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DAMAGE & LOSS

The massacre of 19 youth outside Parliament on 8 September 2025 ignited protests the next day that reduced to ashes all three pillars of the state: the legislature, judiciary and executive. The fourth estate was not spared, nor were schools and private businesses.

The report of the Inquiry Commission set up to investigate the two days of death and destruction detailed the first day, but did not bother with the second. Clips and photos of arsonists and looters of Nepal's 9/9 can still be seen all over social media.

By the afternoon of 9 September, targeted arson gave way to class rage and mayhem with anyone with an axe to grind on the rampage. The buildings smouldered for three days.

The September Storm led to an interim government and an election in which Prime Minister Balendra Shah's RSP secured a near outright majority. It has not been an easy six months – the West Asia war set off a fuel crisis, the RSP was ridden with internal dissent, and then came the 26 August Trisuli Valley disaster.

One year after they were burnt down, we visited the ruined hulk of the old Parliament, Supreme Court, Singha Darbar and Kantipur. The new Parliament and Supreme Court buildings are nearing completion, Singha Darbar is being renovated for the second time after damage in the 2015 earthquake. Kantipur works out of newsrooms in Tinkune while its high rise in Thapthali is repaired.

The ruins are enduring symbols of unfinished business, administrative dysfunction and impunity. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

More pictures and video online .

9.9.2025



KAMAL PRASAI



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(३०४ ग्रेड)

स्टेनलेस स्टिल पानी ट्यांकी

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

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The Digital Deluge

The deadly disaster unleashed a toxic flood on social media



GUEST COMMENT
Milan Shrestha

As Nepalis struggle to come to terms with the enormity of the catastrophic flood in the Trisuli Valley on 26 August, a parallel flood has been surging across social media platforms.

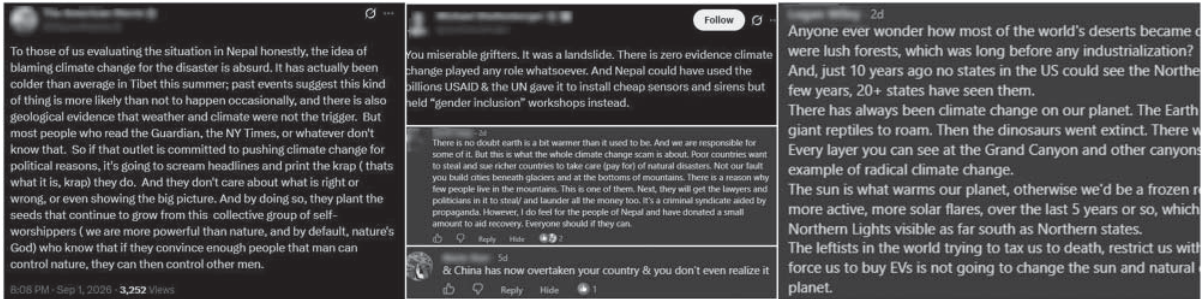
It has been two weeks of a digital deluge of opinions, accusations, false claims, and some attention-seeking performative outrage. Scientists have yet to piece together the exact sequence of what caused the devastating debris flow, yet many ‘experts’ have already delivered their verdicts via social media.

There is also hostility toward scientists, trolling by climate deniers, partisan insults and geopolitical abuse. ‘Academics are useless’, ‘Scientists create a climate of fear’ are some of the more polite comments.

DARK SIDE

Social media itself is not at fault. Given Nepal’s terrain, social media has become an essential disaster-response tool helping families locate missing members, share warnings, volunteers mobilise relief. In emergencies, information can save lives.

But algorithm-driven outrage also shows a misunderstanding of how societies confront



risk and scientists communicate their findings and ideas in public. While these trends are not unique to Nepal, it raises a fundamental question of how researchers should communicate their findings.

But this disaster also revealed social media’s darker side while scientists try to reconstruct exactly what happened. Solid explanations that take time.

But the cybersphere does not lack uncertainty. The attention economy of social media platforms reward people who sound sure of themselves, not people who admit what they do not know.

Nuance is mistaken for weakness. Doubt is interpreted as incompetence. A complex socio-ecological crisis is then reduced to a slogan. Tragedy becomes entertainment, a catastrophe is content.

Comment sections fill with mockery, outrage, conspiracy theories, and political point-scoring -- all while families mourn their losses.

Videos of destruction are consumed with the same casual detachment as any other viral post. The algorithm favours emotional reaction, not ethical reflection. The result is

a public sphere that is often disconnected from empathy.

Yet society must recognise the complex nature of this disaster, and its response management cannot be fully taught in disciplinary areas — it requires collaboration and systems level thinking. Scientists cannot be rushed into giving a definite answer for more effective policy interventions and reconstruction efforts.

Meaningful action is not possible without knowledge. Flood forecasting, hazard mapping, disaster monitoring and modelling, resilient infrastructure design, and early warning systems all originate in years, often decades, of scientific inquiry.

Every infrastructure built in flood prone areas, every evacuation plan, every risk assessment, and every adaptation strategy must begin as research long before being implemented. Society needs both action and ideas. It needs rescuers on the ground and researchers in the field.

It needs both immediate relief and long-term understanding. The real challenge is to bridge these competing demands more effectively.

also view disasters as a moment for reflection rather than rushing to social media without strong evidence just to compete for attention, speculating beyond available evidence, or, turning tragedy into personal branding opportunities.

In a disaster, the role of scholars is not to win online arguments or collect followers. It is to provide careful analysis, acknowledge the limits to what we know, distinguish evidence from speculation, and contribute to collective learning.

In Nepal’s incredibly complex bio-socio-ecological context, disasters happen in the context of glaciers, rivers, sediments, infrastructure, climate variability, settlements. Premature conclusions can be misleading.

Nepal and the wider Himalayan region and other calamity-prone areas need a different disaster conversation. One that values evidence over virality, humility over certainty, and understanding over outrage. Citizens should be free to question institutions, but criticism should not become contempt for knowledge itself.

Milan Shrestha, PhD, is with the School of Sustainability, Arizona State University in the United States.

Trending Online



Nepal beyond the postcards
By Jessica Amity
Jessica Amity's poetic tribute Requiem for Rasuwa goes beyond postcards, and includes photographs that capture daily lives of ordinary Nepalis in Trisuli Valley before the 26 August flood. Read her poem at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

The return of the Taleju necklace

By Devendra Bhattarai



The Taleju Bhawani necklace surfaced at the Art Institute of Chicago 45 years after being stolen from Nepal. Only after extensive proof that the necklace belongs to Nepal were steps for its repatriation agreed upon this year. Details on our website.

Most popular on X

Rethinking Nepal's hydropower future

By Sudiksha Tuladhar

As the search for survivors across more than a dozen hydropower plants continues, experts say Nepal must rethink its energy future in an age of climate breakdown. Read the full report online.

Most commented

Disaster is a warning to fix early-warning system

Devesh Belbase

Nepal's flood gauges are designed to warn us about monsoon rains and for that purpose it works well. The new normal, as shown by the 26 August flood, does not mimic that history, and is a warning to fix its early-warning system. Read analysis on our website.

Most visited online page

Letters

APPEAL TO TOURISTS

I had just returned from my first trip to Nepal 10 days before the flood ('Nepal tells tourists: Your Visit Matters', Shuvani Singh, page 5). It is heartbreaking that such peaceful people have to go through losses and painful experiences. I will surely go back and am doing what I can to contribute to the help needed.

Thanisa Tiranawasi

- I am locked in, coming to Nepal in November and again for four weeks in April. Support is important. I'm thinking about all the small businesses up the Langtang treks.

Jesper Jensen

- It would be better to improve infrastructure than beg for tourists to come.

Sangeet Shrestha

RETHINKING HYDROPOWER

Please ask North America including the US to curb mining for gasoline and Gulf nations to stop producing fuel, and then we can start talking about rethinking the future of hydropower in Nepal ('Nepal must rethink its hydropower future', Sudiksha Tuladhar, #1327).

Niyam Shrestha

- I am told the route for the proposed trans-Himalayan rail link is to go down this valley. Now an alert and temporary closure in the Manaslu region due to potential risk has been caused by river flooding.

Ian Wall

- Nuclear energy is safer than hydropower.

Basanta Rimal

STATE OF CHILDREN

What a challenging job. The right people with skills need to be helping schools. I hope they are.

Basanta Rimal

LOSS & DAMAGE

I fear the powers that be have already designed how it is they'll be exploiting the world under a hotter climate ('What is lost and damaged in Nepal', Astha Guragain, nepalitimes.com). It's everyday people on the receiving end of immediate climate-related catastrophes.

