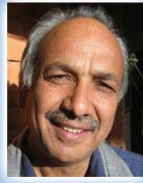


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OPINION
Arup Rajouria



VIEWPOINT
Yubaraj Ghimire



ARTICLE
Juddha Bahadur Gurung

NEW

SPOTLIGHT

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January 10, 2025

FORTNIGHTLY



TOURISTS ARRIVAL Surpass A Million

INSIDE



POLITICS
Looming Instability



GLOBAL IME BANK
Celebrating Eighteen Years of Progress



MD GHISING'S UNWAVERING COMMITMENT
From Darkness To Light



उत्कृष्ट बैंकिङ्ग सबैका लागि

ग्लोबल आइएमई बैंकको १८ वर्षको यो यात्रामा निरन्तर साथ, सहयोग र शुभेच्छा प्रदान गर्नुहुने सम्पूर्ण ग्राहकवर्ग, शेयरधनी, नियमनकारी निकाय, कर्मचारी तथा शुभेच्छुकहरुमा हृदयदेखि नै कृतज्ञता व्यक्त गर्दै आगामी दिनहरुमा पनि यहाँहरुको साथ लिँदै अझ उत्कृष्ट बैंकिङ्ग सेवा दिँदै जाने प्रतिबद्धता व्यक्त गर्दछौं।



Global IME Bank

ग्लोबल आइएमई बैंक लि.

सबैका लागि बैंक



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Notes From The Editor



The revival of the tourism sector, with over 1 million tourists expected in 2024, is a positive development for Nepal's economy, which has been experiencing a slowdown. The resumption of electricity generation from the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi project has helped alleviate concerns about power cuts. NEA MD Kul Man Ghising and company CEO Mohan Prasad Gautam played key roles in restarting power generation after addressing maintenance issues. Additionally, the record paddy production is another reason for celebration. These events provide some relief to the government as it works to stabilize the country's economy, which has been impacted by financial mismanagement and investments in unproductive sectors like real estate. Despite the government's majority in parliament, its performance has been lackluster, and it has struggled to deliver tangible results. The government's handling of foreign policy has also been criticized for being influenced by personal preferences rather than strategic considerations. Despite these challenges, this week's cover story focuses on the revival of tourism, and we also highlight NEA MD Kulman Ghising's efforts to ensure uninterrupted power supply.

Keshab Poudel

Editor

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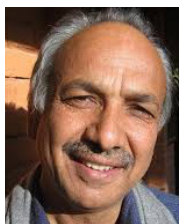


JALPADEVI CABLE CAR: IME Group's Latest Project

28

Manmohan Singh And The Churn In Nepal

Fundamental changes – unfolding till today – took place in Nepal during his tenure as PM. Even though his engagements with Kathmandu were few, they were meaningful



BY: YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

Manmohan Singh did not visit Nepal when he was the Prime Minister of India for a decade. But significant and radical political changes took place next door during his tenure. Nepal, till then the world's only Hindu Kingdom became a secular republic with India's backing. Maoists led an armed insurgency for a decade from 1996. In 2006, after a 12-point agreement mediated by India, they and seven other political parties came up as an alliance against King Gyanendra Shah's direct rule. Maoists coming to the centre stage of power within the democratic framework marked the end of an insurgency that had taken a toll of over 10,000 people. However, Nepal continues to suffer from political instability, and the failure of parties to complete the peace process. Victims of the conflict continue their struggle, and demand the perpetrators of human right violations, including top leaders of the Maoists, be brought to justice.

Dr Singh's engagements with Nepal were few, but meaningful. During a meeting with King Gyanendra Shah in April 2005 in Jakarta, the latter requested that India resume supply of arms and ammunition to the Nepal army, which India had stopped after King assumed direct rule. In November 2005, at the Dhaka SAARC summit — Shah in the wake of reports that India may support Nepal Maoists — said, "We cannot make a distinction between good and bad terrorism; terrorism is terrorism." The summit saw Afghanistan's entry into SAARC as a member although Nepal had slight reservations about a country with foreign forces becoming a part of the regional body. China was also accepted as an observer. India was seemingly not happy with Nepal's role in both.

In the two weeks that followed, the 12-point agreement was formalized and a mass movement for restoration of democracy began in April, as scripted. Ranjit Rae who was involved in formalizing the deal and later served as Ambassador to Nepal, hints in his book Kathmandu Dilemma: Resetting India-Nepal that the then Army Chief J J Singh had reservations about India supporting the Maoists.

Karan Singh visited Nepal as a special emissary of the PM in April 2006, in company of the then foreign secretary Shyam Saran. King Gyanendra agreed to hand over power to agitating political parties and appointed G P Koirala as the prime minister. This was welcomed by OM Singh, then in Berlin, saying that "India stood by two principles", implying continuation of constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy in Nepal.

In fact, in the rarest of such acts, a serving foreign secretary publicly contradicted the PM's official line — and won. Saran

says in his book, *How India Sees The World: From Kautilya to the 21st Century*, that he obtained the permission of Pranab Mukherjee, then officiating as PM to hold a televised press conference "that what I was saying would be at variance with a statement the prime minister had made the same day in Berlin to the Indian journalists accompanying him."

Prime Minister Singh, however, fulfilled a ceremonial role when he received Koirala at the Indira Gandhi International Airport personally in June 2006, and called him a "legendary statesman of South Asia". It was also perhaps a correction to the statement he made in Berlin in April.

But how comfortable he was with Nepal's radical and Maoist leaders is little known.

Bhutan's king personally attended Dr Singh's funeral in Delhi, but there was no one from Nepal representing the government or the state. Top dignitaries from Nepal even on official visits to India have stopped the practice of meeting or engaging with any Opposition leaders, including former prime ministers. The past four years have seen leaders visiting the ruling party office.

In fact, senior Nepali politicians who benefitted from India's role in the change in 2006, feel more comfortable meeting bureaucrats who played crucial roles then, and not the political bosses of the time.



India is criticized by many for things going wrong after the radical change, especially after it discouraged people's involvement through referendums on crucial issues — "monarchy vs. republic", "unitary vs. federal" or continuing with a Hindu Nepal or adopting secularism.

Former US President Jimmy Carter, another statesman, had taken a lot of interest in Nepal placing emphasis on human rights and "freedom of religion". In April 2008, President Carter in his capacity as the key international observer certified Nepal's election to the first constituent assembly as reasonably free and fair when the polling was still on, something that showed he was putting trust in Maoists, his future allies. Maoists were an important tool in the promotion of "religious freedom" maintaining silence on proselytisation, an issue fiercely debated still.

Manmohan Singh's India did face a new challenge in Nepal with China entering the southern border after India, EU and the US began working together as stakeholders in peace-building and consolidating democracy. Dr Singh personally maintained a dignified distance and silence from Nepal's internal affairs.

The writer is the Kathmandu-based contributing editor of The Indian Express. Source: The Indian Express

NEWSNOTES

KOICA And Gandaki Province Sign ROD To Establish Gandaki Institute Of Technology

Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and Ministry of Social Development Youth and Sports (MoSDYS) of Gandaki Province, signed the Record of Discussion (RoD) for the project “Infrastructure Development of Gandaki Institute Technology under the Gandaki Technical Education and Vocational Academy (GTEVTA) in Gandaki Province, Nepal.”

Rajendradev Pandey, Secretary of MoSDYS and Mooheon Kong, Country Director of KOICA in Nepal signed the RoD in the presence of Chief Minister of Gandaki Province, Surendra Raj Pandey.

Korean Government through KOICA will spend US\$



9 million for this project. The project will begin in 2025 and run for five years. The project will be implemented by KOICA and the GTEVTA.

Similarly, Chief Minister of Gandaki Province Surendra Raj Pandey concluded the ground breaking ceremony of the GTEVTA building at Fedikhola, which was jointly witnessed by MoSDYS Minister of Gandaki Province. Bindu Kumar Thapa, Mooheon Kong, Country Director of KOICA Nepal Office and Chairperson of Fhedikhola Rural Municipality, Ghanshyam Subedi.

The main objective of the project is to produce competent workforces ready to meet the domestic and global needs of the 21st century by aligning with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy and 15th National Plan. The project also aims to contribute to economic growth of Nepal through the development of skilled workforce to meet the need of construction industry and increasing their employability.

KOICA plans to construct a 4,630 m2 technical institute building, including a lecture, workshop, and female student dormitory building with necessary equipment, furniture and learning facilities. Similarly, KOICA will also provide technical guidance and support for the development of Master Plan of the technical institute identifying short-term training reflecting local needs, operational plan of the institute, career service package, and partnership with industry.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Hon. Chief Minister of Gandaki Province, Mr. Surendra Raj Pandey praised the bilateral collaboration between Nepal and South Korea. He also expressed that the project will produce skill and competent workforce needed to carry out Nepal’s economic prosperity. He further expressed his full commitment to support the success of this project.

Similarly, Country Director of KOICA, Kong shared the project will create opportunities for youth, women and disadvantage people to access quality technical education and to equip themselves with skills needed to enhance in today’s rapidly growing job market. He stated that KOICA has prioritize technical and vocational education in Nepal.

Bindu Kumar Thapa, Minister of MoSDYS stated that the project will support in generating skilled and competent workforces inside the country and which ultimately supports in economic development of the country. He further expressed gratitude to KOICA for the continuous support provided to the Government of Nepal.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has been supporting the Government of Nepal through KOICA in various areas of health, education, IT, agriculture and rural development since 1991.

Agriculture Minister Thanks Israel Government For Its Support In Agriculture sector

Ambassador of Israel to Nepal Shmulik Arie Bass paid a courtesy call to Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development Ramnath Adhikari on Thursday.

During the meeting held at the Ministry, Minister Adhikari expressed the hope that Israel’s cooperation in Nepal’s agricultural sector would continue in the coming days.

He said that Nepal and Israel have had friendly relations for 65 years and urged the ambassador to take the initiative to renew the agreement on cooperation in the agricultural sector between the two countries.

Minister Adhikari said that the ‘Earn and Learn’ programme, which was implemented after the agreement between Nepal and Israel, has created opportunities for Nepali youth and asked it to be continued.

Stating that the scholarships provided by Israel to Nepali



students have been a significant support to Nepal's agricultural sector, he urged the Ambassador to take the initiative to establish the centre as the areas have been selected for the establishment of the Center for Excellence in accordance with the agreement signed with the Israeli government for the development of Nepal's agriculture.

About 5,000 Nepalis are currently working in Israel and this has improved their living standards, he said and expressed the hope that multilateral cooperation would continue for the mutual benefit of the country and the people in the coming days.

In the meeting, Ambassador Bass said that Israel wants to cooperate further in the coming days through technology transfer in the agricultural sector of Nepal.

He expressed his commitment to taking the initiative to establish a Centre for Excellence for agriculture in the areas selected by Nepal this year.

Stating that there is a possibility of sending Nepali workers to the agricultural sector in Israel, Ambassador Bass said that he would pay attention to the implementation of the agreements reached between the two countries in the past for the development of the agricultural sector in Nepal.

Nepal-India Joint Military Exercise

The 18th edition of Nepal-India military exercise with the aim of security and expansion of bilateral relations



is beginning at Saljhandi in Rupandehi.

The battalion-level joint military exercise named 'Suryakiran' focuses on jungle warfare, counterterrorism in difficulty geography, establishment of peace keeping mission as per UN Charter, humanitarian aid in disaster management and relief mobilization, internal capacity building, and environmental protection.

The two-week long training will be attended by Sri Jung Battalion of Nepali Army and the 11th Gorkha Rifle of Indian Army.

Spokesperson of Nepali Army, Gaurab Kumar KC,

informed that the joint military training was expected to foster friendly relations and trust between Nepal and India and expand cultural relations as well. Professional collaboration will also be augmented with it.

“The exercise will provide a platform for soldiers from both the nations to share best practices, enhance interoperability and foster a stronger bond in conduct of joint operations,” said Indian Army’s press release.

The 17th edition of the joint exercise was held in Pithauragadh of India last year.

So far, the number of Nepali Army persons attending the joint training reached 4,215 while the number from Indian side stands at 4,442.

Such joint exercise had begun since 2067 BS.

British Ambassador Celebrated His 22nd Marriage Anniversary At Janaki Temple

British ambassador to Nepal Rob Fenn celebrated his 22nd anniversary on Saturday in Janaki Temple in Janakpurdhham amid a function performed by the priest of the temple.

“Amb Rob Fenn chose to celebrate his 22nd anniversary today in Janakpur, the city of love as he calls it, following Mithila culture. Speaker of the House, Minister for Education & Culture, Janakpur’s Mayor, & other dignitaries were present at the ceremony!,” writes British Embassy in Kathmandu on X wall.

British Ambassador to Nepal Rob Fenn and his wife, Julia Fenn, celebrated their 22nd wedding anniversary at the historic Janaki Temple on Saturday. The ceremony, conducted according to Mithila traditions, has brought renewed attention to Janakpurdhham as a hub for cultural and wedding tourism.

The ambassadorial couple marked their anniversary within the Janaki Temple complex in Janakpurdhham Sub-metropolitan City, embracing the rich Mithila traditions. The celebration featured Vedic rituals performed by local priests. During the ceremony, the couple exchanged garlands, and Ambassador Fenn applied vermilion to his wife’s forehead, following Hindu customs. The event concluded with the couple circumambulating the temple and offering prayers to Mata Janaki.

Reflecting on the occasion, Ambassador Fenn expressed his admiration for Mithila’s unique culture and hospitality. “The traditions, history, and warm reception of Janakpurdhham always leave a lasting impression on me. Celebrating our wedding anniversary here has been an unforgettable moment in my life,” he said.

Ambassador Fenn also emphasized the cultural significance of the region. “Janakpurdhham is a perfect destination for weddings. The experience here strengthens relationships and offers a profound connection to tradition. Everyone

NEWSNOTES

should visit this extraordinary place,” he added. His endorsement is expected to positively impact the promotion of Janakpurdham as a cultural and tourism hotspot.

