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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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30.8°C -2.6°C
Janakpur Jumla



POST PHOTO: PRAKASH CHANDRA TIMILSENA

People boating on Saptakoshi River pictured in a recent evening at Rajabaas, Barahakshetra Municipality in Sunsari.

TODAY

NATIONAL

Disease Control Division has said that it has started a study on the high death rate from infection of the dengue virus. Since January, at least 62 people have died and around 54,000 others infected. **Pg 3**

Kathmandu Metropolitan City, which on Monday tried to evict squatters from Thapathali, has softened its approach. The City has said it would now consult other government agencies for a solution. **Pg 2**



OPINION

Assessing the failures of the provincial governments without recognising the fact that the federal government is dictating the terms is a bit like choking someone and wondering why he is not breathing, writes Bishal Thapa. **Pg 4**

MONEY

A road linking Dolpa and Jajarkot has brought little cheer to locals. The 118-km road was completed three years ago but five bridges are yet to be built which means people still have to carry goods on their backs. **Pg 5**

WORLD

China is set to announce an easing of its Covid-19 quarantine protocols in the coming days and a reduction in mass testing, a marked shift in policy after anger over the world's toughest curbs fuelled widespread protests. **Pg 6**

SPORTS

Romelu Lukaku missed a string of late chances as Belgium crashed out of the World Cup in the group stage after a 0-0 draw with Croatia on Thursday which sent the 2018 runners-up into the knockout phase. **Pg 9**



Migration turning hill villages into ghost towns

Villages in Ramechhap, Dhankuta lie abandoned and fields fallow with residents leaving in search of greener pastures.



POST PHOTO: TIKA PRASAD BHATTA

Motimaya Tamang outside her house in Nagdaha of Likhu Tamakoshi, Ramechhap.

TIKA PRASAD BHATTA IN RAMECHHAP &
RAMESH CHANDRA ADHIKARI IN DHANKUTA
DEC 1

Motimaya Tamang, a 73-year-old woman of Nagdaha, Likhu Tamakoshi Rural Municipality-5, in Ramechhap, lives alone. These days she works in her field from sunrise till sundown ploughing, harvesting millet and cutting hay.

A mother of two sons, Tamang says the responsibility of running a household and taking care of the fields is becoming too much for her but as she has no one to help her, she perseveres.

"My sons live in Kathmandu with their wives. They don't want to come back to the village but I can't leave the fields fallow and the house decrepit, so I keep working," said Tamang. "My children ask me to move to the city with them but Nagdaha is my home, I can't leave."

Tamang wakes up in the morning, gets busy with household chores and settles down for a meal. By afternoon, she's out in the fields. "I'm not young anymore so there are aches and pains everywhere. But if I don't take care of the house, it will start crumbling," said Tamang.

At present, every Nagdaha villager has a similar story to tell. With the days getting colder, the villagers are working hard in the fields to harvest millet. But like Tamang's, almost every household in the village is empty of young people—only the elderly remain.

"The temperature is dipping. It gets dark early and these old bones cry for rest," said Tamang. "But the fields need to be tended to; meals need to be cooked. We get no rest."

According to the data of the municipality, the total population of the

Likhu Tamakoshi-5, is 5,600, but the villages are mostly empty. Around 470 elderly people in the ward get social security allowance from the municipality.

"There are around 200 households in the village and in most of the houses only elderly people remain as most of the young people have left the village in search of employment," said Tamang. "Some older people have also left with their children. Their houses are on the verge of collapse and their fields fallow."

Laxman Shrestha, a 55-year-old man, lives in his ancestral village with his wife. His four children left for greener pastures and haven't returned, says Shrestha.

"It's just me and my wife here. We have three daughters and one son. My son went to Kolkata, India for employment. He died there," said Shrestha. "The lack of young people in the villages becomes more evident during the harvest season. The elderly folks can be seen working in the fields from sunrise to sunset. My wife and I do the same."

Seventy-year-old Bir Bahadur Magar, former ward chairman of Likhu Tamakoshi Ward No 5, says he doesn't want to work the fields anymore, but has no option. "The village has turned into a shell of its former self. Sorrow and sadness have taken over. Roads, electricity and schools have reached the village but for whose benefit, we don't know. There are no children here to attend school," said Magar.

According to Magar, almost half of the houses in the villages are empty with the young people moving away and some convincing their parents to move with them.

>> Continued on page 2

Dahal wants to be prime minister. Does he stand a chance?

The Maoist supremo is trying to cash in on internal conflict in the Congress and to leverage his position as kingmaker.

ANIL GIRI & TIKA R PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, DEC 1

With the counting of both the first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR) votes of the November 20 elections nearly over, leaders have intensified meetings and behind-the-curtain negotiations to form a new government and, above all, to decide the new prime minister.

There are several claimants for the post. Incumbent Sher Bahadur Deuba, CPN (Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Nepali Congress General Secretary Gagan Thapa, and Congress leader Ram Chandra Paudel, among others, have already staked their claims to the top executive job.

And with no party getting a majority, there is no clarity on the shape of the new government as well as on its leadership. A section of the Congress establishment camp has already proposed Deuba for prime minister.

"We should not seek an alternative to Deuba," Congress Vice-president Purna Bahadur Khadka said on Thursday.

"We went to the election under his leadership and got respectable results. So no one should doubt that Deuba is the undisputed candidate for parliamentary party leader," he added. As per the charter of the Nepali Congress, any lawmaker aspiring to become prime minister should first be elected parliamentary party leader.

Khadka, a lieutenant of



POST FILE PHOTO

Pushpa Kamal Dahal

Deuba, met Dahal on Thursday and discussed government formation. But as the new government will be a coalition one, the Congress needs the support of coalition partners to get Deuba appointed as prime minister.

Maoist chair Dahal, who claims to have been cheated out of the post by CPN-UML chair KP Sharma Oli in the post-2017 government, is himself waiting in the wings to head the next government. Also, Dahal and Deuba reportedly have a gentleman's agreement to lead the next government by turns; Maoist Centre insiders say Dahal wants to become prime minister for the first two and a half years.

But Deuba is quietly making his own preparations to head the new government and is working to bring the Janamat Party and the Nagarik Unmukti Party, besides the Loktantrik Samajbadi Party, on board.

>> Continued on page 2




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Bagbazaar area wears a deserted look after businesspersons closed shops and blocked the road on Thursday to protest Kathmandu Metropolitan City's decision to ban roadside parking.

■ BRIEFING

IOC slashes petrol, disease prices and increases LPG rate
KATHMANDU: Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) on Thursday sent a revised rate of petroleum products to Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC). As per the latest rate, the Indian utility has decreased the price of petrol and diesel while increasing the cost of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). “As per the latest rate received from the IOC, the price of petrol has decreased by Rs2.38 and diesel by Rs11.26 per litre,” said Birendra Goit, director of supply and distribution department of the NOC. “The price of LPG has increased by Rs 45 per cylinder.” Nepali customers, however, will not benefit from the revised prices unless the NOC decreases the prices of the petroleum products accordingly in the domestic market.

US envoy Thompson meets Prime Minister Deuba

KATHMANDU: US Ambassador Dean Thompson met Prime Minister Deuba on Wednesday evening. This is the first meeting between Deuba and Thompson since the latter arrived in Nepal on October 13 to take up his new assignment. Foreign Relations Adviser to the prime minister Arun Subedi said that Thompson congratulated Deuba for holding successful elections to the federal and provincial parliaments. During the meeting, the US envoy said that the United States hopes that the recent elections would strengthen the democratic process in Nepal, according to Subedi. In response, Deuba thanked the US for its support in Nepal's democratic transition, democracy, human rights and development endeavors, Subedi. He added that the prime minister expressed hope that the US will continue to support Nepal.

