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**OPINION**  
Dipak Gyawali



**ARTICLE**  
Sandip Poudel



**FORUM**  
Dr. Prabin Manandhar

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

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May 09, 2025  
FORTNIGHTLY

KAILASH MANSAROVAR TRIP

## Visit to Heaven

### INSIDE



**INDIA PAKISTAN CONFLICT**  
Nepal's Security Challenges



**PRO-MONARCHIST AGITATION**  
United Front



**ECONOMY**  
Nepal To Grow 4.5 Percent



Salient Features	Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Plant	Rolwaling Khola Hydroelectric Project
Type of Development	Peaking Run-of-River (PRoR)	Run-of-River including Diversion
Location	Bagmati Province,Dolakha District, Bigu Rural Municipality Ward No.1	Bagmati Province, Dolakha District, Bigu Rural Municipality Ward No. 1 and Gaurishankar Rural Municipality Ward No.9
Headwork's Location	Bigu Rural Municipality Ward No.1, Lamabagar	Gaurishankar Rural Municipality Ward No.9
Powerhouse Location	Bigu Rural Municipality Ward No.1, Gongar Gaon	Bigu Rural Municipality Ward No.1, Lamabagar
Installed Capacity	456 MW	22 MW
Annual Energy	2,281 GWh	317 GWh including diversion
Gross Head	822m	207.18m
Design Discharge	66.0 m3/sec	13.4m3/sec
Settling Basins	2 Nos. L=225m	110mx9.0mx9.7m
Headrace Tunnel	8.4km (Cross Sectional Area =32.14m2)	6.2km
Power House (Underground)	142.0mx13.0mx25.0m(LxBxH)	35x11.85x22m
Number of units	6	2
Tailrace Tunnel	2.9km (Cross Sectional Area =35.0m2)	740m
Access Road from Charikot of Dolakha District	68.0km	68.0km
Transmission Line	220Kv Double circuit,47.0km (Gongar to Khimti Substation)	8.35km Length, 33kV

*UPPER TAMAKOSHI HYDROPOWER LIMITED*



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**Notes From The Editor**



After a terrorist attack in Kashmir by a Pakistan-based group that resulted in the deaths of 22 individuals, including a Nepali citizen, tensions between India and Pakistan heightened but later eased following a ceasefire agreement. Nepal promptly condemned the attack and stood in solidarity with India in its fight against terrorism. Given Nepal's own experiences with terrorism, its support for India in this matter is unsurprising. Despite the de-escalation of the conflict, Nepal continues to grapple with significant security challenges. With a shared border of over 18,000 kilometers with India on three sides, Nepal has witnessed an increase in radical fundamentalist activities, particularly in the southern plains, over the past decade.

These activities have increased since the Maoist insurgency and the adoption of a secular constitution. Consequently, the security situation has changed, leading to heightened Indian interest in Nepal's internal security. In this edition, we delve into these emerging security challenges in depth as our main feature. Our main article follows

a journey to Kailash-Mansarovar, a revered pilgrimage destination for Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. Visitors from Nepal, India, and beyond view this site as a place of great religious and spiritual importance. Our coverage emphasizes the cultural and spiritual significance of the Kailash Yatra.

In the meantime, monarchists, who had been relatively quiet recently, have reemerged with a call for nationwide protests to demand the reinstatement of the monarchy. This development indicates a potential shift in Nepal's political landscape, potentially heralding a new phase of unrest.

**Keshab Poudel**

Editor

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# Redefining Regional Cooperation: How SAARC Can Evolve Like ASEAN

*SAARC can draw inspiration from this model by prioritizing practical cooperation in climate change, infrastructure, education, and economic integration.*



BY: DR. PRABIN MANANDHAR

Nearly four decades after its formation, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) remains largely ineffective. It is hindered by weak institutions and deep political and economic divides among its member states, particularly the ongoing India–Pakistan rivalry. SAARC was created to foster unity and address critical challenges in South Asia, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, disasters, and youth unemployment.

In contrast, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), established in 1967, has created a more successful model of regional cooperation despite its political disputes. ASEAN has managed to navigate territorial conflicts while building strong economic and diplomatic ties. Its pragmatic, flexible approach offers valuable lessons for SAARC.

## Detach Political Disputes from Development

ASEAN's success lies in its ability to separate economic cooperation from political disputes, allowing collaboration to continue amid tensions. SAARC can draw inspiration from this model by prioritizing practical cooperation in climate change, infrastructure, education, and economic integration. Advancing collaboration in disaster preparedness, peace building, cultural exchange, and technology will not only build trust but also deliver tangible benefits to the people of South Asia, despite ongoing political differences.

## Advance Trade and Connectivity

ASEAN has made significant strides in regional economic integration, with initiatives like the ASEAN Free Trade Area boosting intra-regional trade to over 25%. In comparison, SAARC's intra-regional trade remains stagnant at around 5%, hampered by political mistrust and stalled agreements like the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). To move forward, SAARC should prioritize both physical and digital connectivity, starting with practical sub-regional efforts such as the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) Initiative.

Enhancing trade through digital corridors and streamlined customs procedures can help bypass political roadblocks. SAARC should also adopt flexible mechanisms like ASEAN's "Minus X" approach, which allows willing countries to move forward on shared initiatives without being held back by the need for full consensus. In addition, deeper collaboration with platforms like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and knowledge institutions such as the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) can help advance common priorities.

## Reinvest in People-to-People Connections

ASEAN has successfully promoted a shared regional identity through student exchanges, civil society engagement, and youth programs. While SAARC has attempted similar initiatives, they often lose momentum during times of political tension. SAARC should reinvest in people-to-people exchanges that focus on youth, culture,

and education. These grassroots connections can foster trust, mutual understanding, and a sense of South Asian solidarity that transcends political divides.

## Strengthen Regional Leadership

The SAARC Secretariat in Nepal must be empowered with a clear mandate and greater operational independence. While ASEAN's Secretariat plays a pivotal role in driving regional cooperation and ensuring implementation, SAARC's Secretariat is often constrained by political pressures. To overcome this paralysis, member states must allow the Secretariat to lead on critical regional initiatives such as food security, disaster management, and infrastructure without requiring full consensus for every action.

## Looking Ahead

SAARC doesn't need to replicate ASEAN, nor should ASEAN be seen as a one-size-fits-all blueprint. However, SAARC must evolve from a politically stagnant forum into a development-oriented mechanism that delivers real outcomes. While the India–Pakistan conflict remains a significant challenge, it should not be allowed to paralyze cooperation on urgent issues like climate change, food security, and regional connectivity.

At the same time, SAARC must remain committed to resolving political disputes peacefully through sustained dialogue and negotiation. ASEAN demonstrates that regional progress is achievable even without political harmony. It's time for SAARC to move forward differently toward a more integrated, resilient, and people-centered South Asia.

*Author: Dr. Prabin Manandhar is an international development expert with experience across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. He is the Country Director of Helvetas Myanmar, former Chair of the Association of International NGOs (AIN) Nepal, and former Convenor of ACT Alliance in Nepal and Iraq. He also teaches at Kathmandu University. The opinions expressed are his own. Contact: prabin.manandhar11@gmail.com*

## NEWSNOTES

### **BFIN and PHDCCI's India-Nepal Centre Hosted a Symposium on "An Aspiring Nepal: How to be Benefited from Economic Reforms?"**

The Banking, Finance and Insurance Institute of Nepal (BFIN), in collaboration with the India-Nepal Centre of the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), successfully organized a high-level symposium titled "An Aspiring Nepal: How to Benefit from Economic Reforms?" at the Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu.

The symposium brought together a distinguished assembly of thought leaders, policymakers, economists, and industry experts from Nepal and India to engage in comprehensive dialogue on Nepal's economic reform agenda and the prospects for enhanced bilateral and regional collaboration.

The welcome address was delivered by Dr. Binod Atreya, Managing Director of BFIN, setting a purposeful tone for the program. Mr. Sanjeev Sanyal, Member of the Economic Advisory Council to



the Prime Minister of India, delivered the keynote address, offering compelling insights into India's reform journey and outlining actionable lessons relevant to Nepal. Mr. Binod Chaudhary, Member of the House of Representatives and President Emeritus

of the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), underscored the critical role of a dynamic private sector in advancing effective economic reforms.

Noteworthy remarks were also shared by Dr. Prakash Kumar Shrestha, Member of Nepal's National Planning Commission, and Mr. Prasanna Shrivastava, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of India in Nepal, both of whom reaffirmed India's support for Nepal's developmental aspirations. Additional distinguished speakers included Mr. Chandra Prasad Dhakal, President, FNCCI; Mr. Guru Prasad Paudel, Executive Director, Nepal Rastra Bank; Mr. Upenra Prasad Poudel, President, CBFIN; Ram Kumar Tiwari, MD & CEO, Nepal SBI Bank Ltd. and Anand Jha, Head of Government Engagement-India & South Asia, Visa Inc. The panel discussion, moderated by Mr Atul K. Thakur, Secretary, India-Nepal Centre (PHDCCI), explored key themes such as policy innovation, financial sector transformation, and sustainable regional growth.

### **Nepal will not allow Its soil to be used against our neighbor: Prime Minister Assures Indian Ambassador**

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has met with Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava.

The meeting took place at the Prime Minister's residence, Baluwatar. Ambassador Shrivastava briefed Prime Minister Oli on the latest developments and tensions between India and Pakistan following the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, India on April 22.

Ambassador Srivastava has informed Prime Minister Oli that India has retaliated at the site of the attack, but the propaganda that it carried out a jet attack is not true.

Ambassador Srivastava expressed gratitude for the statement made public by the Government of Nepal on Thursday regarding the incident, according to his secretariat.



Prime Minister Oli has made it clear to Ambassador Srivastava that Nepal will not allow any conflicting power to use its territory against neighboring countries.

On the occasion, Prime Minister Oli condemned the terrorist attack in line with his firm stance against all forms of terrorism, stating that Nepal is in favor of world peace.

### **Ambassador Srivastava Thanked Nepali government And The Entire Nepali People Standing Against The Terrorist Attack In India**

Nepal will not face any problem in supplies from India due to tensions with Pakistan: Ambassador Srivastava

Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava has said that Nepal will not face any problem in supplies from India due to the India-Pakistan tensions.

Speaking to editors of mainstream media outlets at the embassy in Lainchaur on Friday, Ambassador Srivastava said that there would be no problem in managing supplies to neighboring Nepal.

According to Rastriya Samachar Samiti (RSS) ambassador Srivastava requested to be assured that the supply of any kind of goods, including petroleum products, to Nepal will be smooth.

He also informed that security arrangements have been tightened in the border area and pointed out the need for special attention to be paid to border security by both countries to prevent unwanted activities including infiltration, keeping in mind the existing uncomfortable situation.

Ambassador Srivastava informed that he met Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli today and said that the Prime Minister expressed solidarity with the opposition to terrorism and the steps being taken against it.



He also informed that the Prime Minister has expressed his commitment to not allow any of Nepal's lands to be used against terrorism, as it is firmly committed to world peace.

He thanked Nepal for expressing solidarity with the government and political parties of Nepal in protesting the terrorist attacks in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and taking steps against them.

He expressed happiness over the Nepali government and the entire Nepali people standing against the terrorist attack in the Jammu and Kashmir region and emphasized that the entire world should unite



against terrorism.

Similarly, he expressed his gratitude for the support and solidarity received from the entire civil society here, especially the mass media sector, and expressed confidence that support will continue to be received in the coming days.

Giving information about the terrorist attack that killed 26 innocent people, including a Nepali, in Pahalgam, Kashmir, and the subsequent developments, Ambassador Srivastava said that Pakistan is responsible for the Pahalgam attack.

Expressing regret over the Pakistani government's deliberate and continuous dissemination of false and misleading information to fuel the conflict between the two neighboring countries, Ambassador Srivastava said, "India is not in favor of escalating the conflict."

He emphasized that the international community should unite in favor of world peace by firmly confronting terrorism, as the ongoing conflict in the Kashmir region, including terrorism and terrorist attacks, will affect not only India and Pakistan but also the entire world, including the SAARC region.

**MoFA Says Nepali Students in Pakistan Are In Regular Contact With Nepali Embassy**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stated that it is in regular contact with Nepali students studying in Pakistan.

In a statement issued on Friday, the ministry has stated that the government is fully aware of the recent developments and is working to ensure the safety of Nepali nationals in Pakistan. The Nepali Embassy in Pakistan is in regular contact with the students and Nepalis in the country.

Meanwhile, the ministry has also urged Nepali students and their parents to contact the Nepali Embassy in Islamabad for any immediate assistance.

