



THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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POST PHOTO: KABIN ADHIKARI

A child wearing a mask and a face shield as a protection against the coronavirus gets ready for her school in Kathmandu on Friday. (Report on Pg3)

Big confusion as top body responding to Covid-19 becomes defunct

At a time when the government is facing a financial gridlock, the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre getting invalid could spell a catastrophe, experts warn.



POST FILE PHOTO

Covid-19 patients undergo treatment at an outpatient ward of a hospital in Kathmandu.

TIKA R PRADHAN & SANGAM PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, SEPT 17

All legal frameworks related to the country's Covid-19 response, including the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre, no longer exist now, which experts and officials say could make it

difficult to deal with the coronavirus crisis.

With the annulment of the Covid-19 Crisis Management Ordinance 2078 BS, the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre, known as CCMC, an agency created to respond to the pandemic, has become defunct from Wednesday

midnight. The ordinance was presented in Parliament on July 18 and it must have been endorsed by September 16, as such ordinances must get through within 60 days since the date of their tabling.

As the ordinance has no effect now, Provincial Covid-19 Crisis Management Centres and District Covid-19 Crisis Management Centres of all 77 districts also have become defunct.

"Actually, all legal frameworks including the infrastructures functioning under the CCMC have now become defunct," said Balananda Sharma, chief executive officer of the now-defunct CCMC.

The Covid-19 Crisis Management Ordinance 2078 BS was issued on May 20 as the House of Representatives was then in recess. Accordingly, the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre was created. The ordinance allowed the government to declare a health emergency, if needed, and ease the process to procure medical goods, equipment and vaccines to battle the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Nepali comic artists portray their storytelling prowess through online comics and webtoons

They are increasingly gravitating towards online platforms to show off their craft and also hone their skills.

SHRANUP TANDUKAR
KATHMANDU, SEPT 17

Most of the time when something bothers Padma Raj Lama, 19, he just tries to ignore it but when the issue hits too close to home then his hands start itching to get his stylus pen and draw a comic to escape into a world of art. One of his comics dated March 28, 2020, which features his principal character called 'Mr. Blue', is based on the theme of menstruation. In the comic, Mr. Blue goes out to buy sanitary pads for his sister but notices uncomfortable gazes from people around him and in response, his character screams at the people, "What y'all looking at?"

"The incident actually happened, I went to buy a sanitary pad for my sister who was having menstrual cramps but the uncomfortable stares I got from the pharmacist and the people around me bothered me a lot so I drew a comic about it," he says. "Of course, I couldn't scream at the people at that time but in my comic, I have more freedom."

Lama, for now, publishes his comic strips only on his Instagram page. His comics feature the quirky (mis)adven-



PHOTO COURTESY: ROSEENA SHAKYA

Shiro and Leo is a heartwarming slice of life webtoon by Roseena Shakya (Phllegm).

tures of Mr. Blue and occasionally, it also touches upon contemporary social issues. Drawn in an average of three-four panels and read left to right, Lama's comics, unlike the vertical scrolling webtoon format, mimic the style of traditional comic strips found in newspapers.

Webtoon, the digital comic artstyle which originated in South Korea, is especially designed for the smartphone audience with infinite scrolling vertical panels instead of traditional horizontal panels.

Like K-pop, webtoons are cementing their popularity on the global stage. Their popularity is also catching up in Nepal.

Nepali comic artists are gravitating towards online comics and webtoons, which do not entail any costs or hassles that come with publishing a physical comic, to show off their craft and also hone their skills. For many artists, the comics act as a 'visual diary' in which they feature their slice of life stories. For others, the comics act more as a medium to improve their art, and for the lucky few, it can also be a career path.

>> Continued on page 9

Will Kalapani residents fit into 'my census, my participation' motto?

Central Bureau of Statistics, the agency conducting the national census, is not sure whether it could count households and number of people in the region physically.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA & ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, SEPT 17

The national population census, which was halted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is set to start from November. The Central Bureau of Statistics, the agency carrying out the gargantuan task, has made "my census, my participation" its motto. Questions, however, remain whether the people of the Kalapani area fit into this motto.