The celebration was officiated by Mahant Ram Roshan Das Vaishnav, the temple’s successor, who performed the ceremony in the Mithila style. Mahanta Vaishnav praised the occasion as a symbol of love and tradition and called on the government to develop Janakpurdham as a wedding destination.

Ambassador Fenn, who had visited Janakpurdham last year and been captivated by its art, culture, and historical significance, likened the temple’s atmosphere to the love

story of Ram and Sita, saying it added a deeper dimension to their marital bond.



“I had the honour of celebrating our wedding anniversary in Janakpurdham, the sacred birthplace of Mata Janaki. The rich traditions, customs, language, and culture of Mithila and Madhes make this one of the most beautiful and unique places in the world. My decision to mark this special day

here was inspired by a visit last year, during which I was captivated by the city’s charm. My wife wholeheartedly supported this plan, and just a few weeks ago, I had the privilege of briefly visiting the Janaki Temple during the Ram Janaki wedding anniversary to seek Mata Janaki’s blessings,” said ambassador Fenn.

“During my time in Janakpurdham, I was deeply moved by the warmth and insights shared by local leaders, including the Chief Minister, Speaker, Members of Parliament, and the Mayor, as well as members of civil society.

Their dedication to preserving Mithila’s traditions and promoting Janakpur as a wedding destination is truly inspiring. I am grateful for their affection and the love of the people of this province, which motivated me to celebrate this momentous occasion here. I am confident that ongoing efforts by the British Embassy in Kathmandu and the Government of Nepal will bring significant progress to the development of Janakpurdham and Madhes Province in the near future,” he added.

Janaki Temple, a symbol of Mithila civilization, attracts thousands of tourists and newlyweds annually. The ambassador’s celebration further highlights the temple’s importance and enhances its reputation on the international stage.

This event is expected to boost local tourism, celebrate Mithila’s rich cultural heritage, and position Janakpurdham

as a sought-after destination for weddings and anniversaries.

National Learning And Sharing Workshop On Youth-led GESI Initiatives For COVID-19 Recovery Strategies And Action

Oxfam in Nepal organized a one-day “National Learning and Sharing Workshop on Youth-led GESI Initiatives for COVID-19 Recovery Strategies and Action in Nepal” on 27 December 2024.

The workshop was conducted to share the outcomes and learning of the project co-funded by the European Union and implemented in collaboration by Oxfam, Yuwalaya and Women Association for Marginalized Women (WAM). Surendra Basnet, Vice-Chairman of Nepal’s National Youth Council (NYC), was the Chief Guest for the event.

The workshop commenced with welcome remarks from Tripti Rai, Country Director for Oxfam in Nepal. She shared, “It is with great pleasure I welcome everyone to the learning and sharing workshop of this project promoting youth participation in politics and the economy while contributing to building capacity of youth in Karnali and Sudurpashchim Provinces post-COVID-19. “

The event included presentation about the project by Shabnam Pokharel, Technical Coordinator for the project. The Youth Led GESI Initiatives for COVID-19 Recovery Strategies and Action in Nepal project was launched to promote youth-driven efforts towards achieving gender equality and social inclusion in the development process of post COVID-19 crisis. The project sought to empower youth to advocate for inclusive youth engagement and opportunities within policy-making processes, while simultaneously strengthening their understanding and commitment to gender equality and social inclusion.

Oxfam implemented the three-year long project from January 2022 to December 2024 in four municipalities of two provinces - Bhagwatimai Rural Municipality and Dugeswor Rural Municipality in Dailekh district, Karnali Province and Patan Municipality and Dashrathchand Municipality of Baitadi district in Sudurpashchim Province.



The workshop included panel discussion about youth leadership in development among four panelists - Mina Kumari Khadka, Deputy Chair, Bhagwatimai Rural Municipality, Dailekh district, Karnali Province, Chanda Thapa, Chief Administrative Officer, National Youth Council, Rajendra Adhikari, Vice-Chair, Bhagwatimai Rural Municipality Youth Council, and Dharma Raj Rimal,

Chairperson, Yuwalaya.

Similarly, Jose-Luis Venuesa Santa Maria, Head of Cooperation, European Union shared, “We are quite proud of the project achievements. From its inception, our objective was to address the challenges faced by youth in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, acknowledging its substantial impact on their education and overall well-being. In line with the European Union’s core commitment to youth empowerment, we are hopeful that the local government will ensure the sustainability of youth and GESI plans. We would like to thank Oxfam, local partners Yuwalaya and WAM, and the local government, communities, and youth leaders for their crucial support throughout this endeavor.”

Ambassador Of Pakistan To Nepal Abrar H. Hashmi Met With PM Of Nepal KP Sharma Oli

Ambassador of Pakistan to Nepal Abrar H. Hashmi, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli at the Prime Minister’s official residence today. The Prime Minister appreciating long historical and cultural linkages stated the people of the region have common and splendid heritage.

The PM said Nepal was committed to revitalizing the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC),



emphasizing that despite challenges between member States, regional cooperation should remain unaffected. He reiterated Nepal’s foreign policy of “friendship with all and enmity with none,” assuring

national interests while fostering international cooperation through frank and forward looking dialogue. He thanked Pakistan for its friendship, fostering closer people to people, interalia, through technical assistance. The exchanges at all levels, he said, were necessary to sustain and enrich this relationship.

Ambassador Hashmi expressed Pakistan’s interest in deepening multifaceted cooperation and highly values Nepal’s commitment to peace, tranquility, democracy and regional cooperation.

Pakistan was ready to play its due role including hosting the next SAARC Summit with its true spirit. Ambassador Hashmi reiterated the invitation to Prime Minister K.P Sharma Oli to visit Pakistan, extended by the Muhmmad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan during their meeting on the sidelines of recently held 79th UNGA in New York.

Golchha Group Join Hands With ENSSURE for Industry-Led Apprenticeship Program

Golchha Group, a pioneering industrial group in Nepal that carries a legacy of 100 years, has partjered with the Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) project to implement an industry-led apprenticeship program. This initiative aims to bridge the gap between education and employment by equipping youths with market-relevant technical skills.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) wa ssigned between Shekhar Golchha, Chairman and Managing Director of Golchha Group, and Rabindra Bahadur Singh, Team Leader of the ENSSURE project.



The MoU outlines commitments from both parties to train apprentices in fields like automobile engineering, mechanical engineering, and information technology, promote lifelong learning through Skills Upgrading Training (SUT) for employees, incorporate green skills into training curriculum, and ensure workplace safety and occupational health standards in Golchha Group industries.

This partnership under the ENSSURE project, a bilateral initiative of the Governments of Nepal and Switzerland, focuses on implementing the dual VET-Apprenticeship model. This model blends theoretical knowledge acquired in technical schools with practical training in industries under the supervision of in-company trainers. Upon completion, apprentices will receive a pre-diploma certification from CTEVT.

The dual VET-Apprenticeship model is a win-win-win for work force development. Young people gain industry networks, earn while they learn and obtain a recognised qualification. Employers benefit from a net-cost benefit during the apprenticeship period, ultimately increasing productivity through a more skilled workforce. For the government, this model is cheaper, requiring less investment in labs and machinery compared to institution-based TVET courses, while producing more market-relevant graduates.

Shekhar Golchha, Chairman and Managing Director of Golchha Group, expressed his enthusiasm, stating: “This collaboration represents our commitment to empowering Nepalese youth with the skills needed to thrive in today’s competitive job market.” Golchha Group operates more than 100 companies across various sectors.

By participating in the dual VET-Apprenticeship program, the group aims to nurture talent that will contribute to Nepal’s industrial growth and economic development.

BUSINESS BRIEF

Global IME Bank Celebrated 18th Anniversary Organizing A Procession

On the occasion of its 18th anniversary, Global IME Bank Limited organized a nationwide rallies.

As part of its corporate social responsibility, the Bank has organized Prabhatferi program in the main cities of all the seven provinces to increase financial literacy and banking awareness among the general public.

From the 18th of Paush, Global IME Bank is entering its 19th year after completing its 18th year of establishment.

The Prabhat Feri held in Kathmandu was attended by Chandra Prasad Dhakal, Chairman of the Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of Global IME Bank, members of the bank's board of directors, and more than 1,500 employees including the bank's top management.

The employees present in Prabhatferi with financial literacy and banking educational placards and banners walked from the branch office at Kantipath in Kathmandu and circled the main parts of the city and circled the main cities outside the Kathmandu Valley.



Keeping in view the corporate social responsibility, the bank has been directly involving the general public through such socially useful activities.

Global IME Bank is recognized as the best bank in Nepal in two categories under Global Finance's Best Bank Award 2024 and Euro Money Award for Excellence 2024. In addition, Global IME Bank has been honored by various national and international organizations in different categories.

Global IME Bank is the first commercial bank in the private sector with a network of branches in all the 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, 384 ATMs, 237 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 of the world.

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

MCC Approves Additional 50 US Million Dollars For Nepal

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Board of Directors has approved \$50 million of additional funding for the Nepal Compact.



According to the MCC Board of Directors, the latest announcement underscores the shared commitment between MCC and Nepal to advancing Nepal's development priorities through transformative, high-quality infrastructure projects.

"The additional funding reaffirms our mutual dedication to ensuring the compact's success in strengthening Nepal's electricity grid and supporting long-term economic growth," said MCC Vice President of Compact Operations Cameron Alford in a press statement on January 2.

The MCC is an independent U.S. government development agency working to reduce global poverty through economic growth and was created in 2004. It provides time-limited grants that pair investments in infrastructure with policy and institutional reforms to countries that meet rigorous standards for good governance, fighting corruption and respecting democratic rights. (RSS)

Nepalese Cement Producers Are Under Increasing Pressure To Close

Nepal's cement producers have seen increasing plant closures due to a lack of domestic clinker, while the cost of imported clinker has become unaffordable. In addition, export opportunities of recent years have melted away as Nepali producers have been caught in the trade restrictions imposed by India on Chinese goods. Therefore, plant closures look likely to continue as the grinding operators are forced out of the market in favour of those with domestic clinker supply.

The start of 2025 has not begun well for Nepal's cement industry. A total of 13 cement plants in Koshi state have been forced to shut down temporarily as they are unable to meet the high cost of imported clinker, while domestic sources are under the control of the larger players.

Despite these developments, the government has decided not to step in as 21 cement factories in the country are able to produce clinker and are deemed capable of meeting current cement demand needs. The Global Cement Report –

15th Edition estimates that domestic cement consumption in Nepal reached ~8Mta in 2024 and oversupply is now putting pressure on the smaller cement producers.

In geographical terms, the domestic market is concentrated in large cities along the east and west highways between Kathmandu and Pokhara. Cement types produced in the market include 50 per cent pozzolan cement, 40 per cent OPC and 10 per cent slag cement. Prior to 2017-18, Nepal imported half of its annual requirements of finished cement and clinker from India. But this is changing with the larger integrated plants controlling more of the domestic market. Coal, gypsum and iron ore also need to be imported for cement manufacture, which means grinding plants have tended to be more sustainable than integrated plants for the local industry to run. Now the Inkes of Hongshi-Shivam Cement and CG Cement Industries have the capacity to supply half of the domestic annual cement requirements.

However, plants are under continued threat of closure and shutdowns are beginning to mount up. There are four plants on the point of shutting down production in Morang, eight in Jhapa, one in Sunsari, one in Udayapur and one in Dhan-



kuta in Kushi province, according to local sources. In addition, the remaining plants in Jhapa are operating at about 25 per cent of capacity utilisation, claims The Rising Nepal Daily.

The high price of imported clinker and the government's inability to spend capital, the non-payment of loans and the stoppage of exports have combined to put many plants on the brink of closure. According to the Nepal Manufacturing Association (NMA), the industry consisted of 65 cement plants, comprising 42 grinding units and 23 integrated plants in 2023. The largest plant is the Chinese-owned Hongshi-Shivam Cement plant which has a capacity of 2.44Mta.

Global IME Bank Conducted Women Health Camps

On the occasion of its 18th anniversary, Global IME Bank Limited has conducted the “Mary Unalai Swasth Nari initiative as part of the bank’s corporate social responsibility.

Global IME Bank is entering its 19th year from Thursday, the 18th of Paush. As part of the campaign, the bank is going to conduct a one-day free women’s health camp in all the seven provinces in collaboration with the Nepal Family

Planning Association.

In the camp, gynecologist experts will provide various gynecological services - women’s health check-up, uterine cancer (VIA) test, treatment of uterine prolapse cases, distribution of medicines and other services will be available free of charge.

From each camp, early symptoms of cervical cancer and severe cervical cancer patients will be identified, who will be treated surgically in the second phase of the healthy women initiative program.

The bank will conduct these camps in all provinces during this Paush month. Under which the bank in Hetaunda sub-metropolitan ward no. 11 Makwanpur in Bagmati province on Thursday 18th Paush at Saraswati toll hall, Kalauya sub-metropolitan ward no. in Madhesh province. 1,

Rajdevi Mandir Hall at Bara, Modi Village in Gandaki Province, Ward No. 1 Parvat Bhuk health post on Saturday 20th of Paush, Biratnagar Metropolitan City ward no. in Koshi province. 12, Aadharbhut health post at Morang, Barkhi tol on Monday 21st Paush, in Lumbini Province. 11, Clinic of Family Planning Association at Rupandehi, Saljhandima Paush 23rd on Wednesday, Virendranagar Municipality Ward No. in Karnali Province. 2 at Daulatpur health post in Surkhet on Saturday 26th Paush and in Sudurpaschim Province, Godavari Municipality Ward No. 8 There is a preparation to conduct a free health camp on Monday 28th of Paush at Syaule Aadhar Bhut health post in Kailali.

