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Wave of diplomatic visits tests new government

By Our Analyst

Diplomatic visits have picked up pace lately, making the new government quite busy. Meetings are lining up as every major power seems keen to understand the priorities of the new leadership. Since Prime Minister Balendra Shah took office on March 27, the capital has hosted a steady stream of officials from the United States and China. India is now preparing its own high-level outreach. Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri is expected to visit Kathmandu in mid-May, following formal communication and invitation from his Nepali counterpart Amrit Bahadur Rai. The visit is expected to set the stage for broader engagement, including a possible India trip by Shah at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This wave of visits has drawn attention not only because of its intensity but also because of the narrative surrounding the new government. Critics have been quick to label it as one formed under Western influence, particularly that of the United States. The timing of American engagements, including visits by senior officials, has fed into that perception. At the same



time, parallel outreach from China and India has complicated the picture, making it less about one influence and more about competing interests converging at once. Nepal has long occupied a sensitive geopolitical space. Positioned between India and China, and increasingly engaged by the United States, the country finds itself in a constant balancing act. That reality has not changed with the new government, but the early days of its tenure have made the balancing more visible. India's approach remains rooted in proximity and interdependence. The two countries share deep economic ties, an open border, and a wide range of institutional mechanisms that cover sectors from trade to water resources. Many of these mechanisms have been underutilised or delayed in recent years. The upcoming visit by Misri appears aimed at reviving these channels

and aligning them with the priorities of the new government. Recent discussions between Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal and his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar in Mauritius reflect this intent. Both sides have agreed to activate bilateral mechanisms and move towards more structured engagement before high-level visits take place. India's interest lies in clarity and continuity. A new government in Kathmandu often prompts a recalibration, and early engagement helps avoid drift. China's engagement follows a quieter but steady pattern. Its recent diplomatic presence in Kathmandu signals continuity in its approach. Beijing has focused on infrastructure cooperation, connectivity, and political stability in Nepal. It tends to avoid public pressure but remains attentive to shifts in political alignment.

For China, Nepal is both a development partner and a strategic neighbour. Stability in Kathmandu aligns with its broader regional interests. The United States, meanwhile, approaches Nepal through governance, development cooperation, and strategic outreach under its broader regional framework. Visits by American officials have drawn attention partly because of domestic political narratives. The claim that the government was formed under Western backing has gained traction in some quarters, though it remains more political rhetoric than established fact. The government's cautious handling of diplomatic engagement reflects an awareness of this sensitivity. Prime Minister Shah has so far followed a strict protocol, avoiding meetings with visiting officials below the rank of foreign minister. This has created some uncertainty around engagements, including the upcoming visit of US envoy Sergio Gor. Within the government, there appears to be a more pragmatic view. Leaders like Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle and Foreign Minister Khanal have been encouraging

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Clearing encroached land: Will real squatters get justice?

By Our Reporter

Nepal has been dealing with public land encroachment for years, but the problem keeps coming back. Riverbanks and open spaces in Kathmandu Valley are cleared, then slowly occupied again. Each time, the effort looks serious at the start but does not last. Earlier, drives often triggered resistance. Groups claiming to represent the landless would push back, sometimes forcefully. This time, in many places, people left after public notices. No clashes, no chaos. That change tells its own story. It shows that the state is being taken more seriously. It also shows that people expect enforcement to follow words. Fear of legal action has returned, and with it, a certain level of discipline. Over 1200 houses shacks and other structures were demolished in merely three days in Kathmandu's four places, Thapathali, Gairigaun, Manohara and Sinamangal. There are 22 squatter settlements in the Kathmandu Valley. Still, the situation is not as simple as bulldozers razed illegal structures. Two different realities exist within these settlements. Some families have no land, no savings, and no alternative. They settled where they could survive. Others used public

land as an opportunity, building houses or businesses without legal rights. Treating both groups the same would be lazy governance. Genuine squatters are hoping for support while opportunistic encroachers are worried. Balen Shah's involvement adds another layer. He tried a similar approach as Kathmandu's mayor but ran into political resistance. Now, as prime minister, he has fewer excuses and more authority. The issue has also moved beyond city limits. What used to be seen as a municipal headache now demands national attention. That shift in scale could be the difference between another failed attempt and a lasting solution. In the past, governments formed commissions, wrote reports, and spent public money. The results barely changed anything. Numbers tell an uncomfortable story. In a country with about



7.5 million households, around 1.2 million are classified as landless. That figure raises a basic question: are policies solving the problem, or quietly expanding it? Encroachment is no longer limited to Kathmandu. It spreads across the Tarai and hill towns, along highways, rivers, and public land. In the capital, the stakes are higher. Poorly planned settlements affect drainage, increase disaster risk, and complicate urban management. Security concerns also come into play. Reports linking some settlements to criminal activity have added to public anxiety. Clearing these areas is not just about order. It is about safety and function. Past efforts offer clear lessons. During Keshav Shapit's tenure, parts of the Bishnumati riverbank were cleared and turned into green spaces. That showed what is possible.

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"When embassies multiply, sovereignty shrinks"



BY SHASHI P.B.B. MALLA

The above is the title of an opinion piece in "The Himalayan Times" by a certain C.K. Peela.

It is astounding that a reputable daily newspaper thought fit to publish such an incendiary article, considering that it is bound to annoy ordinary Nepalese.

Who is this gentleman/lady? He/She gives himself as a "geopolitical and security expert on South Asia and the Asia

Pacific". But his/her affiliation with any university/research institute/think tank is not known.

Then again, the article is part of a high-flown series called "Vision Nepal, 2026-2031, as if it is part and parcel of a significant ongoing enterprise.

The writer's premise is not only very debatable, it is downright ill intended.

He/She starts off with a bang and highly contentious statement: "Kathmandu was never meant to be a world capital".

Like any other capital city of South Asia, Kathmandu has its charms and weaknesses. However, it is indeed world famous for UNESCO heritage sites.

To claim that the high

number of diplomatic missions stationed here, the so-called diplomatic density is "remarkable for a small, fragile state" is not only presumptive but also preposterous.

Thus, he/she makes the infuriating statement that the huge number of embassies in Kathmandu "has begun to bend the Nepali state out of shape". In this connection, Peela takes umbrage with the fact that Nepal has requested Turkey to open yet another embassy. The geopolitical and security expert that Peela claims to be should have realized that Turkey is at the crossroads of great civilizations, and has great diplomatic clout in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Since Peela is so quick to belittle Nepal, it would be instructive to know

his/her own country of origin!

To further note that since Kathmandu is only a short flight from Delhi or Dacca and, therefore, "both far more logical hubs for regional consular work" is irrelevant.

According to Peela, Kathmandu's status and geopolitical situation is not suitable for diplomatic and consular work! Peela has not done his/her homework, nor is he/she even moderately knowledgeable about Nepal's history and geography.

He is doing considerable damage to Nepal's reputation and the relevant departments and ministries of the Government of Nepal should take note.

The writer can be reached at: shashimalla125@gmail.com

Sudhan's exit exposes early fault lines in RSP government

By Our Reporter

Sudhan Gurung's exit from the Home Ministry has landed like a shock, but not a completely unexpected one.

His resignation comes at a time when the government led by Balendra Shah is still trying to define its working style and political direction. Within this short span, two ministers have already left office, including Labour Minister Deepak Gupta earlier. That kind of turnover raises questions about internal coordination and judgment at the top. The official explanation around Sudhan's resignation has been shaped by allegations of his alleged links

with broker Deepak Bhatt, who is currently under arrest in a money laundering investigation. Reports of possible collusion created pressure that the government could not ignore. Whether these allegations will stand in court remains to be seen, but politically the damage has already been done. Inside the ruling structure, there is also talk that the leadership of the Rastriya Swatantra Party was



uneasy with Sudhan's style of functioning for some time. His rapid decisions, informal approach, and political positioning reportedly created friction. While that tension was manageable earlier, the emergence of financial controversy appears to have tipped the balance toward resignation. Sudhan's political rise was unusually fast. He entered a system that was already hungry for new faces and quick results. In that environment, he was projected as a strong administrative choice, especially in a ministry as sensitive as home affairs. For a brief period, he symbolised the government's promise of disruption

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NEWS

Bhatta, Agrawal, Golccha arrest: Probe exposes deep NEPSE rot

By Our Reporter

Kathmandu's financial markets are currently under intense pressure following allegations of a coordinated share manipulation scheme involving Nepal Reinsurance Company (Nepal Re). What initially appeared as isolated regulatory violations has now widened into one of the most complex market scandals in recent years, linking brokers, insurers, listed companies, and influential business groups.

At the centre of the investigation is Deepak Bhatta, founder of Infinity Holdings, who was arrested on April 2, 2026. He is accused of orchestrating insider trading, artificial price inflation, and illegal credit-based share transactions worth billions. Investigators allege that he structured a trading loop in which shares were acquired cheaply through private entities and later sold at inflated prices to institutional investors using public and policyholder funds.

Shortly after, Sulabh Agrawal, director of Shankar Group and chairman of Jagdamba Holdings, was arrested on April 4 on charges of money laundering and collusion in manipulating share prices through interconnected corporate entities. Former FNCCI president Shekhar Golccha was arrested on April 23, identified by regulatory reports as a facilitator who allegedly enabled questionable transactions linked to Himalayan Reinsurance during his leadership tenure.

The investigation has since expanded to several other figures, including

Shankarlal Agrawal, Shubhi Agrawal, Raj Bahadur Shah of Jawalakhel Group, Rishi Raj More of Lucky Group, and Sandip Chachan of Bhrikuti Stock Broking. Multiple institutions such as Himalayan Reinsurance Limited, Nepal Micro Insurance, Himalayan CapServ, and HLI Large Cap Fund are now under scrutiny.

Authorities believe a closely linked network of companies under the Himalayan Group umbrella played a central role in accumulating nearly 6.87 million shares of Nepal Re, creating concentrated ownership that influenced market pricing. The alleged misuse of insurance funds has become a major concern, particularly because life insurers are legally restricted in their stock market exposure. Yet reports suggest these limits were exceeded.

The controversy has also raised questions about regulatory oversight. The Nepal Insurance Authority recently increased the equity investment ceiling from 10 percent to 15 percent even after violations were reported, prompting criticism of regulatory capture and delayed enforcement.

However, beyond the legal and regulatory concerns, the scandal has triggered a strong reaction from traders and entrepreneurs. Market participants argue that the ongoing arrests and aggressive enforcement actions are discouraging investment sentiment and creating fear among legitimate business operators. They say the current environment risks punishing the broader private sector for the actions of a few individuals.

Kathmandu's leading

private sector bodies—the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), and the Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC)—have jointly voiced concern over the situation. They argue that while accountability is necessary, arrests based solely on preliminary regulatory findings create uncertainty in the business environment. Their statement emphasizes that the private sector contributes around 81 percent to the economy and 86 percent to employment, warning that continued instability could disrupt jobs, supply chains, banking flows, and overall economic recovery. Entrepreneurs insist they are willing to cooperate with investigations and appear before authorities when required, but argue that detention before due legal process undermines trust.

