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THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL

PRESIDENT PAUDEL EXTENDS GREETINGS ON PRITHVI JAYANTI

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Jan. 11

President Ramchandra Paudel has extended greetings to Nepalis at home and abroad on the occasion of Prithvi Jayanti and National Unity Day, marking the 304th birth anniversary of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the architect of Nepal's unification.

In a message issued on Sunday, the President paid tribute to Prithvi Narayan Shah for uniting the small, fragmented states and laying the foundation of modern Nepal. "I express my heartfelt greetings to all Nepali sisters and brothers at home and abroad," said President Paudel.

He stated that the efforts of Nepal's brave ancestors across different periods of history ensured the country's sovereignty and independence. Referring to the present political system, he noted that Nepal has been constitutionally established as an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive, democracy-based, socialist-oriented federal democratic republican state.

President Paudel said the teachings of Prithvi Narayan Shah remain relevant even today. "His divine teachings provide guidance for building a strong economy, fostering patriotism, strengthening relations with neighbouring countries, protecting religion, culture and tradition, and promoting justice, good governance and national unity," he said.

President Paudel expressed hope that National Unity Day would inspire citizens to work for peace, prosperity and public welfare while safeguarding Nepal's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity.

Meanwhile, Vice President Ramsahay Prasad Yadav expressed his hope

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PHOTO: RSS

Tourists enjoying a mesmerising aerial view of Pokhara and the surrounding snow-capped mountains while paragliding over Toripani in Pokhara Metropolitan City–18, Kaski district.

WE CONTRIBUTE 10% OF TOTAL NATIONAL REVENUE: NOC

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Jan. 10

Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) said that it contributed 10 per cent to the total annual revenue of the government.

Last year, it has recorded a turnover of Rs. 366 billion in a year, contributing around Rs. 124 billion in revenue to the government.

Speaking on the occasion of the corporation's anniversary, Executive Director Chandika Prasad Bhatt said the amount paid through customs duties, road maintenance charges and value-added tax is equivalent to nearly 10 per cent of the government's total annual revenue target.

According to him, the corporation annually supplies 63,000 kilolitres of petrol, 222,000 kilolitres of diesel, 18,000 kilolitres of aviation fuel and 46,000 tonnes of LPG. On average, about 7.5 million litres of petroleum products are distributed across the country every day.

The NOC recorded a turnover of Rs. 367 billion and earned a net profit of Rs. 13.5 billion.

Rs. 96 billion was contributed to government revenue, he added.

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Nepal's exhibition infrastructure insufficient and outdated

BY SUSHMA MAHARJAN
Kathmandu, Jan. 10

Exhibitions are globally recognised as powerful platforms for trade promotion, innovation, business networking and tourism. However, in Nepal, the absence of well-equipped exhibition and convention centres has emerged as a major structural bottleneck, limiting not only business growth but also the country's potential in Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism.

Despite the growing number of trade fairs, product expos and international forums organised by the private sector, the country still relies almost entirely on a single, government-owned venue, the Bhrikuti Mandap Exhibition Hall, whose deteriorating condition and limited capacity have become a major obstacle to exhibitions, conventions and MICE tourism.

Industry stakeholders said that the absence of multiple, modern exhibition centres had not only constrained business promotion but also weakened Nepal's ability to attract international conventions, delegations and investors. With



FILE PHOTO

The Godawari Sunrise Convention Centre after being set on fire during the Gen Z movement.

TRN SPECIAL

Bhrikuti Mandap struggling to meet even basic standards, organisers are increasingly forced to turn to five-star hotels, an option that remains inaccessible for many small and medium enterprises.

Prabhat Rimal, CEO of Vogue Ad and Event Management, stated that the government's neglect of exhibition infrastructure had persisted for years. "The government has been indifferent about exhibition centres," Rimal said. "In Nepal, there is only one government-run exhibition centre, Bhrikuti Mandap, and it has very limited facilities."

According to Rimal, the problems are visible and persistent, from parking shortages and outdated technology to limited exhibition space. During the monsoon, water leakage disrupts stalls and damages materials, while exhibitors frequently complain about insufficient toilets, poor waste management and ageing electrical systems.

"These are not small issues. They directly affect the credibility of exhibitions and the experience of both exhibitors and visitors," he said.

Rimal stressed that exhibitions were not merely commercial events aimed at selling products. They are a crucial component of MICE tourism -- meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions, a sector that globally generates high-value tourism revenue. "MICE tourism has huge potential to bring revenue to the country," he said. "International conventions and exhibitions attract delegates from Asia, Europe and the rest, who stay for days, spend money and promote the destination." Yet Nepal has largely failed to tap into this opportunity.

Over time, Bhrikuti Mandap, once envisioned as a national exhibition hub, has increasingly taken on the character of a permanent marketplace rather than a professional venue for exhibitions and conferences.

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UML HAS NEVER SHIED AWAY FROM POLLS: OLI

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Jan. 10

Chairman of CPN-UML, KP Sharma Oli, has said that his party has never shied away from democratic elections, but stressed that elections cannot meet their true objective unless they are held in a free, fair and fear-free environment.

Addressing a meeting of the party's Central Committee on Saturday, Oli argued that the government has failed to create a conducive atmosphere for the general election slated for March 5.

He said the very essence of an election lies in an environment free from fear, which, according to him, has not been ensured under the current circumstances.

Oli pointed out that more than 5,000 prisoners who escaped after the vandalism on September 9 are still at large, while over 700 looted modern weapons and thousands of bullets have yet to be recovered.

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NC leaders in marathon talks before Special Convention

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Jan. 10

The Nepali Congress is heading into a decisive moment as its second Special General Convention is all set to begin on Sunday amid open resistance from party president Sher Bahadur Deuba and other leaders from the establishment faction. The convention, called by General Secretaries Gagan Kumar Thapa and Bisho Prakash Sharma, is being organised based on signatures from a majority of elected general convention delegates.

As preparations for the Special General Convention moved ahead, senior Nepali Congress leaders held consultations in an effort to reach a consensus. Party President Sher Bahadur Deuba met President Ramchandra Paudel, during which they discussed contemporary political issues as well as internal disputes within the Congress.

Separately, President Deuba, Acting President Purna Bahadur Khadka, and leader Dr. Shekhar Koirala held discussions on issues related to the proposed special general convention and the two-tier leadership–cadre alignment. Joint General Secretary Jeevan Pariyar, leader Dr. Minendra Rijal and central member Bal Krishna Khand also participated in the discussions.

Following announcements by General Secretaries Gagan Kumar Thapa and Bishwo Prakash Sharma, both supporters of the special general convention, that preparations had reached the final stage, senior leaders intensified dialogue to find a middle path.

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Poverty rate above national average in more than half of local levels

BY LAXMAN KAFLE
Kathmandu, Jan. 10

The significant disparities continue to exist in degree of poverty across Nepal's local levels and districts, according to the Small Area Estimation of Poverty, 2023 released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) on Friday.

The report shows that out of 753 local levels, 309 have poverty rates lower than the national average of 20.27 per cent, while 444 local levels have poverty levels above the national figure.

The NSO estimated poverty at the micro level by analysing data from the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) and the national population census



using the Small Area Estimation (SAE) method. The latest NLSS, its fourth edition, was conducted in 2022/23 and published in 2023/24. According to the survey, 20.27 per cent of Nepal's population currently lives below the poverty line, marking a significant improvement compared to previous report made public in 2011.

The poverty line has been defined as an annual per capita expenditure of Rs. 72,908. In contrast, during 2011, the poverty line was set at Rs. 19,261 per capita per year.

It has been observed that 18.34 per cent of the population in urban areas and 24.66 per cent in rural areas are living under poverty.

Provincially, the highest poverty rate is in the Sudurpashchim Province and the lowest in Gandaki Province.

Poverty alleviation in Nepal is a major social issue and a priority for all three levels of government.

For its implementation, poverty data at the local level is required. To meet this need, the National Statistical Office has estimated poverty data for 77 districts and 753 local levels using the Small Area Estimation (SAE) method, which is widely used in the country.

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BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold	: Rs. 267,800/-
Worked Gold	: NA
Silver	: 4,780/-

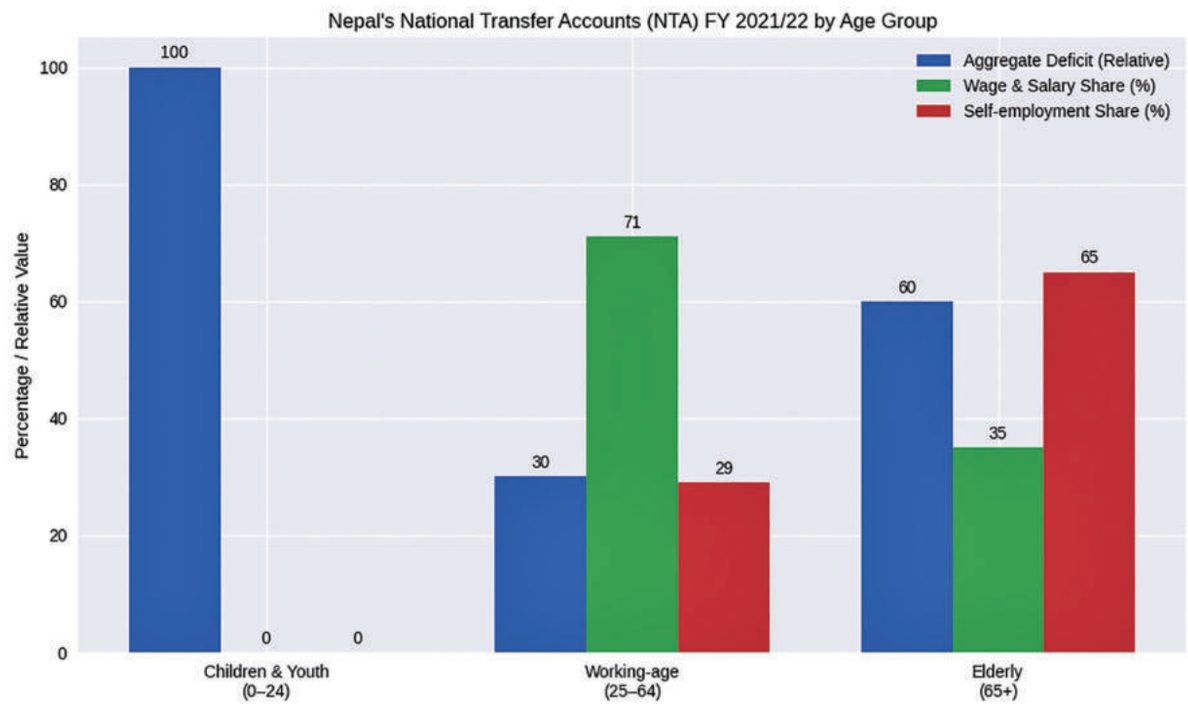
STOCK

NEPSE	: 2,640.54
Total Amount	: 4,908,094,092.74
No. of Share	: 10,431,760

Nepal records Rs. 1.53 trillion life-cycle deficit, NTA study finds

Life-cycle surplus among individuals aged 27 to 46 years

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Jan. 10



Nepal faces a significant imbalance between labour income and consumption, with the country recording a total life-cycle deficit of Rs. 1,527,219 million in Fiscal Year 2021/22, according to the country's first National Transfer Account (NTA) estimates.

The National Transfer Accounts estimates for fiscal year 2021/22 focusing on lifetime deficit analysis made public by National Statistics Office (NSO) on Friday clearly demonstrate the economic implications of demographic change.

An examination of age-specific consumption and labour income indicates that from birth to age 26, consumption exceeds labour income, resulting in a life-cycle deficit.

The estimates show a life-cycle surplus among individuals aged 27 to 46 years, while substantial life-cycle deficits are observed among younger and older age groups.

Beyond age 47, consumption again exceeds labour income, leading to a renewed life-cycle deficit. The maximum per capita deficit occurs at age 87.

The total life-cycle deficit amounts to Rs. 1,527,219 million, reflecting a significant imbalance between labour income and consumption.

Overall, individuals in Nepal experience an average life-cycle surplus for only about 20 years of their lifetime, with deficits prevailing during the remaining years. These deficits must therefore be financed through asset reallocation or private and public transfers.

This report presents life-cycle accounts on both per capita and aggregate bases.

For analytical purposes, the population is grouped into three broad age categories: children and youth (0–24 years), working-age population (25–64 years), and older population (65 years and above).

In Fiscal Year 2021/22, the life-cycle deficit is lowest among the 25-64 age group, although this group does not appear to generate sufficient savings.

The highest per capita life-cycle deficit is observed among individuals aged 65 years and above, while the largest aggregate deficit is found in the 0–24 age group. Per capita consumption is highest in the 25–64 age group and lowest in the 0–24 age group.

The highest per capita life-cycle deficit is recorded among the elderly, peaking at age 87, while the largest aggregate deficit is found among children and youth aged 0–24 years. Although 65 per cent of Nepal's population falls within the working-age group (15–64 years), total labour income remains lower than total consumption.

The effective utilisation of this potential requires strategic policy interventions.

