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March to 5 March

Shristi Karki

Days after he was sworn in as Home Minister last week, Om Prakash Aryal in a meeting with the Election Commission said the interim government was determined to guarantee voting rights for expatriate Nepalis in elections on 5 March 2026.

Nepalis across the world welcomed the move they have been pushing for years. Most are young Nepalis between 18 and 35 who closely followed as their peers back home took to the streets to protest corruption and bad governance this month.

But despite Aryal's directive to the Election Commission, experts say there are legal and technical obstacles to ensuring absentee ballots in the next six months.

Targeted out-of-country voting is possible within the current timeframe, but not a full global rollout reaching the estimated 5 million Nepalis abroad.

Aryal said the interim government plans to set up polling booths to ensure the rights of overseas Nepali to vote under the Proportional Representation (PR) system at least at its 40 diplomatic missions abroad. Of these 30 are embassies, seven consulates, and three permanent missions.

"That this government has recognised the need to guarantee voting rights to overseas Nepalis is a positive step, but a commitment of this scale with the limited time we have is too ambitious," cautions Radhika Regmi Pokharel of The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). "For now, enabling officials within the diplomatic missions to vote may be a starting point."

However, allowing only diplomats abroad to vote will be unjust and may create discontent

at a time when the hopes of Nepali expatriates to vote have been raised.

Former Chief Election Commissioner Bhojraj Pokharel says it is up to the interim government to decide on the scale of the operation. He adds, "We have to consider whether we are aiming for a symbolic franchise with a limited number of overseas Nepalis voting to begin with, as true electoral justice that includes every Nepali living overseas will be a very difficult task to achieve in limited time."

The first step will be to clear the legal pathway to achieving out-of-country voting. With Parliament now dissolved, the government must amend election-related laws through ordinance, not just to ensure voting rights to Nepalis overseas, but also within Nepal.

Hundreds of thousands of young Nepalis have crossed 18 years of age, and become eligible to vote after the last polls in 2022. President Ram Chandra Paudel endorsed an ordinance on Wednesday to keep voter registration open.

"A top priority in this election must be to at least ensure internal migrants are able to cast their ballots for their constituencies from their current place of residence," says Bhojraj Pokharel. Only election officials and security personnel can cast at least their PR ballots from where they are stationed.

Nepalis abroad will also need to be registered to vote, which experts agree is the greatest constraint. The census put the country's absentee population at 2.1 million, but the actual figure is closer to 5 million with Nepalis working, studying and living abroad.

Even if technical and legal hurdles are overcome, there are

diplomatic and security challenges. Voting booths will be needed at sites beyond diplomatic missions, or in nations that do not have embassies where there are no bilateral agreements to designated polling stations.

Moreover, a significant number of Nepalis, especially migrant workers, live in countries that are not democratic which reduces the chances of bilateral agreements being signed in time.

WAYS FORWARD

Antonio Spinelli, Senior Adviser for Electoral Processes for the Stockholm-based International IDEA, says it is ultimately for Nepal's government to decide what is feasible and how to proceed.

"A too ambitious attempt to introduce multiple out-of-country voting methods or a universal system in such a compressed period would carry significant risks," Spinelli told Nepali Times, "administrative failure, host-country resistance, and potential reputational damage could set the cause of migrant enfranchisement back rather than advance it."

A pilot voting scheme could be realistically introduced for in-person voting for the PR ballot at selected embassies and consulates. Conducting trial out-of-country voting in a country with a relatively low expatriate population would be feasible, and if successful could

inspire hope and boost morale among other overseas voters.

Aside from voting, a major challenge for the interim government is to create a political environment to bring the discredited political parties into the election fold, especially as they are set to become increasingly adversarial.

Nepal's youth must be encouraged not just to register and vote, but also contest in elections. If polling and politics are once again dominated by the same players that have refused to loosen their hold on power, even within their own parties, the youth movement that toppled a corrupt and incompetent leadership will have been for nothing, say experts.

The Election Commission is capable of conducting elections within 100 days once it has a voter list. This leaves the government with two months to address technical, political and logistic challenges and introduce electoral reforms.

Concludes Bhojraj Pokharel:

"The main priority of this government must be to enable an environment for the Election Commission to conduct elections through laws, logistics, and dialogue. Nepal has a limited window of opportunity, but provided we clear these pathways, we will be able to conduct a free, fair and timely election."



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SAFE & HAPPY DASAIN

Nepali Times wishes readers and partners a safe and happy Dasain. Let us bring out the best in us as Nepalis to be kind, compassionate, and to help each other this festival season. The Nepali Times editorial team is taking a Dasain break, so there will be no print editions on 3 October. The next hardcopy issue will be on Friday, 10 October. But readers can follow daily online coverage throughout the holidays on www.nepalitimes.com

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GenZ Voices
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GenZ Voices

GenZ constitutional awakening

Sambriddhi Aryal

The protest led by digital-native generation is not a rejection of democratic norms but rather an insistence for the Constitution's most fundamental guarantees to be taken seriously. What confronts us is not youthful defiance, but political impunity masquerading as governance.

The spreading narrative that our protests were about a fleeting social media ban insults our generation's intelligence. The protest has exposed a deeper generational revolt. No longer will we pay for impunity, we are determined to confront it as a constitutional betrayal rather than an inevitability of culture.

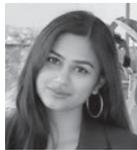
We know what is enshrined in our Constitution. Article 17 guarantees us the right to freedom: a freedom to assemble peacefully and without arms. Yet when we exercised those rights, the state met us with bullets instead of dialogue. That betrayal forces us to ask if Nepal is capable of delivering real democratic substance, or will the upcoming generation be left to inherit yet another endless cycle of hollow symbols and the whims of the powerful?

We, GenZ, are not demanding reforms at the margin. We are asking for the future our Constitution promised. We look ahead with both clarity and urgency.

We envision a democracy true to its words, where the Constitution is honoured in practice; where digital freedom is not revoked when it unsettles entrenched power, where the judiciary upholds the law without fear or favor, and independent watchdogs strike at impunity with unflinching integrity, and where elections reflect the true will of citizens rather than the staged choreography of the elites.

We foresee a cultural transformation-connection being no longer needed for survival. We can only laugh when they label our demands as 'utopian', imagine living in a nation where fundamentals of democracy are themselves treated as luxuries.

What is new is our unwillingness to wait. Raised on digital democracy, well aware of the law and fluent in hashtags, we are unafraid to take our case to the streets when institutions have repeatedly failed us. The whole nation is watching the interim government closely, and so are we -- the generation determined to make a system which works for all, not just for the privileged few.



Sambriddhi Aryal, 21, is a fourth-year student at Kathmandu School of Law with a keen eye on constitutional law, civic rights, and the pulse of global change.



PAGE 1: The frontpage story in Kantipur daily on 25 September with blood soaked shoes belonging to Prakash Bohora, 28, of Dailekh. He has been receiving treatment for a bullet wound at the National Trauma Center for the past 17 days.

The Nepal our friends died for

Niharika Sah

I was there. I marched with two of my closest friends. I heard chants rise, I saw hope spread. And then, in one moment, everything changed. The air filled with sirens and smoke, our voices drowned in chaos. I was pulled back before it was too late, but others were not so lucky.

And as if that was not enough, opportunists took advantage. While we bled, criminals escaped from prisons. At the same time, political actors attempted to hijack the movement for their own interests, undermining the authentic voices of the young generation. These betrayals deepened the sense of injustice and disillusionment among Nepal's youth.

Despite the grief, one truth remains: this generation refuses to be silenced. From the ashes of 8 September must emerge a stronger, more accountable Nepal.

To honour those who lost their lives and to safeguard the nation's future, the following are essential:

- Justice for the martyrs. Not only official recognition but also lifelong support to their families, including education, healthcare, and economic assistance.
- Independent Truth and Justice Commission. An impartial body with international oversight to investigate the events and ensure transparent, public trials.
- Accountability for violence. Immediate suspension, investigation, and prosecution of officers and commanders who authorised or used violence against students.
- Vetting of political leaders. A commission to ensure that no past leader returns to power without thorough investigation

and clearance from corruption or abuse of power. Every new minister and officer must also meet strict academic and professional standards, pass full background checks, and have no criminal record.

- National healing and trauma care. Counseling and support programs for survivors, families, and students who experienced trauma.
- Police and security reform. Ban on live ammunition in peaceful protests, mandatory body cameras, and human rights training for law enforcement.
- Youth participation in governance. Establishment of a permanent Youth Advisory Council under the government to ensure young voices shape national policy.
- Accountability of the interim government. Monthly progress updates and a 100-day roadmap with clear deadlines for reforms and justice.
- Exoneration of GenZ protesters. Officially clear GenZ of any responsibility for property damage, recognising that any destruction was caused by opportunists, while our actions remained peaceful and focused on justice.

These demands are not radical, they are the foundation of a dignified society. In the short term, citizens expect justice for victims, re-arrest of escaped criminals, and concrete accountability from the interim government. In the long term, we look toward systemic reforms: a political culture rooted in merit, transparency, and integrity, and a nation where youth are active participants in governance.



Niharika Sah is a final-year engineering student from Lalitpur with a deep love for literature and poetry.

Democracy's new dawn in Nepal

Tanuja Pandey

Our primary demand to this new government is a full and impartial investigation into the mass murder. GenZ has specifically identified former Prime Minister K P Oli, former Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, and the former Inspector General of Police Chandra Kuber Khapung who must be investigated free from political interference.

Those found guilty must be held accountable under national law. Additionally, GenZ demands a transparent inquiry into the vandalism and arson that undermined the true spirit of their movement.

GenZ's second demand is the conduction of fair elections on 5 March 2026. The true measure of this interim government's success lies in fulfilling that commitment.

The third demand is the establishment of a high-level, independent anti-corruption mechanism to investigate graft since the restoration of democracy in 1990. GenZ argues that existing watchdog bodies are toothless, filled with political appointees loyal to ruling parties. The new body must be free from political influence and empowered to investigate and prosecute even the most powerful. These demands are not negotiable.

While united on these core demands, GenZ activists hold different views on the political system's future. Some advocate for a directly elected prime minister, while others favour reforms within the existing parliamentary structure. Even young members within ruling parties share this frustration, calling for internal reforms and urging long-entrenched leaders to step aside and pass the mantle of leadership to a new generation.

Debates over the Constitution of Nepal 2015 have also surfaced. While some anti-democratic actors have called for its nullification, GenZ protesters firmly reject this. This Constitution was achieved through nearly a decade of struggle. GenZ continues to uphold the principles of a Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. They emphasise that the Constitution must be implemented in its true spirit ensuring accountability, transparency, and rule of law.

No Constitution is perfect. Society is constantly evolving. Space for amendments should always exist, as in any healthy democracy, to address shortcomings and reinforce its foundations. This generation demands strengthening the pillars of good governance. For Nepal's GenZ, this movement is reclaiming democracy, reclaiming their space.



Tanuja Pandey is a lawyer and climate justice activist.

Letters

CORRUPTION

"Politicians and bureaucrats are two sides of the same coin" may be correct but not a complete picture ("Two sides of the same coin", Editorial, #1279). As most uprisings (of any sort or intensity) tend to change primarily PEOPLE and rather less the SYSTEM itself, results may fluctuate from negative to negligible to positively substantial. Simply having laudable intentions without the capability to redistribute, to improve management and administration, to diminish social inequality, to resist special interest factions without any coincidental descriptive and empirical method by which to actually assess progress shall remain a weak system susceptible to yet further instability. And the means used to 'make a point' in this recent anarchical rioting do not bode well for a positive change.

