

# Nepal's Gen Z revolt is a mirror Bangladesh should study hard



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Call it what it is: a legitimacy crisis with revolutionary energy. Nepal's streets did not wake up one morning and decide to overthrow a government for sport. A sweeping ban on 26 social media platforms detonated public trust, protests erupted, at least 25 people (as of the latest count) were killed in clashes, and Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli resigned amid burning symbols of state power. The ban was rolled back soon after its imposition, but the fuse was already lit. This is not a tidy textbook revolution yet, but it is no routine protest either.

Let's be precise on the trigger. Kathmandu tried a hard pivot to platform regulation by blocking Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, X, and more after the companies refused to register locally. Young Nepalis saw it as a gag order on modern life. The curfew did not cool anything. Parliament was stormed, state buildings torched, the ban withdrawn, and Oli still exited stage left.

But the spark is not the fire. Nepal has been marinating in scandal for years, from the fake Bhutanese refugee racket to gold smuggling and notorious land grabs, with big names circling accountability and often escaping it. Add to that youth underemployment and a political class that treats public patience like an infinite resource. When a government that has not delivered decides to switch off the public square that lives on phones, it advertises weakness, not strength.

The constitutional question now is simple in text and messy in practice. Nepal's constitution says a prime minister can resign and the same council of ministers keeps the lights on until a new council is formed. Appointment pathways run through Article 76, with confidence votes under Article 100. On paper, this is fine. In a boiling street context, with mass resignations and calls for dissolution, the risk is presidential overreach or improvised caretaker deals that stretch the spirit of the law. Nepal's courts have previously overturned unconstitutional dissolutions, so the judiciary is not shy. The system has the rules, but rules need political



**Demonstrators gather during a curfew in Kathmandu, Nepal on September 9, 2025, to protest the killing of 19 people in anti-corruption protests earlier, triggered by a social media ban which was later lifted.**

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

actors willing to play by them.

How to land the plane? First, a credible independent inquiry into the killings with legal consequences, not cosmetic committees. Second, a transparent digital governance reset based on lawful orders, narrow tailoring, and appeal rights, not blanket blocks that punish citizens and small businesses. Third, a time-bound roadmap to a confidence vote, or if numbers do not exist, to early polls inside the constitutional frame and supervised by

an empowered election commission. Fourth, fast-tracking anti-corruption cases that everyone in Kathmandu knows by name. Without justice, you only buy downtime.

Bangladesh knows this script. Our July uprising began with a quota dispute, but it was the state's force posture that converted grievance into a mass movement. The prime minister resigned on August 5, 2024 and an interim set-up followed, while the dead and

and election timelines. Nepal today sits at the hinge moment between negotiated reset and uncontrolled cascade. The equation is clear: youth networks plus perceived injustice plus digital chokeholds equal a legitimacy cliff.

Is there a great game connection? Geopolitics always hums in the background. India and China track every tremor in Kathmandu for obvious reasons. But neither New Delhi nor Beijing banned Facebook in

endless committees and call it accountability. Ensure a short, credible election roadmap with guardrails, supervised procurement for security gear with human rights safeguards, and a judicial fast track for graft and abuse cases. If you must regulate platforms, do it the boring way with due process and content-neutral rules that survive court review. That is how you de-risk the street and onboard the generation that will actually pay the taxes.

For Bangladesh, the comparative lesson is double edged. First, never again treat digital rights as a luxury item. When the street is online, a platform blackout is a force multiplier for anger, not a safety valve. Second, interim does not mean indefinite. Our path improves only when the rules are clearer than the personalities. The more

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our institutions behave like institutions, the less any single crisis becomes existential. Nepal's shock should prompt us to finish our own homework on police reform, election administration, party finance transparency, emergency law, and other essential reforms.

