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SUMAN NEPALI

It's Cricket

Shristi Karki

A spell of exceptionally clear weather brought bright blue skies, stunning mountain views, and pollution-less air to Nepal over Dasain and into this week, raising the spirits of a nation healing from back-to-back flood disasters from August-October.

But the clement weather did not last. Cyclone Arnab from the Bay of Bengal is forecast to dump heavy rain and snow on Friday-Saturday (page 8, weather). After that, with the change in wind direction, smoke and smog from the south will start blowing into Nepal.

This drone photo shows the brightly-lit Kirtipur Stadium preparing for a Nepal Premier League (NPL) match on Tuesday evening as the sun set over the Central Himalayan peaks. The tournament is now recognised by the International Cricket Council (ICC) under the T20 setup.

Pakistan Cricket Board's last-minute notice requiring a $25,000 fee disallowed Pakistani cricketers from playing in Nepal, hurting what could have been a display of South Asian solidarity and celebration of the sport.

Nepali cricketers have performed well in matches abroad lately, and the national teams have carried the hopes of a nation bruised by disasters. The RSP government led by Prime Minister Balendra Shah similarly carries the collective aspirations of Nepalis.

On Monday, when PM Shah inaugurated the tournament, smiling and waving to cheering spectators, some were quick to draw comparisons between his match attendance to disdain of Parliament and disregard for members of his own party as well as the opposition.

The spirit of cricket is defined by teamwork, fair play, and sportsmanship. It offers an important lesson for politics that transcends populism and popularity, to performance on the pitch. It is a lesson Nepal's past leaders ignored to their own peril.

PM Shah wants to be different. His party already has a two-thirds majority, it does not need to govern with threats, arrogance and social media stunts. Facebook likes and shares will only go so far.

The tournament offers a symbolic takeaway about teamwork. Nepalis hope Balen Shah plays a captain's innings.

Wildlife Special
PAGE 6-7

Mustang Apples
PAGE 10-11













Building back healthier

How Nepal can continue with affordable and accessible medical care in a time of disasters

Editorial

Kunda Dixit

Nepal is a multi-disaster prone country, and climate breakdown will make these compounded hazards more frequent.

But even as earthquakes, floods, and a pandemic hit Nepal over the past decades, the people have endured silent emergencies and slow-moving crises that do not make it to the headlines.

Infant and maternal mortality rates have gone down drastically, and the average lifespan of Nepalis has doubled in the past 35 years. But progress has flatlined.

Nearly 25,000 children in Nepal still die each year before they reach their fifth birthday, more than half of them from causes that are entirely preventable through full vaccination, safe drinking water, clean air, and timely medical care.

That works out to about 40 babies and children dying needlessly every day. Yet those fatalities never make it to the news. On the other hand, when a bus falls off the road killing 20, it gets the headline treatment in the national press.

All this to emphasise the fact that Nepalis have been suffering an unreported health emergency before, during, and after past calamities.

Silent crises and loud catastrophes like the latest flood disasters are happening side by side. The government's response, therefore, must be two-pronged: tackling the immediate medical needs of those injured and exposed to diseases in crowded shelters, while simultaneously continuing to deliver affordable and accessible healthcare to the larger population away from the disaster zones.



NEPALI ARMY

Besides female literacy and fewer child marriages, the other reason Nepal's maternal mortality rate came down so sharply was because of the spread of the road network. It made institutional deliveries possible, and encouraged retention of medical staff.

The two flood disasters in August and October showed just how important access to hospitals and health posts becomes when bridges and roads are swept away.

As Srijana Devkota reports from Nuwakot (page 4) two months after the catastrophic flood, and as far as 80km downstream, the immediate emergency has been replaced by a silent health crisis.

Communities higher up the slopes not directly affected by the flood are cut off from hospitals and health posts.

Rajendra Lama, a physician at Trisuli Provincial Hospital, tells us that patient numbers have fallen by half after bridges and roads were washed away. The hospital can now only be reached through a precarious cable basket that has to be manually pulled over the river, so Lama has deployed health workers to the far bank to treat patients with chronic ailments who need medicines or those who need referrals.

ZOOMING OUT

In a recent article in the journal Lancet, Abhilasha Karkey, Sudeep Adhikari, and Buddha Basnyat of the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit Nepal refer to the need for the country's healthcare system to address not just the aftermath of disasters and be prepared for the next one, but also to broaden the focus to wider medical needs.

'Nepal cannot eliminate every climatic or geological hazard,' note the authors. 'It can, however, build a health system capable of absorbing their effects without abandoning its essential functions. Resilience must mean more than saving lives immediately after a disaster: it must mean continuing to protect the health and dignity of affected populations throughout the months and years that follow.'

Nepal's healthcare is a three-tier system: local health posts provide basic services, while district and provincial hospitals offer more specialised care. But government hospitals are often under-funded and under-staffed, pushing patients to seek out-of-pocket treatment at expensive private facilities.

Despite the Constitution granting universal health coverage, only half of the population has access to medical facilities. More than 50% of household expenditure is for treatment after accidents or disease.

Children are still dying of preventable causes because only 52% of children are fully vaccinated, 5% are still not reached. Lifestyle changes mean that chronic diseases like diabetes, and cardiovascular or kidney ailments are on the rise. Air pollution alone kills 45,000 people in Nepal every year, and reduces lifespan by 3.5 years in Kathmandu.

Health emergency preparedness for future disasters must be designed to extend beyond treatment of trauma to protect the health of the wider population.

Karkey, Adhikari and Basnyat conclude: 'Increasingly complex climate-related hazards require … a durable, adequately financed health system rather than being assembled anew during every emergency.'

Trending Online

Heritage of the Trisuli Valley
by Alisha Sijapati
When a temple or cremation site disappears, so do places where people have worshipped, mourned, and gathered for generations. Monuments and traditions have been documented, now they need protection in the aftermath of the Trisuli flood. Read the column at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Nepal 160 years ago
by Rajeev Ranjan Singh
Newly discovered photographs by Joseph Gaye provide new insight into life in Kathmandu 160 years ago, a valuable pictorial record of people and places. Review and photos online.

Most popular on X

Not the best climate for climate finance
by Sonia Awale
Nepal's negotiators secured $21.6 million grant from the UN's Loss & Damage Fund for the Trisuli Valley disaster, but it was approved reluctantly, represents only 0.4% of the cost of recovery and reconstruction, and there are strings attached. Read the report on our website.

Most commented



'Himalayan COP' in 2033?
by Kul Chandra Gautam
Hosting COP38 in 2033 would turn Nepal's acute climate vulnerability into a source of international leadership. The aim should be to help secure lasting progress toward climate resilience and justice for vulnerable communities. Read analysis online.

Most visited online page

Letters

LOSS AND DAMAGE
The Loss and Damage Fund should be dedicated entirely to on-the-ground reconstruction ('Not the best climate for climate finance', Sonia Awale, nepalitimes.com) rather than administrative overheads, SUVs, seminars, and reports no one reads.
Indu Bhushan Gautam

■ Nepal should show better governance by assisting people along flood plains to move. Politicians are in this international game as yet another way to skim off the aid and neglect the necessity of helping those in the peripheries.
Todd Lewis

■ The funds for Nepal is a historic first step, yet severely inadequate for the scale of devastation.
Bari Khan

■ Most UN members are not developing nations so they have not experienced first hand the impact of climate change. When it happens to them maybe they will also apply for financial support.
Ian Wall

COP IN NEPAL
I'd love to see an assessment of what COP conferences have achieved vs the costs ('Nepal can host a 'Himalayan COP' in 2033', Kul Chandra Gautam, nepalitimes.com). A lot of sound and fury, typical of UN conferences, but actual achievements? Maybe the millions of dollars could go directly to climate interventions benefiting local communities instead.
Keith D. Leslie

OLD NEPAL
Joseph Gaye's photos are a visual proof of how self-sustaining life was back then ('Nepal 160 years ago', Rajeev Ranjan Singh, #1333). This should make us reflect on where our society is heading.
Rushel Shilpakar

■ I also collected several hundred glass negs, cameras, prints during my stay from 1980-2002. Many are 1-up/unique, circa 1860-1930. I've been trying to donate the archive for years, but few expressed interest.
Stephen Lowe