Kristian Kristienssen

- This is what the climate change scam is about. Poor countries want to steal and sue richer

MEMORIES OF TRISULI

I have traveled to Nepal four times because of the kindness and love of the people I met there ('Requiem for Rasuwa', Jessica Amity, #1327). Our relationships have grown and expanded over the 15 years since. My heart has been nourished by this amazing country.

Joyce Slater

CHILDREN'S TRAUMA

Children are the ones suffering the greatest trauma from the flash flood, having lost parents and homes and should be given the full protection of the government!

Andy Silvermine

GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

Even since last year's flood Nepal knew this was coming, and what have they done to relocate all those low-lying homes. What has the government actually done? Clearly, not much.

Andrew Stuart

TALES OF LOSS AND SURVIVAL

'Tales of loss and survival for Nepal's children, Shuvani Singh and Smaranika Shakya', #1327).

Claire Coveney

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Online Package



NEPAL'S SEPTEMBER STORM

Students of the September Storm in Kathmandu reflect on how the rally turned deadly, and what has changed. Watch video on YouTube.



TWOFOLD LOSS

Residents of Mailung village, Tiru and Gogane were resettled in Khalte, on the banks of the Trisuli after the 2015 earthquake. Eleven years later, the river swept through their settlement, killing many earthquake survivors.

1,000 Words



UNHOLY ALLIANCE: Home Minister Sudan Gurung with Law Minister Sobita Gautam and Infrastructure Minister Sunil Lamsal attended a GenZ commemoration on Tuesday in Kathmandu organised by two controversial self-styled holy men. Their attendance set off a social media storm. And Minister Gurung's combative speech in which he threatened opposition figures and the media critical of government. Even the RSP's own representatives spoke publicly against the ceremony, setting off an angry exchange of messages in an RSP WhatsApp group with MP Krantishikha Dhital.

RADIO NEPAL ONLINE



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Nepal's youth revolt, a year later

Students of the September Storm in Kathmandu reflect on how the rally turned deadly, and what has changed

Sudiksha Tuladhar
and Shuvani Singh

On 8 September 2025, Icchya Thapa, 23, woke up all excited to join the rally that Nepal's GenZ had been organising online.

Like many young Nepalis, she was outraged by a corrupt sociopolitical system that made the rich richer and disregarded ordinary people struggling to survive.

She had taken a half day off at work to join the protest, and headed to the Maitighar Mandala roundabout with a friend. It was a bright sunny morning, and they joined hundreds of other young demonstrators. Waving placards and banners, they chanted, played music, and marched against the status quo.

"The rally was peaceful, people were handing out water bottles and urging others not to litter. We were all having a good time," Thapa recalls, a year later.

They had no idea that the protest would soon take such a violently unexpected turn outside Parliament.

In a hurry to get back to work, Thapa and her friend had turned towards Baneshwor to head back. As they tried to pass through the crowd, people were running in the opposite direction, blocking their way and their view of what was happening at the front.

So the two took an alternate road back to work through Anamnagar, where students from various colleges had congregated.

Attul Shahi joined the rally that day swept up in curiosity and frustration as he watched thousands of young people pour onto the streets of Nepal. He had initially planned to watch a movie with his friends, but believing that the protest would be peaceful, the group changed course.

"At first I was just curious," he admits. "I saw so many young people talking about it and going to the protest, so I wanted to see what it was actually like for myself. Also, there was the frustration towards that old government." The feeling of everyone standing up together for what they believed in, he adds, also pushed him to join.

Suddenly, outside Parliament shots rang out. A few metres from him, someone was shot. "Seeing that happen right in front of me was very scary," Shahi recalls. "There was tear gas everywhere, people were running around and panicking, and I knew things were turning serious."

Eyes stinging, Shahi followed the crowd until he was able to duck into an alley and pour water over his face. All around him, police were beating protesters, shots were being fired from all sides, and a miasma of tear gas enveloped the intersection.

"That was when I realised how unsafe the situation had become," says Shahi. Afraid and disoriented, he made his way home.

Meanwhile, only when they reached the office did Thapa find out how quickly things had taken a turn for the worse. A place that minutes before had been one of music and solidarity ended in bloodshed. Nine students had been shot at close range by riot police guarding Parliament.

"When I reached the office and opened my phone, I saw that a student had been shot," Thapa says. Her fingers stayed frozen. "I never imagined it would end so terribly."



AMIT MACHAMASI / NT ARCHIVE



Icchya Thapa



Attul Shahi



Rupasi Dulal

In the days leading up to the protest, Rupasi Dulal, 24, (pictured, above) watched with increasing anger video clips on social media of the offspring, relatives, and friends of Nepal's political and business elite.

When the nationwide call for demonstrations came through, Dulal thought of those clips, the ostentatious display of wealth and entitlement. But then the K P Oli government banned 26 social media platforms, and that made her even more determined to be part of the rally.

"Although the social-media ban was portrayed as the primary cause of the protest, it was the demand for accountability that pushed us to participate," Dulal says.

When Dulal's teachers at her college found out she was going to the protest, they briefed her and other students on where to go and gave them safety tips. While she arrived prepared, she recalls that

many other protesters were not.

By the time the first shots were fired, Dulal had already left the intersection. A friend later called to tell her that people were breaking down the walls of Parliament. Realising that the situation had spun out of control, Dulal urged her friend to move to safety, and began frantically calling everyone she knew who had joined the demonstration.

Anger over the death of 19 youths spilled over into arson, looting and mayhem the next day. By the evening of 9 September 76 people had been killed, and more than 2,100 injured. The Parliament, Supreme Court, Singha Darbar, hotels, schools, businesses, media companies were set on fire.

A year later, remnants of those fateful two days are still visible all over the city. Graffiti on walls curses corrupt politicians, construction crews work on to repair buildings damaged by the

arson. 'Gen Z' has since become the principal label for any young Nepali.

Both Thapa and Dulal say the political outcome was not what their generation had sought. Their demand, they insist, was for accountability, transparency and equal access to public services.

When asked why they think of the past six months of the RSP government that came to power with a near outright majority in March, Dulal and Thapa say almost in unison: "We never wanted a new government. All we wanted was for our voices and concerns to be heard."

As for whether the authorities have answered that call, Dulal remains cautious. "It is too early to comment on the present government, they need time to work rather than being judged immediately."

The political landscape has shifted dramatically since last September, and Nepal is six months into the government of Prime Minister Balendra Shah, who became the symbol of youth defiance after last year's protests. Shahi, like many young Nepalis, watches the new administration with cautious optimism.

"Nepal has always needed a sort of 'hero' figure to lead. Right now it is difficult to tell if Balen is the right person for that role, but we should be hopeful, I think," he says.

For Dulal, Thapa and many other youths who joined the rally the demand — and hope — for a better Nepal has taken a deeper meaning because they joined the protest one year ago.

"Seeing people dead and injured in hospitals only deepened my love for the country. I felt a sense of commitment towards Nepal like never before," Dulal says. For Shahi, the movement that shook the country remains unfinished business: "I don't think the protest has achieved what they actually set out to do yet. We definitely started something. But something else is still lacking. I think that is something that will happen perhaps five years down the line."

Instead of declaring the movement victorious, he describes it as still something in progress. "I would say the protest is still trying to achieve those things, rather than saying it has already achieved them."

MORE POLITICALLY AWARE

Yet one shift, he believes, has taken root: young people today are more politically aware than they were a year ago.

For many young people active on digital platforms, news and information about politics, about what is going on in Nepal's halls of power, its bureaucracy, and across communities is no longer incidental, but purposeful. In the aftermath of the protest, GenZ's constant access to information has shaped its political identity, say Nepali youth.

"After the protest I felt like young people started paying more attention to politics and what was happening in the country," he explains. "Now people are more willing to question things and speak up."

Social media has enabled young people to communicate quickly, build networks and communities, and connect local grievances with wider national conversations.

"GenZ are now more politically aware. We keep up to date with what is happening around the country and the world," Thapa says. "And all we want is to hold authorities to account."

Adds Dulal: "We, as GenZ, have always been curious. The urge to know why has shaped our character as a generation. Last year's protest has made us more curious, and more united."

The legacy of the past three decades of misrule does not disappear with a single protest or within a single year. It takes effort, and it takes time, and a reflection on past mistakes.

"Now all people are a bit more critical and cautious of the government, and that's a good thing," says Shahi. "I don't think Nepal can handle another grossly corrupt government right now."

The vigilance and caution is an evident legacy of the protests, and one the youth do not take for granted.

