

Nepal's largest selling English daily Printed simultaneously in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bharatpur and Nepalgunj

Vol XXIX No. 212 | 10 pages | Rs.5 Saturday, September 18, 2021 | 02-06-2078 Saturday



A child wearing a mask and a face shield as a protection against the coronavirus gets ready for her school in Kathmandu on Friday. (Report on Pg3)

# Big confusion as top body responding to Covid-19 becomes defunct

At a time when the government is facing a financial gridlock, the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre getting invalid could spell a catastrophe, experts warn.



midnight. The ordinance was presented in Parliament on July 18 and it must have been endorsed by September 16, as such ordinances must get through within 60 days since the date of their tabling.

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As the ordinance has no effect now, Provincial Covid-19 Crisis Management Centres and District Covid-19 Crisis Management Centres of all 77 districts also have become defunct.

"Actually, all legal frameworks including the infrastructures func-

tioning under the CCMC have now

Will Kalapani residents fit into 'my census, my participation' motto?

Central Bureau of Statistics, the agency conducting the national census, is not sure whether it could count households and number of people in the region physically.

#### PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA & ANIL GIRI Kathmandu, sept 17

The national population census, which was halted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is set to start from November. The Central Bureau of Statistics, the agency carrying out the gargantuan task, has made "my census, my participation" its motto. Questions, however, remain whether the people of the Kalapani area fit into this motto.

The census this year, 12th since it was started in 1911, is first since Nepal published a new map in May last year incorporating Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh within the Nepali territory, in an assertion that the regions belong to Nepal, not

India, which claims them to be its own. This emerged last year as a major irritant in Nepal-India relations, with Delhi calling Kathmandu's decision to publish the new map a cartographic assertion.

When the census was planned earlier for June, government officials had talked about some options to include the people in the region in the national head and household count. But no final decision has been taken yet. "Our preparations [for census] are limited to the areas where we have our administrative control and where the local administration has promised security to our supervisors and enumerators," Padam Pandey, district census officer in Darchula, told the Post over the phone. "We have already mobilised the supervisors to make a list of households before conducting the census."

There are households in Gunji, Navi and Kuti areas beside the barracks of the Indian Army. There are no local inhabitants in Tilisi, which is currently Kalapani, and Nabhidang. There, however, are people in Chhangru, Tallo Kawa and Garbyang areas. Since these areas were not included during the 11th census conducted in 2011, there is no data on the number of households and people there.

Nebin Lal Shrestha, director general at the Central Bureau of Statistics, said that it is not that the bureau didn't have any plan to conduct the census in the Kalapani region.

"It, however, is not easier to conduct a census in a region where it is even difficult to reach," he said.

Nepali people still have to travel via India to reach the villages in the Kalapani region in Darchula.

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Covid-19 patients undergo treatment at an outpatient ward of a hospital in Kathmandu.

#### TIKA R PRADHAN & SANGAM PRASAIN Kathmandu, Sept 17

All legal frameworks related to the country's Covid-19 response, including the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre, no longer exist now, which experts and officials say could make it difficult to deal with the coronavirus crisis.

With the annulment of the Covid-19 Crisis Management Ordinance 2078 BS, the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre, known as CCMC, an agency created to respond to the pandemic, has become defunct from Wednesday become defunct," said Balananda Sharma, chief executive officer of the now-defunct CCMC. The Covid-19 Crisis Management Ordinance 2078 BS was issued on May 20 as the House of Representatives was then in recess. Accordingly, the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre was created. The ordinance allowed the government to declare a health emergency, if needed, and ease the process to procure medical goods, equipment and vaccines to battle the Covid-19 pandemic.

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# Nepali comic artists portray their storytelling prowess through online comics and webtoons

They are increasingly gravitating towards online platforms to show off their craft and also hone their skills.

#### SHRANUP TANDUKAR

#### KATHMANDU, SEPT 17

Most of the time when something bothers Padma Raj Lama, 19, he just tries to ignore it but when the issue hits too close to home then his hands start itching to get his stylus pen and draw a comic to escape into a world of art. One of his comics dated March 28, 2020, which features his principal character called 'Mr. Blue', is based on the theme of menstruation. In the comic, Mr. Blue goes out to buy sanitary pads for his sister but notices uncomfortable gazes from people around him and in response, his character screams at the people, "What y'all looking at?'

"The incident actually happened, I went to buy a sanitary pad for my sister who was having menstrual cramps but the uncomfortable stares I got from the pharmacist and the people around me bothered me a lot so I drew a comic about it," he says. "Of course, I couldn't scream at the people at that time but in my comic, I have more freedom."

Lama, for now, publishes his comic strips only on his Instagram page. His comics feature the quirky (mis)adven-



Shiro and Leo is a heartwarming slice of life webtoon by Roseena Shakya (Phllegm).

tures of Mr. Blue and occasionally, it also touches upon contemporary social issues. Drawn in an average of three-four panels and read left to right, Lama's comics, unlike the vertical scrolling webtoon format, mimic the style of traditional comic strips found in newspapers.

Webtoon, the digital comic artstyle which originated in South Korea, is especially designed for the smartphone audience with infinite scrolling vertical panels instead of traditional horizontal panels.

Like K-pop, webtoons are cementing their popularity on the global stage. Their popularity is also catching up in Nepal.

Nepali comic artists are gravitating towards online comics and webtoons, which do not entail any costs or hassles that come with publishing a physical comic, to show off their craft and also hone their skills. For many artists, the comics act as a 'visual diary' in which they feature their slice of life stories. For others, the comics act more as a medium to improve their art, and for the lucky few, it can also be a career path.

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#### OYSTER PERPETUAL SEA-DWELLER

Regency Watch

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## NATIONAL

### Call for statute amendments POST REPORT

#### KATHMANDU, SEPT 1

As Nepal celebrates the sixth Constitution Day on Sunday, the Brihat Nagarik Andolan-a civil society movement-has demanded some amendments to the constitution to address the concerns of various disaffected groups

"To ensure people's inherent rights through the constitution, let's raise our voice to amend the constitution on September 20," the Brihat Nagarik Andolan said in a statement on Friday.

On the day the country got its new constitution, the movement said the wish of many Nepali people to institutionalise an inclusive democratic political system was trampled upon

The struggles of Tharu and Madhesi people for their right to self-determination were brutally crushed.

"The conduct of those leading the major organs of the state and the behaviours of the parties after the promulgation of the constitution shows that there is still the need of movements to ensure the achievements of the people," the movement



A man worships a bus on the occasion of Bishwakarma Puja in Kathmandu on Friday. Bishwakarma is the deity of craftsmen and architects.

# Treatable eye disease is causing blindness among children in Gandaki districts

500 cases of Seasonal Hyperacute Panuveitis caused by Gazaline moths have been reported in Gandaki Province in past year.

#### LAL PRASAD SHARMA IN POKHARA, GHANSHYAM KHADKA IN MYAGDI & **AGANDHAR TIWARI** IN PARBAT

Cases of Seasonal Hyperacute Panuveitis, primarily caused by the Gazaline moths, among children are rising in several districts of Gandaki Province. The disease, if untreated, can leave patients blind, say ophthalmologists.

According to ophthalmologists, there are various factors that cause Seasonal Hyperacute Panuveitis (SHAPU) but one of the leading causes is physical contact with the Gazaline moth. When the dust on the scales of the moth comes in contact with the eyes, it causes damage to the retina and the pupil, says Dr Madan Prasad Upadhyay.

The disease is prevalent in Gandaki Province and was first found in the province by Upadhyay in Lamachaur, Pokhara, in 1975.

Amrit Pun, 18, of Benibazaar in Myagdi district complained of irritation in his left eye in the last week of August. He started complaining of discomfort after he had come in contact with a Gazaline moth. He visited Beni Hospital on August 29 for treatment after his condition worsened.

The hospital immediately referred him to Pokhara-based Himalaya Eye Hospital. But by the time he reached Pokhara, he had lost nis e

from SHAPU. He is undergoing treatment at the hospital," said Shiva. "I had noticed some moths in the house a couple of days ago. The doctors say they could be the reason for my son's eye problem.

Dinesh Pun, aged 7, of Tarakhola Rural Municipality-5 in Baglung has also been receiving treatment at Himalaya Eye Hospital for the past five days after SHAPU was diagnosed in one of his eyes. He underwent surgery twice

"His eye condition is gradually improving," said his father, Omkar Pun. As many as 34 patients, including 20 from Kaski, of SHAPU have visited Himalaya Eye Hospital in the past month. The number of SHAPU patients could be even higher as some patients may have not come to Pokhara for treatment, said the hospital.

According to Upadhyay, around 70 percent of SHAPU cases are caused by the Gazaline moths.

"One should protect themselves from the disease by controlling the Gazaline moths. Two SHAPU cases were found to be caused by other species of butterfly recently. But the disease is mainly caused by the moths," said Upadhyay "Studies are being conducted to find out the other causes of the disease.



SHAPU is a disease seen and reported only in Nepal. It is known to cause blindness in children within a week of showing symptoms. The disease is mostly reported between the end of the monsoon season (August -September) and the peak of winter (December-January) in Nepal.

Around 1,500 cases of SHAPU caused by Gazaline moths have been reported in Gandaki Province in the past year, according to the Gandaki Health Directorate.

"We recently received 15 cases of SHAPU caused by Gazaline moths. The disease is treatable but only with timely medical intervention. It is therefore important to raise awareness among the general public about this disease and its causes," said Dr Iliya Shrestha, medical director at Himalaya Eye Hospital.

According to Shrestha, SHAPU cases, which were reported only in Gandaki Province in the past, are being reported in Bhairahawa and Gulmi districts as well. Until Wednesday, 34 cases of SHAPU were reported in Himalaya Eye Hospital alone. Among them, 15 patients needed hospital admission for treatment. doctors said

According to the hospital administra-



15 years of age are found affected by Seasonal Hyperacute Panuveitis.

"The initial signs of SHAPU are redness and decreased vision in one eye. The pupil of the affected eye gradually turns white. If left untreated, the patient could go blind within 48 hours,' said Shrestha.

According to Khim Bahadur Khadka provincial health directorate of Gandaki Province, the number of patients suffering from SHAPU and illnesses caused by the Gazaline moths has increased in the province.

"We have started to raise awareness on the disease at the community level,' Khadka said.

Meanwhile, the ultrasound machine at the Himalaya Eye Hospital is old and goes out of order time and again, health workers say.

