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26.0° C -6.4° C
Janakpur Jomsom

TODAY

NATIONAL

Will Prime Minister Dahal, whose CPN (Maoist Centre) always tries to project itself as the champion of federalism, do what it takes to fully implement the federal system adopted seven years ago? Pg 3

Amid an increasing risk of Covid, the Drug Advisory Committee granted emergency use approval to Pfizer-BioNTech's bivalent jab. Emergency use authorisation is a must to import and use a vaccine in the country. Pg 3

OPINION



India looks set to end a tumultuous year on a celebratory note, marking both 75 years of independence and the start of its G20 presidency. In another milestone, UN estimates on April 14, 2023, India will overtake China as the most populous country, writes Shashi Tharoor. Pg 4

MONEY

With the harvest season starting and the minimum support price not yet fixed, and sugar mills remaining closed or not preparing to buy sugarcane, farmers in Rautahat are forced to sell their produce at throwaway prices. Pg 5

WORLD

Buffalo residents hovered around heaters, hunted for cars buried in snow drifts and looked for victims on Monday, after 28 people died in one of the worst weather-related disasters ever to hit western New York. Pg 6

SPORTS

Local pro Niraj Tamang took the lead after the first round of Surya Nepal Eastern Open, the second event under the Surya Nepal Golf Tour 2022-23, at the par-70 Dharan Golf Club in Sunsari on Tuesday. Pg 7

Lumbini All Stars registered their third victory in the Nepal T20 League as they beat Pokhara Avengers by three wickets. Kathmandu Royals put a break to Janakpur's winning streak with a 53-run victory. Pg 7



ART

Priyam Pradhan's 'Has Man a Future?' does a great job of setting the mood for the exhibition and gives visitors a glimpse of the art world they will enter. The artwork also features a woman lying on a couch. Pg 8

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People walk on a street dug up for Melamchi water supply project at Mangalbazar in Patan, Lalitpur, on Tuesday.

POST PHOTO: DIPENDRA ROKKA

Chinese arrive for rail feasibility study

The China Railway First Survey and Design Institute Group to do it on a grant basis.

ANIL GIRI

KATHMANDU, DEC 27

A day after Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's assumption of office, a six-member Chinese technical team landed in Kathmandu on Tuesday to carry out a feasibility study of the Nepal-China cross-border railway. Dahal, the CPN (Maoist Centre) chairman, heads a coalition of two biggest leftist parties and others.

The China Railway First Survey and Design Institute Group will carry

out the feasibility study via a Chinese government grant.

"We will probably hold a meeting with the Chinese technical team on Wednesday and discuss how and when to commence the feasibility study, which will take at least 42 months to complete," Rohit Kumar Bisural, director general at the Department of Railways, told the Post.

During a visit to China by then foreign minister Narayan Khadka in August, the Chinese side had conveyed its intent to dispatch a team for the

feasibility study of the proposed 72-km railway as agreed in Kathmandu during the visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping in October 2019.

Earlier, in November second week, the Chinese side had written to Nepal's finance and foreign ministries and asked them to sign a letter of exchange by November 25, 2022 on the grant for the feasibility study. According to the letter, the feasibility study will cost around Rs3.4 billion (180.47 million RMB).

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Seniors opting out citing Lamichhane's high Cabinet rank

The coalition is forming a mechanism comprising party chiefs to finalise power sharing and oversee government.

TIKA R PRADHAN

KATHMANDU, DEC 27

On Monday, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal formed an eight-member Cabinet with four ministers from the UML, and one each from the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) and the Janamat Party. But he has failed to not only expand his Cabinet but also to fix portfolios of the four remaining ministers.

The new Cabinet, which is yet to get full shape, has three deputy prime ministers—Bishnu Poudel from the UML, Narayan Kaji Shrestha from the Maoist Centre and Rabi Lamichhane from the RSP.

But as negotiations among coalition leaders on a package deal have so far been inconclusive, the four ministers are yet to get their portfolios.

"As there have been no conclusive talks with coalition partners, fixing the portfolios and appointing new ministers may take some time," said Ramesh Malla, chief personal secretary to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

A scheduled meeting among alliance partners could not take place on Monday after UML chair KP Sharma Oli left for Jhapa.

UML Deputy General Secretary Pradeep Gyawali said a mechanism comprising chiefs of the ruling parties is being formed to support the government.

"The mechanism will finalise sharing of all constitutional positions besides ministerial portfolios," Gyawali told the Post. "Discussions on these will be held soon."

In the meantime, some senior leaders of major parties in the new coalition have appeared hesitant to join the Dahal-led government citing the entry of Lamichhane as deputy prime minister and home minister. One such senior leader is Barshaman Pun, deputy general secretary of the Maoist Centre, who had played a key role in Dahal's elevation to the prime ministerial position by acting as his chief negotiator with the UML.

"Pun has decided to stay out of the government and focus instead on party-building as there is no chance for him to become a deputy prime minister," said Dayanidhi Bhatta, press coordinator to leader Pun. "How can a three-time minister work under his juniors in the government?"

>> Continued on page 2

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India's policy hurts power export prospects of Nepal

Southern neighbour has announced waiver of inter-state transmission charge for new Indian hydropower projects.



REUTERS

New Delhi declared hydropower projects as a renewable source of energy in March 2019.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA

KATHMANDU, DEC 27

In a move that will make hydroelectricity generated by Indian projects cheaper than that produced by Nepal, India's power ministry starting earlier this month removed the inter-state transmission charges for new Indian hydropower projects.

The ministry on December 2 issued the order to waive Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) charges on the transmission of electricity generated by new hydropower projects. The waiver is already available to solar and wind power projects.

The move has, however, raised the hackles of Nepali officials and the private sector as this concession will not be applicable to the hydroelectricity exported by Nepal and result in Nepali power producers losing competitive edge in the Indian power market. During the South Asia (BBIN) Power Summit organised by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) earlier this month, representatives of the Nepal government and the private sector raised concerns about the possible impact of the Indian policy on Nepali hydropower export.

Energy Secretary Dinesh Ghimire, Nepal Electricity Authority Managing Director Kul Man Ghising, Rastriya Prasaran Grid Company Chief Executive Officer Netra Prasad Gyawali and representatives of the private sector had taken part in the power summit.

Ghimire told the Post that they

raised concerns about the competitive disadvantage Nepal's power producers would face due to the Indian protectionist policy.

"We will also take up the issue at the upcoming meeting of the Joint Working Group and the Steering Committee Meeting on Energy Cooperation," said Ghimire.

These are joint secretary and secretary-level mechanisms whose next meeting has been scheduled for late January, in New Delhi. The Indian government has set an ambitious plan to generate 500GW from non-fossil energy sources by 2030. "Hydropower projects, being clean, green and sustainable, will be of paramount importance in our clean energy transition journey. They are also essential for the integration of solar and wind power, which are intermittent in nature," India's power ministry said.

The Indian government had declared hydropower projects as a renewable source of power in March 2019. However, the waiver of inter-state transmission charges, provided to solar and wind projects, had not been extended to hydropower projects.

"In order to remove this discrepancy and to provide a level playing field to hydropower projects, the Ministry of Power, Government of India has now decided to extend the waiver of charges on the transmission of power from new hydropower projects, for which construction work is awarded and PPA is signed on or before June 30, 2025," India's Power Ministry said.

>> Continued on page 2



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NATIONAL

DISTRICT DIGEST

Police officer accused of extortion faces suspension

BUTWAL: The Nepal Police Headquarters on Tuesday wrote to the Ministry of Home Affairs recommending suspension of Deputy Superintendent Thag Bahadur KC, the chief of the Area Police Office, Butwal after allegations of extortion and discovery of gold and cash from his home. He was arrested by a team from the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) on Sunday night. The team recovered 35 tolas of gold and Rs1.8 million in cash from his residence. The CIB conducted the raid after it was tipped off by a victim of extortion. KC had allegedly seized the gold from a businessman in Butwal and demanded cash from him for the release of the gold.

Exports resume from Rasuwagadhi border

RASUWA: Eight containers were exported to China through the Rasuwagadhi border crossing on Tuesday. Export from Nepal had been stalled for about 35 months following the Covid-19 pandemic. Narayan Prasad Bhandari, chief customs officer at Rasuwa Customs Office, confirmed that the export of goods, which was stalled due to the pandemic, has resumed from Tuesday. According to Bhandari, goods worth around Rs5 million were exported on Tuesday. "Bamboo stools, handicrafts and copper ornamental items were exported to China," Bhandari said. The export of goods and the movement of people through Rasuwagadhi crossing had remained closed from January 29, 2020. However, a limited import was allowed and about 14 Chinese containers were imported from the border daily.

Angbo elected Maoist leader in Province I assembly

MORANG: Indra Bahadur Angbo, outgoing provincial minister of economic affairs and planning, was unanimously elected the leader of the Province I assembly party of the CPN (Maoist Centre) on Tuesday. He was elected the leader by the meeting of the provincial assembly party chaired by Narayan Bahadur Magar, the eldest assembly member of the Maoist Centre. He was elected to the provincial assembly from Panchthar 1 (B).

Province I assembly to hold first meeting on January 1

MORANG: Province I Chief Parshuram Khapung has summoned the first session of the newly-formed provincial assembly for January 1. Issuing a statement on Tuesday, Narendra Shrestha, spokesperson of the Office of Province, said that the Khapung has scheduled the session for 1 pm on January 1. Earlier, on Monday, a meeting of the provincial cabinet had decided to recommend the date for the first session to Khapung in accordance with Article 166 (2) of the Constitution.

सर्टिफिकेट हरायो
मिति २०७९/०८/०६ गते नेपालटारवेखि चुनौखिलसम्म जाने क्रममा अमलेखगंज, बारासा मेरो निम्न व्यहोरा भएको स्नातक तहको Provisional सर्टिफिकेट हराएको हुँदा पाउनु हुने महानुभावहरूले नजिकको प्रहरी कार्यालय वा फोन नं. ९८३३०९०५६४ खबर गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु।
Name: Sunita Shrestha
Regd. No.: 2014-2-03-0415
Exam Roll No.: 15030088
University: Pokhara University
Programme: BBA

Chinese team in Kathmandu for railroad feasibility study



The Chinese team of experts poses for a photo opportunity after arriving in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

>> Continued from page 1
Officials said although Beijing has agreed to fund the study, the two countries have yet to agree on how to fund the construction of the railway.

As per a pre-feasibility study, the project will cost more than \$3 billion. Officials from the two ministries said the Chinese side has proposed to fund the construction through loan. They also added that taking out such a big loan without a cost-benefit analysis would be highly risky.

Aman Chitrakar, senior divisional engineer at the Department of Railways, told the Post that they will sit with the Chinese team and discuss how to move ahead with the project.

"We don't have the expertise for a feasibility study of this scale. We don't have the resources—technical and financial—to conduct such studies for either Kathmandu-Kerung or Raxaul-Kathmandu rails," Chitrakar, who is also the spokesperson of the Department of Railways, told the Post.

According to the letter sent by the Chinese side to the finance and foreign ministries, the feasibility study involves aerial survey and mapping, geological survey and mapping, special technical studies, on-site surveying and mapping, geological survey construction condition studies, engineering studies, and feasibility study report preparation.

"The Chinese side shall be responsible for undertaking the feasibility study works after the exchange of letters of approval for launching this project by the Chinese government and the Nepali government," the letter stated.

"Conducting six relevant technical studies includes evaluation on regional crustal stability, activity of active faults and seismic safety; evaluation on the influence of debris flow, landslide, and slope at tunnel portal among others," the letter further said.

The China Railway First Survey and Design Institute Group in 2018 had prepared technical details for the Kathmandu-Kerung railway line and later conducted the pre-feasibility study.

The Kerung-Kathmandu railway will be part of the 550-km railroad connecting the Tibetan city of Shigatse with Kerung near the Nepal-China border. Although just 75-km long, construction of the Kerung-Kathmandu section will cost over \$3 billion due to difficult geophysical terrains and other complexities, according to the pre-feasibility study.

"The first batch of Chinese experts have arrived in Kathmandu today to conduct the feasibility study and survey of the China-Nepal cross-border railway," the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu said in a statement.

"To conduct the feasibility study and survey of the China-Nepal cross-border railway has been a long-cherished dream of the Nepali people..."

The team was welcomed by the Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy, Wang Xin.

"It is also an integral part of jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) between China and Nepal. China gives priority to Nepal's aspirations and needs in this regard, and will proactively push ahead with the feasibility study with the China aid fund. The two countries will maintain close contact and coordination in jointly carrying out the work

ahead with a view of building trans-Himalayan multi-dimensional connectivity network," the embassy said.

The earlier pre-feasibility study completed in 2016 and later in 2018 by the Chinese companies stated that complicated geological terrain and laborious engineering workload would be the most significant obstacles to building a cross-border railway. The line, which will pass through rugged high mountains, would involve orchestrating complex construction plans—raising questions about the viability of Nepal's most hyped infrastructure project.

Following an agreement signed by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli during his China visit in June 2018, the China Railway First Survey and Design Institute had conducted a month-long technical study for the proposed railway via different alignments.

During the official visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Kathmandu in March, the two sides signed an agreement related to the technical assistance. Expenses for the feasibility study report and completion of the work on the Chinese side will be borne by the Chinese government, the agreement said.

