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YAGYA RAJ THAPA

Dekendra Thapa would be 55

Yagya Raj Thapa
in Dailekh

Twenty-two years ago on 10 August 2004, two months after he was abducted and after being tortured, journalist Dekendra Raj Thapa was buried alive. He would have been 55 today. The Maoist insurgency had been going on for eight years with no end in sight. Dailekh district was at the epicentre of a women-led resistance against the war, and local guerrillas wanted to make an example of a popular media person and social worker.

This year marks 30 years since the Maoists launched their armed struggle, and 20 years since the ceasefire in 2006. Yet, many of the families of the 17,000 killed and 1,335 forcibly disappeared, are still waiting for justice or closure. Dekendra's mother, wife, two daughters and a son are among them.

Last week, the supreme commander of the former Maoists Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' travelled to Dailekh to try to make



DHRUBA BASNET



amends. He paid his respects at Dekendra's statue at an intersection in the town named after him. He also met Dekendra's elderly mother, Gangadevi, and his wife Laxmi.

During the height of the conflict, the Maoists had cut off the water supply to the town, so a delegation of journalists went to Toli village to negotiate. Dekendra was detained in the house of a local Maoist Lachhiram Gharti.

After nearly two months, eye-witnesses saw him being dragged

out to a school classroom, hung upside down and beaten. Gharti later told a court hearing that after severe torture, Dekendra asked for water before losing consciousness.

The guerrillas issued a statement saying he had been 'terminated' for being a spy, but a month later Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara said it was a mistake and issued self-criticism on the party's behalf.

With the conflict over, a Maoist-led government was elected in 2008 raising hope that the truth would finally come out. But for four long years, despite rallies to put pressure on the state, Dekendra's burial site

WAR CRIME: The former Supreme Commander of the Maoists, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, went to Dailekh last week to pay his respect to the statue of Dekendra Thapa, the journalist his cadre murdered 22 years ago this month.

was kept secret.

Then, in August 2008 with the effort of the human rights groups and information from Gharti, forensic experts led by Harihar Wasti exhumed Dekendra's body from a shallow grave in a forest behind a school in Dwari.

Wasti and his team analysed the skull, broken femur and elbow, and determined that Dekendra Thapa had suffered severe trauma before being buried alive. His remains were cremated, and the murder became a national and international issue. Altogether nine journalists were killed during the decade-long conflict: five by the state and four by the Maoists.

Laxmi Thapa lodged an FIR with Dailekh Police naming Bam Bahadur Khadka (Mukti), Keshav Khadka and Lachhiram Gharti for being behind her husband's abduction, torture and murder.

They were arrested despite Maoist-appointed Attorney General Mukti Pradhan's attempt to stop the investigation. They all served their terms and have been released. In 2014, the district court with new evidence convicted Bam Bahadur Khadka (Mukti), Bam Bahadur Khadka (Arun), Bhaktiram Lamichhane and Keshab Khadka of Dekendra's murder. Except Mukti, the three are serving sentences in Dailekh District jail.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Dekendra's case is one of the few in Nepal's transitional justice system in which a war crime has been investigated and some of the perpetrators punished under the country's criminal law. Otherwise, the transitional justice process is in limbo, and it does not seem to be the priority for a government that came to power after last year's GenZ movement.

"The country has been through a lot in the last 22 years, we have come a full circle," said Dekendra's mother Gangadevi after meeting former Maoist chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal this week. "But we still feel the loss, and from time to time, the pain pierces us."

Yagya Raj Thapa is a journalist and Dekendra's younger brother. Go online to watch Dhruva Basnet's video of Dekendra Thapa singing Karnali song.

The anatomy of violence in the Madhes
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The anatomy of violence in the Madhes

How a region that fought for an inclusive Nepal has found itself in the throes of sectarianism

Editorial

Shristi Karki

Eleven years ago, the struggle in the Madhes for autonomy and inclusion under a new federal Constitution came at the cost of 45 lives. On 26 July, a street dispute in a town near the Indian border in Sunsari sparked sectarian violence across the region.

The irony of it was that the initial clashes were between Hindu and Muslim groups, but the Armed Police Force and Nepal Police fired live rounds at protestors, ultimately killing three in Sunsari.

Sunsari's Kaptanganj town had been tense after a dispute over a Muslim banner on an electric pole being replaced with a Hindu one. Both groups taunted each other as a religious procession passed the Muslim neighbourhood. Police opened fire to quell the rioters.

As news of the two deaths in Kaptanganj spread, there were protests by Hindu groups across the towns of eastern Tarai. In Siraha's Golbazar, police shot and killed 15-year-old Ganesh Yadav on 30 July.

Nepal's towns along the plains have seen deadly communal clashes. But the situation has become more volatile because of the influence of political Hindutva from across the border. In some places, far-right ideology is mixed up with pro-monarchist demands and the unfulfilled promise of devolution under the 2015 federal Constitution.

The end result is that a region that fought against socio-political exclusion, and won the demarcation of a Madhes Province in



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the Constitution, is now the epicentre of communal strife.

The anti-minority rhetoric is amplified on social media, helping it spread across the virtual border. Saffron-clad Hindutva demonstrators in Nepal have been emulating tactics used across the border to taunt and threaten minority groups.

The frustration erupted also because Kathmandu has kept a firm grip on power and resources despite promises of devolution. And Madhes-based parties who misruled the Province were all but wiped out in the March election. This political void is now being filled by anti-secularists, far-right religious groups, and supporters of a Hindu monarchy.

PM Balendra Shah is of Madhesi origin, and some had hoped that he was a

closet monarchist, against secularism and federalism. But last week in a meeting with Madhesi leaders in Kathmandu, he dashed any hope that he supported the restoration of a Hindu monarchy or to scrap federalism.

While the New Delhi establishment does not seem to be interested in Nepal restoring its monarchy, Uttar Pradesh's influential Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has thrown his weight behind Nepal's erstwhile monarchy because of his temple's history of being the patron deity of the Shah dynasty.

Many grassroots groups believe that secularism has eroded Nepal's Hindu identity, but the sociopolitical reality is that secularism has not really been translated into practice. Nepal's political and state apparatus, is still primarily occupied by Hindus.

NEGLECTED MADHES

The Madhes' sectarian flashpoints occur against a backdrop of the region's unfulfilled aspirations. Twenty two percent of its population still lives below the poverty line, and the province has the highest unemployment rate and migration.

At 63.5%, the Madhes has the lowest literacy rate, and only 43% of farming families have sufficient food to last them a year. And despite its push for the federal system, weak implementation mired in identity politics, fragmented alliances, and defined by revolving coalitions has failed the region.

In this vacuum of leadership has festered a collective disillusionment and search for other forms of community. This has turned Madhes into a powder keg that is set off by localised disputes along religious lines that spreads across the region. And the responsibility to handle such disputes is given to a law enforcement that is all too happy to shoot first and ask questions later.

This past week has been the greatest test of Prime Minister Shah in the four months since he assumed office. He was slow to rise to the occasion, but when he did with his Facebook address, it did help calm things down. He also dispatched RSP's MPs from the Madhes to reassure their constituents.

