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LUCKY TO BE ALIVE: Shantanu Dhakal before he was shot in the face during the GenZ protest on 8 September in Itahari, and in a social media post documenting his recovery.

says. Soon, he will go to hospital for his fortnightly follow-up, and doctors will determine when his tracheostomy tube can be removed.

Like other young Nepalis, Dhakal is now even more politically engaged and actively reads the news of the interim government installed after the GenZ protests.

With the 5 March elections only three months away, young Nepalis like Dhakal hope that the elections will throw out the old and bring in the new. He is among the more than 800,000 new voters who have registered.

“The most important thing is that we have a stable government,” he says. “As far as candidates go, an ideal one for me would be a person who prioritises health and education. But if the candidates in my constituency are not up to mark, I may not vote.”

Dhakal along with other injured protesters and relatives of those killed went to Dharan recently to meet Energy Minister Kulman Ghising, who has launched his own Ujyalo Nepal Party. He is cautiously optimistic about the work of the current interim leadership.

It is a different story in Kathmandu, where Prime Minister Sushila Karki is struggling to manage the expectations of various youth collectives while trying to convince the old parties to participate in elections.

While the UML and NC are actively trying to delegitimise Karki’s government as they prepare to hold their respective general conventions, they are also preparing to give out tickets for elections (Guest Editorial, page 2).

Self-proclaimed GenZ leaders who used Discord to elect Karki prime minister are putting up their own conditions for the polls, even demanding her resignation for failing to meet their demands.

This is in sharp contrast to the wishes of many survivors who want elections so the nation can heal, and move on. 🇳🇵

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A NEW NORMAL

Shristi Karki

Shantanu Dhakal wakes up to a cold misty dawn, dons his college uniform and fastens his tie, tightening it carefully so as not to dislodge the tracheostomy tube protruding from his throat.

Gingerly, he brushes his teeth, mindful not to hurt the wound on his left cheek, where a bullet tore through his face on 8 September in Itahari during a GenZ protest.

Dhakal, 18, came home from college that day three months ago and headed to join friends protesting in front of the Itahari sub-metropolitan city office. It was mid-afternoon, and the crowd was holding up placards, and chanting anti-corruption slogans.

Like most young Nepalis, Dhakal and his friends had been angered by videos on social media of offspring of the rich and powerful flaunting lavish lifestyles.

“That was the trigger for me to join the protest, it opened my eyes to nepotism and corruption,” Dhakal told Nepali Times.

Some students were arrested, angering the crowd which massed at the gate of a nearby police station to demand their release.

Dhakal was standing across the street from the police station when

the first shots rang out. The crowd scattered. As he ran for cover, Dhakal felt searing pain in his left jaw. It took some time for him to realise he had been shot.

“I was bleeding profusely and couldn’t speak. My vision blurred, there was a ringing in my ears,” Dhakal recalls. “I collected myself and continued to run, fearing that I would be shot a second time.”

Eventually, a fellow protester took him to a nearby hospital, where doctors bandaged his jaw. He was referred to Birat Medical Teaching Hospital, where surgeons immediately performed an emergency operation.

The bullet had gone through his left jaw, shattering the bone, teeth, and tearing into soft tissue. Blood rushed into his throat, obstructing the airway so doctors first performed a tracheostomy, installing a tube into his throat to help him keep breathing. A week later, his jaw was reconstructed with a metallic plate, and skin graft from his chest to the lower left side of his face.

Dhakal spent three weeks in hospital before being discharged. But the relief of being home was marred by disturbing thoughts. He says, “Just sitting there doing

nothing began to affect my mental health.”

Since he was always interested in content creation and producing short documentaries, he decided to document his near-death experience and post-protest life on digital platforms.

Shantanu Dhakal’s Instagram and TikTok posts are simple, short videos about his treatment process, dressing his wound and cleaning his tracheostomy tube, attending events with others injured during the protests, and scenes from everyday life in his family farm.

Z

The comment section has Nepalis and people from around the world reaching out to ask how he is doing, keeping his spirits up. Dhakal now has a caring social media community, and he uses the platforms to keep in touch with other injured protesters across the country.

Life is returning to a new normal. This week, he returned to his college to resume classes after more than two months, and is making up for lost time. He has adjusted to speaking and eating with the tube, although the pain never quite goes away.

“I can eat mostly fine, but it is still difficult to speak,” he

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Stages of denial

After all that has happened, it is obscene for obsolete politicians to still hanker for power



GUEST EDITORIAL
Rabin Giri

In democracies, governments come and go. But Nepali politics was so entangled in the love triangle between Sher Bahadur Deuba, K P Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal that it was impossible to tell who was canoodling with whom.

All three had long since abandoned their party ideologies. Staying in power was all that mattered as they turned Nepal's democracy into a kleptocracy.

For the past at least 20 years, we have warned them to mend their ways. Democracy had to be rescued from the hands of such kakistocrats. Waiting to pounce were monarchists and anarchists of every ilk, outcast Maoists, and supporters of a leader jailed for fraud. Tycoon Durga Prasai said his rally in March was to restore a Hindu monarchy, but he is just a temporary royalist whom even the ex-king has spurned.

All this converged into a perfect storm on 8 September. Commandos shot and killed 19 innocent young people outside Parliament, the anger boiled over into targeted arson and vandalism the next day. The government fell, and Sushila Karki was elected interim prime minister through Discord.

With not just their monopoly on power but also their very lives in danger, the triumvirate was at first in total shock. Then came conspiracy theories and an inability to gauge



the rage after decades of misrule.

In the NC, Deuba has sidelined the caretaker he himself appointed, Purna Bahadur Khadka, and is active again as the party prepares for a showdown in its Convention next month. The UML is

proceeding with its own General Convention, where Oli is fully assured of a third term as party boss. Dahal sees no alternative to himself in his newly-forged Nepali Communist Party and is eagerly eyeing becoming PM for the fourth time.

The three leaders who everyone had hoped would finally retire have reincarnated. After everything that has happened, it is obscene for obsolete politicians to still hanker for power.

SHOCK AND AWE

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, the author of *On Death and Dying* analysed how people with terminal illness deal with their situation. Her theory of the five stages of grief may also be applicable to the way heads of the NC, UML and NCP are reacting — first with denial, then anger, bargaining, depression and finally acceptance.

On 9 September, distressed by what had befallen them, the three were in total denial. Then began the stage of anger. Oli ranted in public about a conspiracy to install an 'unconstitutional' interim government, blaming the Nepal Army, and vowing not to take part in polls even while preparing for it.

The NC has decided to participate in elections, although its internal power struggle needs to be first sorted out. The NCP and the RSP are already actively campaigning. GenZ groups are speaking in different voices, with Sudan Gurung and Miraj Dhungana openly trying to unseat an interim government they themselves installed.

The parties are now in the third stage: bargaining. Instead of asking himself what he should have done on 8 September, Oli wants

Parliament restored. The UML says elections cannot be held unless the government lifts restrictions on Oli's movements.

Likewise, GenZ groups are putting up conditions for supporting polls: arrest Oli and others. Karki is single-mindedly focussed on elections, even if it has to be put off by two months. The Army would also like polls on time because it does not want a repeat of September when it had to intervene.

If Karki's 6-month mandate ends without elections, and if by then the GenZ's trust in the interim government collapses, then UML and NC could press for an all-party election government, restoration of Parliament which would then dissolve itself to appoint a new PM that Karki would also be agreeable to.

It is hard to imagine elections being held on 5 March under present circumstances. Polls would be incomplete without the old parties, and it is unlikely two of them will participate in polls that they are certain to lose since they have not reformed themselves.

The fourth stage of grief is depression, and that is what will happen to the parties when the reality of their unpopularity finally hits them. Only then will they finally accept their fate, realise that it was all their own doing, and perhaps begin to reinvent themselves.

Kübler-Ross said the five stages did not necessarily have to be in that order. In our situation there may only be three phases because the three gerontocratic authoritarians are in no mood to atone for their sins.

Rabin Giri is an editor with nepalnews.com.

Trending Online



Too little snow, too much rain

by Diya Rijal
The COP30 climate summit in Brazil ended last week without tangible commitment to reduce fossil fuel emissions. Its impact will be felt halfway around the planet here in Mustang which is already seeing weather extremes. Visit nepalitimes.com for the full story.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook

Election vs escalation

by Kunda Dixit
Which comes first: prosecuting those found guilty of the 8/9/25 massacre outside Parliament, or elections on 5/3/26? Prime Minister Sushila Karki has to tread a careful middle path through this minefield till election day. Read Editorial on our website.

