



Yes, Prime Minister?

Shristi Karki

Even as mayor Balendra Shah was known to be not much of a talker, to have a short fuse, be impulsive, reclusive and reticent. That persona served him well as a do-er, and got him elected to be prime minister.

But 50 days on, the PM's disdain for Parliament, disregard for the international community, and indifference to his own party is starting to tarnish his carefully cultivated cult of personality.

The prime minister had arrived at the joint session of the House on Monday, handed over to President Ram Chandra Poudel the government's plans and programs and about half an hour later, strode out of the chamber.

To be sure, loyalists on the social web (of which there are

many) still admire him as a crusader against corruption, for not meeting foreign emissaries, and for walking out of the House. Like populists elsewhere, Balen's base thinks he can do no wrong.

However, even in the same social media platforms that elevated him to prime ministership, there are now murmurs of dissent about his deafening silence. His enigmatic style is prompting wild conspiracy theories about a possible personality disorder to an authoritarian streak.

SHADED JUSTICE

On Monday, Parliament convened for the second time since the election. The prime minister last month had the president suspend it so he could pass a slew of ordinances, including one that allowed him to induct a new Chief Justice of his choice.

The RSP's unique selling point has always been that it is different from old parties. But the ordinances exposed it as being no different.

The opposition was up in arms against the government's recent moves on the forced eviction of the landless, the ruling by ordinance, appointment of the new Chief Justice bypassing three seniors, about not being approached to discuss the budget.

Is it the राष्ट्रिय budget, one opposition leader asked, or the Rastriya Swatantra Party budget?, some asked amidst rumours that the draft was being written at the PMO and not at the Finance Ministry. It is being called a 'Balen Budget'.

On Wednesday, the PM was scheduled to answer questions in the House about the government's plans. But at the last minute, he designated Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle to do the job.

The House was in uproar, and had to be adjourned. MPs from the ruling party including RSP chair Rabi Lamichhane sat stone-faced through it all. The House session opened on Thursday amidst continued protests.

The prime minister himself does not seem to be affected by all this, sanguine about his vast support on the digital platforms. His action-oriented statesman persona with

little patience for the old ways of doing things is still hugely popular.

"The PM's absence from Parliament is atypical behaviour, and he would do himself a lot of favour by following established democratic practices—but he does not seem so inclined," says political analyst Tula Narayan Shah.

He adds: "Democracy is a process-oriented system, but the RSP is more result oriented, and not concerned with process."

This time, frustration boiled over even among his base. Many pointed out the irony of a figure who had once sung 'मलाई बोल्न दे सरकार' in rap to his silence now.

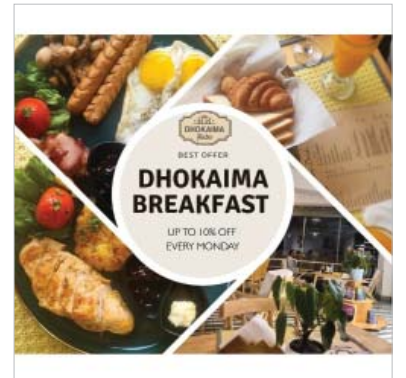
Even so, analysts point out that Nepal's civil society and media are largely Kathmandu-centered, and not pro-RSP. Meanwhile, RSP is an emerging elite with a youth and grassroots supporter base.

"These people voted for the RSP in hopes that their lives would not be plagued by corruption and daily bureaucratic and governance inconveniences—and they are already seeing those changes on the ground," notes Shah. "So they are more concerned about service delivery improvement at the grassroots and less so about the parliamentary process."

RSP lawmaker Manish Jha said last month during the first session of Parliament: "The House is not a public square or tea shop where one can arrive, speak, and leave as they please. It should be a university where we come having done our homework, ready to ask questions, table proposals, and prepared to make presentations. It should be where the people's questions find meaning."

This week, it seems as though PM Shah needed to hear Jha's word the most. 🇳🇵

It is never all black or white
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2



It is never all black or white

With great majority comes great responsibility. Failure is not an option for the RSP.

Sonia Awale

Here we are on exactly Day 50 of the new government under Prime Minister Balendra Shah. Let us recap: he has lost two ministers so far, he sent bulldozers out to flatten riverside settlements, he suspended Parliament to pass an ordinance to amend voting in the Constitutional Council so his man could be appointed chief justice, he walked out of the House as President Ram Chandra Poudel read out his own government's programs on Monday.

He has never spoken to the media, communicates sparingly through tweets, refuses to meet foreign envoys, and he has raked up a territorial dispute with India.

Prime Minister Balendra Shah is still performing like Rapper Balen. As disruptor-in-chief, he is just being true to his own brand: someone voted in to shake things up.

Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution went about ruthlessly to throw out the 'Four Olds': old customs, old culture, old habits, old ideas. When Nepal's Maoists took up arms 30 years ago, and later when they were elected to power in 2008, Pushpa Kamal Dahal also promised "ऋम भङ्ग", a paradigm shift. We know what became of that.

DISRUPTOR-IN-CHIEF

Shah is a post-ideological prime minister, and is answering the call of voters to remove all olds, which means anyone and everything with links to the legacy parties and their discredited leaders. Rule of law and due



PMO NEPAL

process be damned.

By going it alone and acting in the way he does, the prime minister has met resistance from the opposition parties. That was to be expected, but there is now anxiety even within his own RSP, the party which he has pointedly ignored as a nuisance (page 1).

Everyone, even those who have misgivings about the prime minister's trajectory, want to give him a chance. But there is a pattern emerging: a new development every other day to be overtaken and overshadowed by another – all amplified in cyberspace.

Each new episode polarises society some more. The prime minister's supporters do

not want to be proven wrong that he is a young Lee Kuan Yew steering Nepal to a bright future. They dare anyone to utter a peep.

His critics, on the other hand, pick apart every detail (the prime minister wearing sports shoes in Parliament) which dilutes genuine criticism of more serious breaches of democratic principles.

Support and opposition to Prime Minister Shah and the RSP is played out in real time on social media. It is a no-

holds-barred duel between भोले and घण्टे, the derogatory names they call each other. In this din, any debate about rights, morality, freedom and values is not possible.

For too long, the public endured chronic malgovernance and corruption, and there is a lot to set right with the RSP's big electoral mandate. But with great majority comes great responsibility. Absolute power also corrupts absolutely, there need to be checks.

More worryingly, the PMO and the government seem to be working at cross purposes. The prime minister does not hide his disregard for the House and his own party.

For the sake of Nepal's future stability, reports of rifts between the Prime Minister

Shah and party chair Rabni Lamichhane should not be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The RSP concluded a second orientation for its MPs this week, but the person who probably needed it most was the prime minister. What was evident over those two days is emblematic of the larger problem.

When RSP MP from Dhading Ashika Tamang took to social media to question the decision to organise orientations at fancy hotels when conference halls at Singha Darbar are empty, the party reprimanded her instead of reflecting on her suggestion. Another RSP lawmaker was found to be live on TikTok during the briefings.

All eyes are now on the annual budget speech on 29 May. But there has been little or no parliamentary consultation so far, and the prime minister is AWOL. Finance Minister Wagle faces the difficult task of translating the RSP's 100-point plan into do-able budget lines, while reportedly dealing with interference from the PMO.

The RSP stands as an antithesis to everything that was wrong with the older parties: politics, and the system. But it must not discredit itself on the very principles they were against, like rewarding party loyalists with appointments to the 1,500 office-bearers sacked last week.

Not all old is bad, not all new is good. New leaders bring fresh ideas, while older politicians can have integrity and experience. Not everyone with political affiliation is tainted, just as apolitical individuals can be untested or incompetent.

It is never all black or white. There is a lot of grey in between. 🇳🇵

Trending Online



Hard test for education

by Shalav Rana
Nepal does not need to go back to 100-mark final exams, but it cannot afford to replace them with just good intentions. The government's no-exam reform needs training that builds teacher capacity and effective monitoring. Read analysis at nepalimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook



Hydrocarbon to Carbohydrates

by Sonia Awale
The shortage of imported petroleum is affecting food production and fertiliser availability. Hydropower can be harnessed to produce fertiliser to reduce imports and boost harvests. Read report online.

Most popular on X

Bus plunges off the road

by Arnab Upadhyay
Nepal has the highest per passenger kilometre traffic fatality rate in the world, with more than 4,500 people killed every year. Upgrading road safety could save at least 40,000 lives in the next ten years. Details on the website, see page 4.

