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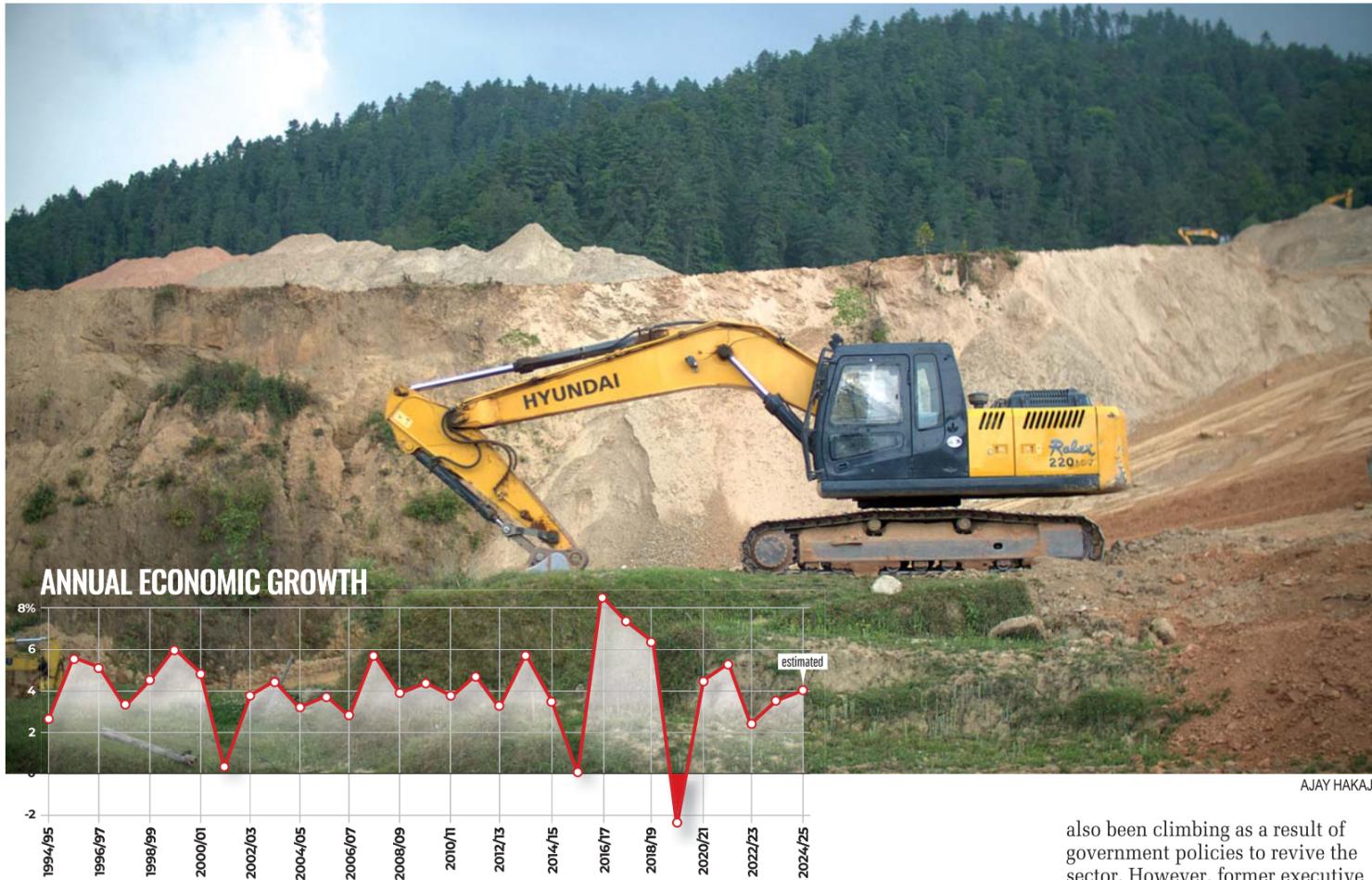
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Nepal's bubble economy

Ramesh Kumar

Two weeks ago, Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli announced jubilantly on social media that Nepal had recorded a historic annual growth of 81.8% in exports.

He was right. Nepal's trade did take a great leap forward, but the dramatic rise was mainly due to processed edible oil. Nepal does not produce the edible oil it exports.

In fact, the soya and palm oil that make up 44% of total exports are imported from Southeast Asia and South America, and simply re-exported, mostly to India.

Under the SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area) Agreement, Nepal can export products to India duty-free if it has at least 30% value-added. Nepal's traders have taken advantage of SAFTA even though the edible oils they export do not reach that value addition threshold.

"The 30% value addition requirement is often only on paper," says former commerce secretary Purushottam Ojha. "It is

clear that simply packaging edible oils in Nepal does not fulfil the terms of the trade agreement."

Prime Minister Oli is aware of this, and even called Nepal's export figures "fake" at an earlier event.

The government is relying on other iffy figures to suggest that Nepal's economy is strong and getting stronger. For example, the value of imports rose by 13.25% in 2024-25 compared to the previous fiscal year. Some of it was due to a jump in electric vehicle imports worth Rs31.76 billion, but mostly it was because more edible oil was imported to be re-packaged and sold in India.

The very fact that the government boasts about increased imports is an indication of how much it relies on taxing them for revenue. Touting such trade figures cannot be the basis to claim an economic rebound.

"A jump in the value of imports can be interpreted as an increase in purchasing power, but it is not evidence of a stronger economy," says economist Keshav Acharya. "Even though imports

have increased, Nepal's domestic production and productive capacity have not improved."

Nepal Rastra Bank's semi-annual economic activity study report shows that industrial production was down in the first six months of the last fiscal year, despite an increase in the number of new industries and investment commitments.

If domestic production does not improve in relation to this year's trade figures, the outflow will put pressure on foreign exchange reserves like it did three years ago. At that time, Nepal borrowed from the IMF under its Extended Credit Facility Program to kickstart the economy.

The macroeconomy, however, is on firm footing with foreign exchange reserves at a comfortable Rs2.5 trillion in May, up 23% from last year. This was largely because of remittances, and partly due to a falling NPR exchange rate.

Real estate transactions and the stock market index have

also been climbing as a result of government policies to revive the sector. However, former executive director of Nepal Rastra Bank Nar Bahadur Thapa cautions: "This is not organic growth, it is the result of deliberate policy decisions to relax rules on real estate and stock markets transactions."

The central bank has announced a slew of new policies, shifting the terms of loan repayment for industrialists and entrepreneurs, reducing interest rates, and injecting more working capital — all to jumpstart the real estate and stock market sectors.

But just because transactions in those sectors increase, does not indicate an economic turnaround, especially the when manufacturing and productive sectors languish.

Two years ago, Nepal's industrialists, business leaders, and political leadership predicted a recession amidst sluggish business, declining market demand, large-scale job loss, and a shrinking real estate and share market.

Still, the economy grew by 3.36% in fiscal year 2023/24. In fact, Nepal's economy has grown nominally over the last two decades (graph, above) even when all sectors of the economy are in decline.

