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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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Bhairahawa Jumla



POST PHOTO: PRAKASH CHANDRA TIMILSENA

Women fish using traditional nets in a pond in Nepalgunj, Banke. Seasonal fishing in the country's plains provides for some household needs.

After election, private sector body has no choice but to end factionalism, and fight a common enemy—Covid-19 pandemic

The faction led by incoming president Golchha loses, but he holds out an olive branch so that it can jointly lobby government for support to rehabilitate pandemic-hit businesses.



POST PHOTO: PRAKASH CHANDRA TIMILSENA

Outgoing president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Bhawani Rana, newly elected senior vice-president Chandra Prasad Dhakal and incoming president Shekhar Golchha at the oath taking ceremony for the new office bearers on Sunday.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA
KATHMANDU, NOV 29

With the end of the pandemic not in sight, these are testing times for the business sector the world over. It is no different in Nepal.

On Sunday, Nepal's business sector got a new leadership. With incumbent senior vice-president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry stepping up to the presidency, as per its statute, the elections held on Saturday had all eyes on the fight for the position of the new senior vice-president.

Incoming president Shekhar Golchha had openly opposed newly-elected senior vice-president Chandra Prasad Dhakal. But now they have to work together on behalf of the business community.

This may be easier said than done. "Those who contested for the top leadership may have made promises to lobby with the government in their interest or to give certain roles in the federation," said Hemanta Dabadi, who had served as director general of the Federation for many years. "Therefore this struggle to accommodate the rival faction may invite further bad blood within the Federation."

The animosity between Dhakal and Golchha has a history.

A faction within the Federation, in which Golchha believes Dhakal was involved, had unsuccessfully sought to amend the provision that paves the way for senior vice-president to become president automatically. In the 2017 Federation election, Dhakal had contested from Golchha's panel for the post of vice-president and won.

But talking to the Post, Golchha said that there is no rivalry anymore.

"During the elections, the panels were created but they should not exist after the elections are over," Golchha told the Post. "Dhakal is one of the most successful businesspersons and I hope to get full cooperation from him. Whatever knowledge he has will be beneficial for the private sector."

While Golchha belongs to one of Nepal's oldest business and industrial houses, Dhakal is a relative newcomer, a self-made man who began with a cargo business but now has interests in banking, insurance, tourism and hydropower, among others. Dhakal is also the brain behind the International Money Express, or IME, group that started in 2001.

While the Golchhas have traditionally been close to the Nepali Congress as they are based in Biratnagar—the ancestral home of the Koiralas who nurtured the party, Dhakal is considered to be close to the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) leadership.

But now, Dhakal similarly has made a conciliatory note.

"There will be no more panels in the Federation after the elections are over," Dhakal told the Post. "The newly elected leadership will work to serve the interest of the entire private sector."

The challenges for the Federation are huge. It needs to lobby hard with the government for policies that will revive the economy and such policies may be needed for years, according to a study by the government.

The business community expects that both factions will now move forward together in the interest of the businesses.

"I think it is time to be united to pursue the interests of the business community in the wake of Covid-19," said Pashupati Murarka, former president of the Federation, who had lobbied against Dhakal. "As Dhakal will be automatically elected president next term, he has no need to keep his faction alive. Therefore, businessmen from both factions will unite under the leadership of Golchha."

But observers are not sure that this will be easy.

"It will be difficult for any leadership to remove the substance of rivalry even after the elections are over, even if they promise to go together," said Dabadi.

The reason for Dabadi's doubts is history at the Federation.

When the two factions led by former vice-presidents Bhaskar Raj Rajkarnikar and Pradeep Jung Pandey contested for the post of president in 2014, before the current provision of the senior vice-president was introduced in 2016, the feud remained even after the elections were over and Pandey won.

The Pandey faction later blamed the Rajkarnikar faction for the arrest and subsequent jail term for the newly-elected Pandey in 2015.

Pandey was arrested in March 2015, and imprisoned for three months before he was released through a presidential pardon, for not serving a jail term despite being convicted of corruption when he was an employee at the Department of Water Supply and Sewage in the 1980s.

After he was jailed, Pandey was removed from the presidency and Pashupati Murarka was elected president for the remaining term. The Federation's statute was subsequently amended following that incident of bad blood.

But at present both Golchha and Dhakal have an enemy in the form of the pandemic.

In conversation with the Post, both the incoming president and newly-elected senior vice-president said that their focus would be on negotiating with the government to provide relief for businesses suffering from the pandemic.

Although the private sector as a whole has suffered badly from the pandemic, micro, small and medium enterprises and tourism industry have been hit worse.

The government and the central bank have introduced a number of relief packages, which are mostly related to debt relief, but the private sector says the support is not enough.

>> Continued on page 2

Chinese stopover militarily significant, politically symbolic

Officially, it is a continuation of exchanges between the two armies, but insiders say Wei's visit is reaffirmation of the messages an advance team from north delivered last week.

ANIL GIRI

KATHMANDU, NOV 29

He came. He met. He left.

Chinese State Councillor and Defence Minister Wei Fenghe on Sunday landed in Kathmandu for a day-long stopover during which he held a whirlwind of meetings with Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, also the defence minister, President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Nepal Army Chief Purna Chandra Thapa before flying straight to Pakistan in the evening.

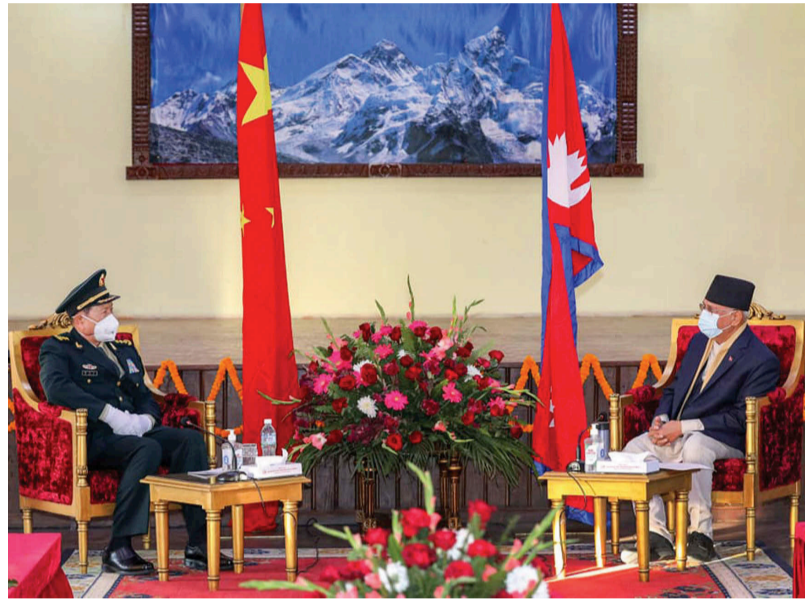
The major takeaway of Wei's visit, according to officials, is an understanding on resuming Chinese supplies of various non-lethal military aid to Nepal, which had been halted due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Nepal Army said Wei also carried the message of his government that it is positive about resumption of training and student exchange programmes and following up on defence assistance that have been impacted in the wake of the pandemic.

There, however, is more to this than meets the eye.

The visit of Wei, who is also a general in the Chinese People's Liberation Army, was aimed at reasserting what was already communicated to the Nepali leadership, especially Prime Minister Oli, also the chair of the ruling Nepal Communist Party, according to at least two high-level sources.

The sources said that ahead of Wei's visit to Kathmandu, a three-member high-level Chinese team had arrived in Kathmandu on November 24 and communicated Beijing's concerns to the top political leadership of Nepal's ruling and opposition parties.

Despite Beijing's growing concerns



RSS

Chinese Defence Minister Wei Fenghe in a meeting with Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

vis-a-vis the rift in the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and the Nepali Congress' new-found rhetoric over land encroachment by China in the Humla region, Wei did not touch upon any political matters during his meeting with Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Oli.

"Since Beijing's message had been already communicated, his arrival means the assertion," said a source familiar with the development, who did not wish to be named citing the sensitivity of the matter. "In diplomacy, it's more symbolism, less is said."

