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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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27.8° C -5.3° C
Janakpur Jumla

TODAY

NATIONAL

A writ petition has been filed at the Supreme Court against Rabi Lamichhane, the president of Rastriya Swatantra Party, calling for annulment of his Parliament membership arguing he is not a Nepali citizen. Pg 2

As the Election Commission prepares to submit poll results to President Bidya Bhandari on Thursday, there is a curiosity whether she will appoint prime minister or summon Parliament first. Pg 3

OPINION



Language nationalism for the sake of it is nothing more than language chauvinism, so the better off we are, writes Deepak Thapa. Pg 4

MONEY

Mundhum Trail, a newly established 88-km trekking trail in Nepal's eastern hills, is drawing a large number of hikers post-Covid. It traverses Khotang, Solukhumbu, Bhojpur and Sankhuwasabha districts. Pg 5

SPORTS

India's Cheteshwar Pujara and Shreyas Iyer combined in a 149-run stand for the fifth wicket to help the tourists overcome a top order wobble and reach 278-6 against Bangladesh on the opening day of the first Test. Pg 6



China military says India troops 'illegally' crossed border

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING, DEC 14

China's military said on Tuesday that Indian troops had "illegally" crossed a disputed border in the Himalayas and "obstructed" Chinese border patrol troops, triggering a fresh stand-off last week.

The December 9 incident is thought to be the most serious on the Asian giants' disputed frontier since 2020, when 20 Indian troops and four Chinese soldiers died in brawling.

Chinese troops "were obstructed by the Indian army who illegally crossed the Line (of Actual Control)," said a People's Liberation Army (PLA) Western Theatre Command spokesman.

"Our response measures were professional, standard and forceful, and stabilised the situation on the ground. At present, China and India have disengaged."

An Indian source previously told AFP the incident, which followed recent joint US-India military exercises near the border, led to "minor injuries to [a] few personnel from both sides".

Chinese soldiers came close to an area near the Line of Actual Control—the de facto border—where it had been agreed that neither side would patrol, Indian sources said.

The PLA spokesman added: "We ask the Indian side to strictly control and restrain front-line troops, and work with China to maintain peace and tranquility on the border."

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said earlier Tuesday that the border situation was "stable overall."

Indian media reports quoted unnamed sources as saying that the incident involved around 300 members of the PLA, and that China suffered a greater number of injuries.



A billboard installed by Amnesty International at the entrance to Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport protesting the exploitation of migrant workers in Qatar, pictured Wednesday. The message reads: "Meet the most industrious lot in Qatar. How nice it would be if they were compensated for their hard work." An investigation by the British daily The Guardian showed 1,641 Nepalis were among over 6,500 foreign migrant workers who died in Qatar in the past decade.

Nepal rights groups ask FIFA chief to ensure compensation for Nepali workers

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

Amid the reluctance of the Qatar government to provide adequate compensation to the Nepali workers involved in the construction of the infrastructure for the ongoing football World Cup, around three dozen human rights organisations on Wednesday wrote to Gianni Infantino, the president of the global footballing body FIFA, the

World Cup organiser, to take initiative to ensure compensation for the workers.

The human rights organisations in their letters have said it would be unforgivable if Infantino continued to ignore the plight of the Nepali workers and to deny their right to compensation. "We call on you to focus on the workers and use all the financial and political resources at your disposal to set up a programme to compensate

workers and their families who lost so much so that others—including FIFA—may win," reads the letter.

The rights groups have displayed their demands on billboards across Kathmandu, including at the Tribhuvan International Airport, which regularly receives returnee Nepali migrant workers—both alive and dead—from abroad including Qatar.

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Roads allow Karnali's farm products to reach overseas

The region's crops have also found fans in Kathmandu where cereals from distant districts have become trendy.



Karnali produces 390,000 tonnes of food grain annually and has a deficit of 16,000 tonnes.

DB BUDHA IN JUMLA & KRISHNA PRASAD GAUTAM IN SURKHET
DEC 14

Bhim Bahadur Budha of Chakheli Rural Municipality, Humla grew 1.3 tonnes of foxtail millet (kaguno) on his farm this year, all of which was snapped up by traders and shipped to Kathmandu.

Foxtail millet from Nepal's far west has found new fans as a health food as it is rich in calcium, especially in the country's capital where cereals grown in distant districts have lately become trendy.

Sur Bahadur Shahi, a farmer in the adjoining district of Jumla, sold three tonnes of marsi paddy this year, which was also dispatched to Kathmandu.

Umesh Budha, another farmer in Jumla, is currently busy taking care of his bean, foxtail millet and proso millet plants. Budha exports most of his harvest to overseas markets, and does not sell it in the local market.

Jumla in north-western Nepal, once known as the back of beyond, has started creating a different identity.

Mention of Karnali, located in the far west and the largest province in Nepal, evokes images of annual food shortages and food drops. The region has long been deemed a food-insecure region, leading the government to dispatch hundreds of tonnes of subsidised rice every year.

This perception is gradually changing. Karnali is producing

high-value cash crops, thanks to the construction of new road networks.

Jumla was connected to the national highway system in April 2007, spreading hope of development in the far west. It's becoming real and visible now.

Visitors to Karnali used to say that apples could be bought for less than Re1 each as there were no roads to get them out to market. Fast forward to the present, and Budha's products are now exported to Australia and Canada. "That's the benefit roads have brought to Karnali," said Budha of Tila Rural Municipality.

These days, traders go to the apple orchards and buy the fruits on the trees before they can be picked. Apple growers say there are a few international buyers nowadays.

More than a dozen shops in the district sell local produce. They collect the crops from the farmers and send them to markets in various cities across the country.

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Early marriage traps disadvantaged girls in poverty cycle

A multisectoral approach is needed to understand and eradicate this multifaceted social evil, say experts.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

Binita, who is 18, is a single mother to a three-year-old boy. She was married at the age of 14 and gave birth a year later. Two years later, she separated from her husband.

"My son and I have been living with my mother after my husband left us," said Binita, who the Post is identifying with a pseudonym for privacy reasons.

After she got married when she was in the sixth grade, she gave up her studies. Neither her parents nor her in-laws encouraged her to continue school. In fact, her in-laws asked the couple to find their own accommodation as the couple did not have any income and were considered a burden to the household.

Binita's story is playing out across the length and breadth of Nepal, which has one of the highest prevalence of child marriage and early pregnancy in Asia. Reports suggest that the practice of child marriage is more widespread in remote villages, but it is also very much present in slums and outskirts of big cities including the capital Kathmandu.

A recent report, 'Nepal Demographic and Health Survey-2022', carried out by the Ministry of Health and Population, shows that overall, 14 percent of women aged 15-19 have been pregnant, including 10 percent who have had a live birth while two percent experienced a pregnancy loss.

According to the report, teenage

pregnancy is the highest in Karnali Province (at 21 percent), followed by Madhesh Province (20 percent). Of the total pregnancies in Bagmati Province, eight percent are teenage pregnancies, the report shows.

Binita's family, originally from Ramechhap district, has for years been residing in Tarakeshwar Municipality of Kathmandu. Binita and her ex-husband had eloped and married at a local temple in the municipality to avoid legal hassles.

According to Nepal's Civil Code, the minimum age for marriage for both women and men is 20. As per Article 173 of the Criminal Code, a person found guilty of either committing or arranging a child marriage is subject to a jail term of up to three years and a fine of Rs30,000.

Binita and her ex-husband did not legalise their marriage fearing penalisation. As in most cases of child marriage, this allowed Binita's husband to shrug off all responsibilities to his wife and child and made it easier for him to abandon them.

Binita's husband started abusing drugs and then assaulting her, she said. "Instead of providing for our son, he started beating me up, questioning my intentions with other men," she added. "There was no option for me but to let him go."

Binita said she has now realised that the decision to get married early and discontinue education has ruined her life and affected the future of her child.

>> Continued on page 2

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NATIONAL

Petition claims Lamichhane is not a Nepali citizen

The journalist-turned-politician is accused of not ceding his Nepali citizenship even after taking US citizenship.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

A writ petition has been filed against Rabi Lamichhane, the president of the Rastriya Swatantra Party, at the Supreme Court demanding annulment of his membership of the House of Representatives. The petitioner has argued that Lamichhane is not a Nepali citizen.

Advocate Yuvaraj Poudel, the petitioner, also demanded that Lamichhane should be removed from the post of party chief. The petitioner has said as only Nepali citizens have the constitutional right to vote in elections, become candidates and open a political party in the country, Lamichhane's positions as the member of the lower house and party president are illegal. "The hearing on the petition will start in the Constitutional Bench from December 21," Bimal Poudel, spokesperson at the Supreme Court, told the Post.

Lamichhane has been accused of not relinquishing his Nepali citizenship even after acquiring citizenship of another country (in this case, the United States) and producing the copy of his old citizenship to file his candidacy in Chitwan-2 in the election last month.

As per Section 10 of the Citizenship Act, any person who acquires the citizenship of a foreign country automatically loses Nepali citizenship. The Act, however, has a provision under which the person can reclaim the Nepali citizenship after renouncing foreign citizenship.

Section 11 of the Citizenship Act says if any Nepali citizen who has acquired foreign citizenship returns to reside in Nepal and submits the evidence of renunciation of foreign citizenship to the designated authority, his/her Nepali citizenship shall be provided again.

Clause 11 of the regulation to the Act says the person who has renounced the foreign citizenship should apply to the Ministry of Home Affairs or the concerned District Administration Office to reclaim his/her Nepali citizenship. The concerned authority, after studying the application, would issue the Nepali citizenship containing the same details mentioned in the previous document. However, the copy of the citizenship Lamichhane produced to file his candidacy in the November 20 election was issued in 1993. That means it is the same citizenship that he had acquired before moving to the United States of America.

Lamichhane has been claiming that he had renounced his American citizenship and its proof was submitted to the Immigration Department to revive his older citizenship. He, however, has failed to make it clear whether or not he has reacquired the new



Rabi Lamichhane

certificate of Nepali citizenship.

A complaint was lodged against him in the Election Commission as well on the same ground. However, the poll body did not take any action, arguing he was already elected. Lamichhane got elected to Parliament from Chitwan-2 defeating former lawmaker Krishna Bhakta Pokharel of the CPN-UML and Umesh Shrestha of Nepali Congress by a huge margin.

Lamichhane, a Television journalist-turned politician, formed Rastriya Swatantra Party in June and contested in the federal election. The newly-formed outfit won 20 seats to emerge as the fourth largest party in the House of Representatives.

Doctor accused of domestic violence and demanding dowry arrested

Neha Chaudhary has accused Pankaj Chaudhary, her husband of nine months, of physical and mental abuse for not bringing enough dowry.

SUNITA BARAL
MAHOTTARI, DEC 14

Police on Wednesday arrested Pankaj Chaudhary, a permanent resident of Ramgopalpur Municipality-5 in Mahottari district, on charges of domestic violence and dowry.

Superintendent of Police Krishna Pangi said Pankaj, who is in his mid-thirties, was detained for investigation after his wife Neha Chaudhary lodged a complaint against him. She accused Pankaj of beating her repeatedly and forcing her maternal family to cough up a huge amount of money as dowry. She claimed that her husband tortured her accusing her of not bringing enough dowry.

Neha filed a complaint against Pankaj, who is a medical doctor, at the Mahottari District Court a week ago. The court on Monday ordered Pankaj's family not to incur any physical, men-

tal, or psychological torture on Neha and protect her at home. The court said it issued the order as Neha's protection was a must for investigation into the case.

The court on Wednesday remanded Pankaj to custody for investigation.

Pankaj and Neha married nine months ago after being in a relationship for about two years. A month ago, Neha took to social media to claim that she had been a victim of domestic violence. She posted some photos of her injuries online.

