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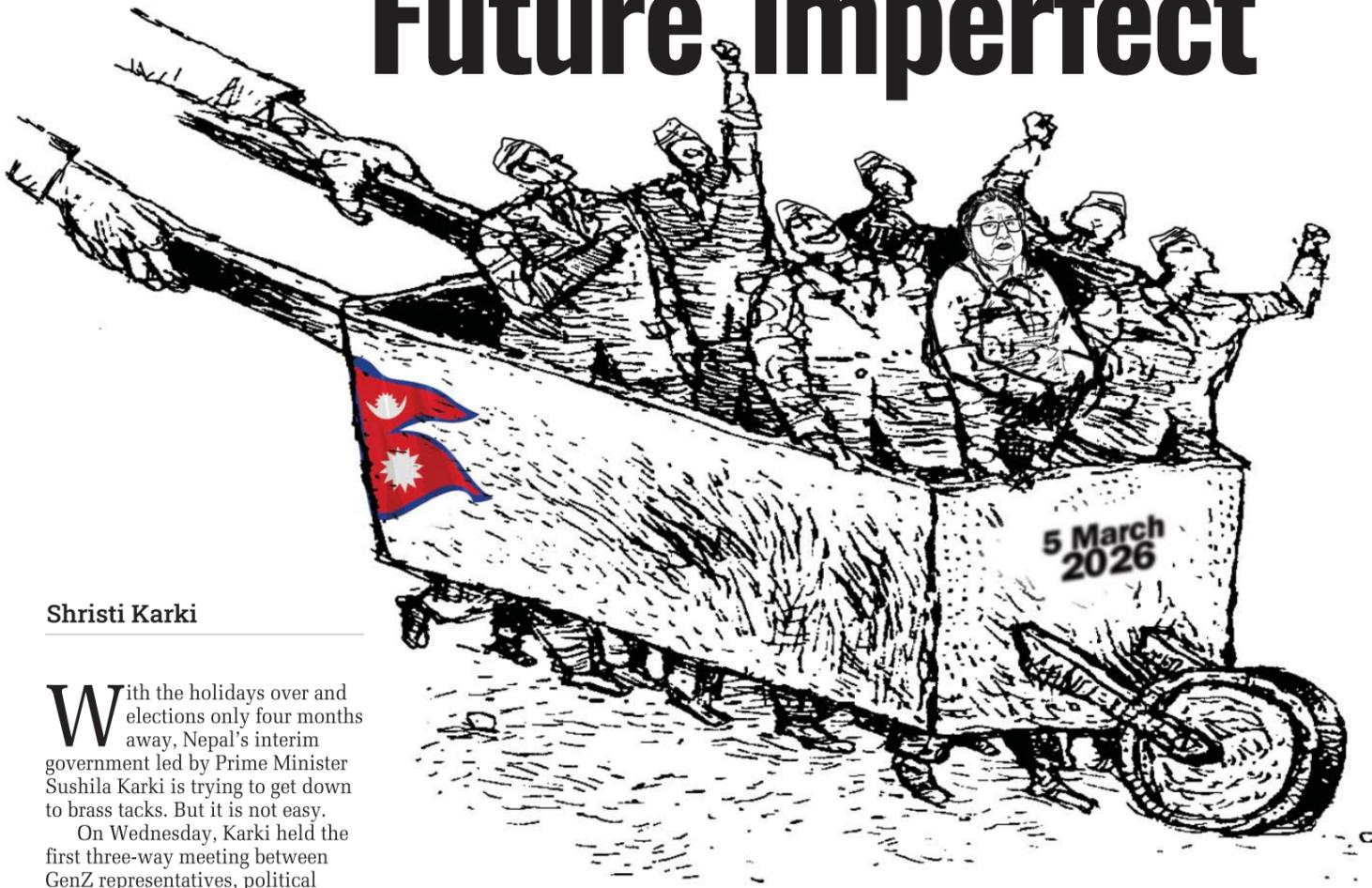
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Future imperfect



Shristi Karki

With the holidays over and elections only four months away, Nepal's interim government led by Prime Minister Sushila Karki is trying to get down to brass tacks. But it is not easy.

On Wednesday, Karki held the first three-way meeting between GenZ representatives, political parties and the government. Despite some acrimony, there was near unanimity about creating the environment for elections on 5 March.

Only the UML is holding out, still not taking responsibility for the 8 September massacre, and calling for the reinstatement of Parliament. GenZ delegates poured their wrath on the unrepentant UML, but were themselves talking at cross purposes on the demand for a directly-elected executive.

Karki was on the defensive, her exasperation spilling over: "How do we undo the damage done by corruption, exploitation, and discrimination over the last 35 years in a single month."

She is reported to have added, "There is a tendency to not allow this government to work, and then turn around to criticise it for not achieving anything. We are trying our best, and will fulfil our goal of elections no matter what."

The Wednesday meeting does seem to have turned the attention of old parties towards elections, and spurred the GenZ and others with political ambition to form parties.

With the deadline for party registration looming, several like-minded individuals and collectives

are coalescing, or trying to. The Election Commission is already reviewing applications from more than a dozen new political parties.

Kathmandu Mayor Balen Shah has held talks with RSP members, but his popularity on social media is not matched by public visibility and accessibility. Intriguingly, Shah and his supporters on social media have been publicly asking for the resignation of Home Minister Om Aryal for not arresting members of the UML-NC government for the 8 September killings. Aryal used to be Mayor Shah's legal adviser.

Sudan Gurung of GenZ, ex-RSP Sumana Shrestha, and Energy Minister Kulman Ghising are all shopping for existing or new political parties to join.

The RSP with its alternative anti-corruption agenda would be the logical choice, but there is a question mark over the role of its head Rabi Lamichhane, who is back in jail on charges of embezzlement.

LARGER CABINET

This week, Karki expanded her Cabinet for the third time by inducting Sudha Sharma Gautam as Minister for Health and activist

Bablu Gupta as the Minister for Youth and Sports.

Recommended by GenZ members, Gupta, 28, is the youngest Minister in Karki's team. But, as has become the norm with this electoral government, two other controversial nominations fell through. Khagendra Sunar was dropped as Minister for Labour because of several ongoing criminal charges, including for assault and inflammatory speech. And Ganapati Lal Shrestha for Minister of Land Management declined at the last moment after he was not given the Tourism and Culture portfolio as promised.

Critics say there is a lack of due diligence on the part of Karki's advisers in selecting candidates. Last month, Sangeeta Mishra who was nominated for Health Minister was dropped after it turned out that she was under investigation at the CIAA. However, Kulman Ghising also had complaints filed at the anti-corruption body, but was still given three portfolios.

Then the nomination of Tashi Lhazom was withdrawn after an online controversy over her citizenship. There was also outrage

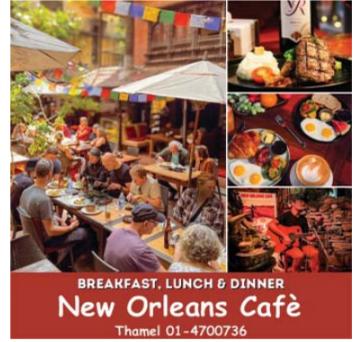
on social media about Mishra and Lhazom being singled out for their ethnicity and gender.

Internal leaks making her choices prematurely public has made Karki's team overcautious about Cabinet expansion. It is also distracting her from her main goal — to hold credible elections by striking a balance between the political parties and GenZ groups.

After a preliminary hearing on 16 writ petitions against the House dissolution and appointment of new government, the Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to issue an interim order.

"The formation of the government is unconstitutional, and a government formed unconstitutionally is not allowed to make any decisions, until the final hearing," stated advocate Surendra Bhandari.

The UML, still smarting from the September protests, is trying to put a spanner in the works of the election government. The GenZ, meanwhile, still do not have a consensus over fundamental demands prior to elections. Combined, these two factors portend a precarious future. 🇳🇵



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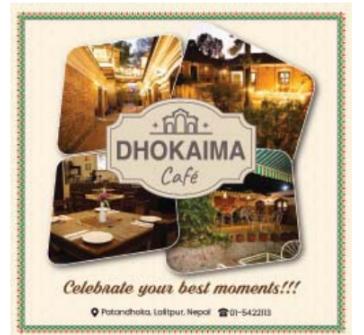
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Who gets to recruit for Malaysia?

Malaysia's 10-point recruiter selection criteria risks punishing the good migration actors



Labour Mobility
Upasana Khadka

On 27 October, the Malaysian Foreign Ministry sent letters to Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma, Pakistan and India to 'rationalise the number of licensed private recruitment agencies permitted to facilitate recruitment and placement of workers to Malaysia'.

The letter includes 10 criteria for private recruiting agencies including at least five years of operating experience, deployment of 3,000 workers in the past three years of operation, experience sending workers to at least three countries, a 10,000 sq m office maintained for three years, valid licenses and good conduct certificates, five employer testimonials, and operating their own training and accommodation centres.

Two conditions stand out as potentially harmful to ethical recruitment in Nepal. First, although the letter cites a minimum of 3,000 workers, it says three years in the heading and five in the body text, a big enough difference to affect a significant number of recruiters from making the cut, but problematic regardless. Second, the requirement to send workers to at least three countries disproportionately impacts responsible recruiters in Nepal and elsewhere.



Turning the selection of workers into a numbers game is dehumanising.

