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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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Fugitive Bangladesh ex-PM Hasina still casting a shadow

Senior Awami League member says he believed exiled leader was genuine in wanting to return.

SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM/AFP
DHAKA, AUG 5

Her voice is that of a frail, elderly woman, but ousted Bangladesh leader Sheikh Hasina still has the power to incite from exile, vowing to return home despite facing the gallows.

Analysts say her defiance is not a death wish, but a desperate bid to remain politically relevant, claw on to her supporters, and revive an outlawed party which once dominated Bangladesh.

To her enemies, Hasina is evil incarnate—a convicted fugitive sentenced to hang for crimes against humanity over her failed bid to crush the 2024 revolution that toppled her.

The 78-year-old told AFP in July from India that she wanted to return to Bangladesh by the year's end.

"I may be killed. I may be arrested. I may be sent to prison," Hasina wrote, in an email sent from hiding.

"I am fully aware of my fate. Still, I want to go back because my people are calling me."

On Wednesday, marking two years since she fled by helicopter to old ally India, she is due to address by telephone a New Delhi event entitled "Sheikh Hasina's homecoming".

'Instability'

"Sheikh Hasina's return is important for the survival of the party—she is still a symbol," said Mohammad Jalal Uddin Sikder, a political science professor at North South University (NSU) in Dhaka.

One senior member of her Awami League (AL) party said he believed she was genuine in wanting to return.

"She feels obligated because party members are being arrested left and right, despite having no involvement in any crimes," he said, too fearful himself to speak on record. "Her return is a way of repaying the party's loyalty."

>> Continued on page 6



REUTERS
Sheikh Hasina pictured in Dhaka in 2024.

Chinese pressure scuttles Tibetan studies event in Nepal

Days after the home minister said the seminar would proceed with security vetting, the government's chief secretary personally ordered Kathmandu University to stop it.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR TIBETAN STUDIES
The last iteration of the conference was held in 2022.

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, AUG 5

The Nepal government cancelled a week-long international Tibetan studies conference that had been four years in the planning — overriding its own security agencies' assessment that the event posed no threat, and reversing a public assurance from Home Minister Sudan Gurung that it would go ahead.

Chief Secretary Govinda Bahadur Karkee, after consultations with Foreign Secretary Amrit Bahadur Rai, personally called senior Kathmandu University officials and instructed them to stop the event, according to multiple government officials who spoke to Kathmandu Post. The decision was never brought before Cabinet, despite what one minister described as significant foreign policy implications. Officials who spoke to the Post asked to speak on condition of anonymity so they could discuss sensitive decisions without fear of retribution.

"We advised the organisers that it would be better not to hold the event. It could be sensitive, several concerns might arise, and it could pose security risks. So we advised the organisers, in good faith, to cancel the event," Karkee told the Post, confirming the matter had been discussed.

However, the head of one security agency told the Post that officials had examined the event "from various angles" and, even with "around 18 or 19 days remaining," had explicitly stopped short of recommending cancellation—choosing instead to continue monitoring. Just days before Karkee's order, Home Minister Gurung had told journalists from Kantipur that the seminar would not be cancelled, only that participants would face security vetting.

The reversal followed a sustained pressure campaign by Chinese diplomats that intensified once registration closed in June.

>> Continued on page 2

In federal Nepal, provinces have the power on paper. CDOs wield it

A decade on, chief district officers continue to lead crisis response under the old administrative structure.

TUFAN NEUPANE & **PARBAT PORTEL**
BIRATNAGAR, AUG 5

Last week, as tensions grew in Kaptanganj of Dewanganj Rural Municipality after a minor dispute between Hindu and Muslim youths escalated, the security situation began to deteriorate.

At the centre of decision-making was one person—the Chief District Officer (CDO) of Sunsari. The deployment of the Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force, the imposition of curfew, and decisions that could eventually require the presence of the Nepali Army all rested with him.

The CDO chaired meetings with political party leaders, protesting youths, federal lawmakers, and local representatives from the affected areas.

Meanwhile, in Biratnagar, about 15 kilometres from Kaptanganj, Morang's CDO declared a curfew in parts of the district and banned loud religious music and sermons. The objective was to prevent a repeat of what was unfolding in the neighbouring district.

Such decisions by CDOs were not limited to Sunsari and Morang districts of Koshi province. As protests and violence spread, CDOs in Dhanusha and Siraha of Madhesh Province adopted similar measures.

What these CDOs did was part of a long-established process in Nepal's security governance.

The contradiction, however, is that these decisions continue to be taken under an old legal framework—the Local Administration Act, 1971, which predates Nepal's federal constitution. The Constitution of Nepal, 2015, does not recognise districts as administrative units. Thus CDOs have no place in the security structure.

The constitution places "provincial police administration and peace and security" under the exclusive authority of provinces. Yet when the crisis unfolded in Sunsari, the Chief Minister's Office of Koshi Province and provincial ministers were holding routine formal meetings. The situation was similar in Madhesh Province.

All provinces have their own Ministry of Internal Affairs, similar in function to the federal Ministry of Home Affairs. But despite being responsible for peace and security under the constitution, these ministries remain largely disconnected from security decisions in their districts because CDOs do not report to them.

> An old law continues to override constitutional intent on provincial control of security affairs.

Appointed by the federal government in Kathmandu, CDOs are answerable to the Ministry of Home Affairs. In practice, provincial internal affairs ministries do not recognise CDOs as officials under their command, and CDOs do not consider themselves accountable to provincial governments. Province-level political leaders and analysts argue that, in security governance, Nepal's federal system remains far from functional. According to them, continued federal control through CDOs has weakened the security role assigned to provinces by the constitution and complicated crisis management.

>> Continued on page 2

Seven constitutional commissions short of funds and power

High expectations, meagre budgets and ignored recommendations have left seven commissions struggling to fulfil their constitutional role.

RAJESH MISHRA
KATHMANDU, AUG 5

Seven of Nepal's constitutional commissions established to safeguard the rights and interests of different communities, are facing growing criticism over their effectiveness. Commission officials and former office-bearers say chronic underfunding, weak legal mandates and government indifference have rendered them largely symbolic.

The commissions, created under Nepal's Constitution, were intended to ensure the protection, inclusion and advancement of women, Dalits, Indigenous peoples, Madhesis, Tharus, Muslims and other marginalised groups.

Instead, many now operate on barely enough funding to cover salaries and office expenses, while their recommendations to the government are routinely ignored.

The Constitution created 13 constitutional bodies. Six of them, including the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority, the Public Service Commission and the Election Commission, are long-established institutions with broad constitutional authority. The remaining seven, grouped under a separate constitutional chapter as "other commissions", comprise the National Women Commission, National Dalit Commission, National Inclusion Commission, Indigenous Nationalities Commission, Madheshi Commission, Tharu Commission and Muslim Commission.

> Ex-chair says the commissions were created to fulfil international commitments more than deliver change.

Unlike the older constitutional bodies, these commissions have struggled to establish themselves as effective institutions. Critics say they lack both the financial resources and legal authority needed to carry out the responsibilities assigned to them.

Their constitutional mandate is broad. They are expected to study the conditions of their respective communities, recommend legal, institutional and policy reforms, safeguard cultural and linguistic heritage, monitor rights violations and advise the government on measures to promote inclusion and social justice.

In practice, however, officials say they have neither the budget nor the authority to fulfil those responsibilities. Most of the commissions were established only in 2018, three years after the Constitution was promulgated, after Parliament passed separate laws governing each institution. Even then, only the chairs were initially appointed. Several commissions are now operating without permanent leadership, with the Tharu, Madhesi, Inclusion and Muslim commissions currently headed by acting officials.

Vijay Dutta, former chair of the Madhesi Commission, says the institutions were created more to project an image of inclusion than to deliver meaningful change.

"These commissions have become little more than showpieces," he said.

"The Constitution itself discriminated against them, and the laws that followed weakened them even further. Either they should be given real authority and adequate resources, or they should be fundamentally restructured."

According to Dutta, during his six-year tenure, the commission received only around Rs500,000 to Rs600,000 annually for programmes targeting the Madhesi community, while administrative costs averaged around Rs30 million a year.

"The commission exists on paper to protect Madhesi rights, language, culture and social justice," he said.

>> Continued on page 2

Two Sarlahi farmers jailed in Bihar over fertiliser import granted bail

After spending more than a month in Dumra Jail as Indian authorities accused them of smuggling fertiliser, they will be released in two days, lawyer says.

SHIVA PURI
DUMRA (SITAMARHI), INDIA, AUG 5

Two brothers from Sarlahi who spent more than a month in an Indian prison after being accused of fertiliser smuggling have been granted bail by a civil court in Sitamarhi, Bihar.

A single bench of associate special judge Akhilesh Kumar Jha at the Dumra District Court on Wednesday ordered the release of 55-year-old Suresh Prasad Singh and 60-year-old Nagendra Prasad Singh, both residents of Ward 5 in Balara Municipality, Sarlahi.

The brothers were arrested on July 1 by a joint team of India's Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and the Agriculture Department while returning from the border town of Sonbarsha with two bags of urea and six bags of diammonium phosphate (DAP) fertiliser. They said the fertiliser was purchased for use on their own farm.

Indian authorities, however, charged them with fertiliser smuggling and remanded them to Dumra Jail.

Defence advocate Sanjay Kumar Jha, who represented the brothers along with advocate Kiran Chaudhary, said the release process would take around two days.

According to Jha, court documents will be prepared and sent to Dumra Jail on Thursday, where the brothers will sign the bail papers. The documents will then be returned to the court after their relatives submit land ownership documents as collateral to complete the bail process.

"Once the court issues the final release order to the prison authorities, both men will be released," Jha said.

Although they will be released on bail, the brothers will have to appear before the Dumra court once a month as legal proceedings continue.

The arrest has exposed a recurring challenge faced by farmers living along Nepal's southern border, where shortages of chemical fertiliser during critical farming seasons often push cultivators to look towards Indian markets.

Nepal has repeatedly struggled to ensure timely supplies of urea and DAP fertilisers, particularly during the paddy planting season when demand is at its highest. In border districts of Madhesh Province, farmers have traditionally relied on nearby Indian towns to purchase small quantities of agricultural inputs when domestic supplies are delayed.



POST PHOTO: SHIVA PURI
The civil court in Sitamarhi, India on Wednesday ordered the release of Suresh Prasad Singh and 60-year-old Nagendra Prasad Singh.

For many communities along the open Nepal-India border, cross-border movement for agricultural needs has been part of everyday life.

However, transporting fertiliser purchased in India can expose farmers to legal action.

Under India's Fertiliser Control Order (FCO) and the Essential Commodities Act of 1955, subsidised agricultural fertilisers are classified as essential commodities.

The Indian government provides subsidies to make fertiliser affordable for its farmers, and the unauthorised movement, sale or export of such fertiliser is prohibited.

Indian authorities have tightened monitoring along border areas to prevent subsidised fertiliser meant for Indian farmers from being diverted elsewhere.

For Nepali farmers, however, the restrictions often collide with the practical realities of cultivation. Delays in Nepal's fertiliser supply system can leave farmers with limited options during planting seasons, when timing is crucial for crop production.

Agricultural experts say fertiliser shortages can have wider consequences because delayed application affects productivity and increases costs for farmers.

Although Nepal imports chemical fertiliser through government channels, procurement delays, transportation difficulties and distribution problems have repeatedly disrupted supply.

Farmer groups have long demanded improvements in the country's fertiliser management system, including timely procurement, better forecasting of demand and a more efficient distribution network.

They argue that shortages have forced farmers to depend on informal sources, leaving them vulnerable to price fluctuations and legal risks.

The Sarlahi farmers had crossed into India at a time when Nepal was facing a severe shortage of chemical fertilisers during the peak paddy planting season. Such purchases in small quantities for household farming are common among border communities.

Following reports of their arrest, Minister for Foreign Affairs Shisir Khanal initiated diplomatic coordination through the Nepali Embassy in New Delhi on July 21.

Abhishek Singh, Suresh's son, welcomed the court's decision but said the case reflected the broader difficulties faced by farmers in border areas.

"It is a relief that my father and uncle have been granted bail, albeit late," he said.

"They were jailed simply for trying to buy fertiliser, yet chemical fertiliser remains unavailable in Nepal. This is deeply unfortunate."

Officials say Nepal's dependence on imported fertiliser makes regular supply challenging, but experts argue that repeated shortages require a long-term solution rather than seasonal interventions.

Constitution says provinces. Law says CDOs



POST PHOTO: PARBAT PORTEL

Riot police and protesters face each other in Kaptanganj on July 29.

>> Continued from page 1

"Just as the Rana rulers used to appoint Patwaris and Ditthas (handpicked local officials), the federal government is now continuing to send CDOs," said Kedar Karki, former Koshi internal affairs minister and former chief minister. "Peace and security is the most important authority of the provincial government. But in practice, the CDO has become more powerful than the provincial government."

