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SUMAN NEPALI

Waiting and watching

Shristi Karki

In two weeks it will be one year since Nepal's youth-led protests led to regime change, and an election in which voters placed infinite trust in a new post-ideological leadership. Prime Minister Balendra Shah promised a lean and mean government, to clean up the bureaucracy, attract investment and create jobs. Even skeptics wanted to give the RSP government a chance. Five months on, the optimism has largely evaporated in Nepal's business community. The reason: party and government are on different wavelengths, ministerial actions are inconsistent, and businessmen are arrested without due process. "I can understand that they want to control corruption, but populist measures to get quick fixes by blatantly flouting the rule of law by apprehending business people and bankers is not going to go down

very well in the long run," says Siddhant Raj Pandey of the group Business Oxygen. Nepal's businesses have bad apples, but hounding CEOs, raiding homes and jailing them without substantiation has cast a shadow on the economy. Says economist Kalpana Khanal of the Policy Research Institute: "Detention without due process has set a bad precedent, instilling fear even among honest businesses. The crackdowns have made entrepreneurs risk-averse and unwilling to invest in new ventures." All this comes on top of a prolonged shortage of cooking gas, inflation, confusing new taxes that the Finance Ministry announced and the prime minister withdrew via a Facebook post. "There is a narrative that anyone who has earned significant money must have engaged in corruption and unethical practices," notes economist Pushkar Bajracharya. Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle's ambitious economic

growth target of 7% for this fiscal year, and an ambitious goal of creating 1.2 million new jobs seems unattainable in the present climate. Still, Nepal's macroeconomic indicators are robust, with nearly \$15 billion in remittances in the first 11 months of the last fiscal year, and foreign reserves sufficient for 16 months of imports. The paradox is that banks are flush with cash, but credit expansion has stalled. "If local businesses feel that they can't invest right now, they're not going to borrow, even though the cost of capital is at the lowest in many years," explains Pandey. "And unless locals invest, foreign investors won't come." Previously, most liquidity used to be invested in unproductive sectors like speculative real estate and securities, but recent lending curbs by the Nepal Rastra bank and more strict land use laws has decreased borrowing.

"Governments have historically facilitated policy-guided investments into hydropower and cement sectors," Khanal explains. "The new political leadership must now identify other productive sectors like tourism or IT for policy-guided incentives."

FOREIGN INVESTMENT In a speech last week, Wagle encouraged the diaspora to confidently invest in Nepal, saying his government had removed regulatory red tape and introduced tax benefits. But overseas Nepalis have heard that before, and it may not be enough when business confidence is so low. Domestic, diaspora and foreign investors are all in wait and watch mode, and have not completely given up yet. But it will need more than band aid announcements to erase the fear factor. Finance Minister Wagle asked investors to be patient because the impact of his regulatory reforms may take a few months or years to be visible. And that is the crux: Nepalis have waited too long, and want instant results from the party they elected. 🇳🇵

Never Ending
Peace And Love
(NEPAL)
GUEST
COMMENT
PAGE 2

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Never-Ending Peace And Love (NEPAL)

What cultural factors explain the relative absence of political vendetta and post-war revenge in Nepal?



GUEST COMMENT

Nirmal Niroula

- Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal launched an armed struggle in which 17,000 people died, many of them civilians accused of being class enemies. Kin of those killed saw the perpetrators move around freely, yet did not seek retribution.
- Former Prime Minister K P Oli and his Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak were accused of being responsible for the massacre of 19 youth outside Parliament last September. They served less than two weeks behind bars.
- Last week, former PM Sher Bahadur Deuba returned to Nepal to welcoming crowds after six months in self-imposed exile.
- Many known fraudsters, rapists, sexual offenders roam openly in broad daylight because their victims have not bothered to pursue justice.

Rampant impunity in Nepal has sent the message to other potential crooks that they can literally get away with murder. Perhaps ordinary citizens do not pursue war criminals because they do not trust the judiciary or law enforcement to prosecute their cases.

But the anger had been building up. It



NT ARCHIVE

exploded in last year's protests, resulting later in the victory of RSP and installation of Balendra Shah as PM. Even so, there has been a remarkable lack of systematic revenge against members of the previous regime that one might have expected.

A Nepali saying goes: 'You pretend to hit me, and I will pretend to wince in pain'. Oli and Lekhak's arrest was essentially to show voters that the PM was acting decisively against past wrongdoers.

Ethno-separatist or sectarian violence in Sri Lanka or parts of India have left a legacy of bad blood and a feeling of us vs them. Nepal's Maoist insurgency, however, was a class war, after which the

guerrillas became partners in coalition governments with their sworn enemies. Both sides buried wartime excesses and let transitional justice lapse.

FRAGILE PEACE

After the decade-long insurgency ended with the ceasefire in April 2006, Nepalis were so deeply traumatised and economically drained that public sentiment turned overwhelmingly to seek normalcy, security, and an end to daily terror.

Individual vengeance was largely suppressed by a collective societal consensus to protect the fragile peace at all costs. The abolition of monarchy on 28 May 2008 itself was a civilised affair.

During the war, atrocities were committed by abstract entities — the 'insurgents' or 'state forces' — rather than purely localised personal enemies. Social psychology shows that when harm is attributed to a collective or an ideological machine, individuals find it harder to anchor personal, targeted vengeance against a single neighbour, defusing personal accountability.

The peace deal of 2006 rescued Nepal from a state of acute anomie (normlessness), where wartime lawlessness had shattered societal conventions. The sudden transition to structured peace

provided a predictable framework in which people eagerly clung to this new social order because human beings inherently crave the stability of social regulation over chaos.

Nepali anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista posited that atrocities, deaths, and disappearances are frequently rationalised as a matter of fate. The belief in reincarnation also promotes the conviction that wrongdoers will ultimately be punished in their next life, so there is no need for the victim to pursue payback in this life. Another factor could be that Nepal's elite comprises a handful of clans interconnected by kinship or patronage.

One often overlooked factor could be that a combination of labour migration and standard state compensation for conflict victims served as a critical economic safety valve that neutralised post-war vengeance in Nepal.

Together, these economic factors shifted the public focus away from retributive justice and effectively flattened deep-seated political grievances into structural financial relief.

Visitors, especially from the Subcontinent, remark on the relative lack of road rage on Nepal's highways even when there is so much reckless driving. Since everyone is breaking traffic rules anyway, there is little open anger against another road user, say, making an illegal U-turn.

Still, this hypothesis cannot lead to complacency, thus allowing grievances of excluded and discriminated groups to pile up until the rage breaks through a critical threshold to explode into violent revenge. 🇳🇵

Nirmal Niroula is Professor of Sociology at South Georgia State College in the United States. Read the longer version of his Guest Comment online.

Trending Online



Equidistance to equiproximity

Shristi Karki
Balancing national and foreign policy is crucial more now than ever. The ruling party and government must adapt to a globalised world, rather than feeding their own purposes. Read analysis at nepalitimes.com.



Most reached and shared on Facebook

The choreographies of nations

Aftab Husain
Pakistan and India celebrate Independence Day one day apart. But the daily parade of the Indo-Pakistani border forces at Wagah–Attari reveals an uncanny intimacy between the two nations. Read the article online.



Most popular on X



Geopolitical convention season

Shristi Karki
The cancellation of an academic conference on Tibet, which has now moved online, raises questions about Nepal's credibility as a space for open academic discussion and as one of the few open societies in South Asia. Full story on the website.



Most commented

If Sartre spoke Nepali

Shikha Sharma
Miss Menuka, Pavitra Khadka's adaptation of Jean-Paul Sartre's The Respectful Prostitute, allows the play to breathe in a different social and political landscape while preserving its moral urgency. Review online.



Most visited online page

Letters

GEOPOLITICS

We have full confidence that Balen will not bend over backwards as his predecessors did for the last 40 years ('Equidistance to equiproximity', Shristi Karki, #1324). He should stress people-to-people relations as the only basis for bilateral relations.

Deepak Shrestha

■ Indians have an overly suspicious mind. If it is not red under the bed, it is colour revolution every time a government changes in Nepal.

Girish Kharel

■ It is indeed shameful that Nepal is not able to give space to such a reputed international conference on Tibet ('Geopolitical convention season', Shristi Karki, #1324).

Phurba Thinley

■ The cancellation of the conference clearly shows who runs the Nepal government.

Pema Bhutia

■ The cancellation of this convention is grounds for concern, surely? What has happened to 'academic freedom' in Nepal?

