



# THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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

Vol XXIX No. 213 | 8 pages | Rs. 5  
Sunday, September 19, 2021 | 03-06-2078

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Nepalgunj Jomsom



A young girl from the Newa community dressed as Living Goddess Kumari reacts during a mass Kumari Puja at Hanumandhoka Durbar Square on the first day of Indra Jatra Festival in Kathmandu on Saturday.

## A new train last year was welcomed with much fanfare. It never ran

Political, legal and technical issues have prevented the brand new locomotives that Nepal bought from India from coming into operation—on a new track.



Two trains that Nepal bought from India last year lie unused at Inarwa platform in Dhanusha.



People who saw colonial era train chugging along Nepal-India narrow gauge were elated to see Nepal's first modern train.



PHOTOS COURTESY: @NKNR/RAILWAY/TWITTER

**SANGAM PRASAIN, PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA & SHUVAM DHUNGANA**  
KATHMANDU, SEPT 18

Exactly a year ago, on September 18, when two brand new train sets arrived at Janakpur station, Kedar Thakur of Bhanu Chowk, near the station, was thrilled.

Thakur, along with hundreds of other people, could not resist the temptation of going to see the new machines of which they had been hearing for quite a while.

These were the country's first broad-gauge trains, a new avatar of the historic Janakpur-Jaynagar railway between Nepal and India which was once a major means of border crossing for citizens from both sides. First built as a cargo line to carry timber from Nepal to India in 1937, the 35km railway from Janakpur in Nepal to Jaynagar in Bihar, India was a life-line for people in Janakpur.

"Everyone was excited. We didn't even care about the coronavirus lockdown. We just wanted to see the train," Thakur, 51, told the Post.

"It was Friday [September 18]," Thakur remembers. "I, along with some of my friends, had gone to the station. There was a huge crowd, all people eagerly waiting for the train to arrive."

People who had seen the colonial-era train chugging along the Nepal-India narrow gauge track were excited to see Nepal's first modern train. The train came.

"And since its arrival, it's been there... stationary," said Thakur. "It was covered with yellow plastic sheets. Now the plastic sheets have been tattered."

Saturday marks the first anniversary of the arrival of the gleam-

ing new train. And had it started rolling on the new broad-gauge tracks, it would have marked a new era in Nepal's railway history.

Dubbed Janaki Rail, it has five coaches and can carry 1,000 passengers, sitting and standing, at a time. The train, with a maximum speed of 110 km per hour, was procured at Rs850 million.

Supendra Kumar Kushwaha, another local, said he too was very excited that resumption of the service would bring back the lost glory of Janakpur.

Many had hoped that the railway service would create employment for locals, boost business activities and give a fillip to tourism in Janakpur, the birthplace of goddess Sita, where the Ram Janaki temple is a major religious and tourism attraction.

Kushwaha is one of the applicants for a job at the railway. He is still waiting for the railway authority to conduct the exams.

"Vacancies were announced but the Department of Railways is yet to schedule the exams despite taking fees from the applicants," Kushwaha told the Post.

A vacancy notice was issued for 129 employees and more than 32,000 people had applied. The Department of Railways had collected up to Rs1,000 per person as exam fees.

"I applied for a job months ago. There is no update on exams," said Kushwaha. He does not know why the train service has not come into operation even one year after it arrived in Nepal.

In Nepal, railway is one of those many things promised by governments that stir up emotions among people and inspire hope.

>> Continued on page 2

## At six, constitution's fragility has only grown, observers say

Those who promulgated the charter have remained non-committal on its implementation and those who once objected to it lack the heft to push for amendments.

**BINOD GHIMIRE**  
KATHMANDU, SEPT 18

Nepal's political parties remember the constitution once a year—on the anniversary of its promulgation. They will do so on Sunday, as the constitution turns six. Concerns still remain over the wider acceptability of the charter adopted in 2015.

Observers say Nepal's major political parties rushed the constitution despite knowledge that various sections of the society were opposed to it. Over the years, the political parties that pushed the constitution through the Constituent Assembly have shown minimal commitment to safeguarding it. Parties, many say, instead have used the constitution as a bargaining tool.

Tula Narayan Shah, a political commentator who follows Madhes and national politics closely, said Madhes-based parties were opposed to the constitution from the very beginning, but those parties who pushed for its adoption too seem to have lost faith in it.

Loktantrik Samajbadi Party led by Mahantha Thakur has already announced that it would continue to observe the constitution anniversary as a "black day".

The Janata Samajbadi Party, yet another political force with its base in Madhes, has not announced any protest programme, but it has said it won't

participate in any celebrations to mark the Constitution Day. Leaders of these two political parties were the ones who objected to the constitution when it was promulgated in 2015. The Janata Samajbadi is organising an interaction on Sunday to discuss the need for constitutional amendments.

Tharu and other indigenous communities have been saying that the agreements forged with successive governments to incorporate their concerns in the constitution remain unaddressed.

Observers say the onus to ensure wider acceptability of the constitution lies on those who pushed for it—the Nepali Congress, the CPN-UML and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), as they had banded together to adopt the charter even as protests grew along the plains.

The adoption of the constitution on September 20, 2015 clearly left the country divided. While celebrations erupted in Kathmandu and other parts of the country, mostly hills, most of the Tarai mourned what they called further marginalisation of the already marginalised communities.

Shah, however, says the Madhes-based parties' sincerity towards constitutional amendments has already come into question.

"The worry is that over the past six years, rather than becoming stronger, the fragility of the constitution has increased," said Sah.

