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Poll commission begins homework to enable Nepalis abroad to cast vote

Home minister promises support with legal framework and technology.

RAJESH MISHRA
KATHMANDU, AUG 21

The Election Commission has revived efforts to allow Nepali citizens living abroad and outside their registered constituencies to vote, eight years after the Supreme Court ordered the government to make necessary arrangements.

The commission is examining the legal, technological and administrative arrangements required to introduce what is broadly known as external voting.

Home Minister Sudan Gurung, who met election officials at the commission headquarters on Friday, assured them that the government would support the necessary legislation, infrastructure and technology for the reform.

"Start the preparations and tell us clearly what the government needs to do," an election official quoted Gurung as telling the commissioners.

"Whether it requires legal amendments or technological infrastructure, give us a clear action plan. The government is ready to provide the necessary support."

The move comes as political parties, youth activists and civil society groups have renewed demands for voting arrangements for Nepalis who live, work or study away from their permanent constituencies, particularly those living overseas.

The issue gained momentum following last year's Gen Z movement.

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Work gathers pace to put Nepal's languages online

From digitising centuries-old manuscripts to training AI models, researchers and language communities are using technology to preserve Nepal's linguistic heritage.

SAJANA BARAL
KATHMANDU, AUG 21

Communities and academics in Nepal are stepping up their efforts to put the country's indigenous languages on the digital scene, aided by artificial intelligence that has emerged as an important tool for preserving languages and passing them on to the younger generation.

A major step comes from the Kathmandu University's Information and Language Processing Research Lab, which recently unveiled a trilingual translation system covering Nepali, Tamang and English.

The system, supported by a Google Academic Research Award, was trained on more than 100,000 parallel sentences in Nepali, Tamang and English. Researchers used artificial intelligence and trained Meta AI's NLLB-200 model on datasets in Nepali and Tamang.

Professor Bal Krishna Bal, lead researcher at the lab, said most of the information Nepali speakers find online is available either in English or Nepali. He believes the trilingual machine translation system can help Tamang speakers access the vast body of knowledge available online while allowing their culture and traditions to reach wider audiences.

"English has become so dominant that we find it increasingly difficult to write and speak even in Nepali. The language faces ever more encroachment," Bal said.

"But among Nepalis living abroad, there seems to be a stronger emphasis on preserving their mother tongue. They want their children to learn cultural and family traditions, including customs and rules surrounding marriage."

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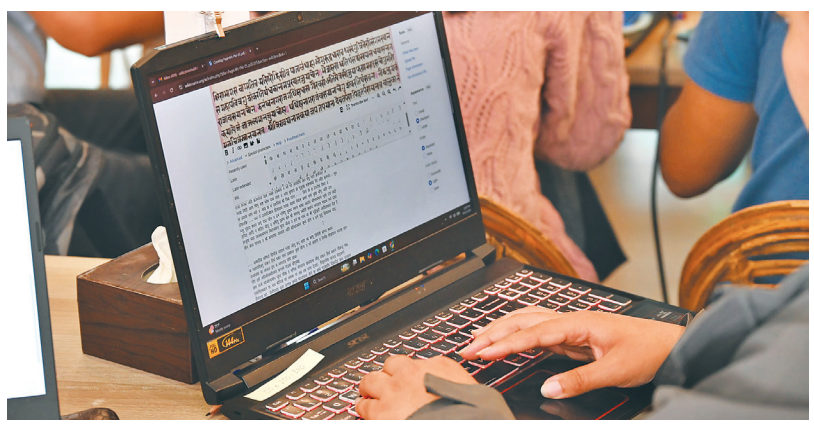

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ARCHIEVE NEPAL

A concerted effort is being made to preserve multiple Nepali languages and their scripts.

500 documents vanished from the foreign ministry. Nepal never followed the trail

In 2009, hundreds of blank travel documents disappeared from the ministry. Fifteen years later, a chargesheet over papers issued to Tibetan refugees has revived the case.

MATRIKA DAHAL
KATHMANDU, AUG 21

Fifteen years after 500 blank travel documents disappeared from the foreign ministry's store section, a chargesheet filed at the Kathmandu District Court has forced investigators to reopen a case they had left unresolved.

Last month, the District Attorney's Office in Kathmandu filed a case against Pushpa Raj Bhattarai, a joint secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, over the illegal issuance of travel documents to five Tibetan refugees back in 2009.

The case followed a years-long investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CIB), which the foreign ministry had asked to look into the matter in October 2011—after a German Embassy official flagged, in 2010, that recently arrived Tibetan refugees appeared to be travelling on Nepali travel documents they should not have been able to obtain.

But buried inside Bhattarai's chargesheet is a second, larger story: three of the five travel documents in question—bearing serial numbers A-026225, A-026226 and A-026227—belong to a batch of 500 travel documents, numbered A-026001 to A-026500, that went missing from the Store Section in 2009 and were never accounted for. The other 497 have never been traced.

AIG Uma Prasad Chaturvedi, chief of the CIB, confirmed that a supplementary investigation into the remaining documents has now begun.

"The CIB has begun a supplementary investigation into who was involved in the other travel documents that went missing from the ministry at the time and where the misuse took place," Chaturvedi told Kantipur. "The remaining matters will become clear only after the investigation."

The missing documents first surfaced during an unrelated investigation in January 2010, when the CIB arrested Bachchuram KC, a non-gazetted officer in the Passport Section, for helping 30 foreign nationals—including five Afghans—obtain Nepali passports using forged documents.

KC disclosed information about a wider network, and it was in the course of that inquiry that investigators discovered 500 travel documents had left the Store Section without ever reaching their stated destination.

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POST FILE PHOTO

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kathmandu.

Eight years after court order, election body revives push for overseas voting

POST FILE PHOTO

The stately Bahadur Bhawan at Kantipath, built in 1889 and rebuilt in 1905 after a fire, houses the Election Commission.

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Ahead of the general elections on March 5 this year, activists and civil society groups campaigned for external voting, arguing that millions of Nepalis living outside the country should not be excluded from elections.

The commission was unable to introduce such arrangements for the March elections, citing a lack of time, the absence of enabling legislation and insufficiently tested electronic voting infrastructure.

The commission's new leadership has now made electoral inclusion a priority. Chief Election Commissioner Man Bahadur Karki, appointed along with two other commissioners last month, had included voting rights for overseas Nepalis and internal migrants in his work plan presented during his parliamentary hearing.

Speaking at the commission on Friday, Karki said two high-level committees had been formed to determine how the voting system could be implemented.

"This issue has been raised for a long time, and public demand has increased in recent years. Furthermore, the apex court has issued explicit directions on the matter," Karki said.

"Maximising voter participation is fundamental to a vibrant democracy. The study panels will determine how we can practically manage voting for citizens living overseas or away from their registered home addresses."

The commission formed the two committees at its board meeting on August 12. The first, led by commissioner Guru Prasad Wagle, will examine the legal framework. It will review existing election laws and propose amendments needed for voter registration abroad, polling stations in foreign countries, the appointment of overseas polling officials and legal recognition of ballots cast outside Nepal. The second committee, headed by commissioner Rajiv Subba, will examine technology and operational arrangements. Its work will include assessing information technology infrastructure, digital security, administrative logistics and possible voting methods, including physical ballots, postal voting and secure electronic voting.

The committees will draw expertise from several government agencies. The legal panel will include representatives from the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The technology panel will include technical officials from the foreign ministry, the Integrated Data Management Centre and the Cyber Bureau of Nepal Police.

Commission spokesperson Narayan Prasad Bhattarai said the coordinators of the two committees had already begun preliminary work. The committees are expected to hold their first full meetings next week after the concerned ministries nominate their representatives.

The commission's latest initiative follows a Supreme Court directive issued on March 23, 2018 for the government and the Election Commission to make the necessary legal and technical arrangements to enable eligible Nepali citizens living abroad to exercise their voting right.

More than eight years later, Parliament has yet to enact the primary legislation needed to implement the directive. Existing election laws do not provide for voter registration outside Nepal, polling stations abroad, voting through diplomatic missions or electronic balloting.

Implementing external voting would be a major logistical undertaking. Nepali citizens live in around 170 countries, requiring the government and election authorities to establish mechanisms that can operate across different jurisdictions and comply with local laws.

Wagle said his committee would study international practices, treaty obligations and previous feasibility reports before recommending a legal framework.

The commission has previously examined external voting in 2010-11 and 2016-17. Both studies found that the system was logistically challenging but technically possible if introduced in phases and backed by coordination among government agencies.

The 2010-11 study estimated that nearly 4 million Nepalis were living abroad at the time. The number has increased substantially since then. A separate study by the Policy Research Institute before the March 5 elections also concluded that out-of-country voting was feasible if appropriate legal and regulatory arrangements were put in place.

The commission does not envisage introducing external voting simultaneously in every country where Nepalis live. Instead, the study committees will identify countries with large Nepali populations and functioning diplomatic missions as possible locations for an initial pilot.

Gurung has also urged the commission to pursue a phased approach and identify jurisdictions where external voting could be introduced first.

The commission is considering the November 2027 provincial assembly elections as a possible opportunity to test external voting under the proportional representation system, provided Parliament passes the required legislation in time.

Local elections are scheduled for April-May 2027, followed by provincial assembly elections in November 2027. The commission therefore faces a tight timetable if it wants to introduce even a limited external voting system during the next election cycle.

For the reform to become operational, however, legal changes will be essential. The commission can develop technical and administrative models, but Parliament must first create a legal basis for registering voters abroad, establishing polling arrangements outside Nepal and recognising votes cast from outside a voter's registered constituency.

Correction

A wrong image was published on the front page of The Kathmandu Post on Friday under the headline "Ruling party chief tells CIAA to act if the executive obstructs its work." The picture should have been of Prem Kumar Rai, chief commissioner of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority, instead of Amrit Bahadur Rai, the foreign secretary. We apologise for the error.

– Editor-in-Chief

Nepal, India to deploy CCTV along sensitive border areas

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, AUG 21

Nepal and India have agreed to use modern technology, including closed-circuit television (CCTV) and other equipment, to strengthen security surveillance in sensitive areas along the border.

The understanding was reached at the 14th meeting of the Nepal-India Joint Working Group (JWG) on Border Management, which concluded on Friday in Dehradun, India. The Nepali delegation was led by Home Ministry Joint Secretary Ananda Kafle, while the Indian side was led by Paushumi Basu, joint secretary at India's Ministry of Home Affairs. "Both sides agreed to enhance security surveillance in sensitive border areas through the use of modern and latest technology, including CCTV and other modern equipment," the Nepali Embassy in New Delhi said in a statement.

The two sides will hold further discussions on the use of such technology, including its deployment and operation by security agencies on the ground, according to a Nepali official who participated in the meeting.

The meeting focused primarily on border security, cross-border crime, trade and other issues of mutual concern. The two sides agreed to strengthen coordination and real-time information-sharing among relevant agencies to combat cross-border crimes, including the trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, prohibited and controlled medicines, wildlife, and people. They also discussed economic crimes, including the circulation of counterfeit currency, arms and ammunition smuggling and other illegal activities. The Nepali side raised emerging security challenges such as cybercrime and cross-border digital fraud.

The two sides also discussed measures to strengthen security arrangements and infrastructure along the Nepal-India border and improve coordination and information-sharing among security agencies. Issues of radicalisation and religious fundamentalism, disaster risk reduction and management, and border infrastructure were also discussed.

According to Nepali officials, the meeting also featured talks on removing encroachments from no-man's-land, unauthorised trade, and Indian assistance to Nepali security agencies. Capacity building of Nepal's security institutions was also on the agenda.

Nepal also renewed its request for India to recognise its national identity card as a valid travel document for travel between the two countries.

India is positive about the proposal but has sought more time to consider it, according to a Nepali official.

The two sides also reviewed decisions taken by lower-level security mechanisms involving chief district officers on the Nepali side and district magistrates on the Indian side, as well as the Armed Police Force and India's Sashastra Seema Bal. Issues related to radicalisation, religious fundamentalism, activities of third-country nationals and tightening border security have routinely featured in security meetings between Nepal and India, from home secretary-level talks to meetings between chief district officers and district magistrates.

The two countries also have a permanent local-level mechanism, the Border District Coordination Committee, to address security concerns in border districts.

The travel documents that vanished without a trace

>> Continued from page 1

According to a former joint secretary at the ministry who recalled the case, storekeeper Anil Lamsal released 250 documents intended for Nepal's mission in Cairo and another 250 for its mission in Bangkok; KC received them for dispatch. But an internal check found that neither mission had actually requested the documents.

