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After questions were raised during Thursday's hearing about why the government had not published the notice regarding the government's

December 20 decision to dissolve the House, Attorney General Agni Kharel on Friday presented before the court the copy of the gazette with the notice. The Department of Printing, which until Thursday night had not upload-

ed the Nepal Gazette with the notice, had it up on its website on Friday

December 20, however, has been mentioned as the publication date of the notice in the Nepal Gazette. At least two officials at the Department of Printing confirmed

that the gazette was printed on Thursday evening and was uploaded on its website on Friday morning. "The gazette was printed yesterday at around 7:30pm," said Bimala Koirala, assistant spokesperson for the Department of Printing. "That

was uploaded on our website on Many were quick to point that the



The notice was published in Nepal Gazette on Friday but with December 20 date

Oli government had committed a forgery, by publishing a backdated notice

after it was caught on the back foot. "The government has been involved in such activities and what has happened now is tantamount to forging

documents," said Shalikram Sapkota, an advocate who is pleading on behalf of the petitioners challenging Oli's House dissolution move. "The government took the decision

to dissolve the House on December 20, but a notice in this regard has been published in Nepal Gazette almost a month later with a backdate. This is out and out a wrong practice.'

>> Continued on page 2



A woman carrying her baby joins a protest organised by the Pushpa Kamal Dahal-Madhav Kumar Nepal faction of the Nepal Communist Party in the Capital on Friday against the dissolution of the House of Representatives by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli

Confusion and dilemma in Nepali Congress continues, now with eyes on leading government in provinces

Views differed in the party over House dissolution. Now there are questions whether it should join hands with Oli or Dahal-Nepal faction in Bagmati and Province 1.

ANIL GIRI KATHMANDU, JAN 22

Nepali Congress is not in government in even one of the seven provinces. Such was the hammering the party got in the 2017 elections. But now with the Nepal Communist Party vertically split, it has a chance to join a provincial government and even lead.

The opportunity, however, has iurtner confusion the Nepali Congress and put it in a

The party is already divided in its response to Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's decision to dissolve the House of Representatives and hold snap polls on April 30 and May 10 with one section

for that it needs the support of the

If the Nepali Congress supports the Oli faction, there are chances that Sherdhan Rai, chief minister of Province 1, and Dormani Poudel, chief minister of Bagmati, both from the Oli faction, could save their seats. Rai and Poudel are facing no-confidence motions filed by the Dahal-

Nepal faction. The warring factions of the Nepal Communist Party are seeking the support of the Nepali Congress in the provinces and the latter seems undecided.

Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba called a meeting of the party's Central Working Committee members representing the Bagmati province on

"It seems that we are joining or leading the government in Bagmati, Nabindra Raj Joshi, a central committee member who was present at Thursday's meeting at Deuba's resi-

But it is not clear whether the Congress will support the Oli faction

"We should be mindful that we were the opposition in the past and we are on the streets

against Oli's move," said Joshi. The party has not discussed what to

do in Province 1. Observers say that the Nepali Congress, rather than joining hands with Oli for short-term gains, should be leading the constituency that is angered by Oli's 'unconstitutional' move to dissolve the House.

"People view the current dilemma of the Nepali Congress as solely guided by its leadership's greed for power and its position is influenced by how it will benefit from immediate access to power whereas it should work to safeguard the constitution," said Bishnu Sapkota, a political commentator for the Post's sister paper Kantipur.

Despite having called Oli's House dissolution "undemocratic and unconstitutional", Deuba has been reluctant to vociferously oppose the move and rejected calls within his party to take to the streets in protest, maintaining that the matter is for the Supreme Court to decide.

He has already rejected the proposal of the Dahal-Nepal faction to join the latter in protests together with the Janata Samajbadi Party, which was the third largest party in the dissolved

Deuba and the party's senior leader Ram Chandra Poudel are poles apart on how to view Oli's move.

While Deuba has been soft on Oli's move and has been urging leaders and cadres to be prepared for the upcoming polls, Poudel and his faction have said that the Nepali Congress should launch street protests against the House dissolution until the move is

"At Thursday's meeting too, we found a similar kind of confusion and dilemma over the party's stance in Bagmati Province," a leader who wants to maintain neutrality said. "Deuba wants to assign the responsibility to the provincial parliamentary committee while Poudel is of the view that the decision should be taken at the centre or through the party's Central Working Committee.'

After Thursday's discussion, the party's Bagmati provincial assembly leader, Indra Bahadur Baniya, has been summoned to Kathmandu to brief the party's leadership on the ground situation in Hetauda, the capital of Bagmati Province.

>> Continued on page 2



Standard <

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A divided party, the Nepali Congress has failed to hold decisive protests against Oli's move.

lution and another section maintaining that it should wait for the Supreme Court's decision on the constitutionality of the dissolution.

Meanwhile, within the Nepal Communist Party, the split is being played out in the provinces with the faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal set to remove the chief ministers of Province 1 and Bagmati Province. But

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ward, two participants of the meeting told the Post. A no-confidence motion against Chief Minister Poudel was tabled at

Thursday and discussed the way for-

the provincial assembly on Friday. "At the meeting, Deuba said that whichever NCP faction offers the post of chief minister to the Nepali Congress, the party will extend support to that," said a participant

requesting anonymity. "Deuba is more inclined to going with Oli and if a 'give and take' between the Congress and the Oli-led faction of NCP goes well, the party is all set to lead the government in Bagmati."

That would put a spanner in the works of the Dahal-Nepal faction's plan to have Asta Laxmi Shakya as the chief minister. Following the elections in 2017, Poudel had pipped Shakya to the post.



NATIONAL



A woman in a Minnie Mouse costume walks along a road at Sanepa, Lalitpur on Friday.

POST PHOTO: ELITE JOSHI

Kalikot teens run successful campaign against Chhaupadi

Campaign inspires girls and women to abandon period sheds.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

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School of Scholars

ALIKOT IAN 22

Sixteen-year-old Sakuntala Budha aban-

doned Chhau, a makeshift menstrual shed, a year ago. After observing Chhaupadi, a practice where girls and women are forced to isolate

themselves inside crudely made sheds during their period, for two years she joined a group of teenage girls to campaign against Chhaupadi.

Since then, 20 teenage girls have come

Since then, 20 teenage girls have come together to raise awareness about the evils of Chhaupadi. Inspired by their campaign, many teenage girls and women in Naraharinath have abandoned Chhaupadi.

"Our parents did not support our decision when we first began advocating against Chhaupadi. But they have come around and so have other elders in our community," said Sakuntala. "We no longer have to go to Chhau sheds. I stay in my room during my periods. My mother also does not practice the tradition these days."

Most teenage girls and women in Lalu, Rupsa, Kotwada, and Kumalgaun in Naraharinath no longer observe Chhaupadi these days.

Local representatives believe that the campaign has become successful because of the participation of teenage girls.

Manashova Budha, vice chairperson of the rural municipality, said, "Other young girls who are still banished to Chhau sheds are seeing that other girls in their villages are no longer observing the practice. This gives them the courage to do the same."

According to her, the local government has selected 30 facilitators (teenage girls) and mobilised them to raise awareness

Subjects/Posts

Administration In-charge

Health, Account, physics,

Science, Math, English,

Computer/IT, Health

English, Nepali, Math,

Science, Social, English

Math, English, Social,

Nepali, Computer/IT.

chemistry, biology

Social, Nepali,

and Population

Language Expert,

Montessori Teacher

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Yoga + Meditation +

Self-defense Trainer

Receptionist and

Computer/IT

Craft, Sports

Accountant

Bus Driver

Cooks /Helper

Lab In-charge

information visit websites.

Hostel warden (Couple)

Librarian and Science

Principal

the following positions:

S. N.

7.

10.

against prevalent malpractices like Chhaupadi, child marriage and gender discrimination. Teenage girls in Raskot and Khadachakra

are also active in the campaign against practices that are discriminatory against girls and women.

Kashichandra Baral, mayor of Raskot Municipality said a group of 90 teenage girls have been organising awareness programmes against Chhaupadi, child marriage, gender discrimination and women

"These girls are also awaring villagers about nutrition, education and reproductive health," he said.

violence, among others.

Kali Bahadur Malla, a right activist in Kalikot, said thanks to the campaign launched by teenagers, issues like sanitation, nutrition and hygiene were being discussed by villagers these days.

"The campaign has also helped boost the school attendance rate of girls," he said.

Harischandra Batala, the headmaster of Rama Secondary School in Kumalgaun, said attendance among girl students has improved these days.

"Girl students don't miss classes like they used to. In the past, most girls would not come to school for days because of the Chhaupadi practice."

According to the data of the District Administration Office, 18 Chhau sheds were demolished in Kalikot in the last fiscal year.

In 2017, the Parliament enacted a law criminalising the Chhaupadi practice and imposing Rs3,000 fine and/or three-month jail sentence on anyone subjecting women to the practice. Despite the law, Chhaupadi is still practiced in various parts of western Nepal.

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Experience is preferred

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Above

MBS/MBA

Number

1

10 (1 each

Subject)

7 (1 each

Subject)

7 (1 each

Subject)

6

3

2

2

3

4

2

Total

Confusion and dilemma in Nepali Congress ...

>> Continued from page 1
"We see clear ideological dif-

"We see clear ideological differences in the Nepali Congress leadership. There could be pressure from cadres on the ground, there could be some geo-political factors in play," said Bhojraj Pokharel, a former chief election commissioner.

"But its high command was always confused and in a dilemma. In my view, the leadership should struggle on the streets so that it will benefit the party whether the House is reinstated or elections are held."

The party has issued a circular to all its 77 districts committees to help the Election Commission's campaign to update voter lists and this means that the party is simultaneously working towards election preparations, according to some party leaders.

In case the Supreme Court does not reinstate the House, elections will have to be held for a new Parliament.

But those close to Deuba do not think there is any confusion within the party.

"We are not going to take any decision immediately on what to do in Bagmati Province," said Ramesh Lekhak, a leader close to Dueba. "There is no question of having a dilemma on key national issues. Whatever decision we will take on national or provincial politics, we will do on the basis of consensus."

Leaders from Bagmati Province too have laid stress on consensus and said short- and long-term views should be taken into consideration.

"We advised the party leadership to take the decision that suits the party best," said Joshi. "Before taking any decision in such a fluid situation, we have to look after long- and short-term gains."

But observers do not have much confidence in the current party leadership and are not surprised by its vacillation.

"Given the Nepali Congress leadership, given who it is led by, the situation is not a surprise. Unless the next general convention installs a more principled leadership, with at least a couple of younger leaders who have shown promise, I do not expect that the current Nepali Congress leadership has the legitimacy to garner wider public support," said Sapkota, the columnist.

"The current leadership is so discredited that even if it takes a sound view on current political developments, its lack of legitimacy will make people question whether its position is valid."

बिमालेख हरायो

मिति २०७७/०५/११ गते घरबाट राजविराजसम्म जाँदा मेरो लाईफ ईन्स्योरेन्स कर्पोरेसन नेपाल लि. को बिमालेख हराएको हुँदा पाउन हुने महानुभावहरूले नजिकको प्रहरी कार्यालय वा फोन नं. ५८५११५३३०७ खबर गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछ । नाम : सवुता कुमारी चौधरी बिमालेख नं. : १०००२५६५० ठेगाना : गा.वि.स. शम्भुनाथ-७ सप्तरी

A motley crew of people and political talk at Capital protest

Thousands attended Friday's rally called by Dahal-Nepal faction of Nepal Communist Party against Oli's House dissolution move. But not everyone was there to protest.

ANUP OJHA

KATHMANDU, JAN 22

A groundswell of people descended on the streets of Kathmandu on Friday to protest the dissolution of the House of Representatives by the KP Sharma Oli government.

Throughout the day the city's traffic was thrown into a chaos as the Pradarshani Marga and Bhadrakali areas were overrun by a sea of people, to attend the protest rally called by the Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal-led Nepal Communist Party.

