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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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Nepalgunj Jumla



Police intervene as heritage lovers, conservationists and civil society members under the banner of Brihat Nagarik Andolan, a broad citizens' movement advocating a better, equal and just society, smash the concrete structure using rocks and sledgehammers at Kamal Pokhari on Friday. They are for restoring the pond using traditional methods.

POST PHOTO: SANJOG MANANDHAR

What if Supreme Court gives Nepal Communist Party to Kattel?

The decision could make Nepal Communist Party (NCP) null and void, taking the warring factions to the state prior to May 2018 when UML and Maoist Centre had merged.

TIKA R PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, FEB 26

The Supreme Court said on Thursday that it would pass a verdict on a case related to the Nepal Communist Party, which is in the name of Rishi Kattel, on March 4, stoking speculation what course Nepali politics could take, as the decision could also be instrumental in determining the fate of the Nepal Communist Party which is currently registered in the name of KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The Oli-Dahal party was registered as the Nepal Communist Party (NCP)—with NCP within brackets—at the Election Commission in May 2018 after the poll body said it could not allow Nepal Communist Party as it was already registered in the name of Kattel.

The Nepal Communist Party (NCP), however, split politically after Oli's December 20 House dissolution move. Oli leads one faction and the other faction is led by Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal. Oli and Dahal had decided to form the Nepal Communist Party after merging their CPN-UML and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre).

After the Supreme Court on Tuesday overturned Oli's decision, now both factions are making their own strategies to prevail. However, a lot now is going to depend on the court decision on the Nepal Communist Party (Kattel) issue.

Legal experts say broadly there are two possibilities if the Supreme Court decides to give legality of the Nepal Communist Party to Kattel. First, the Nepal Communist Party registered by Oli and Dahal in May 2018 will have to get registered again with a new name. Second, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) would be null and void thereby taking the UML and Maoist Centre back to the pre-merger state.

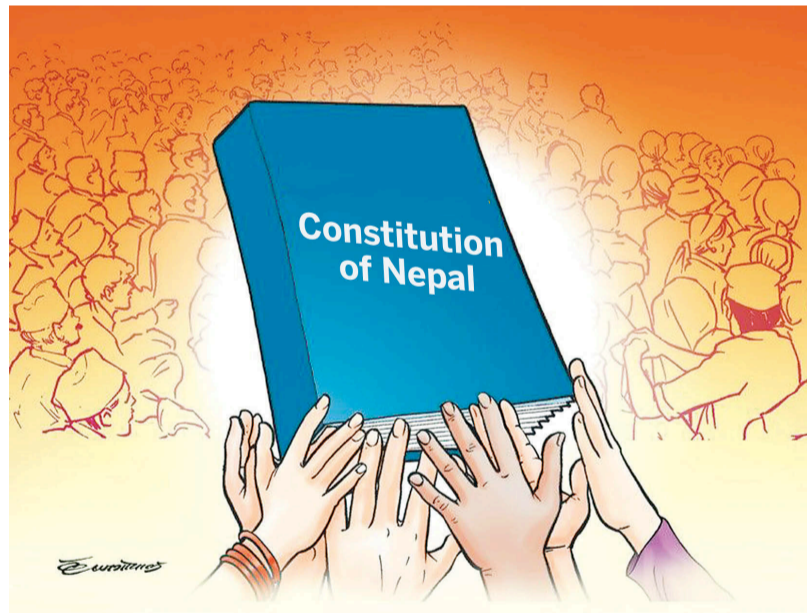
"There will be CPN-UML led by Oli and CPN (Maoist Centre) led by Dahal," said Mohan Lal Acharya, an advocate who was also an adviser to the Constituent Assembly. "Or else Oli and Dahal have to go to the Election Commission demanding any other name for the Nepal Communist Party (NCP)."

But bitterness has grown so much between Oli and Dahal that it looks unlikely they will go to seek another name to remain under it, as they have fallen out with each other.

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Who owns the constitution anyway

As those elected to protect the charter assaulted it and those with reservations emerged as the vanguard, analysts call for work towards its wider ownership and acceptability.



BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, FEB 26

In 2015, during the lead up to the constitution promulgation, Nepal's Madhes-based parties were up in arms. Over 40 people had died in the protests in the Tarai plains.

After squabbling for over seven long

years, the "major" parties—the Nepali Congress, the CPN-UML and the CPN (Maoist Centre)—had come together to adopt a constitution. The April-May earthquakes that year had rocked the country, claiming nearly 9,000 lives. The three major parties were in a rush to push the charter, saying the earthquakes had emboldened "their will" to

complete the unfinished task.

When the Constituent Assembly announced the new charter on September 20, 2015, Nepali Congress' Sushil Koirala was the prime minister. But at the centre, in effect, was KP Sharma Oli, elected leader of then CPN-UML in 2014, who played a key role in getting the constitution promulgated.

The new charter was celebrated in Kathmandu and other parts of the country but it was denounced by sizeable sections of the Nepali society. Those who opposed the constitution said various provisions further marginalised them.

Oli was in a hurry to take over the reins; Koirala wanted to get his name written in history books as a leader who oversaw the promulgation of the constitution; and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the Maoist leader, wanted a vindication that the demand of the "people's war" that there should be a charter through a Constituent Assembly was finally getting fulfilled, analysts say.

Their interests converged; they refused to give two hoots about the dissenting voices—not even the lives that were lost.

In October 2015, Oli became prime minister with the backing of Dahal's Maoist party, only to have the rug pulled from under his feet less than a year later.

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Diplomats are meeting political leaders but Foreign Ministry is unaware

The interest that foreign envoys show in Nepali politics during political instability is the result of political leadership giving them unhindered access, leaders and experts say.

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, FEB 26

As Nepal once again faces political instability, Kathmandu-based diplomats are back in business.

With the Nepal Communist Party fractured into two and the Pushpa Kamal Dahal-Madhav Kumar Nepal faction readying to file a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, a change in government seems likely.

With the Nepali Congress emerging as the kingmaker in the changed political equation, foreign envoys have been making a beeline for meetings with party president Sher Bahadur Deuba, to, presumably, understand the party's position on which of the two factions it will opt to form an alliance with.

But the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is clueless about these hush-hush meetings between diplomats and Nepali leaders.

Besides Deuba, the diplomats have also been meeting with second-rung leaders of the Nepal Communist Party



PHOTOS: TWITTER
Ambassadors from India and China are interested in the Nepal Communist Party.

to get a feel on possible party unity and leaders of the Janata Samajbadi Party.

"We came to know about the meetings from the news," a joint-secretary at the Foreign Ministry told the Post on condition of anonymity. "Neither our leaders believe in us, nor are ambassa-

dors following the system. It is the job of our leaders to inform us [of their meetings with foreign diplomats]."

As per diplomatic norms, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is supposed to record all diplomatic meetings and engagements and the diplomats themselves should inform the ministry.

In interviews with the Post, party leaders, Nepali diplomats and experts, said that though the job of a diplomat is to hold meetings with the highest authority of a country to understand what is happening, it is also the responsibility of party leaders and officials to inform the Foreign Ministry and they should think twice about giving easy access to the foreign diplomats at a time of rapid political developments.

Though time and again political leaders have been calling for a strict imposition of the diplomatic code of conduct. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduced one in 2011 but it never came into implementation.

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Regency Watch

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Dang coal mines have become death traps

A worker's death highlights the dangers of coal mines, where safety measures are flouted and inspection is non-existent.

DURGALAL KC
DANG, FEB 26

Mohanlal Kami was crushed to death when a boulder collapsed on top of him while working in a coal mine at Ramche, Dang on Monday.

The 41-year-old from Tirsang of Ghorahi Sub Metropolitan City-19 was working nearly 160 metres underground at the time of the accident. His three friends who witnessed the accident could not rescue him.

Mohanlal had been working as a coal miner for the last 13 years.

His wife Shanti said it was desperation that drove her husband to work as a miner.

"My husband was working in the mine to earn a livelihood. The day before the incident he had been told that they found water in the tunnel. I had told him not to go but he did not listen," she said.

Tirsang is located on a geographically remote area between the border of Dang and Rolpa districts, 21 km north from the district headquarters.

The place is arid with little farming prospect. As a result most men in the village work in coal mines to support their families.

"There's no other work available in the village. We don't have irrigation facilities here to grow crops. So most of the people work at Ramche coal mine," said Shanti.

There were 15 workers inside the mine on the day Mohanlal lost his life in the accident.

"We could not do anything to save him," said Shovakar Sunar, Mohanlal's friend and a fellow miner.

Harka Gharti, the ward chairman of Ghorahi-19, says Monday's mine accident was a result of the company, Satya Sai Coal Industry, ignoring workers' safety.

"There are no safety measures for work-



Neighbours gather to console the family of Mohanlal Kami killed in Monday's mining accident.

ers. We have been requesting the company to manage helmets, boots and other safety equipment to the workers. But the company has not paid any heed," he said. "After the incident we have asked the company to resume work at the mine without

adopting proper safety measures."

Lumakanta Budhatoki, in charge of Satya Sai Coal Industry, claimed that the company has adopted all safety measures and blamed the workers for not following them.

"It is the workers who do not adopt the safety measures that are already in place," he said. "We have insured all miners and taken all possible measures for their safety."

Satya Sai Coal Industry has agreed to provide Rs 500,000 to Mohanlal's family as compensation.

Miners say despite the risky nature of their job, they are not paid well.

"A worker who digs a quintal of coal makes Rs 140. One can dig up to eight to 10 quintals a day. Other workers who carry coal make Rs 70 per quintal," said Basanta BK, who works at another coal mining site at Tosa of Ghorahi Ward-19.

Coal is being excavated from 12 places at Ghorahi Sub Metropolitan City and Bangalchuli Rural Municipality in Dang.

At least five miners have died and four others have sustained serious injuries in the last 10 years.

Although coal excavation in the district began almost 25 years ago, these mines are not being inspected or monitored.

According to Mines and Minerals Rules, 1999, there should be appropriate safety measures to avoid any accident in a tunnel, well, and pits made in course of excavation of mines.

According to the government policy, the District Coordination Committee in the district should inspect the mines on a regular basis. The inspection team has the right to scrap licence, stop excavation or direct necessary guidelines for excavation if found the ongoing work against the rules and standard.

None of which has happened in Dang coal mines.

"We are preparing to carry out field inspections soon," said Jitendra Man Nepali, chief at District Coordination Committee, when inquired about the situation of coal mines in the district.

What if Supreme ...

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

If the situation returns to the pre-merger, or pre-May 18, 2018 state, Oli is likely to benefit.

The CPN-UML is currently registered at the Election Commission in the name of Sandhya Tiwari. Tiwari is not a known name in politics. A nurse by profession, she is from Biratnagar.

Many believe the CPN-UML was registered at the behest of Oli on August 19 last year and that Tiwari is just a face. If the Nepal Communist Party (NCP)'s status becomes void, Oli can take over the Tiwari-led CPN-UML.

There are also chances that Oli could bring Kattel under his wings and take his Nepal Communist Party, thereby keeping the name, the sun symbol and the party flag.

Analysts say if Oli gets hold of the Tiwari-led UML, that could give him an edge, as former UML leaders who are currently with the Dahal-Nepal faction may come to their "mother party".

This could lead to difficulties for Dahal. He either has to form a new party altogether or he could convince Gopal Kirati, a former Maoist leader who has the CPN (Maoist Centre) under him.

Advocate Dandapani Poudel had on December 7, 2018 registered a writ petition at the Supreme Court, on behalf of Kattel, demanding that the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) led by Oli and Dahal be scrapped as its registration violates Clause 6(e) of the Political Parties Act-2017.

The clause states that a new party cannot be registered if the name and party's emblem resemble those of a party already registered with the Election Commission.