Most commented

Yatri, the Traveller

by Raj Lamsal
In this edition of Diaspora Diaries, a Nepali limousine driver in Dubai looks at life and fortune through literature and poetry. Go online to read about his journey.

Most visited online page

Letters

EXAMS

There are many alternatives to Nepal's flawed exam system ('A hard test for education', Shalav Rana, #1310). Teachers can carry out continuous assessment based on critical observation of students' understanding, processing, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation of activities. Teachers will need to be trained in planning lessons and administering them while taking into account types of learners, levels, and developmental stages. It is doable and can be easily implemented. I am optimistic about the government's stand on this.

Gyanendra Banks

■ It is true that teacher training is lacking particularly in remote parts of the country, and they

need training in continual assessment that is not cumbersome. The new government has stipulated no exams till Grade 5, even before this there were supposed to be no exams till Grade 3. But how many schools followed this? We need a changed mindset from the school authorities first.

Kalpana Parajuli

FUEL & FOOD

What a disaster ('Hydrocarbons to carbohydrates', Sonia Awale, #1310), why are these petrol-based fertilisers used in Nepal's fragile ecology?

Sabine Meyer

LANDLESS

Our journalists have worked hard over the years to lose credibility. It will take time and sincerity to build it back up ('The landless become homeless' Vishad Raj Onta, #1310). Without putting into context the sorry state of journalism, it is an

empty rhetoric to split the populace into mass media and social media users.

Abhi Parajuli

DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

How do you know so much about the vulnerabilities of government servers? Do you work there? ('Putting the digital cart before the horse', Ayusha Chalise #1310)

DipAce Baral

ACCIDENTS

This issue is serious. ('Another bus plunges off the road', Arnab Upadhyay, page 4). The government collects taxes from vehicles up to 200%, but why are those funds not earmarked for safety? The public is desensitised to news of highway deaths. This is the highest form of negligence, not just by the state but also by people. Gone are the days when we boasted about the length of roads, make them safe first.

David Seddon

■ There are over ten times more cars in my country of residence, and annual death toll is about 200. There are 200 times more deadly accidents per vehicle in Nepal. It is not only roads but attitudes also.

Tapio Portimo

■ It seems driving tests address vehicle handling but not road use, vehicle positioning and lane management.

Ian Wall

■ I have hundreds of hours on Nepali buses. Some bus drivers in Nepal are playing with the lives of the passengers. Harzadous overtaking and reckless driving all day long. If the road is bad, drive slow, but in Nepal it's a competition to get to Kathmandu first. These villains need to be stopped and their license stripped - no second chance.

Ben-Erik Ness

Online Package



NJJR SAGA

The Nepal Jaynagar-Janakpur Railway (NJJR) opened for business December 1937 and 76 years of remarkable narrow-gauge railroading in Nepal ended in 2014. Watch video on our YouTube channel.



BEEKEEPER OF MUSIKOT

Chuman Gharti Magar taught himself bee-keeping so he would not have to migrate for work. Magar now keeps 150 hives of local Asian honeybees. Subscribe for multimedia content.

1,000 Words



PARLIAMENT SECRETARIAT

EMPTY SEAT: Prime Minister Balendra Shah continues to be absent from House proceedings after walking out in the middle of President Ram Chandra Poudel's address to a joint Parliament session on 11 May. The PM was scheduled to answer questions on his government's plans and policies on Wednesday, but sparked outrage among opposition lawmakers when he sent in Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle on his behalf last-munite. Shah was absent on Thursday as well.

Nepal Times

Follow @nepalimes on Facebook
Follow @nepalimes on Twitter
Follow @nepalimes on Instagram

Editor: Sonia Awale | Special Correspondent: Shristi Karki

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

Publisher: Kunda Dixit, Nepal Times Pvt Ltd, Patan Dhoka | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu, Nepal

editors@nepalimes.com | www.nepalimes.com | Tel: +977 1 5445310



SAMSUNG

Galaxy S26 Ultra Galaxy AI ✨



Now EMI is *nearly halved, starting at just **NPR 3636/month**


NLG INSURANCE
COMPANY LIMITED
+
**1 year breakage
insurance*****

Insta Finance
Extended **24**
months EMI | Just bring
your Citizenship

+ 
**Exchange facility
available~~**

Authorized Distributors of Samsung Mobile for Nepal



Him Electronics Pvt. Ltd.



Finance Partner

Samsung Customer Care Center

NTC user : 166001-72667
Ncell user : 98015-72667



facebook.com/SamsungNepal



instagram.com/SamsungNepal

Image simulated. Samsung Account login may be required to use certain Samsung AI features. Products sold separately. Color and features as per availability. Samsung does not make any promises, assurances or guarantees as to the accuracy, completeness or reliability of the output provided by AI features. Availability of Galaxy AI features may vary depending on the region/country, OS/One UI version, device model and phone carrier. Galaxy AI features will be provided for free until the end of 2026 on supported Samsung Galaxy devices. Different terms may apply for AI features provided by third parties. Galaxy AI service may be limited for minors in certain regions with age restrictions over AI usage. ***1 time breakage insurance provided for free for the Galaxy S26 series with validity of 1 year from the date of activation provided by NLG Insurance Co Ltd (NLG TnC apply). EMI at sole discretion of NBFC/issuer. EMI amount calculated on the Galaxy S26 Base variant. EMI facility will be provided for upto 24 months. *Nearly halve basis 12 months EMI. HFL is trademark of Hulas Finance Hire Purchase Limited. For details visit nearest Samsung shop. --Exchange facility subject to dealer discretion and basis model. Product delivery shall be under first come first serve basis. All third party logos/ marks shown are registered/owned/licensed logos/ marks of respective brand owners.

Another bus plunges off the road

The perils of bad roads and bad driving in Nepal is costing a tragic loss of lives



DRIVE LINE

Arnav Upadhyay

- 4 killed in bus plunge Arghakhanchi, 12 May
- 20 killed in jeep crash Rolpa, 30 April
- 13 students injured in bus crash Jhapa, 30 April
- 19 die in bus fall, Dhading, 23 February

Nepal has the highest per passenger kilometer traffic fatality rate in the world. More than 4,500 people are killed on roads and highways every year, and improving safety could save 40,000 lives in the next ten years.

The jeep that plunged off the a mountain road in remote Rolpa last month had a capacity of 10 passengers, but was carrying more than double that number, and 20 of them died when the vehicle fell 500m into the valley below.

I have been writing this automobile review column for Nepali Times, and have my own YouTube channel with driving tips. But being on the road for as much time as I do, road and highway safety (or the lack thereof) has always worried me.

Recently, I had just shut my cameras after test driving the Jaecoo J6T, and was flipping through the checklist of shots needed for my video. I had parked the car on the left shoulder of the road on the way to Godavari.

Suddenly there was a screech of tyres followed by a loud crash and



SHANKHAR SHRESTHA / RSS

bang. It was a young speeding biker who had collided with a mother and her child crossing the road on a scooter. Seeing this unfold on my rearview mirror, I jumped out to check. As usual, a crowd of locals had already gathered.

The biker was crouched on the side of the road, pressing his knee. His bike was lying sideways on the ground further ahead, grease and oil oozing out. The mother knelt, hugging her child. The scooter's front had absorbed most of the impact and splintered. Thankfully, casualties looked minimal.

This was one of 'accidents' that can easily turn deadly on Nepal's roads and highways. Highway

fatalities are the biggest killers of young people in Nepal, half the accidents involve motorcycles, two-thirds of those killed are bike drivers, pillion riders, or pedestrians hit by two-wheelers.

POWERFUL VEHICLES

As vehicles get more sophisticated and powerful, the highway infrastructure improves, vehicles are moving faster and over longer distances also grow. But awareness about road safety has not risen with the same velocity. Pedestrians are not used to the higher speeds when crossing roads.

Nepal sees on average 75 road accidents daily. Sometimes it is two

two-wheelers colliding, and often it is a bike and car hitting each other. Documentation of multi-vehicle-collisions are on the rise.

Growing up, two-lane highways were wide enough to handle traffic. The numbers of vehicles have grown, while urban roads have stayed the same.

The average bike has gone up from 100cc to 250cc and above, while cars have risen from 1,000 cc to more than 1,500. And that is without calculating instant-torque and capacity electric vehicles provide. And most importantly, those two-lane highways have expanded to eight-lanes like the Ring Road or the Pokhara highway.

