

ANUP TAMU

The PM's PM finsta

Nobel Rimal

Content on Nepal's 'antisocial media' comes in three genres:

- **Meme** has a template. The frame stays fixed while anyone can swap in context.
- **Troll** has a target. It exists to provoke or humiliate a person.
- **Shitpost** has neither template nor target. It is crude on purpose to derail serious conversation.

The prime minister shitposted at 10:15PM on Saturday night. When 'we are not like them' is the entire value proposition, every ritual of conventional politics rings hollow. On budget night, at 9:54PM, while the consolidated fund was found to have a Rs130 billion hole, the PM's two word online post read: 'Be confident.'

Balen Official on Facebook is his loudspeaker. Its 414 posts from his mayoral days show daylight uploads with a median engagement of

133,601 likes. His alternate account itsb. itsb, the den has 500 posts in romanised Nepali and inside jokes have a median engagement of 3,600 likes. Nepal's PM keeps a main and a finsta.

The ambassador joke was on

the alt account, and had 107,329 likes and 20,789 comments, it outdrew monthly government communication.

The AI-stylised self-portrait was posted just as backlash against ordinances crested. The 'Say cheese' post followed protests by evicted women. It took 463,000 likes in 24 hours. DDC's cheese sales jumped 30%, and the plight of homeless squatters fell off the news radar.

The deflection worked. Of 1,994 comments scraped from the ambassador thread, only 18 mention Pushkar or the police. One in four carries a laughing emoji.

A commenter asking what morality allows a prime minister to expose a citizen's private message gets zero likes, buried by an algorithm that needs no instruction from anyone. This method now works as state communication.

A rapper named Balen mocked Singha Darbar, now he owns the building he threatened to burn down. Trump wrote this playbook.

PM Shah vowed to skip foreign travel in his first year and refused to meet foreign envoys. Addressing Parliament for the first time he said Nepal had also occupied Indian territory. RSP Chair Rabi Lamichhane and Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal had to do damage control in Delhi (Editorial, page 2).

Maybe this is good cop bad cop. The chairman charms, the PM growls, Nepal extracts leverage. But if so, nobody briefed the diplomats. The Indians sent a message by giving Lamichhane a welcome warmer than the Delhi heatwave.

Khanal flew to Delhi the day Lamichhane returned, and is off to Beijing to balance things off. Twice in one month, the RSP has had to clean up a mess its PM made.

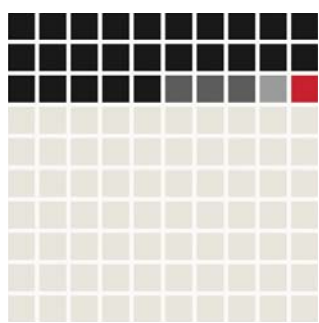
A brand needs consistency. Running a nation takes conversation. But the PM's trash posts point to a leader who would rather stay where nobody has ever defeated him — the attention arena.

The feed will prop up his fan base. The medium forgives and forgets everything by Friday. And buried in hundreds of thousands of likes sits a comment at zero: the one asking what kind of prime minister does that to a citizen.

The Benefit of Doubt
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2

What 1,994 comments on PM's ambassador post said.

■ each square is 20 comments



Balen Shah
Malai pani Ambassador
Banna Mann chha,
PM ko Number chha Bhane
yesso dinus na??

0.9%

Only 18 out of 1,994 comments were about the secretary's arrest

- Laughing emoji or 'Haha': 493
- Banter about phone number: 55
- Other ambassador jokes: 23
- Mentioning 'Pushkar', 'Teku': 18
- Everything else: 1401

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स्टेन्लेस स्टील पानी ट्याकी
माथि चढ्न, भित्र पसेर सफा गर्न र प्लम्बिङ काम गर्न सकिने, आवश्यकता अनुसारको मोटाइ, आकार र क्षमताको उपलब्ध छ ।
महार्जन मेटल इण्डस्ट्रीज
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Giving the government the benefit of doubt

So far so good. But enough of this algorithmic attention-seeking, we now need functioning government.

Editorial

Sonia Awale

Whenever we get exasperated with Prime Minister Balendra Shah's reticence and reclusiveness, we just have to remind ourselves of the past 20 years of three-party rule. In this space we could not conceal our disgust with their greed, power hunger and complete disregard for the welfare of citizens.

Before it all fades from national consciousness, let us remind ourselves of the fake refugee scandal, the various real estate scams and the plunder by politicians and their cronies. These stories were investigated and exposed by the mainstream press and fed the public anger that erupted in the September Storm last year.

Which is why most Nepalis want to give the government elected by a near two third majority two months ago the benefit of doubt. But the signs are not good.

During the partyless Panchayat system (1961-1990) there were two governments in Nepal. Narayanhi Palace was where all the power was, and Singha Darbar was a rubber stamp. There is a sense of déjà vu with decision-making concentrated at the PMO, while Prime Minister Shah ignores Parliament, gives orders to the Cabinet and even bypasses his own RSP. And just like back then the king's advisers were the de facto government, the prime minister's geeks are ordering people around.



All this does not bode well for the country's future stability, and even less so for the RSP. The rift between the Balen boys (and girls) in the Cabinet and technocrats appointed by party chair Rabi Lamichhane is spilling out into the open. One hand of government does not seem to know, or care, what the other is doing.

This is having geopolitical repercussions. Lamichhane and Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal are having to mop up the mess left by the prime minister and his off-the-cuff

remarks and decisions.

The reinstatement of Sudan Gurung as Home Minister was not a surprise. The investigation committee was akin to a fox guarding the chicken coop, and his clean chit over undeclared assets and shares in a fraudulent micro-insurance scheme was preordained. Back in his powerful portfolio, his first puzzling decision to reopen the investigation into the royal massacre 25 years ago sounded to many like an attempt to deflect attention from the skeletons in his own closet.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

As home minister, Sudan Gurung now oversees the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB), the very agency supposed to investigate his involvement in the 8-9 September violence as recommended by the National Human Rights

Commission (NHRC). More intriguingly, an expose published earlier this week on nepalnews.com based on a classified report by the National Investigation Department (NID) names Gurung among those attending meetings from July 2024 planning a Bangladesh type uprising to overthrow the Nepal government.

The NID sent its findings to the Gauri Bahadur Karki Commission and the NHRC that were looking into the GenZ protests. Neither cited the conclusions.

'The NID report explicitly links Sudan Gurung's group to the violence during the movement ... he had attended the program outlining the movement's roadmap. The report identified Bablu Gupta and Som Sharma as key instigators of the destruction and were active members of Sudan's group during the Gen Z protest,' writes Lokendra Bishwakarma for nepalnews.com. Another report in ukera.com exposed the involvement and brief detention of the prime minister's main adviser in the VOIP call bypass scam 15 years ago.

Prime Minister's previous decisions in the past two months with the rushed arrests of K P Oli, Ramesh Lekhak and bank CEOs (only for the court to release them on bail), squatter evictions that left thousands still homeless, ruling by ordinance to appoint a chosen chief justice have all shown an authoritarian streak that has rattled even his own RSP.

But every time his decision is contested, the prime minister sends out a Trumpian-style Facebook post (usually on a weekend night) to divert attention away from the controversy. His 'Say Cheese' (pictured) and ambassador shitpost were all well-timed to deflect attention from his walkout and impromptu remark in Parliament (Page 1).

If we are scratching our heads about this government, imagine what Nepal-watchers in Beijing and New Delhi are doing. A reclusive and impulsive leader can destabilise the whole neighbourhood, and they need clarity.

We will still give the prime minister and his government the benefit of doubt, but they should stop horsing around and start governing for real. 🇳🇵

Trending Online

Protecting natural capital

by Sony Baral Gauli
Forests, watersheds, biodiversity, and ecosystem services must be seen as productive natural capital assets contributing to national wealth. Green development should not be an afterthought. Visit nepalitimes.com for the analysis.

Most reached and shared on Facebook



Modi-Rabi and India-Nepal

RSP chair Rabi Lamichhane met Indian PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi last week after PM Balendra Shah's dramatic statement in Parliament about Nepal also occupying Indian territory. Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal followed up with his own visit to India after Lamichhane. Follow us for the latest updates.

Most popular on X



Budget backs economy, not ecology

by Shristi Karki
If reducing fuel imports by promoting electric transport and increasing household power consumption was the goal, this budget fell short - it introduced new taxes on EVs, a VAT on electricity consumption, and sidelined climate impact. Read the report on our website.

Most commented

Kathmandu Kora Jatra

by 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. The 2026 edition is set to be the biggest one yet. Go online for details.

Most visited online page

Letters

NT GREEN ISSUE

Nepali Times' analysis exposes the deep-seated grip of fossil fuel on Nepal's economy and how it is able to limit environmental commitments to lip service ('Nepal budget backs economy, not ecology', Shristi Karki, nepalitimes.com).

