



ELECTION MAP

Nepali Times presents this map of all the constituencies where voting took place on Thursday. In the coming week, results will trickle in, and once they are announced this map will be refreshed on www.nepalitimes.com

However, readers may want to do their own tally by colouring which FPTP party candidate is declared winner in that constituency.

On this double spread we also bring you a list of a dozen hotly contested constituencies, the number of voters and candidates broken down by gender, and a map with the results of the federal election in 2022.

As soon as the complete results are announced by the Election Commission, we will present a final colour-coded version of this map in a future issue.

- NC
- NCP
- RSP
- UML
- UNP
- RPP
- Others

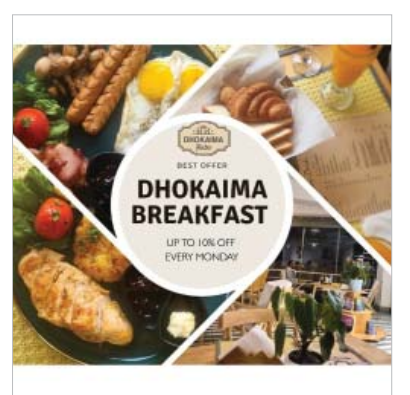
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Even though the West Asia war dominates the news, we bring a selection of international press coverage of the Nepal election **page 10-11**



FLAT

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Sonia Awale

After Thursday's election, Nepalis are in a wait-and-watch mode. The Election Commission says counting ballot papers will be expedited this time, and the results for the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) will start being declared within days. In 2022, it took three weeks for the final results to be tallied.

But winning an election is only half the challenge for the parties, forming a government under parliamentary politics is like a complicated mathematical equation.

In 2022, the Nepali Congress (NC) emerged as the biggest party, winning 89 seats. But the UML with 78 seats and the Maoists with 32 formed a minority government. In fact, Sher Bahadur Deuba did not become PM then despite leading the biggest party in Parliament.

This time, there is an unmistakable Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) wave led by its prime ministerial candidate, Balendra Shah. Besides his own popularity, Shah represents change which most Nepalis are clamouring for after decades of corrupt and feckless coalitions that did not deliver.

The past months of campaigning has seen massive youth engagement on social media through memes, AI clips, and viral images. Digital content that appeals to emotion rather than policy debate between candidates shape electoral outcomes in Nepal and elsewhere.

Shah represents GenZ aspirations, and was their candidate for prime minister. It was only when he declined that Sushila Karki was nominated. None of the political parties in the recent past -- new, old, or revolutionary --



RSP FACEBOOK

The magic 138

Five possible scenarios for election outcome, and what they could mean for new government and Nepal's future

have won enough seats to go it alone.

The most recent majority government was formed by the short-lived Communist Party of Nepal after the UML-Maoist merger in 2022. But that rare two-thirds majority collapsed after a power struggle between K P Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The only party to have won a majority was the NC in the 1991 and 1999 elections. But it is near impossible for it to repeat this success now, even with Gagan Thapa's rebranding of the party.

We have compiled these possible scenarios for election outcome in order of likelihood:

RSP gets a majority

RSP hits the magic 138 to form a government entirely on its own. Balendra Shah wins Jhapa-5, and becomes the new prime minister at 35, the youngest ever to hold the office in Nepal. But danger lurks: there could be a personality clash between Shah and Lamichhane who are both equally ambitious (page 9). History could repeat itself.

RSP wins but does not get a majority

RSP is likely to sweep the most votes, but what if it does not secure enough seats for

a majority? It would need a coalition partner and Nepali Communist Party (NCP) under Pushpa Kamal Dahal could fit the bill, but only if it has the numbers. The RSP is not likely to team up with the UML or NC.

The NCP is relatively untainted by the 8 September events, and also has former UML defectors like Madhav Kumar Nepal and Bhim Rawal who could bag their rural vote banks. After all, there are no permanent foes in politics. If the royalist RPP and Tarai-based Janata Samajwadi have enough seats, those could be options for the RSP.

NC is second

The NC under the new leadership of Gagan Thapa could become the second biggest force and form a government with RSP in a power-sharing deal with Shah. This would be the most stable scenario since the RSP and NC have competent and idealistic young technocrats. Thapa himself embodies a strong combination of both old and new politics to navigate the system for more efficient government. But then Thapa and the RSP's Rabi Lamichhane do not get along.

NC and NCP form a majority

If the NC becomes the largest party but not by a big margin, it could join up with the NCP and Ujyalo. Teaming up with the UML would likely face backlash with the party and outside. If Gagan Thapa becomes prime minister he will face internal pressure from both Deuba loyalists. Same old story.

Minority coalition of NC, UML and NCP

RSP becomes the first party but does not get a majority, paving the way for the three legacy parties to cobble together a minority government. While this is possible in Nepal's parliamentary system, such a scenario is likely to lead to more instability and dissatisfaction among young Nepalis demanding change, and even trigger street unrest. 🇳🇵

Trending Online



Letter from Norway

by Marit Bakke
The election and negotiations to form a government with clear policies for the future will be an indication that Nepalis will obtain better possibilities to participate in political decision-making, writes professor Marit Bakke. Read her letter from Oslo on nepalitimes.com

Most reached and shared on Facebook

West Asia war and Nepalis

by Nepali Times
The war in West Asia impacts an estimated 2 million Nepalis who work across Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar and their families back home. Half of the remittances to Nepal comes from workers in the Gulf. Read the analysis story online.

Most popular on X

Who is accountable for teacher-student relationships?

by Subeksha Poudel
A KU alumna says she was groomed by a faculty member, then sued for defamation. In Nepal, adult grooming often goes unrecognised because it is subtle nature, occurring between individuals with unequal power. Read the investigative story on our website.

Most commented

Nepalis select who to elect

by Sonia Awale
Of the nearly 19 million eligible voters in next week's election, an estimated 5 million are abroad. Many others in Nepal must travel to their home districts, and might decide not to due to the cost. It is a partial poll when a quarter of the eligible electorate cannot vote? Go online to read the report.

Most visited online page

Letters

ADULT GROOMING

This feature about adult grooming is such an eye-opener, and needs to be talked about more because it goes unnoticed and the people affected are far often silenced ('Who is accountable for teacher-student relationships?', Subeksha Poudel, #1300). I remember three cases during school and college: one where a teacher manipulated a student to marry her, only to abandon her later. Another included a teacher pursuing my friend claiming to improve her grades—it was only last year that she escaped that relationship. The third case involved subtle misconduct during lectures.

Power dynamics make these situations tricky, and it is only later that people realise that they have experienced adult grooming. There cannot be true

and free consent in a relationship shaped by power imbalance, which this article says rightfully.

@sometimesHari_

■ This is much-needed reporting. People think teacher-student relations are fine if both are adults. They absolutely are NOT.

@RanjuktM

■ I once used TikTok for just a month or so, during which I saw a trend where people were proudly posting about their teacher-student relationships that had resulted in marriage. I stopped using TikTok after such posts flooded my timeline. Sick society.

@IAMsashankG

BALLOT COUNTING

Restricting the ability of the diaspora to vote is purely the wish of politicians to control elections ('Select who to elect?', Sonia Awale, #1300). Rather than



promoting voters' participation, they engineered it because they realise that they do not have any say over diaspora voters. They thus find excuses to not involve those outside Nepal in the elections.

Bishow Parajuli

■ With electronic voting, it would not be possible to check the news every hour to see who is leading.

Seller Bahadur

HIGHWAY FATALITIES

A simple solution to prevent road traffic accidents could be compulsory tamper-proof speed governors fitted to all public service vehicles and on the spot tests for drug and alcohol on the site on any accident ('Nepal's life or death election', Yugottam Koirala and Yugeshwor Koirala, #1300).

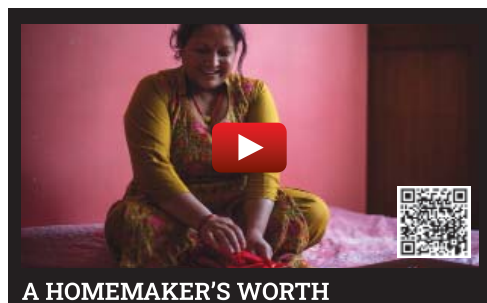
Ian Wall

CIVIC SENSE

The consequences of war has begun here at home ('West Asia war and Nepalis', nepalitimes.com). Please use all possible civic sense. Every normal people should stand up to stop this war. If you chose your government, you have the power to stop them too. The only meaningful retaliation now is to stop. Nothing good has ever come from vengeance or reckless decisions.

@princi_koirala

Online Package



A HOMEMAKER'S WORTH

Homemakers make no money, but if their work was monetised, they would be the highest earners in most families. Watch the video on YouTube and subscribe for more content.



