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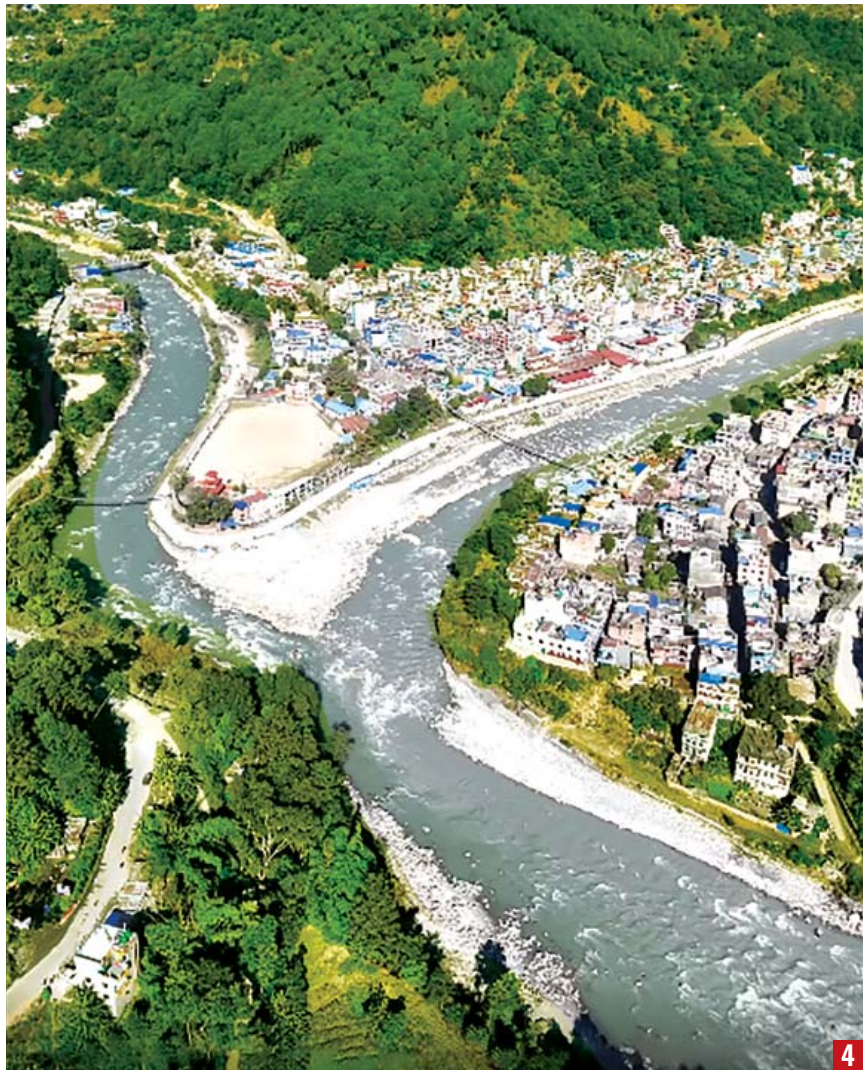
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AWESOME HOLIDAYS NEPAL



SOCIAL MEDIA

Sonia Awale

Nepalis are still reeling from the shock of the Bhote Kosi-Trisuli flood disaster three weeks ago. Some 1,400 bodies have been found but only 104 have been identified and handed to families. Over 5,000 are still missing. It is now becoming clear that the high death toll was due to densely populated market towns along the road corridor, and a dozen hydroelectric plants on the Trisuli basin. What happened in Rasuwa-Nuwakot-Dhading is now making people living along other glacier-fed

rivers in Nepal apprehensive. An important lesson from the 26 August disaster is to go back to the traditional wisdom of not living along floodplains. Experts list towns across Nepal that would be at risk if a 100m surge like the one that came down the Bhote Kosi happened on other rivers. The towns most at risk, they warn, are Beni, Besisahar, Damauli, Bahrabise, and Manthali. Says climate expert Ajaya Dixit: “We urgently need an inventory of settlements at risk. They are everywhere from east to west along the Tamor, Arun, Sunkosi, both Bhote Kosis, Marsyangdi, Budi Gandaki, Madi, Seti, Kali Gandaki,

Myagdi, Karnali.” The Bhote Kosi-Trisuli corridor was so heavily populated because it is close to the load centre in Kathmandu, and the site of Nepal’s oldest and newest hydroelectric plants that exploit the steep river gradient. The hydropower plants and better access brought in workers, shops, and the market towns flourished with trade and tourism with China. “After this disaster, we can say that even places along rivers we thought were safe are not safe because the flood wave topped 100m in places,” warns glaciologist Tenzing Choegyal Sherpa. The big challenge now is for the

national, provincial and municipal governments to muster political will to relocate established riverside towns. Those in Betrawati and Bidur may move because they have seen what a river can do, but it will be difficult in other towns. “Resettlement comes with its own set of issues including resources, the willingness of the people to move. But we must make some trade-offs,” says watershed expert Madhukar Upadhyay. “But it is a political issue and cannot be done without political consensus.” Nepal is a multi-hazard country

Nepal takes its message to the world
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

and preparedness should be its first line of defense. Identifying risk prone areas and enforcing zoning laws to build on higher ground could be a start. Adds Tenzing Choegyal Sherpa: “This is the perfect time to plan wisely and implement zoning laws taking potential hazards into account. We have to do it now when the damage is still visible and before we forget and start settling along the floodplains again.” nepalitimes.com Go online for full report.

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NATUREKNIT

Nepal takes its message to the world

Prime Minister Balendra Shah will tell the UN that Nepal's flood was a global warning

Editorial

Kunda Dixit

Prime Minister Balendra Shah is making his first foreign trip to speak at the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September, and just about everyone everywhere is giving him advice about what he should say.

Going by the content of the PM's address to the nation and social media posts since the 26 August disaster, climate justice will be right at the front and centre of his delivery. Assigning blame for the climate crisis will, no doubt, be a compelling message during the year of a super-charged El Niño. It will also add counterweight to rising climate denialism and rollback on decarbonisation by populist flat-earthers.

Nepal's annual per capita carbon footprint is 0.5 tons – only 0.1% of total global emissions. The annual per capita carbon footprint of the United States is 15 tons and is second only to China, but China has a much smaller per capita footprint. The US and other industrialised states are also responsible for historical release of carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas that stays in atmosphere for hundreds of years.

Global average temperature is already 1.5°C above the pre-industrial baseline, and a phenomenon called 'elevation-dependent warming' means the Himalaya is heating up 0.7°C faster. The average temperature on the north side of Langtang Lirung in the week preceding the rock slide was 5°C at 5,200m



PMO NEPAL

elevation – the highest ever recorded in the area.

The Bhote Kosi-Trisuli Flood was not unexpected, scientists have been warning of even worse events. This is a global warning about warming. It is not just a Nepal disaster, but presages what is coming for the planet and life on it.

For three weeks, the global media was focused on the Trisuli. Terrifying videos of the debris flow burying towns set off a wave of sympathy for Nepal, with an outpouring of humanitarian aid. But the attention span of the international media lasts only some weeks before it moves to other hotspots.

Nepal is already falling off the map, and needs to capture the moment. When Prime Minister Shah walks up to the General Assembly podium it will have been exactly a

month since the China-Nepal flood. What he says there, how he says it, and how it is received will determine whether Nepal's soft power has disproportionately more clout than the country's size and economic importance.

VICTIM CARD

It will be tempting for Nepal to play victim, and make the industrialised world guilty about historical emissions. We have the evidence and moral high ground to assign such blame. The international community will commiserate and offer platitudes, but one thing is clear -- empty empathy is not cash.

The Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment published by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) has put the cost of this disaster at \$4.7 billion. The Fund has a \$20 million disbursement cap on claims, so why extend our arms for alms from an entity that has no money?

Besides, the Fund's funders have set strict criteria for deciding what constitutes a 'climate disaster'. This is like the police asking a bruised and battered victim of a mugging to get written proof that he was mugged. Fund managers will point to geotectonic factors in the 26 August disaster, and trolls will call us 'grifters'.

Instead, let us highlight our contributions: doubling forest area to 46% in the past 30 years, most of our electricity is hydro, and 75% of new vehicles are EVs (page 5). We can say: "This is what we have done. What have you done?"

There is evidence that permafrost melting due to record high temperatures fractured the bedrock on which the ice shelf rested on Langtang. The slope collapse was only a small part of a huge mountain. Multiply Langtang by hundreds of other massifs in Nepal and southern Tibet and it is clear 26 August is a warning of even bigger Himalayan tsunamis.

Climate breakdown may have been only one factor in the Langtang rock-ice collapse, but future outburst floods from thousands of expanding glacial lakes in Nepal and China could add to the threat of even more catastrophic cascading and compounding hazards.

Nepal has only itself to blame for allowing settlements along floodplains, and locating a dozen hydropower plants on a single basin. This disaster was a wakeup call for Nepal to build back safer not just in the Trisuli Valley but also along other rivers (page 1), and to figure out how to pay for climate resilience and damage in the future (page 10-11).

Next week at the UN General Assembly, Nepal's prime minister will alert the world: look at what happened to us, it will happen to you unless we all stop pumping more greenhouse gases into the air. 🇳🇵

Kunda Dixit is the Publisher of Nepali Times and the author of Dateline Earth: Journalism As if the Planet Mattered.