Poudel in his petition claimed that the ruling party had used power to get Nepal Communist Party (NCP) registered even though Nepal Communist Party was already registered in the name of Kattel.

"It's like Oli's dissolution case—there is no legal ground for Oli and Dahal to get the name," Poudel told the Post. "They had abused power and forced the commission to register the Nepal Communist Party by adding NCP within brackets."

The Nepal Communist Party (NCP) legitimacy dispute is currently with the Election Commission, which has not given any verdict, even though the Dahal-Nepal faction has claimed that it should get the party.

With the House reinstated, politics is either likely to get deadlocked or Oli will continue to remain prime minister unless he voluntarily resigns on moral grounds because his dissolution move was overturned by the Supreme Court.

Oli could be removed only if the Dahal-Nepal faction moves a no-confidence motion against him, but unless the Congress backs it, it will fail in the House.

The Dahal-Nepal faction cannot even call a Parliamentary Party meeting, as its leader is Oli and deputy leader Subas Nembang, an aide to Oli.

In a sudden move, Oli on Friday changed the chief whip. He removed Dev Gurung, a leader of the Dahal-Nepal faction, and appointed Bishal Bhattarai.

Lilamani Pokhrel, a Standing Committee member of the Dahal-Nepal faction, said he cannot imagine the Supreme Court awarding the Nepal Communist Party to anyone else except them [Dahal-Nepal faction].

"It's like Oli's House dissolution case. I was always confident that the court would not endorse it," Pokhrel told the Post. "In this case also, I cannot imagine the court will give the name to Kattel."

Gurung, who was ousted by Oli as the chief whip on Friday, said that the Election Commission could ask them to get registered with any other name than Nepal Communist Party (NCP) if the Supreme Court decides in favour of Kattel.

"Yes, conspiracies, however, are going on to revive former CPN-UML and former CPN (Maoist Centre)," Gurung told the Post. "We will see how the situation unfolds."

Experts say it's unclear yet how Oli and Dahal will make their moves in case the court decides in Kattel's favour, which will render the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) null and void. It's too early to say if Oli and Dahal will seek another name for their party or they will go back to the former UML and Maoist Centre, which are registered in the names of Tiwari and Kattel.

Former chief election commissioner Bhojraj Pokharel said the Supreme Court decision on March 4 could work as a future guideline for the Election Commission as well in order for it to be more careful in deciding such cases when party names clash.

"But in the first place, it was the duty of the Election Commission to decide on the matter [back in May 2018]," Pokhrel told the Post. "It was a mistake on the part of the commission to award a party name to [Oli and Dahal] when a party with a similar name had already been registered with the Election Commission."

Kattel, 70, had registered the Nepal Communist Party at the Election Commission in 2013 after his party CPN-Unified split. When the Bamdev Gautam-led CPN-ML decided to rejoin the CPN-UML in 2001, CP Mairali along with Kattel had decided to remain with the CPN-ML.

Kattel joined left politics from the All Nepal National Free Students Union 53 years ago. Since he was a vocal critic of Madan Bhandari's People's Multi-party Democracy, he refused to join the UML even after Gautam went back to the mother party.

Pokharel said it is too early to make any predictions before the Supreme Court passes its decision.

"Let's not project anything to happen earlier but if the court decides in Kattel's favour, an already complicated situation will be further complicated."

Diplomats are meeting political leaders but ...

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"It is as good as dead," said the ministry official.

It is not just the ministry officials but even party leaders that are unaware of what transpires in these meetings.

"Foreign ambassadors and diplomats directly call personal assistants of top party leaders to arrange the meetings and our party leaders do not make public their conversation," Narayan Khakda, a senior Nepali Congress leader who is also the shadow foreign minister, told the Post. "And they don't inform the Foreign Ministry either."

Indian Ambassador Vinaya Mohan Kwatra held a one-on-one meeting with Nepali Congress President Deuba on Thursday, two days after the Supreme Court overturned Oli's House dissolution move. Before Kwatra had reached Deuba's residence, Chinese Ambassador Hou Yanqi and other Chinese diplomats had already held talks with him.

The position of Nepali Congress, with 63 seats in the 275-member House of Representatives, is crucial in the formation of a new government. The Dahal-Nepal faction of the Nepal Communist Party has 88-90 seats while the Oli faction has 82-84 lawmakers. The magic number to form a government, or to pass the no-confidence motion against Oli, is 138.

Some leaders of the Nepali Congress, during a meeting of the office bearers on Thursday wanted to know what had transpired during Deuba's meetings with ambassadors from India and China.

"But Deuba refused to share anything with us," a Nepali Congress leader told the Post on condition of anonymity.

Kwatra also held meetings with Janata Samajbadi Party leaders.

An official at Indian Embassy in Kathmandu told the Post there is nothing new to share with the media about those meetings as these meetings are part of regular engagements from the Indian side.

Besides the government formation equation, the envoys, particularly the Chinese envoy, are also keen to learn about the prospects of unity between the two factions of the Nepal Communist Party, according to sources.

Besides Deuba, Ambassador Hou has also met Finance Minister Bishnu Poudel, Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, Standing Committee member of the Dahal-Nepal faction Janardan Sharma, and others and inquired about the dynamics inside the Nepal Communist Party and making the Chinese preference for unity of the party clear, according to two leaders of the party.

The Chinese ambassador has not been using her official vehicle but going around to meet the leaders in a car with a red number plate used by Nepalis, a senior security official said.

"Some of these meetings are taking place until late night so we are also not able to track and monitor all those meetings," he told the Post on condition of anonymity.

When asked about the ambassador's meetings with party leaders, a spokesperson at the Chinese Embassy said in a text message, "The Chinese side's position is clear and consistent, we want Nepal to maintain political stability and achieve economic development, and the change in domestic political situation of Nepal won't affect China and Nepal friendly relations."

In May and July last year when the crisis within the Nepal Communist Party was at its peak, ambassador Hou and other diplomats in the Chinese Embassy had met with President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, Prime Minister Oli, Chairman of the Nepal Communist Party Pushpa Kamal Dahal and other leaders and stressed the need for party unity.

Although the party practically split with Oli's House dissolution move, its reinstatement by the Supreme Court has come as another opportunity for the Chinese side to press for the two factions to reunite, according to the party's leaders.

"This time Hou is not interested in who will be the prime minister. Her approach that the party unity should remain intact is steadfast," a Nepal Communist Party leader told the Post on condition of anonymity.

A senior leader from the Oli faction of the Nepal Communist Party, who is familiar with the message that the India, China and the US are communicating with the Nepali leadership, told the Post that India and the US are on the same page on matters related to government formation to the unity of Nepal Communist Party while China is pushing hard in its pursuit for party unity.

"India and the US are weighing various options on government formation and quietly following developments inside the NCP as they are much interested in the split of the ruling party and the future strategies of both NCP factions," the leader said on condition of anonymity. "The Chinese are also not confident that the NCP unity will remain intact even after the restoration of the House and therefore their concerns are mainly focused around NCP unification."

But even leaders of the main parties are critical of the

meetings of foreign envoys with their party leaders.

"I have been consistently saying that foreign intervention has significantly increased," Narayan Kaji Shrestha, former foreign minister and spokesperson for the Dahal-Nepal faction of Nepal Communist Party, told the Post. "When the state is weak, the state apparatus is not working properly, and there is political instability, the foreign manoeuvring increases. We are in that stage."

Khakda of Nepali Congress is also concerned about the lack of institutionalisation in the process of meetings between foreign envoys and political leaders.

"There is a certain process that an ambassador should give two to three days for a meeting," said Khakda. "And all meetings between the leaders and diplomats should go through the Foreign Ministry."

In other countries, the presence of Foreign Ministry officials is mandatory in all meetings between party leaders and other government officials with foreign diplomats, Khakda said.

"But in case of Nepal, if the prime minister, President and senior party leaders snub the Foreign Ministry and deal directly with diplomats, what will be the morale of the foreign minister and the Foreign Ministry?" said Khakda.

The onus of ensuring that a system is followed and foreign diplomats are given access lies with the top political leaders, according to Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, former minister and ambassador to India and the US.

"It does not suit our top leadership to ignore the diplomatic code of conduct repeatedly. The way our leaders engage and meet with foreign diplomats, ignoring consultations within domestic actors or within their own political party, is totally against our own interest. It is us who gave the space to the diplomats," Thapa told the Post.

"I do not see any fault of the diplomats because they always try to rub shoulders with top leadership like the PM and others. But the state or the Foreign Ministry should know what has transpired between our leaders and diplomats in those meetings. The Foreign Ministry is mandated to keep records of all meetings, communications and correspondences but it has been failing."

Officials at the Foreign Ministry blame the attitude and culture prevalent in the country.

"Until we change our attitude, culture, behaviour and working style, we will keep on complaining but nothing will be changing," said the joint-secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Who owns the constitution anyway

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Dahal and Congress's Deuba, who was elected party president in March 2016, led the government in turns until the 2017 elections, which then installed Oli in Singha Durbar, making him the custodian of the constitution.

But around three years after assuming office, Oli on December 20, 2020 brazenly assaulted the constitution, which he was elected to protect, by dissolving the House of Representatives.

The subsequent two months were full of uncertainties.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court, through a mandamus order, reinstated the House of Representatives overturning Oli's December 20 move of dissolving the House. The Supreme Court order has been hailed largely as historic, for it helped the constitution prevail.

Political and constitutional experts say though the Supreme Court has helped bring Nepal's politics back within the constitutional framework and saved the constitution from collapsing, it has left more questions for Nepali polity to answer, the foremost being who actually owns Nepal's constitution.

"The constitution continues to be in danger because of a lack of ownership and increasing attacks on it," Rajendra Maharjan, a political commentator and columnist for the Post's sister paper Kantipur, told the Post. "The dissolution was an extreme manifestation of Oli's unconstitutional move. He has been attacking the charter from the very beginning, directly or indirectly."

According to Maharjan, the recent criticism of Oli by Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Nepal over the House dissolution is a farce because they were equally complicit in Oli's assaults on the

constitution.

After Oli's House dissolution move, the Janata Samajbadi Party was quick to take to the streets. The party also called Oli's decision a blatant attack on the constitution and called for protecting it.

On Monday, a day before the Supreme Court passed its verdict on House dissolution, Janata Samajbadi Party chair Upendra Yadav said in Janakpur that they still have reservations about the constitution but protecting it is the need of the hour.

"We had our reservations when the constitution was being pushed and we still have. But this constitution has guaranteed federalism, secularism, inclusion and proportional representation," said Yadav during a book launch. "That's why we have to come forward to safeguard the constitution."

Analysts say the irony over the constitution within five years of its promulgation is uncanny, as those who pushed for it and were chosen to protect it are weakening the charter and those who opposed it are calling themselves the vanguard. This exposes a deep problem, which goes back to the time of its drafting, according to them.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 is the outcome of a seven-year exercise. Why it took two constituent assemblies was largely because of ever-squabbling parties.

Nepali political parties themselves admit that it was the 2015 earthquakes that brought them together to "adopt" a charter at any cost.

And in that rush, analysts say, the philosophy was missing. Since the objective was to have a charter promulgated, it became a document of compromise with technicalities prevailing over philosophy.

CK Lal, a political commentator and a columnist for the Post, said even the parties who called the Constitution of Nepal "the world's best" have failed to own it up wholeheartedly.

"The constitution became a stepping stone to power (government) for the then UML, a platform for the Maoists to embrace mainstream politics and all that the Nepali Congress wanted was credit for promulgating the statute," said Lal.

According to Lal, the present constitution lacks the guiding principle which is the foundation of any constitution.

"Without a guiding principle, the constitution is just a set of laws and bylaws," Lal told the Post. "The constitution without foundation is weak which can be misused easily."

The 2015 constitution guarantees some important features like secularism, federalism and republicanism in an attempt to effect socio-economic transformation, but as a whole, it lacks the political philosophy. As a result, it has a more legalistic approach.