"It is necessary to conduct ultrasound of the eyes to treat the patients. But the machine does not work properly. This has caused difficulty in the treatment process," said Shrestha of the Himalaya Eye Hospital. "The hospital administration has demanded Rs 4 million from the concerned authorities to purchase a new machine.

In Myagdi, over 10 cases caused by the Gazaline moths have been reported since August 29.

Dinesh Baniya, officer at the Netra Jyoti Sangh in Myagdi, said, "We referred four patients to Pokhara after

# Big confusion as top body responding ...

#### >> Continued from page 1

Through the ordinance, a powerful steering committee was set up under the chairmanship of the prime minister comprising ministers from key ministries, chief secretary, chief of Nepal Army, and member secretary of the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre.

The ordinance also empowered authorities to initiate actions if anyone was found flouting new orders aimed at controlling the virus, as the Infectious Disease Act 2020 BS was considered too weak in fighting infectious diseases. With the ordinance becoming ineffective, the government can only apply the 58-year-old law.

Sharma, a retired lieutenant general of the Nepal Army, was appointed chief executive officer the Covid-19 Management Centre on May 25.

Sharma said the CCMC now does not legally exist, and a small team has been attending the office "informally" to support the emergency activities, as the Nepal Army, which has a key role in responding to the Covid-19 situation, won't accept requests from any other authorities.

'I have been attending the office and trying to support with whatever I can," said Sharma. "I am doing this on humanitarian grounds and it necessarily does not reflect my official position."

According to officials, the prime minister and the chief secretary can do nothing to respond to the emergency situation.

"Obviously, the prime minister and the ministers, who were in the steering committee of CCMC, have nothing under their purview," said Sharma

The CCMC had the mandate to perform at least 14 duties, including treatment, management and health infrastructure expansion; creating public awareness and information management; formation and operation of quick response teams and emergency transportation; and rescue and arrangement of patient receiving team and corpse management.

Besides, the centre also looks after the provision and security of

health manpower, infrastructure and materials; management and operation of Covid-19 fund, research and suggestions; prohibition order implementation; traffic management by land and air; provision of testing, quarantine and isolation; and regulation of supply and travel of essential goods dur-

ing prohibition orders. Now with the ordinance failing to get through Parliament, travel protocols too no longer exist. Tourism Ministry officials, however, said they have been making efforts to find a legal alternative.

"We have tabled a proposal before the Cabinet to issue a new travel protocol," said Buddhi Sagar Lamichhane, joint-secretary at the Ministry. The

Covid-19 response system in place in the country.

Nepal has constantly been staring at Covid-19 risks. Cases have been increasing of late after a decline in recent days. Experts have warned that the third wave could hit the country anytime, with festivals just round the corner and no prohibitory measures cur rently enforced.

The countrywide death toll has now reached 11,012, way above the casualties reported during the 2015 devastating earthquakes. Nepal on Friday reported 1,558 new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours, according to the Health Ministry The number of active coronavirus cases stands at 25,497.

As soon as the CCMC became defunct, Sharma said he has not attended any scheduled meetings of the Health and Home ministries.

"We were in the process of purchasing medicines, equipment and vaccines," said Sharma. "All these efforts to control the deadly coronavirus could be affected now."

However, a minister, who wished to remain anonymous, said the CCMC becoming defunct was not a big deal as the Health Ministry can discharge all Covid-19 related responsibilities. "The CCMC itself was a burden. A financially bur dened body."

As per the ordinance, the CCMC had designated Bir Hospital as the Covid-19 Unified Central Hospital and under it, Covid-19 Unified Provincial Hospitals were under operation.

"All these infrastructure are also defunct," said Gopal Nath Yogi, secretary of the House of Representatives. "It takes at least one month to endorse a bill from

both houses after it is registered.' The Post spoke to at least half a dozen officials, including politicians, but no one could provide a clear answer to how the state would respond if the third wave hits the country

Existing holding centres, isolation centres, quarantines centres which were functioning under the CCMC cannot function without the laws now.

Currently, the country is also facing a government shutdown, as the budget has failed to get through the lower house, just like the Covid-19 Crisis Management Ordinance 2078 BS could not. A government shutdown means the government cannot spend money from the state coffers. Experts say such a situation when the government is facing a financial gridlock and the key agency tasked with responding to the Covid-19 getting defunct could spell a catastrophe.

Dr Baburam Marasini, former director of the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, however, said the prime minister could do something to continue the operations endorsing some legal provisions from his Council of Ministers

He said one of the major func-

"The retina of Amrit's left eye was completely damaged when he arrived at the hospital," said Prakriti Dhungana, a technician at the Eye Treatment Unit of Beni Hospital. "There was a long delay in treatment, which led to him losing his eyesight.

Seven-year-old Bishesh Gautam of Hemja in Pokhara was playing in his house on Monday when he complained of soreness in his right eye. His eye had turned red and a scar marked the pupil, according to his father, Shiva Gautam.

"We immediately took him to the Himalaya Eye Hospital. The doctors at the hospital said that he was suffering

POST PHOTO: LAL PRASAD SHARMA Around 34 patients of SHAPU visited Himalaya Eye Hospital in Pokhara in the past one month.

ales were found lodged aee inside their eyes. Two other patients are receiving treatment here."

In Parbat, diseases caused by the Gazaline moths have been rising in Kushma and other rural areas since the last week of August.

According to Parbat Hospital, three patients are receiving treatment at the health facility for illnesses caused by the scales of the Gazaline moth.

"We found microscopic scales of Gazaline moths embedded inside the eyes of the patients. The patients have reported coming in contact with the moths," said Sumitra Adhikari, a health worker at Lions Eye Treatment Centre.

seven-day quarantine for tourists, health safe ty measures at the airport, and other security issues no longer exist."

place as soon as the Cabinet gives

ferred dozens of joint-secretaries,

with the appointments of new

chief district officers, the defunct

structure of the District Covid-19

Crisis Management Centres has

may be affected with no legal

Officials say the needy people

As the government has trans-

an "approval in principle".

created problems.

Tourism

tions of the CCMC was to coordinate with different ministries to Lamichhane said they were combat the pandemic hopeful that new rules will be in

"Even though it was not as effective as it should have been, there was some solace that there was an agency to respond to the Covid-19 crisis. Now with this agency also becoming defunct, we are headed for a serious crisis," Marasini said. "Procurement of goods needed to fight the pandemic will be hugely affected. The government must come up with some alternative measures.

# Will Kalapani residents fit into 'my census, my participation' motto?

#### >> Continued from page 1

Jaya Singh Dhami went missing on July 30 when he fell into the Mahakali while trying to cross the river using tuin, an improvised cable crossing. He was on his way to Kathmandu, but for him to reach the district headquarters to catch a bus, he had no option than to cross Mahakali and get to the Indian side.

Shrestha said that one option to conduct the census in the Kalapani area is mobilisation of people "informally" as cross-border movement is not easy

According to Shrestha, discussions are underway on ways to conduct the census in the Kalapani region at the National Planning Commission, the parent body of the bureau, and with the district census office in Darchula, but no decision has been taken yet.

"We are also planning to approach the Prime Minister's Office and the Home Ministry regarding the matter,' he said

In the case of failure to conduct a census by mobilising supervisors and enumerators physically, the bureau has also been discussing two other options

One option is conducting an "indirect census", which means counting the number of households using satellite imagery and estimating the number of people based on that. Another option under consideration is estimating the current population-based on India's census report of 2011.

The bureau had floated these options earlier this year as well.

Hem Raj Regmi, deputy director general at the bureau, said these options are still alive if it is not possible to visit the Kalapani region for the census

According to officials at the bureau, informal discussions have been taking place on these options at the planning body

"Even to go for these options, a political decision is necessary," said Shrestha

Officials say such "indirect" methods have been used in the past too.

When the national population census was conducted in 2001, it could not be conducted with the physical presence of enumerators in several districts due to the Maoist insurgency.

According to the bureau, census work was affected in 957 wards (including 2 urban wards) of local governments (Village Development Committees and Municipalities) due to the Maoist insurgency.

Works in 83 Village Development Committees of 12 districts could not be carried out. Census was completely affected in as many as 747 wards of many local governments. Census was partially affected in at least two wards of two municipalities and some wards of 37 Village Development Committees.

In Salyan and Kalikot, even the listing process, which includes counting households and family members before the census through enumerators begins, was disturbed in some areas

"In these districts, the population was estimated on the basis of a listing sheet and based on other estimation procedures," the bureau said in its census report

Shrestha said that they had confirmed the population of 23.1 million during the listing process, but when the supervisors counted households and family members before the actual census, details of 22.7 million could be accumulated.

"So we could only provide characteristics (ethnicity, sex, profession, among others) of the 22.7 million population in our final report," he said.

According to Shrestha, the bureau may not bring the characteristics of the households in the Kalapani region if the population is estimated based on the satellite imagery or India's last census, like in the case of the 2001 census

Officials say the bureau has already collected the data on the population in the region based on India's 2011 census, according to which, there are 363 people in Kuti, 78 in Nabi and 335 in Gunji, the three villages in the region.

Buddhi Narayan Shrestha, a former director general of the Department of Survey, said that the government should conduct the survey in the Kalapani area. Otherwise there is no meaning of publishing the new Nepal map incorporating it within the Nepali territory.

During the general elections of 1959, people from two villages, Navi and Gunji, participated in the elections and voted overwhelmingly.

Later, the government conducted the census in 1961, and Nepali enumerators had reached the three villages

Shrestha offered three different ways of conducting census in the Kalapani area

"One is asking the people living in Chharung village of Nepal who have their relatives in those three villages—Gunji, Navi and Kuti. We can go to Chaharung and ask them whatever information they have," said Shrestha. "The second way is to get satellite images of the households in these three villages and estimate the number of people in each household. But we will miss other details in this case."

According to Shrestha, the third way is to analyse the data from the Indian survey of 2011 something the Central Bureau of Statistics too is considering.

"No matter whether we have a full or partial picture... full or partial census... we have to conduct the survey in the [Kalapani] region," said Shrestha.

The Kalapani region, on the far west ridge of Nepal, has been disputed for decades, and has become a constant irritant in Nepal-India relations. The last time the issue emerged was in November 2019 when New Delhi published a new map to update its politi-

cal map after detailing the boundaries of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The new map was unveiled after the Indian government on August 5 rescinded the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, paving the way for the creation of the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

In the updated map, India showed the Kalapani area within the Indian territory, creating uproar in Nepal. Nepal's attempts to hold diplomatic dialogue to resolve the issue went unanswered by India.