The takeaway for the region is practical. South Asia does not have a protest problem; it has a consent problem. Governments that earn consent through delivery and fairness rarely face mobs at their doors. Governments that mock consent will keep discovering that Gen Z is not a focus group, it is a force. If we insist on stability without justice, we will keep buying quiet that expires before the ink on the curfew order dries. If we invest in institutions that outlast leaders, we might finally get the most underrated outcome in politics—boredom. Boring budgets, boring elections, boring headlines. That is the growth hack the subcontinent needs next.

# Transparency alone won't modernise our power sector



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A continuous and uninterrupted energy supply is undoubtedly crucial for sustaining Bangladesh's growth momentum and addressing its development challenges. Upgrading transmission lines, settling outstanding debts, and completing ongoing projects are the primary goals of this year's power and energy sector budget. The government has allocated Tk 7,90,000 crore in this year's budget. This is slightly lower than the previous year's, reflecting the government's increased focus on fiscal prudence and the economy. Although the budget speech appears encouraging, several issues remain unresolved. In the national budget for FY2025-26, Tk 2,178 crore has been allocated to the energy sector and Tk 20,342 crore to the power sector. The total allocation amounts to Tk 22,520 crore, a decrease of approximately 0.80 percent from the proposed budget for the current fiscal year.

One of the key measures in this year's budget is the repeal of the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act, 2010. This step aims to enhance transparency and accountability in the power sector. A national committee has been formed to evaluate agreements executed under this legislation. In addition, a separate committee has been established to review and revise the tariff structures of power purchase agreements (PPAs). Many PPAs have proved financially burdensome due to costly capacity payments to idle power facilities. These measures may foster greater transparency, but their success will depend on political will, independent review panels, and public access to the outcomes.

To make the power distribution system more reliable and effective, underground distribution lines and substations are currently being installed in metropolitan areas as part of the sector's expansion and

modernisation. The interim government has focused most of its budget on upgrading grid networks and distribution lines across six divisions rather than building new power plants. Moreover, it hopes to supply electricity from the 2,400 MW Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant to the national grid by December this year, as construction is expected to conclude soon. Allocations have also been made to ongoing projects, including the 1,200 MW coal-based Matarbari Power Plant, the 800 MW gas-fired Rupsha Plant, and the 150 MW HSD-based Syedpur Power Plant.

These steps are positive but still fall short of addressing Bangladesh's major energy challenges. At present, renewable energy accounts for only about 4.5 percent of total capacity. The government plans to add 3,400 MW of clean energy by 2028, but this progress remains slow.

In the FY26 budget, Tk 37,000 crore has been set aside for power sector subsidies, compared with Tk 40,000 crore initially allocated the previous year. The amount was later revised to Tk 62,000 crore after the interim government cleared the majority of unpaid bills.

On a positive note, in October 2024, Bangladesh signed a deal with Nepal to import 40 MW of hydropower at a low cost. Although modest in scale, this agreement signals growing regional electricity trade. Such trade is vital to strengthening energy

security and diversifying sources, particularly during the hot summer months.

However, the government continues to spend heavily on fossil fuels. BAPEX has planned to carry out a 270 km geological survey, a 700 km 2-D seismic survey, and a 700 sq km 3-D seismic survey from FY2025-26 to FY2027-28. It also intends to drill 69 wells and complete the workover of 31 wells using its own rigs. Simultaneously, initiatives are underway to build cost-effective and sustainable infrastructure to help regulate energy prices in the medium term. The government has approved buying two LNG cargoes from the spot market for a total of Tk 1,000.85 crore.

Additionally, the government has proposed expanding the gas pipeline network by 40 km to improve pressure and delivery at the consumer level. To enhance gas monitoring and reduce system loss, SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) and GIS (Geographic Information System) technologies will be introduced into the existing gas network—an encouraging step towards digital management of energy infrastructure.