The bank believes that the health camp will be effective for women who do not have access to health services in rural and semi-urban areas and will have a positive impact on them.

Since its inception, Global IME Bank has been giving priority to corporate social responsibility by organizing such health camps at various times and directly benefiting rural women and common citizens.

Global IME Bank is recognized as the best bank in Nepal in two categories under Global Finance’s Best Bank Award 2024 and Euro Money Award for Excellence 2024. In addition, Global IME Bank has been honored by various national and international organizations in different categories.

Global IME Bank is the first commercial bank in the private



BUSINESS BRIEF

sector with a network of branches in all the 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, 384 ATMs, 237 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 of the world.

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

Nepal Requires Investment Of Rs 6.5 Trillion To Produce 28000 MW Power

Investment of Rs 6.5 trillion is needed for producing 28,500 megawatts of electricity as per the government's target. Of this investment, Rs 4 trillion would remain within the country.



This information was shared during the funding management agreement signing ceremony of the 49.95 megawatts Danak-hola Hydropower Project promoted by the Lalupate Hydropower Company here on Friday.

The Project is being constructed at Nasong Rural Municipality-2 in Manang district.

Addressing the programme, Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Deepak Khadka said that the government is working towards the development of the energy sector through private sector participation.

President of the Independent Power Producers' Association, Nepal (IPPAN), Ganesh Karki, said that large investment in the power sector will have a positive impact on the national economy.

He said Rs 4 trillion would have to be invested within the next 10 years for the purchase of construction materials like cement, iron rods and others required for building hydro-power infrastructure and for the employment in this sector. This amount of expenditure would contribute to boosting up the national economy.

Presently, the private sector has undertaken the development of over 169 hydropower projects, with 91 of them being listed on the Nepal Stock Exchange. These projects

have garnered investment from more than four million individuals.

Additionally, hydroelectric projects with a combined capacity of 3,200 megawatts are currently under construction, and projects totaling 3,500 megawatts are in the process of financial closure. Furthermore, projects with a cumulative capacity of 12,000 megawatts are awaiting a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with the government, and the private sector is also studying the projects with a combined capacity of 12,000 MW.

A study by the Water and Energy Commission shows that Nepal has the potential to generate 120,000 MW of hydroelectricity. Likewise, research also shows Nepal can generate 30,000 megawatts of solar power. Other multiple studies also found that Nepal can achieve a maximum electricity production of over 200,000 MW during the rainy seasons.

Global IME Bank's 18th Anniversary Celebrated With Financial Literacy Program For Students

On the occasion of its 18th anniversary, Global IME Bank Limited is going to conduct financial literacy programs in various schools of the country under the corporate social responsibility of the bank.

The bank is entering its 19th year after completing the 18th year of its establishment from Thursday 18th Paus.

On the occasion of the 18th anniversary, the bank is conducting an awareness program on financial literacy for students studying in various educational institutions of each province.



In the awareness program, the bank will provide information about basic banking services, digital/latest banking services, ways to keep banking details safe and various banking education.

The bank has been continuing these kinds of social programs under the corporate social responsibility. Keeping in view the corporate social responsibility, the bank has been directly involving the general public through such socially useful activities.

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NIMB Opens Extension Of Branchless Banking Services In Dhuniveshi

Nepal Investment Mega Bank Limited has launched a branchless banking service in Dhuniveshi, Dhading while expanding banking services in various parts of the country where banking services have reached.

Along with this more branchless banking services have been launched through a professional representative in Tylghar (professional representative Sanjeev Khatri). With the launch of the branchless banking service, the number of branchless banking service centers of the bank has reached 73.

In the event, which was attended by bank representatives, local public representatives and local residents, Aryan Sigdel of Nepal Investment Mega Bank Limited Central Office, Digital Payment Department gave information about branchless banking services and its use.

The bank has provided the necessary electronic equipment to the professional representative for the purpose of providing branchless banking services at the local level

Through business representatives, customers can open savings accounts, accept savings, make payments, extract account balances and account transaction details, transfer funds from one account to another, deposit funds in other bank accounts, pay loan principal and interest, electricity bill payment, mobile phone recharge service



and other services specified by the bank.

Since its inception, the bank has been operating a branchless banking service center with the goal of providing financial access to rural areas. Branchless banking service has been established as an important tool for providing financial services in rural areas.

Currently, Nepal Investment Mega Bank is providing banking services to its customers through 275 branch offices, 73 branchless banking service centers, 65 extension counters and 265 ATMs.

In addition, the bank has also informed that in the future, it plans to expand its service centers targeting different rural areas of the country deprived of formal banking services.

Dhakal Calls For Local Entrepreneurs To Propose New Projects For Investment

Chandra Prasad Dhakal, President of the Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), said that there will be no need to face the lack of investment in local projects and enterprise development that will give returns.

Addressing the Bhanu Nagar Festival in Tanahun today, President Dhakal gave importance to domestic capital mobilization and informed that an investment company of 10 billion capital has been established and requested to propose investment projects.



As there are opportunities in Nepal's tourism, energy, information technology and agricultural production sectors, the local industrialists were also urged to take advantage of this as new companies have been formed to gather financial arrangements for investment and to share.

At the request of the federation, President Dhakal mentioned that since the government of Nepal is reforming laws that are considered to be obstacles to investment, suitable opportunities for investment are being created.

President Dhakal also said that since tourist arrivals are increasing, there is enough foreign currency through remittances and sufficient liquidity and interest rates are being balanced in the banking sector, the time has come for investment. President Dhakal also expressed his best wishes to Bhanu Nagar, stating that he is supporting the ongoing efforts to make the birthplace of Bhanubhakta Acharya an excellent tourist destination and promote local products.

2024: A Year Of Missed Opportunities- A Call For Transformative Climate Action In 2025



BY: ARUP RAJOURIA

As 2024 comes to a close, I have been reflecting on everything this year has brought—both the challenges and the moments of progress on human induced climate change. The global community faced significant setbacks in addressing human induced climate change, particularly highlighted by the disappointments of COP29, devastating weather events like the floods in Nepal, and the alarming rate of glacier retreat in the Hindu Kush/Himalayas, the Caucasus and other mountain ranges around the world. Furthermore, Africa and Latin America were not immune to human induced climate impacts and experienced severe climate events that emphasized the urgent need for a reevaluation of strategies as we move into 2025.

In 2024, ever-increasing climate induced disasters impacted regions worldwide. Major events included devastating floods in China costing an estimated \$15.6 billion and claiming 315 lives, and Hurricane Milton in the U.S., which resulted in \$60 billion in damages. Typhoon Yagi wreaked havoc across Southeast Asia, leading to over 800 fatalities and extensive destruction of infrastructure and agriculture. Among the one of the most tragic incidents was here in Nepal, which occurred in July 2024 due to an extreme weather event triggering floods and landslide. These floods displaced thousands, destroyed homes, and resulted in over 200 losses of human lives including in Kathmandu, the capital.

Inadequate emission reductions continued to plague global efforts. In spite of international commitments to curb greenhouse gas emissions, progress has been distressingly insufficient. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) reported that global emissions must decrease by over 40% by 2030 to meet Paris Agreement targets; however, current trends indicate an increase instead. This gap between necessary action and actual performance has contributed to a projected temperature rise of between 2.6°C and 3.1°C this century.

The failure of COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, concluded with a disappointing agreement that promised at least \$300 billion annually in climate finance to developing countries—an amount that is still far from the \$1.3 trillion considered necessary by experts for effective climate action.

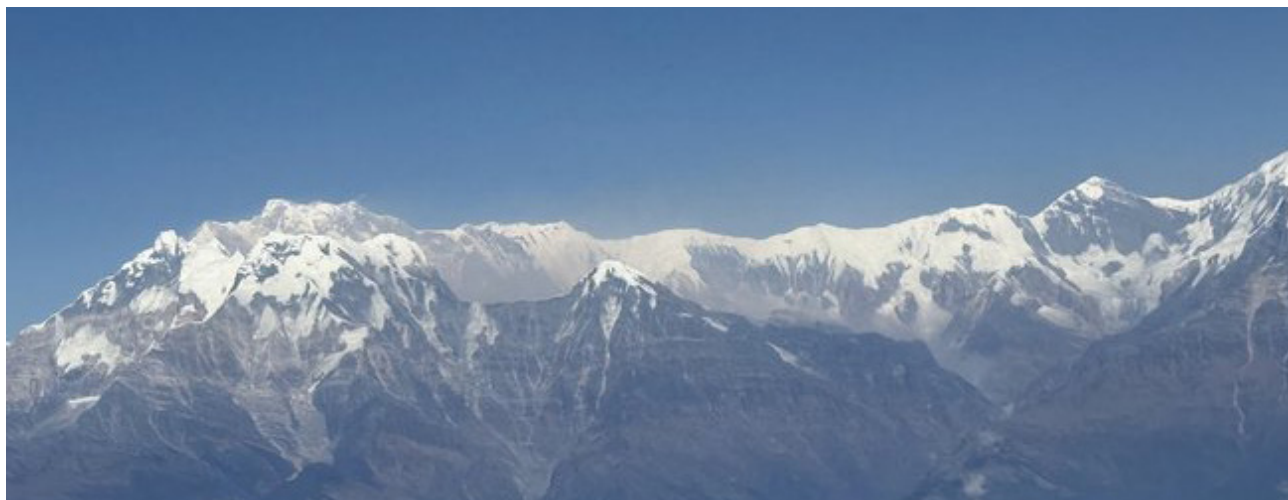
Lowand middle-income countries labeled the outcome as a “brutal betrayal,” noting that it did not include specific targets for adaptation or disaster response funding.

Additionally, climate-induced conflict emerged as a pressing issue aggravated by resource scarcity induced by climate change. Regions like the Middle East and Central Asia have seen strains rise over water resources due to changing precipitation patterns and increased demand from growing populations. The ongoing conflict between Iran and Af-



ghanistan over the Helmand River represents how water scarcity can lead to violence and instability. Similarly, in Yemen, competition for dwindling natural resources amid civil war has intensified local conflicts, undermining efforts for peace. A climate induced conflict in the Himalayas would be much more dire as a recent editorial in the Nepali Times mentions “Research at Rutgers University recently projected that even a one-week nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan would cause the collapse of food systems worldwide, killing 2 billion people from starvation. Prevailing winds would carry the fallout to the Himalaya and Tibetan Plateau, irradiating glaciers that feed into all of Asia’s main rivers.[1]” <https://nepalitimes.com/editorial/thinking-the-thinkable>

Africa has been disproportionately affected by climate change, despite contributing less than 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. In 2022 alone, over 110 million people were impacted by climate-related hazards on the continent, leading to economic damages exceeding \$8.5 billion.



The situation worsened in 2024 with severe droughts and floods exacerbating food insecurity and displacing millions. Somalia faced terrible droughts that displaced over a million people and led to significant loss of livestock and agricultural productivity.

The loss and damage costs in Africa due to climate induced changes are projected to reach between \$290 billion and \$440 billion as temperatures continue to rise. Adaptation financing remains grossly insufficient; estimates suggest that sub-Saharan Africa alone requires between \$30 billion to \$50 billion annually for effective adaptation measures. The need for high income countries to commit fully to funding loss and damage is critical as communities struggle with increasing displacement due to climate-induced disasters.



Latin America also faced significant climate challenges in 2024. Extreme weather events such as hurricanes and droughts have led to widespread destruction of infrastructure and agriculture across the region. Countries like Brazil experienced severe flooding that displaced thousands and disrupted food production. In Central America, prolonged droughts have threatened water security and agricultural output, worsening existing vulnerabilities among rural populations.

The Himalayan glaciers are crucial water sources for approximately 2 billion people across South and Southeast Asia. However, these glaciers are melting at an unprecedented rate due to climate change. A recent report warns that if global warming continues unchecked, these glaciers could lose up to 80% of their ice volume by the end of this century. This loss threatens not only ecosystems, biodiversity, culture but also the livelihoods of billions who depend on glacial meltwater for drinking water, agriculture, and energy production.

As we approach 2025, it is clear that transformative ‘out of the box’ thinking and action is warranted. A dedicated laser focused organization must be established to specifically address the impacts of receding Himalayan glaciers and adapting to manage their water resources effectively. This organization should facilitate cooperation among affected countries and coordinate efforts to monitor glacier health.

Developed nations must commit to providing adequate funding that meets the actual needs of developing countries across Africa and Latin America, most importantly, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs). Future deliberations must build on existing commitments to phase out fossil fuels and ensure that these pledges are backed by concrete actions and not only rhetoric.

Though 2024 served as a vivid reminder of our failures in addressing climate change—particularly through events like COP29, floods in Nepal, severe impacts in Africa and Latin America, and the disastrous retreat of Himalayan glaciers—it also presents an opportunity for transformative action in 2025. By prioritizing and addressing glacier retreat through focused organizations, enhancing cooperation globally, investing in innovative solutions, mobilizing the private sector and fostering public engagement, we can begin to turn the tide against this existential threat of human induced climate change with “out of the box” thinking and strategies. Wishing all a productive, prosperous and a peaceful 2025.

Rajouria is a globally recognized professional in climate change and natural resources management, with an impressive track record at organizations like former CEO of NTNC, UNDP, UN-Habitat, UNEP, and USAID. He holds an MPA degree from Harvard Univers.

POLITICS

Looming Instability

Despite the claim of leaders in the ruling alliance that this government will last for the full term, the factors of instability are looming large.

By A CORRESPONDENT

As it was said by the late Professor Leo Rose, domestic politics determines the foreign policy of bigger countries, and external factors determine the domestic politics of smaller countries like Nepal, which remains valid.

Despite having a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives, which is enough to amend the constitution, the current coalition government led by CPN-UML leader KP Sharma Oli seems fragile and unstable.

From Prime Minister Oli to his comrades in the party and the top leaders of the ruling alliance Nepali Congress, all have been saying that this is a stable and strong government since the day it was formed.