IN THE DRIVING SEAT

For Nepal's female drivers operating electric three-wheelers is a path to financial independence, support for families. Watch this video about their experiences.

1,000 Words



NAMASTAYS: RSP leaders Balendra Shah and Chair Rabi Lamichhane greet supporters in Bhaktapur during their electoral campaign this week. Barring upsets, the party is a favourite to win the most seats in Thursday's election. Shah is contesting from Jhapa-5 in the stronghold of his rival, K P Oli of the UML. Shah, 35, hopes to succeed Oli as Nepal's next, and youngest, prime minister (see page 2, 9).

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Democracy in the manosphere

A gendered diagnosis of political representation in the election



Cyberia

Ayusha Chalise

What was common across all major political parties contesting the election on Thursday is that they are all led by influential men.

Rabi Lamichhane + Balendra Shah duo head the RSP, Gagan Thapa leads the Nepali Congress (NC), the UML's K P Oli is still leader, Kulman Ghising is founder and head of the Ujyalo Nepal Party, and there is Harka Sampang of the Shram Sanskriti Party.

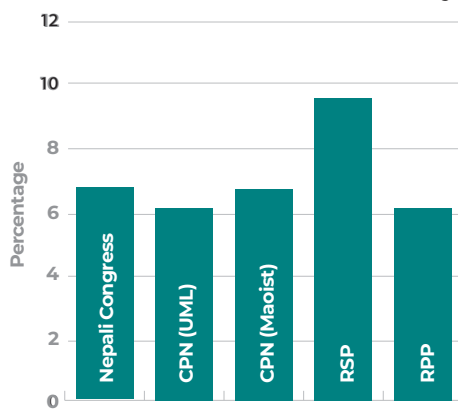
These men do not just lead the parties, they are the parties. Their authority within the party is largely uncontested and is sustained through loyalty to the deeply familiar Nepali figure of the Dai or Ba, the elder brother or father who is trusted, defended, and followed.

For the most part, they do not exert influence due to leadership skills but through a reinforcement of the idea that their leadership is the solution to the political crisis facing Nepal.

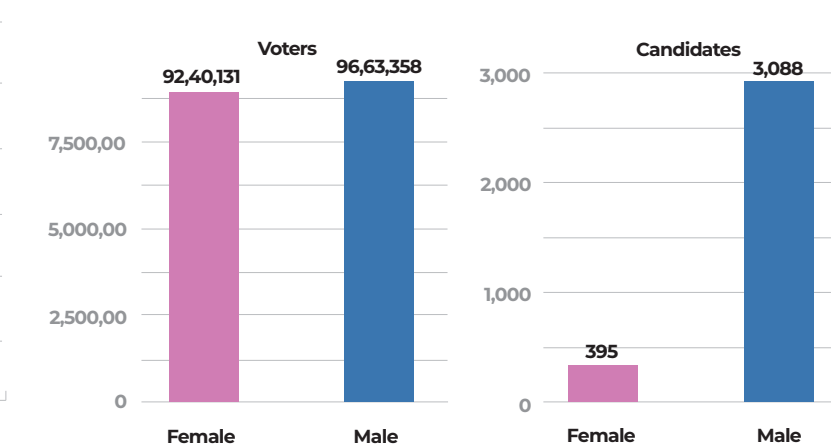
Around these men is a loyal orbit of supporters, extending from central committee members to cadres, also mostly men.

Supporters amplify the idea of their chosen leadership and defend them at all costs in the

% of Female FPTP Candidates by Parties



Voters and FPTP Candidates by Gender



ANUPAM ABHIYAN

public sphere, and especially on social media where polarising and controversial speech is rewarded by the design feature of the platforms.

Only 395 out of the 3,484 first-past-the-post (FPTP) candidates were women in Thursday's election.

Of the biggest parties, the NC has only 6.67% women, UML 7.92%, NCP 6.90%, RSP 9.73%, Shram Sanskriti Party 6.42%, UNP 5.79%, and Janata Samajwadi party 8.41%.

The highest among the parties is not even 10% (chart, above).

The numbers represent the interconnected manospheres that pervade all layers of politics. It is not just exclusion, but systematic structuring of gender in politics.

'Manosphere' is an umbrella term for online communities that have increasingly promoted narrow and aggressive definitions of what it means to be a man, and the false narrative that feminism and gender equality have come at the cost of men's rights. These communities promote the idea that emotional control, material wealth, physical appearance and dominance, especially over women, are markers of male worth.

It is an internet phenomenon, but it also relates to how men have hoarded power and taken up space in Nepali politics that constitutionally belongs to women, in all major parties.

While certainly the leaders of the parties are not spearheading

manospheres, their support systems and structural organisation show characteristics akin to one.

A distinct feature of a manosphere is the attitude of rejection it carries towards liberalism, democratic pillars of inclusion and participation, and political correctness. They distort biology and evolution in argument of restrictive gender roles. They assign men as de facto leaders and women as followers, if not adversaries. Manospheres operate with an underlying understanding that feminism or women empowerment is detrimental to men.

FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCES

This feature of the manosphere is starkly visible in how women in politics have experienced this election, in their campaigning on social media. From Ranju Darshana to Nisha Adhikari to Reema Biswokarma, their social media posts have comments from people trying to tell them of their place in society.

A pregnant politician and two artists turned politicians are routinely told that their pursuit of leadership is not what the society needs. Even Prime Minister Sushila Karki was vilified publicly by Durga Prasai, which was met with laughter from the circle of people around him.

Digital platforms have become an open arena for misogynistic attacks against women, often delegitimising their political participation rather than hosting democratic dialogue. Women who ascribe to the idea of

NMB BANK एनएमबि बैंक

Petroleum stockpile

The West Asia war has also focused attention on the long-languishing plans to build storage for strategic petroleum stockpile. Panic buying and hoarding across Nepal on 2 March following the Gulf war doubled fuel sales, Holi, and upcoming elections. Nepal Oil Corporation reported nationwide petrol sales at 4,700 kl, while the average is 2,500 kl. Kathmandu Valley's Thankot depot supplied 1,650 kl petrol and 1,250 kl diesel. Long queues formed amid fears of shortages or price hikes. Nepal imports all its petroleum from India, which used to source it from Russia, but the Strait of Hormuz blocked supplies of gas and crude oil.



Nepal-India tech forum

The Nepal-India Tech Forum 2026 was held in New Delhi. Organised jointly by Nepal's Embassy in India, Genese Solution, and PHDCCI, industry leaders discussed deepening bilateral cooperation in digital infrastructure, FinTech, cybersecurity, AI, and investment. Nepal's renewable energy, growing ICT workforce, and macroeconomic stability were discussed as investment draws.

Chinese EVs up

Chinese EVs dominated Nepal's imports in the first seven months of FY 2025/26, with 14,475 units. Only 2,218 came in from India. Total EV imports including two and three-wheelers exceeded 17,000 units. Government revenue from four-wheeler EV imports topped Rs10.5 billion during this period.



Ncell discounts

Ncell Business partnered with DAMI Experience to offer lifestyle discounts up to 50% to Ncell Signature Plan subscribers across 400+ restaurants, spas, gyms. Offers are redeemed through the Ncell App via a digital VIP card. The professional plan costs Rs17,999 and the Premium is Rs21,999 per year. They come with high-speed data, unlimited calls, SMS, and international roaming across nine countries.

AI Summit

Startup Network Nepal and Oorja World, an AWS-accelerated clean-energy firm, will co-host a two-day AI Hackathon on March 15-16, followed by Nepal's first National AI Summit on 31 March in Kathmandu. The hackathon invites students, developers, researchers, and founders to build AI solutions in various sectors.



NIMB Turns 40

Nepal Investment Mega Bank marked its 40th anniversary by holding a blood donation program and releasing a picture book about financial literacy. Chairman Prithvi Bahadur Pande pledged transparent and responsible banking. CEO Jyoti Prakash Pande emphasised digital transformation. The bank operates 269 branches, 257 ATMs, 65 extension counters, and 60 branchless banking counters.

Hydro manifestos

Nepal's major parties in their manifestos have emphasised electricity generation in manifestos as an engine of economic growth. The NC targets 14,000MW of projects, crossborder transmission lines, and migrant/shareholder involvement. The UML aims to make Nepal a clean energy export hub, doubling production, advancing Upper Arun. Other parties push 15,000-30,000 MW goals, exports to India/Bangladesh, renewables, digital infrastructure.



SJ Moto x Java

SJ Moto and Himalayan Java reopened a collaborative outlet, originally established in 2021, with a larger seating area and a refreshed interior. The cafe blends motorcycle culture with coffee. The reopening follows the success of its Pokhara outlet. Owner Saurabh Jyoti said the space prioritises comfort, connectivity, and community.