Many ethical recruiters have focused on Malaysia because it is a more common labour market for responsible recruitment than other destinations like the Gulf. There is no credible justification to why responsible recruiters well regarded by scores of Malaysia-based multinational companies

and with decades of experience should be 'disqualified' for not diversifying.

Finding jobs for Nepalis in new markets is difficult, and hit responsible recruiters harder because profit-motivated employers are often unwilling to cover costs and fees associated with workers' recruitment.

The ball is now in Nepal's court at a time when the interim government does not even have designated heads in the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Labour. When rumours about the Malaysian action started circulating, NAFEA raised the issue, but was assured that this was not an attempt to set up a syndicate.

Even if the move from the Malaysian side is well-intentioned to address rampant malpractices migrant workers face, Nepal should deliberate on the conditions set, the collateral damage especially on the responsible actors and small but capable recruiters. Alternate options that might serve everyone better before rushing to respond with a chosen list by 15 November.

The Responsible Business Alliance (RBA), the ILO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and certification programs like On the Level (OTL) also need to use their leverage to ensure that recruiters, including those they have trained or certified on ethical recruitment principles, are not penalised.

This is more than just about protecting the ethical recruitment movement, but raising even more basic questions: Who can legally be a recruiter in Nepal?

There are 1,150 plus players in Nepal's recruitment sector, with a few hundred engaged in the Malaysian market. A unilateral selection criteria could risk foul play, or lead

to unintended, unfavourable consequences.

To be sure, overseas recruitment in Nepal is known for 'settings', corruption, dog-eat-dog competition, and collusion. Profiteering is out of control, often at the expense of workers. But the solution does not lie in stifling the industry with criteria like deployment volume, building worker accommodations or expanding office floors.

The focus should instead be on enforcing rules and laws in both countries that govern the industry, and the Malaysian labour agreement that has not been renewed since October 2023.

Meddling in the industry in ways that harms fair competition and ethical actors means workers suffer. The only issue that should be taking precedence is: how will Malaysia's 10-point criteria and planned arrangement affect migrant workers?

As a longstanding host country for Nepali migrants, Malaysia deserves credit for nurturing the small but growing ethical recruitment industry here. Export-oriented companies in Malaysia need responsible recruitment partners and have mentored recruiters to strengthen their practices and move away from worker-paid models.

The business case for ethical recruitment standards has led many recruiters in Nepal to pivot with many now in various stages of transition from traditional to hybrid or purely ethical practices. This progress needs to be acknowledged and built upon.

Upasana Khadka heads Migration Lab, a social enterprise aimed at making migration outcomes better for workers and their families. Labour Mobility is a regular column in Nepali Times.

Trending Online



Dark Tihar

by Sudiksha Tuladhar
While Nepal celebrated Bhai Tika, those who lost their siblings in the GenZ protests felt the pain of their absence. Families now seek justice for their loved ones. Read the report at nepalitimes.com, and watch video interviews.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Think locally, invest locally

by Bidhya Rai
Last week marked 60 years of UNDP's work with Nepali communities across the country, like with Nabaraj Subedi, Sukmaya Roka, and Buddhi Purja, all of whom have set up small businesses that have since grown to support local economies and livelihoods of many people. Story also on page 10-11.

Most popular on X

Retrofitting Nepal

by Sonia Awale
Author Sujeev Shakya's new book Nepal 2043: The Road to Prosperity charts Nepal's economic growth over the past decades, and provides a roadmap for future governments to achieve high-income status by Bikram Sambat 2100. Visit our website for the review.

Most commented



Nepali runners breakthrough

by Nepali Times
While youth back home showed they would not tolerate injustice and could carve their own future, young Nepali athletes like Sunmaya Budha were securing it on the global sports stage at the World Mountain and Trail Running Championships. Story also on page 6-7. Follow us for the latest updates.

Most visited online page

Letters

GO ELECTRIC

Barring NIU, most 'brands' cannot guarantee service centres, spare parts, or even basic warranty support ('Two wheels good, electric even better', Vishad Raj Onta, #1282). That is one of the main reasons I haven't switched. Some earlier brands vanished overnight, leaving customers stranded.

Arpan Shrestha

■ I see people who got on the EV bandwagon a couple of years ago ready to upgrade and switch to what's available on the market right now ('Is Nepal reaching peak EV?', Arnav Upadhyay, #1282). And gas car owners are also finally considering switching to electric. This is going to help push used cars into the market and then more people will get

these used EVs as their first EV. But there's still so much to be done for the public EV transport system, which is where we will see most of the environmental gains.

Kushal Rajbhandari

ANIMAL LAWS

It is time for Nepal to prioritise addressing animal cruelty ('Nepal needs to enact and enforce animal law', Julie Palais and Varnika Singh, nepalitimes.com). How a nation takes care of its animals defines our integrity.

Yanki Ukyab

■ Current animal protection laws in Nepal are a joke and enforcement is hopeless.

Pawan JB Rana

■ What is the point of honouring dogs when you are scaring them to death with the firecracker (Kukur Tihar, Nepali Times social media)?

Bijesh Limbu

AIR POLLUTION

Those poor people who live on the dusty road between Kathmandu and Pokhara - cement dust from roadworks that only progress at a snail's pace ('Air pollution killing season starts early', page 4-5). Houses, shops, trees, flowers, men, women and children covered and breathing in vast quantities of heavy dust every day, year after year. The good natured Nepali people deserve better.

Gill Porteous

FUTURE NEPAL

I was glad to read this review of Sujeev Shakya's new book Nepal 2043 by Sonia Awale ('Retrofitting Nepal for future shocks', Sonia Awale, #1282). I'm also an admirer of Kishore Mahbubani. There are other positive indicators for Nepal as well, including community forestry, wildlife conservation, life expectancy. However, we must be aware of intergenerational conflicts.

Chun B Gurung

Quotes



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Nepal is strategically placed to make the most of its location between two of the fastest growing economies. We just have to get our politics right and have a strategy for equitable growth. Read review of Sujeev Shakya's Nepal 2043 which launches Thursday:



Krishna Joshi @krishna_joshi01

We just have to get our politics right - something we have not been able to do in the last 4 decades or so. It's like saying I could become a billionaire - I just have to find gas under my basement!



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Federal structures need to be given more power over decision-making and revenue collection. Whether the next generation of Madheshi inherit mistrust or solidarity depends on whether their aspirations are met.



GAJENDRA @Gajendra1310714

The revenue collected in Madhesh should be spent on the overall development of Madhesh and the Madheshi people themselves.

Online Package



DARK TIHAR

A month after 75 people lost their lives during Nepal's GenZ protests, families of Nikita Gautam and Umesh struggle to come to terms with the void that losing their loved ones has left. Watch the video on YouTube and read the report online.



MOMO LOCO

A plate of momo served with an achar or jhol is often the go-to food for Nepalis. Watch how momo brings people together at Kathmandu's eateries. Subscribe to Nepali Times for multimedia content.

1,000 Words



SHRISTI KULUNG

WHITE OUT: The clash of two weather systems, one from the Arabian Sea and remnants of a cyclone from the Bay of Bengal dumped heavy snow in the Nepal Himalaya. The APF had to rescue hundreds of trekkers trapped at Annapurna Base Camp, Tilicho Lake, Rolwaling and Everest Base Camp. An Airbus H125 of Altitude Air on a rescue flight skid off the helipad while landing at Lobuje on Wednesday. There were no passengers and the pilot himself had to be rescued.

Nepali Times

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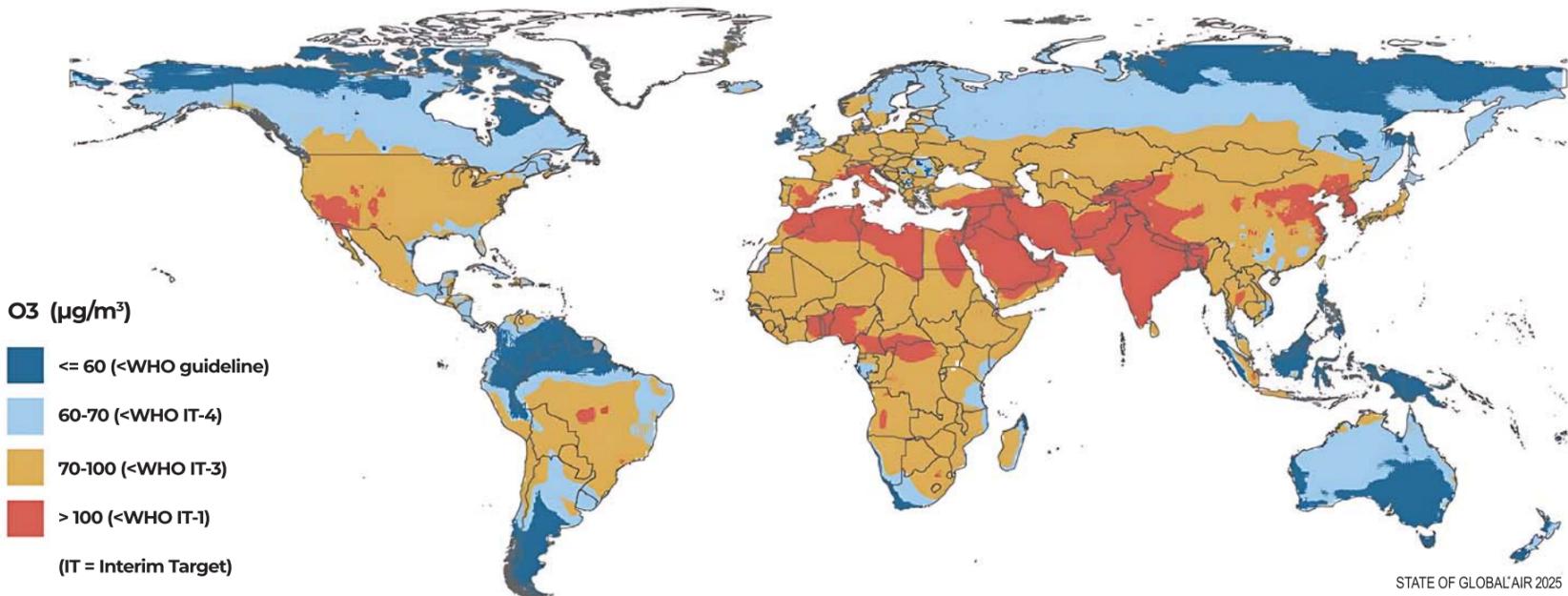
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Air pollution killing season starts early

