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If I could manifest a wish for Nepal, it would be collective wisdom. We have so many high achievers amongst us, we have thinkers and doers, we have artists and dreamers, we are a nation of people with large and generous hearts, we are courageous and unafraid of hard work. What, perhaps, we do not have is true leaders. Leaders who truly are committed to building the country and working for collective progress and good. And yet, we are the ones who chose them to seats of authority and position.

Wisdom in politics and leadership is a crucial trait. Wisdom among communities and people is an asset. As individuals, we mostly tend to make the best decisions for ourselves in any given circumstance. But the minute we have four people coming together to make a decision, ego and assertiveness come to the forefront often resulting in a compromised decision rather than the best one. This is reflected and prevalent in the many procedures, laws, policies and rules active in the country today.

Someone has rightly pointed out that ‘an individual can be a genius but a group of geniuses becomes an idiot’. We have intelligent and charismatic politicians in the country but when they come together, disorder prevails within their own parties and within the coalitions they form. And when decisions are taken among such people, they are bound to not be the best ones. As citizens, it is also our fault that we either choose to follow blindly or descend into chaos.

In a time, when all information is at our fingertips, it is sometimes baffling that we remain inert to the poor policies and practices that are eating up our system. Bill Drayton who pioneered the concept of social entrepreneurship said, ‘There is nothing more powerful than a community acting on its own understanding’. Nothing could be truer. But it starts with first acknowledging and wanting to understand. Politics, policy, leadership are not mere words to be thrown around, they decide the trajectory of our lives. A political or business leader in position is not someone who deserves our attention and respect for the seat s/he is in, they should get our respect only for the work they deliver, the integrity with which they make decisions, and the intent for progressive outcome.

We have always been led to imagine the leader as a solitary figure standing at the helm controlling circumstances but this image is far from the truth, effective leadership is not a solo endeavour but a collective journey in which each person has an obligation and a part to play.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charu Chadha', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Charu Chadha
editor

BIZ INDICATORS

FOREX MARKET	Unit	20-Nov-24	20-Oct-24	YOY (20 Nov 2023)
INR	100	160.00	160.00	160.00
USD	1	134.77	134.21	132.94
EUR	1	142.22	145.54	145.02
GBP	1	170.25	175.07	165.68
AUD	1	87.51	90.05	86.53
CNY	1	18.62	18.89	18.43
SELECTED MACROECONOMIC INDICATORS		Mid-October 2024	Mid-September 2023	YOY (Mid-October 2023)
Real GDP at Basic Price	%	4.82	3.50	2.30
Gross National Income (GNI)	%	7.00	7.00	8.10
Gross Domestic Product (Current Price)	Rs in billion	5704.8	5704.8	5348.5
CPI (y-o-y)	%	4.82	3.85	7.5
BOP (-Deficit)	Rs in billion	185.0	101.8	101.7

Source: Nepal Rastra Bank

B³⁶⁰ BUSINESS

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SOVAN BIR MALAKAR
TRISARA, THE BAKING FACTORY,
PEROS PIZZA,
SANCHYAN RAMEN, JADE CITY
HOTEL & EVOLVE FITNESS



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NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF EDUCATION CONSULTANCY BUSINESS

THE EDUCATION CONSULTANCY SECTOR IN NEPAL HAS WITNESSED A SIGNIFICANT SURGE IN RECENT YEARS, FUELLED BY THE INCREASING ASPIRATION OF NEPALI STUDENTS TO PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION ABROAD. AS THE LANDSCAPE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION EVOLVES, SO DO THE TRENDS AND STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THE CONSULTANCIES.

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COMMON SENSE VS. ECONOMICS “COMMON SENSE” SOUNDS GREAT, BUT ECONOMIC TRUTHS ARE OFTEN THE OPPOSITE OF COMMON SENSE.

SEAT BELTS ARE EFFECTIVE, RIGHT? YES, EFFECTIVE AT PROTECTING THE DRIVER AND THE CAR'S OCCUPANTS, BUT HOW DO SEATBELTS AFFECT THE SAFETY OF THOSE NOT IN THE CAR? THIS IS WHERE COMMON SENSE AND ECONOMICS DIVERGE.

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MY LEADERSHIP STYLE IS COLLABORATIVE AND INTEGRITY-FOCUSED. I PRIORITISE HONESTY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LISTENING TO OTHERS. I ALSO WORK HARD TO BE APPROACHABLE BECAUSE I THINK OPEN COMMUNICATION BUILDS A STRONGER TEAM. MY EXPERIENCES IN DIFFERENT SECTORS HAVE SHOWN ME THAT ADAPTABILITY IS CRUCIAL; EVERY SITUATION, EVERY TEAM REQUIRES SOMETHING DIFFERENT. SO, I AIM TO BE FLEXIBLE WHILE STAYING TRUE TO MY CORE VALUES OF INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

GOKARNA RAJ AWASTHI
DIRECTOR GENERAL, FEDERATION OF
NEPALESE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND
INDUSTRY

LEADERSHIP

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MY LIFE PHILOSOPHY CENTRES ON RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPATHY. I STRIVE TO VIEW SITUATIONS FROM OTHERS' PERSPECTIVES, NOT JUST MY OWN. IN BUSINESS AND IN LIFE, THIS APPROACH FOSTERS UNDERSTANDING AND COLLECTIVE GROWTH

KAPIL DEV REGMI

FOUNDER PRESIDENT, ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS NEPAL

DIRECTOR, ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS INTERNATIONAL



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CREATIVITY COMMUNITY CONNECTION

SOVAN BIR MALAKAR

Trisara, The Baking Factory, Peros Pizza,
Sanchyan Ramen, Jade City Hotel & Evolve Fitness

In the dynamic world of hospitality, few stories are as compelling as that of Sovan Bir Malakar, a tested entrepreneur with 14 years of experience in Nepal's fiercely competitive restaurant industry. From an early start in the garment business to co-owning a popular restaurant that seamlessly blends diverse cuisines and live music, Malakar has shaped his career through hard work, resilience and an unwavering dedication to quality.

His journey in the hospitality business was inspired by a family heritage rich in entrepreneurship, particularly the influence of his father who instilled values of resilience, long-term focus and community involvement. Today, Malakar's restaurant is not only a thriving business but also a landmark hangout for locals and tourists alike.

Beyond his role as a restaurateur, Malakar has ventured into other businesses including the fitness industry, demonstrating a knack for diversifying his investments while staying true to his vision of community and wellness. His future goals, including expanding the restaurant's brand and launching a resort that highlights authentic Nepali culture.

In this edition of **Business 360**, Malakar shares his insights into managing the demands of the hospitality industry, the importance of innovation and customer satisfaction, and the invaluable lessons he has learned along the way.





My father, Surendra Bir Malakar, has been a huge influence. He always emphasised resilience, learning from mistakes, and keeping a strong focus on long-term goals rather than short-term gains.



What led you to open Trisara?

I come from a family with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. I think that played a huge role in shaping my mindset early on. I began in the hospitality industry nearly 14 years ago by starting Trisara and since then it has been an incredible journey. It has not been easy, of course; hospitality is a challenging industry. But there is something so satisfying about creating experiences and spaces where people can come together, relax and make memories. That is what motivates me every day.

Did you always want to run a restaurant, or was there a catalytic point for you that shaped this decision?

That is actually an interesting question. Honestly, I didn't initially set out to enter the restaurant business. My first experience in business was actually in garments. But I soon realised that Nepal has such a rich cultural and natural landscape, and I thought it would be a good idea to get into tourism and hospitality in any small way that I could. As time passed and as I started gaining more exposure and started

learning about the different segments within hospitality, I realised there was a lot of potential in the restaurant industry. Tourism and hospitality are interconnected, and a restaurant can play a big part in a tourist's experience of a destination. Over time, the idea of owning a restaurant started to grow on me, especially the chance to offer exceptional experiences to both locals and visitors.



Any overlaps from your experience of seven years in the garment business that helped you with the restaurant business?

Absolutely, there is a lot of overlap. For one, the garment business taught me a lot about customer service which is the heart of any business whether you are offering a product or a service. In both fields, you need to make people feel valued. I also gained insights into cultural sensitivity, understanding how different people approach dining and hospitality based on where they come from. It is not just about serving food; it is

about creating an atmosphere that people want to return to. In the garment business too as an entrepreneur you need to be aware about the cultural sensitivities of the market that you are catering to. Every region across the world or for that matter even within a country has a different sense of dressing. The garment business helped me understand that at a deep level, and I try to bring that same attention to detail and warmth into the restaurant.

You have often said that your family has been instrumental in shaping your entrepreneurial outlook. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

My father, Surendra Bir Malakar, has been a huge influence. He has been in business himself, primarily in the automobile industry, for many years. Growing up, I watched him navigate challenges, make tough decisions, and balance various responsibilities which I think subconsciously prepared me for a similar path. He always emphasised resilience, learning from mistakes, and keeping a strong focus on

long-term goals rather than short-term gains. My father was also involved in various organisations like the Nepal Chamber of Commerce, and seeing him build connections and foster relationships taught me about the importance of community and networking. In fact, my father is a former president of Nepal Chamber of Commerce. The other valuable lesson I learned from my father was balancing personal and work life. I feel this is one of the most delicate situations one can get into when running multiple businesses; he also maintained



Diversifying is also a way to mitigate risk. Hospitality can be unpredictable – tourism seasons, economic shifts, and even global events can have a huge impact. By branching into fitness, I can balance out some of that risk. Our fitness centre isn't just a gym; we want it to be a community hub where people can focus on their health and wellbeing while socialising.

that no matter how busy you are, you must be able to take out time for your family because at the end of the day it is due to their love and support you are where you are.

How do you view the hospitality industry in Nepal?

Nepal's hospitality sector is growing and I think we all have a role to play in shaping it positively. For example, there is a lot of talk about diversifying tourism and hospitality offerings in Nepal – things like ecotourism, experiential dining, and integrating local culture into hospitality experiences. I feel a sense of duty to help advance these ideas and encourage others in the industry to aim higher. By raising the standards and innovating, we can attract more international tourists and create a sustainable industry that provides long-term employment and benefits for local communities.

Any specific strategies you have implemented to keep your restaurant unique and appealing to guests?

Innovation is definitely essential in this business. For us, it starts with maintaining high quality and consistency. Quality over quantity is our core principle especially in times of economic challenges and inflation where many businesses are tempted to compromise. We have kept our prices steady without sacrificing the quality of ingredients or service. We also focus on creating a memorable ambiance. We offer a blend of live music, different types of cuisine, and a family-friendly environment that appeals to a broad range of people. We want every guest, from young professionals to families, to feel welcome.

There is one incident I would like to share which helped us a lot in terms of indirect marketing of Trisara. We once had former king Gyanendra Shah visit our restaurant and that was a big turning point for us. Previously, we used to have individuals or groups of boys and girls coming to Trisara. However, after the former king's visit, we started

having more families coming to our restaurant. People started recognising our restaurant as a place where families could come and have a good time.

How do you cater to all these different and diverse clients and preferences?

It is a bit of a balancing act. We try to create an environment where everyone can find something they enjoy. We have noticed that people often come in groups with varied tastes, so we offer diverse food options. And live music has been a game-changer for us; it adds energy and draws in a lot of young people. We are also exploring loyalty programmes similar to what big brands like Starbucks have. A loyalty programme could help us connect with customers in a more personal way, rewarding regulars and encouraging more visits.

We are in the pilot stage of the loyalty programme right now but the idea is to create a loyalty card that customers can use across our sister companies and any future branches. Customers would be able to earn points, get discounts and enjoy other perks. In a business like ours, where competition is fierce, fostering customer loyalty can make a huge difference. It is not just about one visit; it is about building a relationship over time, so they feel a connection to our brand. I am excited to see how it unfolds.

You have recently opened Evolve Fitness. What motivated you to diversify into the fitness industry?

The fitness industry is something I have always been interested in, and diversifying is also a way to mitigate risk. Hospitality can be unpredictable – tourism seasons, economic shifts, and even global events can have a huge impact. By branching into fitness, I can balance out some of that risk. Our fitness centre isn't just a gym; we want it to be a community hub where people can focus on their health and wellbeing while socialising. It is about creating spaces where people can connect and grow, whether that is over a meal or a workout.

Any new projects or expansions in the pipeline?

We have some exciting plans. In addition to expanding our loyalty programme and potentially franchising the restaurant, I am also exploring the idea of opening a resort in Kakani. This has been a long-standing dream. A resort would allow us to offer a full experience, combining relaxation, food and activities in one location. We are still in the planning stages but I think there is a lot of potential in creating something unique, blending luxury with authentic Nepali culture. I would love to attract international tourists and give them a memorable stay.

How do you use social media to impact business?

Social media has been a game-changer, no doubt. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook allow us to reach a massive audience, far beyond what traditional marketing could achieve. It is especially helpful for restaurants since people love to share pictures of their food and dining experiences. We have embraced it as a key part of our marketing strategy. Social media helps us show potential customers what we offer, from the ambiance to the dishes. It is also a great way to engage directly with customers, responding to feedback and building a community.

Any advice to young entrepreneurs who are just starting out?

My advice would be to be patient and stay resilient. It is easy to feel discouraged, especially in the early stages but success does not come overnight. Building something meaningful takes time and effort. I would also say, do not be afraid to take risks but make sure you are prepared for the ups and downs that come with it. Surround yourself with people you trust and do not underestimate the power of networking. Lastly, stay focused on quality. Whatever you are doing, make sure you are giving it your best effort, because people notice. **B**



The education consultancy sector in Nepal has witnessed a significant surge in recent years, fuelled by the increasing aspiration of Nepali students to pursue higher education abroad. As the landscape of international education evolves, so do the trends and strategies employed by the consultancies. Students seeking guidance from education consultancies are increasingly targeting countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and several European nations. While undergraduate programmes remain popular, postgraduate courses, particularly in fields like engineering, business and healthcare, are gaining traction.

The decision to engage an education consultancy presents a complex choice. On one hand, consultancies offer expert guidance, streamlined application processes and visa support. However, they also come with associated costs and a potential loss of autonomy. Students must carefully evaluate the credibility and track record of a consultancy to ensure their best interests are prioritised.

To understand how the education consultancy business is evolving in the country and what lies ahead, in this edition of **Business 360**, we spoke to some of the leading education consultancy executives: **Abhishek Shrestha**, Country Director, IDP Nepal; **Mahesh Babu Timalisina**, Founder and CEO, Kangaroo Education Foundation; **Bhojraj Pandey**, Executive Director, Education Park; **Narayan Bajaj**, Head of Operation, Global Reach, Nepal; and **Sonee Shrestha**, CEO, Westford Education.



NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF EDUCATION CONSULTANCY BUSINESS



ABHISHEK SHRESTHA
Country Director
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MAHESH BABU TIMALSINA
Founder & CEO
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BHOJRAJ PANDEY
Executive Director
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SONEE SHRESTHA
CEO
Westford Education



NARAYAN BAJAJ
Head of Operation
Global Reach Nepal



A lot of companies, in my opinion, enter this industry purely lured by the commercials of the business in the form of commissions from the university or college that they are recruiting the students to. There are some unscrupulous players unfortunately that do not work in the best interest of the students. Many tend to provide students the 'easy way out' in terms of proving their financial capability, which is detrimental to the student and our industry in the long run.

ABHISHEK SHRESTHA

Country Director, IDP Nepal



What are the current trends for students applying from education consultancies? Which countries are they targeting, which levels and what subjects?

Abhishek Shrestha: The preferred destinations of Nepali students currently are the USA, the UK and Australia with demand for New Zealand and Ireland rising in recent times. We are seeing a slowdown in the demand for Canada because of the increased visa processing time and unfavourable visa outcomes but I am confident demand will bounce back once the situation improves. We see a healthy mix of students aspiring to study in their Master's and Bachelor's level, with Master's level seeing a slightly higher share. Historically, subjects like business and management, accounting, engineering, IT and nursing have been very popular choices among Nepali students. Off late, we have seen demand rising for courses related to agriculture, sustainable tourism, health management and leadership, biotechnology and others.

Mahesh Babu

Timilsina: Over 90% of students going abroad from Nepal apply through education consultancies due to the expertise and support these agencies provide. Education consultancies build relationships with international institutions, facilitating student admissions and visa processes more efficiently than if they were to apply independently. Education consultancies are trusted by institutions as they handle multiple students and often have certified, well-trained counsellors who understand the needs and expectations of both students and institutions.

Data from Nepal's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology shows that in 2023, Australia was the most popular destination, with 26,443 No Objection Certificates (NOCs) issued, followed by Canada (24,684), Japan (23,568), the UK (11,846), and the USA (6,999). Notably, 2024 data indicates South Korea is also emerging, with 5,216 NOCs issued as of mid-July. About 70% of students apply for undergraduate programmes,

while 30% aim for postgraduate studies. The most popular subjects include business, IT, accounting, hospitality, social work, nursing and healthcare.

Bhojraj Pandey: Nepali students mostly prefer to study in Australia, Canada, USA, UK, with Australia being the top choice. This is because of good job opportunities and sustainable visa process, though recent requirements for documents have become stricter. Most students go for Bachelor's degrees, and some pursue Master's degrees. Popular fields include business, IT, health sciences and engineering. Programmes like research degrees in various fields are also appealing, as they offer hands-on experiences that are hard to find in Nepal. Australia is also known for its vocational and short-term professional courses, which are affordable and skill-focused, attracting many Nepali students. Japan and Korea are also popular study destinations among Nepali students.

Narayan Bajaj:

There is no change in the trend for applying through consultancies though the number of consultancies has increased significantly in recent years. Generally

speaking, students from Nepal apply for undergraduate and graduate courses. There are a few applications for Master's by research and PhD courses also. Mainly students apply for business, IT, engineering, hotel management, health sciences, law, data science, etc. Currently, students are applying to USA, Canada, UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, UAE, Europe, Japan and South Korea to name a few and also India and Bangladesh.

Sonee Shrestha:

The most popular study destinations remain the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and increasingly Europe due to its strong education system, low or no tuition fees, and growing number of international programmes. Other emerging destinations like New Zealand are also seeing growth. Most of the students go to obtain undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. IT, business, healthcare, AI and engineering are the most popular courses.



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MAHESH BABU TIMALSINA

Founder and CEO, Kangaroo Education Foundation



What are the pros and cons of going through a consultancy vs students applying independently? And how does a student know that the education consultancy they have chosen has their best interest?

Abhishek Shrestha: While students have the option to apply to universities/colleges by themselves, it is highly recommended that they use the services of a reputed education consultancy because of the complexities in the process of assessing the students' and their family's financial capability by the university and visa documentation. My advice to students and guardians while applying to study abroad is do thorough research on the course, its outcomes, the destination country choices, its post study work rights, its part time work rights for

international students, among other things. There is a lot of misinformation in the market and on the internet. IDP has a long history of helping thousands of international students globally to realise their academic and career goals and is hence best placed to advise students in this sector.

Mahesh Babu Timalsina: Pros of Using a Consultancy: Consultancies save students significant time, offer accurate and updated information, provide support throughout the visa process, and manage complex documentation requirements. Students can avoid common mistakes and receive personalised guidance.

Cons of Using a Consultancy: Students should ensure they select a reputable agency. Not every consultancy has direct affiliations with foreign institutions, which may impact the quality of guidance they receive.

To ensure a consultancy has their best interests, students should verify the agency's registration under Nepal's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Reviewing

their track record, visa success rates, counsellor certifications, and customer reviews can help gauge the agency's reliability and professionalism.

Bhojraj Pandey: Using an education consultancy to apply for studies abroad can be very helpful. They offer expert advice on choosing universities, enrollment process, and handle visa requirements. Their guidance can save time and help avoid mistakes. Many consultancies have partnerships with universities, which might make admission and scholarship processes easier. However, some consultancies may charge high service charges or prioritise schools they work with, which might not always be in the student's best interest. To ensure a consultancy is trustworthy, students should check and review the agency's past performance and partnerships, and if possible, get feedback from previous applicants. Membership in organisations like NAAER, IERIN, ECAN can also show that an agency follows ethical standards. Asking about their

success rates and the range of university choices they offer can help students decide if the consultancy is committed.

Narayan Bajaj: A student can always be free to apply directly without choosing a consultancy. However, it is always better to apply through a consultancy that is specialised in studies abroad and work with the universities as their representatives.

Applying through a consultancy has certain advantages like smooth application process, information on scholarship possibilities, visa guidance, visa preparation, etc. Experienced counsellors are available in consultancies who can also counsel them on the right courses particularly for undergraduate students. Generally, the trend is that students going to the USA and UK apply directly to some extent since the visa process is not complicated. However, it is seen that students who choose consultancies without carrying out proper background



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Nepal's education consultancy sector is only lightly regulated, which causes inconsistency in quality and standards. The government's involvement is limited, so when rules change suddenly, it can create problems for established consultancies like us. With better policies, the government could help improve this industry.

BHOJRAJ PANDEY

Executive Director, Education Park



check of the consultancy are in problem also due to lack of proper knowledge with the consultancy. To know about the appropriateness of the consultancy, parents should also be engaged in the process and check the credentials and expertise of the counsellors they have, and whether the consultancy represents any university or not.

Sonee Shrestha: Pros:

Expert guidance, streamlined process, visa assistance. These cannot be compared with any kind of monetary value. Immigration process of many countries requires a series of documents which students and parents fail to make on their own. They need proper guidance.

Cons: Consultancy fees, less control, dependency.

Students and parents are always requested to look for consultancies with good reviews and testimonials from previous clients. A trustworthy

consultancy will be transparent about their services, pricing and will provide clear, honest advice about your chances of admission.

How do you see the trend of studying abroad change in the course of the next few years?

Abhishek Shrestha:

With disruptive changes in the field of technology, many jobs today are likely to either become irrelevant or will likely demand different skill sets than that of today. With massive globalisation and the access to new markets that comes with it, aspiring entrepreneurs will be presented with newer market opportunities with newer risks to manage at the same time. Today, education and exposure in more developed countries also present Nepali students a chance to explore their passion like sports, music and fashion as their career. With so many changes happening

around the world at a fast pace, the demand for jobs and entrepreneurial skills will also change and it is advisable that students research on these important considerations before finalising their field of study.

Mahesh Babu Timilsina:

The trend of studying abroad is likely to grow due to increasing global mobility and the immigration policies of popular destinations. However, changes in visa policies, host country requirements, and Nepal's domestic policies could impact the flow of students. Despite these potential barriers, the desire for international education remains strong.