David Seddon

■ What's happening with border issues with India and China will soon happen to Nepal with regard to the northern border of Nepal because of residents' similarity with Tibetan culture, although it's completely different from geopolitics. China will find a way to resolve the dispute, and Nepalis will wake up too late.

Karma Baroc

■ Free expression is a right. Sovereignty is a responsibility. South Asia should never be forced to choose between the two.

Aashish Mainali

■ Why should we host the conference? Tibet's issues are not ours.

Geez Tuzn

■ The reason why the government cancelled the program was to save Tibetan integrity. Chinese delegates wanted to join, with the sole purpose of defending anything that they deemed anti-China. You can kick out anyone when the conference is online. What would have happened if the Chinese delegates were there in the conference in person? It would have ruined the whole seminar.

Barsat Karki

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

There is always a hidden sell-by date that will then require another development loan with an attached management fee – it keeps the world going round ('Nepal's roads don't last the rains,

Ranjan Bhatta', nepalitimes.com).

Ian Wall

■ Corruption is the reason for bad roads in Nepal, so is lack of quality control and cross-checking. A result of poor leak-proofing when it comes to infrastructure building.

Lateeka Singh

DRONE REGULATIONS

Nepal should treat drones as a tourism, creative-industry and technology opportunity—not as a security problem ('Nepal can benefit by relaxing drone rules', Shuvani Singh, #1324).

Sunil Sakya

CORRECTION

Last week's story 'Equidistance to equiproximity' erroneously reported that the Prime Minister met with the US Ambassador. The story has been corrected online.

Online Package



FLOOD OF RECRIMINATION

Every monsoon there is a flood of recrimination in India about Nepal releasing water on its rivers though sluice gates on the both border barrages are controlled by India. Watch video on YouTube.



CANNABIS WEAR

Hippies used to flock to Nepal due to freedom to buy and smoke pot. Today, tourists are attracted by goods made from the marijuana plant. Story on page 10-11. Subscribe for multimedia content.

1,000 Words



SUMAN NEPALI

SPITSVILLA: Former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba returned to Nepal last week, five months after he left for Singapore. His Nepali Congress (NC) is now embroiled in a clash between his faction and the new party president Gagan Thapa. The big three parties which were sidelined in the March election are all in disarray, not able to form a united front and also riddled with internal power struggles. All of this benefits the governing RSP.



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Editor: Sonia Awale | Special Correspondent: Shristi Karki

Reporter: Sudiksha Tuladhar | Layout: Kiran Maharjan

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

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The Gorkhalis of Bangladesh

Their ancestors left Nepal to fight for the British Empire and settled in Bangladesh, and are forgotten by all three

Rehnuma Shahreen
in Dhaka

In the hill town of Rangamati in eastern Bangladesh, in the neighbourhood of Contractor Para along Jail Road lives Manoj Bahadur Gurkha, a cultural activist and musician who was born and raised here.

His ancestors were brought here 200 years ago by the British East India Company to subdue the indigenous people in the jungles between India and Burma. The area was self-governing, and even the Mughals hadn't ventured here to rule directly, preferring to collect a trade tax in the form of raw cotton from the indigenous chiefs.

The British administration later named this area 'Chittagong Hill Tracts' when it annexed, and separated the hilly region from the greater Chattogram district in 1860. These hills were the ancestral land of the Kuki, Lushai, Senduj indigenous groups who were not disturbed by politics of the plains.

But conflict in the Arakan region of Burma brought waves of refugees to seek safe haven in the hills. This rapid growth in the resettled population created ethnic tension across the Chittagong Hill Tracts with a cycle of violence between 1837-1854.



ALL PHOTOS: THE BANGLADESH TRIBUNE



The British military faced practical difficulties in this environment, their soldiers were accustomed to the plains and struggled in the steep, densely forested hills. The Kuki, for their part, knew their home terrain well and used it to their advantage.

After several unsuccessful attempts to quell the rebellion, the British realised that their regular forces were ill-suited for mountain guerrilla warfare. They needed

a force naturally adapted to the environment.

"The British had no experience fighting in the hills and jungles back then," explains Manoj Bahadur, speaking in Bangla. "In their heavy leather boots, they were useless on the slippery mountain clay. They fell into the Kukis' traps and were easily outmanoeuvred. To fight fire with fire, the British decided to deploy the 2nd Gurkha Regiment from the British Indian Army."

AYO GORKHALI

The British first started recruiting Nepal's soldiers after the Sugauli Treaty ended the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-1816. Soon after, Nepalis were fighting in the Afghan Campaign of 1847 and were instrumental in quelling the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Gurkhas served in both World Wars, including in pushing back the Japanese from Burma in 1945.

They still serve in the Gorkha Rifles of the Indian Army, Brigade of Gurkhas in the British military, in the Gurkha Contingent of Singapore Police, in Brunei and Oman. (The word 'Gurkha' is an anglicised version of Gorkha, the original name of unified Nepal).

The Gorkhalis of present day Bangladesh have lived here for at least seven generations, descendants of the soldiers who stayed on.

Says Manoj Bahadur: "There is a fundamental difference between us and the other hill communities who migrated to the hills fleeing conflict. But we did not come here of our own accord, our forebears were brought here to fight."

British expansion into Bengal began in earnest following the Battle of Plassey in 1757. As they consolidated their hold over what is now Chittagong, the East India Company's attention turned toward the rugged, forested region tucked away between Tripura in what is now India, and Arakan in present-day Burma. This area was known as the Kapas Mahal, a name the Mughals gave because the

BRIEFS

Turkish to Chengdu

Turkish Airlines flies to more countries than any other carrier, and is now launching thrice weekly flights to Chengdu of Sichuan Province in China from 11 November. Following Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Guangzhou, Chengdu will become the fifth destination in China served by the flag carrier.



Chengdu is one of China's most prominent metropolitan centres and is a major hub for trade, logistics, and finance, hosting numerous multinational companies operating in strategic industries such as electronics, automotive, aviation, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence.

Says Turkish Airlines CEO Ahmet Olmüstür: "China holds a strategically important position among Turkish Airlines' key markets. With the launch of our flights to Chengdu, one of China's foremost tourism, technology, and aviation centres, and a UNESCO City of Gastronomy, we are further strengthening our flight network in the country."

India-Nepal digipay

NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has committed to strengthening digital payment connectivity between India and Nepal such as growing adoption of QR-based UPI payments. India remains among the leading source of tourist arrivals each year with over 290,000 visitors in 2025.

Electricity export

Nepal earned a total of Rs29.324 billion from electricity exports to India and Bangladesh in the fiscal year 2025/26. Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has 12,000MW of projects in the pipeline, but a new VAT on customers consuming more than 150 units per month has dampened use. NEA is working on reducing power tariffs to compensate. Minister for Energy Biraj Bhakta Shrestha says this week generation capacity and increasing exports are not as important as boosting domestic consumption.

Subisu Royals

Subisu Limited is the internet partner for Sudurpaschim Royals for the upcoming season of Nepal Premier League (NPL). Binaya Mohan Saud of Subisu says, "Through this collaboration, we are trying to join the excitement of cricket with the experience of quality internet. We will continue working towards the promotion and development of Nepali cricket."



UNFPA + WHO

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have launched a new initiative 'Strengthening Systems for Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Gender-Based Violence Services' to be implemented in 20 municipalities in Kosi, Madhes and Sudurpaschim Provinces with financial assistance from Royal Norwegian Embassy and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).



Samsung fold fones

Samsung Nepal has launched the Samsung Z Fold8 Series with smart watches. The Galaxy Z Fold8 Ultra, Galaxy Z Fold8 and Galaxy Z Flip8, alongside Galaxy Watch9 and Galaxy Watch Ultra2 were unveiled, reflecting Samsung's commitment to design, durability, portability and software.

Prabhu Bank

Prabhu Bank has launched its new auto loan and home loan schemes, both at 0.50% premium per annum. The scheme can be accessed from all branches of Prabhu Bank.

NADA Auto Show

The 18th edition of NADA Auto Show is scheduled for 25-30 August 2026 and will mark NADA's golden jubilee with 200 stalls comprising 23 passenger vehicles, 17 light commercial vehicles and 13 two-wheeler stalls. It will also feature G1 Humanoid Robot and a Go2 Quadruped Robot along with other automobile attractions.

Ather Nepal

Ather Nepal managed to secure more than 500 bookings at the NAIMA Mobility Expo 2026. Ather showcased its latest products, technologies and ownership ecosystem; focused on strengthening the fundamentals of electric mobility and battery assurance.