Dirty air kills 41,000 Nepalis a year, this winter will be no different



DANGER ZONE: Nepal had the highest level of ozone pollution in the world at 67.5 parts per billion, just behind Qatar which measured at 67.6. Unlike stratospheric ozone which protects life on earth from harmful solar radiation, surface ozone is toxic and is the result of chemical reaction of vehicular emissions in the presence of sunlight.

The winter air pollution season started early this year with emissions, Diwali firecrackers and crop residue burning making the air unbreathable across north India before the rains washed away the pollutants later in the week.

Much of the pollution was transboundary, with prevailing winds carrying the suspended particulates from Pakistan, across India to Nepal and beyond.

All this pollution and domestic emissions killed 41,300 in Nepal

in 2023, and 85% of all deaths were because of noncommunicable diseases such as heart and lung conditions, lung cancer, diabetes, and dementia, according to the State of Global Air (SoGA) 2025 report released last Thursday.

With the onset of winter, Kathmandu Valley's own emissions are trapped in a surface inversion layer and as in previous years will have some of the worst air quality in the world. The SoGa report says air pollution has now become the leading risk factor for deaths

in Nepal, ahead of tobacco and high blood pressure. Interestingly, while the health impacts due to environmental risk factors such as unsafe water and sanitation have reduced significantly since 2000, the opposite is true for ambient PM2.5 (particles smaller than 2.5 microns).

Globally, 7.9 million deaths were attributable to air pollution—about 1 in 8 lives lost—in 2023. Of this total, 4.9 million deaths were attributable to PM2.5 exposure, 2.8 million were from household air

pollution, and 470,000 were from ozone.

Similarly, dementia attributable to air pollution resulted in 626,000 deaths and 40 million healthy years of life lost. And 95% of air pollution attributable deaths in adults over the age of 60 are due to noncommunicable diseases.

The burden of noncommunicable diseases in relation to air pollution is rising worldwide and in Nepal. The SoGA report shows that nearly nine of ten global air pollution deaths are

from chronic ailments, and half of all respiratory disease deaths are attributable to air pollution.

In Nepal, air pollution is responsible for three out of four COPD deaths, one out of three heart deaths and one out of five diabetes deaths. More than one third of lower respiratory infection deaths were due to air pollution.

"The data presented in the State of Global Air report highlight the significant impacts of poor air quality on the health and well-being of billions of people around

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Turkish and IATA

Turkish Airlines is hosting the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) joint World Passenger Symposium and World Financial Symposium on 5 and 6 November 2025 in Istanbul which will convene global leaders from aviation, finance, retailing, payments, and digital identity to shape the future of passenger travel and airline business models.

"Turkish Airlines is glad to host the joint IATA



symposia in Istanbul, our home city," said Murat Şeker, member of the Turkish board of directors. "As the airline that connects more countries than any other, we are committed to leading the transformation of passenger travel and stay at the forefront of the industry regarding innovation in finance, digital identity, and retailing which are central to offer smarter, simpler and more comfortable journey worldwide."

IATA Senior Vice President Sandrine Le Borgne said: "Aviation is on the cusp of a major transformation. New retailing models, disruptive payment technologies, and digital identity are reshaping how airlines serve customers and run their businesses.

Fuse on NASDAQ

Artificial Intelligence company Fusemachines started by entrepreneur Sameer Maskey in 2013 has become the first Nepali-founded company to be listed on NASDAQ. The company has offices in North America, Asia, and Latin America, and is trading under the symbol FUSE.

Contracts axed

Minister Kulman Ghising has canceled irrigation contracts for projects from as far back as 2011 that had been left incomplete. Ghising also plans to terminate forty road construction contracts in Tumlingtar, Ilam, Hetauda, and Nepalgunj. Despite multiple extensions, contractors have been absent, and must present updated schedules to avoid termination. Ghising has also cut off electricity to industries that have not paid dues for dedicated and trunk lines between 2016-2018. Hulas Steel Industries and Ashok Steel in Bara have started paying instalments dues totalling Rs141.2m and Rs175.8m respectively to the NEA.

Rizta in red

Ather has introduced a new colour, Terracotta Red, for its Rizta family e-scooter which has a range of up to 159km, a 4.3 kW motor, numerous safety features, navigation on touchscreen, and upto 56L of storage. Starts at Rs383,500.

ZTE gaming phone

ZTE launched the nubia Newo 3 GT 5G, which has 12GB RAM, 256GB storage, a 6.78-inch OLED display, a 6000mAh battery, and 80W fast charging. The phone, optimised for gaming, comes with liquid cooling and dual shoulder triggers. It is priced at Rs36,999 with payment plans available.



Global IME best

Leading publication Global Finance Magazine recognised Global IME as the best bank in Nepal for the second year running. The award considers factors like reliability, use of resources, expansion of access, strategic relationships, innovation in customer service, and credit rating.



Cardamom up, tea down

Cardamom exports rose 33% in FY 2082/2083 Q1 with 1072 tons worth Rs167.91m shipped out, almost entirely to India. Plywood, chhurpi, lentils, and vegetable exports also saw significant growth. But tea exports fell 40.9% to Rs101.21m.

Trade losses

An estimated Rs13.53 billion in revenue collection has been lost since floods washed away the Friendship Bridge connecting Nepal and China at Rasuwagadi. Imports have been redirected to Korla in Mustang, but at higher costs and risks. China is setting up a temporary Bailey bridge to solve the problem.

Nepali PUBG success

Nepali teams reached the final stages of the 2025 PUBG MOBILE Super League Central and South Asia Fall season, although they did not finish high enough to be able to attend the Global Championship. Nepali teams Horaa Esports, 4YRj and Nepex Esports won \$11,750, \$4,750, and \$1,750.

New Ncell CEO

Ncell has appointed Canadian-Kenyan Michael Foley as CEO, effective 1 November. Foley has over 20 years of senior leadership experience in telecommunications in Francophone Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Bulgaria. Foley replaces Syed MD Enamul Kabir, who is now CFO.

Flood insurance claims

Insurance claims for damage by the 4 October floods have reached Rs3.26 billion with 704 claims filed, of which most are related to property or agriculture. Other claims are related to engineering and contract risk and vehicle damage.

Hyatt repairs

The Hyatt Hotel estimates that it will take a year to return into operation after repairing extensive damage during the GenZ protests. There was vandalism, looting and arson in the hotel's guest rooms, offices, reception, restaurant, and banquet hall.

Proton in Dhangadi

Jagdamba Motors' Proton e.MAS opened a Sales, Service and Spare Parts showroom in Boradandi, Dhangadhi in the Far West. The launch event featured vehicle handovers and product demos. Three Proton eMAS 7 cars were delivered. The brand aims to continue expanding its network nationwide.



335MW Humla Karnali

An Environmental Impact Assessment is in progress for the 335MW Humla Karnali Second Hydropower Project in Kharpunath and Sarkegad. Electricity generated from this hectare project will be transmitted to the Mugu Karnali Hub.

the world, especially those living in Asia and Africa,” says Pallavi Pant of the Boston-based Health Effects Institute (HEI) that released the report in collaboration with the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation and the NCD Alliance.

She adds: “Growing momentum on air quality management across those hard-hit locations, including expansion of air quality monitoring, adoption of air quality regulations, and sector-specific interventions are yielding improvements for those most impacted.”

HARDEST HIT

Low- and middle-income countries stand to gain most by reducing air pollution, with particularly strong impacts on children, older populations, and people with pre-existing health conditions. Indeed, of the 41,300 air pollution deaths in 2023 in Nepal, 31,600 were in adults over the age of 60 years and 3,500 in children below five years. Death rate for air pollution in Nepal, which is 178 per 100,000, is more than 10 times higher than high-income countries, which is at 17 per 100,000.

“Win-win solutions for air

pollution and NCDs exist, with added benefits for climate, physical activity, nutrition, and many other global development priorities,” says Alison Cox, Policy and Advocacy Director at the Geneva-based NCD Alliance. “These policies are effective and deliver a strong return on investment - for the sake of our people and the planet we need to implement them faster.”

Fine particle pollution (ambient PM2.5), the largest driver of air pollution’s burden of disease worldwide, also amounted to 124 million healthy years of life lost in 2023. Vehicles, power

plants, factories, and homes, as well as agricultural and industrial activities, waste burning and wildfires are some of the biggest sources of pollutants.