Dipak Gyawali

■ As if economy and ecology would contradict each other. This is only the case if the economy is looking backwards, but can this be the future?

Marianne Rukowski

■ Reducing petrol consumption makes sense for one's personal finances, but talking about the environment in 2026 is a joke. Should the US and the West be allowed to do whatever they want while Nepalis are prohibited to use

petrol vehicles? I have frequent power cuts in my house that needs to be reduced.

Nikhil Koirala

■ I have no idea what the government is trying to do. Diesel and petrol are taking so much money out of Nepal. A one-hour traffic jam in Kathmandu costs significant fuel, and increased pollution. I want to see Nepal be fully electric over the next five years. Nature gave us hydropower potential, so we might as well switch everything to electric.

nep_night

■ In the entire article, there is no use of words like 'farm', 'agriculture', 'crop', so this is an elitist piece with theories and with the language of the conference hall ('Protecting Nepal's natural capital', Sony Baral Gauli, nepalitimes.com).

It does not get down into the roots of the issue. It is possible to optimise many types of specialist, profitable, food production. We have cross-frontier markets and better infrastructure. We need a modern perception of agriculture; one that will change the current outdated mind-set.

Tony Jones

TRIBHUVAN HIGHWAY

Very interesting detailed account of Tribhuvan Highway - as someone who has spent a good deal of time assessing the effects of roads this was particularly informative ('The long and winding road to India', Dan Edwards, nepalitimes.com).

David Seddon

AMBASSADOR APPLICATIONS

How do we ensure that an open application process leads to merit-based appointments rather than simply changing the route through which political influence

operates ('Who wants to be an ambassador?', Kunda Dixit, Nepali Times newsletter)? Diplomacy is not a ceremonial role. Ambassadors represent Nepal's interests abroad, strengthen economic and political ties, support Nepali citizens overseas, attract investment, and shape how the world sees our country. These positions require competence, experience, judgment, and a deep understanding of international affairs. Opening applications is a great first step. The harder and more important step is ensuring transparency in the selection process itself. What qualifications will be prioritised? If this reform is genuine, it could become an important step toward professionalising Nepal's diplomatic service. If not, it risks becoming another exercise in optics.

Ishika Panta

Online Package



Watch video on our YouTube channel about how lapsi ko achar is prepared from start to finish as it is peeled, boiled in a sugary syrup and spiced to perfection.



Pabi Sara and Chandra Bahadur's New Sangharsha Dhaka Udhog is one of the 32 small-scale dhaka businesses in Palpa, but their success came after much hardship.

1,000 Words



NEPAL PHOTO LIBRARY

BACK AGAIN: A passerby attempts a selfie with re-appointed Home Minister Sudan Gurung who was visiting Hanuman Dhoka on Wednesday night. Gurung's first decision after reassuming office was to reopen the investigation into the 2001 Royal Massacre, which was seen as an attempt to deflect attention from cases against him, including undisclosed shareholdings and involvement in the 8-9 September violence.

Times

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Protecting Kangchenjunga's natural

Securing a future for the community-managed conservation area below the world's third highest mountain

Chungla Sherpa

Nepal's Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) is one of the most unique experiments in community-managed nature protection in the Himalaya.

The landscape below the world's third highest mountain supports globally significant biodiversity, including the endangered snow leopard, red panda, musk deer, and black bear.

But it also sustains mountain livelihoods, pastoral systems, tourism economies, and transboundary cultural connections. Yet, the region is seeing expansion of hydropower and roads. Tourism growth has put pressure on the ecologically fragile mountains.

This is occurring at a time when Himalayan ecosystems are already under mounting stress from climate breakdown, shifting precipitation patterns, glacier instability, biodiversity loss, and rapid socioeconomic change.

The KCA is no longer just a protected area: it has become a contested socio-ecological space where development aspirations, conservation priorities, local livelihoods, and institutional responsibilities intersect, and at times, are in conflict.

Residents and tourism entrepreneurs recognise the need for conservation management, but also want the KCA Management Council (KCAMC) to be more



BORDER PASS: Steep switchbacks on a new road from Nepal over the Tiptola Pass up to China.

ALTON C BYERS

active in maintaining trekking trails, bridges, rest shelters, and other tourist facilities damaged by landslides or weather.

Residents want transparency regarding taxes, royalties, and the conservation fees they pay. Economic status varies across the region, and not all families have equal landholdings, tourism income, or market access. Taxes and fees are a disproportionate burden on households.

Yak herders are among the most affected groups. They face growing challenges of maintaining traditional pastoral practices as the surrounding ecology and economy changes. Coexistence with wildlife has always been a part of their culture and identity, but their animals are increasingly hunted by snow leopards and wolves.

Herders are not happy with insurance compensation rates, verification procedures, delayed

response, and the valuation of losses. They have limited representation in conservation committees, decision-making bodies, and local governments.

They do not want to be viewed merely as beneficiaries or victims, but rather as essential conservation partners whose ecological knowledge and lived experiences are critical for long-term coexistence.

The suspension of cross-border

livestock trade with China after the pandemic created added economic stress, reducing household income and altering herd management practices. Many families therefore have larger livestock populations than before, increasing grazing pressure, and intensifying competition between domestic animals and wild herbivores like blue sheep, which is an important prey species for snow leopards.

This changing pastoral dynamic

BRIEFS

2 more Marriotts

Marriott International and CG Hospitality Global announced two new luxury hotels to open in 2031: The Ritz-Carlton Kathmandu and The Westin Kathmandu. David Marriott visited the site of a new Marriott-managed Luxury Collection property in Thamel with owners Shesh Ghale and Jamuna Gurung. He also visited



Aloft by Marriott Kathmandu. At Nylgiri Above It All, they were welcomed by Chair of Aloft Marriott Kathmandu Prithvi Pande, and his wife, Pratima Pande.

Ritz-Carlton Kathmandu in Thamel features 150 rooms including 30 suites, five restaurants and bars, a spa, and over 1,100 sq m of conference space. Westin Kathmandu will offer 150 rooms with a WestinWorkout® fitness studio and 700 sq m of smart meeting facilities.

FlyDubai Pokhara

A FlyDubai technical team led by Risk Management VP Adrian Lucas has completed an on-site inspection of the Pokhara International Airport and reportedly declared the facility ready for regular international service. The airline is considering daily direct flights on the Pokhara-Dubai route from September. Completed four years ago, the airport has only seen sporadic international flights.

BARN Ex-Com

The Board of Airlines Representatives in Nepal (BARN) held its Annual General Meetings on 5 June at Best Western Plus Godavari under the theme 'Resilient Skies, Shared Vision'. They discussed key industry matters, endorsed financial reports, and constituted a new Executive Committee for 2026-2028: Chairman: Anil Ghimire (Nepal Airlines), Vice Chairs: Bhola Bikram Thapa (IndiGo), Abit Shrestha (AOC-N), General Secretaries: Sarik Bogati (Qatar Airways), Navaraj Shahi (FlyDubai), Serkan Basar (Turkish Airlines), Junu Maleku (Cathay Pacific), Dhiraj Chandra Shrestha (China Southern), Santosh Bikram Rana (Thai Airways), Tripti Chhetri (Malaysia Airlines), Ramesh Lamichhane (Emirates), Basu Lamichhane (FITS Air). BARN was established in 1990 as the umbrella association representing airlines operating in Nepal and works closely with aviation stakeholders to promote the sustainable development of Nepal's aviation sector.



Turkish 7.9 million pax

Turkish Airlines carried 7.9 million passengers in May with a total load factor of 84.0%, a record for the month in the carrier's history. Available seat kilometers increased by 2.5% to 23.2 billion compared to the same period in 2025. Cargo/Mail carried during the month increased by 8.6%. The carrier has a fleet of 545 aircraft that fly to 358 destinations in 133 countries.



Samsung World Cup TV

Samsung Nepal is running a World Cup TV promotion until 19 July, offering discounts on TVs and soundbars. Also included is 12 months of free NetTV and World Cup broadcasts. 0% 1, 2-year EMI plans are available.

TIA pick-and-drop

Vehicles picking up or dropping off travelers will not be charged a parking fee if they exit in a fifteen-minute window for the next month. The previous limit was seven minutes, which was found to not be enough.

Gurung and Pun

The first decision of reinstated Home Minister Sudan Gurung was to reopen investigation into the 2001 Royal Palace massacre in what many saw as an effort to divert attention from the government's performance issues. Gurung and new Minister of Innovation Mahabir Pun were sworn in at Sheetal Niwas by President Ramchandra Paudel in the presence of Prime Minister Balendra Shah.