X Most popular on X

Bhutan imprisons influencer

by Binod Dhungel
Social media influencer Raghu Pati Subedi was arrested as Bhutanese regime sees new threat from the popularity of content creators. But readers online have since claimed that Subedi absconded after cheating local farmers. Go online for the story and comments online.

66 Most commented

Cash rich, but poor

by Vishad Raj Onta
The September protests and worry about what is in store for Nepal in 2026 have added more uncertainty to a struggling economy. Meanwhile, Nepal's banks are flush with cash, with nowhere to put it. Details in the story.

🔍 Most visited online page

Letters

BHUTAN INFLUENCER

It is not only India that has remained silent on the mistreatment of Nepali speakers in Bhutan, it is the whole of SAARC, the UN and most governments ('Bhutan imprisons social media influencer', Binod Dhungel, nepalitimes.com). The awful myth that Bhutan has a homogeneous population is shameful. Many westerners cling to the absurd propaganda that Bhutan is somehow 'the happiest country in the world'. They are either ignorant or don't object to the horrible treatment of the Lhotsampa. Assamese and Bengali people are also mistreated in Bhutan.

Daniel Birch

■ Pure dictatorship, people don't even say bad words to the

ruler for they will be imprisoned. We can say whatever to our head of country, but in Bhutan you can't, it's like North Korea.

Agnag Mishra

■ You are misleading viewers with regards to the arrest of Raghu Pati Subedi. After collecting Nu. 2.8M, he absconded the country for almost 10 years after failing to pay back the farmers as he promised from some agriculture business.

ལཱ་བཟང་ འཕྲིན་ལས་ཀྱི་

■ An admirable gentleman and a very interesting character but being a social media influencer or activist doesn't mean you get to be a free man if your business fails and you owe a lot of money to a lot of farmers and there's an arrest warrant. He shouldn't have left the country to dodge the law.

Phuntsho Tashi

ECONOMY

This indeed was the unintended but inevitable consequence of the violence of the September troubles ('Cash rich, but poor', Vishad Raj Onta, #1287). Actually the recovery dynamics don't feel quite as weak as one might have expected them to be. So much now depends on the conduct of the upcoming elections - let alone voting patterns.

Tony Jones

GENZ MEMES

People don't want corrupt politicians and corrupt parents, people don't want corrupt siblings, people don't want corrupt friends. People don't want to be cheated ('Meme movements', Nobel Rimal, #1286). That's it.

Grace Greenland

MIGRATION

Migration has great benefits

when managed well and researched thoroughly ('Living and leaving', Upasana Khadka, #128). This article is an interesting read, points applicable not just to the Nepali people who are looking abroad for a better future for themselves and their families.

Helping Hands for Nepal

Thank you for your thoughtful and well-researched article. It has truly supported my study on this topic, and I have learned so much from it. Please continue writing more, your work is a blessing to many people like me, and it has helped me broaden my understanding.

Pramila Pradhan

MOUNTAIN CLIMATE

Climate change is rapidly accelerating in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem as shown by this story from Mustang which is facing weather extremes ('Too little snow, too much rain', Diya Rijal).

Bob Brundage

Online Package



BODHICHITTA

The Bodhichitta beads highly valued in Tibetan Buddhism grows in the mountains of Nepal and some farmers have fetched millions. Watch video and read story on page 5.



Making of दौरा सुरुवाल

The wedding season is upon us. Is your दौरा suruwal ready? Considered national dress for men until 2021, दौरा suruwal is back in fashion. Learn how Nepal's go to official dress is tailored.

1,000 Words



GREEN PARTY: Former Education Minister Sumana Shrestha greeting Minister of Energy Kulman Ghising, at the launch of his new party Ujjalo Nepal in Kathmandu on Wednesday. Shrestha previously declined to join the party because Ghising had not resigned as the minister. Ujjalo Nepal Party (UNP) has chosen green as its party colour.

Times

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TURKISH AIRLINES

ENGLAND

'International Days' range from the sublime to the ridiculous

The UN puts on hold new proposals for international days, weeks, months, years and decades



UN PHOTO / LOEY FELIPE

Thalif Deen

The 193-member General Assembly, the UN's highest policy-making body, routinely designates International Day of This or International Day of That.

The wide range of subjects and events range from the sublime to the ridiculous, turning some urgent international problem into something silly and

absurd.

Commemorations range from the well-known International Women's Day and the International Day to Combat Islamophobia to International Moon Day and World Bicycle Day. There is World Tuna Day, World Bee Day, International Day of Potato, World Horse Day, World Pulses Day and International Day of the Arabian Leopard.

The United Nations observes 218 international

days annually (and counting) out of the 365 days available.

One of the first designations came from the UN General Assembly's declaration in 1947 that 24 October should be celebrated as United Nations Day, the anniversary of the adoption of the UN Charter that founded the organisation.

Since then, UN Member States have proposed more than 200 designations, presenting draft resolutions to the General Assembly

GOAL: The UN General Assembly recently adopted a resolution to designate 25 May as World Football Day, but does not want any more 'days'.

so the entire membership, representing 193 nations, can vote on the proposals.

But a new resolution aimed at revitalising the work of the General Assembly 'notes with concern the significant increase in the number of proposals to proclaim international days, weeks, months, years or decades' during the eighty-first and eighty-second sessions.

The resolution also requests the President of the General Assembly, effective from the eighty-first session in 2026, to group all proclamation requests for international commemoration into a single resolution per agenda item, where each proposed commemoration contains its own operative paragraph focused on its establishment. 🇺🇳

Inter Press Service (IPS).

Upcoming International Days in March 2026 include:

- 1 March – World Seagrass Day
- 1 March – United Nations Zero Discrimination Day
- 3 March – International Day for Ear and Hearing Loss
- 3 March – World Wildlife Day
- 5 March – International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness
- 8 March – International Women's Day
- 10 March – International Day of Women Judges
- 15 March – International Day to combat Islamophobia
- 20 March – International Day of Happiness
- 20 March – French Language Day
- 21 March – International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- 21 March – World Poetry Day
- 21 March – International Nowruz Day
- 21 March – World Down Syndrome Day
- 21 March – International Day of Forests
- 21 March – World Day of Glaciers
- 22 March – World Water Day
- 23 March – World Meteorological Day
- 24 March – World Tuberculosis Day
- 24 March – International Day for the Right to Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights
- 25 March – International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery
- 25 March – International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members
- 30 March – International Day of Zero Waste

List for International Days in December:

- 1 Dec – World AIDS Day
- 2 Dec – International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (A/RES/317(IV))
- 3 Dec – International Day of Persons with Disabilities (A/RES/47/3)
- 4 Dec – International Day of Banks (A/RES/74/245)
- 4 Dec – International Day Against Unilateral Coercive Measures (A/RES/79/293)
- 5 Dec – International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development (A/RES/40/212)
- 5 Dec – World Soil Day (A/RES/68/232)
- 7 Dec – International Civil Aviation Day (A/RES/51/33)
- 9 Dec – International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime (A/RES/69/323)
- 9 Dec – International Anti-Corruption Day (A/RES/58/4)
- 10 Dec – Human Rights Day (A/RES/423 (V))
- 11 Dec – International Mountain Day (A/RES/57/245)
- 12 Dec – International Day of Neutrality (A/RES/71/275)
- 12 Dec – International Universal Health Coverage Day (A/RES/72/138)
- 18 Dec – International Migrants Day (A/RES/55/93)
- 18 Dec – Arabic Language Day
- 20 Dec – International Human Solidarity Day (A/RES/60/209)
- 21 Dec – World Meditation Day (A/RES/79/137)
- 21 Dec – World Basketball Day (A/RES/77/324)
- 27 Dec – International Day of Epidemic Preparedness (A/RES/75/27)



Turkish+Samsung

Turkish Airlines and Samsung jointly launched the Smart Tagged Baggage Service, which helps passengers track lost or delayed luggage. A Galaxy SmartTag in the luggage can be paired with SmartThings Find app on their Samsung devices. Phones, tablets and



smartwatches can then detect and upload data to Samsung's servers for real-time location sharing. Passengers will also be able to upload a photo of their luggage to the SmartThings Find app, helping the carrier identify baggage more easily.

"We are delighted to partner with Samsung to leverage their cutting-edge technology, and Turkish Airlines continues to lead the industry on its road to digitalisation," said the carrier's Chief Information Technologies Officer Kerem Kiziltunc.

