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THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL



PHOTO: SUJAN GURUNG/TRN

Prime Minister and Chancellor of Tribhuvan University Sushila Karki conferring degrees on students on the occasion of 51st convocation of the University held at Dashrath Stadium in Kathmandu on Thursday.

'We are revising system with PM as Chancellor'

TU 51ST CONVOCATION

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

Prime Minister Sushila Karki has stated that the government has initiated steps to revise the system where the Prime Minister is the Chancellor of a university. For this, the government has been conducting serious consultations, and homework is being done, PM Karki added.

"We have started some concrete initiatives. We have realized the need to revise the system where the Prime Minister is the Chancellor of the university. Serious consultations and homework are being done on this issue," stated PM Karki.

Stating that unnecessary partisan interference in educational administration has increased in recent times, Prime Minister Karki said that interference has continuously affected the higher education sector.

Addressing the 51st convocation of Tribhuvan University held at Dashrath Stadium, PM Karki ordered all TU officials to release the results of the examination on time.

PM Karki, who is also Chancellor of the University, said that all stakeholders should be serious about conducting the examinations and publishing the results, understanding the feelings of the students.

"I have found that students feel that it would have been better if the results had been published on time after the exams. Let the university and all its stakeholders seriously seek answers as to why this situation has arisen," stated PM Karki.

She stressed that stakeholders should also be serious about adding timely and practical educational programmes to maintain quality education, as a large number of students are leaving the country for foreign education.

PM Karki also urged all to maintain the professor-student ratio and publish quality research materials, as the TU is the largest university in the country with more than 400,000 students.

"I see the need for all parties, including professors, students, and management, to be more active in maintaining the right professor-student ratio and publishing high-quality research materials.

Stating that the focus should be on the quality and relevance of the research, PM Karki urged all to enhance PhD and graduation programmes to prioritise research more.

Karki also stated that the university needs to prove itself superior in international competition by leveraging technology in educational activities, enhancing research quality, and expanding its global reach.

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NC'S CWC MEETING TO CONTINUE TODAY

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

The Nepali Congress Central Work Execution Committee convened on Thursday at the party's headquarters, B.P. Smriti Bhawan, under the chairmanship of Acting President Purna Bahadur Khadka. Intensive deliberations occurred among the party's top leadership on the current political developments.

Vice President Dhanraj Gurung and General Secretaries Gagan Kumar Thapa and Bishwaprakash Sharma spoke in the meeting. They were joined by Joint General Secretaries Farmullah Mansur, Umakanta Chaudhary, Mahalaxmi Upadhyay 'Dina', Bhishma Raj Angdambe, and Mahendra Yadav. Other senior participants, including Treasurer Umesh Shrestha and Spokesperson Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, also shared their perspectives.

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Today's Supplement Highlight

Once considered a fatal disease, cancer has now become treatable in many forms.



Tika, first woman pilot from Tharu community

BY AVINASH CHAUDHARY
Dhangadhi, Dec. 25

Man Bahadur Chaudhary's farmland lies close to Dhangadhi Airport in Kailali. Airplane fly over his fields every day. Watching aircraft take off and land while working in the fields, his youngest daughter Tika once made a simple but bold declaration: "Dad, I want to become a pilot too."

Chaudhary was stunned at first. After giving it some thought, he tried to dissuade her, saying that pilot training was expensive and beyond their financial reach. He also warned her about the risks of air crashes. But Tika's determination eventually won him over.

After completing her plus two in science from NAST College in Dhangadhi, Tika remained firm in her resolve to become a pilot. "She told me she would work hard and asked me to manage the money," her father Chaudhary recalled. "So, I started looking for funds, while she began searching for consultancies to send her abroad for pilot training."

The 21-year-old has now become the first woman pilot from the Tharu community. Tika Chaudhary has recently obtained her private pilot licence. She is currently undergoing pilot training at Skyhawk Aviation in South Africa, though her training is yet to be completed.

"My training is not complete yet. We need to log 200 hours of flight time to finish the course," Tika told The Rising Nepal. "I still have about 100 hours of flying left, which should be completed within the next six months."

According to her, a private pilot licence allows her to fly an aircraft solo. She can now independently decide where to land in case of bad weather and is allowed to carry up to two passengers, including her father, on flights she operates on.

"Pilot training is very demanding. You have to fly alone in the sky. But nothing is impossible if you are determined. Success is achievable," Tika said.

Chaudhary has six children -- five daughters and a son. He said he feels proud to have supported one of his daughters in becoming a pilot.

Meanwhile, Baatchit Ghar Dhangadhi honoured Tika on Thursday for making history as the first woman pilot from the Tharu community and for bringing pride to the community.

Speaking at the programme, house owner of Baatchit Ghar Thakur Kariya Pradhan praised Tika for enhancing the reputation of the entire Tharu community.



PHOTO: AVINASH CHAUDHARY

Pilot Tika Chaudhary with her father.

The 21-year-old Chaudhary has recently obtained her private pilot licence.

Elections will be held on schedule: Minister Kharel

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

Minister for Communications and Information Technology, Jagdish Kharel, has said that the elections to the House of Representatives will be held on the scheduled date according to the constitution and established democratic practices.

Talking to the media during an inspection of Panchkhal Municipality in Kavrepalanchok district on Thursday, Minister Kharel, who is also the government spokesperson, said that the government has created a conducive environment for the polls.

Political parties are actively preparing for the electoral process, the Minister said, according to a statement issued by his secretariat on Thursday evening.

Stating that no one should doubt the upcoming elections, Minister Kharel said that timely elections are essential to maintaining political stability and consolidating democracy in the country.

He reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to the process, mentioning the latest initiatives of the government to hold meetings with top party leaders. "On Tuesday and Wednesday, the government held a series of discussions with representatives from major political entities, including the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, the Nepali Communist Party, the Rastriya Swatantra Party, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, and the Janamat Party. These efforts were complemented by a high-level meeting involving the President, the Prime Minister, and leaders of the three largest parties," he said, adding that these activities have ensured an environment for elections.

Speaking at the same function, Panchkhal Municipality's Mayor, Mahesh Kharel, called for strengthened collaboration between federal, provincial, and local authorities to foster regional prosperity.

Minister Kharel also participated in the annual Kul Puja and other religious events at Kharelthok Swara, where he underscored the government's priority of protecting religious and cultural heritage. He commended the local community for their active role in these efforts, remarking that such traditional activities are vital for maintaining social unity and preserving the country's authentic cultural identity.

UML is not against elections, says Oli

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

Chairman of the CPN-UML, KP Sharma Oli, has said that while his party prioritises the reinstatement of the House of Representatives, it is fully prepared to face elections if they are conducted in a peaceful environment.

Addressing a programme organised on Thursday, former Prime Minister Oli said the UML is not against elections but stressed that the current situation in the country does not provide a secure and peaceful environment for polls.

He said the UML does not promote violence and criticised what he described as growing insecurity.

"We have never said we would harm anyone. Despite widespread insecurity, our security has been withdrawn. At times, attempts have been made to provoke attacks in the name of Gen Z," he said, urging youths to remain vigilant against forces attempting to push the country backwards. Referring to a recent meeting convened by President Ramchandra Paudel, Oli said he had clearly stated that while the UML is not against elections, it would not accept any regressive moves.

He emphasised the need for the swift reinstatement of the House of Representatives and said that if elections are to be held on March 5, a proper environment must first be ensured.



Involving elephants in sports is normal: Experts

BY SHALIGRAM NEPAL
Chitwan, Dec. 25

Involving elephants in light sports activities is a normal practice and does not harm their health, experts have said.

They made the remarks amid objections raised by animal rights activists against the ongoing Elephant Festival in Sauraha, Chitwan.

While activists have been demanding that elephants should not be used in sports and festival activities, experts argue that participation in light games does not affect the animals' health negatively.

According to experts, elephants that are regularly used for park security and patrolling can safely take part in simple sports activities. Due to protests by animal rights groups, the international elephant polo tournament once held in Meghauli, western Chitwan, was discontinued. Since then, tourism activities in the area have sharply declined.

Following the closure of elephant polo and the shutdown of Tiger Tops inside the national park, the local airstrip in Meghauli has also been closed.

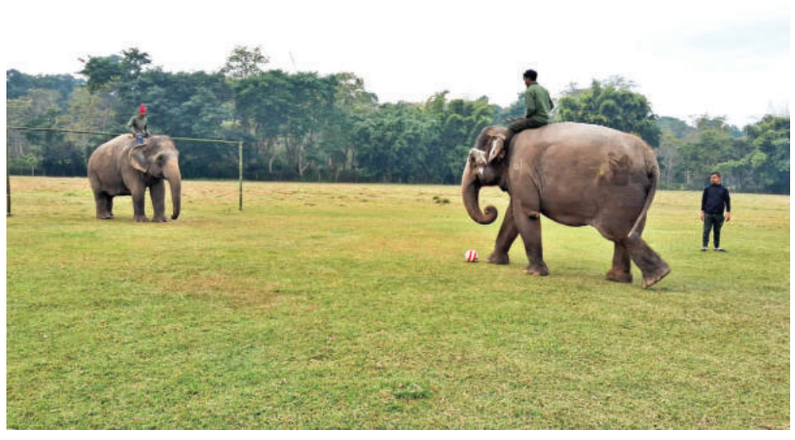


PHOTO: SHALIGRAM NEPAL\TRN

Elephants practise playing football in Sauraha, Chitwan.

The gradual halt of these tourism activities has had a serious impact on overall tourist movement in the area. In recent years, objections have also been raised against the annual Elephant Festival, with critics saying elephants should not be made to run or play games.

The Elephant Festival is being held from Friday at Baghmara Ground in Sauraha. Experts, however, said that making elephants take part in light running or football does not cause any negative effects.

Former Chitwan National Park wildlife veterinarian Dr. Kamal Gaire said that involving large animals like elephants in simple games does not create health problems. "When elephants play football or run lightly, it provides them with exercise and energy," he said.

Dr. Gaire, who worked as an elephant expert in the park for 30 years, said elephants walk long distances daily, carry loads and work regularly without adverse health effects. "Sports actually help them stay active, but they should not be forced or put under pressure," he added. Former Chitwan National Park veterinarian and elephant expert Dr. Bijay Kumar Shrestha said elephants already do strenuous work for park protection, so festival activities are minor in comparison.

"An elephant patrols carrying three to four people and walks long distances. Compared to that, light football or games are not cruelty," he said.

Chief Conservation Officer of Chitwan National Park Dr. Ganesh Pant also said that light activities do not affect elephants due to their large body size. He suggested that forming a study team to assess festival activities would help resolve the ongoing controversy.

He clarified that government-owned elephants are not used in the Elephant Festival or other tourism activities. "We have not seen negative health impacts from activities involving privately owned elephants, but they should never be forced or pressured," he said.

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BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold	: Rs. 267,500/-
Worked Gold	: NA
Silver	: 4,400/-

STOCK

NEPSE	: 2,585.87
Total Amount	: 3,224,664,663.45
No. of Share	: 7,224,917

RS. 80M TURNOVER AT INDUSTRIAL EXPO

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Butwal, Dec. 25

The ongoing National Industrial Exhibition in Butwal has recorded a business turnover of Rs 80 million within its first week, organisers said.

According to the Rupandehi Chamber of Industries (Udhyog Sangh) the 16th National Industrial Exhibition, Agriculture, Technology and Tourism Festival has attracted around 100,000 visitors in just seven days.

Chamber president Krishna Prasad Parajuli said the exhibition features around 500 stalls, all dedicated exclusively to domestically produced goods. He added that the event aims to promote Nepali products and entrepreneurship.

Chamber Secretary Manju Bhusal said special stalls have been allocated for women entrepreneurs, which have drawn significant interest from visitors.

She informed that most visitors showed keen interest in products displayed by women-led enterprises.

The exhibition is being organised under the theme "Expansion of Domestic Entrepreneurship: The Foundation for Building a Prosperous Nepal" and includes ten different pavilions representing various sectors.

According to Hari Bahadur Khatri, vice President of the Chamber and coordinator of the stall management and monitoring subcommittee, around 150 stalls at the exhibition are operated by women entrepreneurs.

Parbati Giri, coordinator of the women entrepreneurship and agriculture subcommittee, said that products showcased by women entrepreneurs have received strong attention, with sales reported to be encouraging.

These stalls feature home-based products, handicrafts, ready-made garments and beauty-related items.

Chamber co-treasurer Raju Ghimire said the exhibition aims to provide information on technology, establish direct interaction between producers and consumers, promote market access for local products, encourage quality competition and facilitate discussions among industrialists on challenges, opportunities, and future prospects.

The exhibition has participants from 39 districts. Executive Director Yadav Bhandari said the event, which will continue until January 1, aims to promote and market domestic products.

Organisers expect that around 800,000 visitors will visit the exhibition and also projected a total economic turnover of Rs 300 million by the end of the exhibition.

EV inflow continues at icy Korala

BY HARIKRISHNA SHARMA
Mustang, Dec. 25

Despite temperatures plunging to as low as minus 15 degrees Celsius in the mornings and evenings, electric vehicles (EVs) continue to enter Nepal in large numbers through the Korala border point in Upper Mustang.

Local traders operating around Pillar No. 24 along the Nepal–China border have already moved down to lower regions to escape the extreme cold.

Settlements including Chhoser and Lomanthang, which are usually lively, have fallen silent.

Hotels and restaurants in densely populated areas along the Korala–Jomsom road section have also shut down for the winter. However, while human activity has declined sharply, the inflow of electric vehicles from China's Tibet Autonomous Region remains steady.

According to the Mustang Customs Office, around 200 electric vehicles have been cleared through customs at Nechung, Lomanthang Rural Municipality–2, over the past three days alone.

Customs Chief Ramesh Khadka said that more than 100 Chinese BYD vehicles are currently parked at the customs yard awaiting clearance.

"The pressure of electric vehicles is high. Despite the extreme cold, we are continuing the clearance process," Khadka said.

Contrary to expectations that imports would decline during the month of December-January, the office has been receiving regular consignments of EVs along with trucks and containers carrying equipment and other goods.



PHOTO: TRN

BYD electric vehicles parked at the yard of Mustang Customs Office in Nechung, Chhoser, Lomanthang Rural Municipality–2, Upper Mustang.

With more shipments expected via the Korala crossing, the customs area has remained busy with vehicle drivers. Most EVs are driven directly to Pokhara after clearance.

Due to the freezing cold, charging stations built for electric vehicles are also experiencing heavy demand.

Drivers are compelled to break ice that forms on the road while transporting cargo trucks and EVs along the 14-kilometre stretch from the Korala border point to the customs office during the morning and evening hours.

The Mustang Customs Office has collected more than Rs. 4.97 billion in revenue as of December 23. During this period, a total of 1,974 electric vehicles and goods carried by 1,620 containers have been imported.

On the export side, 121 cargo vehicles and containers carrying Nepali-made handicrafts, garments and other products have been dispatched, according to Customs Information Officer Amindra Singh.

Although the Korala border point was formally inaugurated on November 13, 2023, it came into full commercial operation from September 15 of the current fiscal year.

However, poor road conditions along the 186-kilometre Korala–Jomsom–Beni road section have created difficulties for operating large containers. From Korala, vehicles must travel 251 kilometres to reach Pokhara, the capital of Gandaki Province.

Located at an altitude of 4,650 metres above sea level, the Korala border point had remained closed since the 1960s after the Khampa protest using Nepali territory.

Since its commercial reopening, the customs point has generated employment opportunities and boosted trade and exports for residents of Upper Mustang.

FARMERS STRUGGLE TO GUARD MAIZE FIELDS

BY GYAANU PANGENI
Madhyabindu, Dec. 25

A farmer with success shielded his maize field in Kawasoti, Nawalpur. He used available household materials to shield the field. Birds, that include parrots, had been hazardous to the crop. As a result, his efforts were successful and the maize was guarded.

Farmer Shyam Prasad Subedi planted maize on a three Kattha plot. Shortly after sowing, he saw that birds were harrowing the seeds and eating them. To guard his crops, he himself utilized accessible materials, containing plant paper, plastic, and fiber bags to protect the field.

Subedi said, "The covering of the maize with plastic and fiber bags was not efficient, and using paper was obligatory with some effort. The cones were made out of accessible papers and utilized them to cover the corn cobs.

Though some of the rolled coverings became loose, the cone-shaped covers have been efficient yet. By utilizing papers from the household and a little plastic, executed this maize protection idea without disbursing much money. A lot of time was spent in stitching and for the preparation of the paper covers."

He added, "The corn cobs that are obscured are shielded, whereas those that are not covered are eaten by parrots. It seems that the paper frightens the parrots away, and they do come near the covered cobs. Regardless of where the paper hasn't come into use, parrots come near the maize and eat it."

Two new hydro projects on Budhigandaki River

BY GUN BAHADUR ROKA
Sulikote, Dec. 25

The construction process for two additional large hydroelectric projects on the Budhigandaki River in Gorkha has moved forward. New Nepal Hydro Electric Company Pvt. Ltd. is set to develop two projects named Budhigandaki 'A' and Budhigandaki 'B'.

The projects aim to generate a combined total of 329.4 megawatts of electricity, which is expected to make a significant contribution to the national power supply, according to project engineer Durgesh Magar.

The Budhigandaki 'A' project will have a capacity of 103.4 megawatts. Under the plan, a dam will be constructed in the Lusyang area of Dharche Rural Municipality–3. Water will be diverted to Machhakhola through a four-kilometre-long tunnel, where a powerhouse will be built.

This project will be based on run-of-the-river technology. Power generated from the project will be connected to the Budhigandaki 'B' project through a seven-kilometre-long transmission line. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 31.32 billion.

Similarly, the 226 MW Budhigandaki 'B' project will be developed by constructing a dam at Khanibeshi in Dharche Rural Municipality–7. According to Engineer Magar, water from the dam will be conveyed to a powerhouse in Soti through a 9.5-kilometre-long tunnel.

The project will generate electricity by utilising a head of 197.97 metres and will be based on off-the-river technology. Its total cost is estimated at Rs. 56.99 billion.

The company stated that the environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and power purchase agreements (PPAs) for both projects have been completed. Electricity generated by the projects will be transmitted to the substation in the Lapa area of Dhading through an 18-kilometre-long transmission line and integrated into the national grid.

New Nepal Hydro Electric Company expressed confidence that the projects will make a significant contribution to local employment, infrastructure development and the overall development of Gorkha district.

Namo Buddha–Balthali hike to boost tourism

BY KEDAR TIMALSINA
Banepa, Dec. 25

A seven-kilometre hiking programme from the historic Namo Buddha to Balthali was organised on Thursday to promote tourism heritage sites and revive traditional trekking routes in Kavrepalanchok district.

The hike was organised by the Hotel Association of Nepal, Kavrepalanchok, with support from the Dhulikhel Municipality Tourism Council. The programme aimed to identify, manage and promote local tourism resources while creating economic benefits for local communities.

President of the association, Prahalad Pyakurel, said the initiative also sought to publicise orange farming in the Shankha, Chinde and Balthali areas and reintroduce the old trekking route linking Namo Buddha and Balthali.

He said that about 15 years ago, the Nepal Environment and Tourism Initiative Foundation (NETIF) had launched the "Exploring the Orange Blossom Hiking Trail" along the same route, but the trail did not receive adequate publicity.

"This hike was organised to inform tourists about the route and allow them to directly observe orange farming in the area," Pyakurel said.

He added that the association plans to further develop the trail and link traditional walking routes with agro-tourism. The organisers aim to attract around 1,000 tourists per month during the orange season through various promotional activities. Improvements to the trail will also be made based on feedback from participants.