The underlying issue, according to critics, is that the federal transition has remained incomplete. Nearly a decade after the promulgation of the constitution, the federal government has still not enacted all the laws necessary to make provincial powers operational. The constitution envisioned that many laws required to implement federalism would later be enacted by the federal parliament, but that process remains unfinished.

Federalism is often described as becoming meaningful only when provincial governments possess the "gun, pen, and money." The phrase is a metaphor for three essential dimensions of provincial autonomy. The gun represents the authority to maintain law and order and enforce decisions through institutions such as a provincial police force.

The pen represents the power to legislate on matters assigned to provinces, allowing them to create policies suited to local needs. The money represents the fiscal resources and financial autonomy required to implement those responsibilities.

Nepal's provinces have gained some authority over the latter two, but policing—the most visible symbol of state authority—has remained largely under federal control.

According to Indramani Parajuli, Koshi Province's Minister for Internal Affairs and Law, the provincial government is currently limited mostly to coordination and support functions.

"At present, we are working more on the management and coordination side. For example, if relief or rescue work is required somewhere," Parajuli said.

"The provincial police have not been adjusted into the federal structure. In terms of the core spirit and pace of federalism, the important responsibility of maintaining peace and security has not been given to provincial governments."

The "core spirit of federalism" referred to by Parajuli goes beyond administrative arrangements. It is linked to the fundamental question of why federalism was introduced in Nepal in the first place.

Renu Chand, a former Constituent Assembly member from the then CPN (Maoist) and currently a National Assembly member, says the debate on federalism in Nepal did not emerge from a desire for administrative decentralisation or merely from aspirations for development.

But in practice, she says, everyday security administration continues to operate through the old legal framework.

Sunsari CDO Ishwari Prasad Aryal, however, insists that the command structure for security management is clear and that the existing system provides an effective mechanism for responding to crises.

"Whenever a security crisis occurs in the district, leadership comes from the District Security Committee. The CDO chairs the committee. The Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, National Investigation Department, and local offices of the Nepali Army, among other security agencies, work under this structure," Aryal told Kantipur. "All matters related to peace and security within the district are handled by this committee under the leadership of the CDO."

Aryal said that although it is not mandatory under the current law, CDOs continue to inform provincial Ministries of Internal Affairs about security matters.

Morang Chief District Officer Yubaraj Kattel is even more assertive about the authority of CDOs.

"Everything can be done by the CDO," he said. "Within the current structure, defined by the Local Administration Act, 1971, lies the authority to assess situations, decide whether prohibitory orders or curfews are necessary, request additional forces, and coordinate with the Home Ministry."

According to Kattel, the law does not even require a CDO to consult the Home Ministry before imposing a curfew.

This is the central contradiction: CDOs say they are operating within the legal framework that exists, while provincial leaders argue that the same framework allows an administrative structure to operate alongside—and above—the constitutional one.

Santosh Pokharel, principal of Adarsha Secondary School in Biratnagar, says the problem began because the federal transition was not accompanied by the necessary laws.

"The constitution guaranteed the rights, but the necessary laws were not enacted. Because the federal government did not make the laws, the provinces could not create and implement them on their own," he said.

The question of command and control has also drawn attention from security officials, who have at times suggested the need for better coordination between lower-level institutions—provinces and districts. After the Sunsari incident, at a meeting of the Central Security Committee in Kathmandu the following day, security chiefs urged the home minister that lower-level agencies should be guided through coordination rather than receiving strategic instructions on every matter.

However, for the federal Home Ministry, the effective lower-level authority continues to be the CDO leaving the provincial government with limited influence over security decisions.

Biratnagar-based local governance expert Arjun Bishwakarma says that if provincial governments had real authority, they could respond more quickly to incidents such as the one in Sunsari. "The federal home minister arrived at the scene only on the fifth day after national pressure mounted. A provincial government would not have taken that long," he said.

According to Bishwakarma, accountability can only exist when authority exists.

"In what happened in Kaptanganj, one could have asked the provincial government, ministers, and other officials why they were not responsible. But that path does not exist right now," he told Kantipur.

The police operating under the CDOs also understand the command structure according to the framework established by the Local Administration Act, 1971.

SSP Yogendra Singh Thapa, spokesperson of the Koshi Provincial Police Office—which itself carries the word "provincial" in its name—says security management at the district level remains under the authority of the CDO.

"Security management in the district takes place under the Chief District Officer," he says. "The Local Administration Act has given the CDO full responsibility for issuing prohibitory orders and imposing curfews. The district where an incident occurs is the first to respond."

For provincial governments, however, the problem is that they carry constitutional responsibility without corresponding authority.

What consequences does this contradiction create?

"The security agency is more accountable to the institution that gives instructions and deploys it. It follows whatever policy and direction comes from above," said Parajuli. "We are in a situation where whatever results we achieve depend on how much we can work through personal relationships."

Morang CDO Kattel describes the limitation of such informal arrangements more directly.

"The Local Administration Act does not recognise the province," he said.

Security committees have also been created at the provincial level through directives from the Home Ministry. The CDO of the district where the provincial capital is located serves as a member of such committees. As a result, Kattel is technically a member of the Koshi Province Security Committee, but he says the arrangement has little practical significance.

"Our law does not recognise that committee. We are not legally required to follow its instructions," he says.

Kattel says the information he occasionally provides to the province is not a legal obligation but rather an act of goodwill.

"When we send reports to the Home Ministry's control room in the evening, we also send a copy to the province. But that is not mandatory. There is no legal obligation towards the province at all," he said. "Sometimes we even forget to inform them, because there is no system. There is no link. So it is not really something that remains in our minds."

The problem extends beyond information sharing. It also affects police mobilisation and accountability.

A significant portion of the performance evaluation of district police chiefs is conducted by the CDO. The performance evaluation of provincial police is done by the provincial chief secretary. However, the chief secretary is a federal civil servant, and transfers and promotions remain controlled by Kathmandu.

"A federal government joint secretary is more powerful here than our provincial chief secretary," Karki says. "With a single letter or phone call, he can halt the province's work or transfer the chief secretary. That is why officials who come here always remain loyal to the federal government."

The question of who gave orders and how the security response unfolded after the Kaptanganj incident is therefore not only about one district. It reflects how Nepal's security system continues to operate during crises.

Whenever a security crisis occurs, the CDO takes command. The CDO mobilises the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force. If necessary, the security committee decides on the deployment of the Nepali Army. The provincial government is limited to a "coordination" role, which provincial leaders argue amounts to having responsibility without authority, while the Home Ministry issues directives.

But the question remains: Is this the arrangement envisioned by the constitution?

The Koshi provincial government says—No. The constitution has assigned us that authority.

The CDOs say—We are working according to the law.

The police say—We are operating according to the legal structure that exists.

Political leaders and analysts say—The problem is not in the constitution, but in its implementation.

Chinese delegation still coming after Nepal cancels Tibetan conference

>> Continued from page 1

On July 21, Ambassador Zhang Maoming met Foreign Secretary Rai to discuss the conference; officials familiar with the meeting said Zhang stopped short of directly demanding cancellation but urged Rai to stay "vigilant" about participants who might make pro-Tibet statements.

As the lobbying continued, Venerable Master Yinshun—a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), former vice president of the Buddhist Association of China, and abbot of the Chinese Temple of Nepal—arrived in Kathmandu on July 29. A senior security official said Yinshun discussed the seminar during his visit, which also took him to Lumbini. Following his visit and a separate meeting between Rai and the ambassador, half a dozen Tibetan experts from the Tibetan Policy Institute in India withdrew from the conference.

"Beijing has already become suspicious that the present government is tilted towards the West. The seminar became a test of the government's neutrality. To assuage China's concerns, the decision was taken to cancel the event," another senior government official said.

Organisers of the conference reject the framing that the seminar was sensitive.

"Nepal was selected to host the conference in 2022," one organiser said. "It is therefore incorrect to suggest that the event was planned only recently. The decision was made four years ago, and a large delegation from several Chinese universities, including Peking University, was expected to participate."

Around 100 Chinese scholars and experts—including from the China Tibetology Research Center—had registered to attend the seminar, which was to bring together scholars of Tibetan history, language, culture, art, philosophy and religion. Organisers say they had already agreed to Beijing's core conditions.

"We had assured the authorities that there would be no pro-Tibet or anti-China activities or statements and that no individuals associated with such activism would be invited. We don't understand why the government is now considering stopping the event," another organiser said.

A Kathmandu University spokesperson said the institution had repeatedly told the government the conference was "purely an academic exercise" with no pro-Tibet or anti-China agenda.

IATS

International Association for Tibetan Studies

COURTESY OF VOICE OF TIBET

"There has been immense pressure on us to cancel the event," the spokesperson said. Kathmandu University has since withdrawn as convener, leaving it to the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) to decide whether—and where—the seminar can still be held.

One organiser linked Beijing's alarm to a separate flashpoint: protests by Tibetans against China's new Ethnic Unity Law, which took effect on July 1. According to Amnesty International, the law frames "ethnic unity" as a precondition for advancing the Chinese Communist Party's political agenda, including Xi Jinping Thought. "There have been major protests against China's new Ethnic Unity Law. That is why Beijing intensified its lobbying and used its influence to prevent any untoward incidents in Kathmandu," the organiser said.

One high-ranking government official who was aware of the decision told the Post the government should have focused on managing risk rather than cancelling the seminar outright.

Despite the cancellation, a Chinese delegation linked to the seminar is still expected to visit Nepal. Jiang Jianguo—a member of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC's National Committee, vice director of its Ethnic and Religious Committee, and executive vice president of the China Society for Human Rights Studies—is set to arrive on August 18 for a three-day visit, accompanied by a five-member delegation.

The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu did not respond to the Post's repeated requests for comment.

"Since we have withdrawn as conveners, it is now up to the IATS to decide where and how the conference will be organised," said Professor Sagar Sharma, one of the event's chief conveners.

Commissions for Nepal's marginalised left powerless

>> Continued from page 1

"But without resources it cannot do anything. We can receive complaints, but we have no authority to investigate them. We simply forward them to the government and wait."

He added that successive governments have largely ignored the commission's recommendations, reducing it to issuing reports with little practical impact.

Tharu Commission member Shanti Modi says the government's lack of commitment has undermined all such commissions.

"No research, documentation or protection work can be carried out without financial resources," she said. "Most of our budget is spent on salaries and administrative costs. Around 99 percent of our recommendations are never implemented."

Financial records illustrate the imbalance. In fiscal year 2023-24, the Tharu Commission spent Rs38.78 million in total, but only Rs900,000 went towards programmes directly benefiting the community. The remaining Rs37.88 million was spent on recurrent administrative costs. "When you spend nearly Rs38 million to deliver programmes worth only Rs900,000, people inevitably begin to question whether these commissions are worth the public money spent on them," Modi said.

The Indigenous Nationalities Commission faces similar constraints.

According to its sixth annual report, the commission received Rs35.66 million in fiscal year 2024-25, of which only Rs1.1 million was allocated for capital expenditure.

Commission member Sharan Rai says the government provides only token funding and this makes meaningful research, monitoring and policy work virtually impossible.

"The law prevents us from seeking external funding, while the government does not provide enough to carry out even basic programmes," he said. "Despite these limitations, we continue trying to fulfil our constitutional responsibilities." Since its establishment, the commission has submitted 95 recommendations to the government, Rai said. Only five or six have been implemented.

"Our annual reports are submitted to the President and tabled in Parliament, but that is where the process ends," he said. "There is no serious parliamentary debate and almost no follow-up."

Rai argues that commissions established after years of political struggle and demands for inclusion deserve far greater attention from both the government and Parliament.

Another commission member, Min Bahadur Shrees, says Nepal established the Indigenous Nationalities Commission partly to meet its obligations under international labour standards relating to Indigenous peoples, but stopped short of giving it meaningful powers.

"These commissions cannot continue in their current form indefinitely," he said. "They were never treated as a state priority. Reform is essential. Restructuring may be necessary, but abolishing them altogether would be the wrong approach."

Appointments to the commissions have also drawn criticism.

Dutta says political parties have increasingly used the commissions to accommodate loyalists who failed to secure election tickets or lost elections, rather than appointing experts with strong records in research or advocacy.

"The credibility of these institutions has suffered because appointments have become political rewards rather than merit-based selections," he said.

The National Inclusion Commission has perhaps the broadest mandate of all. It is responsible for protecting the rights of economically, socially and educationally disadvantaged groups, including Khas Arya, backward communities, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, labourers, farmers, minorities, marginalised populations, residents of Karnali and other remote regions.



POST FILE PHOTO

The Madheshi Commission at Jwagal, Lalitpur.

Acting chair Hari Datta Joshi says the commission's responsibilities stretch "from the Himalayas to the Tarai", covering 11 different sectors nationwide.

"But without adequate staff or budget, we cannot produce meaningful results," he said.

In fiscal year 2024-25, the commission received just Rs1.5 million for programme activities, compared with an administrative budget of around Rs41.7 million.

The National Dalit Commission faces comparable challenges.

Chair Devraj Bishwakarma says the budget for programmes is so small that "it is embarrassing even to mention."