DEMOCRACY VS CONFLICT
Federalism only works when power is genuinely shared, not concentrated ('Portrait of a world on fire', Editorial, #1333). Nepal's democracy must protect local representation to ensure political power serves the people.
Caroline Chapman

■ Surely it is time to question the tripartite agreement on Gurkha recruitment and clarify Nepal's non-aligned position.
David Seddon

CADENZA
I first saw Cadenza at the Lazimpat Street Festival back in 1999 ('All that jazz in Nepal', Smaranika Shakya, #1333). I have been a fan ever since.
Samundra Thulung

Cadenza is a pure Jazz band, and it is my favourite.
Prakash Bahadur Shah

ROBERT POWELL
Robert Powell's works were one of my inspirations in traveling to Nepal ('Anticipating the Robert Powell Painting Retrospective', Kunda Dixit, #1333).
Maureen Drdak

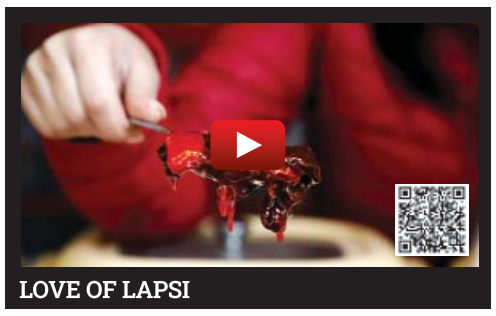
Powell was talented and made a big contribution to Nepal.
Camilla Corona

Online Package



MAKING OF DAURA SURUWAL

Daura suruwal is back in fashion. Most senior politicians and bureaucrats wear it to work. For the public, the dress is a go-to fit for marriages and social gatherings. Watch video on YouTube.



LOVE OF LAPSI

The beloved lapsi comes in many forms like in umami titauras and sweet or spicy pickles. Watch how lapsi ko achar is prepared from start to finish. Subscribe for multimedia content.

1,000 Words



KUNDA DIXIT

NICE RICE: Farmers in Kaskikot on Monday hastened to harvest ripe paddy ahead of heavy rainfall forecast for this week. Up to 80mm of rain is predicted for Central Nepal on Friday as the nation is battered by the remnants of Cyclone Arnab.

The rain and snow are expected to taper off by Sunday, bringing in more Tihar-like sunshine.

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Health emergency after flood disaster

Broken bridges, damaged roads affect healthcare access for survivors in the Trisuli Corridor

Srijana Devkota in Nuwakot

At Benighat, a mother takes a long detour along damaged roads carrying a child with high fever. The bridge connecting the community health post was swept away in the 26 August flood.

Health workers at the hospital use a room heater because the infant radiant warmer is no longer functioning. Across the Trisuli, a woman in labour has to wait to sit in a precarious cable basket to be pulled across the debris-strewn river.

Two months after the castastrophic flood, 80km downstream, the emergency may have passed, but there is now a silent health crisis. Damaged roads and missing bridges cut off access to health centres even to families who were not directly affected by the debris flow.

This means delayed maternity referrals, disrupted treatment for illnesses, lack of essential medicines, unsafe water, the risk of disease outbreaks and psychosocial trauma of losing family, home and livelihoods.

When a bridge disappears, a health facility loses essential equipment. Ambulances cannot reach patients. Treatable illnesses become life-threatening when the neighbourhood pharmacy is swept away. A manageable pregnancy complication can become an obstetric emergency, and a family already struggling with loss can be pushed further into hardship by the cost and uncertainty of seeking care.

"Betrawati is gone, there is no specialised care for us so we must make the expensive journey all the way to Kathmandu," says patient Sitaram Rimal, 67, at Trisuli Pronvicial Hospital.

Emergency relief remains essential, but the regions's health system also needs to care for a catchment of at least 250,000 people. Reconstruction of physical infrastructure also needs to go hand-in-hand with adequate health workers, safe maternity and newborn care, reliable ambulance and referral systems, and mental health support.

In Betrawati, Trisuli Bazar and Devighat, entire neighbourhoods have been obliterated,



SRIJANA DEVKOTA

the ruins are covered in grey mud. Families who survived have started going back to homes covered in silt.

Displacement has brought its own health risks: overcrowded shelters, unsafe drinking water, lack of essential medicines and uncertainty about where to go if a family member falls ill. For pregnant women, young children, older people and those living with chronic conditions, these are not hardships of displacement, they are barriers to survival.

Trisuli Hospital was situated on higher ground and is intact, yet patients on the other side of the river remain marooned because the bridge has been destroyed.

"Patient numbers have fallen by half since the flood not because healthcare needs have diminished, but because damaged roads and destroyed bridges have made the hospital difficult to reach," says Hospital Director Rajendra Lama. He has deployed health workers to the other side of the river.

"Bringing in medical supplies remains a daily challenge, restoring safe and reliable access is essential for us to keep caring for patients who need specialist and emergency treatment," Lama adds.

POST-DISASTER HEALTHCARE

Restoring connectivity for trade and the economic revival is important, but it also represents essential health infrastructure. People with hypertension, diabetes and other chronic conditions still need regular medicines and follow-up. Pregnant women need antenatal checks and timely access to skilled birth care. Children need immunisation and reatment for common illnesses. Survivors coping with grief and displacement need psychosocial support.

Charities and relief agencies are working with municipalities to provide food and emergency assistance. Recovery must now connect immediate assistance with longer-term investment, restoring safe, permanent river crossings, maintaining temporary access routes until bridges are rebuilt, strengthening outreach and emergency referral services, ensuring the continuous supply of medicines and supporting Trisuli Hospital.

Downstream in Benighat, the community health centre has been damaged and cut off from the villages it serves. At Gajuri's primary healthcare centre, nurses struggle to provide care without essential equipment.

At Baireni, the hospital is back in operation but now needs to restore emergency and maternity services for a much larger population, including from the Chepang indigenous community.

Health worker Tika Kumari Ghimire at Benighat continues to serve patients with what is available, and seeks support from donors to replace equipment lost.

Gajuri health post did not sustain direct physical damage, but has to look after displaced patients in addition to the resident population. The centre has three medical officers and experienced staff, yet the emergency room lacks a functioning patient monitor, its ECG machine needs replacement, and the maternity unit needs an ultrasound, a patient monitor and a baby warmer.

One morning earlier this month, a 31-year-old woman arrived in labour. Because the centre in Gajuri lacked critical equipment, she was referred to a hospital in Kathmandu — a bumpy 5-hour journey along damaged roads.

At Baireni Hospital floodwater backed up from the Trisuli and flooded the ground floor, damaging equipment and disrupting services. The staff cleared the debris and reopened the facility with replacement equipment, demonstrating their determination to keep services running even after a disaster.

For the federal government, local municipalities and non-governmental groups, this is an opportunity to connect immediate flood recovery with long-term healthcare strengthening. Emergency relief has saved lives, but this alone cannot rebuild the health system that communities depend on. Free treatment means little when essential equipment is missing, medicines are out of reach or the road to the nearest referral hospital has been washed away.

Public attention has moved on, the cameras are gone, relief supplies are dwindling, but the health crisis continues. It needs coordinated, adequately funded recovery that leaves communities better prepared for the next disaster.

Srijana Devkota is Director of Program and Partnerships, Nyaya Health Nepal (NHN).

BRIEFS

German visitor

Bärbel Kofler, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, is in Nepal for a four-day official visit until 31 October, during which she will focus on issues of women's rights and health, as well as the impact of the Trisuli Valley flood in meetings with officials of the Nepal government and civil society.



Electricity exports

Despite destruction caused to hydropower infrastructure along the Trisuli Corridor by the floods on 26 August, Nepal exported electricity worth Rs 5.92 billion to India between mid-September and mid-October. Nepal resumed exporting 40 MW of electricity to Bangladesh through transmission lines in India. However, the loss of nearly 700MW of power from the damaged plants means Nepal may have to import thermal electricity from India in winter.

Websites still down

Websites across the globe, including in Nepal, went down due to a security vulnerability in the PHP coding system used to build them. Banks, financial institutions, and private sector entities managed to resolve the issue within a few hours, but government websites took longer get back online, causing disruption to public services.