The new government under Prime Minister Balendra Shah's RSP has pledged to act to reduce road and highway fatalities. Traffic police have ramped up issuing fines for road rule violators. At every intersection, officers are busy policing both two and four wheelers to not only follow the traffic lights, but also maintain lane discipline.

And while the number of fines and overall policing have improved in urban areas, common sense road etiquette have not improved. Habits like not overtaking on a blind turn, or maintaining braking distance at higher speeds is overlooked. Such driving behaviour not only endangers one's own vehicle and passengers, but those on the road.

Safety has a multiplier effect. If one drives safely, the 20 people around are safe, but one dangerous driver can endanger the lives of those 20. This is not all to say that the entirety of the blame is irrational human behavior – bad road conditions compound the problem.

Lack of properly built roads with safety infrastructure, railings, markings and signage can make the difference between life and death when frequently used highways are dusty, rocky and slippery.

Even as I continue to share road experiences through POV vlogs on YouTube for cars and bikes, the harsh truth is that public attention often comes only after tragedy strikes. If the speeding biker had just slowed down given that it was a busy area, and if the scooter had stopped and looked both ways patiently before merging onto the road, think how differently things might have turned out for all concerned. 🇳🇵

Arnav Upadhyay is a content creator who reviews automobiles and promotes road safety for his Nepali Times column, Drive Line. He is also on Youtube, Tiktok and IG under the handle Casually Annoyed Driver.

BRIEFS

Startups shortlisted

The Industrial Enterprise Development Institute has shortlisted 1,301 startups out of 10,244 applicants for subsidised loans from Rs500,000 to Rs2 million, with 500 expected to receive final approval. Startups were under seven years old with annual income and paid-up capital below Rs5 million.

Budget portal

A web portal has been launched to collect public input on the upcoming annual budget for the next fiscal year. The platform is open to all Nepali citizens inside and outside the country. A suggestion-tracking feature allows users to monitor the status of their submissions and government responses.



Yeti + NIMB

Yeti Airlines has appointed NIMB Ace Capital as Issue and Sales Manager for its upcoming Initial Public Offering. The agreement was signed between Anup Acharya, CFO of Yeti Airlines, and Sachindra Dhungana, Deputy CEO of NIMB Ace Capital.



Marriott donation

Kathmandu Marriott Hotel donated a fully equipped science lab to Kamal Adharbhat School in Kamal Pokhari on 6 May to enable students to move beyond textbook learning into hands-on experiments.

Climbing permits

A total of 1,072 climbers from 79 countries have received mountaineering permits for Nepal's spring 2026 season, with Everest drawing the most interest at 464 permits from 55 nations. Chinese climbers lead with 139, followed by Americans with 132. The government has collected over Rs1.17 billion in royalties, 90% of it for Everest alone.

Remittance up

Nepal's remittance inflow calculated in rupees has gone up because of USD appreciation, but does not seem to have been adversely affected by the West Asia conflict. Inflows hitting a record Rs209.75 billion between mid-March and mid-April 2026. Nine-month remittance earnings surged 39.1% to Rs1.65 trillion, equivalent to roughly 33% of GDP — up from 27.8% last year. The growth came despite a 3.36% decline in migrant worker numbers, increasing migration to Western countries, and a shift to formal digital banking channels.

Hyperscale Data Center

Bichuten Data Vault is building Nepal's first Tier IV Hyperscale Data Center in Kathmandu and Birgunj which will start at 240kW capacity and scale to 5MW by 2030. Partnering with Google Cloud, AMD, WDN Technologies, and Micron, BDV says it aims to ensure Nepal's data stays inside the country.

Bank chairs resign

The chairs of Rastriya Banijya Bank, Agricultural Development Bank, and Nepal Bank Limited have resigned following the government's decision to remove politically appointed officials from public institutions. At Rastriya Banijya Bank, the entire board stepped down.



Hyatt Butwal

Within six months of opening, Hyatt Place Butwal has received three honors from the Hotel Critics & Bloggers Association: Nepal's Best Hotel 2026, Nepal's Best Destination Wedding Venue 2026, and Nepal's Best General Manager 2026. GM Tushar Nagar credited the achievement to his team's dedication.



Ather in Janakpur

Ather inaugurated its 10th Experience Center in Janakpur on 11 May to showcase the Ather 450 series and the Rizta. Visitors can take test rides, explore financing options, and learn about the scooters. Ather offers an 8-year battery warranty and access to 40+ fast-charging stations nationwide.

Bajaj Grand Exchange

Hansraj Hulaschand has launched the Grand Exchange Carnival at Bhrikuti Mandap till 17 May for exchanging Bajaj motorcycles or scooters for newer models, with 22 appraisers providing on-site valuations with discounts of up to Rs100,000, plus free accessories and servicing.

RE Guerrilla 450

Royal Enfield has launched the Guerrilla 450, an urban roadster at Rs899,000 across APEX, Dash, and Flash variants, available in eight colours. The bike features a 452cc single-cylinder liquid-cooled Sherpa engine, a 6-speed gearbox, ride-by-wire technology, and two riding modes.

A difficult question for David Attenborough

Nepali researcher is still looking for answers to balancing nature conservation with human livelihoods

Bibek Raj Shrestha

It was a packed hall in the summer of 2019 at the 20th anniversary of the Student Conference on Conservation Science in Cambridge. An empty chair waited for one man.

Hundreds of students and researchers excitedly anticipated the arrival of David Attenborough. The British nature broadcaster and writer marked his 100th birthday last week, but back then at age 93 he was as sharp and witty as ever.

I was one of 25 researchers selected to ask him a question that day, and waited nervously for my turn. My question concerned the dilemma we face in Nepal: “How can developing nations prioritise conservation while simultaneously tackling poverty and daily livelihood crises?”

Sir David paused for a while, smiled, and said, “That’s a very difficult question.” The room erupted in laughter.

After finding out that I was from Nepal, he added: “It is ultimately more practical and economically sensible to look after the natural world, to take from it what we need, and no more.”

This was classic Attenborough wisdom, logically simple and delivered with a twinkle in his eye. He turned the question back toward us students: it was up to us to find the balance between nature and human wellbeing in our research.

Seven years later, that “difficult question” has become central to my PhD research.

Attenborough’s documentaries like Planet Earth, The Blue Planet and others inspired the imagination of millions across generations.

His mellifluous narrator voice is instantly recognisable



BIBEK RAJ SHRESTHA



EGIL DROGE

and convincing about the value of nature. This was environmental communication at its best — powerful, persuasive and positive.

TOUGH CHOICES

One of the first films David Attenborough narrated was the black and white BBC documentary in 1958 *The Land of the Gurkhas* which followed anthropologist Christoph von Haimendorf as he travelled across Nepal.

There were later films on the Himalaya, tigers, honey hunters. He narrated short films on the trafficking of pangolins and red panda conservation for the Whitley Awards of both Tulshi Laxmi Suwal and Sonam Lama.

But for people in countries like Nepal, the question has never been about whether nature is precious. It is how conservation can coexist with daily survival.

Conservation asks us to examine uncomfortable questions about how nature itself has been presented to

the world. For decades, wildlife documentaries showed nature as pristine wilderness, untouched, and separate from humans.

Forests appear without roads. Rivers flowed without dams. Animals existed without borders, politics, or conflict. The people living closest to biodiversity, often indigenous communities and rural populations, were frequently absent from the frame.

The result was a powerful wonder, but also emotional distance. Viewers could admire melting glaciers or endangered species while still imagining environmental collapse as something happening somewhere else, disconnected from economics, governance, or consumption.

Researchers question whether such documentaries, despite their beauty, encourage passive admiration rather than pushing for structural change to avert the climate and ecological crises.

Sir David’s more recent films like *A Life on Our Planet* on Netflix feel less like celebrations of wilderness and more as dire warnings. The calm narrator who once introduced viewers to hidden corners of the Earth is now vocal about biodiversity collapse, pollution and climate breakdown.

His words seven years ago about “not taking more than we need” resonate still. Countries like Nepal have historically consumed very little compared to industrial economies, yet face the consequences of overconsumption. This global inequity is now also reflected within Nepal. Such questions add another layer of complexity. Nepal contributes very little to global emissions, yet faces floods, glacier melting, erratic rainfall, biodiversity loss, and growing ecological uncertainty.

Conservation should not just be about saving wildlife. It is tied to livelihoods, tourism, hydropower, migration, indigenous rights, and

survival itself.