For Prime Minister Shah, this crisis serves as a lesson to communicate more with citizens, abandon divide-and-rule and threatening tactics — and not just when there is a crisis. The Madhes violence was a warning that Nepal's socio-economics is tinder dry, and all it needs is a spark. 🇳🇵

Trending Online



Nepal's export to India: Instagram reels

by Nobel Rimal
During the Jantar Mantar protests, India's youth not only replicated memes from Nepal's September movement, but also copied our footage and worked out what a protest against the government requires. Read analysis online.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

What 'Jojolappa' really means

by Pratibha Tuladhar
Before 1996, the Newa greeting Jojolappa wasn't in common daily use until FM radio hosts needed a universal Newa alternative to Namaste. Read more about the roots of this greeting online.

Most popular on X

10 missing on Broad Peak



Nepali-British mountaineer Nirmal (Nims) Purja and five Nepali alpinists were among 10 mountaineers struck by an avalanche on Broad Peak last week. Purja and his expedition did not survive.

See tributes to the team from readers on our social media.

Most commented

A gateway to Nepali hospitality

by Sudiksha Tuladhar
Khem Lakai, founder of hospitality institute GATE, believes Nepal's hospitality industry needs better planning, especially as it moves towards high-value tourism. Read about his vision for Nepal's tourism sector on our website.

Most visited online page

Letters

NIMS & TEAM

Through his passion and dedication, Nims introduced many people to the beauty of Tanzania and played an important role in promoting our tourism to the world (Nims Purja, 5 Nepalis missing on Broad Peak', nepalitimes.com). His legacy will forever remain in our hearts and on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Baraka Mbisey

■ This is a real tragedy. Living for the past 40 years in Khumbu, I am shocked by this news. My condolences to the families

Nico Smeets

■ May all the climbers and their families rest in peace, this is a tragic loss of talented individuals who chased their dreams.

Naysubita Soma

■ Repeating climbs isn't adventure—it's misadventure. Nature satisfies our needs, not our greed. We should limit climbing permits to just once per person in a lifetime.

Himalayan Whisper

■ No matter how many world-famous climbers, no one can conquer Almighty nature.

Lhakpa Tsering Sherpa

■ May their spirits be free from suffering and at peace. The mountain will never forget Nirmal's steps.

Caroline Yeshe Zangmo

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

What should we do, laugh at the irony or be sad as it is truly concerning ('Case stacked against sexual violence survivors', Aishwarya Baidar, #1322)?

Ashmita Tifa Gurung

■ They all need to be put behind

bars. How are we as women or people from the LGBTQ+ community supposed to carry on pretending things are normal?

Sofia Pradhan

■ Sexual abuse is a global issue, that's for sure ('Nepal needs to overhaul its rape laws', Ayusha Chalise, #1322). We need toxic masculinity to be addressed at the very core.

Sara Parker

NEPALI HOSPITALITY

Khem Sir's pioneering leadership in mentoring hospitality leaders for over two decades has been truly an inspiration to many people in Nepal and abroad ('A Gateway to Nepali hospitality', Sudiksha Tuladhar #1322).

Pasang Tamang

TARAI UNREST

Haven't the lessons from India, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar shown

how dangerous communal unrest can become? If the government cannot stop such violence decisively and uphold law and order, Nepal risks facing the same kind of instability that has affected those countries ('One country two governments', Kunda Dixit, Nepali Times eSpecial newsletter, nepalitimes.substack.com).

Hossain Siddiqui

INDIA PROTESTS

I don't think the Jantar Mantar protest memes were based on the Nepal moment. Both countries have had their own movements ('Nepal's biggest export to India: Instagram reels', Nobel Rimal #1322). This is comparing two different agendas with memes that aren't even original to Nepal and making a news out of it.

Suhikar Pantha

Online Package



REINHOLD MESSNER

Renowned climber Reinhold Messner discusses modern alpinism, the evolution of Himalayan mountaineering, impact of commercial expeditions, and his perspectives on climate change in the mountains.



DYING TO WORK OVERSEAS

Nepal's health system is paying to treat workers whose kidneys failed while toiling in hot, rich countries. Subscribe for multimedia content.

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SOCIAL MEDIA

FAITHFUL COEXISTENCE:

There were fears that communal violence triggered by the deaths of four people in Sunsari and Siraha last week would spread across the Tarai. While tension remained high in some areas, the threat level decreased after Prime Minister Balendra Shah addressed the nation and met religious and political leaders last week.

Demonstrations of interfaith solidarity at the local level like this one between Muslim cleric Abdul Jabbar Manjari and Hindu guru Chandra Yogi in Nepalganj also calmed communal tension.

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Everest, Broad Peak and the geography of ambition

Zakir Kibria

I am writing this in Nepal, but I carry the topography of Bangladesh in my bones -- a land of floodplains and rivers, an unrelenting flatness where the horizon is a soft line between water and sky.

Life there is dictated by horizontality, by the flow of currents across vast plains. To come from that world and stand before the vertiginous geometry of the Himalaya is a sensory shock.

The mountains here are not just scenery, they are profound, overwhelming presences. And the news last week of the deaths on Broad Peak represented an enormous tragedy for Nepal and the world of mountaineering.

But there have been triumphs as well, like Andrzej Bargiel's feat -- climbing Mount Everest and skiing down from the summit to Base Camp without supplementary oxygen. The concept is almost alien to my native sense of space -- an unimaginable act, a blend of supreme athleticism and pure, terrifying audacity. To picture him arcing turns in the Death Zone, where the body consumes itself and the mind frays, is to witness a form of human expression bordering on the sublime and the suicidal.

It forces a question that has haunted me since I first gazed upon these peaks from my horizontal world: Why? What alchemy of spirit drives a person to seek such a perilous, vertical edge?

Robert Macfarlane's book, *Mountains of the Mind*, says the peaks were once reviled as 'monstrous excrescences of nature'. The modern desire to conquer them is not innate but constructed, a product of shifting cultural tides -- Romanticism, the advent of geology,



KRITIN HARILA / SOCIAL MEDIA

and the colonial impulse to map the unknown.

Modern mountaineers are performing an idea forged in the West -- the idea of the peak as the ultimate arena for self-testing. Macfarlane calls this a 'history of the imagination', and on Everest, K2, Annapurna or Broad Peak, imagination meets its absolute physical limit.

Yet, here in Nepal there is a dissonance. The Western narrative often centres on the solitary hero, the individual will pitted against the elemental force. Here in Nepal,

or in Pakistan, no individual climber can summit without local climbing guides.

Their role is the bedrock upon which all Himalayan ambition is built. They are the engineers of the possible, stringing the safety lines over gaping crevasses, carrying loads, and possessing a profound, ancestral knowledge of these mountains that no satellite map can replicate.

This brings us to the uncomfortable machinery behind the mystique. Expeditions are underwritten by corporate

sponsorship. The logo of an energy drink brand is the silent partner in this dance with death.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

It is the commodification of human endurance, where extreme courage becomes a vehicle for brand narrative. The mountain, once a sublime terror, is now also a backdrop for a commercial.