The census this year, 12th since it was started in 1911, is first since Nepal published a new map in May last year incorporating Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh within the Nepali territory, in an assertion that the regions belong to Nepal, not

India, which claims them to be its own. This emerged last year as a major irritant in Nepal-India relations, with Delhi calling Kathmandu's decision to publish the new map a cartographic assertion.

When the census was planned earlier for June, government officials had talked about some options to include the people in the region in the national head and household count. But no final decision has been taken yet.

"Our preparations [for census] are limited to the areas where we have our administrative control and where the local administration has promised security to our supervisors and enumerators," Padam Pandey, district census officer in Darchula, told the Post over the phone. "We have already mobilised the supervisors to make a list of households before conducting the census."

There are households in Gunji, Navi and Kuti areas beside the barracks of the Indian Army. There are no local inhabitants in Tilisi, which is currently Kalapani, and Nabhidang. There, however, are people in Chhangru, Tallo Kawa and Garbyang areas. Since these areas were not included during the 11th census conducted in 2011, there is no data on the number of households and people there.

Nebin Lal Shrestha, director general at the Central Bureau of Statistics, said that it is not that the bureau didn't have any plan to conduct the census in the Kalapani region.

"It, however, is not easier to conduct a census in a region where it is even difficult to reach," he said.

Nepali people still have to travel via India to reach the villages in the Kalapani region in Darchula.

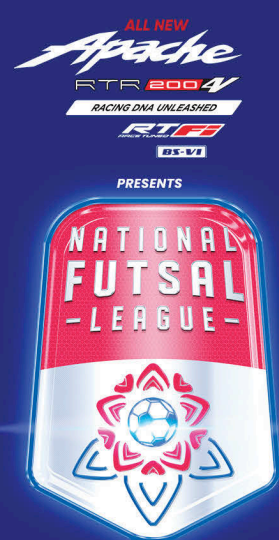
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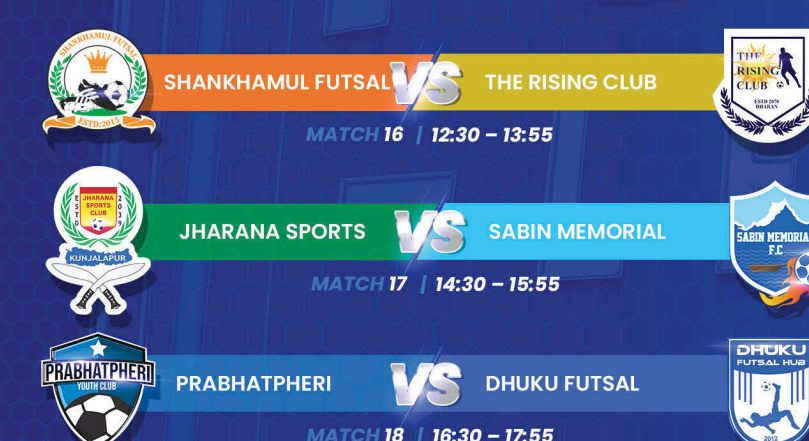
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Nepali artists portray their storytelling prowess through online comics and webtoons

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Meanwhile, physical publication of such comics doesn't yet have a foothold in Nepal. Physical copies of comics may only be feasible as a passion project, artists say.

Most of the Nepali artists use Webtoon canvas (stylised as WEBTOON CANVAS), a webtoon publishing platform by Naver Corporation to publish their artworks. Nepali webtoon artists say Webtoon's publishing platform is free, extremely convenient, and has a large audience and that is why they prefer drawing and publishing webtoons instead of other comic styles.

Comic and webtoon artist Nozomi Rana, 34, says that his fascination with comic books started from an early age. He still remembers devouring Calvin and Hobbes comics back then. His foray into comic artwork started with his online comic series 'The Adventures of Momo Boya' and he eventually moved on to webtoons with his 'Deluded Dreamer' webtoon. Now, he is involved in both, as his webtoon account and Instagram page are updated with a new chapter of 'Momo Boya' and 'Deluded Dreamer' almost every week.

His comic books and webtoons are mostly comedy, adventure, and slice of life genres, and he tries to incorporate Nepali elements through the stories, supporting characters, and settings.

"I actually got the idea to base a character on momos while eating momos with my friend and that's how the name and design of Momo Boya came to life," he says. "The character of Momo Boya and the story of Deluded Dreamer have struck a chord with Nepali audiences."