PHOTO: TRN

Participants in the hike organised by the Hotel Association of Nepal, Kavrepalanchowk.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Dhulikhel Municipality Mayor Ashok Byanju said the municipality had formed a Tourism Council to coordinate the identification, development and promotion of tourism destinations across the municipality and the district. He said the council would prepare a master plan to promote tourism at both national and international levels, stressing the need to attract both domestic and foreign visitors.

District Coordination Committee Chief Dipak Kumar Gautam said the district has significant tourism potential and called for collective efforts from all sectors to utilise it effectively. He noted that events such as hiking programmes play an important role in discovering and promoting tourism destinations.

Around 150 people, including hotel entrepreneurs, civil society members, government employees, artists and journalists, participated in the hike.

NMGA to launch topo map on Sunday

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

For the first time in Nepal, a topo map has been created for the convenience of climbers in the country. National Mountaineering Guides Association (NMGA) had worked on map creation.

During a press conference in Kathmandu, Tul Singh Gurung, President of NMGA informed that the association was publishing a topo map on the occasion of 20th Mountaineering Day on Sunday.

A topographic map is a detailed and accurate illustration of man-made and natural features like roads, power transmission lines, rivers, lakes on the surface of the earth.

Mostly, climbers use this type of map to get information about drainage, landforms, forests, or transportation routes of any geographical feature.

"December 28 is 'Mountain Guide Day' and we are publishing topo map on the occasion," he said.

Gurung further said rock climbing players, who are part of the main sport under Nepal's adventure sports, will benefit from this.

According to him the map will be useful for rock climbers in Hattiban and gradually the service will expand to the main climbing spots across the country.



PHOTO: TRN

Tul Singh Gurung, President of NMGA and member of the association, during a press conference in Kathmandu on Thursday.

"Rock climbing will be easier once the map gets published," he said adding that the map could help players in preparation, as they will be informed about all the topics before reaching the spot.

Rock climbing is considered the first stage of training for mountain climbing across the world.

Similarly, Tshering Bhote, President of Mountain Guide and Mountain Instructor Association, highlighted on the importance of the map during the press conference. He said that since rock climbing is important for training mountain guides, the topographic map needs to be expanded gradually.

He also asked the government to promote such tasks to meet the target of tourism promotion.

"Topographic map contains detailed information about the ease, and difficulty of each route of the climbing site which helps in preparation for the climbers," he added.

Meanwhile, the association also informed that the number of internationally recognized mountain guides in Nepal has reached 107. This number was in low for long.

"The number of certified guides exceeded 100 since the association was recognized by the International Mountaineering Guides Federation in 2069 BS," Gurung said in the press conference.

Gurung also said attraction towards guiding is gradually increasing. After being recognized, guides are allowed to play their role in mountains around the world. "We have better future in this field," he said.

Internationally recognized mountain guides have currently been guiding in 26 countries with mountains and have also been working as instructors in India and China, according to the association.

Judge backs Hawaii cruise climate tax

AP
Honolulu, Dec. 25

A federal judge's ruling has cleared the way for Hawaii to include cruise ship passengers in a new tourist tax to help cope with climate change, a levy set to go into effect at the start of 2026.

U.S. District Judge Jill A. Otake denied a request Tuesday that sought to stop officials from enforcing the new law on cruises.

In the nation's first such levy to help cope with a warming planet, Hawaii Gov. Josh Green signed legislation in May that raises tax revenue to deal with eroding shorelines, wildfires and other climate problems. Officials estimate the tax will generate nearly $100 million annually.

The levy increases rates on hotel room and vacation rental stays but also imposes a new 11% tax on the gross fares paid by a cruise ship's passengers, starting next year, prorated for the number of days the vessels are in Hawaii ports.

Cruise Lines International Association challenged the tax in a lawsuit, along with a Honolulu company that provides supplies and provisions to cruise ships and tour businesses out of Kauai and the Big Island that rely on cruise ship passengers. Among their arguments is that the new law violates the Constitution by taxing cruise ships for the privilege of entering Hawaii ports.

Plaintiff lawyers also argued that the tax would hurt tourism by making cruises more expensive. The lawsuit notes the law authorizes counties to collect an additional 3% surcharge, bringing the total to 14% of prorated fares.

"Cruise tourism generates nearly $1 billion in total economic impact for Hawai'i and supports thousands of local jobs, and we remain focused on ensuring that success continues on a lawful, sustainable foundation," association spokesperson Jim McCarthy said in a statement.

According to court records, plaintiffs will appeal. Hawaii will continue to defend the law, which requires cruise operators to pay their share of transient accommodation tax to address climate change threats to the state, state Attorney General Anne Lopez said in a statement.

The U.S. government intervened in the case, calling the tax a "scheme to extort American citizens and businesses solely to benefit Hawaii" in conflict with federal law.

Plaintiff and Department of Justice attorneys filed motions Wednesday seeking to maintain the status quo pending appeal. Otake denied the motions.

Federalism key to stability, prosperity: CM Yadav

In Madhes Province, widely regarded as the cradle of federalism in Nepal, public attention has focused on the government formed under the leadership of the Nepali Congress (NC). The current administration faces major challenges, including addressing the constitutional crisis, countering attempts to weaken federalism, and overcoming the negative perception surrounding provincial governments. Recalling the NC's historic role in safeguarding federalism, Chief Minister of Madhes Province **Krishna Prasad Yadav**, has expressed confidence in the stability of the government and pledged to prioritise agriculture, education, and good governance to make the province prosperous. He has also committed to eliminating corruption and the practice of trading development plans. Our Janakpurdham correspondent, **Laxmi Chaudhary**, spoke with newly appointed Chief Minister Yadav about these issues. Excerpts:

INTERVIEW



Amid recent political upheavals, leadership in Madhes Province has now shifted to the NC. At a juncture marked by constitutional uncertainty, Madhes, often regarded as the cradle of federalism, has also drawn critical attention. As both the Chief Minister and provincial president of the NC, how do you see this development ?

Federalism in Nepal finds its origin in Madhes Province. The essence and necessity of federalism are most closely linked to Madhes because its people have historically faced neglect. Federalism was introduced with the principles of power-sharing and decentralisation, and it is indispensable for the betterment of the Madhesi People.

Those who oppose federalism are often accustomed to centralised and feudal systems of governance. The true spirit of federalism lies in all seven provinces moving forward with their respective rights, duties, and responsibilities.

We must also acknowledge our shortcomings. The spirit with which federalism was introduced has not been fully reflected in practice. Some actions in the past have caused public dissatisfaction. I believe in action rather than speeches, and I am determined to address and correct these distortions.

The NC itself has faced allegations of unconstitutional practices, for instance, submitting a claim for the chief minister's post without a formal call from the provincial head a few months ago. How do you respond to this ?

That interpretation is incorrect. We had the required majority. Our objective was not merely to take power, but to prevent the dissolution of the Provincial Assembly and to send a clear message in favour of federalism. Our presence was meant to demonstrate that the NC stands ready to protect federalism. Unfortunately, other parties misinterpreted and misrepresented this move.

The media also plays a crucial role in nation and province building. I urge journalists to highlight positive and constructive aspects, not just negative ones. Responsible journalism is essential.

There are growing concerns that the country is heading toward collapse and that the constitution is being gradually weakened. In such a constitutional crisis, what role should the Madhes government play ?

Federalism is absolutely essential for Madhes. Our duty is to take ownership of the province and make it prosperous and developed. If we succeed, calls to dismantle federalism will lose credibility on their own.

NC is the party that introduced democracy, republicanism, and federalism. It has played a leading role in every major political transformation of the country. In the eight years since provincial governments were established, NC has not had an opportunity to lead Madhes. That is why all eyes are now on us. Now it cannot afford to make mistakes.

How confident are you that the Congress-led Madhes government, formed through a seven-party alliance, will remain stable ?

I am fully confident. All parties that wish to see Madhes become strong, prosperous, peaceful, and happy must support the current government. The government must deliver visible results so that people truly feel the presence of a provincial government. To dispel the negative perceptions created in the past and to safeguard federalism, collective support for the Congress-led government is essential.

This is the time to deliver results. What are the government's priorities, especially with youth and Gen Z in mind ?

On the very day I assumed office, I committed to ensuring good governance. Our first priority is to streamline public services.

Agriculture is our top priority. About 90 per cent of Madhes's population depends on agriculture. There is widespread frustration in the sector, and we aim to replace it with programmes that generate returns many times higher than the investment. The 'Feed the Nation' programme will be continued.

The second area of concern is education. Many students from Madhes are compelled to pursue their studies elsewhere. Strengthening affordable and high-quality educational institutions locally would help limit this migration.

Are there any specific plans for education reform ?

Strengthening community schools is our primary objective. We will invest in human resources, capacity development, infrastructure, and physical facilities. Given the province's limited capacity, we will collaborate with donor agencies. There is also a plan to establish an education hub that can accommodate 10,000 to 15,000 students in one location.

Despite being one of the highest tax-paying provinces, Madhes faces an economic crisis. How will you strengthen it economically ?

There are ample internal resources, but they have not been properly managed. I did not become Chief Minister for the title; I am here to work. I will work relentlessly, ensuring that no matter who succeeds me, the legacy of the NC will be recognised for delivering results.

Madhes has long faced allegations of trading development plans. Can Congress put an end to this ?

When I served as Minister for Physical Infrastructure, I reduced plan trading and commissions to zero during my tenure. The same practice will continue. As this is a coalition government, past distortions must not be repeated. I firmly commit that no news of plan trading will emerge from any ministry under my cabinet.

Despite political turbulence, the country is moving closer to elections. How do you view the upcoming polls and coordination between federal and provincial governments ?

Even though elections have been announced, preparations do not appear adequate. With the right preparations, elections can certainly take place. After the Gen Z movement, the morale of the police and administration has weakened, and the central government must address this. The NC and the Madhes government will play a positive role in the upcoming House of Representatives elections.

How likely it is that Gen Z will be included in the Congress leadership through the party convention ?

Leadership in NC is determined through active members. Active membership renewal has not yet been completed. As new members are added, new groups will also emerge, and they must be included. The party president has already said he will not continue in leadership. Once preparations are complete, the general convention will be held.

Finally, as the first NC Chief Minister in Madhes, what message would you like to convey to the people of the province ?

I urge the people of Madhes to take ownership of provincial plans and projects and support them. The government has no room for mistakes. This administration will work to ensure that everyone truly feels the presence of a provincial government. I commit to establishing a result-oriented government by dispelling past misconceptions. Madhes has been neglected in budget allocation despite its population size, and we will work firmly to ensure justice in this regard

EIGHT QUINTALS MARIJUANA CONFISCATED

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Rajbiraj, Dec. 25

Police in Saptari district have seized a large quantity of illegal drugs, confiscating more than eight quintals of marijuana and arresting a driver who was attempting to smuggle the contraband into India.

According to police, a joint police team deployed on the basis of special intelligence intercepted the consignment during a check at Lalapatti Tole of Chhinnamasta Rural Municipality-4 on Wednesday. The team, led by a police inspector from the Saptari District Police Office and a sub-inspector from the Area Police Office, Sakhada, stopped and searched a pickup truck heading from Nepal towards India.

During the inspection, police recovered 32 packages of marijuana from the pickup truck bearing registration number Ko 1 Cha 9665. Saptari District Police Office spokesperson and information officer, Deputy Superintendent of Police Dambar Bahadur Puri, said the seized marijuana weighed eight quintals, 51 kilograms and 200 grams including plastic packaging, and eight quintals and 32 kilograms excluding the packaging.

The driver of the vehicle, 29-year-old Ram Kumar Yadav of Rajbiraj Municipality-11, has been taken into custody. Police have seized the marijuana, the pickup truck, and the driver, and have launched an investigation under drug-related offences, the District Police Office said.

Further investigation is underway after the Saptari District Court granted a six-day remand, DSP Puri added.



People's Campus marks 44th anniversary

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

Nepal's universities produce skilled graduates, yet they struggle to find good jobs, leading to accusations of unemployment against educational institutions. Speakers at People's Campus's 44th anniversary in Kathmandu voiced this concern.

Tribhuvan University Faculty of Management Dean Dr. Mahananda Chalise cited a recent survey done among five thousand students, in which 90 per cent said that they wanted to go abroad for economic gains. Only 10 per cent said that they are after better education.

"Universities produce manpower," he said, "It's government's job to provide employment and self-employment opportunities. But so far not any government launched employment programme focusing youth unemployment."

He blamed the lack of coordination between government and academia for the manpower-employment imbalance, adding, "Our nurses, doctors, engineers, and hotel managers earn global acclaim and income but we fail to offer opportunities at home. The fault lies beyond universities. It's time for government, academia, and private sectors to collaborate on solutions."

People's Campus Chief Manoj Bahadur Kunwar attributed rising migration to improved economic status and broader socioeconomic factors. He noted that community colleges, vital for uplifting underprivileged students, suffer from double standards and deserve a distinct policy perspective.

The event honoured top performers from Tribhuvan University and National Examination Board; among them were Anish Nepali, Deepika Shrestha (NEB Exam), Sudeep Basel (BBS), Kusum Rai and Merina Kayastha (BBA), Karina Shrestha and Ritu KC (BBM), and Anushma Shrestha (MBS). Long-serving staff like Assistant Campus Chief Rajesh Pandit, Prahlad Baidhya, and Pradipman Tuladhar also received accolades.

Parties busy recommending HoR polls candidates

BY NAGENDRA KUMAR KARNA
Mahatthari, Dec. 25

Political parties in Mahottari district are busy finalising and recommending candidates for both the direct and proportional representation systems for the House of Representatives election slated for March 5, 2026.

While parties have begun sending lists of direct candidates to their respective district committees, disputes have also surfaced over some of the recommendations.

In Mahottari, prominent leaders including Nepali Communist Party (NCP) coordinator Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Loktantrik Samajwadi Party (LSP) Nepal Chair Mahanta Thakur, senior leader Sharat Singh Bhandari, and Janata Samajwadi Party Nepal general secretary Ram Kumar Sharma have been recommended as candidates for the HoR under the direct election system.

Meanwhile, the Nepali Congress has also recommended former Madhes Province Governor Hari Shankar Mishra for the National Assembly. From the NCP Mahottari Constituency No. 4, the party's regional assembly has recommended 'Prachanda' and Bharat Prasad Sah for first-past-the-post electoral system.

> Nepali Congress has also recommended former Madhes Province Governor Hari Shankar Mishra for the National Assembly. From the NCP Mahottari Constituency No. 4, the party's regional assembly has recommended 'Prachanda' and Bharat Prasad Sah for first-past-the-post electoral system.

For proportional representation (PR) system, the assembly recommended Arvind Das (Dalit), Md. Mahfuz Alam (Muslim), Sita Devi Sah (Minority Woman), Nagina Devi Yadav (Woman) and Anil Pandey (Madhesi Khas Arya).

The recommendations were confirmed in a letter signed by Provincial Committee Member Arvind Das.

The party has also recommended candidates for the National Assembly, Rajendra Prasad Sah (Open category), Arvind Das (Dalit), Binod Pajiyar (Minority) and Md. Taukir Mansur (Muslim).

Similarly, the Loktantrik Samajwadi Party Nepal has recommended its central chair Mahanta Thakur as the sole candidate from Mahottari Constituency No. 3 for the HoR election.

Thakur has already been elected twice from this constituency. From Constituency No. 2, senior leader Sharat Singh Bhandari has been recommended, while Pitambar Mahato has been recommended from Constituency No. 1.

The Nepali Congress has recommended Ram Chandra Tiwari as the sole candidate for direct election from Constituency No. 3. Under proportional representation, the party has recommended Narendra Prasad Mishra, Baidyanath Mandal, Krishna Singh, Amarendra Jha and Gopal Jha in the male category, and Anita Sharma, Ninu Karn and Rashmi Thakur in the female category, according to Constituency No. 3 Chair Raghabendra Jha.

For the National Assembly, Harishankar Mishra and Dr. Garib Das Thakur have been recommended under the open category, while Dr. Ram Padartha Bichchha and Shrichand Mahaseth have been recommended under other categories.

However, Nepali Congress leader Bajrang Nepali has expressed dissatisfaction over the single-candidate recommendation process.

Recalling past instances where he was asked at the last moment by the party's central office to withdraw his candidacy in support of Mahanta Thakur, he alleged that his political contribution has been consistently undervalued.

Meanwhile, the Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP) Nepal has recommended Ramesh Kumar Mahato, Naval Kishore Yadav and Yognarayan Yadav for direct election from Constituency No. 1. From Constituency No. 3, the party has recommended general secretary Ram Kumar Sharma, executive committee member Hari Narayan Yadav and central committee member Krishna Shankar Sah, according to Constituency Secretary Ram Prasad Chaudhary.

Tarai still under cold grip, schools shut

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

Dense fog and an intense cold wave continue to affect normal life across much of the Tarai region. Transportation, education, health services, agriculture and livelihood remained affected on Wednesday and Thursday.

With dipping mercury over a week, children, elderly people, daily wage earners and poor households have been hit the hardest.

Our Dang correspondent reported that thick fog and frost have made early morning movement difficult. Residents say routine activities, including farming, have been severely affected.

Buddhiram Chaudhary of Karjahi in Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan City-17 said the prolonged cold has brought agricultural work to a halt. "Working in the fields has become impossible. We stay indoors wearing thick clothes and sitting by the fire," he said.

The fog has spread from Ghorahi to Tulsipur and the Deukhuri area. Bus driver Buddhiraj Acharya said drivers were forced to move cautiously due to poor visibility and damp road surfaces, particularly along the Ghorahi-Lamahi-Bhalubang road section.



PHOTO: SUDHA DEO

Firewood being distributed in Rajbiraj.

According to the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology's field office in Ghorahi, Dang recorded a maximum temperature of 16 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 9 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. Officials said cold and foggy conditions are likely to persist for a few more days.

In Bardiya, people's movements have been reduced in the market centres of Gulariya, Mainapokhar, Sanoshree, Rajapur, Bhurigaun and Basgadhi.

Ajay Sharma of Gulariya Municipality-5 said children are finding it difficult to commute to school due to the cold. Temperatures in Bardiya, which can reach as high as 44 degrees Celsius in summer, have dropped to around 13 degrees Celsius.

Paediatrician at Bardiya Hospital Dr. Bishwanath Shah said cases of colds, fever and respiratory problems among children are increasing. He advised parents to keep children and elderly people warm, provide hot food and avoid exposure during early mornings and evenings.

Authorities in West Nawalparasi have announced plans to provide relief and carry out rescue measures for families affected by the cold wave.

Chief District Officer Krishna Prasad Lamsal said priority would be given to poor and vulnerable households. An expanded meeting of the District Disaster Management Committee decided to launch awareness programmes at school and community level to reduce cold-related risks.

The cold wave has also led to widespread school closures. In Saptari, Bodhbarsain Municipality has closed all schools for five days until December 28, citing difficulties faced by children in travelling amid fog and cold winds.

In Mahottari, Bhangaha and Ramgopalpur municipalities have closed all community and religious schools from Tuesday to Friday as a precaution.

In Banke, five local levels, including Kohalpur Municipality have closed all community and private schools for three days after children began falling ill due to extreme cold. Khajura and Janaki rural municipalities have also announced school closures for three days, while Nepalgunj Sub-metropolitan City has declared a four-day winter break starting December 26.

In Dhanusha, Janakpurdham Sub-metropolitan City has announced a one-day school closure on Friday, with further holidays possible if the cold persists.

In Mahottari, hospitals are witnessing increasing number of patients following the prolonged cold waves. Hospitals and Bardibas and Jaleshwar said that 170 patients suffering from cold-related diseases visit the hospitals every day.

In Saptari, the Forest Division Office has started distributing firewood in different public places to keep the locals warm.

The Forest Division Office distributed firewood in various places of Rajbiraj Municipality on Wednesday, according to our Saptari correspondent Sudha Deo.