WFP Alumni

Thirty-five retired employees of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) have gathered in Kathmandu this week for their annual get-together. Former field officers and administration staff from nearly 20 countries of the Rome-based UN agency also handed over a contribution from members for WFP's relief work among survivors of the Trisuli Valley disaster.

inDrive rewards

The ride-sharing company inDrive launched a campaign to reward drivers from 2 -29 November. The campaign requires driver partners to complete at least 60 rides in a calendar week to be eligible for the giveaway. Eligible drivers will receive monthly gift hampers, including a Royal Enfield Classic 350 as the grand prize.



Kusunti overhead

An overhead bridge in Kusunti, Lalitpur-13 has been completed by Lalitpur Metropolis at a Ring Road crossing that has seen dozens of pedestrian fatalities. The bridge cost Rs46.8 million and includes lifts, making it wheelchair friendly.



Dang dairy

Dairy farmers across Dang are facing financial losses as milk purchase prices fail to match increased prices of cattle feed, medication and vet care. Even though consumers pay more for milk, it has not trickled down to farmers.

Dasain fatalities

Nepal Police recorded 134 fatalities on Nepal's roads and highways nationwide over the ten-day holiday with 2,988 injured. A total of 1,339 incidents were recorded. Among the dead were 83 men, 39 women, 7 boys, and 5 girls.

Nepal ranks 103rd

With its GDP crossing $45.59 billion, Nepal is ranked 103rd amongst the world's countries in economic output. The US tops the ranking with $32.64 trillion, followed by China at $21.55 trillion, India has overtaken Japan as the fourth largest with a $4.8 trillion economy.

Flood warning

The government is planning to invest $49.9 million for flood early warning and glacial lake risk reduction from 2026-2033. Tso Rolpa, Imja, and Thulagi glacial lake levels will be lowered, and plans are underway to automate 503 manual weather stations, repair Doppler radars in Surkhet, Palpa and Udayapur, and install an X-band radar to cover Kathmandu Valley.

Syabrubesi Bailey

A new Bailey bridge is being constructed in Syaprubesi to enable vehicle transit in the area after the original bridge was swept away by the August flood. Construction is expected before the Tihar holidays.

NPL begins

The third edition of the Nepal Premier League (NPL) has begun at Kirtipur Stadium (page 1), with its economic footprint increasing every season. This instalment of the cricket tournament has sponsorship transactions with franchises topping Rs1.5 billion, compared to Rs473.6 million last season.



Suspension bridges

An agreement was signed to reconstruct 4 suspension bridges by the under-construction Tanahu Hydropower Project. The agreement was signed between the reservoir company and a joint venture contractor from Kathmandu. River crossings at Chulesi, Tunibote, Dhwang, and Tutuwa are expected to be built by mid-2028.

SALICO Golf

Sagarmatha Lumbini Insurance Company Limited (SALICO) is organising SALICO Golf Tournament 2026 on 31 October to be held at the Gokarna Forest Resort Golf Course. The tournament has ten categories for winners.

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PHOTOS: SONAM TASHI LAMA / RED PANDA NETWORK

Amber

Habitat protection, bet

Sudiksha Tuladhar



Which panda came first: the Giant Panda in China or the Red Panda in Nepal?

Although the Giant Panda is better known worldwide, the Red Panda was first described by Western scientists in 1825 and given the scientific name *Ailurus fulgens.* It took another 50 years for the Giant Panda to be scientifically classified even though it is now the celebrity mammal in zoos across the world.

After DNA analysis concluded that the giant panda was actually from the *Ursidae* bear family, scientists found out that the red panda belonged to a unique taxonomical family called *Ailuridae*, closer to raccoons and squirrels.

The name 'panda' is actually derived from words in a dialect in eastern Nepal 'nigalya panja' which means 'bamboo paw'. Although scientists have studied this shy and elusive mammal for 200 years, very little is still known about its habits and habitat on the forest canopy.

There are said to be only about 1,000 red pandas in Nepal, most of them in the lush cloud forests of eastern Nepal where the thin bamboo called nigalo grows in an altitude belt between 2,400m-3,900m. Although the panda is a carnivore, its favourite snack is bamboo shoots.

Nepali scientists are making progress studying the behaviour of the red panda from a research centre in Taplejung. The findings are important because the mammal is an indicator species that points to the health of the forest ecosystem where it lives.

"Nepal has been successful in receiving global funding but there is a need for a more systematic research method," says Anusha Pahari of Red Panda Network, which organised an inaugural Red Panda Symposium

Nepal mixes traditior

Dolpo shows how humans and nature are inseparable

Sheren Shrestha

Four years ago, during a snow leopard expedition to Upper Dolpo, a traditional medicine practitioner at the ancient Samling Monastery told me about the role this elusive Himalayan predator plays in local tradition.

Sherab Tenzin Lama is an Amchi healer who has been practicing traditional medicine, a knowledge system passed down through generations. Over cups of a potent local drink alternated with hot water, the conversation progressed from snow leopards to the spaces that host them.

The rangelands of this remote trans-Himalayan region sustain the livestock on which communities depend, and they are also the prey base for snow leopards. People here raise yaks, sheep and mountain goats, harvest medicinal plants, and earn money from trekking groups.

When World Wildlife Fund Nepal (WWF) began snow leopard conservation efforts in Upper Dolpo in 2018, livestock losses to wildlife were common. Improved corrals to protect goats, sheep and yaks from predators, and a new approach to help victims access compensation for livestock losses have shown results.

Being an optimist, I imagined that successful management of human-wildlife conflict was just a matter of time. And the outcome was indirectly proportional to available resources. But that meant success would take a long time.

If wildlife kills decrease, would livestock density not increase? If it does, could the rangelands withstand additional grazing pressure? If so, what would happen to the people who depend on these mountains? What would be the effect on other wildlife like blue sheep and the snow leopards?

Having witnessed the changes over the decades, Amchi Sherab agreed that unmanaged rangeland use and over-extraction of natural resources would not be sustainable. Better road access, over-tourism and modern lifestyles and climatic breakdown added to the risks.

As a healer who depended on locally available herbs and medicinal plants, he had a practical outlook on the changes sweeping his land. Generations of native inhabitants have organically and conscientiously looked after this isolated region of Nepal using traditional knowledge, beliefs and values.

For instance, different parts of plants are used in Sowa Rigpa, the traditional science of healing. Plants are never uprooted, only a small proportion of flowers are collected leaving the rest for its propagation, and only parts of the roots are taken so that the plant does not die.

MOUNTAINS AND MINDS

"This is how we ensure that this plant is available for generations after us," Amchi Sherab explained. That conversation four years ago left a strong impression on me. The knowledge for sustainable rangeland management existed, hidden deep in the

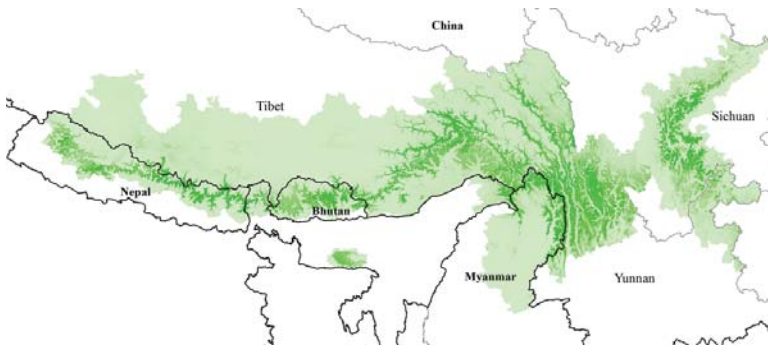


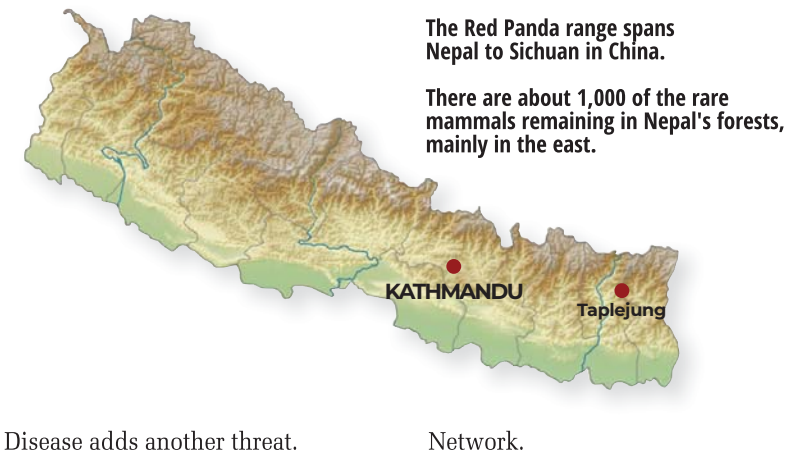
SPOT THE SPOTS: Find the superbly camouflaged snow leopard in this photograph taken in Dolpo (above). New road connectivity (above, right) is disturbing the snow leo

r Alert for the Red Panda

better research, and community involvement are needed to protect this unique mammal







The Red Panda range spans Nepal to Sichuan in China.