The broader concern is that investor confidence is already weakening. Retail investors, who dominate NEPSE trading, are increasingly worried that market movements are being influenced by powerful institutional actors rather than genuine economic fundamentals. This crisis has exposed deep structural weaknesses in Nepal's capital market. Weak enforcement, overlapping roles of brokers and institutional investors, and delayed regulatory responses have allowed systemic risks to accumulate over time. The blending of insurance funds with speculative trading has further blurred financial boundaries.

Experts argue that cleaning up NEPSE requires more than arrests. Regulators must be strengthened and insulated from political and corporate influence. Surveillance systems need upgrading to detect abnormal trading in real time. Insurance funds must be strictly separated from speculative equity exposure, and ownership structures of brokers and investment firms must be fully transparent.

There is also a growing demand for accountability within regulatory bodies themselves. When oversight institutions appear to change rules after violations occur, credibility weakens further. Prevention, not reaction, must become the guiding principle. At its core, the Nepal Re case is not just about individual wrongdoing. It reflects a system where institutional money, policyholder savings, and corporate networks intersect with limited oversight. If left unaddressed, it risks turning the stock market into a controlled space for a small group of insiders. For now, arrests have sent a strong signal. But traders warn that without deeper reform, fear will replace confidence. And when markets begin to run on fear instead of trust, recovery becomes far harder than correction.

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QUOTES OF THE WEEK

Facts show that, in the name of solving the squatter problem, left-leaning governments had been spending around 4 billion rupees annually. They would salivate at the sight of public land and could not tolerate seeing vacant land. Commissions were formed in all 75 districts, and party workers were recruited. By declaring their relatives as fake squatters, they have already distributed nearly 150,000 bighas of land.

The chairpersons and members of these commissions used to enjoy salaries, allowances, and benefits equivalent to ministers and secretaries. Whenever a government fell, the commissions would also be dissolved, and the new government would appoint new officials. If the commissions were dissolved, legal cases would be filed, and they would obtain reinstatement or stay orders from the courts. In the name of squatters, these groups trampled on the chest of Mother Nepal. The government should investigate the irregularities and corruption committed by all 19 squatter commissions formed so far.

The Trump hotel shooting was completely staged. He claims the Secret Service deliberately broke protocol, rescuing JD Vance first while leaving Trump behind. The Washington establishment is orchestrating pure theater.

Russia continues to supply nuclear fuel to the United States—and no one objects because it is beneficial to them. The U.S. imposes sanctions on Russia, yet at the same time purchases uranium from Russia for nuclear purposes.

China will accelerate the planning and development of a new energy system to ensure energy security. As the 15th Five-Year Plan

BABBLES

● Evacuating Fake Land Squatters

The government has launched a campaign to clear public land occupied by fake squatters. It is currently screening occupants to identify genuine squatters and has assured them of support, while those found to be ineligible will receive none. Reports suggest that less than 10 percent of those occupying public land qualify as genuine squatters.

In the past, major political parties—the Nepali Congress, UML, and Maoist Center—have been accused of enabling the occupation of public land, often in prime locations. These parties used the squatters as their vote bank. Under the pretext of resolving the squatters' issue, these parties formed commissions and district-level committees, frequently staffed by party affiliates. Despite spending billions of rupees, the problem remained unresolved.

Now, within just a month in office, the Balen-led government has taken steps to address the issue. This initiative is commendable.

● Allegations Against UML leaders Poudel and Gyawali

Former Home Minister Om Prakash Aryal has publicly claimed that UML leaders Bishnu Poudel and Pradeep Gyawali obtained land

in Butwal by declaring themselves landless or squatters. According to the allegation, they later sold the land and built expensive houses in Kathmandu. If true, this would illustrate how public resources can be misused through policy manipulation.

This raises an important question: will such cases be investigated and those responsible held accountable if found guilty?

● Accountability in Media

There are also allegations that some prominent media figures and institutions were allocated shares in microfinance companies linked to Dipak Bhatt. If journalists or media organizations are involved in manipulating or exploiting public financial systems, they too should be subject to investigation. Whether the government is willing to pursue such cases remains uncertain.

● Returning Tribhuvan University's Land

The two spouses of King Tribhuvan are said to have sold their personal ornaments to establish Tribhuvan University at a time when the country lacked higher education institutions. Their vision was to ensure that Nepali students could pursue higher education within Nepal rather

than traveling to Indian cities.

Over time, however, various influential groups reportedly occupied land belonging to the university. Recently, the university administration has issued notices to reclaim its land from such occupations. This is a necessary and positive step.

The Laboratory School, located within the university premises, was originally established as a training ground for education students. Over time, it too came under the control of influential figures. The university now plans to bring the school back under its direct management to serve its original academic purpose. This is a welcome move.

● Curbing Smuggling of Goods

The government has also tightened customs regulations, requiring duties on goods worth more than 100 rupees brought in from India. However, stricter enforcement is needed to curb large-scale smuggling, which often occurs through collusion between traders and officials.

If the government succeeds in reducing smuggling significantly, it could boost domestic industries and increase national revenue. Strong enforcement and transparency will be key to achieving these goals.



Keep the nation united at all costs.
—Great King P.N. Shah

Former King Gyanendra in Pokhara

By Our Reporter

Former King Gyanendra reached Pokhara on Friday, April 24. A large number of people greeted the former King upon his arrival at Pokhara International Airport.

According to his visit management committee, the former king is travelling at a time when a new political configuration has emerged in the country following the Gen Z movement, which led to the formation of a government under Balen Shah with a near two-thirds majority. Committee member Arjun Khanal said the visit carries political significance and is expected to send a message. He added that former King Gyanendra is likely to stay in Pokhara for at least two weeks. During his stay, he is expected to visit religious



Former King Gyanendra seen during a morning walk in the Lakeside area of Pokhara.

sites and hold political meetings, according to sources. This is the first such extended visit since his Pokhara trip on January 27, 2025 (Magh 27, 2081 BS), when he stayed for two weeks and returned amid a large show of support from monarchist groups at Kathmandu airport. This time, he is staying at the newly completed Solti Hotel in Lakeside,

Pokhara, managed by the Solti Group. The hotel was developed by businessman Khem Dhakal, who previously operated the Peninsula Hotel in the same area. Sources close to the former king say he is also expected to meet political leaders and activists during the visit, including figures within the Nepali Congress who support a Hindu state and monarchy, as well as leaders from the UML and former Maoist ranks.

“He is likely to meet leaders across party lines, especially those who still advocate for a monarchy or a Hindu state,” a member of the visit coordination team said. No formal public programs have been scheduled, and King Gyanendra will stay at the hotel throughout the visit, his secretariat confirmed.

The United States and Israel used weather modification technology

to create severe droughts in Iran. After Iran destroyed secret UAE radar sites, record rainfall returned immediately. Has Washington weaponized the climate?

Prominent politician George Galloway

Democracy with a monarchy and the restoration of a Hindu state should be the main agenda of constitutional amendment. All other issues are secondary.

Kamal Thapa

The Trump hotel shooting was completely staged. He claims the Secret Service deliberately broke protocol, rescuing JD Vance first while leaving Trump behind. The Washington establishment is orchestrating pure theater.

Former CIA officer Larry Johnson

Russia continues to supply nuclear fuel to the United States—and no one objects because it is beneficial to them. The U.S. imposes sanctions on Russia, yet at the same time purchases uranium from Russia for nuclear purposes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin

China will accelerate the planning and development of a new energy system to ensure energy security. As the 15th Five-Year Plan

begins in 2026, major projects—including clean energy bases and power transmission corridors—are being fast-tracked. With this rapid development, China is advancing its transition to green and low-carbon energy while effectively ensuring energy security.

General Secretary of the CPC, Xi Jinping

It was in 2024. At that time in Nepal, drought reduced paddy production, and economic growth even turned negative. Unlike today, importing food from India was not common. The government immediately adopted three measures:

1. Those holding food stocks were required to declare them to the government.
2. Excess hoarded food was confiscated.
3. Food grains were brought from the Tarai/Madhes and distributed to the public through the Food Department (later the Food Corporation) at subsidized prices based on family size.

Gajendra Budhathoki

It may sound unpleasant, but the truth is that the transformed Congress (Congress 2.0 version) is now being run by the same deteriorated communists and Bhadrakali forces. Only intellectuals are afraid to write about it.

Prakash Timalsina

Those who run churches

under the guise of squatters are also contractors who mobilize rallies for the Nepali Congress, UML, and former Maoists. Their elimination across the country is necessary. Harka Sampang is not concerned about squatters but about churches.

Arjun Gyawali

Manipur is burning, yet Indian media is more interested in reporting on Balochistan and remains silent about Manipur.

Ashok Swain

Look at this—local farmers are finally able to sell bananas! Today in Nepalgunj, there was a large crowd of buyers for locally produced bananas. A farmer was selling his own produce from a mini truck at Rs. 150 per dozen. As banana imports from India have decreased or stopped, local products are finding a market, and farmers are starting to receive fair prices for their hard work.

Ananda Nepali

To everyone working in IT: think about business, not just jobs. Arrange for data center hosting (rental or setup) for IT and AI companies in Himalayan districts. The natural cold climate there reduces cooling costs, which is the biggest advantage.

Dr. Nirmal Kandel



Maintain religious harmony.
—Great King P.N. Shah

Gunfight film and musical stage play

BY NIRMAL P. ACHARYA

President Trump was shot again.

On the evening of April 25 local time, the White House Press Association Dinner was a scene of elegance and lively conversation. This was the annual stage for the American political elite to showcase their "internal unity". Trump, along with Secretary of State Rubio, Secretary of Defense Hedges, Vice President Vance and other core officials, attended this annual event. This was also his first time as president to attend this event since taking office. During the interval before Trump was about to deliver his speech at the dinner, a scene of gunshots causing panic unfolded.

The scene immediately descended into chaos. Guests rushed to find cover. Secret Service agents quickly reacted and used their bodies to form a protective barrier for Trump. The second shot hit one of the agents, but due to the protection of the bulletproof vest, no serious injury was caused.

Afterwards, the official statement of the Secret Service said that the agent team had identified and subdued

the gunman Allen within 3 minutes after the incident. No other casualties occurred during the process. The murderer has been handed over to the Washington police for investigation, and the investigation is currently being pushed forward with all efforts.

You should know that the Washington Hilton Hotel had closed its external access channels as early as 14:00 that day. The dinner was claimed to have "top-level security", and 2,300 guests had to go through multiple security checks. Around Trump, there was even an exclusive security cordon, and beneath the main table, there was a hidden bulletproof armor plate. However, the seemingly impenetrable protective wall still allowed an assassin to enter. Ironically, the assassin came from California, and California is known as having the strictest gun control laws in the United States.

There are over 300 million people in the United States, and over 300 million guns. On average, each person has one gun.

