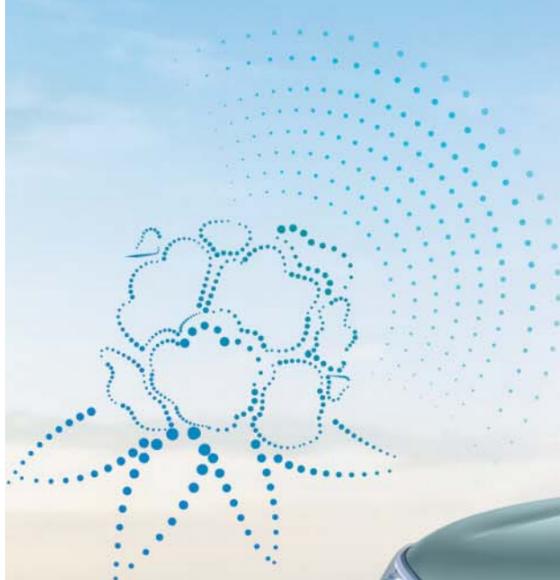




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Electric mobility

Prominent signs along the BP Highway show electric vehicle fast-charging stations every few kilometres. There are as many electric minibuses as petrol ones. BYDs and Nexons are a common sight.

Of all cars sold in Nepal last year, 75% were electric. The country was only behind Norway, with 90% of total sales. It is not just private cars that have gone electric in Nepal, but also public vehicles like vans and three-wheelers.

But instead of building on this achievement, Nepal Rastra Bank last month increased the 'Loan-to-Value (LTV) Ratio' for electric vehicle financing from 20% to 40%.

Electric transport policy has been one step forward and two steps back, as governments flip-flop on incentives. Nepal is not likely to meet its own target of 90% of private vehicles and 60% of public transport to be EV by 2030.

"This is a regressive move which will have people reverting to diesel and petrol vehicles, it will especially hurt electric buses and e-vans," says urban planner Bhushan Tuladhar of the Rastra Bank down payment policy revision. "Electric buses are already much more expensive than similar size diesel ones, and some private operators who were planning to bring electric buses are rethinking their decision."

The sale of private electric cars has soared in Nepal, helping reduce air pollution and petroleum imports. Encouraging diesel bus operators to go electric would benefit more people.

Nepal's installed capacity for electricity has now crossed 3,000MW, although the generation is nearly a third of that at present due to low water level in rivers. During the monsoon, there is surplus electricity even after exporting to India and a lot of it is wasted due to low domestic demand.

Increasing consumption starting with accelerated electrification of public transport would reduce Nepal's petroleum imports and improve air quality, increasing the average lifespan of Kathmandu's residents. 🇳🇵

Sonia Awale

FULL STORY PAGE 10-11

Hydrocarbon to hydropower Editorial PAGE 2

Sacking of NEA chief exposes cronyism PAGE 9

The public in public transport "Money is not the problem, governance is"

Transforming transport in Nepal PAGE 10-11

HIGH TENSION: Transmission line in Tehrathum that will evacuate electricity from several new hydropower plants in the Arun basin in eastern Nepal.

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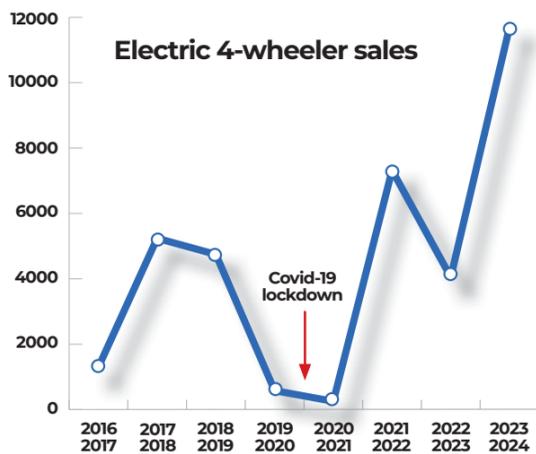
Hydrocarbon to hydropower

A high-level meeting between the energy secretaries of Nepal and India last month agreed to build six high-voltage cross-border transmission lines to facilitate the export of up to 18,000MW of electricity by 2035.

The government's recently-approved Energy Development Roadmap and Action Plan envisages exporting 15,000MW to India and Bangladesh within the decade, and generating 28,500MW by 2035. At present Nepal has agreements to export 941MW to India and 40MW to Bangladesh.

Exports to India happen only during the monsoon when there is surplus energy, and Nepal imports power during the dry season. This month, Nepal is generating only one-third of its installed capacity of 3,400MW because of low river flows.

Generation will exceed 4,000MW by year-end, and another 3,906MW of projects are under construction with more projects worth 3,899MW in the pipeline after power purchase agreements.



That Nepal is now capable of generating and exporting surplus electricity has been seen as a significant development for a country that was plagued by power cuts for up to 18 hours daily until just eight years ago.

In the past 20 years, many energy strategies were formed to power growth through exports. As regional countries look for clean energy to meet climate targets, Nepal's hydropower could be in high demand. Electricity exports can also help offset the country's huge trade deficit with India.

Investment, or the lack of it, stands as the biggest hurdle in achieving Nepal's ambitious energy export targets. Generating 28,500MW of electricity would cost Nepal \$46.5 billion — four times the annual budget.

Capital investment could come from overseas Nepalis, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), the private sector or from 'green bonds'. But even if investment is forthcoming, there is no guarantee that the energy will find a market at an acceptable price.

India has increased its quota every year to allow the NEA to sell 941MW of electricity produced by 28 projects under the competitive market and medium-term power sales agreements. It does not buy power from projects with Chinese involvement, and has a strategic monopsony status.

The country exported more electricity than it imported for the first time in 2023/24 fiscal year, selling electricity worth Rs17.06 billion to India. But this is a drop in the bucket in comparison to the country's total trade deficit. Nepal imported goods worth Rs1.59 trillion, while exports were only Rs152 billion in the same fiscal year.

The amount earned from exporting electricity was just 1.2% of Nepal's trade deficit. While this could increase in future, it will not go up by much. As it stands, Nepal buys electricity from India at almost the same rate as it sells.

Indian state-owned companies are developing hydropower projects with a combined capacity of 8,000MW, mostly on the Arun basin. The agreements give 21.9% of the electricity from these plants for free for 25 years before they revert to Nepal.

Hydropower experts have long argued that Nepal should increase domestic consumption for value added manufacturing rather than exporting raw power. This means making electricity affordable and accessible for household appliances, transport and industries.

To be sure, proactive government policies on tax rebates for electric vehicles have seen remarkable results. Until January of this fiscal year, Nepal imported 6,256 electric four-wheeled vehicles in comparison to 2,662 petroleum ones. Nearly 70% of all EVs sold were from China.

Continuous increase of EV imports will eventually reduce Nepal's dependence on India for fossil fuel, which currently makes up 18% of all imports and the largest item. Promoting electrical appliances and manufacturing them in the country would reduce the increasing dependency on LPG, which is heavily subsidised.

Only 0.5% of Nepali households use electric stoves, if 5.6 million households were to use induction stoves for three hours every day, the country would use 825MW of electricity, displacing LPG consumption entirely, also reducing Nepal's carbon footprint.

But all this requires a better transmission and distribution system in the grid so that they reach the remotest areas to double electricity consumption. Scaling up fast charging stations for battery-powered transportation would meet the growing demand for EVs. Extending tax rebates to also include large electric buses would reduce diesel demand, which has also been growing (page 1, 10-11).

