



THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

Nepal's largest selling English daily

Printed simultaneously in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bharatpur and Nepalgunj

Vol XXVIII No. 287 | 8 pages | Rs.5

Tuesday, December 15, 2020 | 30-08-2077

24.8° C -6.5° C
Bhairahawa Jumla



POST PHOTO: PRAKASH CHANDRA TIMILSENA

Prakash BK is carried to Dhading district hospital after fracturing his leg. It took BK and his three companions 16 hours to reach the hospital at the district headquarters from Tipling village, only to be told that his treatment was not possible there. The 23-year-old was referred to a hospital in Kathmandu.

Congress holds mass rallies to proclaim it's back in business. But is it?

Analysts say it's already too late for it to focus on raising issues from the House and work as an effective opposition party that can really hold the government to account.

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

The last few days have been busy for Bishwo Prakash Sharma, the spokesperson for the primary opposition Nepali Congress. From disseminating information on the demonstrations planned for Monday through various mediums, including social media like Twitter, to correcting the Nepal map on his social media video in which he was making a case for the rallies and calling on his party members to join, Sharma was doing all he could to make the Congress protests successful.

The party organised mass demonstrations in all 77 districts on Monday too, what it said, expose the Oli administration's failures and hold it to account.

As Congress leaders were allotted different districts to address Monday's rallies, Sharma was in Hetauda.

"Don't try to tease a sleeping tiger," Sharma roared.

A Twitter user was quick to react.

"So the spokesperson is admitting that they were sleeping," the user wrote on the microblogging site.

The one charge the main opposition has been facing over the last three years is that it went into a deep slum-

ber. Even as the Oli administration failed on multiple fronts, the opposition was barely seen, except for a handful of leaders on some occasions thundering at Parliament, making any impact.

But after the government prorogued the budget session on July 2, the party lost even that platform from where it could have questioned the executive.

Observers say the main opposition should have taken into consideration the Covid-19 threat and avoided mass demonstrations and instead pressed the government for the House session. Many say the Congress party seems to be taking a queue from some pro-monarchy, pro-Hindu forces that were on the streets recently.

"In just about two weeks, the House session will convene as per the constitutional provisions," said Damannath Dhungana, a former Speaker. "I wonder why it has chosen to hold street protests. If it has indeed realised its mistakes, it can call out the government and hold it to account from Parliament."

A divided house in itself, the Congress party has been struggling to get back on its feet ever since it faced a drubbing in 2017 elections.

>> Continued on page 2

Judicial custody of former anti-graft body chief raises questions over appointments

Unless appointments are made in a transparent way without political motivations, the trend of choosing a person lacking qualifications will continue, observers say.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

The Special Court order to send Deep Basnyat, former chief commissioner of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority, to judicial custody on the Baluwatar land grab case has once again raised questions over why people like Basnyat are appointed to lead the anti-graft body in the first place.

Basnyat, a long-time bureaucrat, was appointed chief commissioner of the anti-graft agency after Lok Man Singh Karki was disqualified for the job by the Supreme Court in January 2017.

A person needs to have high moral

character to be appointed as chief commissioner or commissioner of the anti-graft body as per the constitution.

The Special Court, which looks into cases related to corruption, refused to release him on bail as he had been accused of a serious offence—of creating fake tenants as well as transferring government lands in their names, according to Pushpa Raj Pandeya, spokesperson of the Special Court.

Basnyat is not the only one who, despite having a poor track record, still managed to head the anti-graft body.

Ignoring massive protests within political parties, Karki was appointed as chief commissioner in 2013 as a consensus candidate of the parties despite his history of allegedly playing a key role in suppressing people's movement in 2006 and promoting gold smuggling during his bureaucratic career.

The integrity of Raj Narayan Pathak had also been questioned before his appointment as commissioner at the anti-graft body. He is also facing corruption charges from the commission itself after he was caught on videotape admitting to accepting Rs7.8 million to settle the owner-

ship dispute of a Bhaktapur-based college when he was an incumbent commissioner.

"Officials of the commission being dragged into corruption case has smeared the image of the anti-graft body," said Surya Nath Upadhyay, a former chief commissioner of the commission. "These cases have also raised serious questions over the intention of those who appointed them to run the commission. They should take first the biggest responsibility for controversial figures taking charge of the anti-graft body."

He said that the political leadership's tendency to choose a person who is close to a particular political party or political leader, instead of one's qualification and integrity, has resulted in the appointment of controversial figures.

"This has also been the reason why the anti-graft body has been embroiled in controversy," Upadhyay added.

As per the Article 238 (2) of the constitution, the President appoints chief commissioners and commissioners of constitutional commissions based on the recommendation of the Constitutional Council.

>> Continued on page 2

SC Mobile App 2.0

Standard Chartered

Avoid the crowd, take your bank wherever you go.

#yesitispossible #सकहाँसक

Download the SC Mobile app now.

Mission impossible: Sherpa from Nepal to lead 55-member K2 winter expedition

Despite over 30 attempts to climb the world's second highest mountain in winter, given the extreme weather and the difficult route to summit, none has been successful.



SHUTTERSTOCK

The base camp of K2 (pictured) is reached after a week's trek on a glacier.

SANGAM PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

Thirteen of the world's 14 peaks taller than 8,000-meters have been climbed in winter. But one still remains unclimbed—the 8,611 metres (28,251 feet) K2, the world's second tallest that straddles Pakistan and China.

Climbers say that avalanches are an ever-present risk, and in winter temperatures can fall to -50C (-58F). Winds

blow up to 200km/h (124mph) that's equal to cyclone Fani, the most severe storm that travelled more than 900 kilometres (570 miles) from the Indian state of Odisha and blew nearly two dozen tents at Everest's Camp 2, at 6,400 metres in May last year.

It is also considered to be a technically very difficult mountain to climb and has been dubbed "killer mountain" for the sheer number of climbers that have lost their lives

on the mountain.

"It's the planet's toughest and most dangerous mountain to climb," said Kami Rita Sherpa, who has climbed Everest a record 24 times.

Eighty-four climbers have died attempting to climb K2, and only 306 have reached its summit. The death and success ratio is roughly one death for every three successful climbs.

In contrast, 6,507 mountaineers have climbed Everest from the Nepal side since Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and New Zealander Edmund Percival Hillary first set foot atop the world's highest peak in May 1953.

In the summer of 1954, Italian climbers Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli became the first persons to reach the summit of K2.

"K2 is 237 metres lower than Everest, but it is much challenging to climb even in the best conditions. That's in summer," said Kami Rita. "The weather in winter is beyond imagination. The weather is good only for 2-3 hours a day."

>> Continued on page 2

ROLEX

THE NEW
OYSTER PERPETUAL SUBMARINER DATE

Regency Watch

ANNAPURNA ARCADE
DURBAR MARG

MGA INTERNATIONAL PVT. LTD.

BRIEFING

Temporary camp established to investigate Miklajung incident

BIRATNAGAR: A temporary operation camp has been established in Miklajung Rural Municipality, Morang, to investigate the abduction and killing of school principal Rajendra Kumar Shrestha in Miklajung Rural Municipality in Morang district. The Netra Bikram Chand-led Communist Party of Nepal has claimed responsibility for the murder. Currently, there are 36 security personnel from the Armed Police Force and 15 from Nepal Police at the incident site. Santosh Khadka, superintendent of police in Morang, said, "The team members of the operation base camp are patrolling the area."

Nepal Army to reconstruct Bayalkanda fort

SURKHET: Nepal Army is all set to reconstruct Bayalkanda fort in Birendranagar Municipality-14, Surkhet, in coordination with the local government. The historic fort is believed to have been constructed by Bahadur Shah during his Nepal unification campaign. The army said that design of the fort was being prepared following an interaction with experts and stakeholders. "We will initiate reconstruction work immediately after the design is approved by the Department of Archaeology," said Bigyan Dev Pandey, chief of the Nepal Army's North-Western Division.

444 fugitives arrested in four months

NEPALGUNJ: Banke District Police Office has arrested a total of 444 fugitives in the past four months. According to Superintendent of Police Om Rana, police have launched a drive to arrest fugitives who were sentenced by the court. "We detained some fugitives who were at large for the past two decades. Search is on to nab other fugitives," said Rana. According to him, there are around 500 fugitives convicted on various charges, including rape and murder.



A woman puts clay piggy banks to dry at the pottery square, in Bhaktapur on Monday.