Iván G. Somlai

There is a third side: agents (बिचौलिया). Businesspeople working hand in gloves with the two (politicians and bureaucrats).

Santosh K.C.

My fear is that corruption will continue and the same old political parties will be back in power with the next election ('Next Gen', Newsletter, Kunda Dixit).

Roger Ray

POLITICIANS' FUTURE

Don't underestimate their power, contacts, etc all over ('What next for Nepal's Big 3 parties?', Ayusha Chalise, page 5). And their will to stay in power for all these years.

Tom van Groeningen

Now is the time for all the younger cadres (ie those under 50) in the three main parties to challenge and replace the old 'leaders', abandon the absurd

labels (Maoist, United Marxist-Leninist etc.) and create a vibrant new political movement in tune with the demands of the GenZ protestors.

David Seddon

Looks like the old politicians spoke to each other, and if you listen to Prachanda, the move is to woo GenZ, break them up from within.

Raj Gyawali

BHAT-BHATENI

Dear Sirs and Madams @Nepal Times, am I delusional to think that the gentleman in question is mired in the Lalita Niwas scandal ('Bhat-Bhateni burning', Sangya Lamsal, #1279)? Not condoning violence at all but this type one sided coverage is how you will be called a shill for the wheelers and dealers and lose credibility as MSM. I would urge you to recalibrate to maintain your standing amongst your loyal readers.

Avinash Sharma Ghimire

This article misses the opportunity to talk about the Maoist connection/investment as well as the large number of vendors who provide the stock and hence lost all their inventory. Bhat-Bhateni works on a consignment basis so the destruction hurt many small businesses.

Stephanie Suhowsky

Jealousy. Envy. Too lazy to work. Not bothered about working to raise the standard of living or developing the motherland. Disgruntled about others' hard work and good earnings. Always ready to earn fast and easy money. Totally destructive minded without a single thought nor plan about the consequences; death, injuries, irreparable damages, etc

Bhuban Singh

INDIA & SOUTH ASIA

It may be considered dangerous by India because Indian students and youth could get some ideas

and demand less corruption and more civil rights ('India's reckoning with its dangerous neighbourhood', Nirupama Rao, nepalimes.com). But I think that India is too vast and the society structure too complex. No need to worry but rather be inspired to improve on civic rights.

Erika Belair

Why Nepal is dangerous? Because its people are fighting against corruption and for civil rights?

Maria Tomak

ROBERT REDFORD

Those days, PCN used to send PCV's tin trunks by air cargo to their posts ('The Sundance Kid in Nepal', Lisa Choegy, page 12). I was on board as PO for the Rural Construction Program. I was at the airport to air cargo and ensure they load the trunks. It was that time when a group got off the RNAC twin otter. A lady travel

agency agent ran towards this western guy and asked for his autograph. I realised he was Robert Redford. I took out my old Nepali driver's license and extended my hand for him to sign. When he was signing, I asked him how he liked Nepal. He smiled and said, 'It's beautiful.' Later, I knew he was returning after filming in the Everest area.

Shivaji Prasad Upadhyay

Great story about one of the USA's biggest, most generous, most humble stars.

Pam Johnston

We were there at the same time as Robert Redford on our honeymoon. We missed him by a millisecond.

Jude Allsopp

There is a special level of cool in the memories of Robert Redford's visit to old days' Nepal.

Michal Thoma



Online Package

That one time of the year when everything is sunshine and rainbows is mired by the death and tragedy of the GenZ protests. While the interim government led by Prime Minister Sushila Karki has many of us hopeful, Dasain this year is going to be a subdued affair for many. Watch the public say as much in this short vox pop. Subscribe to our YouTube channel for more multimedia content.



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WEHATETHECOLD YOUTUBE

The accidental JOURNALIST

A British tourist who went viral for vlogging Nepal's GenZ protests just wanted to shoot what he saw

Vishad Raj Onta

Harry Jackson was on an epic adventure 'from Thailand to the UK on 2 wheels' when he ran into the ultimate sidequest.

Having just visited Zangla in Ladakh, Jackson had only landed in Kathmandu when he found himself in the middle of GenZ protests earlier this month.

'Arriving in Nepal - Chaos, Protest & Curfews' is the title of his first video (wehatethecold on YouTube) about the protest. He shoots police as they shoot at protesters outside Parliament.

Jackson is riding a Honda CT125, a retro lightweight motorbike with off-road capabilities. Strapped to the bike is his sparse luggage, flute, and a faded Union Jack. People are rioting on the streets and there is a heavy armed police presence as he makes his way to his hostel in Thamel.

His vlog the day after on 9 September has 29 million views. In 'The side of Nepal the media won't show you', Jackson rides his bike straight at the crowd just past the Parliament building into Old Baneswar.

He parks it and walks among the protestors, documenting it all: from the police firing capsules of tear

gas into the crowd to the burning Parliament building as well as the jubilant, victorious crowd in the premises as they destroy police vehicles and dance.

"I'm shocked at the scenes I've witnessed here today. I have truly witnessed history on a stupid trip from Thailand to England on a f***ing moped!" exclaims Jackson as he leaves the scene for the day, heading back to his hostel to edit the footage.

The hostel is in direct contrast to the raucous scenes of the protest, as tourists and Nepalis sit and lounge at tables.

'KUIRE VLOGGER'

Nepalis quickly called him the 'kuire vlogger', and attribute his skin colour to his popularity. Objectively, the videos are well made. Jackson goes full gonzo journalist, putting himself right in the heart of the action, talking directly to the people, all while narrating the events as they unfold.

Despite being cut together in an entertaining way, the footage retains a raw, unpolished quality that outdoes what most professional journalists with a heavy duty camera crew could do. At a time when legacy media has been seen to be pushing biased narratives, Jackson wants to see for

himself what happened, and make up his own mind.

This kind of video journalism takes a lot of skill and a certain personality. Many people, almost everybody, had their phones out at the protests, but only a handful were like Jackson. He interviewed people firsthand, edited the clips and uploaded them the same day.

Jackson continued his vlogging over the next few days as the curfew was first put in place and then lifted. He explores the city as

the Valley rebounds. By this time, Nepalis recognise him everywhere he goes.

Jackson had achieved moderate fame as a 23-year old DJ in Birmingham, but what he has done in Nepal is something else. Almost everyone he talks to has already seen his vlog, and they are all eager to interact. He has been on multiple podcasts in Nepal too, and most videos online on the protests reference his vlogs.

Before his Nepal blogs, Jackson

had a modest 16k subscribers on YouTube, but after Nepal figure is now almost 700k, gaining over 100k each through 11-13 September. Most of them are Nepali viewers.

"I'm just a regular dude who just did what he wanted to do," says Jackson on a podcast. "I wanted to go on an adventure, learn about history, and learn languages. And I wanted to film it, document it, and have a wicked film for my life to show future generations."

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The Himalayan

Shristi Karki

In 2003, the death by police firing of a student protesting a rise in fuel prices pushed Nepal's student activists to join the प्रतिलग्न विरोधी आन्दोलन (Movement Against Regression), which political parties had begun after king Gyanendra's sacking an elected government a year before.

The students' participation elevated the movement and prompted more Nepalis to join in, leading to the People's Movement that first sidelined the monarchy and then abolished it in 2008.

That took five years to happen. But 12 years later, this month, a youth-led protest forced the prime minister to resign within 30 hours.

Police massacred GenZ activists, many of them students, outside Parliament on 8 September. This intensified public anger, leading to targeted attacks, looting, and burning of the homes of political leaders, private businesses, and public buildings.

Amid the smouldering ruins of state institutions, young Nepalis chose a new prime minister to lead an interim government and deliver a fresh mandate. All of this happened in five days.

Students have been central to Nepal's democratic and political process since the mid 20th century. In her 2018 book Making New Nepal, researcher Amanda Thérèse Snelling traces the history of student activism and politics against a background of Nepal's socio-political history and party politics.

Snelling examines the



1990

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



2006

AJAY JOSHI / A PEOPLE WAR

Nepal's historic youth dissensus

interplay of ideology and identity, explores how student activists fit into a political landscape occupied by the traditional elite, and details how student leaders have established themselves through relationships with influential actors on local, national, regional, and transnational levels.

The Rana regime's repression caused students to be politically aware. In 1947, students held the first organised protest against the Rana autocracy demanding educational reforms.

The breadth of student activism expanded during the Panchayat

era after king Mahendra banned political parties, which drove mainstream politicians and parties underground. Student activists then became proxies for multiparty democracy because they were still able to organise.

Student politics was institutionalised, and unions emerged as vanguard sister organisations of political parties. Student activism, more so than mainstream political parties, played key roles during both major movements in 1990 and the 2000s, as they mobilised the citizenry to join the democratic process.

Through extensive ethnographic research between 2003 and 2015, Snelling investigates the political coming of age of student activists during the final years of the armed insurgency and their role in and beyond the movement that ultimately abolished the monarchy.

Her research revolves around the political journeys of five student activists: Akash and Rishi from the Nepali Congress (NC) student wing Nepal Student Union (NSU), Salini from the UML's All Nepal National Free Students' Union (ANNFSU-Akhil), Gyana from ANNISU-Revolutionary of the Maoists, and

Lagan, who began his political journey from Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party's student wing Nepal Krantikari Bidyarthi Sangathan.

The 'movement against regression' in 2003 served as the entry point for activists into national party politics. It was their participation in the movement that elevated the profile of the main subjects of Snelling's research.

In the years that followed, the paths of the five activists diverged. Some made it into mainstream politics, even becoming lawmakers. In doing so, they have had to trade idealism for pragmatism,



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Election purse viable

The Finance Ministry believes it has enough funds for the 5 March elections and that it will not have to rely on donor support despite the price tag on repairing government facilities destroyed during the GenZ protest. The November 2022 elections cost Rs7 billion. The Mof plans to free up Rs110 billion by scrapping 1,300 low priority projects such as conferences, seminars.

Finance Minister Rameshore Khanal has also decided to release Rs9.8 billion in interest subsidies to the central bank in order to help private businesses damaged in the protests pay back loans.

Highways blocked

Faulty engineering and heavy monsoon downpours this week triggered huge landslides that blocked the Prithvi Highway and the Mugling Highway during the peak Dasain travel season. Minister Kulman Ghising announced that the Japanese-built Nagdhunga-Sisneri tunnel will be open for outbound and inbound passenger vehicles from Kathmandu this Dasain. Long-distance bus operators also want to operate night buses during the day to reduce risk from landslides.



The Kodari Highway opened this week after 2 months being blocked by landslides, further affecting trade with China. Floods in August also blocked the Rasuwa road which has also not come into operation. Meanwhile, the Korala checkpoint in Mustang was opened from 15 September.



New Vespa scooters

Vespa distributor Delta Autocorp launched the Vespa ZX 125 (Rs3.49 lakh), the Vespa 125 (Rs3.99 lakh), and the Vespa S 125 (Rs4.09 lakh). The scooters are powered by new emission-friendly engines and come in Vespa's signature vibrant colors.

Tata parts mela

Official Tata genuine parts, Automotive Fluids and Durafit Parts distributor Sipradi is holding a 'Genuine Parts Mela' for the festive season, which had been postponed due to the protests. Customers can get Rs1000 cashback on every purchase and be entered into lucky draws to win Bajaj Pulsar, TVS scooter 125cc, or a Smart TV and smartphone.

#NepalNow

The Ministry of Tourism has relaunched its #NepalNow social media campaign, to send the message that the country is back in business after this month's deadly protests. Average daily tourist arrivals via air fell from 3,120 to 1,300. Hotels in Pokhara and Chitwan have seen cancellations, and there has been a drop in trekker traffic.