Neha's family has claimed that Pankaj and his family repeatedly tortured her for not bringing enough dowries. Suresh Chaudhary, Neha's father, said they spent around Rs15 million on the wedding and dowry.

Pankaj, an MBBS doctor, worked at Grande International Hospital and Norvic International Hospital in Kathmandu while Neha had been

studying in the national capital. Pankaj's family allegedly forced Neha to quit her studies after engagement.

Neha claimed that Pankaj and his family started torturing her following her plans to stay with her husband in Kathmandu and continue her studies. "They started misbehaving with me saying that my family did not provide them with a house in Kathmandu," Neha said. "They gave me tremendous mental pressure to ask my parents to buy a house for them in Kathmandu."

Neha's maternal family claimed Pankaj and his family had severely thrashed her four times since their marriage. Neha was staying with her maternal family after Pankaj and his mother, Godawari Devi, severely beat her on October 7. Following Monday's court order, Neha returned to Pankaj's house but her husband and in-laws, according to neighbours, did not let her enter the house.

Several members of a family died in Tuesday bus accident

At least 17 people died and several others were injured in the bus accident at Bethanchok Rural Municipality in Kavre.

JYOTI SHRESTHA
KAVRE, DEC 14

Rajan Tamang, who is currently receiving treatment at Dhulikhel Hospital, lost eight members of his family in Tuesday's bus accident in Kavre that has left at least 17 dead and several injured.

Rajan had travelled to his sister's house in Chyalti of Bethanchok Rural Municipality for his 13-year-old nephew's 'chhewar' (rite-of-passage) with his father, grandmother, brother and sister-in-law, uncle, aunt, son and daughter along with other relatives on the bus.

The family reached Chyalti in the morning and attended the ceremony. As part of the custom, Rajan had to bring his nephew to his house in Banepa after the ceremony and take him back to his house the next day. But the family couldn't complete that journey.

A fatal accident occurred at around 6pm at Sallaphed of Chhal Ganeshtan in the rural municipality. Around 39 people from Banepa Municipality had gone to attend the ceremony. The bus was on its way back to the municipality when it overturned.

The nephew is currently receiving treatment at International Friendship Children's Hospital in Kathmandu.

Dikaman Lama, a local resident, said that he heard a terrifyingly loud noise when the accident occurred. "We had never witnessed anything as terrible as this accident," he said. "Some of us rushed to the accident site and helped with the rescue of the passengers."

According to witnesses, the bus was speeding when it overturned.

Shiv Kumar Thapa, chair of Banepa Municipality-11, said that since most of Rajan's family perished in the accident, there is no one left to claim the



Bodies of Tuesday's bus accident victims being taken for cremation on ambulances and pickup trucks on Wednesday.

bodies of the deceased. "Rajan is in no condition to leave the hospital immediately. The hospital has decided to handover the bodies to Rajan's siblings based abroad," said Thapa. "They have been informed and we expect them to return soon."

All 17 deceased have been identified and nine bodies have been handed over to the families, said Superintendent of Police Chakra Raj

Joshi, chief of the District Police Office, Kavrepalanchok.

Among the 22 injured, 17 have been admitted to Scheer Memorial Hospital and Dhulikhel Hospital in the district and five are receiving care in different hospitals in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur.

Meanwhile, the families of the victims and the injured in the bus accident protested on Wednesday disrupt-

ing public vehicle services that operate from Panauti. The agitated family members obstructed traffic in Thado Bato of Panauti district demanding appropriate compensation to the family of the bereaved.

Discussions are being held between relatives of the victims and the transport operators, according to Sub-Inspector Rupesh Shrestha of Panauti Police.

NOC हरायो

मिति २०७९/०८/२० गते बनेपाबाट धुलिखेलसम्म बसमा जाँदा मेरो निम्न व्यहोरा भएको ब्याग र त्यसभित्र रहेको स्वकृति पत्र (NOC) हराएको हुँदा पाउनु हुने महानुभावले नजिकको प्रहरी कार्यालय वा फोन नं. ९८६९२८५४७८ मा खबर गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु।

नाम: सीमात बुढाथोकी

Application ID.: 799705177

NOC Number: 795613

ठेगाना: नैरोपाटी बनेपा-१३, काठे

प्रदेश सरकार

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यस कार्यालयबाट दोस्रो पटक मिति २०७९/०८/०७ को "प्रभाव" राष्ट्रिय दैनिक पत्रिका तथा सार्वजनिक खरिद अनुगमन कार्यालयको विद्युतीय खरिद प्रणाली www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp मा प्रकाशित सिमधारा खोला मोटरेबल पुल निर्माण, गौमुल, बाजुरा (ठेक्का नं. IDO/ACHHAM/NCB/W/Bri/02/2079/080) को निर्माण गर्न बोलपत्र आह्वान सम्बन्धी सूचना अनुसार रीतपूर्वक दर्ता हुन आएका बोलपत्रहरूको प्राविधिक प्रस्तावको विस्तृत मूल्याङ्कन हुँदा तपसिल बमोजिमका बोलपत्रदाताहरूको प्राविधिक प्रस्ताव यस कार्यालयबाट माग भएको मूल्याङ्कन तथा योग्यताका सबै आधारहरू पूरा भएको हुँदा सार्वजनिक खरिद नियमावली, २०६४ (नवौं संशोधन २०७६ सहित) को नियम ३१(ड) को उपनियम ४ बमोजिम सारभूत रूपमा प्रभावग्राही भएको हुँदा तपसिल अनुसारको मिति, समय र स्थानमा आर्थिक प्रस्ताव खोल्ने भएकोले सार्वजनिक खरिद नियमावली, २०६४ (नवौं संशोधन २०७६ सहित) को नियम ३१(ड) को उपनियम ५ बमोजिम सम्बन्धित सबैको जानकारीको लागि यो सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ।

सि.नं.	योजनाको नाम र ठेक्का नं.	सफल बोलपत्रदाताको नाम र ठेगाना	आर्थिक प्रस्ताव खोल्ने मिति, समय र स्थान
१	Construction of Simdhara Khola Motorable Bridge, Gaumul, Bajura. (Contract Identification No. M IDO/ACHHAM/ NCB/W/Bri/02/2079/080)	Nandegada-S.M.P. Joint Venture, Dhangadhi, Kailali, Nepal.	२०७९/०९/०६, दिउँसो १.०० बजे, पूर्वाधार विकास कार्यालय, साँफेबगर, अछाम

सिनियर डिभिजनल इन्जिनियर
पूर्वाधार विकास कार्यालय, अछाम

Rights groups urge FIFA to ensure reparations for Nepali workers

>> Continued from page 1

They wrote to the FIFA chief as the month-long mega footballing event wraps up on Sunday with the final match between Argentina and the winner of the semi-final between France and Morocco. They have reminded Infantino that hundreds of thousands of Nepalis have travelled to Qatar since 2010, when FIFA selected the Gulf emirate to host the 2022 World Cup, to build stadiums, roads and metro lines that have made the mega sporting event possible. For some, this has provided the means to support families back home and for many others, it has led to debt, poverty and abuse, said the human rights watchdogs.

"Our concerns for the rights of Nepalis in Qatar did not start when FIFA awarded the World Cup and will not end when the tournament is over. The stories of stolen wages and broken dreams are part of our everyday life. We are far too familiar with images of coffins arriving at Tribhuvan airport," reads the letter by Amnesty International Nepal, Accountability Watch Group and National Network for Safe Migration, among others.

While welcoming the commitment of Qatar for labour reforms, the letter highlights that the workers remain at the mercy of ruinous recruitment fees and still lack guarantees of decent wages, safe working conditions and dignity. Illegal fees are still handed over, days off are refused, bodies still return without explanation, according to the letter.

"The World Cup has eventually brought some change. But it will be 'too little, too late' for thousands of our compatriots who returned home after having lost so much to

Early marriage, teenage pregnancy stealing girls' prospects

>> Continued from page 1

The decision to quit school might be one of the contributing factors to early pregnancy in young girls, suggests the Health Ministry survey. The report states that 33 percent of girls aged between 15-19 years with no formal education are more likely to start childbearing earlier than those with at least some secondary education which stands at eight percent.

The lack of education and job opportunities coupled with the burden of raising a family prevents young couples from breaking the cycle of poverty. When Binita and her husband left her in-laws' house, they took shelter with Binita's mother. Her mother rented a room for the couple and their child, but they soon had to vacate the room after they could not pay rent. They later moved back in with her mother.

Binita's mother leads a hard life herself, working as domestic help in several homes for a living.

"My father is a drunkard, so the responsibility of running the household rests on my mother who works hard every day," Binita told the Post recently. "The father of my child turned into a drug addict. I often feel helpless thinking about the future of my son."

Child marriage is one of the biggest social problems in Nepal, fuelled further by poverty, lack of education and access to good health services.

"Chances of one entering into a vicious cycle of poverty are higher if one gets married early and starts bearing children early," said Dr Kiran Regmi, former Health Secretary.

"Entire families and a generation have to face consequences of child marriage."

In Binita's case, poverty and lack of education played a major role in the choice she made. Binita's mother did not object to her 14-year-old daughter getting married as she was having a tough time feeding the family of five. The neighbours and society at large did not see the marriage as problematic since it was a common-enough occurrence.

"Given how common child marriage is in our society despite its illegal status, many do not see any fault in it," said Regmi.

Last year, Binita's younger sister eloped with her boyfriend. She was only 13 years old. She has not stayed in touch with her family since, says Binita.

Experts say a multisectoral approach is needed to understand and eradicate this multifaceted social evil.

Dr Naresh Pratap KC, executive director at the Family Planning Association, said these problems—early marriage, teenage pregnancy, school drop out, violence against women, malnutrition, lack of women empowerment, and sexual diseases—will not be addressed unless there is increased investment in education and awareness programmes.

"Our education system also must play a part in sensitising young children about the evils of early marriage," KC said. "Alongside regular curriculum, the schools also must focus on imparting sex education to the impressionable minds."

KC calls for coordination, cooperation and commitment among concerned agencies to eradicate child marriage and early pregnancy that has been plaguing Nepal—where child marriage was abolished in 1963—for decades now.

make your tournament possible. It would be unforgivable for you to continue to ignore their plight, and to deny their right to compensation," reads the letter. "The pain suffered over the last decade cannot be reduced to numbers or statistics—they are workers who have lost their life savings, children who have lost their education, families who have lost their sons, fathers, brothers and husbands. Their losses are real and cannot be dismissed."

Following widespread pressure, Qatar recently set up a fund to compensate workers who can prove in court they have had wages stolen. However, the road to compensation is not easy. The fund does not compensate families of loved ones whose deaths were never recognised as being linked to their work. Unless this changes, thousands of people who contributed to Qatar's hosting of the World Cup will continue to be denied what should rightfully be theirs, according to the human rights watchdogs.

Though Qatar is yet to make public the exact number of workers who lost their lives working on World Cup-related projects since it won the bid to host the World Cup in 2010, Hassan al-Thawadi, the secretary general of the Supreme Committee for delivery and legacy, which is responsible for the delivery of the World Cup, recently said in an interview that their numbers were between 400 and 500. "The letter is our attempt to build pressure on the top football governing body to show due concerns towards the plight of the migrant workers who have contributed so much to make the World Cup happen," Nirajan Thapaliya, director at Amnesty International, Nepal, told the Post.

■ BRIEFING

National Human Rights Commission concerned over ordinance

KATHMANDU: The National Human Rights Commission has said the government's move to issue an ordinance to clear legal hurdles to grant amnesties to convicts of criminal offences would affect the rule of law, democracy and fair justice while also promoting impunity. This will also affect in creating a human rights culture, the commission said. Issuing a statement on Wednesday, the constitutional watchdog urged the government to refrain under any pretext from preparing any law that grants amnesty to those who have been convicted by the court.

