

Iran war is making it harder for millions of children to stay in school

From Cambodia to Africa, rising fuel, food and transport costs are forcing families to choose between school and putting food on the table.

ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL, SOPHENG CHEANG & ANTON L. DELGADO/AP

KAMPONG PRAHOK, CAMBODIA, AUG 17

Sou Sreynich dreams of becoming a teacher. But she knows she's far behind.

The 13-year-old first entered a classroom at 10, an age when most Cambodian children already have been in school for years. Her mother waited until she was old enough to swim, fearing the boat to school could capsize — a decision familiar to many parents on Cambodia's Tonle Sap, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia.

Now, the price of gasoline has spiked because of the Iran war, an additional burden. Unlike outright school closures during Covid, the Iran war's impact on education is less visible. But it is falling first and hardest on the poorest families. Soaring fuel prices are making it more expensive for children and teachers to get to school, and for governments to fund education as national budgets come under strain.

On the lake, getting anywhere has always meant navigating the water. Climate change is making it harder, with increasingly unpredictable floods and droughts. Teachers at her school say 10 students have drowned over the years.

Girls could be hit hardest in South Asia, where families often prioritise sons.

If the war continues, it could push up to 23.4 million more children like Sreynich into poverty by the end of the year, according to a recent United Nations Children's Fund report. About 80% of those children would be in Africa and Asia.

Most mornings, a gas-powered boat chugs through Kampong Prahok, steered by students often no older than those climbing aboard. They pull up alongside floating homes, as peers in crisp uniforms clamber aboard, careful to keep their backpacks dry.

Like most on Tonle Sap, Sreynich's family relies on fishing to survive. They earn some money picking chili peppers and gutting fish for others. Rising fuel prices because of the Iran war mean the family can't afford to travel to deeper waters where fish are more plentiful. When money is tight, Sreynich skips a day or two of school to work alongside her parents. She dreads every absence. "I want to complete my studies," she said.

For families already living on the edge, the war's ripple effects are forcing difficult choices: whether to pay for food, fuel, rent and electricity, or keep every child in school.

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Devotees worship serpent deities at Nagpokhari in Naxal, Kathmandu on the occasion of Nag Panchami on Monday. On this day, people paste Nag images at the entrances of their homes, seeking protection from lightning and fire.

## Finance Ministry delays forwarding MCA-Nepal's request to extend projects

The Millennium Challenge Account-Nepal seeks a one-year extension citing delays caused by Donald Trump's aid pause and failed transmission line bids.

ANIL GIRI

KATHMANDU, AUG 17

The Ministry of Finance has held up a request from the Millennium Challenge Account Nepal (MCA-Nepal) for a one-year extension of US-funded infrastructure projects, with the proposal yet to reach the US government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

MCA-Nepal sent the request to the ministry mid-May, asking it to formally approach MCC headquarters for an extension of the \$747 million projects, which include a 315-km transmission line and road upgrade works.

A senior finance ministry official told the Post that they had received a letter on behalf of MCA-Nepal but had not yet been forwarded to MCC

headquarters. "It is still under discussion," the official told the Post, without disclosing why the request had been held up or when it would be sent.

The MCA-Nepal board member said MCA-Nepal sent the request to the Finance Ministry, which serves as the liaison ministry and must formally approach the MCC headquarters on Nepal's behalf. The finance secretary heads the MCA-Nepal board.

Land acquisition and compensation issues have hampered 315-km transmission line project.



Nepali and US officials break ground for the construction of a substation in Nuwakot on June 10. This is one of the projects funded under the Millennium Challenge Corporation compact.

Under the MCC Compact, the projects are supposed to be completed by August 30, 2028. But MCA-Nepal says implementation has been delayed by about 14 months because of the US government's temporary suspension of MCC operations and the cancellation and re-tendering of contracts for the transmission line.

"Due to some reasons, we have already sought a one year term extension for the completion of the two projects," said a senior MCA-Nepal board member who is not authorized to speak to the media.

"It has been three months that the MCA-Nepal had sent such a request to the finance ministry but there is no information about the term extension," the board member said.

Once the finance ministry forwards the request, the MCC headquarters will review the reasons cited by MCA-Nepal and decide whether to grant the extension.

In its letter, the MCA-Nepal stated that due to some unavoidable circumstances including US President Donald Trump's decision in July 2025 to pause US foreign assistance and halt MCC payments. The suspension put the projects in limbo for several months before the administration decided in July 2025 to allow MCC's global operations, including in Nepal, to continue.

MCA-Nepal also cited the cancellation of bids in October 2023 for construction of the 315-km 400kV transmission line after all bidders quoted prices substantially above the estimated cost.

Following the cancellation, MCA-Nepal had to restart the bidding process. It took almost nine months to award a fresh contract, an MCA-Nepal official told the Post.

The official said MCC headquarters is positive about the term extension and that a new US law could also facilitate the extension.

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## Speaker tells PM to face lawmakers on August 26

The ruling follows months of tension over Shah's repeated absence from the House and his controversial remarks.

JAYA SINGH MAHARA

KATHMANDU, AUG 17

Prime Minister Balendra Shah, who has been absent from the House of Representatives for a long time, will now have to stand at the parliamentary rostrum and answer lawmakers' questions. Speaker DP Aryal issued the ruling after Shah repeatedly skipped the monthly question-and-answer session required under parliamentary rules.

Speaker Aryal had to issue the ruling as Prime Minister Shah has been violating the House of Representatives regulations, which require the prime minister to answer lawmakers' questions during the first week of every month. Lawmakers had been demanding that Shah come to parliament and clarify his position since he made controversial remarks about the border in the House of Representatives on May 31. Earlier, lawmakers had also demanded that the prime minister respond to questions during discussions on the government's policies and programmes, but Shah had ignored their demands.

"Members of parliament have been raising this issue for a long time, and it has come to my attention," said Speaker Aryal before directing the prime minister to attend the House and answer questions as per House of Representatives Regulations, 2026.

Speaker Aryal clarified that each parliamentary party will be guaranteed at least one question during the direct question-and-answer session. Up to 15 additional questions will be selected according to the parties' numerical strength in the House. Lawmakers can submit written questions to the parliamentary secretariat by 1 pm on Friday.

The dispute dates back to Shah's first appearance in the House of Representatives on May 31, when he answered questions after weeks of pressure from opposition parties. Responding to a question about Nepal-India border disputes, Shah said Nepal had also encroached on Indian territory in several places, a statement that immediately drew criticism.

"You may find this surprising, but I too only recently learned, after becoming prime minister, that Nepal has encroached on Indian territory in many places, not just India on Nepali territory," PM Shah had said while addressing Parliament.

In response to Shah's controversial remarks, the opposition parties demanded that Shah retract the statement, provide evidence and clarify his position in Parliament. They also protested against the Speaker's handling of the session, arguing that Shah's appearance had not followed the normal format of the monthly direct question session.

The controversy has since led to repeated deadlocks in the House. The opposition parties had already been demanding Shah's presence after he repeatedly skipped parliamentary discussions on the government's policies and programmes. The dispute intensified when the prime minister designated

ed Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle to respond to lawmakers on his behalf.

The latest ruling is therefore significant for both the government and the Speaker. Aryal himself has faced criticism from opposition lawmakers, who have questioned whether he has acted independently of the ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), from which he came to the Speaker's post. Critics said the opposition's trust in Aryal had weakened over his handling of the dispute.

RSP Chairman Rabi Lamichhane, General Secretary Bipin Acharya, deputy parliamentary leader Ganesh Parajuli and chief whip Kabindra Burlakoti, among other senior leaders were present at Monday's meeting of the House of Representatives.

