



## Decentralization of instability

**ApEx BUREAU** | Kathmandu

Following last year's GenZ movement, there were expectations that Nepal's traditional political parties would reform their political culture. Instead, the March 5 election delivered a sharp rebuke to the established parties by pushing them out of power and giving the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) a single-party mandate. While the struggle for power at the federal level has temporarily subsided, recent developments in the seven provinces suggest that the old political habits remain unchanged.

Despite provincial assembly elections approaching, major parties have once again agreed to reshape provincial governments. Rather than strengthening governance, the move has reignited both inter-party bargaining and intra-party rivalries. The CPN-UML, for example, is grappling with internal disagreements over the formation of governments in Bagmati and Koshi provinces, forcing party chairman KP Sharma Oli to spend considerable political capital managing factional disputes. Similar contests over chief ministerial candidates have emerged within the Nepal Communist Party, while differences between Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal over provincial power-sharing have further exposed internal divisions. Coalition arithmetic has made provincial politics even more unstable. In Bagmati, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party has emerged as a kingmaker because neither the UML nor the NCP commands a majority. The changing alliances have also generated tensions within the RSP, illustrating how coalition politics continues to fuel instability rather than effective governance.

With the latest agreement, all seven provincial governments are once again set to be either reconstituted or reshuffled. Since the provincial governments were formed after the Nov 2022 elections, every province has witnessed repeated changes driven by political instability. Koshi Province has been the most volatile, experiencing six government formations or collapses and 18 cabinet expansions or reshuffles as chief ministers struggled to retain power. During the same period, governments changed three times in Madhesh, Bagmati underwent three cabinet reshuffles, and Gandaki, Lumbini, Karnali, and Sudurpashchim each saw four changes in government.

Over the past decade, Nepal's major political parties have failed to provide stability to provincial governments. Although the federal government now enjoys the stability of a five-year mandate, instability has effectively been decentralized to the provinces. The latest round of government changes is likely to deepen public distrust, weaken already fragmented political parties, and further undermine the credibility of Nepal's federal system.



The high-altitude meadows of Tribeni Patan stretch alongside the Raktakunda River, set against the remote backdrop of the Badimalika region | **Achitra Thieng**

## US steps up push for Starlink expansion

*Nepal maintains that several policy and legal issues must be resolved before Starlink can begin operating in the country*

**ApEx BUREAU** | Kathmandu

The United States has intensified efforts to expand Starlink's satellite internet services across South and Central Asia, with Nepal remaining one of the countries where discussions are still underway due to policy and legal hurdles.

Last week, Samir Paul Kapur, the US Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, met representatives of Starlink to receive updates on the company's operations across the region. Following the meeting, Kapur said Starlink and its parent company SpaceX have significant potential to work with both the US government and private sector to meet the region's growing connectivity needs.

The administration of US President Donald Trump has given greater priority to the global expansion of Starlink's broadband internet services. While several South and Central Asian countries have already approved Starlink's



operations, US officials and company representatives are continuing consultations with other governments, including Nepal, urging them to expedite their decisions.

The Government of Nepal, however, maintains that several policy and legal issues must be resolved before Starlink

can begin operating in the country.

In June, Starlink's Global Licensing Director Rebecca Hunter met Minister for Communications and Information Technology Bikram Timalsina to discuss the possible expansion of satellite-based internet services in Nepal.

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## PM Shah's new playbook

**ApEx BUREAU** | Kathmandu

Prime Minister Balendra Shah prefers to work quietly from Singha Durbar rather than engage in frequent parliamentary proceedings. This marks a significant departure from the practice followed by Nepal's prime ministers since the restoration of democracy in 1990, when regular engagement with Parliament was regarded as a core aspect of executive accountability.

For the first time in Nepal's par-

liamentary history, a prime minister has openly signaled a preference for focusing on governance over active participation in parliamentary debates. Despite repeated calls from opposition parties and suggestions from Speaker Dornath Aryal and Rastriya Swatantra Party Chairman Rabi Lamichhane to appear more frequently in the House, Shah has shown little inclination to change his approach.

So far, the Prime Minister has participated in only one brief question-and-answer session, during which

**Nepal's location between two major powers should be viewed as a strategic advantage rather than a geopolitical burden**

he made a controversial statement on border encroachment. Since then, ministers have increasingly been assigned to respond to lawmakers on the govern-

ment's behalf. Even when Shah visits Parliament, his appearances are often brief, lasting only a few minutes.

His limited participation has created a new dynamic in the House. With the Prime Minister rarely present, parliamentary debates are increasingly driven by the opposition, while government lawmakers have played a comparatively subdued role. Critics argue that this has weakened Parliament's ability to directly scrutinize the head of government.

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**FEATURE  
RIGHT TO BE  
FORGOTTEN**

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# NC puts government on notice

*The party accused the government of failing to respond effectively to several recent crises, including the violence in Devanganj-Kaptanganj of Sunsari, and demanded an independent judicial commission to investigate the incident*

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The main opposition, the Nepali Congress, on Tuesday submitted a 15-point memorandum to the government, raising concerns over governance, transparency, public accountability, the economy, security and citizens' livelihoods while reaffirming its commitment to political stability.

Speaking at a press conference, the party said it was prepared to cooperate with the government led by the Rastriya Swatantra Party in the interest of national stability, but stressed that it would continue to hold the administration accountable for its actions. The Congress argued that while governments receive a mandate to govern, safeguarding democracy, constitutional values and citizens' rights remains the responsibility of all political forces.

The party accused the government of failing to respond effectively to several recent crises, including the violence in Devanganj-Kaptanganj of Sunsari, and demanded an independent judicial commission to investigate the incident. It also renewed its call for a widely accepted high-level commission to probe the GenZ protests, saying previous investigations had failed to establish public confidence.



## The Congress questioned the transparency of the government's passport procurement process

Among its other concerns, the Congress questioned the transparency of the government's passport procurement process, criticised the recently endorsed House of Representatives Regulations for allegedly contradicting constitutional principles, and accused the government of applying double standards in anti-corruption efforts by failing to investigate those in power.

The opposition also expressed concern over alleged attacks on press freedom and freedom of expression, claiming individuals linked to the government had intimidated journalists and political opponents. It urged the administration to conduct an impartial investigation into the allegations and ensure constitutional rights are protected.

The party further criticised the government's handling of diplomatic affairs, appointments to public bodies, the controversy surrounding the home minister, and its response to the concerns of landless settlers. It accused the administration of creating uncertainty for the private sector through arbitrary enforcement actions, while also highlighting shortages of chemical fertiliser,

## 15-point statement

- Devanganj-Kaptanganj incident: It called for an independent and credible judicial commission to investigate the violence in Sunsari and demanded compensation for victims, free treatment for the injured and adequate security for affected families.
- GenZ protests: The Congress rejected previous investigations as inadequate and urged the government to form an independent commission acceptable to all sides while implementing the recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission.
- Press freedom and freedom of expression: The party condemned alleged surveillance and intimidation of journalists, media organizations and opposition leaders, calling for an impartial investigation and an end to arrests over criticism of the government.
- Passport procurement controversy: It questioned the transparency of the passport printing tender,

- sought clarification over the procurement process and demanded answers regarding alleged links involving the Prime Minister's Secretariat, advisers and foreign companies.
- House of Representatives Regulations: The Congress argued that recently endorsed parliamentary regulations contain provisions that exceed constitutional limits and effectively place lawmakers above existing laws.
- Anti-corruption efforts: The party accused the government of applying selective justice by failing to investigate the source of wealth of individuals holding public office while targeting political opponents.
- Governance and political appointments: It alleged that appointments to public institutions lacked transparency and were influenced by political considerations rather than merit.
- Foreign policy and diplomacy: The