Samsung discounts

Samsung Nepal has discounted its Z Fold 6 models by Rs50,000 and its Z Flip 6 model by Rs40,000 for Dasain. The phones come with 16 months of device insurance and can be financed at 0% interest.

Rara flights

Nepal Airlines has resumed flights to Rara airfield from Nepalganj this week after a four month pause. The flag carrier had been operating three flights a week until mid-April.

IMF support

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Mission Chief Sarwat Jahan has promised help to the interim government with economic reform programs. The main task currently is to hold elections, but also to implement anti-corruption measures and create jobs.

Corruption hotline

People can file complaints against corruption or unnecessary delay while seeking government services by emailing Finance Minister Rameshore Khanal directly at rameshore@mof.gov.np, the ministry's email at gunaso@mof.gov.np, or by calling the hotline at 18105000401.



HBL branches

Himalayan Bank relocated its Chabahil - II Branch to NL Complex in Baluwatar on 18 September. Across Nepal HBL has 174 Branch Offices, 20 Extension Counters, 286 ATMs, 8,000 POS terminals and 15,000 Remittance Payment Counters.

NMB + Yadea

NMB Bank Limited has partnered with Kuzu Nepal, distributor of Yadea, to provide a Rs5,000 discount on electric scooters through the banks' debit or credit Cards, mobile banking, or QR payment service.



Yamaha lucky draw

Binod Yadav from Bhairahawa won a Yamaha motorbike in the first week of Yamaha's Ride the Blue with Roadies campaign. Besides the bike, the promotion offers exchange discounts, cash prizes of upto Rs10 lakh, free helmets and service coupons, and 5% off parts and lube.

Skoda festive delight

Under Škoda's Festive Delight 2022, customers purchasing any Škoda Model can get 20% downpayment, up to Rs400,000 discount and the chance to win a ticket to the Qatar Grand Prix 2025. Bookings are open at all Škoda showrooms.

New TVS

Official distributors Jagdamba Motors launched the TVS Apache RTR 160 2V Fi and the TVS Raider iGo motorcycles. The 50km/l 159.7cc Apache RTR will be available in Matte Blue, Racing Red and Black at Rs3.189 lakh. The 72km/l 125cc Raider iGo can be bought in Nardo Grey or Wicked Black at Rs3.059 lakh.

New ZTE phones

Chinese company ZTE has launched the nubia A36 and A56 smartphones, costing Rs10,999 and Rs11,999. Both models come with a 6.75 inch 90Hz screen, a 13MP rear camera, a Unisoc T7200 chipset, 4GB of ram and a 5000mAh battery.



2025

KAMAL PRASAI

Ethnography that traces party-based student union politics helps explain how the GenZ emerged independently from it

and their previous vision for Nepal's democracy have been overshadowed by their political opportunism and position.

And even decades after they began their journey as student activists, the generation that the book focuses on are still considered 'youth' leaders. Snellinger quotes a former student leader who joined mainstream politics as saying: "I am still a youth because my aspirations remain unfulfilled."

Meanwhile, the refusal of Nepal's octogenarian leaders to retire (even after the upheaval this month) has created a surplus of younger adults waiting in the wings, making the word 'youth' relative in Nepal's political trajectory.

Other subjects of Snellinger's research have retreated from student and mainstream activism, either in disappointment over their party's withdrawal from some of their more radical positions, or to continue their work at the community level through education and journalism. One of them has leveraged her political connections to further women-led initiatives after unsuccessful election bids.

Nearing the end of her research in 2015, Snellinger observes the disappointment of Madhesi communities whose movement to demand more inclusive provisions of the draft Constitution had gone in vain, even after 45 lives were lost. TVs were switched off in the Tarai, and there were sighs of resignation. In Kathmandu, Snellinger noted that the student leaders that entered mainstream politics protesting for inclusive democracy had little empathy for the struggles and similar demands of the Madhes.

Despite the students' role in ending the monarchy, Nepal's political status quo has remained. The institutions and people that replaced the monarchy have allowed one set of Kathmandu elites to be replaced with another.

The socio-political benefits promised during the movement two decades ago have remained tightly controlled by leaders who refuse to give up their hold on power. The political system was overhauled, but without concrete reform.

It was only a matter of time before public frustration would boil over. Snellinger concludes her book by predicting the inevitability of future movements in Nepal: 'Leaders emerge through the andolan ... a new generation will emerge shaped by Nepal's accumulated socio-political heritage, which they will mediate

to shape a liveable present and future for themselves in their country, perhaps by continuing the movement.'

NEXT GEN ACTIVISTS

And that is exactly what happened on 8-9 September. Students marched in the streets demanding an end to corruption and impunity, but this time not as proxies of political parties.

Their desire for socio-political reform was apolitical at a time in Nepal's history when the nation's student organisations have weakened and lost credibility, mirroring the erosion of trust in their parent parties. Along with party-based student unions, the Free Student Union (FSU)—the umbrella body for all student unions—has lost its reputation due to corruption and embezzlement.

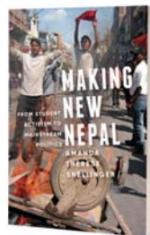
That is not to say there are no similarities in movements past and present. Whether political or apolitical, protests have been overshadowed by a lack of unity within the groups that spearhead movements. They have led to widespread destruction.

Leaders of youth and student movements have also had to bear the brunt of the frustration of the people they represent when there is no delivery on their demands.

Youth andolan, whether political or apolitical, has been a rite of passage into Nepali politics — dissensus is an integral part of political regeneration. It remains to be seen how the fall from grace of political parties after the GenZ movement will affect their affiliated student unions.

As elections approach, student unions and youth collectives will find their own footing in Nepal's newly emerging socio-political landscape. Meanwhile, the NextGen leaders in their parties have been waiting for years for their turn. These established political actors will not go down without a fight in the run-up to March elections.

Amanda Thérèse Snellinger perhaps needs a post-script or even a sequel to her book to see how a new generation of leaders, forged by their student activism, will compete in Nepal's new political arena. 🇳🇵



Making New Nepal: From Student Activism to Mainstream Politics by Amanda Thérèse Snellinger University of Washington Press, 2018 249 pages Rs1,118

What next for Nepal's Big 3 parties?

They better reform and hand over to younger members if they want to be relevant in the upcoming elections

Ayusha Chalise

A week after Nepal's deadly protests, the country's three main political parties whose offices were torched came out in public pledging to reform themselves.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Maoist-Centre visited his gutted party headquarters and said it would be rebuilt on an even grander scale.

Five-time prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress (NC) and his wife are still being treated for the wounds they suffered after being attacked at their home on 9 September.

K P Oli, who was ousted as prime minister after the GenZ protests turned violent with a loss of 74 lives and was under Nepal Army protection in a base inside Shivapuri National Park outside Kathmandu made his first public appearance on Tuesday. But his UML party has said it is not looking at a change in leadership at present.

All the main parties have offered sympathies for the lives lost, and some members said it was time for a generational change within their parties as well. But all sides tip-toed around one crucial point: the GenZ demand for a change in leadership and political culture.

What stands out in the recent statements of political leaders is not what was said, but what was left unsaid: none have raised the issue of transferring leadership to younger figures, let alone democratising their parties.

"Parties that do not appeal to the people, especially young people, will stop being relevant," says Uddhab Pyakurel, a professor of political sociology at Kathmandu University (KU). "However, political parties are an integral component of our democracy."

The youth wings of the main three parties do not shy away from criticising the impunity of their seniors, but have not been able to bring internal reform within their organisations.

Activists in the GenZ movement that toppled the regime say they do not follow any -isms, but Roshan Thapa Magar of the ANNISU (Revolutionary) that is affiliated to the Maoists says: "Ideologies still matter, the sacrifices of the parties in Nepal's democratic struggles, and what they continue to represent, remain indispensable."

He admits being taken aback by the way Maoist leaders and their relatives were portrayed in the #NepoBaby social media campaign: "It was disheartening and disappointing to see how power and position has been misused by our leaders in a party made up of ordinary people. It is now up to us to reform and restructure our parties to gain this trust again."

Nawaraj Tripathi, a former Nepal Student Union (NSU) member and now the NC's Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources says: "Only our party embodies the spirit of democracy etched into its core. But we have lost touch with democracy from within, therefore people are frustrated with us and a leadership that has acted with impunity and a tight grip on power."

But he adds: "But this public disillusionment with us does not mean that we give up on the values of our party, it means we restructure the leadership and renew at all levels so that a new generation can lift the party up again."

SHOCK THERAPY

Yet both acknowledge frustrations with their own leadership and say that the voices they raised against corruption were not loud enough to be heard. The deadly protests last week should be shock therapy to the leadership — especially if they want to recoup before early elections that have been called for 5 March 2026.

Thapa Magar says student politics has been important for the bottom-up voice of youth to be brought to the leadership level. He says, "If the GenZ organised the protests better, then we would perhaps not see the kind of looting and destruction on 9 September. We in the student wings of political parties know how to mobilise protests better."



Over at the CPN-UML student wing ANNFSU, chair Sujan Kadariya and Abdus Miya quit their parties in dramatic fashion via Facebook following the bloodbath on 8 September, only to stage equally dramatic returns.

Miya justified it thus: 'When Nepali youths fell to bullets, I believed the Prime Minister must resign. Even by 2PM the next day, he still hadn't stepped down, and at 2:01 I declared I was quitting the party.' K P Oli resigned shortly after that post, putting Miya in a dilemma.

Kadariya also deleted his post: 'Feeling that the student politics of our entire generation has failed, I resign as President of the ANNISU Central Committee.' Later, he admitted he had posted out of fear for his life and felt ashamed for betraying the party.

Miya and Kadariya expose the thin ideological fabric of student politics in Nepal. Their resignations were seen by many as opportunism, and precisely what is wrong with the mainstream parties.

The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) which was the fourth largest in Parliament, also faced criticism for lacking a clear ideological foundation. The RSP's former Education Minister Sumana Shrestha at first denied rumours she was leaving the party, but resigned the next day declaring: 'I QUIT' on social media.

LEADERSHIP TRAPS

In the last two decades, Nepal's revolving door politics has seen only three protagonists: Deuba, Dahal and Oli. Earlier this month, Oli changed the UML rulebook to make way for his third term as party chief. Deuba has headed the NC since 2016. Dahal has been a permanent fixture as the Maoists' great helmsman for 30 years.

With the exception of Youth Congress Nepal, the student bodies of UML and the Maoists have not explicitly called for a change in party leadership. ANNISU (Revolutionary)'s Thapa Magar admitted his Maoist party has not held a central committee meeting to discuss succession, but hoped that a democratic route to new leadership could secure the party's future relevance.

Some within the NC see Gagan Thapa as a natural heir apparent to Deuba. Both rose up the ranks through the party's student wings and were jailed during the Panchayat. Nawaraj Tripathi of the NC says: "But leaders cannot save parties unless they have institutional frameworks in place for dissenting voices to democratically replace leaders."

This issue extends beyond the NC. Absolute power within political parties seems to undermine intra-party institutions absolutely. Unchecked leaders have consolidated power in ways that even impact the functioning of Parliament, and hence governance.

Pyakurel says: "It is evident from the protests and its aftermath that political literacy is not strong in the new generation. Calling politics a dirty game does not encourage meaningful participation. Corruption is corruption, it is not politics. Equating corruption with politics implies that corruption is inherent to politics."