According to the sources, the Chinese advance team—two from the

Chinese Military Commission and one from the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party—had met with Oli, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the other chair of the ruling party, Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, Sher Bahadur Deuba, the leader of the main opposition, and senior officials from various agencies.

The team had communicated China's various political and security concerns, the sources told the Post. The Chinese team had arrived just two days before Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla landed in Kathmandu on a two-day visit.

>> Continued on page 2

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Foreign employment office limits per day quota of labour permits to 300

The token system would be strictly implemented to serve migrant workers and minimise mismanagement.

CHANDAN KUMAR MANDAL
KATHMANDU, NOV 29

Foreign Employment Office in Tahachal, Kathmandu, has strictly implemented the token system for distributing labour permits to outbound Nepali migrant workers from Sunday. The Office, under the Department of Foreign Employment—the government body overseeing the overall foreign employment sector—has decided to provide 300 tokens to aspirant migrant workers daily to reduce the hassles faced by beneficiaries. According to Chhatra Bahadur Shah, director at the Tahachal office, the token system would be strictly implemented to serve migrant workers who visit the office for the labour permit and minimise mismanagement which was going on in recent times. “We have decided to enforce the token system strictly so as to make the whole process organised. We noticed that even when we fixed 150 or 200 tokens for a particular day, around 15-20 beneficiaries would visit the office at the last moment requesting for labour permits without acquiring the token,” Shah told the Post. “Now, we have increased the number of tokens to 300 but we will not be providing services to those who do not have tokens.” Around 180 outbound migrant workers have been visiting the Tahachal-based office for labour permits. To receive work permits, migrant workers have to submit applications online to schedule the date and time with the respective labour offices in all the seven provinces. However, a large number of applicants used to miss their schedule while others visited the office without appointments, causing problems in service delivery, according to Shah. “We found out that several migrant workers were visiting the office with-

out making appointments saying that they had flight to catch on the same night. Some of them even produced fake flight tickets to receive labour permits by avoiding the regular process,” said Shah. “It is also not possible to check everyone’s tickets. The office would urgently issue labour permits to those whose visas are about to expire even if they had not come via the regular application process. So now the office is not going to issue any extra work permits beyond the 300 tokens.” The Tahachal office had also observed applicants making appointments by booking all the tokens issued for a day and not appearing on the scheduled date. Shah said they would visit the office as per their convenience hindering the day-to-day operation of the office. “With the available human resources, we still can cater to 600-700 applicants in a day. We also do not send any applicants back if they have already taken the token but those not visiting on their scheduled day makes the services difficult,” said Shah. With the resumption of foreign employment, which had remained closed since mid-March, migrant workers have started visiting labour offices for receiving labour permits. Although the Covid-19 concerns are still there, Nepali migrant workers have continued to seek jobs abroad. Since the government started issuing re-entry labour permits in June, around 200 workers have been receiving labour-permits every day—which is lower than pre-pandemic time, according to Shah. “This is a prime season for Nepali migrant workers leaving abroad for jobs. Once the festive season of Dashain and Tihar is over, we see a surge in people migrating. The number goes further up after the Chhath festival,” said Shah. “However, the current trend is slow which is because of the Covid-19 pandemic.”



Devotees offer prayers on the banks of Banganga river in Kapilvastu on Sunday on the eve of Kartik Shukla Purnima. Kartik Purnima, a significant full moon day in the Hindu calendar, falls on Monday this year.

Six people arrested in connection with ‘honour killing’ of 17-year-old in Rautahat

The victim was living with her parents after divorcing her husband, police say.

SHIVA PURI
RAUTAHAT, NOV 29

Six people have been arrested in connection to the murder of a 17-year-old girl in Rautahat. Among the arrested are the victim’s father and mother. According to the police, the murder of the girl is a case of honour killing. Police said their investigation has shown that the victim’s father had paid some henchmen money to kill his 17-year-old daughter in fear of losing the ‘family’s honour’, as his divorced daughter was in a relationship with

another man in the village. According to District Police Office Chief SP Siddhi Bikram Shah, preliminary investigation has shown that the family members had orchestrated a plan to kill the 17-year-old in order to save the family’s honour. “As per the investigation, the victim’s parents paid off some people to kill their daughter,” said Shah. “They feared losing the family’s ‘honour’ if the girl eloped with her lover.” The victim was living with her parents after divorcing her husband. She was allegedly married-off to a man

from Sarlahi last year, despite the family knowing about her three-year-long relationship with another person from the same village. However, the girl’s parents did not approve of her relationship. The police further informed that the parents had paid Rs150,000 to a henchman to kill their daughter on October 25. The plan was to kill her while taking her to India on the pretext of medical treatment. However, they failed to carry out the plan that day. The 17-year-old’s parents then found

another henchman from Dewahi-Gonahi Municipality and paid him Rs100,000 to commit the crime on November 11, according to police. On the day of the incident, the victim was sleeping with her mother. The henchmen entered the room when the mother was in the bathroom and shot the victim in the head. Shah further said that the arrested individuals have confessed to the crime, adding that the police are continuing their murder investigation after extending the custody of the arrestees from the district court.



A number of migrant workers had started appearing with fake air tickets defying the regular application process, officials say.

After election, private sector body has no choice but to ...

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 “My first focus will be to negotiate with the government to provide relief for the businesses suffering from the pandemic,” said Golchha. Working in the interests of the private sector will aid the whole of the economy, observers say. “The federation’s leadership can guide the government to introduce policy that helps the entire economy,” said Dabadi. “For this, it is necessary that they make policy recommendations based on the findings of research rather than the interests of different people at the Federation.” This is what Golchha says he will do. “I will establish a think tank at the Federation soon.”

Chinese stopover militarily significant, politically symbolic

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 During their meeting with Deuba, the sources said, the Chinese team expressed their concerns about the border encroachment issue in Humla, which the Nepali Congress has been fiercely raising, largely based on a report by Jeevan Bahadur Shahi, the party’s Provincial Assembly member in Karnali. The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu, on November 13, had even written to the Nepali Congress, expressing its displeasure at the ways the issue was being raised. A few days before, the Global Times, the Chinese government’s mouthpiece, had also implicated the Congress party as the main institution behind “fabricated reports” on Chinese encroachment. Confirming the visit of the Chinese advance team, a ruling party leader told the Post that during their meetings with the top leadership of the ruling party, they communicated that China is in favour of political stability in Nepal and that it wants to see continuation of the present establishment in Kathmandu.


“The team members communicated Beijing’s view that it has a high-level understanding with the present NCP leadership and that it wants to see the continuity of the present regime in Kathmandu,” said the leader familiar with the visit and the meetings, who requested anonymity because he was not allowed to speak to the media. Upon his arrival at Tribhuvan International Airport, where he was welcomed by Home Minister Thapa, Wei said his visit was aimed at implementing bilateral agreements reached between China and Nepal. “My visit is aimed at enhancing mutual military assistance and strengthening the existing ties between the two countries,” said Wei in a brief comment to the Rastriya Samachar Samiti news agency. “Ties between China and Nepal are strong and I am here to take this relationship to new heights. I am confident about having a result-oriented visit.” Though Prime Minister Oli as the defence minister is Wei’s counterpart, the Chinese official first headed to the Nepal Army headquarters where he received a guard of honour before holding the delegation-level talks. “Bilateral discussions at the delegation level were held mainly on issues pertaining to resumption of training and student exchange programmes and follow up on defence assistance impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic,” said the Nepal Army in a statement. “Wei and the delegation viewed both the proposals positively and affirmed that bilateral cooperation should resume as soon as possible, including exchange of high-level visits. Wei also pledged to provide additional assistance to the Nepal Army in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic.” Discussions on signing of the protocol for the agreements worth around 300 million RMB (approximately Rs5.4 billion) which were reached during two high-level visits last year by Deputy Prime Minister Ishwar Pokhrel, who then held the defence portfolio, in October, and General Thapa, in June, according to the Nepal Army. “Basically these supports are related to construction and engineering equipment and logistics for Nepali peacekeepers, among others,” Brigadier General Santosh Ballav

