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NEPALI CONGRESS

Politics of opposition

Shristi Karki

Ever since the RSP won an outright majority in the March election, Prime Minister Balendra Shah has had a near-absolute mandate to push through his government's programs. The three main opposition parties were nearly uprooted, and are still in great disarray. Not only are the NC, the UML and the NCP not able to put up a united front against the RSP juggernaut, their ageing leaders do not seem to have a sense of the public sentiment against them. Further, each of the three is rocked by internal power struggles between younger aspirational leaders and entrenched septuagenarians who have been prime minister at least 15 times between them, and been in power since 2006. The case in point was the Nepali Congress which held its 15th General convention with hundreds of delegates—including an assortment of animal mascots and a robot—in the very heart of Kathmandu. The tonal contrast between

previous conventions and this year's gathering reflected the generational shift from the old guard to party president Gagan Thapa, who himself is now 50. The NC is the only mainstream party that has at least made an effort to upend the status quo and make way for newer, younger, leadership in the wake of last year's youth revolt. But the old guard has not given up, with former president Sher Bahadur Deuba still sulking. Thapa is a fiery orator from his student days, and laid out in stark terms his party's political failures that precipitated its present predicament: ideological drift, corruption, poor governance, internal power struggles, and a growing distance with youth. Leaders from across the political spectrum addressed the convention in a usual show of political goodwill, but not without some barbs and innuendos. RSP chair Rabi Lamichhane mused that he too would have joined NC — had the party prioritised the loyalty of members over their wealth, and had they not limited their promises of proportional representation to paper. He advised Thapa not to waste time appeasing the old guard. This was ironic, given that

cohabitation between Lamichhane and Prime Minister Balendra Shah has not been smooth. It is not just the opposition parties that suffer from infighting and lack of intra-party unity – factions of the governing party also often work at cross-purposes, and at times it seems as if the PMO and the Ministries run parallel governments. At the closed session, Thapa laid out a reform agenda that included a two-term limit on prime ministership, primaries for candidate selection, an end to electoral alliances, and allowing out-of-country voting. He also defiantly declared an end to factionalism and political dynasties within the NC. That could be wishful thinking since the Koiralas and Poudels are still prominent Deuba allies. Deuba and his loyalists have mobilised to hold their own general convention in December. Deuba's continued rejection of Thapa's leadership is ironic considering he himself came to helm NC after upending the party's lineage-dominated history in 1995. Gagan Thapa's win will institutionalise his party presidency, but his test will be whether or not he is willing and able to translate his

decades-long aspiration for party reform into action. Having lost the election in March, Thapa has had the time to focus on internal party reform. His role will now also be to ensure that NC fulfils its role as the primary opposition in Parliament. In an interview with The Kathmandu Post this week, Thapa said his party was not more aggressive in Parliament because NC did not want to be seen like it did not gracefully accept the outcome of the March election. But, he said, that would now stop, and delivered a sharp criticism of PM Shah's governing style, his refusal to engage with the legislature and for his ad hoc decisions. Shah responded, as is his wont, on Facebook and taking credit for renovating the venue where the NC convention was held. At least it showed that despite his reclusive and elusive behavior, PM Shah is still paying attention. History will not forget Gyanendra Khadka PAGE 10 Fathers killed by opposite sides PAGE 10-11

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Breathing should not be killing us

By the time the air pollution disaster strikes this winter, it will be too late for many

Editorial

Sonia Awale

The season of floods and landslides will soon be replaced by winter air pollution that will make breathing hazardous to health. By the time spring returns next year, it will be the wildfire season. Then it will be time once more for monsoon floods.

Overlapping these chronic crises and amplifying their impact are background dangers of climate breakdown, earthquakes and mountain collapses. We might as well start getting used to cascading hazards.

Both the government and the public have the tendency to take each disaster as it comes. It is a fatalist culture in which we hope for the best, but do not prepare for the worst.

Changing that culture means preparing to be prepared, not waiting till a disaster hits, but anticipating them. We can take mitigation measures now to minimise the impact of wildfires and floods next year and beyond.

This week, the government officially ended search and rescue for the over 5,200 still missing in the 26 August disaster, to concentrate on rehabilitation and reconstruction. The focus has shifted to safely relocating and providing sustainable livelihoods for over displaced 30,000 people.

The priority should be to help families of the dead and missing to obtain death certificates so they can have closure, access relief, compensation, get property papers, citizenship documents, and insurance. This



KUNDA DIXIT

work cannot be delayed by bureaucracy.

We must prepare also for the winter smog season. Farmers in both Punjabs are burning post-harvest rice stalks, and it is already visible in infrared NASA satellite images.

Prevailing winds will blow that smoke our way carrying with it Diwali fireworks smoke. This will add to winter inversion that will trap Kathmandu Valley's smog.

Scientists have analysed pollution particles in Kathmandu and found that half of it is actually transboundary. It will be another winter of silent emergencies and added fatalities due to asthma, COPD, pneumonia and other chronic ailments.

Long-term residents of Kathmandu Valley have their lifespans cut by 3.5 years due to air pollution, which adds 41,000 more deaths

per year in Nepal. All this is no surprise: scientists have been warning about it for decades. What is surprising is the lack of action to improve air quality.

POLLUTION PERCEPTION

A pollution perception survey of 1,200 residents of Kathmandu Valley by the newly-launched TAZA initiative this week showed that over 80% of respondents found air quality extremely hazardous or hazardous. They blamed vehicle exhaust, open burning and industries as major sources.

The survey did not distinguish between visible and invisible pollution. Besides black smoke from diesel exhaust of brick kilns, there are 1.3 million motorcycles in Kathmandu which are emitting highly toxic

carbon monoxide, ozone and other gases that are invisible and odourless.

In the survey, nearly 60% called out governments for not doing anything to clean up the air. They wanted to know what was happening to the pollution tax and now green tax that the public has been paying for years, which were supposed to pay for clean energy.

The key question is: why has such a high level of awareness not translated into action? Perhaps awareness has not put enough public pressure on politicians to act.

If so, why not on something that is literally a matter of their lives cut short? There are rallies in the streets protesting loan sharks, the cooperatives scam or political corruption, but no demonstrations demanding cleaner air.

Public awareness does not automatically lead to behaviour change. Citizens need to be given alternatives that are cleaner, accessible and affordable by subsidising electric transport and to power household appliances. It will reduce Nepal's petroleum import bill, and the health benefits will be a bonus.

The survey has shown that air pollution is the single biggest worry of Kathmandu's citizens, and those in the corridors of power need to recognise this and respond with measures to reduce it. Air pollution, solid waste management and other municipal issues are high on the agenda during election campaigns, but are almost entirely ignored once politicians are elected.

Cleaning up patronage politics, the bureaucracy and private sector is a priority of Prime Minister Balendra Shah's government. Ensuring that the air all of us breathe is not killing us should be even more urgent. 🇳🇵

Trending Online



Himalaya and the Andes

by Kaede Polkinghorne
The mountains of Peru and Nepal share common risks of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFS) from climate breakdown and glacial retreat. Nepal may benefit by learning Peru's approach to mitigating disasters. Details at nepalitimes.com

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

Damber Nepali's Dream

by Dristy Shrestha
Daughter recounts memories of her father Damber Bahadur Nepali, the engineer who built Chilime, which was among the hydro projects swept away by the flood. Read her personalised account on page 9.

