



THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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35.0° C 13.7° C
Dipayal Jomsom



A nine-year-old priest enters the Golden Temple in Patan for evening prayers. At the 12th-century temple, only boys under 12 become the main priest, and are changed every 30 days.

Statements by ruling party's youth wing against democratic values, analysts say

Both NCP and Yuwa Sangh command appeared to distance themselves from the district chapters' statements.

TIKA R PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

On Monday, as the debate over the tourism minister's delaying of a Buddha Air flight continued online, Yogesh Bhattarai's personal aide issued a statement, which many said was in bad taste for his choice of words.

Prem Guragai's statement reeked of braggadocio. And as though it was not enough, the Kaski chapter of the ruling Nepal Communist Party's youth wing—Rastriya Yuwa Sangh Nepal—issued another statement late Sunday, declaring that Gyanendra Shahi, the person who led an altercation with Bhattarai in Nepalgunj for delaying the flight, has been banned from entering the district.

Hours later, the Dhanusha district committee of the Sangh has also issued a separate statement, barring Shahi's entry into the district.

"We warn Gyanendra Shahi not to participate in any programme and enter Dhanusha district," the statement issued by Saroj Yadav on behalf of the Sangh said.

But the central body of the youth wing refused to wholly own the statements issued by its districts chapters.

"The district committees may have issued the statements because they were angry at the way the minister was attacked," said Ram Prasad

Sapkota, the Sangh's central coordinator. "But we have adopted no policy to impose restrictions on the movement of any political party or individual."

According to Sapkota, Shahi, the person in question in the Bhattarai-related incident, has all the right to express his opinion and be involved in the politics of his choosing. Shahi was detained by police on Sunday but was released on Monday.

Ruling party leaders, however, refused to comment on their youth wing's statements. Party General Secretary Bishnu Poudel said he "needed to study the statements" before making comments. A secretary-in-member said it was beneath him to comment on "such nonsense."

"It's definitely not appropriate to take such decisions on an issue related to an individual," he told the Post, wishing to be anonymous because he said such drivel did not warrant a formal response. A series of statements from Bhattarai as well as the ruling party's sister wings comes amid NCP leaders' continuous refrain that the federal republican system is under threat from regressive forces.

Commentators, while stressing the need to protect hard-earned political achievements, say recent activities of the government and the ruling party show the party itself is engaged in politics of negation.

>> Continued on page 4

City uses broomers to clean streets every day. Then trucks make a mess at night

Large-scale construction projects in the Capital have seen hundreds of trucks entering Kathmandu during the night, leaving a dusty mess behind.

ANUP OJHA
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

When the Kathmandu Metropolitan City inaugurated five newly acquired broomer machines in March, Mayor Bidhya Sundar Shakya promised a clean and dust-free city. In June, China gifted two more broomer machines, bringing the total number of machines operated by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City to clean the roads to seven.

But it has turned out to be a futile exercise.

Kathmandu roads, especially in Ratnapark, Tripureshwor, New Baneshwor and Jamal, continue to be dusty—and when it rains, they are muddy. Dust pollution is evidently worse in the New Bus Park area, Kalanki, Chababil and Gaushala.

Perplexed KMC officials have finally found the culprit.

"It's tipper trucks," said Purna

Chandra Bhatta, a city police inspector at the Environment Division of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

"Every night, over 500 tripper trucks enter the city carrying mud and sand for big construction projects. As they traverse the city, the mud and sand they are carrying is spilt on the roads."

After complaints that tipper trucks were wreaking havoc—rash driving and disregard for traffic rules had resulted in accidents and deaths, the government in July last year banned daytime entry of such heavy-duty vehicles into the city.

But a surge in large-scale construction projects in the Capital has seen contractors bringing in raw materials—mud, sand and boulders—in large quantities.

Since there's a ban on daytime entry for tipper trucks, contractors operate them at night.

"The sheer difference between the

number of cleaning machines we have and that of trucks employed by contractors tells the whole story," said Bhatta.

Kathmandu often makes international headlines for its rising pollution problem. In what looked like the government's acknowledgement that pollution is a big problem in Kathmandu, officials, including ministers, have in the past made some grand announcements.

The government announced in its budget for the current fiscal year that it would "soon" set-up vehicle cleaning facilities at major entry points of Kathmandu to ensure that buses from different parts of the country en route to the Capital would be washed before entering the city. The plan—seemingly impractical from the beginning—has failed to take off.

Amid this, there is a construction boom in Kathmandu.

>> Continued on page 4

INTERVIEW | 16

Anup Raj Sharma: We could not be bold enough to pressurise the government

On social media, Nepalis are forever at war

This week the video of Tourism Minister Yogesh Bhattarai's entourage delaying a flight has enraged people on both sides of the aisle.

BHRIKUTI RAI
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

Arguing on the internet, according to someone on the internet, is a lot like playing chess with a pigeon. No matter how skilled you are at the game, the pigeon is going to knock over the pieces, crap on the board, and then strut around like he's won.

Nepali internet currently looks a lot like that.

More than 48 hours after the altercation inside a Buddha Air flight in Nepalgunj, the Nepali internet remains divided, as warring sides continue to scream at each other with exclamation points and block letters. Some have called out Tourism Minister Yogesh Bhattarai whose late arrival at the airport on Saturday delayed the Kathmandu-bound flight. Others, including the minister, are weaving wild theories about the person heard screaming at Bhattarai in the background of the video.

But this isn't the first time Nepali internet has become a battleground for debates, which on most occasions, yield nothing but more outrage and resentment.

Last month, the debate was over Rabi Lamichhane, a popular television show host detained for his alleged role in abetting suicide of a former colleague. Before that, Nepalis were divided over the arrest of YouTuber Pranesh Gautam. Then there was the Miss Nepal episode. Nepalis have even gone on Twitter wars over a work of

fiction. Political commentators, who until a few years ago used to be key in swaying public opinion about certain issues, feel social media has largely disrupted or replaced the traditional definition of public sphere. And there have been numerous studies, trying to understand the complicated ways in

which social media influences political discourse. Discussions have now moved online, but not always for the better, says political columnist Chandra Kishore.

"Social media often divides society on different issues, which is very dangerous," said Chandra Kishore. "Sometimes, they could even incite communal violence because people tend to react in haste without verifying the facts first."

In the Buddha Air delay fiasco, too, the rage soon spilled over to the offline world. On Monday, the ruling party NCP's sister organisation and the tourism minister's personal secretary released furious—and mildly veering on threat—statements condemning the passenger who raised his voice in the plane.

Puranjan Acharya, a political commentator, said even conventional politics has been affected by social media. "The new trend that we are seeing could be dangerous because opinions, as we see today, are not guided by any ideology," said Acharya. "It's a serious issue and it needs serious deliberation."

>> Continued on page 4



DEFY
EL PRIMERO 21



ZENITH
THE FUTURE OF SWISS WATCHMAKING SINCE 1865

Regency Watch

ANNAPURNA ARCADE
DURBAR MARG

MEDLEY

Inside the Post

National

MBBS classes at Chitwan Medical College have been affected for the last 20 days due to the ongoing protest of the students.

Opinion

The latest economic indicators for Nepal show that, apart from its alarmingly increasing trade deficit that exceeded 46 percent of the GDP in the last fiscal year 2018-19, the rapidly decelerating external sector indices are also an equally serious cause for concern.

Technopolis

With Android 10, Google has built-in support for all messaging apps to display 'chat head'-type bubbles within the operating system.

Money

Investment Board Nepal has summoned Indian infrastructural company GMR Group to discuss the planned Upper Karnali hydropower project which remains in limbo for lack of an agreement with prospective energy buyer Bangladesh over tariffs.

Sports

The dispute surrounding Cricket Association Nepal (CAN) is likely to be resolved as the date for cricket governing body's election has been finalised for September 27 and 28.

News Quiz

- 1. Which province recently launched programmes to improve community schools?
2. Recent drone strikes on oil facilities of which country have severely disrupted production?
3. US President Donald Trump on Saturday claimed that Hamza bin Laden, son of slain al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, was killed in a counter-terrorism operation in which region?
4. Which club reclaimed the top spot in Serie A on Saturday?



A vendor, who sells plastic flowers, walks around Kalimati looking for customers on Monday.

On this day in history

Ganesh Man Singh quits after 48 years in Congress

KATHMANDU - After working with the Nepali Congress party since its inception 48 years ago, Ganeshman Singh announced at a press meet Friday he no longer remained a member of the country's largest political party.

The Kathmandu Post
September 17, 1994

Answers to News Quiz: 1(c), 2(b), 3(a), 4(d), 5(c), 6(a)

Quote of the day

On social media, Nepalis are forever at war, Page 1

"Most civilisations are based on the integrity of human communications and of trust. But social media can create echo chambers and corrupt communication, which is a big risk to society."

CK Lal, a political columnist, on how social media leads to unwarranted conflicts and is a threat to society.

Most read online

This company is turning millennials into successful offshore mortgage brokers

At the crack of dawn on weekdays, 27-year-old Ajar Rajbhandari hurries to Jawalakhel, gets into his office and starts looking fixedly at his laptop screen filled with details on names, property and Australian banks.

Asian firms oppose e-passport bid process, saying conditions favour American and European companies

The Department of Passports' call for global tenders for the printing of five million biometric passports has been criticised by a number of Asian firms for favouring American and European firms in their tender specifications.

Despite study warning risks of Zika, officials are woefully unprepared to tackle it

Since the first case of dengue was reported in May, the virus now has spread to 56 districts. At least seven people have died and nearly 9,000 hospitalised.

Export of Nepali readymade garment hits 13-year high

Nepal's readymade garment export hit a 13-year high in terms of value in the last fiscal year, thanks to the appreciation of the US dollar against the Nepali rupee and improvement in product quality.

Corrections

In the article titled 'A record runner who came into the sport by a matter of chance' (Page 15, Sept 16), Krishna Basnet's record timing should have been 2:17:33 instead of what was erroneously published.

HOROSCOPE

Horoscope section for various zodiac signs including Aries, Cancer, Libra, Capricorn, Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius, Gemini, and Pisces, each with a brief daily forecast.

CROSSWORD

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words, including 'Umbrella part', 'Superstars', and 'Nudge forward'.

Large crossword puzzle grid with numbered squares for word placement.

SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzle grid with some numbers pre-filled and a difficulty rating of five stars.



Steel rods jut out on a roadside, posing injury risk for pedestrians in New Baneshwor, Kathmandu.

POST PHOTO: ANGAO DHAKAL

Bhuri Gaun-Telpani road being upgraded for the first time since it was built

Once the road comes into operation, it is expected to work as a lifeline for the residents of Sudurpaschim and Karnali.

THAKUR SINGH THARU
BARDIYA, SEPT 16

The 51-km Bhuri Gaun-Telpani road, linking Birendranagar, the provincial capital of Karnali, to Bhuri Gaun in Bardiya in Province 5 was opened some 51 years ago. The road—rarely used by commuters—was primarily used to ferry goods and messages back in the day.

As it was rarely used, the road section was never really upgraded since it was opened because the road passes through Bardiya National Park. Disputes between the locals demanding upgradation of the road and park officials refusing construction of a road within the park's premises had put upgradation works on hold. But six months ago the Apex court gave a verdict on the ongoing disputes allowing the road to be upgraded soon, local authorities say.

Ananath Baral, chief conservation officer at the Bardiya National Park, said that the park authorities earlier had concerns about construction work disturbing the park's wildlife habitat, and therefore, had refused to allow the construction. "But the court has ordered the Department of the Roads to conduct an environmental assessment before upgrading the road," said Baral.

Once the road stretch is constructed, the Bhuri Gaun-Telpani road, which is unmotorable during the monsoons even for small vehicles, will bring changes to the vicinity, said Hari Bahadur Thapa, a local of Bhuri Gaun. "The road will change the lives of people in Sudurpaschim and Karnali and the western parts of Province 5. Residents of Karnali will be able to easily transport their products to Tarai after the expansion of the road, which will encourage trade between the two provinces," he said.

Once the road comes into operation, it is expected to work as a lifeline for

the residents of Sudurpaschim and Karnali provinces. The expected time travel from Bardiya to Barahatal, in Karnali, is expected to be reduced to only one hour. Currently, one needs to travel 102 km from Bardiya—via Ratna Highway—to reach Birendranagar, which is much closer to Bardiya than Barahatal.

Fifty-one years ago, the District Panchayat had opened the road stretch to carry letters and cargoes from Bhuri Gaun in Thakurbaba to Telpani in Barahatal. According to locals, postmen used to carry letters and cargoes from the road section and Karnali locals themselves would make the journey to Bardiya on foot via the open road.

"It would take people an entire day to walk from Karnali to Bardiya through the Bhuri Gaun-Telpani road; it's now going to be the shortest route to connect the three provinces," said Thapa.

According to locals of Bhuri Gaun, the upgradation and full operation of the Bhuri Gaun-Telpani road will also ensure a decrease in the cost of goods and services in the area. Thapa said, "The transportation cost will be lower after traders start using the road section to ferry goods from Province 5. This stands to benefit the locals in the long run."

The central government has also allocated a Rs 10 million-budget to upgrade the road. Netra Bilash Paudel, an information officer of the Division Road Office in Nepalgunj, said that the government has kept the project on high priority. "The detailed project report for the road project has already been prepared," said Paudel, adding that the upgradation works will start after the Ministry of Forest grants permission for the construction of the road. According to the Division Road Office, an environmental impact assessment (EIA) has also been conducted for the expansion of the road.



Bhuri Gaun-Telpani road was built 51 years ago.

POST PHOTO: THAKUR SINGH THARU

Government ready to amend Act as per international standard: Law minister

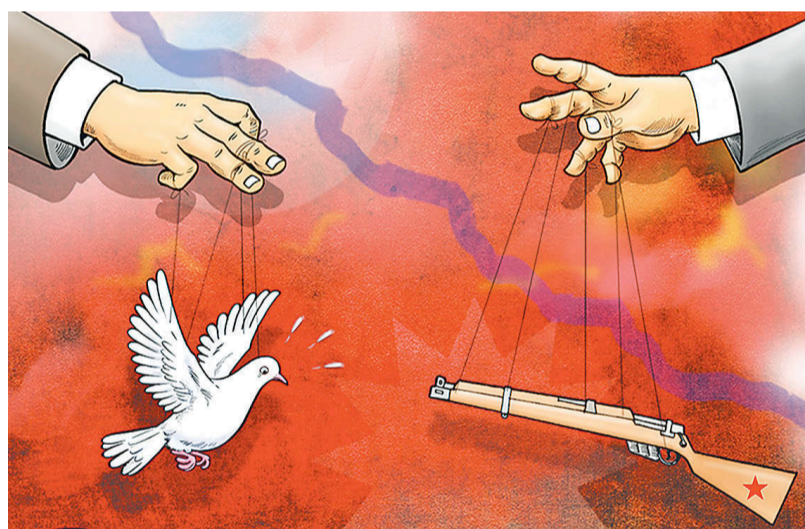
Conflict victims say they are ready to support the process if Minister Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal fulfils his commitments.

BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

Amid criticism over the politicisation in the appointment process in two transitional justice bodies, the government has started a consultation with the conflict victims to discuss the way to move ahead in amending the existing transitional justice Act.

The Ministry of Law and Justice on Monday tried to seek the support of conflict victims in finalising the draft bill on an amendment to Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act-2014. As per the agreement between the ruling and main opposition parties on August 21, the government is preparing to discuss with the conflict victims and other parties concerned on the bill in the seven provinces before giving it a final shape.

At Monday's meeting, the ministry presented a modality for the consultation where 80 people, including conflict victims, representatives of the local and provincial governments, representatives from the security forces, human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists, will put their views in each province. A central level consultation will be held in the federal capital after completing in all the provinces, according to the ministry's modality. Though the government has not yet finalised the date for the consultation,



POST ILLUSTRATION

it plans to complete it before Dashain.

"The Law Ministry will draft the bill based on the suggestions during the consultations, adhering to the international practice and standard and the Supreme Court's verdict," said Minister for Law and Justice Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal in the meeting. The conflict victims, human rights activists and the different national and international human rights organisations have been demanding Nepal government to amend the Act first, and appoint the chairpersons

and members in two transitional justice commissions accordingly. But a lack of political will and the Nepal Army's reservations have resulted in a stalemate, depriving conflict victims of justice even more than a decade after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The government in June last year made public an amendment draft that primarily focuses on reconciliation at the cost of legal prosecution. It proposes community service instead of jail terms for perpetrators. The draft

was prepared three years after the Supreme Court, in 2015, struck down a dozen provisions of the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act-2014, saying that they were inconsistent with transitional justice norms and practices as they supported amnesty.

Though the draft was prepared with a motive to endorse it through Parliament, the government backtracked after conflict victims and human rights organisations expressed serious reservations. They were particularly unhappy with a provision that said if a person cooperates in the investigation process and reveals facts, they would be considered for a significant reduction in penalty.

The conflict victims say that they are happy that the government has assured to formulate the amendment draft at par with the international standard and the Supreme Court's verdict. "We want its commitment to be fulfilled with honesty," Gopal Shah, vice-chairperson of the Conflict Victims Common Network, told the Post. He said the victims will cooperate in the transitional justice process if there is no politicisation in the appointment of the leadership in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons and the amendment to the Act as committed by Dhakal on Monday.

Ongoing protest at Chitwan Medical College affects MBBS classes



Students stage a sit-in at the college entrance to protest against high fees.

POST PHOTO: RAMESH KUMAR PAUDEL

RAMESH KUMAR PAUDEL
CHITWAN, SEPT 16

MBBS classes at Chitwan Medical College have been affected for the last 20 days due to the ongoing protest of the students.

MBBS students had launched the protest on August 27, accusing the college administration of charging them more fees than what was fixed by the government.

The padlocking of the college on September 4, followed by sit-in and other protest programmes have affected the academic session, students say.

On September 11, the District Police Office in Chitwan detained 15 MBBS students who were demonstrating in front of the college gate. They were released the same night but the classes at the college have not yet resumed.

Students have been protesting every alternate day. "We have not given in. We plan to stage a strong demonstration in the coming days. Our friends have been deployed to make preparations for the protest," Prakash Chand, coordinator of the Medical Education Struggle Committee, a body formed by the agitating MBBS students.

The agitating students said the col-

lege is charging them an additional fee ranging from Rs1.2 to 2 million as opposed to what is fixed by the government. They have demanded the college refund the additional fees within a month as well as the extra fees charged from scholarship students.

Nasim Akhtar, a final year MBBS student, said the protest is necessary to provide justice to all students. "We know that our classes have been hampered, but we are compelled to stage demonstrations to get rid of such problems. The college administration is only concerned about making money here," said Akhtar.

Protesting students say the college has been charging them Rs 1.2 million to Rs 2 million extra.

However, the college administration has denied the allegations. Dr Haris Neupane, a promoter of the medical college, admitted that the college had charged some additional fees under headings such as examination, library, and miscellaneous activities.

The government had fixed Rs3.85 million for MBBS programmes inside Kathmandu Valley and Rs4.24 million outside the Valley in 2017. But, the college has been charging a fee (examination and others) up to Rs600, 000.

Metropolitan police step up crackdown on illegal gambling dens

Private homes, restaurants and hotels operate gambling services during festival season.



SHUVAM DHUNGANA
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

The Metropolitan Police Office has stepped up its crackdown on gambling dens in Kathmandu Valley as the festival holidays draw near.

During the festivals of Dashain and Tihar, gambling joints are operated in private homes, restaurants and hotels. The law enforcement authority believes that gambling leads to social crimes and violence.

Bearing this in mind, police has started raiding suspected gambling houses in the run-up to the festival season.

On July 13, the Metropolitan Police

Sector, Balambu, arrested four persons from gamblers and seized Rs 45,250 from a house at Satungal in Chandragiri Municipality Ward No. 11. That same day, the Metropolitan Police Circle, Swayambhu, also detained eight suspected gamblers from Pandhara in Nagarjun Municipality Ward No. 2 and seized Rs 127,300 from them.

In the last three fiscal years, police arrested 7,197 gamblers from across the country.

According to the data maintained by the Metropolitan Police Office, Rani Pokhari, alone more than Rs 19 million was recovered from 1,161 suspected gamblers from different parts

of the Valley in the fiscal year 2018/19. In the first two months of this running fiscal year 2019/20, police detained 277 suspected gamblers and seized around Rs 2.13 million from them.

As the country's law bars Nepali citizens from entering casinos with the intent of gambling, there are many illegal gambling dens that cater to Nepali gamblers.

According to the Gambling Act 1963, if one is caught for gambling offence for the first time, they shall be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs 200. For repeat offenders, there is a provision of jail sentence ranging from one month to a whole year.

According to the data of the past three fiscal years, the number of people arrested for gambling offence has risen steadily over the year. In the fiscal year 2018/19, police detained 2,869 people, the highest number of arrest in the past three years, from across the country. Nearly 40 percent (1,161) of the arrest was made in Kathmandu Valley.