Nepal also has to look beyond conventional hydropower to solar-powered pump storage to generate electricity, which would be cheaper and faster to build. Such schemes would also be less destructive to the ecology of the country's rivers.

The climate crisis is a water crisis, and Nepal must plan for a future in which the Himalayan icecap will be further depleted. Rivers are not just a source of energy but ensure equitable water supply for irrigation, agriculture, and household use.

Ramesh Kumar

Exporting power will not reduce the trade deficit by much, Nepal must increase domestic electricity use.

ONLINE PACKAGES



Ancient water spouts are considered great technological achievements of the Kathmandu Valley Civilisation. Centuries after they were built, these systems still support the Valley's growing population because modern water mains are so unreliable. But Kathmandu's unplanned urbanisation in recent decades has threatened this historic network of sunken spouts. Watch video on Himalkhabar's YouTube channel.



Born to Nepali immigrant family in Japan, eight-year-old Ayan Dallakoti was brought to Nepal so he could receive better English-medium education. Watch video on YouTube to learn about challenges children like Ayan go through as they integrate back in Nepali society. Subscribe for multimedia content.

BURMA SCAM CAMPS

Maybe the media should play a more dynamic role in alerting people of the existence of these fraudulent activities and spare them from so much physical suffering and loss of scarce resources ('Nepalis in 'scam camps' escape to tell the tale', Man Bahadur Basnet, #1253).

Bharat Koirala

■ Nepali folks must please be careful of these scams.

Ashrusha Mainali

BHUTAN DETAINEES

Instead of trying their accused in a court of law, Bhutan regularly resorts to such practices ('Detainee dead end in Bhutan's prisons', #1253). Worse is expelling its own citizens from the country for protesting. The irony is that our own country India turns a blind eye towards just because those who suffer belong to other ethnicities.

Dilip Sharma

INDIA & GLOBAL POLITICS

India needs to hugely improve maintenance of infrastructure, not just build it ('India has arrived', Ana Palacio, #1252).

Tony Jones

SAJITA LAMA

The guys who got Sajita Lama the job in Lebanon must pay her back fully all her wages for 12 years of work ('Enslaved Nepali migrant worker rebuilds her life', Sajita Lama, nepalitimes.com). Otherwise they should be prosecuted. It is insane to read these kind of things.

Varvāra H.

ORCHIDS

Orchids are really intriguing ('Orchids of Godavari-Phulchoki', Nomika Tamang, #1252). I wish I could see them in their natural habitat instead of dead dried flowers that we refer to for our botanical drawings.

Neera Joshi Pradhan

NT NEWSLETTER

Thanks a lot to Nepali Times for keeping alive the debate about the importance of a strong and continued focus on gender, diversity, and equity ('Unfair Sex', Kunda Dixit, nepalitimes.substack.com). There is still much to fight for.

Karen Valentin

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING

Kathmandu Valley to Silicon Valley

by Vishad Raj Onta
After witnessing AI's limitations at Google, Nepali engineer Pratik Karki launched Anthromind, a startup in Silicon Valley that refines AI models with high-quality datasets, improving their accuracy in specialised fields. Read more about his work on our website.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

Detainee dead end in Bhutan's prisons

Nepali Times
UN experts in a report published this month have found the Bhutanese government to have detained its citizens without parole for expressing their political opinions, in direct contrast to its multiparty democratic system and its claim of being a land that promotes "gross national happiness". Details online.

X Most popular on X



Nepalis in 'scam camps' escape to tell the tale

by Man Bahadur Basnet
Nepali youth are being lured with the promise of high-paying foreign job opportunities, only to find themselves in cyber scam camps in Burma. Victims are forced to carry out online fraud under threats of torture. Read the investigative report at nepalitimes.com

46 Most commented



The end of aid

by Jeevan R Sharma and David Seddon
Following the USAID cuts, Nepal's leadership must begin to decrease its reliance on foreign aid, and rethink its development priorities. The 'end of aid' — if it comes to that — need not be the end of development in Nepal, write Jeevan R Sharma and David Seddon.

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QUOTES

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
"This is nothing like I imagined.. I do not think I am getting out of this alive."
Tilak Budathoki, who was deployed in the Russian Army, had shared his fears before being sent back to the frontlines—where he was killed in action.

Mark Pickett @DrMarkPickett
This is very sad.

1,000 WORDS



TRIALOGUE: Prime Minister K P Oli, Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba, and Maoist Centre Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal along with top leaders of the three main parties met to discuss transitional justice at Singha Darbar on Monday. But the real reason for the tripartite meeting was to coordinate their stance on pro-monarchy protests.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Looking for problems

Nearly two months after king Gyanendra's 1 February 2005 coup, Nepal began to feel its economic impact: domestic production slowed down, budget for development programs was diverted to the security sector, and skittish international donors reduced foreign grants.

Two decades later, the USAID cut has led to Nepal losing a significant chunk of foreign grants. But this has also spurred discussion on the need for Nepal to take greater responsibility for its own development.

As Artha Beed wrote in the column *Economic Sense* 20 years ago this week, we should be finding solutions rather than look for problems. Excerpts from issue #240 25-31 March 2005:

Is the economy really stagnating? Has consumption gone down? Have people stopped buying goods and services? Is the remittance from Bipalis drying up? Is the World Bank ending aid? Will Nepal ever recover from the current crisis?.. Yet, it still feels like things aren't really as bad as people think.



Though the off take by intermediaries have come down, retail consumption has remained the same. All manufacturers as well as intermediaries in the supply chain were working on their inventory to tide over potential blockades.

Remittances have not shrunk, as people who save \$100 or \$150 a month can only remit that money to Nepal. They can't buy apartments or houses in Malaysia or the Middle East with that kind of money. Fact is, there is a real estate boom that indicates remittances are healthy.

The uncertainty of future assistance from bilateral agencies has perhaps made people believe that the economy has changed post-February First. It has also been made to sound like a major crisis as the future of 'hardship allowances' earning people in projects is unknown. But pragmatic Nepali analysis is best in times like these.

For archived material of Nepali Times of the past 20 years, site search: nepalitimes.com

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Powerful movie upacks questions of identity

Deepak Rauniyar's new film is a sharp commentary on race relations in Nepal that is not overly didactic

■ Sophia L. Pandé

Deepak Rauniyar's third feature *Rajagunj* is currently in cinemas, and should be seen for many reasons: it is a solid nail biter, a whodunnit, a political thriller with two unconventional, heart wrenching, love stories.

It is also a sharply observed commentary on race relations that refrains from being overly didactic — a common fault in many political films that alienate the viewer instead of enlightening them.

Internationally titled *Pooja, Sir*, the film premiered in 2024 at the Orizzonti section parallel to the main competition at the Venice Film Festival. It has finally opened in Nepal's cinemas after a glitch at the hands of the Censor Board which has a history of choosing conservatism over wisdom. It treats viewers like juveniles, subverting reality by demanding that real events be redacted.

Thankfully, the film is not hurt much from this interference, though concentration is required to follow the twists and turns of the plot. Without giving too much away, the story involves the seemingly cold-blooded kidnapping of two young boys in the eponymous *Rajagunj*.

It plays out against the volatile backdrop of the deadly protests in 2015 that killed dozens in the



A still from Deepak Rauniyar's *Rajagunj*, which was released in Nepal this month. Cast and crew of the film (below) at the Mumbai Film Festival.