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eign spy agency early this month and in the third week of November, respectively. Wei’s brief but hasty dash to Nepal, with a 20-member delegation, comes also as a reminder of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s half-day stopover in 2012. After spending a little over two hours at the Army headquarters, Wei headed to Baluwatar for a meeting with Oli. During the meeting, Oli reiterated Nepal’s commitment to one-China policy and assured Wei that Nepali land will never be allowed to be used against China, according to Rajan Bhattarai, Oli’s foreign relations adviser. “The prime minister said that Nepal is committed to implementing the agreements reached during the visits of President Bhandari and his to China as well as President Xi’s to Nepal,” Bhattarai told the Post. “The prime minister also said that Nepal wants to learn from China’s steadfast progress on socio-economic fronts made in such a short span of time.” According to Bhattarai, the prime minister also appreciated the way China managed to take the Covid-19 pandemic under control. Bhattarai said Wei, in response, appreciated Nepal’s commitment to one-China policy and said that Nepal and China share trouble-free relations and are ready to contribute to each other’s development and prosperity. Apart from its interest in Nepal’s political matters, which is also evident from the Chinese embassy’s overt engagements with the ruling party leadership, Beijing has concerns about the sluggish implementation of projects under its Belt and Road Initiative, to which Nepal signed up back in 2016. Analysts in interviews over the past few days told the Post that Beijing is also keenly watching the geopolitical engagements in the region, including an understanding between the United States and India to counter China. After about year-long frosty relations, New Delhi is already in a bid to effect a rapprochement with Kathmandu just as Beijing was expanding its sphere of influence in Nepal. Wei wrapped up his visit by paying a courtesy call on President Bidya Devi Bhandari in the evening. The Nepal Army stated that it is confident this visit will help in further strengthening and expanding the cordial military-to-military relations between the two countries.

Wei is senior most Chinese official to visit Kathmandu after Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Paudyal, spokesperson for the Nepal Army, told the Post. Wei is the senior most Chinese official to arrive since Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to Kathmandu in October last year, the first by the Chinese head of state in 23 years. Wei is the second Chinese defence minister to visit Nepal in the last two decades, after Chang Wanquan’ trip to Kathmandu in May 2017. Chang, who was the first Chinese defence minister to arrive in Kathmandu in 16 years, led a 19-member delegation for a three-day visit. Chang’s visit had taken place on the eve of a planned military exercise between the Nepal Army and the People’s Liberation Army, the first between the two countries. Wei’s visit also comes days after a visit by Indian Foreign Secretary Shringla who concluded his two-day Nepal trip on Friday. Shringla’s arrival in Nepal was preceded by two back-to-back visits from the south—by the chiefs of Indian Army and India’s for-



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation
Department of Water Resources and Irrigation

Babai Irrigation Project

Baidi, Bardiya

Expression of Interest (EOI)

Date: 30th November, 2020 (15th Mangsir 2077)

Name of Project: Consulting Services for Detailed Survey, Planning and Engineering Design for Command Area Development Works of S-5 Canal System of Eastern Main Canal (EMC) of Babai Irrigation Project.

- Government of Nepal (GoN) has allocated fund towards the cost of **Babai Irrigation Project (BIP)** and intends to apply a portion of this **fund** to eligible payments under the Contract for which this Expression of Interest is invited for **National Consulting Service**.
- The **BIP** now invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from eligible consulting firms (“consultant”) to provide the following consulting services: **Detailed Survey, Planning and Engineering Design for Command Area Development Works of S-5 Canal System of Eastern Main Canal (EMC) of Babai Irrigation Project**.
- Interested eligible consultants may obtain further information and EOI document free of cost at the address **BIP, Baidi, Bardiya** during office hours on or before **15th December, 2020** or visit e-GP system www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp .
- Consultants may associate with other consultants to enhance their qualifications.
- Expressions of interest shall be delivered online through e-GP system www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp on or before **15th December, 2020**.
- In case the last date of obtaining and submission of the EOI documents happens to be a holiday, the next working day will be deemed as the due date but the time will be same as stipulated.
- EOI will be assessed based on **Qualification 40%, Experience 50%, and Capacity 10%** of consulting firm and key personnel. Based on evaluation of EOI, only shortlisted firms will be invited to submit technical and financial proposal through a request for proposal.
- Minimum score to pass the EOI is **65%.**

Project Director

EDITORIAL

Tamasha in the party

As top leaders of the ruling Nepal Communist Party cancel each other, it is the people who suffer.

It hasn't ended yet, the series of exchanges of what are now mockingly called 'love letters' between Nepal Communist Party co-chairs KP Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal. On Saturday, Oli, who is also the prime minister, responding to Dahal's political document presented at the November 13 Secretariat meeting, called it a collection of personal dissatisfaction, limitless frustration and vested interest that deserved to be discarded at first glance. Each time, the two senior-most leaders of the ruling party come up with yet another round of accusations and counter-accusations.

In his latest document, Oli has covered a range of issues including federalism, coronavirus, nationalism, socialism, crony capitalism, transitional justice, the Baluwatar land grab scam, politicians' fancy lifestyles, and the language and tone of Dahal's political document, among others. In almost each of the issues he raises in the document, Oli expresses his dismay over the co-chair's actions and has called for 'sacrifice' for the larger good of the party and the country while he presents himself more or less as a saintly figure. By putting on record his dissatisfactions with Dahal's actions within the party, Oli has more or less made clear his keenness to downsize the co-chair.

It's a *tamasha* worth watching, except that it is at a huge cost to the lives and livelihoods of the citizens in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. When two elephants fight, it is the grass that gets trampled. Even today, the wish of the people could be to see that they stay together for the sake of the nation, as a possible breaking apart of the party means yet another round of political instability. But for that, the leaders must act like adults and begin work towards strengthening not only the party, but also the government. If the in-fighting continues, there will soon come a time when the people would want to see the part break apart rather than see them fight all the time.

The in-fighting between the two factions in the ruling Nepal Communist Party can't be taken lightly as it has caused a great deal of harm to the country. It is not just a random political party, but one that has been leading the country for the past two years and a half. Moreover, its bickering has a direct impact on the direction that the country takes. With their low-grade factionalism, the ruling party's top leaders have turned their much-touted mission of Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepalis into a cuss word already. It is utterly shameful that the senior-most leaders of the ruling party have spent precious time in endless bickering over their hold over the organisation and completely disregarded the concerns of the citizens.

Letter to the Editor

Contributions to Nepali

I am very grateful to Deepak Thapa for raising concerns about the fate of Nepali studies in Euro-America, and for his kind words about my own work over the years ('Nepali language at SOAS', November 25). I would like to add that much of what we achieved at SOAS University of London would not have been possible without the contribution of my colleague Krishna Pradhan. Pradhan taught Nepali at SOAS for 15 years until his own early retirement in 2019, and was greatly admired by the many students who learned so much from him. His presence at SOAS also enabled me to develop courses in Nepali literature, history and culture alongside the essential language courses. Sadly, none of this will be available to future generations of students in the UK.

Michael Hutt,
Emeritus Professor of Nepali and Himalayan Studies,
SOAS, University of London

The envoy and diplomacy



PHOTO COURTESY: @MOFANEPAL/TWITTER

A saner act would be self-introspection rather than blaming the neighbours.

ATUL K THAKUR



While diplomacy can't be sentimental, essentially it should be courteous. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, India's foreign secretary, is in Kathmandu, and it is indeed heart-warming how India's top diplomatic envoy can speak fluent Nepali and understands the norms that safeguard India-Nepal relations. Shringla's visit to Nepal follows two recent high-level visits from India by Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane earlier this month and Samant Goel, chief of India's external intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) in the third week of October.

Without linking the visits to a common cause, the rapprochement from both sides should be welcomed. During the last three high-profile visits from India, Prime Minister KP Oli made himself available to meet the visiting officials, giving the required impetus to the partnership. What does it suggest? India is keeping business as usual and working on the projects undertaken before the China-originated coronavirus flattened the world, and the boundary issue suddenly found extra prominence. It would be too naive to say any-

thing else of a significant nature has taken place in the partnership. Apparently, a choice makes a big difference either way.