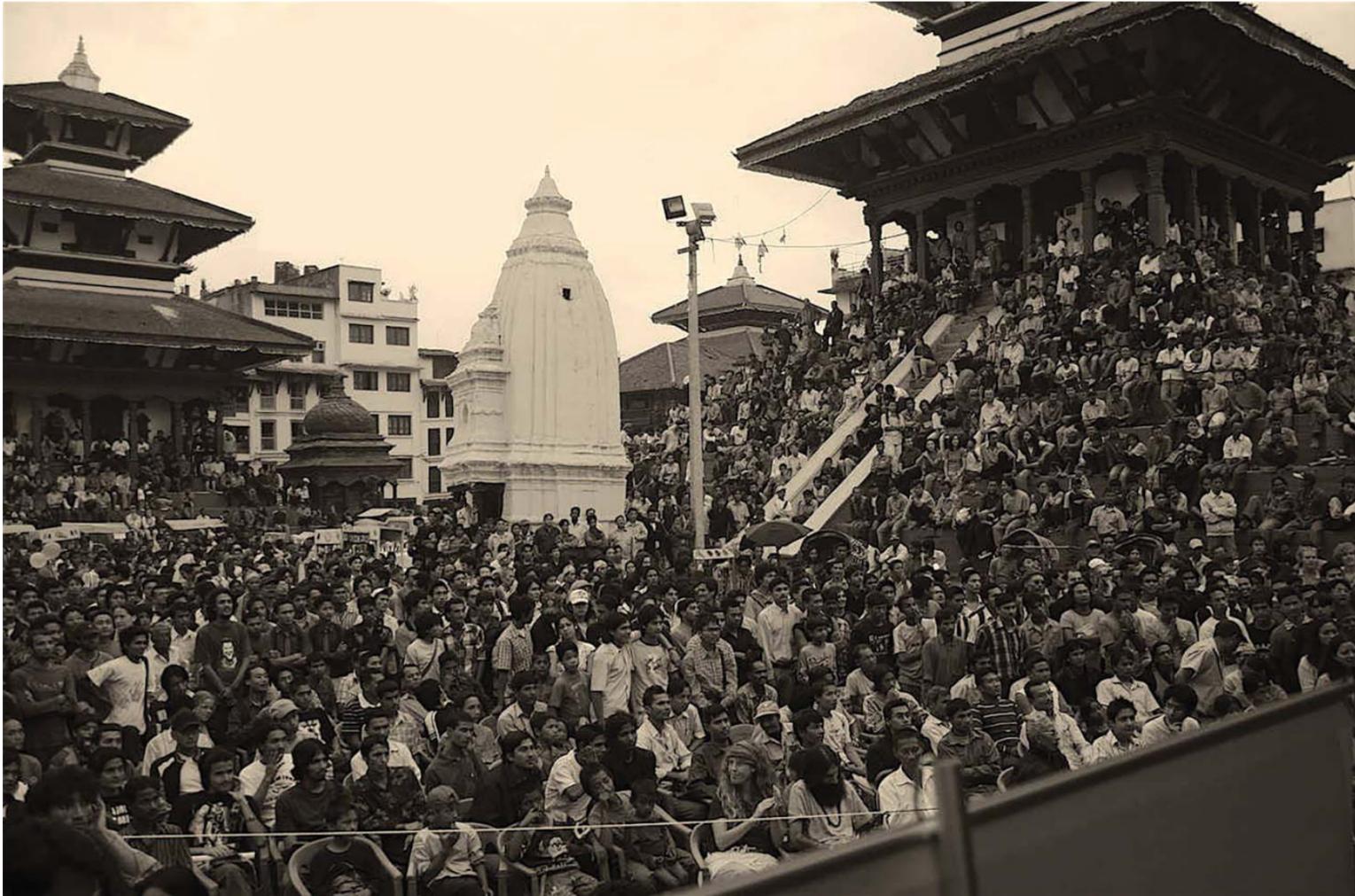
Thapa Magar says: "A party is not just its leader, it is an ideology that its members are committed to. Political parties need to democratise their systems and allow meaningful participation of their members."

In the case of RSP's Rabi Lamichhane, repeated controversies followed by his victimhood narrative and deflections of accountability have gone unchallenged by his own party leaders. Says RSP founding member Bipin Acharya: "It is not fair to compare Rabi Lamichhane to other party leaders, he has not even completed one term. He is innocent until proven guilty and we trust due process in the new judiciary under the GenZ interim government."

Nepal's political parties have deep roots embedded in Nepali society through a network of institutional bodies and sister organisations, says Uddhab Pyakurel. "Yet their relevance now depends on whether they can adapt. To regain public trust, they will need to mobilise these structures in ways that genuinely reflect citizens' concerns, rather than operate as brokers of political power." 🇳🇵



Ayusha Chalise is a communication and development researcher specialising in how politics is experienced in the digital space.



Jazzmandu Festival 2025 was nearly cancelled, but the organisers decided to go ahead with it anyway, believing in the power of jazz for healing and restoration.

The Surya Nepal Jazzmandu is back in town for the 21st time with an impressive lineup of international and Nepali musicians and much jamming at various venues – a festival where east is east and west is west, but the twain meet.

The annual music fest which started in 2002 coincides with Nepal's Dasain-Tihar-Chhat festivals, and this year will run from 9-15 October. The event is a fixture in Kathmandu's music calendar, and a premier international jazz festival.

This year, too, it brings together various genres of jazz and musicians of diverse origins – all of them interacting with local jazz performers and traditional Nepali music.

The five-day festival this year has a lineup of noted musicians from across the world, bringing in their diverse influences and backgrounds. The result is an improvised infusion of different sounds, styles and rhythms.

Jazzmandu schedule on page 8.

JAZZ AS HEALING MUSIC

This year's Jazzmandu Festival will be therapeutic for a nation on the cusp of a new beginning



Catia Werneck Quartet
(France)

Choosing to settle in Paris, she soon joined the group Boto Novos Tempos and quickly became a fixture on the French jazz festival circuit.

Catia has collaborated with some of the most celebrated names in music, including Touré Kunda, Patrick Bruel, and Chico Buarque, and contributed as both vocalist and songwriter to numerous film soundtracks.

In 1997, she released her debut album *Estrêla do Sultão*, a milestone that led to her selection by Peter Basler (Joe Zawinul's agent) to represent Brazil at major international festivals.

Since then, Catia's discography has expanded steadily, with acclaimed albums such as *Saudades de Paris* (2000, Japan), *La Vie en Rose* (2004), *Naturalmente* (2006), *Catia Canta Jobim* (2007 – a tribute to Bossa Nova recorded in Brazil), *Obrigado Brasil* (2009), *Primavera* (2010, with Vincent Bidal), *The Best of Catia* (2011), and *Bossa Catia* (2012, EMI Japan). She relaunched her career in France in 2014 with *Tudo Bem*, while continuing to perform regularly in Brazil.

In 2017, Catia released *Jongando*, a bold new project that explores fresh musical horizons and pays tribute to Jongo, the traditional Afro-Brazilian rhythm often considered the "grandmother" of samba.

Today, Catia Werneck stands out as a unique voice bridging Brazilian roots, jazz sophistication, and global music culture.

Alma Naidu – Vocals and piano
Andreas Dombert – Guitar
Ferdinand Schwartz – Bass
Florian Stierstorfer – Drums



mohs.
(Switzerland)

Since 2019, mohs. has risen to the heart of the European jazz scene with acclaimed live performances and two captivating albums. The talented Swiss quartet has now announced the release of a third opus, entitled *Baine*.

At the origin of the project, guitarist Erwan Valazza and trumpeter Zacharie Ksyk, both rooted in jazz, set out to create their own musical universe. They were soon joined by the gifted Gaspard Colin on bass and Nathan Vandenbulcke on drums.

Blending acoustic instruments with electronic effects, they invite audiences to follow them on a quest for sonic landscapes. The quartet is productive, generous, sprinkling its jazz with many stylistic references while crafting finely chiseled melodies... at the foot of the Alps.

A nod to Friedrich Mohs' scale, which classifies minerals according to their hardness, from talc to diamond, provided the perfect name for the band: mohs.

A highlight selection at Swiss

festivals JazzContrebass and Suisse Diagonales Jazz, mohs. has conquered many stages including the Cully Jazz Festival, AMR in Geneva, and Duc des Lombards in Paris, while opening for internationally renowned artists such as Avishai Cohen, Alfa Mist, Christian Scott 'Chief Adjuah', and Kenny Garrett.

The tour of their album *Mirage* sparked the enthusiasm of a captivated fan base, with the title track alone amassing over 130,000 streams.

"This new album is more instinctive, more organic, almost live," explains Erwan. "Despite this raw approach, the work on sound textures and the search for atmospheres remain at the very core of our music – we sculpt each space with precision."

The ten tracks of *Baine* immerse listeners in a creative effervescence and serene bliss, akin to the emotions evoked by artists like Jon Hassell or Khruangbin. There is fragility of free interaction, genuine risk-taking, and a precise, brilliant writing style.

The music of mohs. is powerful, calm, and luminous, making it one of the most fascinating quartets of the moment.

Zacharie Ksyk – Trumpet
Erwan Valazza – Guitar
Gaspard Colin – Bass
Nathan Vandenbulcke – Drums



Born in Rio de Janeiro into a family of musicians, Catia Werneck grew up surrounded by music. Her father, an avid jazz enthusiast, introduced her to the genre while she began studying piano at the age of ten before turning to Brazilian percussion.

At 21, she left Brazil for a three-month tour in France – a journey that would change the course of her life.



Nick Aggs (Australia)

Hailing from Brisbane, Australia, Nick Aggs, a gifted saxophonist and composer, has gained widespread acclaim for his musical prowess. His impressive discography and captivating live performances have taken him to stages at festivals around the world. In addition to fronting his own musical ensembles, Nick has had the privilege of collaborating with esteemed musicians such as the Indian percussion maestro Trilok Gurtu, legendary guitarist Jesse Van Ruller, Senegambian Kora virtuoso Jali Buba Kuyateh, Nepal's premier jazz outfit Cadenza, and China's JZ Allstar Big Band.

Nick's innovative musical vision played a pivotal role in shaping the sound of the Australian fusion band Afro Dizzi Act, resulting in a series of critically acclaimed albums and memorable performances at some of Australia's most prestigious music festivals.

Presently based in Singapore, Nick serves as the director of a jazz program at the Australian International School and continues to lead his own ensemble, Space Direct.

Femke Smit & Mike Del Ferro (Netherlands)

Femke Smit (1986) is a Dutch singer who has found her true voice in Brazilian music, performing samba, bossa nova, and MPB with such authenticity that it feels as though she were born to it.

Whether it is coincidence or a trace of a past life, she feels completely at home within the Brazilian repertoire, and through projects such as Cantorias, Roda da Holanda, and her duo with pianist Mike del Ferro, she has built a strong presence not only in the Netherlands but also in Brazil itself. With Cantorias—alongside Anna Serierse, Lilian Vieira, and Nina Rompa—she won the Edison National Vocal Award in 2024 and was also nominated for the audience prize, further establishing her reputation.

Known for her vibrant stage presence and compelling interpretations, she invites listeners on a rich musical journey. Her frequent collaborator, Mike del Ferro, is an award-winning Dutch pianist, composer, and world jazz explorer whose career embodies cross-cultural exchange. Born in Amsterdam to opera singer Leonard del Ferro, who performed with Maria Callas and Leonard Bernstein, Mike pursued piano at the Conservatory of Amsterdam before embarking on an international career marked by collaborations with legends such as Toots Thielemans, Branford Marsalis, Jack DeJohnette, Randy Brecker, and Richard Galliano.

His music seamlessly fuses classical training with jazz improvisation and influences from Latin America, Africa, India, and beyond, resulting in a sound that is virtuosic yet sensitive, transcending genres while celebrating global traditions. With a vast catalog of acclaimed recordings, international tours, and work in film and multimedia, he has become a leading voice in contemporary jazz, recognized as an ambassador of global jazz whose artistry continues to highlight music as a universal language and a bridge between cultures.