Deuba expresses condolence on Jiang Zemin's demise



KATHMANDU: Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has expressed condolences on the passing of Jiang Zemin, the former president of the People's Republic of China. Deuba took to Twitter on Thursday to extend his condolence. "I am deeply saddened by the passing away of former president of the People's Republic of China Mr. Jiang Zemin. He was a great friend and well wisher of Nepal," read the Tweet. "I would like to express my deepest condolences to the Government and the people of China and the bereaved family members." Jiang Zemin (1926-2022) was the President of China from 1993-2003 and visited Nepal in 1996. He also met several Nepali leaders, including late king Birendra Shah in 2001 in Boao Forum for Asia, Hainan. In July 2022, Jiang met with former king Gyanendra Shah in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Jiang died on Wednesday at the age of 96 of leukemia and multiple organ failure, according to the Chinese state media.

Lawmaker-elects trying to act as executives even before swearing-in

Experts on parliamentary affairs say the elected representatives should instead focus on how to perform their roles in the House effectively.

BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, DEC 1

On Monday, Mahesh Bartaula, a newly elected member of the House of Representatives from Makwanpur-2, inspected Krishi Samagri Kendra in Hetauda and asked the officials why the farmers were not getting chemical fertilisers. He also directed Prakash Gyawali, director of the centre, to immediately start distributing fertiliser to the farmers in his constituency.

Bartaula defeated Birodh Khatriwala, former minister and a Standing Committee member of the CPN (Unified Socialist), in the November 20 parliamentary election. He started directing the officials just a day after receiving the certificate of election.

A day later, Deepak Singh, a newly elected member from Makwanpur-1, reached the Hetauda Hospital for inspection. Singh not just said he would work towards improving the health services in the district but also asked the hospital authority to improve its services right away.

The vote count for the federal and provincial assembly elections is on the verge of conclusion. As of Thursday, 162 members like Bartaula and Singh have been elected under the first-past-the-post system. Though they have received their certificates, they are yet to take the oath of office to formally become lawmakers.

However, many of them have already started acting not just as lawmakers but more than that.

Laxmi Prasad Gautam, joint secretary of law at the Parliament Secretariat, says those who have been elected to the House can behave like lawmakers only after they are administered the oath. Gautam says that every individual, not just the elected representatives, can seek updates from the authority on any development project or an issue of their concern. But as lawmakers they cannot directly instruct the government agencies to do something.

"As the people's representatives, they [lawmakers] can definitely take updates on every activity of public concern," said Gautam. "However, I don't think any law authorises them to issue directives."

MP-elects from the newly formed Rastriya Swatantra Party that has performed exceptionally well in the polls have left others behind in ordering government agencies. A few days earlier, RSP President Rabi Lamichhane visited a road section in his Chitwan-2 constituency with officials where he grilled them why the works hadn't been completed.

In a video widely circulated on social media, he is heard asking the officials to ensure the road section is completed within the deadline. "No excuse for further delay is accepted,"

he is heard saying.

Following in his footsteps is Hari Dhakal, a recently elected member of the lower house from Chitwan-1 for Lamichhane's party. A few days earlier, he reached the construction site of a bridge over Pampha Kholra in Rapti Municipality-7. From there he called the constructor not to delay the construction on any pretext.

"I don't want to hear anything. I want the bridge to be completed by the end of the current fiscal year, that's it. Only thing I understand is you are completing the bridge in the next seven months," he is heard saying in a widely circulated video.

Experts on parliamentary affairs say the newly elected representatives must understand that they are not activists and their position demands some decorum. "Until those newly elected formally take responsibility, they should focus on studying how they should act in Parliament and what their roles and responsibilities are," Som Bahadur Thapa, former secretary of Parliament told the Post.

"They must demonstrate maturity in their actions."

Lawmakers' role is policy formulation and scrutiny over government through Parliament. "Parliament is a proper channel to direct the government and its subordinates," said Thapa. "Lawmakers should not try to function as executives."

Nepal disease control body to study high dengue mortality

Sixty-two people died and around 54,000 have been infected by the deadly virus in Nepal this year alone.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, DEC 1

The Epidemiology and Disease Control Division has said that it has started a study on the cause of the high death rate from infection of the dengue virus.

Since January, at least 62 people have died and around 54,000 others were infected by the virus, which has spread to all 77 districts of the country, according to the Ministry of Health and Populations.

"Deaths from infection from the dengue virus is too high and we have started a comprehensive study to determine the cause of deaths," said Dr Gokarna Dahal, chief of the Vector Control Section at the division. "A team of experts will analyse the cause of deaths from various aspects."

Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease transmitted by female *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. The same vector also transmits chikungunya, yellow fever, and Zika, according to the World Health Organisation.

Post-monsoon is considered a high transmission season for dengue, but Nepal has witnessed outbreaks of the deadly disease since the start of the year and in the pre-monsoon and monsoon seasons as well. Officials said that the deadly virus has become endemic, as cases of infection of the virus have been reported in all months throughout the year.

Experts say reported dengue cases could be just the tip of the iceberg, as around 90 percent of the den-



This file photo shows a nurse tending to a dengue patient at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital in Teku, Kathmandu.

Those closely tracking the cases suspect many more people could have succumbed to the disease as not all deaths are reported, just like during the Covid pandemic.

Negligence in the case of management, taking preventive measures,

lack of awareness about the risks among the public, and delay in seeking health care services after infections could be among the reasons for the high death rate from infection of the virus, according to experts.

An expert team is tasked to analyse the type of population, which have been severely affected

Utility seeks bids to supply solar power to grid

The electricity authority is buying solar power through competitive bidding, ending the fixed rate regime.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA
KATHMANDU, DEC 1

Nepal Electricity Authority has invited proposals from developers for setting up solar plants connected to the grid so they can sell power through competitive bidding.

The NEA plans to buy a maximum 100MW of power from such solar plants proposed to be developed by the private sector at 16 locations across the country. Up to 230MW of solar power plants could be developed in those locations.

This is for the first time that the state-owned power utility sought to buy solar power through bids.

In January, the NEA board had decided to procure solar energy only through bidding, ending the fixed rate regime of the previous three years.

The NEA said it sought to buy solar power through open competition to bring down the prices considering the significant cheapening of solar equipment in the neighbouring countries and global market.

In March, the power utility had decided to cap the maximum rate to be offered to solar power generators at Rs5.94 per unit. Earlier, the NEA had been signing power purchase agreements with developers at a fixed rate of Rs7.30 per unit based on the Working Procedure on Grid Connected Alternative Electric Energy Development-2017.

“Proposals were requested to select the bidders who want to develop power in the designated area and sell electricity to us at less than Rs5.94 per unit,” said NEA Spokesperson Suresh Bhattacharai. “We will sign the PPA only with the developers who pass technical evaluation and offer competitive bids below the maximum price ceiling.” As per the notice issued on November 28, the bidders can submit RFPs by February 26. As per the bid notice, the solar project must be commissioned within 18 months from the date of PPA signing between the NEA and the developer.

As per the notice, bidder(s) can propose a maximum capacity set for specific locations ranging from 10MW to 30MW based on the location. They cannot propose to deliver less than 1MW at the delivery point.

The bidder can choose any solar photovoltaic power generation technology. The developer will also be responsible for evacuating power from the plant to the nearby NEA substation, according to the RIP notice.

The power utility will sign the PPA with the developers for 25 years as per the Working Procedure on Grid-Connected Alternative Electric Energy Development-2021. After that period, the developers have to hand over the solar plants along with the land used to the government.

However, solar power producers say the price cap on solar power could make many solar plants unfeasible as the prices of solar panels have risen globally again amid supply constraints and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

“Investors may need to wait for

“Investors may need to wait for

15 to 20 years to recover their investment,” Bharat Kumar Malla, senior vice-president of the Solar Electric Manufacturers Association Nepal told the Post in October. “The investors will rethink whether to invest in solar plants in Nepal.”

Currently, the contribution of solar power in the country’s energy mix is minimal. According to the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, as much as 44 megawatts of solar energy has been connected to the national grid as of last fiscal year ended mid-July. This contributes 1.94 percent to Nepal’s total installed capacity.

