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DREAM TEAM: Group portrait of 180 new RSP lawmakers taken after their two-day orientation in Kathmandu that ended Wednesday. Most are freshmen and sophomores, and Balendra Shah and Amresh Singh are missing.

RSP / FACEBOOK

PEOPLE'S POWER

Kunda Dixit

Sometimes, we need to take a step back to realise what a tectonic movement Nepali politics witnessed this month.

In a region and world ruled by elected authoritarians, Nepalis went to the ballot box freely to express a collective will for change.

These faces in this group photo of the RSP's 180 freshly-minted MPs at the ballroom of the Royal Tulip Hotel on Wednesday is symbolic of what Nepal has come through.

The ship of state righted itself after the September Storm, installing an interim government that held an election within six months in which voters banished obsolete politicians and their parties into oblivion.

Nepalis, fed up with the inept kakistocracy of the past three decades, took the country into a post-ideological phase — replacing Marxists, Maoists and monarchists with a belief in a new governing culture that rewards delivery and accountability. And they have trusted the RSP to carry it through.

Nepal's history has never been linear, it jerks ahead in lurches.

The polity also tends to take one step forward and two steps back, so the public's great expectations is tempered by a sense of cautious optimism and guarded pessimism.

This could be the great leap forward that Nepalis have waited for and deserve, but it could also be a Gramscian interregnum in which the old is dead and the new is not yet born. We will have to wait to see whether this transitional period will also see 'morbid symptoms'.

As disruptor-in-chief, it was the Balendra Shah 'wave' or 'craze' that propelled the RSP to power. The former Kathmandu mayor needed a party platform, and the RSP's tainted leader Rabi Lamichhane required a booster. Nepal's voters were looking for a saviour.

Personality-wise Shah and Lamichhane are poles apart: one is Type B and the other Type A. One is enigmatic, the other phlegmatic. But yin and yang do also tend to complement each other.

Kathmandu's chattering class is already making self-fulfilling prophecies about the two falling out, and are fishing for hints that they already have. Shah's absence from the RSP's orientation this week was taken as a clue.

Closing the two-day tutorial on Wednesday, Lamichhane delivered

a fiery 30-minute speech that laid out the RSP's main agenda: to function differently from the old parties, serve the people, avoid middlemen, become true lawmakers without taking the law into their own hands.

"The old political parties contributed to history, we will build the future with a new political contract with citizens," he said, trying to rise over past controversies and his abrasive rhetoric to sound statesmanlike.

GIVE AND TAKE

Lamichhane is said to be in touch with the reclusive Shah to announce a compact cabinet next week. Its composition will be an indication of how much give-and-take there was, and whether the criteria for selecting ministers is competence or loyalty.

Will RSP ministers behave like rulers or service providers? The new government will dive right into the economic fallout of the West Asia war with soaring fuel prices, inflation and uncertainty about remittance inflows.

On Thursday, Gagan Thapa resigned as NC chair, taking moral responsibility for the party's election loss. The UML's unrepentant K P Oli does not share

the same sentiment about who is responsible for his own party's historic downfall.

NCP chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who was luckier than his cross-party cohort, is now a comparative relic in a Parliament largely comprised of freshmen and sophomore lawmakers.

But the NC, UML and NCP still control provincial and most municipal governments. The old parties could try to make things difficult for the RSP at the centre, but it is also an opportunity for them to clean up their act ahead of local elections next year.

Another test for the RSP will be dealing with a heavily-politicised klepto-bureaucracy which has to frontend its policy decisions.

No nation for women
EDITORIAL
PAGE 2



HIGH TAX HINDERS HYBRIDS

PAGE 6-7



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No nation for women

Nepal's state apparatus has repeatedly failed victims and survivors of sexual violence

Shristi Karki

The rape and murder of Inisha BK in Surkhet earlier this month has become yet another case of the abuse and violence that women and girls continue to face — and pay with their lives.

The crime also cast a harsh spotlight on how Nepal's state apparatus has repeatedly failed victims and survivors of sexual violence. This has fostered a sense of impunity that encourages more abuse.

Four teenage boys, one of them reportedly in a romantic relationship with Inisha, have been arrested for her brutal assault and murder. In the days since, Nepalis across the country have come together, as they have before after the same sort of crimes, to demand justice and accountability not just for Inisha but for countless other women and girls who are made to suffer.

Nepal Police records show an average of 2,400 cases of rape over the last five fiscal years, with 2,253 complaints filed in the past year. There are as much as 7 rape cases registered every day, many more are never reported. Yet, even as there are resounding calls for accountability now for Inisha, there is the sense that law enforcement and the judicial system is not to be trusted to ensure safety and justice for women.

The 2018 rape and murder of 18-year-old Nirmala Panta has not been solved due to police mishandling of the investigation. Thousands of survivors of wartime rape during the insurgency remain unaddressed by



the state. Law enforcement shows apathy and loathing towards trans people, particularly sex workers, when they try to register complaints of sexual harassment and assault. Police are routinely reluctant to record complaints of marital rape.

And even if cases of sexual violence are registered, the state allows perpetrators to get away with fumbled investigations, a lack of sufficient evidence or statutes of limitation.

Adults get away with grooming and assaulting minors because both parties 'have consented' to being in a relationship. Survivors and families are often made to

sign a मिलापत्र by police so they do not have to investigate and prosecute. After this month's election, there is hope that a fresh new elected leadership will govern the country better than their predecessors. There are strong demands that the government hold the rapists of Inisha, Nirmala and many others, accountable.

Whenever yet another case of sexual assault makes it to national headlines, there is an outcry to punish the perpetrators. This after they have committed the crime. But what of our own homes, communities, and culture where patriarchy is entrenched, and misogyny rampant?

BLAMING VICTIMS

Following Inisha's rape and murder, the usual questions were already there on the social media manosphere: why would she go into the forest with a boy? Why did she have a boyfriend at 16? Online, some began their think-pieces with 'I don't mean to blame the victim ... but young girls must be careful who they give themselves to.'

Almost every woman will have experienced sexual harassment, misconduct or violence one way or another — in casual conversations at work, walking on the streets, on public transport, interacting with people they know, just going about their daily lives.

And the onus of sexual abuse and violence always lies on those who are subjected to it: on how they dress, how they behave, how they exist. Meanwhile, perpetrators are excused and protected by their celebrity status, wealth, connection, age, by their families and communities.

Meanwhile, young boys and men across the globe are increasingly radicalised on the internet, driven to violent and sexist behaviour as they are algorithmically led to believe that feminism and the calls for equality tramples on their rights.

Misogyny permeates everyday interactions, every time we dismiss the aggression of young men as 'boys being boys', every time men are taught to associate romantic relationships with aggressively pursued behaviour, every instance sexist wedding rituals are taken in jest, every time women are silenced into sweeping violence, abuse, and sexual assault under the rug.

Nepal's laws must ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence are granted no leniency, regardless of age, background, or circumstance. But it must also be made abundantly clear to young boys and men at home, schools, and in the community that bad behaviour, however small, has consequences. 🇳🇵

Trending Online



RSP's activist DNA

by Shristi Karki
RSP members have nostalgic memories of Bibeksheel Nepali founder Ujwal Thapa for inspiring youth to become part of an alternative political force 15 years ago. Today, as RSP lawmakers, they are part of mainstream politics. Visit nepalitimes.com for the full story.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Rough road for new rulers

by Sonia Awale
The fuel crisis caused by the West Asia war will have a knock-on effect on the economy which the RSP government will have to tackle as soon as it comes into office. Full report online.