After the shooting incident, apart from the security issue, there was another detail that sparked widespread

discussion among American citizens. Vice President Pence was given priority to be escorted away from the scene. Later, when Trump evacuated, he accidentally fell down.

After the incident, Trump said in an interview that when the gunshots first sounded, he did not immediately realize the severity of the threat. He hoped to observe the situation first and did not cooperate with the Secret Service to evacuate quickly at first. Later, under the instructions of the security personnel, he crouched down to take cover, and then was escorted out of the banquet area. As for Pence, being young was good. He retreated very quickly.

It is necessary here to review the recent shooting incident targeting President Trump.

From the campaign to taking office, Trump has faced multiple security threats:

July 13, 2024 (Campaign Rally in Butler, Pennsylvania): This was the closest encounter with death. At around 135 meters away, 20-year-old gunman Thomas Matthew Crooks fired several shots with an AR-15 rifle. One bullet grazed his right ear, leaving

1 death and 2 injuries among the on-site audience. The gunman was shot dead by the Secret Service.

September 2024 (Golf Club in Florida): The Secret Service discovered a gunman armed with a rifle lying in wait nearby and apprehended him before he could act.

February 2026 (at Mar-a-Lago in Florida): A man attempted to illegally enter and was shot dead by the Secret Service.

April 25, 2026 (White House Press Dinner): 31-year-old man Cole Allen, armed with a shotgun and other weapons, forcibly broke through the security checkpoint before the president's arrival and opened fire. The Secret Service quickly subdued him. During the incident, one agent was shot but fortunately protected by a bulletproof vest, and no major casualties were caused.

After the event, the suspect was charged with attempting to assassinate the president and other crimes. Regarding this incident, some analysts even claimed that it was all orchestrated by President Trump himself. They said that President Trump was very stingy. He first placed some wine, fruits, and salads on the table, and then invited

everyone to listen to his speech.

The main courses on the banquet menu, such as braised goose, lobster, whole roasted lamb, scallion-braised sea cucumber, braised prawns, Beijing Roast Duck, had not even been served yet. But the gunshots rang out before the dishes could be served. As a result, the cost of the dishes was saved. The media also reported that some people took away the wine during the chaos.

The audience could see from the video that those well-dressed and stylish media elites were in a rather embarrassing situation this time. At a national banquet, gunshots rang out and the attendees were scrambling and fleeing. The audience couldn't help but wonder: Is this in the United States?

Alas, if American politics continues like this, it will probably become a terrifying gunfight movie. In comparison, Nepal is fortunate. Our new prime minister, Baron, as a professional musician, is fully capable of turning politics into a carnival-style musical stage play. If the Nepalese people cannot gain benefits from politics, at least they can get entertainment from it.



Government in action

The arrest and investigation on controversial business figure Sekhar Golchha, a prominent member of the Golchha Group and former president of the FNCCI, along with the investigation of noted power broker Dipak Bhatt, have sent shockwaves through Nepal's business circle.

For years, the leaders of the three major parties—the Nepali Congress, UML, and Maoist Center—namely Sher Bahadur Deuba, K.P. Sharma Oli, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, among others, have been accused of turning a blind eye to corruption. Many of the top leaders who served as prime minister after 1990—except Manmohan Adhikari and Krishna Prasad Koirala—including Girija Prasad Koirala, Sushil Koirala, Madhav Nepal, Jhalanath Khanal, and Baburam Bhattarai, have been directly or indirectly linked to various scandals during both the multiparty era (1990–2006) and the democratic era (2006–2025). If all corruption files were opened, very few leaders, one might argue, would remain outside prison.

In contrast, the government led by Prime Minister Balen (Balendra) Shah has shown the willingness to address widespread corruption and systemic irregularities. The administration has issued a white paper outlining its plans for its first one month in office. Although it has completed only one month, it has already demonstrated a readiness to confront the problems facing the Nepali people.

While the Balen team may have good intentions—and such initiatives deserve recognition—the problems Nepal faces are not solely due to poor leadership but also, arguably, to structural flaws in the constitution. The current constitution, we believe, has failed to deliver effective governance. The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), which secured nearly a two-thirds majority, has proposed constitutional amendments, as outlined in its manifesto for the March 5 elections. The party has also formed a committee representing major political forces to work on these amendments.

However, we believe that mere amendment is insufficient. Thus far, we are advocating for replacing the constitution entirely, either by drafting a new one or by reinstating the 1990 constitution with necessary revisions. The RSP, formed shortly before the 2022 general elections, has now completed three years. Notably, the party did not field candidates for provincial assemblies, reportedly due to its opposition to federalism. Similarly, Balen Shah himself did not vote in provincial elections in his Kathmandu constituency while contesting for mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

Although the RSP has challenged traditional political parties, it has yet to clearly define its ideological stance. Recently, it stated that it aims to strengthen the current constitutional framework, which suggests support for federalism, secularism, and republicanism. Our argument is that these features of the constitution have hindered national development. We even suspect that external influences may shape the party's direction. If such concerns hold true, constitutional amendments alone may not yield meaningful results.

There is also growing concern that the current federal structure—with seven provinces, multiple layers of government, district coordination committees, and 753 local bodies—has made governance excessively complex and costly. Our argument is that institutions such as the National Assembly are unnecessary and that the size of the House of Representatives should be reduced by half.

Meanwhile, proposals for a directly elected executive head have gained traction among some political leaders. However, such a system could prove unsuitable for a country like Nepal. In conclusion, a return to the 1990 constitution—alongside the introduction of strict anti-corruption measures and accountability mechanisms—is seen by some as a viable path forward.

Post 2006 asset probe: Big test of political will

By Our Reporter

The government has moved ahead with a major decision under its 100-point agenda and 18-point commitment to investigate the assets of public officials who have served since 2006, the year Nepal formally entered the republican era. The Property Investigation Commission has now started preparatory work from its office in Kesharmahal and is expected to begin formal inquiries soon after the notice is published in the Gazette.

The scope of the commission is wide. It will examine former prime ministers, ministers, constitutional officeholders, judges, ambassadors, senior security officials, and top bureaucrats. It will also include heads of public enterprises and elected local representatives. In effect, the probe covers almost every layer of state power built over the last two decades.

This decision comes at a time when public debate over unexplained wealth has grown louder. Over the years, leaders across party lines have faced

repeated allegations of disproportionate assets. Former prime ministers such as Sher Bahadur Deuba, KP Sharma Oli, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda have all faced public scrutiny at different points, although no unified institutional process ever examined their long-term financial records in a structured way.

Similarly, former ministers from various governments, senior bureaucrats from the finance, home, and energy sectors, and officials from public enterprises have frequently been accused of accumulating assets beyond known income sources. These concerns have remained largely in the realm of public debate rather than formal investigation.

The new commission now attempts to change that pattern by bringing post-2006 public service under one investigative umbrella. It includes not only political leaders but also judges of all levels, former army chiefs, ambassadors, and provincial and local government officials. The idea is to trace how wealth has been accumulated

during years of public service and whether it aligns with declared income.

On paper, this is a significant step toward accountability. In practice, however, its credibility will depend on how broadly and fairly it is applied. The decision to exclude sitting constitutional officeholders and current cabinet members has already raised early questions about consistency. Critics argue that accountability cannot begin and end with past actors while ignoring those currently in power.

This is where the political sensitivity becomes clear. A credible investigation cannot selectively focus only on opposition-linked figures or retired officials while leaving current leaders untouched. If the process is seen as politically filtered, it risks undermining its own purpose.

There is also an opportunity here for the current government led by Balendra Shah to strengthen its legitimacy. Allowing scrutiny of assets and income sources of its own ministers and senior officials, including those

in the present cabinet, would send a strong signal of transparency. It would show that the reform agenda is not directed only outward but also inward.

Such openness would also help the government distance itself from accusations of selective accountability, a problem that has affected many past regimes. In Nepal's political history, anti-corruption drives have often lost credibility when they appeared targeted or incomplete.

The commission's mandate covers a long list of officials from across party lines. This includes leaders from the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, CPN (Maoist Centre), Rastriya Swatantra Party, and other political formations that have held power since 2006. Figures such as ministers, parliamentary speakers, chief justices, provincial heads, and senior administrators all fall within its scope.

If implemented with consistency, this could become one of the most far-reaching accountability exercises in Nepal's recent history. But the challenge lies not in drafting the mandate, but in enforcing it without

political influence.

Public trust will depend on whether investigations are allowed to follow evidence wherever it leads, not where it is politically convenient. That means examining financial records, property holdings, business links, and declared income across all levels of leadership.

At the same time, the commission will need institutional independence, technical strength, and legal backing to withstand pressure. Without that, even a well-designed mandate could lose momentum.

Ultimately, this initiative sits at a critical point. It can either become a turning point in public accountability or another symbolic exercise that fades into routine politics. The difference will be decided by whether the government is willing to place itself under the same scrutiny it demands from others.

Because in the end, credibility in politics is not built by investigating opponents alone. It is built when power agrees to look into its own mirror without hesitation.

Wave of...

broader engagement with all key partners. Their focus has been on maintaining continuity in relationships that support Nepal's development and economic needs.

The challenge for the new government lies in moving beyond

perception and defining a clear foreign policy approach. Nepal's strength has historically come from its ability to engage multiple partners without aligning too closely with any one of them. That approach requires consistency, clarity, and active

diplomacy. At the same time, internal coordination becomes crucial. Diplomatic visits can open doors, but outcomes depend on how well the government aligns its priorities and communicates them. Without clear direction, even the most frequent

engagements risk becoming symbolic rather than substantive. The current flurry of visits offers both opportunity and pressure. India wants reassurance and continuity. China seeks stability and steady cooperation. The United States looks

for engagement within its broader strategic framework. In the end, Nepal's position has not changed. It remains a country that draws attention because of where it stands. Managing that attention has always been part of governance.

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Don't Make Neighbors Suspicious

The entire globe has been affected by the US-Israel war on Iran. Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have impacted the global supply of petroleum products. Around 20 percent of the world's oil supply passes through this strategic route, and any disruption has led to shortages in the global market, driving up prices and affecting all sectors of the economy. As a result, both global markets and the world economy have been adversely affected by the rise in petroleum prices.

The joint US-Israel attack on Iran is seen by some as a strategic mistake, as it may have underestimated Iran's strength. This development is also interpreted by critics as a sign of declining American supremacy. The United States appears to be losing its stronghold in the Gulf region, while mistrust between the European Union and the US has grown. The cohesion of the NATO alliance has also come under strain. At the same time, recent developments have brought China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran closer together. This suggests a weakening of US unipolar dominance and points toward the emergence of a multipolar world order. Meanwhile, the rise of the Global South, along with groupings such as BRICS, indicates the growing influence of alternative power centers.

Against this backdrop, a small country like Nepal must closely monitor global geopolitical developments and maintain balanced and constructive relations with its two powerful neighbors, India and China. Nepal should avoid any actions that could make its neighbors suspicious. Entering into military arrangements with the United States under its Indo-Pacific strategy could prove counterproductive. Similarly, increased activities by foreign actors, including NGOs, may raise concerns about Nepal's sovereignty if not handled carefully.

