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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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23.0° C -3.4° C
Dharam Jumla



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 brought further confusion within the Nepali Congress and put it in a dilemma. 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 believing that it must oppose the disso-

for that it needs the support of the Nepali Congress. 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 residence said. But it is not clear whether the Congress will support the Oli faction in Bagmati. "We should be mindful that we were the opposition in the past and we are currently on the streets, protesting 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 House.

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 corrected.

"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

A scrambling Oli government produces gazette before court, but it's backdated

Hiding information and distorting it have been the hallmark of the Oli government and not publishing the House dissolution notice is a major procedural lapse, experts say.

TIKA R PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, JAN 22

Hide information, distort it, and confuse and mislead all. That's how the KP Sharma Oli administration seems to have been functioning.

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 uploaded the Nepal Gazette with the notice, had it up on its website on Friday morning.

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 Friday morning."

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 Shaligram 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 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

Thursday and discussed the way forward, two participants of the meeting told the Post.

A no-confidence motion against Chief Minister Poudel was tabled at 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.

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Regency Watch

ANNAPURNA ARCADE
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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 exceeded 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."

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



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 bare-

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 fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION		PRICE PER TOLA
	Fine Gold	Rs 92,900
	Silver	Rs 1,260

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

GASOLINE WATCH



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

REUTERS
LONDON, JAN 22

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.

The much bigger services sector 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 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.

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

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

Trump returns to a business empire ravaged by pandemic



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

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, JAN 22

Donald Trump is returning to a family business ravaged by pandemic shut-downs 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," he said, declining to give details.

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 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.

SPORTS | MEDLEY

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 the title.

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 joined 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 matches.

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

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.



POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

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 Kirtipur.

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 runs.

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.



POST PHOTO

Players of Nepal Police Club (blue) and Chaudandigadhi Municipality in action during the National Women's League in Satdobato on Friday.

Nepal Police Club rout Chaudandigadhi 6-0

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, JAN 22

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 minute when her shot from outside the D-box went straight into the net. Police were

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

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 league."

"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 the same day.

There will be no matches on Saturday.

HOROSCOPE



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

You're just like James Bond except your 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 gadgets.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20) ***

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 often.



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

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 unnecessarily complicated in the long run. Keep this in mind.



CANCER (June 22-July 22) ***

If you can't find anything, it might be time 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 fresh start.



LEO (July 23-August 22) ***

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 delegate.



VIRGO (August 23-September 22) ****

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 resources?



LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***

Someone (and you know exactly who it is) used to do 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 relationship.



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) ***

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 to them to work it out.



SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ***

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 romance?



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

What the heck was that? Did you just feel the earth move under your feet? Lately it feels like foundations that you take for granted are being shaky. 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 zestful ideas you have to everyone around you. Hmmm.



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 mundane?

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Part of Batman's garb

5 Spouse

9 Twitches

14 Shampoo additive

15 Perfect place

16 Senseless

17 Walleyed fish

18 Extend credit

19 Judge's prop

20 Alligator habitat

23 Banquet

24 Had a hunch

25 Keeps safe

27 Alaskan seaport

30 Electric swimmer

31 Dentist's assistant

36 Zippo

40 Quit working

41 Rocker — John

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

DOWN

1 Headlands

2 Dark complexion

3 Roused up

4 Unpleasant glances

5 "Good job!" (2 wds.)

6 Game plan

7 Manage for oneself

8 Wrapped up

9 Fishing lure

10 Painting

11 Poe's night visitor

12 Work dough

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

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

Y	E	A	R	N	S		H	U	G		C	A	S	H
U	N	V	E	I	L		O	R	E		H	O	P	E
L	E	G	U	M	E		T	N	T		E	R	I	E
			B	O	D	E		S	L	A	T	E	D	
R	E	K	E	Y			M	O	S		O	P	A	L
O	X	E	N				N	I	G	H	T	I	E	
W	I	N	S	T	O	N		O	U	T	R	A	C	E
E	L	Y		A	V	E		R	T	E		S	R	S
D	E	A	D	P	A	N		T	O	R	C	H	E	S
			R	E	S	C	U	E	R		R	E	T	E
G	A	B	O	R		E	N	S		R	I	S	E	N
A	L	O	N	S	O		E	T	H	O	S			
T	E	R	I		G	O	V		I	M	P	A	L	A
E	T	O	N		E	R	E		P	E	E	L	E	D
S	A	N	G		E	O	N		S	O	R	T	E	D