Tila 1 Hydropower

Tila 1 Hydropower Project has received financial closure by NMB Bank. Meanwhile, Himalayan Bank and Prabhu Bank are co-lead bank in this 440MW hydropower located in Kalikot. The first year is expected to bring an income of Rs11.4 billion, and the project is expected to start commercial production by 31 December 2030.

Tata carnival

Sipradi Trading has announced Tata Carnival from 20-23 August which will feature recently launched new Punch.ev and Tiago.ev. Customers can avail exchange offers and take home new Tata cars by using their old cars as downpayment.

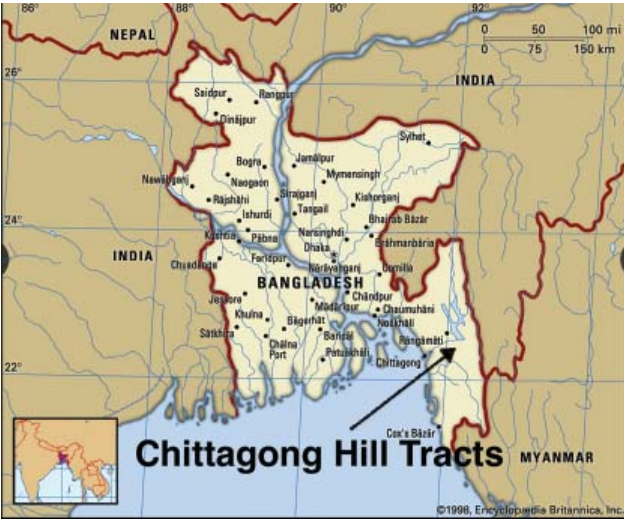
Ncell rates

Ncell has revised its pulse rate for international outgoing calls to 198 countries. The new 60-second pulse rate was implemented in accordance with the Telecommunications Act, 2053 and with approval from the Nepal Telecommunications Authority.



Indian COAS in Nepal

General Dhiraj Seth, Indian Army COAS was in Nepal for a four-day official visit this week and was conferred honorary rank of general in the Nepali Army by President Ram Chandra Paudel. General Seth also met with Prime Minister Balendra Shah, who is also Defence Minister. Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava was also present.



THE NEPALI WORLD: (clockwise)
A framed photograph of Prithvi Narayan Shah in the music studio of Manoj Bahadur Gurkha, a descendant of Nepali soldiers brought by the British to fight in the Chittagong Hill Tracts 200 years ago. He also observes Bhanu Jayanti every year to celebrate the Nepali language.

Gorkhali families are assimilating through intermarriage, and many prefer to wed ethnic Nepalis from Assam.

The street where the Gorkhali community lives in the town of Rangamati. Bangladesh's Gorkhali community now live in many districts of Bangladesh, including Rangamati, Bandarban, Dhaka, Mymensingh, and Kustia.

indigenous people grew cotton.
Captain T H Lewin, the first Deputy Commissioner of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, provided a first-hand account of Gurkha soldiers in his book 'A Fly on the Wheel'. He described the 1871-72 Lusai Expedition, where the 2nd Gurkha Regiment, commanded by Colonel H Macpherson, arrived at Kassalong (a forest in Rangamati) to quell the rebellion.
Lewin was struck by the efficiency of the soldiers from Nepal, describing them as 'splendid little fellows' who operated with 'a quiet, disciplined intensity'. Their fighting style was unlike anything the local tribes had encountered.
Raised in the rugged mountains of Nepal, the Gorkhali troops were masters of the hills and forest and would scamper up high into the upper branches of trees on sentry duty, and wait for hours in silence, observing enemy movements.
This combination of mountain-hardened endurance and specialised tactics eventually brought the conflict to an end. The Lusai, realising they could not defeat a force that was as

comfortable in the jungle as they were, agreed to a treaty to end the conflict in the Chittagong Hills.
However, the British administration did not fully trust that the peace would hold, so they devised a plan to use the Gurkhas as a permanent protective barrier. In the conclusion of his book, Lewin explains that he sought permission from Calcutta to bring emigrants from Nepal to colonise the frontier.
These Gurkha colonies were established in the Myinee Valley in early 1873, a northern tributary of the Karnaphuli River. This area had previously been uninhabited because people feared Kuki and Lushai raids. By settling the Nepali soldiers and their families there, the British created a buffer from other warlike groups to the east.
The importance of this settlement was later solidified in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Act of 1900 under which the British designated the Myinee Valley as a 'special area', keeping it free from administrative control of local chiefs, ensuring that the Gurkha settlement remained a distinct, strategic government outpost.

India became independent in 1947, East Pakistan was partitioned and later became Bangladesh, and the Gorkhali families from Nepal were gradually forgotten — left out of memory and never recognised for their role in shaping the history and geography of this region.
"We were brought here by the British to keep the peace, and we did," Manoj Bahadur says. "Because of that, there is a lingering sense of hurt within our community. Naturally, when your ancestors have made such a heavy contribution, you expect some level of recognition. We came here, we shed blood, and we helped bring peace. Yet today, barely anyone in Bangladesh even knows a Gurkha community exists here."
The Gorkhalis have also been historically marginalised in mainstream in Bangladesh, and it was only in 2018 that the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Dhaka finally listed the 'Gurkha' as among 50 recognised indigenous groups in the country. Even so, the descendants of Nepali fighters have no representation on the Hill District Council, the

Regional Council, or any local administrative bodies that they helped establish two centuries ago.
Many older folk still speak Nepali with a heavy Bangla accent, but they are worried about the younger generation losing the language and customs. They say maintaining their Nepali heritage has become increasingly difficult. A lack of formal education has also hindered the growth of a strong sense of Bangladeshi national identity.
But economic survival remains the most difficult challenge even though following the 2018 recognition, finding jobs has become slightly easier as teachers, in government or the private sector.
Most of the 30 Gorkhali families in Rangamati keep their Nepali culture alive through music, art and observance of festivals. After the 1947 Partition of India, many returned to Nepal, while others crossed over to India.
Governments back home in Nepal also do not seem to know about these remnants of soldiers who fought and died for the British

Empire, and are among the nearly 10 million ethnic Nepalis scattered today across India, Bhutan, Burma, Thailand and Malaysia.
The number of Gorkhali families is also dwindling because of intermarriage with Bengali Hindus, with indigenous communities of the Hill Tracts, or with Nepalis from Assam which they prefer because of ethnic affinity.
Over generations of isolation, the Nepali spoken by Bangladeshi Gorkhalis blends with Bengali, evolving into a distinct local dialect, though they still write using the Devanagari script.
While they worship Kali, Durga and Saraswati just like Bangladesh's Hindus, the rituals and customs still retain their distinct Nepaliness.
Manoj Bahadur notes, "Our customs differ from those in Nepal. Over there, things have modernised but here, we still follow the same traditional rules and rituals our ancestors brought with them two centuries ago."
Interestingly, Manoj Bahadur observes the birth anniversary of Bhanubhakta Acharya, the earliest Nepali poet with a Bhanu Jayanti event at his music school, Surniketan. In his studio he has a large framed portrait of King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha, the unifier of Nepal in the 18th century.
But he also hosts events celebrating the Bengali literary giants like Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam and has translated their works into Nepali.
"We no longer expect much from governments," he says quietly. "We are largely to blame for our current situation. But we are finally working to change things. Perhaps we are a little late, but I remain hopeful that the next generation will keep our identity alive." 🇳🇵

Adapted and reprinted with permission from The Bangladesh Tribune.



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NEPAL AND THE NEW WORLD DISORDER

Excerpts from **Rajib Upadhyay’s** new book *Giants at the Gates: Nepal in a World of Reorder*

NEPAL’S POST-1990 FOREIGN POLICY

Since 1990, Nepal’s foreign policy has mustered little innovation, confidence, or drive. Nor has it even had to try. Notwithstanding their social democratic pedigree, the new ruling elite from the Nepali Congress party enjoyed little room for maneuver or fallback. With Moscow in decline, Europe preoccupied with reintegrating its eastern flank, Beijing struggling to reclaim legitimacy after the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, and New Delhi vigorously embracing IMF-prescribed reforms during the 1991 peak of a humiliating balance of payments crisis, the new government was left with few options but to sing along to the song-sheet of liberal universalism eulogized suchlike in Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*. And as ideological lines blurred in the West and the ‘globalists’ made their big, international push for neoliberalism through bilateral diplomacy and multilateral aid, Kathmandu soon became an early adopter of the Washington Consensus.

