



**SUBARU FORESTER 2.5 STRONG HYBRID**

**MORE MILES LESS FUEL, MORE SMILES**

Spend Less on Fuel & More on Experiences.

Vijay Motors Pvt Ltd | Bhagawati Bahal Marg, Naxal, Kathmandu, Nepal | 01-4414825, +977-9801026542/ 9801059060 sales1@vmp.com.np, bde@vmp.com.np | www.subaru.com.np

# MAKING AMENDS

Sonia Awale

The Constitution Amendment Task Force headed by Prime Minister Balendra Shah's chief adviser Asim Shah is supposed to submit its report next week after months-long consultations with former PMs and presidents, legal experts and civil society.

Constitutions are occasionally amended in democracies so the statute keeps up with the times. But if what the ruling RSP has laid out is anything to go by, it wants a fundamental overhaul. It has been talking about a directly elected



SCAFFOLDED STATE: Drone image of Singha Darbar area taken a month after the 8-9 September 2025 GenZ protest.

SUMAN NEPALI

executive, dismantling provincial assemblies and perhaps federalism itself, electoral reforms, and a partyless Upper House.

It has been nearly 11 years since the Constitution was promulgated, and in that time it has ensured inclusion of disenfranchised groups into government, bureaucracy and

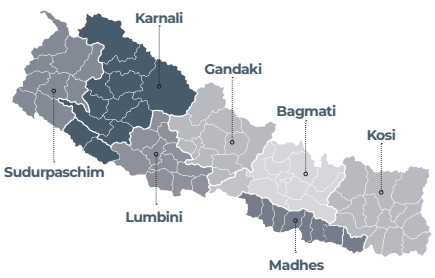
the legislature. Federalism has not led to genuine devolution, but this is not due to inherent shortcomings in the Constitution, rather flaws in its enactment by elected politicians bending the rules.

Whatever the Task Force proposes, passing the amendments will require a two-thirds majority

in the Upper House, where RSP has no representation. The older parties are unlikely to agree to radical changes. Even if RSP sweeps local and provincial elections next year, it will take at least three years for the party to have the numbers in the Upper House to pass the amendments. ❑

**Don't fix what ain't broke**  
EDITORIAL  
PAGE 2

**What the GenZ now want**  
PAGE 4-5



## Federalism

After contentious debate, Nepal was divided into 7 provinces which for years had only numbers because no one could agree on their names.

RSP has been ambiguous about federalism ever since its formation in 2022, and now wants to remove or restructure provincial assemblies because it deems them expensive and ineffective because they were just proxies of political parties in Kathmandu.

Diluting federalism would re-centralise power in Kathmandu and reverse the limited autonomy that provinces have gained. The problem is not that federalism is too expensive, but that provincial governments were never given the autonomy and resources to govern effectively.



## Directly Elected PM

RSP's first general convention last month endorsed the demand to have directly-elected head of government, saying that would ensure more political stability by making the prime minister (or president) directly answerable to the people.

Critics say that in the past 20 years, even prime ministers who were not directly elected have behaved as if they had. Prime Minister Shah's party has a huge mandate, and is already directly elected for all practical purposes. There is concern that without checks and balances, a directly elected PM could push the country towards authoritarianism, and even in the past 100 days there are indications of that.



## Electoral Reform

Most parties want electoral reforms, but the devil is in the details. The last UML-NC coalition that was overthrown by the youth-led movement was working on a bill to remove proportional representation (PR) from the ballot. RSP wants local elections based on PR where citizens vote for parties and not candidates. This and a partyless Upper House would be a radical change from Nepal's model of parliamentary democracy.

Another proposal would ensure voting rights for overseas Nepalis, dual citizenship, and the right to recall and the provision of none of the above in ballots. Citizenship for non-residents is already in place, and just needs to be implemented. Voting by mail will need much more work.



## Meritocracy

RSP is populated by technocrats, and has always maintained that it will appoint those with merit to official positions. It has removed 1,500 politically appointed civil servants for a clean and mean result-oriented government. There have been some untainted officials appointed to head universities, CAAN and the Election Commission. Applications for ambassadorships are being vetted.

But in the process, some efficient bureaucrats with integrity have been let go while RSP yes men have been appointed. PM Shah himself presides over a kitchen cabinet with virtually no governance experience – and it shows. Posts for 57 secretary-level advisers have been placed at ministries, which is behaving like a parallel government.

**New Orleans Café**  
Delicious Food Memorable Experience!

Breakfast Lunch Dinner

Open 7AM - 11 PM | 01-4700736 | Thamel

**DHOKAIMA BREAKFAST**  
BEST OFFER  
UP TO 15% OFF EVERY MONDAY

**SeWahh**  
TRUSTED HOUSE MAID SERVICE  
Reliable Help For Your Home

Verified & Trained Staff  
Daily Cleaning & Housekeeping  
Laundry & Dishwashing Support

BOOK NOW +977-9704805037 sewahh.com  
A Suvridha Holding Entity

स्वस्थ जीवनको लागि स्वच्छ पानी  
स्वच्छ पानीको लागि  
(३०४ ग्रेड)  
**स्टेन्लेस स्टिल पानी ट्याकी**

माथि चढन, भित्र पसेर सफा गर्न र प्लम्बिङ काम गर्न सकिने, आवश्यकता अनुसारको मोटाइ, आकार र क्षमताको उपलब्ध छ ।

**महर्जन मेटल इण्डस्ट्रीज**  
फोन: ५३६२००९/५३६२०३२

**LAVAZZA ITALIAN COFFEE**

Simple Food

BLUE NOTE LAZIMPAT

inspired by nature

**NATUREKNIT**

01-5354812 | Sanchaya Kosh Building, Thamel  
info@natureknit.com | www.natureknit.com

# Don't fix what ain't broke

Forming a taskforce does not mean forcing through dubious constitutional amendments

## Editorial

Sonia Awale

Four political parties have withdrawn from the Constitutional Amendment Taskforce review, questioning the panel's jurisdiction and legitimacy.

They accused the panel led by the prime minister's adviser Asim Shah (pictured, right) of trying to rewrite the Constitution. Earlier, the UML attended two meetings and left. The NC did not even participate, and its chair Gagan Thapa warned that Nepal's hard-won freedoms were in jeopardy from "populists".

Constitutional amendments such as having a directly elected executive head of the country was one of the demands after the youth-led protests in September. But even before that, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) had been ambiguous about federalism and called provincial assemblies a waste of money.

Political scientist Sucheta Pyakuryal says that would be like amputating the heart from the body. It would dismantle federalism even before it started functioning properly. She told us: "Provincial assemblies account for only 1-2% of the national budget, yet it is deemed too expensive and we want to scrap an important state apparatus while funding the prime minister's political advisers with our taxpayer money."

The seven provinces were never given the financial and political authority to exercise autonomy. Three legacy parties made sure provincial assemblies remained proxies, and



RSS

devolution was just on paper. Provinces were deliberately made dependent on Kathmandu, never allowed to generate internal tax revenue.

They were not given their own police because of parties in the federal government. Past governments also dragged their feet on the Federal Civil Service Act which would equip provinces with their own bureaucrats.

In other words, Nepal was never a truly federal country. You cannot abolish a structure that was never even permitted to function.

### DUE CREDIT

But let us give credit where it is due. The electoral reform amendments such as ensuring voting rights for overseas Nepalis, the right to recall, and age and term limits for ministers reflect aspirations of youth-led protests that

gave Nepal a chance to make a new beginning.

It is argued that a directly elected executive head of the country would end chronic instability because of fickle electoral alliances and feckless coalition governments of the past. But the March election proved that a single party can still secure a super majority and possibly complete its full term.

More importantly, given how polarised Nepali society is right now, a directly elected executive head would pose real danger to democracy. If an executive head not directly elected can exhibit such erratic and authoritarian behavior, imagine what a directly elected one would do.

No doubt, four decades of corruption and governance failure by the 'oldiegarchy' fed public disillusionment. But this does

not mean strongman rule would make government any more transparent and efficient. The way to fix a bad democracy is to improve it, not replace it with an autocracy.

If the last 100 days was a trailer of what a directly elected executive would be like, then we are not looking forward to the full feature.

Commentator Santa Gaha Magar told me: "In just the first 100 days, the prime minister has shown that he is not the type who is accountable to anyone. Even the taskforce on constitutional amendments looks like a show; he will do what he wants in the end."

The RSP has said merit is the main criteria for appointments. But only taking technical expertise into account can sometimes be a shortcoming. A good physician may not be the best health minister, an outstanding academic may not be the best manager of a country's monetary policy. The bigger question is, who decides on merit? Who are the boys in the PMO kitchen cabinet? What is their merit?

An unelected Kathmandu-based minister, for example, may lack the local knowledge and experience to deal with, for example, a new strategy for Humla and Mugu to adapt to climate breakdown. A local MP would know.