CPN-UML parliamentary party deputy leader Padma Kumari Aryal wel-



Speaker DP Aryal

Before ruling, Aryal twice visited the prime minister's office to urge Shah to attend House.

comed Monday's ruling. "The opposition has been seeking an answer on the same issue in Parliament for a long time. I want to thank the Speaker again for issuing a ruling that ensures an answer," she said in the House.

The ruling party also welcomed the development. RSP chief whip Burlakoti said the Speaker had coordinated with the prime minister and set a date for his appearance.

"The Speaker took the initiative and coordinated on this matter, and it has now been decided that the prime minister will come [to parliament] on August 26," said Burlakoti. "There had been discussions and coordination, and after today's ruling the prime minister will come to parliament and move the matter forward."

He said the ruling could help end the dispute that had paralysed House proceedings. "The initiative to resolve the problem is positive," he said, adding that Shah's busy schedule should not prevent him from attending parliament.

A member of Shah's secretariat said the prime minister had already been preparing to answer lawmakers.

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## Durgalal Shrestha, the 'people's poet', dies at 93

The poet, lyricist, playwright and language activist spent more than eight decades writing in a style that was simple enough for ordinary readers but deep enough to endure.

HIMESH

KATHMANDU, AUG 17

Poet and lyricist Durgalal Shrestha, one of the best-known poets of modern Nepal Bhasha literature, died at his home in Budhanilkantha on Sunday night. He was 93.

Kishan Sundar Malla, chancellor of the Nepal Bhasha Academy and a close associate of Shrestha, said the poet's death was a major loss to Nepal Bhasha literature. "He was born to write," said Malla, describing Shrestha as a son of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of learning.

Born in Nhyakatol in central Kathmandu in Nepal Sambat 1057, Shrestha was the son of Aashamoti and Ganesh Lal. He entered the literary world by writing plays, and in Nepal Sambat 1075, his poem 'Santwana' was published in Dharmodaya magazine. He later became best known as a poet, although he was also a lyricist, playwright and translator. In 2003, the Nepal Bhasha

Parishad conferred Shrestha with the title of Janakavi—people's poet.

Shrestha often recalled with pride that he wrote, directed and acted in a play in Nepal Bhasha when he was only 11. Street theatre was common in Kathmandu neighbourhoods at the time, and the experience began his long literary career.

Although he wrote poems, songs, plays, essays and translations, Shrestha became best known as a poet. His writing earned him the title Janakabi, or people's poet, because his language was accessible to ordinary readers while carrying strong emotions and ideas.

Essayist Ramesh Kaji Shapit, who followed Shrestha's literary career closely, said the most striking quality of his poetry was its musicality. "His poems were like songs," said Shapit. Almost all could be sung because they had rhythm and melody.

Shrestha's first book 'Chiniyamha Kisicha' was a collection of children's poems and became one of the best-selling



Durga Lal Shrestha passed away on Sunday night.

ing books published in Nepal Bhasha. He went on to publish more than a dozen collections of poems and songs. His writing often dealt with national-

ism, language and community advancement.

The veteran poet and lyricist also wrote in Nepali. His song 'Phoolko Aankhama Phoolai Sansar' remains among his best-known works.

Shapit said Shrestha's work as a playwright was often overshadowed by his poetry and songs. "His pen perhaps ran even faster for plays than for poems," he said. "His plays were equally strong, but his identity as a poet and lyricist covered them."

For Shrestha, literature was also a form of cultural activism. After Radio Nepal stopped broadcasting news in Nepal Bhasha in 1965, he became an active participant in the movement against the state's one-language policy. Literary conferences were organised across Kathmandu Valley neighbourhoods for about a year against the policy, and Shrestha actively took part in them. His poems and songs from that period became part of the wider campaign for recognition of Nepal Bhasha.

Shrestha remained active in organi-

sations devoted to Nepal Bhasha and Newari cultural rights, and became a founding member of Nepal Bhasa Manka Khala.

Shrestha's influence extended beyond books. His neat handwriting became so closely associated with him that a type front was later named after him. His poems and songs have travelled beyond Nepal through translations.

Shrestha's funeral is scheduled for Tuesday; colleagues, admirers and members of the Nepal Bhasha community are expected to gather to pay their final respects. His body will be kept at the Nepal Bhasha Manka Khala building in Bijeshwari before a funeral procession and cremation at Karnadeep.

For a literary community that saw him as both a creator and an advocate, Shrestha's death marks the end of an unusually long career—one that began with a child's neighbourhood play and grew into a lifelong effort to make language, literature and identity speak to ordinary people.







| FOREX                                                                                     |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| US Dollar                                                                                 | 153.27     |
| Euro                                                                                      | 177.72     |
| Pound Sterling                                                                            | 207.81     |
| Swiss Franc                                                                               | 189.29     |
| Australian Dollar                                                                         | 109.2      |
| Canadian Dollar                                                                           | 110.6      |
| Singapore Dollar                                                                          | 120.11     |
| Japanese Yen (10)                                                                         | 9.63       |
| Chinese Yuan                                                                              | 22.75      |
| Saudi Arab Riyal                                                                          | 40.82      |
| Qatari Riyal                                                                              | 42.05      |
| Thai Bhat                                                                                 | 4.64       |
| UAE Dhiram                                                                                | 41.73      |
| Malaysian Ringit                                                                          | 37.75      |
| Korean Won (100)                                                                          | 10.85      |
| Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank                                                 |            |
| BULLION                                                                                   |            |
| PRICE PER TOLA                                                                            |            |
|  Fine Gold | Rs 306,800 |
|  Silver    | Rs 4,770   |
| SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA                                                                        |            |

● BIZLINE

Singapore sees surge in non-oil exports driven by AI demand

**SINGAPORE:** Singapore’s non-oil domestic exports rose by 24.2 percent in July, the government said on Monday, following a 20.8 percent increase in June driven by robust AI-related demand. July’s data came after the government sharply raised its growth forecast for 2026 earlier this month due to a strong thirst for products linked to artificial intelligence. The growth was supported by a surge in electronic shipments, which grew by 112 percent in July, higher than the 105.1 percent in June, government trade agency Enterprise Singapore said. Disk media products performed best, with a 339.1 percent increase, followed by integrated circuits and personal computers at 120.8 percent and 84.5 percent, it said in a statement. Singapore’s non-electronic exports however, fell by 2.3 percent, owing to a decline in pharmaceutical exports, which dipped by 56.7 percent. **(AFP)**

Virgin closer to launching Eurostar rival in 2030

**LONDON:** British group Virgin has been granted track access to run new cross-Channel train services from 2030, the country’s rail regulator said Monday, bringing it closer to launching a rival service to Eurostar. The agreement allows Virgin Trains to operate up to 20 daily return services between London and Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam from October 1, 2030 to the end of 2040, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) said in a statement. Founded by British entrepreneur Richard Branson, Virgin promises to shake-up cross-Channel rail traffic by challenging Eurostar, which has held a monopoly on passenger services through the tunnel linking Britain and France since it opened in 1994. “This is an important next step in bringing competition and growth to the market for international rail services,” said Martin Jones, deputy director of access and international at the ORR. “While there is still more work to do, we are supporting Virgin and the wider industry to grow international services,” he said. **(AFP)**

Japan Q2 growth misses forecasts on weaker spending, investment

**TOKYO:** Japan’s economy slowed in the second quarter and missed market forecasts on softer household and business spending, highlighting the fragile nature of its recovery as the Middle East war clouds the outlook. However, long-term bond yields hit a three-decade high as investors brushed aside the soft reading as reflecting one-off factors, and focused more on mounting inflationary risks that could prod the Bank of Japan to raise interest rates next month. Gross domestic product rose 1.1 percent in annualised terms, government data showed on Monday, missing a median market estimate of 2.0 percent in a Reuters poll and below a revised 1.9 percent expansion in the previous quarter. While the data revealed some temporary soft patches in demand, analysts say robust underlying momentum and persistent price pressures are likely to keep the case for imminent interest rate hikes intact. “Today’s GDP data was a bit weak but the economy is likely to continue recovering moderately,” said Naoki Hattori, chief Japan economist at Mizuho Research Institute. “Given risks of underlying inflation overshooting its target, the BOJ is likely to proceed with a rate hike next month.” **(REUTERS)**

# Worker shortage threatens Nepal’s rising orthodox tea production

Tea estates in eastern Nepal offer wages of up to Rs40,000 a month, but migration abroad and movement to urban areas are making workers harder to find.