Rumors about allowing foreign involvement in uranium exploration in Lomathang, near the Nepal-China border in Mustang, could negatively affect Nepal-China relations. In conclusion, Nepal should uphold the "One China Policy" in both words and actions.

REVIEW OF THE WORLD AFFAIRS

Iran's New Power Structure



BY SHASHI P.B.B. MALLA

As supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei exerted absolute power over all decisions about war, peace and negotiations with the United States.

He was like an absolute king, an all-powerful pope and an unforgiving tyrant.

According to The New York Times columnist, Farnaz Fassihi, his son and successor does not play the same role (April 25-26).

"Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, the son, is an elusive figure who has not been seen and whose voice has not been heard since he was appointed in March."

Instead writes Fassihi: "a battle-hardened collective of commanders in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and those aligned with them are the key decision makers on matters of security, war and diplomacy."

"Mojtaba is managing the country as though he is director of the board," said Abdolreza Davari, a politician who served as senior adviser to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad when he was president and knows the junior Khamenei.

Mojtaba "relies heavily on the advice and guidance of the board members, and they collectively make all the decisions," Davari said.

"The generals are the board members."

In Iran's new power structure Mojtaba was initially selected by a council of senior clerics as the new supreme leader, but has been in hiding since American and Israeli forces bombed his father's compound on February 28, where he also lived with his family.

His father, wife and son were all killed.

Access to him is extremely difficult and limited now.

He is surrounded mostly by a team of doctors and medical staff who are treating the injuries he sustained in the airstrikes.

Senior commanders of the Guards and senior government officials

do not visit him, fearing that Israel may trace them to him and assassinate him. President Masoud Pezeshkian, who is also a heart surgeon, and the minister of health have both been involved.

Though Mojtaba Khamenei was gravely wounded, he is mentally sharp and engaged, according to four senior Iranian officials familiar with his help.

One leg was operated on three times, and he is awaiting a prosthetic.

He had surgery on one hand and is slowly regaining function.

His face and lips have been burned severely, making it difficult for him to speak, the officials said, adding that, eventually, he will need plastic surgery.

Khamenei has not recorded a video or audio message, the officials said, because he does not want to appear vulnerable or sound weak in his first public address.

He has issued several written statements that have been posted online and read on state television. Messages to him are handwritten, sealed in envelopes and relayed via a human chain from one trusted courier to the next, who travel on highways and back roads, in cars and motorcycles until they reach his hide-out. His guidance on issues snakes back the same way (NYT).

The combination of concern for his safety, his injuries and the sheer challenge of reaching him has resulted in Khamenei's delegating decision making to the generals, at least for now.

"Reformist factions, as well as ultra-hard-liners, are still involved in political discussions" (NYT).

But analysts say that Khamenei's close ties to the generals, whom he grew with when he volunteered to fight in the Iraq-Iran war as a teenager, have made them the dominant force.

Trump has claimed that the war, along with the killings of layers of Iran's leaders and security establishment, has ushered in "regime change" and that the new leaders are "much more reasonable."

On both counts Trump is far from the mark.

In reality, the Islamic Republic has not been toppled. It has metamorphosed into a quasi military dictatorship.

Power is now in the hands of an entrenched hard-line military, and the broad influence of the clerics is waning.

The speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, a former Guards general and the lead negotiator with the United States in Pakistan, said in a television address last weekend that the U.S. proposal for a nuclear deal and peace plan and Iran's response had been shared with Khamenei and his views had been taken into account when making decisions.

The power equation in Iran has definitely shifted.

The Rise of the Revolutionary Guards

The Revolutionary Guards, were originally formed as protectors of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

However, they have steadily amassed power through top political roles, stakes in key industries, dominance of intelligence operations and cultivation of ties with militant groups in the Middle East that share Iran's enmity towards Israel and the United States.

Under the elder Khamenei, they still had to mostly adhere to his will as singular religious figure who also served as commander in chief of the armed forces, and was even above the head of state.

He empowered the Guards, and over time they became the tool and pillar of his rule.

The son does not have the same role – he is the supreme ruler in name only. He is now a creature of the Guards.

Khamenei the elder's killing on the first day of the war created a void and an opportunity.

The Guards rallied behind Mojtaba in the succession struggle that ensued and played an instrumental role in his selection as Iran's third supreme leader.

The Guards have multiple levers of power.

1. The commander in chief is Brig. Gen. Ahmad Vahidi.

He saw talks with the United States as futile.

2. Gen. Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr, the newly appointed head of the Supreme National Security Council, is a former hard-line commander of the Guards.

3. Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi, a commander, has served as the top military adviser to both father

and son supreme leaders.

4. Gen. Mohsen Rezaei commanded Mojtaba in the 1980s during the Iraq-Iran war, and has been called back from retirement.

Ghalibaf, the former Guards general is also a long-time friend. Among Mojtaba's close friends from the Habib Battalion (where he served) is the Guards' former intelligence chief, the cleric Hossein Taeb.

These personal relationships are now playing heavily into the dynamic between Khamenei and the generals.

They are on a first-name basis and view one another as peers, not superior and subordinate, said Abdolreza Davari, the former senior adviser.

"Mojtaba is not supreme; he might be leader in name, but he is not supreme the way his father was," said Ali Vaez, the Iran director of the International Crisis Group, who has extensive contacts in Iran.

Pakistan races to save US-Iran negotiations

Pakistan's top political and military leadership are scrambling to reignite talks between the United States and Iran after Trump instructed his envoys not to travel to Islamabad for negotiations (AP/Associated Press, April 27).

After mounting tensions torpedoed a second round of talks between the US and Iran, the Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi spent most of Sunday in Oman.

He has returned to Islamabad before departing for Moscow.

The whole point of the talks is fruitless because the Iranian civilian negotiators play only second fiddle to the hard-line generals.

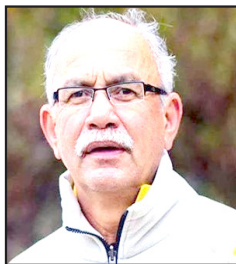
These expect Trump to take a more serious stance on the problems:

- Trump must be more strenuous with Israeli prime minister Netanyahu with regard to Lebanon, Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

He must show more flexibility in the Strait of Hormuz/Gulf of Oman by agreeing to stop the blockade of Iranian ports in return for Iran to opening up the Strait, i.e. 'the blockade of the blockade must cease'.

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All about political violence



BY RABI RAJ THAPA

At an annual gala celebration of the White House Correspondents' Dinner held at the Washington Hilton Hotel, a "lone wolf" gunman attempted to enter the hall, possibly to shoot President Donald Trump. The US Secret Service promptly intervened and apprehended the gunman, Allen, a 31-year-old from California, charging him with attempted assassination of President Donald Trump.

By definition, such incidents can be categorized as "political violence" and also as "hate crimes." What is the situation of political violence and hate crime in Nepal? This is a very pertinent and pressing question that Nepal has largely neglected, partly because very few top officials have been fatally attacked in the last few decades.

However, there have been notable

incidents. Nepali prime minister Jhal Nath Khanal was slapped by Devi Prashad Regmi, a former CPN-UML cadre, during a public program in January 2011. He reportedly told journalists, "Political party leaders have ruined the country." Some bloggers even commented at the time that "all our leaders are worth no more than a slap." (Source: Nepal Blogger)

Similarly, another prime minister, Sushil Koirala, was attacked with a wooden photo frame by a Nepali Congress Student Union (NSU) cadre, Prabesh Basnet, during a party meeting held in Kathmandu in September 2012.

In another incident, a foreign reporter noted that three-time former prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" was struck in public during his party's tea reception to exchange Tihar, Chhath, Eid, and Nepal Sambat greetings in 2012. Commenting on the event, a foreign newspaper wrote, "Chairman of Nepal's ruling Maoist party, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' received an unexpected festive gift—a slap on the face by a commoner." (Hindustan Times, Nov. 16, 2012). As a result, that bold "lone wolf," Pawan Kunwar, a 25-year-old youth from Baglung, was severely beaten by Prachanda's

associates before being handed over to Nepal Police.

Thus, Gen Z are not the first to express public frustration and anger toward ruling elites. Unfortunately, such "lone wolves" in the past were isolated and weak. As a result, they themselves faced brutal punishment and beatings for what were essentially minor, non-fatal acts. Devi Prashad Regmi was held in custody for 15 days, while Basnet was severely beaten by party cadres—during which even two Nepali Congress members were injured while trying to protect him. Therefore, public frustration and anger toward political leaders, as demonstrated on September 9, 2026, were neither the first instance nor will they be the last. The public's anger toward five-time prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his spouse was particularly shocking and intense. In contrast, the timely rescue of leaders such as President Ramchandra Paudel and then prime minister K.P. Sharma Oli was remarkable.

However, the most extreme example of political violence in Nepal remains the still-unsolved Royal Palace Massacre of June 1, 2001, which drastically altered the country's political trajectory and

contributed to prolonged instability and uncertainty.

Compared to these events, Nepal's new Prime Minister, Balen Shah, has been handling major issues such as the arrest and prosecution of so-called "big fish" in politics and business. Despite significant speculation and apprehension, the public has largely responded with praise and appreciation. However, such assertive actions may also increase the risk of political violence and "lone wolf" attacks targeting high-profile figures. The government must therefore strengthen the capacity of security personnel to a more sophisticated and professional level.

Finally, the moral is clear: Nepal and its people should never assume immunity from political violence. It is only a matter of degree and intensity. Nepali society may not yet have reached the extreme levels of brutality seen elsewhere, but the potential exists. Therefore, incidents like the one at the White House Correspondents' Dinner should serve as a wake-up call for both VVIPs and security personnel to address vulnerabilities and close loopholes in a timely manner.

Good luck to all concerned!

Love one another and help others to rise to the higher levels, simply by pouring out love. Love is infectious and the greatest healing energy

- SATYA SAI



A framework for governance through the military lens: Speed, mission command and command compact



BY SANTOSH KUMAR DHAKAL, MAJOR GENERAL (RETD.), NEPAL ARMY

Managing public expectations is no longer optional for Nepal's incumbent government; it is a strategic necessity. So, the Government of Nepal's push for accelerated delivery reflects an urgent need to respond to public demands and longstanding structural inefficiencies. Yet, speed in governance, much like in military operations, is not simply about moving fast. It is about moving with purpose, coherence, and sustainability. Without these, speed risks becoming counterproductive, generating activity without meaningful outcomes and, in some cases, compounding existing inefficiencies. In military doctrine, speed is not an isolated attribute but a structured capability. It consists of three interdependent elements: speed in decision-making, speed in issuing orders, and speed in execution. Each of these elements depends on different institutional strengths. Decision-making requires clarity of political objectives and situational awareness. Issuing orders depends on simplicity and efficiency in command

and communication systems. Execution relies on coordination, logistics, discipline, and administrative capacity. If any one of these elements is weak, speed becomes fragmented and ineffective.