Madhes over inadequacies in the new Constitution.

Pooja Thapa (played by the formidable *Asha Magrati*), a detective inspector from Kathmandu, is sent to the Tarai in the blistering heat to investigate. One of the young boys is the son of a prominent Madhesi politician, the other is his friend and offspring of the house-help. One can guess which victim necessitated the dispatch of a high ranking police officer from Kathmandu.

From the beginning *Pooja* is a compelling enigma, she is forthright and committed, keenly intelligent and a force of nature. She is also stubborn, and occasionally not very sympathetic to her fellow Madhesi colleagues.



There is little humour in the way she is written, the nuances appear thanks to *Magrati's* calibrated performance. *Pooja* is also a lesbian which is hinted at from the very first scene with

a shot of her from the back that emphasises her short boy-cut.

Her sexual orientation is further underscored by a slight but intimate scene in the kitchen with *Rama*, her partner, before she has

to leave for *Rajagunj*.

Rauniyar's social conscience and investment in the woes of Nepali society has been evident from his first film, *Highway* (2012) which, while messy, showed he had both heart and brains as he grappled with multiple characters, each conveying a particularly complicated aspect of the everyman's struggles.

His second feature *White Sun or Seto Surya* (previously reviewed in this paper) came out in 2016, cementing his place as an independent filmmaker and a politically conscious auteur.

Rajagunj shows how far this director has come with a story of a woman who finds herself in an alien city and culture, racing against time to locate two helpless kids, even as she navigates the intensely charged protests in the Madhes as a Pahadi herself, with prejudices further compounded by her own queerness.

There is much that happens in this gritty, urban film that for once does not romanticise or exoticify Nepal's culture and natural landscape for viewers internally or abroad. There are no rose-tinted lenses or filters here.

The cinematography is matter of fact, precise, brutal when it needs to be, hewing to a script with excellent, natural dialogue that was written by *Rauniyar*, *Magrati* (*Rauniyar's* partner in life), and *David Barker*.

While *Magrati's* brave performance anchors the film there are several other substantial performances. *Reecha Sharma*, plays *Sabita Koirala* the fair, Pahadi, upper caste wife of the Madhesi politician, and mother of one of the kidnapped boys.

She is also the headmistress of the local, but now suspiciously shuttered, school. Veteran actor *Dayahang Rai*, also an executive producer of the film, does a fine job portraying *Madan*, the seemingly mild mannered police captain who oversees *Rajagunj*.

Nikita Chandak is completely engrossing in her portrayal of *Mamata Gupta*, a complicated

She is the story

How the portrayal of women has evolved (or not) in Nepali cinema

■ Sangya Lamsal

Nepali films have in the past often portrayed women in limited, one-dimensional roles: selfless mothers, obedient wives, or victims of abuse.

Nepal's very first feature film, *Ama* was a pioneering drama portraying the socio-political landscape of the 1960s Panchayat era Nepal. But it reinforced traditional gender roles where women are caregivers, who silently bear emotional labour, while men are protectors and providers.

The mother's strength is portrayed in her endurance in separation from her soldier son, but she still exists largely just there to support the male protagonist's journey.

"A man was always the hero, that was the norm. Women are either victimised or their struggles are over sensitised," says *Shanta Nepali*, director and cinematographer. "Many have raised awareness through their films, but when it comes to true representation of women's issues, we are still far behind."

Plan International Nepal in a research paper breaks down *Matighar* directed by *BS Thapa* and starring Bollywood star *Mala Sinha* into three acts: first where *Maya* is a romantic lead who is soon widowed and abandoned, she is then forced to flee with her young son and work in a brothel, and finally she seeks a better future for her son.

In the end, *Maya* is accepted back into society but essentially through mercy, highlighting the film's theme of domesticity as a woman's rightful place. Not much has changed since the early days of Nepali cinema, although there have been some recent attempts to alter the stereotype.

"Women are still largely seen as eye candy, sidekicks, or an element of glamour rather than a central character driving the



story. Their portrayal remains superficial, lacking depth and complexity," says theatre director and actor *Akanchha Karki* of *Katha Ghera*. "There has been some progress in recent years, but not nearly enough."

More recent movies like *Shambala* and *Rajagunj* (see above) have tried to break through the mould. *Min Bahadur Bham's* *Shambhala* is centred around a complex female character defined not just by men around her but her own ambitions and struggles. *Pema* played by *Thinley Lhamo* is an active agent of her own story of self-discovery in the face of patriarchy.

Rajagunj directed by *Deepak Rauniyar*

follows inspector *Pooja Thapa* who is sent to a Madhes town to investigate the kidnapping of two boys amidst political unrest and violent protests.

Even the 2001 film *Numafung* by *Nabin Subba* stands out for an empowering portrayal of women, and a rare glimpse of *Limbu* customs. After being widowed early, *Numafung* is expected to marry her late husband's younger brother but defies tradition in the pursuit of her own independence.

Although the 2019 film *Xira* directed by *Ashutosh Raj Shrestha* was critically panned, it did introduce an action-oriented, assertive, revenge-driven female protagonist played by

Namrata Sharma.

Nepali cinema often takes inspiration from Bollywood which has also seen a shift in how women are portrayed. Older films like *Pink* directed by *Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury* critiqued societal prejudices against independent women as well as emphasised the importance of consent.

Last year's *Laapata Ladies* directed by *Kiran Rao* was a critical and commercial success. Through slice-of-life storytelling, the satirical drama set in rural India advocates women's empowerment, education, and equality. Meanwhile, *Mrs.* a Hindi adaptation of *The Great Indian Kitchen*, follows a young woman after an arranged marriage in which she finds her aspirations suppressed.

A big part of the reason behind often stereotypical portrayals of women on screen is the lack of female filmmakers, directors, writers, and producers.

"Many women who started alongside me are no longer in the field, people try to break you mentally," says *Shanta Nepali*. "I also faced caste discrimination, so it is even more difficult for women from marginalised communities."

Nepal is creating platforms such as the *Nepali Female Filmmakers' Community* for women to actively engage in the field. She adds: "Even men struggle in this industry but when a woman says she wants to direct, the discouragement outweighs the support. It feels like going to war."

Anjila is a recent biopic based on the real-life journey of *Anjila Tumbapo Subba*, the captain and goalkeeper of national women's football team. *Subba* plays herself, and the movie depicts her struggles and achievements in a male-dominated field.

Akanchha Karki says that women-centric films often struggle at the box office. Audience preference for action-packed, masala drama discourages nuanced narrative as well as reinforces the traditional beauty standards, perpetuating unrealistic ideals.

"Producers and directors don't invest in them because they don't do as well, making it harder to break the cycle," explains *Karki*. "Even current women filmmakers in the field often feel compelled to prioritise commercial viability over authentic storytelling." 🇳🇵

junior Madhesi police officer who slowly comes into her own under Pooja's rough but wise tutelage.

Politics is ever at work behind and in front of the scenes in Rajagunj, and not everyone is as they initially seem. Women are heroes, anti-heroes, villains, mothers, lovers, and fighters.

Multiple personal and political realities are portrayed, sometimes simultaneously, and while there are some bizarre leaps of logic, Rauniyar's virtuoso gift is evident throughout.

As people protest the new Constitution that was supposed to enshrine the rights of all Nepalis, not just the fairer skinned ones, Pooja and Amar struggle against the tide of protestors, desperately trying to keep track of Mamata.

