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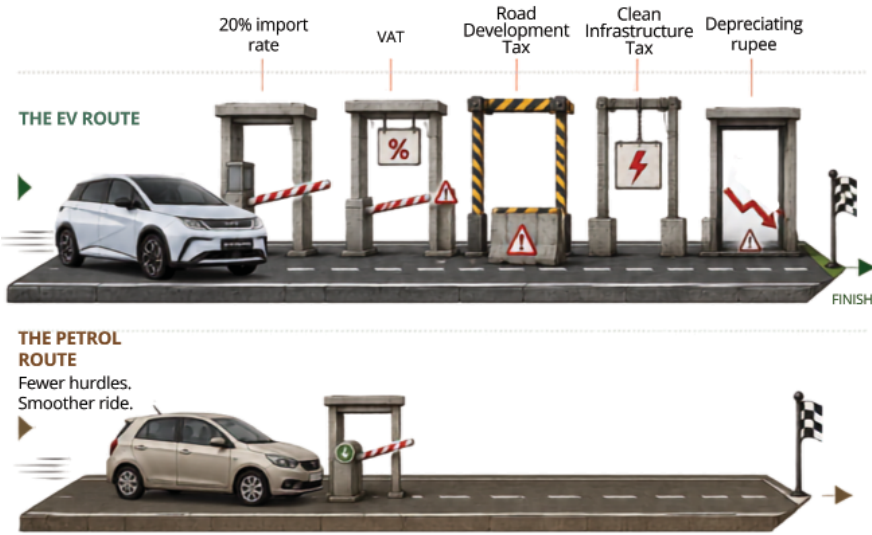
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Ungreen Budget

Nepal takes one step forward and two steps back on transport and household electrification. Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle's ambitious Rs2.1 trillion budget was not the kind of transformative plan many had anticipated. But given revenue constraints and the impact on petroleum prices of the West Asia war, it was no surprise.

But for those very reasons, the budget could have put green energy as top priority. Reducing petroleum imports by promoting electric transport and increasing household power consumption should have been the goal. This budget did just the opposite.

Full Story by Shristi Karki



COST OF EVs

Excise duty replaced by Clean Infrastructure Tax ranging from **2.5% to 130%** depending on price of vehicle.

(In Rs)	Previous Price	Estimated New Price
EVs up to 2 million	1.8 million	2 million
EVs 2-5 million	4.5 million	5 million
Evs > 5 million	8 million	10.5 million
Ev Microbus 11-25 seater	4 million	5 million



NOBEL RIMAL / GRAPHICS BY AI



DISEMPowering ENERGY

- EVs to be taxed on CIF price, not capacity
- Excise duty replaced with Clean Infrastructure Tax
- EV microbus duty up from 1% to 10%
- 5% VAT on more than 50 units electricity
- 13% VAT on businesses using electricity



BHUSHAN TULADHAR
Environmentalist

What affects the economy and the environment most are two-wheelers, buses and trucks where EVs have not been able to penetrate. This is where the government could have provided equitable incentives.



SONY BARAL GAULI
Green Economist, TU

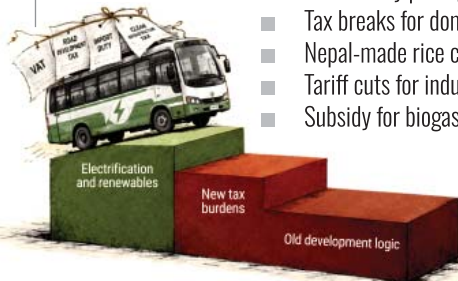
A green budget should have included the natural capital of forests, watersheds, biodiversity as contributing to economic growth and national wealth. This is not a green budget, it is a development budget with some environmental elements.



What a Green Budget Could Have Looked Like

Goal: Reduce petroleum imports, increase domestic consumption of surplus hydropower

- Tax incentives for electric public transport, 2- and 3-wheelers
- Private EV tax discounts staggered for cost
- Incentives for private charging stations
- Time of day pricing and reverse metering for households
- Tax breaks for domestic electrical appliances
- Nepal-made rice cookers, induction stoves
- Tariff cuts for industries to switch to electric
- Subsidy for biogas from urban waste



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Budget takes Nepal back to fossil era

On World Environment Day 5 June, a look at the missed opportunity to build on past gains

Editorial

Sonia Awale

Every year on World Environment Day, 5 June, Nepali Times changes its masthead colour to green. This is not just a token gesture, it is to drive home the point that the economy and ecology are two sides of the same coin. Undermining one destroys the other.

Mahatma Gandhi said it best: "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed." Unsustainable natural resource extraction and irreversible damage to ecosystems in the name of infrastructure and 'progress' ultimately undermine the economy.

In the past three decades, kleptocratic plunder by Nepal's unaccountable leaders resulted in over-exploitation of fragile ecosystems like the Chure, illegal sand mining and quarries, pollution that killed rivers, and plastic waste clogging drainage channels and landfill sites. Development led to destruction.

We had hoped that the new government with a two-thirds majority and ministers with global exposure would have come up with a budget that would steer the country on a green growth pathway. Alas.

For someone who famously started writing the budget even before his party won the election, drafted the 100-point economic plan, and with the experience of working for the World Bank, UNDP and our own National Planning Commission, we expected much



more from Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle. Unless rumours are true, his hands were tied by the PMO boys.

Whatever the case, we now have a record Rs2.12 trillion budget that tries to appease the civil service and the RSP's urban salaried middle class vote bank. The environment and sustainable growth are just afterthoughts. Climate breakdown and adaptation get scant mention.

FOSSIL ECONOMY

What Nepal needed to revive its economy was to wean itself from fossil fuels. Petroleum now makes up nearly a quarter of the total import bill — more than all exports combined. We cannot stop using petrol, diesel and cooking gas overnight, but this budget was the perfect opportunity to take a clean break from the past to start replacing petroleum products with hydroelectricity for transportation and household use.

Instead, we have higher taxes on battery-

powered vehicles and VAT slapped on electricity consumption by households and businesses. Those thinking of replacing LPG in kitchens will now think twice. Gas stations installing charging stations for EVs may now put it on hold.

Nepal hopes to generate 1,040MW of additional hydropower in the coming year — 670MW from hydropower and 370MW from utility-scale solar arrays — bringing the total installed capacity to 5,535MW. But unlike hydropower, investors eager to build solar plants face bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of policy clarity.

Solar power is crucial to Nepal's energy mix given the limitations of run-of-river schemes, the need to protect riverine ecosystems, and the increased risk to hydropower plants from glacial lake outbursts. The cheapest, fastest and most sustainable solution would be to combine solar and hydro for pump storage systems.

As we report on page 1 and 9, the new

tax structure for EVs will actually increase the price of battery-powered vehicles with the tiered Clean Infrastructure Tax (CIT) based on the price of the car. Many intercity public transport operators had switched to battery-powered minibuses. Now, the import tax on 11-25 seater vans has been raised from 1% to 10%. There is no subsidy for larger

electric buses, and hybrid cars that save petrol will be even more costly.

Allocation for forestry, environment and climate change has fallen to Rs12.31 billion from Rs18.75 billion last year. The budget pushes implementation of results-based REDD+ forestry, but also wants to promote timber harvesting which could lead to illegal logging because of local level corruption.

Large infrastructure projects in Nepal are in ecologically fragile areas not only due to geography but also because they usually result in haphazard construction that ignores science and logic. There is a provision for environmental impact assessments but that is just a laughable formality.