As constitutional lawyer Radheshyam Adhikari told a recent Centre for Investigative Journalism podcast: "We have to make sure the amendments strengthen and not weaken republicanism, democracy, federalism and proportional representation, otherwise the very spirit of the Constitution will be dead." 🇳🇵

## Trending Online



### Sneha's homecoming

by Vishad Raj Onta

After literally making her mark in American cities with 'calligrafitti', artist Sneha Shrestha is back home in Nepal to rediscover her roots and give new meaning to her murals. Read about her work at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook



### Kathmandu is a 'fine' city

by Arnab Upadhyay

While heftier fines for traffic violations may make headlines, they will not make Nepal's roads safer. Discipline cannot be legislated into existence, it must be learned, reinforced, and practiced over time. Read the column online.

Most popular on X

### What hunger does before a child can even speak

by Shalav Rana

Even after decades of 'development', over 1 in 3 children under 5 in Karnali suffer from stunting, hitting cognitive development before they can even speak. Read more on our website.

Most commented

### Nepal's emerging silver economy

by Yanko Ukyab

For years, Nepal banked on its youth dividend, but that is now narrowing. Something else is coming into view--the silver dividend. It may be Nepal's next economic chapter. Read the analysis online.

Most visited online page

## Letters

### FOOD SECURITY

Karnali requires a needs-based budget, separate from other provinces, with women and children, infrastructure, agriculture, health and combating child marriage as high priority ('What hunger does before a child can even speak', Shalav Rana, #1318). This province has such unmatched and unexplored beauty, the tourism industry would also certainly thrive.

Sabina Shah Pahari

We need a special program based on local nutritional food production from family farms. The government needs to support such community based initiatives.

Shrikrishna Upadhyay

Governments have allocated funds in a way that opportunities

are distributed unfairly, benefiting only certain demographic groups.

Inna Ghising

The people in the article are all children, with a mother pregnant at 19 with her fifth child. Am I the only one that sees the root of the problem? How can a malnourished mother be expected to nourish? She is beyond exhausted and still feeding, nursing and caring for her children. If 1 in 3 children are failing to thrive, how many child-mothers are included in this statistic?

Gloria Rinchen Chödrön

Nepal needs to tax rice imports and encourage diversification of production of food staples ('Water > Energy > Food', Shristi Karki, #1318). The country must go back to a range of cereals and pulses and lentils. Dal bhat is not JUST

David Seddon

### UNPAID CARE WORK

Monetising human beings, under all circumstances, is a terrible idea ('Nurturing Nepal's care economy', Bina Pradhan, #1318). If people want to take Nepal down this road, they will regret it in 50 years.

Oatmeal Wigglebutt

### TRAFFIC RULES

Traffic police should manage the rules of the road, not implement the laws of vehicle safety ('Kathmandu is becoming a 'fine' city', Arnab Upadhyay, #1318). Driving tests need upgrading to meet the modern systems, road laws and vehicle safety. Drivers need to abide by the laws, but whose job is it to implement those laws?

Ian Wall

### NEPALIS IN DENMARK

It is not easy coming to our countries in Scandinavia ('Nepalis in Denmark: It's a hard knock

life', Suman Nepali, #1318). You need to learn our language and manage all the cultural differences. And the wealth is only possible if you work hard for maybe 20 years. And it is hard to get visa these days. The truth is that our countries are not paradise. We are welfare states with middle class people, but that is not easy to be a part of in the beginning. It is better to try building your own country to a better level. My grandparents grew up in war and poverty in Norway. A country with cold and windy winters. But they made a better country for their children and grandchildren. It takes generations to build a country.

Line Konstali

These two young men mustn't only look for money. They will figure it out. All the best.

Anna Elisabeth Bach

## Online Package



### IN THE DRIVING SEAT

For Nepal's female drivers, operating electric three-wheelers has been a path to financial independence. Story on page 6-7. Watch the video on our YouTube channel.



### HIMALAYAN RICE

Across Nepal, erratic monsoons has meant native rice breeds are disappearing. In Kaski, locals have set up a seed bank to preserve local rice varieties. Subscribe for multimedia content.

## 1,000 Words



### FLAG OF OUR FATHERS:

Prime Minister Balendra Shah, in his first ever one-on-one meeting as head of government with a visiting international official, appears to be explaining the shape and symbolism of Nepal's national flag to Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masato Kanda at Singha Darbar on Tuesday.

The visit marked 60 years of partnership between the Manila-based bank and Nepal. During this visit, Kanda and the Nepal government signed \$165 million in new loan agreements.

PMO NEPAL

Times

Nepali Times on Facebook  
Follow @nepalitimes on Twitter  
Follow @nepalitimes on Instagram

Editor: Sonia Awale | Special Correspondent: Shristi Karki

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

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

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





**TURKISH AIRLINES**

**FLYING TO MORE COUNTRIES  
THAN ANY OTHER  
NOW FROM LONDON  
STANSTED AIRPORT**





AJAY HAKAJU

# What Nepal's GenZ now want

Nine months after the September Storm, young Nepalis list what they want the Balendra Shah government to focus on

**N**ine months after the September 2025 GenZ protests, a quieter question has begun to take shape among Nepalis: what next?

It is a question weighed by grief over the death of 78 young Nepalis in two days of violence

on 8-9 September. Many families are grieving, yet the rupture also produced something more difficult to dismiss than outrage: that the country's governance and conduct needs to fundamentally change.

Participants on a civic platform, 100 Days Nepal, were asked one



## BRIEFS

### Monetary policy

Nepal Rastra Bank is maintaining a cautiously flexible monetary policy for FY 2026-27, aiming to support the government's 7% growth target and contain inflation at about 5.5%. The bank will ease lending for large electric public vehicles, raise microfinance loan ceilings, and introduce measures for stressed borrowers and sick industries. It expects strong remittances, tourism, and fiscal expansion to sustain liquidity and forex reserves. Risks to the economy include West Asia tensions, super El Niño, and fuel prices.



### Stolen antiquities

Two trafficked artifacts, a 13<sup>th</sup>-century gilded bronze Padmapani statue and a 16<sup>th</sup>-century wooden Nritya Devi sculpture, were repatriated to Nepal from the US. The US Embassy said 127 sacred objects have now been returned to Nepal under the new US-Nepal Cultural Property Agreement aimed at combating trafficking in antiquities.

### ADB Prez + PM

ADB President Masato Kanda met Prime Minister Balendra Shah on 7 July as the Manila-based bank and Nepal marked 60 years of partnership. ADB signed \$165 million in loans: \$115 million for water and sanitation and \$50 million for trade facilitation. The bank plans \$2.4 billion support for Nepal through 2029, focusing on jobs, the private sector, and infrastructure.

### Aloft awarded

Aloft by Marriott Kathmandu Thamel won four honours at the 2026 Haute Grandeur Global Excellence Awards: Best City Hotel in Nepal, Best Conference Venue Hotel in Nepal, Best Culinary Experience in Nepal, and Best General Manager in Nepal for Vikram Singh.

### Kumari + DSIK

Kumari Bank signed an MoU with Germany's DSIK to advance ESG frameworks and sustainable banking. The partnership, funded by BMZ, includes ESG Risk Radar, Sustainable Finance Compass, and Business Games for SMEs. It aligns with Nepal Green Finance Taxonomy 2024.

### TikTok Q1 report

TikTok removed 1,961,698 videos in Nepal in Q1 2026 for guideline violations, a 0.4% removal rate, with 99.2% removed proactively and 86.5% within 24 hours. Globally, TikTok removed 184 million videos, took action on 86 million fake accounts, and suspended accounts suspected to belong to users under 13.

### NAIMA Expo

NAIMA announced its annual Mobility Expo, running 11-16 August at Bhrikuti Mandap. The event will feature 51 stalls, 55+ brands, and 40+ new vehicle launches including 2 and 4-wheelers. President Ritu Singh Vaidya noted NAIMA's membership has grown from 21 to 36 companies in one year. Partners include Global IME Bank, Red Bull, and Pathao.

### Nabil tree plantation

Nabil Bank concluded its Green week 2026 by planting 200 avocado saplings at Gale Park in Tokha, marking five years of its Sustainable Savings Account. CEO Manoj Gyawali highlighted the bank's investments in renewable energy, clean transport, agriculture, and MSMEs, plus paper savings through digitisation.



### Sunmaya wins big

Nepali ultra-runner Sunmaya Budha won the 120km Lavaredo Ultra Trail in Italy's Dolomites in 13:33:01, breaking a 13-year course record. Born in Jumla, Budha turned professional at 17 and is the 2025 World Trail Majors Overall Champion, having also won Hong Kong 100K and Cape Town 100K last season.

### Tiger Tops monsoon

Tiger Tops Karnali Lodge in Bardia is open year-round with a monsoon special offer. Upgrades include a swimming pool, air conditioning, private balconies, and wifi. The lodge offers cultural and wildlife experiences in surrounding villages and community forests.



### Rasuwagadi resumes

The 111 MW Rasuwagadi Hydropower Project resumed supplying 74MW to the grid after repairs from a glacial flood last year. Full capacity is technically ready but limited by the NEA due to low demand. Flood damage was estimated at Rs3.5 billion.

### Slow fast-track

The 71km Terai-Madhes Expressway is only half complete eight years after construction began, with costs rising from Rs85 billion to over Rs213 billion. The Nepal Army, now leading construction, cites tunnel and bridge engineering delays and Khokana land dispute. Completion is now slated for March 2027. The expressway will cut travel time from Kathmandu to the Terai to 1 hour.