>> Continued on page 2



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NATIONAL

# Five years on, Ramghat bridge construction remains incomplete

Local residents face difficulties transporting daily essentials in the absence of a bridge.



There is a suspension bridge linking Dasharathpur to Ramghat but it is in a dilapidated state.

CHANDANI KATHAYAT  
BIRENDRANAGAR, SEPT 18

The construction work of a bridge in Ramghat, Bheriganga Municipality of Surkhet has been left incomplete for the last five years.

The bridge, when completed, will connect Dasarathpur of Lekbeshi Municipality to Ramghat in Bheriganga Municipality.

According to the Division Road Office in Surkhet, the proposed site of the bridge construction is not suitable for construction works, as the area does not have a rocky surface to stabilise the pillars.

Ramesh Lekhak, the then Minister of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, had laid the foundation stone of the bridge on December 17, 2016. Ashish JV, the contractor company, had received the contract to construct the bridge at a total cost of Rs 200 million. According to the contract agreement, the deadline of the 157 metres bridge project was mid-February 2020.

The contractor company had asked the Division Road Office to review the design of the bridge after finding that the site was not suitable for bridge construction.

However, the bridge division of the Department of Roads took three years to review the design.

“The pillars of the bridge cannot be constructed in the absence of a rocky surface. The agreement with the contractor company has already been scrapped,” said Bijaya Kumar Thapa, chief at the Division Road Office in Surkhet.

The construction company then went to the High Court in Surkhet, challenging the government’s decision to cancel the contract. The company had demanded that it be provided Rs 30 million as compensation for the contract cancellation.

According to the Division Road Office, the case is pending at the High Court. The office said the project contract was scrapped, as the construction company did not carry out the project work even after receiving Rs 20.9 million in advance.

“The division office has issued a letter to the construction company to pay Rs 50 million, including interest, to the government, as the company did not work even after the design review. Now with the case pending in court, there is uncertainty about the project,” said Thapa.

“Whether to continue the bridge construction work or not will be decided only after the court’s verdict.”

The delay in the bridge’s construction has affected the locals, making it difficult for them to transport daily essentials.

There is a suspension bridge linking Dasharathpur to Ramghat but it is in a dilapidated condition, according to locals.

“The existing suspension bridge is in a poor condition,” said Hari Gurung, a local man. “And the construction of the concrete bridge is far from complete. We just want the bridge to be completed soon.”

Local farmers have also been facing hardships in supplying their agricultural produce in the absence of a concrete bridge.

“We have to risk our lives and carry our agricultural produce across the decrepit suspension bridge,” said Lalmati Oli, a local farmer. According to her, around 1,000 people cross the suspension bridge on a daily basis.

The alternate route for local farmers and traders to transport goods is a motorable bridge in Mehalkuna, a few kilometres from Dasarathpur.

# At six, constitution’s fragility has only ...

>> Continued from page 1

“When the principal actors responsible for implementing the constitution competed to flout it for their petty interests, this was bound to happen.”

The first elections under the constitution in 2017 installed UML’s KP Sharma Oli as prime minister. It was Oli who had played a key role in cobbling together a coalition to push for the constitution. His government was mandated to strengthen federalism and implement the charter. However, Oli left no stone unturned in trampling upon the constitution.

The Congress and the Maoist Centre which took umbrage at Oli’s actions against the constitution managed to return to power in July this year. The current government led by Congress’ Sher Bahadur Deuba, however, has little time to invest in the constitution’s implementation.

Experts on constitutional matters say the tendency among the parties to undermine constitutional provisions for power has led many to wonder who actually are the defenders of the country’s top law.

“It is unfortunate that we are in a situation where questions have arisen over the commitment of those to the constitution, who played a key role in its constitution,” said Bipin Adhikari, a former dean at the Kathmandu University School of Law.

Adhikari, the editor of the book “A Treatise on the Constitution of Nepal 2015”, says it is quite disappointing that the parties that rose to power criticising Oli’s moves as unconstitutional and undemocratic are now failing to stick to constitutionalism and democratic principles.

The Madhes-based parties that had vehemently opposed the constitution in 2015 were quick to join the Oli government in 2018. They argued that they agreed to support the Oli government hoping that their constitutional amendment demands would be addressed.

However, they quit the government after the Oli government showed no signs of amending the constitution.

In May this year, the Mahantha Thakur faction of the Janata Samajbadi Party decided to support Oli, saying the government “is ready to address their demands”. But the Oli government fell in July after a court order. Thakur has now formed the Loktantrik Samajbadi Party.

The Upendra Yadav-led Janata Samajbadi Party is Deuba’s coalition partner. It is waiting to get hold of some ministerial berths rather than making a push for constitutional amendments.

Now after Deuba’s return to power, backed by the Maoist Centre, the House of Representatives has, by and large, remained dysfunctional—so much so that it could not even get the budget through Parliament, resulting in a government shutdown.

As many as 55 bills, many of them necessary for the implementation of federalism, are pending in the federal parliament. Some of the bills have been left unapproved since the first session of the federal parliament that commenced in March 2018. The delay in passing the laws has hampered effective functioning of federalism, which is one of the core pillars of the constitution.

According to Adhikari, effective implementation of the constitution is not possible unless democratic institutions, including Parliament, function effectively.

“Parliament has a constitutional role to hold the government to account but it has been dysfunctional,” said Adhikari.

In the lead-up to Constitution Day this year, Nepal’s political parties, those currently in power, made themselves objects of ridicule. Amid controversy over the Millennium Challenge Corporation Nepal Compact, an American programme under which Nepal is to receive \$500 million in grants, the government, as per an understanding among the ruling parties, asked the Millennium Challenge Corporation if the agreement is “above Nepal’s constitution”. Many were quick to criticise the parties for undermining the constitution they promulgated six years ago.