Sponsorship transforms a personal dream into a logistically feasible mission, but also creates a stark divide between the funded explorer and the local for whom the

mountain is simply home. It begs the question: What are we truly celebrating? The human spirit, or its successful corporate branding?

The Western adventurer, armed with a historically cultivated obsession and corporate capital, comes to a land where the mountains are woven into the spiritual and daily life. He relies on the unparalleled skill and strength of the Sherpas, whose names are too often relegated to the fine print of history, to achieve a personal zenith. The feat itself is a breathtaking, legitimate human achievement, a push against a boundary that redefines what is possible. But it is also a symbol of profound asymmetry.

Perhaps the meaning lies in holding both these truths at once. We can, and should, stand in awe of Nims Purja, Andrzej Bargiel, and others. Simultaneously, we must look deeper, to see the entire ecosystem of the feat -- the cultural history that propels it, the local labour that enables it, and the corporate engines that fund it.

The true summit, then, may not be a point on a map, but a point of understanding. Everest and Broad Peak care nothing for our sponsorships, our historical obsessions, our records, triumphs and tragedies. They simply are.

The feats we perform upon them are ultimately stories we tell about ourselves -- our desires, our capacities, and our often-flawed relationships with the sacred, the wild, and each other.

The footprints of the climbers are soon blown away. The more important mark, the one we must all trace, is the unseen one between celebration and critique, between a conqueror and a guest. 🇳🇵

Zakir Kibria is a Bangladeshi writer, policy analyst and entrepreneur based in Kathmandu. zakir.kibria@gmail.com

BRIEFS

IBN new chief



University, an economist, and a former international civil servant.

For the first time, the Investment Board Nepal (IBN) has a female chief executive officer in Yanki Ukyab who was selected by the Council of Ministers. Ukyab is a graduate of Oxford

Cardamom exports

The export of large cardamom rose by 64.65% in the past fiscal year, equivalent to Rs12.64 billion, compared to Rs7.67 billion last year. The exports have benefited 125,000 farming households across 54 districts.



Hotel Leadership

Ramada Encore Kathmandu in partnership with Impact Yes analysed data from its leaders to understand how hotels can perform better. The three day GALA program analyses staff behaviour and decisions.

Madhes paddy

Despite a late monsoon, paddy plantation has been completed in 91.55% of the total cultivable area in Madhes. This is 350,118 hectares of the total 382,433 hectares allocated for paddy plantation in the province.

Taragaon Next

Taragaon Next in collaboration with Peacemaking Nepal is screening Streetfilms New York's Close Encounters of the 34th Avenue Kind on 14 August. The documentary examines how a residential street evolves into a community space through the Open Streets Initiative.



Ather giveaway

Ather Nepal has announced an e-scooter giveaway at the NAIMA Mobility Expo 2026 following last year's similar scheme. To participate, visitors need to follow Ather on social media, click a picture with the scooter at the expo and tag Ather and two friends.

NEA mobile

The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has added a KYC portal to its website, allowing customers to update details to receive notifications regarding power outages, maintenance, and other power issues on their mobile phones.

Nepal Airlines

Nepal Airlines earned Rs17.33 billion from ticket sales in the last fiscal year. Although this is an increase of Rs2 billion from last year, the airline has paid Rs2.12 billion out of the total Rs56 billion debt to the Employees Provident Fund and the Citizen Investment Trust for loans to buy its Airbus jets.

More power

The Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation says 1,040MW of electricity will be added to the national grid during coming fiscal year, of which 670MW will be generated through hydropower and 370MW from solar.

LPG Gas

Despite reports of shortages, the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) claims it has enough LPG and cooking gas cylinders and is distributing them from its Teku depot. It blamed the market hiccup on half-filled cylinders being replaced by full ones.

Ministry digitised

The Ministry of Industry has shifted to a fully digital system to efficiently carry out administrative and regulatory functions. Company registrations, FDI approvals, capital and production capacity expansion, business visa recommendations, and submission of annual progress reports among others can now be applied for online.



Aayu Molung hydro

NRN Infrastructure and Development Limited (NRN) is set to invest Rs100 million in the Ayu Molung Khola Hydropower Project in Okhaldhunga. The company seeks to invest in 1 million units of promoter shares at a face value of Rs100 per share.



Indian aid

The foundation stone for post-earthquake reconstruction of Janhit Secondary School in Kavre was jointly laid by the First Secretary of Embassy of India Narayan Singh, Mayor of Namobuddha Municipality Kunsang Lama, and Project Director of the Central Level Project Implementation Unit Laxmi Prasad Bhattarai.

Ncell monsoon Offer

Ncell has launched its monsoon offer for instant cashbacks from 5% to 20% on every eligible data pack purchase or new prepaid sim purchase. The cash is credited to customer Ncell App account, and has to be claimed within 24 hours.

Airline safety law

Domestic Air Services (Liability) Act, 2083 has been introduced in the Federal Parliament to increase passenger safety. The proposed new law has provisions for baggage loss, flight delays and other service failures. Airlines, however, say that most reason for delays are beyond its control like poor visibility and congestion at airports.

Domestic fares rise

The domestic airline fares have gone up with the Nepal Oil Corporation raising the price of aviation fuel by Rs20 per litre. Helicopter charters will also be affected.

The Quiet Backbone

Why Nepal's energy future depends on the lines we do not see

By **Niraj Subedi**,
Head of KfW Nepal

Advertorial |

On 18 March, at the Damauli substation, a small group gathered with shovels and hard hats. There were speeches, handshakes, and photographs. Beneath the formalities was a practical question for Nepal: how do we make sure clean electricity reaches people when and where they need it?

The answer begins with a truth engineers know well, but the public debate often forgets. Generation alone is not enough. Nepal has made remarkable progress in hydropower, and the era of scheduled load-shedding is behind us. Yet electricity produced in a river valley in Tanahun or Lamjung does not power a clinic in Damauli, a hotel in Pokhara, or an electric bus on the Prithvi Highway unless there is a strong, safe path to move it there.

That path is transmission. The new Lekhnath-Damauli double-circuit 220 kV transmission line will run for about 45 kilometres through Gandaki's hills and is designed to carry around 1,000 megawatts of power. In plain terms, it can move the output of several large hydropower plants, including the Tanahun Hydropower Project, towards the national grid. Gas-insulated substations at Lekhnath and Damauli will help switch that power safely into the wider system.

Think of hydropower plants as the heart of Nepal's electricity system. Transmission lines are the arteries. A strong heart matters, but without arteries that can carry the flow, the body cannot function. This line is one of those arteries - not built for a single season or a single project, but for decades of service and an economy growing more electric each year.

But the story does not end with transmission. Once electricity reaches a substation, it still has to travel through distribution lines, feeders, and transformers before it reaches a household, a school, a farm, a small factory, or a charging station. This is where Nepal's next reliability challenge sits. The country has expanded electricity access to most of its people, but reliable supply remains uneven. Many households and businesses still keep inverters, generators, or backup fuels because they cannot always trust the last mile of the system.