Pooja has to don an animal mask to hide her Pahadi origin, Mamata is dressed in a red sari (to imitate the maid) that drapes around her head to hide her face. The atmosphere is pregnant with violence, and our dread is further keyed up by Pooja's mask, which renders her figure ghoulish, lending the scene a nightmarish quality which is entirely appropriate given the hellish subject matter.

Nepali cinema has evolved over the years, but from the trailers that plied us before Rajagunj and during the intermission, that evolution is still flailing somewhere in between Bollywood melodrama and skilled, thoughtful verisimilitude, erring mostly toward the former.

Rajagunj is not a perfect film, but it is an admirable one, and stays long after it finishes. It is an important stepstone, one could go so far as to say a vital one, in the journey towards better, more meaningful filmmaking in Nepal.

Cinema is also an art form, and Rauniyar's film has moments of pure art, motivated by an undaunted spirit, and bolstered by the filmmaker's own humanity. 🇳🇵

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



Tenderness in men

The characters we meet on screen go a long way in shaping our ideals and perspectives.

If you grew up under the influence of Bollywood films, it is likely they shaped your idea of masculinity. One, fuelled by the portrayal of the man as the protector, the creator and the embodiment of strength, and fury.



SUBURBAN TALES
Pratibha Tuladhar

Growing up in a middle-class Nepali family, the media access I was given was chosen by the men in the family: they were in charge of the VCR and the remote control.

Men had more knowledge of technology than women did because of their access to wealth, education, public spaces and thereby, technology itself.

The selection of films that were brought home were mostly masculine. There were many mainstream Bollywood films, but there were also Hollywood entries about boxing rings, war planes and gadgets, and some love.

The men were mostly angry even when in love and eager to break or to be broken in order to protect who they loved. Women were either vamps and villains, or

they were coy, demure beings, subject to rape more often than not.

Such scenes of sexual violence were not censored for children. And there were suggestive bedroom scenes, where hands came together in a clasp and you wondered as a child what it meant when a man and a woman strung their fingers together against the headboard.

There was no sanitised version of the world for five-year-olds in the 1980s. The impressions one collected from the cinema was that women need protection and men are either rapists and killers, or breadwinners and protectors.

Even when in love, it was expected of men to pursue women they liked in the most unbecoming ways. Public confrontations and suggestive remarks bordering on harassment were acceptable.

If a man wanted a woman, he would follow and corner her, and the woman would be forced to cave in. This would end in marriage. Essentially, it legitimised marrying the stalker/rapist.

There were gods on tv when I was growing up, and the endless family drama that represented life in South Asia in glamourised versions. Women were told to be good, and men were told to take control. Tv was an apparatus to impose a certain kind

of understanding of nationalism, society and culture.

By the time we moved past the conflict, Nepal had opened up to the world of films beyond Hollywood and Bollywood and the Pakistani and Japanese tv serials donated by their governments.

Korean drama is one of the most popularly streamed genres. The youth take cues from them for fashion and lifestyle as well as relationships.

While men who protect women are a vital part of Korean drama, the women portrayed are also more visible and vocal. They are often seen standing up to men, even getting physical with them on occasion and often rising above their male peers in the workplace.

But what also catches one's eye is the metrosexual look that men now carry with such ease in Korean shows. It has had aesthetic more appealing for many Asian men, who feel represented on screen. It has become possible for men to be pretty and feminine, to reject the hyper-masculine ethos.

Men cry, express love and sadness, break down, but also care for women. The line between genders blur in a surprisingly seamless way. And that is the kind of men, we want to love.

Men, who push against the idea of masculinity that has been thrust upon us for generations. Men who break free of the mould of expected appearance and behaviour needed to validate their gender. The scene of seduction of Ser Criston Cole by Rhaenyra Targaryen in the HBO series, House of the Dragon comes to mind. In the episode written by Ira Parker and directed by Clare Kilner, the portrayal of Cole is one of a man of honour and strength, but there is no dearth of tenderness.

In the scene of seduction, there is no sexualisation or objectification of the woman, which points to the difference in gaze. The female gaze views the man, not as being a representation of aggression or purely a sex object, but as someone who has compassion and kindness and is therefore, desirable. This is in stark contrast to male-directed films, where male gaze highlighted violence as the height of masculinity. Characters we meet on screen go a long way in shaping our ideals and perspectives.

The representations of men who dash the traditional idea of masculinity, and are comfortable in who they are and can be, go a long way in shaping a better world.

There need not be categories to slot men into, as long as we move forward from aggression as a sign of masculinity and cease to perceive softness and kindness as a sign of being 'unmanly'.

Let men endorse that love is fluid and is not bound by the expectations of gender. Let men live free of the burden to carry themselves a certain way, except with the tenderness each one of them brings forth into this world. 🇳🇵

Suburban Tales is a monthly column in Nepali Times based on real people (with some names changed) in Pratibha's life. A version of this column was published in the Articulate, of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

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SIPRADI

EVENTS



Nepal Super League

The third season of Nepal's top-tier football league has teams from across Nepal, like Pokhara Thunder and Lalitpur City FC. 29 March - 26 April, Tickets: Rs300-Rs800, Dasharath Rangashala, Tripureshwar

75 years of Annapurna

The exhibition Summit of Friendship marks 75 years since the first ascent of Annapurna. Explore the past, present, and enduring legacy of one of mountaineering's greatest achievements. 5-18 April, 9am to 5pm, Alliance Française, Dhobighat

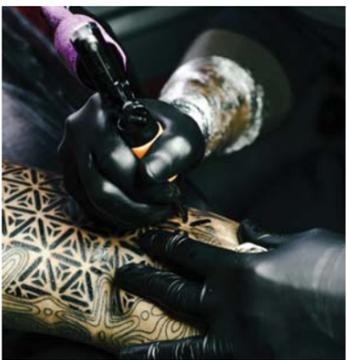


Le Sherpa Farmers' Market

See and be seen at Le Sherpa Farmers' Market this Saturday. Support local businesses selling organic fruit and veg, cheese, bread, meat, honey, food, coffee, baked good, and more. Every Saturday, 7:30am-1:00pm, Le Sherpa, Maharajgunj, 9801081609

Hiti Pranali

The Liquid Landscape of Kathmandu Valley: Hiti Pranali is an exhibition at the Patan Museum this World Water Week. It showcases recent research in Patan that used Ground Penetrating Radar to visualise the underground parts of ancient hitis. Review on page 12. Till 30 March, Patan Museum



12th Tattoo Convention

The 12th Nepal Tattoo Convention will draw body ink enthusiasts and experts from across the world. 11-13 April, 11am onwards, Tickets: Rs500 Heritage Garden, Sanepa

DINING



Lotè Cookies

Lotè is an online bakery that sells fortune and soft artisanal cookies, fudgy brownies, eclairs and more. Cookies come in sets of 9 pieces and in flavors such as Red Devil, Triple Choco and S'mores. Find at the.lote on instagram. They also do birthday brownie commissions. 9867438669

MUSIC

Music Class

Join group music classes at Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. Small groups for vocals, guitar, and violin are available, with two classes per week and structured learning to keep students on track.

