

# NEPAL



Sanghiya Loktantrik Ganatantra Nepal  
(Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal)

*Capital:* Kathmandu

*Population estimate, 2010:* 29.85m.

*GNI per capita, 2010:* (PPP\$) 1,201

*HDI/world rank:* 0.428/138

## KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS

Nepal is an independent Himalayan republic located between India and the Tibetan region of China. From the 8th to the 11th centuries many Buddhists fled to Nepal from India, which had been invaded by Muslims. In the 18th century Nepal was a collection of small principalities (many of Rajput origin) and the three kingdoms of the Malla dynasty: Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon. In central Nepal lay the principality of Gurkha (or Gorkha); its ruler after 1742 was Prithvi Narayan Shah, who conquered the small neighbouring states. Fearing his ambitions, in 1767 the Mallas requested armed support from the British East India Company. In 1769 these forces were withdrawn and Gurkha was then able to conquer the Malla kingdoms and unite Nepal as one state with its capital at Kathmandu. In 1846 the Rana family became the effective rulers of Nepal, establishing the office of prime minister as hereditary. In 1860 Nepal reached agreement with the British in India whereby Nepali independence was preserved and the recruitment of Gurkhas to the British army was sanctioned.

In 1950 the Shah royal family allied itself with Nepalis abroad to end the power of the Ranas. The last Rana prime minister resigned in Nov. 1951, the king having proclaimed a constitutional monarchy in Feb. 1951. A new constitution, approved in 1959, led to confrontation between the king and his ministers; it was replaced by one less liberal in 1962. In Nov. 1990 the king relinquished his absolute power. The Maoists abandoned parliament in 1996 and launched a 'people's war' in the aim of turning the kingdom into a republic. This has resulted in more than 13,000 deaths.

In June 2001 the king and queen, along with six other members of the royal family, were shot dead by their son and heir to the throne, Crown Prince Dipendra, allegedly following a dispute over his choice of bride. Prince Dipendra then shot himself. The former monarch's younger brother, Gyanendra, was crowned king. In Nov. 2001 King Gyanendra declared a state of emergency and ordered troops to contain a fresh outbreak of Maoist violence. The government lifted the state of emergency in Aug.

2002. In Jan. 2003 the government and Maoist rebels reached a ceasefire agreement, seen as a first step towards bringing to an end the rebels' seven-year insurgency. In Feb. 2005 King Gyanendra dismissed his government and once more declared a state of emergency, taking control of the country and suspending democracy for three years. He lifted the state of emergency on 29 April 2005. In April 2006 he agreed to a return to parliamentary democracy after more than two weeks of unrest. On 21 Nov. 2006 a peace agreement was signed between the government and the country's Maoist rebels, bringing a formal end to the decade-long insurgency. In Dec. 2007 an agreement was made to abolish the monarchy and establish Nepal as a republic. On 28 May 2008 the newly-elected Constituent Assembly officially inaugurated the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal and began the process of creating a new constitution.

## TERRITORY AND POPULATION

Nepal is bounded in the north by China (Tibet) and the east, south and west by India. Area 147,181 sq. km; population census 2001, 23,151,423 of which 11,587,502 were female; density 157.3 per sq. km. In 2005, 84.2% of the population were rural.

The UN gave an estimated population for 2010 of 29.85m.

The country is divided into five developmental regions and 75 administrative districts. Area, population and administrative centres are:

Region	Sq. km	Population (2001 census)	Administrative centre
Central Region	27,410	8,031,629	Kathmandu
East Region	28,456	5,344,476	Dhankuta
West Region	29,398	4,571,013	Pokhara
Mid-West Region	42,378	3,012,975	Surkhet
Far West Region	19,539	2,191,330	Dipayal

Capital, Kathmandu; population (2001) 671,846. Other towns include (2001 census population): Biratnagar, 166,674; Lalitpur, 162,991; Pokhara, 156,312.

The indigenous people are of Tibetan origin with a considerable Hindu admixture. The Gurkha clan became predominant in 1559 and has given its name to men from all parts of Nepal. There are 18 ethnic groups, the largest being: Newars, Indians, Tibetans, Gurungs, Mogars, Tamangs, Bhotias, Rais, Limbus and Sherpas. The official language is Nepalese but there are 20 new languages divided into numerous dialects.

## SOCIAL STATISTICS

2008 estimates: births, 731,000; deaths, 185,000. Estimated rates per 1,000 population, 2008: births, 25.4; deaths, 6.4. Annual population growth rate, 2000–08, 2.1%. Expectation of life was 65.6 years for males and 66.9 years for females in 2007. Infant mortality, 2005, 56 per 1,000 live births; fertility rate, 2008, 2.9 births per woman.

## CLIMATE

Varies from cool summers and severe winters in the north to sub-tropical summers and mild winters in the south. The rainfall is high, with maximum amounts from June to Sept., but conditions are very dry from Nov. to Jan. Kathmandu, Jan. 10°C, July, 25°C. Average annual rainfall, 1,424 mm.

## CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT

Following years of political turbulence an interim constitution was approved in Dec. 2006, effectively removing King Gyanendra as the head of the state.

On 23 Dec. 2007 the interim government declared the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, with the abolition of the monarchy approved by parliament five days later. This change entered into force on 28 May 2008 at the first meeting of a 601-member *Constituent Assembly* (with 240 seats filled on a first-past-the-post system, 335 filled through proportional representation and 26 nominated by the cabinet). The Constituent Assembly is charged with drafting a new constitution.

#### National Anthem

'Sayaun thunga phoolka hami eutai mala Nepali' ('From hundreds of flowers, we are one garland Nepali'); words by Byakul Maila, tune by Ambar Gurung.

