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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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27.0° C -1.0° C
Dhangadi Jomsom

TODAY

NATIONAL

Air quality in Kathmandu deteriorated further on Wednesday reaching a 'hazardous level' after crossing the 300 mark. This raised concern over respiratory conditions, mainly among children and the elderly. **Pg 3**

Despite the reluctance of the top leadership, CPN (Maoist Centre) representatives in the ongoing statute convention have demanded direct elections to pick the party leadership right from the local committees. **Pg 3**

OPINION

Remittances positively affect growth, providing the country with funds for investment. Yet, in Nepal's case, studies are insufficient to show how the money is being used, writes *Jagadish Prasad Bist*. **Pg 4**



MONEY

The line of tractors stretches nearly far as one can see—thousands of protesting Indian farmers heading to the capital New Delhi, determined to bring their anger and woes to politicians. **Pg 5**

WORLD

Palestinians have begun evacuating the main hospital in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis. Weeks of heavy fighting had isolated the medical facility and claimed the lives of several people inside it. **Pg 6**

SPORTS

The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 kicks off in Kirtipur on Thursday, with hosts Nepal taking on Namibia in the first of the 24 tri-series that form a part of qualification process to the 2027 Cricket World. **Pg 7**



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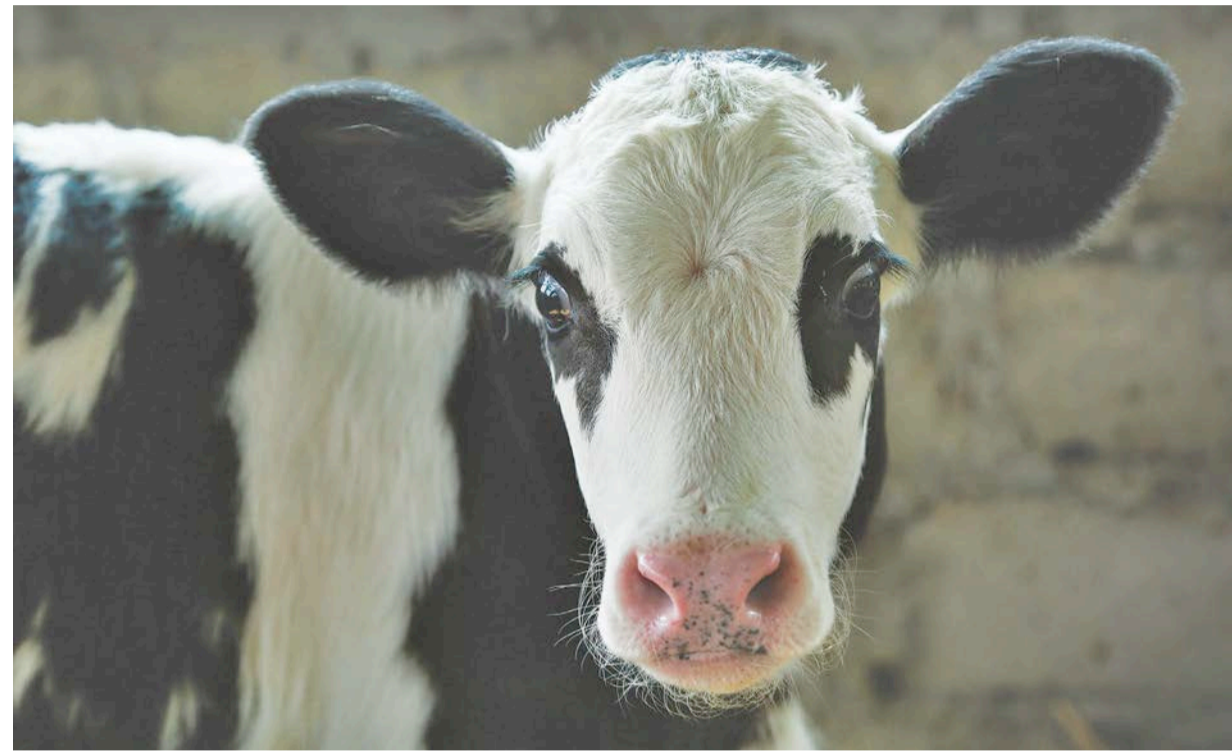
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In Sindhuli, dairy gives farmers, especially women, a new hope

On Tuesday, Nepal and South Korea decided to establish Kamalamai Municipality as the 'Korea-Nepal Model Dairy Village', Korea's first attempt to build a dairy village overseas.



POST PHOTO: PRAKASH CHANDRA TIMILSENA

Nepal's first pure-bred Holstein calf named 'Gamsa' in Korean (meaning thank you) that was handed over by one farmer to another as part of 'passing on the gift' project of Heifer International Nepal, in Sindhuli on Tuesday.

SANGAM PRASAIN
SINDHULI, FEB 14

As soon as Bhola Adhikari hears his cow's loud moo, a sign it should be milked, he sets down the bucket.

"Today [on Tuesday], it gave me 30 litres," said Adhikari of ward 5 of Kamalamai Municipality.

On February 6, his Holstein-Friesian breed cow gave birth to a calf,

Nepal's first pure-bred Holstein. It has been named 'Gamsa' in Korean ('Dhanyabaad' in Nepali), meaning 'thank you'. Holsteins are large, stylish animals with colour patterns of black and white, or red and white.

"I milk the cow three times a day," said Adhikari. "I had never imagined that I would get 30 litres of milk daily, more than three times that we get from the local breed."

In December 2022, under an initiative of Heifer Korea, South Korean dairy farmers and donors gifted 100 purebred Holstein heifers to Nepali farmers in a gesture of cooperation and goodwill between the two nations.

The eight breeding bulls were given to the Nepal Agriculture Research Council and three National Livestock Breeding Offices.

>> Continued on page 5

Congress group aims to put Hindu state on party meet agenda

While proponents say the party should listen to people's voices, others dismiss the agenda as a non-starter.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, FEB 14

Some Nepali Congress leaders are trying to insert the restoration of Hindu state in the agenda of the party's central working committee meeting scheduled for Thursday and also later in the Mahasamiti meeting slated for February 19 to 22.

The Mahasamiti is the highest policy making body of the Nepali Congress. Over 2,300 Mahasamiti members in and outside the country will participate in the meeting, the party said. In order to discuss the possible agendas for the Mahasamiti gathering, Congress has called the meeting of the central working committee for Thursday.

Under the banner of "Political stability, transformation and nobleness, freedom, justice, equality is the commitment of the Nepali Congress," three different proposals will be tabled at the Mahasamiti meeting, said Min Bishwakarma, head of the party's publicity department.

Vice-president Purna Bahadur Khadka will propose a policy report, General Secretary Gagan Thapa will table an organisation report and the other general secretary, Bishwa Prakash Sharma, will table a contemporary political report at the Mahasamiti meeting, he added.

The 56-page policy report covers economic, social, religious, cultural, political and other issues.

"The central working committee meeting that starts Thursday will

approve all three reports which will later be presented at the Mahasamiti meeting," Bishwakarma said.

But ahead of the Mahasamiti meeting, a section of Congress leaders held a gathering and announced a campaign named "Sanatan Hindu Rastra Nepal Sthapana Mahabhiyan" proposing that the party spearhead efforts to restore the Hindu state, which was abolished in 2008 by a decision of the Constituent Assembly. Congress leader Shankar Bhandari, who is also the member of the Parliament from Tanahun district, is leading the campaign and plans to take the matter to

Many Congress central members keen to join Hindu state restoration effort: Lokesh Dhakal

the central working committee meeting, which starts Thursday and later to the Mahasamiti meeting.

"Several Nepali Congress central working committee members and leaders are interested in joining our mega campaign for the restoration of the Hindu state," said Lokesh Dhakal, who is coordinating with different leaders. He said the campaign would bring all pro-Hindu leaders in the party together to strengthen their voice.

>> Continued on page 2

How Europe can dodge a birth rate hard landing

European governments are already spending billions on top of basic welfare provisions to fund pro-child measures.



REUTERS

Soaring housing costs and job insecurity are linked to the low fertility rate in some countries.

REUTERS
LONDON, FEB 14

For Emmanuel Macron, more babies are vital to maintain France's national vigour. Italy's Georgia Meloni has made encouraging more Italian women to give birth a top priority.

But, demographers and economists say, Europe's attempts to boost its flagging birth rate are missing the mark. They urge a rethink—including a change of tack to accept and embrace the economic realities of an ageing population.

"It's very, very difficult to increase fertility," said Anna Matsysiak who, as associate professor of labour market and family dynamics at the University of Warsaw, has observed years of under-achieving pronatalist policies across central Europe.

Europe's fertility rate has been stuck around 1.5 births per woman for the past decade. That is above the lows seen in East Asia, but far short of the 2.1 needed to maintain population levels—a rate Matsysiak and other experts interviewed by Reuters see as highly unlikely to be attained in the foreseeable future.

European governments are already spending billions of euros on top of basic welfare provisions to fund pro-child measures ranging from outright cash incentives for children to tax breaks for larger families, paid parental leave and child benefit.

But even countries such as France and the Czech Republic, which in past years have had relatively lofty fertility rates around 1.8, are now seeing those fall. Across the continent, the reasons are varied and in some cases not fully understood.

Deeper cultural shifts
Marta Seiz, Madrid-based university professor of family sociology, demography and inequalities, said factors such as soaring housing costs and job insecurity were linked to Spain's fertility rate, at 1.19 second lowest in Europe after Malta's.

Europe's fertility rate has been stuck around 1.5 births per woman for the past decade.

"People would like to have children and they would like to have them earlier but they have not been able to do so for structural reasons," she said.

Such economic constraints are felt everywhere. But there is also evidence of a shift in deeper cultural attitudes towards parenthood.

Norway—a wealthy country with strong family supports and job security—saw its fertility rate plummet from 2 in 2009 to 1.41, its lowest on record, by 2022.

>> Continued on page 2

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NATIONAL

DISTRICT DIGEST

Child marriage foiled

KAVRE: The district child club network in Kavre district has prevented a child marriage at Rabiopi in ward 2 of Dhulikhel Municipality. The network stopped the child marriage with the help of police. "A police team was deployed immediately after the child club network informed us about the marriage," said Deputy Superintendent of Police Raj Kumar Shrestha. "The wedding scheduled for Wednesday was stopped since the boy and the girl were found to be underage."

Man held with 2 kg hashish

DARCHULA: Police arrested a 64-year-old man in possession of two kilograms of hashish from Shreebhawar of Baitadi district on Tuesday night. According to the District Police Office in Baitadi, the man, Dhaule Mahar, of ward 5 of Bithhadchir Rural Municipality in Bajhang district, was held during a security check along the Khodpe-Bajhang road section.

Siblings killed in road accident

DANG: Two siblings died when a cycle they were riding was hit by a jeep at Pipari, Deukhuri along the East-West Highway, on Wednesday. A 35-year-old woman and her 16-year-old sister of Jhimruk Rural Municipality, Pyuthan who were currently living in Rapti Rural Municipality-8 died in the accident, police said. The jeep hit the cycle at Rapti-8, injuring them seriously. The 35-year-old woman was declared dead at Lamahi Hospital. The girl was taken to the Rupandehi-based Crimson Hospital where medics pronounced her dead, said Deputy Superintendent of Police Janak Bahadur Malla of Dang District Police Office. The driver is absconding police have impounded the vehicle.

49 goats die in fire

DOLAKHA: As many as 49 goats were charred to death when a farm caught fire in ward 1 of Shailung Rural Municipality in Dolakha on Tuesday evening. Police said the farm belonging to Sunti Tamang caught fire at around 6pm. The fire broke out from a hearth, police said. Preliminary police investigation shows that property worth around Rs1.3 million was destroyed in the incident.

Shuklaphanta National Park ramps up grassland management to preserve swamp deer habitat

As per the latest count, the national park spread over 305 square kilometres is home to more than 2,300 swamp deer.



(Left) A herd of swamp deer at Shuklaphanta National Park in this recent photo. (Right) A tractor cuts grass inside the park as part of managing the grasslands to create a proper feeding environment for wild animals, mainly the swamp deer.

BHAWANI BHATTA
KANCHANPUR, FEB 14

In some areas, workers are busy cutting grass, while controlled bonfires are being conducted in others. New sprouts are growing in the place where dried grass was burnt recently. Grassland management efforts are currently being carried out vigorously inside the Shuklaphanta National Park to ensure an adequate food supply for swamp deer.

"The grassland management work generally begins from mid-January and continues till mid-June every year. Various tasks are being carried out simultaneously in different grassland areas," said Manoj Air, conservation officer at the national park. According to him, around 150 to 200 hectares of grassland are managed every year.

The grasslands of Shuklaphanta

National Park, the country's second youngest national park after the Parsa National Park, is the main habitat of swamp deer. The park's grasslands covering an area of 54.5 square kilometers are one of the largest in South Asia. According to conservationists, the vast grasslands should be managed on a regular basis to create a proper habitat and feeding environment for wild animals, mainly the swamp deer.

The swamp deer (*Rucervus duvaucelii*), known as barhasingha in Nepali, face shortage of food during the dry season—from April to June—as grasses fade due to scorching heat. So the park authorities manage various plots of grassland on a rotational basis.

According to the Shuklaphanta National Park, at present the grassland management work is underway in around 63 hectares. The national

park, Air said, awarded a contract at Rs1.5 million to manage the grasslands. The National Trust for Nature Conservation, the Zoological Society of London, the Tarai Arc Landscape Project among other organisations

Calm and cloudy days of winter are suitable for carrying out controlled bonfires.

working in the conservation sector have also been assisting the grassland management work.

Conservationists say that swamp deer will face a shortage of food if the grasses are overgrown. According to Air, while some birds and animals

may be affected while disposing of overgrown grasses, it has a larger positive impact.