Femke Smit – Vocals
Mike Del Ferro – Piano



Nick's musical journey began with the acquisition of a Bachelor of Music degree from the Queensland Conservatorium. In his hometown of Brisbane, he is revered as a musical icon, celebrated for pioneering a unique sonic identity that seamlessly blends diverse musical genres.

This fusion creates an inviting atmosphere that encourages musicians to explore improvisation while keeping the audience engaged in joyous and danceable celebrations, making his performances a staple at various festivals.

Nick's contributions to the music scene have not gone unnoticed; he has received numerous awards and grants for his exceptional work. He has also been immortalised on canvas through "Face the Music," a collaborative project with some of Brisbane's most influential artists.

Nick Aggs – Saxophone



Cadenza Collective (Nepal)

One of the most unique and eclectic bands from Kathmandu, Cadenza Collective led by drummer and composer Navin Chettri seamlessly blends Jazz, Afro-funk, and Nepali folk into an irresistible sound for your ears and booty.

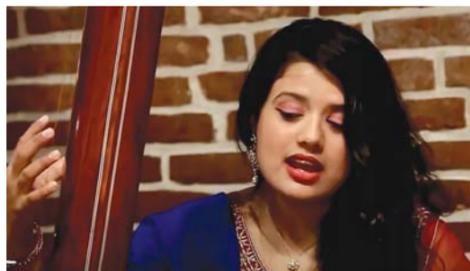
From their humble beginnings in 1998, Cadenza was one of the first bands to experiment with jazz in the Kathmandu Valley, a city dominated by bands playing rock and pop covers. Cadenza broke the mold and has evolved into a mature and experienced collective of

musicians and music educators. Their music has pumped vitality into the improvised music scene in Nepal and beyond through regular performances with both classical and western musicians. With five albums to date showcasing their original music, their CDs are often referred to as instant collector's items. The latest album, Back to the Roots, released in February 2014, is further evidence of their nature as a band to push boundaries.

With their unique jazz, Nepali-afro-funk sound, far from popular mainstream music, the album was nominated in 5 categories for the 2014 Nepal Hits FM Music Awards. They won Best Pop/Rock Composition for their song "Namaste", and Best Pop/Rock Album of the Year.

They have performed in many international musical festivals and venues including the Palmer Street Jazz Festival Australia, ELB Jazz Festival in Hamburg Germany, RSJ Festival in India, La Baiser Sale and LaTimbale in Paris, Klunker Kranich in Berlin, and prestigious jazz clubs in Copenhagen and Brussels to name a few.

Navin Chettri – Vocals and Drums
Rajat Rai – Guitar
Samir Chettri – Bass
Inap Raj Shrestha – Tenor Sax
Pravin Chhetri – Alto Sax



Jonisha Paudel (Nepal)

As a gifted exponent of khayal, the preeminent genre of Hindustani classical music, Jonisha Poudel has already made a deep mark at a young age. Trained under the guidance of Shree K.C., one of Nepal's most respected khayal and dhrupad vocalists, she has won multiple honours and performed at many prestigious classical music festivals.

She has also studied with Pt. Vishnu Acharya, the renowned Nepali dhrupad singer, and the decorated Indian vocalist Pt Rajeshwor Acharya. In 2017, she performed a solo concert organised by the Sanskritik Sansthan (National Cultural Corporation).

Samundra Band (Nepal)

Samundra Band Nepal are musicians and sarangi players known for their performances of Nepali folk fusion music. They have a YouTube channel where they share videos of their musical hiking adventures, performances in Gandharba villages, and sarangi lessons taught by Anil Gandharba.

The videos provide instructions on how to learn sarangi and showcase the beauty of this traditional



Nepali instrument. Samundra Band Nepal is passionate about promoting and preserving the rich cultural heritage of Nepal through their music.

Gandharva (Nepal)

Nepal is home to a group of music makers called the Gandharvas. The word Gandharva appears in the ancient text the Mahabharata, as singers and entertainers. The work of the Gandharva is to make songs, to sing stories of the lives of the people, to entertain, provide social commentary, give news, and heal the people. They were inspired by heavenly female creatures known as Apsaras.



The Gandharvas historically are known as the link between the heavens and earth, bringing messages from the heavens to the people on earth.

Up until very recently, the Gandharvas earned their living, traveling from village to village around the difficult mountainous terrain, to bring news to the people in the ages before radio, television, and the internet. They are commonly known as 'Walking Newspapers'.



Leona Berlin (Germany)

Leona Berlin blends hip-hop, r&b, and jazz into a sound that is deeply emotional, artistically free, and unmistakably her own. It is a dedication to curiosity and profundity, and a refreshing change from mainstream culture. Known for crafting every piece of her music herself, Leona's intoxicating sound and bold contemporary production continues to carve out her unique space in the musical landscape.

Following her debut with Warner Music in 2018, she has collaborated with artists like Snoop Dogg, Ray Angry (The Roots) and Casey Benjamin (Robert Glasper Experiment).

Her sophomore album Change (2021) featured contributions from NYC rapper Stimulus and keyboardist Rob Araujo, earning a spot on the German Record Critics' Award best list (PdSK) in 2022.

In 2023, she appeared on Gregory Hutchinson's acclaimed jazz-fusion album DA BANG, further cementing her reputation as a versatile artist who seamlessly bridges genres.

Currently, Leona is releasing several singles in the lead-up to her third studio album ELEVATE.

Leona Berlin – Vocals
Martin Lüdicke – Keys
Francesco Beccaro – Bass
Magro – Drums

Eastern Classical Musicians

Anil Gandharva – Sarangi
Anil Gandharba is a renowned Nepali sarangi player and teacher as well as a cultural promoter. With nearly two decades of experience in the music industry, he has dedicated himself to promoting Nepali music—particularly the sarangi—on the global stage.



He has been honoured with the title of Arirang Culture Master by the International Advisory Board of Culture Masters, and also serves as an International Reporter for Arirang Culture Connect, a global online publication focused on intangible cultural heritage.

Roshan Putwar
Roshan Putwar is a passionate musician and researcher



dedicated to preserving the rich traditions of Eastern Classical and Nepali Traditional Music. With performances

on more than 1,000 stages across countries like India, Kenya, and Nepal, Roshan Putwar has represented Nepal in the South Asian Residency 2017, collaborating with artists from various nations.

Jagannath Dhaugoda – Tabla
Jagannath Dhaugoda is an accomplished classical musician and tabla player from Kathmandu, with over 20 years of



experience in performance and teaching. He has performed with renowned Nepali and international artists including Ani Choying

Drolma, Sujan Chapagain and Pt. Samir Chatterjee, and has toured across Asia, Europe, and Australia. Currently pursuing a Master's degree in tabla at Lalit Kala Campus, he has also taught at several music institutions and arranged numerous concerts featuring world-class musicians. Respected for his versatility on both percussion and melodic instruments, he continues to inspire through his work as an artist and an educator.



Events



Fulpati

A day dedicated to Kalratri, the seventh form of goddess Durga. A holy kalash, banana stalks, jamara and sugarcane are brought out for a ritual in Tundikhel followed by a military parade.

29 September, Tundikhel



Maha Astami

Animals are sacrificed to appease the goddess Kali on Maha Astami. Newa communities also mark Khadga Puja by worshipping their weapons.

30 September, Basantapur Darbar Square

Maha Nawami

The only day in the year when Taleju Temple inside Hanuman Dhoka is open to the public. The divine architect and craftsman Bishwakarma is worshipped, and offerings are made to vehicles, machines and tools for safety and well-being.

1 October, Taleju Temple, Hanuman Dhoka

Bijaya Dasami

The main day of Dasain is a celebration of good triumphing over evil with goddess



Durga defeating the demon Mahisasur. From this day until the full moon, people receive tika, jamara and blessings from their elders.

2 October



Music

JAZZMANDU

Jazz for the next generation

Thursday, 9 October
11am-1:30pm (Closed invitation)
St Xavier's School, Jawalakhel

Groovin' at Upstairs

Thursday, 9 October
7pm-9pm (gates open at 6:30pm)
Rs1,000
Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat

Valley Jams

Friday, 10 October
7pm-9pm (gates open at 6:30pm)
Rs800
Simultaneously at Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat / Electric Pagoda, Thamel / The Baha, Sanepa

Jazz Bazaar

Saturday, 11 October
3pm-9pm (gates open at 2:30pm, close at 7pm)
Rs1,500
Gokarna Forest Resort (free shuttle bus to Gokarna available)

Sounds of Acid Jazz

Monday, 13 October
7pm-9pm (gates open at 6:30pm, close at 8pm)
Rs1,500
Eden, Jhamsikhel



Jazz at Patan

Tuesday, 14 October
7pm-9pm, (gates open at 6:30pm, close at 8pm, to be seated by 6:45pm)
Rs2,000
Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka

Jazzmandu Finale

Wednesday, 15 October
5:30pm-9pm (gates open at 5pm, close at 7pm)
Rs1,800
The Malla Hotel, Lekhnath, Marg, Lainchaur

Free Jazzmandu Workshops

Tuesday, October 14, Alliance Francaise, Jhamsikhel



Getaway



Hotel Heritage Bhaktapur

A Newari-style boutique hotel that incorporates the rich art and architecture of the ancient city of Bhaktapur. The culture starts and ends at the gate of the hotel.

Suryabinayak, Bhaktapur (01) 6611628

Hotel Annapurna View

Situated at 1,600m atop Sarangkot, this boutique hotel offers breathtaking views of the Himalaya, including a panoramic scene of the Annapurnas right from the dining area.

Sarangkot, Pokhara (061) 506000

Bandipur Safari Lodge

Bandipur is famous for its rich cultural heritage. Go beyond the temples to explore the jungle and its rich wildlife.

Bandipur, +91 9449597880

Buddha Maya Gardens

Just beyond the historical Maya Devi Temple and near the heart of Lumbini is the beautiful Buddha Maya Gardens Resort. Take a morning stroll in the Lumbini World Heritage Garden while listening to the spiritual hymns of nearby prayers.

Lumbini, 9801033114



Club Oasis Spa

Enjoy a weekend to yourself at Hyatt's luxury spa. Take a dip in the jacuzzi, get a full-body massage, a facial and step into a sauna before you to indulge in the hotel's delectable weekend brunch.

Hyatt Regency, Boudha (01) 5171234



Dining

Dasain Bhoj @ Nook

This Dasain, gather loved ones for a festive platter-to-plate experience, perfect for a group of four, at Nook.

Till 30 September, Rs4,999 nett (for four guests), Nook, Aloft Kathmandu Thamel, 9801976054

Achaar Ghar

Nothing beats a home-cooked meal with an assortment of pickles prepared from recipes that have been passed down from generations.

Kupondol (01) 5912440



The Chocolate House

Enter a world of chocolate cupcakes, decadent brownies and chocolate in every size and shape. They also have excellent Peri Peri fries and milkshakes.

Jhamsikhel, 9823837885



Chez Caroline

Tucked away from the street noise and fumes is Chez Caroline which offers authentic French cuisine. Try their Profiteroles au Chocolat and Choux pastry filled with vanilla ice cream, served with hot chocolate sauce.

Baber Mahal Revisited (01) 5363070

Haadi Biryani

Their slow-cooked biryanis, cooked and presented authentically in clay pots, are seasoned with a secret spice blend.