Says Keshav Acharya: "The growth in trade, real estate, and the stock market are bubbles. The real economy remains stagnant." 🇳🇵

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Nanny State

Outrage in Nepal's public sphere as the government tries to amend a law that rectifies infidelity by justifying polygamy

Sonia Awale

The fact that we in Nepal in this day and age are having to block a bill that perpetuates polygamy, and that there are voices justifying it, shows just how ossified the ruling class still is.

It is one step forward, two steps back, and is not surprising given entrenched patriarchy in mainstream society and disregard for constitutionally-stipulated reservation quotas for women at all levels.

Here is a brief recap for those of you not following this saga: a proposed amendment to Article 175 of the Criminal Code attempts to legalise polygamy where an extramarital affair has resulted in a child. It does not state how many partners and children will be accepted, potentially leading to more problems.

Further, the pretext of protecting children's and women's rights purported by the bill is not even valid, legally or otherwise.

Existing civil and criminal codes have mechanisms to establish paternity of a child, not taking into account the circumstances



SUMAN NEPALI

of their birth, providing a clear pathway for birth registration and citizenship. It also allows for inheritance to all children, regardless of the marital status of parents.

But many men refuse to recognise children born out of an extramarital affair, fearing they might be prosecuted for polygamy, or have to further fragment inheritance. But an extramarital affair is not criminalised, unlike polygamy.

We would do better to resolve this confusion, as well as the lack of clarity in the bureaucracy that asks for a marriage certificate for the civil registration of children when it is not even mandatory.

As for protecting women involved with married men, marriage is not always the solution, other mechanisms for reparation should be looked into. She might also be as guilty as the man, and what of the justice for the first wife? Children are not collateral damage, but they are also not a ticket to legitimise a misdeed.

Even so, if people are not happy in a marriage, they can choose to divorce and remarry. A better solution would be to make the path to legal separation easier and

more just for both parties. At present, a man can rarely get a divorce without his wife's consent, owing to social disadvantages that women face. It is less complicated for women.

"It is unlikely that the bill in its current form will be passed, but the fact that something like this has even come up and we have to have this discussion is a huge relapse," says lawyer Neha Gurung.

Equally problematic is what the bill does not say in not so many words: that a woman's identity is her marriage, her husband, her family. She cannot exist as herself.

Polygamy was criminalised with the enactment of the Muluki Civil Code 2017 and the Muluki Criminal Code 2017 after decades of advocacy by rights groups. This amendment not just threatens to undermine progressive work of the past, but also sets a dangerous precedent.

"A step like this can take Nepal back by at least 30 years," warns advocate Diksha Kandel. "And female protection is just a guise, this is not even a gender issue although women will suffer more if this bill were to pass. No one should be allowed double marriage, regardless of their gender."

Trending Online



Visit Nepal in the monsoon

by Santosh Dahit
Tourists have always been told to avoid Nepal in the rainy season, but it is the best time of year. Chaurikharka in Rukum East stands out for its serene beauty with velvety grass and flowers. Pictures and story at nepalimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Unseen wounds of climate disasters

by Anek Rajbhandari
A decade ago, torrential rain killed over 30 people in Kaski. The tragedy left emotional scars the community carries to this day, exposing how climate change induced disasters affect the mental health of survivors. Read the report online.

Most popular on X



Trailing off in Manang

by Durga Rana Magar
Newly built roads have improved access to Manang, but they are being built along existing walking trails, impacting on trekking which is the mainstay of the region's economy. Join the discussion online.

Most commented

Saurya crash

by Vishad Raj Onta
The final investigation report of the Saurya Airlines crash on 24 July 2024 at Kathmandu airport reveals technical flaws, poor monitoring by CAAN, and gaps in emergency response. Visual analysis of the findings on our website.

Most visited online page

Letters

MANANG TRAILS

Either the government should build roads away from trekking trails or the agencies must start creating a new routes just for trekking ('Trailing off in Manang', Durga Rana Magar, #1272). We have seen how high-end tourists have decreased in the last 20 years. Biker groups should also be limited in Himalayan regions because they disturb the area when they come in bikes in group of five to 10, causing air pollution, noise pollution and inconvenience to tourists who have spent thousands of dollars just to reach these towns.

KT YTsang

This is the future of trekking in Nepal. There will be mostly cars from now on. Soon there will be no parking space.

Varvára H.

We have the same problem in Dolpo now, instead of building new roads with the full budget, they are cutting through walking trails, which is harmful.

Norbu O Positive Dolpo

RUKUM MEADOWS

It is very nice to go west in the lower mountains, enjoy the shepherds and see their lives ('Visit Nepal in the monsoon', Santosh Dahit, #1272).

Tom van Groeningen

Nepal is for all seasons.

Rajiv Desraj Shrestha

RECYCLING E-WASTE

It is essential for us to prepare for e-waste recycling ('Waste not, want not', Sonia Awale, #1272). Surely China itself has thought this one through -- and we are lucky for our proximity to it.

Tony Jones

Importers must do something, like keeping track and re-collection of used batteries.

Bhumi Limbu

Hoping for self-awareness of e-waste and responsible recycling is not a strategy. There must be legislation, and recycling must be incentivised at the consumer level. A e-waste deposit, and refund at the end of life of batteries, would help.

Avinash Sharma Ghimire

FUTURE NEPAL

Nepal's mega projects aren't just concrete and steel -- they are symbols of stalled ambition ('Nepal in 2050', Sonia Awale, #1271). Water, power, airports, expressways -- all stuck in the same loop of delay, politics, and short-term thinking. The real project? Learn to finish what we start.

Nepali Horizons

Nepal's ambition of being an electricity exporter or aviation hub depends on India, which will sanction us if we use the biggest capital investor: China.

Aero

Quotes



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

A year after the Saurya Airlines crash, the final report shows faulty takeoff data, ignored safety protocols, and poor oversight by Nepal's aviation authorities which ultimately led to the accident that killed 18 people.



Lexlimbu @lexlimbu

Wonder if anything will happen even with such a clear report and result. #FlyinginNepal



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Where will Nepal be in 2050? The country's population will peak at 36 million, the poverty rate will drop to near zero. Better highways and railways will boost connectivity. But, that is only if all goes well.



Shiksha2055 @Shiksha2055

Instead of audacious plans, we have got banal projects its time to advocate our vision, not convoluted shortcuts. Then only we may ameliorate our future.



Krishna Joshi @krishna_joshi01

What if all doesn't go well, the chances of which are much higher than based on the 30-40 year trend?

Online Package



ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

Three Rasuwa villages were flattened in the 2015 earthquake, and locals relocated to Khalte in the aftermath, only to find out it was a hotspot of climate disasters. Read story on page 4-5, and watch the video on our YouTube channel.



ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Galleries across Kathmandu are exhibiting Kiran Manandhar's five decades of artistic exploration. Read his profile-review on page 12. For more multimedia content, subscribe to our YouTube channel.

1,000 Words



PROLETARIAT OF THE WORLD UNITE: Three-time prime minister K P Oli of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) greeting former (also three-time) prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre) at a ceremony in Kathmandu marking the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Nepal attended by Chinese Ambassador Chen Song on 1 August.