"For instance, the American constitution has life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as its guiding principles. Satyameva Jayate is the guiding principle of the Indian constitution," said Lal. "But the Nepal constitution is devoid of such ethos."

Analysts say a constitution must be read in conjunction with the debate in the Constituent Assembly so that the justification of the values incorporated in the charter can be well understood and explained.

This is why lawyers during the hearing against Oli's House dissolution called on justices to look to legislative intent. The lawyers were arguing that the framers of the constitution had deliberately deprived the prime min-

ister of the right to dissolve the House.

This then raised the question of authorship of the constitution.

Subas Nembang who chaired the Constituent Assembly for both terms and oversaw the entire constitution-drafting process chose not to speak a single word on Oli's House dissolution decision. A video clip of Nembang had gone viral in which he is heard clearly saying that the constitution does not allow the prime minister to dissolve the House. Agni Kharel, one of the drafters of the constitution who is the incumbent attorney general, was defending Oli's House dissolution, which the court ultimately called unconstitutional.

Analysts say a constitution can get wider acceptability only when there is authorship and ownership.

In Nepal's case, both are missing.

It's the drafters of the constitution who should come forward to explain how, when they decided to guide Nepali society and polity by a set of values through the constitution, there was a corresponding set of reasons.

Analysts say the recent turn of events has exposed the shaky ground on which Nepal's constitution stood since the day it came into being. However, weaknesses and shortcomings of the constitution could have been addressed had the custodians and those elected to implement it had shown sincerity, according to them.

Many say what BR Ambedkar, who is known as the father Indian constitution, once said resonates even in the Nepali context.

"However good a constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad. However bad a Constitution may be, if those implementing it are good, it

will prove to be good," Ambedkar said in his final speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949.

Ambedkar stressed the need to work towards a social, not just political, democracy.

Dinesh Tripathi, a senior advocate, said constitution writing is one thing, and constitution building is another.

"A good ruler turns a bad constitution into a good one through its positive implementation," said Tripathi. "However, bad rulers, like in our case, look for loopholes and lacunas to attack it."

According to experts, a constitution is a living document, and it can be amended as per the need and time. But when the custodians start assaulting the charter, its usefulness comes into question, according to them.

Vijay Kant Karnu, a professor of political science at Tribhuvan University, said it was the collective duty of those who championed the cause of the constitution, despite dissenting voices from a large section of the society, to protect it.

"Oli, however, was not the right person from the very beginning for the role to play as the custodian of the constitution," Karnu told the Post. "Oli's actions show he pushed for the constitution in 2015 only to use it as a means to get to power."

According to Maharjan, the political commentator, increasing attacks on the constitution could take away the progressive achievements.

"Federalism, secularism and republicanism are salient features of this constitution," said Maharjan. "Constant pressure must be built for the ownership as well as wider acceptability of the constitution."

EXPLAINED

Everything you need to know about Nepal's carbon trade deal

Nepal will receive \$5 for every tonne of carbon dioxide emission reduced as country embarks on earning up to Rs5 billion by selling 9 million tonnes of CO2 by 2025.



Nepal, home to 6.61 million hectares of forests and other wooded lands, has the potential to generate revenue from carbon financing by participating in the REDD+ programme.

CHANDAN KUMAR MANDAL
KATHMANDU, FEB 26

On Thursday, the government signed a multi-million dollar agreement with the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), a global partnership of governments, business organisations, civil society, and indigenous groups' organisation for reducing emissions by protecting forests.

Under the scheme, Nepal can potentially access up to US\$45 million (approximately Rs5 billion) by 2025 to mitigate its emissions by implementing activities as per the UN mechanism called 'Reducing Emissions through Deforestation and Degradation' (REDD).

Here is everything you need to know about the latest agreement and its significance:

Why was Nepal selected for reducing its emission levels?

As a least developed country, Nepal is eligible to sell carbon to developed countries that want to offset their emissions under the Reducing Emissions through Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) programme.

For reducing emissions, countries implement a collection of actions (commonly referred to as REDD+).

The REDD+ is a framework created by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's Conference of the Parties (COP) to guide activities in the forest sector to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and to enhance forest carbon stock, adopt sustainable land use management in developing countries.

In exchange for their contribution to bringing down emissions, countries such as Nepal are given a certain amount of money.

"Nepal's Emission Reductions Program builds on more than three decades of successful community forestry," said Faris Hadad-Zervos, the World Bank's Nepal Country Director. "The emissions reduction purchase is one pillar of a strategic program on forest landscapes and climate action in Nepal. This innovative financing agreement will address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, helping incentivise further community action across the country."

Nepal had submitted a proposal for its project, 'People and Forests: A Sustainable Forest Management-Based Emission Reduction Program in the Terai Arc Landscape, Nepal' to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Carbon Fund in 2018.

Why does it matter?

Nepal is the fifth country in the Asia-Pacific and 12th in the world to sign such a milestone agreement with the FCPE. The agreement has been touted as a landmark achievement for the country as this would be the first financial support for Nepal for keeping its emissions low.

"This scale of results-based payments for emission reductions is a first for Nepal," said Finance Secretary Sishir Kumar Dhungana.

Nepal, home to 6.61 million hectares of forests and other wooded lands (44.74 percent of the total area), has the potential to generate revenue from carbon financing by participating in the REDD+ programme. Nepal has been working for several years to become eligible for carbon trading or generate revenue by selling carbon stored in its forests.

"Nepal had been working on it for at least ten years as part of the preparation for carbon trading. The signing of the agreement is a landmark event in our pursuit of carbon trade, a sig-

nificant achievement," said Buddhi Sagar Poudel, chief of the REDD Implementation Centre under the Ministry of Forests and Environment. "A lot of work has happened in the last ten year; therefore, we could reach this level and make our claims for carbon trade."

What are the works Nepal has done to be eligible for carbon trading?

According to Poudel, preparations have been made mainly in four sectors. First, the government prepared a REDD+ Strategy in 2018 to guide the development of a set of policies and programmes that address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. For the implementation of the REDD+ Strategy, various 75 activities were outlined.

In 2018, Nepal submitted proposal to the World Bank to implement the scheme.

The government also developed the Emission Reduction Program Document (ERPD), a 253-page proposal, which will be a guiding document for implementing activities under the new agreement. It also prepared the Safeguards Information System for meeting social and environmental safeguards for promoting gender and indigenous issues as well as preserving indigenous knowledge while implementing the REDD, among others. The government also completed the national forest reference emissions level and measurement, reporting, and verification of carbon stocked in its forests.

How will Nepal reduce emissions to access benefits as per the carbon trade agreement?

The government will implement various activities at a sub-national scale in 13 districts of the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL), west of the Bagmati.

"Forests in the Terai region provide ecosystem services that are critical for climate resilience, including watershed protection, and drought and flood mitigation," said Bishwa Nath Oli, Secretary at the Ministry of Forests and Environment. "This programme will help protect forests that are inextricably linked to the well-being of many communities here and across the country."

For accessing revenues, Nepal needs to either cut down emissions or increase carbon stock in the forest.

"We have two ways to reduce carbon-dioxide levels. Either we control activities that increase the emission of gases or speed up carbon sequestration, the process of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and capturing it elsewhere, for example, forests," said Poudel. "Only then can we get the revenue for reducing carbon-dioxide emissions. Carbon trade is not alike giving or receiving money for selling any commodity, but it's about incentivising our efforts to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions."

For estimating the national forest reference emission level, a baseline study was conducted to measure the carbon-dioxide emissions from forests in the country. According to Poudel, the net carbon-dioxide emission of the country was 1.2 million tonnes every year.

"We can either control emissions through afforestation or by controlling

deforestation and degradation of forest areas," said Poudel. "Therefore, as per the existing mechanism, we would get revenue from emission reduction from activities like not letting wildfire incidents occur or increasing carbon stock by increasing forest cover or improving our degraded forests. Both ways work."

What are the targets under the new agreement?

With this Emission Reductions Payment Agreement (ERPA) in place, Nepal is expected to reduce 9 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions in the Terai Arc Landscape. For each tonne of carbon-dioxide emission reduced, Nepal will receive \$5 in return.

According to estimates, forest cover in 13 districts can reduce 34 million tonnes of carbon-dioxide between 2018-2028. Out of which, 23 percent (7.9 million tonnes) can not be sold as they are kept as a buffer.

"In case there is a forest fire, then we may end up releasing more carbon dioxide as well as losing the stocked carbon," said Poudel. "Therefore, we can not commit to selling all the carbon."

Of the remaining 26 million tonnes, which is estimated to be reduced between the 2018-2028 period, only 10 million tonnes are likely to be available between 2018-2025 when the agreement ends. Hence, the government has signed the agreement to only trade 9 million tonnes of carbon-dioxide for now.

How does Nepal plan to achieve the target?

For achieving the targets, Nepal has outlined seven activities. The country will work towards improving management practices in existing community-based forest management. Likewise, officials plan to transfer national forests to communities that can work on restoring them. It shall also support and promote private sector forests. According to Poudel, nearly 30,000 hectares of private forests exist in 13 districts. The government also aims to encourage the use of alternative energy resources as well as work on leasehold forests. Likewise, it plans to improve integrated land use planning to reduce forest conversion for infrastructure development and promote better management of existing protected areas in the country.

"The government will also work towards minimising haphazard development which ends up adversely impacting forests," said Poudel. "Also, we can't forget the protected areas. The government can not only focus on protecting forests outside while protected parks experience degradation of forests."

When and how the carbon stock will be measured?

For receiving the revenue from carbon financing, the stock of carbon will be measured twice—once in 2021 and then in 2025, the final year of the agreement—for determining how Nepal has reduced its carbon-dioxide emissions through the REDD programme.

According to Poudel, the carbon absorbed in the forests does not equal carbon-dioxide emissions, as a ton of carbon can produce 3.67 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

"We have sold one tonne of carbon dioxide, not carbon, at \$5," said Poudel.

Will Nepal get all the \$45 million revenue by 2025?

Although the government and the World Bank have signed the agreement unlocking the potential to get \$45 million in revenue from carbon trade, the country may not get the whole amount. The amount quoted is maximum Nepal can receive under the programme.

"This is completely a result-based trade and depends upon how much we can deliver," said Poudel. "For example, one is paid as much as they produce. But with business as usual, it will be difficult to secure the entire funds."

What will happen to the rest of the carbon stored then?

The World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), launched in 2008, has worked with 47 developing countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and the Caribbean, along with 17 donors that have made contributions and commitments totaling US\$1.3 billion. But this setup will be phased out in 2025. Then, countries like Nepal will have to find another buyer for their stock of carbon.

"Either we have to find new buyers to sell our carbon absorbed through REDD or wait for the same mechanism to continue so that we can again trade with the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)," said Poudel.

A year of pandemic teaches a lot, but lessons not learned

Public health experts say the Covid-19 crisis exposed a lot of weaknesses, which could be used as an opportunity to improve and prepare for the future.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, FEB 26

At least two new coronavirus variants—N440K and E48K—are spreading faster in some states of India in recent days, after a consistent decline in new cases. Along with that, several cases of new variants first detected in the United Kingdom, Brazil and South Africa have also been recorded in India.

However, authorities in Nepal have decided to enforce mandatory quarantine for five days to only those arriving from the United Kingdom and South Africa.

Over 2,000 people return to the country via the international airport and thousands of others enter from India via various land crossings every day.

"The pandemic, which started a year ago, exposed a lot of our weaknesses," Dr Anup Subedee, an infectious disease expert, told the Post. "We could have used the pandemic as an opportunity to strengthen our system and improve our weaknesses but I think our preparation level is not different from before the start of the pandemic."

Nepal had recorded three cases of a fast spreading new variant of the coronavirus, the one identified in the United Kingdom in December.