Dilli Bazaar (01) 4438444

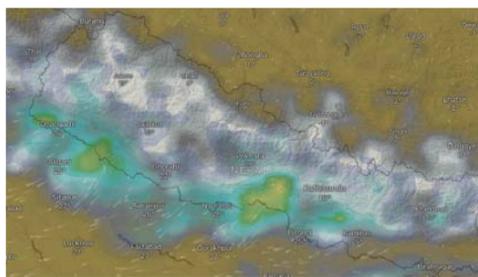
Miss Moti Escapes

Kripa Joshi

MISS MOTI AND THE BALLOON



Weekend Weather



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
30° 19°	29° 20°	28° 19°	28° 19°	27° 19°

Muddy Dasain

The monsoon is officially supposed to taper off by mid-September, but for the past ten years it has been lingering till early October. There is still plenty of water vapour in the air and higher ambient temperature means more intense convective systems along the mountains. The retreating monsoon is also colliding with a westerly system. Stormy rain is expected into Dasain week, as shown in this cloud cover forecast from windy.com for Monday 29 September.



Our Pick

The 2022 Hindi-language thriller Love Hostel is a volatile journey of a spirited young couple that must defy certain death. Set against the pulsating backdrop of rustic North India, the film follows Ahmed Shaukeen and Jyoti Dilawar, who elope and wed in secret, but the latter's family is opposed to this interfaith union and hires a ruthless mercenary to kill them. What follows is bloodshed, near escapes and deception as writer-director Shanker Raman depicts a realistic but gruesome depiction of honour killing in modern-day India. Stars Vikrant Massey, Sanya Malhotra and Bobby Deol.

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 चिन्ना पुरस्कार जस्ता आर्थिक प्रलोभनका प्रस्तावको भरमा नपरौं ।
- आफूले प्रवाह गरेका सन्देश वा सूचनाबाट समाजमा पर्नसक्ने नकारात्मक प्रभावको ख्याल गरौं ।
- आफ्नो सन्देशले कुनै व्यक्ति वा अन्य कुनै समुदायको आत्मसम्मानमा चोट नपुऱ्याऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड

Slavery and unfree labour

A long and torturous history of enslavement continues to shape human rights and gender discourse in Nepal

Sudiksha Tuladhar

The history of slavery is as old as human civilisation. One explanation was that slaves became necessary when there was an abundance of land, but lack of labour. It was profitable for landlords to use forced labour to increase production.

In the Subcontinent and Nepal slavery was linked to powerful land-owning classes and their power. People, usually from 'lower' castes in pre-modern Nepal did not own property, and paid off debts through inter-generational bonded labour. They were also subjugated to enslavement as a punishment for criminal offences.

A new book, *Slavery and Unfree Labour in Nepal: Documents from the 18th to Early 20th Century*, delves into this dark side of history using documents and manuscripts from pre-modern Nepal. Politics and the hierarchical caste system shaped slavery.

Edited by Manik Bajracharya, a researcher at the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the book cites the example of a bondservant who was recaptured after two years, and his bondage renewed with a fine added to the principal. People of disadvantaged castes were forced to abide by the terms of their landlords.

Kamaiya and Kamlari were slave women under a bonded labour system prevalent in the western Tarai. Interestingly, if a Kamaiya woman gave birth to a child of her landlord master during the period of her servitude, the offspring would be considered a legitimate child and be eligible to property like any other children. The women would also be freed from slavery.

However, the prevailing laws allowed men to have sexual relations with slave women while also allowing their husbands to kill the



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partner. There were rules designed to exercise control over people of lower castes, defining the social order. The chain of dependency in a household, hierarchy in castes, and gender discrimination were all aggravated by slavery.

True, such a patriarchal mindset is still deeply entrenched in India and Nepal, but slavery took this discrimination to an extreme — beyond just exploitation of labour. The book contains several accounts of bondage and slavery including fines and actions following which a person became a slave.

The caste system overlaid slavery. Terms like 'sacred thread wearing caste', 'non-enslavable alcohol drinking caste', 'enslavable

alcohol drinking caste', 'water unacceptable but touchable', 'untouchable' are frequently used in the book, indicating the labels and hierarchies at the time.

LAW VS PRACTICE

Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher Rana passed an edict abolishing slavery in 1924, although formally it was enacted only two years later. He said Hindu tenets condemned slavery, and asked slaveholders to release all slaves. The move was applauded by the international audience and the slaves themselves. But there were rumours that he had married a slave, which motivated his move

to abolish the system. Regardless, slavery was done away with in Nepal.

A letter written by Chandra Shumsher to Hugh J Wilkinson, the first British envoy to Nepal, asks him to arrange funds for slave emancipation to pay off the slave owners. In subsequent correspondence, the two exchange names of trustees, discuss progress and share receipts on the progress of the slave emancipation fund.

But laws take time to change deeply rooted cultural practices, and so it was with slavery. The Kamaiya and Kamlari and other forms of bonded labour continued. The 1990 Constitution prohibited all forms of slavery, but again it continued in different forms.

The Kamaiya system was abolished in 2000 and Kamalari in 2013. But despite the ban and campaigns like Mukta Kamaiya, it persisted. Even when freed, it was not easy for the formerly enslaved to reintegrate into society.

The book is not for the faint-hearted, and there are graphic details of some of the most heinous instances of inhumanity. But this also makes it an important documentation of a long and tumultuous time in Nepal's history — especially for disenfranchised and excluded communities. 



Slavery and Unfree Labour in Nepal: Documents from the 18th to Early 20th Century
Edited by Manik Bajracharya
Heidelberg University Publishing, 2022
308 pages
Rs2,800

A reader for Kathmandu

An almost encyclopaedic compendium on why Kathmandu Valley is the way it is today

Kshitiz Pratap Shah

Kathmandu: A Reader, the latest publication from Martin Chautari, is an anthology of anthropological essays exploring Kathmandu through various lenses across the 21st century. This compilation is edited by Benjamin Linder and attempts to bring modern discourses on Kathmandu and its urbanity together, in a single volume.

The book is divided into three sections: the physical form of the city, the imprints it bears from past political upheavals, and the complexity in the lives of its people. The book examines these diverse aspects, leaving readers who have just witnessed the momentous events of September with anxiety, and perhaps a greater understanding of Kathmandu's context.

Urban planning expert Bires Shah's discourse on the Valley's urban sprawl and its landmarks is insightful, but also prophetic when he warns about seismic risk.

Jan Brunson's chapter on female mobility in Kathmandu via scooters is more optimistic, suggesting small-scale, daily-life movements in Kathmandu transform the city for its various demographics — in this case young women.

Linder himself contributes with a discourse on the toponymy of Thamel, close-reading Kathmandu's tourist hub through the usage and understanding of its name over the ages.



GOPEN RAI / NEPALI TIMES ARCHIVE

MYTHBUSTERS

The book is a collage of pieces held together by a thread that runs through the chapters of a vibrant, bustling image of the Valley.

One common theme is Linder's attempt to expand on common understandings and urban myths about Kathmandu. Readers who have spent time in the city will relate to the many anecdotes, for example, Niels Gutschow bringing up the lack of open spaces, or Mark Liechty mentioning restaurants in Kathmandu being melting pots of cultures and castes.

The essays here further extend these urban legends by giving historical and anthropological contexts. In-migration and the

rise in land prices have led to shrinking open spaces, the creation of cosmopolitan food outlets, and even hubs for sex workers. The Bagmati cleanliness campaign extends to a past understanding of the Bagmati Civilisation. Urban myths become puzzles to be solved by connecting the various threads of discussion across the book.

The sections in Kathmandu: A Reader are all by experts in their various fields and present a holistic, well-rounded picture. Yet, it is obvious there is still more ground to cover, more themes to explore — perhaps by more Nepali scholars.

In his introduction, Linder admits that due to practical

reasons, 'many wonderful works were left on the cutting room floor'. That is a pity.

Indeed, there could have been more discourse on the changing ethnic composition of Kathmandu. A close-read into the lives of people termed as 'outsiders' but forming a growing slice of the population would be important to also chart future trends.

The religious importance of Kathmandu as a unique civilisational alloy forged by melding the Hindu and Buddhist faiths can be explored more too. One can imagine a future edition including an examination of the post-Covid era Kathmandu valley. This need to broaden the

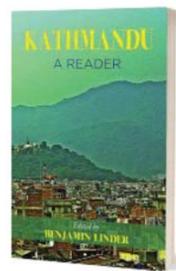
ethnographic literature on Kathmandu becomes more apparent because 11 out of the 15 essays here are written by non-Nepali scholars, including the entire section focusing on urban cultural politics. Linder explains in his introduction that this was largely due to the community of academics in Nepali urban studies being fairly small.

Kathmandu: A Reader then becomes even more integral as a gateway for new authors looking to work in the space of urban research on the Valley — undergraduates in the humanities for future theses and research ideas.

In a time when Kathmandu is littered with new exam coaching centres for medical and engineering students, an anthology like this helps remind young scholars that there is plenty of scope for qualitative research in the social sciences. Sabin Ninglekhu's discourse on the sukumbasi and aesthetics in Kathmandu are reminders that stories and academic journeys can be inspired from one's surroundings.

Kathmandu: A Reader has a good balance between academic and lighter readings, and is almost encyclopaedic in nature. There is even content about Kathmandu's gangsters and scooty girls — allowing readers to venture deeper into their milieu.

Kshitiz Pratap Shah is a recent graduate in English from Ashoka University.



Kathmandu: A Reader
Edited by Benjamin Linder
Martin Chautari, 2025
475 pages
Rs1,500

Deconstructing development in a

Authors posit that 'Development' is just one of many diverse 'development' paths

Kunda Dixit

The word for 'development' in Nepali is *bikas*. The word for destruction is *binas*.

The two words not only rhyme, but replacing just one consonant gives it an opposite meaning. It also demonstrates how easily what we think is 'Development' can be destructive.

University libraries in Nepal and around the world are stacked with hundreds of books dissecting 'development'. They can be divided broadly into at least two types: some authors define development as a moral imperative to improve living standards of people in the underserved parts of the world, mostly in the Global South.

Others critique development either as being an 'industry', or as a continuation of the western colonial project that imposes dependency and corruption, perpetuates the donor-recipient hierarchy, and ends up disempowering intended beneficiaries.

Somewhere in between are books by experts who have tried to find a middle path with concepts like 'sustainable human development', 'people's participation'

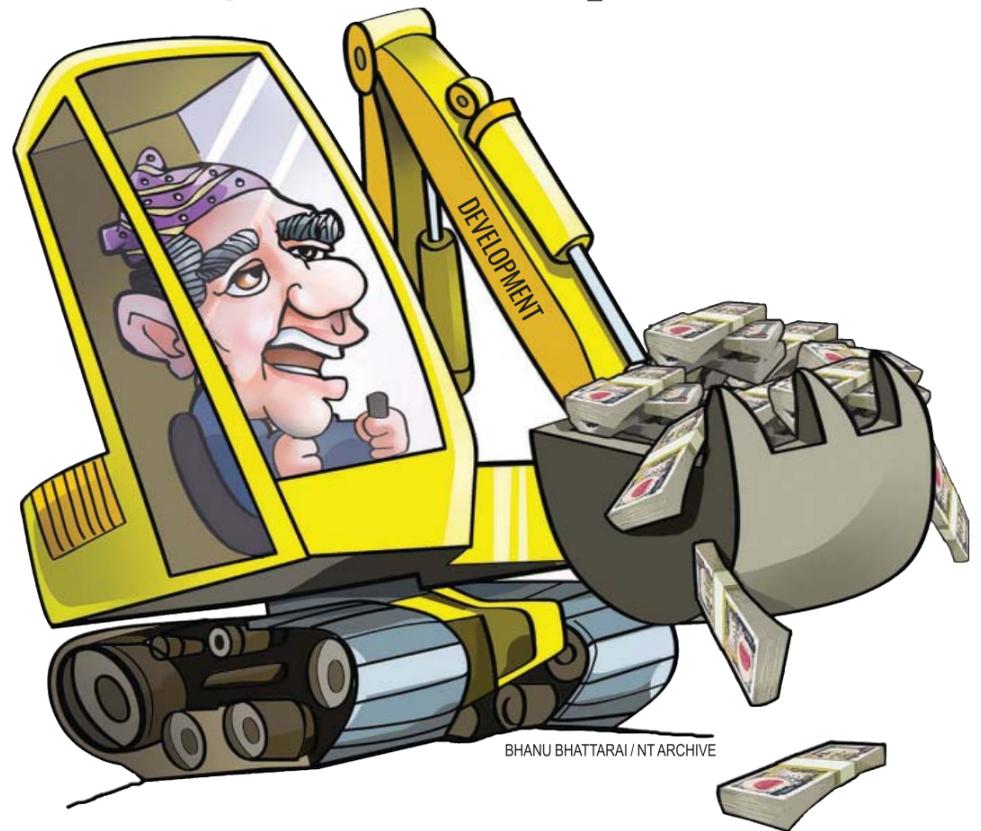
or 'public-private partnership'. But even the staunchest proponents of traditional development models will admit that all is not well, somewhere along the line we lost our way.