South Asia is among the regions of the world with the highest exposures to ambient PM2.5, while more than 36% of people around the world live in areas where PM2.5 levels do not meet even the least stringent interim target.

As per the report, 78% of Nepal’s 30 million population lives in areas where annual PM2.5 exposure exceeds the least stringent WHO Air Quality Interim

Target of 35 µg/m³. Exposure to household air pollution due to the use of solid fuels for cooking remains an important driver for the disease burden in the country.

“Ongoing efforts to meet global development goals are not achievable without directly addressing air pollution,” says Maria Neira, Commissioner of Our Common Air. “Countries and cities must focus their efforts toward reducing air pollution emissions, including household air pollution, which has particularly severe impacts on young children and older people across Asia and Africa.”

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NEPALI RUNNERS SCORE BREAKTHROUGHS

Nepal storms the World Mountain and Trail Running Championships in Spain

While the streets of Kathmandu were erupting with violent GenZ protests that brought down the government, Nepal's athletes were achieving different kinds of breakthroughs on Spain's mountain trails and in the cricket qualifiers in the UAE.

On 27 September, two weeks after the uprising back home, Nepal's cricket team stunned the sporting world with their first-ever victory against a full member nation — defeating two-time World Cup champions West Indies by 19 runs, then crushing them by 90 runs two days later to seal a historic 2-0 series victory (below).

On that very day, 5,000km away in the Spanish Pyrenees Sunmaya Budha stood on a podium alongside American and European champions, clutching a silver medal from the 3rd World Mountain and Trail Running Championships. No Asian athlete had ever finished this high in the Long Trail competition at the World Championships.

While youth back home showed they would not tolerate injustice and could carve their own future, young Nepalis were securing it on the global sports stage even in moments of national crisis.

The Long Trail event at the 2025 World Championships was designed to break even the strongest athletes.



Stretching 82km through the Spanish Pyrenees, the course features an unrelenting 5,413m of elevation gain and descent.

Athletes faced everything from steep scree slopes to narrow ridge lines, from boulder fields requiring scrambling to precipitous descents demanding total concentration. One misstep meant injury, one lapse in focus could cost precious minutes.

Most recreational trail runners need 18-24 hours to complete this course, if they can finish it at all. Budha's pace means she was running at a speed that most casual runners could not maintain on a flat course, let alone while constantly climbing and descending mountains.

The men's winner averaged about 6:17/km on a course where elite mountain runners were struggling. Kulung and Roka Magar maintained a 7:24-7:27/km pace—faster than many recreational runners' easy flat road pace. They were faster than dozens of European athletes who train in the Alps.

Even Sherpa's 9:11/km average pace over 12+ hours represents an extraordinary feat of endurance, maintaining forward progress on some of the most challenging mountain terrain in competitive trail running.

"What set Budha apart was her exceptional descending ability. She recorded the fastest

WOMEN'S COMPETITION

Katie Schide (USA) - Winner
 ■ Time: 9:57:59
 ■ Average pace: 7:18 per km

Sunmaya Budha (Nepal) - Silver Medal
 ■ Time: 10:23:03
 ■ Gap behind winner: 25 minutes and 4 seconds
 ■ Average pace: 7:36 per km

MEN'S COMPETITION

Jim Walmsley (USA) - Winner
 ■ Time: 8:35:11
 ■ Average pace: 6:17 per km (10:07 per mile)

Suman Kulung (Nepal) - 32nd Place
 ■ Time: 10:06:25
 ■ Average pace: 7:24 per km
 ■ Finished 1 hour 31 minutes behind the winner
 ■ Best performance by an Asian male athlete

Man Kumar Roka Magar (Nepal) - 37th Place
 ■ Time: 10:10:53
 ■ Average pace: 7:27 per km
 ■ Finished just 4.5 minutes behind Kulung

Sangge Sherpa (Nepal) - 116th Place
 ■ Time: 12:33:09
 ■ Average pace: 9:11 per km



DR SIGRID FOUNDATION

downhill speed among all women in the competition—a skill honed through years of training on Nepal's steep mountain trails," said her team director Ryan S Blair.

Sunmaya Budha, ranked world 8th for the 100km category

events and 17th in the world by the International Trail Running Association (ITRA), entered the race having recently recovered from injuries to both legs.

While American Katie Schide dominated from the front, Budha



Aasif Sheikh drives through the covers on his way to 69 off 41 vs Samoa.

ALL PHOTOS: CAN

Nepal's prospects at World Cup 2026

NPL starting next month will act as preparation ahead of the games in India and Sri Lanka

Vishad Raj Onta

Nepal's cricket team first beat powerhouse West Indies in two out of three matches in September, the first time it won a match and then a series against a test-playing nation.

Then the Rhinos played six qualifiers in Oman for the 2026 T20 World Cup which is being held in India and Sri Lanka from 7 February to 8 March next year. The national team qualified comfortably with two games to spare, and won all six matches anyway.

In the three months before the World Cup, cricketers will play the second season of the Nepal Premier League from 17 November to 13 December.

After a hugely successful first season, steady upgrades have been made. The flood-lit Tribhuvan University Cricket Ground has been fitted with 15,000 seats, even

though this takes away from the festival-like atmosphere of fans on their feet on the grassy slope.

Last season, matches began at noon and three in the afternoon. Late-evening matches in winter under flood lights will increase attendance and viewership.

There is also now technology that will display how far a six was hit and how fast a ball was bowled. Foreign players who will play in the league include Chris Lynn, D'arcy Short, Ravi Bopara, and Sohail Tanvir, all good ex-international players that people have heard of.

But the most important point of the Nepal Premier League will be to prepare and experiment for the World Cup, which starts less than two months after the NPL ends. Team Nepal will be extra eager to play well, given that the matches are happening in South Asia and Nepali fans can make the trip.

Head coach Stuart Law will be

watching each NPL match keenly, to gain more insight into how to best use his current starters.

As each of the eight teams are only allowed a maximum of four foreign players in their starting eleven, Law and Nepali fans will also be scouting new talent who will be hungry to emerge and prove themselves to earn a place in the World Cup Squad.

ALL-ROUNDERS

One of the most unusual features of the current Nepali squad is how many all-rounders there are. Kushal Bhurtel, Rohit Paudel, Kushal Malla, Gulshan Jha, and Dipendra Singh Airee are all regular starters, and they all bat and bowl. Opener Aasif Sheikh is also the wicketkeeper.

Airee, of course, is also an excellent fielder. In the first five games of the qualifiers, he got a record five runouts with direct hits, and was on a roll with a run in every single game. This



PHOTOS: WMTRC2025 CANFRAC



PREETI KHATTRI



NEPALI SPORTS STARS: (clockwise) Sunmaya Budha storming in second position at the WMTRC2025.

The Nepal team at the World Championships 2025 with the final four: Suman Kulung, Sangge Sherpa, Man Kumar Roka Magar and Sunmaya Budha.

Katie Schide (USA), Sunmaya Budha (Nepal) and Fabiola Conti (Italy) after winning the Women's Long Trail in Canfranc-Pirineos at the World Mountain and Trail Running Championships in Spain last month.

Suman Kulung coming through 65km Assisted Checkpoint.

found herself in an intense battle for second place with Italy's Fabiola Conti, a specialised skyrace and mountain marathon runner. The two runners remained locked together through much of the course, running side-by-side at key checkpoints

and pushing each other through the mountain wilderness.

In ultra-trail racing, where climbs are often won by fractions of minutes, the ability to descend fearlessly and efficiently can make the difference between podium

positions. Budha's technical prowess on the descents gave her an advantage over her European competitors.

The decisive moment came in the final 20km. At the 65km mark, Budha held a 90-second lead over

Conti. By 71.5km she had extended her advantage to eight minutes — a commanding gap she maintained to the finish.

In a powerful display of national pride, she approached the finish wrapped in the Nepali flag, showing the world what Himalayan athletes can achieve on the global stage.

Said Preeti Khattri, team lead for Nepal: "Standing right beside the USA and European peer. Proud. No Asian athletes have ever made it this far."

MEN, TOO

While Budha captured headlines with her silver medal, the performances of Suman Kulung and Man Kumar Roka Magar were also significant. Both of them topped Asian athletes and numerous European competitors.

Suman Kulung delivered a performance that demonstrated extraordinary mental toughness

and racing intelligence. What makes his 32nd place finish even more impressive is that at 1.5km he encountered a severe bottleneck on narrow technical trails.

This critical delay pushed him back to around 92nd position—a devastating setback in a world championship race where every second counts. Many athletes would have been demoralised by such an early disaster.

But Kulung showed why he is Nepal's top-ranked trail runner: he launched a spectacular comeback. By the 30km mark, he had charged through the field to reach approximately 20th position — recovering over 70 places in less than 30km.

His final time of 10:06:25 placed him ahead of runners from traditional mountain running powers including Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, and was the highest-finishing Asian male athlete in the competition. 🇳🇵



Lalit Rajbhansi with tricky left arm spin, 3/13 vs Samoa.



Nepalis turn out to support the team vs Samoa at Al Ameret Stadium in Oman.

depth means that almost always seven players bowl for Nepal, and the wealth of options keeps the opponent batting order guessing, but it may create hesitancy within the team in tough situations against stronger teams.

Countries at the top level of the sport tend to have more specialists. Perhaps Stuart Law might want to tell Bhurtel to really focus on his batting, or Airee to hone his bowling, which seems to be their strengths. The team would be better off with them performing one aspect consistently well than being hit or miss with both.

