



ANUP TAMU

## Might might be right

Sonia Awale

The American military action in Venezuela and the abduction of President Nicolás Maduro may redefine Nepal's geopolitics as it juggles between three world powers, India, China and the United States.

Nepal's interim government is busy preparing for elections on 5 March, and was late issuing a statement on the American intervention in Venezuela, but the country may have to re-evaluate how it deals with its immediate neighbours and the global power.

"How does Nepal avoid being the next Ukraine or Venezuela? Small countries shouldn't go around irritating big neighbours. And when big neighbours really get upset, they usually put up a moral fig leaf justifying their military action," says energy economist Dipak Gyawali. "What we see with Venezuela today is bereft of such moral content, essentially banditry which in today's day and age is unacceptable."

International relations experts have said that there is now a new world order in which rules-based diplomacy has been thrown out of the window, and the world has been carved into America leading the western hemisphere, Russia

is allowed to do what it wants in Ukraine and Europe, and China's sphere of influence is now the Indo-Pacific.

There is also a lesson for smaller resource-rich countries not to give an excuse for intervention with poor governance and political instability due to inequity. Nevertheless, the Trump administration's abduction of a sitting president of a foreign government regardless of the dictatorial nature of his regime and Venezuela's volatile internal politics, is illegal and breaches the international order that has been in place since after World War II.

"The abduction of Maduro is a clear sign of Trump's America ensuring its sphere of influence through might and a warning to toe the line," says Amish Mulmi, author of the book All Roads Lead North: Nepal's Turn to China. "Trump's actions reek strongly of a bygone era of imperialistic control and resource capture."

Venezuela has 17% of the world's reserves of crude oil, even though refining this heavy tar-like oil will be costly. "This has to do with a larger political economy of oil, the unravelling of pax Americana and the post-World war II order. This is USA's heavy-handed response to remain on the top as well as to partly solve its debt of \$39 trillion," explains Gyawali.

"But China is far ahead, Russia has recovered from its 1990s low point, and manufacturing capital has moved away from America. So controlling only financial capital and using military power so brazenly is not going to work."

### STRATEGIC COMMODITY

There might also be specific lessons for Nepal as a smaller country with vast water resources. While water, unlike oil, is renewable, India's interest in Nepal's hydro resources cannot be ignored.

Ironically, America's capture of Venezuelan oil reserves could exacerbate climate breakdown and the melting of Himalayan glaciers, which will put Nepal's water resources in jeopardy in the coming decades. The only way to deal with this for Nepal and downstream India will be to build reservoirs on rivers to store monsoon precipitation, and that makes water a strategic commodity for the future.

"If we continue in the current mode of hydropower-biased water resources development ignoring irrigation, flood control, navigation, fisheries, tourism and other benefits, India will get the free benefit of regulated water while we pay the upstream environmental and social costs. History will blame our elected leaders for having undersold our resources," adds Gyawali, who

served as water resource minister in the early 2000s.

As for a larger geopolitical lesson: "We are fortunate in having not one threatening hegemon but two superpowers India and China: they don't agree with each other, but do agree on a peaceful Nepal for their own security. However, our current political leaders are irritating both the neighbours, unlike since the centuries past when our rulers looked solely after Nepal's core interests and our neighbours knew that."

American intervention in Venezuela also calls for strengthening of our institutions and diplomatic outreach. Nepal has been a non-aligned state, and for all its history has tried to follow a policy of equidistance between India and China. The difference with Venezuela is that Nepal has to deal with two giant neighbours, and not just one. Says Mulmi: "It is no more only about balancing great power relations but also about benefiting from them. But that will be increasingly difficult as international law and the principles of sovereignty are encroached upon."

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

Read full story online.

# Still a necessity, not a choice

Nepal taking strides to ensure better and fairer migration but there is a long way to go

Shristi Karki

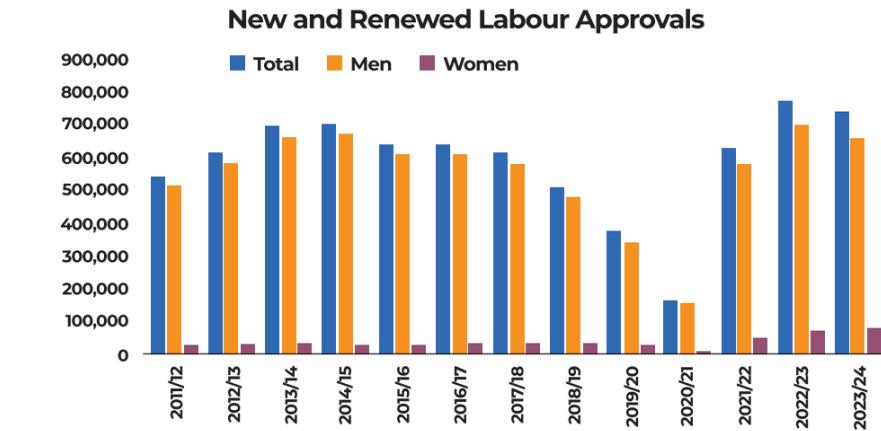
Four months ago, videos of Nepal's rich, famous, and well-connected spread like wildfire on digital platforms. They were flaunting their lavish lifestyles while many Nepalis could not make enough to get by.

This display of nepotistic privilege resonated in particular among the millions of Nepalis who are toiling overseas, or will soon have to migrate to provide for their families.

What started out as a protest against #NepoKids and corruption snowballed into violence that brought down the government. The youth envisioned a future where they would not be compelled to leave a country where rulers offer nothing to them.

Ironically, the arson and vandalism of international hotel brands, corporate houses and businesses has dampened the investment climate which is driving more Nepalis abroad. The Labour Ministry has announced plans to make it easier for those affected by the protests to obtain overseas working permits. Even those who wanted to stay in Nepal might now find it easier and more prudent to leave. Over 200,000 Nepalis have obtained labour permits in the four months since the September unrest.

Since 2011, 7.6 million Nepalis have officially gone to work overseas, as per the 2024 Nepal Labour Migration Report released by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security last month. Of them, 2.8 million have renewed their permits. The report highlights labour migration trends, governance, policies, and data for the fiscal



years 2022/23 and 2023/24, and although a bit outdated, the figures give an idea of the scale and spread of Nepal's migrant workers.

The report also notes strides made towards ensuring better and fairer migration. Since 2023, labour permits are valid for the duration of the contract signed between workers and employers, as opposed to a fixed term of two years previously. Steps have been taken to ensure 'employers pay' with some destinations so that workers do not have to pay exorbitant recruitment fees.

Bilateral labour agreements have been signed with countries that offer relatively higher wages, and agreements have been proposed with 13 countries to extend opportunities to migrants in more eastern European countries, SAARC countries like

the Maldives and higher-income nations like Austria and Luxembourg.

In 2022, the Social Security Fund was extended to include migrant workers abroad. And while the report also includes Nepal's existing G2G agreements, the effectiveness of those deals also need to be discussed.

Nepal's G2G partnership with the UK to send Nepali nurses to work there at zero cost, was expected to recruit 100 nurses, but only 41 nurses have obtained labour permits. Meanwhile, Nepal continues to maintain a G2G partnership with Israel, which is committing a genocide in Gaza, and where the security of Nepalis is at risk.

Destination countries have also introduced unfriendly new migration policies like Malaysia's announcement of new criteria

for selecting private recruiting agencies from countries including Nepal. The nationwide jailbreak in September didn't help either, the UAE stopped issuing visas to Nepali workers for almost two months.

## OVERRELIANCE ON REMITTANCE

Even so, Nepal recorded remittance inflows of \$4.88 billion in the first four months of this fiscal year. Nearly 28% of Nepal GDP equivalent comes from remittances, one of the highest proportions in the world, a reading that shows low level of domestic economic activity. Nepal's leadership will have to reconcile with the fact that depending on remittance to hold up the economy is foolish. Even as Nepal tries to sign labour agreements, higher income nations are becoming less and less tolerant of migrants — even as they face labour shortages and invade developing nations.

At the beginning of the report, Krishna Hari Pushkar, Secretary of the Labour Ministry, writes, 'Our shared goal should be to ensure that migration is always a choice, not a necessity.' But for Nepal and Nepalis, migration will be a compulsion for the foreseeable future. 🇳🇵



2024 Nepal Labour Migration Report  
Ministry of Labour,  
Employment and Social  
Security, 2025

## Trending Online

### YALA

by Sonia Awale  
If Kathmandu is a city of temples, Patan is a city of monasteries which represent a unique melding of Buddhist and Hindu forms. The new book Exploring Lalitpur introduces Patan to the world, as well as to its own inhabitants. Read review at nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook



### Nepal's incomplete revolutions

by Sudiksha Tuladhar  
Nepal's periodic revolutions have been ignited by anger against rulers. They have begun with great promise, spread with enthusiastic popular support — but ultimately always fallen short of the expectations of citizens demanding reform. Full story on our website.

Most popular on X

### Not ever again

Editorial  
2026 marks the 20th anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Accord, and 30 years since the Maoist conflict started. The goals for which so many lives were lost are now covered in the dust of history. It is a long list of promises not kept. Join the discussion online.

Most commented

### Life in a time of cholera

by Ajaya Dixit  
A particularly deadly cholera epidemic in 1885 that killed one-fifth of Kathmandu's population of 50,000 prompted the Rana regime to bring in British engineers to install a modern water supply system that is working to this day. Longread, exclusively on Nepali Times.