Most popular on X



Nobody ran the campaign.

by Nobel Rimal
The RSP's 2026 campaign is a case study in how a symbol becomes so participatory that citizens campaign on behalf of a party they never formally joined. It is a phenomenon no political party in Nepal has pulled off. Read the analysis and join discussion online.

Most commented

As clear as a bell

Editorial
Even with RSP's near two-thirds majority, it would be impossible to solve all of Nepal's problems overnight. Effective governance takes time, and RSP must be given the chance, even if it fails, to make course corrections. Go online for details.

Most visited online page

Letters

RSP CAMPAIGN

No matter how brilliant the RSP campaign was ('Nobody ran the campaign. That is why it worked', Nobel Rimal, #1302), it wouldn't have worked so well without the public wrath incurred by the arrogance and intransigence displayed by the UML and NC even after the events of 8 September.

AirlineGuy

■ This is not a case study as much as it is a reflection of people's long-time anger that they poured onto the ballot. It would be a real case study if RSP could pull this off again and again, because if they don't deliver they will be out of the scene next time.

Anon Branon

■ This will probably be the first

and the last time RSP succeeds like this. The party now needs to pull off generational change and actually deliver.

In God's Shadow

■ RSP's win was a combination of anti-incumbency and a severe delivery deficit, which was the straw that broke the camel's back. Everything else was toppings.

Samaya

NEW GOVT

The editorial is absolutely right about giving RSP a chance, they need time ('As clear as a bell', Editorial, #1302). Rome wasn't built in a day, and I hope voters give the new administration the time they need to bring about the changes.

K Dol Kan

■ A suggestion to the new government— I would prioritise a reduced import tax on EVs to



address the pollution in Kathmandu Valley.

Slow Trekking

UJWAL THAPA

It is good to recognise and celebrate where all of this 'new politics' came from ('RSP's grassroots DNA', Shristi Karki #1302). It was not from the self-declared Maoists or Marxists, or the monarchists— it was from the theory and practice of grassroots politics. Let us hope the party survives as it now confronts

the hard truths of governance.
David Seddon

NEPALI COFFEE

Why is it that Nepal's coffee is so popular ('Caffeine buzz', Vishad Raj Onta, nepalitimes.com)? How come we have never heard about it?

Prajit Adhikari

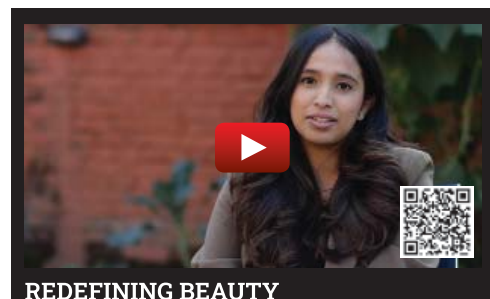
■ Nepal's agricultural sector is underutilised and has huge potential to grow. The key will be an expanded private sector and government efforts to help farmers grow crops like coffee and other cash crops.

Bishow Parajuli

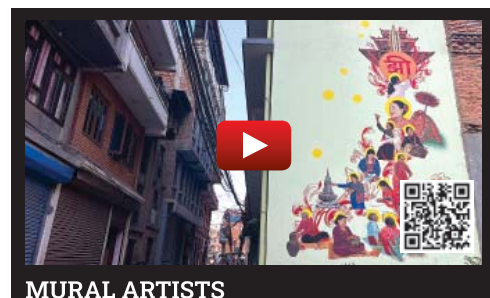
■ A lot of people have no idea how much agricultural land we have. We have the potential to be an agricultural powerhouse comparable to New Zealand. All that matters is productivity.

LunarDrift

Online Package



Arushree Sharma Khatiwada and Megha Agarwal gambled on setting up a skin and haircare brand during the Covid-19 pandemic. Watch video on Nepali Times' YouTube channel.



Murals have become the preferred medium for social messaging. Watch three women artists talk about their experience with the art form. Watch the video and read the story on page 9.

1,000 Words



HUM GURUNG

BARBER MAHAL: A haircutting saloon in Pokhara's B P Marga is seeing brisk business after rebranding itself after Nepal's prime minister-in-waiting, Balendra Shah.

Times

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MIGRANT WORKERS IN WARTIME

Across West Asia, Nepalis carry on with their jobs as missiles explode overhead

Shrijan Pandey in Doha

As war escalates across West Asia, Nepali workers navigate fear, uncertainty and the pressure to keep earning, while back home a new government readsies to take charge.

Khagendra Basnet, 42, has spent seven years as a security guard here. He sits silently during a long night shift as his mobile phone screeches alerts. Explosions follow as Iranian missiles and drones are intercepted overhead.

Three weeks into the war, residents in Qatar have gone from fear to resignation, some even returning to dinners at the Pearl and Souq Waqif under flashes of missiles in the sky.

Basnet's company contracted him to US-affiliated institutions and he works near the American Embassy. He is apprehensive, "I panic from time to time as there is no saying when it is safe."

Qatar's location and its US air

base at Al Udeid puts it at risk of Iranian missile attacks. The base was struck on the very first day of the war on 28 February. Oil and gas installations in Iran and across the Gulf were targeted this week.

While no deaths have been reported in Qatar so far, there is fear among Nepalis in the Gulf states, as well as in Israel itself where there are 7,000 caregivers and nurses.

Three South Asian migrant workers were killed by debris from intercepted Iranian drones above Abu Dhabi on 28 February. Among them was 29-year-old Diwas Shrestha from Gorkha, who had been working as a security guard.

"Hearing that news made my heart ache," says Basnet. "What if my family has to bear a similar tragedy without saying goodbye, and hearing from news sources?"

Basnet came to Qatar to save enough to support his family. His company had promised him a plane



ticket home in April, but Doha airport is only partially open for limited routes. He says, "My family is really worried. I assure them that it's all ok, just to lessen their fear."

Basnet's thoughts are about the political change back home in Nepal. He blames the decades of corrupt governments for not creating opportunities for people

like him in Nepal, and forcing him to work in a war zone.

The Foreign Ministry issued an advisory to the nearly 2 million Nepalis in Israel, Iran and other West Asian countries telling them to follow local security instructions.

"We have formed an Emergency Response Team with different departments in light of the ongoing

conflict in West Asia. We are closely monitoring the situation through our 24/7-operating control rooms, our embassies and advisories in the region, and online information forms," says Lok Bahadur Poudel Chettri of the Foreign Ministry in Kathmandu.

More than 65,000 Nepali citizens have registered in the

NMB BANK
एनएमबि बैंक



Transmission line

NEA and Germany held the groundbreaking of the Lekhnath-Damauli 220kV Transmission Line Project in Tanahu. Co-financed by KfW Development Bank, the project involves a 45km double-circuit line with a capacity of 1,000MW, which will transfer power from the Tanahun Hydropower Project. GIZ is providing technical support by building EV charging stations in Gandaki Province.



Mountain Lodges

Sherpa Hospitality Group's Mountain Lodges of Nepal - Manang has been named one of TIME magazine's World's Greatest Places to Stay 2026. The property has collected many international accolades including Tatler Asia's Best 100 Hotels, National Geographic's Best New Hotels 2024, and recognition from Travel + Leisure, Condé Nast Traveler, and Robb Report.

Tata Tiago

Tata Motors, through Sipradi, launched an exchange campaign allowing customers to trade any bike or scooter for a Tiago EV. Benefits include a down payment of Rs500,000, a high valuation for the two-wheelers, free accessories, one year of vehicle tax exemption, lifetime free DC fast charging, and free home charger.