"How did the Cairo mission, the Passport Section and the Store Section fail to match up? A recommendation from the Ministry of Home Affairs is mandatory for issuing travel documents to refugees," the former joint secretary told Kantipur.

"Why was that requirement not considered necessary in this case? Why were documents that had not been requested released? These questions never became part of the investigation." KC told investigators that people in Nepal and India were involved in obtaining Nepali citizenship certificates for foreign nationals—for as much as $5,000 each—which were then used to secure Nepali passports. Despite being at the centre of the case, KC was never chargesheeted. He was transferred to the National Planning Commission and died on August 21, 2019.

A police officer involved in the original investigation, now an SSP, said the missing documents never got the scrutiny they warranted. "The investigation that should have taken place did not happen for reasons I am not aware of," the officer told Kantipur, speaking on condition of anonymity.

An investigating officer from that period was more blunt about the outcome. "The documents never reached, or were never taken to, the two missions," he said. "It has become mysterious as to why no investigation was carried out." He believes the people responsible could still be identified if an impartial investigation were conducted now.

The CIB's questioning of Bhattarai, along with two other former Passport Section officials—Ram Prasad Subedi and Anil Lamsal—is what eventually reconnected the two episodes. All three now hold senior diplomatic postings: Subedi is Nepal's permanent representative to the United Nations in Geneva; Lamsal is first secretary at the Embassy of Nepal in Vienna.

In his statement to the CIB, recorded in the chargesheet, Subedi said he verified applicants and signed off on travel documents and passports that had come through proper channels, and denied any knowledge that KC had received 500 documents from the Store Section. "I had no knowledge that KC had received 500 travel documents from the Store Section and misused them," he said.

Lamsal similarly denied involvement. "Travel documents released from the store section were entered in the register there and then sent to the dispatch section... to be forwarded to the concerned missions and embassies," he told investigators. "I do not know where those travel documents went or where they were delivered afterwards."

Surendra Thapa, now acting ambassador to India, told investigators he had occasionally signed and issued passports and travel documents in the Passport Section when Subedi was on leave or workload was high, but said he had no knowledge of the missing batch. Thapa was transferred to the ministry's contact office in Birgunj on February 1, 2010.

Lok Bahadur Paudel Chhetri, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said the ministry's hands are tied while the case is before the court. "The issue is very old, and since a related issue is sub judice, there is no particular information I can provide at this time," he told Kantipur. "The concerned section must have looked into it as well; beyond that, I cannot say anything."

The vulnerability the missing documents exposed was not new. A year earlier, in August 2008, two passengers were stopped at Tribhuvan International Airport before boarding a Gulf Air flight to Bahrain, en route to the United States on valid-looking US visas.

Their Nepali passports had been issued based on citizenship certificates that, on closer inspection, did not hold up. The two told immigration officials they were siblings travelling to meet their parents in Boston, and both named Dal Bahadur Lama as their father. But investigators found that Shekhar Kumar Adhikari, whose signature appeared on the citizenship certificates as the issuing officer, had never worked at the Kathmandu District Administration Office where the certificates were purportedly issued. The certificates were also dated November 9, 2007—a public holiday for Tihar.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed the passports themselves were genuine, issued on January 22, 2008. The two individuals were prosecuted for forging government seals and signatures, and subsequently released on a Rs 9,000 bail. The trail stopped there. No one established where they went afterwards, who Dal Bahadur Lama was, or who had produced certificates that did not exist in government records but were nonetheless accepted as the basis for real passports.

Taken together with the 500 missing documents a year later, the case illustrates a recurring gap: Nepal's passport-issuing system has repeatedly been shown capable of accepting fraudulent underlying documents without an agency ever establishing where those documents came from—and, in at least one case, without ever fully investigating where the resulting passports and travel documents went.

It is unclear how long the CIB's supplementary investigation to look into the missing travel documents will take. "The remaining matters will become clear only after the investigation," CIB chief Chaturvedi said.

JE is preventable, but Nepal's vaccination programme falls short

Sayal Rai has spent more than two years on a ventilator after JE left him severely disabled. The disease has killed at least 21 people across Nepal over the past six weeks.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, AUG 21

Sayal Rai was just 12 years old when he contracted Japanese encephalitis. Now 14, he remains in a permanent vegetative state and has been on ventilator support ever since, first at Birat Medical College and Teaching Hospital in Biratnagar and later at BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan.

"It's already been more than two years since the infection, and my son is still on a ventilator," Nirmala, Sayal's mother, a resident of Belaka Municipality in Udayapur district, told the Post over the phone from Dharan. "He cannot breathe on his own or speak, and has developed wounds on his back from lying in the same position."

Japanese encephalitis (JE) is a viral brain infection that kills about one-third of those who develop severe illness, while up to half of survivors are left with severe, lifelong disabilities, according to the World Health Organisation.

Nepal is currently in the midst of a major JE outbreak that has killed at least 21 people and infected 59 others in the past six weeks.

Sayal is among scores of survivors whose lives have been permanently altered by the disease.

Nepal's routine JE vaccination programme covers children but leaves adults out, even though they account for most infections and deaths. Officials are now considering expanding the vaccine to adults, but say funding remains a big obstacle.

"He sheds tears when secretions lodge in his throat and trigger coughing, or when he experiences severe pain," said Nirmala. "It is deeply distressing to watch him suffer. He is our only child, and we had pinned all our hopes for our bright future on him."

Sayal was in the sixth grade when he contracted the virus. His parents had enrolled him in a private school at the district headquarters and arranged for him to stay in a rented room with his cousin sister.

When he developed a 104-degree fever, they rushed him to Birat Teaching Hospital in Biratnagar. Doctors admitted him to the intensive care unit after his condition deteriorated.

His parents spent around Rs800,000 on his treatment, but he showed no signs of recovery. They eventually transferred him to BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences after they could no longer afford the mounting bills.

"We owe around Rs4 million to the hospital, and the hospital administration has since moved him to a free bed because we could no longer afford his treatment."

As Sayal's stay in the hospital stretched from weeks into months and then years, much of his care fell to his family. He depends on continuous oxygen support and has a tube inserted through his neck for feeding. He also needs assistance with excretion and almost every other basic bodily function.

Nirmala, once a housewife who also worked on her family's farm in the village, has become his full-time caregiver. She has learned to perform many tasks normally carried out by nurses, including monitoring his condition, managing his feeding tube, tending to his wounds and caring for him round the clock.

She has rented a small room near the hospital for Rs2,000 a month where she prepares gruel from rice or flour, along with milk and eggs, and feeds him through the tube. Initially, relatives visited and provided some financial assistance, but their visits and support gradually dwindled.

> Officials consider vaccinating adults, but say funding remains a key concern.

Nirmala has borrowed money from relatives but does not know how she will repay the loans. Her husband, who once shared the burden of caring for their son, now carries sand near the India border to make ends meet. He is often unreachable because of a poor phone network.

"We can't say anything about Sayal's full recovery," said Dr Basanta Rai, assistant professor and consultant paeditrician at the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences.

"But his mother has not given up hope and has invested everything she has in her son."

Dr Rai said Sayal's mother has been paying for medicines, diapers, wound ointments, and other items that are not covered by the hospital's free services.

"JE is not like other diseases. Those who suffer know the real consequences," said Dr Rai. "It can leave survivors with devastating, lifelong disabilities and have a huge impact on their families."

JE is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected Culex mosquitoes.

Since the JE outbreak began, 21 people have died, and 59 others have been infected. Nepal's current case fatality rate is around 25 percent. Eighty percent of JE infection cases have been reported from 59 local units in 25 districts. Of those infected, 89 percent were unvaccinated. Among those who died, 81 percent were above 50, and were all unvaccinated, government data show.

According to the Ministry of Health and Food Safety, Koshi province has recorded 24 cases, including 10 deaths. Madhesh has reported 19 cases and six deaths, Lumbini seven cases and two deaths, Sudurpaschim 13 cases and two deaths, and Bagmati reported 10 cases and one death. Gandaki saw five cases, while Karnali recorded one case.

Jhapa district in Koshi province recorded 10 cases, six of which were fatal. Its case fatality rate of 60 percent is the highest in the country. Parsa, Nawalparasi and Ilam districts have each recorded a case fatality rate of 50 percent. Parsa has reported four cases, including two deaths. Nawalparasi and Ilam each reported two cases, including two deaths.

Kailali has reported seven cases and two deaths; Morang seven cases and one death; Saptari six cases and two deaths; Sunsari five cases and two deaths; Dang three cases and one death; and Dhanusha three cases and one death.

Last year, 41 people died, and 141 others were infected with JE, which had spread to over 117 local units in 45 districts. The case fatality rate was around 23 percent. In 2024, 23 people, including one person in Kathmandu Valley, died of JE, while at least 80 were infected.

Health officials say most of those infected or killed by JE were unvaccinated. Many were adults not covered by Nepal's routine childhood immunisation programme. Such people are at serious risk of severe illness and death. JE can cause permanent damage to the brain and nervous system, and there is no specific treatment. Care focuses on managing symptoms and complications.

Last year's data show that 76 percent of those who died from JE were over 40, while around 70 percent of those infected were older than 15. The figures indicate that the disease also affects many people outside the age group covered by routine childhood vaccination.

JE has long been a major public health problem in Nepal. The virus killed nearly 2,000 people in Nepal in 2005, mostly children in the Tarai districts.

Nepal started administering the JE vaccine in 2006, eight years before the WHO officially issued prequalification certification, due to high rates of infection and deaths. The programme was later expanded with support from donors and global health partners.

Nepal now includes the JE vaccine in its routine immunisation programme and provides it free of cost to children at state-run health facilities. But the programme does not cover adults, even though it has been killing many adults in recent years.

"We can prevent death and disability from JE infection by administering a single dose of vaccine," said Dr Abhiyan Gautam, chief of the Immunisation Section at the Family Welfare Division under the Department of Health Services. "But the problem is we don't have a vaccination programme for adults."

Experts say the government should launch vaccination for all age groups, especially in high-risk areas.

"The government's prime responsibility is saving lives," said Dr Yasho Vardan Pradhan, former director general at the Department of Health Services. "JE infection is so deadly that even if patients survive, the virus leaves some lifelong effects."

Along with vaccination, health officials say awareness drives, improved sanitation and hygiene, and behavioural changes are crucial in reducing transmission. Pigs and ducks are natural reservoirs of the virus. Pig farmers and those residing near the paddy fields are at particularly high risk of infection.

An estimated 12.5 million people in Nepal are thought to be at high risk of JE infection.

Officials at the Ministry of Health and Food Safety say they are exploring the possibility of administering a single dose of the JE vaccine to the entire adult population, but add that funding the programme would be difficult.

"We will hold discussions with relevant officials and explore possibilities," said Dr Manohar Pradhan, Health Minister Neesha Mehta's expert advisor. "We have discussed starting the vaccination from Koshi province, where the death rate is extremely high."

Bara parents reject deal, refuse to collect body of three-year-old daughter

Protests continue on Birgunj-Pathlaiya road after local authorities signed 5-point deal with political figures following the rape and murder, without victim's family present.

NEPAL PHOTO LIBRARY

A demonstration in Golbazar, Siraha, on Friday demanding justice for the toddler's rape and murder in Bara.

LAXMI SAH
BARA, AUG 21

The family of a three-year-old girl who was raped and murdered in Bara earlier this week has rejected a five-point agreement reached by local authorities and political leaders, saying they were not included in negotiations.

The girl's parents have refused to claim her body and have been demanding that Home Minister Sudan Gurung and Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Sobita Gautam visit Jitpur Simara Sub-Metropolitan City and assure them that those responsible will face the maximum punishment under the law.

The dispute has triggered protests and a road blockade along the Birgunj-Pathlaiya road in Simara. Relatives and the local residents have staged sit-ins, saying they will not accept the agreement or hold further talks until the federal ministers visit the area.

"A helpless infant has been brutally murdered," the victim's father said. "We demand justice, and the home minister must come here in person to ensure it."

The protests continued on Friday despite the agreement reached late Thursday by the district security committee, local political leaders, representatives of the Tharu Welfare Council, local lawmakers and officials of Jitpur Simara Sub-Metropolitan City. The victim's parents were not present when the agreement was signed.

The case has also come under scrutiny over the initial police response to the girl's disappearance. Her family alleges that delays in the response and investigation cost precious hours that could have been critical to saving her life.