SSP Janak Bhattarai, the chief of Metropolitan Traffic Police Division, said Kathmandu's traffic was severely disrupted till late afternoon.

"The Bhadrakali-Ratnapark road stretch was blocked till late afternoon. As a result, traffic flow was affected citywide. Traffic had to be rerouted and this caused severe bottlenecks in different parts of the city," Bhattarai told the Post.

A large number of people who attended Friday's rally were bussed in from outside the valley. And many had apparently come to Kathmandu because they were promised a free ride and meal by the party.

Rupa Thapa was one of them. The 38-year-old had travelled all the way from Gorkha district along with other villagers.

"We don't know much about politics. Our ward chairman requested us to be here," said Thapa, a resident of Gorkha Municipality. "We were told that the party would be paying for our food and travel."

Thapa said she planned to visit her relatives in Kathmandu before returning home.

Among the rally crowd, there were also those who seemed genuinely concerned about the country's political situation. They keenly listened to the leaders addressing the rally, every now and again, breaking into cheers, hoots and applause to display their solidarity with the leaders.

And then there were also neutral observers like Sunil Pokharel, a 27-year-old law student, and his friends. The group of friends claimed that they do not identify with any political party but stood against the House dissolution move by Prime Minister Oli.

"Listening to these leaders speak does have a galvanising effect," Pokharel said. "There's no doubt what Oli did was unconstitutional. But I believe that we should let the court decide on this issue."

Pokharel and his friends had a rather cynical view about the country's politics.

"Even if the court revives the parliament, we are getting the same old faces running the country. It will hardly matter for commoners," Pokharel said. "And if the Supreme Court verdict came in favour of the government, the country will have to spend billions of rupee for the elections to elect those same leaders. There's no win-win for the people."

The Oli government, after dissolving the lower house of Parliament, has announced midterm elections on April 30 and May 10.

Even if the court rules in favour of the government, many suspect the elections will be held as announced amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Swyambhu Dangol, who was part of a musical troupe that had come for the rally from Khokana, Lalitpur, said no matter what the court decided every Nepali ought to defend the constitution.

"There is so much uncertainty going on in our country. If we do not defend our constitution, we will lose our rights and identity," said he said.

Another protester, Bhimnath Olakhey shared a similar view. The 74-year-old had joined 150 others from his village in Bagmati Rural Municipality to attend the rally.

"Most of us here are supporters of the party. We are here to protest against Oli who is bent on destroying the constitution for which many Nepalis have made an immense sacrifice," said Olakhey.

"We fought tirelessly to reinstate democracy in 1990. I myself joined the Maoist party and fought the 10-year insurgency. I also participated during the people's movement that overthrew monarchy. Now here I am to stand up against Oli who is trying to shred the constitution."

For Sonam Tamang attending Friday's rally was both an expression of his protest and a business opportunity. The 37-year-old was busy selling peanuts to the people while listening to the leaders.

"I am not a Oli supporter. After his government came to power, street vendors like me have faced a lot of hassles from the police. The municipal police have confiscated at least five of my carts and I never got them back," he said. "This government has never been kind to the poor and daily wage workers like us. It should be looking after the poor citizens. I support this protest and consider myself one of the protesters."



POST PHOTO: ANGAD DHAK The city's traffic was thrown into disarray as the Pradarshani Marga and Bhadrakali areas

were overrun by a sea of people attending the protest rally.

A scrambling Oli government produces ...

>> Continued from page 1

Nepal Gazette—called Nepal Rajpatra in Nepali—is the authentic publication of the Nepal government.

According to the website of the Department of Printing, which is underthe Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, the gazette, published regularly since 1951, carries all important government decisions to give them legal status and inform the people about the decisions.

Constitution or declarations at par with constitution; Acts, ordinances stamped by the President after parliamentary endorsement; regulations endorsed by the Cabinet and orders issued by the government; appointments and notices issued as per the constitution; notices as per the Acts, rules and orders or the decision of government which are decided to be published in the gazette and treaties and agreements of which Nepal is party must be published in the Nepal Gazette.

Former chief secretary Bimal Koirala said government decisions do not get the legal status until they are published in the gazette.

"Decisions must be published in the gazette, it's a mandatory process," Koirala told the Post. "But sometimes governments tend not to do so."

As many as 13 writ petitions have been filed against Oli's House dissolution move at the Supreme Court. Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana-led Constitutional Bench has been hearing the writ petitions to test the constitutionality of Oli's move.

Lawyers have been arguing that

Nepal's 2015 constitution has made a departure, not allowing a majority prime minister to dissolve the House, and such provisions were deliberate attempts at ensuring political stability.

According to the drafters of the

constitution, it was made difficult for a prime minister to dissolve the House because in the past a prime minister was given an inherent power to dissolve the Parliament and call snap polls.

At least four prime ministers who

worked under the 1990 constitution had attempted House dissolution.

Despite the current constitution not allowing Oli, a majority prime minister, to dissolve the House, he did so on December 20.

The Oli government had run into controversy a few days ago also for taking a document back from the Supreme Court and not returning it on time despite committing to doing so. Many believe the original document that the government had furnished to the court had not cited articles based on which it had recommended the House dissolution.

However, the copy of the letter,

signed by Prime Minister Oli, that later surfaced in the media did have articles cited. The controversy had arisen because another letter, a copy of which also had made it to public domain, signed by Chief Secretary Shankar Das Bairagi had not cited constitutional articles to recommend House dissolution.

Since the Oli government's intent

has come into question, legal experts say there are ample grounds to suspect foul play when it comes to not publishing the notice regarding House dissolution in Nepal Gazette.

Advocates Tikaram Bhattarai and

Om Prakash Aryal, during Thursday's hearing, had questioned the bench that the House dissolution decision was not published in Nepal Gazette. Anil Kumar Sinha, one of the jus-

Ann Rumar Sinna, one of the Justices on the five-member Constitutional Bench, then asked the defendants if it was true that the December 20 House dissolution decision was not published in Nepal Gazette.

According to Aryal, unless the decision was published in the gazette, it cannot come into force and implementing a decision without publishing it in the gazette is unlawful.

"And since this decision of the

government, which has dissolved the lawmaking body, is quite important, it should have been published in Nepal Gazette without fail," Aryal told the Post.

The House dissolution move has courted so much controversy that legal experts have been demanding that the bench look to legislative intent while deciphering the constitutional provisions that have been cited by Oli and the President. Lawyers have also demanded that the bench seek transcripts, records and committee notes of the constitution drafting process.

Subas Nembang, who chaired the Constituent Assembly that gave the constitution in 2015, has been heard saying in video clips that the current constitution does not allow a prime minister to dissolve the House.

Oli and his lawyers, however, argue that in a parliamentary system, it's the prime minister's prerog-

ative to dissolve the House.

Even Chief Justice Rana during the ongoing hearing has asked the petitioners and those arguing on their behalf multiple times why a majority prime minister cannot say he does not want to govern and he wants to go for a fresh mandate.

Harihar Dahal, a senior advocate, said that not publishing such an important decision in Nepal Gazette is a serious matter, as the practice in democracies worldwide is that government decisions get the legal status through their publication in respective gazettes.

"It's now up to the court how it views the issue," Dahal told the Post. Advocate Aryal, who first inquired the bench on the whereabouts of the gazette, said the goings on show how Oli has been treating all the state organs and agencies as subservient to him.

"Oli has been displaying his totalitarian impulses for long and he is in a bid to have control over the state," said Aryal. "He has no regard for the rule of law; he treats law as a means to fulfil his interest."

Advocate Tikaram Bhattarai, who is pleading on behalf of the petitioners, said the Oli government has made one mistake after another and is now involved in all kinds of shenanigans to cover them up.

"Publishing the notice about House dissolution in the gazette after an uproar does not make sense," said Bhattarai. "By publishing it with a backdate, the government has forged the gazette. But what can one expect from Oli who does not believe in process and procedures?"

While addressing the upper house on January 10, Oli had said people have nothing to do with processes and procedures as they can neither be worn nor eaten. Koirala, the former chief secre-

tary, said there was a clear procedural lapse as such a major decision like dissolving the House was not published in Nepal Gazette.

"Publishing the notice with the

backdate after questions were asked is nothing but the executive's high-handedness; it's like those in power are trying to show they can do anything," said Koirala. "It's up to the court how it takes up this major lapse."

Attorney General Kharel said he is not the authority to print the gazette.

"I just produced the necessary

document before the court," Kharel told the Post.

Cathy Leader W

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Lahan-08, Siraha, www.sos.edu.np, Email:soslead@gmail.com

NATIONAL

BRIEFING

No-confidence motion against chief minister tabled

MAKWANPUR: A no-confidence motion filed against Chief Minister Dormani Paudel, has been tabled in the Bagmati Provincial Assembly on Friday. The seventh meeting of the Bagmati Provincial government also resumed on Friday. Earlier, 45 lawmakers considered allies of the Dahal-Nepal faction of the Nepal Communist Party had registered the no-confidence motion against

Construction of city hall starts

CHITWAN: The construction work of a new city hall has been started at the Bharatpur Metropolitan City. The hall is being constructed with money from the federal government's budget. The total cost of the building has been estimated at Rs878.8 million, said Prakash Aryal, chief at the Building Construction Office in Chitwan. The contractor hopes to complete the building within its deadline.

Two rhinos found dead

CHITWAN: Two rhinos were found dead in separate locations inside Chitwan National Park in the last two days According to Lokendra Adhikari, assistant conservation officer at the park, an 18-month-old rhino was found dead in Padampur on Wednesday whereas a 30-year-old was found dead in Patihani. Data from the national park shows that 22 rhino have died in Chitwan in the current fiscal year.



Students being taught to plough the field using a pair of oxen at Nirmal Secondary School, Bhadgaun, Byas Municipality-1, Tanahun. The school is conducting such classes to inform students about Nepal's traditional skills and occupations

Nepal yet to ensure transitional justice

Officials have been repeating same commitments at international fora, but have done little to implement them.

In his address to the Universal Periodic Review session on Thursday Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Gyawali reiterated that Nepal was committed to concluding the transitional justice process ensuring justice to all victims of human rights violation during the decade-long Maoist insurgency.

He claimed that the transitional justice process is guided by the Comprehensive Peace Accord, various directives from the Supreme Court and relevant international commitments, concerns of the victims and the country's ground realities. This was the third time Gyawali made the commitment in front of the United Nations' forum in the last two years.

In March 2019 addressing the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Gyawali had said the government was preparing to amend prevailing laws related to transitional justice in consultation with, and participation of, the victims. A year later, in February 2020, speaking at the 43rd session of the council he said the transitional justice process will be concluded by taking the victims into

Despite the reiterated claim, the government hasn't taken concrete steps towards bringing the victims of the conflict on board and revising the Enforced Disappeared Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, 2014. "I don't think international community Nepal's commitments anymore," Kapil Shrestha, a former member of the National Human Rights Commission, told the Post. "Our government has made a mockery of itself at an international forum.'

In October, Nepal was re-elected as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council. It was first elected to the position for two years in January 2018 with a role to ensure that international human

rights standards are implemented in UN member countries. In the opinion of Shrestha, who has been a rights activist for years, a country such as Nepal with a deplorable human rights record doesn't have the moral ground to press other countries to abide by human rights principles.

"Democratic values and a good human rights record had been Nepal's strength in the past," said Shrestha. "However, the image has been tarnished over the years." Fourteen years have passed since the Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed. But thousands of victims from the armed conflict are still struggling for justice. The tenure of the Commission of Investigation on Enforced

Activists say the truth and reconciliation law needs to be amended at the earliest.

Disappeared Persons and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission expires on February 9. Although the government has made up the mind to extend their term, it is still clueless about revising the law as directed by the Supreme Court.

A few months after the law was enacted in 2015, the Supreme Court, ruling on a writ petition, had that perpetrators of gross human rights violations such as enforced disappearance, rape, torture and extrajudicial killing can't be pardoned.