Nepal Times

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From one disaster to the next

Nepal's district bordering China was recovering from the 2015 earthquake when it was hit last month by climate calamities



ALL PHOTOS: SABINA DEVKOTA

Sabina Devkota
in Rasuwa

One night last week, Asabir Tamang was awoken from his sleep by the grumble of the nearby Trisuli river. He alerted his family and neighbours in the village of Khalte, and in the dark they scrambled up the slope to safety as the waters rose.

It had been pouring all night, and the villagers thought it was a replay of the 8 July flashflood on the Bhote Kosi that killed 12 people, washed away a vital trade bridge connecting Nepal and China as well as a dry port with electric cars, and damaged four hydropower plants and an electric substation.

The Chinese had warned the authorities in Nepal of another flood, and the Uttargaya Municipality was on high alert.

Both floods are believed to have been triggered when supra-glacial lakes in the catchment of the Lengde River in Tibet overflowed due to global warming.

The flood on 28 July was not as destructive as the earlier one, but Tamang's family climbed to safer ground just in time before the flood swept away his tin-roof hut and those of his neighbours last week.

Fifty-eight year old Tamang, his family, and 276 other households had relocated themselves to the river-side settlement of Khalte after the 2015 earthquake destroyed their villages Mailung, Tiru and Gogane up in the mountains (see map).

According to the locals, they initially took temporary refuge in Satbise along with other displaced families from Haku. They stayed in an open area provided by the municipality chairman for five months. Later, they rented a place in Naubise for Rs27,000 per month,

only to be evicted by the landowner after seven months. Eventually, they settled in Khalte where they continue to live today.

Tamang himself lost nine members of his family to the earthquake in Mailung, including his wife, five grandsons and three granddaughters. Aftershocks triggered rockfalls, and it was too dangerous to go back to rebuild homes in their ancestral village.

But while relocating to a new place that would be safe from a seismic disaster, the inhabitants of Khalte have become victims of recurring climate calamities.

"We left the place we were born in, and have been living in fear for the past ten years," Tamang told us, surveying what used to be home for 17 members of his extended family in Khalte. "But it is just as dangerous here."

The 2015 earthquake not only displaced, but also divided

families. Sanchamaya Ghale, 40, still lives with her husband in her home village of Tiru which was devastated in 2015, while her children are with relatives in Khalte because their school was destroyed in the quake.

Sarita Tamang, 40, is from Gogane, the other village that was destroyed in the quake. She and her husband stayed back to tend the family farm, while her five children are in Khalte for studies.

A 2021 research in Gogane and Tiru shows that the quake did not just destroy homes, but the traditional bonds of the Tamang community providing support to one another in time of need.

With families divided and split into groups, that collective spirit of self-help is now lacking, and this has also led to socio-psychological distress.

Glan Bahadur Tamang, 60, also moved down to Khalte because

it is too traumatic to go back to his ancestral village of Gogane. He does hike up occasionally to sow millet and maize, but rarely lingers there.

Even before last month's floods destroyed their sheds, the highlanders found Khalte too hot and many who were moved here fell sick to water-borne diseases and other infections.

Today, the villagers only gather in their ancestral homes at funerals of relatives and friends because their ancestral burial grounds are near the villages that the earthquake forced them to abandon.

For many villagers like Sukumaya Ghale, 57, the idea of going back up to Tiru, Gogane or Mailung is fraught with fear. But Khalte offers no real safety, either.

"The river can take everything from us at any time," says Lalmaya Tamang, 29, recalling the fear that gripped the resettled families on 8 and 28 July.

NMB BANK एनएमबी बैंक

NAIMA and NADA

The ongoing Nepal Automobile Importers and Manufacturers Association (NAIMA) Mobility Expo will end on 10 August at Bhrikuti Mandap with attractions like Ather's Riza e-scooter which has a range of 160km and starts at Rs350,000. Bajaj is also introducing the Chetak 3501 e-scooter with a range of 153km, 0-80% charging in 3 hours, starting at Rs325,000.



Customers who book the Toyota Yaris Cross Hybrid or Land Cruiser 250 at the expo will get discounts, lifetime free service, a Platinum Card and a gift hamper.

Meanwhile, the 17th Nepal Automobile Dealers's Association (NADA) Auto Show is being held at the same venue soon after the NAIMA show from 19-24 August. The star attraction will be a demonstration flight by Deepal's eVTOL UAV.



Turkish to Aleppo

Turkish Airlines has resumed flights to Aleppo, Syria after stopping in 2012. Round trip flights between Istanbul and Aleppo International Airport will operate three times a week starting 1 August, five times a week starting 19 August, and daily starting 1 September. In January, Turkish had restarted flights to Damascus, the capital city of Syria, after a similarly long gap.



Aloft Top 10%

Aloft Kathmandu Thamel received Tripadvisor Traveler's Choice Award 2025, placing it in the top 10% of all hotels in the world.

Ncell Outbound

In the first for a Nepal telecom company, Ncell has made it possible for its customers to use its call and data services even when in India by partnering with Airtel. It is also working on similar deals with providers in China, Japan, Canada, and the USA.



Far West climbing

In an effort to diversify mountaineering expeditions and reduce congestion on Mt Everest and other peaks, the government has waived climbing royalties for two years for 97 mountains in Karnali and Sudurpaschim, including Churen Himal (7,371m), Kanjiroba (6,883m), Api (7,132m), and Saipal (7,031m).

56% pass Grade 12

56% of the 511,525 students who gave the Grade 12 exams have passed, a 9% increase from last year. Retakes are on 13 and 14 September.



Bad apples

A public notice has been put out prohibiting apple farmers in Jumla from harvesting before 1 September, on the logic that raw apples lack quality and nutrition, and hurt brand and market prices.



NMB gives back

NMB Bank planted 200 fruit trees at Tilottama Park in Rupandehi. The bank also handed over a solar water heater and solar lights to the Manavsewa Ashram in Besisahar, Lamjung. They have also supplied Nepal Police with capsized-rafts, life jackets and other rescue equipment.

Watch out

The new Samsung Galaxy Watch 8 is being introduced in Nepal and comes in 40, 44, and 46mm variations; costing Rs55k, 60k, and 75k, available in white, silver, or graphite.



HEI x Doko Recyclers

Waste produced by Himalayan Everest Insurance will now be collected and processed by Doko Recyclers.



4 wheels barred

Four-wheelers were barred from the Sharada Barrage Bridge on the India border after water flow in the Mahakali River reached 161,032 cubic ft/s, well past the safe limit of 100,000 cubic ft/s. The bridge may still be crossed on foot or on two-wheelers.

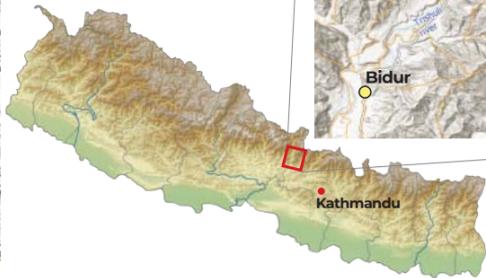


Food lab accredited

The National Food and Feed Reference Laboratory has been accredited internationally for 814 food parameters, which is expected to increase exports of Nepali products such as noodles, chhurpi, achar and more.