POWERPLAYS

The Nepali team likes batting first. It chased only against Japan, but they struggle to put up really competitive scores of say, above 170 unless two batsmen do really well.

In the second match against the West Indies, Aasif Sheikh's 68 and Sundeeep Jora's 63 set up Nepal at 173/6. Against Samoa, Aasif Sheikh had 69 and Airee had 53, before Lokesh Bam's fierce 39 off 12 featuring 4 sixes set up 211/4.

Besides these games, Nepal tends to score up to 150 batting first. To the experienced teams that

Nepal will face at the world cup, this is not at all an intimidating score. One reason is that Nepal just cannot seem to get going in the first six powerplay overs, when there are limited fielders on the boundaries.

A solution to this might be to promote Gulshan Jha up the order. Although Jha has also been an excellent batter in the end overs, using him at three or four might help set up a more productive powerplay and bigger scores. He should try it out with the Karnali Yaks.

Despite all the controversy that comes with Sandip Lamichhane, and his strange decision to sit out the West Indies series minutes before the first match started, his output with the ball is undeniable.

He took wickets in each of the six qualifiers, most notably five vital ones in the match against Qatar that Nepal won by five runs. Lamichhane also gives away very few runs, which cuts some of the more part-time bowlers some slack.

Airee is also economical, and his 3/22 was vital in the one-run win against the UAE. Together with Lamichhane the duo constricted the opposition in the middle overs. Veteran Sompal Kami has not been as productive with the ball, and gave away a lot of runs in the series against the West Indies.

This is a weakness, because Kami does not contribute with the bat much. While his experience is

valuable to ground the young Nepali team, Stuart Law should look out for fast bowlers during the NPL to help balance out quality spinners.

One of the most impressive and professional parts of Nepal's winning streak has been the attention to detail. The players have been generally excellent in the field, giving away very few runs due to wides or no balls. They had three run outs against the UAE and two against Qatar and Japan and in the first game against the West Indies.

The fielders seem much calmer and focused when executing difficult catches, a welcome change from past complacency. This



attention to detail makes the difference in narrow games and keeps morale high.

The Nepali team has performed well, but besides the narrowly-beaten UAE, all the matches were against teams ranked lower in the world T20 rankings. And the series against the West Indies was against a weakened team. In the world cup, Nepal will be facing much stronger teams and will lack the element of surprise it had in the 2024 World Cup.

If Nepal wants to keep improving, it now has to be able to dominate teams like Kuwait and Oman. It also should set up more series with associate nations like Scotland, Ireland, Namibia and The Netherlands. This will help accurately gauge the team's progress and expose its weaknesses. 🇳🇵



Events



Bhaktapur Photowalk

Explore and capture the beauty of Bhaktapur's historic squares, temples, and traditional Newa houses, covering both well-known spots and hidden gems. Meeting point: Nyatapola.

1 November, 6am, WhatsApp: 9843535114

Milarepa

Based on the life of the 11th century Tibetan Buddhist poet and yogi Milarepa, the play is about the journey of self-transformation of a man from a life of revenge and crime to one of enlightenment.

4 November onwards except Mondays, 5:30pm, Mandala Theatre



Chandragiri Hike

A day-long hike amidst rolling hills to freshen up your mind. Attractions include Chandragiri Bhaleshwor Temple, forest walk, village activities and scenic Himalayan views. Meeting point: Subarna Aabhusan in New Road.

1 November, 6:45am, Rs900, 9846190957

Osho Meditation Retreat

Step away from the noise of daily life and discover the inner joy that lives within you. A week-long retreat to dive deep into meditation, laughter, peace, and happiness. 25-30 October (arrival 24 October afternoon), Osho Tapoban International Commune



Music

October Paleti

Gyanu Rana will pay tribute to her father, late singer Dharma Raj Thapa, in the upcoming edition of Paleti by Nepalaya. Gyanu Rana herself is a veteran singer known for evergreen duets with Narayan Gopal such as 'Manchheko Maya Yaha' and 'Sirima Siri Ni Kancha'.

31 October-1 November, Nepalaya 'R' Shala, Kalikasthan

Hetauda Dasain fest

John & The Locals, The Hulaki and Biken And Merz will be performing. Book your tickets now.

3 November, 4pm onwards, Rs500- Rs1,000, Campa danda, Hetauda



Halloween Night

An enchanting evening of music and mystery featuring Rachana Dahal and Srijana where haunting melodies meet Halloween magic. Come dressed to impress—or to spook.

31 October, 3pm-9pm, Rs750-2,000, Tabela Nepal

Kamal Khatri Live

A music concert with special live performance by singer and composer Kamal Khatri of the 'Atma Ma' fame.

7 November, 8pm, Club 18, Baneswor



Young Stunners

Pakistan's most celebrated hip-hop duo Talha Anjum and Talhah Yunus have massive followings across South Asia. Get tickets for their first-ever live performance in Nepal.

15 November, 9pm onwards, Rs2,199 / Rs3,599, Club Nova, Thamel



Getaway



Atithi Resort & Spa

From Ayurvedic Massages to steam and sauna, the Camellia Spa in Atithi Resort is a sanctuary for those looking to get some me time.

Lakeside, Pokhara (061) 1466760

Gaida Wildlife Camp

Bordering the rhino zone of Chitwan National Park, the Gaida Wildlife camp is a great place to experience an extraordinary variety of wildlife such as the Bengal Tiger and the Gharial.

Chitwan (01) 4215409/ 4215431



YMH Kongde

Looking to indulge in a champagne breakfast at 15,000m just a few passes away from the Himalaya? Book a mountain fight to the Yeti Mountain Home in Kongde right away.

Kongde, Khumbu (01) 4413847

Hotel Yukhang

With touches of both the old and the new in its interior, Hotel Yukhang balances Kathmandu's medieval history with contemporary amenities.

Thamel (01) 4267358

Retreat at Damaar

A humble stay within the forestry of Kavre, this getaway is ideal for those seeking peace of mind, scrumptious food and a home away from home.

Bethanchowk, Kavre, 9851052442



Dining

Canova Cafe Coffee

This casual cafe not only serves good coffee but also a surprisingly light and flavourful masala dosa.

Maitidevi, 9801023759

Kunga

Grab some hot pot, peanut chicken and shredded potatoes in Kunga's cozy and casual setting.

Bouddha (01) 4915117



Pho 99

What sounds better in this weather than a piping bowl of Pho? Also on the menu: Vietnamese BBQ, fresh summer rolls, cold noodle dishes, Vietnamese curries, and Banh Mi.

11am-9pm, Jhamsikhel, 9803203119

TAZA

Taza has the softest pita breads, perfectly spiced shawarmas and an assortment of Middle Eastern dishes that will have one yearning for more.

11am-8:20pm, Pulchok, 9860960177



Himali Farmer's Kitchen

This restaurant serves classic Nepali dishes like bhatmas sadeko, aloo jeera, and sukuti and khaja sets.

9am-11pm, Chaksibari Marg

Miss Moti Escapes

Kripa Joshi



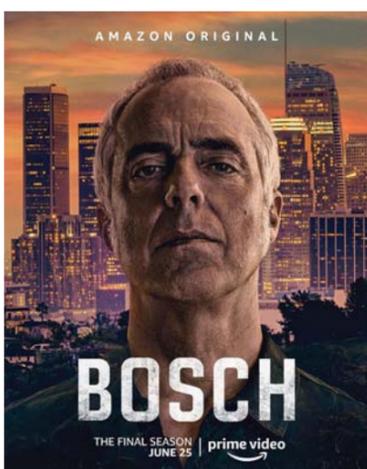
Weekend Weather



One Country, Two Systems

Nepal is seeing the effect of the collision of two weather systems this week. A deep trough in the Arabian Sea sent blizzards over the mountains, and it has now been joined by the outer bands of Cyclone Montha which will continue to add unseasonal precipitation till late Friday. Most of the additional rain and snow over the weekend will be over central and eastern Nepal. It should get sunnier after Sunday with occasional cloud buildup over the mountains.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
19° 15°	24° 15°	24° 13°



Our Pick

Eric Overmyer's police procedural series Bosch, based on Michael Connelly's detective novels, follows Los Angeles Police Department detective Harry Bosch across seven seasons as he goes after LA's serial killers, violent criminals, corrupt cops, and crime lords. At the same time, Bosch also chases leads on cold cases, including the murder of his mother which has remained unsolved for over 30 years. Over the course of his investigations, the tough-as-nails investigator must navigate through departmental red tape, police politics, and law enforcement misconduct. Stars Titus Welliver, Jamie Hector, Amy Aquino, and Lance Reddick.

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 चिह्न 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



BIKAS RAUNIYAR

Unfinished federalism in Madhes Province

The GenZ chants in Kathmandu and the Janakpur unrest are not separate stories

Ayusha Chalise in Sarlahi

In front of the ashes of what used to be Ward 8 of Harion village, a crowd gathers. Two men are talking in Maithili: “They say they want to get rid of the provinces.”

The men were not part of the protests on 8-9 September, and have followed the news about some GenZ protesters wanting to abolish the 2015 federal republican Constitution that led to the establishment of Madhes Province.

Barely three weeks later, communal clashes broke out 70km away in Janakpur during a Durga immersion festival over Dasain, and a curfew had to be imposed. The Tarai districts along the Indian border with Hindu and Muslim communities have become chronic flashpoints for tension.