X Most popular on X

Nepal needs Harka Gurung

by Jit Gurung
The intellectual legacy of Nepal's pioneer geographer needs revisiting not merely as history, but as a resource for thinking about Nepal's future, writes Jit Gurung. Read the tribute on our website.

“ ” Most commented



When is a dead person really dead?

by Sonia Awale
Nepal is preparing to fast-track death registration of missing persons and minimise legal ramifications of the delay to give families of the flood victims closure and relief as soon as possible. Full story online.

🔍 Most visited online page

Letters

ANDEAN LESSONS

There is nothing wrong with learning from others and adapting proven solutions to your own circumstances ('What the Himalaya can learn from the Andes', Kaede Polkinghorne, #1331). Progress comes from learning, improving, and working together—not from pretending every good idea must originate at home.

Devin Gurung

TRISHULI FLOODS

This is a huge tragedy, and it sounds as if the authorities are trying their best to provide essential security ('The cruel math of the aftermath of Nepal's flood', Krishna Malla, #1331). But no amount of donations or aid can replace missing parents and siblings. I hope the government, supported by foreign aid, manages to address the issue appropriately.

These young people need stability in their young lives, throughout the world a school is the second most stable and structural element in a child's life after their parents and immediate family.

Ian Wall

■ A superbly well-researched article with specific recommendations by the author on how Nepal should pursue climate justice through the complex negotiating process at #COP31 and beyond ('How can Nepal get to climate justice at COP', Truong Huyen-Chi, nepalitimes.com). Hope Nepali delegates utilise her and ICIMOD's expertise.

Kul Chandra Gautam

■ Let's get everybody in risky, low-lying areas, permanently out of harm's way ('Nepal, one month after', Sonia Awale, #1330).

Sea Ansley

DAMBER NEPALI

History will always remember the man for his contribution ('Damber Nepali's dream for Nepal', Dristy Shrestha).

Sejal Sezal

TENZING SCREENING

Interestingly, the British Embassy, which accommodated the Everest expedition before departure in 1953 because there were no hotels in Kathmandu, was in fact what is now the Indian Embassy, the site having been transferred to India in 1954 ('Tenzing screens for the home crowd', Sonia Awale, #1331).

Andrew Hall

HARKA GURUNG

Harka was among the most impressive and unique Nepali men in our times ('Harka Gurung: a scholar Nepal needs more than ever', Jit Gurung, #1331). He was eager to speak his mind

on a wide range of social issues, and not kowtow to the mediocre political leadership around him.

Keith D Leslie

■ His research was foundational to my early study of languages of Nepal.

Kristine Hildebrandt

■ He was my classmate at Tri Chandra College (1955-1957). Harka was a genius par excellence. I was an average student and his intellectual brilliance always dazzled me. He was snatched away by death at a time when the country needed him most.

Mohan Lohani

■ I had the honour of working with him. He was a genuine scholar who definitely spoke his mind.

Pravin Rana

Online Package



COVERING THE MAOIST WAR

Twenty-five years after the Maoist insurgency started journalists who covered that war remember their own experiences reporting on the conflict. Video on our YouTube channel.



LAKE RISK

As Nepal's glacial lakes expand, there is a danger of them bursting due to water pressure, or because of earthquakes and avalanches falling into them. Subscribe for multimedia content.

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SOCIAL MEDIA

SAGARMATHA TO SEA:

Australian Minister for Climate Change and Energy Chris Bowen with Nepal's Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal at the Pre-COP31 Leaders' Event in Tuvalu. Khanal was also in Australia this week to meet his counterpart Penny Wong.

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Earthquake rebuilding to flood recovery

Nepal could show the world how to build back sustainably from a major disaster

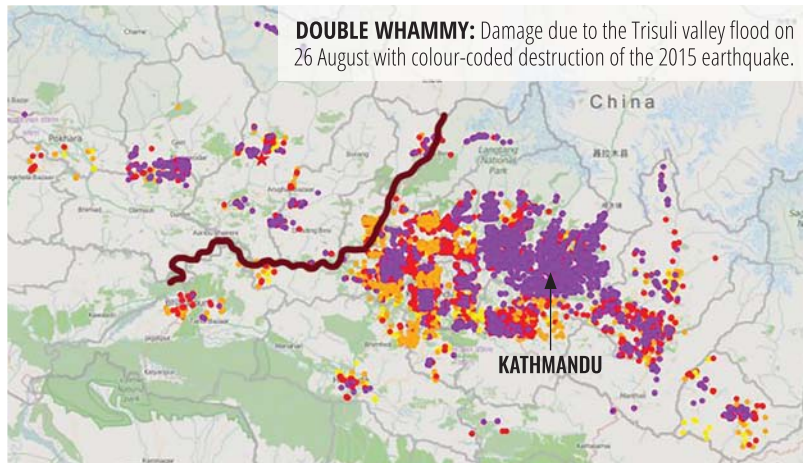
Sara Shneiderman
and Amy Leigh Johnson

As Nepal prepares long-term recovery and risk-reduction strategies, we offer insights from our collaborative research about post-disaster reconstruction and displacement following Nepal's 2015 earthquake, as well as ongoing mountain hazards, to highlight areas of concern for the country's affected communities.

Policies and funding must protect people's livelihoods and rights while the global community must meet Nepal's demands for climate justice and reparation. A focus on the climate impact may help reduce long-term risk and vulnerability, but must proceed in tandem with in-depth engagement with affected communities, including many Indigenous Peoples, to determine what their immediate future will look like.

The destruction of entire villages, road-bridge networks and economic hubs raises major reconstruction challenges for Nepali communities and households. But families affected by the current disaster may find little point in rebuilding their homes if there are no nearby roads, schools or economic opportunities. For many farmers, the land that underpins their agricultural livelihoods has been washed away.

Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority recently released a Rapid Disaster Needs Assessment (RDNA) that states that 'household recovery ... depends on the restoration of connected services and access', which in turn requires viable terrain. As in past disasters, 'integrated settlements' are being



The integrated resettlement of 119 houses in Tiru after the 2015 earthquake, which lie empty.

SABINA DEVKOTA

DESTRUCTION

- Completely destroyed, 2015
- Minimal impact, 2015
- Minor damage, 2015
- Major damage, 2015
- Areas affected by the Trisuli Valley flood, August 2026

discussed to collectively resettle displaced communities.

But our research has shown that integrated settlements set up after the 2015 earthquake struggled most when livelihood needs and caste-ethnic relations among resettled communities weren't prioritised.

Relocation away from hazards like landslides and floods may reduce exposure, but it does not address other forms of risk, including economic precarity and inequality. Any approach to rebuilding will first require beneficiary identification: who is entitled to compensation or support, and on what basis? The RDNA acknowledges that 'building ownership alone does not identify

all households requiring assistance' and notes the challenges with verification, especially when documents are permanently lost.

These are important lessons from the post-earthquake experience, when property ownership was the primary criteria for reconstruction grants, leaving many affected people ineligible.

Nepal's 2015 constitution devolved significant legal responsibility for disaster risk-reduction and management to provincial and municipal bodies. But in the initial days after the recent flash floods, affected local authorities understandably had limited capacity to oversee disaster response. It is now time to refocus

on local capacity and aspirations.

