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Will India Go the Nepal Way? Comparing South Asia's Gen Z Movements



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Representational Image

In the last three years, Gen Z (short for Generation Z) has gone from being a generation of digital natives to a political force to reckon with in South Asia. Contemporary youth movements combine meme culture, satirical branding and social media broadcasting with high-stakes street mobilisation in a way not found in earlier generations of student activism.

The Gen Z movement is a global wave of youth-led protests and mobilisations that has taken hold throughout the 2020s, fuelled by a generation that is fed up with growing inequality, economic instability, political corruption and democratic backsliding. Gen Z activists, the first truly digital-native cohort, are mobilising through social media platforms and digital tools such as TikTok, X, and Discord to quickly coordinate, evade censorship, and communicate symbols of resistance across borders.

From successful government overthrows in Bangladesh and Nepal to widespread anti-corruption demonstrations in Peru, Indonesia and across Africa, these leaderless, decentralised movements share a common demand for government accountability, sustainable futures and the opportunity for young people to live with dignity in systems that have increasingly marginalised them.

This short commentary makes a comparative analysis of the 2026 CJP (the Cockroach Janta Party) protests in Delhi and two successful recent youth-led uprisings in South Asia—Bangladesh (2024) and Nepal (2025)—which transformed the political landscape in fundamental ways. But the question is:

despite some concessions yielded by the Modi administration, will the CJP movement lead to a more substantive overhaul of governance in a vast and diverse country like India with manifold grievances across various sectors?"

Bangladesh: The Revolution For Quota Reform

What started as a student-led protest over the government's distribution of jobs turned into a mass revolution that destroyed a 15-year political rule. The trigger was the June 2024 revival by the high court of a controversial scheme to reserve 30% of government jobs for the descendants of 1971 freedom fighters. Students saw this as a serious setback to meritocracy amid a slowing economy.

Under the banner of "Students Against Discrimination" the youth mobilised the masses through Facebook groups and speedy digital networking. In unity, they turned their digital avatars crimson, sent out revolutionary internet slogans and evaded traditional media check-points.

The government responded with a violent crackdown. The "July Massacre" involved state forces and the student wing of the ruling party attacking protestors, killing more than 1,400 people. Public fury erupted when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called the demonstrators a pejorative name (Razakar – referring to members of the auxiliary paramilitary force that collaborated with the Pakistani Army during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War). The Result was that the movement became the "Monsoon Revolution," with an unstoppable march to the capital by the protestors on August 5, 2024, forcing Hasina to resign and flee to India.

Nepal: Corruption And Freedom Of Expression Leading To Political Change

Short and swift, the September 2025 Gen Z insurrection in Nepal accomplished its immediate political objectives. Protests reflected growing popular anger at pervasive corruption, political favouritism and government-imposed limits on digital freedoms.

What sparked it off immediately was growing discontent about alleged corruption and the flaunting of wealth by the political

leaders. The government has restricted major social media platforms, including YouTube, TikTok, Facebook and X, in an effort to stop mobilisation and control the flow of information amid mounting unrest.

But Nepal's Gen Z protesters adjusted rapidly to these limits. Activists went to the internet communication site Discord to coordinate demonstrations, share information and manage logistics because they could not rely on social media. The change illustrated the power of a digitally connected youth to overcome communication hurdles set by the government.

Demonstrations led to violent confrontations between the protesters and the security personnel. As the news of police action especially involving medical facilities and children getting the brunt of the police overreaction spread, public outrage skyrocketed leading to more violence with torching of a number of government buildings, including the national parliament complex, in what the Gen Z activists termed as a symbolic rejection of the political system.

In five days, the Gen Z protests yielded major political effects with the resignation of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma making way for the creation of a new government. The new administration immediately relaxed the control on social media platforms that fuelled the protests in the first place.

New Delhi: The CJP Protests

The Delhi demonstrations spearheaded by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) demonstrated how Gen Z used humour and online culture as weapons against systemic institutional failure. The movement, named by adopting a deeply offensive remark made by an authority figure as its official identity, was triggered by two major failures in educational administration: the NEET-UG medical examination paper leak and major abnormalities in the CBSE on-screen marking system.