"The challenges facing the Dalit community are enormous," he said. "Yet the resources available to address them are completely inadequate."

Bishwokarma estimates that less than five percent of the recommendations made by the commission during his five-and-a-half-year tenure have been implemented.

"The government and parliament have failed to understand the scale of the commission's constitutional mandate," he said. "Denying us resources, ignoring our recommendations and then portraying the commissions as ineffective creates a false narrative."

Among these seven commissions, the National Women Commission is generally regarded as the most established institution. It predates the 2015 Constitution, having first been established in 2002 under an ordinance before later receiving constitutional status. It receives an annual budget of around Rs100 million and has a substantially larger permanent workforce than the newer commissions.

Dutta also points to disparities within the Constitution itself.

While the Constitution explicitly defines the functions, duties and powers of the Women Commission, Dalit Commission and Inclusion Commission, it leaves the powers of the Indigenous Nationalities, Madhesi, Tharu and Muslim commissions to be determined through federal legislation.

"Not all constitutional commissions were given equal constitutional status," he said.

The Constitution requires a review of these seven commissions 10 years after its promulgation, a milestone that has now arrived.

Dutta believes the review should be used to overhaul the existing framework rather than preserving institutions that, in their current form, have failed to meet expectations.

"Communities have been let down," he said. "One option is to merge these commissions into a single, stronger Social Justice Commission with greater authority, adequate funding and clear constitutional powers."

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Don't test victims' patience further

The government must ensure impartial leadership and resources to complete transitional justice.

In the first week of May, the Balendra Shah government, through an ordinance, relieved hundreds of officials from universities, commissions and several other political positions. Among them were the 10 office-bearers of the two transitional justice bodies—five each from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons.

While replacements in most of the other vacant positions have either been made or are in the process, no concrete initiative has been taken to fill these two mechanisms. The transitional justice process has long been a victim of political meddling, pushing thousands of victims of atrocities committed during the 1996-2006 Maoist insurgency, by both the state and the then insurgents, to the receiving end.

The two commissions, ever since their constitution in 2015, have had three sets of office-bearers, with each appointment mired in controversy as the selection lacked proper consultation. The appointment of the last set of office-bearers in May last year, too, was not without controversy. A section of conflict victims and human rights defenders had strong reservations about the selection process and therefore boycotted engagement with them. They had even welcomed the Shah government's move to dismantle the commissions.

However, three months down the line, they are the ones most dissatisfied with the present government's approach. The government has kept them completely out of the consultation process. Instead of taking the initiative to engage with the victims, it has ignored their repeated calls for dialogue. Even after weeks had passed, a group of victims submitted a written request seeking a meeting with Minister for Law and Justice Sobita Gautam, but received no response. Left with no alternative, they resorted to demonstrations last week, but these too have had little impact on the government's approach.

It has already been two decades since the Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed and over a decade since the transitional justice process began. Yet, there has been no substantive progress in delivering justice to the insurgency victims. They have been deceived by successive governments led by the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and CPN (Maoist Centre)—now united under the Nepali Communist Party—in rotation. It was evident that these parties, particularly the Congress and the Maoists, were linked to atrocities committed during the decade-long conflict, while the UML sought to use the issue for political gain.

Now that the Rastriya Swatantra Party, with no baggage from the insurgency, is in power, it has an opportunity to conclude the long-stalled process once and for all. For that to happen, every step it takes must be transparent and consultative. Refraining from meeting the victims goes entirely against what needs to be done.

The government should, without any further delay, constitute a search committee to select office-bearers for the commissions, with proper consultation and information-sharing with the concerned stakeholders. The search committee must be allowed to perform independently, adopting a fully consultative and transparent selection process. Once the commissions have leadership, they should be equipped with the necessary financial and human resources. Concluding investigations into over 83,000 complaints lodged with the two commissions requires proper state support. Previous governments have tested the victims' patience enough; the present government cannot afford to repeat the same mistake.

THEIR VIEW

Perilous peaks

Deaths on Broad Peak reflect the courage and devotion of those who aspire to reach heights.

The deaths of 10 climbers in an avalanche on Broad Peak is a sad reminder of the perils that many mountaineers face in their quest to scale the tallest peaks. Among the latest victims was Nepal's Nirmal Purja, the first person to summit the world's 14 8,000m peaks and the Seven Summits—the highest mountains in each of the seven continents—both with and without supplemental oxygen. Purja's body was found three days after the avalanche on the 8,051m Broad Peak. In fact, Nepal is mourning the loss of one of the most accomplished generation of mountaineers it has produced. In total, it mourned six deaths in the tragedy, the others being Pur Bahadur Gurung, Kili Pemba Sherpa, Nima Sherpa, Nawang Thendu Sherpa and Gyaljen Sherpa. Pakistani climber Sohail Sakhi was also part of the ill-fated 10-member expedition. Others included Nathira Al Harthy of Oman, American Mallory Geis and China's Wang Zhong. When the avalanche struck on Thursday, theirs was the only expedition on Broad Peak that had stayed behind after the others had retreated due to heavy snowfall. Pakistan immediately launched a search-and-rescue mission after contact was lost, with army helicopters scouring the area. But all hopes were dashed on Friday when the bodies of two climbers were discovered. Inclement weather made matters difficult for the rescuers. Three more bodies were found on Saturday, including Purja's.

In recent years, Pakistan has seen an uptick in the number of climbers who dare to scale its challenging peaks. However, the remoteness of the region makes it difficult to launch rescue missions. The deaths on Broad Peak are a painful reminder of all that these climbers had put on the line to scale the world's tallest peaks. More importantly, they reflect the courage and devotion of these men and women who aspire to reach heights that only a few in the world have attained. That is their way of living out their passion and doing things beyond the ordinary.

— Dawn (Pakistan)/ANN

Too little, too late

That it took violence and deaths to extricate Shah out of the cocoon he has woven around himself and act says a lot about how our country is being governed.

AS I LIKE

DEEPAK THAPA





AI GENERATED

For someone seemingly more at home in the virtual world and surrounded by a narrow coterie of friends, the recent unrest that swept parts of the eastern Tarai must have been a rather rude awakening for our prime minister, Balendra Shah. That it took violence and deaths to extricate Shah out of the cocoon he has woven around himself and start acting like a real leader says a lot about how our country is being governed.

There was not much Shah actually did, though, apart from being briefed by the chiefs of security agencies and, in turn, providing the briefest of briefings on the situation to the President, which itself was preceded by a short address to the nation uploaded *only* on social media.

That he (or his advisers) had the presence of mind to put out his speech in Maithili as well does Shah (or them) credit. Except that one was left wondering why he would not have taken the national address more seriously. For an artiste with some claim to fame, one would have thought speaking to a camera would come easy to him. Instead, what we got was a pre-recorded performance of less than four and a half minutes spliced together from a number of cuts.

Even worse, it appeared that the prime minister had not gone through the address in advance to get a feel for both words and the emotions being conveyed. Hence, we were treated to a somewhat tentative and halting performance with his eyes wavering fully from left to right to left as he read out of the teleprompter, making the whole thing look rather insincere. In this day and age, when technology is readily available anywhere, there is no reason why the use of the teleprompter cannot be made to look more natural, a la, say, Barack Obama.

Regardless, one can be somewhat certain that for people in that part of the Tarai, not only where the disturbances were but elsewhere, too, hearing the leader of the nation imploring them to shun violence in their own language would have meant something. Just as it must have seeing the home minister in their midst sans the trappings of his office. For a population long used to being given short shrift by the Nepali state, such gestures, albeit belated, would have indeed made a difference.

There are three issues though that Home Minister Sudan Gurung will need to deal with if we are to avoid a repeat of Sunsari-like conflagrations in the future.

Police attitudes

The first has to do with police training. As the violence rocked Sunsari and began spreading westward, Gurung found himself in a rather unenviable position of having to defend, in principle at least, the brutality of the police he had experienced from the receiving side during the Gen Z protests that propelled him to where he is now. It has been reported that he took quick action to penalise the officials responsible for the police firing, but he himself might have set the tone for police high-handedness with ambiguous statements such as "The security forces have been handcuffed for the past 36 years".

While Gurung was likely referring to the political meddling that has bedevilled both the police and armed police, it could also be read as giving carte blanche to our cops who have never shied from heavy-handedness. Particularly when incidents like the beating of Gen Z activist Majid Ansari go unaddressed, and the police appear to have been in cahoots with state and extra-state actors during the recent attempted intimidation of some media houses.

More worrisome is what a ruling party MP from the Tarai asked: "Why is it that the police resort to firing even under the flimsiest of pretexts?" There are any number of instances even in the recent past to support his claim. While the police response in Kathmandu during last year's Gen Z protests might seem to counter his argument, the fact remains that the police do need to be re-trained to adopt a completely different approach to crowd control.

Among the solutions proposed are calls for including more Madheshis in the police. But we all know that without proper investment in training, that alone will not suffice. Cops are cops, everywhere in the world. Instead, a more meaningful approach should include: i) use of force as a last resort, and, more importantly, ii) as in the case of the Tarai or anywhere the dominant ethos is feeble or absent, oriented in socio-cultural and linguistic sensitivities. We can at least hope then that there won't be shouts of 'Shoot the Biharis' when the police deal with Madheshis, as was reportedly the case back in 2015.

Intelligent intelligence

The second priority should be bolstering intelligence gathering throughout the nation. That the prime minister did not invite the head of the National Investigation Department, the country's premier intelligence office, during the security briefing mentioned above, speaks volumes. Gurung is right when he blames extreme politicisation of the security forces for eroding their efficacy; when personnel have to expend their energy in currying favour with their political bosses, not much can be expected of them. The malaise having been diagnosed, it is now time for a cure.

As has been widely reported, the Armed Police Force (APF) had warned of exactly a Sunsari-like situation. Subsequent governments failed to act on the APF's findings and recommendations, and hence the nation has now paid the price.

No one keeping tabs on the goings-on in the Tarai would require a government report to grasp how things are. Hindutva extremists have been active in Nepal for nearly as long as India has been independent, bringing their brand of hate and destruction to a country that had been largely untouched by the sectarian violence that swept the pre- and post-partition of India. By and large, though, violent incidents remained largely contained even though the episodic incidents were on the rise.

Since the rise of the Hindu supremacist party in India in 2014, and with the active connivance of its affiliates, the Hindutva brand has now swept across Nepal, particularly in the Tarai. As a political scientist noted, the 'actionable package of *shakha-mandir-sangstha-school-party* that we see in India as the vehicle for Hindutva's long march through the institutions does not yet exist in Nepal'. But Hindutva networks do exist and '[w]e have seen multiple incidents, protests, riots, provocative processions of idols through Muslim neighbourhoods, social media provocations, and...a lot of Hindutva-affiliated propaganda distributed in Nepal's border towns and cities…'.

Another scholar had more recently warned about the 'DJ phenomenon' of religious music provocatively blared through loudspeakers. It was precisely DJ music that had led to the initial altercation in the Sunsari village where it all started. Any intelligence officer worth her salt would have flagged these developments to the government years earlier.

Hence, the third action required of the government is to begin the long, hard, controversial and even thankless task of deradicalising the youth. As a fellow analyst wrote, the focus needs to be equally on the *madrasa and the mandir*, but more on the latter. Any effort will be an uphill task, having to struggle against the double-barrelled onslaught of the systematic anti-Muslim (along with anti-Christian and, eventually, anti-anyone-not-a-Hindu) propaganda from Hindutva extremists from across the border, and the echo chamber of social media. Complete success is not guaranteed since mischief-makers will always find ways to make mischief. But the alternative is being engulfed by the kind of religious conflict common in our neighbourhood, which we have been fortunate enough to be spared thus far.

Thapa writes on social and political issues.

How birding can help relieve stress and anxiety

Birdwatching allows individuals to connect with nature and find joy in the beauty of birds.

ANUJ GHIMIRE





PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANUJ GHIMIRE

It was late afternoon on the universally dreaded Monday. I had been staring at my computer screen all day, barely able to write two full paragraphs. I had a whole thesis to write, yet I was struggling with a mere introduction. A break was what I needed—from the computer and from the frustration of my writer's block.

I've always been a nature lover; I appreciate nature and natural beings. Listening to the melody of birds, the fluttering wings of butterflies, the buzz of bees, the greens of the grasses, and the explosions of colour in the flowers rejuvenate me. As my PhD was forging me into a scientist, it was also forging me into a naturalist, more specifically a hard-core birder. I had been a birder for a long time, but the introduction to eBird—a global database and the world's largest citizen science project, where you can log all the birds you see and identify—enhanced my birding experience and gave it a different turn.

Birding has always been my stress-reliever; it is my getaway from everything. I'd rather be in a forest with non-humans than in a social situation with more humans. This may be my bias as an ornithologist, but birds really do have something special compared with other animals. I've been asked what that is on multiple occasions, and my answer remains the same: "I have no idea."