Bhojraj Pandey: The trend of studying abroad is expected to keep growing, but there are likely to be changes, with more students choosing nearby countries and online learning options. Countries

like Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US will still be popular choices, but more universities are setting up campuses in places like Dubai, India and Malaysia. This allows students to study at quality universities closer to home, saving money and having the option to transfer to the main campus if they want. Online programmes and open universities are also becoming more popular, especially in fields like AI, data science and business, offering flexible, remote learning that leads to well-recognised degrees without needing to move abroad. Students will likely look for programmes that lead to good career opportunities, teach specialised skills, and are affordable. With this variety of options, consultancies will likely adapt to help students choose between traditional study abroad, regional campuses, or online learning based on their individual needs and budgets.

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There has been a significant shift in some of the preferred and popular destinations this year. Currently, there is a drop in Australia and Canada numbers significantly in comparison to last year due to changes in policies related to international students. At the same time, the number of students opting for UK, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand has seen an upward trend. Every student looks at the advantages of 'after study' prospects in that country.

NARAYAN BAJAJ

Head of Operation, Global Reach, Nepa



Narayan Bajaj: Currently, the overall number of students going to study abroad has not declined. And I can say that it might rather increase in the next five years. However, there has been a significant shift in some of the preferred and popular destinations this year. Currently, there is a drop in Australia and Canada numbers significantly in comparison to last year due to changes in policies related to international students. At the same time, the number of students opting for UK, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand has seen an upward trend. Every student looks at the advantages of 'after study' prospects in that country. All these countries give additional stay visas to work full time and at a later stage the option to become a permanent resident is available.

Sonee Shrestha:

- Hybrid learning options combining online and in-person classes.
- More students heading to emerging destinations like Germany, Finland and Canada.

- Increased focus on post-study work opportunities and career prospects.
- Universities enhancing industry ties and internship programmes.
- Growing use of digital platforms for easier applications and support.

What is an education consultancy's business model? Why are there so many new companies coming into this business? What is the possibility of scams?

Abhishek Shrestha:

An education consultancy's primary job is to recommend the right course, city and country based on the interest, budget, preference and academic and career aspirations of the student. It should always be 'student first'. Since preparing to study abroad and going to a new country can be a daunting task for students

and parents, the counsellor's job is to also prepare them for what's coming, not always painting a rosy picture but giving them real and practical insights into what it is like to study abroad and adjust to a new culture. At IDP, a majority of our counsellors are provided the opportunity to visit Australia, the UK and Canada on familiarisations trips for them to be able to get hands-on experience of the country and particularly a student's life so that they are able to guide our students better.

A lot of companies, in my opinion, enter this industry purely lured by the commercials of the business in the form of commissions from the university or college that they are recruiting the students to. There are some unscrupulous players unfortunately that do not work in the best interest of the students. Many tend to provide students the 'easy way out' in terms of proving their financial capability, which is detrimental to the student and our industry in the long run.

Mahesh Babu Timilsina:

Education consultancies typically earn income from training services for English proficiency tests and recruitment fees provided by partner institutions upon successful student enrollment. These partnerships often come with promotional budgets based on recruitment numbers.

Due to rising demand for study-abroad opportunities, many new consultancies have emerged, some of which may not have government registration. The current regulatory framework lacks robust monitoring, enabling unqualified players to operate.

The risk of scams does exist. Students should research an agency's experience, certification and reputation. Choosing a consultancy based on referrals, past performance, and transparency can help minimise risks.

Bhojraj Pandey:

Education consultancies act as a bridge between universities and students, offering services like counselling, university application and visa related support. They usually earn money through commissions from universities for each student they successfully enroll. The setup is easy for new businesses to enter, as it requires little upfront investment or infrastructure. Many of these new agents work as sub-agents and do partnerships with international education aggregators, who connect consultants with multiple universities globally. These aggregators handle the paperwork and payments, allowing consultancies to focus mainly on recruiting students, often with limited responsibility and government oversight. However, this rapid growth and limited regulation have increased opportunities for scams, as some agencies may mislead students for profit by pushing specific universities or programmes without students' interest. Students should look for agencies with a strong reputation, transparent service charges, and ethical practices to avoid falling victim to fraudulent practices.

Narayan Bajaj: I cannot comment on scams since they can happen in any sector. Consultancy business is driven by individual or friends starting together. It is purely knowledge-based model since the individual guiding the student should have knowledge about countries, universities, courses, entry requirements, etc, which are different for every country and university. The reason behind new companies joining the consultancy sector is due to the growing number of students going abroad for higher studies in recent years and also due to the requirement of very low capital to start the business with a fairly good rate of return on capital. Getting into a consultancy business is seen as a better option than being employed somewhere. So, many young individuals who previously worked in some established consultancies have started their own consultancy business.

Sonee Shrestha:

Educational consultancies are not schools or colleges; they only play a bridging role between students and the institutions. They have a limited but very important role in building the career of students.

Service fees for applications, visa support and university commissions might be the reasons for the establishment of many consultancies. It could also be the outcome of high demand. Moreover, students are seeking digital platforms too.

Risk of scams always exists but students and parents should be able to verify credentials and reviews.

What are the factors contributing to your success? How do you navigate competition?

Abhishek Shrestha: The factors that contribute to IDP's success is our global experience and expertise that are unmatched. We represent the largest number of universities in Australia, the UK, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Ireland. How this benefits the students is that we are able to provide the biggest range of choices to our students, giving them access to many more scholarship opportunities than any other consultancy in Nepal. We train our counsellors well for the destination that they counsel students for because we believe that studying abroad is expensive and a life changing decision for the students and their families and hence, we take this task very seriously. Our university and college partners visit us frequently to train and update our counsellors about their institution and the changing landscape of international education in their country.

Mahesh Babu Timilsina:

Key factors include continuous dedication, team effort, expanding partnerships with universities, and maintaining a commitment to excellence. Our counsellors often have firsthand experience studying abroad,

which allows them to provide valuable insights to prospective students.

In terms of competition, we have a presence across Nepal, allowing students to access services closer to home. Staying informed, embracing digital tools, and maintaining strong student engagement through digital platforms also help us stand out. We focus on quality service rather than scale alone.

Bhojraj Pandey:

Education Park's success comes from over 20 years of commitment to guiding and supporting students. As the first and only Nepali agency to win an international award, Education Park stands out by building trust through certified counsellors, strong partnerships with global universities, and a proven record of helping students succeed. With industry-recognised Pioneer Awards and a well-equipped and organised office, we provide students with the best resources to fulfil their academic goals. To navigate this competitive field, Education Park uses its long-term relationships with universities and deep understanding of student needs to offer personalised services that newer agencies may lack. By staying focused on students, regularly updating our services, and following ethical practices, Education Park has become a trusted leader, setting high standards for quality and honesty in Nepal's education consultancy industry.

Narayan Bajaj: I believe in ethical practices and try my best to support the students for their best interest. We have been in this field since 2007 and have sustained through difficult times like Covid so it makes a difference. In this market, navigating the competition is very difficult since it is there both in Nepal and from the destination country too. So, we focus on our services and try to go with the market trend. Definitely we keep watch on the key competitors' activities.

Sonee Shrestha: I am not yet successful, however, I have a strong university partnership. I have been able to achieve a trust level and we offer personalised services. We can see competition in every field. I am always focused on offering additional services (career counselling, pre-departure support, to name a few).

How regulated is the education consultancy business sector? What are some policy changes that could enable this sector to do better?

Abhishek Shrestha: The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is our primary regulatory body. While the sector is fairly regulated, there are areas where improvements could be made, particularly in streamlining the process for students. From obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to study abroad and getting past degrees recognised, to remitting tuition fees, living expenses, and insurance premiums, students often encounter procedural delays that could be addressed at the policy level.

Mahesh Babu Timilsina: The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology registers consultancies and has recently begun reauthorising older consultancies. However, there is no streamlined process for granting new licences, and regular monitoring and compliance checks are lacking.

Policies that mandate regular reporting, audit requirements and compliance checks could help standardise the sector. A dedicated framework for training counsellors and tracking performance would also improve the credibility of consultancies across the board.



Amidst intense competition and economic downturns, staying updated with the latest immigration information is crucial. Continuous learning and adaptation to evolving circumstances are essential to navigate these challenges.

SONEE SHRESTHA

CEO, Westford Education



Bhojraj Pandey: Nepal's education consultancy sector is only lightly regulated, which causes inconsistency in quality and standards. The government's involvement is limited, so when rules change suddenly, it can create problems for established consultancies like us. With better policies, the government could help improve this industry. For instance, by keeping consultancies informed about global education trends, supporting student exchange programmes with well-known universities, and introducing advanced courses and technology, it would make the sector stronger and sustainable. Policies could also guide students towards studying fields that have good career opportunities abroad and at home, while also supporting Nepal's own education system. If the government and consultancies work together to create clear standards and address challenges, it would reduce issues caused by sudden rule changes and

help Nepali students succeed internationally. This partnership would strengthen consultancies, allowing them to offer trustworthy and quality support to students.

Narayan Bajaj: The sector is regulated by the education ministry. I feel that there should be liberal policy so that everybody who wants to do business should be allowed. In many countries it is not regulated as it is a free world and gone are the days of regulations.

Sonee Shrestha: We are regulated by the Ministry of Education. In some regions, such as the UK and Australia, we must adhere to global standards and ethical guidelines.

Our government treats us like we ourselves are a school or college but we just play a bridging role. They feel consultancies are making huge money without making any

effort. It is not true. Yes, there is a financial benefit but not as the government thinks. We keep hearing about scams as well. The government should take stern action against them. They should cancel the registration and put them behind bars so that it will reduce the number of scams. The government should bring in a few flexible regulations for women entrepreneurs.

What are some risks associated with this business? And what are the growth barriers for your business?

Abhishek Shrestha: The actions of some of the dodgy consultancies and education providers have lasting impact

on our reputation as a sector. When they do not recommend the right course or the right institution or provide misleading information to the students and guardians, driven purely by the commercials, the future of the student gets impacted. Then there are consultancies that do not have well-trained counsellors and many consultancies who do not have a direct representation of the universities or colleges are also counselling students to those institutions because they get access through other agencies or aggregators. These are some of the risks I see in our sector.

Mahesh Babu Timilsina: Key risks include changes in immigration policies, which could affect student demand for certain countries and require shifts in business strategy. Also, unexpected global events, such as the Covid pandemic, pose additional risks.

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A lack of government regulation and digital adaptability could also create growth barriers. Consultancies need to stay informed about changing trends and invest in digital engagement to maintain growth.

Bhojraj Pandey: The education consultancy industry faces several risks and obstacles to growth. A major risk comes from changing immigration policies in the destination countries. These changes affect student visas, work rights and residency options, which can make students rethink or delay their study plans if job opportunities after graduation seem uncertain. In Nepal, weak regulations allow some dishonest agents to misuse the 'education consultancy' label for activities like manpower recruitment or manipulating documents like offer letters, insurance documents and financial documents, damaging the industry's reputation. Growth is also limited by unpredictable government policies in Nepal, which can change suddenly and disrupt planning, creating challenges for trustworthy agencies. Fraud within the sector also leads to stricter checks by other countries, making it harder for genuine consultancies to operate smoothly. Clear policies and cooperation between the government and the industry could reduce these issues and support stable growth for Nepal's education consultancy sector.

Narayan Bajaj: Risk factors relate to change in the policies of foreign countries for international students, which have a sudden impact on the business e.g., recently policy changes in Australia and Canada have affected the mindset of students towards these two countries. The increase in competition is significant which is a growth barrier as I see.

Sonee Shrestha: Visa policies have been fluctuating in many countries. For instance, Canada and Australia implemented capping systems, preventing many students from pursuing their

desired study destinations. Similarly, the UK's decision to discontinue accepting spouses of Master's degree students forced many to reconsider their plans or choose alternative destinations. Market saturation and potential reputational damage are additional risks. Amidst intense competition and economic downturns, staying updated with the latest immigration information is crucial. Continuous learning and adaptation to evolving circumstances are essential to navigate these challenges.

Why do foreign universities actively recruit international students while visa processes remain cumbersome and, in certain instances, restrictive?

Abhishek Shrestha: The unprecedented growth in foreign universities driven by the pent-up demand in the post Covid era created some stress in some of the destination countries, leading their governments to rethink their strategy on the number of international students. They are still welcoming students in large numbers because international students are such an important part of their social fabric now. They will however focus on quality students and the ones who genuinely intend to study in their countries as opposed to those who seem to be purely driven by the work and migration opportunities. This renewed focus has led to their admission and visa decisioning process becoming tighter. However, genuine students need not worry as the universities and countries are still very welcoming of genuine international students.

Mahesh Babu Timilsina: Foreign universities value diversity and the economic contributions that international students bring. For instance,

international students contributed approximately AUD 36 billion to the Australian economy in 2023 alone.

Additionally, international students fill skills gaps in countries like Australia, Canada and the UK, which helps address labour shortages in critical industries. Despite complex visa procedures, these countries see significant long-term benefits from skilled graduates in their workforce.

Bhojraj Pandey: Foreign universities are increasingly welcoming students from other countries. There are good reasons for this; international students bring significant economic benefits through tuition and living expenses, which support universities and the local economy. They also bring diversity to campuses, inspiring the learning environment and helping all students prepare for global careers. Many international students also contribute to important research, which benefits the universities. Additionally, they serve as a valuable labour source, often taking on jobs in sectors where local citizens may be less interested, which supports the destination country's workforce. Having a diverse student body also raises a university's global profile, attracting more applicants. However, the complex visa requirements can discourage some students from applying. Universities always advocate for easier immigration policies to keep these valuable international enrollments strong with their governments. This shows the strong connection between universities and international students in today's globalised education system.

Narayan Bajaj: We must acknowledge that education is a business, and governments are reducing annual grants to universities. To compensate for this, foreign universities generate additional revenue by charging international students higher tuition fees than domestic students. Governments support this strategy as it contributes to national income. The skill shortage in developed countries, caused by negative population growth, is another factor driving the recruitment of international students. These students are trained to meet specific skill demands and are often offered job opportunities post-study. However, visa policies are subject to change and can be used as a tool to regulate the inflow of students if it exceeds the demand.

Sonee Shrestha: Universities and immigration authorities are separate entities. Universities aim to attract a diverse international student body to generate revenue and improve global rankings. Immigration authorities, on the other hand, balance supply and demand by adjusting visa policies. For example, during the Covid 19 pandemic, when there was a high demand for international students, visa requirements were relaxed. However, as the demand stabilised, stricter regulations were implemented to control the inflow of students. **B**

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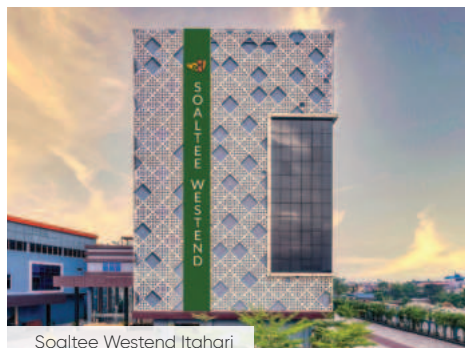
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BUSINESS LOANS NO TAKERS

Text: Pushpa Raj Acharya

Banks and financial institutions (BFIs) in Nepal have been grappling with phenomenal challenges in expanding credit. Due to lack of credit demand from the business fraternity, interest rates have been going down to the lowest minimum. Big borrowers, mainly corporate clients, are under pressure to pay back the loans they had availed as working capital during the Covid 19 pandemic to leverage their businesses through cheaper funds. However, the enforcement of the Working Capital Guideline consequently has built pressure on them to pay back the loans.

Against this backdrop, BFIs have been reportedly exploring new sectors for financing. However, the collateral-based lending policy of banks and financial institutions has been

impeding the concept of project financing. Projects that have been designed based on market potential, and backed by innovative ideas and entrepreneurial skillsets are deprived of financing as they lack immovable assets to furnish as collateral.

Ashok Sherchan, CEO of Prabhu Bank, says that bankers cannot issue project-based loans at their own risk. He stated that if the project fails due to any reason, the concerned BFI's loan sanctioning authority is held accountable along with the borrowers. "In this situation no one wants to take any risk because any project could succeed or fail," he said, adding, "Considering the fact that credit mobilisation is close to the size of the gross domestic product (GDP), which shows an overvaluation of collaterals or

something else, the government must come up with clear policies and guidelines for project financing."

However, it does not mean that project financing is not happening at all in Nepal. It is happening but the banks issue credit only against the land of the project such as hotels/hospitality business or mill/

machinery, raw materials or production outputs of the factories along with the credibility of the borrower.

However, the broader discussion centres around providing access to finance for those aspiring to entrepreneurship, with BFIs comfortable financing based on project proposal evaluations. Many global brands began as startups with innovative ideas, such as Eric Schmidt of Google, Phil Knight of Nike, and Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook.

Who avails the loan?

Till October 2024, commercial banks in Nepal have mobilised loans worth Rs 4.63 trillion. So far, only 1.9 million borrowers have availed credit from banks, however, the number of deposit accounts has exceeded 56.7 million, according to Nepal Rastra Bank. The number of deposit accounts maintained in banks is high due to duplications. However, the state of loan accounts interprets the whole story of access to finance. Only a few business people have been enjoying credit facilities and BFIs have remained confined only among the big borrowers.

Nepal Rastra Bank's instruction to lend in the directed sectors of national priority, such as agriculture; micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); and to the deprived sector has contributed a bit to the expansion of access to finance. Class 'A', 'B' and 'C' category of BFIs lend to the deprived sector through Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) or class 'D'

Table 1: How pervasive is the informal economy?

Indicators	Unit	Status of FY 2022/23	Projections of FY 2023/24	Target for FY 2028/29
Enterprises registered in authorised agencies	Per cent	49.5	60	85
Enterprises maintaining bookkeeping	Per cent	52	58	88
Number of Permanent Account Number (PAN) issued so far	Thousands	5,554	5,800	8,000
Share of informal sector in employment generation	Per cent	62.2	55	40

(Source: 16th plan, National Planning Commission)

financial institutions. However, the sad truth is even the MFIs are not able to lend to half of their members. According to the central bank, MFIs have over six million members but only 2.6 million have availed credit from them.

Commercial banks have to provide 5% of their total lending to the deprived sector while the requirement for development banks and finance companies has been fixed at 4.5% and 4%, respectively.

Authorities in the central bank claim that deprived sector lending has been instrumental in providing access to finance and unleashing the entrepreneurial potential of youth, women and marginalised communities, among others.

Chiranjibi Nepal, Former Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, has suggested that banks should explore new avenues instead of staying confined to a few big corporates if they want to expand their credit. He added that BFIs in Nepal have overlooked their responsibility towards the society, which can be fulfilled by accommodating more enterprises and aspiring entrepreneurs by providing access to finance and assisting them to thrive.

Eligibility

Though the central bank claims that there has been an improvement in the access to finance situation, the reality is drastically different. According to the government's 16th periodic plan (2024/25–2028/29), 49.5% of enterprises are not registered with government agencies and operate informally. Of these, only 52% maintain proper bookkeeping, while the remaining 48% do not. This means that 48% of enterprises are not eligible to avail loans.

Bankers have also admitted that many MSMEs and cottage industries are availing credit from cooperatives, loan sharks and other informal markets due to their inability to follow the procedural steps to make them eligible to avail loans from banks and financial institutions. Also, collateral, company and tax registration, bookkeeping

and other requirements such as developing business proposals are essential to be eligible to avail credit from BFIs, according to Gyanendra Prasad Dhungana, Chief Executive Officer of Nabil Bank. (See Table 1)

To address the challenge of access to finance, the government and central bank have to launch a joint initiative, according to Nara Bahadur Thapa, Former Executive Director of Nepal Rastra Bank.

Formalisation of the economy not only builds transparency but will also provide avenues for revenue mobilisation, jobs, facilitate realistic projections and policy making, and most importantly it will also open up new lending avenues for BFIs, according to Thapa.

As banks and financial institutions are struggling to achieve the mandatory threshold for SME financing despite excess liquidity in their vaults, formalisation of the economy offers a significant opportunity for BFIs to expand credit. Besides, the government also has to devise and execute mechanisms to help firms in the informal sector to transition to the formal sector.

Thapa suggested that the government could launch Business Development Services (BDS) to assist in the formalisation of a large number of enterprises by supporting them in registering, maintaining bookkeeping, conducting audits, forecasting business needs and preparing necessary documents. These initiatives will certainly lead to significant progress in expanding access to finance and being more inclusive as well as promoting broad based financing. Consequently, this will end the compulsion for budding entrepreneurs to rely on informal credit sources, such as loan sharks, who exploit their borrowers.

Thapa underlined the urgency of establishing BDS as a financial auxiliary like the Credit Information Bureau, Nepal Clearing House, and the Financial Intelligence Unit, among others, to enhance

Table 2: Commercial banks' credit flow in MSMEs, agriculture and hydroelectricity

Bank	Total Loan (Rs in billion)	MSMEs (in % of total loan portfolio)	Agriculture (in % of total loan portfolio)	Hydro-electricity (in % of total loan portfolio)
Nabil Bank	386.12	6.67%	12.10%	8.27%
Prime Bank	190.39	7.36%	11.06%	11.85%
Global IME Bank	383.22	8.03%	12.20%	6.35%
Rastriya Baniija Bank	260.86	13.57%	11.76%	7.39%
NIC Asia Bank	283.26	11.09%	11.06%	1.42%
Nepal Investment Mega Bank	319.75	4.97%	13.61%	8.83%
Standard Chartered Bank	88.62	2.41%	12.30%	3.61%
Everest Bank	187.30	7.60%	12.02%	8.24%
Himalayan Bank	242.81	3.15%	17.12%	6.33%
NMB Bank	202.55	4.68%	11.07%	12.23%
Agricultural Development Bank	205.04	25.13%	32.59%	5.28%
Sanima Bank	165.01	6.38%	11.06%	12.48%
Siddhartha Bank	201.08	7.55%	12.83%	8.64%
Laxmi Sunrise Bank	258.35	7.13%	11.41%	8.90%
Kumari Bank	283.94	10.68%	11.06%	11.94%
Nepal SBI Bank	132.25	5.47%	19.81%	8.07%
Machhapuchchhre Bank	132.20	7.87%	11.75%	9.29%
Citizens Bank	155.15	10.13%	11.09%	10.45%
Prabhu Bank	234	5.46%	9.81%	7.31%
Nepal Bank	203.45	19.75%	11.62%	6.64%
Total	4,486.15			

(Source: Nepal Rastra Bank, as of mid-July 2024)

access to finance. “Easy access to finance will provide room for the youth to explore opportunities in the homeland and rampant youth migration will be discouraged to some extent,” he added.

