

“The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes.”
—William James

Shielding citizens

At a time when global uncertainty is pushing economies to the edge, governance is truly tested not by rhetoric but by response. The decision of Modi government to slash excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 10 per litre stands out as a clear example of timely and people-centric intervention. The backdrop is important. The ongoing conflict in West Asia has sent crude oil prices soaring, crossing levels that would normally trigger a sharp increase in fuel prices for consumers. Across many parts of the world, that is exactly what has happened. Prices have surged, supplies have tightened and in some countries in our neighbourhood, the situation has gone to the extent of shortages and shutdowns. However, India has taken a different path. Instead of passing on the burden to citizens, the government chose to absorb the shock. By reducing excise duty, it has created room for oil marketing companies to manage rising costs without increasing retail prices. This is not a small decision. It involves a significant sacrifice in government revenue but also ensures that households, transporters and businesses are protected from the immediate impact of global volatility. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, this approach reflects a consistent pattern. Over the past few years, despite multiple global disruptions, India has managed to maintain stability in fuel prices while ensuring uninterrupted supply. That balance is not easy to achieve, especially for a country that depends heavily on imported crude oil. What makes this move particularly significant is its timing. When fuel prices rise, the impact is felt across sectors. Transportation costs go up, essential commodities become expensive and inflationary pressure builds. By stepping in at the right moment, the government has effectively prevented a ripple effect that could have affected every household. This decision also sends a larger message about governance priorities. In times of crisis, the focus must remain on protecting citizens, not merely balancing books. A country-first approach demands that difficult choices are made, even if they come at a huge fiscal cost. The excise duty cut is one such choice. Alongside this, the imposition of export duties on diesel and aviation turbine fuel is another important step. It ensures that domestic availability is not compromised at a time when global prices create an incentive to export. In simple terms, it prioritises Indian consumers over international markets. The contrast with other regions is stark. While several neighbouring countries are grappling with rising fuel prices and supply disruptions, India has managed to maintain both stability and availability. It is the result of careful planning, proactive decision-making and sustained diplomatic engagement to secure energy supplies from multiple sources. The role of leadership in such moments cannot be understated. The ability to anticipate challenges, take decisive action and communicate clearly makes all the difference. The government's response to the current energy situation reflects precisely that. Policies are judged by their impact on people's lives. By shielding citizens from the immediate burden of rising global oil prices, this decision has provided both relief and reassurance.

Political Tsunami in Nepal Perspectives From India

DR D K GIRI

Nepal is prone to earthquakes. And there has been a tsunami on 7 March 2016, the day of national elections in Nepal. A rapper-turned politician, Balendra Shah – popularly known as Balen, secured a massive mandate defeating the traditional mainstream political parties - Nepali Congress and CPN-UML. This marks a radical shift in the democratic journey of Nepal since it became a republic. It calls for re-strategizing India's Nepal policy.

On 7 March, Balen's Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP) secured a sweeping victory in the elections to the 275-member Parliament winning 182 seats. It is two-thirds majority, compared to Nepali Congress obtaining merely 37 seats followed by CPN-UML with 26 seats. Other smaller parties like Nepal Communist Party won 16 seats, the Shram Sanskriti Party 7 seats and the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party 5 seats. Balendra Shah, at the age of 35, got such an overwhelming mandate which is unprecedented in Nepal's Parliamentary history.

The last comparable moment could be 1959, when the Nepali Congress under the leadership of D.P. Koirala secured a two-thirds majority in the erstwhile Parliament comprising 109 members. Although the democratic process, after the end of the Rana oligarchy was soon interrupted, the elections of 1959 had remained a landmark in Nepal's political history. After 67 years, on 7 March 2026, the massive mandate obtained by Balendra Shah has once again revived the interest in political renewal and democratic transition in Nepal.

In the last election, the conventional splits in Nepali politics on the bases of region, religion, caste, ethnicity and even party affiliations appeared to have receded, at least for the time being. The rise of Balendra Shah is eminently spectacular because just a few years ago he was hardly known in national political circles. He comes from a modest non-political background. His father, Ram Narayan Shah, has been an ayurvedic doctor. Balendra studied structural engineering in Bangalore, India. As a rapper, he had a sizeable following among the urban youth, a connection that helped him in politics in mobilizing the younger generation.

