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USNOAID

NATIONAL PARK: Hundreds of vans, SUVs and motorcycles belonging to USAID are in storage at the Dry Port in Chobhar since the agency closed its operations in Nepal.

SANGYA LAMSAL

Shristi Karki

Nowhere is the impact of the abrupt closure of USAID in Nepal more symbolic than inside the Chobhar Dry Port. Hundreds of abandoned blue-plated SUVs and two-wheelers are parked like a car dealership in suburban America.

Across Kathmandu, an estimated 600 homes, apartments and offices rented by USAID personnel, consultants and contractors are now vacant. It is a similar story in Surkhet, a hub for US-funded development projects in far western Nepal. Some domestic airlines have cut daily flights between Kathmandu and Surkhet because there are fewer passengers flying for fieldwork.

With so many cars and motorcycles off the roads, Nepal is actually saving an estimated 200,000 litres of petrol and diesel a month, worth nearly Rs30 million.

The impact of the USAID shutdown has therefore reverberated not just across Nepal's development agencies, but has hit the economy through downstream impact on the private sector.

In 2022, USAID and Nepal signed a five-year Development Objective Agreement worth \$659 million for Direct Financing projects in four sectors: health, agriculture, education, and inclusive policy.

But soon after Donald Trump was sworn in for his second term earlier this year, the USAID funding freeze left about 40 projects across the country in limbo. Much of the discussion surrounding development aid centred on how much money was actually spent in rural Nepal, and how much was recycled back to America through consultants, or was spent in Kathmandu by contractors.

While the intended beneficiaries of US development assistance did not gain as much due to tied aid and leakage along the way, the funding cut has left Nepal's underserved communities without access to basic services, as well as opportunities for livelihood and empowerment.

A retired Nepali diplomat posted in Washington DC told Nepali Times that although many have reason to be cynical about USAID work in Nepal, the closure of the agency is a "huge loss" for the development sector.

This has prompted Nepal's development experts to advise reducing reliance on foreign aid, especially as the nation is also set to graduate from LDC status next year. Indeed, total annual foreign aid to Nepal in grants and loans is about \$1 billion a year compared to remittances of \$12 billion last year.

"Nepal has adequate resources, both financial and human, to fill the gap left by donors," says Min Raj Gyawali, who was Deputy Chief of Party of USAID's Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) program for Nepal. "What we need to do to implement our development projects successfully is better organisation, management, set achievable goals, have better coordination between local and federal authorities, and use our internal revenue more effectively."

To get out of its dependency syndrome, Nepal needs to look no further than its unspent annual development budget. "It is no use crying over the loss of American aid when we are unable to spend 70% of our own annual budget every year," says economist Sujeev Shakya.

After shutting down USAID,

the Trump administration transferred the work of overseas development assistance to the State Department, and this could mean that it may rethink an aid program in future that aligns with strategic US foreign policy goals.

The US is not unique in this. Australia's foreign aid program AUSAID was integrated to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in 2014, while DFID, the UK department responsible for administering overseas aid until 2020, was merged with the foreign office to form the FCDO.

"The US still needs to maintain and protect its strategic interests across the world," says Shakya. "This means that the closure of USAID might not be permanent, and it may be integrated with other development programs in future."

"We might be faced with a similar situation in future, so we must always have a back-up plan, adds Gyawali. "We now need to focus on funding diversity rather than relying on any one donor, and we need multi-sectoral strategies to meet and manage funding for ongoing and future development programs."

FULL STORY PAGE 5

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T&C APPLY



RAWPIXEL

The first freedom

How we lost sight of our oldest human right — the freedom of movement

movement.

Now, when we hear the word migration, our minds leap not to the journey but to borders, passports, patrols, visas. We ask whether someone's movement is 'legal' or 'illegal', allowed or forbidden. We debate thresholds and quotas, risks and

threats. Rarely do we ask the more human question: does a person not have the right to seek safety, pursue happiness, or simply go on an adventure elsewhere?

For most of human history, the idea that one needed permission to move would have been absurd. Questioning human migration was questioning human nature — it still is. For over 90% of our existence as hunter-gatherers, humans were entirely dependent on movement.

Even with the rise of agriculture and the building of cities, migration remained natural to individual and social life. Entire communities shifted with the seasons. Trade and travel routes like the Silk Road, the trans-Saharan highways were arteries of constant movement. Nomadic peoples endured. Even the settled recognised migration as a response to drought, war, or opportunity. One needed no reason, or any reason would suffice.

This right to move is older than nearly all others. It predates the right to property, the most revered right in American political

mythology. Before there was freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to vote, or the right to due process, there was the right to migrate. Often, it was the only freedom you could use to protect other personal rights by going to a new place.

Religious traditions elevated migration into a moral duty. The Buddha's Great Renunciation, the exiles in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and the Anishinaabe migration were considered sacred journeys shaping both the self and the world.

But the rise of modern nation-states, colonial cartographies, and rigid immigration regimes has replaced this freedom with control. The invention of passports, visa systems, and surveillance bureaucracies has shackled what was once humanity's most basic instinct. A species that roamed the earth for millennia now finds itself trapped inside boxes, walled by citizenship papers, embassies, fences, and checkpoints.

Ironically, it was the very colonial powers that moved freely across oceans and continents in search of resources and dominion turned around to criminalise movement when it came from the margins.

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, freedom of movement was included but subtly severed from the act of migration. The right to leave was affirmed, the right to enter was not. It was a masterstroke of legal illusion, a political magic trick from the Western sleeve that has since cast a spell over global consciousness. A disillusion so complete, we forgot that the right to leave was also a right to arrive.

They even manufactured some baseless rights like preemptive self-defence, preemptive strikes, trade liberalisation, and economic embargo, but somehow framed the right to migrate as too unrealistic, too disruptive, too dangerous to recognise.

Denying the right to free movement has never been merely a matter of security or order, it reflects much deeper structural concerns. Facilitating and even coercing the flow of capital and resources from the Global South while restricting the movement of people ensures that global inequality remains entrenched, locking entire populations into structural disadvantage.

Today, we speak of migration as a problem. A disruption to be managed. We no longer greet migrants with wonder. We do not ask about their journeys, their struggles, their dreams. We fear them.

Our attention has shifted from people to policies, from humanity to geography. People are trapped in war zones, failing economies, and ecological disasters, not because they cannot escape, but because they are not allowed to. The powerful still glide across borders with ease, the vulnerable are held hostage by the coordinates of their birth.

This system has seeded hatred and xenophobia, nationalism, and exploitation. It has enabled trafficking where safe passage is denied. It has weaponised difference and built moral hierarchies out of geography.

To forget this freedom is not only to forget our past, it is to endanger our future. In boxing humanity into artificial lines, we have betrayed the very idea of freedom. We have turned a natural preservation instinct, a birthright, into a crime. We have silenced the journey. And in doing so, we have not only lost sight of our first freedom, we have lost a piece of what it means to be human.

Bashir Mobasher, PhD, teaches at the American University, New York University and the American University of Afghanistan Departments of Political Science.



GUEST EDITORIAL

Bashir Mobasher

Today, migration is no longer about awe-inspiring journeys of Xuanzang, Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, or James Cook. They ventured across oceans and deserts in expeditions into unknown lands without permits and sometimes even received an audience with curious royalty.

We overlook the migration of the earliest humans, those bold crossings over mountains and plains, rivers and seas, islands and continents, by people who knew no boundaries, only the pull of necessity, survival, and discovery. They exercised the most ancient human freedom: the freedom of

Trending Online



The flower guy

by Ishwar Banamala
The 72nd edition of Diaspora Diaries is about Ishwar Banamala, who returned to Nepal to expand his family's horticulture business after working in Korea. Read about his life and work at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

30 years after Baby Arun

by Bikash Pandey
30 years ago, investment in the first phase of the Arun III project, 'Baby Arun', was brought to a screeching halt. This changed the way Nepal's power sector developed. Read up on the history of the hydropower sector in the country at our website.

Most popular on X

Breathing is hazardous to health

by Nepali Times
An average Nepali would live 3.3 years longer if air pollution is reduced to meet the WHO guideline, according to the Air Quality Life Index 2025. Air pollution is now the leading external threat to life expectancy in Nepal, exceeding both tobacco and diet. Details on our website.