Similarly, the Nepali Embassy in India has urged Nepalis to remain alert and safe, after identifying the nearest location of safety and emergency services in case of an emergency.

In view of the developments following the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, India, where a Nepali national was among the victims, the embassy has drawn attention to all Nepalis living and travelling to India to adopt necessary precautions and follow the security protocol issues by the local Indian authorities.

Nepali citizens have also been requested to contact the Nepali Embassy in Delhi and Consulate General of Nepal in Kolkata, India for any assistance.

## European Union Delegation to Nepal Celebrates Europe Day 2025

The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal hosted on May 8 an event at Patan Museum in Lalitpur to celebrate Europe Day. Europe Day officially falls on May 9th, and marks the adoption of the Schuman Declaration, which in 1950 laid the foundations of what would later become the European Union. The occasion holds special significance this year as it is 75 years since the signing of the Declaration.

Chief Guest of the event was Vice President of Nepal, Ram Sahaya Prasad Yadav. Other attendees include Mayor Chiri Babu Maharjan of Lalitpur Metropolitan City, ministers and other representatives of the government of Nepal, diplomats including ambassadors of EU Member States, civil society, the private sector, media, as well as

youth participants, and various other friends and partners of the European Union.

The program featured a presentation on a youth-centered environmental campaign, reflecting the European Union's commitment to sustainability and youth engagement in Nepal.

The Nepali Army Band performed the national anthems of Nepal and the European Union, symbolizing their longstanding friendship and cooperation.

In her remarks, Her Excellency Veronique Lorenzo, Ambassador of the European Union to Nepal, stated: "Nepal is a trusted partner of the European Union. Through our Global Gateway initiative, we support Nepal's prosperity agenda, working together with EU Member States and European Development Finance Institutions."

The Ambassador went on to note that "As global challenges grow, so does the EU's determination to remain a reliable, consistent, and principled partner."

The Europe Day celebration underlined shared values and the ongoing collaboration between the European Union and Nepal.



## COAS General Sigdel Conferred Tank insignia To Major General Mahara And Two Brigadier Generals

Nepalese Army Major General Man Bahadur Mahara has been awarded rank insignia.

Chief of Army Staff Ashok Raj Sigdel awarded Mahara the rank insignia of Major General at the military base on Tuesday.



Last week's cabinet meeting decided to promote Mahara to the rank of Brigadier General. Mahara is currently serving as the Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations' UNIFIL mission in Lebanon. On Tuesday, two colonels were also awarded the rank insignia.

The Directorate of Public Relations and Information has informed that Colonels Manoj Thapa and Arjun Basnet, who were promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, have been awarded rank insignia.

## Israel's Economic And Technical Support To Nepal Is Remarkable: Vice President Yadav

Israeli Ambassador to Nepal Shmulik Arie Bass Paid a courtesy call on Vice President Yadav.

The Vice President's Office stated that during the meeting held today at the Office of the Vice President, important discussions were held on various issues including bilateral relations between the two



countries, cooperation in the agriculture and labor sectors.

Vice President Yadav said that since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1960, Nepal and Israel have maintained friendly, cordial, understanding, and cooperative relations.

He said that attention should be paid to their implementation, noting that there have been various agreements between the two countries and that some are in the process.

Israeli Ambassador to Nepal, Bass, stated that cooperation and collaboration between the two countries will continue, adding that various organizations/institutions monitor whether Nepali workers in Israel have received or not the facilities as per the agreement.

### **Nepal's land should not be allowed to be used against China: NC President Deuba**

The Nepali Congress has reiterated its commitment to the One China policy. While emphasizing the need to expand relations between the two countries and exchange visits, the Congress also seems to be emphasizing its relationship with the Chinese Communist Party.

Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba has made it clear that Nepali soil will not be allowed to be used against China.

At a photo exhibition depicting Nepal-China relations organized by the GP Koirala Foundation in Kathmandu on Monday, Deuba



made it clear that Nepal's territory will not be used against China, saying that Nepal has adopted a one-China policy.

The program organized to commemorate 70 years of establishment of diplomatic relations

between the two countries. The photo exhibition included various photographs related to Nepalese and Chinese leaders. However, the exhibition completely discarded the roles of monarchy and visits of monarchs in China.

He also maintained that the cultural, economic, and social partnership between the two countries has always been strong. He said that Nepal and China have been cooperating in mutual cooperation and international relations.

He said that China has been supporting Nepal in areas including infrastructure development, trade, tourism, cultural and educational exchanges, climate change and environmental cooperation, and expressed confidence that it will continue to provide further support in the coming days.

He expressed confidence that the photo exhibition depicting Nepal-China relations will further strengthen cooperation with China and take the relations between the two countries to greater heights.

Nepal-China diplomatic relations are celebrating 70 years. On this occasion, the GP Koirala Foundation, named after Girija Prasad Koirala, organized a program in Kathmandu.

Chen Song, ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Nepal, Nepali Congress President Deuba, Shekhar Koirala, Sujata Koirala, and others. They discussed various dimensions of Nepal-China relations and emphasized the need to take relations with the Chinese Communist Party to further heights.

In this context, Nepali Congress President Deuba expressed his commitment to the One-China policy and not to allow Nepali soil to be used against China.

While the Congress was making such a claim, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song also spoke about various dimensions of Nepal-China relations and asserted that the two countries would continue to work to take the relationship to further heights.

In particular, various aspects of Nepal-China relations were discussed at the program. Girija Prasad Koirala's daughter Sujata Koirala also expressed her commitment to the One China policy. She emphasized the need to shape the relationship with the Chinese Communist Party in a new way.

The relationship between the two countries is stable. China rarely responds. In such a situation, Congress leader Shekhar Koirala also emphasized the need to expand relations.

### **Dr. Arjun Karki appointed as Vice-Chancellor of Nepal University, Acharya as Registrar**

Dr. Arjun Karki has been appointed as Vice-Chancellor of Nepal University.

Nepal University has issued a press release informing that Dr. Karki has been appointed as Vice-Chancellor.

Similarly, Dr. Suryaraj Acharya has been appointed as the registrar of the university. Dr. Karki is the former vice-chancellor of Patan Institute of Health Sciences. Acharya is an infrastructure expert.

The University Board of Trustees has announced the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar as per the recommendations of the recommendation committee.

Bindu Nath Lohani has already been elected as the Chancellor of the University.



### **Film Screening and Panel Discussion on "Mountain Matters: Sustaining the Spirit of Mountains" held at Alliance française**

The French Embassy and the Alliance française hosted a special screening of the documentary "Annapurna, History of a Conquest" by director Bernard George on 23 April 2025. The event





was followed by a panel discussion titled “Mountain Matters: Sustaining the Spirit of Mountains”, and was conducted in Nepali.

The panel was moderated by journalist Sama Thapa and featured panelists: Jérôme Édou, founder of Base

Camp Trek and Tibetologist; Kalpana Maharjan, mountaineer and journalist; Mingma Chhiri Sherpa, Chairperson of Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality; and Tul Singh Gurung, President of the Nepal National Mountain Guide Association (NNMGA).

Key takeaways from the discussion included calls for government action to combat climate change by reducing carbon emissions and promoting renewable energy to protect glaciers and ecosystems. Panelists emphasized the enforcement of laws against pollution and illegal encroachment in mountain areas, raising public awareness about mountain ecosystems, and advocating responsible climbing practices among mountaineers to minimize environmental impact.

The panel also highlighted the importance of empowering local communities, promoting eco-friendly tourism and agriculture, and designating mountain regions as protected areas.

This event was part of an ongoing celebration in honour of the 75th anniversary of the first Annapurna ascent by Maurice Herzog and Louis Lachenal.

## KOICA Concludes Integrated Rural Development Project worth 4.7 Million USD

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), together with implementing partner, Korea Development Strategy Institute (KDS) Consortium successfully concluded the five-year project titled “Empowering Rural Communities in Nepal through an Integrated Approach to Health and Income Growth”.

Partnering with Dhulikhel Hospital with a total budget of USD 4.7 million, the project aimed to improve the quality of life in rural areas through enhanced healthcare access and sustainable income generation.



The closing ceremony was held on April 24, 2025, at the Square Hotel in Kathmandu Valley.

Approximately 150 stakeholders attended the event, including officials from Nepal’s Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, federal and local governments, the Embassy of the Republic of

Korea in Nepal, KOICA Nepal Office, Dhulikhel Hospital, and civil society partners.

Implemented in four Dhulikhel Hospital Outreach centers across three districts (Tanahun, Sindhupalchowk, and Kavrepalanchok), the project supported agricultural infrastructure—including collection centers, vehicles, and demo farms—and provided training to strengthen farmer organizations. It also offered entrepreneurship

and vocational programs for non-farming residents.

In the health sector, two outreach centers under Dhulikhel Hospital were newly constructed and equipped, while training was provided to local health workers and students. By mobilizing community-led committees, the project fostered not only improved income and health outcomes but also a stronger sense of ownership and social cohesion.

In the event Kong Mooheon, Country Director of KOICA Nepal Office highlighted the strength of linking agriculture and health to enhance community resilience

Likewise, Dr. Biraj Man Karmacharya from Dhulikhel Hospital thanked the team for the efforts on implementing the project, DH shared that the successful result is clearly visible on the sites with the demand on its continuation and expansion. Therefore, requested for its continuity

Dr. Yoon Haejin, Project Leader from KDS has meaningful memories of this project. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, the project achieved successful and positive outcomes through the dedicated efforts of the project staff, the strong support of local governments and ward leaders, and the sincere participation of communities and farmers. He deeply appreciates all contributions and believes that the results will be sustained through continued collaboration.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has been supporting the Government of Nepal through KOICA in various areas of health, vocational training, rural development and IT since 1991. By 2024, total amount of KOICA’s support surpassed Two hundred million US Dollars. Nepal’s designation as a Core Partnership Country by the Government of the Republic of Korea for 15 consecutive yearshighlights the strong bilateral relationship and commitment to Nepal’s development goals.

## BaYu Sambaad: Centering Children and Youth in Nepal’s Climate Agenda – Government of Nepal, United Nations in Nepal

More than 100 children and young people from across Nepal convened in Kathmandu today for the Balbalika tatha Yuwa (BaYu) Sambaad, a children and youth-led national dialogue on climate action ahead of the international Sagarmatha Sambaad. With nearly half of Nepal’s population under the age of 24, the event underscored a powerful reality: children and youth are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, and they are calling for concerted and urgent climate action.



Jointly organized by the Government of Nepal and United Nations Nepal including UNICEF, FAO and UNDP with a consortium of youth networks, namely Nepalese Youth for Climate Action, Mountain Youth Hub, World Food Forum Nepal, Global Youth Biodiversity Network and Clean Energy Nepal, the event placed children and young people at the centre of the climate conversation. Representatives from the government, civil society, development partners, private sectors, media and climate experts joined the dialogue to listen to, learn from and stand with young people.

## BUSINESS BRIEF

### FNCCI President Dhakal Urges Businessmen To Invest In Nepal

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) has urged foreign businessmen to invest in Nepal as there is ample investment potential in Nepal.



In two separate programmes organised in Kathmandu on Friday, the leadership of FNCCI said that there is ample investment potential in sectors such as tourism, hydro-

power, clean energy, agriculture and electric vehicles in Nepal and urged them to invest.

Welcoming representatives of the Chinese and Bangladeshi embassies in Nepal and delegations of both countries who have come to Nepal to participate in the Nepal International Trade Fair 2025, FNCCI president Chandra Prasad Dhakal urged them to invest in Nepal.

“China is Nepal’s second largest trading partner. There is ample potential in sectors such as tourism, energy, agriculture and IT. I urge them to invest in those sectors,” said President Dhakal.

He said that there have been many policy reforms for investment in Nepal and that the Federation is ready to facilitate businessmen who want to invest.

Similarly, he expressed gratitude for China’s continued participation in the Nepal International Trade Fair, saying that the fair is not just a place for buying and selling goods and services, but also an excellent means of mutual cooperation and trade promotion.

Meanwhile, discussions have been held with the Chinese delegation at the FNCCI on further deepening Nepal-China economic relations, reducing bilateral trade imbalances, and the possibility of joint investment, according to a press statement of FNCCI.

During the discussions, Senior Vice President of the FNCCI Anjan Shrestha said that Nepal-China relations hold great potential for trade, investment, and cooperation, and that China’s support is necessary in market access and export of Nepali products and cross-border trade.

Liu Dianxun, Director General of the China Trade Bureau under the Ministry of Commerce of China, said that Chinese investment is being made in various sectors of Nepal and that they are always ready to invest in other sectors and further improve trade relations between the two countries.