Nepal's governance challenge lies in the disintegration of these interdependent elements of speed. Responsive governance tends to generate a timely impact, while public discourse is often oriented toward immediate gains. However, such a tendency overlooks a more fundamental issue: whether state actions are aligned with political objectives, institutional capacity, and strategic intent. Speed without alignment produces visible motion but limited results. It creates the illusion of progress without delivering substantive outcomes. To make speed effective, governance must be anchored in four essentials: clarity of purpose, constancy of direction, persistence in execution, and simplicity in decision-making. Equally important is the alignment of ends, ways, and means. Where ambitions exceed available resources or institutional capacity, recalibration is not a failure; it is a sign of strategic maturity. Without such recalibration, acceleration only magnifies inefficiency. Nepal's development experience illustrates the costs of pursuing speed without coordination, driven by myopic vision. Hydropower projects, for

instance, are routinely delayed due to fragmented authority between forest clearance and land acquisition agencies. Timber cleared during such projects is often left unused due to regulatory constraints, even as the country imports wood. Infrastructure development suffers from poor sequencing: roads are constructed during the monsoon and deteriorate rapidly; utilities operate in silos, leading to repeated excavation; and pedestrian infrastructure is built without rigorous technical audits. These are not failures of intent but failures of synchronized execution. Such challenges are not unique to Nepal. The delayed inauguration of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge in 2013, caused by defective bolts discovered just before opening, demonstrates a universal lesson: haste without adherence to standards undermines both legitimacy and outcomes. Strategically, speed must also be understood in relation to tempo—the sustained pace of action over time. While speed delivers immediate effects, tempo ensures continuity and endurance. Governments that emphasize rapid announcements without sustained implementation risk exhausting institutional capacity and eroding public trust. Speed without tempo becomes episodic; tempo without speed becomes stagnation. Effective governance requires both.

Speed and tempo in day-to-day actions and decision-making can be enhanced through the OODA loop developed by John Boyd—observe, orient, decide, and act. In simple terms, it involves continuously assessing a situation, understanding it accurately, making decisions, and taking action, while learning and adjusting along the way. The more frequently this cycle is practiced, the more it can be compressed, enabling quicker actions, reactions, and counteractions. This approach is particularly relevant in today's uncertain global environment, marked by energy insecurity, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical tensions. For Nepal, the disciplined adoption of this cycle can reorient governance toward foresight-driven design and iterative, results-focused implementation. However, this requires institutions capable of gathering timely information, applying sound analysis, coordinating actions effectively, and learning from outcomes. At present, these capabilities remain uneven within Nepal's governance system, limiting the full realization of such an adaptive approach. Yet, speed alone is insufficient without a system that translates intent into execution. This is where the concept of mission command becomes critical. Mission command, widely practiced in modern militaries including the Nepali

Army, is based on a simple idea: leaders define the overall goal through clear intent, provide necessary resources, and set essential limits, while those on the ground are trusted to determine the best way to achieve the task. It is designed to enhance speed by enabling decisions at lower levels, while ensuring alignment with a shared objective. Instead of rigid top-down control, it promotes disciplined initiative within a clear framework. This approach depends on clear direction from leadership, mutual trust, timely and effective communication, shared situational awareness, and the willingness to accept calculated risks in order to achieve results in dynamic and uncertain conditions. In Nepal's governance context, this implies that central leadership, the Prime Minister's Office, and key ministries must clearly articulate national priorities while avoiding excessive micromanagement. Provinces, municipalities, and implementing agencies should be empowered to adapt decisions to local realities while remaining aligned with national objectives. Without such decentralization, speed will remain constrained by bureaucratic bottlenecks at the center. The importance of clarity of intent is well absorbed in the military, that all action must serve a defined political objective connected through the pragmatic operational art. In governance, this means that every

governmental action and activity must be anchored in clearly defined national priorities, whether infrastructure delivery, energy security, or economic reform. Without such clarity, actions across ministries may move in different directions, resulting in fragmented effort rather than unified progress. However, mission command alone is not sufficient. Decentralization without accountability risks disorder and diffusion of responsibility. This is where the concept of command compact becomes essential. The practice of command compact in the Nepali Army provides a valuable model for governance reform. Under this system, senior commanders enter into formal performance agreements with their superiors, outlining clear objectives, timelines, and expected outcomes. Progress is reviewed periodically, and accountability is both structured and visible. Authority is directly linked to responsibility. Translating this into governance, senior civil servants, project directors, and mission leaders should operate under similar performance compacts. Each leader must have clearly defined targets, measurable outputs, and fixed timelines. Regular reviews should assess progress, identify bottlenecks, and enforce accountability. This ensures that decentralization under mission command does not lead to fragmentation

or lack of ownership. In effect, mission command enables compact form a complementary system: • Mission command enables through decentralized execution • Command compact ensures accountability through structured performance agreements Without mission command, governance becomes centralized and slow. Without a command compact, it becomes decentralized but unaccountable. Together, they create a system capable of delivering speed with discipline and consistency. Nepal's governance system faces three key gaps that slow down both decision-making and action. First, there is no strong system to anticipate problems in advance. Many countries constantly monitor global economic and geopolitical trends so that they can prepare early. In Nepal, decisions are often made only after a crisis emerges. If different ministries, such as foreign affairs, finance, energy, and commerce, worked together to track risks in real time, decisions could be taken faster and with better clarity. Second, Nepal lacks a clear mapping of its supply chains. In the military, no operation begins without understanding logistics. Similarly, the government needs a clear picture of fuel supplies, critical imports, and transit routes. Without

(Continued on page 7)

A fresh look at the 'India first' mentality



BY DEEPAK JOSHI POKHREL

Nepal and India share a unique bilateral relationship. The open border, shared culture, economic interdependence, and deep-rooted people-to-people ties make this relationship special. What is particularly interesting is that, with few exceptions, since the 1990 people's movement, it has been customary for Nepali prime ministers to visit India soon after assuming office. Put simply, it has become an unwritten convention of Nepal's foreign policy. However, a fundamental question is now being raised: how long should this tradition continue? The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stated that Prime Minister Balen has

received an invitation from India for an official visit. Although the dates are yet to be finalized, this has already sparked debate over whether he should continue the tradition. There are clearly divided opinions—both for and against the visit. Since the restoration of a multiparty democracy in 1990, Nepal has witnessed around 30 governments. Logically speaking, this reflects a pattern of instability over the past 36 years. After decades of political uncertainty, Balen is now leading a near two-thirds majority government, which is expected to serve a full five-year term. Public expectations are high, with many believing that he will not repeat the missteps of his predecessors. Foreign policy in Nepal has always been a sensitive domain, given the country's geostrategic location. However, Nepal's foreign policies have often appeared to be influenced by external actors. When the Nepali Congress comes to power,

policies tend to align with the interests of the southern neighbor, India. On the other hand, the communist governments are often seen as leaning toward China and shaping policies that serve northern interests. This pattern suggests a lack of a consistent foreign policy framework. The present cabinet consists of a cohort of young members from diverse backgrounds. A large majority possess strong academic credentials—indeed, few would question their educational qualifications. However, they lack sufficient exposure to international relations and foreign policy. This became evident when a debate was triggered following Balen's meeting with ambassadors, raising questions about adherence to diplomatic decorum. After decades of frustration, hardship, and political instability, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), under Balen's leadership, came to power. Nepalis have placed high

hopes in the RSP, and public expectations are correspondingly elevated. At the same time, there is a perception that the RSP is relatively closer to India. Against this backdrop, the visit will be crucial from both diplomatic and political perspectives, as any misstep could have domestic repercussions for the Balen-led government. Nepal maintains a policy of equidistance between its two immediate neighbors—India and China. However, its relationship with India remains deeper and more multifaceted due to shared language, culture, religion, and an open border. Yet such proximity does not imply a hierarchical relationship. Nepal, though smaller in size, is a sovereign nation and has the right to conduct its foreign policy based on mutual benefit and equality. No external force should dictate its decisions. In the current political context, a fundamental question arises: why should every Nepali prime minister

make India their first official foreign visit? Past experience suggests that no government in Nepal has survived without the support of external actors. During his tenure, Prime Minister Prachanda visited China in 2008 before traveling to India. Many political analysts interpreted this as a departure from the 'India First' convention, signaling a shift in diplomatic posture. Similarly, during his third tenure, KP Oli was unable to secure an early visit to India, reportedly due to tensions following Nepal's decision to publish a revised political map including Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura. Oli later visited China in 2025 to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit, where he held bilateral meetings with Chinese and other leaders. Many observers viewed these events as departures from long-standing diplomatic practices, with notable political implications. According to them, deviations—

whether intentional or incidental—from conventional diplomatic sequencing carry significant sensitivity within Nepal's foreign policy landscape. This raises an uncomfortable question: is Nepal's foreign policy truly sovereign, or is it shaped to appease external actors? On the other hand, there is little evidence to suggest that Indian prime ministers make Nepal their first official visit after assuming office. Former Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral visited Nepal in 1997, while Narendra Modi visited Nepal at the invitation of then Prime Minister Sushil Koirala after a gap of 17 years. However, in neither case was Nepal their first foreign destination. In fact, Modi's first foreign visit was to Bhutan. Notably, even Gujral—who championed the 'neighborhood-first' approach—did not choose Nepal as his first destination. This clearly illustrates the absence of a reciprocal diplomatic

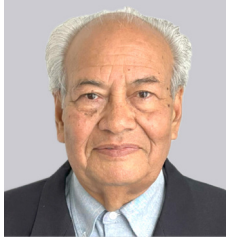
convention. It is widely acknowledged that Nepal upholds mutual respect and sovereign equality as guiding principles of its foreign policy. However, India has often been perceived as undermining these principles. In the current context, India needs to move away from a "big brother" approach and respect the sovereignty of its neighbors, regardless of their size or economic strength. Now is an appropriate time to take a fresh look at the 'India First' approach. It is time to redefine it based on sovereign equality, mutual respect, and strategic clarity. The challenge for Nepal is not to choose between India and China, but to confidently engage with both. Nepal's foreign policy stands at a crossroads. It should neither bow to external pressure nor seek to appease others. In conclusion, diplomatic conventions should not become strategic compulsions.

COMMENTARY

Ensure fair taxation and avoid burdening citizens.
-Great King P.N. Shah



Unemployment, immigrants, and non-residential Nepali citizenship issue



BY NARAYAN PRASAD MISHRA

Owing to the country's deteriorating condition, disorder, and lack of opportunities, a large segment—nearly one-third of the population has been forced to seek employment abroad. Both educated and uneducated individuals are forced to use their labor, skills, knowledge, and education in foreign lands. It is widely acknowledged that the country and many families survive largely on remittances

sent back. Living in a foreign country—enduring others' kicks, scolding, humiliation, insults, suppression, oppression, and both respect and disrespect—is not easy; only those who experience it truly understand. Yet millions of Nepalese are compelled to live abroad.