I shut down my computer, grabbed my jacket, and headed towards a park, hoping to spot a bird that would help relieve my stress. Spoiler alert: there aren't many birds around in a Fargo winter, especially when the temperature is below freezing. However, you could get out for a few hours and log about 15-20 species if you're lucky. But the best thing about a Fargo winter is the Owls! They migrate south (and stop in Fargo) to avoid the cold weather of the Arctic and Canada.

I started scanning the trees, conifers to be precise. Since most trees lose their leaves in fall, they aren't ideal places to hide. So the owls, especially the smaller ones, tend to avoid deciduous trees and hide in conifers. To be honest, that does make it easier for people like me to find birds. Just scan the conifer trees; however, some parks can have over 50-60 of them, so you do end up scanning every single tree.

I was looking for this particular owl, the Long-eared owl, a classic Holarctic owl species. Holarctic refers to a biogeographic region spanning the Earth in the Northern Hemisphere. A vagrant species in Nepal, the Long-eared owl is a revered migrant species that draws quite a few birders in Nepal. For me, it is one of the most stunning owls because it has the classic owl face. As the name suggests, it has two pointy 'ear tufts' which aren't technically ears; they're just bundles of pointy feathers called plumicorns. It also has this barky look which makes it harder to recognise even if it is localised to a conifer tree.

As I started walking along the snow-covered trail, I flushed a few other songbirds of the north. No sight of any owls yet, but I was already feeling much better than I had an hour earlier. It was cold, but somehow it felt warm to be out in nature. As I was scanning for the long-eared owl, I saw something else move in a small conifer. It was another owl, not the one I was longing for, but one of my favourites: the Northern saw-whet owl. This tiny owl, barely eight inches tall, is one of the smallest in the world. I've probably seen hundreds of these owls in the last few years, and I will probably never get tired of finding them.

After 10 minutes of walking, I found my bird. There it was, sitting atop a centre branch of a conifer, a Long-eared owl. The beautiful creature stared back at me. I was as shocked to see it as it was to see me, so I had to step back a little to give the owl its space. I moved further back after a few clicks and stared at the owl through my binoculars for a long time. My hands were getting colder, but my heart was feeling the warmth of the sight. Just as I was lost in the beauty of the owl and of nature, my phone vibrated, jerking me out of the moment. It was my advisor calling, probably to ask why I wasn't at work. I picked up the phone nervously, only to realise she'd called to ask if I was free to tag her along to look for owls. Not before long, she showed up, and we gazed at the bird for a while.

Fast-forward a few years, and I have been seeing a lot of new research and news stories about how birding can benefit one's mental and cognitive health. I am not surprised. Multiple studies have suggested that bird songs can reduce anxiety, irrational thoughts and stress. There was a global boom in the birding community post-Covid-19 as people resorted to safe outdoor activities. The birding community is growing by the day; so is the stress and anxiety in everyone. Perhaps we shall all balance our stress with a little birding and time in the outdoors, maybe even have a surplus of birds' melody in our lives, and little to no stress. Happy birding!

Ghimire is a post-doctoral candidate in Evolutionary Ecology at North Dakota State University.

Leaked government email credentials expose Nepal's cyber security weaknesses

Nepal's integration with a global breach-monitoring platform exposes cyber security gaps, raising concerns over phishing attacks targeting state institutions.

SAJANA BARAL
KATHMANDU, AUG 5

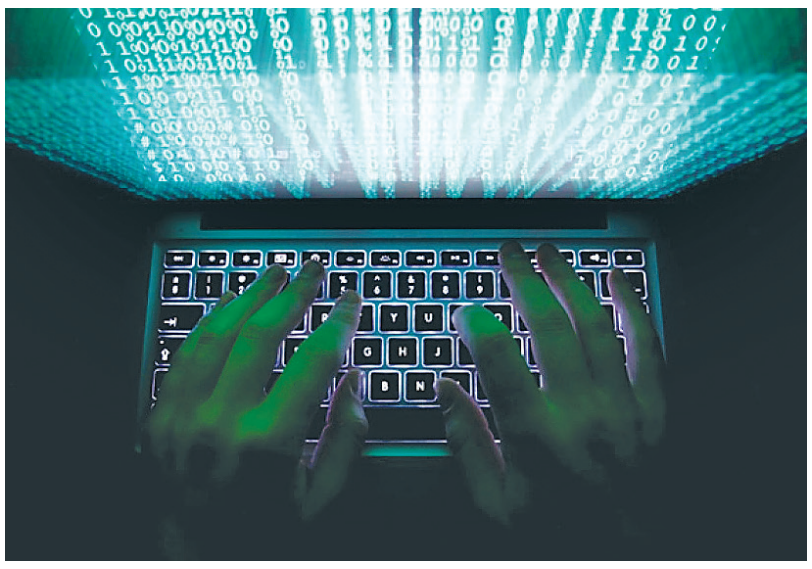
At least 135 official government email addresses under the primary 'nepal.gov.np' domain have been compromised in various data breaches, exposing sensitive state records and triggering a wave of high-profile phishing scams across the country.

The breach was revealed after Nepal officially joined Have I Been Pwned, a global web portal that monitors domain security and tracks credential leaks. According to the National Cyber Security Centre, Nepal became the 47th government entity worldwide to integrate with the monitoring system, enabling state authorities to track exactly when and where official credentials are exposed.

Initial findings from the portal confirmed that compromised email accounts belonged to civil servants stationed across vital institutions, including the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Prominent cyber security expert Mona Nyachhyon warned that such leaks pose a direct threat to state confidentiality. "When official email addresses are compromised, it grants unauthorised actors a doorway into internal networks," Nyachhyon said. "This compromises government secrecy, exposes sensitive communication, and provides attackers with legitimate channels to launch sophisticated social engineering campaigns."

The Director of the National Cyber Security Centre Raj Kumar Maharjan stated that the agency is moving swiftly to notify affected departments and secure vulnerable accounts. "Previously, it was exceptionally difficult to obtain concrete data on where and how Nepal's government records were being stolen," Maharjan said.



REUTERS

"Through this portal, our centre now receives precise details regarding which email address was leaked and from which source. This allows us to alert relevant officials in real time, enforce immediate password resets, and prevent further damage."

To strengthen its defensive perimeter, the centre has expanded its use of advanced technical tools. It currently utilises CTM360, a dark web monitoring tool provided by the International Telecommunication Union, to track illicit data exchanges involving state assets. Additionally, the centre purchased a Security Information and Event Management system to collect and analyse activity logs across government network nodes, expanding on previous open-source platforms like Wazuh and Security Onion.

When system anomalies are detected, Cyber Security Centre analysts conduct deep-dive investigations using global threat intelligence tools that cross-reference suspicious activity against known malicious IP addresses worldwide. The centre has also intensified Vulnerability Assessment and Penetration Testing (VAPT), auditing nearly 40 government systems over the past four months.

According to Maharjan, legacy frameworks and outdated software remain widespread across local and national agencies, greatly increasing vulnerability. He pointed out that the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence has introduced new security blind spots, particularly when agencies use AI tools or 'vibe coding' to build portals without understanding the underlying encryption.

"AI tools have made website development fast and accessible, but users often do not know how secure the generated systems truly are," said Maharjan. "People build applications quickly using AI, but a lack of technical knowledge regarding encryption and security standards elevates the risk of cyber attacks. Furthermore, over 90 percent of cyber incidents stem from human behaviour and social engineering rather than purely technical flaws."

Exploiting human psychology, attackers have increasingly used AI to generate convincing phishing emails that leverage fear and authority. Scammers have repeatedly impersonated high-ranking government and security officials to intimidate citizens.

In a recent case, fraudsters forged emails under the name and title of Additional Inspector General of Nepal Police Manoj Kumar KC. The fraudulent messages claimed that the recipient's IP address had been caught accessing restricted or illegal content. Recipients were threatened with immediate prosecution by the Central Investigation Bureau and warned of impending court orders if they did not reply instantly.

Similar fake circulars have been circulated using the identity of the Prime Minister's Office and Deputy Inspector Generals of Police.

"We have detected phishing emails sent directly in the names of the Prime Minister's Office and top police personnel," said Maharjan. "I have even received phishing emails addressed to me personally. Their primary objective is to instil panic and trick individuals into handing over confidential personal data."

Cyber threats targeting Nepal's public sector have escalated steadily over recent years. A past study by Bhairav Technology revealed that state systems were targeted by Advanced Persistent Threat (APT). Notably, the Sidewinder APT group compromised emails within the Prime Minister's Office to siphon sensitive regional data. During the tenure of former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, attackers manipulated an official document bearing the Prime Minister's signature, circulating autorun malicious files disguised as trip itineraries to infect government computers.

Systemic vulnerabilities came to a head on 1 January 2024, when a massive Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack crippled essential public service websites and web applications for weeks. In response, the Cabinet decided to establish the National Cyber Security Centre on 23 January 2024, officially operationalising it later that spring.

While DDoS attacks and website defacements persist, centre officials maintain that current protocols allow technical teams to mitigate disruptions and restore compromised platforms rapidly. To build resilience, the centre regularly conducts cyber drills and capacity-building exercises across ministries.

Administratively, the government expanded the scope of the Prime Minister's Office through amendments to the Government of Nepal Business Allocation Rules published in the Nepal Gazette on 13 May 2026. The reform transferred the Cyber Security Centre, the Data Management Centre, and the Department of Information Technology from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to the Prime Minister's Office.

Despite these restructuring efforts, operational hurdles remain. Although the government's 100-day agenda approved by the Cabinet on 27 March 2026 mandated the establishment of an Information Technology and E-Governance Office within three months, organisation and management surveys remain incomplete. As a result, the cyber centre's ultimate organisational structure and reporting hierarchy remain unsettled, even as technical teams work to draft comprehensive incident response guidelines to counter emerging threats.

Growing old in Nepal is becoming increasingly lonely and undignified

From public spaces to their own homes, senior citizens are finding respect, care and support increasingly hard to come by.

ARATI PAUDEL
KATHMANDU, AUG 5

When 78-year-old Shanta Kumar Shrestha asked someone not to enter a temple wearing shoes, he expected a gesture of respect. Instead, he was hit with a helmet.

The incident, captured on camera and widely shared on social media, took place a few days ago during evening prayers at a temple in ward 10 of Bharatpur Metropolitan City in Chitwan. Devotees were lighting lamps, burning incense and participating in the evening arati when a child attempted to enter the temple wearing shoes.

Shrestha stopped the child and asked him to remove his shoes. Another man, 21-year-old Shekhar Chand, confronted Shrestha, accusing him of preventing the child from entering the temple, and hit him with a helmet. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Chandra Bhushan Yadav at the Chitwan District Police Office, the incident took place on July 23. Chand, a resident of Shivaraj Municipality in Kapilvastu, was taken into custody soon after.

"An investigation is underway after a case was registered against him under charges related to indecent behaviour," Yadav said. "The legal process is ongoing."

In March, police arrested a man accused of behaving abusively towards an elderly person on the roadside in Lagankhel, Lalitpur. A video showed an elderly man walking along the pavement while a group carrying flags passed by. After he said something, several people surrounded him, with one person appearing to attempt to physically attack him.

Police later detained 30-year-old Ram Sharan Sharma Bajgain of Takhel in Godawari Municipality in connection with the incident. The matter also drew the attention of Home Minister Sudan Gurung, who shared the video on social media with a message saying, "Please take note, no one is above the law." He later visited the victim at his home.

For 65-year-old Sabitri Baral of Green Land, a residential neighbourhood in Tokha Municipality, taking public transport has become an experience she tries to avoid.

She still recalls an unpleasant journey several months ago when she took a microbus from Green Land to a temple at Jhor. She had no option but to use public transport after failing to find a taxi.

"The vehicle was crowded, but we got on anyway," she said. "Instead of offering a seat to an elderly passenger, people at the front shouted at us to move to the back. Some even said, 'Elderly people should take a taxi.'"

Such experiences have left her reluctant to use public transport. "Now, whenever I need to go somewhere, I ask my sons to take me. If they are busy, they call a taxi for me," she said.

These incidents are not isolated. They reflect a broader reality faced by many elderly people in Nepal: humiliation, neglect and abuse in places where they expect safety and dignity, from their own homes to public spaces.

Baral uses Facebook and often sees videos of elderly people being mistreated. Such incidents leave her deeply upset.

"We were young once, too. Everyone grows old someday," she said. "But why do people hurt us as if they themselves will never reach old age?"



POST FILE PHOTO

As younger people move away from their families, many elderly people are left isolated.

She believes society must do more to improve public attitudes. It must also ensure that elderly people are safe and treated with dignity in their own homes.

Experts working with senior citizens say abuse, both visible and hidden, has become a daily reality for many elderly people.

"Senior citizens face disrespect everywhere," said Sharada Devi Chand, first vice-president of the National Senior Citizens Federation (Nascif). "Buses refusing to stop for them, passengers refusing to offer seats, calling them 'old people' in a derogatory way, and preventing them from sitting in public spaces have become normalised."

Verbal abuse is the most common form of mistreatment, she said.