Most visited online page

## Letters

### PARTY POLITICS

Everything written about political parties in this article is very true ('Party Problem', Suveva Pradhan Tuladhar, #1291). But as long as some of the old leaders live, they won't care to change anything. Look at how they are selecting PR candidates, and manipulating the party's legal structure to stay in power and push out anyone who opposes them.

Bishow Parajuli

■ The reason the last government was a disaster isn't just because so many officials were corrupt, but because most had no experience in governing or managing anything ('RSP's PR list is not good PR', Ayusha Chalise, nepalitimes.com). No project management experience. No leadership experience. If you

want a country run by TikTok celebrities, expect more of the same.

Christophe Noel

■ There has been no stability in Nepal since the monarchy was destroyed ('Nepal's incomplete revolutions', Sudiksha Tuladhar, #1292). A steady decline into corruption and dissolution. Young people have to work abroad as there are no decent jobs in Nepal. Nepali youngsters deserve much better. Politicians lining their pockets has to stop. But who is brave enough to stand up to these demons? You've made a start, have the courage to fight for change.

Gill Porteous

■ Now is the perfect time to understand that it is never about the system but its leaders and their execution. Everyone made us believe different systems

would solve our issues for their own advantage. Drop this assumption, and the answer will finally start showing up.

Alok

### MIGRANT RETURNEE

I am happy to be able to read stories like this ('With love from Korea', #1292). My employers also tell me to eventually return to Nepal and do something with what I have learned here, and that they will help me. Surely, one day it will be me who is featured in Nepali Times.

Dipesh Khadka

### CHOLERA

An excellent write up ('Life in a time of Cholera', Ajaya Dixit, #1292). Congratulations Ajaya-jji, very happy to see you going strong.

Rattan Siddhi

■ This article is a verdict on

complacent power, not fate: two centuries after epidemics devastated Kathmandu, in a human induced climate change era where weather extremes and heavier rains and floods contaminate already broken systems, taps still deliver fecal water while budgets favor vanity flyovers over basic pipes, turning outbreaks into political decisions disguised as natural disasters.

Arup Rajouria

### PANAUTI

Thank you Sonia Awale for paying tribute to Gérard Toffin, a very knowledgeable scientist ('Saving Panauti's murals', Sonia Awale, #1292). I went to his lab before going to Nepal. It is a pity that France has stopped financing Panauti and other actions since the 90's.

Yves Carmona  
Former French Ambassador to  
Nepal

## Online Package



### CYCLE OF LIFE

Over 1,200 women in Patan have learned to cycle in the last few years due to an initiative by a local women started in 2021. Visit our website for story and video.



### BISHNU'S FARM

Instead of migrating abroad like his peers, Bishnu Pandey of Rupandehi imported Boer goats to start his own business, which is now thriving. Video on our YouTube channel.

## 1,000 Words



KESHAB THAPA / PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT

**COOL MAN:** Energy Minister Kulman Ghising submitted his resignation from government to Prime Minister Sushila Karki on Wednesday. Ghising's Ujyalo Nepal Party merged with the RSP last month, and he had drawn criticism for remaining in government while denying being a member of any party. He is now one of the vice-chairs of RSP, which has also pledged to make current Kathmandu Mayor Balen Shah prime minister if it wins a majority in the March election.

**Nepali Times**

Nepali Times on Facebook  
 Follow @nepalitimes on Twitter  
 Follow @nepalitimes on Instagram

Editor: Sonia Awale | Special Correspondent: Shristi Karki

Reporters: Sudiksha Tuladhar, Vishad Raj Onta | Layout: Kiran Maharjan

Publisher: Kunda Dixit, Nepali Times Pvt Ltd, Patan Dhoka | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu, Nepal

editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | Tel: +977 1 5445310



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

# BEST PART OF THE JOURNEY STOPOVER IN ISTANBUL



## COMPLIMENTARY HOTEL STAY

1 night for Economy Class  
2 nights for Business Class

YOU CAN EXTEND YOUR STAY  
WITH SPECIAL PRICES



## TURKISH AIRLINES

Terms and conditions apply, visit [turkishairlines.com](http://turkishairlines.com)  
Contact : [KTMSALES@THY.COM](mailto:KTMSALES@THY.COM) / 01-4538363/4538436

# Safe delivery in 2026

Nepal introducing two new initiatives to strengthen maternal and newborn health despite funding setbacks

Marty Logan

Despite funding setbacks, Nepal's public health sector keeps developing new initiatives to strengthen maternal and newborn health. Two in particular, aimed at improving maternal nutrition and safe delivery, are in the pipeline for 2026.

The first initiative is multiple micronutrient supplementation (MMS) for pregnant women. The MMS will replace the iron and folic acid (IFA) supplements that the government now provides with 15 essential vitamins and minerals, including IFA.

The second plan is to do field research on the use of carbetocin as a drug to prevent post-partum haemorrhage (PPH). This is important because carbetocin is not as heat-sensitive as oxytocin, the current main option for treating PPH. In fact, the new medicine is known as heat-sensitive carbetocin (HSC).

The study is scheduled to start early in the new year. It will be a collaboration between One Heart Worldwide, Ferring Pharmaceuticals and the family welfare division (FWD) of the Department of Health.

A recent study in Nigeria found that health-care providers preferred giving HSC to women delivering babies because it had fewer side-effects and was of higher quality



NISSI THAPA

than oxytocin, which was often reported to be degraded by heat or supply-chain issues. The same issues are also barriers in Nepal.

PPH has for decades been one of the leading causes of maternal deaths, in Nepal and globally.

"We are confident that transitioning from IFA to MMS will enable expectant mothers to receive a more comprehensive suite of micronutrients, leading to improved

pregnancy outcomes," says Pooja Pandey Rana, Country Director of Helen Keller International for Bangladesh and Nepal.

The MMS plan is a collaboration between the FWD, the NGO Helen Keller International, Eleanor Crook Foundation, a US-based organisation that funds nutrition work globally, and other development partners.

According to Lili Bikram Thapa,

Chief Nutrition Officer at the FWD, they are now preparing a road map for the rolling out of MMS once an assessment is finalised. Meanwhile, Indra Dhoj Kshetri of Helen Keller International said that his organisation is providing technical support to develop the road map.

"We hope that the government will gradually roll out MMS in a few provinces towards the end of this fiscal year July 2026," said Kshetri, Officer, Africa and Asia Content Marketing, at the organisation.

He added that the partners are now researching possible "issues and bottlenecks" about switching to MMS as well as acceptance of the new supplements

by pregnant women. Findings of both analyses are expected in January 2026.

## MONEY MATTERS

Another current task, said Kshetri, is trying to get MMS added to Nepal's essential medicine list (EML). That would reduce its cost. Today, MMS is imported as a food supplement and subject to 30% customs duty. But once on

the EML, that duty would drop to about 5%, making it easier on the wallets of development partners and — if the government eventually takes over the programme as planned — on the public purse.

Of course, getting it on the list does not guarantee its availability. As many previous reports have pointed out, including a recent article in NepalNews, local governments have had a hard time keeping all medicines in stock. This would of course also apply to HSC if it is approved for use.

Earlier this year a Micronutrient Survey planned for 2025 was cancelled after USAID shut down.

When asked if it was a good idea to go ahead with MMS if they didn't know the current state of micronutrients in Nepali diets, Pooja Pandey Rana of Helen Keller International said that while a micronutrient survey would have added useful insights, it is unlikely to have a significant impact on the government's planned transition to MMS.

"There's already a body of evidence from the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey and past micronutrient surveys that Nepali women have high levels of micronutrient deficiencies and undernutrition," she added.

"Prior research consistently shows that MMS leads to better pregnancy outcomes compared to IFA alone. A large body of global evidence reinforces these findings. And therefore, WHO has recommended to include MMS in the antenatal care package. We are confident that transitioning from IFA to MMS will enable expectant mothers to receive a more comprehensive suite of micronutrients, leading to improved pregnancy outcomes."

The plan is to start rolling out MMS in one province by July 2026. 🇳🇵



**NMB BANK**  
एनएमबि बैंक

## Turkish Airlines Open

Turkish Airlines has signed a new three-year title sponsorship for the Turkish Airlines Open Golf Tournament to be held between April 30 and 3 May at the National Golf Club in Antalya. The \$2.75 million award pool is an important stage as the fifth and final tournament of the Asian Swing, which is the first phase of the DP World Tour 2026 season. The 2025 champion, French Martin Couvra, will return to defend his title.



"We are pleased to once again become the title sponsor. This tournament strongly reflects Türkiye's vision of being a global hub for sports and tourism," stated Turkish Airlines CEO Bilal Ekşi.

## Indo-Nepal Trade

The Everest Chamber of Commerce and Industries is organising the 2nd Indo-Nepal Trade Festival at PHD House in New Delhi. The event will feature cultural performances and traditional Nepali food, amidst meetings between businesses, governments, diplomats, and tourism entrepreneurs.

## Ncell 250 towers

Ncell installed 250 new 4G towers and upgraded 2,200 sites across all seven provinces last year, including 100 new towers in Madhes. Ncell 4G is now available in all 77 districts, to more than 95% of the population.

## Appliances in instalments

Smart Appliances and Jagdamba Hire Purchase Limited have agreed to provide an upto 12 month 0% EMI service for its brands Skyworth and Livpure, which sell TVs, washing machines, fridges, water purifiers. The companies hope the agreement will make consumer appliances more accessible across the country.

## Energy exports

Nepal exported \$9.4 million worth of electricity to Bangladesh in 2025 for 40MW at a rate of US\$6.4 per unit. An agreement for power trade between Nepal, India and Bangladesh was signed in October 2024. Nepal also exported Rs17 billion worth of power to India last year.

