

Nepal's largest selling English daily Printed simultaneously in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bharatpur and Nepalgunj

Vol XXVII No. 262 | 16 pages | Rs.5 $\bigcirc 31.2^{\circ} \text{ C} \quad -0.5^{\circ} \text{ C}$ Wednesday, November 13, 2019 | 27-07-2076

A worker sets up the apparatus for roofing the devotees' home close to the Swayambhu stupa. Reconstruction of the structure damaged in a fire two years ago nears completion

As Oli plans Cabinet reshuffle, the post of House Speaker could be a bargaining chip

The rejig and a number of top appointments are aimed at balancing the ruling party's internal power dynamics and its relationship with its partners in government.

TIKA R PRADHAN KATHMANDU, NOV 12

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's plans to reshuffle his Cabinet will be crucial in establishing a fine balance both within the ruling Nepal Communist Party and with the party's partners in government, according to NCP leaders.

The upcoming reshuffle of the Cabinet, planned for the end of this will not only remove sign ministers but is part of a larger reworking of various leadership positions in government, including ambassadorial postings, leaderships of constitutional bodies, and the crucial post of House Speaker and deputy Speaker. The Speaker's post has remained vacant since early October when Krishna Bahadur Mahara stepped down in the wake of rape allegations.



her priority was the Speaker and she may not accept just any ministerial portfolio

Since the constitution requires the Speaker and Deputy Speaker to be from two different parties-one of them woman, the only option for Oli is to ask Tumbahangphe to resign and appoint a leader of his choice as Speaker. Tumbahangphe is from the ruling Nepal Communist Party, but she is not a directly elected Member of s the House Sp traditionally been a directly elected leader, some within the ruling party might be unwilling to accept Tumbahangphe for the role, say NCP leaders Prior to the parties' merger into the Nepal Communist Party, Tumbahangphe was with the UML while Mahara was from the Maoists, which gives the Maoist faction of the ruling party a 'rightful claim' to the post of Speaker, say former Maoist leaders.



In what is set to be the biggest deal signed by the KP Sharma Oli administration, the French government will be providing a soft loan of 200 million euros.

ANIL GIRI KATHMANDU, NOV 12

After abruptly cancelling a global tender for the printing and supply of 5 million e-passports, the government is now in the final stages of signing an agreement to set up a dedicated security printing press under a government-to-government arrangement with France

This will probably be the biggest government-to-government deal signed since KP Sharma Oli was elected to office in February 2018.

The total cost of the deal is over 200 million euros, not including the facility printing banknotes, for where the French government will provide a soft loan.

Details, including the financial arrangements, interest rate and time frame for repayment of the loan, have yet to be made public, but an announcement is likely this week, most probably on Thursday during a weekly press briefing by Communication Minister Gokul Baskota.

"We do not have the details about the signing of the government-to-government agreement but we are doing the paperwork right now," said Rishi Ram Tiwari, spokesperson for the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. "We hope all the exercises in setting up a security printing press will be out within a couple of days.'

The Department of Passports last week cancelled the multi-million dollar e-passport tender, hours before the deadline for bid submission. Officials told the Post that the tender had been cancelled on Oli's direct intervention.

The deal is going to be signed at a time when a prerequisite security printing law has yet to be approved by the Cabinet. Several Cabinet ministers are in the dark about the deal, according to at least two senior government officials at the Prime Minister's Office.

Former officials and experts, however, said that the government's see-sawing on crucial decisions like these could severely tarnish the country's image.

"If the government was going to set up the security printing press as announced in the annual policies and programmes, why did it call for tenders?" said Shanta Raj Subedi, a former finance secretary. "The whole episode is confusing. Cancellation of a global tender at the last moment has given a very bad impression to global bidders.'

>> Continued on page 4



POST PHOTO

LIFE & STYLE

K-pop has conquered the

world-and Kathmandu with it

08

Though Deputy Speaker Shiva Maya Tumbahangphe has staked her claim to the post of Speaker, party insiders say that she is likely to be

The House Speaker's post has remained vacant since early October

asked to step aside in return for a ministerial portfolio.

"I would prefer to comment only after leaders begin discussions on Speaker appointment," Tumbahangphe told the Post. "Leaders have not consulted with me about this matter yet.' A member in Tumbahangphe's sec-

retariat, however, told the Post that

>> Continued on page 4

National Reconstruction Authority spent just 65 percent of its budget last fiscal year

Officials blame the use of existing state bodies to channel funds for the subpar spending.



A total of 472,351 houses have been rebuilt across the earthquake-affected districts so far.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA

KATHMANDU, NOV 12

National Reconstruction Authority, formed in the wake of the devastating 2015 earthquakes to reconstruct and rebuild public infrastructure and private homes, is spending a lot less than it is supposed to.

The authority, formed to accelerate reconstruction works, spent just 65 percent of its budget last fiscal year. The authority had received a budget of Rs138.42 billion in the fiscal year 2018-2019, but it was only able to spend Rs89.35 billion, which is just 64.5 percent of the budget, according to records from the authority.

Manohar Ghimire, joint-spokesperson for the authority, admitted that the budget expenditure had not been good enough.

"As the budget is spent through the existing government agencies, the expenditure pattern is no different from that of other government agencies," Ghimire told the Post.

With just over a year left in the authority's tenure, 472,351 houses have been rebuilt while 666,570 houses are being reconstructed, according to the authority.

The reconstruction authority's low spending can primarily be attributed to its failure to spend funds pledged by donors, as the expenditure of the governmental budget alone stood at 81 percent.

According to Ghimire, the delay in getting clearance from donors for a number of projects affected the overall expenditure. Resources promised by India, in particular, have not been spent. According to the authority, not a paisa was spent last fiscal year from the Rs 2.71 billion allocated as part of India's \$750 soft loan pledged through its Export-Import Bank.

The government had also allocated Rs 10 billion as part of a reimbursable grant from India, but the spending here too stood at just four percent, while a cash grant of Rs1.4 billion was not spent at all. India had pledged a total of \$1 billion-\$750 soft loan and \$250 grant—for reconstruction.

> Continued on page 4

Sandwich Roofing Panel

चौडाई: ८५० मि.मि. लम्बाई: ग्राहकको माग बमोजिम मोटाइ: ३० मि.मि., ८० मि.मि. ५० मिमि

> शित भण्डार (Cold Store) आवास (Residence) पोल्ट्री फर्म (Poultry Farm) फ्याक्ट्री सेड (Factory Shed)

Sandwich Wall Panel

चौडाईः ८५० मि.मि. लम्बाई: ग्राहकको माग बमोजिम मोटाइः ८०, ५०, ७५, १००, १५० मि.मि.

Bharatpur-9 Chitwan, Nepal, Tel: +977-56-530465, 525945, 9855084467, 9855084465, Kathmandu +977-01-5244261, 9802924893

E-mail: shs.mrkt@gmail.com, info@sandwichhome.com.np, Web: sandwichhome.com.np

MEDLEY

Inside the Post

National

The local units in Jajarkot constructed 216 km of road in the past two years. During a meeting organised by the District Coordination Committee last week, all local units in the district presented their reports on development activities.

Opinion

The mountain agriculture heritage has been enigmatically affluent both in its evolution and content. It has been overwhelmingly shaped by nature, culture, ethnic dispositions and traditional farming practices.

Culture & Arts

In Nepali pop music, there are some songs that straightaway attack and stereotype women to boost male masculinity. Yet these are the songs that people have enjoyed over the years, making it a trend to make songs that have lyrics that demean women.

Money

Families of the US-Bangla Airlines crash victims have charged that the Nepali law firm hired by the Bangladeshi carrier has been pressurising them to withdraw their lawsuit, saying that it was against their fundamental right to a 'fair trial' and the 'independent judiciary' system.

Sports

Amid ongoing speculation over whether the VIP section of the Dashrath Stadium, the primary venue to host the opening and closing ceremony of the upcoming South Asian Games, would be ready in time for the games, the material for the roof arrived on Tuesday.

News Quiz

1.	Stu	dents	in	which	dis	trict	
	are	worki	ng	towards	owl	con-	

- servation?
- a. Bhojpur b. Khotang
- c. Kaski
- d. Palpa
- Where was Dr Govinda KC staging his 17th fast-unto-death demanding medical education
- reform?
- a. Darchula
- b. Doto
- c. Kailali d. Dadeldhura
- Where will Nepal play their home tie against Kuwait in the FIFA World Cup and Asian Cup joint qualifiers?

a. Bhutan b. India c. Bangladesh d. Sri Lanka

4. Which cyclone recently hit the coast of Bangladesh and India?

- a. Fani b. Bulbul c. Nargis
- er made up what percent of all candidates recommended by

the Public Service Commission in the fiscal year 2018-19? a. 45 percent b. 50 percent c. 60 percent d. 55 percent

Which sportswear maker 6. announced on Monday to shut down its factories in Germany and the US?

a. Nike b. Puma c. Adidas d. Sketchers

POST PHOTO: ELITE JOSH An old man wearing traditional daura suruwal looks on from his home at Khokana, in Lalitpur.

On this day in history

Nepal-India security talks

BAITADI - Talks between officials of Nepal and India were held at Pithauragadh, India on November 9 in connection holding the forthcoming general elections peacefully.

According to Baitadi district administration, the Indian officials pledged to cooperate in checking smuggling of illegal goods and flow of travellers, and to maintain strong vigilance on criminal activities.

The meeting was attended by Baitadi CDO Shyam Sunder Sharma, Darchula CDO PD. Subhash, the deputy superintendent of police of both the districts, officer of the national investigation department and Baitadi assistant chief district officer on behalf of Nepal. Likewise, district officer Rajendra Kumar Tiwari, superintendent of police, ADM, SDM and officials of tourism and electricity departments attended the meeting of behalf of India

HOROSCOPE

The Kathmandu Post

November 13, 1994.

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

Quote of the day

How Nepali songs are blurring the lines between entertainment and sexism, Page 9

"Songs are art, and art reflects society, so if vou are saving that this song is objectifying women, then rather than making the song the issue, we should actually look into how women are treated in our community."

Actor Reema Bishwokarma, who was part of the music video of 'Ghati Bhanda Tala Ta Ramri Nai Che', a song with sexist lines, speaks on how the issue is not with the lyrics of a song, but with Nepali society as a whole.

Most read online

Brahmins and Chhetris continue to dominate entry into civil service

Brahmins and Chhetris continue to be disproportionately represented in Nepal's civil service despite a 2007 Act mandating reservations for marginalised groups to increase their presence in the state apparatus. In the last fiscal year 2018-19, Brahmins and Chhetris together made up 55 percent of all candidates recommended by the Public Service Commission, according to the commission's annual report, published recently.

Lalitpur Metropolitan City to start construction of 4.7 km cycle lane from next week

After meeting with the representatives of Nepal Cycle Society and other stakeholders, Lalitpur Metropolitan City on Monday said it would start the construction of a 4.7km cycle lane from November 17. Officials said the work would be completed by March next year.

Oli to decide on Cabinet reshuffle by the end of the week

After directing his secretariat to step down, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli will now be shuffling his Cabinet by the end of this week, according to leaders from the ruling Nepal Communist Party. According to party insiders, Oli and his party Co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal are mulling over a major overhaul, not just of the Cabinet but also of provincial chief ministers and internal party positions including provincial chiefs.

Baburam Bhattarai: Our mission is to create a new force based on an alternative ideology

Baburam Bhattarai, former prime minister and one of the 'architects' of the decade-long Maoists insurgency in Nepal, is currently in the midst of attempting to provide, what he calls, an 'alternative force' in the country.

Corrections

In the news titled 'School students actively involved in the conservation of owls in Khotang', published on November 12, the number of students in the current academic year of Jyoti Secondary School was inaccurately mentioned as 87. The number of students is 287.

If you believe we have got something wrong and it requires correction, please email us at kpost@kmg.com.np with "correction" in the subject line.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)



When someone displays inappropriate behaviour today, it should not be tolerated by you or anyone else. Be the first one to call foul when an insult is hurled or a shot is aimed below the belt. Whether you're defending someone else or defending yourself, go at the perpetrator with equal vigour

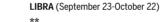
TAURUS (April 20-May 20)



Use your imagination, your most vivid dreams help you gain the insight you've been seeking. You've been suspicious of someone for a while, but haven't been able to figure out why-could your creativity help you connect the dots? Come up with a theory or two about what's been going on, and talk about it with your friends

LEO (July 23-August 22)

CANCER (June 22-July 22)



Today, someone you care about a lot will burst into your life and ask you for help. What they want could sound like a bad thing—but is it really? So open your heart and make time to do what they need you to do. You cannot let your own issues block you from being generous and helpful

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)





Warn your friends or coworkers that you could get grumpy as the day moves forward—have you been getting enough rest and eating well? If not, it's time to put your health first and start saying no to late night invitations. Keeping yourself feeling strong is your responsibility. Take your health seriously and you'll feel sunnier again.

**





If you are looking for someone to team up with, either in a romantic relationship or in a business context, do not pick the first person who shows interest! You had better shop around if you want to find the perfect partner-or at least a partner who will be able to provide everything you truly need.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)



Timing is everything when it comes to any kind

of relationship—so you need to stop trying to rush things! Whether you're eager to hear about a job prospect, dying for the cutie to call, or impatient about when your sweetie will propose, you have to realize that you don't have any influence in this situation.

A controversial issue could be causing conflict between you and someone you love today-but does it have to? Your opinions are important, and it's important to defend how you feel about things. But is it worth upsetting someone else? What the two of you have together is more important than being 'right'.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Loyalty is a crucial component of any friendship, so you need to stand by your friends today when the drama goes down. Accusations are being thrown around, and as far as you know they are not true. If you have to get combative with the accusers, then do so-avoid saying anything that inflames their temper.

Your energy is lower and it will be easy for you to get distracted today, so don't freak out if during a middle of a conversation or a meeting your mind starts to wander. It's going to take a lot of dynamic energy to keep you engaged. This is not a great day to work on projects alone.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ****

You should exercise your creativity as much as you possibly can today-dance, sing, rhyme, riddle, and use all of your other unique self-expression skills to turn heads and provide some entertainment! People will respond well to it, and send some seriously good social energy back your way.

One of the people in your life is going through an emotional period right now. Their typical sunshiney disposition is getting clouded over, and they could start to get very irritable. Do not let this scare you off from talking to them, though. They need your input and good ideas desperately-they just don't know how to ask.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)



A friend's very comments will plant a seed in your brain that grows throughout the day and might start to drive you a little nuts. If want to get to the truth about what they think, you need to ask them. They might be surprised by your boldness, but they will appreciate the fact that you want clarity.

CROSSW	ORD																		SU	JD	OK	U					
ACROSS 1 Like a pancake 5 Use bath	50 Rapid-fire 52 Steakhouse order			1	2	3	4		14	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	18	54	37	62	9				
powder 9 Pony's gait	56 Leave a mark 57 Pennsylvania	L A I D S A I G O R T I	RESTHUD	13					14						15						52 21						
13 Neighbor of Molokai	port 58 Above, to poets	ERASERS	N E S R O T E D U B I O U S	16					17						18				95 21	38	64 79	2 7	1				
14 Desk-drawer item 15 All mammals	60 Raised the lid 64 Parent 65 Bound by oath	ORDEALS	I O U E N A M E L S	19				20			21				22				82	91	45	36	7				
have it 16 Constantly	67 Unseen emanation	A N A I	J N G S L A W F S A W E				23			24		25		26					7354	12	96 83	54 91	8 2 yr	STERD	AY'S SO	LUTION	
17 Languor 18 Eric of —	68 Till 69 Military hats	HILIALASSAILS	DUDEETNA EARNEST	27	28	29					30		31						1	2			7	9			
"Monty Python" fame 19 Dances from	70 Latch on to 71 Not the least bit nice	MOT WIDENED	PIT SPOILED	32					33			34		35		36	37	38					/	3	2	_	
Brazil 21 Get nosy	72 Coast downhill 73 Otherwise	ODINRE VOLTEL	ITELLEIA	39					40				41			42			4	9		4			3		
22 Outward appearance	DOWN		NEDEDEN	43			44	45		46					47					5		4		2			9
23 Holy image 25 Tern or albatross	1 Celts, to Romans 2 Volcanic rock	12 Vogue	. by Andrews McMeel for UFS 45 Ziegfeld				48		49		50			51					6			8					
27 Bored 31 RSVP word	3 Beg pardon! 4 Power-plant	14 Willpower 20 — in the hole	nickname 47 Measure of land	52	53	54				55		56										2		1			ures.com
32 Wingtip 33 Prez's stand-in	spinner 5 Hassle a debtor	24 Down and out 26 Pitch in 27 Recipe amts.	49 Mall booths 51 Gown's go-with 52 Vaccine	57		- ·			58		59		60			61	62	63						3		Ę	2 Inightfeatu
35 Name in tractors 39 Husk	6 Longest arm bone 7 "The Cat in the	28 Oops! (hyph.) 29 Knot	53 Papas or Cara 54 Lasso									66	00			01		00	5			9		4		1	n: www.k
40 Proceeded slowly 42 Roman sun god	Hat" author 8 Kids' wheels	30 Ballerina painter 34 Animal skins	55 Stair post 59 Hawser	64 89					65			00			67						9					5 7	Z
43 Bundle of grain 46 Harvard rival	 9 Sewing kit item 10 Half diameters 	36 Is, in Madrid 37 Tree's anchor 38 A Muppet	61 — and void 62 Aphrodite's child 63 Noblewoman	68					69						70							5	2	\rightarrow			• 1
47 Energy source 48 Sort	11 Persian Gulf craft	41 Minor clergy 44 Plane part	66 Free of	71					72						73									RATIN	IG: ★	***	

NATIONAL

Education Ministry issues circular, asking local units to stop teacher hiring

BINOD GHIMIRE

The federal government has put a brake on the initiative of the local level to hire teachers on their own. Issuing a circular on Tuesday, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology asked all the local governments to stop the recruitment of teachers for now.

The local governments have been appointing teachers in public schools as mandated by the constitution. Schedule 8 of the Constitution of Nepal gives local governments explicit authority to manage school education, which means they can hire and fire teachers, develop curricula and hold examinations up to the 12th grade on their own.

The federal government has, however, been taking several steps to curtail their authority.

"The education units at the local level are asked to stop teacher hiring," reads the directive.

With the powerful local governments coming into being two years ago, they have been making attempts to transform the school education.

Appointment of fresh graduates to replace old teachers is one of their steps. For instance, Changu Narayan Municipality in July introduced a retirement package for teachers above 50 years of age. The municipality is preparing to recruit freshers in their place. The initiative of the municipality will be hampered by the ministry's recent directive.

The association of local govern-

ments says the directive infringes upon their constitutional authority to manage the entire school education.

"We ask the federal government to revoke its directive," Bansa Lal Tamang, general-secretary of the National Association of Rural Municipalities, told the Post. "Even if it doesn't, we won't follow it."

He said a majority of local governments have formulated their own laws to clear the way for teacher management and that the hiring is in accordance with that. Tamang said the federal government has taken steps one after another in curtailing the authority of the local level.

There are 753 local governments rural municipalities, municipalities, sub-metropolitan cities and metropolises—across the country.

The constitution provides them with an independent status, and they don't come under the federal or provincial governments.

"We want the federal government to let us function independently," said Tamang. Local governments in December last year submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, urging him to ensure that the federal government doesn't encroach on their authority.

Their move came after the federal government asked them not to formulate any laws without its consent.

A writ filed by advocate Sunil Rajan Singh claiming that the federal government's circular to stop local governments from formulating laws is unconstitutional. The case is sub judice in Supreme Court.



Medical professionals and doctors at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu take out a rally in support of Dr Govinda KC on Tuesday. KC has long been campaigning for major reforms in the country's medical education sector.

A witness in Alam trial says he was abducted and forced to change statement

Gauri Shankar Ram Chamar, who was injured in the 2008 Rautahat blast, is currently under police protection.

SHIVA PURI RAUTAHAT, NOV 12

Gauri Shankar Ram Chamar, one of the witnesses in the trial of Nepali Congress lawmaker Mohammad Aftab Alam, has said that he was abducted by Alam's supporters and forced to file a false court testimony to protect Alam.

Chamar was injured in the 2008 Rautahat blast in which Alam has been implicated along with the murder of at least 23 people.

On Monday, Chamar had filed a written testimony at the Rautahat District Court, claiming that he was injured when a cooking gas cylinder exploded at his home.

Chamar, who is currently under police custody, retracted his statement on Tuesday, saying that he had testified under duress. "Alam's men abducted me and held me captive for four days. They forced me to change my statement. They also offered me money to change my statement. What I told the court yesterday (Monday) is not true. I was indeed injured in the Rautahat blast and not in the cooking gas cylinder explosion," Deputy Superintendent of Police Nabin Karki quoted Chamar as saying.



reports about Alam's people threatening, cajoling and bribing the witnesses while the Congress lawmaker stands trial for multiple felonies.

On Monday, another witness in the Alam case, Amana Khatun— the wife of Osi Akhtar, one of the persons so far believed to have been killed in the Rautahat blast—had also filed a written testimony at the court, contradicting her police statement.

Khatun told the court in her testimony that her husband was not in the country when the Rautahat blast occurred.