He expressed his commitment to facilitate cross-border trade between the two countries and exchange more cooperation for the promotion of Nepal’s tourism.

Li Zhou, Second Secretary of the Economic and Commercial Section of the Chinese Embassy in Nepal, said that the embassy has always been positive about Nepal’s business promotion and Chinese cooperation.

A group of Chinese and Bangladeshi businessmen is currently in Nepal to participate in the Nepal International Trade Fair 2025, which started on May 8.

### BFIN and PHDCCI’s India-Nepal Centre Hosted A Symposium On “An Aspiring Nepal

The Banking, Finance and Insurance Institute of Nepal (BFIN), in collaboration with the India-Nepal Centre of the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), successfully organized a high-level symposium titled “An Aspiring Nepal: How to Benefit from Economic Reforms?” at the Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu.

The symposium brought together a distinguished assembly of thought leaders, policymakers, economists, and industry experts from Nepal and India to engage in comprehensive dialogue on Nepal’s economic reform agenda and the prospects for enhanced bilateral and regional collaboration.

The welcome address was delivered by Dr. Binod Atreya, Managing Director of BFIN, setting a purposeful tone for the program. Mr. Sanjeev Sanyal, Member of the Economic Advisory



Council to the Prime Minister of India, delivered the keynote address, offering compelling insights into India’s reform journey and outlining actionable lessons relevant to Nepal. Mr. Binod Chaudhary, Member of the House of Representatives and President Emeritus of the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), underscored the critical role of a dynamic private sector in advancing effective economic reforms.

Noteworthy remarks were also shared by Dr. Prakash Kumar Shrestha, Member of Nepal’s National Planning Commission, and Prasanna Shrivastava, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of India in Nepal, both of whom reaffirmed India’s support for Nepal’s developmental aspirations. Additional distinguished speakers included Chandra Prasad Dhakal, President, FNCCI; Guru Prasad Paudel, Executive Director, Nepal Rastra Bank; Upendra Prasad Poudel, President, CBFIN; Ram Kumar Tiwari, MD & CEO, Nepal SBI Bank Ltd. and Anand Jha, Head



of Government Engagement-India & South Asia, Visa Inc. The panel discussion, moderated by Mr Atul K. Thakur, Secretary, India-Nepal Centre (PHDCCI), explored key themes such as policy innovation, financial sector transformation, and sustainable regional growth.

Bringing together policymakers, economists, and industry leaders, the program Symposium provided valuable insights into strengthening bilateral economic ties. With keynote addresses and discussions featuring distinguished experts, including Mr. Sanjeev Sanyal, Eminent Economist and Member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India, the program highlighted key areas where joint efforts can drive mutual prosperity.

Focusing on actionable strategies, this platform encouraged deeper cooperation, innovation, and policy alignment to unlock shared economic potential, shaping a stronger and more prosperous future for both nations.

### **President Dhakal Urges Indian Investors For Investment**

President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) Chandra Prasad Dhakal called upon Indian investors to explore lucrative investment opportunities in Nepal's key economic sectors during his address at the "An Aspiring Nepal" symposium held today in Kathmandu.

Speaking to an audience that included prominent business leaders and policymakers from both Nepal and India, President Dhakal highlighted Nepal's remarkable economic progress, with the economy growing at 4.9% in the first half of the current fiscal year 2024/25.



"Our agriculture and industrial sectors are showing particularly strong performance, driving this growth momentum," Dhakal noted, while acknowledging some ongoing challenges

in the services sector.

The FNCCI president drew attention to Nepal's macro-economic stability, underscored by healthy foreign exchange reserves standing at \$17.27 billion.

He particularly emphasized Nepal's demographic dividend, with a median age of just 25 years, presenting investors with a young, tech-savvy workforce ready to support business growth, according to the secretariat of the FNCCI president.

Dhakal outlined several high-potential sectors for investment such as energy, trade and emerging sectors.

Highlighting the landmark agreement where India has committed to purchasing 10,000 MW of hydroelectricity from Nepal over the next ten years

Similarly, the continuation of duty-free access for Nepali manufactured goods in the Indian market, even after Nepal's graduation to developing country status in 2026.

Growing opportunities in information and communication technology (ICT), tourism, and commercial agriculture.

The FNCCI chief detailed significant improvements in Nepal's investment climate, including the simplification of foreign direct investment (FDI) procedures through an 'automatic route' system and the amendment of more than 30 laws to create a more business-friendly environment.

"These reforms demonstrate our government's strong commitment to facilitating investment and doing business in Nepal," Dhakal asserted.

Concluding his address, President Dhakal extended a warm invitation to the international business community: "With our strategic location, improving infrastructure, skilled workforce, and investor-friendly policies, Nepal offers unparalleled opportunities across multiple sectors. We welcome Indian and global investors to be part of our nation's exciting growth story."

The symposium, attended by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council member Sanjeev Sanyal, senior government officials and business leaders from both countries, served as an important platform to strengthen economic ties and explore new avenues for bilateral cooperation between Nepal and India.

### **Seti River Hydropower Project completed**

The construction of the 25-MW Seti River Hydropower Project located on the Seti River in Machhapuchhre Rural Municipality and Pokhara Municipal Corporation of Kaski district has been completed.

The project was formally inaugurated with the power connected to the Nepal Electricity Authority's national grid.

Vision Lumbini Energy Company Limited, the proprietor company of the project, organised a formal inauguration function here on Friday.

The construction of the project began in 2077 BS and the



## BUSINESS BRIEF

NEA has started purchasing electricity from 2081 BS. The project has been producing better energy than specified in the power purchase agreement every month since the project came into operation, said the company's chair Jagat Pokharel.

The electricity generated from this project is expected to generate an annual income of Rs. 870 million in the first year. It was completed with an investment of about Rs. 6 billion, financed by loans from the Employees Provident Fund and the Agricultural Development Bank, led by NMB Bank.

At the inauguration ceremony, Former Finance Minister Dr Yubaraj Khatriwada, Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal (IPPAN) Chair Ganesh Karki and others said that the standard set by Vision Lumbini in energy production is exemplary.

### Global IME Bank Launches Card-Based Global Payment Gateway

Global IME Bank has launched a card-based online global payment gateway in collaboration with Nepal Clearing House.

Once this gateway is launched, the bank's merchants will be able to receive payments through Visa and MasterCard cards issued by any national and international banks.

Global IME Bank has launched a global payment gateway with the aim of promoting e-commerce transactions in Nepal.

The global payment gateway will enable bank merchants to expand their business scope and easily accept payments from both domestic and international markets. Businesses that engage in e-commerce transactions such as travel and tour agencies, hotels, airlines, hospitals, etc. will benefit from the launch of this gateway.



The global payment gateway will help grow the business of the bank's merchants by facilitating the receipt of national and international payments.

In addition, since this payment gateway uses 3D secured technology, transactions made through this gateway will be more secure. In this way, the bank has been attracting customers by bringing such timely schemes, keeping in mind the convenience of its customers.

Global IME Bank was honored as the best bank in Ne-

pal in two categories: Global Finance's Best Bank Award 2024 and Euro Money Award for Excellence 202

Global IME Bank has also been honored in various categories by various national and international organizations.

Global IME Bank is the first private sector commercial bank with a branch network in all seventy-seven districts of the country.

The bank has been providing excellent service to its customers from more than 1,100 service centers, including 354 branch offices, 385 ATMs, 221 branchless banking services, 68 extension and revenue collection counters, and 3 foreign representative offices.

In addition to providing banking services to Nepali citizens, the bank has also been providing remittance services from various countries around the world.

The bank has been working to receive remittances from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, India, Jordan, and other countries.

### ADB President Calls for Collective Action to Solve Complex Challenges Together at 58th Annual Meeting of the ADB Board of Governors

The uncertainties facing Asia and the Pacific are also an opportunity to build a more resilient and sustainable future, Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masato Kanda said at the Opening Session of ADB's 58th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors.



"External shocks, debt burdens, and climate change weigh heavily on the people and economies of the region. But we are not starting from zero. Growth remains solid, trade and economic integration are deepening, supply chains are diversifying, and digital connectivity and innovation are accelerating," said Mr. Kanda. "Uncertainty is not a reason for retreat. It is a call to be bolder, to move faster, and to work more closely than ever before."

More than 5,000 participants joined the Annual Meeting in Milan, Italy consisting of representatives of governments—including Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni—the private sector, civil society, and academia.

Italian Minister of Economy and Finance Giancarlo Gi-



orgetti and Governor of the Bank of Italy and Chair of the ADB Board of Governors Fabio Panetta also spoke at the Opening Session, emphasizing Italy's partnership with ADB.

"Enhanced collaboration will support higher and sustainable long-term economic growth, avoiding the materialization of downside risks and mitigating their possible consequences," said Mr. Giorgetti. "As a leading multi-lateral development bank and trusted partner in Asia and the Pacific, ADB has been working to solve complex challenges together with its members and partners, both regional and nonregional."

This year's Annual Meeting highlights four focus areas that are central to driving transformational change across Asia and the Pacific.

First, to address the vulnerability of the region's food systems, ADB will scale up financing for food systems transformation to \$40 billion by 2030.

Second, ADB is investing in digital technologies to improve access to education, finance, and markets.

Third, ADB is investing in modernizing and connecting energy systems, including readiness to commit up to \$10 billion to support work on the ASEAN Power Grid.

Fourth, ADB is deepening investments to build resilience by strengthening infrastructure, restoring and protecting ecosystems, and helping vulnerable communities adapt to the impacts of climate change.

### **FNCCI President Dhakal Urged Government To Declare Investment Decade To Boost Investment**

Federation of Nepal Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) President Chandra Prasad Dhakal urges the government to declare an investment decade to boost investment in the country and to formulate and implement a unified law on investment.

President Dhakal made the request while speaking on the occasion of the inauguration of the Province Investment Summit-2082 organized by the Koshi Province Government for the first time in Biratnagar.

He suggested declaring the next 10 years as an investment decade, unifying investment-related laws, including forest, environment, and land, into a unified investment code, and ending the practice of different interpretations by different bodies.

Similarly, he emphasized the need for policy stability for investment and economic development. "Policy stability is the need of the hour for investment and economic development. There are many examples of countries that have achieved development due to policy stability even in the midst of political instability."

"All parties should agree not to make any policy changes for at least the next ten years. We believe that the situation of misinterpretation of laws and the conflicting of one law with another should end," he said.

Stating that the upcoming budget and monetary policy should prioritize investment facilitation, Chairman Dhakal expressed the view that this year's budget should be the starting point for a new phase of economic reform.

President Dhakal urged the government to make arrangements for business registration through the Nagarik app, to make arrangements for automatic renewal based on tax payments, and to end the situation where investors have to manually file files by making arrangements for foreign investment to be submitted online after completing all the procedures.

He also urged to emphasize investment facilitation by integrating the Investment Board, the Department of Industry and other agencies and creating a fully-fledged investment facilitation body.

President Dhakal stated that Koshi Province is a region with vast potential in the fields of tourism, agriculture, industry, energy, infrastructure, information technology, and more.

President Dhakal urged the Koshi Provincial Government to reassure investors by clarifying the feasibility of the projects to be presented at the conference, the investment framework, and the role of the provincial government.

Informing that a public limited company with a capital of 10 billion rupees has been established and work has begun on the initiative of the federation to ensure that there is no shortage of capital for infrastructure development in the country, he said that this will help to overcome the shortage of investment in infrastructure, at least to a small extent.

Similarly, recalling that the Federation raised the issue of good governance during its general assembly to expand investment and enhance service security for the general public, he expressed gratitude to the government for immediately forming the Good Governance Commission.

He also said that the private sector is ready to collaborate in every way for improvements in the areas of good governance and reform.



## Overcoming Indo-Pak Conflict The Dara Shikoh Way



BY: DIPAK GYAWALI

– Those following various international media coverage of last week’s Indo-Pak skirmish had difficulties maintaining their sanity: whom to believe? Even the over-hallowed “international” media was suspect. So, who won? Did India, Southasia’s center of gravity, [win](#) or [lose](#)? With opinions are all over the chart, there is the need to step back and reflect on the deeper root causes behind this conflict if genuine peace is to be found.

This is not the first ceasefire since 1948, and will probably not be the last either. All with the exception of 1971 (and Bangladesh liberation) happened after strong international pressure. The current one is all the more surprising with Trump’s short intervention. US has demonstrated it has little leverage in Gaza, Ukraine, Sub-Saharan Africa or in the tariff war with China. So how was it that a few phone calls from Washington was enough to get two nuclear powers to terminate operations and agree to come to the negotiating table. And what will they negotiate? Certainly not permanent, long-term peace, which, if it happily happened, would certainly help bring SAARC out of its coma!