However, Nepalese citizens have yet to see any sense of a stable government in reality. Despite several efforts, the economy is still in bad shape with no sign of quick recovery.

While Prime Minister Oli has maintained his domestic constituencies in balance, the same cannot be said for his foreign policy. From day one of his tenure, some of his actions and decisions have remained unbalanced. PM Oli's government's inability to manage its foreign relations, particularly with neighbors, is creating problems.

Given the foreign relations situation, Nepal's internal politics is facing uneasy consequences. Although the top leaders of the ruling alliance, including Prime

Minister Oli and Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba, have been defending the present coalition, saying that there is no other alternative, their statements have also raised questions.

Amid a tense political situation, the ruling CPN-UML and main opposition Maoist Center are convening central committee meetings to determine the

of whether Lamichhane will be granted bail or remain in custody is being closely watched, as it will have significant implications for both ruling and opposition parties. The release of Lamichhane on bail could bolster the Maoist Center's criticism of the government.

CPN-UML Meeting



political course. Nepal Police's decision to take Rabi Lamichhane's case to court, the

leader of the Rastriya Swantrparty, who has been in police custody for three months on charges of fraud, misuse of cooperative deposits, and money laundering, has prompted both ruling and opposition parties to strategize for the future political landscape. The outcome

During the CPN-UML meeting, discussions ranged from Rabi Lamichhane's case to the expulsion of senior leader Bhim Rawal from the party, with a focus on assessing the implications for the party's future.

In his opening remarks, Prime Minister and CPN (UML) Chairman Oli characterized the widespread criticism against him and the government as reactionary



responses, emphasizing that reactionary forces are alarmed by the unity of patriotic, progressive, and democratic forces.

Speaking at the eighth meeting of the central committee of his party, Oli condemned reactionary forces for spreading relentless and unfounded propaganda against his party.

He asserted that opposition groups, threatened by UML's increasing popularity, are trying to damage its reputation. Oli urged party members to combat these false narratives and focus on strengthening the party at the grassroots level to establish it as a significant force in Nepalese politics.

"We cannot stay silent in the face of unfounded accusations. Silence indicates weakness. We must challenge such claims with evidence and ensure our organizations actively engage with individuals and households," stated the UML chair. "Internal divisions disguised as democracy only weaken the party. We must unite, prioritizing national and party interests under a single policy framework."

Prime Minister Oli also criticized leaders who had rejoiced at the possibility

of the UML's decline, noting that they are now facing consequences for their actions.

During the meeting, he presented a 43-page political report covering various topics, such as a new political direction, the importance and reasoning behind the alliance with the Nepali Congress, the obstacles of instability and orchestrated negativity, Nepal's foreign policy in a changing global landscape, an analysis of by-elections, and strategies for establishing a strong national presence.

We must not stay silent in the face of accusations from our opponents. It is a flawed notion to remain quiet. The allegations made by our opponents should be countered with facts. It is important for all our organizations to be proactive and engage with people and households. Emphasis should be placed on ideological work," stated UML chairperson Oli.

He emphasized the need to put an end to factions and chaos within the party, stating that creating factions in the name of democracy will not strengthen the party. "We should focus on the party and country's interests by adhering to a consistent policy rather than being misled."

In the political report presented during the meeting, Chair Oli outlined a new political roadmap and discussed the rationale and opportunities for forming an alliance between UML and Nepali Congress. He assessed the current alliance six months after its formation, discussed the changing global environment and the country's foreign policy, reviewed local by-elections, and emphasized the building of decisive national power.

Since the formation of the new government, there has been a message of political stability, issuance of common policy commitments and resolutions, establishment of structures to facilitate government operations, economic improvements, passage of laws on transitional justice, protection of national interests, maintenance of balanced external relations, resolution of issues in the cooperative sector, and justice for savers. He highlighted that those involved in irregularities have been punished, and there has been an acceleration in development and construction.

Maoist Center Meeting

As the political situation becomes more tense, the central committee (CC) meeting of the main opposition party in par-



liament, CPN (Maoist Center), has commenced.

Maoist Chair Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ presented a political and organizational report. In his address to the meeting, Prachanda urged party workers to stay vigilant against any plots against the current constitution and criticized the government led by PM Oli for creating a fragile situation. Maoist Center vice-chair and spokesperson Agni Prasad Sapkota stated that the country has been in a politically and economically challenging situation since the formation of the new coalition government. On the other hand, Nepali Congress leaders are supporting the government, arguing that the two-party coalition is necessary for political stability and economic growth.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Urban Development Prakash Man Singh emphasized the importance of amending the constitution through consensus with all parties.

During a meeting with party cadres in Bardibas, Singh, who is also a leader of the Nepali Congress, highlighted that the current government was established with the goal of amending the constitution and stressed the need for extensive discussions with all parliamentary parties for a constitutional amendment. Singh emphasized that a stable government is crucial for the country’s development and predicted that the current coalition will remain in power until the next House of Representatives election.

He also encouraged party cadres to actively participate in expanding the party organization.

The Deputy Prime Minister stated that the current government, comprised of the Nepali Congress and CPN (UML), was established out of necessity. He emphasized that previous governments formed by smaller parties had led to instability and hopelessness among the people due to frequent changes. The current government aims to provide stability and continuity.

Senior leader of the Nepali Congress, Dr. Shekhar Koirala, has also supported the current coalition government, attributing it to the prolonged political instability.

Political Incidents

Just a few days after the expulsion of senior leader Bhim Rawal from the party, former Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sarbendra Khanal has announced his resignation from the CPN-UML.

The CPN-UML has removed senior leader Bhim Rawal from the party and revoked his ordinary membership. Rawal, a former UML vice chair and former home and defense minister, had been without any responsibilities for a long time due to his disagreements with party chair KP Oli.

During the last UML general convention in November 2021, Rawal ran against Oli for the position of party chairperson

but was unsuccessful.

A UML secretariat meeting decided to revoke Rawal’s party membership after reviewing his series of statements and actions that went against the party’s official stance, according to a senior UML leader.

Rawal had objected to the party’s decision to accept land donated by Min Bahadur Gurung, the owner of Bhatbhateni supermarket, for the construction of the party’s headquarters.

In a Facebook post, Khanal stated that he is no longer affiliated with any political party. Khanal had been absent from the party’s official events for a while.

“I understand that there may be confusion about my political affiliation, so I want to clarify that I am not a member of any political party. I am working independently to address local and national issues. I will continue to contribute as much as possible to the well-being of the country and society,” he said.

Just six months after his loss in Kathmandu-5, Khanal ran in the by-election in April 2023 as a UML candidate from Tanahun-1. However, he was defeated again, this time by Rastriya Swatantra Party candidate Swarnim Wagle, who received 34,918 votes. Khanal came in third with 8,488 votes.

Pradeep Gyawali, the party’s deputy general secretary, stated that these events would not have a significant political impact on the party. “CPN-UML is a large and long-standing party. It is not uncommon for the party to face such situations.”

The country’s economic situation has improved since the government was formed, and international relations are also strengthening, Gyawali added. Considering all these events, the situation appears fragile and may lead to another phase of prolonged political instability.

NATIONAL UNITY DAY

Unity Trail

NA team sets out on Gorakha-Kathmandu march to promote 'unification route'

By A CORRESPONDENT

As Nepal commemorates National Unity Day by organizing various programs to pay respect to King Prithvi Narayan Shah, a Nepali Army (NA) squad has embarked on a trek along the historic Gorakha-Kathmandu route, which was once used during Nepal's unification campaign by King Prithvi Narayan Shah.

After the removal of the monarchy, the political leadership gave up celebrating the National Unification Day in remembrance of Prithvi Narayan Shah, who was the first chief of the Nepal Army.

Following growing public pressure, the government has started to celebrate National Unity Day by declaring a public holiday on 11 January. Prithvi Narayan Shah began the unification of Nepal in 1743 and is also credited with moving the royal seat of power to Kathmandu. The journey aims to promote this historically significant route, which traces the path taken by the king during his unification initiative.

The trek will conclude with participation in the celebrations of Prithvi Jayanti, the birth anniversary of Prithvi Narayan Shah, observed on Push 27 in the Nepali calendar (January 11). This date also marks National Unification Day in Nepal. The trek will pass through Dhad-

numan Bhanjyang Chautara within the Durbar premises, carrying the national flag and lights to mark the beginning of their historic journey. The trip is supported and coordinated by the Gorkha Municipality and Bhimsen Thapa Rural Mu-

nunicipality in Gorkha and has been underway for the past six years.

Among those present at the farewell ceremony in the Durbar area were NA personnel, local representatives, and Punya Bikram Paudel, the Chief Dis-

trict Officer of Gorkha.

As a unifier of Nepal, the Nepal Army symbolizes King Prithvi Narayan Shah, a unifier, as a symbol of unity of Nepal and the Nepal Army. The opening of the trekking route highlights the importance of the role played by King Prithvi Narayan Shah during the unification of the country.



ing and Nuwakot before reaching Kathmandu.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Ashok Kumar Chhetri, the chief of the NA's Ripumardan Battalion in Gorakha, the journey will include a special ceremony at Hanumandhoka in Kathmandu on National Unification Day.

The NA team departed from Ha-

Buddhi Narayan Shrestha

The Border Man of Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

The Centre for International Boundaries Research Unit (IBRU) at Durham University in the United Kingdom honored Nepalese borders expert Buddhi Narayan Shrestha with the seventh annual Raymond Milefsky Award in 2024.

IBRU Director Philip Steinberg praised Shrestha for his dedication to supporting his country and promoting peace and stability through boundary work. The Milefsky Award, which includes a cash prize of £745, recognizes individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to boundary-making or cross-border cooperation.

The award is funded by a bequest from Raymond Milefsky, a former US Department of State borders expert who frequently led training workshops at IBRU. Nominations for the 2025 award will open in January 2025.

According to the IBRU website, Shrestha, a former Director General of Nepal's Survey Department, has leveraged his surveying background to become a leading authority on borders in the challenging terrain of South Asia. In 1992, he transitioned to focus on border issues, earning the moniker "Border Man of Nepal."

Shrestha is an expert in boundary delimitation, providing guidance to governments on historical treaty maps and resolving modern border disputes. He has written 14 books on border-related subjects, demonstrating his extensive knowledge and dedication to boundary studies.

Shrestha emphasizes the crucial role individuals play in protecting various areas, whether it be physical spaces, financial records, or lives. A gatekeeper controls access to unwanted individuals, an accountant manages financial transactions, a lifeguard prevents drownings at coastal areas, a soldier ensures national security, and in sports like football, goalkeepers and linesmen maintain essential boundaries.

Shrestha describes the "Border Man" as a significant figure responsible for safeguarding his country's national borders, meticulously monitoring boundary lines, pillars, and markers to uphold the integrity and security of the nation's borders. As an experienced surveyor, he has conducted numerous tasks, including measuring distances, angles, and heights between border pillars and marking key points to establish latitude, longitude, and altitude. He has verified maps against ground realities for accuracy and record-keeping. With over three decades of service as a border guard, border keeper, border indicator, border protector, and territory visualizer, Shrestha has diligently worked to protect Nepal's national territorial boundaries. His dedication and expertise have earned him the respect and admiration of his colleagues, establishing him as "The Border Man of Nepal."

Indeed, Shrestha also acted as a border activist, bringing international attention to the fact that Nepalese territory Lipulek-Kalapani-Limpiyadhura has been encroached and occupied by India since 1962 A.D. This claim is supported by Wikipedia entries as well. His findings have been widely adopted by researchers, institutions, and government organizations studying the encroached territory of Lipulek-Kalapani-Limpiyadhura of Nepal. His contributions have significantly advanced understanding of this critical issue.

Shrestha, also known as the "Border Man," is a respected border analyst who has dedicated himself to studying boundary lines, border pillars, and markers. His extensive work in researching, writing, and presenting on border-related issues, particularly those involving Nepal's borders with India and China, has greatly contributed to the understanding of these complex matters.

During his 27-year tenure at the Land Survey Department of the Government of Nepal, Shrestha held various positions, culminating in his retirement as Director General in 1992. He has meticulously compiled statistical data on encroachments in areas such as Lipulek-Kalapa-

ni-Limpiyadhura (approximately 372 sq. km), Susta (approximately 145 sq. km), and 69 other locations (approximately 89 sq. km), totaling around 606 sq. km by India, using multiple scale maps.

In addition to his research work, Shrestha has been an advocate for highlighting the encroachment and occupation of Nepalese territory in

Lipulek-Kalapani-Limpiyadhura by India since 1962. His efforts have drawn international attention to this issue, with his findings being widely referenced by researchers, institutions, and government bodies studying the encroachment of Nepalese territory. Shrestha's work has played a crucial role in advancing the understanding of this significant border dispute.

Notably, he is recognized for being the first to publish *Chuche Naksa* (beaked map) in 2003 in his book "Border Management of Nepal". Additionally, he has raised awareness in the country about the disputed origin of the Kalee/Mahakali River, which originates from Limpiyadhura, as shown on British maps from 1819, 1827, 1851, 1856, etc.

As an explorer, he believes there is a contentious issue between Nepal and China regarding the six-hectare land of Nepal due to the displacement of boundary pillar number 57 from its original location in Korlangpariko Tippa, particularly in the Northern flank of Lapchi village, North of Lamabagar in Dolakha district. Instead, the pillar has been moved and engraved on a large Southern sloping rock, marked as Marker #57.

Buddhi Narayan Shrestha is not a diplomat, university lecturer, or politician, but he plays a vital role in sharing knowledge and information on land disputes between Nepal and India with various audiences, including students, media professionals, ministers, prime ministers, and other policymakers.

He also contributes significantly by providing information and insights to media personnel who accompany him to report

on the encroached territory of Nepal. Moreover, he is an approachable resource person, sharing his knowledge and expertise with the younger generation, especially students and emerging media professionals, educating them about the complexities of boundaries.