Three decades on and several experiments later, Nepal finds herself back in the clutches of clientelist politics, firmly in the grip of special interests. While the rest of the world resets its goals to reflect new and emerging realities, Nepal’s priorities appear increasingly inchoate. Between a citizenry inured to circumstance, a ruling class impervious to outrage, and friends abroad prone to conflating failures so conspicuous with ‘resilience’, Nepalis, by and large, find their life choices reduced to a sad binary: escape Nepal or be thankful for small mercies.

NEPAL-INDIA-CHINA TRIANGULATION

India-China relations matter deeply to Nepal, for they determine the potential triangulation of interests and our ultimate path to scale. Take it from a Nepali—a neighbor

adjacent to both; landlocked and dwarfed by geography and demography alike: India and China bring different strengths to the table. More of India should not have to mean less of China. And more of China should not have to mean less of India.

Be that as it may, our border regions are having to serve as unspoken cordons sanitaires and undeclared spheres of influence, not because of our compatriots’ rightful stations there, but owing to the ‘security first’ disposition of our neighbors. To be fair, much of this is of our own doing too. If only we were to approach our neighbors as co-creators rather than inhibitors. If only we were to treat our geolocation as a pride of place rather than a bad hand dealt by nature. And if only we were to bring three-way value proposition to the tremendous upsides of civilizational overlap. It may very well take the thick skin of a Nelson Mandela and the clever brains of a Lee Kuan Yew, but a meaningful trifecta could still be within generational reach should we put our hearts and minds to it.

Not that Kathmandu can effect a rapprochement between New Delhi and Beijing on its own. But we can do more than just moan on the sidelines. The onus still lies on our diplomatic machinery to promote strategic convergences. And in doing so, we should not miss any opportunity to assert that Nepal’s interests do not deserve to be held hostage to an uneasy peace between our estranged neighbors.

A NEIGHBORING SUPERPOWER

While the story of China’s rise to global superpower is awe-inspiring, its prescriptions for prosperity are frustratingly tangential to Nepal. China’s political economy and her institutions of governance are decidedly unique. That said, Nepalis should still find many levels of developmental learning. But to take advantage, Nepal must invest in sharpening our faculties and cultivating curiosity to experience China firsthand. All too often, we subject our understanding of the Chinese



civilizational mindset, cultural DNA, and contemporary worldview to hackneyed accounts recycled from the West.

If the outgoing unipolar order is to be replaced with an incoming multipolar one, someone might as well take a crack at articulating it. And who better than the Chinese? But any depiction of Beijing as a force for good seems to fly in the face of closet ‘cold warriors’ and their credo that security is zero-sum; all or nothing.

A RISING NEIGHBOR

India’s development choices still bedevil an influential section of her professional class. As bizarre as it may sound, this disquiet is actually more salient and intelligible to a similarly challenged Nepal. By sheer size and spread, India’s predicaments appear enormous. Yet they are also instinctively relatable on a human scale, for India and Nepal share many of the same exigencies that our political, administrative, and economic practices commonly demand. Shared antecedents and belief systems, cultural familiarity, and even a partiality for contemporary regional pop culture help anchor the construct of an ‘imagined community’ between large swathes of our peoples.

While there is little to doubt in the vast reservoirs of fellowship that prevails between our peoples, one must also acknowledge the presence of loose cannons and poison pills. Unfortunately, when signaling is indistinguishable from noise and spats spill outside of the realm of coded, restrained diplomacy, bilateral cooperation tends to take the hardest hit. Our recent diplomatic history bears witness to several dark moments when red lines were trampled, oblivious to potential consequences. All too often, we take inconsiderate liberties with each other nowadays. After all, red lines exist for good reasons. They mark the boundaries of vital interests and sovereign sensitivities that nation-states hold sacrosanct.

Few would doubt that the Nepal-India relationship is unique if not ‘special’. But not in ways that the policy hawks in New Delhi tend to constrain it to reductionist and outworn Nehruvian ideas. The adjective ‘special’ is highly loaded

to Nepali ears when applied to ‘relationship’, as prime minister Nehru was once fond of describing India’s relations with Bhutan and pre-annexation Sikkim as ‘special’ as well. Nepalis like to believe that ours is a far more nuanced one. Yet we must also acknowledge that our relationship is by no means exclusive, lest we find ourselves fulminating endlessly over schoolyard issues. Striking that sweet spot and maintaining a delicate balance is crucial—our history stands testimony to the likelihood of mishaps occurring when we sway too far.

CHINA, INDIA AND THE WEST

Having aided and abetted China’s phenomenal rise for a heady four decades, the West is now experiencing a severe bout of buyer’s remorse. It rides roughshod over Beijing at every opportunity because the reigning superpower, the US, has trained the challenger in its crosshairs as a ‘pacing’ peer-competitor. India, on the other hand, has long been handled with kid gloves. If anything, the rise of China has concomitantly elevated India’s profile as a regional counterweight; a ‘doorstop’ to Beijing’s ambitions. In this calculus, the US and its allies often pitch India as a ‘pro-West bulwark’ in Asia—a stamp that New Delhi sometimes welcomes with a wink

and a nod but, at others, stridently protests. After all, ‘strategic ambiguity’ is a valid practice in the conduct of foreign policy.

India is today where China was in 2008: a \$4 trillion economy with a per capita nominal GDP of \$2600. With thirty million people entering the middle class every year, there is little reason to doubt that India will be close to where China is today by the 2040s: an \$18 trillion economy with a GDP per capita of \$13,500. Barring the unforeseen, New Delhi would also likely be asserting its economic, diplomatic, and military heft in the direction of cementing the multipolar order—moves that could be further misread in the West as India having also grown too big for its britches. 2026 will be an interesting year to witness the reshaping of global power relations, especially as India chairs the BRICS as the voice of the Global South and the US leads the G20 as the presiding deity of the Western-led order.

NEPAL’S CASE FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Climate .. is both our identity and our destiny. It is central to understanding how we have evolved as a people, a society, a nation, and a civilization. To the extent we rally fitting stewardship, climate will determine the security of our future. Meanwhile, in

Nepal in a multipolar world

Nepali Times: Why do you say that the 2020s will be a pivotal decade for the world and Nepal?

Rajib Upadhyay: The 2020 pandemic presaged the unravelling of collaborative multilateralism. The 2022 outbreak of war in Europe exposed the foibles of Western hegemony. The 2023 genocide in Gaza declared the demise of the liberal secular order. The 2026 fiasco in the Hormuz Strait revealed to the world that the global policeman has lost its shiny gun. Meanwhile, China is winning every race without having to fire a single shot. With a resurgent Russia, Beijing is roping in the non-Western world’s support for ‘changes not seen in a century’.

Is this why ‘multipolarity’ is suddenly a buzzword in global affairs?

Post-World War II generations everywhere are contesting the fidelity of their taught history and received wisdom. Multipolarity offers a peaceful, logical anchor for interstate relations. It represents the best hope for overhauling international institutions and bringing them up to snuff to urgently, competently, and inclusively address the big questions of our time: war and peace, the climate chaos, social inequalities, debt distress, and human security for all. Multipolarity is about reinventing multilateralism, not rejecting it.



Kathmandu, the response to our climate dilemmas has been dumbed down to a mere ‘development’ problem, bureaucratized as one more check-box for surly Singha Durbar to tick off. Something as core to our essence deserves a far higher, heavier lift in our national consciousness, one would think. Merely updating Nationally Determined Commitment (NDC) documents and costing them upward at every Conference of Parties (CoP) to mirror the latest pie-in-the-sky funding assumptions will simply not cut it.

Nepal risks losing far more in climate loss and damage every year than it can ever hope to redeem through poverty alleviation programs, social investments, economic growth, and development. Yet the last things we need are corporate greenwashing, donor double-dipping, and myriad ‘green-collar’ hustles masquerading as climate finance.

THE NUCLEAR THREAT TO NEPAL

Deterrence and diplomacy are two legs on which the nuclear security regime has stood since the Cold War. But neither approach holds reliably in today’s world where the number of nuclear-armed states has expanded; technical information is imperfect and harder to acquire; threat perceptions and command-and-control structures are trickier to read; ‘no first use’ principles and second-strike capabilities are compromised by technological advances in cyber-warfare, low-yield tactical nuclear weaponry and hypersonic glide vehicles; and arms limitation treaties and inspection and verification regimes have broken down.

Responding to the recklessness with which the big powers have taken to rattling the nuclear sabre, and reacting to how they appear to have lost their fear of nuclear war, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in early 2026 advanced the iconic Doomsday Clock by four spots to 85 seconds to midnight—the closest that humankind has approached global catastrophe.