"The terms of both the commissions will be extended," Lila Nath Shrestha, minister for Law and Justice, told the Post. "The government, however, has not decided about the revision in the law." He said the government is preparing to hold interactions with major political parties in an attempt to forge consensus on the amendment.

The Nepal Communist Party and the Nepali Congress had held rounds of discussions to forge consensus on the amendment to the Act. However, the intense feud within the Nepal Communist Party overshadowed the issue. Nepali Congress leader Ramesh Lekhak, assigned by the party to negotiate with other stakeholders on transitional justice issues, said it's been months since the government last held discussions on the matter.

"I don't think it's even on the mind of the govern-ment," he told the Post. "The deepening political crisis has left the issue neglected."

Those closely following the transitional justice process say all major parties are equally responsible for the little progress made in delivering justice to conflict victims. Gauri Pradhan, former member of the National Human Rights Commission, said that major political parties believe that by delaying the delivery of justice, they can run away from their responsibility. "The ongoing transitional justice process can't deliver justice," he told the Post. "The parties' failure to abide by their commitments is eroding the international community's trust in the government."

He said the government, in consultation with the major parties and the victims of the conflict, should immediately revise the Act so that it can generate hope among the victims and the international com-

However, the Law Ministry doesn't have immediate plans to consult the victims nor has it reached out to them recently. "I think the government has forgotten our existence," Gopal Shah, chairperson of Conflict Victims' National Network, told the Post.

"It seems the parties have made up their mind that they will continue to dally over the delivery of

can help them. The remaining ones do

not want to go back," said Ghouzayel.

medium companies and also as house-

maids. Most of them did not face prob-

lems until the financial crisis that

happened last year. With companies

switching to work online, these undoc-

Nepalis are among the preferred

nationalities for domestic jobs in

Lebanon. Although they are undocu-

mented, they are safe as long as they

are not arrested for any serious crimi-

once hired Nepalis for their jobs

refuse to deploy any other nationals.

According to Ghouzayel, locals who

"Lebanese trust Nepalis workers.

Nepalis have soaked well in Lebanon

umented workers suffered."

"They work as cleaners in small and

Staffers in Dhanusha rural municipality hold sit-in demanding their pay

Local governments, including Dhanauji, haven't been able to get their budget endorsed, months into new fiscal year.



Dhanauji Rural Municipality, Dhanusha convened the meeting of its municipal assembly only in December. It is yet to receive its share of conditional grants from the centre.

KATHMANDU, JAN 22

Staffers, teachers, health workers and other employees drawing their salary from Dhanauji Rural Municipality, Dhanusha, have been holding a sit-in outside the civic body's office for the last 18 days demanding pay as officials haven't disbursed their salary for six

With the rural municipality failing to convene the village assembly for a long time due to "political reasons", the assembly could only meet on December 2 to approve the budget for the current fiscal year 2020-21.

At least three ward chairpersons have blamed chairperson Badri Narayan Singh and chief administrative officer Kanyaiya Kumar Mishra for the delay in paying the staff their salary. But, Misrha said that he has been trying to get the budget released from the District Treasury Office.

Chairperson Singh, elected on a Nepali Congress ticket, does not have a majority in the village assembly. As Samajbadi Party, Nepal, and Nepal Communist Party hold a majority in the village assembly, their non-cooperation meant the assembly couldn't convene on time and approve the

According to Mishra, chairperson Singh has the backing of 13 village assembly members while other parties have 17 seats. "So, a political consensus could not be reached for holding the assembly," said Mishra.

With delay in the presentation of the budget, the rural municipality failed to provide salary to the government staff. The local governments are responsible for distributing salary to federal government staffers, including teachers and health workers, using funds it receives in the form of conditional grants. Before distributing the salaries, the local governments need to incorporate the grants into their

"The government staffers have padlocked the rural municipality office," said Mishra, chief administrative officer at the rural municipality. "Even I haven't received a penny in salary since the beginning of the fis-

"Vaccination programmes for children have also been halted," Ram Mandal, chairperson of Ward No.1, told the Post. While Mishra attributed pality chair and his opponents for the delay in payment of salaries, Mandal pointed his finger at the chairman and the chief administrative officer.

"It has been one and half months since the village assembly convened. But the chairperson and the chief administrative officer have done little to ensure that all government staffers are paid their salary," said Mandal. He accused Mishra of doing his own

personal work at the district headquarter (Janakpur) for two months, instead of coming to the rural municipality regularly to run the office. This was not the first time that

Dhanauji failed to get its budget approved on time. During the last fiscal year too, officials presented their budget before the village assembly only in February 2020, eight months after the deadline to do so.

According to the Intergovernmental Fiscal Arrangements Act, local governments need to present their budget by June 25 every year. A number of the local governments are yet to present their budgets even seven months into the new fiscal year.

According to the Ministry of Federal Affairs, 14 local governments, most of them from Province 2 are yet to present their budget.

Ever since the local elections were held, a number of local governments have been failing to present their budget on time. But, there has been some improvement in the last three

"Due to the delay in budget presentation, development works have also been badly affected in our rural municipality," said Mishra. "Without the budget being approved, it's not possible to invite bids for development

After observing that various local governments are not presenting their budget on time, the federal government has sought to amend the Local Level Operation Act.

The federal affairs ministry, which drafted the amendment proposal, has proposed that the local government not be allowed to spend a single penny without getting its budget approved by the assembly. "We have proposed that the local government that fails to present its budget, will get a budget from the centre, but they cannot run their account without getting the budget endorsed," the official said.

Nepali women migrants repatriated from Beirut

Migrant workers, mostly women, have been hit hard in the West Asian country reeling under multiple crises.

CHANDAN KUMAR MANDAL KATHMANDU, JAN 22

Ten undocumented Nepali women migrant workers stranded in Lebanon for several months made it home on

The Honorary Consulate of Nepal in Lebanon repatriated the migrants from Beirut as they didn't have money to pay for a Covid-19 test and buy a plane ticket to get home.

According to Elcheikh Mohamed Ghouzayel, the honorary consul of Nepal in Lebanon, the women arrived in Kathmandu at 12:50 am via a Qatar Airways flight.

"We managed to repatriate ten undocumented Nepali girls and women who did not have any money to travel back home. We also managed to pay their fines and PCR test fees,' Ghouzayel told the Post from Beirut over the phone. "We had planned to send back 11 Nepalis, but one of them

tested positive for Covid-19.' The workers had been living in

Lebanon for six to 12 years. Hundreds of Nepalis living and working in the West Asian country have been hit hard by the economic crisis it has been reeling under since 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic made things worse for the country. Then the deadly explosion in August the capital killed hundreds.

As a result, many Nepalis have lost their jobs and remain stranded in the country, facing hardships amidst the pandemic and waiting to return home.

"The money the repatriated women earned could barely cover their housing and food as they were all undocumented," said Ghouzayel. "These



The repatriated women neither had money to get tested for Covid-19 nor to buy plane tickets to fly home to Nepal.

workers work part-time. After Covid-19, no one wanted to bring outsiders to their homes, so their situation further

According to an estimate by the Honorary Consulate of Nepal in Beirut, the country hosts nearly 5,000 Nepalis, including workers and peacekeeping forces. Around 2,000-3,000 Nepalis work as domestic help, around 1,000 as factory workers, and the rest are serving as peacekeepers.

Although the government has banned Nepali women from taking housemaid jobs in Lebanon, women migrant workers continue to go there through illegal routes. They fear returning to Nepal would mean losing their jobs in Lebanon.

After languishing for several months and waiting for government help, the first batch of Nepalis were rescued and brought home in

September. Those repatriated in September had also remained without jobs for several months and suffered due to lack of food and accommodation.

With the economic slowdown and then the pandemic, the women Nepali workers have been affected the most as their host families and employers have been unable to pay them. Around 100 undocumented Nepali housemaids have come in touch with the consulate

According to Ghouzayel, the consulate office has repatriated around

"Workers who have remained undocumented for several years need help. For those legally working, the local government ensures that they are paid and get return tickets. We have been convincing undocumented workers to reach out to us so that we

and local cultures. They have been living and working here for several years. These could be reasons why those undocumented do not want to return home," said Ghouzayel. "Some workers have returned home legally. Others have changed their sponsors. But we are always looking for undocu-

mented workers who can return The consulate in Beirut is asking more Nepalis who need help returning home to reach out to its office. Another batch of seven Nepalis will be repatriated within 20 days. The consulate office is still not sure what others will do.

"We have already publishing notices if anyone needs help to travel. The consulate is in touch with undocumented workers," said Ghouzayel. 'We can manage free tickets in case someone needs help and doesn't know how to reach us.'

WORLD

Navalny allies face jail ahead of weekend protests

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Allies of jailed Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny were facing possible fines and prison time on Friday in court cases that ramp up pressure on Kremlin critics ahead of weekend protests.

Navalny's allies are planning to hold demonstrations on Saturday in dozens of cities in support of the Kremlin critic who was arrested and jailed on his return to Russia following a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve

Several close Navalny associates, including prominent activist Lyubov Sobol and his spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh, were detained late on Thursday for calling on Russians to join the demonstrations and face hefty fines and short jail stints.

Sobol, 33, is accused of repeatedly violating legislation on public gatherings, which carries a maximum fine of up to 300,000 rubles (\$4,000), her lawyer Vladimir Voronin told AFP. Sobol, who has a small child, in not

likely to be given jail time Friday,

But he cautioned that if she is found guilty, authorities could later open a criminal probe against her.

Yarmysh, a 31-year-old Navalny spokeswoman who spent the night in jail, is accused of violating legislation on public gatherings and could be detained for 10 days, her lawyer Veronika Polyakova told AFP.

Ahead of Yarmysh's arrest, she recorded a video urging a large turnout on Saturday.

"Our future literally depends on the number of people who take to the streets," she said

A number of Navalny allies were also detained in the regions on Thursday and Friday, including the coordinator for the opposition politician's offices in the Far Eastern city

Prosecutors have warned Russians against taking to the streets during the coronavirus pandemic.

Last week Navalny, 44, returned to Russia from Germany, where he had been recovering from a poisoning with the Novichok nerve agent in an attack he blamed on Russian security services and President

Long queues as China's capital launches mass virus tests

Tens of millions of people have been under some kind of lockdown in northern cities amid worries that infections could spread quickly during the Lunar New Year holiday.



People line up to get their test following the outbreak of Covid-19 in Beijing, China, on Friday.

REUTERS BEIJING, JAN 22

Beijing launched mass Covid-19 testing in some areas on Friday and Shanghai was testing all hospital staff as China battles its worst outbreak of the disease since March, with families fretting over Lunar New Year reunion plans amid new curbs.

Mainland China reported a slight decline in new daily Covid-19 cases on Friday—103 from 144 infections a day

Of the new cases, 94 were local transmissions, Heilongjiang province in the northeast reported 47 new cases, while Shanghai reported six new cases and the capital, Beijing, reported three new cases

Long queues formed in some districts in Beijing, where mass testing was launched following several consecutive days of new cases. City officials said there were some "leaks" in epidemic control in some rural areas, with inadequate adherence to rules on wearing masks, social distancing and temperature checks.

A queue more than 200 metres long up outside Dengshikou Elementary School, a testing spot near the city centre. A man surnamed Lin said the supermarket he works at had told him to get a test.

"I'm not that worried though this round of the outbreak is a bit unexpected. I came as my work unit told me

Shanghai began testing all hospital staff for the disease on Thursday after two such workers tested positive.

Almost all of the local transmissions and asymptomatic cases in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province, were linked to a meat processing plant owned by a joint venture between Thailand's top agro-industrial conglomerate, CP Group, and a development zone.

Tens of millions of people have been under some kind of lockdown in northern cities amid worries that undetected infections could spread quickly during the Lunar New Year holiday in mid-February.

Hundreds of millions of people usually travel during the holiday, as migrant workers return to their home provinces to see family. Officials expect large numbers of travellers, although many fewer than in normal

The northern port city of Tianjin said on Friday that all domestic arrivals would have to present a negative

German virus death toll tops 50.000 even as infections sink

BERLIN: The death toll from the coronavirus in Germany has passed 50,000, a number that has risen swiftly over recent weeks even as infection figures are finally declining.