PROPOSED LOCATIONS AND CAPACITY OF SOLAR PLANTS	
Locations	Maximum capacity
Attariya, Kailali	30MW
Bhurigaon, Bardiya	20MW
Chanauta, Kapilvastu	30MW
Hapure, Dang	10MW
Lamahi, Dang	20MW
Argha, Arghakhanchi	10MW
Gandak, Nawalparasi West	10MW
Dewighat, Nuwakot	10MW
Tinla, Solukhumbu	10MW
Sedhwa, Parsa	10MW
Birgunj, Parsa	10MW
Lahan, Siraha	10MW
Jajale, Udayapur	10MW
Nawalpur, Sarlahi	10MW
Duhabi, Sunsari	10MW
Dhalkebar, Dhulista	20MW

Nepal's total power generation in mid-July stood at 2268MW, according to the energy ministry.

The power monopoly made a move to buy solar energy in volumes as part of implementing the government policy of increasing the share of other renewable sources such as solar and wind to 10 percent of the total installed capacity.

The government aims to increase the share of solar and wind power as a generation mix would bolster energy security considering that heavy reliance on a single source could be risky.

Ram Prasad Dhital, former board member of the Electricity Regulatory Commission, told the Post in October that the country needs to diversify its energy mix to ensure energy security considering that Nepal is prone to earthquakes and landslides that could affect hydropower projects.

The Department of Electricity Development has issued survey licences for 44 projects with a combined capacity of 1,233.7 megawatts.

Major projects getting survey licences include the 300MW Jhapa SPV Power Plant and the 200MW Nepalgunj SPV Power Plant to be developed by GT Energy; 250MW Grid Connected Solar Project in Kohalpur; and Banganga to be developed by Risen Clean Energy Nepal. On top of that, the department has issued construction licences for 21 solar projects with a combined capacity of 133.56MW.

133.56MW.

hospital care, which is also the reason for the decline in reported cases.

Dengue virus serotype 1 (DENV-1), 2 (DENV-2), and 3 (DENV-3) have been found responsible for the dengue epidemic in the country. Studies were carried out at the Tribhuvan University and the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, according to officials at the Health Ministry.

Another extensive study jointly carried out by the National Public Health Laboratory and the Nepal Health Research Council has also been completed.

Dengue cases have declined significantly amid dipping temperatures. But 15 to 20 people are still testing positive for dengue every day.

Entomologists warn that dengue spread has gone down naturally but the risks are still there. They say that a new surge could start once the temperature rises, as no serious initiatives have been taken to destroy the eggs of infected mosquitoes.

"All deaths from dengue virus should be analysed thoroughly and its underlying cause established," said Sishir Panta, an entomologist. "Many other shortcomings could be responsible for a wide spread of the virus and high severity and death rate which should also be analysed properly and further plannings should be made accordingly."

Nepal has witnessed a dengue epidemic every two or three years. In 2019, at least six people died and over 17,000 were infected by the virus, which had spread to 68 districts.

BRIEFING

Five letter bombs detected in Spain, country steps up security

MADRID: Bomb disposal experts defused a fifth letter bomb on Thursday as Spain stepped up security to confront a spate of explosive devices sent to high-profile targets, including the prime minister and the Ukrainian ambassador in Madrid. Early indications suggest that all five of the packages were sent from within Spain, the country's Deputy Interior Minister told journalists. Rafael Perez, the junior minister responsible for security, said the homemade devices were sent in brown packages containing a flammable powder and tripwire that would generate "sudden flames" rather than an explosion. The packages were addressed to the heads of the institutions they were sent to.

North Korea's Kim calls for meeting to review state affairs

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called for a major political conference before year's end at which he is expected to address his increasingly tense relations with Washington and Seoul over the expansion of his nuclear and missile programmes. North Korea's state media said on Thursday that Kim presided over a meeting of the ruling Workers' Party's Politburo in which members reviewed the implementation of state policies in 2022 and decided to hold a larger plenary meeting of the party's Central Committee at an unspecified time in late December. Kim in recent years has used political conferences in late December or early January to review state affairs and reveal his most important goals in economic and foreign policy and arms development.

China's Xi urges Ukraine talks in meeting with EU's Michel

BEIJING: Chinese leader Xi Jinping urged negotiations on a political solution to the Ukraine conflict in talks with visiting European Council President Charles Michel in Beijing on Thursday, state broadcaster CCTV said. Xi was quoted as saying that "solving the Ukrainian crisis through political means is in the best interest of Europe and the common interest of all countries in Eurasia." "Under current conditions, we must avoid escalation and expansion of the crisis and work for peace," Xi said. **(AGENCIES)**

China set to loosen Covid curbs after week of historic protests

Ruling party to allow home quarantine, cut mass testing, sources say. Top official says severity of virus weakening.



A file photo shows an elderly person scanning a QR code at a nucleic acid testing site for the coronavirus disease, in Beijing, China.

REUTERS

HONG KONG/BEIJING, DEC 1

China is set to announce an easing of its Covid-19 quarantine protocols in the coming days and a reduction in mass testing, sources told Reuters, a marked shift in policy after anger over the world's toughest curbs fuelled widespread protests.

Cases nationwide remain near record highs but the changes come as some cities have been lifting their lockdowns in recent days, and a top official said the ability of the virus to cause disease was weakening.

Health authorities announcing the easing in their areas have not mentioned the protests—the biggest show of civil disobedience in China for years—which ranged from candle-lit vigils in Beijing to street clashes with police in Guangzhou.

The measures due to be unveiled include a reduction in the use of mass testing and regular nucleic acid tests as well as moves to allow positive cases and close contacts to isolate at home under certain conditions, the sources familiar with the matter said.

That is a far cry from earlier protocols that led to public frustrations as entire communities were locked down, sometimes for weeks, after even just one positive case.

The frustration boiled over last week in demonstrations of public defiance unprecedented in mainland China since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012. The unrest comes as the economy is set to enter a new era of much slower growth than seen in decades.

On Thursday night, Shanghai train commuters reported wirelessly receiving an unsolicited document onto

their phones saying that life in China would only get better if there was a full lifting of lockdown and that Xi step down - an apparently new tactic amid a heavy police presence in some cities ahead of the weekend.

Less than 24 hours after violent protests in Guangzhou on Tuesday, authorities in at least seven districts of the sprawling manufacturing hub, said they were lifting temporary lockdowns. One district said it would allow schools, restaurants and businesses including cinemas to reopen.

Cities including Chongqing and Zhengzhou also announced easings.

The sense of official momentum towards a landmark shift built on Thursday as Vice Premier Sun Chunlan, who oversees Covid efforts, told a meeting of frontline experts that the Omicron variant was weakening in its ability to cause disease,

Democracy leader says 2,000 dead fighting junta in Myanmar

REUTERS

BANGKOK, DEC 1

At least 2,000 pro-democracy fighters have been killed in Myanmar battling a military junta that seized power last year, the head of a parallel civilian government said in an interview aired on Thursday, urging allies to provide military aid.

Duwa Lashi La, acting president of the National Unity Government (NUG), comprised of remnants of the administration of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi and others, was speaking to the Reuters NEXT conference from an undisclosed location in Myanmar.

"We regard [the deaths] as the price we must pay," said Duwa Lashi La, a former teacher and lawyer in his seventies who fled his home in Kachin State in northern Myanmar with his family.

The military has branded him and his colleagues terrorists and banned citizens from communicating with them, but their parallel civilian government enjoys widespread support. Allied armed groups known as People's Defense Forces have emerged across the country.

Duwa Lashi La has been pictured visiting troops, who include former students and professionals driven to the jungles by military crackdowns, clad in a flak jacket and helmet.

"I have no idea when I will give up my life," he said.

"It is up to God's will. I am already committed to sacrificing anything for my country," he said.

The Southeast Asian nation has been in turmoil since the military seized power in February last year, reversing a decade-long democratic experiment, and used deadly force to crush protests.

In addition to the 2,000 deaths in fighting, more than 2,500 civilians have been killed elsewhere, mostly in crackdowns on protests, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Pro-democracy fighters are outgunned by an army equipped by Russia, China and India, which uses fighter jets to carry out deadly bombing raids. More than 1.3 million people have been internally displaced since the coup, according to the UN.

Modi's home state Gujarat votes in key local polls

A second round of voting will take place on Monday before votes are counted December 8.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW DELHI, DEC 1

Voters in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat cast ballots on Thursday in crucial local elections, a vote that is seen as a barometer of his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's popularity ahead of a 2024 general election in India.