The feasibility study costing around 180.47 RMB will be funded through Chinese grant.

Similarly, while conducting the feasibility study, the Nepali side would be responsible for providing the Chinese side the project's basic data, gathering information in line with the requirements and sharing the information with Chinese technical aid units.

The Nepali side would also be responsible for conducting an environmental impact assessment and preparing a resettlement plan in line with Nepali laws and regulations, and preparing the project pre-condition study report.

Such reports would be reviewed and approved by the Nepal government in order to meet the needs of the feasibility study. "The Nepalese side shall provide convenience for the Chinese technical aid unit to carry out the feasibility study works for the China-Nepal cross border railway project in Nepal, including but not limited to dispatching personnel to take charge of and ensure coordination of the project," the letter stated by the Chinese side while offering to sign the economic cooperation with the government of Nepal.

"The Nepali side will provide a safety guarantee for the Chinese personnel working in Nepal, facilitating access roads, power and communication for Chinese personnel to carry out works in Nepal."

The total feasibility study expenses of 180.47 million RMB should be paid off under the grant assistance fund stipulated in the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the governments of Nepal and China signed on August 15, 2017.

Cabinet expansion still tricky

>> Continued from page 1

But some leaders like Shakti Basnet, another deputy general secretary of the Maoist Centre, are as yet undecided about joining the government. Basnet, who was home minister earlier, said no specific discussion has been held in the party to that effect.

According to some leaders involved in inter-party negotiations, the UML has claimed 10 ministries; the Maoist Centre seven; the NSP, the Janata Samajbadi Party and Rastriya Prajatantra Party three each; the Nagarik Unmukti Party and the Janamat Party two each. However, as of now the Nagarik Unmukti Party and the RPP have decided to support the government from outside. Unmukti Party leaders have said they will join the government only after the party's demands are met. As a major condition for joining the government, the party has demanded the release from jail of its leader Resham Chaudhary, who was convicted in the 2015 Tikapur killings.

The RPP has yet to decide and the party leadership is reportedly in a fix as all of its senior leaders want to join the government.

"A meeting of our party's central work execution committee tomorrow [Wednesday] will decide on whether to join the government," Mohan Shrestha, spokesperson of the party, told the Post. "We will get into details only after that."

Some aspirants for ministers from the Maoist Centre include Rekha Sharma [Dang-2]; Sudan Kiranti [Bhojpur]; Aman Lal Modi [Morang-4]; Mahindra Raya Yadav [Sarlahi-2]; Ranendra Barali; Ganga Karki [Dolakha]; Suryaman Dong [Kavre-1] and Hit Bahadur Tamang [Nuwakot-1].

Yadav, a leader of the Nepal Samajbadi Party, contested polls on the Maoist Centre's election symbol. Sharma, the only female candidate from the Maoist Centre to win a federal seat under the first-past-the-post (FPT) system in the November polls, is also a strong contender for minister.

Likewise, there are many aspirants in the UML and the party, according to insiders, would pick ministers only from among those lawmakers who were directly-elected to parliament twice.

Some UML aspirants for ministerial positions are Prithvi Subba Gurung, Krishna Gopal Shrestha, Bhim Acharya, Yogesh Bhattarai, Gokarna Bista, Basanta Nembang, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, Bidya Bhattarai, Bhagwati Chaudhary, Raghuraj Mahaseth, Devraj Ghimire, Padam Giri, and Ishwari Bishwakarma Rijal (from Dalit community).

However, according to a UML politburo



Deputy PM and Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane

member, Gurung, Shrestha, Acharya, Bhattarai, Bista, Nembang and Rayamajhi are reluctant to join the government arguing that they do not want to serve as junior to a political novice like Lamichhane, who is a deputy prime minister.

The fourth largest party in parliament, the RSP, also has many ministerial aspirants. The party is reportedly getting three ministerial berths. According to sources, top leaders are considering picking an RSP leader as deputy speaker. "In that case, leaders may pick RSP lawmaker Shobita Gautam as the deputy commander of the House given her legal background," said a leader privy to the development.

Even the three independent candidates—Prabhu Sah, Kiran Kumar Sah and Amresh Kumar Singh—aspire to be ministers.

After Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Lamichhane refused to work as government spokesperson, Prime Minister Dahal on Monday assigned the duty to another Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bishnu Poudel.

The UML has already appointed Poudel as deputy prime minister and finance minister, as well as Jwala Kumari Sah of Bara, Damodar Bhandari of Baitadi, and Rajendra Kumar Rai of Dhankuta as ministers without portfolio. On Tuesday, President Bidya Devi Bhandari appointed advocate Dinmani Pokharel as the new Attorney General. Pokharel will take oath of office and secrecy from the President on Wednesday.

India's protectionist policy dims prospects for Nepali power exports

>> Continued from page 1

There will be 25 percent waiver of charge till June 2026, which will climb to 100 percent waiver by the end of June 2028.

The waiver or concessional charges shall be applicable for a period of 18 years from the date of commissioning of the hydro power plants, the Ministry added.

However, Nepali stakeholders said the decision would skew the field against Nepal's hydropower.

"The Indian companies will get a transmission charge waiver in the range of 35-50 paise (Indian currency) per unit," said Kul Man Ghising, managing director of Nepal Electricity Authority, who was also present at the summit. "As this facility is not available to Nepal, it is disadvantageous for selling Nepal's hydropower in the Indian market."

India has allowed Nepal to sell 452.6MW of power generated by eight hydropower projects in India's energy market. Currently, only the NEA has been selling power in the Indian market as the Nepali private sector has not been issued the licence to do so for the lack of legal provisions. But about half a dozen private sector companies have already applied for government permission to engage in power trade within and outside the country.

In fact, Nepal Power Exchange Limited, Nepal's private sector power trading company, and India's Manikaran Power Limited, signed a memorandum of understanding on energy trading in January this year.

As per the MoU, Manikaran has also agreed to purchase 500 MW of electricity from the Nepal Power Exchange Limited, in which the Indian company will also have a stake.

As the private sector has been seeking licences for power trade, the NEA sold electricity worth Rs11.16 billion to India beginning June, until it stopped the exports in the third week of December owing to falling

production. Both the Nepal government and the private sector have expressed serious concerns over the new Indian decision.

The NEA aims to sell power worth Rs16 billion in the current fiscal year after resuming export in June next year. The outgoing Energy Minister Pampha Bhusal told parliament in June that there was a possibility of exporting more than Rs70 billion worth of electricity to India in the next five years.

But without being competitive in prices, it will be difficult for Nepal to sell power in the Indian market. Nepal has also been concerned over the Indian Power Ministry's notification to the power distribution companies that they must purchase a certain portion of hydropower.

The notification issued in January last year and modified in July this year forces distribution companies to buy a certain percentage of hydropower from domestic hydropower projects, which do not apply to imported power.

As per the notification, a distribution company must have purchased 0.35 percent of the total power it distributes from hydropower projects in fiscal 2022-23, which should increase to 2.82 percent in fiscal 2029-30 when India aims to add 30,000MW of hydropower capacity through the compliance of this notification.

"Hydropower imported from outside India shall not be considered for meeting Hydropower Purchase Obligation (HPO)," the notification said.

Ashish Garg, vice-president of Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal (IPPAN) said if India also allowed distribution companies to purchase imported hydropower to meet the HPO requirement, Nepal's hydropower could be sold on a larger scale.

"If India granted a waiver of inter-state transmission charges to imported hydropower as well, Nepal's power exports would see a marked boost," he added.

Bagmati Province Government
Ministry of physical infrastructure Development
Urban Development And Building Office
Kathmandu
Invitation of Bid
(Date of first publication 2079/09/13)

1. The Urban Development And Building Office, Kathmandu Invites Bids From Duly Registered Eligible National Bidders For The Following Works.

Contract ID	Description and Location of work	Qualification Criteria	Bid Security Amount (NRs)	Bid Document Fee (NRs)	Bid Security Validity Period
UDBO/KTM/NCB/W ORKS/09-079/80	Procurement of Construction of Newar Community Building (Ganesh Bhairab Mandir) And Nagarkoti Cultural Building at Kageshwari Manohara	As per Section III, Evaluation and Qualification Criteria of Bid Document.	10,00,000.00	5,000	120 days
UDBO/KTM/NCB/W ORKS/10-079/80	PORCUREMENT OF CONSTRUCTION WORK OF HAWELI JIPLAEN MAJUWA SADAK, CHANGUNARAYAN-08, BHAKTAPUR	As per Section III, Evaluation and Qualification Criteria of Bid Document.	12,00,000.00	5,000	120 days
UDBO/KTM/NCB/W ORKS/11-079/80	PROCUREMENT OF CONSTRUCTION OF "KRITIPUR MUNICIPALITY - 06,PANDECHHAP CHARGHARE HUDAI PANGA JANE SADAK DHALAN TATHA STARONNATI ,CULVERT NIRMAN"	As per Section III, Evaluation and Qualification Criteria of Bid Document.	2,50,000	3,000	120 days

2. For Further Information Please Contact Urban Development And Building Office, Kathmandu, mopid3udboktm75@gmail.com :
3. Bidder Can only bid electronically through e-procurement section of PPMO's website http://www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp.
4. Any amendments in tender notice shall be published in e-procurement section.
5. Bank Guarantee shall be in the format specified in the bid documents.
6. The Urban Development And Building Office, Kathmandu reserves the right to reject or accept or cancel any bid partially or in full, without assigning any reason, whatsoever.

Office Chief

Government of Nepal
Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation
Department of Water Resource and Irrigation
Mechanized Irrigation Innovation Project (MIIP)
Jawalakhel, Lalitpur

AMENDMENT TO INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
(Date of Publication: December 28, 2022)

Following amendment is made to the notice "INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST" published in "The Kathmandu Post" on December 4, 2022 regarding:
Contract No: DWRI/MIIP/CS-01/079-80
Title of Work: Project Management, Design and Supervision Works of Construction of MIIP

Amendment:
The last date of submission of Expression of Interest has been extended by 15 days. The new deadline of submission of Expression of Interest is 19 January, 2023; 12:00 hours and the received expression of interests will be opened on 19 January, 2023; 13:00 hours.

Project Director

Nepal allowed to export another 43.65 MW to India

Earlier, Nepal was permitted to sell up to 408 MW and the new addition has taken the total to over 450 MW.



POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, DEC 27

Nepal can now export more than 450 megawatts (MW) of electricity to India with the southern neighbour agreeing to buy the power generated by two more hydropower projects in Nepal.

The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) said on Tuesday that India has agreed to buy the power generated by two additional projects—Kabeli B 1 (24.25MW) and Lower Modi (19.4MW).

Nepal, at the moment, has stopped exporting power due to the reduced production in the country, but it will be able to sell more when it resumes export to India in the upcoming wet season.

“Now, the country will be able to sell 452.6MW of electricity generated from 10 hydropower projects in India,” the power utility body said, in a press statement.

NEA Managing Director Kul Man Ghising said that India has been giving approvals to power projects on a gradual basis. “We have sought export approval for 600 MW, but the Indian authority has been granting approvals gradually,” he said.

Earlier, Nepal was allowed to sell up to 408 MW of electricity in the Indian market from eight projects.

Since India first allowed Nepal’s power projects to sell in the Indian market in November last year, Nepal has exported power worth over R12 billion.

Since the NEA resumed exporting power in early June this year, it has been able to earn Rs11.16 billion from power trade, according to the NEA.

During a visit to India by a Nepali delegation to take part in South Asia (BBIN) Power Summit on grid connectivity organised by the

Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) on December 16, Indian officials notified that work is in progress to approve more Nepali projects with a combined capacity of 150MW.

Ashish Garg, vice-president of the Independent Power Producers’ Association of Nepal, said officials from the Central Electricity Authority of India have notified that the approval process for an additional 150MW was underway.

But due to delays in getting approval to sell more electricity, the NEA faced the spillage of energy during the wet season this year.

The NEA has projected there would be an addition of 705MW to the country’s power system by the end of the current fiscal year 2022-23. Currently, Nepal’s power projects have an installed capacity of over 2,200MW.

So, the power producers say that Nepal needs to either boost domestic demand for its electricity or sell more to India in the next wet season to ensure power does not go to waste.

Meanwhile, Nepal has been decreasing the volume of power imports from India amid a gradual rise in production. The total energy imported from India was 1,543 gigawatt-hours in the fiscal 2021-22 as compared to 2,806-gigawatt-hours in the fiscal 2020-21, which is a decrease of 45.01 percent, according to the annual NEA report.

The net import of electricity after the deduction of exports was 1,050 gigawatt-hours, which accounts for only 9.49 percent of the total available electricity in fiscal 2021-22.

Ghising, the managing director of the NEA, said earlier the country might have had to import power for four months. “But unlike in the past years, the imports this year will be lower than our exports. We will be a net exporter of power in terms of both volume of energy and earnings.”

Dahal has the opportunity to fully implement federalism. But will he?

Previous governments wasted such chances due to their vested interests.

BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, DEC 27

Implementation of the Constitution of Nepal and ensuring stability in the country was the broader mandate of the government formed after the 2017 general elections.