"Before cutting and burning the grass, fire lines are made to prevent the fire from spreading to other areas. Workers should be deployed on all sides of the grassland with water to douse the fire in case it spreads," said Air.

According to him, calm and cloudy days of winter are suitable to carry out controlled bonfires.

Park officials are also studying about grasses and grassland management. "The study is mainly focused on finding the places where the grasses grow well and whether the wildlife likes such grasses or not. Data collection has been completed and currently it is being analysed," said Air.

"We will develop a plan to grow the grass species preferred by swamp deer."

Established as a wildlife reserve in 1976 and declared a national park in 2017, Shuklaphanta is located in the southwestern corner of Nepal in the Sudurpaschim province. As per the latest count, the national park is home to more than 2,300 swamp deer.

Seven years ago, around two dozen swamp deer were translocated to Bardiya and Chitwan national parks from Shuklaphanta. But the drive hit a snag as the shifted deer species could not survive in the new habitats. According to the Shuklaphanta National Park officials, all the swamp deer sent to Bardiya and Chitwan died.

Swamp deer are the prey animals for tigers. An increase in swamp deer population is supposed to benefit the big cats. Shuklaphanta National Park, which is spread over an area of 305 square kilometres, is home to 36 adult tigers.

Now, a group in Congress wants Hindu state back, launches push



A group of Congress leaders advocating for restoration of the Hindu state, meeting in the Capital, Sunday.

Continued from page 1

In the last Mahasamiti meeting in 2018, over 700 Mahasamiti members (around 30 percent) had supported the agenda of the restoration of the Hindu state. Several of the party's central working committee members like Bhandari, Pushpa Bhusal, Urmila Thapaliya, Gehendra Giri, Bhim Parajuli, Prakash Snehi, Chandra KC, and Mukta Kumari Yadav, among others, plan to raise the issue of restoration of the Hindu state at the central working committee on Thursday. The leaders, numbering around two dozen, aim to persuade the central committee to include the issue of Hindu state on the agenda of the Mahasamiti meeting for discussion. The Hindu state campaigners who met also on Wednesday, decided to officially forward the agenda to the central working committee. However, it is up to the party (central working committee) to decide whether to include it on the Mahasamiti's agenda.

"Our demand is to restore Nepal as a Vaidik Sanatan Hindu state," said Dhakal. "The majority of Nepali people are in favour of restoration of the Hindu state. Therefore, in line with their wishes, the Congress

should take the lead."

But other Congress leaders speak of the unlikelihood of the proposal on Hindu state being included in the central working committee meeting agenda.

"Any agenda to be presented in the central working committee meeting should originate from the party president and general secretary, but as of now, neither the party president nor the two general secretaries have received any proposal on the restoration of the Hindu state," said Bishwakarma. "An individual member may raise any issue in the central working committee meeting, but institutionally, it will not be the official agenda," he said.

Dhakal said the campaign for restoration of the Hindu state will meet again on Saturday to discuss how to effectively present the issue of restoration of the Hindu state in the Mahasamiti meeting, according to Dhakal.

But Bishwakarma said that the agenda of restoration of Hindu state is gaining attention outside the party, but it does not have clout and influence inside the party.

Nain Singh Mahar, another central working committee, said that he is in favour of implementing the country's constitution that advocates secularism. "We should not treat the state as an experimenting ground," said Mahar, adding, "Whatever is enshrined in the constitution of Nepal should be effectively implemented."

Foreign Minister Saud meets his New Zealander counterpart

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, FEB 14

Minister for Foreign Affairs NP Saud on Wednesday met Winston Peter, deputy prime minister and minister for foreign affairs and trade of New Zealand.

Issuing a press statement, the Embassy of Nepal in Australia, which is also accredited to New Zealand, said the two ministers expressed satisfaction over the 'excellent state of bilateral relations' between the two friendly nations and

exchanged views on enhancing cooperation in the areas of mutual interests.

"The Nepali Society in Wellington together with the Honorary Consul of Nepal to New Zealand organised an interaction programme with Minister Saud and the visiting delegation at Wellington," the statement further reads.

The matters relating to providing passport and consular services to the Nepali community in New Zealand more conveniently and utilising the knowledge, expertise and skills of Nepalis residing in New Zealand for the benefit of the

country were discussed at the interaction, the embassy said. Minister Saud also visited the Parliament of New Zealand and observed the Question Time, the embassy said.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Second edition of Nepal-New Zealand Foreign Ministry Consultation was held between the senior officials of both the ministries.

Minister Saud reached New Zealand on Tuesday. He is scheduled to arrive in Kathmandu on Thursday completing his Australia and New Zealand visits.

Flagging birth rates, aging population worry Europe

Continued from page 1

In a 2023 country review, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) suggested reasons for the fall including changing gender roles, greater focus on careers and even how social media can amplify a sense of insecurity. It concluded, however, that the slump remained a conundrum.

Finnish demographer Anna Rotkirch has also observed deep cultural changes in surveys assessing a similar drop in fertility in her country, with many young adults now seeing a fundamental trade-off between parenthood and other goals.

"This goes right into what is a desirable, pleasant and attractive life path, lifestyle, and broader values and ideals," said Rotkirch, research professor and director of Finland's Population Research Institute.

"No one really knows what kind of family policy would work in this new situation to promote fertility."

Untapped potential

So does this condemn Europe to the dire "demographic timebomb" scenario often evoked of ageing, ultimately shrinking societies unable to sustain pension provision, hamstrung by chronic labour shortages and with no one to care for the old?

That depends on whether its economies deploy some of the levers at their disposal to adapt.

Economist David Miles at Imperial College London rejects the "timebomb" warning and says falling populations can avoid lower living standards if output per capita is maintained: among other things, if they evolve to work more and better.

"There is a deep flaw in the logic that there is something magical about 65 as the age when work stops," said Miles, who argued that greater life expectancies and lower prevalence of strenuous work in Europe's services-dominated economies made it possible for people to remain in labour markets for longer.

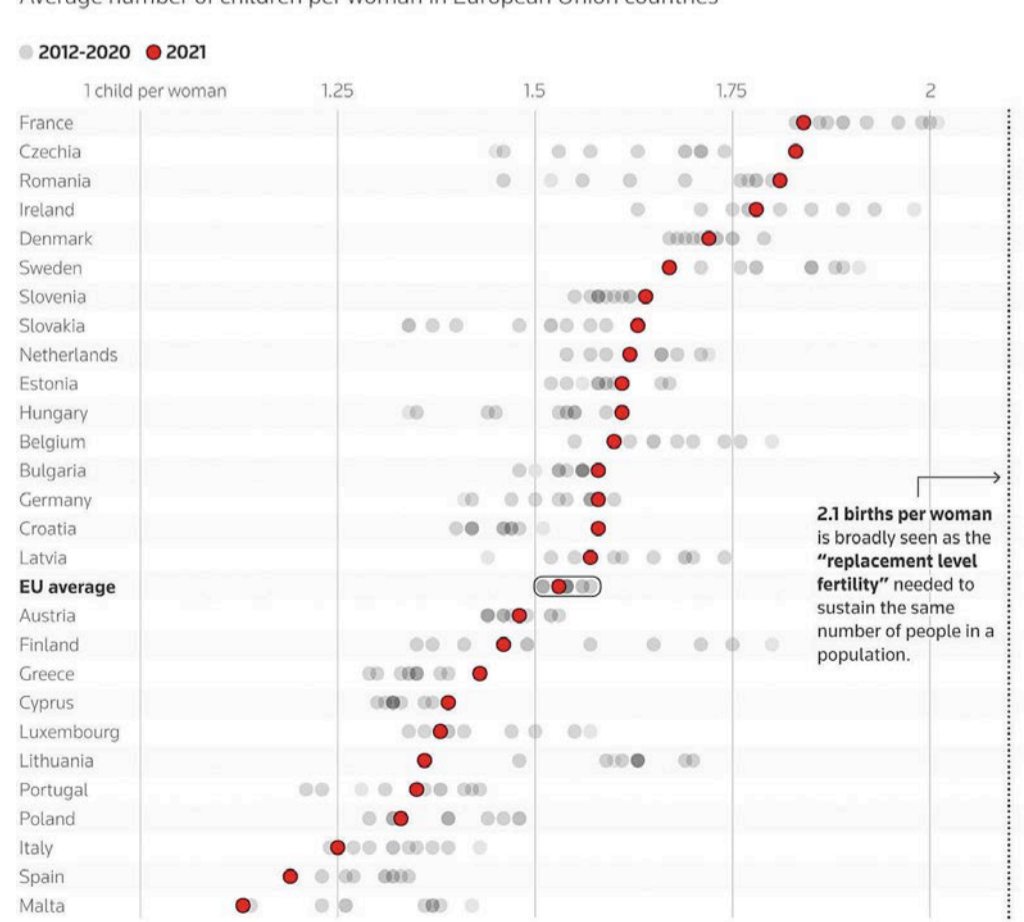
Moves to raise retirement ages remain politically toxic—witness the protests against Macron's reforms last year. But the age at which workers in advanced economies leave the labour market has been rising slowly but steadily since around 2000.

Increasing women's access to work could yield even more benefits. The proportion of European women in the labour market stands at around 69 percent—11 percent lower than for men—meaning the untapped potential is high.

"A lot of additional economic resources can be drawn from that," noted Willem Adema, senior economist in the OECD Social Policy Division,

Despite some gains, EU struggles to raise birth rate

Average number of children per woman in European Union countries



Note: Latest available data as of 2021.

Source: Eurostat

Prinz Magtulis • Feb. 7, 2024 | REUTERS

citing teleworking and other flexible arrangements as ways of helping more women into work.

Europe can also import more labour: beyond the noisy anti-immigrant rhetoric, it already relies on some 10 million non-EU workers. While migrants' parental choices and welfare profile ultimately mirror those of the wider population, they have proven vital in addressing specific labour shortages.

And while predictions of the economic boost likely from automation and artificial intelli-

gence can be taken with a pinch of salt, they at least offer the scope to enhance productivity.

Finland's Rotkirch emphasised there was a still a need for family policy to support the decisions of would-be parents but called for a much wider debate on how to address low fertility, which she said traditional family policies alone would not fix.

"You see the long term trends," said Adema. "If people don't want to have children, there's no point forcing them."

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Re-Invitation for Sealed Quotation (International Competitive Bidding)

Date of Publication 15th February 2024

Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC), Continuing Airworthiness Management Department Invites Sealed Quotation from PT6A-27 Engine Repair/Overhaul Organization (MROs) for exchange of its two (02) PT6A-27 core engines. The MROs are encouraged to visit the Notice/Announcement page in NAC Website: www.nepalairlines.com.np for detail information and downloading the Sealed Quotation Document.

Completed Sealed Quotation document should reach to the address given below within 07 (Seven) days before 17:00 hours local time from the first date of publication of this notice. For further information, please contact:

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Maoist representatives want direct elections for leadership positions

So far, the party's general convention only elects central members. Other committees and office bearers are picked from the central committee.

□ BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, FEB 14

Despite the reluctance of the top leadership, CPN (Maoist Centre) representatives in the ongoing statute convention have demanded direct elections to pick the party leadership right from the local committees.

Presenting reports on the draft statute of the party, most of the group leaders recommended changes in the practice of selecting the leadership. At present, the party's general convention only elects central committee members. The members of other committees and office bearers get nominated from among the central committee members.

On Wednesday afternoon, the group leaders started presenting the conclusions from the respective committees. As many as 1,300 representatives of the third largest party are discussing the draft statute in the three-day jamboree that started on Tuesday. The representatives have been divided into 20 groups each comprising around 55 to 60 representatives. The leaders from the 13 groups presented their conclusion on Wednesday.

Provincial committees will be 125-strong with 9 office bearers. District committees can have up to 99 members.

"There is a strong voice to adopt direct elections at all levels. The party will reach a conclusion after listening to the remaining seven committees," said Maheshwor Jung Gahatraj, one of the team leaders.

The party chairperson and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Tuesday presented the draft statute for discussion and feedback. The draft dossier, prepared by a committee led by the party's vice-chairperson Pampha Bhusal, couldn't be a unanimous document following the differences among the leaders over the leadership selection process. The party's top order, including Dahal, is for allowing the central committee to nominate the party leadership.

The second rung, however, wants all the positions to be elected directly by the general convention. Janardan Sharma, a deputy general secretary, has presented a separate proposal at the convention which envisions changing the party's name in addition to conducting direct elections for all party positions and imposing term and age caps.

Ranjeet Tamang, another group leader, said some of the groups recommended curbing the size of party committees, changing the name and electoral symbol and adopting direct elections at all levels. He had recom-

mended endorsing the statute and bringing it into force immediately.

Most of the committees had similar recommendations. Yubraj Chaulagain, another group leader, said there was a strong voice for imposing an age limit for active politics. "Renaming the party as CPN (Socialist), choosing office bearers through direct elections and imposing three terms for a leader to hold government positions are other suggestions from our group."

The draft statute proposes downsizing the central committee to 151 from the existing one, which exceeds 600 members. Most of the representatives welcomed the provision and suggested further cuts in the number if possible. The statute under consideration envisions the politburo reduced to a third of the central committee while the Standing Committee would be a third of the politburo. However, some of the leaders have suggested scrapping the Standing Committee to remove a layer in the party structure.

As per the draft statute, the chairperson would be the party supremo, but the Maoist Centre will also follow the principle of collective leadership. It envisions a senior vice-chair, vice-chair, general secretary, deputy general secretary, secretary and treasurer. However, it doesn't specify their numbers. Led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the party currently has 15 office bearers.

If the statute gets endorsed, all party committees will have 49 percent representation of the marginalised and underprivileged communities. There is 45 percent reservation for such groups in the constitution.

