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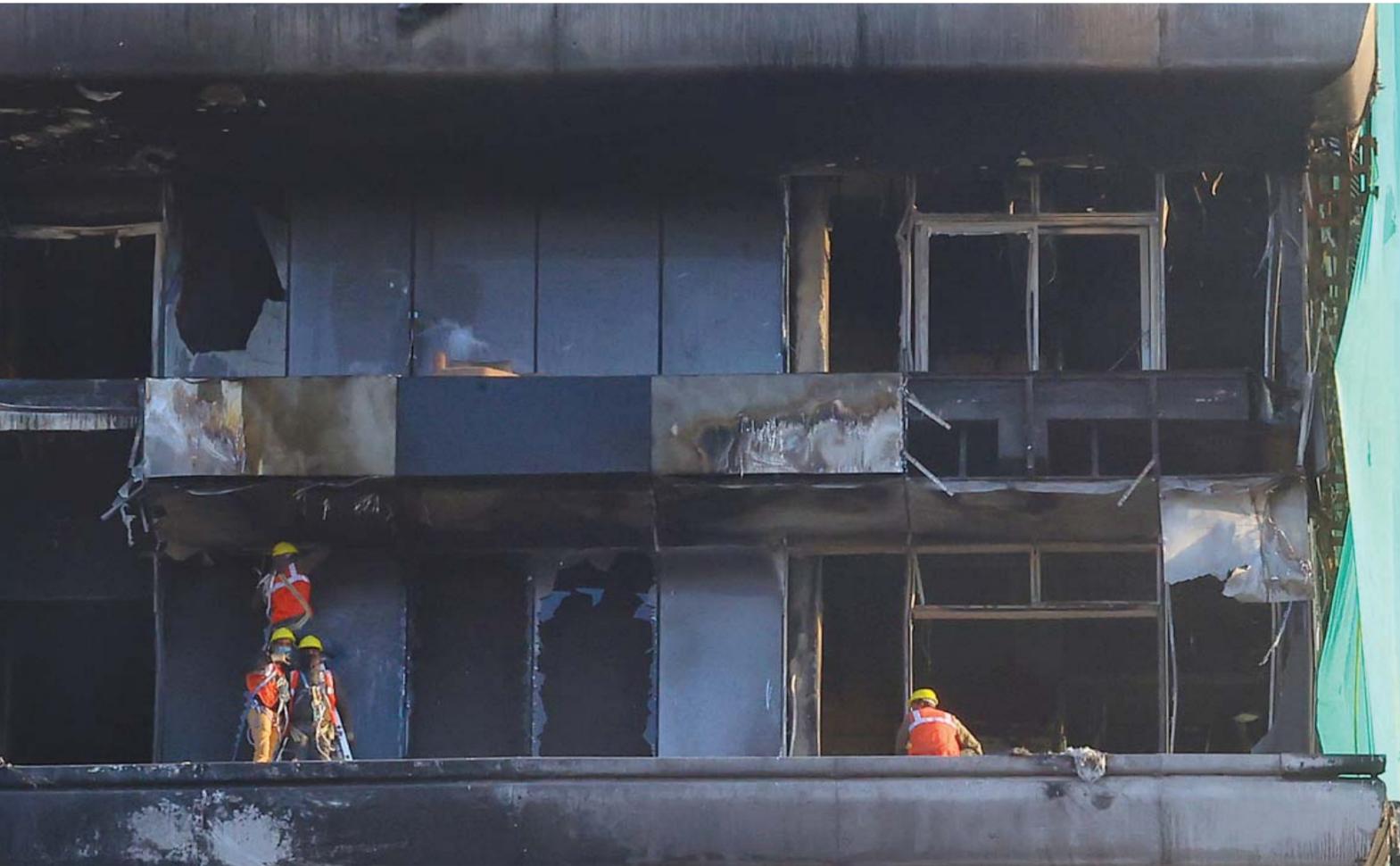
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SUMAN NEPALI

Nepal needs to use its money better

Vishad Raj Onta

Nepal's regime change created two new costs that Prime Minister Sushila Karki's government is scrambling to deal with: reconstruction and holding elections on 5 March.

The buck stops at the desk of economist and Minister of Finance Rameshore Khanal about where and how to spend limited resources.

"Rameshore-ji is a fresh face, the right person for the role. He is capable and knows the system," says Kalpana Khanal of the Policy Research Institute (PRI).

Khanal has to grapple not just with immediate budget needs for elections and reconstruction, but also initiate longer term measures to restore investor confidence badly dented by the arson and vandalism of 9 September.

Immediately after taking office, he set up a 3-member task force to make cuts to free up the budget.

"We have to hold elections and

we have to reconstruct. Both need money, and they are equal priorities for us," said Ministry of Finance spokesperson Tanka Prasad Pandey.

But Khanal has flown into heavy flak for his decision to restore investor confidence by giving a strategic capital gains tax break to Mauritius-based Dolma Impact Fund (see page 12).

Prime Minister Sushila Karki asked Chief Secretary Eaknarayan Aryal for clarification, but the decision is said not to have been taken in the Cabinet. There are indications Nepal may break its DTAA treaty with Mauritius.

This harks back to the capital gains dispute of the sale of Ncell ownership in which both the Supreme Court and the International Tribunal in The Hague ruled in favour of the government.

There are tradeoffs. Private equity funds like Dolma could funnel venture capital more efficiently for Nepali companies than the government, which is

slowed down by many layers of bureaucracy. The downstream multiplier effect of such investments would outweigh taxes to the government since much of it is misused and wasted.

Strategic tax exemptions do provide incentives to investors, to make sure these projects are carried out effectively, which in turn helps Nepal's development which has been affected by corruption and mismanagement.

The main demand of the GenZ protests that led to the downfall of the government coalition two months ago was to control corruption and make government more efficient so there is investment and job creation. The interim government seems to be responding to that sentiment.

The Dolma issue has distracted from the larger and longer-term need to reform the country's financial systems and streamline public expenditure. Corruption and good governance

are going to be the criteria by which voters will select candidates in March.

Minister Khanal's task force went through the budget culling items DOGE-style. Projects deemed 'inadequately prepared,' 'fragmented,' or 'included through political pressure' were axed.

Khanal hoped to save up to Rs100 billion by cutting items less than Rs30 million. But this slash and burn method has hurt rural projects for health and education more than expensive corruption-ridden infrastructure ones.

"There are thousands of low-return programs that are there because of political or personal influence. But the criteria for cutting them needs to be properly defined," says economist Pushkar Bajracharya

PRI's Kalpana Khanal was involved in the taskforce, and explains: "The decision to mobilise internal resources is a pragmatic move to fund elections and reconstruction. But big vote bank projects with time and cost overruns must be addressed."

Proper polls better than no polls
EDITORIAL PAGE 2

27th November Thursday

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Proper polls better than no polls

Failure to hold elections is not an option for Nepal's interim government

Shristi Karki

If the violent clashes outside Simara airport on Wednesday is anything to go by, it means Prime Minister Sushila Karki will find it even more difficult to convince recalcitrant political parties like the UML to go for elections.

Being the two partners in the coalition government which was toppled in the GenZ protests two months ago, the UML and NC are still licking their wounds and do not see much prospect of garnering votes. The UML is also flexing its muscles, with its own show of youth force in order to intimidate the interim government and the Investigation Commission and not implicate its leader K P Oli in the 8 September massacre.

In Simara, protesters calling themselves GenZ were trying to prevent UML leaders from flying in for a political event and clashed with the party's cadre at the airport to welcome them. All flights to the airport from Kathmandu were cancelled on Wednesday.

The Simara fracas comes at a time when the government is alert about the sensitive security situation. The pro-monarchy businessman Durga Prasai was arrested at midnight on Monday over his inflammatory remarks leading up to nationwide protests planned for 23 November. The UML has also planned demos on Saturday to call for restoration of Parliament.

All this sure to feed prevailing public doubt about the 5 March polls. Every act or suggestion of violence feeds into the anxiety. Even as GenZ protesters were massing at



RSS

the gates of Simara airport on Wednesday, UML and NC delegates were meeting Prime Minister Karki in Kathmandu saying they would take part in polls only if safety and security can be guaranteed.

Those remarks are a bit rich. Neither their parties nor their leaders who were prime minister and home minister have expressed any remorse or taken responsibility for the massacre on 8 September. They should be thankful Nepal's courts have not handed down a verdict like Bangladesh's tribunal against deposed and exiled Sheikh Hasina.

Instead, the UML and NC are inviting further instability by undermining the interim government, and taking to the streets to demand Parliament be restored. This week's

Simara violence has bolstered their argument against the elections.

But failure to hold elections is not an option for the interim government. Prime Minister Karki is fully committed, and said in an interview in Nagarik newspaper on Thursday: 'The Nepali people are overwhelmingly for elections, so the parties will ultimately not say no to holding them. There is no question that the election won't be held on time. I am committed to that goal and we have come a long way in preparing for it.'