Trending Online

Nepal to tourists: 'Your Visit Matters'

by Shuvani Singh
The flood in the Trisuli corridor has dealt a heavy blow to Nepal's tourism, threatening the crucial autumn trekking season. But the sector has bounced back after previous disasters. Now, Nepal is telling visitors: 'Your Visit Matters'. Full story at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

The survivors of Syaprubesi

by Garima Shrestha
Syaprubesi residents who lost their homes and livelihoods in the Rasuwa flood are being housed at Kathmandu's Yellow Monastery. But most of the survivors now have nothing left to go back to, and will need more than temporary shelter. Read the story online.

Most popular on X



How on earth to finance Nepal's disaster?

by Rastraraj Bhandari
As Nepal's leadership takes center stage in the next weeks, it should not only champion the mountain agenda and reparations, but also ask how we climate-proof our own communities against disasters that will keep coming. Read analysis on page 10-11.

Most commented

The two women of Timure

by Deependra Bajracharya
In 2004, photographer Deependra Bajracharya met Rasuwa residents Panjom and Kippa near Timure during a trek. When he heard of the Bhote Kosi flood last month, he remembered them and began to search for the women. Story and photos on the website.

Most visited online page

Letters

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The challenges facing Nepal and Iceland are vastly different in scale, but systematic observation of the cryosphere matters in both places ('Early warning about global warming', Kaede Polkinghorne #1328). In Iceland, the persistent Gunnlaugsskarð snowpatch on Mt Esja provides an unusually long local record, with historical observations extending back to the 19th century. Its survival or disappearance reflects the balance between winter accumulation, summer temperatures, and melt.

Hellnasker Hugveita

■ We will have to rewrite Himalayan history and start from the basics of disaster planning and management to prevent damage and destruction in the near future. But who will bell the cat?

Deepak Shrestha

■ Ecocide is the cause ('How on earth to finance Nepal's disaster?', Rastraraj Bhandari, page 10-11). Reckless construction of dams tunnels and roads, importation of concrete, building alongside water sources, using dynamite to impose our will upon nature.

Debrah Huber

■ Every gas guzzling and coal fired power station country in the world should pay the price for the cost of what we've done to an environmentally sustainable country ('Tallying the cost of disaster', Kaede Polkinghorne, Page 4). And then compensate every citizen for killing their loved ones.

Sarah Corrigan

FLOOD SURVIVORS

Temporary shelters are not enough ('The survivors of Syaprubesi', Garima Shrestha #1328), we should all step up

according to our abilities to help these resilient individuals rebuild.

Bari Khan

MORE TOURISTS

I was in Nepal a year ago. Beautiful people and an amazing adventure through the Tsum Valley. Not all of Nepal was impacted by the flood ('Nepal tells tourists: 'Your Visit Matters', Shuvani Singh #1328).

Jean Chesler

NEPALI CINEMA

Elephants in the Fog is worth every award it got and will be getting ('Gripping drama of transgender community', Sophia L Pande #1328).

Reeta Stecklein

■ A beautiful package, with great cinematography, plot, and a strong end. I am immensely happy to see Nepali cinema with such talent and success.

Susmita Lawati

STOLEN ARTEFACTS

Even in Upper Dolpo, many of the old monasteries are now empty, no monks, no scriptures, and no sacred sculptures ('Rescue Nepal's stolen artefacts from auctioneers', Subham Manandhar, nepalitimes.com). Over the years, precious things have been looted, and are lost. The central government is far from this remote region, and local people cannot risk their own lives.

Norbu Lama Dolpo

■ Don't let artifacts be stolen. Many Buddhist artifacts were deliberately stolen.

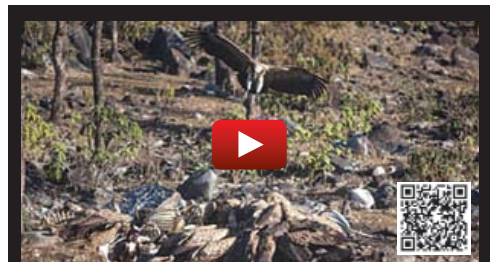
Ritu Angmo

YOUTH REVOLT

Need more research into the outside/foreign funders and provocateurs. (Damage and Loss, #1328)

Bhikshuni Lozang

Online Package



THE VULTURE RESTAURANT

A Vulture Save Feeding Site in Pokhara collects cattle carcasses from surrounding villages, leaving them out in designated sites for wild vultures to feed on. Watch video on YouTube.



SCRAPPY NEWS REPORTING

Young conservationists learnt basic photography and filmmaking, interviewed locals and edited videos on indigenous knowledge about nature conservation in Morang's Kerabari. Subscribe for multimedia content.

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PARTY TIME:

With criticism from opposition parties about inadequate response to the Bhote Kosi-Trisuli flood disaster, RSP Chair Rabi Lamichhane convened a meeting with other parties in Parliament to clarify the government's rescue and rehabilitation plans. Long-term strategy for high-risk areas were also discussed with the formation of two all-party mechanisms.



RSS

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PAINTING BY CHINESE ARTIST ZHAO JIANQIU OF BETRAWATI AND TRISULI RIVER AFTER THE 2015 EARTHQUAKE

Even gods were not spared by the flood

The very geography of the Trisuli Valley that made the region sacred is what made it vulnerable



Kulabhakteśvara Mandir at Purano Bazar.



Rāmācandra Mandira at Uttaragayā.



Rāto Matsyendranātha Mandira at Purano Bazar.

ALL PHOTOS: NHDP

Rajan Khatiwoda

Before any account of temples and shrines lost to the Rasuwa–Nuwakot flood can be written, we must say that far more than monuments were lost.

We lost neighbours, friends, and collaborators who had opened their homes and memories with us at the Nepal Heritage Documentation Project. Our teams worked closely with local families, priests, caretakers, and elders.

They shared historical photographs pulled from attics and family albums, pointed us to archives and unpublished manuscripts. They walked us through rituals and processions, explained the meaning of masks and images, and passed on mythological narrations that exist nowhere in writing — carried orally from one generation to the next.

Some of these people and their loved ones were taken away by the terrible flood. Their knowledge, voices, and very presence in this world are gone.

On a scientific level, the one consolation is that documentation now exists that may help support any future reconstruction of these cultural sites, even though it is far too early to speak of rebuilding.

CIVILISATIONAL CORRIDOR

Rasuwa and Nuwakot sit along ancient trade routes that once linked India, Nepal, and Tibet. Its cultural fabric reflects that history: predominantly Hindu, but home to Buddhist communities, with

shamanic and folk practices woven through both traditions.

The river that carried the great flood down from the mountains carried deep cultural weight of its own. Hindus cremated their dead along its banks, which is why so many temples, shrines, and gathering places cluster along the water. The very geography that made the region sacred is what made it vulnerable.

It is easy to think of heritage as something static: old stone, old wood, old paint, catalogued and admired. In Rasuwa and Nuwakot, as across much of Nepal, this could not be further from the truth. The temples that lined these valleys were not museums, they were, and are, houses of deities — dwellings where gods and goddesses are worshipped daily through offerings, lamps, songs, and processions that structure life's rhythms.

The ghat along the rivers are where protective deities are believed to protect towns and villages around them. This is where the dead are sent onward through rites that have been performed in largely unbroken form for centuries.

To lose a ghat or a shrine in a flood is not just structural, it means losing the physical anchor of a community's relationship with its gods, its ancestors, and its dead.

This is why heritage in this part of the world, is also a method of caring for people in trauma. In the aftermath of disaster, the resumption of ritual life — lighting a lamp at the accustomed hour, carrying a deity in procession

along its original route, performing the rites owed to the dead — offers a small but real measure of reassurance.

It means: 'something of what we knew still holds'. Many death rituals central to grieving in this region are themselves tied to specific monuments, ghat and shrines. When those places are swept away, the rituals that depend on them are left without a home at precisely the moment communities need them most.

In Nepali households, private deities are venerated daily and treated almost like family members. And when the flood left bodies unrecoverable, families in the region asked whether an effigy woven from sacred grass could stand in for the missing dead at the funeral pyre, so that the departed could still be released into their next state.

It is a small ritual imposture, but a telling one: proof that even when the physical anchors of mourning are gone, communities find ways to keep the rites moving forward. I also recall the account of a man who survived nine days trapped in a collapsed tunnel by reciting mantra without pause — a reminder of how deeply religious practice runs through the way people in this region endure catastrophe, not only mourn it.

LOST HISTORY

The Nepal Heritage Documentation Project had documented more than 80 temples, shrines, and cremation sites along the river. Of these, 21 were completely destroyed by the flood. Many more stand damaged, their foundations undercut, their

courtyards buried under silt and debris.

The Rasuwa–Nuwakot documentation is part of a larger effort that followed the 2015 earthquake and backed for eight years by the UK-based Arcadia, in coordination with UNESCO. The Nepal Heritage Documentation Project run jointly by Heidelberg University, in cooperation with the Department of Archaeology and the Saraf Foundation documented more than 2,000 monuments across Nepal in response to earthquake risk, but some of them are now lost due to a flood catastrophe attributed to climate change.