Transaction limit

The GoN lowered the maximum cash transaction limit for goods and services from Rs1 million to Rs500,000 effective mid-January. All transactions above this amount must use banking channels, cheques, or digital payments. The move aims to promote the formal economy, increase tax compliance, and reduce revenue leakage and financial crimes. Exceptions apply to bank deposits, loan repayments, and disclosed wedding or family expenses.

Australia Awards

The Australian Ambassador and Nepal's Education Secretary presented 19 Nepali students Australia Awards Scholarships for Master's programs. The cohort includes 13 from the public sector, 11 women, and 2 disabled. Applications for the next intake open in February.

VISA+NMB

NMB Bank has been awarded Excellence in Commercial Cards Business by Visa International at the Leadership Conclave Nepal 2025 for the bank's role in issuing and managing commercial cards, and contributing to the growth of digital payments in Nepal. NMB also worked with Nepal Clearing House to launch a new online payment gateway that accepts Visa and Mastercard from any domestic or international bank.

Nabil+NiB-GA

Nabil and Nepal in Business – Growth Advisors are partnering to help small and medium enterprises with operational efficiency, export readiness, and job creation. Nabil will manage the disbursement of £4.5 million in grants from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office to 40 selected SMEs through loans and channel financing.



Nabil signed a channel financing agreement with Lumbini Ceramics to provide working capital to dealers nationwide. Nabil Bank has also expanded its online international payment service to 27 branches across Nepal, including 17 in Kathmandu Valley. Customers can now pay visa fees, university applications, insurance premiums, and conference fees directly through branches without a foreign currency card.



Holiday Inn at 2

Holiday Inn Express Kathmandu Naxal marked the second anniversary of its 100-room hotel that was recently named Leading Business Hotel Nepal at the South Asian Travel Awards. Its rooftop bar and kitchen, FuAsian, offers Chinese, Japanese, and Thai cuisine.

Honey=Money

Nepal's annual honey production hit 6,000 metric tonnes of which 4,192 tonnes came from 115,183 commercial hives managed by 2,175 registered farmers. Major production districts include Chitwan, Dang, Jhapa, and Morang. Beekeepers strongly oppose the government's recent decision to allow multinational companies to import honey.

Billionaires in Lumbini

Twenty five billionaires will join over 10,000 participants at the third World Peace Program in Lumbini 10–12 December. Organised around themes of peace, climate change, development, social justice, and youth voices, the three-day event will feature discussions, cultural exhibitions, and performances.

Green skills advice

Nepal launched a Green Skills Advisory Board to promote green training in sustainable agriculture, eco-friendly construction, and tourism to support net-zero carbon targets by 2045 and create sustainable employment. The board is supported by the British Council and includes representatives from the GoN, CTEVT, FNCCI, CNI, and FCAN.

Kumari+ Arogya

Kumari Bank signed an agreement with Arogya Well Care Clinic to offer its card-holding customers 100% discounts on ECG, 50% on echocardiography, endoscopy, colonoscopy, and 24-hour monitoring services, 30% off consultation fees, and up to 25% off on laboratory tests.

Ncell downloads

The Ncell mobile app reached 10 million downloads, making it one of Nepal's most popular digital platforms. Users can recharge, buy packs, transfer balance, activate services, and play games through the app. To celebrate, Ncell launched a 10-day campaign where 10 customers daily win 10 GB data valid for 10 days when they buy packs.



UNISFA

UN Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Lieutenant General Ganesh Kumar Shrestha of Nepal as Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in South Sudan. Shrestha holds Master's degrees in military science and economics and has 36 years of military experience. He succeeds Major General Robert Yaw Affram of Ghana.

Samsung TV

Samsung Nepal is offering up to 33% discounts and up to Rs7,000 exchange bonuses on QLED, UHD, FHD, and HD televisions until 31 December. The AI-powered TVs have 4K upscaling, Samsung Knox security, and a three-year full warranty. Zero-percent EMI plans available.

Sacred seed feeds boom

Used in prayer beads, Bodhichitta seeds found only in Nepal are in high demand in China

Sonia Awale in Kavre

Singha Bahadur Lama worked for six years in Malaysia, but back home in Nepal he is now earning more than he ever did overseas.

Here in his village 60km east of Kathmandu, Lama now harvests Bodhichitta seeds from sacred trees that grow in the mountains, and turns them into prayer bead necklaces revered in Tibetan Buddhism.

The Bodhichitta tree (*Ziziphus budhensis*) is indigenous to Nepal and grows in the mountains of Kavre district, and demand boomed after the Dalai Lama proclaimed that the seeds found in Nepal were the best.

People from Kavre had gone to Bodh Gaya 12 years ago and presented the Dalai Lama with Bodhichitta prayer beads. Not long after, while speaking in Taiwan the Dalai Lama told followers that the seeds from Nepal had special powers.

Lama shows a visiting journalist different types of Bodhichitta seeds (pictured, right). Single-faced beads are the rarest and most valuable, as are the smallest 8mm beads. A prayer necklace made of 108 beads would easily cost Rs1.5 million (over \$10,630).

"We cannot say if our trees will give smaller beads or even how many faces or clear eyes, it's all natural," says Lama, who now works as a consultant, advising people all over Nepal about planting the tree, and has since spread it across the country.

Four years ago, a Chinese middleman made 7mm plastic cups to cover the seeds, hoping the trees would produce smaller pods. It did not work, and the trees died.

Such is the demand for high-quality Bodhichitta beads that a group of 20 men employed by a Chinese dealer cut down a tree along the Rosi River last year. The harvest from that tree had made \$212,600 the year before. With that kind of price, the trees are in danger of being chopped down.

Lama himself used to make Rs10 million (\$70,880) from the seeds of each tree. With this money, he built new houses and sent his daughter to Japan, all with Bodhichitta income. But the market for the seeds is volatile.

Lama invested Rs10 million when prices were high ten years ago, but he lost most of that when the prices collapsed for bigger seeds.

He adds: "That year the demand was only for small seeds, and it has only been three years since the prices have risen again for seeds that make no sound when you shake them."

HISTORY

Legend has it that Guru Rinpoche left seeds of Bodhichitta while meditating in the Temal region of Kavre district in the 8th century as a blessing. He is known in the Himalaya as the 'Second Buddha' whose birth was foretold by the Buddha himself, and spread Buddhism in Tibet.

Now, almost every household from the Tamang community here has on average 50 trees. The tree thrives on gravel and sandy soil, needs to be protected from excess water, and can grow up to 10 meters high. It starts bearing fruit annually from its third year and one tree lives for 90 years.

The fruits are handpicked every June and July, and then have to be processed by boiling the seeds to



ALL PHOTOS: SONIA AWALE

"We also continue to grow other vegetables and spices, all of which help to preserve soil nutrients."

Generally, farmers do not sell directly to Chinese traders but deal with local middlemen who take a cut before they take it to the Chinese traders who lodge in Kathmandu during the harvest season. But the bulk of the profit is made by Chinese wholesalers across the border.

And now with the proliferation of the plant, and with nearly every family growing several trees, farmers sometimes struggle to find buyers and are often severely short-changed, as was the case with Maiya Tamang's family.

"I wasn't home that day two years ago, but my sons later told me that my husband sold an entire tree for just Rs1,500," recalls Tamang, 60. "We asked him why he sold it for a price that wouldn't even buy a sack of rice, and he just shrugged."

Tamang did make a profit two years ago, but last year's crop was destroyed by a hailstorm. Despite this, the bead business has augmented the income of a family dependent on subsistence agriculture.

A neighbour, Sonam Tamang, had a few Bodhichitta trees in his backyard and has bought saplings from a nursery to expand. Saplings cost Rs500, but it is double that for plants that give high value seeds.

Says Sonam Tamang: "The middlemen sometimes cheat us by offering much less than the seeds are worth, and they don't allow us to speak directly with the Chinese buyers. But even if we did, there would be a language barrier."

Meanwhile, Singha Bahadur Lama who started out as a Bodhichitta farmer now owns a nursery and is a dealer in saplings himself. Some Nepalis have tried to sell directly in China, but face added costs of travel and hotel while there. 🇨🇳

remove their hard outer skin. The seeds are then dried in the sun for a few days.

"Our families have been growing Bodhichitta for generations, but it started becoming hugely profitable only about 12 years ago, it has become a cash crop and has even replaced staples like maize," says Dev Lama (pictured, above), 55.

What helps is that Bodhichitta is not a high-maintenance crop, it just needs some weeding, watering, and protection from hailstorms and pesticides. Once it matures, it does not need much care, and farmers intercrop it with other grain.