- Congress criticized the closure of diplomatic missions, delays in diplomatic appointments and what it described as immature and irresponsible handling of foreign policy.
- Home minister controversy: It questioned the credibility of investigations into allegations involving the home minister and demanded an independent and transparent inquiry.
- Landless settlers: The party accused the government of making repeated promises without delivering a permanent solution to the problems of genuine landless families.
- Private sector concerns: It alleged that arbitrary raids and intimidation of businesses without sufficient evidence had undermined investor confidence and harmed the economy.
- Fertilizer shortage: The Congress blamed the government for poor planning and mismanagement

- that left farmers struggling to obtain chemical fertilizers during the planting season.
- LPG supply crisis and inflation: It demanded an explanation for the recent cooking gas shortage and called for measures to ensure uninterrupted supply and control rising prices of essential goods.
- Education sector: The party criticized errors in examination results, delays in addressing teachers' demands and political interference in universities, saying these had created uncertainty for students and educators.
- Failure to implement agreements: It accused the government of signing agreements with protesting groups—including teachers, healthcare workers, microfinance victims, cooperative depositors and nurses—but failing to implement them, urging the administration to honor its commitments

the recent LPG supply crisis, and what it described as poor management of the education sector.

The Congress said the government had repeatedly signed agreements with protesting groups—including teachers,

healthcare workers, microfinance victims, cooperative depositors and nurses—but had failed to implement them. It urged the administration to honour its commitments and demonstrate greater accountability.

Concluding its statement, the party said the issues highlighted represented broader governance challenges facing the country and argued that the government had failed to deliver on good governance, transparency and

accountability. It said the public was demanding tangible results rather than promises and called on the government to restore public trust through effective implementation of its policies and greater transparency ■

## US steps...

Earlier, in Nov 2024, SpaceX founder Elon Musk held a virtual meeting with Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli. During the discussion, Musk sought to bring Starlink to Nepal, while Prime Minister Oli stressed that broader consultations within Nepal were necessary before any decision could be taken. The proposal was later put on hold amid geopolitical considerations.

According to officials at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Nepal's existing telecommunications law allows a maximum of 80 percent foreign investment in telecom service providers, the same provision under which Ncell operates. Ministry sources say Starlink has been lobbying for amendments that would permit full foreign ownership.

Across the region, Bangladesh became the first South Asian country to launch Starlink services in



2025. Sri Lanka also approved the service the same year, while Pakistan granted the company a temporary no-objection certificate to begin operations.

Globally, Starlink, a satellite internet service operated by Elon Musk's SpaceX, is now available in more than 125 countries and territories. The network is designed to provide high-speed internet access, particularly in remote and underserved areas, through a constellation of low-Earth orbit satellites.

Unlike traditional communications satellites that orbit about 36,000 kilometres above the Earth, Starlink satellites operate at an altitude of around 550 kilometres. This lower orbit enables significantly lower latency and faster internet connectivity. The system currently consists of around 10,000 satellites linked through laser communication, allowing data to be transmitted without requiring a constant direct connection to ground stations.

Starlink has also played a significant role in Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion in Feb 2022. The satellite network has been used by

the Ukrainian military for battlefield communications, drone operations and coordination of unmanned systems. Civilian institutions, including hospitals, emergency services, energy providers and the railway network, have also relied on the service to maintain communications during the conflict.

Despite the company's global expansion, Starlink has faced regulatory and security scrutiny in some countries. In June, India reportedly suspended final regulatory approvals required for Starlink's commercial launch after security agencies raised concerns over the reported use of Starlink terminals during the Iran conflict.

As Nepal continues to evaluate the proposal, the government's decision will likely depend on balancing digital connectivity needs, investment policies, national security considerations and the country's broader geopolitical interests.

## PM Shah's...

Shah has also departed from another long-standing convention. Earlier in his tenure, he discontinued the customary practice of the Prime Minister regularly meeting the President to brief the Head of State on national developments. However, following the recent communal violence, he met the President for the first time since taking office.

In a parliamentary democracy, the Prime Minister is expected to remain accountable to the legislature. Although there is no legal requirement for the Prime Minister to attend every parliamentary sitting, regular engagement with the House is a cornerstone of responsible government. Shah's infrequent attendance has therefore prompted growing debate over the government's commitment to parliamentary accountability and democratic oversight.

Speaker Aryal has also been seen as playing a supportive role toward the Prime Minister. Despite the Prime Minister's infrequent attendance in Parliament, the Speaker has not issued any directive or ruling requiring the Prime Minister or the government to ensure greater accountability to the House.

# ApEx biznomy

MISCELLANEOUS

Wilde rules  
playful BDSM  
comedy

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## Arbitrary arrests, raids spark fear in private sector

*Instead of improving confidence and fostering a conducive environment for investment, current enforcement practices are deepening uncertainty and discouraging risk-taking*

ApEx BUREAU | Kathmandu

Earlier this week, police raided the residence of industrialist Beni Gopal Mundanda of Debenara Group in Biratnagar. The scale of the raid was so huge that authorities blocked a roughly 500-meter stretch of Pandit Meghraj Marg—from Golcha Chowk to the District Administration Office, Morang—for nearly five hours and restricted movement of people during the operation.

Police, however, returned empty-handed after finding no evidence of wrongdoing and subsequently gave the Mundada family a clean chit. The incident has been widely discussed within business circles as an example of what they describe as “intimidating” enforcement tactics. After drawing flak from all quarters, the Kosi Provincial Police Office has sought a written explanation from Superintendent of Police Kabit Katwal, the chief of the District Police Office, Morang.

The raid on Mundada’s residence was not an isolated event. Business leaders say aggressive law enforcement practices, which are often carried out before completing thorough investigations, are creating a climate of fear among entrepreneurs. This, they warn, is discouraging both domestic and foreign investment at a time when the economy is struggling to regain momentum.

The controversy intensified in April after the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) detained Shekhar Golchha, former president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and chairperson of the Golchha Group, in connection with alleged share-trading irregularities flagged in preliminary findings by the



Securities Board of Nepal. Similarly, Nepal Investment Mega Bank (NIMB) CEO Jyoti Prakash Pandey was arrested for performing a routine banking function: the sale of assets pledged for loan recovery. Both were later released on court orders.

In both cases, complex financial and regulatory matters were treated as immediate criminal offenses. This sent shockwaves through the business community.

In a separate case, Ramesh Sharma of Sharma and Company and Pitambar Badu of Lama Construction were reportedly detained and taken directly to a ministry for questioning over construction delays. The move has been seen by many as the high-handedness of the government and an act of bypassing standard administrative and legal channels in favor of

**When company leaders are detained and financial accounts are frozen, operations can grind to a halt**

political instruction.

After a series of arrests of businesspersons, three leading private sector umbrella bodies—the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) and the Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC)—called for a change in the government’s approach to handling economic offenses.

“The private sector is not opposed to legal action against the guilty. How-

ever, we urge the government to adopt a ‘hear first, detain only after guilt is proven’ principle in financial offense cases,” they said in a joint statement in April. “The trend of sudden arrests, freezing of bank accounts, and seizure of operational assets prior to completing investigations has demoralized entrepreneurs and created uncertainty in the business environment.”

While the government had assured representatives of the private sector that time that no such actions would be taken unless absolutely necessary and supported by evidence and investigation, the recent raid on businessperson Mundada’s residence had left them anxious and worrying.