Shrestha provided proactive advice to Prime Minister Pushup Kamal Dahal “Prachanda” on 22 April 2023, ahead of his visit to India as recommended by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The advice included advocating for the establishment of a high-level political committee to resolve the issue of the Greater Kalapani area during his meetings with his Indian counterpart. The key points provided by Mr. Shrestha were later published in the Kantipur Daily on 23 May 2023. Additionally, Shrestha briefed Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. N. P. Saud on 28 April 2023 before accompanying Prime Minister Prachanda to India to ensure a well-informed delegation.

On 25 November 1999, Shrestha briefed former Prime Minister Mr. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai on the evidence supporting Nepal’s claim to Kalapani, citing historical maps and old documents. The meeting was attended by seven ministers, their respective Secretaries, Chief Secretary Tirtha Man Shakya, former General Secretary of Nepali Congress Mr. Sushil Koirala, and advisor to the Prime Minister Dr. Narayan Khadka.

Shrestha is widely recognized as a leading border analyst, with nearly all current and former prime ministers seeking his expertise on boundary-related matters. He is their primary point of contact for information and statistics on territorial boundaries. For example, former prime minister Jhalanath Khanal and former deputy prime minister Mr. Bhim Rawal frequently consulted him for information on territorial encroachments by India or China and the land areas affected by dams and embankments near the Nepalese border.

Buddhi Narayan Shrestha’s knowledge in border issues and management is highly valued in the research community. His book on “Border Management of Nepal” has received significant recognition and is cited by numerous national and international researchers. International scholars such as Lew Freedman (USA), Bruce A.

Elleman (UK), Prof. Rongxing Guo (China), Sam Cowan (UK), Sohini Nayak and Anna Orton (India), Haim Srebro (Israel), Prof. Victor Prescott and Gillian D. Triggs (Australia), Emmanuel Gonon (Canada), Benjamin Hans (Germany), Saroj Aryal & Manish Pulami (Poland) have acknowledged his work.

Similarly, prominent national scholars like Dr. Lok Raj Baral, Dr. Uddhav P Pyakurel, Dr. Pitamber Sharma, Dr. Dwarika Nath Dhungel, Dr. Shastra Dutta Pant, Dr. Jagat Kumar Bhudsal, Prof. Gopal Siwakoti, Dr. Surendra Bhandari & Achut Gautam, Amish Raj Mulmi, Hiranya Lal Shrestha, Madhavji Shrestha, Ratan Bhandari, Tulasi Narayan Shrestha, and others have also recognized his con-



tributions.

He remembers an incident from 03 August 2022, as he walked along the pavement of Dillibazar Chaarkhal in Kathmandu. A man approached him, greeted him with “Namaskar,” and introduced himself as Shakti Chauhan. Mr. Chauhan mentioned that he had seen Mr. Shrestha’s interview on Image television two days prior. He expressed his support for Mr. Shrestha’s position on abolishing the “Nepal-India 1950 Treaty,” pointing out the lack of provisions for revision or review compared to the trade and commerce treaty signed on the same day, which had a renewal clause. Mr. Chauhan stressed the legal significance of this discrepancy and agreed with Mr. Shrestha’s argument, encouraging him to continue his efforts and expressing solidarity with his cause.

A recipient of the prestigious Madan Puraskar prize in Nepal in 2000, Mr. Buddhi Narayan Shrestha considers genuine recognition from society as his most valuable

possession, far outweighing the value of money. This recognition brings him satisfaction and peace of mind, fueling his passion for reading, writing, speaking, and discussing complex border issues of Nepal and their resolutions.

Some of his notable recognitions include:

Annapurna Express Daily on 08 September 2022 acknowledged him as a trailblazer for publishing the Beaked Map (Chuche Naksa) for the first time in the book “Border Management of Nepal” in 2003, a significant milestone in documenting this crucial issue.

Board Member at the Institute of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tripureswor, Kathmandu (2012-2016).

Served as Member Secretary of the City Planning Commission at Kathmandu Metropolitan City (2003-2004).

Expert Council Member of the Land Use Council at the Ministry of Land Reform & Management, Kathmandu (2002-2004).

Headed the 13-member Nepal-India Joint Technical Level Committee (1987-1992).

Deputy Team Leader of the 11-member Nepal-China joint Boundary Committee (1988), with reciprocal visits to New Delhi, India, and Beijing, China.

Acted as Member-Secretary of the Mapping Sub-Committee under the Science and Technology Council (1987-1992).

Served as a Member of the Special Land Court under the Chairmanship of the District Judge in Kaski Pokhara (1976-1977).

Buddhi Narayan Shrestha is a dedicated activist working towards reclaiming the Greater Kalapani area, which has been occupied by India since 1962. His unwavering commitment to this cause drives his tireless efforts in seeking justice and restoring Nepal’s original borderlines.

We are proud of Shrestha’s dedication and wish him success in his ongoing endeavors to provide valuable insights and solutions to border issues for national security.

Celebrating Eighteen Years of Progress

Global IME Bank Marks 18th Anniversary: Chairman Dhakal Highlights Expansion of Secure Digital Banking Services

By A CORRESPONDENT

Under the leadership of Chandra Prasad Dhakal, president of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and a prominent entrepreneur, Global IME Bank has emerged as the largest commercial bank in Nepal within just 18 years.

During its 18-year journey, Global IME Bank has not only grown within Nepal but also expanded its presence internationally. The bank recently commemo-

rated its 18th anniversary at an event chaired by Dhakal, the chairman of the bank and Global IME Group, reaffirming its dedication to delivering efficient services through innovation and technology.

With over 1,100 service centers, including 355 branch offices, 384 ATMs, 237 branchless banking services, 68 extension and revenue collection counters, and 3 foreign representative offices, the bank has been consistently providing top-notch services to its customers. In addition to catering to the banking needs of Nepali citizens, the bank also offers remittance services from various countries worldwide.

Global IME Bank facilitates remittances from countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain,

Kuwait, India, Jordan, and others.

Global IME Bank Limited celebrated its 18th anniversary with various programs. Established on 18 Poush 2063, the bank marked the beginning of its 19th year on Thursday. Throughout the week, the bank has organized a series of events to commemorate its 18th anniversary.

During a special program held at the bank's corporate office in Kamaladi on the anniversary day, Chandra Prasad Dhakal, the Chairman of Global IME Bank and the President of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, emphasized the bank's commitment to enhancing customer service and satisfaction through improved technology and efficiency. He highlighted the importance of digitalization in meeting the evolving banking needs while emphasizing the significance of maintaining robust security measures.

Reflecting on the bank's achievements over the past 18 years, Dhakal credited the adherence to government and regulatory policies for the bank's success. He underscored the importance of hard work and dedication in achieving the bank's goals amidst the dynamic banking landscape.

The President, Dhakal, attributed the current state of the bank to the relentless hard work and dedication of all employees, expressing gratitude for their significant contributions in mak-



ing Global IME Bank a top-tier institution. CEO Surendraraj Regmi highlighted the bank's efforts to modernize and enhance customer service, aiming to deliver prompt services in the digital age.

Regmi emphasized the bank's commitment to improving the quality of its services in the future, prioritizing customer satisfaction.

In celebration of its 18th anniversary, Global IME Bank Limited recognized 166 employees who have dedicated 15 years of service to the bank. Chairman Dhakal personally honored these long-serving employees during a special event.

Global IME Bank has received accolades as the best bank in Nepal in two categories, winning the Global Finance's Best Bank Award 2024 and the Euro Money Award for Excellence 2024. The bank has also been recognized by various national and international organizations across different categories. With branches in all districts of the country, Global IME Bank is the first private commercial bank to achieve this milestone. Dhakal emphasized the importance of strong and dedicated leadership for the growth and success of any organization.





MD GHISING'S UNWAVERING COMMITMENT

From Darkness To Light

Despite encountering challenges and resistance from top officials, including the Prime Minister and the Energy Minister, Kul Man Ghising, the Managing Director of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), remains resolute in personally inspecting project sites to ensure timely completion. His guidance has propelled number of 200 kV and 400 kV Transmission line projects

By A CORRESPONDENT

Since assuming the position of Managing Director of the NEA eight years ago, Kul Man Ghising has rarely taken breaks, frequently putting his work duties ahead of spending time with his family on holidays and weekends.

Completing generation, transmission, and distribution projects across the country is crucial for ensuring a reliable power supply. Nevertheless, numerous obstacles such as issues related to the Land Acquisition Act, resistance from the public

regarding the use of private land, legal decisions, environmental considerations, and inefficient contractors have caused substantial delays in transmission line projects, distribution improvements, and hydropower advancements.

Many of these projects face challenges due to minor administrative obstacles and resistance from local communities. MD Ghising has been able to address these issues by organizing meetings with community members, local authorities, and elected representatives during his

site visits.

The addition of new generation projects and the efficient transmission of power from hydropower facilities to the distribution network are essential for ensuring a continuous power supply.

MD Ghising's regular field visits are crucial in overcoming obstacles and ensuring the successful completion of projects.

Upon assuming the role of Managing Director of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), MD

ENERGY

Ghising faced delays in several generation projects, including the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi, 14 MW Kulekhani III, and 30 MW Chameliya, as well as various strategic transmission line initiatives such as the 400 kV Inaruwa-Dhalkebar-Nijgadh, 220 kV Kali Gandaki Corridor, 220 kV Koshi Corridor, Hetauda-Bharatpur-Bardaghat-New Butwal-Trishuli-Kathmandu, Trishuli 3 B Hub-Chilime, 132 kV Chameliya-Attariya Transmission Line, Solu Corridor, and Kabeli Corridor.

From a 132 kV transmission line, Nepal has now upgraded to a 220 kV to 400 kV transmission line with the capacity to transmit 5000 MW of electricity. This marks a significant transformation in the electricity sector in Nepal under the leadership of Ghising.

With 99 percent of the population now having access to electricity and an increasing reliance on it for cooking and transportation, effective management of supply and demand has become crucial. MD Ghising has made a firm commitment that his agenda will remain unchanged for as long as he serves as MD of NEA, with no room for engaging in any conspiracies regarding his position.

Having successfully ended load shedding in the country eight years ago, MD Ghising is now focused on ensuring the continuous supply of power. During a visit to the Baharabise Substation on November 30, he instructed contractors and officials to adhere to the project timeline and inspected the ongoing construction of a 400 kilovolt (KV) substation in Baharabise Township, Sindhupalchok.

The construction of a 12-phase 400 kV substation project has begun to support the transmission

of electricity from planned hydroelectric projects on the Tamakoshi and Sunkoshi rivers and their tributaries into the national grid, improving the domestic power system. Additionally, the construction of 220-132 kV and 132-11 kV substations at the same site has been completed, with equipment testing finished successfully. All necessary equipment for the 400 kV twelve-bay substation, which utilizes Gas Insulated System (GIS) technology, has been delivered to the site. Civil works for the structures housing the power transformers have been completed and are currently being connected.

Construction of the building for the control room and GIS equipment is in progress, with equipment connection to follow once civil structures are finished. Overall progress on the substation construction is at around 70 percent, with the project expected to be completed by May of the following year. Nepal Electricity Authority Managing Director Kul Man Ghising visited the site on Saturday and encouraged the project management and

construction teams to expedite tasks to meet the planned timeline.

Managing Director Ghising highlighted the significance of the 400 kV Barbise substation in transmitting electricity from hydropower projects in the Balefi and Bhotekoshi river corridor to Dhalkebar through the Baharabise-Khimti 400 kV transmission line.

He stressed the importance of prioritizing the substation's construction and expediting the remaining work to ensure efficient power supply to Kathmandu valley during winter and export to India during the rainy season. Ghising also provided updates on the progress of the Khimti, Barabise, and Lapsipedi 400 kV Substation Project, as well as the Tamakoshi-Kathmandu 220-400 kV transmission line project, which is nearing completion.

Despite challenges faced during the construction of the Khimti-Barabise-Kathmandu transmission line, including land use issues, tree removal, and local opposition, Ghising expressed optimism about its imminent



completion.

Currently, 117 out of the 118 towers along the Khimti-Barabise transmission line have completed foundations, and 115 towers have been erected. Additionally, 36 kilometers of cable have been installed, with the final tower under construction. The Khimti-Barabise section is expected to be operational by January of the following year.

Simultaneously, a 46-kilometer, 400 kV double circuit transmission line from Barabise to Lapsiphedi in Kathmandu is also in progress. Of the 122 planned towers for this line, 118 foundations have been laid, and 117 towers have been constructed, with 42 kilometers of wire already installed. The remaining towers are still under construction.

Moreover, the extension of the Lapsiphedi-Changunarayan 132 kV transmission line is ongoing to facilitate power flow from Khimti-Barabise to Kathmandu Valley, despite facing challenges from local community opposition.

Upon completion of the 400 kV transmission line developed by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), power from



Lapsiphedi will be transmitted to the new Butwal substation in Bhumhi, Nawalparasi (BardghatSusta West), Chame, and Tilocho Lake.

Managing Director Ghising has played a key role in overcoming administrative and local obstacles to advance projects during his regular site visits. The ongoing development at the 400 kV Barabise Substation is a clear demonstration of his efforts.

Ghising Directs To Supply Electricity For Fast Track

The Minister and Secretary of the ministry are allegedly plotting to remove MD Ghising from his position, but he remains focused on visiting various sites. After assessing the electricity supply at the Fast Track project, MD Ghising instructed his colleagues to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the project.

The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) will provide electricity through alternative means for road construction in Bhimphedi Rural Municipality-8, Mandu Maltabensi, and Indrasarowar Rural Municipality-3, Sisneri Kogate areas of Makawanpur as part of the Kathmandu-Tarai-Madhes Fast Track (KTFT) project.

The NEA has already implemented alternative measures to ensure that the Expressway construction is not hindered by power shortages. Household consumers in the area will not face any electricity supply issues.