Indian arrivals highest

Indian tourist arrivals by air reached an all-time monthly high in May 2026. The 40,782 total visitors made up 40% of all foreign arrivals that month. The increase, up 19% from 2025, is driven by a heat wave in north India, school holidays, QR payments, and no passport/visa entry. Hotel occupancy in Pokhara is at 90% over the past two weeks, with Indian guests accounting for the majority.

Cabinet backs DDC

The Cabinet has discussed a push to better market the state-owned Dairy Development Corporation with Minister of Agriculture Gita Chaudhary tabling the proposal and distributing DDC products. The initiative aims to make DDC buy more milk from farmers, and reduce reliance on imports. PM Shah expressed support, framing it as part of a broader Buy Nepali agenda.

IME Tamor financing

Global IME Bank is leading Rs19B financing for the 166MW Tamor Hydropower Project in Taplejung under Crystal Power Development. Six banks are involved: Global IME (Rs5B), Siddhartha Bank (Rs4B), Laxmi Sunrise Bank (Rs 4B), Prabhu Bank (Rs3.5B), Krishi Bikas Bank (Rs1.5B), and Nepal SBI Bank (Rs1B). Completion is expected within five years.



Green hydrogen

Butwal Power Company inaugurated a 50kW green hydrogen pilot project in Pyuthan near its Jhimruk plant. The facility uses hydropower-driven electrolysis to produce hydrogen at 99.99% purity for compression and storage. The project is supported by the World Bank and a British development fund, and built by a Chinese company. GoN has plans for bigger hydrogen projects of upto 2.5MW.

heritage

may also be increasing carnivore attacks on livestock. Human-wildlife conflict within KCA is not just a conservation issue, but is connected to transboundary trade, rural economies, grazing governance, and disruptions in people-to-people relations.

Residents want better veterinary services, livestock vaccination programs, and technical support to meet international livestock health standards required for cross-border trade. Many participants argue that improved diplomatic coordination and institutional trust-building between Nepali and Chinese authorities could help restore sustainable livestock markets while reducing ecological and economic pressure in high mountain pasturelands.

UPWARD MOVEMENT

The upward movement of development is one of the most visible and complex transformations in the Kangchenjunga landscape. Roads carved into steep slopes, hydropower plants, transmission lines, and construction camps are in remote areas that were previously accessible only by foot trails.

The changes are visible all along the road from Phungling toward Olangchung Gola and from Sekathum to Ghunsa (map). For someone born and raised in this region, I felt a profound emotional contradiction.

On the one hand, remote mountain communities like mine need connectivity, healthcare, electricity, communication systems, and economic opportunities. Villagers who once walked for days to access basic services deserve the same developmental opportunities available everywhere else.

Yet as a researcher and student of Himalayan ecology, it is equally heartbreaking to witness the scale of environmental disturbance. Scarred mountainsides, sediment-filled rivers, and rivers obstructed by hydropower plants raise difficult questions about the long-term ecological consequences of such accelerated interventions.

Can development and conservation truly coexist within fragile mountain ecosystems, or will one inevitably dominate the other? Rivers, forests, wildlife, glaciers, and mountains are also living systems. How would they respond if they possessed the ability to resist human transformation? If nature could defend itself, what would that ecological revolt look like?

I remember the realities of growing up in a remote Himalayan village: the long walks, isolation, kerosene lamps and limited healthcare and communication. Development need not be inherently destructive: the challenge lies in determining what form of development is appropriate and sustainable in ecologically sensitive mountains.

Nepal's renewable energy expansion and carbon neutrality targets complicate this debate even more. Hydropower is promoted as a clean and climate-friendly energy source that can boost the country's economic growth and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

In the KCA, the cumulative ecological impact of multiple hydropower projects within its river systems remains poorly understood.

A divergence of views and lack of coherence can be seen in the management committees where local communities, federal and municipal governments take part. The ultimate shared objective is still effective conservation and sustainable management of the landscape and its natural resources.



CHUNGLA SHERPA

The existing tensions therefore should not be interpreted solely as institutional failure, but rather as the outcome of multiple actors with different responsibilities, mandates, expectations, and operational limitations within an increasingly complex socio-ecological landscape.

The decisions of government officials are shaped by legal frameworks, national policies, bureaucratic procedures, budgetary limitations, and institutional hierarchies. In contrast, the conservation council sees local realities, community management practices, practical field-level challenges, and the day-to-day concerns of residents.

Both perspectives may be valid but differences in interpretation, implementation priorities, and jurisdictional authority can create communication gaps, affecting coordination and trust. Being a government official myself, I understand that many decisions are constrained by laws, institutional practices, national priorities, and administrative rules.

The local conservation council, on the other hand, must respond to diverse community expectations, local grievances, livelihood concerns, and rapidly changing socioeconomic realities. Balancing these multiple pressures is not easy for either side, particularly in remote Himalayan regions where conservation, development, and political expectations intersect simultaneously.

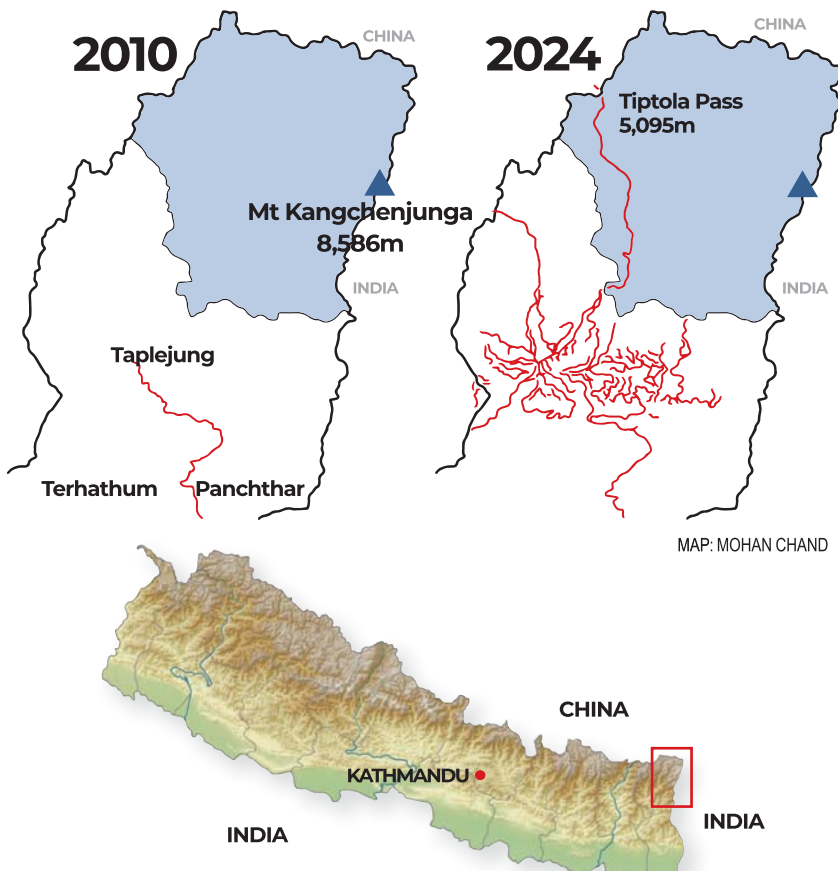
The two expectations can collide and create conflict. Similar tensions can emerge between local governments and the KCAMC regarding resource allocation, development priorities, implementation authority, and spatial jurisdiction. Broader social diversity, differing ideological perspectives, and varying stakeholder interests can also shape decision-making processes and affect conservation.

Monetary inflows from hydropower projects, particularly through corporate social responsibility programs and community support funds, have introduced additional dynamics among local communities.

Despite advantages, there is also growing concern regarding transparency, accountability, and the equitable distribution of such benefits. Council members want ecologically responsible financial mechanisms that ensure a portion of development-related revenue is allocated for long-term biodiversity conservation, ecological restoration, disaster risk reduction, and environmental monitoring.

KANGCHENJUNGA CONSERVATION AREA

The spread of the road network (red lines) in the last 12 years has been rapid, threatening the fragile mountain landscape



MAP: MOHAN CHAND

Nature conservation should not be viewed as separate from development, but rather as the ecological foundation upon which long-term development ultimately depends. Freshwater availability, sustainable tourism, slope stability, climate resilience, hydropower generation, agricultural productivity, and ecosystem services all rely upon functioning natural systems. Development activities within and around conservation areas require careful planning, cumulative impact assessment, and long-term ecological safeguards to ensure sustainability for both people and nature.

CHANGING LAND USE

Land use and land cover within the KCA were assessed using season-wise land cover datasets. Ecological conditions were further evaluated using satellite remote sensing images.

The analysis revealed substantial environmental transformation between 2005 and 2020. Although bare rock, glaciers, grasslands, and forests continued to dominate the landscape, significant shifts had occurred within these ecosystems.