Peter Sutoris and Uma Pradhan have dared to take the bull by the horns to find a new path to 'reimagine' development, and explore new templates to confront a world wracked by interconnected crises of conflict, inequality, environmental decay and climate breakdown.

Their book *Reimagining Development: Bold Directions Towards a Thriving World* lays out a roadmap for countries like Nepal as they try to fix what went wrong. Billions of dollars were poured into Nepal's 'development' over the past seven decades, but the country is littered with the carcasses of failures like the rusted abandoned tractors from the Rapti Valley Development Project 65 years ago.

To be sure, there have been catalytic success stories along the way. It is not a coincidence that whatever has worked well in Nepal since 1990 has the word 'community' in it — things fall into place when local groups are given ownership to decide what they need, and allowed to decide what they need to do.

Some examples in the book include Nepal's community forestry project, which Sutoris and Pradhan cite as an example of the kind of possibilities needed to reimagine development for a 'thriving world'. Local communities were handed control to manage their natural resources, revive traditional

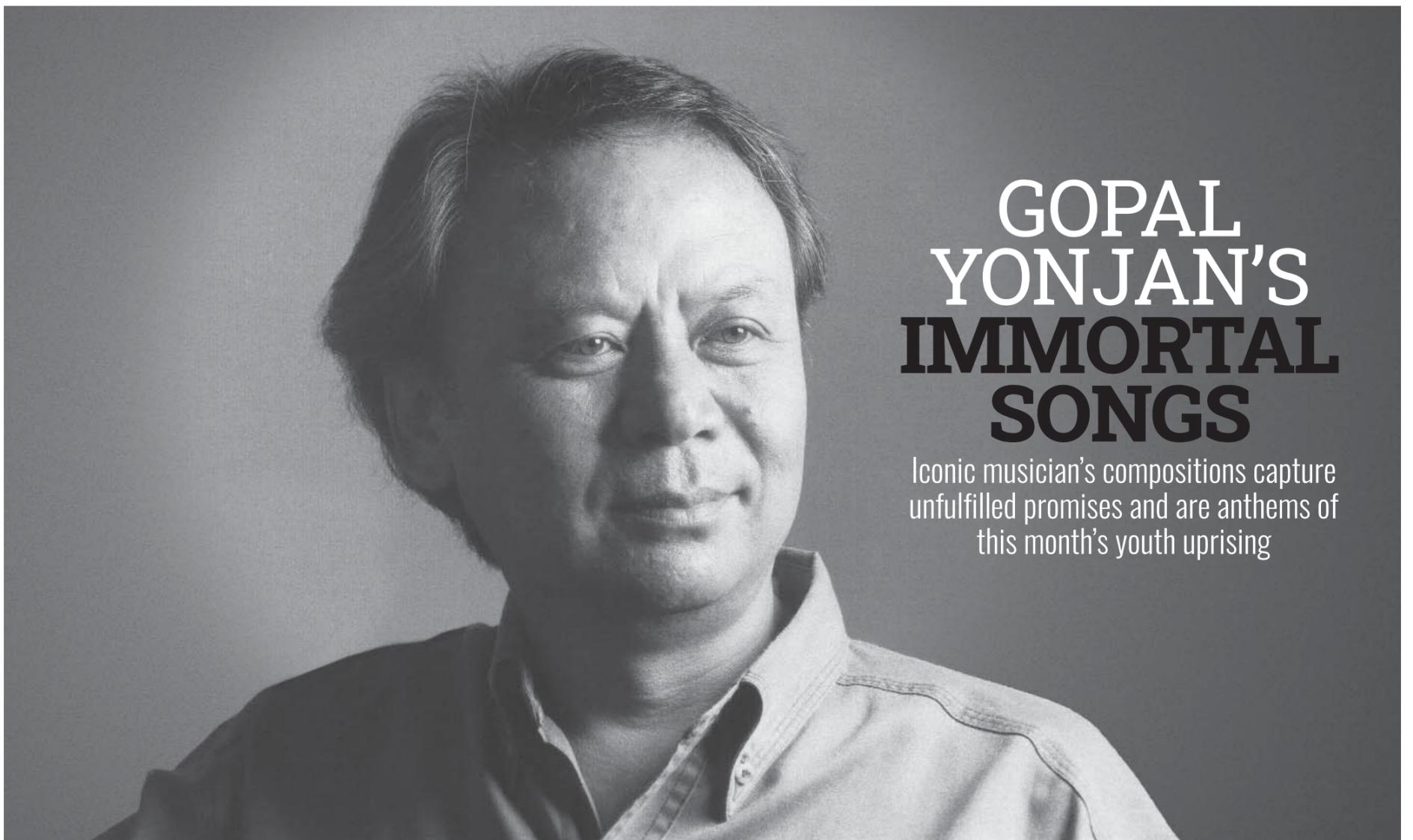


conservation practices, and assert command over their own destiny.

Nepal's community forestry program together with the Local Self Governance Act that decentralised power to elected local

bodies in the 1990s was the best example of how development can be a political act to ensure an equitable future, while conserving nature.

Sutoris and Pradhan write: 'Substantial



Among the songs GenZ protesters were chanting at the Mandala on 8 September was Amrit Gurung's folk-rock rendition of the Panchayat-era patriotic song, रातो र चन्द्र-सुर्जे जङ्गी निशान हाम्रो.

But amidst waving double pennants that day in Kathmandu were strands of Gopal Yonjan singing बनेको छ पहुराले and देशले रगत मागे. The irony is that the message of Nepali nationalism the musician was trying to convey 50 years ago with his lyrics carries a

new resolute relevance in today's context:

I am a son of Nepal who will never kowtow to anyone.

You can behead me, but I will never bend the knee.

I can withstand fire, but will not stand injustice.

If the nation demands blood, I will sacrifice myself.

My mother will not weep, for she is the daughter of a Nepali.

This was pure patriotic poetry that only someone like Gopal Yonjan could write. They are inter-

generational and immortal — speaking as much for the GenZ today, as it was for the early days of nation-building when they were recorded in vinyl and broadcast over Radio Nepal.

Those two songs together have over 20 million views on the Music Nepal YouTube channel, and many of the comments have been posted after the 9 September massacre and the raging conflagration at the epicentre of the Nepali state.

They attest to the emotional

depth of Nepali nationhood and love of motherland in every citizen of every generation no matter how dreadful the circumstances — and especially when the future looks fragile and uncertain.

The release of Gopal Yonjan: The Man & His Music by his wife Renchin could not have come at a more momentous time in Nepal's history to celebrate this iconic legend of modern Nepali music. Yonjan would have been 82 this year, and as a poet, lyricist, singer innovated and improvised using

Nepal's folk traditions to infuse modern arrangements, meld melody with harmony, and lend them words that made the songs eternal.

HOME COMING

Renchin Yonjan brings us an intimate family album of historic photographs of Gopal growing up in school in Darjeeling, his arrival in Kathmandu and the decision to make Nepal his home. She quotes Gopal: 'I was deeply moved by the very glimpse of Nepal. I was

an age of crises

evidence from Nepal indicates that community forestry enhances forest protection and regeneration ... Village Development Committees that had adopted community forestry recorded a 77% increase in forested area, compared to a 13% increase in the villages without community forest.'

Peter Sutoris was born in the former Czechoslovakia that saw the 1968 Prague Spring uprising and the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Uma Pradhan is from Nepal, which has witnessed successive People's Movements in 1980, 1990, 2006 and earlier this month in 2025.

'It was perhaps because of these experiences of witnessing the remaking of the world in the wake of the end of the Cold War that we come to this book with a strong belief that even the most rigid collective trajectories can and do change,' the authors write in their introduction.

Their book has three parts. The first one dissects the Development Industry and the model of perpetual 'growth'. (Interestingly, the word 'growth' is used in medicine to signify malignancy.) The authors propose re-centering the stories of beneficiaries and their lived experiences which have been pushed to the margins in 'project' design of mainstream Development with a capital 'D'.

The book defines development with a lowercase 'd' as a more democratic bottom-up approach. Capital 'D' Development on the other hand involves 'developers' wanting to 'develop' societies, replicating the wasteful, unsustainable growth path of the industrialised countries.

The book's second section examines

the tension between sweeping international concepts of development, and how it is not quite relevant to the reality of rural areas of countries like Nepal. The prevailing notion that development 'aid' flows mostly from cash rich countries to cash poor ones ignores the fact that it mostly takes from the poor in rich countries to give to the rich in poor countries. After all, the Global South also includes the underserved parts of the Global North.

RETHINKING PROGRESS

The Development Industry does 'develop' certain segments of the economy, just not so much the sections it is supposed to uplift. The cancellation of USAID this year vacated hundreds of rented offices and houses in Kathmandu, consultants and contractors became jobless, and even Nepal's domestic airlines lost business.

The third part of this book imagines what 'A Thriving World' can look like if we listened more to indigenous communities and their knowledge of the stewardship of nature, adopted best practices about inclusive and decentralised decision-making, and explores examples of 'degrowth' and 'postgrowth' to address unsustainable consumerist, extractivist economics, and the climate crisis.

Sutoris and Pradhan admit that these concepts are not new. Practitioners have questioned the top-down model for decades, but their book Reimagining Development takes a fresh, non-conventional approach to bridging the best of the 'old' development discourse with a 'new' imagining that transcends entrenched positions.

The authors cite Buddhist mindfulness

techniques, the concept of 'radical humility' and the idea of deep time to zoom out for a fresh perspective on a novel development paradigm to 'think about humanity's position in the world'.

'Ultimately, this book is likely to disappoint both the proponents and critics of development,' the authors admit. 'The proponents might view the arguments we put forward as too esoteric and not attuned to what can realistically be achieved. The critics might be dismayed by our unwillingness to dispose of the concept of development altogether and by our attempts to give credit to the Development establishment where credit is due. Our aim, however, is not to please either camp.'

The authors do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. However, the obsolete way of forcing soft states to adopt the path of linear modernisation and infinite growth so they can 'graduate' to a higher per capita income bracket must be rethought. Alternative models are available to confront the momentous crises facing people and the planet.

Nepal's GenZ protesters this month rose up against corruption and bad governance. But underlying it was a failure of the development path that the country has chosen, which contributed to wanton destruction of ecosystems, the unequal allocation of benefits, and corruption that ensured both over- and under-development.