Institutionalisation of federalism, republicanism and secularism—key elements of the constitution—were the major tasks before the KP Sharma Oli government. The centuries-old centralised system was federated and an ordinary Nepali citizen could become the head of state. As republicanism and secularism need no additional legal arrangements in place, dozens of laws and regulations are needed for a full-fledged implementation of federalism.

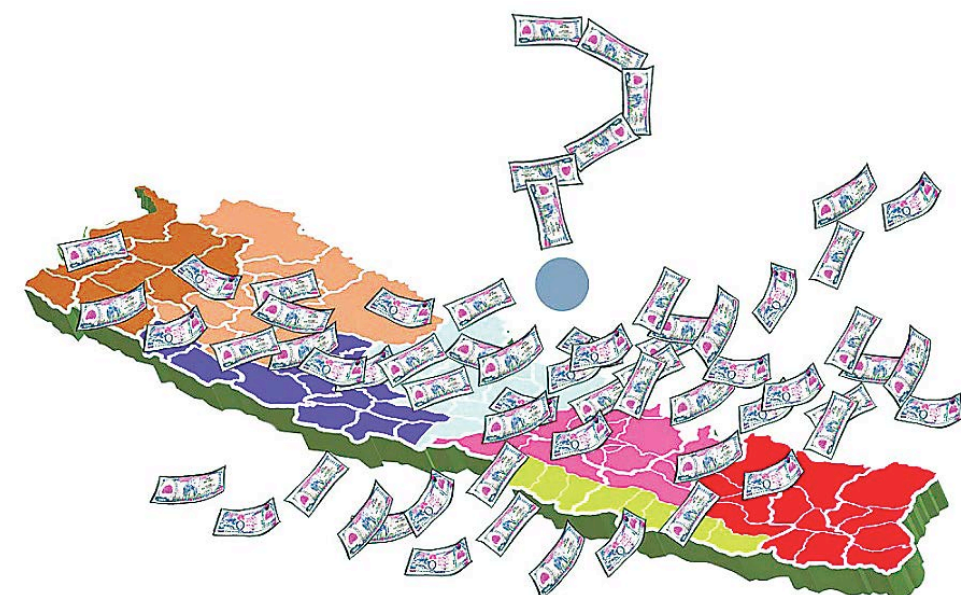
It’s not true that nothing happened in the three and a half years of the Oli government. However, his government was reluctant to allow the provinces and the local level to fully discharge their constitutional duties. Except for the promulgation of the Acts that were mandated by the constitution, little was done towards endorsing the laws needed to strengthen federalism.

Any law inconsistent with the constitution becomes invalid. One year after the first session of the federal parliament commenced, the statute also made it mandatory to have all the necessary laws, including on the guarantee of 31 fundamental rights, in place within three years of the charter’s promulgation. Though existing laws were amended or Acts promulgated within deadline, the Oli government didn’t show the urgency for passing the Federal Civil Service Act or the Federal Education Act. It also did not take the measures necessary to overhaul Nepal Police.

“Several statements and acts of Oli as prime minister showed that he didn’t wholeheartedly embrace federalism,” Kim Lal Devkota, a member of the National Assembly, who is an expert on federal affairs, told the Post. The Sher Bahadur Deuba government, which succeeded the Oli administration, too didn’t act to that effect.

Deuba’s team, which ruled for a year and a half, also did not work towards the police’s integration, nor did it have the legal instruments in place for making federalism functional. Instead, it came up with the law to keep the security of Kathmandu Valley under its purview. The Bagmati Provincial government objected to the move.

The newly installed Pushpa Kamal Dahal government carries this legacy. Dahal’s party, CPN (Maoist Centre), always tries to project itself as the champion of federalism, which was embraced following the Madhesh uprisings led by Upendra Yadav, who now chairs the Janata Samajbadi Party.



POST ILLUSTRATION

Dahal leads the government of seven parties that carry different ideologies and pole-opposite stances on federalism. Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), the third largest party in the ruling coalition, has not made its position on federalism clear. The party didn’t field candidates for the provincial assemblies, and its leaders including the chief, Lamichhane, publicly announced their boycott of the provincial vote. Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), which supports the Dahal government, has been advocating reinstating the monarchy and scrapping the federal system.

“Yes there are some problems,” said Devkota. “However, I have some hope from the Dahal government. The Janata Samajbadi Party, Nagarik Unmukti Party and Janamat Party, which are the part of the government, will neutralise the reservation against the federalism from other parties.”

Devkota, who also chaired the Federalism Implementation Study and Monitoring Committee of the upper house, said promulgating the Federal Civil Service Bill and Federal Education Bill and integration of Nepal Police into the federal police must be the main focus of the incumbent government. “I don’t think any party can openly object, if the government takes measures for a full-fledged implementation of federalism,” he added.

The RPP is supporting the government, but is not a part of it.

The RSP, on the other hand, says that it is not against federalism itself. “Our reservations are over the lack of performance and

against federalism,” Santosh Pariyar, a central committee member of the party and lawmaker, told the Post. “We will have full support in every move that strengthens federalism.”

Given the lack of laws, the provincial governments are yet to set up their bureaucracy. Similarly, they don’t have their own police administration to maintain law and order in their respective provinces. The local governments are yet to fully enjoy their constitutional authority to handle school education up to the secondary level because the federal government is yet to prepare a federal education law.

“Having its own bureaucracy, administration and police force are prerequisites for any government,” Shaligram Jammakattel, minister for financial affairs and planning in Bagmati Province, told the Post. Jammakattel, who has won as a member of the Provincial Assembly, said he is hopeful that the incumbent government accomplishes the long-pending task of full fledged implementation of federalism.

However, not everyone agrees. Some constitutional experts argue that the Dahal-led government won’t be any different from its predecessors because of its composition. “Parties carrying an anti-federalism mindset have dominance in the ruling alliance. The Dahal government will be dictated by Oli, who hasn’t been generous towards federalism,” Dinesh Tripathi, chairperson of the Constitutional Lawyers’ Forum, told the Post. “These days, I also doubt the commitment of Dahal himself.”

Nepal grants emergency use approval to Pfizer-BioNTech’s bivalent vaccine

Due to the delay in giving permission, supply of the vaccine by Covax could not start on time.



ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, DEC 27

Amid the increasing risk of a new surge in Covid infections, a meeting of the Drug Advisory Committee on Tuesday granted emergency use approval to Pfizer-BioNTech’s bivalent vaccine.

Officials at the Ministry of Health and Population said that emergency use authorization is necessary to import and use the vaccine and medicines in the country.

“A meeting of the Drug Advisory Committee held today [Tuesday] granted emergency use approval to Pfizer-BioNTech’s bivalent vaccine,” said Santosh KC, spokesperson for the Department of Drug Administration.

As per the new provision, the emergency use authorisation should be approved by the Drug Advisory Committee.

The bivalent Covid vaccine includes a component of the original virus strain to provide broad protection against Covid and a part of the Omicron variant.

The vaccine is called bivalent Covid vaccine, as it contains two components. Doctors say a bivalent Covid vaccine may also be referred to as an “updated” Covid vaccine booster dose.

Officials at the Health Ministry said Nepal is all set to receive 1.5 million doses of bivalent Covid vaccine from

the COVAX facility, the international vaccine-sharing scheme backed by the United Nations.

It is part of the 9.2 million doses promised to Nepal by the facility. Of the 9.2 million doses of adult Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine committed by the facility, only around three million have been supplied so far.

Earlier, the Health Ministry officials refused to accept vaccine doses offered by the facility as they were nearing expiry. The facility then offered bivalent vaccine doses.

Officials said the bivalent vaccine doses were supposed to be delivered in November, but due to the failure to secure emergency use authorization on time, the supply has been delayed.

Christmas and New Year have further delayed the supply, according to officials at the Department of Health Services.

“We hope the doses will arrive around mid-January,” said Dr Bibek Kumar Lal, director at the Family Welfare Division under the Department of Health Services.

Nepal so far has used Covid vaccines developed by University of Oxford and pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca manufactured in various countries of Europe, India and Japan, the Chinese Vero Cell, and US-made Janssen, Moderna, and Pfizer-BioNTech.

All vaccines used in Nepal had received emergency use authorization.

The Department of Health Services itself had sought permission from the drug department to bring vaccines offered by Covax. The department also provided approval to Vero Cell, Sinovac Corona Vac, Covaxin and Sputnik V vaccines.

The Health Ministry had decided to administer the second booster shots to vulnerable groups—elderly people above 60 years old, those having compromised immunity and frontline health workers, months ago, but the vaccination has not yet been started.

Experts say vaccination is the only reliable way to prevent severity and deaths from coronavirus infections and suggest administering second booster shots at the earliest.

“Our own experiences from the third wave of the pandemic show that the infection is less severe in the vaccinated population,” said Dr Sher Bahadur Pun. “New cases have been surging in China and other countries where the Nepalis have a high mobility rate. Authorities concerned should do everything to administer vaccines at the earliest.”

Nepal had started administering booster shots on January 17, but the uptake of the jabs is very low. So far, 7,972,791 people, or 27.3 percent of the total population, have received booster shots. It has been around a year since most people took them.

Several studies, including the one carried out in Nepal, show that immunity achieved from vaccination or infection wanes after six months of vaccination or natural infection.

“New cases of infection have been surging in China, Japan, South Korea and other countries, whose vaccine coverage rate is comparatively better,” said Dr Prabhath Adhikari, an infectious disease expert. “We do not know the exact data of China’s infection, but what is proved is that the vaccine is less effective against the new virus variant, which is more virulent than other variants. The authorities concerned should try to administer vaccines to the maximum number of population at the earliest.”

So far, 22,324,923 or 76.5 percent of the total population has been fully immunised.

Nepal has so far received Covid vaccines of various brands—AstraZeneca, Vero Cell, Moderna, Janssen, Sinovac-CoronaVac, and Pfizer-BioNTech—including the paediatric doses.

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Type SUB +Space your name and send to 34001

OPINION



OUR VIEW

Missing the bus

Improving the valley's public buses will be a great boon to hundreds of thousands of daily commuters.

People from all walks of life in the valley rely on public buses, which account for 20 percent of all vehicles in Kathmandu. Regular commuters are familiar with the ordeal of long waits to travel in cramped, congested buses with hardly any space to stand. If they don't do so, they either miss work in the morning or don't make it home in the evening. Not only does this situation discomfort people, it also sometimes leads to accidents. To add to the commuters' woes, drivers and their helpers often misbehave, and women are regularly harassed. Our public buses thus fail the people they are supposed to serve.

The problem, however, is not new. It has persisted for decades. Elections come and go. Political parties make people's woes a tool to win votes and vow to address their plight, but the vow is soon forgotten. Even for the implementation of existing laws, there is little commitment. The National Transport Policy 2001 aims to develop a "reliable, cost-effective and sustainable transport system." The Motor Vehicles and Transportation Management Act of 1993 prohibits taking in passengers in excess of seat numbers in public vehicles, but we hardly see these measures implemented.

While traffic police in the valley are making some effort, it is insufficient. They fine the buses that violate traffic rules, including overcrowding, and suspend the licence of repeat offenders for six months. However, due to a lack of constant monitoring and strict punishment, buses again overflow with passengers the next day.

Studies show that a planned public transport system reduces traffic congestion and decreases air pollution. Public transport is also cost-effective for many. But the cramped buses in Nepal are also a risk for the physical and mental well-being of commuters. They are prone to catching contagious diseases, such as Covid-19, amid the fear of another virus surge in the country.

The private sector solely handles Nepal's public transport. People have no affordable options other than to rely on syndicated vehicles or to buy their own. Years of negligence and profit maximisation motives have sidelined the issue of commuter comfort. Perhaps there is a need for government intervention. As this is not only an area of concern for traffic police, local governments in the Valley should collaborate with transport offices, public transport operators, and traffic police to ensure safe transport to the general public.

The Covid-19 pandemic hit public transport hard. As a result, bus drivers and helpers, who depended on daily wage, lost their source of income. They also don't have a sufficient salary, so they strive to maximise the number of trips and carry as many passengers as possible. It is vital to hold them to account for their misdeeds, but it is also important to pay them decent wages so that they can think of providing quality public service rather than only about making a few extra bucks.

Public buses are the only affordable means of transport for many people in the Valley and throughout Nepal. The big roads and road-related infrastructural projects will be futile if people continue to suffer while travelling. Resolving this issue may seem like a daunting task given its complexity. But it is not impossible. Perhaps the new set of parliamentarians and members of the executive branch can get the ball rolling on this.

THEIR VIEW

Preserve the heritages

The temples are now on the verge of ruin due to a lack of maintenance and renovation.

It's painful to see one historic site after another falling into ruins or getting destroyed thanks to the apathy of the authorities. The latest victims of this mindless trend are some 300-year-old temples located on the bank of the Bhairab River, about eight kilometres away from Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila headquarters. The place "bears the sign of a marvellous ancient architectural design" featuring 11 Shiva temples surrounding a large, square-shaped courtyard. Their spectacular designs remind one of the rich art and cultural heritage from a bygone era.