The girl disappeared from her home at around 8:30 am on August 16. Her mother realised she was missing after searching for her for several hours and contacted police posts in Simara and Pathlaiya. She also informed her husband, who works as a daily-wage labourer.

According to the mother, the family told police that their daughter was missing and sought their help. She said officers initially treated the disappearance as a routine matter and told the family that they would look into it.

A formal search operation began the following morning, according to the family.

On the third day after the girl disappeared, neighbours noticed a foul smell coming from an abandoned tin-roofed house about 200 metres from the family's home. Police entered the building and found the girl's body.

Specialised teams from the Madhesh Province Police Office in Janakpur and the Federal Police Office in Birgunj joined the investigation, with sniffer dogs deployed to search the area.

A police dog led investigators to a 16-year-old local youth, who had also been helping with the search for the missing girl.

Police questioned the teenager and arrested him after he, according to police, confessed to luring the child with chocolate before assaulting and killing her.

Superintendent of Police Narendra Kunwar, chief of the Bara District Police Office, said the teenager told investigators that he had acted on impulse after being influenced by a similar crime he had seen in nearby Birgunj.

Police later arrested 24-year-old Progres Chaudhary, the owner and driver of a local public transport vehicle. The 16-year-old suspect worked as a co-driver for Chaudhary.

Both suspects remain in police custody after a court granted a four-day remand for further investigation. The girl's parents say they had already been concerned about the 16-year-old suspect, who frequently visited their home.

The victim's mother said the family had concerns about his behaviour. Her husband had also repeatedly told her to keep an eye on the teenager, she said.

When their daughter disappeared, the family immediately told investigating officers about their suspicions, according to the mother.

The family alleges that police did not act quickly on the information. They say delays over procedural requirements, including the filing of a formal complaint and obtaining court authorisation to access call detail records, slowed the investigation.

Nepal Police Headquarters recalled Deputy Superintendent of Police Dilip Chhetri and Inspector Prakash Thapa from the Simara police office to headquarters following public criticism related to the handling of the case.

Police have not publicly established whether the alleged delays affected the outcome of the investigation or the child's safety.

As protests continued, the District Security Committee, chaired by Bara's chief district officer Dharmendra Kumar Mishra, held talks with local political leaders, representatives of the Tharu Welfare Council, local lawmakers and Jitpur Simara Sub-Metropolitan City mayor Rajan Paudel in Kalaiya on Thursday night.

The talks ended with a five-point agreement that included removing two police officers from operational duties, pursuing the suspects under rape and murder laws, providing relief and employment assistance to the victim's family in coordination with the local government, and strengthening security across the municipality.

The victim's parents, however, were not part of the talks and did not sign the agreement.

Assistant chief district officer Chhabi Raman Bhattarai said officials had tried to bring the parents into the discussions but were told by Mayor Paudel that the couple was too exhausted to attend. The girl's uncle then signed the agreement on behalf of the family alongside the political representatives.

"We have agreed to almost every demand raised within the boundaries of the law," Bhattarai said. "We reached a consensus in good faith, but the victim's parents have rejected it. There is little more the local administration can offer beyond what the law permits."

Mayor Paudel said he was surprised that the protests had continued after the agreement.

"The agreement was reached after collecting demands from the relatives and consulting party leaders, civil society heads, and the home secretary," Paudel said. "I signed it in good faith, and I do not understand why the obstruction persists."

The disagreement has left the local administration trying to end the protests and persuade the family to accept the agreement and claim the body for the final rites.

The Birgunj-Pathlaiya road is a major transport route linking Birgunj, Nepal's main southern border point, with other parts of the country. The blockade has disrupted vehicle movement along the route.

Relatives and community members say the issue is not about compensation alone. They want accountability for the police response and the strongest possible prosecution of those accused of the crime.

The victim's father, the sole breadwinner for his family of four, has been unable to return to work since his daughter disappeared.

Local officials and community leaders continued efforts on Friday to persuade the family to accept the agreement and mediate with the administration, but no breakthrough had been reached by the evening.

Police have arrested two suspects and begun a criminal investigation.

The family and protesters, however, say they want the government to ensure that the investigation is handled properly and that those found responsible are prosecuted under the law.

सर्टिफिकेट हरायो

मिति २०८३/०३/०२ गते केशरमहल बाट घण्टाघरसम्म जाँदा मेरो निम्न व्यहोरा भएको राष्ट्रिय परीक्षा बोर्डको सर्टिफिकेट हराएको हुँदा पाउनुहुने महानुभावले फोन नं. ९८६१५९००२८ वा नजिकको प्रहरी कार्यालयमा खबर गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु ।
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रजिष्ट्रेशन नं.: ८०१०६०८८००८२
स्याम्बल नं.: C0011689
वर्ष: बि.सं. २०८१
ठेगाना: ईटहरी-६, सुनसरी

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

First date of publication: 22 August, 2026

Kailash Helicopter Services is looking for following personnel for its current and planned fleet comprising of Airbus AS350 Series Helicopters. Interested qualified Nepalese personnel may apply with a current CV, License, and all related documents.

1. Helicopter Pilot (Instructor):	**Required Number: 03**
2. Helicopter Pilot (Captain):	**Required Number: 02**
3. Helicopter Co-Pilot:	**Required Number: 02**

Qualification and Experience:

→ Hold a valid ATPL/CFI/CPL (H) on type AS350 series Helicopter issued by ICAO Contracting State / CAA Nepal.
→ Other minimum qualification should be as per requirement of CAA Nepal.

Please apply on the following address or In-person at Kailash Helicopter Services Office within 15 days from the date of publication. Telephone inquiry will not be entertained.

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"The Spirit of Nepal"

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Email: **info@kailashheli.com/operation@kailashheli.com**

KU info lab leads efforts to digitise and preserve Nepal's indigenous languages

>> Continued from page 1

The usefulness of translation technology is broad, both inside Nepal and among Nepali communities abroad, Bal added.

Amrit Yonjan, coordinator of the Tamang translation team, said that the technology had given fresh hope to efforts to preserve Nepal's indigenous languages. He added that the team was also working to have Tamang added to Google Translate by mid-March 2027.

"Google sent us some sentences in English. We translated them into Tamang and submitted them. They said they would integrate them into Google Translate," Bal said.

"Before adding a new language, Google requires its own designated English-language corpus to be translated into the target language. We will soon complete that work and submit it."

Nepali, Maithili and Nepal Bhasha, also known as Newari, are currently the only three languages from Nepal available on Google Translate.

The progress with Tamang has encouraged other linguistic communities to pursue similar projects. Magar, Sherpa and Tharu communities are among those showing interest in bringing their languages into AI systems.

The Magar and Tharu communities have already expressed their interest in formally working with Kathmandu University's language research lab.

The Magar community has pledged to provide more than 25,000 sentences and words to help researchers train an AI model.

Bishnu Kumar Sinjali, an activist involved in indigenous language and cultural studies, said the decline of his mother tongue was a serious concern.

Of Nepal's estimated two million Magars, around 1.1 million have stopped speaking their mother tongue, he said.

"Technology has become essential to teaching the mother tongue to younger generations and ensuring its continuity," Sinjali said.

"When languages are built into technology, it makes it easier for the government to provide services and conduct official business [in them]. Machines can make these processes more efficient without requiring too many personnel."

For the transmission of linguistic knowledge from one generation to the next, embracing digital technology has become a necessity, he stressed.

Nepal's constitution recognises Nepali, written in the Devanagari script, as the official language for federal government business under Article 7. Provinces can designate other mother tongues as official languages based on recommendations from the Language Commission.

The Koshi provincial government recently decided to move ahead with legislation to recognise Limbu and Maithili as languages for official business.

Among Nepal's indigenous languages, Nepal Bhasha has made the most systematic progress in the digital sphere.

The language's historic Ranjana and Prachalit scripts have been standardised in Unicode. Users can now access mobile keyboards, digital dictionaries, Google Translate and optical character recognition tools that can identify characters in historical inscriptions.

The Kathmandu Metropolitan City has also been active in supporting such efforts, including providing financial assistance to young people working on language digitisation. Acting mayor Sunita Dangol has herself been involved in promoting the digital use of the Ranjana script.

Another project, Newa ASR, led by young engineer Swarnim Nakarmi, is working to keep Nepal Bhasha alive through AI.

The automatic speech recognition project aims to develop systems capable of understanding and speaking Nepal Bhasha, including speech recognition and text-to-speech functions.

More than 35,000 voice samples have so far been collected through community participation, Nakarmi said.

"We have collected a wide range of voice samples from native Nepal Bhasha speakers from different regions and linguistic backgrounds," he said. "The samples are processed and used to train a deep-learning model based on the phonetics and grammar of Nepal Bhasha. Our goal is to collect 100,000 voice samples to make the model more accurate and mature."

Once completed, the technology will allow computers and other digital devices to understand Nepal Bhasha and accurately convert spoken language into written text. It will also be able to convert the Nepal Bhasha script into speech.

Kathmandu metropolis has also been recognised for its efforts to preserve local languages.

Aided by the municipal government, a Nepal Bhasha Dictionary app has been launched in coordination with cultural scholar Mall K Sundar. According to city spokesperson Nabin Manandhar, the app contains more than 41,000 words and their meanings. It also allows Romanised Nepali to be converted into Newa script.

"Language preservation cannot have a strong foundation if technology is ignored. People no longer have much time to sit down and read books," Manandhar said

"The metropolis invested in creating an environment where people can find a word with a single click on their mobile phone. If needed, the City will also support Tamang and other indigenous languages spoken in Kathmandu."

Kathmandu University and Kathmandu Metropolitan City have also worked together on an AI-based project to digitally archive ancient historical heritage sites in the Valley.

According to Professor Bal, researchers are developing technology that can photograph inscriptions whose characters are gradually being eroded by exposure to sunlight, rain and wind and convert them into digital text.

"We have developed a model that can photograph the inscriptions and convert their characters into digital text," Bal said.

"This is an important area of research from a historical and cultural perspective. But for now, it remains at the research stage. We have prepared the datasets and model, but it has yet to be released as an application or website."

The push to bring Nepal's languages into the digital world comes amid growing international concern over the lack of technological support for many of the world's languages.

Last year, UNESCO released its report, "Global Roadmap for Multilingualism in the Digital Era: Advancing the Role of Language Technologies", which called for inclusive language technologies, data sovereignty and community-led decision-making to help preserve mother tongues.

The UN agency has also set out strategies to ensure universal access to machine translation and language technologies across language communities and to support the digital transformation and promotion of endangered, indigenous, sign and haptic languages.

UNESCO has also been supporting young developers, startups and language advocates in Nepal through grants and other assistance as part of its strategy to promote multilingualism in the digital age.

One such initiative is Archive Nepal, which is working to preserve handwritten Nepal Bhasha manuscripts.

With UNESCO's support, the organisation has digitised more than 3,300 pages of old Nepal Bhasha manuscripts, said Saroja Hakuduwal, its operations manager. Young volunteers have transcribed and translated the manuscripts and uploaded them to Wikisource.

"Between November 2025 and August 2026, we digitised more than 30 rare Nepal Bhasha manuscripts that are between 200 and 800 years old," Hakuduwal said. "With the help of volunteers, we are transcribing the manuscripts into digital text and translating them into Nepali and English so they are accessible to the public. The materials are freely available on Wikisource and Archive Nepal's digital platform."

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ARCHIVE NEPAL

Nepal Bhasha is ahead of other indigenous languages in terms of efforts to promote its script.

Archive Nepal has also organised four "Transcribathon" events to teach people how to read the Ranjana, Prachalit and Bhujimol scripts and type them using Unicode. More than 50 volunteers from different generations have taken part.

For some young participants, it was their first opportunity to learn to read and type their own traditional script, Hakuduwal said.

"At our fourth Transcribathon event, we brought together AI developers working on Nepal Bhasha speech recognition technology and visual artists to demonstrate how modern technology and art can be combined to preserve traditional cultural heritage," she said. "We now plan to digitise old materials in other languages as well. We are studying whether ancient and historical manuscripts kept in Tibetan monasteries can also be digitised."

To understand how these efforts to preserve mother tongues through technology have evolved, it is worth looking back at Nepal's history of language digitisation.

Writer Kedar Sharma, who played a leading role in promoting Unicode to make Nepali easier to use on computers and the internet, says technology has opened new possibilities for indigenous languages that once struggled even to gain a foothold in the digital world.