364 BIRTHING CENTRES IN GANDAKI

RSS
Gandaki, Dec 25

The number of birthing centres in Gandaki Province has reached 364. With this, the deliveries at home have gradually declined.

Chief of Medical Service Division at Ministry of Health in province, Dr. Ramesh Kumar KC, informed that the number of child births at home has reduced to less than 200 in a year in the province.

He informed that there are 18 hospitals providing delivery service with surgery while the health facilities conducting critical delivery stand at 52. All districts except Manang in the province provide the delivery service.

Even a programme is run by the Ministry for the capacity building of health workers and availability of medical equipment. Annually, the province records nearly 24,000 births. Out of total 36,000 pregnancies, nearly 12,000 undergo abortions.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

We build too many walls and not enough bridges.
- Isaac Newton

EDITORIAL

Vital Social Security

The role of farmers in feeding people cannot be overstated, nor can the work of sewage workers who keep the urban drainage flowing. Likewise, construction workers build crucial infrastructure that enables travel and trade, essential for prosperity. Street vendors ensure that the goods we need never go out of stock. These and more indispensable workers keep the urban centres, industries, and the economy as a whole functional. But guess what? These workers are largely treated as second-class employees without formal safety nets under social protection.

While access to health insurance, pension and other social security benefits was largely enjoyed by a select few, including the public servants, as an exclusive privilege, workers in the informal economy lacked access to income protection, a safety net during illness, accidents, old age, or economic shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic – all of which disproportionately affect the informal workers. All these risk factors not only put them at the mercy of their employers but also force them to lead a precarious existence.

These harsh realities of life also trap, impoverish, and perpetuate the cycle of intergenerational poverty of the vulnerable workers. They also risk sinking them into spiralling debt when falling sick or when providing for the educational or health needs of the family.

But, with the launch of a National Campaign on Social Security for Informal Workers and the Self-Employed by Labour, Employment and Social Security Fund (SSF) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) on Wednesday, such deprivations for these workers will be a thing of the past. This effort marks a giant leap towards fulfilling the constitutional promise of social justice and social democracy. The campaign brings together government institutions, employers' and workers' organisations, local governments, civil society, and the media, to expand social security coverage to those in need.

More than 86 per cent of Nepal's workforce is found to engage in informal employment, far beyond the reach of labour laws and social security nets, with women constituting the vast majority. The absence of social security can mean the deprivation of maternity or sick leaves and loss of income, as well as the lack of dignity during old age when the body is unable to work.

However, the newly launched initiative addresses all these injustices when implemented in its letter and spirit. The fact that the support scheme aims to strengthen women's economic agency and reduce vulnerability across generations is praiseworthy. This expansion also marks the crucial steps towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to ending poverty, promoting health and well-being, and achieving gender equality, among others.

Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security Rajendra Singh Bhandari's remark that social security acts as a protective shield and a lack of one risks leading a nation to social unrest, conflict and forced migration deeply resonated with us. Grounded in the principle of inclusion, the initiative is fundamental to equity, economic resilience and inclusive development.

Government authorities, workers, and employers must wholeheartedly support this campaign and work in tandem to build a just society where every worker's basic right to social security is firmly upheld, regardless of the work or its duration. This is a legal and moral imperative to fulfil the constitutional aspiration of guaranteeing contribution-based social security as a fundamental right for every worker.

Praise Diverse Talents

ADITYA TIWARI / YUWADITYA N. TIWARI

In the heart of every Nepali household, there is a familiar story. It starts with the pressure of the SEE, the weight of being a "topper," and the silent hope of parents that their child will one day wear a white coat or carry an engineering degree. Our society has built a narrow pedestal for success. If you can solve a complex equation or master a physics formula, you are seen as a genius. But if you struggle with numbers, if you hesitate while calculating change at the local kirana shop, or if math feels like a wall you cannot climb, the world quickly labels you as "lazy," "weak," or "careless." We need to stop and ask: Is it really a lack of effort? Or are we judging a fish by its ability to fly?

For many of us, the problem isn't laziness. It is about a concept called numeracy. Most people think numeracy is just simple addition or subtraction. In reality, it is a deep-seated cognitive skill. It is how our brain understands time, measures distances, manages money, and recognises patterns in the world around us. Just as some people are born with a natural gift for languages, others are born with a brain that processes numerical data differently. This isn't a choice, and it certainly isn't a sign of low intelligence.

We may often mistake "rote learning" for actual intelligence. We may celebrate the student who can memorise a textbook but overlook the one who can compose a beautiful song, lead a football team to victory, or paint a masterpiece that captures the soul of our mountains.

When a student struggles with science or mathematics, they aren't just fighting the subject; they are fighting a battle against shame. They are tired of being called "slow" or "dumb" by teachers and relatives. This constant blame creates an emotional wound that lasts far longer than any school term. It destroys self-confidence and breeds an anxiety that makes learning even harder.

If you or a friend finds it hard to navigate these specific areas, know that you are not alone. These are not signs of a "weak mind" but of a different way of learning: Difficulty in understanding the order of numbers or quantities, struggling to remember basic math facts even after hours of practice, getting confused with time management or counting money, finding it hard to estimate distances or measurements and feeling a sense of panic or "brain fog" when faced with a numerical task

These challenges should be met with support, not punishment. If a student cannot learn the way we teach, perhaps we should teach the way they learn. Your talent is your superpower. Nepal is a country built on diverse talents. From our world-class artists and musicians to our innovative entrepreneurs and athletes, very few of them reached the top because they were experts at trigonometry. They succeeded because they found their own "special gift."

Intelligence is a vast ocean, and mathematics is just one small island. If you are a student who feels "weak" in science or math, please listen: You are not a failure. Your brain is wired for something else, something perhaps more creative, more empathetic, or more practical.

Will UML Regain Its Turf



Dr. Narad Bharadwaj

The Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) successfully held its 11th convention last week. According to UML sources, the inauguration assembly drew the presence of over 100,000 people, though the independent sources project a more sobering estimate of 30,000 to 50,000 people. The national congress is the highest regular body of the party, which assembles every five years to assess and correct the party's ideological direction and elect a new set of leadership for five years. This time, however, it drew special public attention and curiosity because it was taking place in a tense political situation of a brutal onslaught it received during the Gen Z revolt. The national conference of the UML was, therefore, necessary to deliver a message that it is still a force to reckon with and will be around to dominate the chessboard of national politics.

The massive presence at the inauguration assembly demonstrated that despite the phase of unpopularity it is passing through, the UML is still l a formidable political force. With nearly 700,000 active members, a strong organisational presence from central down to the ward level. It is in a position to project power more effectively than the Nepali Congress and other communist parties, which appear in a state of torpor following the shock delivered by the Gen Z revolt. In sharp contrast, the resilience shown by the UML in the immediate aftermath of the revolt and the visible activities it organised at different locations of the country proved that this party is way ahead of other political organisations in matters of mobilising the people.

The UML has played a historical role in unifying the divided left movement in the past. At its early period, it projected itself as a genuine communist party with Marxism and Leninism as its guiding ideology. Through its clear goal to overthrow feudalism, semi-colonialism and comprador capitalism, it was able to gain traction among the diverse sections of society. This party provided successful leadership in several historical movements that took place from 1970 to 1990. It was behind the student movement of 1975, the referendum of 1978 and also the People's Movement of 1990. Its legendary leader, Madan Bhandari, formulated People's Multi-party Democracy based on the experience of prolonged revolutionary movements.

The 1990 People's Movement overthrew the Panchayat system and gave legal status to political parties that were clandestinely operating during the Panchayat system. The old generation leaders like Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Ganesh Man Singh and Monamohan Adhikari, Madan Bhandari were icons of moral standards for the people. Following the death of Madan Bhandari in 1993, a culture of hero worship was institutionalised, ideologically sound leaders, met high ethical standards and were away from the temptation for power and pelf, were systematically sidelined or disgraced, with pseudo revolutionaries occupying the central stage.

The UML began to lose its moral terrain in 1981, when it marginalised its founding general secretary, CP Mainali, in the first serious inner-party polemic. Ever since, groupism and unholy alliances have become treasured tools for acquiring leadership posts. Parliamentary elections lost the sanctity of fairness, giving free rein to money and muscles as tools of winning elections and mustering a majority in the parliament. Those who won the election or were appointed ministers underwent a class transformation, as described by Yugoslav communist intellectual Milovan Djilas in his famous book The New Class.

> The party-affiliated youths repeatedly tried to persuade the leadership for the generational transfer of power but their aspirations were nipped in the bud.

The much-touted socialist democratic values of evolving collective leadership, using criticism and self-criticism as a tool for settling differences and practicing democratic centralism, were flung to the wind. The failure of this party to practice democratic principles, flouting rules and stifling inner-party democracy created a space for the emergence of a superman within the party. The educated, well-informed youth population was expressing its discontent through aggressive social media posts. But the elite group of leadership continued to project the cult-like image of KP Sharma Oli as an ineluctable fate of the country.

Naturally, Oli's deification came at a cost. As a powerful coterie deified him, thousands of honest, dedicated and ideologically committed party members and lower-level party leaders were persecuted, sidelined, replaced or disgraced. The case of Bhim Rawal, Karna Bahadur Thapa, Tanka Karki, Binda Pande, and Usha Kiran Timsena can best explain the organisational terror that was unleashed within the UML.

Inner-party injustice

The party-affiliated youths repeatedly tried to persuade the leadership for the generational transfer of power but their aspirations were nipped in the bud. When the inner-party injustice crossed all limits, the wider society started to make scurrilous remarks against not only leaders but also the servile party workers who did not dare to call a spade a spade. Finally, Gen Z revolt came like an avalanche and demolished the edifice of the false value system

The UML has suffered a serious dent in its armor. But instead of seeking vengeance, it should take this as an opportunity to dust itself off, reassemble and reclaim the moral high ground it once occupied. The mega mass assembly that took place on the inauguration day of the 11th national congress has provided this party a much-deserved facelift. But it is only a psychological part of the visible battle; it will have to subject its inner party life to scathing review and achieve a new level of party unity to claw back the turf it has lost in the Gen Z revolt.

(Bharadwaj is the former ambassador and former chairperson of Gorkhapatra Corporation. bharadwajnarad@gmail.com)

Bibliotherapy Boosts Mental Health



Dr. Byanjana Sharma

Last week, I heard a tragic story of a teenage boy who committed suicide. The reason was that his parents insisted that he focus on his studies for the upcoming internal examination at his college. This story was still fresh in my mind when I suddenly encountered another much sadder incident. A news report stated that the suicide rate is soaring in Australia, particularly among Nepali students. The same report indicated that ten dead bodies were sent to Nepal from Sydney alone within just a month. All those students belonged to the age group of 23 to 30. The major reason for their wrong decision surfaced as mental pressure - the news story said.

These two cases made me ponder once again why our youths are choosing suicide as an ultimate solution to their problems. These days, we come across a lot of stories related to mental health issues. A report says that suicide rates in Nepal have surged by an alarming 72 per cent over the past decade. Among many other contributing factors, mental health problems remain a main cause for this. Mental health is a pressing concern not only in Nepal but also throughout the world.

Mental health

Again, there may be many reasons for people's deteriorating mental condition, such as family disputes, domestic violence, poverty, social discrimination, substance use, sleep deprivation, poor health condition or genetics. On top of all these, there is another reason, especially associated with digitally active young people's mental health and it is excessive use of social media. There are many research studies which highlight that if young people are exposed to social media for a long period of time, they will have to face various mental health problems.

For instance, the Mission Australia survey report published in The Guardian in 2023 pointed out that those teenagers who reported higher social media use also reported worse mental health and wellbeing, such as feeling negative about the future, no control over their lives and feeling lonely. It will not be wrong if we say that poor mental health status has been a serious threat to the new technology age. What can be done to get rid of this situation? This is the question that can be asked by all conscious people who prefer a better world to live in.

Recently, I watched an interview of a renowned Indian American novelist and story writer, Usha Priyambada, where she was sharing an interesting story to the interviewer. She said that the middle-aged men of 50-55 years old come to a therapist and complain, 'My life has been empty. Although I'm earning a handsome salary, I have expensive cars and everything but inside I'm empty.' For this, the therapist responds, 'This happened because you haven't read literature.' I was so impressed by Priyanbada's story that I started to explore what this therapist said was really true. Then I came across the term 'bibliotherapy.' I found the term defined as the use of books as therapy in the treatment of mental conditions.

> The young people who spend a lot of screen time and stress themselves can benefit more from bibliotherapy. This technique may reduce the suicide rate as well.

What a good idea to treat mentally disturbed people by using books! My personal experience also aligns with bibliotherapy. When I lost my mother nearly a decade ago, I had no one to share my intense grief but books. It happened so suddenly that I could not process anything. Thanks to God, I am fond of reading. So, I turned to books and articles to soothe my pain. Gradually, all the clouds that gathered inside me started to fade away and eventually, I accepted my mother's passing away. Not only this, I wrote a book, 'Ghaam Astaaeko Hoina', during that time to help the people who lost their dear ones. However, I was not aware of 'bibliotherapy' at that time.

If we surf for articles on 'bibliotherapy', hundreds will appear. Basically, the bibliotherapists use this technique to treat mentally disturbed people. The choice may be fiction, non-fiction or self-help books according to the problems that the patients are facing. For example, the advocates of fiction-based creative bibliotherapy argue that immersing oneself in rich, simulated worlds - often reflective of real-life experiences - can help readers process emotions, discover coping strategies or simply provide momentary escape from their everyday woes. All this helps them to go back to their normal life.

Effective method

The bibliotherapists emphasise that bibliotherapy, as a low-cost, effective and timely method, can be broadly promoted, but the specific choice of books needs to be considered individually for each person's own circumstances. There are many success stories related to bibliotherapy. Dr. David Burns, the author of 'Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy, ' states that people have shared their experiences after reading the book. One of his readers wrote to him, '...I just finished your book. My depression score on the first day was 51, and today, after I just finished it, I scored 0... Here, the score 51 means moderate to severe depression and 0 means no depression at all.

I think it is a good idea to try bibliotherapy if you are going through some kind of mental pressure. It is such a useful and cheap medicine and accessible medicine. Especially, the young people who spend a lot of screen time and stress themselves can benefit more from bibliotherapy. This technique may reduce the suicide rate as well.

(The author is the director of Vidya Shilpa Academy, Damak, Jhapa.)

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

December 26, 1975

New Japanese Envoy To Nepal

Kathmandu, Dec. 25: Mr. Seiken Sasakin has been appointed Japanese Ambassador to Nepal, according to the Foreign Ministry, reports RSS.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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Or send them to
P.O. Box 23, Kathmandu, Nepal

READER'S MAIL

Digital Market Expanding Economy

In the world today, digital technology is evolving by the day. Though many fields have benefited from digital technology, the marketing field has thrived the most. And most marketing companies out there are getting rich from the larger benefits of technological advances. Knowledge is the best and safest treasure to acquire, as the saying goes. With due knowledge and great confidence, we humans can rise to the new challenges posed by the future.

For instance, product management, promotion, and sales are among the key areas covered by marketing strategies. Besides this, the dynamic world of digital marketing has just seen a plethora of revelations. According to a recent survey conducted, almost 93 per cent of online interactions start with a search engine. On the other hand, GetResponse says that email marketing has been evolving into a more trustworthy, relevant channel than ever before.

All these interesting revelations point to a clear paradigm shift towards the digital world. That is why digital marketing matters the most. Apart from making big



bucks through greater reach and better output, digital marketing helps improve business ties between marketing companies and their clientele. In short, digital technology and digital marketing are all real money spinners. The message is clear and even louder across the board.

P. Senthil Durai
Mumbai, India

TAILPIECE

An airliner was having engine trouble, and the pilot instructed the cabin crew to have the passengers take their seats and get prepared for an emergency landing.

A few minutes later, the pilot asked the flight attendants if everyone was buckled in and ready.

"All set back here, Captain," came the reply, "except one lawyer who is still going around passing out business cards."

+++

A man went to his lawyer and said, "I would like to make a will but I don't know exactly how to go about it."

The lawyer says, "No problem, leave it all to me".

The man looks somewhat upset ... "Well, I knew you were going to take the biggest slice, but I'd like to leave a little to my children too!

Zelenskyy sounds alarm over Russia's sanctions

AGENCY
Ukraine, Dec. 25

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sounded an alarm over Russia's sanctions dodging and global security risks, citing Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service head, Oleh Ivashchenko's report of Russia's attempts to circumvent international sanctions through energy companies and fictitious schemes.

In a post on X, Zelenskyy said that Ukraine is tracking these moves and collaborating with partners to maintain pressure on Russia. "Several key areas. First - Russia's attempts to move its energy companies out from under global sanctions.

They are using other temporary owners and numerous fictitious legal schemes. We are tracking all of this and will communicate with our partners to ensure that pressure continues to work and that Russia is prevented from making money for its war through such manipulations," he said.

Ivashchenko's report also highlighted Russia's deployment of Oreshnik systems in Belarus, posing a global threat and prompting Ukraine to prepare joint response options with allies. "Second - the deployment of Oreshnik systems on the territory of Belarus. Intelligence has obtained additional details on this, and it is important that our partners are also aware of them and take them into account in their defensive measures.



PHOTO: AGENCY

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

We believe that the aggressive proliferation of such weapons poses a global threat and creates a dangerous precedent. I have instructed that response options be prepared jointly with our partners," the post added. Zelenskyy further noted the increased cooperation between Russia and China in intelligence sharing.

"Third - the state of Russia's military production and its cooperation with companies and entities from other countries. In particular, we are recording increased ties between Russia and entities in China that may be providing space-based intelligence data," the post read.

Zelenskyy also said that Russia's military production and ties with China, including potential space-based intelligence sharing, are concerning, with Ukraine linking Chinese satellite data to Russian strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure and urged partners to address these issues, emphasising diplomatic efforts to counter Russia's actions "Unfortunately, there have been correlations between Chinese satellite imaging of Ukrainian territory and Russian strikes on the corresponding energy infrastructure facilities.

We view such cases as activities that enable Russia to prolong the war and make diplomatic efforts less serious.

Rahman returns to Dhaka after 17 years

AP
Dhaka, Dec. 25

The son of a former prime minister of Bangladesh returned home Thursday after more than 17 years in self-imposed exile as a frontrunner to become the nation's next leader in upcoming elections.

Tarique Rahman moved to London in 2008 for medical treatment with permission after he was tortured while in custody during a military-backed government that ruled from 2006 to 2008.

Rahman, 60, is the acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, one of two major political parties in the South Asian nation of more than 170 million people. His return is seen as politically significant ahead of the next election set for Feb. 12 under the current interim government.

A flight carrying Rahman, his wife and daughter arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital, Dhaka, late Thursday morning among tight security measures.

Massive crowds of supporters spread across an area about 2 kilometres (1.2 miles) between the airport and a reception venue, where many had stayed overnight. A sea of people also waited at the venue. Rahman's senior party leaders said earlier they expected "millions."

After a reception, party officials said Rahman plans to go to a hospital to visit his critically ill mother, former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who led a coalition government from 2001 until 2006 when a non-elected government backed by the military came to power during a period of political chaos.

Zia, a former housewife, came to politics after her husband, former military chief and then President Ziaur Rahman, was assassinated in a military coup in 1981. She held power for the first time in 1991 after becoming a key leader in a nine-year movement against a former military dictator who was forced to resign during a mass uprising in 1990.

Zia is considered one of two key figures in Bangladesh politics along with Sheikh Hasina, who was sentenced to death in absentia in November. Hasina was convicted on charges of crimes against humanity involving the crackdown on a mass uprising that ended her 15-year rule in 2024. India has not approved requests to extradite Hasina since she fled there last year.