Locals demand justice for murdered woman

SIRAHA: Locals on Wednesday obstructed traffic in the Malhaniya section of the East-west highway for two hours, demanding the arrest and prosecution of the individual involved in the murder of a 26-year-old woman of Mirchaiya Municipality-2. According to police, the woman was found murdered in the Arhariya Community Forest on Tuesday afternoon. Following the incident, the locals pressured the police to file complaints against the accused but the police refused to do so without investigation. "One of the accused has been arrested based on the witness' statement recorded by the police and an investigation is underway," said Deputy Superintendent Hari Woli of the Mirchaiya Area Police Office.

Local authorities demolishing illegal structures

NEPALGUNJ: Narainapur Rural Municipality has started demolishing illegal structures constructed on public land from Wednesday. According to the municipal office, a dozen houses and sheds were demolished in wards 1 and 4 of the rural municipality. The houses built by encroaching public land have been demolished. "This step was taken after encroachers did not respond to the notices of the municipal office," said Istiyak Ahmad Shah, chairman of the Narainapur Rural Municipality. "No one should build physical structures exploiting public property."

Timber smuggling rife during elections

RAUTAHAT: Taking advantage of security lapses during the November 20 elections, timber smugglers cut down green trees of Sal species in Brindaban Collaborative Forest, Rautahat. The forest employees seized around 200 cubic feet of Sal timber from the forest area. "It is found that the smugglers felled down trees and smuggled the timber as forest officials and police personnel were deployed during the elections," said Sunil Karna, chief at the Division Forest Office in Rautahat. The office seized around 2,000 cubic feet of smuggled timber from various forests in the district over the past five months.

Rural municipality without accountant for 10 months

MUGU: Due to the absence of an accountant in the Soru Rural Municipality, all the financial and economic paperwork has been left in a limbo for nearly ten months now. According to officials, the rural municipality did not have an accountant since mid-February. Countless bills, paychecks and salaries of employees remain uncleared ever since the previous accountant Jeth Bahadur Budha resigned. "After the resignation of the previous accountant, the Ministry of general Administration did not send any substitute employee and now other employees are also planning to resign after not getting their salary for months," said Dharma Bahadur Shahi.



Women dance during a wedding ceremony at Kirtipur in Kathmandu on Wednesday.

POST PHOTO: SANJOG MANANDHAR

Nepal resumes buying power from India amid drop in domestic production

Nepali hydropower plants are currently producing just around 1,000MW, lower than the peak domestic demand of over 1,500MW.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

As domestic power production slumped along with the arrival of winter, the Nepal Electricity Authority has resumed buying power from India.

Although the country produces surplus energy during the wet season and exports to its southern neighbour, it has to import electricity in the dry season when demand rises while production, almost all of which is based on run-of-the-river hydropower plants, slumps. The dry season runs from December to April while the wet season lasts from May to November.

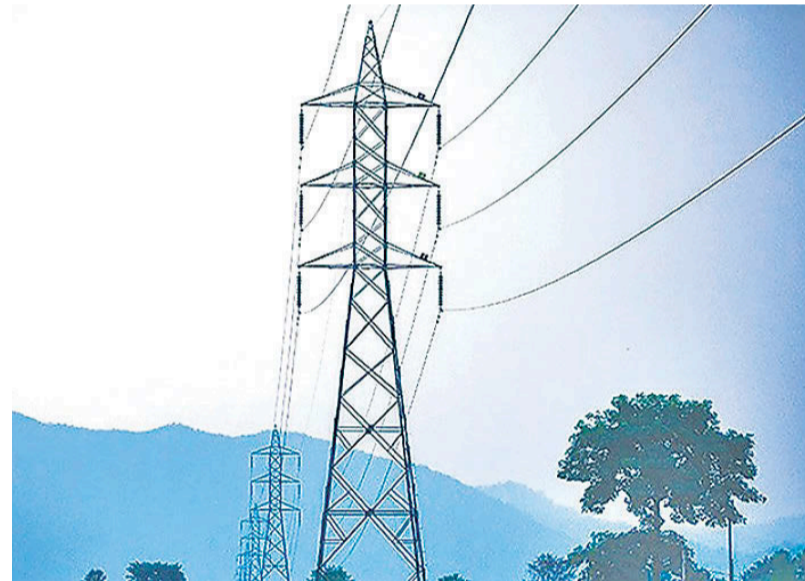
"We restarted importing power from India starting late last week," said Suresh Bhattarai, spokesperson of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA). "Domestic power plants are producing just around 1000MW, lower than the peak domestic demands."

Lately domestic demand for power has been increasing along with cooling temperature as people increasingly use heating systems. On Wednesday afternoon, domestic power demands was 1,548MW, a sharp rise from around 1100-1300MW in October, according to the state-owned power utility body.

The run-of-the-river type hydropower projects usually produce less than 40 percent of their installed capacity during the dry season. Though the total installed capacity of power plants including solar is over 2200MW, their production is currently less than half their capacity which is expected to drop further in the days to come.

Bhattarai believes the country will have to continue buying electricity from India in winter for the next few years as construction of power projects and transmission lines to evacuate the power continue to see delays.

Since the country currently has just one reservoir-based power project, Kulekhani, it has been difficult to boost supply during winter, officials said.



POST FILE PHOTO

The state-owned power utility has been exporting electricity since early June.

According to the NEA, on Wednesday, it purchased 1,969 megawatt hours of electricity from India and sold 661 megawatt hours to the southern neighbour. "Currently, we are selling power when we get higher prices and buying when it's cheaper," said Bhattarai. "We may continue exporting power till the third week of December."

The state-owned power utility body has been exporting power since early June and continues to do so until now. But the export amount has decreased since November amid reduced output.

The NEA has been buying and selling power from and to the day-ahead market of the Indian Energy Exchange Limited, a trading platform, after the southern neighbour in April 2021 opened its market to Nepal only for selling electricity to Nepal. The prices at the market keep changing every hour.

The NEA has sought to buy electric-

ity from the open market of India for six months besides continuing to buy from the day-ahead market under which prices for the next day are determined the previous day and the electricity is traded on a daily basis at different rates.

Issuing a tender notice on September 9, the NEA said it would buy up to 365 megawatts from Indian traders from December 1 to May 31. But the NEA has not yet picked the supplier after India sellers quoted higher-than-expected prices for their electricity.

"The prices quoted by them range from INR 7 (Rs11.2) to INR 8.5 (Rs13.6) per unit," NEA Managing Director Kul Man Ghising told the Post last month. Four Indian companies participated in the bid, according to him.

The NEA would have considered buying from them if the price range was around INR5 per unit, according to Ghising.

Which first: PM appointment or House session?

President's Office says there has been no consultations about which of the two routes to take.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, DEC 14

As the Election Commission is all set to submit the final results of the federal and provincial elections to President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Thursday, a new curiosity is taking hold.

Will the President call for government formation first as she did in the case of KP Oli, the chairman of the CPN-UML, in February 2018, or will she summon the Parliament session to swear in the new lawmakers?

In 2018, then Prime Minister Oli, without taking the oath as a member of Parliament, staked claim over new government after the CPN (Maoist Centre) decided to support Oli. With the support of the Maoist Centre, Oli was appointed prime minister as per Article 76 (2) of the constitution.

The current ruling coalition wants to undo the precedent, while the UML is sticking to it.

"We are in favour of correcting the previous mistake this time and want to call the House session first," said Bishwa Prakash Sharma, general secretary of the Nepali Congress. "As soon as that happens, the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected members of the parliament will start."

"After completing oath-taking, then we will jump to electing the party parliamentary leader within four days as per our party charter," said Sharma. After that, the process of electing speaker and deputy speaker will also begin. The elections of the President and Vice-President will take place a month prior to the expiry of their respective terms.

As no party commands a majority in the House, a government cannot be formed under the Article 76 (1) of the constitution. So the President has to call to form a government as per the Article 76 (2), which says that in cases where no party has a clear majority in the House of Representatives under clause (1), the President shall appoint as the prime minister a member of the House of Representatives who can command majority with the support of two or more parties represented in the House of Representatives. And the prime minister appointed under clause (2) shall obtain a vote of confidence from the House of Representatives no later than 30 days after the date of such appointment.

The president, in consultation with the prime minister, calls for the House session and the new House will devise ways to elect the President, Vice-president, Speaker and Deputy speaker.

"This time, we want to correct the wrong precedent set by Oli by calling the House session first," one minister said. "Oli took the oath of prime minister without the members of parliament taking their own oath, which was kind of awkward."

"But we suspect the President may call for government formation or appoint the prime minister exactly the way she did last time," the minister said.

But officials at the President's Office said there had been no consultations about which of the two routes to take.

"It can happen either way," said an official at the President's Office. "It all depends on when the prime minister recommends the President to summon the House session or when a member of the House brings the signature of the majority lawmakers."

As no party commands a majority, as per Article 76 (2) of the constitution, a member of parliament with 138 signatures of lawmakers will be appointed prime minister, the official added.

"The international practice is for the head of the state to give a new government. It is the President's responsibility to give birth to a new government by appointing the prime



President Bidya Devi Bhandari

In 2018, KP Sharma Oli was appointed prime minister before he took oath as lawmaker.

minister," the official said. "Article 76 (2) of the constitution does not specifically say a member of parliament needs to be the parliamentary party leader to become prime minister. Once election results are submitted to the President, she will consult leaders either individually or jointly before taking a decision. If someone brings the signature of 138 members of parliament, then the President will immediately appoint the new prime minister," the official added.

If the President summons the House session, government formation will take at least a month. The ruling coalition will stake its claim to the new government, but there is no agreement on who will lead it. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN (Maoist Center) chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal are the frontrunners from the ruling alliance, but there are several other aspirants in the Nepali Congress. Dahal on Wednesday again claimed that he will lead the country soon. Speaking at a function in Kaski, Dahal said he does not have enough time to serve the country and so he will soon look to do it.

General Secretary Gagan Thapa, senior leaders Ram Chandra Poudel, Shekhar Koirala, Prakashman Singh and Shashank Koirala have already expressed their interest in the prime minister's office and vowed to contest the party's parliamentary leader position against Deuba.

Officials at the Parliament Secretariat also said that this time the old precedent should be corrected. "First, we should administer oath to members of parliament," said Rojnath Pandey, spokesman for the Parliament Secretariat. "The process of the House session should begin when the Election Commission submits the election results to the President."

"It is against the spirit of parliamentary democracy to appoint a prime minister without swearing in the members of parliament. We must correct the wrong precedent we have set," said Pandey.

But the UML is still in favour of appointing a prime minister first. "We already have precedents of forming the government and appointing the prime minister first," Subas Chandra Nembang, UML's vice-chairman. "The President need not wait for the start of the House session."

"This government is tampering with the constitution, the established system and the precedent. The untimely ordinance to pardon politicians convicted of heinous crimes including killings is an example of the extent this government can go to," said Nembang.

Direction: East Faced
Size: 11 aana land area




Location: Budhanilkantha

3B3HK Semi Furnished House
Price: 7,15,00,000

1 Living Room, 2 Open Hall, 2 Master Bedroom, 1 Bedroom, Kitchen with Dining Area, 1 Store Room

Direction: South West
Size: 0-11-0-1



Location: Matatirtha

4B2HK Semi Furnished Banglow
Price: 6,20,00,000


Direction: South Faced
Size: 8 aana land area



Location: Budhanilkantha

5B2HK Semi Furnished House
Price: 6,80,00,000


Direction: North Faced
Size: 3 aana to 6 aana
Type: Residential



Location: Taukhel, Lalitpur

Land for Sale
Price: 23,00,000 per aana

Size: 4 to 5 aana
Direction: Varies on land
Type: Residential



Location: Bageshwori, Bhaktapur

Plot for Sale
Price: 18,00,000 per aana

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OPINION



OUR VIEW

Rule by decree

The amendment of the Criminal Code via an ordinance could set a dangerous precedent.