To prevent delays in the construction of bridges, tunnels, and other structures in the Mandu Maltabensi and Sisneri



ENERGY



Kogate areas of the KTFT project, the NEA will provide electricity through alternative means. Approximately 12 MW of electricity will be needed for the construction work in that region, which is divided into four packages.

As part of the alternative power supply plan, the existing 66 kV line from Kulekhani First Hydropower Station, Dhorsing to Mandu will be converted to operate at 11 kV. Additionally, a 22.5 MVA power transformer currently in Kathmandu will be transported to Dhorsing Substation for installation, ensuring adequate power supply for the fast-track project.

The NEA will ensure that the construction of bridges, tunnels, and other structures in the Mandu Maltabensi and Sisneri Kogate areas of the KTFT is not hindered by a lack of electricity by providing alternative power arrangements. Approximately 12 MW of electricity will be needed for the construction work in that area, which is being carried out in

four packages. To address this, the

66 kV line from Kulekhani First Hydropower Station, Dhorsing to Mandu will be operated at 11 kV. Additionally, a 22.5 MVA power transformer from Kathmandu will be installed at Dhorsing Substation to provide the necessary power supply for the fast-track project. Due to the current

5 MVA power transformer operating at full capacity at Dhorsing Substation, a new high-capacity transformer will be added to accommodate the additional power flow. T

he 22-megawatt Bagmati Khola Small Hydropower Plant, operated by Mandu Hydropower Ltd., suffered extensive damage from floods and landslides in September, disrupting electricity generation and supply to the KTFT section.

The flood in the Bagmati River washed away the switchyard that transmits electricity generated by the project, as well as the power transformers and other equipment installed by the NEA there.

The electricity generated by the project was transmitted to Dhorsing through a 66 kV transmission line and to Malta Substation in Lalitpur through a 33 kV line.

The electricity was supplied to the KTFT road construction through an 11 kV line from Malta Substation. Another 2 MW Khanikhola Hydropower Project operating in Lalitpur was also connected to Malta Substation.

However, after the flood and landslide damaged Khanikhola, Malta Substation was left without a source of power. As a result, the power supply to the Expressway construction area stopped. Currently, reconstruction of both projects is underway.

After the Nepal Army informed that there was a problem in the construction of the Expressway due to a lack of power supply, a high-level team, including NEA Managing Director Kul Man Ghising, conducted an on-site inspection of the Mandu Maltabensi area on Monday.

The team visited the Bagmati Khola Small Hydropower Project and Dhorsing Substation, currently undergoing reconstruction, and discussed various options with officials for immediate electricity supply. The reconstruction of the project is expected to be completed by mid-April. Once operational, electricity will be supplied according to the previous arrangement.

Ghising suggested adding a power transformer to the Dhorsing Substation and charging the Dhorsing-Mandu line to 11 kV to supply

electricity to the fast-track road construction area as suitable interim options.

Ghising emphasized the importance of ensuring that the national pride project is not impacted by the electricity shortage. He urged for alternative supply arrangements until electricity production resumes from the flood-damaged hydropower projects, emphasizing the need for immediate action.



MD Kul Man Ghising Was Asked For Clarification For The Third Time In Five Months, The Ministry Said, ‘Why Not Dismiss You?’

Nepal Electricity Authority’s Managing Director, Kul Man Ghising, was asked to provide clarification on Monday (January 6). Acting on the instructions of Minister of Energy, Water Resources

to assess your performance, why not terminate your appointment based on the same clause?”

If a satisfactory response is not received within seven days of receiving this letter, you will be notified that further actions will be taken against you as per the Ministry’s decision dated 2025/01/06.

This marks the third time Minister Khadka has sought clarification from MD Ghising within five months of the government’s formation under KP Sharma Oli’s leadership. Previous requests for clarification were made on October 22 and October 13.

Minister Khadka has alleged that MD Ghising has not been cooperative

NEA’s Deputy Managing Director, Manoj Silwal, instructed the Palung and Hetauda distribution center chiefs to promptly initiate local restoration work on the line.

Despite facing challenges and conspiracies over the last six months, MD Ghising remains committed to inspecting various areas to maintain a reliable power supply for households. By prioritizing consumer needs above his own interests, Ghising ensures customer satisfaction, making his dedication a valuable asset.

and Irrigation Deepak Khadka, Secretary Suresh Acharya asked Ghising to address nine specific points.

Ghising was questioned about why he should not be removed from his position and was given a deadline of seven days to provide a satisfactory response.

The letter inquired, “Considering the circumstances that have made it challenging

in the government’s efforts to recover arrears from dedicated and trunk lines.

MD Ghising disagreed with the decision of the inquiry committee established by the Minister on January 4. His dissenting opinion expressed during the board meeting was cited as the reason for his dismissal.

IME Group Is Dedicated To Investing In The Prosperity And Development Of Nepal



BY: CHANDRA PRASAD DHAKAL

IME Group is focused on constructing hotels and resorts with cable cars in all seven provinces to enhance tourism infrastructure, promote tourism, and contribute to the economic growth of the country.

Currently, IME Group has initiated projects such as the Moulakali cable car, hotels, and resorts in Chandragiri, Kathmandu, and Gandakot, East Nawalparasi. The Butbal cable car in Rupandehi is operational, with plans for additional infrastructures including a five-star hotel. Construction of a cable car in Pathibhara, Taplejung, is also underway.

The development in Chandragiri has created 500 new direct jobs and has positively impacted the local economy, attracting around 3,000 visitors daily. Local businesses have flourished, leading to improved living standards for residents. Chandragiri has emerged as a popular destination for both domestic and international tourists, including high-profile visitors to Nepal.

The economic growth in Chandragiri has extended to Butwal and Gaidakot, providing employment opportunities and boosting economic activities in these areas. The region has become a vibrant hub for tourism, catering to visitors of all ages. IME Group's initiatives have not only transformed Chandragiri but have also contributed to the overall development and prosperity of Nepal.

It has emerged as a popular destination for local, Indian, and international tourists. Our goal is to develop extensive tourism infrastructure, including cable cars, hotels, and resorts, based on the successful Chandragiri model in all seven provinces.

Our objective is to encourage tourists to extend their stay in Nepal by at least 7 days. Today, we are laying the foundation stone for the Jalpadevi cable car at the meeting point of the Far West, Lumbini, and Karnali provinces in Karnali Chisapani. We believe that this project will not only boost economic, social, and cultural growth but also serve as a significant

step towards promoting tourism, economic progress, and prosperity in the entire region.

Dear Minister, Nepal currently lacks sufficient tourism infrastructure. The average spending and duration of stay for foreign tourists in Nepal are quite low and decreasing. Recent data shows that foreign tourists spend less than \$50 per day and stay for an average of 12 days in Nepal.

To attract more tourists, increase their length of stay, and boost their spending, we need to develop more large-scale infrastructure. Tourists visit Nepal to experience the unique culture, art, natural beauty, and extraordinary landscapes here. Hence, I recommend the development of tourist infrastructure. The government should focus on fostering partnerships with the private sector to expedite the country's progress. The natural resources bestowed upon us offer abundant opportunities in tourism, nature, and the environment. By combining our vision, determination, technology, and capital, we can achieve remarkable feats.

The private sector has demonstrated its ability to drive the country's development and transformation. With a conducive environment, the private sector can make substantial investments, contributing to development, employment, and economic growth. In the current federal structure, every province and local government should strive to attract investments by creating a competitive environment. They should implement policies that support potential projects and encourage more investments in their regions. This approach will lead to the economic development and prosperity we aspire to achieve. Local governments must establish long-term structures and implement policy reforms to create an investment-friendly climate.

Only then can domestic and foreign investment be attracted. Minister, let's discuss the potential area of our country that has the ability to transform the country - tourism. By investing in tourism infrastructure, we can attract

Tourists and increase their length of stay, leading to more

foreign currency earnings, job creation, increased revenue, and overall economic development and prosperity.

Tourism has the potential to create more jobs and generate more revenue than other service sectors. The project inaugurated today will undoubtedly contribute to improving the standard of living for the people, reducing poverty, and bringing about the economic development and prosperity we all desire. If the government can achieve all these benefits through small policy adjustments and support, why not take action? By acting as a partner to the private sector, the government can reap the dividends of development without direct investment. Each project undertaken by the private sector provides services, facilities, and income that ultimately benefit the state.

The state's status will be enhanced through the improvement of physical infrastructure and services provided by the private sector, which is crucial for the state's development. Encouraging private investment allows the private sector to grow and thrive, boosting their value, dignity, and morale, ultimately leading to



Development, economic prosperity, and progress. As a leader in the private sector nationwide, I have a request and suggestion for the federal, state, and local governments. Now, I would like to address the inauguration of the Jalpadevi Kevalkar project today.

This province, although slightly lagging behind in modern development and economic growth compared to other provinces, is incredibly beautiful and unique. Destinations like Ramaroshan, Badimalika, Khaptad, Shuklaphant, and the Chisapani Bridge in this province are stunning in their own right.

I am confident that the construction of the cable car and resort in Karnali Chisapani, the gateway to Sudurpashchim Province, will boost religious, cultural, and recreational tourism.

The sacred Karnali River holds great potential for water tourism development, including rafting, paragliding, and trekking in the surrounding mountains, as well as showcasing traditional Tharu culture through jungle safaris in

Bardia National Park. This area has the opportunity for significant physical, economic, and social development.

I have observed the increasing demand for tourism infrastructure, such as the foundation stone laid today. Over the past few years, Nepal and its hill stations have become popular destinations for Indian tourists. Whether they are holidaymakers, weekend visitors, vacationers, or attendees of meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions, or destination weddings, many Indian tourists now prefer various destinations in Nepal.

However, the lack of air connectivity and other essential physical infrastructure has hindered the influx of these tourists to Nepal. With this cable car and resort located just a two-hour drive from the Indian border and at the end of

the East-West highway, we have the potential to attract a significant number of tourists. By involving local participation in the development of this infrastructure, we are ensuring that it becomes a shared asset for the people in this area. This project has the potential to bring about a significant boost in tourism not only in this district but also

in the Far West Province and Nepal as a whole.

Therefore, we have asked Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa to serve as the local coordinator for this project. Participation in the project is also open to the company. I believe there is no need to elaborate on the history and significance of the Chisapani region. Chisapani itself is a treasure, and we anticipate that the cable car project will enhance its appeal. We are confident that the Karnali riverbank, known for dolphins and rafting, will become a hub of historical, cultural, and religious tourism.

I extend my gratitude to the Honorable Minister for gracing today's event as the chief guest and inaugurating the project. I also thank all the attendees, including special guests and participants, for their presence.

Dhakal, the President of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry and IME Group, delivered the following statement at the foundation laying ceremony of the cable car project in Chisapani, Kailali district of Sudur Pachim Province.

JALPADEVI CABLE CAR

IME Group's Latest Project

The foundation stone for the Jalpadevi Cable Car in Sudur Paschim Province was laid by Foreign Minister Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba. Chandra Prasad Dhakal, President of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and Chairman of IME Group, is in the final stages of constructing cable cars in all provinces

By A CORRESPONDENT

People often say, 'You work in the fastest-moving industry in the world.' I don't perceive it that way. I believe I work in one of the slowest. It feels like it takes forever to accomplish anything." - Steve Jobs

Despite the perception of rapid growth in the IME group under Dhakal's leadership, he views the pace as steady and normal.

Just days before the 18th anniversary celebration of Global IME Bank, Dhakal was in Kailali, Sudur Paschim Province, laying the foundation for the fifth cable car project.

From banking to hospitality, recreation, hydropower, and industries, the IME Group led by Dhakal has made significant progress and contributions.

Foreign Minister Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba laid the foundation stone for the Jalpadevi Cable Car project, which will be constructed in Chisapani, Kailali, with investment from the IME Group.

The foundation stone for the Jalpadevi Cable Car project in Karnali Chisapani, Kailali district, was laid on Saturday by Foreign Minister Dr. Rana Deuba in a special ceremony in Lamki Chuhan municipality ward no. 3.

During the foundation program, Foreign Minister Dr. Deuba highlighted the importance of the Jalpadevi Cable Car project in driving economic, social, and cultural development in the entire Far West Province.

The Foreign Minister highlighted the rich tourism, culture, tradition, and biodiversity of the Far West region. He emphasized the cultural unity and harmony among its citizens, who are enthusiastic about development. The proposed cable car project, along with hotels, in the Far West Province is seen as a key milestone for the region's prosperity. The Minister urged citizens to support the project for timely completion and encouraged further

investment in tourism and infrastructure. He welcomed the involvement of IME Group in the project, citing their expertise in building cable cars across Nepal. Forest and

Environment Minister Ain Bahadur Shahi emphasized the project's importance for the development of the Far Western Province.

He mentioned the lack of physical development infrastructure in western Nepal and encouraged the private sector to invest more in such projects. He specifically highlighted the limited infrastructure in the Far West, Karnali, and Lumbini provinces, emphasizing the need for modern development initiatives in those areas. He welcomed investments in infrastructure projects and suggested using native wood for development purposes.



Chief Minister Kamal Bahadur Shah of Sudurpaschim Province expressed support for the construction of a cable car and resort in Karnali Chisapani, stating that it would boost tourism in the region.

He assured potential investors of the provincial government's assistance and encouraged them to attract more investments. Chandra Prasad Dhakal, President of Jalpadevi Cable Car Pvt. Ltd., emphasized the importance of tourism in transforming Nepal's economy, culture, and society. He stressed that investing in tourism infrastructure could increase tourist numbers, extend their stays, generate more revenue, create jobs, and contribute to economic growth and prosperity.

President of Jalpadevi Cable Car Pvt. Ltd., Chandra Prasad Dhakal, said that it is possible to transform the economic, cultural, and social landscape of Nepal through tourism. He stated, "If we invest in tourism infrastructure, we can attract tourists as per our target.