### FlyDubai Pokhara

FlyDubai will begin daily Pokhara-Dubai flights on 23 September, connecting Pokhara to London, New York, and Tokyo via the Emirates hub in Dubai. Local tourism stakeholders, such as the Pokhara Chamber of Commerce, pledged to help sustain the route following approval from CAAN. Another Gulf airline, Air Arabia, is also studying the Pokhara route.

### Zonta + Nepal Police

Zonta Club Kathmandu partnered with Nepal Police to hold a mental health and self-care session for 50 officers on 7 July at Naxal. Experts Ananta Adhikari and Sita Bhandary covered stress management, stigma reduction, and warning signs requiring psychiatric care, part of Zonta's ongoing collaboration with police units on gender-based violence response.

### Fertiliser supplied

40,569 metric tons of chemical fertilizers (urea, DAP, potash) were distributed in the first 19 days of this month through Agricultural Inputs Company (26,995 tons) and Salt Trading Corporation (13,575 tons). The PMO claims there has been no delay in fertiliser supply this paddy planting season.

### British Council

The British Council's Cultural Protection Fund is offering grants to protect heritage at risk from conflict and climate change. The fund has backed projects such as Maithil wall painting preservation, reviving the Kusunda language, and indigenous food documentation. Expressions of interest close 20 July. Since 2016, the fund has supported 160 projects in 20 countries.

### Marriott + Coca-Cola

Marriott International and The Coca-Cola Company announced a global agreement making Coca-Cola Marriott's beverage partner across carbonated drinks and hydration categories. Coca-Cola products will appear in guest rooms, restaurants, and event spaces worldwide.



### Le Sherpa-MANZO

Le Sherpa Restaurant and Dhaka's MANZO Restaurant held a collaborative dinner on 26 June, continuing a partnership that started in 2025. Chef Krishna Subedi and Chef Zohra Mahila presented a menu of Jiri rainbow trout, sea buckthorn, wild morel mushrooms, mountain goat, introducing Bangladeshi diners to Nepali cuisine.

### Proton e.MAS 5

The Proton e.MAS 5, an electric compact SUV, is set to launch in Nepal via Jagdamba Motors. The vehicle won Electric Compact Vehicle of the Year 2026 at Malaysia's Allianz DSF Awards and offers storage features including a 70-litre frunk and 28-liter under-seat compartment.

### IME Hackathon

Global IME Bank launched its second annual AI/ML Hackathon. Fourteen teams selected from applications will compete in two phases: 36 hours of coding followed by an onsite hackathon, with accommodation provided. Winners receive cash prizes and an opportunity to collaborate with the bank or other businesses.



SUDI KSHA TULADHAR

### How Issue Areas Intersect

Participants rarely describe issues in isolation. The strongest overlaps suggest a need for interconnected systems.

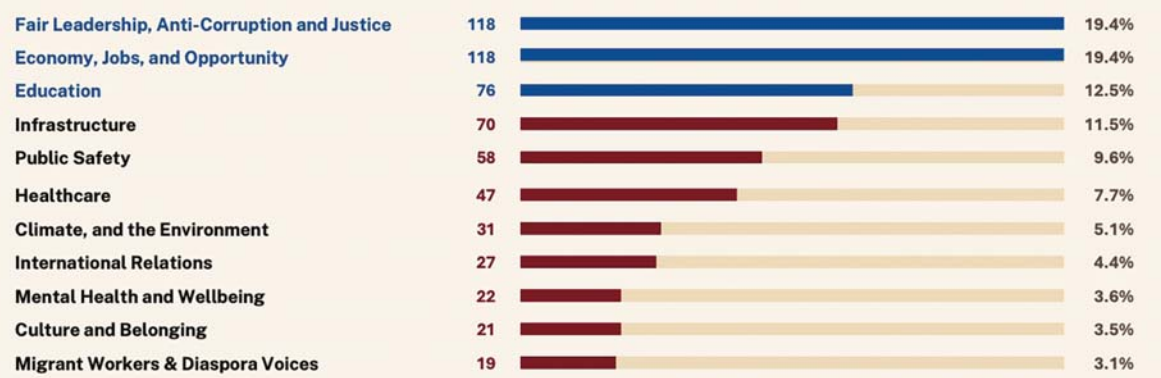


100 Days Nepal Civic Signal Report

### The Priority Map

What Issue Areas Surface the Most

N = 607 classifications across 341 proposals. Each proposal can appear in up to three categories. Percent values reflect % of total submissions.



100 Days Nepal Civic Signal Report

question: If you could decide a single action for Nepal's next 100 days, what would it be?

Taken together, the platform's 341 proposals revealed public expectations, and the strongest themes were familiar burdens in Nepal's public life. One in five responses concerned fair leadership, anti-corruption, and justice. The economy, jobs, and better opportunity were the most frequently selected issue areas.

Education followed, then infrastructure, public safety, and healthcare (see graphs). The pattern suggests that participants are not treating governance as an abstract ideal, but measuring it through work, roads, schools, safety, hospitals, and credible systems.

One respondent wanted a civil service accountability system built around job standards, regular evaluation, and citizen feedback. Another called for short-term skills training, a centralised job portal with verified listings, internships, and small-business support. Others asked for election

literacy, women's safety programs, stronger infrastructure, and more transparent public systems.

In moments of political crisis, public anger is often described as anti-establishment. The proposals gathered by 100 Days Nepal point to a more demanding form of public expectation: participants want accountability that is not limited to punishment. They want transparency, not only speeches. They want opportunity, not just slogans about youth empowerment.

For the 70% of participants inside Nepal, the emphasis fell heavily on immediate delivery. Their top priorities were the economy, education, jobs, fair leadership, anti-corruption, and justice.

Their answers reflect the pressure of daily proximity to problems. When institutions fail, the consequences are not theoretical. They appear in the search for work, the quality of schooling, the reliability of services, and the sense that public life is not functioning effectively.

That explains why economic proposals intersect strongly with infrastructure, education, and anti-corruption. A job portal matters because young people need work. Skills training is important because people need income. Roads, healthcare, and safety matter because they shape everyday life. Education alone does not guarantee mobility.

The language of the submissions is full of systems: verified job platforms, public road maps, accountability processes, legal response systems, civic education programs, and more. This is not the vocabulary of passive hope. It is the language of a generation asking how power will be tracked, how jobs will be accessed, and how public institutions will be made answerable after the moment of protest has passed.

Their demand is not for one reform, it is for a state that can connect its promises to a better lived experience. Nepalis want mechanisms that will deliver.

#### JOBS, JOBS, JOBS

The emphasis on jobs is especially telling because economic opportunity is rarely separate from trust. A government that cannot create work is not simply failing economically, but institutionally. For many young people, the inability to imagine a viable future at home becomes an indictment of the state itself.

About 29% of submissions came from outside Nepal. Responses from the diaspora carried related but distinct emphases. Nepalis abroad also cared about jobs and governance, but their responses were more about institutional access: voting from abroad, embassy accountability, and structured ways to contribute expertise.

For overseas Nepalis, the question is not only if the nation remembers them, but whether it has built credible channels for their participation. Belonging appears to be defined more by access to state functions than by symbolism.

Because this was an online

survey, lower-access populations with less English-dominant voices are underrepresented. The metadata is self-reported and not independently verified. The analysis is thus interpretive, and serious reading of the findings has to resist the temptation to treat it as the voice of the nation.

Even so, they do represent the expectations of Nepali youth. The submissions show how young, digitally engaged Nepalis are thinking after the September Storm: they want proof that the old order has been interrupted. This is not, and should not be read as, a checklist of demands, but a map of where trust has broken down.

In the first 100 days, the credibility of leadership was defined by the visibility of action. In the months after, it may depend on whether services begin to work better. Over the long term, it will depend on whether reforms become embedded in rules, budgets, routines, and institutions strong enough to outlast individual leaders. 🇳🇵

# In a world of noise, choose nuance.

SAVE Rs **750**

on a renewal or new annual subscription to **Nepali Times**, and get a smart travel umbrella.



Print edition at your doorstep every Friday morning.

Call or email today +977 9801904702  
sobhana@nepalitimes.com



# First public transport, then mass transit

Rather than grand departures, the Valley urgently needs modest but high-impact transportation solutions

**Bhushan Tuladhar**  
and **Kanak Mani Dixit**

On 15 May, Nepal's Railways Department issued a notice inviting expressions of interest from international consulting firms to prepare a detailed project report (DPR) for a 27.5km metro line along the Narayan Gopal Chok-Koteswar-Ratna Park loop. This was enough to send social media into a frenzy, with many celebrating the imminent arrival of metro rail in Kathmandu.

A month later, the notice was cancelled, citing 'technical reasons'. Then, the Minister for Infrastructure Development announced in Parliament a much more ambitious plan: a fresh DPR process for a 150km metro rail network for the entire Valley.

There is nothing wrong with dreaming big, and one must appreciate the government's 'Vision 2040' concept to promote integrated urban development. But the people already suffering from an economy in doldrums need practical and urgent solutions.