In recent years, Rahman has been a de facto leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. He regularly joined meetings and rallies online from London, keeping his party united. He was not openly challenged by any party insiders during his absence.

Bangladesh is now at a political crossroads. The interim government headed by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus is struggling to maintain law and order and restore confidence while attempting a return to democracy after Hasina's long premiership.

Global human rights groups including Human Rights Watch and the Amnesty International have accused the Yunus government of eroding democratic rights. Liberals in Bangladesh have expressed concerns over press freedom and minority rights and accused Yunus of presiding over a visible rise of Islamists.

Rahman supported Yunus when he took over as the government's chief adviser, but the relationship with his party has been shaky.

Saudi Arabia calls on Yemen rebels to leave two governants

AP
Uae, Dec. 25

Saudi Arabia on Thursday formally called on Emirati-backed separatists in Yemen to withdraw from two governorates their forces now control in the country, a move that threatens sparking a confrontation within a fragile coalition battling the Houthi rebels.

The statement from Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry on Christmas morning appeared aimed at putting public pressure on the Southern Transitional Council, a force long backed by the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia has backed other fighters within Yemen, including the National Shield Forces, in the war against the Iranian-backed Houthis the kingdom launched in 2015.

The separatists' actions have "resulted in an unjustified escalation that harmed the interests of all segments of Yemeni people, as well as the southern cause and the coalition's efforts," the Saudi Foreign Ministry warned.It added: "The kingdom stresses the importance of cooperation among all Yemeni factions and components to exercise restraint and avoid any measures that could destabilize security and stability, which may result in undesirable consequences."

The Council has moved into Yemen's governorates of Hadramout and Mahra. The Saudi statement said meditation efforts were aimed at having the Council's forces return to "their previous positions outside of the two governorates and hand over the camps in those areas" to the National Shield Forces. "These efforts remain in progress to restore the situation to its previous statement," the ministry added.

Those aligned with the Council have increasingly flown the flag of the flag of South Yemen, which was a separate country from 1967 to 1990. There were calls for demonstrations Thursday in Aden to support political forces wanting South Yemen to again secede from Yemen, but it wasn't immediately clear if they would go ahead given Saudi Arabia's announcement. Aden has been the seat of power in Yemen for forces aligned against the Houthis.

The confrontation also has put pressure on the relationship between neighbouring Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which maintain close relations and are members of the OPEC oil cartel but also have vied for influence and international business in recent years.

The Council's moves in Yemen follow an escalation of violence in Sudan, another nation on the Red Sea where the kingdom and the Emirates back opposing forces in an ongoing war.It's the latest chaos to grip war-torn Yemen

The Houthis seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in September 2014 and forced the internationally recognized government into exile.

North Korea's Kim visits nuclear subs

AFP
North Korea, Dec. 25

North Korea and Russia have drawn closer since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly four years ago, and Pyongyang has sent troops to fight for Russia.

In return, Russia is sending North Korea financial aid, military technology and food and energy supplies, analysts say.

The "heroic" efforts of North Korean soldiers in Russia's Kursk region "clearly proved the invincible friendship" between Moscow and Pyongyang, Putin said in a message to Kim, according to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). Their work demonstrated the nations' "militant fraternity", Putin said in the message received by Pyongyang last week.

The provisions of the "historic treaty" the two leaders signed last year, which includes a mutual defence clause, had been fulfilled "thanks to our joint efforts", Putin wrote. South Korean and Western intelligence agencies have estimated that the North has sent thousands of soldiers to Russia, primarily to Kursk, along with artillery shells, missiles and long-range rocket systems.

Around 2,000 troops have been killed and thousands more have been wounded, according to South Korean estimates. North Korea acknowledged this month that its troops in Kursk had been assigned to clear mines and that some had died on deployment.

KCNA reported Putin's letter on the same day that it published details of Kim's undated recent visit to a manufacturing base for nuclear-powered submarines.



PHOTO: AFP

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visiting a manufacturing base for nuclear-powered submarines.

There, the North Korean leader vowed to counter the "threat" of South Korea producing its own such vessels.

US President Donald Trump has given the green light for South Korea to build "nuclear-powered attack submarines", though key details of the project remain uncertain.

Photos published by KCNA showed Kim walking alongside a purportedly 8,700-tonne submarine at an indoor assembly site, surrounded by officials and his daughter Kim Ju Ae.

In another image, Kim Jong Un smiles during an official briefing as Kim Ju Ae stands beside him. Pyongyang would view Seoul developing nuclear subs as "an offensive act severely violating its security and maritime sovereignty", Kim Jong Un said, according to KCNA.

It was therefore "indispensable" to "accelerate the radical development of the modernisation and nuclear weaponisation of the naval force", he said. Kim clarified a naval reorganisation plan and learned about research into "new underwater secret weapons", KCNA said, without giving details.

Pyongyang's defence ministry said it would consider "countermeasures" against US "nuclear muscle flexing", a separate report said Thursday.

Only a handful of countries have nuclear-powered submarines, and the United States considers its technology among the most sensitive and tightly guarded military secrets.

PRISM

Eiffel Tower from toothpicks

Illinois: An Illinois teenager broke a Guinness World Record by building a 17.32-foot-tall replica of the Eiffel Tower from about 20,000 toothpicks.

Naperville resident Eric Klabel said his father's career as a civil engineer inspired him to get interested in building from a young age. "When I was younger, I just got really, really interested in building things out of popsicle sticks," Klabel told WGN-TV.

He ended up building a 20.2-foot tower from popsicle sticks in 2021, when he was only 12 years old, and set his first Guinness World Record.

That record has since been broken, but Klabel captured his second Guinness World Record in October when he took on a project using a new medium: toothpicks.

Bulldog rescued from island

Florida: A pair of helpful fisherman joined with sheriff's deputies in Florida to rescue a "soaked and shivering French bulldog" stranded on a small island.

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office said on social media that officers responded to a call about a dog in distress and discovered the "soaked and shivering French bulldog" was stranded on a small island in the Ribault River, near Grand Street.

"Without hesitation, the officers waved down two nearby fishermen and asked for help. Within moments, the fishermen used their boat to reach the island safely bring the Frenchie to shore," the post said.

Agencies

TODAY IN HISTORY

1709 – The opera Agrippina by George Frideric Handel premiered in Venice.
1793 – Second Battle of Wissembourg: France defeats Austria.
1805 – Austria and France sign the Treaty of Pressburg.
1860 – First Rules derby is held between Sheffield F.C. and Hallam F.C., the oldest football fixture in the world.
1871 – Thespis, the first Gilbert and Sullivan collaboration, debuts.[20]
1898 – Marie and Pierre Curie announce the isolation of radium
1926 – World premiere of Sibelius's tone poem Tapiola.
1978 – The inaugural Paris-Dakar Rally begins.
2012 – China opens the world's longest high-speed rail route, which links Beijing and Guangzhou.
2015 – A violent EF-4 tornado hits Garland, Texas, killing nine and injuring almost 500 others.
2013 – Spacecraft Gaia is launched by the European Space Agency.
2021 – Dutch Formula One racing driver Max Verstappen wins the controversial 2021 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.
1831 – Former U.S. President John Quincy Adams takes his seat in the House of Representatives.

Indonesians in disaster-struck Sumatra mark Christmas

AFP
South Tapanuli, Dec. 25

At a church in Sumatra, dozens of worshippers sang hymns at a Christmas mass, gathered together for their first service since deadly floods swept the Indonesian island.

The Angkola Protestant Church, in the hard-hit South Tapanuli district, was festooned on Wednesday with balloons and simple Christmas decorations.

Outside, the street leading to the building was buried under mounds of debris and foliage. Many in the congregation are still sheltering at evacuation sites after the disaster wreaked havoc on the island four weeks ago.

Churchgoer Krismanto Nainggolan said this year's Christmas service was "different", even as he noted joy in the bittersweet moment.

"The feelings are mixed. Every word of the pastor's sermon made us want to cry," he told AFP after the Christmas mass."But the spirit of Christmas... gave us strength," he added.

Krismanto lost his house in the flooding, while many of his neighbours were killed.According to the National Disaster Mitigation Agency, 1,129 people died, and more than 170 others are still missing.



PHOTO: AFP

Indonesia's Sumatra islands was hard-hit by floods and landslides this month.

While the annual monsoon season often brings heavy rain to Indonesia, this month's deluge was among the worst disasters to strike Sumatra since a magnitude-9.1 earthquake triggered a massive tsunami in 2004.

In South Tapanuli, churchgoer Mea Rosmawati Zebua said she had not expected to be able to celebrate Christmas this year.

"In past years, Christmas was a routine. Now, (we are) very grateful because God still gives us the breath of life," the 54-year-old told AFP.

While Christmas mass is typically held in the evening, the Angkola church moved its service to Wednesday afternoon ahead of rain forecast in the evening, pastor Yansen Roberto Ritonga said.To prepare for the first service since the disaster, the church had to remove towering heaps of mud that had been washed inside.

Soldiers and police had helped clear the debris and driftwood.

On Wednesday afternoon, a man rang the church's bell before the pastor's entrance, marking the start of the mass.

Around 30 worshippers, each of them holding a lit candle, sung Christmas hymns. Yansen said this year's Christmas served as a moment of "reflection" for the congregation.

Churchgoer Krismanto said that despite the widespread damage and the personal cost of the disaster, he chose to see it as a new beginning.

"Our hopes depend solely on God because we are now starting over... our lives are starting anew," he said.

PM KARKI EXTENDS BEST WISHES ON CHRISTMAS DAY

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

The Christian community across Nepal marked Christmas on Thursday by attending church services, spending time with family and friends, and organising various religious and cultural programmes.

Churches in Kathmandu Valley and other parts of the country witnessed a large turnout of worshippers, who gathered to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with prayers, hymns and special services. Community events and charitable activities were also organised to mark the occasion.

On the occasion, the President, Vice President, political parties and national leaders issued messages of goodwill, extending Christmas greetings to the Christian community.

Prime Minister Sushila Karki, in her message, extended warm wishes to Nepali Christians living both at home and abroad. "On the auspicious occasion of the great Christian festival of Christmas Day, I extend my warmest greetings to all my sisters and brothers at home and abroad," she said.

Highlighting the universal values associated with the festival, the Prime Minister stated that Christmas carries a message of love, peace, compassion and harmony. "May this festival further strengthen the common values of humanity and inspire us to enhance mutual understanding, coexistence and brotherhood in society," she said.

She also highlighted the importance of such festivals in a diverse country like Nepal. "In our country, which is a confluence of diverse religions, languages and cultures, festivals like Christmas have been making a significant contribution to strengthening national unity amidst diversity," said Prime Minister Karki.

On the occasion of Christmas Day 2025, Prime Minister Karki wished all Nepalis happiness, peace, prosperity and continued progress.

According to the National Population and Housing Census 2021, Nepal's Christian population stands at approximately 512,313, accounting for around 1.8 per cent of the total population.



PHOTO: KABITA THAPA/TRN

TOUGH LIFE: Carrying her baby on the lap, a woman walks to sell fruits in Basantapur, Kathmandu.

'GOVT NEEDS TO BUILD ELECTION ENVIRONMENT'

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Damak, Dec. 25

Nepali Congress General Secretary Bishwa Prakash Sharma has said the government is responsible for creating an environment conducive to elections, adding that the current political situation does not reflect such conditions.

Addressing local party leaders and cadres during a visit to his home district on Wednesday, Sharma said elections could not be held if political leaders were restricted and prevented from engaging freely in campaign activities. Commenting on restrictions imposed on CPN-UML Chair KP Sharma Oli, he said an election atmosphere could not be created by limiting the movement of political leaders.

CM Baniya says govt committed to unity, coexistence of all people

BY RAMMANI DAHAL
Makawanpur, Dec. 25

Bagmati Province Chief Minister Indra Bahadur Baniya has said that the provincial government is firmly committed to maintaining unity and peaceful coexistence among all communities.

Issuing a message of congratulations on Thursday on the occasion of Christmas 2025, Chief Minister Baniya stated that the Bagmati Province Government respects all religions, cultures and traditions and remains dedicated to promoting harmony among diverse communities. In his message, he said the festival would inspire everyone to move forward towards the goal of socialism by strengthening nationalism, democracy and the republican system, while preserving social harmony.

> The festival would inspire everyone to move forward towards the goal of socialism by strengthening nationalism, democracy and the republican system

Referring to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the Chief Minister noted that Christ was born to spread the good news of salvation to humanity. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ inspired people with hope, faith and love, guiding them towards the right path and instilling values of compassion, harmony and peace.

He further stated that Nepal is a beautiful country characterised by ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. Unity in diversity and national pride, he said, are Nepal's shared identity, and each ethnic group and community possesses its own unique traditions and cultural significance.

Chief Minister Baniya also mentioned that Christmas has been increasingly recognised as an important part of Nepal's national culture. He reaffirmed that the provincial government is always ready to protect, promote and support the cultures of all ethnic communities living in the province and to assist in their overall development.

On the occasion of Christmas, the Chief Minister extended his heartfelt wishes for happiness, peace, prosperity and continued progress to all Nepali Christian brothers and sisters at home and abroad. He expressed confidence that such festive inspiration would provide renewed energy for the prosperity and welfare of families, society and the nation.

Daughters perform funeral, mourning rituals in Panchthar

BY RADHA LUINTEL
Phidim, Dec. 25

Fifty-three-year-old Januka Rijal of Angsarang, Phalgunanda-7 in Panchthar, who had been suffering from heart-related complications, passed away on December 16 at Nobel Hospital in Biratnagar.

Her body was brought home the following day. Even before preparations began to take her body from the house to the cremation site, discussions arose over who would perform the last rites. Some said a son was required, others suggested a brother should be found, while a few argued that her father-in-law should perform the rituals. There were also voices saying that her husband should step forward.

As these discussions continued, Januka's daughters sat nearby waiting beside their mother's body, listening carefully to everything being said.

"Hearing that only a son or a brother could light the funeral pyre made our grieving hearts feel even more shattered. That was when we concluded that we too are children, what difference does it make if daughters perform the rites?" said her second daughter, Tikadevi.

Januka had four daughters. The eldest, Sabina, the second, Asha, and the youngest, Bimala, are married, while Tikadevi remains unmarried. Since an unmarried daughter shares the same lineage and clan as her parents, Tikadevi proposed that the daughters themselves perform the death rituals. When Januka's father-in-law, Dan Bahadur Rijal, supported the proposal, all four daughters decided to perform death rituals as kriyaputris (mourners).

After the body was taken to crematory, the last rites were performed. Tikadevi lit the funeral pyre. After the cremation, they returned home and observed the mourning period. They performed the dhikuro ritual on the third day and jointly carried out all rites observed under Hindu tradition, from the daily offering of pinda to the breaking of the dhikuro on the tenth day.

"Thursday marked the 10th day since Januka's passing. Until now, all death rituals have been performed entirely by her daughters. This is the first time I have witnessed daughters performing funeral rites for their mother," said local Bishwo Bhattarai.

"According to Hindu tradition, sons are expected to light the funeral pyre and perform death rituals, while daughters born of the same womb are often denied lineage rights. I supported my granddaughters' proposal to break this tradition, believing it will help challenge discrimination between sons and daughters," said Dan Bahadur Rijal, Januka's father-in-law.

"According to Hindu rituals, mourners observe seclusion for 13 days and continue annual death rites for a year. We will perform all these rituals sincerely. Our actions will bring peace to our mother's soul. It is our responsibility to challenge the superstition that daughters cannot lead the deceased to salvation," said eldest daughter Sabina.

"Our grandfather supported our decision and fulfilled his role as a responsible guardian. We moved forward, and we hope other daughters will also find the courage to do the same," said second daughter Asha.

On the 10th day of mourning, two of the daughters remain dressed in white, observing the rites as the mourners, while the other two are wearing light red attire. They are preparing to perform the purification ritual and conclude the mourning ritual on December 28.

Gen Z martyr's family to receive job opportunities

BY GOKARNA DAYAL
Baitadi, Dec. 25

A government team led by the Chief District Officer visited the family of Dipak Singh Saud of Baitadi, who was martyred during the Gen Z movement, to understand their financial condition and explore employment support.

The team, led by Chief District Officer Punya Bikram Paudel, reached Saud's home in Sharmali, Shivanath Rural Municipality-2, on Wednesday.

During the visit, the team reviewed the overall condition of the family and held discussions on possible employment opportunities.

Chief District Officer Paudel informed that the government has already provided financial assistance of Rs. 1.5 million to the martyr's family through the District Administration Office.

He explained that the visit was made to explore additional support, particularly employment opportunities, based on the family's educational background.

Discussions were held on providing immediate employment either in government offices or business-related institutions.

During the visit, the District Administration Office formally presented a framed list of martyrs of the Gen Z movement, including Deepak, to his mother, Laxmi Devi Saud. While receiving the frame, she became emotional and urged all state bodies to work towards fulfilling her son's dreams.

Chief District Officer Paudel clarified that although the state had provided immediate relief to the martyr's family, further decisions had been made to offer employment and pension facilities based on the family's situation.

He assured that the martyr's family would be prioritised in district-level agricultural, livestock, and other income-generating programmes.

Meanwhile, ward chairperson Surendra Saud informed that the rural municipality has also decided to provide additional relief of Rs. 100,000 to the martyr's family.

Tiger census begins in Bardiya, Banke and Dang

BY JYOTI PANTHI
Babai (Bardiya), Dec. 24



Tiger census has begun in Bardiya district, considered a favourable ground for tiger conservation, along with Banke and Dang districts since Wednesday.

The nationwide census aims to determine the current number of tigers, five years after the last count.

According to the 2021 census, Bardiya district alone had 125 tigers. This year's count is expected to provide updated and accurate information on the number of tigers, their distribution and the status of their prey species.

The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) said five blocks (camps) have been designated for the census across the three districts. Each block has been divided into beats of two kilometres, and camera trapping technology will be used to count the tigers. It will take 22 days to survey each block, and the entire operation is expected to take 88 days.

A total of 450 cameras have been installed for the census. Two cameras have been placed in each beat to identify individual tigers and record their movements.

A seven-member team has been deployed in each block, comprising a team leader, two game scouts, one assistant and members from the army, students and conservation workers.

Ajit Tumbahangphe, chief of NTNC Bardiya, said the tiger census in Bardiya, Banke and Dang would be completed within 88 days.

Sarojmani Paudel, information officer at Bardiya National Park, said the national tiger census, conducted every five years to determine the exact number of tigers, formally began on Wednesday.

The government signed a commitment at the Tiger Summit held in St Petersburg, Russia, in 2010 to double the tiger population. In line with that pledge, the 2021 census showed that the number of tigers in Bardiya alone had reached 125.

Conservationists expected that the number to increase further in this year's count.

Conservationist Hemanta Acharya said the start of the five-yearly tiger census is an encouraging development for all those involved in conservation.

As the tiger population has increased in Bardiya, thousands of foreign tourists visit Bardiya National Park every year to see the tigers, contributing positively to local tourism and the economy.

Bardiya National Park is regarded as a success story in tiger conservation.

We are revising system with...

Prime Minister Karki emphasized that unprecedented changes are occurring in the global education sector. He noted the necessity for reforms in Nepal's higher education system to keep pace with technological advancements and the movement of people worldwide.

"There is a need to increase investment in education, but at the same time, all parties need to make efforts to end the partisan politicization in this sector and make universities a place for academic debate," added PM Karki.

Addressing the graduating students, PM Karki expressed her belief that their knowledge, labour, and commitment will contribute to building a bright future for Nepal and the world.

Nobel laureate Takaki Kajita addresses convocation ceremony

Japanese Nobel laureate Takaki Kajita was invited as the chief guest at the convocation ceremony on Thursday.