"You don't have to work on it every year like maize, which needs to be planted year after year," explains Shova Shrestha, 33.

With contributions from Qian Sun, Global Voices.

Vishad Raj Onta

The second season of the Nepal Premier League (NPL) is a prettier and more mature product. The Tribhuvan University International Cricket Stadium has new flood lights, colourful seats, and more of them from which fans watch not just sixers soaring into the evening sky but also spectacular sunsets over the mountains.

Tuesday's match was a double header with matches 20 and 21 of the season. The early game was Chitwan Rhinos vs Janakpur Bolts, and in the evening Karnali Yaks played Pokhara Avengers. These were teams towards the bottom of the table, with plenty to play for.

Things looked fluorescent with the high-vis vests of security, bright pink jerseys of the Bolts, vivid orange Rhinos and the neon green inDrive logo. Security is tight, and between buying tickets and getting to seats viewers are patted down four times, their ticket stubbed twice. The seats are divided into zones, set out by fan base, and they are full and loud throughout.

The biggest name in NPL 1.0 last year was probably Shikhar Dhawan, but the second season has brought in internationals who have played at the highest levels: Jason Roy, Faf du Plessis, Imran Tahir, Wayne Parnell, Sohail Tanvir, Martin Gupthill.

Although they are now in the 35-40 age range and well past their athletic prime, they have been valuable as sources of experience and technique for young Nepali teammates who are preparing for the T20 World Cup in February. They are seeing firsthand the work that goes into being an international level professional.

NPL 2.0 is also much more commercial. Boundary ropes and zones have logos on them, KFC and Asian Paints have their anamorphic logos designed for angle on the field, there is an electric vehicle on display, and the digital scoreboard shows ads in between balls and action on the field.

Sponsors and advertisers have allowed the organisers to pull out all the stops to put up the month-long tournament. Maybe the next season will be broadcast with virtual advertising with digital overlay.

Cricket is a much faster and more dynamic game in person with the whole field in view, while still being relaxing to watch due to its stop start nature, the winter sun and enchanting sunset views.

In the morning game Janakpur bowled first. The defending champions had a defence failure with five losses out of five. They could not break the opening partnership of the Rhinos, who were cruising at about nine runs an over.

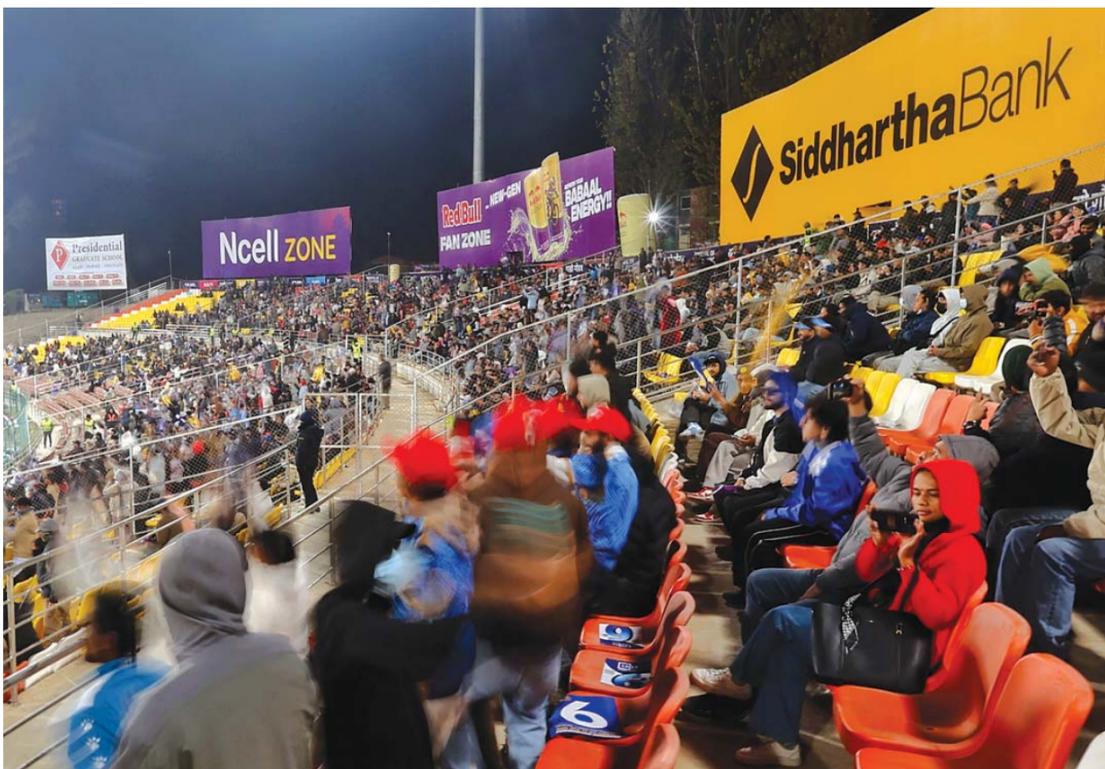
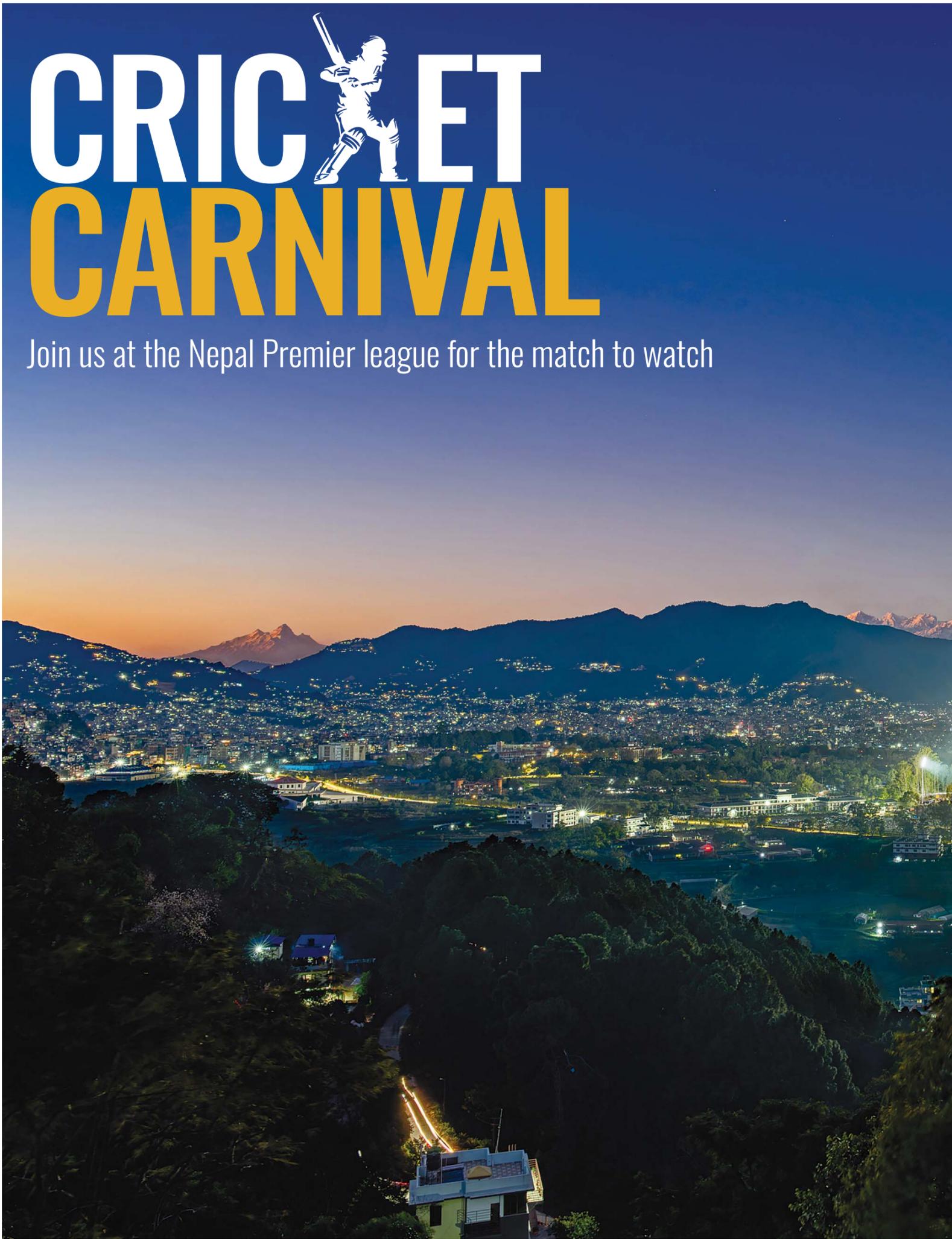
Thirteen overs into the Rhinos' inning, they are 109 for zero. English batsman David Malan, 38, is on 59 off 42, and his opening partner Arjun Saud, 22 from Dhangadi, is on 50 off 37. The message from the dug out is clear: there are wickets in hand, so hit some sixes.