How do countries struggling with inequality, unemployment, and political instability also protect ecosystems? Who carries the cost of conservation? What does justice look like in the age of climate breakdown? And can conservation succeed if local communities themselves are excluded from decision-making?

There are now even more questions. What I remember most from that day at Cambridge is not a celebrity but a global conservation icon admitting to a researcher from Nepal that perhaps conservation is not just about protecting nature, but also about negotiating justice and the future simultaneously.

There are no easy answers, and it may be why David Attenborough paused before saying, “That is a very difficult question.”

Bibek Raj Shrestha is a PhD researcher at University of East Anglia, UK, working on conservation and human well-being in Nepal.

International coalition to phase out fossil fuels

57 countries launch a new drive on the energy transition against the backdrop of the Hormuz blockade

Julian Reingold

As the US and Israeli war against Iran puts oil at the centre of global concerns, an intergovernmental coalition seeks to accelerate the energy transition outside the UN convention system.

The coalition’s 57 members account for almost half of global GDP and met this month in Santa Marta, Colombia, for the First Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels.

“It is essential to keep our planet liveable, to safeguard energy security, and to build economic resilience to volatile fossil fuel markets, states the conference’s final communiqué.

DECARBONISATION

The conference was significant for its discussions on what the consequences of decarbonisation mean for oil exporters, said Susana Muhamad, Colombia’s ambassador for the initiative to create a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

“Can capitalism adapt to an energy system that is not fossil-based?” asked Colombian President Gustavo Petro in an auditorium full of delegates from Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, France and the European Union as well as small island states in the Caribbean and the South Pacific.

Noticeably absent were representatives of the United States and China, the world’s two biggest carbon emitters, as well as Russia and India. They were deliberately not invited to



NEW DEAL: Colombian President Gustavo Petro speaks at the First Conference on the Transition Beyond Fossil Fuels.

COLOMBIAN MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

avoid the kind of obstructionism that led to the deadlocks in COP negotiations.

“When you make a plan, you first call your closest friends, and then you send the invitation to the rest,” Juan Carlos Monterrey Gómez of Panama’s Ministry of the Environment said.

Other attendees had mixed feelings about the invite list. While Claudio Angelo, an international policy coordinator at the Climate Observatory, a network of Brazilian environmental organisations, agreed that inviting Donald Trump’s climate-denying US administration would have been “unnecessary”, he added: “China should be here, as it supplies renewable energy

technology to the whole world.”

A new report by 350.org, a global grassroots movement to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels, found that consumers pay three times for fossil fuels: through public subsidies, on their bills, and through the natural disasters that are a direct consequence of the climate crisis.

“Oil is nobody’s friend,” said Angelo, noting that the international community has viewed the energy transition more favourably as solar and wind technologies have become more accessible over the past decade.

Installed capacity of renewable energy was 50% higher last year than in 2023 and

almost all new energy demand is being met by renewable sources, according to the final communiqué of the meeting.

Stientje van Veldhoven, the Dutch minister for climate and green growth said the meeting was the first step towards a proactive coalition of governments that do not negotiate, as happens at the UN, but rather collaborate with one another.

Harjeet Singh, the founder and director of the India-based Satat Sampada Climate Foundation said the war in Iran has opened people’s eyes to the vulnerability inherent in dependence on fossil fuels.

India self-funds 80% of its climate initiatives and needs trillions more dollars for its transition away from fossil fuels.

Colombia remains the world’s deadliest country for environmental activists – an issue that must be addressed at the election on 31 May and can serve as a gateway to discussing wider environmental policies.

Climate hazards will be on full display at next year’s COP, where delegates will visit one of the countries most threatened by rising sea levels: the South Pacific island nation of Tuvalu that is co-hosting the second conference with Ireland.

“We, the small Pacific Islands, have no choice but to be ambitious,” said Brianna Fruean, a climate activist from Samoa, at a rally during the Colombian conference. “The next summit in Tuvalu will put faces to our countries and bring world leaders to the frontline of the climate crisis.”

A longer version of this article was originally published on [opendemocracy.net](https://www.opendemocracy.net)



PHOTOS: MT REFUGE

The wool, silk a

Frankfurt exhibition bridges gaps between art-craft, artist-artisan, designer-maker

Sophia L Pandé

Floor coverings are a vital part of our lives to protect our feet and floors with traditional dhurries (woven jute or allo mats) or higher end, more designed rugs for decoration to bring comfort and quality to our living spaces.

However, unlike a painting or a sculpture carefully placed in our homes, carpets do not inhabit the same category of fine art. We do not know the maker's name, and they are rarely a topic of conversation or a proud acquisition like the fine art we tend to highlight.

Carpets are in the category of 'applied arts' alongside other products designed for practical use, like ceramics. The 'fine arts' include painting, sculpture and architecture, and some crafts.

An inherent discrimination is folded into the separation of these creative activities: in the fine arts there is a recognised author or creator whose name is alongside if not on the artwork itself. For the applied arts the maker is anonymous, though they often made the piece with their own hands, using their creativity and skills — sometimes developed over generations as inherited knowledge — even while their name is not acknowledged.

These distinctions carry social



and economic consequences. Fine art commands a higher price, the applied artist is often underpaid, their work thought of as manual labour. Nepal's carpets are intricate, beautiful, and were famous in the 1990s, particularly in Europe. Germany imported them in vast quantities, supercharging a homegrown industry in Nepal.

That industry was itself an import, the skill of knotting and weaving came in with Tibetan refugees in the 1960s and was formalised into an industry with the

Architectural kinship between Kathmandu and Quito

Himalayan and Andean dwellers use similar nature-based materials and design

Vishad Raj Onta

Traditional reed bridges in the Nepal Himalaya are similar to those in the Andes, showing how people on opposite sides of the planet living in similar circumstances come up with the same building solutions.

Does this uncanny resemblance stem from serendipitous design of the same structures because of similar topography, or is it because the indigenous people of the Americas originally migrated from High Asia across the Bering Strait during the last Ice Age?

Visitors can gauge for themselves at the Materia Awards Mountain Architecture Exhibition (MaMa '26) that brings Andean and Himalayan designs in an architectural dialogue through nature-based materials.

"If you look at this project in Quito, it could be in Dhulikhel, no? Why not?" asks Anne Feenstra, founder of Kathmandu-based Sustainable Mountain Architecture (SMA), about the yoga and therapeutic centre ÁGAPE (pictured, right). The building looks like a concave accordion and is designed by the Ecuadoran architecture firm RAMA estudio.

The similar geography of Ecuador and Nepal allows for similar architectural styles. "The idea is that we can learn from each other," says Feenstra.

The light rammed earth and timber design uses local nature-based materials, is seismic resistant, and has insulating



RAMA ESTUDIO

properties ideal for the local climate.

Indeed, the Quito centre is similar to buildings by Nepal's Abari, Sustainable Future Nepal or Ramro Mato and would blend in perfectly at Nagarkot or Sarangkot.

The ÁGAPE building has a healing touch, cars are kept away, providing therapeutic space for mind and body. There are bright and airy multipurpose rooms for yoga, art or sculpture, as well as a residential space.

RAMA estudio has designed the main facade with slender triangles made of laminated timber beams, and the rammed earth walls let the building breathe. The unique door handles, sinks and lampshades are crafted by local artisans, and a water management system traps rainfall and grey water from sinks and showers.

The exhibition in Kathmandu spotlights six projects in the Himalaya and Andes that emphasise local materials, climate responsiveness, and sustainability, while being frugal and functional in design.



SMA

SAFER BUILDINGS

Narayan Acharya of Sustainable Future Nepal gave a demonstration to build seismic resistance mud-based structures. He says builders and the public in Nepal are not aware of safer designs with locally-sourced materials. "These buildings are earthquake-proof because the walls are thicker," explained Acharya. "Building this way is a little more expensive than concrete structures, but the pay-off is worth it."

Another Nepali exhibit is the SMA-designed Silinge Maternity Centre in Makwanpur that addresses the high maternal and infant mortality among the indigenous Chepang community of the region.

SMA departed from the typical concrete block design for hospitals in Nepal. It uses light cavity bricks, eucalyptus timber, slate roof tiles, and terrazzo flooring with a high butterfly roof that allows cross-ventilation for natural temperature control.

Another of RAMA estudio's projects from

Ecuador is CASA TALLER in Guápulo near Quito. Once a village, Guápulo is now urbanised with self-built houses occupied by artists, migrants, tourists, and students.