We understand that the Finance Minister had to pass a budget that addressed expectations of citizens impatient for change, but there were ways to have a transformative green budget that ensured sustainable, equitable and inclusive growth. Instead what we have is a traditional budget that rolls back progress Nepal made in the past. ❏

Trending Online

Photographing wildlife

by Nepali Times

Noted Nepali conservation photographer Om Prakash Yadav's dramatic portrait of a tiger looking directly at the camera has been selected for the cover of the June 2026 edition of BBC Wildlife Magazine in the UK. Read about him on page 12.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook



The Balen Doctrine

by Shristi Karki

Prime Minister Balendra Shah's diplomatic disengagement has played well with domestic supporters, but many in the international community say such protocol is counterproductive to Nepal's interests. Read the story online.

X Most popular on X

PM's India border remark

by Prabhakar Sharma

Nepal and India should pursue active dialogue on Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura and Susta since quiet diplomacy does not seem to be getting anywhere. Both sides should support pragmatic nationalism. Join discussion on nepalitimes.com

💬 Most commented

Photo-op diplomacy

by Sudiksha Tuladhar

Prime Minister Balendra Shah's standoffish diplomacy may be having the unintended consequence of pushing New Delhi and Beijing to share a common concern about Nepal's new government. Read the report online.

🔍 Most visited online page

Letters

BORDER DISPUTES

What active dialogue? ('PM Balendra Shah stirs hornet's nest in India border remark', Prabhakar Sharma, nepalitimes.com). The last meeting of the Eminent Person's Group (EPG) was almost 10 years ago. With the PM's recent admission, India would first want its territory back before talks can begin on any disputed territory.

Pandeymonium

■ Where is the mention of EPG report in the article whose main goal was to manage border dispute between Nepal and India? By the way, both Nepal and India formed the EPG jointly.

Pradeep Bhandari

■ People are fighting each other but Indians and Nepalis should not forget that we have been brothers-

in-arms for centuries. Our relationship is stronger than any political agenda on either side, and none of us should fall for it.

Ronak Patel

■ This is just a storm in a tea cup for India. Nepal doesn't even have proper road access to these disputed territories. Nepal should stop these antics to appease the Chinese. Both nations share same cultural heritage but that doesn't mean a landlocked state can be unreasonable with its giant neighbour.

Navdeep Thakur

■ Balen's mental health must be assessed. His supporters will still support him even if he hands over Janakpur, the birthplace of Sita, to India. If Nepal had encroached Indian land, India would have raised this issue many years ago.

Sky Himal

NEPALIS IN KOREA

Because I am a teacher like Dilip, this documentary hit pretty close to home ('Being human in the land of machines', Shristi Karki, #1312).

Charvaksmriti

NEPALI DIPLOMACY

The photo of the three vehicles from Nepal, India, and China ('The Balen Doctrine', Shristi Karki, #1313) seems to represent the level of development of each nation too.

Dinung Bantawa Rai

■ It could have been better if the motorbike with Nepali plate is sandwiched between the Indian and Chinese cars.

Hemanta Arjyal

■ It could well make good sense to fawn over neither India and China instead of fawning over both ('Photo-op diplomacy', Sudiksha Tuladhar, #1313) at least until the

leadership has a better feel for the underlying dynamics.

Tony Jones

EBOLA PREPAREDNESS

Does Nepal have standard healthcare and trained people to manage Ebola ('Should Nepal be worried about Ebola?', Sonia Awale, page 10-11)? If the virus enters here, then it could wreak havoc.

Deepen Gurung

■ Ebola is totally fake like HIV, Corona and more. We are not worried.

Naturopathy Follower

■ Are you promoting pandemics? Nepal should not step on every trap that the West lays out.

Anna Elisabeth Bach

■ Ebola is a hoax-- Nepal please don't buy into it.

Mahan Kaur Shrestha

Online Package



National and international figures weigh in why the Himalaya matters and how their accelerated melt is a threat to the entire world. Watch video on our YouTube channel.



For Nepal's female drivers, operating electric three-wheeler has been a path to financial independence, supporting their families, and putting children through school. Subscribe for multimedia content.

1,000 Words



KIRAN KRISHNA SHRESTHA

MAKE NEPAL GREAT AGAIN:

On Nepal's Republic Day on 29 May, this monarchist bus art was spotted on the streets of Kathmandu. It depicts Prime Minister Balendra Shah with a map of Greater Nepal, and came just before the 25th anniversary of the Royal Massacre on 1 June 2001, and preceded this week's visit to New Delhi by RSP Chair Rabi Lamichhane.

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Healthy eating, high thinking

A Himalayan food brand that addresses wellness, sustainability and climate change



Nepal Made profiles Nepali products and the people who make them possible.

Sudiksha Tuladhar

After graduating with a degree in aerospace engineering from the Singapore University of Technology and Design, Kajol Sethia (pictured, far right) came to Nepal for a break, where she discovered her love for the Himalaya.

A vegetarian all her life, Sethia had become vegan while in Singapore and set up Vegan Dairy Nepal in 2018. After realising that much of the food people consume was not just unhealthy but also ethically wrong, she became an animal rights activist.

She received the Outstanding Activist Award from PETA Asia in 2019, while meeting a growing demand for plant-based superfoods back in Nepal with a loyal customer base for Vegan Dairy Nepal primarily through social media and word of mouth.

Then, during a trek to Humla at an altitude of 4,000m, she came across bushes of sea buckthorn berries (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) that are indigenous to the Himalaya. Known as Dalle Chuk in Nepali, the sour fruit is found across the mountains from Mugu to Taplejung, and is a rich source of vitamin C and omega fatty acids.

"Farmers knew about sea buckthorn and other local herbal plants and used them for traditional medicine but did not know how or



MAKALU FOOD AND BEVERAGES

where to sell them," recalls Sethia. "That is when I decided to fill the gap."

Passionate about healthy living and eating, she had always dreamt of opening a Nepali specialised food wellness brand, and she launched Makalu Food and Beverages in 2023 to market Himalayan food. Sea buckthorn juice is one of its most popular products and is sold at kar.ma Coffee and Himalayan Java outlets, as well as in stores in Kathmandu and Pokhara.

As with many other products, the Covid pandemic raised public awareness around the world and Nepal about healthy living and eating choices. "Before Covid, it was difficult to make people understand the health benefits of our products," Sethia told us. "Now they have become more aware and make conscious choices."

Other Makalu products include lentils, marsi red rice, spices, a range of teas. Sethia's personal favourite kombucha flavour is rhododendron, but she says silajit is more popular among her customers.

The company's success stems from sourcing proven and wholesome Himalayan raw material, using tastefully designed and international quality packaging with carefully chosen colour palette and then marketing it in Nepal and abroad. The spices, for instance, come in handy glass bottles with sifter caps.

Sethia is always on the lookout for new products, and has her eyes set on working with chili farmers in eastern Nepal to market akbare to the diaspora. Indeed, there is no reason why hot akbare sauce cannot one day become as popular internationally as Tabasco.

ETHICAL CONSUMPTION

Genuine fair trade and climate consciousness these days are not just essential for marketing, ethical business practices must keep up with increasing consumer awareness. Which is why Makalu Foods regards sustainability as an important component of its food and wellness products.

Carbon neutrality is a comparatively new concept among Nepali companies, but Sethia says keeping a low footprint is a hallmark of her business. She works with Climeworks AG, a Swiss company specialising in direct carbon capture and sequestration technology. "We calculate the amount of carbon dioxide released, then buy the same amount from Climeworks to remove it from the air."

While carbon offsetting is



PETAASIA

controversial because it has been used by companies to greenwash by funding unverified climate projects to keep on emitting greenhouse gases, the Swiss company directly scrubs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere for customers around the world.

Sethia, who was named in the Forbes 30 Under 30 list in 2024, notes that climate breakdown can be slowed if people shifted to a vegetarian diet and climate-friendly products. "Fifty one per cent of carbon lies in our plates, so it is all in our hands," she says.