Between these two towns connected by the East–West Highway, the communal tension sits uneasily alongside earlier unfulfilled demands for provincial autonomy and at a deeper level the very idea of what it means to be a Nepali.

It is notable that many Madhesi political leaders who have been quick to protest against Kathmandu for greater decision-making powers under federalism have been more hesitant to address the religious tension within their constituencies.

This has led to criticism that the Madhes Movement’s promise of inclusion faltered when it came to protecting caste, ethnic and religious minorities. Muslims of the plains had supported the broader call for autonomy and Muslim activists were among those killed in various Madhes Movements.

Yet, they now find themselves caught up in rising Hindu majoritarian sentiments. Political

analyst C K Lal has warned in his writings that continued ‘othering’ of the largest minority group in the Madhes could tear apart the province’s social fabric unless deliberate efforts are made to foster dialogue and trust.

The Tarai plains are home to 53% of Nepal’s population, and Madhes Province is the most densely populated region of Nepal. It holds a mosaic of identities, ethnic and caste groups. Muslims make up 12% of the province’s 6.3 million. Many of these groups share cultural and family ties with communities across the border.

Then there are the indigenous Tharu, Rajbanshi, and Pahadi communities who do not identify as Madhesi. There is a distinction about who is ‘Madhesi’ and who is a mere ‘Madhesbasi’. There are those who were moved down in state-sponsored trans-location from the mountains to the plains in the past century, settlers from India, and those who have moved south to the plains for an easier life.

The Madhes has hosted a rich tapestry of identities that have mostly coexisted peacefully. There are temples and mosques on the same streets, their calls for prayer often overlapping. The Malangbaba temple in the headquarter in Sarlahi was built to honour a Sufi figure and is revered equally by Hindus and Muslims in an annual fair in March.

This diversity in Madhes Province and the Tarai in general also means competing political interests, and occasional friction. Caste divisions add to the complexity: with entrenched hierarchy within Hindu communities. Dalits form 15% of the Madhes Province population and feel excluded despite the movement for political autonomy.

The Madhesi identity is therefore pluralistic, and the

Madhes Movement tried to encapsulate different groups for one political cause, although not quite successfully. The layers of othering that excludes Madhes from mainstream politics of Nepal is replicated inside the politics of Madhes as it fails to proportionally represent Muslims and other secluded groups.

MADHES GENZ

Despite the lingering effects of exclusion by the Nepali state, young Madhesis also joined the GenZ protests last month in a renewed attempt to make their voice heard.

“In essence, the GenZ protest had resonance because it captured the frustrations of Madhes and dissatisfaction against a corrupt system,” says GenZ activist Nancy Yadav.

The protests on 8-9 September led to widespread destruction across the province, with 90 police posts, 207 government offices and dozens of vehicles set ablaze or vandalised.

Imran Khan, 23, drives a rickshaw in Harion and says the Madhesi people are used to protests, but this is the first time he found his own peers also engaged in a political rally.

“We talk more about politics now than before,” he says. “The GenZ wanted their rally to be peaceful, but somehow old political players caused more damage than good.”

Aayush Karna in Janakpur concurs: “The youth here also marched alongside all of Nepal to demand for corruption free and a more just Nepal. But we were shocked on the second day to see how much damage was done so rapidly. Like the GenZ in Kathmandu the movement was hijacked, and that was not what the GenZ wanted.”

Nepal adopted its federal Constitution in 2015 to address decades of exclusion by Kathmandu, decentralise political

power and give the Madhes and its minorities a political home.

A decade later, the promise feels thin. In mainstream media in Kathmandu the Madhes is still peripheral, and often appears in the news lineup only in moments of crisis, floods, protests, or communal violence.

2015 CONSTITUTION

When the interim Constitution of Nepal was promulgated with no mention of federal restructuring in January 2007, Madhesi leader Upendra Yadav and his Madhesi Janadhikar Forum burnt copies of the charter and launched an indefinite strike across the southern Tarai in protest, blocking the East-West Highway and organising mass rallies for weeks.

After several people were killed in Siraha and other districts, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala agreed to an amendment of the Constitution to commit to a federal state structure. In early 2008, another uprising under the leadership of Mahanta Thakur was underway demanding concessions on electoral representation and to keep the push for federal restructuring on the forefront of the agenda.

The loudest of all dissent from the Madhes towards the state was after the Constitution was promulgated in 2015. Rajendra Mahato set it alight in front of a crowd of supporters, declaring the document illegitimate and anti-Madhes. At least 45 people were killed between August and September as protests spread across the Tarai.

The protesters demanded fair and inclusive representation of Madhes in state institutions, security forces, and the bureaucracy, reflecting their population share. They demanded the redrawing of provincial boundaries to create a contiguous Madhes province stretching the full length of the Tarai from east

to west, and electoral constituency delimitation based primarily on population rather than geography, ensuring densely populated plains weren’t underrepresented.

They sought reform of citizenship laws, especially those restricting children of Nepali women married to foreigners, and formal recognition of Madhesi identity and cultural rights within the Constitution.

Protesters stopped fuel tankers and cargo trucks at key border crossings like Birganj-Raxaul, cutting off the lifeline of a country still reeling from the earthquake. What began as a political dispute soon became a national crisis, and the unofficial blockade left hospitals without medicines and cities without fuel. India was accused of tacitly supporting the border blockade, deepening Kathmandu’s resentment.

As shortages grew and international pressure mounted, the government finally yielded in January 2016, passing constitutional amendments on inclusion and representation. Only then, after nearly five months of paralysis was the blockade lifted.

The Madhes Movements of 2007, 2008 and 2015 is often flattened into ‘ethnic unrest’. The state’s lens rarely distinguishes between demands for dignity and threats to stability. When the state securitises dissent instead of understanding it, frustrations can mutate into sectarian anger.

Communal tension becomes the grammar through which deeper political discontent expresses itself.

“Inclusion is not a favour to the people of the Madhes, it is a right,” says GenZ activist Prerana Paswan. “When people speak of dismantling federalism are we being asked to step back from the GenZ movement?”

There are various political parties calling for federalism to be scrapped because it is too costly, it decentralises corruption, and that provinces are just proxies for the central parties. “But the need for federalism and provincial structures is more about addressing the country’s diversity and devolving power from Kathmandu,” says GenZ activist Bikashkumar Gupta.

The Constitution acknowledges that Nepal is a multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural state. Provinces like the Madhes can promote their regional languages (Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi) and cultural traditions alongside Nepali.

Federalism has given symbolic and constitutional legitimacy to Nepal’s plural identity and represents a psychological and political acknowledgment that Nepal is not a single homogeneous state. For the Madhes, in particular, federalism represents a shift at least on paper in looking at the people of the region.

“The Madhesi people will yet again be forced to take to the street if federalism is dismantled,” said a member of the Janata Samajwadi Party in Sarlahi who did not want to be identified. “We will not go back to being unseen by the Nepali state again.”

Federal structures need to be given more power over decision-making and revenue collection. Whether the next generation of Madhesi inherit mistrust or solidarity depends on whether their aspirations are met.

The GenZ chants in Kathmandu and the curfew in Janakpur are not separate stories. They are different dialects of the same question: who gets to belong in Nepal’s democracy? ■



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



Think locally, invest locally

Sixty years since UNDP in Nepal, uplifting story of how rural Nepalis have developed

Bidhya Rai

This year, the United Nations marked its 80th anniversary, celebrating with special events across the world to commemorate its establishment on 24 October 1945.

It has also been 75 years since the first UN adviser, the Swiss geologist Toni Hagen, was sent to Nepal to explore development opportunities. In 1950, there were no roads so Hagen walked across the length and breadth of Nepal's mountains, valleys and plains.

This year also marks the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Nepal. Much of Hagen's work laid the basis for the UN's involvement in education, health, and connectivity in Nepal's future development.

Despite frequent changes in government and political systems, Nepal has made remarkable progress. The poverty rate has gone down by half in the past 30 years to 20.27%. Much of it has to do

with remittances from Nepalis working overseas, but it is also a result of the Nepal government's investment in education, health care and social welfare.

There have been special initiatives like the Prime Minister's Employment Program that have provided jobs to nearly 800,000 people in the country's 753 municipalities — especially in those areas that have a lower Human Development Index (HDI), like the far-west and the Tarai.

This year's HDI report by UNDP shows that Nepal's score had risen to 0.622, whereas it was only 0.404 in 1990. In the past 33 years, the average lifespan of Nepalis has risen by 15.6 years to 70.4 years, whereas it was only 54.8 in 1990. However, the country's HDI ranking is still 145 among the world's 193 countries.

"Yes, there has been significant improvement in living standards in the past 60 years, road connectivity has improved, the maternal mortality rate has gone down dramatically, almost everyone has phones, there are schools," says Saru Joshi of the



thinktank Nepal Policy Institute.

But, she adds: "It is still difficult to get citizenship papers, especially in the name of the mother, and this has excluded many women from banking services, inheritance. After all our progress in physical infrastructure, Nepal now needs to prioritise inclusive social development."

Some of this is also happening. Eighteen years ago, Nabaraj Subedi, 49, of a village in Baglung decided not to join his peers fleeing the Maoist conflict to find work overseas. He invested Rs500,000 to buy a diesel generator and start a small furniture business.

Today, with the installation of the 380 kilowatt small hydroelectric

plant, he does not need to depend on his unreliable generator to power his equipment anymore. There is now a road connecting his village, and Subedi has generated local jobs, opened a sales branch in the city, and gets orders from as far away as Pokhara and Chitwan.