The issue has come at a time when the private sector, which accounts for 81 percent of the country’s economic output and nearly 86 percent of

employment, is already grappling with sluggish growth, weak demand and limited access to credit. Instead of improving confidence and fostering a conducive environment for investment, current enforcement practices are deepening uncertainty and discouraging risk-taking.

The long-term consequences of such practices could be severe. One major concern is the deterrence of foreign direct investment. International investors closely monitor legal predictability and the protection of property rights, and arbitrary arrests and raids risk making Nepal a less attractive destination for capital. Allegations of pressure from the Prime Minister’s Office on Department of Passports officials to scrap a contract with a German firm in favor of a French company, IDEMIA, are also unlikely to inspire confidence among foreign investors.

Such activities also put domestic investment at risk. Business leaders say entrepreneurs are becoming increasingly hesitant to commit capital to large-scale projects such as hydropower, infrastructure and manufacturing. Instead, capital is remaining idle, shifting to less productive sectors or moving abroad.

The impact extends beyond individual businesses. When company leaders are detained and financial accounts are frozen, operations can grind to a halt. This can disrupt supply chains, delaying payments and put thousands of jobs at risk.

Such disruptions can also affect government revenue, as slower business activity translates into lower tax collection, potentially widening the fiscal deficit and constraining public spending on infrastructure and development projects ■

## A new chapter in Himalayan connectivity

*For Nepal, developing smart tourism is not merely about adopting new technologies; more importantly, it is about strengthening tourism governance and service quality through digital innovation*

HE HONGMEI

The Himalayas, stretching across the heart of Asia, are not only a magnificent natural barrier but also an enduring bridge connecting the peoples of China and Nepal. For centuries, trade, religious exchanges, and people-to-people interactions have crossed these mountains, fostering mutual understanding and cultural ties between the two civilizations. Today, in the digital age, emerging technologies—including the Internet, big data, and artificial intelligence—are injecting fresh momentum into traditional tourism cooperation, enabling China and Nepal to move from simply meeting face to face to becoming digitally connected.

Nepal is home to some of the world’s most iconic tourist destinations, including Mount Everest, the Annapurna region, the sacred Buddhist site of Lumbini, and the Kathmandu Valley, renowned for its rich cultural heritage. China, meanwhile, is both one of the world’s largest sources of outbound tourists and a global leader in the digital economy. It has



accumulated extensive experience in smart tourism, digital service platforms, multilingual public services, and mobile payment systems. By integrating digital technologies with the tourism industry, China and Nepal can develop a more convenient, efficient, environmentally friendly, and sustainable model of Himalayan tourism

cooperation, opening a new chapter in bilateral exchanges.

### Smart tourism platforms

Digital technologies are transforming the way travelers discover destinations, plan their journeys, and experience local cultures. In the past, visitors to Nepal relied primarily on traditional

travel guidebooks and offline services. Today, digital platforms, online maps, intelligent tour guides, and AI-powered travel services have become the new gateways to tourism experiences.

China has developed extensive expertise in smart tourism. Through integrated tourism information platforms, online booking systems, digital destination management, and intelligent service terminals, travelers can conveniently access information on attractions, transportation, cultural heritage, and safety advisories. These experiences provide valuable insights for Nepal as it seeks to accelerate the digital transformation of its tourism sector.

For Nepal, developing smart tourism is not merely about adopting new technologies; more importantly, it is about strengthening tourism governance and service quality through digital innovation. For example, Nepal could establish multilingual tourism information platforms tailored to international visitors, integrating information on attractions, itinerary planning, accommodation, transportation, and other travel services into a single digital ecosystem.

Big data analytics could be used to better understand visitor preferences and optimize tourism products, while digital technologies could also support the preservation of cultural heritage, ensuring that tourism development goes hand in hand with the protection of history and tradition.

Looking ahead, as China-Nepal digital cooperation continues to deepen, travelers will be able to explore the Himalayas and experience Nepal in increasingly intelligent and immersive ways. Digital technologies will allow visitors to appreciate the grandeur of snow-capped mountains and the richness of Nepal’s cultural heritage even before they begin their journeys, creating a seamless connection between the virtual and physical travel experience.

### Digital payment innovation

Tourism cooperation is not only about the movement of people but also about the connectivity of service systems. As digital payments become increasingly widespread, payment convenience has emerged as a key factor shaping international travelers’ experiences.

# POWs in Ukraine hope for exchange as Kathmandu intensifies diplomatic efforts

*One former recruit recalled being warned by officials at the Russian Embassy in Kathmandu not to become involved in the war. Nevertheless, after borrowing approximately Rs 160,000 to finance his journey, he travelled to Russia in search of civilian employment*

ApEx BUREAU | KATHMANDU

A growing number of Nepali nationals captured while fighting for the Russian military in Ukraine are appealing for diplomatic intervention, hoping they can be included in future prisoner exchange agreements between Russia and Ukraine instead of being directly repatriated to Nepal.

Among them is Krishna Bahadur Ghimire, who travelled from Dubai to Russia in 2023 after learning through friends that the Russian Army was recruiting foreign nationals. After serving for nearly 11 months, Ghimire was captured by Ukrainian forces during combat and is currently being held in a Ukrainian prisoner-of-war (POW) camp.

"I first want to return to Russia because I served in the Russian Army and need to claim the benefits promised under my contract," Ghimire said through messages facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the only channel through which prisoners are permitted to communicate with their families.

In a zoom conversation with ApEx, Ghimire sent a handwritten message to his daughter, who is studying psychology at university. "Continue your studies, fulfil your responsibilities and always main-



tain your dignity," he wrote.

Although he remains uncertain about when the Russia-Ukraine war will end, Ghimire says he hopes to regain his freedom through an official prisoner exchange between the two warring countries.

Another Nepali prisoner, Pratik Pun, originally from Rolpa whose

family now lives in Dang, travelled to Russia on a student visa after struggling financially following the death of his father. Expecting to combine study and employment, he later joined the Russian Army after acquaintances assured him of lucrative salaries.

Pun said he spent around Rs

500,000 on university enrolment and tuition fees before financial hardship forced him to seek other opportunities. Recruitment documents were entirely in Russian, leaving him unaware of the exact terms of his military contract.

"We were told we could earn around \$86,000," he said. Like Ghimire, Pun believes the most realistic path to freedom is through an exchange of prisoners rather than direct deportation from Ukraine. "We request Nepal to ask Russia to prioritise us in prisoner exchange negotiations," he said.

Similarly, Bibek Khakri travelled to Russia hoping to study while working. Financial difficulties eventually led him to enlist in the Russian military. "We do not blame the government because we made the decision ourselves," he said. "But returning directly to Nepal will not solve our problems. We still hope Russia will honour the compensation promised under our agreement."

Interviews with returned migrants and prisoners indicate that most Nepali recruits were under 30 years old and came from economically vulnerable backgrounds. Many had no previous military experience and learned about recruitment opportunities through relatives, friends or migrant workers already living in Russia. Several recruits initially

entered Russia on tourist or student visas before eventually joining the military.

One former recruit recalled being warned by officials at the Russian Embassy in Kathmandu not to become involved in the war. Nevertheless, after borrowing approximately Rs 160,000 to finance his journey, he travelled to Russia in search of civilian employment. "I only wanted work suitable for my driving skills," he said. "Later I met some Indian friends who told me Nepalis were being recruited into the Russian Army and would not be sent to the front lines. That is when I began thinking about joining."

Although exact figures remain uncertain, independent estimates suggest that hundreds of Nepali citizens have joined Russian forces since the invasion of Ukraine in Feb 2022.

Reports indicate that recruitment has largely targeted migrant workers and students facing financial hardship. Human trafficking networks and informal recruiters are believed to have facilitated much of the recruitment process.