CASA TALLER was retrofitted with structural rehab removing anything that added weight. The project demonstrates that 'self-built, abandoned, dilapidated structures can be renovated and repurposed with a low budget — something Nepal could emulate.

The exhibition also showcases SMA's Deumadi Mountain Cottage, an elegant structure above Begnas Lake in Pokhara that is designed to open up towards the Annapurnas, and let in moonlight at night through its large windows. The roof is made of extra-thin local slate so they are safe during earthquakes. 🇳🇵

Materia Awards Mountain Architecture Exhibition
Till Friday, 15 May
Alliance Française de Kathmandu
Jhamsikhel
Free entrance

and resistance of Nepal's carpets



he might bring attention back to the fine craft of carpet weaving and knotting, he knew he had to do so in a specific, creative way.

Tsherin Sherpa (pictured, left), the American-Nepali artist, had been thinking along similar lines to highlight craftsmanship. After the 2015 earthquake, Sherpa returned to Nepal permanently. He was struck by the ravages wrought by the earthquake, particularly on cultural heritage: wood carvings, metalworks and other artifacts made by the fine Newa artisans who have passed these skills down through generations.

Sherpa was also troubled by the distinction made between fine artists and craftspeople or artisans. Over the years since the earthquake, and at the 2022 Venice Biennale Nepal Pavilion (a first for Nepal) he sought to underline the skills required to create repoussé and woven works.

MELDED MUDRAS

The metalwork installation of traditional mudras, metal hands and feet melded together alongside a half-woven carpet displaying the warp and weft of the loom laid bare the complex inner workings of an artwork's process. By then, Sherpa and Wangchuk had already met, with the latter extending his ideas to Sherpa for a collaboration, taking Tsherin's original art and transforming it into limited edition carpets. Mt. Refuge, a high end carpet house, was birthed with the production of exquisite carpets made for the discerning collector.

Since then, the collaboration has featured in numerous prestigious shows including the Venice Biennale, Art Basel in Hong Kong, in 2024, and now, currently in an exhibition titled Wool. Silk. Resistance at the Museum Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt that will continue until 14 June.



The exhibition was the brainchild of Katharina Weiler, a German art historian who has worked at the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. Familiar with Nepal's arts, and the key role that artisans play in their creation, she chose to highlight the renaissance of carpets as both fine art and works of resistance -- particularly against the notion of carpet makers as manual labourers who fulfill the 'orders of the West'.

The exhibition also includes works by Jan Kath, a German designer, who has a workshop here near Boudha exporting exquisite abstract carpets specially developed by Kath himself who comes from a long line of carpet designers who understand that the art of the carpet is more than just a rote type of knotting and weaving.

On view in the exhibition are

two artworks designed by Sherpa and executed by Wangchuk and his artisans at Mt. Refuge. The Lone Ranger, Coral (2022), is made for the Year of the Tiger, showing the creature in the style of classical Tibetan weaves that are traditionally not used for the floor, but as wall hangings and table mats. Backgrounding the tiger, what looks like traditional Tibetan script is actually a group of sage Buddhist sayings in Roman script but delineated in a way to fool the eyes of all but the closest observers, to give depth to the carpet both literally and figuratively.

Stairway to Heaven (2024) is a long, upward ascending carpet made for the Year of the Dragon, again using cues and styles from traditional Tibet carpet motifs to symbolise the waxing and waning of the carpet industry. At

several points, the dragon's body is completely sliced off the carpet edges mirroring the dismantling of the carpet industry in Nepal.

The gap between art and craft, between artist and artisan, between designer and maker, all start to close and overlap at an exhibition like this. Carpets become artforms displayed on walls, in museums, galleries and homes. The carpet designer and maker both become the artist, working closely together on design and form. This is the intent of the curator, artists and makers: to begin showcasing craft as fine art. 🇳🇵

Wool.Silk.Resistance
Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt
Till 15 June

Sophia L Pandé is Founding Director of The Kalā Salon, a non-profit space for the arts.

help of DftZ, a Swiss government aid project now known as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The industry reached its zenith in the 1990s and then, over just a few years, declined drastically due to accusations of child labour and cheaper manufacturing options in India.

Today, the art of carpet making continues on a much smaller scale in Nepal. When Jigme Wangchuk (pictured, far left), whose family has been in the carpet business since the 1970s, began to think about how

Connecting community and creativity

Studio in Kathmandu that provides unvarnished space for artists to explore and foster their craft

Sudiksha Tuladhar

When Kailash K Shrestha (pictured) graduated from art school in 2007, there were few studios for artists in Nepal. He wanted to fill the gap to connect artists in a way that their collective effort would be visible to the community.

As Shrestha built his career and body of work, his ideas took concrete shape, especially after he was recognised by the Australian Himalayan Foundation with its Young Artist Award in 2008. He began by setting up Artudio as a personal space, first in Thamel, then a bigger one in Lazimpat.

Shrestha envisioned a triangle of creation, curation, and education, which was later incorporated into the studio's logo. Over time, as spaces and opportunities for artists increased in Kathmandu, Shrestha searched for a more collaborative space, and moved to a larger venue in Swayambhu.

"Artudio aimed to be a space where art is practiced in a more community-oriented manner," explains Shrestha.

The structure at Chhauni, with the studio, gallery, and a café all under one roof, now serves as a haven for contemporary art. Visitors are greeted by a display of one of Shrestha's works on the side of Artudio's brick façade. The studio is unvarnished — artists sit on floor cushions and work on low tables which are themselves abstract canvases of splattered paint.

Seeking to expand its gallery, studio, and residency space, Artudio opened a smaller, cosier place in Patan seven months ago.

"With its rich cultural and artistic



PHOTOS: ARTUDIO

history, we thought a space in Patan would be fitting to facilitate conversations around contemporary art," says Shrestha.

POLITICAL ART

Artudio Patan's most recent exhibition Resonance showcased the work of India-based artist Caroline Stedman Mishra that combined AI with animistic beliefs.

Politics is deeply entwined with Artudio's work. It collaborated with Ujjwal Thapa, who mentored some RSP politicians. The studio

also helped create the murals against gender-based violence at Bir Hospital.

"We wanted to connect our art with politics, education, with society at large," says Shrestha. "This was not to show a political inclination, but to reflect and foster political awareness in the community."

Its 2023 publication Street Art Nepal explored graffiti as it gained popularity in Nepal. Young artists from Artudio chose to collectively sign their art across public spaces.

"We chose not to attribute the art to any



individual because public spaces belong to everyone," explains Shrestha, adding that artists were careful not to come across as preachy or self-righteous.

Artudio's residency program, initiated in 2016, is open to both Nepalis and foreigners on an individual as well as reciprocal basis. This means Nepali artists can train and work abroad, while fellows from across the world come to explore and experience Nepali art.

Artudio also allows children to participate in activities like 'Art Saturday' allowing all age groups to explore and discuss art.

Says Shrestha, "The idea is to make available spaces for people, especially kids, to explore their creativity away from classroom environments or fancy galleries."

Shrestha feels Nepal should mobilise its traditional and modern art forms to push its soft power around the world. He says, "The sector can be an important tool to project the Nepal brand and elevate the nation as a global hub for contemporary art." 🇳🇵



Events



Masquerade Festival

Add a spark of mystery and join the Social Masquerade Festival.

15 May, Rs999, 7pm, Club 10x, Thamel

Art Workshop

Polish your artistic skills at this one-day art workshop themed Recreating Travel Memories. Participants are required to bring a hard or soft copy of the travel picture they want to paint. DM @pal8ofhappiness on Instagram for details.

17 May, 1pm onwards, Rs1,000-1200, Chhauni

Ninjas Carnival

Thinking of where to take your children for an outing this weekend? Visit Ninjas Carnival and make some memories for your kids as they take part in games, activities and win gifts.

16 May, 10am-6pm, Hello Ninjas, Sitapaila



Colours of Nepal

Witness the colours of Nepal come alive through the graceful water colour paintings of Deepak Auji.

Until May 23, Kala Salon, Thamel



Pickleball Event

Play pickleball and connect with new people. The event is limited to 20 people and equipment will be provided by the organisers.

16 May, 12:30pm onwards, Rs500, Pickle Point Nepal, Jhamsikhel

Haat Bazaar

Support local businesses at this pop-up market with its creative stalls, games and more.

15 May, 3pm onwards, Wintons Speakeasy, Sanepa



Weekend hike

Rejuvenate your senses as you hike along the Asura Cave-Bhundol Chaur trail this weekend. Check Hike for Nepal's social media for details.