The graffiti left behind have not all been painted over, the legislature, judiciary and executive buildings and the seats of state still stand in ruins, and are mute reminders of the violence on 9 September. And the young people who marched into the streets are still there — slightly older, perhaps wiser and still hopeful that it was not all in vain. 

Nepal grapples with limited DNA analysis capacity

Only 20% of the bodies of those missing in the flood have been retrieved and await identification

Smaranika Shakya

Unlike the 2015 earthquake, when the death toll could be accurately tallied relatively quickly, the number of bodies retrieved after the Trisuli Flood two weeks ago is one-fifth of those reported missing.

Rescuers fear that the actual number of dead may be much higher, and many of the bodies may never be found. However, of immediate concern is identifying the bodies and body parts found so far. The task has been complicated by the lack of DNA analysis capacity in labs in Nepal, and the fact that about 600 of the missing within Nepal are foreigners.

Forensic DNA testing is a fairly straightforward identification tool and entails the collection of samples of skin, hair, or more commonly, blood of a relative and matching it with the unidentified body. In cases of mutilated and disfigured bodies, forensic experts may also rely on tooth molars as biological samples.

Currently, Nepal has two primary labs handling DNA investigations --- the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) and the National Forensic Science Laboratory (NSFL). At NSFL, the DNA extracted is used for biological detection at the gene level using the CODIS matching software and is compared against family members. India and China have provided further support by sending expert forensic teams to help in DNA analysis because their nationals are also among the fatalities.

“Receiving foreign support is helpful, but completely relying on it isn’t. We need to simultaneously make use of national capacity and



SUMAN NEPALI

mobilise the resources that are already available,” says Sameer Mani Dixit of the Center for Molecular Dynamics Nepal.

SPECIALISED SUPPORT

Nepal does not need to import expensive equipment or specialised DNA analysts, and can develop its own efficient Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) capacity. There already are non-central laboratories with advanced PCR and sequencing capacity that can be mobilised for back-end DNA profiling.

The staggering influx of DNA data has overwhelmed Nepal’s capacity to match it. The country’s labs used to do fewer than 900 DNA tests per year. Distinguishing human tissue from animal remains in recovery sites is proving challenging. DNA samples collected from the scattered remains of the same person may also have artificially inflated the amount of data and slowed down

analysis, experts say. Authorities have to be vigilant to prevent cross-contamination of DNA samples and maintain a strict chain of custody throughout recovery, transport, examination and storage.

It has already been two weeks since the disaster, and with time and morgues reaching maximum capacity, unidentified bodies have begun to decompose. This is why the government decided last week to temporarily bury the dead in carefully labelled body bags.

Before being interred in designated burial sites in Gokarna and Bharatpur, recovered bodies undergo DNA sampling, receive an ID tag, and location code.

Hospitals have tried to keep pace with the unprecedented surge of bodies and the need to identify them by posting graphic photographs of the bodies. Many relatives, already distraught, have objected to this practice as violating the dignity of the deceased.

Relatives have urged the hospitals to adopt a more acceptable method of identification, like just posting cropped images of recognisable tattoos, rings, or birthmarks. Accelerating DNA investigations is critical, they say, but speed should never compromise fundamental human compassion. Especially, it must not come at the expense of the bereaved families’ psychological well-being.

Nepal needs simple extraction kits and to distribute them to non-forensic university labs and provincial hospitals to maximise efficiency. With the front-end of DNA identification decentralised, the DVI process can swiftly move forward without bureaucratic hurdles.

“During Covid-19, we had the same conversation. Nepal has skilled manpower and national organisations on standby. A green light from the government and we are ready to come into action



RSS

immediately and help relieve the hefty load that central labs are carrying,” says Nabin Narayan Munankarmi of the Biotechnology Society of Nepal.

What Nepal went through during the pandemic and what it is experiencing now is the need for optimisation of resources during a crisis, says Munankarmi: “Interdisciplinary, cutting-edge technology belongs on the frontlines in every disaster.”

Meanwhile, Nepali and foreign families of the missing are in a state of limbo, desperately awaiting news. But with DNA identification taking time, family members are having to sit back and cling to a sliver of hope that they will eventually receive the remains and be able to honour and bid farewell to their lost ones.

As more bodies are retrieved from the river banks, collapsed houses and hydropower tunnels, the mortuaries will fill up, and Nepal has to ensure that the dead are treated with respect and family members are assured of speedy analysis at their darkest hour.

Dixit sums it up: “Time is of paramount importance. And right now is no time to get tangled up in bureaucracy. It is time to act.”

BRIEFS

Telecoms connect

Ncell has initiated satellite technology to provide free service in flood affected areas in Nuwakot. Further, the Eutelsat’s Low Earth Orbit Satellite was used by Ncell to coordinate with the government in relief work. Ncell is deploying devices at critical and essential locations identified in coordination with concerned government agencies involved in rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts. The solution provides satellite internet even when normal communication networks are down. Both Ncell and NTC had sent out over 650,000 SMS alerts about the floods, which subsequently saved many lives on 26 August.

Subisu has provided free wifi at relief camps and affected communities, among them is Bhairum Secondary School that houses over 200 survivors. WorldLink Communications suffered Rs35 million damage to its base stations in the Trisuli Valley, but donated Rs10.1 million to the Prime Minister’s Relief fund.



Turkish Airlines x Liverpool FC

Turkish Airlines has announced that it will become Liverpool Football Club’s Main Club Partner from June 2027. Turkish Airlines CEO Ahmet Olmüstür said: “We are very pleased that Turkish Airlines will become the Club’s Main Club Partner and that our name will take its place on one of the most iconic shirts in world sport.”



Corporate relief

South Korean conglomerate Doosan has announced a \$5million donation for emergency assistance to Nepal where it is a lead investor with the IFC in the flagship Upper Trishuli-1 which was badly damaged by the August 26 flood.

Nirvana Chaudhary of Chaudhary Foundation and Nabil bank has announced Rs150 million to support 500 temporary shelters, food, medical supplies and tents for flood survivors.

Surya Nepal has donated Rs150 million from flood relief work and handed a cheque to Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle. Unilever Nepal Limited (UNL) has contributed Rs50 million to the Prime Minister’s Disaster Relief Fund and also donated hygiene products worth Rs10 million to support affected communities. The Jyoti Group has pledged Rs50 million. Prime Commercial Bank pledged Rs30.1 million, while the Agricultural Development Bank contributed Rs30 million. Nepal Life Insurance has donated Rs25.1 million. Other major contributions included Rs11.1 million from Morang Auto Works and Rs10.1 million from Similarly, the Golchha Charity Trust has donated Rs11.1 million to the Prime Minister’s Disaster Relief Fund to support the government’s ongoing rescue and relief efforts.

Gham Power

Gham Power Nepal has unveiled Nepal’s first-ever Soluble Lead-Flow Battery (SLFB), an emerging energy-storage technology developed and demonstrated for Nepal. Prof. Richard Wills of the University of Southampton led a live, hands-on demonstration, walking journalists and energy-sector professionals through exactly how the battery works and how it is made.

International aid

Germany is providing €8million in providing relief and support to the communities affected by the flood for emergency, humanitarian and development support. The UK has granted a £5 million humanitarian support package for flood relief, while Japan pledged an emergency grant of \$3 million. Korea, which has sent to teams for tunnel rescue and humanitarian aid has additionally pledged \$900,000 in emergency relief and thermal blankets.

China, which itself suffered from the disaster, has sent four special flights with 50 tons of specialised tunnel rescue personnel and equipment like thermal imaging drones and rescue hovercrafts. Norway has contributed to the flood relief through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.



The European Commission allocated €2 million in emergency humanitarian aid, on top of €3 million already sent in 2026 for disaster preparedness. A first EU humanitarian air bridge flight organized by UNICEF is delivering 82 tonnes of essential supplies, while the European Commission is providing a further €500,000 for response and coordinating further help offered by European countries channelled through the International Red Cross. Luxembourg, Germany, Latvia and Norway are sending equipment including life jackets, hygiene and kitchen kits, blankets, medical supplies, protective equipment and emergency energy equipment.

Malaysia has deployed its Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (SMART) and pledged US\$1 million in financial assistance. Singapore delivered humanitarian aid worth about \$560,000 to Nepal to support recovery, Thailand provided \$230,000 in aid.

South Asian support

The Indian Air Force has sent eight flights with relief assistance including 54 tunnel rescue and forensic personnel and equipment, and 130 tons of humanitarian aid. Other material include mud rescue suits, gas detectors, breathing apparatus, inflatable walkways, DNA kits and portable generators. Indian tunnel rescuers are helping at Chilime and Langtang hydro plants.