Most commented



Big, beautiful Bills

by Shristi Karki
A new draft Bill proposes dissolving the Social Welfare Council and bringing NGOs under tighter government control. Critics say the Bill curtails civic space and continues a broader trend of shrinking freedoms for media and civil society.

Most visited online page

Letters

CSO BILL

Back in 1992, the SWC, seriously handicapped by financial and human resource issues, was obligated to devolve its nation-wide evaluative responsibilities to the NPC ('Big, beautiful, Bills', Shristi Karki #1276). While issues and attempts at reform have continued with both the SWC as well as the NPC, I do not think that the currently proposed change of authority would guarantee a cleaner, more efficient process. There need to be a serious effort to deal with the internal problems and remain open to leaving both the SWC and NPC as they have been constituted, but with some necessary tweaking and vigorously enhanced, squeaky clean honest oversight.

Iván G. Somlai



■ This Bill is just another knot and bolt loosened at the gesture of our political masters.

Rajendra N Suwal

AIR POLLUTION

Why it is that reduction in pollution would have most effect in Madhes? It is because of the brick kilns, construction, forest fires, crop residue and

garbage burning as well as trans-boundary pollution from India and Pakistan? ('Warning: breathing is hazardous to health' Nepali Times, #1276).

David Seddon

■ This has been known for years. I left Nepal in 2006 partly because I could no longer stand the pollution. I hoped for years that finally something would be done. I have lost all hope for Nepal now.

Margaret Kerr

NEPAL POWER SECTOR

This is a very well summarised chronological history of hydropower in Nepal ('30 years after Baby Arun', Bikash Pandey, #1276).

Ajit Barsimha Thapa

MAN-MADE DISASTER

We are busy destroying planet and ending ourselves ('Rain bombs', Sonia Awale, nepalitimes.com).

Alex Bhandari

Quotes



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Air pollution is now the leading external threat to life expectancy in Nepal, exceeding both tobacco and diet-related risks, according to the annual Air Quality Life Index 2025 published this week.



Helen Hardy @H_Hardy

'On some winter days, Kathmandu records the worst air quality in the world.' One thing I don't miss is sitting in my office seeing the smog hanging over the KTM valley. #kathmandupollution



TTeacher @TaraTeacher1

It is why I left. The apathy too. Walking through air that chokes you past people and businesses burning plastic rubbish broke me.



A R T @AmulyaSir

To make this claim one needs seriously vetted scholarly research to eke out other confounding statistical determinants!!!

Online Package



THE TALE OF TWO FLOWERS

Indra Jatra, which falls this week, is marked with much enthusiasm in Kathmandu. Watch heritage conservationist Anil Chitrakar's retelling of the festival through two important flowers found in the Valley.



THE GOLDEN KING

History remembers Yog Narendra Malla of Patan as a wise king. But an erotic shadow play show this week ahead of Indra Jatra adds another dimension to the story. Read page 9, and watch our video about the restoration of the king's statue that toppled in 2015.

1,000 Words



SOCIAL MEDIA

ILLUSTRIOUS COMPANY: Prime Minister K P Oli with Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un during the Victory Day Parade in Beijing on Wednesday to mark the 80th anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II. Oli's attendance has been controversial at home because of fear that it may anger Japan, a major development and trade partner of Nepal. Oli brought up the Lipulek dispute with Xi, but the official Chinese statement made no mention of it. The Chinese said Nepal had endorsed Beijing's Global Security Initiative, while Oli's aide said Nepal has done no such thing.



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Corporates responsible to society

Nepali companies are showing more interest in setting aside funds to support social and environmental initiatives

Sudiksha Tuladhar

Unlike many countries, there is not much incentive in Nepal for the private sector to fund charities and non-profits. Donations and grants are not tax-deductible.

Yet there are corporate entities that have Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in their portfolio of activities through foundations that they have set up. Some do it loudly to gain public relations mileage, while others are quiet about their generous support.

The CSR outlay of factories and manufacturing companies is regulated by Industrial Enterprise Act (IEA), while the Nepal Rastra Bank oversees grants banks and financial institutions contribute and requires them to set aside 1% of their net profit for CSR activities.

The guideline requires banks and financial institutions to donate to activities covering education, health, environment and financial literacy, among others. Recently, the Supreme Court directed the government to formulate a Bill in the parliament to standardise and regulate the private sector's CSR activities.

"We receive guidelines from Nepal Rastra Bank and follow them," says Pranisha Shrestha who heads the CSR Department at NMB Bank. "We have got a notice about updates on those guidelines, and we will adapt accordingly."

Environmental sustainability is one of the important components of CSR for Nepali companies, and there have been many initiatives aimed at urban renewal. One of the most visible is of the telecommunication



GREEN BELT: Ncell's initiative to green a stretch of the Ring Road in Lalitpur has set an example for other Nepali companies to also show interest in Corporate Social Responsibility.

company Ncell, which is among Nepal's largest taxpayers.

Five years ago, Ncell adopted a 6km stretch of the Ring Road from Ekantakuna to Koteswor-Kalanki, planting 12,000 saplings. They have now grown into a thick forest along the embankment of the road.

Not only is the lush greenery in an overbuilt part of Lalitpur soothing to the eye, it also helps in reducing temperature within the urban heat bubble, and also contributes to reducing air

pollution and traffic noise.

"We started a pilot project along 600m of the Ekantakuna section of the Ring Road during the pandemic," recalls Bishakha Lakshmi Khadka, Director of Corporate Communications and Sustainability at Ncell. "It went really well, and after that we extended the tree planting and upkeep to Kalanki."

Sustainability also means making younger Nepalis aware of the value of nature and environmental sustainability, which

is why Ncell has also undertaken a Green School initiative in and around Kathmandu Valley.

NMB Bank also runs financial literacy programs for youth where they can learn more about social media safeguards, digital payment systems, with a focus on safety and security. Such training not only helps build skills for the future but also protects young Nepalis from online crime. "Threats to young minds through social media use are growing as platforms feed algorithm-driven content," says

Shrestha. "We felt media and digital literacy are important in all seven provinces not just to protect young people, but also give them the confidence to use digital financial systems."

CSR OR PR?

Similarly, Buddha Air helps farmers in Morang to increase productivity, VOITH with its motto 'Little things We Do' provides scholarships to students and has gifted vehicles to hospitals and nature conservation groups, Dwarika's Hotel promotes organic farming and zero waste initiatives, heritage conservation and helps revive traditional handicrafts.

Although some CSR activities have been criticised for masquerading as PR and for greenwashing, many Nepali companies are actually contributing to improve the situation for individuals in need and underserved communities.

It also brings a sense of accountability to the corporate sector so they look beyond shareholder profit with greater involvement in the public good. In Nepal, where government delivery mechanisms are not up to speed in the social sector and environmental sustainability, CSR is a vehicle for public-private partnerships.

The three Metropolitan Cities of the Valley and other private companies are now trying to emulate what Ncell has achieved on the ring Road. Says Khadka, "We were recognised by the Lalitpur Metropolitan City and the Forestry Department for adding greenery to what would have been just an asphalt strip." 🇳🇵



NMB BANK
एनएमबी बैंक

Turkish 12 Years

Turkish Airlines has commemorated 12 years of continuous service between Kathmandu and Istanbul, reinforcing its role as Nepal's sole European airline connection. Since its inaugural flight to Kathmandu in September 2013, the airline has actively supported Nepal's tourism sector, participating in global travel expos to spotlight the country's attractions.

The carrier is increasing the frequency of flights between Istanbul and Kathmandu to six per week starting November to cater to increasing demand from tourists and Nepali travelers.

In a separate milestone, Turkish was recognized with the 2025 Skytrax World Airline Awards in the Best Airline in Europe category for the 10th time, along with World's Best Business Class Catering, and Best Business and Economy Class in Europe.



Turkish is also launching a new connection to Seville, which will be useful to the 40,000 Nepalis residing in Spain. The carrier has also resumed its Misrata flights, as its third destination in Libya following Tripoli and Benghazi as the country returns to normal.

The airline also teamed up with global content aggregators such as Travelfusion, Verteil, DRCT, Mystify, Nuua, Nufflights, and Theta to expand its TKCONNECT platform. This initiative aims to empower Nepali travel agents with tools to craft personalised travel packages, unlock exclusive offers, and simplify booking processes.