Resuming air services

The Oli government had completely misunderstood a very crucial stage in history and abstained from pursuing 'enlightened self-interest' when China did everything possible to alter the boundaries of its neighbours. Reportedly, the Tourism Ministry has once again proposed resuming flight services to India more than one and a half months after its first proposal was rejected outright by the government amid soured relations with the southern neighbour over a boundary dispute. To keep an independent and balanced worldview, the most important virtue to be relied on is a 'sense of proportion'.

Prithvi Narayan Shah called Nepal a 'yam between two boulders' referring to India and China. For British India, Nepal was a buffer zone between China and India. In the present time and context, by not aligning domestic policies with international affairs, Nepal has a better chance to practise a serious non-alignment policy. Remarkably, Nepal has a long history of sovereignty and independent status. Even nonconformists will not forget that the Gorkha Kingdom appealed to the British Empire for protection from a Chinese attack through Tibet. The first British mission came to Nepal in 1793 followed by the next one in 1802.

The collaboration didn't last long, however, and the Anglo-Nepal War or Gorkha War (1814-16) was fought between the Gorkha Kingdom and the British East India Company. A British victory and the 1816 Sugauli Treaty ended the war. With the treaty, Nepal renounced its territorial claims on the

Tarai, and parted with its conquests west of the Kali River that reached up to the Sutlej River. Nepal could retain its independence, though it had to be under the supervision of a British resident sent to look after the protectorate. Nepal succeeded in not letting the British resident be a 'controlling agent' of the British East India Company that ruled its immediate neighbour India.

In 2020, it is still worthwhile to look back and know well about the choices exercised by Nepal, and the glorious journey of overcoming the challenges. With hindsight, a saner act would be self-introspection rather than blaming the neighbours. The neighbours are not the 'boulders', Nepal is not a 'yam'. In fact, it should not be a conduit for 'bridge diplomacy'. As a country with immense possibilities and aspirations, Nepal should think of a free-spirited move in its foreign affairs. It should give 'realism' well-deserved traction. However, this should not be confused as a new system bound to overlook the conventional wisdom that helps in knowing friends and adversaries in difficult times.

As a matter of fact, Nepal can do without seeing India and China in comparison. This will be particularly helpful in avoiding any impending consequences, especially avoiding the risk of turning into a 'geostrategic hotspot' in South Asia. Nepal, a modern republic, should strengthen its democracy and democratise its institutions. It should underline a development strategy that has an inclusive nature. To bring it into action, a participatory model should be followed. For managing its affairs in the world with new vigour and progressive thinking, Nepal has to bring the home in order. Realising it will be a true diplomatic nicety.

The visit of the Indian foreign secretary will help India's development part-

nership assistance to Nepal. It is expected that with the ongoing and potential infrastructure projects, connectivity between the two countries will see promising times ahead. Timing is particularly crucial for cooperation in coping with the existential challenges with Covid-19. As the first vaccine is about to be launched in India, Nepal can stay assured of all assistance from the southern neighbour.

Economic cooperation

Also, it is high time that economic cooperation was given its due to ensure a post-pandemic economic rebound. The bilateral engagement has to be proactive. Long-pending matters related to treaties and territories should get an official mechanism so they can be tabled and sorted out with a trust-based approach. Such matters should not stop Nepal's top leadership from engaging with India and resuming flight operations with the required pandemic-related caution. The policies should have humane consideration. The unprecedented crisis merits a brave counter-response. In testing times like this, there is a need to work together to save lives and livelihoods. Nepal should reciprocate, and this will positively support millions of people across the border.

Without prefixing, the Indian envoy termed Nepal a 'friend' of India. In essence, a friend for all seasons. He said that not in the Queen's language, but in chaste Nepali. He has reset the tone for benign diplomacy. This is the need of the hour and should be taken seriously. In equal measure, decision-makers of both countries should work on it and clear the fog. We all should rise to the occasion.

Thakur is a policy professional and writer based in New Delhi.

America's fifth column

Venal leaders wreck the institutional foundations of their countries' governance systems.

CHRIS PATTEN



The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in the 1970s was a product of the Cold War stand-off between the liberal democratic West and the communist Soviet bloc. The body's name accurately described its role. As the Soviet empire crumbled, the OSCE turned to nurturing countries' transition to democracy, including by helping them run free and fair elections.

The world paid close attention to OSCE observation missions' verdict on elections held in countries like Ukraine, Romania, and Kazakhstan. But few back then took much notice of the conduct of presidential elections in the United States, the land of the free.

Some might have been a bit troubled by the main US parties' widespread electoral gerrymandering, more recent Republican efforts to suppress the vote in communities of colour, and the relentlessly partisan political reporting of some local and national media. Overall, however, the handling of US elections gave little cause for concern. Voters chose presidents fairly, albeit through a curious Electoral College system that reflected America's history but sometimes denied victory to the winner of the popular vote.

This year's presidential election took place amid high political tension



SHUTTERSTOCK

and a raging Covid-19 pandemic. But the OSCE's verdict was clear: The vote was 'competitive and well managed'.

Other independent foreign observers—as well as Republican state officials who organised and administered some of the voting and counting—said the same. But there was a large orange fly in the ointment in the form of President Donald Trump. The OSCE denounced 'baseless allegations of systematic deficiencies, notably by the incumbent president', which 'harm public trust in democratic institutions'.

I guess no one should be surprised at Trump's refusal to concede to

President-elect Joe Biden, which delayed by weeks the start of the transition to the new administration. While daily US deaths from Covid-19 surged toward a new peak, Trump sulked, tweeting claims he had made before Election Day that he could lose only if Democrats cheated.

In arguing that his loss—by about six million votes—must be a fraud, Trump is behaving just as he did when he was an expensively failing businessman. Every collapsed deal, every dispute with a bank that had foolishly lent him money, spawned a specious legal challenge. Trump could never admit that he had lost. Authoritarian

states such as Russia and China have argued for years that core liberal-democratic principles—including the rule of law, an independent judiciary, civil society, freedom of expression, and the separation of powers—are hypocritical and hollow.

Open societies have to stand up for the principles their institutions embody. Confucius argued that leaders' moral qualities matter more than institutions, but history surely vindicates the importance of both. Corrupt, cowardly, and venal leaders often destroy the institutional foundations of their countries' governance systems.

Although Trump has done Putin's and Xi's destructive work for them, he could not have managed it without the collaboration of other Republican Party leaders, especially in the Senate. They know how dangerous Trump's post-election behaviour has been, but, fearing him and his most virulent supporters, they have given their principles a long holiday.

Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, who in 2016 described Trump as a 'xenophobic, race-baiting, religious bigot', recently lobbied Republican secretaries of state in Georgia and Arizona to see whether they might be able to disqualify any

votes cast in Democratic areas.

The commander of this fifth column is Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. His primary concern is to hold on to his job by ensuring that the Republicans retain control of the Senate following two run-off elections in Georgia in early January. So, McConnell does not want to do anything that may deter Trump supporters there from turning out to vote.

McConnell does not seem to believe in partnership and accommodation. During Barack Obama's administration, he blocked much of the Democratic president's agenda, just for the sake of blocking it. Consensus is an alien concept to him.

The enablers of all this wanton destruction are the media who parrot and broadcast Trump's agenda. Fox News has been the principal Trump megaphone, although even it recently seems to have gotten cold feet about continuing to resemble media outlets in authoritarian countries. This assertion of independence—which, admittedly, amounts to no more than acknowledging the fairness and outcome of the election—has naturally annoyed its usual star in the White House.

In Australia, former prime minister Kevin Rudd recently launched a record-breaking e-petition calling for a formal inquiry into Rupert Murdoch's near-monopoly control of the country's print media. It's not hard to see why more than a half-million people signed it.

Nor is it hard to see why America's authoritarian rivals are probably satisfied with the outcome. By undermining liberal democracy in America, Republican leaders and the GOP's media allies are giving them a big helping hand.

Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong and a former EU Commissioner for external affairs, is Chancellor of the University of Oxford.