Forest cover declined from 372.41 km² (18.7%) to 324.89 km² (16.3%), while bare rock decreased

from 467.75 km² to 395.32 km². In contrast, grasslands expanded from 425.59 km² (21.4%) to 484.15 km² (24.3%), and snow-covered areas increased from 181.06 km² to 230.27 km². Glacier extent remained stable, declining only slightly from 434.77 km² to 433.61 km².

Human-modified land uses also expanded, with built-up areas increasing nearly fivefold and cropland showing gradual growth. These changes suggest the combined influence of climatic variability, ecological succession, tourism growth, infrastructure expansion, and changing livelihood practices.

Ecological indicators revealed widespread vegetation greening across lower and middle elevation zones, but this was not accompanied by higher ecosystem productivity. The data showed that increased vegetation cover does not necessarily correspond to improved ecosystem functioning.

Despite global warming, land surface temperature remained relatively stable, with maximum values ranging from 20.4°C in 2005 to 19.7°C in 2020, whereas precipitation exhibited substantial variability, from 1101–1877 mm in 2005, 1450–2276 mm in 2010, and 946–1965 mm in 2020.

Despite growing socioeconomic

pressures, institutional complexities, and ecological uncertainties, community-based conservation within the KCA has generated important social and environmental gains. Local communities, conservation council members, and local residents described improvements in anti-poaching activities, wildfire control, conservation awareness, tourism opportunities, livelihood diversification, and public participation in environmental stewardship.

Yet conservation governance remains complex because local governments, conservation institutions, hydropower developers, tourism operators, and local residents often operate under different priorities, mandates, and expectations.

BENEFIT SHARING

Effective conservation in the eastern Himalaya therefore requires moving beyond fragmented governance toward collaborative, transparent, and science-based approaches grounded in trust, participation, and ecological responsibility.

Smoother communication, improving benefit-sharing methods, economic valuation of nature, integrating indigenous and local ecological knowledge, supporting cumulative environmental assessments, and investing in long-term ecological monitoring systems are all essential for coexistence between people and nature.

At the same time, the transboundary Kangchenjunga watershed continues to face major scientific data gaps. Despite growing evidence of ecological and climatic change, the conservation area still lacks sufficient long-term ecosystem, hydrological, and biodiversity monitoring infrastructure across elevation gradients.

The Snow Leopard Research Centre at Khambachen represents an important step toward strengthening high-altitude ecological research in the KCA, but it needs further support.

In addition, there is a critical need to strengthen data management systems, long-term data storage, and the localisation of data-driven decision-making processes. Enhancing the technical capacity of KCA officials and conservation practitioners through targeted training and institutional support will be equally crucial for improving evidence-based conservation planning, ecological monitoring, and adaptive management.

Ultimately, the future of the KCA will depend upon whether development and conservation can evolve through mutual adaptation rather than working at cross purposes. The eastern Himalaya is not merely a frontier for infrastructure expansion, but one of the world's most ecologically and culturally significant mountain landscapes.

Its glaciers regulate water systems, forests stabilise fragile slopes, rivers sustain downstream populations, and landscapes support biodiversity, tourism, and cultural identity across scales far beyond the conservation area itself.

Protecting this gift of nature requires collective responsibility shared among governments, conservation councils, scientists, local communities, and development actors alike.

It will require balancing aspiration with restraint, economic opportunity with ecological safeguards, and short-term development interests with long-term environmental sustainability for future generations. 🇳🇵

Chungla Sherpa is a PhD researcher at Lincoln University, New Zealand, working in conservation ecology and mountain biodiversity focusing on predator-prey interactions, and community-based conservation in the Himalaya.

Where GODS and PEOPLE mingle

Post-2015 earthquake reconstruction revived Patan's ancient architectural techniques

Sonia Awale

When does a monument become heritage? Who gets to say how to preserve them: the government, local communities or international partners with experience of landmark restoration elsewhere? Does the textbook definition of heritage preservation even apply in Kathmandu Valley where gods mingle among people in everyday life?

Noted conservation architects Niels Gutschow and Rohit Ranjitkar together attempt to answer these difficult questions in their latest publication, *Tradition and Modernity in Patan: The Paradox of Architectural Preservation in Nepal*.

The hefty volume dissects the contradictions in the theory and practice of post-disaster restoration in a place like Patan with its 2,500 years of building history, living culture and intangible heritage.

One needs to first understand how heritage preservation in Nepal differs from Western concepts. This is best explained by Ranjitkar in one of the earlier chapters: 'Our culture is embedded in an ongoing process of change. The monuments that make up our heritage are not treated as memorials to bygone times. In this respect they differ from,

for instance, the pyramids in Egypt or the Colosseum in Rome, which are preserved as functionless relics in the form of ruins.'

In other words, heritage for us is a living, thriving process, an accumulation of the contribution of many generations of artisans who have perfected craftsmanship unique to their culture and traditions with daily rituals and votive offerings.

And after every successive earthquake, they have adapted and rebuilt, keeping the techniques and expertise alive.

The 1964 Venice Charter is a foundational pillar of international heritage conservation (see below). It decrees that restoration must be based on original material and authentic documents, strictly prohibiting conjecture, unproven hypothetical reconstructions, and aesthetic alterations.

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972 also linked cultural and natural sites, and their protection became a concern of the global community.

'By signing the convention in 1978, Nepal agreed to shoulder duties and obligations that were alien to its social and cultural practices,' authors remind us in the chapter titled *Changing Townscape: The Replacement of Historical Houses*.

We met Rohit Ranjitkar in his makeshift office behind the Char Narayan temple in Patan Darbar Square. He argued: "There was no representation from our part of the world in the convention, so it did not reflect our living culture and heritage."

CARVING OUR OWN NICHE

Ranjitkar recalls the first time it hit him that the Western approach to conservation was not always the right fit for Nepal. When the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) was working on the restoration of Radha Krishna temple in 1994, the architects complied with the Venice Charter and left several niches empty.

While the international community praised the restoration, devotees in Patan



HEAVENLY VIEW: Aerial survey photograph of core of Patan taken on 13 December 1971 before the city got overbuilt.

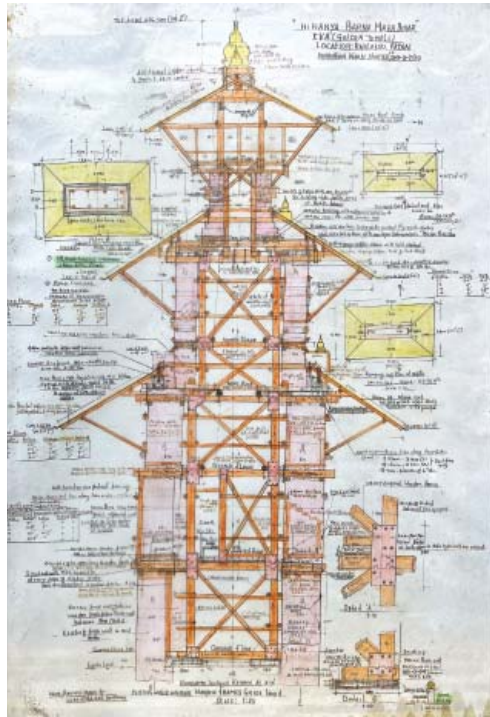
who had been worshipping at the shrine for generations found it appalling that the alcove of the gods was void. One day, Ranjitkar even saw a schoolchild sketching the outline of a deity with chalk on the plain wooden surface.

"The Western approach to conservation can exclude creative replacement," Ranjitkar told us. "But woodcarving is a generational occupation for our people, and we encourage the community to add and adapt."

The textbook definition of heritage conservation therefore directly contrasts with the devotion of local communities who do not mind additions that reflect their faith.

This is most evident in cases of votive offerings or rebuilding in the aftermath of disasters that are traditionally undertaken by local Guthi with funds set aside for just such contingencies.

The book retraces the impact of major earthquakes of 1833, 1934 and 2015 that affected Patan, destroying and damaging temples and monasteries, and their eventual restoration. In every case, modern construction materials were used to rebuild and reinforce the structures to make them safer. Concealed steel beams were used to retrofit Hanuman Dhoka in 1976.



Design for the retrofitting of the three-tiered shrine of Baha popularly known as Golden Temple by Surendra Bahadur Dhakhwa in 2008.

AG Krishna Menon is an urban planner and conservation consultant based in New Delhi who was invited to examine strengthening and rebuilding in Kathmandu after the 2015 earthquake. He calls it the most extensive and successful preservation campaign in South Asia, if not globally.

Coming from an architect with 40 years of experience, that says a lot. Menon worked with Eric Theophile of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) on the book *Nepal Dialogues II: Architecture, Preservation and Living Culture* and is a strong proponent of 'revitalist architecture' in culturally rich earthquake-prone areas.