There are about 1,000 of the rare mammals remaining in Nepal's forests, mainly in the east.

2026 in collaboration with Rotterdam Zoo, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the AZA SAFE Red Panda Program earlier this month in Kathmandu.

Protecting the red panda means safeguarding the forest ecosystem on which the animal depends, and working with the communities where the animals roam.

Besides habitat fragmentation and disturbance from new infrastructure, red pandas are also poached and traded for their fur. Disease adds another threat.

Conservationists at the Kathmandu symposium emphasised that protecting the animal means addressing these pressures together, rather than treating forest loss, wildlife trade, and disease as separate problems.

"Fragmented habitats is a major threat for red pandas, and there is an urgent need to identify potential corridors and increase connectivity and water sources so that their population is not affected," explains Damber Bista of Red Panda Network.

Funding for nature conservation work worldwide is shrinking, and this has also affected resources for research into red pandas. Experts say the challenge is not simply to launch conservation activities, but to keep them going and connect research with work on the ground.

Many rural households across the red panda range from Taplejung to Dolpo in Nepal depend on community forests for their livelihood. Conservation must therefore extend beyond protected areas into landscapes shared by people and wildlife.

"Habitat fragmentation could affect the genetic diversity of red pandas, and this means we have to be extra careful that human-induced activities do not affect them," says Pahari.

Another threat for red pandas is from feral dogs which can transmit rabies, and conservation activity has included vaccinating over 10,000 free-ranging community dogs in rural Nepal.

CHARISMATIC SPECIES

Estimates for the red panda population in Nepal have varied widely, researchers have analysed faecal samples to estimate the population which has increased over the years to about 1,000 after the animals were also found in Bhojpur, and as far west as Dolpo. Scientists have also catalogued 72 bamboo species which the pandas eat.

Research gaps remain, however, especially in western Nepal. There is also limited awareness of the animal's conservation needs. The range of population estimates highlights why a clearer picture matters. Surveys help establish where red pandas live, and spread awareness beyond them just being a charismatic species.

"There is growing awareness for wildlife conservation, but most of it goes to saving larger species like tigers and wild elephants, overshadowing small mammals such as the red panda," says Pahari.

For communities living alongside red pandas, conservation starts in the forests that sustain their livelihoods and shelter wildlife. Ecotourism and habitat restoration offer ways to connect protection with local livelihoods, giving communities a stake in the animal's future.

"Close engagement with the community is vital for awareness and conservation, not just for red pandas but nature conservation overall. Local stewardship is the only way in Nepal where people live in close proximity to wildlife," says Nishan KC from WWF Nepal, which also works in cross-border collaboration since the red panda habitat spans Nepal to India and China.

The red panda's future is tied to the forests and to the people who depend on them. Giving communities the knowledge and resources to protect that shared home is essential to helping people and red pandas coexist.

Says KC: "Whether it is patrolling for poaching control or any other awareness effort, conservation is something that should happen continuously, it cannot stop."

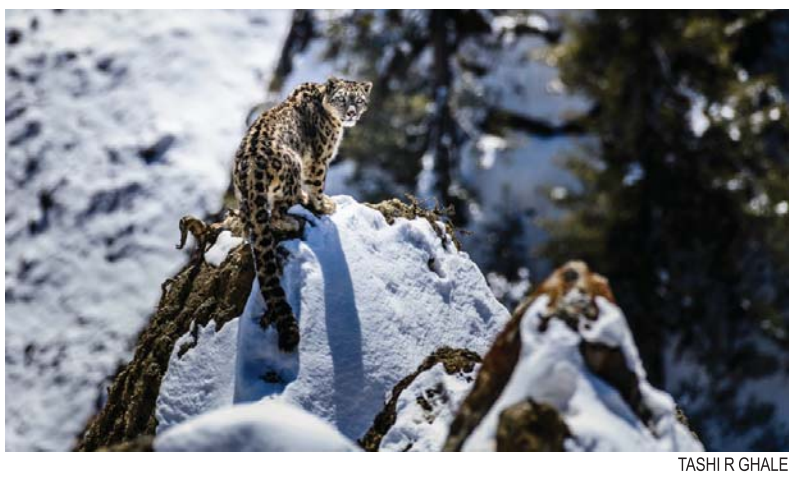
Watch video by Red Panda Network

n and technology for conservation



SONAM CHOEKYI LAMA

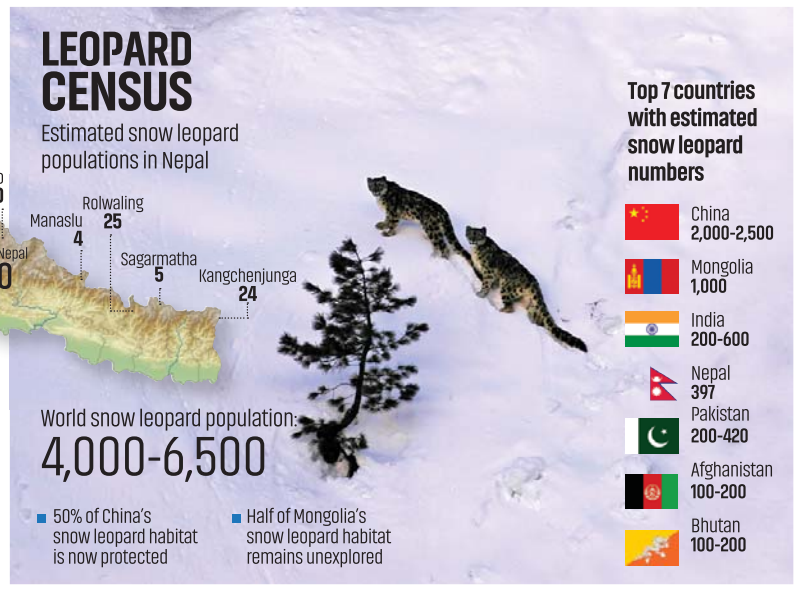
ow leopard habitat.



TASHI R GHALE



SONAM CHOEKYI LAMA



mountains and in the minds of elders and faith leaders.

WWF had already supported the Amchi of Dolpo in conserving medicinal plants. One of the pioneers of this initiative was Yeshi Choden Lama, who along with Nepal's top conservationists was among 24 people killed in the helicopter crash at Ghunsa in 2006.

With colleagues who shared this interest, WWF continued Yeshi Choden Lama's work to support local youth, organising community consultations. The information was augmented through interviews with Amchi, monks, and elders.

In 2023, the Shey Phoksundo National Park (SPNP), Shey Phoksundo Rural Municipality (SPRM), faith leaders, and community youth came together to work towards integrated rangeland co-management.

In 2025, WWF was awarded the Darwin Initiative grant from the UK government to revive faith leadership for high mountain rangeland conservation in Nepal. Partners include Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture, Bioresources (ANSAB) Nepal and Sowa Rigpa Association Nepal (SRAN).

This combines the community's traditional knowledge with modern science, to create, build capacity, and mobilise local institutions to collaborate on managing rangelands.

Community-based rangeland conservation and management sub-committees with youth, herders, women and faith leaders have been formed. Harvesting and trade of medicinal plants have been initiated.