POST PHOTO: KESHAV THAPA

Odd-even rule on traffic movement hasn't checked spread of virus

The rule has led to overcrowding in public transport and experts say its efficacy should have been reviewed earlier.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

On September 5, following the three weeks of prohibitory orders in August, the government decided to enforce an odd-even rule for vehicular movement in Kathmandu Valley hoping that this would discourage people coming out of their homes and the spread of the virus would be checked. Unfortunately, that did not happen. Instead, exactly the opposite has happened.

On September 5, the number of positive cases across the country stood at 45,277. In Kathmandu Valley this figure stood at 7,900.

As of Monday, the number of positive cases stood at 249,244 nationwide and 116,023 in the Valley, or 203,967 more in the country and 108,213 more in Kathmandu Valley than September 5, according to data from the Ministry of Health and Population. The nationwide death toll on Monday stood at 1,716.

Public health experts have questioned the ad-hoc decision of enforcing odd even rules for vehicles and maintain that this decision is partly responsible for the spread of coronavirus.

"I don't understand how it will be possible to maintain social distancing by forcing people to board crammed vehicles," Dr GD Thakur, former director at the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, told the Post.

With businesses and offices open, people have since September 5 been travelling on public buses which ply based on the odd-even rule.

"The decision has not only been giving trouble to the people, but has been also proved counterproductive," said Thakur.

On the other hand, traffic police have also been impounding private motorcycles and vehicles on an ad-hoc basis if they are found to be flouting the odd-even rule.

"We are quite aware about the public's grievances over the odd-even rule," said Kali Prasad Parajuli, chief district officer of Kathmandu.

But three months since the decision, there has been no review of the effect of the decision on the spread of the virus.

In the pandemic, authorities concerned are supposed to conduct daily, weekly and monthly review of the situation and the decision taken to handle the pandemic, according to Thakur. "Had the authorities reviewed the effects of the odd-even rule enforced on vehicles, they would have scrapped the decision long ago," Thakur told the Post. "Some decisions may not work, but they should be replaced by new decisions."

This passivity on the part of the authorities is also a reflection of how serious they are about controlling the spread of the coronavirus, experts say.

"Continuation of the decision, taken months ago, which has only helped spread the infection, shows how seriously we are working to contain the spread of the infection," said Thakur.

The Home Ministry, under whose orders the police enforce the odd-even rule on vehicular movement, said that it cannot do anything, as the decision was taken by the Cabinet.

"We don't know if the decision to enforce odd even rules is working or not," Chakra Bahadur Budha, spokesperson for the Home Ministry, told the Post.

Of late, the number of new cases have declined after the authorities stopped providing free testing in October. Although the government was forced to resume free testing following a Supreme Court decision, contact tracing has all but stopped since October 17.

Meanwhile, most of the public places have opened and more and more schools are opening both across the country and in Kathmandu Valley.

Doctors said that the continuation of the odd even rule in the vehicles, which only gathered crowds could bring disaster in the days to come.

"It is impossible to maintain social distancing in the public vehicles," Dr Sher Bahadur Pun, chief of the Clinical research Unit at the Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital, told the Post. "The odd-even rule will be effective only if the movement of the public is low."

Spread of highly contagious coronavirus can be halted only by completely halting public movement and it is impossible at the time when all busi-

Officials say until a new decision is made, odd-even rule is set to continue.

ness has resumed like during the pre-pandemic period, according to Pun.

Even as authorities have enforced odd-even rules in Kathmandu Valley, it has been unable to prohibit protests and rallies of different political parties, which pose serious risk of spreading the coronavirus.

Following pro-monarchy protests in different parts of the country in the past weeks, on Monday the Nepali Congress party organised anti-government protests in all 77 districts of the country, including Kathmandu Valley, a decision that political analysts have called misguided.

"We are not the agencies to contain the rallies of political parties including motorcycle rallies," Janak Bhattarai, senior superintendent of police at Metropolitan Traffic Police Division, told the Post. "We are tasked to enforce the odd even rules and this we are implementing."

Until a new decision is made, the odd-even rule is set to continue. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, it is the local administration who makes the decision on this.

"The district administration is responsible to enforce and lift the odd even rules," said ministry spokesman Budha. According to Parajuli, the chief district officer of Kathmandu, the decision will be reviewed soon.

"We are going to hold a meeting of the chief district officers of the valley soon to review the effect of the decision," he told the Post.

But the decision whether to continue with or lift the odd-even rule on vehicular movement will not be made by the three chief district officers of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur.

"We will recommend after reviewing the decision to the Covid-19 Crisis Management Center after the meeting," Parajuli said.

The Covid-19 Crisis Management Committee is headed by Deputy Prime Minister Ishwor Pokharel. But its role has been limited to making recommendations to the Cabinet.

Schools hopeful Supreme Court will clear confusion over new curriculum for grade 11

Government-run schools have switched to the new curriculum, which private schools have refused to adopt.

BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

Padmodaya School in Putalisadak, Kathmandu, started grade 11 classes based on the new curriculum prepared by the Curriculum Development Centre from the last week of September.

Classes were running smoothly until the Supreme Court on November 4 issued an interim order halting the implementation of the new curriculum until its final verdict.

"The interim order has confused us," Narayan Gautam, principal at the school, told the Post. "We are currently teaching the contents that are common in both the curricula. However, we haven't been able to run the classes in a full-fledged manner since we are not sure what verdict the court is going to announce."

The hearing on the case, originally slated for November 11, has already been rescheduled thrice. The latest rescheduled date for December 21, and schools across the country expect the Supreme Court to give its final verdict on the matter this time.

Following the government's decision to replace the old curriculum in January, all government-run higher secondary schools switched to the new curricula prepared by the Curriculum Development Centre.

Private schools, however, are

opposed to the decision. They have been saying that it is wrong to enforce the new curriculum at the time of crisis.

While the Supreme Court's interim order may have offered respite to private schools, it has also caused confusion among government-run schools,



Schools started grade 11 classes a month after the National Examination Board on August 17 published the results of the Secondary Education Examinations.

POST FILE PHOTO

where around 70 percent of the higher secondary school students are enrolled.

"The delay in the final verdict has hampered the classes," said Heramba Raj Kandel, principal of Bishwo Niketan School at Kathmandu's

Tripureshwor. "We are okay with the old curriculum as well, but the court's final verdict has come to come."

Private school operators also say they want the final verdict on the matter to clear the confusion.

Lok Bahadur Bhandari, general secretary of Higher Institutions and

lum. We expect its final verdict will also be in the same line."

Schools started grade 11 classes a month after the National Examination Board on August 17 published the results of the Secondary Education Examinations (SEE). Among 482,986 students who had registered for the grade 10 national exams this year, 472,078 were promoted to grade 11 based on internal evaluation, as the SEE could not take place due to the pandemic.

Months of education disruption caused by the pandemic has led the government to truncate the academic year. It is one of the reasons why private schools are reluctant to adopt the new curriculum that has raised the subject numbers to six from the existing five.

According to the new curriculum, students will have to study six subjects each in grades 11 and 12 instead of the present five. Three of these are compulsory — English, Nepali and Social Studies in grade 11 and Life Skills Education in grade 12 — and three others elective subjects.

The new curriculum, according to the Curriculum Development Centre, has been designed to switch to the single-track curriculum for grades 11 and 12 from the system of four disciplines where students after passing grade 10 chose Science, Management, Humanities or Education stream.

Secondary Schools' Association Nepal, said they expected the Supreme Court to issue its final verdict on December 21.

"The Supreme Court had rightly issued the interim order to halt the implementation of the new curricu-

Health workers, doctors to be trained to deal with mental health issues

Nepal faces a severe shortage of mental health professionals, especially at the grassroots, as it only has 130 psychiatrists, most of whom are based in Kathmandu and urban centres.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

After all its efforts to deploy psychiatrists at the grassroots failed, the Ministry of Health and Population has started providing mental health training to health workers.

According to the Non-communicable Disease and Mental Health Section at the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, medical doctors, health assistants, paramedics and staff nurses of 21 districts will get mental health training in the ongoing fiscal year.

"We have also planned to train female community health volunteers serving at the local level in mental health," Dr Phanindra Prasad Baral, chief of the section, told the Post. "We hope that the training provided to the female community health volunteers will help find and treat people suffering from mental health problems."