Khatun's father Samasul Miya said on Monday that his daughter gave false testimony due to the pressure from some villagers, who are believed to be Alem's supporters.

to be Alam's supporters.

Delhi-based experts on Nepal call for dialogue to settle border row

A new Indian map placing Kalapani inside Indian borders has stirred controversy and sparked protests in Nepal.



After Chamar was forced to sign a false testimony, he was reportedly brought to the court by Alam's supporters on a motorcycle on Monday.

Following the incident, Chamar has filed an application with the District Police Office demanding security of his life and his family members.

There have been unconfirmed

Chamar has said that Alam's men held him captive for four days and forced him to change his court statement to protect the Nepali Congress lawmaker.

Khatun had changed her court statement of her own volition or due to external pressure.

District Attorney Khadindra Raj Katawal said that the statements registered by Chamar and Khatun in connection to the Alam trial were meaningless.

"The court does not entertain such claims since it is clear now as to why the witnesses changed their statements," Katawal said.

The court began a formal trial on Alam's case on Thursday. He was arrested on October 13 and charged with, among other crimes, holding, transporting explosive materials and burning alive the people injured in the Rautahat blast on April 9, 2008—the eve of the first Constituent Assembly elections in which Alam was vying from Rautahat constituency-2.

Wildlife parts smuggling continues despite strict laws

Around 20 suspected wildlife poachers and smugglers have been booked since the start of the new fiscal year.

SHUVAM DHUNGANA

KATHMANDU, NOV 12

On October 23, the Metropolitan Police in Lainchaur arrested two men from Kathmandu with pangolin scales and a tiger's hide.

The two men were identified as Nawaraj Neupane, 28, of Kispang Rural Municipality-3, Nuwakot, and Keshav Aryal, 22, of Siranchowk Rural Municipality-6, Gorkha.

"Neupane and Aryal were caught with pangolin scales weighing 1.4 kg and a tiger hide measuring 3 feet 11 inches," said an officer.

The duo was taken to the Kathmandu District Forest Office and charged with smuggling of wildlife parts under the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act.

Pangolin scales are among the most trafficked items in the world.

"Pangolin scales fetch around USD 3,000 per kg in the international black market. They are in high demand in Asian markets, especially in China, where they are used in manufacturing traditional medicines," said Kathmandu District Forest Officer



In this file photo, police display items made of wildlife hides and derivatives seized from a home in Kathmandu.

ment in smuggling the skin of a pro-

tected animal. Both Lamsal and

trading of conserved species is liable

to up to a 15-year jail term and a fine

not exceeding one million rupees or

Anyone involved in poaching and

Shrestha are likely to face jail terms.

Basu Pokharel. More recently, on November 4, a team from the Central Investigation Bureau of Nepal Police arrested Saroj Lamsal,24, of Dhulikhel, and Surendra Shrestha, 25, of Ramechhap, from Sinamangal, Kathmandu, for their alleged involveboth as per the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973.

Wildlife poaching and smuggling of animal parts are common in the country despite the law.

"Most people who get arrested for poaching and smuggling of protected animals do not know the consequences of their actions. Many of them are poor and uneducated people who are lured by wildlife traffickers with financial inducements," said Roshana Pokhrel, an officer at the forest office. "They commit the crime to make quick money but end up serving jail time for years."

Conservationists say while the authorities concerned have prioritised the conservation of animals like one-horned rhinoceros and tiger, lesser-known species like the pangolin are being hunted towards extinction.

According to the District Forest Office, as many as 70 suspected poachers and smugglers of wildlife parts were booked in the past fiscal year. Around 20 suspected wildlife poachers and smugglers have been booked since the start of the new fiscal year. India's new political map puts Kalapani within its borders.

SURESH RAJ NEUPANE NEW DELHI, NOV 12

Amid an uproar in Nepal over a new Indian political map that places Kalapani within Indian borders, New Delhi-based experts on Nepal affairs said on Tuesday that the issue must be resolved through dialogue.

"Both sides should openly present their interests and stance," said KV Rajan, a former Indian ambassador to Nepal. "Nepal has every right to present its claims regarding the matter. Nepal has full authority to have a say and lay their claims."

The Post reported last week that India's new map—released after India formally split up the disputed Jammu and Kashmir state into two federal territories, in line with an August move by the Narendra Modi government to rescind Kashmir's autonomy—placed Kalapani inside Indian borders.

Since then, both Nepal and India have issued statements, making their positions clear. Nepal has also requested India for a foreign secretary-level meeting to resolve the issue.

Rajan, who served as the ambassador to Nepal during the signing of the Mahakali treaty between Nepal and India, said such matters could not be resolved through public pressure.

"Street protests can further complicate matters and fuel mistrust between the two countries," Rajan said.

Responding to a question regarding India placing Kalapani within its borders, Raveesh Kumar, spokesperson for Indian Ministry of External Affairs, had said, "both countries should guard against vested interests trying to create differences between our two countries."

SD Muni, also an expert on Nepal affairs, said that the political map published by India is not new in terms of the border with Nepal and that if there are any disputes, they should be resolved together through discussion. "Such disputes are often seen when rivers are marked as borders. The only way to resolve such dispute is dialogue," said Muni.

Hinting at some protesters in Nepal burning Modi's effigy, Muni said such protests and activities could worsen the relations rather than help solve the problem.

Relations between Nepal and India had soured in 2015 after the promulgation of the constitution, as New Delhi imposed a border blockade creating an acute crisis of daily essentials, including medicines and fuel, in Nepal.

Enhanced bilateral engagements in recent years, however, have helped improved ties between the two countries and some irritants that keep emerging once in a while between neighbours should not affect the relations, experts said.

"At a time when our relations have moved forward in a positive direction, we need to find a lasting solution to issues like Kalapani," said Rajan. "Both sides should try to understand each other's sentiments. Traditional diplomacy cannot find a solution to this particular problem."

Professor Mahendra P Lama, a member of the Nepal-India Eminent Persons Group (EPG) from the Indian side, also called for finding a solution through dialogue.

The EPG, which was formed to provide suggestions for resetting ties and revising bilateral treaties as well as making recommendations on border-related issues, had prepared its report more than a year and a half ago. However, it is yet to be submitted to the prime ministers of both countries, largely due to a busy schedule of Modi.

Referring to Nepal's request for a foreign secretary-level meeting to discuss the boundary row, Lama said the initiative taken by Nepal is positive.

"Though it's a decades-old problem, there is no alternative to dialogue," said Lama. "And the initiative taken by Nepal is in the right direction."

NATIONAL



Women from the Sikh community pray on the occasion of Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary at Guru Nanak Satsang Gurudwara in Kupondole, Lalitpur, on Tuesday.

As Oli plans Cabinet ...

>> Continued from page 1

Former Maoist leaders have proposed Dev Gurung, Agni Sapkota, Lekhraj Bhatta and Pampha Bhusal, among others, for the post of Speaker, which is one of the highest positions in the country, after the President, Vice President, prime minister and the chief justice.

Gurung, a former law minister, is the senior most among the proposed names. But Gurung, who is the party's chief whip, has been one of the loudest critics of the agreement with the US' Millennium Challenge Corporation, which has earned him the ire of former UML leaders, including Oli.

In an interview with the Post's sister publication Kantipur in the third week of October, Oli had expressed dissatisfaction with Mahara's role regarding the Millenium Challenge Corporation agreement.

"He did not do his duty and did not follow the discipline of a Speaker by not presenting the proposal for endorsement, even after the government took it to Parliament," Oli had told Kantipur. Oli's dissatisfaction with Mahara over the Millenium Challenge Corporation could also harm Gurung's chances

Many former Maoist leaders also believe that Dahal could lobby for Agni Sapkota, who is a close confidante and a former minister.

"Agni Sapkota's name tops the list for Speaker, even though there are many aspirants in the party," said Bishnu Sapkota, Dahal's press advisor.

However, standing committee member Sapkota is currently facing the charges of murder, with his case pending at the ench of the Supreme Court. This serious ethical questions over Sapkota's elevation to the coveted post

Nepal set to miss target of ending tuberculosis by 2035

Experts warn of catastrophic condition in coming years if immediate steps are not taken.

ARJUN POUDEL KATHMANDU, NOV 12

A report of a prevalence survey carried out by an independent Joint Monitoring Mission for tuberculosis has painted a bleak picture of the country's tuberculosis control effort.

The report, a copy of which is obtained by the Post, states that Nepal is "not on track to end tuberculosis by 2035". At the United Nation's high-level meeting on TB in 2018, Nepal had committed to ending the problem through the WHO END TB Strategy.

The monitoring mission comprising national and international experts, implementing partners and officials from development agencies, had reviewed the progress, challenges and plans for the c sis control efforts. "Nepal is not on track to meet these commitments," reads the report. "So honouring them, and meeting the milestones and targets of the End TB Strategy, will require implementing bold policies that guarantee access to high-quality TB care and prevention to all who need it." The report states that "business as usual" is not an option—it will lead to a disintegration of the national tuberculosis programme that radical changes are needed. Dr Kedar Narsingh KC, a TB and chest physician, blamed the government for failing to implement strategies. "Our government has signed almost every international commitment but it has does little to implement them," said KC. "If immediate intervention measures are not taken, we can witness a catastrophic condition in the next couple of years." The report has stressed the need to address health system weaknesses, including those exacerbated by federalisation, and significantly increase investment in TB elimination by the government and development partners. According to the report, TB in Nepal is significantly larger than previously thought-two-thirds greater than previously estimated, which

increases the number of "missing cases" significantly.

In 2017/18, 32,474 people were diagnosed with TB, and nearly 7,000 people were estimated to have died (using pre-prevalence survey estimates). TB affects any age, caste or class, but cases are mainly poor people and mostly men

In the fiscal year 2017/18.32.474 people were diagnosed with TB.

ed, but they have far fewer staff than they did earlier," states the report. "Experienced district and regional TB staff have already been transferred. Most staff responsible for TB activities in the provinces and local level are not trained to carry out the work.'

Dr Sagar Kumar Rajbhandari, director at the National Tuberculosis Control Centre, said his office has been working to formulate a new strategy (2021-2025), incorporating the recommendations of the high-level mission.

"We are committed to implementing all the recommendations of the mission," said Rajbhandari. "We have already started some works as per the recommendations.'

The recommendations made by the

After aborting passport tender, government ...

>> Continued from page 1

A Cabinet meeting on November 6 decided to sign a new memorandum of understanding with Imprimerie Nationale, a French government undertaking, to set up a security printing press in Nepal.

The Department of Passports had invited bids as its stock of passports was dwindling and the timeline for setting up the security printing press was years away. However, according to the new deal, Imprimerie Nationale will supply all required passports and excise duty stickers until the security printing press comes into operation. Officials say it will take at least four years to set up the press

"Without our own security printing press, Nepal will be left with no option than to buy or import passports and stickers once we run out," said an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "It will make the project costlier in terms of paying the loan back to the French government.'

According to one official, the French firm will provide over 200 million euros in soft loan to the government of Nepal.

Printing banknotes is a costly affair because it needs bullet-proof infrastructure. The project cost could exceed 300 million Euros, said the official.

Subedi, the former secretary, said the government's rash decision provides ground for suspicion. "The reasoning behind this government-to-government deal is not clear, he said. "It is policy inconsistency. Cancellation of two biddings back to back gives ample ground to suspect something wrong.

Acting upon the directives of Oli, the Department of Passports cancelled the e-bidding process on Thursday, with only around 750,000 passports remaining in stock and the present printing contract with the French supplier, Oberthur Technologies, expiring once the stock is over.

The Inland Revenue Department also cancelled the bids for printing excise duty stickers.

According to officials, whatever the deal, the country must not face a shortage of passports and stickers, and they should not be expensive.

The local representative of Imprimerie Nationale is Yeti Group, which belongs to the family of Ang Tshering Sherpa, who died in a helicopter crash in February.

The decision to sign the new agreement with the French firm has been kept under wraps but the Cabinet has already given the go-ahead to the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to prepare an agreement paper for the multi-billion project with the French firm, two officials at the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology told the Post.

As a memorandum of understanding had already been signed between Nepal and France in March, prior to the global tender call, the government has decided to go for a government-to-government deal with France.

"But the memorandum of understanding we signed with the French firm has expired so if the government decides to sign a new understanding with France, we have to renew the previous memorandum," said Bikal Poudel, executive director of the Department of Security Printing Centre. "Besides this, I do not have any knowledge about any government decision because it is up to the higher authorities.

Officials at the Department of Passports said that since "higher authorities had cancelled the tender, they were now responsible for any shortage of passports"

If the French company is unable to provide passports as per the requirements of the Department of Passports, the only option will be to extend the present contract with Oberthur Technologies. This, however, is impossible as Oberthur's equipment is old and outdated, said officials.

National Reconstruction

However, leaders in the Maoist faction said they could give up their claim to the post of Speaker if Oli lets Co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal lead either the party or the government.

If the two top leaders agree to this condition, and the UML faction gains the post of Speaker, Oli will possibly pick Subas Nembang, who chaired the two Constituent Assemblies, according to former UML leaders

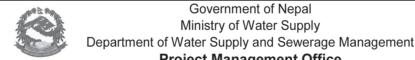
As all of the proposed names, except for Bhusal, are male, it is likely that the next Speaker will be a man. The deputy, therefore, will be a woman, most likely Durga Poudel of the Rastriya Janamorcha

The ruling party will most likely lay claim to the Speaker while the deputy will be awarded to another party, either the Samajbadi Party, Rastriya Janata Party or the Janamorcha. Regardless, the position will not go to the primary opposition, Nepali Congress, say ruling party leaders.



पोखरा ग्राण्डका सहायक फुड एण्ड वेभरेज मेनेजर पदमा कार्यरत अशोक अधिकारीको स्वर्गारोहण भएको आज १३ औं दिनको पुण्यतिथिमा दिवंगत आत्माको चिरशान्तिको कामना गर्दै यस दःखद घडीमा शोकाकुल परिवारजनलाई धैर्यधारण गर्ने शक्ति ईश्वरले प्रदान गरुनु भनि प्रार्थना





Contract Number

UWSSP/OCB-

G01/Vehicles

Children comprise 34 percent of the population but are currently under-diagnosed with TB. Likewise, the number of MDR cases each year may be as high as 1,500, of which only 546 were diagnosed and treated in 2016/17. HIV is a risk factor for TB, but the prevalence of HIV is falling, and it is not presently the problem it once was.

What is alarming is the massive economic burden that the disease has on patients. According to the report, the monitoring mission had met 22 patients who had spent over Rs45,000 in search of effective treatment of tuberculosis, while, as per the government commitment, it should have been easily available.

The average cost to a family of any member with TB can amount to as much as 39 percent of annual household expenditure, a catastrophe for an impoverished family.

Likewise, the report also highlighted the drawback in the TB control programmes by the ongoing employee adjustment process in all three tiers of government-federal, provincial and local level.

The report says the National Tuberculosis Control Centre's technical staff have been hollowed out.

"Federalisation now threatens the integrity of the centre. Districts, central to global TB control strategies, have been abolished and then reinstat-

Government of Nepal

Ministry of Water Supply

Project Management Office

Urban Water Supply and Sanitation (Sector) Project

Notice of Intent to Award Contract

(Date of publication: 13 November 2019)

As per Invitation for Bid published on 26 August 2019, the employer hereby publishes this notice of intent

to award the contract to the following mentioned lowest evaluated substantially responsive bidder as per

Clause 27 of the Public Procurement Act 2063 and Clause 40.1 of Instruction to Bidder's. Following the

Lowest Evaluated

Substantially

Responsive Bidder

M/S Agni Incorporated

Pvt. Ltd., Kathmandu

deadline of this notice, the employer will go on recognizing the bid eligible to be approved.

Details of Work

Supply and delivery of 10 nos of

double cab 4WD 4-door pick-up

(diesel) driven vehicle

nission inclu ensuring ess functions of TB control, especially laboratory network and quality assurance; supportive supervision; surveillance; monitoring and evaluation; procurement; active case detections among others.

The new five-year strategic plan's modality, however, is unclear. According to the report, the National Strategic Plan (2016-2021) is underfunded. More importantly, disbursement of the annual allocated budgets has been just 67 percent, states the report. "In consequence, the national strategic plan has been only partially implemented. Of the activities in the plan, 48 percent have been completed, 17 percent are partially implemented, and 36 percent have not been started, largely through lack of funding and staff.'

According to Dr KC, multi-drug resistance (MDR) TB cases have risen by 15 percent, which was less than 2 percent in the past.

He said channels of new case finding and reporting have been disrupted by the implementation of federalism.

"One TB patient transmit the deadly disease to 10 people and over 12,000 cases are missing every year, which is alarming," said Dr KC. "Concerned agencies including the Ministry of Health and Population have not taken the issue seriously."

Corrected evaluated bid

amount NPR (inclusive of

13% VAT)

44,000,000.00

Project Director

Authority spent just ...

>> Continued from page 1

The failure to spend the budget allocated under Indian assistance may be attributed to various preconditions stipulated by the Indian government, which include the use of at least 75 percent of physical Indian components like plants, machinery, equipment and services and 50 percent of Indian components in civil works.

According to government officials, it is difficult to use 75 percent Indian materials in all reconstruction works, especially smaller projects like rebuilding district health posts.

The government has now sought approval from India to divert this amount to other infrastructure projects, citing the impossibility of using all the funds for reconstruction.

The budget allocated from the Asian Development Bank. however, has been spent relatively well. The expenditure for the bank's reimbursable loan stood at 74 percent.

"The bank's funds were for school buildings and other public infrastructure such as roads," said Ghimire. "So most of the works have either been completed or are under construction, which resulted in better expenditure.'

According to Govinda Pokharel, former chief executive officer of the authority, the use of the existing government mechanism, which is notorious for under-performing, is to blame for the low spending.

"How can we expect better results if we use the same institutions and the same procurement law?" Pokharel asked

After the deadly earthquake of April 2015, which killed nearly 9,000 people and damaged nearly a million houses, the authority was formed to fast-track the reconstruction process on the grounds that employing regular government institutions could cause delays. But immediately after formation, the authority was mired in politicisation and saw a new chief executive every time there was a change in government.

In order to fast-track the procurement process for reconstruction, a number of changes in law regarding the formation of the authority had been made. But, according to Pokharel, government agencies don't follow the revised procurement process.

The government had initially envisioned a reconstruction fund along with the reconstruction authority and using that fund through a fast-track mechanism. But the construction fund was not created, as the establishment of the authority itself was delayed by eight months after the quake due to political wrangling.

"The donors were already signing agreements with the Finance Ministry and the implementing agencies had been selected when the authority was established," said Pokharel. "It was difficult to tell donors to change their implementing agencies after they had already signed the agreement.'

Former finance secretary Rameshore Khanal, however, sees the progress in reconstruction, despite frequent leadership changes. "I think the contracts of almost all projects have been awarded," said Khanal.

"But the delay in paying the second and third instalments to the people to rebuild houses for their failure to meet the conditions might have affected spending.'



Devotees participate in the Rudrayani dancing prosession during Sakimana Punhi in Khokana on Tuesday

POST PHOTO: ELITE JOSH

Jajarkot prioritises road construction over other sectors

Genuine and sensitive issues are being ignored because most local units equate development with roads.

BHIM BAHADUR SINGH

JAJARKOT, NOV 12

The local governments in Jajarkot, a hill district in Karnali Province, constructed 216 kilometres of road in the past two years. During a meeting organised by the District Coordination Committee last week, all seven local units in the district presented their reports on development activities. Their reports showed that the local units had spent approximately Rs 400 million to open tracks of around four dozen roads in the district since the country was federated in 2017.

However, the district's residents complain that the local representatives have solely prioritised the con-

BRIEFING

Birendranagar to be plastic-free BIRENDRANAGAR: Karnali provincial government has prepared a working guideline to make Birendranagar "a plastic bag-free" area, citing that plastic products have posed a serious threat to human health. The drive was initiated by the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Environment in struction of roads while ignoring other sectors such as social security, health, education, communication, agriculture, good governance and poverty alleviation.

"The recently opened tracks are not motorable. They do nothing to add value to our lives. These projects have only destroyed our forests," said Ram Bahadur Singh, a local of Kushe. "Most of the tracks have been opened without proper geophysical and environmental surveys, leaving the areas prone to landslides."

The District Coordination Committee agrees with the locals. It also concurs with the fact that haphazard construction has damaged arable lands and forests in the district. "A huge amount of budget was spent to pay fare and fuel to the dozers used in the road construction. The villagers did not receive employment nor did the opened tracks improve their lifestyle since they remain unmotorable," said Mana Bahadur Rawal, coordinator of the DCC.

According to Rawal, genuine and sensitive issues like shortage of food in remote villages, unemployment and poverty are being ignored because most local units equate development with roads.

"Only dozers can run on the newly opened tracks. Some tracks were dug just to provide work opportunity to the dozer owners," said Singh.

Based on the reports presented during the District Coordination Committee's meeting, Kushe Rural Municipality alone constructed 142 km roads in the past two years. Hari Chandra Basnet, chairman of the local unit, claimed that his office prioritised road construction, as it was the base of other infrastructure development.

"We opened the tracks to connect all nine wards with a road network. We will gradually give priority to other sectors," said Basnet.