Sri Lankan Ambassador Ruwanthi Delpitiya on Tuesday handed over \$1million to Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal. Bangladesh and Bhutan also provided \$1 million for emergency humanitarian assistance to the Prime Minister’s Disaster Relief Fund. Pakistan flew in a chartered Qatar Airways jet from Islamabad with 100 tons of tents, blankets, mats, hygiene kits, and medicines this week.

Driving licences

The Department of Transport Management has dispatched over 2.7 million driving licences that was unprinted for up to four years. The licenses were sent by post to the respective transport offices.



LPG shortage

A massive landslide along the Prithvi Highway due to slope undercutting by the 26 August flood has forced industry operators to reroute cargo trucks through the Tribhuvan Highway, causing disruptions in the supply of LP Gas. It has limited the supply to 18,259 cylinders across nine operating gas companies, whereas the daily demand of Kathmandu valley is 100,000 cylinders. Supplies Minister Gauri Yadav threatened strict action against hoarders.



ADITYA KHARE

Nepal tells tourists: 'Your Visit Matters'

The most direct way tourists can support Nepal now is by visiting the country and helping it rebuild

Shuvani Singh

Nepal's tourism industry has lurched from one crisis to another: the ten-year Maoist conflict, years of political instability and road closures, the 2015 earthquake and blockade, the Covid lockdown. And it has just started recovering from the violent GenZ upheaval last year when videos of the deadly 26 August flood made headlines globally.

But after every disaster, Nepal has bounced back because the country's attraction as an adventure destination, its people and unique culture means that the country has a strong brand.

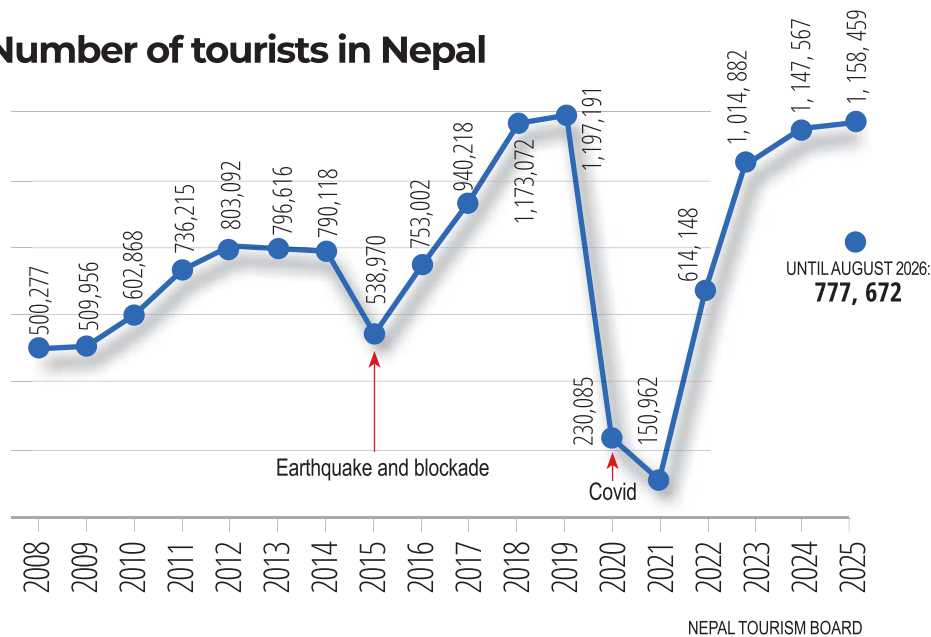
"Nepal's tourism industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of earthquakes, pandemics, natural disasters, and other crises," says Deepak Joshi of Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). "Previous disasters have shown that Nepal can recover quickly."

But since Nepal has always recovered quickly after past disasters, there is an expectation that the impact on visitor numbers will recover. Says Joshi: "The eventual impact will depend largely on how quickly infrastructure is restored and how effectively we communicate with international markets."

At NTB, there is a concerted effort to do damage control through social media with the message: 'Your Visit Matters'. An NTB post on Instagram shows Australian trekkers Aaron and Lydia saying: "The lower part of Langtang has been affected, but all the other trekking areas are all safe to travel, so please come visit ... and support the local communities and the country for their rebuilding efforts," they say.

Even so, the fact that so many foreign pilgrims and tourists were affected on a river corridor

Number of tourists in Nepal



that is the main route to Tibet and Langtang has led to some cancellations by trekking and other tour groups.

Some 142 lodges, 57 restaurants, and 141 tourist vehicles, were destroyed or damaged. The highway to the China border has been swept away, as has the roadhead to the Langtang trek.

"The impact is not limited to physical infrastructure, visitor confidence and bookings have also been affected," NTB's Joshi told Nepali Times, estimating that the industry that contributes nearly 7% to the GDP has suffered at least Rs50 billion in losses.

Arrivals in the first week of August have already declined by 3.56%, and hoteliers report that about 20% of September bookings have been cancelled. Ramchandra Sedai of Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal says that 5% to 10% of bookings for hiking tours in the Himalaya have been cancelled.

"Perhaps the biggest challenge is the perception of Nepal internationally," says Joshi, "Much

of the international media coverage of the floods refers to the disaster as the 'Nepal flood', creating the misconception that the entire country is affected, and therefore unsafe."

NEPAL IS OPEN

The timing is particularly challenging because Nepal's main autumn trekking season runs from mid-September to mid-December, and plays a pivotal role in supporting the rural economy, directly employing more than 1 million people. Most people living in the trekking areas schedule and plan their businesses around the trekking season, and their livelihoods depend on it.

Although the Langtang region may see a drastic drop in trekker traffic because the access road has been swept away, there have been cancellations for other parts of the country by trekking groups spooked by the headlines.

Sedai says the sensationalism and negative portrayal of Nepal after the floods have affected bookings of treks in other regions

too. When tourists cancel their trip, flights and hotel bookings are cancelled, and drivers, porters, tour guides, and lodge owners also face great losses. "The autumn trekking season is especially important. Impact in this season affects the entire tourism ecosystem," he says.

If negative perceptions of Nepal and cancellations among foreign tourists continue, Nepal might face a 10% to 15% reduction in arrivals and tourism receipts compared with expected levels. In this scenario, the cost to local businesses will be severe. Hotels, transport operators, restaurants, guides, and other tourism-related businesses and workers will face significant losses of income and employment opportunities. Many may be forced to migrate to seek work abroad.

Officials say a rapid recovery strategy, combined with strong and targeted destination communication, can significantly reduce the potential impact of the floods, and restore visitor confidence. Connectivity should be given high priority since



Contribution to GDP: 7%



People employed: 1.22 million jobs

much of the search, rescue, and rehabilitation also needs roads to be urgently repaired.

Trekking and tour agencies have maintained full transparency on the safety status of destinations and routes, and emphasise that it is only the Trisuli corridor that has been affected. The landslide on the Prithvi Highway to Pokhara and Chitwan is being repaired and should be back in operation in a few days. There is also a climate-related argument for visiting. It should be well known by now that the impact of climate change is disproportionate, and Nepal is among the countries facing the brunt of it. Thus, travelers may have concerns that going to Nepal may add to their carbon footprints.

But the reality is that visiting Nepal is a climate-conscious choice. Nepal contributes only 0.5 tonnes per capita per year of carbon emissions – among the lowest in the world. So for many travelers, a two-week stay in Nepal would actually reduce their overall emissions had they stayed home.

There is also a deeper value: seeing the firsthand effects of climate change– glacial lakes, erratic weather patterns, fragile ecosystems– can turn trekkers into global advocates for climate action.

Tourism in Nepal is a deeply local economy. The fee a trekker pays for, a night at a lodge, a tip for a porter, all go directly into the hands of families that have few other sources of income. Every visitor who returns brings hope for sustaining the local economy at a precarious time when every dollar matters.

The recovery of Nepal's tourism sector will depend less on the scale of the damage than on how quickly the world is reminded of what Nepal offers, and how much it needs visitors right now. The mountains are still as majestic as ever, and Nepalis are their usual generous and hospitable selves. 🇳🇵

The two women of

Text and Photographs
by **Deependra Bajracharya**

It was November 2004, and we were on a trek to then roadless Rasuwa-Kerung border. This was at the height of the Maoist insurgency, and Army checkpoints were everywhere.

On the Chinese side, there were just some stone sheds connected to Nepal by two suspension foot bridges across the Bhote Kosi (pictured). After spending the night in Kerung my colleague Sitaram Baral and me with our local guide Tashi crossed back to Nepal.