There are no two ways about it: The latest government attempt to amend the National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act-2017 via an ordinance is a subversion of democracy. The government on Monday forwarded the ordinance to President Bidya Devi Bhandari's office amid criticism from the media, the civil society and influential second-rung leaders of the ruling coalition. If the President authenticates the ordinance, it will pave the way for pardoning of politicians convicted of heinous crimes, including murder.

In all likelihood, the same coalition partners will band together to form the next government. If so, why are they in such a rush, when they can easily wait for a few more weeks until they come back with a fresh mandate? This betrays the criminality in their minds, for they seem ready to cross all constitutional bounds to come to power. And they still believe people will continue to support them. But the electorate is increasingly wary of their diabolism and is looking for options, something that was also reflected by the spectacular rise of the Rashtriya Swatantra Party and the Janamat Party in the recent polls.

What they stood against just over a year ago when KP Sharma Oli introduced dubious ordinances, they are doing exactly the same. In the latest case, they are undermining the institutions established to uphold justice and security—the courts, the police, and the intelligence agencies. The ordinance imbroglio has also shown that the parties have no trust in the ability of the House to come to informed decisions on matters of national interest; in fact, there is no more appropriate venue than the national parliament for such debates. Irrespective of the merits of an issue at hand, an ordinance should only be used in national emergencies—and this brazen attempt to appease potential coalition partners by freeing jailed politicians does not qualify as one.

The government's attempt to get an ordinance authenticated during a transitional period is an attack on the ideas of justice and democracy. If the ordinance gets approved as it is, the power of interpreting the law shifts from the judiciary to political actors. That would be a dangerous turn of events for a fledgling democracy.

As the guardian of the constitution, the President has the responsibility to follow the charter's letter and spirit. Yes, in the past, she has gone beyond her call of duty and breached her constitutional bounds to favour a particular opinion or political ideology. Yet that does not mean all the decisions she makes are politically motivated or that she is incapable of telling the right from the wrong. The President has been given some residual powers precisely to prevent the kind of travesty of justice the current ordinance represents. At the fag-end of her term, the onus is now on the President to set the right precedent.

THEIR VIEW

Spurious drugs

Those responsible for manufacturing fake and sub-standard drugs need to be hauled up before the law.

The rampant sale of fake or substandard medicines in Pakistan is literally a matter of life and death. This fact was tragically established after the Punjab Institute of Cardiology scandal a decade ago, in which a large number of patients died after they were administered spurious drugs at the government-run facility. It was in the aftermath of this tragedy that DRAP—the national drug regulator—was established, ostensibly to keep an eye on the fake medicine racket.

Yet 10 years later, little seems to have changed, as a recent DRAP survey of drugs sold in Karachi has shown. As reported in this paper, the regulator found that several fake and spurious medicines were being sold under different brand names in the metropolis. Some of these "medicines" were found to be nothing more than chalk or starch. These disclosures come only weeks after Sindh's drug testing lab found that 18 samples of lifesaving drugs confiscated from Karachi and Hyderabad had no active pharmaceutical ingredient.

It is a travesty of immense proportions that unscrupulous elements play with patients' lives in such a brazen fashion, with the state apparently unmoved. Perhaps the government is waiting for another PIC-like tragedy to take action. For starters, those responsible for manufacturing fake and sub-standard drugs need to be hauled up before the law. It is not too difficult for DRAP, aided by law-enforcement officials and provincial health departments, to crack down on the producers of substandard drugs if the intention is there. Secondly, all pharmacies must be warned that if dubious drugs are found on their premises, action will be taken. The public also has a responsibility in this regard; too often, people ask salespersons at medical stores to recommend medicines instead of consulting doctors or qualified pharmacists. Consumers should only buy drugs from reputable medical stores, with the latter supervised by capable pharmacists.

While DRAP bears primary responsibility for keeping counterfeit medicines off the market, the authority needs the full support of the health administration as well as the law-enforcement agencies to accomplish this task. Moreover, the state must ensure that medicines available at public health facilities are satisfactory. While more well-off segments of society can afford private healthcare and imported drugs, the poor have no option but to turn to the state for healthcare, which is why quality drugs must be available at public hospitals.

—Dawn/ANN

Nepali language chauvinism

AS I LIKE

Language nationalism for the sake of it is nothing more than language chauvinism.

DEEPAK THAPA

There are many in the West who continue to foreswear anything produced by Nestlé, the multinational Swiss company. This is not due to any prejudice against the Swiss, but because of the food giant having actively promoted the use of powdered formula for infants to the detriment of breastfeeding, the source of nutrition commonly accepted to be the best for babies. While certainly not part of the boycott-Nestlé brigade, I have my own story about the company and baby formula.

It was some years ago that one of Nestlé's most recognisable brands, Lactogen, disappeared from the shelves of Kathmandu's stores. As parents of a little girl who was subsisting partly on milk supplements, we found ourselves at our wits' end. There were indeed other substitutes in the market, but who was going to trust those over the tried and tested Lactogen? Mad at the company for having hooked us to its product only to suddenly stop supplying them, I fired off an email to their complaints department at their HQ in Switzerland. Having vented my frustration, I thought that was it. Until a few months later, I got a call from someone who asked me ruefully why I had filed the complaint. He said that he represented the local dealer for Nestlé, and the reason Lactogen was no longer available was because of the World Health Organisation's guidelines coming into effect soon (or already had) that all user instructions have to be printed in the local language as well.

Good for them, I thought. Not many people would have noticed the switch from English+Hindi (as was naturally the case with something produced in India) to English+Nepali that happened some time later on Lactogen packets and many other such items. One can be quite sure though that it has made a world of difference to those who relied only on Nepali to get through life.

The number plate imbroglio

Now, compare that little anecdote about the Nepali language with the never-ending saga of the vehicle registration plates. Nearly a decade ago the government decided to do away with the hand-painted ones in favour of



POST FILE PHOTO

"embossed number plates". The rationale for such a move was clear, but as my fellow columnist Sujeev Shakya put it categorically earlier this week, in many such cases the driver is something else and the procurement process designed to favour one group or the other. Hence, the contract was awarded to a company that had been blacklisted by the World Bank for fraud. With such an antecedent, it was only to be expected that quality would be compromised, and sure enough, complaints have been aplenty.

Actually, shoddiness of construction has been the least of the problems. Installation of the number plates began in the capital region in 2017. The process plunged into controversy immediately for using the name of the defunct zone, Bagmati. It was then decided to use "State 3" instead since the body to provide a name to the provinces, the provincial assemblies, had yet to be elected. That was equally controversial since it would mean that once the provinces' names had been agreed on, the plates would have to undergo modifications at a cost to be borne by someone; who it was to be was not clarified.

The greater objection throughout came from a group of busybodies who were against the use of the Roman script instead of the official Devanagari. The stated argument was that not all Nepalis have the facility of reading the Latin alphabet, and hence when incidents take place on the road,

people would not be able to identify the vehicle concerned. Fair enough, although give the exponential rise in literacy and numeracy, there are few who would not be able to spell out their A, B, Cs and 1, 2, 3s if they can already read *ka, kha, ga* and *ek, dui, teen*. The main problem was that the pro-Devanagari activism was imbued with a heavy dose of a unnecessary nationalism that decried the use of a foreign language in an undertaking of the government's.

A case was filed at the Supreme Court, and a stay order initially granted before the case was finally dismissed. Enter then-prime minister KP Sharma Oli with his own nationalist credentials to preserve. At his express order, the distribution process was once again placed in abeyance before he was convinced otherwise that the technicalities involved in electronic tracking would not allow for the change to Devanagari. A new transport minister took up the issue, and it now appears that a final decision has been made, hopefully, once and for all, that the Roman script will stay.

Belittling Nepali

It was at the 2003 conference entitled "The Agenda of Transformation: Inclusion in Nepali Democracy" that linguist-historian Rhoderick Chalmers branded some empty packets of the ubiquitous "chow-chow" to read out what was printed on them. As he pointed

out, each had (and still does) the name of the brand prominently in both English and Nepali. But little else was in Nepali. Chalmers argued that there are two classes of citizens that the producers cater to: The first were those who could read English and hence were provided with all the information regarding ingredients and nutritional values, and the others were those who could only read Nepali and deserved knowing nothing more than what kind of noodles it is and how to prepare what is universally decried as junk food. The point he was making remains valid—inclusion has very many aspects to it, and while linguistic inclusion of those comfortable only with Nepali may seem out of place given the discourse ongoing over the past two decades, it is still true.

I doubt if the proponents of Devanagari-on-number-plates really care about such matters. Otherwise, they would be out in force picketing the chow-chow factories to ensure the use of Nepali with equal prominence on the packets. As they would the police offices, demanding that the name badges of the police personnel be in Nepali. For a government agency that is perhaps the most widespread of all and is the first line of contact with the state for many Nepalis, it beggars reason why cops should display their names in English. Such a group should be equally protesting against organisations that raise hoardings with public service messages in English all over the country. Such a list can go on.

Perhaps most insidious is the labelling of drugs. A 2017 study looked at how over-the-counter medicines had complied with the government directive that some of the crucial information be provided in Nepali as well. Of the 759 medicines from Nepali manufacturers, "[m]ost... (84.1 percent) mentioned only the necessary precautions in [the] Nepali language, but [the] majority of them were found without a batch number (84.1 percent), date of production (83 percent), date of expiry (84.1 percent) and price (76.1 percent) in [the] Nepali language". I have not heard of anyone decrying this egregious omission or taking drug companies to court for endangering the lives of people through potential misdosings or worse.

Language nationalism for the sake of it is nothing more than language chauvinism. The less there is of it, the better off we are.



Thapa writes on a range of topical social and political issues.

Care homes: New norm for Nepal?

Elderlies claiming to be satisfied in care homes should be seen as a survival strategy rather than a badge of honour.

POONAM THAPA

There are various types of care homes in Nepal that operate under the differing aegis of the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens/Social Welfare Council, the Company Act 2006 and local governments. Today, there has yet to be a validated directory of care homes. In 2021, the National Health Facility Survey by the Ministry of Health and Population included all health services and outlets except gerontology, geriatric care, nursing homes, assisted living/old age care homes or companies that provide health at home. A list of 24 public hospitals with geriatric guidelines where seniors can get free treatment is available, but there is no indication whether these hospitals are linked or are in partnership with existing care homes, even though medical and health care is a mainstay of many of these homes.

The Annual Report of Health Services 2020/21 has an over hundred-page write-up on family welfare without any mention of senior care. However, there is a separate chapter called geriatric and gender-based violence linked to One Stop Crisis Management Centres without any indication of utilisation by the elderly. Neither are care homes under the shared remit of the Department of Health Services; they would have been better off if they were. Furthermore, there needs to be an updated coordinating mechanism or a well-publicised instrument to redress grievances by families or residents.

In 2017, there were at least 70 old-age care homes in Nepal, with a total of 1500 residents. In 2018, Angalo Jeevan Bahumulya Pratishtan, foreseeing a gap in research data, commissioned a randomised field study on the socio-economic situation of senior citizens living in 15 of the 32 licenced care homes in Bagmati province with a focus on the quality of services and support for residents therein. The sample size was 200 out of 480 residents; of these, 60 were from the two-state care homes (Devghat and Pashupati), and 140 were from 13 private/sponsored homes in five districts, including Kathmandu Valley.

Seventy-five percent of the residents were between 70 to 89 years old; all were sufficiently lucid. Fully paid, commercial care homes were not included in the study as they were priced out for most seniors, which is the focus of Angalo's work. A desk review of journal articles published between 2018-22 confirmed Angalo's finding rather than overtly contradicting it.