Last week, Nepali Congress Vice President Bimalendra Nidhi in an interview with Naya Patrika said there is still displeasure that India hasn’t welcomed Nepal’s constitution and that Delhi should do so as the sixth anniversary was approaching.

Nidhi’s statement may be personal but among a large section of Nepal’s political leadership, there seems to be this feeling that India has not welcomed the constitution yet. New Delhi’s displeasure was apparent in 2015 when it said it had “noted” the promulgation of the constitution in Nepal. Subsequently, India imposed a border blockade.

Experts say an immediate neighbour welcoming the constitution is always good but statements by some leaders like the one by Nidhi are indicative of inferiority complex and their lack of faith in the constitution they themselves promulgated.

“Such things clearly reflect the immaturity of the government and its lack of understanding of its own constitution,” said Adhikari.

That the Constituent Assembly failed to give enough time to people to present their feedback is an established fact. The earthquakes in April and May, 2015 had created an urgency among the Nepali leaders to push the constitution, as it was in the making for seven years.

Observers say since the constitution was promulgated amid protests by some sections of the society, it was incumbent on major political forces to listen to the concerns of the aggrieved parties and make gradual attempts to address their demands. This was the only way to ensure wider acceptability of the constitution, according to them.

“The constitution was disputed from the very first day. Against their responsibility to work to strengthen and increase its acceptability, the major parties are busy weakening it,” Daman Nath Dhungana, a former Speaker and civil society member, told the Post. “The constitution has become more fragile over the last few years. The only way to strengthen it is its revision through consensus.”

Those involved in the constitution drafting process, however, say the constitution has become stronger and that its acceptability has increased.

Subas Nembang, who chaired the Constitution Assembly for both of its terms, said the unanimity seen while passing a constitution amendment bill to incorporate Nepal’s new political map showed every party has taken ownership of the constitution.

According to him, the parties that were objecting to the constitution had hit the streets in the name of protecting it, which also shows how they have embraced it.

“I firmly believe the acceptability of the constitution has increased,” Nembang told the Post. “However, if it needs revision to further broaden its acceptance, it can be done based on the need.”

# A new train last year was welcomed with much fanfare. It never ran

>> Continued from page 1

After KP Sharma Oli came to power in 2018, connecting Nepal with both its immediate neighbours—India and China—by trains was his common refrain. When the train arrived last year, the Oli government boasted it as one of its biggest achievements.

But locals say what is the use of a machine that sits immobile.

Like every other development project that often falls victim to political games, Nepal’s railway dreams were also shattered by political wranglings.

To operate the trains, Nepal needed laws. And there were none.

Three months after the train arrived, Oli on December 20 last year dissolved the House, after protracted internal disputes in the then ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), and declared polls. Amid political uncertainty, railway service was not the government’s priority. On February 23, the Supreme Court restored the House of Representatives, but political bickering continued.

Oli continued to threaten to dissolve the House again as he went for a floor test, lost it, got appointed again and created more confusion by asking the President to invoke Article 76 (5), a move that constitutional experts were quick to call unconstitutional.

On May 5, the government introduced an ordinance on railway operations. But on May 21, Oli dissolved the House for a second time, throwing the country into uncertainty again. About two months later, on July 12, the Supreme Court not only restored the House but also threw Oli out of office and ordered the appointment of Sher Bahadur Deuba as new prime minister.

The Deuba government on July 18 presented the ordinance on railway operations before Parliament. The ordinance has now become invalid because it failed to get Parliament’s nod within 60 days since it was tabled. The deadline ended on September 16.

“Laws are a must. Without laws, we cannot operate the trains,” said Niranan Jha, general manager at Nepal Railway Company Limited. “There is uncertainty now.”

Jha was appointed on August 19 this year.

Even more than two months after his appointment, Deuba has not been able to expand his Cabinet. There is no dedicated minister at the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, which oversees the Department of Railways.

“Once we get the minister, we have plans to complete all formalities within a day. We are ready from our side,” said Keshav Kumar Sharma, joint-secretary at the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport. “As railway is of paramount importance, we have accorded high priority to this project.”

According to him, the Cabinets of

In November last year, the railway company tried to hire staff on a contract basis. But there were no bylaws to do that.

The Public Service Commission, the agency tasked with hiring staff in government bodies, held it back, asking the company to hire staff only by introducing the recruitment bylaws. The bylaws consist of procedures that require the company to form a recruitment committee, which shall have a Public Service Commission representative as member.

“The government can recruit staffers by itself on contract, but a commission representative needs to be involved in the recruitment process. In the case of permanent staffers, the commission does the recruitment,” an official of the commission told the Post last year.

Several months after the trains arrived, the railway company did recruit a little over 150 staff members on a daily-wage basis. This was bound to become a political issue. As soon as the new government came, all the staffers were removed, saying they were “politically appointed”.

They were trained by the Indians.

“How is the new government planning to operate the rail service after removing staff who had at least received some training to help operate the railway service?” said Acharya.

The staff recruited on a daily-wage basis were supposed to work in track stations as signal staff.

Jha, however, claimed that the daily-wage workers were dismissed as the company had to spend Rs6 million a month on them without any work.

“I have been discussing with the Public Service Commission for the recruitment of permanent staff,” Jha told the Post.

For the incumbent government, which appears to be completely disoriented, railway does not seem to be a priority though.