In the early days, he said, bringing languages into digital technology was expensive and difficult.

"When the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya was developing a Unicode keyboard, computers and other tools were extremely expensive, consumed a lot of electricity, and mobile phones had not yet arrived," Sharma recalled. "The biggest obstacle, however, was the language itself. People who did not know English could barely use a computer. When Android technology came to Nepal, it gave indigenous languages a new lease of life."

The spread of Android and social media created new opportunities for people to write and express themselves in their own languages, Sharma said. He finds that important not only for language preservation but also for social progress and dignity.

The disappearance of a language, he said, means far more than the loss of words. It can also erase generations of knowledge and local traditions embedded in that language.

"Traditional knowledge held by older people, such as identifying and eating different plants and preparing food using resources from villages and forests, can disappear along with a language," Sharma said. "Digital preservation of languages is therefore crucial for passing on the knowledge our society has accumulated over thousands of years."

He said some families are increasingly choosing to teach their children only Nepali and English, rather than their mother tongue, as they become more integrated into the linguistic mainstream.

AI for Nepal's languages

Himalaya AI Labs is also working to build a local AI ecosystem, with a focus on Nepali and other low-resource languages that have relatively little content available online.

The organisation is developing Devanagari-focused datasets and foundation models for Nepali and other languages. It is also building benchmark tests to measure the accuracy and performance of AI models and developing datasets to improve Nepali-language processing, translation and output quality using open-source models.

Himalaya AI is working with international and Nepali researchers based abroad to secure computing and GPU infrastructure. It aims to develop a large language model focused on Nepali, with plans eventually to bring regional languages such as Rai, Limbu and Newari into AI systems.

Sharma believes technology could even help revive languages that are declining.

"I see strong potential for language revival," he said. "Having the tools available and growing ethnic and cultural awareness within communities can make a huge difference."

During the Panchayat era, he recalled, recording a song required access to Radio Nepal or Ratna Recording Studio because recording technology was limited and tightly controlled by the state.

"But once FM radio stations began operating and recording technology became more accessible, songs and creative works in Newari, Tamang, Kirat and other local tongues grew rapidly," he said. "Once technology gives us the tools, the responsibility to use them and take them forward rests with the people who speak that language."

Government efforts lag

While communities, researchers and technology groups are moving ahead, the government's response remains slower.

The Language Commission began work on a multilingual electronic dictionary in the fiscal year 2018-19, but the project has yet to be completed.

The commission has so far entered words from 30 languages into its digital dictionary, said spokesperson Kamala Bhandari Pandey.

"The commission has developed multilingual electronic dictionary software that allows words to be easily interpreted from one language to another," the commission said in its seventh annual report. "In addition, around 6,200 Nepali words have been entered and linked, wherever possible, to entries in each language."

The software already contains vocabulary from languages including Athpahariya, Uranw, Chamling, Chhantyal, Darai, Bote, Bajjika, Yakkha, Lungkhim, Santhali, Sampang, Belhare, Kathariya Tharu, Done, Jumli, Thulung, Limbu, Tajpuriya, Kshetteli, Tilung, Dangaura Tharu, and Raute.

But a lack of funding has stalled further development, Pandey said.

"Because of budget constraints, we have not been able to further improve the software, and it is still not open to the general public," she said.

"The government's practice of slashing the budget each year and failing to prioritise language preservation has slowed these efforts."

Linguists and language activists are critical of the government's slow pace.

With AI developing at such speed, they say there is little time to waste if indigenous languages are to remain relevant in the digital world. Languages unable to keep pace with new technologies face the threat of gradual extinction.

"Ultimately, the government needs to take ownership of this work and support it to make it sustainable," Bal said.

"Local and provincial governments, in particular, have an important role to play."

FOREX

US Dollar	153.42
Euro	179.53
Pound Sterling	209.55
Swiss Franc	191.98
Australian Dollar	109.89
Canadian Dollar	111.61
Singapore Dollar	120.92
Japanese Yen (10)	9.67
Chinese Yuan	22.83
Saudi Arab Riyal	40.86
Qatari Riyal	42.09
Thai Bhat	4.69
UAE Dhiram	41.77
Malaysian Ringit	37.99
Korean Won (100)	11.08

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION

	PRICE PER TOLA
Fine Gold	Rs 316,700
Silver	Rs 4,985

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

Iraq PM seeks oil export rise to 10 million barrels a day

BAGHDAD: Iraq's prime minister said on Friday that he wants to increase the country's oil exports to as much as 10 million barrels a day within six years. Crude oil sales account for nearly 90 percent of Iraq's revenue but its exports have been hurt by the outbreak of the Middle East war between Iran and the United States, which choked off the Strait of Hormuz. Iraq, an OPEC founding member, was forced to halt production in most of its oil fields during the war as reservoirs filled up. "We are working to increase Iraq's export share within the OPEC+ framework, and we aim to reach 8 to 10 million barrels per day in six years," Ali al-Zaidi told a panel in Baghdad. Baghdad recently asked OPEC to increase its production quota because of the war's impact. Before the conflict began, Iraq produced around four million barrels per day, and exported an average of 105 million barrels per month, mostly from its Basra oil terminal via Hormuz. **(AFP)**

Tribhuvan International Airport set for new ATC tower after nearly four decades

Japan is providing Rs2.73 billion to build a nine-storey control tower and upgrade air traffic management systems.

SANGAM PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, AUG 21

After nearly four decades, Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, one of the most challenging airports to operate in the world, is set to get a new air traffic control tower equipped with modern systems and technology.

Nepal's Cabinet this week approved a grant of around Rs2.73 billion from the government of Japan to construct a modern air traffic control (ATC) tower at the TIA. It is the fourth major grant from Japan aimed at enhancing the safety of Nepal's civil aviation sector.

The proposed nine-storey tower will be built on the eastern side of the runway, near the airport's rescue and firefighting division, according to sources familiar with the project.

On July 28, Dr Akihiko Tanaka toured the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-supported civil aviation safety facilities at the TIA and inspected the proposed site for the new ATC tower.

"As the existing ATC system is too old, we hope the new facility will help a lot to strengthen the air safety system, particularly for challenging airports like TIA," said Nabin Prasad Acharya, deputy director at the Air Traffic Management Department of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

The project will involve construction of a new ATC tower and an air navigation service building, along with installation of an advanced air traffic management system, including a multi-sensor data processing system.

The existing control tower will remain in operation as a backup.

Officials say the new tower cannot be built higher than 32 metres because of Kathmandu's bowl-shaped geography and the need to maintain safe flight paths around the airport.

Despite the height restriction, the proposed tower will provide a significantly more modern working environment and advanced surveillance and communication systems for air traffic controllers.

The latest grant is the largest assistance pledged by Japan for Nepal's civil aviation sector.

POST FILE PHOTO

Air traffic controllers on duty at the Tribhuvan International Airport control tower on August 18, 2013. This tower was built with Japanese assistance in 1987.

"Japan has been supporting Nepal's civil aviation sector for a long time. This is yet another gesture of goodwill," said Acharya.

If preparations proceed as planned, a formal agreement for the three-year project could be signed by September, Acharya said. Japan plans to mobilise workers at the project site by October.

JICA and the Japanese government have supported the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal in improving the safety and efficiency of air traffic management since 1988. Japan's involvement gained particular importance following two major air disasters in Nepal in 1992.

On July 31, 1992, Thai Airways International Flight 311, flying from Bangkok to Kathmandu, crashed into a hill north of Kathmandu near Langtang National Park, killing all 113 people on board. The flight included 17 Japanese nationals.

Less than two months later, on September 28, Pakistan International Airlines Flight 268 crashed into a hillside south of Kathmandu, killing all 167 people on board. It remains the deadliest aviation disaster in Nepal's history.

Before the twin disasters, Nepal operated in a non-radar environment. Air traffic control at TIA relied largely on procedural radio position reports from pilots rather than electronic surveillance. The crashes prompted Nepal to move towards modern radar-based air traffic management.

Nepal subsequently requested Japan's assistance in installing the country's first radar system.

In 1994, the Japanese government conducted a detailed study for installing a radar system at TIA, and the project was completed in 1997 under Japanese official development assistance at a cost of $34 million.

Again, in March 2013, JICA provided Rs906 million in grant assistance to install two advanced radars at TIA and Bhattedanda, on the southern rim of the Valley in Lalitpur.

The Monopulse Secondary Surveillance Radar at Bhattedanda has been providing en-route surveillance of flights within a range of up to 250 nautical miles, or about 450 km, since it began commercial operation on February 1, 2018.

The radar monitors Nepal's airspace and tracks aircraft as far as Surkhet in the west and across the country to the east, north and south, extending from the northern mountain range to the Indian border. The system has made it easier for TIA air traffic controllers to monitor Nepal's airspace more safely and efficiently.

In September 2016, Japan provided another grant of Rs1.51 billion to enhance the safety and efficiency of air transport in Nepal.

The assistance, then the largest Japanese grant to Nepal's civil aviation sector, was used to implement the Project for Improvement of Aviation Safety Facilities. The project covered safety improvements at eight airports across Nepal, including five short take-off and landing (STOL) airstrips.

Beyond grant assistance and equipment installation, JICA has supported Nepal's aviation sector by dispatching experts and senior volunteers and implementing technical cooperation projects.

These have included establishing and operating a spare-parts management centre and building the capacity of personnel to operate and maintain aviation safety equipment.

The latest project comes as TIA continues to face growing pressure from rising passenger and aircraft movements.

TIA is the main hub of Nepal's domestic airport network as well as the country's principal international gateway.

In 2000, TIA handled 1.06 million international passengers. Over the past 25 years, international passenger traffic through Nepal's primary aviation hub has increased roughly fivefold, crossing the 5 million mark.

In terms of flight movements, the airport handled 34,600 international takeoffs and landings in 2025, compared with 8,105 in 2000.

Domestic air travel has also expanded sharply. Nepal's seven fixed-wing airlines and 12 helicopter companies carried 4.56 million passengers in 2025, the highest passenger traffic ever recorded by the country's domestic aviation industry despite the economic slowdown.

The number of domestic air travellers has increased more than fourfold since 2000, when only 853,000 passengers flew domestically and air travel was widely considered a luxury.

Domestic flight movements have also nearly doubled, from 55,998 in 2000 to 103,556 in 2025.

With passenger numbers and aircraft movements continuing to rise, aviation officials say modernising the control tower and air traffic management system has become increasingly important to maintaining safety and improving the efficiency of Nepal's airspace.

Nepal's DDC ghee set to debut in Dubai

SEEMA TAMANG
KATHMANDU, AUG 21

The Dairy Development Corporation (DDC) began its first export of ghee to Dubai on Friday, sending an initial 600 kg shipment under an agreement with Rato ra Chandra-Surya International Pvt. Ltd.

The agreement calls for at least 50,000 kg of ghee to be exported annually.

The company is starting with 600 kg to test demand and assess consumer response in the Dubai market.

The product is packed in jars or bottles of 350 millilitres and has a shelf life of one year, according to the company.

"We are opening a department store through our subsidiary, Matribhoomi General Trading LLC. The ghee will be sold there," said Prakash Chandra Ghimire, managing director of Rato ra Chandra-Surya International. "We will place further orders based on the response from the market."

The shipment marks DDC's entry into the Dubai market as the company seeks to expand ghee exports beyond its existing destinations and establish a presence in the wider West Asian market.

Ghimire said the ghee has already received a health certificate from the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control based on a laboratory report from DDC. The product will undergo another test in Dubai before it is cleared for sale.

The company plans to expand beyond ghee as well. It is working on exporting yak cheese to Dubai in the future, Ghimire said.

The company said it plans to use the Dubai market as a stepping stone to expand ghee exports across West Asia.

The move into Dubai comes as Nepal continues to export ghee to a small number of overseas markets. According to Department of Customs data, Nepal exported 39,859 kg of ghee worth Rs43.34 million in the last fiscal year.

Japan was by far the biggest market, taking ghee worth Rs43.28 million. Nepal also exported ghee worth Rs51,000 to India, Rs16,000 to the Netherlands and Rs1,000 to the United Kingdom.

According to DDC officials, Ghee export to Japan started during the Covid-19 pandemic but has stalled ever since.

General Manager of DDC, Sharan Pandey, informed the Post that Rato ra Chandra-Surya International has also sought partnership with the corporation to export ghee to Japan.

"Rato ra Chandra-Surya International has also sought permission to export ghee to Japan while two other companies want to export the product to Malaysia and Korea," he said.