Fees: Rs500 onwards, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Chabahil, 9704543010



1974 AD

Gear up for an unforgettable night of Nepali folk, rock, jazz, and blues with 1974 AD in honour of their 30th anniversary. Formed in the early 1990s, 1974 AD is one of the most successful rock bands in Nepal. 5 April, Tickets: Rs1,000-Rs12,000, Hyatt Ground

Jameson Patan Fest

Sing and dance along to a phenomenal lineup of artists including Purna Rai, John Chamling, Swar and The Albatross at the Jameson Patan fest. 5 April, 2pm onwards, Tickets: Rs900+, Chyasal Stadium, Patan



KatJazz

This year's KatJazz Music Festival will have a special emphasis on women in music and will bring together artists from across the world for 10 specially curated concerts held across the city. Stay tuned for more details. 13-30 April, Kathmandu



Mark Band

Mark Band is live at Hard Rock this weekend at the Sherpa Mall. Free entry. 29 March, 7pm onwards, Hard Rock Cafe, Sherpa Mall, Durbar marg



Cafe and Cucina

Head to Cafe and Cucina for hot sizzler and crisp schnitzel sandwiches. Pulchok, 9861601155

Utpala Cafe

Utpala Cafe in Boudha is a monastery restaurant. Their menu features healthy vegetarian options and baked goods using fresh produce. They also have a popular lunch buffet. Boudha, 9810700763

GETAWAY



Riverside Springs Resort

Nestled along the tranquil banks of the Trishuli River, the Riverside Springs Retreat has twin-bed cabins and a hearty restaurant overlooking a luxurious landscaped swimming pool. The warm sands of the river beach are nearby too. Kurintar (01) 5444263

Hotel Dolmaling

The Kathmandu hustle and bustle gives way to peace and comfort at Hotel Dolmaling, only a short walk from the Boudhanath stupa. Boudha, 9765964209



Bagaicha Adventure Resort

Immerse in nature in guided nature walks and bird-watch at Bagaicha Adventure Resort, after which you may want to cool off under the stone stream shower in the plunge pool. 9857082693, Nawalpur



Kumari Boutique Hotel

Experience Nepali hospitality at Kumari Boutique Hotel in the heart of Kathmandu: modern comfort fused with traditional architecture. Thamel (01) 5315617

The Old Inn

The Old Inn provides a cozy stay in its two quaint Newa townhouses that overlook the serene, timeless Bandipur bazaar. Spectacular Himalayan views. Bandipur, 9808882270

The Big O

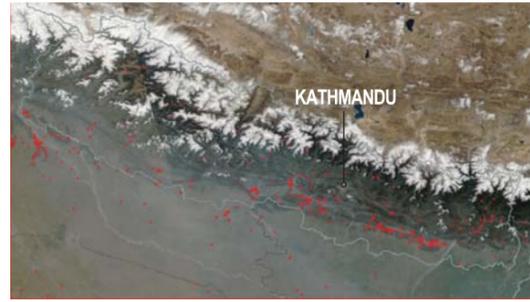
The Big O has a vibrant menu that features authentic döner kebabs, loaded fries, classic chicken döner, savory beef wraps. Unlimited beer every Friday for Rs1800. 970215695, Sanepa



The Diner

Get American comfort food at the newly opened The Diner. Milwaukee-style firewood pizza, croissant sandwiches, salad bowls, chicken sandwiches gourmet burgers are all on the menu. 9764634651, Bhaisepati

WEEKEND WEATHER



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
29° 14°	29° 13°	29° 12°	28° 13°	28° 13°

Hot and Dry

Nothing interesting on the western horizon, so expect a hot and dry week ahead. Temperature in Kathmandu Valley will near 30°C and not much moisture to make rain through local convection. As this NASA FIRMS map taken on Thursday shows, there are several brush fires burning along the East-West Highway and on the hills around Kathmandu Valley which will affect air quality. Smoke from these will keep the cloudless sky hazy in the coming days. If the dry spell and heat continue, expect the wildfires to spread.

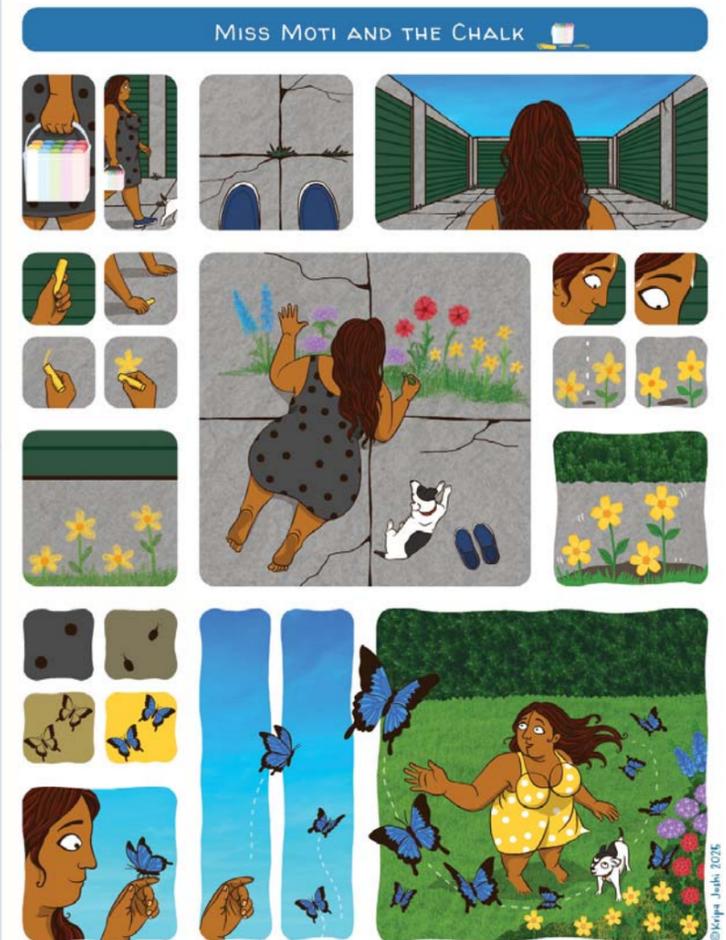


OUR PICK

Set against a backdrop of the 2015 Madhes movement, Deepak Rauniyar's Rajagunj follows Pooja Thapa, a detective from Kathmandu sent to the Tarai to investigate the kidnapping of two young boys. One is the son of a prominent local politician and the other is the son of his household help. The detective races against time to bring the young boys back home, all while navigating race relations in the town of Rajagunj. The film premiered at Pooja, Sir at the 2024 Venice International Film Festival. It stars Asha Magrati, Nikita Chandak, Dayahang Rai, Reecha Sharma, and Bijay Baral. Currently In theatres. Review on page 6-7.

MISS MOTI ESCAPES

KRIPA JOSHI



सामाजिक सञ्जाल प्रयोगमा सचेतता अपनाऔं

- सामाजिक सञ्जालमा अपरिचित व्यक्तिको साथी बन्ने अनुरोधलाई विश्वस्त भएर मात्र प्रतिक्रिया जनाऔं ।
- अपरिचित व्यक्तिलाई जथाभावी साथी बन्न अनुरोध नपठाऔं ।
- सामाजिक सञ्जाल तथा अन्य विद्युतीय माध्यमबाट चिह्ना पुरस्कार जस्ता आर्थिक प्रलोभनका प्रस्तावको भरमा नपराँ ।
- आफूले प्रवाह गरेका सन्देश वा सूचनाबाट समाजमा पर्नसक्ने नकारात्मक प्रभावको ख्याल गरौं ।
- आफ्नो सन्देशले कुनै व्यक्ति वा अन्य कुनै समुदायको आत्मसम्मानमा चोट नपुऱ्याऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

Sacking of NEA chief exposes cronyism

The coalition risks increasing public anger against the government by sacking a popular technocrat

■ Vishad Raj Onta

By sacking the person that many Nepalis credit for ending prolonged daily power cuts, the coalition led by Prime Minister K P Oli has added fuel to the fire as anti-government forces plan protests in the coming weeks.