The District Coordination Committee has urged the local governments to equally prioritise other development sectors while allocating budget. Rawal suggested spending around 60 percent of the budget on infrastructure development and 40 percent on health, education and social security, among other areas.

Saplings planted in front of Nepal Army headquarters and City Office wither

Botanists say city is planting saplings on as if they are planting trees in forests that don't need much care.

ANUP OJHA

KATHMANDU, NOV 12

Conservationists, botanists and commoners have criticised the city authorities for their negligence and lack of proper studies before planting saplings on the roadsides in the name of promoting greenery in the Valley.

Nearly two months ago, Kathmandu Metropolitan City in partnership with the Nepal Army and Department of Environment planted 500 plants on the footpaths starting from Tripureshwor to Jamal, but more than 60 percent of the plants have already died due to lack of care.

Recently, after the saplings had been planted, Nepal Army spokesperson Brig Gen Bigyan Dev Panday had assured that the Army would look afer those plants until they are fully grown. Panday even shared the success record of the Army planting 98,556 plants in its barracks and their surroundings in all seven provinces.

The authorities had planted Bottlebrushes and Jacaranda. Botanists say these tropical plants can easily survive on Kathmandu roads as they are adoptive plants.

"Saplings that are planted for roadside beautification should be planted with great care. But, these saplings were planted as if they were planting trees in a forest where the success rate didn't matter," said Tritha Bahadur Shrestha, a botanist and conservationist. He said that it was unfortunate to see a lack of farsightedness.

"In a forest, if only 30 percent plants survive, it would be meaningful, but planting in a city should give 100 percent results," said Shrestha. "They have planted trees in cemented narrow alleys, how can plants survive in such places."

On Tuesday, when the Post visited Sundhara, dozens of saplings planted

just in front of the entry gate of the Nepal Army headquarters and Kathmandu Metropolitan City in Sundhara looked withered, and many plants were missing from flower pots and those that remained were being pilfered by the pedestrians. In many places, one could only notice empty cemented pots painted in white with the names of Nepal Army, Kathmandu Metropolitan City and Environment Division.

"What could be a greater irony than this? Plants that were planted in front of their office gates are dying. How can they think of preserving saplings in other areas?" said Rajan Dahal, 45, owner of Makalu Yatayat in Sundhara.

"They are dying due to lack of water and proper gardening. I have been pouring water in a sapling planted in front of my office, but it has also died," said Dahal, adding that seeing Army's involvement he was convinced that those saplings would survive.

Starting from Sundhara area, footpaths at Shahid Gate, Bir Hospital, Ratnapark and Ranipokhari all the way to Jamal, the condition of the planted saplings was pathetic.

Hari Bahadur Shrestha, the chief at the City Office's Environment Division, said his office did not have to spend on the plantation as the plants were provided by the Department of Plant Resources. "The plants have died as we could not place tree guards as the supplying company didn't deliver at the time of plantation," Shrestha lamented.

In January, saplings planted along the Kalanki-Koteshwor road had met the same fate due to the authority's apathy in the preservation of the plants. The Ministry of Forest and Environment had planted 2,681 saplings along the stretches and the Lalitpur Metropolitan City had taken charge of regular supervision and regular watering of the plants.

Constable injured in Rautahat police post blast

Police arrest an Indian national in connection with the incident.



police personnel under the command of sub-inspector at the Mathiya Police Station when the incident occurred.

Police have arrested one Indian national Chandan Kumar of Dhaka in the Indian state of Bihar, from no-man's land area as he was trying to cross the border on a motorcycle (BR 05 H 6509) following the explosion.

coordination with Birendranagar Municipality.

Police fire warning shots to capture looters

DANG: Police fired warning shots to capture three looters in Tulasipur, Dang, on Monday. The Area Police Office in Tulasipur said that Bimal Oli, Nabin Nepali and Duja Bahadur Khatri of Tulasipur were arrested from Khamari forest. According to police, the group of looters had kidnapped two persons and demanded Rs 500,000 ransom.

Students stage demonstration against border encroachment BIRATNAGAR: Students affiliated

BIRATNAGAR: Students affiliated to the Nepal Student's Union on Tuesday staged a demonstration in Biratnagar to raise their voice against the encroachment of Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh by India. The students also submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister through the District Administration Office to recover the encroached land.

Ward chief held on charge of thrashing employee

DHANGADHI: An elected ward chairman allegedly beat and misbehaved with an employee in Mohanyal Rural Municipality-5 of Kailali district. Police on Tuesday detained Chhabilal Haujali Magar on the charge of assaulting Tulsara Sijali. The accused has been sent to the District Administration Office for investigation, said police.

Harichaur Primary Health Centre to be upgraded

BAGLUNG: Galkot Municipality in Baglung district plans to upgrade a primary health centre in Harichaur into a 15-bed hospital. Narayandhoj Malla, chairman of the municipality, said the residents of Galkot Municipality and Tarakhola Rural Municipality will benefit from the health services provided by the hospital. The improvised explosive device was detonated outside a police post at Mathiya.

SHIVA PURI

RAUTAHAT, NOV 12

A police constable was injured after an improvised explosive device was detonated outside a police post at Mathiya in Ishnath Municipality of Rautahat district on Tuesday afternoon.

According to police, Constable Ranjit Yadav sustained minor injuries in the blast. There were 11 District Police chief Superintendent Bhupendra Khatri confirmed that an IED was set off at the police station. "A police constable was injured in the incident. But we were able to arrest one Indian national who was absconding after detonating the IED," SP Khatri said. "Investigation into the incident is ongoing."

Meanwhile, security has been tightened along the border with an additional police force being deployed at the incident site.



In many places, only empty cemented pots painted in white remain, with a stick for a sapling.

Babai bridge damaged due to careless construction nearby

The Bridge Division has been constructing a new two-lane bridge alongside an old one to connect Gulariya with the rest of the district.

KAMAL PANTHI

BARDIYA, NOV 12

A bridge over Babai river in Gulariya-Nepalgunj road section along the Postal Highway has been damaged, cutting off Gulariya, the district headquarters, from the rest of the Bardiya district.

The 35-year-old single-lane bridge is the only bridge linking Gulariya to other places in the district. The bridge was damaged because of the on-going construction of a new bridge alongside it, said Ram Surat Raya, a local of Bhada. "The old bridge is on the verge of complete collapse due to soil erosion caused by the ongoing construction work for a new bridge."

The new bridge is designed to have six pillars for which the area was widened with the help of excavators. Raya believes that the use of the excavators have weakened the old bridge's foundation, and this risk was not taken into consideration by the local administration. He said, "Every day, hundreds of vehicles including heavy good carriers pass through the bridge. The foundation of the old bridge was weak and the heavy work done around the area has added to the burden."

According to the Bridge Division Area Number 3 in Nepalgunj, the authority concerned should put a complete ban on the operation of heavy vehicles over the bridge and its surrounding areas until the contractor completes the construction work of the new bridge.

Dhurba Bahadur Chand, an engineer at the Bridge Division, said that they have already informed the local administration and the Division Road Office about the weak condition of the bridge. He said, "Heavy vehicles should be banned from plying the bridge area for 15 days. And the old bridge should be repaired within that period to prevent collapse."

A team of the officials of the District Administration Office and technician of Gulariya Municipality has already inspected the bridge.

Gopal Chaudhary, the technician of the municipality, said that the contractor company did not adopt safety measures while undertaking the construction of the new bridge. He said, "The foundation of the old bridge is cracked and the use of excavators to lay the foundation of the new bridge has only weakened it further."

According to the Bridge Division Area Number 3 in Nepalgunj, Lama Swachhanda JV in Pulchowk, Lalitpur, has been constructing the



The 35-year-old single-lane bridge is the only link between Gulariya and other places in the district.

new bridge at a cost of Rs 334.95 million. As per the agreement, the construction of the new bridge should be completed within December 2020.

Niraj Sharma, ward chairman of Gulariya Ward No. 6, said that the contractor company should immediately take protective measures, such as refilling the dug out area with soil to protect the old bridge from complete collapse. "Otherwise, vehicular movement along the road section will be obstructed cutPOST PHOTO: KAMAL PANTH

ting Gulariya resident from the rest of the district," said Sharma.

The Post tried to contact the representatives of the contractor company but they were not reachable for comment.

OPINION

EDITORIAL

A ticket for her

The old practice of fielding widows in their husbands' former seats continues.

Women's empowerment has been a buzz word for quite some time. Yet, their voices are shut out all too often. Their place in society is, more often than not, defined in relation to their male counterparts—often as someone's wife, daughter or sister. Very few women are persons in their own right, and there is remarkably little to say about their part in political life. A fitting example of this is when women are allowed to hold office through widow's succession, a system under which the widow of a dead politician is elected or appointed to his seat.

Most political parties in Nepal are now preparing for by-elections to be held on November 30. The old practice of fielding widows in their husbands' former seats continues in these polls. It is not to say that giving them a chance to be part of the political sphere is wrong. It should be encouraged. But what is wrong is when they are fielded only once a vacuum is felt, and when they are the second choice, not the first.

Bidya Bhattarai, the widow of Rabindra Adhikari, who was the minister for culture, tourism and civil aviation, is now contesting a seat in the federal Parliament from Kaski Constituency 2 which became vacant following her husband's demise. Similarly, Bimala Oli is contesting the provincial by-elections from Dang Constituency 3 (B) after the last incumbent, her husband Uttar Kumar, died earlier this year in a road accident. Both the women received tickets from the Nepal Communist Party. But in the past, other parties have followed similar practices.

Women have been at the forefront of major political changes in Nepal. Be it during the revolution against the Rana regime in 1951 or the movement to abolish the one-party Panchayat system and establish a multiparty democratic system in the 1990s, they distinguished themselves with their active participation. A significant number of women also participated in Jana Andolan II in 2006 to oust the monarchy and make Nepal a federal democratic republic.

The 2015 constitution guaranteed 40 percent female representation at the local level and 33 percent representation in the House of Representatives and the National Assembly. Currently, women hold 14,352 out of the total 35,041 seats at the local level—a nearly 41 percent share. At the national level, the 33 percent quota has translated into women holding 90 out of the 275 seats in the House of Representatives and 22 out of the 59 seats in the National Assembly.

On the surface, women's representation has increased over the years, and this is a welcome change. But when it comes to them leveraging their power and having a say in decision-making, it might take a while. Because with representation, the next step should be political power without which it will be impossible to bring in substantial and far-reaching change.

The gender of the representative has typically been an outcome of a hierarchy of sexes where men exercised control over women. But the argument for women's empowerment is irrefutable—a democracy without women is just half the democracy since a significant size of the population is not wholly engaged equally in decision-making. More women need to be in politics to rectify the imbalance, and diversity in decision making will only help make societies more progressive. For this, along with ensuring quotas, they should also be considered as political beings without tying that identity with their male counterparts.

We want to hear from you

We regularly publish Letters to the Editor on contemporary

The fragility of secularism and the future of democracy

There is a reason democracy inevitably degenerates into majoritarianism in almost all religious polities.



It's the 550th year of the founding of Sikhism and Amritsar, home to one of the holiest shrines of the Panth, is all lit up for Guru Nanak Dev's birth anniversary. Important events are lined up for the week. His Holiness the Dalai Lama was here to rejoice in the celebrations.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, a former cricketer, hit a diplomatic masterstroke by opening up the Kartarpur Corridor to coincide with the Guru Nanak Gurpurab. The decision of allowing Sikh pilgrims to visit one of their holiest shrines found in the Pakistan side of Punjab had won Islamabad immense goodwill among the global Sikh community.

In frustration, the Hindutva activists had hoarding boards thanking Imran Khan for the move taken down from the streets of the city. However, grateful Sikhs, including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, lined up along the newly opened passage on a pilgrimage to pay obeisance at the shrine.

Unlike in Hinduism, the Sikh pantheon is made up of Gurus that were born, and lived and died for the betterment of the laity. The supreme one of the Panth is the timeless Akal with no form and only the name. Perhaps that's the reason believers of all faiths are enchanted by the serenity of Sri Harmandir Sahib (the Golden Temple) in the frontier city of Amritsar.

There is no word for the concept of Amrit in the English language. The element can have natural, magical or divine qualities of elixir, ambrosia, and nectar. But Amrit doesn't just cure diseases, ensure longevity or even grant immortality. It sets the recipient free from the everyday concerns of life, livelihood, suffering, and death. That's what the eternity of Akal is all about—the only truth.

Sikhs fought the Mughals for the dignity of the community and lost their primacy in Punjab to Muslims. They fought the British and lost an empire—surrendering the Kohinoor diamond and Kashmir. When their homeland was partitioned, the capital Lahore went to Pakistan because Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the British barrister entrusted with the task of drawing the borderline, didn't want to leave the new Muslim However, the anti-Sikh riots of November 1984 seem to have broken their belief that they were the blessed Indian citizens entrusted with the responsibility of defending the Omkar family of faiths. The Sikhs now realise that they are like any other religious minority in an India that is determined to be a Hindu Rastra.

It has been said that Hinduism is a family of religions that allows great diversity while Hindutva is a political ideology that seeks to enforce the majoritarian idea of conflating faith with nationalism. The symbol of Hindu supremacism in recent decades has been the Ram Lalla—Baby Ram believed to have been born at the exact spot where the Babri Masjid had existed for centuries until Hindu fanatics tore it down in 1992.

Decomposing plurality

In a verdict full of inconsistencies and contradictions, the Indian Supreme Court has sanctified the war cry of Hindutva proponents and awarded the disputed site to Hindus. A Hindu temple is to be erected right there on the spot, come what may. In its wisdom, the court says that Muslims have been wronged and need to be compensated with a five-acre plot but refuses to bring the wrong-doers to account. The court evidently had no courage to counter passions of the street with the considered voice of reason and restraint.

About a year ago, Donald Trump Jr, son of US President Donald Trump, had characterised the Indian media as 'mild and nice' compared to the 'aggressive and brutal' American press. They have become milder and nicer since then, and have begun to

enjoy being the stenographers and megaphones of power. There was almost no reflection, barring few exceptions, in the mainstream press about the historic authenticity or the likely ramifications of the verdict.

The Indian National Congress has welcomed the court's sanction of building a temple on the disputed site. Satraps of regional parties have either supported the Hindutva agenda or maintained a deafening silence on the issue. Except for the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen chief Asaduddin Owaisi, even Muslim politicos seem to have accepted the decision with a defeated resignation. Little wondor India has become a

Little wonder, India has become a Hindu nation for all practical purposes. Independent India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had rightly observed that the idea of secularism was so alien to India that it had no equivalent word for the concept in any Indian languages. Unable to keep its promise to the minorities, the Indian constitution has become merely an instrument of Windu wub

Hindu rule. At least marginal autonomy of the states ensures that the dignity of large ethnic groups isn't at risk. In southern India, linguistic sub-nationalism is an established practice. Even in Punjab, authorities have decreed that all signboards henceforth will have to be in Gurumukhi script. But religious minorities (even as large a population as the Muslims, at over 200 million) face stark choices: accept a subordinate status, leave the country on loave to live of denial

or learn to live a life of denial. Among Kashmiris, Sikhs, and SHUTTERSTOCK re trampled

longer. As often as they are trampled under boots, democracies decompose and die under majoritarian regimes. Secularism is a necessary, though not self-sufficient, condition for plurality to flourish in peace.

Decaying democracy

It's quite well known that the term Lahure owes its origin to the Gurkhas that were too proud to join the Nasiri Battalion after the surrender at Sugauli. A large number of Gurkhas continue to serve in the Indian defense forces. However, the number of Nepalis working in the informal sector even in a place like Amritsar isn't small. They strive to maintain their Hindu identity. For an immigrant, it's useful to associate oneself with the dominant community.

Erosion of secular values, however, is as dangerous to minorities within the fold of Hinduism as to practitioners of other religions. Caste hierarchy is an inalienable part of the religion. Very few Hindu rituals can be performed without the assistance of a Brahmin priest. Rightly has it been said that once you take out Brahminism, nothing remains in Hinduism except rituals of animism. But secularism is as necessary for the human dignity of Dalits as for the survival of Muslims or other minority religions.

Perhaps there is a reason democracy inevitably degenerates into majoritarianism in almost all religious polities. Secularism is important to ensure equality among citizens. But the allure of religion is so strong that its politicisation by populists and ethno-nationalists becomes inevitable in periods of uncertainty. That's the risk Nepal too will have to face sooner or later.

issues or direct responses to something the Post has recently published. Please send your letters to **tkpoped@kmg.com.np** with 'Letter to the Editor' in the subject line.

Please include your address, phone number we can reach you at and your email address.

How to make sure your letters are published? It's simple—just follow these basic guidelines:

Keep it short. Your letters will have a better chance of success if you keep it within 400 words. If you're writing commentary, pitch an op-ed instead.

Tell us what we got wrong, but back it up with resources.

Avoid jargon, use clear words and sentences. Keep in mind you're communicating with other readers who may not be aware of the subject.

We welcome witty letters. But please don't go overboard. Avoid abuse and diatribes.

Have something to say?

The Kathmandu Post invites you to submit well-researched, unapologetic opinion pieces. To make sure your articles get our attention, we ask that you keep the following things in mind when inquiring and submitting content to the Post:

All your opinion pieces should be pitched to the Opinion desk not to the editor-in-chief. Email your piece or idea (accompanied with a high-resolution headshot) to **tkpoped@kmg.com.np**.

We will only respond to pitches that have original ideas. We suggest that you google your pitch before writing to us. If you're submitting an article that either the Post or other publications have already covered in the past, tell us in a sentence or two why your story offers something new.

The Post receives dozens of pitches every day from aspiring writers, students, political commentators, entrepreneurs and diplomats. We are not able to respond to every single email, but if we like your idea, we will get back to you soon. Please DO NOT pitch us an idea if you're already pitching it somewhere else.

We carefully review submissions to ensure that no plagiarism has occurred. If we find any articles that have been plagiarised, such practice will lead to blacklisting.

Finally, please tell us who you are in a sentence or two when you send us your story ideas. We want to know where you have published before or what your expertise is on the topic you're interested in exploring. nation without a major city.

Sikhs managed to overcome the trauma of partition with remarkable fortitude and exemplary resilience.

Among Kashmiris, Sikhs, and Muslims, elders advise their wards, in all seriousness, to leave if they can, for India is not safe for minorities any

New hope for Indian unity

Supreme Court crafted a solution that no political process could have arrived at independently.

SHASHI THAROOR

After eight years of deliberations, India's Supreme Court has issued a verdict that settles one of the most protracted inter-religious conflicts in the country's turbulent history. The Court's decision couldn't have come at a better time.

The ruling concerns a disputed site in the dusty temple town of Ayodhya, in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh. Ayodhya attracted international notoriety in 1992, when a mob of Hindu extremists tore down a Muslim mosque, the Babri Masjid, which occupied a prominent spot in a town otherwise overflowing with temples. The mosque had been built in the 1520s by a Muslim noble, Mir Baqi, in the name of India's first Mughal emperor, Babur, on a site traditionally believed to have been the birthplace of the Hindu god-king Ram, the hero of the 3,000-year-old epic the Ramayana. The Hindu zealots who destroyed the mosque vowed to replace it with a temple to Ram and avenge a half-millennium of shame.

India is a land where history, myth, and legend often overlap; sometimes Indians cannot tell the difference. Many Hindus claim the Babri Masjid stood on the exact spot of Ram's birth and had been placed there by Babur to remind a conquered people of their subjugation. But many historians argue that there is no proof that Babur demolished a Ram temple to build his mosque. To destroy the mosque and replace it with a temple, they maintained, would not right an old wrong, but perpetrate a new one.

The Archaeological Survey of India, however, confirmed the existence of ruins beneath the demolished mosque that belonged to an ancient temple—though no one could be sure it was a temple to Ram. The dispute remained intractable, and dragged interminably through the judiciary. A 2010 ruling issued by the Allahabad High Court proposed to divide the disputed property three ways. All the litigants appealed to the Supreme Court, where the matter appears finally to have been resolved.

The court judgment gives the disputed site to a trust to be established by the government to build and operate a Ram temple, thus satisfying Hindus. And it rights the wrong done to Muslims by requiring the state to provide five acres of land at an unspecified 'prominent site' in Ayodhya for a new mosque.

To most Indian Muslims, the dispute is not about a specific mosque. The Babri Masjid had lain largely unused for nearly a half-century before its destruction, because most of Ayodhya's Muslims had emigrated to Pakistan upon the partition of India in 1947. Rather, the dispute was about their place in Indian society.

For decades after independence, mainly under the rule of the centre-left Congress party, Indian governments had guaranteed Muslims' security in a secular state, permitting the retention of Muslim 'personal law' separate from the country's civil code

To most Indian Muslims, the dispute is not about a specific mosque.

and even subsidising pilgrimages to Mecca. Three of India's presidents have been Muslim, as have been innumerable cabinet ministers, ambassadors, generals, and Supreme Court justices, not to mention cricket captains. Until at least the mid-1990s, India's Muslim population was larger than that of Pakistan (where a soaring birthrate finally put it on top). The destruction of the mosque felt like a betrayal of the compact that had sustained the Muslim community as a vital part of India's pluralist democracy.