Rana feels Nepali audiences are receptive towards local context stories and artstyle. "Foreign context stories and artwork style by Nepali artists are a bit less appreciated," he says.

He also dabbles in short horror comics from time to time. His most recent one is titled 'Sadak Hatya', published last month on his Instagram page.

Anish Raj Joshi, author of Blaze Core webtoon, says that he, on the other hand, has always been interested in action and fantasy genres since childhood. He goes by the nickname Xcelon Art on Instagram



The cover art of Blaze Core webtoon by Anish Raj Joshi which has over 1.2 million views on WEBTOON CANVAS.

PHOTO COURTESY: ANISH RAJ JOSHI

and was the author of 'Daemon Ignition' manga which was published in the Otaku Next magazines and also as its own standalone manga volume. From the manga artstyle, he transitioned into webtoons because he saw that the webtoon industry was burgeoning and the process of creating online webtoons was easier than creating online manga.

"Though romance and comedy webtoons are more popular, I was always more fascinated by fantasy and adventure genres. I had a fantasy and adventure story idea brewing on my mind, so when I transitioned to webtoons, I followed through on that idea," says Joshi.

His webtoon has over 40,000 subscribers, 1.2 million views, and even 31 patrons who financially support his artistic endeavour. He says that he is hopeful of making a career out of webtoons and committed to producing three chapters

per month.

For emerging artists, however, their webtoons and artwork are mostly their passion and source of happiness.

Astha (who only goes by her first name), 18, is the author of two webtoons, 'Apology Letter' and 'Mutually Devious'.

"I just feel so much joy when I draw my characters, it's like a source of serotonin for me," she says. She goes by the nickname 'aestha' on Instagram and was introduced to webtoons after an artist she admired started publishing webtoons. As she was always fond of writing stories even before she was seriously drawing art, she got hooked on drawing webtoons as it combined both of her interests.

"I have the power to show anyone what I have in my head. I can actually materialise my thoughts. If I want to see what a frog with horns would look like, I can just

draw it! If I want to tell others about the story of a cheerful golden goddess I thought of in my head, I can just make a comic about her! It's crazy," she says.

The appeal of storytelling and narrative structure in online comics and webtoons attracts many artists. Roseena Shakya, 24, is one of them, who goes by the nickname Phllegm on Instagram and uses they/them pronouns.

"I started my art journey from painting thangka art, then moved on to water colours and then illustrations. However, I was always interested in incorporating a narrative in my artwork so when I was introduced to webtoon through other artists, I found my calling," Shakya says.

It has been four years since they started drawing webtoons. They share that there have been many trials and errors along their journey of learning how to draw webtoons. There have been many

webtoon stories they didn't continue, but the one webtoon which they still continue is called 'Shiro and Leo', which features their own pet dogs. As a slice of life genre, their webtoon illustrates the calm, mundane yet relatable everyday lives of their dogs. Shakya says, "With my webtoons, I try to incorporate emotions that others can relate to. Though I draw my adventures with my own dogs, I believe that my webtoons can be relatable and fun for others, too."

They share that they are planning to publish a physical comic book collection with a small group of artists. "I am still learning how to draw comics and webtoons, and I feel that publishing a physical copy will be a valuable learning opportunity for all of us," they say. However, they don't see this venture as something commercially sustainable. "I don't think publishing physical comic books in Nepal is feasible right now but I still want to do it as more of a passion project."

Kavin Shah, co-founder of Otaku Next, which used to publish a bi-monthly magazine until 2018, says that artists can reach international audiences through webtoons while physical copies can help reach national audiences.

"Japan has had a physical comic book industry for hundreds of years while Nepal doesn't have such a history. So, it is difficult to commercialise physical comic books without an existing infrastructure," he says. However, he says that since manga and anime culture has become really popular, he is hopeful that physical comic book culture will follow suit.

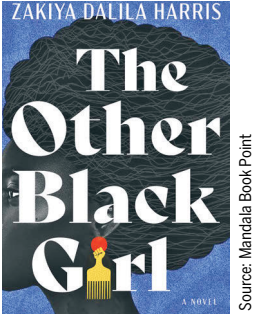
Astha is also optimistic about a physical publishing culture of artwork in Nepal.