But in May last year, India announced that it was building a road link to Kailash Manasarovar in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, thereby forcing the Nepal government to make its own move of unveiling a new map, which was adopted by Parliament.

Experts say it's incumbent upon the government to ensure that the census is conducted in the region so as to assert that the territory belongs to Nepal

'Conducting the census is one of the best ways to assert that the territory belongs to us," said Shrestha, the former director general at the Department of Survey who is known as an authority on border issues.

There, however, seems to be a lack of coordination among the state agencies regarding conducting the census in the region in question.

A senior official at the National Planning Commission said there has been no serious and in-depth discussion among the state agencies yet about conducting the census in the Kalapani region.

"We have to coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and security agencies, among others if we are indeed serious about conducting the census in the region," said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Phanindra Mani Pokharel, spokesperson for the Home Ministry, admitted that there has not been any discussion regarding the census in the region.

"Our primary duty is to make arrangements for security purposes,' Pokharel told the Post. "No line ministries have written to us as of now.'

Now that the census is set to start in November, concerns have grown, just as India continues to maintain its claim over the Kalapani area.

Officials at the Central Bureau of Statistics say they are ready to cover the area but they are worried if they can send enumerators as the move might cause further tensions.

"Indian authorities have prohibited Nepalis from going to the Kalapani area for the last several decades, Dilip Budhathoki, chair of Byas Rural Municipality in which the Kalapani area falls, told the Post in April, two months before the census was to start earlier this year. "We are not sure if the census can take place in the region.'

## NATIONAL

# Amid conflicting assessments of Covid-19 situation, a few schools reopen in Capital

Officials say they were under pressure from private school operators and a few parents to reopen schools.

#### ANUP OJHA Kathmandu, sept 17

Despite strong reservations by educationists and guardians against government plans to reopen schools from September 17, the District Administration Office, Kathmandu on Wednesday published a notice conditionally allowing educational institutions to resume physical classes.

Stakeholders have criticised the notice as evasive and self-contradictory.

The first sentence of the first clause of the notice says that educational institutions are not allowed to run physical classes. But the second sentence says "if physical classes must be conducted, then the metropolitan cities or the municipalities concerned should analyse the Covid-19 infection situations within their jurisdictions, ensure that all the school teachers, staffers, drivers and their helps, canteen operators and school board members have been vaccinated, prepare school operation guidelines through discussion and coordination among guardians and stakeholders and reopen the school by adhering to 'smart lockdown' rules in coordination with the District Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre.'

"The notice is contradictory and unclear," said Suprabhat Bhandari, chairperson of the Guardians Federation Nepal. "First it says schools can't reopen and then says they can."

From the beginning, Bhandari has been voicing his opposition to the idea of reopening schools at least in Kathmandu Valley citing the high Covid infection rate.

He said there is no point in reopening schools and exposing the children to Covid-19 risk now as the monthlong Dashain and Tihar festival vacations are just three weeks away.

On Friday, the country reported 1,558 new coronavirus cases with 10 Covid-related fatalities. The Kathmandu Valley recorded 397 new



A woman walks her grandchildren to school on Friday.

infections in the past 24 hours. Of these, 274 cases were confirmed in Kathmandu, 70 in Lalitpur and 53 in Bhaktapur districts.

Gobinda Prasad Rijal, the newly-appointed chief district officer of Kathmandu, however, said the statement was a continuation to the earlier announcement of the District Administration Office.

"I don't think many schools reopened on Friday. There are 11 municipalities in Kathmandu and we are collecting information on how many schools resumed physical classes. We are equally concerned about children's safety," said Rijal.

Ram Prasad Subedi, the chief of Kathmandu Metropolitan City's Education Department, said the City is under immense pressure from private school operators' organisations--Pabson and N-Pabson--and even some parents from public schools to reopen schools.

"The City had a meeting on Thursday in the presence of Mayor Bidya Sundar Shakya, deputy Mayor Hari Prabha Khadgi, principals of 30 schools, parents and other stakeholders. We have decided to monitor the infrastructure of schools before allowing them to reopen," said Subedi.

"We may allow schools to resume in-person classes only after Dashain, but there is immense pressure from various sides to allow reopening as soon as possible."

Meanwhile, Lalitpur Metropolitan City reopened its schools from Friday citing low Covid-19 infection rate there.

"The Covid-19 infection rate is comparatively low in our city so we have decided to allow physical classes by ensuring that the health protocols are strictly followed by all school staffers and students," said Lalitpur Mayor Chiri Babu Maharjan. He also admitted that his office was under immense pressure from both school operators and parents to permit physical classes.

"Many parents complained that they had to skip their jobs to tend to their children at home and help them with online studies, so we decided to reopen schools with strict adherence to safety protocol," said Maharjan. But Health Ministry officials citing active Covid-19 cases in Kathmandu, which are still above 3,000, advise against resuming physical classes.

"Kathmandu has a dense population so it is still not safe to allow crowding immediately. At least the schools should wait until after Dashain," said Dr Krishna Prasad Paudel, spokesperson for the Health Ministry.

He further said the ministry has authorised local bodies to make their own decisions based on the local Covid-19 infection situations. "It would be relatively easier to enforce health protocols in schools with fewer students and bigger classrooms. It is upto the local authorities to assess the situation and issue permissions," said Paudel.

Although the Kathmandu Metropolitan City itself has not published any notice yet to allow resumption of classes in person, on Friday a few parents in Kathmandu were seen on the road taking their kids to school. However public health experts have

been advising otherwise. Dr Sher Bahadur Pun, chief of the

Clinical Research Unit at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital, Teku, says schools should wait at least until Dashain because more people will be vaccinated by then. The government aims to raise vaccination coverage to 33 percent by Dashain.

"When more people are vaccinated the risk of infection lessens. So the coming three weeks are crucial," said Pun. On Friday a consignment of 4.4 million doses of the Vero Cell vaccine arrived in Kathmandu. The country has received a total of 17,757,590 doses of vaccines to date.

The record of the Ministry of Health and Population shows a total of 55,07380 people across the country have been fully vaccinated as of Friday. Similarly, 6,083,124 have received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccines.

# Why is Nepal facing a government shutdown?

#### POST REPORT KATHMANDU, SEPT 17

The Sher Bahadur Deuba government has not been able to spend money from the state coffers since Wednesday midnight. Nepal is currently facing a government shutdown, a situation that the country has never faced before. There is no certainty yet on when the government will be allowed to spend from the state coffers as the budget must pass through both houses of the federal parliament.

Here is everything you need to know about the current financial deadlock.

#### What happened?

The erstwhile KP Sharma Oli had presented the budget for the fiscal year 2021-22 on May 29 this year through an ordinance, as the House of Representatives had been dissolved on May 21. On July 12, the Supreme Court overturned Oli's decision and restored the House. But the court also showed Oli the door and ordered Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba's appointment as prime minister. The Deuba government on July 18 presented the ordinance before the lower house, which meant it had to get endorsed within 60 days-by September 16. Finance Minister Janardan Sharma presented a replacement bill for the budget ordinance on September 10 amid sloganeering from the lawmakers of the CPN-UML, the main opposition party. On September 15, a day before the bill's passage deadline, the main opposition resorted to protests. Speaker Agni Sapkota adjourned the House meeting until September 20, which led to a government shutdown situation

### Why was the UML obstructing the House proceedings?

The UML on August 17 expelled 14 of its lawmakers, including Madhav Kumar Nepal and informed the Parliament Secretariat about the decision. The UML wanted Speaker Sapkota to issue a notice regarding its decision to expel the lawmakers. The Speaker did not. On August 26, Nepal split from the UML and formed his own party, CPN (Unified Socialist), aided by an ordinance the Deuba government had introduced on August 18. The party is now a coalition partner in the Deuba government. Only on the 13th day of the UML's decision to expel Nepal and 13 other leaders did Sapkota issue a statement saying there was no need to issue a notice as the Nepal group had already formed a new party, much to the chagrin of the UML. When the House session began on September 8, the UML resorted to obstruction and sloganeering. The UML believes Sapkota played foul and aided the party's split and has regularly been staging protests in Parliament since the start of the new session.

### Did the Speaker try to resolve the House crisis?

He did. After the UML did not let the House function on September 12, two days after Sharma steamrollered the replacement bill through the House, Sapkota scheduled an all-party meeting for September 13. But the UML boycotted the meeting. The UML demanded that the Speaker should hold talks with them, not other parties, as the issue was related to them. The UML maintains that the Speaker must issue a notice regarding the sacking of the 14 lawmakers.

#### Are House proceedings possible when the House convenes on September 20?

The UML says it won't let the House function until the Speaker issues the notice of expulsion of the 14 lawmakers. However, some say there is no need to do so because, firstly, they have already formed a new party and, secondly, the UML has filed petitions against Sapkota and the Election Commission. The court is scheduled to hear those cases on Monday. The UML, however, is firm on its demand that the Speaker must issue a notice as per its August 17 decision to expet those 14 lawmakers.

#### What is the government planning to do if the UML obstructs the House again on September 20?

A Nepali Congress leader said earlier this week that the government would anyhow present the replacement bill to vote, regardless of the UML's obstructions. According to him, they would do something similar to what they did on September 10 while presenting the replacement bill. Since it's a voice vote, the Speaker will ask those to say "yes" who are for the passage of the replacement bill and "no" to those opposed to it. The ruling coalition believes the replacement bill would be passed from the next meeting.

### But will that mean the end of the government shutdown?

No. The bill must be passed from both houses of the federal parliament. The government may not be able to bulldoze the bill in the upper house as easily as it believes it can do so in the lower house. Just like the UML believes Speaker Sapkota has been siding with the government, instead of playing a neutral role as a presiding officer, given his previous affiliation with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), others believe the National Assembly chair might follow the UML's directives. Ganesh Timilsina was elected the National Assembly chair from the UML. If the UML, which has 24 members in the National Assembly, out of 59, obstructs the upper house meetings as well, the replacement bill may get stuck.



#### A delivery man pulls his rickshaw laden with goods at the Balkhu section of Ring Road in Kathmandu on Friday.

#### How did the finance minister present the replacement bill when the UML was obstructing the House?

On September 10, as soon as the House meeting began, the UML lawmakers started their protests. Some ran towards the well. Finance Minister Sharma was scheduled to table the replacement bill that day. The UML lawmakers were lining up to create a wall so as to stop Sharma from reaching the rostrum to present the replacement bill. Since Sharma had also tweaked the budget, taking out some of the programmes the UML government had included in the budget ordinance, the UML did not want the replacement bill presented in the House. The Speaker, however, used marshals to escort Sharma to the rostrum. Sharma read out the entire budget amid sloganeering by UML lawmakers. The bill was presented amid pandemonium.