The Hindus who attacked the mosque, however, saw the Indian state as soft, pandering to minorities in the name of misplaced Westernstyle secularism. To them, an independent India, freed after nearly 1,000 years of alien rule (first Muslim, then British) and rid of a sizable portion of its Muslim population by virtue of the partition, had an obligation to assert an identity that would be that of the 80 percent of the population who are classified as Hindu. They have found encouragement in the assertive Hindutva of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, which has overwhelmingly won two consecutive general elections.

The zealots are not fundamentalists in any common sense of the term, because Hinduism is a religion without fundamentals. There is no Hindu pope, no Hindu Sunday, no single Hindu holy book, and no such thing as a Hindu heresy. Hindu 'fundamentalists' are, instead, chauvinists, who root their Hinduism not in any of its philosophical underpinnings, but in its role as a source of identity. They seek revenge in the name of Hinduism as a political banner, rather than of Hinduism as a spiritual doctrine.

What the Supreme Court has done is to craft a solution that no political process could have arrived at independently, but which takes the dispute off the streets. Otherwise, the violence might have gone on, spawning new hostages to history and ensuring that future generations will be taught new wrongs to set right.

At a time when India's social fabric has been placed under unprecedented stress, Indians greeted the Supreme Court's judgment with almost universal relief, and there have been widespread appeals across political lines to respect the verdict, in the hope that it will bring closure to this contentious issue.

The Court's verdict thus should be viewed as the start of a process of national healing. The fact that this longstanding dispute has been resolved with a judicial decision, rather than a communal riot, reminds the world that democratic India can overcome its most fundamental difficulties by relying on the rule of law and the spirit of unity that animated the nation's struggle for freedom.

The Court's decision also represents an opportunity for India to rededicate itself to the best ideals for which it has stood—democracy, pluralism, and peaceful and productive coexistence. If it does, India can leave behind sixteenth-century problems and determinedly address its twenty-first-century challenges. —Project Syndicate



Adding spice to life



Two recent studies on large cardamom farming in Nepal and Sikkim offer new knowledge.

MAHENDRA P LAMA

The mountain agriculture heritage has been enigmatically affluent both in its evolution and content. It has been overwhelmingly shaped by nature, culture, ethnic dispositions and traditional farming practices. Though a range of produces have come out of these mountain regions, there has been very slow induction of modern technologies, negligible institutional interventions and highly vulnerable market linkages. This highland heritage that provides sustained livelihoods is yet to see mainstream discourse. However, some newer trends in agricultural practices have repositioned mountain dynamics. Variables like climate change, organic culture, value chain, improved connectivity, and migration have started injecting a fresh bout of enthusiasm as well as concerns. This has also triggered a variety of studies.

Two recent studies, *Large Cardamom in Nepal* by Jiban Shrestha and others from the Nepal Agricultural Research Council (2018) and *A study of large cardamom spice from Sikkim Himalayas* by Sudeshna Maya Sen at the TERI School of Advanced Studies, New Delhi (2019) have something substantive to offer as new knowledge. There are striking similarities in the political economy of cardamom production and the related value chain in both Nepal and Sikkim. For instance, both studies reveal significant variations in annual production and examples of crashing prices are given. Both conclude that it was Sikkim from where the Nepali labourers working in Adhya and Kut and Aarma Parma actually brought cardamom seedlings to Nepal and started cultivation mostly in eastern Nepal.

In both eco-systems, the diseases that affect the plants are similar including rotting of rhizome and viral diseases like chirke and furke. A decline in the bumble bee population as pollinators is conspicuous. Interestingly, they identify the facilitators and spoilers at each stage of farming to exiting the farm gate, and from marketing as a primary commodity to a range of value added products.

Value chain findings

Both studies have in them a new perspective of value chain analysis. It starts from the household and moves on to the village, district, province, and across state borders, involving the first point of intersection like land, water, seedlings and propagation, currying, drying and packing, and reaching the last mile intervention like spices and pharmaceuticals. While doing so, Sen particularly brings in a range of appropriate methodologies that facilitate the analysis of the entire matrices of the value chain.

In the process they make a serious academic attempt to bring a traditional informal arrangement of production and marketing of large cardamom into the public domain and discourse. These are pretty well juxtaposed with the sustainable development goals.

The value chain existed all through. However, the changing nature, depth, dimensions and reach of the value chain of large cardamom were rarely captured. The largely informal institutions, agencies and functional principles that characterise the production and marketing of large cardamom are given newer interpretations wherein their roles, functions and the consequences are scientifically identified. The analytical tools used in these studies could well be extended and applied in studying several other mountain based commodities like home broom, orange and ginger.

The path of the value chain has been very meticulously figured out. However, both these studies stop at a point where it actually starts getting substantive value addition. They could have gone beyond 'pan masala' and 'pharmaceuticals' and explore how large cardamom is blended in liquor and perfume. In fact, it is noted that a significant spike in prices is seen in this final link where 'some retailers brand their cardamom as organic, which fetches higher prices'.

In Sikkim, farmer incomes from cardamom increased from \$1.9 million in 1975 to \$13.8 million in 2005 and further increased 2.5 times in just five years to \$50 million in 2010. However, like in Nepal, two crucial questions remain unanswered. How much of this market realisation actually reaches the farmers, how is this market realisation distributed across various constituents of the value chain, and who are the leaders in this game? This could have well identified both the facilitative and exploitative agents in the value chain and made 'intervention options' much more effective and meaningful.

Both for Sikkim and Nepal, Siliguri is a crucial point of market disposal. The critical issue of why cardamom prices tend to fluctuate so randomly is not addressed in these studies. While Sen scientifically captures the impact of climate change in a diagram using Vensim software and highlights how communities have observed worsening trends of 'spatio-temporal inequities', the Nepali study makes only a peripheral statement on this very vital aspect.

A very realistic finding has been that of political, communal and administrative discrimination in terms of access to water. It becomes much more diabolical when there is concentration of power in the hands of a single political party. There is no conscious policy on spring sheds providing water to cardamom farming in Sikkim. In fact, a policy-less situation could be more effective as community management of water emanating from traditional principles of governance has been well institutionalised. Governmental policies, if ill-equipped for implementation, may dislocate community practices.

Curing and grading

An upward elevational movement for cardamom farming along with a shift from labour-intensive potato to cash crop cardamom is also recorded. However, unlike in Sikkim where there is a firewood-based highly inefficient curing and drying of cardamom, the Nepali study shows shifts from local *bhatti* to low-cost modern multi-tray curing chamber-dryers based on solar and electric power. This also helps improve the quality drastically.

Sikkimese farmers have developed so much confidence and connections with private trading agencies for marketing their products that they tend to ignore government provided marketing routes like auctions. Despite the fact that auctions fetch higher prices, cardamom farmers have been avoiding them because of lack of trust-awareness, delays in payment, distance from the farm, and limitation of banking transactional habits.

Though grading of the products into 'makhan', 'super delux' and 'chalan chalti' is done much before the farm gate in Nepal, issues of geo-tagging like geographical indicators in Sikkim are not discussed at all. This is attributed to the level of education of the farmers and their location in digital signal gap zones. Pertinent findings that relate to vanishing traditional indigenous knowledge mainly because of lack of documentation and declining institutional memories have been addressed by three extra academic, interdisciplinary and field based projects like Oral History, Winter Sojourn and Taking University Labs to the Communities of Sikkim University. This is where the institutions of higher learning are connected to the communities.

Lama is a Senior Professor in the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Women must have the right to choose

Unmet need for family planning is leading to unwanted pregnancies resulting in unsafe abortions.

HOSSAIN ZILLUR RAHMAN

As an economist, I have been appreciative of the remarkable decline in fertility from 6.3 births per woman in 1975 to 2.3 births per woman now—that was an outcome of both demand and supply-side drivers. A social campaign approach galvanised the demand. A decline in child mortality due to ORS success against the killer diarrhoea gave the confidence to reproductive-age women to opt for smaller families. An effective and accessible supply chain on contraceptives played its due role.

The fertility decline was not only a signature social achievement but contributed to economic success too. Between 1990 and 2010, a quarter of the incremental per capita income growth can be attributed to the fact that there were lesser people to divide up the economic pie than there would have been if we had continued with the 70s-80s fertility rate.

Nairobi, however, cannot only be about the long view. Equally important is to unpack near-term trends and the implications for future strategies. Early successes appear to have triggered a discourse ambivalence, particularly among policy-makers about the urgency of maintaining an unwavering focus on population policy. A dominant perception of being 'on track' actually belies the complexities of the 'last mile' challenges. The population density within the scarce landmass is rapidly reaching its sustainable limits. On current TFR (total fertility rate), the population of Bangladesh will hit 200 million by 2031. Much of this population growth will be located in the cities and, in particular, the burgeoning urban slums. Coping with unsustainable densities stands to jeopardise the policy atten-



tion required for the critical agenda of human resource development to reap the demographic dividend of a preponderantly young population. While the annual addition to the workforce is around 2 to 2.3 million, employment creation—both domestic and external—currently can accommodate only half of this number.

At another end, a vicious circle of consequences is in danger of becoming entrenched. Unmet need for family planning is leading to unwanted pregnancies which is leading to unsafe abortions, which in turn is contributing to a slowing in the decline of the critical SDG indicator of maternal mortality rate (MMR). The persistence of child marriage coupled with a very poor state of education on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) is leading to a disproportionate unmet need for family planning among the 15-19-year olds. A further twist in this near-term trend is that the rate of unwanted adolescent pregnancies is highest among the urban slums.

The 'last mile' challenge pertains not only to the adolescents. Another nearterm trend of concern is the spike in post-partum pregnancy of the older married group in their late 20s and 30s, due to an absence of integrated health-FP service in facilities. Nearly 44 percent of post-partum women have an unmet need for family planning. Further unpacking the near-term trends, one sees another hidden statistic of concern—the preponderance of short-term methods that contributes to a high discontinuation rate of nearly 30 percent. The short-term methods are mostly accessed from the private sector while the private sector is the principal provider of long-acting methods

Are the near-term trends in population policy highlighted above unique to Bangladesh or are, in fact, reflective of a more general phenomenon across the developing countries? Be that as it may, there are serious implications for how the way-forward strategy in the Nairobi conclave is most meaningfully framed. If the language of 'unfinished business' merely energises a bureaucratic drive to increase the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR), this may fall far short of re-igniting the global imagination on the population policy introduced twenty-five years ago in Cairo. Three key constituencies have come into focus around whose needs a holistic re-thinking can come to mark the Nairobi conclave-the adolescents, the urban poor, and the post-partum women. And for each of these, the underlying unifying agenda is that of women's empowerment.

Research is showing that lack of access to family planning is not the major explanation for unwanted pregnancies. Adolescent pregnancies are driven as much by the continuing propensity for child marriage as by the very poor state of exposure to SRHR norms and knowledge. For the urban poor, the reality is as much of policy neglect of a robust and affordable health and reproductive services infrastructure as of endemic exposure to sexual violence and intimidation. For the post-partum women, the issues are as much of lack of knowledge as of sensitive and trusted service facilities.

An issue which appears to have virtually disappeared in the population discourse is that of male contraception. Ultimately, this too pertains to the agenda of women's empowerment because the loss of focus on male contraception essentially indicates an implicit acceptance that the contraceptive burden has to be mainly, if not solely, borne by women. Why should this be so? Why should one readily accept the transparently untenable argument that convincing males of contraceptive use is more difficult? Isn't there a lurking shadow of patriarchy behind such arguments?

This article was published in The Daily Star, a member of the Asian News Network.

There will, and should, be many issues discussed at this global summit on population. But summits are remembered for their signature message. For Nairobi, this can be the cross-cutting agenda of women's empowerment. Not just lip service. But substance and teeth. I learned a valuable lesson on this from my young adult daughter Umama Zillur who works on innovative SRHR education at high schools. Such education will go nowhere if seen only as packaged content delivered mechanically. There are many textbooks which are not read and 'adolescent corners' which are not visited. A meaningful impact can only come from understanding SRHR education as conversations of trust ideally driven by peers. An atmosphere of trust is the ultimate guarantee that needs will be expressed and understood, services sought and delivered, and mutual learnings enhanced to keep the goal in view and progress on track.

LIFE & STYLE

K-pop has conquered the world—and Kathmandu with it.

Young Nepalis are not only drawn to the glamour of the popular culture but also to the idea of being part of a global phenomenon-of 'belonging' to something bigger than themselves.



When Imelda Lama was 13 years old, one of her cousins introduced her to K-pop. It was unlike anything she had heard before-the language was alien to her, and the music new-but before she knew it, she was hooked.

Now at 23, her affinity to the genre hasn't faded one bit. In fact, her love for K-pop, or Korean popular music, has introduced her to other aspects of Korean culture. Now she is an avid fan of not just Korean music, but Korean TV serials, movies, food, fashionor in her words, "everything Korean"

K-pop has become a sensation in many parts of the world, proving that popular music speaks every language, with some Korean artistes amassing enormous fandom among teenagers and young adults. It wouldn't be wrong in suggesting that one of South Korea's best exports is its music.

And like most South-Asian countries, Nepal is embracing this global popularity of Korean culture, termed as 'Korean wave' or 'Hallyu' in Korean. Korean pop culture has become a subculture in itself, especially among teenagers and youngsters. From its music to its cuisine to its street style, youngsters are fascinated by K-pop, and the reason for this fascination is more than just personal preference, say fans of Korean culture: it gives them a sense of belonging to a growing global phenomenon

"Individuals from different backgrounds, cultures and parts of the world all coming together and getting connected through a common artform is simply amazing if you think about it," said Prathana Shrestha, who has even attended one of BTS's (a popular K-pop boy band) concerts in Bangkok.

BTS was named 'the most popular boy band in the world' by various media outlets after it became the first South Korean band in history to debut as a No. 1 album on the US Billboard 200 chart as well as the first to have a single land at the top 10 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2018.

BTS is not the only Korean band that has seen such success. There e been other Korean musicians





Prathana Shrestha during a BTS concert in HongKong (left). BTSNepal Project, a Facebook page for Korean music fans, during one a community service programmes (right).

MUSIC AWARDS

reach a billion views. The song's music video has since been viewed over 3.4 billion times on YouTube and was the most-viewed video on YouTube up until 2017. But his popularity didn't last long.

Artistes like Psy, regardless of their short stint in the global popularity, has been instrumental in creating momentum and curiosity for Korean music. Although the modern form of K-pop can be traced back to the early 90s, the music started becoming increasingly popular to the global audifrom the mid-2000s. Since ence then, their popularity has only increased.

So much so that bands like BTS have been successful in gaining a large fan following around the globe, who call themselves ARMY. Lama joined the bandwagon in 2016, when she first listened to the music group. "I discovered BTS when I was having a lot of selfdoubt and general negative feel-ings," she said. "Their music preached self-love and it really resonated with me."

Now, other artists like Blackpink, Super Junior, Shinee, Girls Generation, 2NE1 are exploding onto the international scene.

Apart from being an avid follower of Korean music and shows, Lama also follows Korean fashclothes -irom ner ries, makeup to her hairstyle. According to her, Korean style is comfortable, attractive and most importantly, easy to follow. "For someone with similar facial and body structure, it is



MGM GRAND

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: PRATHANA SHRESTHA & BTSNEPAL PROJECT

"It is a universal connection that we have with other people."

Korean products even in the mainstream market or just people's interests are declining.

But for people in the food business who are serving Korean cuisine, there isn't the slightest doubt about young people's affinity with the culture, or at least when it comes to satisfying their taste buds with a mouthful of kimbab or a piece of kimchi.

"It has been almost five or six years that Korean restaurants have been popular in Kathmandu," says Dawa Sherpa, who works at Korean Taste restaurant in Thamel. "We host almost 30-40 people every day."

But it isn't just limited to personal grooming and experiencing diverse cuisine for young fans of Korean music. Some fans have even formed groups on social media to come together and discuss their love for Korean music and culture. K-pop in Nepal and BTSNepal Project are among the most popular pages.

BTSNepal Project has even gone a step further and organised a number of community service projects celebrating birthdays of their favourite Korean artistes.

"We have conducted pro-grammes like tree plantation, wall paintings, donations to orphanages, that we believe is a positive contribution to the society," says 23-year-old Arati Bista, who runs BTSNepal Project Facebook page.

Bista says their events receive enthusiastic participation from young people. "We are all celebrating art, and at the same time, helping the community through something that binds us together: our fondness for Korean culture," she says.

According to her, them organising communal events also helps to break the misconception that K-pop fans are obsessed with pretty Korean stars and blindly admire the music, movies and stars without a slight grasp of the Korean language. But Bista says there is more to this community of people who admire Korean culture and music.



South Korean boy band BTS poses on the red carpet with their awards during the 2019 Billboard Music Awards

easy to recreate South Korean looks and style," she says. Korean fashion aficio

that closely resemble what they watch on their screens, and most hey are successful in doing

emulate Korean celebrities, says Sujata Bajracharya, beauty advi-

AFP/RSS

who have gained massive international popularity. In 2012, 'Gangnam Style', a K-pop single by the South Korean musician Psy, took the internet by storm by becoming the first music video to

nado, Dikshya Tamushyo, says that she copies whatever her favourite artistes are wearing in music videos, TV shows or movies. Both Lama and Tamushyo scour the market to find outfits

so. Following the demand of Korean-inspired products, the Nepali market now has abundant Korean products, especially when it comes to beauty and cosmetic goods. Many young people want to

of Misumi osmetics which has been selling Korean cosmetics in Nepal since 2012.

"But it is not as big as it was a few years back," says Bajracharya. But she is unsure whether it is because of the abundance of

"It is a universal connection that we have with other people who love the culture," says Bista.

Striking the balance between work and relationships

Dear Aunt,

I am a 40-year-old woman who has been happily married for 18 years now. It was an arranged marriage and it took us some time to understand each other completely, but once we did, I would say we fell in love immediately. We also started a family soon after and now have a 14-year-old son. In a few years, we opened our own company and were doing pretty good, financially and emotionally. We had a loving and fun family, did fun stuff together, all while growing in our careers. Things were going great until last year when everything started to change.

Since the business started growing, we had to start taking care of more things. Because of this, we had to stay at work until midnight or later and couldn't give any time

to our son anymore, which he was obviously not happy about. After he sat me down and told how lonely he felt, I started to manage my time and get home as soon as possible. My husband was very supportive of the decision too, and he would work on my behalf as well. But eventually, he started staying at the office late even though there wasn't much to do. He now avoids coming home at all, and even if he does, it's just to sleep, not even for dinner.

But there's something that has been bothering me even more than my husband not giving me and my son enough time. As I said, we work in the same office and I have recently started to notice some changes in his behaviour. I feel like he is getting too close to one of our staffs. She is pretty good with her job and is extremely jolly and friendly, which is why he keeps inviting her for dinners or lunches. She is also the one



who takes charge of our phones when we are in meetings and I have caught her looking through them multiple times. This makes me feel very uncomfortable. I've also seen her and my husband texting back and forth and it bugs me very much. I have always trusted my husband and we have never come across a situation like this. He has always made me feel loved, but for some reason, his behaviour in the last year has been making me very insecure about my marriage.

AGONY AUNT

I don't know what to do, Aunt. Should I confront him and tell him that it's making me very upset? But what if I'm overthinking and nothing of that sort is going on? Wouldn't he be hurt to be accused like that? I'm just very confused. Please help and tell me what I should do. -Vani

Dear Vani,

Demanding work hours tend to take a toll on our lives. And when they do, it isn't just us who get hurt; our personal relationships suffer. Often family members are understanding when work pressure hits us hard, but then if we keep taking this for grantedour relationships are bound to fall out. Every relationship needs care and attention. And as humans, we are always on the lookout for someone who can give us company.

But Vani, it seems it took a long time for you to notice that members of your family were suffering alone. You mention even your son had started to feel lonely, and I think, you have been very compliant to the work pressure. While that might have rewarded you at work, your decision probably has distanced you from your dear ones. And I am sorry that you are going through this; I am sure this was never what you intended to do. But now that you have realised your mistake, I suggest you work on a timeline that helps you to separate work from your personal time. Don't bring work home. Sometimes, it's okay to let go of the calculative issues of work life. A very close friend once said to me that she understands that I am very busy with my life, but then again sometimes she can't help but feel that I don't take as much time as she does to make her feel important. At the time, I was trying really hard to win the trust of my seniors in the office and often when my family and friends called to spend some time with me, I used to withdraw from their plans. And in the beginning, they were understanding, but later on, I felt like I had missed out a lot on their lives-and it was natural for them to feel that I didn't care much.

But as for your partner, it could be that when you were busy with work, your husband wanted to talk with somebody about his own problems. And maybe this woman happened to be there for him as a friend, at the time. And perhaps, he is taking time to come home because he feels left out when he is at home. There could be all sorts of reasons for him acting out, but your insecurity probably is making you believe that he might be having an affair with this person. And it could be the case, but let's not jump to that conclusion right away.

Not everyone who doesn't come home early is necessarily having an affair. Every relationship needs attention, and your husband is probably trying to tell you that he wants yours. So make plans to go out with him; do little things that will assure him that you are hopeful of your marriage. Have fun with your son and husband, and take part in activities that you can do together as a family. Also, take time to know the friend he usually has dinner plans with. This will help you resolve your issue.