The labour force participation rate stands at only 38.5 per cent, while youth unemployment is 12.7 per cent. These conditions highlight the urgent need to expand skills development and employment creation programmes.

Per capita labour income stands at approximately Rs. 87,814, with 69 per cent derived from wages and salaries and 31 per cent from self-employment.

High unemployment and underemployment have widened the gap between income and consumption.

The study also highlights sharp disparities in public and private spending. Per capita private consumption is significantly higher than public consumption across most age groups.

In the health sector, per capita public consumption exceeds private consumption, and across all age groups, government health consumption is higher than private health consumption.

However, in the education sector, per capita public consumption is substantially lower than private consumption, indicating the need to strengthen public efforts in human capital development, said the report.

In Fiscal Year 2021/22, per capita total labour income is approximately Rs. 87,814. Of total labour income, around 69 per cent comes from wages and salaries, while approximately 31 per cent is derived from self-employment.

By age group, the share of wage and salary income is highest (71 per cent) among individuals aged 25–64 years and lowest (35 per cent) among those aged 65 years and above.

Through the insights derived from National Transfer Accounts, Nepal can establish a strong foundation for ensuring intergenerational economic stability and sustainable, inclusive development, said the report.

SKBLBS TO OFFER 14.25% BONUS SHARES TO SHAREHOLDERS

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Jan. 10

Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Limited (SKBLBS) has decided to distribute a 14.25 per cent bonus share to its shareholders.

The decision was made by the microfinance's 24th Annual General Meeting (AGM), held in Kathmandu on Friday.

The meeting approved a proposal to provide shareholders with a 14.25 per cent bonus share as a return on investment, along with a 0.75 per cent cash dividend for tax purposes. The institution also reaffirmed its commitment to further expanding its business in the coming days in order to deliver higher returns.

The financial institution has 1,463 partner organisations affiliated across 546 local levels in all 77 districts of the country. These affiliated cooperative institutions have mobilised and utilised internal capital amounting to Rs. 88.84 billion. By the end of the fiscal year 2024/25, the institution had successfully extended microfinance services to a total of 941,731 small farmer households.

Of these, Dalits account for 10.92 per cent, ethnic communities 42.21 per cent, and others 46.87 per cent, while women's participation stands at 82 per cent, the institution claimed.

In fiscal year 2024/25, Sana Kisan's paid-up capital reached Rs. 4.31 billion, while total assets stood at Rs. 41.50 billion. Chief Executive Officer Bashu Adhikari said that earnings per share of the company stood at Rs. 20.29, book net worth per share at Rs. 239.38, return on total capital at 8.48 per cent, the price–earnings ratio at 43.40, and the capital adequacy ratio at 16.02 per cent.

He added that by mid-July 2025, the institution had invested Rs. 23.01 billion and recovered loans worth Rs. 24.84 billion from its affiliated institutions, while outstanding loans amounted to Rs. 35.90 billion.

With loan support from the government, the institution has been implementing a concessional livestock and vegetable farming credit programme for the past 15 years.

Baitadi among 10 poorest districts with unexploited resources

BY GOKARNA DAYAL
Baitadi, Jan. 10

Despite being rich in mineral resources, including phosphorite and iron ore, Baitadi district has been listed among Nepal's ten poorest districts, with two of its local governments also ranking among the country's ten poorest local units.

According to the Small Area Estimation of Poverty Report 2024 released by the National Statistics Office, Baitadi, along with Sigas Rural Municipality and Shivanath Rural Municipality, falls within the list of the ten poorest districts and ten poorest local governments nationwide.

While Nepal's average poverty line stands at 20.27 per cent, Baitadi's poverty rate is significantly higher at 48.65 per cent.

Shivanath Rural Municipality has a poverty rate of 64.07 per cent, while Sigas Rural Municipality records an even higher rate of 66.87 per cent.

The report states that Baitadi district has 49,405 households with a total population of 241,423. Of these, 117,463 people, nearly half of the population, are living below the poverty line.

Among the ten poorest local governments in the country, the two rural municipalities in Baitadi are facing particularly severe hardship. In Sigas Rural Municipality, 14,587 people, 66.87 per cent of its total population of 21,814, are living in poverty.

Similarly, in Shivanath Rural Municipality, 11,573 people, or 64.07 per cent of its population of 18,064, are below the poverty line.

Ironically, Sigas Rural Municipality is considered rich in natural resources, particularly medicinal herbs. The area includes the Sigas Protected Forest, iron ore deposits, slate, and stone quarries.

Shivanath Rural Municipality hosts Sudurpashchim Province's largest community forest, Amargadhi Community Forest, and stone mines renowned for producing grinding stones, millstones and tools used for traditional water mills. However, these resources remain largely unutilised.

The report states that people living below the poverty line are unable to meet minimum living standards, including adequate food and clothing, access to education and healthcare, recreational activities and basic services and facilities.

Five districts from Sudurpashchim among poorest

Five districts and six local governments from Sudurpashchim Province are among the ten poorest in the country. The districts include Baitadi, Achham, Doti, Bajura and Bajhang.

Among the ten poorest local governments, Shivanath and Sigas rural municipalities of Baitadi, Dhakari Rural Municipality and Kamalbazar Municipality of Achham, Shikhar Municipality of Doti, and Triveni Municipality of Bajura are facing poverty rates ranging from 65 to 70 per cent.

Similarly, Junichaande Rural Municipality of Jajarkot and Soru Rural Municipality of Mugu in Karnali Province, Raksirang Rural Municipality of Makwanpur in Bagmati Province and Krishnanagar Municipality of Kapilvastu in Lumbini Province are also listed among the ten local governments with the highest poverty rates.

Eight mines left idle

Several mineral deposits in Baitadi remain abandoned. Iron ore deposits located in Sungarkhal, Sigas Rural Municipality–1 and Purchaudi Municipality, while phosphorite deposits are found in Dogadakedar Rural Municipality.

Deposits of medicinal herbs are located in Gwallek of Dasharathchand Municipality and shilajit is found at Maura cliff in Jhulaghat.

In addition, Sigas Rural Municipality has deposits of iron, slate and stone, while Shivanath Rural Municipality has stone mines used for producing traditional grinding and milling tools. However, detailed studies and commercial utilisation have yet to take place.

According to records of the former District Development Committee, gold and uranium are believed to be present in the Chameliya River, which flows along Dilasaini Rural Municipality. Although the Department of Mines and Geology conducted a detailed study of the phosphorite deposits, industrial extraction has not begun.

In Malladehi of Purchaudi Municipality's Kalidhunga area, more than 400 pits dug by locals to extract iron ore some 30 years ago are still visible. Since these mines remain unused, they have reportedly been used as dumping sites for waste and dead livestock.

As FMTC stops purchase, Banke farmers selling rice at low prices



BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Nepalgunj, Jan. 10

Although 160,000 tonnes of paddy was produced in Banke this year, the Food Management and Trading Company Limited (FMTC), Nepalgunj, purchased only 20,000 quintals from farmers.

The company has stopped procurement after purchasing 20,294 quintals, slightly exceeding its fixed quota of 20,000 quintals.

According to the Agricultural Knowledge Centre, Banke, a total of 1.6 million quintals of paddy were produced in the district this year.

Farmers complain that the government has created serious difficulties by purchasing only 20,000 quintals in a district with such high production.

Bijay Barma, a farmer from Janaki Rural Municipality–5, said he was worried that his production costs would not be recovered as he was forced to sell paddy at low price in the open market after the FMTC refused to buy from most farmers, citing the quota had been met.

He said that although he had received a token to sell paddy, it was returned when he reached the purchase centre, with officials saying the quota had already been met. As a result, he had no option but to sell at a cheaper rate in the market.

Similarly, Siyaram Yadav, another farmer from Janaki Rural Municipality–5, said he was concerned about how to sell his produce if the government failed to purchase it.

He said that traders were buying paddy at prices far below the government's minimum support price, making it difficult for farmers to recover their costs.

Ram Avtar Maurya, a leading farmer from Duduwa Rural Municipality–2, said that the government's failure to procure paddy had allowed traders to purchase it arbitrarily at prices well below the minimum support price.

He said traders had earlier offered up to Rs. 2,500 per quintal, but after the FMTC stopped procurement, prices dropped to around Rs. 2,000 per quintal.

Likewise, Ramkaran Pal, a farmer from Janaki Rural Municipality–6, said the government was merely putting up a drama by purchasing a very small quantity of paddy, forcing many farmers to sell their produce cheaply.

He warned that if the situation continued, it might become impossible for farmers to cultivate paddy from next year.

The government had fixed the minimum support price of coarse paddy at Rs. 3,463.81 per quintal and medium quality paddy at Rs. 3,628.33 per quintal.

However, traders have been purchasing paddy at prices up to Rs. 1,500 below the support price, leaving farmers worried that their costs will not be recovered.

Ram Sharan Lamichhane, Chief of the Food Management and Trading Company Limited, Nepalgunj, said the quota for purchasing paddy in Banke had been fixed at 20,000 quintals and that procurement was halted after the quota was fulfilled, as no additional quota had been allocated.

He said that 721 farmers came to sell paddy this year with recommendations from local authorities, but paddy was purchased only from 536 farmers after the quota was met.

Humla's honey sales hit Rs. 45 million



PHOTO: RAJAN RAWAT

Honey produced in Humla being packed for sale.

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Humla, Jan. 10

Honey sales in the Himalayan district of Humla have reached Rs. 45 million this year, with a total production of 22,500 kg and already largely sold.

According to Chudamani Panta, chief of the Agriculture Development Office in the district, farmers across the district produced 22.5 tonnes of honey in the last fiscal year 2024/25 and earned approximately Rs. 45 million by selling most of it.

Honey in Humla is sold at around Rs. 2,000 per kg. The total production came from 2,775 beehives. Panta said honey production has increased compared to the previous year.

He added that most farmers were successful in selling their produce, with a large portion of the honey supplied outside the district to markets in Surkhet, Nepalgunj, Pokhara and Kathmandu.

Although honey is produced in all seven rural municipalities of the district, farmers say Chankheli, Sarkegad, Kharpunath, Simkot and Namkha rural municipalities produce higher quantities as well as better-quality honey. Local honey trader Gorkha Bohara said he alone managed to sell honey worth Rs. 1 million this year, compared to Rs. 400,000 in the previous year.

Farmers who traditionally produced honey from only a few beehives have gradually begun shifting towards commercial beekeeping. Data from the Agriculture Development Office show that some farmers have now started maintaining up to 50 beehives. Officials say this reflects a growing mindset among farmers that honey production can be a reliable source of income. In the previous fiscal year 2022/23, the district produced 20.5 tonnes of honey.

Karnali finalises policy on Raute

BY LALIT BASEL
Surkhet, Jan. 10



PHOTO: LALIT BASEL

Raute youths living in Lamana, Lekbesi Municipality-5, Surkhet.

The Karnali provincial government has prepared a Raute Policy to study, uplift, protect and support the development of the highly endangered Raute community.

The Raute community has been leading a nomadic life in the forests of the hilly districts of Karnali Province.

The policy, prepared by the Ministry of Social Development, has reached its final stage and has now been submitted to the Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers.

Ghanashyam Bhandari, Minister for Social Development of Karnali Province, said the provincial government has been working for nearly a decade to understand their way of life and improve their living conditions while helping them gradually integrate into society.

A task force formed by the ministry prepared the policy, which will be implemented after completing the remaining formal procedures, he said.

According to Minister Bhandari, the Raute Policy is an important document that aims to protect the community while preserving its cultural heritage.

The policy gives priority to establishing a "Raute Corridor". Based on data from the past 10 years on where the Raute have travelled and stayed, areas most frequently used by the community have been identified.

Studies showed that the Raute mostly live in Surkhet, Achham, Dailekh and Jajarkot districts, while they had earlier travelled as far as Doti and Dang. These districts have been included in the proposed Raute Corridor.

The policy also covers the Raute language, traditional dress, skills and security. It recognises their craftsmanship as exemplary and includes provisions to market products made by the Raute. Their traditional attire will also be preserved in museums.

Minister Bhandari said the policy, now in the final stage, will contribute significantly to the overall skill development, security, upliftment and conservation of the Raute community.

Preparations for citizenship distribution

Meanwhile, preliminary work has begun to provide citizenship certificates to members of the Raute community. Gurans Rural Municipality in Dailekh, which has already issued identity cards recognising the Raute as permanent residents, has started preparations for citizenship distribution.

Rural municipality chairperson Top Bahadur BC said the District Administration Office in Dailekh had earlier initiated the process, but it was halted as a Cabinet decision is required.

He urged the Ministry of Social Development to take the lead, stating that citizenship would help register the Raute formally and ensure access to services and protection.

As the Raute population is declining, BC said citizenship is necessary to register them and provide state services and protection. However, the Raute community has so far been reluctant to accept citizenship, maintaining that they prefer a forest-based, nomadic life without permanent homes or formal education.

Parties recommend FPTP candidate for Jajarkot

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Jajarkot, Jan. 10

Political parties have stepped up efforts to recommend candidates for the first-past-the-post seat in Jajarkot ahead of the House of Representatives (HoR) election scheduled for March 5.