Nabil burn camp

Nabil Bank, working with Koirala Memorial Hospital and Seti Provincial Hospital, completed a three-day free burn treatment camp in Dhangadi. Sixty-five patients were treated, 20 underwent surgery, and 18 with complex conditions were referred to Kathmandu. 50 hospital staff were also trained in basic burn treatment.

NRB restrictions

The Nepal Rastra Bank has introduced restrictions prohibiting government offices from depositing account payee cheques into accounts other than those of the intended recipient organisations. Previously, third-party transfers were allowed, raising concerns over transparency and misuse. The new rule aims to enhance accountability and ensure direct, traceable payments.

NEPSE audits

The Nepal Stock Exchange has enforced IT Audit Guidelines 2026, requiring stockbrokers to conduct comprehensive IT audits of trading systems, networks, mobile apps, security measures, and risk management every two years. New brokers must audit within six months of starting operations. The move addresses technical glitches, protects investors, and strengthens cybersecurity as online trading grows.

Kajaria in Bhaktapur

Kajaria Tiles launched a showroom in Itapako, Bhaktapur, which will be operated by PNS Traders and Suppliers. The showroom features premium ceramic and vitrified tiles for construction and interiors. Miss World Nepal 2024 Ashma Kumari KC was present. Kajaria operates over 100 showrooms nationwide and runs Nepal's largest tile manufacturing facility.



MAW Earthmovers

MAW Earthmovers wins JCB 'Dealer of the Year South Asia' for the fourth consecutive year at the JCB Annual Dealer Conference 2026 in Sri Lanka recently. It recognises sales growth, market leadership, and customer satisfaction. MAW has been JCB's authorised distributor in Nepal since 1964, supplying loaders, excavators; supporting road, bridge, and hydropower projects.



the leadership archetype endorsed by the manosphere are lauded for their participation. Responses to the speech of the RSP's Sobita Gautam in Janakpur is an example.

Another symptom of the manosphere in Nepali politics is that it endorses violence, be it rhetorically, or equating it with leadership. By drooling over the violence spewed by them, instead of looking at evidence of capacity for governance, thoughts on inclusion, visions for development and much more, the definition of being a leader is narrowed.

When our politics are up for debate in social media platforms, unsurprisingly, vile and inflammatory language becomes a recipe for success, hence amplifying 'leaders' who revert to such tactics.

A study by researchers at Dublin City University found that newly created teen-boy accounts on TikTok and YouTube Shorts were algorithmically exposed to sexist and misogynistic content within about the first 23 minutes of use, even when they were not deliberately looking for it. So naturally, misogyny sells.

Besides, groups on Facebook have been mobilised during campaigning for elections. The most prominent men only group in Nepal, MRR, was disabled by Meta prior to the October 2022 election for violating their terms and conditions. But Meta has now removed content moderation.

While it is not new that women in Nepali politics have endured misogyny, it has been magnified by how political discourses online occur in the manosphere. There is no conversation on how Gagan Thapa will not become the next Sher Bahadur Deuba, there is no debate on how the newly formed government will meet the constitutional requirement of having at least 33% women in the House — it is only about which man is more suitable to be the next prime minister of Nepal in a system that does not directly appoint them.

Even if we were to believe the misogyny online is not representative of our society's views on women, the avalanche of toxicity on the platforms is something we have to learn to live with.

Women interested in politics must come prepared to endure hate. Likewise, if these comments are not real, and are bots or fake accounts that seek to demoralise women, then we must understand that the political powers of today are weaponising misogyny to prevent women from being leaders. 🇳🇵

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



Ending Nepal's malestream politics

The next prime minister of Nepal should read Jacinda Ardern's book, and then lead

Aditi Adhikari

I was a new mother trying to protect my young family from Covid in 2020, and that was when I first noticed Jacinda Ardern's leadership. Our own prime minister was spreading misinformation about the strong immune system of Nepalis and our herbal concoctions being antidotes.

Later in 2024, Ardern showed up after the mass shooting at mosques in New Zealand with tears in her eyes, and the strong message: "They are us." It was refreshing to see such empathetic leadership, especially as political news was dominated by elected authoritarians, while Nepal was held hostage by repeat prime ministers.

Ardern's book *A Different Kind of Leadership* should be essential reading for all Nepalis with political aspirations, especially the new generation that wants real change. The theme that repeats throughout the book is to be human before becoming a politician.

The book is not just about Ardern showing up for her people as one of them, it is also about why she decided to show up the way she did, and what brought her to politics to begin with — resolve, a little bit of luck, and stepping up when she had to.

Political ambition is not a bad thing. But stepping up to lead when the situation demands it, and knowing when it is time to leave, is what makes a leader.

Ardern was given the opportunity to become her party's deputy leader at a relatively young age, and her

party leader resigned — two events uncommon in Nepali politics.

Ardern mentions multiple times not thinking of herself as politician material because she has a thin skin, and she talks equally often of her feelings of being intimidated in political spaces, up until she accepted the position of party leader.

But she was accountable at a time when we in Nepal were getting used to non-reactions and non-answers from the loud, confident men who played with power.

Somehow, somewhere, not least because of the malestream ideas we have been fed about politics and politicians, we imagine that leadership should look a certain way. Strong, macho, loud, confident or even better, overconfident. We imagine that empathetic leadership is soft, is scared to make people angry, is ineffective.

LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE

Ardern's leadership was effective. New Zealand had less Covid fatalities than most developed countries, and it went in and out of lockdown with relative ease. Ardern's approval ratings were high at a very unstable time in politics globally.

A significant portion of the chapters that talk about Ardern's time in office also delve into her struggles being a working mother. But she does not consider herself a supermom who did it all. She portrays herself as simply a working mom, one with lots of support, and discusses how common it is for parents, especially mothers, to juggle work and family. She comes across as one of us.

There is a section in the book where Ardern's daughter asks her the question she has been dreading, and which many of us working moms also face, "Mummy, why do you have to work so much?" Ardern explains that she has a "very important job" and explains it to her three-and-half-year-old as "looking after people".

I put down the book when I reached that sentence. I want the next prime minister of my country to read this book, and then lead. I want the next prime minister of Nepal to think that he (all the top contenders for the job are men, page 9) is looking after people, making sure no Nepali child is undernourished, that people can make a living without risking their lives, hearing the concerns of citizens and solving them.

I want him to lead like a woman, like Sushila Karki has been leading for the last six months, with quiet determination and integrity, and without fanfare. I want him to remember that leadership is just service, and that, like Maya Angelou wrote, 'Your legacy is what you do every day.' It is not loud speeches and the making of some imagined, glorified history.

Karki was picked to lead us back during the black days of early September when the country was in flames. The very first video of her on 9 September, the day after young people and students had been shot by the government that was meant to protect them shows her angry and emotional, her voice shaking.

It was Karki's actions in those days of fragility that showed us,

once again, that the leader we deserve gets emotional on our behalf, but also knows how to do the work.

After five years of leading her country through a global pandemic, Ardern realised that she is exhausted, that she does not have enough in her anymore to keep leading New Zealand, and she steps down.

Towards the end of the book, Ardern tells readers like herself, sensitive and self-doubting, that if we want to be leaders, we should channel our anxieties and sensitivities to humble ourselves, to read more and seek out advice, and prepare ourselves for the challenges.

Nepal's next prime minister has to have these qualities: humility, teamwork, diligence and accountability. Good intention, ambition, university degrees, professional achievements are not enough to change the country's trajectory.

And when they have completed the task, or when they know they cannot do it they must have the courage to step down like Jacinda Ardern. 🇳🇵



A Different Kind of Power: A Memoir by Jacinda Ardern Crown, 2025 352 pages \$19 (hardcover)



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Mixed feelings about missing the



DIASPORA
DIARIES 87

This is the 87th episode of Diaspora Diaries, a Nepali Times series in collaboration with Migration Lab providing a platform to share experiences of living, working and studying abroad.

Priti Tamang, Qatar

I am migrating overseas as a cleaner for the first time. I have said my goodbyes, but am stuck at the airport because of the Qatar crisis.

Luckily, I have people travelling with me. I cannot go home because there is a belief that it is bad luck to go home after saying goodbyes. If this wait stretches for more days, I will return to my family.

I have come to the airport before to drop off my family and friends, but this time I myself am leaving for Qatar. My brother and brother-in-law are both in Croatia. I only completed Grade 10 and cannot afford to go to Europe. My parents are back in the village.

There are no jobs here. Those



who do get good jobs know big people. I hope to change my life and make my family happy. I don't have such high expectations.