The country's disease control centre, the Robert Koch Institute, said on Friday that another 859 deaths were reported over the past 24 hours, taking the total so far to 50,642.

Germany had a comparatively small number of deaths in the pandemic's first phase and was able to lift many restrictions quickly.

But it has seen much higher levels of infections in the fall and winter. Hundreds of deaths, sometimes more than 1,000, have been reported daily in the country of 83 million people over recent weeks. Germany hit the 40,000 mark on January 10. (AP)

Covid-19 test and be subject to 14 days of home observation.

Hebei province, next to Beijing, reported 18 new locally transmitted cases. At the high-speed railway station in its largest city, Shijiazhuang, passengers were allowed to get off a train on Friday but none were seen

"I've never been separated from my daughter over New Year before," said a woman surnamed Hao, in Shijiazhuang taking care of her

She said she had been told by her neighbourhood she was not allowed to return to Beijing, where the rest of her family are. She hoped restrictions would be lifted in time for them to reunite over the festival.

She said she was determined to get back to Beijing to be with her daughter and her father was in a nursing home there that no longer allowed

The capital's west train station which normally sees vast numbers of passengers in the run-up to the Lunar New Year, was virtually empty on Friday morning.

Indian farmers to step up protests after rejecting offer to defer new laws



In this file photo, farmers participate in a tractor rally to protest against the newly passed farm bills, on a highway on the outskirts of New Delhi, India, on January 7.

REUTERS

NEW DELHI, JAN 22

Indian farmers on Friday rejected an offer by the government to defer three farm reform laws for one-and-half years, warning they would step up protests as they seek a repeal of the laws and a guarantee on minimum crop prices.

Farm leaders said hundreds of thousands of farmers from neighbouring states including Haryana, Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh would drive tractors through New Delhi on January 26, the Republic Day national holiday when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will join a parade of military forces.

Although some former government officials have expressed concern that the protests could turn violent, the leaders said they would remain peaceful and urged the police to grant permission for the convoy to enter the capital.

The 11th round of talks between government officials led by Agricultural minister Narendra Singh Tomar and forty farm leaders earlier on Friday was inconclusive. Farmers stuck to their demands while the gov-

ernment urged them to consider its offer to hold discussions to address their concerns after deferring the laws. "There is a sort of deadlock as the government repeated the offer of deferring the laws, which is not acceptable," Darshan Pal, one of the farm leaders told reporters after the meeting.

Modi's government has said that the laws introduced in September will unshackle farmers from the obligation of selling produce only at regulated wholesale markets. But the farmers say the bills are designed to benefit private buyers.

Tomar said the government was committed to the reforms. "If [farm leaders] agree with

our proposal, we can meet tomorrow, Hundreds of thousands of farmers have been camping on the outskirts of

national capital for nearly two months, blocking some of the roads connecting New Delhi with neighbouring states. Supporting the farmers, the main

opposition Congress party said on Friday that the government had shown "shocking insensitivity and arrogance" towards farmers and urged it to accept their demands.

BRIEFING

UN warns of 'serious' rape charges in Ethiopia's Tigray

NAIROBI: The UN special representative on sexual violence in conflict says "serious allegations of sexual violence" have emerged in Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region, while women and girls face shortages of rape kits and HIV drugs amid restrictions on humanitarian access. "There are also disturbing reports of individ uals allegedly forced to rape members of their own family, under threats of imminent violence," Pramila Patten said in a statement released on late Thursday. "Some women have also reportedly been forced by military elements to have sex in exchange for basic commodities, while medical centers have indicated an increase in the demand for emergency contraception and testing for sexually transmitted infections.

Russia welcomes US proposal to extend nuclear treaty

MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Friday welcomed US President Joe Biden's proposal to extend the last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between the two countries, which is set to expire in less than two weeks. Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that Russia stands for extending the pact and is waiting to see the details of the US proposal. The White House said on Thursday that Biden has proposed to Russia a five-year extension of the New START treaty. "We can only welcome political will to extend the document," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. "But all will depend on the details of the proposal.'

China says 10 workers trapped in mine are searching for others QIXIA: The ten known survivors

trapped since a deadly January 10 gold mine explosion in northern China have been using laser pointers and loudspeakers to try to find their missing colleagues, state media reported on Friday. The rescue operation, which has been able to get food and medicines to the miners, was expected to take at least another two weeks, authorities have said, "The physical condition, psychological con dition and living environment of 10 miners in the middle section of the mine are good," the People's Daily. the official newspaper of China's rul ing Communist Party, reported on Friday, A total of 22 workers were trapped in the Hushan mine by the January 10 blast in Qixia, a major gold-producing region in coastal Shandong province.

(AGENCIES)

Relatives of Indonesia plane victims cast flowers into sea

Relatives of crash victims on Friday prayed and threw flowers into the Java Sea where a Sriwijaya Air jet plunged into the water almost two weeks ago, killing all 62 people An Indonesian navy vessel took doz-

ens of grieving relatives to the site. Many people wept as they prayed and cast flower petals into the water, and officials from the navy, search and rescue agency, and Sriwijaya Air employees threw wreaths into the sea. The airline's president, Jefferson

Irwin Jauwena, said he hoped by visiting the location to help relatives accept what happened to their loved ones and ease their grief. "We also do feel sad and lost ... our

crew, they were part of our beloved Sriwijaya Air big family," he told reporters on the ship. "I, personally, feel so devastated by this accident."

The jet nosedived into the water minutes after taking off from Jakarta, the capital, on January 9. Searchers have recovered plane parts and human remains from an area between

Lancang and Laki islands in the Thousand Island chain.

Those retrieval efforts ended on Thursday, but a limited search is continuing for the missing memory unit of the cockpit voice recorder which apparently broke away from other parts of the device during the crash.

tracks altitude and other parameters of the plane's flight, was recovered earlier, and investigators are working with Boeing and engine maker General Electric to information from the device. A team from the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration is part of the investigation.

The 26-year-old Boeing 737-500 was out of service for almost nine months last year because of flight cutbacks caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Regulators and the airline said it underwent inspections before resuming commercial flights in December Indonesia's aviation industry grew

quickly after the nation's economy was opened following the fall of dictator Suharto in the late 1990s.



People participate in a beer yoga session, as the country eases the Covid-19 restrictions, at a craft brewery in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Coronavirus guidelines now the rule at White House

ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON, JAN 22

Testing wristbands are in. Maskwearing is mandatory. Desks are socially distanced.

The clearest sign that there's a new boss at the White House is the deference being paid to coronavirus public health guidelines. It's a striking contrast to Donald Trump's White House, which was the

rate outbreaks of Covid-19, their true scale not fully known because aides refused to discuss cases publicly. While the Trump administration was known for flouting safety recommendations, the Biden team has made a point of abiding by the same

epicentre of no less than three sepa-

strict guidelines they're urging Americans to follow. It's part of an overall effort from President Joe Biden to lead by example on the coronavirus pandemic, an ethos carried over from his campaign

and transition. "One of the great tragedies of the Trump administration was a refusal to recognise that many Americans model the behaviour of our leadership," said Ben LaBolt, a former press

secretary to President Barack Obama who worked on the Biden transition.

"The Biden administration understands the powerful message that adhering to their own guidelines and modelling the best public health behaviour sends, and knows that that's the best path to climbing out of

this until we can get a shot in the arm of every American."

To that end, most of Biden's White House staff is working from home, coordinating with colleagues by email or phone. While the White House aims to have more people working onsite next week, officials intend to operate



Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, talks with reporters before an event with President Joe Biden on the coronavirus in the State Dinning Room of the White House, on Thursday.

with substantially reduced staffing for the duration of the pandemic.

When hundreds of administration staffers were sworn in by Biden on Wednesday, the ceremony was virtual, with the president looking out at team members displayed in boxes on video screens.

The emphasis on adhering to public safety guidelines touches matters both big and small in the White House.

Jeffrey Wexler is the White House director of Covid-19 operations, overseeing the implementation of safety guidelines throughout the administration, a role he also served during the transition and campaign. During her first press briefing, White House press secretary Jen Psaki suggested those working in the office would receive daily testing and N95 masks would be mandatory.

Indeed, Biden's new federal mask mandate executive order requires that federal employees, contractors and others in federal buildings and on federal lands wear masks and adhere to social distancing requirements. The executive order allows for agency heads to make "case-by-case exceptions"-like, for instance, Psaki's. She wears one until she steps up to the podium for briefings.

Officials in close contact with Biden wear wristbands to signify they have been tested that day. Every event with the president is carefully choreographed to maintain distancing, with strips of paper taped to the carpet to show the likes of Vice President Kamala Harris and Dr Anthony Fauci where to stand when Biden is deliver ing an address.

When Biden met with his Covid team in the State Dining Room on Thursday, the five people in the room sat at individual tables placed at least six feet apart and four others joined by Zoom to keep numbers down.

Plexiglass barriers have been set up at some desks that are in open areas, but nearly all staff who are already working in the building have enclosed offices. The Biden team already had a robust contact tracing program set up during the transition, which it's keeping around for any possible exposures.

with wallpaper displays that offer a list of Covid symptoms and a directive to "call the White House medical unit" if they have experienced any of them.

Staffers also were issued laptops

The Trump White House was another story altogether.

MONEY

Strained infrastructure in Bhairahawa dents trade growth

More than 700 freight trucks enter Nepal daily through Bhairahawa, making it the country's second busiest transit point.

MADHAV DHUNGANA Bhairahawa, Jan 22

Revenue collection at Bhairahawa Customs Office in south-western Nepal has swelled 16 times in the past decade from Rs5 billion in fiscal 2007-08 to Rs82 billion in 2017-18. In the last fiscal year 2019-20, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, customs revenue exceed-

ed Rs70 billion.

More than 700 freight trucks enter Nepal daily through the Bhairahawa Customs Office located on the southern border with India, making it the country's second busiest transit point for commerce. A decade ago, the number was around 250 trucks.

The increased traffic has exposed the woefully inadequate parking facility constructed back in 2005. Traders say parking infrastructure has not been able to keep pace with the growth in business, and has created hassles for them.

Traders have been repeatedly asking the government to facilitate import and export by expanding the parking lot at Bhairahawa Customs. Everyday, due to lack of parking infrastructure, freight carriers arriving in Nepal are stuck in a massive traffic jam extending up to 10 km on the Indian side of the border.

According to traders, sometimes the line of trucks stretches 20 km on the Indian side. Truck drivers often complain that they are forced to spend at least four days to get their cargo cleared.

Traders are hugely concerned by the delays and have started rerouting their imports.

"I have been importing goods like rice, wheat and coal through the Suthauli Customs Office in Kapilvastu for the past few months to avoid the congestion at Bhairahawa," said Arun Goenka, managing director of the Goenka Group.

"Importing goods through the Bhairahawa border point adds many days to the travel time to reach our warehouse which increases the cost of production. As an alternative, I have started using a different route"

have started using a different route." Goenka said he was also thinking of rerouting other industrial raw materials including iron blades.

Rajesh Agrawal, a central member of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry and managing director of the



POST PHOTO: MADHAV DHUNGAN

Every day, due to a lack of parking infrastructure, freight carriers arriving in Nepal are stuck in a massive traffic jam extending up to 10 kilometres on the Indian side of the border.

Siddhartha Industrial Group, has been thinking of using the Krishnanagar border point for his imports.

"It's not a choice but compulsion." He said either route increases his cost of production, but the goods reach his warehouse faster by using alternative roads.

"Indian shipping companies do not want to transport goods through the Bhairahawa point because of the longer turnaround time," he added.

The government has not shown any interest in expanding the parking yard at Bhairahawa Customs, Agrawal said.

According to traders, the route through the Bhairahawa point has become inconvenient and more expensive. They have to pay extra charges like demurrage and detention that increases their production costs.

Traders claim that demurrage and detention charges come to around Rs15 million daily.