In cooperation with the Department of Archaeology and the Saraf Foundation, the Nepal Heritage Documentation Project had already prepared detailed field documentation of the condition and intangible heritage of the area. It is now the only surviving record of much of what stood there.

The Nuwakot Museum has already begun planning to match recovered objects — statues, ritual items, fragments carried far from where they once stood — back to their original sites. It is delicate, deliberate work, carried out jointly with the museum and the Department of Archaeology.

It was made possible because the project's database holds not only dates and photographs but also records of the religious practices, cult groups, and living traditions tied to each site. In much the same way that recovered bodies are being matched against the missing, recovered fragments of heritage are now being matched against a record

of what once stood. The two parallel efforts, are racing against loss.

When the time for rebuilding does come, this detailed documentation will be indispensable. It will help identify where each site once stood, where each deity was housed, and where other artefacts — images, ritual objects, inscriptions — that were swept away by the flood may be traced or, if recovered, correctly returned to their place and context.

What has happened in Rasuwa and Nuwakot is, among other things, a stark argument for more comprehensive heritage documentation across Nepal — not as an academic exercise, but as an act of care for future generations.

History, recorded with sufficient care and detail, serves as memory for the future's own making: for the communities who will one day rebuild, for the children who will grow up asking what once stood where, and for a country whose sense of itself is woven through with sites like these.

The flood that struck Rasuwa and Nuwakot took lives that can never be replaced, and it took places that will now exist chiefly in memory, in photographs, and in the field notes of projects like this one.

Both losses deserve to be memorialised. Both are reasons enough to keep documenting carefully, patiently, and in close partnership with the communities whose heritage it truly is. 🇳🇵

Rajan Khatiwoda is co-director of the Nepal Heritage Documentation Project at Heidelberg University in cooperation with the Department of Archaeology, Nepal, and the Saraf Foundation.

Tallying the cost of disaster

Economic cost of recovery is put at \$4.7 billion, most of it in destroyed hydropower projects

Kaede Polkinghorne

Building back from the floods on 26 August will cost Nepal \$4.7 billion, according to a Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment published by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA). Hydropower plants took the greatest financial hit at about \$1 billion – more than five times the total infrastructure loss of the 2015 earthquake.

The assessment consolidates damage into four sectors, with recommendations for how Nepal should build back both today and longer-term. While many recommendations are open-ended, early recovery activities are focused on restoring access, maintaining essential services, and enabling livelihoods to resume.

Infrastructure will be the costliest sector to rebuild by far, accounting for about 65% of NDRRMA’s overall estimate at \$2.6 billion. Nepal’s energy and grid system alone suffered just under \$1 billion in damage and loss, and includes damage to 13 hydropower projects and five solar plants with a cumulative capacity of about 783MW – about 20% of Nepal’s pre-disaster generation capacity.

Early recovery activities for the energy and grid system include restoring transmission lines and substations and undertaking micro-hydropower rehabilitation. In the longer term, the government will seek to restore damaged assets. The extent of the damage to headworks, penstock, tailrace

tunnels, and powerhouses in the hydropower plants has not been minutely assessed, and will likely add to actual long-term recovery costs.

The assessment highlights the importance of looking at the Bhotekosi-Trishuli-Narayani corridor as a connected system – and one that will continue to be impacted by global warming. Accordingly, disaster and climate risk mitigation is another costly line item, accounting for about 13% of the overall estimate.

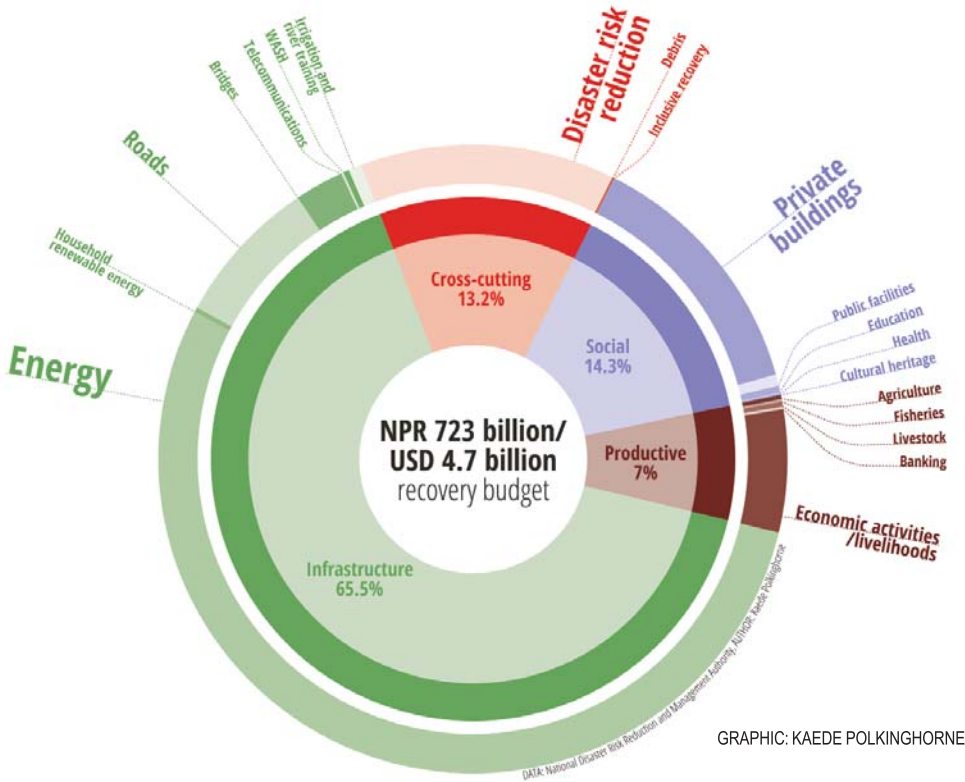
Developing a multi-hazard early warning system within the next six months is a risk mitigation priority. While NDRRMA notes that 679,295 early-warning SMS messages

were disseminated through Nepal Telecom and Ncell to populations in identified downstream risk areas, the assessment recommends further examination to determine how effective these warnings were and to inform the proposed early-warning system’s development.

RISK REDUCTION
A series of general categories for risk reduction projects are also proposed: river management and settlement protection, high bank erosion and landslide protection, waterway clearance and associated filling, command-area development, and irrigation system restoration. River management and settlement protection is the most

financially significant category for recommended risk reduction projects by far, but what the projects in this category will look like is yet to be determined. Restoring roads and private buildings and re-establishing stable economic activity are other line items in the cost estimate. There was damage to 18 schools impacting 9,000 students, seven health facilities, but repairing public buildings will cost a fraction of the budget at under \$50 million. However, these smaller ticket items represent some of the most urgent early recovery areas, as they will make a big difference for the estimated 32,963 people that the RDNA estimates were impacted by

the flood. At present, 3,685 people are spread across 37 holding centres in Nuwakot, Rasuwa, and Dhading. More than half of all impacted households were in Nuwakot, and holding centres are also concentrated in the district. Infrastructure Minister Sunil Lamsal said resettlement will take two years, although the government is working to relocate people from holding centres to temporary accommodations. Further analysis is needed to fill data gaps, especially around housing and road conditions. Till Tuesday, 1,386 bodies were recovered, 104 handed over, and 5,130 people are still missing. 🇳🇵



NDRRMA

BRIEFS



Marriott relief
Aloft by Marriott Kathmandu Thamel has contributed Rs.1.5 million to the Prime Minister’s Disaster Relief Fund, with contributions from both associates and the hotel to support communities affected by the 26 August floods. The team also donated relief material worth Rs300,000. The French government also donated in-kind items like solar lamps, medicine and hygiene kits, and other items to the NDRRMA. France said it will contribute cash to the UN relief fund.

Ambassador list
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has finalised its list of candidates for ambassadors for 21 out of the 22 vacant diplomatic missions. However, Prime Minister Balendra Shah and RSP chair Rabi Lamichhane are reportedly yet to agree on some names.



Pokhara calling
The Centara Collection’s Himalayan Hideaway Resort in Pokhara hosted Indian travel and media professionals on a three-night, four-day familiarisation trip on 10 September as part of the resort’s wider push to connect India’s travel trade with the destination under the #NepalCalling initiative.



Power import
India has raised daily export of up to 654MW of electricity to Nepal for 18 hours per day to offset energy requirements in the aftermath of the 26 August Bhoté Kosi-Trisuli flood that damaged a dozen power projects.



Tiger sanctuary
A 50-hectare tiger sanctuary is planned at Devnagar in Chitwan National Park’s buffer zone to house problem tigers in a natural setting. The sanctuary will accommodate up to 20 tigers and is also expected to create opportunities for ecotourism.

Maternity Bill
The Ministry for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs has drafted an amendment to the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act, 2018 that guarantees at least six months of paid maternity leave for mothers and up to 42 days of paid paternity leave for fathers. The Ministry plans to send the amendment Bill to the Cabinet before it is presented before Parliament.

Mustang conference
The two-day Gharpajhong Climate Conference began Tuesday in Mustang, drawing over 2,000 guests and representatives from 431 local governments. The event gives local governments a platform to raise climate change concerns.

EV registration
The government reopened registrations for public vehicles this week after keeping the process suspended for nearly four months. Electric public passenger vehicles will be given priority outside the valley, while new approvals within the valley will still remain limited.