● LAXMI GAUTAM  
PANCHTHAR, AUG 17

The tea bushes at the Pathibhara Tea Estate, spread across 51 hectares in Panchthar, an eastern hill district, are flush with fresh shoots these days.

The estate plucks and processes the ‘two leaves and a bud’ used to make high-quality premium loose-leaf tea, which it exports to third-country markets.

The factory has the capacity to employ up to 50 workers a day. However, only 10 to 15 workers are currently working at the estate in Falelung and Yangwarak rural municipalities.

Pathibhara, located at Charibhanjyang, is not alone. Most tea gardens in eastern Nepal are currently waiting for workers to pluck tea leaves. Tea gardens and factories pay workers Rs110 per kg for plucking leaves. In addition, workers receive extra wages for withering, rolling, processing, sorting and packaging tea in the mornings and evenings.

“Despite these incentives, tea gardens are facing a shortage of workers,” said Rajan Bhattarai, proprietor of the tea estate.

Experienced workers employed in the tea sector can normally earn up to Rs40,000 a month, including accommodation.

For Shashikala Rai from ward 2 of Falelung Rural Municipality who was plucking tea leaves, working on the hillside is not as strenuous as going abroad and working in the heat.

“At a time when our brothers and sisters are wandering around villages saying there are no job opportunities, and are forced to do strenuous work in 40-degree [Celsius] heat abroad, we are working in the cool and scenic tea gardens here,” she said.

“The earning is not bad either. We earn up to Rs40,000 a month. With such opportunities available, why go abroad?” said Rai. According to her, women workers account for a large share of those involved in tea plucking and processing.

In recent years, an increasing number of both men and women have been going abroad for employment. Most women who remain in the villages are increasingly moving to district headquarters and urban areas to live with their children for their education.

This has created a shortage of workers in small and medium-sized factories and tea gardens operating in rural areas.

Annually, nearly 800,000 Nepalis go abroad in search of jobs, leaving Nepal’s farm sector without sufficient manpower. In recent years, tea estates in eastern Nepal have been hit hard by the shortage of workers.

There are around 60,000 tea workers across eastern districts such as Ilam, Panchthar and Jhapa. Most are temporary or daily-wage labourers, meaning they miss out on steady year-round income and robust benefits. As a result, tea work has not been attractive to many.

Jeet Bahadur Limbu, another tea



An overview of the tea gardens across the rolling hills of Kanyam, Ilam, in this undated photo.

worker, said tea gardens offer employment for nine months of the year, except for the three-month period from early November to January. Limbu, however, said he is comfortable with the earnings.

“It is frustrating to see young people leaving the country saying they are unemployed despite such opportunities being available here,” Limbu said.

Organic orthodox tea produced here without using chemical fertilisers and pesticides is reaching international markets. Although production and market prospects are expanding, a shortage of workers is constraining the capacity of tea gardens.

Tea gardens producing orthodox tea that sell for Rs5,000 to Rs7,000 per kilogram in overseas markets are currently waiting for workers.

The tea leaves produced at Pathibhara and other tea gardens in Panchthar are processed into high-quality organic orthodox tea.

Bhattarai said tea produced without chemical fertilisers and pesticides comes in more than 10 flavours, with natural sweetness, a high-altitude aroma and a distinctive taste, generating demand in third-country markets. He said the tea is exported to international markets including the United States, Germany, France, Japan, South Korea and China.

According to data from the Tea Expansion Project (Chiya Bistar Yojana) in Lalikharka, Panchthar, a government-established tea garden managed by the National Tea and Coffee Development Board, Panchthar has six tea estates and factories and 10 small tea producer groups.

Tea is cultivated on 600 hectares across the district by estates and individual farmers. Although around 2,000 farmers are involved in tea farming through factories and producer groups, factories and tea gardens are facing a shortage of workers.

According to operators, Pathibhara alone produces around 8,000 kg of tea annually.

Bhattarai said the estate has developed the capacity to produce more than 12,000 kg if there is no shortage

of workers, but the labour shortage is likely to affect production.

Demand for Nepali organic tea is increasing in international markets. Despite good local income, residential accommodation, and regular employment opportunities, the shortage of workers is delaying the plucking of tea shoots, Bhattarai said.

Nepal exports more than 88 percent of its orthodox tea to India, leaving only a small fraction for third-country markets.

Nepal processes 7,838 tonnes of orthodox tea annually. Exports of orthodox tea to third countries account for 11.4 percent. Orthodox tea uses traditional methods, including plucking, withering, rolling, oxidation and drying.

There are two types of exports: organic certified and uncertified. The export of organic-certified orthodox tea to third countries accounts for 21.63 percent.

A report by Nepal Rastra Bank highlights that Nepali organic orthodox tea has significant potential in Japan, China, the Netherlands, Canada, Russia, Poland, Turkey and South Korea.

Despite its potential, Nepali organic tea faces multiple challenges, including difficulties in marketisation, fair pricing, access to credit facilities and a lack of skilled workers.

Other obstacles include a lack of technical assistance, insurance and incentives for organic production. These challenges hinder orthodox tea entrepreneurs from unlocking potential new markets.

According to the central bank report, seven factories export to Japan, four to China, two to the United States and eight to other countries. The study included 84 orthodox tea factories and 42 orthodox tea growers.

In September 2020, Nepal’s orthodox tea received its own trademark, 157 years after the country began growing it. The trademark includes the words “Nepal Tea Quality from the Himalayas.” Koshi province has 100 orthodox tea processing factories, 21 of which are organically certified.

# I left New York for Kathmandu. Did the egg crisis follow me?

Turns out inflation doesn’t need your new address to find you; it just needs an appetite.

● ANUP KAPHLE  
KATHMANDU, AUG 17

Earlier this year, I decided to move back to Nepal with the particular smugness of someone who thinks he no longer has to pay for exorbitant groceries. I’d left New York, where a dozen eggs had become more than a small financial event—screaming headlines in national publications about how eggs became a luxury or how to make an omelet without breaking the bank. I’d gone from paying \$4.35 for a baconeggandcheese to \$8.17 at the same bodega on downtown Wall Street in a matter of months. In moving to Nepal, I’d assumed I didn’t quite have to think twice about paying for eggs. It’s a different hemisphere, a different chicken.

A month since I landed back in Kathmandu, the local supermarket has raised its egg price each time I’ve visited it. I hadn’t done the math myself until I read a newspaper report last night: Egg prices increase for the fourth time in a month, hovering at around Rs575 for a crate. The eggs in Kathmandu, for what it’s worth, are good.

New York’s egg crisis had a villain everyone could name: H5N1. The avian flu strain, which had been grinding through American laying flocks since 2022, took its worst swing yet in early 2025. The average dozen hit \$4.95 in January, a record, then kept climbing—wholesale prices in New York touched \$7.24 a dozen at one point. The ones I preferred, eggs with a bright orange yolk that came from “pasture-raised” hens, reached \$11. Restaurants started adding surcharges. And then the government intervened, because in America, you don’t mess with breakfast. In June 2026, the Justice Department sued three of the country’s largest egg producers, accusing them of coordinating supply and pricing between 2022 and 2025. The producers deny it.