Addressing the convocation ceremony, Prof. Dr. Kajita suggested that all students should be able to contribute to their society, whether they are doctors, engineers, policy makers, or politicians.

He also said that no one's future is predetermined just because they are strong, instead, the future belongs to those who constantly serve for anything.

"Ask a question to yourself, what's my responsibility? What new thing can I do?" he suggested.

Professor Kajita of the University of Tokyo, Japan, won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2015.

Likewise, Minister of Education, Science, and Technology, Mahabir Pun, urged all students to create a balance between knowledge, science, modern innovation, and the economy.

Minister Pun, who is also the Co-Chancellor of TU, urged the graduate students to think about which problems in society can be solved with the knowledge and skills they possess.

Meanwhile, University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Deepak Aryal said that the University has made significant contributions to advancing academic excellence and social responsibility

During the convocation ceremony on Thursday, 89,191 students from various faculties, institutes, and levels graduated. However, only 16, 380 students attended the convocation ceremony on Thursday.

NC's CWC meeting to...

According to a statement from Chief Secretary Krishna Prasad Poudel, the committee has yet to reach a final conclusion. Consequently, the meeting has been scheduled to resume on December 26 at 1:00 pm. The party aims to solidify its official stance during the upcoming session as it navigates a complex political landscape.

Involving...

Chief of Bardiya National Park and elephant expert Dr. Ashok Ram said there are no activities in Nepal that involve cruelty to elephants. He urged animal rights activists to study existing practices before raising concerns. "Sports-related activities do not harm elephants, but they should never be subjected to torture," he said.

Tourism expert and professor Dr. Bishwo Subedi said Chitwan's tourism suffered an irreparable loss after the closure of elephant polo in Meghauli.

"Tiger Tops introduced jungle safari tourism here. After polo was stopped, even the airstrip was closed. Elephants constitute the identity of this place," he said, adding that tourism should be promoted by conserving elephants and showcasing their activities.

Mahesh Khanal, general secretary of the Regional Hotel Association, Sauraha, said many activities have been revised following protests, and the festival now mainly focuses on elephant displays.

Former association president Suman Ghimire said the festival has been refined to include only elephant-friendly activities. He stressed that elephants and their activities are central to the identity of Sauraha and Chitwan and should be promoted responsibly for tourism development.

The Elephant Festival is being held at Baghmara Ground in Sauraha on Friday.

Baahrakhari Short Story Competition

Ek Mantha, Ek Devta wins Rs. 200,000



PHOTO: TRN

Prime Minister Sushila Karki presenting award to the winner of Baahrakhari Short Story Competition on Thursday.

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

'Ek Mantha, Ek Devta,' a short story by Shiva Raj Shahi from Jajarkot, won the Dish Home Baahrakhari Short Story Competition-2082, carrying the biggest cash prize of Rs. 200,000 in Nepal for a competition.

Baahrakhari Media announced the final results amid a grand ceremony organised in the capital on Thursday in presence of Prime Minister Sushila Karki on Thursday.

'Bhuin Kuhiroko Bichma' by Ritesh Gurung from Rasuwa and 'Adhuro Pratilipi' by Indraprasad Gotame (Jagatjung) were awarded second and third prizes, respectively.

Beginning this year, the Dish Home Baahrakhari Short Story Competition-2082 awarded Rs. 200,000 to the first, Rs. 100,000 to the second, and Rs. 60,000 to the third. The remaining 22 writers received Rs. 7,000 each.

Previously, the prizes were Rs. 100,000 for the first, Rs. 60,000 for second, Rs. 40,000 for third, and Rs. 5,000 for the remaining 22 writers.

A book featuring the top 25 stories was also published in an anthology titled '12khari Utkrista 25 Katha-2082'.

The anthology includes top stories by Chetanath Acharya, Umesh Shrestha, Shekhar Dahit, Shivraj Shahi, Krishnaraj Sarbahari, Ritesh Gurung, Pragya Niraula, Sita Pandey, Bhogendra Lingden, Haribol Kafle, Basanta Bayung Rai (Namdocha), Laxman Sitaula, Indraprasad Gotame (Jagatjung), Jamuna Bhattarai, Anita Panthi, Avinash Bhattarai, Mandira Madhushree, and Amit Ghimire.

Stories by Tikaram Pokharel, Uma Sharma, Anita Koirala, Bishnu S. Rai, Damodar Dhungel, Prakash Kumar Sharma, and Dr. Himalal Shrestha are also included in the anthology.

Prime Minister Sushila Karki handed over the prizes, trophies, and certificates to the top three winners and the 22 writers. She also launched the '12khari Utkrista Katha-2082' at the event.

For the seventh edition of the Dish Home Baahrakhari Short Story Competition, submissions were opened on October 17, and 1,168 stories were received from Nepal and abroad. An internal jury panel, led by Govinda Adhikari, Baahrakhari Media's opinion editor, shortlisted 59 stories, which were then forwarded to the main jury panel.

The main jury was coordinated by playwright, director, and litterateur Ashesh Malla, with writer Manju Kanchuli and litterateur-cum-journalist Avaya Shrestha as members. They picked the top three from 25 stories.

"It was not easy to select the top three among the 25 top stories," the jury panel noted in the preface of the anthology. "In our evaluation, we considered the theme, message, impact, and aesthetics of the stories. We believe that the top three stories may be representative of the present time."

Baahrakhari Media has been organising this competition to promote and encourage short story writing in Nepal.

At the event, jury panel coordinator Ashesh Malla expressed happiness that the stories submitted for the Baahrakhari Short Story Competition reflect a bright future for Nepali literature.

Baahrakhari Media's Editor-in-Chief, Prateek Pradhan, explained that the increased prize amount was meant to motivate and encourage individuals engaged in the field of literature. He recalled that the Baahrakhari Story Competition was initiated to understand how ordinary people perceive and interpret the Nepali language and literature.

Literature editor of Baahrakhari Media, Rajesh Khanal, also shared background of the competition.

Photo show highlights Nepal-Russia ties



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

The Russian House in Kathmandu, in collaboration with the Nepali Association of Alumni of Soviet and Russian Universities (Mitra Kunj), officially opened a photo exhibition titled 'Reflection-2025 Russia Nepal Friendship' on Wednesday.

The photo exhibition was organised to mark the conclusion of a year-long series of cultural, educational and humanitarian activities.

The exhibition reflects a year of deepening cooperation between Russia and Nepal.

In 2025 alone, the Rossotrudnichestvo Representative Office in Nepal organised more than 100 events aimed at strengthening bilateral ties in culture, education and people-to-people relations.

Addressing the event, Charge d'Affaires of the Russian embassy here, Andrey Kiselenko, said that festivals, exhibitions and educational projects played an important role in strengthening friendship between the two peoples.

Russian House Director Anastasia Khokhlova said that 2025 proved a breakthrough year for humanitarian cooperation, noting that events marking the 80th anniversary of Victory and the 100th anniversary of people's diplomacy were a meaningful contribution to deepening Russia-Nepal relations.

NRSC president Ganesh Shah said the 'Reflection-2025' exhibition represents tangible evidence of shared achievements. He noted that the number of students studying in Russia reached 7,500.

The 'Reflection-2025 Russia-Nepal Friendship' photo exhibition will remain open to the public until January 2026. More than 100 photos have been on display.

Meanwhile, Chargé d'Affaires Kiselenko has underscored the important role of the media in shaping an objective and balanced public perception of international processes.

Speaking at a gathering of media persons at a function organised by the Russian embassy, he said, "Russia consistently supports independent, professional and responsible journalism. Honest and balanced media coverage contributes to strengthening mutual understanding between the peoples of Russia and Nepal, creating a favourable environment for the development of bilateral ties."

Hetauda gears up for 12th Street Food Festival

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Makwanpur, Dec. 25



The 12th Street Food Festival, organised by Makwanpur Hotel Association, is set to be held in Hetauda.

The four-day food festival is being organised to preserve traditional food and culture, as said at the press conference held by the association in Hetauda on Wednesday.

Speaking at the press conference, Makwanpur Hotel Association President Dilish Govind Joshi said that the 12th edition of the food festival will be organised for four days starting from Sunday, December 28, with the slogan 'Let's go to the street, eat on the street, and enjoy on the street.'

He said that the main objective of the festival is to promote domestic and international tourism and to offer food lovers an opportunity to experience exhibitions and sales of a variety of dishes in one place.

According to him, the festival will feature stalls offering traditional foods from various communities as well as dishes made from indigenous crops.

General Secretary of the Makwanpur Hotel Association, Harigopal Sapkota, said that the festival, which will include various entertainment programmes, has made special concessions for Chepang, Tharu, and other communities by providing them with stalls at subsidised rates to help preserve and promote endangered indigenous cuisines.

The festival will be held on the road east of the playground at Huprachaur, Ward No. 4 of Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City.

He added that the festival will showcase traditional to modern food items, performances by local and national artists, and exhibitions of folk art and culture.

The organisers estimate that around 60 stalls will be set up, with an expected business turnover of approximately Rs. 8 million and about 40,000 visitors.

Maghi sparks joy across Tharu settlements

BY SANTOSH DAHIT
Dang, Dec. 25



Tharu settlements are becoming increasingly lively as Maghi, the great festival of the Tharu community, draws near.

From villages to cities, Tharu organisations have intensified preparations and discussions to celebrate Maghi in a special and grand manner.

In this context, a discussion jointly organised in Tulsipur by Namuna Buhyarthan Tulsipur, Tharu Kalyankari Sabha Area no. 3, and Matawa Mahasangh Tulsipur emphasised the need to reflect the originality and essence of Magh in the Maghi festival.

Speakers stressed that Maghi should not be confined merely to a festival, but should be celebrated by prioritising traditional culture, customs, and the community's authentic identity.

Churna Bahadur Chaudhary, Central Treasurer of the Tharu Kalyankari Sabha, said that celebrating Maghi is meaningful only if its originality is preserved.

He emphasised the need to protect and promote Dhumru songs sung during Maghi, the Maghauta dance, and to continue the Tharu community's Maghi Dewani.

He further highlighted that during Maghi, the Tharu community not only engages in dance, music, and feasting, but also reviews the events of the past year, formulates plans for the coming year, and selects village leaders such as Matawa, Barghar, and Bhalmansa (key community leaders).

Therefore, he stressed that these important matters should be given special priority through serious discussion and deliberation in the Maghi Dewani.

"Maghi is a festival that carries social, cultural, and economic significance," he said, "so attention must be given to its originality."

Ramsharan Chaudhary, President of Namuna Buhyarthan and an advocate, said that this year's Maghi festival should be celebrated differently.

"The festival should be focused on our indigenous rituals and culture," he said.

"This time the programmes should be even more authentic and in accordance with Tharu traditions."

He suggested that instead of sofas and chairs on the stage, guests should be seated and welcomed on traditional Tharu items such as gundri (woven mats), beri, and pirka (wooden stools).

He also urged all participants to attend in traditional Tharu attire.

He emphasised that village-based Maghauta dance and Dhumru songs should be prioritised instead of using DJs.

Meanwhile, Ramsharan Chaudhary informed that it has been decided to organise the Maghi Festival on January 9.

The meeting also decided to hold a large preparatory meeting on December 30. In that meeting, detailed discussions will be held on forming various subcommittees, assigning responsibilities, and other matters to make the festival grand and dignified.

The festival will feature Maghauta dance, Dhumru songs, and various other Tharu cultural dances.

Traditional Tharu dishes will be showcased, along with exhibitions of Tharu handicrafts and various books related to the Tharu language.

Dharma Productions rejects plagiarism allegations against Homebound



AGENCIES
Mumbai, Dec. 25

Months after its worldwide release and at a point when its Oscar ambitions are already in motion—director Neeraj Ghaywan's Homebound has become embroiled in controversy.

Journalist-turned-author Puja Changoiwala has initiated legal action against the film, alleging that it plagiarises her 2021 novel of the same title. The matter surfaced just days after the film was shortlisted in the Best International Feature Film category at the forthcoming 98th Academy Awards.

According to Hindustan Times, Puja has taken legal steps against Karan Johar and Adar Poonawalla's Dharma Productions Private Limited, which financed the film, as well as Netflix Entertainment Services India LLP, which streams it on its OTT platform.

The report added that she is expected to file a suit in the Bombay High Court shortly. In response, Dharma Productions has dismissed the allegations, describing them as "baseless and unfounded".

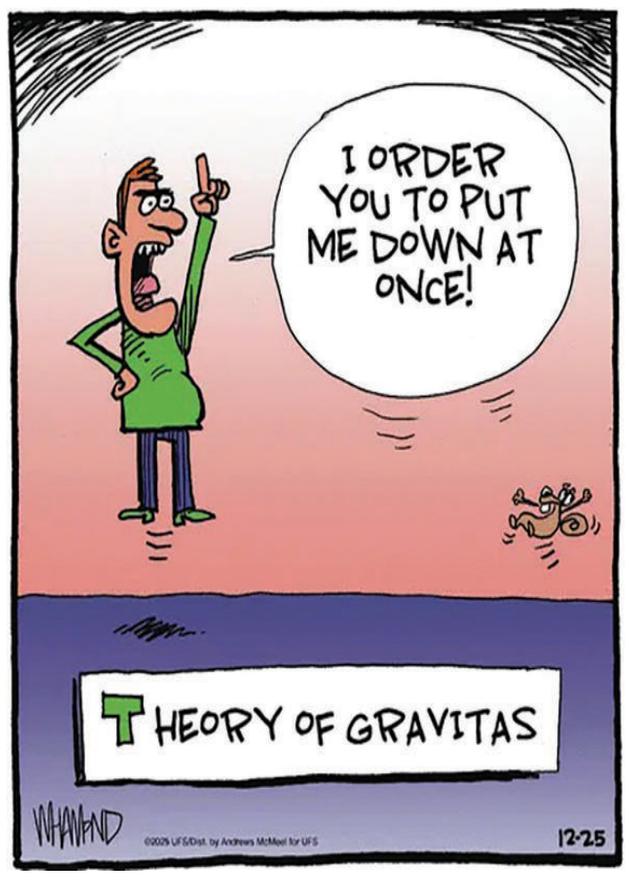
"The allegations of copyright infringement are baseless and unfounded, and Dharma Productions categorically denies the same. Homebound is an officially licensed adaptation inspired by a New York Times article by Basharat Peer, with all requisite rights lawfully acquired and due credit duly provided," a spokesperson for the production house told the publication on Wednesday, 24 December.

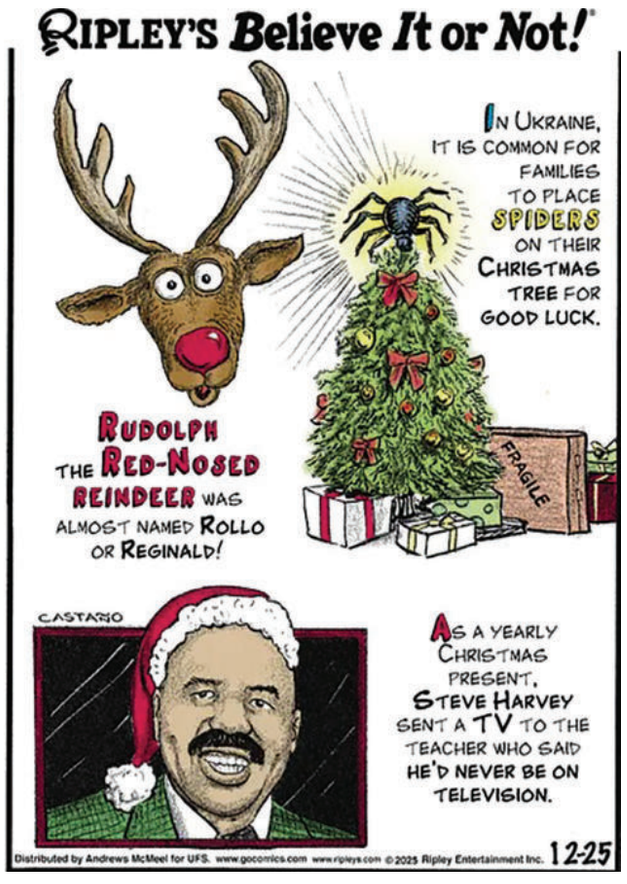
The spokesperson confirmed that Dharma Productions received Puja's legal notice in October and responded "duly" soon thereafter. However, they added that the company has not yet received any official communication regarding the alleged legal suit.

Referring to the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent exodus of migrant workers—which form the backdrop to both the film and her novel—Puja alleged, "Upon watching the film, I discovered that the producers have not only misappropriated the title of my book, but have also blatantly reproduced substantial portions of my novel in the second half of the film, including its scenes, dialogue, narrative structure, sequence of events, and other creative expressions."

CARTOON

gocomics.com





Australia opts for all-pace attack in fourth Ashes Test

AFP
Melbourne, Dec. 25



Australia will take an all-pace attack into the fourth Ashes Test, skipper Steve Smith said Thursday, while Josh Inglis was dropped with selectors preferring Usman Khawaja.

The hosts head into the Boxing Day Test with an unassailable 3-0 lead over England, but are without pace spearhead Pat Cummins and veteran spinner Nathan Lyon.

Cummins is being managed after his return in the third Adelaide Test after a lengthy lay off with a lower back injury and will play no further part in the Ashes.

Lyon had surgery this week for a torn hamstring and faces a long recovery.

Todd Murphy was called up as cover for Lyon, but Smith said they had opted for a pace attack given the "quite furry" surface at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

"We're going to be playing four quicks and no spinner. (The pitch) has 10 millimetres of grass, quite furry, quite green," he said.

"I dare say it's going to offer quite a bit, particularly if (day one) is similar conditions to today, quite cold and overcast so I dare say there's going to be quite a bit of movement.

"You just got to play what surface you're presented with," he added.

"This one looks like it's going to offer a fair bit of assistance for the seam bowlers and the weather throughout the week looks conducive for that too."

Australia named a 12-man squad with a final decision on who leads the attack alongside Mitchell Starc and Scott Boland being made at the toss.

One of Michael Neser, Jhye Richardson, or Brendan Doggett will miss out.

Doggett and Neser played in the second Test in Brisbane, but made way in Adelaide when Cummins and Lyon returned.

Richardson is in his first squad for four years after three shoulder surgeries.

Smith missed the third Test with vertigo symptoms and will slot back in at number four.

Khawaja filled his role in Adelaide, hitting 82 and 40, and slides down to five ahead of Alex Carey and Cameron Green, with Inglis missing out.

Smith, who captained Australia in the first two Tests during Cummins' absence, said he was fully recovered and feeling "100 percent" fit.

"I was watching in the hotel those first two days (in Adelaide) and wished I could have been out there, but it was the right call at that stage because I was struggling," he said of his vertigo, an issue that has plagued him before.

Australia XII: Travis Head, Jake Weatherald, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith (capt), Usman Khawaja, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Mitchell Starc, Scott Boland, Brendan Doggett, Michael Neser, Jhye Richardson

Ivory Coast starts Africa Cup title defense with a win

AP
Rabat, Dec. 25



PHOTO: AP
Ivory Coast's Jean-Michael Seri, right, and Mozambique's Witi battle for the ball during the Africa Cup of Nations group F soccer match against Mozambique in Marrakech, Morocco.

Ivory Coast got its Africa Cup of Nations title defense off to a winning start and France great Zinedine Zidane watched his goalkeeper son's safe hands as Algeria also started its campaign with a victory Wednesday.

Riyad Mahrez scored twice and the 20-year-old Ibrahim Maza scored his first international goal for Algeria, one of the tournament favorites, to beat 10-man Sudan 3-0 to move top of Group E.

"The most important thing was to start with a win," Mahrez said. "The last two AFCONs, we didn't start good. Today, we really wanted to make it happen and we did."