## IME CSRs

Global IME bank announced 19 CSR programs to mark its 19th anniversary including health camps with cervical cancer testing, uterine prolapse treatment, eye checkups, cataract surgery, blood donation, food assistance, and autism awareness.



## GenZ reconstruction

The government has made a two-year plan to reconstruct public buildings damaged during widespread arson and vandalism in the GenZ protests. Total physical damage is estimated at Rs84.5 billion. There are 134 'Red' buildings needing full rebuilding, 176 'Yellow' need strengthening, and 134 'Green' have minor damage. Work is planned to start mid-January.



## Solar energy

Jhapa Energy has sold Rs47.1 million worth of solar-produced electricity to the NEA in the last five months. The company produced 6.52 million units of power from its 10MW project in Buluchok. The power is sold at Rs7.30 per unit.



## Nabil Awarded

Nabil received an Institutional Hero Award at the Development Debate and Development Hero Award ceremony organised by Bikash Media. Finance Minister Rameshore Khanal presented the award to CEO Manoj Gyawali.

## Yatri-Sipradi e-bike

Nepali EV startup Yatri motorcycles and Sipradi, the official distributors of Tata, are launching a joint venture to manufacture e-scooters in Nepal.

## Khalti at Nabil ATMs

Khalti Wallet users can now withdraw cash from Nabil ATM using the app without a card. Users can withdraw a maximum of Rs5,000 daily, and Rs25,000 monthly. The service will work through the app, the cardless withdrawal option on the bank's ATM screen, and an OTP sent to mobile.

## LONGi-Mogha

Chinese solar-tech company LONGi and Nepali renewable energy investment firm Mogha Energy are partnering to launch Hi-Mo X-10 solar panels in Nepal, targeting commercial, industrial and utility sectors. The Hi-MO X-10 panels offer 9% higher energy output and require 8% less land, while also providing better fire safety, and better performance in dust or snow.

## Dongfeng in Dang

MAW Vriddhi is launching a Dongfeng EV showroom in Dang in partnership with Rapti Automart. MAW launched the Nammi Vigo, an e-SUV with 350km range and fast charging: 30-80% in 18 minutes.



## Cathay at 80

Cathay has kicked off its '80 Years Together' anniversary celebrations by unveiling a legacy livery on an Airbus A350. The Hong Kong-based carrier will be hosting events and initiatives throughout 2026 for its anniversary. "Cathay and Hong Kong have grown together over the past eight decades, supporting each other through thick and thin," said CEO Richard Lam. Cabin crew donned Cathay Pacific's vintage uniforms through various eras.

# A healthier, wealthier Nepal

Working models for public-private partnership can fill the gap left by government in delivering universal health care

Srijana Devkota

Nepal has made dramatic progress in expanding health services, yet millions of people still do not fully benefit from their Constitution-ensured right to basic medical service.

Many of those deprived of accessible and affordable healthcare are in remote far-flung areas of the country, but increasingly they are also among the urban poor who have migrated to the cities and live in the margins.

In both areas there are gaps in service quality, workforce availability, and governance capacity. Out of pocket expenses for treatment of a member can push families into absolute poverty and debt.

In Nepal, rising demand for better and more affordable healthcare and workforce shortages due to outmigration of medical personnel and other factors mean that the government is unable to bridge these gaps through public provision alone.

Well-governed and accountable public-private partnerships (PPPs) aligned with national priorities offer a practical pathway from policy commitment to real-world impact. The experience of the non-profit Nyaya Health Nepal (NHN) in partnership with the Sudurpaschim Province is an example of where this has worked well.

Through public ownership and non-profit management, Bayalpata Hospital in Achham (pictured) and Charikot Hospital in Dolakha strengthened service delivery, supply chains, health workforce management, and digital health systems, while keeping all services free at the point of care.

NHN managed Charikot from 2016-2020 and handed it over to Bagmati Province, and Bayalpata was handed over to Sudurpachim after 17 years in August 2025. These partnerships reduced out-of-pocket spending, improved trust in public facilities, and directly addressed financial concerns of citizens.

## GOOD PRACTISES

The experience of Bayalpata and Charikot hospitals show that effective PPPs are governance-driven, not market-led. Clear agreements, transparent data sharing, performance-based management, and strong government oversight guaranteed that public institutions were strengthened rather than sidelined.

Bayalpata and Charikot successfully transitioned leadership and full management to Sudurpaschim and Bagmati provincial governments, proving that PPPs can build lasting government capacity, not dependency.



This model combined facility-level operational flexibility with public stewardship, and tackled long-standing weaknesses in Nepal's health system, from workforce retention to evidence-based decision-making. Replicating Bayalpata

model partnerships in selected hospitals and primary health care centers could rapidly advance the three pillars of universal healthcare: equitable access, quality services, and financial risk protection. Institutionalising public-private

partnerships within the Ministry of Health and Population and linking it to national health insurance reforms could help fulfil the promise of Article 35 of the Constitution guaranteeing basic healthcare to all citizens.

For development partners and donors, this could represent a high-impact, evidence-informed investment aligned with the WHO-World Bank call to reduce financial hardship while strengthening healthcare systems.

If Nepal is serious about leaving no one behind, strategic public-non-profit partnerships must move from the margins to the mainstream of health system reform. By scaling the NHN model at Bayalpata and Charikot nationwide, Nepal can build a resilient, equitable health system where every community regardless of location or income has access to quality care, financial protection, and the opportunity to succeed.

Investing in well-governed PPP models is not only essential to protect the health of the Nepali people but also to safeguard the country's economic stability and long-term resilience. 🇳🇵



Srijana Devkota is Director of Program and Partnerships at Nyaya Health Nepal (NHN).

Experience Luxury

# SILK Finish

# Violations of Nepal's a

Rana rulers objected to planes flying over

## The Pundits don't approve

Bhaskar Koirala

On 5 January 1939, Adolf Hitler was in Berghof, his mountain retreat in the Bavarian Alps, a place from where a considerable number of decisions related to World War II were taken in addition to being a place where plans were set out that would result in some of the most atrocious genocidal crimes the world has known.

Photographs of the place reveal a stunning, idyllic landscape, the actual retreat not appearing too impressive, a structure rather plainly mounted with ordinary corrugated sheet. But then you focus on the images containing Hitler himself.

What is striking about such images is the order and tranquility they betray, order reflected in the dress of the man and another lady who appears to be his partner or companion; order reflected in the two slender German shepherds bound to their masters by these delicately studded leashes but oblivious to the horror that war and aggression instigated by these people was wrecking across the lands.

To Berghof Castle had arrived that winter morning the Polish Foreign Minister Jozef Beck who had come determined to rebuff Hitler's claims upon the port city of Danzig (Gdansk) and some other border guarantees on offer. Beck was known not just as foreign minister but as a Polish statesman, not a trifling designation and one wonders whether his Calvinist Protestant upbringing was to some extent the cause of the esteem he enjoyed.

That same day in January 1939, 7,000km away in Kathmandu, Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana was sitting in his office with his assistant hovering about, wondering what the task of the day would be. The prime minister asked him to load the typewriter with paper, as important correspondence had to be dispatched that afternoon via telegram.

A servant had quietly surfaced in the room, made his way towards the Maharaja who used to sport a handlebar-walrus moustache. That early in the morning he was seen wearing a slightly Nepali-fied brown Kashmiri firan, the length of the arms not covering the wrist on which he was wearing a Longines Aviator watch with a huge brass dial that had been gifted to him a few months before. The servant set down the large brimmed cup of tulsi tea that sat upon a delicately ornate tea plate, possibly of Chinese provenance.

Word had become privy to the Maharaja via intimation he received



Places.	Date.	Time.	Number of planes.	P.O. and District of India.
1. Butwal	23.4.42.	11 AM.	Two.	Soharagunj (Basti).
2. Mahuttari.	23.4.42.	12 P.M.	One.	Sursand (Muzaffarpur).
3. Jhapa.	23.4.42.	12-15 PM.	One.	Digalbank (Purnea).
4. Amlekhgunj.	23.4.42.	11-10 AM.	One.	Raxaul (Motihari).
5. Dhankuta.	30.4.42.	10 A.M.	Noise heard; not seen due to cloud.	Darjeeling.
6. Mahuttari.	4.5.42.	12-10 P.M.	One	Sursand (Muzaffarpur).
7. Sisagarhi.	6.5.42.	10-21 AM.	One Platinum colour.	Raxaul (Motihari).

3. It is possible that 1, 2 and 3 represent the same plane moving from West to East.

by speed horse messenger the evening before, informing him of news from Hanuman Nagar in Saptari in the Tarai adjoining British Indian district of Bhagalpur. The news was rather ominous for the de-facto ruler of Nepal which was officially the Kingdom of Nepal but its Monarch had been so utterly emasculated that he was not really even a titular King.

In his letter to His Britannic Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of Nepal, Sir Juddha brought to the attention of the British Envoy that on the afternoon of 29 December 1938, an aeroplane had been spotted flying northwards from the British side into Nepal's airspace and had proceeded past Barmajia, the 'head work of the Trijuga Canal', navigating further for ten minutes before the aircraft took a sharp turn back south.

The Maharaja could not say in his letter to the British Minister exactly where in British territory the plane had come from but he ventured to guess that the aircraft may have originated from Bhagalpur or Purnea. Then he went on to tell the Minister: 'I should feel obliged if you would kindly make an enquiry and take needful steps to have the aviators warned not to fly across into Nepalese territory.'