Room for financing

There is enough room for financing in agriculture, MSMEs and other sectors where BFIs have been mandated by the central bank to extend credit. But these lending requirements are largely unmet as per the central bank's requirement. However, bankers have said that they are exploring potential credible borrowers. “We will certainly lend if we receive convincing proposals,” said Dhungana. To meet this goal, Nepal Rastra Bank has also enabled banks to invest in

bonds issued by BFIs with expertise in specific sectors, thereby channeling funds into production through priority sector lending.

Banks have still not been able to meet the requirement of allocating 15% credit from their total loan portfolio to MSMEs by mid-July 2024. In addition, the central bank had instructed BFIs to lend 15% of their total loan portfolio to the agriculture sector by mid-July 2023 and 10% to the energy sector by mid-July 2024, however, the target has been largely unmet.

Recently, Nepal Rastra Bank through its Monetary Policy, has also announced it will increase the ticket size of MSMEs loan from the existing Rs 10 million. Further, MSMEs can enjoy a stable interest rate (base rate + 2%), which includes support for agro-based industries, ICT, tourism, and domestic production. (See Table 2) **B**



BANKS AND COOPERATIVES HOW SAFE IS YOUR MONEY?

Text: Pushpa Raj Acharya

Recurring incidents of cooperative fraud in the country have raised serious concerns about the regulatory institution's capacity to protect depositor funds. Although cooperatives are traditionally regarded as having strong internal controls and self-regulation, due to their member-based structure, recent events have uncovered a different reality. Investigative reports have exposed fraudulent audit reports, fictitious borrowers and shareholders, and rampant embezzlement of funds within cooperatives, revealing the depth of the sector's vulnerabilities.

The recently formed Parliamentary Committee tasked with examining the misuse of cooperative deposits has uncovered alarming findings, estimating that Rs 87 billion has been embezzled by promoters and high-level management within cooperatives. The report, presented to parliament, was based on a study of 40

major cooperatives, including 22 identified as problematic. However, due to systemic weaknesses in governance, internal controls and the effectiveness of oversight, it is estimated that deposits totalling Rs 250 billion remain at risk. The government has yet to devise a concrete strategy to address this significant financial scandal or to safeguard the interests of depositors adequately.

Political protection has enabled many perpetrators to escape accountability. According to Surya Bahadur Thapa, Chair of the Committee on Cooperative Embezzlement, certain individuals have evaded justice with the aid of undue political patronage.

Cooperatives as Ponzi schemes

Many cooperatives, particularly savings and credit cooperatives, operate in a manner similar to Ponzi schemes. They attract members with promises of high returns on deposits, essentially using the funds from new members

to pay out to existing ones, creating what resembles a 'paisa double' offer. Eventually, when the pool of new members dries up, these schemes collapse, leaving depositors in financial ruin. The collapse of numerous cooperatives has had wide-ranging socio-economic impacts. So far, 22 cooperatives have been declared problematic by the government, with most of them being savings and credit cooperatives, alongside a few multipurpose cooperatives.

Deependra Bahadur Kshetry, former Vice Chairperson of National Planning Commission and former Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, has called this a failure of cooperative laws, policies and regulatory institutions, attributing the scams to weak enforcement and oversight. He emphasises that the state should not ignore the plight of small depositors who have lost their life savings in these scams. Kshetry also advocates that cooperatives should be limited to the production and marketing of

goods and prohibited from operating like banks and financial institutions (BFIs).

Currently, there are around 31,450 cooperatives operating across Nepal with a membership base of over 7.3 million people. Reportedly, they have mobilised over Rs 500 billion in deposits with nearly 14,000 of these cooperatives dedicated to savings and credit, authorised to collect deposits and lend to members. According to the National Living Standard Survey (NLSS) 2022/23, around 18.3% of Nepal's population relies on cooperatives for credit. However, contrary to their mandate to lend solely to members, cooperatives are extending loans in highly profitable sectors, which has contributed to asset bubbles, especially in real estate, housing and the automobile sector. Some cooperatives, such as Kohinoor Hill Savings & Credit and Vegas Savings & Credit collected vast amounts of money through advance bookings in housing projects that ultimately failed, plunging depositors into severe financial distress.

Political connections

The link between wealth and political influence has played a significant role in the cooperative crisis. The cooperative sector, prone to over-politicization, has been used by some individuals to leverage political connections. In contrast to banks and financial institutions regulated by Nepal Rastra Bank, which



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Funds embezzled by 40 cooperatives

Cooperatives	Amount embezzled (Rs in million)
Shivashikhar Multipurpose Cooperative	10,111.11
Laligurans Multipurpose Cooperative	9,109.96
Sumeru Saving & Credit Cooperative	9,209.52
Kantipur Saving & Credit Cooperative	8,194.82
Ideal Yamuna Hamro Multipurpose Cooperative	7,874.54
Gorkha Savings & Credit Cooperative	7,143.13
Swarnalakshmi Saving & Credit Cooperative	3,514.42
Oriental Cooperative	3,195.02
Capital Saving & Credit Cooperative	3,175.65
Gautam Shree Saving & Credit Cooperative	3,321.63
Jestha Saving & Credit Cooperative	2,949.92
Krishi Bikas Multipurpose Cooperative	2,365.20
Sano Paila Saving & Credit Cooperative	1,543.68
Suryadarshan Saving & Credit Cooperative	1,525.54
Supreme Saving & Credit Cooperative	1,306.46
Image Saving & Credit Cooperative	1,220.53
Darshan Saving & Credit Cooperative	1,570.48
Tulasi Multipurpose Credit Cooperative	1,674.63
Kumari Saving & Credit Cooperative	1,271.98
Prime Multipurpose Cooperative	1,117.71
Pashupati Saving & Credit Cooperative	1,114.83
Baraha Saving & Credit Cooperative	1,067.26
Standard Saving & Credit Cooperative	706.39
Sahara Saving & Credit Cooperative	651.67
Pacific Saving & Investment Cooperative	487.39
Nepal Cooperatives Financial Institution	419.45
Mitra Milan Saving & Credit Cooperative	311.36
Samanata Saving & Credit Cooperative	218.83
Chhipchhi Consumer Cooperative	138.29
Miteri Saving & Credit Cooperative	158.65
Prabhu Saving & Credit Cooperative	132.08
Societal Saving & Credit Cooperative	108.74
Luniva Multipurpose Cooperative	81.18
Chartered Saving & Credit Cooperative	74.93
Hamro Naya Krishi Cooperative	77.79
Consumer Saving & Credit Cooperative	43.47
Kohinoor Hill Saving & Credit Cooperative	24.17
Vegas Saving & Credit Cooperative	16.54
Kuber Saving & Credit Cooperative	5.73
Standard Multipurpose Cooperative	7.52

(Source: Parliamentary Panel Report 2024)

follow stringent guidelines under the Money Laundering Prevention Act, cooperatives have become a haven for unregulated, shadow funds. Unlike BFIs, which have capped cash transactions at one million rupees, cooperatives operate with minimal restrictions, often circumventing financial regulations and indulging in high-risk activities.

This exploitation of loopholes has been enabled by promoters who maintain close ties with politicians. For instance, figures like Ichchha Raj Tamang, a former member of parliament, and KB Upreti, former Cooperative Department Secretary of CPN-UML, are

implicated in frauds involving Rs 7 billion and Rs 8 billion, respectively. Other promoters, such as CB Lama of Kantipur Multipurpose Savings & Credit and Surendra Bhandari of Laligurans Cooperative, have been taken into custody due to their evident involvement in fraud and are reportedly associated with the Nepali Congress. Chairperson of Rastriya Swatantra Party is under police investigation concerning his alleged role in cooperative fraud. Cooperative scams have now become part of public discourse and interest and its resolution is now a key topic in national discourse.

Weak regulatory and supervisory systems

The massive cooperative fraud stems largely from weak regulatory oversight, inadequate supervision and undue political patronage of promoters. This negligence by state mechanisms has left many low-income individuals and small business operators vulnerable. The lack of effective regulation and supervision by responsible bodies such as the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, and the Department of Cooperatives, has prevented the identification and management of systemic risks. While the department oversees 125 large cooperatives, provincial registrars handle nearly 6,000 cooperatives, and local levels oversee 23,759 cooperatives – representing 80% of all cooperatives. However, local governments lack the capacity and human resources to fulfil this regulatory responsibility. Adding to this problem, provincial cooperative registrars can issue licences without local-level consent, creating further inconsistencies in regulation.

Meanwhile, organisations intended to support cooperatives such as the National Cooperative Federation of Nepal and various Provincial and District Cooperative Unions operate as cooperatives themselves, in conflict with legal standards. Despite this contradiction, regulatory bodies have yet to take corrective action.

How safe are BFIs

In the wake of cooperative fraud, public trust in financial institutions has wavered, with many wondering whether their deposits in BFIs are secure. Nepal Rastra Bank has assured depositors of the safety of their funds with NRB Governor, Maha Prasad Adhikari, asserting that as the custodian of depositor funds, the central bank enforces strict adherence to regulatory norms. Deposits of up to Rs 500,000 are insured, and the central bank plans to increase this amount over time to further

protect small depositors and reinforce trust in BFIs.

Sunil KC, CEO of NMB Bank and President of Nepal Bankers' Association (NBA), has repeatedly assured that Nepal's banking sector operates under prudent governance, closely regulated by the central bank.

Governor Adhikari has also called for a comprehensive overhaul of the cooperative sector, emphasising the need for a second-tier regulatory institution dedicated to cooperative oversight. He noted that many cooperatives lack reliable balance sheets, highlighting the need for investigations to trace the movement of cooperative funds. The parliamentary panel's report further indicates that some promoters have moved funds to foreign countries, underscoring the importance of stronger regulatory action.

Some relief, yet a lot more remains to be done

Amid this crisis, the Office of the problematic Cooperative Management Committee has returned deposits to 6,155 individuals by managing assets, selling properties, and recovering loans from troubled cooperatives. In total, Rs 1.48 billion has been reimbursed to depositors affected by problematic cooperatives, according to Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, Balaram Adhikari. Additionally, under partial settlement terms, 438 depositors have received Rs 30 million till date, with funds deposited directly into their bank accounts.

Despite these efforts, a large number of depositors continue to protest, demanding the prompt return of their savings. Victims urge the government to expedite settlements by managing and selling assets, recovering loans and implementing other measures to ensure their deposits are reimbursed in a timely manner. They argue that penalties for promoters involved in fraud are insufficient and that swift action to return depositors' money is paramount. **B**

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RAMIFICATIONS OF CREDIT GROWTH STAGNATION AND RISING NPA

Text: Pushpa Raj Acharya

Stagnation in credit growth could dampen economic growth in the ongoing fiscal year. Though Nepal Rastra Bank – central regulatory and monetary authority – has introduced flexible provisions to support credit expansion, credit growth in the first quarter (August to October 2024) stood at only 5.25%, a dismal improvement compared to 5% of the previous fiscal 2023/24.

“Normally, the first quarter determines the scenario of credit growth for the entire fiscal year as demand is placed by borrowers at the beginning of the fiscal as per their plans

of business operations and expansion for the whole year. For example, L/Cs are opened to import goods targeting the festivals,” said Ashoke SJB Rana, CEO of Himalayan Bank.

The private sector has long alleged Nepal Rastra Bank for restricting credit expansion through various measures, including the ‘Working Capital Guideline.’ Addressing these concerns, the central bank has eased credit mobilisation. Enforcement of the Working Capital Guideline has been halted for this year. Despite these regulatory facilitations, credit stagnation persists,

indicating a lack of appetite among the business community, according to Keshav Acharya, a senior economist.

“The large corporates, overfinanced, were compelled by the Working Capital Guideline to repay loans that could not be justified within their projects,” added Acharya.

Private sector representatives, however, have stated that the government should improve the investment climate and boost investor confidence in the country. Further, bankers have said that the private sector might have been waiting to avail credit as interest rates are declining to their lowest minimum.

Commercial banks' profit surges by 20% in Q1

The profit made by commercial banks surged by 20% in the first quarter (Q1) of Fiscal Year 2024/25, according to their financial statements. The 20 commercial banks that are in operation have earned a total of Rs 16.18 billion in the first quarter, compared to Rs 13.47 billion in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal 2023/24.

Eight banks have earned a profit of above Rs 1 billion. The banks in the billionaire club in Q1 are Nabil Bank (Rs 2.05 billion), Global IME Bank (Rs 1.51 billion), Nepal Investment Mega Bank (Rs 1.46 billion),

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Prime Bank (Rs 1.28), NMB Bank (Rs 1.14 billion), Everest Bank (Rs 1.12 billion), Kumari Bank (Rs 1.07 billion) and Prabhu Bank (1.04 billion).

None of the banks have recorded negative profit growth. The bottom five banks in terms of profit are NIC Asia Bank (Rs 110.15 million), Rastriya Banijya Bank (Rs 151.3 million), Agricultural Development Bank (190.92 million), Citizens Bank (Rs 198.22 million) and Siddhartha Bank (Rs 382.08 million). NIC Asia Bank and Rastriya Banijya Bank have witnessed a significant decline in profits, with a slump of 89% and 82.4%, respectively.

Rising NPA and its ramifications

Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of banks remain high despite the soft measures introduced by the Monetary Policy 2024/25. The NRB has been accused of helping banks raise profits by tweaking prudential norms. The central bank has revised the loan loss provisioning for pass category loans from 1.20% to 1.10% through the Monetary Policy. Additionally, the Monetary Policy has accommodated the demand of bankers to classify loans under the watchlist immediately upon resumption of debt servicing. Previously, despite the resumption of debt servicing, loss loans remained unchanged under the loss loan category for six months, requiring 100% provisioning.

If the debt servicing of loss/bad loans returns to normal, such loans will be classified under the watchlist for six months before being classified as pass/good loans. Under the watchlist category, only 5% loan loss provisioning is required.

Gyanendra Prasad Dhungana, CEO of Nabil Bank, admitted that the aforementioned provision of the Monetary Policy 2024/25

helped reduce NPAs by 0.5 percentage point. Compared to the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year, NPAs increased by 0.53 percentage point to 3.93% of the total loan portfolio. The existing loan portfolio of commercial banks as of Q1 of FY 2024/25 stood at Rs 4,630.63 billion, and NPAs hovered at Rs 181.98 billion. NPLs have been consistently rising from Rs 149.58 billion in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year. They reached Rs 159.84 billion at the end of the previous Fiscal Year 2023/24.

Despite attempts by the central bank and banks to conceal NPAs through classification and soft supervision, NPAs have been increasing significantly. The consistent rise in NPLs has vindicated the concerns of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) regarding the asset quality of BFIs. The IMF has been urging the central bank to reclassify loans and audit the top ten Nepali banks using international audit firms. However, Dhungana has stated that the current level of NPAs is not alarming, considering Nepal's banking history. Private banks have been in operations for over 40 years, and government-owned banks have an even longer history.

Many believe that the reported figure significantly understates the actual NPA situation. A key criterion for determining NPL is loan ageing. A loan deteriorates from the 'pass' category if repayment stalls for 1-3 months, requiring a 5% loan loss provision under the watchlist category. It is then classified as 'substandard' if repayment stalls for 3-6 months, requiring a 25% provision. If payment stalls for 6-12 months, it is classified as 'doubtful,' requiring a 50% provision. After one year or more, it is classified as a 'loss' loan, requiring a 100% provision.

Banks' loan portfolio, NPA and profit in Q1 of FY 2024/25

Bank	Total Loan (Rs in billion)	NPA (in %)	Profit (Rs in billion)
Nabil Bank	394.90	4.24	2.05
Global IME Bank	410.96	4.67	1.51
Nepal Investment Mega Bank	336.77	5.82	1.46
Kumari Bank	296.22	4.96	1.07
NIC Asia Bank	268.12	2.08	0.11
Rastriya Banijya Bank	267.64	4.23	0.151
Laxmi Sunrise Bank	266.90	5.44	0.53
Himalayan Bank	238.84	4.98	0.72
Prabhu Bank	231.63	4.94	1.04
Agricultural Development Bank	204.97	4.78	0.190
Nepal Bank	209.70	3.95	0.60
NMB Bank	214.99	3.63	1.14
Siddhartha Bank	206.45	3.91	0.38
Prime Bank	198.46	4.86	1.28
Everest Bank	195.64	0.77	1.12
Sanima Bank	167.17	2.94	0.39
Citizens Bank	158.07	5.41	0.198
Nepal SBI Bank	134.16	1.84	0.81
Machhapuchchhre Bank	138.81	3.15	0.50
Standard Chartered Bank	90.11	1.95	0.86
Total	4,630.63	3.93	16.18

(Source: First quarter's financial statements of commercial banks, FY 2024/25)

Rising NPAs have exposed the recovery challenges faced by banks and financial institutions (BFIs). However, bankers say that the current challenge is largely attributed to economic slowdown, and that recovery will improve as economic activities accelerate.

Nepal Rastra Bank should take immediate actions to lower NPAs, according to Anal Raj Bhattarai, a financial sector analyst. "NRB, however, has announced plans to formulate a draft Bill for establishing an Asset Management Company (AMC) to manage and enhance the recoveries of distressed assets removed from the banking system," he added. "If NPAs continue to rise, it will hamper the loan expansion capacity of banks, which is

why it must be taken care of considering the risk in financial stability," Bhattarai stated.

The first quarter statements of commercial banks show that Nepal Investment Mega Bank, Laxmi Sunrise Bank, Citizens Bank, Kumari Bank and Himalayan Bank have the highest NPA in the industry against their portfolio. Banks with the largest loan portfolios, Global IME Bank and Nabil Bank also have high NPAs worth Rs 19.19 billion and Rs 16.47 billion, respectively. **B**

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COMMON SENSE VS. ECONOMICS

“Common sense” sounds great, but economic truths are often the opposite of common sense.



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Donald Trump recently identified the Republican Party as the “party of common sense.” In many ways, common sense is lacking in public policy. For example, progressive activists do not acknowledge the negative

relationship between regulation and economic prosperity. However, “common sense” is not what an economy needs. What an economy needs is free markets, and that is not the product of mere “common sense,” but economic sense.

Protecting domestic industry may be “common sense” to Trump, his supporters, and even progressives, but it is not an economically efficient way of increasing a country’s prosperity. Countless pro-free trade articles and lectures have been produced in defense of trade, but the point is that the arguments do not rely on so-called common sense, but on the indirect economic way of thinking.

These arguments rely on notions of opportunity cost, comparative advantage, and gains from trade to name a few. Consumption of other goods is sacrificed when you have to pay a higher price because of a tariff, production becomes less efficient, and mutually beneficial exchanges are prevented. This is not immediately clear from common sense.

If this is not convincing you that common sense and economics are at odds, let’s examine a more controversial example - seatbelt laws.

Almost all states have some regulation governing the use of seatbelts by car occupants. At first glance, this seems like a no-brainer.



Common sense tells us that this is a good thing. After all, seat belts are effective, right? Yes, effective at protecting the driver and the car’s occupants, but how do seatbelts affect the safety of those not in the car? This is where common sense and economics diverge.

Safety measures, such as seatbelts, may protect one group (drivers), but will heighten reckless driving and endanger the lives of other groups (pedestrians). This is an application of something called the Peltzman Effect. Essentially, the cost of reckless driving decreases; therefore, there will be more of it. This demonstrates that in order to evaluate the consequences of a seatbelt law, we must account for the lives lost by adversely-affected groups as well as those who are benefited. This conclusion would be hard to arrive at from common sense alone.

Another good example is occupational licensing. Common sense may mandate that the government intervene to guarantee a basic level of competency among various occupations such as doctors or accountants; however, economists have a different perspective.

Licensing creates a barrier to entry. Effectively, this gives incumbent workers a monopolistic advantage, allowing them to

“Seat belts are effective, right? Yes, effective at protecting the driver and the car’s occupants, but how do seatbelts affect the safety of those not in the car? This is where common sense and economics diverge.”

increase prices, reduce quality, and restrict output without suffering the consequences they would in a free market in licensing, namely, competition from new entrants. This is the point that Milton Friedman makes in his 1962 book *Capitalism and Freedom*. In his chapter on occupational licensure, he makes the case that government licensing is motivated by special interests and has negative consequences for consumers. Friedman states, “The most obvious social cost is that any one of these measures, whether it be registration, certification, or licensure, almost inevitably becomes a tool in the hands of a special producer group to obtain a monopoly position at the expense of the rest of the public”. This effect is hardly considered by the practitioners of common sense.

This is just a sampling of the ways that common sense and economics differ. Of course, common sense and economics can converge through education. Teaching the economic way of thinking helps to bring the two together, and it may even shift the preferences of the electorate toward the free market. Until then, we should be highly skeptical when a political party or movement claims to be “the party of common sense.” **B**

Source: fee.org



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Understanding the legal essentials for companies not distributing profits



Balmani Poudel has been associated with Pioneer Law Associates since 2024. He is part of the corporate team, working on diverse corporate matters. His contributions include assisting the team and senior associates on corporate compliance, drafting and research-related tasks.

Company not distributing profits and its rationale

At first glance, the term 'company' typically refers to an entity created primarily to generate profits and distribute those earnings to its shareholders. However, this definition can overlook the complexities of different business models. While many companies focus on maximising financial returns, others, such as companies not distributing profits, operate with a unique purpose aimed at societal benefit rather than only profit generation.

Section 166 of the Companies Act, 2063 of Nepal provides for the establishment of companies to develop and promote a profession or occupation, protect the collective rights and interests of individuals in a particular field, or conduct an enterprise to achieve scientific, academic, social, benevolent or public utility or welfare objectives on condition that they do not distribute dividends.

In Nepal, non-profit organisations were traditionally the sole entities working for societal welfare, formed and governed under the Associations Registration Act,

2034 and overseen by the District Administration Office. These organisations, however, lacked operational autonomy. To address this, the concept of 'company not distributing profits' was introduced in the Companies Act, 2063. This new framework aimed to ensure greater autonomy for these entities while requiring them to meet certain legal compliances. Based on data released by the Office of the Company

in the eyes of the law; therefore, companies not distributing profits were also subject to tax exemptions. The distinction made by the decision was in terms of registration and regulatory authorities. The registration and regulatory authorities for non-profit organisations and companies not distributing profits are the District Administration Office and the Office of the Company Registrar (OCR), respectively.

The involvement of these promoters not only fulfils legal requirements but also encourages collaborative decision-making and effective governance. However, these five persons should be individuals holding a Nepali citizenship certificate, and foreign individuals or entities are not allowed to formulate a company not distributing profits.