In 2001, the government recognised the place as an archaeological site. Yet, the temples are now on the verge of ruin due to a lack of maintenance and renovation by the authorities concerned. Sadly, as per a report, some major parts of the structure have already been damaged. Local historical documents trace the construction of these temples to around 300 years ago when a landlord, Nilakantha Roy, built them on around 60 acres of land. Only three acres of the property presently remain, while the rest have been illegally occupied in the absence of any form of supervision.

Some local worshippers and their families are the only ones to look after these temples now. Every Monday, around 150 to 200 of them gather there for worshipping. Had the government taken proper initiatives to maintain the site, it could have been turned into an attractive tourist spot, local historians say. This is something that we have witnessed happening time and again: Far from preserving our heritage sites for tourists and future generations, these are being forced to fall into decay, or outright demolished by local influentials or the authorities themselves.

We fail to understand this negligence and disinterest about the history of this land. Despite all the rhetoric we hear from the authorities glorifying our past, very little of that is ever turned into action, which is really a travesty. A nation that is unaware or unmindful of its past is deprived of a vital source of learning, and stands little chance of forging a future that it can be proud of. That is why it is so crucial to stop the destruction and decay of our heritage sites, so that our future generations can look upon them and learn from the history they represent.

According to the director of the Department of Archaeology, the organisation currently does not have enough funding to start renovating the site. We fail to understand why that is the case. When so much of taxpayers' money is being wasted left, right and centre, it is unacceptable that the government cannot afford to allocate enough money for the preservation of these heritage sites. Therefore, we call on the government to allocate the necessary funding and manpower to immediately ensure that such historic sites are not lost to history.

—The Daily Star/ANN

Improve the wards



PHOTO COURTESY: TRIVENI RURAL MUNICIPALITY

GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

The life of citizens living in villages is more difficult than the life of those in municipalities.

KHIM LAL DEVKOTA

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 has instituted a three-tier government: One federal, seven provincial and 753 local governments. Of the local governments, there are 293 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities. The six metropolitan and 11 sub-metropolitan cities fall under municipalities. There is no difference in the functional rights of a municipality or a rural municipality, a metropolitan city or a sub-metropolitan city. Wards form the smallest local government unit in the country, comprising 6,743 wards. Most former village development committees (VDC) have now been converted to wards.

New power centres

In the past, citizens received services from VDCs. It is necessary to understand the ward as an essential service delivery centre. In some places, two or three VDCs have been transformed into wards. For instance, Chapakot and Bhadaure VDCs of Kaski are now Ward 23 of Pokhara Metropolitan City.

The services previously provided by two VDCs (each with nine wards) are now confined to a single ward. Looking at this aspect, the services that citizens receive from the state have gone far away. Even so, citizens should receive services from the current ward according to their expectations. However, the situation is quite different. Most of the resources are centralised in the municipality, and even a kilometre of road has not been blacktopped in Ward 23. As services are not provided through the ward, people must travel 20 kilometres to the municipal office in Pokhara. If this is the situation in Pokhara, which ranks third after Kathmandu and Lalitpur in the Human Development Index (HDI), what can be expected of remote areas?

In the constitution, the rights of Kathmandu (Singhadurbar) have reached the villages, but new power centres have been created at the local level. People have yet to be able to get adequate services from the ward-level offices. There are problems with the

staff at the ward-level offices. People are compelled to visit the local centres to obtain housing maps, pay taxes, and receive payment for implementing programmes and projects.

In addition, there is also the grievance that the allocation of programmes and projects at the local level is lopsided. Mainly, programmes and projects are concentrated in power-centric areas. As mentioned earlier, ward 23 of Pokhara, with an area of 48 square kilometres, lacks even one kilometre of blacktopped road. If the two VDCs (Chapakot and Bhadaure) had not been merged into wards and remained VDCs, they would have received direct fiscal transfer.

If we compare the structure of the unitary system, people have received fewer services and facilities, including buildings and construction of physical infrastructure, among others, than they should get from the ward level. In the past, it would have taken a half an hour's walk to get any recommendation letters, but now, they have to walk for two days. The people living in the hills and the mountains have suffered the most.

Bigger than districts

Based on the 2011 census, the average population and area of the local government ward are 3,892 and 20 square kilometres, respectively. However, at some local levels, the average geographical area of their wards is larger than that of some districts. For instance, the average ward area of Namkha Rural Municipality in Humla is 403 square kilometres, which is about

3.5 times more than that of Bhaktapur district. The area of Bhaktapur is only 119 square kilometres. Not only Bhaktapur, but the average ward area of Namkha is more than that of Kathmandu and Lalitpur.

The southern part of Lalitpur district is so remote that it takes almost a day to reach there, even by vehicle. How difficult it must have been for the residents of Namkha ward, which is bigger than Lalitpur district! It has yet to reach our attention. There are around a dozen local levels with an average ward area of more than 200 square kilometres.

The average area of the wards of Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality in Solukhumbu district is 308 square kilometres. About 2,000 people live in a ward there. Similarly, the average area of the wards of Kanda Rural Municipality in Bajhang district is about 300 square kilometres. As the areas of the wards are bigger, it becomes difficult to provide basic services for people. So there is a need to increase access to basic services such as drinking water, schools, health post, security, banking and communication. But the government has failed to provide enough staff not only at the ward level but at the local government level as well.

All local governments should not be looked at and treated equally. The average area of the wards of Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Madhyapur Thimi, Kirtipur, Kathmandu and Tokha municipalities is less than two square kilometres. Bhaktapur is less than one square kilometre. There is a big difference

between the services these local governments provide to the citizens and those offered by the local governments of mountain districts, for instance, Namkha.

The life of citizens living in villages is more difficult than in municipalities. Among municipalities, smaller ones have more problems than large ones. Further, geographically speaking, the life of the people in the mountains is more difficult than in the Terai or the hills.

The average geography of the local level of the mountain region is 360 square kilometres, while that of the Terai is 110 square kilometres. The average area of the mountain region's local government wards is about 50 square kilometres, while it is 10 square kilometres in Terai. There is little problem with resources, including the availability of officials at local government offices; the problem lies with remote-based local governments. Therefore, from the point of view of service delivery, we need to make policies and laws with special attention to the wards, pay attention to the citizens living in the mountain region, and consider the wards as the basis when making every policy decision for the distribution of resources, among others.



Devkota is an expert in federalism and local governments.

India's looming demographic divide

Instead of starting 2023 on a promising note, India is struggling with a worsening north-south divide.

SHASHI THAROOR

India looks set to end a tumultuous year on a celebratory note, marking both 75 years of independence and the start of its G20 presidency. But another milestone is looming. United Nations experts estimate that on April 14, 2023, India will officially overtake China and become the world's most populous country.

That is not necessarily a cause for celebration. China occupies approximately 9.6 million square kilometres (3.7 million square miles), compared to

But uneven regional patterns, if not addressed, could turn India's demographic dividend into a permanent demographic divide. While India's northern states continue to grow, population growth in southern India has already stabilised; in some states, like Kerala in the south and Nagaland in the northeast, the population has already begun to shrink. This means that parts of India may experience baby booms while other regions grapple with ageing populations.

That said, the effects of climate change make it extremely difficult to predict India's demographic trends. The country is experiencing extreme weather events—cyclones, heatwaves, droughts, and floods—with alarming frequency. Some rivers overflow while others run dry. Millions across the sub-continent already suffer from water scarcity, leading to mass displacement and migration from uninhabitable

fore, greater political power. But in 1976, anxious not to reward poor population control with increased political influence, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi froze parliamentary representation at the level of the 1971 census. The constitutional amendment that enabled the freeze was supposed to expire 25 years later, but Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee renewed it for another quarter-century.

As a result, some southern MPs represent fewer than 2 million voters, while some from the north represent as many as 2.9 million. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which elicits overwhelming support from voters in the northern Hindi-speaking Cow Belt, appears set to end this anomaly and restore equal representation when the amendment lapses again in 2026.

While this scenario would make the Indian parliament more representa-

as their populations grow over the next decade.

Ignorance about family planning and the benefits of smaller families in the less-literate north is likely the principal factor behind India's uneven population growth. While the southern states have already transformed themselves, partly thanks to higher education levels among women, female literacy in the north is still far below the national average. Whereas Bihar's population grew by 25.4 percent between 2001 and 2011, Kerala's increased by just 4.9 percent. The 2021 census was postponed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the gap has likely grown over the past 11 years.

Meanwhile, India's labour market has never fully recovered from the pandemic. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, employment in India fell from 408.9 million in 2019-20 to 387.2 million in 2020-21 as the unemployment rate soared during the first year of the crisis. While employment has since recovered, there are 4.5 million fewer jobs than there were before the pandemic.

The sharp increase in youth unemployment is particularly worrying. The unemployment rate for Indians aged 19-25 rose to 23 percent nationally, reaching 40 percent in Kerala and Kashmir. Female participation in the labour force, which had previously been in line with global trends, has plunged in the last few years. At the other end of the spectrum, southern India has witnessed a proliferation of assisted-living facilities, as many ageing parents have no one to look after them after their children emigrate in search of better work opportunities.

Instead of starting 2023 on a promising note, India is struggling with a worsening north-south divide, with uncontrolled urbanisation, water shortages and resource scarcities, an ageing population in some areas, and mounting youth unemployment in others. India's impressive growth and economic development offer a reason for hope, and Indians have proved themselves to be resilient and resourceful in trying times. But to seize the opportunities offered by the looming demographic shift, India must acknowledge and address these trends. Otherwise, what looked like a dividend could fuel a disaster.

— Project Syndicate



SHUTTERSTOCK

India's 3.3 million square kilometres, which makes India's population density nearly three times higher than China's. Yet, unlike China, India struggles to feed, educate, and care for its 1.4 billion people, despite its impressive growth rate over the last three decades.

Population growth poses both opportunities and challenges. India's population is expected to grow over the next four decades to approximately 1.7 billion before plunging to 1.1 billion by 2100. Owing to the declines in its mortality and fertility rates, India has a narrow window of opportunity to harness the growth of its productive labour force to boost economic development.

areas, exacerbating the regional divide. The political implications of these trends could be far-reaching. India's population grew from 350 million to more than a billion between 1947 and 1997, with the poorer, less educated, and largely Hindi-speaking northern states accounting for much of the increase, whereas southern states curbed population more effectively, owing to better human development and education policies. While northern families had 6-7 children on average for decades, the average for southern Indians dropped quickly to two children per household.

Given that India is a democracy, the more populous north should have had more parliamentary seats and, there-

fore, greater political power. But in 1976, anxious not to reward poor population control with increased political influence, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi froze parliamentary representation at the level of the 1971 census. The constitutional amendment that enabled the freeze was supposed to expire 25 years later, but Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee renewed it for another quarter-century.

Today, just two northern states, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, account for the bulk of India's population increase. With 220 million people, Uttar Pradesh would be the world's fifth most populous country if it were independent. These states, which already have a disproportionate influence on Indian politics, will likely gain even more power



Tharoor is an MP for the Indian National Congress.

FOREX

US Dollar	132.86
Euro	141.56
Pound Sterling	160.09
Japanese Yen (10)	9.97
Chinese Yuan	19.09
Qatari Riyal	36.27
Australian Dollar	89.75
Malaysian Ringgit	30.04
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.33

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

Shares

Nepse		1,983.95	+5.11%
HIGHEST GAINERS			
SIL	MPFL	AI	SHLR
0.19%	0.18%	0.15%	0.12%
MODERATE GAINERS			
SKLES	JBLE	SWMF	VLBS
0.19%	0.18%	0.15%	0.12%
MODERATE LOSERS			
CCBDB8	CMF2	NICBF	EBLD86
-0.52%	-0.39%	-0.34%	-0.24%
HIGHEST LOSERS			
AKBSL	MMFDB	NIBD2082	NBF2
-2.63%	-2.22%	-2%	-1.94%

BULLION

Fine Gold	Rs 100,700
Silver	Rs 1,390

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

Iraq prime minister summons central banker as currency slides

BAGHDAD: Iraq's premier summoned the central bank governor on Tuesday amid worries sparked by a currency drop against the dollar, with lawmakers calling for an extraordinary session of parliament. One US dollar traded at 1,580 Iraqi dinars on the street Tuesday, against the central bank rate of 1,470 dinars, state news agency INA reported. The drop, which began about two weeks ago, has sparked alarm in the media in the oil-rich country, and on Tuesday Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani met the central bank governor to discuss the issue. The central bank has blamed the slump on "temporary pressures" sparked by the "adoption of new mechanisms to protect the banking sector, customers, and the financial system". Iraq's Association of Private Banks said the rate had risen as a result of changes to the "mechanism" of foreign currency sales due to international requirements. The government has sought to ease tensions, including by ensuring a flow of dollars at the official rate. (AFP)

Markets rise after China ends travel quarantine

PARIS: European and Asian markets advanced on Tuesday after China said it would end quarantines for overseas arrivals, spurring hopes for the revival of the world's second-largest economy. China has abruptly reversed its strict pandemic restrictions even as a surge in infections overtakes the country. The curbs had torpedoed the economy and sparked nationwide protests. The latest easing will see three years of border controls end on January 8, when Beijing downgrades Covid-19 to a Class B infectious disease. China has since gone rushing to search for overseas flights, with the reopening set to be a boon for the travel industry. China's benchmark Shanghai index and the second index in Shenzhen both posted healthy gains, while Tokyo ended a shade higher with Seoul, Singapore and Mumbai also all up. Markets in London, Hong Kong and Sydney were still closed for a holiday. Paris was up almost one percent and Frankfurt rose 0.7 percent in early afternoon trades. (AFP)

Ethiopian Airlines to resume flights to Tigray capital

NAIROBI: Ethiopia's national carrier Ethiopian Airlines said it would resume commercial flights to the war-torn region of Tigray on Wednesday after a shutdown lasting 18 months. The announcement comes a day after an Ethiopian delegation made the first high-level government visit to the rebel-held region since the signing of a peace deal last month. The airline, the biggest carrier in Africa, said on Tuesday that it would operate daily flights from the national capital Addis Ababa to the Tigrayan capital of Mekele. The schedule will increase in frequency depending on demand, it said in a statement. "We are truly pleased with the resumption," Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew said. "These flights will enable families to reunite, facilitate the restoration of commercial activities, stimulate tourist flow and bring many more opportunities which will serve the society." Aid has started trickling back into Tigray since the peace deal was signed on November 2, going some way to alleviating chronic shortages of food, fuel, cash and drugs. (AFP)

Sugarcane farmers in Rautahat forced to sell their produce at lower prices

With sugar mills shutting down and the minimum support price not fixed, farmers find themselves at a crossroads.