This will lead to longer stays by tourists,

increased foreign currency earnings, job creation, higher revenue generation, and the economic growth and prosperity we aspire to achieve."

Dhakal emphasized that tourism creates more jobs compared to other service sectors and generates higher revenue. He also highlighted that the foundation stone laying of Jalpadevi Kevalkar construction has injected new enthusiasm into his goal of developing the Kevalkar tourism circuit.

Furthermore, Chairman Dhakal noted that the cooperation of local communities, political parties, and Nepal government agencies in the foundation laying and construction process has set a positive example for other Kevalkar construction projects.

He stated that tourism creates more employment opportunities compared to other service sectors and also generates higher revenue. President Dhakal expressed that the laying of the foundation stone for the Jalpadevi Kevalkar construction project has reinvigorated his vision of developing the Kevalkar tourism circuit.

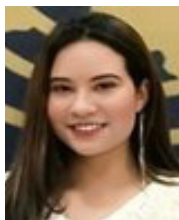
Chairman Dhakal also highlighted the exemplary cooperation of local communities, political parties, and Nepal government agencies during the foundation laying and construction process, setting a precedent for other Kevalkar construction projects.

The 3.1 km long cable car project, spanning from Chisapani in Lamki Chuhan Municipality Ward No. 3 to Rajkanda in Mohanyal Rural Municipality Ward No. 7, will feature 34 gondolas.

At the base station of the cable car, a hotel, casino, banquet hall, and other facilities will be constructed with a total investment of five billion rupees. The top station will include resorts, temples, skywalks, walking trails, restaurants, children's parks, and other tourist and entertainment amenities.

By initiating the construction, Dhakal has introduced a significant project in Sudur Paschim Province. The cable car and amenities constructed in Kailali will provide access to the far west for tourists from Nepal and India.

Moving Beyond The 16 Days Of Activism: Continuing The Battle Against Gender-Based Violence



BY: SUVA BC

Gender-based violence remains a pervasive and deeply entrenched challenge in Nepal, impacting countless lives and hindering progress towards equality and justice. While the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence has brought attention to this critical issue, its limited duration risks relegating GBV to a temporary concern rather than a sustained priority. To achieve lasting change, efforts must extend beyond this time-frame and address the systemic barriers that perpetuate violence and inequality.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nepal is a reflection of entrenched patriarchal norms, economic disparities, and inadequate institutional frameworks. These factors are interconnected, creating a structural barrier that limits the participation of women and girls in society. The fight against GBV is essential for achieving gender equality, a core principle in Nepal's constitution and aligned with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, simply acknowledging these connections is not enough; concrete actions are needed to address the social and economic vulnerabilities that fuel GBV.

While initiatives like the 16 Days of Activism have raised awareness about GBV in Nepal, they often fail to tackle its root causes. The challenge now is how to ensure that the momentum generated during these 16 days is sustained throughout the rest of the year and beyond.

This requires a shift towards prevention, systemic changes, and lasting solutions. Economic marginalization makes women more vulnerable to violence, highlighting the need for targeted interventions that promote education, skills development, and access to financial resources. Inadequate legal protections and weak enforcement mechanisms do not deter perpetrators and often leave survivors without recourse. Strengthening the justice system and ensuring accountability are crucial for fostering a sense of security and fairness.

Efforts to combat GBV should be integrated into broader social and economic development plans. Community-led initiatives in Nepal have shown success in creating environments where harmful practices are challenged, and survivors receive assistance. These programs often leverage local traditions and values to promote gender equality and mutual respect. Women's cooperatives and self-help groups, for example, play a key role in empowering women economically and raising awareness about GBV.

Innovative approaches can also play a transformative role in the

fight against GBV. Technological advancements offer opportunities to connect survivors with support services, establish anonymous reporting channels, and distribute educational materials to remote areas. In Nepal's diverse and geographically challenging landscape, mobile platforms can bridge access barriers, ensuring that resources reach those most in need. Additionally, involving men and boys as allies is crucial. Programs that challenge traditional ideas of masculinity and promote gender-equitable attitudes can help change cultural norms and reduce violence.

The contributions of organizations and civil society in Nepal are crucial. They often serve as the first point of contact for survivors, providing essential services like counseling, legal aid, and shelter. However, their efforts need consistent funding and strategic partnerships with government agencies. Comprehensive models that integrate healthcare, education, and economic empowerment can address both the immediate needs of survivors and the root causes of GBV. Public-private collaborations can enhance these efforts by leveraging resources and expertise to expand effective programs.

The government of Nepal plays a key role in this work, going beyond policy-making to actively promote a violence-free society. This includes investing in education with gender-sensitive curricula, ensuring healthcare services support survivors, and creating economic opportunities to reduce vulnerabilities. The government must also lead by example, using its platforms to challenge discrimination and promote equality.

Ending GBV requires a sustained, collective commitment based on the belief that everyone has the right to live free from violence and fear. By integrating the fight against GBV into Nepal's overall development framework and securing unwavering support from all sectors of society, temporary advocacy can lead to lasting change. Achieving a just and equitable Nepal requires our unwavering dedication to this cause.

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TOURISTS ARRIVAL Surpass A Million

Tourist arrivals in Nepal surpassed the one million mark, despite the temporary shutdown of Tribhuvan International Airport for 10 hours daily in the first week of November for emergency expansion work. This led to a sudden increase in airfare prices, making Nepal one of the more expensive destinations. However, this did not deter tourists from booking trips to Nepal, as the country saw a good number of visitors in November and December. In 2024, Nepal received over 1.1 million tourists, marking a positive turnaround for the tourism sector after being heavily impacted by COVID-19. With the announcement of reduced shutdown hours at TIA from February, there is expected to be an increase in international flights and tourist numbers.

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the combined efforts of all involved, we were able to maintain over a million tourist arrivals for the second consecutive year. Considering the current rate of room availability in Nepal, there is a need to increase the number of tourists to 1.5 million in the coming years," stated Binayak Shaha, President of Hotel Association Nepal.

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) reported that Nepal received 1,147,567 foreign tourists in 2024, with 92,034 international tourists visiting in December. In 2023, a total of 1,014,882 foreign tourists visited Nepal.

CEO of NTB, Deepak Raj Joshi, attributed the significant growth in international visitor arrivals to the collaborative efforts and partnership spirit that has been nurtured from the beginning. Despite the pandemic being the most significant crisis in the industry's history, the tourism sector has achieved a 96% recovery of pre-pandemic visitor levels.

Joshi emphasized that working closely with the travel trade sector and media is crucial for elevating Nepal's tourism to

new heights.

He noted that Nepal's reputation as one of the most preferred tourist destinations has been further solidified by the robust growth in visitor arrivals.

NTB Director Mani Raj Lamichhane expressed optimism about the increase in tourist arrivals in 2024, highlighting that the arrivals in 2024 have been the highest since the coronavirus outbreak.

He mentioned that an average of 3,144 tourists were visiting Nepal daily, marking a significant increase in tourist arrivals since the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism sector experienced a near standstill from 2020 to 2022 due to the pandemic but has been steadily recovering since then.

Lamichhane attributed this growth to the continuous efforts of the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and the private sector in promoting various events such as the Nepal Premier League (NPL), World Buddhist Conference, International Balloon Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and

national and international fairs and exhibitions.

Charter flights brought over 800 people to Kathmandu and Bhairahawa for the Buddhist Conference. Despite challenges like natural disasters, accidents, travel disruptions, and increased airfares, tourist arrivals showed positive growth. He mentioned that the tourism sector is on track for a 96%

recovery, aligning with the global recovery rate of 97%. The COVID-19-impacted tourism industry is gaining momentum in the fiscal year 2022/23.

In the last fiscal year 2023/24, Nepal welcomed 1.01 million tourists, a significant increase from the 614,000 visitors in 2022/23. The country had received 1.197 million foreign tourists in the fiscal year 2019/20, but this number dropped to 230,000 in 2020/21 and further declined to 150,700 in 2021/22 due to the pandemic.

March saw the highest tourist arrival with 128,167 visitors entering Nepal in 2024. In comparison, October had 124,393 tourists. The numbers for other months were as follows: January - 79,100, February - 97,426, April - 111,376, May - 90,211, June - 76,736, July - 64,599, August - 72,719, September - 96,305, and November - 114,501. The Nepal Tourism Board reported a 43.6% increase in January, 33% in February, 28.9% in March, 12.8% in April, 16.1% in May, and 6% in June compared to 2023.

Foreign visitors also rose by 11.9% in July, 8.3% in August, 5.8% in September, 6% in October, and 5.4% in November 2024. However, December 2024 saw a 4.7% decrease in tourist arrivals compared to December 2023, with 96,568 visitors.

The highest number of tourists arrived in Nepal from India in 2024, with 317,772 visitors. This was followed by 111,216 tourists from the United States of America (USA) and 101,879 tourists from China, according to the NTB. Additionally, 57,554 tourists from the United Kingdom, 48,848 tourists from Bangladesh, 43,980 visitors from Australia, and 30,745 tourists from Thailand visited Nepal. In 2024, Nepal also welcomed 30,226 visitors from Sri Lanka, 29,801



from Germany, and 27,071 from South Korea.

Overall, tourist arrivals from SAARC countries increased by 5.9% compared to the previous year, totaling 417,845 visitors. Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka saw significant growth rates of 33.9%, 42%, and 38.3%, respectively. However, arrivals from India experienced a slight decline of 0.7% compared to 2023. European arrivals also saw growth, with visitors from the Unit-

ed Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands increasing by 8.9%, 10.5%, 8.5%, 11.8%, 12.7%, and 6.3%, respectively.

In 2024, the total number of European arrivals in Nepal reached 206,841, showing a regional growth of 10.4 percent. The number of US visitors to Nepal in 2024 was 111,216, marking a 10.8 percent increase from 2023. Canadian visitors to Nepal in 2024 totaled 16,074, reflecting a 9.4 percent increase from the previous year. Australia and New Zealand also saw significant growth in arrivals, with Australia welcoming 43,980 visitors (a 13.4 percent increase) and New Zealand receiving 4,231 visitors (an 18.4 percent increase).

The hotel revenue for the review period reached a record Rs1.05 billion, up by 9.44 percent. The hotel attributed this growth to the strong tourist arrivals in the September-November period, particularly from India and China, indicating a recovery to pre-Covid levels.

Nepal saw over 1 million tourists visit the country in 2024, driven by the reopening of the China border and a surge in arrivals from India. This marked the second time in four years that Nepal surpassed the million-tourist mark, highlighting the country's appeal as a tourist destination.



BINAYAK SHAHA



The increase in tourist arrivals has brought optimism to the KP Oli-led government, especially as other economic indicators are weak and the country is experiencing significant emigration due to the lack of job opportunities. In 2018, the number of foreign tourists exceeded one million for the first time, reaching 1.17 million.

This figure slightly increased to 1.19 million in 2019, thanks to improved flight connections with various Chinese cities. The Tourism Department reports that Nepal now boasts more than two dozen five-star hotels, with several more in de

velopment. Notably, Hotel Mechi Crown in Jhapa has been designated as the country's first five-star deluxe property. While revenue has increased for five-star hotels, other establishments have not seen the same level of growth. With the completion of several

five-star hotels and an increase in hotel room availability, Nepal aims to attract at least 1.5 million tourists. The recent expansion of Tribhuvan International Airport by 33 percent, along with the upcoming operation of Gautama Buddha International Airport and Pokhara International Airport, presents significant opportunities for Nepal to welcome more tourists.

Nepal welcomed over 1 million tourists between January and December of 2024, following China's border reopening and record arrivals from India.

According to the Nepal Tourism Board, the country's tourism promotional body, the arrival numbers crossed the million mark for the second time in four years. This is the fourth instance that Nepal has



received over a million tourists.

The rise in tourist arrivals has cheered the KP Oli-led administration at a time when other economic indicators are poor, and the country is witnessing a massive out-migration due to the lack of decent job opportunities at home.

Arrivals crossed the coveted one-million mark for the first time in 2018, with 1.17 million foreign tourists streaming into the country. In 2019, the number rose

slightly to 1.19 million following better flight connectivity with several Chinese cities.

According to the Tourism Department, the country now has over two dozen five-star properties. Nearly half a dozen five-star properties are in the pipeline.

A large number of hotels have opened

outside the Kathmandu Valley in recent years. Hotel Mechi Crown in Jhapa has been granted five-star deluxe status, the country's first deluxe property.

Insiders say that while revenue has surged for five-star properties, businesses at other establishments have not grown as expected.

At a time when hotel room availability continues to increase with half a dozen five-star hotels in the final stage of completion, Nepal needs to increase the number of tourists to at least 1.5 million.

Following the enhancement of capacity at TIA by 33 percent and the full operation of Gautama Buddha International Airport and Pokhara International Airport, Nepal has huge possibilities to see tourist arrivals.

Is Arabian Tourist Increasing In Nepal?



BY: JUDDHA BAHADUR GURUNG

Nepal is popularly known as the country of Mt. Everest and the birthplace of Lord Buddha. Every year, a large number of visitors flow into Nepal from around the world. On June 3, 1950, French mountaineer Maurice Herzog and his team successfully scaled the 8,000-meter Mt. Annapurna I, marking a historic event for mountaineers.

This achievement greatly inspired other mountaineers worldwide to attempt climbing the remaining 8,000-meter mountains in Nepal. Many mountaineers made attempts, and some successfully completed their ascents. Following this event, a series of attempts on the 8,000-meter mountains (10) of Nepal were made and successfully scaled by mountaineers in the 1950s. These events significantly promoted Nepal's mountaineering tourism and, on the other hand, fostered other forms of tourism. Over the last seven decades, Nepal's continuous efforts in tourism development have established it as a destination for nature, culture, and adventure tourism worldwide.