But political parties must also be free to organise peaceful election rallies without intimidation, as should every Nepali citizen be free to attend them. The youth need to accept that despite all their past failings

political parties are not going anywhere, and they should instead push for them to reform and strengthen internal democracy.

What does not help are incendiary social media posts by populist persona in the GenZ calling for the resignation of Home Minister Om Aryal. Prime Minister Karki was installed by the GenZ but herself has expressed frustration about their contradictory demands.

It is not just the election that needs to be free, fair and peaceful. Candidates, whether they are from old or new parties, or those contesting as independents must be allowed to campaign freely and engage with voters without inciting revenge and violence.

Nepalis overwhelmingly want to usher in fresh new actors, you do not need an election to feel that pulse. This is a chance for the serial prime ministers in the established parties to pass the baton to a new generation because voters are poised to convey that message through the ballot in March.

In the event that preparations are not complete or conditions are not right for polls in March, it can be postponed by up to two months if necessary. Proper polls are better than no polls.

Families of those killed and injured on 8 September as well as those who participated in the protests are right to demand that the ousted prime minister and home minister be held accountable to the full extent of the law for state brutality.

These disgraced leaders have chosen contempt over contrition towards protesters and critics since September. They would do well to see the jubilation in Dhaka at the news of the sentencing of Sheikh Hasina for crimes against humanity.

Trending Online



The periphery cannot hold

by Sonia Awale

Kesang Tseten documents adherents of the Bon Po faith holding on to the last remnants of their culture and heritage in his latest documentary The Lama's Son. Read the review at nepalitimes.com.

Most reached and shared on Facebook



Chronic instability in Madhes

by Ayusha Chalise

The political crisis that unfolded in Madhes last week is a reminder that federalism in Nepal is still in transition, and that its success depends on political actors honouring the constitution. Get details online.

Most popular on X

Climate of tragedy and apathy

by Kanak Mani Dixit

Nepal's inability to raise Himalayan haze and permafrost issues at COPs exposes failures in science and diplomacy. The government has a duty to wake up to the climate breakdown. Read the guest editorial on our website.

Most commented

Party Time

by Shristi Karki

Nepal's political aspirants, both new and old, have been trooping to the Election Commission to register new parties. But parties without shared philosophy might have less chance of influence and longevity. Go online to read the report.

Most visited online page

Letters

NEPAL AT COP

Remarkably put, Kanak Mani Dixit's 'country-on-an-incline' vividly portrays Nepal as a thermometer of global warming ('Climate of tragedy and apathy', Kanak Mani Dixit, #1285). The article's focus on South Asian Brown Clouds and the urgent need to preserve the Hindu Kush Himalaya's moraine and permafrost is crucial.

Abrar H Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to Nepal

The crisis in the Himalaya, Caucasus, and South and Southeast Asia is laid bare in this powerful piece. Permafrost collapse, the Asian Brown Cloud (ABC), and uncontrolled climate breakdown are destabilising the very systems that sustain billions. As originator of the International

Center for Glaciers concept, I urge Nepal and regional leaders to turn COP30 in Belém into a moment of determination, unite behind science, exert climate diplomacy with purpose, and act boldly to protect the mountains, glaciers, rivers, ecosystems, and the people who depend on them.

Arup Rajouria

It's both amazing and stunning that all mainstream newspapers & science commentators very, very quickly 'forgot' about the South Asia Brown Cloud in no time.

Annaashu

The Brown Cloud and Himalayan changes do not respect borders. These concerns are very real for all of us in the region. We need stronger cooperation between India, Nepal and the rest of South Asia, especially on air quality and mountain science.

Nirupama Menon Rao

This is the most elaborate scientifically analysed writeup by Kanak Mani Dixit on environmental issues facing the world in general, South Asia in particular and Nepal in even more particular.

NN Ojha

CLIMATE DIPLOMACY

Don't hold your breath ('Reconstructing the China-India climate diplomacy', Robert Mizo, nepalitimes.com). China & India & USA are the highest polluters on the planet. That's how they make their money.

Gill Porteous

BON PO DOCUMENTARY

I visited Lubra in 2019 ('The periphery cannot hold', Sonia Awale, #1285). Agriculture was flourishing and the children were numerous. I think there is a lot of vitality in this community. I brought friends there in 2023 who were deeply impressed.

Francis Tiso

Quotes



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Nepal should bid to host COP31 on the theme: 'International Summit on the Impact of International Summits on Climate Change.'
Read @kundadixit's weekly newsletter:



Kaye Teale @kaye4180
Agreed, but... the intense flooding could wash it away!



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
"Neighbours not keen on sharing met data"
Nepali Times spoke to Director General Kamal Ram Joshi of Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) about weather extremes and changing rainfall patterns.



mieke @mieke2
What is it with many governments that they don't gladly share such data?

Online Package



NJJR SAGA

The Nepal Jaynagar-Janakpur Railway (NJJR) opened in December 1937. By the 70s, the railway was living on borrowed time. The last engine ran in 2006, and 76 years of railroading in Nepal ended in 2014.



BEEKEEPER OF MUSIKOT

Chuman Gharti Magar taught himself bee-keeping so he would not have to migrate for work. Magar is now the proprietor of Malrani Mauripalan Kendra in Musikot. Subscribe for multimedia content.

1,000 Words



NEPAL PREMIER LEAGUE / FACEBOOK

FAIR PLAY: Prime Minister Sushila Karki took time off her busy schedule to inaugurate the second season of the Nepal Premier League (NPL) at the Tribhuvan University Cricket Stadium in Kirtipur on Monday. Eight teams will compete in 32 matches over the course of the tournament till 13 December.

Times

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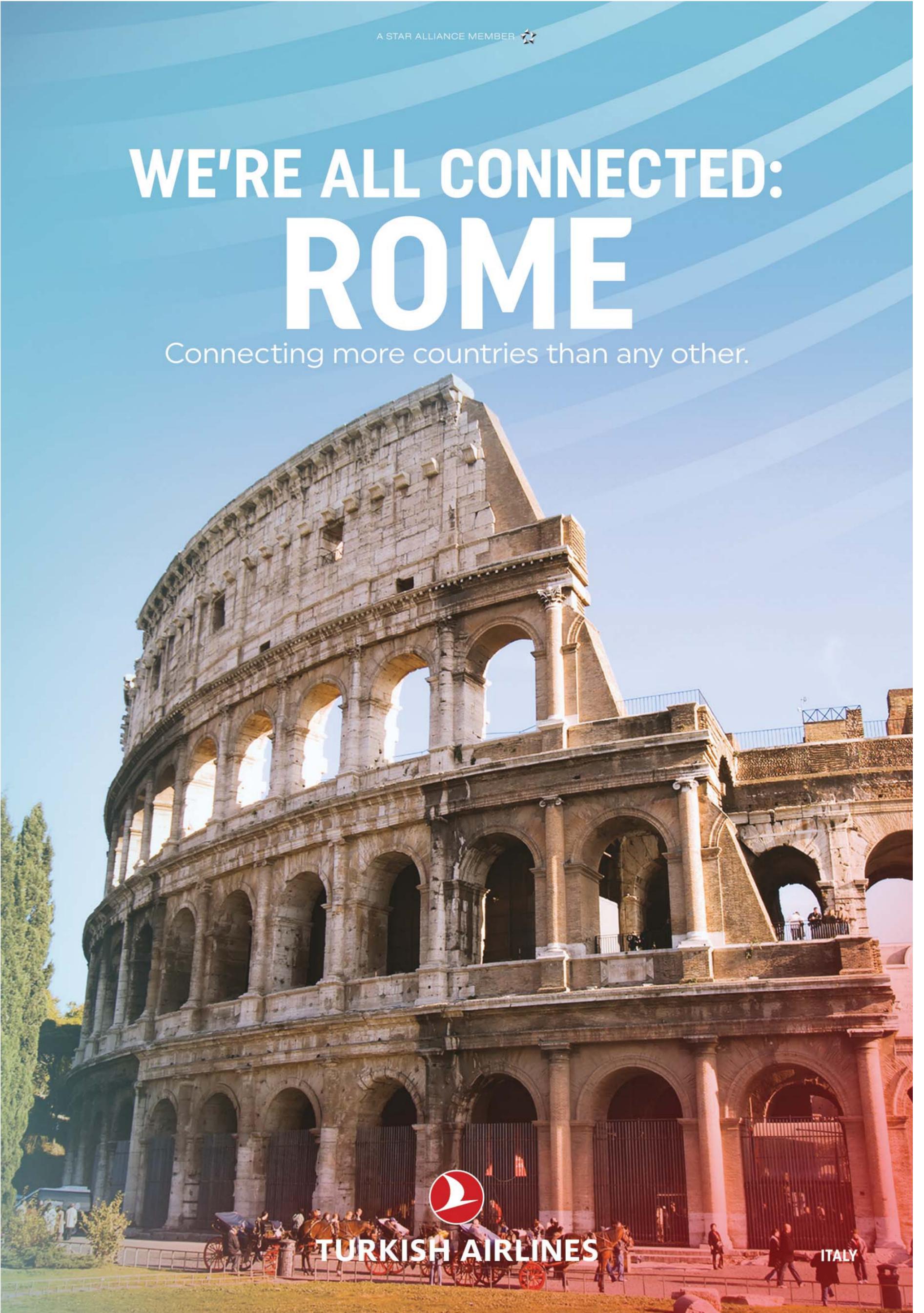
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The future of international aid

Even without US funding cuts, there would be a need for fresh thinking about making aid more efficient

David Miliband

America's role in international aid has been turned upside down since January, with institutions shuttered, policies upended, and funding slashed. It is unclear what lies ahead for American policy, the international aid system, or the world's poorest. All we know is that a massive gap needs to be filled.