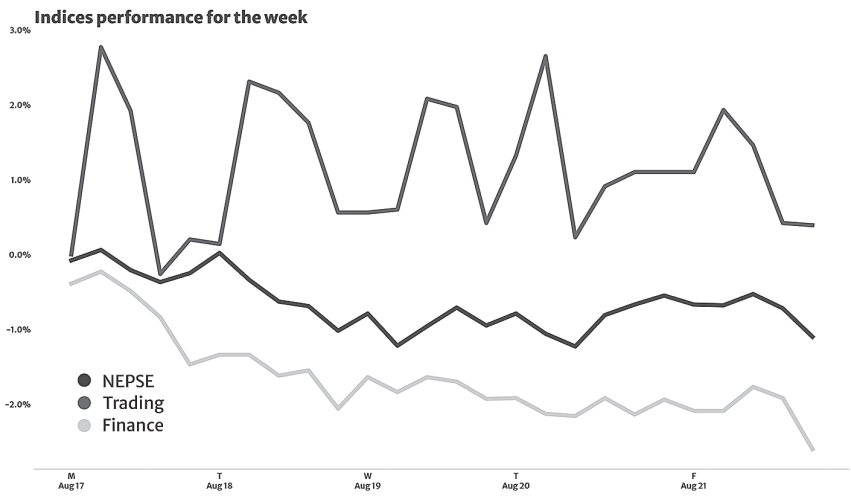
NEPSE This Week

2,618.72 ▼-25.11 -0.95%

Turnover	Shares Traded	Gainers	Losers
Rs. 21.22 Billion	43.74 Million	49 Stocks	230 Stocks

Data provided by **npstocks.com**

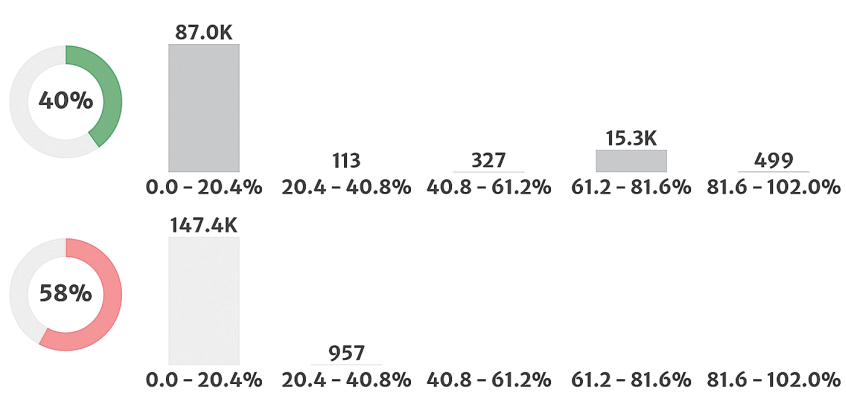
TRENDING STOCKS: KKHC, MEHL, RIDI, UHEWA, BHCL, GHL



	At Close	% Chg	Volume (Rs.)	Advancers	Decliners	52wk High	52wk Low	YTD Chg
Trading	3,253.15	0.41%	26.8M	1	1	4,348.83	3,188.66	-14.38%
Manu.& Pro.	10,354.56	0.11%	3,336.3M	6	12	12,106.76	6,943.38	20.70%
HydroPower	3,725.94	-0.05%	11,419.9M	29	83	4,151.22	3,120.66	11.57%
Banking	1,447.48	-0.79%	2,187.4M	6	13	1,572.61	1,308.53	5.61%
Others	1,903.76	-1.35%	340.6M	1	7	2,822.31	1,866.70	-19.62%
Non Life Insurance	10,419.14	-1.57%	215.4M		13	12,639.99	10,302.55	-5.24%
Hotels And Tourism	7,214.87	-1.69%	356.3M		8	8,570.32	5,775.66	3.80%
Life Insurance	11,593.42	-1.78%	422.3M		14	13,998.19	11,550.58	-11.02%
Development Bank	5,481.82	-1.83%	905.5M		15	6,533.59	5,166.72	-0.18%
Investment	95.53	-1.84%	581.0M	1	6	115.30	94.07	-6.79%
Microfinance	4,491.46	-1.86%	791.6M	5	45	5,335.64	4,479.27	-8.80%
Finance	2,318.68	-2.37%	634.0M		13	2,718.98	2,137.39	-0.17%

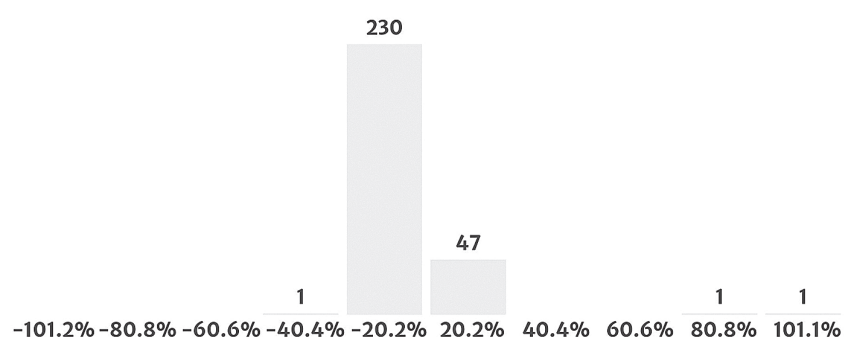
Trade distribution

Of all transactions in the week, 40% increased prices while 58% decreased prices.
147.4K transactions decreased prices between 0.0% and -20.4%



Price change distribution

Prices of 230 companies decreased between 0.0% and 20.2% this week.



Top gainers

	At Close (Rs.)	% Chg	52wk High (Rs.)
Sarvottam Paints	797.60	101.06%	797.60
Mount Everest Power Development	774.00	69.66%	855.00
Panchakanya Mai Hydropower	345.90	9.46%	428.00
Reliance Spinning Mills Limited	2,775.00	8.57%	5,049.00
CYC Nepal Laghubitta	1,466.00	8.19%	1,879.00
Sanima Mai Hydropower	527.20	6.48%	588.00
Sanima Middle Tamor Hydropower	484.70	6.06%	525.00
Super Madi Hydropower	517.00	4.23%	931.11
Ridge Line Energy Limited	925.90	4.03%	1,592.30
Bikash Hydropower Company	541.00	3.62%	699.00

Top losers

	At Close (Rs.)	% Chg	52wk Low (Rs.)
Khanikhola Hydropower Co.	269.90	-23.39%	208.00
Manakamana Engineering Hydro.	244.00	-12.54%	230.20
Muktinath Krishi	920.00	-12.21%	905.00
Dhaulagiri Laghubitta	1,027.00	-11.71%	1,023.60
Saptakoshi Development Bank	699.00	-11.27%	680.00
Hathway Investment Nepal	610.00	-9.90%	577.00
Everest Colour Limited	1,400.10	-8.73%	296.60
First Microfinance	758.00	-8.67%	723.00
Appolo Hydropower	738.00	-8.32%	299.70
Corporate Development Bank	972.00	-8.13%	965.00

Top turnover

	Turnover (Rs.)	At Close (Rs.)	% Chg
Reliance Spinning Mills Limited	2,273.4M	2,775.00	8.57%
Solu Hydropower Limited	1,420.0M	686.00	2.24%
Ridi Power	683.7M	359.90	-2.17%
Khanikhola Hydropower Co.	617.4M	269.90	-23.39%
Sahas Urja	595.8M	695.00	2.66%
Sanima Middle Tamor Hydropower	439.6M	484.70	6.06%
Mountain Energy Nepal	412.8M	626.30	1.84%
Ankhu Khola Jalvidhyut Company	405.0M	348.90	-3.08%
United Modi Hydropower	370.8M	579.90	-0.87%
Super Madi Hydropower	338.4M	517.00	4.23%

Most active

	Stocks Traded	At Close (Rs.)	% Chg
Solu Hydropower Limited	2.042M	686.00	2.24%
Khanikhola Hydropower Co.	2.021M	269.90	-23.39%
Ridi Power	1.883M	359.90	-2.17%
Ankhu Khola Jalvidhyut Company	1.145M	348.90	-3.08%
Nepal Bank	1.059M	276.80	2.59%
National Hydro Power	0.980M	265.80	-0.82%
Ghalemdi Hydro	0.980M	231.00	-7.23%
Prabhu Bank	0.956M	183.00	-2.14%
Sanima Middle Tamor Hydropower	0.932M	484.70	6.06%
Global Ime Bank	0.932M	246.20	-2.65%

Eel-powered Japan whizz-kid, 11, chases Asian Games history

AFP/RSS

Eleven-year-old Yuki Kurihara (centre) looks on past other athletes as he waits for a team Japan photo after a send-off ceremony for the 2026 Asian Games in Tokyo on Wednesday.

ANDREW MCKIRDY/AFP
TOKYO, AUG 21

Yuki Kurihara will become Japan's youngest athlete in Asian Games history next month and the 11-year-old eSports whizz-kid wants to be the competition's youngest ever medallist too.

The bespectacled primary school student joined his Japan team-mates this week for an inauguration ceremony ahead of their home Games, which take place in Nagoya and the wider Aichi area from September 19 to October 4.

Kurihara will compete in eSports event Puyo Puyo Champions, a puzzle game where players try to clear their screen of coloured blobs by lining them up and popping them.

He is aiming to outshine a previous child medallist in Indonesia's Bunga Nyimas, who won bronze in women's skateboarding aged 12 in Jakarta in 2018. "I want to win so that I can bring a gold medal back for Team Japan," Kurihara said.

The Asian Games, which were first contested in 1951, have in recent editions witnessed numerous school-age athletes.

Cui Chenxi, 13, became China's youngest Asian Games gold medallist when she won the women's street skateboarding event three years ago in Hangzhou.

Cui was not even the youngest skateboarder appearing at the Games.

Nine-year-old Mazel Paris Alegado competed for the Philippines in the women's park final, and the women's street final had a pair of Thai competitors aged 11 and 12.

Kurihara started playing Puyo Puyo in his first year of primary school and soon started competing in and winning tournaments.

He obtained his pro licence in April this year and regularly competes against adults.

"It's hard having to balance it with school and cram school, but it's really fun," he said. "It's the summer holidays now so I have a lot of time to practise. I want to practise a lot and develop some new strengths."

Kurihara says his favourite food is eel, and his "win rate is better" if he eats it before a contest.

Puyo Puyo is a game of skill and dexterity, with players looking to set off chains to clear their screens of coloured blobs.

Kurihara says he has pulled off a maximum chain of 19 and he is looking to polish his skills further.

"It feels great when you set off a massive chain," he said.

"I'd love for newcomers to see a massive chain too."

Brazil great Ronaldinho arrives at third-tier Ravenna

DANIELLA MATAR/AP
RAVENNA, AUG 21

Brazil great Ronaldinho has landed in Ravenna, a city more famous for its nearby beaches than its football team.

The lyrics "and the world's going to know your name" seemed ironically superfluous as one of football's most recognisable figures stepped on stage in front of thousands of fans on Thursday.

That song, "Hall of Fame" by The Script, had been belted out throughout the presentation of third-tier Ravenna's team for the upcoming season before the team's new No 10 walked out.

Thursday was dubbed "Ronaldinho day" as the football legend was presented first to the press before a glitzy beachside ceremony in front of around 6,000 fans, waving flags and holding flares aloft—despite the intermittent rain. In a surprise announcement in June, the 46-year-old Ronaldinho signed with Italian third-division club Ravenna more than a decade after retiring.

"I'm very happy to be here with my friends, but let's wait and see if things go well with the team," Ronaldinho said Thursday when asked about how he was feeling, before later answering a question as to when Ravenna fans could expect to see him on the field.

"I feel fine," he said with a laugh, before later adding: "I don't know, it depends on the president and coach. I don't know."

Ronaldinho arrived by private jet at nearby Forlì Airport—about 30 kilometres (19 miles) from Ravenna—around midday local time. He signed a couple of footballs for airport staff before getting into a car on the runway, skipping the handful of fans that were waiting landside.

AP/RSS

Brazilian star Ronaldinho greets fans as he is introduced during his official presentation for Serie C football club Ravenna FC in Ravenna, Italy, on Thursday.

He was accompanied by Ravenna President Ignazio Cipriani of the Cipriani restaurant brand.