According to available estimates, hundreds of Nepalis have served in the Russian military, with dozens confirmed dead and many others reported missing, wounded or captured. Independent observers believe the actual numbers could

be significantly higher because Russia has not publicly disclosed the number of foreign nationals serving in its armed forces. The Government of Nepal has repeatedly stated that Nepali citizens are prohibited from serving in foreign militaries except in countries with longstanding bilateral recruitment agreements.

To discourage further recruitment, Nepal has temporarily suspended labour permits for Russia and Ukraine, tightened visitor visa regulations, expanded no-objection certificate requirements for several countries and arrested individuals suspected of trafficking Nepalis into the Russian military.

Diplomatically, Kathmandu has repeatedly urged Moscow to stop recruiting Nepali citizens, repatriate those serving in the Russian Army, return the bodies of those killed and provide compensation to affected families.

Nepal has also requested Ukraine to release Nepali prisoners of war on humanitarian grounds.

During recent talks between Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha, Nepal formally requested the release of all Nepali POWs. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ukrainian side expressed willingness to continue discussions on the issue.

Ukraine maintains that foreign nationals serving in the Russian Armed Forces are legally considered Russian combatants under international humanitarian law. As prisoners of war, they are detained under the Geneva Conventions and monitored by the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international organisations.

Because they were captured while serving in the Russian military, Ukrainian authorities argue that their release cannot simply be arranged through direct repatriation to Nepal. Instead, they are generally expected to

be released through negotiated prisoner exchanges between Russia and Ukraine unless separate diplomatic arrangements are reached.

Meanwhile, families across Nepal continue waiting for information about relatives who remain missing, imprisoned or serving on the battlefield. Many families have appealed to the government for stronger diplomatic engagement with both Moscow and Kyiv. While Nepal has intensified discussions

**Independent estimates suggest that hundreds of Nepali citizens have joined Russian forces since the invasion of Ukraine in Feb 2022**

**Families across Nepal continue waiting for information about relatives who remain missing, imprisoned or serving on the battlefield**

with both governments, many of those affected say progress remains slow.

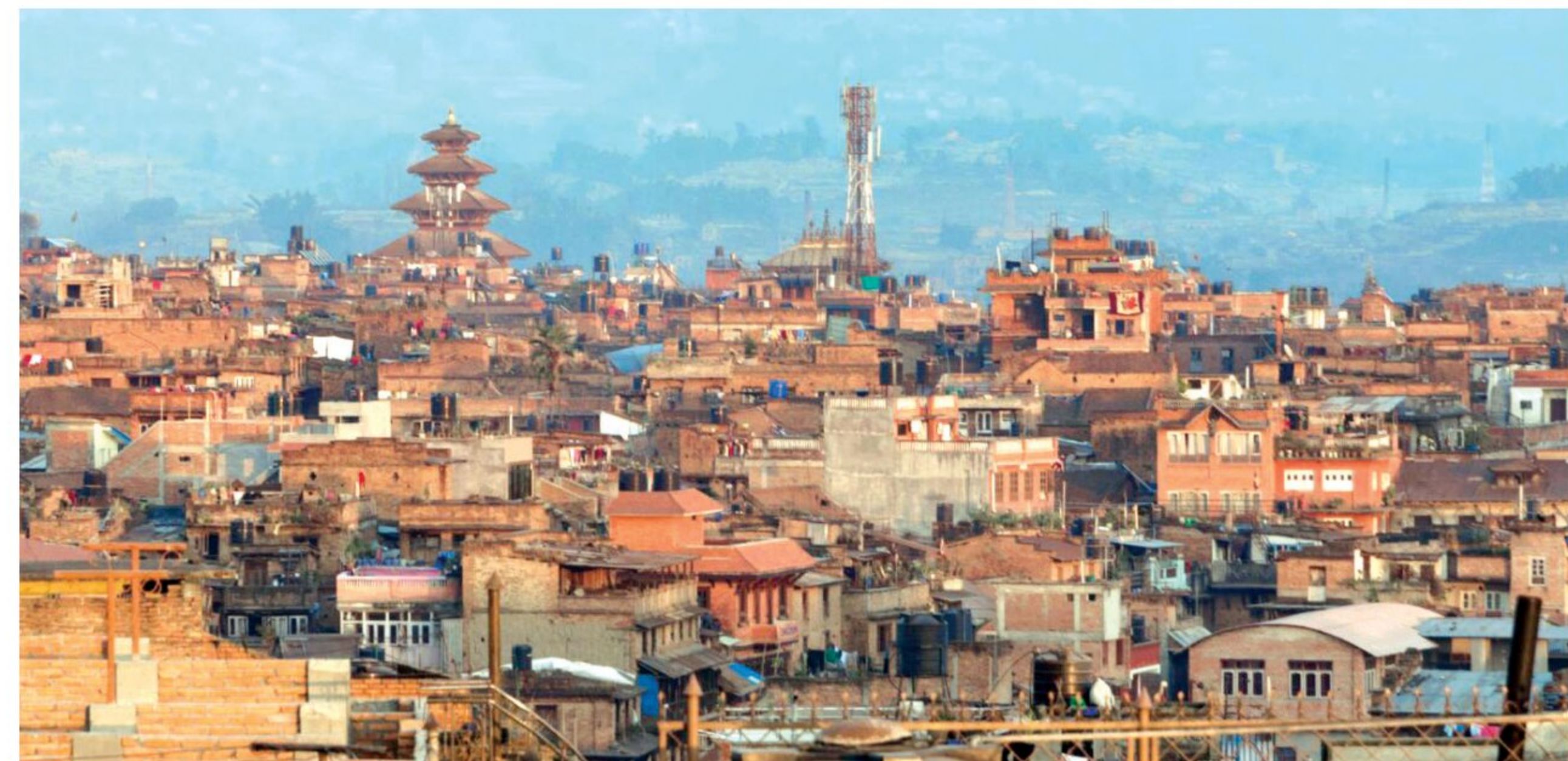
For the Nepalis detained in Ukraine, hopes now rest largely on future prisoner exchange agreements between Russia and Ukraine.

Until then, communication with home remains limited to occasional handwritten letters delivered through the International Committee of the Red Cross—brief messages that offer reassurance to families but little certainty about when their loved ones will finally return ■

## Archival insights

# Bhaktapur: A small city with big lessons for the

*Once associated with poor sanitation and urban decay, it has transformed into a model of transparent municipal governance, cultural conservation and sustainable urban development*



BISWO ULAK

Bhaktapur, traditionally known as Khwopa, is one of the oldest cities in Kathmandu Valley. Covering an area of 6.88 square kilometers, the city has a population of approximately 100,000 and lies at an elevation of 1,401 meters above sea level. The majority of its inhabitants are Hindu or Buddhist, and the harmonious coexistence of these two faiths has long been one of the city's defining characteristics. Owing to its remarkable religious harmony and exceptional cultural heritage, Bhaktapur is often compared with Vatican City in Rome.

Bhaktapur flourished during the Licchavi period, particularly under King Narendra Dev in the seventh century, and reached its cultural and architectural zenith during the Malla era, when it became a renowned center of architecture, craftsmanship and the arts. Following Nepal's unification under the Shah dynasty, however, the city's political and economic importance gradually declined, and it eventually became one of the Kathmandu Valley's most neglected and unsanitary urban centers. Despite this decline, its extraordinary artistic and cultural heritage continued to captivate visitors from around the world.