### What are the consequences of a government shutdown?

There will be no problem in revenue collection. However, the government cannot issue any cheques or spend money from the state coffers on certain headings. Spending on development projects remains halted. Social security allowances given to the citizens won't be distributed. Civil servants will not get their salaries. Former civil servants' pensions will be stopped.

#### Whose salaries and allowances won't be affected?

The government shutdown won't affect the salaries and allowances of the President, Vice President, Supreme Court justices, House Speaker, National Assembly chair, chief commissioners and commissioners of constitutional bodies and provincial chiefs.



#### TIKA R PRADHAN

#### KATHMANDU, SEPT 17

After studying for five years, the Language Commission on September 6 recommended 11 different languages to be used as official languages apart from the Nepali that is currently being used in the seven provinces.

Experts and observers have hailed the development as historic and said it has led the unilateral country towards an inclusive society as imagined by the constitution. However, they have warned that a practical implementation of the commission's recommendation could be challenging as there are many factors that could impede its implementation.

"It's a historic beginning," said Malla K Sundar, an ethnic rights activist. "With the recommendation of the Language Commission, the door has opened for the provinces to use the languages for official use."

In the report presented to President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, the commission has recommended Maithili and Limbu for Province 1; Bhojpuri, Maithili and Bajjika for Province 2; Tamang and Nepal Bhasa for Bagmati; Magar, Gurung and Bhojpuri for Gandaki; Tharu and Awadhi for Lumbini; Magar for Karnali; and Dotyali and Tharu for Sudur Paschim.

The first and foremost challenge to use these languages will begin from the provincial governments, with whom the Language Commission has not consulted properly.

"The authorities of the provincial governments refused to join the discussions organised by the Language Commission which shows that they could be reluctant to use the recommended languages," said Yogendra Prasad Yadava, a linguist, who was part of the research team for the commission.

"I think the provinces could delay its implementation without saying they won't use the languages."

One of the most important challenges for the provinces would be to manage funds for resources including manpower for bringing the languages to official use in the governments, judiciary and education sectors. Many of the 11 languages do not have proper scripts, grammar and writing practices. So the respective governments should first spend on the standardisation of the scripts and grammars of the languages before they could be used as official languages.

With the Language Commission completing its job to recommend the languages following 11 different criteria, now it's up to the provincial governments to draft the necessary laws to implement them.

According to Lavadeo Awasthi, chairperson of the Language Commission, they have taken the population of the speakers of the languages from the 2011 census as the fundamental basis for recommending the languages. However, some experts have questioned how relevant the 2011 census would be when the country has already started a new census from Wednesday.

"Actually, we had also realised this but we had only five years to The Language Commission has recommended 11 official languages.

submit our report. So we had no option but to submit the report," Awasthi told the Post. "But we have suggested that the recommendations should be reviewed and amended if the latest census revealed any substantial changes in the existing data."

Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (Nefin)--the umbrella organisation of the indigenous people of the country, has also questioned the relevance of the criteria used by the Language Commission while selecting the languages and also asked why the ethnic groups concerned were not consulted. Issuing a statement on Thursday, its chairman Jagat Baram said they will support the implementation of the recommendation only after their concerns are addressed and the report becomes acceptable to all.

"Now the language groups concerned and intellectuals pressure the respective provincial governments to draft necessary laws at the earliest," said Amrit Yonjan, another linguist and ethnic rights activist. "In Bagmati, there are some Provincial Assembly members who are preparing to draft the bill on language use if the government refuses to bring it."

But less than a week after the recommendation, the Nepal Rana Tharu Society has objected to the recommendation of Tharu as the language for official use in Sudur Paschim Province claiming that the Rana Tharu, which was already recognised by the state, should be the official language.

Organising a press meet in Dhangadi on Sunday, 16 different organisations of the Rana Tharu community of Kailali and Kanchanpur expressed their dissatisfaction for ignoring their language. Experts say such disappointments would now pour in from various language communities and that would help create pressure on the government to gradually look after them all as there are more than 123 languages in the country and the Language Commission has identified eight more languages which need to be verified by the upcoming census.

Article 7(2) of the constitution states that a province may, by a provincial law, determine one or more languages of the nation spoken by a majority of people within the province, as its official language(s), in addition to the Nepali language. While article 7(3) says other matters relating to language shall be as decided by the government on the recommendation of the Language Commission.

The authorities of the provincial governments may demand additional resources for developing and standardising the languages before using them for official purposes including for teaching and learning at schools. This will require a lot of resources.



# WORLD

## BRIEFING

#### Australian PM rejects Chinese criticism of nuclear sub deal

**CANBERRA:** Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Friday rejected Chinese criticism of Australia's new nuclear submarine alliance with the United States and said he doesn't mind that President Joe Biden might have forgotten his name. China reacted angri when Biden, Morrison and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson used a virtual news conference this week to announce a trilateral defence alliance that will provide Australia with a fleet of at least eight nuclear-powered submarines. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Zhao Lijian said it was "highly irresponsible" for the US and Britain to export the nuclear technology.

#### Putin's foes accuse Google and Apple of caving to Kremlin pressure

**MOSCOW:** Russian opposition activists accused Alphabet's Google and Apple of caving to Kremlin pressure on Friday after the US tech giants removed an anti-government tactical voting app from their stores on the first day of a parliamentary election. The app, devised by allies of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, gives people detailed recommendations on who to vote for in an effort to thwart the ruling United Russia party which supports President Vladimir Putin. Members of the upper house of parliament met Google and Apple representatives in the run-up to the election to tell them to remove the app, or face consequences including fines and criminal prosecution.

#### US paves way for more sanctions over Ethiopia's **Tigray conflict**

WASHINGTON: The United States on Friday paved the way for further sanctions to be imposed on parties to the conflict in northern Ethiopia where thousands have been killed and millions are in need of humani tarian assistance. A new executive order allows Washington to take punitive action against those in the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Amhara regional government if they play a role in prolonging the conflict, obstructing humanitarian access or commit serious human rights abuse. (AGENCIES)

# Taliban replace women's ministry with notorious vice department

Although still marginalised, Afghan women have fought for and gained basic rights in the past 20 years.



A man walks past an entrance gate of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Kabul on Friday.

#### AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE KABUL, SEPT 17

The Taliban appeared Friday to have shut down the government's ministry of women's affairs and replaced it with a department notorious for enforcing strict religious doctrine during their first rule two decades

Workers were seen raising a sign for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice at the old Women's Affairs building in the capital.

Several posts have appeared on Twitter in the last 24 hours showing women workers from the ministry protesting outside the building, saying they had lost their jobs.

Taliban No official from the responded Friday to requests for comment on the matter.

Despite insisting they will rule more moderately this time around, the Taliban have not allowed women to return to work and introduced rules for what they can wear at university.

A new Taliban government announced two weeks ago had no women members or even a ministry to represent their interests

Although still marginalised, Afghan women have fought for and gained basic rights in the past 20 years, becoming lawmakers, judges, pilots and police officers.

Hundreds of thousands have entered the workforce-a necessity in some cases as many women were widowed or now support invalid husbands as a result of two decades of conflict.

But since returning to power on August 15 the Taliban have shown no

inclination to honour those rights.

When pressed, Taliban officials say women have been told to stay at home for their own security but will be allowed to work once proper segregation can be implemented.

During the Taliban's first rule from 1996 to 2001, women were largely excluded from public life including being banned from leaving their homes unless accompanied by a male relative.

Enforcers from the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice were known to lash women

found walking alone. They were also responsible for strictly implementing other hardline interpretations of Islam, such as compulsory attendance at prayers, and no

trimming of beards for men. People reacted angrily on social media Friday in support of a group of women seen on Twitter protesting outside the ministry.

'No-one hears our women," said Twitter user Somaya, while another asked, "what else can we expect from these animals?"

## Taliban say Afghan boys' schools to reopen, no mention of girls

#### REUTERS KABUL, SEPT 17

Afghan schools will open for boys from Saturday, the new Taliban ministry of education said in a statement that gave no indication of when girls might be able to go back to their classes

More than a month after the movement seized the capital Kabul, most institutions educational have remained closed as the Taliban have struggled to reopen the economy and restore normal life in the cities.

At some of the schools that have managed to operate, girls up to the sixth grade have attended, and women students have gone to university classes. But high schools for girls have been closed.

Taliban officials have said they will not replicate the fundamentalist policies of the previous Taliban government, which banned girls' education, and they have promised that girls will be able to study so long as they do so in segregated classrooms.

While the Taliban did not order schools to close after their takeover, the movement has said the security situation meant that many activities for women and girls were not yet possible, and the latest statement did not mention girls at all.

It said state and private schools at primary and secondary level as well as official madrasa religious schools would be open from Saturday.

# India vaccine tycoon calls Covid booster shots 'unethical'

#### AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MUMBAL SEPT 17

The head of the world's largest vaccine maker said on Friday it was "unethical" to give third doses of the Covid-19 vaccine while developing nations are struggling to access first and second jabs.

Adar Poonawalla, billionaire chief executive of Serum Institute of India, spoke out as he announced a \$4.9 billion deal to take a 15 percent stake in a rival pharma firm, allowing vaccine production to be ramped up.

Israel was the first country to recommend Covid-19 booster doses in July and several European nations have since followed, targeting highrisk groups.

The United States, which is suffering rising coronavirus cases, is expected to roll out booster doses from next week

"It's unethical to start giving three doses to somebody when others in certain countries and populations have not even got two doses. Poonawalla told reporters.

He added it was "not right" to roll out booster shots when poorer countries have "not been able to get the vaccines purely because the rich nations have taken away most of the vaccines.'

Serum Institute is currently producing 160 million doses of Astra-Zeneca's Covishield each month, but Poonawalla said this would go up to 200 million from October.

Despite India's export ban because of shortages that have hit the domestic vaccination drive, he said he expects restrictions will "slowly ease in the next month or two"

He acknowledged that "some very vulnerable sections" could benefit from booster shots, but added: "There is no evidence to say so far that Covishield requires a third dose.'

Serum Institute is taking a stake in fellow pharma billionaire Kiran Mazumdar Shaw's Biocon Biologics.

Under the deal, Biocon will be able to manufacture and sell 100 million vaccine doses annually-including Covishield and Covavax, Serum's Novavax vaccine for children, currently undergoing trials.