Care homes are not necessarily a bad concept. Often, they may be the only option for seniors to find physical help and emotional support. Nevertheless, there are enough cases where sending parents away has become an act of deliberate cruelty and where care homes are preying upon the desperation of families and their residents. Actions taken by both parties are always a choice, and hence the motivations and the mindfulness of the people concerned truly matter. Even 1 percent

social and economic class as well as employment status, with those who defined themselves as better off and the poor dominating one-third of each side of the spectrum.

There was general satisfaction with food and lodging but not clothing and hygiene in private/sponsored care homes. Frailty tests were non-existent, and healthcare treatments were problematic, particularly in state-run homes. Health conditions varied but were more often than not related to being old/older. These conditions could be treated with nutritional supplements and the right kind of physical activity. With the exception of TV, social life and outside excursions were severely lacking, as was indoor entertainment. Most residents said they liked to sleep, but inactivity was a vicious cycle, and oversleeping or resting could be a marked sign of depres-



SHUTTERSTOCK

of any violence is disturbing, but 33 percent in care homes, much of it harmful like withdrawing food and clothes, verbal abuse, or isolation is unacceptable. Unlike everyday life, there is no gender divide in the type of violence, as both women and men are at the receiving end, mainly at the hands of staff.

Seniors in Bagmati province were in care homes when their utilitarian years within a family were considered over, and their dependency on resources of earning children increased. Resident couples were rare; significant numbers were widows, less so widowers, and quite a few singletons. Religion or upper caste background was no barrier to being sent away. Senior citizens are not a heterogeneous group. Hence, people in care homes cut across every

division. A good number of these homes did not access the free care provided by the government, while in other cases, care homes complained that staff of local public health facilities would not show up for scheduled visits.

There seems to be a laissez-faire attitude from all sides, like older people's lives or pain do not matter. Regular and authoritative supervision or monitoring is almost non-existent, and the state-run homes are not the role models.

Education and employment were not ready-made options for the current older generation in homes. Nearly 60 percent defined themselves as small farmers from what were rural areas in the past. Many residents perceived government policy towards them as moral but said it was too little, too late. They

were optimistic about the elderly but were cautious about saving for the future and not relying on family members. A few people who could combine savings schemes, contributory provident funds, and employer/child support had a decent standard of living. Such residents, however, remained hesitant to demand quality assurance for fear of being returned to family or relatives.

For the destitute, the universal social pension was a lifeline. For those whose basic needs were sponsored, it helped pay for extra necessities; but in both cases, the financial support was empowering. However, access to social pensions was unequal, especially among the uneducated, poor and rescued. Most often, the cause was the lack of proof of citizenship and required documentation. The numbers of such people were small, but to be deprived of identity in old age is harsh, and solutions need to be found by the local government to see it as a facilitator rather than an obstacle. It was heart-warming that even with so little, quite a few senior residents opted to help their compatriots, and there was cooperation between sponsored care homes in the districts of the study area.

Residents were clear they would opt for the care homes they were in even if they had a choice. Yet two-thirds 'chose' to join one and learnt to accept and be happy within its four walls, and a significant number never wanted to return to their family. The loss of connection to all that was familiar remained painful, as did death, but it had not been dealt with as a mental health issue. The word 'choice', in the sense of a resident saying, "I choose to come to a care home and wish to be here forever", is a double-edged sword. It is so especially when 58 percent said they had assets seized and documentation taken with impunity, abused or increasingly isolated, neglected or ignored by family members. A few seniors said they did not feel safe and secure in the family homes they built. Hence, the high response of satisfaction, regardless of poor standards in care homes, should be seen as a survival strategy for the seniors rather than a badge of admiration.



Thapa is a retired health, rights and gender expert.

FOREX

US Dollar	132.24
Euro	140.93
Pound Sterling	163.72
Japanese Yen (10)	9.79
Chinese Yuan	19.04
Qatari Riyal	36.04
Australian Dollar	90.81
Malaysian Ringgit	30.11
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.17

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

Shares	
Nepse	1,897.08 _{ns} -0.14%
HIGHEST LOSERS	
PHCL	-10%
KLES	-4.14%
AL	-3.95%
SMFDB	-3.75%
NMBHF	-3.49%
GMFL	-3.03%
MODERATE LOSERS	
RFPL	-2.98%
KKHC	-2.46%
KRBL	-2.46%
RDI	-2.38%
USHEC	-2.35%
MEN	-2.12%
MODERATE GAINERS	
CORBL	2.59%
MBJC	2.76%
NYADI	2.93%
SMB	3.47%
SGHC	3.5%
MNLB	3.87%
HIGHEST GAINERS	
WNLB	4.37%
KLES	6.11%
BHPL	6.25%
DLS	8.2%
EHPL	10%
CVCL	10%

BULLION

PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 101,000
Silver	Rs 1,400

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BRIEFING

Realme 10 Pro+ 5G set to launch on Tuesday

KATHMANDU: Realme, the world's fastest growing smartphone brand is all geared up to introduce its most premium mid-range smartphone of 2022, the realme 10 Pro+ 5G. The company has spent a staggering \$15 million on the display technology itself, making this the absolute best display in the segment, reads the press release issued by the firm. Also, the 6-inch curve vision display has given realme 10 Pro+ 5G a design that is truly out of this world. The phone is equipped with a 108MP ProLight camera. In addition, the smartphone has a 5,000mAh battery that supports 67W SUPERVOOC charging. (PR)

Samsung Innovation Campus inaugurated in Nepal

KATHMANDU: Samsung, one of the world's leading consumer electronics and smartphones brands, has inaugurated its global CSR programme Samsung Innovation Campus at the Pulchowk Campus of Tribhuvan University Institute of Engineering. Under the programme, Samsung will train youth in Nepal on future tech skills such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Big Data and Coding & Programming, contributing to the development of a strong technology and innovation ecosystem in Nepal, according to a statement by Samsung. Launched in 2019, Samsung Innovation Campus, which is part of Samsung's global CSR vision of "Together for Tomorrow! Enabling People", trains students and unemployed youth to be experienced in key technologies of the 4th Industrial Revolution, nurturing them for the next generation workforce. (PR)

India's Mahindra to set up \$1.2 billion EV plant in Pune

BENGALURU: Indian automaker Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd said on Wednesday it would invest 100 billion rupees (\$1.21 billion) to set up an electric vehicle manufacturing plant in Pune as part of its aggressive push in the country's EV space. India's car market is tiny compared to its population, with electric models making up just 1 percent of the total annual car sales of about 3 million, but the government wants to grow this to 30 percent by 2030. The Mumbai-headquartered conglomerate said it had gotten approval for the investment from the Maharashtra state government and would spread the investment over a 7-8 year period. (REUTERS)

Karnali exporting high-value cash crops

>> Continued from page 1

"We send the farm products as per the orders," said Govinda Acharya, proprietor of Koseli Ghar Jumla. "Traders from Kathmandu Valley are the largest buyers. They ship our products to foreign countries."

Jumla Ghar Organics and Superfoods, an agricultural cooperative, exported around 55 tonnes of food products to Canada and Australia in the last fiscal year.

The company exports the popular Jumli marsi (a red rice variety), beans, millet flour, foxtail and proso millet, apples, garlic, lentils, walnuts, herbal tea, jimbu (Himalayan herb) and timur (Szechuan pepper) produced in Karnali.

State-owned Food Management and Trading Company also buys crops grown in Karnali. The firm started procuring marsi rice in 2021 and has been selling proso millet, beans and lentils in Kathmandu.

The Agriculture Development Office in the district says it has been encouraging farmers to increase production by providing incentives as demand for organic goods has shot up.

Raj Shahi, proprietor of Jumla Ghar Organics and Superfoods, said they export farm products of Karnali to Canada.

The company has exported one tonne of beans, one tonne of split black lentils and 10 kg of dried apple chips to Japan so far this year. Agro experts say that's a good initiative of farmers in Karnali to produce high-value crops that could transform the local standard of living.

Rishi Ram Pandey of Gidi Khola in Tatopani Rural Municipality displayed a tonne of dried apple chips and 100 caps made of rabbit wool at the Asian Credit Union Forum 2022 held in Thailand in August.

"There were representatives from 16 countries at the conference," said Pandey, who has been exploring markets abroad. Pandey says he has received orders for some products.

Jumla Ghar Organics and Superfoods has been exporting marsi rice to the United States for the past two years.

"We exported four tonnes of Jumli marsi rice to the US last year," said Shahi. "We also exported this type of rice to Germany, Bangladesh and the United Kingdom, but in small quantities."

The road has been a boon to Karnali, the last region in Nepal to be connected. But road connectivity



Road access has been a boon to Karnali, the last region in Nepal to be connected by roads.

POST FILE PHOTO

also has brought negative impacts to the region.

The road has made it easier to bring food to Karnali, and many people have stopped growing it because they can get it at subsidised prices.

"Of course, the road has made the people too lazy to grow their own food," said Budha. "Our dependence on imported foods is increasing."

He said many farmers were still unaware of the significance of local farm products. "Production has been decreasing every year."

Shahi agrees with Budha. "It is ironic that though there is high demand for our farm products in foreign countries, farmers here aren't much interested in growing them. They have grown used to the easy life of getting subsidised imported foods from the government."

Shahi said commercial production could change Karnali, which is at the bottom of the human development index ranking. "Commercial produc-

tion will not only reduce our dependence on imported foods but also promote a sustainable farming system in the district."

There are several agricultural cooperatives sending local products from Karnali to Kathmandu and foreign countries.

Khalanga-based Chandannath Cooperative dispatches Jumla's products to Kathmandu and Himalayan Multipurpose Cooperative exports apples to Bangladesh.

Jeevan Bahadur Budha, a farmer from Jumla, worries that indigenous crops could be lost.

"While there is easy access to imported food, indigenous crops are being exposed to pests," said Jeevan. "So we are compelled to use hybrids and improved seed varieties to grow more."

Farmers grow 6,125 tonnes of marsi rice on 2,850 hectares in Jumla annually, according to the district's Agriculture Development Office.

The Provincial Planning Commission says Karnali has 299,000 hectares of land suitable for cultivation, but only 216,000 hectares has been utilised.

Karnali produces 390,000 tonnes of food grain annually and has a deficit of 16,000 tonnes.

According to the Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Karnali produces 20,868 tonnes of millet on 19,076 hectares annually. Farmers also grow 13,075 tonnes of proso millet on 18,072 hectares and 575 tonnes of foxtail millet on 948 hectares.

Farmers and experts say that international sanitary and phytosanitary laws are the main barriers to exports.

"Lack of organic certificates has affected the export of foods produced in Karnali," said Ganesh Adhikari, chief of the Agriculture Development Office, Jumla. "The federal government should take the initiative to promote Karnali's crops."

ADB trims growth outlook for Asia as headwinds persist

REUTERS
MANILA, DEC 14

The Asian Development Bank cut its growth forecasts for developing Asia for this year and next as the region faces persistent headwinds from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, China's Covid-19 policies, and a slowing global economy.

The Manila-based lender said in a supplement to its Asia Development Outlook report it expected 2022 growth in developing Asia to slow to 4.2 percent, down slightly from its 4.3 percent forecast in September and marking the fifth time the outlook was downgraded. For next year, the combined bloc's economy, which includes China and India, is projected to grow 4.6 percent, much slower than its previous projection of 4.9 percent.

"Recovery in developing Asia is expected to continue but lose steam," the ADB said in the report.

The region may see a little respite from rising consumer prices with regional inflation now expected to settle at 4.4 percent this year from 4.5 percent previously, the ADB said.

The ADB warned risks to the growth outlook remain as the Russia-Ukraine conflict could renew surges in commodity prices, stoke global inflation and induce further monetary tightening.