The situation is urgent. The World Bank recently revised up its estimate of people living in extreme poverty (on less than \$3 per day) to 831 million – about 10% of the global population. Over half of the world's extreme poor now live in fragile, conflict-affected states, and this figure is predicted to rise to two-thirds in the next five years. Nearly 40% of these countries' populations already live on less than \$3 per day, compared to 6% in other developing economies.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) ran the numbers to determine which countries are most in need of aid. We came up with a list of 13, typified by Sudan, home to the world's largest humanitarian crisis. While 29% of the world's extreme poor live in these hardest-hit countries, only 9% of international aid is allocated to them -- a \$35 billion funding gap.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Ukraine has become the biggest



HANDSHAKE: USAID officials distributing baby packs and hygiene kits to survivors of the 2015 earthquake in Sindupalchok.

global aid recipient. Moreover, European countries are increasingly spending funds classified as 'overseas aid' on refugee integration at home. These outlays now account for around 14% of the total global aid bill, about the same as is spent on humanitarian aid.

So, even without US funding cuts, there would be a need for fresh thinking about how the aid sector works. **First**, we should focus grant aid – which accounts for more than 90% of the global aid budget (the rest being concessional loans) – on the poorest people in

the poorest places. That means addressing the mismatch between the approximately 50% of the extreme poor who live in fragile and conflict-affected states, and the 25% of the global aid budget that goes to those countries.

Second, we need to devote resources to evidence-based, proven, cost-effective programming, like the community-based vaccine drive the IRC has pioneered in eastern Africa, where we delivered over 20 million doses for \$2 each. We have also proposed a simplified protocol for treating moderate and severe acute

malnutrition. In our study involving 27,800 acutely malnourished kids in Mali, we achieved cost savings of around 20%. But scaling up these approaches will require a change of mindset from donors, so that their efforts aggregate results, rather than diluting them.

Third, we need more innovation in programs, finance, and delivery. For example, technology can help achieve impressive learning outcomes for children whose education is interrupted by conflict and disaster.

DEBT SWAPS

Innovation requires new commitments of capital. Disaster-risk financing, for example parametric insurance that pays out as soon as triggers are hit for rainfall, establishes predictable and fast flows of support. But we also need to bring debt swaps into the humanitarian arena. These approaches have already been used to fund environmental improvement projects worth \$1.7 billion in seven countries.

Fourth, we need accountability for outcomes, rather than for inputs, in order to cut bureaucracy, increase flexibility, promote value for money, and drive innovation. Governments and international institutions should follow the example of Sweden, which holds

us accountable for the outcomes we achieve. What matters is educational attainment, not the number of teachers trained, and the number of healthy newborns, not the number of neonatal health consultations.

Fifth, we need to align the aid burden with the composition of the global economy. The United States accounts for 25% of global income, but its share of national income devoted to foreign aid is only 0.22%, a figure set to decrease after the recent cuts. Still, in a February poll, around 89% of Americans said that 1% of the federal budget should go to overseas aid. Since that is close to the actual figure, maintaining such funding could be a unifying mission for America and Americans.

Today, 80% of acutely malnourished children in conflict zones are not treated, 60% of maternal deaths in childbirth occur in fragile states, and 85 million children in these countries are out of school. Effective international aid is the answer to these challenges, not the problem.

Humanity has more resources to do good than at any time in its history, so it is up to us to use them wisely. Setting aside 1% of a federal budget is not excessive. The money can be put to good use, and it is in America's own interest to do so. 

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David Miliband, a former British foreign secretary, is President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee.

NMB BANK एनएमबि बैंक

BB- Fitch Rating

Fitch Ratings affirmed Nepal's Long-Term Foreign-Currency IDR at 'BB-' with a Stable Outlook. The rating takes into account low government debt, strong FX reserves, and medium-term growth potential based on hydropower. Political unrest, reconstruction costs, and weak tourism are expected to widen the fiscal deficit and slow growth. Fitch rated Nepal BB- in 2024 as well, and the Ministry of Finance takes this as proof that the September unrest did not damage the economy and investment prospects as much as expected.



Turkish A350s

Turkish Airlines has concluded financing for the delivery of two brand-new Airbus A350-900 aircraft combining Itasca insurance-backed financing with a Japanese Operating Lease with Call Option (JOLCO) structure. Bank of China acted as the sole lender and facility agent in the transaction, whilst JOLCO equity was arranged and underwritten by JP Lease.

IME AGM

Global IME Bank held its 19th Annual General Meeting in Kathmandu this week, reporting Rs7.23 billion operating profit, and Rs5.07 billion net profit for FY 2081/82, from which shareholders are to receive an 8% cash dividend. Chairman Chandra Prasad Dhakal affirmed the bank's commitment to regulatory compliance and balanced growth into new business areas. IME Limited was also recognised as the company paying the highest taxes in the remittance sector on National Tax Day 2082.



Aus-Nep @ 65

The Australian Embassy hosted a reception to celebrate 65 years of diplomatic relations with PM Sushila Karki as Chief Guest. A book commemorating Australia's support in education, trade, and democratic transition was launched. The countries cooperate on climate action, gender equality, and peacekeeping.

Great Walls hybrids

Great Walls Motors Nepal unveiled its Tank series of off-road hybrid SUVs. The Tank 300 HEV is a 5-seater priced at Rs160 million that delivers a mileage of 12kmpl. The Tank 500 Plug-In Hybrid EV is a 7-seater priced at Rs216m.

Mustang fees

The Cabinet has decided to abolish the four decades-old fee of \$500 each for a 10 day visit by foreign trekking groups, and replaced it with a daily \$50 charge. This does not change the total fee for a weeklong trek, but will reduce the cost for a short visit to Lo Manthang which is now connected by road.

Carbon credits

Nepal has received \$9.4 million from the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility as the first payment under the Emission Reductions Payment Agreement. The amount rewards the reduction of 1.88 million tons of CO₂ in the Tarai Arc Landscape through community-led forest management. These funds will support indigenous groups and their green initiatives.

IBN approvals

Investment Board Nepal has given the greenlight for hydropower projects including Betan Karnali (440MW), Lower Arun (669MW) and an agreement with India's Satlug for Arun III (900MW). The survey license for West Seti Dam (800MW) also got a go-ahead.

Ncell 4s for 4

Ncell will provide kits for every boundary hit during the NPL 2 cricket tournament. They will have school bags, notebooks, pencils, and other stationery and will be distributed to students in rural community schools. Ncell launched 11 NPL Fan Packs from 15 November-13 December offering bonuses such as 25–50 minutes on-net talk, free TikTok, 750 MB YouTube, or 1GB data on buying Rs99 Unlimited, Rs 399 Sadhain ON, or Rs 599 Home & Away packs. Users can also spin & win NPL match tickets through the Ncell app.



Deepal goes east

MAW Vriddhi launched the Deepal S05 electric SUV in Birtamode while also inaugurating a new showroom. A three-day test drive and exchange camp is currently offering cash discounts and free road tax, insurance, and travel charger. The S05 starts at Rs4.9 million and has a range of 470km. It also has a 14.4" touchscreen and remote parking.

MG Lumbini Lions

Paramount Motors, distributor of MG vehicles, has become the mobility partner of Lumbini Lions for NPL 2. The company is providing its vehicles to the team for travel throughout the tournament. MG Nepal looks to support the development of sports in Nepal.

MCC top-up

The US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) that is building cross-country transmission lines and upgrading highways got a top-up to take the total outlay to \$550 million. The Nepal government is contributing \$197 million.

XTERRA Nepal 2025

The inaugural XTERRA Nepal 2024 off-road triathlon at Begnas Lake, Pokhara saw strong local and international participation. Organisers are holding a second edition this 29 November, adding a new Mixed Relay category featuring 750m swim, 14km bike, and 6km trail run. Cash prizes available.

Skydiving in Pokhara

Skydiving operators in Pokhara are urging CAAN to issue permanent Recreational Aviation Operation Certificates to allow year-round operations instead of temporary 15-day permits. Local companies now employ fully trained Nepali instructors and offer packages ranging from Rs95,000 to Rs150,000. CAAN will begin issuing certificates within the next fiscal year.



Rara-Phoksundo

A Rs256m contract has been awarded to upgrade 68 km of the Tripurakot–Moure road section in Dolpa to connect Rara and Phoksundo lakes. The gravel road with drainage will provide an alternative route to Jumla and boost tourism in Mugu and Dolpa. Construction is scheduled for completion within two years.