In 1929, British traveller EA Powell observed that "it would still be amply worth making a journey halfway around the globe to see it." During the 1930s, Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher Rana reportedly referred to Bhaktapur as the 'City of Devotees'. In the 1970s, German architect and conservation scholar Niels Gutschow helped popularise Bhaktapur as a 'living museum', and in Kailash (1989), scholar Jagadish Shumsher Rana described it as Nepal's "capital of dance and music".

Today, however, Bhaktapur is far more than a living museum, it is a vibrant living city where heritage remains an integral part of everyday life. Once associated with poor sanitation and urban decay, it has transformed into a model of transparent municipal governance, cultural conservation and sustainable urban development. This remarkable transformation reflects the long-term vision articulated in Narayan Man Bijukchhe's book Bhaktapur After One Hundred Years (2000), which envisages a city where master craftsmen preserve its architectural legacy, devotees begin their mornings in peaceful spiritual

surroundings, students establish it as an international center of learning during the day, and music, dance and festivals enliven its evenings. His vision demonstrates that historic cities can embrace modern development without sacrificing their cultural identity. His lifelong dedication has been instrumental in shaping Bhaktapur's future.

More recently, his book Letters from Jail, a collection of letters written to his wife, Shobha Pradhan, during his imprisonment and later translated into English and Chinese, has served as an important catalyst for social transformation. His vision demonstrates that historic cities can embrace modern development without sacrificing their cultural identity.

Bhaktapur's living culture has not only preserved its unique identity but has also shaped an outstanding model of local governance. Over the past several decades, the

Kathmandu Metropolitan City, has publicly expressed his admiration for Bhaktapur's achievements in heritage conservation, urban management, and local governance, stating that he envisions building a Kathmandu inspired by Bhaktapur's model. He has recently made private visits to Bhaktapur after assuming the office of Prime Minister to pay homage to its revered deities, reflecting the city's enduring spiritual and cultural significance. His appreciation illustrates a broader recognition that Bhaktapur is not merely a well-preserved medieval city but also a contemporary model of how cultural identity, accountable governance, and sustainable urban development can successfully coexist.

Bhaktapur's reputation is increasingly extending beyond Nepal. Government officials, urban planners, researchers and community leaders from India, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Mongolia and several European countries have visited the city to understand how a relatively small historic municipality has successfully integrated transparent governance, cultural preservation and financial sustainability. Unlike many internationally funded demonstration projects, Bhaktapur's achievements have largely been sustained through local leadership, community ownership and revenue generated from heritage tourism, making it an inspiring example of self-reliant urban development.

At a time when the international development community often searches for governance innovations in wealthy nations or rapidly expanding megacities, Bhaktapur offers a different lesson. It demonstrates that effective governance does not depend on the size of a city or the scale of its budget. Rather, it depends on visionary leadership, accountable institutions, active citizen participation and respect for cultural identity.

As cities around the world struggle to balance rapid urbanisation with the preservation of their history and character, Bhaktapur shows that heritage can serve as a powerful driver of sustainable development rather than an obstacle to progress. More than a beautifully preserved medieval city, it has become a living classroom where policymakers, urban planners and local governments can learn how transparency, culture and community can work together to build resilient, inclusive and prosperous cities for the future.

**Today, Bhaktapur is increasingly recognised as a learning center for local governments in Nepal**



## Why data center boom needs urgent regulation

*With a growing installed electricity capacity, naturally cool environments, and strategic geographic positioning, Nepal is an ideal candidate to become a localized regional data routing hub*



SHAILLINA  
RAI

Valued at roughly \$300bn in 2024 by TMT Finance, the global data center market is on a meteoric trajectory toward a trillion-dollar valuation over the next decade. As the world's top economies race to secure the physical infrastructure undergirding the Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution, Nepal is quietly stepping onto the track. This August, the country is set to welcome its first Tier IV data center, the highest global standard for digital uptime and infrastructure.

Yet, unlike its international peers, Nepal is racing blindly into this race without a unified regulatory safety net. While the government unveiled the Data Center and Cloud Services Directive in 2025 to ease the operation, existing policies fundamentally lack environmental accountability. Anyone who has closely studied the global expansion of data centers knows this regulatory vacuum is a recipe for local disaster.

The environmental externalities of these facilities are staggering. Recognizing the strain, governments worldwide are stepping in with targeted regulatory frameworks. For example, the European Union has established overriding policies mandating 'Ecodesign' regulations to curb design-phase energy use, alongside strict transparency laws under the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED). Singapore, fully aware of its land and water constraints, enforced a strict, integrated regulatory framework, going so far as to halt new data center approvals entirely for a period to evaluate resource strain.

Closer to home, South Asian models offer a cautionary tale. For instance, India lacks a binding national environmental framework for data centers, leaving development to an 'incentive-driven' state model rather than integrated national resource planning.

Nepal's digital journey began in 2009 when the government established the Government Integrated Data Center (GIDC) with South Korean assistance. Since then, telecom giants like NTC and Ncell, alongside internet service providers like Worldlink, have scaled up their private infrastructure.

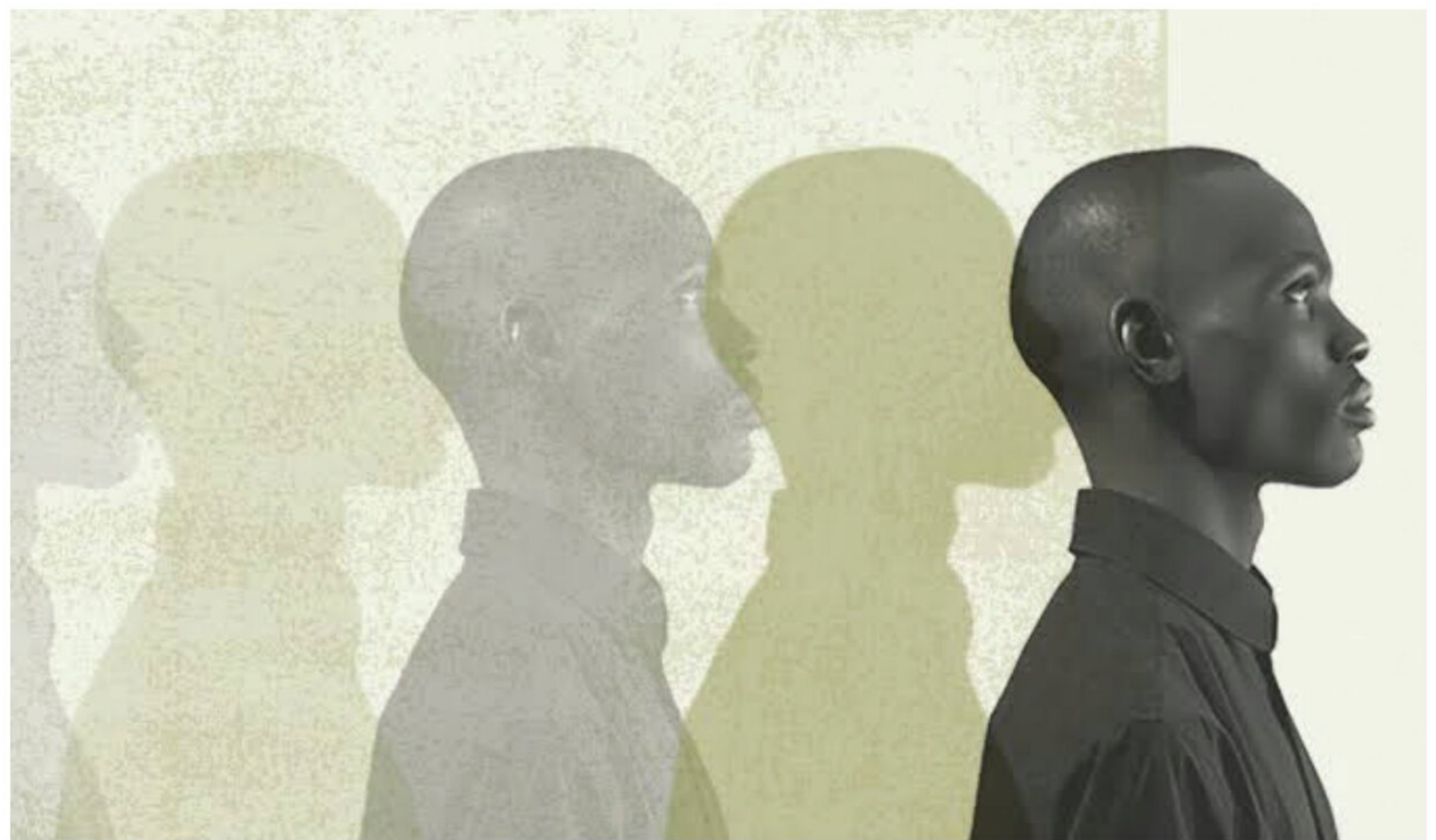
On paper, this is a massive win. Nepal sits strategically between two of the world's largest digital economies. With a growing installed electricity capacity, naturally cool environments, and strategic geographic positioning, Nepal is an ideal candidate to become a localized regional data routing hub. The economic promises are vast. But in our rush to build the cloud, we are ignoring the ground and the massive toll on our water resources.