Each municipality will likely have different preferences and priorities for reconstruction, relocation and restoration. These will depend on the specific disaster impacts experienced in their jurisdictions and the cultural and economic dynamics of their constituencies. A one-size-fits-all recovery approach mandated by the federal government following a 'one-door policy' is unlikely to succeed fully. Instead, needs-based, municipality-specific plans should be negotiated carefully in relation to relevant federal, provincial and municipal policies.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The RDNA says 'no household survey, key informant interviews, focus groups, structured community consultation, or detailed engineering assessment was undertaken' to prepare its initial report three weeks after the flood. Person-to-person learning is the necessary next step. Affected Indigenous Peoples and local communities must not be treated as simply informants for central government programs, but rather as political entities with the capacity to lead assessment and craft policy.

The Bhote Kosi-Trisuli floods swept over homelands of the Tamang community and other Indigenous Peoples whose identities are deeply connected to place. Indigenous nationalities comprise approximately 38% to 90% of the population in nine of the 15 affected municipalities.

Even when relocation would offer greater physical safety, many Indigenous participants in our post-earthquake research said they didn't want to move away from their ancestral territory.

At the same time, the disastrous

consequences of ad hoc, river-centric development in the Himalaya cannot be clearer. When rivers are conceived only as corridors for economic development, roads, services and opportunities become concentrated in flood- and landslide-prone areas. People migrating for work find themselves exposed to levels of risk they cannot mitigate.

It remains an open question what responsibility Nepal's hydropower sector will take for worker compensation and regional rebuilding. Rather than reconstruction in the same risky locations, there should be a systems-wide rethink of settlement and development patterns.

Those who moved to take advantage of riverside economies might consider moving uphill once again if connectivity and collective needs are appropriately addressed and resourced. Ultimately, people should not have to choose between place-based attachment and safety, or between traditional territory and economic opportunities.

With financial support from the international community and private sector corporate social responsibility, Nepal has an opportunity to show the world how to reconsider economic development in relation to climate and geohazard risks and in consultation with communities and local governments. This will also require a reframing of transboundary geopolitical relationships.

Nepal can build back differently by upholding human-centred values, emphasising sustainability, recognising the inequitable distribution of risk and its causes, and prioritising communities' autonomy over their futures. 🇳🇵

Sara Shneiderman is Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia. Amy Leigh Johnson is Assistant Professor at Berry College.

BRIEFS

Turkish IATA

Turkish Airlines hosted the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) World Safety and Operations Conference 'Performance Through People' in Istanbul from 6–8 October.



Commenting on the occasion, Turkish CEO Ahmet Olmüştür stated: "We believe a strong safety culture grows through continuous learning, open communication and a shared sense of responsibility."

Building Bill

The government has registered a Bill in Parliament to provide what it says will be 'safe and planned housing plans' to Nepalis, including those affected by the recent floods. It includes financial aid packages and Nepali-style designs by technical experts before construction. Critics say the subsidy is not adequate to cover costs.

Economic growth falls

The World Bank has projected Nepal's economic growth will dip to 3.7% for the fiscal year 2026/27 due to the effect of the Trisuli Valley flood, as well as landslides and road obstructions this month.

Only hi-speed net

Internet service providers in Nepal are set to discontinue low-cost and low-speed internet packages (under 50Mbps) from 5 October. The Internet Service Providers Association Nepal (ISPAN) says the reason is inflation and rising prices of fibre optics cable and routers.

India-Nepal power

Four Nepali hydropower projects have renewed their export approval to India. They include the Upper Chameliya, Seti river, Upper Tadi Khola, and Upper Dordi A hydropower projects, totalling 98MW. India continues to refuse to import power from projects with Chinese investment, contractors, and equipment. However, due to the destruction of so many power plants, Nepal may need to import power from India this winter.

Leapmotor up

The global sale for Leapmotors has risen to 105,656 deliveries in September, and the Chinese EV brand has crossed the milestone of delivering over 100,000 units monthly for the third consecutive month, representing a 59% increase from last year. Shangrila Motors is the distributor of Leapmotors in Nepal.



Subisu Connect

Subisu organised a corporate client meet event Subisu Connect 2026 on the occasion of its 25th anniversary in Nepalganj. Dipesh Maskey, Senior Vice President (Enterprise Business) said the company is adapting to changing technology to enhance their services.

Alchi Mystery Rooms

Mystery Rooms by Alchi, one of Shark Tank's Season 1 funding recipients, was launched at Civil Mall on 7 October. The event was attended by investor Cabinet Shrestha as well as partners Manish Shrestha and Raunak Agarwal.



Indian assistance

The Shreepur Water Supply and Sanitation Project in ward 5 of Triyuga Municipality has been built with financial assistance from the Indian government. Another project inaugurated this week was the Panchayat Madhyamik Vidyalaya building in Gothgaun of Morang.

New Indian envoy

India has named its new ambassador to Nepal. He is Sudhakar Dalela, 57, a career diplomat and electronic engineer who has served as India's representative to BRICS and in Indian missions in the US, Bhutan, and Israel.

TATA+ Bhat Bhateni

Sipradi Motors, the distributor for Tata Motors in Nepal, and Bhat Bhateni Supermarket have joint special offers for the festive season. Customers purchasing goods worth Rs2,500 or more at any Bhat Bhateni branch are eligible to participate in a lucky draw to win a Tata Punch.ev. Customers paying through Nepalpay QR will be also eligible for the lucky draw to win the car. Two winners will be announced.

Essence of Japan

Edamame, the Asian restaurant at Kathmandu Marriott Hotel, is organising The Essence of Japan food festival till 18 October. It is curated by Chef Kyohei and brings flavours and cuisines from various parts of Japan.

Chamber Bazaar

Chamber Bazaar, a dedicated space for women entrepreneurs to sell their products, was opened on 3 October by the Nepal Women Chamber and is located at the Nepal Chamber of Commerce building in Jamal. The bazaar consists of food, clothing, handicrafts, and other products.

Ncell+Tranquility Spa

Ncell has collaborated with Tranquility Spa for a Buy One Get One (BOGO) offer per which Ncell customers who purchase a prepaid pack or postpaid plan worth Rs499 or more can avail a BOGO offer on Tranquility Spa's certain services. Two people can enjoy spa service for the price of one.

Shinta Mani

Shinta Mani Mustang has been recognised in the 2026 Condé Nast Traveller Readers' Choice Awards. The recognition comes alongside The Dwarika's in Kathmandu, making two properties from Nepal part of this year's 'Rest of Asia' selection.



Pavilions Himalayas - The Farm in Pokhara has also received the 2026 Condé Nast Traveller Reader's Choice Award for its eco-tourism model.

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A transportation system

Electric public transport arrived in Kathmandu 50 years ago, but was allowed to rust away

Dan Edwards

Fifty years ago, The World Bank ranked Nepal as the sixth poorest country in the world. But even back then Kathmandu already had a small but modern, efficient public transportation system. It did not run on imported diesel but locally produced hydroelectricity. Unfortunately, like other well-designed, well-intentioned development projects in Nepal, the Bhaktapur trolley bus route was allowed to rust away – just like the cargo ropeway service joining Kathmandu to the plains.

The Chinese built a 115km road from Bhaktapur to Kodari to the border (the Aniko Highway) in 1964. The road from Thapathali to Bhaktapur was improved in 1969, and four years later, the Chinese agreed to install the trolley bus service on the 13km route between Kathmandu and Bhaktapur.

Moulds for production of 10m tall concrete poles arrived from China. Land was acquired to build a terminal and workshop at Baneshwor, a sub-power station was set up in Thimi and a bus terminus at Suryabinayak.