In the fiscal year 2016/17, at total 1,504 suspected gamblers were arrested. The number rose to 2,824 in the fiscal year 2017/18.

Senior Superintendent of Police Uttam Subedi, also the chief of the Metropolitan Police Range, Kathmandu, said besides raiding illegal gambling joints, Nepal Police will also be keeping a close eye on drink driving through the period of Dashain and Tihar festivals.



A pedestrian steps over a footpath fence in order to cut across a busy road section, despite an overhead bridge and a zebra crossing located nearby at Bhadrakali in Kathmandu on Monday.

POST PHOTO: ANISH REGMI

On social media, Nepalis are forever at war

>> Continued from page 1

Some political analysts say social media, while it can serve as a conduit for information, can also lead to unwarranted conflicts, posing a threat to society.

CK Lal, who has been writing about society and politics for decades, says social media has some distinct characteristics—it demands instant response.

“There is no time for reflection and there is no space for nuances, and it plays in emotions with no reasoning,” said Lal, who also writes regular columns for the Post and its sister-paper Kantipur.

Lal does not mince words when he says social media is inherently anti-democratic and that’s why interest groups could misuse it for their benefit.

“Most civilisations are based on the integrity of human communications and of trust,” Lal said. “But social media can create echo chambers and corrupt communication, which is a big risk to society.”

While old guards like Chandra Kishore and Lal look at the internet and social media debates and screaming matches as divisive forces, the younger generation of social commentators, most of whom have spent a significant chunk of their personal and public lives on the internet, say social media wars are simply a reflection of actual divisions in society.

“That’s just the nature of this medium: people will refuse to say they are wrong even when they run out of arguments,” said Sabitri Gautam, a columnist.

“Nepal has always been a politically polarised society; the divisions in our homes and among families have simply moved online.”

Health Ministry pays Rs 5.8 million to release insecticidal mosquito nets stuck at customs

The ministry had purchased 77,800 such nets with last year’s budget for free distribution among the people vulnerable to malaria.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

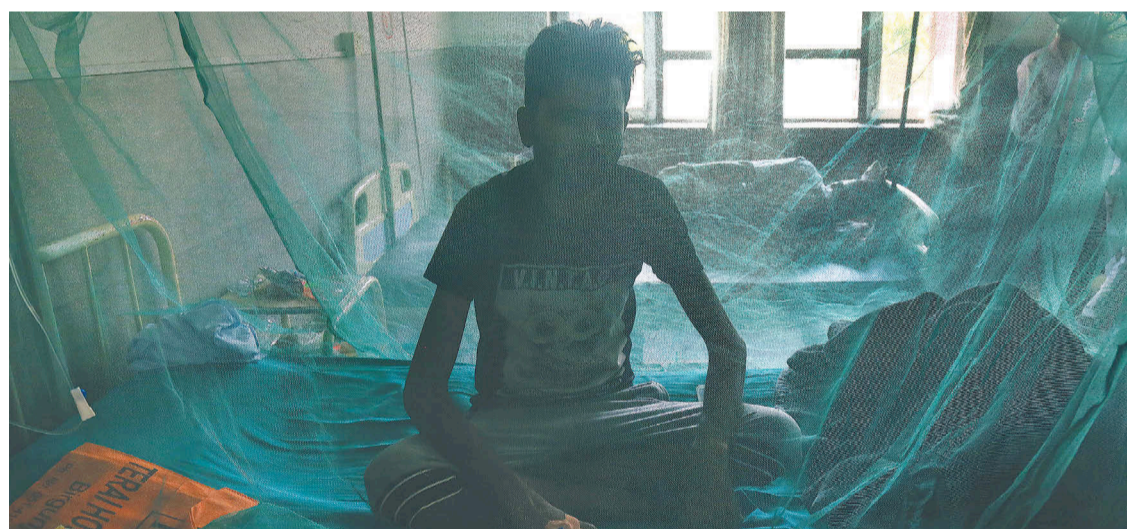
The Ministry of Health and Population has paid Rs 5.8 million to release long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets held at the customs for months.

The ministry had purchased 77,800 such nets with last year’s budget for free distribution among the people vulnerable to malaria. But due to the inability to pay import duties, all the nets were stuck at the customs.

“We have passed the cheque to the customs office,” Dr Surendra Chaurasia, an official at the Management Division of the Department of Health Services, told the Post. “We hope all the long-lasting insecticide-treated nets stuck in the customs office will be released soon.”

The Epidemiology and Disease Control Division said that the customs charges of the insecticide-treated nets were paid through the budget allocated this year to purchase additional nets.

“We cannot discontinue with the



POST PHOTO: KASIN ADHIKARI

With diseases like malaria and dengue on the rise, these nets are a good measure to keep mosquitoes at bay.

programme, so we paid from this year’s budget for purchasing additional nets,” Dr Prakash Prasad Shah, a senior health administrative officer at the division, said.

The Health Ministry itself pur-

chases such nets for distribution among the residents of places where malaria case is detected. Two persons of each household get an insecticide-treated net and when a woman of a particular

house becomes pregnant she gets a new such net. Single women and women whose husbands are away for employment get separate nets.

Nepal has committed to elimi-

nating malaria by 2026. For that the country has to reduce new cases to zero by 2022. Among the 77 districts across the country, malaria control programmes have been launched in 65 districts currently.

Malaria is caused by Plasmodium parasites. Infected female Anopheles called ‘malaria vectors’ carry these deadly parasites, according to the World Health Organization. Long-lasting insecticide-treated nets played a vital role in reducing the malaria burden in Nepal, according to the UN health agency.

Health experts say Nepal’s commitment to eliminating malaria by 2026 as part of the Sustainable Development Goal target will not be met if effective intervention programmes are not launched immediately.

The deadly disease has been reported in the mountainous districts of Mugu, Bajura and others that were considered non-endemic in the past. In 2018, at least 229 people were infected with malaria in Mugu district and 85 people in Bajura district.

Statements by ruling party’s youth wing ...

>> Continued from page 1

“If the leaders of today’s Nepal Communist Party fought for true democracy, then they should stop engaging in such activities,” said Rajendra Maharjan, a political analyst. “Restricting an individual from free movement is not acceptable regardless of who it is aimed at, be it Gyanendra Shahi, Gyanendra Shah, [Pushpa Kamal] Dahal or [KP Sharma] Oli.”

In a democracy, Maharjan said, all citizens should have the right to express dissent and right to free movement.

“A person’s movement cannot be restricted unless he or she raises arms,” said Maharjan. “The Maoist leaders have gone through the phase during the armed conflict and they should know it better. The Maoists are in the ruling party now and such restrictive measures are not acceptable.”

Earlier in February, the same youth wing had left the ruling party red-faced after it issued a strong statement against folk singer Pashupati Sharma for his new song, in which he takes a jibe at leaders indulged in corruption.

Such activities, political analysts say, are against the constitution, multi-party polity and parliamentary system.

Jhalak Subedi, who has followed Nepal’s leftist politics for decades, said both parties and leaders in the government should counter ideas through ideas, not restrictions.

“After all, the ruling party has always maintained that it fought for democratic values,” said Subedi. “It should practise what it preaches.”

City uses broomers to clean streets every day...



POST PHOTO

Officials say tipper trucks—which bring in mud, sand and boulders—are behind Kathmandu’s rising dust pollution.

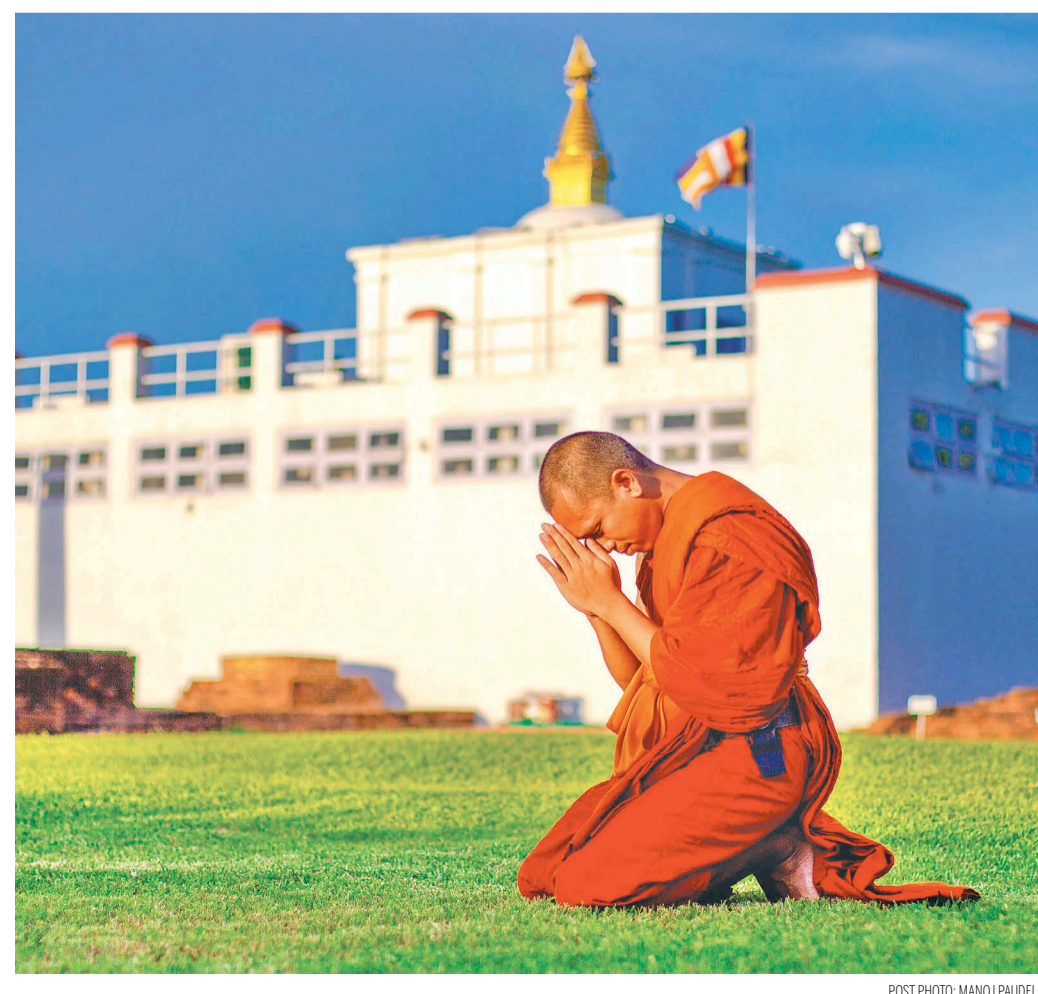
>> Continued from page 1

According to Bhatta, construction of large projects like the Dharahara and multi-storey buildings has led to a rise in the demand for construction materials. Bhim Dhakal, chief of the Metropolitan Traffic Police Division, said tippers carrying construction materials are negligent about how mud and sand spill on the roads.

Spokesperson Dangol admits that KMC has largely failed to make the city dust-free.

“This could be one of the reasons for increasing dust on the road,” said Dhakal. Ishwor Man Dangol, spokesperson for the Kathmandu Metropolitan City, admits that they have largely failed to make the Capital a dust-free city.

“There is a lack of coordination among the concerned authorities such as the Department of Roads, Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanepani Limited, Nepal Telecom and the Nepal Electricity Authority,” said Dangol. “We are trying our best to coordinate with these bodies, but we have yet to see the desired results.”



POST PHOTO: MANOJU PAUDEL

A Thai monk offers prayers at Maya Devi Temple in Lumbini. With the arrival of the tourist season, the inflow of tourists is picking up in the area.

Lack of necessary laws leaves local government helpless

With no legislation, Butwal's government is failing to work effectively—particularly in forest and land management.

AMRITA ANMOL
BUTWAL, SEPT 16

Owing to the spirit of federalism adopted by the country, with the promulgation of the new constitution in 2015, people expected local governments would function more efficiently. However, the local government—across all provinces—hasn't been able to deliver on its promises, mainly due to a lack of laws.

The constitution has delegated 22 different powers and authorities to the local unit to execute works regarding health, education, agriculture, livestock, social security, development activities, among others. But as various provincial laws are yet to be formulated, the local government has failed to work effectively in various sectors—particularly forest and land management.

Butwal city is incapable of taking action against forest encroachers.

Butwal, as the headquarters of Province 5, grows by the year with people rapidly migrating into the city—so much so that the market places and the settlement areas have expanded into public land. As per a report prepared by the Butwal Sub-metropolis last year, 16,193 houses have been constructed on public land. The laws of the country do not allow private property to be built on public land and the guilty should be rightfully evicted off the land.

However, the Province 5 government is yet to enact the necessary law/s into the matter so far. This absence of law has rendered the local unit incapable of taking action against the encroachers, says Shivaraj Subedi, the mayor of Butwal.

"There are innumerable problems at the local level. But we are helpless due to the lack of laws. Only the provincial laws can facilitate us to address such problems. But the province has not formulated the required laws," he said. According to the Local Government Act 2074 BS, the local unit has authority to manage/evict

people who have been staying on the public land in the local body. In a bid to manage rampant encroachment in Butwal, the sub-metropolis collected data of illegal settlers and formed a task force to conserve public land. "But we could not move forward. We could not remove the settlers from the public land since we weren't equipped to do so without proper laws in place," said Subedi.

Nearly 50 percent of the settlement areas in Devdaha, another municipality of Rupandehi district, is located in a forest area. Major settlements—including Khairahani and Bhawanipur—lie in forests. Charange, a dense settlement, is built entirely on forest land. Most of the market places, mainly along the East-West Highway of Sainamaina municipality lie in the forest area. The local government could neither evict the encroachers nor collect tax from them.

"It is the provincial government's responsibility to formulate acts and policies to conserve the forest. But the province hasn't done anything about it. We have to bear the brunt of the provincial government's inefficiency and their inability to have necessary legal provisions in place," said Chitra Bahadur Karki, the mayor of Sainamaina. The municipality is unable to check rampant encroachment and irregularities in the forest due to the provincial government's failure to enact laws, he added.

Some local units attempted to formulate rules and regulations, but they were not effective enough, said Keshavnanda Baniya, chief of Marchawari Rural Municipality.

"We tried implementing some rules and regulations but it didn't work. Our rules don't hold the same power as laws do. The federal and provincial governments are not coordinating in regards to laws and policies for the local units—that's where all the problems arise," he said.

"The local units are unable to execute their works effectively as the federal and provincial governments haven't formulated various laws. The laws formulated by the local government will be scrapped by default if they contradict with the federal and provincial laws. So the roles of the local government has become meaningless," said Mahendra Prasad Pandey, an advocate who has expertise on local governance.



Children somersault on the banks of Bagmati River in Tilganga, Kathmandu.

POST PHOTO: ANGAD DHAKAL

Meet the three female ward chiefs of Bardiya

When the female chiefs assumed office, there were plenty of naysayers. Now, the naysayers have become supporters.

THAKUR SINGH THARU
BARDIYA, SEPT 16

These days, Radha Chaudhary, ward chief of Thakurbaba Ward No. 9, is busy—so busy that it's hard to find her at her own home. She has meetings to attend, development projects to oversee and programmes to speak at.

Chaudhary is one of the only three female ward chiefs in the district, which has 74 wards divided among six municipalities and two rural municipalities.

Her focus is on attracting new development projects in her ward and on advocating women's rights, she says.

"Women in my ward have big expectations from me," she said. "I won't let them down."

In the immediate days of her assuming office, Chaudhary says she was



POST PHOTO

Chief of Gulariya Ward No. 7 Geeta Basnet.

apprehensive of her own abilities. But she says she has learnt a lot in the last two years.

"So far I have received largely positive feedback for my working style," Chaudhary told the Post.

Prior to her election, Chaudhary used to work at various social organisations and also ran a cooperative. This, she says, has helped her hone her leadership skills.

"After I was elected, there were many who doubted my capabilities," Chaudhary said. "But I was undeterred. Now, I think I have proven myself with what I have done so far. The people who doubted my abilities have now come to be my acolytes."

Two other female ward heads in Bardiya—Sabitra Gautam, of Gulariya Ward No. 5, and Geeta Basnet, of Gulariya Ward No. 7—are taking big strides.

Gautam said issues related to women have hitherto not been highlighted because most government agencies have mostly been male-dominated.

"Even today, patriarchal mindset is ripe in the district," said Gautam. "Most men refuse to believe that women can cause an impact in terms of development."

But Gautam said she is determined to prove her naysayers wrong. "We work hard, and this is why people elected us," said Gautam, a Congress leader.

On Monday, Geeta Basnet, another female ward chief, was surrounded by service seekers at her office. After she settled their concerns, she engaged in a brief conversation with the Post.

"It's hard to be ward chief. For women, it's harder," Basnet said. "But I have been persisting against all the odds. I am committed to changing the conservative mindsets of men."

BRIEFING

27 people injured in Tanahun bus accident

TANAHUN: Twenty-seven people were injured when a bus met with an accident at Byas Municipality in Tanahun along the Prithvi Highway on Monday. According to police, the bus was heading towards Muktinath from Tanahun. The injured are receiving treatment at Manipal Teaching Hospital in Pokhara.

20 farmers apply for compensation in Langtang park

RASUWA: Twenty farmers have filed applications for compensation in Langtang National Park after wild animals destroyed their crops in the last two months. According to the farmers, the majority of their crops were destroyed by wild boars.

16 corruption cases filed in last two months

DHADING: The Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has received 16 cases from Dhading within two months of the running fiscal year. As per the record of the CIAA regional office in Hetauda, the office had registered 1,100 cases in the last fiscal year.

Local units to construct their own buildings in Makwanpur

HETAUDA: Most local units in Makwanpur are constructing their own office buildings this fiscal year. People's representatives say they are unable to provide effective services because they have to work from rented buildings. There are 10 local units in Makwanpur.

Urlabari Municipality resumes daily administrative works

BIRATNAGAR: Administrative works in Urlabari Municipality, Morang, resumed on Monday. Administrative works and development activities in Urlabari Municipality were halted for the last month due to a dispute between the municipality's mayor and deputy mayor.

Road blockage creates shortage of daily essentials in Manang

Even though the mounds of mud across the Besishar-Chame road have been cleared, vehicular movement is still at least a week away.

AASH GURUNG
MANANG, SEPT 16

On Thursday, four friends from Kathmandu's Sankhu were on a trip to Manang, on their motorcycles. They rode across the notoriously difficult areas such as Arkhale and Chyamche, albeit with considerable difficulty and risk. When they reached the Myardi river, where a Bailey bridge is under construction, they had to carry their bikes across. Once on the other side, the four companions resumed their journey, only to be stopped just about 200 metres ahead. This time they were faced by a landslide at Myardi Bhir. It was here that the group realised their trip had ended. They returned to Kathmandu without reaching their destination, as the landslide at Myardi Bhir had rendered the road impassable.

"We were well-aware about the frequent landslides in the area. But we didn't expect a landslide of this scale," Nirjal KC, one of the four friends, told the Post. "We should have waited until the winter to undertake this journey."

The landslide at Myardi Bhir has taken a toll, particularly on the people of Manang. The dirt track is a lifeline for the people of the mountain district.

Bil Bahadur Tamang, who transports daily essentials from Dharapani in Manang to Larke Pass in Gorkha, said the road obstruction has threatened his business.

"The road may open today, but it will get blocked tomorrow," Tamang said. "Sometimes, we get stuck midway."

Padam Kumari Gurung, a woman from Naso Rural Municipality, said there has been an acute shortage of daily essentials like salt and rice in her area after the landslide.

"We would have taken a trip on foot to get the foodstuffs if it were not for the boulders that roll down the hill during landslides," said Gurung.

According to Deepak Khadka, who

drives a jeep along the road stretch, vehicles currently reach only up to the Myardi River.

He complained the Division Road Office has been delaying the resumption of vehicle movement.

Frequent landslides are caused due to weak topography of the region, according to Jhalak Bahadur Gurung, chief of Naso Rural Municipality Ward No. 1.

"The 2015 earthquakes further weakened the topographical integrity of hills. This has led to frequent landslides in the area," Gurung said.

The Besishar-Chame road stretch was completed in 2012. But the road has not been repaired despite the damage and destruction caused by landslides and flash floods over the years.

All that the Division Road Office ever does in case of landslides and floodings is clear the debris and mud, said Khadka.

It was about two weeks ago that the

mud accumulated at the Myardi Bhir was cleared, according to Suman Adhikari, sub-engineer at Division Road Office in Damauli.

The road reopened after 17 days on Sunday. However, the vehicular movement is yet to resume, owing to the slow pace of work at the construction site of the Bailey bridge. Manang residents are looking forward to the formal completion of the Bailey bridge.

The bridge was swept away by the flash floods on June 23. Adhikari said that the bridge would be motorable after a week. People have started crossing the river through the bridge, but it is yet to be fully prepared for vehicular movement, according to Adhikari.

As for the landslide situation at Myardi Bhir, the rainfall has been incessant, and the hillside is still witnessing occasional mudslides and rockfalls.



The Besishar-Chame road sees frequent landslides due to the region's weak topography.