NEITHER HERE NOR THERE: Survivors of the 2015 earthquake in Mailung, Tiru and Gogane, were resettled in Khalte on the low-lying banks of Trisuli, but have suffered two damaging floods in July (left) caused by climate breakdown.

The government developed integrated resettlement of 119 houses for the villagers in Tiru, but they lie empty due to a lack of basic facilities (right).



Asabir Tamang



Norsing Tamang



Sanchamaya Ghale



Sukmaya Ghale

INTEGRATED RESETTLEMENT

The heat and danger of living in the deep valley of an unpredictable river have made some families consider going back to their villages in the mountains. In 2020, the Hong Kong-based Kadoorie Foundation, in coordination with the National Reconstruction Authority built an integrated settlement of 119 houses in Tiru for 152 beneficiaries.

However, disputes over fair allocation halted the distribution of new homes. They are now all locked and vacant, and some are being used for livestock.

“We could have considered moving in, but there are no basic facilities like toilets and taps,” says Norsing Tamang, 58, pointing at a row of empty houses in Tiru.

The Dhading District Level Project Implementation Unit

actually bought the land to build the homes for the survivors of the earthquake, but it was not enough for everyone.

Says Bam Bahadur Tamang, former chair of Ward 1 of Uttargaya: “We didn’t know how to decide who gets what, there was no option for further land acquisition.”

The government did acquire additional land in Pahirebesi in 2021 to resettle 125 survivor families, but that also turned out to be sufficient for only 103, halting distribution once again.

The government’s resettlement plans look good on paper, but there are many stories of well-meaning but failed attempts. This year the Ministry of Urban Development has allocated Rs70 million to acquire land for the 86 remaining displaced people in Khalte.

But residents are unhappy because there is still not enough housing and the elderly refuse to move into the buildings because they lack water and toilets.

Experts criticise the one-size-fits-all approach of government and charities. “Integrated settlements post-earthquake have become failures,” says Tribhuvan University professor Ratnamani Nepal. “Just building a two-room house is not a shelter. Livelihoods, access to water, education, and roads, all should be part of the plan.”

Elsewhere, in Barpak and other integrated re-settlements in Sindhupalchok, the government has overlooked community needs, cultural sentiments and social networks in the name of

reconstruction.

“A settlement is a cultural and social space, without it there is no sense of community,” adds Nepal.

A 2021 research published in ScienceDirect Journal, referring to Khalte, Tiru and Pahirebesi settlements, recommended that resettlement and relocation should be community-driven and reflect the priorities of affected people.

The World Bank’s Safer Homes, Stronger Communities: A Handbook for Reconstructing After Natural Disasters notes why relocation after disasters often does not succeed, identifying key problems such as poor site selection, culturally insensitive designs, lack of community input, distance from jobs, and insufficient funding.

According to the Central Level Project Implementation Unit, 97 integrated resettlements have been completed post-quake and six are still under construction. The need for proper housing is far greater than relocation.

Chegu lama, 40, still lives in Khalte, and dissuades people from moving there. “There are no basic amenities: no road, no hospital and no school. We go back and forth to keep up with culture and survival.”

But not everyone agrees. Chiring Tamang, 65 and Yangchen Tamang, 60, make occasional visits from Tiru to Khalte to meet their four sons and daughters-in-law.

“They are scared to live here, but in our old age we won’t abandon our ancestral home,” they add. 🇳🇵






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Alok Siddhi Tuladhar

It was a bitterly cold night in January 1980, and I was guarding the family's gilded Dipaṅkara Buddha image at Kathmandu Darbar Square.

The white palace wall was defaced with political graffiti, a sign of the anti-Panchayat street demonstrations that were going on at the time. It was also the occasion for Samyaka Mahādāna, a 12-yearly mega alms-giving Buddhist festival usually graced by the head of state.

I was supposed to collect the money offered by devotees who thronged there to pay homage to Dipaṅkara, and the coins made a bulge in my right pocket (pictured far right, below).

Many Newāḥ traders of Kathmāndu Valley spent some of the riches they earned from the profitable trans-Himalayan trade with Tibet organising these grand Samyaka Mahādāna festivals.

In 1882 CE, one such trader who was my ancestor, Gyān Bir Singh Tulādhar of Wonemā, had funded an exclusive Samyaka Mahādānā festival. All Newāḥ Buddhist priests in Nepāla Maṅḍala are invited to receive alms, and at the end it is obligatory for the patron to commission a large idol of Dipaṅkara, usually of gilded copper, with an abundance of ornaments bedecked with precious stones.

The fire-gilded statue is then consecrated so that it is elevated to the status of deity, worthy of worship. The god is handed down from generation to generation as a living testimony of one's ancestors having paid for the elaborate Samyaka ceremony.

Succeeding generations proudly display the Dipaṅkara image every year along with other religious and ritualistic artefacts, such as a long, narrow scroll painting (Bilaṅpau) that depicts life stories of legendary figures. The exhibit is put up for several days during the holy month of Guṇā, especially on the full moon and the day after, which this year fall on 9 and 10 August.

The practice of communal recitation of hymns and prayers in front of the image of Bahi Dyo, known as Tutah Bwonegu, adds tranquillity and humbleness to a festival that otherwise flaunts wealth.

Entire neighbourhoods throng to pay homage to the golden Dipaṅkara Buddha, propped up on a wooden frame, behind latticed wooden windows in a room on the ground floor of a house in the sacred courtyard to which the family belongs.

The exhibition is known as Bahi Dyo Bwoyegu (bahi = sacred courtyard; dyo = deity; bwoyegu = to exhibit). The



ALL PHOTOS: ALOK SIDDIH TULADHAR



in Pātan on the eighth day of the bright half of Śrāvan.

In line with the same philosophy, the monumental two-day alms-giving festival Samyak Mahādāna is held every 12 years in Kāthmāndu, where hundreds of Dipaṅkara images are paraded through the city thoroughfares and assembled at Bhuikhyah, a large open public space at the base of the sacred hill of Swoyambhu.

This important event is now several years behind schedule because of the encroachment of Bhuikhyah, where the alms-giving ceremony takes place. A downsized version of the Samyaka festival takes place in Pātan every five years.

Predictably enough, this display of affluence and opulence comes with its share of risks. A large gilded Dipaṅkara image was found missing from a reputed monastic complex in Pātan several years ago, together with many smaller images and other accessories. Later, most of the stolen items, including the Dipaṅkar image, surfaced at an auction house in Europe.

GODS IN SAFEKEEPING

Continuous efforts by the local community in Pātan, the Nepal government, and the 'host' government helped bring back the image safely to its original place of residence two years after it was stolen. But some of the pieces of the Bahi Dyo set are yet to come home.

This case has alerted other Bahi Dyo owners about the very real threat of theft, leading to many of them exhibiting the image privately in their residences only for a day or two. But while this allows for their family members to pay homage to Dipaṅkara, the public gets no access to them, a practice that is becoming increasingly common.

Some families have resorted to entrusting the safekeeping of the deity to one of the government museums in the city for the rest of the year after the exhibition is over.

However, some families which held the Bahi Dyo Bwoyegu ceremony privately earlier are now putting together resources and security measures to display their god openly in the courtyard for all to venerate.