Each trolley bus had seats for 26 passengers with standing room for 35. It had an 80 HP, 600-volt (DC) motor, with a top speed of 50 km/h. The buses were type SK-541 manufactured in Shanghai in 1974.

Prime Minister Tulsi Giri inaugurated the trolley bus line on King Birendra's birthday, 28 December 1975. The government-owned Nepal Transport Corporation (NTC) managed the service and from the very beginning it faced competition from bus syndicates on the Kathmandu-Bhaktapur route.

Six buses and 25 minibuses were operating on that route in 1976, although up to 12,000 passengers a day were riding the 22 sleek trolley buses. Political pressure to reduce fares was brought to bear by government employees, students and workers who travelled daily on the electric buses. So the government issued them discounted season tickets.

A Tribhuvan University graduate student Arjun Raj Banshi wrote a dissertation on the trolley bus in 1982, showing that during its first four fiscal years (1976-77 to 1979-80), the trolley bus service lost Rs298,000, Rs325,000, Rs360,000 and Rs575,000.

The line never broke even for its entire operational life. The staff consisted of 49 working in management, 43 drivers, 37 conductors, 32 technicians, and 21 non-skilled workers. The general manager and board of directors were government-appointed.

Salaries, overtime and other facilities for the employees consumed more than 50% of total expenditure, and charges for electricity were 25%. While annual revenues increased each year, many riders hopped off without tickets,



Trolley bus climbing on what is now the tinkune incline in 1976 on a traffic-free road (above). The trolley bus graveyard in Baneshwor depot three years ago (below).



and conductors were lackadaisical in collecting full fares.

The Chinese initially had trained Nepali technicians, but they resigned to seek better job opportunities and higher salaries elsewhere. Workers also became dissatisfied because there were no provisions for life insurance for technicians working on 600 volt overhead lines.

Raj Banshi also noted that the Nepal Electricity Corporation was unable to guarantee a reliable and consistent daily supply of electricity, which affected the ability of the trolley bus to provide adequate and dependable service. Buses were often stranded for hours when the lights went off.

LONG DISTANCE TROLLEYS
Initial enthusiasm over the trolley bus line soon led to several ideas for building similar transportation systems in different areas of Nepal.

Trolley bus lines had political appeal, and a pre-feasibility study of electric public transport as an alternative to petrol-based service on the 200km Tribhuvan Rajpath linking Kathmandu with Birganj was carried out in 1977 by Centre for Economic & Development Administration (CEDA) and the Department of Electricity.

It showed that from 1977 to 1990 a trolley bus and truck system could generate profits of Rs14.7 million with an investment of

Rs400 million. A minister told the National Panchayat in 1981 that a feasibility study was underway for introducing trolley bus or trolley truck services in some regions of the Tarai.

In 1984, the government announced that a technical survey for extending trolley bus service to Kirtipur and Patan Dhoka had been completed, and survey work for operating similar services from Jogbani to Dharan and Sunauli to Butwal would be undertaken during that fiscal year.

Offers from Nepali firms, with foreign collaboration were requested: to build and operate two trolley bus projects from Sunauli-Bhairawa-Butwal and Jogbani-Biratnagar-Dharan.

Feasibility studies to extend trolley bus operations from Suryabinayak to Banepa and to provide such services along Ring Road were prepared in 1989 and 1990 respectively. Upgrading an aging trolley bus system and expanding such services were among many challenges elected politicians in a new democratic order faced in Nepal.

In Nepal's Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-1997), the government stated:

‘With a view to minimising imported fuel consumption, trolley bus services will be extended to Tripureswor-Kirtipur and Thapathali-Patan Gate-Pulchok



PHOTOS BELOW: KANAK MANI DIXIT

during the Eighth Plan period. Important contribution will be made to reduce the pressure of vehicles on the urban roads if trolley buses are operated throughout Ring Road of Kathmandu. Therefore, a 15-km trolley bus service will be operated in Teenkune-Chabahil-Maharagunj sector. In addition... a 22-km trolley bus service will be implemented between Ithari and Biratnagar.’

The Rising Nepal took up the cause of an expanded trolley bus system in a 1994 editorial:

‘As air pollution caused by the growing vehicle emission in the Kathmandu valley has resulted in a growing environmental problem, an alternative transportation means needs to be explored. The proposal to extend the country's only trolley bus network to other routes in the valley is a relevant one to combat the pollution problem.... Why has the concerned authority been lagging behind in materializing the proposed scheme for broadening the network?’

Problems and prices escalated. Power failures affecting bus services became more frequent in the 1990s, as overall demand surged in the valley and those grandiose plans never materialised.

Nevertheless, NTC faced huge increases in the price of electricity. Bus service deteriorated because of lack of spare parts (China no longer

made parts for 1974 buses), and maintenance delays kept only 13 of the 22 buses on the road.

A trolley bus making a round trip from Kathmandu to Bhaktapur used Rs125 worth of electricity, while an ICE bus consumed only Rs70 of diesel over the same distance. Studies revealed that the cost for new trolley bus infrastructure would be enormous: a double line overhead extension of wires to provide power to trolley buses would cost up to Rs8 million per km.

Furthermore, many of the existing roads (except Ring Road) were not wide enough to accommodate trolley buses along with the growing automobile, micro-bus and truck traffic.

China came to the rescue temporarily by donating 10 new SY-D60C buses manufactured in Shenyang in September 1996. Each bus cost US\$79,000, had 32 seats and could accommodate 90 riders. The government renewed its call for foreign private sector investors to build and operate the two Tarai trolley bus routes under discussion since 1984.

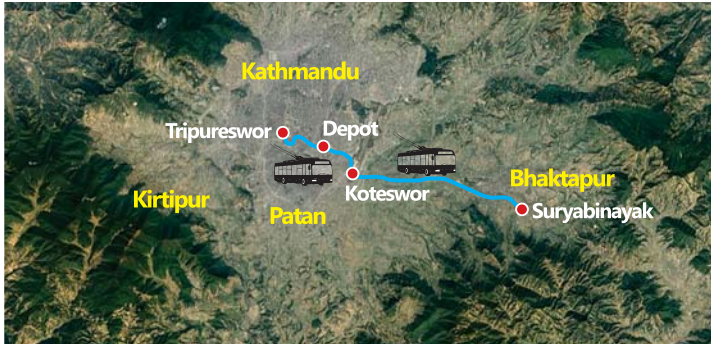
SAME PROBLEMS AS NOW
Nepal's Ninth Five-Year Plan (1998-2002) once more envisaged the extension Kathmandu-Bhaktapur trolley bus service to Kathmandu Ring Road and to initiate its privatisation. As newspaper articles

ahead of its time



Leaving the Tripureswor terminal, 2007.

STEFAN MASHKEVICH

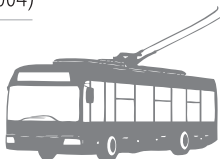


Routes

Tripureswor – Suryabinayak
(12.1975 – 12.2001, 10.2003 – 2004)

Tripureswor – The Depot
(09.2003 – 10.2003)

Tripureswor – Koteswor
(2004 – 11.2008)



chronicled the increasingly poor and erratic trolley bus services, CEMAT Consultants undertook a study in 1999 to examine future options. It called attention to the absence of an organized public transportation system in the Valley that had resulted in uncontrolled growth of private vehicles with the resultant traffic congestion and decrease in vehicle speeds.