Major parties, including the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, Nepali Communist Party and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), have forwarded multiple names for consideration. Jajarkot has only one constituency for the House of Representatives.

The Nepali Congress and CPN-UML have recommended five candidates for one seat, while the Nepali Communist Party has recommended six candidates, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party has recommended two and the CPN (Maoist) has recommended one.

In total, around 19 names have been recommended after district-level party leadership struggled to reach consensus on a single candidate.

The Nepali Congress has recommended Mukti Prasad Acharya, Khadga Bahadur Budha, Mahendra Bahadur Shah, Main Karki and Ramjung Shah.

UML has recommended the names of Niraj Acharya, Dambar Bahadur Singh, Ganesh Bahadur Thapa, Kaushila Khatri and Narayan Ghati.

From the Nepali Communist Party, Shakti Bahadur Basnet, Ramdip Acharya, Ganesh Prasad Singh, Krishna Bahadur Budha, Mahesh Adhikari and Parbati Thapa have been recommended. Similarly, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party has forwarded the names of its central chair Rajendra Lingden and Krishna Bikram Shah, while the CPN (Maoist) has recommended Paurakh Malla as its sole candidate.

Following the submission of recommendations, party leaders and cadres have become busy lobbying central leaders to secure tickets. As many leaders and activists have left the district to pursue their candidacies at the central level, Jajarkot's district headquarters and villages have appeared unusually quiet.

Although the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) has gained momentum in urban centres across the country, it has yet to make a visible impact in Jajarkot, according to local observers.

Locals have begun speculating that the election could become particularly competitive if parties contest independently without forming alliances. In the previous election, the Nepali Congress emerged first in the proportional representation vote in Jajarkot, followed by CPN-UML in second place and the then CPN (Maoist Centre), now the Nepali Communist Party, in third.

Locals say the Gen Z movement's impact has been minimal in geographically remote districts like Jajarkot.

With around two months remaining until polling day, election-related discussions have become common at roadside stalls, tea shops and public gathering points across towns and villages.

Many young voters say they plan to support candidates who can prioritise and address the everyday problems faced by the people.

Gulmi's youths to construct lake at Ridi

BY TOPLAL ARYAL
Resunga, Jan. 10

Local youths of Gulmi's Ruru area have started constructing a lake at Ridi by diverting the river's flow.

Eight local youths are working to construct a permanent lake with their own investment of Rs. 10 million. The youths plan to operate boating services from the upcoming Maghe Sankranti fair.

As the lake is being developed by blocking the river stretch from Ridi Bridge to Tinmukhe Bridge, there is a temporary plan to operate two jet boats, each with a capacity of 11 people.

Businessman Rabi Lal Pantha, one of the investors in the project, said there are plans to build a permanent lake with an RCC dam next year.

According to Pantha, the lake will measure 400 metres in length, 60 metres in width, and four metres in depth in the initial phase. He added that an environmental impact assessment has already been conducted by Ruru Tal Ridi Adventure Pvt. Ltd.

Ruru Dham, located at the confluence of Gulmi, Palpa, and Syangja districts, is a well-known religious site. Religious tourists who come to bathe in the Kaligandaki River and visit the Krishikesh Temple fill the area daily.

> Rurukshetra connects the country's main Kaligandaki and Madan Bhandari highways. Nepal's first model three-arch bridge has been constructed at Ruru Dham, connecting Rurukshetra Rural Municipality–1, Ridi in Gulmi; Kaligandaki Rural Municipality–1 in Syangja; and Tansen Municipality–14 in Palpa.

Especially during Maghe Sankranti, a large number of pilgrims from different parts of the country, as well as from India, visit Ruru Dham. In recent years, the site has been promoted from both religious and tourism perspectives.

Rurukshetra connects the country's main Kaligandaki and Madan Bhandari highways. Nepal's first model three-arch bridge has been constructed at Ruru Dham, connecting Rurukshetra Rural Municipality–1, Ridi in Gulmi; Kaligandaki Rural Municipality–1 in Syangja; and Tansen Municipality–14 in Palpa.

Sundar Kasaju, a young businessman from Rurukshetra Rural Municipality–1, Ridi, said that infrastructure developments, including the two major highways, Ruru Dham, Tinmukhe Bridge, Krishikesh Temple, and Hanuman Garden, have boosted local enthusiasm and increased the number of foreign tourists.

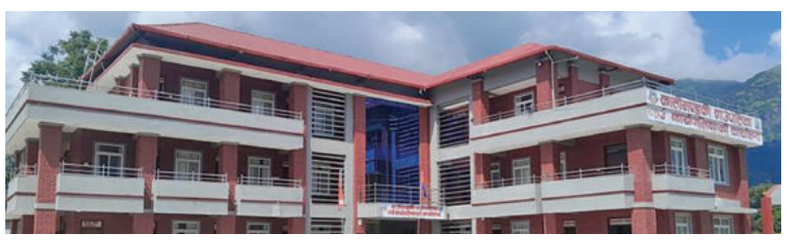
Commercial activities in the area are also increasing. The Kaligandaki Corridor has connected Ruru Dham with Lumbini, Palpa, and Mustang, leading to the operation of standard hotels in the Ridi area.

As the Syangja region holds significant importance in terms of indigenous identity, art, and culture, there is considerable potential for economic growth through the operation of homestays as tourist numbers rise.

Yadu Gyawali, Chief of Rurukshetra Rural Municipality, said temporary structures are currently being constructed through private investment as legal procedures related to the lake are still unclear. He added that since the youths' initiative will promote tourism through adventure sports, discussions will be held regarding permanent structures and legal matters.

An agreement has also been reached to build a zipline near Ruru Dham, connecting Rurukshetra Rural Municipality with Kaligandaki Rural Municipality of Syangja. Gyawali said preparatory work is underway on land acquisition and operational modalities.

Kaligandaki to provide Rs. 4,000 incentive for third child



BY ARJUN KAFLE
Syangja, Jan. 10

As Nepal begins to feel the impact of a slowing population growth rate, a rural municipality in Syangja has introduced a policy that reflects a growing national concern.

Kaligandaki Rural Municipality in Syangja has announced a monthly security allowance of Rs. 4,000 for families who give birth to a third child, as part of efforts to address the declining population growth rate.

The local government said the decision aims to curb the falling birth rate, encourage positive attitudes towards having children, maintain long-term population balance and implement nutrition-friendly local governance.

According to Chief Administrative Officer Bhesh Raj Acharya, the allowance will be provided to eligible families in line with the Procedure for Providing Financial Assistance to Families with Three Children, 2025.

Families meeting the prescribed criteria will receive Rs. 4,000 per month for up to two years.

Municipality Chair Khim Bahadur Thapa said that although the traditional belief is that "two children are a blessing from God", the municipality introduced the policy to counter the declining birth rate.

As per the procedure, families permanently residing within Kaligandaki Rural Municipality, who give birth to a third child after mid-July 2025 (Shrawan 2082 BS onwards), are eligible to apply.

Applicants must submit a request to the concerned ward office along with the required documents.

The municipality has requested citizenship certificates of the parents, birth registration certificates of all three children, a marriage registration certificate and a migration certificate in cases where the family has relocated.

The municipality also stated that the child must be born at a health institution listed by the government.

MYAGDI TO MOBILISE 861 ELECTION POLICE PERSONNEL

BY THAKUR PRASAD ACHARYA
Myagdi, Jan. 10

A total of 861 election police personnel will be mobilised for the upcoming election to the House of Representatives scheduled for March 5 (Falgun 21).

The Election Police Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Committee, Myagdi, has initiated the necessary process for recruiting election police personnel to be deployed during the election.

Applications for election police positions can be submitted from January 9 to January 15.

According to Kul Prasad Acharya, Assistant District Officer at the District Administration Office, Myagdi, and recruitment forms can be obtained from the Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force offices in Galeshwor.

Assistant Chief District Officer Acharya informed that the recruitment has been opened with a salary of Rs. 34,776 for a deployment period of 40 days.

He further stated that if any mental or other health-related problems are detected after 20 days of enrolment, personnel will receive benefits according to their service period, including transportation and food allowances, accident insurance, and other facilities.

Senior journalist Dahal passes away



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Jan 10

Senior journalist and political activist Homnath Dahal has passed away. He died on Saturday morning while being taken to Bir Hospital for his Maitdevi residence. He was 84.

Born on November 10, 1941, in Baruneshwor, Okhaldhunga, Dahal was a renowned political activist and writer.

He contributed through his writings to the right to freedom of expression during the Panchayat Regime. Dahal also served as the chairman and general manager of the Gorkhapatra Corporation.

During the Panchayat Regime, he was arrested repeatedly and spent about three years in jail for raising voice in favour of press freedom through Rastra Pukar Weekly.

A leader of Nepali Congress, he was appointed Minister for Agriculture and Cooperation in the Sher Bahadur Deuba-led government in 2004.

Similarly, he also served as the spokesperson of the then Nepali Congress (Democratic) party.

He was cremated at Pashupati Aryaghat on Saturday. Nepali Congress General Secretaries Gagan Kumar Thapa and Bishwo Prakash Sharma and leader Dr. Minendra Rijal reached Aryghat and paid final tribute to Dahal.

He is survived by his wife and two sons.

Relocation begins after landslide kills 10 in Bisauna



PHOTO: TOPLAL ARYAL

Landslide survivors of Tham Bisauna, Musikot Municipality-1, receiving land ownership certificates.

BY TOPLAL ARYAL
Resunga (Gulmi), Jan. 10

The process of relocating a settlement has begun in Tham Bisauna of Musikot Municipality-1 after 10 people lost their lives in landslides. Residents have been displaced since last year following repeated landslides in the area.

According to local records, 10 people were killed in landslides in Bisauna from 2007 to 2024. As the entire village remains at high risk, families were forced to leave their homes.

To resettle displaced families in a safer location, Musikot Municipality has initiated the relocation process within Tham Ward No. 1. Under a 50-50 cost-sharing arrangement between the municipality and the beneficiaries, nine ropani and 15 aana of land near Thamdanda have been purchased, and land ownership certificates have been distributed.

Mayor of Musikot Municipality Jivlal Kharel 'Jiwan' said the relocation process is moving forward and that the municipality is now focusing on housing and livelihoods.

He said coordination would be made with higher levels of government for housing construction, and if that is not possible, the municipality would take the lead itself. He urged beneficiaries not to lose hope, noting that they had only recently secured land in a safe area after a year and a half.

Beneficiaries have contributed between Rs. 100,000 and Rs. 150,000 each, depending on plot size. A total of Rs. 3.5 million was spent to purchase the land, shared equally by the municipality and beneficiaries, said Pratima KC, a local and member of the municipal executive. KC said the municipality has been arranging rented accommodation for 15 displaced households since last year.

Landslide survivor Fulmati BK said her family urgently needs a permanent home. Her five-member family has been living in others' houses for a year and a half since leaving the village.

With their shelter and farmland in different places, daily life has become difficult. Although she managed to borrow money to pay for the land, she said there is still uncertainty over who will build the house.

Ward Chairperson Anand Shrestha of Musikot Municipality-1 said the steep slopes and weak soil had forced repeated displacement in the past. Although 20 to 22 households were at risk of displacement, land has currently been managed only for 15 families.

He said some could not arrange the required 50 per cent contribution, while others were living elsewhere, making it difficult to include everyone in the process. He added that many Dalit settlements in the district are situated in hazardous and challenging terrain, making them highly vulnerable to landslides.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

He who has health, has hope; and he who has hope, has everything.
- Thomas Carlyle

EDITORIAL

Poll Preparations Intensify

Recent activities of the government, the Election Commission (EC), and other stakeholders have heated up the election environment across the country, ending all speculation about whether the House of Representatives (HoR) elections scheduled for March 5 will be held. All political parties, including the CPN-UML, are well prepared for the elections by submitting the closed lists of their candidates to be elected under the proportionate representation (PR) category and picking candidates to contest the elections under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system.

Of the 275 members of the HoR, 110 are elected under the PR category and 165 through the FPTP system. Likewise, the EC has made all preparations to hold the elections within the stipulated timeframe. It is now working to enforce the election code of conduct, while the police force has already initiated the process to recruit election police.

The code of conduct will probably come into effect from the third week of this month, and the state stakeholders, including the political parties, should abide by it to ensure the polls are conducted in a free and fair manner. On the one hand, the code of conduct does not allow them to engage in provocative activities, which could affect the election results; on the other hand, it creates grounds for credible elections. The code helps create a peaceful environment so that the legitimate voters can exercise their franchise without fear. It prevents the political parties and their candidates from resorting to illegal activities to influence the voters.

The role of the government is, no doubt, to facilitate the EC to complete the election process. Moreover, the main goal of the present government, formed after the Gen Z movement in September last year, is to hold the elections to the HoR within six months, and it has left no stone unturned to accomplish the task. Prime Minister Sushila Karki, the other day, showed concerns about the preparations being made by the EC to hold the elections. She held a consultative meeting with the EC officials along with her cabinet ministers. According to a news report published by this daily the other day, the meeting focused on the election code of conduct.