Meanwhile, Turkish Airlines and British Council Nepal have partnered for the 3rd edition of 'IELTS Upahar Campaign,' under which three lucky winners will win one-way tickets to the USA and the UK, making study abroad dreams more accessible. The offer is open to the British Council IELTS test takers between 15 August to 31 October. "We hope to contribute to the dreams of many Nepali students and professionals aiming to reach international destinations," said Serkan Basara, Turkish Airlines Nepal GM.



Middle Bhote Kosi

The 102MW Bhotekosi Hydropower Project in Sindhupalchok has completed testing, and will soon be feeding electricity to national grid through the Barabise substation. The project was started in 2013, and faced delays due to Covid and other construction complications along its 7.5km headrace tunnel. The project is operated by the NEA's Chilime Hydropower Company and cost Rs16 billion.

Tracking tourists

The Department of Immigration Tuesday announced a new mobile online system to track foreigners in Nepal from visa application, movement within the country, hotels and departure. The Nepali Post Traveller Tracking Module is supposedly to make the visa application system less cumbersome, and ensure security, safety and rescue if needed. However critics on social media said the procedure to get a QR code seemed too complicated, and raised questions about privacy and surveillance.

Meanwhile, there was a 22% increase in tourists entering Nepal in August compared to July with 88,680. Most were from India, followed by Chinese and US nationals. Since January-August, 736,562 tourists visiting, which means Nepal may be on track to cross 1 million tourists in 2025.

World Bank VP

World Bank vice-president for South Asia Johannes Zutt is in Kathmandu this week to discuss the overall economy, investment climate and infrastructure. Zutt met finance Minister Bishnu Paudel on Tuesday, and the two talked about new investment to boost employment and growth.

NIBL + Java

NIBL Equity Partners has invested in Himalayan Java Coffee, acquiring a 28.8% stake. "With this support, we are ready to take Himalayan Java beyond Nepal, while staying committed to sustainable growth at home," said founder Gagan Pradhan. Started in 1999 as a single cafe, Java now serves over 2,300 customers a day through its 90 outlets.

Samsung Dasain

Samsung's 'Dashain ko Mood, Sabai Good' 10 September - 10 October offers discounts of upto 33% on its TVs, home appliances, soundbar, fridge-microwave, and washing machine-detergent bundles. 'Din Dinai Dashain' running from 1-28 September offers customers the chance to win a Bhatbhateni shopping voucher worth Rs100,000 every day when they buy a Samsung phone or tablet. Samsung also launched the A17 5G which starts at Rs28,999 and comes with three cameras and AI features.



Ek Ek Paila at 10

Volunteer-based health nonprofit Ek Ek Paila marked 10 years by launching a book and a documentary about its journey that started after the 2015 earthquake, has established health centres and hospitals and conducted health camps across the country.

Pokhara-Perth

Sichuan Airlines plans flights between Pokhara and Australia vis Chengdu this month pending CAAN permission. The carrier had been operating chartered flights to Pokhara. This is welcome news for the Pokhara International Airport, which has been suffering from a lack of use.



Nabil Nimbuzz

Nabil is working with 'everything app' Nimbuzz to make it more convenient for its customers to buy international data and apply for driving permits through the nBank app in China, India, USA, Australia, Qatar and other countries.

Kat Chronicles

The Kathmandu Chronicles, organized by Gallery MCube and BYD, aimed to prove that Kathmandu's heritage could be infused into business meetups. Marriott's corporate clients divided into teams and traveled in BYD cars to Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and Swayambhunath where they competed to answer riddles and unlock stories about the city's past.

IPO Workshop

NIMB Ace Capital, Pioneer Law Association and ICRA Nepal jointly organised a 'Road to IPO' workshop at Aloft on 29 August about the process of taking a company public through an Initial Public Offering. Speakers at the event included NIMB ACE Capital CEO and ICRA Nepal Head of Ratings Rajib Maharjan.

Hyundai Creta turns 10

Authorized Hyundai distributor Laxmi intercontinental marked the 10-year anniversary of the launch of the Hyundai CRETA SUV. Hyundai Nepal thanked its customers, dealers, and partners for the model's continued success.

USAID cut affects access to safe sex

End of critical aid has hurt sexual and reproductive health outcomes for at-risk communities

Shristi Karki

The absence of USAID funds in the 10 months since its shutdown has hit Nepal's health sector the hardest. The resource gap has affected crucial programs supporting nutrition, reproductive health, and tuberculosis prevention. As much as 60% of USAID funds were said to support health-related projects.

Programs aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality, especially for neonatal care, have been seriously undermined. The impact on nutrition programs for schools could mean that childhood malnutrition in Nepal could see a surge.

One of the programs affected was USAID-funded five-year Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) project led by CARE Nepal in partnership with the government and other non-profits to empower Nepalis aged 10-19 through behaviour change efforts, group-based interventions, and girl-led activism for reproductive health and changes in social norms.

"All our plans had been made around the guarantee of external support, so training, exposure, and capacity enhancement programs were stopped," explains Min Raj Gyawali, who was Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP) for the ARH program. "The short-term, accelerated learning course to send out-of-school girls back to school was continued after reorganisation of funds from other partners, but the community adolescent forums made to facilitate discussions about their health have largely come to an end."

But among the hardest hit health programs in Nepal are ones aimed at HIV prevention. Nepal's progress over the past decades in addressing HIV and AIDS is now at serious risk since USAID involvement in HIV screening, preventative medication, and condom distribution has discontinued (graph).

Key populations at risk of HIV including sex workers, their clients, women whose husbands and partners are living with HIV were supported with pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

Data from the NCASC shows there are 30,300 people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Nepal as of 2024. Meanwhile, up to 86,809 cisgender female, 25,955 cisgender men who have sex with men, and 14,250 transgender women are involved in sex work across the country.

HIV screening also came to a standstill following the funding freeze, but the government has restarted it with help from other development partners, says Lok Raj Pandey of the National Centre for AIDS and STI Control.

Antiretroviral therapy services, which are provided for free for people with HIV by the government, have not been impacted, say



HEALTH FOR ALL: USAID's Saath-Saath Project provided home-based care services to people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Nepal.

USAID / FLICKR

officials. A total of 25,728 infected people are currently on antiretroviral therapy.

"HIV testing and counselling services have resumed at the 96 antiretroviral therapy treatment centres across Nepal," adds Pandey. "But a shortage of PrEP medication and condoms persists."

Government officials say that they can not definitively say if HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases have increased in the last 10 months. But civil society organisations that support sex workers disagree.

"We have already begun to note a rise in sexually transmitted infections like gonorrhoea, and a rise in HIV infections in the last 10 months," says Tulsi Gandhari, chair of the Janahit Mahila Mahasang, Nepal's national federation of female sex workers. "The situation for people engaged in sex work has become increasingly dire, and a sustained lack of condoms is only going to make things worse."

"The shortage of condoms has also meant that female sex workers have to use emergency contraceptives like pills after the fact, continued usage of which will have lasting damage on their general and reproductive health in the long run," Gandhari adds.

Experts are concerned about the rise of not just HIV, but other life-threatening sexually-transmitted diseases like cervical cancer and Hepatitis B.

95-95-95

Despite government assurance that testing for HIV and sexually-transmitted infections have

resumed, non-profits point to the unavailability of large-scale, free-of-cost screening. Meanwhile, condoms have been distributed by organisations that support family planning and HIV prevention, but it is not nearly enough to meet daily needs for the sex worker community.

"Sex workers face daily risks to their health and physical safety, and the funding gap has left them without essential services," adds Rajan KC of Janahit Mahila Mahasang. "The lack of timely testing, contraceptives, outreach, and peer educators for moral support increases this risk."

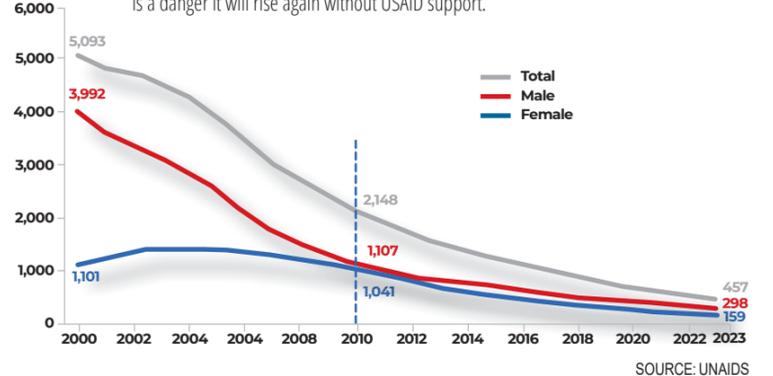
The UNAIDS '95-95-95' target aims to ensure that 95% of people living with HIV are aware of their status, 95% of those diagnosed receive antiretroviral therapy, and 95% of those on treatment achieve viral suppression by 2030. Nepal's National HIV Strategic Plan 2021-2026 outlines a fast track approach towards ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health by achieving the 95-95-95 targets by 2026.