—Project Syndicate

FOREX

US Dollar	118.79
Euro	142.11
Pound Sterling	158.07
Japanese Yen	11.41
Chinese Yuan	18.06
Qatari Riyal	32.62
Australian Dollar	87.73
Malaysian Ringit	29.19
Saudi Arab Riyal	31.67

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

Shares	
Nepse	1,968.27 <small>pts</small> 3.96%
HIGHEST GAINERS	
CCBL 10%	GRDL 10%
NIB 10%	SRRI 9.92%
MRL 9.91%	MNBL 9.89%
MODERATE GAINERS	
NBB 9.88%	MEGA 9.88%
MLBL 9.87%	PRVU 9.85%
GBBL 9.84%	KBL 9.78%
MODERATE LOSERS	
UNHPL -2.38%	UMHL -2.43%
NBMBF -2.66%	AIL -2.85%
MSMB -2.92%	JOSHI -3.12%
HIGHEST LOSERS	
GILB -3.16%	PPCL -3.29%
SFMF -3.79%	MPPL -4.02%
AKJCL -6.25%	BBC -10%

BULLION

	PRICE PER TOLA
Fine Gold	Rs 90,700
Silver	Rs 1,150

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

GASOLINE WATCH



SERVO 4T
ENGINE OILS
100% PERFORMANCE. EVERYTIME.



Petrol (Per Litre)
Rs 107.00/-

Diesel (Per Litre)
Rs 89.00/-

Kerosene (Per Litre)
Rs 89.00/-

LPG (Per cylinder)
Rs 1375/-

Source: Nepal Oil Corporation

As pandemic continues, frozen food sales boom

People thought it wiser to stock up on refrigerated products and avoid crowded shops.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Frozen French fries, sweet corn, momo, prawn and other seafood, and meat items are popular among customers, retailers say.

KRISHANA PRASAIN

KATHMANDU, NOV 29

Sales of frozen foods skyrocketed after the lockdown as housebound valley residents went for items that could be stored for long periods, and now they seem to have become hooked on them, said traders.

According to retailers, sales of frozen foods like meat and fish swelled by more than 40 percent after the government issued stay-home orders in March to contain the spread of coronavirus infections.

Sabindra Byanjankar, sales manager at Bhat Bhateni Super Market, said that demand for frozen foods has soared compared to pre-lockdown days. “Frozen food sales have doubled in recent months, and during weekends and festivals, sales rise three-fold,” Byanjankar told the Post.

The major reason for the increase in demand for frozen food is that people now prefer to cook special dishes at home instead of going out to restaurants and hotels, he said. “With the winter season upon us, demand for frozen momos and meat items has risen compared to before.” Chet Narayan Poudel, chief operating officer at SalesBerry, said the consumption of frozen foods increased by 35-40 percent after the coronavirus.

“As the markets were closed during the lockdown, people’s options were limited and they started buying frozen food items for reasons of quality and hygiene,” he said.

After people purchased frozen foods, they liked them so much they wanted to have them more often, he said. Sales of frozen foods also jumped sharply during Dashain this year, he added.

Frozen food manufacturers and suppliers said that demand from their biggest customers, the restaurants, had declined steeply while retail sales rose by 15 to 20 percent after the virus.

Frozen French fries and varieties of potato fries, sweet corn, momo, fish, prawn and other seafood, and meat items are popular among customers, said retailers.

Raj Kumar Ghimire, owner of Pacific Frozen Food, supplier and manufacturer, said that demand from restaurants had been increasing steadily until the lockdown forced them to close. “But frozen foods are becoming very popular among retail buyers,” Ghimire said.

Instead of going shopping daily for fresh vegetables and meats with the pandemic raging relentlessly, people thought it wiser to stock up on refrigerated foods and avoid crowded marketplaces, merchants said.

Also, keeping food frozen for a long time kills germs, so it’s hygienic and that has increased the popularity of frozen food products, he said. Ghimire’s company makes frozen food items such as vegetables and meats. Sujan Pradhan, owner of Saathi ko Pasal, says he has been supplying frozen food products to hotels, restaurants and supermarkets. Orders from hotels and restaurants have gone down, but supermarkets are ordering more, he said.

Pradhan opened his shop at Jhochhen three years ago. He said that there was good demand for frozen foods before Covid-19, but after the pandemic, sales took off with people fearing to go to vegetable markets and cold stores.

With restaurants and hotels closed, people started ordering frozen foods like French fries, momos and sausages besides vegetables and meat items. Retail consumption surged after the pandemic. Imported frozen foods cost more than local products, he said.

Demand for frozen foods used to increase during festivals like Dashain and Tihar; but after Covid-19, there has been a sales boom, Pradhan said. Daily sales now come to around Rs25,000 while the turnover was around Rs15,000 before the pandemic, he added.

From small businesses to farmers, middle India is driving demand

REUTERS

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, NOV 29

Manish Mehra, owner of Washex Hospitality, an industrial laundry service, recently flew from Delhi to Jodhpur, a city in north-western India, to win a contract to service a large, government-run hospital—a move essential to kickstarting his business.

“For a new relationship it is essential to know each other before you can establish the trust and confidence to work online and that need is higher in case of government departments,” said Mehra, who had to stay for a week in a Jodhpur hotel.

Increased demand for air travel and hotel stays by small business owners like Mehra, accompanied by a rise in rural incomes and spending after two good monsoons, is helping the pandemic-hit Indian economy slowly recover.

Government data released on Friday showed the economy shrank 7.5 percent in the July-September quarter, performing better than analysts’ expectation of an 8.8 percent contraction as lockdowns were eased and some pent-up demand was met. In the April-June period, the economy shrank 23.9 percent.

Annual growth of 3.4 percent in farm sector and 0.6 percent in manufacturing during the September quarter has raised hopes of an early recovery and some service sectors such as trade, hotels and transport contracted

at a much slower pace compared with the April-June period.

Farmers, benefiting from a bumper crop, are lapping up tractors while demand for personal vehicles, due to a lack of public transport and the need for safer travel options, has boosted sales of cars and motorcycles.

There has also been an uptick in goods and services, tax collections and higher energy consumption.

A recovery is taking shape and it has been led by the manufacturing sector which has moved from near annihilation in the July quarter to rebound mode, said Yuvika Singhal, an economist at QuantEco Research.

“Until there is a stronger recovery in high contact service sectors, which make up 60 percent of the GDP, agriculture and manufacturing are expected to carry the growth,” said Singhal, adding that India is still growing on a lower GDP base and it will take more than a year to recover lost output.

A string of Marriot hotels in industrial towns like Sriperumbudur, Visakhapatnam and Nasik are operating at 50 percent to 60 percent occupancy with the bulk of guests working with domestic manufacturing companies, said Ashish Jakhanwala, CEO of hospitality firm SAMHI which owns the properties.

Meanwhile SAMHI’s hotel in the tech-city of Bengaluru, that mainly depends on large corporates, is filling only 20 percent to 30 percent of rooms.



REUTERS

An airport staff member pushes trolleys at the entrance of Mumbai’s airport.

Domestic airlines resume Mt Everest sightseeing flights after eight months

POST REPORT

KATHMANDU, NOV 29

The domestic airlines have announced resuming mountain view flights from next week after eight months of closure, as economic activities have started to pick-up again and return to normal, including all tourism-related activities. The airlines have launched “Buy one, get one free” ticket offer to entice the passengers to fly.

“Now, the domestic passenger movement has started to pick up. Along with the travel demand, there has been a request for sightseeing activities from people as well as foreigners, especially residential foreigners who have been serving in Nepal,” said Sudarshan Bartaula, spokesperson for Yeti Airlines.

“We will be conducting the flight once a week [on Saturday] and increase the frequency based on the demand,” he said. Yeti Airlines has announced three tiers of airfares. For Nepali flyers who buy a ticket costing Rs8,999, they will get another ticket free. The total flight time is 45 minutes.

Similarly, for Indian and residential foreigners, the fare is Rs13,499. They will also get one ticket free. The scheme will not be applicable to other tourists, said Bartaula.