Sociologists argue that abuse of elderly people should not be viewed only as a failure of individual morality.

Laxman Prasad Sharma, an associate professor at the Department of Sociology at Tribhuvan University, said neglect and discrimination against elderly people must also be understood through broader social changes.

"Such behaviour is linked to changing social values, economic systems, transformations in family structures, changing social relationships and existing power dynamics within society," Sharma said. "The scale and form of such behaviour vary from one society to another."

He said incidents of inequality and neglect can become more visible in capitalist societies, where individual freedom, competition, consumerism and economic productivity often receive greater emphasis.

"As younger generations move away from their families in search of employment, education and opportunities, many elderly people are left isolated and socially marginalised," he said.

Such attitudes risk being carried forward by future generations, Sharma warned.

"If children grow up seeing disrespectful behaviour towards elderly people as normal, that behaviour can become part of social culture in the future," he said. "The issue requires a broader response involving families, communities, educational institutions and the state."

Mental health toll

"Abuse and neglect can make elderly people feel anxious, lonely, and emotionally distressed," said senior psychiatrist Professor Dev Kumar Thapa. "In such situations, family relationships need to be strengthened, and attention should be given to reducing isolation."

According to Thapa, around 10 percent of elderly people in Nepal experience some form of abuse. Verbal abuse is the most common, he said.

"Physical violence, depriving them of food or medicine, and failing to provide proper care can all negatively affect their mental health," he said.

Surya Prasad Shrestha, president of Nascif, said many elderly people are increasingly experiencing loneliness as their children leave the country in search of education and employment.

"Many elderly people are now living in situations of isolation, lack of care, and insecurity," he said. "Along with creating jobs for young people, the country also needs to build social infrastructure and an environment where families remain connected."

He added that many elderly people struggle to seek justice because they lack information about available resources and legal procedures.

Thapa says families and communities have a crucial role in ensuring proper care for elderly people.

"Just as parents care for their children when they are young, children should provide their parents with the same level of attention, healthcare and medical support when they grow old," he said.

Thapa said Nepal lacks adequate social welfare mechanisms for senior citizens. He believes the country needs a system similar to those in developed countries, where trained mental health professionals visit elderly people at home and provide support.

"The government should introduce proper policies and create a system to provide counsellors or occupational therapists who can offer support," he said.

He also advises families to seek help from counsellors or psychiatrists if an elderly person becomes withdrawn, starts behaving differently from before or prefers to remain isolated.

What does the law say?

Nepal Police data show 46 cases of indecent behaviour against senior citizens were registered in the fiscal year 2023-24 and 41 cases in 2024-25.

Under the Senior Citizens Act, 2006, anyone aged 60 or above is classified as a senior citizen. According to the National Population and Housing Census 2021, Nepal has around 2.97 million people above the age of 60, accounting for 10.2 percent of the country's total population.

Nascif president Shrestha said many elderly people remain unaware of their legal rights and protections.

"Government agencies and various organisations conduct awareness programmes in remote areas every year," he said. "But many senior citizens still do not know that there are specific laws designed to protect them."

He said many elderly people face abuse both at home and in society but hesitate to speak out because of social pressure.

"Many remain silent because they fear what society will say or worry that speaking against their own children will damage the family's reputation," he said. "We often find that they share their pain only with friends at day-care centres, temples or public resting places, but do not want to take the matter to formal authorities."

According to Shrestha, some elderly people also face neglect and humiliation within families, while others are deceived or pressured in attempts to take control of their movable and immovable property. Very few seek legal remedies, he said.

Article 41 of Nepal's constitution guarantees senior citizens the fundamental right to special protection and social security. Legal provisions also exist under the Senior Citizens Act, 2006, its regulations issued in 2008 and other amendments to existing laws.

However, senior advocate Prakash Mani Sharma said legal provisions alone are not enough without effective implementation.

"If laws are properly enforced through local units, judicial committees and courts, no elderly person should have to live in humiliation, neglect or without basic necessities," he said.

He said caring for and respecting elderly people is not only a moral responsibility but also a legal obligation.

"The law requires families to provide food, clothing, healthcare, respectful living arrangements at home, and opportunities for elderly people to participate in religious and social activities," Sharma said. "If families fail to fulfil these responsibilities, senior citizens can seek legal remedies by filing complaints with local judicial committees."

Under Nepali law, abuse, humiliation, attempts to seize an elderly person's property through deception or coercion, and depriving them of basic rights are criminal offences. Depending on the nature of the offence, perpetrators can face fines ranging from Rs10,000 to Rs500,000, imprisonment from one to five years, or both.

The law also provides priority and certain concessions for senior citizens in public transport, healthcare services, courts and other public facilities.

The constitution recognises elderly people not as objects of charity or sympathy, but as citizens entitled to special protection.

"Recognising their lifelong contribution to the nation and society, ensuring their social security, protection and dignity is the constitutional responsibility of the state," Sharma said. "All of us will become senior citizens someday. Respecting the elderly today is also about building the foundation for our own dignity in the future."

System transition halts driving licence services

BIMAL KHATIWADA
KATHMANDU, AUG 5

A new online system introduced by the Department of Transport Management has brought most driving licence services across Nepal to a standstill for nearly three weeks, leaving applicants unable to obtain new licences or renew existing ones.

While some transport offices have resumed limited services, such as distributing licences that have already been printed, most offices remain unable to process new applications, conduct trials or complete renewals.

The government has highlighted the printing of long-delayed licences as an achievement, but critics say it has remained silent as licence services have remained largely dysfunctional for 19 days.

Nepal has 42 transport management and service offices across the country. Most of them have reported severe disruptions after the department shifted to the new online system. In some offices, only limited functions have resumed.

Although the department issued a public notice announcing the launch of online services, applicants arriving at transport offices say they are being turned away because the system is not functioning as expected. At the Transport Management Office in Ekantakuna, Lalitpur, which handles one of the highest volumes of applicants, officials are only distributing licences that have already been printed.

"Licence renewals and distribution have been halted since July 17," said office chief Keshav Kumar GM. "The department says the online system is in its final stage, but the system is not working. We have also not received any official notice about the full launch of online services."

Before the disruption, Ekantakuna processed around 250 to 300 renewals daily and handled trial examinations for 400 to 500 new applicants. Both services are now suspended.

"Except for distributing printed licences, all other services have stopped," GM said. "People coming for renewals and trials have to be sent back. We have been facing the anger of frustrated service users every day."

A similar situation exists at the Transport Management Office in Chabahil, another high-volume centre in Kathmandu. Information officer Meghnath Gautam said the office was only handing out printed licences and handling some verification requests for people travelling abroad.

"The transition from the old system to the new one has not been completed smoothly," he said. "We are facing problems at different stages."

Gautam said payments made online for renewals sometimes fail to appear in the system the following day. Health examination details, which are also supposed to be uploaded online, have also created difficulties.

"Trial examinations and renewal services have not been possible since the new system was introduced," he said. "Only licence distribution and verification for people travelling abroad are continuing."

Previously, the Chabahil office handled around 250 renewal applications, 700 trial applicants and 300 to 400 written examination candidates daily. The total number of visitors often reached about 2,500 a day.

Officials said the purpose of the new system was to allow citizens to complete forms, renew licences and apply for trials online without visiting transport offices repeatedly. However, the failure of the system to operate fully has created additional hardship.

The disruption comes shortly after the government completed a major backlog-clearing exercise. After years of complaints from people who had passed trials or completed renewals but had not received their licences, the government printed and distributed old pending licences in two phases.

A total of 2.74 million licences were printed and sent to transport offices, covering applications up to April 25, 2026, in the first phase and up to mid-July in the second phase. The Department of Transport Management and the Security Printing Centre had reached an agreement under which the centre printed all pending licences.

Some offices say the new system is operating partially rather than being completely shut down.

"Some problems exist in the new system, but it has not stopped completely," said Subash Karki, information officer at the Transport Management Office in Itahari. "Trial examinations have not started because of the transition, but renewal services are continuing. Medical verification is still facing occasional problems."

Karki said the system was not operating at the speed required.

"Under the old system, 500 to 600 people used to visit daily for new licences, renewals and category additions," he said. "Now applicants report problems while filling out online forms because the system does not run smoothly."

Previously, around 4,000 to 5,000 people across the country applied for new licences every day. Applicants now complain that even after submitting online forms, their applications are not moving forward.

At the Transport Management Office in Lahan as well, the new system is functioning only partially.

"We ourselves have not received enough information about the online system. No training has been provided," said information officer Binit Kumar Jha. "There were also problems because we did not know where medical examinations for renewals and new licences should be conducted. The medical process has been settled only since Tuesday."

In Dadeldhura, renewal services have resumed through the new system, but officials say health examination procedures remain problematic.

"Data is not being transferred from the Nagarik App," said information officer Kamal Prasad Ojha.

"Trial examinations for new licence applicants through the new system have not started."

Ceuta warns of 'unsustainable' situation for child migrants after influx

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CEUTA, SPAIN, AUG 5

The leader of Spain's north African territory of Ceuta on Wednesday said the number of children left there after last week's rush of migrants was "unsustainable", pleading for government aid.

Spain said 70,000 of the 72,000 people who had entered Ceuta from Morocco in a sudden rush last week had now returned, after an incident that led to a spat between Spain and some other EU countries seeking a harder line on immigration.

But the roughly 2,500 who remain include hundreds of unaccompanied minors who are enduring dire conditions with limited access to food, water, shelter and sanitation.

Ceuta's leader Juan Jesus Vivas, of the main opposition conservative Popular Party (PP), told public broadcaster RTVE that authorities were taking care of 1,100 youngsters against a theoretical capacity of 90.

"This is an absolutely unsustainable situation," said Vivas, adding that there was "a high risk for order and public security" as reception centres were overwhelmed. Groups of young migrants continued to roam the streets of Ceuta on Wednesday, gathering in parks and beaches as authorities worked to identify and accommodate them, an AFP reporter saw.

The Spanish government's top official in Ceuta, Miguel Angel Perez, conceded those youngsters were "a priority, a source of great concern".

The charity Save the Children estimates that around 1,000 "unprotected" minors are among the migrants still in Ceuta. "We are asking for help, for assistance from the rest of Spain" through the leftist central government, said Vivas.

Any redistribution of the children to the rest of Spain under existing legal provisions is likely to meet resistance from regions governed by the PP and the anti-immigration, far-right Vox party. Socialist deputy prime minister Carlos Cuerpo insisted on public television that the PP and its regional governments "must comply with the law just like everyone else".

In Tibet, some hope to preserve language and customs despite China's new law

E EDUARDO CASTILLO/AP
LHASA, TIBET, AUG 5



AP/RSS

Kalsang Lhamo, a 73-year-old retired nurse, practices Tibetan calligraphy at the Chengguan District Day Care Centre for the Elderly in western China's Tibet autonomous region on July 20, during a government-organised visit for foreign journalists.

Kalsang Lhamo traces a series of vertical strokes, slow but firm, practising Tibetan calligraphy. A 73-year-old retired nurse, she has spoken Tibetan all her life but never learned to write it. Now, in classes at a centre for older adults, she immerses herself in the script.

Lhamo also speaks and writes Chinese, which China mandated as its primary language for schools and government agencies in a sweeping new "ethnic unity" law implemented on July 1. Under the new regulations, acts deemed to incite division among China's 56 ethnic groups are prohibited, and schools, families and other institutions are expected to foster patriotism, national unity and a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation.

The law has been widely criticised as a way to further erode the rights of Tibetans and other minorities, and for the authority it gives Beijing to target activities it considers separatist, even outside China. The Chinese government has dismissed foreign criticism as "ideological bias".

In Tibet—a remote Himalayan region officially designated autonomous but tightly controlled by Beijing—the stakes are particularly high. This year, China is marking the 75th anniversary of what it calls the "peaceful liberation" of Xizang—the Chinese name for Tibet—an event many Tibetans in exile and other critics regard as an invasion.

Some Tibetan activists say the new law represents more forced cultural assimilation and extended control over ethnic minorities.

Rights groups say language policies have already been implemented in other minority regions, including expanded Mandarin education for Uyghurs in Xinjiang and the replacement of some Mongolian-language instruction with Mandarin in Inner Mongolia.

"Minority communities that seek to maintain their culture will be pushed toward a double life of public conformity and private reservations," wrote James Leibold from La Trobe University and Tenzin Dorjee from the advocacy group Tibet Action Institute in Foreign Affairs magazine.

The Associated Press last month joined a government-organised trip to Tibet, including stops in the regional capital, Lhasa, and the city of Shannan, where authorities arranged visits to palaces, Buddhist temples, tourist sites, local businesses and the eldercare centre where Lhamo studies. Government officials accompanied the foreign journalists throughout the visit, and AP journalists were not free to move around or conduct reporting independently. The AP retained full editorial control of its content.

Reminders that Tibet is part of China are everywhere, from Chinese airport welcome messages and billboards promoting ethnic unity to Chinese national flags and President Xi Jinping portraits in public squares and buildings.