POST PHOTO: AASH GURUNG

A village in Baitadi district terrorised by leopard attacks

A minor was mauled to death in yet another leopard attack earlier this month.

TRIPATI SHAHI
BAITADI, SEPT 16

On September 6, around six in the evening, Kalavati Madai from Shivanath Village went to fetch fodder for her cattle, leaving her seven-year-old son Sudeep at home. When she returned, Sudeep was not home. Thinking that he must have gone to a neighbour's house to play, she kept busy with household chores. It was only after dusk fell with Sudeep nowhere in sight that Kalavati and her husband started searching for their missing son.

During their search, the couple came across a bloody road, and scattered on it were Sudeep's clothes and slippers. He had been mauled to death by a leopard.

"The villagers are terrified by this incident. After my son was taken away, we have to think twice before leaving our children home," said Ram Singh Madai, Sudeep's father.

This, however, is not the only time that the village has witnessed leopard attacks. The animal has been terrorising the villagers of Tallo Swarad in Shivanath Rural Municipality and its neighbouring municipalities of Melauli and Pancheshwore for about a decade now.

"We always have to fear for our lives," said Ram Singh.

Twenty-three people in the village have been mauled to death by leopards in the past five years, and 22 injured, according to data of the Division Forest Office.

"The attacks have grown more frequent over the years," said Ram Prasad Chaudhary, assistant forest officer at the division. "Sharmali, Udaya Dev, Pancheshwore and Shivanath are the most affected areas."

The division has been conducting various programmes to curb the attacks, said Keshav Parajuli, forest officer at the division. It has distributed 250 solar panels to light the village at night and is spreading awareness among the locals via radio, according to Parajuli. Even the police were once deployed to patrol the area.

"But the attacks keep happening," Parajuli said.

Chief District Officer Ananda Poudel, officials from the Forest Division and security personnel met Sudeep's family on Sunday. The family will get Rs100,000 as immediate relief and Rs 50,000 from the Amargadhi Community Forest. The division also announced that the government will provide Rs 1 million as a relief to the family.

Twenty-three people in the village have been mauled to death by leopards in the past five years.

"We have requested the officials to immediately come up with measures to address the issue," said Surat Singh Dhama, a local of Shivanath. "The frequent attacks are also due to a lack of electricity in the villages. So we have asked the authorities to provide us with electricity facility."

Poudel said his office has deployed security personnel to the affected areas. "We are committed to never letting incidents such as Sudeep's happen again," he said.

EDITORIAL

Don't stifle dissent

The government and the ruling party need to learn to take criticism; it is a part of democracy.

What started off as a lawful, if a bit loud, example of protest against the abuse of power by a federal minister has now turned into a fiasco in image building for the ruling communist party. The scenario in question came into play after the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Yogesh Bhattarai was reprimanded by irate passengers, after he and his aides purposefully delayed a Buddha Air flight from Nepalgunj. Instead of accepting his errors and giving an honest apology, the minister has been lambasted for delivering a crass and insincere apology. What's worse, Gyanendra Shahi, one of the passengers who heavily criticised Bhattarai, was detained by the police. The minister's apology, issued by his aide, followed yet another statement by the ruling party's youth wing, declaring that Shahi has been banned from entering Kaski district. The actions of the police, the minister, the government and the Rastriya Yuva Sang Nepal are wrong. Although Shahi's actions could be considered over the top, the government cannot in any way attempt to stifle dissent.

Nepalis have had enough of the people supposed to serve them creating a hindrance in their daily lives. In a country where citizens were used to being stalled in traffic to let politicians and government officials pass, people have been growing bolder and more annoyed at such extravagant processions. In recent times, vehicles obstructed from movement due to VIP convoys have been honking their horns in unison as a sign of protest; some have even defied roadblocks entirely. Perhaps inspired by such protests, a number of passengers got out of their seats in the aircraft to heckle the tourism minister, while some filmed the entire episode. Gyanendra Shahi was among those passengers that protested. And on Sunday, Shahi arranged for a press meet in Lalitpur to speak about the incident. At the meet, citing a scuffle, the police supposedly took Shahi in 'for his protection'. Shahi was subsequently released a day later. Why the police chose to detain Shahi and not his supposed aggressors remains a mystery.

Much like any controversy this government seems to drag itself into, the events that have unfolded since that Buddha Air flight on September 14 could have been avoided entirely. That is if the government and the Nepal Communist Party—and its sister organisations—had learnt any lessons from past storms. This unnecessary show of power from the government and the NCP is undemocratic. While Shahi's behaviour in the matter could be considered aggressive, he was only attempting to vent his frustration—show his dissent—at the way government officials have been acting. In a democracy, the ruling party and the government must not attempt to suppress people's views, especially when those views critique the government. The government would do well to remember the people's protests in the recent past against its heavy-handedness.

Letter to the Editor

Passive population

I can't help but wonder why we don't have a national guideline regarding Dengue when Nepal has been witnessing cases of the disease since 2004. It is shameful that 15 years later we're facing an epidemic, and the government is still struggling to come up with an effective nationwide campaign to contain this disease (**Fogging does not help contain dengue epidemic, experts say**, September 13).

Lack of vision regarding development at the grassroots level is what keeps putting us back in such situations. There have been multiple research-based reports of how countries like Nepal will have to bear the consequences of global climate change. Yet no one seems to be questioning the governments' plans and actions. If more people were to take interest in holding their local representatives accountable for their sluggish response during such crises, the government at different levels would be forced to take some measures.

The general public is pretty passive too. Cleaning up one's own space, fumigating and destroying breeding areas can all be done if members of a single *tole* decide to do so. Separating one day of the week to participate in a cleaning drive isn't a herculean task if people band together to do so. This community-based approach needs to be brought about among the urban population as well.

I write this with the hope that people who read this take it as their personal responsibility to take up necessary precautionary measures. We're a small nation with an utterly useless public system. That's the reality. But that doesn't mean we can't help ourselves and our loved ones. We're good at showing resilience during crises. I am sure we can tackle this one as well.

Aakriti Karki, Sylhet, Bangladesh

Running around aimless

Alas, Pushpa Kamal Dahal has courted international controversy by making yet another anti-American statement. During his recent meeting with the Chinese foreign minister where he seems to oppose the US's Indo Pacific strategy (**US Embassy seeks clarification after Beijing says Nepal 'disapproves' of Indo-Pacific Strategy**, September 11).

International Relations analysts must be pondering over Nepali leaders' erratic and confused foreign policy statements. It just doesn't make sense. Nepali foreign policy pushers often seem tickled into making pronouncements appeasing one of the three global powers—India, China or the US.

Currently, in international politics, all great powers are trying to push their own global agendas, usually accompanied by catchy slogans or names. President Donald Trump has pushed to 'Make America Great Again', while the US defines its major global strategy as the Indo-Pacific Strategy. President Xi from China has the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with its 'Chinese characteristics'. And Indian Prime Minister Modi has the 'Made in India' slogan.

However, there is nothing conflicting in the BRI or the Indo-Pacific strategy that would make China or the US compete directly over the Eastern Pacific region. On the other hand, Nepal and India have a millennia-old open border, and cultural, historical and familial ties.

Nepal is a very small country that has so far benefited from its past aid dependence. But it now seeks to paint its own economic chart to democratic stability. I hope that the KP Oli administration will continue standing firm on the US-Nepal friendship which is very close and mature, without harming Nepal's relations with its powerful neighbours.

Foreign policy pronouncements must in the future strictly come from Nepal's Foreign Ministry, not political leaders. I hope Mr Dahal, who considers himself a committed democratic leader from within the Nepal Communist Party's senior-most fold, will allow Nepali diplomats to do their homework and articulate their professional views on the matter.

Surya B Prasai, Washington DC

Stalled reform, stunted development

Nepal's economic policy regime suffers from over-regulation, duplication, and lack of clarity.

ACHYUT WAGLE



The latest economic indicators for Nepal show that, apart from its alarmingly increasing trade deficit that exceeded 46 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the last fiscal year 2018-19, the rapidly decelerating external sector indices are also an equally serious cause for concern. The current account deficit of \$2.4 billion (approximately 9 percent of GDP), balance of payments deficit of \$612 million, decline in foreign direct investment and depleting foreign exchange reserves are among the key indicators of the country's economic health, and they hardly buoy hopes of rapid development and prosperity.

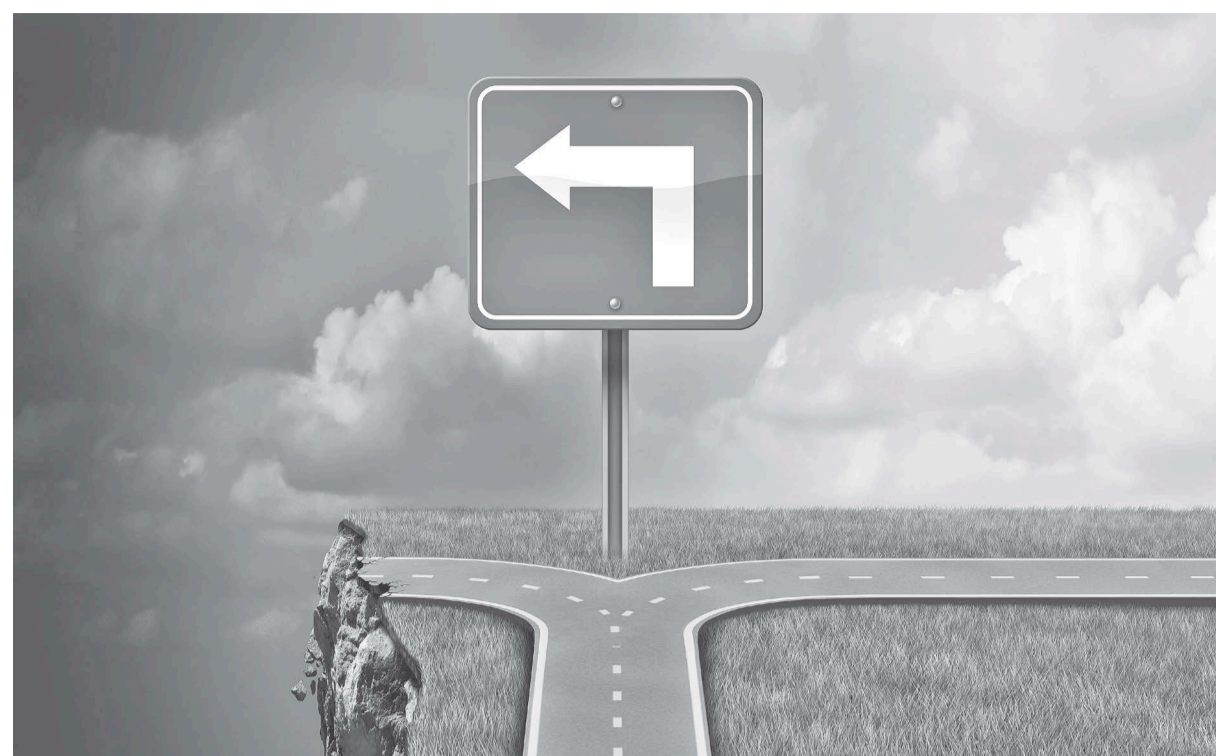
Major international development partners, both multilateral and bilateral, are keen to support Nepal's endeavour for economic progress. Although private investors seek assurances for their investment, they are not yet averse to investing even in large projects. The Nepali diaspora has developed a substantial capacity to invest if the right level of confidence-boosting environment is provided.

Typical questions

Unfortunately, these strengths have failed to lead to better delivery of the 'goods' to the economy. What's more, fast decelerating trends in multiple sectors scarily threaten the viability of Nepal as a sustainable national economy in the long term. What is not working for us? And, what went wrong despite persistent claims of 'successful implementation of the restructuring of the state' by our political class? These are typical but obvious questions now being asked at present by one and all.

Since the economic outcomes are contingent on a number of impacting variables, within and without, the answers to these excruciating questions are not simple and straight. One of the critical components that had such a devastating consequence appears to be the abandonment of the idea of 'comprehensive economic reform' that encompasses both fiscal and monetary policy formulations. Such policy omissions are felt more keenly when the country is going through a critical transition from a unitary to a federal polity.

Two consecutive budget speeches of the federal government, including one for the current fiscal year, are a clear example of this. Not that these budget statements do not propose



The intents of the policies seem to be more to control investment than to facilitate them.

about a dozen reforms, like structural reform in agriculture including loans to smallholding agriculture, capital market reform, educational reform, land reform, insurance sector reform, labour reform, governance reform (in the federal context), revenue reform and so on; but the approaches taken are largely fragmented across the sectors and lack a much needed comprehensive approach with well-defined yet achievable objectives of these inadvertently overlapping propositions.

Nepal, for example, has failed to set up a functional single-window document processing mechanism for foreign investors as per the commitment made at the investment summit in March 2019. It had then promised to operationalise it within a month after the conference. Other measures to enhance credibility include being part of a globally accepted sovereign credit rating system and the government's ability to sell its development bonds and debentures at the time and on the scale it desires. Needless to say, these are mere mirages for Nepal now.

The capacity of both public and private financing is severely constrained. In fact, public financing suffers from a paradoxical capacity constraint spectre. On the one hand, the state apparatus is unable to spend the available budgetary appropriation efficiently, and on the other, it suffers from a chronic constraint of 'sizeable' resources causing severe underinvestment, mainly in infrastructure and public service delivery systems like education and health.

The capacity of the financial sector is also limited which, in turn, has failed to spur private investment. The available loanable funds in the entire banking sector may not be enough to finance even a 200-megawatt hydro-power project that generally costs \$300 million. Moreover, the financial industry is highly reluctant to finance

projects with a long gestation period. However, a tangibly risen conspicuous consumption pattern over the last years is testimony to the fact that there are untapped financial resources in the economy, more often than not unaccounted for in the input-output matrix.

On the corporate governance front, there are three gaps to be filled. First, the accountability framework has completely collapsed. Politically protected and, at times, promoted defalcation of public funds and rampant impunity for crimes related to the same have significantly weakened the authority of the state. Second, the government's inability to contain a fast burgeoning ghost economy skews redistributive justice, and casts its dark shadow over future prospects of course correction, thus making comprehensive reform more inevitable. Third, as federalism is now a constitutionally mandated system of governance, it is ideally expected to devolve power and automatically strengthen the public audit practices at the grassroots. Sadly though, federalism now suffocates in its own existential battle.

Comprehensive economic reform on any scale is only possible in a dispensation free of philosophical or ideological delirium. Its comprehensiveness should warrant a simultaneous and all-encompassing transformation of all three dynamics—policy, institutions and operational efficiency—of the state structure.

Nepal's economic policy regime suffers from over-regulation, duplication, contradiction and lack of clarity, more evidently in the laws enacted after the adoption of the federal system. The inherent intents of the policies seem to be more to control investment and entrepreneurship than to facilitate them. This has historically been the major deterrent to potential new investments and resulted in low efficiency for those who have already made investments. In the absence of a comprehensive approach in policy reform, even if some ministries (like industry) have come up with favourable laws, others (like forest and finance) continue to create policy hurdles.

Performance appraisal

The institutional set-up of Nepal's public sector is inadequate in the first place. The gap seems to have widened as the state failed to put institutional arrangements in place as envisaged by the federal set-up. Lack of efficiency, professionalism and inter-agency coordination are the issues in institutions that already exist. Some institutions like the National Planning Commission have already outlived their political rationale for existence. At the operational level, the provisions of the law are often violated by all and sundry.

A performance and effectiveness appraisal of public or semi-public institutions is thus far an unconceived agenda in our development discourse. A monolithic narrative of growth has also been part of the problem. This is because even an impressive economic growth story does not automatically translate into development, let alone social equity. Therefore, amid the current awe and bewilderment regarding the future of the economy, the initiation of comprehensive reform may provide some respite in the short run and serve as the foundation to rescue it in the long run.

Analysing the US-China trade war

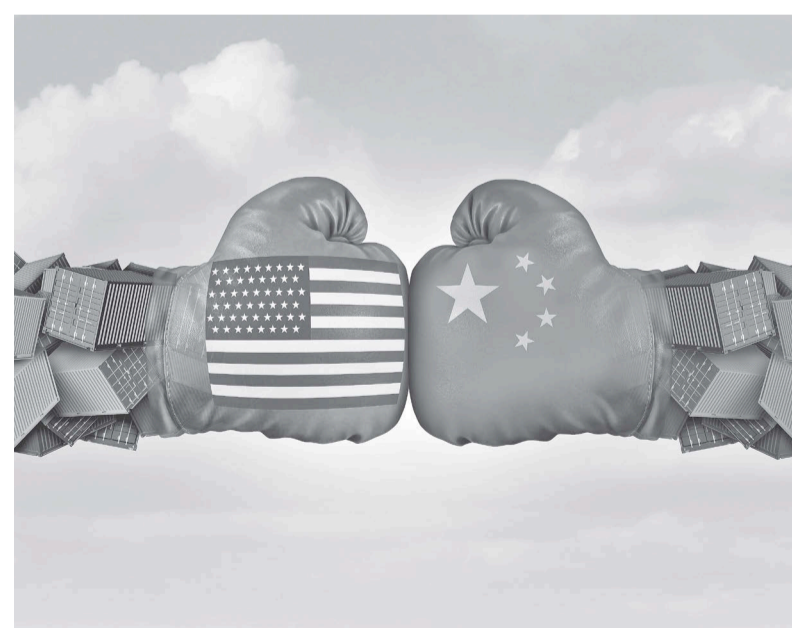
A global economic slowdown is looming if the current situation is not addressed.

RACHIT MURARKA



The US-China trade war was initiated by the US because President Donald J Trump believes that America's trade deficit, especially with China, is not good for its economy. He believes that China's rise in recent decades has been at the United States' expense. The trade war between the US and China is more so because of this conviction, and less due to material reality. President Trump thinks that trade with China has led to the loss of factory jobs in America, and China also uses unethical practices like artificial devaluation of the currency to get an edge in the US-China trade. But Trump's ideas are largely misplaced. And the trade disputes between the largest and second-largest economies is not just hurting their respective economies, it is taking its toll on the health of the global economy as well.

Trump supposes that cheap imports from China are hurting US manufacturing jobs, and therefore by adopting protectionist policies, he can restore employment numbers. If trade with China did reduce the number of available jobs, the US should have experienced a steady job loss. But that has not happened. From 2008 to 2009, the unemployment rate rose to 10 percent from 4.4 percent. But since then the unemployment rate



had decreased to 5.5 percent in 2015. As a matter of fact, jobs in the United States rose to 138 million in 2012 from 71 million jobs in 1970. In another instance, the US factories shrank for the first time in three years in the middle of the trade war. The fact is that, despite America imposing protectionist measures, the manufacturing sector is shrinking.

President Trump also frequently complains about China is running a huge trade surplus with the US, which is challenging American dominance in the global economy. There are two parts to this problem. First, the problem is structural. The US cannot have a trade surplus with the dollar as a global currency at the same time. This phenomenon is called the Triffin Dilemma. In order to keep the wheels of the global economy moving, the US needs to infuse a huge amount of currency into circulation. US dollar is a popular reserve

currency as compared to other currencies. This leads to a high exchange rate, which in turn leads to less competitive domestic industries. Thus, a trade deficit is a built-in feature of the US economy. However, the question arises, how much trade deficit is acceptable? In 2018, the US trade deficit with China was \$418 billion. In 2018, the overall trade deficit of the US was \$878.66 billion. This implies that the US's trade deficit with China is almost half of its total trade deficit. The figure at first seems alarming and needs immediate attention, but closer scrutiny will reveal that the figure gives an incomplete picture.

Adjusting the trade balance to reflect the value-added content of Chinese exports would cut down the US trade deficit with China to half, which would be almost equivalent to the US trade deficit with the European Union. An often-cited example in this regard is the shipment of the Apple

The trade war is hurting the economies of Southeast Asian countries.

iPhone from China. The import of iPhone from China at a factory cost of \$240 is added to the huge US-China trade deficit. According to one estimate, the import of the iPhone 7 and iPhone 7 Plus added \$15.7 billion to America's trade deficit with China in 2017. However, this figure does not account for how much value is added by China. The most important and valuable components of the iPhone, like screen display and processors, are sourced from Japan, Korea, the US, and Taiwan. Of the factory cost of \$240, China gets \$8.46 for the labour and the battery used in the iPhone. Since the final assemblage is done in China, the factory cost of \$240 is added to the Chinese export, which wrongly reflects in the US-China trade deficit. Interestingly, the biggest part of value addition in the process of retailing and distribution of iPhone is pocketed by Apple Inc. Not only are Chinese exporters are hit by the trade war, but American companies operating in China are also affected by the ongoing trade war.

China being an important player in the global supply chain is not the only one affected. The trade war is hurting the economies of Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asian countries. The effect of the trade war is not just limited to China and America, in fact, a global economic slowdown is looming if the current situation is not addressed.

Murarka is an assistant professor at the Kathmandu School of Law.