According to Goenka, importing coal from Gujarat, India used to cost Rs3,200 per tonne, but now it is costing more than Rs4,000 per tonne due to delays.

Importing a container of mustard through Bhairahawa customs point costs Rs68,000 more than when import-

ing it through Birgunj.

Customs officials admit that the existing infrastructure does not match the growth in trade. A study conducted two years ago showed that it takes about 19 hours for a cargo truck to be checked and released after entering the customs area.

The study shows that importers spend 14 percent of this period at the customs office and the rest of the time on completing the paperwork, said Maniram Poudel, chief of the Bhairahawa Customs Office.

"Lack of parking infrastructure is the key cause of the problem," Poudel said. According to Poudel, the parking lot at Bhairahawa Customs can hold 1,000 vehicles only. About 700 cargo vehicles arrive in Bhairahawa daily from India.

The customs office opens early in the morning, but traders do not arrive early to clear their cargo. As a result, the line of freight trucks does not move, and this leads to traffic being backed up for many kilometres on the Indian side, according to customs officials.

"It is the responsibility of traders and their agents to clear the goods from the customs as soon as possible after completing the necessary paperwork" said Poudel He claimed that if the imported goods and vehicles were released from customs on time, the parking lot would be vacated. "But it takes a long time to release the trucks from the customs due to delays in the customs process from the traders' side."

Poudel claimed that importers do not use the facility to make self-declaration online remotely to speed up customs clearance. The banks located at the customs become crowded only after 4 pm with everybody coming to pay their customs duty at this time, he added.

Traders, for their part, accuse customs officials of hiding their shortcomings. "This is baseless," said Agrawal. "They do not build infrastructure and instead blame traders for delaying," he added.

Agrawal said that if the parking facility was increased to accommodate 3,000 vehicles, the problems would be resolved immediately.

According to Agrawal, it takes up to 18 days for his industrial raw materials to arrive at the factory which is 18 km from the border at Nautanwa, India.

Goods carriers using the Raxaul checkpoint make 50 trips per month while those using the Sunauli-Bhairahawa checkpoint barely make six trips per month.

Agrawal said that instead of transporting cargo directly to Bhairahawa, which is 125 km from Gonda, an industrial area near Gorakhpur in India, Indian truckers and Nepali traders prefer to use the Krishnanagar, Kapilvastu route which is 250 km away.

The traffic jams bring other problems to truckers. According to traders, Indian police demand money from them in the name of managing the queue. Those who pay are allowed to jump the queue. Indian truckers simply add the extra costs to the transportation charges, Agrawal said.

Driver Dharmendra Ven, who arrived at Bhairahawa Customs with vehicle bearing registration number RJ 14 GF 9833, said that he spent four days in the line that was 8 km long.

"There is no provision for eating and sleeping in the middle of the road, nor are there any toilets," he said. "The villagers do not allow us to go to the fields to relieve ourselves." he added. The police demand up to Rs1,000 to move us up in the queue, he said.

Traders have repeatedly urged authorities to use the land that has been bought to build an Integrated Check Post in Bhairahawa as a parking yard to ease the problem.

Ravi Parikh, manager of the Bhairahawa branch of Trans Nepal Freight Services, which manages the customs parking lot, said that it had become tough to manage the growing number of cargo vehicles in the limited parking lot.

He said that the problem had been compounded by the tendency of traders to work slowly to get their cargo cleared through customs, or not remove their trucks even after the paperwork had been completed.

According to Ashim Neupane, president of the Bhairahawa Customs Agents Association, Siddharthanagar, Rupandehi, Bhairahawa Customs collects Rs350 million in revenue daily, and one day's collection would be enough to create a better parking lot.

He said that despite repeated pleas to the finance minister, deputy director-general of the Department of Customs, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, and other high-ranking officials, no one had bothered to explore a solution to the problem.

Google threatens to pull search engine in Australia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND), JAN 22

Google on Friday threatened to make its search engine unavailable in Australia if the government went ahead with plans to make tech giants pay for news content.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison quickly hit back, saying "we don't respond to threats."

"Australia makes our rules for things you can do in Australia," Morrison told reporters in Brisbane. "That's done in our Parliament. It's done by our government. And that's how things work here in Australia."

Morrison's comments came after Mel Silva, the managing director of Google Australia and New Zealand, told a Senate inquiry into the bill that the new rules would be unworkable.

The government is planning new rules to make tech giants pay for news content.

"If this version of the code were to become law, it would give us no real choice but to stop making Google search available in Australia," Silva told senators. "And that would be a bad outcome not only for us, but also for the Australian people, media diversity, and the small businesses who use our products every day."

The mandatory code of conduct proposed by the government aims to make Google and Facebook pay Australian media companies fairly for using news content they siphon from news sites.

Silva said it was willing to pay a

wide and diverse group of news publishers for the value they added, but not under the rules as proposed, which included payments for links and snippets.

She said the code's "biased arbitra-

tion model" also posed unmanageable financial and operational risks for Google. She suggested a series of tweaks to the bill.

FOREX US Dollar 117.07 Euro 142.57 Pound Sterling 160.07 Japanese Yen 11.29 Chinese Yuan 18.07 Qatari Riyal 32.15 Australian Dollar 90.30 Malaysian Ringit 28.96 Saudi Arab Riyal 31.21 Exchange rates foed by Nepal Rastra Bank BULLION PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold Rs 92,900

Rs 1,260

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

GASOLINE WATCH



UK factories fear shortage of materials and workers as Covid-19 and Brexit hit

REUTERS London, Jai

British manufacturers' concerns about shortages of low-wage workers and supplies have risen the most in almost 50 years, a survey showed on Thursday, as they wrestle with Covid-19 disruptions and new customs rules after leaving the European Union.

A measure of how manufacturers feel about their competitiveness relative to EU rivals deteriorated at the fastest pace on record, meanwhile, and companies expected output and orders to decline, the Confederation of British Industry said of its survey results.

"Manufacturers across the board

are continuing to battle major headwinds," CBI chief economist Rain Newton-Smith said.

A monthly index of new orders for January dropped to -38 from -25 in December, and a quarterly measure of optimism sank to -22 from zero in October.

However, export orders bucked the broader trend, with this balance rising to its least negative since March, though it was still below its long-run average.

"(This) suggests that EU firms are not hesitating to source goods from the UK, despite the extra red tape and rise in haulage costs," Samuel Tombs of Pantheon Macroeconomics said.

The survey adds to signs that Britain's economy will contract in early 2021, hit by a surge in coronavirus cases and restrictions, and new bureaucracy for trade with the EU.

Manufacturing accounts for about

10 percent of Britain's economy.

has been hit far harder by social-distancing measures and is also facing new barriers to trade with the EU.

Separately, a new experimental

measure of consumer spending indicated that credit and debit card spending in early January slumped to 35 percent below its level last February, before the pandemic.

The figures—published by the Office for National Statistics using

Office for National Statistics using Bank of England data—are not seasonally adjusted, so part of the fall probably reflects a normal drop in spending after Christmas, on top of the impact of new Covid restrictions which closed non-essential retailers this month.

The CBI figures showed many manufacturers reported a rush to build up stocks and complete EU orders in December, before the new customs rules took effect on January 1.

Pritick gods are not subject to tar.

British goods are not subject to tariffs or quotas as they enter the EU, but do face significant new paperwork, adding to costs and delays.

Concern about shortages of materials and components rose by the most since January 1975, which the CBI linked to Covid disruption to international trade and Brexit-linked customs delays.

Clock ticking for CEOs to grow profits



Trader Ashley Lara works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK, JAN 22

Are better days ahead for corporate profits? They'd better be.

CEOs across America have begun telling shareholders how much profit their companies made during the last three months of 2020, just as the worsening pandemic sent death rates soaring. The general expectation is for nothing heroic. Earnings for the big companies in the S&P 500 likely fell 7 percent from a year earlier, according to FactSet.

Over the long term, stock prices tend to track the path of corporate profits. And stock prices sometimes rise much faster than profits, particularly when interest rates are low, as they are now. But stocks surged to records in 2020 even as profits plunged due to the pandemic.

Investors will likely give CEOs another pass if they do turn in a fourth-straight quarter of profit declines over the next few weeks. That's because Wall Street is focusing instead on the huge turnaround it sees beginning.

After getting blindsided by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the economy will hopefully right itself this year as more stimulus flows from Washington and as coronavirus vaccinations return daily life closer to normal.

Applyeds foregoed S&R 500 carpings

Analysts forecast S&P 500 earnings will grow in the first three months of 2021 by roughly 17 percent, before accelerating to 46 percent growth in the spring. For the full year, analysts

expect profits for S&P 500 companies to jump 22.5 percent. Companies better meet those lofty

Companies better meet those lofty predictions. Otherwise, the US stock market will look even more expensive than it does now. Critics are already calling it a bubble that may be on a similar scale as the dot-com boom or the financial orgy that preceded the Great Depression.

By several measures stocks are now valued at their most expensive since the dot-com bubble popped in 2000.

Some of the bubble talk could cool if things pull closer to normal, with earnings rising more than stock prices in 2021. That would temper some of the extreme valuations. And that's exactly what much of Wall Street is forecasting for this year, with the S&P 500 likely rising much less than earnings.

That's why, when CEOs report their companies' results in upcoming weeks, investors will likely pay more attention to the forecasts they give for 2021 than the actual results.

Some CEOs have already made comments that bolster enthusiasm for a coming recovery.

While reporting the biggest annual loss in its history, Delta Air Lines said it expects to bring in as much cash as it spends by the spring. That's a huge turnaround for a company that was burning through \$12 million a day during the last three months of 2020 and \$100 million daily at the end of March.

The airline said it expects conditions to remain rocky early in the year, but it's looking for business to pick up as Covid-19 vaccinations become widespread, offices reopen and travelers start to feel more confident.

Trump returns to a business empire ravaged by pandemic



ASSOCIATED PRESS NEW YORK, JAN 22

Donald Trum

Donald Trump is returning to a family business ravaged by pandemic shutdowns and restrictions, with revenue plunging more than 40 percent at his Doral golf property, his Washington hotel and both his Scottish resorts over the past year.

Trump's 2020 financial disclosure released as he left office this week was just the latest bad news for his financial empire after banks, real estate brokerages and golf organizations announced they were cutting ties with his company following the storming of the Capitol this month by his political supporters. The disclosure showed sizable debt facing the company of more than \$300 million, much of

it coming due in the next four years, and a major bright spot: Revenue at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, his new post-presidency home, rose by a few million dollars.

Eric Trump, who with Donald Trump Jr. has run the Trump Organization the past four years, told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday that the disclosure doesn't tell the whole story, calling the debt "negligible" and the outlook for the company bright, especially at its golf resorts and courses.

"The golf business has never been stronger. We took in hundreds and hundreds of new members," he said, adding that profits were in the "tens of millions." Hinting at possible new ventures in the post-presidency era, Eric Trump raised the prospect of a flurry of new licensing deals in which the Trump name is put on a product or building for a fee, a business that has generated tens of millions for the company in the past.

"The opportunities are endless" be

"The opportunities are endless," he said, declining to give details.

The disclosure report filed each

The disclosure report filed each year with federal ethics officials shows only revenue figures, not profits, but the hit to Trump's business appeared widespread.

The National Doral Golf Club outside of Miami, his biggest money maker among the family's golf properties, took in \$44.2 million in revenue, a drop of \$33 million from 2019. The Trump International Hotel in Washington, once buzzing with lobbyists and diplomats before operations were cut back last year, generated just

\$15.1 million in revenue, down more than 60 percent from the year before.

Trump's Turnberry club in Scotland took in less than \$10 million, down more than 60 percent. Revenue at the family's golf club in Aberdeen dropped by roughly the same proportion. The Mar-a-Lago, the Palm Beach club where Trump arrived Wednesday, saw revenue rise 10 percent to \$24.2 million. Revenue at a golf club near that club and one in Charlotte, North Carolina, also rose, up about 5 percent to \$13 million each.