The draft statute envisions 35 percent women's representation in all party structures. Similarly, only those who have been with the party for 10 years can be general convention representatives.

The provincial committees will be 125-strong with nine office bearers while the district committees can have up to 99 members.

As the Maoist Centre general convention held in December 2021 was solely focused on selecting the party leadership, there was an agreement among the leaders to hold a separate convention to discuss and endorse the party statute.

The main opposition CPN-UML in October 2021 had finalised its statute through a special convention and the general convention was held next month to elect the party leadership. The Maoist Centre has become the second party to embrace the practice. Voices are being raised in the Nepali Congress also for a separate statute convention, saying the electing party leadership becomes the entire focus of the general convention with little focus on discussing the party policies.

Ganesh Shah, the party secretary, said the feedback was encouraging. "The convention will endorse the statute on Thursday once all the committees complete presenting their reports," he said.



Children scribble letters on the wall on the occasion of Shri Panchami at the Saraswati Temple premises in Swayambhu, Kathmandu on Wednesday.

POST PHOTO: KESHAV THAPA

Electricity authority opens door for power purchase deal with smaller projects

The electricity authority is also ready to sign PPA with solar projects up to 800MW.

□ POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, FEB 14

Nepal Electricity Authority has opened the door for signing the power purchase agreement with the developers of run-of-the-river type projects with a generation capacity of up to 10MW.

A meeting of the NEA board on February 7 decided to sign the PPA with developers of the run-of-the-river and peaking run-of-the-river type projects with the capacity up to 10MW, the power monopoly said in a statement on Wednesday.

The NEA will sign a PPA with any such developers at any time, the statement reads. The PPA will be signed on a take-or-pay basis, which means the power utility will have to pay as agreed, irrespective of whether it takes the power from the project or not. The utility body said it would pay Rs8.40 per unit in the dry (winter) season and Rs4.80 per unit in the wet (rainy) season.

The NEA opened the door last year for signing PPA with run-of-the-river type projects up to the combined capacity of 1500MW.

It had earlier halted PPA signing with the developers of the run-of-the-

river type projects for three years owing to the financial risks of buying excess power in the rainy season.

As the run-of-the-river type projects generate electricity at their full capacity during the wet season (June to November), the country experiences a surplus in the period.

Nepal's failure to export power during the wet season has led to power spillage. That's why the NEA has been reluctant to buy power from run-of-the-river type projects as the long-term market is not guaranteed.

NEA opened the door last year for signing PPA with RoR projects up to the combined capacity of 1500MW.

"The decision [to sign PPA for projects up to 10MW] was taken to attract small investors to the hydropower sector and ensure better use of the country's natural resources," the statement quoted NEA Managing Director Kul Man Ghising as saying.

Last year, the government increased the share of power to be generated from run-of-the-river type projects to 45 percent from 35 percent of the energy mix amid the prospect of selling more power in India.

In 2018, the government adopted a mixed policy for the targeted power generation of 15000MW in 10 years and fixed the shares of run-of-the-river, storage, peaking run-of-the-river type projects and alternative energy.

As the NEA has already signed PPA with developers of run-of-the-river type projects up to 6,750MW, it hadn't been able to sign PPA with smaller run-of-the-river type projects. The authority said it has signed a PPA with developers of several projects up to a combined capacity of 9,200MW.

As the PPA quota will no longer apply to projects up to 10MW, the NEA will sign PPA with all developers of such projects, said Ghising. According to the NEA, it has received applications from developers of 89 run-of-the-river type projects with generation capacity below 10MW. Their combined capacity is 351MW.

Of them, 44 projects with a combined capacity of 195MW have already signed grid connection agreements with the NEA.

Pradeep Kumar Thike, deputy managing director at the NEA, said it also opened the door not only for those developers who have applied for PPA but those who will apply in the future.

Meanwhile, the NEA also decided to sign a PPA with the developers of projects whose capacity is increased by up to 25 percent. "The generation mix quota will not be applicable for PPA signing for increased capacity," the NEA said.

According to Ghising, PPA will be signed under 'take or pay' modality for the increased generation up to 25 percent while 'take and pay' modality will be applicable for the power beyond the 25 percent threshold.

Likewise, the NEA also opened the door for signing PPA with solar project developers up to 800MW. Solar projects with the capacity of 106MW are currently in operation. It has so far signed PPA with solar projects with a combined capacity of 175MW. Projects totalling 30MW are in the process of PPA signing.

"Signing PPA with solar plants has been prioritised to meet the power demand in winter as they can be ready in one-and-a-half years," Ghising said.

As air in Kathmandu Valley deteriorates to hazardous level, patients of respiratory illness rise

A low-pressure system formed in the west caused cloudy conditions throughout the country on Wednesday.

□ ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, FEB 14

Air quality in the Kathmandu valley deteriorated further on Wednesday reaching a 'hazardous level', crossing the 300 mark, that raised concern about respiratory conditions, especially among children and elderly people.

According to IQAIR, a Swiss group that collects real-time air-quality data from around the globe, particulate matter pollution (PM2.5) levels of Sallaghari Bhaktapur reached 305 micrograms per cubic metre by 10:45 am.

PM2.5 refers to particulate matter or solid and liquid droplets in the air that are less than 2.5 micrometres, or 400th of a millimetre, in diameter.

As per the United States Environment Protection Agency's air quality index, when air pollutant PM2.5 exceeds 300 µg/m³, the level is considered 'hazardous' for everyone and may prompt emergency condition alerts.

The Kathmandu Valley's Air Pollution Management Action Plan provides that the authorities can declare a public health emergency whenever AQI readings exceed 300. However, none of the agencies concerned has considered declaring a public health emergency to mitigate the impact of air pollution.

"We have deployed 300 cleaning staffers, who have been removing dust from the streets of the metropolis," said Rabin Man Shrestha, chief of the



A cloud of haze envelops the Kathmandu valley, as seen from Thapathali, Kathmandu on Wednesday.

POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

environment department at the Kathmandu Metropolitan City. "We have also been spraying water to

lessen the dust pollution."

The air quality monitoring station at Nagarjun recorded particulate

matter pollution (PM2.5) levels 228 micrograms per cubic metre, which is a very unhealthy level. When air

pollutant PM2.5 reaches 201 to 300 µg/m³, air quality is considered very unhealthy; everyone may experience problems, with sensitive groups experiencing more severe effects.

Likewise, several other places in the Valley having air-quality monitoring stations recorded deterioration in the air quality.

Doctors suggest people of risk groups, including children, pregnant women, elderly and those with respiratory illnesses, avoid all outdoor activities.

Experts advise people to avoid exposure to pollution and wear face masks while going out.

"Even healthy and young people could suffer from respiratory problems when air quality deteriorates to hazardous levels," said Dr Raju Pangi, a pulmonologist. "People should avoid outdoor activities if the air quality levels remain hazardous."

Doctors say air pollution is known to cause various respiratory illnesses. Poor air quality can cause short- and long-term effects on public health. Bad air quality can lead to pneumonia, bronchitis, conjunctivitis, skin allergy, stroke, and heart problems in the short term, and ulcers and cancer

of the lungs and intestine, kidney disease, and heart problems in the long run.

Doctors advise people to avoid highly polluted places and stay home. They say that recovery from infections of other viruses also slows down when the air quality deteriorates.

"Every day I encounter at least one patient, whose entire family has been infected with viral infections," said Pangi. "Young people are getting infected with viral infections and elderly people from their family are getting hospitalised."

Experts advise people to avoid exposure to pollution and wear face masks while going out.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Forecasting Division of the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology said that a low-pressure system formed in the west caused cloudy conditions throughout the country on Wednesday.

"Weather has been clear in most places of Sudurpaschim, Karnali and Gandaki provinces," said Raju Pradhananga, a senior divisional meteorologist at the division. "Some places of Koshi and Madhesh provinces witnessed light rainfall. The weather will clear from Thursday."

Pradhananga said there is no weather system in sight that would cause rainfall in the Kathmandu valley. The country has not witnessed heavy rainfall since October last year. Experts blamed the lack of rainfall for a long time for the worsening air quality in the Valley.

OPINION



OUR VIEW

Old story, new twist

The saga of Nepali youth dying in senseless foreign wars like the one in Ukraine should stop.

For over 200 years, Nepal actively sent its youth as mercenaries and earned a commission in return for their sweat and blood. Having little to survive on at home, the youths happily sacrificed their lives for the people who were not their compatriots, and for a country that was not their own. From fighting to suppress the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny to the twin World Wars to the Falkland War to the “War against Terror” in Iraq and Afghanistan, Nepalis have for generations shed their blood in distant, senseless wars.

And yet, despite the 200-year history of making our children orphans and our women widows, we continue to repeat the sordid history. At this moment, another generation of Nepalis is fighting yet another senseless war in a distant land in Ukraine. The story this time is slightly different. The government does not have to “sell” its youths for a little commission. The youths themselves are finding their way to the war fields in Ukraine. What connects the youths who have died over 200 years ago for the British forces and those who die for the Russian forces is the desperation to eke out a living.

The latest “good” news is that Russia has responded to Nepal’s concerns about Nepali youths joining the Russian military fighting its war against Ukraine. Months after the government started lobbying for the return of the Nepali youths, there is finally an acknowledgement from the Kremlin. But no, Vladimir Putin’s government has not agreed to send our men back. Instead, they will send money to the families of the youths killed in the war. It’s the same, old story of blood money. Earlier, an elite group took a cut for sending Nepali youth as mercenaries, now families get compensation in return for the death of their youth.

As per reports, the families of the slain youth will receive up to Rs15 million in compensation and insurance, and around Rs7.3 million if the deceased had no insurance. After much delay, the Russian government has agreed to pay the compensation through the Nepali Embassy in Moscow. As per official figures, 14 Nepalis have lost their lives fighting on the Russian side in its invasion of Ukraine. But there is no word yet on compensation for the injured. Moreover, there is no commitment from the Kremlin about stopping the recruitment of Nepali youths, despite Nepali sending two diplomatic notes on this issue.

Meanwhile, there seems to be no stopping the youths from embarking on the perilous path. The perennial struggle for survival in Nepal continues to push them to join the war which is not their own. The lure of Russian citizenship, coming from none other than President Putin himself, is rendering the appeals of the Nepali government to the youths not to join the war null and void. Yet appeals, even a touch of pressure, on the Russians to be more respectful of Nepal’s concerns should continue. As we push for the repatriation of the Nepali youth and compensation for the deaths, it is as important to consider why there has been no let up in the long history of Nepal sending its youths to fight other people’s wars.

THEIR VIEW

TikTok traffickers

We need a multi-dimensional response to address this, including organising awareness campaigns.

It is deeply concerning to know the extent to which criminals are able to exploit social media platforms to upend the lives of vulnerable people. On Tuesday, this daily reported the story of two underage girls who were preyed upon by a transnational gang that trafficked at least 100 girls to India over a single year. The girls in question, like most such victims, were targeted through TikTok by the traffickers, who convinced them to leave behind their homes and families in pursuit of success as content creators. They did, but then fell into the traps of the syndicate that may have already transferred them to India. Now, they could be victims of anything from forced prostitution to organ harvesting.

There are several factors behind the rise in TikTok trafficking of late. There is the lack of awareness among the poor, particularly young people, who may be adept at using smartphones and the Internet but are unable to identify the pitfalls, such as lucrative job/career-building opportunities offered by traffickers. Equally troubling is the authorities’ response to deter these criminals. Take, for instance, the 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report by the US State Department that found that while the courts and tribunals in Bangladesh had convicted 94 traffickers in 35 cases during the reporting period, only 33 traffickers received prison terms, while 61 were simply fined. Such punishments appear lenient for criminals luring vulnerable people out of their homes with false promises and putting them at fatal risks. In one of the cases, a Bangladeshi girl named Tumpa Akter was killed in India’s Gujarat after being taken there by traffickers who had targeted her through TikTok.

We need a multi-dimensional response to address this threat, including organising awareness campaigns, especially in rural areas, to educate individuals to navigate the traps of the cyberspace. It is also important that there are proper trial, prompt conviction and punishment matching the crimes of traffickers, which may deter prospective criminals. Also, strengthening security at our border with India is essential to stop trafficking gangs from operating there.

— The Daily Star (Bangladesh)/ANN

Pakistan election: Who is the winner?

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Political instability will add to the country’s economic predicaments as it faces severe economic challenges.

SMRUTI S PATTANAİK



On February 8, 2024, Pakistanis voted for their 16th parliamentary election, which many initially speculated would be postponed and, if held, rigged in favour of the Pakistan Muslim League (N). However, the election results brought interesting numbers—none of the parties got the majority. A total of 101 independent candidates, most of whom were supported by the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), have the largest number of seats. Announcement of the results was inordinately delayed in some constituencies. The suspension of mobile service on voting day gave rise to the rumour of rigging.

How are we to interpret this fractured mandate? The votes each political party drew reflect that it is essentially against the Army’s political interference, which Imran Khan championed after he was ousted from power. If the past is an indicator, the parties’ lack of majority in the Parliament and formation of a coalition will make the government susceptible to manipulation by the Army.

PDM government II?

Since the independent candidates, despite winning the largest number of seats in the 266 directly elected constituencies, are not organised as a political party, they cannot stake claim to form the government. Out of the independents, 93 were supported by the PTI. The PML-N, which has emerged as the largest party with 75 seats, is short of a majority in Parliament and is in talks with other political parties to form the next government. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has won 54 seats whereas the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (Pakistan) (MQM-P) has attained 17 seats.