#### RECENT ELECTIONS

In elections to the Constituent Assembly held on 10 April 2008 the Communist Party of Nepal/Maoist (CPN-M) won 220 of the 575 elected seats (26 seats are reserved for nominated members). Nepali Congress won 110 seats, the Communist Party of Nepal/Unified Marxist-Leninist 103, the Madhesi Jana Adhikar Forum/Madhesi People's Rights Forum 52 and the Tarai-Madhes Loktantrik Party 20. The remaining 70 seats were shared among fringe parties and independents.

Ram Baran Yadav (Nepali Congress) was elected president by the Constituent Assembly in a second round of voting on 21 July 2008, defeating Ram Raja Prasad Singh (Communist Party of Nepal/Maoist) by 308 votes to 282.

After 17 attempts and seven months of political gridlock, Jhlanath Khanal of the Communist Party of Nepal/Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) was elected prime minister by the Constituent Assembly on 3 Feb. 2011, securing 368 of the 557 votes cast in the 601-seat parliament. Ram Chandra Poudel of the Nepali Congress received 122 votes and Bijay Kumar Gachhadar of Madhesi People's Rights Forum 67 votes.

#### CURRENT ADMINISTRATION

*President:* Ram Baran Yadav; b. 1948 (Nepali Congress; sworn in 23 July 2008).

*Vice President:* Parmanand Jha.

*Prime Minister and Minister for Industry, Agriculture, Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs:* Jhlanath Khanal; b. 1950 (Communist Party of Nepal/Unified Marxist-Leninist; sworn in 6 Feb. 2011).

In March 2011 the cabinet comprised:

*Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Energy, Irrigation, Commerce and Supplies:* Bharat Mohan Adhikari. *Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Information and Communications, Law and Justice, Land Reform and Management, Health and Population:* Krishna Bahadur Mahara.

*Minister of Defence, General Administration, Forest and Soil Conservation, Environment:* Bishnu Prasad Poudel. *Physical Planning and Works, Labour and Transportation Management:* Top Bahadur Rayamajhi. *Peace and Reconstruction, Youth and Sports:* Barsha Man Pun. *Tourism and Civil Aviation, Women, Children and Social Welfare:* Khadga Bahadur Bishwokarma. *Education, Local Development, Federal Affairs, Constituent Assembly, Parliamentary Affairs and Culture, Science and Technology:* Ganga Lal Tuladhar.

*Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers:*

<http://www.opmcm.gov.np>

#### CURRENT LEADERS

##### Ram Baran Yadav

*Position*  
President

##### Introduction

Ram Baran Yadav became president in July 2008 after winning a comfortable majority in the first presidential elections since

the country became a federal democratic republic. Yadav's role is largely ceremonial, including the performance of traditional Hindu duties previously carried out by the now abolished monarchy.

##### Early Life

Ram Baran Yadav was born on 4 Feb. 1948 to an ethnic Madhesi family in the village of Sapahi, in the Dhanusha District. He studied medicine at the School of Tropical Medicine (Kolkata) and the Calcutta Medical College. He obtained his postgraduate degree from the Institute of Medical Education and Research in Chandigarh, India. Upon returning to Nepal, Yadav ran his own medical practice in Janakpur.

While in India, Yadav had become involved in the Nepali pro-democracy movement and in 1980 he joined the Nepali Congress (NC) party. He participated in the 1990 Jana Andolan (People's Movement) but was arrested and jailed for three months until the implementation of a democratic constitution. Yadav was elected to parliament as an NC candidate in 1991 and served as minister of health for three years in the administration of Girija Prasad Koirala.

At the 1999 general election Yadav was re-elected and continued as health minister, establishing a healthcare system in rural Nepal. He then became general secretary of the NC. He won the seat of Dhanusa-5 at elections for the constituent assembly in April 2008.

Yadav contested the presidential election of July 2008 on an NC ticket but fell four votes short of the 298 needed to win a simple majority. In a second round of voting he won 308 of 590 votes cast. Yadav's victory came as an upset to the Communist Party of Nepal/Maoist (CPN-M) who were seeking to form the government after their win in the April 2008 Constituent Assembly election. Yadav was sworn into office on 23 July 2008.

##### Career in Office

Yadav prioritized the drafting of a new democratic constitution in a bid to end Nepal's long track record of political violence, and has been keen to maintain friendly ties with both India and China. However, he faced opposition from the CPN-M whose leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda), led a coalition government from Aug. 2008 until May 2009 when he resigned in protest at Yadav's blocking of his controversial attempt to dismiss the country's army head. Madhav Kumar Nepal of the Communist Party/Unified Marxist-Leninist was sworn in as the prime minister of a new coalition, excluding the CPN-M, later in the month. The CPN-M demanded a return to power, claiming that Yadav had acted unconstitutionally, and kept up prolonged political pressure on Madhav Kumar Nepal until he resigned as prime minister in June 2010. The previous month the coalition government and Maoist opposition had agreed to extend a deadline for drafting a new constitution until May 2011. Repeated efforts to elect a new premier were unsuccessful until Feb. 2011 when, following the withdrawal of Pushpa Kamal Dahal and then Ram Chandra Poudel of the NC as candidates, Jhlanath Khanal of the Communist Party/Unified Marxist-Leninist was approved by parliament and sworn in by Yadav.

##### Jhlanath Khanal

*Position*  
Prime Minister

##### Introduction

Jhlanath Khanal, leader of the Communist Party of Nepal/Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML), was elected prime minister in Feb. 2011, ending months of political deadlock. A veteran left-winger, Khanal came to power with the support of Maoist Party MPs.