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31.2°C -0.5°C
Dipayal Jumla



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.

POST PHOTO

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 week, will not only remove and reassign 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.

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 secretariat, however, told the Post that

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 Parliament. As the House Speaker has 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.

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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

The 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

After aborting passport tender, government to sign security printing deal with French firm

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



LIFE & STYLE | 08

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

Sandwich Puf Panel

Sandwich Roofing Panel

चौडाई: ८५० मि.मि.
लम्बाई: ग्राहकको माग बमोजिम
मोटाई: ३० मि.मि., ४० मि.मि. ५० मिमि

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

Sandwich Wall Panel

चौडाई: ८५० मि.मि.
लम्बाई: ग्राहकको माग बमोजिम
मोटाई: ४०, 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



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, Lekhray 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 Millennium 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 Millennium 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 constitutional bench of the Supreme Court. This could raise serious ethical questions over Sapkota's elevation to the coveted post.

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 Janamorchha.

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 Janamorchha. Regardless, the position will not go to the primary opposition, Nepali Congress, say ruling party leaders.

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 country's tuberculosis 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.

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-

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 mission include ensuring essential 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."

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 bid- dings 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 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."

माका, मुल, दया, क्षमा र समता, सन्तोष जान्दैन त्यो ।
झन्डै बित्तिल गरुन् झुकेर पदमा त्यो बित्तिल मान्दैन त्यो ॥
शुभोमा उभिली मिलो र नमिलो सुट्याई घान्दैन त्यो ।
खाला जोयि सवै दुरुस्त नबुकि विरौर घान्दैन त्यो ॥
राजा रोक सवै समान उसका देवद्वय गद्दैन त्यो ।
आजो टप्प टिप्प्यो लग्यो, भित्ति पुग्यो टारेर टर्दैन त्यो ॥

भावपूर्ण श्रद्धाञ्जली

जन्मः
२०३८/५/१७ गते

स्वर्गारोहणः
२०७६/७/१५ गते

स्व. अशोक अधिकारी

पोखरा ग्राण्डका सहायक फुड एण्ड वेभरेज मेनेजर पदमा कार्यरत **अशोक अधिकारी**को स्वर्गारोहण भएको आज १३ औं दिनको पुण्यतिथिमा दिवंगत आत्माको चिरशान्तिको कामना गर्दै यस दुःखद घडीमा शोकाकुल परिवारजनलाई धैर्यधारण गर्ने शक्ति ईश्वरले प्रदान गर्नु भनि प्रार्थना गर्दछौ ।

सम्पूर्ण पोखरा ग्राण्ड परिवार

Government of Nepal
Ministry of Water Supply
Department of Water Supply and Sewerage Management
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 deadline of this notice, the employer will go on recognizing the bid eligible to be approved.

Contract Number	Details of Work	Lowest Evaluated Substantially Responsive Bidder	Corrected evaluated bid amount NPR (inclusive of 13% VAT)
UWSSP/OCB-G01/Vehicles	Supply and delivery of 10 nos of double cab 4WD 4-door pick-up (diesel) driven vehicle	M/S Agni Incorporated Pvt. Ltd., Kathmandu	44,000,000.00

Project Director

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 high-land 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



SHUTTERSTOCK

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 deluxe' 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-



SHUTTERSTOCK

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 near-term 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.

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.

ARJUN BHATTARAI
KATHMANDU

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, fashion—or 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 have been other Korean musicians 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



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).



PHOTOS COURTESY OF: PRATHANA SHRESTHA & BTSNEPAL PROJECT

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 audience from the mid-2000s. Since 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 self-doubt and general negative feelings,” 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 fashion—from her clothes, accessories, 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



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.

Another Korean fashion aficionado, 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

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

emulate Korean celebrities, says Sujata Bajracharya, beauty advisor of Misumi Cosmetics 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.”

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 programmes 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.

“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.

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 granted—our 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.

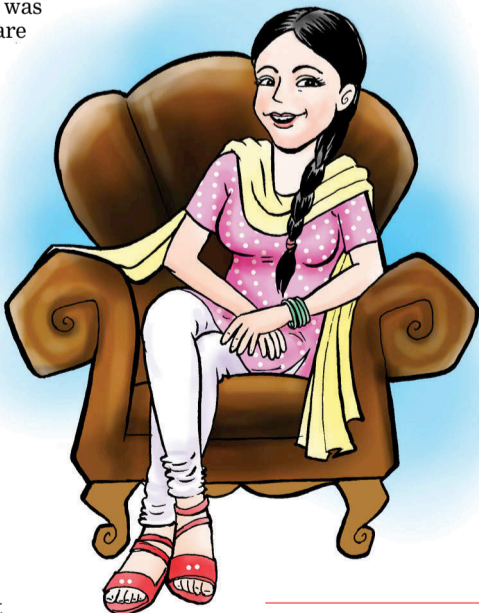
A very close friend once said to me that

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 your questions and the Agony Aunt will answer them like only she can.

agonyaunt@kmg.com.np.



UNSPASH

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 Bhandha 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



SCREENGRAB VIA YOUTUBE

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.



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 Bhandha 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 parties 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 enter-

tainment 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 Bhandha 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



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 problem in our society,” says 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 sexist 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 organisation.

While 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 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.

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

festival, said that this year’s festival 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 judgments on the issues projected in the documentaries. “Nepal provides that free space where everybody from South Asia can come easily without travel restrictions,

where they can meet and talk and discuss freely even as such spaces close up all over the region,” she is quoted.

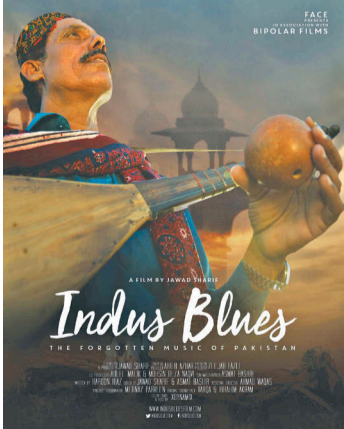
When asked if this year’s festival would be any different from previous festivals, assistant festival director Alok Adhikari said, “We’re actually not aiming to do anything drastically different. But we do have a much broader collec-

tion of documentaries.” This year’s documentaries will be covering all sorts of issues, including women’s empowerment, animal abuse, LGBTQTIQ+ 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

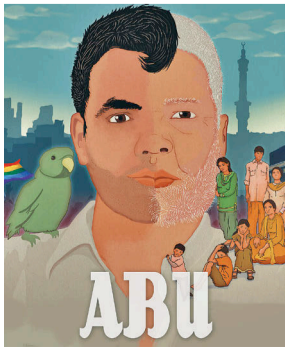
three-member jury, comprising Aiysha Abraham, Sivamohan Sumathy and Kunda Dixit, will decide the winners from the competition.

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:



Abu

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 seven Audience and Jury awards, the documentary will be screened on November 15, the second day of Film Southasia.



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.



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.

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.

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
CSAAL	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 build-up 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.

Arsenal back Emery but warn results must improve

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, NOV 12

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 of poor performances and a 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. “We are as disappointed as everyone else with both our results and performances at this stage of the season,” Sanllehi and Venkatesham told

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 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 Khaka club captain earlier this season. Khaka was stripped of that honour after a foul-mouthed 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.

Premier League sharpshooters in Africa for Cup of Nations qualifiers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JOHANNESBURG, NOV 12

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 warm-up 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 group matches despite being hosts 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.

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 year-end 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, play-

ing 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 straight-sets defeat against Dominic Thiem.



33 KILOS IS A LOT OF GOLD. HOW DOES ONE SMUGGLE THAT IN?

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