Is *Pax Americana*, the successor to *Pax Britannica*, so dominant in the internal wirings of these two British Raj fallout states that the umbilical cord that ties them to the Collective West has dominated their growth and behaviour? Or is it, as [Samir Amin](#) has so brilliantly described, that India and Pakistan are fully integrated into the Western capitalist world order as secondary entities, [peripheral](#) to the centers of New York and London?

Whatever the reason, Modi’s bromance with Trump and his hope to piggyback on the US to both counter China and achieve regional dominance has [backfired](#). India’s inherited Raj colonial diplomatic outlook has left it with bad relations with all its neighbours – Sri Lanka, Maldives, now Bangladesh and even [Bhutan](#). In Nepal, India’s four major economic blockades over the last half century rankles deep

and is destined to do so for several generations: *April-October 1962* lifted only due to the Sino-Indian war; *1 November 1970 to 26 August 1972* lifted due to Bangladesh war; *23 March 1989 to 1 July 1990* lifted after the Panchayat system was abrogated; and *23 September 2015 to 5 February 2016* in the aftermath of the devastating 2015 earthquake for Nepal making a constitution not to India’s liking.

Pakistan fares just as badly. Its current [defense minister](#) as well as its [former foreign minister](#) and leader of the important Peoples’ Party of Pakistan both admitted that the country (primarily its all-powerful military that has deposed and locked up its legitimate prime minister Imran Khan) has produced Islamist terrorists over the last thirty years to serve US interests in the region! This pandering to religious Sunni fundamentalists has ironically been done not just by the military but also by liberal democrats as well. After East Pakistan split off as Bangladesh in 1971, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had the country’s constitution amended in 1974 to declare mild Muslim sects such as the Ahmadiyya’s as apostates. It forced the founder of its nuclear program (and future Nobel Prize winner in physics) [Abdus Salam](#) to leave the country!

The current flare-up began with the selected killings by Islamist terrorists of Hindu men tourists in Kashmir’s [Pahalgam](#) after verifying that they were not circumcised and could not recite the Muslim *kalam*. It has churned deep resentments, already stoked by the rise of the BJP and its RSS ideologues in India, among Hindus globally among the diaspora as well. Those roots back in history beyond British rule to the very advent of Islam in Southasia along two tracks, one violently coercive and the other reflectively persuasive.

The Islamic scholar Habib (book pictured above) has described that historical process with remarkable insights. He divides the world’s major religions into two classes: Semit-



ic (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and Aryan (Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism). Having originated in the harsh deserts, the former emphasize social ethics of group cohesion essential for survival, while the latter focus on metaphysical aspects of faith that are more individualistic and introvert. It was after the Muslim conquest of Persia that the reinterpretation of Islam took place in light of their earlier Aryan achievements of Zoroastrianism and Buddhism. *Tasawwuf* or Muslim mysticism and the subsequent Sufi trend in this direction of mysticism followed, which has many adherents not only in Shia but also Sunni Islam.

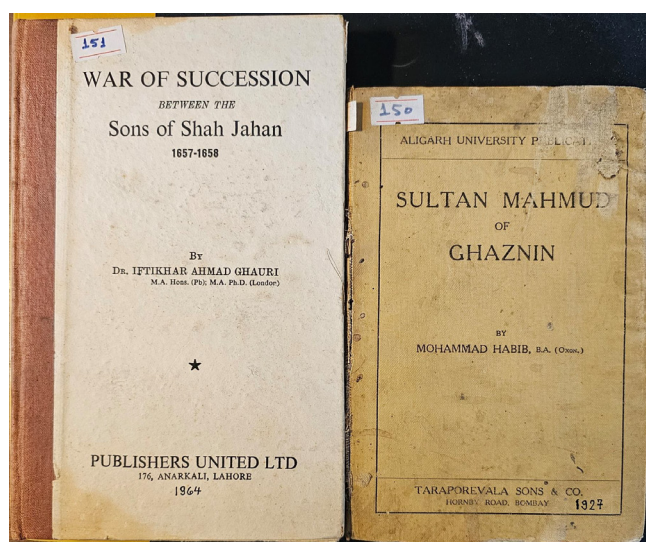
The spread of Islam in Southasia has occurred in parallel via these two tracks. Given that most Hindu rulers were presiding over a land and agriculture-based social order whereas much of the Muslim world was trade focused, Sufi teachers reached far-flung corners of Bengal and Indonesia along with their merchants, and rather peacefully. In contrast, Arab and Central Asian rulers brought much killing, looting, plundering and forcible conversion (or death!). Bin Qasim in 712AD, Mahmud Ghazni with 17 invasions between 1000-1027AD including the destruction of Somnath temple, Muhammad Ghori at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and Timur's sacking of Delhi in 1398 are blood-stained histories that have overshadowed the works of peaceful Sufi saints.

Once the Central Asian conquerors had established their rule, they, however, toned down their violence and promoted Sufism. The Delhi Sultanate rule of the Lodhis and Tugluqs between 1300AD and the advent of the Mughals in 1526 saw such a peaceful interlude and a flowering of culture including the birth of Urdu, despite Timur's massacre in between. It also saw the rise of Sikhism which was an indigenous response to the strong inclusive social aspects of Islam and an attempt to reform Hinduism, much as Buddha had nearly two millennia earlier. Moghul rule too, despite its origins in violence and an antipathy towards Delhi Sultans who were seen as having regressed in Muslim beliefs by being too soft on Hindus, saw significant ecumenism and accommodation with Hindu and other beliefs, especially during Akbar's long rule. Akbar had set up a translation bureau, the *Maktab Khana*, which oversaw the translation of the Ramayana into Persian, the court language.

The real adaptation came with Akbar's great grandson, crown prince Dara Shikoh, although that ecumenism was

tragically squashed. Dara was the eldest of the four sons of emperor Shahjahan who was mystic on his own right, having studied under the Sufi mystic Mian Mir. He was also close to the seventh Sikh guru Har Rai. Realizing that some 90% of his future subjects were not of Muslim faith, he sought to understand Hinduism by discussing with pandits in Benares, and had the Upanishads translated into Persian (which further translated into German in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was what the philosopher Schopenhauer discovered, allowing him to be the only bridge between Western and Eastern philosophies).

Dara's attempt to see the similarities between Sufi mysticism and Hindu Vedanta resulted in his seminal composition [\*Majma ul Bahrain\*](#), translated as "the comingling of two oceans, Islam and Hinduism". It was also to be the cause of his death: his rigidly orthodox Sunni younger brother Aurangzeb – who was a far better military strategist – not only defeated Dara in battle but, under pressure from Sunni clerics, had him beheaded for apostasy. His head was sent on a platter to his grieving father emperor Shahjahan whom he had imprisoned in Agra fort.



With that, the reconciliation between Muslims and Hindus (as well as Sikhs) in Southasia came to a tragic end. An attempt at peace between the two communities by the ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675AD was rejected by Aurangzeb who not only had him beheaded for not converting to Islam, but sawed in half as well as boiled in oil the Brahmin pundits who had accompanied him. It laid the groundwork for the eventual demise of the Moghul rule and the rise of the British Raj. Had Dara become the emperor of Hindustan instead of Aurangzeb, one can only speculate what new civilization would have arisen in South Asia that, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, "would have a Vedantic brain inside an Islamic body" but that only if we don't just tolerate all religions but ACCEPT all as equally true.

In light of this historical background, while the Trump-brokered ceasefire between India and Pakistan is a welcome relief to the entire Southasian region, it is difficult to see a permanent, lasting peace in the days or years ahead. The entire spectrum of intractable issues – ranging from India's unilateral abrogation of the Indus treaty to the fundamental belief of Semitic religions that all others must be brought to their faith – run counter to genuine peace without the rise of a new Dara Shikoh.

# Facing Turbulence

*Despite claims of good relations, the NC-UML coalition is currently experiencing various challenges.*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister K.P Sharma Oli has been vocal about his commitment to upholding the coalition culture by sharing powerful appointments with the Nepali Congress.

However, the reality paints a different picture. UML has been appointing its own sympathizers to key positions, overshadowing the Nepali Congress leaders and their designated share.

An example of this is the delayed appointment of the Governor of the Nepal Rastra Bank, which should have been finalized before Chaitra 25. The UML and the Prime Minister, who previously replaced Kulman Ghising with their own supporter as the Managing Director of the Nepal Electricity Authority, are now also seeking control over the Governor of the Nepal Rastra Bank.

Journalist Yubaraj Ghimire highlights the shifting dynamics, noting that Oli appears to be disregarding Deuba's claim to the governor position at the Nepal Rastra Bank due to his alleged involvement in a conspiracy

against Ghising. The Deuba couple reportedly approached Oli in desperation, urging him to swiftly become the Prime Minister in order to evade corruption investigations targeting themselves and

irregularities and corruption in the Patanjali land case.

Oli is currently engaged in negotiations with a politically weak and corruption-ridden Nepal. If he parts ways with Deuba, his



their family.

The situation remains unchanged. Even if Oli were to take over as Governor of the National Bank, the Deuba couple would have no choice but to accept it. Whether the Congress will accept this situation or pressure the Deuba couple to find a way to maintain their self-respect is uncertain.

Oli has shielded all the leaders of his party and those involved in corruption. The Commission has not disclosed the statement made by Madhav Nepal regarding the

next move may involve forming the largest party or exploring alternative alliances.

While it is expected that Congress President Deuba will become Prime Minister in a few months as per the agreement with Oli, there is skepticism about the Congress's ability to govern effectively and combat corruption. Consequently, there is little enthusiasm among the public for Deuba's potential premiership.

The government's harsh crackdown in Tinkune on Chaitra 15



will not secure Oli's position in power or facilitate Deuba's ascent to power.

The leadership of the Nepal Police, actively involved in this repression, has transformed the police institution into a faction of the UML party. It is highly likely that Deepak Thapa will face investigation and legal consequences for severe human rights violations within two months of assuming office.

Amidst escalating state repression and corruption in Nepal, pro-monarchy forces have declared their intention to initiate a movement to reinstate the monarchy from Jestha 15, the day the republic was established, without consulting the Nepali people. This move is primarily orchestrated by Shyam Saran, pushing it towards a critical juncture.

With Oli's authoritarian and repressive stance towards dissenting views and political ideologies, the Congress and the Maoists are inadvertently contributing to the destabilization of the system.

The situation in Nepal has heightened tensions between neighboring India and Pakistan. The tragic incident on April 22, where terrorists killed 26 tourists, including a Nepali citizen, in Pahalgam, Kashmir, has brought the two countries closer together, causing concern worldwide.

While various concerned countries, including Nepal, have expressed their desire to prevent tensions between India and Pakistan from escalating, India, as a victim, understands that failure to eradicate terrorism will instill fear and insecurity



throughout the country.

Nepal empathizes with India's pain and anger, recognizing that everyone is affected. Nepal maintains its stance against all forms of extremism in principle. In 2062/63, the Indian establishment placed the Maoists, labeled as terrorists, at the forefront of Nepali politics under its protection, leading to chaos, impunity, corruption, unrest, and external interference in Nepal.

India has yet to address this issue. Collaboration between Indian groups and the Maoists persists, but defeating terrorism requires that no country provides shelter or support to terrorists. Nepal's parliament has condemned the Pahalgam attack, but there has been limited discussion on how terrorism has impacted Nepal, fostering dependence and external interference in its internal affairs.

The current system and rulers are impacted by external intervention, making leaders like Oli, Prachanda, or Deuba unable to prioritize nationalism and the interests of Nepal.

Nepal's previous strong foreign policy and security stance has deteriorated since the democratic rule of 1990 and has continued to weaken since 2006/07. There is evidence of significant Western influence and funding for religious conversions under the guise of secularism in countries like the United States and Nepal. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bharatiya Janata Party's foreign affairs chief Vijay Chauthaiwale have raised concerns about religious conversion in Nepal. Despite public dissatisfaction, leaders and parties benefiting from external support have not taken these issues seriously. The fight against corruption has also gained momentum alongside the opposition to religious conversions, with some advocating for the restoration of the monarchy.

In a political environment where external pressures shape political agendas and secularism is equated with republicanism and religious conversion, leaders have lost respect in the eyes of the people.

# Rethinking Multilateralism

*The tumultuous political and financial environment in today's world is demanding a new vision for international relations. The actions, counteractions, and reactions of those holding the purse along with the key to the functioning of the different institutions within the system substantiate the observation.*



BY: DR. KISHOR UPRETY

Recent discussions revolving around the current system of international organization and governance, followed by multiple proposals for change in varying degrees of intensity, raise serious concerns amongst international lawyers pertaining to the eventuality of an overhaul of the 'form of multilateralism' practiced today and which has prevailed for decades, with many good results.