I have mixed feelings about missing the election. They say we have to choose a good leader, but they all make lofty, empty promises. How to decide who

to vote for? The crooks win, and people like us have to leave the country anyway. But a part of me also wishes I could vote for someone good.

I hope the new government will make lives more comfortable. I am a single mother and have to provide for my son. My sister is taking

care of him while I am away. I am unable to give my son anything beyond a good education, I hope he realises his mother went out of her way to educate him.

If I could just find a Rs25,000 job in Nepal, I would not have to leave. My English is weak, and my Nepali is better now.



Sabitri Paudel, Malaysia

I am married with a son. I am migrating to learn and earn to help my family. I have done many kinds of jobs in Nepal. I worked in a factory and also as a marketing manager.

I am migrating to Malaysia without paying any fees through Aakarshan International. I would still have borrowed money to migrate if the amount was reasonable. But this way there is no financial burden on my family. I can now focus on supporting my son. Most of my relatives are overseas in Japan and Korea.

I am going away right

Women, migration

Many Nepalis leave because overseas jobs are more important than the ballot, others return because votes are more important than their jobs



Labour Mobility
Upasana Khadka

To mark International Women's Day on 8 March right after the election, we had planned a Diaspora Diaries series (above) focusing on female migrants. What are their aspirations? What challenges or opportunities are unique to them? And, what are their expectations from the new government?

The stories would also draw attention to one group we could not manage to speak with at the airport: domestic workers.

Why? Because the government has banned domestic work for Nepali women in the Gulf.

You will not find them at the airport, at least not with a labour permit for domestic work. They are mostly travelling through India, migrating but without required documents, adequate pre-departure skills and orientation training. They remain invisible in government records, and are left to fend for themselves.

This has been one of the most persistent failures of multiple governments despite evidence that such bans



amplify the very abuses that they are designed to address.

But while we worked on the profiles of female migrants this week, war broke out in West Asia. Millions of workers are at risk, including female domestic workers.

Crises expose cracks in our system and policies. During Covid-19, for example, repatriation efforts revealed gaps in data and coordination, particularly concerning domestic workers.

Precisely when the government needed to know how many Nepalis were overseas, where they were located, and how to assist them, they were absent in records, lacked documentation and were ineligible for welfare services that

required valid labour permits.

Labour permits are important because they are tied to the government's data management system, and are critical for record-keeping. They are issued only after workers complete pre-departure training tailored to their sector and contribute to the welfare fund which provides various services during crises. But we have failed to learn lessons from past failures.

WAR FEARS

Nepalis in the Gulf have told us they are safe so far, although there is an atmosphere of fear and anxiety. The explosions are frightening, especially for children. Attacks are not confined

to military bases, but airports, oil refineries and embassies have also not been spared, fuelling further fear.

If regional tensions escalate and evacuation becomes necessary, it would be an enormous challenge given the size of the Nepali diaspora in the Gulf. Female domestic workers would be especially vulnerable, partly given the nature of their work but also because our emigration system does not have their records.

The task of collecting information of all migrants whether they are documented or not through an online registration system should already begin, says Krishna Panthi of the Non-resident Nepalese

Association (NRNA) in Qatar.

One consistent theme in conversations with migrants is the need to have more effective Nepal embassies abroad. Crises like this magnify the weaknesses of our embassies and labour diplomacy.

Migrant workers frequently cite Philippine embassies as good examples of care for its overseas workers. They are also significantly better resourced and staffed than Nepal's embassies.

How diplomats are appointed needs to be reformed, embassies must have sufficient resources for the size of the population they serve, they must build relationships with the destination country and back home, and they should be held accountable.

This crisis is a reminder for the incoming government to allocate adequate resources from the budget to the foreign employment sector. This means increasing staffing and strengthening our diplomatic missions while holding them accountable for their primary task — address the needs of overseas Nepalis.

But the West Asia war is happening right now, and we have to make the best of what we have in an all-hands-on-deck way. Leveraging diaspora groups will be critical in supporting migrants to cast the net widely. A recent letter from the NRNA-International Coordination Council urged the government to prepare and coordinate effectively, immediately mobilising volunteers.

Another consistent ask among migrants is that the new government create jobs with liveable wages in Nepal itself so they do not have to leave. Even those who earned adequate wages in Nepal said they were just one crisis away from indebtedness because of a health shock in the family or a household emergency. Political party manifestos all mention job creation, but how this will be realised in

e election

Four Nepali women migrant workers speak about their hopes and aspirations



Sangita Darlani Magar, Romania

I have been living in Romania since 2022. I work in a nail salon. I came here when I was 20, since I could not complete my undergraduate because of Covid.

I chose Romania because the cost of recruitment was the lowest among European countries. But I had not even heard of the country.

I also chose it because it allowed travel to other European countries.

I worked as a babysitter, switched to a warehouse and now I am in a salon. My English is good enough for Romania. My language skill and calm personality impressed my boss, and it is after securing my job that I learnt about nail care and hairdressing during a vacation in Nepal.

I honestly do not care much about the election. Still, I am a Balen fan. I have always been self-reliant and expect nothing from the government beyond proper education, health and roads and better tax policies.

I will perhaps return in two years or so after I have saved enough. I have realised that living abroad may not be for me. When you cry, you cry alone and resume life as normal the next day. You don't want to spend even 10 Euros on food because you could be sending that money home or saving for your future.

I want to save enough so I can be self-reliant when I return home, I have no desire for a big house or a car. You can earn enough in Nepal to live and eat, but not beyond. I am a single child and have to take care of my family financially. Everyone says I am like their son.

My father was also a migrant worker in Malaysia. I missed building a deep connection with him since he was away when I grew up. He is now a security guard in Lalitpur. Sometimes I feel like giving up, but then I think of him and all the sacrifices he made for us. Even at his age, he is struggling, and I am just getting started.

I worked in two schools in various capacities back in Nepal. The environment was very positive and respectful. Children were attached to me, and I want to start my own pre-school after I return. If I were to take a job instead in Nepal I would need to earn at least Rs50,000 to live comfortably.

When I need a break in Nepal, I have my Gods, and can go to the temple to clear my mind. Here I don't even have my God.

Anonymous, Oman

I came to Oman over a decade ago. As I did not have papers, it took me four years to first return home and I had to go through India as Nepal did not give labour approvals for domestic work.

When my mother was ill, I risked coming home. On the way back, I paid Rs250,000 underhand to agents so I could fly out. Nepal should just allow it because people will go anyway just like Filipinos and Indonesians.

Newcomers need some language training, and domestic work skills like how to iron or use washing machines. Not everyone is going through India because they don't know any better: they are going so because that is the only way out. I had to reluctantly pay the bribe to get out of Nepal.

I have worked in this house in Oman for a decade, and things are going well. Not all households are good, so we need to have the option to change employers through placement offices here. I make 120 dinar (\$320) a month, higher than what general workers earn.

There are challenges especially around Ramadan. It gets easier when you stay longer with an employer because wages improve, you are more comfortable and work gets easier. Muscat is full of Nepali Didis and Bahinis like me, and we meet frequently.

I have never voted in my life. I am not into politics. I am missing this election too but hope someone good will come to power. I don't know when I will come home next. I have to think about how to survive before deciding to return. Let's see what the new government will do.

n, election and war



march
International Women's Day



practice is what actually matters.

Many Nepalis may now be compelled to return or not leave in the first place because of wars, pandemics or other economic or geopolitical shocks. Whether returns are planned or unplanned, meaningful jobs back home, an environment to run successful businesses and good remigration options allowing migrants to build on previous experiences need to be prioritised.

This crisis has again proven that lack of diversification in destination countries makes Nepalis more vulnerable. It is important to invest in labour mobility partnerships such as those with Korea, Japan and the UAE. A pilot agreement with

the UAE for domestic workers is yet to be implemented.

Overseas demand will continue, as the destruction on this scale in the Gulf will inevitably be followed by rebuilding. Demographic change and the need for migrants in essential job categories are critical to keeping societies functioning.

For example, a Jordan-Nepal agreement for garment workers with support from International Labor Organization (ILO) has opened up opportunities for thousands of women for garment jobs linked to multinational brands who are recruited ethically without having to pay fees.

Rita Choudhury from Rautahat (pictured left) who

was at SCC Manpower that manages deployment of garment workers to Jordan told us, "We are benefiting from free training in tailoring before we migrate for free to Jordan. I will earn money working for a few years and can continue the same work once I am back and create jobs in my village for those who are unemployed."

Of all the migrant workers who left last year, 12.9% were female with over half of them migrating just to three countries: UAE, Qatar and Kuwait.

From tracking what candidates are up to in this week's election, Nepalis have now switched focus on monitoring the situation in the Gulf. With every refresh, there is

a new missile intercepted or blast debris that has hit some building.