Some Tibetans, like Lhamo, have found ways to embrace their language and identity, even as critics say the new law pushes China's majority Han culture. In Tibet, that can mean studying the Tibetan script, speaking it at home and with family members, preserving traditional weaving and attending Buddhist rituals.

At these religious sites in Tibet, no signs or references to the Dalai Lama

At the Jokhang Temple, one of Tibet's holiest religious sites, Tibetans and Han Chinese visited. Some rested outside. Most people in Tibet practice Tibetan Buddhism.

"As a Tibetan, I think it's important to preserve our language and our culture," said Qongqiu Quco, a 19-year-old student who came with her aunts, some of them Buddhist nuns.

"Everyone in our ethnic group hopes that our culture can be passed down to future generations," said Quco, an aspiring teacher who speaks Tibetan much of the time. But at school, she noted, students speak different Tibetan dialects, so they use Mandarin.

For Tibetan Buddhists, the Dalai Lama is their spiritual leader. But at Jokhang Temple, there are no signs or references to the current Dalai Lama, who has lived in exile since fleeing to India after a failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule.

The succession of the 14th Dalai Lama, who established a government-in-exile unrecognised by Beijing, has become one of the most contentious issues surrounding Tibet. The Dalai Lama has said his successor could be born outside China and that only his office has the authority to recognise his reincarnation.

Beijing says the selection must comply with Chinese law and receive government approval. China has long accused the Dalai Lama of promoting separatism.

The Potala Palace, one of Tibet's most revered sites and once the winter residence of the Dalai Lamas, also had no public reference to the current leader. Thousands visit daily—tourists from across China and local Buddhist believers who pray and leave offerings, including money.

Today, the Chinese national flag flies there.

China's unity law 'codifies' a policy that's already playing out, an expert says

Benno Weiner, a professor and historian on modern China and Tibet at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, said many effects of the policy shift have already been visible for years—particularly stripped-away education and language rights.

"I don't think the law itself changes things," he said. "I think it sort of codifies and sort of summarizes a trend that's been going on."

Beijing says the policies improve educational opportunities and ensure equal access for ethnic minorities.

The same week as AP's government-organized trip, China's No. 4-ranked Communist Party leader, Wang Huning, toured Tibet, where he said the priority in governing the region was maintaining stability. He called for the implementation of the unity law and urged authorities to "guide Tibetan Buddhism to adapt to socialist society," according to a report by state news agency Xinhua.

On its trip, AP visited a traditional Tibetan medicine facility; artisan workshops and cultural centres with traditional crafts, including ceramic making and textile weaving; and a Tibetan opera performance, where workers and performers spoke about the importance of preserving local traditions. Weiner noted that the Chinese government's approach to cultural preservation often emphasizes elements seen as less politically sensitive and suitable for tourism.

"The parts of culture that they want to protect and maybe even enhance are the sort of anodyne or nondangerous clothing, certain celebrations that are not religious in many cases," he said. "Things that maybe not that coincidentally also attract tourists."

At the Tibet Museum, an exhibit highlights Tibet's historical links with Chinese dynasties over centuries, a narrative Beijing uses to argue that Tibet has long been part of China. Many Tibetans in exile dispute that, arguing that Tibet was independent for much of its history.

Laba Ciren, the Communist Party's official in charge of the museum, spoke to journalists about the new law. "It only brings benefits and does not have any negative effects," he said.

Billboards carry the law's message: Promote integration

Access to Tibet is tightly restricted for foreigners. But for those who do arrive, a first observation—after the thinner air, with Lhasa Gonggar International Airport at 3,600 meters elevation—might be the official welcome messages.

Some signs are written in Chinese and Tibetan. But outside the terminal, a large sign, in Chinese, says simply: "Xizang welcomes you."

From highways to city streets in Lhasa and Shannan, billboards promoting ethnic unity are a constant presence. In part, one reads, in Mandarin and then Tibetan: "Forge a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation."

In Lhasa, Lhamo retired 22 years ago. With her children grown, she tries to make it to classes at the centre every day—writing, grammar, poetry—in part because she wasn't able to attend school as a child.

"Our mother tongue is the Tibetan language," she said proudly.

Butterflies seek new habitats as climate changes: Study

DELPHINE PAYSANT/AFP
PARIS, AUG 5

Climate change is driving shifts in where butterflies are found globally, a major study said Wednesday, with many species moving into new areas while others are retreating from traditional habitats.

The study in Nature Ecology & Evolution is one of the most comprehensive to date on how butterfly distributions are changing, assessing more than 1,700 species across 105 countries and territories.

Researchers found that nearly 80 percent of the reported shifts in the geographic ranges where butterflies were associated with climate change and extreme weather events.

Other factors were also driven by human activity: changes in land use, intensive agriculture, urbanisation, habitat fragmentation and the introduction of invasive species.

Butterflies are considered important indicators of ecosystem health because they are highly sensitive to temperature changes, have short life cycles and depend on specific host plants.

As the planet warms—primarily because of the burning of coal, oil and gas—some butterfly species are relocating northwards or seeking out higher elevations in search of cooler conditions.

However, just 22 percent of species showed a shift in elevation.

Overall, 80 percent of species expanded their range while 27 percent experienced range contractions, with some showing different patterns in different regions, underscoring the complexity of responses to climate change.

"This is rather good news as it proves that butterfly species are capable of migrating and shifting their range to adapt to changes," study co-author Jonathan Lenoir, an ecologist from France's national scientific research centre (CNRS), told AFP.

'Trapped'

Lenoir cautioned that range expansions were easier to detect than contractions because it was simpler to confirm a species has colonised a new area than prove it has vanished entirely from another.

Many observations, including those made by citizen scientists, were concentrated in lowland areas and near urban centres, potentially skewing the findings.

But butterflies could only adapt so far, Lenoir said.

It was possible that beyond a certain warming threshold more butterflies would contract their range, causing "much more rapid and sudden upheavals" among certain species and "potential extinctions".

A 2024 study in Global Ecology and Biogeography found that 84 per cent of roughly 270 butterfly species studied in Europe would reduce their range by 2080 if global temperatures keep rising.

"Some butterfly species will not necessarily be able to migrate further north in latitude, or higher up in the mountains, in response to the global rise in temperatures," said Lenoir.

Species endemic to mountain regions on islands could become "trapped" as their habitat is reduced "to almost nothing" with limited options to shift elsewhere, he added.

The authors advocated for stronger conservation policies, the protection and restoration of butterfly habitats, ecological corridors and micro-climatic refuges, and improving biodiversity monitoring particularly through citizen science.

Underlining it all, they emphasised the urgent need to limit global warming to lower levels.

Hasina return plan amid efforts to repair strained bilateral ties

>> Continued from page 1

Dhaka's Prothom Alo newspaper suggested her vow was "part of a strategy to energise party members, build pressure for the lifting of the ban on the party, and reclaim political space".

But former senior Awami League member Mahmudur Rahman Manna, now a fierce critic of Hasina, dismissed the vow as self-serving.

"There are people in the AL who have some degree of public acceptance. Sheikh Hasina could have given them a little space to help bring the party back after the ban. She didn't," he said.

"The idea that she would come back for the sake of the party is absurd."

Hasina also knows that simply threatening to return will needle Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, who swept February's elections in which the Awami League was barred, Sikder said. Political imprisonment has a long history in Bangladesh. Under Hasina's rule, Rahman's mother, former leader Khaleda Zia, spent years in jail in Dhaka on graft charges that her party said were politically motivated.

"The Bangladesh government isn't ready to accept her, even if she lands in jail directly from India," Sikder told AFP. "Her return will create political instability.. I doubt the government can handle that."

Not so, says Zahed Ur Rahman, an adviser to Bangladesh's prime minister. "We want her back—please return," he told reporters. "We have written to India. The individual we want to bring back intends to return. We are ready—let her come, and we will ensure justice."

Hasina refused to attend her trial in Dhaka, where she was found guilty of incitement, ordering killings and failing to prevent atrocities. Her vow to return comes as Bangladesh and India seek to repair strained ties, with Hasina remaining a persistent point of friction. Dhaka has repeatedly requested her extradition, while New Delhi has said only that the request is being examined through the legal process. But relations have improved since Rahman, leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, became leader, and India has invited him to a BRICS summit in September.

India's foreign ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal, speaking to reporters on Tuesday, sought to distance New Delhi from Hasina's "homecoming" speech.

"The government has no involvement whatsoever in it, neither does it endorse any views that may be expressed at the forum," he said.

But some in Bangladesh see India's hand in using Hasina's return threat as leverage.

China announces countermeasures against Washington

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BANGKOK, AUG 5

China announced a series of economic measures Wednesday against the United States, including controls on exports of drones to the US and a ban on dealings with six American entities, in response to recent restrictions imposed by Washington.

Tensions are simmering between the world's two biggest economies ahead of an expected visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to the U.S. in September, despite signs of warming ties during his meetings with U.S. President Donald Trump in Beijing in May. The Commerce Ministry said the sanctions are in response to recent moves from the US, including a ban by the US Federal Communications Commission on imports of Chinese drones, and the Department of Homeland Security's decision to add 43 Chinese companies to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act entity list to prevent imports of goods made with forced labour. The "measures seriously violate the important consensus reached by the two heads of state and severely damage China's legitimate rights and interests. China has no choice but to take necessary countermeasures in response", the ministry said in a statement.

It emphasized that China was acting with restraint and urged the US to scrap its measures against Beijing and cease its "erroneous practices."

It also warned of further sanctions if the US rolls out new restrictive measures against China.

Stranded boats, out-of-work fishermen as Danube hits record lows

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CORABIA, ROMANIA, AUG 5

The tourist port in the Romanian town of Corabia, on the banks of the Danube river, is deserted except for a few pleasure boats stranded in the algae.

The waters of the river are so low that vessels can no longer get in or out due to sandbars.

"Last year we could swim across but now the water only comes up to our chests," said 71-year-old Doru, pointing to an island in the river.

"In two years, we'll be able to just walk across," the fisherman, who only gave his first name, told AFP.

The waters of the mighty Danube, Europe's second longest river, have dropped in parts to a record low due to successive heatwaves that have parched the continent since May.

From its source in the Black Forest mountains of western Germany to its mouth on the Black Sea in the east, countries along its 2,850-kilometre (1,770-mile) route are feeling the impact. In Slovakia and Hungary in central Europe to Romania and Bulgaria further east, ships are unable to travel fully loaded along the waterway and face lengthy waits.

Hungary shut down its sole nuclear power plant, which relies on the waters of the Danube for cooling, on Sunday while Romania shut down the two reactors at the Cernavoda plant, the first time both had been shut at the same time because of low water levels.

Serbia has also been forced to reduce power generation on its two biggest hydroelectric plants.

Already harsh, this current drought was made even more severe by human-caused climate change, according to a report published last week by the World Weather Attribution group of scientists. The river is at a 30-year low in Romania and Slovakia and at its lowest ever in Hungary.

Navigation problems

At the Vidin-Calafat bridge connecting Bulgaria and Romania across the Danube, Bulgarian fishermen complained of being out of work because the low water levels had trapped their boats onshore.

"It's never dried up this much before," fisherman Rossen Dobrev told AFP. "Now we can even walk all the way to Romania."

"I've been a fisherman for 39 years and there's never been a drought like this before," sighed fellow fisherman Aleksandar Angelov.

"The people in charge up there need to take action," the 59-year-old added.

"We don't have any water here."

Ferry service between Romania and Bulgaria have been suspended temporarily in two areas.

A cruise ship with almost 200 passengers had to be evacuated in Bulgaria after it ran aground on the Danube because of low water levels.

Commercial shipping is also affected. "Cargo vessels are being forced to wait or sail with a reduced load," a spokesperson at the Bulgarian government's Danube agency told AFP.

In Romania, the water level along parts of the Danube is already one metre [three feet] below the minimum navigable.

"This is an exceptional situation... We're surprised by this very, very low



AP/RSS

People watch the wreckage of a WWII German warship, emerged due to the drought on the Danube river, between Romania and Serbia, near Prahovo, Serbia, on Tuesday.

level," Adrian Maizel, from the administration monitoring traffic on the Danube, told AFP.

"We are making efforts to maintain a navigable channel as much as possible—albeit a narrower one—so that navigation is not completely blocked," he added of the administration's dredging operations.

Both countries recorded low water levels much sooner than last year.

Further upstream in the Hungarian capital Budapest, the Danube has dropped to its lowest level since measurements began. Dozens of Hungarian cities and villages along the river introduced water restrictions during the June heatwave. By July, several cruises had been suspended as well.

At Slovakia's Gabcikovo dam, further upstream again, lock operations have slowed down, causing longer waiting times, and captains are being urged to check their vessels' navigability. With the heat expected to last, there is no immediate relief in sight.

"I've lived here for 25 years and the water has never been this low," said Romanian pensioner Mitica Nicolae from Corabia as he fished in an irrigation canal close to the river.

The 65-year-old, who checks public radio every morning for the latest Danube water report, said he was catching fewer fish than before and feared for farm crops.