Climate pledges put world on 'catastrophic pathway,' UN says submitted updates to their emissions

#### **ASSOCIATED PRESS** BERLIN, SEPT 17

The world is on a "catastrophic pathway" toward a hotter future unless

targets, also known as nationally determined contributions or NDCs, by the end of July. Their pledges would result in a 12 percent drop in emissions for those countries by the decade—a figure that could more than double if some governments' conditional pledges and assurances about aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050 are translated into action. "That's the positive side of the picture," said UN climate chief Patricia Espinosa, whose office compiled the latest report. "The other one is more sobering.

bon neutral by 2060, haven't yet been formally submitted to the UN and so weren't taken into account for the report. An update, which would include any further commitments submitted hen, will be issued short the Glasgow summit, she said. Still, environmental campaigners and representatives of some vulnerable nations expressed their disappointment at the findings. "We must ask what it will take for some major emitters to heed the scientific findings and deliver our world from a point of no return," said Webson of Antigua and Aubrev Barbuda, who chairs the Association of Small Island States. "The findings are clear - if we are to avoid amplification of our already devastating climate impacts, we need major emitters and all G20 countries to implement and stick to more ambitious NDCs and make strong commitments to net-zero emissions by 2050.' Jennifer Morgan, the executive director of Greenpeace International, said meeting the Paris goal would only be possible with "courageous leadership and bold decisions." "Governments are letting vested interests call the climate shots, rather than serving the global community,' she said. "Passing the buck to future generations has got to stop-we are living in the climate emergency now."



Two packhorses playfully jostle each other in the rain-soaked main town square in Dharmsala, India on Friday.

# Japan governing party begins race to pick successor for Prime Minister Suga

#### **ASSOCIATED PRESS**

#### TOKYO, SEPT 17

The race is on for the next Japanese prime minister.

Official election campaigning began Friday for the new head of Japan's governing Liberal Democratic Party, who typically becomes the national leader because of the party's control over parliament.

Four candidates are competing in the September 29 vote to replace outgoing Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who will quit when his term ends at the end of this month after serving only one year. He took over from predecessor Shinzo Abe.

Their policies largely focus on the pandemic and its economic fallout, and on the increasingly assertive role China is playing in regional affairs.

Taro Kono, currently the Cabinet minister in charge of vaccinations and a front-runner, said in his kickoff speech on Friday that he wants a society that people see as compassionate.

On foreign policy, Kono, who has served as foreign and defence ministers, said Japan and the international

community should resolutely address Chinese attempts to change the status quo in the region and "let China know it has to pay a certain cost if it violates international rules."

Kono, considered a maverick in Japan's conservative political culture, says he also seeks to reform his own party.

Suga later on Friday said he wants Kono to be his successor. Suga handpicked him to help speed up vaccinations to achieve his ambitious goals of bolstering daily doses to above 1 million and possibly finish inoculating all those who wish to get their shots by October to early November.

"It is Minister Kono who made such plans under me and has achieved great results in the middle of a national crisis," Suga said. "Continuity is extremely important for Covid-19 measures. With that in mind, I support Mr Kono.'

Support ratings for Suga and his government nosedived over his handling of the coronavirus and insistence on hosting the Olympics despite the pandemic, and the party is hoping that a new leader can bring it victory

in general elections that must be held by late November.

Abe's long rule brought unusual political stability but also what critics described as an autocratic and ultra-nationalistic approach.

Former Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, considered a close contender with Kono, said he will listen to the voice of the people and "restore a sense of unity to this country divided by the coronavirus pandemic."

Unusually for Japan, two women are competing in the race.

Seiko Noda, who has served as postal and gender equality ministers and is seeking to become Japan's first female leader, said the country's rapidly aging and declining population pose a serious security and economic threat because there won't be enough troops and police in coming decades.

Sanae Takaichi, who shares Abe's right-wing political views and historical revisionism, called for a stronger military. The former internal affairs minister said she wants ample government spending to create a "beautiful and strong Japan that grows.

vernments make more ambitious pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions, the head of the United Nations said on Friday.

A new UN report reviewing all the national commitments submitted by signatories of the Paris climate accord until July 30 found that they would result in emissions rising nearly 16 percent by 2030, compared with 2010 levels.

Scientists say the world must start to sharply curb emissions soon and add no more to the atmosphere by 2050 than can be absorbed if it is to meet the most ambitious goal of the Paris accord-capping global temperature rise at 1.5 Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) by 2100.

"The world is on a catastrophic pathway to 2.7 degrees (Celsius) of heating," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

Experts say the planet has already warmed by 1.1 C since pre-industrial times.

"We need a 45 percent cut in emissions by 2030 to reach carbon neutrali-

ty by mid-century," Guterres said. Some 113 countries including the

United States and the European Union

Dozens of countries, including major emitters such as China, India and Saudi Arabia, failed to submit new pledges in time for the report.

Espinosa called for leaders at next week's annual UN gathering in New York to put forward stronger commitments in time for the global body's upcoming climate summit in Glasgow.

'Leaders must engage in a frank discussion driven not just by the very legitimate desire to protect national interest, but also by the equally commanding goal of contributing to the welfare of humanity," she said. "We simply have no more time to spare, and people throughout the world expect nothing less.

Espinosa added that some public pledges, such as China's aim to be car-



In this 2020 file photo, plumes of steam billow out from the chimneys of a steel mill in Duisburg, Germany.

117.87

138.89

162.49 10.72

18.26

32.37

86.13

28.26

31.43

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

PRICE PER TOLA

Rs 89,100

Rs 1,170

SOURCE: FENEGOSID/

FOREX

Pound Sterling

Japanese Yen

Chinese Yuan

Qatari Riyal

Australian Dolla

Malaysian Ringi

Saudi Arab Rival

BULLION

🤍 Silver

Fine Gold

GASOLINE WATCH

100% PERFORMANCE. EVERYTIME

KFC Nepal opens new outlet

KATHMANDU: KFC Nepal, known for

Chicken, has launched its 8th restau-

located in Bhatbhateni supermarket

Kathmandu. According to the press

release issued by the company, the

new restaurant is spread across 1,640

Customers will be able to enjoy their

KFC favourites from 9am to 830pm

with dine-in, delivery and takeaway

rant in Kathmandu. The new outlet is

in Bhatbhateni Naxal

offering the 'World's Tastiest

and departmental store, Naxal,

square feet and seats 40 people.

options available.

Petrol (Per Litre)

Rs 130.00/

Diesel (Per Litre)

(erosene (Per Litre)

Rs 113.00/

LPG (Per cylinder

Rs 1450/-

Rs 113.00/

US Dollar

Euro

### MONEY

# Government subsidised stores open across country

The scheme will not help to control prices, nor will it benefit the targeted groups, activists say.

#### **KRISHANA PRASAIN KATHMANDU, SEPT 17**

Government subsidised stores opened different outlets of Food Management and Trading Company and Salt Trading Company on Friday. The stores selling daily essential goods at subsidised prices will serve customers through the festival season till November 10.

Consumer rights activists have viewed the initiative with scepticism, saying that selling a limited number of products from a few outlets of stateowned companies will not make a huge impact on the market.

The scheme will not help to control prices, nor will it benefit the targeted groups and provide relief to consumers, they said.

Food Management and Trading is providing a discount of Rs5 per kg on all types of rice, wheat, lentils, beaten rice and flour. Mustard and sunflower oils are being sold at a discount of Rs5 per litre and soybean oil at a discount of Rs10 per litre. Karnali beans and buckwheat are cheaper by Rs10 per kg. Live goats are available at a discount of Rs10 per kg.

Food Management and Trading Company maintains 43 outlets in 39 districts

"The maximum quantity allowed per customer and prices can be fixed depending on the inventory and consumer pressure by conducting internal discussions and creating a work procedure," said the company. Separate sales quotas have been set for urban and rural areas depending on the food situation.

The company is bringing around 2,000 goats from Hetauda and Dang. It is unlikely that Himalayan goats will be brought this Dashain due to the high prices and the difficulty of importing them from China, officials said.

Mohan Prakash Chand, chief executive officer of Food Management and Trading Company, said that farmers in Mustang were selling Himalayan goats at prices ranging from Rs30,000 to Rs40,000 and even higher per head. "We cannot buy goats at those prices and sell them to consumers," he said.

Salt Trading Company will be selling subsidised food items such as rice, legumes and lentils, spices, edible oil, sugar and salt from its 42 outlets across the country.

Dairy products like milk, paneer





Stores selling daily essential goods at subsidised prices will serve customers through the festival season till November 10.

and ghee produced by Dairy Development Corporation will be sold at a discount from these subsidised shops

Consumer rights activists said that the subsidised shops the government has opened targeting low-income consumers and rural people never benefit from them.

"Unless subsidised shops are opened in all 753 local units in the country, the targeted groups will never be able to benefit from the discounts provided by the government,' said Madhav Timilsina, president of the Consumer Rights Investigation Forum

"Besides, selling a limited number of goods will have no effect on market prices which the government intends to stabilise by opening these subsidised shops," he said, adding that the subsidised goods should be delivered to different places by truck

Consumers have complained about the quality of items sold at the subsidised shops.

if the targeted people are to benefit.

"When edible oil prices have jumped by more than 17 percent, the cost of sugar has reached Rs100 per kg, legumes and lentils have become dearer by 10 percent, and almost all food items have become costlier, offering small discounts will not help low-income consumers, marginalised groups and people who have lost their jobs and income sources due to the pandemic," he said.

"Even people residing outside the Ring Road in Kathmandu cannot benefit from the government subsidised shops because they have to spend more on travel than they save with the discount," he said.

Some consumers have complained about the quality of the food items sold at the subsidised shops in the past.

Pabitra Gurung, a resident of Thankot who purchased Karnali beans from a subsidised shop last Dashain, said the beans were of poor quality and did not cook well.

"I had bought 2 kg of beans at Rs200 which I had to throw away because they did not cook well," said the 48-year-old housewife.

Timilsina said consumers had complained in past years about the food items bought from subsidised shops which were of low quality. Consumers have also complained in the past that the food items sold at the government subsidised shops could be bought in the market for less.

POST PHOTO: BEEJU MAHARJAN

With the increase in consumption during festival time, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supply has also decided to make an intense and joint inspection of prices, quality and quantity of goods in the market.

Sales of food and non-food items like clothes and electronics double during major festival seasons, and the rise in consumer spending raises chances of business fraud.