His Britannic Majesty's Minister at Kathmandu sat with this information for about a week after which he determined that the best course of action would be to write to the Chief Secretary of the Political and Appointment Department (in Patna), Mr R E Russel, Esq., C.I.E., I.C.E. (who had just completed his tenure as Collector of Puri, Orissa) to understand what exactly was going on.

Consequently, on 13 January 1939, such a letter was dispatched to the Chief Secretary whom the British Minister addressed by saying, 'I would be grateful if the enquiry asked for could be made and needful steps taken to warn the aviators concerned not to fly across Nepalese Territory.'

At issue here was the fact that the Nepal government did not like planes flying over its territory, and several reasons were advanced by the leadership to explain why. First, Nepal felt that unless the government's permission was obtained in advance for such flights, its independence was being denied.

The second and perhaps more proximate reason that gave rise to Nepal's displeasure was that superstitious Pandits in Kathmandu objected to it on religious grounds, citing scripture and astrology to make the point that mechanised flying objects in Nepal could portend various manner of disturbances including natural calamities.

One wonders, however, whether in fact the Pandits were more practical and shrewder in dispensing their ecclesiastical judgements than they let on: flights coming in and out of Nepal would surely erode their mystique and reduce their indispensable status.

Chief Secretary R E Russel went on to launch an investigation into the overflight that lasted about a month at the conclusion of which the British Minister in Kathmandu received correspondence from Patna that explained that no aeroplane except one belonging to a Mr Fairweather had flown on that particular date and that too did not 'really' fly over Nepal's territory.

He explained: 'It is probable that the Maharaja of Nepal is referring

to this aeroplane whose course was misjudged by the people in Nepal.' However, the Chief Secretary went on to say that Mr Fairweather and others were being informed 'not to fly in future on a course which would involve any likelihood of crossing the Nepalese boundary without obtaining previous permission'.

W M Fairweather at the time was stationed in Muzaffarpur, and was himself compelled to write to the Chief Secretary explaining that though he regretted that the Nepal government had complained to them about a delinquent flight in their airspace, 'this is not correct'.

He explained that when his plane was well above the clouds, 'the people on the border heard it, and imagined it was flying into Nepal'. Actually, according to Fairweather, the border was roughly 20 miles north from where he was flying to view a specific section of the Kosi river, and then he had 'climbed right above the clouds heading north for about 10 miles', taking in a view of Mt Everest and then circling back down south.

Upon receipt of the Chief Secretary's letter, the British Minister went on to write to His Highness the Prime Minister relating all of this information adding at the end: 'Mr Fairweather has asked if he should write Your Highness a personal letter explaining exactly what he did. Would Your Highness like him to do so?'

A few days later the Maharaja wrote back, noting with thanks the information supplied to him by the British Minister but expressing rather sternly, 'there is no mistake in the fact reported from Barmajia that an aeroplane was seen flying over that place steering northwards and back again after a few minutes'.

Explaining the obvious fact that as Barmajia was situated several miles from the Nepal-Britain border, 'the appearance of the aeroplane there on a fine day could not have been due to the pilot having lost his bearing owing to atmospheric disturbance'.

The Prime Minister, however, was now satisfied with the action being taken to prevent a repeat of such an incident and under the circumstances did 'not see any necessity of asking Mr Fairweather to write a personal letter to me in the matter'. 🇨🇪

## Nepal's Japanese

Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, is a tropical haven of small verdant green rolling hills looking out to lagoon blue waters of the Coral Sea beyond which is northern Australia.

With rather moderate temperatures for a place that features a tropical savanna climate, the flora and fauna, the kangaroos and Birds of Paradise from which were drawn the feathers used for the Crown worn by Monarchs of Nepal, makes it an attractive location.

On 8 May 1942, United States and Australian naval and air forces engaged with the Imperial Japanese Navy in the Battle of the Coral Sea off the coast of Port Moresby. A Japanese carrier air attack had bombed the USS Lexington which had to be abandoned and scuttled — the first American carrier lost in World War II.

Though tactically this was perceived as a success for the Japanese, the battle was in fact a strategic victory for the Allies as it prevented the Japanese capture of Port Moresby and halted



# airspace during WWII

overhead, fearing invasion or divine anger



**ANTI-AIRCRAFT:** (Clockwise) Commanding General Bir Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana who sent objections to an American diplomat in New Delhi about overflights by American military aircraft.

The Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighter aircraft which had a range of over 3,000km and could have overflown Nepal.

Details of flights spotted over Nepal which was used to raise objections with the British administration in India.

tete with the British Minister to inform him that on 29 April 1942, an aeroplane was seen flying over Amlekhganj in Nepal and that numerous other planes had been flying over Nepali territory as well.

The officer explained to the Minister that though the Nepal government did not wish to complain, it felt compelled to bring this to his notice as it was wrong to violate Nepali air space 'particularly now when it was difficult to convince the Nepalese that they were out of long-range Japanese bombers'.

In fact, Nepal was not out of range of Japan's air force which had among other assets, a number of Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters that boasted impressive range of some 3,100km. But that did not figure into the calculus of the British Minister when he told A S B Shah that he assured Nepal's leadership 'that Japanese bombers could not reach any portion of Nepal yet' but that he agreed that our aeroplanes should not fly over Nepal's territory if it could be avoided.

In his discussions the British Minister informed the officer that it would be useless for him 'to tell the Government of India vaguely that planes had flown over [Nepal]. I must give details'. And details were furnished to the Minister — surprisingly meticulous ones too given the circumstances — containing exact place, date, time, number of planes observed, and adding the point of reference in British Indian territory as well (pictured, left).

With respect to a plane that had reportedly flown over Sisagarhi, the British Minister was probably not too enthusiastic to relate to New Delhi that the Post Commander reported that incident as having occurred at precisely '10:21am' (and not 10:20am!) on '6.5.42.', and 'found that the Sepoys had fallen in and were about to open fire when he stopped them saying that the plane must be a British or American plane'.

That Nepal had nearly fired

upon an Allied aircraft using small arms (probably Martini-Henry rifles) would not just have been injurious to global war propaganda, but would have likely created a significant fall-out in British-Nepal relations with immediate and serious repercussions for Gurkha recruitment.

Which explains why the Minister went on to inform A S B Shah that he would be grateful if this information could be passed on to Air Force Headquarters immediately 'with the request that they will warn airmen against flying over Nepal territory' because this was having a 'bad effect' on the Nepali people.

The British Minister decided to dispatch another confidential letter on 26 May 1942, in which he shared a further list of planes which had been seen flying over Nepal. 'This is not a good thing to happen,' the British Minister emphasised, unless the Government of India 'first obtained His Highness' permission' because the Nepal government did not like planes flying over its territory.

Four specific reasons were cited by the British Minister to explain why Nepal took umbrage: firstly, that unless prior permission was obtained, the Nepalis felt their independence was being trampled upon and secondly, that 'so far their superstitious Pandits have objected to it on religious grounds'.

The third reason cited was that the morale of the people was being upset while the fourth point was a conundrum to even the Minister: apparently Nepal's leadership insisted 'that there is nothing to stop aerial photography of their country to which they strongly object, and curiously enough, are particularly averse to Indians flying over it'. What difference would it have made to Nepal whether airmen flying over the country were British or Indian?

The Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the External Affairs Department in New Delhi did not respond for 18 days, which appeared to leave the British Minister in Kathmandu in a state of some distress because he was likely receiving frequent reminders from the Nepalis seeking an official and definitive explanation.

The British Minister dispatched a confidential note on 26 May 1942, to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the Foreign Office in London that contained the two letters sent to A S B Shah with the subject line 'Aeroplanes seen flying over Nepalese territory'. This was almost as if to state the obvious: that this was a serious matter and he could not comprehend as to why no official clarification had been issued thus far.

We find no direct response to the British Minister's telegram in official records, but notes scribbled on the bottom of the page of the telegram indicate that the authorities in London seconded to oversee the case observed two essential points arising out of the incident.

The first was that the British believed that 'the Nepalese Govt. adopt a more tolerant attitude than the Afghans, but then they

haven't had any bombs dropped [on them]!' The other thing that caught the attention of the official in London who studied the enclosures forwarded to him from Kathmandu was that 'the point about Nepalese fear of Japanese planes is a telling one and it is to be hoped that the Govt. of India will confirm with G.H.Q about violation'.

In other words, it could very well have been that the British underestimated Japan's ability to strike at distances as far afield as Nepal, which implied that many parts of British India were even more vulnerable to such air attacks. Why else would the official in London find the point about Nepalese fear of Japanese planes so 'telling'?

A S B Shah finally responded to His Britannic Majesty's Minister in Kathmandu on 10 June 1942, informing him that the position had been 'personally explained to the Air Staffs of Air Headquarters of Royal Air Force and of the United States Air Force'. Both had been informed that the Government of India 'attach very great importance to the maintenance of good relations with the independent State of Nepal and the undesirability of further violations of her territory'.

Pilots had been instructed not to fly over Nepal and furthermore, he wished the British Minister to know that 'the second lot of violations took place probably before the orders could get out. There was a certain amount of time lag'.

The incident had drawn sufficient interest and curiosity by now that internal secret memoranda began circulating within British officialdom to provide a basis upon which authorities could properly comprehend the events in Nepal ending 30 June 1942.

The Maharaja Prime Minister of Nepal had realised that a large number of British and American planes were being 'flown from West to East over India from centres such as Karachi, Delhi, Ambala and Lahore and that, latitudinally, a part of Nepal lies in the way'.