The Epidemiology and Disease Control Division said that at least 13 suspected cases of the new variant have been found in Kathmandu and Pokhara. Samples of those people, who came in close contact with the people returning from abroad, were found positive in the polymerase chain reaction tests but negative for s-gene targets.

S-gene target or spike protein is one of the key biological characteristics of SARS-CoV-2, which enables the virus to penetrate host cells and cause infections.

Without spike protein, the coronavirus cannot infect people but doctors say that if the polymerase chain reaction tests are failing to detect the spike proteins in the swab samples of the

infected people or negative s-gene target, there is a possibility that the virus may have undergone mutations or the virus could be of a different variant than the one commonly found in the country.

"But no one is monitoring the mutation of virus variants within the country or those that might have come from abroad," an official at the Department of Health Services, told the Post, asking not to be named. "We have asked people who return from abroad to stay in home quarantine but no agency is monitoring if those people have been following the instructions or not."

Doctors say officials should have set up whole-genome sequencing facilities at state-run labs.

New cases of Covid-19 have seen a steady decline over the past months. But doctors say that negligence towards the risks could be too costly for the nation.

"We should not forget that countries which have successfully contained the spread of infections have been forced to reinforce restrictions due to a rise in new cases caused by new variants," Dr Sameer Mani Dixit, director of research at the Center for Molecular Dynamics Nepal, told the Post. "We cannot rule out that such conditions will not repeat in our country. But I think we are not prepared for a rise in new infections or another pandemic."

Doctors say there is a chance for the country acquiring infections seen in any corner of the globe due to people's movement. And even if the pandemic continues, there is a chance of several emerging diseases spreading in the country.

"This is not the first and nor last pandemic but it exposed our weaknesses, and the capacity of our healthcare care system," added Dixit. "It taught an important lesson that when a contagious disease spreads throughout the country, everything gets affected and we need to be prepared."


The coronavirus pandemic not only infected and killed the people but it also hit the health care system hard. Most of the achievements made over the years in health care sectors—maternal health, child health, nutrition, tuberculosis and mental health among others—have been affected.


"The ongoing pandemic teaches us what kind of preparation is needed to deal with a potential new infection, and what kind of alternative arrangements should be made to continue other health services," Dr Keshav Deuba, a public health epidemiologist, told the Post. "But I think we will suffer the same consequences, if a second wave of the coronavirus comes or any other new infection spreads."

Doctors say the government should have set up whole-genome sequencing technology at state facilities and shown concern to use the technology available at private centres. Instead of dismantling isolation and quarantine facilities, they should have been improved. Health workers should be trained and prepared psychologically to handle cases, and polymerase chain reaction test laboratories should be utilised properly.

"Active case findings are important not only at present but also in future, which should be done on a regular basis," added Deuba. "We should focus on it. Awareness also plays an important role in the success of any programme, authorities should pay attention to it."

Experts say separate mechanisms should be created to deal with major epidemics and pandemics, as the existing multiple layers did not work properly for various reasons.






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WORLD

BRIEFING

Indian coast guard rescues 81 Rohingya on drifting boat

NEW DELHI/DHAKA: India's coast guard found 81 survivors and eight dead on a boat crammed with Rohingya refugees adrift in the Andaman Sea, an Indian foreign ministry official said on Friday, adding the survivors would not be allowed to enter Indian territory. Another refugee was missing, External Affairs Ministry spokesman Anurag Srivastava said on Thursday, giving news of the rescue. The United Nations refugee agency had raised the alarm earlier this week over the missing boat, which had set off on February 11 from Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, where refugee camps have been established for hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled neighbouring Myanmar. After four days at sea the boat's engine failed, and those on board had run out of food and water, Srivastava said. Many were ill and suffering from extreme dehydration by the time they were rescued.

US strikes on militias in Syria kill at least one fighter

BAGHDAD: US air strikes against Iran-backed militias in eastern Syria killed at least one fighter and wounded several others in what US officials said was a calibrated response to rocket attacks against American personnel in Iraq. The attacks, which took place early on Friday Middle Eastern time, were deliberately limited in scope and designed to show that President Joe Biden's administration will act tough but wants to avoid a major regional escalation, US officials said. Washington and Tehran are seeking maximum leverage in attempts to return to the Iran nuclear deal secured in 2015 but abandoned by former President Donald Trump in 2018, after which regional tensions soared and fears of full-scale conflict grew. The US strikes targeted militia sites on the Syrian side of the Iraqi-Syrian border, where groups backed by Iran control an important crossing for weapons, personnel and goods. Western officials and some Iraqi officials accuse Iran-backed groups of involvement in deadly rocket attacks against US sites and personnel in Iraq in the last month.

Widow of slain Italian envoy says he was 'betrayed'

ROME: The Italian ambassador killed in an ambush in the Democratic Republic of Congo while travelling on a UN convoy was "betrayed" by someone close to the family, his widow said in an interview published on Friday. Luca Attanasio, 43, was shot dead on Monday after unidentified assailants ambushed a two-vehicle convoy from the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) in the eastern North Kivu province, near the Rwanda border. The ambassador's bodyguard from Italy's Carabinieri police forces, Vittorio Iacovacci, 30, and a Congolese WFP driver, Mustapha Milambo, 56, were also killed. "Luca was betrayed by someone close to us, to our family," Attanasio's wife, Zakiya Seddiki, told Italian newspaper Il Messaggero. "Someone who knew his movements has spoken, has sold him out and betrayed him," she said without giving more detail as investigations are under way. Attanasio, who had been Italy's chief diplomat in Kinshasa since 2017, lived in the capital with Seddiki and their three daughters. (AGENCIES)



Dancers perform near the burning Daljips, a wooden hut, to celebrate the first full moon of the Lunar New Year, in Siheung, South Korea, on Friday.

A year after first case, Brazil hurtles past 250,000 Covid-19 deaths

Virus spreads to Brazil's vast interior as people move freely across the continent-sized country, experts say.

REUTERS

RIO DE JANEIRO, FEB 26

One year after the first confirmed case of the coronavirus in Brazil, Latin America's biggest country has passed 250,000 Covid-19 deaths, with the virus still spreading freely as a national vaccination drive struggles to gain momentum.

President Jair Bolsonaro, a far-right populist who has railed against lockdown measures while saying he will not take any Covid-19 vaccine, has been criticised for his response to the virus.

Brazil has the world's second-highest Covid-19 death toll after the United States, and over 10.3 million confirmed cases, the third-highest outbreak behind the United States and India.

The highly contagious respiratory disease has killed 251,498 people in Brazil, the Health Ministry reported on Thursday evening, tallying 1,541 deaths in the past 24 hours.

The situation in Brazil appears to be deteriorating, thanks to a new variant that researchers believe is more contagious. Over the past two weeks, Brazil has recorded the highest daily average of coronavirus deaths since the start of the pandemic - nearly 1,100 - exceeding the previous peak at the end of July.

"The virus is circulating without any control," said Christovam Barcellos, of the country's federally funded Fiocruz biomedical institute, which is manufacturing Brazil's allotment of the AstraZeneca



A woman at the burial of her aunt who passed away due to Covid-19 in Manaus, Brazil.

Half of Israel's population receives vaccine dose

JERUSALEM: Israel has administered at least one Covid-19 vaccine shot to 50 percent of its population, while 35 percent have received the full two-dose course, Health Minister Yuli Edelstein said on Friday.

Israel counts East Jerusalem Palestinians, who have been included in the vaccine campaign that began on December 19, as part of the 9.3 million population. Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip are not part of the Israeli campaign.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu aims to vaccinate all Israelis over the age of 16 by the end of March - when he is up for re-election. He says that would allow for a post-pandemic reopening of the country in April. But the Health Ministry has been worried by waning turnout for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

To counteract this, it has been limiting access to some leisure sites that have reopened only to fully vaccinated people. (Reuters)

Covid-19 vaccine.

Brazil is experiencing "a second plateau," he said. "It's not a second wave, because we've been over five weeks with 1,000 deaths per day."

The virus is now spreading mainly through cities in Brazil's vast interior, officials say, aided by a lack of national or even local lockdowns, which means Brazilians are moving freely across the continent-sized country.

That has been crucial for the spread of the new variant from Amazonas state, which has caused international alarm and led to a frosty reception for

Brazil has world's second-highest death toll and 10.3 million confirmed cases.

Brazilians hoping to travel internationally. According to the Health Ministry, the new strain has been identified in at least 17 Brazilian states.

After a slow and politically turbulent start, Brazil has managed to begin vaccinations, with over 7.5 million shots given so far in a country of more than 210 million people.

The Covid-19 vaccine developed by China's Sinovac Biotech, currently Brazil's main tool to slow the virus, is effective against the UK and South African variants, the vaccine's Brazilian partner said last week.

Police fire into air to disperse protests as lawyer to Suu Kyi says access denied

REUTERS

YANGON, FEB 26

Police dispersed protesters in Myanmar's two biggest cities on Friday, firing stun grenades, rubber bullets and guns into the air, witnesses said, as the challenge to the army's bid to re-impose its rule showed no sign of slackening.

At least one person was injured in the protests in the main city of Yangon, a witness said, and a photograph posted by a media outlet from the second city of Mandalay appeared to show a wounded protester in the back of an ambulance.

Police were not immediately available for comment.

The Southeast Asian nation has been in crisis since the army seized power on February 1 and detained civilian government leader Aung San Suu Kyi and much of her party leadership after the military complained of fraud in a November election that her party won.

A lawyer for Suu Kyi, who is being held under house arrest, complained that he had not been granted access to her, three days before she is due to return to court, adding that it would undermine her right to a fair hearing.

There have been daily protests and strikes by democracy supporters for about three weeks, often drawing hundreds of thousands of people across the diverse country.

In Yangon, hundreds of mostly young people congregated again on Friday but they largely melted away when police prepared to move in.

Small groups gathered in other places to chant slogans and confront lines of riot police who later fired stun grenades and guns into the air to send people scattering.

"One house let me in to hide," journalist Thu Zar told Reuters from the scene. "I can't leave yet as the police are very near and firing into the air."

A short time earlier, several people were detained, witnesses said, among them a Japanese journalist, a colleague said. Domestic media and witnesses reported a similar situation in Mandalay where police also fired rubber bullets. It was not clear how the wounded man in the photograph was hurt.

Security forces have been more restrained than they were during earlier bouts of protest in the course of nearly half a century of military rule.

Military chief General Min Aung Hlaing says authorities were using minimal force. Nevertheless, at least three protesters and a policeman have been killed.

The army has promised a new election but has not set a date. A vote is not expected until after a one-year state of emergency the military imposed when it seized power.

Suu Kyi, 75, has been detained incommunicado in the capital, Naypyitaw, but her party and the throngs of protesters say its November election victory must be respected and the junta must hand back power.

The daughter of Myanmar's independence hero spent nearly 15 years under house arrest for her efforts to end military rule. She now faces charges of illegally importing six walkie-talkie radios and of violating a natural disaster law by breaching coronavirus protocols.

From India's hinterlands to Hollywood: How farmers galvanised protest movement



Police detain a leader of Kisan Congress during a protest against new farm laws in New Delhi.

REUTERS

NEW DELHI, FEB 26

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is struggling to beat back his biggest political challenge in years from a protest movement which began with disgruntled farmers travelling to New Delhi and is now gaining wider support at home and abroad.

Simmering in makeshift camps housing tens of thousands of farmers since last year, the movement has seen a dramatic growth in recent weeks.

At its heart are three new farm laws passed by the government last September, thanks to the majority Modi's right-wing BJP enjoys in the lower house of parliament.

"To frame this narrowly as agricultural frustration wouldn't explain the scale of what we are seeing," said Neelanjan Sircar, a political science professor at Ashoka University.

"This is about some larger frustration with how the government conducts business."

Led by farmers from India's northern

Punjab state, the movement has spread to the country's northern and western farm belts.