16 May, Rs1,000-1,500, 6:45am, Bhrikutimandap



Music

Gone Elvis Live

Watch the band Gone Elvis perform their electrifying tunes alongside good food and loved ones.

21 May, Hard Rock Cafe, Darbar Marg

John & The Locals

John & The Locals will be performing live for the Hami Ek Hau session. Don't miss the chance to listen and groove to your favourite tunes.

16 May, Rs1,350, Sasa: Twa, Kirtipur



Cultural Carnival

Kathmandu-22's Cultural Carnival includes live music and other activities. Watch your favourite artists, including Deepak Bajracharya and the Rhythm Band and Kutumba.

16 May, Ward 22, Kathmandu

Grasslands Festival 2026

Witness music, vibes and nature come alive in the great outdoors at the Grasslands Festival.

16 May, Rs1,000-30,000, 12pm onwards, Grand Norling Resort, Gokarna



Sangeet Fest 2026

Gather with friends for Sangeet Fest 2026 and watch popular bands like the Firante and Cobweb perform live for this charity music event.

23 May, 10am onwards, Rs400-1,800, Pulchok Engineering College



Getaway



Dahlia Boutique Hotel

A luxury hotel at Phewa Lake with 180 degree mountain and city views. A great place to mark the end of a memorable trek.

Lakeside, Pokhara (061) 466505

Jagatpur Lodge

Jagatpur Lodge's 5-star tents and rooms with private viewing decks offer breathtaking views of nature.

Jagatpur, Chitwan, (056) 411085 / 9801974084



The Last Resort

From bungee jump, tandem swing, to white water rafting: take an adventurous trip to Bhote Koshi River near the Tibetan border.

Bhotekoshi, Sindhupalchok (01) 4700525

The Old Inn

This B&B consists of two beautiful timber and brick Newa townhouses and traditional design, overlooking a serene, traffic-free bazaar. The view of Central Himalaya from Annapurna in the west to Langtang and beyond in the east is magnificent.

Bandipur, Tanahu (065) 520110

Summit River Lodge

The Summit River Lodge is an expansive 16-lodge property that boasts an infinity pool, semi-tropical vegetation and authentic Nepali cuisine made from local organic produce. The rustic lodge incorporates traditional wood designs with minimalistic accents.

Kurintar, Dhading, 9801151166

Weekend Weather



Monsoony pre-monsoon

Rain, rain and more rain when it is supposed to be the dry season. April precipitation was three times the average, and the first week of May looks the same. Long-term forecasts show a weak monsoon arriving late. More rain is coming over the weekend and into next week. The only consolation is that the maize crops are getting rain, and the maximum temperature in Kathmandu is 3°C below normal.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
27° 16°	27° 17°	27° 17°	28° 17°	29° 18°

Our Pick



Grimm, the American fantasy detective drama that ran from 2012 to 2017, follows Portland homicide detective Nick Burkhardt, who discovers that he is descended from a line of Grimms who protect humanity from creatures known as Wesen. Across six seasons, Nick, along with his detective partner Hank and his Wesen collaborator Monroe, confront villains from fairy tales, folklore, and mythology—all the while keeping the fragile balance between humans and Wesen. Stars David Giuntoli, Russell Hornsby, Bitsie Tulloch, and Silas Weir Mitchell.



Dining

Garden Terrace

A wide selection of international cuisine including Nepali, Indian, Continental, Oriental, Japanese and Italian cuisine.

Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal (01) 4273999

Haopin Hotpot

If you plan on visiting Haopin Hotpot anytime soon, make sure to take a couple friends with you because hotpot is best served with a side of good, and hungry company. They offer a wide variety of meats and vegetables to dip in flavoured soups and delicious sides to keep you satisfied while it cooks.

Narayanchaur, 9808064999



Aloft BOGO

Enjoy the Buy One Get One Free Dinner Buffet for two at Aloft Kathmandu Thamel's Nook this May.

7-31 May, Rs3,500 (beer package) / Rs3,000 (soft beverage package), 6:30-10:30pm, Aloft Kathmandu Thamel

Pho 99

Explore a wide range of Vietnamese favorites including Banh Cuon, stir fried shrimp, Pho Bo and more.

Jhamsikhel, 9803203119



FuAsian Fridays

Begin your weekend above the skyline at FuAsian, where a lavish Pan-Asian buffet, handcrafted cocktails, live music, and rooftop vibes come together for the ultimate Friday evening escape. Call to make reservations.

Rs2,500 Net per person. Holiday Inn Express, 9802356232 / 9802354209

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 चिड्डा 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



KIRAN KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Remembering a forgotten war

Twenty-two years after her husband was killed, widow raises a daughter who never saw her father

Chhauni Hospital where critically wounded Nanimaiya was treated.

The story and photograph shocked the nation. Among those moved to tears was Nepal's most famous folk-rock singer, Amrit Gurung (pictured, left with Nanimaiya and Sona in 2016).

He told us at the time: "That tiny girl symbolised for me the Nepali nation itself, orphaned, terrified of the future ahead of her."

Amrit Gurung travelled to Mainapokhari a week after the firefight to see for himself where it happened. Nanimaiya was breastfeeding her baby (left), and villagers were traumatised.



GOPAL CHITRAKAR / KANTIPUR



RAJESH K

Kunda Dixit

Early one morning exactly 22 years ago this week, school teacher Sobendra Kafle, his wife Nanimaiya Dahal, their baby daughter Sona and mother-in-law Krishnamaya boarded a crowded bus in Jiri.

Unbeknownst to them, there were soldiers in civvies also in the bus as it drove off. This was at the height of the Maoist conflict, and as the bus descended to the Tama Kosi, there was a roadblock in a forested stretch. It was there that guerrillas ambushed the bus.

The passengers were caught in the crossfire, and in just 15 minutes on 9 May 2004, eight soldiers and guerrillas were killed, along with six people on the bus, including Sobendra.

Nanimaiya and her mother, who hid under the seat shielding Sona from the ricocheting bullets, survived. Even by the standards of the Maoist war, this highlighted the brutality of an insurgency that had already lasted eight years. It made headline news on FM radio stations, and in Kathmandu newspapers the next day.

Kantipur and The Kathmandu Post printed a heart-rending picture by photojournalist Gopal Chitrakar (pictured above, right) of a weeping Krishnamaya holding her 19-day-old granddaughter Sona in her lap at

MUSIC FOR A CAUSE

During the conflict, Amrit Gurung's band Nepathya used to go around the country singing at peace concerts, and he immediately started composing a rock ballad in Nepal's gaine troubadour style.

The 25-minute piece was the title track of his album Ghatana, and Nepathya performed it live at the exact spot of the battle later that year, and in another concert tour of the country.



30/20
CONFLICT
ANNIVERSARY
1996-2006-2026

The song would never be a hit, and it was not intended to be. It was an almost journalistic reportage in music with a heavy metallic sound, the powerful lyrics documenting blow-by-blow what happened that day. There had never been a composition like this in Nepal's musical history both in style and format.

"Ghatana was meant to memorialise and communicate what the conflict was doing to Nepalis, especially civilians caught in the crossfire in a war in which they wanted no part," recalls Kiran Krishna Shrestha of Nepathya. "The war has been over now for 20 years,

but the trauma and loss is still there in survivors like Sona and Nanimaiya."

Nanimaiya teaches in a school in her village of Yarsa in Dolakha, and says she still has post-traumatic stress with frequent headaches and insomnia. She has sought treatment, but the medicines have not helped.

Soon after her husband was killed, she stayed with her in-laws for a year but moved to her parent's home because of the stigma of widowhood. She did get a compensation package from the government, but not as much as families of the Maoist who were declared 'martyrs' by the state.

Nepathya helped Sona finish her 10+2, and she is getting a pharmacy degree at a college in Kathmandu. She is now 22 years old, and feels remorseful and lonely whenever she sees her friends go out with their fathers. She hopes to get her license and open a pharmacy, or get a government job.

"I hope no Nepali mother, father, brother or sister will have to bear a tragedy and loss like I did," says Nanimaiya. "I hope parents do not lose their children, and children do not become orphans. They should not have to live their lives in a flood of tears." 🇳🇵



Major Lal Bahadur Gurung

Major Lal Bahadur Gurung (affectionately known as Maj LB) was a man whose journey from humble beginnings to distinguished service stood as an enduring testament to dedication, resilience, and quiet strength. He died at age 75 in Farnborough, UK on 6 May.