Relics of the past

Attitude change on the part of the law-enforcement agencies is vital if the police-public trust deficit is to be reduced.

MOHAMMAD ALI BABAKHEL

In the absence of structural reforms, most police chiefs opt for soft interventions without legal backing or strong political ownership, which is why these interventions prove to be short-lived, lasting only for the duration of their tenure. Structural adjustment is hence inevitable. But to be sustainable, this requires political ownership, third-party monitoring and evaluation, and additional resources.

Historically, police reform has been a closed-door issue with virtually no civil society input. Further, except for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Act 2017, police reforms and police laws cannot be termed an exclusive outcome of public lobbying and parliamentary deliberations. A few model police stations were recently established but there is no independent body to evaluate service delivery.

In developed countries, the police are a front-line public service. However, in the former colonies, police chiefs have scarcely paid attention to growing police-public mistrust. Most of them failed to realise that cosmetic changes may not transform the police's colonial makeup.

The Police Station Inquiry Committee (1976), the Cabinet Committee on the Emoluments of SHOs (1982) and the Cabinet Committee on Determining the Status of SHOs (1983) were three endeavours with a focus on police stations and SHOs. Their recommendations were shelved.

Generally, police stations present a shabby picture, surrounded by rusting case-property vehicles or piles of sandbags. They hardly cater to the needs of complainants. Several have in the past been targeted by terrorists, exposing their structural security weaknesses. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police standardised the design for new police stations, though the old ones too must be revamped.

However, without transparent internal accountability, public safety and public complaint mechanisms, police stations will continue to function along colonial lines. A separate budgetary allocation for them—which does not exist—and empowering SHOs will ensure transparency and discourage corruption.

Police-community programmes, such as those undertaken by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police, and attitudinal change on part of the law-enforcement agencies, are vital if the police-public trust deficit is to be reduced.

Though the original colonial policing model encouraged police-public interac-



SHUTTERSTOCK

tion, the gulf between the two widened over time. To address this, community policing needs to be revived. Foot patrolling was an effective means to stay in touch with the public and collect credible information.

Unearthing sleeper cells and ferreting out facilitators of terrorism requires a revival of the defunct 'beat' system. Expansion of slums and migration from rural to urban areas has drastically altered demographics and reduced police stations to mere reporting centres. Touring villages and holding open houses were useful practices but have fallen out of favour owing to largely to security threats and disinterest on the part of senior police officials. This approach trickled down; soon even SHOs neglected to learn the dynamics of their area.

The new Karachi police chief has rightly suggested reducing the number of

De-politicisation is essential to transform police stations into public facilitation centres.

police stations from 107 to 45. Instead, given the actual issue is non-reporting of crimes, reporting points will be increased. More focus is to be paid to investigations.

Also, police stations are averse to technology, which is only being used for typing memos. Optimum use of social media will reduce the gulf between the police and the public. More investment in policing and apolitical public safety apparatuses will add to people's confidence in law enforcement. The introduction of women police desks at police stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a step that needs to be replicated.

Often the long chain of command in the police service (12 ranks) creates inconvenience for victims of crime. To seek help, complainants often first approach the senior ranks. In order to make police stations more efficient, junior officers must be able to help victims with less intervention of senior officers. However,

that is not possible without winning trust, dedication and capacity building.

As per the Police Rules, police station's inspection and crime review meetings are important obligations, but they have been reduced to a mere formality. Inspections ensured crime management, monitoring of the quality of investigations and safe custody of case properties. Inspections and touring helped officers recognise the capabilities of junior officers and understand criminal trends. The sharing of such knowledge with other stakeholders was very beneficial.

It is imperative for the government to be apprised of the correct picture of crime, so it can plan and allocate resources accordingly. However, de-politicisation is essential to transform police stations into public facilitation centres.

This article was previously published in Dawn, a part of the Asia News Network.

How pooling can beat stunting

Stunting in children limits human capabilities and reduces current investment in the future.

PHILIPPE DOUSTE-BLAZY & CARL MANLAN

In many developing countries, women come together on a regular basis to contribute their earnings to a common pot. Together, these micro-contributions can pay for school fees, kick-start a joint business venture, or buy the best available seeds for the next planting season. Pooling resources has a community-wide impact.

Of course, these individual contributions are small compared to the broader challenges of improving nutrition and creating employment, let alone achieving the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Meeting the SDGs will cost trillions of dollars, and financial pledges to date fall well short of what is required. Community solidarity must, therefore, become an integral part of a global citizen movement to contribute to human progress.

Fortunately, the rapid growth of digital platforms and payment systems makes it possible to replicate the community-level pooling mechanism on a global scale to help those most in need. Although community pooling of funds is not new, large payment platforms such as WeChat, GoFundMe, and M-Changa have digitised solidarity, making it easier than ever for



SHUTTERSTOCK

communities around the world to cooperate in addressing problems and responding to crises.

This sense of community was evident this year in the aftermath of large-scale disasters, including Cyclone Idai in southern Africa and the fire at the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris, as it was following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. Yet technological advances in the intervening decade and a half meant that the responses were very different. After the tsunami, individuals could not respond directly to help the affected communities in Southeast Asia and Africa. Today, mobile banking can translate compassion into dollars.

But what about less visible tragedies, such as stunting in children? It is harder

to galvanise people around issues that do not make global headlines. Yet stunting, or chronic malnutrition, is a huge problem that cries out for community collaboration to address it.

Stunting is the result of limited or no access to adequate nutrition during pregnancy and the first two years of a child's life. Globally, the condition affects about 22 percent of children under the age of five; most live in Africa and Asia.

By slowing children's physical and cognitive development, stunting limits their opportunities in life and makes them less able as adults to contribute to their country's social and economic transformation. The resulting skill-shortage poses significant risks to future economic growth in

Africa, Southeast Asia, and India, and hence globally. Although the initial cost of stunting is borne by the child's family, the economic impact affects us all.

Whereas natural disasters tend to be one-off events that demand a massive immediate response, providing mothers and children with the nutrients and vitamins they need requires a consistent, sustained effort over time.

That is the thinking behind UNITLIFE, a new UN initiative that aims to tackle stunting with the support of people around the world. By mobilising individual voluntary micro-donations, UNITLIFE will help to fund nutrition programs in developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. The initiative, which is hosted by the UN

Capital Development Fund, is based on the successful innovative finance organisation UNITAID, whose \$3 billion fund to fight diseases is financed by an air-ticket solidarity levy implemented in ten countries.

Over the past 15 years, telecom operators, banks, and fintech firms have developed mobile and e-payment systems that allow people to transfer money at the speed of a tweet. From the comfort of her home, a resident of Los Angeles or Nairobi can donate to support an anti-stunting program in eSwatini (Swaziland). And shoppers can contribute affordable amounts at the checkout, turning the simple act of swiping or scanning their cards into a global phenomenon for development impact.

Anyone, in fact, can contribute to UNITLIFE by scanning a QR code and adding an affordable contribution to their online or in-store purchases. And with 20 billion credit, debit, and prepaid cards in circulation around the world, there are almost limitless ways to support the fight against stunting.

People are the world's most important resource, yet stunting limits human capabilities and reduces current investment in the future. Fortunately, the rapid growth of digital technologies means we can now imagine a world in which millions of small voluntary donations help to end this scourge, improving the lives of women and children immeasurably.

By pooling resources locally, women across Africa and Asia are raising their communities' living standards. With a global community pot, we can strengthen the foundations of life, contribute to human progress, and secure our collective future.

— Project Syndicate

Setting a new course for Android

The latest Android operating system could prove monumental in modernising the operating system.

PRAJESH SJB RANA
KATHMANDU

This year's update to the ubiquitous Android operating system brings a lot of changes that might go unnoticed. Android 10 offers limited changes to the overall look of the operating system but brings important under-the-hood features that could drastically change how users interact with their phones. Breaking away from Android's tradition of naming their releases after desserts, Android Q was rebranded as Android 10 along with other branding changes, in an attempt by Google to cater to an international audience who might not know what 'Nougat' is.

But getting to use Android 10 on your existing phones might be a problem—considering how Android updates are usually tied to OEMs who decide when, or if, your device will get an update of the latest by Google. Even if you are one of the lucky ones with a device scheduled for an Android 10 update, it's likely you won't get it soon. But regardless, Google's recent update to Android brings some very important features that could dictate the way forward for the operating system. Here, we take a look at some of the most important features that Android 10 brings to the table.

Gestures

Android 10 doesn't bring a whole lot of eye-candy changes with its new operating system. While it looks close to what 'Pie' looked like, it brings a completely new gesture navigation system modelled after the gestures on the iPhone and alternatives offered by third-party OEMs like Xiaomi, Huawei and Samsung. On Android 10, you swipe in either from the left or right corners of your phone to trigger a back command; swipe up from the bottom to fall back to your home screen; and swipe up and hold to access the multitasking view. Android 10 also mimics the iPhone with a white bar at the bottom of the screen that users can swipe left or right to move between open apps.

Getting used to these gestures will take time, as they can be uncomfortable at first, especially if you haven't been accustomed to similar gesture-based navigations offered by third-party OEMs. Fortunately, Android 10 still offers the traditional soft button navigation bar for people who don't like the new gesture-based navigation. While getting used to the new navigation mechanism might be tedious at first, they feel more fluid and easier to use once you get used to them.



Some issues do stem from this new style of navigation, especially since Android apps are designed to work with Google's older soft button navigation bar. Most apps utilise the swipe from corner gesture for in-built drawers that offer some very important settings. Accessing these settings is going to be a pain for many users since Android will want to quit the app with the same gesture.

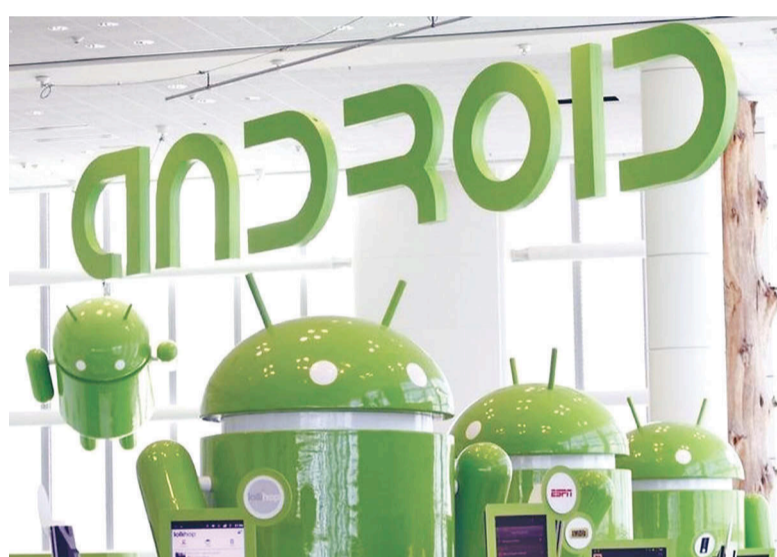
Project Mainline

The most important feature for Android 10 comes in the form of Project Mainline. In an attempt to tackle the problem of OEM tied updates, with Project Mainline, Google will now send out updates through Google Play Store. Updates should now be as easy as updating Play Store apps—mitigating the need to wait for OEMs to release critical system updates like security patches for the operating system. These updates also encompass media codec updates and audio recording APIs.

We still aren't sure if major Android updates will benefit from Project Mainline, but this new way of accessing updates will ensure that all Android phones are up-to-date with the latest security patches. And if Project Mainline succeeds, it might pave the path for future major Android updates to benefit from it.

Bubbles

Facebook Messenger, despite its bloating and performance issues, offers a stellar feature for Android users: the chat heads—a feature missing from all other messaging apps like Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp and Snapchat. With



Android 10, Google has built-in support for all messaging apps to display 'chat head'-type bubbles within the operating system. Currently there aren't any apps on Android that take advantage of this feature, but users can select apps to forcefully use this feature through ADB codes. But with native support, it is only a matter of time before major messaging apps support this feature.

Accessibility

There are a lot of new features that make Android 10 more accessible to different kinds of people. The Live Caption feature now listens to your phone's audio output, be it video, podcasts, or Voice Memos, and captions them in real-time for users to

follow along visually. There are also settings that will help users amplify their audio output for people hard of hearing.

Google has also introduced Digital Wellbeing, a feature that understands and tries to mitigate digital addiction. While earlier versions of Android did offer 'Do Not Disturb' modes, Digital Wellbeing takes it further by completely silencing apps from even updating or running in the background. Attempts to launching silenced apps prompt users with a message that reads: "Hey, didn't you say you wanted to focus right now?"

Parental Controls have also been expanded in Android 10 and has been bundled inside the Digital Wellbeing feature. But with so many new fea-

Google's recent update to Android brings some very important features.

tures being introduced for granular control—Do Not Disturb, Digital Wellbeing, Focus Mode, Notification Priority and Parental Controls—users are bound to be confused while interacting and trying to set certain settings for their phones. Consolidating all of these features into one easily understandable banner would probably have been a better idea than just introducing more control mechanisms to the user.

Security and privacy

Android 10 has overhauled its privacy settings and offers more control over app-based permissions. We have come a long way from giving apps permissions in bulk and with Android 10, even singular permissions are limited to their active runtime. While this means that apps running in the background can't constantly access your data, they can, however, grab data in bulk when running. While these security measures are a welcome change to digital privacy, a better alternative would probably be to revoke permissions after a certain amount of time, much like the third-party app Bouncer.

Android 10 also features a new encryption system called Adiantum. Encryption is not something new to Android but earlier versions of data encryption were limited to high-end devices because of the processing power required. Adiantum is more resource friendly and even offers encryption on devices that fall in the lower end of the spectrum. Just because users are on a cheaper device doesn't mean that they should be less secure and Google has addressed this with Adiantum.

Apart from these features, Android 10 offers a slew of other important features as well, the most notable ones being support for foldable devices, multi-camera support and dark themes. Considering all of these features together, Android 10 is probably one of the most personal versions of Android yet and seems to be monumental in modernising the operating system. But while many may not get access to the newest flavour of Android, it is bound to shape the future of all devices using the operating system.

Rana is a writer based in Kathmandu.

YouTube settlement latest in struggles over children

These are the instances of Google making moves to promote 'friendly' content but failing.



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

A settlement requiring Google-owned YouTube to pay \$170 million and change how they serve up ads on videos aimed at children marks the latest twist in a series of controversies over content for young audiences. Here are a few examples:

'Beloved bastards'

"I think I can not call you + my beloved bastards anymore," Philip DeFranco lamented to his millions of YouTube subscribers in late 2016 when Google made moves to make sure ads were paired with "friendly" content.

The popular YouTuber had been informed that one of his videos had been "demonetized" because he used insulting language. Other creators received similar notices, and protested what they condemned as censorship on the platform.

Google countered that its policy to keep money-making ads away from videos that could cause advertisers concern or embarrassment was not new, just the notification process.

Lost confidence

In early 2017, Google and YouTube were hit with controversy after a British newspaper revealed that ads from major brands were paired with hateful content, including video from

Sweden's Felix Kjellberg, who posts under the name "PewDiePie."

Major advertisers stepped back from YouTube, awaiting assurances that their marketing messages would not be associated with racial slurs and offensive videos.

The scandal spotlighted how computer algorithms fell short when it came to taking into account how troublesome or incendiary a video might be when it came to calculating

where to show ads.

Unwelcome comments

In late 2017, YouTube removed tens of thousands of children's videos that included uncomfortable, inappropriate remarks in comments boxes and tried to stem the momentum of an ad boycott on YouTube.

"We have clear policies against videos and comments on YouTube that sexualize or exploit children and

we apply them drastically every time we are alerted," YouTube said.

Google said it invested to better detect questionable content using artificial intelligence and more human workers.

Forest fervor

At the end of December in 2018, star video-blogger Logan Paul posted a video of coming across a body in a Japanese forest where suicides were

In early 2017, it was revealed that ads were paired with hateful content.

common.

Online critics pounced on Paul, decriing his actions in the video as insensitive and disrespectful. The video was viewed millions of times before it was removed.

'Pedophile' problems

In early 2019, a blogger raised an alarm after noticing people with seeming salacious interests in children were using comment boxes under YouTube videos to communicate and share.

The blogger believed the tactic allowed pedophiles get around YouTube's ban on child pornography and network, with the algorithm even serving as a helpful tool as ads brought in money for video views.

YouTube faced a new advertising boycott by big brands.

YouTube quickly took steps that included disabling comments on videos with children, removing accounts and videos, and reporting illegal activity to police.

Witnessing history unfold, in colour and on canvas

Hari Prasad Sharma's detailed documentation of history through his artworks is heritage in itself.

ASMITA MANANDHAR
KATHMANDU

This past week, social media sites have been flooded with photos of tableaux that took to the streets for Yanya, or Indra Jatra, the biggest festival in Kathmandu. But a little farther from the core city, where people and gods appear to have immersed themselves in celebratory inebriation, sits a picture showcasing a similar scene—the revelry of the Yanya festivities.

All three chariots of Ganesh, Bhairab, and Kumari, with Majipa Lakhey, Pulukishi among the crowd in front of Kumari Chhen, and even the lesser-known Mahakali and Bhakku-Bhairab Pyakha, have been captured in the artwork. Only this large oil-on-canvas is artist Hari Prasad Sharma's imagination of Prithivi Narayan Shah's victory over Kathmandu, which according to history, took place on the day of Indra Jatra in 1768.

There is no doubt that the 82-year-old artist is a maestro when it comes to art. And Sharma's paintings in his ongoing exhibition 'Nepal Through The Ages: Reviving ancient and medieval culture and architecture', which is currently being exhibited at Nepal Art Council in Babermahal, proves just that. And it isn't just the beautiful and careful details in light-shade and colours that highlight his dexterity, it is the layers of events that unfold in a two-dimension at display, successfully creating a separate world in itself that deserves applause.

Among the 45 paintings on display, a majority is a depiction of history—from the time of Prince Siddhartha's departure in search of enlightenment to Emperor Ashoka overlooking the instalment of the Ashoka pillar in Lumbini, to Malla-era Kathmandu and the Shah dynasty's consequent overtaking of the Valley.

But these reimaginings aren't just derived from hearsay of historical myths or tidbits of legends orally passed through generations. The descriptions displayed alongside the paintings give an insight into the detailed process of research that the artist conducted before he envisioned the frame for his work.

"It took four years of research to understand the logistical details depicted in this single painting," says Bishnu Prasad Sharma, the artist's son and research partner for the historical series, pointing at the 'Emperor Ashoka's Pilgrimage to Lumbini'. Even the buffalo-carts, which only make an appearance in fourth-layer of background in the painting, were placed in the frame after the artist discovered that they were a reliable replacement to ox-carts for transportation of the pillars, as the buffaloes were better in terms of strength as well as stability.

Similarly, in another painting, 'King Manadev Establishing Garuda Pedestal', the artist has reimagined the king's facial structure by referring it to a Garuda's, as



POST PHOTOS: ELITE JOSHI

Hari Prasad Sharma's artworks is a product of his nonpareil skill as an artist and a detailed research of history from him and his team.

it is believed that the king specifically ordered to build a statue that resembled his face. It indicates the artist's effort to be as historically accurate as possible.

One of the artist's most sought-after paintings, and the artist's favourite, according to his son, is 'Kailashkut Bhawan', a 7th-century building built during the time of King Amshuvarma, which is also referenced from a travelogue of Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang. Comparisons can be drawn between this particular art with the renaissance paintings in the West, especially, frescoes in the Stanza della Segnatura, by Raphael, although the medium and base has basic distinctions.

Even when he is depicting events inside an enclosed space, there are at least three to four layers illustrated in the pictures, cleverly incorporating the outer environment through open windows and doors.

The artist's eye for detail can also be seen in another smaller, yet equally layered, painting 'Emperor Yongsten Gampo receives Princess Bhrikuti' which is a portrayal of two cultures coming together. As Princess Bhrikuti travelled to Tibet as the King's bride-to-be, she is followed by a maid carrying *jualah nhyaka* and *sina muh*, a traditional, decorated hand-mirror and a box to store *sindoor*, a minute but important detail representing

Bhrikuti's roots—which is what the artist has reimagined in immaculate detail. But the most amazing detail is of the artist's use of Ranjana script over a manuscript that reads Pragyaparamita, a Buddhist scripture.

These similar themes and careful detailing runs throughout the exhibition, each painting successfully drawing the audience inside its universe. Furthermore, the exhibition invokes a peculiar vision: some paintings provide different perspectives when observed from near and far. This is particularly true for 'Araniko's departure for China.'

"The paintings also take into account the seasonal variations during which these historic events may have occurred," says Bishnu Prasad. The Araniko painting depicts summertime as a good time to travel to the north of the country, as there would be less snow along the way. Apart from the weather, the placement of characters is also aptly executed according to the then social fabric: Araniko is surrounded by men and older women in the streets while young females overlook from intricately carved windows.

In addition to the exceptional beauty of these artworks, the curator's attempt to place the paintings in chronological order elevates the essence of the exhibition. As one goes through, one painting after the

other, the process can feel like a trance—an almost surreal experience of witnessing history unfold right in front of you. It also jolts observers into a philosophical crisis, as the paintings slowly move towards contemporary history, making it almost painful to realise what has been lost in the process of development.