Hyperscale data centers require millions of liters of water annually for evaporative cooling systems. According to an analysis published by the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI), a medium-sized facility consumes roughly 110m gallons of water annually, while large-scale hyperscale centers can drink up to 5m gallons per day. In a nation already plagued by systemic urban water scarcity, introducing these resource hogs without strict oversight is dangerous. The Digital Nepal Framework 2019, despite its mention of "green" technologies, lacks any frameworks for water usage. Furthermore, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are not yet legally mandated for data centers unless triggered by some project dimensions.

This regulatory gap is already hitting communities in different ways. In Nakkhu, Lalitpurb, neighboring residents have protested against existing data center installations, citing nighttime industrial noise, intense heat dissipation, and generator soot. If left unchecked, Nepal will soon face its own wave of the global 'NIMBY' (Not In My Backyard) protests that have forced tech titans like Meta and Google to withdraw projects in the West.

Digital growth doesn't have to come with ecological damage. To compete sustainably in the global sovereign AI race, Nepal can adopt a three-pronged regulatory approach. First, we must establish a Unified framework; concerned ministries must mandate specific usage metrics like Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) and Water Usage Effectiveness (WUE). Secondly, annual sustainability reporting should be mandated for facilities operating above a specific energy threshold. Third, the government must assess how many data centers our national grid and local water tables can sustainably support and hard cap expansion beyond that threshold.

Data commercialization could be the bedrock of Nepal's digital sovereignty. But if we do not regulate its thirst today, the infrastructure built to secure our future will end up draining our resources.



## The value of understanding and our identity

*We have many languages, cultures, traditions, and ways of life. This diversity should be our strength. But sometimes it feels that our understanding of being Nepali together is becoming weaker*

I was listening to scientist Brian Cox, and one thing he said resonated with me: learning is about understanding. When we truly understand something, it does not need evaluation from others. It is something that happens within us. We realize it ourselves.

And that moment of realization can be a kind of spiritual experience. I think this is something very basic about being human. We are not only people who collect information, get qualifications, and solve problems. We are also people who wonder. We look at nature, the universe, and our own existence, and we want to understand. The mystery itself creates a desire inside us to know more. I remember when I was standing in front of the Himalayas in Manang.

I still cannot fully explain that feeling in words. It was not only about seeing a beautiful mountain. There was something deeper. The vastness of the Himalayas created some kind of mystery inside me. It made me want to understand more—about nature, about my own position in this world, about my relationship with others, and

**Learning is not only about collecting information. It is about developing understanding**

about myself. That experience also made me realize that some forms of understanding cannot be measured by others.

Someone else can stand in the same place and see the same mountain, but the experience inside can be completely different. No one else can fully evaluate that feeling. The mystery and the understanding begin within the person who experiences them.

But perhaps our personal experiences do not separate us from each other. They can also connect us. A forest is made of many individual trees. Every tree has its own shape, its own history, and its own way of growing. But no tree exists completely alone. Every tree is connected to the same soil, the same air, the same water, and the larger ecosystem.

Perhaps human beings are also like that. We are individuals with our own experiences, identities, and journeys, but we are also part of a larger human and natural world. Maybe this is one of the most beautiful characteristics of human beings: we have the ability to wonder.

Before knowledge comes curiosi-

ty. Before answers come questions. A child looking at the stars, a person standing in front of a mountain, or a scientist exploring the universe—all are connected by this desire to understand something bigger than themselves.

But when I look at human society, I sometimes wonder: how is it possible that we have this deep ability to experience wonder and connection, yet we also create so many divisions among ourselves?

Recently, I have been thinking about this in relation to what is happening in Nepal. It hurts me when I see people fighting and blaming each other because of religion, language, community, or different identities. People start saying "this group" and "that group," "our people" and "their people."

Somehow, we become more aware of our differences and forget the deeper connection that we share. I do not think identity itself is the problem. Identity is important. We all need identity. It gives us a feeling of belonging and helps us understand who we are. Our language, culture, religion, and traditions are meaningful parts of human life. They carry our memories, histories, and experiences. But the question is: how do we understand our identity? For me, identity is not only about belonging to a particular group. Like a tree in a forest, my identity comes from my own experiences, but also from my relationships.

My relationship with nature, with other people, and with myself shapes who I am. Being connected does not mean losing my individuality. It means understanding that my individuality exists within a larger whole. When identity becomes only about separation, then it can create fear and conflict. But when identity is understood as a relationship, it can bring us closer. We can be proud of our own culture and still respect others. We can belong to a particular community and still understand that we are part of a larger human family.

This is something I often think about when I look at Nepal today. Nepal is a country with incredible diversity. We have many languages, cultures, traditions, and ways of life. This diversity should be our strength. But sometimes it feels that our understanding of being Nepali together is becoming weaker.

Nepal has gone through many changes, from monarchy to a federal democratic republican system. Political systems are important, but I wonder if changes in systems alone are enough. Maybe we also need a deeper change in our understand-

ing of ourselves and each other. A country cannot become united only through political structures. There also needs to be a feeling of connection among people. Many people blame social media for increasing divisions in society. Social media certainly has an influence. It can spread anger quickly and make people more divided. But I also wonder if social media is only showing what already exists inside us. Maybe social media is revealing our level of understanding, our ability to listen, and our ability to see beyond our own identities.

If that is true, then the deeper question is not only about technology. It is about us. It is about how we are growing as human beings and what kind of understanding we are developing. And this brings me back to education. As teachers, we need to ask ourselves: what kind of learning are we providing for the next generation? Are we only teaching children how to pass exams, compete, and achieve success? Or are we also helping them develop curiosity, compassion, humility, and a sense of connection with the world?

Children naturally have a sense of mystery. They ask questions about life, nature, and existence. They want to know why things are the way they are. But sometimes our education system focuses so much on finding the correct answer that we forget the importance of asking questions.

Learning is not only about collecting information. It is about developing understanding. It is about learning how to think, how to listen, how to connect, and how to see the relationship between ourselves and the world around us. As teachers, perhaps our responsibility is not only to prepare children to use the world, but also to help them understand that they belong to the world. They should learn science and technology, but they should also learn wonder, respect, and responsibility.