Makalu Food products is now also sold in India, and Sethia is working to expand the market in Europe. But first, she wants to work some more in Humla and other mountain communities in Nepal to create jobs. Many of the products are derived from herbs that grow wild and cannot be farmed, so sustainable extraction has to be a priority.

"A lot of people have migrated from the mountains, there are very few left to farm," says Kajol Sethia. "We want to provide employment so those who remain can sustain livelihoods through agriculture. Makalu is for the farmers who make it all possible, then it is for our consumers. And the profit we earn will go to fund animal welfare." 🐾

BRIEFS



Neighbours first

Three days after Prime Minister Balendra Shah's dramatic statement in Parliament about Nepal also occupying Indian territory, his party's chair Rabi Lamichhane met with Indian leader Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Wednesday. The visit comes at a time when India-Nepal relations have been buffeted by PM Shah bringing up the Kalapani dispute, taxing Nepalis returning with petty purchases from India, and his remark about including Britain to resolve border issues. Last month he turned down a planned meeting with Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

Officials in New Delhi want to use Lamichhane's visit to gauge what makes Nepal's new PM tick and assess their relationship. Modi said he was 'delighted' to have met Lamichhane and welcomed his offer to work together on mutual cooperation for the prosperity of both countries. The visit elevates Rabi Lamichhane's position within his party as well as his stature in Nepal as someone more acceptable to the international community, including Nepal's neighbours. Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal is visiting next a day after Lamichhane's expected arrival upon the invitation of Misri.

German cooperation

A rehabilitated Dhulikhel Drinking Water Supply System and new Healthcare Waste Management Treatment Site at Dhulikhel Hospital financed with German Cooperation as part of their broader support to renewable energy and climate-resilient infrastructure development in Nepal were inaugurated this week by German Ambassador Udo Eugen Voiz. The rooftop solar project at Dhulikhel Hospital financed by the German government through the KfW Development Bank was also launched at the event.

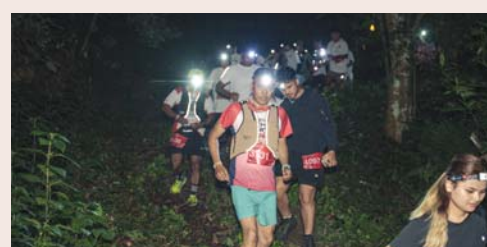
Dailekh petrol

Nepal's Department of Mines and Geology is nearing a second-phase agreement with China Geological Survey to start extracting petrol commercially in Dailekh. Initial drilling and surveys in Bhairabi Rural Municipality suggest viable petroleum and natural gas reserves, raising hopes of reducing the country's dependence on imports.



Kathmandu-Shenzhen

Himalaya Airlines began direct flights between Kathmandu and Shenzhen on 4 June, the first airline to do so. Flights are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from Kathmandu, Wednesdays and Fridays from Shenzhen, China's tech and business hubs. The airline has suspended its Pokhara-Lhasa flights.



North Face Trail Run

The 7.5km North Face Night Trail Run drew 400 runners and over 600 spectators. The free-to-enter event also featured panel talks, cultural dance and live music, bringing together over 1,000 people in total at Gokarna Forest Resort. The Mountain Quest Event marked International Everest Day 2026 on 29 May with donations to Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee's Everest clean-up project. The event also featured a panel discussion with athletes Dawa Yangzum Sherpa and Conrad Anker.

NRN FDI

The new budget makes it easier for foreign and NRN investors to do business in Nepal. Companies no longer need central bank permission to take profits out of Nepal. Nepalis abroad can now trade on the stock market. Businesses can expand or change ownership without government approval. A new tribunal will streamline commercial disputes. Smaller businesses will get easier loans.

Ultraviolette EV bike

Vaidya Organization has become the official distributor of Indian electric motorcycle brand Ultraviolette in Nepal. Bookings are open for the F77 Original at Rs811,000 and F77 Recon at Rs969,000. The F77 offers a 323km range, top speed of 155kmph, 0-60kmph in 2.8s.

Samsung upgrade

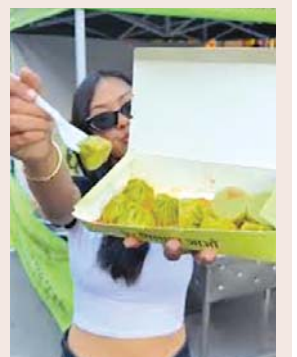
Samsung Nepal is running an upgrade campaign from 27 May to 30 June during which customers can exchange old devices for new Galaxy S26 or A-series smartphones. Benefits include up to Rs8,000 in exchange bonuses, free Ncell data, and 0% interest financing plans.

Sunset law

The GoN is considering a Sunset Law to expedite stalled road, hydropower, and irrigation projects. The proposed legislation sets strict deadlines for land acquisition, environmental approvals, tree-felling permits, and extraction of construction materials. A PM-led committee can intervene in the case of delays to clear stalled projects.

inDrive momo

Ride-hailing app inDrive ran a three-day campaign in Kathmandu, using bargaining games at momo stalls to highlight inDrive's core feature, which lets riders and passengers offer and agree on fares.



TVS Ronin variants

Jagdamba Motors has launched two new variants of the TVS Ronin motorcycle in Nepal. The Monotone is priced at Rs429,900 and the Agonda at Rs439,900. Both run on a 225.9cc engine producing 20.4HP.

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KATH KORA 2026



Vishad Raj Onta

It has been 15 years since cyclists in Kathmandu have been gathering on the third Saturday of every July to circumambulate the Valley rim as part of the Kora cycling challenge.

Kora is a Buddhist term meaning a meditative walk around a shrine or a sacred mountain like Kailash. This works well as a cycling loop around Kathmandu Valley, gives bicycle enthusiasts the adventure of a lifetime, and they are never far from a road, so they can take any length of the course that suits them.

The challenge is flagged off at Patan Darbar Square, and the basic 50km route follows the Ring Road to Chobhar, Kirtipur, then up to Sitapaila, Nagarjun, circling around the north of the valley through Gongabu, Golphutar and Boudha, behind the Airport, and on to Imadol before ending up back at Patan.

There are other distances for more fit mountain bikers who may choose to do 75, 100, or even the 165km ultra which has 4,000m of altitude gain. With the main Kora day only six weeks away, more than 1,500 riders have already registered with 51 plucky participants opting for the 165km category.

The shortest of the four rides is designed for beginners and amateurs, but can be a challenge with its brisk climbs. The Good to Expert 75km circuit involves more adventurous cycling, with steeper climbs, while the 100 and 165 are for more experienced endurance riders.

The plan is for Kora 26 to be the biggest one yet, and for it to resemble the many jatra in Kathmandu Valley during the monsoon. And this year, the entire week building up to the main ride will be a festival filled with music, DJs, night rides, events at the pump track, films, and meet-ups.

"The Kora already has all the trappings of a festival, so we thought why not make it a week-long thing," says tourism entrepreneur Raj Gyawali and founder of the challenge. "What is fascinating from a business perspective is not that it has become such a big annual event, but how it became big."

The first challenge in 2011 had only 35 riders going around Kathmandu Valley. It was not a race, there were no sponsors and no prize money, just some passionate cyclists riding together. This year the Kora Jatra begins a full week before the 'Mahajatra' with talks, films, music, community gatherings, workshops, skill sessions building up to the main ride on 18 July.

Over the years, the Kora has now grown into a major event, gathered over 50

sponsors like Turkish Airlines which offers Click2Win prizes for the best Instagram photographs, gifts from Kar.ma Coffee, Sasa Twa Newari Restaurant, and Tuyou Dental Care for those who register.

The Kora has now become a part of Nepal's adventure tourism brand, and occupies a unique positive space that combines a healthy workout with endurance, charity for women's health, education to community initiatives, and respect for nature.