The metro rail plan may wow social media, but what we are seeing yet again are high-visibility announcements followed by fragmented, uncoordinated interventions. After all, a comprehensive public transport masterplan for the Valley developed by JICA over three years is due for completion in two months.

At a critical moment, attention is being diverted from fixing the bus network, which remains the backbone of the Valley's urban mobility. Building a metro rail system is expensive, complex and time-consuming, and

requires first overcoming institutional and implementation challenges. Over the years, even DPRs for modest projects have not happened: such as bus rapid transit (BRT), monorail, and urban cable cars.

Moreover, global experience shows that urban rail cannot replace a bus network. Even in cities with well-established metro systems, buses fulfil a vital urban transport function. Despite Delhi Metro's popularity and extensive network, buses continue to carry a larger share of daily passengers and provide indispensable connectivity across the sprawling city.

## TRIGGERING MOVEMENT

The haphazard spread of the Valley's road network overlaid old foot trails or followed trucking tracks connecting brick kilns. Therefore, there are few wide thoroughfares. New neighbourhoods are connected only by narrow, winding and undulating roads fit for small vehicles such as the three-wheel Safa Tempo (see below).

Traffic jams and delays, economic inefficiency, air pollution and the absence of night bus service all contribute to a dispirited public and weak commerce. The Valley contributes more than a quarter of the national GDP, making its economic efficiency, public health and psychosocial wellbeing vital for the country as a whole.

Prime Minister Balendra Shah's government has an opportunity to deliver tangible relief, but to do so it must replace grandiose visions with practical solutions. Three-wheelers, minibuses and buses must remain integral components of our public transport system. Sadly, the Ministry of Infrastructure Development continues to



## Four wheels good, three w

New three-wheelers wait for registration in factories as old ones near decommissioning

**Shristi Karki**

The distinctive boxy green-and-white electric Safa tempo that trundle along the Valley's streets have become an iconic part of its identity.

Safe tempo were introduced in Nepal in 1993, when diesel-powered Indian-made Vikram Tempo three-wheelers were so polluting that a USAID-funded project converted seven of them to electric.

These were then purchased by the Nepal Electric Vehicle Industry (NEVI) which manufactured eight more in 1996 and began plying the Baluwater to Patan route with a charging station at Lazimpat.

Since then, the fleet of battery-powered three-wheelers has expanded to 714 and they serve up to 11 non-trunk inner-city routes—making them real pioneers in zero-emission transportation in Nepal and across the region.

A majority of the vehicles have over the years changed their lead-acid batteries to lithium. And in 2018, operators successfully lobbied to exempt them from a government



SUMAN NEPALI

ban on vehicles more than 20 years old.

But starting this year, a bulk of Kathmandu's electric three-wheelers will reach the end of their mandated 30-year lifespan. As mass decommissioning looms, the government's ban on the registration

of new three-wheelers remains.

Operators, entrepreneurs, three-wheeler manufacturers and green transport activists have been lobbying the Bagmati Province government unsuccessfully to reopen registration for new electric three-wheelers.

"All we do is make rounds of government offices," says Prakash Thapa, vice-president of the Electric Vehicle Association of Nepal (EVAN). Thapa spoke with Nepali Times from Hetauda, where his team is trying to get permission for registrations.

But the bureaucracy always gives them the same answer: they cannot make a decision because the file is mired in red tape somewhere along the provincial chain of command.

"Ultimately, the public continues to suffer whoever is in government," rues Thapa.

Safa tempos carry 100,000 passengers daily on Kathmandu's tertiary routes, and in areas with less population density which larger vehicles do not find profitable to operate. Their size and speed make them ideal for commuting students and the elderly. Three-wheelers also have the lowest number of accidents and petty crimes.

## WOMEN DRIVERS

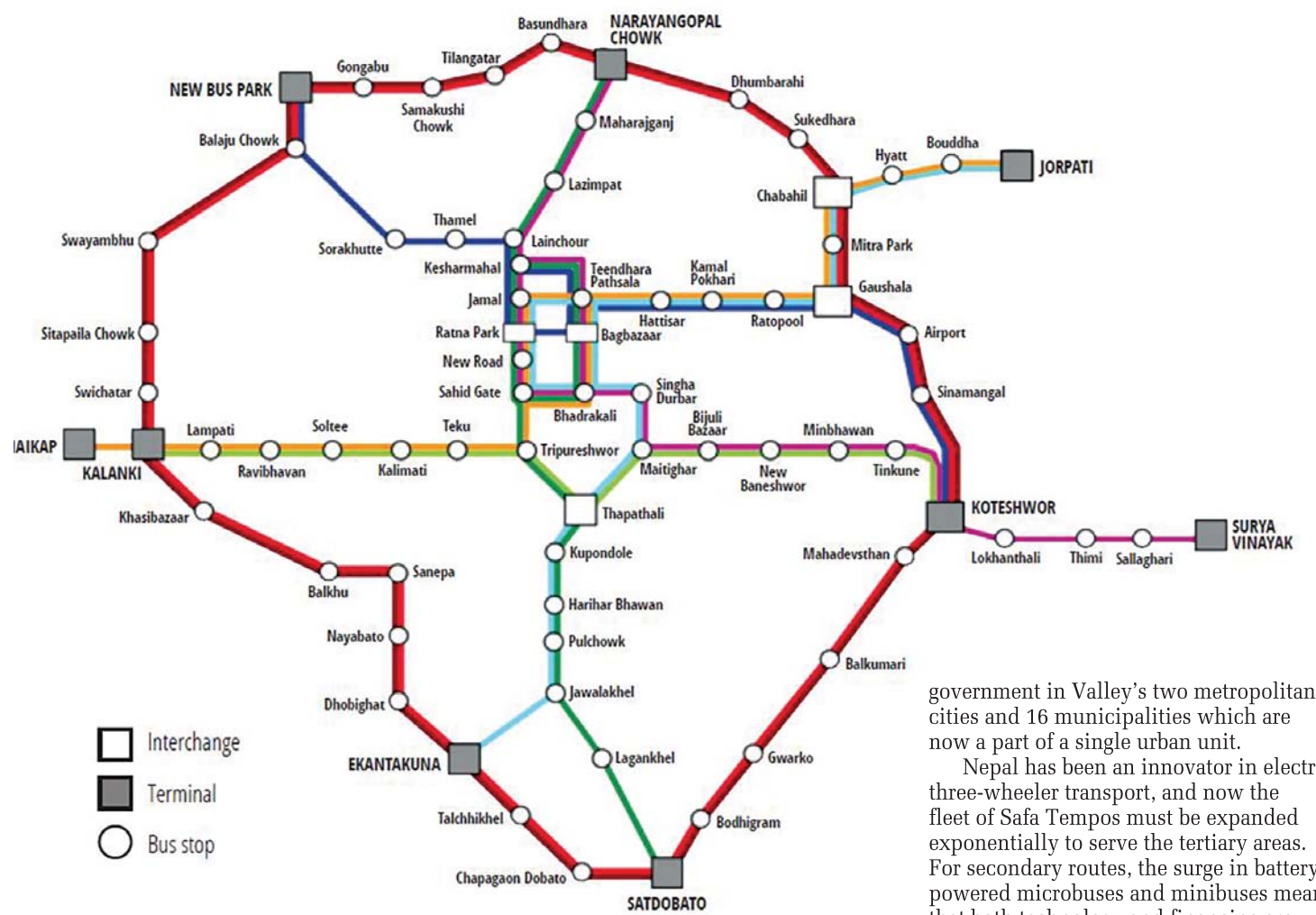
But the most significant achievement of Safa tempo is that the transport network employs thousands of women operators and entrepreneurs. Among them is Indra Maya Shrestha (pictured, right), who came to Kathmandu from Kavre as a 17-year-old.

She learnt how to drive a tempo, got her license, and over the years has gone from driving to now owning two vehicles. She also runs a charging station in Mahankal that



SUMAN NEPALI

# Kathmandu Valley Proposed Integrated Bus Routes



prioritise roads and bridges over mobility systems. ‘Transport’ was recently dropped from the ministry’s name, and ‘public transport’ was mentioned only once in the recent budget, in a passing reference to electric buses.

The single most important action the government can take on public transport is to energise the Valley Transport Authority (VTA), the institution meant to coordinate among local, provincial and federal tiers but neglected by successive governments. (The official name of VTA is Federal Capital City Public Transport Authority, even though its mandate covers the entire Valley.)

### THE AUTHORITY

Rather than ‘mass transit’, including metro rail, the government could step back and concentrate on ‘public transport’ planning. The goal should be an integrated transport system that encourages citizens to abandon

motorbikes and cars in favour of buses, vans and three-wheelers. As roads become less congested and the air cleaner, cycling and walking will revive as modes of transport for work and recreation.

Forgetting flamboyant proposals, over the next couple of years the VTA must systematise public transport by concentrating on three areas:

Valley-wide tertiary, secondary and primary routes for large buses, minibuses, microbuses, vans and three-wheelers.

Seamless, digitally supported fare collection and routing that allows transfers across routes and operators.

Electrification of public transport (battery and grid-powered) from financing to technical assistance.