That is why the Lekhnath-Damauli line should be seen alongside the Power Distribution Strengthening Project, or PoDiSP, being developed with the Nepal Electricity Authority and partners including Germany and the European Union. PoDiSP focuses on the less visible but essential parts of the electricity journey: upgrading substations and transformers, improving feeders, extending 33 kV, 11 kV and low-voltage lines, strengthening monitoring and control systems,



and supporting infrastructure for clean technologies such as electric mobility, clean cooking, and electric heating. Its initial phase is being designed to mobilize around EUR 70 million in the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), European Union (EU), and NEA resources, with room to scale through Team Europe and other partners. Together, transmission and distribution complete the chain from generation to everyday use.

As Joint Secretary Sagar Goutam of the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation puts it, "Reliable electricity is not only about how much Nepal can generate; it is about whether power reaches households, schools, health posts and enterprises safely and consistently. The Lekhnath-Damauli transmission line and PoDiSP are part of the same national journey: from access to reliability, from reliability to productive use, and from clean power to inclusive economic growth."

For Germany, this is also a

long-term political and development commitment. Ambassador Udo Volz notes, "Germany's partnership with Nepal in the energy sector has always been about trust and long-term delivery. The Lekhnath-Damauli line strengthens the backbone of the grid, while PoDiSP looks to the next mile - the distribution systems that bring reliable, climate-friendly electricity to homes, businesses and communities. Together with the Government of Nepal, NEA and the EU, Germany is supporting an energy transition rooted in people's daily lives."

A reliable grid turns clean electricity from an aspiration into a public good. It allows a health post to keep vaccines at the right temperature during a monsoon storm. It lets a women-led cooperative run a cold storage unit without a diesel generator. It makes electric two-wheelers and buses realistic on Nepali roads, not just attractive in showroom brochures. It also helps Nepal reduce reliance on imported

petrol, diesel and LPG, keeping more value inside the country.

The Lekhnath-Damauli line is therefore a climate project as much as an infrastructure project. Every kilowatt-hour of domestic hydropower that reaches a consumer through a stable grid is a kilowatt-hour of fossil fuel not burned. Every charging station that can be built with trust in that grid is a cleaner commute made possible. Nepal's climate commitments and its ambition for a more resilient economy depend not only on dams and turbines, but on the wires, substations, transformers and technicians that make electricity dependable.

This is also a story of partnership. Over several decades, German cooperation through KfW has supported Nepal's power system at important moments, from the Lower and Middle Marsyangdi hydropower projects to the Chilime-Trishuli transmission line and the National Load Dispatch Centre. German Technical Cooperation through GIZ has complemented these investments with practical systems and skills: municipal energy planning, electric-vehicle charging, integration of small hydropower into the grid, transformer testing and vocational training for network technicians. Germany has also supported solar photovoltaic systems across Nepal, from household and irrigation uses to grid-connected installations.

The lesson is simple. Lasting energy infrastructure requires sustainable funding, capable institutions, practical skills, and trust built over time. Nepal brings the leadership, the engineers and the national ambition. Germany brings resources, technical depth, and a long-term view. The EU and other partners add scale and momentum. Together, these efforts are helping move Nepal from a power system shaped by scarcity to one capable of supporting clean growth.

Building transmission and distribution infrastructure in Nepal's terrain is never easy. Rights of way, forest clearances, community concerns and the movement of heavy equipment through hill districts all require patience, transparency and respect. Safety, environmental and social safeguards, and meaningful engagement with communities along the alignment matter as much as the steel and cables themselves.

A groundbreaking ceremony is only a photograph of a beginning. The real story of the Lekhnath-Damauli line will be written over the coming years: in substations that energize, towers that rise across ridgelines, technicians who keep the system safe, and households and businesses that one day take reliable electricity for granted. When that day comes, this project should be remembered as one more chapter in a Nepal-Germany energy partnership that kept its promise: to build the quiet infrastructure on which a cleaner, more prosperous Nepal depends.

Author bio

Niraj Subedi leads KfW Development Bank in Nepal, supporting development initiatives as part of German Financial Cooperation.



DRIVE LINE
Arnav Upadhyay

t's officially car season in Nepal. Historically, the post-budget month of August has seen annual automobile expos happen at the national level.

This year there are two. The first is being organised by NAIMA (Nepal Automobile Importers and Manufacturers Association), the representative body for Nepal's automobile importers and

manufacturers, between 11-16 August at the Bhrikuti Mandap fair ground in Kathmandu, and the lineup is more diverse and 'electrifying' than ever before. NADA Automobile Association of Nepal will be organising the second expo between 25-30 August at the same venue.

Traditionally, car exhibitions in Nepal showcased entirely ICEs (internal combustion engine vehicles) but the shift to electric has grown rapidly since Covid, and this year there are a number of noteworthy hybrids in the mix too. Ritu Singh Vaidya, President of

NAIMA, points out that as recent ICE alternatives have been favored and taxed less by the government, there is a shift back to that segment, but importers and distributors are here for the long run to meet customer demand.

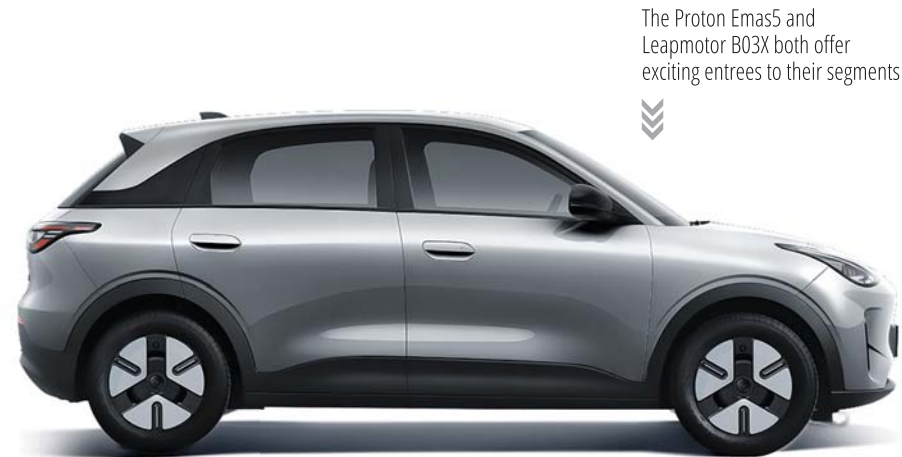
However, she cautions that if prices now stabilise and do not fluctuate as rampantly as in the past, it may be the moment to strategise and plan longer term commitments and growth.

As mentioned in my previous column, the national budget unveiled at the end of May introduced a new progressive tax

structure for electric vehicles (EVs), shifting the basis of taxation from motor capacity to each vehicle's CIF (Cost, Insurance and Freight) value.

Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle maintained that though EVs priced below Rs5 million would remain largely unaffected, many mid-sized models ultimately required revisions to their retail prices ranging from Rs100,000 to Rs500,000, with a few exceptions such as the Leapmotor B10 and Suzuki E-Vitara.