"I do think that a physical publishing of an original work created by a Nepali artist might have the possibility of success in Nepal, given that the price is within a range that students or teens can afford," she says. "I have also thought of printing a zine, like a small collection of my artworks, but I haven't thought about printing something on a large scale like a comic or the webtoon, mainly because I do not have the funds to publish my stories."

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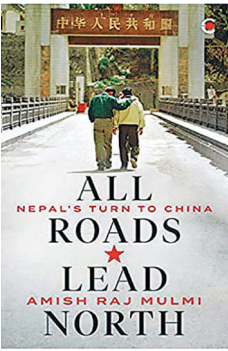
Fiction

1. The Other Black Girl by Zakiya Dalila Harris
2. Sex and Vanity by Kevin Kwan
3. The Anthropocene Reviewed by John Green
4. The Comfort Book by Matt Haig
5. Girl in White Cotton by Avni Doshi

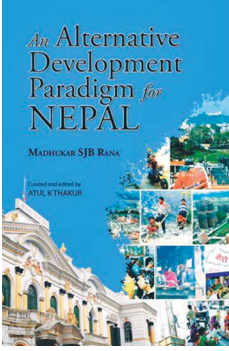


Source: Mandala Book Point

Non-Fiction

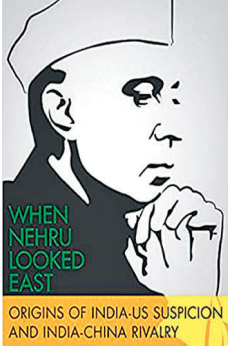


1. A New Cold War: Henry Kissinger and the Rise of China Edited by Sanjaya Baru and Rahul Sharma
2. All Roads Lead North: Nepal's Turn to China by Amish Raj Mulmi
3. Nehru, Tibet and China by AS Bhasin
4. India and Asian Geopolitics: The Past Present by Shivshankar Menon
5. India's China Challenge by Ananth Krishnan



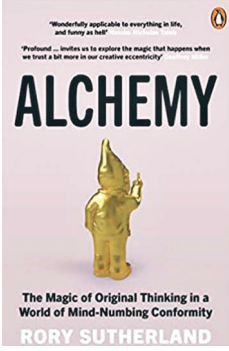
An Alternative Development Paradigm for Nepal
Author: Madhukar SJB Rana
Publication: Vajra Books
Price: Rs 1000

In 'An Alternative Development Paradigm for Nepal', the late Madhukar SJB Rana (who passed away in 2019), an eminent public intellectual and the former Finance Minister, provides an understanding of the country's crucial development accounts and fundamentals. It also discusses Nepal and South Asia's development priorities. Rana also brings light to the policy perspectives to the development history of Nepal.



When Nehru Looked East: Origins of India-US Suspicion and India-China Rivalry
Author: Francine Frankel
Publication: OUP USA
Price: Rs 1592

Francine R Frankel, the founding director of the Center for the Advanced Study of India (CASI) at the University of Pennsylvania, discusses the framework of foreign policy introduced by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. Frankel provides the most authoritative account yet of the origins of India-US suspicions and India-China rivalries.



Alchemy: The Magic of Original Thinking in a World of Mind-Numbing Conformity
Author: Rory Sutherland
Publication: WH Allen
Price: Rs 958

TED Talk superstar and Ogilvy advertising legend Rory Sutherland discusses why abandoning logic and casting aside rationality is the best way to solve any problem. Sutherland brings behavioural science, jaw-dropping stories, and a touch of branding magic on his mission to turn people into idea alchemists. "To be brilliant, you have to be irrational," says Sutherland.

Rhino drowns at Dutch zoo in mating mishap

Rhinos are highly prized across Asia for traditional and medicinal purposes but breeding them is difficult.

DANNY KEMP
THE HAGUE

A female rhinoceros drowned at a zoo in the Netherlands after a first date with a new male went tragically wrong, the zoo said on Friday.

Elena was "startled" on Thursday by the arrival of a white rhino named Limpopo at the Wildlands zoo in the eastern city of Emmen near the German border.

After a chase, the exhausted female slipped into a waterhole, at which point zookeepers lured the bull rhino away from her.