The event has grown organically over the years, with social media disseminating and amplifying the message far and wide. Direct online reach of the Kora last year exceeded one million views, promoting Nepal's tourism brand.



This year, the Kora is also being held on the same day through 'franchises' in 20 other locations across Nepal.

WOMEN RIDERS

Raj Gyawali is excited that what he started as "just a ride" has now grown into a "national cultural movement" and even spreading across the world. Asked to encapsulate what the Kora is all about he replies: "Active. Community-driven. Environmentally aware. Purpose-led. Experience-oriented."

This year, 1,528 riders have already registered for various distances, says Shailesh Joshi who designed the Kora website and the online registration forms under his alias smjrifle. The proportion of female riders continues to grow with 22% women this year, compared to 16% in 2025.



KATHMANDU VALLEY KORA JATRA

26 Annual bicycle challenge is now a weeklong festival celebrating adventure, endurance and community

And this year there are bicycling enthusiasts coming from Singapore, India, Canada, and Finland.

Just like the Machindranath chariot festival from Bungmati to Patan, the Kora route has not changed since 2011, even though the Valley's outskirts have now become semi-urban.

"Nobody needs to be coerced to go to the Machindranath Jatra, they go every year because it is loud and it is fun," says Gyawali. "We want the Kora also to be a free, communal thing. It is not a rally, the point is that everyone is riding together."

The pleasure of the riding is the focus. Like traditional jatra, the Kora also creates participation across all layers of society from children riding with parents, to university students, bankers, a sprinkling of CEOs and even a former Army chief.

"This diversity is why it has become such a powerful visibility platform," says Gyawali. "Not visibility in the advertising sense. Visibility through emotional association."

The Kora's community participation has been a constant through the years. Says Bhishan Hari Silwal, who participated in the 2018 edition: "Around half an hour into it, everybody settles into groups according to their ability. Faster riders go ahead, there are all age groups, it is pretty wholesome."

Another factor that makes participation genuine is the merchandise like the jersey, and neck buff in particular which has become a signature of a Kora participant. This year's buff is orange coloured, and adds to the team spirit.

Finishers all receive a Made in Nepal medal, which goes with the sustainability focus of the event that discourages use of plastic, and flex banners and littering (box).

SPONSORS

The 2025 edition had BYD and B&B Hospital on board as sponsors, and Himalayan Everest Insurance will continue providing coverage for accidents. Turkish Airlines is also on board with its Kora Click2Win photo contest with the top prize being a roundtrip ticket to Istanbul.

Besides sponsors, the Kora is itself a fund-raising event with non-participants contributing for each km a rider covers for collective impact. The wider public gets involved for a good cause. Past Koras have generated over Rs8 million for charity.

This year, funds go to support EDUKICK working with children in Sarlahi with football training during the FIFA World Cup happening at the same time as the Kora. 📺

To register: <https://mykorachallenge.com/>.



ALL PHOTOS: KORA

Sustainable Lifestyle

The Kathmandu Valley Kora has sustainability as its focus. Although it is not designed as such, it meets in practical ways many of the 17 targets set by the United Nations for its Sustainable Development Goals to be met by 2030.

SDG 3 – GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The Kora encourages daily physical activity, promotes mental well-being and bicycling makes streets safer.

SDG 4 – QUALITY EDUCATION

This year's Kora is a weeklong jatra with workshops on skills-based learning for youth, first-time cyclists and awareness programs for road safety.

SDG 5 – GENDER EQUALITY

This year, more than a quarter of the expected 3,000 participants will be women, giving them visibility and confidence in public life.

SDG 8 – DECENT WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY

The Kora Jatra supports local businesses with visibility, and injects cash into the circular economy at the local level.

SDG 11 – SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES

By promoting people-first mobility, the Kora highlights the value of shared public spaces to make the city more sustainable, liveable and inclusive.

SDG 12 – RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION

Bicycles are human powered, do not burn fossil fuel and the Kora itself does more with less and has a low-waste event design.

SDG 13 – CLIMATE ACTION

By making bicycling high profile and thrilling, it helps individuals to switch to sustainable transport options, reducing petroleum imports and makes climate action do-able.

SDG 17 – PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

The Kora is a public-private partnership of municipalities, businesses, communities, and civil society, and has collective impact.





Events



Embroidery Workshop

Learn the art of stitching at the fully guided Arcane embroidery workshop. No experience needed, materials will be provided. For more details DM @arcane.threadwork on Instagram.

7 June, Rs1,500, Petals Cafe, Thamel

Bhagwan Bahal

Witness divinity come alive through intricate woodcut prints at Samjhana Rajbhandari's ongoing exhibition, Impressions of Bhagwan Bahal.

Until 7 June, 11am-7pm, Gallery 108

Achheta

Achheta, written and directed by Govinda Sunar, explores caste discrimination, societal neglect and blind faith in the Karnali region. Catch some shows.

Until 8 June, 5:15pm, Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali



Manichud Day Hike

Be one with nature and rejuvenate your senses with a one-day hike to Manichud Daha. Enjoy pleasant sights along the trail until you reach the stunning lake.

6 June, Rs1,000, 6:45am, Bhrikuti Mandap

Terrarium Workshop

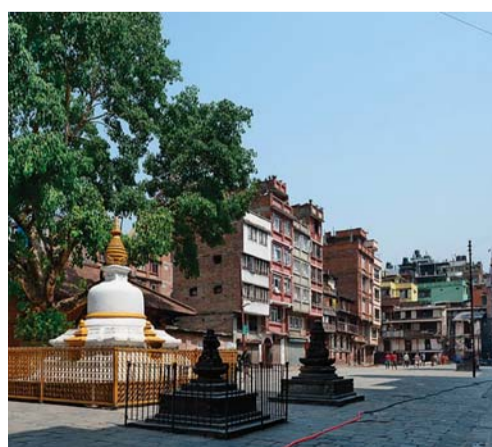
Plant enthusiasts can meet and engage with like-minded participants at this terrarium workshop. Connect with other plant lovers over brunch.

6 June, Rs3,999, 11:30am-1:30pm, Winstons Speakeasy

Taragaon guided tour

Join Taragaon Next's guided tours to explore the surrounding art and architecture throughout this month. Tune in to Taragaon's social media platforms for details.

Every Tuesday, Taragaon Next, Boudha



Itumbahal Sketch

Try a hand at sketching Itumbahal, one of the oldest bahals of Kathmandu, this weekend. DM @usk.kathmandu on Instagram for more details.

6 June, 3pm onwards, Itumbahal



Music

The Heartbreakers

Watch The Heartbreakers perform hit tracks from the 70s and 80s. Enjoy their music with good food and great ambience.

5 June, 6:30-9:30pm, Hard Rock Cafe, Darbar Marg

6K & music

This one-of-a-kind event combines a 6k run with a concert. Watch artists Salil Maharjan and Prabesh Kumar Shrestha perform live after a refreshing run.

6 June, Rs499-Rs1,200, 4pm onwards, Kundalini Durbar Banquet, Maharajganj



Rajesh Nepali Live

Multi-instrumentalist Rajesh Nepali promises an evening of fusion music this weekend. Go with friends to watch him live.

6 June, Rs599-Rs1,000, 8pm onwards, XO Club, Thamel

Bikki Gurung Live

Witness classic performances by Bikki Gurung during his homecoming tour. Join for an unforgettable evening filled with music and soulful vibes.

6 June, Rs1,299-Rs9,995, 5pm onwards, Club Nova, Thamel



Boudha Mahotsav

Featuring a lineup of musicians including The Axe, The Render, Hercules Basnet and The Pasa Rockers, Boudha Mahotsav brings together culture and community.