Although Nepal is a bystander in the nuclear arms race and an improbable target for direct attack, intensifying rivalries between India, Pakistan, and China still expose us to destabilization risks. Should one draw a Venn diagram to illustrate overlaps in the striking ranges between the nuclear stockpiles that each maintains, Nepal would lie smack in the middle, way too close for comfort. The threat of an accident and the risk of miscalculation multiply several-fold as one prices in the premise that the nuclear race in South Asia is, in fact, four-way: while Pakistan ensures that it does not fall behind India, India is responding to China’s force expansion. China, for its part, is attempting nuclear parity with the US. Any which way, Nepal is an unwitting participant.



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

LESSONS FROM THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Wars, they say, are clarifying. “The sword will carve what the pen will sign,” as one axiom has it. Once the guns fall silent, military strategists will analyze the Russia-Ukraine theater for combat lessons in every battle move and all manner of Wunderwaffe deployed or disabled. Economists will assess the impact of military Keynesianism on Russia’s economic resurgence. Peacemongers will shock us with the scale of human loss.

In Nepal, lessons in prevention and peacebuilding will be far more pertinent, heaven forbid, should we ever be lured into a proxy situation even fractionally on this scale. Understanding how Ukraine got swept up in the drumbeats of war pounded by faraway patrons should encourage us to identify our own vulnerabilities in order to reinforce our guardrails around national sovereignty, over and above what we have already worked into our constitutional practices. As someone wise once said, “great powers don’t lose wars, they only lose interest.” This should serve as a blunt reminder that the only guarantor of national security is the nation-state itself.

For small nations like Nepal, it only makes sense that a robust defense of international law and its instruments of multilateral enforcement should form a rational substitute for hard power. After all, the ultimate security guarantee derives from not having enemies and desisting from posing threats to one’s bigger neighbors. Mencius, the 4th-century BCE Chinese

philosopher, offers handy advice: “Great powers should be benevolent and small states should be wise.”

THE COMING RESET IN THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SYSTEM

Governments around the world are watching the dollar system with trepidation, quietly shopping for alternatives. Many wish to not remain at the mercy of any single reserve currency. The question being asked of America today is: Did enlightened minds like George Washington, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton ever intend to allow the US Treasury free rein to wage unilateral economic warfare against anyone and everyone it pleases? Madison himself provides useful insight in the Federalist Papers: “Enlightened people will not always be at the helm.”

But the search for a wholesale replacement of the dollar system will remain elusive, at least for the time being. Barring an outright geopolitical breakdown, the world will likely settle for a financial architecture where parallel universes compete, coexist, and often overlap. Yet this is hardly the first time that the Global South is calling for a reset. As early as May 1974, the Group of 77 coalition comprising postcolonial and developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, called for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and rallied behind proposed revisions to trade rules, reforms to the international monetary system, and new forms of South-South cooperation. As a founding member, Nepal has lent its voice to the G77 agenda since 1964.

The will for equity and fairness lacked agency in the past. Aspirations for amends were limited largely to lofty speeches in the halls of ‘Third World’ diplomacy and in the progressive discourse of rarefied symposia. Today, it has entered the mainstream in discussions about multipolarity.

NEPAL’S 2025 YOUTH UPRISING

While it can be parsed in many ways, the uprising belies decades of creeping disillusionment with Nepal’s ‘one-day democracy’, desperately in need of some tough love.



Yet if democracy is still the answer, the uprising reminds us of the question: to what end? Predictably, armchair analysts—many apologists for the old guard—spot the globalist ‘deep state’ unleashing its ‘toolkit’ on Kathmandu. Fight, flight, freeze, or fawn, resident powers under threat often smell conspiracies where there are none. A false flag here; a red herring there—they will try to cling to privilege and kill all green shoots of change. This, by now, is second nature to

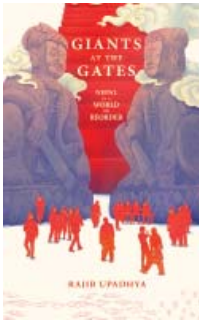
them— obfuscation and plausible deniability—as regular Nepalis increasingly reject political panaceas and economic edicts that are forever short on delivery but still in circulation well past their shelf lives. It may well have been the case that the online platforms of youth mobilization were affiliated with the West. But so were the targets of their ire: crony capitalism, suave socialism, and cosmopolitan communism.

LEARNING FROM OUR PAST

It would be highly presumptuous on the part of any student of Nepal today to embark upon yet another grandiose inquiry into the political, social, and economic breakdowns that possibly every Nepali is a victim already. Governance, justice, rule of law, economic management, entrepreneurship, social mobility—Nepalis are hardly hankering for another discursive exposition on the privations of their everyday lives.

There is really no mystery to the art and science of development. By now, well into our 16th Five Year Development Plan, practitioners from many disciplines and spanning many generations have all acquired top-class mastery over the whys and wherefores of our circumstances. Yet we let our guard slip; allowed our sense of urgency to slide somewhere in the political theatre and hollow rhetoric. Where we were meant to fortify the economic foundations of our young democracy, we went about building castles in the air. We lost sight of the very pathways we promised ourselves: committed leadership, strong and inclusive institutions, skilled and healthy human resources, open markets, modern infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and effective governance. Put another way, we never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

Shape up or ship out; the gig is up—the message of the September 2025 youth uprising could not be any starker. Duck and cover tactics will no longer apply. Our leaders cannot go on behaving like holdouts from a different era, constantly condemning the past or conjuring up fanciful futures. It will take a certain kind of grit, pluck, and ingenuity to thread that needle—the type that can dwell on the here and now.

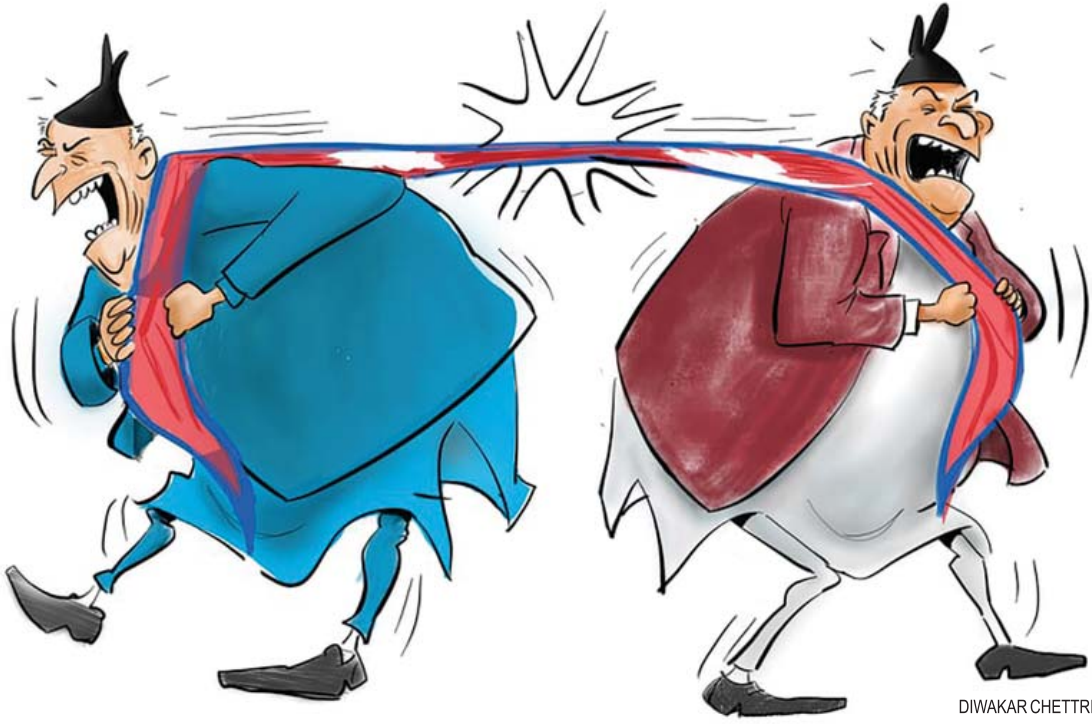


Giants at the Gates
Nepal in a World of Reorder
by Rajib Upadhyaya
FinePrint, Kathmandu August 2026



Your previous book *Cabals and Cartels* was about Nepal held back by domestic constraints. Has anything changed for us to benefit from this reordering?