However, coordination among various groups in this remote landscape is challenging. The community's socio-economic timelines are aligned to the seasons and packed tight, allowing for limited free time. Changing climate and increasingly unpredictable weather have disturbed the traditional timetable for these seasonal activities.

Snow leopards are at the top of the food chain, and protecting these elusive cats means sustaining local communities that hold nature in the highest regard and strengthening human-wildlife coexistence. Local livelihoods needs to be secure so the predators do not cause loss of livestock.

Zooming out of Dolpo, away from Nepal and toward High Mountain Asia, the larger challenge is to protect the 'water tower' that supports two billion people living downstream who depend on rivers that start here.

Sheren Shrestha is the Manager for Mountain Programs at WWF Nepal.

Watch video by WWF Nepal

Events



NPL 2026
Cricket fever has gripped Nepal this festival season with the arrival of the third Nepal Premier League. Get tickets through Esewa and Khalti, or watch matches live via Himalaya TV and Star Sports.
Until 21 November, Tribhuvan University International Cricket Ground, Kirtipur

Kathmandu Film Festival
The first edition of the Kathmandu Film Festival (KFF) 2026 is organised by Kathmandu Metropolitan City, and will showcase 40 feature films and documentaries from 14 countries. Details on page 9.
30 October- 1 November, City Hall and Jai Nepal Cinema

Kathmandu Horror Film Festival
The second iteration of the Kathmandu Horror Film Festival is returning with screenings and watch parties in a celebration to the horror genre.
30 October- 1 November, 12pm, Russian House, Kathmandu



Kukur Bhoj
Hosted by PetMama, the Kukur Bhoj is a feast for the dogs and their people. Join to celebrate Kukur Tihar early with fellow pet parents.
31 October, Rs500, 12pm, Garden Project, Bhanimandal

The Baha Bahis
The film Newar Buddhism in Nepal: The Baha Bahis explores their origins, meanings and continuing role through cinematic observation and conversations with scholars and traditional practitioners. The screening will be followed by a Q&A session with the filmmakers.
30 October, 5:30pm, Taragaon Next, Boudha

Music

Halloween Special
Listen to bands including What the Funk and Mixtape at this year's Halloween Special event. Other activities include face painting and halloween-themed cocktails.
31 October, 6pm, Rs1,000, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

Kta Haru
Kta Haru will be joined by Nigam Acharya for a live performance this weekend. Go with friends and family.
30 October, 4pm, Tropical Rest and Camp, Swayambhu



Jazzmandu 2026
The 22nd edition of Jazzmandu has returned to Kathmandu with 11 musicians and bands, including artists from Nepal, Brazil, Switzerland, France, Australia, Singapore, and the US. See the schedule at nepalitimes.com
Until 4 November

Baithak 2nd Edition
An intimate acoustic evening of sound and silence with Suresh Raj Bajracharya, Gabriel Barok, Navaraj Gurung, and Om Raj Bajracharya.
1 November, 6pm onwards, Rs1,990, Yala Mandala Art Workshop, 9803459904



Nepal-Japan Festival
The 70th anniversary of Nepal-Japan relations will be marked with music by Vek, Kuma Sagar and Kwopa and other artists.
31 October, Rs1,000, 12pm, The Malla Hotel, Thamel

Getaway



Tiger Mountain Pokhara
The resort with a Gold award from Travelife for sustainability offers a model for eco-tourism, and showcases the best of Nepal's scenery, nature and culture. The weather is perfect to view several of the world's highest peaks.
Kandani Danda, Pokhara, (01) 4720580 / tmpl@secret-retreats.com

Kasara Resort
Immerse into the lush greenery in the heart of Chitwan's National Park. With activities for everyone, from cycling to wildlife viewing, Kasara Resort is a fantastic getaway for families.
Patihani, Chitwan National Park, 9801249337

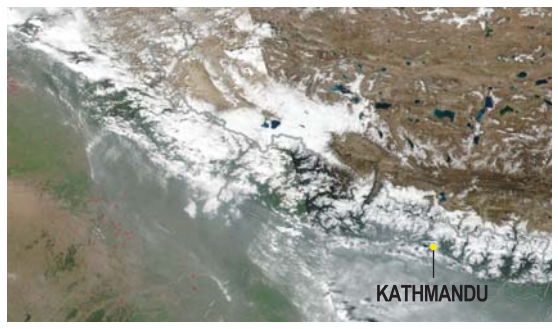


Soaltee Nagarkot
A peaceful resort located at the hills of Nagarkot, Soaltee Westend Resort offers breathtaking views of the surroundings and the sunrise. Visit the spa, outdoor pool and Jacuzzi, and try out other amenities.
Nagarkot (01) 6680244

Grand Norling
Take a trip to the outskirts of busy Kathmandu to the scenic Gokarna. A stay at the Grand Norling, with their spacious bedrooms, eclectic huts, golf course and garden, will rejuvenate the senses.
Gokarna (01) 4910193

Chhaimale Village Resort
Adorned with pear trees, the resort is an ideal destination for anyone seeking to escape the madness of Kathmandu city.
Chhaimale, 9860676495

Weekend Weather



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
24° 14°	24° 13°	26° 13°	27° 14°	27° 14°

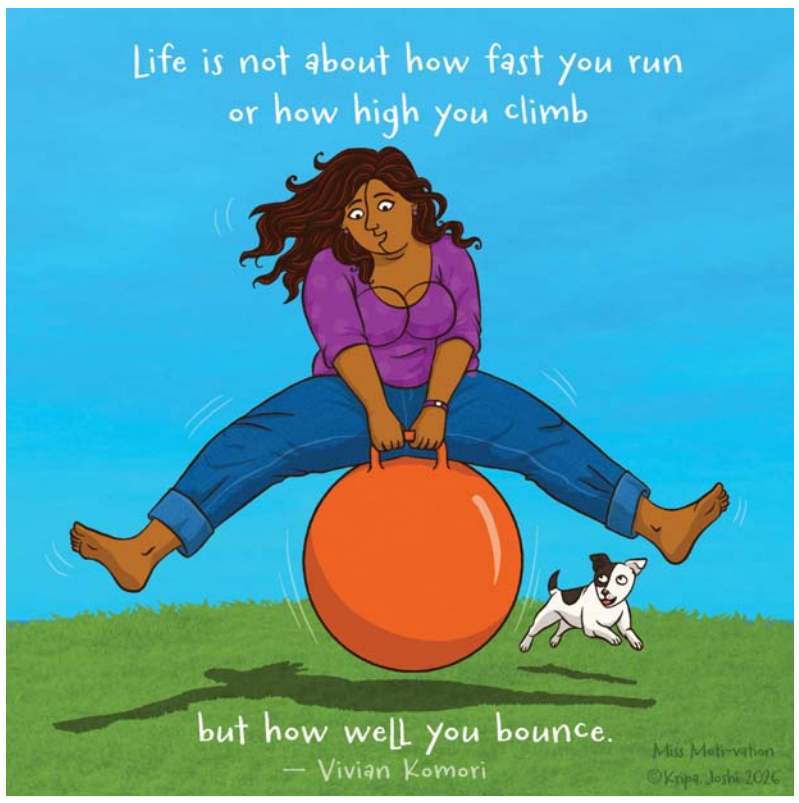
Arnab Arrives
Cyclone Arnab has probably been the most-watched weather system in Nepal's history. Meteorlogists have taken to social media platforms to track its path, the mainstream press and amateur weather forecasters have all joined in. This means there has been enough warning about a system that is weakening, but is still going to dump over 100mm of rain over Central and Eastern Nepal Friday-Saturday with up to 50cm of fresh snow on the high passes. Trekkers and travelers have been advised to stay put, and be alert. Farmers are harvesting and securing ripening paddy before the heaviest rain. Clearing up by Sunday and a fall in average daily temperature.



Our Pick

Jennifer Peedom's 2026 biographical drama Tenzing explores the life and times of Tenzing Norgay Sherpa, who, along with Edmund Hillary, became the first person to summit Mount Everest in 1953. The film explores Norgay's childhood as son of a yak herder from Tibet's Kharta Valley, and how his vocation for climbing began. As the story progresses, viewers see how Norgay overcame differences in class and background and fought to be part of the British expedition team, how he met Hillary, and what it took for him to become one of the most well-known figures in mountaineering. Stars Genden Phuntsok, Tom Hiddleston, Thinley Lhamo, Caitríona Balfe, and Willem Dafoe. Available to watch on Apple TV.