The polls are the first of two phases of voting in the western state that Modi ruled as chief minister for over a decade before he led his ruling Hindu nationalist party to victories in national elections in 2014 and 2019.

A second round of voting will take place on Monday before votes are counted December 8.

Modi's party remains popular despite criticism of inflation and unemployment and is expected to emerge victorious. Most pre-election surveys and several political analysts have predicted that it will win a majority of the 182 seats in the state for a record seventh time in a row, defeating the main opposition Congress party and new entrant Aam Aadmi Party.

The BJP has been in power in Gujarat, a state of more than 60 million, since 1995.

Modi and dozens of top leaders of his party have been campaigning in Gujarat and voters will go to the polls a month after the collapse of a suspension bridge in the town of Morbi

killed 135 people. The disaster angered people across the state but analysts say it won't dent BJP's popularity in the polls.

India's main opposition Congress party is hoping to revive its fortunes and regain some popularity in the state. In October, the party elected a new president, a move that was seen to shed its image as a family dynasty. In September, Rahul Gandhi, its most prominent leader, launched a cross-country unity march across Indian cities, towns and villages to rejuvenate the party and win the people's support. But analysts say neither event will help the party electorally during the Gujarat polls.

Meanwhile, the BJP is facing a

tough challenge from the Aam Aadmi Party, which has ruled the capital, Delhi, since 2015. Earlier this year, it swept polls in the northern Punjab state by overthrowing the Congress party.

Aam Aadmi Party, which grew out of a nationwide anti-corruption movement in 2012, has been a force to reckon with in Delhi. Since its surprise win in the Punjab state, the party has been trying to strengthen its presence across the country. A strong showing in Gujarat could indicate whether the party could appeal voters during the 2024 general election, mainly at the expense of the Indian National Congress party that has struggled since 2014.

Heaviest Ukraine fighting rages in east, NATO seeks to sustain support against Russia

US missile contract worth \$1.2 billion awarded to help Ukraine, Pentagon says.

REUTERS

KYIV, DEC 1

Russian forces tried to advance in eastern Ukraine and trained tank, mortar and artillery fire on Kherson in the south, the Ukrainian military said, as Western allies sought to buttress Ukraine and its neighbours against Moscow.

In Washington, a \$1.2 billion contract for six National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) for Ukraine was awarded to Raytheon, the Pentagon said.

Ukraine Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Wednesday his country needed US-made Patriot missile defence systems to protect its civilian infrastructure, which has been under heavy attack by Russia at the start of winter.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Russian President Vladimir Putin had focused "his ire and his fire" on Ukraine's civilian population and warned Russia that its strategy would fail to divide Ukraine's supporters.

"Heat, water, electricity ... these are President Putin's new targets. He's hitting them hard. This brutalisation of Ukraine's people is barbaric," Blinken told a news conference in Bucharest following a two-day NATO meeting.



Ukrainian servicemen fire with a Bureviy multiple launch rocket system in Donetsk region.

REUTERS

At the NATO foreign ministers meeting, allies on Wednesday pledged to help Moldova, Georgia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as they face pressure from Russia, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and ministers said.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said the outcome showed NATO was "absolutely

not interested in a political and diplomatic solution in Ukraine".

Russia invaded Ukraine nine months ago in what it calls a "special military operation" to rid Ukraine of nationalists it considers dangerous. Ukraine and Western allies accuse Russia of an unprovoked, imperialist land grab.

Ukraine ordered all of Kyiv's

embassies abroad to strengthen security after two letter bombs were sent to the Ukrainian ambassador in Madrid and an arms company in Spain that manufactures rocket launchers donated to Ukraine. Spanish police said they were examining a possible link between the two bombs, one of which injured an embassy security officer.

In the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, site of the heaviest fighting, Russian forces tried to make further advances and shelled several towns, including Bakhmut and nearby Soledar and Opytnye, the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces said in a Wednesday night statement.

On the southern front, it said Russian forces took up defensive positions and trained tank, mortar and artillery fire on Ukrainian positions and on the regional capital of Kherson, abandoned by Russian troops earlier in November.

Other battleground activity was reported in northeastern and central Ukraine, the military said.

Reuters was not able to verify battlefield reports.

"We are analysing the intentions of the occupiers and preparing counter-measures—tougher counter-measures than is now the case," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Wednesday evening address.

Viewers flock to watch glowing lava ooze from Hawaii volcano



People take a photo in front of lava erupting from Hawaii's Mauna Loa volcano on Wednesday near Hilo, Hawaii.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KAILUA-KONA, DEC 1

The world's largest volcano oozed rivers of glowing lava Wednesday, drawing thousands of awestruck viewers who jammed a Hawaii highway that could soon be covered by the flow.

Mauna Loa awoke from its 38-year slumber on Sunday, causing volcanic ash and debris to drift down from the sky. A main highway linking towns on the east and west coasts of the Big Island became an impromptu viewing point, with thousands of cars jamming the highway near Volcanoes National Park.

Anne Andersen left her overnight shift as a nurse to see the spectacle on Wednesday, afraid that the road would soon be closed.

"It's Mother Nature showing us her face," she said, as the volcano belched gas on the horizon. "It's pretty exciting." Gordon Brown, a visitor from Loomis, California, could see the bright orange lava from the bedroom of his rental house. So he headed out for a close-up view with his wife.

"We just wanted ... to come see this as close as we could get. And it is so bright, it just blows my mind," Brown said. The lava was tumbling slowly down the slope and was about 10 kilometres from the highway known as Saddle Road. It was not clear when, or if, it would cover the road, which runs through old lava flows.

The road bisects the island and connects the cities of Hilo and Kailua-Kona. People traveling between them

would need to take a longer coastal road if Saddle Road becomes impassable, adding several hours of drive time. Ken Hon, scientist in charge at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, said at current flow rate, the soonest the lava would get to the road is two days, but it will likely take longer.

"As the lava flow spreads out, it will probably interfere with its own progress," Hon said.

Kathryn Tarananda, 66, of Waimea set two alarms to make sure she didn't oversleep and miss her chance to see sunrise against the backdrop of eruptions at Mauna Loa.

"It's a thrill," she said. "We're out in the middle of raw nature. It's awe inspiring that we live in this place. ... I feel really, really fortunate to be an islander."

Mauna Loa last erupted in 1984. The current eruption is its 34th since written record keeping began in 1843. Its smaller neighbour, Kilauea, has been erupting since September 2021, so visitors to the national park were treated to the rare sight of two simultaneous eruptive events: the glow from Kilauea's lava lake and lava from a Mauna Loa fissure.

Abel Brown, a visitor from Las Vegas, was impressed by the natural forces on display. He planned to take a close-up helicopter tour later in the day—but not too close.

"There's a lot of fear and trepidation if you get really close to it," Brown said. "The closer you get, the more powerful it is and the more scary it is."



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Nepal's Karan KC attends a practice session in Windhoek, Namibia on the eve of the Namibia-Nepal-Scotland Tri Series of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 which began on Wednesday. Nepal open their series against hosts Namibia on Friday.

Former Sports Council member secretary no more

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, DEC 1

Former member secretary of National Sports Council (NSC) Kishor Bahadur Singh died in Kathmandu on Thursday. He was 73.

Singh had suffered a heart attack, according to Nepal Badminton Association President Ramji Bahadur Shrestha.

Singh breathed his last at Norvic Hospital, Thapathali, where he was admitted on Wednesday evening after his health suddenly deteriorated.

Singh served as the member secretary of the Council from 2003-2007.

A former Nepali badminton legend, he was a six-time men's singles national champion from 1972 to 1977.

NSC paid its tribute to the late Singh stating that his death caused a huge loss to the Nepali sports and a great pain to the council family.

"Singh's contribution to the development and expansion of Nepali sports is laudable. We express our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and relatives. May his soul rest in peace," the NSC statement reads.

All Nepal Football Association



Kishor Bahadur Singh died of a heart attack.

(ANFA) said it was grieved by the death of Singh.

"The ANFA family is saddened to learn of the loss of former NSC member secretary Kishor Bahadur Singh. Our thoughts are with the Singh family. We offer them our heartfelt condolences in this difficult situation," ANFA said in a statement.