Samsung Buds4 Pro

Samsung Nepal launched the Galaxy Buds4 Pro, featuring a two-way speaker system, Adaptive Active Noise Cancellation, AI-powered call clarity, and easy integration with Galaxy devices. The Buds are priced at Rs33,999, and are available on a 0% interest 24-month EMI plan when bought with the Galaxy S26 Series.



IME overseas

Global IME Bank inaugurated Nepal's first Non-Resident and Overseas Banking Department (NROBD), a dedicated service for Nepalis living abroad with credit, transaction banking, capital market services, and 24-hour support. The Bank also organised week-long financial literacy programs across all seven provinces for Global Money Week 2026, themed Smart Money Talks.



inDrive awards

inDrive Nepal hosted its Driver Partner Excellence Awards, Biswasko Samman, recognising 80 top-performing driver partners across cab and motorbike categories. inDrive is the second most downloaded mobility app worldwide.



Mero Kishan IPO

Mero Kishan Limited, an agri-tech company working directly with farmers on seed production, crop collection, storage, and distribution, signed an IPO management agreement with Prabhu Capital to establish an agricultural processing centre and dairy in Patihani, Chitwan on 3.5 bighas of land. The processing centre is expected to be operational within this fiscal year.

Construction holiday

FCAN demanded the government declare a construction holiday due to soaring material costs following petroleum price hikes. Iron rod prices rose from Rs85 to Rs100/kg and cement rose by Rs50/sack.

KUSoA open letter

At least 445 members of the Nepali arts and academic community have signed an open letter addressed to authorities at the Kathmandu University School of Arts in response against sexual misconduct by senior faculty member Sujan Chitrakar. The move is a response to the investigation carried out by Subesksa Poudel and published in Nepali Times on 26 February 2026.

Madhes mango



Mango production in Madhes Province is expected to rise by 60% this year across 30,800 hectares in eight districts. Total production could exceed 400,000 metric tons. Madhes accounts for 76% of Nepal's total mango output.



Pathibhara offerings

Pathibhara Temple in Taplejung collected Rs3.11 million in offerings during Falgun, with 18,652 pilgrims visiting over the month. Donations are sealed, transported to Fedi, and then counted daily at the committee's Phungling office under police supervision and CCTV before being deposited in a bank.



Prithvi Highway 41km

The 41km Aabukhaireni-Jamune section of the Mugling-Pokhara road expansion has been completed and handed over to the government, financed by a Rs6.31 billion ADB loan. The section has been widened to four lanes in market areas. The construction company will carry out maintenance for the next five years.

Exchange Fest

Laxmi E-Mobility is running an exchange fest from 20-22 March for its Forthing EV. Customers trading in their current vehicle for a Forthing Friday EV can get benefits of up to Rs700,000, including an exchange bonus, cash discount, one year of insurance and road tax, etc.



SHRIJAN PANDEY

ministry's online system, among whom roughly 6,000 requested emergency assistance.

Foreign Minister Balananda Sharma has said Nepal would "use both air and sea routes" if the number of people requiring assistance increases.

However, the department sees no immediate need for mass-



evacuation from the region.

But for many workers here, the issue is not only whether they are officially asked to leave. It is whether they can afford to.

On 14 March MoFA advised Nepalis in Qatar to secure Saudi tourist visas in advance so they could use the Salwa border route and fly out to Nepal.

Other governments evacuated their nationals through overland transfers, charter flights, and consular assistance routed via Saudi Arabia or Oman.

The Indian Embassy in Qatar facilitated departures through limited Qatar Airways flights and through Saudi Arabia, including temporary 96-hour Saudi transit visas for its Indian nationals.

"I checked the available options and it will cost at least 4,000 riyals (Rs157,000) to fly to Nepal via Saudi Arabia, and most flights are already booked," says Basnet, whose salary is only 1,800 riyal a month.

NEW NORMAL

For most migrant workers in Qatar, fear has become routine. Arun Thapa, 31, works at a food delivery company here, and was in his room scrolling through TikTok when he first saw videos and updates about war breaking out 28 February.

Before he could fully process what was happening, emergency alerts began ringing on his phone, followed by explosions in the sky.

For Thapa this was less scary than the Israeli air strike in Doha last September targetting the Hamas leadership. He was delivering food when he heard the bombs go off at that time.

"That day, I was really frightened. It was my first time seeing this," recalls Thapa. "That is not to say I am not scared now, of course, I am," he says. "I try not to overthink, and get on with my job."

Thapa came to Qatar 10 years ago after being first rejected for medical reasons. He first worked

in Bangalore as a waiter, and connections he built there helped him secure a job in a supermarket in Qatar. Unlike many migrants he did not have to pay an exorbitant amount to recruiters.

Still, he was promised a salary of 2,500 riyals a month, which was the main reason he agreed to come, but found out he would earn only half that.

His job is risky even without war: riders spend long hours on the road, exposed to traffic, heat and now the possibility of falling missile debris.

But he came here to earn and save, and this means he has to overcome his fear. Thapa wants to stay on for another two years because he still has loans after buying land for his family.

"It has become a habit. If I hear an alert, I park my bike to watch the fireworks, and get back to delivering," he says. "People are not as scared as they were at first.

Despite everything, Qatar feels safe."

But if the war escalates, Thapa does not expect much from his company beyond the annual return ticket, he will have to fend for himself. He is somewhat more optimistic about the Nepal Embassy helping than before.

Even though Nepal is a neutral country, its citizens are now scattered across the globe — many of them in war zones like West Asia. Ten Nepalis were killed in the Hamas attack on Israel in 2023, at the Canadian Embassy in Kabul in 2014, and the dozen Nepalis were killed in Iraq in 2004.

At least 1,000 Nepalis are fighting in the Russian Army against Ukraine, and 110 have been killed. Economic desperation and tempting offers by recruiters pushes many to risk their lives just to support their families.

"Labour and migration must be diversified and not be entirely dependent on Gulf countries," says Pitambar Ghimire at the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security in Kathmandu. "We must ensure safe and dignified migration in our labour diplomacy."

With the change of government in Nepal, there is hope among migrants that in the long term there will be better job opportunities, but there is the immediate risk posed by the West Asia war.

Nepal needs to move beyond lip service to migrant workers for supporting the country with their remittances, to ensuring their safety and security.

Khagendra Basnet stares out at the glittering Doha skyline, gives a worrying glance at the sky, saying, "I hope I can still live safely and be here to work and earn. If not, I will have to find a way back." 🇳🇵

Some names have been changed to protect their identity.

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DRIVE LINE

Arnav Upadhyay

Petrol, diesel, electricity, hybrids. They are various forms of engines automobiles used to propel them forward. Few know that the first cars 150 years ago were actually battery-powered, but the Ford Model T overtook them.

Ever since the first vehicles were carried over Chitlang pass to their Rana owners in Kathmandu in the early 1920s, Nepalis have been fascinated by the traditional internal combustion engine that burns some form of liquid fuel.

But in the past five years, there has been a switch to battery-powered electric vehicles (BEVs). Better range and lower cost due to tax rebates made Nepal the second country after Norway last year to adopt EVs.

But there is another option for Nepal that predates the recent popularity of electric vehicles: hybrids.

Early on, electric vehicles also faced a monumental challenge in Nepal to gain acceptance. Skepticism behind the technology was by far the biggest hurdle for the industry. People were not ready to adopt it and even if they did, it was a gamble because only a few knew how to maintain and repair such vehicles. Furthermore, there was zero charging infrastructure, and it was not feasible to travel long distances.