Nepal does not have enough experts to treat and cure mental health problems. There are only around 130 psy-

chiatrists in the country, most of whom are based in the Kathmandu Valley and other urban areas. The Health Ministry said that less than 30 psychiatric doctors serve in state-run hospitals.

"It may take years to deploy psychiatrist doctors at the grassroots, so we decided to train medical officers, paramedic and staff nurses," added Baral.

The Ministry of Health and Population has already trained around 1,000 paramedics and staff nurses of 20 districts to address mental health problems.

"A lot of mental health patients, who are deprived of treatment, will get treatment at their nearest health facilities, if we could train local health workers," Dr Basudev Karki, a consultant psychiatrist at Nepal Mental Hospital, told the Post. "Female community health volunteers, who work at the grassroots will recommend people for treatment, if they are provided with mental health training."

According to Karki, a study carried



The National Mental Health Survey-2020 showed that 10 percent of the adult population has suffered from mental health problems in their lifetime and 4.3 percent currently have mental disorders.

POST FILE PHOTO

out in the past showed that of the 100 people recommended by trained female community health volunteers, 64 were found suffering from some form of mental health problems.

Mental health is one of the major public health issues in Nepal. The National Mental Health Survey-2020 showed that 10 percent of the adult population has suffered from mental health problems in their lifetime and 4.3 percent currently have mental disorders.

The study was carried out on 15,088 people from across the country from January 2019 to January 2020.

Doctors say mental health problems have increased several folds due to the effect of ongoing coronavirus pandemic. A lot of people have been compelled to remain in isolation, have lost their jobs and family members and incurred losses due to the pandemic.

The Health Ministry provides 11 different types of psychotropic medicines from state-run health facilities throughout the country.

OPINION

EDITORIAL

Bitter pill

The government must ensure that sugarcane farmers are paid in full immediately.

Most farmers often don't have much reason to visit Kathmandu as they spend their lives toiling in their fields. More so for sugarcane farmers, who would have no reason to stay away from their fields in the thick of the harvesting season. But like last year, they are in the capital city again. The industrious farmers are leaving their work behind to visit Kathmandu as they are duped time and again—by the sugar mills they sell their crop to, and the government that is supposed to support them—as the factory owners fail to pay them their dues that run into hundreds of millions.

According to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Shree Ram Sugar Mill owes farmers Rs260 million, Indira Sugar Mill around Rs40 million, Lumbini Rs80 million and Annapurna Sugar Mill Rs170 million. There are over 6,000 farmers in Sarlahi district alone that await payment for their sales. What is alarming is that the mill owners are paying small amounts to the farmers, especially to those who are more vocal, so that they stop asking for their payments and their joint agitation goes into disarray. Not to mention that the mills have failed to pay the farmers according to the schedule fixed during the previous negotiations.

Left in the lurch by the government after its repeated promises to help them, the sugarcane farmers are now torn between selling their product to the same non-paying mills or finding new mills that are more likely than not to turn out to be yet other defaulters. Such is the precarious position they are in as the KP Oli administration has done little to help their cause even after repeated requests and protests. The government has been too lenient when it comes to making the sugar mills accountable. The mills, meanwhile, continue to dupe the farmers even after making repeated promises that they would pay the outstanding dues that run into hundreds of millions.

Their demand is for the five-point agreement the sugar mill owners reached with the government in January 2020 to be honoured. They had planned to visit Kathmandu in March itself but held back due to the increase of the Covid-19 pandemic. The farmers would have no reason to leave their work behind and hold a march on Kathmandu if their demands had been met. Hundreds of farmers from Sarlahi had visited Kathmandu last year to pressurise the government to help them get the money the sugar mills owed them. The farmers had withdrawn their indefinite protests in a week following the government's assurance that it would get the sugar mills to pay their outstanding dues by January 21. But most of the farmers remained unpaid.

It is high time the government addressed the demands of the farmers once and for all. It cannot expect them to stay silent even if the mills continue to default on the payment schedule. The government must take immediate steps to facilitate a negotiation between the farmers and the mills and penalise the mills that fail to clear the dues for years.

Corrections

A news article published on Pg 7 on Monday about sports awards misstated the date of the award ceremony. The event will take place on January 12.

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

For the most recent corrections, visit kathmandupost.com/corrections.

The business of foreign affairs



As Nepal shows a renewed focus on foreign policy, it needs to think about possible transformative changes.

SUJEEV SHAKYA

THE OTHER VIEW



Last week, the government released the 31-page Nepal Foreign Policy 2077 document. While it is no doubt interesting that the government has finally thought to bring forward a seemingly comprehensive policy direction in an area much neglected, I continue to question the basics surrounding its release. With no official English translation released, it seems like the document was meant for the domestic audience. But how can people who do not read Nepali understand it? If it were to have been released in the six official UN languages, Hindi and Bengali, it would have been a groundbreaking effort that would cover most of our neighbourhood and the countries strategically important to us.

Whenever Nepalis look to reimagine issues, we get stuck building on the

past rather than looking ahead. It is like trying to find new ways to fix the tax machine when most of the world has moved on to better forms of communication. Nepal needs to continuously have a futuristic perspective on managing the fundamentals, rather than trying to repair a broken past. In this regard, we can focus on some key areas.

First, we need to think of the large population of Nepalis around the world and the services that they need. A survey that we ran, when I was visiting the US regularly in the early 2000s, told us that people of the diaspora were willing to pay as much as \$100 to get a birth certificate (and other important administrative documents) attested and sent back to them. I had proposed to the Nepal Embassy in the US how this service could be thought of as a profit centre—a point from where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or individual embassies could gain a large chunk of much-needed revenue. Yet, the thought was considered too disruptive back then.

Perhaps the time has come to revisit this idea, particularly considering how some countries gain back the cost of building new embassy buildings from just the visa fees and services sold from those individual embassies. The five million-odd Nepalis around the world who have to jump through hoops to avail of consular services would undoubtedly appreciate it. Embassies, at the same time, would not be pres-

ured to handle mundane issues that arise when a service-oriented system is not in place. And, such a service provided through the embassies wouldn't be as exploitative and problematic as some of the private, outsourced companies that other countries are known to employ.

Second, we need an institution that focuses on the selective study of countries and regions from around the world. Global events can be held, and collaborative projects can be undertaken. Such an institution would then mould academics that could make better policy recommendations, particularly foreign policy. Hundreds of well-trained Nepalis who have studied international relations from a top institution will be more than happy to serve their own country; they will bring not only their experience, but also the connections they have fostered through global links. For a young Nepali who aspires to contribute to Nepal's transformation, this would be an essential institution. The revenue gained from providing effective service through embassies could fund this institution.

Third, we need to reimagine how the government connects with its diaspora. The Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) was created in 2003 when there were less than half a million Nepalis (besides the Nepalis residing in India) living abroad. Today, when there are more than five million. This necessitates recalibration. I had personally

spent a couple of years helping NRNA to create its Vision 2030 and implement transformation, but politics has dominated the discourse.

The associations that dominate the lives of the diaspora have become vote banks; even the newer political groups in Nepal see them that way. It seems the transformation of non-resident contribution through the NRNA seems complicated, while the second generation of non-resident Nepalis feels disconnected from the ancestral home. Perhaps an independent entity within the Foreign Ministry or the NRNA can lead the necessary changes. The issues that need dire attention are the provisioning for dual citizenships, helping Nepalis invest or grow their businesses abroad, and unleashing Nepal's soft power. The latter can focus on Nepal's rich endowment of nature, heritage and the diversity of its art, culture, music and culinary experiences. If the government sought help, there would be hundreds that would volunteer.

Finally, what will be required is the change in the old mindset of cronyism and nepotism. Nepal needs to reimagine its diplomacy. It has to move away from politics. If it is to succeed, it would be better to run the system like a business—with a CEO at the helm that delivers the triple bottom line; namely, surpluses from services, high impact unleashing of Nepal's soft power and happy citizens who are genuinely proud of their country.

Building an EU-Africa partnership of equals

The relationship must be rethought and reshaped—beginning at the upcoming mini-summit.

CARLOS LOPES



This was supposed to be the year Europe and Africa redefined their relationship. In March, the European Commission unveiled its vision for a 'comprehensive strategy with Africa', intended to kick-start a six-month consultation process, which would culminate at the European Union-African Union summit in October in an agreement on a new blueprint for relations—one that would give Africa significantly more agency. Then Covid-19 arrived.