This new backdrop has given room for a new segment of vehicles aggressively aimed at different demographics and lower price



The Proton Emas5 and Leapmotor B03X both offer exciting entrees to their segments



The Hongqi EHS9 ushers in a premium-luxury class EV to the Nepali market

NEPAL'S CAR CARNIVAL

City Runners

Targeting purely city travel, the micro segment sees the Wuling Mini EV, Honri ViAuto BOMA in addition to the MG Comet and Henrey Minicar at their respective stalls.

Here is what else is new at
NAIMA

Honri ViAuto BOMA



Larger show stoppers

Hyundai's new three-row flagship, the Ioniq 9, will be on display at NAIMA. Honqi Auto, often nick-named the Rolls-Royce of China due to its uncanny resemblance, is set to make its debut in Nepal with the EHS4 and EHS9. Chinese President Xi Jinping himself uses Hongqi vehicles as his official state limousine.

The Ioniq 9 is rich in features that could rival even Chinese EVs



Mid-size and Premium EVs

Alongside its popular Tiago.ev, Tata is also expected to showcase the new facelift Punch.ev at NAIMA. Wuling will be relaunching an updated Neo - Binguo, alongside new models: the Eksicn and Darion EV (an upscale MPV).

MG follows suit with a large variety of EVs: the MG 4, MG S5

and MG S6 models in addition to its premium brand IM6.

Mahindra is also set to launch the new large-size EV: the XEV 9S. And for those wanting an EV that breaks the traditional sharp mould and boxy design, GWM will display its recently launched Ora 05. There is also speculation that

GWM could debut their new Jolion Max EV.

This busy segment also sees the recently launched Omoda E5 Pro, an update to the previous E5, and Jaecoo J6T, a new version of the J6 from some years prior. Icaur will again show the V23, but rumours are that the Icaur V27 might come down the line; although there is no confirmation at press time.

Tata's redesigned looks to the Punch.ev



Successor to last years Mahindra BE6 and 9E



The Denza B5 is equipped with a 1.5 litre hybrid power train capable of facing all-terrain



BYD

Cimex is also introducing updates to the popular BYD Atto Lineup alongside its flagship collection: The Denza.



Leapmotor B03X

points. Instead of the larger and mid-sized premium vehicles at the centre of attention, we are now witnessing the re-entry of hatchbacks and smaller crossovers in the Nepal market garnering interest – such as the Proton Emas5, Chery QQ3, Arcfox T1 and Leapmotor B03X.

The second edition of NAIMA is setting its sights high, featuring more than 50 exhibition stalls and over 40 new launches across the passenger, two-wheeler, and commercial segments. Beyond the vehicles themselves, the event will also host a series of educational sessions aimed at informing visitors about the evolving automotive landscape in the afternoon daily.

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



Chery QQ3

MONTH

What is new at the Naima 2026 auto show next week

ICE and Hybrids

Kia will be showcasing an all-ICE lineup with the Sonnet and new facelift Seltos K3. Another all-ICE lineup is from Nissan with its Magnite and newly launched Tekton. Similar in size, there is a new

generation of Hyundai Venue as well. MG also enters this scene with a facelift Hector and will be unveiling the new large-size flagship called Majestor from the Indian market. MG also showcases the HS model in hybrid from the Chinese market. Toyota too is bringing two

new products, including a new hybrid. BAIC, one of China's largest state-owned automakers, unveils the B30e hybrid. Jetour will also be entering the Nepali market with the T1 & T2 models that will be coming in both ICE and plug-in hybrid shortly after NAIMA.

The Nissan Tekton will be a strong contender in the the mid-size SUV market



The BAIC BJ30e is a rugged hybrid SUV features a 1.5 liter turbo engine

Maxus E-terron 9 EV

Pick-Up trucks

Maxus is showcasing the E-terron 9 EV, and MG is displaying the U9 full electric EV.



Yadea's latest maxi-style scooter designed also for longer distances

Two wheelers, too

4-wheelers do not share all the glory: NAIMA boasts 18 two-wheeler brands at their respective stalls. EV two-wheelers like Ather are bringing updates to the 450 line whereas other emerging brands like Yadea, are showcasing three completely new models: the GS70, GT70 & GT80.



NAIMA mobility Expo' 2026



Organisers are pushing for improved ventilation and sanitation throughout the exhibition halls, while parking will be available at Nepal Police's Blue Pavilion opposite the venue, which will also host the learning sessions.

Visitors can also expect interactive activities at the Red Bull Nepal stall, while Pathao will offer discounted rides to and from the exhibition venue. Online ticketing is through Khalti and priced at Rs100 for students and Rs200 for general admission. Tickets will be issued by the date and can also be bought at the entrance.

The stakes for this year's NAIMA auto show have never felt higher as there is a plethora of cars to choose from. Buyers and visitors will enjoy an unprecedented breadth of choice across every price and size segment– but what will car enthusiasts and buyers choose? August will tell.



Events



Mailung Waterfall Hike

Join Hike For Nepal's day walking trip to Mailung Waterfall this weekend. Rejuvenate your senses through beautiful scenes of nature across the trail.

1 August, Rs1,000, 6:40 am, Bhrikuti Mandap

Whispers of Nature

This solo art exhibition by Prabha Maharjan, includes nature-inspired acrylic artworks. Stop by.

7 August, 10am-5pm, Patan Museum, Patan



Miss Menuka

Adapted from Jean-Paul Sartre's acclaimed 1946 play La Putain Respectueuse (The Respectful Prostitute), Miss Menuka, directed by Pavitra Khadka, is the story of a Nepali sex worker.

Until 22 August, 5:15 pm (Except Tuesdays), Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali

Sharul & Seema

Add a dash of comedy to your hectic routine and laugh the evening away with Sharul from Sinagpore and Seema, a ventriloquist from Nepal.

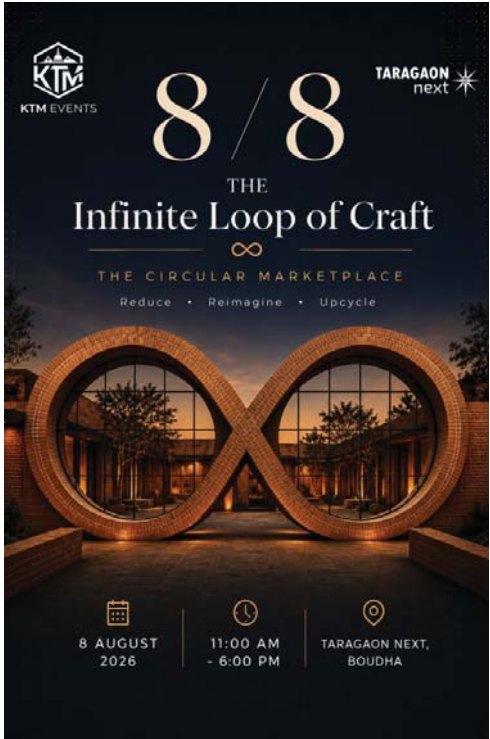
8 August, Rs1,500, 7pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel



Kathak Show

Calling all kathak enthusiasts for this one-hour kathak dance show, Anushruti by Anushilan that will keep viewers engaged with music and storytelling.