MISS MOTI-VATION — KRIPA JOSHI



Dining



Kunga
Kunga Hotel Restaurant & Bar is one of the best Chinese restaurants in Kathmandu. Grab some hot pot, peanut chicken and shredded potatoes in Kunga's cosy setting this autumn.
Boudha (01) 4915117

The Diplomat
Experience luxurious culinary delights at the hotel's Indian and Continental restaurant, without compromising on comfort.
Hotel Ambassador, Lazimpat (01) 4542726



Baan Thai
Baan Thai serves generous portions of perfected and healthy Thai dishes. Try the Red Tomyam Chicken, Pad Thai, Grilled Pork Neck, and more.
Darbar Marg (01) 4231931



Achaar Ghar
Nothing beats a home-cooked meal with an assortment of pickles prepared from recipes that have been passed down from generations.
Kamalpokhari, 9851358668

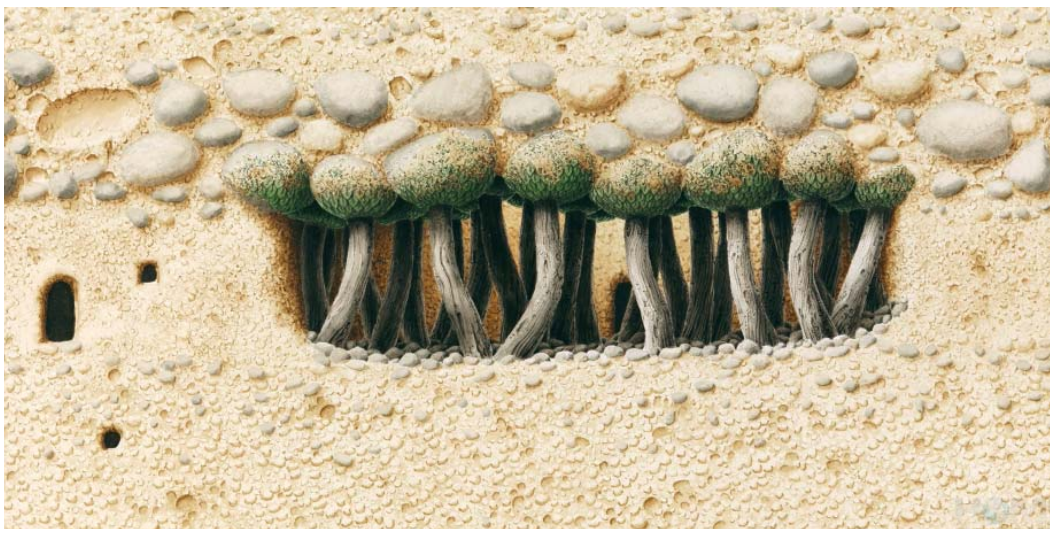
Tamarind
If you're looking for a good restaurant to get great drinks and food, Tamarind is the place to go. And if you're in the mood to Salsa dance or just marvel at the moves of the regulars, stop by on Tuesday evenings.
Jhamsikhel (01) 5522626

सामाजिक सञ्जाल प्रयोगमा सचेतता अपनाऔं

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

नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड





(Clockwise) Stills from The King's Warden, Enchanted Matter, and Dear You.

Kathmandu Film Festival 2026

40 films from 14 countries will be showcased at the first ever festival



The first-ever Kathmandu Film Festival (KFF) 2026 organised by the Metropolitan City will take place from 30 October to 1 November, putting Nepal's capital on the world's cinema map.

The festival will showcase 40 feature films and documentaries from 14 countries, and will be screened at the City Hall and Jai Nepal Cinema.

Ten films have been shortlisted for the International Panorama Program, a curated selection of global, contemporary, and independent cinema that represents powerful stories, unique voices, and distinct cultural perspectives.

The Nepal Panorama Shorts Program will feature nine films. A special retrospective will celebrate Nepali cinema of the 1970s and 80s, including Kumari, the first Nepali feature film in colour.

KFF will also feature a screening of shorts 'View People, View Cities' from Yamagata, a UNESCO Creative City of Film in Japan to mark 70 years of bilateral ties between Nepal and Japan.

KFF will feature a conversation with noted Indian actor Shabana Azmi on the theme 'Film, Festivals and A Life Well Lived'. There will be a masterclass 'The Importance of Film Aesthetics from the Global South and the International Festival Circuit' with Marco Mueller of the Shanghai Film Academy, and panel discussions on Nepal's film industry.

Each film selected will receive a prize of Rs100,000. The top three films will receive additional cash awards of Rs150,000, Rs100,000 and Rs50,000. Films to be screened include: The King's Warden (Korea), Dear You (China), Bayaan (India), La Gradiva (France), and even the classic, The Godfather.

Among documentaries to be screened will be Enchanted Matter, the Art of Robert Powell, and other short films.

Kathmandu was designated a UNESCO Film City in 2023. Entry to festival screenings and events is free.

Kathmandu Film Festival
30 October-1 November
City Hall, Jai Nepal Cinema







MUKESH POKHREL

Lost crops of the Himalaya

Migration, markets, and climate change have reduced cultivation and consumption of nutritious indigenous grains

Mukesh Pokhrel in Mustang

When Sangmu Gurung was a child in this trans-Himalayan district, her parents took her for millet planting in Kagbeni's fertile alluvial fan. The lama performed a special worship for a bountiful harvest.

The banks of the Kali Gandaki have burst into autumn colours of red, gold, and green of ripening buckwheat, millet, barley, and apple. They have to be harvested before the first snow.

But outmigration, processed food and climate breakdown means fewer farms are cultivating indigenous grains of the Himalaya. “Uwa (barley) was not just a food, it was our culture,” Sangmu says.

But the native grains going out of fashion, and with it the unique culture of Mustang, Manang, and Dolpo is also eroding.

Till three years ago, Tshiring Gurung used to plant barley and buckwheat, but now his farm is an apple orchard. It used to be too cold for apples here, but with a warming climate fruit-farming is climbing to higher altitudes, and they are also a more lucrative cash crop.

Mendo Gurung of Tiri village has also switched from barley to apples. She says, “I haven’t planted uwa and kodo (buckwheat) for the last five years, apple earns more.”

In 2015, 472 tonnes of barley was harvested from about 3 sq km of farms in Lower Mustang. Today it is barely 91 tonnes. Buckwheat production has also dropped.

Yaggin Gurung is nostalgic when she remembers the uwa planting season when everyone donned ceremonial bakkhu and white shawls for the prayers in the field before planting.

“It used to be like a festival, growing food was nourishment not just to the body but our culture, but this tradition is dying out," she says. “The next generation will not have a tase for it.”

Mustang has one of the highest outmigration rates among Nepal’s districts, having lost nearly 30% of its population between the 2011 and 2021 census. Young people have migrated to the cities, or to Japan, Korea, and the US.

Thini village at an altitude of 2,800m has 17 houses, but only two planted barley and millet this year. The remaining farms have turned into apple orchards.

APPLE COUNTRY

Down the valley, Thasang and Marhpa used to be famous for their apples, and before the road got here, the fruit would rot in the trees because of lack of access to market. The area became famous for the Marpha apple brandy, but no more.

“It is getting warmer here, so the apples are moving up the mountains,” says Krishna Bhattachan (pictured, above), who like many others has turned to growing vegetables in greenhouses. Mustang's average temperature increased by 2°C from 1981-2014.

Prakash Pantha at Marpha's Temperate Horticulture Development Center says climate change has turned farming upside down. Apple trees require an average temperature of 7°C for 1,000 hours during the growing period to do well. But it is difficult to get sufficient cold hours in Lower Mustang for apples.

Also, it rains when it should not, and there have been snow droughts for eight of the last 10 winters.

“Below Jomsom, the climate is no longer suitable for apple farming, and orchards are moving to higher elevations,” says Pantha. “New pests and diseases are also reducing productivity.”