The former and incumbent general managers of the Nepal Railway Company gave conflicting statements regarding preparations for operating the trains.

While Jha, the general manager, said that preparation for railway operation is “still at an early stage”, Guru Prasad Bhattarai, former general manager of the company, said that he had invited the then prime minister Oli to inaugurate the railway service on July 9.

“I had to leave the company after the change in government,” he said.

Bhattarai was removed by the Deuba government.

“Now there is uncertainty. There is no law as the ordinance on railway operations has lapsed. And there is this risk of our contract with Konkani getting terminated due to prolonged delay,” said Bhattarai.

Bhattarai said that Konkani may demand cost adjustment if railway service continues to face delays. The two sides had signed an agreement worth INR 220 million (Rs350 million) for the procurement of equipment, human resources supply, rail and track maintenance and other operating systems.

The government was supposed to pay an advance to the Indian company for the work, but the government is

yet to release the budget.

Deepak Kumar Bhattarai, director general at the Department of Railways, said that the government has already decided to release the budget. “This budget is for paying for equipment and manpower,” he said.

Jha, however, said the Nepal Railway Company has started a new process for making payment to Konkani after the cheque issued by Nepal Rastra Bank expired.

“With the replacement bill on budget failing to get through, there is uncertainty about whether we can make payment immediately,” he said.

With no law, no staff, no handover of railway infrastructure and no signing of standard operating procedure, the fate of Nepal’s railway service continues to hang in the balance.

“Railway service is unlikely to begin anytime soon,” said Jha.

The Janakpur-Jaynagar Railway was originally built in the 1930s to move timber from the Tarai, just above Janakpur, needed for the Indian Railway. After there was no timber left to move, the railway line was gifted to Nepal for continued operation, according to a World Bank’s report on the National Transport System for Nepal published in 1965.

The report said that the line has never been well maintained, but it has not fallen into complete disrepair. Two new locomotives were purchased in 1962.

Three railways were built in Nepal, all narrow-gauge (2 ft 6 inches) lines. They were: the Nepal Government Railway (NGR) from Raxaul in India to Birgunj and

Amlekhganj (46 kilometres); the Nepal-Janakpur-Jaynagar Railway (NJJR) from Janakpur to Jaynagar (29 kilometres); and the Koshi Railway, a construction railway running from Bathnaha and Birpur in India along the Koshi river to Chatara and Dharan Bazaar (74 kilometres).

The first two railways were owned and operated by the government. The report at that time said that the efficiency of both railways was low, primarily due to the lack of competent management.

The Koshi Railway was built in 1957 to move gravel and stone from the quarries near Dharan and Chatara to the site of the new Koshi barrage and to carry construction materials and machinery from Bathnaha, where it connects with the metre-gauge Jobgani line of the Indian Railways, to Birpur and Bhimnagar (site of the Koshi Barrage).

“Further, the management has not learned how to reduce and simplify the paperwork involved in shipping by rail, thereby making the service difficult and unattractive to the shipper,” said the report.

Following the opening of Tribhuvan Highway linking Tarai with Kathmandu in 1956 and the construction of the road from Birgunj to Amlekhganj in 1962, rail traffic and revenues fell sharply.

However, for people from Janakpur, the slow-moving passenger train, worn out and in desperate need of repair, continued to provide services.

And in January 2014, the decrepit train made its last trip, marking the end of an era. Nearly 150 people lost their jobs. The closure hit Janakpur hard and moved the trade elsewhere.

Thakur recalls a trip to Jaynagar by train some seven years ago, just before the service was halted.

“Even though the trains at that time didn’t have much facilities, it was still faster and cheaper than travelling by bus,” said Thakur. “In the old train, it would take an hour to reach India. Travelling by bus, it’s almost a six-hour long journey. The roads are also not that good.”

Despite all political, legal and technical hiccups, Thakur, who once worked outside the railway station managing local buses before the previous railway service was closed, is still optimistic.

Thakur hopes the operation of the railway services would increase business activities, eventually making the sleepy town vibrant.

“Railway service means a lot for Janakpur. It will not only make the journey easy, convenient and cheap, it will also boost economic activities,” he said. “We hope the trains will start chugging soon... we hope our city will come alive with the whistles, and the hissing of the engine.”



The Janakpur-Jaynagar train service was hugely popular in the region.

POST FILE PHOTO



OPINION

Remote working has emerged as a strong option in managing offices, even in the public sector.

HIRAMANI GHIMIRE



Covid-19’s most profound impact is being observed in how we manage our work. The increasing tendency to decouple the work-force from the workplace is creating both challenges and opportunities for managers. Amidst fears of a decline in productivity, the experience of this past year shows that employees working from flexible locations, including their own homes, are becoming more productive than previously thought. As a result, remote working has emerged as a strong option in managing offices, even in the public sector.

The world of work is undergoing four major shifts in this context. First, the concept of a fixed location for an office is giving way to the idea of hybrid working. Second, the managerial focus has moved from efficiency to resilience, involving provisions for organisational resources to maintain supply chains. Third, control as a management principle is losing ground to trust, leading to disintermediation and de-layering of decision-making. Finally, organisational leaders are increasingly emphasising the need to complement technical skills with social skills such as emotional intelligence. It is very important that Nepali managers, in both public and private domains, adapt their organisational strategies to these emerging trends.

Flexible working

The workplace—or the office—evolved in the 19th century as a result of the industrial revolution. In today’s service-oriented economy, people can work differently. Much of office work can be carried out remotely and from home. The influential writer Fareed Zakaria notes in his recent book *Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World* that work is coming back to home, which it was like for much of history. In other words, the world of work is moving “back to the future”.