Ronaldinho will not feature in Ravenna's first Serie C match of the season on Monday, at Reggio Emilia, and it is still unclear how much he hopes to play during the campaign. However, Cipriani has said it is his dream for the Brazilian to score his last career goal for the team.

"If that happens, even better, no?" Ronaldinho said. "I've come here because of the friendship we have, and that's it, let's wait and see how the team does…I'm here to help."

Ronaldinho last played professionally for Fluminense in 2015. It marks his second spell in Italy after featuring for AC Milan from 2008-11. He won the World Cup with Brazil in 2002 and the Ballon d'Or in 2005.

Fans launch global petition urging FIFA boss Infantino to resign over World Cup 'betrayal'

GRAHAM DUNBAR/AP
GENEVA, AUG 21

A collection of football fan groups from around the world launched a petition Thursday calling for Gianni Infantino to resign as FIFA president after he tried to sell future World Cup profits to private investors.

The petition with the hashtag InfantinOut also calls for FIFA "to be rebuilt so that the current debacle can never happen again."

"The shameful attempt by one individual—the FIFA President himself—to sell off the World Cup to private investors exposed a betrayal football will never forget," the petition said about Infantino's plan for a commercial spinoff, which he dropped amid a furious backlash.

The fan groups include Football Supporters Europe, Football Supporters Africa and, in North America, the Independent Supporters Council, plus about 40 national fan groups worldwide.

Infantino has resisted calls to leave office despite European football body UEFA saying it has no confidence in him. He has also been criticised by the leadership of North America's CONCACAF and the Asian Football Confederation.

Some of FIFA's 211 member federations are supporting Infantino, including 2030 World Cup co-host Morocco as well as Qatar, where he lived before the emirate hosted the 2022 World Cup, and Lebanon, which gave him citizenship this year. Saudi Arabia, the 2034 host, has not publicly backed Infantino despite his close political ties to the kingdom.

"Gianni Infantino has demonstrated a profound failure of leadership, incompatible with democratic governance," the fan petition states.

"The concentration of power around the FIFA Presidency, combined with opaque decision-making, personality cult clientelism, and zero accountability, has destroyed any remaining trust in the world governing body."

"For the credibility of FIFA—and for the future of the game—he must resign," the petition adds.

AP/RSS

FIFA President Gianni Infantino arrives for the inauguration of President Abelardo de la Espriella in Cali, Colombia, on August 7.

FIFA was approached for comment about the petition.

Fan anger at World Cup ticket prices

The petition also cites Infantino's past support for projects that outraged fans, including the failed European Super League project, pushing to hold World Cups every two years that was resisted and the "extortionate ticketing policy at the 2026 FIFA World Cup."

FIFA and Infantino did not consult with fan groups before setting record ticket prices for the 104-game tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico, which provoked anger and led to some tickets being sold for $60 to the most loyal fans of each of the 48 teams.

Football Supporters Europe is the official liaison for fans with UEFA and advises on ticket prices for European Championships and club cup finals like the Champions League.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Some new information about an interesting field could have you browsing the web and looking through books to learn more, Aries. This could involve law, philosophy, history, or spirituality.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Today you might learn about new and creative ways to increase your income, Taurus, possibly involving technology in some way. So much new information could come your way that you find it hard to keep track of it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)
Social events could put you in touch with interesting people in intriguing professions, Gemini. You might get involved in some fascinating conversations that provide you with a lot of useful information.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)
A friend or colleague could recommend some books that you want to read right away, Cancer. Be sure you take breaks and rest your eyes from time to time to avoid eyestrain and headaches today.

LEO (July 23-August 22)
Today your mind will be quick, insightful, and inspired, Leo. Your creative impulses should go a thousand miles an hour and ideas should pop in and out of your head like crazy.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)
If visitors are able to pop in and out during the day, Virgo, you'll be in the right frame of mind to enjoy their company. Expect interesting news and stimulating conversation.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)
Don't be surprised if your inbox fills with email or your phone rings off the hook, Libra. Friends, relatives, and colleagues could have great news and useful information.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)
Inspiration is the word for today, Scorpio. Your creative talent should blossom and motivate you to work on wonderful ideas. This could involve music, painting, decorating, or cooking. Relax and have fun with it.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)
Today your physical and mental energy should be operating at a very high level, Sagittarius. You probably won't spend much time inside if you can avoid it. Expect get-togethers with friends and colleagues.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)
Your intuition is likely to be very keen today, Capricorn. Accurate psychic insights could come to you thick and fast. our imagination is also strong, and you might come up with ideas to enrich your home, work, or anything else on your mind.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)
Get-togethers with friends or meetings with a small group, if possible, should prove informative and enlightening today, Aquarius, although some of it may be a bit perplexing.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)
Today things could be rather hectic at work, Pisces. You'll probably be very busy and happy with whatever results you produce. You could tire yourself out, so be sure to take occasional breaks, and certainly don't forget to eat.

HOROSCOPE.COM

CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 "Frozen" princess
5 Rigid
10 Pallid
13 "It's Only a Paper —"
14 "The Simpsons" dad
15 Sharpen
16 Grocery store
17 iPhone company
18 The best (Hyph.)
19 Patriotic songs
21 Drunkard
23 Follow orders
24 Opening
25 Forbidden thing (Hyph.)
27 In shape
32 Voice box
34 "America's — Talent"
35 — Scotia
36 Succor
37 Overact
39 Holiday drink
40 Currier and —
42 Tried for office
43 Hit the sack
46 Ritual
48 "I Love —"
49 Playing card
50 Norse god
52 Move forward
56 Wander
60 Smile from ear to ear
61 Elliptical path
63 — Stanley Gardner
64 Foundation
65 Work by Michelangelo
66 "The Simpsons" girl
67 Skill
68 Leavening agent
69 Raced

DOWN
1 Austen heroine
2 Bank offering
3 Type
4 Actor — Hopkins
5 Dishonor
6 — -turvy
7 Mischievous sprite
8 Touched
9 Cargo ship
10 Sheep's coat
11 English queen
12 — -do-well
15 Occur
20 Black
22 Bud
25 Artless
26 Request for food
27 Extreme pain
28 Kid
29 Bar mixer
30 Off-white
31 Imprison
32 Secular
33 Duplicate document (2 wds.)
38 Guy
41 Edible seed
44 Lamb's pen name
45 Underground passages
47 Time per.
50 Drops
51 Coup —
52 "Dancing Queen" group
53 Costly
54 Far-reaching
55 Ohio lake
57 Plumbing problem
58 If not
59 Peruse
62 "Luck — — Lady"

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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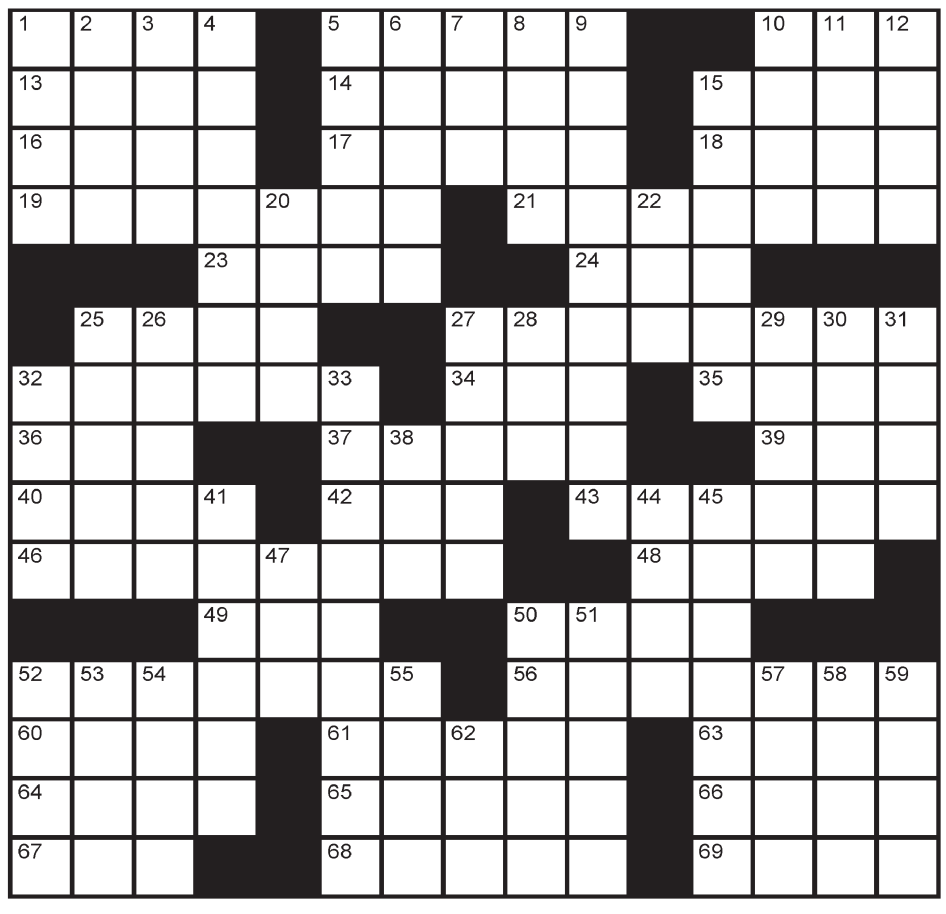

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No.SC6109 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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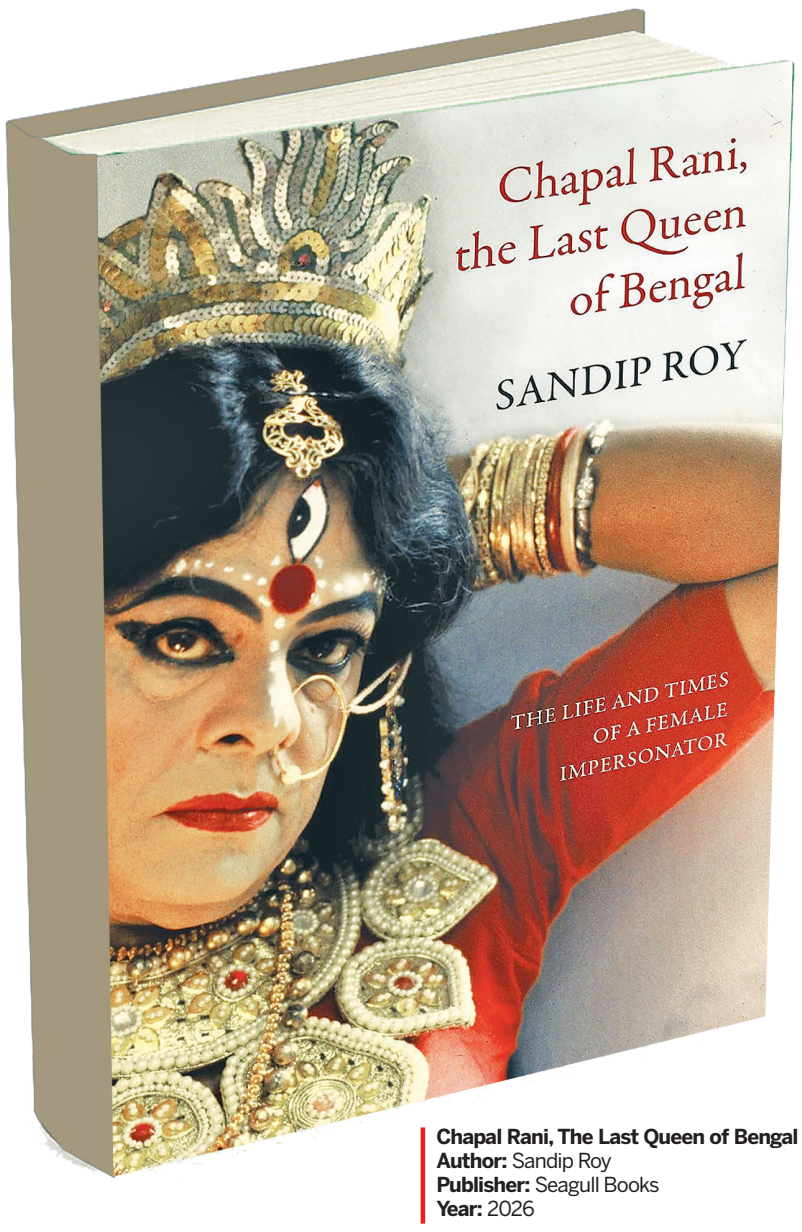
No.SC6110 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Why and how Chapal Bhaduri became 'Rani'

The success of Sandip Roy's book is in its capacity to present an iconic female impersonator and not push the claim that he took on the role to be a proto-queer icon.