SHIVA PURI
RAUTAHAT, DEC 27

Sukhlal Sah, a farmer of Samanpur, Rautahat was forced to sell his produce to the jaggery industry at a much lower price after the sugar mill in his district got closed.

"We have started selling sugarcane at Rs400 per quintal. Sugarcane farmers have been hit the hardest after the closure of the sugar mill," said Sah. "The farmers' attraction towards sugarcane farming is declining and I too am thinking of not cultivating sugarcane anymore."

The farmers have started selling sugarcane to the jaggery industry at Rs400 per quintal. One sugar mill is closed in the Rautahat district while the other one has not made any preparations to procure sugarcane. With the harvest season starting and the minimum support price not yet fixed and the sugar mills remaining closed or not preparing to buy sugarcane, the farmers are being forced to sell their sugarcane produce at throwaway prices.

With Shree Ram Sugar Mill located in Garuda Municipality remaining closed, the farmers of the district are forced to sell sugarcane at a low price to the jaggery industry. The shutdown of the mill has hit hard to sugarcane farmers. The number of sugarcane farmers is decreasing in recent times.

The Garuda Sugar Mill owned by Golchha has been closed since last year as it had been running at a loss. As the mill got shut down, the farmers started selling sugarcane to the jaggery industry at a cheaper price.

Baba Baijunath Sugar Mill in Kathariya Municipality has not started crushing the sugarcane due to which the farmers said that they are forced to sell sugarcane to the jaggery industry.

The government has not even fixed the price of sugarcane yet for this year's harvest. Last year, the minimum support price of sugarcane was set at Rs590 rupees per quintal.

As farmers rush towards planting winter crops like lentils and wheat, they have already started offloading their sugarcane at a much lower price to the jaggery industry. There are 14



POST FILE PHOTO

The government has not even fixed the price of sugarcane yet for this year's harvest.

jaggery industries in operation in Gadhimai Municipality-4, Susanderpur area of the district. The industry is giving sugarcane at low rates from the farmers and producing jaggery.

With the sugar mills shutting down, the farmers are no longer attracted towards sugarcane production.

Bisun Yadav, director of the jaggery industry, said the price of sugarcane will be fixed according to the demand for jaggery. "As there is no fixed market price for jaggery, selling it at a higher price could cause losses," he said. "The price that the jaggery industry is giving to farmers for their sugarcane is the highest," he claimed.

Yadav said that crushing 12 quintals of sugarcane produces a quintal of jaggery. Of the jaggery produced, the price of black jaggery is Rs5,000 per quintal, while the white one costs Rs6,000 per quintal. The jaggery industry operators said that sugarcane is being purchased based on the

selling price of jaggery.

Farmers get nearly Rs600 per quintal while selling their sugarcane to the sugar mills.

Shree Ram Sugar Mill was established in Garuda in 1993 with the aim of crushing the sugarcane procured from the farmers of neighbouring districts Bara, Parsa, Sarlahi and Rautahat. But the director of the mill closed the mill saying that it was running at a loss due to multiple reasons. Now the jaggery industry is buying sugarcane from the farmers.

During the 1990s, sugarcane was cultivated in more than 14,000 bighas in the district. Ashok Yadav, president of the Rautahat Sugarcane Producers Association, said that the number of farmers producing sugarcane has been declining after getting into trouble in getting payments for their produce.

"In earlier days, Shree Ram Sugar Mill started creating trouble by not making payments on their purchase

of sugarcane. And later, the mill got closed on the pretext of loss," Yadav said. "The sugarcane production is now restricted to 5,000 bighas," he said, adding that after not being able to sell their sugarcane on time, the number of farmers planting sugarcane has been reducing.

Yadav said that the farmers sold their sugarcane to the jaggery industry in cash, at a cheaper price, instead of leaving their produce in the field to dry. The long trend of sugar mills not operating and the minimum support prices not being fixed on time have brought a lot of suffering to the sugarcane farmers.

Baiju Babara, director of Baijunath Sugar Mill, said that their mill will become operational soon. "There is a delay in the operation of the mill due to some technical reasons," he said. "Farmers have hurried to sell sugarcane to the jaggery industry, but it will be appropriate for them to be patient for some time."

China 'turns corner' by ending quarantine

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, DEC 27

Foreign companies welcomed China's decision to end quarantines for travellers from abroad as an important step to revive slumping business activity while Japan on Tuesday joined India in announcing restrictions on visitors from the country as infections surge.

The ruling Communist Party's abrupt decision to lift some of the world's strictest anti-virus controls comes as it tries to reverse an economic downturn. It has ended curbs that confined millions of people to their homes and sparked protests, but hospitals have been flooded with feverish, wheezing patients as the virus spreads.

The announcement late Monday that quarantines for travellers from abroad will end January 8 is the biggest step toward ending limits that have kept most foreign visitors out of China since early 2020. Quarantines were reduced last month from seven days to five.

Also Monday, the government downgraded the official seriousness of Covid-19 and dropped a requirement for people with the virus to be quarantined. That added to a rapid drumbeat of steps to dismantle controls that had been expected to stay in place at least through mid-2023.

"It finally feels like China has turned the corner," the chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, Colm Rafferty, said in a statement. He said ending the quarantine "clears the way for resumption of normal business travel."



AP/RSS

A vendor wears a mask as he waits for customers at a popup store in Beijing.

Business groups have warned companies were shifting investment away from China because foreign executives were blocked from visiting. The American chamber said more than 70 percent of companies that responded to a poll this month expect the impact of the latest wave of outbreaks to last no more than three months, ending in early 2023.

The British Chamber of Commerce expressed hope China will restart normal processing of business visas to allow "resumption of crucial people to people exchanges." It said that will "contribute to restoring optimism and reinstating China as a

priority investment destination."

The move "will potentially boost business confidence," but companies are likely to "wait to see how the situation on the ground evolves" before making long-term decisions, the European Chamber of Commerce in China said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Japan announced visitors from China will undergo virus tests starting Friday as a "temporary emergency measure."

Visitors who test positive will be quarantined for one week, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced. He said Japan also would reduce a planned increase in the number of flights between Japan and China "just to be safe." That follows India's decision last week to begin requiring a negative virus test for travellers from China, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Thailand.

India also randomly tests 2 percent of airline passengers arriving from abroad. Visitors who test positive or have symptoms will be quarantined. A foreign ministry spokesman defended China's handling of the latest outbreaks.

"The Chinese government has always followed the principle of science-based and targeted measures," said Wang Wenbin. He called for a "science-based response and coordinated approach" to keep travel safe and "promote a steady and sound recovery of the world economy."

China kept its infection rate low with a "zero Covid" strategy that aimed to stamp out virus transmission by isolating every case. That prompted complaints that controls were too extreme and counterproductive.

India plans \$2 billion incentive for green hydrogen industry

REUTERS
NEW DELHI, DEC 27

India is planning a \$2 billion incentive programme for the green hydrogen industry, three sources told Reuters, in a bid to cut emissions and become a major export player in the field.

The 180-billion-rupee (\$2.2 billion) incentive aims to reduce the production cost of green hydrogen by a fifth over the next five years, said a senior government official and an industry manager working in renewable energy. It would do this in part by increasing the scale of the industry, they said. The current cost in India is 300 rupees to 400 rupees per kg, said the manager. The United States and the European Union have already approved incentives worth billions of dollars for green hydrogen projects.

Green ammonia is made by combining nitrogen with hydrogen using renewable energy sources.

Hydrogen can be used as a fuel. It is made by splitting water with an electrical process, electrolysis. If the devices that do that, electrolyzers, are powered by renewable energy, the product is called green hydrogen, a fuel free of greenhouse emissions. The Indian aid could be announced in the February 1 budget for the fiscal year beginning April 1, said the government official. All sources declined to be named discussing a budget proposal.

The ministries of renewable energy and finance did not respond to queries sent by Reuters. Indian companies such as Reliance Industries, Indian Oil, NTPC, Adani Enterprises, JSW Energy and Acme Solar have big plans on green hydrogen.

Adani, led by the world's third-richest person, Gautam Adani, said in June that it and France's TotalEnergies would jointly create the "world's largest green hydrogen ecosystem".

The Indian government expects industry to invest 8 trillion rupees in green hydrogen and its derivative green ammonia by 2030, said the industry manager and another government official. Green ammonia is made by combining nitrogen with hydrogen using renewable energy sources; it can be used by the fertiliser industry or as a fuel or convenient means of transporting hydrogen.

Pokhara street festival begins today

The organiser expects the five-day festival will help revive tourism in Pokhara, the gateway to Annapurna.

POST REPORT
POKHARA, DEC 27

The 24th edition of the Pokhara Street Festival is scheduled to begin on Wednesday.

The five-day festival is being organised by the Pokhara Chapter of the Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN). The street festival is also the biggest cultural show

in the country. The street festival will have cultural activities, local food, and musical performance along a three-kilometre stretch. Other activities include boat races and paragliding.

The organisers hope the festival will attract domestic as well as foreign visitors and promote tourism stalled by the Covid-19 pandemic. "We have completed the prepara-



PHOTO COURTESY: REBAN POKHARA

REBAN is expecting around 400,000 visitors during the festival.

tions to host the festival from Fishtail Gate at Lakeside to Jarebar through Khahare Chowk," said Naresh Bahadur Bhattarai, chairman of the Pokhara Chapter of REBAN. "We hope the festival will help revive the tourism sector, which has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic."

"The festival will be organised without disturbing the movement of essential services vehicles," said Bishwa Raj Poudel, the media coordinator for the festival.

While the Lok Dohori programmes will be organised at Komagane park from 1 to 6 pm, the live concerts will be held until 10 in the evening.

The organisers have also arranged a night bus service to facilitate the visitors during the festival.

While the bus service will be made available from Shahid Chowk and Dihikopatan to Bagar, Lamachaur and Amar Singh Chowk up to 11 pm, the service will be extended further as per needs on December 30 and 31, the new year's eve, according to the organisers.

When it began in 1998, the festival was organised for a single day.

The tourism entrepreneurs in Pokhara believe the festival has succeeded in establishing itself at the national level. The festival, which has been instrumental in promoting adventurous sports such as paragliding in Pokhara and homestay business in Kaski and the neighbouring districts, sees a high number of domestic visitors.

Hotel occupancy is expected to be full during the street festival period.

Pokhara's tourism industry depends on trekking. But during the winter, the city's tourism takes a backseat as the hilly regions around Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Manaslu—the major tourist destinations—get colder.

The festival was started two decades ago to tap into the possibility of attracting tourists coming downhill from their treks. Previously, foreign tourists would visit India, Thailand or their own native country to celebrate the New Year, but the festival has given them the option to stay in Pokhara.

REBAN is expecting around 400,000 visitors during the festival.

WORLD

Western New York death toll rises to 28 from cold, storm chaos

Up to 9 more inches of snow could fall in some areas of western NY through Tuesday, the National Weather Service says.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BUFFALO, DEC 27

Buffalo residents hovered around space heaters, hunted for cars buried in snow drifts and looked for more victims on Monday, after 28 people died in one of the worst weather-related disasters ever to hit western New York.

The rest of the United States also was reeling from the ferocious winter storm, with at least another two dozen deaths reported in other parts of the country.

Up to 9 more inches of snow could fall in some areas of western New York through Tuesday, the National Weather Service said.

"This is not the end yet," said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz, calling the blizzard "the worst storm probably in our lifetime," even for an area accustomed to punishing snow.

Some people, he noted, were stranded in their cars for more than two days. President Joe Biden said his prayers were with the victims' families, and offered federal assistance on Monday to the hard-hit state.

Those who lost their lives around Buffalo were found in cars, homes and snowbanks. Some died while shovelling snow, others when emergency crews could not respond in time to medical crises.

Melissa Carrick, a doula, said the blizzard forced her to coach a pregnant client through childbirth by telephone. An ambulance crew transported the woman to a hospital about 45 minutes south of Buffalo because none of the closer hospitals were reachable.