Namibian leg spinner Nicol Loftie-Eaton was bowling for the Bolts, and the batsman went after him. They got off twice, with Rupesh Singh losing an easy catch in the sun, and then putting down a much harder chance running to his left.

American Sanjay Krishnamurthi took a fantastic catch diving

CRICKET CARNIVAL

Join us at the Nepal Premier league for the match to watch



forward in the very next ball. The rest of Chitwan's batting order got out regularly while still scoring at a decent clip. The Rhinos ended up posting 174, a big score of course, but not the 200+ that their strong start suggested.

In the last over, young left-handed national team batsman Kushal Malla lofted a six on the off-side. The ball scored a direct hit on a cheerleader's face, she crumpled to the ground, and was rushed on a stretcher by an ambulance. Meanwhile, Mr Gaida, the one-horned Chitwan mascot, stole the



Starting a new innings

Tek Raj Kharel had just dropped off his inDrive customer near Zone 3 and had been following the tournament, watching games in between rides. He thinks the NPL is more than a game, it is a carnival.

“This festival is more for women than men,” says Kharel. How so? “They go to be seen on the digital screen and take selfies, and the men go to see the women.”

This week both male and female fans on the stands were certainly dancing hard, and they did not seem to care much about which team was winning. They cheered both when batsmen hit boundaries, and when a wicket fell. They were there to have fun, cricket was just an excuse.

A pair of friends were not having as much fun, and were obviously not too much into cricket. The youngsters exited early, with one telling the other to never invite him to something as boring again. Many other couples seemed to be on dates.

There were also many dads with their young kids, both generations enjoying themselves. There are not too many other events in Nepal that the family can go to like this.

“Any match you watch here is pretty entertaining,” says an older fan. “I didn’t really know much about cricket before but now it has become a habit.”

Thanks to new Youth and Sports minister, 26-year old Bablu Gupta, at the end of day’s games, fans get a free ride on shuttle buses to Kalanki, Swayambhu, Bhaktapur and elsewhere in the Valley.

There is a lot that is very good with the NPL, and not much that is bad. A few things need quick fixes.

While the stadium itself is all right, outside where the stalls are, the ground is dusty and resembles a construction site with litter everywhere. There are no actual bathrooms. Siddhartha Bank has set up a few small makeshift steel sheds, where fans stand shoulder to shoulder to relieve themselves.

The pricing system has to be rethought. Tickets started at Rs300 last year, and the stadium was packed. Tickets cost Rs500 now, and on weekdays many seats are empty. A new system where tickets get discounted depending on booking time would improve the atmosphere with bigger crowds.

Even so, the NPL is a breath of fresh air in post-GenZ protest Nepal with the hope that the country is starting a new innings.



NEPAL PREMIER LEAGUE

show as he roamed the boundary, swaying to the wide mix of DJ songs. The crowd cheered.

As the Bolts started batting, popular Irish commentator Andrew Leonard came down from the press box to check on cheerleaders. Three cheerleaders were reduced to one, but a male breakdancer had joined her.

Janakpur were never in any real trouble as they chased. Young Pakistani all-rounder Maaz Sadaqat’s 63 off 30, and Anil Sah’s 61 of 36 propelled the Bolts to the target with two and a half overs to spare.

At dusk, the floodlights come

on, adding to the atmosphere. There is smoggy Kathmandu below and Langtang glowing pink on the horizon as the second match began.

Karnali Yaks captain Sompal Kami won the toss and chose to bowl, but Adam Rossington’s 108 off 58 and Jason Roy’s 46 of 34 meant that Pokhara set up a target of 202.

The Yaks started well, and were still very much in the game at over 10 with 95/3. But they lost wickets and slowed down. The pressure of the rising run rate got to the batting order, and soon they were all out for 167.

In between innings and games, there is plenty for viewers to do in the carnival-like atmosphere outside. Asian Paints offers free face-painting. Ncell has a stall where viewers can pick up free new sims and play against a bowling machine to win t-shirts. KFC is the only food option around. Red Bulls are Rs150 per can.

“Why do you think they’re dancing so hard out there?” asks the vendor of the caffeine-rich energy drink. “Red Bull.”

Tickets on Khalti.

MATCH FIXTURES

5 Dec	Janakpur Bolts vs Lumbini Lions
6 Dec	Biratnagar Kings vs Sudurpaschim Royals Chitwan Rhinos vs Pokhara Avengers
7 Dec	Janakpur Bolts vs Karnali Yaks
9 Dec	Qualifier 1
10 Dec	Eliminator
11 Dec	Qualifier 2
13 Dec	Final

SUMAN NEPALI



Events



SAFF Club Women

Top women's football clubs from South Asia compete for the championship title at Dasrath Stadium.
5-20 December, 2pm onwards, Rs300-500 per person, Dashrath Stadium, Kathmandu

Musical Canvas

The Guest List puts a creative twist on musical chairs: participants pass around canvases, painting collaboratively in a fun, artsy atmosphere.
6 December, 2:30pm, Rs1,250 per person, Vue Eatery & Cocktail Bar, Nagpokhari



Grand Prix Watch Party

Catch the thrilling season finale of Formula 1 live, as Lando Norris, Max Verstappen, and Oscar Piastri battle for the championship in Abu Dhabi. An adrenaline-packed evening for motorsport fans.
7 December, 6pm, Tickets: Rs150, Eden Amphitheater, Sanepa

Ikhachhen Cultural Fest

A vibrant Newari celebration at Alko Hiti Ikhachhen featuring traditional food stalls, music, and cultural showcase, bringing together heritage and community spirit.
4-6 December, 12pm-10pm, Alko Hiti Ikhachhen



Christmas market

Celebrate the festive season with over 40 local artisans and vendors offering handmade products, jewelry, apparel, home décor, and delicious treats. Enjoy food, drinks, hot chocolate, cakes, cocktails, and live music.
6 December, 5pm-9pm, The Yellow House

International Mask Exhibition

Experience a rich display of global craftsmanship with handicraft exhibitions, ethnic dress photography, and intricate masks curated by IMACO Korea and UNESCO.
3-7 December, 10am-5pm, Patan Museum

Nepal Premier League

Watch the second season of the Nepal Premier League as the teams play the final few matches before the tournament heads to playoffs. Get tickets at Khalti, or watch live online through the DishHome Go app. Read a round-up of the season so far on page 6-7.
Until 13 December, TU Cricket Stadium, Kirtipur



Music

Friday Night with Rockhead

Rockhead ignites the stage with a powerhouse set of anthems featuring popular hits like Ranga. A charged atmosphere and rock 'n' roll spirit make this the perfect way to kick off the weekend.
05 December, 7pm onwards, Tickets: Rs1,000, Omnia Club, Thamel



Batauli Festival 2025

An electrifying night of music, bringing together some of Nepal's biggest DJs for an open-air celebration in Butwal.
12 December, 6pm-10pm, Devinagar Ground, Devinagar-Butwal

Brutal Lunch Box X

A hardcore deathmetal gig. Expect brutal riffs and an underground metal vibe. Venue location will be released soon; check the event page on the AllEvents website for updates.
06 December, 2:30pm, 7pm, Kathmandu



Diwas Gurung Intimate Session

An intimate pop-folk evening with Diwas Gurung, known for his soulful vocals. Perfect for listeners seeking a warm, immersive live experience.
12 December 2025, Tickets: Rs1,500, Beers N' Cheers



Getaway



Lake View

Escape to Lake View Resort's cosy wooden huts for a weekend of rest and relaxation. One of Lakeside's oldest establishments, the resort features traditional, rustic designs and modern accents.
Lake Side, Pokhara (061) 451477

Sapana Village Resort

Experience the rich Tharu and Chepang culture at the heart of Sauraha, witness elephants lumbering through the forests, and marvel at the beauty of the lush national park.
Sauraha, Chitwan (56) 580308