Smart cars for not-so-smart streets

Modern cars have driver assistance features, but they may not be much help in Nepal's chaotic traffic



DRIVE LINE

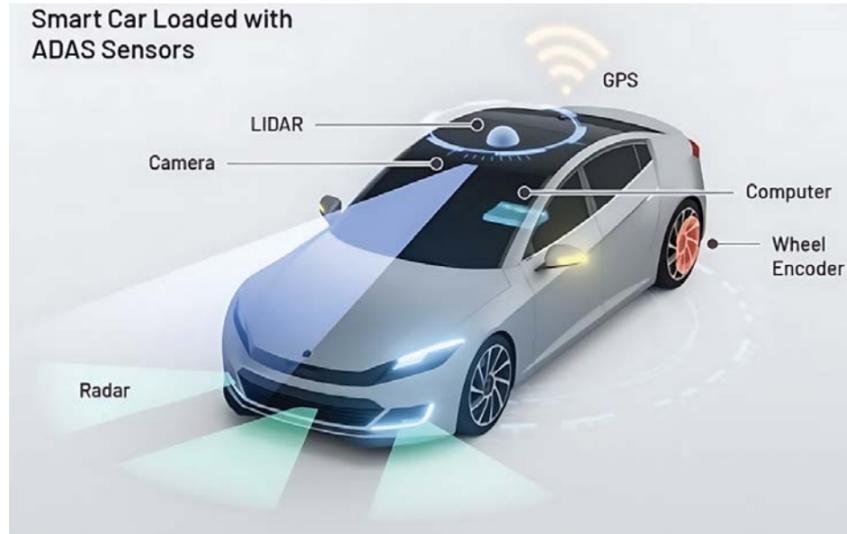
Arnab Upadhyay

Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) have become an integral part of the safety features in higher-end new cars (mostly EV) available in Nepal. It has come to a point where customers are turned off by cars that do not have them installed.

These features vary widely: from very basic visual assistance for drivers to self-driving options. Among the more common features in Nepal are blind spot monitoring, traffic sign recognition, and emergency braking. But not all of such driver assistance options actually come into play or are any help in Nepal's chaotic traffic.

Gone are the days when simply having two airbags in front, traction control and anti-locking braking were considered the epitome of safety. Cars now come with highly specialised and nuanced systems that work to actively prevent road casualties, rather than just mitigate its after-effects.

In my recent review of the MG IM6, I noted that the car took ADAS to a whole new level with sensors firing LiDAR rays and HD cameras constantly and computing obstructions nearby and detecting imminent harm, but also performing necessary last-minute



evasive actions if needed. These features allowed the IM6 to not only to drive autonomously, but also parallel park with ease without any human input.

But the question I had in my mind was: would I ever allow my car to do this knowing Nepal's (lack of) road discipline?

Road infrastructure in Nepal is finally trying to catch up to international standards in some places, but there is still a long way to go. While many newly built roads have proper paint markings they are faded in many others. Road furniture exists in some new highways, but mysteriously only in limited stretches.

Nepal's roads and highways are irregularly pitched with asphalt

overlay, but done so sloppily and with no regard to drainage that they are soon cratered with potholes. Many roads are barely lit at night.

Although traffic has improved, it is still unpredictable, especially during rush hour, with two- and four-wheelers darting left and right between lane markings and jaywalkers raising an arm towards oncoming speeding vehicles. Then the pollution, dust and rain can reduce ADAS accuracy.

While ADAS was built with the assumption of proper road infrastructure and giving the benefit of doubt that there is good road discipline, Nepal's flexible and fatalistic driving culture can confuse its algorithms.

When I took Leapmotor

B10 out for a review, its refinement and efficiency was amazing, until I had a predicament common in the inner lanes of Kathmandu: backing out of a galli into the main Lazimpat uphill near the Japanese Embassy.

I had just picked up the EV and naturally had not familiarised myself with it much, being preoccupied with its range. While reversing, the ADAS detected harm, deployed emergency brakes and screeched to a dead halt. Even though I was going hardly 2kph into incoming traffic,

the brake calipers bolted firm, the hazard lights flashed, the seatbelts tensioned around my neck and the entire cabin jerked backwards. I had to eventually shift into park, turn all the ADAS settings off before finishing the maneuver.

OVER-RELIANCE

Opinion remains divided among Nepali drivers about ADAS. Some swear by it, while others quietly disable the system. It is a bit like pilots flying to mountain airstrips in Nepal turning off the cockpit's Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning System because the 'Terrain' warning keeps coming on.

Proper understanding of ADAS functionality is needed to fully utilise it, otherwise it can lead to over-reliance and misunderstanding

about capabilities. ADAS features are also reserved and equipped in more premium models and trims, thus remaining a far reach for the capabilities of many Nepali buyers.

ADAS is tested and calibrated in markets abroad where good road infrastructure and better driving discipline may be the norm. To fully sensitise it on Nepal's roads, there has to be more rigorous testing and calibration done with South Asian road behaviour where, sometimes a single-lane road is shared by not just two-way traffic, but ox carts, buses, bicycles, pedestrians and all of the above. Nepal has no national standards for testing or regulating ADAS.

Proper ADAS implementation in future will need transparent collaboration between the various government agencies and the auto sector. But for a small auto market like Nepal where the annual vehicle sale averages only around 15,000 units, large automotive brands would probably not care.

While ADAS can make driving safe not only for those inside and outside of a vehicle, the system must understand the nature of roads it is navigating. Until Nepal's highways and habits truly evolve, technology and algorithms alone can outsmart chaos only so much.

But who knows, AI-enabled ADAS could be trained in future to handle even Nepal's poor roads and chaotic traffic. 🇳🇵

Arnab Upadhyay reviews automobiles and promotes road safety under the handle Casually Annoyed Driver on Youtube, Tiktok and IG, and this monthly column Drive Line in Nepali Times.

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 Issue I
 08 Sept. 2025

Gen-Z is screaming.
Gen-Z is screaming.


किन?


Families of crooks turned "influencers".
 Kids flaunt luxury built on theft.
 Bribes needed for basic procedures.
 Samdhis illegally mine sand to sell for profit.
 There was no justice for Nirmala Panta.

Pro-Tip:
 If they don't answer our UHW, we will
 meme it until they cannot ignore it.

नेट
मात्र हाम्रो

एक

विकल्प

What YOU can do

1. Start the fire

Memes fuel movements. Today's protest is only the spark — the real blaze is online.

2. Grab Your Tools

- Download Meme Packs (like the ones on this brochure).
- Ready-to-use templates, captions, and graphics.
- Use them, remix them, make them funnier, angrier, louder.

3. BREAK the barrier

The PROBLEM:

- Global memes don't reach the real world who matter at 1000 to 100,000 scale.
- Nepal (Bharat) never got loved by the internet.
- This level of protest support is rare unlike just the past week.

The FIX:

- The best way to reach isn't social media (Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- Make memes in Nepali script.
- Use your friends, family, and other trusted community members.
- If they see within, the government cannot ignore it.

This WORKS.

We've seen it before in:

- Egypt (2011) memes spread faster than the protests.
- Hong Kong (2019) memes turned Pasa into a protest symbol.
- Bahrain (2011) memes satirized the regime and generated.
- Indonesia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka (2010-2015).
- Nepal (2020) — it's your chance.

Memes are for everyone. If we stay English-only, we lose the majority.

Protect the Movement


KNOW THE THREAT

- Every protest attracts opportunists.
- Political parties, NGOs, influencers, even fake activists will try to hijack your anger.
- They will rebrand our struggle into their campaign, their clout, their money.


GUARD THE NARRATIVE

- Keep the focus on corruption, injustice, and our pain.
- No single leader owns this.
- Credit the collective, not the loudest voice.
- Use open channels (Telegram, WhatsApp, Signal) where decisions are visible.

A NO ENTRY A
 for bullshit

GenZ uprisings everywhere look the same because the digital visuals offered a new language for youth to organise

Nobel Rimal

Nepal has finally become famous the world over for something else besides Mt Everest — the GenZ Movement. The 8 September protests in Kathmandu may have been triggered by what happened in Jakarta a week previously, but it inspired street uprisings all over the world.

This week, Mexico's GenZ are clashing with riot police. Last month, the president of Madagascar fled to Dubai. Philippines, Morocco, Peru, Timor Leste all have seen similar anti-government protests against corruption, nepotism and poor governance.

A Himalayan republic, a Latin American federation, a Southeast Asian archipelago, or a North African kingdom may have little in common, their histories, religions, languages, and political systems are worlds apart. But the common thread running through these demonstrations were the simulacra and symbols spread on social media platforms.

The young crowds marching through the streets of these countries were holding up the same icons. They painted the same images on cardboard, waved the same flags, stitched the same badges on their backpacks. They chanted the same references from the same corners of the internet.

To anyone who did not grow up online, this looks random. To anyone who did, it feels like the most obvious thing in the world. A new kind of global identity has formed — one that cuts across nationalities and cultures. In Nepal older relatives mock the 'जेन्जी'. My neighbour asked me if 'GenZ' was a new political party.