Prithvi Highway
The landslides on the Prithvi Highway that had blocked the main highway artery to Kathmandu for nearly 18 days has now been opened. The blockage had created shortages of cooking gas, and inflation of food and vegetable items in Kathmandu.

FlyDubai to PHH
FlyDubai will inaugurate its direct Pokhara-Dubai connection from 23 September, lifting hopes of a tourism revival in the city that has suffered from a slump after last year’s unrest and last month’s flood disaster. The daily flights will be operated with Airbus 319 and 320 aircraft with the arrival at 6:15pm and departure at 7:30pm. Pokhara airport was inaugurated nearly four years ago, but has seen only sporadic international flights. Himalaya airlines that operated a direct flight to Lhasa has suspended the route. Sichuan Airlines has also stopped its charter flights to Kunming.



The airport is expected to also cater to Nepali diaspora traffic so passengers from central Nepal do not have to fly in and out of Kathmandu anymore.

Glacier melting is black and white

Reducing air pollution is the fastest way to help protect the Himalayan icecap

Smaranika Shakya

The accelerated melting of Himalayan glaciers is mainly caused by global warming due to the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. But a new study has confirmed that air pollution deposits also melt the icecap by making it darker.

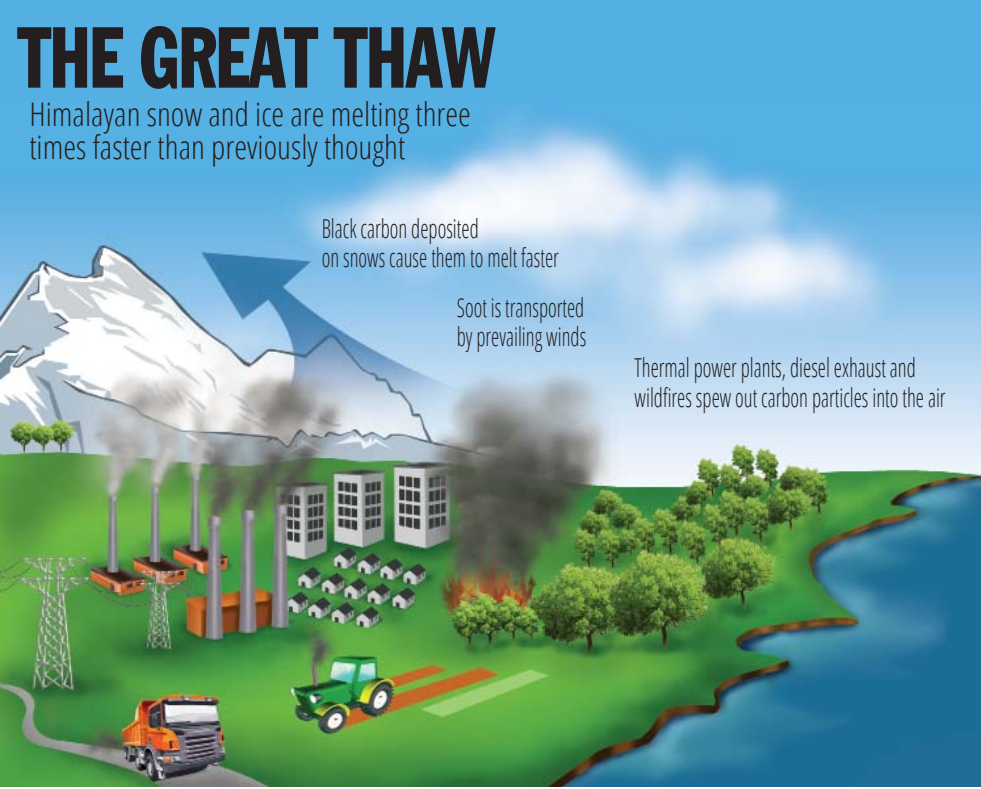
The two phenomena work in different ways. While the buildup of greenhouses gases due to fossil fuel burning traps solar radiation and raises global surface temperatures, soot particles make snow and ice absorb more sunlight and cause additional melting.

Record high temperatures led to the ice-rock avalanche on the north face of Langtang Lirung on 26 August that unleashed the catastrophic flood downstream.

The Air Quality and Climate Bulletin of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released this month shows that ‘black carbon’ from air pollution accelerates melting when deposited on snow or ice surfaces.

Aerosols like soot particles are carried by prevailing winds across oceans and continents, and lifted by terrain onto glaciers.

A previous study by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) on Yala Glacier in the Langtang region showed that India and Nepal together contributed 69% of atmospheric black carbon over the central Himalaya.



The sooty deposits contributed 39% of Yala Glacier melting in the pre-monsoon season.

Though microscopic, soot is one of the greatest enhancers of glacial destabilisation, and the WMO warns of a vicious climate cycle: a warming climate increases wildfires and sand storms, which adds more suspended ash and dust that are then deposited on mountains, accelerating glacial melting.

Scientists are hesitant to

pinpoint exactly how much of the glacier collapse on Langtang last month was due to black carbon, and say it will need measurements.

“Avalanches are often driven by a mix of thermal thawing, internal glacier instability, and structural weakness rather than a singular factor, so it is difficult to establish a causal relationship. But black carbon undeniably plays a role in it,” explains air quality expert Parth Sarathi Mahapatra at

ICIMOD.

Black carbon is fine particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}) made from incomplete combustion of diesel and coal from vehicles and industries, firewood or farm residue burning. Technically, it is called a ‘short-lived climate pollutant’ that stays in the atmosphere for a week or so only, while CO₂ gas can remain in the air for hundreds of years.

Besides making glaciers melt more rapidly by reducing their albedo reflectivity, black carbon also has 1,500 times more warming impact than CO₂.

“In general, the presence of black carbon in the atmosphere can significantly enhance solar heating by up to 50%,” says Abhishek Kumar Upadhyay from ICIMOD.

Glacial melting exposes bare rocks, which are darker and lead to more ice and permafrost thawing. The ice structure and the bedrock itself gradually weakens and can collapse like it did on Langtang last month and other Himalayan peaks in recent years.

Scientists have confirmed that the deadly debris flood that swept across China and Nepal on 26 August originated as an ice-rock avalanche on the northern slope of the Langtang Lirung.

WMO has also launched the Atmospheric Deposition Initiative (WADI) to produce detailed global maps of total deposition of major atmospheric pollutants, using satellite and surface measurement.

REGIONAL RESPONSE

“The transboundary nature of black carbon needs coordinated regional response due to its interconnected impact on health, climate, and water resources,” says Ashish Tiwari at ICIMOD.

Cleaner brick kilns and vehicle emissions and curbing wildfires can reduce black carbon buildup in South Asia. Household fires account for nearly half of black carbon emissions globally, and clean energy for cooking, heating, lighting and transportation can lower total soot emissions.

Says glaciologist Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa: “We cannot pinpoint exactly how much of the glacial slide can be attributed to black carbon specifically because it is difficult to disentangle individual sources of glacial melt without measuring deposition.”

But even while scientists try to find the exact causes of the Langtang slope collapse, there is proof that black carbon is a culprit, and reducing air pollution can slow glacier melting and global warming. 🇨🇳



TOYOTA

HELLO HYBRID HELLO FUTURE

■

WHAT IS A HYBRID VEHICLE?

Hybrid electric vehicle is a system that uses two different kinds of power sources, one being the traditional internal combustion engines or ICEs and an electric motor combined with batteries.

The combination uses the best of both worlds, giving it a longer range than an ICE and the sustainability benefits that electric vehicles offers.





RAV4

How Ghunsa tragedy was turned into triumph

In memory of Nepal’s top conservationists killed in a helicopter crash 20 years ago this week

Sudiksha Tuladhar

On 23 September 2006, a helicopter carrying many of Nepal’s foremost conservationists, along with diplomats, politicians, journalists and crew crashed in Ghunsa of Taplejung district. None of the 24 on board survived when the aircraft hit a mountain during a monsoon storm. The 29 September 2006 edition of this newspaper carried a front page tribute with only one word: VOID.

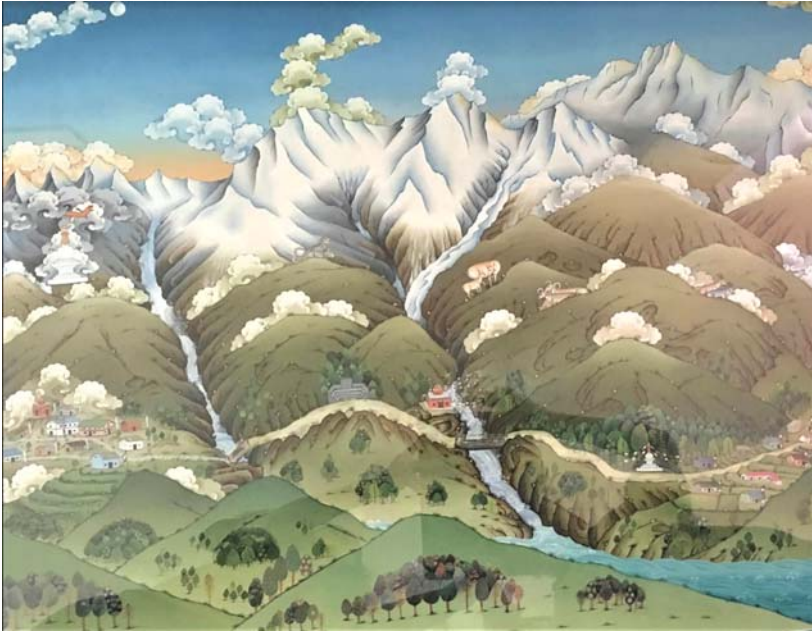
Among those on board were WWF Nepal’s Chandra Prasad Gurung who helped design the concept of ‘conservation areas’ instead of ‘national parks’ in Nepal.