Musk's banks to book Twitter loan losses, sources say

Twitter has seen advertisers flee amid worries about Musk's approach to policing tweets.

REUTERS
NEW YORK, DEC 14

Some of the banks that lent Elon Musk \$13 billion to buy Twitter are preparing to book losses on the loans this quarter, but they are likely to do so in a way that it does not become a major drag on their earnings, according to three sources with direct knowledge of the situation.

Banks typically sell such loans to investors at the time of the deal. But Twitter's lenders, led by Morgan Stanley, could face billions of dollars in losses if they tried to do so now, as investors shy away from buying risky debt during a period of economic uncertainty, market participants said. In addition, Twitter has seen advertisers flee amid worries about Musk's approach to policing tweets, hitting revenues and its ability to pay the interest on the debt.

Banks still have to mark the loan to its market value on their books and set aside funds for losses that are reported in quarterly results. In the absence of a price determined by actual sales of the debt, however, each bank can decide how much to write it down based on its market checks and judgment, according to the three sources who are familiar with the process of determining the value of such loans.

The biggest chunk of the debt—\$10 billion worth of loans secured by Twitter's assets—might have to be



An image of Elon Musk is seen on a phone placed on printed Twitter logos in this illustration.

REUTERS

written down by as much as 20 percent, one of the sources said. The hit on the loan, distributed among seven banks, could probably be managed by most of the firms without creating a significant hit to profits, the source added.

Another one of the three sources with direct knowledge of the matter estimated that some banks might only take a 5 percent to 10 percent writedown on the secured portion of the loan.

The deliberations of how some of these banks are thinking about

accounting for these losses have not been previously reported. They come as Wall Street banks are bracing for lower fourth-quarter earnings due to a slump in investment banking revenue and a rise in loan-loss reserves amid a weakening global economy.

Three banking industry sources said the remaining \$3 billion, which is unsecured, could lead to steeper losses for the seven Twitter banks. Reuters could not determine how much the banks were planning to write down the unsecured portion of the debt.

The lenders have considered replac-

India's December wheat stocks fall to 6-year low

REUTERS
MUMBAI, DEC 14

Indian wheat stocks held in government warehouses for December fell to the lowest in six years, government data showed on Tuesday, as prices jumped to a record high on rising demand and falling inventories.

Lower state reserves could hobble the government's efforts to release stocks to cool wheat prices, something it does regularly for bulk buyers such as flour and biscuit makers.

Wheat reserves in state stores totalled 19 million tonnes at the start of this month, down from 37.85 million tonnes on December 1, 2021.

The current stocks for December are at the lowest since 2016, when inventories had fallen to 16.5 million tonnes because of back-to-back droughts in 2014 and 2015 that curtailed wheat output.

Lower state reserves could hobble the government's efforts to release stocks to cool wheat prices.

"The new crop supplies would start only after four months. The government's task of calm prices is becoming more difficult every month," said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trade house.

"It can't release more than 2 million tonnes in a month to bring down prices. The market needs much more as farmers supplies have nearly stopped and traders are slowly releasing stocks," he said.

The government stockpile depleted by around 2 million tonnes in November, according to data compiled by the Food Corporation of India.

Wheat prices have surged in India despite implementing a ban on exports in May as it was stung by a sudden drop in crop yields.

Indian farmers have planted wheat on 25.6 million hectares since October 1, when the current sowing season began, up 25.4 percent from a year ago.

Mundhum trail in eastern hills draws trekkers

DAMBAR SINGH RAI
KHOTANG, DEC 14

Mundhum Trail, a newly established trekking trail in Nepal's eastern hills, has seen a greater number of visitors post-Covid. The trail passes through hill districts such as Khotang, Solukhumbu, Bhojpur and Sankhuwasabha.

The word 'Mundhum' finds its roots in Kirati culture and history; it's an oral guide to the Kirati way of life and holds more traditional implications than religious tones.

According to the local authority, the new trail received more than 4,000 trekkers from the US, Switzerland, Jordan and China in the last eight months. There were around 2,500 hikers last year.

Ramesh Kumar Rai, the chairman of Maiyum-Temke-Salpa-Silichung Tourism Promotion Centre, hopes the

number of visitors will cross the 10,000 mark by the rhododendron blooming season which begins in January.

"The recent popularity of the trail and promotional activities contributed to the increase in visitors," said Rai. Mundhum Trail is among the top 100 tourism destinations listed by the government.

However, the lack of infrastructure has affected the development of the trail, according to Rai. "The provincial government in the last fiscal year had allocated Rs5 million for the construction of trekking trails, but the amount was frozen as it was not utilised by the fiscal year," said Rai. "Though the same amount has been allocated this fiscal year, the work hasn't picked up pace in the absence of the provincial government."

Out of a total of 88 kilometres of the trekking trail, the work on 62 kilo-

metres has been completed through the joint cooperation of local and provincial governments as well as the Swiss government.

"The Swiss government couldn't get involved in the project last year as the provincial government delayed approval of the project," said Ramesh.

Construction of trekking trails at Kepilasgadhi Rural Municipality in Khotang, Temke Maiyung Rural Municipality in Bhojpur and Silichung Rural Municipality in Sankhuwasabha has been delayed.

"The project is still in limbo as the contract couldn't be awarded in time due to the political situation," said Samir Rai, chief of Kepilasgadhi Rural Municipality. Of the 14-kilometre segment of the trail in the rural municipality, only 15 percent work has been completed.

Of the 31 kilometres of the trail in Temke Maiyu, work on only 19 kilo-

metres has been completed.

Out of the Rs35 million allocated for the section, Rs33.3 million has been spent so far, said Ramesh.

Similarly, Rs20.02 million of Rs28.1 million has been spent to complete the work on eight kilometres of the 12-kilometre-long segment in Salpa Silichung.

The 10.5-kilometre segment in Sakela in Khotang and 12-kilometre in Bhojpur municipality is ready. Rs23.2 million was spent on the construction of these segments.

The Swiss government and Province 1 government have funded 70 percent of the project, while the remaining have been covered by the local governments.

While Rs135 million has been spent on the project to date, the Swiss government has sponsored the construction of resting places, drinking water taps and signboards on the trail.



PHOTO COURTESY: RAMESH KUMAR RAI

According to the local authority, the new trail received more than 4,000 trekkers in the last eight months.

SPORTS | MEDLEY



This picture taken on Wednesday shows the heating swimming pool of the International Sports Complex at Satdobato. The pool will be open to public from Friday.

Worker dies after fall at World Cup stadium

Rights groups say workers face unsafe conditions at work, including extreme heat, as well as exploitation by employers.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DOHA, DEC 14

A security guard died after suffering a fall at a World Cup stadium in Qatar, tournament organisers said on Wednesday.

The Supreme Committee said that John Njau Kibue fell at Lusail Stadium on Saturday. He was taken to the hospital and put in intensive care but died on Tuesday, the organisers said in a statement.

The security staff at stadiums is largely made up of migrant workers, particularly from Kenya and other African nations. The Supreme Committee did not specify Kibue's nationality.

His family was informed and the organisers "are investigating the circumstances leading to the fall as a matter of urgency," the committee said. There was no match at Lusail Stadium on Saturday. The venue will

host the final on Sunday. Since being named as host of this year's World Cup, Qatar has come under intense scrutiny over conditions for over 2 million migrants who work in the country in everything from construction jobs to service industries.

Rights groups say workers face unsafe conditions at work, including extreme heat that has caused deaths, as well as exploitation by employers, despite reforms instituted by Qatar.

Qatari officials say stronger regulations over work conditions have been imposed under the reforms.

They say three workers died in workplace accidents connected to the construction of new stadiums for the World Cup over the past decade, along with 37 other stadium workers who died outside the workplace during that time.

They argue that accident rates at the stadiums are comparable to others around the world.

Pujara, Iyer rescue India after top order collapse

The Indians were 48-3 in the morning session but the batters share a 149-run stand to help the visitors reach 278-6 on the opening day of the first Test against Bangladesh.

REUTERS
CHITTAGONG, DEC 14

India's Cheteshwar Pujara and Shreyas Iyer combined in a 149-run stand for the fifth wicket to help the tourists overcome a top order wobble and reach 278-6 against Bangladesh on the opening day of the first Test in Chittagong on Tuesday.

Iyer was batting on 82, a fine knock that included 10 fours, at stumps having lost Axar Patel to the last delivery of the day from spinner Mehidy Hasan.

Earlier, India's decision to bat backfired and they slumped to 48-3 in the morning session with stand-in skipper KL Rahul and stalwart Virat Kohli among the dismissed batsmen.

Pujara, who made 90, and Iyer joined hands to prop up India aided by the relievers they got. Pujara was dropped on 12 by Bangladesh wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan, who also spilled an edge when Iyer attempted a cut shot against Shakib Al Hasan.

Leading the side in absence of India's injured skipper Rohit Sharma, Rahul won the toss and

elected to bat and Bangladesh drew first blood inside the first hour, thanks to Yasir Ali's excellent anticipation.

With no fielder behind the square, Shubman Gill (20) attempted a paddle sweep against left-arm spinner Taijul Islam (3-84) only to scoop the ball behind him.

Yasir, standing at first slip and watching Gill shape up to play the shot, had enough time to run across to leg slip and take the catch.

Bangladesh did not have to wait long for a second wicket.

Rahul made 22 before dragging an Ebadot Hussain delivery onto his leg stump, trying to hit the seamer through the off-side.

India slumped to 48-3 when Taijul returned to remove Kohli lbw for one.

Kohli, trying to work the ball to the leg side, was beaten by turn and wasted a review in his unsuccessful bid to overturn the decision.

Next man in Rishabh Pant threw caution to the wind and counter-attacked to lift the pressure.

The left-hander stepped out to hit Taijul over long-on boundary for a six to signal his intention and scored at a run-a-ball rate.

Taijul had his revenge in the second session when Pant, after clobbering the spinner's previous delivery for a six, dragged a ball onto his stumps to depart for 46. Pujara and Iyer ensured India did not lose another wicket in the second session and lead their recovery with their risk-free accumulation of runs.

Taijul denied Pujara his hundred and spun one past the bat and into the stumps.

SCORECARD

DAY 1, FIRST TEST

STUMPS

Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chattogram

Toss: India, elected to bat first.

India 278-6 (90 ov)

C Pujara 90 (203)

S Iyer 82 not out (169)

T Islam 30-8-84-3, MH Miraz 18-4-71-2



India's Shreyas Iyer (right) and Cheteshwar Pujara run between the wickets during the first day of the first cricket Test match against Bangladesh on Wednesday.

HOROSCOPE

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

Keep your eyes peeled for small moments of beauty and synchronicity. New insights will come up that can help you plan more efficiently for the future. Try not to make any major plans and spend a relaxing evening.



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

You may receive unexpected news or hear from an old friend this morning. It's a good time to embrace your creative side. Make sure to embrace friendship while nurturing the bonds that are most important to you.



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

You may want to avoid posting on your social media feeds this morning. You'll feel encouraged to nurture your community and friendships through a genuine exchange. Take time to relax and give your mind a break this evening.



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

You'll receive an abundance of support from the other side. Creative inspiration will find you, so be sure to notate any brilliant ideas that pop into your psyche. Be mindful about who or what you devote your time and energy to.



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

This celestial exchange will inspire you to swim against the tides, so don't be afraid to question what's considered to be normal. You'll be encouraged to communicate your hopes and dreams with the other side.



LEO (July 23-August 22) ***

This cosmic climate could bring forth new possibilities to earn, so be sure to keep your eyes peeled for such opportunities. The stars ask you to focus on the future, especially when it comes to your professional goals.



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) ***

Don't be surprised if you wake up to salacious news or gossip within your sphere. Luckily, you'll get a chance to find beauty in the present. The stars will ask you to speak your truth when it comes to romantic entanglements.