Around the world, when youth-led protests appear, reporters and politicians ask the same question: 'Who is the leader?' The answer is the same: there is no leader.

Some names come up more prominently, as people did during the Nepali protests: Sudan Gurung, Miraj Dhungana, Rakshya Bam and other organisers who appeared in livestreams and interviews. But look closely and the leader is hiding in plain sight. The leader is not a person. The leader is the internet meme.

Memes today are doing the quiet organising work that pamphlets and party cells once did. They offer identity, coordinate action, level power differences, and they do it without any central command. This is not because memes cause revolts. It is because memes are the connective tissue of a generation that grew up on the same visual language, the same jokes, the same references, and the same sense of shared digital childhood.



MEME MOVEMENT

Older generations did not share cultural symbols in the same way. Whether they read a certain comic book or watched the same cartoon depended on class, religion, caste, the country, or neighbourhood they grew up in. These divisions created stratified cultural memories.

Today, an entire global cohort has been raised on the same visual media. The same YouTube creators. The same TikTok jokes. The same anime storylines. It is truly what McLuhan predicted the Global Village would be.

This has also created the perfect environment for memes to become political tools. They are instantly recognisable, emotionally charged, and open for remixing. They allow young people to signal their values without stating them. They compress identity, anger, humour,

and belonging into something that the rest of the world dismisses as unserious.

The perfect example of a GenZ meme is the famous skull and crossbones in protest flags from Kathmandu to Manila to Mexico City. The Strawhat Pirates from the anime One Piece, is a show with over 1,000 episodes and a global fanbase that spans continents. One Piece follows Luffy, a justice driven pirate who travels across a world ruled by corrupt older elites who hoard power and suppress dissent.

It is not hard to see why that story resonates with young people who feel locked out of political systems built by generations before them. I even printed stacks of my own flyer that explained memetic warfare using Minecraft visuals and handed them out in the crowd.

Each one linked to a Telegram group with the Strawhat Pirates logo called MemePack HQ.

CULTURE EXPOSURE

The Strawhat logo is not the only symbol making people protest. That would be like saying video games cause real world violence. Instead, the logo works like a modern version of mythology. It packs meaning for those who understand it. It represents loyalty, rebellion, chosen family, and resistance against unfair structures. It works as a rallying flag because it is already a shared story. And unlike older myths, it is accessible regardless of religion, caste, language, or national identity.

Across Nepal, the Strawhat symbol has shown up on posters, badges, and protest outfits. But it is



ENTS

only one piece of a larger ecosystem of youth symbols. From Nepali meme pages remixing political speeches into ironic audios, to posts that place politicians into familiar pop culture formats, to clips that exaggerate the absurdity of daily life under slow moving governance, these are not just jokes. These are narrative units. Each post is a tiny story with its own punchline and its own political edge.

Each TikTok video or meme functions like a religious shlok, a short piece of narrative that carries layers of meaning depending on who consumes it. Someone who has spent years studying a religion, in this case, inside GenZ online culture will recognise the symbols instantly. Someone outside this world will only see noise. This creates a literacy divide that is not



One Piece reference meme on Instagram, 115K likes



about formal education but cultural exposure.

Protesting youth spent countless hours scrolling, interpreting, remixing, and responding to content. They built a shared symbolic universe across borders without planning to. This is why their political movements feel leaderless. They are not following individuals. They are following stories that define what justice looks like. Stories that define who the villain is. Stories that define how to respond when power is abused.

In Nepal, memes about broken roads, delayed passports, political inheritance networks, and bureaucratic absurdity circulated for months before they became slogans or chants. By the time people took to the streets, the

narrative groundwork had already been completed by thousands of posts liked and shared in private. The protests did not emerge from nowhere. They emerge from years of digital storytelling. Which is why the government's ban on 26 digital platforms on 5 September became such a rallying force.

The platforms that distribute these memes are not neutral, they are actually designed to maximise engagement because engagement translates to ad revenue. Right now, there is an engineer in Silicon Valley getting paid an enormous salary to find the perfect colour shade for a singular pixel on your screen so that you linger for fractions of a second longer.

Algorithms reward content that trigger emotion. Sometimes the emotion is delight. Sometimes

it is envy. Often it is anger. When rage becomes a business model, movements built inside these systems can feel powerful but unstable. The platforms democratise attention but centralise emotion. They allow anyone to broadcast, yet they shape the emotional tone of what becomes viral.

GenZ sits inside this tension. Empowered by the ability to speak without gatekeepers. Trapped inside systems that monetise their attention and amplify their frustration. This is why these leaderless online movements feel both organic and volatile. The algorithm filters which stories rise and which fade. It becomes an unintentional political actor. Not elected. Not accountable. Yet influencing millions.



Masked K P Oli, 63K likes



Aurafarming, 233K likes



Indonesia-Nepal comparison, 17.7K likes

When the state is no longer the primary distributor of information, and when the algorithm becomes the new filter of reality, the public is left with a new responsibility. We have to learn to read memes the way past generations learned to read pamphlets or manifestos. A 15 second video can carry more political weight than a two hour speech. A symbol on cardboard might represent a decade of digital storytelling.

Older generations often dismiss these images as childish. They are actually literacy markers of a new political class, one that does not wait for leaders. A political class fluent in remixing power, raised on global stories that feel more honest than the institutions they inherited.

The youth did not create these platforms. They inherited them. But through memes they found a new language, one that lets them organise without permission. One that lets them build solidarity without needing meetings or manifestos. One that allows them to resist systems that feel too old to reform.

It is time to take that seriously. 🇳🇵

Nobel Rimal is a researcher of digital culture and political communication who studied and participated in the meme driven mobilisations during the Nepal protests.



Events

NPL SEASON 2 FIXTURES			
Date	Time	Match	Venue
Nov 17, MON	7:30 PM	Blue Bulls vs. Dolphins	Edenburg
Nov 18, TUE	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Nov 19, WED	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Nov 20, THU	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Nov 21, FRI	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Nov 22, SAT	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Nov 24, MON	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Nov 25, TUE	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Nov 26, WED	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Dec 09, TUE	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Dec 10, WED	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Dec 11, THU	7:30 PM	Shirataki vs. Stormers	Edenburg
Dec 13, SAT	3:30 PM	GRAND FINALE	Edenburg

Nepal Premier League

The second season of the Nepal Premier League features eight teams that will play 32 matches over the course of the tournament. Get tickets and watch live.

Till 13 December, Tribhuvan University Stadium, Kirtipur

Newa Transcribathon

Archive Nepal invites participants to a hands-on event to preserve Newa manuscripts. Attendees will receive Wikisource training, network with fellow heritage enthusiasts, and work on transcribing century-old texts

22 November, 12pm-5pm, Yalamaya Kendra, Patandhoka



Around the Globe

Three comedians from three countries, coming together for a night of comedy and global stories. Aayush Shrestha (Nepal), Scott Dumas (Canada), and Marcus Ryan (Australia).

21 November, 7pm onwards, Rs500, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

18th Shabdakiri Evening

An open call to literature lovers for an evening of poetry, storytelling, and creative expression. Enjoy a vibrant gathering in the colourful world of words.

22 November, 3pm onwards, Taragaon, Bouddha

AIR_MCUBE

Gallery Mcube presents works created during the 2024 residencies, showcasing artists from Austria, Argentina, the USA, the Netherlands, Sweden, and more. The exhibition celebrates global creativity and cross-cultural exchange. Curated by Manish Lal Shrestha.

21 November-7 December, 5pm-8pm, Gallery Mcube, Mitra Road, Chakupat



Embroidery Workshop

Kalashala presents a workshop in collaboration with Mamta Rai where participants will learn basic techniques and stitches, explore ways to transform embroidery into art, and complete a final project. Suitable for beginners and those looking to refresh their skills. Limited seats.

29 November, 1pm-5pm, Rs1,950, Kalashala, Sanepa Chowk

Artudio Patan opening

Artudio's Patan wing is set to open with a pop-up art exhibition by Artists with Autism - Aakar Foundation, offering to visitors the art of seeing differently. Experience an inspiring exploration of new perspectives. Opens 21 November. Details at artudio.net

22 - 25 November, 11am-5pm, Nakabahil, 9823490390



Music

Anoushka Maskey

Anoushka Maskey performs in Nepal for the first time with her full band. PHOSPHENES will open the evening of diverse, rhythmic live music.

26 November, 7pm onwards, Tickets: Rs1,500, EDEN, Sanepa

Sleepless

Musician Gauri performs alongside Foeseal, Chau, Vibe Lizzii, and more for a night of upbeat music at Club Nova.

22 November, 8pm onwards, Rs1,000-Rs1,500, Club Nova



Panhelo Batti Muni

Experimental rock group Pahanlo Batti Muni performs live at Moksh. The band, known for exploring inner and outer worlds through their music, features Rochak Dahal, Kus KC, Lav Jung Chhetri, and Pravesh Thapa Magar.