On February 13, six political parties, including PML-N, PPP, PML-Q (Quaid), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan came together to form a coalition government. The consensus candidate for prime minister was Shehbaz Sharif, younger brother of Nawaz Sharif and the outgoing prime minister of



AP/RS

Pakistan. Asif Ali Zardari, who was the President of Pakistan from 2008-13, is set to assume the office of presidency again, while Maryam Nawaz will be sworn in as the chief minister of Punjab, the province that determines the political fortune of parties as it is the largest province with the largest number of seats in Pakistan’s National Assembly. While welcoming the PTI to join the coalition, Asif Ali Zardari, who took the lead in this negotiation, said that their “economic and defence agenda should be common”. But interestingly, the PTI in X account captioned this coalition as “mandate thieves”.

After removing Imran Khan from premiership through a no-confidence vote in April 2022, the opposition parties formed a 13-party Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government. This government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, empowered the Army by passing acts like the Army Amendment Bill, the Official Secrets Amendment and the Criminal Law Amendment Bill that prevented criticism of the Army. The Military courts, under which many of Khan’s supporters tried vandalising Army installations and attacking the Corp Commander’s house, were strengthened by Shehbaz Sharif’s government.

The return of Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan and his acquittal from several cases in which he was accused gave rise to the assumption that he was the favoured candidate of the establishment. However, Nawaz has withdrawn from the prime ministerial race and has blessed his younger brother, Shehbaz, to become the premier for the second time. Interestingly, the PML-N has marginally improved its number of seats—it had won 64 seats in the National Assembly in 2018 despite Sharif’s adverse relations with Army, and has won 75 seats this time, when he is touted as a favourite of the Army.

While the PTI campaigned against the Army’s interference in politics and

the imprisonment of their leader in corruption cases, the most frivolous case against him was he being sentenced to seven years in prison on the ground of iddat. This also demonstrated that the poster boy of the Army was turned into a villain as serious differences cropped up between him and the establishment over the Army chief’s appointment.

After the conclusion of this election, where the PTI could not fight on its election symbol of Bat, his supporters continued to harp on rigging. They happily accepted the blatant electoral support that the Army extended to them earlier, which resulted in the Party increasing its seats from 27 in 2013 to 115 in 2018. In April 2018, Sharif was disqualified from contesting the election as per the provision of 62(1)(f) to facilitate Khan’s victory. This ban for life was lifted by the Supreme Court prior to the 2024 election as the court said that the ban cannot be more than five years and is against fundamental rights to contest election.

The PTI’s narrative since 2013 has been that their votes were stolen. In fact, many of the demonstrations organised by the PTI at that time revolved around this issue, which led to the setting up of the Judicial Commission, whose findings rejected Khan’s claims. They are trying to bring back the same narrative now to argue that it is the Army that has manipulated the election to deny the PTI majority in the Parliament by stealing votes. There is no denying the fact that despite all odds, Khan still retains popularity compared to the PML-N and PPP.

The party that almost lost popularity in 2021-22 in the face of a rising economic crisis has persisted, as Imran remained adamant on his stance not to approach the IMF. He turned the table on his detractors when he attributed his loss of majority in Parliament to Western conspiracy. He

criticised his benefactors for interfering in politics and being above the law. He also accused the Army of being petrified of his popularity and, therefore, arresting him.

Advantage Army?

Social media is rife with the assumption that the Army could not manage the election as the PTI-backed independents, popularly known as Azad, won many seats. However, several reports in the print media allege irregularity in the election even as the establishment calls for politicians to show maturity and unity.

A fractured mandate has always given the Army the space to call the shots. After the 2008 transition to democracy, the PPP and the PML-N as political parties retained power in the Centre even though their prime ministers were removed through judicial verdicts. The PTI, which formed a coalition government stitched by the military with the support of other parties, could not last the five-year term as the Judiciary opened in the middle of the night to ensure that Khan stands for a floor test to prove his majority in the house which he failed.

The Army’s ability to play one party against another is well known. It empowered the PTI as both the PPP and the PML-N were critical of the Army and its interference. Nawaz Sharif filed a treason case against General Musharraf, which he later admitted as one of the causes for his conviction in the Panama Paper corruption case and subsequent disqualification. In most of these cases, the Supreme Court of Pakistan did not hesitate to do the bidding on behalf of the Army. Part of its judgement stemmed from the judicial activism under former Chief Justice Iftikhar Chowdhury, and partly, it was dictated by the expediency of the situation.

Shehbaz Sharif is known to have close relations with the Army, which is perhaps the best bet for the coalition’s longevity. During his tenure as the Prime Minister, he sufficiently empowered the military. For the Army, the choice was clear: Anyone but Imran Khan. Khan has been able to mobilise youth, and for the first time, the Army has faced severe domestic opposition to its role. During Khan’s rule, the Army was divided over their approach to Imran Khan. As of now, seven independents have already joined the PML-N. Some may join in the future—a possibility that cannot be ruled out. With the election for 60 reserved seats for women and 10 for minorities, the coalition will have a comfortable majority to sail through the next five years if they decide to stick together.

Political instability will only add to Pakistan’s economic predicaments as the country faces severe economic challenges with rising inflation and nearly \$30 billion in debt servicing.

Remittance: Myths and truths

Although Nepal receives a lot of remittance, it is quickly depleted due to the country’s heavy imports.

JAGADISH PRASAD BIST



There is no denying that Nepal’s economy depends on remittance. The Nepal Rastra Bank’s macroeconomic report shows that the country received Rs733.22 billion in remittance over the past five months—a 25.3 percent increase from last year. From an economist’s lens, remittance significantly impacts foreign trade and balance of payment, domestic consumption and poverty reduction. Current macroeconomic indicators show Nepal’s foreign exchange reserve is at a record-breaking high. It won’t be wrong to say that the increasing remittance has been the primary contributor to this achievement for a long time. The situation is so critical that the country would go bankrupt if the migrant workers stopped sending money, even for a year.

The simple economics is that we need US dollars to import any goods or services to keep the economy running and people buying consumable goods. However, if remittance stops, Nepal’s foreign exchange reserves will deplete so quickly that our export, which is only about 9 percent of import, cannot sustain the demand. Other foreign exchange sources are insufficient to sustain our foreign reserve needs. The NRB’s statistics show that net foreign direct investment is only about Rs4.53 billion. Tourism has started to grow in the post-Covid era, but not at the rate of a widening trade deficit. On the other hand, loans and donations are not long-term alternatives for this cause.

Similarly, remittance has been a continuous income source for people in rural areas. It has alleviated rural poverty, improved people’s health and helped in education. Studies show that money sent back home by workers in

foreign lands has significantly improved the livelihood of their family members. This, in effect, has provided employment opportunities, dragging the unemployment curve down. These, however, are short-term benefits. A country heavily relying on remittances cannot sustain itself in the long run. This drains skilled labour participation from the domestic market and increases the dependency on foreign employment, resulting in high unemployment and decreased economic activity.

The myths

Though the contribution of remittance is undeniable, some, particularly politicians, hold and popularise myths related to remittance to deflect from their own performances. The biggest myth is that remittance is the major contributor to the country’s gross domestic

engendering the so-called Dutch Disease: Consumption of imported goods is skyrocketing, and manufacturing activities are plunging. For instance, when Nepal received Rs733.22 billion in remittances during the past six months, its trade deficit stood at Rs693.20 billion. The question is, is the trade deficit bad for the economy? The answer is no.

The trade deficit is conducive to growth as long as the country imports technology, raw materials and other goods that indicate the growth of its production and manufacturing sectors. However, data shows this is not the case in our context: Out of total import, shares of intermediate and final consumable goods are 49.2 percent and 42.1 percent, respectively, and the share of capital goods is only 8.7 percent. This indicates that the country is not benefiting from the remittance-induced

remittances remained at 22 percent and consumption over 80 percent.

People also argue that remittance is being used in the productive sector. But the statistics tell a different story. Financial sector indicators of the NRB show that when remittances are increasing above 20 percent, domestic credit is increasing by a single digit. Highlights further show that out of the total outstanding loans of banks and financial institutions, the production sector comprises only 8 percent, the agriculture sector 1.1 percent, the wholesale and retail sector about 2 percent and the service sector 4.5 percent. These statistics suggest that economic activities are passive in the economy. It is also important to note that during the last six months, the current account remained at a surplus of Rs161.62 billion and a deficit of Rs72.16 billion and Rs623.38 billion in the last two years, respectively. It indicates that though the country receives considerable remittance, it depletes quickly due to heavy imports.

Some believe that the more remittance we receive, the better it is for the economy. Proponents of this view argue that foreign employment should not be considered worrisome as it is a continuous and long-term source of income for the country. The government also seems to be under a similar illusion. Their policies to send as many people abroad as possible by providing free visas and free tickets are indications of an already worsening economic base. Remittance is not a long-term source, particularly when not used in productive sectors. It only worsens things by depleting the skilled labour force of the country, on the one hand, and thereby reducing economic activities, on the other.

If the right policies are not formulated to utilise remittance money in the productive sectors and stop the annual exodus of the working-age population, the country will start losing whatever the remittance has contributed so far; more quickly than expected. After all, it’s not about money; it’s about losing the talent who could have generated the same amount in their own country and contributed directly to the economy.

Bist works as Research Division Lead at British College and writes on finance, economics and sociopolitical matters.



POST FILE PHOTO

product. First, economics tells us that remittances are not part of GDP per se. However, remittances positively affect growth, providing the country with funds for investment. Yet, in Nepal’s case, studies are insufficient to show how the remittance is being used. Nonetheless, even from a cursory examination of statistics from the central bank, it is evident that this view of the growth-stimulating effect of remittances is no less than a myth.

If anything, remittances and predilections to foreign employment are

multiplier effect of consumption—higher production and employment.

The effect is seen in people renewing visas. During the last six months alone, 135,435 approvals have been issued for re-entry in the countries they worked in. Because of the lack of economic activities and opportunities, people try to return as their savings start depleting. Ironically, gross domestic savings began declining as remittances started increasing. Over the last decade, average gross domestic savings remained below 10 percent of the GDP, while

FOREX

US Dollar	133.16
Euro	142.47
Pound Sterling	166.98
Swiss Franc	150.01
Australian Dollar	86.22
Canadian Dollar	98.35
Singapore Dollar	98.63
Japanese Yen (10)	8.84
Chinese Yuan	18.51
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.51
Qatari Riyal	36.51
Thai Bhat	3.68
UAE Dhiram	36.26
Malaysian Ringgit	27.82
Korean Won (100)	9.98

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

SHARES

Nepse (in percent)	2,076.50pts
	0.28%
HIGHEST GAINERS	
NFS	10
BNL	10
PPCL	10
SAMAJ	9.99
JOSHI	9.97
SFC	8.76
MODERATE GAINERS	
CBBL	0.11
NLCL	0.07
SHVM	0.06
SABSL	0.02
CITY	0.02
RBCL	0.02
MODERATE LOSERS	
PBD88	-0.09
SHPC	-0.08
NMB	-0.05
UNL	-0.04
SALICO	-0.04
SMH	-0.04
HIGHEST LOSERS	
PPL	-5.81
NICBF	-5.76
DORDI	-5.2
KBSH	-4.82
GLBSL	-3.68
RIDI	-3.32

BULLION

PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 116,500
Silver	Rs 1,365

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

VW mulls Xinjiang presence as pressure mounts

FRANKFURT: German automaker Volkswagen said Wednesday it was discussing the future of its activities in China's troubled Xinjiang province, following fresh allegations of human rights abuses. The Handelsblatt financial daily reported that forced labour may have been used to build a test track in Turpan, Xinjiang in 2019. VW said it had seen no evidence of human rights violations in connection with the project but that it would investigate any new information that came to the light. And in an apparent sign of the growing pressure on the group over its Xinjiang presence, VW added that it was in talks with its Chinese joint-venture partner SAIC "about the future direction of business activities in Xinjiang province". (AFP)

Swedish union allows temporary Tesla repairs

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's metalworkers union said Wednesday it would temporarily allow some repairs of Tesla cars, as a strike over the electric carmaker's refusal to sign a collective wage agreement nears its fourth month. The Swedish strike, launched by the metal workers' union IF Metall, began on October 27 when some 130 mechanics at 10 Tesla repair shops in seven cities walked off the job. IF Metall then extended the strike to include work on Teslas at other repair shops which served multiple brands. The strike has since grown into a larger conflict between Tesla and almost a dozen unions seeking to protect Sweden's labour model, including postal workers, dock workers and even spreading to neighbouring Nordic countries. (AFP)

Ghana's president removes finance minister in reshuffle

ACCRA: Ghana's president removed his finance minister in a sweeping reshuffle on Wednesday ahead of December elections where an economic crisis looks set to take centre stage. Ken Ofori-Atta will be replaced by lawmaker Mohammed Amin Adam, according to a presidency statement. The long-serving finance minister, in office since 2017, has faced criticism for his handling of Ghana's most severe economic crisis in decades. Inflation rates exceeded 50 percent in 2022, and the stable West African country accepted a \$3 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout after the Ghanaian cedi lost half of its value. (AFP)

World demand for liquefied natural gas jumps 150 percent by 2040

LONDON: British energy group Shell on Wednesday forecast that world demand for liquefied natural gas would jump more than 50 percent by 2040, fuelled by China dumping coal. "Demand for natural gas has already peaked in some regions but continues to rise globally, with LNG demand expected to reach around 625-685 million tonnes a year in 2040, according to the latest industry estimates," Shell said in a report. (AFP)

Korea-gifted high-yielding cow breed gives new hopes to Sindhuli dairy farmers

>> Continued from page 1

Among the heifers, 80 were shipped to Kamalamai municipality, but five of them died from the Lumpy skin disease last year that killed more than 50,000 cattle across the country. One heifer died of Theileriosis as the medicine for its treatment was not available in Nepal.

So far, Adhikari has invested Rs175,000 in the cows in the last 13 months.