The new farm laws allow private retailers to buy farm goods directly from growers, circumventing India's government-controlled wholesale markets. For over 60 years, Indian farmers have been selling grain to the government at state-guaranteed prices through these wholesale markets, and they say the new laws leave them at the mercy of large private retailers.

More recently, a wave of global support for the protests has complicated matters further for the Modi government.

Pop superstar Rihanna, Swedish climate change crusader Greta Thunberg and US activist Meena Harris, the niece of US Vice-President Kamala Harris, all tweeted in support of the farmers this month, drawing a rebuke from India's foreign ministry.

The subsequent arrest of Disha Ravi, a 22-year-old environmental activist linked to Thunberg, on sedition charges for creating and sharing an online document about the protests has only galvanised international support, advocacy groups say.

South Asian advocacy groups in the US and Britain say they are lobbying those respective governments to pressure India to stop coming down hard on farmers and their supporters.

"We are pushing for more action from the US government - particularly Congress - especially in the weeks ahead," said Satjeet Kaur, executive director of The Sikh Coalition in New York.

India, China foreign ministers to set up hotline as border crisis eases

REUTERS

NEW DELHI, FEB 26

India and China have agreed to set up a hotline between their foreign ministers as the two nuclear-armed neighbours look to reduce tensions along a disputed Himalayan border where their troops have been locked in confrontation since last summer.

The decision was reached at a lengthy call between the two foreign ministers on Thursday, India's foreign ministry said in a statement on Friday, adding that New Delhi was pushing for an quick resolution to the border crisis.

"A prolongation of the existing situation was not in the interest of either side," India's foreign ministry said in a statement citing the conversation between Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and China's Wang Yi.

On Sunday, both countries said their troops had pulled out from a lake

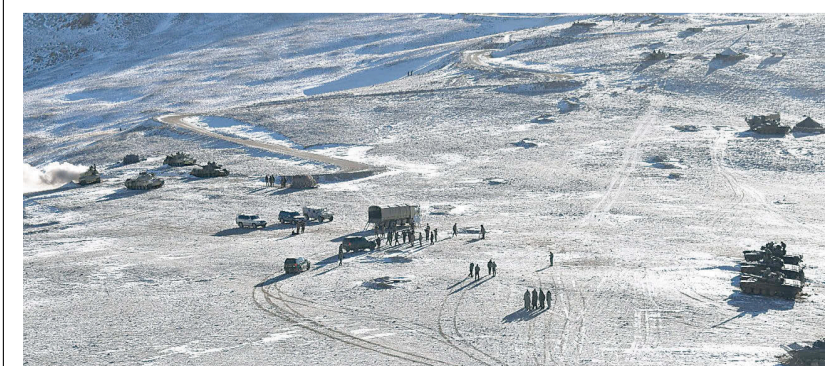
area in the western Himalayan region of Ladakh, where thousands of soldiers backed by tanks and artillery have been facing off since April.

As per an agreement announced by India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in February, the two countries will now hold talks to end close proximity deployments in other parts of Ladakh.

"Once disengagement is completed at all friction points, then the two sides could also look at broader de-escalation of troops in the area and work towards restoration of peace and tranquility," the foreign ministry statement said.

The standoff in Ladakh began last April, when India said Chinese soldiers had intruded deep into its side of the Line of Actual Control, or the de facto border.

China said its troops were operating in its own area, accusing Indian soldiers of provocative actions.



A handout photo released by Indian Army on February 16 shows the disengagement process between Indian Army and China's People's Liberation Army in Ladakh.

विमालेख हराएको सूचना
डोटीको बुढरदेखि भि.न.पा.-१४, कञ्चनपुर आउँदा मेरो निम्न व्यहोराको विमालेख हराएकाले पाउनुहुने महानुभावले नजिकको प्रहरी चौकी वा तलको ठेगानामा सम्पर्क गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु।
नाम : दिपक कुँवर
विमालेख नं. : ७०२०००००१४६
हराएको मिति : २०७७/११/०६
संस्थाको नाम : Citizen Life Insurance
सम्पर्क नं. : ९८००६७७३३/९८३३९६०८०८

बिमालेख हरायो
मिति २०७७/११/१० गते दाइदेखि काठमाण्डौसम्म जाँदा मेरो लाईफ इन्स्योरेन्स कर्पोरेसन (नेपाल) लिमिटेडको विमालेख हराएको हुँदा पाउनु हुने महानुभावहरूले नजिकको प्रहरी कार्यालय वा फोन नं. ९८४१७०२३२९ मा खबर गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु।
नाम: प्रमुराम चौधरी
विमालेख नं.: १५०००८२०६
ठेगाना: चैलाही-७, दाइ

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It is notified for the information there my original qualifying Examination certification main. Examination of year 2017 and Roll No SSCE/2017/1142581, Mig/2017/0960696, 9300077B, TC 25/2017-18 issued by CBSE has been actually lost.
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Chatamangalam, Calicut, India

FOREX	
US	117.85
Euro	142.92
Pound	164.29
Australian	92.06
Japanese	11.08
Chinese	18.23
Saudi	31.42
Qatari	32.36
Malaysian	29.1

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Source: Nepal Oil Corporation

BIZLINE

Ananek becoming go-to place for beauty, makeover services



Actor Manisha Koirala and Ananek CEO Surveen Bantawa at the launch of one of the branches in Kathmandu.

KATHMANDU: Ananek Beauty Salon and Spa is fast evolving into the go-to place for beauty and makeover services. The establishment has already opened several branches inside Kathmandu Valley and one in Pokhara. Ananek offers a range of beauty and spa services from its highly experienced team of beauticians and makeup artists. Surveen Bantawa, the CEO of Ananek, believes in style. For him makeup and styling is more than a part of one's wardrobe but something that can bring out their confidence. He started the business with the vision of taking the country's beauty industry to a new height. At Ananek, there are amenities and beauty prescriptions which are not available in other beauty salons. And the place is being talked about in the town. "Surveen and his team are really laborious and that's the main reason for their success," says actor Manisha Koirala. Captain Vijay Lama claims the Ananek is to be the best spas in the country while actor Deepashree Niraula says the place offers the best hospitality. Miss Nepal 2020 Namrata Shrestha is also an admirer of the place and its staff members. "Ananek has definitely come a long way... love the hospitality at the place." (PK)

Huge price differential triggers cross-border fuel smuggling

Nepal and India share an 1,800-km open border with more than three dozen motorable crossing points.

KRISHANA PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, FEB 26

Gasoline station owner Mukesh Kumar of Adapur in the Indian state of Bihar said he was being undercut by cheap contraband fuel from Nepal, with his daily petrol sales plunging from 1,300 to 200 litres.

According to Indian media reports, many motorists, particularly in Bihar, are filling up at roadside vendors who get their supply from border-hopping locals who smuggle petrol and diesel in jerry cans from Nepal because of the huge price differential.

Residents owning a motorcycle or car are engaged in the lucrative trade, the report said, dashing back and forth across the border throughout the day.

Fuel prices in India are currently the highest in South Asia. Petrol costs upwards of IRs100 (Rs160 Nepali currency) per litre in India while it is available in the Nepali border town of Birgunj for Rs112.50 per litre.

Diesel costs IRs86.57 (Rs138.51) in India and Rs97 per litre in Kathmandu.

The Post's calculation, based on Friday's price lists in Nepal and India, shows that petrol is cheaper by Rs46 per litre in Nepal than in India. Likewise, diesel costs Rs41 less in the Nepali market.

According to The Times of India, petrol pump owners in Raxaul, Adapur, Chauradano, Ghorasahan and Kundwa-Chainpur in Bihar are claiming heavy losses due to smuggling of petroleum products from Nepal. Smugglers are particularly active in two dozen Indian border villages—like Bhiritarwa, Basantpur, Semarwari, Bhaluwahiya and Bhagha in Uttar Pradesh—where there is no checking.

According to reports, in Ghorasahan and Chauradano villages alone, there are more than three dozen boys acting as couriers, each earning IRs1,000 daily. They buy petrol at Rs113 per litre in Nepal, and sell it for Rs145 per litre across the border in India.

There is rampant gasoline smuggling from Nepal, but Nepal Oil Corporation says they have recorded 'no huge' sales trends at petrol pumps on the southern border.

Nepal and India share an 1,800-km open border with more than three dozen motorable crossing points.

Surendra Poudel, executive director of the state-owned oil monopoly, denied there was widespread smuggling of petroleum products.

"We have compared the data. We don't see vast differences in sales com-



Petrol being smuggled to India from Nepal. Fuel prices in India are currently the highest in South Asia.

pared to last year at the southern border points," he told the Post. "If there was rampant smuggling, it would be reflected in the sales figures."

Poudel said that smuggling was not happening in an organised way, but said owners of two- and four-wheelers were engaged in gasoline peddling.

Consumer rights activists said smuggling could create a fuel shortage in the Nepali market. They said that if the illegal trade was not checked immediately, the corporation's losses could balloon as it would need to purchase more oil which it has been selling at subsidised prices.

Madhav Timalina, president of the Consumer Rights Investigation Forum, said that smuggling could create an artificial fuel shortage in Nepal, and it should be controlled by the local administration.

As Nepal is going through a fluid political situation, a short supply in the domestic market could create another problem, he said.

"The smuggling needs to be controlled immediately."

The state-owned oil supplier has already hiked fuel prices thrice in one month, based on the tariff sent by its sole supplier India Oil Corporation.

On January 18, Nepal Oil raised the price of diesel by Rs2 per litre to Rs93 per litre. In February, the price was raised twice—Rs2 per litre each time on February 10 and February 17. Diesel now costs Rs97 per litre.

While Nepal imports all petroleum products from India, based on five-year supply agreements between the two neighbours, why are they so expensive in India compared to Nepal?

Rising international crude oil prices is one factor. Crude oil crossed \$60 per barrel for the first time this year. Another reason is India's heavy taxation policy, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Indian media reports, taxes on petrol and diesel are higher than 61 and 56 percent respectively.

Indian Union Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan explained that the central and state governments rely heavily on collections from taxes on crude oil 'for meeting their developmental and welfare priorities'.

"They need some resources... (and) this [taxing petrol and diesel] has been a proven and substantial route by all the governments, whether state governments or the central government," he said. "Both the states and the central government are raising taxes according to their developmental needs."

According to Poudel, the tax structure is very high in India. In Nepal, petrol and diesel are taxed at the rate of 48 and 39 percent respectively.

Nepal Oil Corporation estimates that its fortnightly losses on the sale of petroleum products amount to Rs867.8 million. That means, the subsidies on petrol and diesel come to

Rs5.82 and Rs4.13 per litre respectively. In a bid to stop the illegal flow of fuel to India, the government enterprise issued a work plan on February 19 and circulated it to all its regional offices in Biratnagar, Amlekhgunj, Thankot, Bhairahawa, Surkhet and Dhangadhi; fuel depots in Nepalgunj and Janakpur; and branch offices in Birgunj and Charali.

As per the work plan, each regional office has to conduct sales inspections of petrol pumps located up to 5 km north of the Nepal-India border. Company officials are required to inspect at least five petrol pumps in the border areas.

Further, its depots are barred from selling fuel exceeding their capacity; and if they do so, they need to obtain permission from the head office in Kathmandu.

The work plan also says that petrol and diesel should not be sold in drums, jerry cans or other fuel containers in the border areas.

Gasoline stations located on the Nepal-India border can refill an automobile's fuel tank only, and sales to large Indian vehicles have been capped at 100 litres. Petrol pumps violating the rules will face action under the Petroleum Product Bylaw 2018.

Consumer rights activists and even Nepal Oil Corporation officials say that despite these measures, the lucrative oil smuggling business has not stopped.