Science itself teaches us humility. The more we discover about the universe, the more we realize how much we do not know. True understanding does not make us feel superior. It makes us humbler and more connected.

The mystery of nature and our desire to understand that mystery may be one of the deepest parts of being human. True understanding does not divide us. It connects us. Maybe the crucial question for education today is not only how much knowledge we can give to children, but what kind of human beings we help them become ■



Devinder  
Thapa

Before knowledge comes curiosity. Before answers come questions

# Right to be forgotten in the digital era

*The right to be forgotten seeks to balance the individual's rights to privacy, dignity, reputation, and data protection against competing interests such as freedom of expression, the public's right to information, and the public interest*

**BALIRAM KUMAR CHAUHAN**

In this digital world most of people's data and information are being shared, stored, posted, downloaded, forwarded and published on digital spaces that has raised a big concern of privacy and dignity. New forms of Human Rights are emerging every time. One of them is Right to be Forgotten (RTBF). The Right to be Forgotten refers to an individual's right to request the removal, deletion, or de-indexing of personal information from online platforms, search engines, or digital databases when the information is no longer necessary, is inaccurate, outdated, unlawfully processed, or disproportionately infringes upon the person's privacy and reputation. This right is associated with internet privacy. RTBF is derived from the broader category of the right to privacy.

This right has gained limelight after the case of Google Spain SL, Google Inc v Agencia Española de Protección de Datos, Mario Costeja González (2014), in which the CJEU held for the first time that EU citizens have a right to be forgotten. Costeja objected to the data that was being processed and displayed by the tech giant Google when his name was entered on their search engine on the ground that it is irrelevant in contemporary times and is harming his reputation in the society. The CJEU held that search engine operators must remove links to webpages displayed following the search of an individual's name that are inadequate, irrelevant, or no longer relevant, or excessive in relation to the purposes of the processing, thereby ruling in favor of recognizing a right to be forgotten. Another instance is on May 29, the Delhi High Court ruled in a batch of over 30 consolidated petitions, led by Laksh Vir Singh Yadav v Union of India. The core issue was whether informational privacy could justify the de-indexing or masking of judicial records in a system committed to open justice. The court



held that the right to be forgotten flows from Article 21's guarantees of dignity and informational privacy.

For the first time, RTBF is codified and to be found in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in addition to the right to erasure. The GDPR provides statutory recognition to the right to be forgotten in the form of the right to erasure under Article 17, Recitals 65 and 66. The individual or "data subject", as is defined under Article 2 of the GDPR, is granted the right to ask the "controller" to erase the private data without undue delay. Many countries in Europe such as Germany, Sweden, France, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Portugal, Austria, and

**For the first time, RTBF is codified and to be found in the GDPR in addition to the right to erasure**

Spain have developed notable legal provisions regarding the right to be forgotten in their domestic legislation.

Exploration of the scope of the right to be forgotten and its implications for internet search engine providers is critically important. In the digital age, personal information can remain accessible on the internet indefinitely

through search engines, social media, news archives, and online databases. The right to be forgotten seeks to balance the individual's rights to privacy, dignity, reputation, and data protection against competing interests such as freedom of expression, the public's right to information, and the public interest. It does not provide an absolute right to erase all online information; rather, each request is assessed based on factors such as the nature of the information, its accuracy, the public interest, and the individual's role in public life.

In the context of Nepal, the laws dealing about the protection of individual privacy such as the Privacy Act, 2075 (2018), Electronic Transactions Act 2063 (ETA) and The National Penal (Code) Act, 2074, does not incorporate the provision regarding the RTBF. Fundamental rights under the constitution of Nepal recognizes the legal basis of the right to be forgotten. Article 16 (1) provides that every person shall have the right to live with dignity. The right to be forgotten is an integral part of the right to life with dignity. To live a respectful and dignified life in this digital era erasing, deleting, or de-indexing personal information that are irrelevant, outdated, unlawfully processed, damaging individual reputation and career is one of the most fundamental aspects.

Further, article 17 (2) states that every citizen shall have freedom of opinion and expression and the right to information that at times negates RTBF, for example, when media coverage opposes an individual's dignity that needs balancing between personal privacy and freedom of the press. Generally, both the CJEU and scholars agree that balance is needed between the right to be forgotten and the freedom of expression. What is undecided is how much weight one right should carry in relation to the other, and who should conduct the balancing.

Most important Article 28 of The

Constitution of Nepal guarantees the right to privacy that states "the privacy of any person, his or her residence, property, document, data, correspondence and matters relating to his or her character shall, except in accordance with law, be inviolable." This article does not expressly recognize the right to be forgotten. However, it provides a strong constitutional foundation from which such a right can be derived, particularly in the context of the digital age. For instance, the inclusion of "data" and "matters relating to his or her character" is particularly significant. A person is arrested and prosecuted for a criminal offence. newspapers and online news portals publish reports identifying the individual. Several years later, the person is acquitted by the court, but search engines continue to display the earlier news reports whenever the person's name is searched. The continued online availability of those reports may damage the person's reputation, employment opportunities, and social standing.

Based on Article 28, the individual could argue that the continued accessibility of outdated and prejudicial information infringes the privacy of matters relating to his or her character.

The new government which is in discussion of various legal amendments on existing laws must make explicit legal provisions regarding RTBF. Nepal needs to enact proper law for implementation of this right. Any future recognition of the Right to Be Forgotten in Nepal should not be absolute. It should be balanced against public interest, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, the public's right to information, and the principle of open justice. For example, information concerning public officials, corruption, serious crimes, or matters of significant public interest should ordinarily remain accessible unless exceptional circumstances justify otherwise ■

## Reading is becoming a luxury we can't afford

*With the increasing number of digital libraries, e-books, and audiobooks, literature has become more accessible than ever. Information has become abundant*

**DIBYA DAHAL**

There was a time when reading was simply a hobby to me. I believed it was something people who loved stories did on rainy afternoons or quiet weekends. It solely belonged to those who preferred libraries over shopping malls and sweet handwritten notes over text messages. Never had I imagined that one day I would look at a person peacefully reading a book and think, what a privilege that must be. After experiencing a book slump for a few years, I recently found my way back to reading almost by accident and I haven't been this happy before.

Yet the rediscovery came with an unsettling realization. Reading had not become difficult because books had lost their magic. It had become difficult because the world around us had completely changed. Today, uninterrupted time, sustained attention, and mental stillness have become luxuries we can rarely afford. In today's world, reading can no longer be taken as a competition with television or other books but with an entire digitally built economy built to monetize every spare second of our attention. The greatest irony of our time must be this: never have we had easier access to books, and never has it felt harder to truly read them. A few years ago, acquiring a book usually meant either visiting a bookstore or borrowing one from the public library. However, today, thousands of classics



and contemporary works are widely available within a single click. With the increasing number of digital libraries, e-books, and audiobooks, literature has become more accessible than ever. Information has become abundant.

Attention, however, has become scarce. We are living in an age where every application competes just for our gaze. Every notification demands urgency. Every scroll reveals something newer, better and appealing than the last. We have been consuming hundreds of headlines without even attempting to read the articles beneath them. We skim opinions without

**Attention, however, has become scarce**

examining arguments. We often end up mistaking familiarity with understanding because we have seen a topic repeatedly on our screens.