Secondly, the organisation's objectives must be articulated



Registrar (OCR) on September 25, 2022, a total of 4,305 companies were identified as not distributing profits.

Before the Supreme Court's decision (Corporate Social Consortium v. Ministry of Finance, NKP 2069 No. 3, Decision No. 8785), the concept of non-profit organisations and companies not distributing profits were considered differently. Earlier, only non-profit organisations were subjected to tax exemptions. The Supreme Court's decision erased the distinction between non-profit organisations and companies not distributing profits by interpreting that the two entities have equal footing

Registration process of a company not distributing profits

To register a company not distributing profits, the initial step is to propose and apply for name reservation through the OCR's online portal. Once the OCR approves the name, the next step is to prepare constituent documents, including the Memorandum of Association (MOA) and Articles of Association (AOA) for incorporation of the company. These documents lay the foundation of the organisation and must meet certain key requirements.

Firstly, it is essential to have at least five promoters involved in the formation.

clearly and precisely. These objectives should reflect the purpose of the organisation and guide its activities, providing a roadmap for its mission and goals.

After preparing these documents, the final steps involve submitting them through the OCR portal, paying the necessary registration fee, and awaiting approval.

Challenges in the registration process

1. Name Reservation:

The OCR often rejects names containing terms like 'Association', 'Federation', or 'Society', citing internal policy rather than legal directives,

which lack any explicit restriction on such terms.

2. Initial Capital

Requirement: Despite legal provisions stating no share capital is needed, the OCR pressures these companies to show initial capital, contradicting their ability to rely on membership fees and donations.

3. Objective Clause: OCR mandates clear income sources, creating hurdles for promoters to justify income-generation capacity and financial backing, posing challenges to new companies with limited resources.

4. Delayed Registration

Timeline: Inter-departmental opinions delay the registration process, creating unpredictability and hampering timely decision-making.

Post registration compliances

After registering a company not distributing profits, it is essential to comply with the legal and regulatory requirements applicable to public companies. This includes maintaining transparent financial records, conducting regular audits, and submitting annual reports to the relevant authorities to ensure accountability and compliance with the law.

One of the key compliances, which is distinct from public companies, is that the annual budget shall be passed by the general meeting of the company and submitted to the OCR. Such a budget shall not exceed administrative expenses by more than 25% of its total expenditure. Further, the company not distributing profits must include 'Pvt Ltd' or 'Ltd' after its name. Unlike a public company, there is no concept of shares in a profit-not-distributing company, and membership is not transferable. The profit earned by these companies shall be utilised to achieve the purpose of the company. A company not distributing profits is not allowed to merge with a profit-

distributing company, however, its branch can be expanded with prior approval from the OCR.

Moreover, to access grants and donations, the company must establish an affiliation with the Social Welfare Council. This affiliation not only enhances the organisation's credibility but also opens opportunities for funding from various sources dedicated to supporting non-profit initiatives. Adhering to these compliance requirements is crucial for the sustainability and effective operation of the company, as it builds trust with stakeholders and fosters a strong reputation within the community.

Conclusions and way forward

Understanding the legal essentials for companies not distributing profits is crucial in fostering a robust non-profit sector that effectively addresses societal needs while ensuring compliance with applicable laws. As outlined, the Companies Act, 2063 of Nepal provides a framework that allows for the establishment of these entities, aimed at promoting various professional and benevolent objectives without the expectation of profit distribution. However, the registration process has revealed significant challenges, particularly regarding name reservation, initial capital requirements and the clarity of operational objectives.

To improve this, the Office of Company Registrar must enhance transparency and ensure its guidelines align with the legal framework, streamlining the registration process. Engaging with stakeholders, particularly potential promoters, will yield insights that lead to more practical regulatory solutions. By prioritising collaboration, the OCR can better support companies not distributing profits, ultimately strengthening their capacity to contribute to societal welfare in Nepal. **B**



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“Each crystal has its own story. They are formed over millions of years under immense pressure, making them unique pieces of history”

Nepal is not only known for its natural beauty but also for the hidden treasures buried beneath its mountains. Among these treasures are crystals; glimmering, multifaceted stones that have fascinated humanity for centuries. Today, as the global crystal market grows, one Nepali entrepreneur, Parbat Ghimire, is carving a niche for himself in this promising industry. As the founder of Alpine Crystals, Ghimire is turning Nepal's natural wealth into a thriving business while promoting the cultural and therapeutic significance of crystals on a global scale.

Ghimire's story begins in Sankhuwasabha, a small community with limited access to opportunities but filled with natural resources. Like many young Nepalis, he dreamed of pursuing higher education and a better life abroad. Initially, after high school, he planned to go abroad for further studies. However, life had other plans.

“I had plans to go abroad for my studies, but things didn't work out as expected,” Ghimire recalls. At the time, his initial disappointment was hard to shake, but looking back, he views this twist of fate as a blessing.

Unable to pursue his overseas aspirations, Ghimire decided to explore opportunities closer home. His father, a seasoned crystal miner with decades of experience, became his inspiration. “My father started mining crystals 30–35 years ago,” he shares. “I grew up watching him work with crystals and that sparked my interest.”

Drawing from his family's experience and the vast untapped potential of Nepal's crystal reserves, Ghimire established Alpine Crystals in



PARBAT GHIMIRE
CEO, ALPINE CRYSTALS

2021. This venture would not only honour his father's legacy but also introduce a modern, entrepreneurial approach to the industry.

Ghimire's journey into the crystal business began as a hobby. He started with modest effort, experimenting with social media to showcase his products. “I opened an Instagram account and began connecting with tourists and collectors,” he explains.

Through engaging content and direct communication, Ghimire was able to capture the attention of a niche audience.

His efforts paid off as orders started flowing in, and within a year, Alpine Crystals had grown into a stable business. Today, the company sells 5–10 kilograms of crystals monthly, both in Nepal and abroad.

What sets Alpine Crystals apart is Ghimire's dedication to quality and authenticity. He ensures that each piece is carefully mined, processed and delivered to customers who appreciate its natural beauty and cultural significance.

Nepal is home to abundant crystal reserves, particularly quartz, which is known for its

purity and unique properties. However, despite this natural wealth, the industry remains largely underdeveloped. Ghimire identifies several factors contributing to this situation, including the lack of modern technology, inadequate infrastructure and restrictive government policies.

One significant hurdle is the Nepali government's 2017 decision to ban the export of raw crystals. While this policy was intended to encourage value-added processing within Nepal, it has inadvertently stifled growth for many small

businesses. "We lack the facilities to process crystals on a large scale," Ghimire explains. "If we had the right tools and support, the industry could create jobs and contribute significantly to the economy."

Despite these challenges, Ghimire remains optimistic about the future. He believes that with proper investments and policy reforms, Nepal can emerge as a leading player in the global crystal market.

For many, crystals are simply beautiful decorative items. However, they hold much deeper significance across cultures and practices. Ghimire is passionate about educating people on the multifaceted uses of crystals, from their therapeutic benefits to their spiritual and cultural importance.

"Each crystal has its own story," he says. "They are formed over millions of years under immense pressure, making them unique pieces of history."

Quartz crystals, for instance, are highly sought after for their healing properties. They are believed to have high vibrations that promote energy balance, emotional well-being and physical health. "Crystals are widely used in yoga, meditation and even massage therapies abroad," Ghimire explains. "In Nepal, awareness is still growing, but we are seeing more interest in their therapeutic applications."

Alpine Crystals has grown significantly in just three years with Ghimire's innovative approach to marketing. The brand relies heavily on social media to connect with customers and showcase its products. By posting captivating images, videos and educational content, Alpine Crystals has managed to reach collectors and enthusiasts from around the world. The company also participates in international exhibitions, where it showcases the unique qualities of Himalayan crystals. These efforts have not only

boosted sales but also enhanced Nepal's reputation as a source of high-quality crystals.

Ghimire's long-term goal is to expand Alpine Crystals into a global brand while continuing to promote Nepal's natural heritage. He envisions a future where Nepali crystals are recognised as premium products in the international market.

Running a crystal business in Nepal is not without its difficulties. "One of the biggest challenges is the lack of awareness about crystals in Nepal," he shares. "Many people don't understand their value, which makes it harder to create a domestic market." To overcome this, Ghimire focuses on educating his customers and building trust.

When asked what makes Alpine Crystals stand out, Ghimire doesn't hesitate. "We are the source," he says proudly. "From mining to processing, we handle every step with care. Our crystals are ethically sourced and of the highest quality." This commitment to excellence has earned Alpine Crystals a reputation for reliability and authenticity, both in Nepal and abroad.

Looking ahead, Ghimire hopes to see significant changes in Nepal's crystal industry. He advocates for policy reforms that would enable businesses to export raw materials and attract foreign investments. He also emphasises the need for modern technology to enhance processing and value addition.

In the meantime, Ghimire remains focused on his mission to promote Nepal's crystal heritage. "This is more than a business for me," he says. "It's about preserving and celebrating the natural gifts of our land." **B**

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How Commodity Markets Influence Food Prices

B360 Correspondent

Commodities are bought and sold around the global market but only a few are sold on platforms of commodity exchanges. A commodity market is where commodities, hard and soft, are traded similar to shares and bonds in financial markets, and this often affects the general market price.

The price of a commodity on an exchange will be influenced by forces beyond the manufacturers themselves. Commodity markets drive the prices of key foods and ingredients on all levels of the supply chain. Here, we will examine how close is the link between the commodity exchange to the general price level of the commodity itself.

A commodity exchange permits a buyer to lock in a supply of the corresponding commodity in advance through futures contracts guaranteeing that they are safeguarded against fluctuations in the market. The main advantage of an exchange is that it allows both participants - buyers and sellers of physical commodities - to hedge their prices way before they even transact physically.

While the price being paid on the commodity exchange inadvertently drives the value paid by the sellers in the physical world, sometimes it does not determine the amount exactly. The product specifications set by the exchange are strictly defined regarding quality, quantity, location and the delivery period of the commodity traded. This is done to attract liquidity since the higher the trades in that commodity, the better the price discovery is. However, in the 'real physical world',



every buyer and seller might require something slightly different than the exchange specifications in terms of quality, quantity or location, among others.

Commodity exchanges are based in major cities including Chicago, London and Shanghai. However, prices of key agricultural commodities such as cocoa and coffee fluctuate numerous times in a year. But does the commodity exchange, in locking in futures for large companies, work well or not for these stakeholders?

One school of thought suggests that farmers benefit from structured commodity pricing. The supporting argument states that these prices are published and made available on a public platform where anyone with a smartphone and internet connection can view the price. When farmers are not being paid the price their commodity

is valued at, it is not the large corporations who prevent them from getting it; it is the middlemen who control the farmers from receiving the right price.

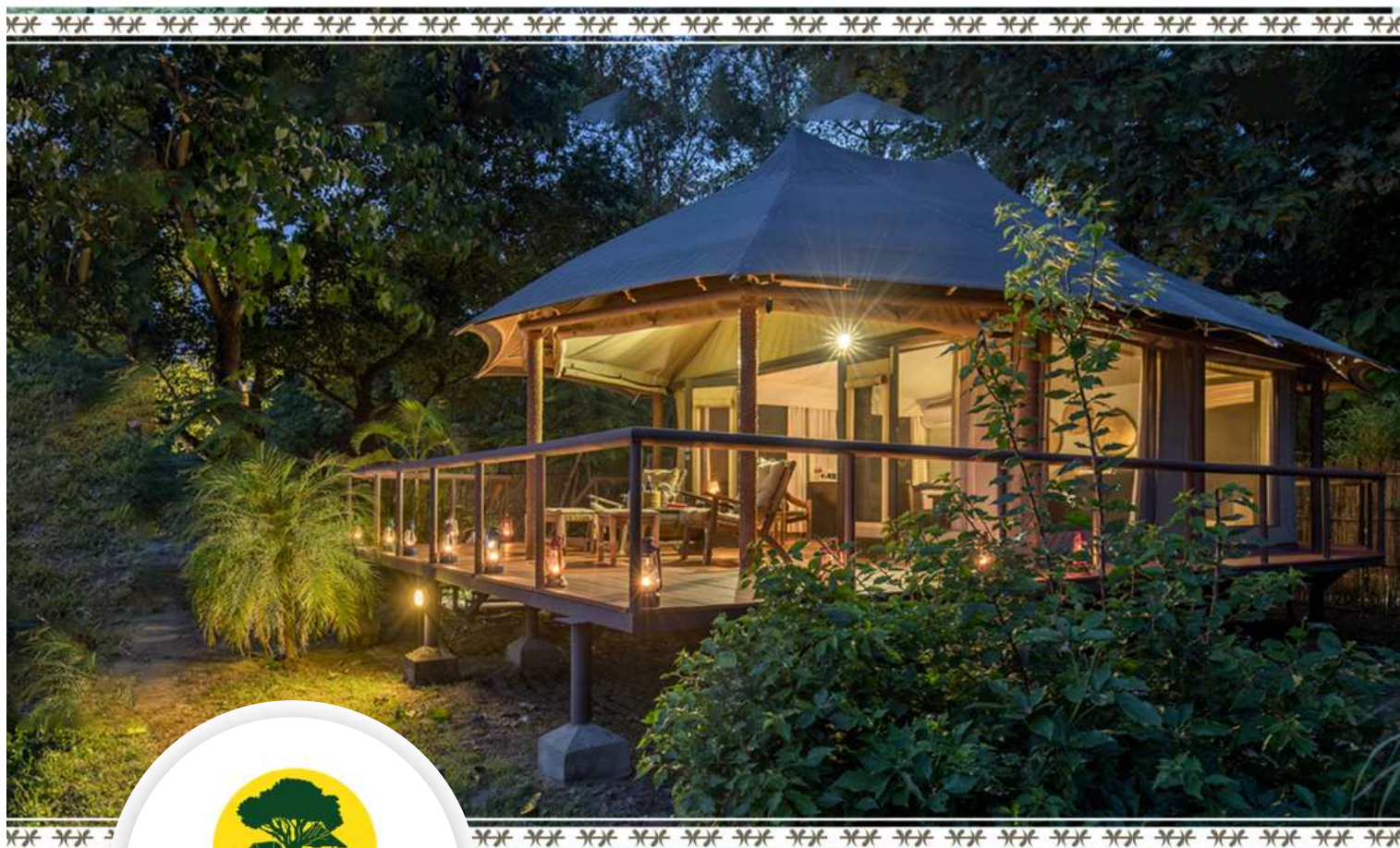
In West Africa, growers of cocoa are often paid a small fraction of exchange prices because their governments often negotiate export contracts with foreign buyers. This is where the missing link or the disconnect between physical prices to producers and the exchange prices typically occurs.

Another common feature of commodity prices is the rising trend of direct sourcing where small-scale manufacturers can work with a buyer directly cutting out the middleman and transacting directly with a buyer to fix a price that is often independent of the futures

price. In most African regions, high-quality specialty coffee is increasingly transacted through a direct sourcing model and buyers prefer this as it looks nice from a PR perspective as well and provides peace of mind in terms of supply security.

In light of the rising prices of commodities, the risk of those with contracts in the commodity markets will be mitigated versus someone without it. But again, the question arises, will the farmers on the ground feel the increased value of their produce? In the case of coffee, farmers will probably see a difference. However, with a time lag introduced as farmers are paid from one harvest to the next, they will see a benefit in the rising prices but not until their next harvest is in the bag and sold. On the contrary, large growers who actively hedge using commodity markets will be best positioned to realise the full value of their gains.

Commodity markets establish a reliable market for buyers and sellers to lock their prices. Facilitating trade through the deployment of a trusted commodities exchange model creates the backbone for sustainable consumption and production of commodities. Through this ecosystem, economies become more inclusive boosting critical links between agriculture and finance especially where information is vital to achieve efficient trading mechanisms. **B**



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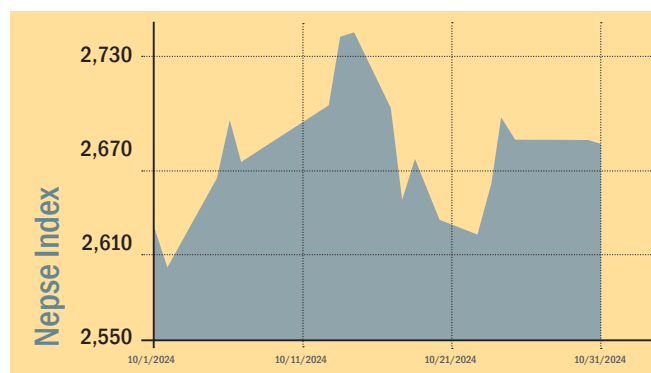
Traveller Review Awards 2024



Beed's take on the market

The Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE) index rose by 165.17 points (+6.58%) to close at 2,675.51 points during the review period between October 1 to November 6, 2024. It reached its highest point on October 17 at 2,745.36 points. The NEPSE index saw tumultuous movement, without any fixed trend, during the review period. However, it managed to recover from the decline in the previous period. The overall market volume during the review period dropped to Rs 113.44 billion, a 29% decrease. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: NEPSE Index during the review period
(September 1 to September 30, 2024)



Source: Nepal Stock Exchange

During the review period, 10 of the 11 sub-indices landed in the green zone while only one landed in red.

Finance sub-index (+24.04%) was the biggest winner as the share value of Samridhi Finance (+Rs 313.9), Janaki Finance (+Rs 240.4) and Nepal Finance (+Rs 202.1) increased substantially. Hydropower sub-index (+12.92%) followed suit with rise in share prices of Kutheli Bukhari Small Hydropower (+Rs 751), Peoples Hydropower (+Rs 283.51) and River Falls Power (+Rs 199.1).

Hotels and Tourism sub-index (+9.83%) was next in line as the share value of City Hotel (+Rs 107), Soaltee Hotel (+Rs 84.5) and Kalinchowk Darshan (+Rs 76) went up.

Others sub-index (+7.66%) saw an increase in share prices of Muktinath Krishi (+Rs 241), Nepal Warehousing (+Rs 110) and Himalayan Reinsurance (+Rs 95).

Development Bank sub-index (+7.61%) witnessed a rise in share values of Narayani Development (+Rs 166.8), Sindhu Bikash (+Rs 150) and Karnali Development (+Rs

142.8). Life Insurance sub-index (+6.44%) also saw increase in share prices of Citizen Life Insurance (+Rs 73.3), Asian Life (+Rs 67.5) and Nepal Life Insurance (+Rs 64.3).

Non-Life Insurance sub-index (+5.08%) surged with rise in share value of Rastriya Beema Company (+Rs 202), Sanima GIC Insurance (+Rs 121) and IGI Prudential Insurance (+Rs 58.8). Microfinance sub-index (+5.03%) followed suit with increase in share values of Samaj Microfinance (+Rs 803.9), Mithila Microfinance (+Rs 330.6) and Unique Nepal Microfinance (+Rs 238).

Table 1: Sub-indices during the review period
(October 1 to November 6, 2024)

	October 1, 2024	November 6, 2024	% Change
NEPSE Index	2,510.34	2,675.51	6.58%
Sub-Indices			
Commercial Bank	1,444.59	1,507.12	4.33%
Development Bank	4,965.16	5,343.24	7.61%
Hydropower	2,990.04	3,376.29	12.92%
Finance	2,819.72	3,497.44	24.04%
Non-Life Insurance	12,645.75	13,288.68	5.08%
Others	1,915.60	2,062.26	7.66%
Hotels and Tourism	6,198.88	6,807.96	9.83%
Microfinance	4,722.87	4,960.41	5.03%
Life Insurance	12,402.78	13,201.46	6.44%
Manufacturing & Processing	7,049.23	6,956.29	-1.32%
Trading	3,433.25	3,593.45	4.67%

Source: Nepal Stock Exchange

Trading sub-index (+4.67%) saw the share values of Salt Trading Company (+Rs 267) and Bishal Bazar Company (+Rs 155) climb up. Commercial Bank sub-index (+4.33%) came next with rise in share prices of Standard Chartered (+Rs 60.1), Nepal SBI (+Rs 51.7) and Nepal Bank (+Rs 20.1).

Meanwhile, Manufacturing and Processing sub-index (-1.32%) was the only loser with drop in share prices of Unilever Nepal (-Rs 2,490), Sarbottam Cement (-Rs 29.7) and Ghorahi Cement (-Rs 19.6). (See Table 1)

News and Highlights

The Ministry of Finance has advanced SEBON's proposal for the issuance and trading of securities by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); the draft regulations are now awaiting approval from the cabinet. It has proposed a dedicated trading platform for SMEs or companies with a maximum paid-up capital of Rs 250 million.

On the public issue front, SEBON was unable to approve any new Initial Public Offerings due to the continuing vacancy of its chairperson's position. However, SEBON has approved the Further Public Offerings (FPOs) of Samata Gharelu Microfinance worth Rs 35.09

million under Microfinance sub-index. Muktinath Capital has been appointed as the issue manager for the FPO. Similarly, right shares of Liberty Energy (Rs 750 million) and Balephi Hydropower (Rs 1.82 billion) were approved under the Hydropower sub-index. Prabhu Capital and NIMB Ace Capital have been appointed as respective issue managers.

Outlook

A majority of the sub-sectors witnessed positive changes compared to the previous period. However, investors remain cautious, closely monitoring the market for signs of a trend reversal that might spark a rebound. Economic activities have started to pick up post-festivities and listed companies continue to announce dividends from the earnings of the previous year, which can contribute to optimism in the market. **B**

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Time to Harness Technology in Nepal's Agriculture and FMCG Sectors



Nepal's economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, contributing around 25% to its gross domestic product (GDP) and employing two-thirds of its population. In parallel, the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector is a growing industry, influenced by increasing urbanisation and evolving consumer habits. The integration of technology in these sectors is rapidly transforming production, distribution and consumption patterns, paving the way for sustainable growth. As both sectors are pivotal to Nepal's development, advancements in agri-tech and FMCG technology hold immense potential. However, several challenges need to be addressed to fully capitalise on these opportunities.

The incorporation of smart agricultural technologies, including precision farming, Internet of Things (IoT) solutions and drones is reshaping traditional farming methods in Nepal. For instance, precision farming enables

farmers to monitor crop health, soil conditions and water needs through sensors resulting in optimised resource use. Studies have shown that farmers using precision farming in countries like India and China have experienced up to 20-30% increase in yield. In Nepal, pilot projects like the deployment of drone technology for irrigation in Terai region are already producing promising results, increasing water-use efficiency and reducing labour cost.