G20 finance chiefs meet on Covid recovery, aid to poor countries

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MILAN, FEB 26

G20 finance ministers and central bankers were meeting on Friday to align plans to relaunch the global economy after the coronavirus pandemic and to limit the harm to the worst-off nations shut out of the race for vaccines.

The video conference, which Italy was chairing as G20 president, is the first such meeting in post for US President Joe Biden's new Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who is expected to be far less confrontational than Donald Trump's representatives at past gatherings.

"With the new American administration, it will certainly be easier to reach a deal" for increased aid to poorer nations, international economy professor Lucia Tajoli of Milan's Polytechnic business school told AFP.

But while "Joe Biden's approach to international cooperation is much more open... it won't be easy to gather funds given the economic crisis hitting many countries," she added.

Washington urges wealthy countries to launch a global vaccine campaign.

On Thursday, Washington urged wealthy G20 countries to launch a truly global, coordinated vaccination campaign.

"Without access to vaccines, low-income countries in particular will experience further tragic loss of life and needlessly delay their economic recoveries," Yellen wrote in an open letter to her G20 finance counterparts.

Yellen also signalled openness to issuing new so-called Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) at the International Monetary Fund to worse-off countries, reversing a Trump position.

Several G20 countries have already suggested the move, after the financial instruments—which can be exchanged for US dollars, euros, Chinese renminbi, Japanese yen or British pounds—

proved their worth as crisis firefighting tools in 2009.

Financial crisis-era SDR allocations amounted to around half the \$500 billion now under discussion.

But a source close to the Italian presidency dampened expectations of a quick deal, saying "it is premature to talk about a sum" as "the decision on the SDR can only be taken after the [IMF] has made a proposal."

Last year, the G20 also agreed a pause in debt interest payments for the poorest countries, extending it until June 30 this year.

However, the impact of this initiative "hasn't been as broad an impact as had been hoped. The private sector didn't participate in it and, in many parts of the world, the China Development Bank has not been participating," the President of the World Bank, David Malpass, told Italy's La Stampa newspaper.

In November, the G20 finance ministers also agreed a framework for reducing debt burdens.

So far Chad, Zambia and Ethiopia have asked for their debt to be restructured.

China pineapple ban sparks sour rebuke from Taiwan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TAIPEI, FEB 26

Taipei slammed a sudden Chinese ban on Taiwanese pineapples, describing the move on Friday as "economic intimidation" and likening it to tariffs Beijing slapped on Australian wine.

The trade to China—which views the self-ruled democratic island as part of its territory awaiting reunification—is worth around \$50 million, and is Taiwan's largest export market.

Beijing announced the ban Friday morning after saying it "found pests in pineapples imported from Taiwan", and said the rules were in line with mainland "regulations".

But the island's ruling Democratic Progressive Party accused Beijing of "ambushing" Taiwan with a political-driven ban, which came on March 1.

"China appears to be duplicating its actions against Australian wine last year to use economic intimidation on Taiwan," the party said in a statement. "We hope Taiwanese will support Taiwanese pineapple just like the Australians supported Australian wine," said presidential spokesman Xavier Chang, adding the government

Twitter considers charging users for special content, in revenue push

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SAN FRANCISCO, FEB 26

Twitter has said it plans to offer a subscription service in which users would pay for special content from high-profile accounts, part of an economic model to diversify its revenue.

The globally popular social media platform announced the potential new Super Follows service at its annual investor meeting, as it searches for new revenue streams beyond targeted advertising.

"Exploring audience funding opportunities like Super Follows will allow creators and publishers to be directly supported by their audience and will incentivize them to continue creating content that their audience loves," a Twitter spokesperson told AFP.

Top Twitter executives discussed Super Follows while outlining goals and plans for the near future during the streamed presentation.

"We are examining and rethinking the incentives of our service—the behaviors that our product features encourage and discourage as people participate in conversation on Twitter," the spokesperson said.

Super Follows was described during the presentation as a way for Twitter audiences to financially support creators and receive newsletters, exclusive content and even virtual badges in exchange.

Twitter, which currently makes money from ads and promoted posts, might be able to add additional revenue via the Super Follows transactions.

Creative Strategies analyst Carolina Milanese was not convinced people will be inclined to pay for special content on Twitter.

Such a model makes sense for content on platforms like YouTube, where hours of craftsmanship might be devoted to producing entertaining videos, but it is debatable whether the same could be said for tweets on Twitter, she said.

No timeline was given for when Super Follows might become a feature, but it is expected that the tech giant will make further announcements in the coming months.

Twitter is also considering allowing users to join communities devoted to topics via a feature seemingly similar to Facebook's "groups."

Twitter aims to reach a milestone of 315 million "monetizable" users in 2023, a steep increase from the 192 million it had at the end of last year, according to a filing with US financial markets regulators at the Securities and Exchange Commission.

India exits recession with 0.4 percent quarterly growth

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW DELHI, FEB 26

India's economy grew 0.4 percent year-on-year in the final quarter of 2020, official data showed Friday, ending its first recession since independence as easing coronavirus restrictions sparked a modest recovery.

The country has struggled to claw back lost ground after a stringent, months-long lockdown caused the labour market to collapse and the economy to contract by nearly a quarter between April and June.

India entered a "technical recession" last year for the first time since gaining independence in 1947 after registering two successive quarters of contraction. The government now estimates annual GDP will fall eight percent in 2020-21.

The latest figures, which fell shy of

the expectations of a Bloomberg survey of economists pegging growth at 0.5 percent, will nonetheless bring some cheer to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's beleaguered government.

Key sectors such as construction and manufacturing showed an improvement compared to the same quarter last year, Friday's data revealed.

And in January car sales in the bellwether automobile sector increased by more than 11 percent compared to a year earlier, according to industry figures.

Restrictions have been relaxed as coronavirus infections have slowed in the country of 1.3 billion in recent weeks, allowing economic activity to resume.

But the government still faces the tough task of creating enough jobs for



Restrictions are relaxed as coronavirus infections have slowed in the country of 1.3 billion.

Construction and manufacturing look better compared to the quarter last year.

India's overwhelmingly young population, as millions of migrant workers make their way back to cities, reversing a massive exodus sparked by the lockdown.

"We can't say we are completely out of the woods," Mumbai-based economist Ashutosh Datar told AFP.

"The real test would be what happens next financial year. Today's number is not a major surprise," he said.

The government has forecast economic growth of 11 percent in the

2021-22 financial year, in line with the International Monetary Fund's prediction of 11.5 percent.

But experts have warned that India, whose tally of 11.1 million infections is second only to the United States, could experience another wave and be hit by new variants of the virus, as has happened in Brazil, Britain and South Africa. The financial and film capital of Mumbai imposed fresh pandemic restrictions on Monday, banning religious gatherings and political rallies after infections spiked to levels last seen in October.

New Delhi is hoping that the economy will get a further boost from a massive vaccination drive that kicked off last month but which is already running behind schedule, with 12.2 million shots administered so far to health workers and other frontline staff.

SPORTS | MEDLEY

BRIEFING

Henderson out until April

LIVERPOOL: Jordan Henderson has joined Liverpool's lengthening injury list with the Premier League champions saying on Friday their skipper will be sidelined for at least five weeks after undergoing groin surgery.

Grealish to miss Leeds trip

LONDON: Aston Villa captain Jack Grealish will miss Saturday's Premier League trip to Leeds United as he has still not recovered from the leg injury that ruled him out of last week's defeat by Leicester City.

Nadal pulls out of Rotterdam Open due to back pain

LONDON: World number two Rafael Nadal has withdrawn from next week's Rotterdam Open due to a back injury, the Spaniard said on Thursday.

Rodgers takes blame for Leicester's Europa League exit

Slavia Prague stun the English side 2-0 at the King Power Stadium to advance into the Europa League last 16 and the coach admits his team selection failed to work.



Goals from Lukas Provod (left) and Abdallah Sima helped Slavia Prague snatch a 2-0 aggregate victory over Leicester City on Thursday.

REUTERS LEICESTER, FEB 26

Leicester City manager Brendan Rodgers shouldered the blame for his side's shock exit from the Europa League after Thursday's 2-0 home loss to Slavia Prague.

With the score tied at 0-0 from the first leg in Prague, Lukas Provod and Abdallah Sima scored in the second half at the King Power Stadium to put the Czech side into the last-16.

Rodgers made a number of changes to the side that beat Aston Villa in the Premier League on Sunday, with Harvey Barnes, Timothy Castagne and Ricardo Pereira dropping to the bench.

Rodgers said his team selection had backfired. "It's my responsibility. I pick the team to try to get the result and that clearly didn't work as well as I would have liked."

Rodgers said his players would now shift focus to the Premier League and FA Cup. "If we had to prioritise, those would be the two we would want to succeed in."

Leicester, who are third in the Premier League on 49 points, host Arsenal on Sunday.

Arsenal needed a late comeback to secure their place in the draw for the Europa League last 16 where they will be joined by Ajax Amsterdam, Manchester United, Milan and Rangers but Napoli and PSV Eindhoven also crashed out.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's 87th-minute header secured Arsenal a 3-2 win over Benfica for a 4-3 aggregate victory, but the Premier League side had been staring at the exit door.

After the first leg, played in Rome because of Covid-19 restrictions, ended 1-1, Arsenal's home leg was played in Athens and all looked comfortable when Aubameyang scored early on.

Diogo Goncalves curled home a free kick for Portuguese giants Benfica just before halftime, however, and when a terrible mistake by Arsenal midfielder Dani Ceballos allowed Rafa Silva to put Benfica 2-1 ahead just past the hour it looked grim for Arsenal.

Milan squeezed past Red Star Belgrade on away goals after their tie ended 3-3 on aggregate following a 1-1 draw in the San Siro. Franck Kessie's penalty gave Milan the lead but Red Star hit back through Ben Nabouhane and pushed hard late on despite being reduced to 10 men.

Roma completed a 5-1 aggregate in over Braga while Manchester United also eased through after a 0-0 home draw against Real Sociedad, following

a 4-0 first leg win.

Former winners Napoli bowed out despite a 2-1 victory at home to Spanish club Granada. Having lost the first leg 2-0 they got a perfect start when Piotr Zielinski put them in front after three minutes.

Ajax beat French club Lille 2-1 for a 4-2 aggregate win although it was tough examination for the Dutch side who needed a late goal by David Neres to calm their nerves.

Rivals PSV Eindhoven's hopes disappeared as they lost a thrilling tie 5-4 on aggregate against Olympiacos, despite winning 2-1 on the night. Eran Zahavi's brace appeared to be sending PSV through on away goals but Ahmed Hassan fired home in the 88th minute to leave the hosts in despair.

Scottish Premier League leaders Rangers completed an astonishing 9-5 aggregate win over Belgian side Antwerp thanks to a 5-2 win in Glasgow.

Villarreal made it through with a 2-1 defeat of Salzburg for a 4-1 aggregate win while Shakhtar Donetsk and Dynamo Kiev advanced against Maccabi Tel Aviv and Bruges respectively.

Norwegian Molde caused a surprise by winning 2-0 in Hoffenheim to wrap up a 5-3 aggregate triumph and Bayer Leverkusen suffered a 6-3 aggregate defeat by Young Boys.

Satdobato move three points clear in 'B' Division League

SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU, FEB 26

Satdobato Youth Club edged Khumaltar Youth Club 3-2 in top of the table clash of the Martyrs Memorial 'B' Division League football match at the ANFA Complex, Satdobato, on Friday.

The outcome meant Satdobato moved three points clear on top of the standings and strengthened their title bid. Satdobato have 19 points from seven matches after the sixth win and a draw while the first defeat left Khumaltar unchanged in second place with 16 points.

The entertaining match saw Dorje Tamang, substitute Ashish Rai and Bhuwan Basnet score a goal each for Satdobato. Khumaltar captain Sabin KC and Aadil Hamid were on target for Khumaltar.