Workers in office jobs have moved to remote work, outdoor work is restricted, and other jobs, such as those in the service sector, have reduced personnel. Many workers are confined to their rooms including those evacuated from American military bases.

A Nepali from Gorkha, Diwas Shrestha, who worked as a security guard was among those killed in the UAE on March 1. Social media posts show others narrowly escaping falling debris of intercepted missiles while many are stranded at airports.

Even though the West Asia war has diverted our attention,

now more than ever, we need bold, visionary leadership that we can actually count on.

Our internal crisis borne out of frustration and distrust with the system came at a huge cost including young lives lost on 8 September — some of whom were in Kathmandu waiting to fly out for overseas jobs.

The government has also constantly overlooked Nepalis abroad who cannot vote. This includes 2 million of them in West Asia alone who are now in a war zone that threatens their safety and livelihoods.

As this election shows, the diaspora may be disenfranchised, but it is not disengaged. Nepalis overseas are campaigning through calls, letters, posters on suitcases and social media.

Many are leaving Nepal and voting with their feet because the safe job overseas is more important than any ballot. Others are returning because the ballot is more important than the job.

Many Nepalis who were flying home this week to cast their vote are stranded in Dubai, Doha and Kuwait, and may not make it on time. Migrants who were on their way out are stuck at home, and many have returned to their villages to vote as they wait for flights to resume.

What struck us most in our interviews on elections and migration these past couple of months was the urgency with which many migrants are approaching this election. Many traveled home convinced that their individual vote mattered because the stakes are just so high. Will the new government reciprocate to this disenfranchised population and deliver with the same sense of urgency? 🇳🇵

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



Events



Comedy Jatra

Aakash Gupta brings his stand-up special Daily Ka Kaam Hai to Kathmandu as part of the Comedy Jatra Nepal Tour. **2 May, 4pm onwards, Tickets: Rs599-Rs3,099, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamladi**

Natya Utsav 3.0

An annual dance showcase celebrating movement, culture, and expression, with this edition presented as a tribute to Sujana Chapagain. **20 March, 6pm onwards, Tickets: Rs600-Rs800, Rastriya Naach Ghar, Kantipath**



Bādal

The 9th edition of Taragon's Object in Focus features Sanjeep Maharjan's Bādal, a series of ceramics and sculptures representing the movement of water and its cycle of renewal. Curated by Roshan Mishra. **8 March, Taragon Next, Boudha**



Art exhibition

Journey to a Visionary Artworld is a solo exhibition of drawings and paintings by Nikhil Bahadur Shakya, exploring imaginative forms and personal artistic vision. **13 March, 11am-5pm (Sun-Fri), 12pm-5pm (Sat), Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited**

TOKYO Before/After

The exhibition portrays Japan's capital as a living, evolving organism in 80 selected artworks of photographs. **Till 18 March, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal**



Labim Bazar

Shop for fresh and baked goodies, agro products, thrift items, handicrafts and support local businesses. **Saturdays, 10am-4pm, Labim Mall, Pulchok**



Music

Karaoke & Open mic

Ladies, get together with friends, get some drinks and sing your heart out at Karaoke & Open mic nights every Wednesday. **Wednesdays, Beers N' Cheers, Jhamsikhel**

Rock Concert

Featuring Sabin Rai & The Pharaoh, this concert brings a high-energy afternoon of live Nepali rock and crowd favourites. **21 March, 12pm onwards, Tickets: Rs1,200, Sasa Twa, Kirtipur**



Nepal tour

Two of Nepal's acclaimed bands, Albatross and Pahlenlo Batti Muni, hit the road together for a multi-city tour across the country. **21 March, Club Nova**



Radhika Das

Radhika Das performs live in Nepal for the first time, presenting an evening of devotional music and mantras in Patan. **27 March, 5pm onwards, Tickets: Rs3,000-Rs10,000, Patan Museum, Lalitpur**



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) 461477 / 463854**

Sapana Village Resort

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



Dalai-La Boutique Hotel

The hotel provides an unforgettable experience, letting you step out of Kathmandu's chaos and into peace and serenity. Decorated with historic artifacts over 50 years old, the hotel is an attraction in itself. **Thamel (01) 4701436**

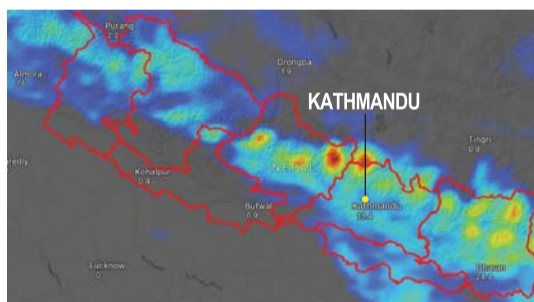
Milla Guesthouse

A quaint stay that combines both the old and the new, Milla Guesthouse is the perfect getaway for people who don't want to get way too far from the city. **Bhaktapur, 9851024137**

Harmony Spa

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 impossible to recreate elsewhere. **6:30am-10:30pm, Gokarna Forest Resort (01) 4451212**

Weekend Weather



Warm Rain

The coming days and next week will see a strong westerly front moving across Nepal. Rising temperatures in the plains will send the moisture rising along the mountains bringing moderate to heavy snowfall along trekking routes from 7-14 March (see map of accumulated precipitation). In the lower valleys, including Kathmandu, the rain will douse the dust and pollution and be helpful to farmers. It can get stormy in the afternoon, and the cloud cover will bring down the maximum temperature.

Our Pick



It is 16th century England, and Agnes and William Shakespeare are grappling with grief of losing their 11-year-old son Hamnet to plague. The 2025 biographical period dramatises the life of William Shakespeare and his wife Anne Hathaway. A healer, Agnes must find strength to care for her surviving children while processing her devastating loss while William channels his pain to write one of his masterpieces, Hamnet. Stars Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal, the former near-confirmed to win an Academy for the Best Actress later this month.



Dining

Le Mirch

Indulge in Urban Indian delights at Le Mirch By Exotic. Serving halal food for lunch, dinner, and cocktails, their flavorful kebab platter and tempered momo are must-tries. **The Park, Darbar Marg, 9810120043**

The Workshop Eatery

Workshop is the go-to fast-casual spot for dining and takeaways. Try their Nashville Hot Chicken Burger, or go for their signature donuts and creamy milkshakes if you have a sweet tooth. **Bakhundole, 9860431504**



Prazada

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

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) 4258757**



Nylgiri

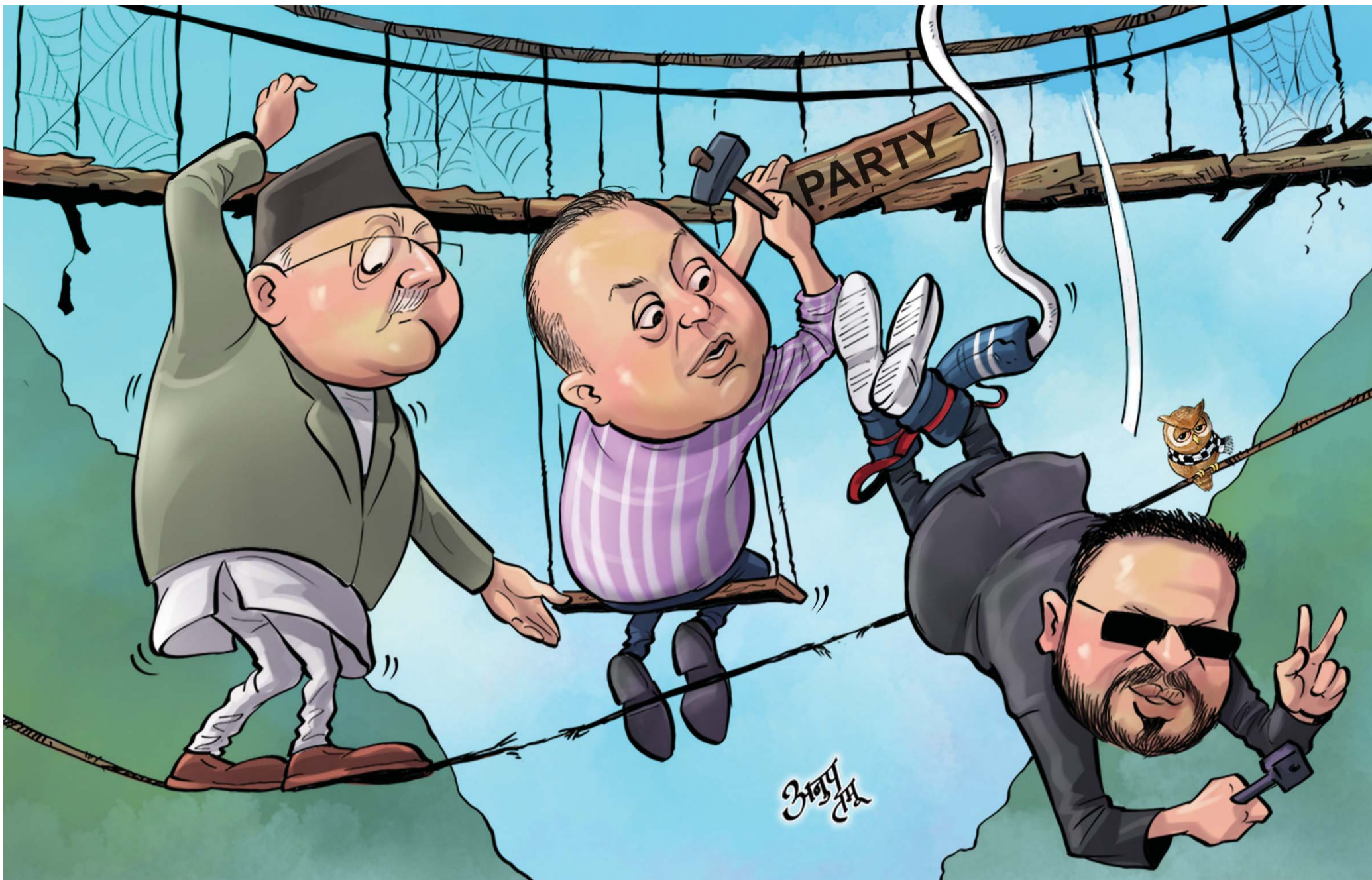
Indulge in refined flavors and skyline views with an exclusive midweek and weekend offer, where men get 50% off all food and beverages on Super Man Sundays, and ladies on Wonder Women Wednesdays. **5pm-11pm, Nylgiri, Aloft Kathmandu Thamel, 9705568643**