Conditions governed by changing times have forced Bahi Dyo owners to adopt newer and more pragmatic practices. The Bahi Dyo Bwoyegu festival is the proudest moment of the year for communities — an opportunity to showcase the achievements of their ancestors with full religious endorsement.

This event is also a reflection of the deep devotion of the people, their uncompromising social values, and extraordinary artistic skills.

The razzmatazz of the Bahi Dyo Bwoyegu tradition may seem in sharp contrast with the merits of philanthropy preached by Dipaṅkara Buddha, but it has survived for centuries. In fact, this glorious intangible heritage is thriving again. 🇳🇵

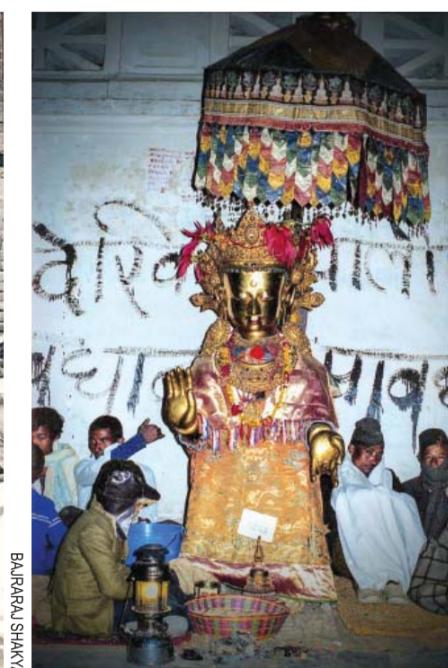
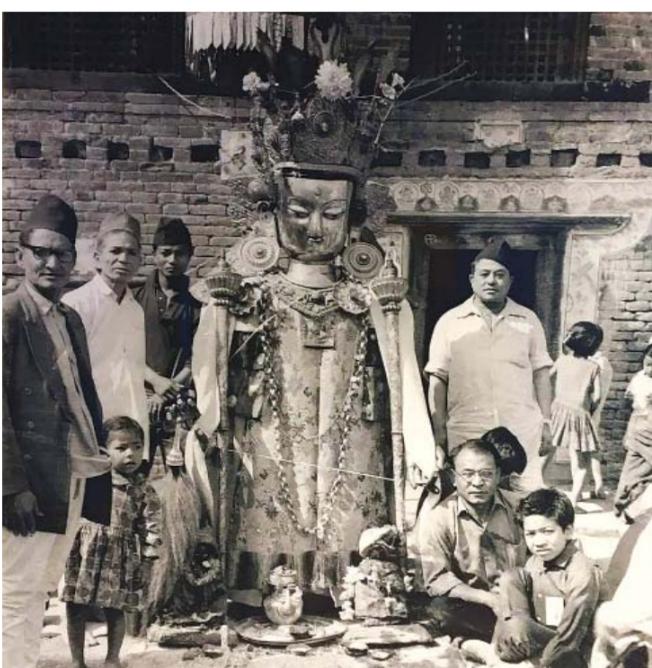
Alok Siddhi Tuladhar is a cultural preservation activist and documentary filmmaker.

nepalitimes.com

More photos online

KATHMANDU'S RELIGIOUS OPULENCE

Newa community worship idols in exuberant pageantry, even though the Buddha preached humility and frugality



BAJRABAI SHAKYA

PAJNADHAR TULADHAR

EYES OF BUDDHA: The idol of Dipaṅkara Tathāgata of Kvābahāh being exhibited at the house of the eldest member of the clan upon completion of communal feast which is part of the Itilahnē Samyaka. Samyaka Mahādāna in Kathmandu Darbar Square in 1980 (right).

day after the full moon, scores of religious Dhāḥ and Khiṅ drum ensembles parade around town, visiting the colourful Bahi Dyo exhibits. Bahi Dyo Bwoyegu essentially is the age-old practice of publicly showcasing the religious, artistic, and economic heritage of Newāḥ Buddhist families of Kathmandu Valley.

According to Buddhist scriptures, a Samyaka Sambuddha — an all-knowing supreme being — makes his appearance on earth after the passage of an eon. Twenty-eight such Buddhas have taken birth so far, the latest one being the Śākyamuni Gautama Buddha born in Lumbini in the 6th Century BC.

One of the earliest in the series was the Dipaṅkara Buddha, a great proponent of the merits of giving alms, and the one who forecast the coming of Siddhārtha Gautama, the historical Buddha.

Legend goes that while on his way to receive alms at a magnificent ceremony organised by an affluent king, Dipaṅkara stopped en route to receive offerings of a handful of grain from an impoverished elderly woman who had made it a habit of keeping aside a portion of her meagre income for giving away.

When asked by the puzzled king about the reason for stopping to receive such a scanty handout, Dipaṅkara gave a lengthy discourse about the virtue of selfless charity and the demerits of giving away riches collected by unscrupulous means. Suitably convinced, the king took up a menial job with a blacksmith, using his earnings to organise another alms giving ceremony at a later time, albeit on a much smaller scale.

This lore has been venerated to this day by the Newāḥ Buddhist community by virtuously perpetuating the tradition of giving alms on several occasions throughout the sacred month of Guṅlā.

Guṅlā means the month (lā) that you spend in the nearby forest (guṅ) engaging in meditation and devotional activities. Also known as Varśāvās, it is the period of the annual retreat of the monsoon (Varśā = rain in Sanskrit) and coincides with the month of Śrāvan in the solar calendar when followers of Śaivism perform special prayer rituals and weekly fasts in reverence of Lord Śiva.

As part of the Guṅlā celebrations, during the Pañcadāna festival all Newāḥ Buddhist households in Kāthmāndu offer alms of grain, money, and rice pudding to members of the Śākya and Bajrācārya priest clans, who go from house to house seeking alms as required by religious duty, regardless of their financial status. The Pañcadāna festival is held



Events



Far Away

Directed by Rajkumar Pudasaini, the powerful Nepali adaptation of Caryl Churchill's *Far Away* blends political commentary with surrealism to keep the audience on their toes.

Till 10 August, 5:30pm onwards, Ticket: Rs500, Mandala Theatre, Thapagaun

Himalayan Art Festival

Himalayan Art Festival 2025 is back with art talks, panel discussions, art workshops and the Prashanta scholarship which recognises emerging artists. The festival will be inaugurated by The Sharks from The Shark Tank Nepal.

8-14 August, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal



Waterfall hike

Escape the city and immerse in a scenic hike to Sursing Jharana. Explore wild honey bee hives and local villages along the way.

9 August, Fee: Rs1,800, 6am onwards, New Road

Powerlifting Championship

Asia's strongest powerlifters will put on a showcase that will have the audience on the edge of their seat.

15-17 August, 8:30am onwards, Ticket:Rs1,000, Nepal Police Club, Bhrikutimandap



Kiran Manandhar

Experience the original masterpieces of Nepal's emblem of abstract expressionism, Kiran Manandhar, at locations across Kathmandu Valley. Read review on page 9.

Till 18 September, Museum of Nepali Art / Kathmandu Art House / Kathmandu Guest House / Patan Museum

Kagtali

Written and directed by Nabin Chandra Aryal, *Kagtali* unravels a disturbing event in a wealthy household. Watch the play to discover a gradual unfolding of long-buried secrets. Go on Facebook for show time details.