The conclusion drawn by British analysts was that the principal reason planes were overflying Nepal was that 'many of the pilots are young British and Americans who have never been East before ... steps have been and are being taken by the Government of India'.

In July, another incident consumed the attention of the Secretary of State himself in London who in his cypher telegram to the Government of India, External Affairs Department, explained that the Times newspaper had published a report from 'Chungking' (Chongqing in southwest China) 'that United States airman Colonel Scott has flown military aircraft over Everest'.

The Secretary of State instructed the Government of India to repeat to Kathmandu 'Forminka No. 135 of 21st July' and settle with the United States Commissioner in New Delhi exactly how the matter was to be handled if the Nepalis protested. The main point the Secretary wished to convey was that because the United States Government was not at the time represented in Kathmandu, 'it might be convenient for us to assume technical responsibility'.

Forminka No. 135 was reference to a Cypher Telegram from Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, India Office, to His Majesty's Minister in Kabul in which it was explained that 'the fact that aircraft are based on British territory would not itself

constitute British responsibility' unless the aircraft were under British command and control.

In this case, United States military aircraft in India were organised in 'homogeneous American formations' and were under the strategic control of the British Commander-in-Chief (India) yet the aircraft in question carried American markings.

The Secretary of State appeared to be uncertain as to 'exactly what degree of British control this will mean in practice' but that the position was essentially that either the US or British government could accept responsibility while His Majesty's Government would be content to allow the British Minister in Kathmandu to confer with his United States colleague, based upon 'instructions he receives from Washington, [and decide] which Government should do so'.

The issue also seemed to hinge on the possibility that if the Americans accepted responsibility, this 'might facilitate settlement of liability to pay compensation in remote contingency of this point arising'.

On 13 August 1942, Commanding General of the Nepal Army Sir Bahadur Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana, G B E, happened to meet the British Minister in Kathmandu. General Bahadur was the son of Maharaja Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher Rana himself and was in fact widely believed by the British establishment to be the real power behind the scenes. He certainly resembled his father with the walrus moustache yet at times also looked like a mathematician when he decided to wear spectacles.

General Bahadur related to the British Minister that he recently had an 'interview' with a certain 'Captain Boileau' of the US Air Force, who had come to see the General while the latter was in New Delhi about American planes flying over Nepal. The General explained to the British Minister that Captain Boileau had initially inclined to be 'overbearing' when he asserted: 'If you are helping the British, what is your objection to our flying over Nepal?'

To which the General said that Nepal was indeed helping the British which was in fact 'an ancient and most friendly ally' of Nepal but that Nepal was not a part of India and the British had always respected Nepalese territory and had not flown over it'.

Captain Boileau responded initially that he 'thought all this was nonsense' and that it was a narrow-minded approach of the Nepalese to deny American planes access to their airspace. General Bahadur replied that 'on the contrary he thought it was very rude of the Americans to do so without first asking for permission from the Nepalese Government'.

The General was clear in his message to the American officer that if permission was sought and if the reasons for wanting to fly over Nepal were adequate, he was sure that the Prime Minister of Nepal would grant permission. Captain Boileau finally understood this message after which 'he was very nice about everything and had promised that all possible steps would be taken to prevent American pilots flying over Nepalese territory'. 🇳🇵

Bhaskar Koirala is a New Delhi based writer. bhaskar.koirala@gmail.com

## s fear of se planes

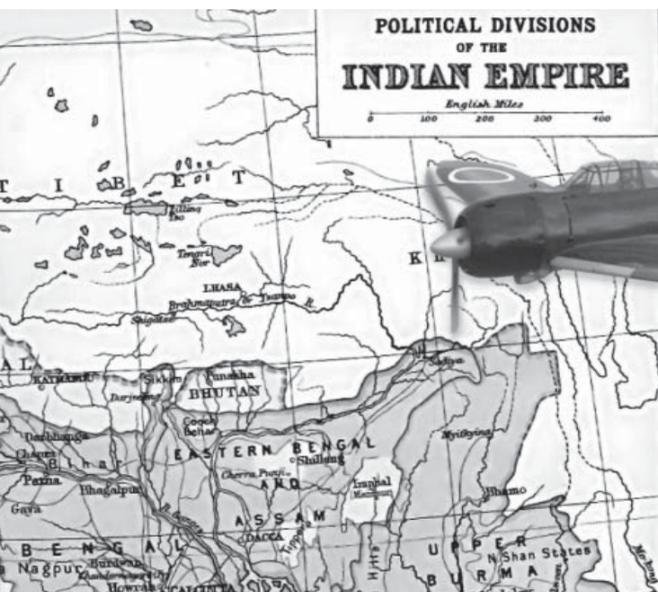
its southward expansion into Australia, cutting off vital sea lanes.

Imperial Japan had enjoyed a string of military successes leading up to 1942 by which time it had established numerous military bases on captured territories across Asia and the Pacific including Singapore, Rabaul, the Philippines, Dutch East Indies, Burma and outposts in the Andaman Islands, New Guinea and the Solomons, all places where the Japanese maintained naval and air facilities.

The British Minister at the Legation in Kathmandu had probably not yet heard the news that the USS Lexington had gone down. Had such news reached the British envoy on 8 May 1942, perhaps the tone of his letter written the same day would not have been so utterly lacking in urgency and disjointed from global events of the day.

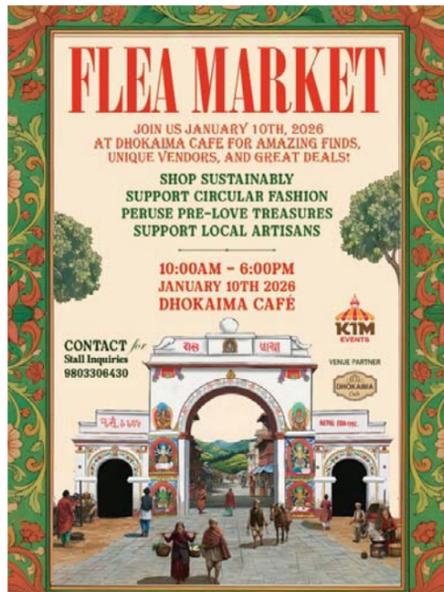
The letter was to Major A S B Shah, the Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the External Affairs Department in New Delhi.

Four days earlier, the Nepali officer attached to the British Legation sought a special tete-a-





## Events



### Dhokaima flea market

KTM Events in collaboration with Dhokaima Cafe is set to resume its flea market this Saturday. Be a sustainable shopper and choose from pre-loved fashion and wardrobe staples, household decor, kitchenware, and collectibles, handmade jewellery and accessories, as well as local art and artisan crafts.

10 January, 10am-6pm, Dhokaima Café

### Art exhibition

A solo exhibition by Suchin Shrestha exploring the human figure and interiority through contemporary visual language. The works reflect the nuanced intersections of thought, desire, and presence.

Until 10 January, 11am-5pm, Patan Wing, Nakabahil

### Bhairav Bhav

Bhairav Bhav presents artist Mukesh Shrestha's evocative exploration of Shiva and his fierce manifestation as Bhairav, rooted in the sacred traditions of the Kathmandu Valley.

Till 31 January (Only by appointment on Mondays), Gallery 108, Darbar Marg

### Amilchaur Hike

Hike for Nepal is organising a day-long hike to Amilchaur this weekend. Enjoy lush green trails and meet new acquaintances along the way.

10 January, 6:40am, Rs 1,500, Bhrikutimandap



### Bhatti Tales

In James Dhakal's first original play Bhatti Tales, a local watering hole is a microcosm of Nepali society.

Till 17 January, 5pm (except Tuesdays) and Saturday matinee at 1pm, Sadhana Ghar Theatre, Oscar College of Film Studies

### National Topi Day Run

A run like none other, with topis on your head. Choose between two distances: 8 km and 4.5km.

January 11, 6am, Rs150-200, Patan Darbar Square



### Hiti Art Exhibition

E-Arts Nepal, Rotary Club of Yala and Chiva Chaitya have come together to celebrate Kathmandu's hiti heritage for this exhibition that showcases paintings by 20 contemporary Nepali artists.

9-11 January, 11am-6pm, Patan Museum



## Music

### KJC Winter Camp

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory's week-long Winter Camp 2026 for children aged 6-12 combines music, art, movement, and mindfulness, with interactive sessions and a final performance.

Till 14 January, 10am-4pm, Rs12,000, KJC Chabahil

### Music Festiv 2026

Prepare yourself for The Edge's live performance at Music Festiv 2026. Enjoy an unforgettable evening filled with music and culture.

15 January, 3:00pm onwards, Rs 500-1000, Campachaur, Chitwan



### Gone Elvis

Gone Elvis is in the house this Saturday at Beers N' Cheers for a live performance. Grab a cocktail or some beer and join in in the audience.

10 January, Beers N' Cheers, Jhamsikhel

### Acoustic Night

Experience an acoustic night with Shobeen Thapa Magar performing live at Hard Rock Cafe. Plan a cozy evening with friends and close ones.

10 January, 6:30pm - 9:30pm, Hard Rock Cafe, Durbar Marg



### Musical Fiesta

Catch Sushant Ra Rāga's vibrant performance at the Musical Fiesta. Upbeat performances and soulful melodies are sure to uplift spirits.

10 January, 12:30pm onwards, Rs. 460, St. Xavier's College, Maitighar



## Getaway



### Dwarika's Sanctuary

If you're looking to getaway for lunch outside the city or for a spa experience that will wash away all your worries, Dwarika's Sanctuary is the place to go. A relaxing couple of hours in the salt room for Crystal Salt Therapy will leave one feeling energised and ready to tackle the chaos of the city.