6 June, 8am onwards, Mahendra Boudha Secondary School, Boudha



Getaway



Bodhi Suites

Situated in the City of Lakes, Pokhara, this boutique hotel is modern, classy and offers a wide variety of luxury amenities. The rooms are spacious, stocked with goods, and the perfect place to unwind after a long day of exploring Lakeside.

Lakeside (61) 467657 / 58

The Old Inn

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

Bandipur (065) 520110, 9808882270

Hotel at the End of the Universe

In this quaint sanctuary, located in scenic Nagarkot, settle into one of the rustic cabins, eat local cuisines and marvel at snow-capped mountains.

Nagarkot (01) 6680109



Borderlands Eco Resort

Enveloped in the natural Himalayan splendor, the resort is located a mere three hours north of Kathmandu, a quick getaway to wild nature.

Sindhupalchok, 014981214, 9802025888

Dusit Thani

Escape from the hustle and bustle of the city to Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort and discover a stay nestled in the Himalayan foothills. Enjoy beautiful views of sunset and mindful moments with meditation, sound healing and yoga.

Dhulikhel, 9851373755



Dining

La Casita

With a direct view of Boudhanath Stupa, La Casita is the ideal place for taking pictures and eating tacos, burgers and tapas.

Boudhanath (01) 4915645

Bayleaf Restaurant

Drop by the garden restaurant for Burmese dishes such as Burmese Tofu Thoke, Khao Swe Thoke (Noodle Salad), Mohinga (fish noodle soup) and other signature pork dishes.

Tangal, 9823514053



Donut Drool

From custard, cinnamon to strawberry, blueberry to their signature cream cheese, Donut Drool has a wide variety of tasty doughnuts. Other bakery items including cookies, bread, cake and their signature drinks are also on the menu.

Pulchok, 9802367543 / Dhapasi, 9861792555

Pawan Sweets

In the mood for Indian? Enjoy sweets, South Indian cuisine and other meals. The Pawan Special Dosa is a must-try.

Baneshwor (01) 5906437



Akari & Koko

Vivanta Hotel's Asian-inspired fusion restaurant and bar serves an impressive assortment of East Asian dishes with modern twists. Try their sushi and pad thai.

Jhamsikhel (01) 5525002

Weekend Weather

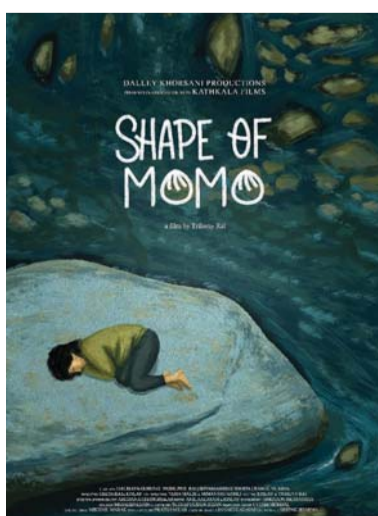


FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
29° 19°	29° 19°	30° 19°	30° 19°

Late Monsoon

The Southwest Monsoon usually hits the Kerala coast on 1 June. The clouds are building up offshore, and it did have a weak start on Thursday. However, this means progress across the Subcontinent and the Bay of Bengal arm of the monsoon will also be delayed to arrive in Kathmandu about the third week of June. Till then, the heat in the plains will continue to push up convective systems with afternoon and night showers over the mountains. Hot and humid daytime in Kathmandu. India's southwest monsoon is continuing its gradual advance over the surrounding seas of southern India, despite missing its anticipated early onset over Kerala this year. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the monsoon has further progressed into parts of the Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep region, Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, indicating that the seasonal rain-bearing system is steadily gathering steam after a brief slowdown.

Our Pick



A 2025 Nepali-language drama written and directed by Tribeny Rai, Shape of Momo follows Bishnu who quits her job in Delhi and returns to her family in Sikkim plagued by the deaths of male members. Before long, she is facing mounting family pressures and societal expectations and people telling her that she now has to be the son of the family. Screened at the opening of Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF) last week, catch this award-winning movie in theatres around town. Stars Gaumaya Gurung, Pashupati Rai, Rahul Nawach Mukhia and Shyama Shree Sherpa.

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

China floors accelerator, Nepal hits brake on EVs

BYD's technological advance comes even as the new budget ends Nepal's near laissez-faire EV policy



DRIVE LINE

Arnab Upadhyay

Nepal's past tax rebate and China's technological innovations in affordable EVs had made battery-powered vehicles popular in Nepal, but the new budget of the new government could impact the transition to renewable energy transportation.

Foot down, hard on the accelerator and BYD's hypercar, the Yangwang U9, hit triple digits speeds seamlessly at BYD's Zhengzhou race track, situated in Henan Province, China.

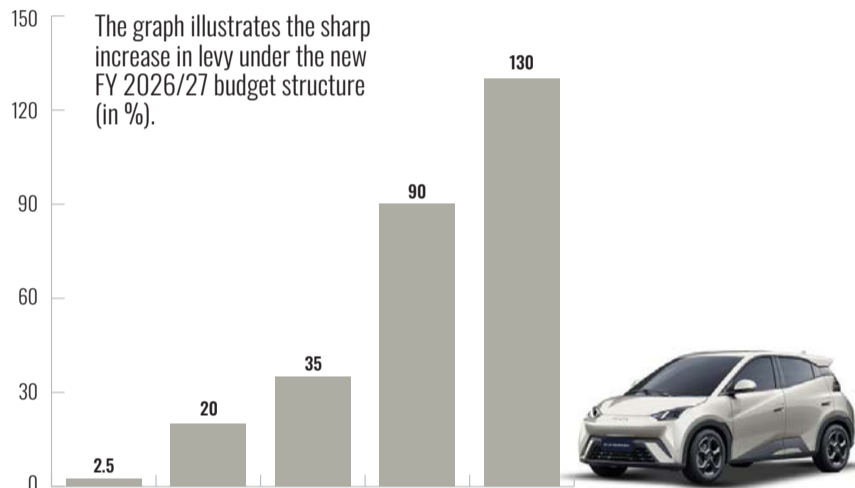
Before I realised it, the car hit 193 km/h towards the end of a 500-metre straight stretch. Hard on the brakes, and in just a couple of seconds the car made a hard right-hand turn at just 65kph.

BYD's crème de la crème U9 featured a 240kW motor setup in each wheel, totalling to 960kW, and produced 1,680 Nm of torque, meaning it was capable of reaching 100kph from a standstill in 2.8 seconds. Compared to that, the BYD Atto 3, widely sold in Nepal, comes with a 100kW motor and produces 310Nm of torque. The catch? The U9 has a hefty price tag of over \$200,000 – making it unsuitable for Nepali roads and pockets.

During a recent visit to the Zhengzhou facility, BYD also showcased its ultra-luxurious plug-in hybrid, the Yangwang U8, as it climbed an artificial 30m sand dune. The U8 features a quad-motor system along with a 2.0L turbo-charged petrol engine that generates 1,280Nm of torque and could actually do 0-100kph in 3.6 seconds. And, if and when needed, the U8 can float on water.

How did a modest Chinese battery-maker come this far? After a one-week trip to BYD's Zhangzhou facility and headquarters in Shenzhen, the success behind this global giant was easier to understand.

BYD started small in 1995, producing Nickel-Cadmium batteries. In the early 2000s, they supplied batteries for Motorola and Nokia.



BYD went public in 2002 on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange with a starting price of HK\$10.95 per share.

However, it was not until after acquiring a state-owned automobile company that BYD produced its first internal combustion engine car, the F3, in 2005. The first hybrid, the FD3M, debuted in 2008 before the company transitioned into electric buses and monorails.

BYD's next big breakthrough came in 2020 with the mass production of its Blade Battery, an innovative use of Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) with a lower production cost and better space efficiency and energy density. BYD famously pierced its battery

with a nail without it going up in flames to prove it was fire-safe.