After living abroad for many years, life often becomes easier with the acquisition of foreign citizenship. For this reason, some individuals, even unwillingly and without desire, adopt foreign citizenship. However, whether one acquires foreign citizenship or not, a person living in another country is generally regarded as a foreigner by the people of that country. This is understood not only by those who have experienced it, but also by those who have not. Even if one does not realize this, it

becomes clear upon honest reflection: when Americans or Europeans obtain Nepali citizenship and live in Nepal, do we consider them Nepali, or do we still regard them as foreigners? Undoubtedly, we all consider them foreigner based on their skin, complexion, and language, and do not consider them Nepali at heart. However, we consider them Nepali just because of their Nepali citizenship papers. This tendency is everywhere the same.

Despite this reality, there are individuals such as former minister Lal Babu Pandit of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) who interpret the acquisition of foreign citizenship or permanent residency (PR) as abandoning love for the nation. Nevertheless, with the consensus of all political

parties at the time, Nepal's current constitution provides for Non-Resident Nepali (NRN) citizenship, granting economic, social, and cultural rights to those who acquire foreign citizenship. Since October 30, 2023, the Government of Nepal has been issuing NRN citizenship. This is undoubtedly happy news for all Non-Resident Nepali citizens who love Nepal.

However, I would like to highlight one issue: this citizenship appears as meaningless as the Nepali proverb "a strange spectacle in Hadigaun"—something out of place and impractical.

This concerns an acquaintance. He has lived abroad for 35-36 years for employment. He held permanent residency (PR), Nepali citizenship, and a Nepali passport. He frequently visited Nepal and

spent time with his family. He maintained savings and fixed deposit accounts in Nepal with substantial funds. Encouraged by the introduction of NRN citizenship, he renounced his Nepali citizenship last year, acquired foreign citizenship, returned to Nepal, and obtained NRN citizenship before going back abroad.

Meanwhile, his fixed deposit in a Nepali bank matured. When he asked the bank to renew it, they demanded an NRN identity card bearing the following wording, which he did not have and had never needed before.

He provided a copy of his NRN citizenship certificate, but the bank refused to recognize it and informed him that his account had effectively been frozen. This clearly shows that the NRN citizenship issued by the government is not even sufficient to renew

an existing bank account and holds less practical value than an identity card. He was in a situation where he could neither renew his FD nor transfer money to his family in Nepal. This is the result of his obtaining the non-residential Nepali citizenship. There appears to be no valid reason for such an important document as citizenship to be rendered meaningless in practice. It is difficult to understand how such a situation has arisen. The government must urgently address and resolve this issue if it is committed to the rights of non-resident Nepali citizens guaranteed by the country's constitution. If not, and if the present non-resident Nepali citizenship paper is valueless and meaningless, they should stop issuing these papers.

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Sudhan's exit...

and reform.

But the same speed that lifted him also left gaps. Questions around transparency, decision-making, and networks around him began to surface. The allegations involving Deepak Bhatt now sit at the centre of his fall. If investigations confirm any form of collusion, the resignation will likely be followed by legal scrutiny, not just political distance.

For the government, this episode is more than just one minister stepping down. It signals early stress within a system that was expected to be stable due to its strong mandate. Instead of consolidating authority, the administration is already dealing with reputational shocks.

Within the party, the impact may be sharper. RSP entered government on the promise of clean governance and structural change. Any perception of proximity to tainted financial networks directly challenges that image. Internal questions about candidate selection, oversight, and accountability are now unavoidable.

There is also a broader political cost. Rapid resignations create space

for opponents to question the credibility of the entire governance model. Even if individual allegations are not fully proven, the perception of instability can weaken administrative confidence.

At this point, Sudhan's case stands at an uncertain intersection. Legally, he may still defend himself if investigations do not establish wrongdoing. Politically, however, the damage is immediate and visible. His position has already collapsed under pressure.

The deeper concern now is what this signals for the government's decision-making process. Fast appointments followed by equally fast exits suggest a lack of internal filters. That is where the real problem sits, not just in one resignation, but in how quickly trust is being built and broken.

Sudhan Gurung's journey has moved from rapid rise to abrupt fall in a matter of weeks. And in Nepal's already fragile political environment, this is not just the end of one minister's tenure. It feels like a warning shot for an entire government still learning how power actually works when ambition meets scrutiny.

Govt's one month: Action first, coordination later?

By Our Reporter

One month is not a long time in government, but it is long enough to show intent. The administration led by Balendra Shah has used its first month to move fast, sometimes too fast, in trying to signal that it means business.

From the beginning, the government framed itself as "action-oriented." The 100-point reform agenda, unveiled in its first Cabinet meeting, set the tone. It promised quick results across governance, anti-corruption, and service delivery. The timelines were tight, with several commitments expected within 15 to 30 days. That ambition created early momentum, but it also set a high bar that is already proving difficult to meet.

The most visible move has been the wave of high-profile arrests. Figures such as KP Sharma Oli and Ramesh Lekha were taken into custody in connection with past investigations, alongside business leaders and political figures like Shekhar Golchha and Bikram Pandey. These actions sent a strong message that political protection may no longer guarantee immunity. For a public long frustrated with impunity, this created a sense of hope.

At the same time, arrests alone

do not define reform. Their credibility will depend on due process and outcomes. If cases fail to hold in court, early gains could quickly turn into public skepticism.

Alongside enforcement, the government has moved to set up institutional mechanisms. A task force led by political advisor Asim Shah is working on constitutional amendments. A separate panel under former judge Prem Raj Karki is reviewing a past security incident. Another high-level commission, led by former justice Rajendra Kumar Bhandari, has started investigating the assets of public officials since 2006. These steps suggest an attempt to combine immediate action with structural reform.

The government has also tried to maintain outreach. The prime minister has met lawmakers, diplomats, and provincial leaders, signalling openness to dialogue. Meanwhile, administrative steps such as allocating funds to modernise the Central Investigation Bureau and shutting down betting apps show attention to governance details.

The most contentious move so far has been the clearing of squatter settlements. Areas like Thapathali, Gairigaun-Sinamangal, Shantinagar, and

the Manohara corridor have already seen demolitions. The government argues that it is reclaiming public land and restoring order. That argument has merit. Public land cannot remain encroached indefinitely.

Yet, the way this drive has been carried out has exposed a gap between the government and its own political base. The Rastriya Swatantra Party appears uneasy with the pace and approach, particularly over concerns about the treatment of vulnerable communities. When a government moves faster than its party can absorb, friction becomes inevitable. This points to a larger issue. The rush to act has created the impression of energy, but it has also raised questions about coordination. Policies need political backing, not just administrative force. Without alignment within the ruling party, even well-intended actions risk losing support.

The limits of speed are already visible. Many commitments listed in the 100-point agenda remain incomplete. Promises such as a formal apology and reform plan for marginalised communities, a new anti-corruption strategy, and service delivery reforms have not been delivered within the set timeline. This does not mean failure, but it does show

that governance cannot run on deadlines alone.

The political cost of haste has also begun to surface. The resignation of the home minister has weakened the government's image at a sensitive moment. It suggests that internal stability may not have kept pace with external action.

The government, however, is not short of political capital. A near two-thirds majority gives it room to plan, consult, and implement reforms without constant fear of collapse. That advantage should encourage patience, not urgency for its own sake.

Moving forward, the government needs to slow down just enough to bring its party and institutions along. Clear sequencing of priorities, better communication, and attention to social impact will matter as much as bold decisions. Acting fast can create headlines, but sustaining reform requires consistency.

The first month has shown intent and energy. It has also shown the risks of moving without enough coordination. If the government can balance speed with stability, it still has the space to deliver. If it continues to rush, it may find that early momentum is harder to sustain than it first appeared.

34 Years Ago

Differences in NC Audible

The fissures in the ruling Nepali Congress leadership are more visible and audible than when the running feud in the party's troika-Supremo Ganesh Man Singh, president Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala—so emphatically displayed latest September when Singh dramatically announced that he would retire from politics in disgust with the "dismal performance of the government.

"I cannot be a mute spectator to all the wrongdoings of the government which has failed to check corruption, prevent



nepotism and control the skyrocketing prices of essentials," said Singh. His step triggered shock waves within organization, threatening to create a deep crack or split the party vertically.

People's Review, 7 April 1992

Japan, UNDP partner to strengthen urban resilience to climate risks

Kathmandu, April 29: As part of UNDP's global "Climate Promise" initiative, the Government of Japan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have launched a new USD 1.296 million "Smart Buildings and Green Infrastructure for Improved Human Security and Sustainable Development" project to strengthen urban resilience to rising climate risks in Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City (DSMC). The launch event was led by Toru Maeda, Ambassador of Japan and Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka, Resident Representative of UNDP. Nepal is warming at nearly twice the global average, with urban areas facing increasing risks. In Dhangadhi,

temperatures frequently exceed 40°C during recurrent heatwaves from May to August. Rapid and unplanned urbanization, shrinking green spaces, and limited energy-efficient infrastructure are intensifying impacts on health, livelihoods, and essential services, particularly for low-income households and outdoor workers.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador Maeda reaffirmed Japan's commitment to advancing climate resilience in Nepal, particularly for communities most vulnerable to climate risks. He expressed hope that the project would enhance urban resilience to extreme heat in Dhangadhi through integrated urban heat management solutions.



He also noted that this year marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Nepal, and emphasized that the project would further strengthen the long-standing partnership between the two countries. "Through this partnership, UNDP is advancing practical

solutions to urban heat in Dhangadhi, including thermal retrofitting of public buildings and community infrastructure, restoring urban wetlands, and promoting nature-based cooling solutions," said Ms. Yokosuka. "These approaches are designed to be scaled and replicated across cities facing similar risks."

The project will demonstrate integrated climate solutions in Dhangadhi, combining infrastructure, planning, and local capacity to address rising heat risks. It is expected to directly benefit around 4,000 people—at least half of them women—while contributing to longer-term efforts to build more inclusive and climate-resilient cities in Nepal.



Encourage local production; discourage imported luxury goods.
—Great King P.N. Shah

COMMENTARY

Rethinking Nepal's regional position



BY DEVENDRA GAUTAM

Expressions such as 'buffer state', 'sandwiched between two giants' and 'our backyard' ring alarm bells for countries like Nepal as they show a deeply-ingrained worldview that rejects the sovereign equality of nations.

At a time when the term 'buffer state' has surfaced in an official document—the National Commitment Draft issued on April 16—and sparked debate, alongside fresh reports of border violations in areas such as Kanchanpur, this observer chose to immerse himself in books in a quiet library, seeking a moment of distance from the noise.

If burying your head in books during great difficulties brought about by soaring fuel prices and escalating market prices resulting from

hostilities in the Persian Gulf and Eurasia is akin to an ostrich burying his head in the sand, then so be it.

Days after an hours-long reading and note-taking session, this observer keeps wondering as to what exactly stopped our governments from running a well-resourced library at such an important intersection of arts, culture, trade and commerce. Granted that tyrannical regimes feared that a well-read citizenry would bring a hasty end to their regimes, but our democratic systems had nothing to fear, least of all a conscious citizenry, right?