Nepal is having the same emergency, but here, no one wants to ask questions. Remember when the banana prices were going bananas a few months ago?

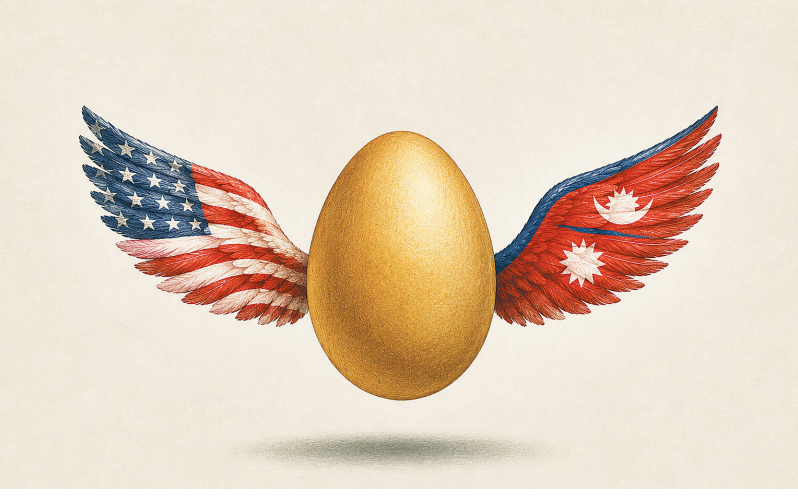


ILLUSTRATION GENERATED BY OPENAI’S CHATGPT

# China’s recovery sputters as consumption, output lose steam

● REUTERS  
BEIJING, AUG 17

China’s economy lost momentum at the start of the second half, with industrial output and retail sales slowing as extreme weather disruptions and persistently weak domestic demand renewed pressure on policymakers to step up stimulus.

The disappointing data, following second-quarter growth that cooled to a three-and-a-half-year low, highlights China’s continued dependence on exports to offset sluggish consumption and investment even as it confronts headwinds from US tariffs and the conflict in the Middle East.

Factory output grew 4.5 percent from a year earlier last month, compared with 5.3 percent in June, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Monday, missing a Reuters poll forecast for 4.8 percent growth. “The poor performance is due in part to ineffective use of the policy measures in hand. Fiscal spending has lagged behind, for example,” said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit. “It’s a call for officials to be bolder about spending what they have.”

“Attention should be paid to investment, whose sharp decline is by no means acceptable to Beijing,” he added.

Fixed-asset investment contracted 6.7 percent in the first seven months of 2026, compared with an expected 6 percent decline. It fell 5.7 percent in the January-June period.

Fu Linghui, an NBS spokesperson, told a press conference that officials would step up counter-cyclical policy adjustments to bolster domestic demand.

Getting China’s roughly 1.4 billion population spending again will not be easy while the country’s property sector remains in a slump, with new

home prices in July down 3.2 percent from a year earlier and 0.1 percent from June. Economists estimate that about 52 percent of household wealth is tied up in real estate, a share that has declined in recent years as the protracted property crisis has pushed investors toward gold and other assets.

Retail sales grew 0.6 percent, slowing from a 1 percent rise in June despite summer holiday tourism spending. Analysts had forecast 1.5 percent growth. The drop was “partly

just payback for the consumer goods trade-in scheme, which boosted sales a year ago by bringing forward demand,” said Julian Evans-Pritchard, head of China economics at Capital Economics.

Analysts at Citi noted that the pace of subsidy distribution had weakened again in July, with daily average sales dropping to 6.3 billion yuan (\$934.8 million) from 9 billion yuan in June.

Policymakers are also having to contend with factors beyond their con-

trol, such as the weather.

Industrial output and retail sales were likely hampered by unusually active extreme weather last month, with three typhoons making landfall and millions of people relocated across China’s eastern and southern manufacturing hubs.

Auto sales declined for a 10th straight month in July, albeit at a slower pace, contrasting with strong external demand as automakers eye overseas expansion to offset domestic

weakness.

Economic indicators released so far have pointed to a weak start to the third quarter. The official manufacturing purchasing managers’ index unexpectedly slipped into contraction, while export and import growth both moderated from June, though they remained in double-digit territory.

Still, Fu was confident the recent weather would not rain on policymakers’ ambitions to see the \$20 trillion economy grow by between 4.5 percent and 5 percent, stating that the foundation remained solid.

Robust exports, buoyed by the global AI infrastructure buildout, have continued to support China’s factories. But weak domestic demand remains a major risk that leaves the economy vulnerable to shocks such as weather disruptions and trade barriers. China logged another month of more than \$100 billion in trade surplus last month, with the full-year total on track to top \$1 trillion for a second year.

That has continued to unnerve trading partners, with the European Union weighing tougher measures to curb its trade deficit with China, and the US announcing new tariffs on Chinese goods.

China’s leaders pledged to shore up the slowing economy by accelerating fiscal spending and introducing new policies “in a timely manner,” but have so far stopped short of signalling major new stimulus measures.

“The emerging pattern is one of selective strength amid broad softness,” said Yuhua Zhang, principal economist at The Conference Board’s China Center. “The question is, therefore, not simply whether China can sustain growth, but whether policy-supported pockets of activity can eventually generate a broader recovery in household spending and private investment.”



People walk past a lane lined with restaurants, at a shopping area in Shanghai, China on September 28, 2024.

REUTERS



# Crowdfunded care keeps injured footballer Rai afloat amid official apathy

National team defender Aashish Rai relies on global citizen donations while the National Sports Council caps its total aid at Rs250,000 citing rigid budget rules.

**NAYAK PAUDEL**  
KATHMANDU, AUG 17

It took footballer Aashish Rai over a year of silent suffering to finally speak out. His injury was mishandled from the outset; he was mistreated during rehabilitation; and the All Nepal Football Association, the country's football governing body, had provided only erratic support.

Even that meagre backing came to a complete halt following FIFA's suspension of ANFA on June 24. Rai then found himself stranded in Bangkok, Thailand, where the governing body had sent him for treatment. Left with no choice, Rai was forced to go public with his ordeal. He hoped the new Balendra Shah administration would step in to take responsibility for his recovery as he was injured while playing for the country.

But more than a month after the Post reported his ordeal on July 14, state assistance has proven negligible. To date, the government has provided just Rs150,000, through the National Sports Council. That, however, is nowhere near enough, Rai told the Post over a phone call on Monday. It costs him between Rs450,000 and Rs500,000 per month to cover his treatment, rehabilitation, medication, and stay in Bangkok. "What should I make of Rs150,000?" he said.

Rai had initially held high hopes for the new government, recalling how happy he felt listening to Balendra Shah's speech on supporting football from the grassroots during his election campaign. Today, however, that optimism has given way to deep disillusionment.

"The issue has also been raised in the parliament," Rai said. "But the state is yet to respond properly."

Harka Sampang, chairman of the Shram Sanskriti Party who got elected to the House of Representatives from Sunsari-1, the neighbouring constituency to Rai's home in Itahari, had raised Rai's situation in the parliament a week ago.

It is not that the government has not reached out to Rai yet. Apart from the Rs150,000 support through the NSC, Rai got a phone call from a government representative.

"I do not know which ministry or department the person represented," Rai said. "He said that the government did not have any law to send money abroad."

For a lack of adequate government support, Nepalis from around the world have stepped in to help Rai, raising funds for him. And this is how Rai is affording his treatment and stay in Bangkok. This contrast between



PHOTO: AASHISH RAI'S FACEBOOK

Supporters stage a rally in Itahari, Rai's hometown, on Saturday demanding that the government bear all medical and rehabilitation expenses for the national player.

overwhelming public generosity and state indifference highlights a grim reality for Nepali athletes—celebrated when representing the nation, but forced to depend on public charity when injured in its service.