The EC officials have also briefed the media on the updated progress. According to them, the EC has started printing sample ballots to promote voter education for the upcoming elections. Of these, half a million ballots were printed for the PR election system, and the remaining half a million for the FPTP category. The EC has also started printing real ballots for the PR election system. According to EC, the ballot for the PR election system includes 58 symbols from the 64 parties that submitted closed lists. Approximately 20 million ballots for the PR system will be printed based on the number of voters.

Likewise, the EC has appointed Chief Election Officers and Returning Officers in all 77 districts. The newly appointed officials will be deployed in the concerned polling stations from January 16. Similarly, the EC officials have held dialogues with representatives from social media operating companies such as Meta and TikTok to discuss ways to prevent fake news, false accusations, and hate speech that could affect the election.

Similarly, the EC has issued letters to TikTok, X, and Meta this week regarding potential security issues on social media. The EC has also launched its Social Media Monitoring Tool to prevent the spread of false information and fake news during the election. All these activities show that significant progress has been made toward holding the polls on the scheduled date.

Embracing Prithvipath

GANESH P PAUDEL

It stands to reason why the US attacked Venezuela and abducted President Maduro. Even a layman understands that it was for political dominance and resource control. Be that as it may, we are not in a position to romanticise the situation and say, "Oh, poor Maduro has been abducted and the entire political system in Venezuela has been hijacked."

This is because Maduro himself may have been fooling his people by capitalising on narratives of "foreign intervention" and "safeguarding national interests," if the political history of the country is anything to go by.

So, where does the true solution lie? It lies with the Venezuelan people themselves, who need to turn to the lessons taught by their own history and choose their government accordingly. Does this sound too vague? National reconciliation, however obscure or impossible it may seem at first, is just the ticket for our country because we have tried everything else without success.

Humans, after all, can learn from history—just as Japan did when it rose from the ashes of the Second World War. It is national reconciliation and a broader sense of fraternity that helped Japan come this far in terms of development.

Our country, too, stands at a similar crossroads, where we are at our wits' end as to which course of action to follow next. We see a prosperous Nepal at the end of the tunnel, yet no bankable leader is here to usher us to it. Those who claim to possess the mantle of leadership are the very ones with dismal track records. This inherent dearth of charismatic leadership has been paralysing the country ever since the dawn of democracy some seventy-five years ago.

The new political forces that have emerged are wreathed in dubious attributes. We cannot risk falling for the "trap" laid by these forces outright, yet people are equally unwilling to return to the devils they have known for decades, either. This leaves our country stagnating in a state of political limbo. What a catch-22 situation this is for us!

Elections, at this point in history, are not merely about exercising our right to vote but about preventing our votes from perpetuating the same cycle of hardship and poverty. The government, at best, has not made provisions for a "none of the above" option while casting votes. Such an option could have allowed us to officially gauge the political climate through a legitimate method, even though it might potentially further divide the nation.

Therefore, the surefire remedy lies in all Nepali people taking to the streets, carrying Nepali flags from their own homes, having eaten their own dal-bhat, and bringing the entire nation to a grinding halt infused with euphoria—without leaders, but with a single founding father of the nation, Prithvi Narayan Shah, in their hearts.

In this scenario, there will be no one left to protest or shout at. The whole nation is echoing the same epic voice carrying the words of patriotism in unison. Happy National Unity Day !

Maduro's Capture

Is Gunboat Diplomacy Back ?



Ritu Raj Subedi

Exactly thirty-six years after the US invaded Panama and captured its de facto ruler, General Manuel Noriega, it abducted the leader of another Latin American nation, Venezuela, on January 3, 2026. But the kidnapping of President Nicolas Maduro, the sitting President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and his wife Cilia Adela Flores, has delivered global shocks, triggering condemnations from both adversaries and allies of the US. The act of military aggression against another sovereign nation has blatantly violated international law and the UN Charter. It has effectively ditched the Westphalian system, which stipulates that each state has exclusive sovereignty over its territories and that no state should intervene in its internal affairs.

Under President Donald Trump, the US has apparently returned to gunboat diplomacy, widely executed in the 19th century, an age of imperialism, when naked power, coercion and military invasion characterised the foreign policy. Even the US Constitution does not allow its government or president to invade other nations at will. By attacking Venezuela, Trump, dead-set on implementing the 'Donroe doctrine', has unleashed new geopolitical warfare as the world is gradually inching towards a multipolar order. However blunt, impulsive and unpredictable, Trump did not mince words while disclosing the motive of assaulting Venezuela. He said he would 'run Venezuela' and the US oil companies would go there to spend money to take back the oil. "... frankly, we should have taken it back a long time ago. A lot of money is coming out of the ground," he said, adding that the companies will pay the cost of the military operation.

Mockery of democracy

The United States of America claims to represent a liberal order, democracy, and human rights. Is it the same America whose president rejoices in the kidnapping of an elected president of an independent nation for the sole purpose of extracting its natural resources? This sounds bizarre. Trump's move has sharply divided the US domestic politics, too. The democratic establishment was rocked by Trump's military adventure that killed at least 100 people in Venezuela. There is a chorus of condemnation from former vice president Kamala Harris and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer to Senator Bernie Sanders and New York's new Mayor Zohran Mamdani. Harris called the capture of Maduro and his wife 'unlawful and unwise.'

Sanders, a voice of the American working class, has said that Trump has, once again, shown his contempt for the Constitution and the rule of law. Schumer said, "The idea that Trump plans to now run Venezuela should strike fear in the hearts of all Americans." Mamdani has a stronger opposition to Trump's hegemonic action. "Unilaterally attacking a sovereign nation is an act of war and a violation of federal and international law," he said.

As Trump did not take the authorisation of Congress for the military blitz, the Senate has forwarded a bipartisan resolution to prevent him from carrying out further military action in Venezuela. Five Republican senators, including Rand Paul and Josh Hawley, have backed the measure. They became furious with

> Military superiority alone does not ensure the long-term success of an operation until it is backed by civilian support.

Trump when the latter, in a recent interview with the New York Times, asserted that only his "own morality" could limit his military actions in the world and that he doesn't "need international law." As the Republicans control both the Senate and the House of Representatives, it is unlikely that the motion will see the day. But it signifies the currents of tumultuous US politics and can be a reference point for its military behaviours abroad in the coming years.

The US attack on Venezuela bears broader geopolitical implications. Political scientist John Mearsheimer terms it a 'desperate act of an empire in decline'. A powerful hegemon has other tools – diplomatic persuasion and economic strength – to fulfil its interests. When its economic and soft powers weaken, military action becomes the final option for survival. Mearsheimer argues that Venezuela has become the first proxy battlefield for incumbent and rising superpowers in the multipolar setting. The US military action has set a 'dangerous precedent' in international relations but this has, at the same time, given diplomatic leverage to its adversaries, as its European allies – except for Spain, the Netherlands and Norway - have fudged their response to its egregious move.

Russia, China and Iran swiftly coordinated to denounce and isolate the US at the UN Security Council meeting, presenting themselves as the defender of international law, the principle of equal sovereignty and multilateralism. China has been investing in the UN and non-UN organisations for decades. This is now paying off as the US under Trump is withdrawing its support from them. Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs's roaring speech delivered to the Security Council on January 5 via video offers insight into the motives of the US's scores of military interventions in foreign countries in the past.

Principles of sovereignty

Meanwhile, Nepal's Foreign Ministry has called for fully respecting the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of states, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The statement is interpreted as an indirect rebuke to Trump's reckless military adventurism in Venezuela. Nepal urged to solve disputes peacefully through dialogue, diplomacy, and mutual understanding.

The US has demonstrated its military excellence, cyber capability and intelligence gathering while striking Venezuela and capturing its leader in the dead of night. However, military superiority alone does not ensure the long-term success of an operation until it is backed by civilian support. Hours after Maduro was taken to the US, Delcy Eloína Rodríguez was sworn in as the acting president of the country. The daughter of a Marxist leader, Rodriguez has now become an icon of resistance, foiling the US attempt at regime change. Hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets of Caracas against a US military attack and Maduro's abduction. This shows he still commands popular support at home, which challenges the US court to convict Maduro on narco-terrorism and other charges.

(The author is the Deputy Executive Editor of this daily.)

Acknowledging The Role Of Vitamin D



Dr. Shyam P Lohani

In recent times, Vitamin D, often known as the sunshine vitamin, has been a topic of discussion among healthcare professionals and the general public alike. It not only keeps our bones healthy but also plays different roles in our body physiology. It is an interesting paradox that even with abundant sunlight in many parts of the world, vitamin D deficiency has become a common occurrence. This paradox has raised several surprising issues regarding modern lifestyles, public health, and the relationship with nature.

Vitamin D is produced by our body when the skin is exposed to sunlight. Unlike other vitamins that should be obtained mainly through food, Vitamin D is unique in the sense that it links nutrition and environment. Theoretically, the deficiency of vitamin D should be exceptional in countries with abundant sunlight, but owing to modern lifestyles, it is becoming common in those countries as well. In fact, rapid urbanisation, indoor work culture, increasing air pollution, and excessive use of sunscreen have considerably reduced sun exposure to working people.

Role

Vitamin D helps our body absorb calcium. Calcium has a unique role in maintaining bone health. The deficiency of vitamin D causes a reduction in calcium absorption and leads to weak bones, rickets in children, and osteoporosis in adults. Even well-fed individuals can suffer from vitamin D deficiency, contrary to a common occurrence among poor people and people of old age. We should have strong bones to maintain independence in old age, have adequate mobility, and thus enjoy a better quality of life.

Moreover, vitamin D has a crucial role in regulating our immune system, which is necessary in fighting infections and reducing inflammation. Its importance was felt more during the COVID-19 pandemic when its role in the immune system and disease severity was explored. As a supportive nutrient, it shows how basic health foundations can have a significant influence against communicable diseases. Hence, it was found that it helps our body to fight against infections.

Vitamin D plays a role in our mental health as well. In regions where there is limited sunlight or long winters, a low level of vitamin D is associated with fatigue, depression, and mood disorders. The connection between sunlight, vitamin D, and emotional well-being is obvious among people suffering from seasonal affective disorder. This link deserves greater attention as mental health problems are rising.

Interestingly, public health awareness campaigns have also contributed to Vitamin D deficiency. The awareness campaigns rightly warn against excessive sun exposure and the risk of skin cancer. However, this message has led to sun avoidance or excessive use of sunblock. The cultural preferences for fair skin and cosmetic concerns have also exacerbated this trend, particularly in South Asian countries. This

> A balanced approach that involves adequate sun exposure, improving diets, using supplements prudently, and healthier living conditions can naturally fight vitamin D deficiency.

trend has led us to low exposure to sunlight, compromising our health.

There are limited dietary sources of vitamin D, which makes the issue more complicated. For non-vegetarians, sources of vitamin D can be from fatty fish, egg yolks, liver, and fortified foods. However, for many people, these foods can be expensive or not routinely consumed. The deficiency of vitamin D can be seen more often among vegetarians or vegans, as they have to rely on fortified foods for vitamin D. In countries where food fortification is not common, the risk of deficiency is even higher.

The simple solution for averting vitamin D deficiency is supplementation. The correct use of vitamin D through supplements is affordable and effective. However, excessive use may cause health problems such as calcium imbalance and kidney issues. Therefore, it is important to take vitamin D under medical guidance rather than self-medicate through supplements.

Vitamin D deficiency shows deeper systemic issues from a public health perspective. Rapid urbanisation that has limited open spaces, sedentary lifestyles that confine people indoors, air pollution that blocks sunlight, and a healthcare system that prioritises treatment over prevention have all contributed to the vitamin D deficiency. Therefore, addressing vitamin D deficiency requires lifestyle changes, policy interventions, and public awareness.

Adequate sun exposure

Even in countries like Nepal, where sunlight is plentiful, vitamin D deficiency is common. Traditional lifestyles, such as outdoor farming and physical activities, obviously ensure adequate sun exposure. However, when society becomes urban and sedentary, the exposure to sunlight diminishes. Healthy lifestyles, such as morning walks and outdoor activities, ensure adequate sun exposure that is necessary to get enough vitamin D.

Modern living has resulted in unwanted health consequences such as vitamin D deficiency. Although modernisation and urbanisation have improved many aspects of our lives, they have caused a reduction in our exposure to sunlight, and our body primarily depends on sunlight for the synthesis of vitamin D.

We should give more attention to vitamin D as it is essential for bone health, the immune system, mental well-being, and overall vitality. A balanced approach that involves adequate sun exposure, improving diets, using supplements prudently, and healthier living conditions can naturally fight vitamin D deficiency. Let us acknowledge the importance of vitamin D for a healthier and quality life ahead.

(Dr. Lohani is the clinical director at the Nepal Poison Information Centre. lohanis@gmail.com)

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

January 11, 1976

Second Amendment Welcomed

Kathmandu, Jan.10: More statements from panchas and intellectuals from different parts of the country are continuing to flow in here welcoming the second constitutional amendment promulgated by His Majesty King Birendra, reports RSS.

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READER'S MAIL

Need For Dog Sterilisation Campaign



I am writing to draw the attention of concerned authorities to the alarming rise in the population of community dogs and their pitiful condition in Gokarneshwor municipality. With each breeding season, the number of dogs multiplies in every street of the municipality, and without a home, many dogs and their pups often succumb to hunger, diseases, accidents, and human cruelty.