While these technologies offer considerable benefits, their adoption in Nepal has been slow due to several factors. The country's rugged terrain, lack of infrastructure, and limited access to technology in rural areas pose significant challenges. Small-scale farmers who make up the majority of Nepal's agricultural sector often lack the capital to invest in these solutions. Moreover, with over 25% of the population living below the poverty line, affordability becomes a critical issue. Government subsidies and international assistance

SUPPLY CHAIN OPTIMISATION IS ANOTHER AREA WHERE TECHNOLOGY IS MAKING A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT. TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS BLOCKCHAIN, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI), AND BIG DATA ARE BEING EXPLORED TO ENHANCE TRACEABILITY, REDUCE WASTAGE AND IMPROVE INVENTORY MANAGEMENT.

programmes, such as those led by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, have been crucial in driving initial adoption, but more effort is needed for large-scale implementation.

The FMCG sector in Nepal has experienced rapid growth due to digitalisation and the rise of e-commerce platforms. The Covid 19 pandemic accelerated the shift towards online shopping with platforms like Daraz, SastoDeal and Foodmandu witnessing exponential growth. Daraz, Nepal's leading e-commerce platform, reported a 100% increase in its customer base in 2020 alone. This shift has forced traditional FMCG companies to adopt digital supply chains, improve logistics and invest in technology for customer engagement and data analytics to stay competitive.

Supply chain optimisation is another area where technology is making a significant impact. Technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), and big data are being explored to enhance traceability, reduce wastage and improve inventory management. In Nepal's FMCG sector, several multinational companies like Unilever and Nestlé are testing AI-driven demand forecasting tools to better manage inventory and reduce stock-outs. A 2021 report by McKinsey shows that effective demand forecasting can reduce inventory levels by 20% while improving product availability by 5%. For landlocked Nepal, optimising supply chains is critical for reducing costs and ensuring timely product delivery, especially for perishable goods.

The Nepali government has recognised the potential of technology in transforming both agriculture and FMCG

sectors. In 2021, the Ministry of Agriculture launched the 'Agriculture Development Strategy 2015-2035', focusing on modernising farming practices and integrating technology for higher productivity. The strategy includes provisions for capacity building, access to finance, and incentives for technology adoption. Similarly, the government's 'Digital Nepal Framework' aims to promote digitalisation across all sectors, including FMCG, by improving internet access and digital infrastructure, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

The intersection of agriculture and technology has opened new opportunities for startups in Nepal. Platforms like 'Krishi Guru' provide farmers with real-time weather forecasts, pest control advice and best practices, improving productivity and reducing crop failures. Agri-tech startups like 'Mero Agro' are bridging the gap between farmers and buyers, facilitating online transactions for agricultural products. Similarly, the FMCG sector has seen an increase in local tech-driven startups that offer home delivery services, digital payment options, and subscription-based FMCG goods, further integrating the digital economy into everyday life.

Despite these advancements, Nepal continues to face significant technological barriers. Internet penetration remains low, with only about 65% of the population having access to the internet, and quality of service varies drastically between urban and rural areas. The World Bank's Digital Development Report of 2022 indicated that Nepal ranks low in digital infrastructure quality compared to other South Asian countries. Poor infrastructure such as unpaved roads and unreliable electricity in remote areas limits the reach of agri-tech solutions and e-commerce services in the FMCG sector.

Access to finance remains a challenge for both small-scale

farmers and emerging FMCG companies. In 2022, a report by the Central Bureau of Statistics noted that only 40% of farmers in Nepal had access to formal credit, often relying on informal loans with high-interest rates. Financial technology (fintech) solutions, such as digital wallets and online banking platforms, offer an opportunity to bridge this gap. Companies like eSewa and Khalti are expanding financial inclusion by providing online payment and loan services, which could help small businesses and farmers gain easier access to capital for investing in technology.

With increased awareness of sustainability, consumers in Nepal are keen to shift towards eco-friendly and organic products. Technology is playing a key role in meeting these demands. For example, organic farming technologies that reduce the use of harmful chemicals and promote sustainable practices are gaining traction. Further, FMCG companies are adopting eco-friendly packaging solutions and utilising data analytics to track consumer preferences. A survey by Nielsen in 2023 revealed that 65% of urban consumers in Nepal prefer sustainable products.

To fully realise the potential of technology in the agriculture and FMCG sectors, public-private partnerships (PPPs) can play a crucial role in addressing infrastructure gaps and facilitating the transfer of technology to rural areas. Additionally, fostering a culture of innovation through investments in research and development (R&D) can drive the growth of tech-driven solutions tailored to Nepal's unique challenges. With the right mix of government support, private sector innovation and technological investment, Nepal can harness the power of technology to transform these vital sectors, ensuring food security, economic growth and improved living standards for its people. **B**



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Modern Technologies for Industrial Growth



Purshottam Ojha is a Former Secretary of the Government of Nepal. The views expressed herein are personal.

Production processes before the 18th century was largely manual and created by the skilled artisan using their hands. This was a slow and time-consuming process requiring considerable efforts of human power. Products were customised to meet the client's needs.

Human ingenuity enabled the creation of new inventions through science and technology and this impacted the ways and means of running businesses and industries. A series of industrial revolutions took place on the backbone of these innovations. Application of technology in industries helped to produce in scale of economies, reducing costs and enhancing efficiency in production.

The first industrial revolution started late 18th century with the invention of the steam engine and the application of mechanisation in textile production. Steam power enabled the transportation of goods in large volumes, thereby replacing the outdated method of transportation by using animal and human power. Mechanisation of industries made it possible to produce in a large scale.

The second revolution started in the late 19th century and remained till the early 20th century. This period of industrialisation was based



on the use of electricity, assembly lines, and use of telecommunication facilities. The ultimate impact was the reduction in the cost of production.

The third generation of industrialisation remained for almost half a century starting from the 1950s, and was based on the automation of industries and the use of electronics, computers, and digital technologies. The internet became the backbone of digital operations and means of information and communication during this period.

Further advancement of technologies based on the internet and digitalisation gave rise to the fourth industrial revolution since the beginning of the 21st century. Also known as Industry 4.0, the current stage of industrialisation is being driven by Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), Robotics, 3D printing, and the use of big data, among others.

Automation of production processes and service delivery

lie at the heart of the fourth generation of the industrial revolution.

Nepal has made substantial progress toward digitalisation and automation of government services. Department of Customs was the pioneer of the automation process with the introduction of Automated Systems of Customs Data (ASYCUDA) during the latter half of the 1990s. Internet infrastructure was strengthened with the laying of optical fibre over the last two decades. Now, the internet penetration in the country has reached 65% but there is a big gap in the availability of services. Only 30% of people in rural areas have access to the facilities while coverage in the urban population has reached 85%. Mobile penetration has reached almost 300% of the population and 40% use smartphones.

Policy and legal reform have also started since the beginning of this century. The Government of Nepal bought out the Long-Term Plan of Information, and Communication Sector in 2002.

Other policies in the ICT sector include: Telecom Policy-2003, ITPolicy-2015, Broadband Policy-2014, and National Cyber Policy-2023, among others.

A framework programme of Digital Nepal was launched in 2019 with the objectives of creating a knowledge-based society, focusing on a digital economy, and achieving the social and economic development objectives through the optimum use of digital technology for simplification and facilitation of public service delivery.

The Parliament enacted the Electronic Transaction Act (ETA) in 2006 and the government bought out its regulation in 2007. A comprehensive revision in the ETA-2006 has been proposed in the Information Technology Act which is under the consideration of the Parliament.

Nepali industries are in the primary stage concerning the use and application of modern technologies in their operations. Manufacturing industries like cement, noodles,

yarn and drugs, among others, have started automation based on the application of the Internet of Things (IoT). The use of robotics, big data, and artificial intelligence is virtually non-existent. Logical use of big data, available on the internet would have multifold advantage that helps the user to solve complicated problems. Industries could use those advanced technologies for managing periodic maintenance, improving energy efficiency, increasing equipment and machinery performances, and building good customer relationships. The use of artificial intelligence and robotics helps to reduce the cost of production.

The adoption of Industry 4.0 in Nepal is not easier than said. There are inherent problems in the adoption of modern technologies. First, there is a big gap in the availability of services, the so-called digital divide, between the urban and rural areas. Second, the number of IT-related human resources is not sufficient to support the development and sustenance of the services. A large number of young people are temporarily migrating outside the countries in quest of remunerative job opportunities. These include all kinds of young workforce: skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. This resulted in the lack of human resources to work in all sectors; agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Third, supply of the electricity for running the manufacturing units is not reliable and predictable. Fourth, most of the production units in the country fall under the micro, cottage, and small, industries (MCSI) category, not being able to afford the technology due to their tiny size. They largely rely on manual workforce and in most cases family members are employed in running the units. Fifth, digitisation is adopted in only limited sectors of the economy and is not widespread among the government, public, and private economic entities. Sixth, the regulatory

regime is not conducive to making big investments in digital technology. The current legislation and the institutional arrangements are not sufficient to address the issues of data protection, cyber theft, cyberbullying, and other form of cybercrimes. Seventh, there are no government incentives and motivation for industries to adopt modern technologies in their operations. All industries are getting the same treatment irrespective of their mode of operation.

Modernising industries, particularly the manufacturing sector, is important from the perspective of creating new job opportunities and aligning the economy on a new growth trajectory. The cautionary tale says that the advances in AI and robotics technology are likely to eliminate a large number of jobs. Hence, reconfiguring and creating new jobs for the displaced human resources and the new entrants in the job market should be a priority for the government. This requires careful planning, training, and retraining of the workers to take up new roles and responsibilities. Proper incentives for adopting modern technologies, creating robust physical and digital infrastructures, adequate institutional and legal arrangements for data security, and controlling cybercrime are crucial for enabling an IT-enabled ecosystem in the country.

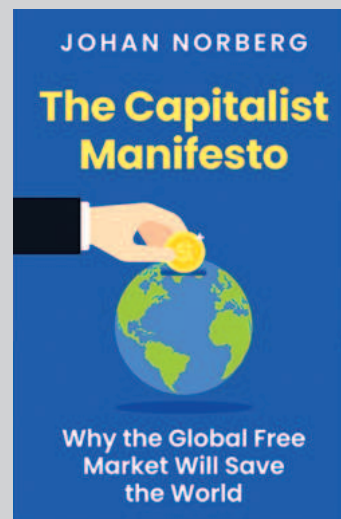
The Government of Nepal should develop a comprehensive plan for taking the industries and manufacturing sector to a new height by nurturing and facilitating the use of ICT-based technologies, and the need for micro, cottage and small industries should be given due priority in the plan. This could be one of the important policy measures to incentivise the young workforce to seek decent job opportunities within the country. **B**

BOOK OF THE MONTH

The Capitalist Manifesto

Why the Global Free Market Will Save the World

Author: Johan Norberg



Johan Norberg's 'The Capitalist Manifesto' is a spirited defence of free-market capitalism. Norberg argues convincingly that capitalism, with its emphasis on individual liberty and voluntary exchange, has been the primary driver of human progress, lifting billions out of poverty and improving living standards worldwide. The book is well-researched and effectively uses data to demonstrate the positive correlation between economic freedom and prosperity. Norberg's writing style is clear, engaging and accessible, making complex economic concepts understandable to a broad audience. He skillfully weaves historical anecdotes and contemporary examples into his narrative, making the book both informative and entertaining.

However, some critics argue that Norberg's portrayal of capitalism is overly idealistic and fails to acknowledge its potential drawbacks, such as income

inequality and market failures. While the book provides a strong defence of capitalism, it could benefit from a more nuanced discussion of alternative economic systems and their potential shortcomings. Additionally, some readers may find that Norberg oversimplifies complex economic and social issues, neglecting the nuances and trade-offs involved in policy decisions.

Despite these limitations, 'The Capitalist Manifesto' is a compelling and thought-provoking book that makes a strong case for the benefits of free-market capitalism. It is a valuable resource for anyone interested in understanding the relationship between economic freedom and human progress. While it may not offer a comprehensive analysis of all economic issues, it provides a valuable perspective on the role of capitalism in shaping the modern world. **B**

Value & Pricing: A Nepali Investor's Odyssey



As investors in this burgeoning nascent 'private equity and venture capital' space, it has been fascinating to observe the evolution of this asset class in Nepal with a number of intriguing case studies to absorb from. From four PEVC investors up until 2017, the market has grown to 20 players today. The fundamental function of fund managers of this asset class is to back potential business winners that may disrupt the status quo with sustainable and scalable business models providing handsome returns. In exchange, a fund manager invests risk capital to back such businesses and may also provide capacity building and network support, and where necessary shepherding support. During the deal negotiation, the paradox of human behaviour meets the ingenious creativity of mathematical science – 'Valuation vs Pricing'.

There are numerous articles and academic papers that highlight how to 'value' a business, yet with so much

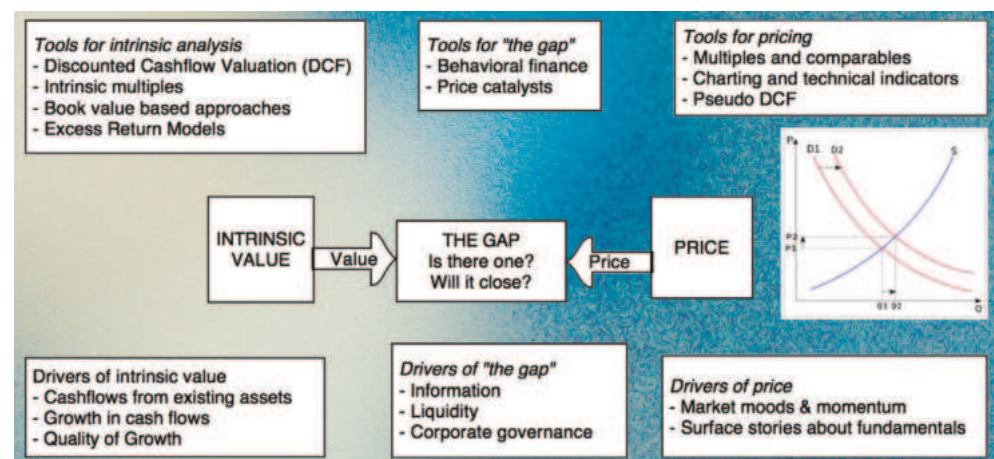
rational science thrown to us, the exercise of valuation in most cases incites the fundamentals of behavioural science testing our acumen and self-prophesised expertise on forecasting the future. Many a times 'valuing' a business gets misinterpreted with 'pricing'. Basically, valuing a business is an introspective exercise to examine the potential of the business based on certain underlying pragmatic

assumption while pricing is an external negotiation exercise based on market forces and comparable variables. Damodaran through the figure below succinctly outlines the differences, yet while we soldier on the ground, both as investors and businesses observe blurring lines between the two.

With years of experience as business accelerators, investors and investment

banking advisors, we have encountered, on multiple occasions, the dilemma between valuing a business and pricing it. In our formative years as business accelerators, we ran sessions on valuation to cohort companies primarily explaining the science and examples from more developed markets. However, we were caught off-guard when the companies used the learnings from those sessions to expect Silicon Valley numbers while raising funds from us. It took us a few years to temper founders' expectations based on local context and nuances and we believe we are still at it.

It is imperative for businesses when raising money to have an optimistic orientation based on aggressive assumptions. As investors it becomes our responsibility and duty to scenario-test those assumptions for value at risk while assessing the capabilities of the business owner and teams to deliver on such promises amongst many other variables. Local market dynamics and recurring black swan events challenge the excel sheets based on superficial stories. We lean heavily on the founder and team on their



Source: <https://aswathdamodaran.blogspot.com/2020/03/a-viral-market-meltdown-iii-pricing-or.html>

VALUING A BUSINESS IS AN INTROSPECTIVE EXERCISE TO EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL OF THE BUSINESS BASED ON CERTAIN UNDERLYING PRAGMATIC ASSUMPTION WHILE PRICING IS AN EXTERNAL NEGOTIATION EXERCISE BASED ON MARKET FORCES AND COMPARABLE VARIABLES.

resilience, hunger for hustle, transparency and openness to ideas and pivots.

In our years of investment, we have had six successful exits out of 14 investments with above market returns. Our exit track record is currently the best in the industry. Yet, these exits have stories that significantly diverge from their original fairy tale trajectories. It is our learning that, at the end of the day, a firm's values at different stages are determined most significantly by rational behaviour and responsiveness of the founder, more than anything else in our neck of woods.

As mentioned earlier, valuation is an inward-looking exercise which may serve as an anchor or a reference point or even serve as a strategic tool to organise business plans and approach. Within our portfolio, we periodically undertake this exercise to shape our actions and in many cases, to better understand our businesses and the pivots and iterations they may need. These exercises

have helped us to pivot business models from 'Service to Product' or enter 'Business to Customer' segments from existing 'Business to Business' models, which in many cases have yielded favourable returns. Valuation exercises enable better understanding of cash flow cycles which in turn widens and provides better understanding on the options of financing.

As sell side investment advisors to portfolio or non-portfolio companies, pricing has always been swayed by market forces and founder or business owner biases. However, our belief is that 'price is what the buyer is willing to pay for the business'. In some cases, precedented prices or the conditional interest to avoid down round sets a range. There are instances where we have observed significant down round investment asks, while in some cases pricing has been so high that we wonder if there will be a next investor beyond those prices.

In Nepal's context, it may be appropriate to balance the value and pricing aspects separately, one as an introspective reference tool and the other as negotiation skill. The alternate investment landscape of Nepal has been evolving and as we journey further, lessons and cases of investments shall showcase better understanding of value and price. **B**

True North Associates is a private equity shop founded and led by a veteran banker. We invest in growth stage companies across all sectors but have an affinity to tech-enabled businesses. We are structured as a permanent capital vehicle and manage investments through wholly and partly owned entities that include an offshore fund manager, a local SIF licensed firm and an investment company. Our approach is to help companies grow through supportive shepherding. Find us at www.tna.com.np



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#GrowWithTikTok Masterclass

TikTok is actively supporting small businesses in Nepal by providing them with the tools and knowledge to succeed on the platform. The recent #GrowWithTikTok Masterclass in Kathmandu is a prime example of this commitment. This workshop brought together entrepreneurs, marketers, and business owners to learn about content creation, audience engagement, campaign strategies, advertising options, and community guidelines. By helping businesses with these tools, TikTok aims to help them expand their reach, attract new customers, and drive growth.

The Masterclass offered a comprehensive overview of TikTok's features and best practices. Participants learned how to create engaging content, optimize their profiles, and utilize TikTok's advertising tools to reach a wider audience. Additionally, the workshop emphasized the importance of understanding and following TikTok's community guidelines to ensure a positive user experience. The significant participation in the Masterclass underscores the growing interest in TikTok as a powerful platform for businesses in Nepal. This initiative aligns with TikTok's commitment to supporting small businesses, enabling them to thrive in the digital age. The significant number of participants who attended the workshop also demonstrates the growing interest and demand for such initiatives within the Nepali business community. Below are the profiles of the participants who attended the #GrowWithTikTok Masterclass:

Aaditya Bhatta
Hansikar Technologies



Hansikar is a leading digital marketing agency established in 2018 and has served over 50 clients.

Aafrin Khan
Zars Collection



Zars Collection established in 2021 focuses on import quality products and clothes for all age groups.

Aditya Gupta
Posak



Posak is a clothing brand that was launched in 2024 by a trio of partners dedicated to offering stylish and unique apparel.

Amsu Amatya
The Sweetlime



The Sweetlime is committed to enhancing everyday life by offering high-quality self-care products and daily essentials.

Ang Chhechi Sherpa
Lukla Outdoor



Lukla Outdoor is an outdoor gear brand from the heart of the Himalayas. This Nepal-based company offers high-quality adventure equipment.

Anustha Dahal
Project Redpaper



Project Redpaper was established to help students learn about various computer science and arts concepts

through personalised curriculum and hands-on projects via cohort-based learning system.

Bishant Neupane
Le Monal Chocolates



Le Monal Chocolates is a homemade chocolate shop offering rich and delightful assorted chocolates, made in Nepal.



Himanshu Shrestha
Re-कृति



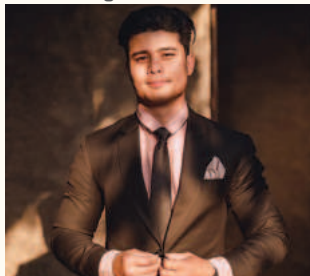
Re-कृति Upcycled Fashion creates eco-friendly bags and accessories from upcycled materials, offering customised bags made from jeans to promote sustainable style.

Ina Dangol
Thriftomatic



Thriftomatic offers a selection of handpicked items featuring both brand new as well as thrift pieces.

Kripam Shrestha
Owl Reading Room



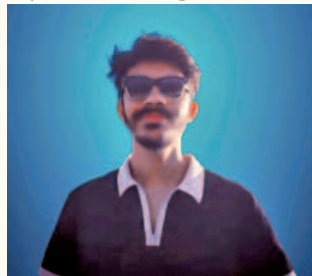
Owl Reading Room is a cosy library offering peaceful study rooms, discussion areas, and dedicated working spaces, complete with ample parking and delicious food to enhance productivity.

Lijaa Manandhar
Nepal Wearhouse



Nepal Wearhouse is a clothing store that proudly offers premium quality items at affordable prices, specialising in exports of quality garments made in Nepal.

Nimesh Dhakal
Nirjala Seeds and Agro Chemicals



Nirjala Seeds and Agro Chemicals was established in 2018 with a clear mission to produce, preserve and distribute a variety of local seed varieties for different crops.

Pasang Lamu Sherpa
into_mini7



into_mini7 offers beautifully handcrafted crochet products made with love and creativity.

Peshal Bhattarai
Eventique Nepal



Eventique Nepal excels in organising a wide range of corporate events such as seminars, conferences, product launches, press meets and more.

Pooja Rijal
Hostel Next Door



Hostel Next Door offers an easygoing atmosphere that caters to adventurous travellers seeking comfort, with curious hosts and inspiring spaces designed to encourage like-minded travellers to connect on local experiences.

Pragati Maharjan
MakeupbyPragati



MakeupbyPragati is a professional beauty salon dedicated to make people feel most beautiful. With expert artistry and a passion for enhancing natural beauty, their goal is to create stunning looks that empower every client.

Pragya Khanal
Elpis Care



Elpis Care is a skincare brand inspired by the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda. Recognising the growing demand for natural, chemical-free skincare products, they aim to offer a range of solutions that harness the power of pure botanical oils.