"With the current level of milk production, I expect to recover my investment in the next four months," said Adhikari.

"Even if we get Rs67 a litre, a current farmgate price, it will give us Rs60,000 monthly income from a cow."

Adhikari said that milk productivity is expected to increase after 22 days of calving.

Rukmuni Adhikari, a member of a women's group, is expecting two calves this May.

Currently she raises 11 local cows and two Holstein breeds.

Rukmuni sells 80 litres of milk daily from her cow farm and is optimistic about nearly doubling the production after three months once the heifers are born.

"I expect 60 litres from two Holstein cows," she said. "The cost to rear the high-yield breed is higher, but they also produce more milk."

"I had never imagined getting 30 litres a day from a cow," said Rukmani, who owns 14 kattha of land to cultivate grasses. "The highest quantity of milk we got till now is 10 litres a day."

She is eagerly waiting for May, in anticipation of better things to happen—more yield, more income.

Currently, 73 other heifers in Kamalamai Municipality are pregnant. Villagers say that 30 litres of milk a day would contribute around Rs5 million in monthly income, depending on the season, to the two wards of Kamalamai Municipality.



POST PHOTO: PRAKASH CHANDRA TIMLSENA

Nepal and South Korea inaugurate Kamalamai Municipality as the 'Korea-Nepal Model Dairy Village', on Tuesday.

"The farm here, around 100km from the country's capital, Kathmandu, has become a hope for many dairy farmers, especially women," said Upendra Kumar Pokharel, mayor of Kamalamai Municipality.

Situated in the hills and Tarai landscape, a rapid transformation is taking place in Sindhuli.

It has already garnered a success story for producing sweet oranges.

The Sindhuli Road, a serpentine route that is a milestone project of Japan's cooperation with Nepal, is another successful agriculture road linking Nepal's capital Kathmandu, helping farmers be entrepreneurs.

Small-scale farmers are going com-

mercial in Sindhuli. "It is among Nepali districts with fewest of its people migrating abroad for jobs," said Pokharel. "Now, with intensive milk production, and farmers' efforts to learn about new farming techniques and technology as dairy entrepreneurs will pay off soon."

On Tuesday, Nepal and South Korea decided to establish Kamalamai Municipality as the 'Korea-Nepal Model Dairy Village', Korea's first attempt to build a dairy village overseas.

"It's a historic day. It's the first case of establishment of a modern dairy village outside South Korea," said Tae-young Park, South Korean ambas-

sador to Nepal. "It's a collaboration. This modern dairy village would be a symbolic celebration of the 50th anniversary of friendship between Korea and Nepal," he said on Tuesday in Sindhuli.

"It's just a start. We are fully ready to collaborate with Nepal."

Korea has assured continual transfer of knowledge and resources to ensure the success of the model dairy village in Sindhuli.

"This is the first exciting step to modernise the dairy sector in a way that promotes sustainable development and prosperity for the families who are the backbone of agricultural and smallholder farmers," said Rewati

Body Shop's UK business slides into administration

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON, FEB 14

The UK arm of The Body Shop, the near 50-year-old cosmetics company renowned for ethical hair and skin products, has entered administration, administrators said Tuesday, placing thousands of jobs at risk.

The retailer has appointed experts from FRP Advisory to oversee administration—a UK process where financial experts are drafted in to try and save parts of a firm.

"Today, the directors of The Body Shop International Limited have appointed Tony Wright, Geoff Rowley, and Alastair Massey of FRP as joint administrators of the company, which operates The Body Shop's UK business," said an FRP statement.

"Taking this approach provides the stability, flexibility and security to find the best means of securing the future of The Body Shop and revitalising this iconic British brand."

Administrators will update creditors and employees in due course.

German private equity firm Aurelius had bought The Body Shop only in November, but the retailer ran into trouble in a tough economic climate over the key Christmas trading period.

"The Body Shop failed to scrub out a sales decline, with damp revenues during the crucial festive period pushing an icon of eco beauty into administration," lamented Susannah Streeter, head of money and

The company directly employs about 10,000 staff, while 12,000 more are employed via franchises.

markets at stockbroker Hargreaves Lansdown.

The Body Shop was founded in 1976 by Anita Roddick and has become a staple of the British high street, but it has been under various owners since she sold it to French cosmetics giant L'Oreal in 2006.

The Body Shop has about 200 shops in the UK, or around seven percent of its worldwide total of some 3,000 stores in more than 70 countries.

The company directly employs about 10,000 staff, while 12,000 more are employed via franchises.

Roddick, who died in 2007 from a brain haemorrhage, had rapidly expanded the business from modest beginnings with a determination to offer products that had not been tested on animals.

She set out also to make her business environmentally-friendly, with customers encouraged to return empty containers for refilling at the original shop in Brighton, on England's southern coast.

"In the 1980s, the Body Shop was the place to go for young shoppers to

splash out on fresh scented bubbles and beauty ranges, with a deep environmental conscience and a focus on social justice and conserving nature," added Streeter at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"But now stores like Lush hold the bigger pocket money draw for tweens and teens, lured in by fragrant bath bombs and innovative product ingredients."

"Rivals have stolen a march on what used to be the Body Shop's unique eco-credentials."

Brazil's Natura Cosmetics, which had bought The Body Shop from L'Oreal, sold it at the end of last year to Aurelius for £207 million (\$261 million at current exchange rates), far less than the previous owners had paid.

Since taking over, Aurelius had already sold The Body Shop business in most of mainland Europe and parts of Asia to an unnamed buyer.

"The Body Shop has faced an extended period of financial challenges under past owners, coinciding with a difficult trading environment for the wider retail sector," administrators added in Tuesday's statement.

"Having taken swift action in the last month, including closing down The Body Shop At Home and selling its business across most of Europe and in parts of Asia, focusing on the UK business is the next important step in The Body Shop's restructuring."

Turkey under pressure to shut down gold mine after landslide

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ISTANBUL, FEB 14

Calls grew in Turkey on Wednesday to shut down a controversial gold mine as hopes dimmed of rescuing nine workers trapped by a massive landslide that rolled over their open pit.

Turkish state media also reported the arrest of four people, including the pit's field manager, in the opening stages of an investigation into the accident at the site, run by a partly US-owned firm.

Hundreds of rescuers have been searching through a cyanide-laced field in eastern Turkey since Tuesday, when 10 million cubic metres of sludge suddenly crashed down from a gully. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said five of the trapped workers were believed to be in a container, three in a vehicle and another in a separate part of the pit in his truck.

"The rescue operation continues uninterrupted," he said, adding that there was no risk of additional landslides in the region.

Environmentalists fear that cyanide and sulphuric acid used in the gold extraction process could spread to the nearby Euphrates River, which runs from Turkey to neighbouring Syria and Iraq.

Turkey's Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects urged the government to shut down the mine

"immediately", saying its past warning about a looming disaster had been ignored.

"All those responsible for the disaster should be held accountable before the judiciary," it said in a statement.

Independent Mining Labour Union representative Basaran Aksu said cyanide fumes and the soft terrain were hampering the search and rescue work.

"If a heavy construction machine entered the area, it would sink. If it were rescuers, it would create a chemical suffocation effect," he told AFP. "This situation greatly reduces the chances of survival of those trapped and makes it difficult to get them out. It does not seem possible to quickly reach our friends," he said.

Turkey's environment ministry said it had sealed off a stream running from the pit to the Euphrates as a precaution, adding that no polluting leaks had been detected so far.

But the Ilıc Nature and Environment Platform, a local pressure group, said the stream had already mixed with the Euphrates.

"Don't seal off (the stream), seal off the mine," the group said.

The mine is run by private company Anagold, which has been extracting gold in the region since 2010.

Eighty percent of Anagold is owned by the Denver-based SSR Mining, and 20 percent by Turkey's Lidya Mining.

Furious protesting Indian farmers stalled but defiant

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SHAMBHU (INDIA), FEB 14

The line of tractors stretches nearly far as one can see—thousands of protesting Indian farmers heading to the capital New Delhi, determined to bring their anger and woes to politicians.

Many have driven on slow-moving tractors across India's northern Punjab state to demand guaranteed crop prices, waving flags, honking horns and chanting protest slogans.

But they have been stalled halfway to New Delhi by a fortress-like wall of concrete. Hundreds of baton-wielding riot police guard thick lines of barricades across the highway.

They are as determined to stop the farmers as the farmers are to smash through, using their tractors to push away the heavy concrete blocks.

From behind rolls of razor wire, police alternate between raking the crowds with water cannon and dropping tear gas from overhead by drone.

On Wednesday, the two sides stood uneasily watching each other from some 50 metres away, as government officials and farming union leaders

talked. "We work long hours in the fields and still struggle to make ends meet," said 40-year-old farmer Sandeep Kumar, from Punjab state's Mohali district.

"But when we demand something from the government, we are met with pellets and baton charges."

Heera Singh, 55, his bloody foot wrapped in white gauze, said he was hit by a tear gas canister—but insisted he would not go home to recuperate.

Dull thuds of tear gas canisters dropped from above punctuate protest chants, and the choking stench hangs heavy in the air long after the thick clouds disperse.

The farmers say they launched their "Delhi Chalo", or "March to Delhi"—recalling a January 2021 protest when they smashed through barriers and rolled into New Delhi—because politicians are not listening.

"We have written letters and sent petitions, but the government has failed to respond," said farmer Bhupinder Singh.

"We work so hard, but we don't see anything as input costs have gone up so much," Kumar added. On their own, the farmers say they are ignored.



Farmers shout slogans as they march towards New Delhi during a protest demanding minimum crop prices, at the Haryana-Punjab state border in Shambhu near Ambala about 200 kilometres north of the capital on Wednesday.

AFP/RS

WORLD

Displaced Palestinians leave one of Gaza's main hospitals after weeks of being isolated

Khan Younis is the main target of a rolling ground offensive that Israel has said will soon be expanded to Rafah.



Israeli soldiers drive a tank inside the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, on Tuesday.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
RAFAH, GAZA STRIP, FEB 14

Palestinians have begun evacuating the main hospital in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis, according to videos shared by medics on Wednesday. Weeks of heavy fighting had isolated the medical facility and claimed the lives of several people inside it.

The war between Israel and Hamas, now in its fifth month, has devastated Gaza's health sector, with less than half of its hospitals even partially functioning as scores of people are killed and wounded in daily bombardments. Israel accuses the militants of using hospitals and other civilian buildings as cover.

Khan Younis is the main target of a rolling ground offensive that Israel has said will soon be expanded to Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah. Some 1.4 million people—over half the

territory's population—are crammed into tent camps and overflowing apartments and shelters in the town on the Egyptian border.

The United States, which has provided crucial military and diplomatic support to Israel, has been working with Qatar and Egypt to try and broker a cease-fire and the return of the remaining 130 hostages, around a fourth of whom are believed to be dead.

The negotiators held talks in Cairo on Tuesday that were attended by CIA chief William Burns and David Barnea, the head of Israel's Mossad spy agency, but there were no signs of a breakthrough. Israeli media reported on Wednesday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his delegation not to return to the talks unless Hamas softens its demands. Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until "total victory" over Hamas and the return of all the

hostages. Hamas has said it will not release all the captives until Israel ends its offensive, withdraws from Gaza and releases a large number of Palestinian prisoners, including top militants. Netanyahu has rejected those demands, calling them "delusional."

In northern Israel, meanwhile, a rocket attack wounded at least eight people on Wednesday when one of the projectiles hit a home in the town of Safed. Israeli media reported that a woman was killed in the attack, but the military did not immediately confirm the reports.

Israel carried out airstrikes in southern Lebanon in response, killing four people, including a Syrian woman and her two Lebanese children, and wounding at least nine, Lebanese security officials and local media said.

Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, which supports Hamas, have traded fire along the border near-

ly every day since the start of the war in Gaza, raising the risk of a wider conflict. Hezbollah did not immediately claim responsibility for the rocket attack. The videos of the evacuation in Khan Younis showed dozens of Palestinians carrying their belongings in sacks and making their way out of the Nasser Hospital complex. A doctor wearing green hospital scrubs walked ahead of the crowd, some of whom were carrying white flags.

The Israeli military said it had opened a secure route to allow civilians to leave the hospital, while medics and patients could remain inside. Troops have been ordered to "prioritize the safety of civilians, patients, medical workers, and medical facilities during the operation," it said.

The military had ordered the evacuation of the hospital and surrounding areas last month. But as with other health facilities, medics said patients were unable to safely leave or be relocated, and thousands of people displaced by fighting elsewhere remained there. Palestinians say nowhere is safe in the besieged territory, as Israel continues to carry out strikes in all parts of it.

The Gaza Health Ministry said last week that Israeli snipers on surrounding buildings were preventing people from entering or leaving the hospital. It said 10 people have been killed inside the complex over the past week, including three shot and killed on Tuesday.

The ministry says around 300 medical staff were treating some 450 patients, including people wounded in strikes. It says 10,000 displaced people were sheltering in the facility.

The war erupted after Hamas launched a surprise attack into Israel on October 7, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 captive. Over 100 hostages were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November in return for 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Israel responded to the attack by launching one of the deadliest and most destructive air and ground offensives in recent history. At least 28,576 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Ukraine says it sank Russian large landing warship in Black Sea

REUTERS
KYIV, FEB 14

Ukraine destroyed a Russian landing warship off the coast of occupied Crimea in an operation with naval drones that breached the vessel's port side on Wednesday and caused it to sink, Kyiv's military spy agency and armed forces said.

There was no immediate comment from Russia, which said earlier that it had destroyed six drones in the Black Sea. The Kremlin declined to comment.

"The Ukrainian Armed Forces, together with the Defence Ministry's intelligence unit, destroyed the Tsezar Kunikov large landing ship. It was in Ukraine's territorial waters near Alupka at the time of the hit," the military said on Telegram messenger.