Private operators have played a vital role in public transport, and an empowered VTA must engage with them while ensuring coordination among the three tiers of

government in Valley’s two metropolitan cities and 16 municipalities which are now a part of a single urban unit.

Nepal has been an innovator in electric three-wheeler transport, and now the fleet of Safa Tempos must be expanded exponentially to serve the tertiary areas. For secondary routes, the surge in battery-powered microbuses and minibuses means that both technology and financing are already in place.

For primary routes, we must scale up the deployment of 10–12-metre electric buses, supplemented where needed by higher capacity articulated buses. We could also consider reintroducing trolleybuses and exploring tram systems. These modes are well suited to Nepal’s context, as they draw power directly from the grid, offering higher efficiency and lower vehicle and operating costs.

Even as we develop an integrated public transport spectrum from Safa Tempos to vans, electric buses, trolleybuses and trams, the time will come when we need, and can afford, a metro rail network in Kathmandu Valley.

We can plan for that future, but we need reliable and affordable mobility right away. Let us stop chasing headlines and get the system, and the buses, moving. 🇳🇵

Bhushan Tuladhar is an environmentalist and air quality campaigner. Kanak Mani Dixit is a writer and journalist. Both are associated with the Sajha Yatayat cooperative company.

# wheels bad?

## commission deadlines



SHRISTI KARKI

loan she is still paying off. But her vehicle has only three months before it reaches 30 years, and has to be decommissioned.

“I have no idea what I am going to do about my loans if I am unable to drive my tempo anymore,” says Nepali.

Fifteen years ago, Nepali had been working at a carpet factory, all while raising her young daughter alone, when a friend encouraged her to learn to drive a three-wheeler.

“It changed my life, I did not have to worry about my next salary, and could choose my own hours,” she says. This allowed Nepali to get her daughter an education and the means to send her to Dubai, where she now works.

“The three-wheeler network employs thousands of women who have come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and enabled them to stand on their own feet,” she says.

Umesh Raj Shrestha, former chair of EVAN says that Nepal’s achievement with Safa tempo is one of the earliest examples of locally manufactured and assembled electric transport in South Asia, even the rest of the world.

“It is our legacy, we must

preserve it,” he adds.

There is speculation that microbus and other private bus operators have influenced the provincial government not to allow new registration of three-wheelers.

“But four-wheelers and three-wheelers can co-exist on tertiary roads, the government just needs to assign specific routes,” says Dharma Kumar Shrestha at NEVI.

Operators want the chassis number of their vehicles, which signifies ownership, to be transferred to new ones after the old ones are scrapped. “Replace Safa tempo with Safa tempo,” says Indra Maya Shrestha emphatically.

Others note that Nepal’s policies have begun to reflect the political leadership’s inclination towards sophisticated mass transit options, like articulated buses seen in urban spaces globally. The RSP government’s ambitious Vision 2040 for Kathmandu goes one step further than articulated buses to a metro rail network for the entire valley (see above).

“Increasingly, Nepal’s leaders aspire to Western ideals of urbanisation – so we hear about bringing in articulated buses and other large vehicles,” says Shrestha. “And while such vehicles are important features of urban public transport, there needs to be

an understanding of our context and history for a mix that best fits Nepal.”

In a post on social media last month, NEVI managing director Lobsang Lama expressed puzzlement that the government celebrates four-wheeler EV imports while refusing policy support for Nepal-made public electric vehicles aimed at the poor. Four prototypes are currently at the NEVI factory in Chapali.

“It is sad to see our tested vehicles gather dust in our factory, if other new vehicles can be replaced, why not three wheelers?” asks Dharma Kumar Shrestha of NEVI.

There are other concerns. Operational skills for Safa tempos are largely non-transferable to other vehicles. “If our vehicles are scrapped, it will be difficult to immediately shift to driving other types of vehicles,” says Manju Nepali.

Others like Indra Maya Shrestha, are optimistic that Safa tempos are here to stay: “Our three-wheeler transport system provides indispensable service to countless commuters on fringe routes. And we now have a government whose main agenda is to reduce unemployment. I don’t think this leadership will want to deprive even more people of jobs.” 🇳🇵

can charge 70 three-wheelers at once.

One of her vehicles has three years left, while the other one has 11 years before it has to be scrapped. She says, “Although I have some time left, there is constant worry at the back of my mind. We did not

expect the post-GenZ leadership to leave us hanging like this. If they are not going to allow new registrations, they should just come right out and say it.”

Manju Nepali has driven a Safa tempo since 2011, and bought her own vehicle three years ago on a



## Events



### Sursing Waterfall Hike

Join Hike for Nepal's scenic Sursing Waterfall hike and nurture your adventurous spirits this weekend.

**11 July, 5:45am, Rs1,900, Brikuti Mandap, Kathmandu**

### A Sweet Apple

Directed by Kedar Shrestha, the children's play A Sweet Apple is a great opportunity to introduce little ones to theatre. Multiple showtimes included, even on weekends. Visit Mandala Theatre's page on Facebook for details.

**9-18 July, 10:30am, Mandala Theatre, Thapagaun**



### Candle Making Workshop

Looking to get into new a new hobby? Meet people and explore your creativity at this weekend candle-making workshop.

**11 July, Rs850, 4pm-5:30pm, Winstons Speakeasy, Sanepa**

### Goodbye Sisters

Alliance Francaise will host a special screening of director Alexander Murphy's documentary Goodbye Sisters about two Nepali sisters and their livelihoods in the Himalayas.

**11 July, 5:30pm, Alliance Francaise, Pulchok**

### Poolside socials

Socialise and meet new people at this refreshing evening poolside event. The theme for the evening is neon.

**11 July, Rs1,000, 6pm, Moxy, Darbar Marg**



### Le Sherpa Farmer's Market

From fresh organic produce to European cheese and bakery items, Le Sherpa Farmers Market has it all. Shop and support local businesses.

**Every Saturday, 8am-12:30pm, Le Sherpa, Maharajganj**

### Community Musicking

Maitri Music Therapy Nepal with Taragaon Next have collaborated for a music experience that brings the community together. Visit Taragaon Next's website to register.

**11 July, Rs105, 3pm, Taragaon Next, Boudha**



## Music

### All Yellow Live

Afro-Latin Band All Yellow will be in Nepal sharing songs inspired by African and Latin American folk traditions across different corners of the world.

**10 July, Rs599-Rs999, 8pm-10pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel**

### Vibe with Mantra

Mantra Band will be performing some of their greatest hits live this weekend. Rock out with friends.

**11 July, Rs1,000, 10pm onwards, Club Nova, Thamel**



### Heartbreakers

Enjoy an evening with of music and good food with the Heartbreakers Band at Hard Rock Café this Friday.

**10 July, 6pm-9pm, Hard Rock Café, Darbar Marg**

### Ghugu'Mugu Live

Get some drinks, unwind with friends and listen to some soulful tunes by Ghugu'Mugu.

**17 July, Rs799, 7pm onwards, Irish Pub, Lazimpat**



### National Music Awards

Be a part of the audience at this year's National Music Awards. The performing lineup includes John and The Locals, Deepak Bajracharya and The Rhythm Band, Samriddhi Rai and more. Get tickets via esewa.

**10 July, 3pm onwards, Rs1,500, The Plaza, Pulchok**



## Getaway



### Tiger Tops Karnali

Enjoy the ongoing monsoon offer at Tiger Tops Karnali Lodge. The package including bird watching and village walks.

**Thakudwara, Bardia, 9851217265**

### Atithi Suites

A resort with calm and comfort alongside nature with amenities such as a swimming pool, gym and more. Rooms are soundproof and suites available for families or groups.

**Pokhara (061) 456763 / 9856012543**



### Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort

Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, discover a cosy stay nestled in the Himalayan foothills. Enjoy beautiful views of sunset and mindful moments with meditation, sound healing and yoga.

**Dhulikhel, 9851373755**

### Shivapuri Heights Cottage

Situated atop the hills of Budhanilkantha, Shivapuri Heights Cottage is the ideal retreat for nature enthusiasts, offering fresh monsoon air and stunning views over the valley.

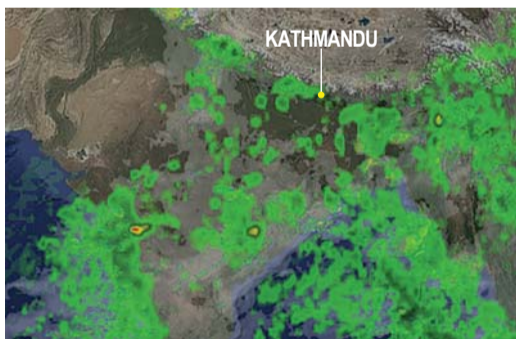
**Budhanilkantha, 9841258666**

### Lapsi Tree Resort

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

**Danda Gaun Marg, 9761797014**

## Weekend Weather



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
27° 21°	26° 21°	27° 21°	27° 20°	28° 21°

### Mature Monsoon

The monsoon is progressing well across Nepal, with only parts of the eastern Tarai getting below normal precipitation.