Pratik Khanal
PK Organic & Wellness



PK Organic & Wellness manufactures and sells cold pressed oils along with other essential oils. The oil is sourced ethically and processed with care, ensuring quality and sustainability.

Prerana Maharjan
Vintage Kathmandu



Vintage Kathmandu is a second-hand shop offering a variety of thrift items, where one can discover unique vintage gems to elevate style.

#GrowWithTikTok Masterclass...

Rabi Man Shrestha
Manakamana Metal Fabrication



Manakamana Metal Fabrication specialises in creating stunning metal artwork, combining craftsmanship and creativity to produce unique pieces that enhance any space.

Radha Sapkota
Yaki Wears



Yaki Wears is a clothing brand that helps people express with comfort through their custom printed T-shirts, sweatshirts and hoodies.

Runa Banu
Shahzcreation



Shahzcreation is a creative photo studio dedicated to capturing moments that matter. With a focus on artistic photography, Shahzcreation brings your special memories to life.

Samid Nakarmi
Linkwithequipment



Linkwithequipment offers a diverse selection of wireless earphones and smartwatches, providing customers with high-quality tech accessories to enhance their audio and wearable experience.

Sampada Koirala
Project Redpaper



Project Redpaper was established to help students learn about various computer science and arts concepts through personalised curriculum and hands-on projects via cohort-based learning system.

Sarah Khan
HAYA Clothing



Haya Clothing plans to bring Indo-western brands into Nepal. It has been working on fashionable clothes for middle-aged women who want to look beautiful and comfy, enhancing their fashion sense.

Sarfaraz Alam
Glamour Tailors



Glamour Tailors is a Kathmandu based tailoring brand offering a complete made-to-order service, solely for menswear. They are one of the oldest shirting and suiting brand in Nepal which was established in the year 1982.

Senu Ranjit
The Home Made



The Home Made is a small cafe in Sanepa located close to Heritage Garden. It started about a year back with five employees.

Shakriya Pandey
BOTS Industries



BOTS Industries is a dynamic tech company specialising in robotics, automation, electronics and data analysis.

Shivaj Adhikari
Go Easy



Go Easy is a tech company focused on digitising bus payments in Nepal. The company offers innovative solutions to make public transportation payments seamless, efficient and cashless.

Shreesh Poudel
Moru Digital Wallet



Moru is a digital wallet. It ensures real time, secure and instant payment to various merchants.

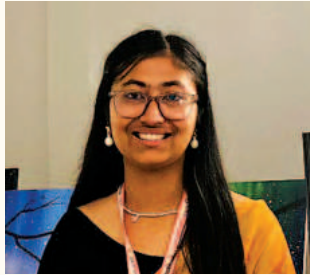
Shrinkhala Maharjan
The Harry Collection



The Harry Collection is a custom tailoring business. They mainly sell suits and formals for both men and women.



Shrisha Pandey
VayuDrishhti+



VayuDrishhti+ is dedicated to 'Seeing the Invisible' by uncovering hidden air quality data and empowering individuals to make informed choices for a healthier world.

Sujana Shakya
Cocomaya



Cocomaya was established to deliver high-quality, beautiful, glamorous and most importantly comfortable pet essentials at a great price.

Sulav Man Shrestha
Gamercode.np



Gamercode.np is a retail store that sources gaming PCs, accessories and custom keyboards.

Suruchi Khadka
Aama's Creation



Aama's Creation is a Nepali baby and maternity clothing brand. They focus on premium and healthy fabric with traditional Nepali touch.

Sushistha Tuladhar
Adore Fits Nepal



Adore Fits Nepal is a clothing brand dedicated to creating stylish apparel made with love in Nepal.

Swastika Rajbhandari
Swastika Makeup Studio



Swastika Makeup Studio is a renowned bridal and party makeup studio in Nepal. With over 10 years of experience in the makeup industry, the studio continues to deliver stunning and professional makeup services.

Ujol Shakya
Aryata's Pizza Blessings and Cafe



Aryata's Pizza Blessings and Cafe offers a delightful dining experience featuring delicious pizzas and a cosy atmosphere, making it the perfect spot to enjoy a meal with friends and family.

Vaskar Maharjan
Roaming Around Nepal



Roaming Around Nepal is a digital marketing travel company dedicated to showcasing the beauty of Nepal. As a digital creator, they invite people to explore, experience and promote the stunning landscapes and rich culture of this amazing country.

Yomoo Bajracharya
Othāro Incubation Program



The Othāro Incubation Program invites aspiring entrepreneurs to turn their innovative ideas into profitable and scalable business ventures by providing the necessary skills, mindset, mentorships and network.

Zoti Bhattachan
Hanabites Restaurant



Hanabites is a restaurant specialising in authentic Asian modern fusion cuisine, blending traditional flavours with contemporary twists for a unique dining experience. **B**

Remittance increases 15.2% to Rs 263.14 billion; total trade deficit up 1.8% to Rs 237.45 billion

According to the Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation of Nepal based on two months' data ending mid-September, 2024/25 published by Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), the year-on-year (y-o-y) consumer price inflation stood at 3.85% in mid-September 2024 compared to 8.19% a year ago.

Food and beverage inflation stood at 5.03% whereas non-food and service inflation stood at 3.19% in the review month. During the same period in the previous year, the price indices of these groups had increased by 9.77% and 7.19%, respectively.

Under the food and beverage category, y-o-y price index of pulse and legumes sub-category increased 10.80%, vegetables 9.84%, cereal grains and their products 9.34% and fruits 4.94% while y-o-y price index of spices sub-category decreased 2.69%.

Meanwhile, under the non-food and services category, y-o-y price index of miscellaneous goods and services sub-category increased 8.71%, alcoholic drinks 6.76%, clothes and footwear 6.08%, and furnishing and household equipment 4.88% while y-o-y price index of insurance and financial services sub-category held constant.

As per the NRB report, during the review month, y-o-y price index in rural areas increased by 4.04%, while in urban areas, it rose by 3.78%. Based on provinces, in the review month, y-o-y consumer price inflation in Koshi Province was 4.66%, Madhesh Province 3.82%, Bagmati Province 3.29%, Gandaki Province 3.50%, Lumbini Province 3.53%, Karnali Province 3.56% and Sudurpashchim Province 5.90%.

In the review month, y-o-y consumer price inflation in Kathmandu valley, Terai, Hill and Mountain region surged

Nepal's economy expected to maintain growth momentum



Nepal's economic growth is projected to accelerate to 5.1% in Fiscal Year 2025 from 3.9% in Fiscal Year 2024, driven by anticipated high tourist arrivals, along with increased hydropower and paddy production, according to the World Bank's latest economic update, Nepal Development Update: International Migration and Well-being in Nepal, released on October 2.

The private sector is expected to contribute to the country's growth, as it is anticipated to benefit from the central bank's loosening of monetary policy and easing of regulatory requirements. Nepal's economy is projected to grow by 5.5% in Fiscal Year 2026.

However, the report identifies multiple risks to the outlook, including heightened vulnerabilities in the financial system such as a rise in non-performing loans that may limit private sector credit growth, potential policy discontinuity that could deter investment, delays in the execution of the capital spending budget affecting infrastructure development,

and regional instability and trade disruptions that could reduce tourism and domestic demand.

"Nepal's economy is on a gradual recovery path," said Vice Chairman of National Planning Commission, Professor Dr Shiva Raj Adhikari. "Our focus on enhancing capital expenditure, particularly by completing nearly finished projects, along with reforms in the budgetary process, will strengthen macroeconomic stability, boost domestic productivity, and create more jobs."

Shocks in migrant-receiving countries such as the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Malaysia, could also slow growth, impacting international remittances that are crucial for raising household consumption, reducing poverty and developing human capital. However, migration from Nepal is costly, opportunities are unequal, and the process remains challenging for many. The report presents the latest evidence on the benefits and costs of Nepal's emigration trend and highlights key policy interventions needed to build an inclusive migration

management system aimed at ensuring sustainability and maximising rewards.

"Maintaining growth momentum is key to Nepal's development. This requires continued reform in critical areas such as infrastructure, governance human capital development, and developing an environment which encourages and supports the private sector," said David Sislen, World Bank Country Director for Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka. "Nepal has greatly benefited from remittances from overseas workers and improving the management of these inflows, better supporting Nepalis who choose to seek work abroad, and also building a vibrant domestic economy which allows for skilled Nepalis to be productive in Nepal is critical to the future of the country," added Sislen.

An inclusive migration management system would establish a transparent recruitment process, better prepare migrants to go abroad, ensure the safety and mobility of migrants in those labour markets, plan for long-term skills and destination diversification, and create an economic environment conducive to harnessing the capital and skills of returnees.

The Nepal Development Update, produced biannually, provides an in-depth analysis of significant economic developments over the past year, contextualising them within a longer-term and global perspective.

to 3.49%, 4.09%, 3.61% and 4.19%, respectively. Inflation in these regions was 9.83%, 7.03%, 8.09% and 11.32%, respectively a year ago.

The report also states that during the two months of 2024/25, merchandise exports decreased 5.1% to Rs 25.09 billion compared to a decrease

of 7.8% in the same period of the previous year. Destination-wise, exports to India, China and other countries decreased 4.5%, 45.3% and 3.9%, respectively. Exports of tea, particle board, oil cakes, shoes and sandals, soyabean oil, among others increased whereas exports of cardamom,

zinc sheet, palm oil, readymade garments, herbs, among others decreased in the review period.

Meanwhile, during the two months of 2024/25, merchandise imports increased 1.1% to Rs 262.54 billion compared to a decrease of 5.1% a year ago. Destination-wise, imports from India and



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Qatari investors seek opportunities in Nepal



Qatari investors are looking for investment opportunities in Nepal's IT sector, pharmaceutical industry, banking and financial services, hydropower and tourism. Khalifa bin Jassim bin Mohammed Al-Thani, Chairman of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce, said, "Investors here are looking for investment opportunities in Nepal. We will encourage this."

In April, during the state visit of Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani to Nepal, an agreement was signed to establish a Business Council between the FNCCI and the Qatar Chamber.

In the first meeting of the Nepal-Qatar Business Council held in Doha, the capital of Qatar, on October 2, between Chairman Thani and a delegation of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry led by its President, Chandra Prasad Dhakal, discussions were held on expanding economic relations. He proposed organising a Qatar-Nepal Business Summit in Nepal.

FNCCI President Dhakal also participated as a representative of the private sector of Nepal in the Asian Cooperation Dialogue organised by the Qatari government.

other countries decreased 0.1% and 5.1%, respectively, while imports from China increased 11.9%. Imports of transport equipment, vehicle and other vehicle spare parts, edible oil, chemical fertiliser, telecommunication equipment and parts, garlic, among others increased whereas imports of gold, MS billet, rice/paddy, crude palm oil, electrical equipment, among others decreased in the review period.

Total trade deficit increased 1.8% to Rs 237.45 billion during the two months of 2024/25. Such deficit had decreased 4.7% in the corresponding period of the previous year. The export-import ratio decreased to 9.6% in the review period from 10.2% in the corresponding period of the previous year.

As per the central bank report, remittance inflows increased 15.2% to Rs 263.14 billion in the review period compared to an increase of 18.7% in the same period of

the previous year. In US dollar terms, remittance inflows reached \$1.96 billion in the review period which was \$1.73 billion in the same period of the previous year.

The number of Nepali workers, both institutional and individual, taking first-time approval for foreign employment stood at 76,485 and taking approval for renew entry stood at 40,583. In the previous year, such numbers were 74,455 and 32,004, respectively.

The NRB report states that the current account remained at a surplus of Rs 49.69 billion in the review period compared to a surplus of Rs 23.97 billion in the same period of the previous year. In US dollar terms, the current account registered a surplus of \$370.1 million in the review period against a surplus of \$181.3 million in the same period last year.

Meanwhile, Balance of Payments (BOP) remained at a surplus of Rs 101.77 billion in

the review period compared to a surplus of Rs 55.1 billion in the same period of the previous year. In US dollar terms, the BOP remained at a surplus of \$757.9 million in the review period compared to a surplus of \$417 million in the same period of the previous year.

The gross foreign exchange reserves increased 5.5% to Rs 2,152.53 billion in mid-September 2024 from Rs 2,041.10 billion in mid-July 2024. In US dollar terms, the gross foreign exchange reserves increased 5% to \$16.04 billion in mid-September 2024 from \$15.27 billion in mid-July 2024.

Of the total foreign exchange reserves, reserves held by NRB increased 4.4% to Rs 1,928.99 billion in mid-September 2024 from Rs 1,848.55 billion in mid-July 2024. Reserves held by banks and financial institutions (except NRB) increased 16.1% to Rs 223.53 billion in mid-September 2024 from Rs 192.55 billion in mid-July 2024. The share of Indian currency in total reserves stood at 22.1% in

mid-September 2024.

Based on the imports of two months of 2024/25, the foreign exchange reserves of the banking sector are sufficient to cover the prospective merchandise imports of 16.8 months, and merchandise and services imports of 13.7 months.

IPPAN welcomes 40 MW Power Sale Agreement between Nepal and Bangladesh

The Independent Power Producers' Association, Nepal (IPPAN) has welcomed the 40 MW Power Sale Agreement (PSA) signed between Nepal and Bangladesh on October 3.

This agreement, signed in Kathmandu between Kulman Ghising, Executive Director of Nepal Electricity Authority, Renu Narang, CEO of NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVVN) of India, and Mohammad Rezaul Karim, Chairman of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), in the presence of Minister



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for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Dipak Khadka, State Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Purna Bahadur Tamang and the Interim Government of Bangladesh's Water Resources Minister Syeda Rizwana Hasan, is considered a historic agreement by Nepal.

While Nepal and India have been exchanging electricity since 1971, and a Power Trade Agreement (PTA) was signed between the two countries in 2014 leading to short-term electricity trade, this agreement with Bangladesh comes on the heels of a long-term agreement with India on January 4 to export 10,000 MW of electricity in 10 years.

The agreement with Bangladesh has not only opened up the Bangladeshi market for Nepal's electricity but has also paved the way for cooperation, partnership, and investment exchange between the two countries governments and private sectors for energy development and expansion. The Government of Bangladesh aims to import 9,000 MW from Nepal by 2039, while the Government of Nepal aims to export 5,000 MW in the next 10 years.

IPPAN states that with this agreement, Nepal Electricity Authority should now fully open the stalled Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). It added that it sees the need for the government to permit the private sector to export electricity, encourage banks and financial institutions to increase investment in energy, announce further concessions for energy production, and be proactive in resolving the policy, administrative and procedural issues currently faced in the construction of energy projects. IPPAN has also requested the government to make immediate policy and procedural reforms to facilitate exports to India and Bangladesh as per the target.

The sixth meeting of the Joint Steering Committee of Nepal-Bangladesh Energy Secretaries held in Kathmandu on October 3, explored the

Merchant Bankers Association of Nepal elects new executive committee



The Merchant Bankers Association of Nepal (MBAN) successfully conducted its 15th annual general meeting on October 1, in Kathmandu. During the AGM, the association elected members to its executive committee.

Ramendra Rayamajhi of NIC Asia Capital has been elected as Chairman of the association while Manis Narayan Joshi of Nabil Investment Bank has been elected as Vice Chairman. Nirmal Bhattacharai of Garima Capital has been elected

as General Secretary and Shivanth B Pandé of NIMB Ace Capital as Treasurer. Other elected members of the executive committee include Sandip Karki of Siddhartha Capital, Lekhnath Pokhrel of Nepal SBI Merchant Banking and Pushpa Sharma of Kumari Capital.

The new leadership team's focus will be on improving capital market accessibility, promoting sustainable financial practices, and strengthening relationships with regulatory authorities.

possibility of organising a business conference to attract the private sector of Bangladesh to invest in Nepal's hydropower sector. IPPAN has said it believes this agreement will help to promote cooperation and partnership between the private sectors of the two countries.

IPPAN added that Nepal's private sector is ready to implement this agreement and has requested the governments of Nepal and Bangladesh to create a solid environment for this by establishing the necessary mechanisms between the private sectors of both countries.

Nepal has been generating electricity for 113 years. Of the current total installed capacity of around 3,200 MW, 2,550 MW, or 80%, is being produced by the private sector. Currently, private sector projects worth around 4,000 MW are under construction, and projects worth 14,000 MW are about to be constructed.

World Bank approves \$150 million to strengthen Nepal's disaster response and resilience

The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors on October 8 approved \$150 million in contingent financing for the Government of Nepal to use in the event of a natural or climate-induced hazard or health emergency in Nepal.

The Nepal Disaster Resilience Development Policy Credit with Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option (Cat DDO) operation supports policy and regulatory reforms to increase disaster resilience and strengthens institutional mechanisms for effective disaster response. It also supports the government in improving early warning systems and building the policies, institutions and regulatory frameworks needed for risk reduction and risk informed investment in critical infrastructure as well as increasing preparedness for public health emergencies.

Contingent financing through the Cat DDO, which provides access to immediate liquidity in the aftermath of a disaster provides the government one more instrument in its approach for disaster response and recovery. In the case of Nepal, post-disaster resources are critical to disaster response and recovery across the three levels of Nepal's federal system.

"As the flooding of recent weeks has shown, Nepal is facing a polycrisis of natural and climate-induced hazards and health emergencies, putting the country at ever increasing risk of serious financial shocks," said David Sislen, World Bank Regional Country Director for Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka. "This operation supports the government's reforms to build resilience against these escalating risks and provides a line of credit that can be accessed immediately following a disaster or public health emergency to ensure a timely and effective response."

The Cat DDO is an innovative disaster risk financing instrument that would help the government respond quickly to emergency needs without diverting resources from its ongoing development programmes. It will complement the government's existing response mechanisms such as the National Disaster Management Fund and the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund.

The Nepal Disaster Resilience Development Policy Credit with Cat DDO operation is supported by technical assistance and grant funding from the Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and the Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Multi-Donor Trust Fund supported by the Canadian government, US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

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NCC signs agreement with SICCI to facilitate trade and investment



An agreement has been reached between Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC) and Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) to facilitate investment and trade. The agreement reached between NCC President, Kamlesh Kumar Agrawal, and SICCI focuses on investment in Nepal's hydroelectricity, tourism, minerals, natural resources, and other sectors. During his visit to Singapore, Agrawal held dialogue with SICCI office bearers about Nepal's investment areas and opportunities, urging investors to invest in hydropower, tourism, mining and other natural resources in Nepal. He emphasised Nepal's potential as a top tourism destination and stressed that both Nepal and Singapore could benefit economically through investment and business partnerships.

Kishan Lal Dugar honoured with 'Jain Samaj Ratna' award



Kishan Lal Dugar, Chairman of KL Dugar Group and a philanthropist, was honoured with the 'Jain Samaj Ratna' award by Bharat Jain Mahamandal on September 22

in Mumbai, India. The award was presented by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, India, Om Birla.

Dugar is the first and only Nepali personality to receive this prestigious honour. The event was graced by the presence of Speaker Birla, Chief Justice of India Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud, and other distinguished figures from various fields.

The 'Jain Samaj Ratna' award is bestowed upon individuals who have dedicated their lives to the upliftment of society, particularly in the realm of social service within the Jain community. Founded in 1899, Bharat Jain Mahamandal aims to unite the Jain community for the purpose of serving society.

Anju Shrestha appointed CEO of Himalayan Everest Insurance



Himalayan Everest Insurance has appointed Anju Shrestha as its new Chief Executive Officer, making her the second female CEO in the history of Nepali non-life insurance companies. She officially assumed her role from October 4.

With an impressive 29 years of experience in the insurance sector, Shrestha began her career on February 28, 1996, as an Assistant Officer. Expressing her excitement at the new role, Shrestha stated, "I am honoured to lead Himalayan Everest Insurance and build on its strong legacy. My focus will be on fostering innovation and driving customer-centric solutions while maintaining a commitment to sustainable growth. I aim to create an environment of collaborative growth with accountability, all founded on a culture of deep professional respect."

Manoj Ghimire appointed as CEO of Smart Choice Technologies



Manoj Ghimire has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of Smart Choice Technologies, a company authorised to operate payment systems by Nepal Rastra Bank.

Ghimire, who started his banking career at the Bank of Asia (now NIC Asia Bank), was previously working as the Head of Card Services at Laxmi Sunrise Bank. With over 15 years of experience in banking and digital payments (cards, QR, mobile banking, etc.), Ghimire's competence, experience and dedication are expected to take the company to new heights, said company Chairman Rabin Kumar Nepal. Smart Choice Technologies has been providing digital payment services for the past 20 years offering payment cards, QR, mobile banking and interbank payment services.

Smart Wealth Pro launches exclusive partnership programme

Smart Wealth Pro, a leading stock market analysis platform developed by Source Code, has launched its exclusive partnership programme. The programme offers influencers, financial bloggers, industry experts and individuals a unique opportunity to earn by promoting a revolutionary tool transforming people's investments.

"We are thrilled to introduce a partnership programme that not only enhances financial literacy but also allows individuals to monetise their platforms," said Amod Bhattarai, CEO of Source Code. "This programme is perfect for those passionate

about finance and investments, enabling them to contribute to the financial success of their audience while generating significant income," added Bhattarai.

By joining the Smart Wealth Pro partnership programme, partners can earn by promoting the platform among their audience. Interested partners will be provided with a unique promo code. Anyone subscribing using their promo code will get a discount on Smart Wealth Pro and the partner can earn up to 20% commission on each subscription made using the code.

Smart Wealth Pro empowers investors by offering advanced features like portfolio management, technical analysis, candlestick patterns and market insights, all of which are essential tools for any serious investor.

The partnership programme is ideal for individuals with a strong online presence or notable sales skills. Whether you have a blog, YouTube channel, social media following, or any platform where you discuss financial tools and trends, this is a prime opportunity to turn your influence into a reliable revenue stream.

Jay Ambe Steels partners with NIMB Ace Capital to issue shares

Jay Ambe Steels, a leading player in Nepal's steel industry, has partnered with NIMB Ace Capital to issue shares at premium to the public through Initial Public Offering (IPO). The number of issuing shares will be approved through the AGM/SGM of the company. Jay Ambe Steels was established in 2019 as the most modern steel factory in Nepal with a production capacity of 1,000 tonnes per day. As the largest steel factory in western Nepal, it supplies 80% of the region's market under the 'Ambe' brand. Located in Nepalgunj in Banke district, the production plant produces construction materials,

13th National Human Resources Conference held



The Human Resources Society Nepal (HRSN) successfully concluded its 13th National Human Resources Conference in Kathmandu. This year's conference theme was 'Human-Centred Leadership: Beyond Technology and Organisation', and was attended by nearly 200 HR professionals from across Nepal. Chaired by Tekraj Sharma, President of HRSN, the conference was inaugurated by the Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security, Sharat Singh Bhandari. Other distinguished

guests included Sumana Shrestha, former Minister of Education, Science and Technology, and Prem Singh, President of the National HRD Network (NHRDN) of India. The event saw extensive discussions on how leadership can transcend the boundaries of technology and organisation to embrace a human-centred approach.