Balen's electoral breakthrough came in 2022 when he won the election to the post of Mayor of Kathmandu metropolitan city as an independent candidate. At that time, many observers believed that he had a ghost of a chance as politics was dominated by established parties and certain political elites. In that context, Balendra Shah, a candidate of Madheshi origin, winning the elections, was a radical departure from conventional politics. Balen's victory marked not only an electoral upset but also the growing exasperation of voters with the established political order. The same frustration continued upto the unrest by students and youths followed by the political tsunami in reference.

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Minister will create history of sorts as no leader of Madheshi origin has so far occupied the office of the Prime Minister. This should make up for the long-standing grievance of Madheshi Nepalese over political exclusion within the national power structure. That said, the extraordinary victory of Balendra Shah enjoins enormous responsibilities upon his leadership. Nepal today is said

Nepal, it is a time of great expectation. The overwhelming mandate should help Balen Shah to steer the ship through the troubled waters. But it will all boil down to his political sagacity learning the ropes sooner than later. How does India view this election and the way ahead? To begin with, as always, Nepal's recent elections have drawn significant attention in India with many Nepal

of USA. Likewise, Rishi Sunak, the former British Prime Minister of Indian origin was not overly friendly with India although he openly and proudly asserted his Hindu religion. Antony Costa, the former Portuguese Prime Minister and currently the President of European Council, who was one of the Chief Guests at this year's Republic Day cel-

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watchers weighing in on the implications for bilateral relations and regional dynamics. India's relations with Nepal have been close as well as complex, with issues like border disputes and hydro power projects often taking centre-stage. India sees Nepal as crucial to its neighbourhood policy, with stability in the region being a key concern. India's investments in Nepal's hydropower and infrastructure sectors make the country's political stability vital for Indian interests. Third, the India-Nepal border remains a sensitive topic with ongoing discussions on territories like Kalapani. Observers believe that New Delhi would engage with the new government in Nepal, focusing mainly in areas like energy, trade and security. It is expected that Balendra Shah, a Madheshi, should be well-disposed to India. Madheshi have close cultural proximity with India, what is popularly known as roti-beti relations (sharing food and exchanging daughters in marriage). But cultural affinities do not always translate into bilateral relations. Kamala Harris, with an Indian mother was not necessarily friendly with India when she was the Vice-President

celebration, has been somewhat friendly with India. So it can go either way with Balendra Shah. He may try to distance himself from India and tilt towards China to show his neutrality and avoid kinship nepotism. But he need not do so as he is politically secured with two-thirds majority in the Parliament. New Delhi also has to be sensitive to the Madheshi origin of the new Prime Minister of Nepal, Balendra Shah. In the past, New Delhi has burnt its fingers by supporting the cause of Madheshi, by imposing a blockade at the borders. Some of us argued then that India should deal with Nepal while leveraging its cultural affinity with Madheshi as well as Hinduism in Nepal (esp. for BJP). Likewise, India had alienated Sri Lanka by supporting the Tamil insurgents and now the Hindus in Bangladesh. It is true that Indian civil society – Biharis for Madheshi, VHP for Hindus in Bangladesh, and Tamils for Sri Lankan Tamil – will speak up for the legitimate rights of the people mentioned in these three countries. But Government of India should deal with the governments in those countries; that is how New Delhi reset ties with Nepal. ---INFA