"We wanted to participate in the ongoing public discourse of urbanisation and lost architect of the Valley since the earthquake," says Bishnu Prasad, pointing at the 'Ranipokhari' painting, where the artist depicts the inaugural ceremony of Rani Pokhari in 1670. "I captured the geographical characteristics of the current Ranipokhari through Google Maps and my father reimagined its historical setting."

A few of Sharma's paintings are also his recollections of Kathmandu, from what he remembers. It reflects the artist's pain and longing for the same beauty that many artists, poets and historians have captured through their respective mediums. Although his earlier paintings attempt to seize the charm of the Valley and the Newar tradition, his recent works offer a more in-depth and comprehensive picture of the Valley's history and its ties to the ever-evolving social and political fabric of the country.

"The last exhibition my father had was

in 1973, and after my mother's demise in 1995, he nearly gave up painting," says Bishnu Prasad. "But I came up with the idea of documenting the country's history through art, and his invigoration since is inspiring."

The crowd of school students that kept flocking in the gallery holds Bishnu Prasad's words true. The events depicted in these paintings is a crucial part of history lessons in every school, and although adults may have forgotten these historical figures, the students were in awe of how they have come to life in Sharma's artworks.

Another distinctive feature of this exhibition is a five-minute-long audio-visual presentation of the making of these paintings by Saruk Tamrakar. In these videos, the creator takes the base of the paintings, outlined in monochrome burnt umber, and explodes with the final product in vibrant colours that covers these paintings. And the corresponding music to each artwork gives life to the paintings that are already full of life. The video is art in itself.

Prints of Sharma's artworks are also available for Rs500 at the exhibition.

The exhibition will be on display till September 26 in Nepal Art Council, Babermahal.



As the paintings move towards recent history, it is painful to realise what has been lost.



Booming Bollywood comes home for 'Oscars' 20th edition

Bollywood blockbuster releases in parts of North America and Britain are huge events, with passionate fans often queuing for hours just to catch a glimpse of stars.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Mumbai hosts the "Bollywood Oscars" for the first time in India in 20 years this week with the megastars, movers and shakers of a booming Hindi film industry celebrating another bumper year, including in huge markets like China.

With nearly 1,800 titles released in 2018, which included not only Hindi-language—Bollywood—movies, but also titles in regional languages like Tamil and Telugu, according to a report released in March by Ernst & Young and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry.

The industry grew 12.2 percent in 2018, which included not only Hindi-language—Bollywood—movies, but also titles in regional languages like Tamil and Telugu, according to a report released in March by Ernst & Young and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry.

The huge South Asian diaspora in North America, Britain and the Gulf region has traditionally been the major overseas market.

Bollywood blockbuster releases in parts of North America and Britain are huge events, with passionate fans often queuing for hours just to catch a glimpse of stars like Shah Rukh Khan.



Extravagant dance performances by film stars during award shows are the highlight in Bollywood film industry.

But Indian films have also been making huge inroads elsewhere—most notably in China.

The black comedy *Andhadhun*, for example, nominated for best picture at the glitzy Indian International Film Academy Awards on Wednesday, was a huge hit with Chinese viewers, gross-

ing almost \$50 million. Aamir Khan, the star of the two top-grossing Indian films in China, has a crazed following there and is known by many as "Nan Shen" ("male god").

Film distributor Akshay Rath told AFP that the industry has also seen "great growth" in many

European countries and in Canada, New Zealand and Singapore thanks to the South Asian community.

"Now it is just a matter of time before we focus on the wider populations in these countries," Rath added.

And not forgetting 1.3 bil-

The industry has been attracting big capital and fresh talent.

lion-strong India itself, where there is massive potential for growth.

According to the Ernst & Young analysis, industry revenues are estimated to swell from 174.5 billion rupees (\$2.4 billion) in 2018 to 236.1 billion rupees in 2021.

A shot in the arm

As the other nominees for best picture at the IIFA—spy thriller *Raazi*, swashbuckling epic *Padmaavat*, and middle-aged motherhood comedy-drama *Badhaai Ho*—underline, Bollywood has long ago moved on from the cliched all-singing, all-dancing affair.

The industry has also been attracting big, institutional capital and fresh talent, which have helped create greater variety and reaching out to wider, often younger, audiences.

There were fears for the indus-

try when major streaming services arrived in India a few years ago, changing the way many Indians consume films.

But the likes of Netflix and domestic players like Hotstar have instead been a shot in its arm, providing a new medium for releasing films and more money for new productions.

Unlike regular cinematic releases, they are not subject to India's notoriously stuffy censors.

Revenues from the sale of digital rights ballooned nearly 60 percent in 2018, according to the EY-FICCI report, with Amazon Prime and Netflix among the major buyers.

The major streaming giants have started producing original Indian content, splashing out on big-money titles.

Netflix, for example, recruited Bollywood superstars Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Saif Ali Khan for its acclaimed series *Sacred Games*.

Last week, the streaming giant linked up with Karan Johar, one of the highest-profile producers in Bollywood, to produce films and series exclusively for its platform.

"It's going to be P.H.A.T—pretty hot and tempting," said Johar.

WORLD

BRIEFING

Spain's king opens talks to break political impasse

MADRID: Spain's King Felipe VI began meeting parliamentary leaders Monday in an eleventh-hour bid to form a government and head off what would be the country's fourth elections in as many years. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's Socialists won elections in April, but only secured 123 of the parliament's 350 seats, leaving him dependent on support from the radical leftwing Podemos and several smaller regional parties. Until now, Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias has refused and Sanchez only has until September 23 to be confirmed as premier—or face fresh elections on November 10. In a bid to break the deadlock, the king began two days of talks with party leaders.

Russian man jailed for 3 1/2 years over opposition protest

MOSCOW: A Moscow court on Monday sentenced a 23-year-old actor to three-and-a-half years in prison for violence against police at an opposition protest as Russia cracks down on anti-government demonstrators. Moscow's Tverskoy district court sentenced actor Pavel Ustinov to serve the sentence in a penal colony, the Investigative Committee said in a statement. Investigators said Ustinov violated public order during an unauthorised rally on August 3 and put up resistance during his arrest. As a result, a policeman sprained his shoulder. Ustinov denied any guilt, insisting he was not even taking part in the protest, and rights activists and prominent Russians spoke out in his support.

'Torturers' from Libya prison camp arrested in Italy

ROME: Italian police arrested three people Monday accused of kidnapping, torturing and trafficking migrants hoping to set sail from Libya to Europe. A 27-year-old man from Guinea and two Egyptians, aged 24 and 26, were taken into custody in a detention centre in Messina in Sicily after police gathered testimony against them from other migrants. The witnesses said the three had run a prisoners' camp in Zawya in Libya, where those ready to attempt the perilous Mediterranean crossing were forcibly held until they could pay a ransom.

(AGENCIES)

US locked and loaded in response to drone attacks on Saudi oil facilities: Trump

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi says the Americans adopted the 'maximum pressure' policy against Iran, which, due to its failure, is leaning toward 'maximum lies'.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, SEPT 16

Tensions are flaring in the Persian Gulf after President Donald Trump said the US is "locked and loaded" to respond to a weekend drone assault on Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure that his aides blamed on Iran.

The attack, which halved the kingdom's oil production and sent crude prices spiking, led Trump to authorize the release of US strategic reserves should they be necessary to stabilize markets.

Trump said the US had reason to believe it knew who was behind the attack his secretary of state had blamed Iran the previous day and said his government was waiting to consult with the Saudis as to who they believe was behind the attack and "under what terms we would proceed!"

The tweets on Sunday followed a National Security Council meeting at the White House and hours after US officials offered what they said was proof that the attack was inconsistent with claims of responsibility by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels and instead pointed the finger directly at Tehran.

A US official said all options, including a military response, were on the table, but added that no decisions had been made. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the internal deliberations.

Iran called the US claims "maximum lies" and threatened American forces in the region. The attack dimmed hopes for potential nuclear talks between Trump and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani at the UN General Assembly this week.

The US government produced satellite photos showing what officials said were at least 19 points of impact at two Saudi energy facilities, including damage at the heart of the kingdom's crucial oil processing plant at Abqaiq. Officials said the photos show impacts consistent with the attack coming from the direction of Iran or Iraq, rather than from Yemen to the south.

Actions on any side could break into the open a twilight war that's



A file photo shows smoke from a fire at the Abqaiq oil processing facility filling the skyline, in Buqayq, Saudi Arabia following a drone attack on one of the world's largest crude oil processing plants.

been raging just below the surface of the wider Persian Gulf in recent months. Already, there have been mysterious attacks on oil tankers that America blames on Tehran, at least one suspected Israeli strike on Shiite forces in Iraq, and Iran shooting down a US military surveillance drone.

The attack on Saturday on Saudi Arabia's Abqaiq plant and its Khurais oil field led to the interruption of an estimated 5.7 million barrels of the kingdom's crude oil production per day, equivalent to more than 5% of the world's daily supply. It remains unclear how King Salman and his assertive son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, will respond

to an attack targeting the heart of the Saudi oil industry.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi dismissed the US allegation of responsibility as "blind and futile comments."

"The Americans adopted the 'maximum pressure' policy against Iran, which, due to its failure, is leaning toward 'maximum lies,'" Mousavi said in a statement.

Houthi leader Muhammad al-Bukhaiti reiterated his group's claim of responsibility, telling The Associated Press it exploited "vulnerabilities" in Saudi air defenses to strike the targets. He did not elaborate.

Iran, meanwhile, kept up its own threats. Hajizadeh, the brigadier general who leads the country's aerospace programme, said in an interview published across Iranian media on Sunday that Revolutionary Guard forces were ready for a counterattack if America responded, naming the Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar and Al-Dhafra Air Base near Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates as immediate targets, as well as US Navy ships in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.

"Wherever they are, it only takes one spark and we hit their vessels, their air bases, their troops," he said in a video published online with English subtitles.

Leaders of Iran, Russia, Turkey meet in Ankara over Syria conflict

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ANKARA (TURKEY), SEPT 16

The leaders of Russia, Iran and Turkey are to meet in the Turkish capital of Ankara on Monday to discuss the situation in Syria, with the aim of halting fighting in the country's northwestern province of Idlib and finding a lasting political solution to Syria's civil war, now in its ninth year.

Topping the agenda of the meeting is the volatile situation in Idlib—the last remaining rebel stronghold in Syria—where a cease-fire went into effect at the end of August, following a wide four-month offensive by government forces.

The cease-fire has been holding despite some violations that left six people dead last week. A major conflict in Idlib has raised the possibility of a mass refugee flow to Turkey, which already hosts 3.6 million Syrian refugees.

Hundreds of thousands of Syrians, some already displaced from other parts of the war-torn country, have moved toward Turkey's border to flee Syrian airstrikes, backed by Russia.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned that Turkey could "open its gates" and allow Syrians already living in his country to flood Western countries if Turkey

is left to shoulder the refugee burden alone. Monday's talks are the fifth trilateral meeting among countries that stand on opposing sides of the conflict. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iran's Hassan Rouhani are key allies of Syrian President Bashar Assad while Turkey backs Syrian rebels seeking to oust him.

A major offensive was averted last September when Erdogan and Putin agreed in the Russian resort town of Sochi to set up a demilitarized zone in Idlib and open two major highways. Those plans, as well as a Turkish pledge to tame armed groups in Idlib, dominated by the al-Qaida-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, have largely failed.

Despite divergent interests in Syria, Erdogan and Putin have been building closer ties, having met seven times in 2019 alone. Russia has delivered two batteries of the S-400 surface to air missile systems to Turkey and the two countries are cooperating on energy deals.

The three leaders were also expected to take up Turkish and American plans for a so-called "safe zone" in northeastern Syria, to meet Turkish demands for U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces that Ankara considers terrorists, alleging they have ties to a Kurdish insurgency within Turkey, pushed farther from its border.



A file photo shows Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during their meeting in the Black sea resort of Sochi, Russia, in February 2019.

South Africa dispatches emissaries to calm xenophobia fears

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JOHANNESBURG, SEPT 16

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has sent high-ranking emissaries on a mission to reassure African countries after a wave of xenophobic attacks, the presidency said on Sunday.

At least 12 people have been killed in the surge of mob violence targeting foreign-owned businesses and homes, mainly in and around Johannesburg since the start of the month.

Hundreds of economic migrants

from neighbouring Zimbabwe and Mozambique have fled to shelters and Nigeria has flown 600 of its citizens back home after they were targeted in the violence.

The mission, led by former minister Jeff Radebe, left South Africa on Saturday and will visit Nigeria, Niger, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, DR Congo and Zambia, the presidency said.

Ramaphosa was jeered at on Saturday during his speech at Zimbabwe ex-leader Robert Mugabe's funeral in Harare before he apologised for the attacks, which have

been prompted by unemployment and poverty.

"I stand before you as a fellow African to express my regret and apologise for what has happened in our country," Ramaphosa said at the state funeral.

His comments were met with cheers and blasts of air horns from the crowd.

South Africa, the continent's second largest economy, is a major destination for other African migrants. But they are often targeted by some locals who blame them for a lack of jobs.

NY schools first to have 'red flag' petition power on guns

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ALBANY (NEW YORK), SEPT 16

Schools across New York began the academic year with a new tool intended to prevent student suicides and violence: the ability to ask a court to remove a troubled person's access to firearms.

About a third of US states have so-called "red flag" laws, which allow courts to temporarily seize guns from people believed to be a danger to themselves or others, but New York is the first to empower schools to petition a court themselves for such an order, rather than go through local law enforcement.

In New York, school principals are now allowed to petition the court for an "extreme risk protection order" requiring the safe storage of firearms the youth might have access to, such as a parent's gun. Supporters of the law say educators are uniquely suited to pick up on the kind of troubling behavior seen before school shootings, like the 2018 attack in Parkland, Florida, in which an expelled student killed 17 people at his former high school.

With the law so new, though, New York schools are still crafting procedures or waiting on guidance to help them figure out when and how to take action if the need arises. Several school systems contacted by The Associated Press said they're not yet sure what the law will look like in action.

Do they step in each time a student tells a guidance counselor he's feeling depressed and suicidal? What about if a student overhears a classmate talking in the hall or sees post on social



Gregory B Jarvis Junior/Senior High School in Mohawk, NY. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year, New York became the first state that empowers schools to petition courts for temporary removal of firearms from people believed to be a danger to themselves or others.

media about wanting to shoot up the school? And when should a school still turn to law enforcement, rather than try to handle a petition themselves?

John Kelly, a former president of the New York Association of School Psychologists, said he expects schools would file petitions only in the most extreme cases. Schools that follow best practices, he said, should have threat and risk assessment protocols to help them decide whether a situation is serious enough for court intervention. That process, he said, should include finding out the context of the threat

and gathering background information on the student, like any past behavioral issues.

"It's not a quick judgment," said Kelly, a school psychologist. "It's not based on hearsay."

Peter Kruszynski, the principal of a middle school in Lancaster, New York, and president of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, recalled an instance where the school investigated a student who had reportedly talked about a shooting, but instead was simply discussing going to a gun range with his father.

Still no viable Brexit proposals from Britain, EU says after talks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRUSSELS, SEPT 16

Britain has still not proposed any workable alternatives to the Northern Ireland "backstop" provisions of its Brexit withdrawal agreement, the EU said Monday after talks between bloc chief Jean-Claude Juncker and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The first face-to-face encounter between Johnson and European Commission president Juncker failed to yield any major breakthrough, although Downing Street insisted it had been a "constructive meeting".

Johnson says Britain will not agree to a divorce deal that includes the backstop, a provision which temporarily keeps the UK in the EU customs union to keep the Irish border open, and will not delay Brexit beyond October 31, even if it means leaving with no deal.

Juncker's office said he used the lunch meeting in Luxembourg to reiterate the EU view that it is Britain's responsibility to come up with a workable alternative to the backstop, which was agreed by Johnson's predecessor Theresa May but rejected by MPs.

"President Juncker recalled that it is the UK's responsibility to come forward with legally operational solutions that are compatible with the Withdrawal Agreement," a statement from Juncker's office said.

"President Juncker underlined the Commission's continued willingness and openness to examine whether such proposals meet the objectives of the backstop. Such proposals have not yet been made."

With just six weeks to go before Brexit day, the two sides have agreed to step up the pace of talks, Downing Street said, with negotiators to start meeting "soon" on a daily basis rather than twice a week as at present.

"It was agreed that talks should also take place at a political level between Michel Barnier and the Brexit Secretary, and conversations would also continue between President Juncker and the prime minister," a spokesperson said.

Northern Irish activist joins other Brexit cases in top court

BELFAST: A Northern Irish rights campaigner whose case against Britain leaving the European Union without a deal was dismissed by the Belfast High Court last week succeeded on Monday in joining two other challenges before the United Kingdom's Supreme Court.

Raymond McCord, whose son was murdered during Northern Ireland's three decades of sectarian bloodshed, will challenge Prime Minister Boris Johnson's suspension of parliament in the UK's highest court on Thursday, his lawyer said.

McCord had sought to challenge the suspension of parliament in Belfast but the court decided instead to hear his wider case against a "no-deal" Brexit. A judge dismissed that, saying the issue was political and not for the courts.

The London parliament was suspended last week until Oct 14, a move opponents argued was designed to allow Prime Minister Boris Johnson to carry out a no deal exit from the UK on Oct 31 with little scrutiny. (REUTERS)

Restore normal life to Kashmir, India's top court tells government

REUTERS
NEW DELHI, SEPT 16

India's top court said on Monday the federal government should restore normal life in Kashmir as soon as possible, as a partial shutdown of the disputed region entered its 42nd day.

India stripped its portion of Muslim-majority Kashmir of autonomy and statehood on Aug. 5, shutting off phone networks and imposing curfew-like restrictions in some areas to dampen discontent.

Some of those curbs have been relaxed, but mobile communications in the Kashmir valley are largely still blocked, and more than a thousand people are likely to still be detained, according to official data.

"We direct Jammu and Kashmir to make the very best endeavor to make sure normal life returns," India's Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said on Monday, after a panel of three judges heard several petitions relating to Kashmir, which is also claimed by Pakistan.

The court had previously said authorities there needed more time to restore order in Kashmir.

One of the Supreme Court judges, Sharad Arvind Bobde, said the situa-

tion in Kashmir, where thousands have died since an armed rebellion against Indian rule began three decades ago, as "a terrible state of affairs".

A written submission by the government said restrictions were still required in order to maintain law and order, and that they had prevented widespread casualties seen in previous periods of unrest.

"Not a single life has been lost since the abrogation of Article 370," said Tushar Mehta, India's Solicitor General appearing on behalf of the government, referring to the action of India's constitution granting autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir state.

Separately on Monday, local media reported Farooq Abdullah, a three-time former chief minister of the state, was detained in state capital Srinagar under the Public Safety Act, a special law that allows for detention of up to two years without trial, and has been criticised by rights groups as draconian.

A current member of India's parliament, 81-year-old Abdullah was previously under informal house arrest.

Abdullah and Indian police officials in Kashmir did not respond or were not reachable for comment.

600,000 Rohingya still in Myanmar at serious risk of genocide: UN

The mission has reiterated calls for the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar to the ICC or to set up a tribunal.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON, SEPT 16

Rohingya Muslims remaining in Myanmar still face a "serious risk of genocide", UN investigators said on Monday, warning the repatriation of a million already driven from the country by the army remains "impossible".

The fact-finding mission to Myanmar, set up by the Human Rights Council, last year branded the army operations in 2017 as "genocide" and called for the prosecution of top generals, including army chief Min Aung Hlaing.

Some 740,000 Rohingya fled burning villages, bringing accounts of murder, rape and torture over the border to sprawling refugee camps in Bangladesh, where survivors of previous waves of persecution already languish.

But in a damning report, the United Nations team said the 600,000 Rohingya still inside Myanmar's Rakhine state remain in deteriorating and "deplorable" conditions.

"Myanmar continues to harbour genocidal intent and the Rohingya remain under serious risk of genocide," the investigators said in their final report on Myanmar, due to be presented on Tuesday in Geneva.

The country is "denying wrongdoing, destroying evidence, refusing to conduct effective investigations and clearing, razing, confiscating and building on land from which it displaced Rohingya", it said.

Rohingya were living in "inhuman" conditions, the report continued, adding over 40,000 structures had been destroyed in the crackdown.

The mission reiterated calls for the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC) or to set up a tribunal, like for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

It said it had a confidential list of over 100 names, including officials, suspected of being involved in genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, in addition to the six generals named publicly last year.

The report also repeated calls for foreign governments and companies to sever all business ties with the military, calling for a "moratorium" on



Rohingya refugees gather behind a barbed-wire fence in a temporary settlement setup in a 'no man's land' border zone between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

investment and development assistance in Rakhine state.

The maligned Muslim community has long been subjected to tight movement restrictions, making it difficult or impossible for many to access healthcare, work and education.