Major Gurung was born in 1952 in Khilang of Kaski district, and began his education at a British-run school in Paklihawa and later at St Xavier's in Kathmandu. This not only provided a strong academic foundation but also instilled in him the values of leadership, integrity, and service that would guide him throughout his life.

He answered the call to serve by joining the British Brigade of Gurkhas

as a General Duties soldier in 1973 and this marked the beginning of a distinguished military career in one of the world's most renowned fighting forces. Through unwavering dedication, courage, and professionalism, he rose steadily through the ranks, eventually attaining the senior rank of Major.

Maj LB was also a gifted sportsman and was among the standout players in the renowned Nepali Cup Football Tournament in Hong Kong and the Pahadi 11 in Nepal and abroad.

After retiring from the army, Major Gurung remained deeply committed to community service, actively involved as chair of the Tamu Dheen Association UK and the Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh UK.

Relatives, friends and colleagues knew Maj LB for his honesty, cheerful nature, and selfless spirit. He remained in close touch with friends back in Nepal.

Major Gurung's life story is one of perseverance and purpose, personal determination and a profound sense of duty to others.

He is survived by his loving wife, Dilmaya, three daughters, and four grandsons, including a set of triplets.

May his soul rest in eternal peace, and his life be forever honoured.
Jit Gurung

Major Lal Bahadur Gurung at the statue of a Gurkha soldier at Church Crookham near Aldershot in England in 2017.



Why do Kathmandu and Myagdi have t

... and Madhes and Sudurpaschim the lowest?

Mohan Mainali

The divorce cases rate in Nepal has doubled in the past five years, with nearly one in every ten marriages ending in separation.

This does not include those who have separated unofficially, and among registered divorces are those who had wed before they reached the legal marriageable age of 20, as well as senior couples over 75.

Court registries show that last year alone, 42,739 couples all over Nepal were fighting legal battles to terminate their marriages. Five years ago, that figure was only 21,649. Since divorce involves two people, more than 85 thousand families were involved in courts.

Besides this dramatic increase over time, divorce prevalence also shows a marked spatial distribution with the districts of central Nepal having the highest rates.

In 2023-2024, Myagdi had the highest divorce rate of 75 per 10,000 persons, followed by Tanahu, Kaski, Chitwan, Lamjung and Rukumkots (map).

Kathmandu had the second-highest divorce rate in the country, with separations also common in Panchthar and Ilam in the east.

There was a 19-fold increase in divorce cases between 1998-2000 in district courts in Jhapa, Sunsari, Parsa, Rupendehi,



INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF FAMILIES
15 MAY (2026)



SUMAN NEPALI

Palpa, Kaski and Banke, and this has only gone up since.

Divorce rates have been rising dramatically every year, except in 2019-2020 because of the Covid lockdown. The sharp increase in 2022 could also be due to court backlogs.

The number of divorce cases has overtaken all other categories of court cases since 2021.

According to the latest Annual Report of the Department of National ID and Civil Registration (DNIDCR) of the 289,000 marriages registered nationwide in 2023-24, there were 24,000 divorces. The

divorce rate per 100 marriages went up from 0.6 in 2014 to 9.58 in 2025 (graphs). The number of new cases has also nearly doubled since 2019.

The report also shows that 341 young women and 50 male adolescents divorced between 2019-2023 — indicating the persistent prevalence of child marriage. In

that period, 156,000 boys (9.8% of total males who registered their marriages) and 362,000 girls (22.7% of females) were under 20, the legal marriage age.

More than 800 senior citizens went to the courts to terminate their marriages, and among them 39 males and three females were above

Growing up with blended identities

Czech-Nepali mother's new book on cross-cultural parenting is a handy manual for international families

Kunda Dixit

While studying at Princeton, Sangita Shresthova was asked to perform a Nepali dance at a program. She did, and a local newspaper carried a photo with the caption, 'Native of Nepal'.

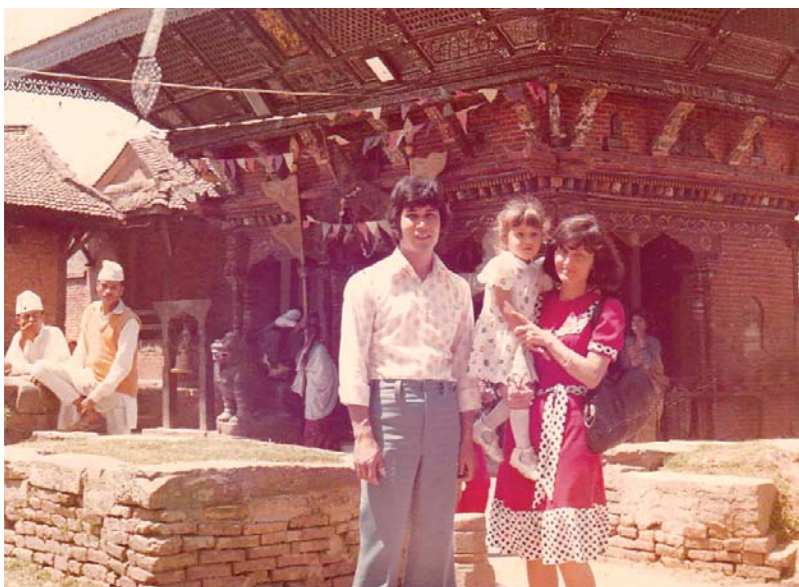
But she recalls feeling like an impostor. Her father is Nepali, her mother Czech. She is married to a Gujarati from India and she is raising a son in Los Angeles.

All this makes Shresthova a 'Third Culture Kid' (TCK) and the right person to write this guide on cross-cultural upbringing that is useful not just for parents and grandparents in international marriages, but for everyone else in a multicultural world.

Cross-Cultural Parenting Playbook is a much-awaited manual for an interconnected Nepali diaspora across the globe finding partners from other countries. The book can also offer valuable tips for inter-ethnic Nepali parents as cross-cultural marriages become more common within Nepal itself.

'Identity is not about choosing between cultures, instead I need to accept the contradictions and find joy in the intersections,' writes Shresthova as she describes feeling Nepali in the streets of Patan, being Czech in Prague, and an American now. This is an experience she wants to pass on to her 11-year-old son, Marek, who is also growing up in an Indian-Nepali-Czech family.

Each of the book's chapters on language, media, popular culture, cuisine, are interspersed with



INTERCONTINENTAL: Author Sangita Shresthova as a baby in Patan in the 1980s with her parents (left) and skiing with her father in rural Czechoslovakia.



Reflection Questions that readers can think about and seek answers on their own. These are not one-size-fits-all suggestions, the guidelines can be individualised.

Marta, the daughter of Chinese-Singaporean and Czech parents provides useful advice when she says, "I am not half-Czech and half-Chinese. I am three times something."

Indeed, Shresthova believes that children of international parents are more than the sum of their parts — they are 'exponential, not fractional', they are 'both insider and outsider'.

Sangita Shresthova's name itself indicates a multi-cultural nomenclature. The 'ova' suffix to her father's Shrestha name comes from the Slavic custom of adding it to a father's or husband's surname

— although there is now a move towards non-gendered names.

In writing her research-based, story-driven book, the author surveyed a wide range of cross-cultural parents from China, Korea, Afghanistan, Europe, Latin America, Canada, and the US. The interviews show how international couples allow their children to live between many worlds of extended families spread across continents.

Especially useful are chapters on old and new media, popular culture, food and dance as ways to bridge both space and time for children whose parents come from different parts of the world.

Just like Trevor Noah's self-deprecating humour about his cross-cultural upbringing in South Africa, Shresthova highlights the

role of humour in defusing stress in international families. One mother she interviews is a Hong Kong-Chinese mother married to a Czech who is also a stand-up comedian with a repertoire of ice-breakers.

Even as more Nepali families become intercontinental, the distance that separates them is spanned by Facetime and WhatsApp video chats. But visa restrictions, expensive travel and even censorship make these connections fragile.

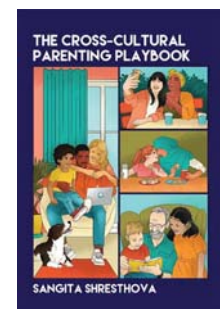
Watching movies, cultural programs, cooking can turn blended identities into cross-cultural bonds to smoothen the rough edges.

Shresthova does not gloss over the challenges, citing statistics to show that divorce rates among cross-cultural marriages tend to be

higher than average. She is frank about the difficulties her own parents had to overcome while straddling European and Nepali cultures when she was growing up in Nepal in the 1980s.