But with the lack of preventative support and robust screening services, experts are not so optimistic about Nepal's HIV outcomes. The risk of exposure to HIV among sex workers and their clients brought about by the absence of essential services also increases the chances of exposure to pregnant women and the wider community.

"If we continue on the same trajectory for another few months, we run the risk of rolling back our progress with HIV prevention," cautions KC. "The government has not been serious enough to address

HIV INFECTIONS IN NEPAL

The number of cases had been declining yearly, but there is a danger it will rise again without USAID support.



this possibility."

The lack of counselling and peer support has also led to a rise in violence and social stigmatisation in vulnerable communities, note experts. The absence of free treatment centres and clinics mean that sex workers have to seek sexual and reproductive healthcare at public and private institutions, where they often encounter hostile and discriminatory rhetoric from service providers and fellow patients. Trans sex workers are subject to even more scrutiny, ridicule, vitriol, and bigotry.

This stigmatisation, in addition to the costs associated with repeated visits for HIV and STI-related health concerns, prevents sex workers from accessing essential healthcare. "We urgently need free clinics so that sex workers are not met with an unfriendly environment whenever they seek healthcare," says Gandhari.

Pandey of the NCASC says

officials are looking into how they can resume the free-of-cost sexual health services that have stopped, noting that USAID was not Nepal's only partner in HIV and STI preventative support. America has also not completely pulled out of sexual and reproductive health support, he adds.

Last week, the US embassy in Nepal met with partners in the health sector to maintain America's commitment to health projects in Nepal, saying that regional officials would helm USAID's legacy health programs.

"Together, we will continue lifesaving work in HIV/AIDS, maternal & child health, and global health security," the embassy wrote in a statement on social media. "Working closely with the Government of Nepal and donors, the United States is committed to strengthening health systems and promoting Nepal's self-reliance in delivering quality services." 🇺🇸

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① Tawaghat Bridge on the far-western border.



② A dirt road amidst the far-western hills.



⑤ The Kali Gandaki river in Kagbeni.



⑦ A busy Thamel Street in Kathmandu.



⑧ The Pushpal Highway in Lamidanda in Kosi.

Navigating Nepal online

Thanks to new map services, it is becoming harder to



Vishad Raj Onta

Last month Nepal was officially released on Google Street View, making it possible to virtually explore the streets of more than 60 cities and scenic highways, hopefully boosting business and tourism.

Just open up maps.google.com, click on the little yellow Peg Man, and drag him to an area on the map. In future, Street View Nepal may serve as an important archive of what Nepal used to look like.

Nepal is the 107th country to get comprehensive Street View coverage, and the fourth in South Asia after Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.

"We used two cars, a smaller one for narrower alleys and a bigger car for wider roads," explains Nishant Nair, who leads a team that oversees outsourced Street View operations.

Last year, a dark grey Hyundai Santro was spotted in Kathmandu with an NCTech iSTAR Pulsar, a 360-degree camera used to capture and stitch together Street View images.

In July, the process ran into problems in Bharatpur, where locals thought the car was surveying the alignment of the East-West Railway. So they torched the car and detained the surveyors. Bharatpur today has zero coverage on Google Street View.

The maps have satellite images with photos from Street View Cars or contributors. The data is from official street maps. Says Nair: "Our AI algorithms can then analyse photos for street names, turn restrictions, and number of lanes to build a comprehensive map of the country."

From the pictures, Google's AI can also extract information about 'places of interest', helping small businesses be visible on the internet.

Dipesh Lamsal, CEO of Mahalaxmi Bikas Bank, says that hotels, restaurants, and tour operators benefit from the maps because it brings global visibility: "For us banks the technology can support Know Your Customer (KYC) verification, helping us confirm locations, assess businesses, and strengthen due diligence."

The network of coverage of

Street View is denoted by a road glowing blue, with roads in cities and towns mostly featured. The Tarai has a denser road network, the foothills have a few highways connecting main cities, and the mountains do not have blue at all except for some highways and popular trekking routes.

One of the biggest users of this feature will be Nepalis themselves, as domestic travel gets more popular than ever this holiday season. Trekking trails are now also on Google maps with embedded views of scenic areas.

What is striking is how similar cities look across Nepal — the same cement ads painted to the sides of buildings, the same shutter pasal, and haphazard overhead wires. Towns on the other side of the border look fundamentally the same except for billboards for Indian companies like Jio Mobile.

CONNECTIVITY

As ride-sharing and e-commerce expands, tech-based companies need accurate data about locations, and directions to them. Rather than develop their own databases and maps from scratch, it makes sense to use existing Google Maps.

Mapping services get paid a small amount every time another app asks to search for a location, or to calculate the optimal route between two specific places. They may also allow auto-completing searches or calculating just the distance between two locations instead of the best route.

There is one problem: Nepali companies cannot afford to pay for this data from Google Maps — especially with 1 USD hitting Rs142 this week. And that is where Nepali mapping companies like Baato and Galli Maps come in.

"We built Baato because we wanted to empower business, but over time we realised that bad maps isn't only a business concern, it's annoying for regular individuals too," says Prithvi Khadka, Baato's investor and business developer.

One problem Khadka faces is the lack of trained technicians to take existing data about a customer and predict their preferences. Skilled people are rare, and once hired and trained in data manipulation, they will likely emigrate. Khadka's solution is to use an agency to do the work, but that raises privacy issues.

Khadka recently pitched

Baato Maps on Shark Tank Nepal, successfully snaring a Rs24 million investment from Hem Raj Dhakal of IME for 40% of the company. Details of the deal will be finalised after Dasain, and Khadka says being on the show has given Baato better visibility: "The dynamic has flipped. Companies are now coming to us, instead of us going to them."

One of the new clients is all-electric ride-hailing service eDrive Nepal. Baato Maps' main selling point is accuracy: it updates the changing nature of streets and locales with verification tools so users do not waste time chasing dead ends. "Building a map is challenging because it reflects all the changes that happen in real life," says Khadka.

Baato also makes it quick to find areas that would be of immediate locale interest, such as ATMs, bus stops, and EV Charging stations. In future it will recommend local restaurants and businesses to customers based on location, and perhaps tie-up with IME Pay's inDrive.

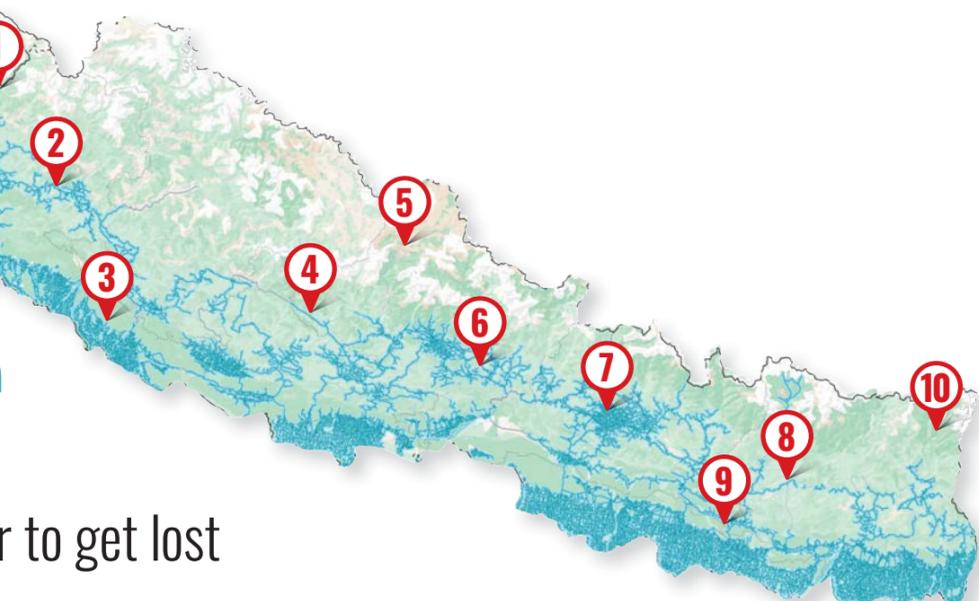
Galli maps serves companies like Hamrobazar, WorldLink, eSewa, Foodmandu, Sajilo Rides, and others. Founder Raj Bikram