CEMAT identified other significant issues: inflexible regulations of state-owned enterprises, government control of trolley bus tariffs, lack of technically qualified personnel, absence of provisions to take legal action against ticketless travelers, and lack of a preventive maintenance system for the buses and the overhead trolley network.

CEMAT believed that with 20 trolley buses running from Kathmandu to Bhaktapur and 28 buses operating on Ring Road, imports of diesel fuel would be reduced by Rs176 million annually. However, the investment required for the proposed Ring Road trolley bus system would be Rs416 million.

It was all too late. The trolley bus lost Rs13.1 million in 2000/2001. Its unpaid electricity bills exceeded Rs3 million. The last trolley bus left Bhaktapur on 19 December 2001.

A brief revival occurred in September 2003, when three buses

emerged from their Min Bhawan garage and made a truncated 7km run to Tripureswor.

Only three buses carrying 200 passengers a day were operating on the Tripureswor to Koteswor section in March 2005. The fate of the bus line was sealed in March 2007, when the government decided to remove all 278 trolley bus poles from Koteswor to Suryabinayak to make the Arniko Highway a four-lane road. They were dumped at Sallaghari for more than a decade – a monument to this failed experiment in electric public transport.

That October, the Maoist-affiliated Joint Republican Workers Front of Nepal was given authority to run what little was left of the trolley bus line in Kathmandu. Hundreds of Maoist Young Communist League (YCL) cadres already were living rent-free in former trolley bus offices and buildings in Baneswor.

The denouement under Maoist management came quickly in November 2007: the saga of trolley bus service ended not as drama but as political farce.

Could the ultimate failure of the Kathmandu-Bhaktapur trolley bus been avoided? Could the government's once ambitious plans to build an extensive trolley bus network in Nepal have been achieved?

Good ideas were proposed, studied, and recommended, and public promises were made. However, always lacking were proper management by NTC, adequate funds, investments by firms willing to build new lines, and the political will to implement ambitious plans. 🇳🇵

Dan Edwards is a former Peace Corps volunteer. This is the last episode of his series on the history of transportation in Nepal.

BUS FARES

The stops and fares from the west end of the line at Tripureswor were:

Thapathali	40 paisa
Maitighar	40 paisa
Babar Mahal	40 paisa
Baneswor	40 paisa
Min Bhawan	40 paisa
Koteswor	75 paisa
Lokanthali	75 paisa
Kausaltar	75 paisa
Gattaghar	75 paisa
Thimi	1 rupee
Sallaghari	1 rupee
Suryabinayak	1 rupee

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Rudrarapriya International, Nepalgunj - 9802510215
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SIPRADI



Events



Kite Flying

There is no better way to get into the festive spirit than by participating in the time-honoured tradition of kite flying. Head to the Address Lounge.
10 October, Rs1800, 2pm, The Address Lounge, Dilibazar

Creator’s Workshop

Join a creative workshop for content creators to learn about content creation and build a sustainable career in the field.
10 October, Rs3500, 10am, Playbook Kathacharya, Kupondol



Dasain Bazaar

Make this festive season memorable and visit this Dasain Bazaar with local artisans and pop-up stalls.
10-14 October, 10 am-8pm, Chhaya Center, Thamel



Samyukta

Samyukta by artist Srijan Thapa is opening this week at The Kala Salon.
9 October, 5pm, The Kala Salon, Chhaya Center, Thamel

Yoga Hike

Join for an eventful hike from Shankharapur to Jhule, followed by an enlightening yoga session. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.
10 October, Rs2200, 6:30am, Chabahil (Near Helping Hands Hospital)



Art for Humanity

Noted Nepali artists come together for a case in this exhibition, the proceeds of which will go towards flood relief.
Until 14 October, 10am-5pm, Nepal Academy for Fine Arts, Naxal

Dasain Carnival

An unforgettable event full of music, kite flying, food and entertainment awaits at the Dasain carnival. Albatross, Deepak Bajracharya and Rhythm Band and Kutumba will be performing live.
11 October, Rs500, 11am, Chyasal Football Ground



Music

Narayan Gopal Saanjh

Listen to the melodious tunes by Narayan Gopal, performed live by Indreni Band.
9 October, Rs300, 7pm, Eden, Sanepa



Cadenza concert

Spend a jazzy day with celebrated Nepali jazz band Cadenza Collective at their Back To the Roots concert. Get tickets at kgarira.com
24 October, The Garden Project, Bhanimandal

Astha Tamang Maskey

Join for an intimate evening of music by Astha Tamang Maskey and her band, where she will perform her hits including Sabai Thikai Huncha, Muskuraye, Gotta Be Love and Khula Aakash.
11 October, Rs999, 5pm, Trisara, Lazimpat



Rock for Relief

Albatross will be performing their popular hits to kickstart the weekend. All proceeds from the event will be donated to the prime minister's relief fund.
10 October, Rs2,000, 7pm, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel



Getaway



Fish Tail Lodge

Located on the quieter side of Phewa Lake, this lodge is an oasis surrounded by blue waters. Coupled with an innovative architectural design and breathtaking panoramic views of mountains, this place is a must-visit.
Phewa Lake, Pokhara (61) 465071

Jagatpur Lodge

Jagatpur Lodge's five-star tents and rooms with private viewing decks offer two special experiences. The former brings you closer to nature, and the latter gives you breathtaking views.
Jagatpur, Chitwan (056) 411085 / 9801974084



Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort

Escape from the hustle and bustle of the city and discover a stay nestled in the Himalayan foothills. Enjoy beautiful views of sunsets and mindful moments with meditation, sound healing and yoga.
Dhulikhel, 9851373755

Champadevi Hillside Resort

Relax by nature and immerse into the views of the hillside. Perfect for retreats, staycations or a getaway, one can enjoy by the pool with refreshing options on drinks and food.
Dakshinkali, 9763699009

Balthali Village Resort

A simple and cosy retreat just beyond Kathmandu Valley, Balthali Village Resort is ideal for anyone seeking to get away but not too far away from the city.
Panauti, Kavre, 9851087772

Weekend Weather



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
24° 14°	24° 13°	26° 13°	27° 14°	27° 14°

Enter: Autumn

The monsoon has been pushed back, this year by nearly a month. The first westerly of the season is here, bringing moisture from the Arabian Sea. Combined with residual water vapour from transpiration and late monsoon storms, we have seen strong thunderstorm activity this week. This is likely to continue till Sunday, so take precautions against lightning and localised hailstorms if you are outdoors. Dasain-like weather will set in from Monday onwards with afternoon breeze ideal for kite-fights. Daytime temperatures will be higher than normal in Kathmandu.

Our Pick



Zoe Kazan's American historical set in the 1900s follows brothers Adam and Charles Trask raised by their domineering father, as they navigate their complex relationship. Their lives are upended when a mysterious woman, Cathy Ames, shows up at their doorstep and drives a wedge between the two. Adapted from John Steinbeck's 1952 classic East of Eden, this 7-episode limited series recounts the tale of Cain and Abel and the eternal struggle of good versus evil. Stars Florence Pugh, Christopher Abbott and Mike Faist. Watch on Netflix.



