

From Anger to Accountability: Gen Z Protest, the First 100 Days of the Government, and Nepal's Democratic Second Chance

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The political history of Nepal has been different in terms of armed struggles, street movements and constitutional promises. The Gen Z movement in September 2025 is an urgency of time protesting not only against the ban on social media but against the corruption, political instability, unemployment and arrogance of public power (Dahal, 2026; Timalsina & Shrestha, 2025).

It is wrong to romanticise the protests in Nepal, when you consider the pain and destruction they cause and the scars they leave. Politically, Gen Z has amplified long-standing citizen concerns about the integrity of democracy, the failure of federalism to deliver services and elections that simply rotate familiar elites without accountability.

Digital media gave the movement speed, visibility and emotional power. This is in line with broader scholarship demonstrating that digital platforms can facilitate 'connective action' in which people mobilize through personal networks rather than conventional party structures (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Similarly, studies on protest participation have shown that social media can help people to learn about, to record and to participate in collective action, although online enthusiasm in itself does not guarantee democratic transformation (Boulianne, 2015; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Nepal's Gen Z moment, therefore, is both a democratic opportunity and a governance risk. It can refresh politics, but only by moving from outrage to institution-building.

Here, the focus is on the first 100 days of Prime Minister Balendra Shah's government being assessed by a public that has already lost patience with symbolic politics. The youth-led political transition and the electoral rise of the Rastriya Swatantra Party set the stage for Shah's rise to power and raised hopes for a new approach to governance (Associated Press, 2026). The first Cabinet meeting of the government approved a 100-point agenda for governance reform, with the first priorities being administrative reform, digital governance, public accountability, fiscal discipline and service delivery (Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers [OPMCM], 2026).

"There is a bit of guarded optimism. In a country where corruption is much talked about but rarely institutionalized (Sharma, 2026), a high level mechanism for asset investigation to probe the wealth of public officials, both serving and former, is a politically significant move. Money laundering investigation, development of digital asset registry, cyber security and administrative reform have also been on the government's focus (Khabarhub, 2026). These measures speak directly to Gen Z's demand that public office is no longer a private opportunity.

The 100-point agenda is a story the government can tell about things moving fast.” Within the first 100 days, the government claimed to have accomplished 70 out of 100 on the agenda and over 80% of 17 items, with an overall progress of 87.2% (Republica, 2026). If someone else was to check these numbers, they would show a bizarre management motion. It is good to see that vague promises have been replaced by clear goals, although the country is used to delays.

But success is not what democracy is about, self-report or not. Kantipur Bureau (2026) also found that only 38 of the 100 promises had been kept and another 62% were either not completed or were in various stages of implementation (Kathmandu Post). That's why the people needs to be able to see what's happening . That difference between what the government says and what the media says is not a small issue. Reform needs to be able to be shown. There should be no need for people to choose between the optimism of the government and the skepticism of the news media. They should have a live, separate, public dashboard showing each promise, the responsible agency, budget status, proof of implementation, due date and independent verification.

Here is where the Gen Z movement can turn itself into a commitment to democratic accountability. Engaging young people shouldn't stop at protest, voting or online screeds. Nepal needs structured spaces for young citizens to review policies, track implementation, question the officials and contribute their ideas. A Gen Z or youth advisory mechanism might be useful, but only if it is inclusive beyond Kathmandu, beyond English-speaking digital elites, and beyond party-friendly youth networks. Timalisina and Shrestha (2025) rightly warn that who participates in movements and whose voices are heard is contingent on caste, class, gender, geography and obscured political dynamics. Hence, a democratic youth platform must include young women, Dalit youth, Madhesi youth, indigenous nationalities, persons with disabilities, migrant families, unemployed graduates, technical students, rural youth and those outside the social media visibility.

The government's early anti-corruption drive is important but it should not become a spectacle. “Public anger calls for action, but constitutional democracy calls for due process. Asset inquiries, money laundering cases and investigations into past conduct must be guided by evidence, legal standards and the independence of the institution. If anti-corruption turns into selective revenge, it will undermine the legitimacy it is trying to build. If it becomes slow paperwork it will disappoint the generation that made this mandate. The right way is solid, fair, open, legally sound action.

The next challenge is service delivery. Gen Z didn't rise for democracy as a theory. It rose because life is too difficult for too many young people. They want jobs, affordable education, credible universities, clean public recruitment, digital public services, safe mobility, less humiliation from bureaucracy and a future inside Nepal. "News can be made in 100 days by a government. Trust is built when a citizen can renew a license without intermediaries, get health insurance benefits without confusion, get police service without fear, get public data without begging, and compete for jobs without political connection.

Digital governance can be a major bridge between citizen expectation and state capacity. Yet, digitalization is not simply about putting old bureaucracy on a screen. Nepal needs systems that work together, a one-stop rule for citizens' data, a way to track complaints, clear rules for buying things from the public, open budget tracking, and strong protection for data. Digital reform also

needs to reduce exclusion. Exclusion in Nepal is not only digital, but legal and institutional too. In a qualitative study of OHS legal services during the COVID-19 pandemic, Aryal, Shrestha and Joshi found that limited knowledge of legal procedures, perceived high legal costs, delays and uncertainty in justice delivery, fear of job loss and stigma, pressure from the employer and family, and mobility restrictions due to lockdowns hampered workers' access to justice. Governance reform has to reach workers who are least able to claim their rights (Aryal et al., 2024). Many citizens continue to face significant barriers to accessing language, literacy, disability, geography, internet access, and documentation. A digital state that caters only to the connected will mirror inequality in a new form.

The larger lesson of the first 100 days is that Nepal's democracy has now entered the era of performance. People will no longer accept speeches about sacrifice, ideology and contribution to history. They will ask, 'What has happened to my ward? What was sped up? What was fairer? Whom did they blame? "What was the promise broken? Why is that? "That is good for democracy. Constitutional facts and values can help inform public pressure for greater government responsiveness.

But there are duties on the citizen's part as well. Democracy cannot be rebuilt by government alone. Media has to be responsible. Commentary won't do. Universities have to show this. Civil society should be a bystander, not a participant. Young activists have to push back against misinformation and mob pressure. Parties have to re-invent themselves rather than simply condemning the new government. Then the private sector has to encourage ethical hiring and tax compliance. Public intellectuals can channel rage into policy literacy.

Nepal's Gen Z movement has broken down the door. The first 100 days of government have shown that the state can move faster when it feels watched. That is a good thing, in itself. But 100 days is not a time to celebrate, and too important to dismiss. These should be regarded as a beginning of the democratic test: the government must demonstrate that reforms are real and citizens must demonstrate that accountability can be assured without destroying institutions.

If Nepal succeeds in this, Gen Z will be remembered not only for demolishing an old political order but for putting the country on a path towards a more truthful, data-driven, citizen-centered democracy. If Nepal fails, this movement is in danger of becoming another hope in a long line of dashed hopes. The difference will be when the slogans are gone, when the files are moved, when the laws are applied equally, when the budgets tell the truth, when the services improve and the young people start to believe that they can build their future at home. First 100 days have given a ray of hope to Nepal. The next 1,000 days must deliver a system that can deliver that hope.

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