## Traditional Multilateralism in Question

The UN system, conceived in 1945, largely following a compromise amongst the victors of the Second World War, is now being put under pressure for change. The tumultuous political and financial environment in today's world is demanding a new vision for international relations. The actions, counteractions, and reactions of those holding the purse along with the key to the functioning of the different institutions within the system substantiate the observation. In addition, those criticizing the inherent problems of governance, power-sharing and limited scope of work, as well as those regularly over-advised and under-nourished clients, make the situation worse and contribute to further confusion. All seem so desperate that an undefinable desire to go beyond the standards that have been, so far, observed in inter-state relations is emerging. All see an opportunity to score points and position themselves to become more visible and relevant.

The UN system instilled optimism and played a significant role in preventing new world wars, in structuring peacekeeping (thus reducing the potential of new regional wars), and in strengthening international cooperation. This international cooperation was facilitated by another parallel system conceived during the same decade, which focused on economic development and

financial discipline as designed at the Bretton Woods Conference and on trade liberalism established by the GATT system (later morphed into WTO). The political side of it (the geopolitical turf delimitation) was, on the other hand, secured more pointedly through the Accord of Yalta, as well as through regional agreements such as those of Helsinki. All these now are now being questioned and perhaps on the verge of being partially dismantled, both de jure and de facto.

The United States, the most important single player in the international community, propelled by internal political dynamics and electoral commitments, decided to get out of several international organizations, or reduce its participation substantially. Items such as the financing of NATO's operational costs, Ukraine's membership in NATO, or more broadly the uncertainty about the perceived and real effects of trade war triggered by the change of tariff structure on most countries, some critical ones, also played a limited role in the decision. Certainly, this is not the first time that the United States has made a decision to exit an international institution. But, this time, the impact appears quite intense and broadly all-encompassing.

The perception of general inefficiency, political biases, and inadequate benefits, or mere ideological choice, causing geopolitical mismatch with traditional thinking, have led to such decisions. No matter the reason, the decision has had an immediate chain effect on all. Consequently, several international institutions were compelled to consider decisions to reduce the size of their staff, to strategically relocate staff in less expensive countries, and to regroup staff in select hubs for 'efficiency' (i.e., cost-saving) sakes. Looking ahead, this may also lead to such institutions being encouraged to recruit increased number of staff in local



offices and to reduce the size of expatriate staff, thus also weakening the concept of multi-nationalism and internationalism of experience in the workforce.

There are also some new institutions mandated to finance international development, such as, for instance, the New Development Bank or the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, for which the current system's overhauling may become an opportunity. For such institutions, lessened supply from the traditional institutions against increasing demand from clients means a larger shopping forum.

### Readjusting Multilateralism

Multilateralism is a technique in diplomacy that allows peaceful consultation between more than two nations within a commonly defined framework. It can be used as a tool for one-off consultation to respond to a specific crisis, or for broader crisis management with institutionalized consultation through international organizations.

A crucial point worth recalling is that at the time the current tool of multilateralism began (with the creation of the UN); there were 51 countries in the world. Today, there are almost 200 states and territories flying the banners of sovereignty. Thus, as cautioned by many scholars, lawyers, and political scientists, it would be difficult to create the same type of multilateral and liberal tool today. All sorts of questions from the multiple stakeholders from all directions would need addressing. The strategic pondering for reconstruction is already underway in several bilateral and multilateral forums and think-tanks. But the variety and multiplicity of actions by most major power centers make a diagnosis and forecast of the elements of the response particularly delicate.

It must be admitted, from a practicality angle that it was less complicated when the United States dominated the international scene and itself pushed for a multilateralism agenda; i.e., when intentional geopolitics was unipolar. But in the current situation of

a multi-polar world with complex, layered and cascading power-centers that moreover continue to proliferate, and the competition between large, medium, and small power-centers intensifies, the refinement or overhaul of multilateralism suffers because countries calculate and decide on the basis of how and what national interest they can advance.

Let us also recall that the geopolitical and geo-economic categorization at the time of the creation of the current multilateral system was different. Notions such as East versus West, North versus South dominated discussions. Today, it is unclear which nations belong to the West and which nations belong to the East. In

the large spectrum of players and stakeholders, the competing interests of for instance Russia, China and several others cannot be undermined. Moreover, the world community today does not only need to consider the United States and European countries; it needs to also con-

sider their allies of the Pacific (Japan, South Korea, or Australia, for instance). Because of the possibility of further breaking down, scholars have also started to talk about mini-multilateralism or plurilateral exercises (sectoral, regional, or sub-regional groupings on issues).

### Conclusion:

Despite all of the above, a multilateral system, in a form satisfactory to the majority, remains more necessary than ever. The international community failing to establish a minimum number of international law principles, rules, and norms for everyone to follow would mean that diplomacy by force (i.e., use of power in international relations) would win. That would be of particular concern to smaller, and politically and economically less affluent, but strategically located countries in the world!

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# Nepal's Security Challenges

*With an open border spanning over 1800 kilometers with India, any escalation of conflict between India and Pakistan could have significant security implications for Nepal.*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Following the ceasefire, the de-escalation of conflict has commenced along the border between India and Pakistan. However, Nepal is facing heightened security challenges in its southern border areas. With the restructuring of the state into three tiers of government and the re-configuration of security measures, the centralized security system that has been in place for decades is now faltering. The intelligence networks have almost ceased to exist due to prolonged instability and political turmoil resulting from the Maoist insurgency and identity-based uprisings.

Given this situation, the emergence of fundamentalism in the southern border and hilly regions is a cause for concern among Nepalese and Indian security officials. These incidents are likely to further fuel the activities of fundamentalists.

Experts have urged the government to be prepared for necessary measures, warning that if the conflict between India and Pakistan intensifies, it will present a challenge to Nepal's national security.

They argue that Nepal, with its porous border with India, would inevitably be affected if tensions between the two nuclear-armed nations escalate to a full-scale war.

They have also highlighted the potential geopolitical consequences, including the risk of Nepali territory being misused.

Government officials have stated that they have heightened security measures and are closely monitoring the situation.

## Concerns of Experts

Following the attack in Pahalgam last April that resulted in the deaths of 26 people, including a Nepali national, India conducted air-strikes on various locations in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir on Wednesday (May 7).

Pakistan has reported 31 deaths and 57 injuries on its side, while India has confirmed at least 15 fatalities in Pakistani shelling along the Line of Control, the border area between the two countries. The potential escalation of the current conflict remains uncertain.

Deviram Sharma, former head of the National Investigation Agency, expressed concerns about the impact of a war between India and Pakistan on various sectors such as the economy, security, and tourism. He emphasized that such a situation could disrupt daily life and lead to the stockpiling of goods if supply systems are disrupted, resulting in price increases.

Sharma also noted that with open borders, individuals from Pakistan in India could easily seek refuge in Nepal. This could potentially lead to an increase in the number of people seeking asylum.

He stated that it is important to prepare for potential geopolitical challenges in our country, focusing on essentials like fuel, cooking gas, and medicine. While the chances of war are low,

national readiness is crucial in case it does occur. Civil aviation experts have warned that if the India-Pakistan conflict results in airspace closures, international flights from Nepal could



be affected. There is a concern about the spread of extremism, with security experts noting the possibility of extremist groups from India turning their attention to Nepal.

Sharma, a former head of the National Investigation Agency, expressed concerns about potential disruptions to peace and order by such groups, emphasizing the importance of maintaining peace to avoid long-term consequences.

Reports indicate that India has heightened security measures in the border area following the launch of its military operation 'Operation Sindoor' against Pakistan.

Indian Home Minister Amit Shah has instructed the Border Security Force (SSB) to ensure border security with Nepal and Bhutan, as reported by The Indian Express.

Nepal, a landlocked country, is bor-



dered by India on three sides, with an open border of approximately 1,880 kilometers guarded by the Armed Police Force on the Nepal side and the SSB on the Indian side.

India has raised concerns to Nepal about security issues, such as the influx of counterfeit Indian currency and the movement of extremist groups across the border.

Former head of the National Investigation Agency, Sharma, notes that India has consistently highlighted Pakistan as a haven for terrorist groups during security discussions.

Former Additional Inspector General of Nepal Police Rajendra Singh Bhandari also acknowledges the potential risks if vigilance is not maintained, suggesting that blame could be placed on Nepal if security lapses lead to problems.

He expressed concern that if large countries engage in frequent conflicts, it could result in a situation similar to a bullfight where the calf is killed. He also warned of potential increased surveillance and military operations under the guise of combating terrorism, as well as unwarranted interference in Nepal. Bhandari highlighted instances where individuals involved in Kashmir-related incidents sought refuge in Nepal using fake identities or marrying Nepali citizens. He raised concerns about the presence of criminal activities such as the Dawood gang operating in Nepal in the past and the circulation of counterfeit currency.

The US State Department's 2019 terrorism report mentioned the Indian Mujahideen's activities in India, Nepal, and Pakistan, noting its ties to militant groups in Pakistan and its significant presence in Nepal. However, experts criticize the Nepalese government for not adequately addressing these security concerns.

Political instability and governance issues are to blame for this," stated retired Nepali Army Lieutenant General Binoj Basnyat.

"We need to gather information discreetly. People may be migrating and residing there. We must investigate that. Corruption within our country leads to a tendency to overlook things. We should utilize government mechanisms to conduct thorough investigations."

Terrorism poses a significant challenge. Instead of remaining silent on the statements of larger countries, Nepal, as the chair of the South Asian

use of its territory by harmful forces against neighboring countries, as stated in the official announcement. The Ministry of Nepal expressed solidarity with all those affected by the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam on April 22, emphasizing the shared grief and support between Nepal and India.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli chaired a meeting of the National Security Council, while Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak led a session of the Central Security Committee. The National Security Council meeting focused on formulating effective strategies to address the evolving situation between India and Pakistan in the upcoming days.

Security measures have been heightened at the Nepal-India border and Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu since Wednesday, with continuous monitoring and analysis by security agencies.

The Home Ministry spokesperson, Ram Chandra Tiwari, emphasized the importance of preventing unauthorized movements and ensuring border security along the open border with India through vigilant monitoring and checks.

The spokesperson for the Armed Police Force, Deputy Inspector General of Police Kalidas Dhaubaji, stated that the Armed Police Force stationed in the border region is on high security alert.

He mentioned that border checkpoints have been reinforced, with thorough checks of people's identity cards and maintenance of records to monitor border crossings. Increased coordination and patrols with counterparts on the other side have also been implemented. Sharma, a former head of the National Investigation Department, suggested that regular checking of identity cards and record-keeping at border checkpoints could enhance border security.



Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), should consider diplomatic actions in the national interest and address its own challenges.

"However, I rarely see this being handled in a mature manner." Nepal released its official statement on the India-Pakistan conflict more than 36 hours after the incident.

In a statement issued on Thursday evening, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed, "The Government of Nepal is deeply concerned about the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan. Nepal calls for a de-escalation of tensions and reaffirms its commitment to long-term peace and stability in the region."

Nepal reaffirms its commitment to combat terrorism and prevent any mis-

## PRO-MONARCHIST AGITATION

# United Front

*Following a period of quiet, all pro-monarchists, under the leadership of Nawaraj Subedi, came together to form a united front and called for a nationwide strike starting on May 29.*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Taking inspiration from the recent solidarity among pro-monarchists, a motorcycle rally was organized in Kathmandu last week to showcase their unity.

Led by movement leader Nawaraj Subedi, the rally kicked off in Sukedhara in Kathmandu on Friday afternoon and proceeded to Balkhu as per the committee's directives.

Prior to the rally, a press conference was convened by the pro-monarchists, where they affirmed their commitment to continue protesting until the monarchy is reinstated. The committee has confirmed that the protest program has been initiated as scheduled.

Committee coordinator Nawaraj Subedi, RPP Nepal chairman Kamal Thapa, RPP leader Bikram Pandey, and others were in atten-



dance at the rally. The committee has announced that the people's movement will commence on May 29.

From street demonstrations to meditation aimed at bringing back the king, a new strategy has been devised to give the move-



ment a 'fresh perspective'. The Joint People's Movement Committee led by Subedi unveiled a new program for the movement on May 8.

Subedi had previously stated that the Shah would remain on the throne until May 29, while the committee has declared an indefinite protest starting from that day.

However, some activists from outside the Kathmandu Valley who participated in the announcement meeting expressed doubts about the movement being launched at the onset of the rainy season.

When the movement was announced at a 'party palace' in Sokedhara, Kathmandu, supporters of the restoration of the monarchy displayed a renewed enthusiasm compared to previous occasions.