Singh is survived by a wife and a daughter.

His final rites will be performed at the Pashupati Aryaghat on Friday, according to the NSC.

Lumbini see off Province 1 to keep alive final hopes in U-19 national cricket

Bishal Bikram KC's team are third in the table and face an easy task against winless Madhesh in their last league match.

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, DEC 1

Nirmal Gurung-inspired Lumbini Province thrashed already-eliminated Province 1 by six wickets at the TU cricket ground on Thursday to stay in contention for the final race in the Under-19 National Cricket Tournament.

Spinner Gurung returned the match figures of 5-4 in his 4.2 over bowling spell that also featured two maiden overs to help Lumbini restrict Province 1 to a paltry total of 69 in 26.2 overs.

Gurung impressed from the start, removing opener Sonu Ansari for a nought in the very first delivery of the first over.

SCORECARD
U-19 NATIONAL CRICKET TOURNAMENT
16th match, TU cricket ground
Toss: Province 1, elected to bat first.
Province 1: 69 (26.2/50 ov)
S Ansari 22 (22)
N Gurung 4.2-2-4-5
Lumbini: 73-4 (16/50 ov)
D Khanal 19 (39)
D Kandel 5-1-19-3
<i>Lumbini win by six wickets.</i>
Player of the match: Nirmal Gurung
17th match, Mulpani cricket ground
Toss: Gandaki, elected to bat first.
Gandaki: 234-7 (50/50 ov)
G BK 55 (87), A Kumal 50 (106), D Dumre 44 (27)
A Shah 10-0-70-3
Karnali 125 (30/50 ov)
S Ayer 32 (36)
S Bhandari 10-3-27-6, C Shrestha 5-2-15-3
<i>Gandaki win by 109 runs.</i>
Player of the match: Subash Bhandari

Suvan Gahatraj, the highest scorer for Province 1, made 22 before Avishkek Gautam (1-11) had him caught by Aakash Tripathi in the ninth over.

Durgesh Gupta, who took five wickets in a 85-run shock win over Bagmati on Wednesday, then bowled captain Dipesh Kandel (5) and Faijal Rahaman (0) in the successive deliveries of the 12th over to inflict further damage on Province 1 innings.

Tul Bahadur Thapa added to the Lumbini misery, trapping Bhupal Dangel in front towards the end of the 20th over.

Gurung then brushed off the rest of the batters including the wicket due



Lumbini players celebrate a wicket during their U-19 National Cricket Tournament match against Province 1 in Kirtipur on Thursday.

Estain Rijal—the only other Province 1 batter to reach double digit figures—as Province 1 succumbed to the third-lowest total of the tournament so far.

Province 1 also hold the tag for the lowest total in an innings when they were bundled out for just 51 by title favourites Sudurpaschim on Monday.

In reply, Lumbini also struggled with the bat, with openers Tripathi and Dev Khanal departing cheaply for 17 and 19 respectively.

Captain Bishal Bikram KC was sent back for a nought, trapped lbw by Dipesh Kandel (3-19), who also removed Khanal.

Khanal also removed Prajjiwol Thapa for 15 to wreak havoc in the Lumbini batting order.

But despite the batting collapse, the target was too easy to reach and Sunil Bhandari added 6 not out and Vishal Bhusal contributed 8 not out as Lumbini reached 73-4 in just 16 overs.

The win gives Lumbini eight points from five matches, level with Bagmati on points.

Bagmati occupy the second spot due

Bagmati occupy the second spot on net run rate but face an acid test against Sudurpaschim.

TABLE					
Team	P	W	L	Pts	NRR
Sudurpaschim	5	5	0	10	2.732
Bagmati	5	4	1	8	1.221
Lumbini	5	4	1	8	0.950
Province 1	5	2	3	4	-1.364
Gandaki	5	1	4	2	-0.428
Karnali	5	1	4	2	-1.470
Madhesh	4	0	4	0	-2.475

to superior run rate. But they face an acid test against unbeaten Sudurpaschim in their final league round on Friday.

A defeat against the leaders could prove fatal to Bagmati's chances to reach the final, provided Lumbini face an easy task against rock-bottom Madhesh Province, who are still winless after four rounds and have already exited the tournament.

The top two teams at the end of the single round robin league will qualify for the December 5 title match.

Consolation win

In the day's dead rubber action at Mulpani cricket ground, Gandaki Province defeated Karnali Province by 109 runs to register their first win of the tournament.

Openers Govind BK and Arjun Kumal scored half centuries each and Deepak Dumre added 44 as Gandaki posted 234-7 after choosing to bat first.

Aawash Shah took three wickets while Mohan BK pocketed two for Karnali.

In response, Subash Bhandari returned 6-27 and Cibrin Shrestha took 3-15 as Gandaki skittled out Karnali for 125 in 30 overs for a consolation victory.

HOROSCOPE



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

Good vibes will continue, activating the sector of your chart that governs spirituality and luck. Use this energy to meditate or chant positive mantras. An opportunity to heal wounds will manifest this evening.



CANCER (June 22-July 22) ***

You'll feel motivated to finish your work before the weekend rolls in. These vibes are also perfect for calling on help if you need it, so don't be afraid to delegate tasks. Prioritize your emotional and mental well-being.



LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***

Your exceptional social skills will be elevated today. However, issues could arise if you go into people-pleasing mode. Stay focused on your goals. Try to cut out some time for romance or self-care this evening.



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

This cosmic climate will bring compassionate energy to your heart, allowing you to move beyond pain or fears without needing a specific form of closure. Take some time to lay low at home and practice self-care.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20) ***

You'll feel the winds of change upon you today. This celestial exchange will encourage you to seek your next adventure. Spend some time reaffirming yourself through positive mantras and motivational meditations.



LEO (July 23-August 22) ***

This cosmic climate will allow you to feel good about yourself and the work you produce, as the stars conspire to elevate your confidence. Seek spiritual release later tonight, bringing forth a healing energy.



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) ***

Avoid the urge to throw money around. It is important to keep this in mind when it comes to indulging in materialistic purchases. Luckily, you'll feel more confident about who you are as the evening rolls around.



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) ***

You'll feel equal parts social and curious today. Look for opportunities to reach your community later in the afternoon. Your heart and soul will benefit from some journaling or meaningful discussions as the day ends.



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

This cosmic climate is ideal for carving out a position within your community, so be sure to socialize. Helping others will bring a sense of healing later tonight, though you should know when to draw lines as well.



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

This cosmic climate will help to cut ties with any situations no longer serving you, helping you to make fresh starts. A helpful energy will bring warmth to your heart and home, encouraging you to nurture relationships.



SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ***

Interacting with others will elevate your aura today. This celestial exchange is perfect for pushing your agenda and leading others. Self-love and ego-boosting mantras will also serve you well and release fears.



PISCES (February 19-March 20) ***

The stars will ask that you fully embrace your situation and surroundings today. Feel free to indulge in a little bit of luxury later this afternoon. Grounding energy will find you later tonight, helping you feel safe.

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CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Bird duct

5 Bird enclosure

9 Shout

13 The Bard's river

14 Claim

15 Winter drink

16 Grazing

18 Erie neighbor

19 Tribute in verse

20 Thrush's refuge

21 Expose as false

22 Secondhand

24 Rental contract

26 Prez after Jimmy

27 Having life

31 Unbroken horse

34 Crafts' partner

35 Geese formation

36 Sass

37 Baby fox

39 Cereal grass

41 Mesozoic, for one

42 Raided the fridge

43 Diva — Ponselle

45 Slip-up

47 Reuse excavated material

50 — -Magnon

51 Supermarket area

DOWN

1 Mist

2 Stay clear of

3 Plane tips

4 Explosive letters

5 Swerve

6 Car rental name

7 Softer

8 Unit of energy

9 "Sure!" (2 wds.)