Even without the pandemic, the road to a stronger, more equal EU-Africa partnership would have been difficult. When the year began, tensions were high in many parts of the world, raising serious geopolitical and security risks. Moreover, the strategic competition between the United States and China had escalated into a trade war. Multilateralism was faltering.

As challenging as these conditions were, they also encouraged progress, by highlighting how high the stakes had become. Africa's resolve was evident: a series of AU summits and meetings had indicated that the continent was committed finally to implement the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), to reform regional bodies, and to move onto a more ambitious development path. Such initiatives implied an overhaul of the tenets of any partnership with



the continent.

The Covid-19 crisis threw a wrench into plans to engineer such an overhaul with Europe. But it also underscored the need for one—not least because the EU is Africa's main trade and investment partner.

The pandemic has demonstrated the practical implications of inequality; revealed the excessive dependence of critical value chains on certain economies, particularly China; and exposed the vulnerabilities of the international finance system. It has also shown the limits of current modes of global cooperation, even in the face of shared crises.

As a result, the desire to 'return to normal' has increasingly given way to calls to 'build back better'. Progress on the European Green Deal reflects policymakers' determination to take advantage of the current upheaval to advance real change. Africa should follow suit—beginning by accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA.

An integrated continental market could have cushioned the blow of declining international trade during the Covid-19 crisis, saving jobs and livelihoods. Instead, Africa is struggling to revive its economies, despite having been significantly less affected

by the virus than many other parts of the world. The continent's leaders must ensure that, when the next crisis strikes, Africa is ready.

Given the likelihood of another health crisis—experts warn that pandemic risks are rising—this means, among other things, ensuring stable supplies of critical medical equipment. Early restrictions on medical-supply exports and more recent 'vaccine nationalism' on the part of a handful of countries show just how quickly countries can resort to protectionism. It is thus in Africa's interest to promote production of strategic supplies and create robust value

chains for pharmaceuticals and medical equipment on the continent. The AfCFTA would facilitate these efforts.

But the AfCFTA's implementation will need to go hand in hand with broader international engagement, especially with the EU. During the Covid-19 crisis, Africa needed large-scale debt relief and increased access to liquidity, so that countries could implement economic-support measures on par with the advanced economies. It hasn't gotten them—at least not to the necessary extent.

Of course, it is far from ideal for Africans to assume that others will rescue them. But this is not a choice; it

is a systemic problem. As it stands, some African countries—especially those with very limited monetary-policy space—need external support, particularly from the International Monetary Fund, to be able to respond to exogenous shocks. The EU can and should play a key role here.

Such cooperation must extend beyond short-term imperatives to address medium- to long-term structural challenges. For example, while debt relief is important, and the sustained push for it by several G20 countries is welcome, it will not be enough to reinvigorate African economies. Rethinking financing approaches for infrastructure investment, to support the implementation of the AfCFTA, would have a greater long-term impact.

Building a stronger, more strategic partnership with Africa will also require EU countries to abandon their fixation on the migration 'threat', and recognise the continent's strategic importance. A candid debate about the expansion of legal pathways to ensure mobility, including circular migration, would help.

The idea of returning to 'normal' after the Covid-19 crisis may still tempt many people. But, when it comes to the EU-Africa relationship, it is simply not an option. The partnership must be rethought and reshaped. To that end, both sides must abandon the unbalanced, piecemeal approach of the past, and work toward creating an effective joint-governance mechanism.

At the upcoming 'mini-summit', EU and AU leaders have an ideal opportunity to catalyse this process. By the time the full summit takes place next year, they should be able to put forward a clear vision of a partnership fit for the 21st century.

Lopes, Professor at the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance at the University of Cape Town, is African Union High Representative for Partnerships with Europe.

—Project Syndicate

WORLD

BRIEFING

TV executive held in India

SRINAGAR: Indian police have arrested the chief executive officer of a media group that owns a polarizing television news channel on charges of rigging the ratings system, a major component in determining what a channel can charge advertisers. Police arrested Vikas Khanchandani, the chief executive of ARG Outlier Media, on Sunday at his home in Mumbai, India's financial capital, Republic TV, which is owned by ARG, announced during a broadcast. Republic TV, which broadcasts in English and Hindi, aggressively supports Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his nationalist policies. Republic TV denounced the arrest. "I know he will go in and come out with his head held high," the news channel's co-founder, Arnab Goswami, said of Khanchandani on his firebrand nightly show. The arrest is part of a police investigation that began in October into some TV channels in the western state of Maharashtra, of which Mumbai is the capital, over accusations that they rig the ratings scores system.

Trump raises China concerns as reason to veto defence bill

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump offered a new rationale on Sunday for threatening to veto the annual defense policy bill that covers the military's budget for equipment and pay raises for service members: China. He did not outline his concerns. Republican and Democratic lawmakers say the wide-ranging defense policy bill, which the Senate sent to the president on Friday, would be tough on China and must become law as soon as possible. Both the House and Senate passed the measure by margins large enough to override a potential veto from the president, who has a history of failing to carry out actions he has threatened.

US agencies hit by cyberattack

WASHINGTON: The US government issued an emergency directive to federal agencies in the wake of a major cyberattack, as multiple media outlets reported at least two departments—including the Treasury—had been targeted by hackers with ties to Russia. In a statement on Sunday, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) said it had ordered federal agencies to immediately stop using SolarWinds Orion IT products following reports that hackers had used a recent update to gain access to internal communications. "The compromise of SolarWinds' Orion Network Management Products poses unacceptable risks to the security of federal networks," said CISA Acting Director Brandon Wales. "Tonight's directive is intended to mitigate potential compromises within federal civilian networks... we urge all our partners to assess their exposure," he added.

(AGENCIES)

Notice

This to notify that Mr. Abhishek jain, S/O Mr. Ajit Kumar Bothra and Mrs. Sarita Devi, permanent Address: Narpatganj, Dist. Araria, Bihar, India had married to Tanvi Rauniyar D/O Mr. Rajendra Kumar Rauniyar and Mrs. Jyoti Rauniyar, Permanent Address: Sukrapath, New Road, Kathmandu, Nepal on date 07/12/2015 at Hotel Radisson, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Now they are going to register their marriage via Indian Embassy, Kathmandu, Nepal. If anyone has any objection on this marriage please contact us within 30 days of this notice.

Contact - 9851048050



A man dressed as Santa Claus greets children from a glass enclosure in Vaughan, Ontario, Canada. Vaughan cancelled their seasonal in-person visits with Santa amid the continuing Covid-19 pandemic.

Japan, South Korea fret as surging Covid cases undermine leaders' support

Singapore approves Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine and says it expects its first shots to be administered by end of the month.

REUTERS
TOKYO/SEOUL, DEC 14

Japan and South Korea grappled with surging coronavirus cases and growing public frustration on Monday, with Japan suspending a contentious travel subsidy programme and South Korea closing some schools and considering its toughest curbs yet.

Japan reported more than 3,000 new cases on Saturday, yet another record as winter set in, with infections worsening in Tokyo, the northern island of Hokkaido and the city of Osaka.

But Japan, with a focus on the economic costs, has steered clear of tough lockdowns. It tackled its first wave of infections in the spring by asking people to refrain from going out and for businesses to close or curtail operating hours.

The government also launched a subsidy programme called "Go To Travel" to encourage domestic tourism and support businesses but critics said encouraging people to travel had helped spread infections.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga had ruled out halting the programme, citing economic considerations, but that changed after weekend polls showed his support being eroded over his handling of the pandemic.

The programme would be suspended nationwide for two weeks from December 28, media reported.

Across the sea in South Korea, President Moon Jae-in also faces sliding ratings as clusters of new infections fuel criticism over what many see as slack containment.

Moon has warned of the possibility

more stringent curbs.

"Our back is against the wall," he said. "This is a crucial moment to devote all our virus control capabilities and administrative power to stopping the coronavirus."

South Korea reported a new daily record of 1,030 infections on Sunday, a big worry for a country for months held up as a mitigation success story but still a fraction of the tallies being seen in some European countries and the United States, where vaccines are being rolled out.

Few Asian countries expect to get significant amounts of coronavirus vaccines in coming weeks as they manage distribution schedules, allow time to check for any inoculation side effects elsewhere or run their own late-stage trials.

Instead, they are counting on the methods that have largely kept infections in check for months - ahead of the curve testing, stringent travel curbs, strict social distancing and masks. China, for instance, where the virus emerged almost a year ago, has managed to limit new cases with tough, sweeping action.