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



OLD vs NEW vs NEW

This election has come down to a personality clash between personality cults

Vishad Raj Onta

KP Oli of the UML is trying not to fall from a precarious tight rope, Gagan Thapa is busy mending his NC party, while the RSP's Balendra Shah is bungee jumping off the bridge in this cartoon (above) made exclusively for Nepali Times by artist Anup Tamu.

This post-GenZ movement election is a contest between a stale past, and the promise of a fresh start. The post-1990 politics saw instability, polarisation, an insurgency, a royal coup that briefly brought back the absolute monarchy, and will now be replaced with a new, accountable political culture.

At least that is the hope. The old is represented by 75-year-old Oli who was deposed after the 8-9 September upheaval. Challenging him directly in his own constituency of Jhapa-5 is Shah, the popular former mayor of Kathmandu. If informal polls are right, Shah and the RSP are set to win. That means this is ultimately going to be a contest between Balendra Shah and Gagan Thapa, the new leader of the grand old party (See Editorial, page 2).

This election came down to a personality clash between personality cults. Most are voting for the prime minister of a party, not for the party of a future prime minister. Below are profiles of the three prime ministerial hopefuls:

K P Oli

The comeback kid. Forced to resign and flee after disastrously banning social media in September, yet here he is, back again, elected chair of the UML for the third time in a row.

The UML party line is that those protests were fuelled not by genuine frustration with the leadership,

but by bad actor infiltrators. The election is between those who want to build the nation and those who want to burn it down, Oli says.

It seems unlikely that after the September upheaval, the country will allow Oli Ba a return to the office he was forced to vacate. Yet his longevity is undeniable, despite two kidney transplants.

Oli started at age 18 in the radical Communist underground in eastern Nepal in the early 1970s. He spent 14 years in prison, emerged in 1987, and became a central committee member of the UML, served as Home Minister, and was known for his oratory.

He became prime minister for the first time in 2015, opposing India's unofficial blockade and making trade deals with China. He was adept at playing the nationalist card, and pushed for the adoption of the Nepal map that included disputed Limpiyadhura, riling New Delhi no end.

Oli has been prime minister four times, which is also how many kidneys there are in his body. Tons of experience in age and at the very top of Nepali politics is certainly what he has over both Gagan Thapa and Balendra Shah. This is a negative too because he represents obsolete politics.

Oli defended his multiple premierships: "I have been PM for a total of five years. How come nobody gets a headache when neighbouring countries have been leaders for 15 years? How come other 80-year-old leaders are not criticised?"

Oli has a sharp tongue and a wicked sense of humour that often gets him into trouble. He is prone to hyperbole and weaving fantasies, making him the target of ridicule. Over the years, he has promised ocean-going ships on the Kosi, gas pipelines, supercomputers, and rapid airport development, with zero follow-through.

Oli developed a thin skin towards the end of his tenure, squeezing the press and social media. He has chosen not to issue any apology or accept accountability for the 8 September massacre. His own party has gone along with this delusion, but now the people will have their say.

Gagan Thapa

Of the three prime ministerial hopefuls, Gagan Thapa of the NC would seem to be the ideal compromise of old and new, youth and experience. Starting as a student activist, he has had an extensive political career, and is an anti-monarchist who has seen stints in jail.

Thapa was elected to the first Constituent Assembly in 2008 and has since always been an MP. As health minister in 2016-17, he introduced Nepal's first health insurance scheme. Almost 50 now, Thapa can no longer claim to be a Young Turk, although he is still 25 years younger than Oli.

Thapa has waited patiently for his day in the limelight, and sensed his time had come after the GenZ movement. He seized the NC leadership from Sher Bahadur Deuba, becoming president unopposed during a 'special' general convention. Deuba seems to still be in shock after a near-lynching and the burning down of his house.

Contesting from Sarlahi and not his usual Kathmandu constituency, Thapa has launched an extensive campaign on the ground and on social media. Much of this focuses on a rebranding of his party as Nepali Congress 2.0. He is also making a distinction between a reformed NC and newbies in the RSP, but is facing a stiff challenge in Sarlahi-4 from former NC member Amresh Singh who defected to the RSP.

He is one of few politicians

who use social media effectively. After the September protests, even when his house was burnt down, he spoke directly into a camera to say sorry on behalf of his party. "Our core values are still the same: democracy, social justice, democracy," he said.

No more coalitions that go against principles, no more corruption, judge us by performance and not speeches, Thapa has said. Idealistic, but can he pull it off in a party so rooted in the old ways of doing things?

Thapa's heart seems to be in the right place. As MP he has spoken up against his party's aging leadership, and in favour of the right to free expression. He represents the voting block that is tired of the old, but sceptical of the new.

Balendra Shah

'Rapper/Structural Engineer/Kathmandu Metropolitan Ex Mayor' reads the TikTok bio of @balenshah. Balendra Shah could not be more unconventional as a Nepali politician.

He is running a brave gambit, choosing to contest Jhapa-5 and challenge K P Oli in his home turf. If Shah wins, it will be quite a statement from voters. What a blow to Oli, and all of the legacy parties. The apt bell symbol of his RSP is sounding the alarm.

Despite his rapper background, Shah's campaign so far has been scanty with words. He has chosen to partake in aurafarming — in one video he pilots a boat in Udaypur, in another he drives on a rural road. Many posts position him as a family man.

Unlike Gagan Thapa, Shah has few videos that speak directly to the voting public. And he never spoke to the press while mayor and on the campaign trail. There were sarcastic comments after his recent campaign address, one feigning surprise: "He speaks!"

This is carefully curated brand-building, along with the trademark beard and sunglasses. With a 'Balen Craze' sweeping the country, his thinking perhaps is: 'The less I say, the less chance that I mess up.'

And he has messed up in impulsive social media posts since deleted (page 10-11) in which he heaped abuse at India, China and the US. He also once threatened to burn down Singha Darbar after being stopped by traffic police.

Shah has been campaigning not just in Jhapa but all over the country, trying to establish his credentials as a national leader. At a speech in Itahari this week, he vowed to solve problems of agriculture, tourism, sports, and connectivity.

It was a weak speech, lacking focus, much stuttering, superficial, and without the powerful tone of Thapa or Oli. However, the crowd was engaged and loved every minute of it. Shah's supporters have made up their minds.

As Kathmandu mayor, Shah got mixed reviews. Many were outraged by his crackdown on street vendors and squatters, and his flashy attempts to beautify Kathmandu were seen to be performative. Budget spending was one of the lowest among metropolitan cities, yet the public perception is that Kathmandu is cleaner and better managed.

If Shah looks to succeed and last in Nepal's politics, and perhaps as prime minister, he would have to conduct himself in a much more diplomatic and transparent manner. To some, he is a populist and too new to be taken seriously. Others are skeptical about him joining the RSP, with all of the scandals of its leaders.