8 August, Rs500-Rs1,000, 5:30pm onwards, Rastriya Naach Ghar, Jamal



Music

Nepali Night

Culture and music take centre stage at Nepali night, from soulful classics to recent chartbusters. Wear your best traditional attire.

7 August, Rs500, 10pm, Club 10x, Thamel

Cabaret Night

Be a part of a musical night with live saxophone and piano by Aashik Shrestha. The live performance will be made all the better with some friends and drinks.

8 August, 8pm onwards, Garrison Pub, Thamel



The Rock Legacy

Be a part of the rock music movement in Nepal through The Rock Legacy. Watch artists Sabin Rai and The Phararoh, Nabin K Bhattarai and the Atripta, and more bands perform live.

8 August, Rs1,000, 8pm, Club Nova, Thamel

Mark Band

Mark Band are set to perform some of their soulful tracks. Go with friends and family, enjoy good food and drinks.

7 August, 6pm-10pm, Hard Rock Cafe, Durbar Marg



Apurva Tamang Live

Watch Apurva Tamang perform some of his crowd favourite pop hits and entertain the audience.

14 August, Rs1,000, 7pm onwards, XO Club, Thamel



Getaway



Hotel Annapurna View

Situated at 1,600m atop Sarangkot, this boutique hotel offers breathtaking views of the snow-capped mountains and Phewa Lake. Catch a glimpse of the panoramic scene of the Annapurnas in the dining area.

Sarangkot, Pokhara (061) 506000

Kasara Resort

Immerse into the lush greenery in the heart of Chitwan's National Park. With activities for everyone, from cycling to wildlife viewing, Kasara Resort is a fantastic getaway for families.

Patihani, Chitwan National Park, Chitwan, 9801249337



Shivapuri Heights Cottage

Experience unique accommodations on the edge of the Shivapuri National park, just a short drive from the city. A Mongolian yurt tent offers visitors a stay unlike any other – featuring air conditioning, a flat-screen TV, and a private Jacuzzi.

Budhanilkantha, 9846232271

Balthali Village Resort

A simple and cosy retreat just beyond Kathmandu Valley, Balthali Village Resort is ideal for anyone seeking to get away but is not looking for a long drive.

Panauti, Kavre, 9851087772

Dusit Thani Himalayan Resort

Escape from the hustle and bustle of the city and discover a stay nestled in the Himalayan foothills. Enjoy beautiful views of sunset and mindful moments with meditation, sound healing and yoga.

Dhulikhel, 9851373755



Dining

Villa Everest

With some of the best handmade Korean noodles, Bibimbap, Korean BBQ and Kimchi Jigae, Villa Everest is the perfect place for Korean food lovers.

Thamel (01) 4513471

Embassy

Enjoy a hearty meal in this centrally located restaurant known for its lively ambience and assorted menu. Try the Duck Breast, served on a bed of mashed potatoes and roasted vegetables in a rich peppery steak sauce.

Lazimpat, 9802024040



Capital Grill

This American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone's tastes. Present 3 bills paid in Capital Grill paid in the same month and get a privilege membership for discounts and seasonal offers.

Bhatbhateni (01) 4537674

Turkish Kebabs and Pizza Hub

Head to Turkish Kebabs and Pizza Hub to try some authentic Turkish cuisine. Order the kebabs, or try Turkish street food Dhurum.

Ekantakuna (01) 5439733

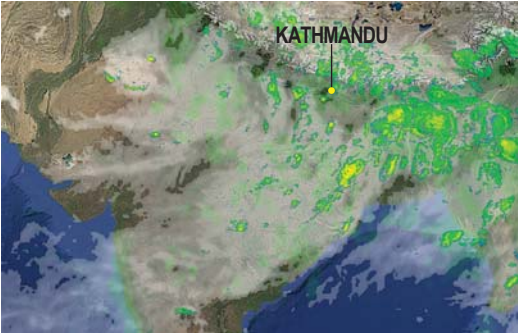


Tasneem King's Kitchen

Tasneem's mouthwatering authentic Bohra Muslim cuisine is a must for anyone who loves flavorful, spicy and savoury dishes. From slow-cooked Dum Biryani to traditional 10-course Bohra Thaaals, Tasneem is a place that brings food-lovers together.

Jhamsikhel, 9801121212

Weekend Weather



Wet, Wetter, Wettest

We are now more than half-way through the monsoon season, and there are no signs of the rains tapering off. In fact, another low-pressure system is moving inland from the Bay of Bengal (image). Expect more precipitation across Nepal over the weekend and beyond. The top soil along the highways is saturated, so any heavy rain could cause slope failure. Use caution.



Our Pick



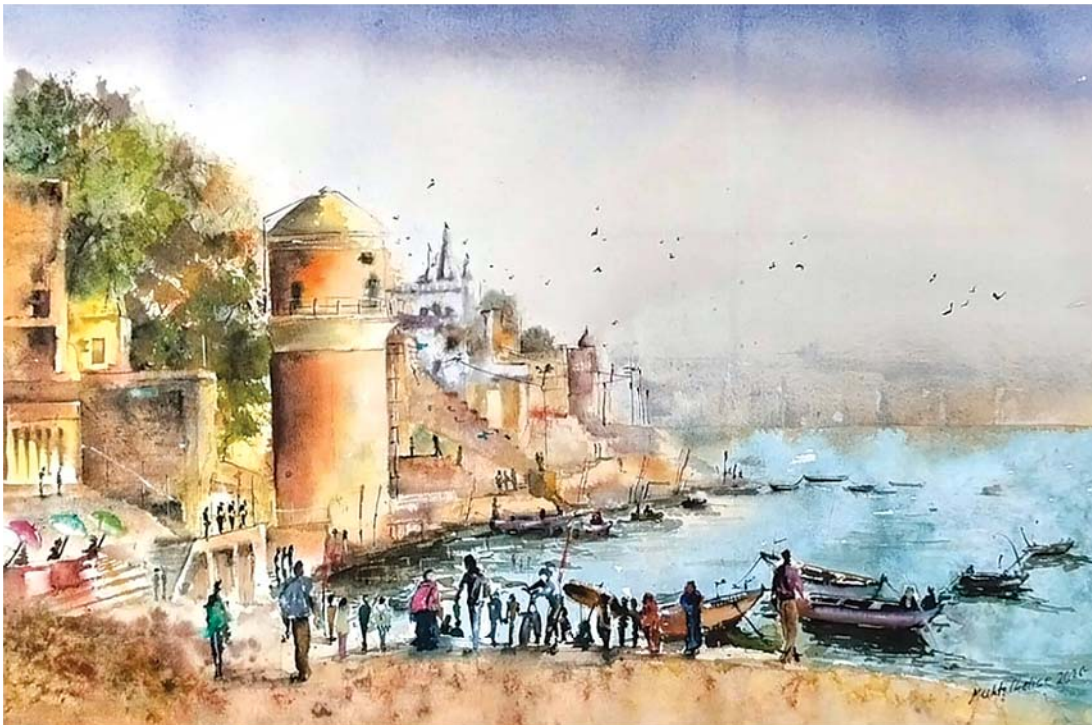
Adapted from Wajdi Mouawad's acclaimed play, Denis Villeneuve's 2010 film, Incendies, follows twins Jeanne and Simon on a journey to an unnamed Middle Eastern country to fulfill their mother's last wishes. Inspired by the brutalities of the Lebanese Civil War, the film is a moving tale of young adults trying to make sense of never-ending wars, hatred, and love. Starring Lubna Azabal, Melissa Désormeaux-Poulin, and Maxim Gaudette, Incendies is available to watch on Netflix.