"Unfortunately, this help came too late for Elena and she had already drowned," the zoo said in a statement. The 19-year-old Limpopo had arrived at the park in early September from another Dutch zoo where he sired three offspring as part of a European breeding programme.

The male and the Wildlands zoo's two female rhinos, sisters Elena and Zahra, started getting to know each other by smelling and seeing each other in separate pens. The "most exciting" part, the zoo said, was planned for Thursday morning before visitors arrived when Limpopo was allowed into the area where the females were grazing.

"From that moment on it became restless: both women were startled by the male and instead of putting him in his place together, they both ran off," it said. "As a result, Limpopo gave chase. He seemed particularly focused on Elena, because she was the



UNSPASH

closest to him."

Both animals appeared exhausted after 15 minutes, and Elena slipped into a shallow pool of water; landed on her side and was unable to get up, the zoo said.

Caretakers were unable to stop her drowning.

Limpopo's past problems - Stunned zoo vet Job Stumpel paid tribute to the "beautiful, sweet, stable and calm" Elena.

"You want to jump over there and lift her head above water but you couldn't. Rhinos are not only very dangerous, but they also weigh almost 2,000 kilos (4,409 pounds)," he told the AD newspaper. "We raced to it with a shovel and chased the male away with it, so we could get to the female, but it was too late."

The zoo said such an introduction "often requires intervention, but never before has one been fatal".

Limpopo had been moved from a German zoo six years ago because he "didn't treat the female there properly", the Brabants Dagblad newspaper said.

In his most recent home, the Beekse Bergen safari park near Tilburg in the southern Netherlands, he was a "proven breeder" living with a herd of six females.

The southern white rhino is listed as "near threatened" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, with 10,080 animals in existence.

Rhinos are killed for their horns, highly prized across Asia for traditional and medicinal purposes.

But breeding them is difficult, as a female-only gives birth to a calf once every three to four years, after a 16-month pregnancy, the zoo said.

— Agence France-Presse

Buying bamboo comb or continue using plastic one?

While using eco-friendly products is a great way to be more climate-conscious, one also needs to adopt daily sustainable practices.

SHUVANGI KHADKA

Weeks ago, as my old plastic comb started collecting dust, I planned to buy a bamboo comb priced at Rs 450. When I told my mother about it, she gasped.

As I browsed the bamboo company's website to find the reason behind the product's high cost, I found out that their products are imported from Vietnam. This led me to think of the carbon footprint of an imported bamboo comb.

A quick Google search assures me that locally sourcing or manufacturing is not always the best for the environment. Local production may reduce the carbon miles of transport, but there are still many things that factor in—from sourcing raw materials, selecting suppliers to the production process—when it comes to determining how environment-friendly the products are. In the context of developing countries, things get even trickier.

Research shows that the average energy needed to import shoes to a retailer in Morocco is less than the average energy required to distribute a pair of locally produced shoes in the country. Such findings from developing countries highlight the need to assess the actual total energy effects of nearby sourcing versus long-distance sourcing. The outcomes of such assessments can be the stark opposite of what appears at first glance. Importing products to a landlocked country can lead to additional challenges and costs and yield different results.

I am not sure if importers of 'eco-friendly' products track their product's carbon footprint. "Usually in Nepal, trading of such products has flourished as people see demand for sustainable products. So, they import what is already in demand and supply," shares Nitesh Sharma, founder of Dhaasoo Deals, an online store that sells upcycled products.

But is practising sustainability as easy as buying expensive sustainable eco-products off the counter? And is that all businesses can think of?

Principally, sustainability requires considering and reacting to one's behaviour's impact on the larger community and environment. For businesses, such behaviour is not limited



SHUTTERSTOCK

to the final product but every step along the way. A sustainable business model looks at how raw materials are acquired, how production is done, how the final product is packaged, shipped, and how it is disposed of. For example, a menstrual cup minimises sanitary pad waste but it also has to be disposed of in the end. But as such cups are mostly made of medical-grade silicone, they can simply be burned to ashes and not cause significant harm to the environment.

The idea of sustainability begins from the conception of the business idea itself. Of course, a business can make eco-friendly products. But there is a need to differentiate whether a product is needed or wanted. There is a great irony in selling and buying zero waste products like bamboo straws and metallic bottles without realising how a simple change in consumption habits like drinking from cups may prevent their use entirely.