"In any other normal Buffalo storm? I would just go because that's what you do—just drive through the snow," she said. "But you knew this was different."

Scientists say the climate change crisis may have contributed to the intensity of the storm. That's because the atmosphere can carry more water vapour, which acts as fuel, said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Victor Gensini, a meteorology professor at Northern Illinois University, likened a single weather



Joseph McVay (left) and Sarah Guglielmi, who live nearby, walk along a street in the Elmwood Village neighbourhood of Buffalo on Monday, after a massive snow storm blanketed the city. Along with drifts and travel bans, many streets were impassible due to abandoned vehicles.

event to an "at-bat"—and the climate as your "batting average".

"It's hard to say," Serreze said. "But are the dice a little bit loaded now? Absolutely."

The blizzard roared across western New York Friday and Saturday. With many grocery stores in the Buffalo area closed and driving bans in place, some people pleaded on social media for donations of food and diapers.

"It was like looking at a white wall for 14 to 18 hours straight," Poloncarz, the county official, said.

Relief is coming later this week, as forecasts call for temperatures to slowly rise, said Ashton Robinson Cook, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Cook said the bomb cyclone—when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a strong storm—has weakened. It developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions including heavy winds and snow.

Some 3,410 domestic and international flights were cancelled on Monday as of about 3 pm EDT, according to the tracking site FlightAware. The site said Southwest Airlines had 2,497 cancellations—about 60 percent of its scheduled flights and about 10 times as many as any other major US carrier. Southwest said the weather was improving, which would "stabilise and improve our situation."

Based on FlightAware data, airports all across the US were suffering from cancellations and delays, including Denver, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Seattle, Baltimore and Chicago.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul toured the aftermath in Buffalo—her hometown—on Monday, calling the blizzard "one for the ages." Almost every fire truck in the city became stranded Saturday, she said.

Hochul noted the storm came a little over a month after the region was inundated with another "historic"

snowfall. Between the two storms, snowfall totals are not far off from the 95.4 inches the area normally sees in an entire winter season.

The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 49.2 inches at 10 am Monday. Officials say the airport will be shut through Wednesday morning.

Shahida Muhammad told WKBW that an outage knocked out power to her 1-year-old son's ventilator. She and the child's father manually administered breaths from Friday until Sunday when rescuers saw her desperate social media posts and came to their aid. She said her son was doing well despite the ordeal and described him as "a fighter".

In a makeshift hut in her living room, Trisha LoGrasso was still huddled around a space heater on Monday with three of her children and her eldest daughter's boyfriend.

South Korea military sorry for failing to down North's drones

North Korea has touted its drone programme, and Seoul officials previously said the North had about 300 drones.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEOUL, DEC 27

South Korea's president on Tuesday called for stronger air defences and high-tech stealth drones while the military apologised for failing to shoot down North Korean drones that crossed the border for the first time in five years.

South Korea's military scrambled warplanes and attack helicopters on Monday, but they failed to bring down any of the North Korean drones that flew back home or disappeared from South Korean radars. It raised serious questions about South Korea's air defence network at a time when tensions remain high over North Korea's torrid run of missile tests this year.

On Tuesday, the military again launched fighter jets and attack helicopters after spotting suspicious flight paths at a front-line area. A local county office sent emergency text messages notifying residents of a new batch of North Korean drones. But the military later said it was a flock of birds.

"We have a plan to create a military drone unit tasked with monitoring key military facilities in North Korea. But we'll advance the establishment of the drone unit as soon as possible because of yesterday's incident," President Yoon Suk Yeol said during a regular Cabinet Council meeting.

"We'll also introduce state-of-the-art stealth drones and bolster our surveillance capability."

He said that South Korea's military needs more intensive readiness and exercises to cope with threats posed by North Korean drones.

Lt Gen Kang Shin Chul, chief director of operation at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in a televised statement the military feels sorry because of its failure to shoot down the North Korean drones and for causing big public concerns.

Kang acknowledged South Korea lacks capacities to detect and strike small surveillance drones with a wingspan of less than 3 meters though it has assets to spot and bring down

bigger combat drones. Kang said South Korea will establish drone units with various capacities and aggressively deploy military assets to shoot down enemy drones.

It was the first time North Korean drones entered South Korean airspace since 2017. The drone flights came three days after South Korea said North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles, extending its record testing activities this year.

North Korea has touted its drone programme, and South Korean officials have previously said the North had about 300 drones.

Advanced drones are among modern weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to procure, along with multi-warheads, underwater-launched nuclear missiles and a spy satellite.

Since taking office in May, Yoon, a conservative, has expanded regular military drills with the United States and vowed to sternly deal with North Korean provocations. He's offered massive support plans to North Korea if it abandons its nuclear weapons, but the North has rejected his overture. On Monday, South Korea sent its own surveillance assets, apparently unmanned drones, across the border as corresponding steps against the North Korean drone flights.

South Korea's public confirmation of reconnaissance activities inside North Korea is highly unusual and likely reflects a resolve by Yoon's government to get tough on North Korean provocations.

Yoon used the drone incident to hit at his liberal predecessor's engagement policy with North Korea. He said Tuesday South Korea's military had conducted little anti-drone training since 2017, when Moon Jae-in was inaugurated. "I think our people must have seen well how dangerous a policy relying on the North's good faiths and [peace] agreements would be," he said.

Moon's liberal opposition Democratic Party accused Yoon of shifting his government's "security disaster" to someone else.

BRIEFING

Indian police probe deaths of Russian lawmaker, companion

NEW DELHI: Indian police are investigating the sudden deaths of a wealthy Russian politician who reportedly criticised the Ukraine war and his travelling companion at a luxury hotel, authorities said on Tuesday. The body of Pavel Antov, 65, was found on Saturday in a pool of blood outside his lodgings in eastern Odisha state, where he was on holiday with three other Russian nationals. His death came two days after another member of the travel party, Vladimir Bidenov, was found unconscious after suffering an apparent heart attack at the same hotel and could not be revived. Police said they were reviewing CCTV footage, questioning hotel staff and were waiting on detailed autopsy reports, but so far there was no sign of foul play. "All possible angles as regards to the deaths of two Russian nationals are being verified," regional police chief Rajesh Pandit told AFP. Bidenov's heart attack had likely been caused by binge drinking and a possible drug overdose, he said. "So far it seems that Antov accidentally fell from the hotel terrace," he added. "He was probably disturbed by the death of his friend and went to the hotel terrace and likely fell to his death from there." The officer said Antov and his friends had arrived in the state in mid-December and visited several locations before arriving at their hotel in Rayagada last week.

Iran holds funerals for troops killed in 1980s Iraq war

DUBAI: Thousands of Iranians on Tuesday attended state-organised funerals for 400 soldiers killed in the 1980s Iran-Iraq war. Iran's president, meanwhile, lashed out at the United States and its allies, accusing them of fomenting anti-government protests that have been underway in Iran for over three months. Caskets with the remains of "unidentified martyrs" were draped in Iranian flags and carried in mass processions. For many Iranian families, the conflict's painful legacy drags on in a continuous waiting for news of loved ones still "missing". In January, 250 Iranian soldiers killed in the 1980-1988 war were buried. Iran has been shaken by protests since mid-September over the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman who died after being detained by the morality police. The protests rapidly escalated into calls for the overthrow of Iran's theocracy, established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, marking one of the biggest challenges to the Iranian clerical rule in over four decades. (Agencies)

Taiwan extends mandatory service over China threat

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TAIPEI, DEC 27

Taiwan on Tuesday announced an extension in mandatory military service from four months to one year, citing the threat from an increasingly hostile China.

Beijing considers self-ruled, democratic Taiwan a part of its territory, to be taken one day, by force if necessary, and the island lives under the constant fear of a Chinese invasion.

China's sabre-rattling has intensified in recent years under President Xi Jinping, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine has further deepened worries in Taiwan that Beijing might move similarly to annex the island.

China's "intimidation and threats against Taiwan are getting more obvious", President Tsai Ing-wen told a press conference after a high-level government meeting on national security.

"No one wants war... but my fellow countrymen, peace will not fall from the sky."

"The current four-month military service is not enough to meet the fast and ever-changing situation," she said. "We have decided to restore the one-year military service from 2024."

The extended requirement will apply to men born after January 1, 2005, Tsai added.

Mandatory service used to be deeply unpopular in Taiwan, and its previous government had reduced it from one year to four months with the aim of creating a mainly volunteer force.

But recent polling showed more than three quarters of the Taiwanese public now believes that is too short.

Tsai described the extension as "an extremely difficult decision... to ensure the democratic way of life for our future generations".

"We can only avoid a war by preparing for a war and we can only stop a war by being capable of fighting a war."

The prospect of a Chinese invasion has increasingly worried Western nations and many of China's neighbours.



A protester uses a slingshot to hurl back a tear gas canister at Israeli forces during clashes after a demonstration demanding the return of the bodies of Palestinian being held by Israel, at the Qalandia checkpoint south of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday.

Abduction, torture, rape: Congo conflict worsens, UN says

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DAKAR, DEC 27

The accounts are haunting. Abductions, torture, rapes. Scores of civilians including women and children have been killed by the M23 rebels in eastern Congo, according to a UN report.

In addition, the M23 rebels have forced children to be soldiers, according to the report by a panel of UN experts. The 21-page report based on interviews with more than 230 sources and visits to Rutshuru area of Congo's North Kivu province where the M23 have seized territory, is expected to be published this week.

Conflict has been simmering in eastern Congo for decades where more than 120 armed groups are fighting in the region, most for land and control of mines with valuable minerals, while some groups are trying to protect their communities.

The already volatile situation significantly deteriorated this year when the M23 resurfaced after being largely dormant for nearly a decade.

The M23 first rose to prominence 10 years ago when its fighters seized Goma, the largest city in Congo's east, which sits on the border with Rwanda. The group derives its name from a peace agreement signed on March 23,

2009 which called for the rebels to be integrated into the Congo army. The M23 accuse the government of not implementing the accord.

In late 2021 the reactivated M23 began killing civilians and capturing swaths of territory. M23 fighters raped and harassed women trying to farm family fields in areas controlled by the

rebels, according to the report. The rebels accused civilians of spying for the Congolese army, said the report. They were often incarcerated and some were beaten to death, it said.

Not only are populations living under M23 subject to abuse but they are forced to pay taxes, said the panel. At the Bunagana border crossing with

Uganda, the rebels earned an average of \$27,000 a month making people carrying goods pay as they entered and left the country, said the UN. Two locals living under M23 who did not want to be named for fear of their safety, told The Associated Press they'd been forced to bring the rebels bags of beans, pay \$5 if they wanted to access their farms and take backroads if they want to leave the village for fear of reprisal.

The M23 did not respond to questions about the allegations, but has previously dismissed it as propaganda. The violence by the rebels is part of an overall worsening of the crisis in eastern Congo, with fighting by armed groups intensifying and expanding in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces, said the report.

"The security and humanitarian situation in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces significantly deteriorated, despite the continuous enforcement of a state of siege over the past 18 months," and despite military operations by Congo's armed forces, Uganda's military and the UN mission in Congo, said the report.

Adding to the difficult situation in eastern Congo, attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces—believed to be linked with the Islamic State group—are increasing, said the report.



Residents flee fighting between M23 rebels and Congolese forces near Kibumba, some 20 kms North of Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, on October 29.

Lumbini win last-ball thriller against Pokhara

Needing five runs off the last ball, tailender Van Schalkwyk hits a six off Pratis GC to give Lumbini their third straight victory in the Nepal T20 League.



Lumbini All Stars players embrace South African Shadley van Schalkwyk (second right) after he hits a winning six off the last delivery at the TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur on Tuesday.

POST PHOTOS: KESHAV THAPA

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, DEC 27

Lumbini All Stars on Tuesday registered their third consecutive victory in the Nepal T20 League as they defeated Pokhara Avengers by three wickets in a match that went down to the very last delivery.

Chasing 134, Lumbini needed eight runs off the final over to win and maintain their perfect record at the Tribhuvan University Cricket Ground in Kirtipur, Kathmandu.

Tailender Shadley van Schalkwyk, who had raised the hopes for Lumbini with two consecutive sixes in the penultimate over, then cut the chase down to five off the last ball and blasted an eye-opening six off Pratis GC for a nail-biting victory.

Player of the match Van Schalkwyk cracked four sixes in his unconquered 11-ball 31.

Earlier, the 34-year-old South African also starred with the ball taking 3-27 that also included the prized scalp of Pokhara danger-man Kushal Malla, who smashed a speedy half-century in the midst of a batting collapse that saw eight batters leave the crease without even

touching double-digit figures.

Sent in to bat first, Pokhara reached 133-9, thanks to a 96-run stand between Malla and Sri Lankan batsman Upul Tharanga, for the third wicket.

Tharanga, who hit 42 runs off 51 balls, was caught behind off Kishore Mahato (2-20).

Malla cracked five fours and five sixes in his crucial knock of 61 before Van Schalkwyk had him caught by Unmukt Chand in the ninth over.

Gulsan Jha also picked up two wickets for Lumbini.

Lumbini's run chase took an early hit after Pokhara's Indian pacer Abhimanyu Mithun surprised Sri Lankan Lahiru Milantha—who had hit 60 and 80 not out in the first two matches—off the third delivery of the second over.