Nepal's young idealists may not have been able to articulate it in the language of academic discourse, but on social media platforms they have discussed a post-development era to reexamine and reimagine development, accountability, embedded ethnocentric hegemony, and an in-built structural inequality in the system.

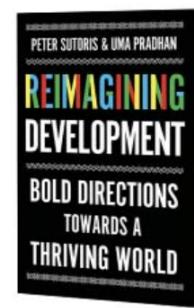
These lines from Sutoris and Pradhan's book could almost be word-for-word from the GenZ manifesto: 'Development

encompasses not only financial prosperity but social justice, environmental sustainability, and the more plural development pathways that respect the world's diverse cultural, historical, political, and social contexts.'

Indeed, instant global connectivity through social media platforms has meant that socio-political movements elsewhere in the world impacted on young Nepalis, just as the events in Nepal this month are now influencing youth globally.

These lines from Reimagining Development were written before the September Uprising in Nepal, but were a warning of things to come: 'The current moment feels different. Perhaps due to the global nature of many of the contemporary movements facilitated by social networks, perhaps due to the movements' sheer scale, or perhaps as a result of the multitude of challenges faced by the world, the feeling in the air seems to be that accumulated critiques of Development are more pressing than ever. If development is to remain a historical moment, it must reinvent itself and finally listen to the voices from below.' 🇳🇵

Kunda Dixit is the author of *Dateline Earth: Journalism As If the Planet Mattered*, and publisher of *Nepali Times*.



Reimagining Development: Bold Directions Towards a Thriving World by Peter Sutoris and Uma Pradhan
Hurst Publishers (UK) 2025
Oxford University Press (International)
264 pages
Hardback £25



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4

enchanted by the greenery of Kathmandu, the gentle nature of the people, their pure thoughts, and their hospitality ... how wonderful it would be to spend my life in such a beautiful and serene place.'

It was a kind of homecoming for Gopal Yonjan, the land his ancestors left to migrate to British India. In Kathmandu he found kindred spirits and musicians as passionate about their craft as himself: Narayan Gopal, Nagendra Thapa, Ratna Shumsher Thapa, Shiva Shanker, Pushpa Nepali

Gopal Yonjan and Narayan Gopal hit it off right away, complementing and inspiring each other with their shared love for meaningful music. They came to be known as the 'Gopal Duet', and Yonjan wrote in Nepali in his diary on 21 April 1963 about their first meeting: 'I was immediately struck by his talent and presence. There was something in both his artistry and demeanour that drew me in. It didn't take long for us to draw close.'

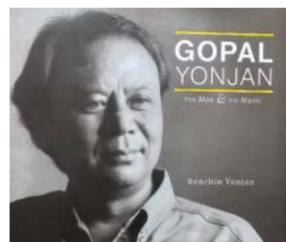
Towards the end of his life,

1 Narayan Gopal with Gopal Yonjan, the 'Gopal Duet' at Swayambhu circa 1963.

2 Gopal Yonjan arriving at Kathmandu airport in 1963 and greeted by Nepali singers Pushpa Nepali, Dilmaya Khatri, Shiv Shanker Shrestha, among others.

3 Renchin and Gopal Yonjan in their garden in Kathmandu in the late 1980s.

4 Gopal Yonjan at his Gopalaya Studio in Kathmandu in 1992.



Gopal Yonjan: The Man & His Music
By Renchin Yonjan
Gopalaya USA 2025
220 pages
\$55www.gopalaya.org

Gopal Yonjan drifted away from themes of patriotism and unity to celebrate music in its purest form in his Gopalaya Studio in Kathmandu. It became art for art's sake.

The words of his song मेरो गीत मेरो प्रतिबिम्ब होइन immortalised by Narayan Gopal has lines that give goosebumps to anyone who listens to them: मेरो गीत भन्ने अधिकार छैन, गीत को पो म हूँ मेरो गीत होइन (I have no right to call this my song. This song does not belong to me. I belong to this song.)

In Nepal, Gopal Yonjan also found a more complicated story. There were grand historical narratives of nationalism, bravery and glory, but there was an undercurrent of fear and control. Renchin writes in the chapter, Tell Me Where My Country Lies: '[Gopal saw] national pride slowly erode in the face of social exclusion, political silence, and economic disenfranchisement.'

Gopal Yonjan's song भन्दिने नेपाली दाइ मेरो देश कहाँ पर्यो is 'as much an elegy as a manifesto' with searing lines like 'Where is the river that ran red with Nepali blood? Where is the battlefield where our defenders wiped their khukri?' Gopal Yonjan sings this song himself, reminding Nepalis of the sacrifices made to forge this nation, and for us not to squander them.

In his song लहुरे, Yonjan celebrates Nepal's illustrious history written in blood both to keep the nation free and then spilling it to defend other countries. Today, the same song takes on added meaning of Nepali lahure shedding not blood but sweat and tears as they toil abroad to send money to families back home. It evokes the pain of separation, and an anger at an uncaring state that drives them to leave.

Gopal Yonjan died aged 53 in 1997 in a New Delhi hospital, leaving a legacy that still defines the Nepali nation in ageless musical compositions. The US-based Gopalaya and the Gopal Yonjan Foundation have worked to remaster some of the tapes and recordings that are in safekeeping at Cornell University's Carl A Koch Library.

Renchin Yonjan has collected some of that valuable documentation in her book, *Gopal Yonjan: The Man & His Music*. Her concluding paragraph sounds prescient because of what Nepal has just been through: 'Gopal's patriotic compositions remain timeless not because they repeat old slogans, but because they ask new questions, and demand that we answer not with our voices, but with our lives.' 🇳🇵

Kunda Dixit



The Sundance Kid in Nepal

Robert Redford was at the height of his fame when he visited Nepal in 1982

Lisa Choegyol

Robert Redford was an A-list megastar who had dominated Hollywood throughout the 1970s, generally considered the high water mark of American cinema.

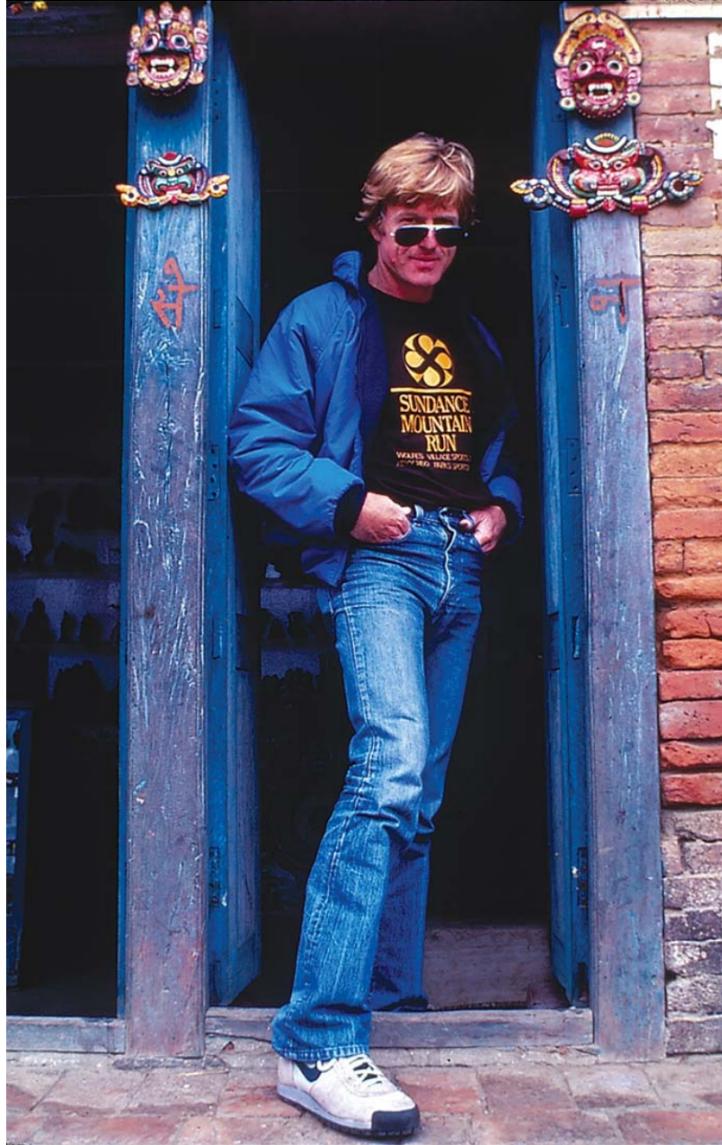
In those days Nepal was a fashionably remote destination, so it was not unusual for us to be looking after celebrity visitors. But Robert Redford was huge by any standards.

"Call me Bob," was the first thing he said to me, with that wonderful embracing smile that had lit up screens and quickened heartbeats around the world throughout the previous decade.

We met over a cosy Mountain Travel dinner in Al Read's brick and stucco house in Dhobighat. The floors were traditional terracotta tiles, the low beams darkly varnished and a cheerful fire warmed the October chill.

Our heroes often seem diminished in real life and Redford was shorter than expected, though taller than his friends and co-stars Paul Newman and Dustin Hoffman. But most striking was his pock-marked skin which must have challenged makeup artists over the years. I was disappointed he was not wearing his trademark cowboy boots, but Bob's fame infused the room with his gentle politeness and low-key glamour.

Next morning I picked him up from the Malla Hotel for some light sightseeing around the Valley. Under strict instruction from 'his people' that any fuss from fans was to be minimised, I was surprised



to see him wearing a Sundance tee-shirt – just in case no one recognised him.

Unmolested, we walked the ancient streets of Bhaktapur, and Bob was duly entranced by the visual impact of Malla Newar's enduring culture.

EVEREST

Robert Redford's main purpose in Nepal was to trek in the Khumbu with his friend Galen Rowell, an adventure photographer, conservationist and mountaineer who met a premature death in 2002 in a small plane crash in California.

There may have been some talk of a film about Everest, but nothing came of it. After the trek, Bob and Galen explored the grasslands and forests of Chitwan, staying with us at Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge to view wildlife from the back of a well-trained elephant.

Bob told us Nepal was one of his first trips outside the USA. He preferred his homes in Malibu on the Pacific coast and the wide open spaces of Utah, which he named Sundance after his favourite role.

With his strong affinity for the outdoors, Redford's horizons must have been significantly expanded by the soaring grandeur of Nepal's sublime mountains, untamed rivers, and tiger and rhino infested lowlands.

Galen's knowledge and enthusiasm for all things Himalayan made him the perfect person to introduce this prominent novice tourist to Nepal's wild places. Framed photographs of Bob taken by Galen's skilled camera still grace tourist lodges on the Everest trail.

His movie classics that defined our youth included the iconic Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, The Sting, All The President's Men and The Way We Were. With many Oscar nominations, his personal best was Ordinary People, his directing debut which swept the award board in 1980, shortly before his Nepal trip.

But Robert Redford was more than just an all American action man actor and successful film director. He chose roles that highlighted his political and social outlook. He was admired as an active environmental campaigner, using his fame to fight for clean air and pure water, serving as a trustee of the Natural Resources Defence Council.

Redford once said: "The danger of success is that it forces you into a mould. I prefer independence." Choosing the wilds of Utah over the jungles of Hollywood, in 1981 he started the Sundance Institute to cultivate controversial and independent movie talent.

Festival screenings and workshops gave thousands of film people a chance of artistic freedom, nurturing a galaxy of filmmaker greats. At the end of his long life, Redford's Sundance is widely recognised as having profoundly influenced American cinema.

I like to think that Robert Redford's rare overseas holiday amidst the stunning natural beauty of Nepal's high mountains, Sherpa villages, living heritage and endangered animals might have opened his eyes and perhaps even sparked his lifelong concern for social and environmental issues. 🇳🇵

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