28 November, 7pm onwards, Rs1,000-Rs3,200, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

Diwas Gurung

Diwas Gurung, one of Nepal's most prominent folk singers, performs at Moksh, bringing decades of influence on the Nepali music scene. Known for hits like Chyangba Hoi Chyangba, Lekali, and Kati Baschau Maiti Kai Kausi Ma.

22 November, 7pm onwards, Tickets: Rs800-Rs1,199, Moksh, Jhamsikhel



Winter festival

Chitwan Winter Festival returns to Campachaur, Narayangadh, with a full day of music, food stalls, and festival fun. Performances include KATAAV, Kehar and The Lunga, ST MAN, and The Elements, known for hits like Birsiney Hau Ki and Sapana Ko Mayalu.

21 November, 3pm onwards, Campachaur, Chitwan



Getaway



Royal Mustang

Set in the backdrop of glittering white mountains, a field of flowers and typically clear skies, Royal Mustang Resort stands like a mirage amidst Nepal's driest regions.

Lo Manthang, Mustang, 9746707045

Shangri-La Village Resort

Get away for a couple days this winter and head to the idyllic Shangri-La Village Resort. Meditate in the outdoor Yoga Pergola, indulge in a massage in Phewa Spa and soak up the sun in the Sanctuary Garden.

Gharipatan, Pokhara (61) 462222



Pataleban Vineyard

Take a stroll through the vineyards of Pataleban, watch the panoramic view of Kathmandu Valley and sip aromatic wines during your getaway to Pataleban Vineyard Resort.

Chisapani (01) 4316377

Kathmandu Guest House

Kathmandu Guest House is a favourite of frequent trekkers to Nepal. The converted Rana mansion has offered comfortable accommodation, airy rooms, beautiful gardens and great prices since 1967.

Thamel (01) 4700632

Kasara Resort

Immerse into the lush greenery in the heart of Chitwan's National Park. With activities for everyone, from cycling to wildlife viewing, Kasara Resort is a fantastic getaway for families.

Patihani, Chitwan National Park, Chitwan (01) 4437571

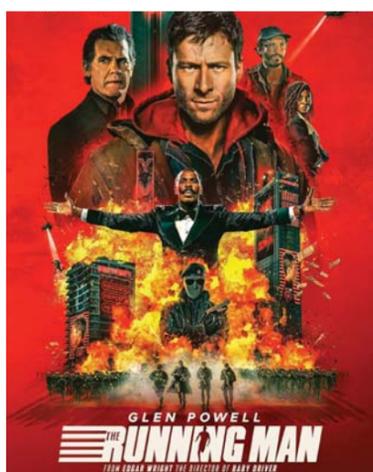
Weekend Weather



Sunny with Haze

There is a cloudy patch moving west to east over Nepal on Friday that will bring some snow flurries in the higher elevations. But we are looking at a largely sunny weekend and beyond with the minimum temperature continuing to fall down to 7°C. The sun will be filtered by haze and pollution, which will keep the maximum in the low 20s for the Valley.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
21° 9°	20° 8°	21° 7°	20° 7°	20° 7°



Our Pick

Edgar Wright's 2025 dystopian action thriller *The Running Man*, based on Stephen King's 1982 novel, is set in an authoritarian United States ruled by a media company called The Network. The media company broadcasts a widely-watched, violent reality show *The Running Man*, where the participants, called 'runners', can win \$1 billion if they survive for 30 days. The film follows Ben Richards, who decides to participate in the show to be able to afford healthcare for his sick daughter. Stars Glen Powell, William H. Macy, Lee Pace, Emilia Jones, Colman Domingo, and Josh Brolin. Catch it in theatres.



Dining

Koto

Maki sushi, cold or fried tofu, tempura, fried chicken, miso soup, chicken karage, Katsu Don, anything to satisfy one's Japanese food cravings is right at the restaurant.

Darbar Marg (01) 5320346

La Terrasse

La Terrasse blends authentic Italian cuisine with a café, bakery, bar, yoga studio, and boutique shops, all set within a garden space. A spot for soul-fulfilling food and relaxation under the warm winter sun.

Chundevis, 980356136



Winter warmers @ Aloft

Savor the season with comforting winter blends at Aloft Kathmandu Thamel's WXYZ till the end of the year. Call for reservations.

Till 31 December, 11am-11pm Rs599 (mocktails) / Rs999 (cocktails), 9860849912

Thanksgiving @ New Orleans

Enjoy a hearty roast turkey paired with great wines for the perfect holiday meal. Dinner is accompanied by live acoustic music. Call for reservations.

Thamel (01) 4700736



Achaar Ghar

Satisfy the desire for home-cooked meals along with the various choices of pickles prepared using recipes passed down from generations.

Jhamsikhel, Pulchok (01) 5916968

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 चिड्डा 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



The beekeeper of Surkhet

Social entrepreneur is inspiring women in Karnali Province to promote sustainable agricultural practices

Shristi Karki

As a young girl, Jaysara Baral remembers trying to gently catch bumblebees buzzing around flowers at springtime, curious to know what they would feel like in the palm of her hand. Decades later, clad in her beekeeper overalls and hood, she looks out towards the rows upon rows of beehives stretched across her land, ready to start another day of work.

Baral is one of several women beekeepers in Surkhet, and she is among the local entrepreneurs leading the charge in her district and the province. She has tended the land ever since she was young, and began her career in agriculture as a mushroom farmer before she discovered beekeeping seven years ago.

Soon after, she participated in a short training at the Karnali Province Beekeepers' Federation, and officially began her business with five hives. Seven years later, she has 100 hives, 42 of which she added in the last year. She does most of the work herself.

"Beekeeping is a more involved profession than other jobs," she explains. "You need to know bee behavior intimately and be trained in handling them."

When Nepali Times spoke with her this week, Baral had just returned to Surkhet after transporting all of her hives to Bardia, where her bees will graze on the nectar-rich mustard fields this time of year. While her bees are away, Baral is busy packing the latest round of harvested honey to send it off to waiting customers.

As her beehives increased,

Baral went from selling jars of honey to her neighbours to supplying hundreds of kg at a time to customers in Pokhara, Kathmandu, and as far as Jhapa. She earns a profit of up to Rs600,000 every year despite challenges like market access.

"The personal and professional struggles of women are universal. We are just as capable as anyone to build and sustain businesses, or achieve whatever they aspire to," she says.

Last year, her bees produced 2,500kg of honey. This year, with more hives, she expects that she will have a supply of up to 3,000kg.

"I have all this supply, but not enough market," she says. "Our greatest need as entrepreneurs is to be connected to the markets so that local products have nation-wide reach."

Bees produce honey for up to six months a year, feeding on flowers and ripening crops, pollinating them along the way.

POLLINATION

Baral has been keeping *Apis mellifera* European bees so far, and just this year has started with a single hive of *Apis cerana* Asiatic bees.

The bees pollinate more than ten types of trees and crops, and contribute to healthier harvests, stronger community forests, biodiversity expansion and more resilient local food systems. But bee populations are at risk due to urbanisation-induced habitat loss, climate change, and the use of pesticides.

"If there are no bees to pollinate, there are no flowers, no forest, no people, no planet," she says.

In October, on the

International Day of Rural Women, Baral received the Women's Creativity in Rural Life Award from the Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF) in Switzerland (pictured, right). But the biggest reward is that her hardworking bees have given the single mother the income to educate her daughter who has graduated college and is preparing for a job in the banking sector.

With her business having gained solid footing, Baral has also shifted focus to sharing her beekeeping knowhow to the younger generation. Through her partnership with Kopila Valley Sewa Samaj, Baral at present teaches students at Kopila Valley School about bees and their role as pollinators for the environment and agriculture. She is also actively mentors women farmers

in her community and promotes sustainable agricultural practices.

"Jaysara's hard work and creativity are an inspiration to all of us," said SP Kalaunee of the BlinkNow Foundation, which funds Koplila Valley programs in Surkhet and supports Baral's local entrepreneurship. "Her leadership shows the power of women to build sustainable and thriving communities." 🇳🇵

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Nepal, here comes the sun

The country's attempt to diversify from hydroelectricity to solar power is stymied by geopolitics

Sonia Awale

Nepalis worship the sun, and mark its seasonal passage with festivals. Adding to that spiritual reverence now is the economic relevance of solar power.

Fast-flowing Himalayan rivers give Nepal a total feasible hydropower generation capacity of 48,000MW, of which only 3,600 has so far been harnessed. Yet, Nepal's total solar power potential has been calculated to be nearly 10 times higher at 432,000MW.

With over 300 days of sunshine a year, the country could produce 3.6 to 6.2 units of electricity per square meter based on its solar radiation levels.

This potential, combined with decreasing installation costs of Chinese-manufactured photovoltaic cells and other means, is a viable and affordable alternative to Nepal's over-reliance on hydropower which faces concerns about the destruction of riverine ecosystems, as well as risk from glacial lake floods caused by climate breakdown.

However, restrictive domestic energy policies and geopolitical sensitivities mean Nepal is failing to diversify fast enough to tap this tremendous solar energy potential.