Experience of the past year or so shows that employees working from home can be



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as productive as those working from the office, if not more. The myth of productivity decline has been dispelled. In a McKinsey research (2020), for example, 41 percent of respondents said they were more productive working at home than they had been before, with 28 percent saying that they were as productive. The UK Chartered Institute of Personnel Development finds that 30 percent of British employees felt they worked more hours at home. A US Federal Work-Life Survey shows that teleworkers are 16 percent more engaged, 19 percent more satisfied, and 11 percent less likely to leave than onsite workers. Closer to home in Nepal, managers have indicated that their fear of 50 percent efficiency loss was unfounded, and whatever loss was there could be attributed to logistics and connectivity problems.

Working from home is a good response to the pandemic, but it cannot be an alternative to the office forever. Going back to the 19th-century idea of the office as a fixed location is neither efficient nor desirable. The time has come for a hybrid model. It involves some combination of working remotely and from an office. The hybrid model is a plan that incorporates a mix of office-based and remote work in an employee’s time plan. It enables employees to work from different locations—home, on the go or the office.

Many people tend to associate hybridity with organisations in the private sector. This may be attributed to the fact that private enterprises were the first to resort to remote work arrangements when the pandemic struck. Meanwhile, public

sector organisations are catching up. International experience of the past one and a half years shows that governments in several countries are formalising hybrid office arrangements.

The United Kingdom, known as the mother of parliaments, was the first country to introduce the concept of a “hybrid parliament” in April 2020. For this, Members of Parliament adopted a set of “hybrid proceeding measures” which enabled them to take part in oral questions and statements. They were also able to participate virtually or in-person in substantive proceedings under these arrangements. Brazil, Mongolia, Maldives, Canada and Poland have also adopted a hybrid parliament with different stages of development.

Other government businesses are also

being conducted from hybrid offices. In April this year, the UK government decided to open “drop-in” offices in 10 cities outside of London to enable Whitehall staff to work from any of these offices. Civil servants can work efficiently and flexibly from home without the costly overheads of office spaces and time-consuming commuting for employees. This also eases traffic congestion, thereby reducing the impact of climate change, even if in a limited way. In India, the Department of Personnel and Training has issued a protocol for work from home for civil servants with flexi-time schedules. These examples show that the model is not only applicable but also desirable in government organisations.

Experience in Nepal

Covid-19 has affected the business of government in Nepal equally badly. During the past 18 months or so, Nepalis have had to face complete or partial lockdowns several times. This impacted the delivery of public services, including critically important ones. But there was a silent reluctance to introduce the hybrid model. For example, when several countries were finalising their working procedures for a hybrid parliament, Nepal decided to prorogue the House in the wake of some Covid-19 cases in April 2020.

This is not to suggest that government agencies are not aware of the benefits of remote working. The pandemic has augmented their “intention” to offer services online. And several government departments have introduced IT-based measures to enable people to access their services. This is in line with the Digital Nepal Framework, which the government has adopted to “leverage the potential of digital technologies to drive accelerated growth”. This shows that there is significant technical capacity within the government system.

It is said that opportunities are usually disguised as problems. The pandemic has given public sector agencies an opportunity to use available technologies for improving business processes through flexible working arrangements, including the hybrid model. For this, two things need to happen simultaneously: The development of digital infrastructure and management capacity to use it. While these will take time, one step could be taken immediately, which is to formalise and build on what is already happening—hybrid work.

*Ghimire is a governance specialist and holds a PhD in Public Administration from the German University of Administrative Sciences Speyer.*

India’s green growth imperative

The country should promote both decarbonisation and economic development through green investment.

DHURBA PURKAYASTHA



India’s commitments under the 2015 Paris climate agreement, which aims to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius relative to pre-industrial levels, include three quantifiable objectives. By 2030, the country aims to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35 percent, ensure that renewable energy sources account for about 40 percent of its installed power capacity, and, through afforestation, create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.

International observers like Climate Action Tracker and Climate Transparency regard India as one of the few G20 countries to be “2 degrees Celsius compatible” and on track to fulfil its so-called nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris accord. But even if India achieves its NDC targets and adopts measures to help keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, on current trends its CO2 emissions in 2030 could be about 90 percent higher than in 2015.

India must therefore decarbonise more, and fast. But India also needs to invest in manufacturing and infrastructure to improve its competitiveness, create enough jobs to lift one-third of its 1.3 billion people out of poverty, and increase its chances of meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Achieving these objectives without drastically increasing CO2 emissions will require India to pursue a radically different green growth strategy.

This will not be easy. True, with renewable energy sources currently accounting for 140 gigawatts, or 37 percent, of India’s 380 GW of installed power capacity, the country looks set to achieve its 40 percent target by 2030. But only 15.5 percent of the electricity consumed in India is clean, while the remainder is sourced through fossil fuels. That is primarily because large additions of renewable-energy capacity do not translate into lower CO2 emissions in linear fashion. The effect instead depends on the capacity utilisation of renewable sources, the grid’s capability to absorb variable power, and the flexibility of power systems to ramp up during peak loads.

Moreover, while India is the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs), its per



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capita electricity consumption is among the world’s lowest, at about one-third of the global average. But it is imperative that the country’s electricity consumption increases as the economy continues to develop.