⑨

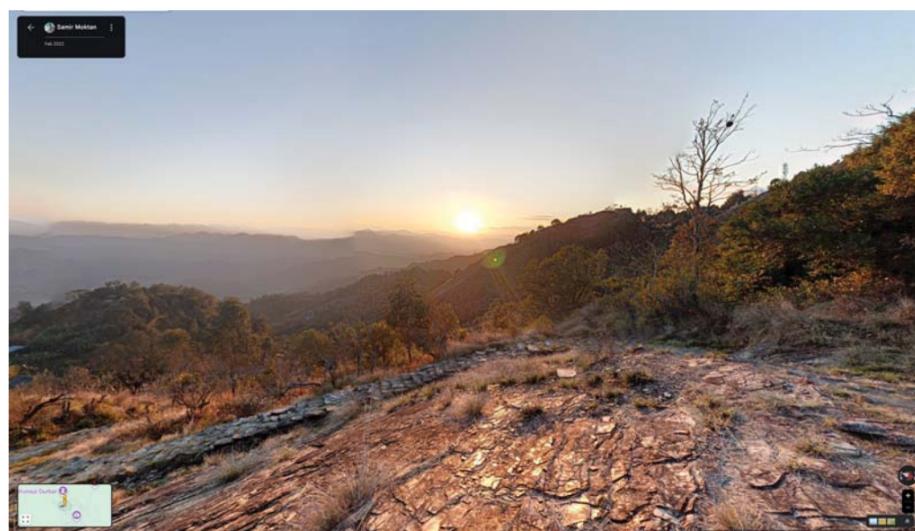


3 Near the Bardia National Park in Western Tarai.

4 Near Jhiwakhola Devasthan in Baglung, Gandaki.



to get lost



6 A central Nepal sunset at Tanahunsar in Gandaki.



9 Dadhauri in the central Tarai.



10 The Himalaya in the north-eastern corner of Nepal.

Maharjan says the company got a start from the government's attempt to solve the addressing problem by numbering houses in 1998.

"That was a revolutionary concept, but there was actually no way to see the numbers and use them to locate, and Lalitpur then numbered houses in 2019, but had the same problem," recalls Maharjan who faced the issue firsthand when he tried to order an oximeter for his sick mother during Covid and was stuck giving directions on the phone for half an hour.

Galli Maps also has a 360 degree street view feature, covering Kathmandu, Pokhara, Everest Base Camp, and Annapurna Base Camp, although it is not something it spends a lot of resources to maintain.

Maharjan is excited about Google Street View now being a thing, and used to contribute to the service in 2014. Google was quite stealthy about carrying out mapping, but they need not have been because when Galli went to the Ministry of Communication and Technology, it said it did not need permission because it was not filming, just pictures.

Galli does work with the government in other ways: re-mapping locations every year to update data, and also recent information from the Department of Roads. It has also tried a reporting feature so users could report accidents, potholes, trash buildups, and fires. This feature was scrapped after government departments did nothing about the complaints.

Galli is planning for more use cases for its map application in future, including live tracking of festivals like Indra Jatra, which this year starts on 6 September with chariot pulling.

"I love to attend these jatra, but the problem is nobody knows exactly where the rath or lakhey are at any given time. Locals give directions, but the processions have moved by then," says Bikram.

Besides Baato and Galli, there are companies like Thegana which look to solve the addressing problem by digitising locations by assigning unique Thegana Codes to them. Another is Trackon Nepal, which offers vehicle tracking and fleet management solutions using small GPS devices and mobile data. 🇳🇵

Trekking Views



Google Street View covers roads, but what about Nepal's trekking trails? Now that the two main mobile telephone providers have built towers along the main trekking routes, it is possible to geolocate on online maps that show hiking paths.

Better coverage would give trekkers an idea of the facilities they can expect en route, views that await them, and even weather alerts to warn of impending blizzards, landslides or avalanches.

As more Nepalis travel within the country, they are uploading photos along the way. Two areas in the mountains that are partially covered on Google Street View are the Annapurnas and the Everest Trail. In Annapurna, the coverage is along the Beni-Tatopani-Jomson-Kagbeni route, including of the Kali Gandaki River. Most contributors are individuals.

In the Khumbu area, there was a concerted effort in 2014 by a Google Maps team to create videos and an interactive website with places to explore in Lukla, Namche Bazaar, Thame, Khumjung and Phortse. Explorable views of the German Bakery at Lukla Airport, a Yak Parking Lot, and the Sir Edmund Hillary School reveal what life is like in the area.

This is a project that could be undertaken quite easily by the government working perhaps with tour operators and individual trekkers with 360 degree cameras that cost about \$200. Documenting routes in the Far-West hills, perhaps showing that facilities do exist, could be vital to increasing tourism and the economy in the region.



Events



Theatre: Kali Paar

Kali Paar is a fictional period drama that revolves around Dharampur's campaign of territorial expansion and its clash with Triratnapur. Experience history live. Runs everyday except Tuesday.

Till 20 September, 5:15pm, (additional 1pm show on Saturdays), Kausi Theatre, Teku, 9840382006

Career Conclave

The 'Nepal ma Future Cha?' conclave will host workshops and present opportunities to network with the nation's top companies across industries.

6 September, 10am onwards, Ticket: Rs1000, Hotel Yak & Yeti



Art exhibition

The ongoing exhibition X – Celebrating a Decade of Art shows an array of artwork created over the last 10 years by 10 veteran and emerging Nepali artists.

Till 16 September, Music Art Gallery, Sanepa

The Himalayan Now

Feel the essence of the mountains at The Himalayan Now 2025, a vibrant showcase of the contemporary Nepali art of five diverse artists.

Till 9 September, 11am-8pm, The Kala Salon, Chhaya Center Mall



Farmers' Market

Sample seasonal produce, indulge in gourmet baked treats and browse through local artisanal handicrafts at the Le Sherpa Farmers' Market on Saturdays.

6 September, 7:30am onwards, Le Sherpa, Maharajganj

Comedy Show

A laugh-packed evening awaits with The Funtastic 4 group of comedians Aayush Shrestha, Sajan Shrestha, Utsav Sapkota, and Yojana Magar.

6 September, 5pm onwards, Ticket: Rs800, Actors' Studio, Pingalastan



Waterfall hike

This weekend, reconnect with nature through a hike to the Mohini waterfall on adventurous trails with stunning views of the Kulekhani Dam.

6 September, 6am onwards, Fee: Rs1600, New Road, 9768771113



Music

Geography of the Moon

Geography of the Moon's music is a unique mix of dreamy shoegaze, postpunk, and introspective lyrics. Listen to them live this Friday.

5 September, 8pm onwards, Ticket: Rs500, Beers N' Cheers

Kutumba

Celebrate this Indra Jatra with an evening of fusion folk music by Kutumba at the Indra Daha Mahotsav.

5 September, Kalu Pande, Indra Daha



Mood.Ctrl

World-class DJs are taking over the deck at XO. Head to the party for endless music featuring DJ Sid, DJ Fake Tattoos, and DJ Almost.

12 September, 10pm onwards, Ticket: Rs800, XO Club

Live Music

Have a relaxing weekend with live music at Tyandro while you chow on authentic Newari snacks with family and friends.

5 September, 5pm onwards, Cafe Tyandro, Sano Thimi



Shailu Rai

Shailu Rai is bringing his unique soulful sound to the Indie Getaway. Hear him live alongside The Alley and Ketchup.

6 September, 6pm onwards, Ticket: Rs800, Reggae Bar



Getaway



Getaway to Chandragiri Hills

Indulge in a golden autumn getaway at Chandragiri Hills Resort. Enjoy a 1-night stay for two with breakfast, round-trip cable car rides, infinity pool and jacuzzi access, indoor games, and 20% off spa services. Offer valid on weekdays only, for Nepali citizens and expats.