In the oil sector, a new project will establish Eastern Refinery Limited Unit-2, with the capacity to refine three million metric tonnes of crude oil annually. At the same time, the government has paid \$570 million in import dues to stabilise fuel supplies. To improve

control, Vehicle Tracking System (VTS) devices using SFDMS technology have been installed on more than 2,465 fuel tankers, allowing real-time tracking and helping prevent fuel theft or adulteration.

The FY2025-26 budget includes several significant projects to strengthen and make Bangladesh's energy sector more efficient. These include expanding transmission lines and increasing the capacity of grid substations to ensure more reliable power. Reducing system losses and unpaid bills in the distribution system is also a top priority. The government will review current power generation projects and seek to increase electricity trade with neighbouring countries to improve output and reduce costs. In terms of resources, the plan includes extracting 6.5 lakh metric tonnes of coal and 1.3 lakh metric tonnes of stone domestically. To improve and modernise the gas system, the government will also install SCADA systems and use GIS mapping tools.

In summary, the FY2025-26 power and energy budget focuses on gradual but steady changes. While there are signs of improved planning and greater transparency, long-term success remains uncertain due to the slow growth of renewable energy and continued reliance on fossil fuels. Bangladesh needs deeper policy and structural reforms to truly modernise its energy sector rather than relying on incremental fixes.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

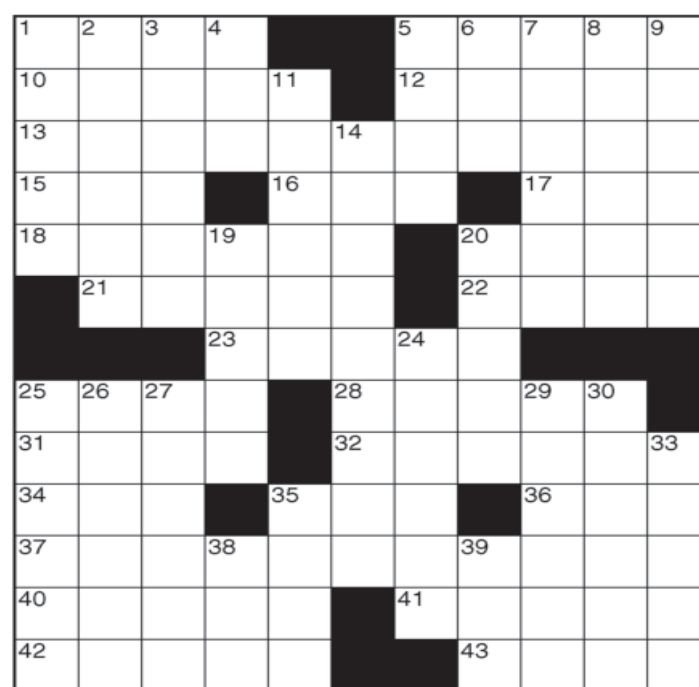
- 1 In addition
- 5 Heiress, at times
- 10 Brings up
- 12 Musical set in Argentina
- 13 Botched
- 15 Finish
- 16 Misbehaving
- 17 Barracks bed
- 18 Searched deeply
- 20 Portion (out)
- 21 Plover pioneer John
- 22 Not new
- 23 Writer Asimov
- 25 Volition
- 28 Uses one's incisors
- 31 Historic times

**DOWN**

- 1 Ready for war
- 2 Inclined
- 3 Rider's seat
- 4 Valuable rock
- 5 Hoe target
- 6 Hosp. hookups

**ACROSS**

- 7 Dance clubs
- 8 Peter of "Troy"
- 9 Floated on the breeze
- 11 Fencing swords
- 14 Screwed up
- 19 Hides
- 20 Old gold coin
- 24 Dried chili peppers
- 25 Prepared leftovers
- 26 Large lizard
- 27 Bank, at times
- 29 Scottish sprout
- 30 Coxswain's call
- 33 Bank fixtures
- 35 Calendar units
- 38 CPR expert
- 39 Cry of surprise



## WEDNESDAY'S ANSWERS