As is characteristic of the monsoons, the rains will fall mainly at night. But localised late afternoon cloudbursts can also be expected as the land heats up and the moisture rises along the mountains. That is what it may be like over the weekend in Kathmandu, with the rains getting heavier into the early part of next week. Caution along highways on landslide prone areas, and while crossing mountain streams.

## Our Pick



Yellowstone, the American neo-Western drama created by Taylor Sheridan and John Linson, follows the powerful Dutton family who own the largest contiguous cattle ranch in the United States, located in Montana, and often violent and political battles to protect their ancestral land from land developers, a bordering Native American reservation, and the government. The five-season series has since spawned numerous spin-offs and stars Kevin Costner, Luke Grimes, Kelly Reilly, Wes Bentley, Cole Hauser, Kelsey Asbille, and Gil Birmingham.



## Dining

### Beirut

Beirut comes to Kathmandu bringing Lebanese cuisine, including traditional mezze, grilled dishes, shisha, and Mediterranean hospitality within a refined courtyard setting in the heart of Kathmandu.

**Gairidhara, 9712066188**

### Haadi Biryani

Haadi's slow-cooked biryanis are seasoned with a secret spice blend and the clay pots that they come in enhances the experience.

**Dilli Bazaar (01) 4438444**



### Erma Restaurant

Erma Restaurant offers an upscale fine dining experience with chef-curated continental dishes. With a farm to table approach and an assortment of wines, Erma turns every meal into an experience.

**Hotel Shambala, Chakrapath (01) 4650351**

### Chill: Mo

Taste the authentic flavor from the Himalayas at Chill: Mo. Explore a delicious variety of flavourful and hearty Himalayan food.

**Bhatbhateni, Naxal, 9829996405**



### The Belgian Waffle

Want something to satisfy your sweet tooth? Treat your taste buds from a wide range of waffle sundaes and Waff-wiches from The Belgian Waffle.

**Darbar Marg, 9849636013**

## 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

# Cleaning up Mt Everest top to bottom

A model for sustainable waste management in the Himalaya

Leila Ezzat in the Khumbu

Whether climbing mountains, or engaged in spiritual retreats, the sacred Khumbu valley offers adventures amidst the icy peaks.

But its popularity comes at a price. Each year, the Khumbu welcomes 100,000 visitors and porters, generating thousands of tons of waste that threaten the fragile ecosystem already under pressure from climate change.

Since 1991 the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC) has managed waste in villages, trails and base camps.

Yangji Doma Sherpa of the SPCC says that while at first it was successful at controlling litter along trekking trails, burning and burying plastics, tin cans, glass, batteries continued largely unchecked.

Now, many waste materials like aluminium, tin and steel cans, and PET plastic can be recycled, while organic waste is converted to compost and animal feed.

Since 2022, the non-profit Sagarmatha Next has been working on alternative waste management practices and reducing trash. Its co-founder Tommy Gustafsson teamed up with mountain geographer and conservationist Alton C Byers and anthropologists Milan Shrestha and Netra Chhetri to develop a solid waste management plan.

“Sagarmatha Next and SPCC had conducted a detailed survey of all 70 plus landfills within the park, with locations, contents, size, and probable impacts,” says Byers. “Once we understood the local point of view it was fairly simple to plan recycling, re-use, reduction, and use locally available food.”

Supported by a National Geographic Grant in 2019, SPCC and Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality developed the Sustainable Waste Management Plan of Khumbu in three stages:

- Collection and sorting the waste at 'Environmental Stations'
- Pre-processing and packaging waste at 'Recovery Facilities'
- Taking waste to Kathmandu for recycling or disposal

The SPCC constructed 125 garbage bins along trails and schools, nine Environmental Stations with another 18 planned, and one Material Recovery Facility in Namche, with a second one planned for Lukla.

## AWARENESS, ACTION, ART

Sagarmatha Next acts as an awareness centre that also provides financial support to SPCC and local community actions.

“Our role is to awaken consciousness, inspire everyone who comes, and to explain what’s being implemented from the collection point to recycling,” explains Gustafsson, a mountaineer and former business executive who has lived in Nepal since 2016.

SPCC and Sagarmatha Next launched the ‘Carry Me Back’ initiative, where each trekker transports a 1kg bag of waste from collection points to Lukla to be taken to Kathmandu.

“Every trekker can participate and leave something behind, for the environment and future generations,” explains Laxman Lama Blon at Sagarmatha Next.

Visitor feedback is generally



LAXMAN LAMA BLON



SPCC

positive. Over the past four years, more than 35,000 participants have carried down over 45 tons of waste.

Since 2022, 75,000 people have visited Sagarmatha Next's gallery where waste is turned into art.

Estonian artist Ines-Issa Villido, in residence at the centre said: “It is a place of connection, at the heart of where problems exist. Waste offers the opportunity to transmit the message more powerfully. It combines creativity and technical skills to create something complete and beautiful from waste.”

This waste management model with support from local communities, could eventually serve as an example for waste management systems in other remote mountain regions of the world facing similar challenges.

Every spring, the SPCC ‘Icefall doctors’ set ladders and fixed ropes on Everest, securing the route from Base Camp to Camp 2. They are first to arrive and the last to leave, and are also responsible to manage and carry waste back down.

From base camp, solid waste is transported to Gorakshap, where it is first sorted and segregated, then brought down to Namche using dzopkio. Recyclable waste is taken further down to Surke by mule, and onward to Kathmandu.

More than 7,000kg of waste was carried to Kathmandu in 2025 and a

further 5,000kg of ‘Carry me Back’ waste was handed over to Blue Waste, a recycling company.

Above Base Camp, beyond 6,000m, solid and human waste often remains frozen in ice. A promising counter-measure is that each expedition is required to pay a refundable \$4,000 garbage deposit once it obtains the team’s climbing permit.

Starting in 2015, the SPCC has enforced an 8kg garbage rule: each climber must return 8kg of waste from above base camp, with at least 2kg from Camp 2 and above starting from the 2026 season, and must also use SPCC-issued human waste bags. Similar requirements apply

on other peaks, including Ama Dablam, where climbers are required to bring down 3kg of waste and human waste bags.

Challenges remain. French alpinist Benjamin Védrines has witnessed the dilemma of managing human and solid waste in the cryosphere while on an expedition in Pakistan. At base camps waste and human excrement were collected by high altitude porters in boxes and drums, carried on mules to a village five days’ walk away.

“The intention is beautiful. But it saddened me to see these men going up to Camp 2 were taking colossal risks... of losing their lives. It seemed surreal,” he says.

Védrines believes drones may be an alternative. On Everest cargo drones have already been successfully tested to bring waste down from Camp 1. Drones are not yet able to reach the highest camps, where collection is still left to climbers and guides.

Until 1960, most high mountain communities in Nepal lived mainly agro-pastoral lifestyles. But Namche Bazar, perched at 3,440m, as a gateway to Everest, had more

potential. It is today a tourist hub, a centre of Sherpa culture and an essential place for acclimatisation. But this transformation is recent.

“Before the arrival of tourism, which truly boomed in the 1990s, Namche was an important trading point. Rice from the valley and buffalo hides were exchanged for salt and meat that came from Tibet,” recounts Pemba Gyaltzen, manager of Khumbu Lodge, the first lodge established in Namche Bazar in 1973.

Living conditions were spartan: no electricity, no running water, firewood for heat and fuel, and oil lamps for light. “We had to fetch water from the stream below. To fill 20L, it took about 20 minutes. Life was therefore quite difficult at that time,” he recalls. 🇳🇵

Leila Ezzat holds a PhD in environmental sciences from Sorbonne University and has conducted research on coral reefs to high-mountain streams.

[nepalitimes.com](https://nepalitimes.com)

More pictures online

## ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR 2026

### Programs Offered

**BBA** BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**BBIS** BACHELOR OF BUSINESS INFORMATION SYSTEM

**BHM** BACHELOR IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

Admissions forms are available at LACM

### FOR BBA & BBIS

Form Submission Last Date: 10 July 2026  
KUUMAT (Entrance Date): 20 July 2026  
Entrance Venue: LACM

### FOR BHM

Form Submission Last Date: 7 August 2026  
Entrance Venue: LACM



**LA** LITTLE ANGELS' COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT  
AFFILIATED TO KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY

### For more information

Hattiban, Lalitpur +977-1-5912721, 5912723 9851365447 | 9851365472  
info@lacm.edu.np www.lacm.edu.np

SOME CHOICES ARE LIFE CHANGING



REGISTER NOW

# How feasible for Nepal to get on c

Surplus clean energy and cold mountains make country ideal, but many hurdles remain