While work is important, you have to understand the strength to tackle the challenges of life comes from being with our loved ones. Take care, Vani. And don't worry, things will be fine.

WRITE TO US Need some relationship advice? Is your life or your career in a jam? Send us you questions and the Agony Aunt will answer them like only she can.

agonvaunt@kmg.com.np.

How Nepali songs are blurring the lines between entertainment and sexism

Sexist euphemisms are ingrained in many contemporary Nepali pop songs, yet people love them.

SRIZU BAJRACHARYA KATHMANDU

When Arjan Pandey's single 'Ghati Bhanda Tala Ta Ramri Nai Che' was released on YouTube in July, the platform's comment section exploded. The chorus of the song literally translates to "She is at least beautiful from the neck down," and many identified the song as sexist and said it diminished women to an object. The English translation of a Nepali comment on the platform reads, "This song is disrespectful to all women, beauty is neither above or below."

Pandey's song is funky and upbeat, and the music catchy and groovy. But many went online to diss the song's lyrics and called it downright offensive, as it describes lust for the woman's body despite everything the man in the song is unconvinced with in their relationship.

But Pandey's song is not very different from other Nepali pop songs that describe a woman's relationship with a man—where the woman's role





is only to react to the man's experience to make sense of the man's story. There are some songs that straightaway attack and stereotype women to boost male masculinity. Yet these are the songs that people have enjoyed over the years, making it a trend to make songs that have lyrics that demean women.

"I think the music in such songs trick us into liking them. If you look at the pattern of these songs, you will notice they are really groovy," says Seema Ghimire, an avid music listener.

Over the years, many people have enjoyed songs like Kumar Basnet's 'Chori Bhanda Aama Taruni' and Ram Thapa's 'Aayo Kali Dhappaka'. In recent years, songs like 'Udhreko Choli', 'Thamel Bazar', 'Kale Dai' and 'Sali Mann Paryo' have wooed music lovers. Many of these songs have even become ceremonial get-together songs that are played at partainment and to imbue flavour to the movie's storyline.

'Sali Mann Paryo', a popular song currently, from the movie *Ghamad Shere* plays on the chemistry of a *sali* (sister-in law) and a *bhinaju* (brother-in law), and has been deemed offensive by many music lovers.

"It is entertaining; but to me, it sounds offensive," says Ghimire.

The conversational song is entertaining and is played more than a dozen times every day on various FM stations.

"In movies, we usually have songs to justify the movie's storyline and sometimes to promote the movie itself. 'Sali Mann Paryo' is a song that supports the storytelling of Ghamad Shere, and it is there to justify the characters we are playing in the movie," says Nischal Basnet, one of the lead actors in the movie.

However, some women believe that these types of songs leverage, even encourage, flirting and teasing between *sali* and *bhinaju*. "Many men still believe they have the right over their wife's sisters," says Bindu Sharma, assistant professor at Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus. "Although it stems from our culture, to present it in popular media only serves the social ill."

With the growing awareness of gender-based issues and sexuality, people around the world are progressively becoming sensitive to how entertainment content that uses sexist euphemism encourages objectification of a woman's body and normalises body shaming, stalking, eve-teasing and slut-shaming. Even filmmaker Karan Johar, who is known for his exuberant movies in an interview with the She The People. TV in 2017 said, "The moment you put a woman in the centre and a thousand men looking at her lustingly, it's setting the wrong example. As a filmmaker, I have made those mistakes, and I will never do it again.

In Nepal, however, promotional songs have become a raging trend and are a well-thought pursuit for movie promotion.

"Definitely, these days, we do think about making promotional songs to grab the attention of people; however, I do make sure that the songs that I am part of are not offensive," says Basnet.

In promotional songs, it is usually a woman dancing around men, with lyrics describing men's lustful passion. However, men are rarely put on the same spot.

"I understand that there is a thin line between glamour and obscenity and we have to be very careful. I think songs like "Thamel Bazar' and 'Kale Dai' are not offensive because I have been pitched more derogatory ideas for promotional songs and I know the difference," says Basnet.

Reema Bishwokarma, who acted in the music video of 'Ghati Bhanda Tala Ta Ramri Nai Che', also hadn't found the lyrics of the song obscene. "When I was initially pitched the idea of the song, I was only weighing questions like will people enjoy it or not. And because I found the song entertaining, I didn't see it as offensive as many found it," said

of

tion

But the more significant problem of listening to offensive songs lies in the consumption of these musical entertainments that are available everywhere on the internet and in television and radio broadcasting without any disclaimer or rating, says Basnet.

"If these kinds of entertainment songs are to continue, there should be some kind of information provided to viewers and listeners to tell them that what they are viewing and listening too is adult content or needs parental guidance. And that we haven't been able to do," he says.

Kali Prasad Baskota, the lyricist and singer behind the famous 'Sali Mann Paryo' song, also agrees with Basnet and says that there should be a proper mechanism to publish content for a wider audience. "Our censorship board needs to be strengthened, and it's not just movies that should go through censorship, even songs should be rated and censored," says Baskota.



Bishwokarma.

However, Bishwokarma also believes that going after a song on what it represents isn't fair, because as actors they are only being dutiful to the character they are playing. "Songs are art, and art reflects society, so if you are saying that this song is objectifying women, then rather than making the song the issue, we should actually look into how women are treated in our community. We should actually try to solve the probin our society," lem Bishwokarma.

Many studies also say that the recurrence of sexism and misogyny in music lyrics might render the issues of gender, sexuality and cases of abuse as insignificant. Its repetition can make people accept the views of the songs.

"But the reason offensive and sexists songs are consumed without being questioned has to do with the structure we live in. It could be because we have accepted the way women and women-identifying folks are perceived and represented in entertainment content," says Shubha Kayastha, co-founder of Body & Data, a non-governmental organisaWhile the tension rapper VTEN's arrest caused has slowly died down, the main issue of his detention still needs attention and more initiations from authors of art. "There was no need for moral policing, but the concerning issue the incident brought forward is definitely something that we should conscious about," says Basnet.

Speaking on the influence of offensive songs, assistant professor Sharma shares how she feels uncomfortable when children as young as 10 sing Ghising's lyrics easily and recreate his moves, without being unperturbed by what they mean. "These children cannot differentiate for themselves what is right and wrong, and so it's important to keep engaging in conversations that make people aware about the sensitivity of the various songs they are listening to," says Sharma.

"Every creator in the art sector needs to be well acquainted with gen-

ties and picnics.

While many on the internet have taken issue with the lyrics of such songs, the makers and the actors behind the songs believe that these songs are only representing the truth of society, and are meant for enterneeds to be well acquainted with gender and queer issues. We have to criticise offensive songs and assess the graver impacts they make on society. We need to understand that art has a greater influence than we think," says Sharma.

Five documentaries you don't want to miss at Film Southasia '19

The 12th edition of the film festival will showcase 63 films, selected from among more than 2,500 submissions from all over South Asia.

quoted.

festival, said that this year's festi-

val celebrates freedom, according

to the press release issued by the

festival. She suggests people

approach the festival with an open

mind and make their own judge-

ments on the issues projected in

the documentaries. "Nepal pro-

vides that free space where every-

body from South Asia can come

easily without travel restrictions,

SWEKSHA KARNA

KATHMANDU

The 12th edition of Film Southasia (FSA) starts November 14, and will be screening documentaries up to November 17. The film festival will showcase 63 films that were selected from more than 2,500 submissions from all over South Asia.

Earlier renditions of the festival have struck a chord with audiences for their unusual themes, 'Documentaries can be fun', 'Documentary bears witness' among others. The theme of this year's festival is 'Wherever Mind Is Free', inspired by poet Rabindranath Tagore's beloved poem.

Mitu Verma, the director of the

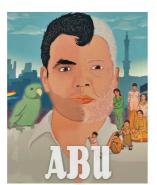
<text>

Indus Blues

Directed by Pakistani director Jawad Sharif, *Indus Blues* is the story of indigenous musicians and craftsmen of Pakistan who struggle to keep their music and instruments alive. The documentary takes you on a journey across Pakistan, showcasing rich, diverse and colourful musical traditions that are slowly fading away. The documentary, which will be screened at the opening of the festival, has also won the Grand Jury Prize at Guam International Film Festival and 'Best Feature Documentary' at the South Film and Arts Academy Festival.



The feature documentary *Abu*, by Pakistani-Canadian Director Arshad Khan, is a story of self-discovery and family reconciliation that resulted from the director's migration from Pakistan to India. Composed of family footage, the documentary explores the director's relationship with his father after he comes out to him as a gay man and the process of reconciliation. The winner of sevem Audience and Jury awards, the documentary will be screened on November 15, the second day of Film Southasia.





where they can meet and talk and

discuss freely even as such spaces

close up all over the region," she is

val would be any different from

previous festivals, assistant festi-

val director Alok Adhikari said,

"We're actually not aiming to do

anything drastically different. But

we do have a much broader collec-

When asked if this year's festi-

Kabul, City in the Wind

Shot in Kabul, Afghanistan, by Aboozar Amini, Kabul, *City in the Wind* portrays the city of Kabul that is destroyed by political and religious powers, through the experiences of two children and a bus driver. The winner of eight awards, the documentary will also be screened on November 15, the second day of the festival.

We Are With Dr KC

We Are With Dr KC is a documentary by Nepali directors Gopal Shivakoti and Govinda Shivakoti. The documentary is about Dr Govinda KC's journey in seeking reforms in medical institutions, with over 100 days on hunger strike. The documentary will be screened on November 15, the second day of the film festival.

tion of documentaries." This year's documentaries will be covering all sorts of issues, including women's empowerment, animal abuse, LQBTIQ+ issues and reflect the immense diversity and plurality of the region.

The festival will be opened by Amrit Gurung, Nepal's renowned folk rock artiste, and will feature Jawad Sharif's film *Indus Blues*. A three-member jury, comprising Aiyesha Abraham, Sivamohan Sumathy and Kunda Dixit, will decide the winners from the competition.

While documentaries like *After Sabeen, Abu,* and *The Monks Who Won The Grammy* will be screened, here are five Film Southasia documentaries to look out for at the screenings for Film SouthAsia:

Bamboo Stories

Bamboo Stories is directed by Shehnaaz Dill-Riaz. The documentary is about a group of men in North-Eastern Bangladesh who are supposed to conquer a river with a 70-metre long raft with 2,500 bamboo trees. The documentary will be screened on November 17, the fourth and final day of the film festival.



Film Southasia '19 will be open from November 14, Thursday, to November 17, Sunday, at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka.

WORLD

Australia fires rage out of control, hit Sydney suburbs

More than 300 bushfires burned up and down Australia's east coast, fanned by gale-force winds, scorching temperatures and tinder-dry bushland.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SYDNEY, NOV 1

Bushfires raging across eastern Australia on Tuesday singed the Sydney suburbs, where firefighters were forced to scramble planes and helicopters to splatter a built-up neighbourhood with water and red retardant

Twin blazes in the north shore suburb of Turramurra—around 15 kilometres (nine miles) from the centre of Australia's largest city—tore through a eucalypt forest park and sparked spot fires in homes, before eventually being brought under control.

As night fell, the authorities said they were bringing another "clearly suspicious" blaze in a national park in the city's southern suburbs under control.

Throughout the day more than 300 bushfires burned up and down Australia's east coast, fanned by galeforce winds, scorching temperatures and tinder-dry bushland that has brought some of the most dangerous conditions the country has seen.

In Sydney's Turramurra, gardens smouldered, thick smoke hung heavy in the air and cars, houses and roads were caked in raspberry-red retardant as if hit by a giant paintball.

"It was the embers that floated up that actually went across and set off spot fires in the front yards" resident Nigel Lush told AFP, adding that one roof had been set alight.

Another resident, Julia Gretton-Roberts, said the blaze spread shockingly quickly.

"Next thing I know the fire was opposite our house and it was massive and the police came and grabbed our kids and took them away," she said. "My daughter is pretty freaked out."

Firefighter Andrew Connon told AFP "a number of homes were threatened but it was contained by the aerial bombing"

From early morning thousands of firefighters spread out across New South Wales in anticipation of what they called "off the scale" fire risk and "catastrophic" conditions

They were unable to prevent several bushfires from breaching containment lines and trapping residents who had not already evacuated

New South Wales Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said so far only a dozen buildings had



A firefighter defends a property from a bushfire at Hillville near Taree, 350km north of Sydney on Tuesday.

been damaged Tuesday and a handful non-life-threatening injuries were reported, but the crisis was far from over.

Firefighters will be "working on these fires for days and weeks given the enormity of the firegrounds," he said.

Experts have described the conditions as the worst on record, as spring temperatures climbed toward 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) and winds topped 80 kilometres (50 miles) per hour across a zone which has been plagued by persistent drought.

Even before unfavourable weather hit, days of fires had killed three people and destroyed at least 150 homes. "The conditions are expected to get worse," Fitzsimmons said, warning residents in adjacent areas to stay

alert "Complacency kills," he added.

Up to 600 schools were closed, as well as many national parks, a total fire ban was introduced for the affected area and Rally Australia—due to be held in Coffs Harbour at the weekend-was cancelled.

The military pitched in, helping firefighters with logistics and water-dropping sorties using more than 100 aircraft

In the town of Hillville a fire that has ripped through an area the size of

25,000 soccer fields approached the home of Daniel Stevens.

Like many, his family-including his mother nursing a broken leghave packed their bags but have struggled over whether to leave their house and everything they own.

"We'll fight it first," he told AFP, "but if it jumps the fence line into the paddock, we'll go.'

In the nearby town of Taree, dozens of people have already moved to a showground that has become a makeshift evacuation centre.

Fifty-nine-year-old Caroline Watson arrived last night with her husband

and their dog. "The fires are just rife. They are absolutely everywhere" she told AFP. "They didn't ask us to get out, but we figured it was coming.

Further south in the Blue Mountains on the outskirts of Sydney, veteran Winmalee firefighter Alan Gardiner said locals were "terrified and on edge"

The town still bears the scars of a 2013 blaze that destroyed 200 homes, and residents are acutely aware that with few roads in and out of the mountains, a decision to leave too late can be fatal.

Efforts to burn fuel in a controlled way have been limited by months of drought-like conditions that made it too dangerous.

Bolivia's former president Morales heads to Mexico for asylum

REUTERS MEXICO CITY, NOV 12

Bolivia's former president, Evo Morales, was flying to Mexico on Tuesday after fleeing his South American homeland, seeking refuge under a leftist government that has supported the veteran socialist in the wake of a disputed election.

Bolivia's first indigenous president came under Mexico's protection after he departed Bolivia late on Monday on a Mexican Air Force jet, Mexico's Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard

"His life and integrity are safe," Ebrard wrote on Twitter, after warning Morales was in danger and saying Mexico would offer asylum as part of its long tradition of shelter ing exiles.

The Mexican government's support has helped cement its emerging role as a bastion of diplomatic support for left-wing leaders in Latin America.

Morales, who governed for 14 years, said on Twitter he was thankful to Mexico but saddened to leave Bolivia for political reasons, following weeks of violent protests and unrest

In a photo tweeted by Ebrard, Morales is seated alone on the jet with a downcast, unsmiling expression, displaying Mexico's red, white and green flag across his lap.

Morales' government collapsed on Sunday after ruling party allies quit and the army urged him to step down, a tactic that Mexico's government said it views as a "coup' because it broke with Bolivia's constitutional order.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador praised Morales for the decision to resign rather than put the lives of Bolivians at risk.

His departure added to a sense of crisis in Latin America, which has been hit by weeks of unrest in countries such as Ecuador and Chile, where protesters are urging governments to step back from policies raising fuel and transport prices.

BRIEFING

UK Labour suffers 'major cyber attack' ahead of election

LONDON: Britain's main opposition Labour party said on Tuesday it had suffered a "large-scale cyber attack' which undermined some of its campaign efforts for next month's election. "We have experienced a sophisticated and large-scale cyber attack on Labour digital platforms," the party led by veteran socialist Jeremy Corbyn said in a statement. "We took swift action and these attempts failed due to our robust security systems. The integrity of all our platforms was maintained and we are confident that no data breach occurred." It said that some campaign activities were slowed but they were restored early Tuesday and were now back to normal.

France's Macron says global political system in 'unprecedented crisis'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS, NOV 12

French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday said that the global political system was in "unpreceden sis", urging new kinds of alliances and cooperation to solve the world's problems. Macron's warning came days after the publication of an interview in which the president argued NATO was experiencing brain death and Europe risked becoming insignificant, in comments that sent shockwaves around EU capitals. "We are experiencing an unprecedented crisis in our international system," he told the Paris Peace Forum, a France-backed group promoting global peace.



Poland says Netflix Holocaust documentary 'rewrites history' AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WARSAW, NOV 12 nd has complained to Netflix that a Holocaust documentary series on Nazi German death camps "rewrites history" by featuring an "incorrect" map.

shows death camps built by Nazi Germany during World War II inside the borders of modern-day Poland established only end of the war. In reality, Nazi Germany set up the camps inside territory it occupied following its September 1939 invasion and takeover of Poland. "Not only is the map incorrect, but it deceives viewers into believing that Poland was responsible for establishing and maintaining the camps, and for committing crimes therein, Morawiecki said in the letter to Netflix boss Reed Hastings posted on his official Facebook page on Monday. "As my country did not even exist at that time as an independent state, and millions of Poles were murdered at these sites, this element of 'The Devil Next Door' is nothing short of rewriting history," he said. The map in question appears in a documentary focused on retired US autoworker John Demjanjuk, convicted in a landmark 2011 German court ruling for serving as a guard the Nazi German Sobibor camp in occupied Poland.

Erdogan defies EU sanctions threat over Cyprus drilling

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that he would not give in to EU demands to stop oil and gas exploration in the Mediterranean around Cyprus. Brussels has repeatedly warned Turkey to halt drilling off the coast of EU member Cyprus, and announced on Monday that a framework had been agreed to impose travel bans and asset freezes on the individuals and companies involved. "Do not dare to give an ultimatum to Turkey about the developments on Cyprus," Erdogan said in a televised press conference. "We do not care about it, and we will proceed on our path." The discovery of hydrocarbon reserves in the eastern Mediterranean has sparked a dispute between Cyprus and Turkey, which occupies the north of the Mediterranean island.

UN chief calls for international cooperation on Syria jihadists

PARIS: UN chief Antonio Guterres called on Tuesday for an international accord on the fate of foreign jihad ists being held in the Middle East. saving it was not up to Syria and Irac "to solve the problem for everyone." "We need international cooperation to solve the problem." Guterres, who is attending the Paris Peace Forum alongside some 30 world leaders, told France's RTL radio. "We cannot just ask Iraq and Syria to solve the problem for everyone. There must be real international solidarity," he said. Ankara, which has criticised Western countries for not taking back Islamic State group (IS) fighters, on Monday began deporting foreign jihadists being held in Turkish prisons to their countries of origin. (AGENCIES)

The president, who has sought a prominent place on the international stage since coming to power in 2017, said that "new ways of cooperation, new alliances" are needed between states and organisations, complaining that the United Nations itself has become "blocked"

Macron lamented that while the



French President Emmanuel Macron takes part in the Paris Peace Forum, on Tuesday.

global political and financial systems have worked well after World War II, they are now in crisis.

"The system was efficient for 70 but it allowed new ities to emerge," the years inequalities president said, adding: "A crisis of our democracy allowed unilateralism to

between states and organisations.

be reborn. "We need more cooperation to respond to these challenges," he said, warning against reluctance to question existing international institutions.

interview with The Macron's published Thursday, Economist, by analysts as a described revealing expose of the president's views, caused controversy in Europe with German Chancellor Angela Merkel saying his comments were "drastic"

Possibly taking aim at his critics, Macron said Tuesday that plain-speaking was essential.

"I think we need the truth. Squeamishness or hypocrisy won't work. Silence is not a solution," he said.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki called on the popular US streaming and production website to correct the "terrible mistake" that he believed had been "committed unintentionally"

A Netflix consultant in Poland who only identified herself as Malgorzata told AFP on Tuesday the company was "treating the issue as a priority" and that its headquarters would soon issue an official statement. "Netflix did not intend to offend anyone or compromise any values," she added.

The Auschwitz memorial museum also tweeted that historical and geographical information in the Netflix documentary about the locations of Nazi death camps was "simply wrong".A map featured in "The Devil Next Door" documentary wrongly

Trump promises to release transcript as impeachment probe progresses

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, NOV 12

US President Donald Trump Tuesday could take some on control of the impeachment inquiry into his dealings with Ukraine if he follows through on a promise to release a transcript of an April call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Trump said on Saturday he would likely release the transcript on Tuesday, describing it to reporters as "very important." He said on Twitter on Monday evening, however, that he would be releasing it "sometime this week," adding: "I am sure you will find it tantalizing!"

Just two days before the first public hearings in the impeachment inquiry, Trump issued a series of scathing tweets on Monday slamming the probe and the Democrats conducting it. "It is a totally one sided Witch Hunt. This can't be making the Democrats look good. Such a farce!" he said.

The investigation formally

launched six weeks ago by Democratic Speaker of the House Representatives Nancy Pelosi has shadowed Trump's presidency, with the threat that he could be removed from office even as he seeks re-election next year.