This marks the first instance where all major political parties advocating for the reinstatement of the monarchy have come together in a unified movement. With this newfound unity and determination, the Subedi-led committee declared an indefinite movement commencing on the 15th of Jestha.

The energy and optimism in Rajawadi can be attributed to the unprecedented collaboration among the political parties. Notably,



Rajendra Lingden, the chairman of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, had not previously participated in Subedi's events.

Alongside him, RPP Nepal Chairman Kamal Thapa and Rastriya Shakti Nepal Coordinator Keshar Bahadur Bista addressed the gathering, reaffirming their dedication to realizing the movement's objectives.

Bista described the announcement as the happiest day of his life, while Thapa appeared to be motivating Lingden by suggesting that he would take a leading role. Thapa assured the support-

ers of their solidarity, emphasizing their commitment to achieving good governance, economic prosperity, and the restoration of the monarchy and Hindu nation by liberating the country from corrupt governance promptly.

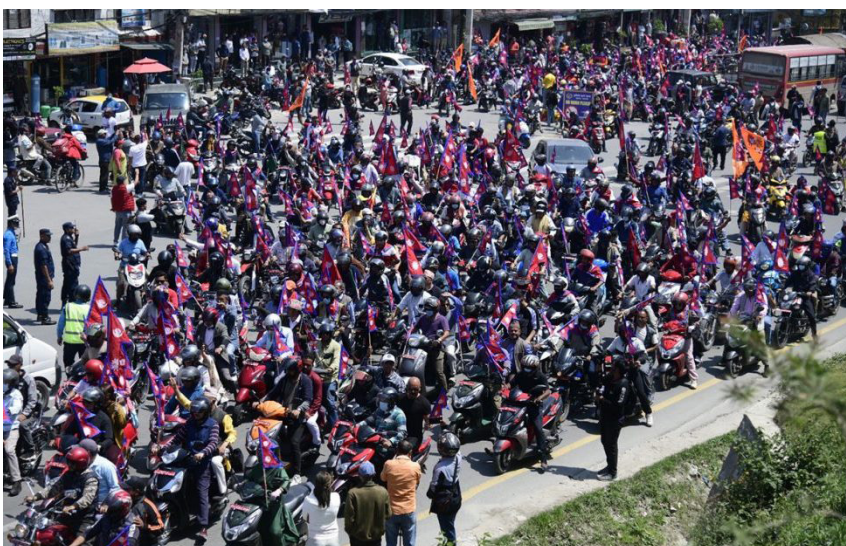
Earlier, Lingden, who defeated Thapa at the RPP general convention to become the president, also addressed Thapa as 'brother' and expressed support for the promise of unity.

"I would like to urge those in Congress, UML, Maoists, and other parties, as well as those in power who support the monarchy and the Hindu nation, to join this polarization," said Chairman Lingden.

"If those who believe that democracy and secularism will solve the country's issues are facing obstacles, they should also come on board."

RPP Nepal leader Rajaram Bartaulla expressed great enthusiasm and energy when leaders who were previously part of the same party reunite on a single platform.

He stated, "This was crucial for a decisive movement. It has also boosted the morale of the workers who had been hoping for the lead-







ers to unite until yesterday. This unity will empower us to make our movement decisive.”

However, many are questioning how the RPP, which had been reluctant to accept Subedi and claimed that past political change movements were led by the party, has now prepared for this change.

How has Kamal Thapa, who parted ways with Lingden after alleging that he was defeated by the former king, suddenly publicly acknowledged Lingden’s significant responsibility? Some experts suggest that the parties’ own tactics, strategies, or realizations may have influenced this shift.

However, other sources indicate that the recent developments occurred following a meeting with former King Gyanendra Shah. Leader Buddhiman Tamang, who attended the joint meeting of RPP leaders with the former king, stat-

ed that the current unity was not initiated or facilitated by the former king.

“We discussed the idea of coming together, especially within our party, as some of our colleagues are in prison. This led us to the decision to unite and join the movement,” explained Tamang.

“It was also necessary for us to have

the support of the largest party.” Some experts suggest that RPP Chairman Lingden and others were unhappy with Subedi being appointed as the leader of the movement at the former king’s behest.

There were indications that leaders Thapa and Bista were also hesitant to accept his leadership.

Reports suggested that the leaders were particularly dissatisfied because the former king did not grant them a meeting. However, in recent days, the royalist leaders have had the opportunity to meet with the former king.

There is some understanding that this also made the situation easier. Jagman Gurung’s empty chair After Subedi was placed under unannounced house arrest, he had assigned the responsibility of acting coordinator to cultural expert Jagman Gurung.

Gurung was also given a chair at

Thursday’s announcement event along with Subedi and other leaders. But he did not appear at the event. Gurung said that he did not attend due to a conflict between the time for giving an interview to the media and the time for announcing the movement.

The responsibility of gaining strength through spiritual practice’ Although he said that he was not boycotting the program, he did not hide the fact that he would not participate in the movement.

“On the one hand, the physical movement, on the other hand, doing classical spiritual practice.”

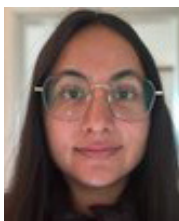
“I am going to do spiritual practice,” he replied about the reason, “but the purpose is the same, complementary to each other. With our spiritual practice, their movement will be successful, and the king’s wish will also be fulfilled.”

During his tenure as the acting coordinator of the Joint People’s Movement Committee, he had declared that if the individuals detained following the March 30 incident were not released, he would initiate mass arrests starting from Baisakh 22. Notably, RPP Senior Vice President Rabin-dra Mishra and other leaders are still in custody.

“Despite being labeled as resolute, the movement is set to continue into the next year,” the activist remarked. The pro-monarchy parties and factions have been staging protests for an extended period, albeit independently.

While protests typically lose momentum over time, the leaders have affirmed their commitment to infuse a new vigor into the current protest and make it definitive.

## Chapters Of Connection: My Journey With The Nepali Women's Book Club In San Francisco



BY: PRAGYA TRIPATHI

I'm often rushing, grabbing my keys, balancing a tote bag filled with the book of the month and a homemade dish to share, as I head out the door and navigate through San Francisco's busy streets, determined to arrive on time. The stress melts away the moment I walk in. I'm greeted by warm smiles, the hum of cheerful conversations, and the comforting aroma of familiar spices. We settle in, plates in hand, ready to dive deep into another book that has sparked curiosity, debate, or even a little controversy among us.

After graduating college in the U.S., I realized how much I missed the deep, layered conversations that used to light up my English literature classes. Even though I was an engineering major, I found my grounding in those discussions by teasing out symbolism, interpreting an author's motives, drawing connections to my own life. In a way, it reminded me of the literary analysis I was required to do back in the schools I attended in Nepal. There, too, I had wrestled with meaning in Nepali novels and poems, even if I didn't fully appreciate it at the time. The book club has brought that same analytical joy back into my life, but in a more personal and connected way.

The Nepali women's book club in San Francisco, California, which blossomed from The Great Nepali Diaspora's Teej event in 2023, has become more than just a monthly meetup. Through it, I've connected with Nepali women in the U.S. from all walks of life: scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, and academics, each bringing a distinct perspective to the table. Some of us came to the states for education or work, while others were born and raised here—but we're

all bound by a shared curiosity and love for stories. Together, we've delved into American favorites like *Lessons in Chemistry* and *The Fourth Wing*, global sensations such as *The Island of Sea Women* and *The Vegetarian*, and timeless Nepali classics like Krishna Dharabasi's *Radha* and Parijat's *Shirish Ko Phool*. Many of these books are ones I might never have chosen on my own, but the club constantly

pushes me out of my reading comfort zone. Sometimes, I get the joy of sharing a favorite and seeing it spark something in others. More often, I find my own assumptions and interpretations shifting, thanks to the fresh lenses others bring to the conversation.

This book club does more than inspire us to read; it fosters a sense of belonging and connection, weaving

a fabric that binds us to one another, to our roots, and to the narratives that shape our identities. As a Nepali woman, this community has helped me not only reconnect with my heritage but also explore and affirm my identity in the diaspora. In a world where life's demands pull us in every direction, our gatherings serve as a reminder of the transformative power of community and the unique magic found in a truly engaging book. There is profound strength in Nepali women uniting to exchange stories, uplift one another, and amplify our voices through literature. Initiatives like these build a home away from home, helping us stay grounded, even when miles away from Nepal.





## KOSHIYARI'S VISIT

# Seeking Nepal's Support

*Amid the ongoing India-Pakistan conflict, India is sending political leaders to Nepal to seek support.*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**B**hagat Singh Koshyari, a former vice president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and ex-Chief Minister of the Indian state of Uttarakhand, is currently engaged in high-level political meetings in Kathmandu. However, the purpose of these meetings has not been widely discussed.

In an interview with the BBC, Koshyari stated that his visit was purely personal and that he had been invited by the Badrinath Temple Construction Committee to visit Nepal. He mentioned that he has many friends in Nepal and enjoys meeting them during his visits. When asked about the high-level political meetings, he downplayed their significance, stating that he meets various people throughout the day and exchanges greetings with them.

Koshyari's visit to Nepal comes at a time of heightened tensions between India and Pakistan, and it appears that he is seeking support and fostering relationships with Nepali leaders during his

stay.

Koshyari met with PM Oli and other high-ranking officials in

place. He shared a photo of the meeting on Facebook and mentioned positive discussions on Nepal-India relations, cultural



Nepal. Before becoming the Governor of Maharashtra, he led the Indian side in the Nepal-India Intellectuals Group (EPG) tasked with reviewing the 1950 Treaty. The EPG report was supposed to be submitted to the Prime Ministers of India and Nepal, but India has not handed it over yet. Some speculate that this may be why Koshyari refrains from making political comments in Nepal. Despite meeting with officials like

President Ram Chandra Poudel, PM Oli, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Koshyari denies any political discussions took

heritage, and coordination.

He mentioned that he had no specific message for the Prime Minister. "Nothing special, just asked him to improve things," Koshyari stated, noting that he has refrained from discussing politics. "I have stopped talking about politics now, many people in India are involved in it."

### Could it be an unofficial visit?

Congress leader NP Saud also had a meeting with Koshyari. He mentioned that Koshyari talked about the bilateral relations between Nepal and India,



as well as the Kashmir incident. “He offered condolences to Nepal for the loss of Nepali youth in the terrorist attack,” Saud stated.

A Nepali expert close to Koshyari mentioned that despite distancing himself from active politics, he still holds a high position in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

“I believe the visit goes beyond just courtesy calls,” the expert explained. Journalist Yubaraj Ghimire pointed out that Nepal does not have a defined diplomatic protocol for such meetings, so they cannot be considered purely as ‘private visits.’

It was reported a month ago that Koshyari, along with other Indian leaders KC Tyagi and Sudhendra Bhadoria, was planning to visit Nepal for a program organized by the Ganeshman Singh Foundation.

There was a lot of excitement when he was officially declared as the representative of India, so this time he has come with unofficial status but with official backing,” Ghimire explains. “He is here to gather information about the internal politics and current situation in Nepal.”

### **Ignoring RPP?**

Previously, BJP leader Chauhanwale had meetings with leaders from all parties except for the Rastriya Prajatantra Party.

Leader Koshyari also did not meet with RPP leaders, as per sources close to him in Nepal.



“To avoid the perception that India is influencing politics here, he may have skipped meeting with the RPP, which advocates for the return of the monarchy,” journalist Ghimire suggests.

“Another factor could be that India has recognized the unpredictability of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and is cautious not to provoke him.”

Ghimire speculates that Koshyari might return after assessing the concerns raised about India’s role in Nepal and the current state of its diplomatic credibility. He believes that India is aware of its diminishing credibility in Nepal.

“The allegations of supporting the Maoists and collaborating with Western powers on the issue of secularism are additional reasons,” Ghimire adds.

Even if we acknowledge the message from the Indian Prime Minister, Koshyari may have been tasked with initially as-

sessing the diplomatic betrayal experienced by the then King Gyanendra Shah and the subsequent damage he has endured. However, he believes that in the future, as circumstances evolve, India may need to engage with the monarchy and Hindu nationalist supporters.

Some leaders of the monarchist movement have suggested that by expanding their movement, they can attract international attention and significance. They have declared an indefinite strike set to begin on May 29. Regardless of the purpose of Koshyari’s visit, it conveyed a message from the Indian establishment that Nepal should align with India in its ongoing conflict.