In total, Trump's vast holding of

In total, Trump's vast holding of hotels, resorts, office buildings, licensing deals and other assets took in at least \$278 million for 2020 and the first few weeks of the New Year, down more than a third from a minimum of about \$450 million in 2019.

● **()** () ()

A file photo shows extra security barricades placed outside the Trump Hotel in Washington.

BRIEFING

Suarez brace sends Atletico seven points clear in La Liga

EIBAR: Eibar goalkeeper Marko Dmitrovic scored a penalty against Atletico Madrid on Thursday but a brace from Luis Suarez saw the La Liga leaders come from behind to win 2-1 at Ipurua. Dmitrovic drove an early spot-kick past fellow goalkeeper Jan Oblak, only for Suarez to inspire the comeback, his second also a penalty which he earned himself and then converted in the 89th minute. Another late victory for Atletico means they pull seven points clear of second-placed Real Madrid and 10 ahead of third-placed Barcelona, with another game in hand over both still to come. Suarez, meanwhile, moves level with Lionel Messi at the top of La Liga's scoring charts on 11 goals, the Uruguayan increasingly looking like a player that can lead his side to

Mathews ton settles Sri Lanka

GALLE: Angelo Mathews scored an unbeaten century to dig Sri Lanka out of early peril and lead his side to 229 for four on the opening day of the second and final Test against England on Friday. The home side won the toss and elected to bat at the Galle International Stadium, but a double strike from seamer James Anderson had them teetering at seven for two. Mathews then came to the crease and settled the innings with his 11th Test ton. He will resume on the second morning on 107 not out and will be ioined at the wicket by Niroshan Dickwella on 19 Opener Kusal Perera had a wild swing at a delivery outside off stump and was caught by Joe Root at first slip for 6. Oshada Fernando (0) who came into the side for Kusal Mendis, lasted just four balls. Mathews and opener Lahiru Thirimanne (43) put on 69 for the third wicket before the latter edged Anderson's second ball after lunch to wicketkeeper Jos Buttler, Captain Dinesh Chandimal (52) added another 117 with Mathews before he was trapped leg before wicket by fast

bowler Mark Wood. (AGENCIES)

Baskota's batting lifts Bagmati in PM Cup as Province 1 bow out with victory

Bagmati Province maintain their perfect record in the Prime Minister Cup with a six-wicket win over Province 2 and are atop Group B with six points from three matches while Province 1 exit the tournament with only one win.

SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU JAN 22

Prithu Baskota continued with his impressive batting form for Bagmati Province as they edged Province 2 by six wickets to maintain cent percent winning streak in the Prime Minister Cup National one-day cricket tournament at the Mulpani grounds on Friday.

Baskota, who played a key role in their first two wins scoring 84 runs against Sudurpaschim and unbeaten 48 runs against Nepal Police Club in the first two matches, contributed an unbeaten 53 runs against Province 2 on Friday. The highest scorer of the match Baskota's 75-ball knock included one six and four boundaries.

With the outcome, Bagmati climbed on top of the Group 'B' standings with maximum six points from three matches and inched closer to semi-final berths. They could finish on top of the group and qualify for semi-finals as group winners if they beat Lumbini on Sunday. Province 2 are second from bottom without scoring points at their account after two

Electing to bat first, Province 2 scored 179 runs in 48.2 overs. In the run chase, Bagmati made 181-4 in 48.2

Province 2 made poor start to their innings and were restricted to 5-39 despite opener Sudhir Chaudhary contributing 15 runs. Number eight batsman Bibek Yadav contributed the highest 66 runs off 74 deliveries. Kumar Thapa and Rahul Pratap Singh who scored 22 and 18 runs respectively were the other batsmen to touch double figures for Province 2.

Gautam KC of Bagmati claimed four wickets in his 10-over spell. He gave away 29 runs with a maiden over.



Province 1 beat Karnali Province by 59 runs on Friday to finish fourth in Group A and crashed out along with bottom placed Gandaki Province.

Ramnaresh Giri pocketed two wickets. In the run chase, Aakash Thapa (32) and Bibhatsu Thapa (47) were the major contributors for Bagmati apart from Baskota. Thapa was trapped leg before by Kumar Thapa. Bibhatsu hit three boundaries in his 93-ball knock before he was bowled out by Harishankar Shah. Ishan Pandey was the other player to score in double digits contributing 15 runs.

Harishankar of Province 2 pocketed two wickets in his 10 over spell. He conceded 36 runs

Province 1 sign off with victory Province 1 edged Karnali Province by 59 runs in the Group 'A' match to bid

adieu to the Prime Minister Cup with consolation win at the TU grounds in Batting first, Province 1 scored 215-9

in the allotted 50 overs before bowling

out Karnali for 156 runs in 35 overs.

The result meant Province 1 finished fourth in the five-team Group 'A' and crashed out of the contest along with bottom placed Gandaki Province after playing four matches each. Despite having equal two points, Gandaki Province finished fourth on the basis of better net run rate. Karnali are third with two points in their account and have played only three matches.

Province 1 skipper and middle order batsman Siddhant Lohani contributed highest 66 off 97. He hit nine boundaries in his 97-ball knock. Opener Sarwan Yadav (17), Shuvankar Urao (36), Minash Thapa (25) and Firdosh Ansari (17) were the other major contributors for Province 1.

Karnali bowlers Ranindra Shahi claimed three wickets while Dinesh Adhikari and Anuj Chunara grabbed two wickets apiece.

Karnali made a sound start to their run chase with openers Rabindra Shahi and Bipin Rawal playing 63 runs partnership for the first wickets. Shahi scored 18 off 32 and Rawal played a quickfire 47 off 34. The number three batsman Nischal Rawal contributed 31 as Karnali seemed to be heading to their second victory with 118-4 on board. But they lost the remaining six batsmen cheaply for 38

Province 1 bowler Minas Thapa claimed five wickets in his 10-over spell. He gave away 26 runs with two maiden overs. Dipesh Kandel claimed three wickets while Manoj Tamang grabbed two.

Nepal Armed Police Force Club will take on Karnali Province on Saturday at the TU grounds while Lumbini will vie against Sudurpaschim



action during the National Women's League in Satdobato on Friday.

Nepal Police Club rout Chaudandigadhi 6-0

SPORTS BUREAU

Rekha Paudel and Srijana Khadka netted twice each as Nepal Police Club thrashed Chaudandigadhi Municipality 6-0 in the

National Women's Football League on Friday. Paudel opened the scoring in the 28th minute for the departmental side to begin the rout at the ANFA Complex. Paudel converted a pass from former national team captain Niru Thapa with a one touch finish. Amrita Jaisi doubled the lead in the 41st

CANCER (June 22-July 22) ***

LEO (July 23-August 22) ***

you can't find anything.

four goals ahead before the break, both coming in the 45th minute. Khadka scored the third and Nirmala BK made it four in the

Poudel then got her brace in the 89th minute and Khadka also found the net again in the added time of the second half, which gave Police their first league win and four points from two games. Police had earlier played a goalless stalemate against another departmental team Tribhuvan Army Club in the opening fixture on January 20.

Police coach Sanjeev Joshi was happy the team won. "It is always good to win. They players played really well," he said.

But Chaudandigadhi coach Dipak Thapa was still positive despite the embarrassment. "We conceded four goals in the first half that ruined our game. Our team lack experience, yet we are happy an outsider team like us are competing in the national

"Hopefully, we will do better in the next matches," he added.

Army will look for their first win when they take on Waling Municipality on Sunday. Nepal Armed Police Force Club will meet Biratnagar Metropolitan City later on

There will be no matches on Saturday.

Burnley end Liverpool's 68-game unbeaten home run

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Jurgen Klopp took responsibility for the sudden collapse of Liverpool's Premier League title defence after their 68-game unbeaten run in the Premier League at the Anfield came to a stunning end in a 1-0 defeat by Burnley on Thursday.

The Clarets began the game just one place above the relegation zone, but gave their chances of beating the drop a huge boost when Ashley Barnes was tripped by Alisson Becker seven minutes from time and then beat the Brazilian from the penalty spot. Klopp's men have now failed to win

in five consecutive league games to

slip to fourth in the table, six points behind leaders Manchester United. Liverpool had not tasted a league defeat at the Anfield since April 2017. Since then the Reds have ended a 30-year wait to win a league title, but their chances of repeating that feat are fading rapidly after a disastrous run over the past month. "We lost the game, which I think is pretty impossible to lose, but we did it," said Klopp. "That is my fault because it is my job so that the boys have the right feelings, like they have the right amount of confidence.

The champions have been disrupted by a host of defensive injuries, but it has been scoring goals that has cost Liverpool of late. Despite having 72 efforts on goal, the Reds have now failed to score in four consecutive league games. Klopp reacted to Liverpool's longest Premier League goal drought for 16 years by dropping top scorer Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino to the bench.

But Divock Origi underlined why the champions have been reliant on their habitual front three when he smashed off the underside of the bar with just Nick Pope to beat after an uncharacteristic error from Ben Mee. The Belgian has scored a number of important goals in big games for Liverpool, most notably netting twice in a 4-0 Champions League semi-final win over Barcelona two seasons ago. But Origi has scored just one league goal since December 2019.

Salah and Firmino were introduced to partner Sadio Mane early in the second half, but Burnley held out despite incessant Liverpool pressure. Pope saved brilliantly from Salah at his near post before Firmino showed why he has struggled for goals all season by slicing horribly wide from Andy Robertson's inviting cut-back.

Burnley had scored just once themselves in their last four games. But Sean Dyche's men took advantage of indecision in the Liverpool defence when Alisson upended Barnes, who coolly slotted home Burnley's first penalty of the season. "Our shape and our diligence was excellent," said Dyche.

Players of Nepal Police Club (blue) and Chaudandigadhi Municipality in minute when her shot from outside the D-box went straight into the net. Police were

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19) ****



license is to thrill. You've got the magnetism and suaveness to charm anyone. Just about the only thing you're missing is an arsenal of shiny



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



Isn't it exhausting to try and be the person in charge all the time? Sit back and let the universe drive just this once. Who knows? You might enjoy the experience so much that you decide to do it more

Jumping to conclusions is a fun and easy sport, but

they don't give medals for it at the Olympics, and

there's a good reason why. It just makes things unnec-

essarily complicated in the long run. Keep this in

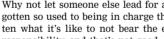


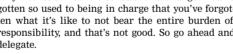
Why not let someone else lead for a change? You've gotten so used to being in charge that you've forgotten what it's like to not bear the entire burden of responsibility, and that's not good. So go ahead and

for some heavy-duty closet cleaning. Holding onto

things that don't fit or that you haven't worn in years

just means there's less space in your closet for a









PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

B O D E D S L A T E D R E K E Y M O S G O P A L S

WINSTONOUTRACE

GABOR ENS RISEN

OXENNIGHTIE

TNT

RESCUER RETE

|E|R| | |E

Money changes everything, especially if you're having problems with it. In and of itself, money is neither good nor bad, but it is a source of energy that you should respect. Are you being careful with your



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) ***

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ***

to them to work it out.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***



Think of yourself as Switzerland, especially if two people you care about are involved in a knock-down, drag-out war. Stay neutral and refuse to become a sounding board for their problems. Insist that it's up

How long has this been going on? Could it be that

while you weren't looking something kindled (or

rekindled) between the two of you when you least

expected it? Isn't that always the way it is with

16

a lot of nice things for you, but what have they

done for you lately? If it takes you more than five

minutes to think, perhaps it's time to rethink your



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) ****

earth move under your feet? Lately it feels like foundations that you take for granted are being shifty. It's important to remember that in this world, the only constant is change



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) ***

Your brain is like a bottle of champagne right now: all bubbles and fizz and tons of excitement. What's more, you're able to communicate all that zestand the zillion ideas you have to everyone around you

PISCES (February 19-March 20) ***



Something's obscuring your vision like a veil. If you concentrate, you might be able to see clearly. Forcing it, however, might not work. Ever notice how the best ideas come to you while you're doing something

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Part of Batman's garb
- 14 Shampoo
- 16 Senseless
- 19 Judge's prop
- 20 Alligator habitat 23 Banquet
- 27 Alaskan seaport 30 Electric
- 31 Dentist's assistant
- 36 Zippo 40 Quit working
- 43 Ricci of fashion 44 Smudge
- 46 Laundry need
- 48 Today 50 Loose garment
- 51 Black mark 55 Extends
- 60 WWII's Gen. Bradley
- 61 Equal 64 Sand mandala

builders

- 5 Spouse Twitches 4 1
- additive 15 Perfect place
- 17 Walleyed fish 18 Extend credit
- 24 Had a hunch 25 Keeps safe
 - swimmer
- 10 Painting 41 Rocker — John 11 Poe's night
 - visitor 12 Work dough
- 72 Senhora 73 Next in line DOWN

1 Headlands

2 Dark

66 Gulls' cries

67 Fork prong

68 October sign

70 Sleuth's find

71 Does in

69 Estrada or Satie

- complexion 3 Roused up 4 Unpleasant glances
- "Good job!" (2 wds.) 6 Game plan
- 7 Manage for oneself
- 8 Wrapped up 9 Fishing lure
- 13 Puts on the
- market 21 Kelly or Barry 22 Take in 26 City in Morocco
- 28 Gentle 29 Organic compound 31 Coll. credit units
- 32 Nonetheless 33 Federal management org.