Dorje Tamang gave an early 11th minute lead to Satdobato before Sabin KC equalised for Khumaltar in the 26th. Aadil Hamid made it 2-1 for Khumaltar, scoring three minutes into the second half. Substitute Ashish Rai, who came as a 46th minute replacement of Akash Rai, restored the parity for Satdobato in the 61st before Bhuwan Basnet netted a third goal in the 61st to ensure victory for Satdobato.

Khumaltar coach Rajesh Shahi was sent off deep into the second half for manhandling fourth official after initially shown a yellow card for using abusive language.

Satdobato's coach Sanoj Shrestha credited the victory for the hard work of his players and the outcome would be a huge boost in their title ambition. "We still have four matches to play but



Dorje Tamang, Ashish Rai (centre) and Bhuwan Basnet scored one goal each in Satdobato Youth Club's 3-2 win over Khumaltar Youth Club at the ANFA Complex on Friday.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19) **** You're ready to kick things into high gear this afternoon, Aries. The mood wades through productivity-seeking Virgo, helping you tune into the needs of your body and your current to-do list.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) *** There's a lot to process on a mental level today, Cancer. You're filled to the brim with thoughts and feelings, and today's skies work to help you find an outlet for this overflow.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) *** Give yourself extra room for processing, Libra. Last night's emotionally raw full moon may still have your head swirling in a world of memories and feelings, so be patient with yourself.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) **** Get out of your comfort zone today, Capricorn. You're itching to shake up your environment and refresh your perspectives under Saturday's skies. Find yourself a new adventure to engage yourself with today, however big or small.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) *** As a Taurus, you have a natural appreciation for the finer things in life. Let that instinct guide your choices under Saturday's skies, as the moon cruises through sensual Virgo.

LEO (July 23-August 22) *** There's work to be done, Leo. That always seems to be the case lately! Fortunately, the cosmos are supportive of your drive to take care of business today, as the moon roams through mentally-sharp Virgo.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) *** As a Scorpio, you tend to instinctively deal with your problems all on your own. Saturday's skies arrive with the gentle reminder that you don't have to take on everything on your own.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) *** Be kind with yourself today, Aquarius. You're likely still reeling in feelings after last night's sensitive full moon. Give yourself room to process any unsettling relationship material that may have cropped up.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) **** Rest is needed after yesterday's emotionally-charged full moon, Gemini. Let yourself off the hook today, as the moon slides through reflective Virgo. It's an ideal day to reconnect with family members, beautify your home, or explore elements of your past.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22) **** Be gentle with yourself under Saturday's skies, Virgo! You're in a sensitive headspace after last night's emotionally stirring full moon in your sign. Your body and individual needs should rank near the top of your priorities today.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) *** Your career is asking for some attention under Saturday's skies, Sagittarius. The moon roams through busybody Virgo all day, directing your attention to any work that's slipped through the cracks in recent days.

PISCES (February 19-March 20) *** Relationships are your central focus under Saturday's skies, Pisces. Last night's full moon likely stirred up some important revelations, conversations, or developments in the partnership arena.

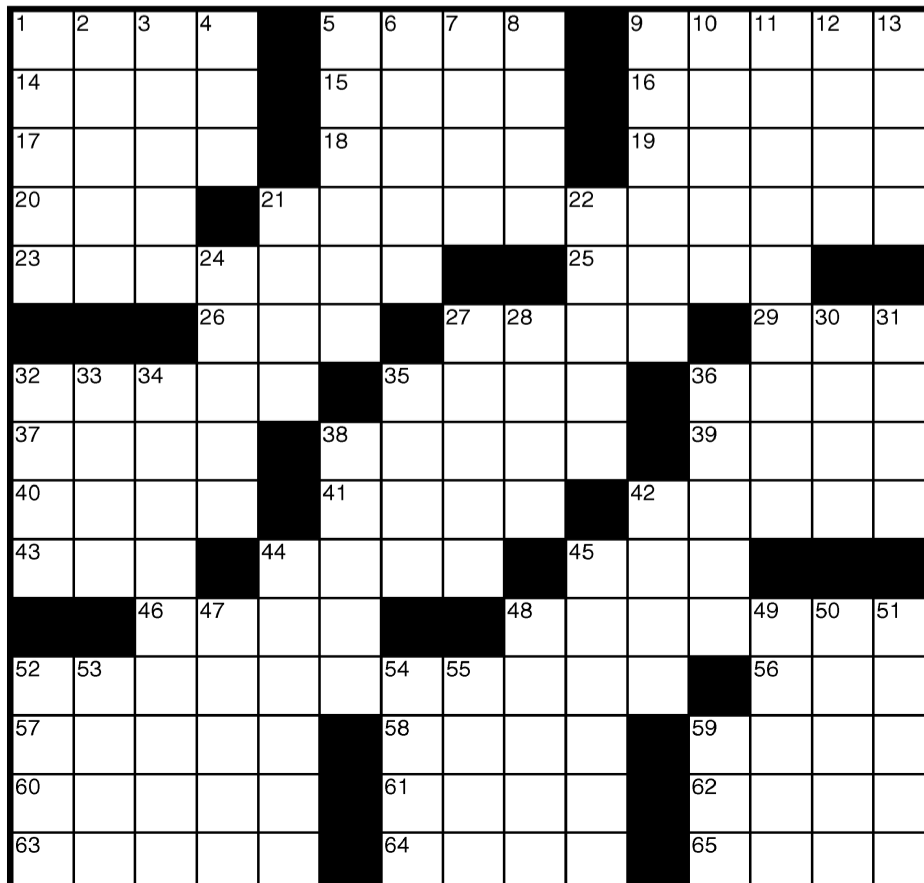
CROSSWORD

- ACROSS 1 Walking step 5 Cornfield robber 9 Tiny jumpers 14 Tiant or Aparicio 15 Tee-hee cousin (hyph.) 16 Bowie's last stand 17 Custard ingredients 18 Centrally located 19 More judicious 20 Detective's cry 21 Official assignment 23 Bowler's goals 25 Date part 26 Diamond — 27 Drying oven 29 Currently 32 Fairylike 35 Loony 36 Give up land 37 Mel's Diner waitress 38 Spicy mustard 39 Where Cambodia is 40 Writer — 41 Reddish-brown horse 42 Cheapskate 43 Sinbad's transport 44 Plummeted 45 Storage unit 46 Italian wine city 48 Livestock source 52 Traveler's goal 56 Funny Charlotte — 57 Illegal burning 58 Shucks! 59 Leaning tower town 60 Sluggish 61 Heavy-metal band 62 With, to Henri 63 Tries to locate 64 Velvety plant 65 Vitality DOWN 1 Supplications 2 Anything whatever 3 Havana export 4 Snaky letter 5 Wedding site 6 Boat runways 7 Taft's state 8 Arroyo 9 Zip up 10 Andes ruminant 11 Enthusiasm 12 So be it! 13 Variety 21 Quite similar 22 Chute material 24 Epic of Troy 27 Savalas role 28 Screen image 30 Comics dog 31 Become frayed 32 Constantly 33 Jay of late-night TV 34 Chicken dish 35 Wildebeest chaser 36 "The — Mutiny" 38 Shower feature 42 Appearance 44 Is frugal 45 Wild horses 47 Baby bringer? 48 Finch and sparrow 49 Go by car 50 Inches forward 51 Respond to a stimulus 52 Speaker's platform 53 Seacoast eagle 54 Bede or Sandler 55 Baja snack 59 La —, Bolivia

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



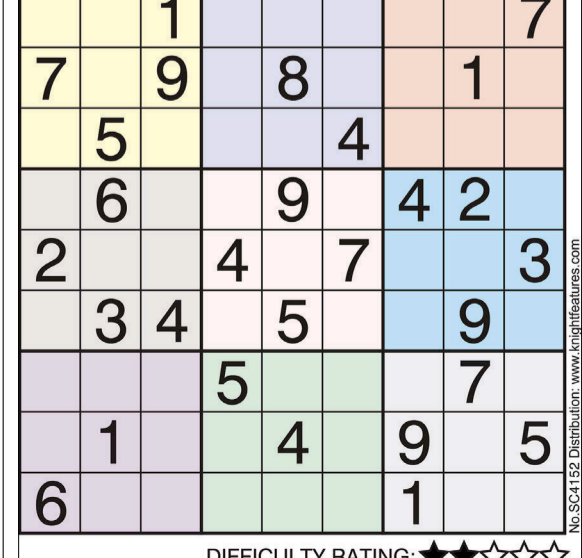
12-31-20 © 2020 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS



SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Breathing life into movies

In a landscape where the significance of sound in movies is neglected, Uttam Neupane, an award-winning sound mixer and designer, is creating sounds for Nepali movies that drive the story forward.

ANKIT KHADGI
KATHMANDU

When Uttam Neupane talks about sound design, he speaks with ease. "In simple words, the role of a sound designer is to enhance the scene as well as the narrative of the film through sound," he says.

But it's not as easy as it sounds. There have been times when the National Award-winning sound mixer and designer has had to work day and night to elevate the quality of sound for the many projects that he has been a part of. He has also had to battle the lackadaisical attitude many have towards the art of sound mixing, as very few people, including filmmakers, actually understand the importance of sound in a film, he says.

However, while pursuing his passion continuously for the past decade, Neupane has been successful in making a name for himself in the field of sound designing and mixing. And with critically acclaimed films like *Bulbul* (2019), *Loot* (2012), *Talakjung vs Tulke* (2014), *Dadyaa* (2017) to his name, and having worked with Oscar-nominated director, Eric Vailli, in *Beyond the Clouds* (2018), it wouldn't be wrong to say that Neupane is one sought-after sound mixer and designer in our film industry.

In an interview with Post's Ankit Khadgi, Neupane talks about his experience working as a sound designer/mixer in the Nepali film industry, his collaboration with Oscar and Emmy winning filmmakers, and the significance of sound in a film. Excerpts.

What inspired you to start your career in sound designing and mixing? What were your earlier days of work like?

Since my growing years, I have been interested in music and movies. I moved from Rautahat to Kathmandu with the motive of working in the movie industry. While I was unclear about which department I could work in, as I had an inclination towards music, I eventually started studying sound designing and ended up working as a sound designer.

The first project where I worked as a sound designer and as a re-recording mixer was in 2008. I had worked for a short film *Awaken Eyes* in 2008, which was directed by Binod Paudel. Then a year later, I received the opportunity to work in a mainstream movie called *Mero Euta Sathi Cha* for which I was also felicitated with the National Award.

However, the more I started working, the more I realised how little I knew about sound mixing and designing. That's why I decided to pursue and study more about sound designing and enrolled myself in an audio institute in Chennai.

The exposure and the knowledge that I gained changed my perspective regarding sound, and as I realised the impact it can have I started doing things differently.



POST PHOTO: ANISH REGMI

'In terms of sound design and mixing, Nepali cinema is evolving. However, I believe over the years we have neglected the importance of sound.'

For someone who has no clue about what you do, could you explain the role of a sound designer and a mixer in a film?

So, usually, sound designers are the ones who are hired to look after the sonic elements of the film. After the movie has been shot, we receive a blank picture, and by using various techniques, we try to make people (the audience) believe that a certain scene or an event is happening for real by adding the required sounds.

In short, it can be said that sound designers style the film and incorporate and assemble the diegetic and non-diegetic sounds that can enhance the narrative as well as the director's vision.

In regards to other countries, the Nepali film industry doesn't necessarily have classifications in the sound department. It's mostly a one-person job. However, in other film industries, there are usually many people who are working under the supervision of sound designers, like foley artists, who reproduce various kinds of sounds for the film. Likewise, dialogue editors, whose job is to assemble the dialogues delivered by the actors, also work under close supervision of the sound editor.

After the sound designer finishes their work, re-recording mixers come onboard and make the final decisions regarding the sound of the film. They perform the final mixing and blends of the sound of the film, maintaining its technical and

artistic composition before the film is released.