He is only the fourth US president to face impeachment. None has been removed from office, although Richard Nixon resigned as he faced almost certain impeachment in 1974 over the Watergate scandal.

Democrats are investigating whether there are grounds to impeach Trump over his July 25 request in a phone call to Zelenskiy to investigate a domestic political rival, former Vice President Joe Biden.

That call prompted a whistleblower complaint that led Democrats to launch the probe in September into whether Trump abused his power by withholding security assistance to put pressure on a vulnerable US ally.

The transcript Trump will release is from a call with Zelenskiy on April 12, after the Ukrainian was elected president, but before he took office.



Donald Trump issued a series of scathing weets on Monday slamming the probe and the Democrats conducting it.

The White House did not release a readout of that conversation when it took place.

For the past two weeks, House investigators have been releasing transcripts of interviews conducted behind closed doors with witnesses, including diplomats and security

"It is a totally one sided Witch Hunt. This can't be making the Democrats look good."

aides, about dealings with Ukraine by administration officials and the president's personal attorney, Rudv Giuliani.

On Monday, the House Foreign Affairs, Intelligence and Oversight committees released transcripts of interviews with one official from the Department of Defense and two from the State Department.

In her testimony, senior Pentagon official Laura Cooper, detailed confusion and concern in the US national security community after Trump's White House blocked nearly \$400 million in security assistance to Ukraine without explanation.

"All of the senior leaders of the US national security departments and agencies were all unified in their - in their view that this assistance was essential," Cooper said, according to the transcript.

Trump has intensified his attacks on the investigation as public hearings approach. He issued a series of impeachment-related tweets on Monday evening, including accusing Representative Adam Schiff, the Democratic chairman of the Intelligence Committee, of fabricating transcripts.

There has been no suggestion by any witness or Republicans on the three committees that the transcripts have been inaccurate.

Democrats consider the open hearings that start on Wednesday crucial to building public support for a vote on articles of impeachment –formal charges - against Trump. that occurs, the 100-seat Republican-controlled Senate would hold a trial.Republicans have so far shown little interest in removing Trump from office.

BRIEFING

Pakistan installs statue of Indian pilot shot down over Kashmir

KARACHI: Pakistan has put on display a statue of an Indian pilot whose plane was shot down over Kashmir earlier this year, invoking the ire of India's media. The life-sized statue of Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman—complete with his singature moustache—has been installed in an exhibit at a museum in Karachi run by the Pakistan Air Force. Varthaman's plane was shot down in a dogfight over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir in February during clashes which brought nuclear-armed India and Pakistan to the brink of a new war.

Indonesia buries over 1,000 cholera-hit pigs

MEDAN (INDONESIA): More than 1,000 cholera-stricken pigs have been buried in Indonesia after their decaying carcasses were plucked from local waterways, a government official said on Tuesday. Hundreds more swines are still floating in rivers and a lake near Medan, the capital of North Sumatra province, as police search for suspects who discarded their bodies. "They were abandoned about eight days ago so they're decaying and it smelled very bad," local official Muhammad Yunus told AFP. "We will keep cleaning them up and burying the carcasses until they're gone because people have been complaining about it," he added.

Six workers die in heavy rains at Oman construction site

MUSCAT: Six South Asian labourers died in Oman during heavy rains when they were buried at an excavation site for a water pipeline project, emergency services said on Tuesday. The construction workers were believed to be Indian nationals, New Delhi's embassy said in a statement on Twitter, "Rescue teams recovered the bodies of six Asian workers that were buried in a water project" in the coastal city of Seeb, about 30 kilometres (18 miles) northwest of the capital Muscat, the Public Authority for Civil Defense and Ambulance (PACDA) said. (AGENCIES)

Afghanistan to swap Taliban militants for American, Australian captives REUTERS

Israel kills Islamic Jihad commander in Gaza, another targeted in Syria



A rocket is fired from Gaza towards Israel, in Gaza on Tuesday

REUTERS GAZA/JERUSALEM, NOV 12

Israel killed a top commander from the Iranian-backed Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad in a rare targeted strike in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, and militants responded by firing rockets at Israeli cities, including Tel Aviv.

In the most serious escalation in months, an Israeli missile attack also targeted the home of an Islamic Jihad official in Damascus, killing two people including one of his sons, Syrian state media said. Israel declined any comment on that incident.

"Israel executed two coordinated attacks, in Syria and in Gaza, in a declaration of war," Islamic Jihad leader Khaled Al-Batsh said at the Gaza funeral of Baha Abu Al-Atta.

Israeli officials described Al-Atta as "ticking bomb" who was responsible for a string of recent cross-border rocket, drone and sniper attacks and was suspected of planning more.

"We conducted the attack (on Al-Atta) because there was no other choice," Israeli military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Conricus said. "I want to emphasise that we are not looking to further escalate the situation."

s nome along with his wife, looked likely to pose a new challenge for Gaza's ruling Hamas faction, which has mostly pursued truces with Israel since a 2014 war

immediately clear.

Palestinian militants fired dozens of rockets into Israel, setting off sirens as far north as Tel Aviv and prompting several municipalities to close schools. Similar precautions were ordered in Gaza.

The Israeli military said its Iron Dome air defence systems intercepted some of the Palestinian rockets. Israeli hospitals reported several civilians with injuries.

Israel's banking regulator instructagainst the dollar.

A later Israeli air strike on two men

Israel "bears full responsibility for all consequences of this escalation,'

Syrian state media said the Israeli suburb of Daraya.

Iran accuses Europeans of hypocrisy over nuclear deal

In a joint statement on Monday, Britain, France, Germany and the European Union said Iran's decision to restart activities at Fordow was 'inconsistent' with a 2015 nuclear deal.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE TEHRAN, NOV 12

Iran accused European nations of hypocrisy on Tuesday for criticising its latest step back from a nuclear deal while failing to fulfil their commitments of relief from US sanctions.

But President Hassan Rouhani made no mention of a new report from the UN nuclear watchdog that reveals that its inspectors detected uranium particles of man-made origin at a undeclared site in Iran.

Britain, France, Germany and the EU have been trying to salvage the 2015 Iran nuclear deal since the US unilaterally withdrew from it in May last year and began reimposing sanctions.

A year after the US pullout from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran began reducing its commitments to the deal hoping to win concessions from those still party to the accord.

Iran's latest measure came last week, when engineers began feeding uranium hexafluoride gas into mothballed enrichment centrifuges at the underground Fordow plant south of Tehran.

In a joint statement on Monday, Britain, France, Germany and the European Union said Iran's decision to restart activities at Fordow was "inconsistent" with a 2015 nuclear deal. "The E3/EU have fully upheld their JCPOA commitments, including sanctions-lifting as foreseen under the JCPOA," they said.

"It is now critical that Iran upholds its JCPOA commitments and works with all JCPOA participants to de-escalate tensions.'

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif hit back on Tuesday, "Fully upheld commitments under

JCPOA' YOU? Really?" he tweeted.

Zarif said Iran had already "triggered and exhausted" a dispute resolution mechanism in the troubled accord

German Foreign Minister Heiko Mass had on Monday threatened the use of "all the mechanisms laid down



Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad has hit back at European nations, saying that Tehran had already 'triggered and exhausted' a dispute resolution mechanism in the troubled accord.

in the agreement" to make Iran comply with its obligations under the JCPOA.

On Tuesday, Rouhani said Iran only began scaling back its nuclear commitments a year after the US withdrawal to give the other parties time to make up for it.

'We waited for a year," Rouhani told a televised news conference.

"Nobody in the world can blame us by saying 'Why are you abandoning your commitments under the JCPOA today and why have you launched Fordow today?" he said.

"This is a problem that the enemy has created for us," he said, referring to Iran's arch-foe the United States.

Iran's approach, he said, was to take "the path of resistance and perseverance" by reducing commitments under the JCPOA and engaging in negotiations.

'We are negotiating with the

world... they are giving us proposals, we're giving them proposals. Up until today, I have not accepted the propos als I've been given."

Rouhani made no mention of the uranium particles the International Atomic Energy Agency said its inspectors had detected at an undeclared site in Iran.

In a report seen by AFP on Monday, the watchdog said its inspectors had "detected natural uranium particles of anthropogenic origin at a location in Iran not declared to the agency.'

The particles are understood to be the product of uranium which has been mined and undergone initial processing, but not enriched.

While the IAEA has not named the site in question, diplomatic sources have previously said the agency has been posing questions to Iran relating to a site where Israel has alleged secret atomic activity in the past.



ed banks in areas within rocket range to operate under emergency procedures, with essential staff only. The main Tel Aviv share index was down 0.5%. The shekel was 0.2% weaker

riding a motorcycle in Gaza killed one and wounded the other, Palestinian residents said. Israel said the men were an Islamic Jihad rocket crew.

Hamas said in a statement, pledging that Al-Atta's death "will not go unpunished"

attack in Damascus had been carried out using several missiles, one of which was shot down over the nearby

Afghanistan will release two senior Taliban commanders and a leader of the Haqqani militant group in exchange for an American and an Australian professor who were kidnapped in 2016, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said on Tuesday.

The government's decision to free Anas Haqqani and two other Taliban commanders in a prisoner swap was taken in the hope of securing direct talks with the Taliban, which has hitherto refused to engage with what it calls an illegitimate "puppet" regime in Kabul

"In order to pave the way for a faceto-face negotiations with the Taliban, the government has decided to free Taliban prisoners in exchange for two university professors," Ghani said.

Ghani said Anas Haqqani and Taliban commanders Haji Mali Khan and Hafiz Rashid were being released. All three were captured in 2014.

The prisoner exchange comes at a time when efforts were being made to revamp peace talks between the United States and the Taliban.

The Haqqani network has in recent years carried large-scale militant attack on civilians. It is believed to be based in Pakistan and is part of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Anas Haqqani is the younger brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is second-in-command in the Afghan Taliban hierarchy and leads the Haqqani network, considered to the deadliest faction of the Afghan Taliban.

A Taliban spokesman earlier this year said that the movement was determined to obtain Anas Haqqani's release and named him as a member of a negotiating team that would hold talks with U.S. officials.

The Taliban had kidnapped U.S. citizen Kevin King and an Australian Timothy Weeks, both professors, in August 2016 from the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul.

Ghani said authorities had been unable to discover where the Taliban were holding the two captive.

"Information suggests that their health while being held by the terrorists has deteriorated," he said.

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan during a three-day visit to Washington in July that he would do his best to help release the American University professors.

Israel casts rising Gaza tensions as part of a regional struggle with archfoe Iran that has also played out in Syria. Conservative Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has cited such scenarios in trying to form a coalition government with centre-left rivals after two inconclusive elections this year.

Islamic Jihad said the target of the Damascus attack was the home of a political leader, Akram Al-Ajouri. His possible significance to Israel was not a Reuters journalist said the top floor of a two-storey building had been completely scorched. A neighbour said he had been woken up at around 4 a.m. by three consecutive explosions that had blown open the doors in his house.

Syrian state media said six people were wounded in the attack, describing the target as a civilian home in Mezzah, a western district of the capital where several foreign embassies are located.

In recent years, Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in Syria against Iran and the Tehran-backed Lebanese Hezbollah group, which it calls the biggest threat to its borders.

Bystanders look on after a train collided with another train in Brahmanbaria some 130 km from Dhaka on Tuesday. At least 16 people were killed and nearly 60 others injured in the accident, police said.

Hong Kong protests hit universities, business district

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE HONG KONG, NOV 12

Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters clashed with riot police in the city's upmarket business district and on university campuses on Tuesday, extending one of the most violent stretches of unrest seen in more than five months of political chaos.

The confrontations followed a particularly brutal day on Monday, when police shot a protester and a man was set on fire, prompting calls from western powers for compromise but further fury in China against the challenge to its rule.

"Hong Kong's rule of law has been pushed to the brink of total collapse,' police spokesman Kong Wing-cheung told a press conference on Tuesday afternoon as he denounced the latest rounds of violence.

In Central, a district that is home to many blue-chip international firms and luxury shops, thousands of office workers occupied roads for hours on Tuesday chanting: "Fight for freedom, stand with Hong Kong!"

Hundreds of hardcore protesters, dressed in their signature black clothes and masks, then used a passenger bus to barricade a key road in the area.

They threw bricks and other objects before retreating when riot police



A student protester builds a roadblock outside the City University in Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong.

fired tear gas in the shadows of highend stores

The scenes in Central were a vivid illustration of how moderate people are continuing to back the pro-democracy movement even as their more radical allies adopt more violent tactics

Meanwhile, universities emerged as a new battleground with sustained clashes at major campuses for the

first time.

At China University of Hong Kong, police fired multiple volleys of tear gas and rubber bullets in the afternoon at hundreds of protesters, who had built barricades afters an hourslong stand-off between the two sides.

Protesters responded with bricks and petrol bombs, while a vehicle used in a barricade was set alight.

At City University, protesters used a

three-person slingshot to fire bricks at police from a footbridge.

Masked activists also built barricades and blocked roads at Hong Kong University while at Polytechnic University, clashes broke out as police tried to arrest a female student.

During the morning rush hour hardcore protesters blocked roads, threw objects onto rail tracks and held up subway trains, sparking yet another bout of transport chaos throughout the city.

China has ruled Hong Kong under a "one country, two systems" framework, which allows the city greater freedoms than on the mainland, since its handover from the British in 1997.

The protest movement has been fuelled by Beijing's tightening control over Hong Kong.

Protesters are demanding a right to freely elect their leaders, as well as an independent inquiry in what they see as police brutality.

But China has steadfastly refused to give any concessions to the protesters, and instead warned of even tougher security measures.

China has repeatedly signalled that it would be prepared to send mainland security forces into Hong Kong.

Chinese state media on Tuesday again raised the spectre of the People's Liberation Army being deployed to end the crisis.

The warnings were in response to Monday's violence, in which a man was doused with a flammable liquid and set ablaze by a masked assailant following an argument with pro-democracy protesters.

Chinese authorities, as well as staterun media, have said the attack was an example of protesters' violent tactics, although the assailant has not been arrested and his identity remains unknown. "This kind of hair-raising behaviour has caused terror and anxiety among the broader Hong Kong public," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters in Beijing.

On Monday, protesters rampaged through train stations, vandalised shops and barricaded streets.

'We condemn violence on all sides, extend our sympathies to victims of violence regardless of their political inclinations, and call for all partiespolice and protesters-to exercise restraint," US State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said in a statement.

They were reacting in fury to a police officer shooting a 21-year-old protester on Monday morning, with that incident broadcast live on Facebook by a bystander.

Both the man set alight and the shot protester remained in critical condition on Tuesday, hospital authorities said

THE KATHMANDU POST

MONEY

Aramco listing a critical test for young Saudi exchange

Mega-IPOs have a record of causing technical glitches on stock markets as they can lead to a surge in trading orders that swamp an exchange's system.

REUTERS RIYADH/DUBAI, NOV 12

The imminent listing of oil giant Aramco will be a pivotal moment for Saudi Arabia's young and untested Tadawul stock exchange

The Tadawul has said it has been preparing for years and is primed for the long-awaited share sale in coming weeks. But hosting possibly the biggest initial public offering in history represents a huge leap into the big league for a 12-year-old exchange that only admitted foreign investors four years ago

Mega-IPOs have a record of causing technical glitches on stock markets as they can lead to a surge in trading orders that swamp an exchange's system and can prevent investors from buying or selling stock.

Facebook's 2012 listing on Nasdaq, for example, was hit by widespread delays and problems processing the huge volume of orders. And that was a smaller IPO than Aramco's is expected to be, on a marquee exchange with more than four decades of experience; the Nasdaq Composite index today hosts more than \$13 trillion worth of shares, according to Refinitiv data, about 27 times the Tadawul's roughly \$500 billion

Any technical or liquidity problems could deal a blow to the Tadawul's credibility, industry experts say.

"You have to have really robust technology in order to support the spike that's expected with a high-profile IPO," said Spencer Mindlin, an analyst at Aite Group.

For an exchange in an emerging market like Saudi Arabia, the Aramco IPO arguably carries more risk than for an exchange in a country with a more developed capital markets infrastructure, because the IPO will set the tone for the market, he added.

The Tadawul did not respond to a request for comment on its preparedness for the sale.

The exchange might argue though that it has learned from missteps made elsewhere in big listings like Facebook's

It brought in a new trading platform developed by Nasdaq in 2015, while last year Saudi Arabia's Capital Market Authority introduced a price stabilisation mechanism to prevent large share price drops in newly listed companies

Nonetheless, uncertainty around

trd nrg-ygtr gsg-n Ldeath;yfi,y ss t	BANKS & RINANCIA SOUGH PETROCHEMICAL NOUSRUSS DETAIL SOCHEMICAL NOUSRUSS DETAIL SOCHEMICAL NOUSRUSS DETAIL SOCHEMICAL NOUSRUSS DETAIL SOCHEMICAL NOUSRUSS DETAIL SOCHEMICAL NOUSRUSS DETAIL SOCHEMICAL NOUSRUSS DISSINGLY SOCIEMENT DISSINGLY SOCIEMENT DISSINGLY SOLENTING DISSINGLY SOLENTING DIS	3,393,60 3,703,53 9,111,78 4,675,79 6,863,81 1,316,64 990,27 2,346,17 5,023,96 1,652,66 4,682,35 6,019,90		Changed 1.56% 0.66% 0.53% 0.53% 0.53% 0.53% 0.53% 1.33% 0.53% 1.33% 0.53% 0.53%		siptint aeCtivt s btisftJv\$ woildyA ottaldASs
	CANSPORT		and the second	and the second se		A S
et e	EDIA AND PUBLISHING	2,116.23	131.75	V.05%		c
)- n		11.060.27	111.13	1.024		fo
-					REUTERS	te

An investor monitors a screen displaying stock information at the Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

the exchange's ability to digest the bumper listing represents another potential hazard for investors already rattled by a September attack on Aramco's facilities that underlined the geopolitical risk associated with the state oil company.

Some advisers working on the IPO say the Saudi stock market's ability to handle the deal was one of the main questions coming from investors.

"They're asking who are the cornerstones, is there liquidity in the market, how much will be leveraged, is there any potential risks with margin calls?" said one banker, who asked not to be named as he is not authorised to speak publicly.

Share sales of the world's most profitable company will begin on Nov. 17,

Share sales of the world's most profitable company will begin on November 17.

according to the IPO prospectus published on Saturday.

Aramco could offer 1 percent-2 percent of its shares, raising as much as \$20 billion to \$40 billion, sources have told Reuters. A deal over \$25 billion would top the record IPO of Chinese retail titan Alibaba on the New York

Stock Exchange in 2014.

The Saudi exchange has been bullish, with its boss Khalid al-Hussan saying this month that it was "ready to receive the largest listing in the

But Aramco itself has warned the transaction could disrupt trading on the exchange, where the largest listing

In its IPO prospectus, the company said recent changes to trading mechanisms, to modernise the platform and align with international standards, were "untested and there can be no assurance that they will adequately facilitate the listing of and expected high trading volume in the

shares The changes mean there is now a smaller window between when a company's shares are priced, sold and then admitted to trading, which could risk a delay to the listing, the prospectus said.

The past two years have seen several major investment banks join the exchange as members including Goldman Sachs and Citi, meaning they can broker and deal there, providing more outlets to help investors to trade.

But volume on the market this year so far is sluggish.

In 2015, when foreign funds started buying Saudi stocks, the average daily traded value was \$1.8 billion. After a sell-off in Saudi stocks in October 2018 following the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, volume dwindled, with average traded value in 2019 at \$900 million a day.

"They (the Tadawul) have been working over the past couple of years on improving the market and making it ready for Aramco's IPO, however I don't think they have done stress tests yet," said Saudi economist Fadl Alboainain

To avoid the risk of a slew of sell orders hitting the exchange following the IPO - companies listing usually aim for a bounce on their debut followed by relatively steady trading -Aramco plans to grant bonus shares to Saudi retail investors who keep the stock for six months.

The Saudi government has also committed not to sell any more shares for at least a year. Retail investors, who could snap up as much as a quarter of the shares put up for sale, say they have been preparing for months by saving money, selling land plots and exiting other stocks

Their attitude could be crucial to how the stock trades as it is still unclear how many international funds will take part in the listing.

Saudi Arabia's inclusion in the MSCI developing-economies equity benchmark this year has failed to pull in active emerging-market funds because of high valuations and reputational risks, an analysis by Copley Fund Research showed.

One reason investors kept their distance was the murder of Khashoggi, said Steven Holden, CEO of Copley Fund Research.

However, he added: "The massive underweight does imply there is plenty of dry powder in emerging market portfolios to deploy on Aramco.'

Quarter of German firms in China planning to leave: Survey

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BELIING NOV 12

Nearly a quarter of German companies operating in China are planning to relocate all or part of their business out of the country, according to a study released Tuesday with many blaming rising costs.

Chamber of The German Commerce's annual survey of 526 member firms in China found that 23 percent have either already decided to withdraw production capacity in the country or are considering it.

One-third of those companies have planned to leave China entirely.

The rest will transfer part of their business and production overseas, largely to lower-cost countries like India or in Southeast Asia.

Operating costs in China have been rising as the country seeks to rebalance its economy from an export and investment-led model to one driven by consumer spending.