Till 16 August, Ticket: Rs500, Kausi Theatre, Teku



Farmers' Market

Experience the best of local goods at Le Sherpa Farmers' Market. Browse through fresh, seasonal produce, handcrafted treasures, and artisanal goods while supporting small and local businesses.

9 August, 7:30am onwards, Le Sherpa, Maharajganj



Music

The Heartbreakers

The Heartbreakers is back with their signature sound to bring the audience some lively music this weekend.

8 August, 7pm onwards, Hard Rock Cafe, Sherpa Mall



Karan Kanchan

Karan Kanchan is throwing a kitty party at XO. Get ready to sing your favourite throwback songs and be part of a full-blown karaoke and some fun games. Get tickets at Loko.

15 August, 9pm onwards, XO Club, Thamel

Rachana Dahal

Catch Rachana Dahal live as she brings songs from her album to the stage with her full band.

9 August, 10pm onwards, Ticket: Rs1000, XO Club, Thamel



Live music

Go with friends and family to listen to live music every Friday at Cafe Tyandro. Also savour authentic Newari dishes and refreshing drinks.

13 June, 5pm-8pm, Cafe Tyandro, Sano Thimi



Sonagi Blues

After two years of performing together, the contemporary band Sonagi Blues is set to release their first album, *The Last Show*. Be a part of their special launch gig this week.

8 August, 7pm onwards, Ticket: Rs1,000, EDEN, Sanepa



Getaway



Chandragiri Hills

Celebrate Shrawan Sobar at Chandragiri Hills and witness the Maha Arati, join live bhajans, and enjoy pure vegetarian meals. Plus buy one get one free offer on cable car tickets after 4pm. Call for more offers.

11am-6pm (Live Bhajan) / 6:30pm-7:15pm (Maha Arati) / Chandragiri, 9802300306 / 9802084007

Tiger Mountain

Perched on a peaceful hilltop, Tiger Mountain offers a tranquil escape with sweeping views of Nepal's majestic mountains, best enjoyed from its inviting verandahs.

Pokhara (01) 4720580

Park Village Resort

Offering a harmonious blend of nature with luxury, Park Village has furnished rooms equipped with modern amenities and private balconies. A fitness center, outdoor pool, sauna, and steam room are available for wellness enthusiasts.

Budhanilkantha, 9851020727



Aloft staycation

A chic city staycation for two awaits visitors at Aloft. Enjoy their stylish Loft Room, breakfast and dinner at Nook, cocktails at Nylgiri, spa discounts, rooftop pool access, and more. Exclusively for Nepali nationals and expats residing in Nepal. Call for offer details.

Rs14,999, Aloft Kathmandu Thamel, 9801976065

Club Himalaya

Club Himalaya by ACE Hotels has the best panoramic views of Himalaya. Explore recreational activities like mountain biking, yoga and meditation sessions, and nearby hiking trails while there.

Nagarkot (01) 6680080



Dining

Kharayo Bakes

Kharayo Bakes serves an array of handcrafted desserts from pastries, cakes, and cookies, to classic cheesecakes and flaky croissants. Choose your pick and order now.

Hanuman Dhoka, 9851132172

The Weavers

Head to the Weavers and try their soft Bao Buns. Or enjoy Nepali staples including their momo and thali sets.

Lagankhel, 9818409661



Teej @ Aloft

This Teej, celebrate the spirit of womanhood at Aloft with their specially curated 'दर to Go' takeaway boxes. Pre-order four hours in advance and pick up orders from Nook. Explore their festive menu for on-site dining, with live food stations, a welcome drink, and decadent desserts. Call for prices.

Till 25 August, Aloft Kathmandu Thamel, 9801976054

Vera Pizza

Try their authentic Neapolitan-style pizza with classics like pollo pizza alongside iced drinks, which make for a perfect snack this summer.

Thamel, 9763398430

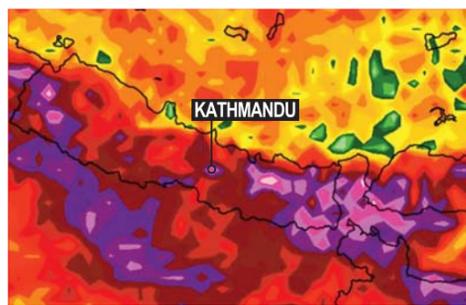


Dokdo Sarang

Dokdo Sarang is the perfect spot for dining, be it for casual meals or BBQ feasts. Try their filling kimbap rolls, and other authentic Korean delicacies.

Kupondole, 9803472187

Weekend Weather



No Warning

The Uttarakhand flashflood on Tuesday in which at least 60 people are missing, is a warning for Nepal where the terrain and weather are similar. We do not have hyper-local forecasting, and Himalayan cloudbursts can send deadly floods down even minor tributaries without any warning. A series of monsoonal pulses is sweeping across Nepal from east to west, and as this precipitation forecast for Saturday shows, there is more heavy rain headed towards Kathmandu, while central and western Nepal will continue to experience squally conditions.



Our Pick

Abdullah Saeed's 2025 American comedy series *Deli Boys* follows two Pakistani-American brothers Mir and Raj, who are forced to reckon with the secret drug empire of their seemingly upstanding convenience store-magnate father after his death. Thrust into a life of crime, the duo navigate their newly inherited illegal enterprise as well as their public-facing company with the help of Lucky, their dad's closest advisor. All the while, they must keep their late father's double life a secret from their loved ones. The 10-episode series stars Asif Ali, Saagar Shaikh, Poorna Jagannathan, Alfie Fuller, and Brian George.

गर्मी मौसममा संक्रामक रोगबाट बचौ र बचाऔँ

- गर्मी मौसममा मलेरिया, कालाजार, डेंगी, हैजालगायतका विभिन्न संक्रामक रोगहरू फैलिन सक्छन् ।
- संक्रामक रोग फैलाउने झिँगा, लामखुट्टे, भुसुना आदिको नियन्त्रण गरौँ ।
- संक्रामक रोगबाट बच्न शुद्ध र उमालेको पानी पिऔँ ।
- बासी तथा सडेगलेका खाना नखाऔँ ।
- घरभित्र र वरपरको सरसफाइमा ध्यान दिऔँ ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड



Sangya Lamsal

For someone who is considered a pioneer of abstract expressionism in Nepal, Kiran Manandhar is abstract about his craft.

At age 68, Manandhar does not see the need to explain himself, or his art. His bold and vibrant brush strokes on canvas capture movement in the temporal and spatial planes.

“I still do not understand what is abstract, there is no way to define it,” Manandhar told us while showing us around his exhibition. “Sometimes, even before I decide what I am about to create, a drop of colour hits the canvas. That’s the beginning of a dialogue.”

The ongoing exhibitions are bursting with the products of Manandhar’s lively palette and wide imaginings. The visuals are quick to grab the visitor’s attention, but the emotional depth lingers longer.

In his series, Women, what initially look like distorted, animal-like forms reveal themselves to be powerful abstractions of the essence of womanhood. It is all there: strength and vulnerability, nurturing and rebellion, solidarity and sorrow, compassion and love.