The slim volume is a perfect companion to *Tradition and Modernity in Patan: The Paradox of Architectural Preservation in Nepal* (also reviewed above). Menon compares KVPT projects with that of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) which restored Jyababahi

Monastery in Patan (pictured, right).

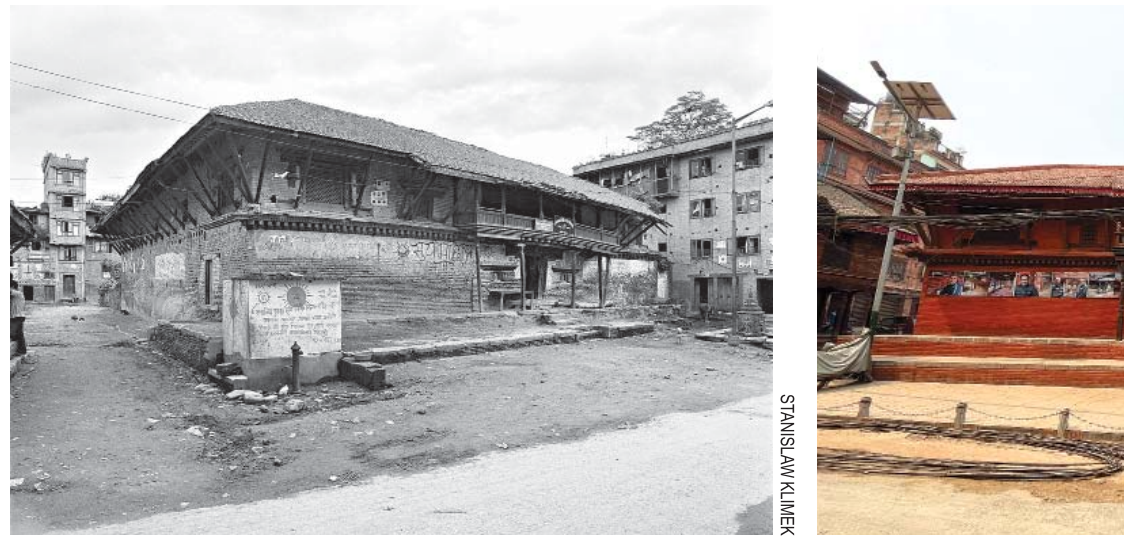
The difference between KVPT and INTACH was the approach. The Jyababahi restoration was perfunctory, old drawings were not consulted, and INTACH did not adhere to principles of conservation. The contractor was free to dismantle and discard anything, and proceeded as if building a brand new monastery.

The structure had sustained only light damage in 2015, but was pulled down, carved wooden windows and columns were sold to a junk dealer, and rafters and joists were turned into firewood. The lesson for Menon is that conservation is as much about love and passion as legal and fiscal propriety.

KVPT has compellingly challenged universal conservation norms in its projects, but Menon laments INTACH has not, despite its local roots. Eurocentric conservation ideology is so ingrained that even local architects aware of South Asia's living heritage seldom contest it.

The paradox here is that heritage conservation and high-level decisions are often isolated from the community, even though the monuments were first envisioned and built by those very communities with their traditional skills and craftsmanship.

KVPT is a New York-based charity with deep roots in the classical European ideal of



BRAND NEW: Jyababahi monastery in 1992, and in 2024 after it was rebuilt from scratch.

heritage conservation but it went native.

Notes Menon: 'While KVPT did not totally abandon their faith in the ideals of a universal conservation ideology, they learnt from, and respected, the deep rooted cultural values of the local societies whose architectural legacies they sought to conserve.'

Menon himself tried to get international heritage preservation bodies to revisit the

Venice Charter during an International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) meeting in 2024 but was largely ignored. That is why he thinks KVPT's engagement with living heritage is especially instructive as a case study in transnational dialogue.

It demonstrates that it is possible to interrogate Eurocentric bias in heritage preservation which itself is the West morally

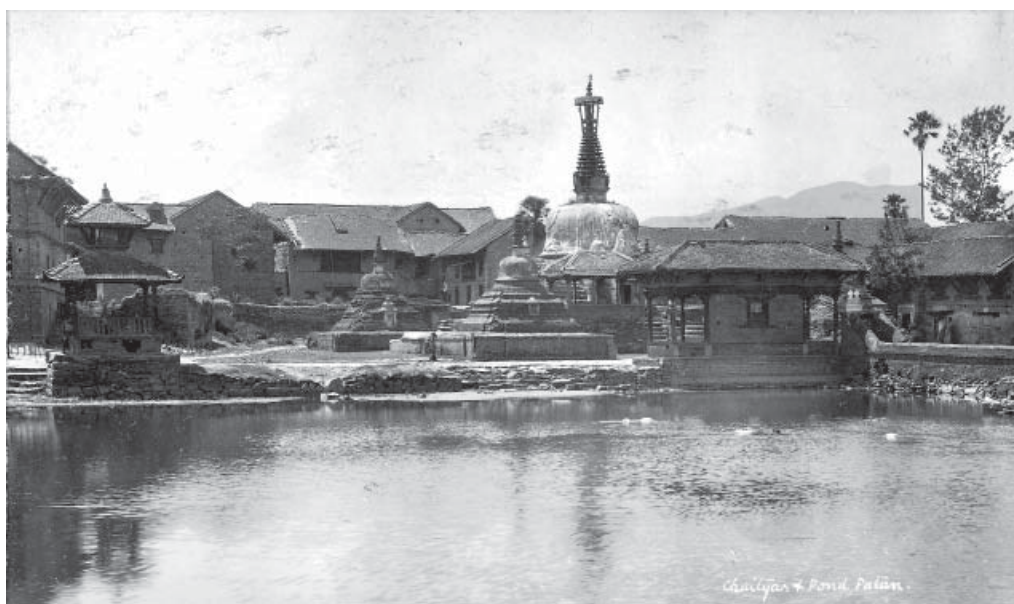
Balancing conservation cons



ERWIN SCHNEIDER

The use of steel, cement and other modern materials in heritage sites is controversial as they risk altering or destroying the architectural authenticity of traditional building techniques as well as going against preservation guidelines.

“Unlike in the West where they were already using stronger construction materials even 1,000 years ago, our monuments are made of bricks and clay mortar. In earthquake-prone Nepal, safety is our biggest concern,” added Ranjitkar who also authored a previous book, *Monuments of Kathmandu Valley: Before and After 2015 Earthquake*. “If



HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF: Pimbahal pond and Charu Vihar in 1910 and in 2021 (above). The original Patan Dhoka in 1928, rebuilt after the 1934 earthquake, and in 2023 (above, right)

we had materials to strengthen our buildings back then, we would have probably done so.”

On the flipside, there is a growing trend towards reclaiming indigenous culture and tradition which has also included stripping temples and monasteries in the Kathmandu Valley of any element considered foreign.

An example is the Matangi shrine in Patan located in a pit below street level. An inscription says it was beautified with decorative tiles in 1946, and has since been replaced with datiaapa veneer bricks to re-Newarise the shrine.

Finding an ancient monument in Kathmandu Valley with all of its original elements intact is near impossible. For instance, the bricks on the lower floors of the Patan Darbar Square are from the Rana period, not the earlier Malla era. Rebuilding and restoration over time means using contemporary materials when the original

material cannot be sourced.

Changunarayan was built by Lichhavi King Mandev in 4 CE, and is regarded as the oldest temple complex in the Valley. But Ranjitkar says that while it may be true that the site is old, the temple structure is much newer. “Perhaps originally it was a very small temple and only the stone inscriptions are the oldest,” he explained.

The Bhai Dega in Patan collapsed in the 1934 earthquake, was rebuilt with a Mughal dome by the Rana rulers, and there was a genuine reason to restore the original three-tier pagoda style. Ranjitkar himself found several pre-1934 struts from the structure as well as the original designs and photographs of the temple and used them as a guide.

The book looks at Shikhara style temples like Krishna Mandir, Rana buildings and private homes near the heritage sites that have been mostly rebuilt with reinforced concrete.

The Rana-era stucco neo-classical facades



C.J. MORRIS



COLLECTION OF ROHIT RANJITKAR

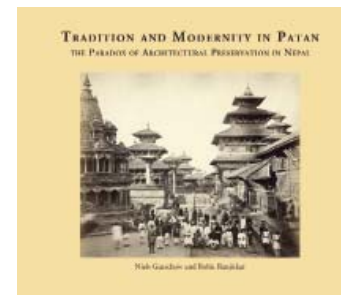


ROHIT RANJITKAR

may have looked alien when they were built 100 years ago, but they are now heritage. Will Patan’s concrete high rises that look out of place today also one day be heritage?