Till November 2025, Price: Rs 12,999, Chandragiri, 9802069900

Methlang Villa

Methlang is a great pick for anyone seeking modern comfort just minutes from Lakeside. The villa offers a tranquil retreat with private infinity pools and breathtaking views of the Annapurna range.

Pokhara, 9846082437



Prakriti Resort

Wake up to Himalayan dawns over terraced organic farmlands at Prakriti Resort and Organic Farm. Unwind and learn through calm tours in the herbal garden and hands-on cooking classes. In the evening, stargaze around a campfire.

Shivapuri National Park (01) 4533151

Dwarika's Hotel

A heritage oasis celebrated for its serene courtyards and cultural elements, Dwarika's offers warm hospitality and special multi-course Nepali feasts, all without having to leave the city.

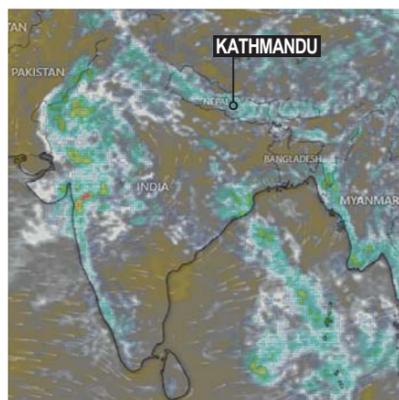
Battisputali (01) 4570770

Hotel Bhrikuti Tara

Bhrikuti Tara is an ideal getaway for travelers seeking a comfortable retreat near Boudha. The hotel's Rooftop Oasis Restaurant is a must-try that features British, French, Indian, and Nepali cuisine.

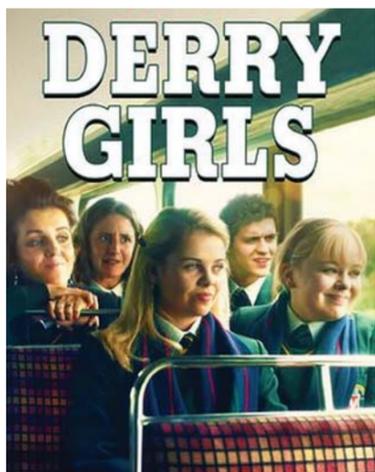
Boudhadwar Marg (01) 4595266

Weekend Weather



Convection Systems

Nepal has seen a slight let up in the monsoon this week, with moist winds bypassing the country and colliding with a westerly system over northern India and Pakistan. Extra heavy rains have battered the mountains, causing havoc and submerging farms and cities in both countries. Kathmandu Valley will likely see localised convective systems building up mainly over the mountains with short, sharp bursts of rain in places. Forecasts expect rains to pick up early next week, but not as intense.



Our Pick

Creator Lisa McGee's period teen sitcom, Derry Girls tells the coming-of-age story of four teenagers living in the eponymous town of Derry in Northern Ireland in the mid 90s during the final few years of The Troubles. Over three seasons, viewers follow the exploits of the fivesome at their Catholic all-girls school, headed by the indomitable Sister Michael. Based on McGee's own experiences as a teenager living in Derry during the time of the conflict, Derry Girls stars Saoirse-Monica Jackson, Louisa Harland, Nicola Coughlan, Jamie-Lee O'Donnell, Dylan Llewellyn and Siobhán McSweeney.



Dining

Attic

Attic serves a vibrant mix of Nepali, Indian, and Asian fusion. Check out their signature Attic Chicken Chop, made with minced chicken and fresh grated potatoes.

Gyaneshwor (01) 4517843

Sanchyan Ramen

Slurp yourself a hearty bowl of Tonkotsu ramen simmered in a rich and creamy broth at Sanchyan Ramen. Explore the other options on their menu as well.

Durbarmarg, 9805674887



Dine @ Aloft

Elevate your dining experience with exclusive midweek and weekend offers at Nylgiri rooftop bar. Ladies get 50% off food and beverages on Wonder Women Wednesdays; men get the same deal on Super Man Sundays.

Aloft Kathmandu Thamel, 9705568643

Pasa Deli

Pasa Deli is the go-to place for a wholesome breakfast. Their One Pan Grill comes with eggs, bacon, and hash browns, and their French toast is sweet and creamy.

Boudha, 9820805958



Gourmet Eatery

From the smoky BBQ Bacon Cheeseburger to the spicy Hot Honey Chicken burger, each bite is a flavor-packed experience at Gourmet Eatery.

Thamel, 9818232414

गर्मी मौसममा संक्रामक रोगबाट बचौ र बचाऔँ

- गर्मी मौसममा मलेरिया, कालाजार, डेंगी, हैजालगायतका विभिन्न संक्रामक रोगहरू फैलिन सक्छन् ।
- संक्रामक रोग फैलाउने झिँगा, लामखुट्टे, भुसुना आदिको नियन्त्रण गरौँ ।
- संक्रामक रोगबाट बच्न शुद्ध र उमालेको पानी पिऔँ ।
- बासी तथा सडेगलेका खाना नखाऔँ ।
- घरभित्र र वरपरको सरसफाइमा ध्यान दिऔँ ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

Sex and the city of Patan

An erotic shadow play show this week exposes the infidelity of a king 350 years ago



YOUTUBE



KWELACHHI TOLE SUDHAR SAMITI

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: Jhyalcha Pyankha (above), an explicit shadow play exposing King Yog Narendra Malla's affair with a local Patan girl, commissioned by his favourite queen, performed in tune with bhajan (right). The statue of Yog Narendra Malla being reinstated (below) after it toppled in the 2015 earthquake.

Sonia Awale

Yog Narendra Malla became king at age 18, and ruled Patan from 1684-1705 — his reign marked by a cultural and architectural renaissance of the city state.

He put up a statue of himself in the palace square with a little bronze bird sitting on the guardian serpent above his head. It is said he told his subjects that he would look after their welfare till the day the bird flew off.

During the 2015 earthquake, the pedestal collapsed and the statue was damaged. The bird was lost, only to be located in a pile of debris and reinstated when the statue was consecrated two years later.

History remembers Yog Narendra Malla as a wise king, but like most royalty of the day, he had a weakness for women. He is supposed to have consorted with 30 queens and numerous concubines. At least 33 of them self-immolated on Malla's funeral pyre when he died, adhering to the prevailing practice of sati.

When Yog Narendra Malla's favourite queen found out that he was carrying on with yet another woman, this one of a lesser social standing, she got the rival community of the Kwelachhi neighbourhood to stage a shadow sex play to expose his

unfaithfulness.

Actors enacted the explicit exploits of the king and his mistress, a bright butter lamp projecting the moving shadows of their lovemaking on a thin white drape to those gathered in the square below.

The queen made sure that the show was designed to face the home of the king's paramour to shame them both. She also paid for a group to chant a bhajan with lyrics that ridiculed the king's extramarital affair.

The Jhyalcha Guthi community trust that the queen set up three-and-a-half century ago is still active to this day, and performs the annual shadow play in the same building in Kwelachhi the day before Indra Jatra every year. This year's show is on Friday evening, 5 September.

The opening lines of the chants that accompany the play are the same words approved by the queen all those years ago: "Raja Yog Narendra ya aparadh..." (King Yog Narendra's crime...)

The community leader of the Kwelachhi neighbourhood, 62-year-old Baburaja Awale, explains the importance of the event: "This Jhyalcha is our intangible heritage and oral history. We do not have a written format, it has been passed down from generation to generation. But the bhajan is the story of King Yog Narendra Malla." Jhyalcha Pyankha, as the



GOPEN RAI / NEPALI TIMES ARCHIVE

ceremony is called, starts with a puja for the Bhimsen — the god of wealth and prosperity, a popular deity in Patan who has a temple dedicated just to him in the palace square.

This is immediately followed by a bhajan of Bhairab performed with traditional Newa musical instruments. Community members serve samay baji snacks consisting of beaten rice, water buffalo chunks, soybean, green veggies, lentils, ginger, garlic and aila liquor.

"In the first act of the shadow play, the man initiates the lovemaking, and in the third it is the woman," says Laxmi Lal Awale, also a member of the trust

that organises the show. The shadow action is all uncensored, but interspersed with scenes of everyday life: the woman is spinning a thread, the king is going about his royal chores, and the two sit down to share sanacha fermented pickle that is popular this time of year.

"Back then, there was no tv, films or YouTube, and yet we managed to stage the shadow play using our own resourcefulness," says Baburaja Awale. "It is important to continue the tradition."