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) ***

Your dreams may be vivid and emotionally charged in the very early hours. A sweet energy will allow you to let go of the past, as long as you accept what you cannot change. You'll be in an introspective mood today.



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

A spiritually charged energy will manifest in the very early hours this morning. Your intuition will spike, helping you see beyond the facades of others. Remember to maintain respectful boundaries as you go about your day.



VIRGO (August 23-September 22) ***

Get a mediation session before starting the day. Good vibes will flow, opening new pathways that can help you get ahead within your social and creative goals. Watch out for gas lighting behaviours later tonight.



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

Profound dreams can help you make peace with the past today. Take a moment to feel grateful for how far you've come. New projects or work opportunities could manifest, so be sure to head into the office prepared.



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

An unexpected crush may reveal themselves this morning, so pay special attention to who messages you right now. Note down any brilliant ideas that find you right now, as they could lead you towards success.



Astrology.com

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Authorizes
- 4 Cereal box remnant
- 9 Group that votes alike
- 13 Use a ray gun
- 14 Observances
- 15 Flu symptom
- 16 El Dorado loot
- 17 Gnomes
- 18 Dad's brother
- 19 DEA agents
- 21 Chronic pessimist
- 23 Lasting forever
- 26 To date
- 27 Exclaimed over
- 29 Did a greenhouse chore
- 34 Tsar name
- 37 Say it's so
- 39 Get hitched
- 40 Rani's garment
- 41 Commenced
- 43 Curse
- 44 Road map data
- 46 Add brandy
- 47 Parroted
- 48 Watery
- 50 Lines of stitches
- 52 Holm or Fleming
- 54 Bram Stoker novel
- 58 Military attack (3 wds.)
- 63 Large volumes
- 64 Facetious tribute
- 65 Hotel employee
- 68 Ebenezer's outburst
- 69 Hint
- 70 Lapis lazuli color
- 71 Before
- 72 Lhasa —
- 73 Within the law
- 74 ER staffers

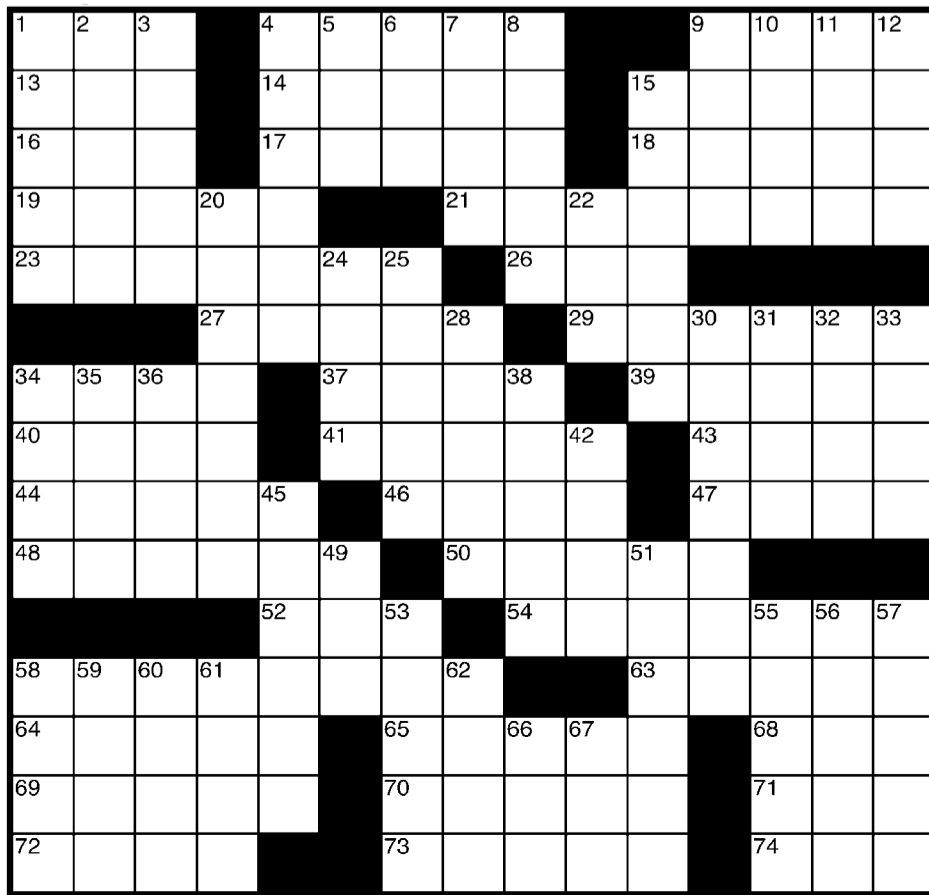
DOWN

- 1 — layer
- 2 Jeweler's measure
- 3 Mushroom-to-be
- 4 San Joaquin Valley city
- 5 Like Capp's Abner
- 6 Dune buggy kin
- 7 Not dull
- 8 Writing assignment
- 9 — fide
- 10 Miss Van Pelt
- 11 Give the eye
- 12 "Moonstruck" star
- 15 Habit
- 20 Pals
- 22 Terse affirmative
- 24 Melville captain
- 25 Knock flat
- 28 Painter of ballerinas
- 30 Hot sauce
- 31 Mouse catcher
- 32 Sea eagle
- 33 Did a salon job
- 34 Dogmas
- 35 Colorado ski town
- 36 The younger Guthrie
- 38 Hurried
- 42 Get closer to
- 45 Untrustworthy
- 49 Swing off-course
- 51 Big name in toys
- 53 Of ships
- 55 Palette color
- 56 Pick up
- 57 Volcano emission
- 58 Diva's rendition
- 59 Free pass
- 60 Collects maple sap
- 61 Kon-Tiki Museum site
- 62 Demolish
- 66 Clumsy person
- 67 Memorable time

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



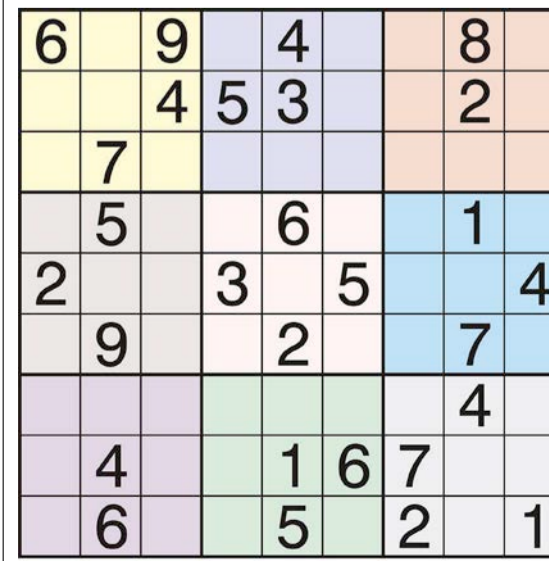
12-9-22 © 2022 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS



SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★



TERMS & CONDITIONS APPLY

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Mileage पनि

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CASHBACK

WEEKLY PRIZE
WORTH Rs. 12,000*



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Messi evokes Maradona comparisons

The forward scores the opening goal and sets up another in Argentina's 3-0 World Cup semi-final victory over Croatia.



Argentina's Lionel Messi (left) and Julian Alvarez celebrate after scoring a goal against Croatia at the Lusail Stadium in Lusail on Tuesday. AP/RSS

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DOHA, DEC 14

The blue-and-white wall of Argentina fans launched into another rendition of their World Cup anthem as fulltime approached at Lusail Stadium. "Maradona," they sang, "is cheering Lionel on" from heaven. The parallels between the two all-time greats of Argentine football, Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi, are

becoming ever more striking in Qatar. Just like the 1986 World Cup seemed to be a highlight reel for Maradona, Messi has made his mark on this tournament with a string of spectacular goals and assists, carrying Argentina's class of 2022 into the final. There have always been echoes of Maradona in Messi—his size, his dribbling skills, his quick feet, his wand of a left foot. Add in the leadership and fighting

qualities he has shown throughout the tournament and it really does feel like Messi is imbued with the spirit of Maradona as he closes in on football's ultimate prize. "Messi is playing the Maradona role in the World Cup," Jorge Valdano, who was in Argentina's victorious World Cup squad in 1986, said in an interview to TyC Sports channel. That was clear to see in Messi's latest stirring performance as Argentina

beat Croatia 3-0 on Tuesday to advance to the World Cup final for the sixth time. And nothing encapsulated his magnificence more than his assist for the third goal, scored by Julian Alvarez. Receiving the ball on the touchline just inside Croatia's half, Messi lifted the ball over the challenge of Josko Gvardiol and sprinted down the right flank. Gvardiol chased him, constantly grabbing the jersey of the Argentina captain, and was then bewitched as Messi dropped his shoulder and swivelled the other way to turn and burst into the area. Then came the simple cross with his right foot that Alvarez swept home.

Messi has confirmed he will play his last World Cup game in Sunday's final in Qatar.

It was another moment of magic in a tournament that has been full of them for Messi. "Personally," Messi said, "I can say that I feel very happy in this whole World Cup. I am enjoying it a lot and luckily enough I can help my whole squad to make things happen." After the match, an Argentine reporter conducting a post-match interview with Messi broke off from asking questions and told him that, whatever happened in the final, he had succeeded in making a mark on every Argentine's life and was bringing joy to the country. And for Messi, it is now about more

BYD

THE FIRST SPORTY ELECTRIC SUV IN NEPAL

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Julian Alvarez (Argentina)

Coach Scaloni initially preferred Lautaro Martinez to Alvarez. The Man City forward made his first start against Poland and scored the second goal in the 2-0 win that secured passage to the last 16. He then scored the winner in the 2-1 victory over Australia. Aside from the two goals against Croatia, Alvarez stretched the Croatian defence with his constant running and probing.



ATTO 3



SCAN HERE



FOR MORE DETAILS

than just winning football matches. "It is no longer only the result but the road we have travelled," he said. "Before in Argentina, it was valued to win or lose, but I think people now value other things." That may be so, but winning the World Cup would cement his legacy, allowing him to join Pele and Maradona in the pantheon of football's greatest players. He might be there already, but being a World Cup winner would end the debate. Messi confirmed that this will be his last dance at a World Cup—he will turn 39 during the 2026 tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico. "I feel very happy, to be able to achieve this, to finish my World Cup journey by playing my last game in a final," Messi told Argentine media outlet Diario Deportivo Ole. "It's many years for the next one and I don't think I'll be able to do it. And to finish like this, it's the best," added the Argentina captain. And he's been doing plenty of dancing, on the field after matches and in the locker room, as Argentina have

rebounded with five wins following a shocking loss to Saudi Arabia in their World Cup opener. "It was an acid test for this whole squad but this squad proved how strong we are," Messi said. "We won the next matches. It was very difficult what we did because every match was a final and this was a mental load because we knew things would be more complicated for us. "We managed to win five finals and I hope it will be this way for the last game. Internally, we were confident that we would make it because we know what we are capable of as a squad." After the victory over the Netherlands in the quarter-finals, Messi said Maradona—who died two years ago—was looking over the team as Argentina came through a heated, fiery match. "Diego is watching us from heaven," Messi said. "He is pushing us. I hope it stays like that until the end." Well, Messi will be there at the end. And he is doing his very best impression of Maradona along the way.