The Department of Commerce, Supplies and Consumer Protection will be holding discussions with private sector organisations like the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Confederation of Nepalese Industries and department stores about operating subsidised shops as they have spread to different parts of the valley.

# IMF chief called out over pressure to favour China while at World Bank

REUTERS WASHINGTON, SEPT 17

World Bank leaders, including then-Chief Executive Kristalina Georgieva, applied "undue pressure" on staff to boost China's ranking in the bank's Doing Business 2018" r eport, a ing to an independent investigation released Thursday. The report, prepared by law firm WilmerHale at the request of the bank's ethics committee, raises concerns about China's influence at the World Bank, and the judgment of Georgieva-now managing director of the International Monetary Fundand then-World Bank President Jim Yong Kim.





Georgieva said she disagreed "fundamentally with the findings and interpretations" of the report and had briefed the IMF's executive board.

The World Bank Group on Thursday cancelled the entire "Doing Business" report on business climates, saying internal audits and the WilmerHale investigation had raised "ethical matters, including the conduct of former Board officials, as well as current and/or former Bank staff."

The US Treasury Department, which manages the dominant US shareholdings in the IMF and the World Bank, said it was analyzing what it called the "serious findings."

The WilmerHale report cited "direct and indirect pressure" from senior staff in Kim's office to change the report's methodology to boost China's score, and said it likely occurred at his direction.

It said Georgieva, and a key adviser, Simeon Djankov, had pressured staff to "make specific changes to China's data points" and boost its ranking at a time when the bank was seeking China's support for a big capital increase

Kim did not respond to a request for comment. Djankov could not be immediately reached.

China's ranking in the "Doing Business 2018" report, published in October 2017, rose seven places to 78th after the data methodology changes were made, compared with the initial draft report.

The "Doing Business" report ranks countries based on their regulatory and legal environments, ease of business startups, financing, infrastructure and other business climate measures

The report comes nearly two years after Georgieva took over as IMF chief, shortly before the biggest global economic crisis in the Fund's 76-year history, prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva.

The US Treasury is analysing "serious findings" in the WilmerHale report, Treasury spokeswoman Alexandra LaManna told Reuters. "Our primary responsibility is to uphold the integrity of international financial institutions."

The WilmerHale report also cited pressures related to data used to determine rankings for Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Azerbaijan in the "Doing Business 2020" report published in 2019, but found no evidence that any members of the World Bank's Office of the President or executive board were involved in these changes. Saudi Arabia climbed 30 places to 62nd in the "Doing Business 2020" report.

"Going forward, we will be working on a new approach to assessing the business and investment climate," the World Bank said.

WilmerHale said it was hired by the lender's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development in January to review the internal circumstances that led to the data irregularities. It said the bank supported the probe, but it was wholly independent.

The report said the push to boost China's ranking came at a time when the bank's management was "consumed with sensitive negotiations" over a major capital increase, and China's disappointment over a lower-than-expected score.

Georgieva told WilmerHale investigators that "multilateralism was at stake, and the Bank was in 'very deep trouble' if the campaign missed its goals," the report said.

The World Bank in 2018 announced a \$13 billion-paid in capital increase that boosted China's shareholding stake to 6.01 percent from 4.68 percent.

WilmerHale said Georgieva visited the home of a "Doing Business" manager to retrieve a hard copy of the final report that reflected changes that boosted China's ranking, and thanked the employee for helping "resolve the problem."

The report said a "toxic culture" and "fear of retaliation" surrounded the Doing Business report, and said members of that team "felt that they could not challenge an order from the Bank's president or CEO without risking their jobs."

Nonprofit group Oxfam welcomed the bank's decision to discontinue the Doing Business report, saying it had long encouraged governments to slash labour regulations and corporate taxes in order to improve their spot in the rankings

Former World Bank chief economist Paul Romer first voiced concerns about the integrity of the "Doing Business" report in 2018, saying Chile's ranking may have been biased against socialist then-President Michelle Bachelet. Romer left the bank shortly after his comments.



# **Rama Shah**

1945 - 2021 (Wife of Late Devendra Bahadur Shah)

We will always remember, Your joyful nature that brought a smile to all.

> For living life on your own terms, And your sheer zest for life.

Gone too soon. We will miss you, always.

Mr. Sunil Shah Mrs. Pravriti Shah

Mr. Sarvesh Shah

Mrs. Kalpana Pande Lt. General Pawan B. Pande (Retd)

Ms. Simran Shah

Mr. Nayapal B. Pande & Mrs. Ashlesha Rana Pande Mrs. Natasha Pande Ceka & Mr. Enerson Ceka

And all those who loved you.

# SPORTS | MEDLEY



The futsal mat of the Pokhara Multipurpose Stadium is hosting the 'A' Division National Futsal League from today. Rising Club Dharan will take on Sky Goals Kathmandu in the inaugural match of the tournament being organised for the first time in the country. Sports Castle Pokhara will face Prabhatpheri Youth Club in the day's other match. The competition will run until October 8.

### New Zealand axe Pakistan tour after security alert REUTERS ISLAMABAD, SEPT 17

New Zealand abruptly abandoned their tour of Pakistan on Friday citing a security alert in a massive blow to the South Asian country's hopes of staging regular international cricket.

The tour was due to get underway with the first of three one-dayers in Rawalpindi on Friday but New Zealand did not travel to the stadium. New Zealand Cricket (NZC) then issued a statement announcing their decision to call off the tour.

"Following an escalation in the New Zealand Government threat levels for Pakistan, and advice from NZC security advisors on the ground, it has been decided the Blackcaps will not continue with the tour," it said.

New Zealand, minus several frontline players, were visiting Pakistan for the first time in 18 years and were also due to play five Twenty20 matches in Lahore

Top teams have largely shunned Pakistan following an attack on the Sri Lanka team bus in 2009 that killed six policemen and two civilians.

More disappointment could be in store for the PCB with England now reconsidering what was to be their first Pakistan visit in 16 years to play two Twenty20 matches in Rawalpindi next month

"We are liaising with our security team who are on the ground in Pakistan to fully understand the situation," an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) spokesperson said.

The ECB Board will decide in the next few days if the tour should proceed

# Messi and co still have a long way to go

#### REUTERS PARIS, SEPT 17

After failing to impress in their first outing together, Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe clearly have a long way to go before the most lethal attacking trio in the world, on paper, can produce the goods on the pitch for Paris St Germain.

None of them found the net in a disappointing 1-1 draw at Club Brugge in the Champions League on Wednesday with only Mbappe producing a decent performance, before the France striker limped off injured in the 51st minute after setting up Ander Herrera for the opening goal.

They only managed four shots-two on target—and their lack of defensive work left the midfield and defence exposed, with the trio winning only

seven balls between them. Coach Mauricio Pochettino had warned that it would take time for the new signings to gel, saying PSG were "not a team yet". He was right.

While Mbappe started his preparation for the new season earlier than expected, after France were surprise last-16 casualties at Euro 2020, Brazil's Neymar and Argentina's Messi resumed training only in mid-August having played in the Copa America final on July 10.

The South Americans have lacked rhythm and Messi's arrival on a twoyear deal from Barcelona seems to have disrupted the attacking line's balance.

PSG were without the injured Marco Verratti, whose ability to create a link between the midfield and

attack was sorely missed as Herrera lacks the Italian's technical quality.

The Spaniard was not helped either by a poor performance from Georginio Wijnaldum while Leandro Paredes struggled to cope with Brugge's intense pressing.

Former PSG and Barcelona winger Ludovic Giuly, however believes that the attacking trio will shine soon.

The draw at Brugge is a cue PSG cannot just rely on Messi, Neymar and Mbappe to win games.

"Mauricio Pochettino has the experience and the necessary vision," he told French sports daily L'Equipe. "His only problem will be to have the trio defend a minimum. The team will need to know what to do when they lose the ball and be compact. Then they'll be rolling.'

Pochettino agreed it was a matter of balance, especially if he plays with Achraf Hakimi and Nuno Mendes, who are two attacking fullbacks.

"Like I said, we have a superb squad but we need balance, to find an attacking organisation with creativity but stay solid at the back. For that, we need time," he said.

However, with a Champions League home game against Premier League winners Manchester City in 11 days, time is a luxury that PSG do not have.

### HOROSCOPE

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) \*\*\*

**Ronaldo's Manchester United** look to make amends

After a shock defeat to Young Boys in the Champions League despite the Portuguese scoring a goal, coach Solskjaer has demanded immediate response from the Red Devils.

#### AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON, SEPT 17

All eyes are once again on Cristiano Ronaldo as Manchester United aim make amends for a shock Champions League defeat to Young Boys when the Premier League leaders head to West Ham on Sunday.

Second-placed Chelsea are behind United only on goals scored and will look to extend their unbeaten start in a London derby at Tottenham.

Liverpool and Manchester City will not expect to be troubled when Crystal Palace and Southampton visit Anfield and the Etihad respectively on Saturday.

But the pressure is on under-fire Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta when the Gunners travel to fellow strugglers Burnley.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has demanded an immediate response from United after the optimism engendered by Ronaldo's return was punctured in Bern.

Solskjaer's side had won three of their first four matches in an unbeaten start to the Premier League campaign, including a Ronaldo-inspired rout of Newcastle on the Portuguese superstar's Old Trafford return last weekend. Ronaldo was on target again in Bern, but United succumbed after Aaron Wan-Bissaka's red card to lose to the lowest seed in their Champions League group.

"Our attitude is like you'd expect; focused, a little disappointed but not too downbeat," Solskjaer said. "It's a setback, we have to do better.'

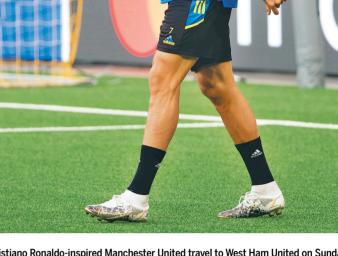
It was Jesse Lingard's woeful backpass that condemned United to defeat against Young Boys. Lingard is back at United after shining on loan at West Ham in the second half of last season. The Hammers were keen to sign Lingard on a permanent basis, but Solskjaer convinced him to stay and retains his faith in the England international.

"We really want to see the best of Jesse this season and we hope to see him, we support him, and we hope to keep him here with us. He's a Red through and through," Solskjaer added

#### Lukaku vs Kane

Chelsea striker Romelu Lukaku will go head to head with Tottenham's Harry Kane in a fascinating shoot-out between two of the Premier League's leading marksmen. Lukaku has made a flying start on

his return to Chelsea following his club record £98 million (\$135 million) move from Inter Milan. The Belgian has already scored four times in four



Cristiano Ronaldo-inspired Manchester United travel to West Ham United on Sunday

appearances, including a perfectly-timed header to break Zenit Saint Petersburg's stubborn resistence in the Champions League in midweek.