The Marpha station is itself shifting its apple research, and has acquired 40 hectares of land in Ghemi at 4,000m, a place where apples did not grow before.

For Laxmi Gurung in Kagbeni the spread of apple farming has come at the cost of traditional grain that used to be a part of Mustang's cultural heritage.

“Traditional crops are not only adapted to the local geography, climate, and lifestyle but are also deeply intertwined with local cuisine, festivals, religious and social practices, and community identity,” she says.

UNESCO’s 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage recognises knowledge, skills and practices that communities create, preserve and transmit across generations as important elements of intangible cultural heritage.

The shift to apples and other fruits has increased income for subsistence farmers. This change in cropping patterns may have come anyway because of migration and road connectivity, but climate breakdown has hastened it.

Nepal’s National Agriculture Genetic Resource Center (Genebank) is launching a new program in the Mustang and Manang to preserve indigenous crops and local culture.

“More than half the indigenous knowledge has already disappeared from these areas, in some areas our research found all of it has been lost,” says Balkrishna Joshi of Genebank.

Many of Mustang’s indigenous crops are already in the ‘red list’ such as naked barley, buckwheat, foxtail millet (kaguno) because their cultivation has been declining rapidly each year.

Joshi says besides just preserving the genetic material and culture, the grains are also highly nutritious and more resilient to climate breakdown. Their conservation is therefore important for both food security and biodiversity.

Unseen

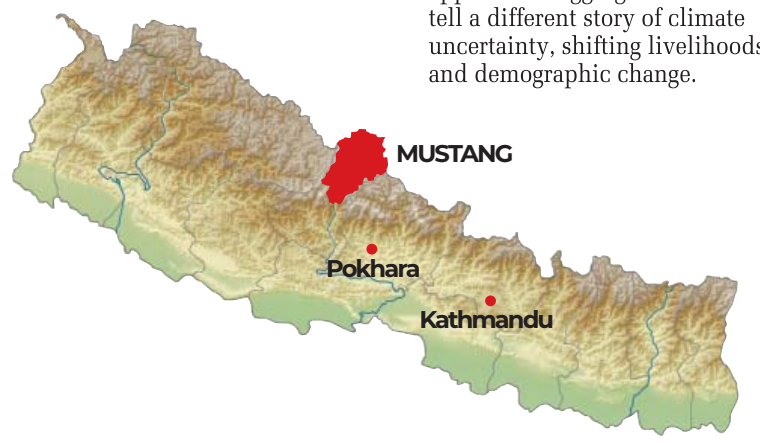


Outmigration, climate breakdown, and literacy have changed society, but not caste system

Simran Silpakar and **Sunayana Basnet** in Mustang

Spring gives way to a rainy monsoon, and then autumn arrives in a quiet, spectacular way. Apple orchards are heavy with fruit in this rugged landscape.

This is a breathtaking sight for tourists who flock here in autumn. However, for locals, apple trees sagging with fruit tell a different story of climate uncertainty, shifting livelihoods, and demographic change.



Good apples and bad apples in Thini

Cushioning apple farmers from oversupply and transport disruptions by improving quality of produce

Carys Hardy in Mustang

Quantity is no longer the problem with Mustang’s apple economy, quality is. And that is what a project in the village of Thini below the snowy peak of Nilgiri is trying to achieve.

The slopes here are bright with autumn foliage, and Ward Chair Pradeep Thakali is working on a project to produce high-quality apples that fetch a higher price in city markets.

Thini’s orchards have seen an increase in apple production in recent years. Demand from Pokhara and Kathmandu has helped farmers sell the fruit, but Thakali worries that the oversupply may outpace consumer demand and lower prices.

The project, Syaa-Grahm (apple village) would push farmers to prioritise quality over quantity and protect the apple economy. Farmers here sell their apples mainly to brokers, who purchase the fruit



CARYS HARDY

in bulk and sell them to retailers.

The project will purchase apples directly from farmers, sort them into quality grades, package, and market them under a consistent brand. Higher-quality A, B, and C are sold directly to consumers, while low-quality grades can be used to produce juice or the apple brandy.

Unsold apples will be cold-stored, to be sold past the harvest season and fetch more. Surplus revenue from Syaa-Grahm will be reinvested into community education, healthcare, farmer training, and fertilisers.

Apple production in Thini doubled or tripled compared to last year, but post-monsoon landslides blocked the highway, disrupting transportation to Pokhara and Kathmandu. Many farmers have apples still hanging on their trees. Thakali's project would protect farmers from similar disruptions in future.

Mandana Thakali (pictured, left) is the manager of Thini’s homestay committee whose family has been apple farming for 45 years. She says, “I think the project will make good use of all our apples, it will enhance the marketing for us and we will sell more.”

Another apple farmer, Batti Thakali has been farming apples since she was a child, and considers the project to be good for the family. “It will help us distinguish between good and bad apples,” she says.

The project has been underway for nearly five years, and Thakali estimates it could take another 10 to 15 years to see results.

“It’s a long-term project,” Thakali explains, “and it has to have community support to happen, this is the best thing we can do going forward.”

hands of Mustang's Dalits





Apples were always central to Mustang's economy and identity, and this more true today than ever before. Cultivation has climbed to higher elevations as temperature rises and rainfall patterns change.

"Earlier apples grew mostly around Marpha, Tukuche and Jomsom," says Triple Gurung, a hotelier in Kagbeni. "Farmers here here believe it has to do with rising temperatures."

Climate breakdown has also made this arid region wetter in summer and there have been many years with winter drought. Farmers in Kheenga say heavy unseasonal rain damages apple blossoms, and the fruit harvest is affected.

Despite these uncertainties, better road connectivity and market linkages have helped apple farmers thrive in recent years. These changes coincide with significant demographic shifts.

Many youth and working age people have migrated to the cities and overseas, leaving behind an elderly population and a major labour shortfall. Today, much of the work sustaining Mustang's orchards and agriculture is carried out by Dalits and migrant workers.

Seasonal migration was once driven by the need to escape the long, harsh winter in the trans-Himalayan plateau. Today, it is for education, employment, and economic opportunities.

THOSE WHO STAY

While many have left, Mustang's Dalit communities have remained, even as their histories and contributions remain overlooked in dominant narratives about the Thakali and Gurung communities here.

Dalits are no newcomers to Mustang. Many households can trace their families' presence here back five generations, settling through their traditional occupations and labour rooted in हात को काम, the 'work of hands'.

They played a vital role in Mustang's economy through skilled and manual labour. Their hereditary caste-based occupations have now diversified into daily wage labour, tourism services, and other non-farm work.

Their lives, however, have unfolded alongside a long history of caste-based exclusion.

Older Mustang Dalits recall how social stigma once structured their everyday life. Says Ram Bahadur BK, "We did all the work with our hands, but these same hands were regarded as being impure."

Another 48-year-old Dalit woman farmer recalled that decades ago, her husband crafted and sold utensils, yet the communities would perform purification rituals before using them.

While education and increased literacy has been a equaliser, yet many Dalits have to make a choice between pursuing studies or support families.

"If we had studied, we could have jobs. We didn't study so we continue to work as labourers," says Rita BK, 37.

Fifty one-year-old Maya BK also could not continue her studies because her family was poor. "I started helping out my father when I was 12 because we needed the money," she adds.

Over time, caste hierarchies have begun to shift in Mustang. Economic interdependence, migration, tourism and increased social interactions have all contributed to blurring the rigid lines of caste and untouchability.

Political transformation, particularly after the Maoist conflict and the 2015 Constitution accelerated this change.

Buddhism does not have such rigid caste hierarchies, and contributed to reducing discrimination. Some Dalits embraced Buddhism alongside local traditions and practices.