The Human Resources Society Nepal is a non-profit organisation that has been advocating for the implementation of best HR practices in organisations. HRSN also launched its first newsletter.

including steel and bars, such as TMT steel, MS billet, MS flat, MS square, Torkari and Gabion Boxes.

The company is owned by Ambe Group, one of the largest conglomerates in Nepal, with a total yearly turnover exceeding \$300 million. Jay Ambe Steels is the second steel company under Ambe Group. The Chairman of the company is Shovakar Hari Neupane.

NCC holds interaction on 10-year investment policy for agriculture with minister

Nepal Chamber of Commerce has held an interaction with Agriculture and Livestock Development Minister, Ramnath Adhikari, and stakeholders regarding the government's 10-year investment policy for agricultural development. The programme, organised by NCC's Herbal and Forest Products Committee, discussed

the government's 10-year investment policy for Nepal's agricultural development, the possibilities and challenges of self-sufficient agriculture, with representatives from the private sector.



Minister Adhikari said that the government is striving to develop the economy and free the country from poverty by becoming self-reliant in agriculture. He said that he is working to ensure that the subsidies and concessional loans provided by the government in the agricultural sector reach the actual farmers. He also assured that the government is willing to work with the private sector to modernise and commercialise agriculture.

NCC President, Kamlesh

Kumar Agarwal, pointed out that it is unfortunate for the country to import agricultural products worth nearly Rs 3 billion while leaving land barren.

Agarwal said that the expected results have not been achieved in agriculture due to the lack of budget and the inability to spend the allocated budget effectively. He stated that Nepal Chamber of Commerce is ready to establish a fertiliser factory in joint investment with the private sector. Agarwal emphasised the need to increase the production of agricultural products such as paddy, maize, wheat and potatoes for a self-reliant economy and food security.

Deepak Malhotra, Senior Vice-President of NCC, stated that landholding limits have prevented commercial agriculture. He commented that the private sector is ready to invest in the modernisation and commercialisation of agriculture, but the government's policies are cumbersome.

Krishna Man Shrestha, Chairman of the Herbal and Forest Products Committee, stated that there is a mismatch between the government's policies and programmes for agriculture and the real problems of ordinary farmers. Shrestha said that the problem of thousands of young people migrating abroad while not finding skilled manpower in the agricultural sector should be ended. He stated that farmers are suffering due to the government's indifferent attitude towards the marketing and pricing of agricultural products. Shrestha said that productivity is declining day by day due to limited irrigation facilities in agriculture, traditional farming methods, and a lack of quality fertilisers and seeds.

NCC also submitted a 38-point suggestion to Agriculture Minister, Adhikari, regarding the government's 10-year investment policy for agricultural development.

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CAN Federation organises discussion on AI Concept Paper



A programme for interaction between representatives of stakeholder agencies and experts on various aspects of the 'Artificial Intelligence (AI) Concept Paper' made public by the government was held in Kathmandu on October 2. In the programme organised by the Federation of Computer Association Nepal, while welcoming the concept paper, speakers pointed out important issues were not included in it. They also expressed a common view that while AI regulation is necessary, it should not be controlled.

Participants included teachers, information technology experts, lawyers, service provider companies, digital rights activists, and regulation and management of AI stakeholders.

Bhojraj Ghimire, Head of the School of Technology at Nepal Open University, pointed out that the concept paper has neglected important issues such as data standardisation, data sharing, data cleaning, data privacy and security. Sanjina Kshetri of Digital Rights Nepal expressed that the concept paper does not clearly define the roles of the three levels of government in the current context where the country has entered a federal structure. Rajib Subba, an information technology expert and former DIG of Nepal Police, recalled that the Electronic Transaction Act introduced 18 years ago with the aim of promoting the e-commerce sector but later the same law was used to control cybercrime. He said that if the current debate on AI is not given the right direction, there is a risk of similar confusion.

Prabesh Subedi, Founder of the Digital Media Foundation,

opined that AI should not be placed under the Ministry of Communications.

A report based on the findings of the meeting will be compiled under a committee comprising Prof Dr Sudan Jha from the Computer Science Department of Kathmandu University; Ganga Bhandari, Coordinator of the Women in IT Committee of CAN Federation; and Diksha Raut, a member of the Internet Safety Programme of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. CAN's General Secretary and coordinator of the AI Concept Paper, Chiranjivi Adhikari, informed that the report will be submitted to the ministry once ready.

WWF Nepal celebrates International Snow Leopard Day 2024



WWF Nepal celebrated the International Snow Leopard Day 2024 on October 23 at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, bringing together government officials, conservation organisations, researchers and members of the press to highlight crucial conservation efforts for one of the world's most elusive species.

The event started with the announcement of the snow leopard population numbers in the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area, based on a study recently completed by the government of Nepal with support from WWF Nepal. A significant highlight of the event was the launch of the Eastern Dolpa Snow Leopard Population Report. This groundbreaking study, the first of its kind in the region, revealed an estimated population of 30 snow leopards in Eastern Dolpa, with a density of 1.5 snow leopards per 100 km². These findings provide a

NTB collaborates with Rakuten Viber to promote Nepal's tourism



Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has signed an agreement with the popular free calling and messaging app Rakuten Viber to promote Nepal's tourism. Deepak Raj Joshi, CEO of Nepal Tourism Board, and Kshitu Risal, Country Representative for Nepal and Business Development Manager for Rakuten Viber, signed the agreement on October 23.

The NTB's official Viber platform, 'NepalNow by NTB', is expected to assist

the tourism industry, tourists and the general public by disseminating tourism information, daily communication and updates among Nepalis worldwide. This channel will also share the latest news about tourist destinations, new products, packages, activities and experiences in different parts of Nepal. Tourism promotion campaigns and sticker packs will also be conducted during the partnership period.

vital baseline for understanding the status of snow leopards and their habitat, offering essential data for future conservation and management efforts.

In a remarkable addition to the day's achievements, the event also announced the discovery of a Wild Yak (*Bos Mutus*) in Shey Phoksundo National Park. Once considered 'data deficient' and possibly regionally extinct, the Wild Yak was sighted at an altitude of 4,825 metres above sea level, following reports from the local community. This sighting, facilitated by collaboration between DNPWC, Shey Phoksundo National Park, and WWF, involved citizen scientists Sonam Wangdi and Ugyen Gurung, who conducted an assessment in Upper Dolpa.

The celebration underscored Nepal's commitment to the conservation of snow leopards and their habitat and served as a testament to the collaborative

efforts that not only protect these magnificent animals but also ensure the preservation of biodiversity for future generations.

NIMB Ace Capital appointed as Issue Manager for NIFRA Energy Bond

Nepal Infrastructure Bank (NIFRA) has officially appointed NIMB Ace Capital as the issue manager for its upcoming 'NIFRA Energy Bond 6% (2088/89)'. This new bond issuance aims to bolster the country's energy infrastructure, a crucial element for Nepal's economic growth.

The NIFRA Energy Bond will feature a 6% interest rate and a validity period of seven years, with a total issuing size of Rs 5 billion. After approval of SEBON, 60% of this total will be allocated for private placement, allowing select investors to participate, while

Bajaj introduces attractive motorcycle exchange scheme

Hansraj Hulas Chand & Company, the authorised distributor and seller of Bajaj motorcycles in Nepal, has launched an attractive motorcycle exchange scheme. Under this scheme, one can exchange any model and any brand of motorcycle for any model of Bajaj motorcycle. Abhimanyu Golchha, Director of Hansraj Hulas Chand & Company, said, "Considering the popularity of Bajaj bikes and the

needs of our customers, we have launched this golden scheme. We are also committed to bringing more such new schemes for our customers."

This exchange programme, popular in over 80 countries, offers immediate financing along with free Bajaj motorcycle accessories for customers who exchange their motorcycles. The scheme was launched on October 24.

the remaining 40% will be available to the general public, promoting broader access to investment in this vital sector.

The bond issuance is expected to bolster the energy sector, enhance financial inclusion, and provide a secure investment avenue for both institutional and individual investors.

BFIN and ITRI sign MoU to foster global educational partnerships



The Banking, Finance and Insurance Institute of Nepal (BFIN) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the International Training and Research Institute (ITRI) USA, under Finverse LLC on October 18. This partnership aims to

foster long-term collaboration in training, education, research and consulting across the USA, Canada and beyond.

The MoU establishes a framework for both institutions to coordinate with global training partners, enhancing professional development opportunities. ITRI will facilitate internships for students in Nepal and other countries, while BFIN will manage programmes in the USA and Canada.

"This MoU marks a significant step in promoting

educational development across borders," said Dr Binod Atreya, Managing Director of BFIN. "We look forward to the positive impact this partnership will have on our communities," he added.

Basant Raj Mishra, former VP of CNI, passes away at 70



Basant Raj Mishra, former Vice President of the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), passed away on October 20. He was 70. Mishra had contracted dengue and was receiving treatment at Norvic International Hospital.

Mishra was an important figure in Nepal's tourism industry for over four decades. He was the founder of Temple Tiger Group and Company and served as Vice President of CNI from 2013 to 2016.

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Championing Nepali Cricket and Sustainability



Paras Khadka, a name synonymous with Nepali cricket, is not only a former national team captain but also a visionary leader shaping the sport's future in the country. Currently

serving as the Secretary of the Cricket Association of Nepal, Khadka has dedicated over two decades to Nepali cricket – first as a player and now as an administrator. Under his leadership, the sport has

witnessed unprecedented growth, including the launch of landmark initiatives like the Siddharth Bank Nepal Premier League. Khadka envisions cricket as a thriving industry that fosters national unity,

generates livelihoods, and positions Nepal prominently on the global sports map.

Beyond cricket, Khadka's dynamism extends into sustainable living as he champions the future of electric mobility in Nepal. Partnering with Deepal, a premium electric vehicle brand, Khadka exemplifies how modern technology aligns with personal values of efficiency, style and sustainability. As a proud driver of Deepal's SO7 variant, he celebrates the car's innovative design and advanced tech features, appreciating how it reflects his vision of progress and excellence.

For Khadka, Deepal is not just a vehicle but a symbol of Nepal's shift towards eco-friendly transportation and a brighter, sustainable future. In this issue of **Business 360**, Khadka speaks about cricket in Nepal and the reason why he chose Deepal. Excerpts:

How did you get into cricket?

As a young kid, I never had this dream that I would go on to play for Nepal. But the most important thing is that I played all forms of sports in school. My school was very supportive. The support that I received from my family has always been terrific. I guess it was written in my destiny that I had to become part of Nepali cricket one way or the other. I spent two decades playing cricket for my country, and now I am in cricket administration. I have spent almost 70-80% of my life in cricket.

How was the experience back then leading the national team as a captain?

I think it was a privilege. Leading your country in any sector is great. But the journey that our generation went through when we started

 THIS IS MY FIRST ELECTRIC VEHICLE, SO IT IS DIFFERENT. IT IS MORE TECH-DRIVEN. THE SCREENING, INTERNAL STRUCTURES AND INTERIORS ARE WELL-FURNISHED. IF YOU LOOK AT THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS, THE EV MARKET HAS REALLY GROWN IN NEPAL. THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE I FEEL. I HAVE BEEN DRIVING THE SO7 VARIANT OF DEEPAL AND I LOVE THE DESIGN OF THE CAR – IT IS BEAUTIFUL. I REALLY LOVE THE EXTERIOR.

cricket was not easy as cricket was not recognised as a sport then. However, now cricket is loved, endorsed and accepted by every Nepali.

Cricket has become an identity for every individual. And the most important thing here is that the entire country now comes together whenever Nepal is playing. Tomorrow, if we can establish this sport as an institution, as an industry, it will create a lot of opportunities. It is going to bring in a lot of tourism into the country. Cricket is something that I am totally surrounded by 24x7. So, I am very glad that even as a cricketer, I got to live some of the best times of my life. And hopefully, as an administrator, I can do even better.

How do you see the state of cricket right now in the country, and what are your expectations for the future?

The game has grown tremendously. There is a lot of interest nationally, internationally and even from the government sector. People are ready to invest in the game at present. We just started the Siddharth Bank Nepal Premier League, which is probably the biggest event in terms of sports. There are eight teams participating in the tournament, with a lot of investments for each team. The matches are going to go live on international TV. There is huge enthusiasm. Teams have covered the whole country. All seven provinces have been represented. So, in that way, cricket has become bigger than how it was.

As the Secretary of the Cricket Association of Nepal, what are your key priorities for developing cricket right now?

The most important factor would be developing the bench strength and grassroots cricket and establishing our own prominent league. The Nepal Premier League is important to us because with this league, we can generate a lot of international eyeballs and investments.

Some of the best cricketers can come and play here. Even at the national level, this tournament will provide a great opportunity for a young domestic Nepali cricketer to play and make a livelihood for himself. The industry in itself involves a lot of hotels, vehicles, hospitality, financial transactions and social engagement. All of these aspects come together.

What are your expectations from Nepal Premier League? How will it contribute to the development of cricket in Nepal?

First of all, the investments go to the cricket side of it, where the players benefit. Whatever money we generate and raise from the tournament, we are going to put it into our

districts and provinces. We want to establish a professional setup at the district, province and central levels. Most importantly, it is about the engagement of everybody from that particular region. This tournament potentially could establish a sports culture in Nepal, where every representation from each team fosters a sense of belonging. If we can establish that culture, the league will grow and bring goodwill to the respective provinces, cities, the whole country and Nepali cricket in general.

Are there any challenges that you have faced in organising the Nepal Premier League?

There have been a lot of challenges. But as a former cricketer who has faced so many battles on the cricket field, you accept every challenge and take it as an opportunity. Nepal Premier League has been a vision for a very long time. It was about time we delivered it. We are grateful to our owners and sponsors – they have come on board quickly. We are starting this league and let us hope we can keep growing year by year.

You are the brand ambassador of Deepal. How did the partnership with Deepal come about? What attracted you to this brand?

I had seen the car on the road and really liked it. I was like, "Which car is this?" Then representatives from Deepal got in touch with me. For me, it was about taking the opportunity. Until you drive the car, you wouldn't understand how good it really is. Physically, it looks great and it is very efficient. Especially for someone tall like me, it is a big, stylish and comfortable car.

You have driven other vehicles as well previously. What is the comparison like in the driving experience with Deepal?

This is my first electric vehicle, so it is different. It is more tech-driven. The screening, internal structures and interiors are well-furnished. If you look at the last couple of years, the EV market has really grown in Nepal. That's the difference I feel. I have been driving the SO7 variant of Deepal and I love the design of the car – it is beautiful. I really love the exterior.

How does owning a Deepal align with your personal values and lifestyle?

It has great content value in terms of what it is priced at. This car could have been sold for 30-40 lakhs more. For me, it made sense – it is comfortable and stylish. As a cricketer, you understand the importance of catching eyeballs. With Deepal, it is similar; wherever I go, people associate me with Nepali cricket. Deepal, too, is a head-turner.

How do you see the future of electric vehicles in Nepal and what role could Deepal play in contributing to sustainable transportation?

The world is focusing on sustainable models with electric vehicles. Over the last two to three years, many EVs have entered Nepal, including Deepal, which is a premium car. From an economic perspective, as more cars are sold, people will associate ownership with a better livelihood. Nepal's growth has made vehicles accessible, thanks to the banking sector. I hope Deepal can make its mark as affordable, sustainable and long-lasting while offering a premium feel to its owners. That is how I see it. **B**

TOP PICK

“THREE THINGS BRANDS CAN DO TO RETAIN CUSTOMERS IS TO STAY RELEVANT BY BEING IN TUNE WITH THE TRENDS AND NEEDS OF THE MARKET, HAVE A STRONG SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE, AND CREATE A UNIQUE IDENTITY”



Siddhant Begani

Director, TBG Nepal Education
Consultancy and Ganapati Jewellers

Siddhant Begani, a dynamic young entrepreneur with a diverse range of interests, brings a unique perspective into the world of business and fashion. After completing his studies in Business and Computer Science at the University of Southern California and gaining experience at Ernst & Young, he returned to Nepal to contribute to the family business, Ganapati Jewellers. His passion for the industry led him to pursue a GIA Diamond certification, solidifying his expertise in the field.

In recent days, Begani has ventured into the education consultancy business with the launch of TBG Nepal. A keen sense for what's trending, a forward-thinking approach and sharp business acumen make him an entrepreneur to watch as he consolidates, expands and diversifies his business portfolio in the coming days.

In this edition of **Business 360**, Begani talks about the brands that have had an influence on him.

Top 3 brands

- Tom Ford; for the perfumes
- A Bathing Ape; streetwear apparel
- Kith; the way they make their stores is amazing, especially the one in New York. They also have great streetwear.

An all-time favourite brand

Rolls Royce. I think they have a brand identity and name that is here and will be for generations to come. I think it is everyone's dream to own one, and that is the biggest brand to be.

Is expensive better?

Not really. At the end of the

day, it is quality that matters. I look for something that is durable and fashionable.

How does advertising influence your purchase?

Not much actually. I will not wear something just because someone else is wearing it. In fact, I try to buy pieces that are rare and not worn by anyone else. I like each of my T-shirts to be different.

A company that has got its branding spot on

Almost Gods and Blue Orange in India. They have taken over the market superfast.

Gadgets

iPhone, Mac and AirPods

Functionality or aesthetics

When it is for work and



functions then it would be aesthetics but when it comes to travel and leisure then I would look at the functionality.

An entrepreneur you admire

The one entrepreneur that I truly admire and look up to is late Ratan Tata. Leaving behind a legacy that others are proud to share really speaks volumes about his life and journey as a businessman.

3 things brands can do to retain customers

- Stay relevant – be in tune with the trends and needs of the market
- Strong social media presence
- Unique identity

You would never buy a brand that...

I would never buy a brand that has big logos displayed on the clothes.

A startup in Nepal that deserves recognition

Hopefully mine, TBG Nepal Education Consultancy. We are trying different kinds of marketing strategies and hoping we can gain the traction.

Online or offline shopping

It would definitely be offline shopping. There is really something nice about roaming around the stores and picking things you like.

One thing you would never buy online

The one thing that I would never ever buy online is perfumes.

A brand you would never hesitate to recommend

It would definitely be Tom Ford. Literally, all their perfumes are classics.

Would you ever buy a fake of your favourite brand?

That is a strict NO. It dilutes the value of everything else that you wear.

3 things that top your search list on Google for shopping or travel

- Cheap flights to any destination
- Street wear brands of the destination
- Best bars and speakeasies. **B**

BIZ.QUOTES



SOPHIA CHRISTINA AMORUSO

FOUNDER, NASTY GAL

“

Abandon anything about your life and habits that might be holding you back. Learn to create your own opportunities. Know that there is no finish line; fortune favours action. Race balls-out toward the extraordinary life that you've always dreamed of, or still haven't had time to dream up. And prepare to have a hell of a lot of fun along the way.

If you are frustrated because you are not getting what you want, stop for a second: Have you actually flat-out asked for it? If you haven't, stop complaining. You can't expect the world to read your mind. You have to put it out there, and sometimes putting it out there is as simple as just saying, "Hey, can I have that?"

Nothing will teach you more about perceived value than taking something with literally no value and selling it in the auction format.

It teaches you the beauty and power of presentation, and how you can make magic out of nothing.

Sometimes in the world, there's such pressure to follow a certain path that we forget the importance of learning as we go.

”

“MY LIFE PHILOSOPHY CENTRES ON RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPATHY. I STRIVE TO VIEW SITUATIONS FROM OTHERS' PERSPECTIVES, NOT JUST MY OWN. IN BUSINESS AND IN LIFE, THIS APPROACH FOSTERS UNDERSTANDING AND COLLECTIVE GROWTH”

Born and raised in Syangja, Kapil Dev Regmi has made it his life's mission to empower communities and foster global collaboration. His journey is marked by an unwavering determination and deep-rooted passion for education and social impact. Regmi's academic pursuits laid the foundation for his endeavours. He pursued an MBA and later an MPhil in Educational Leadership at Kathmandu University. These years ignited his desire to make a tangible difference in the world and set the groundwork for the individual he is today.

With a vision to provide quality education, Regmi established Kathmandu Don Bosco School and College in 1998. The institution grew to become one of Nepal's top educational institutions. But Regmi wanted more, he wanted to create a forward-thinking institution that blends traditional Nepali values with global perspectives, and that gave birth to Kanjirowa National School.

In this issue of **Business 360**, Regmi shares the five things that have had an impact his work and life.

Failure taught me resilience and shaped my approach to challenges

My journey in life has been a testament to the transformative power of education, perseverance, and a vision for positive change. After completing my School Leaving Certificate (SLC), I moved to Kathmandu to study at Shanker Dev Campus where I laid the foundations for my career. Following my studies in business, I pursued an MBA and later an MPhil in Educational Leadership at Kathmandu University. Those years were formative, not just academically but personally, setting the



Kapil Dev Regmi
 Founder President, Engineers without Borders Nepal
 Director, Engineers without Borders International

groundwork for the person I am today.

In 1998, I established Kathmandu Don Bosco

School and College, a decision that marked the beginning of my lifelong commitment to education. It was a thrilling and

daunting undertaking, but over time, our institution became one of the top ten schools in Nepal. After a period of growth,

we rebranded as Kanjirowa National School. This name represented our commitment to Nepal and our broader vision of providing world-class education within our own borders. However, I wanted to do more than just run a successful school; I wanted to pioneer something innovative. Later, we opened Kathmandu Pragya Kunja School.

As time went on, I noticed a shift. In the education sector, as in life, names carry immense power. Many schools in Nepal were opting for foreign names to signify their aspirations, and we, too, initially adopted a name with international appeal. But over time, it became clear that our pride in our Nepali identity deserved a place in our institution's name. So, Kanjirowa National School was born, proudly Nepali yet forward-looking. It was a significant step for us, embodying our goal to offer an education rooted in local values but global in perspective.

My educational journey wasn't without its challenges. The path was often steep, filled with hurdles that demanded hard work and resilience. When I reflect on my early years, I remember how much effort it took to succeed academically. During college, transitioning from Nepali-medium government schooling to taking exams in English was no easy task. I spent countless hours preparing, sometimes studying 8-10 hours a day. Despite failing my SLC exam the first time, the setback only fueled my determination. I eventually passed, but that experience of failure was pivotal, teaching me resilience and shaping my approach to challenges.