While India and China both position themselves as natural heirs to the leadership of the Global South, Nepal is eminently placed to speak truth to power. We can hold the mirror up ever higher to invoke the esprit de corps that both our neighbours swear by. And we can call them out if they ever lapse into what they once condemned. By expanding our touch points with the rising powers and straddling multiple, overlapping circles of friends, we stand to bring significant assets to bear. But to benefit from the grand bargain that a multipolar order promises, we must cleanse our worldview of the claustrophobia that clouds it. We must expand our mind-space to explore every realm of possibility.



DIWAKAR CHETTRI



Events



The Age of Darkness

The Age of Darkness follows a fracturing society where hope is scarce, and the narrative follows interconnected individuals navigating a landscape stripped of moral certainty. Catch a show at Mandala. **Until 30 August, 5:30pm, Mandala Theatre, Thapagaun**

South Asian heritage

Taragaon's new exhibition, What Empire Took, What Empire Left, confronts the removal of deities, manuscripts, and ritual objects from across South Asia, and their reclassification within Western museums. **23 August onwards, Taragaon Next, Boudha**



Game Tournament

Play Bluff Momo, a bluff game by Tumlet. Winners will be awarded prizes. Join for a day of games, competition, connection, and music. **22 August, Rs250, 2pm onwards, Dhokaima Cafe, Patandhoka**

Two Hearts One Canvas

Sri Lankan artists, Prof. Dr. Manoranjana Herath Bandara S.A. Nilanthi Dilini Perrera, who are partners, put up their artworks on display. Read review on page 12. **Until 9 September, Kala Salon, Chhaya Center, Thamel**

The Lhasa Newa

The Lhasa Newa: Centuries of trade and beyond captures the essence of trade in ancient Nepal through photographs from Pratek Man Tuladhar's collection. **22 August-5 September, Patan Museum**



Vajra Market

A wide range of delicacies and organic produce will be available at the pet-friendly Vajra Market. The market also has art and craft and painting stalls. **Saturdays, 9am-2pm, Hotel Vajra, Swayambhu**

Himalayan Art Festival 2026

The 2026 festival honours Batsa Gopal Vaidya, and includes a Ranjana Lipi workshop, poetry, and panel discussion. **21-27 August, 11am-7pm (Opening day: 5:30pm), Nepal Arts Council, Baber Mahal**



Music

The Eagles tribute

Witness the timeless tunes of The Eagles sung live. The event is a collaboration of Moksh and Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. **29 August, Rs800, 7:30pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel**

Shaan in Nepal

Noted Bollywood singer Shaan will be live in Nepal next week. Sing along to his biggest hits throughout the night. **22 August, Rs4,000, 9pm onwards, Club Nova, Thamel**



Mark Band

Mark Band takes the stage with soulful melodies, guaranteeing the audience an unforgettable evening. **21 August, 6pm onwards, Hard Rock Cafe, Darbar Marg**

Shanti People

Shanti People are set to spread hypnotic beats and spiritual energy with their fusion of Vedic mantras and psychedelic trance **22 August, 9pm, XO Club, Thamel**



Amit Jung and Gorkhey

Watch Amit Jung & Gorkhey perform tunes that are a fusion of folk and modern. **22 August, Rs750-Rs1,000, 6pm, Eden Amphitheatre, Sanepa**



Getaway



Dahlia Boutique Hotel

A luxury hotel at the bank of Phewa Lake with a panoramic mountain and city view, Dahlia Botique Hotel is a good end to a memorable trek. **Lakeside, Pokhara (061) 466505**

Shivapuri Heights Cottage

Shivapuri Heights Cottage is the ideal retreat for nature enthusiasts, and its Neeru's Spa offers a touch of wellness, with soothing massages and therapies designed to melt away tension. **Budhanilkantha, 9841258666**



Green Valley Resort

Just beyond Budhanilkantha at Green Valley Resort, enjoy a cool breeze as you take a stroll around the Tamang Valley. This place is perfect for those who want a taste of home without venturing far away from the city. **Shivapuri National Park, (01) 5248092 / 9851351881**

The Old Inn

This B&B consists of two beautiful timber and brick Newa townhouses and traditional design, overlooking a serene, traffic-free bazaar. The view of Central Himalaya from Annapurna in the west to Langtang and beyond in the east is magnificent. **Bandipur, Tanahu (065) 520110 / 9808882270**

Gokarna Forest Resort

The resort is a paradise, thick with century old trees rustling out natural tunes and great restaurants for fine dining. An ideal retreat for golf enthusiasts. **Gokarna (01) 4450002**



Dining

Casa Mexicana

Enjoy a taste of Mexico with an assortment of tacos, quesadillas and tres leches cakes. From vegetarian to meat options, anyone can try authentic Mexican dishes. **Gairidhara / Patan, 9840542082**

Pawan Sweets

Enjoy sweets, South Indian cuisines and other meals at Pawan. The Pawan Special Dosa is a must-try. **Baneshwor (01) 5906437**



Bungalow Bar & Kitchen

At Bungalow Bar and Kitchen, one can have authentic Thai dishes like Som Tam Essan, Pad Kra Pao and Red Curry, or asian - fusion dishes like the Pork Bamboo Shoot, Buff Lemon Grass and Fried Calamari, all with a side of refreshing cocktails. **Naxal, Bhatbhateni, 9802032396/ 980106830**

Koto

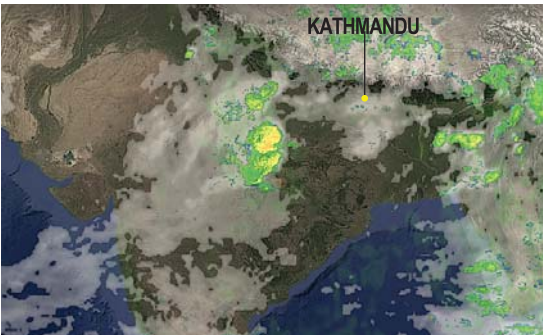
Maki sushi, cold or fried tofu, tempura, fried chicken, miso soup, chicken karage, Katsu Don, anything to satisfy one's Japanese food craving is right at the restaurant. **Darbar Marg (01) 5320346**



Le Sherpa x FUEGO

Le Sherpa x FUEGO, Bangkok come together for an exclusive dining collaboration celebrating the spirit of Spain with a Japanese twist. Crafted for a limited number of guests. Reserve now. **26-27 August, 6pm-8pm / 8pm-10pm, Le Sherpa, Maharajgang, 9801159480 / (01) 4528604**

Weekend Weather



Rains Continue

The periphery of a large low pressure circulation over central and northern India is affecting the Himalayan foothills with heavy showers. Forecasts show that hefty rain will continue over the weekend. Most parts of Nepal, except the Tarai, have seen normal or above normal rainfall, however the precipitation totals mask heavy downpours and long dry periods. The western coastal regions of India have recorded rainfall 14% below normal this monsoon because of weak moisture accumulation in the Arabian Sea, which is likely to persist.



Our Pick

The 2026 drama follows a couple, Joe and Angela, whose marriage is on thin ice, as they invite their eccentric upstairs neighbours, Pina and Hawk, for a dinner party that takes an unexpected turn. Olivia Wilde's third directorial is a remake of the Spanish film The People Upstairs, and balances comedy with a poignant portrayal of a failing marriage. Starring Penelope Cruz, Seth Rogan, Olivia Wilde, and Edward Norton, The Invite is available to watch on Amazon Prime.

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

A goodbye note to the people’s poet

Durgalal Shrestha showed Newa-speaking people that it is possible to live with your language



I popped my head inside Musician Nhyoo Bajracharya’s DoReMi Pathshala studio to tell him I was done with my lesson for the day.

An elderly man, with a burst of thick gray hair, seated on the sofa, looked at me and asked, “Cha Uraay ni khaa la?” (Are you Uraay’s daughter?)

Nhyoo Sir had told him about my father. The man was the poet, Dugalal Shrestha.

As we connected dots, identified non-familial but social ties, I was asked to sit down, and asked the poet how he could tell I was Uraay’s daughter. He said the way I speak Newa gives it away. Only a poet can read the lilt in one’s voice.

In the days that followed, I would always make sure to go into Nhyoo Sir’s office to listen if Durgalal Taaba was visiting. I had learned to call him Taaba quickly. In Nepali, Thulo Bua. Someone like a guardian.

Nhyoo Sir would sit there strumming his guitar and Durgalal Taaba would sit near him, weaving words into the music. Sometimes the other way round. Some days, I got to listen to a stanza taking shape and other days, completed songs.