On the contrary, reading asks us to do something radically different. It demands patience in an impatient world. It asks us to sit with uncertainty, makes us uncomfortable and forces us to follow complex ideas, to

imagine lives different from our own, and to resist the temptation of instant gratification. In hundreds of ways, reading has become an act of quiet rebellion. Because this is not merely about literature. It is about the kind of minds we are cultivating as individuals and as a society. Someone who enjoys Fiction is often dismissed as an entertainment seeker, yet it quietly performs one of democracy's most essential functions: it expands empathy. A novel allows us to feel the fears of a refugee, experience the loneliness of an elderly widow, the ambition of a young woman challenging social expectations, or the moral conflict of someone whose circumstances differ entirely from ours. Statistics can tell us how many people suffer while reading helps us understand what suffering feels like. We live in an increasingly polarized world where empathy should no more be considered a sentimental virtue but a civic necessity.

Unfortunately, our educational systems fail to nurture such understanding among young students. Too often, reading becomes associated with examinations rather than exploration. Our universities often compel students to memorize summaries instead of engaging with complete texts. Books have become instruments for grades rather than companions for life. Once examinations come to an end, many stop reading altogether because they have never experienced the practice of reading as pleasure or discovery.

The problem however extends beyond schools. Adults are found trapped in a culture that glorifies constant productivity and constant gratification. We proudly announce how busy we are. We measure success by the number of hours worked rather than the quality of our thinking. Leisure increasingly requires justification. Reading for enjoyment is dismissed as laziness by so many only because it does not produce any economic value. Instead of debating thoughtfully, we respond instantly. Outrage is rewarded more than nuance by algorithms because outrage keeps the viewers engaged. Books reward the opposite. They teach us to take a pause before concluding. They allow us to examine multiple perspectives, and to appreciate complexity.

On any ordinary day, we wake up to notifications buzzing on our mobile phones. We commute to work through traffic while checking emails. We work under constant interruptions and a never-ending cycle of pressures. And during short breaks, we scroll through social media because our attention has already been trained to seek quick rewards. When a book finally finds its way into our hands in the evening, our mind becomes too exhausted to follow even a few pages without drifting elsewhere. This is not a failure of willpower alone. It is the result of living in an economy that profits from distraction. Here technology itself should never be seen as the sole enemy.

# Wilde rules playful BDSM comedy

*In the spirit of going big, this is a movie that takes on GenZ's crisis of intimacy in the wildest and most inappropriate of ways*

LINDSEY BAHR

Erika Tracy, the artist and provocateur at the heart of “I Want Your Sex,” may be the most quotable fictional female executive since Miranda Priestly “that’s all-ed” her way into film history.

Yes, sure, it is a little strange to compare a very buttoned-up character in a mass-audience, PG-13-rated movie with one in a very R-rated movie who is often topless, in bondage or toting a sex object around as an accessory. But like Miranda, Erika, brought to vibrant life by Olivia Wilde, has a withering glare, a commanding presence and killer timing. In fact, it is difficult to imagine anyone else in the role—nor would you want to.

This playfully provocative comedy about sex and generational divides from New Queer Cinema pioneer Gregg Araki (in theaters Friday), really lives and dies on the plausibility of Erika Tracy. She could have very easily just been an eccentric cartoon. While “I Want Your Sex” takes nothing terribly seriously, you do have to buy the many outrageous things she says, and to care a bit about how and why she ends up floating naked, unconscious, face-down and likely dead, in her pool. If you are going to reference

“Sunset Boulevard” you might as well go big, right?

The noirish mystery propelling the narrative isn’t even really the point. Instead, Araki, who shares writing credits with Karley Sciortino, wants to talk about sex and the well-documented lack thereof among members of Generation Z. But, you know, in a sharp, humorous and outlandish way.

**The noirish mystery propelling the narrative isn’t even really the point**

In the spirit of going big, this is a movie that takes on GenZ’s crisis of intimacy in the wildest and most inappropriate of ways: a sex-only, dom-sub relationship between an employer and her younger employee Elliot, played by Cooper Hoffman. It was all consensual, he stresses over and over again to the detectives (Johnny Knoxville and Margaret Cho) interviewing him. But it does also kind of ruin his life, at least for a little bit.

Elliot is quite awkward, perhaps the least likely candidate for someone like Erika to hand-select for this anything-but-straightfor-

ward arrangement. He lives with his best friend Apple (Chase Sui Wonders) and has a girlfriend, Minerva, (Charli xcx).

But no one seems to be having sex. When Elliot proposes a little celebration after scoring the job at Erika’s gallery, Minerva complains that they just did it 11 days ago.

But his imagination is active and, soon, with Erika, the fantasies become real. Of course, it is only a matter of time before things get messy—there’s blood, tears, betrayal and maybe even murder. It is also self-consciously garish, an over-the-top satire of the art world and the personalities who encompass it, but the world is never not compelling, with fun supporting performances from the likes of Daveed Diggs and Mason Gooding. Wonders is also terrific, a ball of neuroses and repression, envious of Elliot’s exploits ■

AP



## Grande clarifies her decision

*Grande spoke about maintaining perspective despite outside commentary, saying the bond she shares with her fans remains her priority*

**Washington:** Ariana Grande has clarified that her decision to take a break from public-facing work after completing her Eternal Sunshine Tour was planned well in advance and was not prompted by recent events or public speculation. Speaking to fans during her performance at the United Center in Chicago on Monday night, the singer addressed growing discussion surrounding her announcement and sought to reassure supporters who had expressed concern.

“So basically, the announcement that was made yesterday was not a reactive or impulsive thing,” Grande told the audience, adding, “It is something that I had decided to plan that I had quietly made a long time ago and it’s a decision that was made from a thoughtful and empowered place,” as quoted by Deadline.

According to Deadline, the Grammy-winning artist emphasised that her decision was made independently and that recent negativity had not influenced her plans. “I want to share this because I heard that my fans were worried that negativity was ruining things for me, but I just have to say that could not be more the f-c- opposite,” she said, adding, “Honestly, this is not what that is.

And I just want to be very, very clear: Multiple things can be true at the same time. Yes, boundaries, they need to be set. Human beings can



need a break sometimes. And also, this can be and will continue to be the greatest experience of my professional and creative life.”

Grande also spoke about maintaining perspective despite outside commentary, saying the bond she shares with her fans remains her priority. “No matter what noises exist out there, nothing will ever be able to distort my reality or be more real to me or elaborate to me than this love that we share. The rest of that sh-t is not mine to carry, so I don’t carry it. I need to get out here and differentiate that from my truth for you all because I love you and this tour has been the most healing, beautiful, corrective, magnificent, special experience of my life,” she said, as quoted by Deadline.

Her remarks come after she withdrew from the West End revival of Sunday in the Park with George amid ‘ongoing public scrutiny’ over her physical health following the release of the ‘Petal’ music video. In a statement to Deadline, Grande’s team said, “Ariana will be taking a step back from visibility after she completes the Eternal Sunshine Tour. She looks forward to finishing the tour and ending it on a high note, both healthily and happily and then taking a much-deserved break from public facing work and appearances which has led to endless, ongoing public scrutiny.

ANI



### Imagination

Imagination full of curiosity,  
Sometimes it can take us to a place  
like a city.

Imagination 1 step to victory,  
Your imagination makes you worthy.

Your imagination is dark and bright,  
So remember to always choose the  
right.

Imagination gives the world of wonder,  
It helps you understand the definition  
of sonder.

Imagination presents the world of beauty,  
However it can affect your duty.

Imagination costs your life,  
Day dreaming is just like getting hit  
by a knife.

Use imagination wisely,  
So you can use it precisely.

Imagination makes you creative,  
It can help you connect with your  
relatives.

This power of imagination takes you  
to a beautiful sight,  
It gives you the power of self-esteem  
to make you right.

Imagination is the way to enjoy life,  
And it can fix any type of strife.

**Sourish Pokharel**  
Grade 8