Spaying and neutering dogs is the most humane and effective way of reducing the number of dogs on the streets. It not only helps in controlling the surge in population, but also helps to prevent the canines from being victims of uterine infections, ovarian tumors, and testicular cancers. Additionally, public health also benefits from the sterilization of the dogs, as it is easier to eradicate zoonotic diseases like rabies since fewer strays take less resources and effort to vaccinate.

While our neighbour, the Kathmandu Metropolitan City, has already acknowledged the problems that come with the population growth of dogs and initiated a sterilising campaign for dogs, which has to date sterilized thousands of dogs in the metropolitan area, Gokarna falls short on this approach. As a result, underfunded animal rescue organisations have to take responsibility for the well-being of countless dogs. Relying solely on animal activists and NGOs for this issue, without the government offering any assistance, reflects poorly on the governing bodies' sense of responsibility. Therefore, we strongly urge the municipality to launch a community dog sterilisation campaign.

Ojaswi Kapali
Gokarna

TAILPIECE

A guy walks into a post office one day to see a middle-aged, balding man standing at the counter methodically placing "Love" stamps on bright pink envelopes with hearts all over them. He then takes out a perfume bottle and starts spraying scent all over them.

His curiosity getting the better of him, he goes up to the balding man and asks him what he is doing. The man says, "I'm sending out 1,000 Valentine cards signed, 'Guess who?'"

"But why?" asks the man.

"I'm a divorce lawyer," the man replies.

Russia deploys new missile in Ukraine



PHOTO: AP

A residential building burns after a Russian strike in Kyiv, Ukraine.

AP
Kyiv, Jan. 10

Russia bombarded Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles in a large-scale overnight attack, officials said Friday, killing at least four people in the capital.

For only the second time in the nearly 4-year-old war, it used a powerful, new hypersonic missile that struck western Ukraine in a clear warning to Kyiv's NATO allies.

The intense barrage and the launch of the nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile came days after Ukraine and its allies reported major progress toward agreeing on how to defend the country from further Moscow aggression if a U.S.-led peace deal is struck.

Europe's leaders condemned the attack as "escalatory and unacceptable," and the European Union's top foreign policy envoy said Russian President Vladimir Putin's reply to diplomacy was "more missiles and destruction."

The attack also coincides with a new chill in relations between Moscow and Washington after Russia condemned the U.S. seizure of an oil tanker in the North Atlantic.

It comes as U.S. President Donald Trump signaled he is on board with a hard-hitting sanctions package meant to economically cripple Moscow, which has given no public signal it is willing to budge from its maximalist demands on Ukraine. Ukrainian officials said four people were killed and at least 25 wounded in Kyiv as apartment buildings were struck overnight.

Those killed included an emergency medical aid worker, according to Kyiv City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko. Four doctors and one police officer were injured while responding to the attacks, authorities said.

About half of snowy Kyiv's apartment buildings — nearly 6,000 — were left without heat amid daytime temperatures of about minus 8 degrees Celsius (17.6 Fahrenheit), Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. Water supplies also were disrupted.

Municipal services restored power and heat to public facilities, including hospitals and maternity wards, using portable boiler units, he said.

The attack damaged the Qatari Embassy in Kyiv, according to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who noted that Qatar has played a key role in mediating the exchange of prisoners of war.

He called for a "clear response" from the international community, particularly from the U.S., which he said Russia takes seriously.

Ukraine's Security Service said it identified debris from the Oreshnik missile in the Lviv region in the country's west. It was fired from Russia's Kapustin Yar test range near the Caspian Sea in southwestern Russia and targeted civilian infrastructure, investigators said.

"I heard a loud, shocking explosion, and it's normal at this time of the war to hear these things here," said Lviv resident Kristofer Chokhovich, who said he was an American. "I just want everyone in the world to know that Ukraine is strong and we don't care how many missiles you send."

Another resident, Ulyana Fedun, described the attack as "very unpleasant" but not scary because "we've been living in this state for four years."

Russia's Defense Ministry said the attack was a retaliation to what Moscow claimed was a Ukrainian drone strike on one of Putin's residences last month. Both Trump and Ukraine rejected the Russian claim.

Moscow didn't say where the Oreshnik hit, but Russian media and military bloggers said it targeted an underground natural gas storage facility in the Lviv region. Western military aid flows to Ukraine from a supply hub in Poland just across the border.

Greenland rejects Trump's bid for US control



FILE PHOTO: AP

A view of houses in Nuuk, Greenland.

AP
Nuuk, Greenland Jan. 10

Greenland's party leaders have rejected President Donald Trump's repeated calls for the U.S. to take control of the island, saying that Greenland's future must be decided by its people.

"We don't want to be Americans, we don't want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders," Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen and four party leaders said in a statement Friday night.

Trump said again on Friday that he would like to make a deal to acquire Greenland, a semiautonomous region that's part of NATO ally Denmark, "the easy way." He said that if the U.S. doesn't own it, then Russia or China will take it over, and the U.S. does not want them as neighbors.

"If we don't do it the easy way, we're going to do it the hard way," Trump said, without explaining what that entailed. The White House said it is considering a range of options, including using military force, to acquire the island.

Greenland's party leaders reiterated that "Greenland's future must be decided by the Greenlandic people."

"As Greenlandic party leaders, we would like to emphasize once again our wish that the United States' contempt for our country ends," the statement said.

Officials from Denmark, Greenland and the United States met Thursday in Washington and will meet again next week to discuss the renewed push by the White House for the control of the island.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that an American takeover of Greenland would mark the end of NATO.

The party leaders' statement said that "the work on Greenland's future takes place in dialogue with the Greenlandic people and is prepared on the basis of international laws."

"No other country can interfere in this," they said. "We must decide the future of our country ourselves, without pressure for quick decision, delay or interference from other countries."

Rescuers detect life in deadly avalanche

AP
Manila, Jan. 10

Rescuers detected signs of life in an avalanche of garbage that killed at least four workers and left more than 30 others missing Thursday in a central Philippines landfill and plan to intensify search efforts, an official said Saturday.

Twelve workers have been rescued with injuries from the huge mound of garbage that collapsed among the low-slung buildings of a waste management facility in the village of Binaliw in Cebu City, authorities said.

Dozens of rescuers including police, firefighters and disaster-response personnel have raced against time to find more survivors in dangerous conditions in the rubble of twisted tin roofs, iron bars and combustible heaps of garbage and debris.

"Authorities confirmed the presence of detected signs of life in specific areas, requiring continued careful excavation and the deployment of a more advanced 50-ton crane, which is enroute with police escort," Cebu City Mayor Nestor Archival said in a statement.

"Safety of responders remains paramount due to hazards such as unstable debris and acetylene risks, prompting adjustments to the security perimeter and controlled access," Archival said.

The four dead, including an engineer and a female office worker, were all employees of the landfill and waste management facility with a staff of 110, according to the mayor and police.

The initial list of victims on Friday included two dead and 36 missing, which increased Saturday to four dead, according to Archival, who did not provide an updated nunber of people missing.

The cause of the collapse of the mountain of garbage remains unclear, but a survivor told The Associated Press on Friday that it happened in an instant without any warning despite fairly good weather at the time.

Jaylord Antigua, a 31-year-old office worker at the landfill, said the wall of garbage cascaded down and destroyed the administrative office he was in. He extricated himself with bruises on his face and arms by crawling in darkness in the rubble and debris.

NKorea accuses SKorea of flying drones

AP
Seoul, Jan. 10

North Korea's military accused South Korea of flying drones across the border between the nations this week, warning Saturday that South Korea will face consequences for its "unpardonable hysteria."

South Korea quickly denied the accusation. But the development is likely to further dim prospects for efforts by South Korea's liberal government to restore ties with North Korea.

North Korean forces used special electronic warfare assets on Sunday to bring down a South Korean drone flying over North Korea's border town.

The drone was equipped with two cameras that filmed unspecified areas, the General Staff of the North's Korean People's Army said in a statement carried by state media. South Korea infiltrated another drone into North Korean airspace on Sept. 27 before it was forced to crash following electronic strikes by North Korea, the statement said, adding that authorities found the drone also contained video data on major objects in North Korea.

"We strongly denounce the hooligans' serial outrageous encroachment upon our sovereignty and undisguised provocative acts against us," the North Korean statement said. "The ROK military warmongers will be surely forced to pay a dear price for their unpardonable hysteria."



PHOTO: AP

Kaepoong village seen from Ganghwa, South Korea, near the border with North Korea.

The ROK is the abbreviated form of the Republic of Korea, South Korea's official name. South Korea's Defense Ministry said it did not operate drones during the times specified by North Korea and doesn't even posses the types of drones that North Korea claimed were used.

Senior ministry official Kim Hong-Cheol said in a statement that authorities will investigate whether civilians flew the drones found in North Korea. He said South Korea has no intentions of provoking North Korea and will continue its efforts to build trust between the Koreas. Since taking office in June, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung has pushed hard to reopen talks with North Korea and reconcile the rivals. But North Korea has steadfastly rebuffed Lee's overtures.

PRISM

Man's longtime numbers hit record win

Michigan: A Michigan man who used the same let of numbers to play the lottery for 20 years scored a record-breaking $32.91 million Lotto 47 jackpot.

The 73-year-old Macomb County man told Michigan Lottery officials he has been using the numbers 02-03-12-15-16-33 ever since he started playing Lotto 47. "I have been playing Lotto 47 for 20 years and I've always played the same sets of numbers," the player said.

Those were the numbers on the ticket the man purchased for the Dec. 13 drawing, which earned him Lotto 47's largest-ever jackpot.

"When I checked my ticket, I saw right away I matched three numbers and thought: 'At least I got $5 back.' When I saw I matched the rest of the numbers, I rubbed my eyes and checked my ticket again because I couldn't believe what I was seeing," he said.

Stranded kitten rescued from bridge

Texas: An animal services officer in Texas came to the rescue of a cat stranded for nearly 15 hours on a three-story high support beam for a bridge.

Dallas Animal Services said that the kitten, dubbed Skyline in honor of her predicament, was stranded for nearly 15 hours on a support beam underneath the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge.

A worker identified as Animal Services Officer Torres responded to the bridge and teamed with Dallas Fire-Rescue to bring the feline to safety.

Officials said Skyline is recovering from her ordeal in a foster home and is now available for adoption.

Agencies

TODAY IN HISTORY

930– Sack of Mecca by the Qarmatians.
1055 – Theodora is crowned empress of the Byzantine Empire.
1158– Vladislaus II, Duke of Bohemia becomes King of Bohemia.
1569– First recorded lottery in England.
1787– William Herschel discovers Titania and Oberon, two moons of Uranus.
1805 – The Michigan Territory is created.
1820– The Great Savannah Fire of 1820 destroys over 400 buildings in Savannah, Georgia.
1851– Taiping Rebellion: Hong Xiuquan proclaims the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, starting the Jintian Uprising.
1861– American Civil War: Alabama secedes from the United States.
1863 – American Civil War: The three-day Battle of Arkansas Post concludes as General John McClernand and Admiral David Dixon Porter capture Fort Hindman and secure control over the Arkansas River for the Union.

Iran protests hit two weeks amid crackdown

AP
DUBAI, Jan. 10

Protests sweeping across Iran neared the two-week mark Saturday, with the country's government acknowledging the ongoing demonstrations despite an intensifying crackdown and as the Islamic Republic remains cut off from the rest of the world. With the internet down in Iran and phone lines cut off, gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult. But the death toll in the protests has grown to at least 65 people killed and over 2,300 others detained, according to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency.

Iranian state TV is reporting on security force casualties while portraying control over the nation. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has signaled a coming clampdown, despite U.S. warnings.

"The United States supports the brave people of Iran," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio wrote Saturday on the social platform X. The State Department separately warned: "Do not play games with President Trump. When he says he'll do something, he means it."

Saturday marks the start of the work week in Iran, but many schools and universities reportedly held online classes, Iranian state TV reported. Internal Iranian government websites are believed to be functioning. State TV repeatedly played a driving, martial orchestral arrangement from the "Epic of Khorramshahr" by Iranian composer Majid Entezami, while showing pro-government demonstrations.



PHOTO: AP

A man holding a device to document burning vehicles during a night of mass protests in Zanjan, Iran.

The song, aired repeatedly during the 12-day war launched by Israel, honors Iran's 1982 liberation of the city of Khorramshahr during the Iran-Iraq war. It has been used in videos of protesting women cutting away their hair to protest the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini as well.

"Field reports indicate that peace prevailed in most cities of the country at night," a state TV anchor reported. "After a number of armed terrorists attacked public places and set fire to people's private property last night, there was no news of any gathering or chaos in Tehran and most provinces last night." That was directly contradicted by an online video verified by The Associated Press that showed demonstrations in northern Tehran's Saadat Abad area, with what appeared to be thousands on the street. "Death to Khamenei!" a man chanted.

The semiofficial Fars news agency, believed to be close to Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and one of the few media outlets able to publish to the outside world, released surveillance camera footage of what it said came from demonstrations in Isfahan. In it, a protester appeared to fire a long gun, while others set fires and threw gasoline bombs at what appeared to be a government compound.