The works portray the patriarchy, and how Nepali women have become each other’s pillars. The complexities of womanhood are often best understood only by women themselves, but Manandhar seems to have the heart, mind and eyes to explore them artistically.

Several pieces from the Women series and Manandhar’s other artworks, are currently on display across Kathmandu Valley in the Museum of Nepali Art, Kathmandu Art House, Kathmandu Guest House and Patan Museum. The exhibitions honour the maestro’s five decades of artistic exploration and features not just his iconic works, but also represent a timeline of his life journey.

As a child, Manandhar used to accompany his mother to the Bishnumati River, which at the time was clean and wide. During her evening puja, he would watch the flicker of votive lamps as they floated down the dark waters.

Later, he sculpted sand figurines on the banks or rendered flowers in

watercolour. Painting soon became a passion, but the young Manandhar was a rebel: rigid schools never held his interest and he preferred to roam by the river. Growing up without a job, he survived on little, searching for free meals outside mosques, and spent hours fishing and observing life unfold around him.

He ended up in Varanasi. He remembers sleeping on railway platforms, eating leftovers from garbage piles and being beaten and chased away by the police. Yet, in letters home, he wrote that he was staying in hotels and dining lavishly.

“No one rises easily in art. There’s always struggle, pain, and relentless effort,” he reflects. “Almost every artist has had to fight their way up.”

Eventually, he enrolled in Banaras Hindu University and earned both a BFA and an MFA in painting. As he came to his own, Manandhar began exploring the broader Nepali art scene and travelled to France, Germany, and Japan for art programs and residencies.

Along the way, he imbibed influences of contemporary movements in art but was mostly drawn by expressionism in a cubist style — but infusing it with influences of his Nepali roots.

Manandhar has plenty of heartfelt advice for younger artists: “One reason art hasn’t progressed as much as it could is that we often dismiss young people and their potential. Wisdom is hoarded instead of shared. But these learnings must be passed down.” Which is exactly what he seems to be doing with his multiple exhibitions around the Valley.

TUG-O-WAR

Manandhar describes his creative process as a playground with three players: colours, canvas, and himself. From that moment, the painting unfolds on its own terms. He begins to see possibilities and builds upon them, even as he is caught in a constant, dynamic tug-of-war. What emerges from this push and pull are masterpieces.

“As soon as I see colours or even think of painting, I’m completely consumed by it. My only fear is: what if one day there are no more colours? What if one day I cannot paint anymore?”

Kiran Manandhar in the abstract

Exhibitions in galleries celebrate the creative explorations of one of Nepal’s best-known artists



SUMAN NEPALI



His Aatma Series takes us on a spiritual journey. The aatma (soul) transports visitors somewhere beyond the visible to unknown terrain. In Aatma IV, we are pulled into a hypnotic spiral, falling into Manandhar’s own Bermuda triangle of emotions and abstraction.

His Ganesha paintings take a more serene approach with soft curves and muted tones that emanate wisdom. In contrast, the Bhairava radiates the raw ritualistic energy of a mask dance.

Both are deeply rooted in Nepali tradition, yet boldly contemporary in expression.

Then there are the Self-Reflection and Untitled works perhaps intentionally open-ended. Viewers will find human forms, birds, fleeting figures, and swirling emotions scattered across canvases and lokta paper with acrylic, oil pastels, charcoal, and mixed media.

Even by Kiran Manandhar’s standards this is as abstract as art can get. 🇳🇵



KIRAN

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Museum of Nepali Art

Kathmandu Art House

Kathmandu Guest House

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What China wants

China has no interest in filling America's shoes, Beijing is focussed on its domestic economy

Yu Jie

Will President Donald Trump give his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping a gift? While Trump prizes unpredictability, Xi aims to position China as a force for global stability. Thus, there is a widespread assumption that China will rush to fill the vacuum left by an increasingly nationalist and isolationist United States.

The Chinese leadership has no interest in filling America's shoes. To do so could cost China dearly just when it is undertaking a broader economic reorientation at home. The world may be tired of US interventionism – and, now, of Trumpian aggression, but that does not mean it is ready to welcome an abstemious superpower.

China has avoided being involved in major crises beyond neighbourhood. Though it has proposed global initiatives on 'development', 'security', and 'civilisation', and articulated a vision of multipolarity, its efforts to realise these goals have not gone beyond economic statecraft.

Foreign commentators debate whether China is a

potentially benevolent hegemon or a malevolent one, but Chinese authorities and intellectuals are more immediately concerned with weathering the storm that Trump has unleashed.

Viewed from outside, China's core national interests seems straightforward: to replace the US as global leader. But pursuing that role may contradict other core interests, such as maintaining regime legitimacy and security, orchestrating a continuous rise in living standards, and reunifying Taiwan with the mainland.

These goals might best be served by maintaining a cold peace with the US, rather than embracing conflict with it.

China knows all too well that being a global superpower would inevitably draw it into regional conflagrations that it would prefer to avoid. But China also knows that it has benefited from the relatively stable world economy that the US and its allies helped bring about.

China needs to retain resources and manpower domestically to tackle its biggest challenges. Chinese leaders must manage an economy that is no longer driven primarily by property development and exports, while preparing for its largest trading partners descending into total isolation.

Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariffs and escalatory duties were a wake-up call. Whatever happens in the trade war, China urgently needs to rebalance its economy by stimulating domestic demand.

While Chinese leaders have long acknowledged the need for such a rebalancing, they have been slow to follow through with the necessary policies. They have continued to prioritise industrial output over living standards, and capital investment over consumer spending. But the prospect of losing one of its biggest export markets should change this calculation.

Similarly, China has an interest in building resilient supply chains for critical technologies in order to circumvent US chokepoints. A significant share of national resources has already been redirected toward promoting domestic innovation.

With the Sino-American rivalry intensifying over the past decade, Chinese leaders have come to regard domestic innovation as a strategic necessity. Beyond boosting domestic innovation, China is eager to seize opportunities to set the global governance agenda for emerging technologies.

Its recent successes in AI – most notably DeepSeek's release of low-cost models that rival those from



top US developers – have created a strong impetus for China to amplify its voice. China's message – that a handful of rich countries should not be able to monopolise the technologies that will determine everyone's economic future –

undoubtedly resonates with many around the world.

During the post-Liberation Day staring contest with the US, China convened an impromptu gathering of the all-powerful Politburo and Chinese ambassadors stationed

Turning point in US-India relations

In the face of Donald Trump's capriciousness, India will not panic, but it might pivot

Shashi Tharoor

India's relationship with the United States has long been a careful balancing act between shared democratic values and sometimes diverging national interests. But recent diplomatic tremors have unsettled India, prompting it to question whether the partnership has reached a turning point.

In an unsettling display of geopolitical grandstanding, President Donald Trump has taken credit for halting hostilities between India and Pakistan in May by threatening to disrupt trade ties.

India has bristled at Trump's claims, not only because it is fiercely protective of its sovereignty, but also because they lack merit. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Foreign Minister S Jaishankar have noted, Trump did not call them during the conflict.