From what stage of the project are you generally involved?

For any sound designer and sound mixer, it's best to get involved in the film before the shooting. However, in Nepal, that is not the case. Filmmakers only come to approach us once they have shot their projects.

But I usually prefer to get involved in projects before it gets shot, as this way as an artist I can also contribute to the film. And there have been films, where I was involved from the pre-production stage, and because of such an opportunity, I along with the director of the film could actually use the sound of the film to take the film's narrative forward and leave an impact.

For instance, in *Bulbul*, directed by Binod Paudel, there was a particular scene where the lead character's phone would ring, and through the ringtone, the director wanted to depict the conflict that is happening inside her mind. As there was an opportunity for me to discuss with the director beforehand, we could actually use sound for the ringtone that was successful in depicting what the director had envisioned and increase the impact of the scene.

Every artist has their own unique approach. What's your creative approach like?

From whatever I have learnt through my experiences and learning is that you can't put just any sound in a film because you like it. There should be a reason and logic behind it and every sound of the film should support its narrative.

My approach is mostly to seamlessly embed the sound in the film so much so that the audience gets lost in it and they don't even realise it. As ironic as it may sound, I usually prefer making the sound of the film subtle. It's the job of every sound designer to create sounds that can engage the people with the narrative of the film not with the sound of the film.

I also pay a lot of attention to the details while designing sounds and try to focus on the creative aspects as well.

In your opinion where do the Nepali films stand in terms of sound design and mixing?

I think in terms of sound design and mixing we are evolving. However, I believe over the years we have neglected the importance of sound.

Most of us grew up hearing radio plays that were broadcast by Radio Nepal. We had the practice of enjoying art without visuals. But from the time people started watching movies, visuals started getting more priority than sound.

And this lack of concern and seriousness is also reflected in the behaviour of filmmakers, as usually the sound designers and mixers do not get enough time to work for films.

You also became a member of the prestigious Cinema Audio Society, and your film 'Selfie King' was selected in the competition for Outstanding Achievement in Sound Mixing in Cinema Audio Society Awards. How do you feel about it?

I felt incredibly happy when I was select-

ed as a member of the Cinema Audio Society. For any sound designer and mixer, being a part of such a prestigious institution is one of the biggest achievements, as the institution has hosted sound designers and mixers who have been awarded the Oscars.

So, naturally, I also wanted to be a part of it and had been trying to be a member of the Cinema Audio Society (CAS) since 2015. But the qualifications required to be a member were really high. While I was rejected in the previous years, this year I was selected after the institution analysed my works and two members of the institution, Emmy award-winning sound engineer Marti D Humphrey and Academy award-winning sound engineer Gregory H Watkins, decided to sponsor me.

To be able to write CAS behind my name was always a dream and after my dream came true, I was extremely happy.

Likewise, my film *Selfie King* (2019) was also selected in the competition for Outstanding Achievement in Sound Mixing in Cinema Audio Society Awards, an annual award ceremony that is organised by Cinema Audio Society and to see that it was competing with films like *Tenet*, *Mulan*, *No Man's Land*, *Wonder Woman*, made me happier.

As someone who has worked for decades in award-winning films, in your opinion how important is sound for a film?

The power of sound is such that you can actually make the audience believe that something is happening without showing them. It's so powerful that you can do anything with it. I think the audience won't be surprised or taken aback if there are no visuals for a brief moment in the film. But if there is no sound, or even if it is high or low, the whole impact of the scene gets affected. Sound is that powerful.

Any film suggestions you would like to give to our readers?

There are plenty of movies that have great sound design. I really like the sound design of *La La Land* (2016). Through the *Olive Trees* (1994), *1917* (2019), *Darkest Hour* (2017), and *Dunkirk* (2017) also have great sound designs.

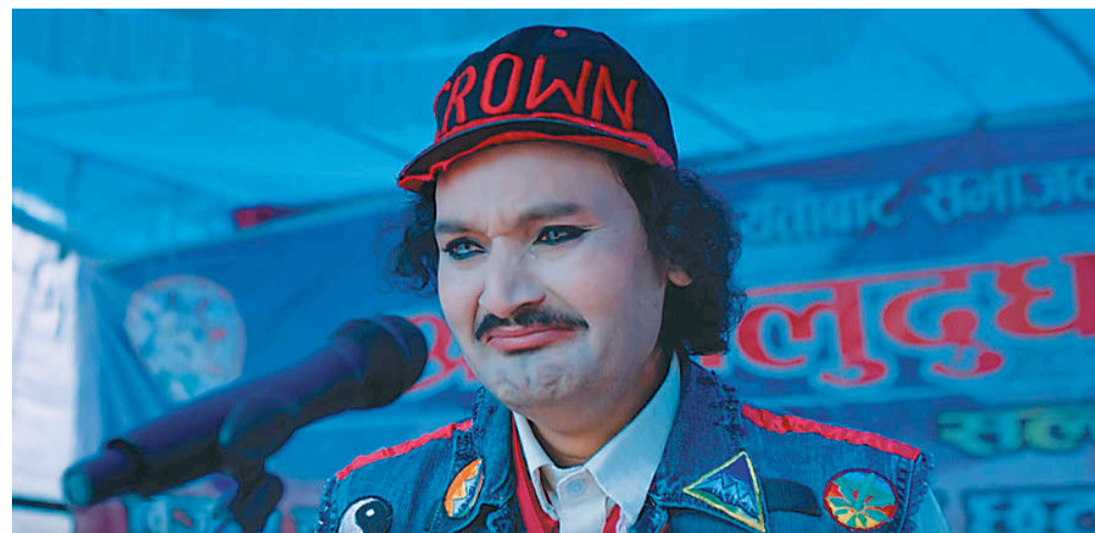
I am also fond of the sound works of *A Rainy Day* (2014), *Liar's Dice* (2013), *Is love enough, Sir?* (2018) and *Photograph* (2019). Likewise, I also liked the sound design of the recent Nepali short film, *Song of Cloud*.

Any exciting projects lined up that you are involved in currently?

I am working on a feature film called *Chiso Ashtray*. Likewise, I am working in Veemsen Lama's new horror movie *Kathaputali* and Dinesh Raut's *Prakash*. There's also an international docu-drama about the aftermath of a pandemic in Nepal, which BBC is producing. I am also a part of it.



Screengrabs of *Kabaddi Kabaddi Kabaddi* (left) and *Selfie King*, two films Neupane has worked on.

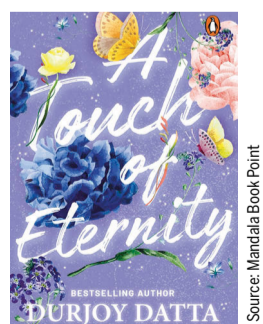


SCREENGRABS VIA YOUTUBE

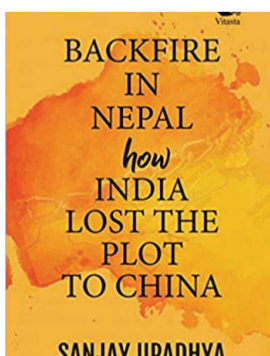
BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES

Fiction

1. *The Touch of Eternity* by Durjoy Datta
2. *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo
3. *Hidden in Plain Sight* by Jeffrey Archer
4. *Suheldev: The King who Saved India* by Amish
5. *The Archer* by Paulo Coelho

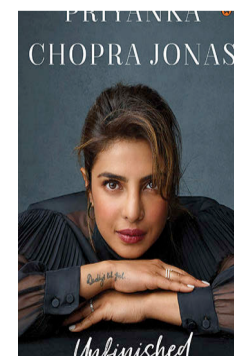


Source: Mandala Book Point



Nepal: How India Lost the Plot to China
Author: Sanjay Upadhyaya
Publication: Vitasta Publishing Private Limited
Price: Rs 792

In this book, author Upadhyaya explores how China has become the ultimate beneficiary to Nepal, rather than India, with whom it has shared years of friendship. The book further dwells into how the land of the Himalayas has become a focal point for the two Asian giants.



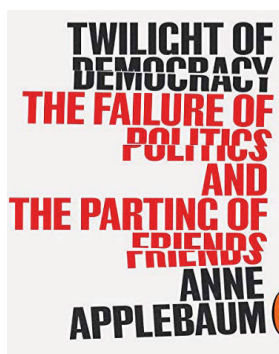
Unfinished: A Memoir
Author: Priyanka Chopra Jonas
Publication: Ballantine Books
Price: Rs 1,118

A New York Times bestseller, *Unfinished: A Memoir* is written by global star Priyanka Chopra Jonas. The actor takes readers to her childhood in Bareilly, India, her teenage years in America, and her return to India, where she was crowned Miss World.



Think Again
Author: Adam Grant
Publication: Viking
Price: Rs 1,278

Adam Grant in his new book delves into the concept of rethinking, learning to question one's opinions and the power of unlearning and relearning. In *Think Again*, Grant weaves together research and storytelling to help readers build the intellectual and emotional muscle they need to stay curious enough to change the world.



Non-Fiction

1. *Twilight of Democracy: The Failure of Politics and the Parting of Friends* by Anne Applebaum
2. *This is Not Propaganda: Adventure in the War Against Reality* by Peter Pomerantsev
3. *Caste Matters* by Suraj Yengde
4. *Simultaneous Identities: Language, Education and the Nepali*
5. *The Presidential Years 2012-2017* by Pranab Mukherjee

The wildflower trail

After a spell of showers, at Meme Pokhari, in Kaski, an enchanting world of wildflowers and green meadows await.

TEXT & PHOTOS: RISHAV ADHIKARI



1. To Nupchupokhari, Kanchenjunga.

For as long as I can, when the rain pours and the grass goes green and the wildflowers are in full bloom, I will head north. There is this beautiful feeling you get as you traverse through the high and lows and everything in-between, chasing the wildflowers that grow in the nooks and crannies up north. You feel a magic in the air when you see them—over the hills, dancing nearby streams and small lakes, in the shadow of gigantic mountains. To see them, touch them, feel them and understand that they all are so different, in colour, shape and size, and yet the same, is meditative.

6. A surreal reflection in Kori

Enjoyed the wildflowers? Now turn the paper upside down and look at the photo again. I was screaming with happiness with my friend when I took this shot. The day was clear when I took this shot and we had the Annapurnas and the Lamjung mountain standing tall in front of us, their reflection perfectly still in a pool of clear rain water. I composed the shot framing only the wildflowers, their reflection and the reflection of the mountains.



2. Around Khambachen, Kanchenjunga

I remember locals showing us this spot telling us that it's the place where you will find a phone network when the weather's clear. We headed to the spot, reached the point after half an hour of walking through wild bushes. The rain had just stopped and as a result the wildflowers were there—nodding away in the light breeze, as though waiting for us.

3. A blissful morning

The highs and lows of life, rain and rainbows, sun and shade, mountains and their reflections. I had no idea it would look this surreal when I opened the tent and looked outside—rubbing my eyes with amusement. It was a beautiful moment of not knowing what to do next, whether to enjoy the view in the now or to capture it forever in my camera. All the time in the world was not relevant. I just sat there watching the sun rise first above the snow-capped high mountain peaks and then rest slowly on the pond beside our tent. Wildflowers came to life with the warm light and so did we, all the highs and lows were worth it.



5. Kori wildflowers and an abandoned hut

In the highlands of Kori, the clouds are beneath you and everywhere you look you see pretty wildflowers.

4. Taking a walk around Meme Pokhari

After the rains had come and gone, we were blessed with a short window of perfect weather. Mountains were shining with warm light, and the blue sky and colourful wildflowers danced to the tunes of the cold wind. We walked around Meme Pokhari, in awe of everything that was alive around us.

Adhikari is a travel photographer based in Pokhara.