Contributions have poured in for Rai from across the world—from Nepal to Japan to Australia. Nepal United FC in Australia, for instance, has donated him Rs81,000. The Malaysia-based N Penang FC, in coordination with Himalayan FC and Neptourne FC, collected Rs1.2 million. Shantinagar FC, a club from Rai's hometown, is also aiming to collect more funds through the 5th Monsoon Football Tournament, which is taking place soon at Budha Subba Football Ground in Itahari. In Japan, Spice Purbeli FC announced that a portion of the proceeds from its upcoming SMILES GOLD CUP 2026 futsal tournament—scheduled for August 30 in Chiba—will be donated to

support Rai's ongoing treatment.

Support has also come in from individual well-wishers, including Prasamsha Bhandari, a ninth-grader at Tender Feet Boarding School in Sundarharaincha, Morang, who donated her Rs1,000 competition prize money to Rai's cause.

Funds are also being raised through GoFundMe, a crowdfunding platform.

"The way Nepalis around the world supported me with as much money as they could is how I was able to resume my rehabilitation in Bangkok," Rai said. "I cannot thank them enough."

Rai was also heartened by a youth rally organised by his friends and supporters in Itahari on Saturday to press the government for immediate intervention. Demonstrators marched holding placards reading, "Applause when playing for the nation, neglect when injured—how long will this injustice continue?" and "The government must take full responsibility for

the treatment and compensation of injured players."

Public solidarity is there but Rai stresses that meaningful state intervention remains absent.

"The most crucial support—from the state—is still missing," Rai said. "If given the opportunity, I would like to speak directly with Education and Sports Minister Sasmit Pokharel to explain my reality."

When contacted, the NSC stated that it plans to release an additional Rs100,000 for Rai through the Athlete Welfare Fund, bringing its total assistance to Rs250,000.

"We initially dispatched Rs150,000 from an emergency fund designated for accidents involving players or staff—a fund that had a total budget of only Rs700,000," explained Khush Raj Dahal, spokesperson for the NSC. "We are now arranging to reimburse another Rs100,000 through the Athlete Welfare Fund."

Asked if Rs250,000 was the maximum state support available to a national athlete injured in service of the country, Dahal cited rigid budgetary constraints.

"We cannot spend funds outside designated budget line items," Dahal said. "This Rs250,000 is the absolute maximum we can extend under current rules."

To date, Rai has received just over Rs2 million—including the NSC's initial Rs150,000—through donations from well-wishers and crowdfunding efforts worldwide.

Doctors have advised the defender that he will require at least six more months of intensive rehabilitation before he can return home for surgery to remove the hardware in his leg.

"When I last consulted the doctors, they told me I need about six more months of rehab. Only after that can I return to Nepal to remove the steel in my leg," Rai told the Post. "I have only one fear left: will my treatment come to a halt once again in the coming months for lack of money?"

ANFA has said it would bear all expenses related to Rai's treatment until he fully recovers and will resume the pending payments and treatment process as soon as the legal and administrative issues surrounding its suspension are resolved. However, given the government's present handling of the crisis, an immediate resolution—and the lifting of the ban—remains a distant prospect.

Even the ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party's chief whip Prakash Chandra Pariyar raised Rai's issue at the parliament on Monday. Whether the government will hear the plea of its own party's member remains to be seen.

# 'This is probably my last year in football,' says Cristiano Ronaldo

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
RIYADH, AUG 17

Cristiano Ronaldo says this Saudi Pro League season is likely to be the last of his professional career.

The 41-year-old superstar's contract with Riyadh club Al-Nassr, signed in December 2022, expires next June, and he has told Vogue magazine that another is unlikely.

"This is probably my last year of football, and I want to leave a spectacular legacy," Ronaldo said.

The Portugal forward, who has scored 976 career goals, married long-time partner, Georgina Rodriguez, earlier this month.

"I have my future all mapped out," he said. "I have so many things to keep me busy that to tell you just one thing is hard. Because football could leave a big hole, you have to fill your time in various ways, not just one. "And also have more fun, travel more, watch and play padel, which I really like, and continue to enjoy what I've earned—what we've earned. Because after all, it's been 25 years with a lot of sacrifice."

The 2026-27 SPL season is Ronaldo's 25th as a professional. During his career, he has won five Ballon d'Or awards and five UEFA Champions League titles.

Ronaldo's 28 league goals last season helped Al-Nassr become champion of Saudi Arabia in May to secure his first trophy since arriving in Riyadh, and a first league title for the club since 2019.

After returning from his wedding, he missed Al-Nassr's first game of its title defence on Saturday, watching from the sidelines as it opened with a 3-0 win over Al-Fateh. "Cristiano is here today, and he is always present with us," Al-Nassr coach Ange



Postecoglou said after the game.

Ronaldo could play against Al-Diriayah in the King's Cup on Tuesday. "The most important thing now is recovery, especially as we have only two days after this match," former Tottenham Hotspur and Nottingham Forest coach Postecoglou said. Ronaldo's comments came days after long-time rival Lionel Messi revealed that, following his father's death, he may soon retire.

"I don't know how to carry on," Messi, 39, said. "I used to just play football, and now I'm really not sure if I'll carry on doing it for much longer."



AP/RS

Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo waves following the World Cup Group K match against Colombia in Miami Gardens, Florida, on June 27.

## HOROSCOPE

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19)  
Follow your instincts, Aries. Even if you tend to listen more to your reason, put that aside. While your ears can hear words, your intuition can hear what's between the lines and provide you with a much bigger picture.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20)  
Feed your mind with new knowledge, Taurus. Visit an internet bookstore or read some interesting information online. If you have more time, visit the library; if possible, or explore courses that you might like.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21)  
Try to see nightmares as safe ways to understand feelings, Gemini. No one likes to experience them, and we'd sooner forget them once awake, the quickest way to ensure they don't return is to understand what they're saying.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22)  
Are you living your dreams, Cancer? Are you still in touch with them? The energy from today's planetary aspects can lend strength and encouragement to this part of your life. Take hold of the things you want most of all.

**LEO** (July 23-August 22)  
Today's a good day to check into advancing your career or education, Leo. The energy favors expansion and growth. When was the last time you learned a new skill? It doesn't have to be work related, either.

**VIRGO** (August 23-September 22)  
Do you recognise your intuition as a valuable asset, Virgo? Some people do and some don't. Which group are you in? It can be easy to trust more in concrete, factual reality than in the things you can't touch.

**LIBRA** (September 23-October 22)  
Use your creativity to make things happen today, Libra. This doesn't have to take the form of a finished product. You can come up with new and innovative ways to approach a task, project, or problem.

**SCORPIO** (October 23-November 21)  
Find new ways to expand your horizons, Scorpio. The web has an infinite number of resources and information to explore. Not only that, but your community and local colleges offer various online courses to choose from.

**SAGITTARIUS** (November 22-December 21)  
Step out of your usual role, Sagittarius. Doing this every now and then can add knowledge and expand your life. The day's planetary aspects favor such growth.

**CAPRICORN** (December 22-January 19)  
Are you satisfied with your current career, Capricorn? If not, start by making a plan. There are specific steps that you can take to give you the greatest advantage in the opportunities available.

**AQUARIUS** (January 20-February 18)  
Don't fear change, Aquarius. Even if you think you don't adjust well, you have far more adaptability than you realise. Without change, life would become stagnant and lifeless.

**PISCES** (February 19-March 20)  
Make your dreams valuable tools for insight, Pisces. Back in the old days, great rulers believed so strongly in the insight of dreams that they employed interpreters.

## CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 Bit of paper
  - 5 Horses
  - 10 Sour substance
  - 14 Ore deposit
  - 15 Inappropriate
  - 16 Second to —
  - 17 Shepherd in Genesis
  - 18 Pacific island nation
  - 19 Fatigue
  - 20 Opulence
  - 22 Airport employee
  - 24 Corn spikes
  - 26 Animal group
  - 27 Sunscreen
  - 29 Stage plays
  - 33 — and haw
  - 34 Burdens
  - 37 Condition
  - 38 Say with confidence
  - 40 Less important
  - 42 Gaelic
  - 43 Kingly
  - 45 Sticker on a jar
  - 47 Part of Scand.
  - 48 Kitchen items
  - 50 And others (2 wds.)
  - 52 "La — Bonita"
  - 54 Old Germanic letter
  - 55 Spray cans
  - 59 Harvested

- 63 Reach across
- 64 Pie nut
- 66 Turnstile
- 67 Antitoxins
- 68 Steer clear of
- 69 Skeletal part
- 70 Duck
- 71 Thick
- 72 Panache

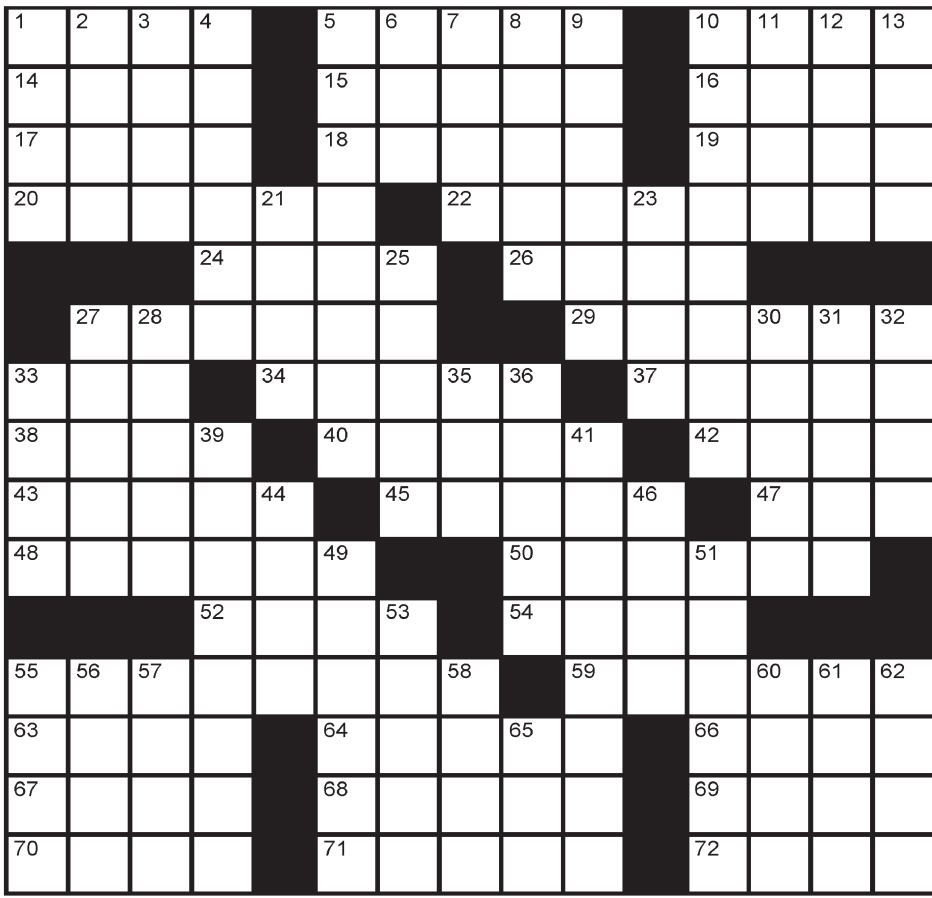
- DOWN**
- 1 Cabbage salad
  - 2 Rounded body part
  - 3 Concept
  - 4 Owl dropping
  - 5 Toadstool
  - 6 Literary collection
  - 7 Butts
  - 8 Period
  - 9 Looked fixedly
  - 10 Occur at an earlier time
  - 11 Invent
  - 12 About (2 wds.)
  - 13 "The — Hunter"
  - 21 Kite appendage
  - 23 Goofs
  - 25 Escargot
  - 27 Raze
  - 28 Last Greek letter
  - 30 — Gras
  - 31 Lost (2 wds.)
  - 32 "Now I've — everything!"

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P | E | A | L | M | A | D | A | M | U | T | A | H |
| A | L | L | A | A | L | E | V | E | T | A | P | E |
| R | I | M | S | D | I | C | E | D | E | L | A | N |
| T | A | S | T | E | D | R | U | N | N | E | R | S |
| C | A | R | D | I | N | A | L | A | S | I | A | N |
| A | B | E | T | E | X | A | S | E | L | M | E | R |
| R | O | A | M | D | O | V | E | R | S | A | G | E |
| D | U | C | A | T | N | E | V | E | R | T | E | N |
| T | H | I | R | D | D | E | C | I | S | I | V | E |
| R | E | P | L | E | T | E | L | E | A | V | E | S |
| A | V | I | A | E | X | P | E | L | S | I | L | O |
| M | I | N | N | S | P | A | R | E | O | L | L | A |
| S | L | E | D | T | O | W | E | D | N | E | A | R |

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|    |                     |    |                          |
|----|---------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 33 | Complain            | 57 | — avis                   |
| 35 | Letters in genetics | 58 | Read in haste            |
| 36 | Not at all tipsy    | 60 | Feeling of gloom         |
| 39 | Sane                | 61 | Lab burner               |
| 41 | Homecoming one      | 62 | Rat Pack singer — Martin |
| 44 | Minus               | 65 | Classifieds              |
| 46 | Road                |    |                          |
| 49 | Tilted              |    |                          |
| 51 | "A — of Their Own"  |    |                          |
| 53 | Painkiller brand    |    |                          |
| 55 | Aide (Abbr.)        |    |                          |
| 56 | Sword               |    |                          |



## SUDOKU

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
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| 8 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 6 |
| 3 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 4 |
| 9 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| 7 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 3 |
| 2 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 9 |
| 6 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 5 | 7 |

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |   | 4 |   |   | 3 | 6 |
|   |   |   | 2 |   |   |   | 1 |   |
|   |   |   | 1 |   | 6 | 9 |   |   |
|   | 1 | 7 |   | 3 | 6 |   |   | 8 |
| 6 | 4 |   |   |   |   | 9 |   | 3 |
| 8 |   |   | 1 | 9 |   | 6 | 5 |   |
|   |   |   | 9 | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |
|   |   | 6 |   |   |   | 3 |   |   |
| 2 | 4 |   |   | 8 |   |   |   |   |

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

# When a parent leaves, a child grieves

Parental migration can bring anxiety, loneliness and attachment difficulties for children, even when they remain connected through calls and messages.

○ JONY NEPAL  
KATHMANDU

When a parent migrates for work, they leave behind fragments of their presence, which, for a child, are never quite enough to make up a whole person.

As parents' migration for work becomes more normalised in Nepali society, we might be underestimating its psychological cost, a complex understanding of presence and absence in the children's minds.

Through FaceTime, voice memos, pictures, and videos, their parent's embrace is known but never truly felt. As a result, they neither become fully connected nor entirely foreign, leading to a sense of ambiguity in their grief.

Sunika Joshi is a mental health professional specialising in trauma, neurodiversity, child and adolescent mental health, and suicide prevention. She is also the co-founder of Lighthouse Neural, a mental health organisation.

Here, she discusses the psychological impact of parental migration on children, how prolonged separation can shape attachment and relationships, and what families can do to protect children's emotional well-being.

**When one parent goes abroad for work, what happens inside a child's mind in the first few months before the 'new normal' sets in?**

The new normal depends on who is the caretaker, living arrangements, and sense of security/ safety where they live. Usually, children gradually adapt to new family dynamics.