A Cabinet meeting on Monday decided to replace the Executive Director of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Kulman Ghising with Hitendra Dev Shakya.

With pro-monarchy forces planning street rallies starting Friday, and the opposition Socialist Front also demonstrating, Prime Minister Oli has taken the wrong decision at the wrong time.

There is a sense of déjà vu since both men led the NEA in previous stints. Ghising had been NEA chief in 2016 and again in 2021, when he had replaced Shakya. Ghising is backed by Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Maoist Centre, and Shakya is Oli's brother-in-law. Both Ghising and Shakya are knocking at the gates of the Supreme Court.

Relations between Ghising and Energy Minister Dipak Khadka have been strained for the past year after the NEA cut off electricity supply to industries for failing to pay dues dating back to 2016. At the time, factories were provided uninterrupted power from dedicated lines, while the rest of the country suffered power cuts sometimes lasting 18 hours a day.

Industrialists cried foul and appealed to Minister Khadka and Prime Minister Oli, contesting the NEA's unpaid bills.



SUMAN NEPALI



COOL MAN: There were protests against the dismissal of Kulman Ghising (below, left) on Tuesday and Wednesday in Kathmandu. Prime Minister Oli appointed his brother-in-law Hitendra Dev Shakya (below, right) as the new head of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA).

Khadka is from the Nepali Congress (NC) and himself a hydropower entrepreneur and his appointment was seen as conflict of interest. Shakya's first act was to get the NEA board on Wednesday to open 5,000MW worth of power projects to the private sector. Ghising is largely credited

for having ended loadshedding because he redirected electricity from industry to households -- even though imports from India and increase in installed capacity worked in his favour.

"Some things were in place when Kulman Ghising came in,

but what he did first was to free up 400MW from the dedicated line to industrialists," recalls energy expert Kumar Pandey.

Ghising also benefited from the completion of the 140km transmission line from Dhalkebar to Muzaffarpur in India, which meant Indian exports could make up for the shortfall, allowing NEA to end power cuts to households.

There were protests in support of Ghising on Tuesday and Wednesday and both Houses of Parliament had to be adjourned. Even members of the coalition government opposed the sacking of the popular NEA chief.

Energy Minister Khadka had sought clarification several times from Ghising, accusing him of 'insubordination'. His main gripe was Ghising's pressure on industrialists and going off to India to talk about power trade. He questioned Ghising's authority to make deals bypassing the ministry. The minister even gave Ghising a performance 'report card' in which he was given zero out of 100.

On Sunday, Khadka told Parliament Nepalis would once more have to suffer load shedding because of Ghising. "Kulman isn't really the hero bringer of light," said Khadka, in remarks that were lampooned on social media and newspaper cartoons.

A prolonged winter drought and below-normal precipitation in March has reduced power supply from mainly run-of-river hydropower plants to a third of installed capacity.

This shortfall coincided with India announcing it could not export electricity to Nepal during peak hours because of its own domestic demand. Ghising and

Khadka appeared to be negotiating separately with India on increasing power export to Nepal, and often worked at cross purposes.

The NEA had been making up for the power deficit by cutting electricity to industries to maintain household supply. This month, industrial corridors in the Tarai are suffering power cuts from 6PM to 6AM, forcing them to use generators.

Powerful industrialists had increased pressure on the government to rein in Ghising. Two industries did play part of the sums they owed to NEA last week, just before Ghising got sacked.

Ghising had wide support in Nepal's public sphere, with some speculating that he may have political ambitions. Which could be another reason the UML and NC are wary of a potential Maoist candidate in the next elections.

Ghising is also credited with effective negotiations with India to increase the export of nearly 1,000MW of Nepal's surplus electricity in the monsoon.

Ultimately, his dismissal reeks of politics, the business interest cronies and clashing egos. The only silver lining seems to be that Ghising's replacement Hitendra Dev Shakya is also a grid development and power sector expert.

The government risks further alienating Nepalis already angry about cronyism and corruption by firing Ghising just four months before his term ended.

The Socialist Front and the pro-monarchy RPP are both planning rallies in Kathmandu on Friday, which looks likely to gridlock traffic in the capital. 🇳🇵



NMB BANK
एनएमबि बैंक



Poverty down

The World Bank has released its quinquennial Nepal report that shows the country has done well at eradicating extreme poverty, mainly through remittances. However, it can still drive stronger growth by optimising migration, improving exports, streamlining hydro development, and boosting the tech sector.



Proton e.Mas7

Jagadamba Motors has launched the Proton e.MAS7 EV which comes in two variants, Prime and Premium, and in six colours. The Prime model has a 345km range and costs Rs5,699,000. The Premium has a 410km range and costs Rs6,799,000. It can charge 30-80% in 20 minutes. Free road tax, complimentary chargers, and 6-8 yr warranties are offered.

NMB Money Week

To mark Global Money Week, NMB Bank held financial literacy programs at schools and colleges across the country from 17-23 March.

Ginger exports

AQysta Nepal is helping a co-op of 272 famers export 8 tonnes of raw ginger from Palpa to Europe. Further exports of 12 tonnes of dried ginger are planned.



Hyundai CRETA

Hyundai dealer Laxmi Intercontinental launched electric and petrol/diesel versions of its CRETA model. The CRETA EV has a range of 470km and starts at Rs 52 lakh. The CRETA ICE, assembled in Nepal, starts at Rs 54 lakh.

Exports rise

Nepal exports rose to Rs 158.17 billion in the first eight months of this fiscal year, a 57% increase. Soybean oil, yarn, sunflower oil, woollen carpets, plywood, iron sheets, large cardamom, readymade garments, fruits, and jute account for most of the exports.



NMB, IFC, EU

NMB Bank, the International Finance Corporation and the EU held a three-day training about sustainable financing, focusing on energy, agro-business, and Small and Medium Enterprises.



NTB x UNDP

Nepal Tourism Board and UNDP have launched a \$5 million Sustainable Tourism Project that aims to create jobs and improve infrastructure in key tourist destinations.



IME discounts at LMC

Global IME customers can get up to 25% discounts on lab tests, x-rays, OPD, surgeries, ultrasounds, and general stay at Lumbini Medical College.

Whip sorry

Nepali Congress Chief Whip Shyam Kumar Ghimire apologised after suggesting that legalising prostitution and marijuana would increase tourism earnings. Ghimire conceded that this was a personal opinion and not the party line.

E-rickshaws

Eloi, Ryan Energy and Mahalaxmi Bank are working to make e-rickshaws more accessible in Saptari. The electric three-wheelers can be bought with 20% down and a daily instalment option. Battery-swapping and vehicle-renting options have also been made available.

Samsung A56 5G

Samsung launched the Galaxy A56 smartphone, which starts at Rs65,999. Exchange offers and 0% interest financing programs are available.

Ncell 4-for-4

The Ncell Foundation's 4-for-4 program committed to donate four educational kits for each boundary hit in the Nepal Premier League with 446 kits distributed in Lumbini, and plan to distribute 2,166 more to government schools across Nepal.