4-4-19 © 2019 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS

32 Nonetheless

33 Federal management org.

34 Travel plan

35 Oz canine

37 Twist the truth

38 "Early Start" aier

39 Kind of rack

42 Omaha's state

45 Eur. nation

47 Paper quantity

49 Clever person

51 Toy-store stock

52 Inbox filler

53 Deadly snake

54 Docile

56 V-shaped cut

57 Duplicity

58 Listlessness

59 Guide

62 Caligula's nephew

63 Minnesota baseballer

65 Stockholm carrier

SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

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 STEP CZAK

As 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 obsolete.

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)



SHUTTERSTOCK

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 realisa-

tion 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 powers, 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 at 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 reference.

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 them.

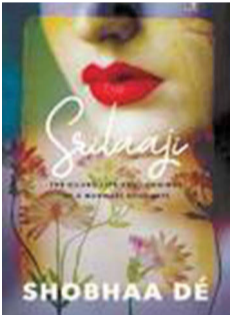
The only difference is that in this diverse group of wonderful people who deserve to wear a cape, some are cheered and acclaimed, while others lack any public recognition whatsoever.

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

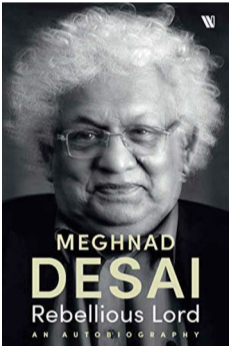
BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES

Fiction

1. Darling Rose: A Novel by Stephanie Wrobel
2. Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Deep End by Jeff Kinney
3. Srilaaji by Shobhaa De
4. The Archer by Paulo Coelho
5. One Arranged Murder by Chetan Bhagat

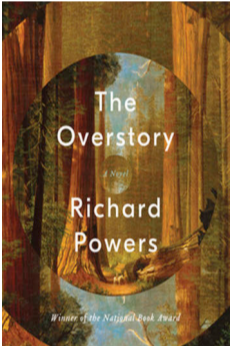


Source: Mandala Book Point



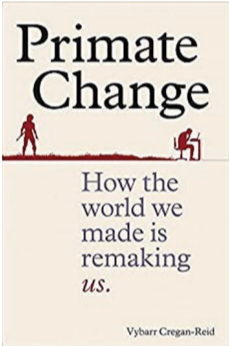
Rebellious Lord
Author: Meghnad Desai
Publication: Westland
Price: Rs 1,278

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 entertaining.



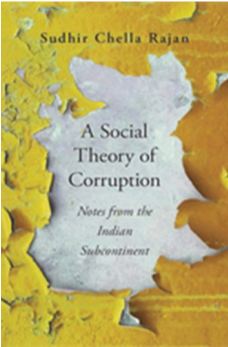
The Overstory
Author: Richard Powers
Publication: WW Norton & Company
Price: Rs 1,118

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 would tell us if it could speak.



Primate Change
Author: Vybarr Cregan-Reid
Publication: Cassell
Price: Rs 798

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.



Non-Fiction

1. A Social Theory of Corruption by Sudhir Chella Rajan
2. Hidden Hand: Exposing How the Chinese Communist Party is Reshaping the World by Clive Hamilton, Mareike
3. Too Small to Fail by James Breiding
4. Shameless by Taslima Nasreen
5. The Battle of Belonging by Shashi Tharoor

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
WUHAN

Two 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 their homes.

“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 it overseas.

“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 authorities.

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.



AP/RSS

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 Chinese cities.

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.

— Associated Press

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
KATHMANDU

Every 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 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 Floyd’s death, urban Nepal 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



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 Vidyalya 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 killings.

“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 Nepal.

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 Ram.

“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
PARIS

Just 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 the AP.

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 troubles 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 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 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 cohesive 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 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