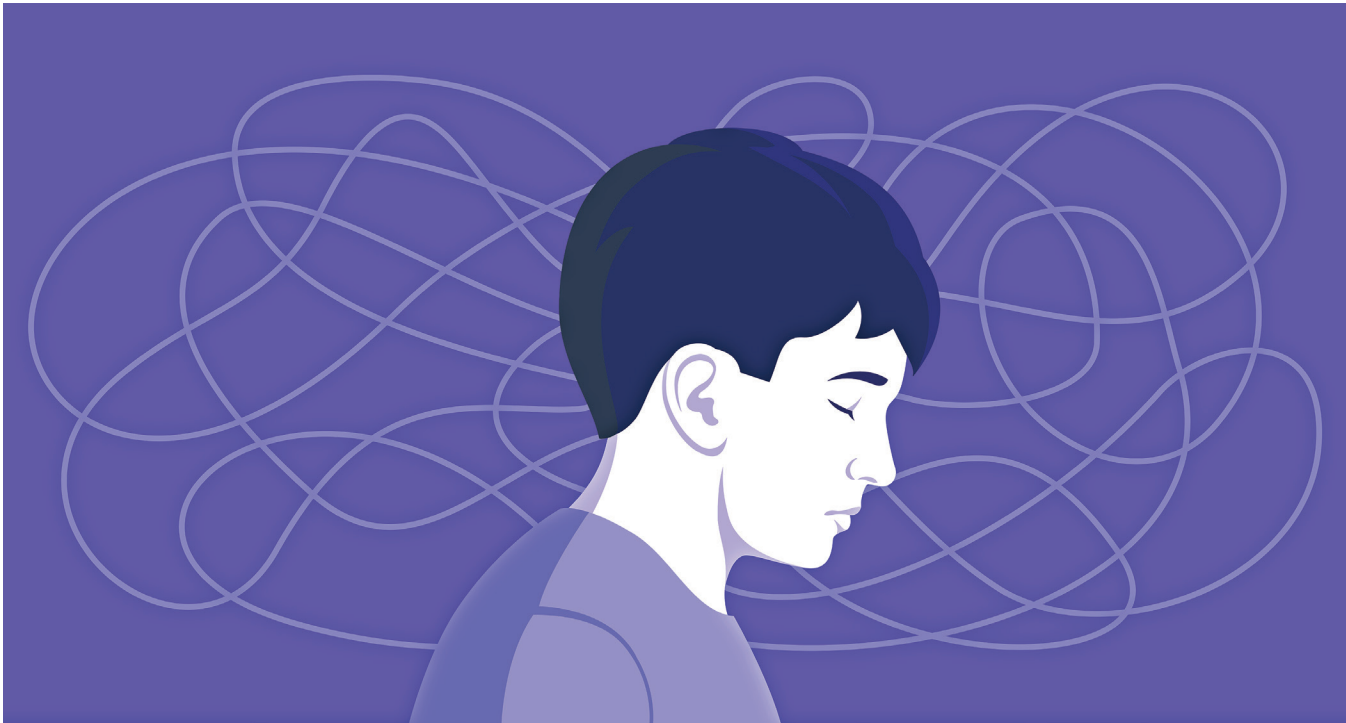
Initially, children may experience grief-like responses such as sadness, confusion, anger, and somatic complaints like headaches, stomach pain, and sleep issues.

Younger children may show stress in the form of bedwetting, anger issues, and crying over minor issues that are not related to the absence. Adolescents may experience increased worry due to uncertainty, loneliness, and fear.

It can be termed as ambiguous loss, which is a profound sense of loss and sadness that is not death-related; the parent is physically absent but psychologically or emotionally present in some way.

But at the same time, adolescents can also feel a sense of pride if they see it as a sacrifice for the family's financial security and remain hopeful that their lives will improve—economically and socially.

If the child is young, has the family member explained what migration is and how the living arrangement will change? Is anyone helping the child to make sense of the change? Does the child have access to communicate with the parent who



SHUTTERSTOCK

migrated? Questions, as such, matter equally.

There could be many underlying vulnerabilities. If the child has the right support, they can feel hopeful about the future, but if the child is exposed to uncertainty due to debt or illegal ways to go abroad, the risk of being cheated and the family being stressed, the child can also sense the stress and show emotional and behavioral symptoms.

**How does prolonged physical absence affect a child's attachment style? Are these kids more anxious, more avoidant, or does it vary?**

What happens during the absence of the parent determines the attachment style. They can be anxious and avoidant. Prolonged separation can increase the risk of both.

Anxious attachment means becoming hypervigilant, fearing abandonment, and worrying about parents' return, safety, and relationship. Experience emotional vulnerability and loneliness. This attachment happens when caregivers are unable to consistently meet or respond to the young child's emotional and physical needs. Later in life, they might struggle with anxiety in relationships, making them 'clingy' or jealous.

Avoidant attachment means to learn to suppress and avoid emotional conversations, spending time with family, or communicating their issues. Children may become self-reliant and push people away;



don't actively seek out their caregiver for comfort or emotional support. It results when a young child loses a sense of security in their environment. It can lead to suspicion, hostility, and lack of commitment in later relationships.

But these depend on the child's temperament, the consistency of the substitute caregiver and how communication through the absent parent is handled.

But when caregiving is inconsistent, children are likely to show anxiety, depressive symptoms, and challenges in forming an emotional bond with friends and family.

**Can a strong emotional bond survive almost entirely through video calls and voice notes? What gets lost that even daily calls can't replace?**

No, physical presence is different than talking on a call. You see the nuances. It is like reading a summary of the book without reading the entire book.

Video calls and voice notes help maintain a sense of connection and can reduce separation anxiety compared to no contact, but cannot fully replace physical presence, especially for younger children.

The child is deprived of physical affection, which is crucial for co-regulation, feeling safe and secure, and forming an attachment to the parent. The child and parent also miss out on the minor, first-hand details of daily routines and what each other's days look like.

Non-verbal communication is largely missing, creating a gap in understanding underlying emotions and in developing attachment through non-verbal cues. And if certain things are not communicated through words or messages, they will be missed.

In the Nepali context, emotional bonds are formed by providing material support in the form of favourite food and gifts. Families do not communicate through words and talk about emotions. In Nepal, fathers, in particular, do not share vulnerability or emotions.

So, this can create a huge gap in building a strong emotional bond as a family. Families would only know about each other through events shared across the device. What gets lost is the bond, trust, and reliability you create through physical presence, making memories by being in the same space and engaging in activities like cooking and celebrating festivals together. Also, passing down the culture, values, knowledge, and the



COURTESY OF SUNIKA JOSHI  
Psychologist Sunika Joshi

roots of the family/ethnicity/indigeneity.

**Is there any age range where a parent's absence particularly leaves lasting damage?**

Yes, in young age and in adolescence.

Younger children, when they have not made sense of the separation and do not understand the change, can show withdrawal and aggression. Early childhood is the time when they learn and understand attachment, love, care, affection, and emotion regulation from their parents, and disruptions in this process can have emotional consequences. Adolescents also face an increasing risk of confusion, loneliness, worry, and uncertainty.

As humans, we are all resilient and can adjust to change, but how a child makes sense of a parent's absence largely depends on the caretaker and guardian, as well as the family's response, the community the child lives in, and the environment.

The connection with the parent can become superficial and may lead to issues with socio-emotional adjustment. A sense of security and trust can also change as the child grows. Psychological well-being declines if more socio-economic challenges arise after migration.

**What's one piece of practical advice you'd give the parent staying behind to protect a child's emotional development?**

Choose a safe and secure place to live and a caregiver. Assess the risk of abuse, assault, discrimination, and neglect from the people around.