But Indian batsman and opener Chand (22) shared a 57-run partnership with Kushal Bhurel, who made 39, to steady the run chase.

Bipin Khatri then trapped Bhurtel lbw to break their stand and it seemed Lumbini's winning streak would come to an end after Khatri removed Harmeet Singh for a duck. Before Malla had dismissed captain Dipendra Singh Airee for two and had Chand caught by Mithun to put Lumbini in trouble at 75-5.

Jha departed cheaply for 10 and Anil Sah contributed 19 to drag Lumbini to 127-7 with Van Schalkwyk and Kishore Mahato at the crease.

Schalkwyk then led the charge when it mattered the most to guide Lumbini to a pulsating victory.

The match result propelled Lumbini to the top of the table with six points.

Pokhara are winless after their third straight defeat.

Airee's Lumbini now remain the only unbeaten team in the league after Kathmandu Royals put a break on Janakpur's winning streak with a 53-run win later in the day.

English batsman Alex Blake top scored for Kathmandu, hitting 83 off 43 balls, that included four boundaries and seven sixes. He put on a 62-run stand with Malaysian Virandeep Singh, who scored 49, to give Kathmandu, who had elected to bat first, a solid start to their innings.

When Singh returned back to the pavilion, Kathmandu were already eyeing a big total with 103-2, on board.

A middle order collapse saw Zimbabwean Ryal Burl (2), captain Gyanendra Malla (1) and Sunam Gautam (9) depart cheaply.

But the player of the match, Blake, kept the game alive.

Lower order batter Azmatullah Omarzai—who had scored 85 not out against Pokhara Avengers in their opening win—then added 43, slapping Janakpur bowlers with quickfire sixes and fours in his aggressive 15-ball knock to guide Kathmandu to 208-6.

In reply, Janakpur lost wickets at regular intervals and were bundled out for 155, with Omarzai returning figures of 3-25. Samiullah Shinwari, playing for Janakpur for the first time, came up with the highest score of 29. Sundeep Jora scored 26 and Pawan Saffar 24. Kathmandu captain Trevon Griffith failed to make an impression yet again, getting out for three runs.

Basir Ahamad took two wickets for Kathmandu.

SCORECARD

NEPAL T20 LEAGUE
SEVENTH MATCH, TU CRICKET GROUND

TOSS: Lumbini, elected to field first.

Pokhara Avengers 133-9

K Malla 61 (31), U Tharanga 42 (51)

Schalkwyk 3-27, K Mahato 2-20

Lumbini All Stars 135-7 (20 ov)

K Bhurtel 39 (28), Van Schalkwyk 31* (11)

K Malla 2-8

Lumbini win by three wickets.

Player of the match: Shadley van Schalkwyk

EIGHTH MATCH, TU CRICKET GROUND

TOSS: Kathmandu, elected to bat first.

Kathmandu Knights 208-6

A Blake 83 (43), V Singh 49 (34), A Omarzai 43* (15)

P Sarraf 2-18

Janakpur Royals 155 (20 ov)

S Shinwari 29 (27), S Jora 26 (12)

A Omarzai 3-25, B Ahamad 2-27

Kathmandu win by 53 runs.

Player of the match: Alex Blake

TODAY'S MATCHES

Far West United vs Lumbini All Stars

Biratnagar Super Kings vs Pokhara Avengers

Tamang takes lead after first round

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, DEC 27

Local pro Niraj Tamang took the lead after the first round of Surya Nepal Eastern Open, the second event under the Surya Nepal Golf Tour 202-23, at the par-70 Dharan Golf Club in Sunsari on Tuesday.

Tamang scored five-under 65 for a one-stroke lead over Nepal number one Sukra Bahadur Rai and Sanjay Lama—both of whom carded four-under 66.

Bhuvan Nagarkoti turned in a round of three-under 67.

Jayaram Shrestha carded an even-par 70. Amateur Raj Kumar Rai scored one-over 71. Rabi Khadka, Ramesh Adhikari, Rame Magar, Surya Prasad Sharma, Tanka Bahadur Karki, Bal Bhadra Rai and Dinesh Prajapati carded two-over 72.

Tamang began the day with birdies on the second, third, fifth and sixth holes before closing with an eagle on the par-4 ninth hole for six-under 30 on the front nine. On the back nine, he made three straight birdies on 10th,

Tamang scores five-under 65 for a one-stroke over Surka Rai and Sanjay Lama.

11th and 12th holes but dropped shots on 13th, 14th, 17th and 18th holes for one-over 35.

Rai opened with two straight bogeys, birdied the fifth, sixth and ninth holes for one-under 35 on the front nine. On the back nine, he carded birdies on the 10th, 13th, 15th and 18th holes with a drop shot on the 14th for three-under 31.

Lama played three-under 33 on the front nine with birdies on the second, fifth and sixth holes. On the back nine, he made birdies on the 10th, 16th and 18th holes against bogeys on 13th and 14th holes for one-under 33.

Nagarkoti hit his tee shot out of bounds on the first hole and shot a double-bogey, then birdied the third and ninth holes and closed the front nine at even-par 36. On the back nine, he made birdies on the 10th, 12th and 13th holes for three-under 31.

A total of 40 golfers—29 pros and 11 amateurs—are taking part in the 54-hole competition.

Cut will be applied after the second round with top 21 pros and at least six amateurs making it to the final round. The event carries a purse of Rs800,000, with top three pros receiving Rs140,000, Rs90,000 and Rs67,000, respectively.

The tournament will conclude with the Pro-Am event on December 30.

HOROSCOPE

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

A creative energy will wash over you, though you could find yourself lost in a daydream if you don't funnel these visionary vibes productively. You'll feel supported in your professional goals. Ask for help when you need it.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) ***

Your people-person skills may feel sharper today. People will be drawn to your grace and healing abilities this afternoon. Consider tapping into your spiritual side when you get time. Your intuition will be heightened later tonight.

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

Opportunities to expand your professional standing may manifest today. Use this energy to nurture healthy dynamics with your superiors and colleagues. Invest some time in meaningful relationships later in the day.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) ***

A giddy feeling may find you today. Use this energy to walk a higher path, trusting that the universe has beautiful surprises in store. Afternoon is a good time to show that you care, especially when it comes to love.

LEO (July 23-August 22) ***

A cleansing and supportive energy will surround you today. Use this luminary placement to release that which is no longer serving you, as doing so will help you to feel empowered and in control of your situation.

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

The stars will ask you to prioritize harmony today. These vibes are all about leaning into love and harmony. Don't feel guilty about shirking your responsibilities temporarily in favour of embracing the lighter side of life.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***

Do something nice for your body today. Focus on finding ways to release stress once afternoon emerges. Good vibes will continue to flow later in the day, encouraging you to embrace luxury from the comfort of home.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) ***

Don't be afraid to embrace your wild side. A passionate and romantic energy will find you later in the afternoon, so be sure to invest some love into that special someone. Profound thoughts will find you this evening.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ***

Devote your day to nurturing your heart and most valued relationships. Emotional exchanges will also prove to be quite valuable, making it a good time to open up with someone you trust. Plan on doing self-care this afternoon.

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

You'll have an opportunity to inspire others with your visionary ideas. Try to conversationally nurture your love life later in the afternoon. A cleansing energy will find you later tonight, making it a good time to relax.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) ***

These vibes are all about being present and observant, so be sure to appreciate your surroundings. Feel free to treat yourself to a bit of luxury, but try not to overspend. A sense of peace will surround you this afternoon.

PISCES (February 19-March 20) ***

You'll feel energized, creative, and beloved today. Use this energy to nurture your goals and personal agendas. A new admirer may reveal themselves later in the day. Consider using social media lesser today.

ASTROLOGY.COM

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Excited
- 5 Biscayne Bay city
- 10 Muscle quivers
- 14 Off the —
- 15 Caesar's year
- 16 Water, in Baja
- 17 Dilly
- 18 Walk heavily
- 19 Ears of corn
- 20 Shut the gate
- 22 Menu listing
- 24 Corny
- 25 "—Pan"
- 26 Taverns
- 29 Frosted treat
- 33 Heir to the throne
- 34 Vinyl records
- 35 Some toothpaste
- 36 TV statuettes
- 37 Gift-tag word
- 38 Cochise's warrior
- 40 Head, slangily
- 41 Robin's beak
- 42 Lyrical
- 43 Crushed, as grapes
- 46 Omen
- 47 Coal alternative
- 48 Radio station need
- 49 Troubleshoots
- 52 Less pale

- 55 "Woe is me!"
- 56 Windy City airport
- 58 Pub brews
- 60 Annoy
- 61 Consumer advocate
- 62 Road division
- 63 Smidgens
- 64 Molts
- 65 Weather word

DOWN

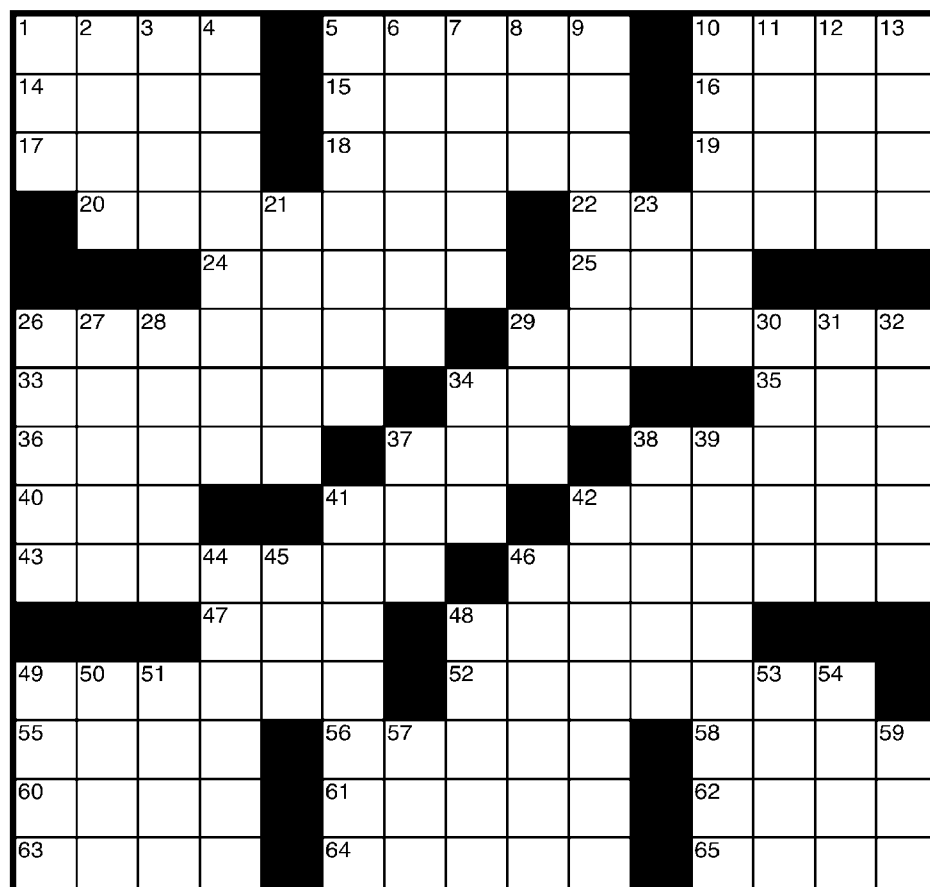
- 1 Cobbler's tool
- 2 France, long ago
- 3 Earthenware pot
- 4 Excessive eating
- 5 Lever or pulley
- 6 Shore indentations
- 7 Battery post
- 8 Fall flower
- 9 Momentum
- 10 Ploy
- 11 The Munsters' bat
- 12 Third power, in math
- 13 Business encl.
- 21 Gator cousins
- 23 Sleep briefly
- 26 Made purchases
- 27 Knight's attire

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



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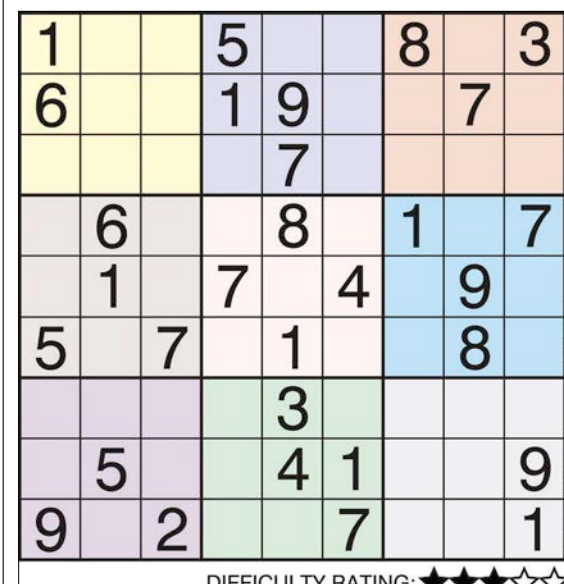
- 28 In-between state
- 29 Paramedic's skill
- 30 Striped stone
- 31 Bacon or Costner
- 32 Put in office
- 33 Easy toss
- 34 Half a sawbuck
- 38 Used a drill
- 39 Hung-jury results
- 41 Ricky and Willie
- 42 Applies makeup
- 44 Puts out a fire
- 45 Use a spade
- 46 Served the tea
- 48 Export or import
- 49 Scurry
- 50 Essay byline
- 51 Hairless
- 53 Joie de vivre
- 54 Gamblers' mecca
- 57 Nasty laugh
- 59 Make a seam



SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

Four last-minute New Year's Eve getaways

Welcome the New Year in a luxurious resort deep in a forest or indulge in unlimited food and drinks with the Himalayas in the backdrop—these four resorts are open and taking bookings for NYE.