10 Pale brown

11 Minnesota bird

12 Thin

15 Game of strategy

17 Open up

21 White-and-yellow flower

23 Aleta's son

25 Newsboy's shout

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

R	U	L	E	S	T	E	A	M	O	W	L	S
U	S	U	R	P	R	A	G	E	P	O	U	T
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P	R	E	C	E	D	E	N	T	S	I	N	G
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S	U	D	S		L	E	O	N		S	E	N

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28 Even once

29 Fiddling emperor

30 Split apart

31 Spill the beans

32 Beatles' meter maid

33 Oil cartel

34 Coral reef

38 From Dublin

40 Stranger

44 Traveled on snow

46 Compost

48 German ruler

49 Suspicious

50 Crunchy stalk

53 Caribbean nation

54 Fragrant compound

55 Short poem

56 Goalies' protection

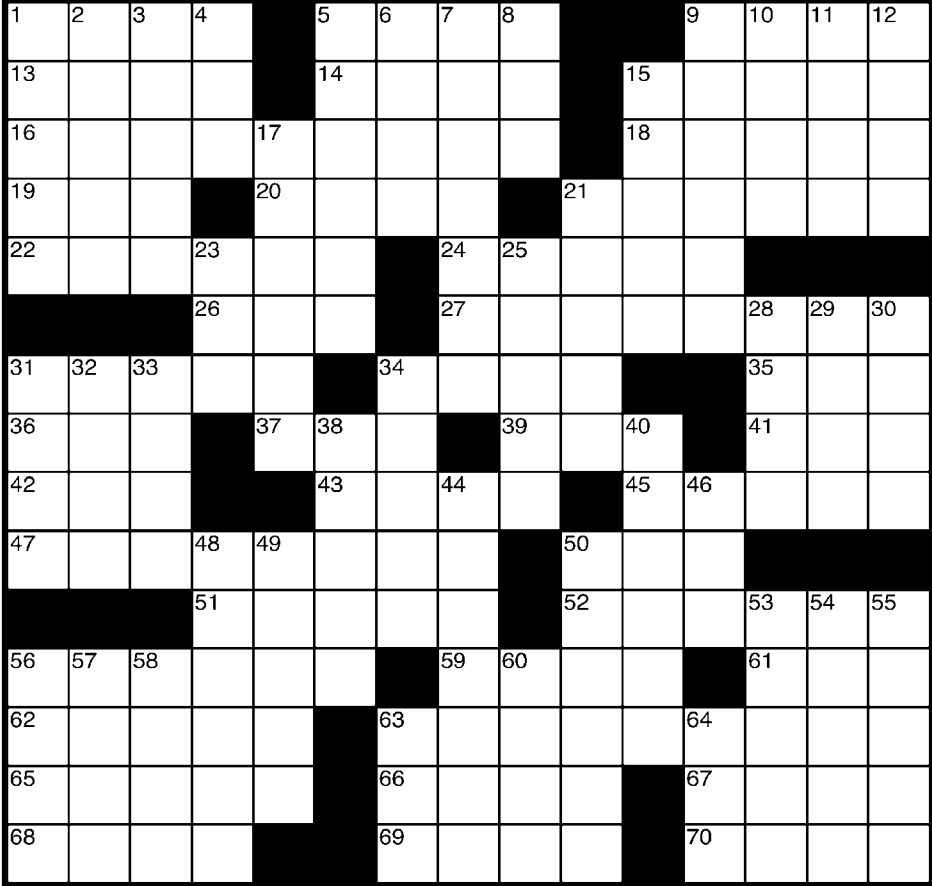
57 Give off heat

58 Costa —

60 Running track

63 Meyers of "Kate & Allie"

64 — vous plait



SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

4		6		2		9		
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Belgium crash out after Croatia draw

What has long been called Belgium's ‘Golden Generation’ is set to split with the semi-final appearance in 2018 as its peak.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
AL RAYYAN, DEC 1

The win and a place in the round of 16 at the World Cup was there for Belgium. All the team needed was for Romelu Lukaku to score as the ball reached him in front of goal in the final seconds.

Somehow, he missed. Belgium and their aging generation of players were eliminated Thursday after a 0-0 draw with Croatia, who advanced as the second-place team in Group F behind Morocco.

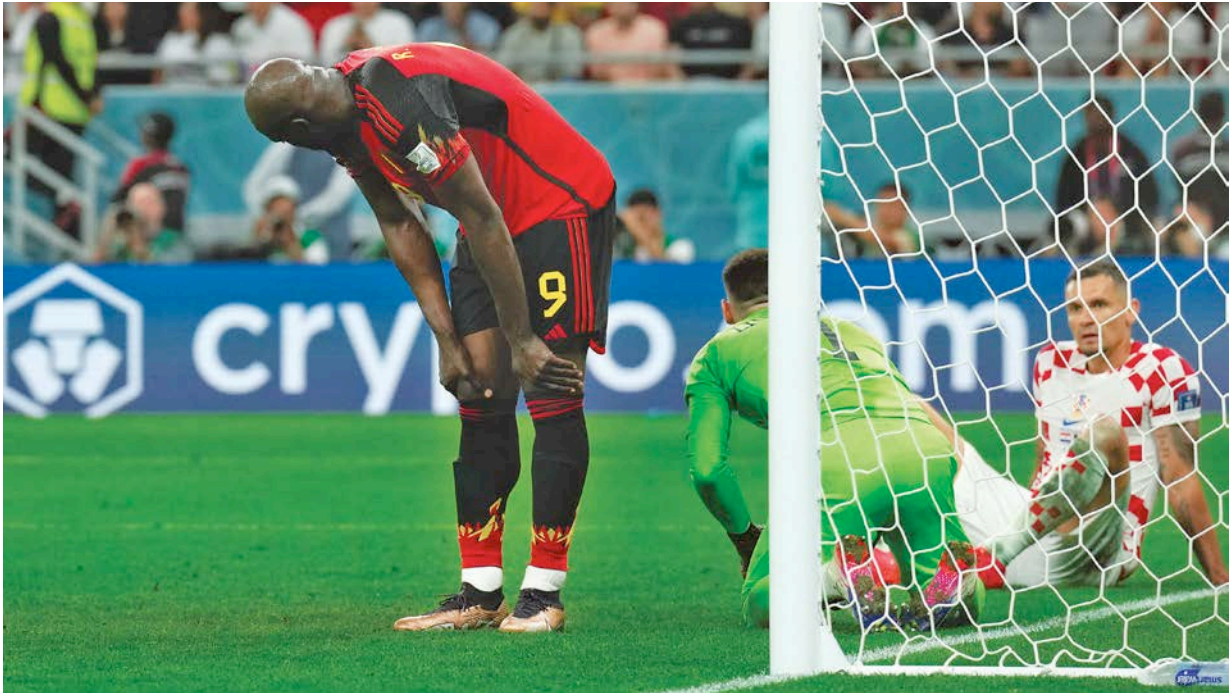
While Croatia—the 2018 runners-up and a 1998 semi-finalists—aims for another deep run at the World Cup, Belgium are facing the breakup of their talented but underachieving squad after failing to live up to their status as the second-ranked team and one of the tournament favourites.

Lukaku, who came on as a half-time substitute and squandered several great chances, punched the side of the dugout as he walked off, knocking the plexiglass screen out of place.

Not only did he fail to guide in that late chance from close range, he hit a shot against the post with the goal beckoning. Another chance, from a header in front of goal, sailed over the bar, but it's not clear if the goal would have counted.

What has long been called Belgium's “Golden Generation”—now featuring six players with more than 100 appearances—is set to split with the World Cup semi-final appearance in 2018 as its peak.

The team, who have faced questions of infighting between players during the tournament in Qatar, scored only one goal in three games and saved their best performance until their final match. It came too late.



Belgium's Romelu Lukaku reacts after missing a chance to score against Croatia at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan, Qatar on Thursday.

Morocco advance
Morocco advanced to the last 16 for just the second time after clinging on for a 2-1 win over Canada.

The victory meant they finished top of Group F ahead of 2018 World Cup finalists Croatia and semi-finalists Belgium.

The Moroccans' only other trip past the group stage came in 1986.

Hakim Ziyech scored for Morocco in the fourth minute after a bad error by Canada goalkeeper Milan Borjan left the winger to shoot the ball into an empty goal. Youssef En-Nesyri added

a second in the 23rd.