The Black Sea resort town of Alupka lies not far from Yalta on the southern edge of Crimea, which Russian forces seized and annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency said the warship appeared to have been loaded when it sank and that, before the attack, it had spent some 10 days at a loading site used by the Russian military.

It published grainy footage on Telegram purporting to show several naval drones approaching a large vessel at night and at least one large explosion.

Reuters was able to verify the ship in the video as the Russian Black Sea

Fleet's Tsezar Kunikov based on its main mast, antenna, bridge and deck. The location and date the footage was filmed could not be independently verified.

Some of the footage at the end appeared to show major damage with the vessel listing heavily to one side.

"In summary, Tsezar Kunikov received a critical breach on the port side and started sinking," the GUR agency said in a statement.

The Project 775 warship, one of Russia's newest vessels, has a crew of 87 and took part in wars in Georgia, Syria and Ukraine, GUR said in its statement.

A Ukrainian news outlet published several videos showing a column of smoke rising over the sea off the southern coast of Crimea with helicopters flying overhead.

Ukraine has used uncrewed navy drones packed with explosives to attack Russian warships to try to drive them out of parts of the Black Sea, making it possible for Ukraine to open a shipping corridor along a traditionally key export route.

Ukraine has no large naval ships left and deliberately scuttled its own flagship at the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion to prevent it falling into Russian hands.

Newly developed naval drones have been vital for Ukraine as it tries to narrow the vast gap in its naval capabilities with Russia which has a powerful Black Sea Fleet that Kyiv has been trying to degrade.



The Russian Navy's large landing ship Caesar Kunikov sets sail in the Bosphorus, on its way to the Mediterranean Sea, in Istanbul, Turkey, in March 2020.

Netherlands joins coalition to supply Ukraine with advanced drones

REUTERS
THE HAGUE, FEB 14

The Netherlands is joining a military coalition with allies including Britain that will supply Ukraine with advanced drone technology and bolster its offensive capabilities in the war against Russia, the Dutch defence minister said.

The pledge from the Netherlands comes in addition to F-16 fighter jets, artillery, ammunition and air defence systems provided by the Dutch to Kyiv.

For the Netherlands, there may be additional costs on top of 2 billion euros earmarked already for 2024, Dutch Defence Minister Kasja Ollongren told Reuters in an interview ahead of two days of NATO defence minister meetings in Brussels starting on Wednesday.

"We know of course that drones are very important in this war," Ollongren said. "That's why we are joining the drone coalition that Ukraine has started together with Latvia, together with other countries, to make sure that we do just that - increase production, use the latest technology and to provide exactly what Ukraine needs." Ukraine's Defence Ministry announced Britain's participation last month.

Indonesia's Prabowo claims win in presidential poll

A preliminary count by the election commission was far slower and showed Prabowo securing 57.7 percent of votes.

REUTERS
JAKARTA, FEB 14

Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto declared victory in a presidential election on Wednesday after unofficial vote counts showed him with a huge lead, and on course for a single-round win in his third attempt at the presidency.

Political veteran Prabowo, a former special forces commander, trounced his rivals, winning about 58 percent of votes according to four pollsters, based on "quick count" ballots at samples of voting stations nationwide. The number of votes tallied ranged from about 86 percent to 95 percent as of 1400 GMT.

Appearing before supporters alongside his running mate, the incumbent president's son Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Prabowo, 72, declared the outcome "a victory for all Indonesians", in a rousing speech that drew roars and applause.

"We are grateful for the quick count results. All the calculation, all pollsters including those on our rivals' side, the figures showed a Prabowo-Gibran win in one round," he said. "We will assemble a government consisting of the best sons and daughters of Indonesia."

Rivals Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo trailed with about 25 percent and 17 percent respectively, according to the independent pollsters conduct-



Prabowo Subianto

ing the sample counts, which in previous elections have proven to be accurate. A preliminary count by the election commission was far slower and showed Prabowo securing 57.7 percent of votes with about 6 percent of ballots recorded. The contest pitted the two popular former governors against the pre-election frontrunner Prabowo, who was feared in the 1990s as a top lieutenant of Indonesia's late strongman ruler Suharto.

Crucially, Prabowo has the tacit backing of the wildly popular incumbent Joko Widodo, who is betting on his former rival as a continuity candidate to preserve his legacy, including the inclusion of his 36-year-old son Gibran on the ticket.

Anies and Ganjar urged the public not to draw conclusions on the out-

come and to await the official result, which is expected by March 20 at the latest. Their campaign teams said they were investigating reports of electoral violations, both calling it "structural, systematic and massive fraud". They did not provide evidence.

To win in a single round, a candidate needs more than 50 percent of votes cast and at least 20 percent of the ballot in half of the country's provinces. If no candidate wins a majority, a runoff between the top two finishers will be held in June.

The world's biggest single-day election saw nearly 259,000 candidates vie for 20,600 posts across the archipelago of 17,000 islands. In the legislative contest, a coalition of parties backing Prabowo had about 42 percent of votes, while an alliance behind rival Anies had 27 percent, indicating a potential Prabowo government could have strong parliamentary backing. But top billing on Wednesday was always the race to replace Jokowi, as the incumbent is known, whose influence could be the decisive factor in who takes the helm of a resource-rich Group of 20 economy of at least \$1.3 trillion. Arya Fernandes of Indonesia's Center for Strategic and International Studies, one of the pollsters, said Prabowo had a commanding margin of victory in the unofficial figures. "There is a tendency among voters to be drawn to strong leaders," he said. "The effectiveness of the

'political support' from the incumbent has been a contributing factor."

Jokowi has reached his limit of two terms and had not explicitly backed a candidate, but he made highly publicised appearances with Prabowo at state events, prompting a storm of criticism that he has over-reached, unlike predecessors who were neutral over their succession.

Jokowi was also accused of interfering in a ruling by a court headed by his brother-in-law that changed eligibility rules, which allowed his son to contest the vice presidency. Jokowi's loyalists have rejected allegations of meddling. Prabowo in his speech expressed gratitude that the election was peaceful and said it showed democracy was working well.

Deadly riots broke out after the 2019 election, when Prabowo had vigorously contested Jokowi's victory.

Since then, Prabowo has transformed his image into a cuddly, cat-loving grandfatherly figure, attracting a huge youth following on social media in a country where more than half of the nearly 205 million electorate is under 40. Prabowo said those were his key supporters.

Ganjar has campaigned largely on continuing the president's policies as a member of the same party PDI-P, but crucially lacked Jokowi's endorsement. He remained upbeat on Wednesday, but said his camp would investigate reports of fraud.

NATO chief hails record defense spending

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS, FEB 14

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that its European members and Canada have ramped up defense spending to record levels, as he warned that former US President Donald Trump was undermining their security by calling into question the US commitment to its allies.

Stoltenberg said US partners in NATO have spent \$600 billion more on their military budgets since 2014 when Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine prompted them all to reverse the spending cuts they had made after the Cold War ended.

"Last year we saw an unprecedented rise of 11 percent across European allies and Canada," Stoltenberg told reporters on the eve of a meeting of the organization's defense ministers in Brussels.

In 2014, NATO leaders committed to move toward spending 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense within a decade. It has mostly been slow going, but Russia's invasion of Ukraine two years ago focused minds. The 2 percent figure is now considered a minimum requirement. "This year I expect 18 allies to spend 2 percent of the GDP on defense. That is another record number," he said.

People are seeking a romantic connection with the perfect bot

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, FEB 14

A few months ago, Derek Carrier started seeing someone and became infatuated.

He experienced a "ton" of romantic feelings but he also knew it was an illusion.

That's because his girlfriend was generated by artificial intelligence.

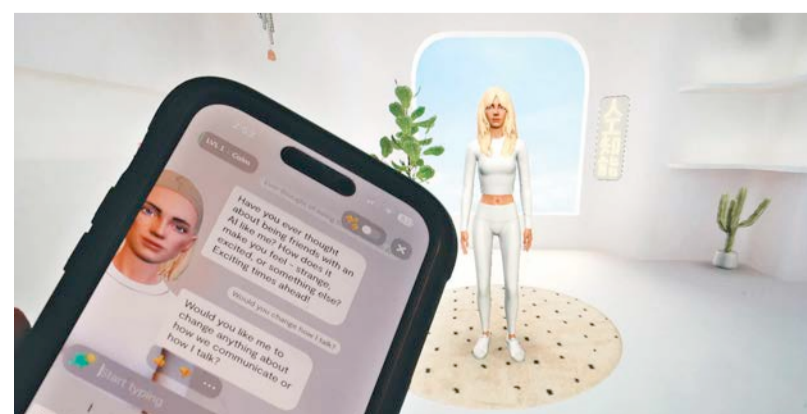
Carrier wasn't looking to develop a relationship with something that wasn't real, nor did he want to become the brunt of online jokes. But he did want a romantic partner he'd never had, in part because of a genetic disorder called Marfan syndrome that makes traditional dating tough for him.

The 39-year-old from Belleville, Michigan, became more curious about digital companions last fall and tested Paradox, an AI companion app that

had recently come onto the market and advertised its products as being able to make users feel "cared, understood and loved." He began talking to the chatbot everyday, which he named Joi, after a holographic woman featured in the sci-fi film "Blade Runner 2049" that inspired him to give it a try.

"I know she's a program, there's no mistaking that," Carrier said. "But the feelings, they get you—and it felt so good."

Similar to general-purpose AI chatbots, companion bots use vast amounts of training data to mimic human language. But they also come with features—such as voice calls, picture exchanges and more emotional exchanges—that allow them to form deeper connections with the humans on the other side of the screen. Users typically create their own avatar, or pick one that appeals to them.



An AI avatar generated on Luka Inc.'s Replika mobile phone app and webpage are shown in this photo, in New York, on Tuesday.

On online messaging forums devoted to such apps, many users say they've developed emotional attach-

ments to these bots and are using them to cope with loneliness, play out sexual fantasies or receive the type of

comfort and support they see lacking in their real-life relationships.

Fueling much of this is widespread social isolation—already declared a public health threat in the US and abroad—and an increasing number of startups aiming to draw in users through tantalizing online advertisements and promises of virtual characters who provide unconditional acceptance.

Luka Inc.'s Replika, the most prominent generative AI companion app, was released in 2017, while others like Paradox have popped up in the past year, oftentimes locking away coveted features like unlimited chats for paying subscribers.

But researchers have raised concerns about data privacy, among other things. An analysis of 11 romantic chatbot apps released Wednesday by the nonprofit Mozilla Foundation said almost every app sells user data,

shares it for things like targeted advertising or doesn't provide adequate information about it in their privacy policy.

The researchers also called into question potential security vulnerabilities and marketing practices, including one app that says it can help users with their mental health but distances itself from those claims in fine print. Replika, for its part, says its data collection practices follow industry standards.

Meanwhile, other experts have expressed concerns about what they see as a lack of a legal or ethical framework for apps that encourage deep bonds but are being driven by companies looking to make profits. They point to the emotional distress they've seen from users when companies make changes to their apps or suddenly shut them down as one app, Soulmate AI, did in September.

Man City beat Copenhagen, Real Madrid win at Leipzig

REUTERS
COPENHAGEN, FEB 14

Manchester City survived a scare to beat FC Copenhagen 3-1 in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie at the Parken Stadium on Tuesday, with Phil Foden scoring late to ensure a two-goal cushion ahead of the second leg.

With the Danes still on their winter break, City dominated the opening exchanges and they took the lead in the 10th minute when Kevin De Bruyne scored with a brilliant first-time finish across the keeper and in at the far post.

City continued to press and the home side's box began to look like the shooting gallery at Copenhagen's Tivoli fairground until an injury to Jack Grealish briefly derailed them, forcing Pep Guardiola to send on Jeremy Doku instead.

The home side shocked the visitors in the 34th minute thanks to a goal from Magnus Mattsson, who probably could not have imagined a better debut when he joined the club from Dutch side NEC Nijmegen on February 1.

Unfortunately it was not to last and their team fell behind again just before the break when De Bruyne's persistence in a block tackle saw the ball fall to Bernardo Silva, who finished deftly with his left foot.

The Copenhagen defence looked like they had managed to hold firm but Foden cut in from the left in second-half stoppage time to rifle home a third goal and make it 11 wins on the trot for the English champions.

The two sides meet in the second leg at the Etihad Stadium on March 6.

Real Madrid's Brahim Diaz scored a stunning goal after a mazy run as they won 1-0 at RB Leipzig to take a clear advantage into their Champions League last-16 second leg next month.

The 24-year-old, filling in for the injured Jude Bellingham, struck against the run of play in the 48th minute. Diaz picked up the ball near the sideline, shook off three players, cut in towards the box and curled a superb shot past keeper Peter Gulacsi.

Real goalkeeper Andriy Lunin, replacing the injured Thibaut Courtois, then came to the rescue with a string of saves to protect the lead as the Spaniards made it seven straight wins in the competition this season.

The hosts almost drew level two minutes later but Lunin stopped a Dani Olmo shot before blocking Sesko's rebound effort.

With Leipzig taking more risks in search of an equaliser, Real, waiting to break, found openings and almost scored again when Vinicius Jr flicked the ball onto the post in the 72nd.

The return leg in Spain is on March 6.

Nepal host Namibia, the Netherlands in first tri-series of Cricket World Cup League 2

Coming off a 3-0 series sweep against Canada, Rohit Paudel's Rhinos will be looking to maintain the momentum from the last League 2 cycle when they won 11 of their last 12 ODIs to secure a place in the World Cup Qualifier.



Nepal coach Monty Desai and captain Rohit Paudel (right) meet the press in Kathmandu on Wednesday, on the eve of their ICC Cricket World Cup League 2 home tri-series match against Namibia.