Dhulikhel (01) 4579488

### Aloft staycation

Have a joyful, cosy, and relaxing staycation at Aloft Kathmandu Thamel this new year. Check out discounts and other perks under the exclusive offer.

Till 15 January, Rs11,000 (Single occupancy) / Rs12,000 (Double occupancy), Aloft Kathmandu Thamel (01) 5252000



### Borderlands Eco Resort

Enveloped in the natural Himalayan splendor, the resort is located a mere three hours north of Kathmandu. A quick getaway to wild nature—celebrate the weekend for eco-adventures.

Sindhupalchok, 9802025888

### Godavari Village Resort

Spread over 14 lush green acres, the resort offers mountain views and traditionally-styled cottages and buildings overlooking endless fields.

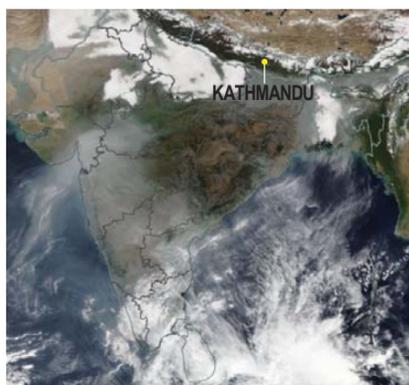
Godavari, 9869804598

### Tiger Mountain Pokhara

The resort offers a model for the kind of tourism Nepal should be promoting: homegrown high-value eco-tourism that uses local products and showcases the best of Nepal's scenery, nature and culture.

Kandani Danda (01) 4720580

## Weekend Weather



### COLD AND DRY

The Tarai as well as the Trisuli, Seti and Sun Kosi river valleys will continue to be blanketed by thick fog till noon. The minimum temperature will stay in the 3-4°Celsius range in Kathmandu, with below freezing in Jomsom, Jumla and most mountain towns. No westerly disturbance in sight, and the long-range forecast shows another winter drought in the coming month.



## Our Pick



Set in the 1930s, twin brothers both played by Michael B. Jordan return to their hometown Mississippi Delta after fighting World War I. Upon their return they are confronted by supernatural forces set in the motion with the purchase of a sawmill using money stolen from criminal syndicates to start a juke joint for the local Black community. Their younger cousin joins them despite his pastor father's warnings about the sins of blues music. The critically acclaimed vampire horror movie also stars Hailee Steinfeld, Miles Caton, Jack O'Connell, Wunmi Mosaku, Jayme Lawson, Omar Miller and Delroy Lindo.



## Dining

### Gangnam Galbi Barbeque

Korean barbecue, grill and stick food, a.k.a. galbi, will tempt one as it cooks and will definitely tantalize one's taste buds.

Naxal (01) 4547137

### Mechung

Eat the best of Tibet at this authentic Tibetan restaurant. The sha phaley, thukpa and gyuma are a must.

Boudha (01) 4477759



### Cafe Soma

For a sunny spot to grab brunch in and mouthwatering desserts, head to Soma's Baluwater location and if you're looking for a place to work by yourself, the Jhamsikhel location is perfect.

Jhamsikhel (01) 5428732 / Baluwater (01) 4415792

### WXYZ Winter Warmers

Savor the season with comforting winter cocktails and mocktails at Aloft's WXYZ. Call for reservations.

Till 28 February, 11am-11pm, Mocktails – Rs599 (mocktails) / Rs999 (cocktails), Aloft Kathmandu Thamel, 9860849912



### Le Sherpa

With a focus on seasonal and local vegetables and fruits, Le Sherpa's chef creates seasonal menus that delight your appetite. Try the Grilled Chicken Leg with Morel Mushroom.

Maharajanj, 9801159480

## 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 नपराँ ।
- 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

# RSP's PR list is not good PR

Political legitimacy tethered to popularity and digital visibility risks sidelining competent individuals who lack social capital



**Cyberia**  
Ayusha Chalise

Nepal's 2022 elections, its second under the federal system, were marked by a disruption in Nepal's political status quo. Two figures stood out in particular: Balen Shah, whose outsider candidacy transformed urban political imagination, and the Rastriya Swatantra Party under Rabi Lamichhane, which leveraged his extensive media-built credibility to secure unexpected influence within months of its formation.

Their success was not an ideological victory, it was the victory of leaders who presented a vision of leadership that was different from Nepal's political norm. It was the result of sophisticated public relations, effective message dissemination, and the careful cultivation of the credibility of these forces.

Last week, these once-separate trajectories formally converged as Shah and Lamichhane first joined forces, and within twenty-four hours their alliance expanded further with Kulman Ghising's Ujjyalo Party. Ghising, who was appointed Minister in Nepal's post-September interim Cabinet largely due to his public goodwill, has been another public figure whose reputation has been built as much through perception as through performance.

Together, Balen-Rabi-Kulman (BRK) now present themselves as an alternative front to the entrenched Oli-Prachanda-Deuba (OPD) power centre. But as this emerging bloc positions itself as a corrective option to "old politics", the first substantive glimpse into its internal political behaviour raises important questions. The alliance's Proportional Representation (PR) list provides an early indicator of priorities.

"The PR list of RSP showcases the utter disrespect for the constitution," says Shailee Chaudhary, a PR candidate from Gatisheel Loktantrik Party. "It reveals that RSP at its core is an opportunistic clique instead of a political party. For them the PR list became a corporate takeover for their investors and brand ambassadors."

Prospective candidates were reportedly required to pay Rs50,000 to have their names included, and the resulting roster reads less like a reflection of Nepal's diverse social fabric and more like an inventory of recognised public figures.

The party's explanation for the Rs50,000 fee requirement was that it has been raised to ensure that candidates are well off enough to not engage in corruption. But Yajaswi Mangpang, President

of Youth Congress Nepal says this defense implies that corruption is exclusive to the poor: "The PR system of RSP has been captured by elites. The fact that one had to be affluent to be considered in the list is exclusionary."

Mangpang compares the PR selection process of the RSP to the Nepali Congress. The NC has exploited the PR list, she says, but the party has at the least understood the essence of the system, and why it exists. "Nepal's diversity, its socio-economic and political history, as well as where we are now must be understood by politicians," she adds.

### POLITICS OR POPULARITY

Actors, singers, pageant winners to business personalities and athletes in RSP's PR list have positioned themselves as representatives of marginalised communities. Notable names include (pictured, left to right) former Miss Nepal Anushka Shrestha (Adhivasi Woman), singer Prakash Saput (Dalit), the once formidable contender for KMC mayoral race, Ranju Darshana (Khas Arya-Woman), executive director of Goldstar shoes Vidhusi Rana (Khas-Arya Woman), former cricketer Gyanendra Malla (Adhivasi) and actress Reema Bishwokarma (Dalit Woman).

Rather than reimagining representation, RSP's PR list appears to extend the same reliance on visibility and public appeal that has driven the BRK's rise so far. Reducing politics to communication tactics and profile-building not only trivialises governance, it fundamentally distorts the purpose of the PR system, which was designed to broaden inclusion, not as a stage to curate and amplify personalities with pre-existing social capital.

"The inclusion of already established figures in the PR list meant for marginalised communities is evidence of intellectual and moral poverty," says Chaudhary. "It signals that their approach is 100% about marketing and 0% about representation. They are not building a party, they are merging fan clubs, they confuse social media trends with grassroots movements and celebrity recognition with democratic legitimacy."

Indeed, this strategy is akin to the dynamics of social media, where visibility translates directly into political currency. Shah's politics has been inseparable from his online persona, carefully crafted through bold declarations, poetic nationalism, and viral digital performance. Lamichhane's rise, meanwhile, is rooted in years of television-driven credibility, now amplified through algorithmic circulation that rewards outrage, emotional immediacy, and charismatic confrontation over deliberative politics.

The BRK project exemplifies how Nepali politics is increasingly being shaped by algorithmic culture. Platforms such as

Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube don't simply reflect political sentiment; they actively shape it by privileging sensationalism, conflict, and personality-driven storytelling. Their political momentum is therefore less a reflection of ideological consolidation and more a product of digital mobilisation, where "followers" begin to substitute party structures, and engagement metrics are mistaken for mass legitimacy.

In such an ecosystem, leaders who can command attention are rewarded more than those who can articulate policy. Indeed, political power in Nepal is increasingly determined by who commands the loudest applause, especially online. This risks reducing democracy

to an algorithmic popularity contest: noisy and charismatic, but ultimately no different from the legacy political figures, just with a new facade.

Political legitimacy online may make it seem like the people and the leader are interacting, directly in touch with one another, but to pursue popularity over policy-driven politics is to avoid facing the public. What the RSP has done now is to make a safety valve for elites so that they do not actively interact with the people.

"To run an election is to have guts, you must have an understanding of your constituency, you must have a vision, and it is a gamble," says Mangpang.

When political legitimacy becomes increasingly tethered to personal popularity and digital visibility, it risks sidelining individuals who possess competence, policy expertise, and grassroots understanding, because they lack comparable social capital.

If the system rewards recognition over representation, leadership opportunities go to those embedded in media and celebrity ecosystems. This could consolidate power and perpetuate the marginalisation of communities who are structurally disenfranchised from politics.

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



EDWARD MORGAN

# New 8,000ers

Nepal has added six Himalayan peaks to raise the total eight-thousanders from 14 to 20

**Edward Morgan**

In 2025, Nepal's Ministry of Tourism added six new 8,000m peaks to those listed on its website. These are subsidiary summits of Kangchenjunga and Lhotse, which some view as insufficiently independent to be called separate peaks.