It was the excise tax cuts that made EVs affordable, and while the taxes have crept up over the years they still remain below that of traditional internal combustion engines (see box). Newly-elected MP Swarnim Wagle, who is being touted as the RSP's new finance minister said last week he wanted to bring down the taxes on petrol cars too.

However, the taxes never came down for hybrid cars even though they position themselves as an alternative to petrol. The tax structure for hybrids is similar to traditional

gasoline vehicles. As a result, most hybrids available command a steep starting price above Rs10 million. The smallest Toyota hybrid, the Yaris Cross, comes at Rs12.9 million. Toyota also sells the Corolla Cross and Rav4 hybrid.

To be sure, hybrids have been around for 20 years, and this paper actually test-drove and reviewed the Honda Insight and the Toyota Prius in 2013.

Toyota brought an early gen Prius model back in 2007, and its owner Suryansh Vaidya of Toyota Nepal says the car is still running smoothly with over 85% battery health after all these years.

Unlike internal combustion engines that solely rely on the combustion of a fuel to move the crankshaft and propel the car forward, or BEVs that solely rely on batteries to spin electric motors that then spin the wheels, hybrids usually have both. They mostly come equipped with a smaller sized battery pack and motor that is integrated into the output of a traditional gas engine (see box).

Over the years, hybrids have evolved and provide a number of advantages to traditional petrol and diesel cars such as better mileage and smoother ride handling as the tiny battery and electric motor. At lower speeds (and traffic) hybrids fully utilise its electric



half, thereby saving fuel and providing better pickup.

Hybrids have evolved in size and shape and have come to replace the much favoured gasoline engine vehicle in many countries globally. The market remains robust in Japan where nearly 30% of vehicles are hybrids and even USA has seen 7 million hybrids till date. There has been a wave of adoption hitting some European markets such as Switzerland and the Netherlands.

ELECTRIC NEPAL

However, Nepal has taken the EV road. And although this reduces the country's petroleum imports, EV battery packs contain a lot of rare earth and other metals that if

disposed haphazardly can be toxic. Most EV distributors claim their batteries will easily last a decade (or more) and provide an industry standard of eight years warranty. Both BYD and Deepal, among the top-selling EVs in Nepal, even provide extended warranties up to 10 and 11 years.

Annie Gardner Vaidya from Vijay Motors, the importer of Subaru says the smaller hybrid batteries tend to last longer: up to 15 years. And this generally seems to be the case as unlike in EVs the on-board hybrid batteries rarely fully charge or fully drain and constantly operate in a safe middle-ground, dramatically reducing wear.

Both the 2,000cc Subaru Forester and Crosstrek deliver between 14-16 km per litre with moderate driving. Whereas the 1,496cc Toyota Yaris Cross hybrid with a smaller engine claims a slightly higher mileage of 18-20kpl.

"What hybrids gives you is almost unlimited range within Nepal with a much lower fuel cost with models that have a proven record in rough terrain," says Annie Gardner Vaidya from Vijay Motors.

In most countries, the general trend is that gasoline vehicles are the cheapest to purchase as they are easiest to mass produce and simplest in technology. Hybrids are the middle ground as they have both an engine and a battery, making their drivetrain slightly more complex. Hybrids are still cheaper than most EVs because the battery pack is much smaller.

But EVs are the most expensive of the three, as the large battery pack contains expensive rare earth minerals. However, this chronology is not followed in Nepal.



The road didn't get easier Good thing your Forester SHEV got stronger

Nepal's roads need practicality. Hybrid vehicles combine a petrol engine with an electric motor for efficient driving in traffic and reliable power on highways and hills. In city traffic, hybrid runs on battery, achieving near-zero emissions, with the battery charged via regenerative braking. For long distances, hybrid switches to fuel. With Euro 6 standard, hybrid cuts fuel use and emissions, offering a cleaner, practical mobility solution.

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TOYOTA



began to overwhelmingly favour battery-powered electric vehicles after the Covid pandemic.

Import duties on EV fell sharply, making them dramatically affordable and offering better value for money for everyday consumers. Why spend 10 million when you could get a sleek EV for half that? Rising fuel prices and aggressive improvements and the rapid spread of charging infrastructure paved the way for

quicker adoption. Slowly but surely, public perception in favour of EVs was building up.

This left hybrids too expensive to compete with not just EVs, but against petrol cars. In Nepal's context for cleaner and smarter mobility, hybrids did not fail due to weak technology, but because the market moved faster than their value proposition could keep up.

As of 2026, besides Subaru and Toyota hybrids, cars like the BMW X5 (plug-in hybrid), BYD Shark (plug-in hybrid), GWM Tank 300 (hybrid), GWM Tank 500 (hybrid), Mitsubishi Outlander (plug-in hybrid), Nissan X-trail E-Power (series hybrid) and Suzuki's Grand Vitara (hybrid) and Victoris (hybrid) are also available.

But unless the new government changes the tax structure, all these names remain largely absent in Nepal. 🇳🇵

Arnav Upadhyay is a content creator who reviews automobiles and promotes road safety on Youtube, Tiktok and IG under the handle Casually Annoyed Driver. This is his regular Drive Line column in Nepali Times.

EVs vehicles are the cheapest, followed by traditional petrol and diesel cars, with hybrids generally being the most expensive.

Taxes are to blame. Better, more favourable taxes and subsidies for the hybrids, just like their EV counterparts, would have been beneficial for the country in reducing petroleum imports as well as air pollution.

"Where investments on the EV charging infrastructure had to start from scratch, hybrid technology would not have needed any because all they require is fueling up at any existing gas station," explains Suryansh Vaidya at Toyota. "In fact, hybrids did not even have a learning curve from traditional petrol or diesel cars, unlike EV's that need to be driven differently to maximise range and efficiency."

Despite being well acknowledged and proven worldwide, hybrids never found momentum in Nepal largely due to pricing, policy and timing. While hybrids arrived carrying the cost burden of both expensive petrol cars added to a complex electric drivetrain, government incentives quickly



HYBRID TYPES

A full hybrid contains both a gas engine and electric motor with a sizable battery that can alone drive the car. The battery is charged internally when the vehicle is in motion.