The challenge now is to ensure that the younger generation takes over, learning the lyrics of the ancient bhajan. The dafa khala

group that performs all over Patan during festivals and religious events is now training teenagers to play the musical instruments.

The Jhyalcha was staged even after the 2015 earthquake when the falcha where the bhajan is performed collapsed and they made-do in a tin shed. The structure was later rebuilt with a grant from the group, Photo Circle.

Lalitpur Metropolitan City sets aside a budget of Rs50,000 to organise the Jhyalcha Pyankha every year, but this is not enough and is supplemented by donation from the community. The performers including musicians and actors are all volunteers, and take part in it because it is their community duty.

The erotic shadow play was way ahead of its time, not just in its graphic content but the use of contemporary local technology as well as improvisation and pure imagination.

Says Laxmi Lal: "Whatever its origin in the legend of King Yog Narendra Malla and his queen, Jhyalcha also served as a medium of sex education. In the past, women were discouraged from watching the shadow play, but today everyone is welcome, we all watch it together." 📺

*Jhyalcha Pyankha
Kwelachhi, Chyasal, Patan
7PM onwards
Friday, 5 September*



रंग बहार



SAMSUNG TV 65"



DIAMOND NECKLACE



IPHONE 16



साथै अन्य थुप्रै उपहारहरु

बर्जर पेन्टले घर रंगाउनुहोस्, लक्की इ मार्फत आकर्षक पुरस्कारहरु जित्नुका साथै बम्पर पुरस्कारमा हिसाको हार जित्नुहोस् ।

उपहारै उपहार, बम्परमा हिसाको हार



थप जानकारीको लागि: www.bergernepal.com

The return of communicable

Sonia Awale

■ Japanese Encephalitis has claimed 23 lives so far this year, and the monsoon is not even over yet. As of Thursday, there were 118 laboratory confirmed cases of this mosquito-borne infection across 36 districts with most patients in Lumbini.

■ A cholera outbreak in Birganj last week claimed at least four lives, and 850 people were hospitalised in Parsa district alone. Cholera is caused by faecal-oral transmission, but the source of the contamination has not been determined.

■ There was a resurgence of rabies infections with three fatalities in northern Dhading in July. Hundreds of others had come in contact with rabid dogs or infected persons amidst a shortage of anti-rabies vaccines.

■ This year's dengue outbreak was not as serious as 2022 when at least 100 people died across Nepal from the virus spread by mosquito bites. Nearly 2,900 cases have been reported since January this year, mostly in Gandaki Province and Kathmandu Valley.



SUMAN NEPALI

For some time now, many public health experts had thought that the burden of infectious diseases was going down in Nepal, and the bigger threat was chronic lifestyle-related ailments.

Indeed, communicable diseases were thought to be largely under control due to increased immunisation, better hygiene and sanitation as well as advances

in healthcare. Deaths due to non-communicable diseases like cancers, cardio-vascular and respiratory diseases, and diabetes had increased from 31.3% of all hospital patients in 1990 to 71.1% in 2019.

The rise in chronic diseases is due to reduced physical activity as society urbanises, unhealthy diet, smoking, tobacco and

alcohol use. While genetics is a factor, pollution and environment including climate breakdown have added to the challenge. Warming temperatures mean even vector-borne communicable infections such as dengue and malaria have moved up the mountains with the mosquitos.

Japanese encephalitis (JE) cases this year have surpassed last

monsoon's figures, and most of the deaths are of those above 15 years, meaning they were probably not vaccinated against the viral brain infection. Up until 2005, encephalitis killed up to 2,000 people every year, most of them in the Tarai, before the Chengdu vaccine was introduced.

"One-third of those who get JE don't make it, one-third survive,



SUMAN NEPALI

Do you worry about dying of rabies?

Preventive vaccination can protect you for the rest of your life against rabies

Mary Warrell

Everyone in Nepal should beware of dogs in the streets, which are the most likely source of rabies infection. Rabid dogs are not always aggressive. They can be partly paralysed and drooling saliva.

A bite, scratch or even licking an open wound by an unknown dog or any sick-looking mammal should be taken seriously. The best treatment following a dog bite is to wash the wound immediately with soap or detergent and then go to a

hospital or clinic straight away for advice.

It is urgent to begin treatment if it is prescribed. A course of rabies vaccine is 3 or 4 doses, and an injection of rabies immune serum into the wound may be given if the risk is severe. Treatment is free in Nepal's government hospitals and clinics, but the immune serum is expensive and only available at major hospitals.

Private clinics may provide treatment but at a cost. If this preventive treatment is delayed or is incomplete the risk of rabies infection remains. Treatment is

most urgent if the bites are on the head, neck or hands.

Experts estimate that over 100 people die from rabies in Nepal every year, where there are nearly 3 million dogs, many of them strays. More than 132,000 people were bitten by dogs and wild animals last year, and 40% of them were children.

This year alone, there have been about a dozen reported deaths already, and the government is trying to address the shortage of vaccines in hospitals around the country. However, pre-exposure vaccine before being bitten by a

rabid animal is 100% effective.

Although rabies infection is 100% fatal once the illness has started, the vaccine can be 100% protective if given before contact with a rabid animal. No one has ever died of rabies who has had a course of pre-exposure vaccine and later, if bitten by a possibly rabid animal, had a booster vaccination. Rabies immune serum is not needed.

For pre-exposure vaccination, only a small amount of vaccine is needed and 0.1 ml can be injected into the surface of the skin. One vial of vaccine can be shared between a family or other group of people

which reduces the cost.

A separate syringe and needle must be used for each person. However, they must all go to the clinic together because an opened vial must be discarded at the end of the day. A vial of vaccine costs approximately NPR 650-700 at pharmacies, private clinic charges vary. If bitten by an animal later in life, only booster vaccine is needed but rabies immune serum is not needed.

Only mammals can be infected by rabies, including dogs, cats, cattle, sheep, buffalo and wild mammals including

diseases

Recent outbreaks of infectious diseases weigh down Nepal's health system even as it deals with rising chronic maladies



SAGLO SAMAJ

and the rest survive but with neurological complications,” explains Buddha Basnyat, chair of the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit (OUCRU) in Kathmandu.

The Chengdu vaccine which was trialled in Nepal was first given to all populations of Banke, Bardia, Dang and Kailali districts which were most affected. The immunisation was later expanded to 19 districts with children under 15 inoculated.

Sher Bahadur Pun, virologist at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital, confirms that encephalitis is the biggest vector borne infection in Nepal right now. He adds, “Even as we were talking about dengue, for the past two years I have been concerned

about JE since we started neglecting vaccination thinking that the threat was gone. That is why it has re-emerged.”

Nepal has frequent cholera outbreaks due to poor sanitation, and faecal contamination of piped water in cities. In most cases, it is dismissed as severe diarrhoea. A major outbreak of cholera in Haiti in 2010 killed 10,000 people with 820,000 cases recorded – it was traced to a camp housing Nepali peacekeeping troops who carried the *Vibrio cholerae* bacillus to a population that had not developed immunity against it.

A severe cholera outbreak in Jajarkot in 2009 killed 300 people, mostly children, and 40,000 cases were recorded. But cholera is now vaccine preventable, an Indian

made Hillchol oral cholera vaccine being one of the jabs available.

Says Pun: “The fact that these biblical, easily preventable illnesses still kill people in Nepal is tragic. We need three things to fight communicable diseases: communication, hygiene and vaccines.”

The resurgence of rabies in Dhading and surrounding districts in July raised alarm bells, and public health experts worried that the vaccines had not reached the remote health posts. Rabies has a 100% fatality rate, but post-exposure prophylaxis, a standard 3-4 dose jabs administered after a dog bite can prevent it. The injections are supposed to be available for free in government hospitals.

An injection of rabies immune serum called immunoglobulin is also given if the risk is severe but it is expensive and available only in major hospitals. A pre-exposure prophylaxis is recommended to travellers in high-risk areas like Nepal.

Mary Warrell, world expert on rabies, says that no one who has had a course of pre-exposure vaccine has ever died of rabies (below). A small vial is sufficient for an entire family and would cost Rs700 at most. If bitten, a booster shot would be sufficient, and immune serum is not needed.