According to the Department of Archaeology any building older than 100 years is a ‘heritage’, but what makes a monument or a building worth preserving is perhaps not just its age.

Heritage for us is not a ruin or the legacy of a bygone era, but the inter-generational faith and sentiment attached to them by local communities. 🇳🇵



Tradition and Modernity in Patan: The Paradox of Architectural Preservation in Nepal by Niels Gutschow and Rohit Ranjitkar
Vajra Books, 2025
473 pages Rs8,000

servatives with pragmatism



ROHIT RANJITKAR

justifying colonisation and the political control and appropriation of material resources of native societies.

LIVING CULTURE

Erich Theophile is co-founder of KVPT, and elaborates on what living culture means in reality. He studied under Eduard F Sekler at Harvard who was an adherent of the

Venice Charter, and cautioned against going too native, arguing that recreating a lost iconographic carving was by definition fake.

‘Preservation in this sense resembled dentistry more than design – stabilization without creativity,’ Theophile writes, adding that working alongside mentors like Niels Gutschow and Götz Hagmüller in his early days in Nepal helped him recognise the limitations of this rigid orthodoxy.

Gutschow and Hagmüller were designers as well as historians, and themselves learnt from local Kathmandu Valley craftsmen, and wove new architectural elements to fit with local patterns of worship and civic life.

The distinctions between these two schools of thought came to the fore in the 1999 restoration of the 14th century Sulima temple, whose missing roof struts had to be designed. An international symposium was held to debate whether the lost carvings should be reproduced, and Menon, a strong advocate of allowing local craftsmen to decide, was also present.

Going native and living culture also go hand in hand with patronage. In the past, kings and nobility commissioned temples and monuments, sustaining artistic traditions. KVPT just became the new custodian of giving continuity to such craftsmanship.

Gutschow, with 50 years of experience in

Kathmandu Valley and Patan native Ranjitkar share a deep attachment to Newa architecture that is reflected in their own book (above).

In his chapter, Theophile praises Ranjitkar as a modern master builder ‘capable of synthesising design judgement, technical rigor, and civic diplomacy’.

The collective experience of all these architects was put to the test in 2015 when most of the Valley’s monuments collapsed. An even harder job followed: negotiating western standards and local practice.

Traditionally, after earthquakes in previous centuries destroyed or damaged temple carvings were replaced with new ones. But Theophile says that international preservation ethos prefers the maximum retention of original fabric, with conjectural replacements generally forbidden.

The Trust decided to pursue a hybrid model: prioritising the reuse of historic fragments and replacing only irreparably damaged elements with new carvings to restore visual and ritual completeness in line with local expectations.

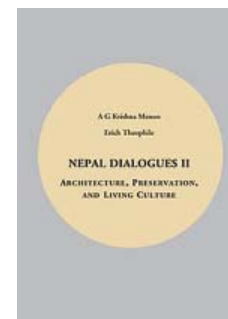
The reintegration of rescued fragments in temple reconstruction preserved far more of the original than would have been possible under either orthodoxy alone. KVPT did face opposition from local conservation conservatives who maintained that no modern

materials should be used in reconstruction.

But this would have made the monuments vulnerable to future earthquakes. This resistance, however, did help the Trust refine designs to make them ‘more conservative, more concealed, and more technically sophisticated without compromising on historic appearance’.

Theophile concludes: ‘Living culture is not only what artisans and patrons create in wood and bricks, but also what we create together in memory, dialogues, and reflection.’ 🇳🇵

Sonia Awale



Nepal Dialogues II: Architecture, Preservation and Living Culture
Text by A.G. Menon, Erich Theophile
Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, 2025
99 pages



Events



Kalika Mandir-Gurdhum hike

Join this Kalika Mandir-Gurdhum hike this weekend with loved ones. Be one with the nature and rejuvenate your senses
13 June, Rs1,000, 6:45am, Brikuti Mandap

Maharastrian Food Festival

Treat your tastebuds at 'Marine Drive to Kathmandu', a Maharastrian food festival at Aloft in Thamel. This is a must-visit if you like Indian food.
12-14 June, Nook, Aloft Kathmandu

Paws and Paint

Strengthen your bond with your pet at this painting session. Materials will be provided. For more details, contact @petmama.np on Instagram.
13 June, Rs799, 12pm-5pm, Kaho 88, Bhanimandal

Poetry and Gazal

Looking for a quiet evening with just words and emotions? Check out Shabdakiri Saajh and immerse in a poetic evening full of expressions and introspection.
20 June, 4pm, Taragaon Next, Boudha



Farm Running Festival

Get your gear on and make your way through mud, ropes and more at this outdoor obstacle course by Urban Farm. Categories available for both adults and children.
13 June, Rs1500-10,000, 6am onwards, Urban Farm, Tokha

Silent Bone

A multi-site art exhibition 'Of Place, Memory and Residue' throughout June by Binod Shrestha brings visitors into his world of art, visual, performances and expression. More info on page 9.
June 12-26, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal



Labim Bazaar

Indulge in a wide variety of baked goods and other delicacies, shop handicrafts, clothing and more.
Every Saturday, 10 am-4pm, Labim Mall, Pulchok



Music

Bollywood Night

Dance the night away with all the classic Bollywood tunes. Make it more exciting by going in your favourite Bollywood inspired outfit.
12 June, Rs450, 7pm onwards, XO Club, Thamel

Summer Music Fest

SWAR, Rohit and The Crew are performing live in Dharan. Enjoy this musical extravaganza with friends and families.
12 June, Rs400-700, 5pm onwards, Dharan Rangashala



Kuma Sagar and The Khwopa

Kuma Sagar and The Khwopa are performing some of their hits this Friday evening. Join for an unforgettable musical evening.
12 June, Rs999, 11pm, Kings Lounge, Darbar Marg

Raithane Ghumphir

Artist Jhuma Limbu will be brining her crowd favourite tunes at Moksh later this month. Book now and don't miss it.
26 June, Rs1,000, 8pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel



Mark Band

Hard Rock Café is bringing the rock and reggae act the Mark Band this Saturday, for a night well spent with good music and delicious food.
13 June, 6:30-9:30pm, Hard Rock Cafe, Darbar Marg



Getaway



Temple Tree Resort and Spa

Surrounded by majestic peaks, serene foothills and a lake, Temple Tree offers a relaxing stay alongside amazing spa amenities.
Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara (61)465819

Kasara Resort

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



Maya Manor

This Rana palace turned boutique hotel offers a Victorian Gazebo, manicured gardens, highly-rated restaurants and an exclusive rooftop garden overlooking the city.
Darbar Marg, 01-4528028

Dhulikhel Mountain Resort

This resort blends culture and comfort seamlessly with well-designed bungalows and Newa accents visible throughout the property.
Dhulikhel, (01) 4420774

Sukute Beach Resort

Just 69km from the capital, Sukute Beach Resort offers a beautiful destination at the shores of the Bhotekoshi River. Guests can raft and camp.
Chautara, Sindhupalchowk, 985-1316057



Dining

Bricks Café

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

Tamarind

You will find great drinks and food here. And if you're in the mood for some Salsa, stop by on Tuesday evenings.
Jhamsikhel, (01) 5522626



Utpala Cafe

A scrumptious buffet lunch and mouth-watering baked goods Utpala one of the best eateries in Boudha. Also perfect for vegetarians.
7am-8pm (Except Sunday), Boudha, 981-0700763

Jimbu Thakali

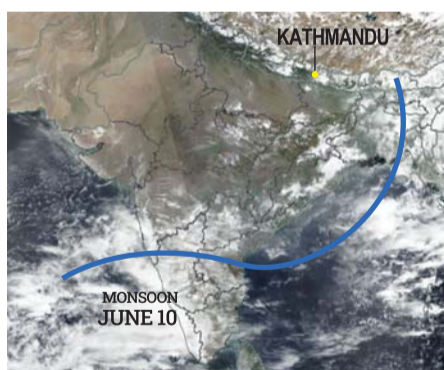
Not in the mood to cook? Head over to Jimbu and enjoy a healthy and tasty traditional Thakali thali.
Jhamsikhel, (01) 5444011



Zen Bistro & Cafe Restaurant

For the best Red Curries and Pork BBQ for anyone who wants to venture into the palatable world of Thai cuisine. Try the refreshing papaya salads as the summer days get hotter.
10am-10pm, Bansbari, (01)4017654

Weekend Weather



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
27° 18°	28° 18°	28° 18°	28° 18°

Soon, Monsoon

The heating building up over the plains and the migration of the jetstream to the Tibetan Plateau is opening the way for the southwest monsoon to advance from the Arabian Sea. It is gathering strength over the Bay of Bengal, but is still about four days behind schedule. ETA in Kathmandu is 20 June or thereabouts. We will still be getting rain over the weekend, but these will be convection systems. The way to tell the monsoon has arrived is that the prevailing wind direction will switch from west to east, bringing clouds and cleaner air.