Mingma Norbu Sherpa headed the WWF’s Eastern Himalayas Program based in Bhutan, a Nepali who had won international recognition for empowering communities to own nature conservation initiatives.

Harka Gurung was Nepal’s veteran geographer, author and as the foremost authority on the Himalaya advised many governments on ecotourism. He was also in charge of naming many of Nepal’s unnamed peaks.

Tirtha Man Maskey was four-time director general of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and was widely credited with the early success in curbing poaching of tigers and rhinos at Chitwan National Park.

Among the other internationals on board were Pauli Mustonen the Charge d’Affaires of the Finland Embassy in Kathmandu, USAID Nepal deputy director



MEMORIAL THANGKA: A traditional painting that honours the conservation heroes who died, showing Kangchenjunga, Ghunsa and tail of the helicopter that crashed.

Margaret Alexander, Jillian Bowling Schlaepfer and Jennifer Headley of WWF-UK.

The team had been returning after handing over the management of Kangchenjunga Conservation Area from the government to local communities the day before. The narrow valley at Ghunsa was covered in late monsoon clouds, and it was raining heavily.

Reports said the Russian pilots of the MI-8 helicopter were under pressure from officials who were in a hurry to get back to Kathmandu for a meeting. First reports said the helicopter was missing, but a day later everyone’s worst fears came true.

“There was a sense of horror and anguish in the conservation community,” recalls Lisa Choegyal, New Zealand’s honorary consul in Nepal. “It was difficult to believe.”

This week marks two decades

since the tragedy. In the weeks and months after the crash, there were fears about whether Nepal’s conservation institutions could recover from this loss.

“Many said WWF Nepal would be weakened and unable to function properly. But we turned our grief into strength and moved forward,” says WWF Nepal country director Ghana Gurung, who was supposed to be on the helicopter but had to give his seat to someone else.

That resolve is reflected in the progress the conservation sector has made in the years since the crash as Nepal’s environmental movement strived to build on the legacy that their fallen colleagues were committed to. Nepal’s forest cover has reached 46%, tiger numbers have crossed 400, and wildlife poaching, especially of rhinos, has fallen sharply.

Nepal’s tiger population stands

at 429 this year, up from 121 in 2010. The rhino population increased from 645 in 2015 to 752, while snow leopard research and conservation have also expanded. Nepal now holds the fourth-largest snow leopard population among the species’ 12 range states. These are all apex species, and protecting them protects their ecosystem.

Gurung says these gains are the result of sustained cooperation across communities and institutions: “We have reached significant milestones in conserving biodiversity through the collective efforts of local youth, authorities, Nepal Police and the Nepali Army.”

FELLOWSHIPS

But perhaps the most enduring legacy of Ghunsa has been the opportunity for a whole new generation of young Nepali conservationists to get higher education abroad in the theory and practice of safeguarding people’s livelihoods to protect nature.

In the aftermath of the tragedy, five scholarships were created in memory of those who died: the Chandra Gurung Memorial Fellowship, Nepal Conservation Memorial Scholarship, Mingma Norbu Memorial Scholarship, Jennifer Headley Memorial Scholarship, and Jillian Bowling

Schlaepfer Memorial Scholarship.

These programs have facilitated students from Nepal’s diverse communities access to undergraduate and postgraduate study in Nepal and abroad, offering training, exposure and a chance to build professional skills for students who might otherwise have viewed higher education as unattainable.

The Mingma Norbu Memorial Scholarship, for instance, enables students to pursue a master’s degree at Lincoln University in New Zealand, where Sherpa himself once studied under a scholarship set up by Edmund Hillary. Two students are selected for the award every two years ever since 2006.

“I had a great experience to learn about natural resources, biodiversity and conservation,” says Sonam Tashi Lama, who is now with the Red Panda Network in Taplejung. “The scholarship helped me fill the gap in my learning.”

Since its inception, more than 200 students from Nepal’s rural and underserved communities and mostly women, have received assistance across the scholarship categories and completed undergraduate or postgraduate studies.

“The Nepali students have a good reputation, they are good at stepping up, organising themselves and making



How South Asia's vultures were resc

Raptor conservationist says birds of prey serve an important ecological function

Ramesh Bhushal

Munir Virani is a conservation biologist and filmmaker who has dedicated his life to protecting birds of prey. Born in Kenya and now based in Abu Dhabi with the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, Virani played a key role in uncovering why South Asia’s vulture population had collapsed. He is a Whitley Award winner and a featured TED speaker, known for his work on tackling major threats to raptors worldwide. Excerpts from journalist Ramesh Bhushal’s recent interview with him:



Ramesh Bhushal: What are birds of prey?
Munir Virani: These are birds that have very sharp bills, hooked talons, and forward-facing eyes.

They are really the tigers, leopards, and lions of the sky. They’re predators. Out of about 10,000 species of birds globally, raptors or birds of prey make up about

5%—around 560 species across the globe.

What brought you to Nepal?

I must have been about five, sitting in my grandfather’s living room watching an old black-and-white TV set. I remember listening to the voice of David Attenborough; people were sitting on an elephant, radio-tracking tigers, and you could see the mountains in the back. I told myself I will make it to Nepal.

I completed my doctorate studies in 1999 and two weeks after I got married, my boss phoned me to go to India for the Peregrine Fund. Vulture numbers had gone down by 95%. Having seen that documentary when I was five, I saw my chance to go to Nepal. I traveled by road from West Bengal and took a 16-hour bus journey to Kathmandu from the border. My job was to find partners in Nepal to set up field and diagnostic studies to understand what was causing the vultures to die.

How did you find what was causing the vultures to die?



This was a complete team effort involving the Peregrine Fund, my job was a fact-finding mission.

Three species—the Oriental white-rumped, Indian long-billed, and slender-billed vultures had collapsed, though there were still a few down in the Tarai. To



the most of the opportunities provided to them,” says Choegyal.

Beyond financial support, the scholarship provides international exposure and allows students to examine biodiversity and conservation from global perspectives. Nepal has benefited when graduates bring home academic knowledge and research experience, while New Zealand learns from Nepal’s experience in community-based conservation.

These efforts have aimed to build awareness, expertise and commitment needed to sustain conservation work and pass it to future generations. WWF Nepal has also sought to bridge the generational gap through school eco-clubs and support for undergraduate and postgraduate education.

“The scholarships have helped nurture the next generation of

conservationists by enabling them to develop technical expertise and skills, and apply them in jobs in conservation areas in Nepal,” says Gurung.

There are two memorials in Kathmandu and Taplejung for those who perished 20 years ago. Choegyal says the memorials are not just reminders of those who died but they also reflect how far Nepal’s conservation sector has come since the tragedy.

“I thought the crash was the end for Nepal and conservation. But we were proved wrong,” she says. “Nepal is now far ahead in areas including tourism and community forestry.”

But while that progress offers grounds for optimism, it does not lessen the scale of the work still ahead. Conservation, as well as building a pool of expertise, has become increasingly important as conservation faces pressures from climate change, unchecked and unregulated development, and human-wildlife conflict.

The Bhote Kosi-Trisuli flood disaster is also a stark reminder that development has to go hand-in-hand with conservation, and that we ignore nature at our own peril. Building on those gains in the aftermath of Ghunsa will require sound policy, long-term planning, public investment and leadership from qualified professionals and officials.

Just as importantly, the next phase will depend on strengthening coexistence between people and wildlife. As development expands, conservation measures and wildlife-sensitive infrastructure will need to keep pace.

Says WWF’s Ghana Gurung: “There is a need for coexistence between humans and wildlife. For that, nature-based solutions that take people’s livelihoods into account is the number one answer.” 🇳🇵

MEMORIALS

Ghunsa’s legacy is marked not just with conservation scholarships, but also in stone. There is a memorial in Taplejung with the statues of the 24 who died (below) with a service held every year on 23 September.

There is also a Conservationist Memorial Statue Park at Ramkot in Nagarjun Municipality on the western rim of Kathmandu Valley (left). This memorial with cement likeness of the conservation heros was built by the Ministry of Urban Development, but it is dilapidated, overgrown with vegetation, and in a sad state.

While some statues still bear the names of those they commemorate, on others, the names have faded or disappeared.



SUDIKSHA TULADHAR



KUNDA DIXIT

scued from the brink of extinction



KUNDA DIXIT

understand the cause, we needed fresh tissue samples stored in liquid nitrogen to send to labs in the United States. We worked with virologist Lindsay Oaks at Washington State University, who unfortunately passed away later.

Was it tough to take genetic material out of these countries?

It was a very tough. That’s where Pakistan came in. India and Nepal have very strict laws against exporting DNA material, We did start programs in both countries. We worked with Bird Conservation Nepal at Kosi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, where a student monitored nests from 2000 to 2002 and saw a catastrophic drop.