Nepal's hydropower generation is almost entirely from run-of-river projects that do not have large reservoirs. Many such projects in Nepal and across the Himalaya have been swept away by glacial lake outburst floods in recent years.

Such risks and limitations to hydropower should have prompted the Nepal government to jump-start investment into solar farms, but the main reason is that the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA)



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

caps solar power at just 10% of total capacity. There is no official explanation, but it is likely due to the outdated perception that solar technology cannot supply a consistent energy stream at evening and morning peak loads.

But today, there are plenty of ways around it, including pump storage schemes that use daytime solar power to pump water from a river to a reservoir and drain it to generate electricity at night. Battery technology is now more advanced, and affordable enough to make grid-scale batteries feasible.

But then there is an issue of

tariffs, which are much lower for solar at Rs5 per energy unit, and competitive bidding forces companies to lower it even further. But there is no bidding process for hydropower and licenses are given out on a first-come, first-served basis with a fixed rate of Rs6.5 per unit regardless of location.

SUPPLY VS DEMAND

Hydropower is supply-driven, while solar responds to demand, so under such a discouraging scenario, solar power accounts for only 5% of Nepal's total energy mix.

"Given the risks to hydropower,

investors demand increased tariffs. So the government must decide whether it is paying more for hydropower, or buying more of cheaper solar power," said energy entrepreneur Kushal Gurung.

Solar investors are lobbying to raise the cap on solar power to 30% and expand zoning policies so that solar plants can be built in areas with high potential, such as Dolpo and Mustang in the trans-Himalaya.

These regions are sparsely populated, arid, have a cold climate and high solar radiation

levels — ideal conditions for photovoltaics.

Solar power's biggest advantage is that its operating cost is four times less than hydropower for the same generation capacity. Investors are also put off by climate risk and increased insurance premiums.

"Last year, when the government opened bidding for 800MW of solar power, the private sector was ready to invest on 3,000MW. Banks were convinced about the potential for solar energy, but the government and bureaucracy were not



Storing rain inside mountains

Scenic Dhankuta revives traditional water management practices to boost ecotourism

Sudiksha Tuladhar
in Dhankuta

Groundwater is like a phone battery, it needs to be regularly recharged. Springs are going dry across the Himalaya due to over-extraction and climate change, and some communities are reviving traditional knowledge to replenish aquifers.

Dhankuta is located along the spine of a ridge and is running out of water. Unregulated pumping and weather extremes due to climate breakdown means springs are dry.

Since water is so important for life, necessity has become the mother of invention here. More accurately, it is the mother of

re-invention — since recharging ground water is a traditional practice that has been discontinued.

Communities are practicing sustainable water management again by recycling rainwater and reviving recharge ponds that had fallen into disuse. Some of these indigenous practices had eroded over time due to outmigration and modernisation.

The village of Khambela is home to the indigenous Aathpahariya community and its ancestral practice of rainwater harvesting, which is being upgraded by the Kathmandu-based SmartPaani (pictured, right).

Households collect rainwater during four monsoon months in 10,000 litre tanks for household use and to irrigate vegetable patches in



PHOTOS: SUDI KSHA TULADHAR

the dry season.

"The rainwater harvesting installation here uses a rapid sand filter system that allows rainwater to move rapidly through the built-in filtration unit," says Jyotsna Lama of SmartPaani. "The clean water is stored in tanks for future use."

The initiative is supported by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and local municipalities. Local households contribute Rs50 a month for maintenance.

"During the rainy season there is enough water in the springs,"

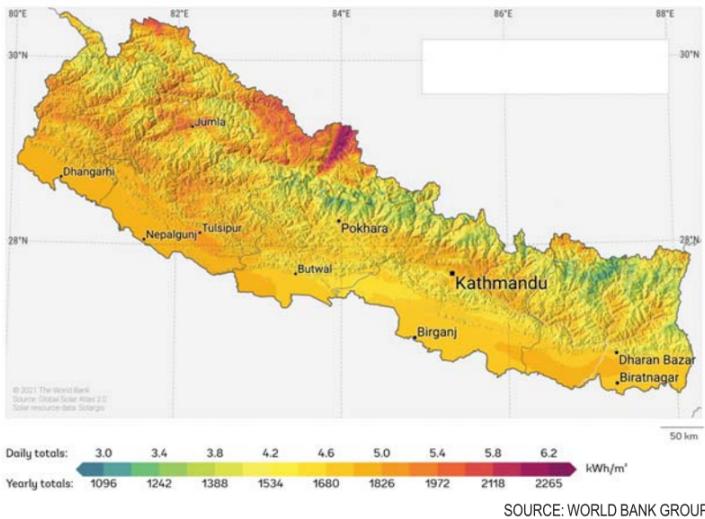
says Sangita Rai, a local. "And stored monsoon rain can last the whole dry season."

Dhankuta town has a recharge pond at Sukepokhari, which means 'dry pond'. The 24m diameter pond can hold up to 200,000 litres and lets water seep



GHAM POWER

Nepal Solar Irradiation (1999-2020)



SOURCE: WORLD BANK GROUP

on the same wavelength,” added Gurung.

Interim Energy Minister Kulman Ghising wants to increase the cap on solar energy, but there is a question whether he will remain in office after launching his own Ujyalo Nepal party.

GEOPOLITICS

In 2018, Nepal’s only foreign private equity firm Dolma Himalayan Climate Fund (page 12) pitched a proposal to generate 150MW from a solar farm in Mustang and store 20MW of it in battery systems.

It got approval from Investment Board Nepal (IBN) and had already

poured millions into the project when the Department of Mines instructed all developers to halt projects, citing the discovery of uranium ore in Mustang. Insiders say the real reason was China’s security concerns.

The same thing happened, but in reverse, when the Chinese company Risen Energy proposed a grid-connected 125MW solar farm in Banke and Kapilvastu near the Indian border.

Risen’s subsidiary, Risen Energy Singapore JV, was negotiating with IBN to commit \$190 million in the project which would also store 20MW of daytime generation for morning and

evening peak demand.

But the deal was cancelled because of India’s security concerns about Chinese involvement so close to their border.

India has also refused to buy electricity from any hydropower plant in Nepal that has Chinese or other foreign investment or contractors. Indian state-owned companies are currently building or planning hydropower plants in Nepal to generate nearly 3,000MW, mostly for export.

Says Gurung: “Hydropower is a geopolitical mess, but it has well and truly started in solar power too. It now all comes down to how we handle it, and we need deft diplomacy to make sure our projects are not indefinitely delayed as has happened in the past.”

LOW-HANGING FRUIT

Despite domestic restrictions and geopolitics, there are still small-scale opportunities for solar energy entrepreneurs to cash in, such as net metering. Most industries in Nepal have enough rooftop space to generate 500KW to 1MW of solar energy.

Combined, they would generate a substantial amount of energy to feed into the grid. Factories, supermarkets and chain stores are trusted by banks from which they could easily get credit.

China could also take advantage of Nepal’s high solar power potential. Given that the United States has imposed only a 10% tariff on Nepal, China could set up PV manufacturing plants in Nepal.

However, this requires government-to-government deals which could run into trouble, again because of geopolitics. The same applies for the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism which is a carbon tariff on carbon intensive products, such as steel, cement and some electricity, imported to the European Union.

But Chinese products made in Nepal can be competitive in the European market given lower carbon tax for Nepal. Clean energy has long been an area where Nepal hopes to attract Chinese investment — not only in hydropower, but also in solar and wind energy.

With contributions from Qian Sun, Global Voices.

the scenic village of Dhojedanda. After the pond was restored, two springs sprang back into life, supplying water to six households.

“There used to be multiple springs and water sources, and biodiversity was diverse, but as people started to build wells and drag water sources to their homes via plastic pipes, the water sources started drying up,” explains Phurba Sherpa of Dhoje Paani Samuha. But now there is more water flowing out of the springs.

WATER IS LIFE

Syaule-Sipting Homestay in Dhankuta has been using water sustainably after facing shortages. It has now built a bio-sand filtration system in the water tanks, so that water is safe for use by four households.

One of the homestays also uses a rainwater harvesting system. While the bio-sand and rainwater harvesting are used for cooking, washing and other purposes, table top filtration systems are used for drinking.

Safe drinking water can also revive eco-tourism. Safe drinking water is vital, so visitors are not turned off, says Anu K Lama of ICIMOD.

She adds, “Health and hygiene are important for everyone. But foreigners do not have the strong immune system that locals have. Clean and adequate supply is necessary especially if we are targeting foreign guests.”

underground slowly to recharge the aquifer. One in four springs in Dhankuta have dried up, but Sukepokhari is helping revive them.