It locked down an area of more than 250,000 people after half a dozen cases were confirmed near the Russian border in the province of Heilongjiang, the Associated Press reported on Monday.

Singapore, which has reported only a handful of local cases over the past two months, said it was easing restrictions and would soon allow up to eight people to gather. It also approved Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine and said it expected its first shots by the end of the month.

New Zealand, which has been particularly successful in tackling the pandemic, said it had agreed to open a "travel bubble" with Australia in the first quarter of 2021.

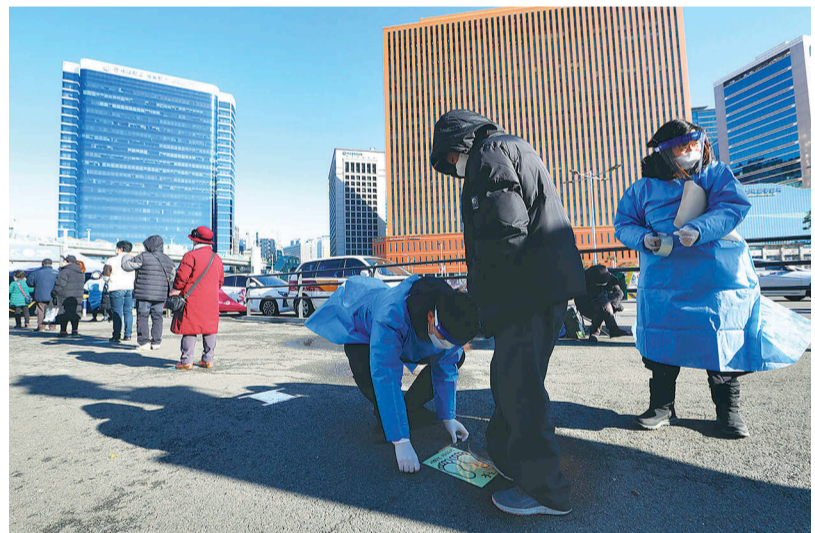
South Korea ordered schools to close in its capital, Seoul, and surrounding areas and warned that restrictions may be raised to the highest Phase 3 level, which would essentially mean a lockdown for the first time in Asia's fourth-largest economy.

Last month, the government banned year-end parties and it has ramped up testing to more than 22,000 people a day, compared with about 16,000 a day in September.

In Japan, which is hoping to stage the postponed summer Olympics next year, testing has remained relatively low, peaking at about 50,000 in one day recently. Testing in Tokyo, which has the capacity for more than 60,000, is now about 9,000 a day.

"Whether a country or region is doing enough testing should be assessed based on the positivity rate and not on the number of tests," said Fumie Sakamoto, infection control manager at the St Luke's International Hospital in Tokyo.

"The positivity rate for Tokyo is now over 6 percent, so we should be doing a bit more testing to bring the number down."



A worker attaches a social distancing sign on the road as people wait for their Covid-19 testing at a makeshift clinic in Seoul, South Korea, on Monday.

Protesting farmers call for second strike in a week in India

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW DELHI, DEC 14

Tens of thousands of protesting Indian farmers called for a national farmers' strike on Monday, the second in a week, to press for the quashing of three new laws on agricultural reform that they say will drive down crop prices and devastate their earnings.

The farmers are camping along at least five major highways on the outskirts of New Delhi and have said they won't leave until the government rolls back what they call the "black laws." They have blockaded highways leading to the capital for three weeks, and several rounds of talks with the government have failed to produce any breakthroughs.

Scores of farmer leaders also conducted a token hunger strike on Monday at the protest sites. Heavy contingents of police in riot gear patrolled the areas where the farmers have been camping.

Protest leaders have rejected government offer to amend the new farming law.

Protest leaders have rejected the government's offer to amend some contentious provisions of the new farm laws, which deregulate crop pricing, and have stuck to their demand for total repeal.

At Singhu, a protest site on the outskirts of New Delhi, hundreds of farmers blocked all entry and exit routes and chanted anti-government slogans. Some of them carried banners reading "No farmers, no food."

About two dozen leaders held a day-long hunger strike at the site, while a huge communal kitchen served food for the other protesters.

"It's the government's responsibility to provide social benefits (to people.) And if they don't give those, then people will have to come together" to protest, said Harvinder Kaur, a government employee who came from her home in Punjab state to help at the kitchen.

Another protester, Rajdeep Singh, a 20-year-old student who helps his farming family back home in Punjab, said the protest would continue until their demands are met.

Farmer leaders have threatened to intensify their actions and have threatened to block trains in the coming days if the government doesn't abolish the laws.

The farmers filed a petition with the Supreme Court on Friday seeking the quashing of the laws, which were passed in September. The petition was filed by the Bharatiya Kisan Union, or Indian Farmers' Union, and its leader, Bhanu Pratap Singh, who argued that the laws were arbitrary because the government enacted them without proper consultations with stakeholders.

The farmers fear the government will stop buying grain at minimum guaranteed prices and corporations will then push prices down. The government says it is willing to pledge that guaranteed prices will continue.

With nearly 60 percent of the Indian population depending on agriculture for their livelihoods, the growing farmer rebellion has rattled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration and its allies.

Scientists focus on bats for clues to prevent next pandemic

ASSOCIATED PRESS
RIO DE JANEIRO, DEC 14

Night began to fall in Rio de Janeiro's Pedra Branca state park as four Brazilian scientists switched on their flashlights to traipse along a narrow trail of mud through dense rainforest. The researchers were on a mission: capture bats and help prevent the next global pandemic.

The November nighttime outing was part of a project at Brazil's state-run Fiocruz Institute to collect and study viruses present in wild animals—including bats, which many scientists believe were linked to the outbreak of Covid-19.

The goal now is to identify other viruses that may be highly contagious and lethal in humans, and to use that information to devise plans to stop them from ever infecting people—to forestall the next potential global disease outbreak before it gets started.

In a highly connected world, an outbreak in one place endangers the entire globe, just as the coronavirus did. And the Brazilian team is just one among many worldwide racing to minimize the risk of a second pandemic this century.

It's no coincidence that many disease scientists are focusing attention on bats, the world's only flying mammals. Bats are thought to be the original or intermediary hosts for

multiple viruses that have spawned recent epidemics, including SARS, MERS, Ebola, Nipah virus, Hendra virus and Marburg virus.

A 2019 study found that of viruses originating from the five most common mammalian sources—primates, rodents, carnivores, ungulates and bats—those from bats are the most virulent in humans.

"The secret is that bats have unusual immune systems, and that's related to their ability to fly," said Raina Plowright, an epidemiologist who studies bats at Montana State University.

Plowright and other bat scientists believe evolutionary tweaks that help bats recover from the stress of flying, when their metabolic rate rises sixteen-fold, also give them extra protection against pathogens.

Probing the secrets of bat immune systems may help scientists understand more about when bats do shed viruses, as well as providing hints for possible future medical treatment strategies, said Arinjay Banerjee, a virologist at McMaster University in Canada.

Increasing destruction and fragmentation of habitats worldwide—especially biodiverse areas like tropical forests—means "we are seeing higher rates of contact between wildlife and humans, creating more opportunities for spillover," said Cara Brook, a disease ecologist at the

University of California, Berkeley.

In India, a National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well-Being has been pending since 2018 and will likely be launched next year. A core part of the plan is to set up 25 virus surveillance sites across the country.

One approach that won't help, scientists say, is treating bats as the enemy—vilifying them, throwing stones or trying to burn them out of caves. An attack along those lines took place this spring, when villagers in the Indian state of Rajasthan identified bat colonies in abandoned forts and palaces and killed hundreds with bats and sticks.

Scientists say such tactics are likely to backfire.

Bats also play vital roles in ecosystems: They consume insects like mosquitoes, pollinate plants like agave, and disperse seeds.

A better approach to minimize disease risk, Frank said, is simply to minimize contact between wild bats and people and livestock.

In Australia, bats transmitted a virus to horses, which in turn infected people. First identified in 1994 and named Hendra virus, it is highly lethal, killing 60 percent of people and 75 percent of horses infected.

To potentially reverse the movement of bats, Montana State University's Plowright and colleagues based in Australia are studying restoring the bats' original habitat.