The Rohingya are denied citizenship in Buddhist-majority Myanmar and are accused of being illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh.

The army justified the crackdown as a means of rooting out Rohingya insurgents.

Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation deal two years ago, but virtually no refugees have returned to date.

The investigators described conditions in Myanmar as "unsafe, unsustainable and impossible" for returns to take place.

They also accused the army of fresh abuses against civilians in the north of Rakhine state.

The area has once again become embroiled in conflict as the military wages war on the Arakan Army (AA),

rebels fighting for the rights of ethnic Rakhine Buddhists.

The UN probe accused the military of "war crimes", including forced labour and torture and said the AA was also guilty of abuses on a smaller scale.

Myanmar military spokesman Zaw Min Tun rejected the team's findings, calling them "one-sided".

"Instead of making biased accusations, they should go onto the ground to see the reality," Zaw Min Tun told AFP.

BRIEFING

Kuwait probes drone that 'intruded' on day of Saudi strike

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait is investigating accounts that a drone intruded into its airspace and flew over the royal palace Saturday, the same day a devastating strike was launched on Saudi oil infrastructure. Yemen's Huthi rebels—who are aligned with Tehran—claimed the attack on two oil facilities which cut Saudi production by half, but the United States has blamed Iran and there is also speculation the assault may have been launched from Iraq. Baghdad on Sunday denied any link to attacks on Saudi oil plants, saying it is "constitutionally committed to preventing any use of its soil to attack its neighbours". But Iraq is home to several Iran-backed militias and paramilitary factions, putting it in an awkward situation amid rising tensions between its two main sponsors, Tehran and Washington.

Indian rescuers search for 39 missing after boat accident

NEW DELHI: Indian authorities were engaged in a major search and rescue operation on Monday to find 39 people missing after their tour boat capsized in a fast-flowing swollen river. Police told AFP that eight bodies have been recovered, down from a previous tally of 12, after the accident on the Godavari river in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. The boat was carrying a total of 73 passengers, of whom 26 have been rescued, local police official Adnan Asmi said. Almost 300 personnel using boats and a helicopter were engaged in the search operation on Monday including from the Indian Navy and the National Disaster Response Force.

South Korea opposition party leader shaves head in protest

SEOUL: South Korea's main opposition party leader shaved his head Monday to protest against the controversial appointment of a new justice minister despite allegations of corruption against his family. Law professor Cho Kuk began his duties as the justice minister last Monday as state prosecutors carry out a probe into his daughter's schooling and an investment in a private equity fund suspected of dubious operations. The appointment infuriated opposition lawmakers and created an even sharper divide in parliament. On Monday, Hwang Kyo-ahn—the main opposition Liberty Korea Party leader—said he would shave his head to urge the resignation of "criminal Cho Kuk".

Hong Kong legislator calls for probe into 'police abuse'

REUTERS
GENEVA, SEPT 16

A pro-democracy Hong Kong legislator called on the top UN human rights body on Monday to investigate what she said were "brutal crackdowns" and "police brutality" against demonstrators in the former British colony.

Tanya Chan addressed the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva as Hong Kong's businesses and metro stations reopened as usual on Monday after a chaotic Sunday when police fired water cannon, tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters who blocked roads and threw petrol bombs outside government headquarters.

"Today marks the 100th day of the movement, but there is no sign the police will exercise restraint. This is a direct result of the lack of democracy in Hong Kong, as the government is not held accountable for its endorsement of police abuse," Chan said.



A riot police personnel (left) stands guard as bystanders look on inside a train station in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong on Sunday.

Referring to UN human rights boss Michelle Bachelet, she said: "Will the High Commissioner support our

appeal for this Council to convene an urgent session and establish a Commission of Inquiry, to ensure jus-

tice and human rights for the people of Hong Kong?"

China's diplomatic mission wrote to the United Nations in Geneva at the weekend urging it to deny Chang accreditation for the event, according to a letter seen by Reuters.

It called her a "convicted criminal", citing her suspended sentence handed down in June after she was found guilty of inciting public nuisance during 2014 pro-democracy protests.

Hong Kong returned to China in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" formula that ensures freedoms not enjoyed on the mainland.

The spark for the latest protests was planned legislation, now withdrawn, that would have allowed people to be sent to mainland China for trial. They have since broadened into calls for universal suffrage.

China insists that Hong Kong is an internal issue. It has accused foreign powers, particularly the United States and Britain, of fomenting the unrest and told them to mind their own business.

Angry bees delay Air India flight

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW DELHI, SEPT 16

An Air India flight was delayed by several hours after a swarm of bees landed on the cockpit window, attacking ground staff when they tried to remove them, officials said.

The insects landed on the window just before the plane was due to leave the eastern city of Kolkata on Sunday with 136 passengers, including Bangladesh's information minister.

Ground staff tried to shoo the insects off, angering them, and when attempts to use the windscreen wipers failed officials switched to "plan b" and blasted them off with water.

"Fire tenders were deployed to spray water to dislodge the honey bees and they could be driven away after nearly an hour-long operation," airport official Kaushik Bhattacharya told AFP.

The flight to Agartala in north-eastern India eventually took off more than three and a half hours late.

Lilly, Thailand's Greta Thunberg, wages 'war' on plastic

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BANGKOK, SEPT 16

Skipping school to glide through a dirty Bangkok canal on a paddleboard, Lilly fishes out rubbish in her mission to clean up Thailand, where the average person uses eight plastic bags every single day.

"I am a kid at war," the bubbly 12-year-old says after a painstaking hour-long routine picking up cans, bags and bottles bobbing in the canal.

"I try to stay optimistic but I am also angry. Our world is disappearing," she adds.

Thailand is the sixth largest global contributor to ocean pollution, and plastic is a scourge.

Whether it's for wrapping up street food, takeaway coffees or for groceries, Thais use 3,000 single use bags per year—12 times more than someone from the European Union.

In June, Lilly won her first victory: she persuaded Central, a major supermarket in Bangkok, to stop giving out plastic bags in its stores once a week.

"I told myself that if the government did not listen to me, it would be necessary to speak directly to those who distribute plastic bags and convince them to stop," she explains.

This month some of the biggest brands, including the operator of the ubiquitous 7-Eleven convenience

stores, pledged to stop handing out single-use plastic bags by January next year.

Mindssets have started to shift this year with the deaths of several marine mammals whose stomachs were lined with plastic, stirring emotions.

The demise last month of a baby dugong was mourned on social media, reviving discussion in the government over a proposed ban on most single-use plastics by 2022.

But critics say along with new rules there need to be enforcement mechanisms such as fines.

For now young activists like Lilly can help capture attention.

"You might be able to tune out all of the evidence and advocacy in the world, but it's very hard to ignore a child when they ask why we're trashing the planet that they have to live on," says Kakuo Nagatani-Yoshida, regional coordinator for chemicals, waste and air quality with UN Environment.

Lilly is Ralyn Satidtanasarn's nickname.

The US-Thai youngster started campaigning at the age of eight after a seaside vacation in southern Thailand where she was horrified by a beach covered in rubbish.

"We cleaned up with my parents, but that was not helpful because other waste was thrown out by the sea the next day," she recalls.



Twelve-year-old Ralyn Satidtanasarn, known by her nickname Lilly, collects plastic waste during the Trash Hero cleaning initiative at the Khung Bang Kachao urban forest and beach in Bangkok.

Then came the global movement initiated by 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, who has become a key face in the battle against global warming.

Inspired by the young Swede, Lilly

did sit-ins in front of the Thai government buildings. "Greta Thunberg gave me confidence. When adults do not do anything, it's up to us children to act," she insists.

MONEY

Saudi on track to restore third of lost output after attacks on oil plants, experts say

Saudi Energy Minister said the kingdom would use its vast inventories to partially compensate for the lost production.



An Aramco oil facility near al-Khurj area, south of the Saudi capital Riyadh.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RIVADH, SEPT 16

Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, is expected to restore on Monday at least a third of the production lost to weekend attacks on two major oil facilities, according to experts and reports.

The Saturday strikes on national energy giant Aramco's Abqaiq processing plant and Khurais oil field knocked 5.7 million barrels per day (bpd) off production, over half of the OPEC kingpin's output, sending shockwaves through markets.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said Sunday the kingdom would use its vast inventories to partially compensate for the lost production, and the US also authorised the release of its reserves.

But oil prices saw a record surge on Monday, with key contracts more than 10 percent higher as finger-pointing at Iran fuelled fresh geopolitical fears.

The Energy Intelligence specialist newsletter cited industry sources as saying Aramco was "close to restoring as much as 40 percent" of the lost production, or about 2.3 million bpd.

Oil prices rocket on slashed Saudi output

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, SEPT 16

Brent crude surged by 20 percent on Monday—the biggest gain since the 1991 Gulf War—after weekend drone attacks on two Saudi oil facilities halved output in the world's top crude exporter, fuelling fresh geopolitical and growth fears.

WTI oil meanwhile soared 15 percent, also after President Donald Trump warned that the US was "locked and loaded" to respond to the attacks that Washington blamed on Iran. Both key oil contracts pared

The Wall Street Journal cited people familiar with the damage estimates as saying the hit facilities would take weeks to return to full production capacity. However, one of its sources told the newspaper: "We should be able to have two million barrels a day back online... by tomorrow (Monday)."

gains but were still up by more than eight percent around 1030 GMT.

The price surges weighed across world stock markets on fears that a sustained higher cost of crude could further impact weak global economic growth.

But share prices of energy majors jumped, with traders seeing higher profits down the line for the likes of BP and Shell, whose stock won between 3-4 percent Monday.

In foreign exchange, the dollar was down against the euro and yen, while the pound slid as Prime Minister Boris Johnson was holding Brexit

deal talks with EU chief Jean-Claude Juncker.

Gold, which along with the yen is seen as a haven in times of geopolitical and economic unrest, won one percent to \$1,503.70 an ounce.

Markets' focus was firmly on oil however after the weekend attack that was claimed by Tehran-backed Huthi rebels in neighbouring Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition is bogged down in a five-year war.

"Oil price shocks like this are bad news for growth," Neil Wilson, chief market analyst at trading group Markets.com, told AFP.

surance to jittery markets.

A report by Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya television said Monday however that Aramco was ready to restart the Khurais plant, which handles 1.5 million bpd.

Saudi Arabia pumps 9.9 million bpd, almost 10 percent of global demand, of which seven million bpd is destined for export.

The kingdom also has a spare capacity of around two million bpd that it can draw on at times of crisis.

Yemen's Iran-aligned Huthi rebels have claimed responsibility for Saturday's strikes, one of the most destructive attacks on Saudi oil facilities, but the kingdom has not yet officially accused any side.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pointed the finger squarely at Tehran, saying there was no evidence the "unprecedented attack on the world's energy supply" was launched from Yemen.

US President Donald Trump has raised the possibility of military retaliation, saying Sunday that Washington

deal talks with EU chief Jean-Claude Juncker.

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was "locked and loaded" to respond to the attack.

Tehran denies the accusations but the news revived fears of direct conflict after a series of attacks on oil tankers in sensitive Gulf waters earlier this year that were also blamed on Iran.

Some 46,000 General Motors auto workers go on strike



United Auto Workers members picket at a gate at the General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DETROIT, SEPT 16

The United Auto Workers union began a nationwide strike against General Motors on Monday, with some 46,000 members walking off the job after contract talks hit an impasse.

The move to strike, which the Wall Street Journal described as the first major stoppage at GM in more than a decade, came after the manufacturer's four-year contract with workers expired without an agreement on a replacement. Local union leaders met in Detroit "and opted to strike at midnight on Sunday," the UAW said on its Twitter account.

"This is our last resort," Terry Dittes, the union's lead negotiator with GM, told a news conference after the meeting. "We are standing up for the fundamental rights of working people in this country."

UAW officials said the two sides remained far apart in the contract negotiations, with disagreements on wages, health care benefits, the status of temporary workers and job security. "Our members have spoken; we have taken action; and this is a decision we did not make lightly," Ted Krumm, chair of the UAW's national bargaining committee, said in a statement. "We are standing up for what is right," Krumm said.

Hours before the strike began, US President Donald Trump tweeted: "Here we go again with General Motors and the United Auto Workers.

Get together and make a deal!"

Democratic presidential hopefuls also took to Twitter, to voice support for the strike. "A job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about dignity and respect," frontrunner Joe Biden wrote. Bernie Sanders urged GM to "end the greed."

"Sit down with the UAW and work out an agreement that treats your workers with the respect and dignity they deserve," the Vermont senator tweeted.

GM's last major strike, according to the Journal, was in 2007 when 73,000 workers at more than 89 facilities walked off the job for two days.

In a statement, GM said it was "disappointing" that the UAW's leadership had decided to call the strike, saying it had presented a "strong offer" in contract negotiations.

"We have negotiated in good faith and with a sense of urgency. Our goal remains to build a strong future for our employees and our business," it said. UAW's leadership had previously won overwhelming approval from its rank-and-file for a strike if it became necessary.

Workers at Ford and Fiat Chrysler agreed to extend their contracts, but GM management was informed Saturday that the union would not extend its contract.

Earlier on Sunday, contract maintenance workers walked off the job at GM plants in Michigan and Ohio in a parallel dispute with contractor Aramark.

South Korean beer imports from Japan plunge 97 percent

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SEOUL, SEPT 16

South Korean imports of Japanese beer slumped almost to zero last month in the face of a consumer boycott sparked by a bitter trade and historical dispute between Seoul and Tokyo, data showed on Monday.

Japanese companies shipped \$223,000 worth of beer to South Korea in August, figures from the Korea Trade Statistics Promotion Institute showed—down 97 percent from \$7.57 million last year.

Before the trade spat—which has raised concerns over ties between the neighbours, both of them US allies—Japanese beer had long been South Koreans' favourite alternative to their country's own brews, according to KTSPI, topping the import tables since 2010.

"Japan's rank dropped to the 13th place last month," an official from KTSPI told AFP, adding that beers from China, the Netherlands and

Belgium now had the biggest shares of South Korea's imports.

Seoul and Tokyo have been embroiled in the trade dispute since July, when Japan tightened export controls on two chemicals essential to key products of South Korean tech companies such as Samsung.

Seoul and Tokyo have been embroiled in the trade dispute since July.

The restrictions followed a series of South Korean court rulings ordering Japanese firms to pay for forced labour during WWII.

South Koreans have since mounted a widespread boycott of Japanese goods, including beer, cosmetic products and cars, among others.

They were also second only to Chinese as the top visitors to Japan last year, but have increasingly shunned the country since early July.

An average of 12,140 Koreans a day flew to Japan from Incheon airport during last week's four-day harvest festival, down 39 percent from last year's holiday, the operator told AFP.

Several South Korean airlines including flag carrier Korean Air have suspended routes to Japan because of falling demand.

Japanese automakers have also seen sales in South Korea slump in recent months.

South Korea and Japan are both democracies and market economies faced with an overbearing China and a nuclear-armed North Korea.

But relations between Tokyo, Beijing, and both Koreas continue to be heavily affected by Japan's expansionism in the first half of the 20th century, including its colonisation of the peninsula.



A vendor selling peaches waits for customers at a market in Beijing on Monday. China's economy showed more signs of strain as the country published weak data for industrial output, investment and retail sales, amid a lingering trade war with the US.

In Ethiopia, busted Volkswagen Beetles 'pimped out' for hip youth

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ADDIS ABABA, SEPT 16

When Robel Wolde bought a beat-up 1967 Volkswagen Beetle from a friend for 50,000 Ethiopian birr (about 1,540 euros, \$1,700), it marked the start of an extensive restoration he'd plotted for years.

The 25-year-old Ethiopian painter quickly went to work.

He installed new grey leather seats, applied black stripes and decals along the orange-and-blue exterior and hired a metalworker to fit oversized headlights to the front bumper.

Two months and an additional \$1,000 later, Robel's vision was complete. And with that, he joined the growing number of young Ethiopian drivers giving the Beetle—which has long occupied a hallowed position in the nation's car culture—a 21st-century upgrade.

Some of this restoration work is inspired by shows like the old MTV hit "Pimp My Ride"—"pimped out", American slang for customised vehicles, has been adopted in Addis Ababa.

But love for the Beetle in Ethiopia goes back decades, and is rooted in both economics and nostalgia.

Volkswagen is hoping to capitalise



Ethiopian mechanic Kaleb Teshome, 29, poses in front of his pimped Volkswagen Beetle in Addis Ababa.

on this goodwill. In January, it signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ethiopian government to set up a domestic auto industry, including

an assembly plant.

Regardless of what comes of this project, Robel says the Beetle's popularity will endure.

"Most of the time, Beetles are driven by old people," he said, leaning on the bonnet of his car near one of Addis' busier roundabouts.

"But when they are custom and pimped like this, they are a fashion statement for young people."

Initially developed in Nazi Germany as an instrument of propaganda, the origins of the Volkswagen Beetle "people's car" date back to 1938.

Love for the Beetle goes back decades, and is rooted in both economics and nostalgia.

Beetles became a common sight in Addis Ababa under former emperor Haile Selassie, who ruled for more than four decades beginning in 1930.

In 1974, when the communist Derg regime removed him from power, Haile Selassie was famously forced to duck into a Beetle before being escorted away from his palace.

Decades later, Beetles remain ubiquitous, in part because exorbitant taxes make buying new cars impossible for many.

Yet it's clear that the cars also have sentimental value.

When the Ethiopian-American novelist Maaza Mengiste sees one, she says she is reminded of the pale blue Beetle her grandfather drove—the same car that took her to the airport when she left the country as a young girl not long after the Derg came to power.

"I associate that car with Ethiopia, with growing up there and all the happy memories I have," she told AFP. Last year, Mengiste started posting pictures of Beetles on Twitter, using the hashtag #BeetleEthiopia.

Ever since, Ethiopians from a range of backgrounds have been posting photos of their own, sometimes offering equally personal memories.

"There was something about a Volkswagen that cut through social lines," Mengiste said.

"It was a car for everyone. You could be looking for some form of stability, and you would manage to buy a Volkswagen and that was your step into an upwardly mobile but not extravagant social class."

Like Mengiste, Kaleb Teshome, a 29-year-old mechanic, has been riding in Beetles all his life.

For decades, his family has owned a garage that specialises in fixing up the cars. Now Kaleb works alongside his father at the garage, where more than a dozen Beetles compete for space on a tiny dirt lot, with others lining the nearby road.

Many of the Beetles have been brought in for standard tune-ups.

But every few months, Kaleb is asked to do the kind of custom work worthy of "Pimp My Ride," a show he still watches online even though it was cancelled more than a decade ago.

"I've known the cars since my childhood. I know what they need," he said. "It could be paint work. It could be big tyres. It could be a sound system. I pimp all of it."

One recent morning, he showed AFP his own "pimped-out" Beetle, a shiny green-and-black 1972 model with massive tyres that would look more at home on a truck.

"When I drive it on the street," he said, "even people who drive luxurious cars say 'Wow.'"

Whether "pimped-out" or not, the Beetles of Addis Ababa seem destined to become collectors' items.

FOREX

US Dollar	114.86
Euro	126.78
Pound Sterling	142.93
Japanese Yen	10.66
Chinese Yuan	16.25
Qatari Riyal	31.54
Australian Dollar	78.96
Malaysian Ringit	27.58
Saudi Arab Riyal	30.62

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

Shares

Nepse 1,123.83pts
-1.42%

HIGHEST LOSERS					
NJCL	SPDL	IGI	NLG	LNHR	LGL
-7.09%	-6.06%	-5.73%	-5.67%	-5.55%	-5.40%
MODERATE LOSERS					
PLC	SLBSL	GHL	MBBL	GILB	SJCL
-5%	-4.98%	-4.7%	-4.23%	-4.21%	-4.08%
MODERATE GAINERS					
CFCL	AHPC	UPCL	ALJL	GBSL	RFL
0.92%	1.06%	1.33%	1.61%	1.67%	1.69%
HIGHEST GAINERS					
TRH	SFFL	GMFS	CHL	NMBM	STC
1.87%	2.04%	2.45%	2.53%	2.92%	3.98%

BULLION PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 71,300
Silver	Rs 865

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

GASOLINE WATCH

SERVO 4T ENGINE OILS
100% PERFORMANCE. EVERYTIME.

Petrol (Per Litre)	Rs 107.00/-
Diesel (Per Litre)	Rs 95.00/-
Kerosene (Per Litre)	Rs 95.00/-
LPG (Per cylinder)	Rs 1375/-

Source: Nepal Oil Corporation

EU urges US to 'make deal' in Airbus-Boeing row

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BRUSSELS, SEPT 16

The EU on Monday urged the US to make a deal to end a 15-year long Airbus-Boeing row, just days before Washington is expected to announce a raft of new tariffs in the epic tit-for-tat battle.

"We have enough tariffs in the world as it is, so imposing tariffs on each other, which strictly speaking we are allowed to do according to the WTO, would not be a good solution," said EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom.