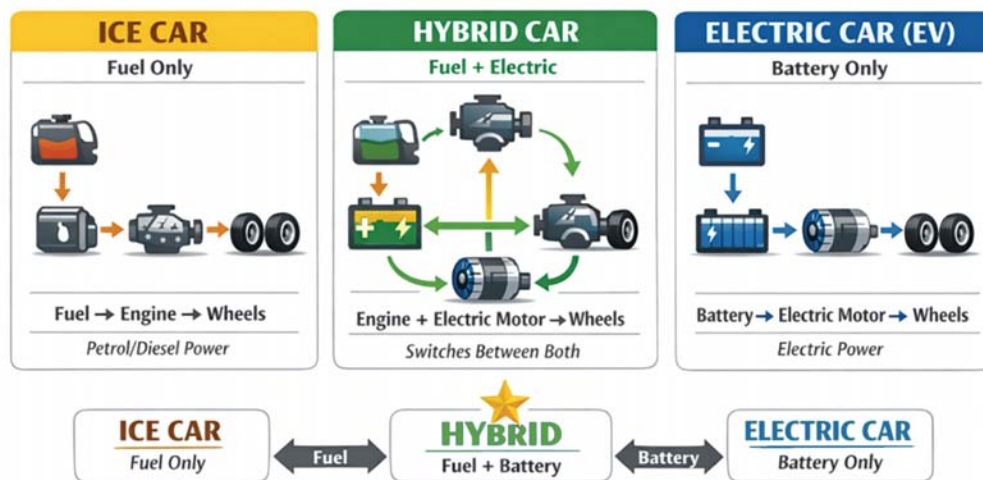
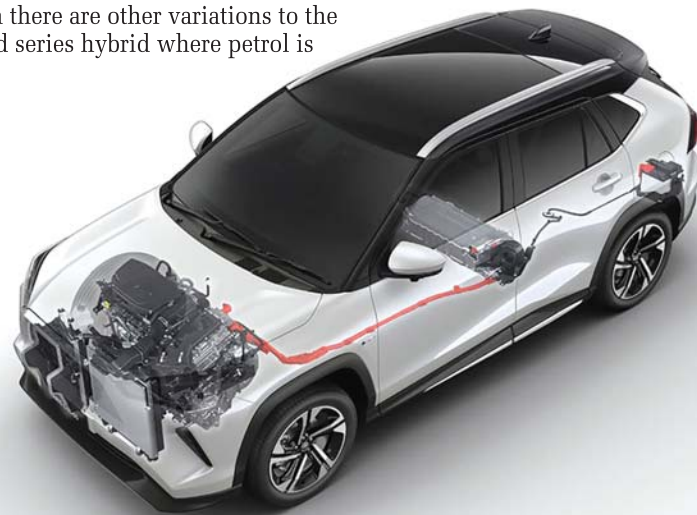
A plug-in hybrid is just like a full hybrid with the only difference that you can actually plug the battery to charge it.

A mild hybrid again follows the same principle of using both motor and battery, but due to the smaller size of the battery, it alone cannot drive the vehicle.

And then there are other variations to the system called series hybrid where petrol is

actually used to operate an in-house generator that produces electricity, which then in return powers the car such as the newest generation of Nissan X-Trail in the Nepali market.

And then finally come micro-hybrids that assist during ignition (auto on/off in traffic) and have some form of regenerative braking that captures the vehicle's kinetic energy during deceleration to charge the on-board battery.



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Events



Charandas Chor

Catch a performance of ongoing play Charandas Chor, written by Habib Tanvir and directed by Milan Karki. Book tickets through Mandala Theatre's website. **Till 25 March, 5:15pm (except Mondays, additional 1:15pm show on Saturdays), Mandala Theatre**

Antardristi

This contemplative solo exhibition of works by Sangee Shrestha explores inner vision through paint and ceramic. **Until 11 April, 11am-8pm, The Kala Salon, Chhaya Center, Thamel**

Flea Market

Be a sustainable shopper and choose from pre-loved and upcycled products and collectibles, as well as handcrafted artisanal goods. **27 March, Pulukisi Newari Restaurant, Lal Colony Marg, 9803306430**



Art exhibition

Nikhil Bahadur Shakya's ongoing exhibition takes visitors beyond the physical world into a surreal spiritual realm. Read review on page 12. **Till 6 April, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited**

Shabdakiri Saanjh

The 22nd edition of Shabdakiri Saanjh will be an evening of poetry sharing and literary exchange, bringing together voices for a celebration of words and expression. **21 March, 5pm onwards, Registration required, Taragaon Museum, Boudha**



Simpani-Chakhel Hike

Get some nature therapy and be a part of Hike for Nepal's Simpani-Chakhel hike and walk through flat trails and forest paths. Call for details. **21 March, 9828054244**

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**



Music

Kehar Limbu live

Kehar Limbu and his band Kehar & The Lunga, known for recent songs like Kata Chhau from the film Kumari, blend folk melodies with a high-energy live performance. **21 March, 7pm-2:30am, King's Lounge, Darbar Marg**



Weekend Rock 'n' Roll

Get ready for an evening of blues and rock this weekend with The Midnight Rider, Young Bloods, and 5150. **21 March, 7pm, Uptown Lounge, Jhamsikhel**

Hiphop Mandal

The Hiphop Mandal-Circuit Mixer features five artists and rap battles. Ticket details are available on Skathi Entertainment's Facebook page. **20 March, 5pm to 12am, Ticket: Rs300, Sunshine Boutique Hotel, Lazimpat**

Classical music eve

Celebrate classical music and experience the magic of classical ragas, contemporary melodies, and soul-stirring performances by top artists. **28 March, 3:30pm onwards, Tickets: Rs1,000 (general) / Rs1,500 (premium) Rastriya Nach Ghar, Jamal**



Moksh Hall 2.0

Moksh celebrates a new chapter with the inauguration of its Hall 2.0 featuring live performances from Joint International Family and What The Funk. **20 March, Entry: Rs500, Moksh, Jhamsikhel**



Getaway



Gokarna Forest Resort

The resort is a paradise, thick with century old trees rustling out natural tunes. Great restaurants for fine dining. Golf, anyone? **Gokarna (01) 4451212**

Barahi Jungle Lodge

Perfect for travellers, stay in the individual or two-in-one private villas, or guest rooms the eco-jungle lodge offers. Revel in the beauty of the surrounding Chitwan National Park, and go on a safari through the jungle. Also available: spa, boutique guest rooms, in-suite private swimming pools. **Megauli, Chitwan, 9851331247**



Balthali Village Resort

A simple and cosy retreat just beyond Kathmandu Valley, Balthali Village Resort is ideal for anyone seeking a getaway that isn't too far from the city. **Panauti, Kavre, 9851087772**

Yatri

Indulge in a relaxing spa treatment which includes a full body massage, body scrub, sauna and steam at Yatri Suites and Spa. **Amrit Marg, Thamel (01) 4545285**

Milla Guesthouse

If one prefers the quiet and admires a mix of old and new, this is the perfect place to stay. Not too far from the city, yet worlds apart. **Bhaktapur, 9817849759**



Dining

Cafe Soma

For a sunny spot to grab brunch in and mouthwatering desserts, head to Soma's Baluwatar location. If you're looking for a place to work by yourself, the Jhamsikhel location is perfect. **Jhamsikhel (01) 5428732 / Baluwatar (01) 4415792**

Fire & Ice

Fire & Ice's pizza is beloved by both Nepalis and tourists alike. Or try out their lasagna and Penne Al Forno if you want to switch it up. **Thamel (01) 5350210**



Attic

Enjoy Attic's signature Royal Aloo, chicken chop, potato bacon, fried prawn, and more from its wide menu. **Gyaneshwor, 9801138788 / 9801138789**

Raithaane

Eat your way through Nepal at Raithaane, a restaurant that is committed to using locally sourced ingredients. Each dish on the menu is connected to a different community of the nation, so you can eat everything from east to west. **Kupondole, 9801002971**



Cafe de Tukche

Tired of trying to figure out what to cook for lunch day after day? Order the Thakali Khana set, or the Dhedo set at Cafe de Tukche. **Bhrikuti Chok, Kapan 9705022990**

Weekend Weather

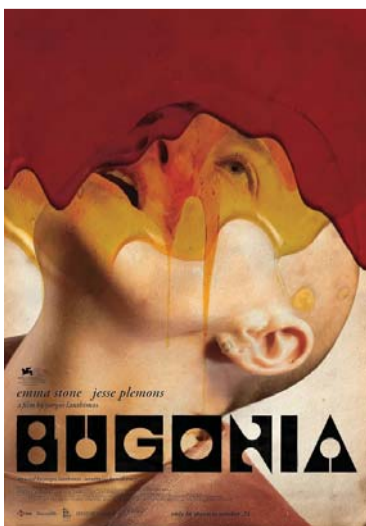


FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
23° 11°	16° 9°	19° 10°	21° 11°	21° 11°

Wet Weekend

If you packed your woollies and jackets, time to get them out again. We are looking at a wet weekend of thunderstorms and rain, at times heavy, in Kathmandu Valley. The maximum temperature may drop down to the mid-teens on Saturday with overcast skies and precipitation. Trekkers should be careful about crossing high passes because of blizzards. Thing will settle early next week as the westerly system exits, but expect afternoon cloud buildup and lingering showers.