Vishad Raj Onta

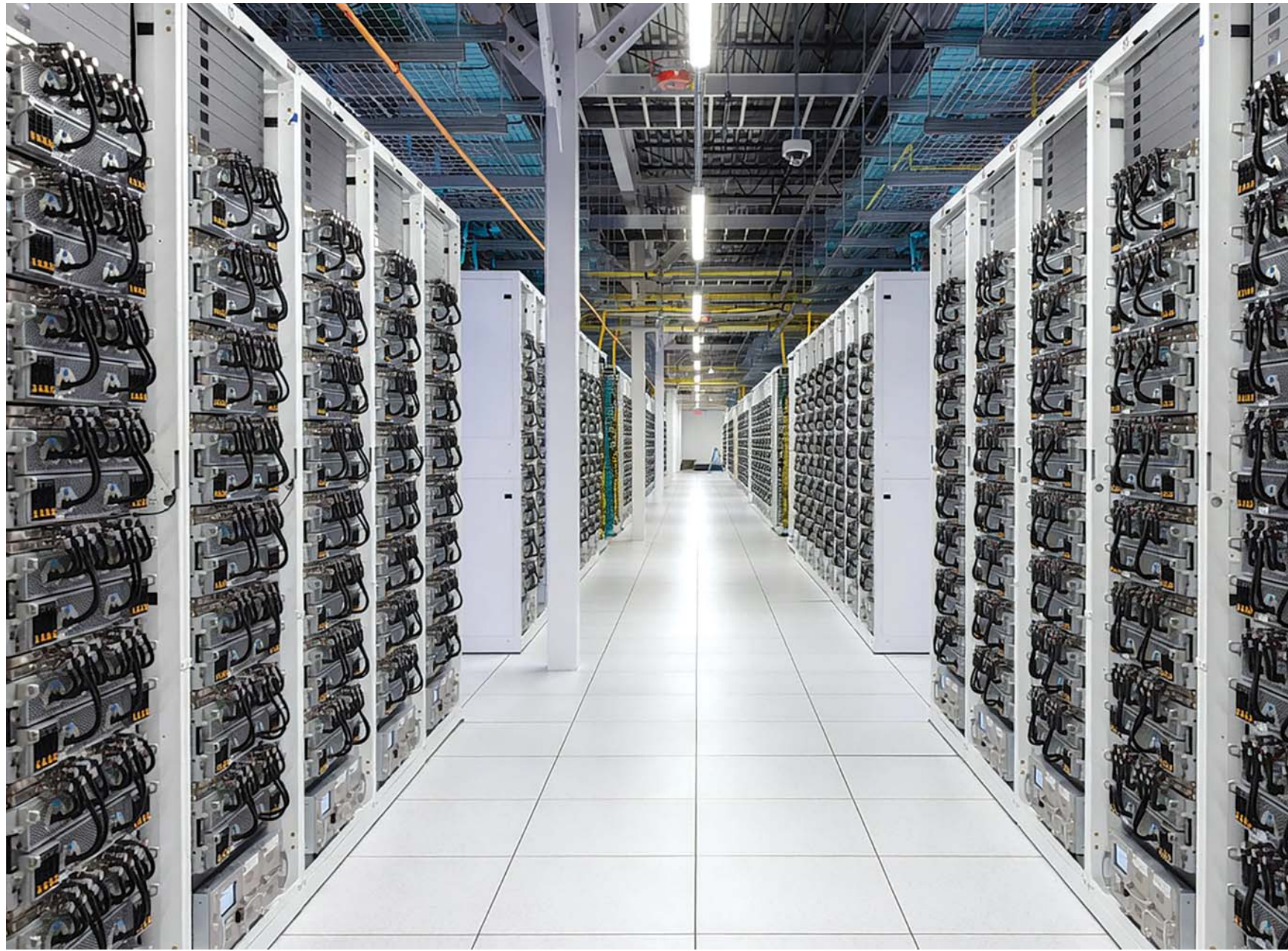
Every time a user clicks on Gemini AI icon on Gmail or AI Overview on Google search, every prompt that is typed into ChatGPT or Claude, means that somewhere in the world a data centre needs energy to power servers, and water to cool them. Intelligence, even if it is artificial, generates lots of heat.

Because of Nepal's cooler climate, its surplus hydroelectricity, and abundant water on Himalayan rivers, proponents of AI have been talking up the benefits of locating data centres in the country.

The utopian vision is that this technology is an opportunity for Nepal as a South Asian data hub, in between the tech powerhouses China and India, to generate revenue and employment, and have some important role in the digital world.

"You cannot simply dump thousands of monsoon megawatts into kitchens, we need to invite large industries, data centres, commercial enterprises and luxury tourism," said Energy Minister Biraj Bhakta Shrestha at Nepal Republic Media's Power Nepal Conclave on Wednesday. "We must expand the consumer base that has the structural capacity to observe high demand."

Last year's Digital Nepal Framework (DNF) 2.0 says Nepal 'intends to inform the strategic direction needed to effectively



SERVETHEHOME

tap digital technologies and unleash extensive socio-economic transformation.' The document repeatedly mentions 'energy-efficient' data centres as a key area of policy and investment. The

National AI Policy document also lays out the same promise.

Nepal's IT private sector is equally enthused. Dileep Agrawal of WorldLink Communications, Nepal's biggest internet service

provider told the Conclave: "Data centres need energy to produce heat and then cool down the server, the cooling part in Nepal is 15% cheaper compared to warmer places so in the future we can become a

hub for green data centres where we are exporting AI computing power to overseas customers rather than building expensive transmission lines to export to neighbours who bring a lot of geopolitical tension

## The Himalaya as the next



Cyberia

Ayusha Chalise

Data centres have become a contentious subject in policy debates worldwide, and even in Nepal some experts speak of data centres as if it is the next gold rush.

"Bring Facebook data centres to Nepal, and then we can localise our own data, for data sovereignty," said one expert recently in a chandelier-lit conference room at a Pulchok hotel.

The pitch is usually framed as a win-win: data centres get cooled naturally in the Himalaya, and Nepal's economy can get a boost with talent, money, and leverage that big tech brings. The country's hydropower potential would power this imagination, offering the promise of clean, cheap energy to match the cold, clean air (see above).

The same promise of cold temperature and abundant renewable energy once drew data centres to geothermal energy-rich Iceland. In her ethnography *Where*

Cloud is Ground, Alix Johnson writes that although technology is often imagined in opposition to the natural world, as something that subdues or escapes it, digital infrastructure is in fact deeply entangled in ecological narratives.

Data, she writes, was drawn to Iceland not simply by the availability of natural resources, but by the deliberate work of marketing those resources: landscapes turned into pitch decks, cultural history turned into a selling point. The 'natural fit' was, in large part, a story told before data centres were built.

It is the same rationale now in Kathmandu's ICT circles. Nepal may well succeed in bringing data centres to the Himalaya, and construction could bring an initial burst of jobs. But the data centre business only really works at scale, and scale is where the costs start to show.

Felipe Figueiredo, a PhD candidate at the IT University in Copenhagen, researching data centres in Iceland, points out that the business model underneath all this is essentially rental infrastructure, connectivity, energy, cooling, and on-demand computation, leased out not just to serve society but mainly to generate profit for tech companies.

"Data centres are critical



# data centre bandwagon?



NEPALI TELECOM

and arm twisting.”

He added: “It could be a much larger income and wealth for the country than just producing and exporting raw power.”

There are data centres already in operation in Nepal, including a WorldLink facility in Chandragiri, an Ncell server base in Nakkhu, and a NEA base in Nagarjun. There are also plans for a ‘hyperscale’ Bichuten Data Vault in Chobhar and Birganj, and WorldLink is mulling expansion.

However, none of these data centres in Nepal are even close to the scale of plants globally, and neither are they symbiotically connected to any hydropower plant as envisioned. In fact the Nakkhu Ncell centre (pictured,

above) has faced local noise and pollution complaints, as the centre burns diesel for its generators to ensure consistent power supply.

Nepal’s total installed capacity for electricity generation has now reached 4,400MW, almost all of its renewable energy from hydropower plants. But even after exporting 850MW to India and Bangladesh, the country wastes up to 1,000MW during the monsoon due to low domestic demand and transmission chokepoints.

Nepal’s data centres could use this green energy surplus, but before that the new government needs to remove bureaucratic friction and make the investment

climate friendlier. Nepal’s advantage is that it is right next door to China and India and can be a green computing export hub.

But the RSP government has shown the same old-school caution of past governments, rejecting Starlink’s advances a month ago due to local telecommunications laws requiring at least a 20% local partnership. Whatever one may think of Elon Musk, Starlink would have instantly solved internet connectivity across Nepal.

There are other advantages to locating data centres in Nepal. There will be revenue and jobs in construction and maintenance, reduced reliance on foreign data, building local IT capacity, and

## WHAT ARE DATA CENTRES?

A data centre is a building designed to house large numbers of computer servers and storage that can talk to each other. The computers store, process and distribute large amounts of digital data at high speeds, securely – essential for AI, websites, apps and streaming. The internet of everything on phones and social media involves sending data and commands to and from a data centre.

Lately, data centres are also where AI models such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Grok are trained. Grok, for example, was trained at xAI’s ‘Colossus’ supercomputer facility in Tennessee, which is still also a data centre. As companies fight to conjure up the best chatbot, one of their main strategies is to throw more powerful and a higher number of computers at their model training than the competition. As more and more computers worldwide get recruited for this purpose, companies such as xAI are planning massive in-house computer chip-building operations to gain an edge.

The problem is that at some point, the limiting factor will not be the availability of computers, but the massive amounts of energy required to run and to cool these facilities. Some tech giants are investing in their own power generation, even nuclear power plants.