The Young Journalists' Club, associated with state TV, reported that protesters killed three members of the Guard's all-volunteer Basij force in the city of Gachsaran.

It also reported a security official was stabbed to death in Hamadan province, a police officer killed in the port city of Bandar Abbas and another in Gilan, as well as one person slain in Mashhad.

State television also aired footage of a funeral service attended by hundreds in Qom, a Shiite seminary city just south of Tehran. Iran's theocracy cut off the nation from the internet and international telephone calls on Thursday, though it allowed some state-owned and semiofficial media to publish. Qatar's state-funded Al Jazeera news network reported live from Iran, but they appeared to be the only major foreign outlet able to work.

Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, who called for protests Thursday and Friday, asked in his latest message for demonstrators to take to the streets Saturday and Sunday.

He urged protesters to carry Iran's old lion-and-sun flag and other national symbols used during the time of the shah to "claim public spaces as your own."

Pahlavi's support of and from Israel has drawn criticism in the past — particularly after the 12-day war. Demonstrators have shouted in support of the shah in some protests, but it isn't clear whether that's support for Pahlavi himself or a desire to return to a time before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The demonstrations began Dec. 28 over the collapse of the Iranian rial currency, which trades at over 1.4 million to $1, as the country's economy is squeezed by international sanctions in part levied over its nuclear program. The protests intensified and grew into calls directly challenging Iran's theocracy.

NRNA DELEGATION MEETS FM SHARMA

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Jan. 10

In line with the broad unity agreement reached on 30 November 2025, the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) has held a meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Balanand Sharma to discuss preparations for the 12th General Convention and International Conference. The convention is scheduled to be held in Kathmandu from 23 to 25 February 2026.

During the meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), a delegation led by NRNA co-presidents Dr. Badri KC and Mahesh Shrestha met Foreign Minister Sharma. On the occasion, the minister advised that it would be appropriate to conduct the upcoming 12th General Convention of the NRNA in accordance with the association's statute.

"There are many positive aspects to holding it physically in Nepal, and my preference is that it be organised here," Minister Sharma said. "However, we must adhere to the prevailing rules and regulations. Therefore, it would be best to proceed as stipulated in your statute, because members who are unable to come to Nepal should not be deprived of their voting rights."

Article 14 of the NRNA's amended statute of 2003 (revised in 2022) states that the General Convention and General Assembly may be held either online or through physical presence. It further provides that arrangements must be made for representatives who are unable to attend physically to participate in the General Assembly and vote in elections through online means.

Prachanda likely to contest election from Rukum East

BY RAJU LAMICHHANE
Rukum West, Jan. 10

Coordinator of the Nepali Communist Party (NCP), Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has said that he will contest the upcoming election from Rukum East.

Addressing a Unity Message Assembly held at Barahatakura of Musikot Municipality-1, Rukum West, on Saturday, former Prime Minister Prachanda said he had made up his mind to contest the election from Rukum to remain closely connected with the local people.

He added that following party unification, he wished to chart a new course for the development of Rukum.

Speaking in Rukum West, the home district of former Maoist Centre leader Janardan Sharma, Prachanda accused Sharma of betraying communist ideology and Marxism.

He said Sharma's mistakes had prompted the party to move forward by fielding young leader Gopal Sharma as a candidate, adding that the people of Rukum had found a leader capable of responsibly upholding the party's ideology and principles.

Prachanda said the people of Rukum have demonstrated greater responsibility towards the party and have proven that they do not follow escapees. Recalling the mid-hill highway campaign, he said that although some leaders deserted at the time, the people of Rukum remained steadfast in their commitment to the party's principles and ideology.



PHOTO: RAJU LAMICHHANE/TRN
Participants of a mass meeting organised by Nepali Communist Party in Musikot Municipality, Rukum West, on Saturday.

Taking an apparent swipe at Janardan Sharma, who has joined a newly formed Pragatisheel Loktantrik Party, Prachanda said the people of Rukum have not followed 'defectionist', anarchic or hypocritical forces.

Prachanda further said that the people of Rukum had played the role of frontline fighters during the "People's War' and people's movement.

Stating that the country is currently facing an uncomfortable and extraordinary situation, he said that 17 left-wing parties have come together to build the strength needed to stabilise the situation. Speaking at the same programme, NCP Co-coordinator and former Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal said the campaign for revolutionary unity has generated enthusiasm, confidence and hope across the country.

He urged party cadres not to be distracted by what he described as reactionary forces spreading misinformation against the party.

Kul Man chosen chair of Ujyalo Nepal Party

BY LAXMAN KAFLE
Kathmandu, Jan. 10

Newly appointed Chairman of the Ujyalo Nepal Party, Kul Man Ghising, has said that his party was betrayed after the merger process with the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) broke down.

At a press conference held on Saturday evening, Ghising accused the RSP of keeping his party entangled for 12 days, encouraging its cadres to join, and ultimately breaking the unity process.

According to Ghising, many unwritten agreements were made during the merger talks, and the Ujyalo Nepal Party did not have any major demands. "We only wanted the agreements to be implemented."

He claimed that the media was completely wrong to report that his party had bargained for positions.

"We did not have any major demands from our friends during the agreement phase," Ghising said.

"It is completely wrong to say in the media that we bargained for positions. Even though I was the vice-chairman, my ranking was very low. I was just an ordinary RSP member. This issue was not even a major one."

He said that the RSP had initially agreed on issues related to inclusiveness and federalism as key constitutional principles but later backed down.

Despite lengthy discussions on how to proceed with the election process, the RSP took 12 days and delayed making decisions on proportional representation as well, Ghising said.

"We were ready to abandon everything and move forward," he said. "This prolonged period of 12 days caused significant damage to the Ujyalo Nepal Party."

He added, "The RSP told us that they no longer needed us and that they would move forward even without us."

Ghising wished the RSP well but made it clear that the Ujyalo Nepal Party would now pursue its own path.

"The way we have left the RSP should not be considered as our weak position," he said. "Even when we tried to be honest in the unity agreement, we were forcibly kept out. Even in such a situation, we want to express our commitment to move forward alone."

However, he said that the party will collaborate with other interested groups in the coming days.

"I took the membership of the Ujyalo Nepal Party today itself, and I have been elected president at the central committee meeting held today," he said. He said that if his party is given a chance in the upcoming elections, it will bring about similar changes nationwide.

President...

that National Unity Day would help preserve and promote Nepal's rich cultural heritage and pave the way to fulfil aspirations for lasting peace, good governance, development and prosperity through the federal democratic republican system.

In his message, Vice President Yadav emphasised Nepal's multi-ethnic, multilingual, multireligious and multicultural character.

The day should be utilised as an opportunity to promote social harmony, tolerance and mutual coexistence, he added.

Vice President Yadav said the day reminds citizens that rising above personal interests and prioritising national interest is the foundation to build a strong and inclusive nation.

The Vice President highlighted the day's significance in inspiring the youth with a spirit of commitment, service and responsibility to the nation.

He urged everyone to renounce discrimination, hostility and intolerance, and to embrace equal opportunity, social justice and respect for culture as guiding principles of life.

Likewise, former President Bidya Devi Bhandari has paid tribute to King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the architect of Nepal's unification, on the occasion of his 304th birth anniversary and National Unity Day.

In her message, former President Bhandari described the unification of numerous principalities, once weakened by conflict, rivalry and instability, as a proud chapter in Nepal's history that led to the formation of the modern Nepali nation.

She emphasised that Prithvi Narayan Shah's far-sighted leadership transformed the unification process into a people-based national campaign by incorporating the advice and suggestions of citizens.

The former president said it was due to the sacrifices and dedication of Nepal's brave ancestors, guided by Shah's visionary leadership, that Nepal's independent and sovereign existence has been preserved.

Nepal's exhibition infrastructure...

Stakeholders said such shift had further eroded its appeal for high-profile national and international events.

"As a result, serious exhibitors and organisers are compelled to move to five-star hotels for business promotions and events, because they seem to be the only applicable venues," Rimal said. "But even these hotels struggle to host conventions or exhibitions involving more than 300 participants."

The reliance on luxury hotels has also created an uneven playing field. While large corporations may absorb the high costs, small-scale producers and emerging businesses are effectively excluded from participation. "This situation has created major challenges for small-scale production businesses," Rimal said. "They simply cannot afford the expenses of five-star venues."

A business bottleneck

Industry experts warn that this exclusion undermines one of the core objectives of exhibitions i.e. providing a platform where small, medium and large enterprises can compete, connect and grow side by side. Exhibitions traditionally allow businesses to display goods and services to a targeted audience, showcase products in action, build brand credibility and generate word-of-mouth marketing. They also enable companies to understand customer preferences, receive feedback, observe competitors and strengthen their market presence.

Without suitable venues, these benefits remain unevenly distributed.

Kamlesh Kumar Agrawal, President of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce, also pointed out the absence of fully facilitated and technologically advanced exhibition centres as a major constraint for Nepal's business sector.

"The only existing exhibition centre, Bhrikuti Mandap, is itself in a run-down condition," Agrawal said. "As a result, the business community has been unable to connect effectively with international markets through exhibitions."

According to him, the standard of exhibition and event venues directly influences the perceived value of products and businesses, while also shaping the country's image in the global marketplace.

"The quality of an event venue determines the face value of products and businesses and directly affects the prestige of the country in the international market," he said.

Agrawal said business stakeholders and private-sector representatives had repeatedly held discussions with the government and urged it to establish advanced exhibition centres. However, he said these concerns had largely been ignored.

"When domestic products fail to gain exposure nationally and internationally, it directly affects sales and limits export potential," he said, adding that the lack of exhibition venues also constrains marketing opportunities.

He stressed that exhibition centres are essential platforms for businesses of all scales. "They are accessible and convenient not only for large industries but also for small-scale enterprises and new entrepreneurs," he said. "Without such platforms, emerging businesses do not get the opportunity to connect with international stakeholders, confining their growth to the local market."

Drawing a regional comparison, Agrawal said neighbouring countries had moved ahead by investing in modern, technology-driven convention and exhibition centres. "While our neighbours are advancing their businesses through such infrastructure, we remain limited to the domestic market," he said.

Exhibitions are widely recognised as dynamic platforms that connect brands and customers through direct interaction. They support innovation, learning and collaboration across sectors. However, their success depends heavily on infrastructure, planning and execution. In Nepal's case, organisers complain that infrastructure limitations have become the weakest link.

The loss or repurposing of other major venues has compounded the problem. The Godawari Sunrise Convention Centre was set ablaze and destroyed during the Gen Z movement in September, while the Birendra International Convention Centre (BICC) was used as a parliamentary building and later suffered damage amid political unrest. With these facilities no longer fully operational, pressure on Bhrikuti Mandap has intensified.

From the government side, officials do acknowledge the challenges.

Aaganath Regmi, Head of the Administrative Department of Bhrikuti Mandap Exhibition Hall, said the venue was established nearly four decades ago and had suffered from years of inadequate maintenance. "It has not been regularly maintained, and yes, it is not in well-kept condition," Regmi said.

According to Regmi, the hall routinely receives complaints related to poor infrastructure, insufficient toilets, parking constraints and outdated technology. "We do acknowledge the complaints from exhibitors about the status of the centre," he said.

However, Regmi pointed to financial and institutional constraints as the primary reasons behind the deterioration. Bhrikuti Mandap falls under the Social Welfare Council, which, he said, had not been able to allocate sufficient budget for thorough maintenance.

"A few years back, a survey was conducted on the condition of the exhibition centre," Regmi said. "The report concluded that the life of the building has almost expired."

Based on the survey findings, authorities reportedly decided against investing heavily in maintenance. Instead, experts recommended constructing a new exhibition centre rather than spending large sums on repairing ageing structures. A detailed project report (DPR) for a new building was even prepared, according to Regmi, but it has yet to be executed.

"We do not have the infrastructure to facilitate international-level exhibitions," Regmi said. "The structures are dilapidated."

The prolonged delay in building new facilities reflects broader policy gaps. While exhibitions in Nepal are largely organised by the private sector, the burden of infrastructure development has remained unclear. Private investors argue that purchasing land in prime locations is financially unfeasible without government support.

Public-private collaboration essential

Rimal suggests that the solution lies in public-private collaboration. "What the government can do is provide land on lease, because it is not feasible for the private sector to purchase the land," he said. "Then the government can invite the private sector to build exhibition centres."

He also stressed the need for structured dialogue. "The government should hold discussions with experts, stakeholders and the private sector to establish proper, well-facilitated exhibition centres," he said.

The absence of such coordination has had ripple effects across multiple sectors. Tourism entrepreneurs stress that international exhibitions often serve as gateways for broader travel. Delegates attending conventions typically extend their stay, visit heritage sites and generate income for hotels, restaurants and transport services. Without adequate venues, Nepal misses out on this multiplier effect.

Business associations warn that the country risks falling behind regional competitors. Neighbouring countries such as India, China and Bangladesh have developed multiple international-standard convention and exhibition centres, enabling them to host large-scale trade fairs and global events year-round. These venues not only support domestic industries but also enhance international visibility.