Our Pick



In Steven Spielberg's latest directorial, Disclosure Day, a cybersecurity expert steals thumb drives proving alien contact and goes on the run while a television meteorologist suddenly develops latent preternatural abilities, including telepathy and fluency in several languages she has never learnt. They are pursued by Wardex Corporation, a secret arm of the U.S. government, attempting to cover-up extraterrestrial intelligence and track down whistleblowers. Showing in theatres around you. Stars Emily Blunt, Josh O'Connor, Colin Firth, Eve Hewson and Colman Domingo.

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 नपराँ ।
- 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



BIDHATA KC

Lone artist's simultaneous shows in Kathmandu

US-based artist Binod Shrestha brings a unique multi-show to his hometown

Vishad Raj Onta

Is the human brain hardwired for violence? Why does another war start after one ends? How does one suppress the reptilian side of the mind to foster peace and compassion?

Sages through the ages have grappled with this question. Binod Shrestha seeks answers through his art. He says: "The history of humanity is violent. It is embedded within us. Nepal's history and politics are also replete with violence."

Shrestha's project Silent Bone is exhibiting in galleries across Kathmandu in June and July, and will invite viewers to think about violence and the residue it leaves behind in identity and memory.

Shrestha landed in the US just after 9/11 and was immediately interested in how that act of terrorism shaped the

country's trajectory since.

Silen Bone will be taking place simultaneously at Dalai La Art Space, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Mandala Theatre, Nepal Academy of Fine Arts and Taragaon Next. Shrestha is also involving 28 students and recent graduates from Kathmandu University, Tribhuvan University, and Lalitkala Academy.

This unique exhibition combines performance, street theatre, sculpture and included one at Annapurna Temple in Asan, featuring art students in black walking silently in slow formation on a platform, holding structures made of red steel rods shaped like homes, but meant to represent bones.

Shrestha monitored the performance from nearby, and explained: "The idea is to show homes as bones and vice versa. I'm not interested in depicting violent imagery. I want viewers to think about it."

The skit drew a curious but confused crowd on a recent afternoon, the silence and calm of the sombre performers stood in stark contrast to the hustle and bustle of Asan. The red hue of vermilion or blood pervades much of Shrestha's work across drawings, prints, photographs, sculptures, and performance art. The strap of his watch is red, too.

"It's a cultural thing, I want to distill red into the purest, abstract form in my art, which makes it more accessible," says Shrestha, "we are asked that question a lot for some reason what is Nepali about your art? I don't think of it in that way."

Shrestha's performance art demands a lot of logistics and project management. "When you think of artists, that's not what you expect them to do, but it is what is needed when you have a big project like this," he says.

Shrestha has lived outside of Nepal for much of his life,

exhibiting all over the United States. After leaving Nepal for a Master's in Fine Arts in Bangalore in 1997, Shrestha did a further MFA degree at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture in Maine.

KATHMANDU ART SCENE

He also teaches studio art at the University of North Texas, and has been back in Nepal only a few brief times, mostly on research trips. In that span of time, he has seen the Kathmandu art scene change dramatically.

"There used to be just one art school then, and few galleries. Now, there are three art schools that each produce 20 artists a year, and they are making interesting work that people want to see and buy," says Shrestha.

For aspiring Nepali artists who would like to follow a similar path, Shrestha has advice that is

very pragmatic: "Figure out what sustains your practice. Maybe you teach art, work in an office, or drive a taxi."

Having a side income lets artists follow their own interests and frees them of the need for gallery support. Shrestha himself dislikes confining himself to just one medium or one style, although he did start out as a painter.

"Paintings are one-dimensional," he says. "Other forms of art are more engaging for the audience." 🇳🇵

Silent Bone

Dalai La Art Space, 9 June - 10 July as 'Nepali Sublime: Body in Translation'
Siddhartha Art Gallery 12 - 26 June as 'Of Place, Memory, and Residue'
Nepal Academy of Fine Arts 26 June - 5 July as 'The Shape of Stillness'
Taragaon Next 28 June - 5 July as 'Reliquaries for Remembrance'

There will also be an invitation-only performance at Mandala Theatre on 23 June.

RALSON
50
YEARS OF
TREADING NEW PATHS

RALSON
TIRES TREAD NEW PATHS

डिजेलको महंगीले हैरान हुनुहुन्छ?

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टायर

लामो समयसम्म टिक्ने

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RALSON TIRES लामो यात्रा, कम खर्चमा

Nepalis meet family needs through



DIASPORA
DIARIES 94-95

These are the 94th and 95th episodes of *Diaspora Diaries*, a Nepali Times series in collaboration with Migration Lab providing a platform to share experiences of living, working and studying abroad.

Shiva Kumar Sada

I don't have any memory of my father leaving for Dubai in 2009. I was just four years old, and used to live with my grandparents. In fact, when my father returned I thought he was my uncle.

Four migrant workers share the story of their lives, and what made them seek work overseas

He came back with gifts like clothes, books, and chocolates. My mother told me he was my father, and I eventually accepted it. He has worked ever since for the same employer in Dubai as a gardener. He comes home every two or three years.

Now it is my turn to migrate. He was not pleased when I told him I was going to work in Malaysia, and wanted me to focus on studies. But I am going abroad precisely so he does not have to keep working in Dubai any longer.

I am the eldest of three siblings, and have to support them and my father. It is because of the sacrifices

he has made over all these years that we are in a much better place. He has bought land, and we are now building a house even though the construction is slow because we have to wait for him to send money home. That is the reason I need to help complete our house, and he can return.

I look at my childhood pictures when we were so happy and free with not a care in the world. Now, from our group of 11 boys, five of us are in Malaysia. And I am leaving behind my six-month-old. I have to come home in two years for vacation so he does not forget me, just like I forgot my father.



Ram Niwas Sada

I worked in Chennai for four years as a housekeeper, tea seller and making vegetarian food. I learnt on the job, and have done it all. A Nepali chef from Pokhara taught me how to make nan and momo.

My brother, who was also working in India, became sick and cannot work. I am now the only earner in the family and have to take care of his three sons as well.

This is my first time in Kathmandu. Soon, I will be flying out to Malaysia. I am both happy and sad to leave. My son is just two and I will miss him.

My father had also gone to Punjab to work on a farm, he is now too old to work. We had to borrow money for my sister's wedding, and when we could not repay the debt we lost the property that was collateral. My father tells me that his dream is for me to get the land back. This is why I am going to Malaysia.

From the mountains of Rolpa

After losing both grandparents to cancer, aspiring actor moves to the former Soviet republic

Ganesh Bahadur Gharti Magar

Whenever I remember my childhood back in Rolpa, I think about my dotting grandparents.

As the eldest grandson, they showered me with love. I lived with them: six months in a cowshed during rainy seasons and six months back in their nearby home.

Until I was 14 I was not close to my mother, her love was overpowered by my grandparents' affection. They pampered me with biscuits, snacks and pocket money — I was the centre of their world.

My grandfather had lost his eyesight, and not even treatment in India helped. He never got to see me, but would try to measure how tall I was.

I had to guide him to village meetings, warning him of steps ahead or that the path was steep. And he would always remind me to study hard.

He used his disability allowance to motivate me. If I passed, he would buy me clothes and bags, nothing was free from my grandfather. I had to earn it.

My father worked in India most of his life, and decided to go to Saudi Arabia to earn more. I did not know of many foreign countries, but had heard of Japan, Germany,



America, Saudi, UAE, and Qatar.

I knew about Japan because someone had gifted my grandfather a Japanese radio. One of my friends who studied in Dang told us to study hard so we could go to Germany or America. Later, I learnt about Malaysia because one of my aunts went there.

Many of our neighbours had migrated to the Gulf for work, so it was not a surprise that my father joined them. But he was also not prepared for the heat in Saudi Arabia and he told us people collapsed from it.

But he sent home money and that eased



our financial burden. I could focus on my studies and completed Grade 10, and he paid for my higher studies in Dang.

When I was in grade 11, my grandfather was diagnosed with cancer, and he had to go to Bharatpur Cancer Hospital every month for chemotherapy. Since there was no one else, I had to take him there. Despite support from the government, expenses were high.

Taking care of my grandfather affected my studies. When things got really difficult for him physically, he asked to be taken

home to Rolpa. We booked a cab, and he died soon after.

After finishing Grade 12, I went to Kathmandu wanting to be a comedian. I had played small parts in local serials. I signed up for drama classes and had to walk along the Ring Road to save bus money.