कागेश्वरी मनोहरा नगरपालिका

नगर कार्यपालिकाको कार्यालय
डाँछी, काठमाडौं
बागमती प्रदेश, नेपाल

आशय सम्बन्धी सूचना

(प्रकाशित मिति : २०७७/०८/३०)

यस नगरपालिका अन्तर्गत तपसिल अनुसारको ठेक्का नम्बरहरूमा उल्लेखित कार्यको लागि मिति २०७७ साल असोज २६ गतेको द काठमाडौं पोस्ट राष्ट्रिय दैनिक पत्रिकामा प्रकाशित बोलपत्र आह्वान सम्बन्धी सूचना अनुसार Single Envelope System मा e-bidding मार्फत दर्ता हुन आएका बोलपत्रहरू मध्ये तपसिल अनुसारको बोलपत्र दाताहरूले पेश गरेको बोलपत्र न्यूनतम मूल्यांकित सारभूतस्वमा प्रभावग्राही देखिएकोले स्वीकृतीको प्रक्रियामा रहेको हुँदा सार्वजनिक खरिद ऐन, २०६३ को दफा २७ को उपदफा २ को प्रयोजनार्थ बोलपत्र पेश गर्ने सम्बन्धित सबैको जानकारीका लागि यो सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ ।

तपसिल

सि.नं.	ठेक्का नं.	कामको विवरण	बोलपत्रदाताको नाम र ठेगाना	कबोल रकम (मू.अ.कर सहित) रु.
1.	RFW/W/NCB/101/2077-078	Retrofitting works with addition second storey for ward office 9 of Kageshwori Manohara Municipality	श्री एम.सि.सि. कन्स्ट्रक्सन प्रा.लि. गोकर्णेश्वर	३७,८५,५५९,१२९
2.	STB/W/NCB/102/2077-078	Construction of Steel Community Hall at Kageshwori Manohara Municipality -9	श्री गिन स्ट्रिट कन्स्ट्रक्सन एण्ड इन्जिनियरिङ प्रा.लि. ललितपुर	२२,६८,६२५,१८१
3.	IWB/W/NCB/103/2077-078	Interior works for ward office-5 of Kageshwori Manohara Municipality	श्री गिन स्ट्रिट कन्स्ट्रक्सन एण्ड इन्जिनियरिङ प्रा.लि. ललितपुर	२८,२०,८२६,९८८

BRIEFING

AC Milan stay unbeaten in Italy

MILAN: Theo Hernandez scored twice to help AC Milan recover from two goals down to draw 2-2 against Parma on Sunday and preserve their unbeaten league record.

Dortmund sack coach Favre

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund have sacked manager Lucien Favre following Saturday's 5-1 loss at home to promoted VfB Stuttgart that saw them drop to fifth.

Arsenal's crisis deepens after Burnley defeat

The Gunners drop to 15th position after crumbling to fourth straight home league defeat for the first time since 1959.



Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (centre) is waiting for his first league goal from open play since new contract extension in September.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON, DEC 14

Arsenal slumped to a fourth consecutive home league defeat for the first time since 1959 after Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's own goal handed Burnley a 1-0 win on Sunday.

year contract in September, but scored at the wrong end when he flicked in Ashley Westwood's corner 17 minutes from time.

the FA Cup last season, just eight months into his first senior managerial role. However, Arteta is now under mounting pressure with little sign his side can turn things around.

New Zealand beat West Indies to sweep Test series

REUTERS WELLINGTON, DEC 14

New Zealand took a little over an hour to wrap up a comprehensive innings and 12 runs victory in the second Test against West Indies on the fourth day at the Basin Reserve on Monday to seal a 2-0 series sweep.

The tourists resumed on 244-6 with captain Jason Holder on 60 and Joshua Da Silva on 25 but were dismissed for 317 midway through the first session still 12 runs from making the hosts bat again after they scored 460 in their first innings.

"Clinical is probably the word to use," Latham told reporters. "The way we were able to set the game with the bat on the back of Henry's innings was outstanding.

The start of play on Monday was delayed for 20 minutes due to light rain falling in central Wellington but Tim Southee and Neil Wagner picked up the four wickets required, while Da Silva scored his first Test half century.

Bhurtel guides Rapti to one-wicket victory

SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU, DEC 14

Rapti clinched a one wicket win over Narayani in the last league match of the Gautam Buddha Cup twenty-20 cricket tournament played in Bharatpur on Monday.

Kushal Bhurtel cracked 65 runs off 41 balls as Rapti chased 139 runs target with a ball to spare. Bhurtel, who came as one of the openers, hit four fifties and six sixes before being bowled out by Kishore Mahato in the 11th over.

Both sides have already secured berths in the three-team round-robin

league finals after defeating national team skipper Gyanendra Malla-led Bagmati in their first matches.

Monday's match outcome means Rapti secured first position in the round-robin league finals. The same teams will vie in the finals on Tuesday.

Kamal Singh who came to bat at number eight remained unbeaten at 24 runs while Asif Sheikh and Sumit Maharjan contributed 14 and 12 runs respectively. Narayani captain Karan KC claimed three wickets while Kishore Mahato and Sushan Bhari grabbed two wickets each.

Narayani, which elected to bat first, made a shaky start and lost four wick-

ets for 28 runs. But they managed to reach 138-8 with contributions from lower middle and tailender batsmen. Sushan Bhari, who came to bat at number seven, contributed 18 runs before skipper KC and Mahato played 59 runs for the eight wicket.

Mahato contributed unbeaten 36 runs, the highest score for Narayani, which included two boundaries and four sixes in his 14-ball knock. KC scored 32 off 22 deliveries.

Rapti bowlers Surya Tamang and Abinash Bohara grabbed two wickets apiece while Jitendra Mukhiya, Kamal Singh and Basant Karki picked one each.

Messi saves Barcelona, Sociedad back on top

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BARCELONA, DEC 14

Lionel Messi saved Barcelona from another embarrassing result by scoring the decisive goal in a 1-0 win over lowly Levante, while Real Sociedad returned top of La Liga on Sunday.

Messi struck with 14 minutes remaining of a lacklustre display from Barca at the Camp Nou which will do little to ease fan fears following their 3-0 hammering at the hands of Juventus midweek.

Ronald Koeman's side are still way off the pace in the title race, nine points behind Sociedad who reclaimed

first place despite only drawing 1-1 with Eibar. Barcelona do however have two games in hand on the Basque outfit. Atletico are level on 26 points with Sociedad and also have two games in hand while Real Madrid are now just three points behind the leaders having played one less after beating their local rivals 2-0 on Saturday.

"The team is working well, they gave the maximum," said Koeman. "We still lack a little confidence in ourselves, in our game, but we had a lot of chances, and I have nothing to say about the attitude of the players in this match."

Barca managed to force several

saves from Aitor Fernandez, with the Levante goalkeeper doing particularly well to push away a stinging shot from Martin Braithwaite in the 16th minute and Antoine Griezmann's header five minutes later.

Earlier Ander Barrenetxea gave Real Sociedad the lead in San Sebastian with a thumping strike in the 20th minute, but Sergi Enrich turned home with 25 minutes remaining to send his team 10th on 15 points. Sociedad would have had a bigger gap between them and Atletico had Igor Zubeldia's 80th-minute tap-in not been ruled out by VAR for an extremely tight offside.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19) **** People will treat you the way you deserve to be treated today—singing your praises and patting you on the back. That means that it's a particularly good time to use all the goodwill that's coming your way to get people to help you start something new.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) *** Someone close to you could be going through some issue with their home life. The drama in their private life is leaking into your relationship. You're getting frustrated by their lack of concentration, and that's understandable.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) *** Don't let your flirting skills get rusty! Even if you're in a long-term, committed relationship, flirting should still be a part of your life. After all, it's not a big commitment or infidelity. It is (or it should be) harmless.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) **** The challenges you face at your job or school are not only adding stress to your life, they're also causing some disruption in the lives of your closest friends and loved ones. Today, try to make sure your two worlds stay separate.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) *** It's wise for you to rethink your health regimen today, but it's unwise to set goals that are too ambitious. You have to be realistic about what you can do and how quickly you can do it or you'll only get frustrated.

LEO (July 23-August 22) *** One of your friends has been acting immature lately, but today it looks like they've decided to grow up. But is it too little too late? This relationship has been a mixed blessing in your life, and it might be time to decide once and for all if you want it to continue.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) *** Have the past few days been dragging along too slowly for you? If so, today will probably be no different. Time feels like it's crawling right now, but in reality you're just moving too quickly for it! So slow down the pace of your life.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) *** Today, let people into your life a little bit more. Open yourself up and they'll show you the best that they have to offer. Encourage them to be confident and you'll be putting yourself in a strong leadership position.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) **** There's a fight about to bust out today, and you'll be lucky enough to have a front row seat for all the action! The two warring parties, in your humble opinion, are equally in the wrong, so this should be an interesting battle to witness!