सामाजिक सञ्जाल प्रयोगमा सचेतता अपनाऔँ

- सामाजिक सञ्जालमा अपरिचित व्यक्तिको साथी बन्ने अनुरोधलाई विश्वस्त भएर मात्र प्रतिक्रिया जनाऔँ ।
- अपरिचित व्यक्तिलाई जथाभावी साथी बन्न अनुरोध नपठाऔँ ।
- सामाजिक सञ्जाल तथा अन्य विद्युतीय माध्यमबाट चिड्छा पुरस्कार जस्ता आर्थिक प्रलोभनका प्रस्तावको भरमा नपरौँ ।
- आफूले प्रवाह गरेका सन्देश वा सूचनाबाट समाजमा पर्नसक्ने नकारात्मक प्रभावको ख्याल गरौँ ।
- आफ्नो सन्देशले कुनै व्यक्ति वा अन्य कुनै समुदायको आत्मसम्मानमा चोट नपुऱ्याऔँ ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड



Long before what we know today as Varanasi, the sacred city was called Banaras, a name that has travelled through Sanskrit and Pali into colonial English.

Whatever it is called, this pilgrimage site on the banks of the Ganga is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Also called Kashi, the 'city of light', it has been a holy destination for millennia drawing pilgrims, intellectuals, and philosophers.

The steps leading down to the river have remained a hallowed place of worship, celebration, and cremation — life and death unfolded on the ghat for centuries.

Many Nepali rulers, from Newa kings of Kathmandu Valley to the Shah and Rana rulers, made their way to Banaras throughout history, some on pilgrimage and others as political exiles. The city gained a

new dimension with the founding of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in 1916, which became a centre of education, spirituality and politics for many Nepalis as well.

An ongoing exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Homage to Banaras, brings together two generations of Nepali artists whose lives have been shaped by this city and its history. Nineteen students from Lalitkala Campus exhibit artwork inspired by a visit to Banaras, while alumni of BHU contribute as well.

For the student artists, the exhibition is a way of expressing their emotional affinity toward the city, each arriving at it through a different personal experience. Bipin Chhetri, a multi-genre artist, focused on the Ganga Arti ceremony, capturing its sacred daily evening ceremony on the banks of the Ganga.

The ghat form the foundation of Mukti Chalise's watercolours, a painter absorbed in capturing the effect of light and atmosphere. He uses transparent washes and expressive brushwork to convey the essential character of his subject — the movement of water

and boats in constant flux. His mastery of stillness and movement allows him to depict a city for which the river is a venerated vein.

Ayush Sunar also captures the river, but in wood to depict a place where rest is not possible. The result of this sculptural practice is not a single, settled entity, but a question of what remains once the restlessness has ceased.

Pratibha Tiwari paints boats as her central motif, seeing in them witnesses to everything the city has undergone. Each boat becomes an eye-shaped lens floating on the water's surface, carrying centuries of life's celebrations, rituals, sufferings, prayers, and burials. There is no judgment, just the ghats and boats themselves have silently done for centuries.

Aashish Poudel, Arjun Basnet,
Dasharath Bhatt, Henjilee Limbu, Kajal
Kumari, Manish Shrestha, Parwati Dulal,
Pramila Sunuwar, Prashamsa Shrestha,
Pratiksha Tiwari, Prativa Khadka, Ranjit
Kunwar, Sugam Baralie, Sunil Harijan, and

Tshering Tamang also exhibit work under the guidance of professors from Lalitkala Campus.

BACK TO THE START

The second group of works is from a generation returning to Banaras — not for the first time, but, in some cases, as artists recalling a place they never truly left. Many alumni of BHU have shaped the city in their own ways. The late Karna Narsingh Rana, one of the earliest artists to bring his BHU training back into Kathmandu's developing art scene, and the late Surendra Bhattarai stand at the start of this lineage.

Sculptors Pravin Kumar Shrestha, Hridaya Ballav Pandey are also featured, as well as Kiran Manandhar, Uma Shankar Shah, Narayan Prasad Bohaju, Jasmine Rajbhandari and Mukesh Shrestha. Sagar Manandhar, son of Kiran Manandhar, also BHU alumni, paints ever-evolving forms of nature, his time on the ghat of Varanasi having shaped his view of the world as a palette of constant change.

Agam Shrestha guided this year's Lalitkala students on their journey to Banaras, and also has a sculptural installation: 25 ceramic diya placed on delicate, flower-like brass stems. Agam's work was inspired by his observation of the votive lamps set afloat on the Ganga by pilgrims — a ritual that continues to this day and serves as inspiration for this new generation of artists.

Kashi is devoted to the worship of Shiva, much like Kathmandu itself. Bhusan Duwal and Shrawan Maharjan, working in bronze and copper, bring the same lineage forward in sculpture, their material choices carrying the weight and permanence of a tradition shaped by years spent in Banaras and Kathmandu.

A Nepali artistic homage to Banaras might be understood less as an exhibition about a city than as one about the act of returning to it whether for the first time or many times over.

It asks what it means to carry a place with you after leaving it, and what happens when a new generation arrives to discover a history that existed long before their teachers ever set foot on those ghats. 🇮🇳

Homage to Banaras
Kathmandu Art Gallery
Baber Mahal revisited
Till 25 August

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KUNDA DIXIT

Roads don't last the rains

Infrastructure failure is rarely an engineering mishap but malgovernance made worse by climate change

COMMENT
Ranjan Bhatta

Nepal recently amended its Public Procurement Act, replacing the long-criticised lowest-bid rule with an average-bid evaluation system. The reform was overdue, and its intent is sound: to stop the race to the bottom that allowed contractors to underprice projects, cut corners, and recover costs through delays, variations, and quietly compromised construction.

Last year in Syangja, I came across a problem that suggests the issue is larger than any single procurement rule can fix. The road had been widened outward toward the cliff edge instead of being cut into the slope above. The pavement had already cracked in places. Heavy gabion walls held up the outer edge, but the entire stretch looked less like a finished road and more like a structure fighting gravity.

Residents told me the safer option had been obvious from the beginning: a modest cut into the hillside would have been simpler, cheaper and more stable. They had raised concerns when construction began, but the widening proceeded. The contractor had made a financially convenient choice, an engineer had supplied a justification after the fact. Nobody was held accountable.

The amendment to the procurement law might have changed how that contract was awarded. It would not, on its own, have changed what got built.

Mountain roads are among the most visible signs of government presence and one of the largest recipients of public capital spending. They connect villages, reduce travel time, and symbolise recognition from the state. But too often, roads are built for visibility before elections rather than for durability after the monsoon.