The next iteration of the Blade Battery, the 2.0, came out last month. It has a longer life span, even higher energy density and the ability to charge from 10% to 97% in under 10 minutes.

Today, BYD is at the forefront of technological advancement, and is a model for vertical and horizontal integration in vehicle manufacturing. The floors at the Zhengzhou mega factory are impressively automated with armies of robots hard at work. Quality control is AI-driven.

Human workers are only needed in the production line for complex work on the interior and for sorting small components. This

enables the BYD plant to roll out one vehicle per minute. Even then, it is having difficulty keeping up with the surge in global demand for EVs, caused by rising fuel prices because of the West Asia war.

NEPAL MARKET

Despite its relatively small market size, next-door Nepal figures prominently in BYD's scheme of things. The company's aggressive marketing and Nepal's favourable tax regime for EVs (till recently) means BYDs and other Chinese and Indian EVs are now coursing through the capillaries of Nepal's roads and highways.

"Nepal is an important market to us," BYD's Asia's Pacific General Manager Liu Xuelian told us recently at a round table at its headquarters in Zhangzhou. "We had seen great potential for EV development and for our cars in Nepal as far back as 2010."

The technological innovation of companies like BYD comes at a critical point in Nepali automobile history. Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle's new budget last week marks a shift in the country's almost laissez-faire policies on EVs that made Nepal second only to Norway last year in proportion of new vehicles that were electric.

The new tax on imported EVs will now be based on the import value of the vehicle, and not based on motor capacity (kW) as

it was. This means taxes now are calculated on a vehicle's CIF (Cost + Insurance + Freight) and could reflect the government's perception that the EV market is maturing and is a potential new steady revenue opportunity.

TAXING ELECTRONS

Previous excise duties have been replaced with a new Clean Infrastructure Investment Fee that the government claims will help pay for EV-related infrastructure. On paper, these reforms look to create a fairer and more transparent system. The old kW-based structure allowed expensive EVs with lower-rated motors to enjoy lower taxes, but by linking taxes to vehicle value, the government introduced a progressive tax mechanism to EVs, aligning it with how ICEs have been taxed.

The budget also now encourages the installation of EV chargers at petrol pumps as minimum infrastructure, a move that, if enforced, could further reduce range anxiety.

However, the immediate concern is affordability. While a flat 20% customs duty has been introduced, higher-value EVs now face steep infrastructure fees. While the Rs 3-5 million segment that has driven Nepal's recent adoption boom may see relatively modest changes, premium and luxury EVs will face significantly higher import costs.

The change in foreign currency exchange rates between NPR and other currencies means that the CIF values at the time of import might fluctuate causing vehicles to shift between the new tax brackets.

The government also plans on introducing a 5% VAT for households that consume more than 50 units per month of electricity (see page 1 and Editorial, page 2). This further marginally decreases the running cost advantage EVs have enjoyed over petrol and diesel vehicles.

Nepal's EV industry is therefore transitioning into a higher cost, more regulated, but infrastructure-rich operation environment. Which could be both good news and bad news for prospective car-buyers. 🇳🇵

Arnab Upadhyay is a content creator who reviews automobiles and promotes road safety on Youtube, Tiktok and IG under the handle Casually Annoyed Driver, and writes this regular column Drive Line in Nepali Times.

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Should Nepal be worried about Ebola?

No need to panic yet, but we must be prepared to deal with possible Bundibugyo transmission

Sonia Awale

Central Africa may seem too far away for most Nepalis to worry about the spread of Ebola, but the presence of Nepali UN peacekeepers at the epicentre of the epidemic has raised concern.

The Nepali Army has mandated a 21-day quarantine for all of its soldiers returning from peacekeeping duties in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Infectious disease experts say the country should remain on high alert, but not panic.

"Increased movement of people means we have to be prepared for any infection in any part of the world as we did previously with Covid," says virologist Sher Bahadur Pun at Teku Hospital. "An average of six Nepalis take yellow fever vaccines every day in our hospital, which proves there are Nepalis travelling to sub-Saharan Africa."

There are 960 Nepali peacekeepers with MONUSCO (UN Organisation Stabilization Mission) and they are stationed in

and around DRC's Bunia of Ituri province at the epicentre of the outbreak of the Bundibugyo strain. Suspected cases in Brazil and Italy have tested negative.

Over 1,000 people have been infected and 250 have died in the DRC and neighbouring Uganda, and the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. The fatality rate of this strain, named after a town in Uganda, is between 30-50%. Bodies of victims remain highly contagious days after death.

PULLOUT FALLOUT

First detected in South Sudan in 1976, Ebola hemorrhagic fever is spread by fruit bats. Human-to-human transmission happens through direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person (graphic). The virus has an incubation period of up to 21 days and symptoms develop within 8-10 days starting with fever, headache, muscle pain, fatigue and sore throat, before it gets more serious.

Nepal needs well-equipped and strict quarantine and isolation centres with trained staff not just



for Ebola but future epidemics. Given Ebola's high fatality rate and stigma, health officials say the government needs to revive the quarantine centres it had for Covid in 2020. However, some of those shelters now house those evicted from settlements last month.

"In many ways, Covid served as good training for us to prepare for other new and emerging infections,"

says infectious diseases specialist Anup Subedee. "We have learnt some of the lessons but the same cannot be said institutionally. We still have a last-minute mindset and wait until it is too late. We have to prepare, not panic."

What makes the current Ebola outbreak even more challenging is the lack of resources on the ground. Health workers are handling

patients with only surgical masks as protection. Several doctors and health workers in Congo have already died from the infection they were treating their patients for.

This is the 17th outbreak of the virus in the DRC, but this time the rapid spread of the virus is a fallout of the USAID and WHO pullouts. The USAID's financial and technical support in rural and

Nepal's HIV crisis is not

Stigma, funding cuts and competing health crises put disease in the shadows

Sabina Devkota

As the school year drew to a close in April, kindergarten teacher Sharmila Gurung, 27, was summoned to the principal's office and was told to resign because her English-language instruction was 'inadequate'.

But her ouster had nothing to do with English proficiency, it was her HIV status. She was also told to transfer her 7-year-old daughter to another school.

"That's when I realised they somehow found out that I was HIV positive," recalls Gurung. "I felt numb and couldn't speak for myself."

Her teaching job in Kathmandu paid just Rs13,000 a month, and half of that went towards rent. As a single mother, she is now worried about her daughter's education.

This was not the first time Gurung has been stigmatised over her HIV status. Four years ago, she was fired from a Montessori school in Gorkha after the staff learnt of her diagnosis and parents threatened to withdraw their children from school. She resigned and moved to Kathmandu, but ostracisation due to ignorance and stigma pursued her.

HIV/AIDS peaked in Nepal in the 1990s, spread through injecting drug use, unprotected sex, and from workers returning from India. Since then, the disease was largely under control because of the availability of antiretroviral therapy (ART). Annual reported cases dropped from 6,000 to a little over 600 in 2024 (graph).

However, there has been no drop in the social stigma associated with the disease. For people living with HIV across Nepal, disclosure of status is often the beginning of social and economic ostracisation.

However, with the pullout of USAID that was supplying ART to Nepal, there has been a recent resurgence. Most are in the 25-50 age group, and new diagnoses is mostly among women.

Parmita Ale, 43, had worked for years at a school canteen in Gorkha until her HIV status was disclosed to her employers six years ago without her consent. What followed was collective exclusion after a community meeting convened to terminate her.

"They pressured me to sign a resignation letter," she recalls. "I told them I wouldn't sign. I had been cooking and serving there for over a decade without anyone getting sick."

But she was eventually fired. Ale relied on her Rs10,000 monthly salary to raise three children, and she has now gone back to subsistence farming.