If I was passing through the corridor, and there was the sound of Nhyoo Sir’s guitar and the voice of Durgalal Taaba, I would always knock and step into the office.

I had never before met a man who spoke Newa like Taaba did. I grew up in a Newa-speaking household, where we fling the language at each for its utilitarian purpose, never thinking too much about the way it is spoken. Except when my father sings. But when Taaba spoke, it was



something else. He spoke in Poetry.

As a teenager trying to use up my time between schools, I got interested in new hobbies and soon dropped out of DoReMi and so my free sessions with the artist duo was over.

In 2004, my father had a call from Durgalal Shrestha, asking if I would be interested in translating his poems. As a child, like many of us do, I had aspired to write poetry. But I was not sure if I was qualified to translate his verse. Still, the lure of being near the poet made me say yes. And so began a small chapter in my life, when I would go to Durgalal Shrestha’s Thamel home, eat the baji prepared by Taama (his wife), read his poems, listen and translate.

A couple of times, we rode in taxis from Thamel to Tabachal, to Writer and Translator Tirtha Raj Tuladhar’s house, to get help on the accurate interpretation of nuances.

An octogenarian then, Tuladhar was beginning to lose focus, as we all do with age. He would grope for the right word in his mind and falter. One time he said: “Durgalal, ji khatam jula,” I’m over.

Taaba told him the words would come back because that is the nature of words. They always find us, he said. I remember that moment like now because there was despair in that moment, but there was also the offering of hope. And it is hope that keeps us still.

I translated 223 of Taaba’s little poems and Poet Rajnimila

translated about a hundred. They were eventually edited by D B Gurung and published in the form of a book — a story for another day.

I didn’t see much of Durgalal Taaba after that. I would run into him at events or meet someone in the family.

In 2018 SAFU, Srijanalaya and Books for Asia brought out his work Dhapla Khyah. His song Phool Ko Aankha ma sung famously by Ani Choying was released in 2020. Then in 2023, SAFU’s English translation of his work Chiniyamha Kisicha came out. Dhapla Khyah is a lore children grow-up singing, and to see it in the form of a book made my heart jump with joy.

Taaba had always shown Newa-speaking people that it was possible to live with your language, even at a time when Newa people were taught to be ashamed of their mother tongue.

HEY MAKKA

In the 1990s, a musical album, Chulichiya Chan Chan, a collection of Newa songs for children, was released. The songs were written by Durgalal Taaba, tuned by various composers, sung by children. The songs became a gift to children who had been compelled to listen to songs in other languages because no content of that nature had existed before.

The songs came to be taught in some schools. One of the songs from the album, Hey Makka, is still hummed by non-Newa friends from Rato Bangala School.

When the album came out, I was in a school run by Anglo-Indians, where I said the Catholic prayer every morning. I had learned propriety. At home, the voices of girls close to my age singing in Newa reverberating through the rooms, gave me reason to laugh. It is curious what joy familiarity can bring! Hey Makka!

I felt the same way again last year, when I was sitting in Durgalal Taaba’s drawing room in his Budanilkantha home. My Baa, my Kaka and I had gone for

a visit. We spent an afternoon talking to Taaba, and his son, Suman [uncle].

I listened to them speak — people of letters. Their Newa was deliberate, composed, and yet soft and smooth. While I was filled with a tinge of envy for their speaking skills, I also felt a deep connection to my mother tongue.

When we were leaving, Taaba held both my hands and thanked me for the work I had done for him as a teenager. I put my head to his hands and thanked him for trusting me.

I saw Taaba again yesterday. Before him, I saw Taama. Clad in red, as she always is, she was seated outside their bedroom, her feet propped up on a stool, tears streaming down her face. It had been less than 12 hours since Taaba passed away.

The afternoons I had spent with the couple in their Thamel home came to me in flashes.

And my last visit to their Budanilkantha home, when she had sat near him, beaming as he conversed with the others.

I wondered how her days without him would turn out — her entire life has been about him. When mourners approached, she gasped and said: I didn’t think he would leave me so soon.

I stepped inside their bedroom, where Taaba was now alone, laid on the bed. Taaba and Taama’s bedroom was where I’d also spoken to both of them on a previous visit. But yesterday, it was just Taaba and me.

He was lying on the bed, silent, eyes shut, face turned toward the ceiling. The AC had been left on at full blast. His feet were freezing, I touched them with my hands, put my head to them and said: Thank you, Taaba.

And then, goodbye. Poet Durgalal Shrestha passed away at the age of 93, on the night of 16 August 2026. 🇳🇵

Suburban Tales is a monthly column in Nepali Times based on real people in Pratibha’s life.

Experience Luxury

SILK Finish

Moving to decriminalise ca

Sudiksha Tuladhar

Last week, Gandaki Province Chief Dilli Raj Bhatta pushed a law to allow regulated cultivation of cannabis for medicinal and industrial purposes.

This provincial legislation is the first major attempt to create a legal pathway for a crop that has long grown wild and free across Nepal, but has been restricted under federal narcotics law since 1973.

The law is intended to support pharmaceutical production, provide raw material for manufacturing (see article below), supplement income of farmers, while notably still outlawing recreational use of cannabis.

The measure includes a three-step licensing process, mandates cultivation only in approved areas, and sets monitoring conditions for production, storage, processing and sale of cannabis. Cannabis grown for industrial use must contain less than 0.3% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), its primary psychoactive compound.

Nepalis who have long pushed for legalisation have welcomed the provincial decision. Says Rajiv Kafle, one of Nepal’s leading advocates of legal cannabis: “Gandaki Province’s new cannabis law is a praiseworthy step in the right direction.”

But activists add that the Gandaki Province law must now be broadened nationwide to help



PHOTOS: SAGLO SAMAJ

Nepal transform a historically stigmatised plant into a regulated economic resource.

“Nepal should not view cannabis only through the lens of narcotics control, but also the perspective of agriculture, medicine, industry, and local livelihoods,” adds Kafle.

Cannabis grows wild across

Nepal, and has been used traditionally for Ayurvedic medicine, fibre, and religious practice.

Nepal became known for its open cannabis culture in the 1960s and 1970s when international tourists in search of Shangri La travelled across the Hippie Trail overland from

Istanbul to Kathmandu, ending up in Jhochhen Tole — later nicknamed ‘Freak Street’ — where marijuana was sold openly from government-licensed shops.

Beginning in 1973, sustained pressure from the US and the UN amid their global War on Drugs compelled Nepal to revoke

cannabis production, buying, and selling licences. In 1976, Nepal passed the Narcotic Drugs (Control) Act which criminalised the cultivation, production, sale and consumption of cannabis except for select religious purposes.

Since then, advocates have repeatedly called on successive Nepali governments to reconsider Nepal’s

Nepal gets high on hemp



This series profiles world-class Nepali products and the people behind them.

New companies cater to a growing market for cannabis fabric here and abroad

Thamel shops are doing a roaring business selling cannabis. The weed may be illegal in Nepal and cultivation of cannabis still limited, but backpacks, laptop bags, sustainable, cruelty-free shirts and dresses are flying off the shelves this summer.

As hemp gains popularity among tourists and Nepalis alike, local manufacturers have redesigned quality products made from the fabric. One of the more versatile company is Boho Nepal with a range of popular bags for every occasion and profession.

Founded by Reyhan Ghimire and Rafi Hussain, Boho Nepal sources its products from manufacturers in Kathmandu with an emphasis on practical designs



NT ARCHIVE

suited to daily use rather than tourist-focused souvenirs.

“We ask our manufacturers to make custom products and design them specifically for us,” says Ghimire, adding that while the business started only four months ago, the team began marketing Boho Nepal a year ago and has already attracted a growing customer base.

Hussain’s family background in business has helped the company

expand with vibrant social media marketing, and prioritised products designed for local customers who recognise quality and style.

This approach has helped the brand build visibility early on, especially among consumers looking for alternatives to mass-produced bags and accessories.

Ghimire says quality consistency of the raw material is a challenge, but the versatility

of hemp sells itself. The fabric is naturally antibacterial, dries easily after washing, and becomes softer with use, making it suitable for everyday items that are used frequently and need to be more durable.

Boho Nepal’s recently launched hemp socks, for example, was a hit among customers because they do not develop odour as quickly as

regular socks when worn for long.

Boho Nepal plans to expand its product line and eventually manufacture them itself. Bringing production closer to the brand would give the company greater control over design, quality, and supply.