"My costs have gone down drastically because of the

Quo Vadis UN @80?

To remain relevant, the UN must transform itself to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world

Kul Chandra Gautam

The United Nations turned 80 this year. What should have been a moment of pride and celebration at the high-level session of the UN General Assembly in September 2025 turned instead into an occasion of bitter irony.

At the UN Headquarters in New York—fittingly located in the host country that once helped found and champion the organisation—the loudest fireworks came not from commemoration but condemnation.

The President of the United States, boasting that he had "ended seven wars in seven months while the UN did nothing," derided the very purpose of the institution. He dismissed climate change as a hoax, renounced the Sustainable Development Goals, and mocked multilateralism as an obsolete bureaucracy.

That outburst was shocking, but not surprising. The UN has long been an easy target for populist politicians. Yet even as it endures ridicule and neglect, the truth remains: if the UN did not exist, the world would have to create it again.

IMPERFECT BUT INDISPENSABLE

The UN's failures are glaring and often heartbreaking. As the wars in Ukraine and Gaza rage on—each aided and abetted by two Permanent Members of its Security Council—

the organisation looks helpless, capable only of issuing pleas and providing meager humanitarian aid.

Its impotence is evident again in Haiti's gang warfare, Myanmar's and Sudan's military atrocities, Afghanistan's gender apartheid, and North Korea's saber-rattling, just to name a few.

It is easy to blame "the UN," but the real culprits are its Member States—especially the five veto-wielding powers of the Security Council, who too often place narrow national interests above global security. Many others strangle the UN with grand resolutions and lofty mandates but fail to fund them.

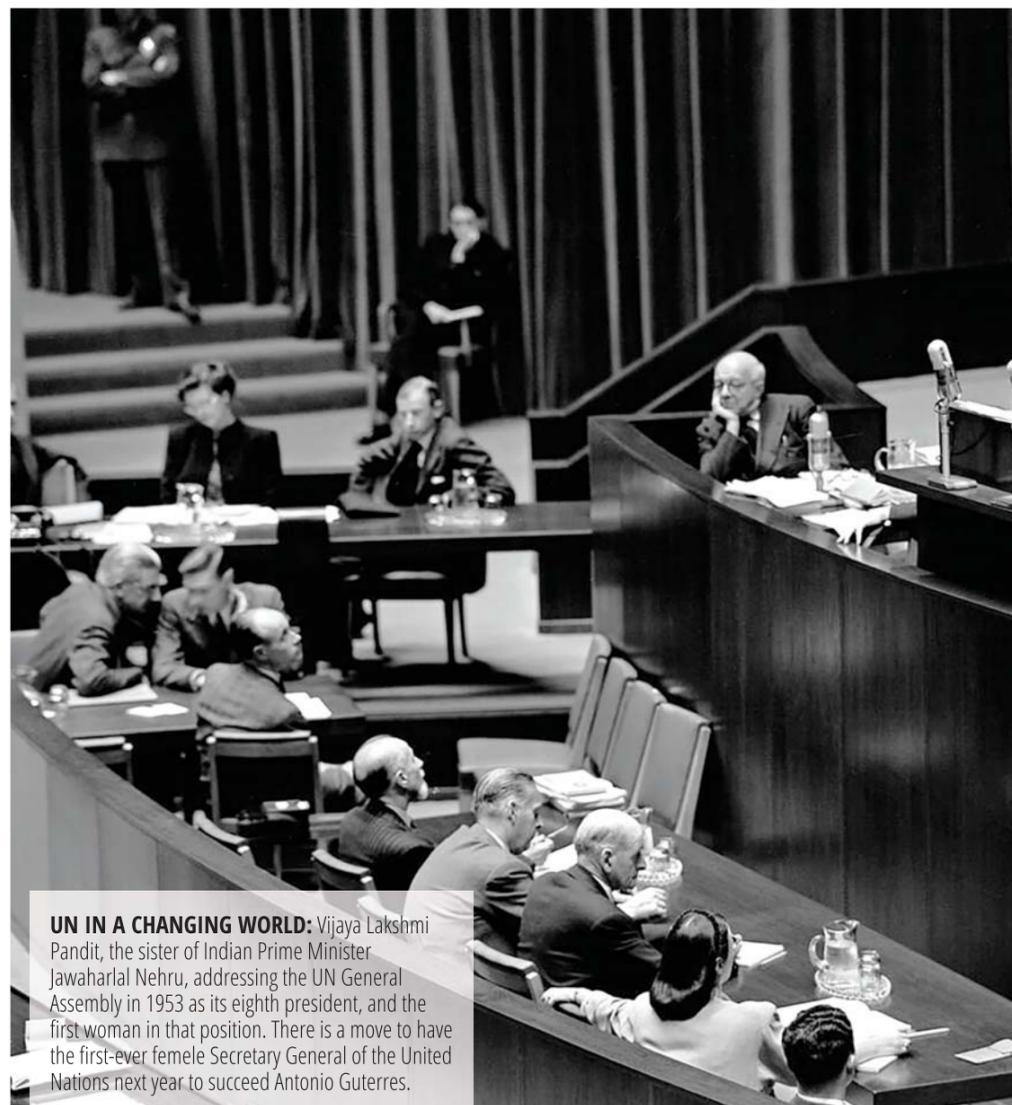
Hiding behind sovereignty, many governments oppress their citizens, foster corruption, and neglect their global commitments. Meanwhile, the richest nations, capable of lifting millions from poverty, pour trillions of dollars into their militaries.

Still, despite its flaws and frustrations, humanity cannot afford to abandon the United Nations. The challenges of our time—poverty, climate change, pandemics, terrorism, cybercrime, and mass displacement—are "problems without passports." No nation, however powerful, can solve them alone. Only collective action

through a multilateral system can address the interconnected crises that define the 21st century.

For smaller or poorer nations, the UN is an amplifier of voice and leverage. Acting together, they can negotiate more fairly with the powerful. For big and powerful nations, the UN provides legitimacy and a framework for cooperation that unilateral action can never achieve.

The UN, for all its imperfections, remains a mirror of our world: it reflects both our aspirations and our divisions. Its hypocrisy is our hypocrisy; its failures are our failures.



UN IN A CHANGING WORLD: Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, the sister of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, addressing the UN General Assembly in 1953 as its eighth president, and the first woman in that position. There is a move to have the first-ever female Secretary General of the United Nations next year to succeed Antonio Guterres.

Resolutions without resolve and promises without action are the true reasons for its ineffectiveness.

Yet amid the cynicism, it is worth recalling that the UN and its agencies have earned 14 Nobel Peace Prizes—more than any other institution in history. That is

no small testament to its contributions to peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, human rights, and development.

But it cannot rest on past laurels. If the UN is to remain relevant, it must transform itself to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.



ALL PHOTOS: SURAJ RATNA SHAKYA

CHANGING RURAL NEPAL:

(Clockwise) A worker at Rhitu Saugat Handicraft in Parbat making a bag out of nettle. Started by Buddhi Purja with Rs500,000, the company is now Rs20 million business with 25 workers.

Sukmaya Roka leads the Sipa Aalu Chips Utpadan Samuha in Baglung, a small local business that employs local women to process, package and market potato they grow themselves.

Nawaraj Subedi, 49, proprietor of Tarakhola Furniture Factory which has generated local jobs, and gets orders from as far away as Pokhara and Chitwan.

allo (nettles) and turning it into household products is an example.

When a landslide swept away his home and farm in a flood 40 years ago, Buddhi Purja of Parbat became destitute. But he took part in a government training program supported by UNDP and Australia to harvest the wild nettle that grew on mountain slopes and turn the fabric into bags.

“After the landslide, we had to go hungry if we did not get a day job,” Purja recalls, “but after this training we have found that we can turn nettle into cash.” His allo bags are now hanging in tourist shops in Pokhara Lakeside and Thamel.

The idea that nettle can be processed into useful fabric has now spread across the country, and new ecologically conscious consumers in Europe and elsewhere now import Made in Nepal nettle products.

Purja started out with an investment of Rs500,000, and had a Rs20 million business that employed 25 workers. The Covid crisis in 2020 affected the sales, but Purja has recovered from it, sent his daughter off to study abroad, and is thinking of diversifying his product range.

While UNDP’s project has made successful businessmen out of people like Purja, nationwide it has created 187,000 jobs in rural medium-scale industries.

Much of what has worked in Nepal has been at the community level with decentralised projects like these that use the entrepreneurship of people like Buddhi Purja, Navaraj Subedi, and Sukmaya Roka. It is tantalising to imagine how much more progress Nepal would have made if their work could be replicated nationwide and upscaled to the state-level. 🇳🇵

UNDP is focussed on using that power for local employment creation. A women’s group, for example, has bought an electric-powered potato processing machine that can produce chips.

“12 of us mothers, daughters, daughters-in-law who process, package and market the potato that we grow ourselves, and it has raised our income,” says Sukmaya Roka, 57, who chairs the group.

Today, 6.1 million households in Nepal (92.2% of total) have electricity in their homes, up from 17.9% 30 years ago. Access to electricity has not just brought lights to homes, but improved everything from productivity, quality of education, healthcare and phone connectivity.

“To see what electricity and roads can do, just look at our municipality,” says chair Dhan Bahadur BK. “Citizens have become more self-reliant, more aware of the outside world.”