Chapal Rani, The Last Queen of Bengal
Author: Sandip Roy
Publisher: Seagull Books
Year: 2026

❍ **MALLARIKA SINHA ROY**

When Shirsho Bandyopadhyay's cover story Beneputul on the male queens of the Bengali folk jatra performance world came out in the reputed Bengali cultural magazine Desh in May 1992, I was in school. My mother was not too happy to see me leaf through the pages and getting fascinated by the photographs of female impersonators. The unease and hesitation of a middle-class, university-educated, college-teaching woman reflected the gender politics embedded in the social perspective towards the gender fluidity embodied by these performers. More than three decades later, Sandip Roy's extraordinary book on the life of Chapal Rani, or, Chapal Bhaduri as he is known more conventionally, captures this lived world of female impersonators of jatra not as exotica, but rather as a poignant tale of a journey balancing the public life of a successful artist and the private life of a homosexual man finding his place in a conservative society.

Roy's Introduction to the book may not be full of too unfamiliar historical details and historiographical reflections on female impersonation on stage to a scholar of theatre and performance studies, but it is an adequate entry-point to the life and times of Chapal Rani (born in Calcutta, 1939) for a reader eager to contextualise this unusual life story. It brings together academic and popular writings on jatra, interviews with scholars like Samik Bandyopadhyay, Ananda Lal, Naveen Kishore and film-makers like Kaushik Ganguly, who directed Ar Ekti Premer Golpo (Yet Another Love Story, 2010) loosely based on Chapal Bhaduri's life.

Jatra began as a form of popular entertainment from the 16th century in Bengal, principally with the emergence of the narrative form of Mangal Kavya, long propitious poems about a deity, connected with a sect or a cult; and by the end of 19th century, it became a fusion folk-form of play-acting with costumes and make-up, songs with grand gestures played on make-shift stages in the open air and connecting emotionally with its audiences through mimetic connection with the strong flow of narrative. In the 20th century, it became a popular secular form often dealing with politically charged themes of nationalism, grassroot rebellions as well as contemporary social issues with artists like Mukunda Das, Brajen De and Utpal Dutt.

The Introduction is also important to break the 'standard story' of a queer man in 20th century Bengal. Roy explains that there need not be an essential 'coming out' moment, that a non-binary man need not own up any of the labels—gay, hijra, queer—and yet live and love on his own terms, that the sadness of a motherless child need not be about the difficulties of sexual identity within the family life. Chapal Rani's artistic family lineage, however, is quite formidable.

He is the youngest son of the great Prabha Devi, the doyen of Bengali theatre in the first half of 20th century, and Taracharan Bhaduri, brother to Sisir Bhaduri and a stakeholder in the heydays of Srirangam Theatre, as well as younger brother to Ketaki Dutta, actress extraordinaire of Bengali commercial theatre in the 1960s and 1970s. Chapal Rani, himself, became a star of the jatra world in the 1960s playing strong female roles in the productions like Chand Bibi, Mayur Singhhasan, Bharat Biday, Michael Madhusudan, Sipahi Bidrohoi, Nihoto Golap and Louho Kopat.

The book is written in Chapal Rani's own voice, which is not especially rare in the field of ethnographic life-history writing, but it becomes a creative non-fiction with imaginary interludes contained in each chapter. These interludes allow us a glimpse into spatial setting of the jatra world where the jatra troupes or 'company' as they are called in popular parlance are located; the lives and tribulations of other male queens—Chhabi Rani (who was nicknamed the Elizabeth Taylor of jatra), Rakhal Rani, Satadal Rani, Babli Rani—who preceded and followed Chapal Rani; the professional rivalry, jealousy, lovers' tiffs or admiration; and the desolate humiliations when the fame faded and money dried up.

Chapal Rani's memories take the reader through a world of performers, troupe managers, audiences as well as everyday practices of skincare, food habits, costume designs, make-up that constitute, what we today call the 'BTS'—behind the scenes—of bright lights and props on stage. Roy's language is lucid, accessible but, at the same time, full of the local flavours that convey the emotions, behavioural patterns, speech-acts typical to the world Chapal Rani inhabited.

BOOK REVIEW

> **The Introduction is important to break the 'standard story' of a queer man in 20th-century Bengal.**

The stars of the other spaces of performances—Uttam Kumar from Bengali films, Tripti Mitra from Bengali group theatre—make appearances in Chapal Rani's life story as bewitched audience members. Uttam Kumar, after watching him play the mother of Michael Madhusudan Dutt on stage, came to meet him and could not recognise him in his ordinary clothes. Chapal Rani remembers the embrace of the Nayak (Hero) of Bengali silver screen fondly but he immediately intersperses his own success with a memory of her mother Prabha Devi, who had met Uttam Kumar in his early years and prophesied that he would do great things.

One can read his very own way of contextualising stardom and artistry through his lineage. This sense of personal history and the ease, with which the public and private worlds merge through the voice of the protagonist, acknowledge the tension between the tinsel brightness of the stage and the rigorous discipline of the craft of performance and yet the aura of an extraordinary world of make-believe never fades.

One may think that the nadir in the female impersonator Chapal Rani's life came when he decided to do the street performances of Ma Sitala (Goddess of Small Pox), a mythological skit, to earn his livelihood. His roles in proper jatra came to end with the entry of women artistes from the mid-1970s. Academic explorations of this critical moment in the history of jatra by scholars like Bishnupriya Dutt, Manujendra Kundu and Prabhat Das reveal a particularly ambiguous transformation, the regular employment of women artists, who have been at the exploited fringe for long, signalled a new assertive gender politics and yet the loss of work for female impersonators, another marginalised group, meant the end of a specific kind of an artistry.

The male queens of jatra fell into penury and they had to resort to professions like pulling a rickshaw or sewing petticoats or to open small shops. Chapal Rani found a different way of taking his art to the public in the early 1990s. His street play Ma Sitala was part of a troupe that performed in street corners, dilapidated mansions and abandoned warehouses, begging for money, during the spring and summer when the disease was in full swing. Playing the goddess brought out a different aspect of Chapal Rani's personality. The make-up did not remain a simple act of putting on a costume but rather a transformation with the drawing of a divine third-eye that gave Chapal Rani a lasting impact of a successful performance.

Ma Sitala opened a new chapter for him when he met Naveen Kishore and Samik Bandyopadhyay through his sister Ketaki Dutta. Kishore's photographs of his make-up and organisation of his solo act that he wrote for himself and acted all the roles—goddess, crone, king, boy, queen—in Delhi and Mumbai and finally the documentary Performing the Goddess gave Chapal Rani a new identity to the film-going audience, the film-makers, journalists and academics. Chapal Rani's critical reflections on Kaushik Ganguly's film and Rituparno Ghosh's performance in the film also alert us to the way real, lived lives become fodder for different artistic and/or academic products.

Roy's book is brave enough to understand and communicate the complexities and dilemmas woven into the craft of creating art from 'true' stories. The poignancy of Chapal Rani's days in the old age home bear a deeply tragic note. But, for me, the success of the book remains in its capacity to present Chapal Bhaduri who became a 'Rani' as female impersonator, and not as a proto-queer icon. No apologies.

Published in special arrangement with TheWire.in

EVENTS

Voices from Himalayas

Takpa Gallery is showcasing a group exhibit that brings together contemporary artists presenting work rooted in Himalayan identity and craft.

When: August 22 to September 19 (Saturday to Saturday)
Where: Takpa Gallery, Lazimpat
Time: 11:00 am to 7:00 pm
Entry: Free

Sanepa Cultural Street Festival

A community street festival celebrating Newa culture, with live music and performances, authentic local cuisine, and an artisan and entrepreneur market.

When: Saturday, August 22, 2026
Where: Agima Marg, Sanepa
Time: 11:00 am onwards
Entry: Free

Lachha, Pilates & Mehendi

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SUJITA TAMANG

A beginner-friendly Pilates morning is being hosted, blending hair braiding, mehendi and breakfast.

When: Saturday, August 22
Where: Bagan Thakali, Baluwatar
Time: 9:30 am to 11:30 am
Entry: Rs1,500

Felting Memories of Culture

Curated by Saphal Shrestha, 'Felting memories of culture' is an immersive felt-artwork exhibition tracing the creative journeys of its artists.

When: August 21 to September 20, 2026
Where: Sarvashhrestha Gallery, Swayambhu, Kathmandu
Time: 12:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Entry: Free

Dungeons and Dragons in Kathmandu

A beginner-friendly D&D session is being hosted where you create your own character, explore a fantasy world, and dive into a tabletop adventure.

When: August 22
Where: The Rustic Wood, Kumaripati
Time: 1:00 pm onwards
Entry: Rs999

Bichitra Baaje

A Nepali stage adaptation of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's 'A Very Old Man with

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SXC

Enormous Wings,' presented by the Department of Major Arts at St Xavier's College.

When: August 20 to 22
Where: 4th Floor, Miller Hall, Loyola Campus, Thapathali
Time: 8:30 am onwards
Entry: Rs200

Art with Poetry

Photo: Courtesy of NAC/Facebook
A poetry session will be held as part of the Himalayan Art Festival 2026, bringing together well-known Nepali poets and writers. The event is organised by Arts Nepal.

When: Sunday, August 23
Where: Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal
Time: 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Entry: Free

Shaan Live in Nepal

Bollywood playback singer Shaan will be performing live in Nepal.

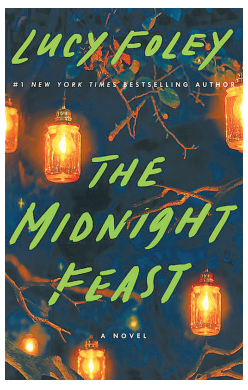
When: August 22, 2026
Where: Club Nova, Thamel
Time: 7:00 pm onwards
Entry: Rs4,000 to Rs6,000 (Standing)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SINGER_SHAAN/INSTAGRAM

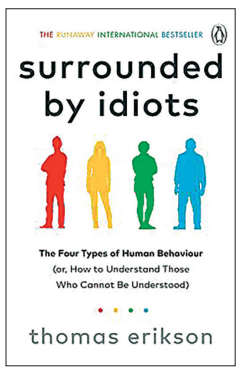
BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES

Fiction

1. The Midnight Feast by Lucy Foley
2. The Story Collector by Evie Woods
3. Everyone Has A Story by Savi Sharma
4. The Inheritance Games by Jennifer Lynn Barnes
5. Veil of Shadows by Siddharth Maheshwari

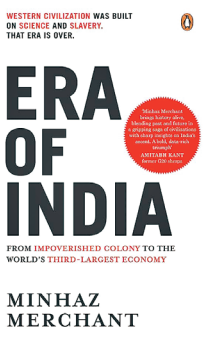


Non-Fiction



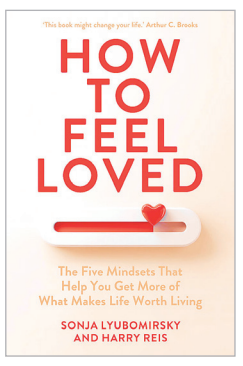
1. Surrounded by Idiots by Thomas Erikson
2. Develop Self-Confidence, Improve Public Speaking by Dale Carniege
3. Make Your Bed by William H McRaven
4. Modern Achievement by Asheesh Advani & Marshall Goldsmith
5. The Power of Words by Mariano Sigman

Source: Ekta Books



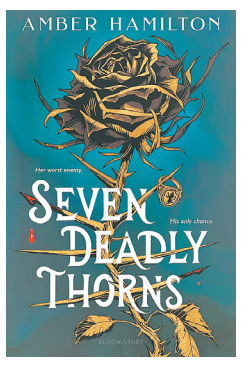
Era of India
Author: Minhaz Merchant
Price: Rs1,598
Publication: Penguin Books

'Era of India' by Minhaz Merchant is a compelling exploration of how history, economics, and global power have shaped the rise of modern India. Through meticulous research and a sweeping historical perspective, Merchant examines centuries of wealth transfer, colonial legacies, technological progress, and rapid economic transformation. The book traces India's journey from an impoverished British colony in 1947 to its rise as the world's third-largest economy, offering a thought-provoking analysis of global shifts and civilizational change. This book presents a reflection on India's past and present.