"We have offered the US to try and make a deal in order to jointly find a negotiated solution and see what we can do to discipline ourselves (on subsidies) when it comes to aircraft," she told reporters.

The legal battle between Airbus and Boeing at the World Trade Organization began in 2004 when Washington accused Britain, France, Germany and Spain of providing illegal subsidies and grants to support the production of a range of Airbus products.

A year later, the EU alleged that Boeing had received \$19.1 billion worth of prohibited subsidies from 1989 to 2006 from various branches of the US government. The two cases were then tangled up in a messy legal quagmire, with each side being given partial vindication after a long series of appeals and counter appeals.

Under WTO rules, the EU and US each have the right to punish the other, with Washington given a first crack at imposing tariffs, probably the week of October 13, according to Malmstrom.

The EU side will then have their chance to slap similar duties on the US about six months later.

Washington has demanded the right to levy tariffs worth \$11.2 billion while Brussels is demanding \$12 billion as punishment. The WTO is likely to decide on a lower number in each case. The Airbus-Boeing row is just one of several issues stoking transatlantic tensions that quickly descended into acrimony when US President Donald Trump took office in 2017.

Trump embraced a protectionist agenda, slapping import duties on steel and aluminium from the EU and other allies, while also threatening tariffs on European cars.

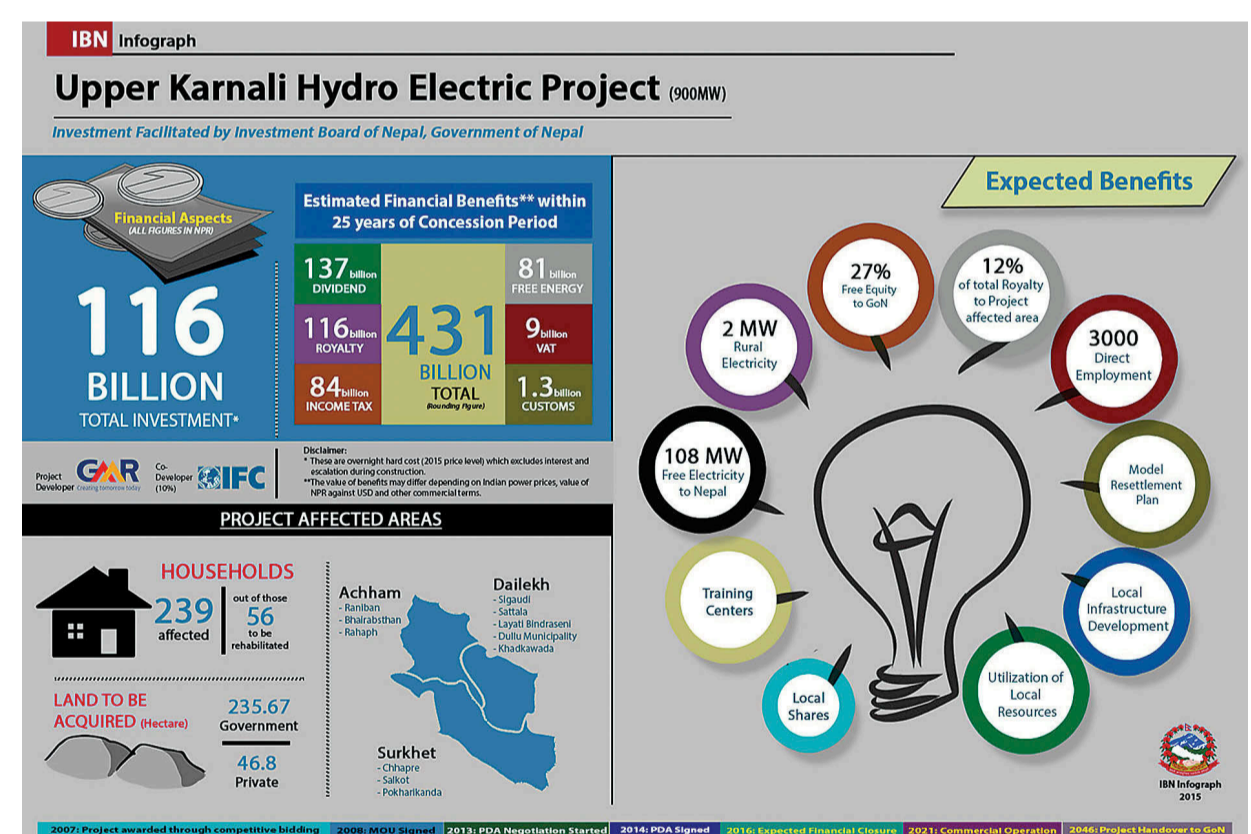
Earlier this month, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was seeking a "reset" in relations with a new team of EU top officials taking office later this year.



A high-speed 5G mobile network antenna is pictured near Montpreveyres, western Switzerland, on Sunday. Switzerland was among the first countries to begin deploying 5G, but health fears over radiation from the antennas that carry the next-generation mobile technology has sparked a nation-wide revolt.

Investment Board Nepal summons GMR to discuss the fate of Upper Karnali

The Indian company has been unable to perform financial closure and begin construction of the hydro project.



PRAHLAD RIJAL
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

Investment Board Nepal has summoned Indian infrastructural company GMR Group to discuss the planned Upper Karnali hydropower project which remains in limbo for lack of an agreement with prospective energy buyer Bangladesh over tariffs. The export-oriented 900-megawatt scheme is located in western Nepal.

According to Maha Prasad Adhikari, chief executive officer of Investment Board Nepal, GMR officials are expected to arrive this week to hold formal discussions on issues pertaining to project development, deadline extension and financial closure.

The move comes days after Indian Union Minister of State Raj Kumar Singh asked the Nepal government in a meeting with Energy Minister Barshaman Pun to facilitate the land acquisition process, and proposed to allow another Indian developer to build the project if GMR was unable to execute it.

Investment Board officials said it would be less complicated if GMR sorted out financial arrangement issues and initiated the project even though it is running late. "We have taken a wait and see approach as the board wants the project to be developed without complicating issues further since a project development agreement has been signed with the Indian developer," said Adhikari.

Even though it has been five years since the board and GMR signed the project development agreement, the Indian company has been unable to perform financial closure and begin construction. It has only conducted several studies as required by the agreement.

The terms of the agreement require GMR to find funding sources within two years from the signing of the agreement and build the project within five years from the date of financial closure. The agreement was signed in September 2014, and the Indian developer has already received multiple deadline extensions from the board to perform financial closure.

The second deadline extension expired in September 2018, and despite multiple requests from GMR, the board has not been able to decide whether to extend the time limit for the third time or not.

Bangladesh had signed a memorandum of understanding with India's NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam to import electricity from the Upper Karnali scheme via India during Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in April 2017.

Last year, GMR and the Bangladesh Power Development Board reached an agreement in principle on the commercial terms of the power purchase agreement excluding tariff rates, paving the way for the Indian company to export 500 megawatts to power-hungry Bangladesh.

But the two parties have not been able to break the deadlock in negotia-

tions over the power purchase and sales agreement.

"Commercial negotiations have concluded for almost all the key clauses such as payment obligations and termination terms, as of date," said an anonymous GMR official. "But we are yet to settle on the tariffs to be placed on power sales."

According to the official, the project also faces issues over forest clearance and land acquisition as ownership records exist for only 35 hectares out of the 49 hectares of private land that need to be acquired. And since the people occupying the 14 hectares do not possess title deeds, land acquisition has not been concluded.

Energy officials disagree. "When Indian Union Minister of State Singh said that the developer was grappling with land acquisition problems, Nepali officials denied there was any such difficulty," an official present at the meeting told the Post.

Amid delays in implementing the scheme, political parties and activists belonging to the Save Upper Karnali Campaign have repeatedly asked the government to scrap the deal with GMR as it has been clinging to the project without showing any progress.

Earlier, a Nepali secretary-level delegation had flown to Bangladesh and held a meeting with Bangladeshi energy authorities, but they were unsuccessfully in persuading them to fix a three-month timeframe to reach an agreement with the Indian developer on purchase rates.

Banks may be required to set up stabilisation fund

The bill to amend the Bank and Financial Institution Act also proposes to set a two-term limit for board members.

RAJESH KHANAL
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

A bill to amend the Bank and Financial Institution Act 2017 tabled in Parliament on Wednesday contains a provision requiring banks to maintain a financial stabilisation fund that they can dip into during times of financial crisis.

The fund can be utilised if any bank and financial institution gets into a financial crisis that is likely to affect the entire financial sector.

According to Nepal Rastra Bank officials, the central bank inserted the provision to prevent banks from going into liquidation. "Apart from maintaining the other funds in the existing law, banks will have to set aside money to deal with potential crises if the bill is signed into law," said an anonymous source.

Currently, banks fall back on the reserve maintained in the capital adequacy ratio, general reserve and equaliser fund to manage operational risks. No separate provision exists to address a financial crisis.

Bhuvan Dahal, chief executive officer of Sanima Bank, said banks had been utilising the equaliser fund to address exchange rate fluctuations.

According to him, banks use the capital adequacy ratio and general reserve to meet liabilities and other risks such as credit risk and operational risk.

The bill to amend the Bank and Financial Institution Act also proposes to set a two-term limit for the board of directors of banks and financial institutions. Similarly, banks will have to obtain permission from Nepal Rastra Bank to hire or fire their chief executive officers.

According to bankers, the govern-

ment has introduced the provision in a bid to maintain healthy practices in the banking business. "In many cases, board members have been found to be pressuring the chief executives to issue loans in prescribed areas or to fulfill their own vested interests," said a former banker who didn't want to be named.

The bill to amend the act has also fixed the eligibility criteria for candidates to get appointed to the board of banks and financial institutions.

According to the proposed stipulation, a prospective board director must have a bachelor's degree in a related subject, work experience of five years in the position of at least a director in any bank or an officer in the government.

The fund can be utilised if any bank and financial institution gets into a financial crisis.

Similarly, the bill has also set the upper age limit for board directors at 65 years and the minimum age limit at 25 years. There is currently no maximum or minimum age limit for board members of banks and financial institutions.

According to the bill, the money in bank accounts that remain inactive for 20 years will be turned over to the government. Currently, the money in dormant accounts is transferred to Nepal Rastra Bank's banking development fund.



Similarly, the bill has also set the upper age limit for board directors at 65 years and the minimum age limit at 25 years.

SPORTS

SPANISH LEAGUE RESULTS

Eibar	1-2	Espanyol
Alaves	0-1	Sevilla
Celta Vigo	0-2	Granada
Valladolid	1-1	Osasuna
Betis	1-1	Getafe

PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Bournemouth	3-1	Everton
Watford	2-2	Arsenal

ITALIAN SERIE A RESULTS

Genoa	1-2	Atalanta
Brescia	3-4	Bologna
SPAL	2-1	Lazio
Parma	1-3	Cagliari
Roma	4-2	Sassuolo
Verona	0-1	AC Milan

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA RESULTS

Hoffenheim	0-3	Freiburg
Paderborn	1-5	Schalke

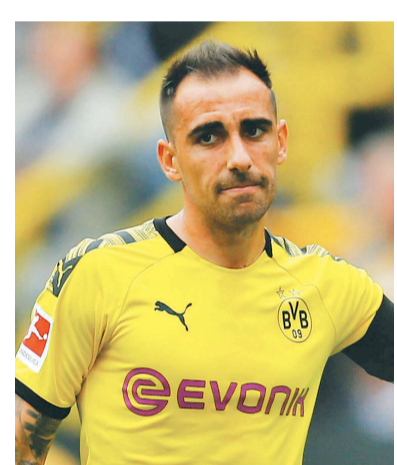
FRENCH LIGUE 1 RESULTS

Nantes	1-0	Reims
Saint-Etienne	2-2	Toulouse
Monaco	3-4	Marseille

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"It is a liberation to be playing, getting time on the pitch and enjoying my job. It will be a special game. It will be a joy to play against my former team [Barcelona], and it makes me want to play well."

—Paco Alcacer



REUTERS

Smith, Cummins, Hazlewood ensure Aussies retain Ashes

Victory in the fourth Test at Old Trafford meant the Australians could not lose the series and the 2-2 scoreline meant they retained the urn.

REUTERS
LONDON, SEPT 16

Sustained excellence from Steve Smith, who scaled new heights with 774 runs, complemented by the searing pace and accuracy of Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood enabled Australia to cling on to the Ashes despite losing the final Test against England on Sunday by 135 runs.

Smith, the former captain who returned to the national side for this year's World Cup and Ashes after he was suspended for his part in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa, finally fell to earth when he was out for 23 in Australia's second innings on a glorious sun-drenched autumn afternoon at The Oval. With his departure, greeted with generous applause from a capacity crowd aside from a few scattered boos, Australia's faint hopes of reaching a victory target of 399 also vanished despite a battling century from Matthew Wade.

However, victory in the fourth Test at Old Trafford meant the Australians could not lose the series and the 2-2 scoreline meant they retained the urn. It was the first drawn Ashes series since 1972 when Ian Chappell's Australians squared the series 2-2 at the same London venue.

Smith, who missed the third Test after he was concussed by a blow to the neck at Lord's, scored 144, 142, 92, 211, 82 and 80 before Sunday. Each knock was the highest for his team and the first innings at the Oval was his 10th successive score exceeding 50 against an England Test attack. In the history of Test cricket only his incomparable compatriot Don Bradman, who averaged 99.94 from 52 Tests, stands ahead of Smith whose average has risen to fractionally below 65.

"The series has ebbed and flowed. I've loved every minute and I'm proud to have been able to perform for Australia and bring the urn home," Smith said. "You always want to get better as a player and I'll continue to work hard," he said.

Smith's prodigious scoring, with able assistance from Marnus Labuschagne who became Test cricket's first concussion substitute when he replaced Smith at Lord's and then scored four half-centuries, helped paper over some woeful Australian upper-order batting. David Warner, who also served a year-long suspension for the same offence as Smith, returned to the national side to score



Australia's cricket team with the Urn after the fourth day of the fifth Ashes Test against England at the Oval cricket ground in London on Sunday.

647 runs at the World Cup where the defending champions were beaten by the home side in the semi-finals. England defeated New Zealand to win the trophy for the first time.

However, in the Ashes series the pugnacious left-handed opener, who with Smith has been the bulwark of the Australian batting in recent years, had his technique picked apart by Stuart Broad, bowling around the wicket with the new ball. Broad dismissed Warner seven times in 10 innings, in which his average was 9.5. The average opening partnership was also in single figures and the highest stand a dismal 18.

To compensate for their batsmen's

failures, Cummins in five Tests and Hazlewood in the final four took 49 wickets between them and all the England batsmen struggled against their speed and aggression. But at the Oval even they were showing the effects of five Tests in seven weeks, which was reflected in indifferent shots and uncharacteristic dropped catches, and the team will be delighted to return home for a break before the Australian season begins.

Root plots Ashes success Down Under

LONDON: Captain Joe Root put the focus firmly on winning the Ashes in

Australia after England levelled their home series on Sunday, saying he was "desperate" to take the team forward.

England won at The Oval by 135 runs in the fifth and final Ashes Test to tie the series at 2-2, ending their historic World Cup-winning season on a high. It meant the series finished in a draw for the first time since 1972, although holders Australia retain the urn. Root described the summer as "a huge success for English cricket" after their World Cup triumph in July. He said the foundations were in place for England to build on, praising Rory Burns for his contributions at the top of the order and paceman Jofra Archer, who only made his Test debut

last month.

"Throughout the whole series we've shown a lot of character," said Root, who described 2-2 as a fair result. "At times we've been out-skilled... but we've always fought very hard and that's a very pleasing thing," he said. "Hopefully that will be a massive stepping stone and starting point for us to really kick on as a team now." The Ashes will next take place in Australia in 2021-22 and Root said he was "in it for the long haul".

Root said the performance in the fifth Test was a "blueprint" of how he wanted his team to play but there was still room for improvement. (AFP)

Klopp expects tough Champions League ride

Reds reached last two Champions League finals, beating Tottenham in June after losing to Real Madrid 12 months earlier.



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (2nd right) during a training session at Melwood complex in Liverpool on Monday on the eve of their Champions league group stage match against Napoli.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, SEPT 16

Jürgen Klopp has warned Liverpool that retaining the Champions League will be even harder than their incredible march to victory in Madrid last season.

Klopp's side start their bid to win a seventh European Cup with a trip to Napoli for their Group 'E' opener on Tuesday. The Reds have reached the last two Champions League finals, beating Tottenham in the Spanish capital in June after losing to Real Madrid 12 months earlier. But Klopp believes Liverpool face a daunting task to make it to the final in Istanbul's Ataturk Stadium—a venue which carries extra resonance for the club after they won the 2005 Champions League with an astonishing comeback against AC Milan in the same stadium.

Before Liverpool can dream of emulating Steven Gerrard and company's triumph by the banks of the

Bosphorus, Klopp knows they will have to run the gauntlet in what he expects to be a fiercely contested tournament. Napoli are expected to pose the sternest test to Liverpool in a group which also includes unfancied Salzburg and Genk.

Carlo Ancelotti's team came within a whisker of ending Liverpool's European campaign in the group stage last season when Alisson Becker's superb late save denied Arkadiusz Milik to preserve a 1-0 win at Anfield that sent the Reds into the last 16 at the expense of Napoli. Even if Liverpool should advance to the knockout rounds without so much drama this season, Klopp is wary of the restocked superpowers certain to be lying in wait in the latter stages.

"I will have no problem with it (reaching the final) if it happens again, but at this moment I am not too sure it will," he said when the draw was made in August. "We have the same chance like everyone else, but

that is all, and I don't see us, the English teams, dominating. I really think a lot of teams have a good chance. Look at the squad Borussia Dortmund has and tell me we are stronger than them. That is incredible. They can make five changes and you think: 'Really, they didn't play last week? Why?' There are a lot of quality teams. Juventus will be there, PSG will be there. Real Madrid? Do you think they gave up already? Bayern Munich now finally brought in Perisic and Coutinho which is a big boost."

While Liverpool will always have a special relationship with the Champions League after the club's dominance of the competition in the 1970s and 1980s, it is not hard to believe that some die-hard Kopites would happily exchange their continental supremacy for a season of domestic bliss. Having erased the pain of that 2018 final defeat against Real, Liverpool's main goal this term is to end the club's long wait to win the English title.

Pipped to the Premier League trophy by Manchester City on the final day of last season, Liverpool are desperate to win the title for the first time since 1990. That desire has been clear to see in a blistering five-game winning streak which has already taken them to the top of the table this season. Even an injury to Alisson has failed to interrupt their flow and the Brazilian keeper's replacement Adrian admits Liverpool's rock-solid defence—marshalled by the imperious Virgil van Dijk—has made his life much easier as the former West Ham player adapts to his new club.

"It's easy to play with them; you have some of the best players in the world, the best defenders, midfielders and attackers. From the back, I need to help on the occasions when I have to," Adrian said. "I'm really proud to have won the last few games. We are in a good moment, we are like a rock - all together, the manager, the staff, players and fans. The club is living a great moment."

Arsenal grateful for a point at lowly Watford

Arsenal played a huge part in their own downfall as they were caught in possession on the edge of their own box.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, SEPT 16

Arsenal captain Granit Xhaka admitted the Gunners were lucky to escape with a point after blowing a 2-0 lead to draw 2-2 at bottom-of-the-table Watford on Sunday.

Quique Sanchez Flores enjoyed a happy return as the Hornets manager as Tom Cleverley and Roberto Pereyra's penalty secured a thoroughly merited share of the spoils. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang looked to have the Gunners well on course for a comfortable three points when he struck twice in 11 minutes before the break. However, Sanchez Flores, who was appointed as Hornets' boss for the second time last week after one point from their opening four games of the season saw Javi Gracia sacked, roused the hosts for an impressive second-half fightback.

"We came out and played such a bad second-half. You have to say we are happy to take a point," said Xhaka. "We were scared in the second-half. We knew they would come at us and push us hard but we have to show more character and not be scared. We have spoken about it. We cannot give a performance like this in the second half."

Arsenal played a huge part in their own downfall as they were consistently caught in possession on the edge of their own box, trying to play out from the back. That was how Watford got a foothold back in the game as Sokratis Papastathopoulos's pass was intercepted inside his own box by Gerard Deulofeu and the ball broke to Cleverley to fire home eight minutes into the second-half.

"They controlled the match with their pressing, causing us (to make) some mistakes. Scoring the first goal gave them confidence to continue that," said Arsenal manager Unai Emery. "That is the moment we needed calm and control." However, the Spaniard refuted Xhaka's suggestion that his side were scared. "Maybe that is (his) individual feeling. I think in football you never should be scared and you have to take that moment. We need to be strong in our mentality."

Emery is clearly still trying to find the right balance between his brilliant attack and shoddy defence. Mesut Ozil was recalled to his starting lineup for the first time since he and Sead

Kolasinac were the victims of a car-jacking attack in July. Ozil initially struggled to settle as Watford started the brighter with Cleverley's rising drive forcing Bernd Leno into a fine save before Jose Holebas fired horribly off-target with a great chance from the edge of the area.