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Croatia's 'golden generation' nears end after World Cup

The Croats weren't the most attractive team but they were tough to beat and defied expectations for the second World Cup in a row.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DOHA, DEC 14

Argentina were a step too far for a Croatia team that reached back-to-back World Cup semi-finals and shocked Brazil along the way in Qatar. Lionel Messi inspired Argentina to a 3-0 win at Lusail Stadium Tuesday and moved a step closer to lifting the one major trophy that has eluded him. But for Croatia playmaker Luka Modric, this was almost certainly his last chance of winning the World Cup. He was substituted late on and left the field to applause from both sets of fans, who paid tribute to one of football's greats. Beaten finalists at the World Cup in Russia four years ago, Croatia weren't expected to go deep again this time around. Especially after drawing 0-0 with underdog Morocco in their first group game. That result has aged well as the tournament has progressed and Morocco emerged as the first African nation to reach the semi-finals of a World Cup. Croatia's spirit has been their most notable quality, coming back from behind against Japan and Brazil to go through on penalties in the round of 16 and quarter-finals. But the run to the semis also involved a degree of luck. Croatia could have been knocked out at the earliest possible stage if Romelu Lukaku had taken one of a series of chances in a 0-0 draw with Belgium in their final Group F game.



Modric, 37, has likely played in his last World Cup, but he could still be around for the Euro 2024. AP/RSS

The Croats certainly weren't the most attractive team in Qatar, only winning one of six games in regulation or extra time, but they were tough to beat and defied expectations for the second World Cup in a row. "They achieved great things and they're

the golden generation of Croatian football," said coach Zlatko Dalic. **Who is out?** At the age of 37, Modric has likely played in his last World Cup, but he could still be around for the European Championships


in 2024. Ivan Perisic and Dejan Lovren are both 33, and Andrej Kramaric, 31. "Well, perhaps this is the end for the generation at the World Cup," said Dalic. "A couple of them are at an age where it will be hard to play at the World Cup in 2026. "I think a lot of players will finish off at Euro 2024." Dalic, who led Croatia to the final in Russia, also plans to stay on. "I will continue, my contract runs until Euro 2024," he said. "My plan is to qualify with Croatia for Euro 2024." **Who is next?** Centre back Josko Gvardiol has been one of the standout players of the World Cup and has been linked with a host of Europe's biggest clubs. He was powerless to stop Messi's moment of magic in the buildup to Argentina's third goal, but he looks like he will be a key figure for his country going forward. Mateo Kovacic is a seasoned international at 28, and could be the dominant force in midfield when Modric steps aside. **What is next?** The third place playoff may seem like one of the most pointless games in football, but not for Croatia. "Win the match and go back to Croatia with a medal," said Modric. "We need to leave everything to win the bronze medal and let our fans celebrate one more time." Dalic is also looking further ahead to the Euros, with qualifying games against Wales and Turkey in March.

WORLD CUP MATCHES

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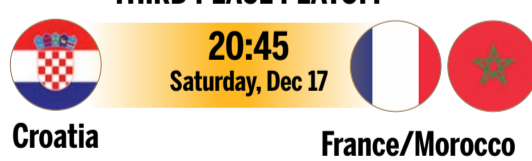
20:45
Sunday, Dec 18



Argentina France/Morocco


THIRD PLACE PLAYOFF

20:45
Saturday, Dec 17



Croatia France/Morocco

SEMI-FINAL RESULT



3

Argentina


Messi 34' (P)
Alvarez 39' 69'

0




Croatia

Messi 69' Assist




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I have a newfound interest in Nepali authors

The biomedical scientist and TV producer/presenter on his favourite books growing up, how his preferred genres changed over the years, and how he chooses his books.



POST PHOTO: DEEPAK KC

As a young boy, Dixit fell in love with books from the Famous Five series.

Sameer Mani Dixit is a biomedical scientist working in Nepal's public health sector and also a producer/presenter for Galaxy This Morning Live (a morning TV on Galaxy 4K). In this interview with the Post, Dixit shares how his life has always revolved around books, his favourite books, and the subject on which he would like to write a book on.

written by Enid Blyton. I'd also read other books at regular intervals as well.

Can you name a book you're grateful to have read back then?

Definitely the Famous Five series. It made me really enjoy fiction, and I would always look forward to reading the next in the series, as they came out in inconsistent intervals.

Now an established personality in your fields of work, how exactly have your preferences in genres changed since your childhood?

Actually, my preferences for fiction have remained the same. I love fiction, especially the thriller/spy and horror genres. Stephen King was and continues to be a favourite author of mine.

However, these days, I have had a newfound interest in Nepali authors and their creations. I've taken up a liking for reading about social issues as well.

Which books do you think have had the most impact on you as a person and professional?

I haven't experienced such an impact yet, but 'All Roads Lead North' by Amish Mulmi opened up my mind and reminded me about our recurring links to our northern neighbour, China, something that wasn't apparent to me before reading the book.

'The Code Breaker' by Walter Isaacson, a book about the discovery of CRISPR—a family of DNA sequences in bacteria-like organisms—has reaffirmed my belief in advances in biotechnology, my area of interest.

What part did reading play in your childhood?

I was very much encouraged to read at home and school—exchanging books with friends—but I read mostly on my own device since I loved books and magazines. Thanks to the library at St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel, which I attended as a boy, I would get my hands on the latest Famous Five books—a children's adventure novel

As a busy biomedical scientist and TV personality, how do you decide which books are reliable and worth your time?

I go for books in my preferred genres and popular authors that I am familiar with, for example, Dan Brown or John Grisham. In the case of Nepali books, I stick with authors like Subin Bhattarai and Buddhi Sagar. I also choose my books by reading book reviews published in reliable publications.

Unfortunately, I don't have as much time to read as I'd like, but I do try to make time where possible. Yuval Noah Harari's 'Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind' and 'Homo Deus' have been on my to-be-read list for about six months!



BOOK TALK

Have you ever considered writing a book for the general public? If so, what would it be about?

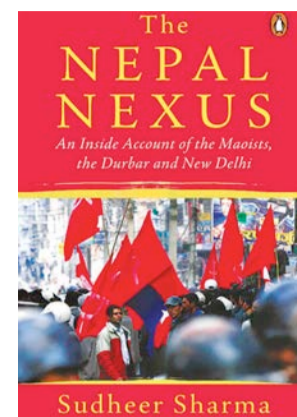
I was very lucky to have published my book on interactions of probiotic bacteria with intestinal microbiota based on my PhD research—which a fair few people bought. But if I were to write for the general public, I would most likely write about the adventures of starting my research institution, something that tells the story of working in the field of science and health in Nepal. I am already keeping notes on the subject.

Additionally, I have regularly contributed op-eds on topics of health and science (including the Kathmandu Post) and I plan to continue that. I might consider combining my knowledge and personal experience in a book one day.

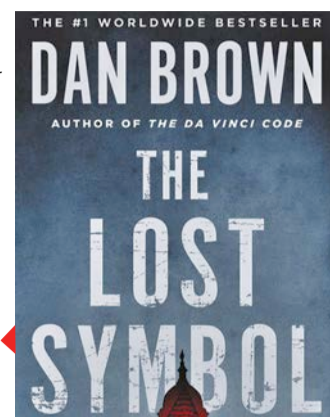
Can you name the top books that you've read and would want others to read as well?

'Nepal Nexus' by Sudheer Sharma
'The Lost Symbol' by Dan Brown
'Prey' by Michael Crichton
'The Code Breaker' by Walter Isaacson
'Airframe' by Michael Crichton
'Nathiya' by Saraswati Pratikshya

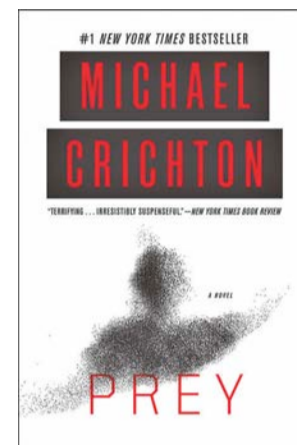
Sameer Mani Dixit's favourite books



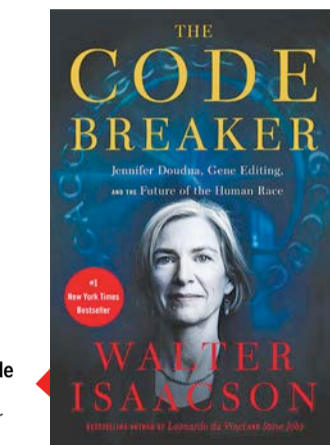
'Nepal Nexus' by Sudheer Sharma



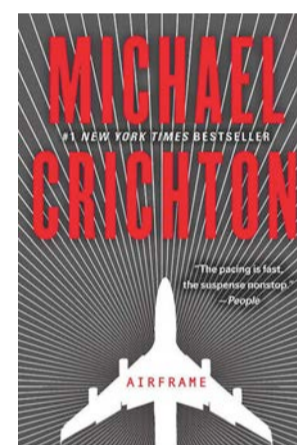
'The Lost Symbol' by Dan Brown



'Prey' by Michael Crichton



'The Code Breaker' by Walter Isaacson



'Airframe' by Michael Crichton



'Nathiya' by Saraswati Pratikshya

A soulful musical evening with Anuv Jain

Get set to sing along with the singer behind Hindi hit songs like 'Baarishein', 'Gul', 'Aag Asmaan', 'Ocean', 'Mazaak', and many more.



POST REPORT

Anuv Jain, the immensely popular Indian singer, songwriter, and composer, will perform his first concert in Nepal at Prive Nepal, the Soalte Kathmandu, on December 17.

Jain set on his journey to make it big in the music world in 2016, releasing his debut single 'Baarishein'. But perhaps, just six years into his career and with less than a dozen singles under his belt, Jain might not have expected to garner such a huge audience for himself—that too an international one—in a relatively short time.

Now with a humongous following of 8.2 million listeners on Spotify who've streamed his songs almost 115 million times, Jain has no doubt spread his wings in the industry, and now, he's flying into Nepal for his first-ever live performance in the country.

What: Anuv Jain Live in Nepal
Where: Prive Nepal, the Soalte Kathmandu
When: December 17, 7pm onwards
Ticket price: Rs 2,500
For bookings: Tickets to the concert can be purchased via eSewa or by calling 9801324782

'When Harry Met Sally,' 'Iron Man' added to film registry

The registry is housed at the Library of Congress, which selects movies for preservation.

JOCELYN NOVECK

They'll have what she's having. The 1989 rom-com "When Harry Met Sally" is one of 25 films chosen this year to enter the National Film Registry, a list that ranges from Disney's "The Little Mermaid" to an 1898 silent documentary, long thought lost, about the Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans.

Also chosen this year for preservation: Marvel's "Iron Man," John Waters' "Hairspray," Brian de Palma's "Carrie" and the 1950 "Cyrano de Bergerac" starring Jose Ferrer, whose performance made him the first Hispanic actor to win the best actor Oscar.

The registry is housed at the Library of Congress, which since 1988 has selected movies for preservation based on their cultural and historical importance. This year's picks bring the total number of films in the registry to 850—many of which are among the 1.7 million films in the library's collections.

The oldest film selected this year is the 1898 "Mardi Gras Carnival," a silent-era documentary with the earliest known footage of the carnival in

New Orleans. A copy was recently found at the Eye Filmmuseum in the Netherlands. Showing floats, spectators and marchers at a parade, the film is one of nine documentaries chosen, covering topics like the Attica prison rebellion, female union workers, mental health treatment, LGBTQ history and others.

And the most recent film on this year's list is the 2011 "Pariah," by Dee Rees, a coming-out story about a lesbian teen in Brooklyn that's considered a prominent film in modern queer cinema.

Among a number of other LGBTQ-themed films chosen this year is the 1967 student short film "Behind Every Good Man" by Nikolai Ursin, a look at Black gender fluidity in Los Angeles. Another: the 1977 "Word is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives," which interviewed over two dozen gay people about their lives, becoming a landmark of the early gay rights movement.

"We are proud to add 25 more films by a group of vibrant and diverse filmmakers to the National Film Registry as we preserve our cinematic heritage," said Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden.

—Associated Press



Meg Ryan, left, and Billy Crystal in a scene from 'When Harry Met Sally'.

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