Carrying more than her own dreams

Beyond the viral social media posts celebrating Rajina Bista's win over a Thai fighter, the 27-year-old martial artist overcame financial hurdles and institutional neglect to claim silver at the Amazing Muay Thai World Festival.

NAYAK PAUDEL
KATHMANDU, AUG 5

Rajina Bista, 27, has a dream: to represent Nepal at the biggest Muay Thai events like ONE Championship and Rajadamnern World Series (RWS).

Bista is currently in Bangkok, Thailand. She has extended her stay to learn more about Muay Thai at the home of the martial art itself.

Photos of Bista recently circulated like wildfire on social media, celebrating her landmark victory over a Thai fighter at the birthplace of Muay Thai. But the posts missed a crucial detail: she had not just conquered one Thai opponent.

Bista defeated two Thai fighters—Phet Nanin and Theptida Sor Pichai—to reach the finals of the 2026 Amazing Muay Thai World Festival in Bangkok, Thailand. She lost the final to USA's Layal Shafee by judges' scores after an intense five-round fight and had to settle for the silver on July 29. But by then, she had already made history, becoming the first Nepali woman to defeat a Thai opponent in a professional Muay Thai fight.

"Well, I believe I should have won that final match," Bista told the Post over a phone call on Sunday. She had fought in the Adult Elite/Advanced -51kg category. "I am returning home next week to search for sponsors who can back me up as I move forward—towards ONE Championship and RWS."

But it is not Bista's sole dream. She wants to do it for her father—Radheshyam Bista—and her husband—Paras Rawal. And for those who have believed in her to date.

"My father loves martial arts and wanted to be a fighter himself, but he never got the chance to continue it on the big stages," Bista said. "Before my younger brother was born, my parents had three daughters. But we were never treated as weak or constrained by what society expects of girls. I am carrying our father's dream forward."

How happy Radheshyam is with his daughter can be seen on his Facebook. He has proudly shared every post he has come across regarding Rajina's martial arts journey.

Bista was eight years old when she started her martial arts journey when her father enrolled her and her elder sister Renu Bista at a newly opened Narharipur Karate Dojo in Chandragiri, Kathmandu.

"I remember sparring within three months of joining the dojo," Bista recalls. "I lost the fight and was sad to see others in joy with medals. It was then that I told myself: I am going to win that medal that looks like gold."

While her elder sister discontinued karate after getting married, Bista never considered quitting.

"Well, I would have stopped had I not got so much support from not only my family, but from my in-laws as well," she said proudly.

Bista married Rawal, a former national age-group cricketer, last year. "My husband also dreamed of playing cricket for Nepal at the highest level, but he couldn't continue his journey," she said. "Now I am carrying his dream forward alongside mine."

Bista considers herself fortunate to have unwavering backing from her family.

"When people ask my mother-in-law when we are going to start a family or when I will stop fighting—saying it doesn't suit a girl—she defends me," Bista shared. "She tells them she wants to see me achieve my dreams because she never got the chance to pursue hers. That is a reality so many women in Nepal face, and she wants a different path for me."

From karate to Muay Thai

Bista went on to participate and win medals across several national and international karate tournaments during her childhood and teenage days. And her accolades led the Japanese to call her to be part of an emerging martial art called Sei-Za.

Bista was only 16 when she and another Nepali martial artist—Radha Manandhar—joined emerging martial artists from Russia, Brazil and Australia in Tokyo, Japan.

"It was a new experience. I enjoyed it. It taught me different forms of martial arts as well," she said. Sei-Za is an all-female Japanese combat sport that blends full-contact kickboxing strikes with sumo's ring-out dynamics.

But the sport lacked adequate funding and sponsorship and could not develop. As a result, Bista also did not see a quality future in Sei-Za. But she says that coming across kickboxing while practising Sei-Za allowed her to take up a new martial art.

"Most importantly, it was karate that helped me," she says. "Karate is a martial art that improves your basics and helps you cope with other martial arts a bit more easily."

In 2018, Bista started practising kickboxing in Japan. She worked as an English teacher and a kickboxing coach at a kindergarten, and then supported her own kickboxing journey.

"After working at a kindergarten, I used to go to my training in the evening," Bista said. She has played in over eight amateur and professional kickboxing bouts since 2021. Her latest kickboxing bout was against Yuzuki Horita at the NJKF—New Japan Kickboxing Federation—promotion in March last year.

But Bista was still seeking something more.

"I returned to Kathmandu in 2023 and found out about Erawan Muay Thai Fight Gym in Bansbari," she remembers.

And the rest is history.



PHOTO: LAYAL SHAFEE'S INSTAGRAM

Nepal's Rajina Bista came second after losing to USA's Layal Shafee in the final of their 2026 Amazing Muay Thai World Festival fight in Bangkok, Thailand, on July 29.

Bista was selected to represent Nepal at the Amazing Muay Thai World Festival in Bangkok as the WBC Muay Thai Nepal National gold medalist in the 51kg division. It means she is at the top of Muay Thai among female fighters in the country.

But Bista argues that Nepal does not have many female Muay Thai fighters. "That is why I also tried MMA once," she added.

Bista had fought Sangita Dhami, one of Nepal's best female MMA fighters, at Omega Championship Fight in July 2023. Bista lost it.

"Losses have, meanwhile, never stopped me," Bista said. "In this sport, it is always about getting stronger."

She is inspiring many

Earning a sustainable living from combat sports remains an uphill battle for Nepali martial artists—whether they are Paralympic medalist Palesha Goverdhan, Asian Games silver medalist karateka Arika Gurung, or professional MMA fighter Rabindra Dhant. For athletes like Bista, however, giving up has never been an option.

"Fighting is not an easy sport," Bista shared. "And to take it up as a source of livelihood is a bigger challenge, especially for a girl, and that too in a country like Nepal."

But she has learnt to stand up stronger as a martial artist.

"We had to pay a registration fee of 330 euros (approximately Rs58,000) for the tournament in Bangkok. Then the ticket fare," Bista said. "I also paid 35,000 Thai Baht (approximately Rs160,726) for a month-long training at Sor Chokmeechai, a Muay Thai gym."

Bista exhausted all the savings she had earned working as a trainer at Erawan Muay Thai Fight Gym to make the trip. "I had to participate in this tournament because it had been a year since my last fight," she said. "Trying to secure support from local municipalities was a hassle. I was even told that the maximum a municipality could offer was Rs2,000 to Rs3,000."

For an athlete well aware of how rare government support is for non-mainstream combat sports, the institutional neglect came as no surprise.

"I sought state support only with a faint hope of 'what if'," she said with a wry laugh. "Since government backing has never materialised before, being turned away didn't hurt. The sacrifices we fighters make have never been seen."

Still, she refuses to let cynicism take over. "What remains if we lose hope?" she asked.

Bista now plans to approach corporate houses to fund the next chapter of her Muay Thai career.

"Once I return to Kathmandu, I plan to visit business houses for sponsorships so I can continue training in Thailand and become a better fighter," Bista said with determination. "I was so happy to see so many Nepalis sharing my victories in Thailand on social media. I hope that visibility helps me land a few good deals."

She recognises the reality of modern athletics: digital presence equals leverage. "In today's sporting world, sponsorship follows popularity," she noted. "That's why I try to stay active online."

Bista regularly produces short videos and longer vlogs documenting her training sessions and fight trips to build her audience. "Yet, without formal backing from the state, you always feel like something vital is missing," she added.

Amid the financial hurdles, what keeps her going is the growing impact she has on the next generation of female fighters.

"We have a national Muay Thai promotion called the Elite Fighting Series (EFS), and its eighth season is coming up," Bista said. "With every edition, I see more young women joining from gyms across the country. When those young girls approach me during tournaments and tell me I inspire them, it makes me immensely proud. Moments like those make me want to keep pushing higher."

Bista also argues that parents should let their daughters pick up a martial art.

"We all know how unsafe girls are. Even if not as a professional, girls should be taught martial arts for self-defence and to boost their confidence," Bista added.

When asked how long Bista would want to continue her career as a fighter, she replied, "It is not about age. It is all about you. You can continue to be a fighter until you give up. In my case, I feel my journey has only started."

And it is where Bista stresses the need for a professional ecosystem in martial arts.

"This is a sport where injury can happen any moment," Bista said. "It is why there is a major need for professional coaches, physios, doctors and much more technical manpower. Without these, we Nepali fighters will always struggle against better-supported athletes across the globe."

For Bista, every punch, kick and hurdle is no longer just about personal glory—it is about proving that a Nepali woman can stand at the very top of the combat sports world.



HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Funnel more energy into your relationships and overall sense of balance throughout the coming weeks, dear Aries. Surround yourself with people who feel safe and open up emotionally.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
A renewed desire to feel good and live your best life comes into focus, dear Taurus. Keep a close eye on your routines, looking for opportunities to bring more ease, efficiency, and healthy habits into each day.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)
You'll be eager to celebrate friendship and make new connections throughout the coming weeks, but should focus on personal interests as well. As visions crystallize internally, take steps to manifest them in real time.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)
Home becomes your main focus throughout the coming weeks, dearest Cancer. This planetary placement supports romantic nights in, dinner parties, and financial investments in your space.

LEO (July 23-August 22)
Sweetness attracts sweetness throughout the coming weeks, dearest Leo. Embrace quiet time to sort through any challenges or ideas you've been meaning to get a firmer grip on.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)
Focus on financial goals, beauty, and art throughout the coming weeks to make the most of this planetary placement. Listen carefully to what others say and search for deeper meaning.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)
Venus comes home to your sign today, dearest Libra, helping you feel balanced, loved, and cherished. Don't be afraid to make commitments that are in your best interest, even if they come with some sacrifices.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)
This planetary shift presents a chance to work through personal issues with compassion and self-love. You will also feel more reclusive and eager to hide away with your favorite people.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)
Your world will feel soft, communal, and full of love throughout the coming weeks, dearest archer. Open your heart to new friends and remember to cherish existing companions.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)
Though some connections may be tested throughout the coming weeks, you will feel increasingly secure in dynamics that are meant to be. Don't hesitate to show off a bit, especially when attempting to catch the attention of someone special.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)
Your luck builds throughout the coming weeks, dearest Aquarius. This planetary shift brings blessings and peace your way, giving you the calm necessary to take risks that will lead to major rewards.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)
Matters of the heart will feel sweeter and more serious throughout the coming weeks, dearest Pisces. Prioritise connections that leave you feeling celebrated and empowered. ASTROLOGY.COM

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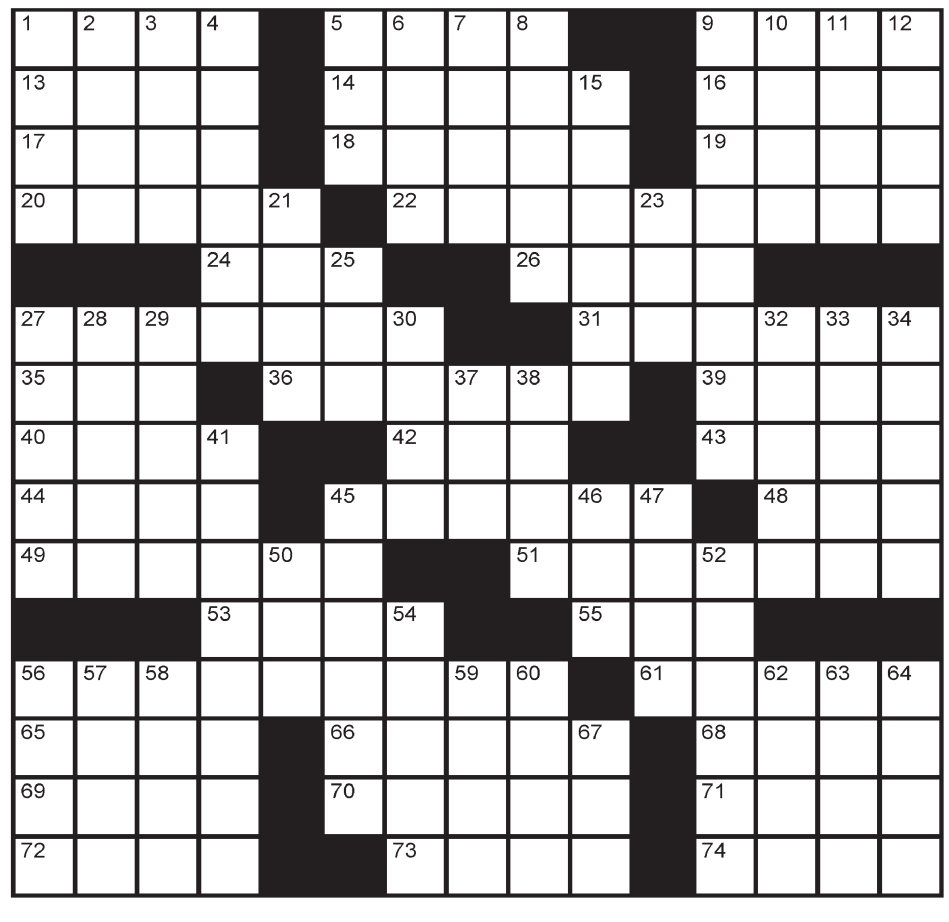
ACROSS
1 Shapeless mass
5 Coral ridge
9 Food fish
13 Jot
14 Bring upon oneself
16 Actor — Shalhoub
17 Oodles
18 Carried
19 Commedia dell'—
20 Chew the scenery
22 Bronzed
24 Actress — Marie Saint
26 Length
27 Emotional state
31 Affect
35 Clumsy boat
36 Untie
39 Of a wing
40 Greek god of war
42 Nourished
43 Poi source
44 Harvest
45 Arranged in advance
48 Swab
49 Distant
51 Piercing place
53 Sculls
55 Chinese "way"
56 Alike
61 Stew with okra
65 Helot
66 Typo
68 Ibsen character
69 Rights org.
70 Meaning
71 Caprine creature
72 Christmas carol
73 Sob
74 Tips