Zidane, who was at the sweet-smelling Moulay El Hassan Stadium in Rabat to see his son Luca Zidane playing in the Algeria goal, was feted by the crowd every time he was shown on the big screens.

Luca Zidane opted to represent his grandfather's country after getting the Fennec Foxes' invitation and he's been given his chance to shine because of an injury to Alexandre Oukidja, who might have been expected to start otherwise.

Algeria wasted little time Wednesday with Mahrez sweeping in the opener in the second minute after unselfish play from Hicham Boudaoui to set him up.

Zidane was called into action shortly afterward to deny Yaser Awad on a break.

Sudan had to play all its qualification games away from home because of the near 1,000-day old civil war ravaging the country.

Though the Algerians looked confident and played with intensity, the big chances fell at the other end, with Zidane saving again from Awad before Abdel Raouf fired over.

Salah Adil was sent off just as the rain began to fall shortly before the break with his second yellow card for a foul on Rayan Aït-Nouri, who would have been through otherwise.

But the Algerian fans, who were in a majority, needed to be patient.

Mohammed Amoura produced a brilliant cross with the outside of his boot for Mahrez to score in the 61st, and Baghdad Bounedjah headed the ball into Maza's path for the substitute to complete the scoring in the 85th.

"I'm very happy," Maza told The Associated Press. "My first goal in my first African Cup game, it couldn't go any better for me, Alhamdulillah."

Elephants begin title defense

Amad Diallo's second-half strike was enough for defending champion Ivory Coast to beat Mozambique 1-0 in a rain-soaked game in Fez.

The Elephants' captain, Franck Kessie, headed the ball back and Diallo struck it inside the far corner shortly after the break.

Ivory Coast, which won the title in scarcely believable fashion on home ground in the last edition, missed a host of chances to finish the game with Vakoun Bayo having two good chances blocked late on.

Then Geny Catamo eluded three Ivorian defenders in stoppage time only to lack power with his final shot, which was gathered by goalkeeper Yahia Fofana to safeguard the win.

In the other Group F game, Etta Eyong's early goal through the goalkeeper's legs was enough for five-time champion Cameroon to beat Gabon 1-0 in the coastal city of Agadir.

Drama in Casablanca

Edmond Tapsoba completed a remarkable turnaround as Burkina Faso scored two goals in stoppage time to beat 10-man Equatorial Guinea 2-1 in the early Group E game.

Tapsoba's team had pushed hard for the opening goal after Basilio Ndong was sent off early in the second half for a bad challenge on Bertrand Traoré's ankle.

Marvin Anieboh then stunned the Stallions when he launched himself at Carlos Akapo's cross to score with a looping header in the 85th minute.

Georgi Minoungou equalized in the fifth minute of stoppage time and Tapsoba headed the winner three minutes after that.

DELAP AND ESTEVAO IN LINE FOR CHELSEA RETURN

AFP
London, Dec. 25

Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca expects both Liam Delap and Estevao to be available when in-form Aston Villa visit Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

Delap has recovered from a shoulder injury he sustained during the draw with Bournemouth on December 6 when it seemed the £30 million ($40.5 million) striker could be set for a lengthy lay-off.

The 22-year-old has yet to score his first Premier League goal since moving from Ipswich in the transfer window, having missed around 10 weeks of the season, mostly with a groin problem suffered on his first home start in August.

The return of Estevao, who has not played since coming on as a late substitute in the December 13 win over Everton, also bolsters Maresca's options.

"Estevao is available for Saturday and also Liam Delap," Maresca said. "We didn't know exactly how long (Delap) needed to be out. Very happy for both."

Saturday's match will see two of England's leading number 10s in opposition, with Villa's Morgan Rogers up against Chelsea's Cole Palmer as they both look to cement their international spot ahead of next year's World Cup.

Rogers has been in fine form for third-placed Villa this season but Maresca was happy to stand by his man, saying: "I love Cole and Cole is my player. It's a good option for (England manager) Thomas (Tuchel) but in the end it's his decision."

Reece James has impressed for fourth-placed Chelsea following several injury-blighted campaigns and was instrumental in the Blues coming from 2-0 down to draw 2-2 with Newcastle.

Maresca, asked whether James is behaving like the captain he wants, replied: "Absolutely, yes. He is growing in terms of leadership, in terms of playing more minutes. This is why we are happy, because first of all he can be fit and healthy, and then because he can be a leader.

"He is one of the main players. He's an academy player, he's the captain. When he's fit, he's one of the best players we have, no doubt."

Cricketer Manish Thapa dies in motorcycle accident

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Biratnagar, Dec. 25



National cricket player Minash Thapa died in a motorcycle accident that occurred on Thursday morning in Biratnagar. Thapa, 27, a resident of Biratnagar Metropolitan City-5, met with the accident at around 12:45 am.

According to Superintendent of Police Kabit Katuwal, the motorcycle (Province 1-02-042 Pa 8002) ridden by Thapa went out of control while he was traveling from Airport Line in Biratnagar-4 towards Ganesh Chowk in Bargachhi, resulting in the crash.

Thapa was immediately rushed to Koshi Hospital for treatment, where doctors declared him dead.

Thapa had been representing Koshi Province in national cricket for more than nine years. He played as a batsman and had also participated in several franchise leagues, family members said.

The untimely death of the national athlete has plunged his family, relatives, and cricket supporters into deep mourning. According to the family, Thapa's father has been missing for nearly one and a half decades. He is survived by his mother, Tanuja Thapa, and younger brother, Pradeep Thapa.

APF HAND REINS TO TAMANG

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25



Armed Police Force (APF) Football Club has appointed Rajendra Tamang as head coach for the upcoming ANFA National League.

APF announced the appointment of Tamang, the former head coach of the women's national football team, on its official social media page on Thursday.

APF has also signed Santosh Khatri and Anish Chhetri for the league.

The National League is scheduled to begin on 9 January, with 17 teams taking part — 13 from the top division and four selected from the President's League.

National Women's Volleyball Tourney set for January



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 25

The 9th Sher Bahadur Khadka Memorial National Women's Volleyball Tournament will be held in Kathmandu from 8 to 11 January.

The Sher Bahadur Khadka Memorial Foundation organises the event annually. At a press conference in Kathmandu on Thursday, Foundation Chair Ranjan Khadka announced that five teams, including three departmental sides, will compete.

Nepal Police, Nepal Army, Armed Police Force (APF), New Diamond Youth Sports Club, and Everest Volleyball Club will vie for the title, which carries a winner's prize of Rs. 500,000.

The teams will be split into two groups, with matches played on a league-cum-knockout basis.

Sponsored by multinational paint company KNP Nerolac, the tournament has a total prize fund of Rs. 1.3 million. The runners-up will receive Rs. 250,000, while the third-placed team will take home Rs. 125,000. Outstanding players in specific categories will each be awarded Rs. 25,000.

The 'Player of the Match' in every game will earn Rs. 15,000. At the opening ceremony, one national-level female player will be honoured with Rs. 50,000 in cash, continuing a tradition from previous editions.

Chair Khadka also confirmed that each player and member of the technical team has been insured for Rs. 500,000.

All matches will be staged at the covered hall of the National Sports Council (NSC) in Tripureshwor.

APF won the first six editions, New Diamond claimed the seventh, and Nepal Police are the defending champions.

During the press conference, Manoj Mishra, Country Head of Nerolac, and Gamali Khadka, Patron of the Foundation, signed the sponsorship agreement.

The organisers said the tournament is supported by NSC, the Provincial Sports Development Council, Bagmati Province, corporate houses, and local municipalities.

Mishra noted that as the tournament has grown in stature, the company's commitment has also increased, ensuring continued budget support. Jitendra Bahadur Chand, President of the Nepal Volleyball Association, extended his best wishes for the success of the competition.

The Foundation launched the tournament in 2015 with the aim of empowering female athletes and enhancing their skills.

Amorim wants Man Utd players to cover 'irreplaceable' Fernandes

AFP
London, Dec. 25



Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim has urged his players to "step up" in the absence of "impossible to replace" skipper Bruno Fernandes.

The Portugal international suffered a soft tissue injury sustained in Sunday's 2-1 loss at Aston Villa and, although Amorim believes the midfielder will be back soon, he is acutely aware of the need to fill the gap in United's attack.

Fernandes, who has started every Premier League match this season, is the English top-flight's most creative player, creating 51 chances and while he is sidelined, United will also be without Kobbie Mainoo for Friday's clash at home to Newcastle.

"It is impossible to replace Bruno but I said that this morning to the team," Amorim told a pre-match press conference on Wednesday.

"We need to take the good thing -- if there is a good thing on that -- that a lot of people need to step up and understand we cannot rely on one player for everything.

"Sometimes we rely on Bruno for organisation and the creation. We have lost Bruno on set-pieces, Bryan (Mbeumo) and Amad (Diallo) on set-pieces, so this is massive for the team.

"But it is an opportunity for other players to step up and show the leadership that we need in the team."

The Portuguese boss, asked what United would miss most when deprived of Fernandes's leadership qualities, replied: "Everything.

"He understands every position on the field, he pays attention to every detail; every set-piece when you have a substitution he is always the guy telling the other guys where they should be.

"But that is a very good opportunity for guys like Licha (Lisandro Martinez), Luke Shaw, all these guys. We need to step up to have more leaders in the group because this can happen to Bruno.

"It is not usual but this can happen, so it is a big opportunity for the other guys.

"We have other players we need to maybe try to see different ways of playing. I think Jack Fletcher did a very good job (when he came on against Villa) and that is why when we have this opportunity we have to give space to Jack and the other ones.

"We will find solutions to play."

United are currently seventh in the table, three points adrift of the Champions League places.

After Newcastle, United face basement club Wolves, Leeds, Burnley and Brighton. They will look to pile up the points ahead of what are sure to be sterner challenges in back-to-back games against title contenders Manchester City and Arsenal.

United have won just two of their last eight league fixtures but Amorim said: "I am confident we can win any game.

"Of course we have some problems, but even without many players in this moment in time I believe in the team and I believe we can win any game.

"Of course it is more difficult but I trust in my players and if we are really focused, we can win."

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Rare Initiative For Humanitarian Cause



Dr. Suman Raj Tamrakar

From the very first day of the English New Year 2026, an important campaign with a truly exemplary purpose is set to begin. A group of adventurers will undertake a journey of 1,800 kilometres along Nepal's Mid-Hill Highway by bicycle. What makes this campaign even more remarkable is that two of the cyclists are cancer survivors themselves.

In collaboration with Dhulikhel Hospital, the Cycle Culture Community is organising such an expedition. The campaign will commence on January 1, 2026, from Chiwabhanjyang in Panchthar and will conclude at Jhulaghat in Baitadi. This adventure journey is expected to take nearly one month to complete.

The expedition will pass through various stops along the Mid-Hill Highway, including Tharpu, Phidim, Sankranti Bazar, Myanglung, Leguwaghat, Bhojpur, Dorpachiuridanda, Halesi, Ghurmi, Lubhughat, Melamchi, Bidur, Arughat, Sundarbazar, Pokhara, Achhatikhola Bridge, Burtibang, Rukumkot, Chaurjahari, Bhagwatimai, Jambhukadh, Mangalsen, Sajghat, Amargadhi, Patan, and finally reach Jhulaghat. Although the total distance of the cycling tour is approximately 1,800 kilometres, it includes a cumulative elevation gain of nearly 52,000 metres.





Cancer survivors' journey

The journey will be led by cancer survivor and accomplished cyclist Harka Lama. In 2020, Lama was diagnosed with bladder cancer and received treatment at Dhulikhel Hospital. After recovering from cancer, he returned to cycling with renewed vigour and has since won various cycling competitions. Actively participating in international cycling events, Lama is recognised as one of Nepal's finest cycling athletes, especially known for cycling in high Himalayan terrains. Just a few months ago, he participated in the world's largest cycling race, the "Cape Epic" held in Africa. He regularly takes part in Nepal's internationally renowned mountain biking event, the "Yak Attack."

Like Lama, another cancer survivor cyclist participating in this campaign is Kavita Chitrakar. Once considered a fatal disease, cancer has now become treatable in many forms due to continuous advancements and innovations in medical science. However, in developing countries like Nepal, cancer patients still face immense challenges due to limited resources and a shortage of skilled healthcare professionals. In such circumstances, a cancer diagnosis often brings not only physical suffering but also severe mental stress, depression, and trauma. Maintaining mental strength before treatment or after radiotherapy, chemotherapy, or surgery is extremely difficult. Yet, Chitrakar stands apart from this harsh reality.

She is not only a cancer survivor but also a living example that life can remain energetic and purposeful even after cancer treatment. She demonstrates that with determination and goals, cancer survivors can move forward just like anyone else. Kavita was diagnosed with stage-three breast cancer. However, after recovering from treatment, she did not allow fear to dominate her life. Instead, she is resolved to dedicate her life to cycling and remain actively engaged in it. She has already participated in the "Yak Attack," held in some of the world's highest Himalayan terrains. Among Nepali women cyclists and campaigners, Kavita is recognised as a role model.

Even before her own diagnosis, Kavita had endured the painful reality of losing both her mother and sister to cancer. When she later learned that she herself had cancer at an advanced stage, it is easy to imagine the emotional turmoil she must have experienced. Yet, she confronted every struggle head-on. After adopting cycling as her lifestyle post-treatment, the positive transformation she underwent astonished even the doctors involved in her care. Now, as a woman, a cancer survivor, and an inspiration to women worldwide, Kavita is participating in this month-long cycling campaign. Through this journey, she is prepared to share her personal story while raising awareness about cervical cancer and breast cancer at various locations along the route.

In this context, following a morning cycle rally in Kathmandu, followed by a musical goodwill programme at Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikutimandap will be held on tomorrow (December 27, 2025). During the campaign, cycling enthusiasts and supporters from across the country can contribute physically, financially, or emotionally. Local organisations as well as local and provincial governments can support the cycling team by organising various programmes within their respective regions. Throughout this one-month-long cycling expedition from the eastern border (Chiwabhanjyang) to the western border (Jhulaghat), cancer prevention awareness programmes will be organised at multiple locations. Health screening programmes are also planned in certain areas.

According to 2022 data, approximately 22,000 new cancer cases are added annually in Nepal, while nearly 15,000 cancer patients die each year due to the disease. Lung cancer, oral cancer, and cervical cancer are the most common cancers among Nepalese. Comparatively, cancers of the lung, stomach, gallbladder, breast, and cervix have proven to be particularly fatal. On one hand, unhealthy lifestyles, poor dietary habits, and harmful addictions are major contributors to cancer. On the other hand, despite many cancers being preventable or treatable, lack of access to healthcare and negligence toward regular health checkups have caused the number of cancer patients to rise steadily. Although all three levels of government have recently begun providing limited financial assistance, many cancer-affected Nepalese still struggle to receive adequate treatment due to financial constraints.

Contribution

Anyway, this cycling campaign will contribute, directly or indirectly, to all four dimensions of healthcare: prevention, promotion, treatment, and rehabilitation. The involvement of cancer survivors themselves, doctors who work tirelessly in cancer treatment, and professors who spread awareness through teaching will make this campaign truly unique and rare on a global scale. The initiative will not only be a courageous event but may also be the first of its kind in the world in terms of its scope and impact.

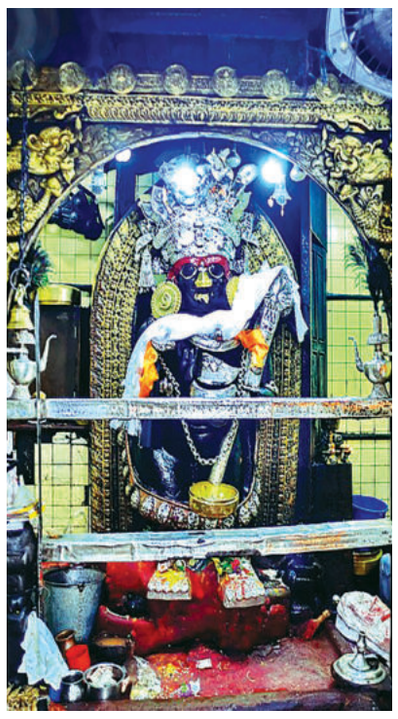
What makes this cycling campaign especially exemplary is that funds collected through individual or institutional donations, charity contributions, and financial support during the campaign will be handed over to Dhulikhel Hospital. These funds will be used to support cancer patients receiving treatment at the hospital. The collected funds will be formally handed over on World Cancer Day, which falls on February 4.

(Dr. Tamrakar is a senior gynaecologist in Dhulikhel Hospital.)

Myth Of Mahankal And *Kaliyug*



Devendra Gautam





> Mahadev leaves the place at godspeed, encounters an elephant on the way, severs its head, and fits it into his son's body! This is how a rotund god got his elephant head! Sadly, the surgery Vidhya of yore has vanished, right?

Ancient times in the ancient Valley of Kathmandu. Under a piece of high heavens over Tundikhel, one fine morning, an unnamed tantric is addressing nature's call on the lap of Mother Nature, with a pitcher full of water by his side for cleaning. Here, one does not need the brain of a rocket scientist to imagine that the valley must have been sparsely populated at that time, with hardly any human activity early in the morning.

Perchance, the sapien happens to glance into the small vessel and sees a divine image inside — the image of some supernatural being passing by high in the sky. Very quickly, the occult practitioner cleans up and, using powers of sacred mantras accumulated through Sadhana, manages to get hold of the deity. The deity turns out to be Tin Mahankal, also known as Shani Mahankal. By the side of a sprawling Tundikhel and just opposite the Trauma Centre, there's a huge image of the captured deity inside a pagoda-style temple.

Saturn god

The deity, whom many consider to be the Saturn god, is considered quite powerful and a proof supporting this belief is that his temple has withstood major jolts like the 2015 Gorkha quake that have rocked this country located on a seismic fault-zone over the past several decades. Every Saturday, devotees pour into the temple, offering the deity liquor, black-eyed peas and objects made of iron in a bid to appease him as he is associated with Adhaiya and Sadhesati (troubles that last 2.5 to 7.5 years, based on an individual's birth chart)

Close by the temple and in the middle of the road, there's a Peepal (ficus religiosa) tree where devotees pour in every Saturday to offer puja with the belief that this also reduces the harmful effects of the deity. As stated earlier, Shani is considered quite powerful. According to an ancient tale, even the all-powerful Mahadev had to hide himself under the trunk of a tree in the form of a woodworm to shield himself from the effects of Sadhesati for 7.5 long years!

As per another lore, upon insistence from Goddess Parvati, the mother of deities Ganesh and Kumar, and consort of Lord Mahadev, Saturn attended a function marking the birth of Ganesh. Quite aware of the harmful effects of his gaze, the god keeps his head lowered in the assembly full of supernatural beings, determined not to glance upon the newborn for the sake of the latter's life. This predicament is not hidden from Goddess Parvati, who was perhaps unaware of the harmful effect of Saturn.

Also, Ganesh was such a sweet child and a guest not looking at her child and appreciating his cuteness probably hurt a mother's pride. So, the goddess calls Saturn not to put on such a sad face on such a joyous occasion, and see how beautiful the baby was.

The Saturn tries to convince Parvati that even a glance could prove fatal for the baby, but she would have none of the excuses.

Left with no option, the Saturn looks at the child and the effect is so powerful, it beheads the baby then and there, leaving the divine audience panicked and in shock.

Without losing a moment, Mahadev leaves the place at godspeed, encounters an elephant on the way, severs its head, and fits it into his son's body! This is how a rotund god got his elephant head! Sadly, the surgery Vidhya of yore has vanished, right?

According to our scriptures, there are four ages (Yug) — the Satya, Treta, Dwapar and the Kali. Before the start of Kaliyug (the modern age), which comes after Satya, Treta and Dwapar Yug, Singhraj (the lion king), the king of the jungles, convenes a key meeting of wild animals.