In contrast, Nepal's dependence on a single, outdated exhibition hall limits scheduling flexibility and discourages international organisers. Conflicting bookings, logistical constraints and infrastructure concerns make it difficult to plan long-term exhibition calendars.

Despite these challenges, interest in exhibitions remains strong. Businesses continue to see them as effective tools for promotion, networking and market research. However, the advantages of participation, brand visibility, customer engagement and industry connections are increasingly offset by high costs, space limitations and operational hurdles.

Organisers suggest that proper planning and adaptability can mitigate some challenges, but infrastructure constraints remain beyond their control. Without investment in modern facilities, they warn, Nepal's exhibition sector will struggle to grow.

We contribute...

He also claimed that to enhance transparency in transactions, the corporation has introduced digital payment systems, bottom loading in fuel tankers and automated metering systems.

Monopoly will not last: Minister Sinha

Addressing the event, Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Anil Kumar Sinha said that the benefits of long-standing monopoly would not last forever, and stressed the need for institutional reforms and greater efficiency.

He noted that despite limited capital, difficult geography and supply risks, the corporation has been successfully ensuring regular supply of petroleum products across the country. However, Minister Sinha said the corporation must further strengthen its structure, services and management systems in view of possible changes in market structure and the introduction of open competition in the future.

Likewise, according to Deputy Director Nagendra Sah, petrol in the Nepali market is currently cheaper by around Rs. 14 per litre than in the Indian market. He said a policy has been adopted to increase storage capacity from the current 10–12 days to 30 days.

Poverty rate...

At the local level, poverty rates range widely, from a minimum of 1.18 per cent to a maximum of 77.89 per cent.

The highest poverty rate, at 77.89 per cent, has been recorded in Junichande Rural Municipality of Jajarkot, reflecting severe deprivation in remote and mountainous regions.

In contrast, the lowest poverty rate, just 1.18 per cent, is found in Gharpajhong Rural Municipality of Mustang, indicating comparatively better living standards and income levels.

In terms of absolute numbers, Kathmandu Metropolitan City has the largest population living below the poverty line, with 59,218 people classified as poor. Despite this, the poverty rate in the metropolitan city stands at 6.87 per cent, which is well below the national average.

Several local levels in Sudurpashchim Province record particularly high poverty rates. Dhakari Rural Municipality (70.57 per cent), Sigas Rural Municipality (66.87 per cent), Kamalbazar Municipality (66.8 per cent), Shikhar Municipality (65.34 per cent) and Shivanath Rural Municipality (64.07 per cent) are among the most affected.

Similarly, Krishnanagar Municipality of Lumbini Province records a poverty rate of 64.32 per cent, while Raksirang Rural Municipality of Bagmati Province stands at 65.64 per cent.

At the district level, the analysis shows similar disparities. Achham district in Sudurpashchim Province records the highest poverty rate at 49.58 per cent, underscoring persistent structural challenges such as limited access to education, employment, and infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Kaski district in Gandaki Province has the lowest poverty rate at 5.63 per cent, reflecting stronger economic activity, tourism, and service-sector employment.

According to the study, overall, 34 districts have poverty rates below the national average, while 43 districts exceed the national figure, indicating that a majority of districts still face higher-than-average poverty levels.

NC leaders in marathon talks...

The Nepali Congress establishment has concluded that the Special General Convention would weaken the party and has emphasised the need to move forward in unity towards the elections scheduled for March 5.

After a meeting of the Central Working Committee, party spokesperson Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat said that since it had been decided to formally conclude the regular convention process and hold the 15th general convention in May 11 to 14, that decision should be accepted.

"The party's strength should be focused on the House of Representatives elections. Let us stop the special general convention and unite for the elections," he said.

Leader Dr. Chandrakant Bhandari said the party would not split as a result of the special general convention. Addressing a press conference on Saturday, he said that although 54 per cent of general convention delegates had applied for a special general convention, the leadership ignored the demand, creating an awkward situation within the party.

Referring to the party's history, he said there is an option to convert the special general convention into a policy or resolution-focused convention. "If a Special General Convention had been called after the Gen-Z movement, it could have become a basis for internal awakening and organisational strengthening. The special general convention should be taken to the level of policy debate to transform the party," he said.

Five provincial presidents and vice presidents of the Nepali Congress, along with presidents and acting presidents from various districts, have urged support for the 15th general convention scheduled for May. Likewise, presidents from 44 districts and acting presidents from three districts also called for proceeding with the regular general convention and elections through a joint statement.

The statement recalled that the regular convention process had moved forward after approval of the agenda to hold the 15th general convention from May 11 to 14, and noted that the legal authority to call a special convention rests only with the central level.

Meanwhile, the Special Convention Organising committee has sent invitations to senior leaders, including President Sher Bahadur Deuba and Acting President Purna Bahadur Khadka, to attend the event.

According to Manoj Mani Acharya, coordinator of the convention management committee, an invitation was sent to President Deuba requesting him to deliver the chief guest's address.

Meanwhile, the organising committee has claimed that more than 60 per cent of convention delegates will participate in the special general convention. Congress Central member Ajay Babu Shivakoti said that although more than 54 per cent of delegates had applied for a special convention, at least 60 per cent would be present at the inauguration ceremony.

UML has never shied away...

He also claimed that the morale of security agencies has been further weakened, making it impossible to conduct fear-free elections.Oli said the UML has repeatedly raised these concerns both publicly and during talks with government representatives, but a secure and impartial election environment has yet to be guaranteed.

Despite these concerns, Oli said the party is clear that the country will sooner or later move towards elections.

He stressed that the UML must always remain prepared for that eventuality. He informed that the Central Committee meeting has called on the entire party rank and file to stay ready for election at all times and to intensify necessary preparations.

Regarding candidate selection, Oli said the UML has already submitted its proportional representation list to the Election Commission within the stipulated timeframe.

While acknowledging that the party has many capable and deserving individuals, he said it was difficult to fully accommodate everyone due to the limit of 110 candidates, inclusive cluster requirements and the need for geographical cluster.

He admitted that some aspects may have been overlooked and said more systematic groundwork would be carried out in the days ahead.

On the selection of candidates under the first-past-the-post system, Oli said the recommendation process is in its final stage, but accepted that some complaints have surfaced.

Oli said the party leadership would make final candidate decisions by ensuring the credibility of the recommendation process and by taking all sides into account.

He emphasised that once decisions are finalised, all aspirants and the entire party must unite with determination and high morale to engage in the election campaign.

He urged party leaders and workers to remain vigilant and not allow minor internal disputes to undermine electoral outcomes.



PHOTO: RSS

Tharu women dressed in traditional attire to participate in a programme in Ghorahi, Dang.

Actor Timothy accused of child sex abuse

AP
New York, Jan. 10

Authorities in New Mexico issued an arrest warrant Friday for director and Emmy Award-winning actor Timothy Busfield to face a child sex abuse charge.

An investigator with the Albuquerque Police Department filed a criminal complaint in support of the charge, which says a child reported that Busfield touched him inappropriately. The acts allegedly occurred on the set of "The Cleaning Lady," a TV series Busfield directed and acted in.

The child said the first incident happened when he was 7 years old and Busfield touched him three or four times. Busfield allegedly touched him five or six times on another occasion when he was 8.

The child's mother reported to Child Protective Services that the abuse occurred between November 2022 and spring 2024, the complaint said.

Busfield's attorney and agent did not immediately respond to email messages seeking comment late Friday.

The arrest warrant, which was signed by a judge, said the charge is for two counts of criminal sexual contact of a minor. According to the complaint, the child, which it identifies only by his initials, has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety. A social worker documented him saying he has had nightmares about Busfield touching him and woken up scared. The child was reportedly afraid to tell anyone because Busfield was the director and he feared he would get mad at him.

The investigation began in November 2024, when the investigator responded to a call from a doctor at the University of New Mexico Hospital. The child's parents had gone there at the recommendation of a law firm, the complaint said.

"The Cleaning Lady" aired for four seasons on Fox, ending in 2025. It starred Elodie Yung as a Cambodian doctor who comes to the United States to get medical treatment for her son, witnesses a mob killing and ends up becoming a cleaner for organized crime.



PHOTO: AP

Actor Timothy Busfield smiles before an NFL football game in Detroit, Sept. 14, 2025.

HOLLYWOOD COUPLE GOOD, MAJORS GAIN GUINEAN CITIZENSHIP

AP
Conakry, Jan. 10

Hollywood couple Meagan Good and Jonathan Majors received Guinean citizenship after tracing their ancestry to the West African country through DNA testing.

The couple was awarded citizenship in a private ceremony in the capital of Conakry on Friday. They are scheduled to tour the country's tourist sites on Sunday.

"We think that you are among the worthy sons and daughters of this Guinea. You represent our country, the red-yellow-green flag all over the world," said Djiba Diakité, head of the president's cabinet.

Majors seemed destined for the ranks of Hollywood's A-list before he was arrested following a 2023 altercation with his then-girlfriend. He had won critical accolades for his work in "Da 5 Bloods" and "Lovecraft Country" and secured years of future Marvel stardom with his role as Kang the Conqueror. However, after his conviction on assault and harassment charges, Marvel dropped him from future projects, and "Magazine Dreams," a film once tipped to bring him an Oscar nomination, went on ice until last year.

Good, an actor herself, began dating Majors in 2023, and was a constant presence at his trial in New York. They were engaged in 2024, and wed last year in a small, impromptu ceremony as he promoted "Magazine Dreams."

An affable Prabhas gets lost in a giant, spiralling mess

AGENCY
New Delhi, Jan. 10

At about two-thirds into Maruthi's latest film, you feel that the writer-director is onto something quite sophisticated. Raju, the protagonist (Prabhas), is facing off against Kanakaraju, the antagonist (Sanjay Dutt), in a clash that is as epic as it could be, but the catch is that the two are barely in the same room at the same time. They talk to one another, throw challenges, and engage in a battle of one-upmanship that involves fighting crocodiles, evading deadly pyrotechnics, and so much more, all without any form of physical contact. A game of minds is the chosen method for Maruthi's saga, which, incidentally, is unfolding between a grandfather and his grandson.

At the outset, The Raja Saab is a delectable offer that has so much going on in its favour. It's the coming-of-age story of a young man looking to find his doting grandmother's lost reputation. It's a motley-crew comedy set inside a haunted palace and featuring some ridiculous, yet fun, contrivances. It's a rom-com when it wishes to be, a Harry Potter or Chronicles of Narnia kind of 'magical' adventure at other times, and also a sci-fi, 'mystical' thriller that brims with bold ideas and promises. Prabhas, too, is well in his element to handhold us through the whopping 3-hours-and-10-minutes-long ride.

Raja Saab movie review

Yet, as the cliche painfully goes, the ideas, the promises and the delectable offers buckle under the weight of their own pressure, leaving behind a mess that is so tangled up that you couldn't fathom its origins or its destination. The Raja Saab is a film whose potential goes grossly unrealised because of an oversight, one that ignores its novelty until very late, as well as a sloppy, outdated approach that simply seems lost from start to finish.



PHOTO: TRN

The Raja Saab movie cast: The film stars Prabhas in the lead role.

David and Victoria receive legal notice from son Brooklyn



PHOTO: AP

AGENCY
New York, Jan. 10

The rift within the Beckham family has reached new heights as David Beckham and wife Victoria Beckham have now received a legal notice from their son Brooklyn. The family has been going through a tough phase for the past few years. The first child of David and Victoria, Brooklyn has now cut all communications with his parents and has appointed a lawyer for any further communication.

A recent report from The Sun revealed that Brooklyn had sent a legal notice to his parents, asking them only to contact him and his wife, actor Nicola Peltz, via lawyers. Interestingly, all of this transpired on Nicola's birthday. Brooklyn had also blocked his parents, which he claimed was due to a 'like on Instagram' by his mother, which was a breach of the 'desist' letter.

An insider told People magazine that both David and Victoria have tried to patch up things with Brooklyn and Nicola multiple times. He said, "David and Victoria have repeatedly asked Brooklyn and Nicola to meet and talk in order to move forward. David loves his kids; they are his everything. He, of course, invited Brooklyn and Nicola (to his knighting and after-gathering). They have always been invited to all family occasions or events, whether private or public."

Most of the online timelines and media reports point towards Brooklyn and Nicola's marriage being the starting point of this controversy. Nicola decided to not go with a wedding dress designed by her mother-in-law Victoria, and reportedly left the hall crying when family friend Marc Anthony invited Victoria and Brooklyn on the stage instead of her for a dance.

HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

ARIES: Today you might play detective, Aries. Something or someone, perhaps a pet, has gone missing in your neighbourhood and you'll be out there leading the charge.

TAURUS: Worries about money that plague you today could well be misplaced, Taurus. To all appearances, the financial road might temporarily get a little rough, but probably all is not as dire as it seems.

GEMINI: Rational thought gets muddled today as everything seems to be happening to you at once, Gemini. Everyone wants your advice, lots of people need favours, and those in authority have new tasks for you.

CANCER: A strange communication could come from a person who doesn't leave a name and whose voice you don't recognize, Cancer. It might, however, sound important and therefore could bother you throughout the afternoon.