In 2024, the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) responded to a request by the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) and the government to officially recognise these peaks. While recognising that 'there is no one definition of a "mountain" or a "peak" or a "top" or "point" in topographic terms', and

encouraging further debate, the UIAA's opinion was that the 8,000m peaks should continue to the 'Classic 14', first completed by Reinhold Messner in 1986.

The degree of prominence and isolation of the six new peaks varies, with Yalung Kang having the strongest claim to being a separate peak with a prominence of 135m, but they are all separate

enough to be included on some peak-bagging lists. The UIAA's own list of 4,000m summits in the European Alps includes Punta Giordani with a prominence of only 6m.

Whatever the case for the six peaks being geographically separate mountains, they represent significant climbing challenges. They are not minor tops that can simply be 'bagged' on route to a main summit. In the case of Lhotse Middle and Lhotse Shar, no one has ever managed to traverse between them and Lhotse itself.

Several fine routes have already been climbed on these mountains, such as Slovenians Andrej Štremfelj and Marko Prezelj's alpine style ascent of the South-West Ridge of Kangchenjunga South.

The six peaks have not yet achieved universal acceptance, but it is possible that climbing an expanded list of 20 eight-thousanders could become a new mountaineering challenge, just as the 14 classic peaks are today. It is therefore interesting to analyse who is currently closest to achieving this goal, using data from The Himalayan Database and other internet research.

The first conclusion of my analysis is that these six additional peaks have received far less attention than the classic 14 eight-thousanders. One of them, Yalung Kang West, has never been climbed or even attempted: probably because it is a subsidiary peak of Yalung Kang which is itself a subsidiary peak.

The other five peaks have seen a

**Dirgha Raj Upadhyay**  
in Denver

Did George Mallory and Andrew Irvine of the 1924 British Expedition reach the top of the highest mountain in the world?

It has been more than a century after the two climbers were last seen just 300m below the summit. And 26 years ago Mallory's remains were found on the North Face of Everest, while Irvine's boot was located at its base.

Some doubt that the two could have reached the top with the level of equipment and clothing of the time, but others are convinced that at least one of them made it but had an accident on the way down.

Among those who believe Mallory and Irvine were the first to climb Mt Everest, and not Hillary and Tenzing in 1953, are the Nepali guides who took part in the research expeditions in 1999, 2001 and 2004 to find clues about Mallory and Irvine.

Mallory's body was found 8,125m on the North Face in 1999, and Irvine's detached foot and sock with his initials inside a leather hob-nailed boot was found in 2024 in the Rongbuk Glacier below the North Face. Various expeditions have recovered a mitten, an oxygen cylinder, and ice axe from that expedition.

"I believe they reached the summit, and fell on the way down in the dark and bad weather," says Panuru Sherpa, who has climbed Mt Everest 16 times, including on the northern route taken by four British expeditions in 1921, 1922, 1924 and 1933.

"They were making good progress past the Second Step from where it is a much easier hour-and-a-half to the summit. A climber who reaches that point below the final pyramid does not turn back."

Panuru is convinced that the location of Mallory's body and Irvine's ice axe shows that the two had not lost their way on their descent. He told Nepali Times in Denver,

## Finding George Mallory

Sherpa brothers who took part in finding George Mallory recount their 1999 Everest expedition



where he now lives: "Mallory's body was not decomposed even after 75 years, and his exposed back was white like marble. One of legs was broken, and there was an altimeter and letters written to his wife Ruth in his pocket."

He remembers the search team was happy to locate Mallory, but it was unable to find one of the three cameras believed to be with the duo that could have held the proof that the two, or at least one of them, had indeed been the first to climb Everest.

There was a deep wound around Mallory's waist, which could have been caused during the fall by the rope which was still found tied around his body. Mallory's remains were covered in stone slabs at the site after a brief

ritual, Panuru recalls.

A 1975 Chinese expedition reported seeing the body of a Western climber, which was probably Mallory, near their Camp VI. There are rumours in climbing circles that the Chinese also found a camera, but that the negative could not be developed.

Everest summiteers have said the Second Step's 45m overhanging cliff at 8,610m would have been "essentially insurmountable", and it is only possible today because the Chinese fixed aluminium ladders to the rock face in 1975.

But Panuru agrees with other mountaineering historians who believe Mallory could have decided to take a route below the northeast ridge and bypass the

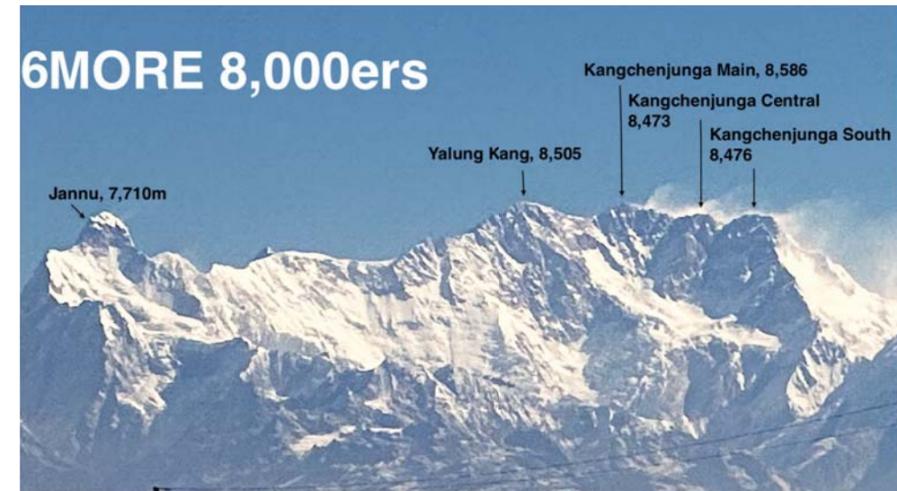
Second Step, following the advice of fellow team member Ed Norton who set the then world record by reaching 8,572m.

The other finding that could indicate that Mallory reached the top was that a photograph of his wife Ruth which he intended to place at the summit was not in his pocket.

### EVEREST CONNECTION

Panuru is the son of Nima Tsering Sherpa, who was a part of the 1953 expedition to Mt Everest that made Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay the first climbers on the world's highest peak. Nima carried loads for that expedition up to the South Col.

# ... may restart peak-grabbing race



KUNDA DIXIT



**RENEWING THE RACE:** (left to right) The South Wall of Lhotse with Lhotse Middle (centre) and Lhotse Shar (right) from Island Peak.

Nepal has listed six additional 8,000ers: Yalung Kang (8,505m), Yalung Kang West (8,077m), Kangchenjunga Central (8,473m), Kangchenjunga South (8,476m), Lhotse Middle (8,410m), and Lhotse Shar (8,400m).

Only one mountaineer, Korean Um Hong-Gil, has climbed any of the six additional peaks.

which further complicates the task of coming up with a definite extended list. At the moment, these subsidiary summits are not attracting a lot of attention: of the 138 summit climbs on them, only 12 occurred in the last 25 years and none since 2011.

Most climbers like to have some wide recognition of a target before investing time and money in trying to achieve it, and this may make it hard to build interest. But as completing the classic 8,000m peaks starts to become a rather frequent occurrence, some may be attracted to the longer list.

If this new challenge catches on, as the Ministry of Tourism presumably hopes, how long will it be before someone passes Um Hong-Gil's total and how long before someone climbs all 20 or 22 or 23 summits? 🇰🇷

*Edward Morgan is a British author and climber based in Switzerland. His first book, Lhotse South Face - The Wall of Legends, has been published in several languages and his second book, Chasing Mallory's Dream is expected out this year in the UK.*

total of 138 ascents. Just 101 people have ever climbed one or more of the additional peaks. Compare that to the 354 people who climbed Everest on 23 May 2019.

Russian Evgeni Vinogradski is unique in having climbed five of the six new peaks. He has also climbed six of the classic 8,000ers, giving him a total of 11 out of the 20 peaks on the expanded list. Vinogradski, now 80, is unlikely to add to this total.

Several other former Soviet climbers have climbed three of the new peaks, having participated in the 1989 traverse of the four main summits of Kangchenjunga. This includes two legends of Soviet climbing: Kazakh Anatoli Boukreev and Ukrainian Sergey Bershov, each

of whom has climbed 13 out of the 20 peaks on the extended list.

Boukreev died attempting Annapurna in 1997. Bershov, one of the only men to have ever climbed Lhotse South Face, is now 78 and, although he was in good form when I met him in Chamonix last summer, he is unlikely to extend his tally.

The addition of the new peaks does not take any of these climbers beyond the total of 14 peaks achieved by the 76 climbers who have completed the classic 'Himalayan Crown'. Of those who have climbed all 14 classic eight-thousanders, only one, Korean Um Hong-Gil, has climbed any of the six additional peaks.

Um climbed both Lhotse Shar and Yalung Kang, giving him a

total of 16 summits. He required four attempts to climb Lhotse Shar, including one attempt in which he turned back just 100m from the summit following the deaths of two teammates. He finally succeeded in 2007 via a route up the Lhotse South Face. If a race to climb all 20 eight-thousanders were to begin, Um is currently in the lead.

### 14, 20, 22, 23...

The Himalayan Database also lists two additional mountains in Nepal not included among the peaks announced by the Ministry of Tourism: Annapurna Central and Annapurna East. If these are included, bringing the total to 22 peaks, a few additional climbers deserve mention.

Poles Piotr Pustelnik and the great Jerzy Kukuczka have both climbed all 14 classic eight-thousanders as well as Annapurna East, giving them 15 out of 22. Swiss climber Erhard Loretan climbed all 14 as well, and both Annapurna subsidiary summits, giving him a total of 16 out of 22 peaks.