Her parents met in Communist Czechoslovakia, came to Nepal during the Panchayat era, saw the transition to democracy in both their countries after 1990, and the eventual breakup of Czechoslovakia. She is the author of books on Bollywood dance and youth activism, and is currently Associate Research Professor of Communication at The University of Southern California.

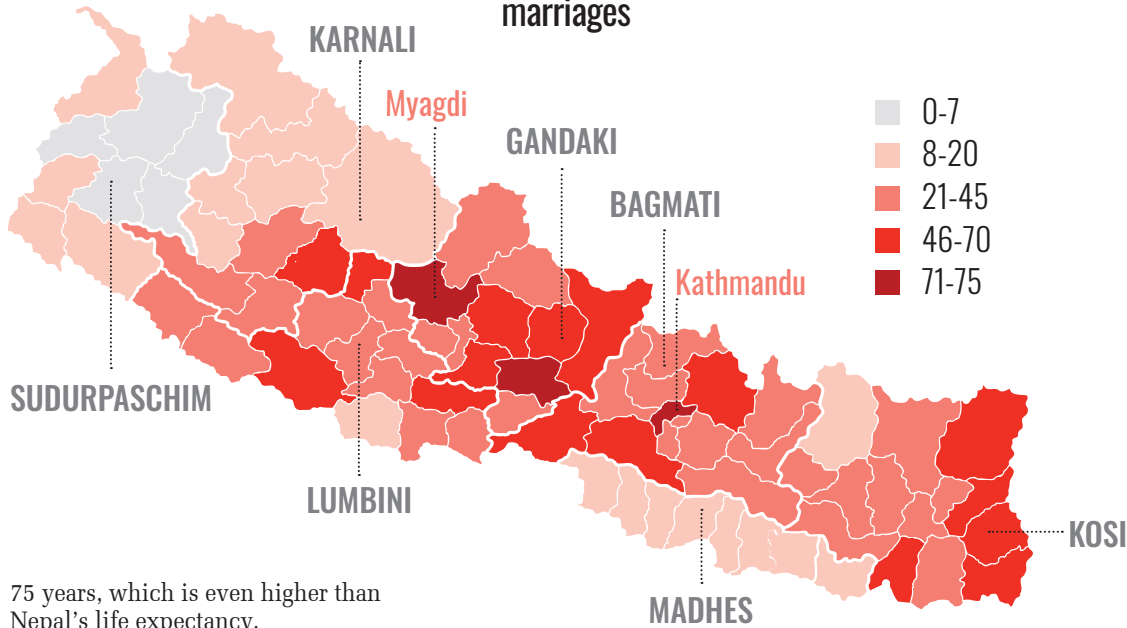
Towards the end of the book, Shresthova writes: 'I often dream of showing Marek the Nepal I grew up in. But the Nepal I carry in my heart no longer exists. Walking through Patan's streets or gazing at the Himalayas might one day be the start of his own relationship with Nepal. I can nurture this connection, but ultimately he must make it his own.'



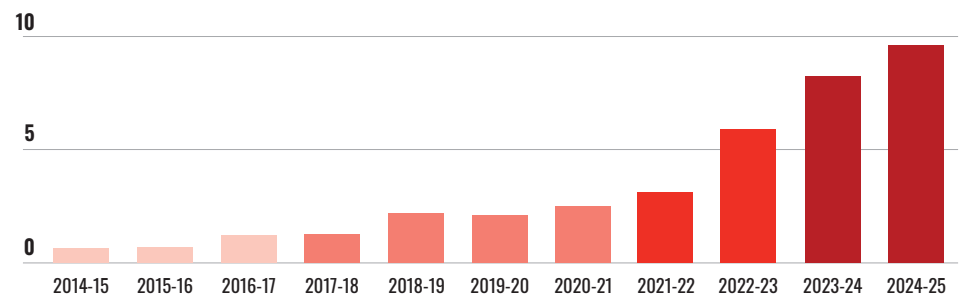
The Cross-Cultural Parenting Playbook by Sangita Shresthova
Multilingual Matters, Bristol UK
2026
gpsr.requests@easproject.com

Are we the highest divorce rates ?

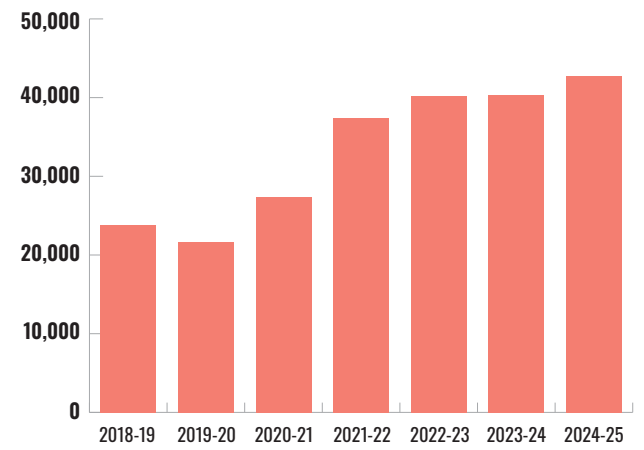
Divorce cases per 10,000 in Nepal marriages



Divorce case rate per 100 marriages (2014-2025)



Total divorce cases in Nepal (2018-2025)



75 years, which is even higher than Nepal's life expectancy.

In general, women tend to get divorced earlier than their male counterparts. The DNIDCR report notes that the highest number of female divorcees (nearly 30%) were in the 25-29 age group. Highest number of male divorcees (26%) were aged 30-34.

The DNIDCR report also shows that 13,000 couples who got officially divorced between 2019-2023 did not have any children. There were nearly 43,000 children of divorced parents in that time. In 2023, there were 21,500 Nepali children of divorcees.

COURT CASES

Divorces lead to the breakdown of families, and often there are disputes over alimony and inheritance. In fact, the number of cases in the courts involving

inheritance has doubled in the past ten years. Inheritance and divorce disputes have always topped the list of cases in the courts.

The DNIDCR annual report tries to get to the bottom of the higher legal separation rates, and blames changing societal mores, demographic shifts, long separation of couples due to overseas migration, and increase in literacy rates. Cultural factors may also affect abnormally high divorce rates in certain parts of Nepal.

Forty of Nepal's 77 districts have divorce case rates higher than the national average. Tanahu-Kaski-Myagdi have 60-75 divorces per 10,000 marriages.

Districts with the lowest divorce rates also tend to be the ones with the lowest Human Development

Index (HDI), and those higher up in development rankings like Kathmandu, Chitwan, Ilam have generally higher rates of divorce.

Among exceptions to this rule are Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. The two districts are the second and the fourth highest HDI rankings in Nepal, but are 22nd and 47th in the divorce case rates. Solukhumbu and Manang also have comparatively low divorce rates, even though they score relatively high in HDI.

Doti has the lowest divorce case rate (3.03 per 10,000 persons) — which is four per cent of Myagdi. Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang, Bajura, Mugu and Kalikot in the mountains of western Nepal and Rautahat, Mahottari and Saptari in the eastern Tarai also have low divorce rates. Both regions of Nepal have

entrenched patriarchy and caste system.

The divorce case rate of Saptari is much lower than its neighbours to the east (Sunsari) and north (Udaypur). Likewise, Tanahu with far lower Human Development Index compared to Kathmandu is only one step behind Kathmandu in divorce-case rate.

The two Rukums, Rolpa,

Sindhupalchok and Gorkha have much higher divorce case rates compared to their HDI.

Among the cluster of districts with low divorce rates are Dolpo, Mugu, Humla, Bajhang, Darchula, Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Doti, Achham, Bajura and Kalikot which have the lowest HDI and literacy rates, but show less than 14 divorce cases per 10,000 persons. 🇳🇵

SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD.
 THAPATHALI - 01 5350643, 9802376020
 RADHE RADHE - 01 5914771, 9802394293



SIPRADI



aloft[®]
KATHMANDU THAMEL

*Buy One
Get One*
at
nook

1+1 on Dinner Buffet Everyday

📅 All through May 🕒 6.30 P.M - 10.30 P.M.

Rs.3500 NET
(Glass of beer)

Rs.3000 NET
(Soft beverages)

1+1 on Breakfast Buffet Everyday

📅 All through May 🕒 7.00 A.M - 10.30 A.M.

Rs. 2400 NET

For Reservations: +977-9801976054
Nook@aloftkathmanduthamel.com