TERI

- 34 Travel plan 35 Oz canine 37 Twist the truth 38 "Early Start" airer
- 39 Kind of rack 42 Omaha's state 45 Eur. nation 47 Paper quantity 49 Clever person
- 51 Tov-store stock 52 Inbox filler 53 Deadly snake 54 Docile 56 V-shaped cut

RTE SRS TORCHES

IMPALA

PEELED

58 Listlessness 59 Guide 62 Caligula's nephew

57 Duplicity

63 Minnesota baseballer 65 Stockholm

18 19 28 30 38 52 60 63 69 70 68 72 73

SUDOKU

234156879 5 9 4 3 8 1 2 6 6 1 8 2 9 7 5 3 4 8 4 2 7 6 9 3 5 1 963815742 5 7 1 3 2 4 6 9 8 426571983 1 8 5 9 4 3 2 6 7 3 9 7 6 8 2 4 1 5

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



The wearers of the hero's cape—for now

The Covid pandemic has changed our perception of a hero but it remains to be seen whether the value we are attributing to frontliners nowadays is here to stay.

EDYTA STEPCZAK

s Nepali climbers were making history being the first ever to ascent K2 [8.611m], the World's second highest, one of the deadliest and technically most challenging mountain, in winter season, on the streets of Kathmandu a protest against the dissolution of the Parliament was being held. It was being led by doctor Govinda KC.

These are two very different cases, but with one common denominator: both Dr Govinda and the summiteers are all heroes, in their respective fields.

The profile of the hero has constantly been changing over the years. And those changes have been influenced, among other factors, by political circumstances, market trends, fears or popularity ratings. But at some point, when human interactions became one huge popularity contest, influencers and celebrities took over, making the term 'hero' almost

During the golden era of space exploration, it was the astronauts and scientists who were making children's eyes glow with excitement. As an American astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson points out, what drove the young generation in his country in the 60s. was the space programme. It had the capacity to stir the imagination of millions, inspiring children and pushing them towards science to pursue the path of their heroes.

Those were then dethroned by other types of icons and admired figures: the stars of reality shows, bloggers or techies from Silicon Valley. Most recently, the (s)



hero has a face of a teenage Swedish girl named Greta Thunberg.

Then came the Covid pandemic, which changed the paradigm in terms of who we perceive as a hero. And Banksy was there to confirm it with his drawing depicting a healthcare worker wearing a hero's cape, an accessory reserved till

now for Superman and Batman. The year 2020 woke us up to a realisation what the term 'essential worker' really means, and that besides healthcare professionals it also includes garbage collectors. It made us see better than ever that along the way 'glamorous' got somehow mistaken for 'essential'. And maybe it finally taught us, although the hard way, to respect those often omitted and

diminished. It remains to be seen whether the value we are prone to attribute to the frontline

professions nowadays is here to stay. CNN Heroes also contributed to that shift in our perception of a hero. This television special, created by the network in 2007, aims to honour those who make a difference in their societies. Someone we hoped will save us if needed, no longer was a fictitious figure with magical pow-

ers, but a flesh-and-blood individual.

Those everyday people do their 'magic' equipped with integrity, persistence, courage and selflessness. Like Anuradha Koirala, a recipient of CNN Heroes Award in 2010.

As I argue in my book, Burqa in Nepal is called Sari, 'the most crucial battle in Nepal is fought not in the so-called death zone in the Himalayas, but in the lowlands, where what is in stake is dignity and fundamental human rights, not a sports record'. The fight I had in mind writing it is the one led by activists and social workers, like Indira Ranamagar of Prisoner's Assistance Nepal, Renu Sharma of The Women's Foundation, and so many others. These are my personal (s)heroes.

But there is no need to dethrone anyone and replace them with someone else, rather to make the stage more inclusive and welcoming to different individuals to look up to. It's better we have that stage crowded so that each of us can relate to our own figure of ref-

With their audacity and vision, those disruptors of all walks of life, ages, nationalities and genders take humanity to the next level, push the boundaries of our understanding on what is possible, transform what is into what should be, shape our dreams and inspire us to become a bit more like

The only difference is that in this diverse group of wonderful people who deserve to wear a cape, some are cheered and acclaimed, while others lack any public recognition whatsoever.

Stepczak is the writer of Burqa in Nepal is called Sari.

BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES

Fiction

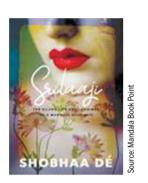
- Darling Rose: A Novel by Stephanie Wrobel
- Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Deep End by Jeff Kinney
- Srilaaji by Shobhaa De

udhir Chella Raja

A Social

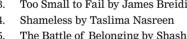
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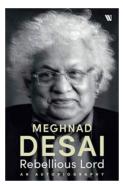
- The Archer by Paulo Coelho
- One Arranged Murder by Chetan



Non-Fiction

- A Social Theory of Corruption by Sudhir Chella Rajan
- Hidden Hand: Exposing How the Chinese Communist Party is Reshaping the World by Clive Hamilton, Mareike
- Too Small to Fail by James Breiding
- The Battle of Belonging by Shashi

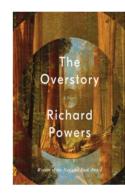




Rebellious Lord Author: Meghnad Desai **Publication:** Westland

A scholar of Marxian economics, political economy, monetary policy and economic history, Desai in his autobiography writes not just about what shaped his life but also about the shaping of academic agendas and national and international politics. The intellectual and political maverick writes lively about his life and his book is educative, self-aware and

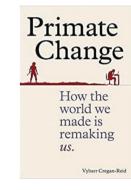
Rs 1,278



The Overstory

Author: Richard Powers Publication: WW Norton & Company Rs 1.118

The Pulitzer Prize-winning novel The Overstory brings concentric fables that range from antebellum New York to the late twentieth-century Timber Wars of the Pacific Northwest and beyond, exploring the essential conflict on this planet: the one taking place between humans and nonhumans. The book imagines what a tree



Primate Change

Vybarr Cregan-Reid **Publication:** Cassell

Vybarr Cregan-Reid in this book discusses how the world we made has changed us and gives a polemical look at how the human body has changed since humankind could stand on their feet. The book further investigates where we came from, who we are today and how modern technology will change us beyond recognition.

2 films offer 2 tales ahead of Wuhan lockdown anniversary

Through the films, the Chinese government has sought to control the narrative and deflect blame about the pandemic's origins.

EMILY WANG FUJIYAMA & HUIZHONG WU

wo new films about Wuhan were released Friday, the eve of the anniversary of the start of a 76-day lockdown in the central Chinese city where the coronavirus was first detected. How they were released and who their audiences are stand in stark contrast.

The first, a state-backed film praising Wuhan's sacrifices, is being screened throughout China, targeting audiences that firmly back the ruling Communist Party's response to the outbreak. The second, a sombre documentary about the pandemic from artist and political activist Ai Weiwei, has been forced to seek viewers online, a testimony to the party's influence over the global film industry. The Chinese government has sought to

control the narrative and deflect blame about the pandemic's origins. It has weaved a story of triumph against the virus through TV shows, social media campaigns and books, lauding nurses and doctors and government-backed vaccine companies. Any criticism of early missteps is silenced. The state-backed film "Days and

Nights in Wuhan" features contributions from 30 filmmakers portraying the suffering of the city's 11 million residents, medical staff and front-line workers as they battled the virus that began racing through the city in December 2019.

Ai's "Coronation" has been rejected by festivals, theatres and streaming services including Amazon and Netflix, he said. He attributes the censorship to fears over offending the ruling party, which controls what movies can be shown in China and what Chinese films can be displayed abroad.

"I don't care about the film festivals," Ai said in a virtual news conference Friday hosted by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. "But they are a platform, they should present meaningful films. That's their duty. If there's a failure of this duty, then I feel ashamed of them."

The lockdown in Wuhan, imposed on January 23, 2020, was eventually extended to surrounding areas in Hubei province, confining some 56 million people to "Days and Nights in Wuhan," directed

by Cao Jinling, debuted in Wuhan earlier and was released nationwide on Friday. The film echoes China's official line that the measures it took, including the lockdown, bought precious time for the world to prepare for the pandemic. Critics say habitual Communist Party secrecy and weak control measures allowed the virus' initial spread.

It's not clear if there are plans to show

"We wanted to record the journey of battling against the Covid-19 epidemic via motion picture. Some of the details, including the intense care, anxious waiting, heartbreaking farewells and hopeful rebirths, might strike a chord with viewers," Cao was quoted as saying by state broadcaster CCTV.

In the trailer, medical staff repeatedly express their determination to prevail over the outbreak.

"I have a burning love for my hometown and I will do whatever I can to save it," says one ambulance driver.

Ai's film tackles the same story from the perspective of construction workers, delivery staff, medical workers and Wuhan residents. Like the other film, it is a collage, but draws instead on footage filmed sometimes surreptitiously by friends, colleagues and amateur videographers, some of whom remain anonymous to avoid repercussions from the

His film offers a rare glimpse of the pain that Covid-19 patients in China suffered, with footage of them struggling to breathe as medical workers in protective gear attempted to save them.



Residents wearing masks pass by a screen showing a trailer for the film 'Days and Nights in Wuhan' outside a mall in Wuhan in central China's Hubei province.

Hospitals and morgues were overwhelmed at the height of the crisis and Wuhan accounts for the bulk of China's

death toll of 4,635. Following a thinly attended showing of "Days and Nights in Wuhan" on Friday morning, Wang Yu said the movie had awakened both memories of the trauma of lockdown and fears for what might still lie ahead.

"It's hard to describe. It's been a year since then, and to think back now, it's still painful," said Wang, 31. Relatives of her husband who died in the outbreak appeared in the film, she said.

'There is the mutated virus, there's fear. It's the second Lunar New Year holiday that we have to pass like this," she said. "Things are a little better than last year but I'm worried, it's not completely over. You're still under the effect of the

virus, the fear and the terror.' Wuhan has been largely free from the virus since the end of lockdown, while smaller outbreaks have set off renewed containment measures in many other

China's government has sought to cast

doubt that Wuhan is the source of the pandemic, pushing fringe theories that the virus was actually brought from outside the country, possibly by US soldiers.

The city is now hosting a team sent by the World Health Organization to begin investigating the virus' origins.

A panel of experts commissioned by the WHO criticised China and other countries this week for not moving faster to stem the initial outbreak, prompting Beijing to concede it could have done better but also to defend its response.

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CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

When will Dalit lives matter?

Despite voices being raised in the Capital and across the country against the injustices inflicted on Dalit people, their plight remains the same.