Meanwhile, a shift toward more liberal government policies could create space for local businesses built around hemp, says Ghimire: “Hemp is easily accessible and requires less



Reyhan Ghimire



Rafi Hussain

cannabis

Gandaki Province’s law regulating cannabis cultivation has revived the legalisation debate



policies and laws on cannabis, arguing that prohibition has failed to eliminate cultivation while depriving farmers as well as the nation of potential income. “The illegal cultivation of cannabis across Nepal is an open secret,” says Saurav Dhakal of the sustainable initiative Green Growth Nepal, noting that legalising cultivation will facilitate increased revenue as well as crop and product diversification for farmers and entrepreneurs. “The crop is more beneficial than maize and does not face the same threat from monkeys and other wild animals,” Dhakal explains. “For farmers in the mountains where crop damage, labour migration, and low agricultural returns remain persistent problems, cannabis

could become an alternative cash crop if regulation, pricing and, market access are handled carefully.” In 2020, former Minister and lawmaker Sher Bahadur Tamang registered a private Bill in Parliament to legalise cannabis, highlighting its medicinal and industrial values. But the Bill remained stalled through changes in leadership. In 2024, Finance Minister Barshaman Pun announced that the government would legalise and commercialise medicinal marijuana cultivation and distribution, but that budget speech went nowhere. For many Nepalis, the legalisation of cannabis is not just important legally or economically, but also socio-culturally. Seeds derived from

the flowers, leaves, and stems of the female cannabis plant, called bhang, are a protein-rich source of food. Across Nepal, bhang is made into achar, and also used during religious celebrations. “The seeds are commercially available in leading supermarkets like Bhat-Bhateni,” says Kafle. “It is clear that there is a huge domestic as well as international market for cannabis.” **AYURVEDA** Cannabis can be also be turned or added into a variety of processed products including powder, oil, and chocolate. Beyond food and ayurveda, industrial hemp can be used in textiles, cosmetics, construction materials, oils and other products. Nepal’s altitude, climate and

existing traditional knowledge give the country a comparative advantage. Some studies suggest that large areas of land in Nepal may be suitable for cultivation, although more field-based research may be needed. International experience also shows both opportunities and risks. India, Thailand, China, and the US have developed models for regulating hemp or medical cannabis. Most industrial hemp frameworks use a 0.3% THC threshold, similar to the standard adopted by Gandaki Province. With Gandaki’s legislation, lawmakers in Nepal’s federal Parliament have once again called for a nationwide cannabis law to stimulate the agro-economy. But questions have also been raised over

how Gandaki’s new law will operate alongside federal restrictions on cannabis. Says Dhakal: “As long as the crop remains illegal at the federal level, whether or not legislation can be implemented smoothly remains a pertinent question.” There are already concerns over the implementation of the new law. A debated provision requires farmers or businesses to have at least two ropani (1,018 sq km) to apply for a licence to cultivate cannabis, which experts say will exclude smallholders, tenant farmers, and marginalised communities. “Any regulation will only be meaningful only if it includes cooperatives, small growers, and local governments in the value chain,” adds Dhakal. Without reliable data, cannabis policy risks being driven either by fear or by exaggerated promises. A regulated approach, should begin with research, pilot cultivation, laboratory testing, farmer training and transparent coordination between provincial, federal, and local governments. Global experience also shows that clear testing systems, traceability, public health safeguards and enforcement capacity are essential to prevent misuse and market confusion. Rajiv Kafle is optimistic that Gandaki’s legislation has opened the door for a national conversation on cannabis: “If regulations are within the framework of Nepal’s Narcotics Act, then cannabis has a bright future in Nepal.”

products



SUMAN NEPALI



NTARCHIVE

investment and time to produce. A more liberal policy regarding hemp cultivation could pave the way for businesses like ours to grow.” **HEMP HOUSE** A company that has been in this business even longer is Hemp House Nepal which manufactures products according to client orders, using raw materials sourced from farmers in the western mountains.

“We buy the fabric from farmers in Bajura, Bajhang, and Rolpa,” says Dipendra Dahal of Hemp House Nepal. “We contact local agents who understand the area and then visit to assess the quality of the hemp.” At the company’s processing facilities in Kathmandu, workers knit the threads into 100% hemp-based bags, shirts, socks, trousers, pants and purses. It also blends hemp with dhaka and cotton fabrics

for export to retailers in the US and Europe. Hemp is a variety of the Cannabis sativa plant with low levels of THC and used to make a variety of products, including soap, oil, and cosmetics. It can also be turned into hemp bricks for environment-friendly houses, a practice that has taken root in Australia and Thailand. Hemp is also relatively easy to

cultivate. Its seeds can be planted on hillsides and barren cliffs, where the plants can grow with limited inputs, fixing nitrogen in the soil to improve fertility. Although hemp cultivation is largely limited in Nepal, there have been ongoing efforts at both local and federal levels to legalise the crop (see above). “Local governments must take the initiative to promote hemp cultivation and encourage farmers,” says Dahal. “If a proper market is established, farmers and manufacturers alike will be encouraged to expand their businesses.” Thailand and Indonesia have developed markets around hemp products under more open legal frameworks. In Nepal, some

political figures in previous governments have expressed support for hemp farming, but so far only Gandaki Province has moved forward with a Bill for its legalisation. “The government can supervise plantations and issue licenses to those dealing in such products,” adds Dahal. “Solutions and opportunities exist; we just have to learn to tap into them.” However, challenges remain in formulating and implementing clear policies for cultivation and sales. With limited interest from concerned institutions and government agencies, the market potential of hemp still remains largely unexplored.

Sudiksha Tuladhar



Blissful conjugal life is an art

Shuvani Singh

Sri Lankan husband-and-wife artists Manoranjana Herath Bandara and Nilanthi Dilini Perera do not just paint together, they complement each other's themes, colours, and emotional frequencies. Their artworks in the exhibition Two Hearts One Canvas at The Kalā Salon meld two distinct bodies of work in a unique visual dialogue that feels like a conversation in colour and form.

Dilini Perera's palette leans towards the dreamy: soft blue hues, muted greens, delicate washes of pink and gold, displaying soft and surreal images that transport the viewers into technicolour dreamtime. The face of a woman is a recurring motif that gives the impression of a Mother Earth figure, nurturing and quietly powerful. Around this central presence of Gaia, Perera builds a world with dense symbolism: flying fish, intricate flowers, birds, waves.

The visual elements draw from Sri Lankan traditional art brought to the present day. Perera explains: "These designs connect with Sri Lankan artistic traditions, but I chose my own colours and visual approach, allowing the paintings to develop in a personal and contemporary direction."

Indeed, these are a visual representation of what she calls a "Poetic Mind", the theme of her works and a personal vocabulary to inner desires and hopes.

There is a quality of fantasy in her works, yet it is not escapism. They come from her imagination, emotions, and the surroundings, she adds. So, lotuses rising from waves might speak to resilience, the gaze of women carry a serenity that feels hard-won as if they have finally arrived where they want to be.



LANKA ART: (l-r) Gallery curator Sophia L. Pandé, Manoranjana Herath Bandara, and Sri Lankan Ambassador Ruwanthi Delpitiya at the opening of the exhibition.

PHOTO: THE KALA SALON

GEOMETRY OF FEELINGS

Bandara's world is more abstract. Whereas Perera's works breathe and drift, his geometrises human emotion. They are denser, made from solid colours and layered forms pressed against the edges of the frame. Faces multiply across the canvas: eyes, lips, and hands recur like fragments of human memory, experience, and presence that never take a singular form. There is a certain restlessness to them.

The central subject is titled The Kiss, but not as a literal act. "It is not just a physical kiss. I think the affection, love, and a lot of memories behind that experience," he says.

Bandara depicts the body's involuntary response, the geometry of two people leaning in to kiss, the result is a series of works intense, emotionally charged, and deeply human.

Sri Lankan ambassador to Nepal Ruwanthi Delpitiya opened the exhibition which will be on till 9 September. She said: "Two hearts, two unique identities come together in one canvas. It honours individuality while depicting the coexistence and partnership of two artistic visions which enrich each other."

Two Hearts One Canvas is more than just two artists exhibiting in a joint space. Perera's pensive strokes meet Bandara's angular forms and the two enrich each other.

Writes Sophia L. Pandé, who curated the exhibition at The Kalā Salon: 'Seen in tandem, these works convey the synergy that comes from an artist couple who work alongside, inspired by each other's themes, colours, forms, thoughts and hearts.'

Two Hearts One Canvas
Until 9 September
11am - 8pm
The Kalā Salon, Thamel



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