Our Pick



In Yorgos Lanthimos' 2025 black comedy thriller Bugonia, conspiracy theorist Teddy and his cousin Don abduct pharmaceutical company CEO Michelle Fuller, believing her to be a member of an alien species which seeks to destroy life on earth. As they keep Michelle chained in their basement, Teddy gives her an ultimatum — she has four days to arrange a meeting between the kidnapers and the leader of the alien order they believe she belongs to. The film was nominated for four academy awards, and stars Emma Stone, Jesse Plemons, Aidan Delbis, Stavros Halkias, and Alicia Silverstone.

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



Painting walls to bring down walls

Women artists paint vibrant murals on Kathmandu walls as expressions of collective identity and solidarity



Anita Bhetwal

There is one particular wall in Thimi that catches the attention of every passerby. Many stop to look, even those in cars slow down to catch a glimpse of this two-storey-high mural.

It is titled 'We', the Newa word for 'We' and it is by artist Pooja Duwal, 27, who admits she had always been afraid of heights before she got on ladders to do these wall paintings.

"I was doing paubha painting and thought I should learn a new skill," says Duwal, who took a class in mural art, and never stopped since.

Murals are different from other art forms -- the canvas is not on an easel but on brick walls or ceilings. They have become the preferred medium for social messaging about feminism, democracy or press freedom after Nepal's GenZ movement.

At Kathmandu University's fine arts department, most of her colleagues chose canvas or sculpture. But Duwal (pictured above, right) found the scale of mural paintings irresistible despite the challenges.

The main message in her murals is women's empowerment. 'We', for example, depicts the collective identity and solidarity of women in Bhaktapur. Women are shown worshipping at a temple, while others are busy sewing, weaving or farming -- showing the diverse roles played by women.

"Women would gather around while I worked and ask why I was painting on walls," she says. "But then they would start telling their own stories. They were proud that they could participate in and contribute to my art."

Mural is not an easy art form, Duwal had to overcome her acrophobia, climbing rickety ladders to high walls with her paint can and brush.

Over in the nearby town of Sankhu, the mural artists are playing an important role in connecting their ethnic, religious and cultural heritage to people who have forgotten tradition and ancient folklore.

Subidha Lama, 20, painted a

mural at the Sankhu bus park of women weaving sweaters. This resonates powerfully with Radhika Prajapati who knits sweaters herself and feels her work is being valued and recognised.

"It is a great pleasure for us women to see our work displayed on the walls, it makes me feel that what I do is important for society," said a beaming Prajapati.

Lama recalls that the first time she climbed a ladder to start her mural, locals were puzzled. "Our society still believes that such things are done by foreigners," she says. "And they are especially surprised that women are painting."

Lama has now gathered some experience, including in the Philippines, where she was commissioned by local communities to paint murals.

"If you can invest and commit yourself to it, it can earn you a living," says Lama, who is continuously working to inspire and empower women towards this art form.

Murals are nothing new in Nepal. Refugee monks fleeing persecution in the Pala Empire in the 11th century brought the traditional Buddhist artform to Kathmandu. The technique peaked during the Malla period, considered the 'golden age' of Nepali art.

But compared to woodcarving, sculpture, and traditional architecture, the contribution of mural art in preserving local history and tradition has been overlooked. Murals are not just creative outlets, but documentations of our past and present, and how we want our future to be.

WOMEN INSPIRING WOMEN

In the town of Khokana in Lalitpur, Saru Prajapati (pictured, above) also started out as a paubha painter, but found the grand scale of wall painting more stimulating. She consults local women to decide on the content of the mural and tells the stories of the everyday lives of local women.

People used to poke fun at her while she worked high up on a ladder, but now they are impressed with her work. Prajapati is now encouraging a

new generation of women artists to join the field.

Samudraman Singh, an artist with experience in both paubha and mural art, says the expansion of art education in universities means more women are taking up mural art, but adds: "Many more women

would have joined, but they have family commitments."

Pooja Pant, director of VOW Media that is conducting mural training, says female artists are reclaiming physical space in their neighbourhoods. That it is an exercise, making narrative space

one's own, and becoming a means of resistance and transformation through art. "These murals are not just pictures on the wall, they are centres of power," adds Pant. "They bring women's history and future to public view, and help to inspire other women."



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Loot in Lele

Business as usual for quarries and crushers even after deadly floods in 2024

Ramu Sapkota and Archana Darji

Deadly floods two years ago along the southern fringes of Kathmandu Valley killed 200 people. Climate change was blamed, but the destruction was magnified by quarries and sand mining owned by local politicians and crony contractors.

Disaster mitigation and environmental risk was not a priority for any of the political parties that ran and won Nepal's election last week. Although the RSP has a supermajority, rural municipalities that grant mining contracts are still ruled by the established parties that supply aggregates and sand to feed Kathmandu's construction boom.

Here in Lele Valley, residents

are worried about another monsoon season that will start in June and fear more floods bringing unmanaged gravel from quarries down the Nallu River.

The house of Sanumaya Nagarkoti, 65, and ten neighbours were washed away by the flood on the night of 28 September 2024. She and her husband petitioned the ward and municipal council to remove the crushers but no one listened.

The slopes above are scarred by landslides from two years ago, and the banks of the river are strewn with boulders the size of cars that were brought down.

"We live in constant fear of landslides," says Chakra Nagarkoti, "the heavy crusher machinery and tipper trucks also constantly shake the house."

Google Earth images show that 24.6 hectares of mountain



flanks have been excavated since 2010, and despite the disaster no lessons have been learnt.

The RSP might have got a near two-thirds majority in Parliament but decision-making at the community level is controlled by politicians in cahoots with contractors.

Along the Mahadev Khola, the Department of Mines cancelled

excavation permits for crushers citing flood and landslide risk. Yet there are still 21 contractors mining stones and sand.

Nearby Godavari Municipality also instructed operators who had not renewed permits to close down. No action was taken.

One of them is Vinayak Multipurpose which delivers aggregate and stones for United

Cement. Local ward chair Milan Silwal, has a stake in Vinayak and locals accuse him of taking the side of industry.

Another slope is being gouged out near Mahadev Khola, and comparing satellite imagery from 2010 shows that the scar on the mountain is now five times bigger.

Nearby stands the lone house of 55-year-old Sabina Tamang,

Soon, the monsoon

Activists who rescued flood survivors are now in government. Will disaster response be different this rainy season?

Rastra Raj Bhandari

Nepal's new political wave has been described in many ways: a generational shift, a technocratic shift, a shift in ideas, and a shift in political behaviour. Young leaders now sit in Parliament, many with international education and policy experience.

But amid this excitement, a quieter truth risks getting lost: this political transformation is also the ascent of people who, until recently, were at the grassroots themselves.

For the first time, many of those now in government are not distant elites. They are people I have marched with, argued with, worked with, and been inspired by for more than a decade.