Haushala Gurung Thapa, educator and founder of Haushala Creatives, says, "It is important to understand the term itself. Instead of using the

word 'sustainability', which is a noun, I prefer, to use 'sustaining', which is a verb."

The main point is not to manufacture more sustainable products but to find sustaining practices for the environment.

Some pioneers have been working to establish a closed-loop production system or cradle to cradle approach that recovers waste and turns it into new production resources. Today, if a company operates linearly without looking at its effects in a transversal way, then it is selling just a half-baked narrative. It doesn't make sense when a company uses single-use plastic packaging but at the same time boasts about its sustainable corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

While we are talking about sustainable production, mobility is one of the priority areas. Recently there was a lot of talk about reducing electric vehicle import taxes. But upgrading to newer technologies also has problems of its own.

Nitesh Sharma, who has been upcycling for the last six years, laments the

lack of focus on what to do with dead EV batteries. "As more and more electric cars start plying on the roads, the world needs to seriously think about environmentally friendly ways to deal with millions of EV batteries that are no longer of use," he says.

In Europe, experts are already worried about how the EV industry is booming because 10-15 years down the line, there will be a huge accumulation of dead batteries.

He further questions, "If electric vehicles are really the future, why are big companies still investing in petroleum products? Here in Nepal, the government may have reduced taxes on EVs, but one also needs to be aware that the country still imports a lot of petroleum products."

This further reaffirms the importance of imagining more sustainable business practices.

If a brand or a company really believes in sustainability, then they can easily imagine new and innovative ways to be more sustainable. Sharma confides, "A few years ago, wooden pallets could be gotten for free

because they were discarded materials. But as businesses started using wooden pallets as raw materials, prices of wooden pallets started going up. What people need to understand is scrap is not limited to used bottles or wooden pallets. There are plenty of other scraps to take care of." It is pretty evident that there are enough scraps for everyone from recent garbage pictures all around Kathmandu.

One such innovation that comes to mind is Haushala Creatives, which upcycles old clothes by repairing them. The company started by organising clothing swap events. But as clothes accumulated, they shifted their focus on repairing clothes. Thapa also questions the thrifting culture in Nepal. "If you are thrifting by buying or importing more, you are missing the whole point."

The devastating effect of the overwhelming import of second-hand clothes in Africa is a case in hand. According to Oxfam, more than 70 percent of the clothes donated globally end up in Africa. While second-hand clothes provide a cheaper alternative,

the import is so overwhelming that it is impossible to sell everything. With not enough resources for textile recycling programmes, the clothing waste from Global North ultimately ends up in the landfills of Africa.

Thrifting is, of course, a good sustaining option. But it doesn't make sense if I am thrifting to wear more and cheaper clothes. What am I doing with my own wardrobe full of old clothes? Recently, a thrift store I follow encouraged other people to send in pictures of old clothes and sell them through their platform. Such practice can help the actual exchange of clothes rather than just foster second-hand selling and buying culture.

The thing is what consumers consume ultimately falls on what is being produced or what alternatives are being given. We can continue to carry our own straw or drink directly from the cup, but the difference we make does not multiply. On the other hand, as Sharma aptly said, businesses can help create and multiply demand for sustaining practices.

Thapa puts the onus on both producers and consumers, saying, "Every production decision manufacturers make should be done keeping the environment and people in mind."

Instead of framing the sustainable lifestyle message through the lens of elitism, brands can promote eco philosophies of innovation, anti-consumerism, self-sufficiency, and environmental stewardship.

While for consumers, Thapa encourages them to question. "In our culture, we don't question much. But it's important that we do it," she says. "As a customer, we need to ask producers about how a certain product is made, or where it is from. Producers need to be held accountable for what they produce or provide."

A recent article in The Guardian warns how individual acts of thrifting and abstinence doesn't really do much in helping the environment. Instead, we need collective action in every sector to lessen our dependence on fossil fuels significantly. We should be motivated to rethink how we do almost everything. Businesses need to start from today itself.

As for me, I clean my old comb and continue using it.

Khadka is a spoken word poet and works at the Samriddhi Foundation as a researcher.



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