Buddha Air has also announced the resumption of mountain view flights with buy one, get one free offer. It will fly once a week on Saturday. “We expect the flight resumption, one of the key tourism products, will provide momentum to the slowed tourism activities to some extent,” Buddha Air said in a statement.

Buddha Air has fixed the fare for Nepalis at Rs8,900. Under the buy one, get one free offer, the passenger will get one window seat and one non-window seat.

The mountain view flight is one of the major income-generating activities for domestic airlines as it offers passengers views of the Himalayas, including the highest mountains on the earth, flying from Kathmandu.

The flights were closed since the government announced the nationwide lockdown on March 24, halting all flights, except for emergency purposes.

During the peak tourism season, airlines used to make at least 10 mountain view flights a day.

According to an official of Buddha Air, passenger occupancy in domestic airlines has started to pick up. On Sunday, Buddha Air received 5,000 passengers, the highest number since the airlines resumed normal flights from September 21.



REUTERS

A file photo shows a visitor grabbing for a virtual book from an empty shelf as he wears augmented reality goggles during Gamescom, in Cologne, Germany.

REUTERS

LONDON, NOV 29

Once the preserve of gamers, virtual reality (VR) has been seized on by the financial sector as a way of enlivening home working for lonely traders or isolated executives and replicating real-world sales, networking or training events.

With 90 percent of employees at some of the world’s biggest financial firms now working at home due to a resurgence in coronavirus infections, more and more companies

are experimenting with VR.

Some practices could stick beyond the pandemic, particularly as home working becomes more widespread.

At investment manager Fidelity International, executives experimented with a VR auditorium, taking questions from colleagues and even walking up and down the aisles.

“Working from home has massively accelerated the interest in virtual/online spaces,” said Stuart Warner, head of technology at Fidelity International which manages \$3.3 trillion in assets.

Suited avatars and digital offices: Traders and bankers embrace VR

Having internally explored VR and augmented reality (AR) technology, which unlike VR is not fully immersive and involves computer-generated elements being visible through a smartphone screen for example, Fidelity now aims to trial VR with its sales teams’ interactions with clients.

“It brings it to life a bit,” Warner said. For London-based Ed Greig, chief disruptor at Deloitte Digital, VR has sparked conversations with potential clients and colleagues in far-flung cities in office get-togethers. “The other day, I was finishing a VR meeting with somebody and as I was walking out of their office I bumped into a person who was coming in for another meeting and that interaction for a couple of minutes turned into a proper business conversation later,” Greig said. VR can be useful not just for scheduled meetings but also for helping ease feelings of isolation and giving some workers the office buzz they crave and thrive in. Swiss bank UBS has experimented with issuing its London-based traders with Microsoft HoloLens smart glasses, which it says allows staff to recreate the trading floor experience at home.

VR headsets allow users to see and interact with others in the same digital room, and movements, such as turning one’s head, correspond with how the person’s avatar moves in the space.

Recreating the feeling of human interaction is what has provided impetus for the VR push.

Executives say they are combating

so-called Zoom fatigue—exhaustion brought on by a daily barrage of video conferences, meetings and messaging via tools such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, which have replaced face-to-face interaction.

The hope is that virtual reality spaces will resuscitate team spirit, especially when bringing in new employees. Marc Bena, who leads the digital audit business unit at PricewaterhouseCoopers UK, said:

“In a virtual environment you can hear multiple people talking at the same time, which is different in a zoom meeting... when you wear these headsets you are transported into a giant room with a whiteboard and office furniture and you join your other colleagues in brainstorming ideas.”

“You can look around you and interact as if you were in an office. That recreates the sensation of being together.”

After a virtual session he and colleagues had virtual drinks in another zone and could move from table to table.

“You could recreate exactly the same environment as if you were in the cocktail parties with your avatar. The only downside to this is that it can get pretty intense after a couple of hours,” he said.

A PwC study in June found participants in a virtual reality workshop were three times more confident about what they had learned than those learning via traditional classrooms or even via e-learning courses.

Fitch downgrades Sri Lanka’s sovereign credit rating

REUTERS

LONDON, NOV 29

Fitch downgraded Sri Lanka’s sovereign credit rating to “CCC” on Friday, warning the country’s debt levels were set to soar past 100 percent of GDP and that it was increasingly at risk of default.

Sri Lanka relies on tourism and garment exports for foreign exchange reserves. It’s been hit hard by the pandemic, which has undercut consumer demand and curtailed almost all global travel this year.

The CCC rating means Fitch considers default to be “a real possibility”, according to its ratings framework, as it added to Sri

The country’s tourism and garment sectors have been hit hard by the pandemic.

Lanka’s string of downgrades this year.

“We think there are now increasing risks to Sri Lanka’s ability to meet its external debt repayments,” the firm’s analysts said in a note.

In a statement, Sri Lanka’s

finance ministry called the downgrade “baseless” and “based on uncorroborated facts” saying the government had acted to contain the economic impact of the pandemic faster than many other emerging countries.

“We do not accept this downgrade as it fails to recognise the robust policy framework of the new government for addressing the legacy issues,” the statement said.

Sri Lanka has around \$4 billion of debt repayments due annually until 2025. Its foreign exchange reserves stand at just under \$6 billion leaving it little room to spare.

Earlier this month, Finance Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa presented an ambitious budget that

aimed to more than halve the fiscal deficit over the medium term. But Fitch said it expected the country’s fiscal position to worsen, not improve, over the next few years.

It expects the government’s ratio of debt to gross domestic product to increase to about 100 percent in 2020 from 86.8 percent in 2019 and to rise to around 116 percent in 2024.

Sri Lanka’s own targets see a reduction in debt-to-GDP to 75.5 percent in 2025, from an estimated 95.1 percent in 2020.

Rival ratings agency Moody’s downgraded Sri Lanka to an equivalent level in September, noting the country’s debt repayments in the next few years.

भेटिरिनी गुणस्तर तथा औषधी नियमन प्रयोगशाला, बुढानीलकण्ठ, काठमाडौं				
बोलपत्र स्वीकृत गर्ने सम्बन्धी आशयको सूचना				
प्रकाशित मिति २०७७/०८/१५				
यस प्रयोगशालाको देहाय अनुसारका शिलबन्दी बोलपत्रदाताहरुबाट दर्ता हुन आएका बोलपत्रहरु सार्वजनिक खरिद ऐन २०६३ (संशोधन सहित) बमोजिम उक्त कार्यका लागि सारभूत रुपमा प्रभावग्राही न्यूनतम मूल्याङ्कित बोलपत्रदाताहरुले कबोल गरेको रकमको बोलपत्र सोही ऐनको दफा २७ को उपदफा १ बमोजिम स्वीकृतिको लागि मिति २०७७/०८/०९ को निर्णयानुसार छनोट गरिएकोले सार्वजनिक खरिद ऐन २०६३ को दफा २७ को उपदफा २ को प्रयोजनार्थ सम्बन्धित सबैको जानकारीको लागि यो सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ ।				
सि. नं.	बोलपत्र नं.	कार्य	कबोल गरेको रकम (मू.अ.कर बाहेक)	बोलपत्रदाताको नाम, ठेगाना
१	GoN/VSDRL/NCB 1-077/078	Procurement of Maintenance of Roof, Construction of Toilet and Water Treatment Plant Works.	२१,०७,७१,०१८	हनुमान निर्माण सेवा, चैनपुर-८, बर्फाङ्ग
२	IFB No. SDRL/G-077/078-02	Procurement of Laboratory Consumable Items.	२४,०४,५०९,१००	मनासलु ट्रेडिङ कम्पनि प्रा.लि, टेकु, काठमाण्डौ

BRIEFING

New Zealand down West Indies, bag Twenty20 series

WELLINGTON: Glenn Phillips smashed the fastest Twenty20 international hundred for New Zealand to help the hosts to a 72-run win against West Indies on Sunday and an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. The middle-order batsman hit eight sixes and 10 fours in his 108 off 51 balls as the hosts, who won the opening T20 by five wickets, posted a massive 238 for three in their 20 overs after put in to bat first at Mount Maunganui. West Indies kept losing wickets at regular intervals in their chase and could only reach 166 for nine. Colin Munro had taken 47 balls to reach his century against West Indies at the same ground in 2018 for New Zealand's fastest hundred in the shortest format of the game, but Phillips bettered the mark. None of the West Indies bowlers could make an impact, with fast bowler Keemo Paul returning the worst figures among them, conceding 64 off his four overs.