How to Feel Loved
Author: Harry Reis and Sonja Lyubomirsky
Price: Rs1,598
Publication: Cornerstone Press

'How to Feel Loved' by Harry Reis and Sonja Lyubomirsky explores the profound science behind human connection and the emotional experiences that make us feel cherished. Drawing on decades of psychological research, the book examines how love is expressed, perceived, and strengthened through everyday interactions, meaningful gestures, and genuine understanding. The authors reveal that feeling loved is not merely a matter of circumstance but a quality that can be cultivated through awareness, empathy, and intentional relationships. This thought-provoking work offers a compelling reflection.



Seven Deadly Thorns
Author: Amber Hamilton
Price: Rs798
Publication: Bloomsbury

Hamilton's debut, a cursed tattoo becomes a countdown to death: seven thorns, seven days, and one impossible choice. In the fractured kingdom of Aragoa, where magic is outlawed and mist-shrouded ruins bear the scars of an ancient war, Viola Sinclair has concealed her shadow magic for seventeen years while studying at Vandenberghe Academy. When her secret is exposed, the Queen orders the Huntsman to kill her within a week or forfeit his life. Her hunter, it turns out, is Roze Roquelart, the entitled prince she despises most, who needs her magic.

(C.R.P.D.) - 3/052/053

'Summer Love': All of the nostalgia, none of the magic

Subin Bhattarai's beloved love story comes alive on stage, but the production leans too heavily on music, effects, and overacting instead of trusting its story and its audience.

SHRINKHALA CHAND THAKURI
KATHMANDU

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF KANTIPUR THEATRE

The opening scene of 'Summer Love' is a masterclass of nostalgia. For a few minutes, the stage feels like a memory.

A cruise to Norway unfolds through smoke and a soft harmonica, and for anyone who has read Subin Bhattarai's 'Summer Love', the familiarity arrives immediately. The opening is immersive in a way that feels intimate. The harmonica carries the atmosphere, giving the story the hazy quality of reminiscence.

The production, directed by Samrat Bhujel, remains faithful to Bhattarai's novel. Lines have been lifted with such precision that readers will sometimes find themselves anticipating the dialogue. Atit's monologues, in particular, benefit from remaining close to the novel. There is something satisfying about hearing lines one once read privately now being spoken aloud.

It also makes sensible choices about what to leave behind. A novel can afford to wander. A two-hour play cannot. The production picks the major beats of Atit and Saya's relationship rather than attempting to reproduce every subplot.

The trouble is that the production seems to know when to cut the novel, but not when to leave it alone.

Atit and Saya are most convincing when they are simply together. Their scenes of hanging out, teasing each other and gradually becoming attached have a warmth that the rest of the play struggles to recreate. They are slightly over-delivered at times, but there is an unmistakable sweetness to them.

Bashana Timalsina, as Saya, is particularly effective in these moments. She feels effortless in a way several of the other performances do not. Saya is supposed to be elusive and avoidant, and Bashana's relative restraint works in her favour. She brings a much-needed sense of life to the play.

Sagar Khanal, on the other hand, often seems to be performing for us rather than being Atit.

He does not so much inhabit the character as announce him. His anger is pushed until it becomes aggression, his sadness until it becomes performance. There is a difference between an actor showing us that a character is emotional and making us believe that the character is emotional. Khanal too often falls into the former.

His scenes with Saya are an exception. Something about their interaction makes both performances more natural. Their chemistry is most convincing when they are doing very little—talking, teasing, simply occupying the same space. Elsewhere, Khanal can seem as though he is waiting for the audience to register his emotion.

The supporting cast suffers from a similar problem. Kiran and Pratikshya have the outlines of a lively friend group, but the production never gives us enough of their friendship to make us care about it. They pass through the story more like stock characters than people whose absence would actually alter it. Pratikshya, in particular, is so loud that her character begins to feel like a volume setting rather than a person.

Perhaps that is another consequence of adaptation. Perhaps the production simply did not have the time. But the result is still noticeable.

THEATRE REVIEW

And then there is the music. This cannot be stressed enough: the music is bad. Not the harmonica, which beautifully carries the opening, but almost everything that follows.

The score repeatedly tells us what to feel. Romantic scene, romantic music; Norway, Norwegian music; sex scene, lyrics describing the sex. At one point, an abrupt transition even had the audience laughing.

The problem is not that music has no place in theatre. Good music can deepen a scene without announcing itself. Here, it often feels like an instruction manual. The Norwegian music is a particularly strange choice. Yes, Saya is in Oslo. We know. But the music seems more interested in telling us where she is than in responding to how she feels.

The dance sequences suffer from the same problem: clearly intended to externalise emotion, they instead feel detached and oddly busy. Even the smoke machine, so effective in the opening, later becomes distracting, pulling us out of scenes just as they begin to settle.

The lighting occasionally works, particularly during the conflicts, but the technical glitches and underuse of it add to the production's larger problem: it keeps explaining emotions that the audience should be allowed to discover for themselves.

The production seems to have forgotten a fairly fundamental distinction: representing an emotion is not the same as producing a sensation.

There is also an interesting complication in the way the play portrays Atit. Bhattarai's novel works hard to convince us that Atit is the "good" choice. The stage version is less flattering.

His anger is harder to ignore. His possessiveness is harder to romanticise. His refusal to let Saya go begins to look less like the enduring devotion the novel wants us to see and more like obsession.

That is one of the few places where the adaptation unintentionally complicates its source material.

Unfortunately, the play begins to lose its grip somewhere around the middle. The initial nostalgia can carry a surprisingly long way—perhaps farther than the acting deserves—but eventually even that begins to wear thin. The audience's attention visibly drifts.

This is especially unfortunate because 'Summer Love' has everything it needs to be affecting. It has first love, distance, jealousy, youthful stupidity, longing and heartbreak. It has Bhattarai's writing, which has already made thousands of readers feel these things.

It just seems terrified of leaving them alone.

Bhattarai himself, portrayed on stage by Arpan Thapa, is one of the most natural presences in the production. His performance has an ease that makes some of the more mannered performances around him stand out even more.

Still, there is something strangely compelling about watching 'Summer Love' on stage precisely because it reveals what the novel could get away with. Bhattarai's prose can smooth over an awkward character, carry a weak plot or make an immature relationship feel more romantic than it perhaps is. On stage, stripped of the narrator's protection, the weaknesses are harder to hide.

The final dialogue, drawn from the opening pages of Saya, is a particularly clever choice. It gives the play a sense of continuity while making the ending feel like the beginning of another story. After a production that often reaches for effects, this moment lands because it is simple. The words do the work.

Which makes the rest of the production all the more frustrating. Because the writing is not the problem. The actors are.

It is difficult to become emotionally invested in a love story when you can constantly see the actors trying to make you believe they are in love.

And that is the real tragedy of this 'Summer Love'. The production has been handed material that already carries its own emotional shorthand. The audience already knows Atit and Saya. Some of us have known them for more than a decade. We know the jokes, the heartbreak, the longing. The first scene proves how easily the play can tap into that collective memory.

Instead of trusting it, the production keeps interrupting it.

The music tells us what to feel. The dance numbers tell us what the characters feel. The smoke tells us when something is supposed to feel atmospheric. The acting repeatedly, and sometimes loudly, tells us that these characters are emotional.

We know. We just don't believe you.

Atit and Saya's story was always going to be difficult to translate. But the production spends too much time trying to convince us it is theatre.

It should have trusted the story.

And, more importantly, it should have trusted the audience.

Summer Love
When: Until September 5
Where: Kantipur Theatre, Gairidhara
Time: 1:15 PM and 5:15 pm daily, except Wednesdays
Entry: Rs300 to Rs1,000

Dan + Shay are back with the autobiographical 'Young'

The album opens with its title track, the stripped-back acoustic arpeggio 'Young'.

MARIA SHERMAN
NEW YORK

The lead single from Grammy Award-winning duo Dan + Shay's forthcoming album "Young" is a hard pivot from the wedding songs that make up so much of the country pair's discography.

___ EDITOR'S NOTE — This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988. There is also an online chat at 988lifeline.org ___

"Say So," with its big-hearted and hopeful chorus, is about suicide prevention. It was written in tribute to Dan Smyers and Shay Mooney's late mentor Ben Vaughn, head of Warner Chappell Music Publishing, who died by suicide a year before.

"If you're going through hell, you're not alone," Mooney sings. "If you need somebody, say so."

"For one of the first times in our career, I was like, 'I'm not like sure if we should tackle this,'" Smyers told The Associated Press.

But in the studio, it became an inevitability—even though they were uncertain. "We were just sharing stories about our friend. And it just fell out of us. A verse and a chorus in, and I think we were all just like, 'I don't know, man. Is this too heavy to tackle?'" Smyers continued.

Creating the demo together, alongside co-writers David Hodges and Jimmy Robbins, became therapeutic.

"We owed it to our friend Ben," he said. "We owe it to the community, who he meant so much to. And I feel like we owed it to ourselves to at least see that one through to the finish line." What they didn't realize is that the day they started work on the song was also what would've been Vaughn's 50th birthday. "It was more than a coincidence," he said. "That was the sign that this song could help somebody."

"Say So" may be the heaviest song off "Young," but it is also a thematic center for the record—10 autobiographical tracks of crossover country that reflect their lives, now, with new emotional vulnerability—what Mooney labels "a very life-giving thing."

The heart of 'Young'

The album opens with its title track, the stripped-back acoustic arpeggio "Young," what Smyers describes as "a message from your future self to your present and past self, about the passage of time and appreciating the moment."

But there's an additional, gendered resonance. "Men — I just think, maybe I'm generalising — don't do as good of a job of sharing their feelings and emotions. And I'm saying that because that's me," he said.

AP/RSS

"You're tough. You bottle it up. But when I finally broke down that wall, it changed my life. And I think that song just talks about aging as a man."

That's yet another difficult subject, which might also explain why, before creating the 10 songs that make up "Young," Dan + Shay wrote and scrapped an entire album's worth of material. The tracks that made up the final collection took time, open and honest conversation, and a hearty dose of self-reflection.

It's why there may be more religiosity to this album than in the previous works — from the single "Her, The Kids and Jesus" to the album's two mentions of a King James Bible.

"'Her, the kids and Jesus,' that's kind of a snapshot at what my life looks like right now," Mooney said.

Growing into 'The Old Guys'

Grief — and affection — take on many forms across "Young." From the ode to a young adult's first pet ("Dogs in Our Twenties") to a twist on the traditional love song format and praying your partner dies after you (the '90s country-channeling "The Old Guys"), the songs are delivered with tenderness. The latter includes the album's sole feature, Cody Johnson — a neo-traditionalist in country music that, on paper, may seem at odds with Dan + Shay's genre-hybridity. After all, these are the same guys who recorded the multiplatinum crossover hit "10,000 Hours" featuring Justin Bieber in 2019.

"We occupy a very different space in country music," agrees Smyers. Even vocally — Mooney's got a high register, Johnson sings low, and when they're all singing together, "It's, like, perfectly meeting in the middle."

It also highlights the range of this album. "There's kind of a song for everybody, for whatever you're going through," says Mooney. "Whatever people need to get out of this album, I hope that they get that."

– Associated Press

Bollywood playback icon Shaan to perform live in Kathmandu on Saturday

The singer will perform more than 40 songs in what organisers say will be an almost non-stop show.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU

Renowned Indian playback singer Shaan will take the stage at Club Nova on Saturday. The event, 'Shaan Live in Nepal', is being brought to the capital by Nepali Touch.

The singer landed in Kathmandu on Friday and will depart on Sunday after his performance. Gates at the venue open at 7 pm, with the show following shortly after.

Shaan will be backed by his own touring band, and audiences can expect a marathon performance. "He will sing more than 40 songs," said Saugat Regmi, owner of Nepali Touch. "It's almost a non-stop show; there are no breaks in between, and it will run about two to two-and-a-half hours."

Describing what Nepali fans can expect from the singer, Regmi said Shaan has a reputation for warmth and stage presence that resonates with local audiences. "He is a generous person, and he's easily communicative on stage," he said. "He will open with a Nepali song."

For the Nepali audience, the concert carries an added layer of nostalgia. Shaan, known for hits like 'Chand Sifarish' (Fanaa), 'Jab Se Tere Naina' (Saawariya), 'Hey Shona' (Ta Ra Rum Pum), and 'Suno Na', who rose to fame in the 1990s, remains one of Bollywood's most recognisable voices, known for a string of hits across three decades of playback singing.

Shaan Live in Nepal
When: August 22, 2026
Where: Club Nova, Thamel
Time: 7:00 pm onwards

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SHAAN/FACEBOOK

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