



FREEDOM 250

Independence Day Celebration

AI Innovation and Economic Transformation: Building the Next U.S.—Nepal Partnership

Event Report



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary..... 2

Event Overview..... 3

Event Objectives.....3

Event Highlights..... 4

 Opening Remarks..... 4

 Panel I: AI Innovation and Economic Transformation..... 5

 AI Product Showcase.....6

 Panel II: Emerging AI Infrastructure..... 6

 Closing Remarks.....7

Event Schedule..... 8

Acknowledgment.....9

Executive Summary

To mark the Freedom 250 Independence Day celebration and honor the U.S.-Nepal partnership, the Nepal-U.S. Alumni Network (NUSAN) and the Nepalese Young Entrepreneurs' Forum (NYEF) jointly organized a one-day event titled "**AI Innovation and Economic Transformation: Building the Next U.S.-Nepal Partnership**" on Friday, July 10, 2026, at the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Teku, Kathmandu. With the support of American Spaces and the U.S. Embassy in Nepal, the event focused on exploring the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in driving Nepal's economic growth and innovation while strengthening the bilateral partnership between the United States and Nepal. The program brought together policymakers, entrepreneurs, industry experts, and academia to discuss how AI-driven innovation can enhance economic opportunities, foster entrepreneurship, and promote deeper collaboration between the two countries in technology, trade, education, and investment.

The event was honored by the presence of Scott Urbom, Charge d'Affaires a.i., and Mike Harker, Public Affairs Chief at the U.S. Embassy in Nepal. Their presence reflected the U.S. Embassy's continued commitment to fostering a stronger U.S.-Nepal partnership through innovation, education, trade, and people-to-people engagement. In total, 140 participants representing USG alumni networks, youth, academia, and AI entrepreneurs and enthusiasts, including representatives from government and the private sector, took part and showed strong engagement throughout the event.

Event Overview

Every year on July 4, the United States commemorates its Independence Day. In 2026, the occasion held special significance, as it marked the launch of Freedom 250, a year-long global celebration honoring the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America.

To support the Freedom 250 campaign in Nepal, the U.S. Embassy in Nepal, through its American Spaces program, partnered with the [Nepal-U.S. Alumni Network \(NUSAN\)](#) as an implementing organization. As part of this year-long initiative, NUSAN has organized a series of events and activities to showcase American excellence and leadership and to promote a deeper understanding of U.S. history, culture, democratic values, innovation, and the enduring partnership between the United States and Nepal. As part of this celebration, NUSAN and NYEF jointly organized two panel discussions and two Artificial Intelligence (AI) product showcases to build knowledge of AI and its contribution to economic and social development in Nepal.

Event Objectives

- To celebrate the enduring U.S.-Nepal partnership by highlighting the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI), innovation, and economic transformation in shaping future collaboration.
- To showcase AI-powered products, tools, and entrepreneurial ventures developed by U.S. Government (USG) alumni who have leveraged the knowledge and experience gained through American education and exchange programs.
- To facilitate high-level panel discussions on the role of AI in driving economic development, strengthening Nepal's emerging AI ecosystem, and identifying opportunities for innovation and growth.
- To foster collaboration and networking among U.S. alumni, entrepreneurs, young professionals, policymakers, civil society representatives, academia, and private sector stakeholders, promoting cross-sector partnerships and knowledge exchange.

Event Highlights

Opening Remarks

The program commenced with opening remarks by **Mr. Scott Urbom**, Charge d'Affaires a.i. at the U.S. Embassy in Nepal; **Mr. Agni Raj Upadhyay (Anil)**, Vice President of the Nepal-U.S. Alumni Network (NUSAN); and **Ms. Bilasha Shrestha**, National Governing Council EC of the Nepalese Young Entrepreneurs Forum (NYEF). In their remarks, they emphasized the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in driving economic growth and innovation, while highlighting its role in strengthening the longstanding partnership between the United States and Nepal.

"Nepal's entrepreneurs, technology leaders, and innovators are helping drive the country's digital transformation. Through U.S. exchange programs, alumni networks, and American Spaces, the United States is proud to connect people, share knowledge, and support partnerships that help turn emerging technologies like AI into practical opportunities for Nepal's economic growth."

- **Mr. Scott Urbom, Charge d'Affaires a.i., U.S. Embassy in Nepal**



Mr. Agni Raj Upadhyay (Anil), Vice President of NUSAN, called it a great honor and privilege to

welcome everyone on behalf of the Nepal-U.S. Alumni Network (NUSAN), noting that the audience's presence reflected a shared commitment to exploring how emerging technologies can strengthen not only economies but also the long-standing partnership between Nepal and the United States.

Ms. Bilasha Shrestha, National Governing Council EC, Nepalese Young Entrepreneurs Forum (NYEF), shared that it was inspiring to be part of this event and witness how AI is driving innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth in Nepal. The collaborative efforts of the U.S. Embassy, NUSAN, NYEF, and the broader innovation community will make the event especially impactful.

Panel I: AI Innovation and Economic Transformation

Moderated by Mr. Nikesh Balami, General Secretary of NUSAN, the first panel featured Mr. Mike Harker (*Public Affairs Chief, U.S. Embassy Nepal*), Dr. Suresh Manandhar (*CEO, Co-founder, and Chief Scientist, Wiseyak*), and Ms. Karvika Thapa (*Founder and CEO, Kimbu Tech*).



- Mr. Mike Harker spoke about the U.S. Embassy's ongoing support for Nepal's startup and AI ecosystem, emphasizing practical applications such as improving small business productivity and preparing entrepreneurs for an AI-driven economy.