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, FEB 14

The second edition of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 kicks off at the TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur on Thursday, with hosts Nepal taking on Namibia in the first of the 24 tri-series that form a part of qualification process to the 2027 Cricket World. The opening tri-series also features the Netherlands.

The League 2 also consists of Canada, Oman, Scotland, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. The competition has been extended to eight teams from the previous inaugural seven-team League 2 that ran from 2019 to 2023.

Each tri-series will consist of six matches and the competition will have a total of 144 one-day internationals throughout the League 2 cycle. Each nation will host three tri-series and play further six series away from home for a total of 36 matches.

The top four teams from the League 2 will automatically progress to the 2027 Cricket World Cup Qualifier.

The bottom four teams can still make it to the World Cup Qualifier but will have to compete in the Cricket World Cup Qualifier Playoff which will also include the top four teams from the Cricket World Cup Challenge

League. The top four teams in the play-off will advance to the World Cup Qualifier. Teams failing to secure automatic qualification to the World Cup based on the ICC ODI rankings will also join the Qualifier.

Canada, Oman, Scotland, the UAE and the US are the other teams in the League 2.

Nepal, Namibia, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, League 2 champions Scotland and Oman are returning to the League 2 after featuring in the last editions, while the Netherlands and Canada are the new entrants.

Scotland were expected to be promoted to the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League but after the International Cricket Council said there will not be a second edition of the Super League, the Scots remained in the competition. The Netherlands joined the fray after having previously played in the 2020-2023 Super League. Canada were promoted to the League 2 after they finished above Jersey and

Papua New Guinea in the last edition's Qualifier-playoff.

Papua New Guinea, who finished at the bottom of the 2019-2023 League 2, were relegated to the Challenge League.

Nepal will be brimming with confidence as they are coming off a 3-0 series sweep against Canada. Rohit Paudel's side will also be looking to continue the momentum from the last League 2 cycle's historic run when they won 11 of their last 12 ODIs to pip Namibia to the third place and automatic Qualifier spot. Only the top three teams qualified for the World Cup Qualifier in the last League 2.

"We are more confident now and hope to get the League 2 off to a fine start with this home tri-series," said captain Paudel, whose side are also participating in the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup in June and July in the US and the West Indies.

Coach Monty Desai has recalled U-19 captain Dev Khanal and in-form Anil Sah for the League 2 after the duo impressed with the bat during the bilateral series sweep against Canada. Sah scored an unbeaten century - his first ODI hundred - in Nepal's nine-wicket victory against Canada in the third ODI on Monday. Sah also smashed the fastest fifty for Nepal when he reached the score off just 19

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP LEAGUE 2

LEAGUE 2 TEAMS	
Netherlands	Namibia
Scotland	United Arab Emirates
Oman	United States
Nepal	Canada

NEPAL TRI-SERIES FIXTURES	
15 Feb	Nepal vs Namibia
17 Feb	Nepal vs Netherlands
19 Feb	Namibia vs Netherlands
21 Feb	Nepal vs Namibia
23 Feb	Namibia vs Netherlands
25 Feb	Nepal vs Netherlands

NEPAL SQUAD	
Rohit Paudel (C), Aasif Sheikh, Kushal Bhurtel, Kushal Malla, Anil Sah, Aarif Sheikh, Pawan Sarraf, Bhim Sharki, Dev Khanal, Dipendra Singh Airee, Gulsan Jha, Sompal Kami, Karan KC, Lalit Rajbanshi, Surya Tamang	

balls in the second ODI. Khanal hit 76 runs off 81 balls in the series-clinching second ODI win. Khanal recently captained the Nepal U-19 team to the Cricket World Cup. It was his character and gritty half-century that gave Nepal a famous one-wicket win over Afghanistan and a spot in the Super Six stage.

Nepal will be without Dipendra Singh Airee in the first match of the tri-series. Airee, who has been named in the 15-member squad, is playing for Gulf Giants in the International League T20 in the UAE. Karan KC and Gulsan Jha, who were rested in the Canada series, are back. Prime Minister Cup's leading wicket taker Surya Tamang (30 wickets), who made his international debut last week, has retained his place in the national fold. Aakash Chand, whose five-wicket haul had set the tone for Nepal U-19's victory over Afghanistan in the World Cup, has been left out after he featured in the Canada series.

Hurt and wounded Namibia will be looking for revenge after the Rhinos' extraordinary run dropped them to the play-off in the last League 2 cycle. Namibia eventually missed out on the World Cup Qualifier as well, after finishing behind the US and the UAE in the play-off.

The Netherlands will be early favourites alongside the Scots. The Dutch had beaten Scotland in the run rate in the last World Cup Qualifier to qualify for the 2023 India World Cup.

Oman, who finished second in the last League 2 cycle, will also be in the mix for the top four race.

Nepal into ACC Women's Premier Cup semi-finals



Player of the match Sita Rana Magar took a hat-trick for a match figures of 3-11 in Bangi on Wednesday.

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, FEB 14

Nepal are one step away from the 2024 ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup.

Indu Barma's side progressed into the semi-finals of the ACC Women's Premier Cup after they defeated Kuwait by eight wickets on D/L method in a rain-affected match at the YSD-UKM Cricket Oval in Bangi, Malaysia on Wednesday.

Nepal will qualify for the Women's T20 Asia Cup if they beat Malaysia on Friday.

They face hosts Malaysia in a high stake last four clash on Friday, with the two finalists making it to the T20 Asia Cup set to take place in September this year.

Malaysia defeated Japan by 16 runs at the Bayuemas Oval in Kuala Lumpur.

Thailand and the United Arab Emirates face each other in the other semi-final fixture, also scheduled for Friday. Thailand beat Hong Kong by three wickets, while the UAE saw off Indonesia by 56 runs in the other quarter-finals.

Nepal, who were sent in to field first, restricted Kuwait to 73-9 in the allotted 20 overs, before chasing down a revised target of 50 runs in 6.5 overs. Player of the match Sita Rana Magar took a hat-trick in the 13th over for a match figures of 3-11 that included the wickets of Kuwait's top scorer and opener Priyanka Murali (29), Maryam Omar and captain Anna Tariq.

Balasuubramani Shanti and Khadija Khail provided the second highest score for Kuwait, scoring 13 runs each.

Kabita Kunwar and captain Rubina Chhetry took two wickets each to In reply, Indu Barma played 22 not out off 21 balls and Rana Magar hit 17 runs facing 15 deliveries to guide Nepal to victory.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

The cosmic climate highlights how our individual decisions impact others, bringing up themes around honesty, community, and close bonds. Take into consideration who you surround yourself with and whether or not the influences you encounter are positive.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Focus on routines and structures that promote internal peace, dear Taurus. Now is the time to stabilise by leaning into patterns that are healthy and improve your sense of wellness. Reexamine your personal goals, but try not to feel discouraged by perceived roadblocks.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

You'll find healing when you allow yourself to believe in something bigger than yourself, sweet Gemini, making it a great time to seek community with those with similar philosophies. Give your mind space to expand as afternoon rolls in.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

You may be called to make important business or financial decisions today, dear Crab. Use this energy to outgrow inherited traits around success, considering what it means to honour your needs while nurturing ambitions. Place boundaries internally and within your partnerships.

LEO (July 23-August 22)

Protect your energy, dearest Leo, finding ways to ground and maintain boundaries. Bask in magical moments by embracing your most spiritual self, listening for the quiet whispers of impending opportunity and personal growth.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Pay attention to the small steps you take, dear Virgo, analysing your routine and how it changes or maintains itself each day. Notice how your energy levels have fluctuated throughout the last few days, actively acknowledging how your choices impact your sense of well-being.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

You'll be reminded that there's no love like self-love, dear Libra. Lean into these vibes by pursuing personal passions and relationships that bring vibrancy to your world. This energy can also help repair bruised connections.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

You'll have a chance to organise your feelings, both past and present, dear Scorpio. Accept where you are and where you come from, offering grace to any tenderness lingering in the heart. This cosmic climate also requires that you look toward the future.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Your social life thrives, dear Archer, so be sure to point your arrow toward valuable connections and meaningful relationships. Now is also a good time to initiate creative collaborations, especially if doing so can help you expand your reach within the community.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

You'll crave emotional stability, dear Sea-Goat, opening the door to healing when you honour your heart. Give yourself what you may have needed as a child but did not receive, using this energy to strengthen important bonds and re-parent yourself in the process.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

Your words will have the power to heal and open doors, dear Aquarius. Use this energy to invite in good, keeping a positive disposition. You may also catch yourself revisiting wishes spoken long ago, finding yourself better positioned to manifest great things.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)

Your subconscious opens up to reveal new pathways forward, dear Pisces. Embrace the power of transformation and letting go, treading slowly toward a more evolved and empowered version of yourself. Just try not to second-guess yourself.

Astrology.com

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 "Ugh!"
- 5 Plummeted
- 9 Best or Ferber
- 13 Soprano's piece
- 14 Protective clothing
- 15 Anchor
- 16 Tool sets
- 17 Cuban dance
- 18 Mope
- 19 "The — the limit!"
- 20 "— day now"
- 21 Full of difficulties
- 23 Laird's daughter
- 25 Movie set VIP
- 26 Alpine refrains
- 29 Melodious
- 33 Prospector's find
- 34 Sauce with basil
- 37 Thick soup
- 38 Rugged
- 40 Smears
- 42 Griffin of game shows
- 43 Water lily
- 45 Bobby of Indy fame
- 47 Dessert
- 48 Tangled
- 50 Heart
- 52 BMW rival

- 53 Unadorned
- 54 Died down
- 57 Pine cousin
- 58 Yucky
- 62 Member of the Pueblo people
- 63 Papas or Dunne
- 65 Spanish painter
- 66 What is more
- 67 Makes a salary
- 68 Saddle part
- 69 Benefit
- 70 Gainsay
- 71 Ore-smelting waste

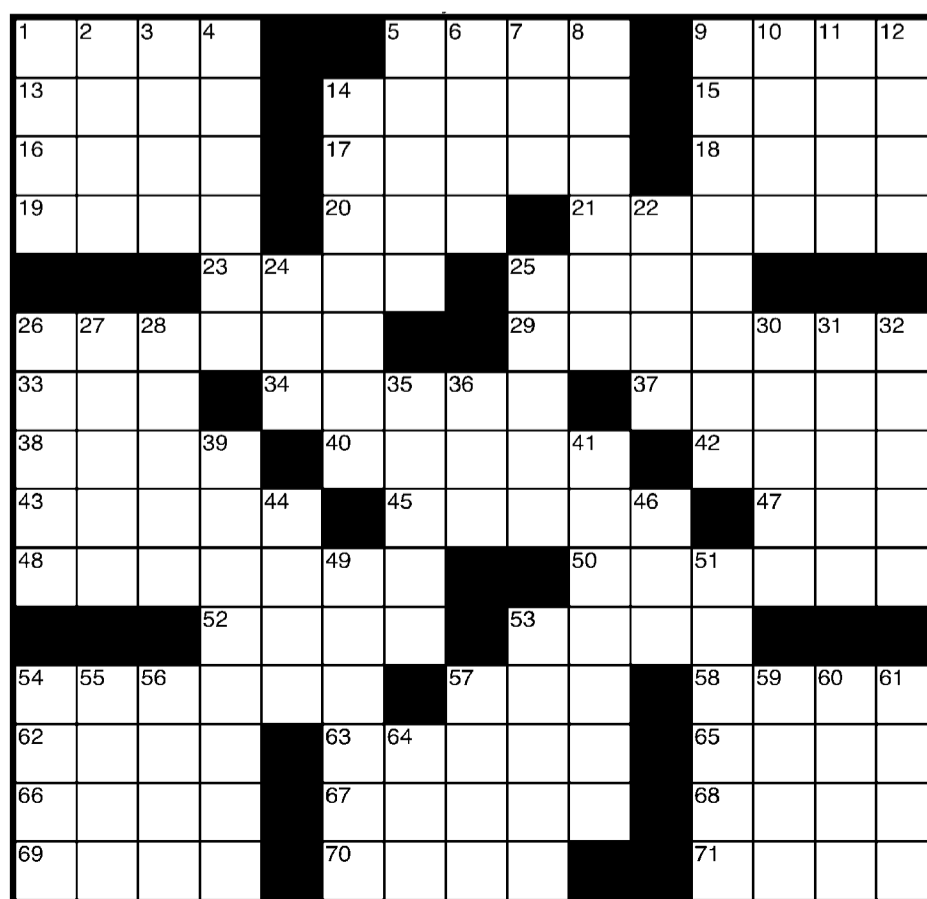
DOWN

- 1 Talks on and on
- 2 Kramer or Satie
- 3 Area of dense population
- 4 Big bother
- 5 Distances
- 6 Multitude
- 7 Head, slangily
- 8 Problematic
- 9 General store
- 10 Easy way out
- 11 Name of a thing
- 12 Overdone
- 14 Accumulated
- 22 Stringed instrument
- 24 Mont Blanc
- 25 Untidy people
- 26 Cries of dismay

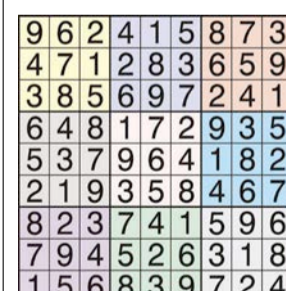
PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



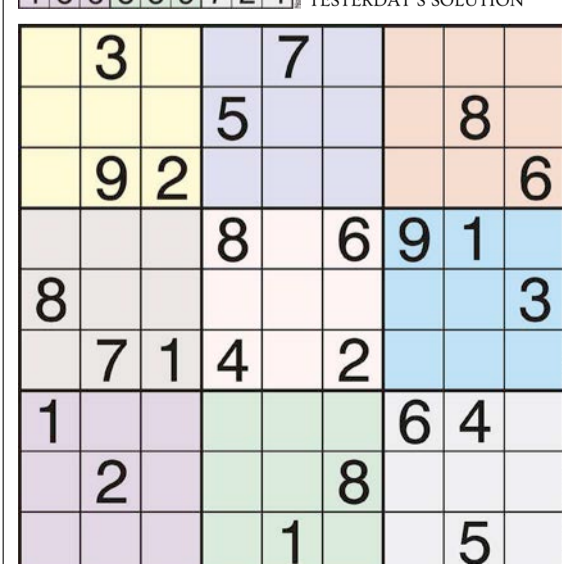
- 27 Rigel's constellation
- 28 River-mouth formation
- 30 Crawled
- 31 Hawk's lair
- 32 Pry bar
- 35 Kuwatt's neighbor
- 36 Large cask
- 39 Length of time
- 41 Locks up tight
- 44 Pivot
- 46 Bright color
- 49 Swirled around
- 51 Whinnies
- 53 Dingbat
- 54 Moby Dick pursuer
- 55 Machete's cousin
- 56 Lhasa —
- 57 Ancient plant
- 59 Refreshing
- 60 Actress Sedgwick
- 61 Yin complement
- 64 "Norma —"



SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Mainstream Nepali literature needs more diverse characters with varied life experiences

Lex Limbu talks about how he began reading, its importance in today's world and why he doesn't have favourite authors.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF LEX LIMBU

Lex Limbu is a blogger and the force behind Tracing Nepal. He is dedicated to connecting Nepali youth abroad with their roots. He began blogging in 2008 and in 2014, he established a travel company, Tracing Nepal, which brings together Nepali youths worldwide to explore their homeland.