Leadership is not just about titles but about mindset

My life took another exciting turn when I connected with Engineers Without Borders International, a global network dedicated to advancing engineering solutions worldwide. I had always been

interested in contributing to Nepal's growth, and this organisation represented a path to do so. Though I am not an engineer by training, I reached out to their leadership and proposed a partnership with Nepal. The director from Israel, whom I first contacted, encouraged me, saying that leadership is not just about titles but about mindset. With that, I joined the Engineers Without Borders International, where we are working with a diverse team of professionals, including representatives from Nepal's LGBT community and various academic institutions like Kathmandu University and Pokhara University.

Three years ago, I never imagined I would be part of such a global initiative. But as I travelled to various countries, engaging with engineering boards across Europe, I realised how much potential Nepal holds. I met with presidents and teams of engineering boards who showed genuine interest in contributing to Nepal's development, whether through infrastructure projects or educational exchanges. Recently, the president of the Swiss Board of Engineers visited Nepal, signalling the growing global interest in our country's potential. Through these collaborations, I saw the opportunity to bring international knowledge and expertise back home.

Another initiative that is close to my heart is STARS – For Leaders of the Next Generation, an organisation based in Switzerland that brings together influential figures from business, industry and policymaking across the globe. In 2018, I attended their symposium in Switzerland and found the experience so inspiring that I proposed hosting a similar event in Nepal. This year, we are organising a study tour under the theme 'Envisioning Nepal 2030', which I believe will open new doors for our country. With respected figures like Anil Chitrakar

participating, it promises to be a platform for sparking innovative ideas and building international partnerships.

Throughout my journey, I have also felt deeply connected to the diplomatic community in Nepal. I believe in working closely with embassies to create a synergy that benefits all involved. The diplomatic missions in Nepal represent a bridge between our country and the world, offering opportunities to collaborate on sustainable projects that uplift communities and spur growth. My goal has always been to showcase Nepal not merely as a recipient of aid but as a vibrant partner capable of contributing to global initiatives. I have friends in Europe and the United States who encourage me to keep exploring and deepening these international ties.

Alongside my work in education and international partnerships, I am also working to support people with cerebral palsy through a self-help group. For the past 12 years, I have served as treasurer for this initiative, advocating for social entrepreneurship that makes a tangible difference in people's lives. Recently, we launched Green Card Investment, an investment company, envisioning a model that allows Nepalis living abroad to invest back home. This initiative, though in its early stages, promises to create jobs and foster economic resilience in Nepal.

Every day, I feel fortunate to work with an incredible team within the International Dialogue Forum, where we engage with leaders from diverse fields to spark ideas and drive change. Over 30 alumni from around the world are participating in STARS, and they will bring their expertise back to Nepal, helping us address the unique challenges we face as a country. Our vision is not just about economic growth but about creating opportunities for a wide range of people, including those

who have historically been marginalised or overlooked.

My father inspired my curiosity about the world

Reflecting on my journey, I often think of my father, who used to listen to BBC news, and how he inspired my curiosity about the world. I remember him talking about East and West Germany and the Berlin Wall, which sparked my desire to see the world beyond Nepal. Today, I am humbled to have visited Germany and many other European countries multiple times, forging connections that I hope will benefit Nepal in the years to come.

As I look back on my life, I realise that ambition isn't always about having grand plans from the start; sometimes, it's about making the best of each opportunity and striving to bring positive change wherever you are. From humble beginnings, I have found myself on a journey I could never have anticipated, a journey that has taught me the importance of education, resilience and a spirit of service. I may not have achieved everything I set out to do but I am grateful for each experience and the privilege to contribute to my country in any way I can.

If there is one lesson I would like to share, it is that no matter where you start, dedication and a commitment to learning can take you far. Nepal may be small, but our dreams and potential are boundless, and I am honoured to be part of this journey to build a better future for all.

Personal growth and transformation are constants in my life

Reflecting on my journey, I see that personal growth and transformation are constants in my life. In my 20s, I thought I understood the world, but my perspective was limited. Today, with experiences abroad and rich connections across cultures, I have gained not just knowledge but the ability to appreciate diversity.

This diversity, I have come to realise, is a source of beauty and strength. Every encounter has helped me grow, teaching me that different interests and perspectives are vital to a fuller life.

I find myself gravitating toward social entrepreneurship rather than financial gain. For me, wealth is not about money but about impact. Inspired by my father, a man deeply respected in our community, I often ponder: how many lives will feel my absence when I am gone? My father's legacy in community service continues to guide me. It reminds me that true success lies in uplifting others and making a difference that resonates beyond oneself. This belief drives my work, especially in community-focused projects that prioritise social impact over profit.

One project I am particularly proud of is our initiative in community upliftment. Through this, we work to support underprivileged communities worldwide, reaching regions across Asia, Africa and beyond. Many organisations, particularly in the western world, see this as an opportunity for cultural exchange and learning. They come to understand the challenges others face, recognising their own privilege in the process. This project isn't merely about development; it is about building empathy and bridging worlds.

At the heart of our work are community schools. We have set up innovation labs that serve as hubs for environmental projects, technology development and entrepreneurship training. Our activities span tree planting to tech education, tackling local issues while fostering creativity and resilience among the youth. The idea is to nurture minds that can think critically and contribute meaningfully to society.

In reflecting on my values, 'people, planet and profit'

emerge as guiding principles. People come first because human connections are fundamental. Everything we do must benefit humanity as a whole. Planet follows, as it is our responsibility to leave a sustainable world for the next generation. This world is livable now, and with conscious effort, we can make it even better for those who come after us. The last, profit, serves as a reminder that while financial sustainability is essential, it should never come at the expense of people or the planet.

Thinking broadly about humanity's journey, I feel optimistic. Looking back over centuries, the world today is a vastly better place. Despite our current challenges, we have overcome wars, famine and extreme hardship, and each generation has made strides toward a more compassionate and interconnected world. In my youth, we rarely encountered people who lived past their eighties. Today, lifespans have increased, quality of life has improved, and even in remote areas, technology has brought about enormous changes. This shift isn't unique to Nepal; it is a global trend. While challenges like climate change loom, I am hopeful that innovation and a renewed focus on sustainability will guide us through.

It is an exhilarating time, too, with advancements in AI and technology. They open up endless possibilities, not only in efficiency but in enhancing quality of life. For instance, countries like Israel have leveraged technology to revolutionise agriculture, achieving food self-sufficiency with minimal labour. If we can adopt similar models, there is no limit to what our communities can achieve. I believe the next generation will have even more tools to shape a prosperous, balanced future.

True leadership is collaborative

Leadership, in my view, is less about power and

more about teamwork and empowerment. True leadership is collaborative; it is about bringing people together, aligning them with a shared vision, and fostering a sense of belonging and purpose. I do not see myself as a leader in the traditional sense. Instead, I aim to create a team dynamic where every member feels valued and heard. Happy, engaged teams can accomplish more than any individual effort.

Finally, my life philosophy centres on relationships and empathy. I strive to view situations from others'

impact on a global scale. His life reminds me that the mark we leave on others is the truest measure of a life well-lived.

Every step in my journey has been a learning process, filled with mistakes, resilience and gratitude. I wake up each day with a sense of purpose, embracing the life I have been given. I hope to make the world a little brighter, one small act at a time, and to inspire others to do the same. This journey is ongoing, and I am eager to see where it leads.

As I look back on my life, I realise that ambition isn't



perspectives, not just my own. In business and in life, this approach fosters understanding and collective growth. As Dale Carnegie said, most people spend 90% of their time focused on 10% of negativity. I choose instead to focus on the good, investing my energy where it can uplift and inspire.

When I reflect on my sources of inspiration, my father's legacy stands out. His compassion, integrity and dedication to community service continue to motivate me. I want to honour his contributions by expanding his

always about having grand plans from the start; sometimes, it's about making the best of each opportunity and striving to bring positive change wherever you are. From humble beginnings, I have found myself on a journey I could never have anticipated, a journey that has taught me the importance of education, resilience and a spirit of service. I may not have achieved everything I set out to do but I am grateful for each experience and the privilege to contribute to my country in any way I can. **B**

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DON'T SETTLE FOR STEREOTYPES



Sandesh Palungwa Limbu, Certified professional fitness instructor, founder of RAGE Fitness, and specialises in mixed martial arts.

A lot of people in their mid forties and early fifties approach me with apprehension about their health and fitness status, broadening waistlines, excess kilos, blood pressure, joint pains; they want to start exercise but are apprehensive if it's too late to begin. It's never too late. Some of my most consistent and progressive clients are over 50. They believed in taking charge of their health and well being, and have made exercise an important part of their lifestyle, and are strong and energetic people.

The aging process, I believe, is something that is directly linked to your mind and to your attitude to life. You can use it as an impetus to work on and improve your health and quality of life. The choices you make the minute you decide to integrate exercise into your life will not only greatly improve your current health but also how well you do in the years ahead. Here are a few things to think about:

- Health benefits are huge at whatever age you decide to begin to exercise. Beyond your 40s, regular exercise helps preserve lean muscle mass and strength, improves balance and coordination and helps improve functional decline that comes with age.
- Choose a workout that you will enjoy. That way

you are more likely to stay consistent. In the beginning it is advisable to go to a gym or fitness centre and consult with a professional certified trainer to guide you.

- Your exercise routine should be challenging, not painful. Discomfort or the feeling that you need to push yourself are good during a routine, pain is not. Set short and achievable goals

improves joint stability among other benefits.

- Don't go on fad diets or make poor nutritional choices to get rid of the mid section trouble spot. Make healthy food choices. Avoid processed foods, refined sugar and starchy carbs. Instead opt for fibrous food, vegetables and fruits and whole grains. Eat consciously.

- Don't skip your exercise routine even when you are awfully tempted to. It can trigger off a sequence. Ultimately you are the only one to lose out.

Don't settle for stereotypes of your age. Enjoy life, find time to do things you really want to, invest in good food, travel, books, exercise and quality living, meditate for at least 20 minutes a day, every time



and progress into more complex and intense routines eventually.

- Vary your exercise routine to combat boredom. It also helps you avoid plateaus. You can also alternate the intensity of your workout.
- Always warm up and cool down before and after your routine.
- long easy cardio session with short high intensity interval training when you are ready. This will give you great results.
- Weight training is extremely important. It helps boost metabolism, increases strength, build strong bones,

- You have to exercise to get rid of that belly. Planks are great and one of the most effective abdominal exercises. Ask your fitness trainer to get it right.
- Eliminate stress. It doesn't get you anywhere. Prioritise your time and create a checklist to get you started. List the important stuff on the top and get it over and done with at the beginning of the day.
- You don't have to answer every call, every message. You don't have to be on FB every few minutes. Life's waiting to be explored in real!

you feel like you are getting stressed – pull back, take a few deep breaths and ask yourself if worrying is actually going to change anything, catch up with friends, watch a good movie, indulge in a massage, do something for someone when they least expect it, engage in social service, take a power nap, take an impromptu break and do something you love; know that this is your life, this is your body and each choice you make each day should make you feel good inside out! **B**

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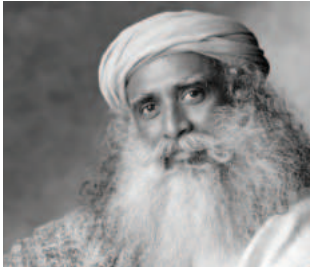
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HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE?



Sadhguru. Ranked amongst the 50 most influential people in India, Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and a New York Times bestselling author. Sadhguru has been conferred the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in 2017, the highest annual civilian award, accorded for exceptional and distinguished service.

Q: Namaskaram. I have big dreams, which I hope will come true. But I am not a person who socialises easily with others and I am scared to face the world. How will I be able to follow my dreams once I finish college, without the fear of my dreams being dismissed?

Sadhguru: When people go to sleep, they have dreams. I am telling you, put your dream to sleep for some time. Do not dream anything now and fix what you will become in the world because it is too early.

In three to five years' time, you will be an entirely different person. In reality, even from today to tomorrow, though it may not be a noticeable shift, something would have changed. So, you do not have to think today, "What am I going to do in the world?" because you will only fix up a very small, inefficient dream. Right now, your business is to imbibe as much as you can. Grow into a full-fledged human being – physically, mentally emotionally and in terms of your intelligence. On all levels, you must become as much as you can become.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IN THE WORLD? YOU SHOULD DO WHAT IS MOST NEEDED, NOT WHAT YOU FANCY IN YOUR HEAD. WHAT YOU FANCY IN YOUR HEAD MAY BE IRRELEVANT TO THE WORLD. THEN WHAT IS THE POINT OF DOING THAT? TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE DONE WHAT THEY FANCY AND DESTROYED THE WORLD IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.



Ready for the race

In some way, a dream or an ambition means you are thinking of some kind of a race. They are calling it a rat race these days. If you enter the rat race, it is mainly about who is better than whom. You have to be a rat to qualify. That is a huge backwards step in the evolutionary process. If you win, maybe you are a super-rat, but still a rat. Do not think in terms of, "Where will I be, how much ahead of somebody or behind somebody?" This is a time to absorb as much as you can. This is not a time for you to yield mangoes. This is a time to pluck the damn flowers out and just grow.

If you want to win a race, it will not happen just because you desire it. You must build an appropriate machine. What you have is a Maruti 800, but you are thinking of winning a Formula One race. You can dream as much as you want, about how Lewis Hamilton was trying to overtake you, but with your Maruti 800, you went off ahead of him! You can dream all that, but if

you go on the track and try to do something, the four wheels of your Maruti will fly in four directions.

Do not try to win the race. Just build a good enough machine – that is the most important thing. Thinking of winning the race means you are looking back and seeing, "Somebody is behind me." If you have a bunch of idiots around you and you are winning the race, you will be a better idiot – that's all. Do not ever think on those lines. Wanting to be better than someone is a wrong direction that has been set for the whole of humanity. This will leave you in a state of strife all the time. Above all, if you enjoy someone else's failing, it is a sickness.

Beyond your dreams

What should you do in the world? You should do what is most needed, not what you fancy in your head. What you fancy in your head may be irrelevant to the world. Then what is the point of doing that? Too many people have done what they fancy and destroyed the world in many different

ways. If we can joyfully do what is needed, then we will find expression and people will gather and support that activity – then things will happen.

Put your dreams to sleep for some time because dreams come from past experience of life. Our future should have nothing to do with our past, otherwise we will just recycle the past and think it is the future. Most people's idea of future is to take a piece of past, apply make up on it and think it is future, a little improved.

Future should happen new. What you could not dream of should happen in your life – that is my blessing to you. What you could not imagine must happen. If what you could dream happened, what is the use of that? You can only dream what you know. If only what you know happens, it is a poor life. Let something happen that you cannot dream of right now – only then, life is exciting.

I want to destroy your dreams. Let them be destroyed, so that you aspire to just grow yourself to your full potential. **B**

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MY LEADERSHIP STYLE IS COLLABORATIVE AND INTEGRITY-FOCUSED. I PRIORITISE HONESTY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LISTENING TO OTHERS. I ALSO WORK HARD TO BE APPROACHABLE BECAUSE I THINK OPEN COMMUNICATION BUILDS A STRONGER TEAM.

MY EXPERIENCES IN DIFFERENT SECTORS HAVE SHOWN ME THAT ADAPTABILITY IS CRUCIAL; EVERY SITUATION, EVERY TEAM REQUIRES SOMETHING DIFFERENT. SO, I AIM TO BE FLEXIBLE WHILE STAYING TRUE TO MY CORE VALUES OF INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBILITY”



GOKARNA RAJ AWASTHI

DIRECTOR GENERAL, FEDERATION OF NEPALESE
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Born and raised in a small village in Darchula district, Gokarna Raj Awasthi, Director General of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, moved to Kathmandu after completing class 5 in the village. Awasthi says that his school years were very important as they taught him about discipline, perseverance and the value of education.

"I was fortunate to have supportive parents who encouraged me to pursue further studies. I eventually did an MBA which was a big step for me," he ruminates. Awasthi also shares about the opportunity he had to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Development Journalism at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication which exposed him to the wider world of journalism.

"I started my career as a journalist, and before that, I even worked as a teacher for a brief period of time. However, journalism quickly became my full-time pursuit, and I started with Artha Ko Artha, one of Nepal's longest-running television programmes," he recalls. That experience, from 1997 onward, was transformative, he says, adding, "It shaped my understanding of economics and current affairs, as well as my passion for storytelling."

In 2004, Awasthi joined Kantipur Daily as an economic journalist. He went on to become the head and editor of the Economic Bureau, a role he held for nearly a decade.

Later, Awasthi says that he also had the opportunity to work with the United Nations as an advisor to the UN Resident Coordinator's Office. For three years, he advised various UN agencies on public communication, particularly regarding economic and development issues. "Working in such a multicultural, multi-disciplinary environment gave me a global perspective on local issues, and I came to understand Nepal's

development challenges on a deeper level," he says.

In 2020, Awasthi transitioned to his current role with the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry. "My work has allowed me to use all the skills I have gathered over the years in journalism, public policy and communications to contribute to economic and social causes close to my heart," he shares.

In this issue of **Business 360**, Awasthi talks about what leadership means to him.

How do you define leadership?

I would say that leadership is both an art and a responsibility. In many parts of Nepal, leadership is traditionally associated with politics or high-profile roles. But to me, leadership is much broader. It is about uniting people with a common vision, even if you are not in a formal position of power. Leadership is also about taking responsibility, which means guiding others through both successes and failures and ensuring that, as a team, everyone is aligned with the organisation's mission.

In my career, whether in journalism, with the UN, or my current role, I have come to see that leadership is about service. It is about putting the organisation's goals and the team's well-being above your personal ambitions. You are there to inspire, to provide clarity, and to support your team in realising their potential. That is why I believe leadership is not just about giving orders but about making sure everyone feels heard, valued and connected to a larger purpose.

Is leadership inborn or a quality developed over time?

That's a great question. I think it can be a combination of both. Some people may have natural tendencies that draw others to them – qualities like empathy, strong communication, or an ability to stay calm in crises. But,

personally, I believe most of us grow into leadership through experiences. In my case, I did not set out to be a leader; it was a result of focusing on doing my work well, accepting responsibilities as they came, and adapting to the challenges in front of me.

Mentors and role models play a big part as well. They often help you see qualities in yourself that you might not recognise. For example, in journalism, I had a few mentors who challenged me to take on difficult stories, which in turn taught me resilience. Similarly, while working with the UN, I observed leaders from diverse cultures and backgrounds which showed me how leadership could look different depending on the context. So yes, some people may have an innate ability, but I believe experience, continuous learning and personal reflection are what make a leader truly effective.

Could you share an experience where your leadership abilities were tested?

Leadership is full of tests. One particular instance was during the Covid 19 pandemic. As you know, it was a time of immense uncertainty and fear. Many people looked to us for guidance and solutions, and there was a lot of pressure to make quick, often risky, decisions. We established an isolation centre which involved a degree of risk for everyone involved, including the board members and staff. But it was something we felt was necessary for the community.

At the same time, we had to manage the economic impact, both at an organisational level and for the wider community. Advocating for policy changes with government bodies, working with international organisations, and finding resources; all of it required quick thinking, collaboration and sometimes taking difficult stands. This experience taught

me the value of courage in leadership and showed me how critical it is to be decisive yet flexible in challenging times.

How do you view the relationship between a leader and their team?

The team is the backbone of any leader's success. I firmly believe that no leader can achieve anything substantial alone. Every success I have had is because of the collective effort of the teams I have been part of. A leader's role is to support, guide and sometimes shield the team from unnecessary pressures so they can focus on what they do best.

To me, a strong team is built on mutual trust and respect. It is important that team members feel they can approach me with ideas, concerns or even criticism. I believe in creating a space where everyone feels their contribution is valued. This approach not only strengthens the team but also leads to better decision-making since you are drawing on a diverse set of perspectives and skills. As a leader, fostering such an environment is one of the most important responsibilities.

How do you see leadership evolving, especially in the political and social sectors in Nepal?

That is an interesting question. Nepal is at a crossroads in many ways, and leadership across sectors needs to evolve to keep pace with our changing society and economy. For instance, we are seeing a lot of young talent leaving Nepal in search of opportunities abroad, which is creating a gap in leadership here. To address this, leaders will need to find ways to retain talent and encourage the next generation to invest in Nepal's future.

Leadership will also need to become more inclusive and adaptable. Social and political leadership, in particular, must focus on involving youth and women, groups that have historically been underrepresented. As we adapt



to global changes in technology and economy, Nepali leaders will need to embrace innovative solutions tailored to our unique challenges. I believe that if we cultivate a culture of inclusive, forward-thinking leadership, it could make a significant difference.

What is your personal leadership style? Has it changed over the years?

Yes, my style has evolved. Early in my career, I was more focused on doing the best work I could, and I was less conscious of my influence on others. However, as I took on roles with more responsibility, I realised the importance of being not just effective but also approachable and transparent.

Today, I would say my leadership style is collaborative and integrity-focused. I prioritise honesty, accountability and listening to others. I also work hard to be approachable because I think open communication builds a stronger team. My experiences in different sectors have shown me that adaptability is crucial; every situation, every team requires something different. So, I aim to be flexible while staying true to my core values of integrity and responsibility.

What are the most important qualities of a good leader?

Three qualities stand out to me: integrity, resilience and humility. Integrity is the foundation of trust. A leader without integrity cannot earn the genuine respect of their team, and that respect is

crucial for effective leadership. Resilience is also essential because leadership inevitably involves setbacks. You need the strength to push through challenges and the ability to stay focused on the long-term vision.

Finally, humility allows a leader to recognise the strengths of others, listen to different perspectives, and learn from mistakes. Leaders are only human, and humility helps you connect with your team and continuously improve. I would also say continuous learning is vital – a leader who stops learning is a leader who stops growing.

Are there any leaders or role models who have inspired you?

Many, actually. Globally, leaders like Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi come to

mind. Mandela's resilience in the face of adversity and his focus on unity are inspiring, especially in a country like Nepal, where unity is crucial for progress. Closer to home, I have great respect for some senior journalists who mentored me in my early years and taught me the importance of dedication and integrity in one's work.

In the UN, I met people from diverse backgrounds who were deeply committed to making a positive difference, and that commitment inspired me. And, of course, I am inspired by my own parents, who instilled in me the values of hard work and perseverance. Leaders like these remind me that a good leader is driven by a purpose beyond personal success. **B**