The Post takes a look at the events that took shape last year and why they were not enough.

SRIZU BAJRACHARYA

very day a number of people pass by a stencil memorial drawn on one of the exterior walls of Lalitpur Engineering College in Chakupat. The memorial has eight people: Bijay Ram, Ajit Mijar, Shiva Shankar Das, Angira Pasi, Samjhana Kami, Mana Sharki, Shambhu Sada and Nawaraj BK—all of them belong to the Dalit caste, all of them were killed brutally in separate persecution incidences in rural parts of Nepal. Among them, five were killed in 2020. Their portraits in Lalitpur are engraved with the words: 'Not Forgotten'.

The stencil work was part of the project Paint the Revolution initiated by the social campaign, Dalit Lives Matter Nepal, in collaboration with Kaalo.101, an independent art collective based in Patan.

While this is happening in Lalitpur, in Rautahat, where Bijay Ram died after being brutally tortured in police custody, 25-year-old Udaya Narayan Chamar feels alienated—he does not feel part of the different efforts and social campaigns that have been raising their voice for the Dalit people's rights and for a cultural change in the country.

"Here it feels like everyone except for us have moved on," said Chamar, echoing the defeat he has felt for months. Chamar lives in Chamar Tole in Rajpur Municipality and is the chair of Dalit Samudayik Bikash Kendra. And since August he has been crusading for the justice of Bijaya Ram whose case is still under investigation.

"The police and the Municipality's government officials have assured us that they are looking into the case of Bijay Ram. But nothing really has happened, and we are still awaiting his justice," he said.

Living as a Dalit in Nepal is not easy. And the year 2020 has been particularly hard for Dalit communities. Violent incidences in Soti, Rukum, (where a 21-year old Dalit was killed along with five of his friends for wanting to marry a girl from a higher caste) and in Rupandehi (where a 12-year-old Dalit girl was found dead after being married off to the man who raped her) in the past year served as catalysts to bring together many voices, and social campaigns across the country—including celebrated Nepali actor Rajesh Hamal's 'Jaatko Prashna' to question the systemic ills of the caste system. But these initiatives have not been enough to bring about a radical change.

Despite these efforts, the plight of Dalits remains the same and for many like Chamar, there is no light at the end of the tunnel

Amid the pandemic, however, the killings of Nabaraj BK, and Angira Pasi spurred an extraordinary revolt on the internet addressing the two Dalits' lives. Alongside the Black Lives Matter movement in the US, following African American George Flyod's death, urban Nepalis responded to the heinous killings in the rural areas with the hashtag trails that read #Dalitlivesmatter.

For weeks, there were more than hundreds and hundreds of appeals for justice on the lives lost. And by June, the voices had taken different forms: from petitions to show solidarity to casteism conversations. In late June, Dalit Lives Matter



POST PHOTO: SRIZU BAJRACHARYA

This stencil work was part of the project Paint the Revolution initiated by the social campaign, Dalit Lives Matter Nepal, in collaboration with Kaalo.101, an independent art collective based in Patan.

Nepal, a social campaign, introduced 'Caste Conversation' with Pradip Pariyar, a social activist and executive director of Samata Foundation, to discuss and understand caste through various critical lenses

Pariyar and his team from Dalit Lives Matter Nepal also had immediately started documenting Dalit killings' incidences on their page as they saw a huge information gap. The campaign also introduced forms to register discrimination online and disseminated information to educate users of the platform on caste-based discrimination and the laws related to it.

In between these incidences, many youths in other parts of the country, like Rautahat and Parsa, came together to organise campaigns like Dalit Bachcha Shiksha ko Pahuch Tatha Vidyalaya Tikau Abhiyaan, as a call to action programme because they believed education would be one of the most important tools to fight the structural caste-based discrimination. Many youths in Parsa were also involved in campaigns like 101 Dalit Youth Leadership that sought to build the leadership skills of Dalit youths to aware

their community about their rights.

But one of the significant efforts of some social campaigns had been to see through the justice process of the Dalit billings.

"We have had about 14 Madhesi Dalit people's death in Province 2 just this year, and that number is quite scary, but all these cases are still stalled," said Ram.

When the vehement outcries from the public had subsided, Dalit Lives Matter

Nepal was still pushing forward to investigate Nawaraj BK and Angira Pasi' case from Kathmandu. And in Rautahat and Parsa, organisations like Peace for Dalit Foundation and Dalit Samudayik Bikash Kendra kept on pressing for the investigation of Niranjan Ram, Bijay Ram, Shambhu Sada and Samjhana Kami. At Sakhuwa Prasauni rural municipality various young Dalit groups also initiated a Dalit Dabab Samuha to address Dalit

discriminations.

However, the different efforts taken by individuals, groups and organisations have not translated into any reforms in society.

While many events hoped to significantly impact the general public's mindset for some reason there has been an absence of a meaningful change, say Dalit activists. Many events that manifested to empower Dalit voices had thought they would in some ways create ripples to change the culture of caste-based oppression. And they continue to believe their efforts will press for the rights of the Dalits in the future.

But nothing has changed, says Manoj Ram. "These voices have not spread out like we had imagined it would," he said.

Locals in areas like his, inside Dalit toles, are well aware the government is not interested in their problems, says Ram, who lives in Mahuwan Gau, Dalit Tole in Parsa. Ram is also an activist and the chair of Peace for Dalit Foundation

According to him, the Dalit people in the rural areas have so much hardship that awareness has not even been their primary concern.

"There haven't been any government-led initiatives in our areas, and we are still living as outcasts; we are nowhere close to ending the horror of the Dalit people," says Ram.

Ram is aware that Dalit discrimination is pervasive both in and outside of their castes and for things to really change, the Dalit people need to be empowered first.

"What we need is programmes that can empower our people to grow economically, initiatives that will educate them, programmes that focus in areas like ours. But the government has not even separated a budget for the Dalit people's development; nor have funds ever reached here to help families in this dire time," said Ram.

According to recent studies, the Dalits fall under the minorities who are the most affected in the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic; the crisis has worsened social inequalities and further pushed out the Dalit people from development.

In recent times, according to Chamar, it has been more dangerous for younger Dalit girls and boys to walk in their hometowns, he says. "There have been incidences where some non-Dalits invite the Dalits to drink, and when they get drunk, they bash them together telling they caused a nuisance. This is how we have been living here, and this is the reality of our place," said Chamar.

"And when we try to do something for our community, press for the injustices we are told that we are trying to act like heroes, and we get threatened," he adds. But these recent incidents have awakened the Dalit people from within, says

"Many people in our community have learnt that we need to step up for ourselves. And so, people despite their difficulties are addressing their issues," said Ram. "I am even ready to die to make things better for our people," he said.

However, the government's initiative on the overall events that started since May, according to the people the Post talked with, has been very minimal.

"Many of the movements and efforts we made were conceived individually from our pockets, from the people we know and from some organisations like Samata Foundation. But the government has not really made an effort to help with our issues—we work on our own, and it has been scary for us because we don't get any kind of protection for speaking out," said Ram.

But over the course of the Dalit Lives Matter Nepal journey, Pariyar shares one of their key learnings to make way for an equal society has been their realisation that organisations and movements like theirs need to work together with different capabilities in multiple levels to spread the awareness and bring change structurally.

According to him, the media's role has been the most significant to bring attention to Dalit issues, while the role of the police is something they need to work more deeply into as that is where the process for justice and accountability starts. "We have learnt that we have to work together with the police force, with the government, journalists and human rights activists if we are to work on justice and awareness," said Pariyar.

"We have come to understand to work on multiple levels of caste-based discrimination and that we also need to create a global alliance and global solidarity to fight this system from within," he further added.

But the major reason why little action is being seen in real-time is because everything is centred around Kathmandu. "The conversations related to caste discrimination happening in Kathmandu hardly trickle down to the areas we live in," said Ram.

Most programmes for Dalit people are centred around Kathmandu when the most vulnerable Dalit communities are in the rural areas where the division of the Dalits and the non-Dalits are distinct, in the way they live and where, he says.

"We have families who are barely making income, and so many of these houses have no electricity, so while the focus should be on Dalit people in areas like ours, the voices are all focused at the centre. People's conversation about caste-based-inequality is our daily reality here," said Chamar.

"But people assume just because people are talking about these issues there, things are changing down here," said Chamar. "For us, every day has been turning more and more unsafe. And so, even with all that is happening our people's lives are still on the line."

"Just a few initiatives is not enough to change the system that is entrenched in the ills of the caste system for so long."

(Disclaimer: The article does not include all the events that happened in 2020.)

UN calls on France to help as virus imperils Fan Museum

France's storied fan-making museum could become the cultural world's latest coronavirus victim.

THOMAS ADAMSON & MICHEL EULER

ust like the leaves of its gilded fans, France's storied fan-making museum could fold and vanish. The UN's cultural agency has called on France to do more to stop the splendid Musee de l'Eventail in Paris becoming the cultural world's latest coronavirus victim.

The museum classed as a historical monument has until January 23 to pay up over 117,000 euros (\$142,000) in rent arrears—stemming mainly from losses during lockdowns, otherwise it will close. And with it will go the savoir-faire of its workshop. The studio that teaches design and restoration to a new generation of fan-makers was placed on France's intangible heritage list last year.

In a rare intervention, UNESCO called on France to honour the implementing of "safeguarding measures identified for this particular living heritage," noting in response to AP's reporting that Paris' decision to place this know-how on the list was taken already "while the pandemic was starting to expand at a fast pace."

"It is a tragedy. I can't believe Parisians will let a part of their heritage die. I have a problem, because I always believed there would be a miracle," the museum's 74-year-old director, Anne Hoguet, told

There may be some surprise that France, a country that famously prizes its culture, has not done more to save the museum, especially given that the French public was so eager to help other cultural sites in danger, such as its burned-out Notre Dame cathedral.

It might be a question of size. Hoguet said she was "exhausted" by the fight for survival that has hit smaller institutions but spared larger ones, such as Florence's Uffizi which re-opens this week. "Like all small museums, we had trou-

bles before, but the health crisis has been a catastrophe," she said. Bailiffs are even threatening to seize

the museum's artefacts from next Monday, numbering 2,500 original pieces—including historic fans made from turtle shell, lace and silk and adorned with diamonds and rubies.

Like many of Paris' 130 museums, Hoguet said her institution—which

Hoguet said her institution—which charges just 7 euros entry and is located in the French capital's popular 10th district—was forced to close for most of 2020 because of government virus restrictions. She said she would previously have charged between 500 and 600 euros per fan to restore them to their original state using traditional materials, and she used the income from that to pay the rent.

Hoguet is the fourth generation in

the income from that to pay the rent.

Hoguet is the fourth generation in charge of what is Paris' last original fan-making workshop. She has trained directly or indirectly five young fan-makers, whom she hopes will carry the torch of the storied craft.

The making of fans, traditionally with wooden sticks and painted paper leaves, has been considered sacred in many ancient cultures. But in France, its golden age was in the French court of 18th-century Versailles, where women used fan as forms of communication to flirt expertly or to hide modestly behind. The images painted on them would often chronicle the current affairs of the world around them. To this day, they remain part of France's fashion heritage DNA, featuring elaborately in couture collections by Chanel, Dior and Jean Paul Gaultier.

Hoguet's father bought the museum's impressive collection of fans in 1960. It spans the period from the Renaissance to



Anne Hoguet, fan-maker and director of the hand fan-making museum, works in her workshop in Paris.

the 20th century, including "advertising" or "illustrated" pieces, as well as vellum, kidskin and feathered fans. She is very much an eccentric of the

old school. A staff of one, she has no cohe-

sive fund-raising tool set up other than

email, but her efforts to rally support since 2019 have been valiant. She says that she has been so failed by

She says that she has been so failed by French authorities that she now has trouble sleeping. She had rallied the French Culture Ministry and been in talks with Paris City Hall, but it has, she said, made no difference.

"What is the point of marking us out as intangible heritage if they will not protect us?" she asked.

— Associated Press

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