Of the 104 companies that have decided to leave or are considering to, 71 percent cite the rise in production costs-particularly for labour.

A third blamed an unfavourable public policy environment and one in four said the China-US trade war is having an impact.

"Business expectations have dropped to their lowest level in years,' the study warned, with only a quarter of companies surveyed expecting to meet or exceed their goals this year.

And more than a third said Beijing's efforts to "level the playing field" for foreign companies are "insufficient".

"Competition has to be fair," said German Ambassador Clemens von Goetze at the launch of the study Tuesday.

"Foreign companies, including German companies, and Chinese companies should play on a level field."

The ambassador also said German companies had been "not so well informed" about China's huge Belt and Road Initiative—a \$1 trillion global investment drive-and said they had not been able to benefit from the economic potential of the project.

This initiative "is mainly Chinese-financed and implemented by Chinese companies", said the German ambassador.

Scandal-hit Nissan's profits crash amid lower global sales

ASSOCIATED PRESS TOKYO, NOV 12

Japanese automaker Nissan reported Tuesday that its July-September profit tumbled to half of what it earned the sales and brand p crumbled following the arrest of its former chairman, Carlos Ghosn. Yokohama-based Nissan Motor Co.'s fiscal second quarter profit totalled 59 billion yen (\$541 million), down from 130 billion yen in 2018. Quarterly sales slipped nearly 7 percent to 2.6 trillion yen (\$24 billion), falling globalling, including in the key US, European and Japanese markets.

making dubious payments Nissan has also been charged as a

corporate entity. The company has vowed to improve governance, corporate culture and ethical standards.

Also Tuesday, Nissan slashed its full year profit forecast through March 2020 to 110 billion yen (\$1 billion), from the earlier estimate of 170 billion yen (\$1.6 billion), citing poorer sales and unfavourable currency rates.

history of financial markets"

so far has been worth \$6 billion.

Ghosn was arrested on Nov. 19, 2018. He is out on bail but faces strict limits on its activities, including a ban on meeting his wife Carole. Prosecutors assert the couple might collude to fabricate stories in the case. It's unclear when his trial might start.

The allegations against Ghosn include under-reporting of promised compensation and breaching trust in

adership at the maker of the March subcompact, Leaf electric car and Infiniti luxury models. Ghosn had tremendous power at Nissan for nearly two decades

Hiroto Saikawa, his successor, stepped down in September after acknowledging that he had received dubious income. Saikawa has not been charged. Nissan has said that an internal investigation found the money he received was not illegal.

Another Nissan veteran, Makoto Uchida, was named as Saikawa's successor, effective Dec. 1.

Uchida has headed Nissan's China business, a key market for global automakers. He has not yet appeared before reporters to explain the company's strategy or policies.

recovery is coming, office Ghosn was sent to Japan by Renault in the late 1990s and is credited with turning around a then near-bankrupt Nissan. He insists he is innocent of any wrongdoing.

The company and Ghosn's defense team have sought to promote their own versions of what happened.

Ghosn's lawyers insist the case against the former star executive is weak and that there is little evidence, including official company records, to support claims against him.

The prosecutors are still looking for evidence and trying to gather testimony, and it is clear they had no evidence at all but went ahead and arrested him," Junichiro Hironaka said Monday at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Tokyo.



A Vietnamese labourer load bags of cement on a barge at a loading dock along the Red River in Hanoi on Tuesday.

China's Xi on investment drive in EU member Greece

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATHENS (GREECE), NOV 12

China and Greece signed 16 bilateral agreements on Monday outlining cooperation in a broad range of sectors during a visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping aimed at furthering a major global investment initiative inside the European Union.

China's state-owned shipping giant Cosco controls Greece's largest port of Piraeus, near Athens, and Beijing is keen to boost Chinese investment in Greece as part of its global "Belt and Road" investment initiative.

"Both sides see China and Greece as natural partners for building the Belt and Road," Xi said after meeting with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. "We would like to mesh the Belt and Road initiative more closely with the development strategy of this country.'

Xi said both countries would "fully leverage" Piraeus' shipment capabilities and strengthen the China-Europe Land-Sea Express Line, a trade route between China and Europe that on land connects Piraeus with Budapest in Hungary.

Chicken 'billionaire' Poland is Europe's poultry king

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KONDRAJEC PANSKI (POLAND), NOV 12

In what looks like a Niagara Falls of yellow feathers, thousands of chicks cascade down a conveyor belt in central Poland.

A day old, they only have 41 left to live. Their fate is sealed: once grown, they will wind up on a plate

Their lives may be brief, but their living conditions could be better, according to animal rights activists, ever more active and influential in Poland and elsewhere.

The city of New York voted last month to ban the sale of foie gras, which is made from the livers of forcefed ducks and geese.

Also last month France announced that the culling of male chicks by maceration would be outlawed by the end of 2021.

For the day-old Polish chicks, their next stop is a chicken coop the size of a hangar

It houses 54,000 chickens-hopping, pecking, clucking and raising their heads to drink from suspended water bowls

"After six weeks, the chickens grow to between 2.7 and 2.8 kilogrammes" weighing 40 after grammes on day one, said Andrzej Gontarski,



Andrzej Gontarski, head of the chicken farm inspects chickens in the coops at Kondrajec Panski, Poland.

head of the farm comprising a dozen such warehouses in the village of Kondrajec Panski.

Poland's poultry industry has come a long way over the last decade.

The country is now Europe's top chicken producer and exporter, having raised more than a billion chickens for meat last year, according to Statistics Poland-or 10 times more than in 2009.

Chicken was the natural choice over pork: the sky is the limit for the poultry export market, whereas many countries, especially Muslim ones, do not allow pork.

The production cycle is also shorter, and the invested funds are recouped faster, after a dozen weeks or so.

Dressed in a sterile white jumpsuit, Gontarski enters the massive chicken coop, triggering a white wave of agitated birds. Their short lives will come to an end in the nearby village of Ujazdowek at a slaughterhouseowned by the Polish firm Cedrobthat employs 1,600 people and processes 750,000 chickens a day.

Attached by their knees to an overhead chain conveyor, the chickens are anaesthetised and then paralysed by an electric shock, having first been spritzed with water to help the current pass more easily.

Their necks sawed off, the chickens lose all their blood, which dribbles down into a suspended trough. The animals die after a half hour.

They are then spritzed with warm water to make it easier for a machine furnished with rubber fingers to pluck their feathers.

Sent to a cold room to lower their body temperatures, the chickens are cut into pieces.

Another machine packages up the segments to be sold either frozen or fresh. In Poland, the living conditions of chickens raised on industrial farms have drawn criticism from animal rights activists like the Otwarte Klatki (Open Cages) group.

The group launched a campaign called "Frankenkurczak" (Frankenchicken), in a reference to the Frankenstein monster,

denounce the practice of fattening up chickens to an extreme degree.

"The bird's breast is disproportionately large compared to its legs. It's common for the leg bones to break, they can't bear the weight," said the group's spokeswoman Anna Izynska.

Every year, 1.8 billion chicks are born in Poland, according to Mariusz Paweska, an official from a large hatchery in the area, in the village of Skarzynek.

Many are exported almost immediately, notably to Belarus and Ukraine, but more than half are raised in Poland for consumption at home or export later on.

Its export markets are EU countries, led by Germany, the Netherlands and Britain, with Ukraine, South Africa and Hong Kong the main ones outside of the bloc. The industry continues to grow. Poland's main asset are its prices, much lower than those of Western poultry farmers, according to Mariusz Szymyslik, a co-director of the national chamber of poultry and animal feed.

He says trade barriers protect in particular the French and German markets, adding that "if the European market were totally free, Polish poultry would have swept the Western competition.'

114.64

126.37

147.10

10.50

16.36

31.48

78.39

27.67

30.57

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

PRICE PER TOLA

Rs 71.200

Rs 845

SOURCE: FENEGOSID

HIGHEST GAINERS

NIB 3.14%

BULLION

< Silver

Fine Gold

GASOLINE WATCH

100% PERFORMANCE, EVERYTIME

Petrol (Per Litre)

Rs 107.00/

Diesel (Per Litre)

(erosene (Per Litre)

Rs 95.00/

LPG (Per cylinder

Rs 1350/-

FOREX

Pound Sterling

Japanese Yen

Chinese Yuan

Qatari Riyal

Australian Dolla

Malaysian Ringit

Saudi Arab Riva

US Dollar

Furo

MONEY

Oil rises further above \$62 a barrel

Oil rose further above \$62 a barrel or Tuesday, supported by hopes that US President Donald Trump may signal progress on trade talks with China and lower inventories at a US oil hub.

Concern about slower economic growth and oil demand due to the fallout from the 16-month US-China trade dispute sent prices lower on Monday. Trump gives a speech later on Tuesday and investors are keen for an update on the talks.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, was up 29 cents at \$62.47 a barrel by 1300 GMT, after falling as low as \$61.90. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude rose 27 cents to\$57.13.

"The oil market is in a holding pattern," said Tamas Varga of oil broker PVM. "The next \$5-\$10 move will be decided by economic and trade considerations.'

"He is widely expected to delay his decision to impose tariffs on European car and auto part imports and will also shed further light on the status of the trade negotiations with China,' Varga added, referring to Trump's speech

The US president said on Saturday that talks with China were moving along "very nicely" but the United States would make a deal only if it was the right one. He said there had been incorrect reporting about US willingness to lift tariffs.

"Market participants continue to believe in a (partial) trade agreement to be signed soon," said Carsten Fritsch, analyst at Commerzbank "Increasing doubts about this would put oil prices under pressure.

Adding further support, US data showed that crude inventories at Cushing, the delivery point for WTI, fell by about 1.2 million barrels in the week to Nov. 8, traders said, citing market intelligence firm Genscape.

Cushing inventories had grown for five weeks in a row through Nov. 1, according to government data.

Brent has risen 16 percent in 2019, supported by a supply-limiting pact by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia. The producers meet on Dec. 5-6 to decide whether to extend the deal.

Oman, one of the outside producers working with OPEC, said on Monday that the alliance would probably extend the agreement but was unlikely to increase the size of the supply cut

Families of air crash victims say they are being pressured to withdraw their case REUTERS LONDON, NOV 12

22 Nepalis were killed when US-Bangla flight BS 211 from Dhaka crashed while landing at Kathmandu airport.

SANGAM PRASAIN KATHMANDU, NOV 12

Families of the US-Bangla Airlines crash victims have charged that the Nepali law firm hired by the Bangladeshi carrier has been pressurising them to withdraw their lawsuit, saying that it was against their fundamental right to a 'fair trial' and the 'independent judiciary' system.

On March 12, 2018, a scheduled US-Bangla Airlines flight from Dhaka to Kathmandu crashed on landing at Tribhuvan International Airport, killing 51 passengers including 22 Nepalis. There were 71 people, including four crew members, aboard the 76-seater Bombardier.

The families of seven students who died in the crash have sued the airline for \$19.09 million.

The families of seven of the deceased passengers-MBBS students Ashna Shakya, Anjila Shrestha, Meeli Maharjan, Neega Maharjan, Princy Dhami, Sanjaya Maharjan and Shreya Jha-filed the suit in Kathmandu District Court on July 31 for unlimited compensation citing wrongful death, nearly a year and a half after the disaster.

"The hearing was set for November 6. But we postponed it after the law firm—Pradhan & Associates emailed the plaintiffs' lawyer Amrit Kharel stating that 'the report pre-Nepal's pared by Accident Investigation Commission was not admissible as evidence as per various Nepali statutes'," said Bidhur Man Shrestha, father of Anjila.

The commission released its report in January 2019, concluding that the captain of Flight BS 211 was 'stressed and emotionally disturbed'. Evidence confirmed that the captain was mentally unstable and unfit to fly. A copy of the email dated November

1 seen by the Post shows that Pradhan



Families of the US-Bangla Airlines crash victims at a press meet in Kathmandu on Tuesday

& Associates already knew that the court proceeding slated for November 6 would be dismissed for lack of jurisdiction.

"How did lawyer Devendra Pradhan of Pradhan & Associates know that the lawsuit would be dismissed five days in advance? It's against the fundamental right to a fair trial and independent judiciary system," said Kharel at a press meet organised by the victims' families on Tuesday. "The families of the victims have the right to file a lawsuit, and it's their fundamental right.'

The email says that the plaintiffs have relied on claims of 'gross negligence' and 'willful misconduct' under Article 25 of the Warsaw Convention 1929 which is not applicable to these lawsuits

"We prepared to raise these issues very strongly as well as other issues before the court to seek dismissal of these lawsuits," the email said. "It is our belief that plaintiffs can still avoid the unfavorable situation. US-Bangla wishes to extend plaintiffs a full and final settlement out of the court on the terms offered to them previously in order to avoid lengthy litigation which definitely will take

The email ended with the words: "Please judge your action accordingly. We are more than happy to discuss authorised to speak on behalf of their

The families of the seven medical students who died in the crash have sued the airline for \$19.09 million. The lawsuit was filed based on the report of the Nepal government's Accident Investigation Commission which concluded that the crash and 'wrongful death' occurred due to 'willful misconduct' and 'gross negligence' of the

airline, said Kharel.

Shrestha told the press meet that they had knocked on the court's door after the airline refused to pay reasonable compensation. "The law firm had offered \$50,000 per person. They have been frequently pressurising us to take the compensation amount that they have fixed.

The families of the victims have already been given \$20,000 as advance payment.

The families of the 15 other Nepali victims and a Bangladeshi victim have also been seeking legal remedy to get their rightful compensation separately by hiring another law firm in Kathmandu.

US-Bangla Airlines took insurance coverage of \$107 million through two local insurance companies-Sena Kalyan Insurance Company and Sadharan Bima Corporation-consisting of \$7 million for the aircraft and \$100 million for passenger liabilities.

Gold imports grind to a halt as buyers flee high prices

The vellow metal traded at Rs 71,200 per tola in the local bullion market on Tuesday.

Regulatory body rejects Nepal Electricity Authority's tariff proposal

Electricity Regulatory Commission is mulling to enforce a new directive on tariff fixation.

PRAHLAD RIJAL **KATHMANDU, NOV 12**

eek after the Nepal Electricity Authority forwarded



several years.

this matter further." An advocate at Pradhan & Associates refused to comment on the issue as he was not clients, US-Bangla Airlines.



KRISHANA PRASAIN KATHMANDU, NOV 12

Gold imports in the first quarter almost ground to a complete halt largely due to a sharp rise in prices.

The country imported Rs60 million worth of the yellow metal during the period mid-July to mid-October, down from Rs7.5 billion in the same period last year, Nepal Rastra Bank said. In the whole of the last fiscal year, gold imports totalled Rs34 billion.

Plunging gold imports helped to trim Nepal's trade deficit by 12 percent in the first three months of the fiscal year, according to the central bank report

Traders said prices had soared in unexpected ways due to trade tensions between the US and China, prompting investors to turn to gold as a safe haven since its value typically rises during times of economic weakness and market volatility.

Domestic factors like increased customs duty are partly responsible for the hike in prices, bullion merchants said.

Laxmi Prapanna Niroula, spokesperson for Nepal Rastra Bank, said demand for gold decreased steeply after prices rose unprecedentedly.

Prices have been on an upward

The government has hiked the customs duty on the import of gold by Rs 1,500 per 10 grams.

trend since June, leading people to sell their holdings which resulted in gold sales decreasing drastically. "Banks were also compelled to stop importing because there were few buyers," said Niroula

According to Anil Sharma, executive director of the Nepal Bankers Association, banks imported 600 kg of the yellow metal in the first three months of the current fiscal year. "They used to import 600-650 kg monthly when the rate was normal,' he said

He added that sales had started picking up in the past few weeks despite the hiked price.

Tej Ratna Shakya, former president of the Federation of Nepal Gold and Silver Dealers' Association, said that people had been waiting for three months to buy gold, hoping prices

would fall. "But the price did not fall, and there is still no sign of it decreasing.'

The Federation of Nepal Gold and Silver Dealers' Association fixed the gold price at Rs71,200 per tola on Tuesday. The market closed with the trading price of Rs69,900 per tola on Friday and opened at Rs71,000 per tola on Sunday.

The government has hiked the customs duty on the import of commercial gold by Rs1,500 per 10 grams effective from Friday. With this, the customs duty on 10 grams of gold will now come to Rs6,500.

The Department of Customs said that that the duty had been hiked on a par with India to prevent smuggling. Chances of gold smuggling are high due to the open border as gold is cheaper in the Nepali market, said the department.

Shakya said that though the price of gold has decreased slightly in the international market, it has increased in the local market due to a hike in the customs duty.

According to Reuters, gold fell on Monday to its lowest in more than three months as spot gold fell 0.1 percent to \$1,456.98 per ounce having touched its lowest since August 5 earlier.

tariff proposal to Electricity Regulatory Commission seeking to slash electricity rates for industrial consumers and suggesting rates for electric vehicle charging stations, the regulator has rejected the proposal.

The regulator rejected the proposal on grounds that the power utility forwarded the rates in haste while the regulator was mulling to enforce a new directive on tariff fixation.

"The commission through its soon-to-be enforced directive on tariff proposal has set criteria that the power utility must fulfil before any tariff revision is approved by the regulator," said Dilli Bahadur Singh, chairperson of the commision. "We will send a letter to the utility on Tuesday seeking more information as mandated by the directive before allowing it to make changes to existing electricity rates.

According to Singh, homework needs to be done by the power utility before seeking tariff revision and it can not simply ask the regulator to approve the tariff through a plain letter.

The power utility in the proposal had asked the regulator to review and approve the electricity rates which have remained unchanged for over two years because of the scrapping of former electricity tariff fixation commission and delayed formation of the new regulatory body.

The proposal had pitched slashing high power rates for commercial entities, community drinking water projects and factories using power through dedicated feeders, a cause of a major row between the power utility and the industrialists

As per existing billing rates, the power utility charges the factories using dedicated feeders 70 percent more than what the general households pay for using electricity.

Industrialists have time and again complained that the power utility has been taking exorbitant charges despite the country witnessing an end to the power crisis which had forced the utility to hike rates earlier.

The power utility had proposed the rates for dedicated feeder users to be slashed by 50 percent, removal of demand charge of Rs155 per month levied for community water projects which supply water to people in hilly and rural areas.

The new tariff proposal had also forwarded a tariff rate for electric vehicle charging stations, a crucial infrastructure touted to boost electric mobility in the country, leading to increased electricity consumption.

Amid the uncertainty over standard tariffs for charging stations, some transport entrepreneurs have already invested in charging stations and are awaiting the authorities to make things easier.

Sundar Yatayat, which runs four electric buses in Kathmandu has been operating a station installed with 30 kW, 60 kW and 120 kW charging ports at a cost of Rs5.4 million excluding taxes.

Company officials recently told the Post that they were ready to invest in more stations only if the authorities fix a standard rate and other norms for operating charging stations.

The private sectors' plan to invest in EV charging stations is likely to be deferred as the Electricity Regulatory Commission is yet to issue the final directives on tariff fixation.

According to officials close to the situation, the regulator could have asked it to submit supporting documents mandated by the new directives once they were issued

rather than outrightly rejecting utility's proposal. "The rejection hints at the underlying political tussle between the regulator and power utility while delaying a much-needed tariff revision and approval by adding additional layers to the process," said an anonymous official. "The power utility plans to forward the same rates for various sectors as proposed in the recent proposal after compiling other documents sought by the regulator.'

A week ago, the commission drafted a directive which requires the power utility to undertake lengthy assessments of its projected annual revenue requirement to obtain permission to revise its tariffs.

As per the directive, the commission will review the capacity demand charge levied on industrial consumers, the energy charge paid by general consumers, the annual return of the power utility from investments, the cost, quality and quantity of electricity supplied through the country in relation to the source, the interest expenses and the power purchase commitments of the power utility before making a decision on revising the tariff.

According to Ram Prasad Dhital, a member of the commission who oversees legal and external affairs, the directives-which are currently open for stakeholders' review and comments-will be passed by the regulator within a week.



SPORTS

EURO QUALIFIERS FIXTURES

Turkey vs Iceland 2245 NST (Thursday) Czech Republic vs Kosovo 0130 NST (Friday) England vs Montenegro 0130 NST (Friday) Portugal vs Lithuania 0130 NST (Friday) Serbia vs Luxembourg 0130 NST (Friday) Albania vs Andorra 0130 NST (Friday) France vs Moldova 0130 NST (Friday) Norway vs Faroe Islands 2245 NST (Friday) Armenia vs Greece 2245 NST (Friday) Finland vs Liechtenstein 2245 NST (Friday)

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS FIXTURES

Malawi vs South Sudan 1845 NST Central African Republic vs Burundi 1845 NST Namibia vs Chad 2145 NST Cameroon vs Cape Verde 2145 NST Guinea-Bissau vs Eswatini 2145 NST Nigeria vs Benin 2145 NST Sierra Leone vs Lesotho 2145 NST

BRAZILIAN SERIE A FIXTURES

Cruzeiro	0-0	Atletico Mineiro
Sao Paulo	0-1	Paranaense
Internacional	2-1	Fluminense
Flamengo	3-1	Bahia
CSA AL	0-3	Vasco DA Gama
Chapecoense	0-1	Gremio
Fortaleza	1-0	Ceara
Botafogo	2-0	Avai

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Advancing to the knockout phase is our priority, and that starts by getting a win against Canada. We will be ready to play, the team is looking forward to competing in front of our fans. Orlando has been a great venue for the National Team, and the support of our fans makes a big difference."