Ramesh Rai received his HIV diagnosis last November during mandatory medical screening before leaving for Romania. "The manpower agency told me over the phone about the diagnosis, and all my plans went up in smoke," he told us.

Ramesh is now a daily wage labourer at a garage in Itahari, barely earning enough to pay for food and rent. He has not told his family yet. "It is a huge burden to keep this a secret," he said, breaking down. "I feel like my life has shattered like a mirror."

More than 27,000 people living with HIV are receiving treatment at the government's 96 ART clinics across the country. About half of them got support from the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) Nepal, covering transportation costs, lab tests and nutrition support.

But more treatment centres and better support have not translated into social acceptance. A 2024 study by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) found



SABINA DEVKOTA

that many people living with HIV are still denied employment, education, and even citizenship.

The People Living with HIV Stigma Index 2.0 Nepal, 2022 survey showed that while overt discrimination has declined from 49.7% in 2011 to 9.5% in 2022, hidden stigma remains pervasive.

In a survey of 927 respondents across 21 districts, more than half reported hiding their status, while only 17% had disclosed their diagnosis to employers. Of those whose status was known to their colleagues, 22%

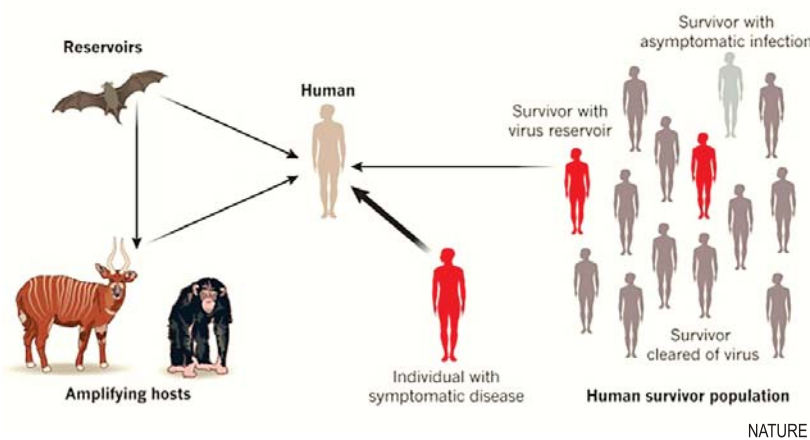
said the disclosure had occurred without their consent.

Explains Manju Adhikari of Teku ART Centre: "The science is not the problem. The medicine works, the real problem is the failure to remove the social stigma."

The National Integrated Biological Behavioural Surveillance among Male Labour Migrants which surveyed 1,873 people across 14 districts in 2024 showed that 41.3% of respondents believed that a person living with HIV who is not yet sick should not be allowed to continue working.



BIKRAM RAI / NT ARCHIVE



India has already issued a travel advisory urging citizens to avoid non-essential travel to the DRC, Uganda, and South Sudan. The Indian government even postponed its fourth India-Africa Forum Summit, which was to be held in Delhi 28-31 May.

Several countries including the United States, Canada, the UAE, and Thailand have issued travel advisories and border restrictions for the DRC, Uganda, and South Sudan following the spread of the Bundibugyo strain.

Africa accounts for less than 1% of visitors to Nepal and most of them are from Egypt, Morocco, or South Africa. Even so, Kathmandu airport and all the border checkpoints have been alerted for arrivals from central Africa.

"We need heightened surveillance, especially along the Indian border. We have to prevent Ebola from entering Nepal because hospitals here are not equipped to handle it," warns Pun.

"By designation our Infectious Diseases Hospital in Teku is the only one that can take in Ebola patients, but it will soon be overwhelmed if precautions are not taken. The government must think urgently about upgrading existing facilities and make healthcare a priority."

being done," says Subedee. "Much of this has to do with the United States pulling out from WHO and the lack of USAID support."

Another reason for the rapid spread of the Ebola virus is that its symptoms are similar to malaria, cholera, typhoid, and other viral hemorrhagic fevers, so that when infected patients are admitted to hospitals they spread it to non-infected patients. It also takes days for results of sample tests to be confirmed during which time there is more mingling of patients.

Just like with Covid, health authorities in Nepal have to be especially alert to the measures being taken in India due to the open border.

conflict-torn areas like DRC was crucial in containing previous Ebola outbreaks, with robust surveillance, testing and contact tracing. The US pullout has affected timely alerts.

"The outbreak this time is pretty serious, and it was spreading for a month and a half before it was detected. Even now only one-fourth of the required contact tracing is

Bird flu alert

Bird flu alerts have become so common in Nepal that the public tends to ignore them. Health officials say that although the threats so far are low, people need to stay vigilant.

The recent detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza in poultry farms in three wards on the northern outskirts of Kathmandu had raised health

is rare, but the danger of infection is high for poultry workers. Because the virus does not survive at 70°C and above, it is safe to consume meat and eggs if properly cooked.

"Poultry farmers, those who transport and handle poultry, and slaughter houses are at high risk since they are in contact with secretion, faces and feathers," says Sher Bahadur Pun, virologist at the Infectious Disease Hospital in Teku. "We have to pay close attention to signs of spreading.



SONIA AWALE

concerns. All poultry, eggs and feed in the affected areas were destroyed.

Nepal is on the Central Asian Flyway for migratory birds that make round trips across the Himalaya every year, and Kathmandu Valley's wetlands are popular stopovers. One such spot is Taudaha Lake, but in March, 15 birds were found dead there. Crows and other urban birds are also dying near the Teaching Hospital and Patan.

Aquatic birds are the primary reservoirs of the virus, and it can cause mild to severe illness when it spills over into domestic poultry and even mammals. Human-to-human transmission

There have been human fatalities in the past."

Pun says he treated three patients with mild symptoms a while ago. But there may be more unreported cases. "Viruses are always mutating and they can become more infectious, especially if they jump the species barrier."

The United States and Canada have vaccine stockpiles against the H5N1 strain for high-risk populations, but these are not easily available in Nepal. As for treatment, the prescription antiviral oseltamivir (Tamiflu) has been found to be most effective. Sonia Awale

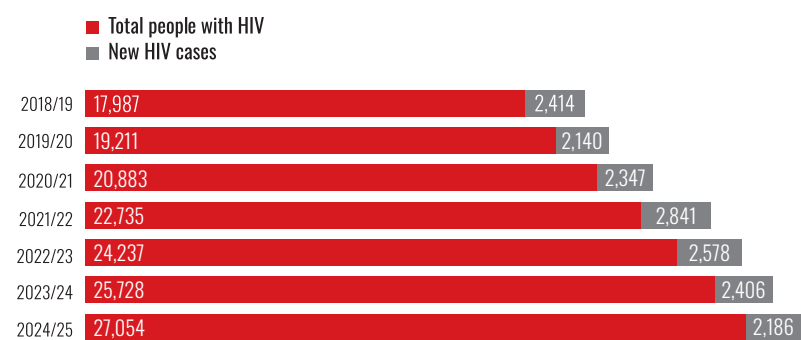
over yet

People with HIV receiving anti-retroviral therapy

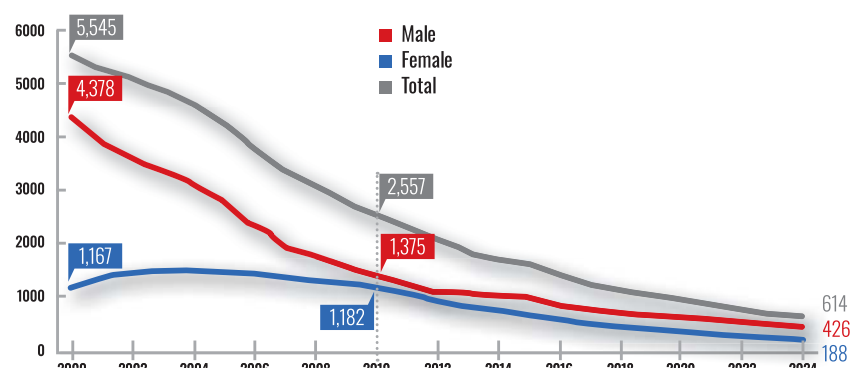
*PLHIV can receive ART free of cost from ART centers across Nepal.