RUKUSHA GIRI
KATHMANDU

New Year's Eve is nigh, and it's that time of the year when people start where and how they

would want to ring in the New Year. If you live in Kathmandu Valley and are looking for a getaway for the final day of 2022, we have curated a list of properties that are hosting exciting NYE events.



PHOTO COURTESY: PARK VILLAGE RESORT

Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha

Located on the foothills of Shivapuri National Park, Park Village Resort's location has long made it an ideal weekend getaway destination for Kathmandu's residents. The resort's New Year's Eve event is just one of the many reasons to spend your final day of 2022 at this resort.

The charming resort's NYE event starts early at 6:30 pm and will feature unlimited BBQ snacks, buffet dinner, unlimited drinks until 8pm, live music, and DJ music from 9pm onwards.

Price: Rs 16,999 nett (for two) includes accommodation in a deluxe room and entry to the NYE event.
Contact: 9851230568



PHOTO COURTESY: DE LAKESIDE SIMLANG HOTEL

De Lakeside Simlang Hotel, Markhu

Located around 40 kms from Kathmandu, the delightful hotel in Markhu makes for a great budget escape this New Year's Eve. The property is located just above the Kulekhani Reservoir and offers great views of the man-made lake and its surrounding hills. The hotel's swimming pool area is also a

great spot to watch the sunset. If you are in the mood to party, the hotel's special New Year's Eve event features a live performance by the band Anabhigya followed by party music.

Price: Rs 3,500 nett (per person on a B&B basis) includes welcome drinks, snacks, dinner, and entry to the NYE event.
Contact: 9851114149



PHOTO COURTESY: GOKARNA FOREST RESORT

Gokarna Forest Resort, Gokarneshwar

If you want to escape the city without leaving it, Gokarna Forest Resort, which is nestled deep within the lush Gokarna forest, is the place to be. The resort's special New Year's Eve room package includes accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis, entry to its New Year's Eve event, and access to the swimming pool and gym. The resort's NYE event kicks off at 7:30pm and includes a buffet dinner and unlimited snacks. The event's guests will also get

a free flow of beer, cocktails, mocktails, soft drinks and juices until 11 pm.

Jyostna Maharjan will emcee the event, and there will be a live performance by the band Jung Trio Extended. DJ Shyank will keep the party going into midnight.

Prices: New Year's Eve Room Package rates on a B&B basis and entry to the NYE event starts from Rs 16,999 nett (for single occupancy), Rs 22,999 nett (for double occupancy) and Rs 31,999 nett (for triple occupancy)
Contact: 01-4451212



PHOTO COURTESY: AAGANTUK RESORT

Aagantuk Resort, Dhulikhel

The luxurious Aagantuk Resort has plenty going for it. It is tucked away in a quiet part of Dhulikhel, is surrounded by pine forests, and offers stunning views of the Himalayas. The resort has come up with a stay package designed for its NYE event. The package includes accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis and entry to its New Year's Eve event,

which includes an endless free flow of beer and spirits and unlimited barbecue, snacks, and buffet dinner. The event will also feature live performances by Ashmita Adhikari and Anand Karki

Price: Rs 24,999 nett (for double occupancy on a B&B basis) and includes entry to the NYE event and a bottle of wine in the room.
Contact: 9801907530

The world through Priyam Pradhan's eyes

'The Mind of the Maker' takes us on a journey through the artist's world and, in the process, our own.

SHREYA GAUTAM

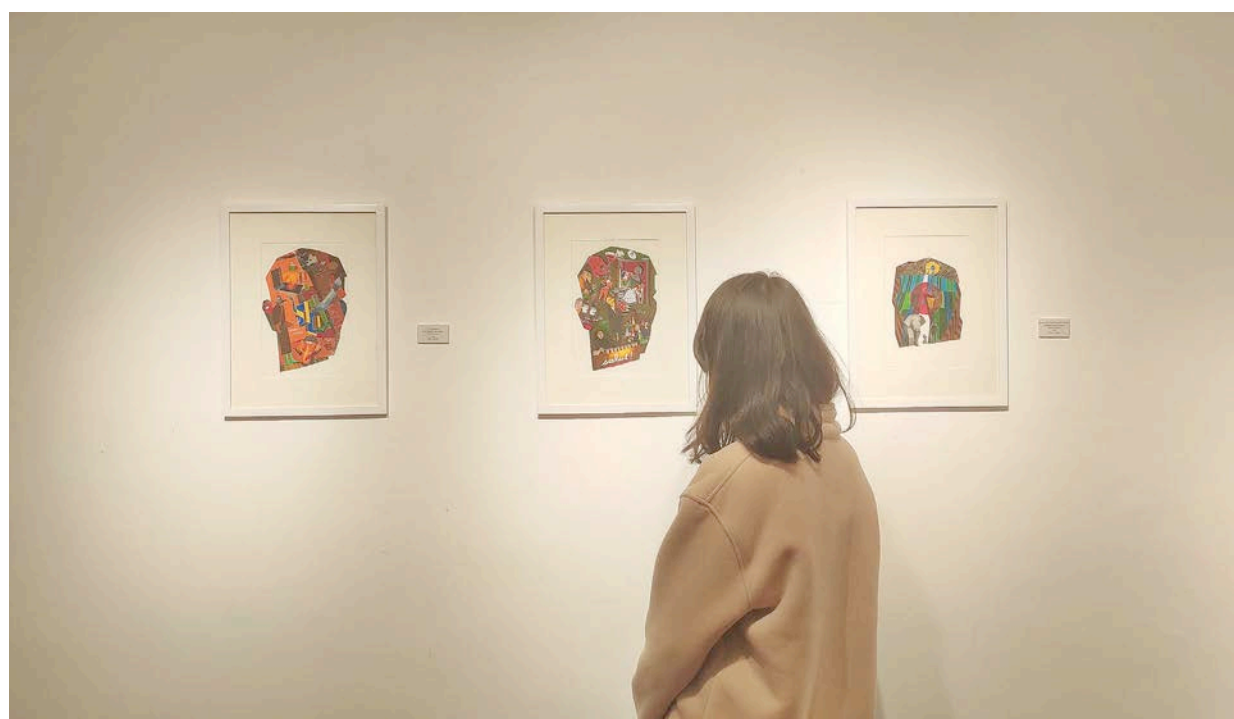
The Mind of the Maker' is the second solo exhibition by the artist Priyam Pradhan. He first began experimenting with art as a tattooist in 2015. However, as he began exploring the depths of art—and his own being—he realised art to be an inseparable part of himself.

Pradhan's 'The Mind of the Maker' is currently being exhibited at Siddhartha Art Gallery. As soon as you enter the exhibition, the first artwork that greets you is 'Has Man a Future?'. The artwork does a great job of setting the mood for the exhibition and gives visitors a glimpse of the worlds they will enter. The bottom of the artwork features a lone married woman sleeping on a couch, whereas at the top is a peculiar man with six arms performing what looks like puppetry. Below it,



a white silhouette resembling a Hindu goddess is sitting on a crane. To the right of the artwork is a man smoking a pipe, his face elevated. To the left is a TV where someone seems to be hosting some show. There is a lamp on top of the TV and, over it, is a poster of a woman. There are also engravings that read—"THE GOOD SIDE" and "7 BILLION PEOPLE DIDN'T DIE TODAY."

If you look at the artwork long enough, giving it the time it deserves, you will find yourself lost in its maze, which seems to represent the artist's mind. This theme continues in the exhibition's other artworks. 'Journey to the End of the Night', 'Price of Insanity', 'Cuckoo Cocoa', 'O' Ganesha', 'Abstract Society', 'Favorite Game', 'Opium', and all the other artworks in the exhibition seem like an invitation for us to gaze and ponder at Pradhan's meditations on religion,



POST PHOTOS: SHREYA GAUTAM

'The Mind of the Maker' features abstract artworks that let viewers interpret them however they want to.

self-awareness, beliefs, games, drama, dreams, and illusions.

The artworks in this exhibition are abstract, and the beauty of this genre is the freedom it allows viewers to interpret the works however they choose. When we look at an abstract painting, we try to derive meaning from it. And when we fail to do so, we reason it with feelings. Yet, at the same time, we cannot help but wonder about the person who created it and think about the thoughts that could have passed in the artist's mind. One cannot deny that it is hard—if not impossible—to separate the art from the artist.

It is quite difficult to comprehend where Pradhan is really coming from in some of his artworks. In the beginning, he takes us inside his mind, and the next moment, we are in outer space. In 'Mind Control', 'The Only Dance There Is' and 'Surrounded by Idiots', we can see the influence jazz has on the artist, while in 'Cuckoo Cocoa', the artist has drawn inspiration from the movie 'French Dispatch'. 'Love Beings' features the Hindu god Ganesha and a fairy, whereas 'Colors Out of Space' features a man sitting in front of a

It is quite difficult to comprehend where Pradhan is coming from in some of his artworks.

mirror and watching what seems to be some variation of his own reflection.

In our bid to interpret abstract artworks, we tend to jump from the creator's mind to something else—a fairytale, the galaxy, the heaven—to our own, only to realise that our minds have a lot in common. This is what Pradhan's exhibition does: the moment you step inside the gallery, you have entered the maker's mind, and you find your way through it, relying on your experiences and understanding.

When I got to share a few exchanges with the artist, I asked him why horses feature in many of his artworks and if the animals signify anything in particular. He brushed off my question, saying, "Sometimes, I use them

to tell my story symbolically." In the end, I was left to figure out the meaning of the horses myself.

Nevertheless, now, we know for sure that Pradhan relies on symbolism in his artworks. So, if you thought you found out the meaning behind the elements in his artworks, you might have been right. And, if you perceived the artworks as just plain thoughts inside the artist's mind, you might have been right, too. It is natural, sometimes, to find what goes on inside the other person's mind nonsensical. Whatever it is, I do not think we ever really know what goes in the maker's mind—even if we are presented with discrete images.

In the end, if you perceive art solely as a means of aesthetics, this exhibition is for you. If you perceive art as a portal to guide you through life, this exhibition is for you. If you are new to art and do not know where to begin, this exhibition is for you. And this exhibition is for you if you simply enjoy art, art for art's sake.

'The Mind of the Maker' will be on display until January 12 at Siddhartha Art Gallery in Baber Mahal Revisited, Kathmandu.

Save the Children and WWF Nepal organise event with 5 youth groups

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU

Save the Children and WWF Nepal in collaboration with five youth groups from the joint partnership 'SHIFT for Our Planet' organised the national level event 'SHIFT-Shifting Power to Young People'. The two international organisations have been jointly implementing "SHIFT for Our Planet", which aims to shift power to young people by supporting them to lead campaigns and advocacy efforts around critical issues that affect them.

The five youth networks that participated in the event were Eco Warriors, Forestry Students' Group, Kayapalat, Nepalese Youth for Climate Action (NYCA), and Pariwartak. During the event, the campaigners from different parts of the country raised their concerns regarding climate change and urged government stakeholders to invest more towards climate justice in an event today. The participating youth groups were selected via an open competition organised by Save the Children and WWF Nepal back in April.

Presenting their climate campaigns at the event, Angel from Eco Warriors said, "Climate change is affecting everyone. But it has impacted the marginalised community more, making them even more vulnerable. Those who do not have access to facilities are forced to depend on nature for livelihood, which at times results in the destruction of natural resources. Realising this, we have recently provided solar panels to 50 households in Humla with the objective of creating awareness on the conservation of forest and lessening their dependency on firewood".

Another participant Ramesh from team Pariwartak said, "Climate change impacts children and youth the most as they will be the ones facing the consequences of today's negligence. Hence, it's time for us to come together as an alliance and raise our voice for more investment and accountability from the government for climate action so that the risk of climate change can be mitigated and children and youth can have a safer future."

At the event, all five youth groups presented their learnings and achievements from their climate change campaigns to stakeholders from government and development agencies.

The Everest Hotel
KATHMANDU

NEW Year's EVE 2023

Dinner | 31 DEC 2022

Welcome the **New Year** in style with a luxurious **dinner buffet** at The Café with live band, Free flowing selected **beverages, impeccable ambience.**
Special prizes to be won through the **lucky draw**

<p>New Year Eve Dinner</p> <p>Lavish New year eve gala dinner 8 pm onwards Unlimited selected beverages Live Band performance NPR 3999 + taxes per person</p>	<p>New Year Getaway Package</p> <p>Lavish New year eve gala dinner 8 pm onwards Unlimited selected beverages Live Band performance Couple accommodation in a deluxe room Breakfast on 1st Jan at the coffee shop NPR 14,999 + taxes per couple</p>
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Venue: The Café & Poolside

Reservations
980-1977323 / 014780100

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