Dalai-La Boutique Hotel

The hotel provides an unforgettable experience, letting visitors step out of Kathmandu's chaos and into peace and serenity. Decorated with historic artifacts over 50 years old, the hotel is part of the city's heritage.
Thamel (01) 4701436

Milla Guesthouse

A quaint stay that combines both the old and the new, Milla Guesthouse is the perfect getaway for people who do not want to get too far from the city.
Bhaktapur, 9817849759

Harmony Spa & Health Club

Amongst trees on the edge of a plateau overlooking Gokarna forest and the grassed valley below, Harmony Spa combines therapeutic care within a natural environment. Included are a variety of rejuvenating courses, emphasising Ayurvedic treatments within Ayura, the Adam & Eve, and Serenity massage rooms.
6:30am-10:30pm, Gokarna Forest Resort, Thali (01) 4451212



Dining

Jimbu Thakali

Not in the mood to cook? Head over to Jimbu and enjoy a healthy, tasty and traditional Thakali meal.
Jhamsikhel (01) 5544011

Utpala Cafe

Located within a Buddhist monastery within Boudha, Utpala Cafe offer an all-vegetarian menu. They feature locally grown produce and their mushroom dishes are a must-try!
Boudha, 9810700763



Anatolia

Anatolia's Indian and Turkish dishes are packed with spices and an unforgettable assortment of flavours. From the Mutton Kofta Curry to the Baklava, the dishes will keep one wanting more. All the food is halal.
Thamel (01) 5358757

Pho 99

This winter, enjoy Vietnamese cuisine made with fresh ingredients, aromatic herbs, and traditional recipes. Try Pho 99's signature Pho and crispy spring rolls, as well as refreshing salads and Vietnamese coffee.
Jhamsikhel, 9803203119



Prazada

Enjoy Prazada's selection of chilled draught beers in the lush garden with aromatic food and special pizzas accompanied by relaxing music.
Baluwatar (01) 4410473

Weekend Weather



Colder and Colder

The mercury is now really falling, with Kathmandu Valley's minima at 6°C and the maximum staying at below 20°C. The onset of winter has meant an increase in pollution haze that filters sunlight. A snow-bearing westerly front will pass across western Nepal but will spare Kathmandu, even though it will lower the ambient temperature. This NASA satellite image of Nepal on Thursday morning shows riverine fog along the Narayani into Chitwan so careful on the highways. The Tarai is blanketed in crossborder smog, weakening the sun's warmth.



Our Pick

Following the events of the first part, Elphaba is now branded by Madame Morrible's propaganda as the Wicked Witch of the West, and is fighting for animal rights from a forest hideout. Meanwhile, Glinda, has become the Wizard's spokesperson, and is engaged to Fiyero, Captain of the Gale Force who searches for Elphaba. Directed by Jon M. Chu and written by Winnie Holzman and Dana Fox, the Wicked series is feature film adaptation of the Broadway musical, and highlights the friendship between Elphaba and Glinda, the Good Witch of the North. Stars Cynthia Erivo, Ariana Grande, Jonathan Bailey, Michelle Yeoh, Jeff Goldblum and Ethan Slater.

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



Niranjana Kunwar

We often see ourselves reflected in the other. For someone who grew up in Kathmandu Valley in the eighties and nineties, this maxim comes alive with an even greater force.

I left for America for further studies, and was somewhat determined to never return to Nepal. It was a country full of potholes and black-outs. But foreigners have been fascinated with our country for decades.

In the early 19th century, Francis Buchanan-Hamilton led a pioneering expedition and documented more than a thousand species of plants native to the region. Almost a century later, in 1905, Frenchman Sylvan Levi published 'the first attempt to produce a comprehensive study of Nepal', drawing on not just indigenous but available Chinese and European sources as well.

After Nepal opened up in the 1950s, foreigners arrived -- most notably cold war spies disguised as diplomats, and later the hippies.

I returned to Nepal in 2013 and was primarily struck by two major demographics -- the artists and expats. Energised by the recent revolution, the creatives were making vibrant, powerful works. The expats, on the other hand, demonstrated a different way to navigate life in Kathmandu Valley.

These two groups of people re-introduced Nepal to me and I began seeing my country and my hometown with a renewed perspective. Which is why one particular image from Giovanna Caruso's ongoing show at the Kalā Salon curated by Sophia L Pandé instantly caught my attention -- rather, it called out to me, as if it was composed for me, framing a key moment from my own life.

Its title is, coincidentally, 2013. Like most of her other works, the pen-and-ink drawing is punctuated by an explosion of watercolour: a woman standing confidently in front of a Newa-style house, a log arched up, as if she is fixing a strap around an ankle before stepping out on an adventure.

The watercolour depicts a rainbow streaming out of a pot through a second-floor window. The rest of the details are rendered in realism -- clusters of garlic and

onion hanging to dry from the rafters, and further down a stack of corn. There are towels drying, even an old water pump.

"This work is a celebration of my 30 years in Nepal," says Caruso. It was while trying to calm restless students during her teaching days in Italy that Caruso first came across an iconic image of Kathmandu Darbar Square.

She had found an old box of slides and while projecting images from the Himalaya to engage her students, the artist was determined to travel to Nepal. The first flat she rented was close to the square and the view from her rooftop was the same as the one in her classroom.

She has been traveling to Nepal every year since. Some of her favourite drawings depict Khokana in morning fog. From 1993-2006, she drew murals at Ram Mandir and Pashupatinath, asking sadhus to guide her and correct her depictions.

Caruso received a classical education, trained to focus on perspective and geometry while capturing mainly portraits and still lives. She is influenced by M C Escher and his explorations of mathematics and symmetry, and finds the Darbar Square architecture compelling.

She also names as inspiration Gustave Dore, whose style is different from Escher's and I can see how she has fused these influences in her body of work: Escher's austerity complimented and slightly dislodged by Dore's comics and caricatures.

"Before starting, the painting needs to be complete in my mind," she explains as we pass a series of portraits titled Saraswati, Lakshmi, Kali Dancing, and Durga dominated by a roaring tiger. "These are all real people, my friends and family sit for me."

The Kali in the drawing has the artist's fiery copper red hair and she is dancing, surrounded by various men with flowing hair. The artist seems to have experimented here, drawing the revelers from above, and indulging in playful abandon.

Depictions of Nepal are often in danger of being exoticised. But Caruso is familiar with her subjects, knows our alleys and temples intimately. Her colours and compositions are



NIRANJANA KUNWAR

Viewing Nepal from Venice

Italian artist's exhibition of 30 years of work based on Kathmandu's evolution

passionate and dense. In an essay, Anirudh S Chari writes the artist's work is splashed with rapturous energy and most drawings have a carnivalesque element.

'Kali Dancing' illustrates this idea perfectly in that she has turned Kali's usual fearsome portrayal on its head by depicting and embracing another feminine principle - the capacity to celebrate and create joy.

Apart from drawing inspiration

from Hindu goddesses and Nepal's multi-colored rituals, Caruso has also drawn the Sumerian Ianna and Lillith and the Egyptian Nut. She enjoys drawing Nataraja because "Shiva is a good husband".

We stand in front of another painting titled 100 Days a Lion. "There is a saying in Italian, Better one day as a lion than a hundred days as a sheep, but I thought why not 100 Days a Lion?"

This sentiment captures this

nomadic artist's spirit spanning four decades, in which she has captured urban energy as well as the sacred imagery of 'life diaries on canvas'.

From Venezia to Kathmandu and Journeys In Between
Giovanna Caruso
The Kalā Salon
Chhaya Centre Mall, Thamel
Till 12 December
10am-8pm

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Things eventually work out

A Nepali in Australia fundraised for GenZ protest survivors, and finally releases money to families amidst a personal crisis



DIASPORA
DIARIES 75

This is the 75th episode of Diaspora Diaries, a Nepali Times series in collaboration with Migration Lab to share experiences of living, working and studying abroad.

Hiroshi Khanal

My father was a country boy from Sarlahi, and my mother a city girl from Kathmandu. They had an inter-ethnic marriage that the two families finally accept.

My parents viewed the world through a social lens since they worked in development. They travelled overseas often, leaving me and my sister behind. We spent a lot of time at my grandparents' house, or in rented apartments with guardians.

Between Grades 1 and 10, I switched schools seven times. Our parents prioritised our education, and sent us to expensive schools. I was shocked by my school fees, and wondered how they managed.

I wanted to be a businessman, so I could afford the life some of my well-to-do friends had. Now I realise what my parents gave me was already over the top, a truth that becomes clearer as I get older.