Nepal Super League starts Saturday with seven-a-side friendly football matches being organised at Lainchaur Ground between an Ncell team, a team of sports journalists, and a team of influencers and artists.

Meanwhile, Ncell's Sadhain ON 1799 roaming pack comes with 100GB of data, unlimited YouTube, and unlimited calls in Nepal. It also enables roaming in India.

NSL on TikTok

TikTok will be the official Entertainment Partner for the Ncell Nepal Super League, being held 29 March - 26 April. Interviews, behind-the-scenes content, and highlights will be uploaded to 'nepalsuperleague' on the app.



ZTE Smartphones

Chinese telecom company ZTE has launched five smartphones from its Blade A and Nubia series. Prices for the phones range from Rs10,499 to Rs18,999.

The public in public transport

The state of democracy can be measured by the quality of a country's bus system

■ **Sonia Awale**

The former mayor of Bogota, Enrique Peñalosa, who implemented a successful Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for his city once told this paper during a visit to Kathmandu: "Democracy can be measured by the width of a country's sidewalks."

To this, he could have added that the state of democracy in a country can also be measured by the quality of its public transport system. Going by that criteria, Kathmandu is not doing very well.

"We forget that the first word in public transport is public," says urban planner Bhushan Tuladhar. "Public transport in Nepal needs a complete reform from route structuring and information management to building an ecosystem for electric mobility."

There are no government subsidies for public transport. In Kathmandu there are over 55 private operators as well as the semi-government Sajha Yatayat. The government does regulate bus fares, and the Department of Transport Management (DoTM) issues driving licenses and route permits. The Department of Roads is more interested in building roads than managing public transport.

Since the 1990s there have been over 15 studies on public transport in Kathmandu Valley, in which proposals range from a fanciful underground metro, impractical overhead cable cars, or trams and light rail transit.

But experts at a regional symposium on public transport this week organised by Sajha Yatayat point to a BRT modelled after Bogota's transformative

TransMilenio as the best strategy for Kathmandu and other cities.

A BRT network uses high-capacity buses on dedicated lanes that stop at elevated subway-style stations with priority passage at intersections for uninterrupted commutes in traffic-clogged cities.

The main advantage of BRT systems is that they are more reliable and convenient than standard bus routes, they are cheaper than trains to build, and help reduce traffic and air pollution, especially if the buses are electric. Besides Bogota, BRTs have proven their worth in cities like Jakarta and Istanbul.

There are 163 public transport routes in Kathmandu Valley, with 495 big buses plying just on the 27.2km Ring Road. Of the 1.8 million registered vehicles in Kathmandu Valley, only 3% are public buses. Most are two-wheelers, and are a major source of toxic gases like carbon monoxide and ozone.

A high frequency reliable rapid bus transit system in Kathmandu would encourage commuters to use public transport. This would improve air quality and public health. Tax rebates on e-buses would make public transport even cleaner and greener.

The government has proven that it can be done by cutting excise on smaller EVs. Similar incentives could transform public transport in Kathmandu and other cities by making larger battery-powered buses affordable.

One 42-seater bus can replace 19 private cars or 35 motorcycles on the road. And if that bus is electric, the benefit is multiplied.

Lack of state investment or subsidy is the main reason behind



GOPEN RAI

the limited growth of electric public transport, making it much cheaper to buy diesel buses.

In China, all the city buses are electric while India's Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) in 2015 is now in its second phase. By 2024, there were 3,616 electric buses in India, with the government planning to add 50,000 more by 2027.

"The initial cost of electric buses is high, and not all governments have that kind of money," explains Alok Jain, international Nepali expert on

public transport (see profile, right). "But those that have done the transition know the total cost of ownership of EVs is cheaper, whatever is paid upfront can be recovered quickly for a profit because operating and maintenance costs are much lower."

Most young people in Kathmandu have no memory of the Chinese-donated Kathmandu-Bhaktapur trolley bus service which was way ahead of its time when it started in 1975. There were 22 trolley buses covering the 13km distance one way, and carried up to 10,000 passengers daily.

The line was operated by the Nepal Trolley Bus Service, a branch of the Nepal Transportation Corporation (NTC). However, bureaucratic failure, overstaffing and cronyism led to NTC being dissolved in 2001, and the trolley bus operations halted in 2009.

After Sajha Yatayat was revived, it started plying trunk routes in Kathmandu Valley and 40 of its buses are battery powered. The company is planning to add 100 more e-buses with a grant from China this year.

The Chinese company CHTC KINWIN in Nanjing supplied the

Transforming transport in Nepal

Decarbonisation targets include phasing out fossil vehicles to reduce urban air pollution and improve energy security

■ **Prashant Khanal**

Transport is one of the biggest and fastest-growing sources of carbon emissions in Nepal where private cars and motorcycles make up 87% of the registered vehicles and 37% of the total emissions.

Meanwhile, freight and public transport make up a small share of registered vehicles (chart), but contribute 36% and 27% respectively to Nepal's emissions.

Transport emissions have risen six-fold in the last two decades after the end of the Maoist conflict. Petroleum and vehicle imports have widened the country's trade deficit with India (Editorial, page 4). Air pollution is a major public health risk directly causing the deaths of 12,700 Nepalis in 2021, according to the State of Global Air.

Nepal is preparing the next round of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0) as required by the Paris Agreement, and must set ambitious and robust targets to decarbonise transportation.

This is not so much to save the planet, given the country's negligible carbon footprint, but to reduce our dependence on imported petroleum, increase consumption of clean hydropower, and improve air quality.

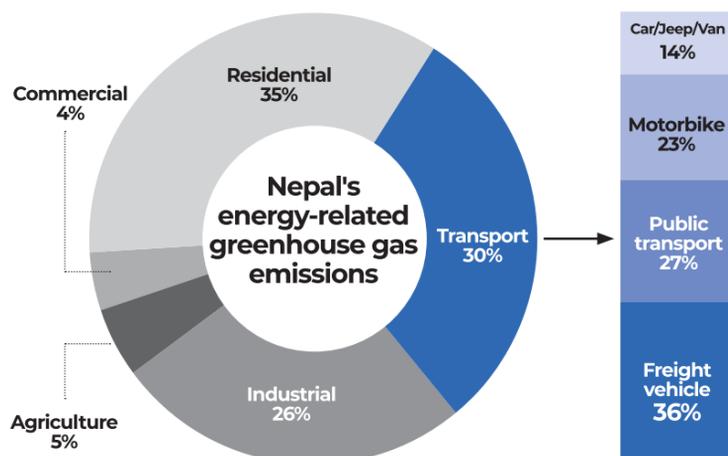
The government needs to phase out vehicles with internal combustion engines (ICE), starting with a ban on their import and sale by 2030. Heavy commercial vehicles can be exempted for now.

The federal budget of 2021/22 did include a policy to phase out fossil fuel vehicles by 2031, and by 2028 from the urban centres of Bagmati Province. The government banned the registration of new ICE taxis in the capital, showing that regulatory measures can be cost-effective, sustainable, and transformative.

Norway has an even more ambitious target to ban ICE vehicle sales by end-2025. The EU adopted legislation to reduce 100% of carbon emissions from 2035 for new cars and vans. Over 20 vehicle manufacturers, representing over 90% of car sales in 2023, have set targets for EV production, with many setting a goal to achieve 50–100% of electric vehicle production or sales by 2030–2035.

EV sales in Nepal will likely increase even without government effort. Already, battery powered vehicles make up 75% of all new car sales in Nepal. But our focus should now shift to the electrification of public transport.