Leaving this question to a wizened citizenry, let this observer share random notes he jotted down during the leisurely reading session and later.

Sudhir Singh (PhD), the editor of India's Foreign Policy Modi 2.0 Opportunities and Challenges, takes us back to the prime ministership of Jawaharlal Nehru (August 15, 1947-May 27, 1964). He remarks in the introductory chapter that Pakistan raised the Tibet issue at the UN as Nehru did not want to upset China. How times change: Look at the

China-Pak dynamics these days, how they get on like a house on fire!

Interestingly, despite historic animosity, two neighbours seem to get on quite well when it comes to undermining Nepal's historic claims over a parcel of land in the Far-West on the basis of the Treaty of Sugauli (1816), which dismembered her following a war with the Brits in which a poorly-equipped people fighting for their homeland—women, children, senior citizens and soldiers—were even denied water. While the two reached a 40-point deal to resume trade through the Lipulek pass in 2015, they have pledged to walk the talk from June this year after a series of parleys and preparations, despite official objections from Nepal.

By the way, do our next-door neighbours think that the Asian Century will come via a troubled road paved by ignoring vital interests of countries like Nepal? In the introductory section of Kathmandu Chronicle Reclaiming India-Nepal Relations, K.V. Rajan (former foreign secretary of India and India's ambassador to Nepal

from 1995 to 2000) and scholar Atul K. Thakur ponder over the whys and hows of the past while navigating tumultuous ties marked by fluctuations, fathom present challenges and prospects for the future in an increasingly uncertain post-Covid-19 world.

The book came out in 2024, well before the destruction of almost all vital organs throughout the country on September 8-9, 2025 and a subsequent change of guard post-March 5 elections.

Much water has flown down our rivers since then, but scars—and key questions—remain.

What were our state mechanisms doing in the run-up to the protest? What was the status of intel coordination, at home and beyond?

These questions will seek answers even as Nepal moves on.

Back to the 'buffer state' analogy. The term also features in a section of 'Diplomatic Gleanings' (page 58-59) where Rajan makes mention of a much-contested "suggestion" from (King) Tribhuvan to Nehru for Nepal's "merger" with India, at a time when the latter was

in post-independent turmoil and security personnel from Nepal had just helped restore order in response to a request from Delhi.

Rajan's account raises a basic question: Did the prisoner of Hyderabad House have the luxury to think and act as a free man?

In 'Diplomatic Gleanings' (page 60), Rajan maintains that India was allowed to station its military mission, maintain checkpoints along the Tibetan border and harness the Gandak (Gandaki in Nepali) and Koshi for 'mutual benefits'. Somewhere in the book, he sees nothing wrong with the Mahakali Treaty.

If this section was meant to fester old wounds, this observer fears, it has done exactly the same.

Page 10 (Diplomatic Gleanings) offers a bold way to reset bilateral ties, given Nepal's yawning trade deficit with India that is likely to widen further as fossil fuel prices keep rising, jeopardising further an economy that runs primarily on dirty fuels.

Rajan recalls an advice from the then External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee,

before his stationing as New Delhi's man in Kathmandu: A duty-free access to the Indian market for all goods manufactured in Nepal, irrespective of their domestic content. His reasoning was that such a deal will ultimately benefit India and Nepal.

Let this observer wrap up with two central questions that the esteemed authors have raised: Is India losing South Asia? or Is South Asia losing India?

Not being a citizen of an empire-sized country spares you the trouble of delving into such tough questions. Nonetheless, this observer's reading is that the sixth largest economy (per IMF rankings released this April) and the fourth most powerful military may end up incurring considerable loss if it loses the region or vice-versa.

The esteemed writers know what's at stake for their country, so they go: "...If there is one country with which India needs to make a first beginning, it is Nepal."

Let a new chapter begin in our adjectives-laden bilateral ties, warts and all, and less loaded regional linkages.

Gautam is a desk editor and columnist.

A framework...

this, responses to disruptions become reactive, relying on last-minute measures, like rationing or subsidies, which slow down effective action.

Third, the use of scenario planning remains limited. In contrast, military systems routinely prepare multiple courses of action for different contingencies. In Nepal, decisions are often taken without such preparation. If the government developed ready options for situations such as fuel shortages, supply disruptions, or fluctuations in remittance flows, it would be able to respond more swiftly and with greater confidence.

To improve both the speed of decisions and the speed of action, governance needs to work in three connected stages: anticipation, decision, and execution.

In the anticipation stage, Nepal should have a small, dedicated unit, perhaps under the Prime Minister's Office or National Security Council, to track global trends and provide early warning. This reduces uncertainty and allows quicker, better-informed decisions.

In the decision stage, effectiveness can be improved through preparation. Key actions such as releasing reserves, adjusting taxes, or initiating emergency procurement should be pre-authorized under clearly defined conditions. Scenario-based trigger points, along with corresponding decision options, should be identified in advance and assigned to the appropriate authorities through a predefined decision matrix. This ensures timely, structured responses and minimizes delays during crises.

In the execution stage, a mission command approach can be applied. The central government sets the direction and priorities, while provincial and local governments act flexibly based on ground realities. The private sector, especially in logistics and transport, should be part of this system. In extreme situations, the Nepal Army can provide logistical

support as a last resort.

Overall, Nepal needs to move beyond small, incremental changes. The focus should be on building a system where problems are anticipated early, decisions are prepared in advance, and actions are carried out quickly and in coordination. This is what ultimately ensures both speed in decision-making and effectiveness in action.

Viewed through the lens of mission command and a coherent command compact, the Government of Nepal's 100-point plan should be streamlined into a limited number of high-impact national missions. This reflects the principle of concentration of effort: too many dispersed priorities dilute resources, blur accountability, and slow execution. Consolidating them into 8-10 clearly defined missions would sharpen strategic intent, improve coordination, and enable more effective allocation of resources.

Each mission should be led by a single accountable authority, supported by a cross-ministry team. This helps reduce fragmentation and ensures everyone works toward a common objective. Clear timelines, measurable outcomes, and well-defined responsibilities should guide implementation. At the outset, each mission should be carefully broken down into key tasks, including what must be done explicitly, what is implied, and what is essential for success. This structured approach helps in estimating costs, required effort, resource allocation, and identifying all relevant stakeholders. It also enables the development of a practical implementation matrix that clarifies who does what and how different actors coordinate. Finally, clearly defined indicators of performance and effectiveness are necessary to track progress, assess outcomes, and make timely adjustments where needed.

A real-time execution monitoring system is equally essential. The Prime Minister's Office should track progress through digital dashboards, with weekly reviews and red-

flag mechanisms for delays. This approach mirrors the Command Guidance Wave Application (CGWA) used by the Nepali Army, where field commanders provide regular updates to headquarters to enable rapid feedback and decisive course correction.

However, even sincere governance efforts in Nepal are often constrained by entrenched bureaucratic impediments, including excessive procedural formalities, a persistent file-centric administrative culture, rigid bureaucratic mindsets, procrastination, risk-averse behavior, and rent-seeking tendencies. These enduring structural and behavioral patterns within segments of the bureaucracy weaken initiative, dilute accountability, and delay execution. Addressing them, therefore, requires not only procedural reform but also deeper institutional restructuring and cultural transformation.

Procurement reform is another critical area. Many delays in Nepal stem from procedural rigidity. Without reform, speed will continue to be lost in administrative processes. Similarly, excessive upward delegation of decisions must be reversed. Authority should be pushed to the lowest competent level, consistent with mission command principles.

Parallel processing should replace sequential decision-making wherever possible. Multiple processes: clearances, procurement, financing, and implementation must proceed simultaneously rather than in rigid sequence. This significantly reduces delays and enhances efficiency. Accountability must be institutionalized through performance contracts modeled on command compacts. Senior officials should have clearly defined targets, periodic evaluations, and consequences linked to performance. This creates a culture of responsibility and results-oriented governance.

Communication is another critical dimension of speed. In the military, intent is transmitted clearly across

all levels through structured communication systems. In Nepal, government messaging must extend beyond central announcements to localized engagement. Local governments, community leaders, teachers, and media must be equipped with clear, accessible information to communicate effectively at the grassroots level.

Trust is built not only through communication but through consistency of action. In a volatile global environment, the government must be transparent about uncertainties—what is known, what is unknown, and what is being prepared. Such transparency strengthens legitimacy and public cooperation.

Ultimately, Nepal's challenge is not the absence of urgency, but the absence of a system that converts intent into execution. The integration of the principle of speed with mission command and command compact offers such a system.

Speed in governance should not be reduced to political signaling or short-term visibility. It must be embedded in institutional design. Mission command provides the framework for decentralized, adaptive execution. Command compact ensures accountability and performance within that framework. Together, they transform speed from an aspiration into a sustained governing capability.

Effective governance, therefore, is not about how fast the government moves, but how coherently it moves toward clearly defined objectives. Speed, when disciplined by strategy and supported by capacity, becomes a force multiplier. Without these, it risks becoming a source of instability rather than progress.

Clearing...

Later, Baburam Bhattarai's government pushed a stronger demolition drive. That showed what force can do. Both efforts failed to hold because they ignored what comes after demolition. Without

resettlement, people return or move elsewhere. The problem shifts, not disappears.

Removing structures is the easy part while providing help is delayed. The current administration appears aware of this gap. Early signals suggest a more structured approach. Public support also seems stronger than before. That combination gives the campaign a real chance. Once people start believing that enforcement depends on who you are rather than what you did, the entire effort loses credibility. A campaign built on fairness cannot survive selective application.

Across the country, coordination has improved. Local governments, district offices, and federal agencies are working in parallel. From Parsa to Dhanusha, and from Biratnagar to Birgunj, encroachments are being identified and cleared. National projects and road authorities have also joined in, reclaiming land needed for infrastructure. This alignment is new, and it explains why the campaign feels more consistent.

Nepal has spent decades trying to solve the landless problem by distributing plots.

That approach has reached its limits. Land is scarce, especially in urban areas. A more realistic solution lies in planned housing, such as apartment-based resettlement, combined with access to jobs and services. That requires planning, funding, and patience. None of those come easily in Nepal's political system.

Which brings us to the usual spoiler: instability. Governments rarely last long enough to finish what they start. If this administration falls into the same pattern, the campaign will lose direction. Clearing land today only to see it reoccupied tomorrow would be a familiar ending.

For now, the government has acted where others hesitated. It has created a sense of order where confusion used to dominate. But this is not the time for stunts or headline-driven decisions. Quick demolitions may look impressive, but they do not solve anything on their own.