Our family was getting along fine until our father died suddenly in September 2021. The official reason was 'heart attack'. We do not talk about this much, perhaps as a way of dealing with the loss.

He was our rock, and everything got harder. At least we had good people around us who reminded us to take care of our mother, and to work hard. And we did.

My sister and I made TikToks during the lockdown, initially on a joint account which reached its peak in 2022-2023. I had always wanted to be an actor, but my parents urged me to keep acting aside as a passion project.

TikTok enabled us to showcase our talent for comedy. We cracked TikTok's algorithm and stayed on top of trends. People liked our duo, and the raw, authentic content. It required strategy, luck, planning, and understanding the game.

We used #NakarmiKhanalAF hashtag in our content, drawing from my parents' last names although they did not need to know what 'AF' stood for.

My first viral content was a humorous take on a Marvel character that hit over 500k. That fusion of combining international trends with Nepali humour worked really well, and I made this my niche.

My father was always thick-skinned and did not have to try to be cool or tough. He was unapologetically himself, sometimes to the point where my sister and I felt embarrassed. When he was invited as a chief guest at a cricket game, for example, I felt proud to be the child of an 'important person', but then he would grab the mic and start lecturing everyone to start cleaning up the ground.



Many of our friends came from wealthy families because of the schools we attended, and he proudly lectured them about our humble background and the importance of social service.

Growing up, we tried to earn his validation. My proudest moment was gifting him a shirt bought with my first salary. My father did not get to see our rise on social media, but I know he is watching over us as he always did.

My social media started getting brand deals, and with them, money. I earned as much as Rs40,000 per video and tried to make one every day. This was a big contrast to my monthly salary of Rs35,000 in the clothing store.

All along, I was acutely aware that fame would not last forever. After TikTok was banned in India, there was even more uncertainty about social media. People running businesses had to close shop or were stuck, and the political uncertainty was scary. This pushed me to think about migrating, and Australia was a safe backup.

I uploaded content right up to two hours before my flight from Kathmandu. I wanted to have enough savings so I did not have to start working right away in Australia. I was buying my freedom.

Rodin was one of my few enduring friends. He was in Australia and assured me that he would take care of everything, and he did. He was my family there, and I did not have to go through the initial struggle that other international students had to endure.

In Australia, I have done multiple jobs over the last two years and completed my MBA. One job interviewer challenged me to make him laugh with one of my content videos. He did and I started work the very next day.

To the boss, I was just another Nepali who could work swiftly. I mopped floors, washed dishes, and served customers. This was Australia, and I hustled. But I knew there had to be more to life.

The long hours and little sleep eventually caught up with me. One day I slept 14-15 hours straight, and when I woke up, it hit me that I should try networking.

I reached out to the admins of Facebook groups. Some replied, some did not, some offered jobs that were not for me. Then came an email from 8848 Momo House, and I travelled to Brisbane to meet the owner Hom Pyashi.

"Do you want momos?" was the first thing he asked warmly. He told me to stop by one of his new outlets and make a video. I did, and I was hired the next day.

It was that easy, and I have been working there ever since. My boss said later that he did not hire me because of the video but because I was young and he saw hunger in my eyes. To him, I was clay that he could help shape.

I am now the marketing head, and the chain is doing well. But just as my parents taught me, I still see it as sort of a side passion.

GENZ

Then came the GenZ protests. I could relate to the rage and suffocation Nepali youth felt. A song I was featured in was supposed to be released just when social media was banned in Nepal, and that fuelled my anger more.

But from the onset, I was wary of the headless nature of this movement. There was no

Doomscrolling democracy

Rumour, bias and propaganda have always been a part of the informationsphere, but what is different today is the velocity at which falsehood spreads



Cyberia
Ayusha Chalise

A recent post on Instagram has an image of Sudan Gurung. Over the top is the message: 'We won't let this year's election happen if Gen Z's demands are Ignored'. The bio reads 'Uniting Nepalese Through Independent Investigative Research'.

Such posts have become a template for the information ecosystem in the aftermath of the GenZ revolt. Three months later, social media feeds are saturated with content that uses a multimodality of captions, video, audio, to convey alarm and warnings about how GenZ aspirations are being subverted. Research has shown

fear-mongering, anger or hate has already spread.

In Nepal's social media, apparently everyone is tarred as opportunists, or funded by a foreign government. Calls to dismantle federalism, restore the monarchy, or teach political leaders a lesson by supporting authoritarian alternatives are no longer fringe ideas. They circulate routinely on the algorithmic streams legitimised not by evidence but sentiment.

When misinformation becomes the default, nostalgia for a mythical prosperous past begins to look like a rational response. Their algorithmic amplification gives perceived legitimacy that often exceeds actual political support.

"We have not highlighted the achievements of our multiparty democratic system, and the new generation has not experienced authoritarianism," Adhikari explains. "Therefore opinions like federalism is expensive, and that the monarchy was better have taken up space, because the counter

politically volatile environment.

Everything appears in the same vertical stream, formatted with similar fonts, voiceovers and music, making a platter of content that they know you are most likely to consume. For Nepali users, this has created personalised and parallel political realities. Two people living in the same household may open TikTok and encounter completely different ideas. One is fed content in favour of elections in March, while another pushes conspiracy theories about anti-GenZ activities aided and abetted by foreign powers.

None of these feeds reflect the whole picture. Each reflects what the algorithm has learnt will capture user attention. Academics have long found that social media sites do thousands of A/B testing to silently optimise which colors, captions, or video formats users respond to most intensely.

Tests help design the most addictive feeds. Interface interference allows platforms to limit discoverability of features such as the 'Logout' and 'Privacy' settings so the system remembers users' preference for the next time they are scrolling the platform.

WHAT NEXT?

When faced with such an infocalypse, we have the option to withdraw and not engage with our feeds or our phones. But billions of dollars have been spent by Big Tech to keep us hooked. We need more structural revisions that integrate the need of a safer online environment. Media and digital literacy must be woven into both formal education and public institutions. It cannot be an optional topic or a workshop for a select few.

Students must learn how algorithms work, how misinformation spreads, and how to verify information before sharing it. Adults need community-level programs that help them navigate the online world that now shapes politics.

Content creators also must be held accountable. Profiles posing as news sites must also be brought under the same scrutiny as the mainstream press. Directives for social media journalism, a section in the Press Council's Journalism Code of Conduct, can be introduced as provisions that foster transparency and ethical journalism practices on social media. Creators should pledge to verify facts, cite sources, and clearly label opinion or commentary.

While this will not entirely curb disinformation, it can be the first step towards a digital public sphere that can host democratic dialogue that is nuanced and factual.

Says Adhikari: "Journalism doesn't exist in a vacuum. Our knowledge spaces: academia, think tanks, research centres, archives, are scaffolding to support journalism, and we must make them stronger. The responsibility of the information ecosystem does not rely on journalists alone."

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

Partnering with them was going to be a lifesaver because I was not at all prepared for what was ahead. Over 11,000 people contributed across our two campaigns, raising AUD514,386.

But we had not thought through the logistical challenge, the online hate and delays. We needed to release the money to the right organisations in Nepal, get complete information about the families of the martyrs and injured.

We faced backlash after a hate narrative instigated by a few people spread online. It was not going to be as simple as raising the money and handing it over. People believed what they wanted to believe.

Internet hate can take you to very dark places, even when you believe in your cause and know it can bring some comfort to grieving families. You try to focus on the positive message, because many people did support us, but the hate and accusations do bring you down.

When I was too paralysed by the internet hate to carry out even the most mundane activities like cooking and cleaning, my roommate Bibek took over. He even made me watch an episode from the Mahabharat about Krishna's teachings on karma without worrying about the fruit, a lesson that did not just help me get out of that low point, but has become a guiding principle. How could I have emerged out of that darkness, battling suicidal thoughts if people had not showed up for me?

We worked day and night to find the right partners, and because of the large amount of money and the level of transparency we asked for, many influencers or organisations turned us down.