It looked then like Morocco would overrun the Canadians.

But Nayef Aguerd's own-goal just before halftime made it 2-1 and lifted Canada enough for them to put pressure on Morocco in search of an equalising goal for most of the second half.

Canada came agonisingly close when a header from captain Atiba Hutchinson, who came on as a second-half substitute, bounced off the crossbar and onto the goal-line.

Canada, who will co-host the next

World Cup in 2026 with the United States and Mexico, had already been eliminated before the Morocco game. They ultimately lost all three of their games in Qatar, matching their three defeats at their only other World Cup appearance in 1986.

Argentina, Poland qualify
Lionel Messi will grace the World Cup stage at least one more time.

The Argentina great had a penalty saved but his team still beat Poland 2-0 earlier on Wednesday after second-half goals from Alexis Mac

BYD

PLAYER TO WATCH

Yann Sommer (Switzerland)

Yann Sommer is the backstop of Switzerland in every sense of the word. The penalty-saving specialist can always be relied on to put in a solid performance, and has proved his worth on countless occasions. Sommer played every minute of every game in Qatar 2022 qualifying and conceded just two goals. Switzerland's defence, with Sommer behind it, will be crucial to the team's success against Serbia on Friday as the Swiss look to advance to the last 16. Switzerland have conceded just one goal in Qatar.

ATTO 3

THE FIRST SPORTY ELECTRIC SUV IN NEPAL

Allister and Julian Alvarez and advanced to the last 16.

After opening the World Cup with a shocking 2-1 loss to Saudi Arabia in one of biggest upsets in the tournament's history, Argentina wound up finishing in first place in Group C and will next play Australia — a surprise qualifier for the knockout stage.

As for Poland, it was ultimately a happy night, too, because the team went through as the group's second-place team—on goal difference ahead of Mexico—and will next play defending champions France.

Messi ended up relieved after failing to score a penalty for the second straight World Cup. It was awarded after he was hit in the face by the flailing hand of Poland goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny, who made amends by diving to his left to block Messi's kick in the 39th minute.

“I’m upset that I missed the penalty, but the team came back stronger after my error,” he said.

Mexico beat Saudi Arabia 2-1 but the victory wasn’t enough. Because of Argentina’s 2-0 victory over Poland in

a simultaneous match, Mexico failed to advance out of their group for the first time since 1978.

Mexico had reached the knockout round at the last seven World Cups, second only to Brazil, who have gone through to the round of 16 since 1986.

Group C							
Team	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts	
Argentina	3	2	0	1	3	6	
Poland	3	1	1	1	0	4	
Mexico	3	1	1	1	-1	4	
Saudi Arabia	3	1	0	2	-2	3	

Group F							
Team	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts	
Morocco	3	2	1	0	3	7	
Croatia	3	1	2	0	3	5	
Belgium	3	1	1	1	-1	4	
Canada	3	0	0	3	-5	0	

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Ghana and Uruguay meet again after 2010 drama

Ghana would reach last 16 with a win over Uruguay. A draw could also be enough depending on the result of South Korea vs Portugal.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DOHA, DEC 1

Ghana and Uruguay meet at the World Cup on Friday in a repeat of one of the tournament's most contentious games, and Luis Suarez still isn't apologising for his central role in the controversy 12 years ago.

Uruguay striker Suarez's deliberate handball on the goal-line at the end of extra time in the quarter-finals of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa denied Ghana a certain goal and a place in history as the first African team to reach the semis. Suarez was sent off for the handball but celebrated wildly on the sidelines when Asamoah Gyan hit the penalty off the crossbar. Uruguay won the ensuing penalty shootout.

To make it worse, Suarez boasted after the 2010 game: “Truth is, it was worth it.”

On Thursday, he remained unrepentant.

“I don't apologise because I take the handball and the red card but the Ghana player missed the penalty. It's not my fault because I didn't miss the penalty,” Suarez said.

Ghana can now go some way towards settling the score. By beating Uruguay in their final Group H match, Ghana would advance to the round of 16, while knocking Uruguay out of the tournament.

Though the match in Al Wakrah has been circled as one to watch ever since the World Cup draw was made, Ghana coach Otto Addo tried his best to cast it as a “nor-



Uruguay's Luis Suarez refused to apologise on Thursday to Ghanaians over his infamous handball at the World Cup 12 years ago that denied Ghana a certain goal and a place in history.

mal game” despite 2010 remaining a raw and painful memory for many Ghanaians, who are demanding revenge for the handball.

“For me, it's not a big topic,” Addo said, adding he wouldn't criticise one of his own players if they did the same as Suarez. “I would expect every player to do all he can to make sure his team goes through. Even sacrificing himself with a red card.”

“What happened in 2010 is very sad but we can't change it. We want to look forward and we want to win this game,” he said. “No matter how.”

Ghana, who squeezed out a thrilling 3-2 win over South Korea in their last game, must win again in Al Wakrah to be certain of going past the group stage for the first time since 2010. A draw could also be enough depending on the result of South

Korea vs Portugal.

Captain Andre Ayew is the only Ghana player in Qatar who was on the 2010 squad.

Uruguay have a handful, including the 35-year-old Suarez, who is playing what's likely his farewell World Cup before winding down a career that saw him celebrated as one of the best forwards in the world at one point. He won the Copa America with Uruguay and Spanish league titles and a Champions League trophy with Barcelona.

Suarez also carved out a reputation as one of the game's most controversial characters and has been punished three times for biting opponents, including a four-month ban for biting Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini on the shoulder at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Suarez started Uruguay's 0-0 draw with South Korea in Qatar but was on the bench for the 2-0 loss to Portugal, which left Uruguay bottom of the group.

Uruguay must now beat Ghana and hope South Korea do not beat Portugal to extend their stay at the World Cup and Suarez's international career for at least one more game. Goal difference will decide it if Uruguay and South Korea both win.

Stoking it just a little bit more, Suarez said the 2010 game against Ghana does still mean something to Uruguay.

“We are going to put our lives and soul into this match,” Suarez said. “Ghana are a good team but we know them, we have beaten them before and we know how to beat them again.”

TODAY'S MATCH

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South Korea 20:45 Portugal

Ghana 20:45 Uruguay

Serbia 00:45 Switzerland

Cameroon 00:45 Brazil

RESULTS			
Poland	0-2	Argentina	
Saudi Arabia	1-2	Mexico	
Croatia	0-0	Belgium	
Canada	1-2	Morocco	

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Going local on the Australian Base Camp

‘It’s about the journey, not the destination,’ they say. On this trip, we lived it.



PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK

AYUSH GURUNG

One winter evening in 2018, as I bid farewell to my friends and departed for our homes, there was excitement in the air. After all, we were leaving on a four-day trip the next morning.

Typical of a bunch of 15-year-olds, we had barely ever trekked in our lives. Having hiked only on short trails around the Kathmandu Valley, we had now decided to go on a trip to get a closer look at the mountains. The trip in question was a lesser-known route to the Australian Base Camp.

After a few Google searches and a quick call to an agency, we were ready to set off.

The following morning, our journey began. After a seven-hour drive, through the roads and places most of us were familiar with, we reached Pokhara. Our trek was scheduled for the following day, so we were advised to rest well.

Getting advice is one thing and



being able to apply it is another. None of us seemed too tired even after the seven-hour drive. We stayed up late, talking about the trek and joking about who would not be able to walk the distance.

After what felt like an eternity, the night passed. It was now dawn and the first day of our trek. We had our breakfast and set off on our journey to Phedi, a village 18 kilometres from Pokhara, on foot.

The trail from Phedi to Dhampus was serene, to say the least. It took us through jungles, paddy fields and local civilisations. Although the trek isn’t necessarily arduous, it does test your limits at times. The trail features plain roads, narrow paths through various farmlands and an amusing flight of the stairs. As uncertain as the nature of the trail may be, the welcoming smiles and hospitality are equally certain. Along the journey, you find various individuals to keep you company. Our favourites were the schoolchildren and the mules.