We were walking along the river towards Timure, admiring the strikingly beautiful landscape when we met two local women Panjom and Kippa along the trail.

I was surprised to learn that Kippa's surname was Shrestha – a Newari name. It turned out that her ancestors had been exiled to Nagarkot, and then fled to Rasuwa eight generations ago after the Gorkha conquest of Kathmandu.

Her grandparents used Nagarkoti as surname and spoke Nepal Bhasa, but Kippa did not understand when I spoke to her in the language of her forebears.

On 26 August, it was a bright sunny morning in Timure after days of heavy rain. Panjom had given her best friend Kippa some ears of green corn, and Kippa had gone to Panjom's house to return the favour with some apples.

Panjom was busy cooking breakfast for her restaurant guests, so Kippa just shouted out to her that she had brought a bag of apples, and



left for her own house nearby.

Soon, her phone started buzzing with posts about a flood on the Bhote Kosi. This was the monsoon, so floods were common. Bhote Kosi had a flash flood last year, and it was the biggest she had ever seen.

She did not think this one was that serious. Still, she hurried along the trail leading to her home.

Suddenly the narrow valley was filled with the roar of a big brown wave of water racing down. Only, it was not water – there were boulders

the size of houses, uprooted trees, buses, jeeps, and parts of a concrete bridge floating in the raging torrent.

Kippa watched as the entire town of Timure was swept away. Her own house, with her husband,

parents, father- and mother-in-law, brothers-in-law, nephews and nieces – all gone. Panjom's house, and everyone in it was swept away.

Kippa ran up the mountain in a trance, but has no recollection of it. She fainted in the forest above the



The survivors of Syaprubesi

Homes and livelihoods gone, they find refuge and hope at a Kathmandu monastery

Garima Shrestha

Two weeks after the massive Trisuli Valley flood, tens of thousands of displaced people are living in tents, or with relatives and friends. Hundreds of others from Syaprubesi have found refuge at the Gosok Phuntsok Choeling Monastery.

Known as the 'Yellow Monastery' in Kathmandu, the complex had also served as a shelter for survivors of the Langtang earthquake-avalanche in 2015. Eleven years later, the rock-ice collapse on the north face of the same mountain has sent another flood of refugees here.

There are elderly men and women counting prayer beads, children and infants and entire families who have nowhere to go. Monks and staff here provide food, basic accommodation and other necessities from the monastery's own resources.



Shanbu Sherpa

At about 8:45AM on 26 August, Shanbu Sherpa was preparing breakfast for her family. She worked as a caretaker at a school, and had come to Syaprubesi during a two-day break.

The sky was blue with wisps of white clouds draping mountaintops, just like in thannga paintings. The monsoon seemed to be winding down.

The water of the Bhote Kosi was clear again as it tumbled over boulders. Some buses and hired jeeps carrying tourists and pilgrims had spent the night,

prepared to leave for the Chinese border 15km upstream.

The morning bus to Kathmandu was honking for passengers, ready for the nine hour journey. There was nothing to warn anyone about what was about to happen.

Suddenly, there was a deafening roar from the direction of the Chilime hydroelectric powerhouse, and Sherpa's immediate reaction was that it was a repeat of the 2015 earthquake which had sent rockfalls down to Syaprubesi. Last year's flood on the same river had also arrived with a roar like this.

"We ran outside thinking an

earthquake had struck," she says.

Soon, a gigantic brown wall of sludge appeared around the bend in the river rearing like a cobra head and approaching at incredible speed.

It was preceded by a strong cold wind. Multi-storey houses were battered and swept away like matchboxes, debris was flying through the air.

Sherpa has a paralysed leg and realising that she could not outrun the flood, shouted for her children to climb to higher ground and save themselves.

"I told my 16-year-old son, 'Go. I cannot run. I will die here', she recalls.

Her son refused to leave his mother behind: "He told me, 'No, mother, even if I die, I will save you first.'" He then carried her to safety just in time as the flood raced past.

"I did not think I would survive," Sherpa says, safe now at the Yellow Monastery with her husband, daughter and two sons. She has lost her home but does not want her children to lose their education.

"I have nothing left at home. I only want my children to be able to study," she says. "I appeal to the government to make arrangements for their education."



Chesang Ghale

The flood reached the courtyard of Chesang Ghale's house and took half of it away. He managed to climb up the slope and save himself, watching his younger brother being swept away. He is still missing.

Ghale says, "We are here at the monastery temporarily, now it is up to the government to make proper arrangements for us and other affected families."

If the flood had come at night, a lot more lives may have been lost here in Syaprubesi and down the valley. The flood took away the entire lower part of the town, and only the houses on the upper slopes remain. Even the village monastery was partially inundated.

f Timure

A photographer's chance encounter on the Bhote Kosi two decades ago connects memories with tragedy



TWO DECADES EARLIER:

Kippa Shrestha holding a tablet with her 2004 portrait (far left, above) while she recovered in a shelter in Kathmandu this week.

Kippa with photographer Deependra Bajracharya in Timure 22 years ago (far left, below). And Panjom with Kippa in the kitchen preparing a meal in the same kitchen where Panjom and family were swept away by the flood two weeks ago.

Kippa was there minutes before, but barely survived. Her entire family is missing after the flood, except her 6-year-old daughter.

The Chinese border checkpoint at Gyirong across the Bhote Kosi in 2004 (right, above) and earlier this year. More than 600 people were in the structure when it was swept away by the gigantic wall of mud on 26 August.



ago and wondered if they were safe. One part of me was so worried they had not survived that I hesitated to contact them.

BITTERSWEET MEMORIES

Instead, I started digging out old slides and prints from our trip to Timure in 2004. I tried to contact Tashi, but he had gone abroad.

I posted the photo of Panjom and Kippa on Facebook, and soon a comment pinged on my phone.

It was a distant relative, who said Kippa was in the monastery.

It had been six days since the flood, but I still could not get myself to go and see her. Finally I drove to the Mustang Monastery. Kippa recognised me immediately.

"Do you remember this photo I took of you?" I asked showing her the portrait on my tablet. "Not just the photo, I remember everything we talked about," she replied.

She was on medication, and

recounted her escape in a faltering voice, shivering with fear. From her family, only her 6-year-old daughter survived.

"She is all I have left," Kippa says with a sigh. "I don't know how long I can live here in this shelter. But there is nothing, and no one, to go back to." 🇳🇵

 nepalitimes.com

More photographs online.

village, and was rescued after nine hours and flown by a Nepali Army helicopter to Dhunche.

She regained consciousness at the army base in the evening, had some biscuits and fainted again. When she came to, she was at the

Yellow Monastery near Swayambhu in Kathmandu. She was treated at a hospital and moved to the nearby Mustang Monastery.

After I heard of the Bhote Kosi flood, I remembered my encounter with Panjom and Kippa 22 years



Mingmar Lama

At 89, Mingmar Lama is waiting for news of his son and younger brother, who were swept away by the flood. His house was destroyed, and not a single possession could be retrieved. He also lost six goats and 28 chickens.

"I don't know what to say anymore," he says. "I have no idea where my son and my younger brother are. There is still no news of them. What could I do? The flood came all at once."

Lama barely managed to escape as surrounding buildings started collapsing, as the flood rushed past. "My son was taken. My brother was taken. I couldn't save even one item of belonging."

Lama was brought to the monastery in Kathmandu wearing the same clothes he had fled in. For now, he has food and a place to sleep. But he is haunted by nightmares, and he does not know what comes next.

"For now, they are looking after us. But what about tomorrow? What will happen the day after? I don't know," he says.

Kami Ghale

Only two walls remain of 75-year-old Kami Ghale's home in Syaprubesi. The family was preparing a meal when there was loud shouting outside. "We were cooking when we heard the noise, so we dropped everything and ran uphill," he recalls.

That instant reaction saved their lives. Others who tried to collect belongings were not so lucky, such was the speed at which the flood ravaged the town.

Ghale and his family were finally evacuated by helicopter to Dhunche and then down to Trisuli and to the Yellow Monastery by bus. "Our fields are gone with all the crops. What will we eat? Everything is gone," he says with a faraway look.

Ghale and his family have been here for two weeks, but it already feels like two months. He reckons they will all have to wait until the road to Syaprubesi is repaired. All he wants is to go back home, or what remains of it.

"How long can we depend on someone else's charity?" asks Ghale, for whom the loss goes



ALL PHOTOS: GARIMA SHRESTHA

beyond just his house.

"Whatever condition it was in, it was still our home. It is the place where we were born. I saw it the entire town being swept away right before my eyes."