This was not easy because we had our own jobs to take care of, our own bills to worry

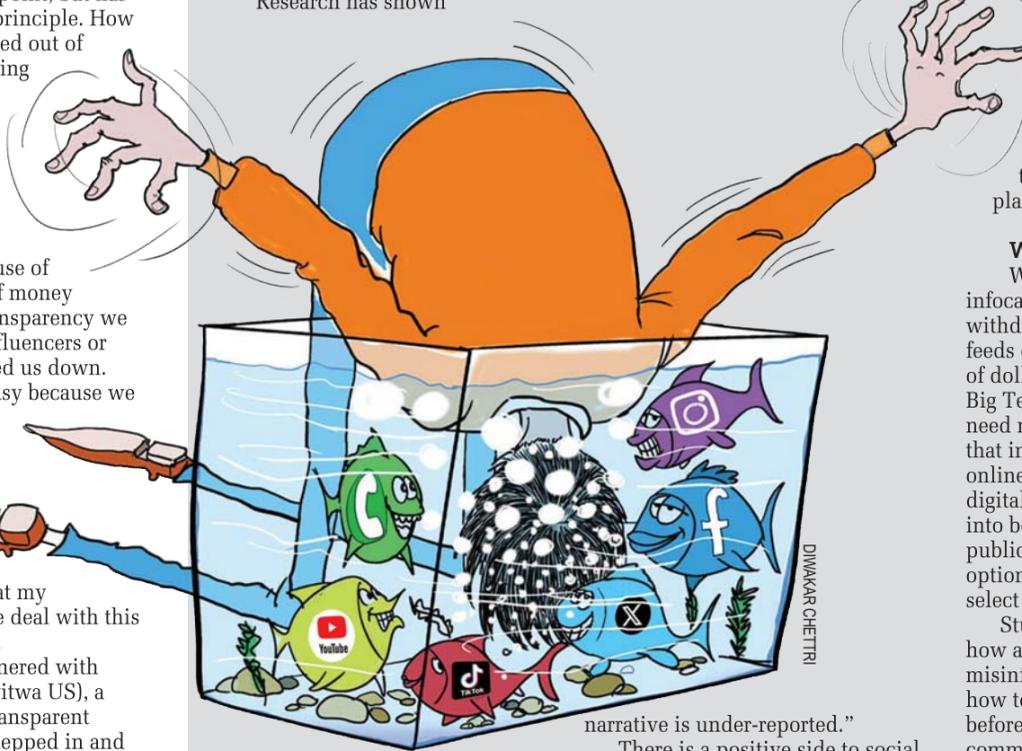
about. It helped that my team at 8848 let me deal with this during work hours.

We finally partnered with Nepal Rising (Daayitwa US), a professional and transparent organisation that stepped in and saved the day. GoFundme finally released the funds to their account and it has begun reaching the right people. My sister helped ensure the money is delivered properly.

As a final check, I speak with the families in Nepal and offer my condolences. I honour their loved one's contribution to our country and assure them that we will make sure it is never forgotten. But no matter what we say or how much we try to help, the heartbreaking truth is that their young son or sibling is not coming back.

The narrative is slowly changing. Slaps are now claps. But the trauma of public hate still gnaws at me, I have anxiety about attending Nepali gatherings like concerts here.

I remember when a dance I had created for Bola Maya went viral on TikTok, with tens of thousands of people picking it up. A chef friend told me it was time to use that influence for a social cause. Those words stayed with me. As I navigated the backlash, I was also reminded of my parents who worked on social causes and asked my mother if they had faced similar cases. She had, and she reminded me that all we can do is stay focused on the cause and drown out the noise. Things will eventually work out.



DINAKAR CHETTRI

that fake news reaches 1,500 people six times faster than the truth on X. On platforms where narratives compete for attention, users gravitate to shock-value and not to factual precision or nuance.

"Misinformation easily mutates into disinformation," says media literacy trainer Deepak Adhikari. "The news we see on social media is often lacking context, misinforming more than informing."

Indeed, today's 'Post-Truth Society' is characterised by a media environment in which users look to confirm their pre-existing beliefs and emotions rather than engage with objective facts or subjective nuance. Pre-held personal beliefs shape public opinion, not the truth.

Rumour, bias and propaganda have always been a part of the informationsphere, but what makes it different today is the velocity at which falsehood spreads. The news cycle is short, and before content can be verified the damage is already done.

Pre- and post-publication fact checking can counter this. But when a misleading video goes viral, and even after fact-checkers catch up to correct it,



दुलो मान्छे leading and no one would be accountable if something went wrong. There was so much uncertainty, and I am not comfortable with uncertainty.

We were glued to social media as the protests escalated, at work and in the gym. When we learnt of the deaths of young Nepalis back home, a part of me died. The grief of unexpectedly losing my father came back. My friend and I left the gym early and just drove to a waterside. We did not even sit together because neither of us wanted to see the other in tears.

One of the messages I received was a GoFundMe link to support the victims. I shared it, but someone asked if it was genuine. That is when it hit me that I had a large social media following and could not just share things without verifying them. I removed the link.

The only person I felt I could trust was myself, so I decided to start my own fundraiser. I felt emotional and helpless, and had to do something.

I assumed we could raise around AUD5,000. I was wrong. Within hours, we had raised nearly AUD60,000. Fellow content creators Avash and Manzil from Minority Report had also started a GoFundMe. We decided to team up.



Staged chaos evokes the state of the country

The drama 'के? Us.' at Kausi Theatre is a microcosm of post-GenZ protest Nepal

It is quite a feat for just two actors on a darkened stage to hold an audience spellbound for more than one hour. Yet, 'के? Us.' at Kausi Theatre does just that.

This thought-provoking but baffling work leaves the audience questioning reality, the recurring metaphors in the dark comedy haunting us for days afterwards.

The unsettling sound of deep breathing mingles with a muffled drum beat, pulsating through a red glow dimly illuminating shadowy structures charred by fire. A door leads to what is later revealed to be the ancestral home of two brothers which is 'under renovation'.

One of the brothers Ashim (Bijaya Tamrakar) lives in Nepal caring for a comatose mother who is only depicted by a tree draped with arterial red LED lights circulating blood corpuscles. Visiting him is long-lost brother Aaryan (Eelum Dixit) who has returned (was deported?) from America.

The stage is littered with scattered paper trash, a run-down motorcycle chassis, tattered sofa, and beat-up table and chairs. It is all set for a sinister plot. Are the characters to be punished in perdition? It does not take long for the audience to grasp that this is an apocalyptic Nepal that could exist at any time in the future or the present day post-GenZ protest state.

Ashim, the younger brother, has been burdened with the responsibility of taking care of their brain-dead mother. Aaryan returns 15 years after migrating to the US, where he married, had children, divorced, and lost everything.



KATHA GHERA

The brothers have intense back-and-forth that expose their cynicism. The conversation tangentially alludes to Nepal's unstable politics, migration, an economy in shambles, aging population, alcoholism and mental health. Even the sibling argument about the relative merits of momo and burgers is metaphorical.

Tamrakar and Dixit improvise their lines. No two shows are exactly the same, although the overall plot has continuity.

In the first scene, Aaryan approaches the house tentatively, creeping rodent-like, and carrying a briefcase and an old-fashioned lantern. And at the end, Ashim

screams, "I am chaos." Is this the end of the beginning, or the beginning of the end?

At one point Aaryan seems perturbed by the sound of protest outside (the GenZ movement?) and the taut atmosphere grips the audience.

Throughout, there is the sound of breathing, as if through a ventilator, a thumping heartbeat, the morbid buzzing of flies and the glowing red LED veins.

The 'mother' could be Nepali Aama muted by an entrenched patriarchy. Or, the symbol of a helpless country while her children fight over the ruins of what is left. The cake cutting is a delightfully

Shakespearean subplot where we wonder if one of the brothers is going to poison, or knife, the other. How can we move forward if it is brother against brother?

The stairs signify political transition (elections, constitutional change, new coalitions) promising upward movement, but eventually lead to falls, leaving the nation exactly where it started, or worse.

The mother's terminal illness evokes an ailing state apparatus, hollowed out by corruption and deep-seated social decay. Yet the brothers cling to an irrational hope instead of confronting the harsh truth and pursuing radical

solutions, suggesting blind faith in the mother.

The brothers are lost. Aaryan climbs up stairs that lead nowhere, Ashim holds on to unrealistic hope that somehow Aama will get better.

When Aaryan breaks a wall and directly addresses the audience, spectators turn from being passive observers to active participants ('the society'). The audience become ogles in this drama, suddenly made self-aware of their role as scrutinising, cavilling voyeurs. There is some discomfort of being watched and judged. After the stage goes dark, the applause takes some time. Audience members shuffle out in silence, minds reeling from the collective soul-searching they have just participated in.

After 'के? Us.' the din at Teku intersection outside sounds different. Audience members wait for Pathao rides near the खरो tree where Shukra Raj Shastri was hanged in 1941 by the Rana regime. 🇳🇵



'के? Us.'
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