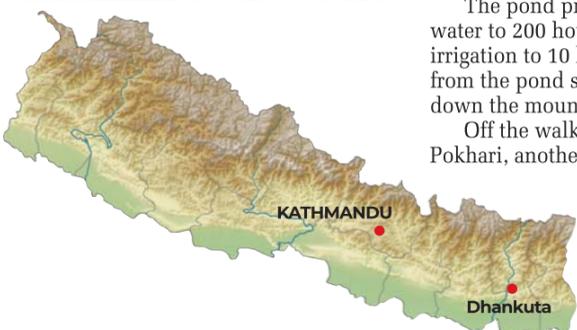
The mountains in Dhankuta act like a sponge, absorbing water in the dry season and letting it out through springs. But water started becoming scarce when the town’s expanding population started pumping it up. Plastic waste and pollution contaminated the remaining water.

Sukepokhari’s caretaker is Krishna Kumar Thakuri, fondly known as ‘Pani Ba’ (pictured, left) by locals who regard him as a passionate father figure. He regularly monitors rainfall and the water level in the pond to gauge how much of it is seeping into the ground to recharge the groundwater.

“We harvest rain that falls on slopes,” explains Thakuri. “But leaves, vegetation and sediment also flow into the pond and have to be desilted every year.”

The pond provides drinking water to 200 households, enabling irrigation to 10 households. Water from the pond supports springs down the mountain.

Off the walking trail is Dale Pokhari, another recharge pond in



“Neighbours not keen on sharing met data”

Nepali Times spoke to Director General Kamal Ram Joshi of Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) about weather extremes and changing rainfall patterns. Excerpts:

Nepali Times: Is the risk of glacial lakes bursting as serious as it is made out to be?

Kamal Ram Joshi: Analysing meteorological data of the past 30 years we see that average temperature in Nepal is rising at 0.056 Celsius per year. That may not seem like a lot, but it adds up over the decades. More worryingly, the rise in average temperature is much higher: 0.086 Celsius a year. The Himalaya is more at risk from global warming.

This means 24% of our glaciers retreated between 1977 to 2010, and in many of them glacial lakes are expanding. Of total 47 glacial lakes categorised as potentially dangerous for Nepal, 21 are in Nepal, 25 in China and one in India. Since many of our rivers start in China, the impact of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) is transboundary.

In the past 60 years 27 major GLOFs have been recorded in Nepal. Of them, 15 were from lakes in Nepal and 12

from floods. Others can also follow our model. Lowering glacial lakes in Nepal means less risk for downstream countries.

Irrespective of financial and human resources that we have and our topography Nepal has done quite an impressive job in the field of disaster management. We have much more to do making our infrastructure more climate resilient. But we have done our best to disseminate information to save lives.

For example, in August a glacial flood started in China at 3am. If we had been warned, the nine lives we lost on the Bhote Kosi could have been saved. The flood arrived at Rasuwagadi at 6am, and we immediately warned settlements downstream saving lives. So, data sharing is important especially to prevent transboundary disasters. If China doesn’t share data with us, we will not know there is a flood coming.

Neither our northern nor southern neighbours are generous about sharing



RASTRA RAJ BHANDARI

originated from Tibet. Lately, we have seen that even smaller unnoticed supra-glacial lakes have turned out to be a serious threat downstream – for example, recent floods in Thame of Khumbu, Namkha of Humla and Bhote Kosi in Rasuwa.

So, what can be done to reduce the risk from GLOFs?

In 2000, with the support of The Netherlands, the DHM lowered the level of Tso Rolpa glacial lake by 3.4m. Sixteen years later, we lowered the water level of Imja glacial lake in the Everest region. We have installed automated early warning systems in downstream areas based on precipitation data.

Based on the experience with Imja and Tso Rolpa, we proposed to the Green Climate Fund to reduce the risk of four other dangerous glacial lakes: Thulagi, Hongu 2, Lower Barun and Lumding Tso. It will cost \$50.4m, GCF has approved \$36.1 million with the UNDP and Nepal government co-financing it.

How easy was it to secure GCF funds?

The Imja lake lowering was with support from the Green Environment Fund, and this experience allowed us to get the GCF on board to lower the water level of four more glacial lakes. We have also prepared a national adaptation plan based on which we can approach other donors and the international community.

Does Nepal graduating from a least developed country affect access to more funds for climate adaptation?

Despite being a climate vulnerable country, Nepal has made good progress especially in mitigating glacial lake outburst floods. India, Bhutan and China have not lowered their glacial lakes yet. Nepal has a lot of experience that it can share, for example 20 years ago we started an SMS early warning service to save lives

meteorological data. In Nepal, we share real time data on our official website. It is in the public domain and more people outside Nepal access them than Nepalis. Why? For any flood that originated in Nepal it takes three days to reach India, three more days to reach Bangladesh. We are sharing data on humanitarian grounds, but it is not reciprocal.

How do you plan to lower the remaining four glacial lakes?

We have started defining roles and responsibilities of implementing agencies, finalising project designs, total cost and structures. Based on that, selected firms will lower glacial lake levels and we will install early warning awareness and hydrometric stations. The core objective is to ensure an end-to-end early warning system and last mile communication. Next, we also protect watersheds after lowering water levels.

What is in Nepal’s national adaptation plan?

Access to global climate finance is evidence-based. No donor will give money without data. Our experience with Tso Rolpa and Imja is proof to potential donors that we have experience and evidence to back it up. At Cop27, we had pledged to ensure early warning for all by 2027, we have now extended that to 2030.

For that, we will expand our forecasting and early warning so that the death and destruction following the tornado in Bara and cloud burst in Manang in 2022 could be prevented. Manang saw 300mm of rain in Manang in June when the average rainfall for that month is 42. The Melamchi flood in 2021 is taken as a disaster of multi-hazard cascade effects. Last year, an unprecedented 624mm was recorded in Kanchanpur. Because of timely information and rescue, there was zero casualty. But this year 97 people died in flood whereas 34 died in Kathmandu valley despite timely information. It is worth noting that more than 1,300 people died when a similar rainfall volume was recorded in 1993.



Double trouble with taxes

Double-taxation, profit repatriation and capital gains tax have always been a headache for foreign investors in dealing with Nepal's infamous rent-seeking state.

When Dolma Impact Fund applied last year for exemption from capital gains tax citing Nepal's Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with Mauritius, it got the runaround.

But new Finance Minister Rameshore Khanal, himself a respected former bureaucrat, gave Dolma a capital gains tax break. Nepal needed to restore investor confidence especially after videos of the arson of the Hilton (pictured) and Hyatt hotels on 9 September went viral globally.

Dolma's partners include funds in the UK, US, Japan, Netherlands, Finland, Austria, Sweden as well as the World Bank. It argues that making it easier for FDI is a more efficient way to spur the economy and create jobs than raising revenue through taxation because of that money being leaked through corruption or wastage.

After Finance Minister Khanal's decision leaked out on 3 October, Prime Minister Sushila Karki inquired about it. Chief Secretary of the GoN Eaknarayan Aryal clarified that the decision was not in the minutes of the Cabinet.

Economist Pushkar Bajracharya says it is important to have a consistent tax policy for FDI, but it has to be applied uniformly. The Dolma decision could encourage other investors to demand similar treatment, hurting Nepal's tax base.

"Besides, the evidence just isn't strong that tax cuts lead to

higher investment, or more jobs," Bajracharya adds.

Nepal has DTAA with 11 countries, and there are moves to end the 1999 treaty with Mauritius.

"We were raising a fund that could have brought \$1 billion in for energy, and we had to stop it due to the reputational damage to Nepal by not upholding an international treaty," Tim Gocher, CEO of Dolma, told Nepali Times from London.

Dolma says Nepal's DTAA with Mauritius means profit arising from sale of shares should be taxed only in the resident state and not in Nepal, citing the Treaty Act 1990 which states that bilateral treaties supersede domestic law in case they contradict each other.

Gocher said it makes sense for his fund to be based in Mauritius: "When you have investors from all over the world, you have to choose a domicile, and Mauritius is probably the most popular for development finance institutions due to strong governance, anti-money laundering laws and treaties with developing countries."

Nepali officials, however, see Dolma as a conduit company sourcing funds from outside Mauritius and label it as possible 'treaty shopping'. A similar case involving the sale of Ncell ownership went to the Supreme Court and all the way to the International Tribunal at The Hague, and both ruled against exemption to DTAA.

Officials argue that approving an exemption for Dolma would contradict that precedent. They also cite Section 73 of the Income

Tax Act of 2002 which states that to avoid double taxation, more than half of the company has to be owned by residents of both Nepal and a foreign country.

Bureaucrats also seem to be wary about being hauled over

the coals at the Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIAA) if they agree to Dolma's demands.

"It was after the government decided to uphold the treaty that the whole hoo-hah started," said Gocher. "It is crystal clear, and the way international treaties are dealt with all over the world."

Chief Secretary Acharya, who is retiring next week, seems to want

to avoid being haunted by any whiff of controversy before he leaves, but also faces intense lobbying by the international community for Dolma's exemption.

Dolma has investments in Chirayu National Hospital, CloudFactory Holdings, Setikhola Hydropower, Foodmandu, Solar Farm Nepal, FuseMachines and Rhododendron Biotech. Vishad Raj Onta



CASH FOR ASH: Two months after it was completely burnt down on 9 September, the Hilton Hotel in Kathmandu is being rebuilt from scratch.




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