Transforming the transport system requires it to be inclusive and equitable. Electric public



transport such as buses provide the greatest emission reduction potential and wider social and economic benefits from equitable access to mobility to meet Nepal's energy security (page 1 and above).

This means investment and financial incentives from the government, and not just tax rebates, to be extended to other electric or zero-emission public service vehicles, such as taxis and cargo trucks. Enabling more people to walk and cycle safely is also a quick, affordable, and reliable way to help reduce transport emissions

by as much as 50%.

Public transport is a public service, and the onus lies squarely with the government. It cannot be left entirely to the private sector as is the case at the moment.

To be sure, Nepal has some policies on sustainable transportation on paper but government agencies are working at cross purposes.

For example: no federal budget has been allocated for a public bus system and pedestrian and cycling infrastructures this year.

Almost the entire transport

budget goes into building roads and widening highways. There is little hope of transformation unless the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport sets new priorities.

The Department of Roads has not moved beyond its focus on roads and highway construction, while continuously failing on road safety. The Department of Transport Management on the other hand acts solely as a vehicle registration and licensing agency.

These departments need to be overhauled with a mandate for sustainable public transportation. The jurisdiction over all roads, other than national highways, should be devolved to local governments. The federal government can then ensure that the biggest slice of the transport budget flows to sustainable public transport projects.

Decarbonising and transforming transport require a whole-of-government approach with a strong commitment to reforming the sector, and not just paying lip service to it.

But while one arm of the government plans to increase clean energy generation and achieve net-zero, the other is drilling for oil and building petroleum pipelines. 🇳🇵

Prashanta Khanal is an independent climate and transport policy researcher.



Kathmandu's liquid landscape

Research maps network of ancient water canals that still function despite urban pressure

■ Sudiksha Tuladhar

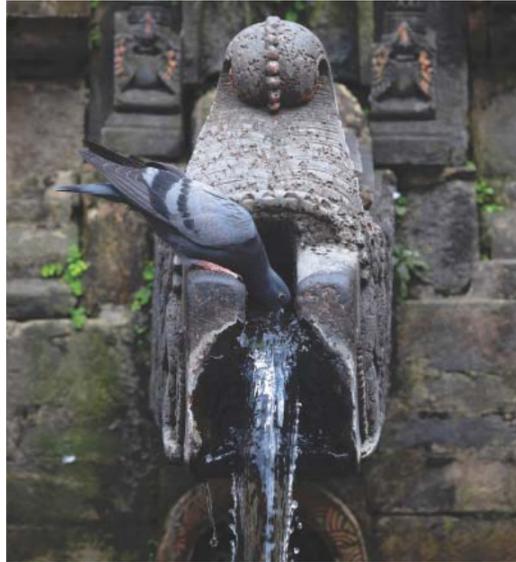
The Kathmandu Valley civilisation can also be called a hydrological culture where sophisticated water management allowed dense settlements to co-exist with intense agriculture on the fertile soil of a former lake-bed.

Both needed plenty of water, but the Valley's rivers are not snowfed. Rulers therefore sourced water from surrounding hills through an elaborate network of canals. These did not just provide irrigation and fill ponds that recharged aquifers, but also ensured urban supply through sunken spouts called hiti.

The hiti system is still a vital source of water for the residents of inner city Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur, despite rapid urbanisation. This is a testament to the planning and engineering expertise in the Lichhavi period (400–750 CE), and then the Malla era (10th–18th century CE).

The exhibition *The Liquid Landscape of Kathmandu Valley: Hiti Pranali Water Heritage* at Patan Museum pays tribute to this heritage by showcasing archaeological research done on hitis, and ways to preserve and maintain them.

Hayley Saul of the Heritage for Global Challenges Research Centre and PhD scholar Anoj Khanal at the University of York used Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to map underground water conduits. Collaborating in the research was engineer and author of *Hiti Pranali*,



Manga Hiti inside the Patan Darbar complex.

SUMAN NEPALI

Padma Sunder Joshi of the Madan Bhandari University of Science and Technology in Chitlang.

"We used GPR to explore filtration systems that allowed the flow and control of water, and its distribution," Saul explains.

Many historical monuments of the Valley that were destroyed in the 2015 earthquake have been rebuilt, but there has been minimal work in repairing underground water channels.

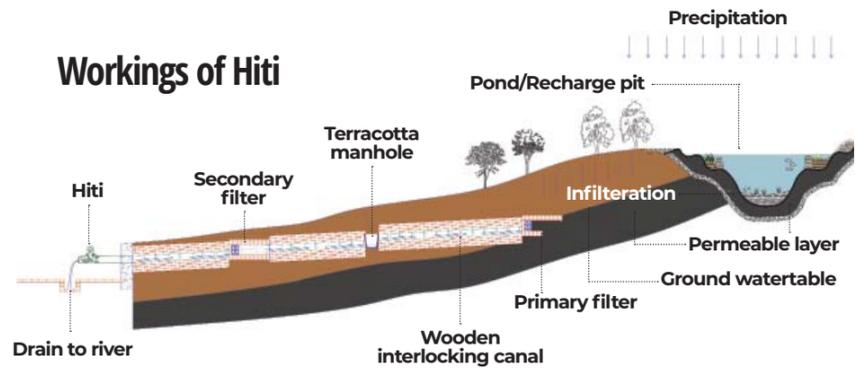
GPR enabled the researchers to map the main canals (raj kulo) and their branches without having to carry out expensive excavation, which would be difficult given how much of the Valley floor is

now built up.

Local governments can now use the data collected by the researchers to map out the network canals, enforce building restrictions if needed, and to maintain them.

The hiti of Kathmandu were not just functional, but also served as sacred social and spiritual hubs. They provided water for drinking, laundry, household use, and rituals, while also serving as gathering places for communities.

But of the 573 stone spouts in Kathmandu Valley, many are lost, damaged, or not functional due to neglect, pollution, and encroachment of the ponds and canals that feed them.



Joshi explains that Kathmandu's ancient urban planners developed the hiti network after the kingdoms relocated to higher ground to leave the lower areas for agriculture. It forced them to devise ways to bring water through a network of canals fed by aquifers, and use the gradient to sunken hiti stone spouts.

The exhibition at Patan Museum also demonstrates that the hiti system accommodated an ecosystem of ferns and algae, and snakes and frogs. Absence of this biodiversity today indicates that the water systems have been degraded or polluted.

Every June just before the monsoon, Kathmandu Valley's Newars ritually clean wells and other sources of water to maintain drainage and ensure that they serve as effective storage systems. Which is why Kathmandu's hydrological culture is such an important part of its civilisation to this day.

The underground network of

water canals also showed advanced engineering knowledge and skill that has been lost today.

Says Anoj Khanal, "The wisdom from the past must be preserved and used. The techniques and knowledge must be adapted for modern times."

The York University team used the GPR technology at 33 hiti sites in Patan, and hopes to do similar research in Kathmandu.

The hiti exhibition showcases the intricate heritage of Kathmandu Valley's water supply network and how modern technology can help restore them. It is also a call to action to preserve the canals, spouts, ponds and the catchment areas on the Valley's rim.

Says Khanal, "It is possible to revive hiti using maps of water conduits to figure out alternate routes. Better late than never." 🇳🇵

The Liquid Landscape of Kathmandu Valley: Hiti Pranali Water Heritage
Until 30 March
Patan Museum

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