But as the elected mayor of Kathmandu, and holding on to the position for four years, he has proven that at least he has initiative and effectiveness. 🇳🇵

International commentary on

Nepali parties promise big ahead of polls; however, concerns remain

Parties have already unveiled their manifestos and are now on campaign trails, pledging not only development but also an end to corruption and good governance

Published - February 28, 2026 10:53 pm IST - KATHMANDU

SANJEEV SATGAINYA

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Sanjeev Satgainya

THE HINDU

While analysts are sceptical of the parties' overambitious plans, they point to the risk of this election turning into another regular vote that may not offer solutions to some core political problems plaguing Nepal.

With Nepal's nominal GDP at \$45.5 billion, per capita GDP around \$1,535, one in five persons unemployed, and the country's current power generation at 3,878 MW, almost all parties have made tall claims without providing any concrete plans — or a clear resource management model.

Tara Nath Dahal, a civic rights activist and campaigner for open government, says a hung Parliament is almost certain, which could revive the same revolving-door politics, albeit with new actors and faces.

"Every party is talking about development and ending corruption. But development is a

political process, corruption has its roots in the system and culture," he said. "Political commitment and the will to achieve those are missing from their manifestos."

Most of the parties have made the September protests their reference point, stopping short of acknowledging their demands. The NC has explicitly referenced and incorporated the Gen-Z uprising but has also centred its manifesto on the economy and development.

A new force, which could be the RSP, is likely to alter the traditional composition in Parliament or may even get a chance to lead the government. No matter what parties have pledged, even if their promises are realistic, achieving those goals is not going to be easy unless a party secures a majority and leads the government for five years.

"So, these manifestos hardly mean anything," he added. "This election is most likely to return us to the same coalition fragility."

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nepali-parties-promise-big-ahead-of-polls-however-concerns-remain/article70688498.ece>

Rajendra Pokhrel

MONGABAY

Bigger hydropower plants, wider roads and more transmission lines: These are the promises major political parties in Nepal are presenting to win votes in the country's general elections, scheduled for March 5, a quick scan of the cover illustrations used in their manifestos suggests.

The images show that despite rising climate risks across the country, major political parties continue to prioritize economic growth and mega infrastructure expansion, with climate and environmental issues receiving limited space even in their imagination, experts say. Globally, Nepal is one of the countries most

the hill regions, landslides are becoming more frequent and in the Tarai-Madhes, floods and inundation are intensifying. These changes are already affecting agricultural productivity, energy production, tourism and daily life.

Mega infrastructure projects also have borne the brunt of climate change as they weren't designed to cope with potential climate risks. In 2021, the \$464 million project to divert water from the Melamchi River to Kathmandu was badly damaged by floods triggered by intense rainfall attributed to climate change. Similarly, 17 hydropower projects with a capacity of 180MW and 15 projects of 338MW under construction were affected following heavy rain in 2025.

Despite these risks, major political parties have invested only a few words in their manifestos for

In Nepal polls, political parties root for mega infrastructure

Rajendra Pokhrel

4 days ago



vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It ranked sixth on the list of countries most impacted by climate change in 2024, according to the Germanwatch Climate Risk Index.

Rising global temperatures have changed monsoon characteristics and prolonged winter droughts. In the Himalayan areas, glacial melting and glacial lake outburst risks are rising; in

climate change and its impacts, a reading of the documents shows. In contrast, they have written pages after pages on economic growth, infrastructure expansion and employment generation, which dominate policy commitments.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2026/02/in-nepal-polls-political-parties-root-for-mega-infrastructure/amp/>

Selection of readings from the foreign press about Nepal's election

The BBC documentary *Shot Like Enemies: Inside Nepal's GenZ Uprising* set off a frenzied debate in the public sphere, highlighting how sensitive international coverage of the country still is for Nepalis despite the national media doing its job.

The investigative report focussed on the massacre outside Parliament on 8 September that led to the collapse of the government and paved the way for the election on Thursday.

There was praise from supporters of the film and scathing criticism. Raw clips and leaked conversations showed how deliberately the protesters were shot in cold blood. Others saw a sinister conspiracy behind the release of what they regarded as a one-sided documentary just a week before the election.

News in the foreign media of the election from Nepal was eclipsed this week by the war in West Asia. *Nepali Times* brings this selection of readings from the international press. Complete articles can be found online at the links.

Rudabeh Shahid

Atlantic Council

For decades, Nepal managed its geopolitical position through calibrated hedging—extracting economic benefits from both India and China while maintaining formal nonalignment. This strategy has deep historical roots. Nepal has had a consistent policy of diversifying external partnerships without surrendering its strategic maneuverability.

What distinguishes the current moment from past Nepal policy is not a departure

major powers and experiencing generational upheaval can rebuild legitimacy quickly enough to preserve strategic agency.

If the next government delivers credible governance and economic reform, Nepal can pursue balanced partnerships—transparent engagement with Western partners and managed cooperation with India and China without surrendering strategic autonomy.

Strong institutions enable genuine hedging; weak ones invite the kind of asymmetric relationships that erode sovereignty over time.

The distinction matters: countries with robust governance can negotiate from strength. Those without it become arenas of competition rather than actors within it.

Will Nepal's long-standing nonalignment survive the first election after its Gen Z uprising?

from hedging, but the erosion of the elite consensus that managed it for decades. During past bouts of geopolitical volatility, elite continuity ensured predictability in Nepal's foreign policy.

But today's political fragmentation could bring to power figures that are less socialized into the country's diplomatic tradition, raising uncertainty about whether they will maintain this hedging strategy with the same coherence.

Nepal's upcoming elections are not simply about whether Gen Z energy can be translated into parliamentary seats. They are about whether a state positioned between

The September uprising burned parliament in the name of dignity and opportunity. The election will determine whether that rupture produces renewal—or whether Nepal's internal volatility transforms it into a more contested arena of great-power rivalry.

Rudabeh Shahid is a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's South Asia Center and a visiting assistant professor of government at Wesleyan University.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/dispatches/will-nepals-long-standing-nonalignment-survive-the-first-election-after-its-gen-z-uprising/>

Balen Shah: Rapper, mayor, Nepal's next prime minister?

His sunglasses and songs are the rage, but the ex-Kathmandu mayor has his sights on Nepal's top job.

Listen to this article | 14 mins



Samik Kharel

ALJAZEERA

Balen's volatile public communication — he has abused mainstream parties, India, China and the United States, and threatened to burn down symbols of power in Nepal — has sparked criticism and questions over whether he is ready for high office.

But Balen defied the pundits when he won the Kathmandu mayoralty. And observers and analysts say that for many Nepalis, he represents a breath of fresh air in a country where more than 40

percent of the population is under the age of 35, but where the leadership of all major parties is in its 70s.

Pranaya Rana at *Kalam Weekly* said that for many he "embodies the outsider spirit that many young Nepalis are looking for to shake up the status quo".

Yet, he acknowledged, questions over Balen's ability to lead Nepal linger as the country heads to elections: "A primary concern for most critics is Balen's immaturity and his refusal to engage with the public. During his time as mayor, he gave no interviews to local media and did not answer any questions."

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2026/3/2/balen-shah-rapper-mayor-nepals-next-prime-minister>

Nepal election

Ashok Swain

Scroll.in

Nepal's general election on March 5 is far more than a routine political event. It has become a crucial democratic test in a region where genuine democracy is in rapid retreat. Across South Asia, the outer forms of democracy, elections, parliaments, constitutions, still exist. Yet, in reality, democratic competition is shrinking, opposition voices are being silenced, institutions are weakening, and leaders are evading accountability.

In this grim regional context, Nepal's election has taken on a significance that transcends its borders. It is a referendum not only on Nepal's future but on whether democracy in South Asia can still feel authentic and alive.

Nepal did not follow the path of its neighbours. It did not militarise politics, as seen in Pakistan and Myanmar, nor did it suspend electoral processes for a longer period, as occurred in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Instead, it established an interim government and committed to an inclusive election within six months.

This procedural response may seem standard, but in today's South Asia, it is a radical act of political renewal. While other regional states often meet crises with coercion, Nepal is attempting the harder, more hopeful path, channeling

street protest into political change and resolving conflict through ballots.

The domestic stakes are enormous. This election is tied to the survival of Nepal's secular, federal, republican constitution, established after the monarchy's abolition in 2008.

That experiment now faces a dual threat. The first is public exhaustion with democratic performance. The second, more dangerous threat emerges from

Personality-driven politics can energise young voters alienated by traditional party machines. However, it can also weaken democratic substance. When elections become contests of celebrity and viral spectacle, politics turns into consumerism.

Nepal's election already shows signs of this trend, optics are replacing ideology, and digital outrage is supplanting grassroots organization. The nation may achieve a generational turnover in leadership but lose the deeper institutional culture that makes democracy durable.