I got to play small roles here and there, but it did not pay much. I took on odd jobs: as a receptionist in an uncle's hotel, in online media where I edited video. Money was always tight, and I eventually went back to Rolpa to work as a social mobiliser

migration

Ram Pukar Majhi

This is the second time I have come to Malaysia to work, the first time was 14 years ago. I had a lot of responsibilities and owed money to my agent. He agreed to send me after I promised to send him what I earned. Perhaps he felt sorry for me.

My elder brother had two unhappy migration experiences: one to Qatar and another in Dubai. When he returned from the UAE after 10 months, he collapsed at the bus stop where I had gone to receive him. He died the same day.

It was as though he had waited to come home before dying. My parents were traumatised, and his death added to my

responsibility. Migration was the only option because we were up to our necks in debt.

Malaysia has worked out well, and I have paid off my brother's loans and mine too. I have bought some land and built a house. But I got into financial trouble, and had to sell my land, and was back to zero.

Now, eight years down the road I am off to Malaysia again and this time with my late brother's son. My younger brother is also there. This time I am more optimistic about the future. I leave knowing that even if things don't work out for me, I have my nephew and brother.



Ram Lakhan Kumar Sada

I went to Punjab when I was just 15 with a couple of friends and started out cleaning tables at a restaurant. Before I knew it, I was cooking South Indian, North Indian, Chinese. I know it all. I have worked in Kerala, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. I hopped places after employers stopped paying me because I had no contracts.

They would not directly deny us payment, but the delays forced us to leave and try our luck elsewhere. My father was in Saudi Arabia when I went to Punjab, and he dissuaded me from leaving

and wanted me to focus on studies. But I did not listen. I was spoiled, and was not taking anything seriously.

I hung out with friends, and was not interested in household chores or school. But in India, I had to work because my next meal depended on it. I learnt to value work and money and started taking responsibility.

I am now headed to Malaysia to fulfil my parents' dreams. They have struggled all their lives to bring us up. My brother went to Malaysia with the same goal, and I am following his footsteps. I will do whatever he does.

to a mushroom farm in Belarus



For almost two years now, I have been working in a mushroom farm. I taught myself Russian which has opened doors for me. I am dedicated to my work and have become an expert at maximising my earnings, since we are not paid a fixed salary but by meeting targets. The company sets a target of 3,000 to 4,000 kg, which ensures a good salary. But we can exceed this, sometimes reaching 7,000 kg.

I make sure the mushrooms do not go to waste. My fingers are now quicker and more precise. You have to know to pick them when they are fresh, if they spoil the value decreases.

I am often recognised for my work by my superiors. The rewards are based on who cuts the most mushrooms.

I have built a good rapport with my colleagues and supervisors, and I was even featured on a local news channel, where I spoke in Russian bringing me more visibility in my company.

There are about 250 Nepalis working in Belarus, including six or seven from Rolpa. I enjoy vlogging, traveling across the clean and beautiful city and talking to locals. People are also fascinated by Nepal and have many questions to ask.

I do not know what the future holds. But I have come a long way from my humble beginnings back in the mountains of Rolpa. Life was difficult, and we got to eat rice only during festivals. Later, we started to buy rice and other essentials like salt for which we had to walk up to seven hours.

Our heads would ache from the weight of the rice and the heat, our feet would be sore from all the walking.

Times were very different. I especially miss my grandparents and often watch videos of them. 🇳🇵

for an NGO nutrition project. I learnt a lot, and made a lot of contacts.

Then my grandmother was diagnosed with the same cancer as my grandfather. My parents had another son, much younger than me. My grandmother was filled with joy, and said she wanted to get better so she could take care of the baby.

Her surgery in Bharatpur went well at first and we were relieved. But she suddenly lost consciousness, and never fully returned to us. Doctors said she had lost her willpower. We brought her back to

Rolpa and a few days later, she died. Just like my grandfather.

I then set my sights on moving abroad for work. The UK seasonal visa for agriculture was interesting, but it was blocked for Nepalis the year I wanted to apply. I tried Croatia, Romania, nothing was working out.

MIGRATION AT ANY COST

I wanted to migrate out at any cost. I had always been fascinated by the foreigners I met in our village, when they came to build a hydro project. Their eyes are so different.

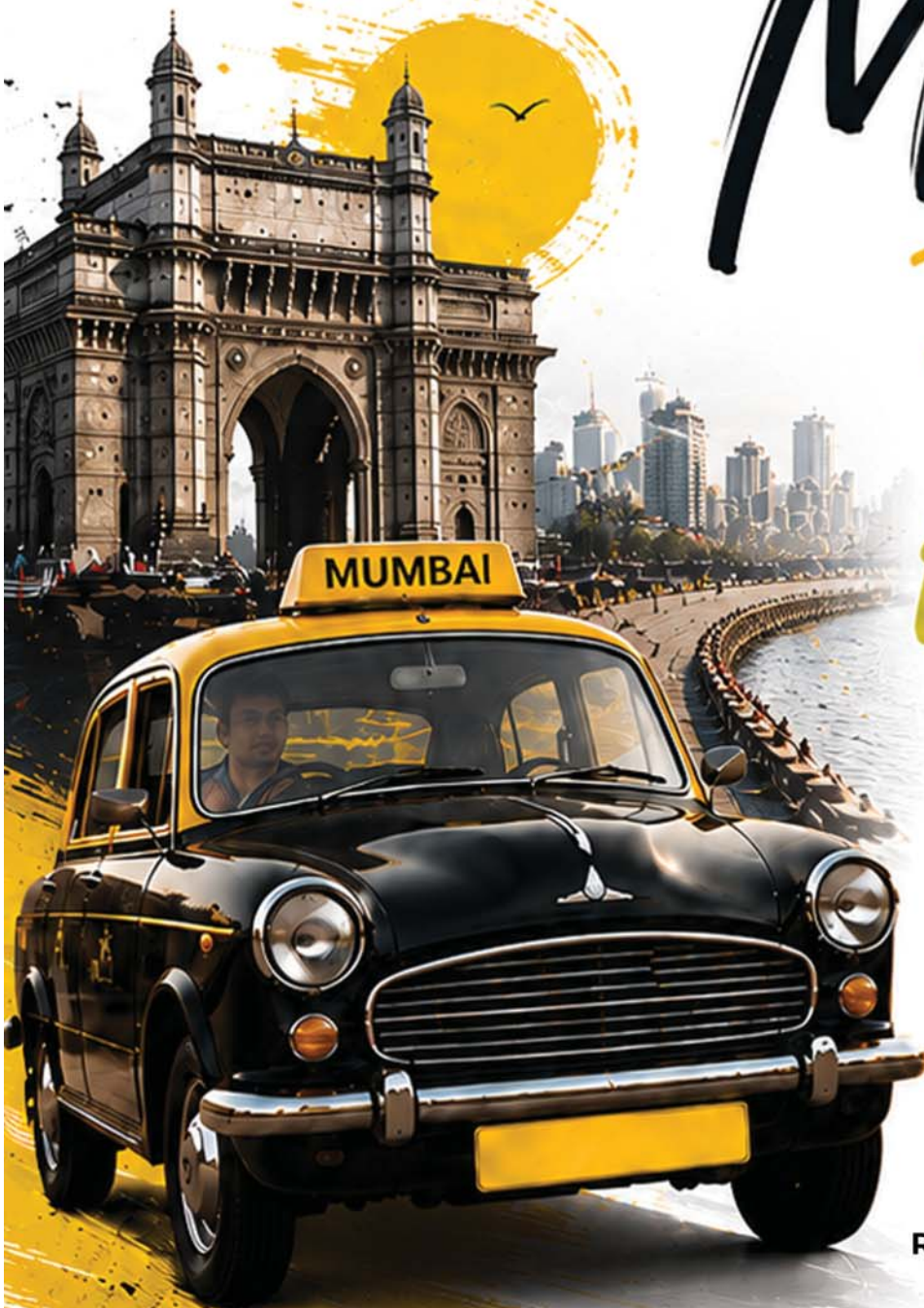
Their hair was so light. They were bigger than us. They came in sleek shiny cars.

We just had downtrodden, overbooked buses that stank so much it made us want to puke. So we chose to sit on the roofs instead. When would we ever get in cars like those?

One day, a dai helped me get the paperwork done for Belarus. I did not even know there was a country called Belarus. I searched on Google and without even finding out much about the place, said yes. I just wanted to get out.



aloft
KATHMANDU THAMEL



Marine Drive To Drive Kathmandu



**A VIBRANT
MAHARASHTRIAN
FOOD FESTIVAL**



Buffet Dinner
Rs.3333 net per person
12,13,14 June
Time : 6.30 P.M.-10.30 P.M.



Lunch-Set Menu
Veg Rs.2222 nett
Non veg Rs.2555 nett
13,14 June
Time : 12 P.M.-3 P.M.



**1 welcome drink
on arrival**

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