Ronaldo-less Juventus held 1-1 by Benevento in Serie A

BENEVENTO: Serie A titleholders Juventus were held to a 1-1 draw away to promoted side Benevento on Saturday, their fifth draw in nine league games this season, after resting their talismanic forward Cristiano Ronaldo. Alvaro Morata gave Juventus a 21st-minute lead but was sent off as tempers flared at the end of a niggly second half. Gaetano Letizia rifled in Benevento's equaliser in first-half stoppage time. Elsewhere, Inter Milan scored twice in the first 15 minutes on their way to a convincing 3-0 win at previously unbeaten Sassuolo.

Bayern Munich beat Stuttgart to top Bundesliga

STUTTGART: Bayern Munich came from a goal down to beat VfB Stuttgart 3-1 on Saturday and stay top of the Bundesliga. The hosts went in front in the 20th minute after Tanguy Coulibaly beat keeper Manuel Neuer to the ball to score. Bayern's Kingsley Coman punished the home side, hitting them on the break to level in the 38th minute. Robert Lewandowski drilled in his 12th league goal of the season on the stroke of halftime from a Coman assist to turn the game around. It was not until Douglas Costa's low shot in the 87th made it 3-1 that the Bavarians were able to breathe more easily. Bayern are on 22 points with RB Leipzig second on 20 after beating Arminia Bielefeld 2-1. Borussia Dortmund dropped to third on 18 after suffering a shock 2-1 home loss to Cologne. Elsewhere, Borussia Muenchengladbach registered an impressive 4-1 victory over Schalke.

(AGENCIES)

13th South Asian Games expenses unveiled, but nearly after one year

Rs 1.75 billion was spent on infrastructure while Rs 1.31 billion went to the holding of matches during the Games.

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, NOV 29

The National Sports Council (NSC) on Sunday unveiled the details of the Rs 3.06 billion spent to organise the 13th South Asian Games (SAG), nearly a year after the sub-continental sporting event was held in December, 2019.

Of the total expenses, the NSC said Rs 1.75 billion was spent on infrastructure while Rs 1.31 billion went to the holding of sports events from the state coffers, according to the financial report released on Sunday. However, Rs 2.86 billion was the total amount spent over the past years on infrastructure development.

NSC Member Secretary Ramesh Kumar Silwal, who had promised to make public the transaction details of SAG within three months of the completion of the Games held from December 1 to 10, shared the details of incomes and expenses only after more than 11 months.

"It took really longer than what I expected to collect and prepare the financial report of the mega event," said Silwal, who was hailed for successfully organising the multi-disciplinary sports event six months after his appointment at the council, apologising for the delay.

"It took a long time to collect the expenditure details of the event held at three different locations of the country. We were able to collect all details by mid-November only. The lockdown imposed by the government to curb the spread of the coronavirus also contributed to the delay," said Silwal at a press conference on Sunday.



National Sports Council Member Secretary Ramesh Kumar Silwal (centre) makes public the transactions of the South Asian Games on Sunday.

The event, which featured 26 disciplines, was organised in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Janakpur. Altogether 3,652 athletes had participated in the events that saw competition among seven member associations of the SAARC region.

While the government had allocated a budget of Rs 3.65 billion for the organising part, Rs 1.93 billion was frozen, prompting Silwal to make a claim that the NSC saved almost Rs 2.4 billion of the taxpayers' money. The budget does not include the cash reward given to medalists of the

Games by the government.

"Rather than going for the public spending procedure due to the short time available, we resorted to direct contact for buying the required kits. So we were able to save the cost. Besides, we also reduced the budget for the opening and closing ceremonies while the Home Ministry took over the responsibility of security without us having to spend on it," said Silwal.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports had formed a taskforce to prepare an estimated budget for the Games in

June last year and the Pitambar Timalisina-led committee had proposed a budget of Rs 5.265 billion for work execution. But the government had allocated only Rs 3.65 billion.

It was the third time that Nepal hosted the games after hosting the first edition in 1984 and the eighth in 1999. Nepal had wrapped up the event with a record haul of 51 gold, 60 silver and 96 bronze medals to finish second in the medal standings. India once again dominated the final medal count with a total of 312 medals, including 174 gold.

POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

Man City crush Burnley as Everton lose again

REUTERS
MANCHESTER, NOV 29

Riyad Mahrez scored a hat-trick in Manchester City's 5-0 crushing of Burnley in the Premier League on Saturday, while Carlo Ancelotti's Everton suffered their fourth defeat in five games after a Raphinha goal gave Leeds United a 1-0 win at the Goodison Park. West Bromwich Albion celebrated their first win of the season as they beat bottom team Sheffield United 1-0 to move out of the bottom three after Conor Gallagher scored his maiden Premier League goal.

Manchester City had a goal ruled out by VAR but will have barely cared given they had already taken a 5-0 lead by the time Gabriel Jesus's effort was overturned. It was the fourth straight

5-0 win for City against Burnley at the Etihad and Sean Dyche's side were fortunate to leave with that scoreline.

Slack defending from the Clarets allowed Mahrez to score twice early in the game — both times with his trademark move in from the flank followed by a left-foot shot into the far corner. Benjamin Mendy headed in the third goal before the break and Ferran Torres added the fourth before Mahrez completed his hat-trick with a header.

City had managed just 10 goals in eight games before Saturday's rout and manager Pep Guardiola was relieved. "We have to score, that's why they are here and play up front. The most important thing now is we have almost 21 players fit," he said.

Brazilian winger Raphinha scored his first goal for Leeds in another

game which saw goals disallowed. Everton's James Rodriguez and Richarlison had the ball in the net but both efforts were ruled out for offside, and Leeds striker Patrick Bamford suffered a similar fate.

Raphinha appeared to be looking for a pass but he checked back, driving the ball between the legs of defender Ben Godfrey and in at the foot of the far post in the 79th minute. The two teams managed 38 goal attempts. "This is a more difficult period," said Ancelotti, "In a difficult period you can see how players react — see their personality and character. I still have confidence. We need consistency."

In the late game, Gallagher netted 13th-minute winner for West Brom as Sheffield United missed a string of chances in an action-packed match.

Real lose, Atletico win sixth straight league match

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MADRID, NOV 29

As Diego Simeone keeps celebrating Atletico Madrid victories, Zinedine Zidane continues to look for answers to Real Madrid's struggles. Atlético defeated Valencia 1-0 for a sixth win in a row in La Liga on Saturday, while Madrid lost to Alaves 2-1 at home for their third straight setback, dropping six points behind the city rival and having played one extra game.

"I don't have an explanation," Zidane said. "We haven't been consistent. We need to change this dynamic." Lucas Perez scored in the first half

Smith ton guides Australia to series win

REUTERS
SYDNEY, NOV 29

Steve Smith was at his imperious best as he scored a second successive 62-ball century to drive Australia to a 51-run victory over India at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday, sealing the one-day series 2-0 with a match to spare.

The clash, almost a carbon copy of Australia's 66-run win in Friday's match, was soured for the home fans by an injury to David Warner which may rule him out of the Test series around the new year. Warner had scored a bright 83 in an opening partnership of 142 with his skipper Aaron Finch (60) as Australia pile on 389-4.

Four overs into India's reply Warner injured his adductor while fielding and had to be helped off the field. His team mates wrapped up the match comfortably enough despite a fine innings of 89 from Virat Kohli and a 72 from wicketkeeper KL Rahul as India limped to 338-9.

India's openers were dismissed in successive overs with only 60 runs on the board before skipper Kohli took charge and put together partnerships of 93 with Shreyas Iyer (38) and 72 with Rahul. Once the skipper departed to a flying catch by Moises Henriques off Josh Hazlewood, Rahul took up the mantle to keep alive Indian hopes that they might just pull off their biggest ever successful run chase in one-dayers.