## KAILASH MANSAROVAR TRIP

# Visit to Heaven

*Visiting Kailash Mansarovar is considered one of the most sacred and transformative pilgrimages in the lives of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and followers of the ancient Bon religion. This holy journey is not just a physical trek through the Himalayas—it is a spiritual odyssey that brings inner peace, divine connection, and a sense of ultimate fulfillment. Our ten days journey started from April 23 and concluded on May 2, 2025*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Located in the remote southwestern region of Tibet, Mount Kailash is believed to be the abode of Lord Shiva, where he resides with his consort Parvati (Bhavanani). The mountain, often described as the axis mundi or the center of the universe, has been revered for millennia. Next to it lies Lake Mansarovar, a pristine and sacred freshwater lake, believed to be created by Lord Brahma in his mind—hence the name

‘Manas’ (mind) and ‘Sarovar’ (lake). According to Hindu belief, a single parikrama (circumambulation) of Mount Kailash washes away the sins of a lifetime, while 108 circumambulations can lead to salvation (moksha). For Buddhists, Mount Kailash is the home of Demchok (Chakrasamvara), a representation of supreme bliss. Jains revere it as the place where their first Tirthankara, Rishabhadeva, attained liberation.

### Spiritual Significance

The journey to Kailash Mansarovar is not just a religious duty—it is a deeply personal spiritual calling. It tests physical endurance and mental resilience while offering moments of awe, reflection, and connection with the divine.

Pilgrims often recite sacred mantras along the way, including:



“Karpoor Gauram Karunnaavataram

Sansaar Saaram Bhujgendra Haaram

Sadaa Vasantam Hridyaarvrinde

Bhavam Bhavaani Sahitam  
Namaami”

This powerful mantra is a prayer to Lord Shiva, describing him as the embodiment of purity (Karpoor Gauram), compassion (Karunnaavataram), and the essence of the universe. It honors his eternal presence in the hearts of devotees, along with Goddess Parvati.

### The Journey

The trip to Kailash Mansarovar can be undertaken via several routes—through Nepal, India, or directly via Tibet (China). Each route is challenging due to high altitudes, unpredictable weather, and remote terrain. Yet, the hardships are embraced as part of the purification process.

Most pilgrims begin their journey with a dip in the holy waters of Lake Mansarovar, followed by the three-day circumambulation of Mount Kailash, which reaches altitudes over 18,000 feet at the Dolma La Pass. Despite the physical challenges, the sense of serenity and divine energy felt throughout the pilgrimage is unmatched.

Through this Shiva hymn, the glory and form of Sadashiva, Bhola Baba, Bholenath, the formless and pure Lord Shiva residing on Mount Kailash, is revealed. While chanting this sacred prayer, we were blessed with the rare opportunity to embark on the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

This sacred journey, which took place from Baisakh 10 to 19, 2082 B.S. (corresponding to April/May 2025), was initiated by our close family friends Batukrishna Upreti and his wife Uttara Upreti. From the beginning to the end, my wife Sarita Paudel stood by my side with unwavering support

and companionship.

We were joined by our close relatives Gyanraj Pandey and Radha Pandey, as well as Batukrishna’s relatives, Dr. Ganeshraj Joshi and his wife Kamala Joshi. Together, we formed a close-knit group of eight devoted pilgrims.

Also part of our team were Ratna Sahi and Ratna Sahi, a devoted couple from Hadigaun in their seventies, along



with Surendra Aryal from Syangja and Shreya Bharti from Pokhara, both in their forties. Our 10-day journey through the high Himalayan region, under the guidance of Basant Baral from Namaste Holidays, became an unforgettable chapter in all our lives—a blend of spiritual fulfillment, natural beauty, and deep companionship.

To speak honestly, the idea of this pilgrimage hadn’t even crossed our minds. Just a few weeks prior, we had returned from another spiritual tour to Ganga Sagar, Jagannath Puri, and the Jyotirlinga Baidyanath Dham in Jharkhand, India. Still recovering from that intense trip, we had no plans for another long journey—certainly not one as demanding as Kailash Mansarovar.

But fate had other plans. One morning during the second week of Chaitra (March/April), Batukrishna Upreti called and asked me directly:

“Do you want to go to Kailash Mansarovar?”

Though I am usually slow to make decisions, something within me responded without hesitation.

“Yes,” I said immediately.

My wife, Sarita, who was standing by the door, looked at me in astonishment. She could hardly believe her ears—she knew how unusual it was for me to decide so quickly, especially on something so momentous.

Later, I learned that Batukrishna had already discussed the Kailash Mansarovar trip with his wife Uttara before approaching me. As the leader of our group, he took full responsibility for all the arrangements—planning, logistics, and coordination—ensuring that every detail was managed with care and dedication to make the journey a success.

But this pilgrimage was far more than just a physical expedition or a climb through geographic elevation—





it turned into a profound spiritual experience, filled with inner peace and divine energy.

The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is surreal—an experience that feels beyond the realm of ordinary human imagination. The vast wilderness, otherworldly landscapes, and the sacred power of the snow-capped mountains and pristine lakes elevate this journey far above any ordinary adventure or leisure trip.

It becomes a test of endurance—a battle between the body and the altitude, as the thin air challenges every breath. But at the same time, it's a cleansing of the mind and soul, brought on by the purity and

silence of nature itself. It is in this space—between the struggle and the surrender—that many pilgrims, including myself, experience a deep sense of self-revelation and realization.

#### Mansarovar: Scriptural Glory and Spiritual Touch

The name 'Mansarovar' comes from the Sanskrit words "Manas" (mind or intellect) and "Sarovar" (lake). According to ancient Hindu texts, this sacred lake was created by Lord Brahma, and is described as the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu.

Religious traditions say that during the auspicious Brahma Muhurta—

the hour just before sunrise—the Saptarishis (seven great sages) and various deities descend to bathe in the lake's crystal-clear waters. An early morning bath at Mansarovar is believed to be incredibly meritorious, bringing blessings that transcend lifetimes.

As per Hindu scriptures, a single dip in this holy lake can cleanse the sins of seven lifetimes, and even a single sip of its sacred water is said to grant Shivahood—the state of divine consciousness and liberation.

#### Rakshas Tal: Symbol of Darkness and Duality

During our circumambulation of Mansarovar, we reached a slightly elevated point on the western side, from where we could clearly see Rakshas Tal—the crescent-shaped Lake of Demons—lying directly opposite. Unlike the sacred Mansarovar, this saline lake is considered tamasic (symbolizing ignorance and darkness) in Hindu tradition.

The two lakes are connected by a small river, Ganga Chu, which legend says was created by the Saptarishis to purify the negative energies of Rakshas Tal using the divine waters of Mansarovar.

According to Hindu scriptures, Ravana, the king of Lanka, created Rakshas Tal to perform severe penance to Lord Shiva. It's believed he offered one of his ten heads daily on the islands within the lake, and on the tenth day, Shiva, pleased with his devotion, granted him a powerful boon.

At an altitude of 4,575 meters and covering about 250 square kilometers, Rakshas Tal appears lifeless—devoid of vegetation and wildlife—and is traditionally considered inauspicious. Bathing in it is believed to invite sin, unlike the purifying waters of Mansarovar.



Though separated by just 200 meters, Mansarovar and Rakshas Tal represent opposing forces—light and darkness, purity and penance—standing side by side as a powerful symbol of spiritual duality.

A highway now runs alongside Rakshas Tal, improving access between Mansarovar and

### Features of the Kailash Mansarovar Tour

Organized by Namaste Holidays, the Kailash Mansarovar Tour brought us face-to-face with the sacred Mount Kailash, which rises majestically to 6,675 meters. The journey includes the opportunity to perform the revered “Kora” (circumambulation) around the mountain, offering breathtaking views of remote Himalayan landscapes.

Unlike other mountain regions, the route to Kailash is rugged, remote, and deeply spiritual, passing through the isolated terrain of the Tibetan plateau. The drive is rich with Buddhist culture—prayer flags, ancient monasteries, and devout pilgrims reflecting the deep spiritual heritage of the region.

Nestled in the shadow of Mount



Kailash is the serene Lake Mansarovar, believed to have healing powers. A dip in its holy waters is thought to cleanse the body and soul.

### Source of Major Rivers

Mount Kailash is the origin of four of Asia's great rivers: the Indus, Sutlej, and Brahmaputra in India, and the Karnali in Nepal. These rivers, flowing from the sacred mountain, nourish millions across South Asia.

### Spiritual Significance Across Religions

For Hindus, Mount Kailash is the divine abode of Lord Shiva. Buddhists revere it as the home of Buddha Demchok, while Jains believe it is where Rishabhadeva attained Nirvana. For followers of the Bon tradition, it is a powerful spiritual center. Its universal sacredness draws pilgrims and seekers from around the world.

### Highlights of the Yatra

The 10-day Kailash Mansarovar Yatra offered a rich blend of natural beauty, spiritual depth, and cultural discovery, spanning across Nepal and Tibet.

- Tibet: Once across the border, the journey through Kyirong Valley reveals the unique lifestyle and spiritual traditions of the Tibetan people.

- Mount Kailash: Standing at 6,638 meters, the mountain marks the spiritual climax of the yatra. Pilgrims undertake the revered Kora (circumambulation), believed to cleanse sins and bring inner transformation.





## COVERSTORY



- **Lake Mansarovar:** At the base of Kailash, the serene lake is considered holy and purifying, attracting those seeking healing and peace.

### **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra Difficulty**

The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Kyirong (Nepal) is considered moderate to challenging, primarily due to high altitude and remote terrain. Altitudes often exceed 15,000 feet, making altitude sickness a real concern, with symptoms like headaches, nausea, and dizziness. Proper acclimatization, a gradual ascent, and necessary medications are essential.

The route offers spectacular scenery but involves winding roads and rugged terrain, requiring a sturdy vehicle and experienced driver. Weather in the Himalayas is unpredictable, with sudden rain and cold, even in summer—so travelers must be prepared for extreme conditions, especially cold nights.

Accommodations, particularly in Derapuk and Zuthulpuk, are basic, with limited facilities and often inadequate washrooms. It's advisable to carry essentials like medications,

warm clothing, and personal hygiene supplies.

Despite these challenges, the yatra is a profound spiritual and scenic journey, offering both inner transformation and unforgettable Himalayan beauty.

### **Travel Itinerary:**

**Day 1:** Kathmandu to Syabrubesi or Timure via Trishuli and Dhunche (7 hours)

Our journey will begin from Kathmandu at 7 AM. We will travel

through Trishuli and Dhunche and reach either Syabrubesi or Timure after approximately 7 hours of driving, where we will stay overnight.

**Day 2:** Syabrubesi or Timure to Kerung via Rasuwagadhi Border (2,800 meters)

After morning tea and snacks, we will proceed towards the Rasuwagadhi border. After completing the necessary immigration formalities at the border and meeting our Chinese guide, we will change buses and continue our journey to Kerung. It will take about 1 hour from the Tibet border to reach Kerung, where we will stay overnight.

**Day 3:** Kerung to Saga (170 kilometers | 5 hours | 4,300 meters elevation)

Today's journey will take approximately 6 hours. Along the way, we will witness scenic spots like Ru-Pemba Mountain (4,500 m), beautiful waterfalls, the old Kerung village, Khumdang-La Pass (5,200 m), Salt Lake, Yalap Shang village, and high Himalayan peaks. After crossing the Brahmaputra River, we will arrive in Saga for an overnight stay.

**Day 4:** Saga to Mansarovar (510 kilometers | 8 hours | 4,600 meters)





elevation)

After morning refreshments, we will start our journey around 8:30 AM Chinese time toward the holy site of Mansarovar. The bus ride will last 8–9 hours, passing through various Tibetan villages such as Old Dongba, New Dongba, and Paryang, and crossing the high Mayumla Pass (5,200 m). Upon reaching the eastern shore of Lake Mansarovar, we will obtain entry tickets, change to another bus, and start the clockwise circumambulation (parikrama) of the lake. On the way, we will see Mount Gurla Mandhata and Rakshas Tal before arriving at Chiu Gompa on the western side of the lake for an overnight stay.

Day 5: Mansarovar to Darchen (35 kilometers | 1 hour | 4,700 meters elevation)

In the morning, we will bathe, perform worship, and sing devotional hymns at the sacred Lake Mansarovar. After lunch, we will head to Darchen. On this day, travelers who are unable to complete the Kailash Parikrama (circumambulation) on foot should arrange for horses and porters as needed.

Day 6: Darchen to Yam Dwar by bus (4 kilometers | 20 minutes), then Yam Dwar to Deraphuk on foot (13 kilometers | 5 hours | 4,950 meters elevation)

After morning tea and snacks today, the circumambulation (parikrama) of Mount Kailash begins.