Annapurna East has a greater prominence than some of the 6 new peaks proposed by Nepal, but Broad Peak Central in the Karakoram has the greatest prominence of any subsidiary 8000m summit. Kukuczka has also climbed Broad Peak Central, so if the list is extended to 23 peaks, he has 16, equal with Loretan and Um.

Then, there is a case for Shishapangma Central in China,



**MOUNTAINEERING LEGACIES:** (Clockwise) Panuru Sherpa on the top of Mt Everest with a client in 2002. He has climbed the peak 16 times.

Brothers Panuru and Danuru Sherpa are now working in Golden, Colorado, and lead occasional climbing trips in the Rockies and Alaska.

Mt Everest North Face in China which early expeditions took because Nepal was closed till 1950. The red line is the classic route to the peak, the dotted line is probably what George Mallory and Sandy Irvine took in 1924 to avoid the formidable obstacle of the Second Step.

The siblings are now chefs at the Sherpa House in Colorado.

In 2001, both brothers were members of another expedition composed of 20 foreign and 21 Nepali climbers led by David Hahn that tried to find Irvine in the same area of the North Face, guided by the discovery of Irvine's ice axe in a 1933 expedition as well as sightings of what was believed to be his body near the ridge above. No more clues were found then, or in 2004 when Danuru returned for another search expedition.

Remnants of Irvine and Mallory's Camp VI were found at 8,600m during the 2001 expedition, only about 300m from where Mallory's body was located.

"It was probably dark when Mallory fell because his snow goggles were in his pocket," says Danuru, who has taken part in the three search expeditions on the north side and is also convinced the two fell on their way down after reaching the summit.

Altogether 13 people died on Everest during the three expeditions that Mallory was involved in, of which nine were Nepali porters, cooks and guides who were hired in Darjeeling before the march-in.

"Chomolungma and Sherpa are synonymous," says Danuru. "It was Chomolungma that made the Sherpa people famous globally, and it was Sherpas who made it possible to climb Everest."

Konrad Anker, who led the 1999 team that found Mallory's body, doubts that one or both the climbers reached the summit in 1924, mainly because of the difficulty of climbing a cliff at 8,600m with the kind of gear they had.

"It is possible, but unlikely they climbed the Second Step with 1920s equipment, but even getting to that altitude back then was an incredible accomplishment," he has said.

After the expedition, Anker and Panuru worked together to set up the Khumbu Climbing Center to upgrade the technical skills of Nepali guides. Panuru has also trained hundreds of fellow Nepali guides, and many of them regard him as a mentor.

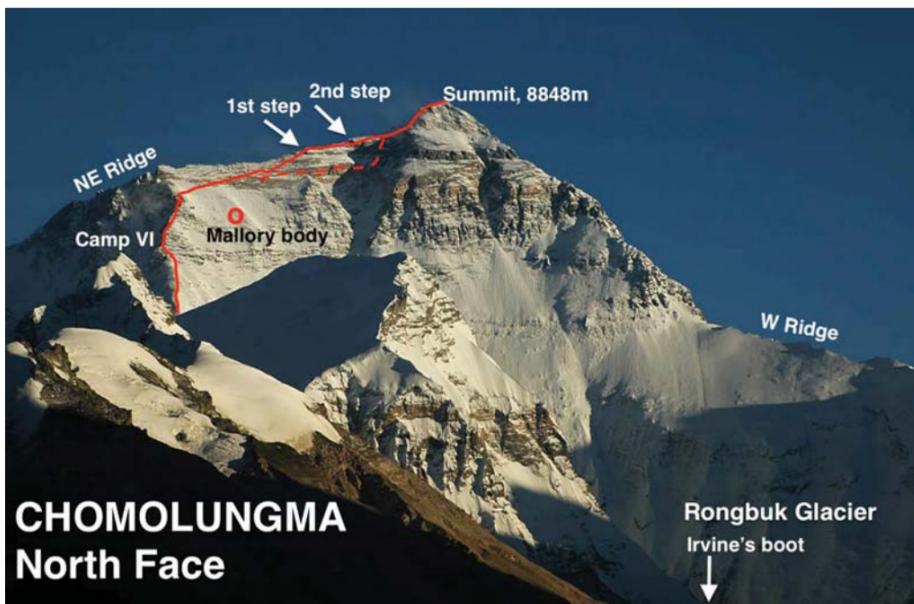
Panuru knew the need for better training because he himself had been badly wounded during a fall into a crevasse in the Khumbu Icefall in one of his early expeditions in 1992 and had to be evacuated by helicopter to Kathmandu.

But the very next year, he was back on the mountain. He climbed Everest from the north with a Korean team in 1994, and a year later got to the top again from the north side with an American expedition. He summited again from the Nepal side in 1996, and nearly died in an avalanche on the north side that killed a fellow Sherpa in 1997.

So far, Panuru has climbed Everest 16 times, Cho Oyu 14 times from both sides, Xixapangma four times, five other eight-thousanders in Nepal, and Ama Dablam six times. He was the first Nepali to ascend Gurla Mandhata in Tibet. After emigrating to the United States, he has climbed Mt Denali (6,190m) in Alaska three times while also being a part of a volunteer rescue team.

Irvine's boot was found by an expedition led by American climber Jimmy Chin in the Rongbuk Glacier, probably transported there from the base of the face by the movement of ice in the past 100 years.

Asked why he climbed Everest 16 times, Panuru echoes George Mallory: "Because I was there." 🇰🇷



**CHOMOLUNGMA North Face**

Nima had eight sons and a daughter, Panuru is the sixth, and most of his siblings are also climbers. After the successful 1953 expedition, Nima spent time grazing yaks, growing potatoes and raising his family in Phortse. He joined expeditions to support the family.

The young Panuru would meet mountaineers who stopped by at the family's tea house in Phortse. He has walked

the Jiri route to Kathmandu many times, and his eldest brother who worked for Mountain Travel Nepal got him a job as a trekking guide.

Panuru ended up joining expeditions, climbing Everest from both sides multiple times. Panuru Sherpa's brother Danuru was the youngest member of the 1999 expedition, and a year earlier had first climbed Everest from the Nepal side when he was only 18.



# Music to our ears

Kutumba is connecting people and healing society through education for the underprivileged

Sudiksha Tuladhar

Music isn't just a rhythm or melody, it is an emotion that connects. Music is art, it is culture and it is a way of life. Nepali folk instrumental band Kutumba has exemplified this for 22 years, as it now gives back to society.

Kutumba first rose to prominence for its use of traditional instruments such as sarangi, tugna and tabla during classical music performances in Nepal and across the world.

Nepal was at the peak of the Maoist war, and Kutumba spread the message of unity through music, and bringing instruments from across the country to one stage.

Tugna is mostly played in the mountains and dholak in the Tarai, Kutumba also integrated dhime and bhusyah played during festivals in Kathmandu Valley.

"We want people to take pride in playing traditional instruments, our journey started with the use of traditional instruments that connected with the audience," says Pavit Maharjan, one of the six members of the band.

He adds: "The country's situation further pushed us to continue playing music for the longer run. When the country was divided between mountain and Tarai, we aimed to spread the message that we all are one through our music."

The rest of the band is made up of Arun Manandhar, Kiran Nepali, Raju Maharjan, Rubin Kumar Shrestha and Siddhartha Maharjan, and is managed by Arun Gurung.



**HELPING HANDS:** Imperial Academy in Kathmandu with their donation of stationeries for less privileged students. Kutumba performing at Valley Public School in Lamatar (below).



## SCHOOL TO SCHOOL

Before long, Kutumba was touring the country and spreading the message of unity, peace and compassion.

During one of the tours in Khokana in southern Lalitpur, band members heard that students at a nearby school write notes on cigarettes and other pieces of paper because they couldn't afford basic stationery.

This eventually led to the 'School-to School' project. Students from private schools are encouraged to donate notebooks and stationery which is then distributed to schools in remote parts of the country.

"The aim is that students

learn about Nepali traditional music and instruments while also helping underprivileged students," says manager Amar Gurung as he explains that the band performs in both sets of schools.

The project carried out in collaboration with International Sound Service (ISS) and Kutumba has performed in 222 schools in 16 years, benefitting over 200,000 students all over Nepal.

Schools on both the ends go through careful selection. Says Shibir Shakya of ISS: "Most schools mobilise their students for the event management, making them keener and more interested in Nepali traditional instruments."

Kutumba finances most of its events through sponsors who fund the band and the sound while local communities arrange food for the crew and stage.

Nepali traditional instruments often do not get the credit and recognition they deserve. Many people have left playing traditional instruments such as sarangi owing to the societal tag of class and hierarchy associated with them.

"We complain that there aren't enough facilities and services in the country, but what have we done to subsidise it with the available resources?" questions Maharjan.

Music, especially with traditional instruments, plays a crucial role in bridging the gap, connecting people and bringing about gradual change, and Kutumba has paved a way with its school-to-school project.

As Shibir Shakya of the International Sound Service says: "Giving starts from oneself. Then only can you influence and encourage others to do the same." 🇳🇵




## Tiago.ev

Made to

# MOVE YOU



\*Per Day EMI  
**Rs. 622/-**

\*Daily EMI based on 50% down payment & 7-year financing

T&C apply.

**SIPRADI TRADING PVT. LTD.**

THAPATHALI - 015350643, 9801013469 | RADHE RADHE - 015914771, 9802345443



Scan for Test Drive

**SIPRADI**