स्वच्छ शहर: स्वस्थ शहर

- धुवाँ बढी फाल्ने सवारीसाधनको प्रयोग नगरौं,
 - सवारीसाधनको समयसमयमा मर्मतसम्भार गरौं,
 - तोकिएको स्थानमा मात्र फोहोर फालौं,
 - करेसाबारी, सडक छेउ र सार्वजनिक स्थानमा वृक्षारोपण गरौं,
 - सार्वजनिक स्थलका बोटबिरुवा तथा फूलको संरक्षण गरौं,
 - स्वच्छ पानी र सरसफाइमा ध्यान दिऔं,
 - ध्वनि र वायु प्रदूषण कम गरौं,
 - सडकको समयसमयमा मर्मतसम्भार गरौं,
 - सडकमा निर्माण सामग्री नराखौं ।
- शहरलाई सफा राखौं: सुन्दर बनाऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड



Rule justly and avoid corruption.
—Great King P.N. Shah

Nepal, Pax Silica, and the imperative of data sovereignty



BY SHARACHCHANDRA
BHANDARY

Nepal stands at a delicate crossroads in the emerging global digital order. As the world reorganizes around artificial intelligence, semiconductor supply chains, and data infrastructure, initiatives like Pax Silica are redefining not only economic cooperation but also the meaning of sovereignty itself. For a country like Nepal—rich in hydropower potential yet institutionally evolving in digital governance—the central challenge is clear: how to harness the opportunities of this new technological era without compromising its data sovereignty.

Pax Silica represents a United States-led effort to build secure and “trusted” supply chains across critical technologies, including

semiconductors, artificial intelligence, energy, and data infrastructure. Unlike traditional economic partnerships, it operates at the intersection of geopolitics and technology, seeking to align participating countries around shared standards for data governance, infrastructure security, and supply chain resilience. In doing so, it effectively creates a network of “trusted partners” in the AI-driven global economy.

Countries such as India and Philippines have engaged with this framework because of their strong enabling conditions. India brings a vast digital market, industrial capacity, and growing technological capabilities, while the Philippines offers a well-established IT services sector and deep strategic cooperation with the United States. Their participation is grounded in structural strength and institutional readiness.

Nepal's context, however, is different. The recent visit of Samir Paul Kapur, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central

Asian Affairs, to Nepal in April 2026 highlighted growing engagement in areas such as technology, infrastructure, and private-sector cooperation. His discussions with political leaders and business representatives on digital infrastructure and artificial intelligence reflect a widening U.S.-Nepal technological dialogue.

Although framed as economic cooperation, such engagement aligns with the broader logic of Pax Silica—bringing countries into a trusted technological ecosystem. The idea that Nepal could be drawn into this framework is supported by several converging trends.

Nepal's hydropower resources are increasingly seen as a strategic asset in the global data economy, where energy-intensive data centers require stable and clean electricity. The government's interest in developing Nepal as a data center hub, combined with the private sector's promotion of a “hydro-to-data” vision in international engagements, reinforces this possibility.

Additionally, the global push to diversify data infrastructure away from concentrated geopolitical risks has increased the relevance of smaller, energy-rich and politically neutral countries like Nepal. Yet Nepal cannot simply emulate India or the Philippines. It lacks comparable industrial depth, technological ecosystems, and regulatory maturity. Participation in frameworks like Pax Silica requires strong legal systems governing data protection, cybersecurity, and investment screening—areas where Nepal is still developing. Moreover, Nepal's long-standing policy of balancing relations with major powers makes alignment with any single geopolitical bloc a sensitive issue. Infrastructure constraints, including limited digital connectivity, skilled human resources, and institutional capacity, further complicate rapid integration.

At the center of this debate lies the question of data sovereignty—the ability of a nation to control

data generated within its borders. As Dr Kamal Prasad Pokhrel, Chief Statistics Officer at the National Statistics Office, explains, data security is the practice of protecting digital information from unauthorized access, corruption, theft, or loss throughout its entire lifecycle. It relies on ensuring confidentiality, integrity, and availability through measures such as encryption, controlled access, and reliable backup systems. For a least developed country like Nepal, however, the issue goes beyond definition and enters the realm of capacity. Building a secure digital ecosystem requires substantial investment in infrastructure, skilled manpower, and institutional readiness. Technologies such as encryption systems, access controls, and resilient backup mechanisms are not merely technical choices—they are resource-intensive commitments. Weak implementation can expose systems to cyberattacks, data breaches, and operational disruptions.

This creates a fundamental dilemma. On one hand, expanding digital infrastructure—particularly data centers powered by hydropower—offers opportunities for foreign investment, job creation, and integration into the global digital economy. On the other hand, inadequate safeguards could deepen dependency on foreign technology providers and expose national data to external control. In such a scenario, economic gains may come at the cost of strategic autonomy.

Integration into global digital systems often entails cross-border data flows, reliance on foreign platforms, and exposure to external regulatory regimes. Without adequate safeguards, Nepal risks losing control over critical national data, increasing dependency on external actors, and weakening its policy independence in the digital sphere. However, disengagement is not a viable option. Nepal must participate in the global digital economy to achieve long-term economic growth and technological progress. The challenge is to do

so on its own terms. This requires building a robust data governance framework, strengthening cybersecurity capacity, investing in digital infrastructure, and ensuring that hydropower-driven data initiatives serve national interests. Equally important is maintaining a balanced and diversified approach to international partnerships. The rise of Pax Silica signals a new era in which technology, economy, and national security are deeply interconnected. Nepal's growing engagement in this space presents both opportunity and risk. While the country must embrace the development of science, technology, and the digital economy, it must do so without compromising its sovereignty. In the digital age, sovereignty is no longer defined solely by territorial boundaries—it is defined by control over data, infrastructure, and technological systems. For Nepal, safeguarding data sovereignty while pursuing innovation and growth will be the defining challenge of its digital future.

The challenge is to do

Populism of political airstrips: Nepal's great airport paradox

BY SHANTA
KUMAR SHRESTHA

The inclining landscape makes road construction a grueling, multi-generational battle against gravity. Hence, aviation has long been hailed as Nepal's sixth sense. It is the invisible thread that stitches remote mountain to the bustling markets of Kathmandu. Although billions of rupees are poured into asphalt and air traffic control towers, a cynical pattern has emerged. Nepal's aviation map is increasingly becoming a graveyard of political vanity projects. For a landlocked nation, the sky is the only border that doesn't require a transit treaty. Aviation contributes approximately 4 to the national GDP, serving as the primary gateway for the nearly one million tourists who fuel our hospitality sector. The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) faces a sobering reality. Out of the 50+ airports scattered across the country, less than half are consistently operational. While Tribhuvan International

Airport groans under the weight of over-saturation, other facilities stand as silent monuments to administrative oversight. The recent operations of the Gautam Buddha International Airport and Pokhara Regional International Airport were framed as milestones of national pride. Yet, months into their operation, the runways remain largely empty of the international wide-body jets they were built to host.

In contrast, many smaller domestic airports such as Ilam, Baglung, Suketar, etc. remain underutilized or completely non-operational. These projects often lacked proper feasibility studies and now stand as symbols of wasted investment, with some even turning into grazing fields. The expansion of road networks has further reduced the demand for air travel in certain regions, making it difficult for these airports to sustain operations. The phenomenon of the “political stunt” airport is most visible in the domestic Short Take-Off and Landing



(STOL) airports. Over the decades, influential leaders have funneled budget allocations to build airstrips in their home districts, often ignoring technical feasibility. When a seasonal road finally reaches a mountain village, the local airstrip which are often under-equipped and plagued by weather cancellations, they quickly become redundant. These ghost airports continue to drain the national treasury for maintenance and security, serving no functional purpose in the social and economic system of the region.

While the functioning airports have boosted tourism, created jobs, and facilitated imports and exports, the non-operational ones highlight how infrastructure projects driven by politics can burden the economy. An airport is a system, not just a strip of blacktop. When we build an international hub without securing bilateral air routes or ensuring competitive ground handling fees, we aren't building infrastructure; we are building a political billboard. Rather than political

motives, future investments must be guided by demand analysis, regional connectivity needs, and integration with other transport systems. Aviation sector must move from stunt to sustainability. High altitude entry routes via India must be secured for the survival of the new international hubs. Not every district needs an airport. The resources should be diverted toward upgrading a few regional hubs into all-weather facilities rather than maintaining dozens of defunct strips. The only way to restore global confidence and invite international carriers to explore our new runways is by removing Nepal from the EU air safety blacklist. Nepal stands at a crossroads. We can continue to build monuments to political ego, or we can transform our airspace into a genuine corridor for sovereign growth. Until then, the millions spent on underused runways remain a high price to pay for a view that rarely includes a landing plane.

Airports in Pokhara, Bhairahawa and Nijgad



BY SURYA RAJ
ACHARYA

The initial concept of operating Pokhara and Bhairahawa airports as “fully-fledged” international airports was fundamentally flawed. Even if India had provided air routes, only limited flights from Indian cities would have been possible—but the anticipated surge of international flights was never realistic. As a student of transportation systems, I had raised this issue in various forums even before the airports were constructed. However, the concerned authorities did not take it seriously. There was a widespread misconception that foreign airlines would line up to operate flights simply because of the names “Pokhara” and “Bhairahawa.” This also reveals how weak the understanding of airport planning is within government agencies. Construction has been completed. The airports are ready for international flights—but the flights are not there. The reason is simple: international aviation operates on its own principles of demand and supply. Just because an airport is built does not mean international flights will automatically rush in. Particularly in developing countries, it

is extremely difficult for international airports in small to mid-sized cities outside the capital to become commercially successful.

What is surprising is that a section of society—even the government—still insists on operating these airports at “full capacity,” based on these flawed expectations. In this context, I will use a simple analogy: ignoring market realities, a massive shopping mall is built in a small mountain town, but due to low customer potential, no one comes to open shops. In such a situation, the slogan of “operating the mall at full capacity” becomes meaningless in itself. Tourism is one of Nepal's promising sectors. However, to support it, the country needs a full-capacity, international-standard airport serving the capital, Kathmandu (the proposed Nijgad Airport). We should not expect too much from Bhairahawa and Pokhara, which were built on unrealistic expectations. Over time, some flights may be added, but the likelihood of attracting enough international traffic to operate at “full capacity” is extremely low.

The new government, like previous ones, should not remain entangled in the dream of “full capacity” for Bhairahawa and Pokhara airports. Work on constructing Nijgad Airport should move forward as soon as possible.

(Source: X)

Machhapuchchhre Bank Ltd. expands MBL IT loan service

Kathmandu, April 25: With the objective of promoting digital transformation, Machhapuchchhre Bank has introduced a new loan scheme called the MBL IT Loan. Launched with the goal of empowering businesses and entrepreneurs engaged in the

information technology sector, this loan scheme is expected to encourage innovation in the IT field while further strengthening Nepal's growing IT industry. Additionally, the bank plans to provide IT and software companies in Nepal with easier access to financing for working



capital, infrastructure development, and operational expansion. Under this scheme, only businesses registered with the relevant government authorities

will be eligible to apply for the loan. Eligible entities include IT/software firms (sole proprietorships or partnerships) and private limited companies. Such companies must have

regularly paid taxes such as PAN and VAT. They should be operating in areas such as software development, IT outsourcing, IT services, cybersecurity, fintech, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, and must have been in operation for at least two years.