Dining

Essence of Japan

Experience authentic Japanese flavours that capture the essence of Japan at this event curated by Chef Kyohei.
5-8 October 5-18, 1pm-10:30pm, Mariott Kathmandu, Naxal

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



Alice Kathmandu

Indulge in a wide range of delicacies including Continental, Japanese, Chinese and Thakali at Alice. Their varieties of momo are a must-try.
Gairidhara, Kathmandu, 01-5357318

White Zambala

Tucked away in a hidden alley in Boudha, White Zambala has the best comfort Tibetan food in the area. With sweet and sour pork, shredded potato and amazing dumplings, this eatery is a must try.
Boudha, 9866999999



Cafe Soma

For a sunny spot to grab brunch and mouthwatering desserts in, head to Soma's Baluwatar location and if you're looking for a place to work by yourself, the Jawalakhel location is perfect.
Jhamsikhel (01) 5528732 / Baluwatar (01) 4415792

सामाजिक सञ्जाल प्रयोगमा सचेतता अपनाऔँ

- सामाजिक सञ्जालमा अपरिचित व्यक्तिको साथी बन्ने अनुरोधलाई विश्वस्त भएर मात्र प्रतिक्रिया जनाऔँ ।
- अपरिचित व्यक्तिलाई जथाभावी साथी बन्न अनुरोध नपठाऔँ ।
- सामाजिक सञ्जाल तथा अन्य विद्युतीय माध्यमबाट चिड्छा पुरस्कार जस्ता आर्थिक प्रलोभनका प्रस्तावको भरमा नपरौँ ।
- आफूले प्रवाह गरेका सन्देश वा सूचनाबाट समाजमा पर्नसक्ने नकारात्मक प्रभावको ख्याल गरौँ ।
- आफ्नो सन्देशले कुनै व्यक्ति वा अन्य कुनै समुदायको आत्मसम्मानमा चोट नपुऱ्याऔँ ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

Damber Nepali's Nepali dream

Fond memories by the daughter of engineer who built Chilime, one of the projects swept away by the flood

Dristy Shrestha

Some losses are difficult to explain because they cannot be measured by what was physically destroyed. This tragedy feels much more personal.

I lived in Nepal with my parents and brother for the first 16 years of my life before embarking on a global journey. During much of that time, there was one word that came up again and again at our dinner table: Chilime.

My father Damber Bahadur Nepali devoted a decade of his life to the Chilime hydropower project on the Bhote Kosi. He gave it the kind of time, care and attention a parent gives to a child, pouring his heart and soul into it.

At family dinners, we listened to him talk about an idea he was working through with his team, how a newly appointed minister had taken away one of the project's two jeeps limiting the team's ability to travel to the site, the landslides that came every monsoon and delayed construction, how he went from one government office to another to expedite work.

There were complaints to the CIAA, there were banks and investors to convince that a hydropower project designed and developed entirely by Nepalis could actually work without relying on the usual international loans and grants.

But there were also many milestones we celebrated, like the excitement when construction moved forward at the headworks, tunnel and powerhouse, overcoming new hurdles at every turn. Or, the agreement that 10% of Chilime Hydropower Company Limited shares would be allocated for local communities to purchase. And finally, that day in 2003 when the project started feeding 22.1MW of electricity into Nepal's national grid.

One Indra Jatra when I was ten, we were out watching the Kumari chariots being pulled through the streets of Kathmandu. My father was not really interested in the procession. He sat in a corner, scribbling away in a tiny notebook, the kind he always carries in his shirt pocket with a pen. He still does this despite now having a smartphone.

He showed me some calculations and began explaining how Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) employees



at various levels could invest in Chilime shares. He was worried that, without upfront capital, many employees might not be able to purchase as many shares as they could otherwise afford over time.

He was trying to find a way for them to use their provident fund or salary savings to participate. It was a brilliant idea, and he negotiated with the Employees' Provident Fund, the NEA, and others to make it happen.

BURIED IN MUD

Now, tragically, Chilime is no longer operating. It was one of a dozen hydropower projects on the Trisuli Basin that were swept away by the 26 August flood. The Chilime power house is buried in mud, and six people lost their lives.

The devastation of the hydropower projects, and the hundreds feared dead at these sites, have raised questions about whether Nepal's long-cherished hydropower dream can ever be pursued in quite the same way again.

Back then, my father had walked me through the tunnel to emerge at the underground

powerhouse. I was completely wide-eyed seeing a room four-storeys high inside a mountain — all built by Nepalis with Nepali investment. It was only then that I truly understood what the Chilime team had accomplished, and what my father had been dreaming about for nearly a decade.

When the project was completed, we invited the entire Chilime team to our home, had everyone sit on the floor in a long row, my mother giving the traditional sagan to each person involved in the project.

Many years have passed, and my father has retired from the NEA and moved on to other challenges. But no other project he has taken up has ever meant as much to him as Chilime. There may be a way to recover and repair the underground powerhouse, or maybe not. But Chilime's significance and legacy was never tied only to its physical infrastructure.

Growing up, we were taught in school that Nepal was second only to Brazil in hydropower potential. It turns out the number-two ranking was never true, but the promise of hydropower as a path to national development and prosperity certainly was.

Chilime showed how that dream could become a reality. It helped demonstrate that Nepal could design, finance and build a major hydropower project with its own people and institutions. It helped build confidence in Nepali investment and brought many ordinary Nepali households into the stock market. It allowed the NEA to build the even more ambitious 456MW Upper Tama Kosi, which

my father called 'Chilime's elder brother'.

Chilime influenced how hydropower development could be imagined in Nepal. Its model of public-private partnership, with majority holding by the NEA, an array of private investors, and a definite share of local ownership, has inspired or influenced several hydropower projects in the country today. Chilime helped democratise hydropower investment. It became a symbol of a new beginning, of pride and possibility.

The recent devastation has brought to the fore the many risks that come with the country's hydropower ambition. The biggest vulnerability comes from the climate crisis. This raises big questions: can hydropower really be the foundation of a more prosperous Nepal, and what will it cost to pursue that dream?

Nepal has a few other paths to economic progress, but cannot afford to abandon hydropower. Projects can be repaired. New tunnels can be dug and new structures built. But chasing the dream will take more than just infrastructure. It takes dedication, integrity and vision of the kind that my father had.

I remember the conversations around the dining table, the many tiny notebooks that he filled up over the years, the many days and nights he was away at the project site, the excitement in his voice when something finally moved forward, and the mountain where, as a child, I finally understood what all those years of work had created.

I wish my husband, who understands very well what Chilime means to me, had the

LIFE'S WORK: Damber Bahadur Nepali and his wife at the entrance to the Chilime Hydropower plant (above) and the same tunnel entrance that damaged the powerhouse, killing six staff (left).

Damber Nepali in 2003 (left), when he headed the Chilime Hydro Porogect.

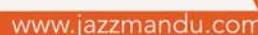
chance to walk through that tunnel and emerge into that four-storey underground powerhouse. I wish our son had the chance to stand there and admire what his grandfather and his indomitable team achieved.

My heart aches for the lives lost, for the families grieving, and for all those hit directly by the disaster. And it aches for my second sibling.

But perhaps that is also why I find myself holding on to hope. I have seen what can happen when people believe in something even when it seems impossible, when they persist through setbacks and refuse to give up. Chilime was once only an idea in my father's tiny notebook, but a decade later it stood inside a mountain.

I hope that this spirit continues to live on in Nepal: in the people who will rebuild, in those who will dream up what comes next, and in the generations who will continue to believe that seemingly impossible things can be made possible. That is the part of Chilime that no flood can ever wash away. 🇳🇵

Dristy Shrestha is a social protection specialist who advises governments and multilateral institutions on policy reform, institutional strengthening, and economic inclusion strategies. Visit nepalitimes.com to read Nepali Times interview with Damber Bahadur Nepali in 2003.