The regional context makes Nepal's task even more urgent. South Asia is becoming a graveyard of democratic hope. Against this bleak backdrop, Nepal stands out, not because it is perfect, but because it is still open. This openness is precious and fragile.

Nepal's 2026 election is more than a party contest. It is a test of whether the republic can defend itself against the lure of autocratic nostalgia, whether youth energy can be transformed into effective governance rather than mere spectacle, and whether constitutional democracy can survive in a hostile regional climate.

Ashok Swain is a professor of peace and conflict research at Uppsala University, Sweden.

<https://scroll.in/article/1090389/nepals-election-is-referendum-on-its-future-and-democracy-in-south-asia>

Nepal's election is referendum on its future and democracy in South Asia

In response to the 2025 protests which overthrew the government, Nepal took the more difficult path of political renewal unlike its neighbours.

Ashok Swain
Feb 28, 2026 · 06:30 am



Former Nepal prime minister KP Sharma Oli addresses his party during a rally in Kathmandu in November. | Reuters

this disappointment, a growing nostalgia for a supposedly stronger, simpler past. This is where a revived royalist sentiment enters the picture.

Voters are no longer just choosing between familiar parties with minor differences, but between old political structures and entirely new political brands.

This is hopeful but risky.

Where have Nepal's 'nepo kids' gone as corruption takes centre stage in election?

15 hours ago

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Phanindra Dahal, BBC Nepali and Flora Drury



Phanindra Dahal and Flora Drury

BBC

It was the excess on show on the social media accounts of politicians' children that provided the kindling for Nepal's GenZ uprising last year. The lavish presents, all clearly marked with designer labels, piled up and decorated like a Christmas tree, the expensive trips to five-star resorts around the world, the extravagant wedding parties that closed roads to traffic.

For many, the disparity between the haves and have-nots right there, on your phone, was too much to be ignored, in a country where youth unemployment stands at 20.6% and with three million working overseas.

As the country heads to the polls next week, it appears politicians have taken note of their anger, and have promised a raft of changes to appease it. Meanwhile, many of the social media accounts which so carefully curated privileged lives have gone quiet.

That shift in focus may be away from the social media posts, but it is not away from the perception of nepotism, and more widely, corruption. According to Transparency International 84% of Nepalis believe government corruption is a big problem. Corruption was a major factor behind the unrest that forced the resignation of then-prime minister KP Oli last September, leading to next week's election.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgqg3j5nj4o>

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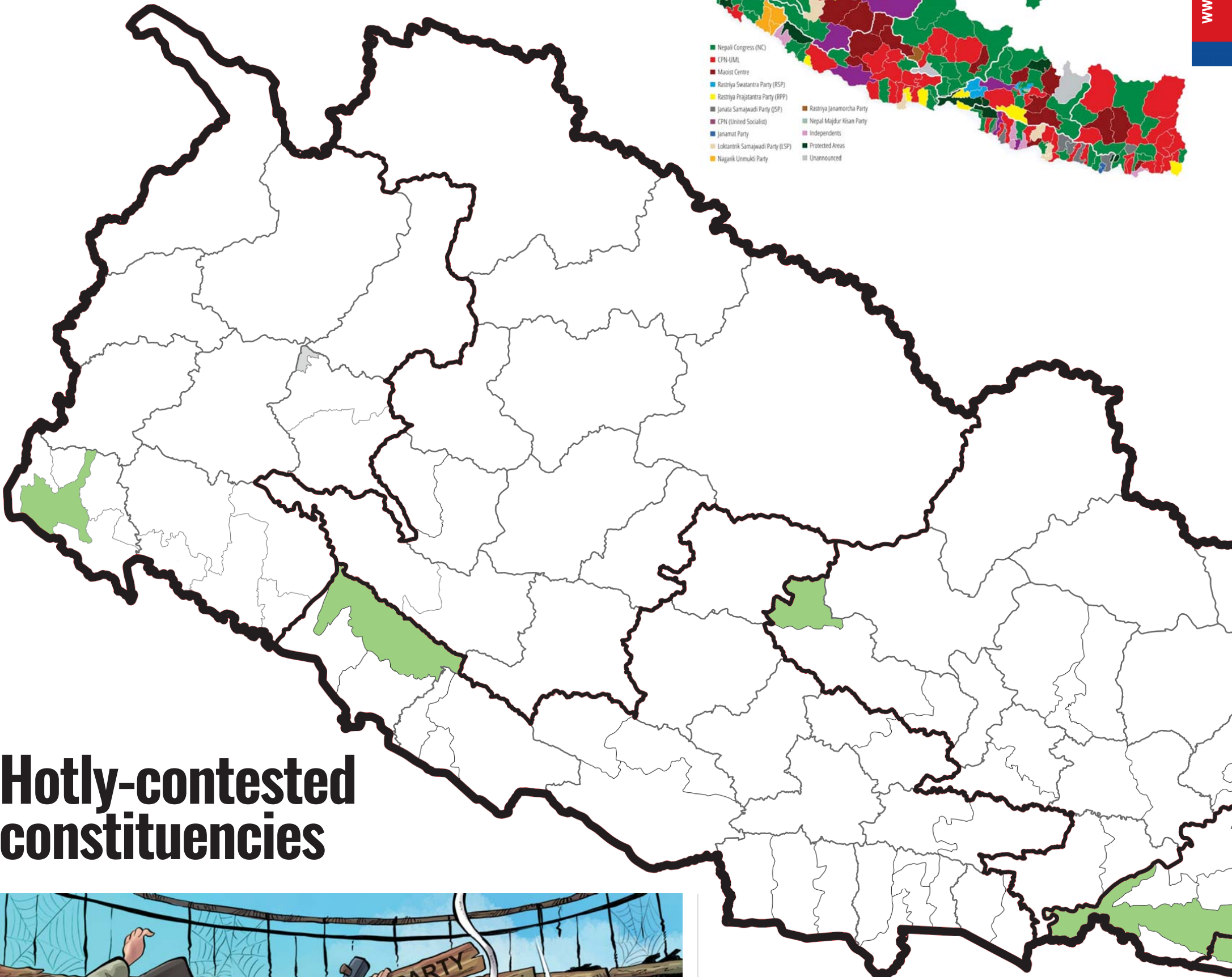


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2022 FEDERAL ELECTION RESULTS



Hotly-contested constituencies



ANUP TAMU

- JHAPA-5**
Nepali Congress: Mandhara Chamariya
NCP: Ranjit Tamang
RSP: Balendra Shah
UML: K P Sharma Oli
- ILAM-2**
Nepali Congress: Bhesh Raj Acharya
NCP: Om Bahadur Gurung
RSP: Gokul Bahadur Rai
UML: Suhang Nembang
- HUMLA-1**
Nepali Congress: Jaya Pati Rokaya
NCP: Dipendra Rokaya
RSP: Tashi Lhazom
UML: Dal Fadera

- SUNSARI-1**
Nepali Congress: Sujendra Tamang
NCP: Surya Bahadur Bhattarai
RSP: Goma Tamang
Shram Sanskriti Party: Harka Raj Rai
UML: Tika Ram Limbu
- SARLAHI-4**
Nepali Congress: Gagan Thapa
NCP: Rajnish Roy
RSP: Amresh Kumar Singh
UML: Amanish Kumar Yadav
- KATHMANDU-3**
Nepali Congress: Ramesh Aryal
NCP: Niraj Lama
RSP: Raghu Nath Pandey
UML: Rameshwar Phuyal
UNP: Kulman Ghising

- CHITWAN-3**
Nepali Congress: Tek Prasad Gurung
NCP: Renu Dahal
RSP: Sobita Gautam
UML: Shankar Raj Thapaliya
- CHITWAN-2**
Nepali Congress: Mina Kumari Kharel
NCP: Pratap Gurung
RSP: Rabi Lamichhane
UML: Asmin Ghimire
- MYAGDI-1**
Independent: Mahabir Pun
Nepali Congress: Karna Bahadur Bhandari
NCP: Arjun Bahadur Thapa
RSP: Yubaraj Roka
UML: Hari Krishna Shrestha

- GORKHA-1**
Nepali Congress: Prem Kumar Khatri
NCP: Hariraj Adhikari
RSP: Sudan Gurung
UML: Ram Chandra Lamichhane
- TANAHU-1**
Nepali Congress: Govinda Bhattarai
NCP: Bidhyanath Dhakal
RSP: Swarnim Wagle
UML: Bhagwati Neupane
- EAST RUKUM-1**
Nepali Congress: Kusum Devi Thapa
NCP: Pushpa Kamal Dahal
RSP: Lakhan Kumar Thapa
UML: Lila Mani Gautam

Election in numbers