After the debilitating struggles of Chelsea's misfiring forwards last season, Blues boss Thomas Tuchel admits Lukaku has been a breath of fresh air.

"He was the type of player and pro-file we were missing," Tuchel said. "He's also super humble. He is always open to everybody and that creates a certain energy and atmosphere that we are proud of.<sup>3</sup>

While Lukaku is living out his dreams at his boyhood club, Kane is having to make do with another season at Tottenham after the England captain's failed attempt to engineer a move to Manchester City. Kane, frustrated by Tottenham's 13-year trophy drought, was desperate to join City, but Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy refused to grant his wish.

With Tottenham looking to recover from last weekend's chastening 3-0 loss at Crystal Palace, Kane's first Premier League goal of the season would be timely for both the striker and his team.

#### Arteta 'sees the light'

Besieged by calls for his head after Arsenal opened the season with three successive defeats and not a single goal, Arteta earned a modicum of breathing space when the Gunners narrowly beat Norwich last weekend. But the Spaniard knows that 1-0 win will quickly be forgotten if Arsenal lose to a Burnley side still looking for their first win this term.

Arteta was given more money to spend than any other Premier League manager in the transfer window and is adamant there are better days ahead for his young squad.

"I can really see the light," he said. "I'm telling you I'm very positive most of the time. "There can be bumps in the road within that light, but I can see a lot of light.'

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) \*\* universe has been pushing you to deepen your faith in your self-confidence. Saturday's skies nudge this story along. Today's alignment encourages you to examine your resources and activate your underutilised skills.



skies are idyllic when it comes to having aturday's few plans. It's an ideal day to brunch with friends or to immerse yourself in your community. Today's alignment imbues the day with little action and calls for social withdrawal and recuperation

#### TAURUS (April 20-May 20) \*\*



Saturday's cosmic landscape has you focusing on the big picture trajectory of your ambitions. Yet, the alignment makes it hard to take any real action. Use this energy instead to focus on maintenance and accomplishing existing projects

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



Get out of your same old weekend routine if you can today. Today's alignment encourages you to cultivate adventure and get lost in different perspectives. Today is an ideal day for you to get lost in a good movie, book, or day trip.

### CROSSWORD

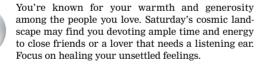
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old relationship wounds. The alignment directs the bulk of your focus towards unfinished business in partnerships. It's an ideal day to talk things through, or active release

Saturday's skies work to help you prioritize healing

#### LEO (July 23-August 22) \*\*\*\*

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



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

In true Virgo fashion, you're ready to get productive—even if it means working on the weekend! Let yourself sink your teeth into a project or craft worthy of your time. This is an ideal day to work on existing projects rather than start anew

Saturday's skies are blissfully aimless. Today's align ment sends your focus towards existing creative projects and the state of your romantic life. Get lost in a world of your own with a lover and leave the rest behind.

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

Let yourself embrace a slow-paced, easy-going approach to Saturday's skies. It's an ideal day to tidy up your home and quietly commune with family. Later, the alignment today, spices up your sex life and increases your need for fun.

#### SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) \*\*\*



Saturday's cosmic landscape can be molded to your liking. The alignment increases your need for movement and connection in your local environment. It's an ideal day to catch up or involve yourself in impending talks.



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



While it's an unusual mode of action for you, the universe has been quietly encouraging you to develop a deeper sense of your own individuality and power. The day encourages deepening your connection to your health and body.

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



You may feel as if you're two totally distinct people in the course of the day. Today's alignment pushes you to focus on quiet recuperation and prioritize healing moments of solitude. It also encourages you to activate your self-expression.

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DIFFICULTY RATING:

THE KATHMANDU POST

# Nepali artists portray their storytelling prowess through online comics and webtoons

#### >> Continued from page 1

Meanwhile, physical publication of such comics doesn't yet have a foothold in Nepal. Physical copies of comics may only be feasible as a passion project, artists say.

Most of the Nepali artists use Webtoon canvas (stylised as WEBTOON CANVAS), a webtoon publishing platform by Naver Corporation to publish their artworks. Nepali webtoon artists say Webtoon's publishing platform is free, extremely convenient, and has a large audience and that is why they prefer drawing and publishing webtoons instead of other comic styles

Comic and webtoon artist Nozomi Rana, 34, says that his fascination with comic books started from an early age. He still remembers devouring Calvin and Hobbes comics back then. His foray into comic artwork started with his online comic series 'The Adventures of Momo Boya' and he eventually moved on to webtoons with his 'Deluded Dreamer' webtoon. Now, he is involved in both, as his webtoon account and Instagram page are updated with a new chapter of 'Momo Boya' and 'Deluded Dreamer' almost every week.

His comic books and webtoons are mostly comedy, adventure, and slice of life genres, and he tries to incorporate Nepali elements through the stories, supporting characters, and settings.

"I actually got the idea to base a character on momos while eating momos with my friend and that's how the name and design of Momo Boya came to life," he says. "The character of Momo Boya and the story of Deluded Dreamer have struck a chord with Nepali audiences.'

Rana feels Nepali audiences are recep tive towards local context stories and artstyle. "Foreign context stories and artwork style by Nepali artists are a bit less appreciated," he says

He also dabbles in short horror comics from time to time. His most recent one is titled 'Sadak Hatya', published last month on his Instagram page

Anish Raj Joshi, author of Blaze Core webtoon, says that he, on the other hand, has always been interested in action and fantasy genres since childhood. He goes by the nickname Xcelon Art on Instagram

The cover art of Blaze Core webtoon by Anish Raj Joshi which has over 1.2 million views on WEBTOON CANVAS. and was the author of 'Daemon Ignition' manga which was published in the Otaku Next magazines and also as its own standalone manga volume. From the manga artstyle, he transitioned into webtoons because he saw that the webtoon industry was burgeoning and the process of

Astha (who only goes by her first creating online webtoons was easier than

creating online manga. "Though romance and comedy webtoons are more popular, I was always more fascinated by fantasy and adventure genres. I had a fantasy and adventure story idea brewing on my mind, so when I transitioned to webtoons, I followed through on that idea," says Joshi.

His webtoon has over 40,000 subscribers, 1.2 million views, and even 31 patrons who financially support his artistic endeavour. He says that he is hopeful of making a career out of webtoons and committed to producing three chapters

per month. For emerging artists, however, their webtoons and artwork are mostly their passion and source of happiness.

name), 18, is the author of two webtoons, 'Apology Letter' and 'Mutually Devious'. "I just feel so much joy when I draw my characters, it's like a source of serotonin for me," she says. She goes by the nickname 'aeestha' on Instagram and was introduced to webtoons after an artist she admired started publishing webtoons. As she was always fond of writing stories even before she was seriously drawing art, she got hooked on drawing webtoons as it combined both of her

interests "I have the power to show anyone what I have in my head. I can actually materialise my thoughts. If I want to see what a frog with horns would look like, I can just draw it! If I want to tell others about the story of a cheerful golden goddess I thought of in my head, I can just make a comic about her! It's crazy," she says.

PHOTO COURTESY: ANISH RAJ JOSHI

The appeal of storytelling and narrative structure in online comics and webtoons attracts many artists. Roseena Shakya, 24, is one of them, who goes by the nickname Phllegm on Instagram and uses they/them pronouns.

"I started my art journey from painting thangka art, then moved on to water colours and then illustrations. However, I was always interested in incorporating a narrative in my artwork so when I was introduced to webtoon through other artists, I found my calling," Shakya says.

It has been four years since they started drawing webtoons. They share that there have been many trials and errors along their journey of learning how to draw webtoons. There have been many

webtoon stories they didn't continue, but the one webtoon which they still continue is called 'Shiro and Leo', which features their own pet dogs. As a slice of life genre, their webtoon illustrates the calm, mundane yet relatable everyday lives of their dogs. Shakya says, "With my webtoons, I try to incorporate emotions that others can relate to. Though I draw my adventures with my own dogs, I believe that my webtoons can be relatable and fun for others, too.

They share that they are planning to publish a physical comic book collection with a small group of artists. "I am still learning how to draw comics and webtoons, and I feel that publishing a physical copy will be a valuable learning opportunity for all of us," they say. However, they don't see this venture as something commercially sustainable. "I don't think publishing physical comic books in Nepal is feasible right now but I still want to do it as more of a passion project.

Kavin Shah, co-founder of Otaku Next, which used to publish a bi-monthly magazine until 2018, says that artists can reach international audiences through webtoons while physical copies can help reach national audiences.

"Japan has had a physical comic book industry for hundreds of years while Nepal doesn't have such a history. So, it is difficult to commercialise physical comic books without an existing infrastructure," he says. However, he says that since manga and anime culture has become really popular, he is hopeful that physical comic book culture will follow suit.

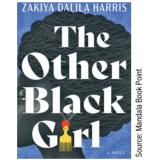
Astha is also optimistic about a physical publishing culture of artwork in Nepal

"I do think that a physical publishing of an original work created by a Nepali artist might have the possibility of success in Nepal, given that the price is within a range that students or teens can afford," she says. "I have also thought of printing a zine, like a small collection of my artworks, but I haven't thought about printing something on a large scale like a comic or the webtoon, mainly because I do not have the funds to publish my stories.

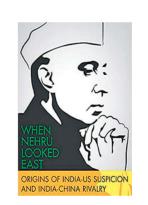
### **BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES**

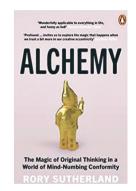


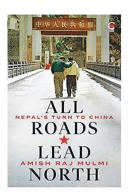
- The Other Black Girl by Zakiya 1. Dalila Harris
- Sex and Vanity by Kevin Kwan 2. The Anthropocene Reviewed by 3.
- John Green The Comfort Book by Matt Haig 4.
- Girl in White Cotton by Avni 5. Doshi











#### Non-Fiction

- A New Cold War: Henry Kissinger and 1. the Rise of China Edited by Sanjaya Baru and Rahul Sharma
- All Roads Lead North: Nepal's Turn to China by Amish Raj Mulmi
- Nehru, Tibet and China by AS Bhasin 3.
- India and Asian Geopolitics: The Past 4. Present by Shivshankar Menon
- 5. India's China Challenge by Ananth Krishnan

An Alternative Development Paradigm for Nepal Author: Madhukar SJB Rana Publication: Vajra Books **Price:** Rs 1000

In 'An Alternative Development Paradigm for Nepal', the late Madhukar SJB Rana (who passed away in 2019), an eminent public intellectual and the former Finance Minister, provides an understanding of the country's crucial development accounts and fundamentals. It also discusses Nepal and South Asia's development priorities. Rana also brings light to the policy perspectives to the development history of Nepal.