On the other hand, around the globe, the tourism business is dramatically increasing with modern technology and services. Simultaneously, Nepal is increasing such facilities or services, mainly transportation, accommodation, travel trade, dissemination of information, using IT technology, and other services for tourists in Nepal. These services are increasing throughout the country through government plans and programs. In addition, the private sector has been aggressively promoting ecotourism in Nepal. So far, their efforts are continuous with the collaboration of government plans.

Nepal is a popular destination for mountaineering and adventure tourism. It is gradually evolving into other forms of tourism, mainly nature-based recreational tourism such as ecotourism, trekking, hiking, sightseeing, mountain biking, bird watching, wildlife safaris, and cultural tourism. European and American tourists are particularly interested in visiting Nepal for adventure tourism, especially mountaineering and ecotourism, as well as sightseeing, recreation, leisure, and more. Additionally, Nepal is a major pilgrimage destination. Many Hindu and Buddhist followers also visit Nepal as pilgrimage tourists. Throughout its long history, Nepal has been a significant destination for Hindu followers, especially from India. Every year, thousands of Indian tourists visit places like Pashupatinath, Muktinath, Janaki Temple, Chatara, Devghat, Tribeni Ghat, and many other Hindu shrines on various occasions. In addition to Hindu followers, there is a large number of visitors from Eastern Asian countries, such as Japan, Thailand, China, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and others, who follow Buddhism and visit Nepal for pilgrimage purposes.

They have been visiting Nepal to see the birthplace of Buddha, which is one of the dreams or goals of their life. In comparison, the number of Christian pilgrimage tourists is also low,

but they come to Nepal to work in service sectors such as education, health, and other social services. However, there is a very small Muslim community in Nepal, and almost no Muslim pilgrimage tourist destinations, with very few visitors compared to other regions of the world.

The Muslim community is collectively known as the Arab League in the world. In other words, the Arab world is composed of 22 countries, with 12 in Asia and 10 in East Africa in the Arab League. The population in the Arab League is approximately 456 million according to the World Bank report 2021. Arab League countries have strong economic activities that are higher than other countries in the world. Exporting petroleum products and natural gas is the main pillar for their economic development.

The International Monetary Fund report for 2022 showed that Arab League member countries have a strong economy, with a GDP per capita higher than the global average. The average GDP per capita is \$7,722.73 per year, which is more than half (approximately 58%) of the world average GDP per capita in 2022. Arab countries have significant potential for outbound tourism. Nepal is a popular tourist destination for many Arab countries, but the number of Arab tourists visiting Nepal is lower compared to countries like the USA, UK, Canada, Japan, France, Australia, and others. Additionally, Gulf countries in the Arab world have higher incomes compared to other Arab countries. However, the number of visitors to Nepal from these countries is lower than expected. When comparing their populations, economies, and visitors to Nepal, there are noticeable disparities.

This article focuses on a glimpse of tourism in Gulf countries. In the Gulf, only six countries are included: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These Gulf countries have a higher per capita income than the global average economy and a higher human development index as well. The population is approximately 6 million. However, their travel trend to Nepal is very poor, with less than 0.01% visiting. This trend is also reflected in other countries in the Arab League.

Table: Population, Economy, and Visitors in Gulf Countries and Their Neighbors

What are the major obstacles that reduce the flow of Arabian visitors to Nepal despite their good financial status?

Authorities in the Gulf view modernity as achievements in economy, technology, and education, while socio-political involvement is seen as problematic. In detail, the position of women from the eight Gulf States – Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emir-

ARTICLE

ates – lags far behind other countries that are economically on par with them. So far, only six women from these countries have climbed Everest from the Nepal side despite the wealth they have from oil and natural gas.

According to Sangam Prasain, Business Editor of the Kathmandu Post Daily, only six women from Arabian countries, mainly 2 from Iran, 2 from Saudi Arabia, one from Oman, and one from Bahrain, have climbed Everest from the Nepal side in the last two decades.

Bahraini Prince Mohammed successfully scaled Mt. Everest on May 11, 2021. Now, Qatari woman Sheikh Asma Al Thani is planning to climb Mt. Everest next season, as announced in a notice. According to the notice, the climbing plan is set for September 20, 2023. These mountaineering events should

Table : Gulf countries and its neighbors population, economic and visitors in Nepal.

SN	Gulf country	*visitor in 2019	*Visitor in 2022	Population in 2023	Capita in US \$	Visitor % in Nepal	Remarks
1	Bahrain	461	349	1,485,509	30,152	0.03	High income
2	Kuwait	418	559	4,310,108	43,233	0.009	High income
3	Oman	489	317	4,644,384	25,056	0.01	High income
4	Qatar	279	205	2,716,391	88,046	0.01	Highest income
5	Saudi Arab	1298	1296	36,947,025	30,436	0.004	high income
6	United Arab Emirate	869	585	9,516,871	53,758	0.009	High income
	Total visitor	3814	3311	5,96,20,288	45113.5		Average GDP Per capita

Source : * NTB 2022 and Wikipedia 2023.

inspire Muslim women to engage in mountaineering tourism within their community. Such events will raise awareness about Nepalese tourism and help promote Nepalese tourism in the Arabian world.

While some Nepalese travel agencies promote mountaineering tourism, their main market focus is not on Arabian countries. It seems they mainly serve as ground handling agencies for foreign tour operators. There is a need for tour operating agencies from the Arab world to establish a presence in Nepal.

Mani Ram Lamichhane, Director of the Nepal Tourism Board, stated that Arabian tourists are high-quality and luxury travelers. Nepal currently lacks the capacity to meet the needs and expectations of Arabian tourists. They prefer to travel to European and American cities, spending more money on luxurious travel experiences and enjoying modern developments and luxurious lifestyles. These types of products and services are not readily available in Nepal, which is why there is a lack of attraction for Arabian tourists. In order to attract more Arabian tourists, Nepal needs to develop tourism products specifically tailored to their preferences. Despite the fact that there are more flights from Arabian countries to Nepal compared to Eastern Asian countries, only a few Arabian tourists, especially foreigners working in Arabian countries, choose Nepal as their holiday destination. For example, there are 28 flights per week from Doha to Kathmandu operated by Qatar Airways, as well as multiple flights per week by Turkish Airlines, Fly Dubai, Air Arabia, Kuwait Airways, Jazeera Airlines, Salam Air, Emirates, Nepal Airlines, Himalaya Airlines, Air Arabia

Abu Dhabi, Etihad Airways, and many more airlines from Arabian countries. Despite the high number of flights originating from Arabian countries, there is a low number of Arabian tourists arriving in Nepal on these flights. On a daily basis, Tribhuvan International Airport receives a minimum of 16 flights from Arabian countries, but the number of tourists arriving in Nepal from these flights is significantly low. The question remains: why are Arabian tourists not choosing Nepal as a travel destination despite the availability of flights and sufficient infrastructure?

Vice President of Nepal Tourism Board Chandra Prasad Rijal said the Nepal Tourism Board has no plan or program to attract Arabian tourists. Gradually, Arabian tourists are being observed in the Nepalese tourism market.

Senior journalist Khim Ghale, Editor for Highlight Tourism, said Arabian tourists are less common in the Nepalese tourism market. There may be many reasons behind this, and a detailed study is needed to explore the causes of this lack of interest and to improve Arabian tourism in Nepal.

During informal interactions with tourism experts and operators, some major points were identified. These include language and cultural barriers, a lack of tourism products in Nepal, poor understanding of the Arabian world, diverse geography and climate, and a poor tourism marketing strategy for the Arabian world.

In contrast to other tourism experts, Mr. Laxman Gautam, Research Division Chief at the Nepal Tourism Board, has a different understanding. He stated that Arabian tourists pay close attention to travel safety from both manual and natural hazards. Flight and road accidents in Nepal might be a cause of their lack of interest in Nepalese tourism. Additionally, food hygiene is important to them, and they prefer to eat traditional halal food, which is not commonly available in the Nepalese market, leading to their disinterest in visiting Nepal.

Gautam also points out that thousands of Nepalese citizens are working in the Gulf, including Arabian League countries, which has created psychological barriers for them to visit Nepal. Nepalese are a working-class community, and it may not be their preferred travel destination. Nepal is seen as the hometown of workers, and they may develop a negative attitude towards visiting. They may think that everyone in Nepal is like the workers in Arabian countries, so why should they visit a poor country like Nepal?

Tourism expert (IOF/Pokhara) Prof. Shreekantha Khatibada has a different experience than others. He mentioned that Arabian culture is more closed off compared to others, and they often travel with family members, including women and children. Male travelers prefer casinos, while female travelers prefer shopping, which are tourism products available in countries like Malaysia and Thailand. Therefore, every year, more than a million Arabians visit these countries. Saudi Arabia alone sends over 1 million visitors to Thailand, followed by visitors from UAE, Oman, and Kuwait. Additionally, their food culture is also similar. Religion and culture play a vital role in tourism. Besides, Nepal lacks Muslim culture and historical

monuments to attract Arabian tourists.

Some tourism experts have said that language and cultural barriers might be one of the causes that distract Arabian tourists from visiting Nepal. Based on informal interactions and information received, many travel agency operators and tourism experts have mentioned that food hygiene and cultural food, mainly halal food, are their concerns. Language may not be a barrier because the education level of the Arabian community is higher than in other countries. However, food and other daily customs are unfamiliar to them, which could be a major constraint for Arabian visitors in Nepal. Therefore, we concluded that language and cultural practices are major barriers for Arabian tourists in Nepal. The number of Arabian language speakers in Nepal is very low, and they are unfamiliar with the culture and food habits. Additionally, their culture, especially the use of burkas (face cover shields) by women, is not conducive to trekking tourism. The Muslim society strictly follows traditional norms and values, with high moral and social punishments for non-compliance.

In terms of tourism products or destinations, Nepal is a mountainous country famous for adventure tourism, especially mountaineering. However, the Arabian community has less knowledge and interest in adventure tourism, which may be a reason for Arabian tourists to be deterred from visiting Nepal as a tourist destination. Tour operators have mentioned that they have difficulty convincing them about Nepal's tourism products. From what I know, Arabian tourists prefer to travel to highly developed countries like those in Europe and America.

Diverse geography and climate: Arabian countries are mostly desert, with a plain landscape of sand and dunes. They experience high temperatures, low rainfall, and are surrounded by seas, shaping their daily lifestyle. In comparison, Nepal has diverse geography, ranging from lowlands to the highest peaks in the world, and experiences rainy to cold seasons. Nepal is a mountainous country, with over 83% of its landscape covered by mountains, including the Chure range, Mahabharat, and the lesser to higher Himalayas. The climatic and geographical diversity in Nepal has led to biodiversity and cultural diversity. The climate influences people's lifestyles, such as their clothing and food habits. Drinking Tibetan tea is a popular cultural practice in the Himalayan region, as it helps prevent dehydration in the high altitudes. In contrast, in the plains, this type of dress and tea have no significance.

Weak tourism marketing to attract Arabian tourists: The Arab

world is famous for its oil-producing countries. The Arabian community is smaller in number compared to other communities, but they hold a high position among the world's wealthier communities. Nepalese travel agents lack knowledge and skills, are not focused on marketing, and have a weak understanding of Arabian culture and economy. There may be many other reasons why Nepalese travel agencies have a weak marketing strategy for Arabian countries. It is the right time

to promote Nepalese tourism products to Arabian countries through appropriate business strategies.

Potential tourism activities in Nepal: Tourism activities focused on Arabian communities are lacking in Nepal. Some potential tourism activities include ecotourism, such as wildlife safaris in national parks, wildlife watching, bird watching, paragliding, bungee jumping, rafting, rock climbing, honey hunting, sightseeing in mountain regions, cultural tours, homestays, heli-tours in high mountains, and many more.

These are other potential tourism activities in Nepal for Arabian tourists.

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation's records in 2021 showed that the number of Arabian tourists visiting Nepal is not significant. The Nepal Tourism Board is responsible for promoting international tourism marketing in Nepal. However, there have been no specific programs for promoting tourism to Arabian tourists. In recent years, the number of Arabian tourists visiting Nepal has been low, and promoting mountaineering can help to promote other forms of tourism in Nepal.

The Arab world is one of the potential markets for Nepalese tourism promotion. Their economy's growth size and the huge number of outbound citizens in the country have proven that there is a huge tourism market. Based on Arabian culture and their interests, Nepal has to develop tourist destinations and marketing strategies to achieve the tourist numbers in the tourism decades declared by the government of Nepal.

Finally, joint cooperation of private and public partnerships is essential for the promotion of ecotourism in Nepal. First of all, we have to clear all obstacles mentioned above and develop an appropriate marketing strategy. Mountaineering will be an appropriate entry point in this region, which has already started. The only way to improve Arabian tourism in Nepal is to win the Arabian community's trust that Nepal is a safe, appropriate, and attractive diverse destination for ecotourism. Then, Arabian community ecotourism will flourish in Nepal.

Gurung is a member of the International Ecotourism Society Eurasian Chapter, Turkey



आगो, हिटर वा गिजर प्रयोगमा होसियारी अपनाऔं

- आगो वा हिटर नजिकबाट नतापौं,
- कागज, कपडा जस्ता छिटो जल्ने खालका सामग्री आगो वा हिटरको नजिकै नराखौं,
- कोठामा आगो वा हिटर बाल्दा हावा ओहोरदोहोर हुने व्यवस्था मिलाऔं,
- हिटरलाई समय समयमा बन्द गर्ने गरौं,
- आगो वा हिटर बन्द गरेर मात्र सुतौं,
- आगो, हिटर र बिजुलीको काम सकिने बित्तिकै बन्द गरौं,
- बाथरूममा गिजरको प्रयोग गर्दा भेन्टिलेसन खुला राखौं,
- गिजर खोलेर लामो समयसम्म बाथरूममा नबसौं ।



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*शर्मा राना, हुबेला



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