VIRGO (August 23-September 22) **** You've got a much more focused energy than you've had for a while, and you can almost instantly make a molehill out of any mountain! The tallest, toughest obstacles will melt into minor setbacks and your plan for fun won't have to be delayed by one minute.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) *** You can feel free to kick back and just have fun today. Go ahead and let yourself get distracted by the silly, the inane, and the downright goofy. If you have children in your life, this is the perfect day to get down on their level and have a play date.

PISCES (February 19-March 20) *** Getting caught up in the past isn't something you should be doing right now. There are too many important opportunities in front of you, and you can't afford to be distracted by things that have already happened and don't really matter anymore.

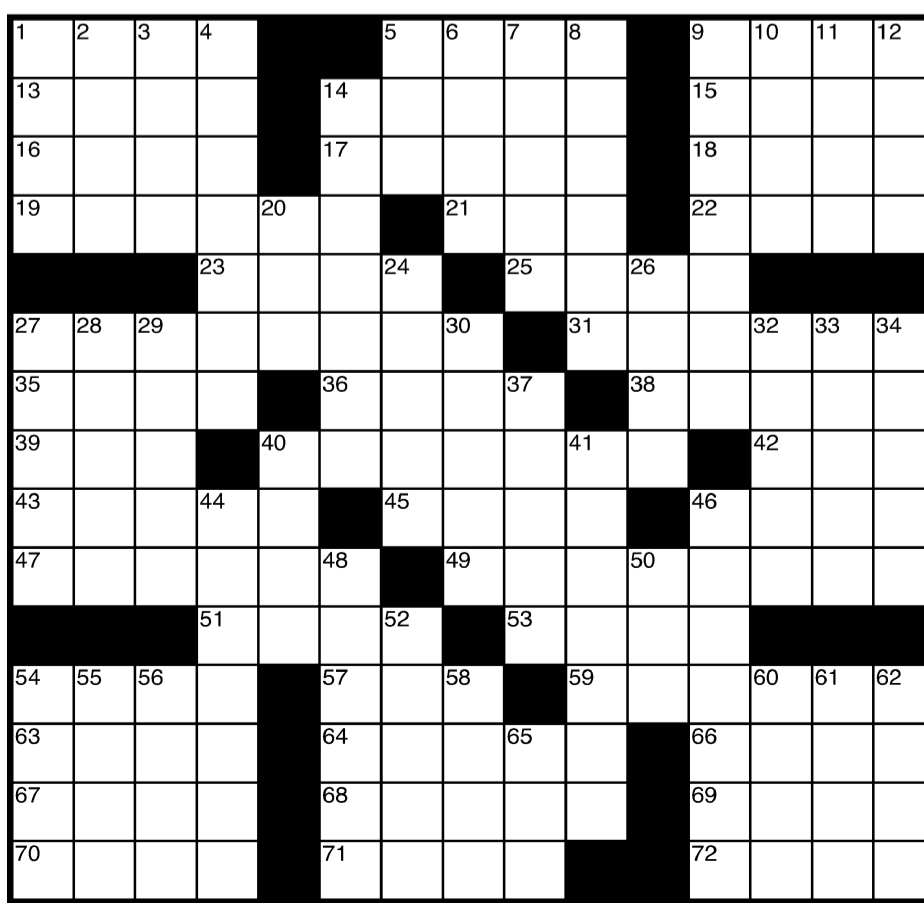
CROSSWORD

- ACROSS 1 Kind of lens 5 Subtle emanation 9 Cries audibly 13 Gluck of opera 14 Yanks up a sock 15 Slangy refusal (hyph.) 16 Requirement 17 Choose 18 Ache for 19 Over there 21 California's Big 22 Diva — Ponselle 23 Freud's concerns 25 Hotfoot it 27 Fetching 31 Harley competitor 35 Prepares to fire 36 Leg part 38 Gross out 39 Rural elec. provider 40 Had ambitions 42 Kubrick's computer 43 Comic-strip Viking 45 Scissors sound 46 Racehorse parent 47 Arctic vehicle 49 Pekoe chest (2 wds.) 51 Quay 53 Litigated 54 Hill's opposite 57 Rye partner 59 Accounts book 63 Unlock 64 Hazard a guess 66 Place of exile 67 Hoover Dam lake 68 Orlando attraction 69 Diner sign 70 Ms. Ferber 71 Swedish auto maker 72 Broadcast DOWN 1 Wacky 2 Dairy-case buy 3 Auspice 4 Infuriates 5 Feel poorly 6 Small music makers 7 Happen again 8 Off the track 9 Second to none 10 Buckeye State 11 Sweet rolls 12 Mets' former ballpark 14 Brave deeds 20 Souffle ingredient 24 Crackles 26 Part of a deck 27 Showers 28 Foe 29 Reflection 30 Sparkle 32 Plant parasite 33 Got news of 34 Narrow passageway 37 Burger partner 40 Golden Fleece ship 41 Military trim 44 Book appendixes 46 Makes unhappy 48 Canyon effects 50 So-so grade 52 Frat letter 54 Stadium roof 55 Parroted 56 Not fatty 58 Translucent mineral 60 Delight 61 Poet's black 62 Cash, in Pretoria 65 Head, slangily

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



3-27-20 © 2020 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS



SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

The unemployed and small business owners turn to ride-sharing apps to pay their bills

Many who have lost jobs or are incurring losses have joined the gig economy to earn a living, with a majority of them opting to work as riders on ride-sharing platforms.

TSERING NGODUP LAMA
KATHMANDU

Sitting on his parked motorbike beside an upscale restaurant in Lazimpat, Uttam Kumar Rai, his head bowed, stares intermittently at his smartphone's Pathao app, a ride-sharing app.

It's almost noon, and Rai has just completed a ride request from Boudha to Lazimpat. And until he gets a new ride request on the app, all Rai can do is wait.

After around 10 minutes of waiting, a ride request pops up. Rai is quick to accept it, and he speeds away.

On any given day, Rai, a full-time Pathao rider, takes anywhere between 12 to 15 rides. He starts early, around 8 am every day, and by the time he gets home in his rented accommodation in Kapan, it's usually 7 pm.

Until a few months ago, Rai's daily routine was completely different. He held a 9-5 job at a financial investment company, and it was only during his free time that he worked as a Pathao rider to make extra money.

But in February this year, says Rai, a disagreement with the company's HR left him with no option but to quit. "I was told by the company's HR that upon completing two years at the company, I would get a better contract. But when the time came, the HR reneged on the promise," said Rai. "I felt disrespected and unappreciated, and I decided to resign."

After putting in his papers, Rai started applying for jobs but before he could land one, the pandemic hit, and for months, Rai was left without a source of income.

When the lockdown loosened, Rai left for his village in Khotang and returned to Kathmandu only a month ago, and he has since been working full-time as a Pathao rider.

Rai's case isn't an outlier.

Ever since the lockdown loosened, many who have lost jobs and owners of small businesses that have been hit hard by the pandemic have joined the gig economy to earn a living, the vast majority of them opting to work as riders on ride-sharing platforms.

Data from ride-sharing apps like Pathao and Tootle show a huge surge in the number of new applicants wanting to sign up and work as riders in the midst of



SHUTTERSTOCK

a pandemic.

Starting from June, Pathao, says the platform's senior manager Shashank Shumsher Thapa, was inundated with queries from people wanting to sign up on the platform.

"The situation was similar at Tootle. 'We were seeing anywhere between 80 to 100 new applicants daily,' said Sixit Bhatta, co-founder of Tootle.

But during the first few weeks following the lockdown, with many people reluctant to step outside their homes, demand for rides on ride-sharing platforms was low.

"Given the low demand, it didn't make sense for us to accept new applicants because that would mean existing riders on the platform would end up getting much fewer rides," said Thapa.

But soon, Pathao, says Thapa, started receiving messages from people saying how they have lost jobs, their businesses have suffered immensely and that they desperately need the gig as a rider to make a living with.