Besides being the birthplace for many, Syaprubesi was also the gateway for trekkers going up to Langtang Valley, and also the stopping point for pilgrims on their way or returning from Lake Mansarovar in Tibet.

Many of those who perished in the flood were Hindus and Buddhists from all over the world on their way to the holy lake.

Besides tourism, Syaprubesi located at 1,500m elevation was also booming because of at least three hydroelectric plants being built nearby. It was teeming with construction workers, engineers, and the staff quarters were located along the river.

Although the population of Syaprubesi and Timure village 10km upstream has increased in recent years with visitors and construction workers, most residents are elderly and the younger generation has moved to the city or abroad for better prospects. 🇳🇵



Events



Namo Buddha Hike

For those spiritually inclined, immerse in nature as you hike to Namo Buddha this weekend.
12 September, Rs1,000, 6:40am, Brikuti Mandap

Licchavi Cinema Festival

Licchavi House is set to hold the first edition of its Licchavi Cinema Festival that brings together a collection of curated films from the region and beyond. Get tickets at Khalti.
11-16 September, Taragaon Next, Boudha



Run for Rasuwa

Join Islington College's efforts to provide relief to the communities of Rasuwa. All funds collected will be donated to the Prime Minister's disaster relief fund.
19 September, Rs250, 7am, Islington College

Paubha Painting

Join the 15-day paubha masterclass to learn the process of painting this sacred Newa art form through guided, hands-on practice.
13-29 September, 7:30-9:30am, The Drawing Room, Gyanmandala, Jhamsikhel

Deities of Nepal III

This edition of Deities of Nepal, titled Lores and Legends, centers on the legends, myths, and folk tales that connect Nepali deities to their cultural and communal contexts. It features 285 artworks from 157 artists.
17 September -10 October, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal



Area 13 Market

Head to the Area 13 Market to enjoy live music, food stalls, games and more. They also have a night market every Wednesday. Support local businesses.
Every Saturday, 2pm-8pm, Area 13, Chhauni

Heritage Walk

Take a walk with Saurav Thapa Shrestha through Chabahil Ganesthan and surrounding shrines and experience Nepali culture and heritage like never before.
13 September, Rs500, 7am, Chabahil Ganeshthan



Music

Amit Jung and the Gorkhey

Celebrate a musical evening with Amit Jung and the Gorkhey, who will be blending western sounds with Nepali folk music. All the proceeds will go directly to the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund.
12 September, Rs500, 5pm onwards, Eden Amphitheatre, Sanepa

Her Fest

Celebrate womanhood and music together with close ones. Enjoy performances by ISTRi's Band and DJ Suraj.
12 September, Rs999, 6pm onwards, Trisara, Lazimpat



Naren Limbu & co

Go with friends and familt to listen to Naren Limbu and the Gentlemen perform their hit tracks until dawn.
11 September, Rs2,500, 5pm, Reggae Bar, Thamel

What the Funk

What the Funk will be performing for a cause this Friday. Listen to some great tunes even as you help Nepal's flood victims with your contribution.
11 September, Rs1,000, Moksh, Jhamsikhel



VTEN Live

Hip-hop fans are set for an energetic evening with VTEN performing live.
19 September, Rs999, 5pm, XO Club, Thamel



Getaway



Soaltee Nagarkot

A peaceful resort located at the hills of Nagarkot, Soaltee Westend Resort offers breathtaking views of the surrounding and sunrise. Soak into the weather with a spa, outdoor pool and jacuzzi along with other amenities.
Nagarkot (01)6680244

Begnas Resort & Villas

Located in one of the most agriculturally flourishing areas of Pokhara, guests have the opportunity to explore and try locally grown coffee, grains, oranges and more.
Begnas Lake, Pokhara, 9856061080



Green Valley Resort

Located 5.5km away from Budhanilkantha Temple, the resort is a perfect getaway for city dwellers. The first ray of sun warms up autumn's cool breeze, making way for a perfect stroll around the Tamang Valley.
Shivapuri National Park (01) 5248092 / 9851351881

Maruni Sanctuary Lodge

Chitwan National Park is home to a wide range of flora and fauna. From the comfort of the cabins and cottages of this lodge, one can take a peek at the wandering wildlife and nature of the park.
Sauraha (01) 4700632

Milla Guesthouse

A mix of old and new that is symbolic of the city of Bhaktapur, Milla is the perfect place to stay--not too far from the city, yet **worlds apart**.
Bhaktapur, 9851024137



Dining

KGH Thamel

Celebrate father's day at KGH Thamel with a special discount of 15% on food, beverages and other services. A complimentary half-pound cake is available for visitors who spend a minimum of Rs3,499.
Jhamsikhel (01) 5521674

The Diplomat

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



Achaar Ghar

Satisfy the desire for home-cooked meals along with the various choices of pickles prepared using recipes passed down from generations.
Kamalpokhari, 9851358668

Kaiser Cafe

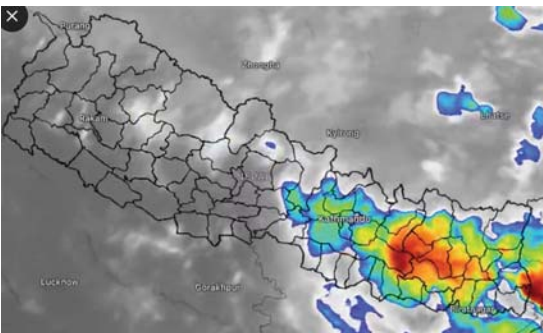
A very quaint restaurant, with a nice menu and an attentive service hidden in the corner of Garden of Dreams. Enjoy fine dining after a relaxing walk around the serene garden.
Thamel, 9741662187



Mechung

Eat the best of Tibet at this authentic Tibetan restaurant. The sha phaley, thukpa and gyuma are a must.
Boudha (01) 4477759

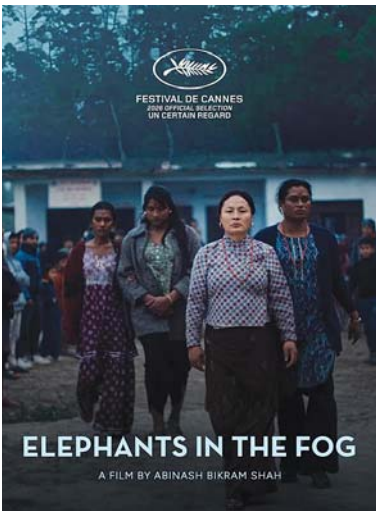
Weekend Weather



Monsoon Climax

We are now entering the final stage of the monsoon when the weather gives way to misty mornings, humid and hot afternoons and cloud buildup with thunderstorms in the evening and at night. Although total precipitation is decreasing, this is the most dangerous phase of the monsoon, with destructive localised cloudbursts that can lead to flooding. Showers should start tapering off gradually by middle of next week.

Our Pick



Nepali filmmaker Abinash Bikram Shah's 2026 film *Elephants in the Fog* is set in a small Nepali village within a forest inhabited by wild elephants, and follows Pirati, the matriarch of the transgender community, who dreams of escaping with the man she loves. But when one of her daughters vanishes, she is torn between choosing to leave and the responsibility towards her child and her people. The film won the Jury Prize in the Un Certain Regard category at the 2026 Cannes Film Festival. Stars Pushpa Thing Lama, Deepika Yadav, Jasmine Bishwokarma, Aliz Ghimire and Dura Sanjay Kumar Gupta. Now in nearby theatres. Read review on page 9 (right).

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 चिड्छा 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

Gripping drama of the transgender community

Elephants in the Fog, the Nepali movie that stole the show at Cannes this year, screened in Kathmandu

Sophia L Pandé

A Nepali film makes it to Cannes, the film festival that all serious filmmakers consider the apogee of their career. Acceptance is through a notoriously rigorous selection process.

It then goes on to win the Jury Prize in the Un Certain Regard category, a feat that an artist can only dream about being just a step away from the Un Certain Regard Prize. This is an honour that most independent filmmakers work their whole lives for a chance at. Abinash Bikram Shah's first directing feature Elephants in the Fog, or Tiniharu (They/Them), won that coveted award earlier this year, joining the ranks of acclaimed filmmakers like Jafar Panahi.

Written by Shah and directed with intense compassion, the film, while fictional, serves as a kind of clear-eyed ethnography of the Kinnar in Nepal. The Kinnar live across the Subcontinent in strongly bonded communities, encompassing people with diverse gender and sex identities, including those who identify as third gender or transgender, and, in some contexts, intersex.