“Unfortunately, even when you are bitten by a dog, rabies vaccination is still not a standard procedure in Nepal when you go to most pharmacies, they would rather give you a tetanus injection,” laments Basnyat. “Most people don’t even know you get a free post-exposure anti-rabies vaccine in Teku hospital in Kathmandu.”

Experts agree that the most effective antidote to tackle both communicable and non-communicable diseases should be awareness. This means communicating prevention options about how infections spread, as well as healthier habits to reduce risk from modern lifestyle-related maladies.

Rakshya Pandey, pulmonary physician at HAMS Hospital, says most government budgets are spent on treating heart, kidney and neuro diseases, when the focus should be in delaying onset through awareness.

“We contract chronic illnesses just by breathing Kathmandu’s toxic air, there are children as young as

12 vaping and look at how easily accessible cigarettes are,” she says. “But most of the cost of treatment in Nepal is out of pocket.”

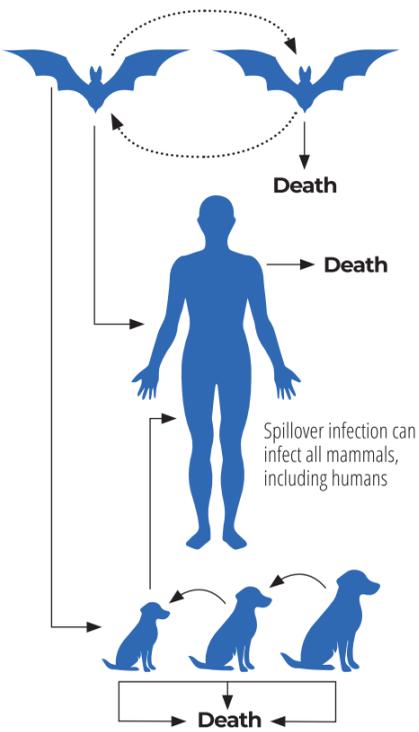
In addition, there is huge disparity between public and private healthcare. Government health centres are unreliable, underfunded and understaffed, while private hospitals are out of reach for most Nepalis. And now, with USAID’s health projects shut, the government’s dedicated health delivery programs will be affected (page 1, 5).

Sixty percent of the money USAID was providing to Nepal was for the health sector, including paying for community mobilisers who are credited for successful immunisation and progress in maternal and child care in the country. Similarly, active case finding and contract tracing of tuberculosis which kills 6,000 people in Nepal every year was almost entirely funded by USAID.

“The wealth of a country is not measured in just income, but in the health and education of citizens,” says Pandey. “The health sector should not be politicised, and impacted every time there is a change in government.”

But since the problem is political malfunction, the solution lies in politics too. Policies such as taxation for tobacco, strictly enforcing mandatory vehicle emission tests, and reinvigorating vaccine programs and community healthcare would do much more to reduce the burden of both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Concludes Basnyat: “Communicable infections are whimsical in nature. They have not returned, they never went away from Nepal. Now, we also have to increasingly deal with chronic illnesses. It’s a double whammy, we have to recognise that and tackle them head-on simultaneously.”



quick gasps for air when trying to drink water, also fear of water, going on to fits, confusion and anxiety.

The infection progresses to unconsciousness, and breathing, heart or nervous system complications might follow. When the facilities exist, the possibility of giving intensive care to prolong life may arise, but although a very few patients, who have had incomplete vaccination, may survive a few weeks or months, they will be left with severe disability, unable to feed themselves, walk or talk.

Rabies infection can sometimes be a paralysing illness like polio, without spasms. When the muscles of breathing become paralysed, the patient dies. Tests on the patients’ skin or saliva can confirm the diagnosis, but this is not likely to be possible locally. After death a tiny sample of brain tissue can be tested.

In a disease as agonising and terrifying as rabies, relieving distressing symptoms is the primary concern. Because there is no treatment which will kill the virus in the brain, the only option is to give active compassionate care, to reduce suffering. Palliative therapy must reduce thirst and dehydration, fever, anxiety, fear, restlessness, agitation, seizures and pain.

The patient should be nursed in quiet darkened rooms, because bright lights and loud noises might provoke spasms. Fluids, sedatives and anticonvulsants help to keep the patient comfortable. Death usually occurs within a week or so.

In an ideal world, everyone in Nepal could have peace of mind by having a complete course of vaccine. Children are at greatest risk as they are less aware of rabies and may not report contact with a possibly rabid animal. 📌

Mary Warrell was with the Centre for Clinical Vaccinology and Tropical Medicine, University of Oxford.

bats. In humans many cases are not reported but a study in India showed that 12,700 people die of rabies every year. 40% of the deaths are in children under the age of 15 years.

Bites or even a scratch, usually from a rabid dog or cat, can result in an agonising death a few months later. The virus in the animal’s saliva is inoculated through the skin, and travels in nerves up to the brain. The rabies virus multiplies resulting in inflammation of the brain.

The diagnosis of rabies encephalitis depends on recognising the typical symptoms in people who have been in contact with a possibly rabid mammal in the previous weeks or months. The most characteristic symptoms are jerky muscle contractions, like



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Nepali zero waste art in Zurich

Two artists take contemporary art to the global stage with an exhibition in Switzerland

Sangya Lamsal

East meets west, traditional meets modern at a gallery in Zurich, where two Nepali artists are exhibiting their art using digital frames cycling multiple works in a single slideshow.

Kailash K Shrestha and Krisha Tamrakar, the founders of Artudio in Kathmandu are presenting In Between the Unseen at HeLai Art Gallery in this Swiss city using digital frames by AELIG to present their work as dynamic digital papers, cycling multiple works in a single slideshow.

Powered by batteries, the frames make exhibitions more sustainable and adaptable to smaller spaces. The digital frames bring art into the real world, verifying the authenticity of the work through non-fungible tokens (NFT) and displaying them simulating natural light.

Tamrakar's *Between Colors and Spaces* was previously featured in *Nepali Times*, and traces the delicate interplay of memory and transformation. Through layered imagery and nuanced use of vibrant colours, she meditates on the quiet tension between tradition and consumerism. The brass utensil shops of her community in Patan, once central to local life, have been replaced by rows of clothing and shoe stores.

Similarly, Shrestha's *Phantasmal Series* nestles on the boundary between illusion and reality. Drawing on glitch-inspired



PHOTOS: ARTUDIO, HELAI ART GALLERY

repetition, he distorts familiar sociopolitical imagery — speaking to the instability of memory and the disorientations of the present in Nepal with its ever-changing but recurring faces. The personal is political through his art.

The exhibition transforms Shrestha and Tamrakar's works into spaces of encounter, where what is hidden, erased, or displaced becomes momentarily tangible. Together, their works probe what lies in between and in the unseen threads of daily existence.

Using digital frames allows them to facilitate circulation and sales, including transfers for NFT collectors. This can be useful in expanding the reach and longevity of Nepal's contemporary art.

"Nepal's art scene is often

misunderstood," Shrestha told us on a call from Zurich. "Many still assume that we only have traditional art. Our collectors and the international art community are frequently surprised by the vibrancy of contemporary Nepali practices."

These young Nepali artists serve as Nepal's cultural ambassadors to the world, and use international collaborations through residencies, curatorial projects, intellectual exchanges to network.

"Nepal is an ideal landscape for contemporary art interventions. Compared to other South Asian countries, there are unique opportunities here," adds Shrestha. "Geopolitical contexts and cultural history provide artists with freedom and space to explore. There is

immense potential for art to thrive."

Yet, both artists feel Nepal needs to nurture a supportive environment for artists.

"Celebrating and documenting art, music, film, and literature, and creating feasible working conditions needs conducive policies. The government should invest in the talent that already exists."

Digital innovation is also transforming the field. The artists have noticed how digital certification, NFTs, and tracking databases are the next frontier in art, and these mediums are needed for contemporary Nepali artists to expand reach and visibility globally.

Back home, at Artudio Center for Contemporary Visual Arts,

the duo is constantly uncovering overlooked narratives and promoting sustainable art. It is now a dynamic hub for Nepal's contemporary art, pioneering transformative practices, experimental exhibitions, residencies, and educational programs to create a vibrant, interconnected art community.

The artists are giving a special talk at the gallery, sharing insights on the stories behind their works, the evolving Himalayan contemporary art scene, and their ongoing projects in Nepal. 🇳🇵

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Till September 19, 2025*

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Presented by Swiss Nepal Chamber of Commerce (SNCC) and HeLai Art Gallery

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