The energy sector alone accounts for 78 percent of India’s GHG emissions, while industry is responsible for 7 percent, and agriculture and land use 10 percent. Within the energy sector, industry is the biggest consumer of electricity, using 42 percent of India’s output. As the country’s low per capita resource consumption rises toward the global average, and with demand for carbon-intensive commodities such as steel, cement, and chemicals expected to grow, electricity consumption is likely to increase at least threefold between 2014 and 2030.

Structurally transforming the Indian economy will entail a shift in the share of GDP from agriculture to industry and services, accompanied by a reduction in energy poverty and improved access to reliable electricity. This would be the required development trajectory for achieving the SDGs, but it would result in India increasing its CO2 emissions.

So, how, and to what extent, can India decarbonise? The solution lies in deploying clean technology on a large scale, reducing the cost of finance, and pricing and paying for CO2 emissions mitigation.

To promote both decarbonisation and economic development through a green investment and growth strategy, policymakers should consider adopting a sequenced approach. They could start by investing in

large-scale renewable-energy projects, before electrifying transportation, and then expanding and integrating distributed green energy for cleaner electricity access.

The next step would be to create additional rural non-farm livelihoods in agro-processing (such as milling, grinding, crushing, and packaging), storage, and warehousing. After that, policymakers should aim to increase energy efficiency in heating, cooling, lighting, and electric motors. India also will need to adopt clean technologies such as carbon capture and storage, hydrogen as a fuel and reducing agent for steel, and green cement manufacturing. And, it must expand its forestry-based carbon sinks on a massive scale.

Speeding up decarbonisation in line with India’s NDC calls for massive investments totalling some \$2.5 trillion by 2030. Moreover, most emission-mitigation technologies require large upfront capital investments relative to subsequent operating costs, which is why India’s relatively high cost of finance is an important factor. And increased risk perceptions of the country—including climate-related financial risks—make it difficult to reduce borrowing costs for climate investments. Large-scale green investments in India therefore may not provide adequate risk-adjusted returns.

That means India requires interventions from government and intergovernmental institutions to enable finance to flow toward decarbonisation investments. These measures could include creating pooled or specific risk-mitigation mechanisms to “de-risk”

finance; shifting investments from banks to financial markets; reducing reliance on credit ratings for lending and investment; measuring, registering, and pricing carbon mitigated incrementally beyond NDC targets; and compensation for additional perceived risks borne by banks and institutional investors.

The risks are indeed high. A long coastline, widely varying seasonal monsoons, and significant dependence on agriculture make India highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. This is evident from increasingly frequent cyclones, droughts, and erratic temperatures across the country.

India therefore requires climate-adaptation investments that would preserve ecosystems and reduce coastal erosion while protecting livelihoods. Because the private sector usually perceives core adaptation investments as economically unviable, the public sector must lead by making suitable investments and developing public-private partnership business models to attract private investors.

Indian policymakers should thus regard meeting national climate targets under the Paris agreement as only a first step. The far bigger challenge is to foster sustainable green growth that provides a better future for India’s people while also helping to protect the planet.

*Purkayastha is India Director at the Climate Policy Initiative and Director of US-India Clean Energy Finance.*

— Project Syndicate

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Please let us know what your expertise is on the topic you’re interested in exploring. The *Post* receives dozens of pitches every day from aspiring writers, students, political commentators, entrepreneurs and diplomats. We are not able to respond to every single email, but if we like your idea, we will get back to you within a week.





# Nepal lose opening match 2-1 against Philippines

Nepal take the lead in the 10th minute but the Philippines make a dramatic comeback scoring twice in the fading moments in the AFC Women’s Asian Cup Qualification 2022.



Nepal’s Saru Limbu (left) in action against Kristen Ryley Bugay (right) of the Philippines at the JAR Stadium in Uzbekistan on Saturday.

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
KATHMANDU, SEPT 18

Nepal national women’s football team squandered an early lead to succumb to a 2-1 defeat against the Philippines in their Group ‘F’ curtain raiser match of the AFC Women’s Asian Cup Qualification 2022 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on Saturday.

Nepal’s dream of pulling off an upset victory slipped from their grip after they conceded a dramatic equaliser in the 90th minute and next goal in the second minute of five-minute stoppage time.

Nepal went ahead in the 10th minute with a Bimala Chaudhary header before Tahnai Annis restored parity in the last minute of the regulation time. Camille Wilson ensured victory for Philippines two minutes later with a second goal.

The outcome came as a hammer blow in Nepal’s bid to qualify for the finals, as only group toppers in the

three-team group are guaranteed a place for the tournament proper, which will take place next year in India. Nepal will vie against Hong Kong, the other team of the group, on Tuesday.

Nepal, playing against the mighty opponents who sit 68 place above Nepal in FIFA rankings, made a bright start and took early lead through Chaudhary. The forward headed Sabita Rana’s cross to stun Philippines goalie Inna Palacios.

But Chaudhary had to be replaced by Anita Basnet in the 39th minute after she picked up an injury when she collided with fellow teammate and goalkeeper Anjila Tumbapo Subba.

The Philippines piled up consistent pressure in the second half. Nepal suffered another injury in the 57th minute when defender Pujana Rana had to be substituted following a knee injury. She was replaced by debutant Bimala BK.

“Replacing Chaudhary and Rana

had a major impact on our performance,” said Nepal’s Australian coach Gary Phillips. “They were enforced changes and the replacements had difficulty adjusting with the team,” he said.

The Philippines’ push for goal was rewarded in the 90th minute when Annis turned McDaniels cross to level the scores. Two minutes later, Wilson converted McDaniels pass to make sure they walk away with victory.

Coach Phillips said that the last five minutes’ performance cost his side dearly.