Set in Birganj and the community forests and jungle in its vicinity, the story's heart is Pirati (Pushpa Thing Lama), a Kinnar matriarch. She nurtures three women, each of whom is a strong personality in her own way. The youngest and most wayward, however, is her daughter, Apsara (Aliz Ghimire), who wears a blonde wig and has a flair for drama.

The Kinnar follow a Gurumata who anoints them as they enter the community, giving each of them a mother, guiding them in a whispering voice as they take their vows, one of which is to remain celibate. After this ceremony of nirvaan, the initiate gains the power to bless or curse, making them favourites at weddings and births. Unfortunately for our main characters who want to live full lives, the celibate aspect of their vow becomes a problem.

Pirati is in love with the local drum master (Aashant Sharma), a tender man who wants her to run away with him to Delhi, where they can live their own lives, and perhaps adopt a child of their own. She is torn, having strong ties with her own community as well as in



the village she has worked so hard to be accepted in, along with her little family. She also loves her wayward child, Apsara, who both clings to her and pushes her away in a classic mother-child trope that is both familiar and discomfiting.

Framing all this human drama is the setting of the community forest, with the lurking jungle and the wildlife that it barely contains. Pirati's village is at the edge of this teeming life that includes wild elephants. People have been killed in encounters with these mighty creatures. Each villager has a patrol duty to alert the larger community if there is a breach, and it is during one of these patrols that Apsara goes missing.

FOUND FAMILY

As events unfold, suspicions run rampant. What has happened to this young, strong-willed woman? Pirati, wracked with guilt, having fought with Apsara before her disappearance over her potential departure to Delhi, uses every resource she can to try and find her daughter, and she is indeed a resourceful woman.

The ugliest side of humanity manifests, from the petty to the egregious. Communities turn on each other and within communities there are betrayals. The script written by Shah, and laced with profanity and humour, is elegant, its drama carefully calibrated. There are very few flat moments. One

imagines, though, that there must have been room for improvisations in some of the most fluid scenes, particularly within portrayals of the Kinnar community, where the dialogue is so natural and colloquial that it can't have been scripted as such. This in itself is a testament to the quality of the filmmaker.

It takes great restraint and skill to elicit these kinds of candid performances, not to mention a sacred trust between the director and the actors, most of whom are new to acting. Amidst these glimpses into the most intimate aspects of the Kinnar community's lives there is no hint of objectification or romanticisation, only poignant authenticity.

Everything is filmed in a cool, clear palette, even the atmospheric fog, and it is apparent that Shah has found a vital collaborator in Noé Bach, the French cinematographer whose understated, beautiful visuals support the story without ever jarring us out of the narrative.

It took over five years to bring this film to the theaters, and it is a fitting film to represent Nepal abroad, conveying our diversity, beauty and tragedies, especially at a time when the entire nation's psyche is caught up in an apocalyptic climate event. The film's power is in its ability to portray people across the spectrum with all of their very human flaws, making us care about their destiny.

There are some lapses. The opening scenes are rough. In our first glimpse of Pirati out in the jungle she seems self-conscious, aware of the camera. The next sequence where we first meet Apsara is one of the few times when the dialogue is stagey. Thanks to Pushpa Thing Lama's immense gravitas, these initial, awkward moments are quickly forgotten, though this viewer was left wondering at her character's strong bonds with a daughter who is so self-centred that she barely offers her family anything aside from coquettish comments that are a thinly veiled disguise of her meanness.

The other bonds are more developed, with both nuance and pathos. The ensemble cast's performances are indelible, from the Drum Master to the voluble Joon (Sahabdin Miya), one of Pirati's daughters, and the initially unsympathetic Police Inspector Shova (Akanchha Karki) who has an agenda of her own. The elephants, of course, steal the show.

Tiniharu, when translated, becomes They/Them, the preferred pronoun for those who are of the third gender. In Abhinash Bikram Shah's film, you cannot look away from them and their story. The end, one where the oppressed and nature take their joint revenge, will stay with you.

Elephants in the Fog is currently in theatres. 🇳🇵

Sophia L Pandé is a writer, art historian and filmmaker. She is Director of Development at the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust and Founding Director of The Kalā Salon.



Elephants in the Fog
Directed by Abinash Bikram Shah
2026 | 103 minutes



WANT TO HELP?

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The Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund





Nepali families who lost

They survived the earthquake, but could not escape the flood on the Trisuli

Sabina Devkota in Nuwakot

After losing their homes and loved ones in the 2015 earthquake, residents of Mailung, Tiru and Gogane villages in Rasuwa were resettled in Khalte, on the banks of the Trisuli River. Eleven years later, the river swept through their settlement, killing many of those who had survived the earthquake.

CHEKKU LAMA
On the morning of 26 August, 41-year-old Chekku Lama was having tea by the river when his phone rang. The call was from a relative in Tiru. “Run! Run! Mailung has been wiped out, the Bhote Kosi has gone mad.” Lama knew what this meant. He thought it was a glacial lake collapse in China like the one last year when the Chinese alerted the



district administration in Rasuwa. This time there was no warning. There was barely time to think. Lama got on his motorcycle, and headed towards his home in Khalte, shouting at people along the way to get out of their houses. Many were working in the fields. “By then, the flood was already upon us,” Lama recalled, sitting in a shelter. He abandoned his motorcycle and clambered up the rocky slope above the settlement. He watched in horror as his family was swept away. “My mother, father, brother, sister, nephew and brother-in-law, the flood took them all away,” said Lama, who plans to go down to Chitwan as soon as the landslide along the highway is cleared to search for their bodies. His wife and children survived as they had gone for a tutorial class. The wall of mud and boulders tore through the Khalte settlement of earthquake survivors, drowning homes, fields and an entire community. A place that had been home to more than 1,100 people was reduced to mud, sand and boulders. At least 383 of them are dead or missing. “As far as I can estimate, only 10% of the people who were in Khalte at the time survived,” he said. “We are still collecting data.”

For the people of Khalte, the tragedy began long before the flood. The 7.8 magnitude earthquake on 25 April 2015 with its epicentre 50km to the west in Gorkha shook the region. Many in Mailung, Tiru and Gogane were crushed by buildings and landslides. Survivors lived in temporary shelters for years, there were failed relocation efforts, until they were finally resettled in what was supposed to be a safe area near the Trisuli River. Lama says he never trusted the location, and feared monsoon floods. Last July’s flash flood from a glacial collapse in China confirmed his worst fears, but there was no alternative.



Monsoon floods are an annual ordeal. Whenever they received SMS warnings about rising river level, they would move up the slope. Sometimes, the river carried away their tin-roof sheds. But they always returned to their temporary homes. This time, the angry river rose to levels no one had ever seen before, and there is nowhere to return to. Many who were weeding their paddy fields had no time to run for safety and were swept away. The geography of Khalte offered little protection. The settlement sat in a narrow section of the Trisuli, with the river

close to homes and cliffs above. The mountains are vulnerable to earthquakes and landslides, the river banks are threatened by floods. They were trapped, and nowhere was safe. For Chekku Lama, the disaster has become a question of accountability. “This is not just a natural disaster, this is state-sponsored slaughter,” he said angrily. It was only luck that that spared his life, but took away so many from his community. After the quake, families initially took temporary refuge in Satbise, where they stayed for about five months on land provided by

the municipality. Some moved to Naubise, where they rented land for Rs27,000 a month. After seven months, the landowner asked them to leave. Eventually, 276 households were settled on public land beside the Trisuli in Khalte. People continued to return to their ancestral villages to farm, conduct life rituals and other activities. Some families were divided: parents remained in Tiru and Gogane to farm, while their children stayed in Khalte for school and work. In 2020, an integrated settlement of 119 houses was built

Early warning about global

Kaede Polkinghorne

When the village of Blatten was flattened by an ice-rock avalanche last year in Switzerland (pictured), only one life was lost. The debris flow two weeks ago in Nepal killed thousands. While Nepal’s flooding was unprecedented, cryosphere experts are exploring whether detection and warning systems used in the Alps may be relevant to the Himalaya. Blatten was evacuated after tiny rock movements and slope deformations were detected by interferometric radar prior to the collapse. Precise measurement equipment deployed by the monitoring company GeoPrevent helped manage the disaster. Nepal has monsoon flood warning gauges on its rivers, but is unprepared for transboundary glacial lake outburst floods and massive ice-rock debris flows like the one that devastated the Trisuli Valley on 26 August. “If you compare Switzerland and Nepal, there are a lot of stark differences,” says cryosphere analyst Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa.