He approaches the horse first and says: Dear horse! The Kaliyug is approaching and it will be marked by the rule of humans over us. Humans will not be kind to us, that's for sure. So, I have decided to head for the heavens as I do not like to live at their mercy. Accompany me to the heavens.

The horse replies: O lord of the jungles! The sapien has promised me a never-ending supply of food, so I ain't going with you. Then comes the turn of the jumbo. The lion king calls the elephant to accompany him, to which the latter replies: O good lord, the human being has vowed to take good care of me, to treat me like Lord Ganesh. So, I won't be going with you. Unable to convince any wild animal, the lion king leaves for the heavens, a tad too sad.

Kaliyug

As the Kaliyug begins, the sapien saddles and bridles the horse by offering treats and then starts using it as a beast of burden. When the horse reminds the sapien of his pledge to feed him nonstop, the latter replies: "The metal contraption that I have fitted in your mouth is your food. It will still be there even if you chew it for 12 long years. You see, I have kept my words. The horse nods, sadly.

As for the elephant, the animal receives a jumbo treatment at first, with the sapien offering puja accompanied by sweetmeats, coconuts, garlands, and other offerings. This way, the human wins the heart and mind of the jumbo. After the formal ceremony, the Lilliputian creature seeks to ride the giant and asks the latter to lower himself. After getting on top, the sapien reins it with iron shackles and starts lording over it. What prompted his majesty to return to Earth from the high heavens and inhabit the jungles of the Kaliyug as the lion king? Did he also fall prey to the scheming sapien? This scribe has no idea.

This mythological description is partly based on my conversation with Ram Tuladhar, a veteran wood carver from Khokana.

(The author is a freelancer.)

E-waste Management Challenges In Nepal



Ramesh Dahal



E-waste is an abandoned electronic goods or electronic products improperly disposed or discarded in the environment. In modern era, e-waste represents a byproduct of technological advancement. E-waste comes from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (EEEs), which is a growing concern of developing countries. E-waste is world's rapidly growing solid waste stream in the global level because every year, millions of electronic goods are discarded or dumped at landfills which poses a threat to human health and environment.

EEEs include but are not limited to old computers, TV sets, gazettes, household appliances like microwave, washing machine, and medical equipment, etc. The useless electronic goods are subject of discussion because they are either stored improperly at home, store, warehouse or transported to the developing countries assembling them as second-hand or refurbished items. In developing countries, where government and people are less sensitive to e-waste, women and children often collect it for valuable metals like gold, copper, silver or other parts that can be used later.

In order to find solution to the e-waste related problems, this article has been prepared reviewing secondary sources and the conclusion drawn about the environmental challenge, health impact and policy reform.

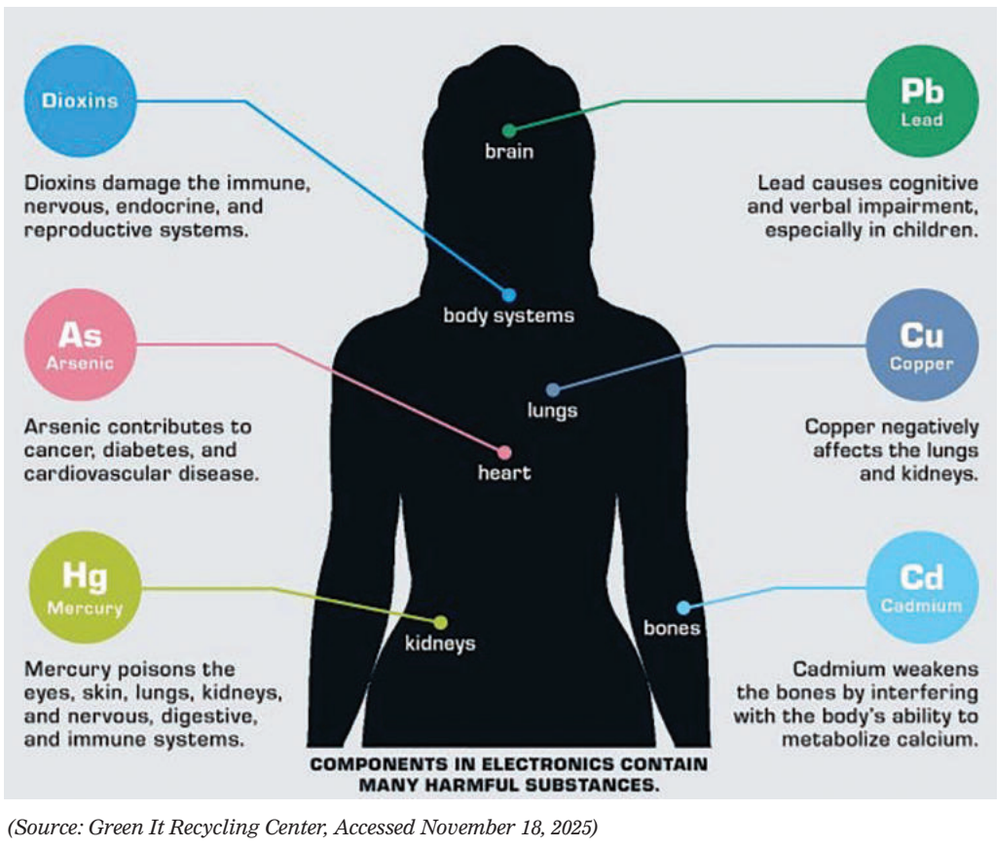
E-waste is a growing environmental, social and health byproduct of modern lifestyle. After the useful life of the EEEs, they are discarded either at landfill or collected by waste hawkers to smelt useable parts.

Toxic substances contained in e-waste

E-waste contains a wide range of materials, including 69 naturally occurring elements and over 1,000 different substances. EEEs commonly includes toxic metals such as lead, mercury, beryllium, thallium, cadmium, arsenic, as well as brominated flame retardants and polychlorinated biphenyls. Meanwhile, e-waste holds valuable metals such as gold, silver, platinum, palladium, etc., making it a potential source of income for waste hawkers. It further contains critical raw materials including cobalt, germanium, bismuth, and antimony. Iron and aluminum are also widely used in electronic devices. Notably, it is estimated that one tonne of mobile phones and personal laptops can yield approximately 140 grams of gold.

Impact on human health

Discarded EEEs containing batteries or plugs often include toxic and hazardous substances, such as mercury, which pose serious risks to human health. Mercury is found in LCD screens, fluorescent lamps, computer monitors, and laptops. Exposure through inhalation of mercury vapour or consumption of contaminated foods can damage brain, heart, kidneys, and lungs. It is also associated with abnormal births, miscarriages, delayed brain development, neurological and cognitive impairments, making it particularly dangerous for women and children.



(Source: Green It Recycling Center, Accessed November 18, 2025)

Lead is a harmful material widely used in smartphones, TV screens, printers, batteries, and other personal electronics. Lead can damage human health in multiple ways, including damage of nervous system, impairing cognitive function, and causing long-term challenges. Human exposure to lead can lead muscle weakness, brain damage, hearing and speech problems, behavioural problems of developing children, anemia, nerve damage, and death.

Exposure to toxic substances commonly found in EEEs results in cardiovascular disease. Unnecessary exposure to heavy metals such as arsenic, lead, and cadmium can disrupt heart rhythm, elevate blood pressure, and impair lipid profiles. Long-term exposure to these metals is associated with a higher likelihood of major adverse cardiovascular events, cancer, heart failure, stroke, angina, and death.

People expose to the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) while screening valuable metals through e-waste. CFCs slow down the Central Nervous System (CNS) which impacts brain and spinal cord. They experience respiratory problem, and lung congestion which put people from simple health complications to life threatening condition. Therefore, improper disposal of e-waste poses significant health risks, particularly for women and children who are on the frontline of e-waste recycling.



E-waste as a social problem

Generating over 62 million tonnes of e-waste annually has become a significant social issue and an environmental challenge. Many developed countries export second-hand EEEs—often illegally, or under the guise of donations—to developing nations where environmental regulations are less stringent. As a result, developing countries are compelled to manage already-used e-waste dumped into their fragile environments which exposes marginalized people to both social and environmental burdens.

Although women are trained in using technology and awareness to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in developed countries, their Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is poor in Nepal. In other words, working in e-waste recycling is 'informal' and a low-paid work in Nepal while it is a 'formal' occupation in developed countries. According to UNU report, women sort through e-waste manually without PPEs and limited skills for low payments, expose themselves to toxic chemical including but not limited to Chlorofluorocarbon (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) and others.

According to a report, very few African countries are practicing e-waste legislation. We too are equipped in waste management policy, but it is silent about e-wastes. In Nepal, e-waste management belongs to informal sector which means that labour law, Acts and regulations are bypassed. This creates insecure work environment and exploitation. It is a serious social issue that women and children are at health risk due to their exposure to e-waste for their hand-to-mouth. But the good point is that women's role in green economy through e-waste recycling is praiseworthy and substantial.

Impact on environment

People dismantle discarded EEEs for expensive metals releasing mercury, lead, cadmium, arsenic, beryllium, thallium, antimony, brominated flame retardants, polychlorinated biphenyls, aluminum, bismuth, chromium, nickel, CFCs, HFFCs, and others that contaminate soil, water and air. The leaching of toxic substances from landfill degrades soil, water and air irreversibly. When e-waste is burnt openly, it releases toxic fumes.

E-waste policy gap

Nepal lacks e-waste policies. Despite increasing volume of e-waste with negative impact on health and environment, policies remain silent, indicating that e-waste is not a concern. For example, Solid Waste Management Act, 2011 of Nepal is quiet about e-waste. The absence of e-waste legislation discourages private-sector investment. Likewise, Nepal is weak in e-waste facility and technology due to resource constraint. Despite Nepal being a signatory to Basel Convention which regulates the transboundary movement of hazardous materials, tonnes of e-waste is sent to other countries through illegal routes. The mentioned scenario necessitates the extensive discussion for comprehensive e-waste policies in Nepal.

Key solutions and recommendations

None can imagine modern life without EEEs but it is our responsibility to use them cautiously. On the other hand, experts emphasize that strong legislation grounded in the 'polluter pays principle' can hold producers accountable for the safe management of their e-waste.

A crucial part of e-waste management is transitioning from the 'informal' sector to a formal and regulated system that eliminates unregulated, undocumented, and haphazard handling of e-waste by poorly paid women. It is recommended to establish an e-lab with hazard-safe recycling and refurbishing facilities outside Kathmandu—ideally in the Tarai region—at an appropriate distance from residential areas to allow for the safe dismantling of equipment, recovery of valuable materials, and proper handling of toxic substances. Additionally, it is advised to establish and operate specialized machinery, and manage by trained personnel based on protocols.

We can apply 3R principles to reduce e-waste: first, by minimizing the purchase of unnecessary EEEs; second, by reusing devices through repair and maintenance; and third, by sending them for recycling. Nepal can address existing capacity gaps by learning from international best practices and by formally encouraging private-sector participation to systematize e-waste recycling and strengthen an e-waste-based economy. The country can also prevent the loss of valuable resources—such as gold, silver, copper, and other materials—currently being sold off as e-waste. Furthermore, the development and promotion of a second-hand electronic market can contribute to waste reduction and support economic growth in e-waste sector. Implementing extended producer responsibility can help establish a reliable economic stream and foster a robust local second-hand market.

The private sector plays an important role in e-waste management; however, meaningful progress will remain limited without involvement of the government.

Therefore, the Government of Nepal is advised to explicitly address e-waste issues through an additional amendment to existing acts, or by introducing a separate, dedicated regulations. Provincial and local governments are encouraged to address e-waste challenges within their respective jurisdictions.

Nepal can address existing capacity gap by adopting international best practices and formally encouraging private-sector participation to systematize e-waste recycling and strengthen an e-waste-based economy. Public awareness about e-waste remains limited in Nepal, making education and advocacy essential.

Stakeholders—including the general public, waste hawkers, and government employees—should be trained to handle e-waste properly, recognizing that it is not merely waste but also a source of employment and valuable materials for a circular economy.

E-waste is a growing environmental, social and health byproduct of modern lifestyle. After the useful life of the EEEs, they are discarded either at landfill or collected by waste hawkers to smelt useable parts.

People, especially women and children from marginalised communities, expose themselves senselessly to the e-waste for a little amount of earning in extracting valuable materials and toxic substances. The discarded equipment when dismantled, can leak 1,000 types of substances including mercury, lead, cadmium, CFCs, HCFCs and others. In countries like Nepal, such substances damage human health and environment irreparably, so it has social consequences on several levels. The article hence advises the governments at all levels to address e-waste problem by means of proper policy reformation, awareness and advocacy.

(Dahal is a freelancer)

Distress Of Finding Money





Avaya Shrestha

We were on a literary tour in the first week of Baisakh 2073 (April, 2016). In the course of the three-day tour organised by the Nepali Kala Sahitya Dot Com Foundation, we reached Dhankuta Bazaar in the evening of Baisakh 3. It had begun drizzling, and in that murky evening we circled Dhankuta Bazaar with poet Suman Pokhrel, a native of Dhankuta now living in Biratnagar. The next afternoon, a crowded poetry symposium was organised in Dhankuta. I had read a poem on my mother's legacy.

The following morning, passing through the highland Hile of Dhankuta, we reached Basantapur of Tehrathum. Even in the heat of Baisakh, Hile remained cold. When we reached fog-covered Basantapur, a wind cheater was hardly enough; the cold made one shiver. From there, we had planned to travel 26 km east to Myanglung, the headquarters of Tehrathum. However, for some reason, the plan was cancelled. After enjoying the pleasant morning at Basantapur, we had lunch there and then hiked to Tute Deurali of Sankhuwasabha, and from there walked to the captivating RR Park.

I cannot recall the names of everyone who travelled with us. But I remember that Usha Sherchan, who had difficulty walking due to her weight, stayed inside the microbus at Tute Deurali. Poet Tulsi Diwas too did not seem eager to walk. Naturopathist Dr. Hari Prasad Pokharel 'Manasagni'- who always emphasised good health, yoga, and walking- along with Momila, Rajeshwor Karki and the others, reached the park on foot. We entered the park from the northern entrance, walking downwards. Three or four groups had already entered before us.

TV journalist-cum-poet Thakur Belbase was walking beside me at the time. A little ahead, several notes of one-thousand and five-hundred rupees lay scattered. I pointed them out to Belbase. He jumped back like a startled rabbit and said, "I won't touch the money. I might get beaten up for no reason. I don't want to get beaten up in this age." I thought that someone might misuse the money, so I picked up all the notes with the intention of returning them to the rightful owner or handing them over to the police. But there was no bag, no identity card, nothing at all around the spot. Stuffing the notes into the side pocket of my pants made it uncomfortable to walk.

Within moments, the news of the money spread like wildfire among our companions. Now I truly began to fear. With the news going viral among the group, I feared becoming the target. Someone might falsely claim the money, snatch it, or I might even be beaten. At the same time, imagining the distress of the person or group who had lost it, especially if they were poor, filled me with sadness. I silently wished that the matter would not spread further, that the real owner would come searching for it inside the park, and that I would be able to return it.

Meanwhile, friends were busy taking photographs with the statues of tigers, bears, deer, and sitting with real yaks. I too took part, but inside me there was a great storm. My heart throbbed so strongly that it felt as if it might burst out of my chest. The nearly two-hour walk inside the park felt like an entire era. No one appeared to claim the money.

I expressed my wish to hand it to the police. Hearing this, our driver ran to the microbus and conveyed this to our seniors, Usha Sherchan and Tulsi Diwas. "He is such a learned man, yet his brain doesn't work even as much as mine; he wants to hand it to the police! What foolishness is that?" he complained. Usha called me immediately and advised me not to hand over the money to the police.

I then asked other friends whether I should inform the local FM station. That, too, did not seem likely to help identify the real owner. Later, a plan materialised between me and journalist Belbase, who was then a hit presenter at Image TV and Image FM. Once back in Kathmandu, he would interview me about the incident on Image FM and then we would hand the money to a financially poor girl he knew, for her schooling and books. I agreed.

While returning to Hile, Anupam Roshi and I counted the money on the microbus. It totalled Rs. 30,500. Usha worried, saying that if the money belonged to the group of orphans who had walked ahead of us, it would be a great tragedy. In the end, both Tulsi Diwas and Usha suggested that the amount be donated to the organiser, Nepali Kala Sahitya Dot Com Foundation, as it had been 'tirelessly serving literature.' Everyone clapped. Embarrassed, I looked at Belbase; he silently surrendered to the idea. Finally, I said, "Let's not make this public. If the rightful owner comes by tomorrow, I will return it. If not, I will hand it to the Foundation. Until then, I will keep it with me."

We spent that night at Hile. I could not sleep even for a moment. I kept thinking no one was going to show up to claim it. Right then, RM Dangol told me that the Foundation was facing financial difficulty. The next day, the group once again reminded me to hand the money to the Foundation, and I did it to chairperson Momila Joshi. Clearly, I felt guilty about this. As a simple man, I have many weaknesses. In some matters, I may not be a good person either. I still feel guilt and regret about those things. Yet in some matters, I have an instinct that feels a bit different.

Once at Pashupati Plaza in Kathmandu, a young man talking on his phone dropped a hundred-rupee note from his pocket. I returned it; he did not even thank me, yet I felt happy. Another time, at New Road Gate, I bought a packet of lemons worth twenty rupees. When I gave a five-hundred-rupee note, the vendor mistakenly returned Rs. 980 to me, thinking I had given a thousand-rupee note. Returning the extra money and seeing gratitude flare in her eyes still gives me joy.

Similarly, whether it is the meat-seller at Harsha Chowk in Dadhikot, the momo vendor, or the bus conductor, many times they have given me extra change by mistake, and I have always returned it honestly. It is a different matter that many times I have mistakenly given extra money to vendors and others, and they did not return it to me.

The joy of returning someone's money is something only the one who returns it can feel. I believe one can deceive the whole world, but not oneself. So at the very least, I do not lie to myself, which is why I return such money. The amount I found at RR Park was no small amount at that time for an average Nepali. I think it was equivalent to Rs. 70000 today. In a hilly district like Sankhuwasabha, it was extraordinary. Imagining the mental anguish of the person who lost it still fills me with a deep melancholy.

(Litterateur Shrestha writes on various issues.)

FUTURE WATCH

(Based on birth names)

From December 26th 2025, to January 1st 2026 - D. N. Lohani

ARIES

Initially, excessive expenses will cause some concern. Circumstances will improve from Monday. Business will yield an ordinary return. You will find it difficult to manage expenses on a limited income from your job. Support provided by friends will help.

TAURUS

Progress slower than expected can cause some concern. Family problems can arise. Avoid risky ventures on Tuesday. Circumstances will improve from Wednesday. Support provided by friends will help.

GEMINI

You will feel restlessness. Travel will fascinate you. Avoid minor cuts or bruises on Tuesday. The prayer of Ganesh during the morning is important. Avoid risky ventures.

CANCER

Family concern will cause some concern. The period starting Saturday is better. Major tasks will be completed successfully. A high level of confidence will help. Trade and profession will turn profitable.

LEO

An advantageous week is in store. Work will be completed only after applying additional expenses. Business will continue as usual. A health disorder is likely. A leg-related problem may haunt you from tomorrow.

VIRGO

An ordinary week is in the store. You will retain partial progress in obligation, but you won't face defeat. Investment will generate a return. Seasonal disease can impact the study.

LIBRA

Emerging challenges will not cause many problems. Family will provide good support. The technical task will take a progressive course and yield a return. New friends can join your circle. Try to limit investment to business.