Trends on PLHIV on ART



Number of new HIV infections in Nepal, 2000-2024



SOURCE: NATIONAL HIV FACTSHEET 2025

One in two migrants said they would refuse to buy goods from a shopkeeper known to have HIV.

Adhikari provides psycho-social counselling to people living with HIV, and has witnessed the quiet epidemic of workplace expulsions. She remembers a construction labourer who disclosed his HIV status to co-workers. Soon after, his employer asked him to leave, claiming he was "unable to work".

Experts say migration is common among people living with HIV. Due to stigma and discrimination, many are distanced from family and hometowns, losing support systems, livelihoods, and agency.

"Many people initially go to private clinics that charge Rs7,000 to Rs10,000 for baseline tests that cost only Rs1,700 to Rs1,800 at an ART Centre," Adhikari says.

LEGAL VACUUM

Nepal's Constitution as well as its Public Health Act 2018 prohibits discrimination based on a person's health status, and the 2017 Labour Act requires due process for termination of employment.

The ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS (1998) even encourages employers to provide special measures such as assigning staff lighter duties or more suitable work, instead of firing them if their job is physically demanding. But such legislation is limited to paper. People living with HIV can file legal cases under pseudonyms to protect their identity and avoid social stigma following the Supreme Court's 2007 Confidentiality Guideline. However, many are unaware of this provision.

Workers seeking reinstatement can also file a case within 35 days of receiving notice of termination. But experts and activists say this short window is often impossible to meet for individuals dealing with stigma, emotional distress, and sudden loss of income. Which is why, despite protection, very few people living with HIV pursue legal action. Most isolate themselves from society to avoid the risk of wider disclosure and discrimination.

Bibek Yadav, spokesperson for the Department of Labour and Occupational Safety, confirms that not a single case related to HIV-based dismissal has formally reached the labour courts so far. The long process exhausts victims, and many give up when justice is not immediate, or eventually drop their cases. While the NHRC identifies issues of people living with HIV, it can only direct its recommendations to the relevant bodies.

A 2015 legal assessment of Nepal's HIV response policy led by NCASC found that the National Policy on HIV/AIDS in the Workplace (2007), which prohibits mandatory HIV testing, is poorly implemented.

The Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, and Nepal Army, continue to conduct mandatory HIV screenings during recruitment. Candidates who test positive are disqualified. A 2024 directive from the Ministry of Labour mandates HIV I and II tests for all foreign employment, regardless of destination, and allows physicians to order frequent testing for 'risk groups'.

The long-pending HIV Bill, which activists and experts have advocated since 2009, remains stalled. Nabin Aryal, 50, who has been living with HIV and was ousted from his teaching job 20 years ago, is still desperately waiting for the Bill to fight his long-overdue and humiliating expulsion.

He says, "I have not returned to my village since then. I migrated to Kathmandu. I worked as a paper boy for years. I underwent surgery for a brain tumour, and am vulnerable to opportunistic diseases."

Lok Bahadur Lopchan, Under Secretary and Grievance Hearing Officer at the Ministry of Education and Sports, says that cases of discrimination faced in schools by employees must be reported to local authorities. But in reality no such complaints reach formal grievance mechanisms.

For people living with HIV across Nepal, legal provisions meant to protect them remain out of reach, and figuring out how to pay rent as putting food on the table for their families takes precedence.

Names and identifying details have been changed.



Photographing Nepal's wildlife for the world

Nature photographer lands his striking portrait of a tiger on the cover of this month's BBC Wildlife

Noted Nepali conservation photographer Om Prakash Yadav's dramatic portrait of a tiger looking directly at the camera has been selected for the cover of the June 2026 edition of BBC Wildlife Magazine in the UK.

Yadav is a wildlife and conservation photographer whose work focuses on endangered species, natural habitats, and the relationship between people and the environment. Over the years, he has documented wildlife across Nepal's national parks, wetlands, grasslands, forests and mountain landscapes, working at the intersection of photography, conservation, education, and storytelling.

The photograph of the Royal Bengal Tiger was taken in Meghauri just outside Chitwan National Park in November last year and was selected for 'the tiger's direct eye contact, strong detail, and natural forest setting'.

"Tigers are difficult to spot, but I came upon this one during an unexpected forest encounter in the buffer zone," Yadav recalls. "It appeared quietly and briefly, creating only a short window to photograph the animal before it disappeared back into the undergrowth."

He added: "The moment was not a dramatic chase or planned shoot, but a reminder of how unpredictable and humbling wildlife photography can be. Meaningful nature photographs come from patience, field knowledge, and respect for the natural rhythm of the forest rather than aggressive pursuit."

The June 2026 issue of BBC



Wildlife Magazine features the BBC series Tiger Island, and the editorial team selected Yadav's image for the cover after reviewing a curated selection of tiger photographs from Nepal. Yadav sees the selection as more than just a personal milestone, but an opportunity for Nepal's wildlife and protected areas to receive wider international attention through photography.

Yadav's career started out neither as a conservationist nor a photographer. He originally worked in IT, graphic design, and digital

media, but he took photographs as a hobby.

Over time, repeated visits to Nepal's national parks and natural landscapes gradually shifted his focus to specialise in wildlife and conservation photography. Encounters with birds, mammals, reptiles, and forest ecosystems led him to spend more time in the field documenting species, and observing animal behaviour rather than simply photographing landscapes or travel scenes.

"Photography became a way

to communicate environmental stories and create awareness about conservation issues in Nepal," Yadav told us from Manang last week, while photographing Himalayan birds. Eventually, he moved into biodiversity education outreach, conducting workshops, and conservation-oriented visual storytelling.

"Wildlife photography is built far more on patience, observation, and understanding animal behaviour than on equipment and



technique alone," said Yadav, pointing out that wild tigers are notoriously difficult to photograph because it requires long hours in the field, repeated visits to the same habitats, and acceptance that many days may pass without any meaningful encounters.

Photographers may spend weeks searching forests and riverbeds for signs such as pugmarks, alarm calls, or scent markings, only to have a few seconds to react when a tiger finally appears. "Weather, light, terrain,

and the movement patterns of animals all influence the outcome, and often the most important part of wildlife photography is learning when not to disturb the environment," he said.

ETHICAL PHOTOGRAPHY
For Yadav, ethical practice is equally important. Maintaining distance, avoiding disturbance, and prioritising the welfare of the animal always come before getting a photograph. Besides tigers, Yadav has photographed many of Nepal's lesser-known wildlife species, including birds, reptiles, wetland animals, and mammals from the country's diverse ecosystems.

In 2010, 12 tiger range countries met in St Petersburg, pledging to double their big cat populations in ten years. Nepal more than tripled them by 2026 — the only country to do so. He added: "Nepal holds enormous potential for wildlife storytelling and conservation communication at an international level. It is not just about saving iconic species for the future but also to the wider ecosystems that support them. This encourages people to protect nature and this in turn ensures human livelihoods." 🇳🇵


Equipment Om Yadav uses:
Nikon Z9 Nikon D810
For wildlife
Nikkor 180-600mm Z
Nikkor 80-400mm VR II

For travel and landscape;
Nikkor Z 24-120mm f/4 S
Nikkor 20mm f/1.8 G
Nikkor 16mm f/2.8 D




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