Switzerland has a dense data network that includes extensive Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) services and numerous ground monitoring stations. Besides being costly, these high-tech solutions require maintenance. The Himalaya is three times as vast as the Alps, and its glaciers are more elevated and remote—making the task of installing and servicing such

a network daunting. “That’s the scenario that I hope for in Nepal,” Sherpa says, adding that data density can save lives, “but I don’t see when it will happen here.” Until then, a continuously updated glacial inventory combined with careful land use planning and participatory flood preparedness could make Nepal’s river valleys safer.



GOOGLE EARTH

MONITORING RISK
Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) did complete a glacial survey in 2020, but many of the 47 dangerous lakes in China and Nepal identified then have already expanded because of global warming. The inventory needs to be updated because

the Himalayan cryosphere is dynamic, and risk is constantly shifting. “We are losing glaciers almost everywhere,” explains Mohan Bahadur Chand, a glaciologist at Tribhuvan University. As permafrost continuously freezes and thaws in a warming atmosphere, the rocks that support glaciers can

everything twice



SUMAN NEPALI

in Tiru with the support from the Hong Kong-based Kadoorie Foundation and the National Reconstruction Authority. But it was not enough for everyone, and dispute over allocation prevented families from moving in.

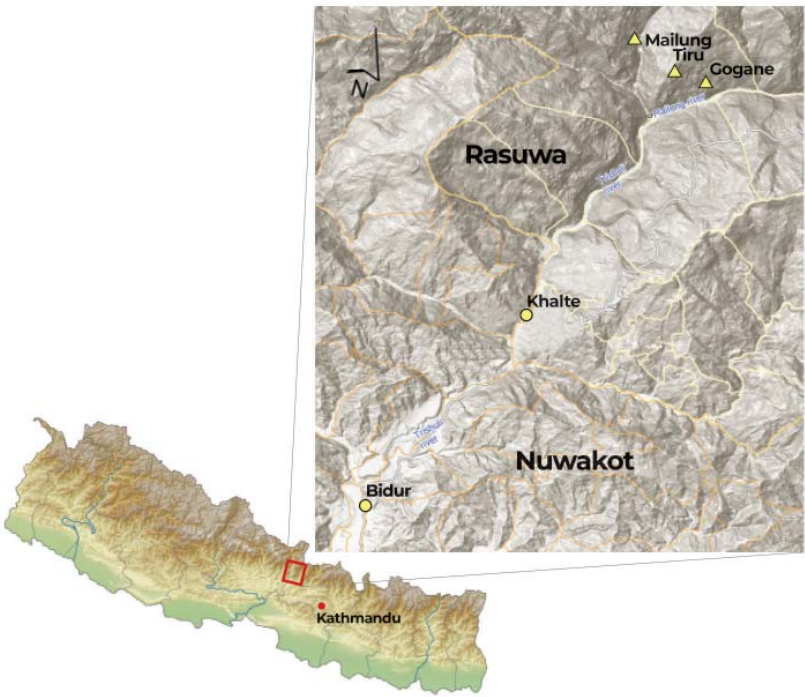
Even those who moved in complained of a lack of basic facilities such as water and toilets, and also the risk of being so close to the river. In 2025, the Ministry of Urban Development allocated Rs70 million to acquire land for the remaining displaced families.

The survivors are now scattered across Nuwakot and Kathmandu. Others are dependent on food and

basic supplies provided by donors. But they have once again no homes to return to. No school. No fields. No market.

Lama is compiling the names of those killed and missing, and plans to take the records to Kathmandu and publicly demand answers at a rally in Maitighar. “We will expose what the state did to us,” he said. “They forced us to live in a death trap.”

SABINA TAMANG Sabina Tamang, 21, had her newborn strapped to the back, and when she saw the flood overtaking her, she climbed up the slope.



“We didn’t believe the warning, thinking it wouldn’t reach the road, so we stayed inside at first,” she said. “When the flood neared it sounded like many helicopters approaching at once.”

She added: “It came so fast. I don’t even know how I survived. I just grabbed the baby and climbed to higher ground.”

Members of her family were also also running, but her youngest aunt, grandfather and grandmother, her eldest uncle’s young son and her little sister did not make it.

“They were right behind us, the river was too fast,” she said.



NORSING TAMANG Norsing Tamang, 59, lost his son, sisters, brother-in-law, nieces and nephews in Khalte two weeks ago.

“It feels like a strange dream,” he said. “What kind of life is this?” His anger is not only at the river but at the authorities who knew Khalte was dangerous.

“Our local leaders think we are nothing,” he said. “They could have settled us in a safer place. They didn’t even care to look for those swept away.”



Survived the earthquake, but the flood killed him

Asabir Tamang, 59, had survived the quake although nine members of his family in Mailung were killed in 2015: his wife, five grandsons and three granddaughters. He settled in Khalte with other displaced families and lived in a tin-roof house on the banks of the Trisuli.

He remarried, had children. He watched a new generation grow from the remnants of a family he had lost. On 26 August, Asabir was taken away by the flood. Nine members of his remaining family, including his new wife, children, daughters-in-law, grandchildren and his third son, were also all swept away.

Three of Asabir’s sons from first marriage survived because they were away. Five days later, search teams recovered Asabir’s mutilated body downstream. “We waited all day, brought the body to the house where he had planned to settle and finally cremated him,” Lama said.

Asabir had borrowed money to build that small house in Battar village. It was supposed to be the family’s escape from Khalte. He never got to live there.



TWOFOLD LOSS

Residents of Mailung village, Tiru and Gogane were resettled in Khalte, on the banks of the Trisuli after the 2015 earthquake. Eleven years later, the river swept through their settlement, killing many earthquake survivors.

warming



GEOPREVENT

become unstable. Gradually, some glaciers begin to hang over the space where rocks have crumbled away, ready to collapse at any time.

Chand says such hazards are becoming more frequent, although in remote valleys and at smaller scales they often go unnoticed. Likewise, there are thousands of glacial lakes in Nepal, and not all

of them pose an immediate risk to human life.

Monitoring every glacier and glacial lake precisely is impossible, but Chand agrees that a continuously updated, high-level inventory would be a good first step. Such an inventory could inform priority areas for precision monitoring and early warning system pilot projects.

SLOPE FAILURES: (l-r) The town of Blatten in the Swiss Alps was flattened by an ice-rock avalanche last year (left). A similar avalanche, only 12 times bigger, buried Langtang village in Nepal’s 2015 earthquake. The 26 August disaster was triggered by a slope collapse on the north side of the same mountains. Switzerland has early detection and warning radar systems like this (right).

FUNDING RESEARCH Preparedness requires resources. Funding, for both research and physical equipment, is a concern in a country where meeting basic needs is the public sector’s priority. It is difficult to marshal political will and public funding to build and maintain monitoring stations, for example (especially when they do not come with a 100% safety guarantee).

However, Sherpa notes that private hydropower producers operating along Nepal’s vulnerable waterways stand to lose the most in a flood event. While some companies have invested in early warning and digital monitoring systems, many have not.

The Trisuli has a cascade of 12 hydropower stations, and all of them were either damaged or destroyed by the recent floods.

Some plants had installed flood gauges upstream, but these were designed for monsoon flooding — they were no match for the 26 August deluge, which surged 100m high in some areas.

It is in the best interest of hydropower companies to better understand growing risks upstream, the floods are only the most recent in a string of climate disasters that make this clear. Encouraging private investment in not only flood preparedness systems but also cryosphere research could be a pathway towards more comprehensive and precise monitoring in the future.

ENGAGING PEOPLE Relocation of floodplain settlements would be a difficult task in Nepal. Yet, limiting density along riverbanks, providing adequate evacuation routes, and even designating certain areas off-limits could save lives.

The recent floods demonstrate that many areas in the floodplain are uninhabitable and should be declared as such, says Sherpa, adding: “When the locals have accountability and ownership, it is more sustainable.”

Sherpa and Chand collaborated on a community-based flood warning system in which evacuation drills helped residents better prepare for a disaster scenario, making where and how to run “muscle memory.”

On 26 August, many residents who received SMS warnings from the government underestimated the scale of the flood and chose not to evacuate. Meanwhile, community-based warning systems, like the phone call to a school principal downstream, saved many lives.

Where people choose to live and how they perceive or react to risk is deeply personal. It is unlikely that putting a simple regulation down on paper will influence these patterns in Nepal.

By building on existing social infrastructure, researchers, public officials, and residents can work together to implement sustainable land use practices and early warning systems.

Only 2% of Nepal’s area is glacier-covered, but these dynamic systems pose disproportionate risk downstream. “We can always do more research,” Sherpa acknowledges, “but things are already happening quite fast.”