When Nehru Looked East: Origins of India-US Suspicion and India-China Rivalry Author: Francine Frankel Publication: OUP USA **Price:** Rs 1592

Francine R Frankel, the founding director of the Center for the Advanced Study of India (CASI) at the University of Pennsylvania, discusses the framework of foreign policy introduced by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. Frankel provides the most authoritative account yet of the origins of India-US suspicions and India-China rivalries.

Alchemy: The Magic of Original Thinking in a World of Mind-Numbering Conformity Author: Rory Sutherland Publication: WH Allen **Price:** Rs 958

TED Talk superstar and Ogilvy advertising legend Rory Sutherland discusses why abandoning logic and casting aside rationality is the best way to solve any problem. Sutherland brings behavioural science, jaw-dropping stories, and a touch of branding magic on his mission to turn people into idea alchemists. "To be brilliant, you have to be irrational," says Sutherland.

# Rhino drowns at Dutch zoo in mating mishap

Rhinos are highly prized across Asia for traditional and medicinal purposes but breeding them is difficult.

#### DANNY KEMP THE HAGUE

female rhinoceros drowned at a zoo in the Netherlands after a first date with a new male went tragically wrong, the zoo said on Friday. Elena was "startled" on Thursday by

the arrival of a white rhino named Limpopo at the Wildlands zoo in the eastern city of Emmen near the German border.

After a chase, the exhausted female slipped into a waterhole, at which point zookeepers lured the bull rhino away from her.

"Unfortunately, this help came too late for Elena and she had already drowned," the zoo said in a statement. The 19-year-old Limpopo had arrived at the park in early September from another Dutch zoo where he sired three offspring as part of a European breeding programme.

The male and the Wildlands zoo's two female rhinos, sisters Elena and Zahra, started getting to know each other by smelling and seeing each other in separate pens. The "most exciting" part, the zoo said, was planned for Thursday morning before visitors arrived when Limpopo was allowed into the area where the females were grazing.

"From that moment on it became restless: both women were startled by the male and instead of putting him in his place together, they both ran off," it said. "As a result, Limpopo gave chase. He seemed particularly focused on Elena, because she was the



closest to him."

Both animals appeared exhausted after 15 minutes, and Elena slipped into a shallow pool of water, landed on her side and was unable to get up, the zoo said. Caretakers were unable to stop her drowning.

#### Limpopo's past problems -

Stunned zoo vet Job Stumpel paid tribute to the "beautiful, sweet, stable and calm" Elena

"You want to jump over there and lift her head above water but you couldn't. Rhinos are not only very dangerous, but they also weigh almost 2,000 kilos (4,409 pounds)," he told the AD newspaper. "We raced to it with a shovel and chased the male away with it, so we could get to the female, but it was too late.'

The zoo said such an introduction "often requires intervention, but never before has one been fatal".

Limpopo had been moved from a German zoo six years ago because he "didn't treat the female there properly", the Brabants Dagblad newspaper said.

In his most recent home, the Beekse Bergen safari park near Tilburg in the southern Netherlands, he was a "proven breeder" living with a herd of six females.

The southern white rhino is listed as "near threatened" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, with 10,080 animals in existence.

Rhinos are killed for their horns, highly prized across Asia for traditional and medicinal purposes.

But breeding them is difficult, as a female-only gives birth to a calf once every three to four years, after a 16-month pregnancy, the zoo said.

Agence France-Presse

# Buying bamboo comb or continue using plastic one?

While using eco-friendly products is a great way to be more climate-conscious, one also needs to adopt daily sustainable practices.

#### SHUVANGI KHADKA

eeks ago, as my old plastic comb started collecting dust, I planned to buy a bamboo comb priced at Rs 450. When I told my mother about it, she gasped.

As I browsed the bamboo company's website to find the reason behind the product's high cost, I found out that their products are imported from Vietnam. This led me to think of the carbon footprint of an imported bamboo comb

A quick Google search assures me that locally sourcing or manufacturing is not always the best for the environment. Local production may reduce the carbon miles of transport, but there are still many things that factor in-from sourcing raw materials, selecting suppliers to the production process-when it comes to determining how environment-friendly the products are. In the context of developing countries, things get even trick-

Research shows that the average energy needed to import shoes to a retailer in Morocco is less than the average energy required to distribute a pair of locally produced shoes in the country. Such findings from developing countries highlight the need to assess the actual total energy effects of nearby sourcing versus long-distance sourcing. The outcomes of such assessments can be the stark opposite of what appears at first glance. Importing products to a landlocked country can lead to additional challenges and costs and yield different results.

I am not sure if importers of 'eco-friendly' products track their product's carbon footprint. "Usually in Nepal, trading of such products has flourished as people see demand for sustainable products. So, they import what is already in demand and supply," shares Nitesh Sharma, founder of Dhaasoo Deals, an online store that sells upcycled products.

But is practising sustainability as easy as buying expensive sustainable eco-products off the counter? And is that all businesses can think of?

Principally, sustainability requires considering and reacting to one's behaviour's impact on the larger community and environment. For businesses, such behaviour is not limited



to the final product but every step along the way. A sustainable business model looks at how raw materials are acquired, how production is done, how the final product is packaged, shipped, and how it is disposed of. For example, a menstrual cup minimises sanitary pad waste but it also has to be disposed of in the end. But as such cups are mostly made of medical-grade silicone, they can simply be burned to ashes and not cause significant harm to the environment.

The idea of sustainability begins from the conception of the business idea itself. Of course, a business can make eco-friendly products. But there is a need to differentiate whether a product is needed or wanted. There is a great irony in selling and buying zero waste products like bamboo straws and metallic bottles without realising how a simple change in consumption habits like drinking from cups may prevent their use entirely.

Haushala Gurung Thapa, educator and founder of Haushala Creatives, says, "It is important to understand the term itself. Instead of using the word 'sustainability', which is a noun, I prefer, to use 'sustaining', which is a verb.'

The main point is not to manufacture more sustainable products but to find sustaining practices for the environment

Some pioneers have been working to establish a closed-loop production system or cradle to cradle approach that recovers waste and turns it into new production resources. Today, if a company operates linearly without looking at its effects in a transversal way, then it is selling just a half-baked narrative. It doesn't make sense when a company uses single-use plastic packaging but at the same time boasts about its sustainable corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

While we are talking about sustainable production, mobility is one of the priority areas. Recently there was a lot of talk about reducing electric vehicle import taxes. But upgrading to newer technologies also has problems of its own.

Nitesh Sharma, who has been upcycling for the last six years, laments the lack of focus on what to do with dead EV batteries. "As more and more electric cars start plying on the roads, the world needs to seriously think about environmentally friendly ways to deal with millions of EV batteries that are no longer of use," he says.

In Europe, experts are already worried about how the EV industry is booming because 10-15 years down the line, there will be a huge accumulation of dead batteries.

He further questions, "If electric vehicles are really the future, why are big companies still investing in petroleum products? Here in Nepal, the government may have reduced taxes on EVs, but one also needs to be aware that the country still imports a lot of petroleum products.'

This further reaffirms the importance of imagining more sustainable business practices.

If a brand or a company really believes in sustainability, then they can easily imagine new and innovative ways to be more sustainable. Sharma confides, "A few years ago, wooden pallets could be gotten for free

because they were discarded materials. But as businesses started using wooden pallets as raw materials, prices of wooden pallets started going up. What people need to understand is scrap is not limited to used bottles or wooden pallets. There are plenty of other scraps to take care of." It is pretty evident that there are enough scraps for everyone from recent garbage pictures all around Kathmandu.

One such innovation that comes to mind is Haushala Creatives, which upcycles old clothes by repairing them. The company started by organising clothing swap events. But as clothes accumulated, they shifted their focus on repairing clothes. Thapa also questions the thrifting culture in Nepal. "If you are thrifting by buying or importing more, you are missing the whole point.

The devastating effect of the overwhelming import of second-hand clothes in Africa is a case in example. According to Oxfam, more than 70 percent of the clothes donated globally end up in Africa. While second-hand clothes provide a cheaper alternative, the import is so overwhelming that it is impossible to sell everything. With not enough resources for textile recycling programmes, the clothing waste from Global North ultimately ends up in the landfills of Africa.

Thrifting is, of course, a good sustaining option. But it doesn't make sense if I am thrifting to wear more and cheaper clothes. What am I doing with my own wardrobe full of old clothes? Recently, a thrift store I follow encouraged other people to send in pictures of old clothes and sell them through their platform. Such practice can help the actual exchange of clothes rather than just foster second-hand selling and buying culture.

The thing is what consumers consume ultimately falls on what is being produced or what alternatives are being given. We can continue to carry our own straw or drink directly from the cup, but the difference we make does not multiply. On the other hand, as Sharma aptly said, businesses can help create and multiply demand for sustaining practices.

Thapa puts the onus on both producers and consumers, saying, "Every production decision manufacturers make should be done keeping the environment and people in mind.

Instead of framing the sustainable lifestyle message through the lens of elitism, brands can promote eco philosophies of innovation, anti-consumerism, self-sufficiency, and environmental stewardship.

While for consumers, Thapa encourages them to question. "In our culture, we don't question much. But it's important that we do it," she says. "As a customer, we need to ask producers about how a certain product is made, or where it is from. Producers need to be held accountable for what they produce or provide.'

A recent article in The Guardian warns how individual acts of thrifting and abstinence doesn't really do much in helping the environment. Instead, we need collective action in every sector to lessen our dependence on fossil fuels significantly. We should be motivated to rethink how we do almost everything. Businesses need to start from today itself.

As for me, I clean my old comb and continue using it.

Khadka is a spoken word poet and works at the Samriddhi Foundation as a researcher.







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Published and Printed by Kantipur Publications Limited, Central Business Park, Thapathali, Kathmandu, Nepal, P. B. No. 8559, Phone: 5135000, Fax: 977-1-5135057, e-mail: kpost@kmg.com.np, Regd. No. 32/049/050, Chairman & Managing Director: Kailash Sirohiya, Director: Swastika Sirohiya, Editor: Sanjeev Satgainya

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