They are people who once stood ankle-deep in floodwaters, not at press conferences. Amidst the optimism about the new government, we must not forget that the climate crisis is intensifying.

The monsoon is at our doorstep again. And if the disasters from previous years taught us anything, it is that climate impact does not wait for political transitions. Our mountains and rivers do not care who sits in Singha Darbar.

What is different this time is who holds power.

During the September 2024 floods in Kathmandu, the first responders were not the state machinery. It was ordinary young people. A loosely formed WhatsApp network coordinated everything from dispatching mountain bikers to landslide-hit areas, to pooling relief supplies, to delivering materials to army bases for airlifting. These were citizens acting out of necessity, not mandate.

Many from that very network are now part of the government. Top-down climate responses in Nepal have always been too



GOPEN RAI

little, too late, and too disconnected from lived experience. The only proven path is bottom-up, community-led adaptation. Those who face the risks must daily shape solutions.

Research backs this: community-based adaptation is central to success stories in Bangladesh's cyclone shelters, Vietnam's mangrove restoration, to barangay committees in the Philippines. Resilience grows from the ground up, not the top down.

RARE MOMENT

Nepal now has a rare political moment where people with experience of disaster relief are in authority. The real test is whether this translates into policy and immediate action.

The expectation should not be that the new leaders deliver because of their degrees,

rather because they know where they come from and use their privilege to strengthen and fund local institutions, networks and people who kept this country functioning long before governments did.

The monsoon that starts in June will test the government's commitment to governing from the bottom up. Will these new leaders govern the way they once volunteered — listening first, acting fast, improvising where needed, and involving those closest to the danger? Or will the weight of the state push them back toward the familiar comfort of top-down plans and consultant reports?

The challenges are complex. Climate change is driving displacement, deepening poverty, and exacerbating gendered vulnerabilities. Climate adaptation, therefore,

needs cross-sectoral solutions that understand how these issues intersect.

Cities like Kathmandu desperately need a future where rivers are protected instead of mined, where an urban forest cools heat-trapping cities, where mobility focuses on sustainability, not just shiny EVs.

Mountain and Tarai villages deserve a community resilient to climate impacts, with livelihoods protected. These require years of work. But immediate, life-saving measures cannot wait.

Will the new government rein in the sand mining and quarrying upstream of the Rosi and Nakkhu Khola (above)? Will someone sit down with the communities and listen to early warning signs they have learnt? Will climate adaptation be prioritised amidst political noise and competing crises?

Or will we find ourselves, yet again, mourning damage that could have been prevented? I have been inspired by many of the individuals now in government — they questioned old hierarchies, challenged worn-out norms, and believed that things could be done differently.

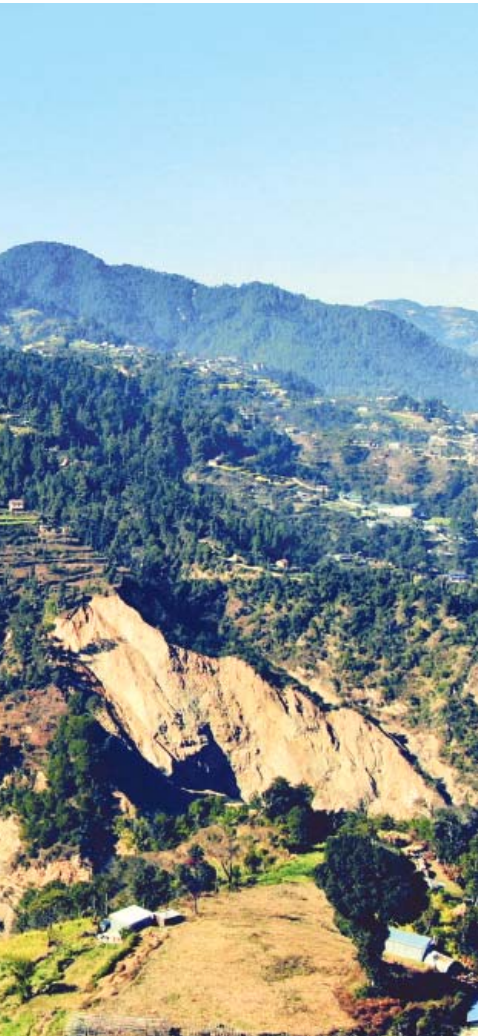
But while the faces in Parliament have changed, the bureaucracy has not. Development and civil society groups have not. And those systems are too slow for the speed at which our climate is changing.

Something has to give. And that shift must begin with remembering where this political movement came from: the grassroots. Those now in power must not forget the urgency they once carried in their bones.

And it is all our responsibilities — mine as a writer, yours as a reader, and ours as citizens — to remind them. The real spark for climate action comes from personal stories of loss, fear, survival, and solidarity. And suddenly, those stories are no longer outside the halls of government. They are inside.

The question is no longer whether our leaders understand the stakes. They do. They lived it. The real question, as the skies grow heavy again, is this: What will we do with this moment? 🇳🇵

Rastra Raj Bhandari is a co-founder and fellow at the Himalayan Water Project, where he leads the research on climate finance opportunities for the Himalaya. He contributes regularly to Nepali Times on climate change.



PHOTOS: ARCHANA DARJI



who lives with her husband and daughter. Due to the sound of the stone-breakers, they cannot hear each other speak.
“Last year, a landslide destroyed our cowshed and latrine,” she says. “Next it is going to be our home.”

DRY SPRINGS

Lele gets its water from several perennial springs which have gone

dry in recent years. One of them is near where the cement factory quarries limestone.

“We hardly get any water, and the little that does flow is murky and red,” says local resident Rajesh Shrestha. A parliamentary committee directive ordered excavation to stop 15 years ago after a similar flood to the one in 2024.

United Cement’s manager

Hari Upreti says his company has fulfilled all requirements and has permission to mine 15 hectares of its own property and 4 hectares of government land.

“We have the Department of Mines permit which is valid till 2036 and extract 1,600 tons of limestone every day,” says Upreti. “The local community knew about the mining and if there is a problem

with springs going dry it is not because of us.”

Environmental researcher Uttambabu Shrestha, however, says there is a direct correlation between the quarry operation and floods, landslides and dry springs.

“Extraction should not be allowed without an environmental impact assessment, and companies must stick to set limits,” he says.

Investigation of permits show that there is collusion between local officials and contractors. Godavari-6 Chair Bishnuman Maharjan has investment in two quarries and crusher companies operating along Nallu Khola. A paper trail links Maharjan also to Sagarmatha Stone Crusher and Mankamana Aggregate Industries.

IMPUNITY

Godavari Municipality published a notice in June 2024, instructing crusher companies to submit environmental reports within two weeks, covering initial examination and impact assessment. It also told them to pay local development fees and clear outstanding dues.

The municipality even wrote to the Department of Mines clarifying that it had issued permits to only five out of 27 contractors. Within a month, the Department wrote to the District Administration Office (DAO) and District Police Office instructing them to stop illegal excavation, and sent a copy to the Lalitpur Division Forest Office.

The DAO then wrote to Lalitpur Police naming Machhindranath Multipurpose as operating illegally and should be shut down. There was no followup. The municipality then issued fines worth Rs 60 million to

it and one other company for non-compliance. The companies stalled, disputing the calculations.

Machhindranath Multipurpose operator Kedar Timalisina Shashi denies doing anything wrong, and says the landslides were collateral damage because of the steep terrain. When contacted Godavari Municipality Deputy Mayor Muna Adhikari declined to comment.

It has been 10 years since Rajesh Shrestha, Nimesh Shrestha, and others raised their voices against the environmental destruction caused by the construction mafia.