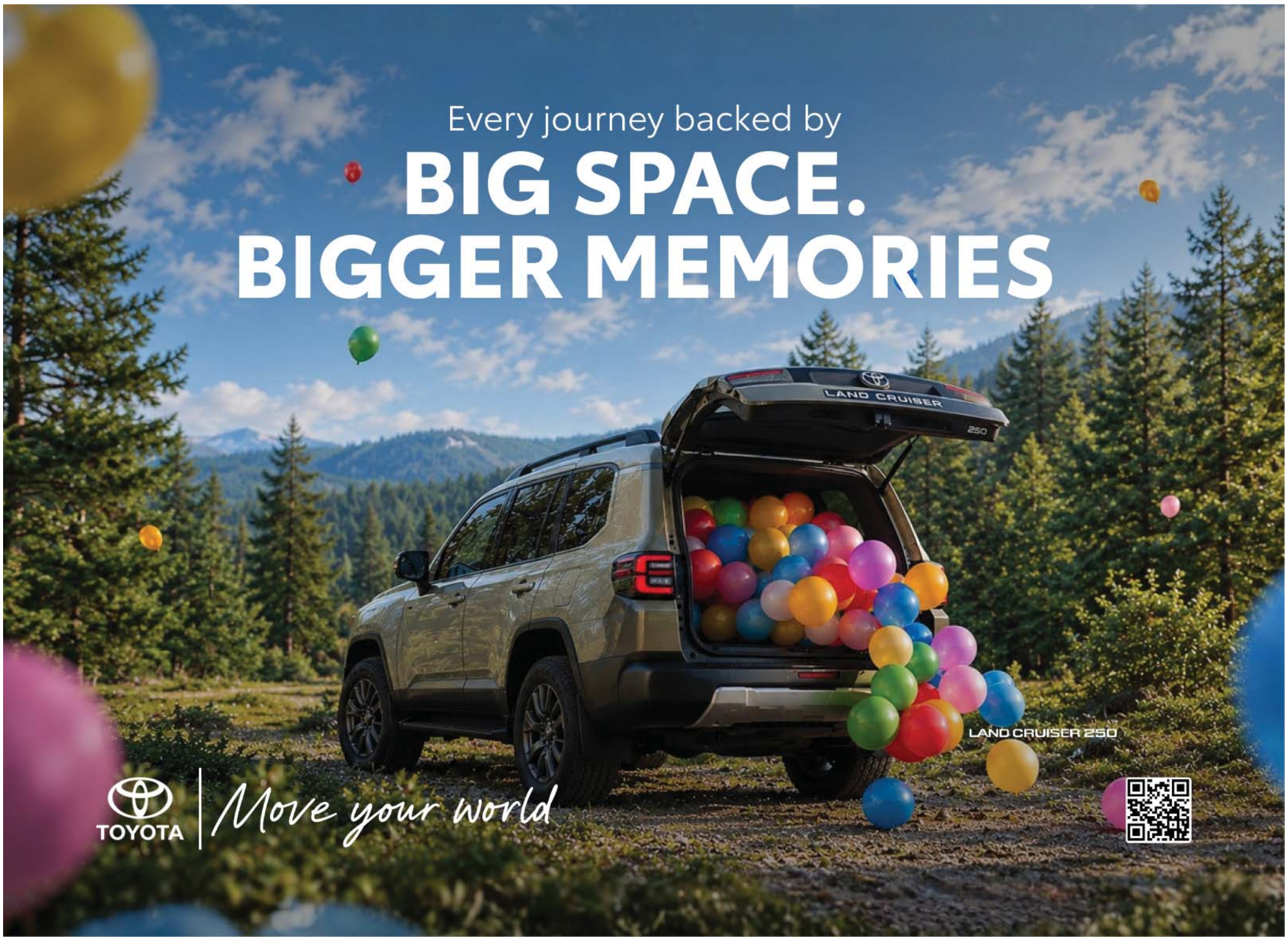
"My brother became a monk which earned him respect here," says Sunita Sunar from Dhakarjong. Overall, the younger generation of Dalits face fewer social barriers than their parents did, with many prioritising education and personal growth.

Yet this has not translated into economic mobility. The historical exclusion of Dalits from education, land ownership and other rights has limited their access to better opportunities.

Traditional occupations such as utensil making are no longer economically viable, and Dalits who stayed back remain tied to wage labour in the apple orchards and the service industry.

Behind the apple blossoms in Mustang are the unseen hands that have sustained this landscape for generations. The pivotal question now is not who leaves but who remains. It is ensuring that Dalits here are no longer the 'left behind'.

Simran Silpakar and Sunayana Basnet are both with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu. Some names have been changed.



www.nepalitimes.com

Forgotten custodians of cultural heritage

The Kami need due recognition for creating and preserving the country's traditions

Arjun Bahadur B K

When Nepal's national heritage is cited, monuments come to mind: Dharara, Pashupatinath, Darbar Squares. History glorifies kings who built them.

We overlook the Kami, the industrious blacksmiths, and their आरण forges and anvils without which no monument was possible. The Kami helped build Nepal.

The Kami smelted, slagged, pounded, hammered, forged, and tempered metals using ingenious indigenous technology.

The आरण forge embodies a rich living knowledge system, grounded in rich oral stories, myths and cultural memories, it can also restore the community's dignity.

But this rich blacksmithing tradition is being forsaken as the youth shift to other occupations due to shrinking earning opportunities and occupational stigma, leading to an irrecoverable loss of generational knowledge.

A new Bill to protect intangible cultural heritage is an opportunity to correct historical wrongs.

IGNORED HISTORY

Ironsmithing in Nepal began as early as the Kirat Period (800 BCE-300 CE). The Licchavi Period (300 CE- 879 CE) was Nepal's golden age for arts, crafts and ironwork. During the Malla era (1200 CE-1769 CE), artisans traded their finely crafted metalwork with India and Tibet.

The Kami and Aagri, a western subgroup within this caste, extracted and smelted metal ore. They forged essential tools for carpenters, shoemakers, masons, and farmers, as well as weapons and minting dies. Blacksmiths sustained the agrarian economy and even helped forge the Nepali nation state.

To the Kami, the forge is not just a workplace, it is a shrine where Lord Vishwakarma and other deities reside. They keep their smelting process a strict secret, believing that if other castes watch their work, it can ruin the process.

Biswakarma Puja marks the day to pay respects to this deity, when all tools, machinery and even computers and escalators receive special reverence.

People often perceive smithing as a dirty occupation, overlooking knowledge of indigenous material science. The Kami knew where to find iron and copper ore, and how to test their quality. They knew exactly how to make bellows, manage fuel resources, and reach the right heat to purify, shape, and temper metal into strong tools.

They knew the skills of hardening and softening metals using just water on heated metal, and used the iron's colour -- blue, yellow or white -- to assess its quality. It was not based on memorised text.



Even though caste society places them at the bottom, the Kami hold total authority inside their workshops.

A master Kami possesses multiple skills beyond his workshop. My grandfather's younger brother was an armourer and a sharpshooter, earning him a three-generation military pension. He was also a traditional healer, adept at bamboo splints to treat broken limbs.

In the 1970s Dalibir Singh Kami from Dailekh built suspension bridges, surveyed highways, and repaired typewriters and helicopters. From 1957 to 1981, Doti's Lal Bd Bishwakarma invented an automated fan, a six-round rifle, a water pump and a generator to produce electricity.

In Kathmandu, Shakti Khati, an ironsmith, works at S K Khukuri Khunda Karkhana making traditional knives and swords (pictured, left).

In Japan and the US, a blacksmith's metal craft and its contribution to economic growth and political freedom are valued. Japan sponsors annual festivals showcasing knives and sword-making demonstrations and designates metal-working masters as important intangible cultural properties.

In the US museums have live workshops that honour blacksmiths for their contribution to the nation's growth and to the American independence movement. In Nepal, many Kami youth are abandoning the craft of their forebears due to low earning opportunities, a declining agrarian economy, the availability of cheap goods, along with caste stigma.

The Nepali blacksmith's forge and its associated technologies can be a proud symbol of invention, innovation, and resilience. To preserve this valuable heritage, direct financial support can help the Kami market products and incorporate their artisanal skills into Nepal's school curriculum, vocational training and to recruit master artisans.

Ironsmithing was never just a mindless menial job, it was a skilled engineering lab and an industry. But a repressive socio-economic system has held it back.

If Nepal's past rulers had understood the reverse-engineering skills of the Kami, perhaps so many ordinary people would not have had to struggle to carry heavy cars on their shoulders and backs across the steep hills of Bhimphedi just for elite comfort.

Arjun Bahadur BK is a PhD Scholar at the Department of Development Studies of Kathmandu University.



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