Earlier, the day had belonged to the Australian top order, who once again showed their skills in the face of some lacklustre bowling. Smith needed only 64 balls for his 104 before falling to all-rounder Hardik Pandya. Glenn Maxwell's belligerent unbeaten 63 from 29 balls and a stroke-filled 70 from Marnus Labuschagne helped Australia build on the strong platform and finish with a flourish.

HOROSCOPE



ARIES (March 21-April 19) ***

You've never been good at taking orders, especially if they're delivered by a higher-up. Under those circumstances, you'll go out of your way to do exactly what you've been told not to do, and you'll go about it with gleeful irreverence.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20) ***

A partner or a dear old friend, someone you either share your deepest thoughts or your checkbook with, could make you a rather odd yet extremely wonderful offer, the kind you absolutely couldn't refuse even if you wanted to, which you don't.



GEMINI (May 21-June 21) ****

As the song says, you're in the mood for love simply because they're near you. You won't settle for just any old candlelit-dinner-type thing, though. You're in the mood for a whole lot more. You want it all!



CANCER (June 22-July 22) ****

If you can manage to get through today, which will be very interesting, you can get through anything. Whether it's an authority figure, partner, good friend, you'll be gracious, smile, and do whatever they ask with no complaints.



LEO (July 23-August 22) ***

Today would be a good day to be by yourself if you can swing it. People could be a bit testy and tempers could flare. No sense getting into an unnecessary argument that everyone will just regret tomorrow, right? Play it safe and do your own thing.



VIRGO (August 23-September 22) ***

Your routine is about to be seriously disrupted, but just this once you won't be too upset about it. It's going to be for a good reason. Perhaps it's your partner or a good friend or your boss asking the favour, whoever it is really needs your help.



LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***

Don't even try to hide your feelings from the ones you love and who love you. The mood you're in is the one that inspired that ancient phrase about wearing your heart on your sleeve. Basically, if it's on your mind, it will be quite obvious to one and all.



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) ****

You could still be a little irritated about past events, but it really is time just to let go and forget it. Do yourself and anyone you live with a favor and move on. Holding grudges only hurts you. It doesn't do a thing to the other person.



SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ***

In your opinion, life is meant to be a series of extended vacations, which certainly explains why you move so much, so easily, and with such abandon. It's not that you're irresponsible, exactly. It's that you don't want to miss seeing anything.



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) ***

Your mantra, should you choose to repeat it, is "Yesterday never happened. Today will be wonderful." Keep it up until you absolutely believe it. Those arguments that happened are not worth ruining today. Forgive, forget, and move on.



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) ****

It's not exactly that you're aiming to aggravate everyone you cross paths with, especially the ones you love. You just can't hold back your feelings. If someone asks for your opinion, why bother trying to pretend that you can hold back?



PISCES (February 19-March 20) ****

Self-control has never been high on your list of the qualities you admire in yourself. It's more like on the "qualities I wish I had" list. So don't beat yourself up if you're not exactly the soul of willpower when it comes to money right now.

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- Cooked just slightly
 - and kin
 - Husband's mom (hyph.)
 - Arab VIP
 - Glimmering
 - Marching band composer
 - Friendly
 - Enjoys a lollipop
 - Before Sept.
 - Marciano stat
 - Lab glassware
 - Seer
 - Glazier's unit
 - Grassy surface
 - Britain's royal house
 - Dental aid
 - Goes down
 - Payable now
 - Scurry
 - Eccentric
 - Like some chatter
 - Doctors' org.
 - Shrivels, as flowers
 - Defeated one
 - Obviously
 - Untrained, as recruits
 - Toy-block brand
 - Beirut locale
 - Roar

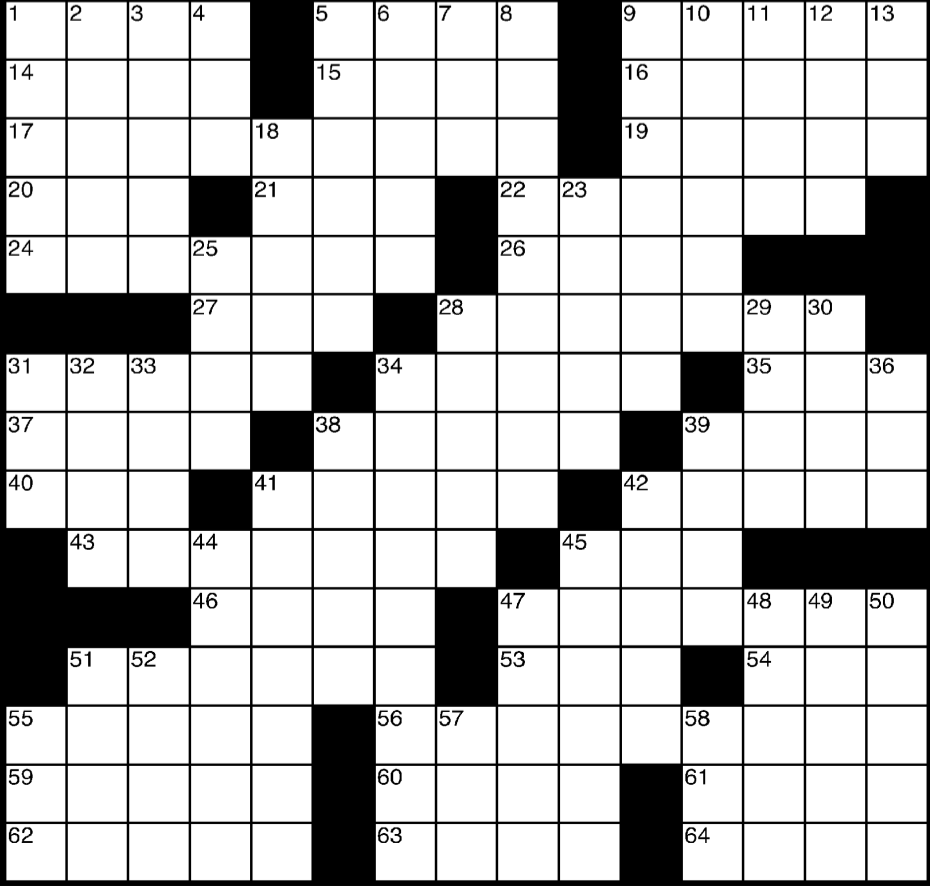
- DOWN**
- Summary
 - "My Cherie —"
 - Beatles drummer
 - Joule fraction
 - Got twisted
 - box
 - Drink with scones
 - Small kids (2 wds.)
 - Dots on a map
 - Rackets
 - Good fortune
 - Tries to find out
 - We — robbed!
 - Social mores
 - Rangy
 - Hey, you!
 - Clever
 - Chances
 - Run the show

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

FIAT DAME OMAHA
LOLA EGOS FINAL
ATOM RAMSHACKLE
PATINA SEE HATS
NEIL NAVE
BUNGALOW LILACS
ORA PECAN ALLOT
SAME DALAI LEAVE
SLEDS LEDGE MEL
ASSIST SILICONE
FEED RENE
SHUI RUB SEALED
CINCINNATI SIRE
ALTER EDNA EMMA
MOOSE SETS SOMA

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- Pharm.
- watchdog
- Bedroom fixture
- Paperless exam
- Most pale
- At all times, poetically
- Right on!
- Midwest state
- Exercised, as power
- Work
- Claim
- Fends off
- Livy's language
- "Peachy keen!"
- Easy-to-find constellation
- Tot watcher
- Minnows
- She, in Cherbourg
- Air rifle pellets
- No, to a lassie
- Knock politely



SUDOKU

8 5 3 7 4 9 2 1 6
4 7 2 3 6 1 8 5 9
9 6 1 8 2 5 3 4 7
3 2 6 4 9 8 1 7 5
1 8 7 2 5 6 9 3 4
5 9 4 1 7 3 6 8 2
7 4 8 9 3 2 5 6 1
6 3 9 5 1 7 4 2 8
2 1 5 6 8 4 7 9 3

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