— USA football coach Gregg Berhalter



India look to consolidate their top Test spot

Virat Kohli, who opted out of the Twenty20 series, returns as captain in the two-match Test series against Bangladesh.



A file photo shows Indian players warming up during a training session ahead of their T20 series against Bangladesh in Nagpur, India.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE INDORE, NOV 12

Virat Kohli's India will be aiming to strengthen their number one position in the world Test championship when they start a two-match series against Bangladesh on Thursday. India start as favourites to pick up 120 points from the two games against a Bangladesh side missing key players.

The hosts have recorded two sweeps in the five-day format since the start of the Test championship in August, beating South Africa and the West Indies. New Zealand and Sri Lanka are second and third, already 180 points behind though they have played only one series each. India go into the first match in Indore boosted by a 2-1 Twenty20 series win over Bangladesh. Kohli, who opted out of the T20 matches, returns to lead the side that recently won their record 11th straight series at home. Rohit Sharma has been on hot form, hitting two centuries and a double ton in his debut series as opener against South Africa. The pace department also looks settled despite the absence of injured Jasprit Bumrah and played a key part in the three convincing Test.

Bangladesh, under new captain Mominul Haque, had a troubled buildup to a series after star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was banned for two years, with one year suspended, by the International Cricket Council. He admitted failing to declare illegal approaches by bookies and the ban

SQUADS

India: Virat Kohli (capt), Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant

Bangladesh: Mominul Haque (capt), Shadman Islam, Imrul Kayes, Saif Hasan, Liton Das, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mohammad Mithun, Mosaddek Hossain, Mehedi Hasan, Taijul Islam, Nayeem Hasan, Mustafizur Rahman, Al-Amin Hossain, Abu Jayed, Ebadat Hossain

ruled Shakib out of the tour and next year's World T20 in Australia.

Earlier a player revolt put the India tour in doubt before the national board gave in and increased match payments. The touring side is also missing prolific opener Tamim Iqbal who took a break due to family reasons. Liton Das, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad will lead the team's batting alongside Mominul who was not part of the T20 squad.

"I never considered captaincy as pressure or responsibility. If I keep thinking that as a captain I have to take extra responsibility to carry the team forward then I will be in some pressure," Mominul said after being named captain. "But if I play my natural game, and think that I am a batsman who needs to score for his team."

The second match of the series will be the first day-night Test to be staged in India. Kolkata's Eden Gardens will host the spectacle.

Premier League sharpshooters in Africa for Cup of Nations qualifiers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRES

English Premier League sharpshooters Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah flew to Africa this week, seeking goals as 2021 Cup of Nations (CAN) qualifying kicks off.

New Arsenal captain Aubameyang has claimed eight league goals this season and Liverpool duo Mane and Salah seven and six respectively, putting the trio among the top 10 scorers. The form of Gabonese Aubameyang, Senegalese Mane and Egyptian Salah will encourage their nations as they face two matches each between this Wednesday and next Tuesday.

Mane, who is looking good to succeed two-time winner Salah as African Footballer of the Year, will be first into action with Senegal hosting Congo Brazzaville in Thies on Wednesday. Having scored for Liverpool in a 3-1 triumph over reigning champions Manchester City Sunday and travelled to Dakar Monday, Mane will have little time to prepare for the Group I clash.

Mane will be first in action with Senegal hosting Congo on Wednesday.

Fortunately for 2019 Cup of Nations silver medallists Senegal, whose defence is marshalled by Napoli centre-back Kalidou Koulibaly, Congo have not impressed recently. Any outcome other than a comfortable win for Senegal would be surprising as the nation currently ranked first in Africa launch another attempt to win a maiden Cup of Nations title.

Aubameyang and Salah play Thursday with Gabon away to central African neighbours the Democratic Republic of Congo in Group D and Egypt at home to Kenya in Group G. Salah will work with recently appointed Egypt coach Hossam el Badry for the first time, having missed a warmup win over Botswana last month because of an injury. El Badry succeeded Mexican Javier Aguirre, who was sacked after the Pharaohs flopped as 2019 Cup of Nations hosts, losing to South Africa at the last-16 stage. Another Premier League star available to the new coach is Mahmoud 'Trezeguet' Hassan, who scored for Aston Villa in a weekend defeat at Wolves.

Kenya appeared at a Cup of Nations this year for the first time since 2004 and edged Tanzania between group losses to eventual champions Algeria and runners-up Senegal.

Aubameyang, the son of a former international, and Gabon have unhappy memories of recent Cup of Nations. They could not win any of three 2017 oup matches despite being and made a humiliating first round exit before faring even worse in the following edition by failing to qualify. Aubameyang struggled for form in Africa and refused to travel from Gabon to South Sudan for a 2019 qualifier because he believed the chartered aircraft was unsafe. Only a handful of countries leave DR Congo capital Kinshasa with maximum points and a realistic target for new Gabon coach Patrick Neveu would be a draw. Algeria star Riyad Mahrez has managed only two Premier League goals for Manchester City this season and was an unused substitute at Liverpool

Arsenal back Emery but warn results must improve

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Unai Emery has been offered the backing of the Arsenal board for now, but has been warned that results must improve. The Spaniard has come under mounting pressure following a string poor performances record of just two wins from their last 10 Premier League games. A 2-0 loss at Leicester on Saturday saw the Gunners fall eight points behind the Premier League's top four. Emery's target had been to secure a return to the Champions League for the first time in four seasons next year, either via a top four finish or by winning the Europa League. However, the club's head of football Raul Sanllehi and managing director Vinai Venkatesham insist Emery remains the right man for the job.

Arsenal staff at a pre-planned meeting on Monday. "We share the frustration with our fans, Unai, the players and all our staff as they are not at the level we want or expect. Things need to improve to meet our objectives for the season, and we firmly believe Unai is the right man for the job, together with the believe



"We are as disappointed as everyone else with both our results and performances at this stage of the season," Sanllehi and Venkatesham told with the backroom team we have in place."

The backing comes with supporters unrest rising due to poor performances on the pitch and the Emery's decision to make Granit Xhaka club captain earlier this season. Xhaka was stripped of that honour after a foulmouthed tirade towards his own fans when being substituted at home to Crystal Palace on October 27.

"We have to make the tough decision Arsenal! It's not getting better," said former Arsenal striker Ian Wright after Saturday's defeat. "No definitive style or plan. Negative goal difference. No improvement in the defence. Not creating anything," added Wright on Twitter.

Belgian Delfine Persoon (left) and Nigerian Helen Joseph fight for the WBA World female super featherweight title in Ostende on Monday. Persoon, the former lightweight titlist, decisively outpointed Joseph over 10 rounds on Monday.

Top seed Nadal loses ATP Finals opener to Zverev as Tsitsipas triumphs



Alexander Zverev of Germany returns to Rafael Nadal of Spain during their ATP World Tour Finals match at the O2 Arena in London on Monday.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON, NOV 12

Rafael Nadal refused to make excuses after being outplayed by defending champion Alexander Zverev at the ATP Finals on Monday as Stefanos Tsitsipas got his campaign off to a flying start. The Spanish top seed, who has never won the season-ending event, came into the tournament at London's O2 Arena under an injury cloud and was well short of his imperious best as he went down 6-2, 6-4.

In the earlier round-robin match in Group Andre Agassi, sixth seed Tsitsipas beat Daniil Medvedev 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, admitting their spiky relationship had made his job tougher.

Nadal is locked in a battle with Novak Djokovic to finish as the yearend number one but was not serving flat out in practice last week due to an abdominal strain that forced him to pull out of the Paris Masters at the semi-final stage. The 33-year-old led Germany's Zverev 5-0 in head-to-head contests but was uncharacteristically sloppy in the first set, conceding two breaks of serve.

Buoyed by his dominant start, Zverev, seeded seventh, broke in the first game of the second set to take an iron grip on the match. Nadal dug deep, urging himself on but his opponent proved too strong. He did not The Spaniard is in a battle with Novak Djokovic to end the year at number one.

concede a single break point in the entire match. Zverev hit a total of 26 winners — double his opponent's tally — and Nadal managed just three forehand winners in the entire match.

"The physical issue was not an excuse at all," said the Spanish 19-time Grand Slam champion, who said he did not feel any pain from his abdominal injury. "The only excuse is I was not good enough tonight." "What really matters is I need to play much better in two days. That's the only thing," he added. "We knew that it was going to be tough, because the period of time since the injury until today is very short, but we are here trying."

Zverev, one of four players under the age of 24 at the event in London, was delighted to recapture his best form after a mixed season. "This means so much, playing here again after winning my biggest title so far in my career here last year," he said. "This means everything to me. Playing here, playing in front of you all, playing in the O2 is something that we don't have during the year, and this is so special."

Nadal faces a tough task now to qualify for the semi-finals from the group phase, with matches still to come against Tsitsipas and Medvedev. The Spaniard has qualified for the year-end championships for 15 years in a row but has only made nine appearances due to injuries.

Earlier, Tsitsipas made light of a 5-0 losing record against his Russia's Medvedev, edging a first-set tie-break and breaking late in the second set to seal the match. The two players have had a rocky relationship.

Tensions flared between them in Miami last year and Tsitsipas recently labelled Medvedev's way of winning as "boring" after defeat against the Russian in Shanghai. The Greek player said Medvedev had got "into my head" in Miami — he said the row had centred on a demand from the Russian for an apology over a net cord. "I mean, our chemistry definitely isn't the best that you can find on the Tour," said Tsitsipas, who added that Monday's match had been tougher because he was so desperate to win.

Djokovic launched his bid for a sixth ATP Finals title with a win against Matteo Berrettini on Sunday but Roger Federer slipped to a straightsets defeat against Dominic Thiem.

Stadium likely to be ready in two weeks as roof arrives

As the roof over the VIP parapet has not been built, there were fears that the stadium would not be ready in time to host the South Asian Games.



A file photo of the Dashrath Stadium. The venue is set to host the opening and closing ceremonies of the 13th South Asian Games scheduled for December 1 to 10 in Nepal.

PRAJWAL OLI Kathmandu, Nov 12

Amid ongoing speculation over whether the VIP section of the Dashrath Stadium, the primary venue to host the opening and closing ceremony of the upcoming South Asian Games, would be ready in time for the games, the material for the roof arrived on Tuesday. The roof will now be built in two weeks, according to Arun Upadhyaya, chief of the Engineering Section at the National Sports Council.

"Once technicians from the Chinese company that is building the roof arrive on Sunday, it will only take a week to install the roof," said Upadhyaya. "The installation will begin on Monday."

The current state of Dashrath Stadium, where no games have been played since it was damaged in the 2015 earthquakes, had led many to worry whether the primary venue for the South Asian Games, to be held from December 1 to 10, will be ready.

"The tensile fibre for the roof arrived in Kathmandu today from China," said Sports Minister Jagat Sunar Bishwokarma. The material for the roof was brought to Nepal via air cargo, as just 19 days remain for the games.

Already, Nepal's World Cup and Asia Cup joint qualifiers against Kuwait will be held in Bhutan, a neutral venue, on November 19, as the Asian Football Confederation found the stadium unfit to host Nepal's home game.

Bishwokarma has himself taken a lead role in expediting the construction of the VIP parapet. He remained at the stadium until midnight on Saturday and Sunday to oversee the erection of steel pillars at the parapet. All 19 pillars were erected on Tuesday.

"Installing the truss and chairs are the only major works remaining now for the VIP stand. Installing the truss will not take more than four days," said Bishwokarma. "We already have chair and they only need to be fixed. Once the roof work is over they will be placed" said Bishwokarma.

Apart from the Dashrath Stadium, the completion of a heated swimming pool was another major concern ahead of the games. Bishwokarma is confident that the swimming pool too will be ready in a week's time.

"We are in the last phase of the construction of the swimming pool," he said. "Everything relating to infrastructure will be in place by November 23. Now our main focus will be to organise the games successfully as it is a matter of national pride."

Despite being damaged in 2015, renovation work at the Dashrath Stadium only began a year ago. Nepal brought POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

home the flag for the South Asian Games, pledging to host the 13th edition of the sporting event, in 2016. As hosts, Nepal have postponed the event four times in the past, owing to infrastructure damaged by the earthquake. A meeting of the South Asian Olympic Council on Sunday in

Olympic Council on Sunday in Kathmandu ended speculation over whether the 13th edition of the games would be held in December or postponed once again. The meeting confirmed that the games would be held on the scheduled dates.

The South Asian Games, which will feature a total of 26 events, will bring together around 3,000 athletes from seven countries of South Asia.

Klopp tells UEFA seminar that VAR must improve



Jurgen Klopp

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LAUSANNE, NOV 12

The day after Liverpool beat Manchester City in a crunch match where VAR decisions were hotly disputed, the Premier League leader's coach Jurgen Klopp and other top football figures have suggested improvement is needed to the fledgling system.

Klopp, his City opposite number Pep Guardiola, Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane, and Thomas Tuchel of Paris Saint-Germain all attended the UEFA coaches forum in Nyon, Switzerland on Monday, where the VAR (Video Assistant Referee) system was a hot topic.

"It is clear it's a process where they have to keep on improving," Klopp said. "It can be improved, a lot of things have to be done by human beings and we are not 100 percent (either). There is space for some mistakes, nobody asks for perfection, just to have the right decision, that's all."

His comments were made a day after the marquee game of the Premier League season so far saw a controversial VAR call after six minutes when City could easily have had a penalty when the ball ricocheted around the Liverpool area and hit the Reds' Trent Alexander-Arnold on the arm.

Not only did VAR fail to overturn the referee's decision not to award City a penalty, but they were doubly punished 22 seconds later when Liverpool's Fabinho fired home a brilliant strike to give the Reds a 1-0 lead. UEFA assistant general secretary Giorgio Marchetti said uniformity was needed but called for time for the promising new system to bed in.

BRIEFING

Nepal secure final berth in Dhaka

KATHMANDU: Nepal have marked their third successive win at the AVC Central Zone Women's Volleyball Tournament defeating hosts Bangladesh in straight sets on Tuesday. Nepal earned a comfortable 25-7, 25-6, 25-6 win. Having secured a straight set win against Afghanistan Hope ton powers West Indies to ODI sweep over Afghanistan AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE West Indies to four for two but Hope

west indies to four for two but Hope stood firm to keep the chase on track. Hope, who starred in the opening win with an unbeaten 77, remained the top-scorer in the series with 229 runs.

Man of the match Hope got support from debutant Brandon King, who made 39, and Pollard, who hit 32. for his 145 runs including a highest of 94 in the three matches and six wickets with his off-spin. Afghanistan, led by Rashid Khan, were outplayed in all three matches in their newly adopted home in Lucknow. India has been the home of the wartorn nation's cricket team since 2015. A 127-run partnership between Asghar Afghan and Mohammad Nabi gave Afghanistan a fighting total from a precarious 118-5 after being invited to bat first. Afghan made 86 off 85 balls and Nabi remained unbeaten on 50 to thwart a persistent West Indies bowling. Opener Hazratullah Zazai hit an attacking 50 but the rest of the top-order fell flat. Nabi, who hit three fours and a six in his 66-ball stay, raised his 15th ODI fifty on the penultimate ball of the innings as Afghanistan managed 54 runs from the last five overs.

in their first match, Nepali spikers had seen off Kyrgyzstan, also in three sets, in their second. Sunita Khadka of Nepal was adjudged the player-ofthe-match. With their third win in three matches, Nepal top the standings with nine points. Nepal are contesting at the tournament alongside Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Top two teams of the tournament, played on a round-robin format, will face-off at the tournament decider. **(SB)**

Belgian champions Genk sack coach Mazzu

BRUSSELS: Belgian champions Genk said Tuesday they had sacked coach Felice Mazzu after slipping to ninth place in the table following a disappointing start to the season. After los ing three matches out of four in their Champions League qualifying group led by Liverpool and winning only six out of 14 domestic league games, Genk said they had let Mazzu and his three assistants go. "KRC Genk part ways with Felice Mazzu," the club said on its website. Leaders Bruges have opened a 13-point gap at the top of the table over Genk. Genk lost 6-2 to Salzburg in their opening Champions league match this season and have twice been beaten by Liverpool. Domenico Olivieri takes over as interim coch while Genk search for a replacement for Mazzu. (AFP)

Warnock leaves Cardiff by mutual consent

LONDON: Cardiff manager Neil Warnock has left his position by mutual consent. the club announced on Monday with the Welsh side languishing 14th in the Championship table. He was appointed in October 2016 with Cardiff second from bottom in the Championship, but after consolidating their position in England's second tier, he guided the club to promotion to the Premier League in 2018 Relegation followed last season during a difficult campaign in which the club's record signing Emiliano Sala died in a plane crash. Defeat to Bristol City on Sunday capped a run of one win in six league games that left Cardiff seven points off a playoff place. (AFP)

Hope made 109 and built crucial partnerships including an unbeaten 71-run stand with Roston Chase, 42 not out, to anchor West Indies' chase of 250 with eight balls to spare in Lucknow. The wicketkeeper-batsman completed his seventh ODI hundred as West Indies, under new limited-overs captain Kieron Pollard, recorded their first ODI whitewash since 2014.

Opening batsman Shai Hope struck an

unbeaten century as West Indies out-

played Afghanistan by five wickets in

the third one-day international on

Monday to complete a 3-0 series rout.

LUCKNOW, NOV 12

"We came here with a mission and specific roles for players, and all the players deserve credit," said Pollard. "Winning is a habit, and anything that we want to do as a team is a process, and it's something we had to improve in a period of time. This was an opportunity for us to show we have that kind of venom inside us. We knew we had to rally as a team, and we proved we can bat 50 overs, and once we do that, we can win games."

Paceman Keemo Paul played a key role in the win, returning figures of 3-44 in Afghanistan's 249-7. Afghanistan's teenage spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman took two wickets to reduce

The two teams will now play three Twenty20 internationals om Lucknow starting November 14.



Wrestling players in action during the Birat Wrestling Championship in Thadighat, Nawalparasi, on Tuesday.

POST PHOTO: NARAYAN SHARMA

Emotions got the better of me, says dropped Raheem Sterling

The forward had an altercation with Liverpool's Joe Gomez. The clash resulted in him being dropped from England's next Euro qualifier match.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON, NOV 12

Raheem Sterling said he allowed his "emotions" to get the better of him leading to a brief altercation with Liverpool's Joe Gomez that resulted in Manchester City player being dropped for Thursday's Euro 2020 qualifier against Montenegro.

Sterling admitted on Instagram on Tuesday he and Gomez "had words" when they met up at the England camp the day after Liverpool's 3-1 win over defending champions Manchester City which left the latter nine points adrift of Jurgen Klopp's side.

"Both Joe and I have had words and figured things out and moved on," Sterling said. "We are in a sport where emotions run high and I am man enough to admit when emotions got the better of me. This is why we play this sport because of our love for it me and Joe Gomez are good, we both understand it was a five to 10-second



Liverpool's Joe Gomez (left) and Manchester City's Raheem Sterling clash during their Premier League match at Anfield, Liverpool, on Sunday.

thing... it's done, we move forward and not make this bigger than it is. Let's get focus on our game on Thursday," Sterling added. The Daily Mail reported that Gomez and Sterling had to be separated by teammates on Monday after a "physical confrontation." The pair had also clashed on the field towards the end of Sunday's match.

England manager Gareth Southgate moved quickly to deal with the issue — arguably one of his achievements during his time in the post has been to erase the rivalries between members from different clubs which plagued previous England squads. The likes of former star defender Rio Ferdinand have spoken about how when they used to join the England camp he and Manchester United players would stick together and find it hard to mix with Chelsea or Liverpool stars.

In a statement prior to Sterling's Instagram post issued by the Football Association, Southgate alluded to that. "We have taken the decision to not consider Raheem for the match against Montenegro on Thursday. One of the great challenges and strengths for us is that we've been able to separate club rivalries from the national team. Unfortunately the emotions of yesterday's game were still raw. My feeling is that the right thing for the team is the action we have taken. Now that the decision has been made with the agreement of the entire squad, it's important that we support the players and focus on Thursday night." Sterling has been one of the stars of England's qualification campaign, scoring eight goals in six games.

A draw against Montenegro at Wembley will be enough to guarantee England's place at Euro 2020. Sterling has enjoyed a makeover in his image in the past year with less biting observations of his bling-bling image in the press and more positive headlines regarding his public stance against racism.

The 24-year-old silenced the critics over having a rifle tattooed on his leg by revealing it was his pledge never to touch a gun following his father being shot dead in Jamaica in front of his own father when the star was just two. He has been hailed by London Mayor Sadiq Khan for his campaigning against racism. "I'd go as far to say he's the best statesman we have (for fighting racism)," Khan said in September this year.



33 KILOS IS A LOT OF GOLD. HOW DOES ONE SMUGGLE THAT IN?

From a vague bill the government just proposed to a mysterious gold smuggling case that simply won't go away, we'll tell you everything you need to know about the big stories in our weekly Explained series.

Look for it every Thursday on Page 16.