It was almost noon when we reached Dhampus. What we were told was that an hour-long trek had taken us two-and-a-half hours. We settled down in an eatery by the roadside to have lunch and get some much-needed rest. The exhaustion from the trek coupled with the sleepless night was slow-

ly piling on us. But the exhaustion made the lunch much better. The Thakali set there was drastically different from the ones served in fancy restaurants in the Valley. The ingredients were organic and home-grown. The locals tried to persuade us to spend the night in Dhampus and ascend further the next day.

“The mountains look just as beautiful from here. We have cultural dance programmes in the evening. You can experience and learn about the local inhabitants,” the eatery owner told us. “I’ll personally show you around.”

However, the weather had become cloudy and we could not tell if the mountains looked just as beautiful up close. Besides, we were set in our tracks and had decided that we would reach the Australian Base Camp that very day.

We turned down the hotel owner’s offer and set off on our journey again. The trek from Dhampus to the Australian Base Camp was comparatively easier than the one from Phedi to Dhampus. The nature of the trail remained almost identical, but it was not as steep or narrow.

After walking for two hours, we decided to take a break. By that time, we were in one of the many human settlements we had passed along the way. As we walked through the stone-paved alleys, we noticed a few locals hanging around a small tea shop. They looked at us with welcoming smiles when they saw us approaching. My friends settled on the small wooden benches outside the tea shop as they exchanged greetings.

“Reyngo prairi narai hola (Must have been tired walking this long),” said one of the locals.

“Anaarai muh, toi aatai muh (No, not tired yet. Nothing has happened),” I replied, as I made my way to the shop.

The locals were elated when they heard my reply. “Aachya, kyi Tamu wa? (Aachya, are you a Gurung?),” one of them asked.

“Knihba (Yes),” I replied, clarifying that I did not speak much Gurung and that was pretty much

all that I knew.

After a little back and forth about where I was from, and if I was originally from the village or villages nearby, we left the locals behind and continued with our journey.

By the time we reached the Australian Base Camp, it was half past four. The weather had still not cleared up. But we were hopeful that we would be greeted by the mountains when we woke up. The hope was short-lived. One of the locals informed us that the weather could remain gloomy and not clear up for days. We were disappointed, but we had to remain optimistic. After all, we had not walked all the way up there for nothing.

The houses at the Australian Base Camp were different from what we had seen along the way. It was fascinating to see how humans had urbanised lands that were seemingly in the middle of nowhere. Although situated at an elevation of 2,045 metres above the sea level and many kilometres away from urban civilisation, the Australian Base Camp had all the facilities that one could expect—internet, hot water shower, continental meals—but with a price tag, of course.

For our dinner in the evening, we opted for the traditional Thakali rice set. While we waited for our dinner, we peeked at the menu which boasted of a large variety of dishes. Do you want to enjoy a pizza while you watch the mountains or would you like to watch the sunrise on the horizon? No problem. Maybe you’re in the mood for some hot Japanese-style soup. Say no more. They had it all.

After our dinner, we headed for the campfire that was arranged in a nearby open field. We sang and danced the night away with strangers from all over. All of us around that fire were away from home, yet felt like we belonged. Like we were one big family.

We had carried tents and sleeping bags, with plans of spending the night in them, but the weather demanded otherwise. Although

very rare, there were chances of rain, since it was still cloudy. We were told that the temperature dropped very low during the night-time and that it was better to stay indoors. We agreed. The rooms weren’t fancy—two beds and a small table shelf. Just enough to accommodate two people and spend the night.

The next morning, at around 4 o’clock, we heard knocks on the door: “Wake up call for the sunrise and mountain watching,” the voice on the other end said.

Exactly as we were told the previous night, the temperature had indeed dropped pretty low. It was still dark outside and the sun was not out yet. We walked up to the terrace of our hotel and waited anxiously. “Had the weather cleared up or would we have to return disheartened?,” a question all of us had on our minds. Thankfully, a few minutes later, we started to see traces of the Himalayas from the dark. The night sky was lifting and the sun was rising on the horizon. In no time, the mountains showed themselves in full glory. Although not as close as one would have expected, the view was majestic nevertheless.

We had our breakfast and rested before we started our descent. The trek down was rather easy. As

much as I would have loved to meet the locals from the tea shop, none of my friends opted for the longer route. So we walked towards Kande instead, which was just an hour away. We boarded a bus from Kande and returned to Pokhara.

A wise man once said, “It’s about the journey, not the destination.” You must have heard and used the phrase multiple times, but I lived it during this trip. Sure, watching the mountains and the sunrise was an experience of a lifetime, but interacting with complete strangers and exchanging stories with them was even better. The campfire may have kept us warm while it lasted, but the warmth from the hospitality and the welcoming nature of the people remains indelible. The destination may be what kept us going, but the journey and the people we met along the way are what made it special.

Destination: Australian Base Camp
Getting there: Take a bus from Baglung bus park or Tudikhel to Phedi or Kande. Australian Base Camp is an hour-and-a-half to three-hour walk, depending on where you start the hike from.
Budget: Around Rs8,000 per person.



Academia Industry Alliance to promote media and entertainment sector

The two-day event ending today has brought together academicians, industrialists and officials from various ministries.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU

The Round Table Discussion on ‘Academia Industry Alliance’, organised by Purbanchal University School Of Science and Technology (PUSAT), SB Services and Media and Entertainment Skills Council (MESOC), has seen speakers from within and beyond borders to discuss the roles of the academic sector to uplift the media and entertainment industry.

With the goals of developing faculty programmes, placement-linked skill development programmes, and setting up business programmes on augmented reality, virtual reality, extended reality and gaming field, the guests from India and Nepal have gathered in Kathmandu to discuss expanding Nepal’s courses throughout the provinces.

Minister for Internal Affairs and Law of Bagmati Province Kadar Karki as the chief guest and Chairman Padmashri Ramesh Sippy of the Media & Entertainment Skills Council (MESOC) from India spoke alongside Pramila Devi Shakya Bajracharya, secretary at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Deans of the universities in Nepal and several animation companies



PHOTO COURTESY: SB SERVICES

Noted Indian film director Ramesh Sippy inaugurates the two-day event on Thursday.

from India also participated in the two-day programme starting Thursday.

Minister Karki, emphasising the idea of making Nepal a media and entertainment hub, extended his support to creating a viable roadmap through the conclusion of discussions.

“Since technology has been an integral part of our lives, the demand in this industry is more than we can supply,” said Bajracharya, secretary at the

Education Ministry who also attended the discussion. “Today, the market isn’t just limited to India or Nepal—the whole world is our market, making employment opportunities more widely available,” she added.

The second day of discussion will involve bankers, stakeholders from Nepal Film Development Board and businesses catering to the media and entertainment sector.

Nepathya to kick off ‘Music for Humanity’ tour on December 2

The band will travel across the country with their entourage, covering twelve cities in total.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU

Nepathya has announced their musical tour—Music for Humanity—from today to 31. The band will travel across the country with their entourage and cover cities like Biratnagar, Birgunj, Hetauda, Narayanghat, Nepalgunj, Dhangadhi, Surkhet, Butwal, Pokhara, and Kathmandu.

The band’s latest tour carries a social message of ‘Music for Humanity’ and aims to support Manavsewa Ashram, a social organisation which provides shelter to the homeless. Known for their signature folk-rock music, Nepathya has conducted similar social campaigns like ‘Sundar Shanta Nepal’ and ‘Shanti Ko Lagi Sikchya’ in the past. The band’s initiatives work towards bringing communities together through their music and contribute to the benefit of society at large.

The Music for Humanity tour is kicking off on the heels of the federal and provincial polls and Amrit Gurung, Nepathya’s lead singer, says the timing of the tour was a conscious choice. “It’s time for our entire country to come together again through the power of music,” says Gurung. “The political party flags have fluttered in the skies,



now it’s time for Nepali flag to do the same. We hope our music will bring people together.” Tickets for the concert are available online. The ticket in nine cities is priced at Rs1,000 while in Kathmandu it will cost Rs1,500.

What: Nepathya Live Concert
Where: Biratnagar, Birgunj, Hetauda, Narayanghat, Nepalgunj, Dhangadhi, Surkhet, Butwal, Pokhara, and Kathmandu.
When: December 2-31
Contact: 9855076005