However, Watford have now conceded 10 goals in their opening five games to the campaign and were opened up far too easily to allow Aubameyang to open the scoring on 21 minutes. The home fans were screaming for a foul as Dani Ceballos won back possession, but Watford were slow to react as Kolasinac burst down the left and fed Aubameyang, who spun and fired low past Ben Foster.

Emery is still trying to find the right balance between his brilliant attack and shoddy defence.

It was soon 2-0 after a 20-pass move. Ozil freed Ainsley Maitland-Niles in behind the Watford defence and the right-back squared for Aubameyang to slot home his fifth goal in as many games this season.

However, Arsenal unravelled after the break to miss the chance to climb up to third. A point sees the Gunners move level with Manchester United, Tottenham, Chelsea and Leicester behind Liverpool and Manchester City in the early season battle for a top-four finish.

And it could easily have been worse for Arsenal as Deulofeu sent an effort inches wide and Cleverley's fierce drive was deflected over by Luiz as wave upon wave of Watford attack continued even after equalising.

But it was Abdoulaye Doucoure who squandered the best chance of all for a winner deep into stoppage time when he shot too close to Leno with just the German goalkeeper to beat to leave Watford still bottom of the Premier League table. "Second-half I am really happy with reaction," said Sanchez Flores. "It's very difficult to do what they did against Arsenal."

Andrew Parson pushes for development of Nepali athletes

The International Paralympic Committee president believes sports can be a strong medium to help the differently-abled athletes to rehabilitate themselves in society.

International Paralympics Committee (IPC) President **Andrew Parsons** came to Nepal for a three-day visit on Friday. The 42-year-old joined the Brazilian Paralympics Committee as an intern in 1997. Later he served in various positions at Brazilian Paralympic Committee including general secretary and president. He was elected the IPC President in September 2017. The Post's **Prajwal Oli** caught up with the Brazilian before he left Nepal on Sunday. Excerpts.

What is the purpose of your visit to Nepal?

My objective is to know about the situation about the Paralympics in Nepal. To know about the challenges and the opportunities and learn how the national Paralympics committee operates in Nepal. The idea is to build a stronger relationship with our members and understand how we can better support them through our programmes and projects we have. But to do that we have to know them better.

How did you find the situation of Paralympics in Nepal?

They have many challenges. One of the main issues is that they don't have funding. But we know that there is a new sports law in the parliament being discussed. So we hope that new law can help change the situation. In lack of funding, they cannot make short, medium and long-term plans. We have Paralympics Games every four years and we are talking about how to qualify for the Games. Nepal don't have funding even for day to day operation to run the national paralympic committee. With the new law being passed, hopefully the situation will change and they will get more recognition from the government.

How can sports be helpful to bring positive changes to the differently-abled athletes?

It is the rights of every individual to embrace sports. Sports can be a strong medium to help the differently-abled athletes to rehabilitate themselves in society. Elite competition can help change the perception of the person with disabilities. Normally when an athlete competes in big Paralympics games like Olympics, you can find changes in society and attitude to



watch an individual with disability. This leads to big changes in society. For example, after the London Olympics in 2012, now we have one million more people with disability earning their livelihoods. The Paralympics Games helped change the mentality of people in the UK and they have opened the doors for them in the labour market. Things like this are directly connected with the Paralympics movement. Society, in general, sees people with

disabilities with the idea that they cannot contribute much. But when they see them practising sports, their attitude changes. If a blind person can run 100m in less than 11 seconds then he can do whatever he wants. In the same way, when a female wheelchair racer can push her wheelchair for 42km race, it gives a strong message that she is capable of achieving anything in life. It helps to change the mentality. And to change the perception, you need to first change the men-

talidity of people. Even the abled-athletes in the country do not have basic sporting facilities in Nepal. In such a scenario, how would you expect the Paralympics to grow here? I am aware of the problems here, especially related to facilities or infrastructure. But if you have athletes competing in the Paralympics Games and if you have them recognised at the

talidity of people.

Even the abled-athletes in the country do not have basic sporting facilities in Nepal. In such a scenario, how would you expect the Paralympics to grow here?

I am aware of the problems here, especially related to facilities or infrastructure. But if you have athletes competing in the Paralympics Games and if you have them recognised at the

government level, it helps change the situation. It will not happen overnight or in a short span of time. It takes years to get attention from the local government. It's a process that needs to start and the best way to do so is by strengthening the national paralympic committee. It is very important for Nepali athletes to compete in Paralympics Games, Asian Paralympics Games or any other international events so as to help draw public attention. The day we succeed to multiply athletes in thousands here, there will be pressure for the local authorities to build facilities for para-athletes and make sports more accessible for them.

Nepal is scheduled to host the South Asian Games on December 1-10. Do you have any plan in facilitating such multi-event sports in the region?

I think it is super important to have such regional games. In other regions of Asia, they do have such Games. In South-East Asia, they have South-East Asian Paralympics Games. In South Asia, we still don't have Para version of Games but it is fundamental for the growth of the games. We can start with a few events in the South Asian Games.

We are always in contact with the Asian Paralympic Committee to try to help such things materialise. But in order to achieve that first, we need to strengthen the national paralympic committees of the region. We have to support member associations of these countries and strengthen them so that we can lobby for such events.

Where do you see Nepal as a Paralympics nation in Asia?

I think Nepal has good athletes and good people in the national committee. I don't like to rank countries. In Asia, we have very strong countries. China is the world powerhouse in Paralympics. We also have Japan, who is hosting the Paralympic Games next year. I don't think it is important to compare Nepal with the rest of the Asian nations but it will be relevant to see where the Himalayan national was two years ago, and where will it in the next two years in terms of Paralympics development. The important thing is to identify, support and monitor the potential athletes. We want Nepal to rise to the next level of development.

Powerful sporting bodies like FIFA and the International Olympic Council have been tarnished by corruption scandals in the past. How clean is International Paralympics Committee?

People see our organisation positively. We never have any problem with corruption or lack of transparency. When the doping scandal arose during the Sochi Games, we were the ones to take a firm stance. We want to have members and athletes in our decision-making process and make them engage. To us, Nepal is as important as China, Australia or the United States. There is no single national paralympic committee that is less important than the other.

Do you have any short or long term plan to support para-athletes of Nepal?

We have Agitos Foundation which supports different programmes and members around the world. Nepal has already benefitted from some of our programmes which provided two swimmers opportunities to compete in the World Para Swimming in London. Nepal also got a chance to participate in the organisational capacity-building programme in Singapore. I came to Nepal to gather more information and understand the situation better. I will be going back to Germany in our head office so that we can map out a plan for the development of Nepal.

Is it right for an abled individual like yourself to lead the Paralympic movement meant for the differently-abled athletes?

I think we need right people in any organisation in the world. You don't need to be women to defend female rights. You don't need to be gay to defend LGBTI rights. So, I don't believe I need to be someone with impairment to lead the International Paralympic Committee. The first person to say me that I should think to lead IPC was the former president Philip Craven, who was a wheelchair user. He competed in five different Paralympic Games in wheelchair basketball. I have faced this question during my entire career. I think I am doing a good job as IPC president.

Impending Cricket Association of Nepal election a big relief for the popular sport of the nation

PAJWAL OLI
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

The dispute surrounding Cricket Association Nepal (CAN) is likely to be resolved as the date for cricket governing body's election has been finalised for September 27 and 28.

A meeting between National Sports Council (NSC) and representatives of International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday have agreed to hold the final election date, informed the NSC Member Secretary Ramesh Kumar Silwal on Monday.

ICC Deputy Chairman Imran Khwaja and ICC representative Ammar Shaikh arrived here on Sunday to find a way out to lift the CAN suspension. ICC had suspended CAN membership on April 2016 due to the internal wrangling. "After a meeting, we have reached an agreement to hold the elective general assembly of CAN on September 27 and 28. We reached an agreement to hold the election in an independent and fair manner," Silwal said.

"The ICC board meeting is set for October 12-13 and I have requested the world cricket governing body repre-



sentatives to lift CAN suspension during the meet. They have responded positively. I am very much confident that the suspension would be lifted by the meeting once the election is over," said Silwal.

Issuing a separate statement, ICC also confirmed that the CAN Annual General Meeting has been scheduled for September 27 and 28 following meeting with Silwal. "Elections of the Central Working Committee will be conducted during the AGM and will be overseen by the Independent Panel formed under the provisions of the CAN constitution," reads the statement. "I am optimistic that upon conclusion of the central elections, the



ICC Board will be in a position to consider Nepal's reinstatement at its October meeting in Sydney," Khwaja was quoted in the statement. ICC had suspended CAN in April, 2016 owing to dual existence of the cricket governing body in the country and government interference in the election. Nepali cricket has long been in crisis after a faction of the previous CAN committee led by Tanka Aangbhang held its general assembly and subsequently elections without support from the National Sports Council (NSC), the country's top sports governing body. The Council had refused to give legitimacy to the new body under Chatur Bahadur

Chand, which was formed on December 15, 2015 following a controversial election not contested by then CAN president Aangbhang and his faction.

NSC, in February 2016, formed an ad-hoc committee under Ramesh Silwal which prompted ICC to suspend CAN. Later ICC had formed an advisory committee in 2016 entrusting it with the responsibility of drafting a new statute of the cricket governing body and facilitating in holding a fresh election. The new statute was unanimously approved by CAN in April 2018. ICC had formed Independent Committee in July last year and tasked it to oversee the elections of districts and provinces under the newly adopted statute. The election process of district and province were completed two weeks earlier.

Earlier the Advisory Committee and the Independent Panel had announced to hold the election on September 20 and 21. But NSC had expressed reservation on the date claiming that they had not taken its consent, while also not following a minimum requirement of publishing a 21-day public notice of election.

Academy Cricket League starts on Thursday

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, SEPT 16

Nexus Cricket Academy is all set to organise Academy Cricket League U-19 Twenty20 Cricket Tournament from Thursday at the Mulpani Cricket Ground in Kathmandu.

The tournament will feature 16 academy cricket teams vying for the top honours.

Played in the league cum knockout format, the tournament will feature 16 cricket academy teams from across the country, informed Prabal Gautam, the tournament director and the vice president of Nexus Academy. "We have invited almost all registered cricket academies run across the country and 16 of them accepted our invitation," said

Gautam. The teams are divided into four groups of four teams. The winners of each group will make to the semi-finals.

The man-of-the-series, best batsman, bowler and emerging player of the tournament will be provided six-month training at a cricket academy in Delhi, India. Other best five players of the tournament will also get free training at the Nexus Academy in Kathmandu.

The best batsman, bowler, fielder and man-of-the-series will get direct entry to the second round open selection of Kathmandu Kings squad for the upcoming Everest Premier League, which is slated to star on February 29 next year.

The 14-day tournament, promoted by National Sports Council and organised on the occasion of Constitution Day, will offer a purse of Rs 150,000 to the winners and Rs 100,000 to the runners-up.

The best batsman, bowler, man-of-the-series and emerging players will also be rewarded. The expected cost of the tournament is Rs 1.5 million.

Despite government apathy, Nepal prepare for Pesapallo World Cup

Almost unheard of the sport in the country, Nepal is taking part in Pesapallo World Cup scheduled for November 26-30 in Pune.

PARBAT PORTEL
KAKADBHITTA, SEPT 16

Pesapallo made its foray into Nepal around two-and-half-year earlier. But in such a short span of time, the game has now established the country at the international arena.

Nepal is now preparing to take part in 10th Pesapallo World Cup, to be held in Pune, India, from November 26 to 30 later this year. Thirteen players have been called up for a closed camp training in Bahundangi in Jhapa as part of their preparations for the World Cup. A coach from Finland has been training the team in the camp. Twelve countries including Nepal are taking part in the world cup.

"Pesapallo has established itself during a short span of time in Nepal," said Pesapallo Association Nepal President Paras Mani Dahal. "But due to government apathy, the expected results have not been achieved in our country," he said. Dahal said the game started in Nepal from 2018. The little known game is yet to be recognized by the National Sports Council. "We have received no objection letter from the Nepal Olympic

Committee. We have registered the Association at the District Administration Office in Kathmandu," said Dahal.

Dahal said the lack of interest from the state has also hampered their preparations. He said they have collected around Rs 1.5 million from the office-bearers and have been spending that amount in the team's preparation. "Our preparations would have been much better if the government had helped us. The low budget has restricted our preparations," said Dahal.

Nepal's Pesapallo team had secured the second position in the Asian Pesapallo Championship in Dhaka last year. Pesapallo Asian Committee vice president Prasant Dahal said they had struggled to send players to take part in that competition. "We could have improved on our position had there been sufficient funds for preparations," he said.

Nepal's Finn coach Miko lauded Nepal's achievement in the sport despite taking up the sport just a few years earlier. "I see a bright future of Pesapallo in Nepal. Players are hard-working and enthusiastic. That is a good sign," said the Finnish coach. Miko

believes Nepal's performance in the World Cup will be better if they prepare well, predicting the sport to establish Nepal at the international stage very soon.

What is Pesapallo? Pesapallo is a fast-moving bat and ball sport. It is the national game of Finland. Inspired by baseball, the Finn starting playing the game since the 1920s. This game also has some presence in other countries such as Germany, Sweden Switzerland, Australia and Canada. It is rapidly growing in Asian countries too. A total of 21 players—nine in the batting side and 12 in fielding side—take part in the competition.

The batting team tries to score by hitting the ball and running through the bases, while the fielding team attempts to put the batter and runners out. Unlike baseball, the ball is pitched vertically in Pesapallo.

NEPAL SQUAD

Bidhan Pokharel, Ishwor KC, Sujana Karki, Rajesh Mainali, Sudip Bhurtel, Lhakpa Singh Yolmo, Raju Shrestha, Sankalpa Shrestha, Samir Shrestha, Atit Khanal, Mukunda Poudel, Sujal Upreti, Sakriya Thapa Magar.



Finnish coach Miko (left) oversees training of Nepali Pesapallo players in Bahundangi, Kakadbhitta, on Monday.

POST PHOTO: PARBAT PORTEL

Anup Raj Sharma: We could not be bold enough to pressurise the government

The chairman of the National Human Rights Commission on the weaknesses of the commission.

The National Human Rights Commission is the most powerful constitutional body that enjoys supreme authority when it comes to the protection of human rights. However, the government for years has been ignoring its recommendations. In April, the government came up with an amendment to the National Human Rights Commission Act 2012 in an attempt to reduce its constitutional authority. Binod Ghimire sat down with Anup Raj Sharma, chairperson of the commission, to know more about the government's attitude towards human rights and civil liberties.

This interview has been condensed for clarity.

How do you assess the incumbent government's attitude towards human rights and civil liberties?

There are problems, but it's not alarming. Immediately after the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal, the commission gave a 17-point recommendation that needed to be included while amending the National Human Rights Commission Act as envisioned in the statute. But, four years later, when the government came up with an amendment bill, our recommendations were ignored. Some of the bill's provisions were regressive as they were targeted at reducing the role of the constitutional commission to a subordinate of the government. We voiced our reservations at the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. The chairman of the committee and Nepal Communist Party leader Subash Nembang have assured us that the bill would be revised as per our recommendation. Similarly, the amendment process has begun for the Media Council Bill as well. These two incidents prove the government has learnt from its mistakes.

The government's reluctance to implement our recommendations worries us, however. There are legal provisions and the Supreme Court's verdict, which makes it mandatory for the government to implement them. Yet, it remains ignored.

Is the government's move to introduce regressive laws a strategy to weaken state institutions or whimsical acts driven by the arrogance of the two-thirds majority?

It is an amalgamation of different factors. I've heard a provincial chief minister say the constitutional commissions are the organs of the government and they must support it. Had he taken a few minutes to read the constitution, I am sure he wouldn't have given that statement. Many lawmakers don't know the commission is a watchdog which praises or criticises the government depending on the move it makes. Our lawmakers have immense pride that they drafted the constitution. They, therefore, have a perception that they know everything. All these factors prompted the two-thirds majority—a supposedly powerful government, to introduce regressive laws.

You have seen Nepali Congress, then CPN (UML) and CPN (Maoist Centre) and the Nepal Communist Party rule the country. Are there any differences in their perspective when it comes to human rights?

Not at all. The parties are very much committed to human rights and the rule of law when they are in opposition, but that changes once leaders take office. The late Girija Prasad Koirala once said that the Supreme Court must be shifted to Narayanhi because it summoned him for a statement. Similarly, Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba said two years ago that it is unnecessary to dig into the cases of insurgency, and everyone should be given an amnesty. Our parties, including the ruling NCP, need a free press, independent judiciary and autonomous human rights commission unless they are in power. There is an apparent duality among our political parties in their position on human rights and civil liberties.

The double standard is not limited to our parties,



POST PHOTO: KESHAV THAPA

but it has become a common phenomenon. For instance, a bureaucrat, who is a hardcore conservative when in service becomes a true advocate of human rights, liberalism and freedom from the day he retires.

The government hardly implements 14 percent of the commission's recommendations. How responsible is the commission itself for this worrisome situation?

I agree we couldn't be bold enough to pressurise the government. I tried to introduce some strong measures, but there's no consensus among commission members. I can't take decisions solely unless the rest of the team members support it.

The commission, for years, has been saying it will blacklist those found guilty of human rights violations but never followed through. There could have been some pressure had this commitment been fulfilled. We have not been able to blacklist as per our commitments. However, I don't think it could have exerted much pressure. The commission can only publish the lists of such people and recommend the government to seize passport, stop them from travelling abroad or take departmental action. But it is unlikely that the government, which is already reluctant to implement our recommendations, would take such stern measures. I asked one of my predecessors why he didn't

execute the authority he had. He said the last card of the commission would be gone if the people in power give a cold shoulder. Therefore, we are also hesitant in blacklisting. We have been working on publishing a compiled record of the names of the people and the cases of their involvement ever since the commission was formed.

Cases of alleged extrajudicial killings have been reported recently, and the commission is investigating some of them. Why is the investigation so slow?

True, the investigation hasn't been completed as per our expectations. But it is due to circumstances beyond our control. In some cases, the witness and alleged perpetrators don't cooperate in registering their statements. We had to wait for weeks to get the statements from the police and witness in the case of Kumar Paudel, who was killed in Sarlahi. Now, the investigation process is over and report preparation is ongoing.

The eyewitness in one of the cases in Bhaktapur, where two youths allegedly involved in the abduction of a child was killed by the police, denied giving a statement. The locals strongly feel that the police didn't do wrong because those killed were the abductors of a child. We are still investigating the case, like how did the police know where the child was buried, where is the revolver that belongs

There is an apparent duality among our political parties in their position on human rights and civil liberties.

to the abductors, if the claim of the police that they were killed in an encounter is valid, and so on. Investigating these facts is time-consuming. Lack of ballistic experts in the country is also another factor causing the delay in probing such cases.

It is good that the commission conducts different research. But some of them are very shallow. Why so?

A couple of our research, including one on Chhaupadi, are not research per se but just compilations of the accounts of some local people. Having given a landmark verdict on the Chhaupadi issue as a Supreme Court justice, I believe the commission didn't have to research the subject. One of our members felt the study was necessary, and we couldn't stop. Back in 2008, after proper study, I have categorically stated the steps the concerned parties, mainly the government, needs to take to end the practice.

It is not that I am happy with every activity of the commission. I had rejected this position three-times, demanding the names of other members of the team. I wanted to ensure my team is compatible. However, the government made the appointment without giving me a hint. Every member of the team must have some level of commonality for effective performance. If not, you cannot achieve what you want.

Eight constitutional commissions have been added with the new statute coming into effect. Has the addition of new commissions complimented the human rights commission or there is a fear of duplication in the working area?

There are no issues because they are not yet functional. The constitution envisioned different commissions but was short of having provisions to build a linkage between them. During the deliberations, while drafting the constitution, I had suggested cross-party leaders make the human rights commission an umbrella body which has representation from all the commissions. As it didn't materialise, chairpersons of the commission, therefore, are thinking to have a memorandum of understanding to distinguish the jurisdiction of the different commissions to avoid duplication of their works. There are still possibilities of confrontation if there is no proper cooperation.

A recommendation committee has been formed to pick the new team in the two transitional justice commissions. But there remains risk of political being politically appointed. What role can the commission play in controlling the politicisation in the transitional justice process?

Seemingly the committee is independent but three out of five members are political appointees. The members recommended by the parties tend to work as directed by the respective parties. Five months after its formation, the committee is yet to recommend the names because it is looking at the major parties to decide. I, therefore, asked Prakash Osti, who represents the commission in the committee to return. The politicisation in the appointment process is an indication that the transitional justice process will not move transparently.

The major parties have differences in many issues, but they seem to have a common position on transitional justice. I have learnt that parties have agreed to avoid prosecution at the maximum level.



WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

The road to the truth is difficult.
A path filled with division, diversion and danger.
A path filled with validation and temptation.
There are voices to be heard and stories to be told.
The road is long and the road is hard.
But this is the road we walk.

Without fear or favour.

THE KATHMANDU POST