ARTISTS 2026

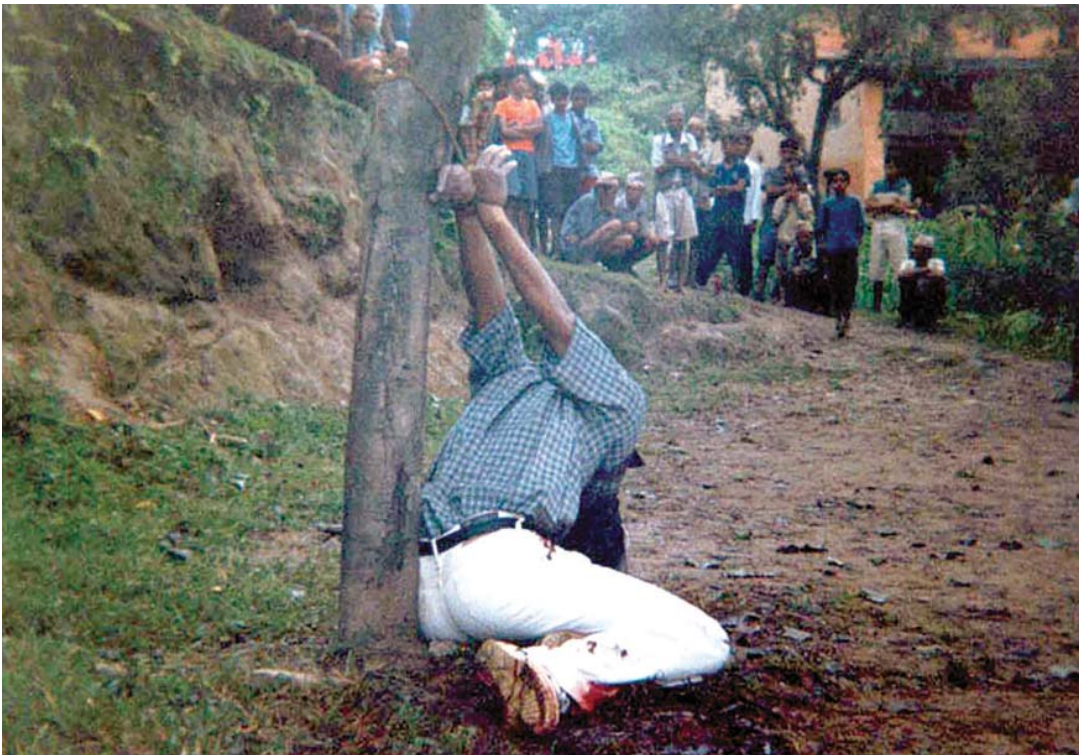
TITO PUENTE JR. USA
MANON MULLENER SWITZERLAND
CESAR HAAS BRAZIL
NICK AGGS QUARTET AUSTRALIA, USA & SINGAPORE
KEVIN SAURA GROUP FRANCE

NEPAL
CADENZA COLLECTIVE
KANTA DAB DAB
MILAN & MILESH DUO
HOT CLUB OF PATAN



History will not forget Gyanendra Khadka

Family remembers the brutal execution of a journalist and teacher by the Maoists 23 years ago



YUBARAJ PURI



Kunda Dixit

Ajita Khadka was nine-years-old at the time. After helping her mother do the dishes she got out of the house to go over to a neighbour to ask for a flowering plant for the family garden.

It was a bright clear afternoon on 6 September 2003 in Jyamire village of Sindhupalchok, the monsoon was taking a break, and Ajita thought the flower would look really pretty on her porch.

On the other side of the village at Janata School, Ajita's father, the journalist and teacher Gyanendra Khadka, had finished addressing parents and guardians. Suddenly, two men sprang up, and wielding pistols and hand grenades, grabbed him roughly, and led him away.

Ajita had just stepped outside her front gate, when she saw her father, wearing a green check shirt and white trousers, being pushed by the armed Maoists, his hands tied behind his back with a rope.

In a heavy, trembling voice, Gyanendra glanced at his daughter and said: "I'll be back soon."

Ajita ran back into the house in panic, and told her mother, Mithila. "She let out a visceral scream, and raced down the path after them," recalls Ajita, who was so terrified that she hid in the cowshed.

By the time Mithila caught up with the Maoists, they had tied her husband to a volleyball pole, and forced her to watch as one of the assailants pulled out a long khukri knife. Then she fainted.

Gyanendra's close friend and fellow-journalist Yubaraj Puri heard what had happened, and rushed to the site. "There was blood in the dirt at his feet. Closer, I saw that his head had been nearly sliced off. It was dangling from his neck."

Ajita finally found the courage to enter the house, where her mother was still unconscious. Relatives and neighbours gathered around to offer words of comfort.

"Deep inside, I was still hoping desperately that I would wake up from the nightmare," recalls Ajita, the eldest daughter who now had to take care of her sister Asmita and brother Aswin. Gyanendra's father, Bishnu Bahadur Khadka, a retired army man, was in total shock.

Being a reporter, Yubaraj Puri



KUNDA DIXIT

rushed down to Melamchi to file the story. Gyanendra Khadka reported for the RSS news agency and Yubaraj Puri was a district stringer for various newspapers.

The Maoists warned villagers not to remove the body, and a 'charge sheet' on Gyanendra's body, accused him of spying for the state.

"I borrowed a camera and took five photos," Yubaraj remembers. "My hands trembled so much I could not keep the camera still."

PHOTO CREDIT

It would take another day for Gyanendra's body to be taken down to be cremated by the banks of the Indrawati. Yubaraj Puri's graphic photo was all over national newspapers that week, but without his photo credit.

He faced threats himself, and joined a newspaper in Kathmandu, returning to his town only after the 2006 ceasefire. The first time his name appeared with the photo was when it was published in the book, A People War, in 2008.

That night guerrillas visited the Gyanendra's home, threatening the Gyanendra's home, threatening his family. No one in the village dared question why a much-liked teacher and a respected journalist had been so brutally executed.

Mithila was 30 when her husband was killed, and says in the book, People After War, "I just hope no Nepali will have to suffer a tragedy like ours, and there will now be peace in the country."

Many still remember Gyanendra Khadka as a dedicated teacher and an independent journalist at a time when schools

and media were caught in the crossfire from both sides of the conflict.

"My father's murder altered the course of my family's life forever," Ajita says. "Beyond the emotional void, his absence meant navigating childhood without him."

The weight of the loss still affects every aspect of the family's life. Festivals are painful reminders of her father, and seeing other children with their fathers makes Ajita emotional.

"Father's Day is the biggest trigger for me," she adds. "I wish the day would simply vanish from the calendar."

For years, the family never went near the volleyball court where Gyanendra was beheaded, and they would take a longer path so they did not have to be reminded of the violence. Because the place he was killed is next to the temple of Devasthan, her father's murder even shattered Ajita's faith in God.

She says, "Even now, 23 years later, small things like an old song brings back his memory. To cope, I tried to escape into daydreams and find comfort in sweet memories."

As a mental health counselor in Australia, Ajita now knows that such behaviour is called 'dissociation'. Her interest in mental health comes from her own lived experience, and she says there are many families like hers in Nepal who need psychosocial support from trauma-informed mental health clinicians.