We succeeded in Pakistan, partnering with the Ornithological Society of Pakistan. Thousands of vultures were still there, which was baffling, but we were also finding many dead birds. We had students monitoring 1,800 nests across the country. We got permission to export tissue samples to the US.

What did you find?

We looked at their diet —livestock carcasses and wanted to find what was causing kidney failure in vultures. When you opened a dead bird, internal organs were covered in a white chalky paste of uric acid. Diclofenac stood out. When Lindsay tested four samples, all

four were positive. We nailed it in 2003 after four years of work.

You went back to Pokhara recently. What did you see after 23 years?

One of my former students Tulsi Subedi is now a leading raptor expert and runs a site 45 minutes outside Pokhara called Thulakharka. It’s one of the best locations to observe migratory raptors coming from the north toward India. It was extremely nostalgic to see white-rumped and red-headed vultures back in the skies again. Twenty-six years ago, you couldn’t have seen them.

Ten million birds are electrocuted on power lines every year. Forget about other causes, how do we deal with this?

There is a huge demand for energy, including renewables like wind, solar, and hydro. While electricity is necessary, the issue lies in how the distribution networks are constructed. Old power lines used wooden poles with T-frames and insulators, which were 100% safe. Now, wooden poles are being

replaced with cheap concrete ones containing steel rebar and metal cross-arms. Everything is exposed.

In big grasslands like Mongolia, raptors sit on power poles to hunt rodents. When they land on these power lines, they touch two phases or a phase to ground, complete the circuit, and get zapped. Every three seconds, a bird dies of electrocution globally because power poles are being put up without proper design.

Is it expensive to fix them?

I’ll give you the example of our work in Mongolia where power lines were killing 18,000 birds of prey every year, including 4,000 Saker falcons. The UAE invested in local partnerships with the Mongolia Bird Conservation Center, and since 2019, we have insulated 27,000 poles covering 3,000km of lines across 80% of the country. It costs roughly \$40 per pole, so it’s a very doable fix that should be scaled up globally.

Do people take birds for granted?

Historically, people shot birds of prey in places like the UK

and US before awareness grew. It comes down to education about the ecosystem services birds provide. For instance, the crash of vultures in India led to an estimated half a million human deaths because the disappearance of vultures allowed feral dog populations to surge, spiking rabies cases. India was spending \$1.5 billion annually treating rabies, a service vultures previously provided for free.

We live in a complex age with economic, political, and daily struggles. In India, for example, young researchers are studying dusky eagle owls, vultures, mountain hawk eagles. Nepal needs to inspire this young generation.

How can citizens help?

Take a pair of binoculars and get out of your home. You will never regret it, and it will make you a better person. Get in touch with local bird organisations and volunteer. Giving up cricket to pursue bird conservation completely changed my life, and I have no regrets. You don’t necessarily have to do research just enjoy looking up at the sky.



Events



Lakhanchuli Waterfall Hike

Take a breath of fresh air and enjoy scenic views along the trails of Lakhanchuli this weekend.
19 September, Rs1,000, 6:40am, Brikuti Mandap

A Killer View

Catch shows of Satish Prasai's play A Killer View at Kausi Theatre. Call to book tickets.
Till 10 October, 5:30pm except Tuesdays & two shows on Saturdays, Kausi Theatre, Teku, 9861317144 / 9813492990



Painting Workshop

Dipesh Nepali and Marcel Wissing will be teaching beginners the basics of acrylic painting at this workshop.
19-20 September, Rs1,500,10am-1pm,Patan Darbar Square

Rebuild and Restore

An evening of fun music, games, and other activities, the proceeds of which will go towards providing relief for communities affected by the flood.
19 September, Rs500 onwards, 1pm, Winstons Speakeasy, Sanepa

Flood Relief Run

Join this 10K run that is raising money for survivors of the recent floods. All funds collected will be donated to the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund. For more details, follow @trailmandunepal on Instagram.
19 September, 6am, Swayambhu Ringroad



Vajra Market

A wide range of delicacies and organic produce are available at the Vajra Market. The pet-friendly market also has art and craft and painting stalls. Support local businesses.
Every Saturday, 9am-2pm, Hotel Vajra, Swayambhu

Eternal Harmony

Experience culture and divinity through the eyes of artist Sabita Dongol, whose exhibition Eternal Harmony explores the relationship of Radha and Krishna. Ten per cent of the sales will be donated to the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund.
Until 4 October, 11am-7pm, Gallery 108, Darbar Marg



Music

Nepathya Live

Make your evening memorable and watch Nepathya perform many of their enduring hits.
10 October, Laboratory School Ground, Kirtipur

Simma Rai

Groove to the tunes of Simma Rai as she sings some of her all-time popular songs.
19 September, Moksh, Jhamsikhel



Samir Shrestha

Samir Shrestha is set to perform some of his crowd-pleasers for the dance floor. Put your dancing shoes on.
18 September, Rs1,000, Club Platinum, Kathmandu

Shabdakiri Saajh

Join with friends for a mesmerising evening filled with poetry and ghazal.
19 September, 4pm, Taragaon Next, Boudha



Mark Band

Mark Band will be performing some favourites at Hard Rock Cafe this weekend.
18 September, 6:30pm-9pm, Hard Rock Café, Darbar Marg



Getaway



Meghauli Serai

This luxurious safari lodge at the heart of Chitwan National Park overlooks the Rapti river, and not only offers scenic views but accommodations that integrate local culture and art.
Chitwan National Park, 9851218500

The Pavilions Himalayas

Luxury boutique eco resort with boutique villas, swimming pool, organic farm, restaurant lounge and bar. For refreshing morning walks, therapeutic and relaxing days-in, authentic gastronomical experience and quiet nights.
Chisapani, Pokhara, 9856025997



The Famous Farm

The three-storey boutique hotel is Nuwakot's best kept secret. The traditional architecture and rich cultural history will take you back to a time beyond our own.
Kuwapani, Nuwakot (010) 413044

Lapsi Tree Resort

Escape the noise of the valley and experience a serene, peaceful stay at Lapsi Tree with delicious food, comfortable rooms and a mesmerising view.
Danda Gaun Marg, 9761797014

Gokarna Forest Resort

The resort is a paradise, thick with century old trees rustling out natural tunes, great restaurants for fine dining, and an expansive golf course.
Gokarna (01) 4450002



Dining

Bricks Café

A multi cuisine restaurant in the heart of Kathmandu offering flavourful dishes in a pleasant surrounding. Their lasagna is a must-try.
Kupondole (01) 5181156

The Workshop Eatery

Indulge in an assortment of doughnuts, fries and burgers. The Nutella Doughnut and the Workshop BBQ Chicken Burger are a must.
Jhamsikhel, 9860431504



Gangnam Galbi Barbeque

At Gangnam Galbi, get Korean barbecue, grill and stick food, and galbi roasted in charcoal at high level of heat to add more softness, different flavor and scent to meat.
Lal Colony Marg, Naxal (01) 4434780

Tip Top

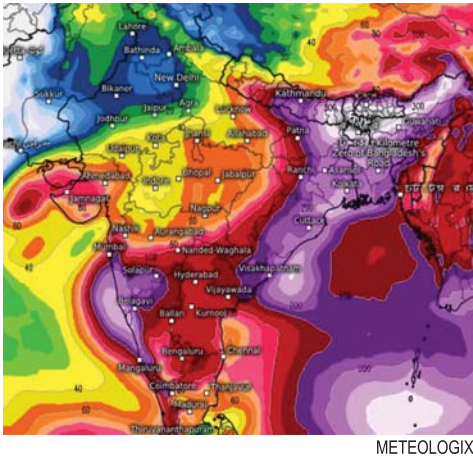
In the mood for Indian? Enjoy sweets, South Indian cuisines and other meals at Tip Top. The Chola Bhatura is a must-have.
New Road (01) 4240470



Le Sherpa

With a focus on seasonal and local vegetables and fruits, the chef creates a seasonal menu that delights the appetite. Try the Grilled Chicken Leg with Morel Mushroom.
Maharajganj, 9801159480

Weekend Weather

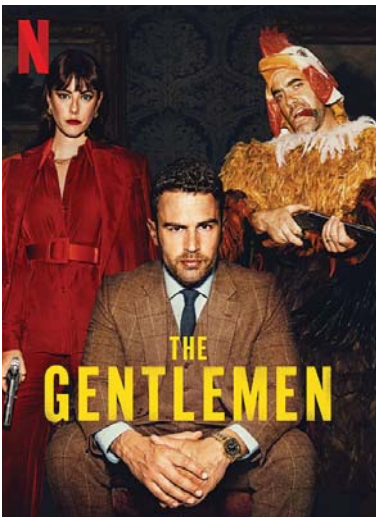


Not over yet

The monsoon is winding down, and total precipitation will fall with more autumn-like weather. However, experience from the past few years shows that the most devastating floods and landslides from saturated top soils can still happen. Localised but violent cloudbursts can still occur. A low-pressure circulation is in the Bay of Bengal and an anti-cyclone is over northwest India. We need to watch their progress till end-September.



Our Pick



In Guy Ritche's series The Gentlemen, Eddie Horniman finds himself the brand new bearer of the title of Duke following the death of his father. As he steps into his new duties, he finds that his father had partnered with a weed-growing crime syndicate to sustain his family's crumbling estate, a relationship that Eddie must now reluctantly continue. Try as he might to end the partnership, he soon comes to realise that the new business associates he has found himself with might not be going anywhere. Stars Theo James, Kaya Scodelario, Daniel Ings, Vinne Jones, Ray Winstone, and Giancarlo Esposito.