NETTLE INTO CASH

Just a little bit of training, resource backup and local empowerment can uplift the living standards of Nepalis. The progress made in harvesting abundantly-available

electricity, and sales have gone up because of the road connecting my furniture to markets. My business has expanded,” Subedi says.

Back in 1960 in a report he prepared for the Nepal government on behalf of the United Nations, Toni Hagen had emphasised just this: investing in electricity generation and connectivity to

uplift the remote rural areas of Nepal.

Subedi’s furniture factory gets its electricity from the nearby Tarakhola Hydropower, a company set up eight years ago with financial and technical support from UNDP’s Renewable Energy for Rural Livelihood (RERL) project.

“The project completely

transformed living standards in this village,” says municipality chair Dhan Bahadur BK. “It has helped create jobs locally, there is now money to invest in education and healthcare. Households can pay their electricity fees electronically through smart billing.”

After working with the government on rural electrification,

and 86% have no sunset clause. Many require the Secretariat and specialised agencies to carry them out “within existing resources”—an impossible task.

Hundreds of overlapping resolutions and reports clog the UN’s machinery, sustained by bureaucratic inertia and Member States’ appetite for endless paperwork. Too many meetings produce too little action.

Technology now offers a way out. Artificial intelligence can consolidate and streamline reporting, freeing up resources for real work. Likewise, the frequency of governing board meetings could be reduced without sacrificing accountability.

Facing financial crisis, political hostility from major donors, and a proliferation of unfunded mandates, the UN has no choice but to rationalise its structure. Some agencies will have to merge or move their operations from costly headquarters in New York and Europe to lower-cost locations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Such moves will also bring the organisation closer to the field, and align it better with the realities of today’s world. At the same time, many of the developing nations now produce highly qualified experts who can serve effectively—and at lower cost. The UN must take advantage of this tremendous growth. UNICEF pioneered this decades ago by hiring national professionals in its field offices. Expanding this practice system-wide would also strengthen local ownership and credibility.

These are sensible, short-term measures but they only scratch the surface. The real test of leadership lies in tackling the deep structural reforms that have eluded the UN for decades.

THE HARD REFORMS

Democratising the UN: The UN’s mission is to promote peace, democracy, development and human rights—but its own structure remains profoundly undemocratic. The Security Council’s five permanent members hold veto power that can paralyse action even in the face of genocide or aggression.

That provision might have made sense in 1945, but it is indefensible in 2025. Yet changing it requires the consent of those same five powers. Only enlightened leadership in those countries and sustained public pressure

globally can bring about reform.

Democratisation must also extend to how the UN’s top leaders are chosen. The Secretary-General and heads of major agencies are still selected through opaque bargains among powerful nations. These posts are often “reserved” for certain nationalities rather than awarded on merit. The UN must move toward a transparent, merit-based system if it hopes to regain credibility.

Reviving R2P: Too many regimes hide behind the shield of sovereignty to oppress their own people. The world leaders agreed at the UN Millennium Summit in 2005 that when a government fails to protect its citizens—or worse, becomes their tormentor—the international community has a Responsibility to Protect (R2P). The 2024 Pact for the Future reaffirmed that principle. But R2P has rarely been applied because powerful nations invoke it selectively—protecting their allies and condemning their rivals. True leadership would mean upholding R2P universally, without double standards.

Disarmament and Development: The UN was founded to prevent war. Yet worldwide military spending now exceeds \$2.7 trillion a year—nearly \$7.5 billion every day. NATO countries are expanding their defense budgets even as social spending shrinks and commitments to the poor are cut.

This is moral madness. Humanity needs fewer weapons and more investment in sustainable development. Redirecting even a fraction of global military spending toward the Sustainable Development Goals would do more to secure peace than all the bombs in the world.

Fixing the UN’s Finances: Money and power often speak louder than moral authority at the UN. The United States contributes about a quarter of the UN’s regular budget—and uses that leverage to exert disproportionate influence. Other large donors do the same.

In 1985, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme proposed a simple remedy: no single country should pay—or be allowed to pay—more than 10% of the UN’s budget. That

would reduce dependence on any one donor while requiring modest increases from others. Ironically, Washington opposed it, fearing it might lose influence.

Reviving that proposal today could help depoliticise UN financing and make it more sustainable. The UN should also expand partnerships with private philanthropy, foundations, and innovative sources such as taxes on global financial transactions or the use of the global commons. Such mechanisms could liberate the organisation from the recurring hostage drama of budget threats and withheld dues.

A HOPEFUL HORIZON

History rarely moves in straight lines. Progress often comes two steps forward and one step back. Today, the post-World War II international order is fraying, and populist nationalism is resurgent. But in the long arc of human history, the movement toward global cooperation is irreversible. We are slowly—but surely—evolving from primitive tribalism to modern nationalism and onward toward shared global solidarity. Multilateralism may be under siege, but it will rise again, reimagined and renewed, because our interdependence leaves no alternative.

I take hope from the energy and courage of GenZ across the world—from Nepal and Bangladesh to Kenya, Indonesia, Morocco, and beyond. Young people are challenging corruption, inequality, and authoritarianism, and they see themselves increasingly as global citizens, connected through technology and united by shared aspirations rather than divided by borders or dogma.

If we can offer these young citizens opportunity and justice instead of inequality and despair, we will see the dawn of a more cooperative, humane, and equitable world. That, in turn, will breathe new life into the United Nations—still imperfect, still indispensable, and still humanity’s best hope for promoting peace and prosperity. 🇳🇵



UN PHOTOS

REAL REFORM

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has launched the UN@80 Initiative to sharpen the system’s impact and reaffirm its purpose. As per the recent system-wide Mandate Implementation Review, over 30% of mandates created since 1990 are still active,



Kul Chandra Gautam is a former Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations.



Artful devotion

Bhaktapur artists pay homage to faith, myth and heritage in meticulous paubha paintings

Sudiksha Tuladhar

Intricately painted Buddha, Aryatara, Krishna, and Parvati gaze serenely at visitors at the Kathmandu Art Gallery under muted amber lights.

Moving from one artful devotion to the next, a quiet, profound connection to the divine envelops the visitor. This transcends art to the realm of the spiritual.

The gallery's latest exhibition, Masters of Devotion, features art by 22 artists all from Bhaktapur including Ajay Karmacharya, Purna Prasad Hyoju, Nhucho Kaji Bajracharya, Rajani Sinkhwal, Shashi Dhar Sainju, Surya Bahadur Chitrakar and Sundar Sinkhwal from the Khowpa Paubha Chowmi Pucha.

Paubha are religious and devotional art depicting deities and mandala that date back to the 7th century, when Newa artists began to paint images of the gods on cloth. For the artists who practice this craft, the art form is as meditative as it is meticulous.

The exhibition at the newly-opened space Kathmandu Art Gallery coincided with the festival season and is a collection of extravagant works done in mineral and stone colour, sakura and gouache.

The vintage art space is located at Babar Mahal Revisited and is a fitting accompaniment to the paubha featured in the exhibit.



Sundar Sinkhwal's vividly painted Harihara is among the more eye-catching works. "Half of the painting is Shiva and half is Vishnu, hence the name Harihar," explains Sinkhwal. "Together with their consorts Parvati and Laxmi, I have painted Uma-Maheswor and Laxmi-Narayan."

Nandi and Garuda, the vehicles of the two gods, complete the vibrant painting.

In contrast, for his piece titled Lakshmi, Sinkhwal shrouds his canvas in dark colours to paint

Kuber, the deity revered as the custodian to the wealth in the Hindu pantheon, accompanied by two khyak apparitions—one black, the other white—both mythical creatures in Newari folklore.

"The black khyak is considered inauspicious, while white ones are a symbol of good luck," explains Sinkhwal.

Purna Prasad Hyoju has used mineral paint on canvas for a powerful depiction of Ardhanarishwar, the composite form of Shiva and his consort Parvati.

"I drew inspiration from the Newari Swasthani story about the separation of Shiva and Satidevi," says Hyoju. Legend has it that Shiva, unwilling to part from his consort, reincarnated as a unified dual gender form of himself and Parvati.

Hyoju has painted goddess Parvati in bright yellow, in homage to one of her other manifestations, Gauri, which means radiant.

Meanwhile, Ratna Gopal Sinkhwal's Kurkula Devi, done in stone pigment, is radiant on the

cotton canvas. "Kurkula Devi is a tantric goddess whose traces are found in the Sadhana Mala," says Sinkhwal. "The stone pigment is what makes the goddess look like she is gleaming."

One of Sinkhwal's other works draws from stories in the Mahabharat to depict Bhimsen, Draupadi, Dushasan and Akash Bhairav in confrontation, expressions fierce.

DIVINITY AND MYTHOLOGY

The opening of the exhibition last week also featured a music session, during which some of the artists sang traditional songs. Their voices joined the rhythm of the madal and melody of the harmonium, adding warmth to the crisp autumn evening.

Each painstakingly detailed paubha reflects the artists' devotion to divinity and mythology, as well as their heritage. Masters of Devotion showcases the work of veritable masters of their craft, and is a must-visit for art connoisseurs and devotees alike.

Says the gallery's Sangeeta Rana Thapa: "It is our honour to celebrate the artists' work—to stand among pieces that embody both devotion and mastery, and to witness a tradition that continues to inspire us." 📌

Masters of Devotion
Kathmandu Art Gallery
Babar Mahal Revisited
Until 22 November

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