Bilateral trade was not mentioned by any US official while the fighting was underway. Trump may well have pressed Pakistan to end the violence, but India did not need persuading. As a status-quo power focused on its own economic development, the last thing India wanted was a protracted conflict.

'Operation Sindoor' featured strikes on nine known terrorist basecamps and other facilities in Pakistan was retribution against terrorists who had targeted Indian tourists, not an opening salvo in a war with Pakistan.

When Pakistan retaliated, India initiated another decisive but carefully calibrated strike. It was this manoeuvre, possibly coupled with US pressure on Pakistan, that prompted Pakistan to seek a cessation of hostilities. Trump hardly deserves credit for this outcome, and yet, true to form, he has sought to claim it.

But India will not tolerate the implication that it succumbed to Trumpian threats or blandishments. This is not Trump's only action that is giving India pause.



NO PUSHING: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gesturing towards US President Donald Trump during happier times in February in Washington. This photograph that has been widely circulated in India after Trump's stance against New Delhi on trade, and taking credit for ending the conflict with Pakistan.

In June, he hosted Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir at the White House. Pakistan's civilian leadership was not at the table.

Trump's unpredictability vis-à-vis China is similarly troubling. Whereas he took a reliably hardline approach to the country during his first presidency, Trump 2.0 blows hot and cold. One minute, he is imposing extreme tariffs against China, the next, he is seeking to negotiate a trade truce and saying that he might visit Beijing at Chinese President Xi Jinping's invitation.

Where India fits into these calculations – if it factors into them at all – is a mystery.

During Trump's first term and during the Biden presidency the US regarded India as a vital partner in the Indo-Pacific and a bulwark against China.

India upheld its foreign-policy doctrine of strategic autonomy and avoided committing to confrontation with China, it welcomed US engagement in the region, and supported the revitalisation of the Quad, which includes Australia, Japan, and the US, in 2017.

After all, India has its own quarrels with China, and in recent years lent critical support to Pakistan. China is directly undermining Indian industry, by barring

access to high-end machinery. China's influence across South Asia is also growing, extending from Bhutan and Nepal to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Indian officials and businesses see China as a threat. But it is difficult to know where the US stands, especially after Trump opted not to rebuke China publicly for offering intelligence assistance to Pakistan, including real-time satellite data that reportedly facilitated Pakistani strikes on Indian military targets during the recent conflict.

When it comes to trade, moreover, Trump has often been tougher on partners than adversaries. This week he increased tariffs to 50% on Indian goods for its energy and military equipment imports from Russia.

OUTSIZED EGO

Trump's capriciousness has heightened India's strategic anxieties. The US has proved to be an unreliable partner before. Now, Indian decision-makers are split: should India decouple from China, trusting the US to have its back, or pragmatically engage with it, for fear that the US will do the same? But what is the value of a partnership that is subject to the whims of an outside ego?

India will not panic, but it might pivot. Given its lack of treaty obligations, it has greater leeway to act independently than formal US allies like Japan or South Korea. Jaishankar's July visit to Beijing pointed to a desire to broaden communication with China.

Indian foreign policy will remain rooted in deterrence, decisiveness, and non-tolerance of terror. As for the US, India will continue to walk the same tightrope, constantly aware that it may be fraying at one end. 

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Shashi Tharoor is a former Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and an MP for the Indian National Congress. He is the author, most recently, of *A Life* (2022).



strategic necessity. The two countries' 4,209km land border gives China more than enough reason to work with Russia.

China's ultimate focus is not Russia but its long-term rivalry with the US. An axis with President Vladimir Putin's regime might well offer a workable (if imperfect) solution to America's containment strategy against China.

Likewise, China has been de-escalating tensions with India, another large, nuclear-armed neighbour. Both know that the structural and historical strains on their relationship – characterised by an obvious power imbalance and mutual mistrust – will not be easily eliminated. But both also know that predictable, stable ties will yield big benefits over time, especially in a new multipolar order.

PAX SINICA

Beyond managing relations with its immediate neighbours, China has sought to mobilise the Global South behind reforms to multilateral institutions.

When Chinese leaders and diplomats speak of ushering in an 'orderly multipolarity', they mean an international order in which the non-Western world has much more clout. Hence, China is a strong advocate of the recent BRICS expansion, and of proposals to redistribute voting shares within Western-dominated international financial institutions.

China has also sought to shape the agenda at United Nations-affiliated institutions where the US historically has had less influence, such as at UN Trade and Development and the South Centre. It can assume a limited leadership role without directly confronting the US and the rest of the G7.

China does have a foreign-policy interest in subtly countering US influence in the developing world, which is why it builds large-scale infrastructure and addresses long-ignored development needs there without making any demands about democracy, human rights, and accountability.

Instead of offering security guarantees, China offers roads and bridges. In exchange, it can secure access to critical raw materials and open new markets for its state-owned enterprises and private companies at a time when the US and Europe are closing their doors.

China did broker a modest rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and its Global Security Initiative aims to foster international cooperation against terrorism, cybersecurity, biosecurity, and AI.

But in the case of the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas wars, it has avoided taking direct responsibility. China's self-proclaimed neutrality on Ukraine has not gone unchallenged.

In Gaza, China has criticised the US for supporting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's agenda of continuing the war. But unlike Iran – which China relies on for oil – these other flashpoints have been kept at arm's length.

China would face three big challenges in pursuing even partial or limited global leadership.

First, given America's accelerated withdrawal from international affairs, China might struggle to sustain its commercial engagement with many parts of the world. After all, the US wants to impose drastic costs on those who do business with China, and it may well get its way.

Second, China cannot avoid engagement in dangerous security situations forever. Sooner or later, it will have to develop a truly global foreign policy. In fact,

simply putting its own Global Security Initiative into practice would require it to do much more heavy lifting, not only in setting the agenda but also in terms of deploying security personnel and resources. America may be retreating, but that does not mean it will sit idly by and watch China try to increase its own influence.

Third, China still needs to orchestrate a domestic economic rebalancing – a process that will have enormous global consequences. Shifting from export-led growth to greater domestic consumption will take years, and the push to rebalance may run up against China's ambition to remain a global manufacturing powerhouse.

The latter objective is already causing tensions with Europe and some developing countries whose domestic manufacturers are struggling to compete with Chinese national champions (such as the electric-vehicle maker BYD).

Even as its economy continues to grow, China will remain a largely self-centered and reluctant superpower. Unlike the US, its domestic political economy calls for a more restrained foreign policy, focused primarily on its immediate neighbours and commercial opportunities in the Global South.

As the world grapples with the decline of US power and the shift toward multipolarity, China will increasingly become the centre of gravity in the global economy. The rivalry between a political and military superpower and an economic one will be dangerous for everyone. Both must tread carefully to prevent economic warfare from escalating into a conflict that all would regret. 🇨🇳

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Yu Jie is a senior research fellow on China in the Asia-Pacific Program at Chatham House.

abroad. The purpose was to assess China's relations with its neighbours, and the stature of those in attendance spoke to the sense of crisis that had swept through the country's top leadership. More to the point, the meeting

confirmed that China's strategic orientation remains focused on its own region – not the global context. Beijing remains fully committed to maintaining strong ties with the Kremlin, viewing Russo-Chinese alignment as a geographical and




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