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 चिड्छा 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 ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

Price war and flood cloud EV market

Battery-powered cars are cheaper, but journeys are more uncertain and expensive



DRIVE LINE

Arnav Upadhyay

The Rasuwagadi checkpoint that was damaged in last year's flood had just resumed being the main entry point for EV imports from China when it was hit by the massive debris flow on 26 August.

There is no count of the cars and vans that got washed off the road from the border down the Pasang Lhamu Highway that day.

Before the disaster struck, Kathmandu saw two back-to-back auto shows, the NAIMA and NADA fairs. They showcased an unprecedented number of electric vehicles across the two-, three-, four-wheeler and commercial segments.

If there was one unofficial slogan to emerge from the auto shows, it was: get more cars, pay less. In fact, there has never been a better time to buy a car in Nepal, or switch from an older model to a new one. Even now, with a range of alternatives at each and every price point, customers can easily get overwhelmed by what exactly to pick.

Things have evolved since my column in this space a year ago, which reported that Nepal's EV market was peaking. It still is, but what is also cresting is a price war.

The headlines in China among its many EV manufacturers have now buffeted the Nepal market with aggressive pricing and offers for the customer base here.

COMPETITIVE PRICING

Some examples of EVs that really disrupted the current market price mechanisms were: the Nammi Box, Nammi Vigo and the Deepal Nevo Q05. The hatch-back sized Nammi Box saw a Rs100,000 price reduction from its previous entry point of Rs3.099 million, whereas the Nammi Vigo compact SUV dropped to an eye-catching Rs3.799 million with the removal of minor



Jaecoo EVs being ferried to Kathmandu from Mustang after the Rasuwagadi checkpoint was destroyed last month.

SHIVA BARAL



Chinese EVs parked in Jomsom after entering Nepal via Korala in Mustang.

SUSHILBABU THAKALI

features like a panoramic moonroof.

The Deepal Nevo Q05, on the other hand, might be marginally smaller than its bigger brother, the S05, but launched with an introductory offer of Rs4.699 million.

Soon enough, bigger players

also announced price reductions and feature updates, such as BYD dropping the price of the highly sought after Atto 2 model from Rs4.899 million to Rs4.595 million, with the caveat that it has a smaller battery pack.

Similarly, the new Cherry QQ3,

a crossover hatchback, launched at yet another aggressive introductory price of Rs3.099 million found itself undercutting another recently launched similar sized vehicle, the Proton Emas5, by just a couple of hundred rupees.

The mid-size SUV segment also saw price reductions such as with the Jaecoo J5 that was being offered at Rs4.799 million with a smaller battery configuration. The J5 was first launched at last year's NAIMA Expo at Rs6.099 million. Similarly, Leapmotor decreased the price of its recently launched B03X from Rs4.699 million to Rs4.499 million, keeping up the competition.

Larger premium vehicles EVs were not exempt from this wave. BYD launched an updated Sealion 7 with a bigger 150 kW motor (previously capped at 99 kW due to

tax brackets) at Rs9.3 million and the Leapmotor C10 now sells for Rs7.599 million.

The price war meant that customers could quickly move up in segment size, features and range if they were willing to shell out a couple of extra lakhs as the hefty price tag between segments blurred.

But all this battle for the buyer also poses one great question: what about after-sales? The recent death of a driver in Bharatpur after his EV caught fire has put a spotlight on maintenance and safety.

EV's, unlike traditional ICEs, cannot be serviced and maintained just anywhere. The cost of keeping and maintaining inventory of spare parts and of skilled workers is high. The question is, will importers keep their promise or falter down the line?

After the floods, deliveries to customers who booked their vehicles at the auto shows have faced delays because the vehicles have been rerouted through the longer Korala checkpoint in Mustang.

This border point remains relatively underdeveloped and its ability to absorb a sudden diversion of containers and commercial traffic is uncertain. Even so, nearly 700 Chinese EVs have entered Nepal through Korala since 26 August.

Even the EVs coming in from Korala and the vehicles imported from the Indian border are affected by the two-week landslide breach on the Prithvi Highway.

For importers, such uncertainties are likely to translate into longer transit times, more complicated logistics, and ultimately higher costs against the backdrop of price wars. How much of that burden will eventually hit consumers remains unclear.

With key trade routes still vulnerable to late-monsoon highway disruptions, the risks to both supply and pricing are becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. 🇳🇵

Arnav Upadhyay reviews automobiles and promotes road safety under the handle Casually Annoyed Driver on Youtube, Tiktok and Instagram, and this monthly column Drive Line in Nepali Times.

Experience Luxury

SILK Finish







How on earth to pay for c

The question is not whether there will be more climate impacts. It is how we will finance resilience, pay for damage.

Rastraraj Bhandari

In 2016, just after the Paris Agreement, I attended a bankers' conference in Sydney. The CEOs highlighted the shortage of high-quality climate projects that could also generate a return.

That encounter complicated my activist view that the problem was simply wealthy countries refusing to pay. Finance existed, but the structures for moving it into viable projects often did not.

Ten years later, the conversation has changed little. Developed countries still reduce public finance even as developing countries bear the brunt of climate impact. Oil and gas companies invoke energy security and poverty.

Financiers see a lack of bankable projects, local developers complain that they cannot reach international investors. Scientists struggle to translate risk into language markets can use, while governments are overwhelmed by competing priorities.

Caught between these failures are communities losing lives and livelihoods. That puts Nepal in a difficult position.

As Nepal's leadership takes centre stage in the coming weeks, it should use that moment not only

to champion the mountain agenda and climate reparations, but also to ask a harder question at home: how do we climate-proof our own communities and infrastructure against disasters that will keep coming (Editorial, page 2)?

RISK PRICING

At the centre of this conversation is how we understand and price climate risk. Once the risk is understood, it needs to be quantified and a monetary value placed on it. If there is a 20% chance of crop failure next year that can lead to a loss of Rs100,000 to a farmer, the climate risk for next year is Rs20,000. Understanding this can help the farmer find solutions like insurance.

"A lot of people think of insurance as a band-aid solution that only kicks in after disasters. But it doesn't have to be," says Hannah Melville Rea at Stanford University. "At its best, it can work to incentivise resilience projects. Reduce the risk, and the industry rewards you. You have to be able to measure the risk that you reduce."

But measuring risk is easier said than done. Suman Ghimire of the climate-insurtech startup PlantSat has insured more than 14,000 farmers with \$2.3 million in coverage over the past four years.

When extreme heat triggered maize parametric insurance in western Nepal this year, 1,352 farmers received Rs2.63 million in payouts within seven days, fast enough to replant.

"For most smallholder farmers in Nepal, traditional crop insurance is too slow and costly," Ghimire says. "Farmers can wait months for



SUMAN NEPALI

claims to be verified, often missing the opportunity to replant, which is why we use weather data to trigger automatic payouts without inspections or paperwork."

Melville-Rea says speed is the whole point of parametric insurance. There's no assessor, no claims process. A pre-set payout triggers the moment a certain flood height is reached.

"But," she notes, "someone or something still has to prove,

quickly and transparently, that the threshold was hit."

These risks are critical to shaping any conversation around insurance in Nepal, particularly as coverage will be expensive and reliance on private insurance as the backstop of these disasters will not be possible.

RISK MANAGEMENT

In Nepal, domestic sources combining revenue and borrowing

finance cover 85% of the annual budget expenditure. The remaining 12% comes from loans from multilateral development banks (MDBs), bilateral lending, and 3% from foreign grants.

But international grant aid is drying up, and as the country graduates from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, access to ultra-cheap concessional MDB loans is narrowing.

Nepal Rastra Bank has adopted

Development, debt, and disaster

Who pays to rebuild after the Bhote Kosi-Trisuli flood?

Sebastian DiPirro

What happened in Rasuwa and Nuwakot points to a larger problem than flood management, it reveals how decades of development has reorganised an entire valley around roads, trade, and border infrastructure, concentrating people and investment in places increasingly exposed to climate hazards.

The Trisuli Valley was a landscape already familiar with disaster. On 8 July 2025, a flood originating from the Purepu Glacier in China destroyed the same bridge at Rasuwagadi, killed or left missing at least 28 people, and wrecked 60% of the Timure dry port, a Rs2.8 billion facility that was 81% complete.

The bridge was rebuilt. The dry port was still being repaired when the flood came again.

TRADITIONAL SAFETY

Traditional Tamang settlements in the valley were organised around flood mitigation. Rice fields were often located close to the river, where access to water and fertile soil made them productive. Houses were built higher up the slopes.

Over the past 70 years, development altered that relationship. Roads, outmigration, and the shift from agricultural livelihoods toward trade and wage-based economies reorganised where people live and work.

Roads are frequently built along floodplains because they are easier



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and cheaper. Houses and businesses then follow the roads, concentrating settlement precisely in areas most exposed to flooding.

Infrastructure attracts economic activity, economic activity attracts settlement, and settlement increases exposure when rivers overflow their banks. What once functioned as agricultural floodplain become real estate and transport corridors.