“We were really good for 85 minutes but we were sleepy at the last five minutes,” said Phillips. “Probably lack of game and international exposure was the difference on the day against professional teams like the Philippines.

“The outcome was disappointing but we battled and showed really good spirit. We worked hard and I am proud of the performance. We take a lot of confidence going into the next game.”

# Rising Club and Sports Castle off to winning starts in ‘A’ division futsal league

**KUSHAL TIMALSINA**  
POKHARA, SEPT 18

The Rising Club of Dharan and the host city’s Sports Castle made winning starts in the A’ Division National Futsal League that kicked off at the Pokhara covered hall on Saturday.

Rising overcame the first goal deficit to edge Machhindra Sky Goals of Kathmandu 5-4 while home team Sports Castle made a dominant start with a 7-0 thumping of the Kathmandu-based Prabhatheri Youth Club.

Sri Krishna Shrestha scored the opening goal for Sky Goals against Rising as the match headed into break with a 1-0 cushion. Rising came into the restart with an offensive approach and were rewarded with three goals in the first two minutes of the second half. Dorje Tamang, Milan Limbu and Sudip Gurung got on the scoresheet for Rising. Rewos Maskey scored fourth and fifth goals for the Province 1 team. Ashis Sunam struck second for Prabhatheri and before Shrestha scored twice to complete his hat-trick. However, they failed to hit the fifth, the equaliser before the final whistle.

The event played on a mat surface for the first time to meet the international requirement was inaugurated by Gandaki Province sports minister Rajiv Gurung.

Rising coach Yubendra Gurung expressed satisfaction with his team’s performance. “We had training for only four hours on this mat after arriving in Pokhara as we don’t have such a surface in Dharan. But the

players came up with a spirited show,” he said.

Sky Goals coach Ramesh Sinkeman said that his side lost due to a lack of understanding between the teammates. “The players failed to grasp their roles and it was the first time we

were playing on the mat surface. We will come up with a better performance in the upcoming fixtures,” said Sinkeman.

In another match, the home team Sports Castle gave a strong statement of their title intent as with a convincing win. Backed by roaring home supporters, Sports Castle scored three goals in the first half and four in the second half.

Sumit Shrestha scored in the third and 24th minutes while Khim Raj Gurung netted in the sixth and 21st minutes. Bijay Gurung, Dipesh Ghale and Kishor Gurung added one each.

Sports Castle deputy coach Arbin Gurung said that his players gave their cent percent. “We had the advantage of training on



the mat surface and got more practice sessions at our home town’s court. The players also fulfilled their duty,” said Gurung.

Prabhatheri coach Saroj Thapa said it was their first experience of playing on the mat surface. “We conceded the first three goals due to our own mistakes and we have learned a lot from this game. We will try to come out as a better side in the next game,” he said.

Altogether 10 teams are vying in the tournament being played in the round robin format. The teams winning top four positions will play qualifiers and eliminators for a place in the final.

The winners of the tournament will take home Rs1 million while the runners-up will get half the amount. All matches of the event are telecast live on Kantipur Television and the digital platform ekantipur.com.



Rewosh Maskey (10) of The Rising Club Dharan netted twice in his side’s 5-4 victory over Machhindra Sky Goals in the opening match of the A’ Division National Futsal League at the covered hall of the Pokhara Stadium on Saturday.

## HOROSCOPE

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

Sunday’s skies are peaceful and pleasant so long as you keep a low profile. The Pisces moon forms a supportive connection with Venus, making it an ideal day for soulful relationship talks.

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

Luna’s supportive link with Venus makes it easy to cultivate a welcome sense of emotional equilibrium. Elsewhere, Mercury’s alignment with Jupiter may open up pathways for career advancement.

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

The universe is working to hype you up and have you thinking big. Use this uplifting energy to engage in bringing your creative powers to life on a grander scale.

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

Messenger Mercury forms a supportive connection with Jupiter. This pairing is ideal for seeking out new living spaces, roommates, or making future plans involving your home life.

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

Sunday’s skies act as a soothing balm in your love life as the dreamy Pisces moon’s meeting with lover Venus brings an uplifting energy to matters of the heart.

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

Sunday’s cosmic landscape works to reinvigorate your love life. Your ruling planet Mercury forms a harmonious alignment with Jupiter, making it an ideal day to reap benefits from work-related efforts.

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

Sunday’s skies put you in a productive mindset. You needn’t devote yourself to some mindless labor. In fact, aim to invest your energy into a craft that you’re called to.

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

Let yourself blissfully drift through Sunday’s healing skies. You’re in need of a bit of fun, and the quirky Pisces moon offers you ample opportunities to immerse yourself in pleasurable activities.

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

Sunday’s skies remind you of the simple pleasures of keeping things low-key and among your closest of kin as the sweet Pisces moon quietly aligns with bond-building Venus.

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

Sunday’s skies are welcomingly blissful and easy-going. The moon drifts through Pisces and aligns with Venus, making it an ideal day to brunch with friends or do some local adventuring with a lover.

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

Let yourself be set adrift in the sea of your imagination today. The moon’s presence in dreamy Pisces encourages you to employ your talents and expand upon your personal vision ambition-wise.

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

It’s easy for you to get lost in helping others. Sunday’s skies remind you of how good it feels to take care of yourself as the moon’s presence in your sign helps you dote on yourself.

## CROSSWORD

**ACROSS**

1 Conspires

6 Frolic

11 Hindu title

14 Prove false

15 Urgent

16 Always, to Poe

17 Car model

18 “Beat it!”

19 PFC mail drop

20 Winter sports gear

22 “Annie Hall” director.