DOWN
1 Liver secretion
2 Appear threateningly
3 — von Bismarck
4 Kitchen "syringe"
5 Bone
6 Deputy — Strate
7 Light color
8 Laughable
9 Be firm (2 wds.)
10 Trumpet
11 Before (Prefix)
12 Tinted
15 Hold on to
21 Wicked
23 Upper limb
25 From — — Z
27 Drummer Ringo —
28 Thick soup
29 Girder (Hyph.)
30 Quiet
32 Texas landmark
33 Chocolate substitute
34 Truism
37 Ocean
38 Go carefully
41 Quantity of medicine
45 Succession
46 "— your heart out!"
47 RuPaul's attire
50 Make lace
52 Waiting room
54 Hardware item
56 No man — — island
57 Art —
58 — Stanley Gardner
59 British composer
60 Forfeit
62 Once in a blue —
63 Nail
64 Horse feed
67 Agent, for short

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

S	T	A	B	■	D	A	R	T	S	■	L	E	S	S
L	O	G	O	■	I	S	E	R	E	■	O	S	L	O
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■	■	■	A	V	I	D	■	E	R	A	S	■	■	■
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T	A	U	■	N	E	P	A	L	■	C	A	R	E	T
A	B	L	E	■	D	O	V	E	R	■	R	O	V	E
T	I	E	R	S	■	T	I	G	E	R	■	M	E	A
S	T	R	U	T	S	■	D	A	T	E	P	A	L	M
■	■	■	P	E	A	R	■	L	U	N	A	■	■	■
■	B	A	T	T	L	E	■	■	R	O	S	T	E	R
R	A	N	I	■	U	N	P	I	N	■	T	O	B	E
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SUDOKU

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9	4	8	5	7	1	6	3	2
2	5	6	3	4	8	1	9	7
1	8	2	4	3	7	5	6	9
5	9	3	1	6	2	7	8	4
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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

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INTERVIEW

We seek the spotlight for advocacy

Inspired by her mother, a first Miss Nepal 1994 contestant, Miss Nepal World 2026 Deepmala Dhakal shares her journey of identity, resilience, and championing cancer awareness.

From working as an investment strategist and holding a black belt in Taekwondo to delivering a TEDx talk and running marathons, **Deepmala Dhakal**, Miss Nepal World 2026, defies conventional stereotypes.

In a candid conversation with the *Post*'s **Jony Nepal** and **Rivash Rijal**, she reflects on her pageantry journey, navigating public scrutiny, and bringing global visibility to Nepal.

What was your biggest inspiration to begin your pageantry journey?

I knew I wanted to participate even before I was born because of my mother, who was a contestant in the very first Miss Nepal in 1994. Growing up outside Nepal, I did not relate to figures in the local Chinese limelight in Hong Kong; they didn't look or sound like me. But in pageantry, I saw young women who walked with grace, carried immense presence, and spoke with absolute authority. That level of confidence inspired me, and I realised pageantry was where I could find my role models and discover who I wanted to become.



POST PHOTO: DIPESH DARSHANDHARI

Former Miss Nepal Luna Luitel crowning Dhakal as Miss Nepal World 2026.

What was your training like, and how did you navigate the transition from self-improvement to self-criticism?

Stepping into a completely new format this year brought a lot of self-doubt. I questioned whether I still fit the mould, especially with the pressure of representing the Non-Resident Nepali (NRN) community on a global stage. The turning point occurred two weeks into the competition during the sash ceremony. I randomly drew contestant number 17—the exact number my mother held during her pageant in 1994 as a participant in the first Miss Nepal event. That moment felt like destiny. The fear instantly dissipated, giving me the mental resilience and confidence to stop doubting myself and focus entirely on growth.

Social media amplifies your voice, but it also subjects you to constant public evaluation. How do you drive real-world change while protecting your mental space?

It comes down to perspective. We seek the spotlight not for personal fame, but to accelerate our advocacy work. I accepted early on that public comment would follow every photo and challenge. As a second-generation NRN representing Hong Kong in Nepal, social media allowed me to connect with the diaspora.

I even posted videos speaking Nepali—something I had been self-conscious about due to my accent. Embracing my language publicly helped me overcome fear; ownership over identity leaves less room for criticism.

Have you ever felt the need to prove that beauty, intellect, and physical strength can coexist?

Yes. I strongly dislike the phrase 'beauty with brains' because it implicitly suggests that beauty usually exists without intelligence. They are not mutually exclusive. People often question why pageant contestants need lessons on walking, posture, or speaking. Historically in South Asian societies, women were expected to make themselves smaller and take up less space. Pageantry teaches women to walk with their chests out, hold their chins high, and claim their space. It is a comprehensive platform demonstrating that women can excel across all domains simultaneously.

Take us back to the moment you were crowned. What went through your mind, and what was your interaction with your mother?

The crowning moment was intense. Three titles were being awarded, and six of us held hands. As Miss International and Miss Cosmo were announced, I realised there was only one crown left for the remaining four of us—it became an all-or-nothing moment. Everything flashed through my head: the tireless dedication of my team, makeup artists, walk trainers, and community members in Hong Kong who volunteered their time to groom me.

When my name was called, it was pure relief. Because of stage protocol, my mother couldn't come up immediately, but we held eye contact from across the stage. Right after winning, she was in complete disbelief, but in that shared look, we were fully connected and living in the moment.

What does the Miss Nepal sisterhood mean to you?

Coming from Hong Kong's competitive environment, I initially approached the pageant with a purely performance-oriented mindset. The sisterhood was the sweetest surprise. As a naturally competitive person, I initially didn't understand that sentiment. But being up there, I felt the exact same way. Shifted from trying to be the best to being my best, I viewed my peers' strengths as inspiration rather than competition. If Nepal wins, we all win.

How do pageantry and change-making intersect for you, and what is your primary advocacy?

Pageantry acts as a multiplier. Advocating for a cause individually might reach a hundred people, but wearing a crown brings a platform that reaches thousands. My primary advocacy is cancer awareness, inspired by losing my 30-year-old cousin brother to end-stage colon cancer after early symptoms were overlooked. Cancer affects one in five people; raising awareness about warning signs and early detection is genuinely life-saving work. As a goodwill ambassador for Nepal Cancer Hospital, this remains my core commitment, crown or no crown.

What are your short-term and long-term goals moving forward?

Short-term, my focus is entirely on preparing for Miss World. My fellow titleholders and I are putting in every effort to represent Nepal with dignity and achieve international recognition.

Long term, I am in Nepal to stay. I have relocated my life here and will continue my work with the NRNA. Professionally, I plan to maintain my career in finance, while also aspiring toward diplomacy. Given my international upbringing, multilingual background, and cross-cultural experience, diplomacy is a long-standing goal.

What is your message to young people and aspiring participants?

Take that initial step. Many young girls harbour dreams of pageantry or other high ambitions, but goals evolve as we grow. Whatever your goal is, do not get in your own way or yield to external noise. Understand your value, build steady momentum, and pursue your ambitions with your eyes wide open.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CREATIVE D STUDIO

Scan the code for a related video.

In Prague, a Nepali restaurant keeps tradition alive

At Lumbini-Indická a Nepálská Restaurace, food is only the beginning. The family behind the eatery uses music and community events to introduce Czech diners to Nepal.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF LUMBINIPRAHA/INSTAGRAM

ANISH GHIMIRE
PRAGUE

A little piece of Nepal sits in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, where a giant mural of the Buddha welcomes visitors. Walking inside, Czech diners can be seen tucking into plates of an 'all-you-can buffet' that runs from 11 am to 2 pm, Monday to Friday.

Around them hang traditional Nepali musical instruments—a full Naumati Baja set—turning the restaurant into something that feels as much like a cultural centre as an eatery.

This is Lumbini-Indická a Nepálská Restaurace, a family-run Nepali and Indian restaurant in Prague's Žižkov district. For husband-and-wife duo Baikuntha Rayamajhi and Anjana Rayamajhi, who jointly run the establishment, serving food, they say, is only part of their mission.

Just as important, they say, is preserving and promoting Nepali culture thousands of kilometres away from home.

Although the eatery was established about eight years ago, the couple took over its management more than two years ago. Baikuntha says the opportunity came unexpectedly.

"I jokingly asked the owner if he wanted to sell the restaurant," he recalls. "We negotiated as a joke, but eventually the deal actually happened."

Years of organising community events convinced him that a restaurant could be more than just a place to eat. He saw it as a space where Nepalis could come together while Czech diners discovered Nepal's cuisine and traditions.

Today, Lumbini-Indická a Nepálská Restaurace serves familiar Nepali dishes such as momo, dal bhat and thali alongside Indian favourites, attracting Nepali, Indian and Czech customers alike.

But the walls reveal another side of the restaurant's identity. The collection of traditional musical instruments is not simply for decoration.

Since 2013, Baikuntha has led a Naumati Baja team that performs at weddings and community events across the Czech Republic and occasionally elsewhere in Europe.

"My wife and I also sing dohori," he says. "We have our own performing team with musical instruments and a sound system."

Anjana Rayamajhi shares both the business and the stage with her husband. While helping manage the day-to-day operations of the restaurant, she also performs traditional Nepali songs during cultural events, making music a natural extension of their family life.

Whenever Nepali artists visit the Czech Republic, many of their programmes are hosted inside the restaurant.

Baikuntha Rayamajhi's involvement in cultural activities extends well beyond the restaurant. He is the founding president of the International Nepali Artists Society (INAS) Czech Republic.

Scan the code for a related video.

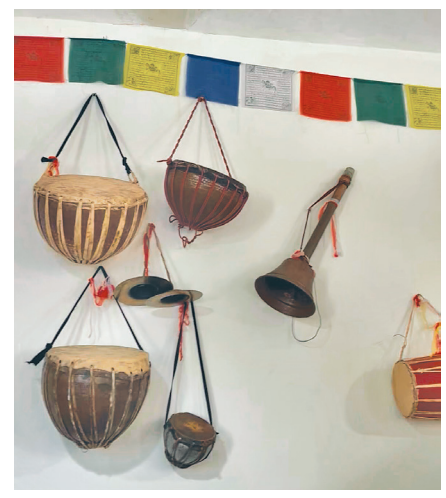
"When I started organising programmes, there weren't many Nepali cultural events here," he says. "Now there are many more people involved."

For many Czech diners, Lumbini-Indická a Nepálská Restaurace is their first introduction to Nepal. They arrive for the food but often leave having encountered something more—a glimpse of the country's music and traditions.

For Nepalis living in Prague, meanwhile, the restaurant offers a familiar space where language, culture and community come together.

As Nepali migration to Europe continues to grow (an estimated 450,000–500,000 Nepali nationals live across Europe), restaurants like this are increasingly serving purposes that extend far beyond business. They become gathering places, performance venues and informal cultural institutions.

At Lumbini-Indická a Nepálská Restaurace, an 'all-you-can-eat buffet' may bring customers through the door. But it is the sounds of the madal, the melodies of dohori and the warmth of a Nepali family welcoming guests that leave the strongest impression.



POST PHOTOS: ANISH GHIMIRE

Since 2013, the restaurant's owner, Baikuntha Rayamajhi, has led a Naumati Baja team that performs at weddings and community events across the Czech Republic and occasionally elsewhere in Europe.



Call for contributions

The Kathmandu Post invites well-researched and creative pitches for 'Fiction Park' stories and feature articles—travelogues, book reviews, and pieces on technology, culture, and lifestyle. To ensure your articles get our attention, please keep the following things in mind when inquiring about and submitting your pieces.

All your stories should be pitched to the Features desk, not the editor. Email your piece or pitch (along with a high-resolution headshot and a one-line bio) to tkpfeatures@gmail.com.

We will respond only to well-written stories and pitches that have original ideas. Plagiarism will lead to blacklisting. We suggest that you Google your pitch before writing to us. If you're submitting an article that the Post or other publications have already covered, tell us why your piece offers something new.

The Post receives dozens of pitches every day from aspiring writers and students. We cannot respond to every single email, but if we like your idea, we will get back to you.

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