"So for the first few weeks after the lockdown, we decided to screen and accept riders on a case-by-case basis to ensure that those who were financially struggling due to the pandemic have a chance to get on board the platform and at the same time not significantly disrupt the supply-demand balance," said Thapa.

When the nation-wide lockdown was announced in March, Roshan (name changed) didn't think it would last that long. In January, he and his friend had started a small restaurant. "We spent Rs

400,000 in setting up the place and business was doing okay and we were hoping that things would pick up," said Roshan. "When the lockdown hit I wasn't very worried because I thought things would return to normalcy in a few weeks and the whole thing would just be a minor setback."

But as the lockdown stretched for months, fear and worry began to creep in. "Despite remaining shut for four months and with no business at all, we still had to pay rent, and that crippled us financially. When the lockdown loosened in July, we reopened but business was very slow," said Roshan.

In September, out of desperation, Roshan started working as a rider for a ride-sharing platform.

"Last year, I signed up on Tootle and

Pathao and worked as a rider for a few months. But when my mother came to know about it and she got worried and asked me to quit," said Roshan.

But this time, Roshan says he has no option but to work as a rider and keep it hidden from his family.

Roshan now divides his time between his restaurant and ride-sharing platform.

Until 9 am, Roshan helps his partner at the restaurant in getting things ready for the day, and by 10 am, he is out ferrying passengers on the back of his scooter.

"I make sure I am back at the restaurant before six in the evening because things get slightly busy at the restaurant around that time," said Roshan. "I manage to do around eight to 10 rides in a day and after my expenses, I save around Rs 700."

Since the lockdown loosened, says Thapa, riders on Pathao are also taking twice the number of rides they used to before the pandemic.

"This trend clearly shows that the number of riders who rely on the platform for their livelihood has increased significantly," said Thapa.

Both Rai and Thapa say that they are grateful that ride-sharing platforms are providing many like them a source of income at such an economically volatile time in their lives.

"To be honest, I am making more money working as a rider than I used to work at the financial investment company. My salary then was Rs 19,000 a month. But now I make that amount in around 20 days," said Rai.

But it's a hard job, says both Rai and Roshan.

"Riding a motorbike in this cold isn't easy and after riding for hours, in the evening, your back hurts a lot," said Roshan.

For Rai, the biggest drawback of working in the gig economy as a rider is the risks involved.

"When you are riding for hours on a daily basis, you are obviously more predisposed to auto accidents. And if a rider injures himself/herself, they are on their own. That's a huge risk for riders," said Rai. "But then in the present scenario, those who are doing it full time are doing so out of desperation. The bills have to be paid."

Artists, activists rush to save Black Lives Matter murals

To preserve expressions of anger and pain born of outrage over racial injustice, artists have begun painting intricate murals and spray-painting raw messages of anguish.

CHRISTINE FERNANDO
INDIANAPOLIS

Neither woman could bring themselves to watch the video of George Floyd's final moments, his neck pinned under a Minneapolis police officer's knee.

But as their city grieved, Leesa Kelly and Kenda Zellner-Smith found much-needed comfort in the messages of anguish and hope that appeared on boarded-up windows as residents turned miles of plywood into canvases. Now, they're working to save those murals before they vanish.

"These walls speak," said Zellner-Smith, who said she was too numb to cry after Floyd's killing. "They're the expressions of communities. We want these feelings, hopes, calls to action to live on."

Together, the two Black women formed Save the Boards to Memorialize the Movement, part of a push to preserve the ephemeral expressions of anger and pain born of outrage over racial injustice that triggered weeks of protests across the country.

Some artists began painting intricate murals, but many spray-painted raw messages of anguish. Zellner-Smith started with the simple pieces.

"Some of these boards aren't pretty," she said. "There is collective pain and grief in each board, and each one tells a different aspect of this story. And now we get to tell that story to everyone."

One is the word "MAMA" scrawled hastily onto the side of an abandoned Walmart. The word was among Floyd's last. Now it's part of a database of protest art called the Urban Art Mapping George Floyd and Anti-Racist Street Art database.

"The art was changing quickly, and these raw, immediate responses were being erased and painted over," said Todd Lawrence, an associate professor of English at the University of St Thomas in St Paul, Minnesota, and one of the database's creators. "We want people to see the full range of responses, the complexity, the multitude of voices."

Lawrence and art history professor Heather Shirey were part of a research team already documenting street art. When the streets of countless cities became temporary galleries after Floyd's death, they set out to capture the art before it disappeared.

Although many of the 1,600 artworks in the crowdsourced database come from Minneapolis, Shirey says they hope to expand to pieces from around the world. "Oppression and racial violence is unfortunately universal, so art is responding to it around the world," she said.

Similar work is going on across the country as groups take measures to keep

the art alive.

In New York City, the Soho Broadway Initiative worked with local arts groups to get permission for murals and provide artists with materials. As murals started coming down, the organisation returned 22 artworks to artists and collected 20 more waiting to be returned.

In Indianapolis, organiser Malina Jeffers is unsure about the future of the Black Lives Matter street mural stretching across Indiana Avenue. The mural is wearing down from traffic, and with winter will come weather damage and snowplows.

But the mural will live on in prints and T-shirts created by the local Black artists behind the original mural. More than 1,000 shirts have been sold. Vinyl banners representing 24 other murals painted in the downtown area are displayed at the city's Central Library.

"All of us know the mural won't be there forever," Jeffers said. "So we all wanted a piece of it to hold onto."

"They're the expressions of communities. We want these feelings, hopes, calls to action to live on."

For Seattle's Black Lives Matter street mural, Mexican American artist Angelina Villalobos, aka 179, mixed her mother's ashes into the bright green paint she used for the letter A. City workers scrubbed the mural from the asphalt after it began chipping, but one worker collected paint from each letter, which Villalobos plans to keep on her mother's altar in the kitchen.

"I'm getting my mom back, but she's been transformed," she said. "It's like ... a time capsule of that mural experience and all the work and thought and pain that went into it."

The original artists have repainted the mural, planning to touch it up again in five years.

Designers at the Seattle architecture and design firm GGLO are using a different approach to preserve protest art by creating an augmented reality art show that allows visitors to use smartphones to view works scattered around the city. The show includes a digital version of the "Right to Remain" poster by local artist Krea, 3D graffiti honoring victims of police brutality and digital tears pouring over Seattle's skyline.

Gargi Kadoo, a member of the design team, says much of the protest art around



Leesa Kelly (left) walks past plywood mural boards as she and Kenda Zellner-Smith (background right) and volunteers meet at a warehouse in Minneapolis. AP/RSS

Seattle was removed. Street art has been erased in many other cities, including Tulsa, Oklahoma, where workers in October removed a Black Lives Matter painting at the site of the Tulsa Race Massacre where in 1921 a white mob attacked a prosperous African American district, killing an estimated 300 people. Other cities such as Indianapolis and New York City have seen their Black Lives Matter murals vandalised.

"This is our homage to the art that is gone," she said. "It's trying to keep the message alive virtually, in a form that no one can take down or hose off."

In Oakland, California, community arts organisations are preserving and cataloging more than 700 murals. The team is discussing plans including a December outdoor exhibition, a 2021 indoor exhibition, and high school lesson plans centering the artwork, said Jean

Marie Durant, president of Oakland Art Murmur Board of Directors.

The Black-led Black Cultural Zone has a leading role in the project.

"We've been living this story, this trauma for a long time," CEO Carolyn Johnson said. "That gives us a perspective that others may not have. We know how to best tell this story."

Back in Minneapolis, Save the Boards is working with researchers Lawrence and Shirey as well as the Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery to document, archive and plan an exhibition in May 2021, the anniversary of Floyd's death.

Museum co-founder Tina Burnside says the initiative hopes to preserve the murals in a way that continues dialogue on systemic racism, provides context and allows for public access. "It's an important chapter in the fight for racial justice

in this country," she said. "We're documenting history."

Kelly and Zellner-Smith have filled their warehouse space to capacity. They started out by hoarding boards in their garages. Now, they have 537 in a warehouse. They say watching the space fill up was surreal.

"Being surrounded by these boards that encompass this pain and grief and hope, it was spiritual," Kelly said.

The group's next steps are to catalog the boards, do 3D scans and build a virtual gallery.

But while Kelly and Zellner-Smith created a GoFundMe to raise money for the project, funds have quickly dwindled.

"They all need to be saved," Zellner-Smith said. "They all matter, and we want to keep collecting. We're just a little stuck right now. But the work is far from over."

—Associated Press