This is where Nepal’s natural advantages are supposed to prove valuable. Nepal plans to generate 28,500MW of clean energy by 2035, and it would be ideal to use as much of that power domestically for value added products instead of exporting it. The climate at higher altitudes would mean less energy and water needed for cooling.

“The number of chips produced will increase exponentially, but electrical output looks flat except for China,” Elon Musk told Dwarakesh Patel on his podcast. “How are you going to turn the chips on? Magical power sources? Magical electricity fairies?”

Patel pushed back and asked why power plants and data centres are not just built together. “That’s what we did,” replies Musk, whose Colossus location deployed mobile natural gas turbines, paired with Tesla Megapack Battery storage to make sure that there is a continuous energy source.

Musk says he already has the technology to put solar-powered data centres into orbit, bypassing the bureaucracy of building on land, as well as taking advantage of space conditions that make sense for solar, like perpetual sunshine and colder ambient temperature.

By the time Nepal catches up with its hydropower for data centres, they could be located in space.

better access to digital services and AI for startups in the local tech ecosystem. Expertise in building such centres would also be valuable as Nepal figures out digital governance, and building systems that have to share large amounts of data fast and safely with each other.

It is logical to argue that Nepal would benefit from hitching its wagon to this new movement, and even better if it can be eco-friendly. However, on closer examination, Nepal’s plans so far seem premature and poorly thought-through.

The reality is that hydropower plants and data centres take time

and money to build and are hard to maintain and repair. The Rasuwagadi plant that was damaged by a glacial flood last year has only recently been repaired. Climate breakdown increases the risk to infrastructure.

So far, Nepal’s hydroelectricity generation is starkly seasonal with a surplus in the monsoon but deficit in the dry months. This does not work well for data centres that need reliable year-round power. One answer could be solar power plants and pump hydro that are cheaper and faster to come into operation. 🇳🇵

# data centre arena

Before Nepal becomes a hub in someone else’s cloud, it is worth asking how much energy and water will that need



KUNDA DIXIT

infrastructure,” Figueiredo says, “but not all the compute that happens in commercial data centres is critical for society.” A great deal of it is cryptocurrency mining, or AI slop, consuming more electricity than the databases running hospitals, schools, and universities, or the basic infrastructure of everyday communication.

Figueiredo argues that the surveillance-driven business model of social media, the mass collection of personal data, is itself a form of computing that has no place in a genuinely sustainable data centre.

European civil society is currently grappling with legislation that, according to journalist Nico Schmidt in a podcast with Tech Policy Press, was drafted verbatim from a Microsoft lobby document, with only a typo corrected in the final version.

Besides proposing what Key Performance Indicators are relevant, they also proposed that those KPI of energy use of data centres be shielded from public scrutiny by law. What is built, how much it consumes, what it emits: under this framing, none of it is meant to be our business.

This opacity, and an appetite for resources that treats machines

as more entitled than people, runs through how US big tech approaches infrastructure.

At India’s AI Impact Summit earlier this year, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman was pressed on the electricity demands of AI.

His response was to compare it to the food a human being eats for over 20 years before joining the workforce. The industry equates machine consumption with human need. OpenAI is currently eyeing data centre commitments of roughly \$1.4 trillion over the next eight years.

Energy availability is, in practice, the hard ceiling on how far this industry can expand, and the scramble for it is already reshaping who gets power and who does not. Here in the Netherlands, where I am now, data centres currently consume up to 4.6% of total electricity, equivalent to the annual usage of two million households.

That boom has caused grid congestion severe enough to stall new housing construction in a country already facing a housing crisis. Figueiredo calls this ‘grid grabbing’ -- private corporations buying up future electricity in advance from public utilities, securing capacity the state has not even built yet.

It is a way of privatising

a public resource that could potentially be used for improving local infrastructure and household access to electricity, and it puts direct pressure on local grids.

Kenya offers a starker version of the same story. President William Ruto has stalled a billion-dollar Microsoft data centre project, initially expected to break ground in May 2026. Kenya’s installed capacity currently stands at 3,000MW, and the proposed data centre alone would have needed roughly a third of that. The project was announced in 2024, during Ruto’s visit to Washington, framed at the time as a way to deepen US-Kenya ties.

### LESSONS FOR NEPAL

Kenya’s experience raises an uncomfortable question for Nepal’s own relationship with China. What would it mean if data centres owned by big American tech firms now operating alongside the US government, especially when much of the hydropower Nepal is offering runs on Chinese investment and technology?

Bichuten Data Vault, marketed as a step toward a ‘digitally sovereign’ Nepal, wants to build a tier-4 hyperscale data centre that could consume 100–500MW on its own. Meanwhile, as of 2023, 6% of Nepal’s population (over 1.5

million people) had no access to electricity at all.

Before we chase the dream of becoming the Himalayan hub in someone else’s cloud, it is worth asking a much simpler question: is it fair to divert scarce electricity toward data centres in a country that has not yet managed to light every home? 🇳🇵

Ayusha Chalise is a communication and development scholar specialising in how politics is experienced in the digital space. She contributes this Cyberia column for Nepali Times.



Where Cloud Is Ground: Placing Data and Making Place in Iceland by Alix Johnson. University of California Press, 2023. \$29.95



# From tiger trails to children's tales

Wildlife photographer Shovna Upadhyay's book inspires young readers to value nature

Sudiksha Tuladhar

Shovna Upadhyay's curiosity about wildlife first took root in Nepal, where she grew up. Sitting high up on a tree branch, watching bright-eyed bats and tiny babies clinging to their furry underbellies, she discovered a whole new world.

Around ponds, she waited for tadpoles to turn into frogs, caterpillars into butterflies, and snakes to shed skins.

It was only later in life, as she lived in Bhutan, the UK, Thailand, and finally settling down in Delhi, that she truly answered the call of the wild. Coming face-to-face with a tigress named Kankatti in Bandhavgarh and later with Sundari in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve changed her life forever.

Upadhyay recalls, "Kankatti lowered her head from behind the shrub and looked directly at me. As our eyes met, I realised she had only one eye. There was something incredibly powerful about that encounter with a one-eyed tigress."

Today, she is a noted writer and wildlife photographer, known internationally for capturing animals in their most candid moments.

Male tigers are solitary, and for generations writers and fables have perpetuated the myth that they are inherently dangerous predators. Upadhyay's first book, My Tigers, My Stories, grew out of her concern



that many children encounter wild animals through stories that portray them as villains.

She sought to change the narrative and present tigers as they truly are – powerful, intelligent animals with distinct behaviour and personality rather than only threatening humans.

Her second book, Our Jungles, My Stories, was released recently in New Delhi and Kathmandu. In it, she ventures beyond tigers to share adventures from the wild, including unexpected encounters, memorable safaris, and stories of people living alongside wildlife.

When asked about the

BBC documentary Tiger Island, Upadhyay said what particularly stood out was the behaviour of two tigresses sharing the responsibility of caring for each other's cubs. She found it remarkable that they were looking after five cubs together.

"We believe we understand tiger behaviour after decades of research, but moments like these remind us how much remains unknown," she adds. "I am proud of women like Sushila Mahatara with whom I have done safaris."

Aside from the narration, it is Shovna Upadhyay's photographs and watercolour illustrations that stand out. She says, "Wildlife photography taught me patience and respect for the natural world. Spending long hours in the jungle helped me understand animal behaviour first-hand."

## EYEWITNESS

Over the years, she began writing wildlife books for children. By nurturing children's curiosity and compassion for wildlife, she believes they can inspire not only young readers but also the adults around them. Some children may even grow up to be wildlife biologists, veterinarians, conservationists, photographers.

Whatever Upadhyay cannot convey through her photographs and prose, she expresses through poetry. In doing so, she moves beyond simply sharing information to connecting with readers emotionally, reminding them of humanity's enduring relationship

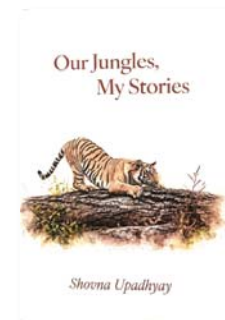
with nature and wildlife.

Conservation matters because the well-being of humans and wildlife is closely intertwined. Forests provide clean air, water, and a stable climate while serving as homes for countless species. As human populations grow and natural habitats shrink, protecting these ecosystems becomes increasingly important.

Conservation is not just about saving animals; but preserving the natural world that sustains all life on Earth, including our own.

Upadhyay's writing is easy-going and unpretentious. There is no attempt to overdramatise her adventures, instead she serves as the reader's eyewitness to the natural world. She hopes that Our Jungles, My Stories will encourage young readers to see animals and nature in a different light.

She says, "I want children to develop compassion and respect for wildlife. Animals are not separate from us; they are our co-inhabitants on this one Earth. Just as we need space to live and thrive, so do they." 🇳🇵



Our Jungles, My Stories  
Shovna Upadhyay  
(Author, wildlife photographer and Publisher)  
2026  
Rs1,250




## Switch to Tiago.ev

**More Safety. More Comfort. More Sense.**



**SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD.**

THAPATHALI - 015350643, 9801013469 | RADHE RADHE - 015914771, 9802345443



Scan for Test Drive

**SIPRADI**