- Dr. Suresh Manandhar made the case for a sovereign Nepali AI capability and for sustained investment in education to build the next generation of AI engineers, positioning Nepal as an innovator rather than a follower in AI.
- Ms. Karvika Thapa spoke regarding the need to change the narrative for Nepal's youth: moving beyond the role of user and consumer of AI toward that of creator and innovator, for both local and global problems, and building trust by drawing on Nepal's own history and cultural legacy.

AI Product Showcase

Two AI tools developed using knowledge and networks gained through American educational and exchange programs were featured:

- **Pairavi AI:** An AI-powered legal assistant that provides instant, structured answers to queries on Nepali law, presented by Mr. Saroj Bista, Director, Young Innovations, and Past President, NUSAN.
- **Open Data Nepal AI Assistant:** A tool that lets users ask natural-language questions to discover, understand, and visualize datasets, presented by Mr. Jamesh Shrestha, Chief Operating Officer, Open Knowledge Nepal.

Panel II: Emerging AI Infrastructure

Moderated by Mr. Shailendra Raj Giri, President of AI Association Nepal and Founder of MeroJob, the second panel featured Mr. Deepak Shrestha (*Managing Director, Data Hub Nepal*), Ms. Sandhya Sitoula (*Executive Director, NAAMII*), Mr. Ram Bhattarai (*Managing Director, Jyra Soft Technologies*), and Mr. Suresh Gautam (*CEO, ExtensoData*).

- Mr. Deepak Shrestha clarified what data centers actually are and addressed common misconceptions and public concerns about them.
- Ms. Sandhya Sitoula spoke to the importance of shifting mindsets around AI adoption in Nepal and highlighted NAAMII's growing role as an international learning hub for AI through its autonomous research labs and initiatives such as the Annual Nepal AI School (ANAIIS) and UDAAN. She noted that meaningful advances in AI and other disciplines, including the social sciences, can originate even from a small country.
- Mr. Ram Bhattarai explained the role of data in AI systems and argued that Nepal needs to rethink its national data framework to position itself as a leader in AI, both for domestic solutions and in the global market.
- Mr. Suresh Gautam discussed the need to rework Nepal's AI ecosystem to support businesses in scaling their use of AI.



Closing Remarks

The program concluded with closing remarks by Ms. Swarna Tamrakar, President of NUSAN, followed by a group photo session with participants, panelists, and organizers, marking the successful conclusion of the event.

Ms. Swarna Tamrakar, President of NUSAN, thanked the U.S. Embassy in Nepal for its continued support and acknowledged the contributions of the panelists, moderators, the Nepalese Young Entrepreneurs' Forum (NYEF), the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), the NUSAN Executive Committee and Secretariat team, and all participants for their collective efforts in making the event a success.

Event Schedule

Time	Program
10:30 AM – 11:15 AM	Arrival & Registration
11:20 AM – 11:45 AM	Opening Remarks: • Scott Urbom, Chargé d'Affaires a.i., U.S. Embassy in Nepal • Agni Raj Upadhyay (Anil), Vice President, NUSAN • Bilasha Shrestha, National Governing Council EC, NYEF
11:45 AM – 1:15 PM	<u>Panel I:</u> AI Innovation and Economic Transformation: Building the Next U.S.–Nepal Partnership <u>Panelists</u> • Mike Harker, Public Affairs Chief, U.S. Embassy Nepal • Dr. Suresh Manandhar, CEO, Co-founder, and Chief Scientist, Wiseyak • Karvika Thapa, Founder and CEO, Kimbu Tech <u>Moderated by:</u> Nimesh Balami, General Secretary, NUSAN
1:15 PM – 1:25 PM	AI Product Showcase • Pairavi AI: an AI-powered legal assistant providing instant, structured answers to queries on Nepali law.
1:25 PM – 2:10 PM	Break & Refreshments
2:10 PM – 2:20 PM	AI Product Showcase • Open Data Nepal – AI Assistant: lets users ask natural-language questions to discover, understand, and visualize datasets.
2:20 PM – 3:45 PM	<u>Panel II:</u> Emerging AI Infrastructure: Nepal's Next Economic Layer <u>Panelists:</u> • Deepak Shrestha, Managing Director, Data Hub Nepal • Sandhya Sitoula, Executive Director, NAAMII • Ram Bhattarai, Managing Director, Jyra Soft Technologies • Suresh Gautam, CEO, Extensodata <u>Moderated by:</u> Shailendra Raj Giri, President, AI Association Nepal
3:45 PM – 3:55 PM	Closing Remarks: • Swarna Tamrakar, President, NUSAN
3:55 PM – 4:00 PM	Group Photo & Wrap-Up

Acknowledgment

NUSAN and NYEF extend their sincere appreciation to **American Spaces** and the **U.S. Embassy in Nepal** for their valuable partnership, guidance, and support in making the event a success. Special recognition is extended to Charge d'Affaires a.i. Scott Urbom and Public Affairs Chief Mike Harker for their presence and continued commitment to strengthening the U.S. Government exchange alumni network and fostering collaboration within Nepal's emerging AI ecosystem.

Both organizations express their gratitude to the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) for providing the venue and support for hosting the program. Appreciation is further extended to all panelists, moderators, and AI product showcase presenters for sharing their expertise, experience, and insights. The organizers acknowledge the dedication of the NUSAN and NYEF organizing teams, volunteers, and all participants whose active engagement and contributions played a vital role in making the Freedom 250 Independence Day Celebration a successful reflection of the enduring U.S.-Nepal partnership.