Rising Temperatures & the Collapse of Natural Balance

LALIT GARGG

Today, the greatest crisis facing human civilization is not war, pandemics, or economic recession, but climate change. The world is standing at a critical turning point in the climate crisis, where every new scientific report sounds like an alarm bell. According to recent global climate reports, the decade from 2015 to 2025 has been the hottest period ever recorded in human history. This is not merely a statistical record, but a serious indication of the Earth's changing behavior. Scientific data shows that greenhouse gas concentrations have reached record levels, and the Earth's energy imbalance is continuously increasing. The oceans, which are considered the largest regulators of climate balance, are absorbing more than 90 percent of the excess heat generated by global warming. This clearly means that global warming is not limited to rising air temperatures; the heat is accumulating in oceans, land, and glaciers as well. Climate change is no longer a slow-moving future problem; it has become a crisis of the present. Across the world, extreme weather events such as heatwaves, floods, droughts, cy-

clones, and wildfires are increasing rapidly. Seasonal patterns are becoming unstable and unpredictable. In some regions, excessive rainfall is causing floods, while in others, rainfall is absent for months. This imbalance is directly affecting human life, agriculture, water resources, biodiversity, and the global economy. One of the most severe impacts of climate change is on human health. Rising temperatures are increasing heat-related illnesses, respiratory diseases, water-borne diseases, and mental stress. According to global health studies, climate change could push millions of people into poverty and food insecurity in the coming decades. In the context of India, the crisis is becoming even more serious. In recent years, temperatures in many Indian cities have reached 48 to 50 degrees Celsius, whereas earlier 45 degrees was considered extreme. Now even February and March are experiencing unusually high temperatures. The frequency and intensity of heatwaves are increasing every year. This affects not only health but also electricity demand, water availability, agriculture, labor productivity, and the economy. Climate change is not only threatening humans but also wildlife, forests, rivers, and the entire ecosystem. The biggest reason behind climate change is the human model of devel-

opment. Excessive use of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas, deforestation, unplanned urbanization, industrialization, and uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources are continuously heating the planet. Scientists warn that the current global temperature is approaching levels not seen in the last 125,000 years, which clearly indicates that the problem lies not in nature, but in human lifestyle and development patterns. Current global conflicts are making the situation even more dangerous. Wars not only destroy human life and economies but also severely damage the environment. Explosions, chemicals, burning oil reserves, destroyed industrial plants, and military activities release massive amounts of greenhouse gases and toxic pollutants into the atmosphere. In this way, war and climate change together are pushing the Earth toward a double crisis. Today, nearly 75 percent of districts in India and large parts of the world are exposed to some form of climate risk. Himalayan glaciers are melting rapidly, raising serious concerns about the future of major rivers such as the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus. At the same time, rising sea levels are threatening coastal cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai. If sea levels continue to rise at the current rate, millions of people living in coastal

areas may be displaced in the coming decades. This will not only be an environmental crisis but also a major social and economic crisis. Scientists around the world warn that if global temperature rise is not limited to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the ecological balance of the Earth may be severely disrupted. This could lead to water scarcity, food shortages, health crises, mass migration, and economic instability across many regions of the world. However, within this crisis lies an opportunity. This is the time to change the model of development. Renewable energy such as solar, wind, and hydropower must be promoted rapidly. Cities should be developed as green cities instead of concrete jungles. Water management must become a mass movement, including rainwater harvesting, water recycling, groundwater recharge, and river conservation. Agriculture must become climate-resilient by promoting low-water crops, natural farming, and sustainable agricultural practices. At the district level, heat action plans, water conservation programs, afforestation drives, and local environmental protection initiatives must be implemented. The fight against climate change cannot be won by governments alone. Society, industries, scientists, and citizens must work

together. This is a collective responsibility of humanity. For the world's major powers, this is the biggest test of leadership in modern history. If they remain trapped only in economic growth and military competition and ignore the future of the planet, future generations will never forgive them. They must understand that if the Earth survives, the economy will survive, civilization will survive, and development will survive. But if the planet becomes overheated and unstable, all progress will become meaningless. Therefore, global powers must adopt strict and binding policies to reduce carbon emissions, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, stop deforestation, and promote green technology and sustainable development. Climate change is no longer a challenge of the future; it is a crisis of the present. If decisive action is not taken today, future generations will inherit an unstable and overheated planet. Such a planet may become unsuitable for human life. But if humanity acts wisely and timely, this crisis can also become the beginning of a new, balanced, and sustainable model of development. Saving the Earth is no longer an option; it has become a necessity for human survival.