Nepal has made undeniable progress in expanding road access. Communities that were once days away from markets, schools and health services are now just minutes or hours away. But are we building roads that remain safe, functional and resilient over their full life cycle?



RIBBON CUTTING

Roads are powerful electoral currency. A new alignment can be announced, photographed and inaugurated within a political term. Maintenance, drainage, slope stabilisation, and long-term resilience are less visible and carry no votes. The incentive is therefore to build quickly, extend reach and

A flood of worries

Living along the river corridors of Kathmandu Valley needs constant vigilance during the monsoon

Sushim Thapaliya

The Rudramati is not the sacred river it once was: it carries the city's sewage, is a flowing rubbish dump, and on hot afternoons the putrid smell settles over the neighbourhood forcing residents to shut their windows.

Nobody swims here. Children do not even need to be warned not to play in the river because they never would. Most days, it exists quietly in the background, hidden behind concrete embankments and half-forgotten by everyone except those who live along its banks.

Then the rains come, and nature demands to be noticed. The garbage is washed away, the sewage diluted and the smell is diminished on the river also called Dhobi Khola.

One night this week, there was commotion in the neighbourhood. Everyone knew what that meant — the monsoon is a time of keeping watch and warning others of floods.

Residents look at their windows to see how far the river level has risen to assess whether it is time to move things from ground floor. If the current is strong and bringing down branches, plastic bottles and heavier floating garbage, they know it has rained heavily upstream.

Sure enough, that night the Rudramati spilled over its banks and into the streets on either side of the river within minutes. The very spot where every Tihar there are rangoli decorations on the doorstep are submerged.

For commuters, the river corridors of Kathmandu Valley are



PHOTOS: SUSHIM THAPALIYA

convenient shortcuts to avoid traffic jams on arterial roads. They hardly give the river a second glance.

That is a luxury residents never had. The river exerts its presence, filth and stench in the dry season and floods in the monsoon.

This stretch of the river between Kalopul and Kapan rarely floods. Sitting on slightly higher ground, residents there thought they were safe.

When the water rose that night



last week, neighbours called one another in choreographed synchronicity. Cars were driven to higher ground, people stepped outside to measure the water against familiar landmarks, neighbours waited by the doors to help relatives in, street dogs climbed up front porches.

There is a practiced air to these measures. This is how living along the river corridors conditions you to act. An elderly woman and her granddaughter waded along the sidewalk. They

had gone out to get ice-cream and when they returned the water was knee-deep.

She muttered: "New government, same problem."

SAME THING EVERY YEAR

Despite repeated requests to the Ward, the neighbourhood still lacks a proper drainage system. The roads have been dug up repeatedly over the past two years, yet no one bothered about drainage.

The police acted, but after the waters had already risen. A police van blared a warning to people to get to higher ground. They needn't have bothered, most already had.

Much of the public conversation around Kathmandu's rivers focuses, understandably, on settlements that have encroached upon them which were recently demolished. Much less attention is paid to those who complied with building regulations, left the required space from the riverbank, pay taxes and still find floodwaters entering their homes.

For most of the year, the Rudramati is treated as something to ignore — a polluted channel carrying the city's waste out of sight. But every monsoon the river demands to be noticed.

By morning, the water recedes, leaving behind plastic bags tangled on the fences, and branches of trees trailing debris — showing just how high the river had risen.

Families are sweeping the silt out of their ground floors. The mop and bucket are not stowed away, they will be needed again. The next night, family members keep a vigil at windows again, gauging the water level for signs it is rising or falling. 🌧️



MUGLING BAZAR / FACEBOOK

show immediate results. The cost arrives later, when the monsoon exposes what was ignored during design and construction. Engineering standards exist for a reason. Decisions about slope cutting, retaining structures, drainage and alignment should be guided by terrain, hydrology and long-term stability. In practice, those

decisions are shaped by competing pressures from contractors, elected representatives, administrative timelines and fragmented oversight. Municipal engineers frequently understand the risks, but they often lack the institutional authority or support to insist on better choices. What is later described as a technical failure is almost always

a governance failure first. Cracks appear on the road surface, but the problem begins much earlier in procurement decisions, design compromises, weak supervision and unclear accountability. The procurement amendment must be matched by stronger project preparation, independent supervision and clearer

HIGH RISK HIGHWAY: A heavy earthmover attempts to clear a section of the Mugling-Narayanghad road blocked due to a landslide following rains this week.

accountability through the full life cycle of every project from site assessment to post-monsoon review. Changing the bidding formula without fixing these foundations risks producing the same roads under a different rule.

Municipal finance officers know the cycle well. Roads deteriorate during the monsoon. Emergency repairs consume budgets that could have funded proper planning or more resilient construction. Municipalities end up building, repairing and rebuilding the same infrastructure while the underlying incentives remain unchanged.

Federal restructuring has made accountability more complicated. Many local roads are financed by provincial or federal sources, implemented by municipalities, supervised by multiple agencies and constructed by contractors operating across political networks.

When a road fails, responsibility becomes diffuse. The municipality points to the contractor. The contractor points to the design. The funding agency points to implementation. Communities which bear the direct cost are left with damaged infrastructure and little recourse.

NOT NATURAL

The environmental consequences are not accidents. Landslides triggered by poor slope cutting, subsidence caused by unstable fills, blocked drainage and undersized culverts are routinely treated as 'natural' disasters. They are not, they are governance outcomes.

As rainfall becomes more intense and unpredictable, every shortcut is more expensive. A road that might have survived under

older rainfall patterns may now fail under heavier monsoon events. What appears in the news as a sudden disaster is often the delayed result of choices made years earlier in a budget meeting, a design office or an election campaign. Climate does not create weak roads. It reveals weak decisions.

Nepal does not lack capable engineers or technical know-how. What it lacks is a governance environment where technical judgment, fiscal planning and climate risk outweigh short-term political incentives.

Procurement reform is necessary but insufficient. It must be matched by stronger project preparation, independent supervision, clearer accountability across all tiers of government and meaningful community participation before construction begins.

Above all, climate risk must be treated as a fundamental design requirement, not a box to be checked after the alignment has already been decided. In fragile mountain terrain, resilience is not an optional upgrade. It is the condition for whether public infrastructure remains useful at all.

As another subnational election cycle approaches, roads will once again dominate speeches, banners and budget promises. The real test of political leadership is no longer how many kilometres are inaugurated before polling day. It is whether those roads remain standing after the ribbon-cutting, after the votes are counted and before the next monsoon arrives.

Roads rarely fail simply because it rains. They fail because decisions made years earlier ignored the realities of the landscape they were meant to serve. 🇳🇵

Ranjan Bhatta is a researcher in climate governance and resilient infrastructure. The views expressed are the author's own and do not represent that of their employer or its funders.

TATA.ev

TATA

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A yellow Tata Tiago.ev car is parked in front of a modern building with large glass windows. The car is shown from a front-three-quarter view. The building has a grid-like pattern of windows and is illuminated from within. The ground is a mix of orange and blue.



Scan for Test Drive