Across Nepal, roads have become the organising principle of development concentrating homes, businesses, and public infrastructure in narrow river corridors where hazards are growing faster than planning systems can adapt.

Nepal has contributed almost nothing to the warming now

destabilising the Himalayan watershed on which it depends, yet it is losing bridges, roads, trade, homes, and lives to that warming faster than it can rebuild them.

The question is not whether Nepal should develop. It is who that development is for -- and who absorbs the cost when it fails. Those two groups are rarely the same.

The benefits of a road, a border post, or a construction project are distributed broadly and often captured at a distance: by traders, contractors, transporters, national governments, and consumers hundreds of kilometers away.

The losses, by contrast, are absorbed locally and specifically: by the shopkeeper in Timure, the porter at the truck park, the family

living in a house built where land was cheapest, and the workers whose livelihoods disappear each time the corridor shuts down.

And the people who bear those risks most directly are almost never in the room when the decisions that create them are made.

On Wednesday, the World Bank offered Rs25 billion in emergency assistance for rescue, relief, and reconstruction. The government is separately moving to mobilise about Rs20 billion of its own. But financing reconstruction is only part of the challenge.

Rebuilding the border crossing is necessary. Rebuilding it exactly as before is a choice. Each disaster creates pressure to restore what existed previously and to do so as

quickly as possible. Yet speed often comes at the expense of asking harder questions about design, exposure, and long-term resilience.

A bridge can be rebuilt. A highway can be repaired. The more difficult task is deciding whether infrastructure that has repeatedly failed should be reconstructed according to the same assumptions that governed it before.

Climate finance remains part of this debate. Countries like Nepal should not be forced to shoulder alone the costs of a warming world they did little to create. (See above)

Taking on fresh foreign debt to respond to a disaster Nepal did not cause risks reproducing that vulnerability if reconstruction simply restores development patterns that existed before.

Who will control the reconstruction? Will planning and design decisions be made locally, with knowledge of the river, the monsoon, and the communities that live alongside them? Or will reconstruction once again prioritise engineering timelines and commercial demands over local experience of risk?

The danger is not simply that Nepal will borrow money to rebuild, but that reconstruction will restore the same infrastructure that made the valley vulnerable in the first place.

The challenge is to rebuild not simply what was lost, but the terms on which development takes place. 🇳🇵

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climate disasters?

the Environmental and Risk Management (ESRM) guidelines alongside issuing the Green Finance Taxonomy to push commercial banks to promote green lending, without disrupting the economy and risking capital flight, while there are ongoing conversations on green diaspora bonds, promoting agriculture insurance, and introducing a nationwide property insurance scheme.

Commercial banks in Nepal are at the center of this. As of mid-2026, Class A commercial banks hold a total outstanding loan portfolio of approximately Rs5.32 trillion (\$39.5 billion), 4.2 times more credit to the Nepali economy than international MDBs.

While large infrastructure projects rely on international financing, domestic homes in climate-vulnerable floodplains, construction projects fueled by rampant sand mining, and the purchase of fossil-fuel-based automobiles are funded, often by commercial loans.

“Almost 10% of bank portfolio is already exposed to the energy sector, and banks have already made a commitment to finance an even larger pipeline of energy projects,” says Dinesh Dulal, Chief of Sustainable Energy Finance at NMB Bank. “But how do we manage the growing climate-related risks and ensure that these investments remain operational and financially sustainable?”

Nepal is already taking significant strides to pivot to a low-carbon economy. This needs to be scaled up to ensure entities promoting climate action and incorporating climate risks and resilience are provided with financial incentives to continue the transition -- either lowered interest

rates to install early-warning systems, buy subsidised insurance, or to get a loan rejected for a project that is in a climate hazard zone.

“We cannot look at climate resilience as an additional feature of an energy project, it has to become a core part of design, financing and commercial viability,” says Dulal. “If we want banks to continue financing Nepal’s energy ambitions, we must ensure that these projects are not only bankable today but also resilient to the climate risks.”

BLENDING FINANCE

As domestic revenue is entirely eaten up by recurrent expenditures such as salaries and pensions, Nepal cannot afford to rebuild out of its pocket every time, and the landscape for international grants is shrinking. But if Nepal does not build a domestic ecosystem for climate insurance and risk pricing, it will face a sovereign credit downgrade as climate disasters worsen, making international borrowing even more expensive.

Nepal therefore is presented with an inherent question of securing financing to undertake massive shifts, first to rebuild the existing loss & damage, but also to secure additional critical infrastructure from impending disasters. The first choice is reparations, but Nepal is joining the queue after small island states.

Unless Nepal manages to pull off a historical achievement in international climate negotiations, there is not much precedent. It needs to continue using scarce domestic resources for more private and development capital in the energy and industrial sectors, while

pulling internal levers to transition the economy. This means a stronger focus on de-risking and the use of guarantees and blends in different forms of capital.

It also means a strategic vision for the use of carbon markets. Despite criticism, carbon finance remains one of the few debt-free forms of capital that is seeing a positive momentum in the climate finance landscape with the potential to ease fiscal space for countries such as Nepal. Such revenue mobilisation from carbon markets can be earmarked for climate adaptation and livelihood protection of local communities.

If loans are sought for resilient infrastructure, it is important to ensure strong covenants that have future potential for debt restructuring and climate swaps triggered in the case of disasters with careful focus on project types.

There are inherent risks with the large hydro sector, not to mention the harm to the environment and biodiversity. Energy diversification, decentralisation, and focus on alternative energy solutions are therefore critical.

Adaptation needs integration in existing infrastructure and mitigation projects so it’s not treated as stand-alone projects, as they can never raise the return on investment to turn projects bankable. The climate vulnerability urges Nepal to focus on smaller, decentralised energy solutions over large-scale projects in the face of impending disasters.

Solutions such as pumped hydro storage can help address the seasonal variability with deficits in winter, and prevent Nepal from

buying expensive electricity from India, can prove handy.

In addition, pumped hydro has less risk as it can be built completely ‘off-river’ away from dangerous floodplains, and also offers significant climate adaptation benefits, particularly through improved water management, flood mitigation, and regional drought resilience. Reservoirs associated with pumped hydro projects can capture and hold heavy runoff, helping to regulate peak river flows and protect communities.

Nepal has also identified green hydrogen as a priority. Its massive monsoon hydro surplus can be converted into stored hydrogen or green methane, saving it to generate electricity or supply heavy industries during the dry winter months as a seasonal battery.

Butwal Power Company has established Nepal’s first private-sector 50kW Green Hydrogen Commercial Pilot Project in Pyuthan, adjacent to its 12MW Jhimruk plant, while government plans advance for a larger 2.5MW plant in Hetauda.

The real question now is how mitigation and infrastructure projects are reflecting climate risks in their operating models, and how the existing ecosystem can be leveraged to maximise the flow of international finance.

MOUNTAIN TSUNAMI

The mountain tsunami on the morning of 26 August was too big to contain. But that should spur Nepal to ideate solutions with whole-of-economy systemic rethinking:

- Understand climate finance and how interactions with funds and development partners are done, year-round climate diplomacy to demand and receive reparations.
- Tap into overseas Nepalis through a structured financial vehicle such as diaspora green

bonds. ■ Translate climate science into domestic risk pricing, integrate climate resilience into domestic lending alongside infrastructure design and fund the grassroots so lived communities also have a voice on how adaptation can be done. The question is no longer if there will be climate impact. It is how Nepal will pay for them.

If climate risk can be measured, it can also be incorporated into lending decisions, infrastructure planning and investment strategies. This makes Nepal’s banking sector one of the most important actors in climate resilience.

Domestic sources already finance the majority of Nepal’s public expenditure. Foreign grants are declining, and access to highly concessional financing is expected to narrow as Nepal graduates from LDC status. The transition will depend on how effectively domestic capital is mobilised.

Nepal will continue to need international climate finance. It should continue demanding greater global accountability from those most responsible for the climate crisis. But waiting for others to solve our problems is not a strategy.

In the present disaster, the forces involved were too large to contain. But that should not stop us from preparing for the next disaster, because there will be more.

The lesson from this year’s tragedy is not that Nepal is vulnerable. We already knew that. Climate resilience can no longer be treated as a peripheral environmental concern. It is now a question of economic stability, fiscal planning, financial regulation and national security. 🇳🇵

Rastraraj Bhandari is a climate economist with the Himalayan Water Project.



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FUTURE SHOCKS

The Bhote Kosi-Trisuli flood is a lesson for other riverside towns across Nepal

- 1 Manthali Bazar in Ramechhap is situated on the banks of the Tama Kosi, which floods even during the monsoon, inundating its airfield. Upstream is the potentially dangerous Tso Rolpa glacial lake which has grown to 3.3km in length and sits below avalanche-prone mountains.
- 2 Damauli in Tanahu is near the confluence of the Seti and the Madi rivers, both snowfed and along which there have been disastrous rock-ice avalanches in the past. The Tanahau Project dam is nearby.
- 3 Besisahar in Lamjung is on higher ground above the Marsyangdi, which is fed by a stream draining the Thulagi glacial lake. If it bursts, four hydropower plants and other infrastructure would be at risk.
- 4 Beni in Myagdi is potentially one of the most dangerously located towns because it is only a few metres above the Kali Gandaki and Myagdi rivers draining glaciers below the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri massifs.



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