SCORPIO

You may have to tolerate cold-related issues. Health concerns can delay progress. Students will have to work harder. You will find it difficult to complete the task on sole effort. The prayer of Ganesh will help.

SAGITTARIUS

The period until Sunday will comprise challenges. Circumstances will improve from Monday. Fear and confusion can reside within the self. Decisive ability can slow down. Foreign trade will excel.

CAPRICORN

Work will be completed after spending more. The job will advance. Business will continue as usual. You will enjoy travel with interesting ones. Students will have to work harder.

AQUARIUS

The week will start pleasantly. You will enjoy meeting with interesting people. Financial status will improve. Investment will generate a return. Business will turn profitable. Avoid a risky venture on Thursday.

PISCES

Avoid risky ventures today. A health disorder is likely. The prayer of lord Shiva and offering a wood apple is a remedy. Financial challenges can arise. An unnecessary cause can increase expenses. Family problems will prevail.

A Memoir Of Brilliant Bureaucrat



Madan Kumar Bhattarai

It is generally assumed that top civil servants provide brain, blood and muscle to their political masters to undertake any initiative or make policy decisions. This applies more in the case of some key sectors like foreign affairs, finance, home and defence as governments have to take quicker decisions and make initiatives for reforms, changes and adjustments, or roll back decisions taken earlier found not appropriate in the changed circumstances.

Despite their crucial roles in the art and craft of governance, bureaucrats all over the world are normally recipients of brickbats rather than bouquets, as whatever positive things happen as a result of their advice or suggestion are immediately taken by their political masters as credit and blamed for failings squarely put on the heads of the civil servants. There are also allegations that, in many cases, civil servants simply suggest alternatives or pose questions that provide no durable solutions.

It is in this category that a recent book by a top Indian bureaucrat may be read seriously, as it offers considerable insights into both the machinery and working patterns of the government. The author, Dr. Duvvuri Subbarao, has all the credentials that can be called exemplary. A topper of combined civil services examinations for entry into the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Foreign Service (IFS) of 1972, he is a true amalgam of academic brilliance and an envious record of career trajectory, including some of the most sensitive assignments both in and outside the purview of the government.

While his first option was IFS (Indian Foreign Service) and he was keen to join it, he changed the stream in favour of IAS within the 10-day time limit after gentle persuasion from his father. After 50 years, he thought he made the right decision and had no regrets for not joining the IFS. His service records include stints as Secretary to the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, lead economist in the World Bank, Finance Secretary, Andhra Pradesh government and Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance of India, before taking over as the Finance Secretary of India.

After serving as Finance Secretary, the author was in the striking range of becoming Cabinet Secretary, the highest position in Indian bureaucracy. He was instead appointed Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that he calls the most significant transition in his career. He was the 22nd RBI Governor after his superannuation, only to leave it prematurely as an accumulated expression of inconvenient moments with two well-recognised finance ministers, Pranab Mukherjee, who later became the President of India, and P. Chidambaram.

An acknowledged expert and prolific writer on public finance, decentralisation and fiscal reforms, Subbarao also has experience with issues of public finance in several countries of Asia and Africa. His highly impressive and varied academic credentials include top positions at both BSc (Physics) and MSc (Physics) from two of the best institutions of India, IIT, Kharagpur, and IIT, Kanpur, respectively, MS (Economics), Ohio State University, and PhD in Economics from MIT.

He has devoted a whole chapter (five) to his PhD saga, depicting the travails and tribulations a serving civil servant has to bear in the course of doctorate research in terms of leave and other provisions. In addition, it was delayed by his elder brother's suicide, leading to his abrupt return to be with his parents at the worst hour. Taken as one of the first IITians to join the civil service, his book has an equally interesting and even thought-provoking title, JUST A MERCENARY? – Notes From My Life and Career. The voluminous book has 18 self-contained chapters with 8 snippets/op-eds that are inserted in various chapters instead of being separate treatments on their own.

While the book is highly readable with significant insights into the working of the government of India, the author leaves the answers to his title to the readers, stating that the answer to this question will always be a matter of elusion for him. Another beauty of the work is that he has summed up his true feelings in the last chapter, which is sort of a concluding observation.

The last chapter, entitled Letter to My Mother is both in the form of a coda and the most emotional attachment he had with his mother, with profound tributes for so many things and sacrifices she made for her dear son. He concludes that despite putting all efforts for the service of the government, the moot question always remains, whether the civil servant is just a mercenary or something more.

The book depicts a change of preferences in India in terms of civil service career options, as he finds that in earlier days, people used to prefer IFS to IAS, but that is not the case now, as people opt more for IAS. He also gives a succinct overview of the training modules India adopts in training bureaucrats, as they come from a heterogeneous area of schooling, background and discipline.

The second aspect is that the private sector has grown and attracts talent more these days than earlier, when civil service used to be the only preferable pursuit for career development. The third important aspect of the Indian civil service is that more and more women are now joining, making it what the writer prefers to call a steady stream rather than a trickle in earlier years of Indian independence.

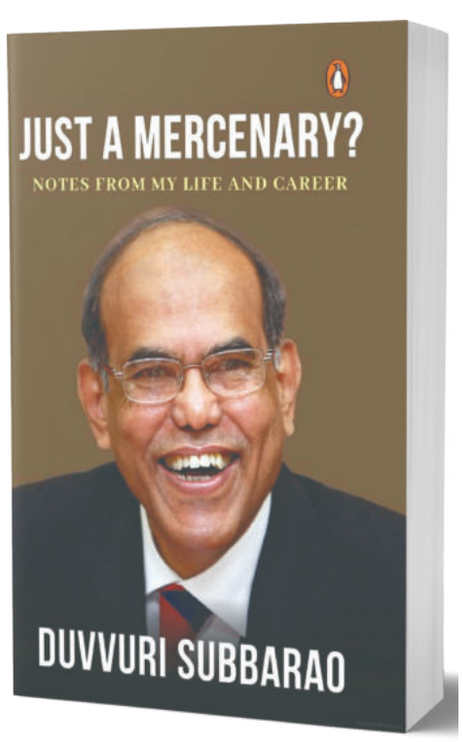
The fourth and last point the author has highlighted is the preponderance of people from backgrounds other than civil service making entries into the service, as children of bureaucrats used to flock to the civil service examinations in earlier days. This may indicate both the impression of the plight of their parents in civil service and the emergence of other attractive avenues for career development as India grows in terms of socio-economic development, with special stress on management, technology and service.

One chapter (seventeen) is dedicated to the author's self 'desanitising' endeavours relating to his post-retirement stints at top academic institutions like Yale Jackson School of Global Affairs at Yale University, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and National University of Singapore Business School.

In a nutshell, Duvvuri Subbarao deserves accolades for the most comprehensive presentation as it lucidly combines memoirs and the real-life situation of India.

(Dr. Bhattarai is a former foreign secretary, ambassador and author. kutniti@gmail.com)

JUST A MERCENARY? – Notes From My Life and Career by Duvvuri Subbarao;
Published by Penguin/Viking, Gurugram, 2024;
Pages 435 and Price: IRs. 79



The World In An Age Of Staged Reality



Ganesh P Paudel

In every society, the powerful constitute a small minority, yet they occupy an extraordinary space – physical, political, and moral. The rest of us, the vast majority, live relatively unmasked lives. Our actions are judged plainly, and the law – however imperfect – touches us without ceremony. But for those in command, truth functions differently. It becomes negotiable, shape-shifting according to convenience, image and ambition.

In Nepal, this contrast is neither new nor subtle. It is woven into our everyday political culture. The landscape may have changed since the tumultuous years of conflict and constitution-writing, and even in the age of AI, but the performance of leadership remains strikingly the same. We continue to witness ministers driving past traffic rules with confidence that accountability is meant for others. We hear pledges of reform from leaders who have held office long enough to implement at least a fraction of what they preach. We have almost normalised the dangerously unaccountable and unethical practice of political leaders and government authorities lying in public.

Disowning misdeeds

They routinely get away with disowning their misdeeds or – more recently – dismissing them as AI-generated fabrications. Yet, the public listens, nods, and then quietly files these promises and political shenanigans away in the growing archive of disillusionment. The emboldened speeches and unfazed demeanour of the leaders of the party troika, who faced debacles during the Gen Z uprising, serve as testimony to this argument.

This gulf between rhetoric and reality is not an exclusively Nepali phenomenon. It mirrors a global trend in which political authority is increasingly theatrical and less ethical. Around the world – from South Asia to the Middle East, from Washington to Moscow – leaders craft carefully curated narratives. "National interest," "security concerns," "development priorities," and other official phrases often mask uncomfortable truths. During the Syrian conflict, for instance, I still remember then president Basar Al Asad attempted to redefine the civil war, which later ended up claiming more than three hundred thousand civilian lives, as a "new kind of war". It revealed a broader pattern: language can be weaponised to obscure responsibility.

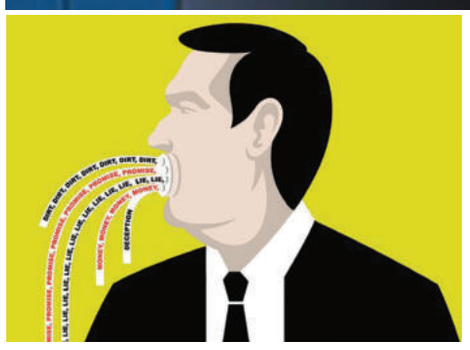
What makes hypocrisy so persistent – both at home and abroad – is that it thrives where power concentrates but accountability thins. Political leaders, corporate magnates, bureaucratic elites, and even self-appointed moral guardians often operate under the assumption that principles are optional and consequences negotiable. And whenever this assumption is left unchallenged, impunity spreads quietly but swiftly.

Yet the Nepali case carries a particular poignancy. We are a pretty young republic, still groping for the meanings of the vocabulary of citizenship, federalism, and civic responsibility. Our politics, still in transition, is remarkably crowded with leaders who began as idealists – many forged in revolution, jail time, or grassroots struggle.

But somewhere along the ascent from the streets to Singha Durbar, many discovered that power offers comfort, and comfort demands unscrupulous means. The revolutionary fire dims, replaced by coalition arithmetic, factional battles, protocol vehicles, and speeches fine-tuned for applause rather than honesty.

The irony is sharp: those who once promised transformation often become guardians of the very structures they sought to dismantle. But hypocrisy is not solely a political ailment. It leaks into institutions, workplaces, civic organisations, and even spiritual communities. I once had a senior employer whose public persona radiated humility, detachment, and the discipline of Vipassana meditation. He spoke frequently of impermanence and compassion, yet wielded corporate influence with manipulation and selective truth. This contradiction was not personal alone;





it mirrored a broader tendency among the powerful to preach virtue while practicing forced decency.

He failed to provide the festival bonus to a few employees, which he, during the time of recruitment, had promised with great rapture. When principles become performance, the meaning of ethics collapses–whether in a boardroom or a Cabinet room. This raises a deeper question: Why do the powerful lie so effortlessly? Not because they lack intelligence, but because they operate within systems that reward perception more than sincerity. In such systems, polished narratives secure votes, investments, and influence; candour, on the other hand, invites scrutiny. Thus, hypocrisy becomes not merely a moral failure but a strategy–one that thrives across continents.

Still, the consequences are not uniform. In fragile democracies like Nepal, where institutions remain vulnerable, the effects are acutely felt. Public faith erodes. Citizens disengage. Cynicism replaces hope. Politics becomes a spectacle rather than a service. And once cynicism becomes normalised, even sincere leaders – rare as they already are – struggle to gain traction. Yet history teaches that nations do not decay because ordinary people fail; they decay when their most powerful actors abandon restraint. The philosopher Vaclav Havel once wrote that the struggle of the powerless begins with "living in truth." Perhaps the inverse is also true: the decline of societies begins when the powerful stop "living in truth".

As Nepal navigates new geopolitical currents – balancing neighbours, negotiating development, coping with mass exodus, brain drain, and confronting environmental vulnerability – leaders with integrity are not optional; they are essential. But they must be more than symbolic. They must be willing to step beyond scripted compassion, beyond hurried promises of "good governance," beyond the security of political theatrics.

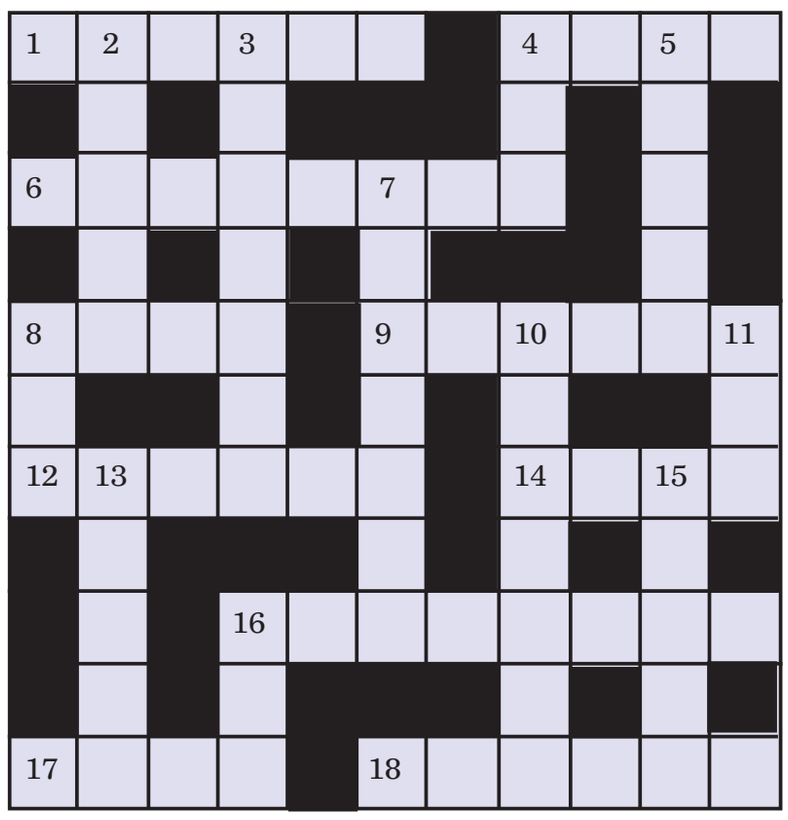
Crucial juncture

For the world's powerful – whether in Washington, Beijing, New Delhi, Brussels, or Kathmandu – the mask of hypocrisy may be convenient, but it is unsustainable. Power without conscience eventually corrodes not only institutions but the very idea of a healthy and functioning society. And when that happens, it is ordinary people – those without masks – who bear the brunt heavily.

Nepal today stands at a crucial juncture. Our citizens are more informed, more connected, and more impatient, filled with the sense of pretence than ever before. If our leaders continue to choose spectacle over sincerity, showmanship over utility, and expediency over principles, the future will echo the frustrations of the past. The Gen-Z movement was the case in point. But if even a few choose differently, the moral arc of leadership – long bent in the lack of rectitude – might yet straighten.

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TRN CROSSWORD PUZZLE NO. 1862



Across

1. An outrage.
4. A wheel that controls the direction in which ship travels.
6. To deliberately damage something for political or military advantage.
8. A religious festival or fair.
9. Occurring once a year.
12. Force someone to do something against their will.
14. A white crystalline substance.
16. A state of being resistant to a particular disease/infection.
17. A quick, sharp, sudden movement.
18. Eyes looking dull or unfocused from tiredness or sleep.

Down

2. Tranquillity.
3. A leaf with a narrower end at the base.
4. A colour or shade.
5. A physical tag.
7. A Eurasian plant bearing white or yellow flowers.
8. Stupid, foolish.
10. Not in attendance.
11. By now or then.
13. A liquid waste made by the kidneys.
15. A liquid unit of measurement.
16. To irritate or annoy someone.

Last date of entry:
December 31 , 2025

Win a prize of Rs. 600. In case there are more than one correct entry the prize will be split into three sums of Rs. 200 each. The winner will be selected by a lucky draw. Only cuttings (not photo copy) that include the Crossword Puzzle no. will be accepted.

Name: .....

Address: .....

Solutions to TRN Crossword Puzzle No. 1861

ACROSS: 1. BABBLE/JABBER 4. DEBT 6. MORIBUND 8. HERO 9. BAFFLE 12. TANTRA 14. LAMB 16. ABEYANCE 17. HEAD 18. LAYMAN

DOWN: 2. ABODE 3. BAILOUT 4. DAD 5. BANAL 7. UMBRAGE 8. HAT 10. FALLACY 11. EBB 13. AZURE 15. MECCA 16. AID

LUCKY WINNER

1. Sheela Shrestha, Kuleshwor-14, Kathmandu
2. Kumari Nirmala Giri, Bheemdatt-15, Kanchanpur
3. Ganga Ram Shrestha, Hyumat tole, KMC 12

CREATIVE CORNER



Aswant Aryal, Grade: III, Kathmandu Columbus School



Rensu Gautam, Grade: II, Himalayan Whitehouse IB World School

QUIZ OF THE WEEK 28

Questions	Answers
1. Which country has the most beautiful girls?	
2. Who is the author of the book Kotparva in Civil Administration?	
3. When was World Mental Health Day first celebrated?	
4. Who is the first female Prime Minister of Japan?	
5. Who is the author of Urmal?	

LUCKY WINNER

Mahendra Kumari Nath, Mulpani, Kathmandu

Memories From Nepal



Samirah Shrestha Greene

I wake up to a hundred little bug bites and my hair is a mess. The sun is piercing through the window, filling the room with light. The sky is clear after a storm. The lush trees are filled with a vibrant green and a breeze dances on their leaves. The pink bed canopy made me feel like a princess, even though it's to keep the mosquitoes out. It's nice and cool in the early morning, but still too warm to wear a jacket. I go upstairs for breakfast and the smell of fresh mango and rice fills the room.

It looks like my Ma has cooked everything in her fridge with the help of my older cousin. We sit down to eat and fill up our plates tower high. The delicious goat curry and garlic naan call my name. The mango tastes like summer wrapped in orange skin. I swat flies away from my food but they won't leave me alone. A fan spins lazily above my head, but just fast enough to be refreshing. The city of Kathmandu is slowly starting to wake up and I hear motorcycles revving in the streets. My fingers are oily from eating with my hands and a warm breeze is brushing against my face.

After breakfast, I help my Ma gather the laundry. The clothes are already soaking in buckets on the rooftop, full of water and the smell of soap. My Ma doesn't explain with words how to wash the clothes – I can't understand most of her Nepali – so she shows me instead. I only washed a few pieces, a T-shirt, and a pair of pants, but my arms are already tired. Water splashes everywhere, and my skirt clings to my legs, soaked at the edges. Chickens cluck somewhere on the rooftop, and a motorcycle buzzes in the distance. I look up and follow the sound of chickens to the rooftop garden, where the sun warms the drying clothes and the birds peck among the pots.

I look at the chickens and I can tell they don't have a thought behind their eyes. I feel bad for them, stuck in a cage all day, but they don't know that they are living a sad life. I climb down from the rooftop, chickens clucking behind me, and I rejoin my family inside the house. Bright clothes, laughter echoing, and the scent of spices filling the air. My mom braids my hair and helps me get ready for a party. We go downstairs and pile into the car. The party is full of colour and light. I see family and friends everywhere that I met just the other day.

All of my aunts and uncles ask if I remember them, and I say yes, even though some faces feel like very distant memories. Laughter and chatter fill the room. I don't speak Nepali fluently, but their expressions, gestures, and tone fill in the gaps. Somehow, I'm able to understand the feelings behind their words. I look fondly back at the memories from Nepal, knowing Nepal is a part of me even though I might not be a part of Nepal. After years, I still haven't learned the language, but I know that no matter how old I get, a part of me will always be in Nepal.

L.A., USA Grade VIII



Aadarsha Paudel Grade: VIII, Liverpool Secondary School