"It is not just about healing past grief but about preventing the devastating secondary impacts of

CRIME SCENE: No one dared remove journalist Gyanendra Khadka's body from the pole to which it was tied because of threats from his Maoist assassins.

Fellow journalist Yubaraj Puri points to the place where his friend and colleague was tied to a pole (left).

Gyanendra Khadka's photo from his family album (above). He was 32 when he was killed.

unaddressed trauma," she says.

Ajita's siblings are now 27 and 25 years old, and they do not want to dwell in the past. Time has not healed, the pain still runs deep.

"Not speaking about our grief has left us feeling isolated, which is why I want to contribute to mental health services in Nepal for families like ours," she adds.

No one was ever charged for the murder of Gyanendra Khadka, but in 2004 the Maoist area commander for Sindhupalchok was Agni Sapkota, who went on to become Speaker of Parliament.

Last year, the Supreme Court ordered a criminal investigation against him for his alleged involvement in abduction and murder in Kavre of local politician Arjun Bahadur Lama in 2005.

Does Ajita want to know who killed her father? She replies: "Part of me wants to know who they were, and why that order was given, and ask: was it necessary to take a life? But another part of me thinks, what's the point?"

At 32, Ajita is now the same age as her father was when he was killed. She lost faith in Nepal's politics when the Maoists were elected into government in 2008, and ruled in various coalition governments till last year. But after the March 2026 election that put a young government in charge, she is more hopeful about the country's future.

She adds, "What happened cannot be undone, but no one should ever have to pay with their life for simply seeking the truth, educating others or doing their job. No family should ever have to carry the heavy, lifelong burden of that loss." 🇳🇵

Fathers

Smaranika Shakya

The Maoist insurgency began 30 years ago and ended 20 years ago, yet for tens of thousands of survivors and families of victims there has been no closure. The physical battles are a part of Nepal's history, but the fight for truth and justice endures.

In the decade of conflict, 17,000 Nepalis were killed at the hands of fellow Nepalis, and 1,400 are still 'missing'. There was suffering and pain on both sides, with the heaviest toll on innocent civilians.

Ram Bhandari and Suman Adhikari both lost their fathers to opposing sides in the war in Lamjung district. Both are now human rights activists.

Ram Bhandari's father was forcibly disappeared from Besisahar of Lamjung by state security in December 2001, soon after the Royal Nepali Army joined the conflict. Accused of being a Maoist, Tej Bahadur Bhandari was taken in by soldiers, and never seen again.

"My father was a man of many talents, well-loved in the community. He had an artistic mind, loved comedy and theatre," Bhandari remembers fondly.

Tej Bahadur Bhandari was his son's teacher at school, a guardian at home, and his closest friend. "When we learnt of his disappearance, our whole world crumbled. My family's way of life changed," says Ram Bhandari.

Witnesses saw Tej Bahadur being blindfolded and beaten in broad daylight before being pushed into a van.

"If we were told his body was buried somewhere, perhaps we would've coped better. But we weren't given any location to look for, there was no sign of him anywhere," says Ram Bhandari. "Even 25 years later, all we are left with are burning questions, and a rage that cannot be quelled."

Ram Bhandari became a human rights activist, founding the National Network of Families of the Disappeared (NEFAD) to fight for truth and accountability.

THE OTHER SIDE

Suman Adhikari endured similar pain, but inflicted by the Maoists. His father Muktinath Adhikari was a science teacher at a school in the same district as Tej Bahadur Bhandari.

Maoist rebels

took him away in front of his students while he was teaching class in January 2002. They tied him to a tree and shot him for not supporting the revolution, and for teaching Sanskrit.

"It is painful and exhausting recounting my father's story again and again, especially when our voices keep going unheard, and there is no change," says Adhikari, who founded the Conflict Victims' Common Platform and has been fighting for transitional justice since his father's murder 25 years ago.

For families of victims and survivors of the war, the unending fight for justice keeps reopening old wounds. Activists like Adhikari and Bhandari are unable to move on because their questions remain unanswered, and the state has not acknowledged the crimes against their loved ones.

Nepal's history textbooks do not mention the conflict, and since the former enemies became



**30/20
CONFLICT
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killed by opposite sides

Just as guilt of war crimes brought Nepal's former enemies together, families of victims also find common cause



GULIGO JIA



the state after the peace accord in 2006, they have allowed the transitional justice process to lapse.

“We filed lawsuits, we campaigned locally, we lobbied internationally, and we asked for accountability. Yet not a single case was investigated,” Bhandari told Nepali Times.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Act was drawn up in 2014, and a decade later, an amended TRC was finally passed along with the Commission for the Investigation of Enforced Disappearances (CIEDP). Still, there has been no tangible outcome because the commissions were heavily politicised.

Both Adhikari and Bhandari contend that the transitional justice process stalled because those holding decision-making power were the very same people

who needed to be held accountable. Justice was therefore continually sought, but never delivered.

It was as if the TRC Act was a tool to clear their conscience rather than a mechanism for justice, they say.

Adds Adhikari, “We saw the same thing during the GenZ movement last year. So many innocent young people were killed by security forces, but the state has yet to punish the perpetrators. It is a perpetual cycle of impunity that all Nepalis are tired of.”

TRANSPARENCY

The activists want transparency and accountability no matter which side killed or disappeared their relatives. The government must officially acknowledge war crimes, and announce comprehensive reparations that includes psychological, social, and financial support, they add.

They want a new commission with victim representation and structural participation. “The process of making the Commissions should be transparent and the state trustworthy,” says Adhikari.

Both Adhikari and Bhandari have high hopes that the new RSP government can push the process of truth and justice that languished under the previous politically unstable landscape.

However, justice requires more than informal conversations: it needs nuanced dialogue and formal action. With Nepal lurching from one disaster after next, addressing war crimes from decades ago does not seem to be any government’s top priority.

The new government has dismantled the previous commissions, so both Adhikari and Bhandari hope that a more productive conversation will take shape for truth and justice.

“The state kept toying with the vulnerability of marginalised, oppressed victims by delaying and denying the truth. Many have given up hope entirely, silenced by the state’s inaction. But it is important for us to keep persevering,” says Adhikari.

Despite the challenges, Adhikari and Bhandari keep on with the struggle for justice. They speak up for those with less privilege than them. They keep moving so that the voices of marginalised victims and survivors don’t go unheard.

“As long as I am alive, I will keep seeking the truth and keep asking questions,” says Bhandari, who finds solace knowing that this shared effort for the cause has produced leaders who are unafraid to ask probing questions, call out injustice, and demand truth.

He finds comfort in the knowledge that individual suffering is being turned into collective

NO CLOSURE: A photo of Ram Bhandari and his father, Tej Bahadur Bhandari, 25 years ago (far left). He was abducted by soldiers from Besisahar and never seen again.

In the same district a year later, Suman Adhikari’s father Muktinath Adhikari was taken away from a science class he was teaching by Maoist guerrillas, tied to a tree and executed (cover photo in Himal magazine, above).

Suman Adhikari in front of a photo of himself and siblings with his father (middle, above).

power to push for justice.

“Sometimes it feels like I may still see my father walking on the streets somewhere, unharmed,” Bhandari says ruefully.

Just as the guilt of the war crimes they perpetrated brought the two former enemies together into government after the ceasefire, it has also seen activists like Ram Bhandari and Suman Adhikari find common cause for truth and justice. 🇳🇵



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