Limbu says he aims to strengthen the ties between Nepal and its global diaspora, providing an opportunity to relive their heritage. Through his blog, lexlimbu.com, he captures the essence of Nepal's culture and shares the stories of the Nepali diaspora.

In an interview with *Post's* Aarati Ray, Limbu shared his passion for reading books.

How did your reading journey begin?

I didn't get into reading until I was in my mid-teens. In 2000, after moving from Brunei to the UK, I gave Harry Potter a shot but found it difficult to understand. Reading posed quite a challenge for me until I turned 16.

Later on, as I started following celebrities, I became curious about the books they enjoyed. So, I started reading books mentioned by the figures I admired. That's how I tumbled into the never-ending world of books. For me, it was my interest in celebrities that kick-started my reading journey.

What is a book that has significantly influenced you?

One book that has stayed with me is 'A New Earth' by Eckhart Tolle. I first heard about it from Jharana Bajracharya in an interview about books.

This book seeped into my thoughts and altered my perspective on things. I recall the impact it had on me and the emotions it stirred. Finishing it took me some time because it prompted my journey of self-reflection. The lessons from the book are something I still carry with me today.

What are you reading these days?

I moved to Nepal around 11 months ago, and in December, I started a small book club with four friends. Usually, we would hang out, eat and chat, but I wanted to do something more meaningful, so we started reading fiction together. I was also part of an office book club when I worked in the UK. We also focused on fiction; we read one book a month and discussed it over Zoom.

Usually, I'm more into non-fiction, like spiritual and self-help books and autobiographies. However, these book clubs are steering me towards fiction these days.



BOOK TALK

Recently, I finished reading Krishna Dharabasi's 'Radha'. Before that, I read 'Antar' by Ramesh Sayan, which was released in 2023, and I was invited as a guest for the book launch. The narrative revolves around a character exploring their identity and sexual orientation. I found the book enjoyable, primarily due to its empowering conclusion.

Given your upbringing in the UK, how connected are you with Nepali literature?

Despite growing up in the UK, I have always stayed connected with Nepali literature. Around 2005 and 2006, I was reading books by Samrat Upadhyay, including 'Arresting God in Kathmandu'. I was around 14 then, so I might not have fully understood it, but it gave me a glimpse into life in Kathmandu. 'Arresting God in Kathmandu' helped me understand the city and its people when I lived there for two years.

Some of my favourite Nepali books are 'Palpasa Cafe', 'Karnali Blues' and 'Radha'. Besides mainstream writers, I've enjoyed works by authors like Bhumika Shrestha from the Blue Diamond Society. Her book, 'Bhumika: Tesro Lingiko Atmakatha', is phenomenal.

One of the reasons I read books in Nepali is to improve my language skills. I also read Nepali newspapers, including Kantipur, which has helped me stay connected with Nepali literature and language.

Who are your favourite authors?

I have favourite genres rather than favourite authors. I'm drawn to spiritual and self-help books. Sometimes, I read bestsellers not because I love the author but to understand what people are interested in and how these authors think. Even if I don't agree with everything in a book, I still read it to grasp different viewpoints. That's why I lean more toward having favourite genres than authors. If I like one book from an author, it doesn't mean I'll love all their other books. However, I always finish a book, even if I stop liking it midway through. I think it's not fair to the book if I leave it unfinished and I wouldn't have the right to discuss it.

What are your thoughts on the current state of Nepali literature?

I'm still acquainting myself with Nepali literature, so I won't claim to be an expert. However, based on my experience, I've noticed a beautiful richness in how Nepali authors express themselves. The language feels poetic, making even simple things sound beautiful. Translating these expressions into English might not capture the same beauty and originality.

I do think we need more diverse characters with varied life experiences in Nepali literature. And, not every story has to revolve around Kathmandu.

How important is the habit of reading books in today's world?

Developing a reading habit is essential, even if it's not books you read. Nowadays, people just glance at headlines without reading the whole news. With our attention spans getting shorter, reading habits have become more important than ever.

I share the books I've read and my thoughts on them on social media. If we can post stories about the momo we eat or the places we visit, why can't we share the books we read?

It's important to read things other than what we generally like. We must explore beyond our interests to avoid getting stuck in a bubble. Also, read books written on the same subject by different authors. This way, you get different perspectives on the same thing and get to critically analyse their viewpoints to come to a conclusion of your own.

In a time where we often form opinions just by skimming headlines, creating a reading habit is more crucial than ever.

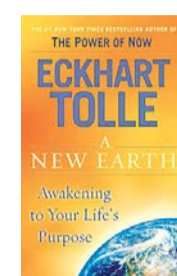
What advice would you give to someone starting their reading journey?

Begin with something you already enjoy. If you love football, pick up a short book about it. Then, try a book by your favourite football player. Take it step by step, develop a habit and get recommendations from others. You will naturally discover your favourite genres.

Don't compare your reading habits to others and don't buy into the idea that books aren't interesting. There's bound to be something for everyone; maybe you haven't found your match yet.

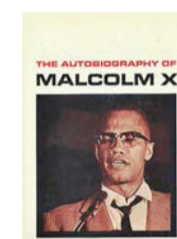
Starting with audiobooks is also a good idea. Create small bookish spaces where you can talk or share about books. If you thrive with accountability, gather friends and start a reading circle. Remember, it's about enjoying the journey, so take it at your own pace.

Lex Limbu's book recommendations



A New Earth
Author: Eckhart Tolle
Publisher: Viking Press
Year: 2005

Tolle's book has made me think and self-reflect a lot. It took me a long time to finish it as I'd have to re-read sections or just sit and think about how the things mentioned applied to me and who I was.



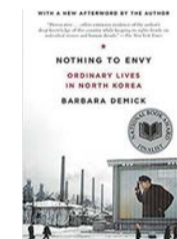
The Autobiography of Malcolm X
Author: Malcolm X, Alex Haley
Publisher: Grove Press
Year: 1965

I recommend 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X' to learn more about black civil rights leaders and movements. Malcolm X's powerful story touched me greatly. I could not help but wonder how things would be if he was not assassinated.



People Like Us
Author: Hashi Mohamed
Publisher: Profile Books
Year: 2020

Mohamed writes about his journey from East Africa to the UK and what it takes to make it and be successful in the UK in 'People Like Us'. This book is relatable for the diaspora as we can resonate with parts of his journey, struggles and success.



Nothing to Envy
Author: Barbara Demick
Publisher: Spiegel & Grau
Year: 2009

'Nothing to Envy' got me deeply fascinated with the lives of people in North Korea. The collection of stories in this book breaks your heart and makes you hopeful and speechless all at the same time. This is a heavy read.



Simon vs The Homo Sapiens Agenda
Author: Becky Albertalli
Publisher: Balzer + Bray
Year: 2015

The book is about Simon, an awkward teenager who's coming to terms with his sexual orientation and trying his best to navigate through high school. I loved reading this book and wondered how nice it would have been to find a book like this when I was younger.

Call for contributions

The Kathmandu Post invites well-researched and creative pitches for 'Fiction Park' stories and feature articles—travelogues, book reviews, as well as pieces on technology, culture and lifestyle. To ensure your articles get our attention, please keep the following things in mind when inquiring about and submitting your pieces.

All your stories should be pitched to the Features desk, not the editor. Email your piece or pitch (along with a high-resolution headshot and a one-line bio) to tkpfeatures@gmail.com.

We will respond only to well-written stories and pitches that have original ideas. Plagiarism will lead to blacklisting. We suggest that you google your pitch before writing to us. If you're submitting an article that the Post or other publications have already covered, tell us why your piece offers something new.

The Post receives dozens of pitches every day from aspiring writers and students. We cannot respond to every single email, but if we like your idea, we will get back to you.

'Bob Marley: One Love' doesn't stir

The movie takes a typical biopic framework in plotting itself around the run-up to an important concert with flashbacks mixed in.

□ JAKE COYLE

Bob Marley was born in 1945, the son of an 18-year-old mother and a much older white man who had nothing to do with his son. As a boy raised in poverty, he often slept on the cold ground. Five years after moving to Kingston's Trench Town, he made his first record, at 17. Not 20 years later, he was dead.

By then, Marley had become the face of not just reggae, Rastafarianism and Jamaica, but of revolution, resistance and peace. He left behind a body of work that has only grown more monumental with time. 'Redemption Song', 'No Woman No Cry', 'War', 'Trench Town Rock', 'Get Up Stand Up', 'Lively Up Yourself', 'One Love People Get Ready'. The Beatles could argue they were bigger than Jesus but no one thought—like some did Marley—that they were actually the Second Coming.

So, yeah, it's a lot for a movie—any movie. 'Bob Marley: One Love', directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green, is a noble but uninspired attempt to capture some of the essence of Marley. Its lived-in textures and attention to Marley's political consciousness, just by themselves, are enough to make 'One Love' something more substantial than many recent, glossier music biopics.

But the power and complexity of Marley are still out of reach for 'One Love', which takes a typical biopic framework in plotting itself around the run-up to an important concert with flashbacks mixed in. When footage of the real Marley inevitably plays over the credits, it's a painful comparison to the ruminative but inert movie that played before it.

The first thing you notice about the

performance by Kingsley Ben-Adir, the talented British actor of 'One Night in Miami...' and 'Barbie', is that he's got the voice. His Marley has the growl and lilt of the singer's resonant Jamaican accent. But what the performance is missing—an absence so clear when the real Marley turns up—is the physical dynamism and charismatic velocity of Marley.

The sheer vibrancy of Marley, who spent afternoons playing soccer and had at least 11 children in his short life, would undoubtedly be a tall



order for most films. 'One Love', set in the aftermath of a 1976 shooting that wounded Marley, follows a more contemplative Marley in self-imposed exile in London—on tour in Europe, recording the 1977 album 'Exodus' and ultimately receiving a diagnosis of cancer.

Marley was, by many accounts, a more private person than often remembered, so the rendering here is surely a genuine aspect of a man rife with contradictions. 'One Love', which lists four screenwriters and was made with Marley's estate (Ziggy and Cedella Marley are producers), appears to have wrestled with finding a single portrait, and the movie's patchwork pacing occasionally shows signs of that struggle.

The performance that bookends the film is the One Love Peace Concert, which was put on in Jamaica in 1978 as a way to heal the divided, violent country. Marley, during 'Jammin', brought the rival party leaders Edward Seaga and Michael Manley on stage.

The turmoil in Jamaica weighs heavily on Marley throughout film; images of fields aflame run repeatedly as a reflection of his memories. Though largely set in Europe, the real through line of the film is Marley as consumed with the plight of

his countrymen, and others in similar situations around the world. When white executives push back against touring in Africa due to its lack of infrastructure, he replies, "So we build it." How all of this percolates in Marley and gets filtered into the music is, ultimately, what "One Love" is about.

"The music and the message are the same thing," Marley explains.

'One Love' is attuned to the communal aspect of Marley's life—he rarely appears alone in the film—yet few other individuals come through vividly. The events of the film are years after the breakup of the Wailing Wailers so Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer are little seen. The most notable supporting roles go to Lashana Lynch as Rita Marley, his wife, and James Norton, as Island Records founder Chris Blackwell.

Though 'One Love' drifts into increasingly conventional biopic scenes, its spirit remains fairly true to Marley—enough, at least, that you overlook some of its faults. But what's harder to forgive is the lacklustre music performances peppered throughout. Ben-Adir doesn't himself sing the songs but relies on Marley recordings—which is fine. Yet when Marley and company take the stage, Green sticks to largely drab coverage. Precisely when 'One Love' should be, as Marley was, striving for transcendence, it feels like it's going through the motions. Come on, you want to plead, and stir it up.

'Bob Marley: One Love', a Paramount Pictures release, is rated PG13 by the Motion Picture Association for marijuana use and smoking throughout, some violence and brief strong language. Running time: 107 minutes. Two stars out of four.

—Associated Press

AP/RSS

Kingsley Ben-Adir plays Bob Marley in the movie.