An agreement was finally reached two years ago between locals and mining and transport businessmen, stipulating that stone mines must close permanently by mid-2025.

The agreement also stated that check dams must be built to manage mining debris, and damaged structures must be restored to their original state. Trees were to be planted at sites where stone mines had operated.

But the mines in the catchment are still in operation with 500 tipper trucks working on the site every day, transporting stones and aggregate. Local youth have continued holding sit-in street protests and at Lalitpur DAO.

After one sit-in, the mines closed for about a month but they started back up a month later.

Birendra Maharjan owns one of the crusher units, and says he follows all environmental protocols. He told us: “You need stones to build, and we must dig to extract stones. Some trees have to be cut, people get employment, and besides, floods and landslides happen across Nepal.”

Centre for Investigative Journalism – Nepal.

HBL

घर कर्जा

घर त्यहाँ बन्छ, जहाँ मन रक्छ

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In the mind's eye

In times of turmoil, this exhibition invites visitors to introspect

Sudiksha Tuladhar

The sense of sight is front, centre, and all around. Hundreds of eyes follow visitors moving from one painting to the next at Nikhil Bahadur Shakya's ongoing exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery.

Shakya has used blank canvases as well as partially-done thangkas and paintings as a base for more than 50 works on display.

The exhibit takes visitors beyond the physical world, into a surreal spiritual realm. Shakya strips the human body down to muscle, tendon, networks of nerves, and skeleton. But all the while, eyes are a constant presence.

The central theme is self-reflection and the journey from one's outward to inward self, and the works offer a glimpse into the artist's world of mindfulness.

Shakya grew up watching his artisan grandfather design jewellery, which he says cultivated in him an interest for art. During the Covid-19 pandemic, confronted by the fragility of life and the stark reality of death, his art took an introspective turn.

The paintings have splashes of neon yellow, pink, red, orange, green, and gold, and Shakya combines them with black and white to create the human body, sunflowers, geometrical shapes, and

the cosmos — turning these motifs into elements of devotion and spirituality.

In Wheel of Life, Shakya adds to an incomplete thangka, contrasting traditional Buddhist devotional imagery with contemporary mosaic art to create a demon holding on to a wheel with a yin and yang symbol.

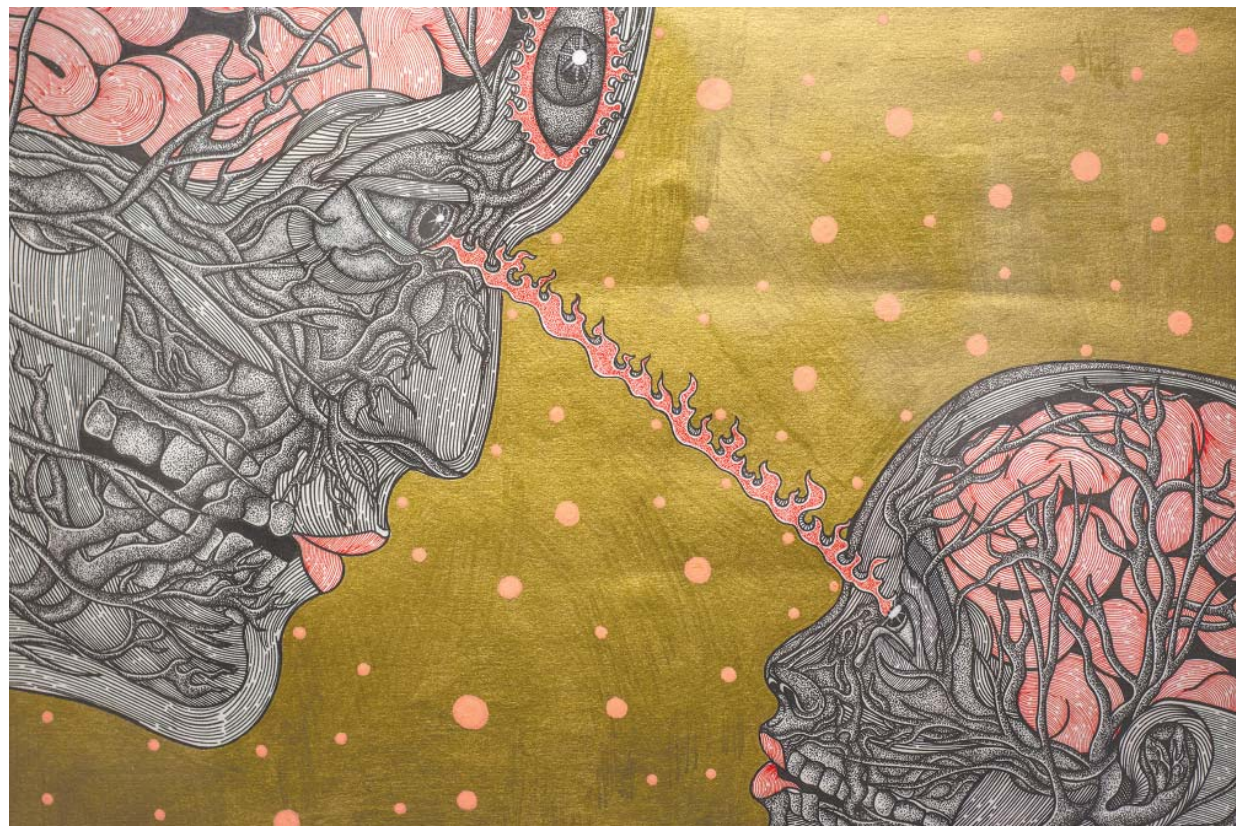
ELEMENTS OF LIFE

"I wanted to reflect the elements of life and the balance of good and bad in this painting," explains Shakya. "I took a lot of time to complete this particular piece, but it felt as though my vision flowed out of the brush onto the canvas."

Shakya uses neon colours, meaning that his artwork looks different under blue light. This gives viewers a chance to look at a single artwork from two different perspectives.

His Sunflower series draws from a field of blossoms, and the eyes stare back at visitors in an almost-hypnotic gaze. In An Ancestral Visit (pictured above, right), Shakya goes transcendental to depict the connection of living beings to their forebears.

"In my father's last days, he was unwell and often unable to eat, it left his body very frail," explains Shakya. "An Ancestral Visit was inspired by a dream in which I saw my father as his former healthy self. That dream made me feel deeply connected to my ancestors."



In another one of his works titled Devotion, a woman prays to a Shivalinga against a background of red-and-white stripes, which was inspired by the tradition of women being at the forefront during

religious and spiritual ceremonies.

In Sunyata, which shows a skeletal figure meditating as they are surrounded by flames, Shakya captures the chaos of the outside world with peace of the inner self. Shakya was compelled to create Sunyata when he saw a monk, his body thin and face gaunt, meditating peacefully.

"Many viewers might find the painting frightening, but when they take it home, I think it will give them strength whenever they feel like they need it," says Shakya.

The exhibit also includes a gigantic painting of Masan

Bhairav spread across two canvases, capturing the majesty of the original work housed at Banepa's Chandeswori Temple. Shakya met the artist who painted it and praised his rendition.

Geometric figures are another recurring motif on Shakya's creations, which he says were inspired by mathematics textbooks from his school days. He says, "Art channels the strength of our minds and brings about change in our lives. My paintings reflect the fact that we are all made up of some madness, magic, and love." 🇳🇵

Journey to a Visionary Artworld
by Nikhil Bahadur Shakya
Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal
Till 6 April
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