24 Mountain antelope

28 Horrible

29 Half a round trip

30 Is stinky

32 Troubles, to Hamlet

33 Scoundrel

35 Rain protector

39 Narrow board

40 Hard water?

41 Think-tank output

42 Sumptuous

43 Smile upon

45 Gists

46 Wheel rods

48 Viewpoints

50 Necktie

53 Coarse hair

54 Turn color, maybe

**DOWN**

1 TV network

2 “Annabel —”

3 Well-worn

4 Tijuana aunt

5 Motion detector

6 Baja houses

7 Bank dep.

8 Free of contaminants

9 Frat letter

10 Comment

11 Zoo favorites

12 Drive back

13 Socrates’ forte

21 Muscle twinge

23 Yellow Page items

24 Not soft or wilted

25 Conversation starter

26 Mercator’s tome

**PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED**

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

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27 Absolutely essential (hyph.)

28 Turn right

30 Road rallies

31 Arden and Curie

34 Egypt’s river

36 Mature

37 Mutiny

38 Out-of-date

43 Diner sandwich

44 Ms. Teasdale

47 Coleridge setting

49 Shogun’s warriors

50 Walked stealthily

51 Out of the sack

52 Not together

53 Male adornment

55 Glass square

56 In a while

59 Clean the floor

61 Pub order

62 Series of battles

63 Big bird

64 Sir, in Portugal

## SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY’S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

No. SC4346 Distribution: www.knightridgeworks.com

# Time is immortal

Everything will cease to exist one day. But the only thing that will remain is time.



SUGAM GAUTAM

There were days when I didn't want to go to school, but now I can't go even though I want to because I am a grown-up man. I understand that it's natural for time to pass and that it's impossible to rewind the clock and return to the past. Time has changed everything.

But what if I say time itself is the epitome of change? When I was two years old, I might have gladly hopped onto my mother's lap for comfort and milk. But now, I can't help but feel discomfort whenever I think about hugging her. I don't know what is it that stops me from hugging her. It would not be fair if I blamed time for this. Maybe, what is to be blamed is the growing-up stage. But it is also somehow related to time.

When I turned five, I might have finally begun making sense of the world and comprehending things I didn't understand until then. As I was physically developing and becoming stronger than ever before, I started getting into sports.

Time has made me realise that life is not a bed of roses. It has made me aware of life's harsh realities.

One of my favourite sports was football. One day, I asked my father for a football, and he gifted me one. My house's front porch became my playground. Since I was still relatively young, I would get tired just by kicking the ball a few times. But now I can run several kilometres in one go and play for hours and still not get tired. I wonder at these changes time has brought.

On my first day at school, my schoolbag was so heavy that I couldn't carry it. It was my mother who carried it for me. Now when we have to refill our cooking gas cylinder, my mother asks me to take the heavy cylinder to the refill shop. Time

has made me physically stronger than my mother.

When I was younger, my sister used to assist me with my studies. Now, whenever she comes across a word she can't understand, she asks for my help. Time has made me more knowledgeable than my sister.

Whenever people stole my toys, I would get mad. Sometimes, I would even pick up fights. Now I share everything that can be shared. Time has taught me to be generous and to get along with people.

My world used to be limited to what was physically in front of me. I couldn't think beyond it. But now, I dream of heading to Mars and imagine all sorts of things. Time has given me the ability to broaden my imagination and my world.

However, time has not just given me positive things. Time has made me realise that life is not a bed of roses. It has made me aware of life's harsh realities. When I was a little child, everyone smiled at me, and I assumed they were well-wishers. Little did I know that only kids are loved unconditionally.

Growing up, I might have made many mistakes, and with each passing year, I have seen my social circle grow smaller. I used to be a chubby baby with large eyes. Everyone found me adorable. But that adorableness has long left me. I now have a thick moustache and an even thicker beard.

When I was young, I used to think that those who love would love me forever. I was wrong. People change.

I have gained a lot, but I have lost a lot too. I believe time will help me regain everything that I have missed. My experiences have wounded me emotionally, but I strongly believe that time will heal everything. Time may bring me face to face with unforeseen circumstances, but I know that it will also equip me with the tools to handle all of them. One day, time will lead me to death, but it has also already taught me that death cannot be avoided.

I know we all will die, but time is the only thing that never ceases to exist. Time is immortal.

*(Gautam is an IT student at GGMC, Pokhara.)*

# Dashain weather and joy

BARSHA HUMAGAIN

Mornings these days are pleasant,  
The sky is deep blue,  
And there's often a gentle breeze,  
The sun is also just warm enough.

This weather this time of the year,  
It is what we call the Dashain weather,  
This weather is uplifting and brings joy,  
It reminds us that our beloved festival Dashain is near.

Dashain is when families get together,  
Feast on delicious food and have a good time,  
Leave behind worries and focus on the now,  
Ah, Dashain, you give people reasons to be happy.

For many, this Dashain will be quite different,  
The pandemic has taken away loved ones from many,  
And this Dashain, many families will feel the absence of loved ones,  
We should all pray for their souls and for the pandemic to end soon.

I can't wait for Dashain to come,  
So I can spend time with people I love the most,  
I can't wait for Dashain to come,  
So I can get some happiness after what has been a bad year.

*(Humagain is a grade 9 student at Himalaya Boarding School, Pokhara.)*



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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](mailto:kpost@kmg.com.np), Regd. No. 32/049/050, Chairman & Managing Director: Kailash Sirohiya, Director: Swastika Sirohiya, Editor: Sanjeev Satgairiya