New Delhi's Jantar Mantar was transformed into a content-creation hub by the protesters, who shot "Get Ready With Me" (GRWM) lifestyle clips for protests, played card games like Uno at police barricades, and used viral audio tracks to record clashes with the police.

There was a major escalation when environmental activist Sonam Wangchuk and other influential personalities joined the students in indefinite hunger strikes. On July 20, 2026, tens of thousands of young people tried to march on Indian Parliament, but they were met by tear gas and baton charges by the Delhi Police, leaving scores hospitalised. The protests were calling for Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation and comprehensive educational reforms. Eventually the minister resigned on July 25, 2026.

Comparative Analysis: Triggers, Tactics, Trajectories

Despite the fact that all the three movements were spearheaded by Gen Z, their strategies and scopes differed based on the distinct political environments they operate within.

The protests in Delhi were as internet-savvy and dispersed in their outrage as the ones in Dhaka and Kathmandu. For now, though, the Indian protests resemble the early stage of the Bangladesh quota movement, which was tightly focused on one bureaucratic grievance (examinations, not jobs). Nepal and Bangladesh have overthrown entire governments through protests, but the Delhi movement is asking for accountability within the existing democratic system through satire and targeted disruption. The protests in Delhi are visually arresting, like youth revolutions in Bangladesh and Nepal, but the political processes that enliven them are essentially different.

Prognosis

Here's a preview of how the CJP movement will force big reforms, but not likely to cause systemic government collapse.

Collapse Of The Regime Is Unlikely

There is no chance of a complete collapse of the regime in New Delhi as in Bangladesh where the 2024 Monsoon Revolution overthrew Sheikh Hasina or Nepal where the Prime Minister was forced to resign by riots.

Clear And Actionable Demands

The goals of the CJP were rabidly specific. They were demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra

Pradhan, ₹1 crore compensation to the families of NEET applicants who died by suicide and structural changes in the test marking systems. Despite the outrage, the movement has not become a blanket call to throw out the central government.

Democratic Safety Valves

India's elections are well-entrenched, and the parliamentary opposition is vigorous. In Bangladesh, 15 years of democratic backsliding had made the streets the only way to effect change. In India, leaders like Rahul Gandhi are quick to adopt the students' demands into parliamentary debate, using the street's anger for electoral politics, not revolution.

State Capacity And Resilience

India's large security apparatus and historically resilient institutional architecture are not easily breached through single-issue street agitation.

Highly Likely - Major Policy Change

If 'substantial change' means high-level cabinet resignations, destruction and rebuilding of powerful institutions (e.g., National Testing Agency), and permanent politicisation of a generation, then the CJP movement is already succeeding.

The Gen Z Political Awakening

Digital strategists like Abhijeet Dipke have leveraged the digital age culture to grow the CJP to an unprecedented size, rapidly growing to over 25 million followers on Instagram. They had turned the snide "cockroach" remark into a badge of honour, and turned systematic apathy into the enemy.

The Feedback Loop Of State Violence

Youth movements are always legitimised by state violence. An accelerant was the July 20 skirmishes, where police used tear gas and batons to break up the "Sansad Chalo" march and injured dozens of students, making the outcry about police brutality go viral. It was at this very time that the Bangladesh quota protests were at their peak.

Coalition Overlap

The movement started over an examination issue but snowballed. With high-profile figures like Sonam Wangchuk — who broke a 26-day fast on July 24 — along with farmers, veterans and civil society groups involved, this went from being a localised student complaint to a widespread national issue.

Conclusion

The odds of the 2026 protests in Delhi mirroring the government collapses in Dhaka or Kathmandu are slim. Criticism is received and redirected differently within India's democratic architecture. However, the CJP's ability to mobilise unemployed youth, students, and civil society through digital savviness has cemented Gen Z as a powerful, well-organised voting bloc. Consequently, they are likely to secure substantial political concessions and permanent academic reforms that the political elite can no longer ignore.

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