Do not pressure the child to take responsibility for the missing parent.

Make sure they understand why the parent migrated; do not expose them to the news of death, accidents, injury, parent separation.

Create space for the child to express their feelings, be vulnerable and if they are showing emotional distress, understand that it can be a reaction to worry and distress.

Do not shut the children and ask them to understand everything.

Help the child to foster a bond with the migrant parent—help them maintain a healthy relationship and communicate.

Avoid putting the child in the middle of adult conflicts about money or return plans. Seek help from schools, communicate about the change in a child's life.

## When an oral story becomes a painting

'Myth & Memory' brings Kirati Rai folklore, sisterhood, and the movements of Sakela into a contemporary series of paintings.

○ POST REPORT  
KATHMANDU

Artist Bivas Rai's solo exhibition 'Myth & Memory' will open at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, on August 28.

Presented by the Australian Himalayan Foundation (AHF) and Siddhartha Art Gallery, the exhibition brings together paintings that explore Kirati Rai culture through Sakela, a communal dance and festival celebrated to honour nature and ancestors.

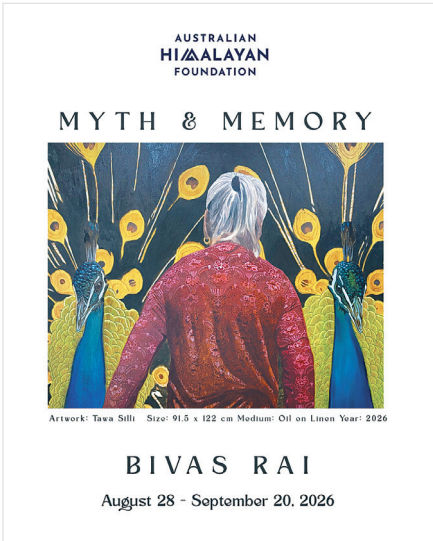
Rai, recipient of the 2025 AHF Himalayan Art Award, grew up in an extended Rai family surrounded by stories. As a child, however, he says he rarely had the patience to listen to them. Years later, his relationship with those stories has changed.

"Indigenous history is primarily passed down in the form of stories from one generation to the next," says Rai. His growing curiosity about the stories he once avoided led him to spend the past year observing, listening to, and archiving accounts shared by elders in his family.

Rather than trying to establish a single authoritative version, 'Myth & Memory' works within this shifting nature of folklore.

Sakela provides the visual language for the series. Its silli, or dance movements, often imitate elements of nature, including animals and flowers. While Sakela sets the visual tone, Rai says the exhibition is rooted in sisterhood and matriarchy.

Every painting in the series features one of his sisters. Rai con-



nects the women he grew up with to the Kirati myth of Tayama and Khiyama, the primordial sisters, allowing familial memory and inherited mythology to occupy the same space.

"My world has been shaped entirely by the strength and presence of my mother, her sisters, and my own sisters," says Rai.

Through 'Myth & Memory', these recollections are carried from oral storytelling into painting, preserving them while acknowledging that memory itself continues to shift each time a story is retold.

The exhibition will be inaugurated by Australian Ambassador to Nepal Simon Ernst, AHF Chair Garry Weare, and AHF Himalayan Art Award founder Margie Thomas.

**Myth & Memory**  
**When:** August 28 to September 20  
**Where:** Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Kathmandu  
**Opening:** August 28, 5:30 pm

## Now that it's big business, nostalgia is a thing of the past

Almost nothing disappears anymore. Old films stream on demand. Games are endlessly remastered.

○ JONATAN SODERGREN

Retro is booming. Nintendo keeps bringing back old games. Hollywood can't stop making sequels and remakes. Netflix fills our screens with shows inspired by the 1980s. Spotify recommends songs we loved as teenagers. Even Facebook reminds us what we were doing "On This Day" ten years ago.

For businesses, the past has become big. The market for retro entertainment has never been stronger. Companies know that looking backwards can help sell products today. A familiar logo, an old game or a favourite song can create an instant emotional connection with customers.

For years, researchers have explained this success through nostalgia. Looking back on happy memories can make us feel connected to who we are, remind us of people we care about and even help us cope with difficult times. Marketers have learned to tap into these feelings by bringing back old brands, old designs and old experiences.

But what if businesses become too good at selling nostalgia? Research I carried out with colleagues suggests that digital technology is changing nostalgia itself. Ironically, by making the past permanently available, companies may be weakening the very notion they are trying to sell.

Video games show this better than almost any other industry. Not long ago, if you missed an old game, that was it. Consoles became obsolete, cartridges stopped working and arcade machines disappeared. Part of what made those games special was that they belonged to another time.

Today, the opposite is true. Nintendo lets players revisit classic games through online subscriptions. PlayStation regularly releases remastered versions of older titles. Publishers such as Nightdive Studios restore forgot-

ten games for modern computers. Fans can play hundreds of classics through online archives. Old games rarely stay old for long.

Three connected practices

In our research, we argue that companies increasingly rely on three connected practices.

The first is preservation. Digital archives, cloud storage and online libraries keep games, films, music and photographs available for decades instead of allowing them to disappear.

The second is restoration. Old

**Marketers have learned to tap into these feelings by bringing back old experiences.**



PHOTO: THE CONVERSATION

products are cleaned up for modern audiences. Games receive better graphics and sound. AI improves old photographs and recordings. The past returns looking newer than ever.

The third is "foreverisation". This goes beyond preserving or restoring the past. Companies continually remake, reboot and recycle successful ideas so they never really leave the market. Instead of revisiting the past once in a while, consumers encounter endless new versions of it.

Gaming makes these changes especially easy to see. But the

same pattern now shapes television, music, film, fashion and even our personal memories stored on digital platforms.

**Nostalgia is bittersweet**

This is where philosopher Grafton Tanner offers an interesting twist. He argues that today's culture is less nostalgic than we think. That sounds strange at first. After all, we seem surrounded by nostalgia. But nostalgia has traditionally depended on something being gone. You missed the TV show because it was no longer broadcast. Your favourite toy broke. The record went out of print. The band split up. The past mattered because you couldn't go back to it, but now you can – easily.

Psychologists have long argued that nostalgia is bittersweet. It combines warm memories with the knowledge that those moments can't be relived exactly as they

were. That feeling of loss gives nostalgia much of its emotional power.

Digital technology changes this relationship with the past. Almost nothing truly disappears anymore. Old films stream on demand. Games are endlessly remastered. Social media reminds us of what happened years ago without us even asking. Instead of remembering the past, we increasingly live alongside it. The more the past stays present, the less distant it feels. And without distance, nostalgia

may become something different.

**Selling familiarity**

This creates an interesting challenge for businesses. Retro products clearly remain successful. But perhaps companies are no longer selling nostalgia itself. Instead, they may be selling something close to it: familiarity, comfort and recognition.

Those feelings are valuable. Consumers often enjoy revisiting favourite characters, songs and brands. Familiar products also feel safer in uncertain times, which helps explain why companies continue investing in them. Yet our research suggests there is a potential limit to this strategy.

If nostalgia depends on time, distance and the feeling that something has been lost, then endlessly reproducing the past may slowly erode the conditions that make nostalgia powerful in the first place. Consumers may stop longing for the past because the past never actually goes away.

That doesn't mean retro marketing will suddenly stop working. Familiarity will always have commercial value. But familiarity and nostalgia are not quite the same thing. The irony is hard to

miss. The companies that have become most successful at preserving, restoring and "foreverising" the past may eventually exhaust the emotional resource they depend on.

Gaming shows this most clearly today. But as streaming platforms, AI, social media and heritage brands increasingly keep the past permanently within reach, every industry may face the same question: the future of nostalgia may depend on whether we're still allowed to let go of the past.

— The Conversation