All pilgrims will be taken by bus to Yam Dwar for a visit. After the visit, those continuing the journey on foot will depart toward Deraphuk, while those not walking will return to

Darchen and stay there for two nights.

Day 7: Deraphuk to Zuthulphuk via Dolma La and Gauri Kund (9 hours on foot | 22 kilometers | 4,850 meters elevation)

Today is the most challenging day of the journey. We will begin early in the morning and trek throughout the day, crossing the highest point of the trek at 5,600 meters. After this long day of walking, we will reach Zuthulphuk



for an overnight stay.

Day 8: Zuthulphuk – Darchen – Saga (480 kilometers | 8 hours)

After an early morning tea or coffee, we will walk for around 3 hours to reach a place called Zhongba. From there, we will take a short bus ride to reach Darchen, reunite with those who waited, have some refreshments, and then proceed to Saga.

Day 9: Saga to Kerung (170 kilometers | 5 hours)

Day 10: Kerung to Rasuwagadhi (1 hour) – Syabrubesi – Dhunche – Kathmandu (6 hours)

Today marks the final day of our journey. We will cross the border early in the morning and travel directly back to Kathmandu, concluding our pilgrimage upon arrival.

### Information about the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar, located in the western region of Tibet — an autonomous region of China — are sacred pilgrimage sites for followers of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and the Bon religion. Every year, thousands of pilgrims visit this holy land to seek spiritual blessings.

Mount Kailash stands at an altitude of approximately 6,714 meters, while Lake Mansarovar is situated at an elevation of 4,600 meters. The lake spans an area of 320 square kilometers and has a depth of about 100 meters.

Lake Mansarovar is formed by the waters flowing from Mount Kailash and Mount Gurla Mandhata. Interestingly, several major rivers are believed to originate from this lake — Brahmaputra to the east, Indus to the north, Sutlej to the west, and Karnali to the south.

One fascinating aspect of circumambulating Lake Mansarovar is that no water is seen flowing outward from the lake; yet the rivers are believed to originate from within the lake itself, suggesting that they emerge from its internal sources.

# Nepal To Grow 4.5 Percent

*World Bank Downgraded Nepal's Projection Reduced to 4.5% for FY 2024/25*

By A CORRESPONDENT

Despite advancements in certain sectors, Nepal's economy is not anticipated to reach previous growth estimates. In light of escalating global economic uncertainties, the World Bank has adjusted its growth forecast for Nepal downwards, mirroring broader concerns throughout South Asia.

According to the latest South Asia Development Update, titled Taxing Times, the World Bank predicts that Nepal's GDP growth will decelerate to 4.5 percent in FY 2024/25, primarily due to the devastation caused by floods and landslides. Growth is projected to reach 5.2 percent in FY 2025/26, with persistent structural weaknesses in the financial sector being a contributing factor.

The report underscores that the overall growth prospects for South Asia are weakening, with the region's GDP expected to expand by 5.8 percent in 2025, a decrease of 0.4 percentage points from the previous forecast in October. Growth is anticipated to marginally increase to 6.1 percent in 2026, although this outlook remains susceptible to various global and domestic risks, including constrained fiscal capacity and policy uncertainties.

Martin Raiser, World Bank Vice President for South Asia, remarked, "A series of shocks in the past decade have left South Asian nations with limited buffers to navigate an increasingly challenging global landscape. The region necessitates targeted reforms to address vulnerabilities such as fragile fiscal positions, underdeveloped agricultural sectors, and the repercussions of climate-related disasters."

The report stresses the need for South Asian nations to strengthen domestic revenue mobilization. Although tax rates are relatively high compared to other developing regions, tax collection remains

inefficient. From 2019 to 2023, government revenues in South Asia averaged just 18 percent of GDP, well below the 24 percent average for other developing economies. The shortfall is particularly evident in consumption taxes, as well as corporate and personal income taxes.

The World Bank emphasizes that improving tax collection and fiscal discipline will be critical for Nepal and other countries in the region to build economic resilience and address long-term development challenges.

Tax revenues in South Asia are estimated to be 1 to 7 percentage points of GDP below their potential, based on existing tax rates. Some of this shortfall is explained by the widespread informality and large agricultural sectors in the region. However, even after taking this into account, sizable tax gaps remain, highlighting the need for improved tax policy and administration.

"Low revenues are at the root of South Asia's fiscal fragility and could threaten macroeconomic stability, especially in times of elevated uncertainty," said Franziska Ohnsorge, World Bank Chief Economist for South Asia. "South Asian tax rates are relatively high, but collection is weak, leaving those who pay taxes with high burdens and governments with insufficient funds to improve basic services."

The report recommends a range of policies to improve tax revenues by eliminating loopholes, streamlining tax codes, tightening enforcement, and facilitating tax compliance. This includes paring back tax exemptions; simplifying and unifying the tax regime to reduce incentives to operate in the informal sector; and using digital technology to identify taxpayers and facilitate collection. The report notes the potential of adopting pollution pricing, which could help address the high levels of air and water

pollution while raising government revenues.

## Country Outlooks

In Afghanistan, with aid declining, the economy is estimated to have grown by 2.5 percent in FY24-25, slower than the pace of population growth and growth is forecast to increase only moderately to 2.2 percent in 2025/26.

In Bangladesh, growth is expected to slow in FY24/25 to 3.3 percent amid political uncertainty and persistent financial challenges, and the growth rebound in FY25/26 has been downgraded to 4.9 percent.

In Bhutan, the forecast for FY24/25 has been downgraded to 6.6 percent due to weak agriculture sector growth but upgraded in FY25/26 to 7.6 percent due to expected strength in hydropower construction.

In India, growth is expected to slow from 6.5 percent in FY24/25 to 6.3 percent as in FY25/26 as the benefits to private investment from monetary easing and regulatory streamlining are expected to be offset by global economic weakness and policy uncertainty.

In Maldives, the completion of a new airport terminal will contribute to 5.7 percent growth in 2025, although challenges in meeting external debt obligations continue to pose a downside risk.

In Pakistan, the economy continues to recover from a combination of natural disasters, external pressures, and inflation, and is expected grow by 2.7 percent in FY24/25 and 3.1 percent in FY25/26.

In Sri Lanka, the government has made further progress with debt restructuring, and a projected rebound in investment and external demand is expected to lift growth in 2025 to 3.5 percent before it returns to 3.1 percent in 2026.

Sixtieth Session of SAARC Program-





ming Committee Convenes in Kathmandu

The 60th Session of the Programming Committee of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) commenced today at the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu, Nepal. The three-day meeting, held from 28 to 30 April 2025, brings together distinguished delegates from the Member States, Heads of SAARC Specialized Bodies and Regional Centres, as well as senior officials from the Secretariat.

The SAARC Programming Committee meeting is being held under the Chairmanship of Nepal and is attended by the National Focal Points of the SAARC member states at the level of Joint Secretary/ Director General of the Ministries of Foreign/External Affairs of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The Session was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai, Foreign Secretary of Nepal and Chair of the SAARC Standing Committee. In his inaugural

address, Foreign Secretary Mr. Rai emphasized the urgent need to revitalize SAARC mechanisms and deepen regional cooperation, reaffirming Nepal's steadfast commitment to the SAARC Charter and its objectives. He underlined the importance of convening the Nineteenth SAARC Summit and other core mechanisms to restore momentum in regional process.

In his welcome remarks, Md. Golam Sarwar, Secretary General of SAARC, thanked the Chair, the Government of Nepal, and the Member States for their steadfast support. He underlined the vital role of the Programming Committee as an "Engine Room" for SAARC process and called for renewed efforts to address emerging regional and global challenges through integrated actions. Stressing the need to revitalize the SAARC, he urged Member States to engage constructively to restore high-level engagements leading to the SAARC Summit.

The Secretary General inspired SAARC delegates to approach the Session with steadfast ambition and, reminding them

that regional cooperation is not just about dialogue, but about co-creating a better and sustainable future for the peoples of South Asia.

During the Session, the Committee is deliberating on a wide range of important issues, including reviewing the status of implementation of previous decisions, considering and approving budgets and programmes for the SAARC Secretariat, Specialized Bodies, and Regional Centres for 2025, examining reports from key SAARC entities, and assessing progress in areas such as food security, economic cooperation, trade, energy, climate change, health, education, poverty alleviation, and social development. The Committee is also addressing matters related to the convening of future SAARC meetings and endorsing the SAARC Calendar of Activities for 2025.

## Technology Revives Interest In Pottery Among Youth And Women



BY: SANDIP POUDEL

The Kumhal community in Nepal's Madhesh Province has a long-standing tradition of crafting clay pots. Pottery is not only a skill but also a vital part of their heritage and main source of income. Unfortunately, this traditional craft is facing a decline as younger individuals and women are turning away from it due to the physical demands, outdated techniques, and low pay. This shift is resulting in rising unemployment rates as many are leaving their villages in pursuit of better prospects. The future of pottery in the Kumhal community is in jeopardy due to this changing trend.

Shrikrishna Pandit Kumahal, a 56-year-old potter from Pokhariya Municipality-9, continues to make clay pots daily. Despite the challenges, this work supports his family and his son's education. He hopes that his children will continue the tradition, but they lack interest. He explains, "The work is too demanding, and we face tough competition from cheap pots imported from India and China." He believes that modern tools and machinery could make the work more appealing to the younger generation. He says, "With support to improve our craft, I am confident that our children will rediscover their passion for it."

### A New Generation Joins In

Acknowledging these obstacles, the InElam project by Helvetas Nepal collaborated with the National Innovation Center in Kathmandu to introduce electric-powered pottery wheels. These new machines are replacing the labor-intensive manual wheels, offering hope to struggling potters.

One of the early adopters is Sandip Pandit Kumahal, 28, the son of Shrikrishna. With a background



in management, Sandip had initially planned to seek work abroad. However, the introduction of the new technology inspired him to stay and join the family business. "These machines make the process easier and more efficient. It encouraged me to work alongside my father," Sandip explained. "I am now exploring other technologies, such as energy-efficient ovens, to replace the traditional clay ovens." The current ovens result in approximately 25% product damage and rely on costly and inconsistent firewood, impacting product quality.



Bidhya Devi Pandit Kumahal, 38, the wife of Shrikrishna Pandit Kumahal, has also embraced the change. “The manual wheel was too cumbersome for me. However, this electric wheel is foot-controlled and user-friendly,” she noted. “Now, we can produce a variety of items based on market demand.” Their next objective is to upgrade the traditional oven to a modern, energy-efficient model to enhance quality, reduce expenses, and sustainably expand their business.

### A Pottery Entrepreneur from Jhauwguthi

Another inspiring story comes from Kaushal Kishor Saraf, a 27-year-old resident of Binda Bashini Rural Municipality, Jhauwguthi. Initially unemployed and considering migrating abroad, his life took a new direction after he met Enterprise Service Provider Sunil Saha. Through the guidance of the InElam Project, which included exposure visits, technical training, and business planning, Kaushal made the decision to remain in Nepal and establish his own pottery business. With an initial investment of USD 2,500—funded by loans from family and friends—he acquired machinery and launched his startup a year ago. Today, Kaushal produces approximately 15,000 pottery items such as teacups and pots, which he sells throughout Nepal under the brand name Mataka Tea. His environmentally friendly cups are gradually replacing plastic alternatives in urban areas, reflecting the increasing demand for sustainable products. Additionally, his business has provided employment opportunities for 17 women in his village, each earning between USD 170 and USD 180 per month.

### Empowering Change Through Innovation

These stories illustrate how providing access to appropriate technologies and business services

can enable young people and women to establish sustainable, innovative enterprises while also upholding cultural customs. The InElam project by Helvetas Nepal remains dedicated to collaborating with private sector entities, innovators, financial institutions, research organizations, and the National Innovation Center to promote technology-based solutions that support the success of local businesses. Many families within the Kumhal community

encounter similar obstacles, but with modest investments in equipment, training, and business assistance, they can preserve their traditions, boost their earnings, and generate employment opportunities.

Currently, the InElam Project is gearing up to enroll 20 young individuals and women in a business and technology incubation program focused on revitalizing the traditional pottery sector. This endeavor will be conducted in conjunction with local and provincial governments, financial institutions, and youth organizations.

Our goal is to not only create economic opportu-

nities but also to generate social and environmental value. By combining traditional skills with modern tools and entrepreneurship, the program encourages sustainable business practices that preserve cultural heritage, decrease plastic usage, and provide meaningful local employment.

Let’s help nurture their skills, safeguard their culture, and inspire the future generation.

*Sandip Poudel, Team Leader of InElam, with support from Hari Gurung, Technical Coordinator of InElam and Krishna Lal Karna, Provincial Coordinator of InElam, Madhesh Province.*



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