LEO: This is not the day to do in-depth research of any kind, Leo, whether it's an intellectual subject or how to put together a new computer system. Your mind is not as focused as it usually is.

VIRGO: A friend you've known for years might suddenly shock you by saying some unkind things that you would never have expected of him or her, Virgo. If they're said about you, you might be very upset because it isn't fair.

LIBRA: Have you just recently reached a cherished goal, Libra? If so, you might temporarily be confused as to what you're going to pursue in the future. You may be toying with a number of options.

SCORPIO: You might be introduced to a new colleague, Scorpio. Don't be surprised if this person makes your flesh crawl. This could be a warning signal or it could simply mean that this person is absolutely terrified.

SAGITTARIUS: Perhaps it's best if you stay away from your current love partner today, Sagittarius. Your friend is having some very draining hassles with family and on the job and won't be in the best of moods.

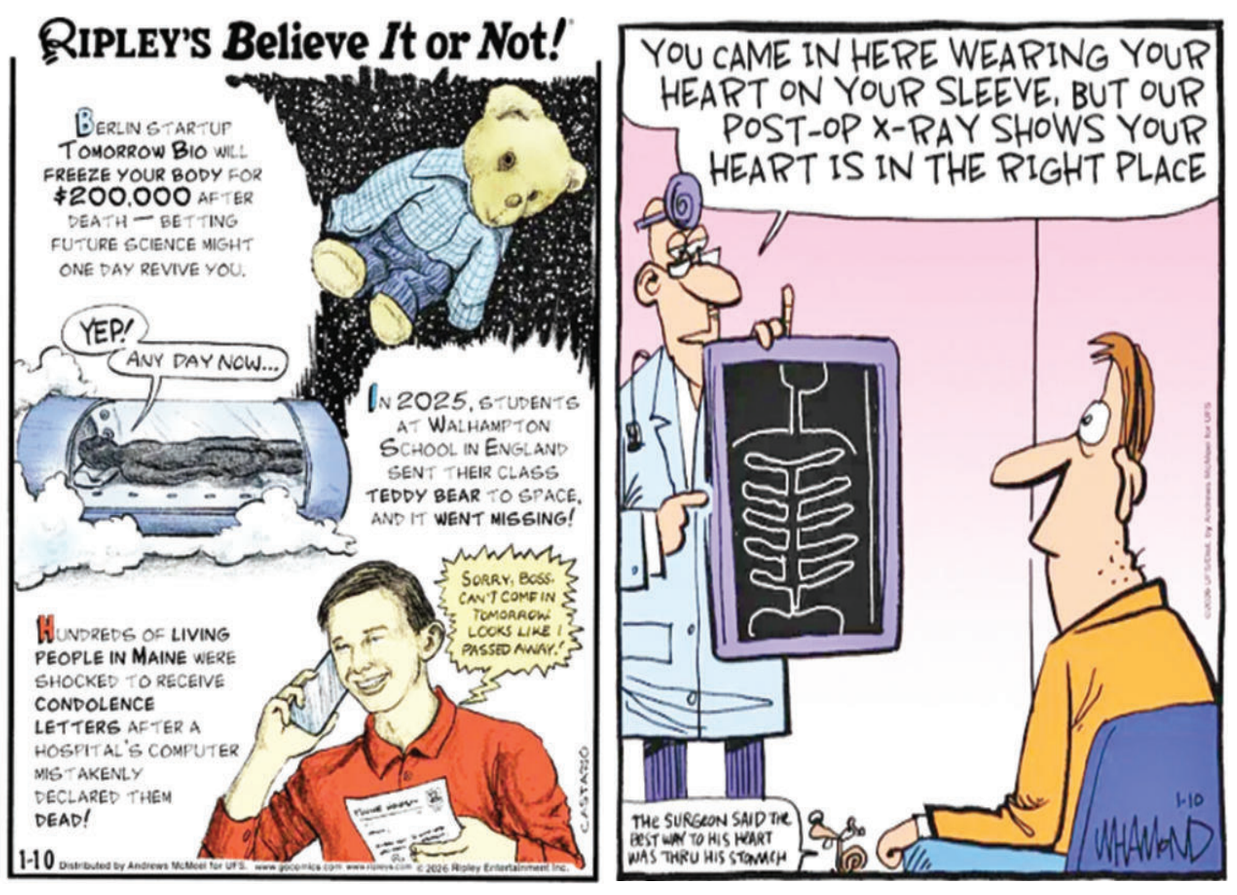
CAPRICORN: Today you might want to concentrate on one of your private projects for which you have a lot of passion, Capricorn. If one of your family members keeps you from working on this project, explain just how important this is for you.

AQUARIUS: Memories from the distant past, perhaps as far back as early childhood, could keep popping into your conscious mind today, Aquarius. You may feel really silly, crying over a fairy tale your grandmother read to you when you were five years old.

PISCES: An object that you treasure, perhaps a family heirloom, could be missing, Pisces. Don't panic. It's probably somewhere in the house, although it may have slipped behind something or had a pile of other stuff put on top of it.

CARTOON

gocomics.com



Morocco joins Senegal in Africa Cup semifinals



PHOTO:AP

Morocco's Brahim Abdelkader Díaz, right, scores his side's opening goal during the Africa Cup of Nations quarterfinal match between Cameroon and Morocco, in Rabat, Morocco.

AP
Rabat, Jan. 10

Brahim Díaz scored again and host Morocco joined Senegal in the semifinals of the Africa Cup of Nations with a 2-0 win over Cameroon.

Díaz extended his Moroccan record by scoring in a fifth straight game at the tournament when he ushered in with his groin Ayoub El Kaabi's header from a corner in the 27th minute. Díaz ran to the corner and shrugged as if to say he didn't know how he scored again.

Ismael Saibari sealed the win in the 74th with a low shot inside the far post after a corner, just minutes after Cameroon substitute Georges-Kévin Nkoudou went close at the other end.

That proved to be five-time champion Cameroon's only real chance as the Indomitable Lions succumbed to the Atlas Lions for the first time in five meetings at an Africa Cup.

"It wasn't a perfect match because in the second half we allowed Cameroon to gain confidence again," Morocco coach Walid Regragui said. "We spent a lot of energy in the first half, we were all over the field. But in the second half we fell back, so there are things that can be improved. At the end of the day we're in the semifinals."

Morocco next plays Nigeria or Algeria on Wednesday.

Cameroon players danced their way to the locker room before the game but when they took to the field they were greeted by deafening whistles at the near 70,000-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium.

Morocco will have the fans' support there in the semifinals, also, and the final on Jan. 18 should it progress.

The Atlas Lions might have won by more but for Cameroon captain Nouhou Tolo's spectacular clearance early on and Samuel Kotto's goal-line clearance in the second half. Abdessamad Ezzalzouli fired just wide and El Kaabi hit the side netting in the first half, then Ezzalzouli headed over in the second.

The tireless Díaz went off to ovations in the final minute. He'll have an extra day's rest over the team's next opponents.

Teranga Lions also progress

Iliman Ndiaye's first-half strike was enough for Senegal to beat 10-man Mali 1-0 in the first quarterfinal.

Ndiaye poked the ball home from close range in the 27th minute after Mali 'keeper Djigui Diarra let Krépin Diatta's cross slip through his fingers to land at Ndiaye's feet.

The winter rain which has soaked the tournament started to fall early at Grand Stade de Tanger and it would not have helped Diarra's grip on the ball.

Mali captain Yves Bissouma was already booked for a foul on Sadio Mané as his team made a courageous start, and the Eagles' hopes took a major blow when he was shown a second yellow card before the break for a foul on Idrissa Gueye.

Referee Abongile Tom had already sent off Woyo Coulibaly in Mali's previous game, a penalty shootout win over Tunisia, and Bissouma's sending off represented the team's third sending off in as many games.

Abdoulaye Diaby had Mali's best chance before the hour mark but his shot was too close to Senegal keeper Édouard Mendy.

Otherwise all the chances were at the other end; Diarra saved from Lamine Camara and Mané in stoppage time.

Frankfurt share spoils with Dortmund in thrilling Bundesliga draw



PHOTO:AP

Dortmund's Fabio Silva kicks the ball during the Bundesliga soccer match between Eintracht Frankfurt and Borussia Dortmund in Frankfurt, Germany.

AP
Frankfurt, Jan. 10

Second-placed Borussia Dortmund twice surrendered a lead and looked like losing to a stoppage-time winner but it came back to score in the last minute and draw at Eintracht Frankfurt 3-3 in a thrilling Bundesliga clash.

The first league match of 2026 was a riveting advert for German football but both sides will rue their ability to hold a lead.

The draw left Dortmund in second place, eight points behind leader Bayern Munich and four above Bayer Leverkusen and Leipzig. All three have a game in hand.

Frankfurt missed a chance to move into fifth and remained in seventh spot, equal on points with Stuttgart.

The game started encouragingly for the visitor with Maximilian Beier side-footing home Julian Ryerson's inviting cross from the right flank after 10 minutes.

But on a chilly night at Deutsche Bank Park, the home fans were warmed by their team's reaction. Can Uzun equalized from the penalty spot after Serhou Guirassy was adjudged to have fouled Robin Koch.

Dortmund took the lead again midway through the second half when Felix Nmecha's deflected shot trundled in off the far post.

And Frankfurt came back three minutes later. Arnaud Kalimuendo's defense-splitting pass sent Younes Ebnoutalib through on goal and he kept his cool to hammer the ball past Gregor Kobel.

Frankfurt took the lead for the first time in the second minute of injury time when Mahmoud Dahoud scooped in a shot but four minutes Carney Chukwuemeka bundled home a loose ball with almost the last kick of the game.

Meanwhile, Brais Mendez scored a goal-of-the-season contender as Real Sociedad won at Getafe 2-1 and gave American coach Pellegrino Matarazzo his first win in charge of the Basque club.

The ball fell kindly for the big midfielder right on the 18-yard line and he struck the sweetest of volleys past a despairing goalkeeper late in the first half.

Juanmi equalized for Getafe in the 90th minute but defender Jon Aramburu gave Sociedad the win when he headed home a corner kick six minutes into stoppage time

The result was a welcome victory for new boss Matarazzo. He replaced Sergio Francisco just before Christmas following Sociedad's poorest start to a La Liga in a decade.

He led his new charges to a creditable 1-1 draw with Atletico Madrid in his opener and was fortunate that slack goalkeeping at the late corner contributed to his side's winner in Getafe.

The result lifted Sociedad into the top half of La Liga, equal on points with Getafe but ahead of it on goal difference.

It was the fifth loss in six games for the Madrid club, which halted a four-game losing streak with a last-minute equalizer last week at Rayo Vallecano.

Venezuelan Aramburu dedicated his goal to his compatriots and stressed Matarazzo's message was that they need points any which way.

"The boss told us this wouldn't be the prettiest of games but that we just had to go out and win," Aramburu said.

Likewise, the big guns entered the FA Cup on Friday and one of them was shot down immediately.

Championship club Wrexham knocked out Premier League side Nottingham Forest 4-3 on penalties after a thrilling match ended 3-3 after 90 minutes and extra time.

Wrexham keeper Arthur Okonkwo was the hero, saving twice to take his side into the fourth round.

The Welsh side co-owned by actors Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney was 2-0 up at the break thanks to goals from Liberato Cacace and Ollie Rathbone.

Igor Jesus pulled one back with a header after 64 minutes only for Dominic Hyam to restore Wrexham's two-goal lead with a diving header 10 minutes later.

Forest substitute Callum Hudson-Odoi scored in the 76th and 89th minutes to force the game into extra time but when neither side could get a winner it went to penalties.

James MacLean missed for Wrexham but Okonkwo saved from Igor Jesus and Omari Hutchinson to send the home fans into raptures.

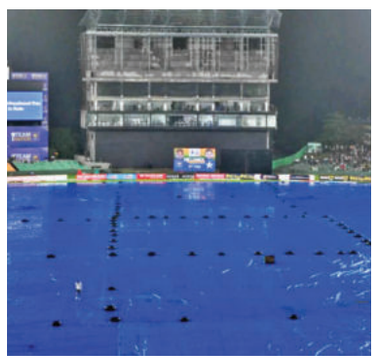
"The manager spoke to us before the game, told us about the history of the club and how we're able to beat teams who are way above us," a jubilant Okonkwo said. "It was amazing to win the game in the end. We just have to enjoy the moment."

The FA Cup kicked off in August with 446 clubs dreaming of a place in the famous final at Wembley Stadium but teams from the top two tiers enter only at this third round.

Friday's win was another memorable chapter in the rise of the Welsh club that was bought in 2021 by Hollywood pair Reynolds and McElhenney.

The stars have overseen Wrexham's rapid ascent and watched three consecutive promotions. It sits ninth in the Championship and Friday's win was its fifth in a row in all competitions.

RAIN WASHES OUT T20 MATCH



AP
Dambulla, Jan. 10

Rain washed out the second Twenty20 between Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Persistent rain in Dambulla forced the match officials to call off the game at 8:37 p.m. local time.

Pakistan leads the three-match series 1-0 after beating Sri Lanka by six wickets on Wednesday. The final game of the series will be played at the same venue on Sunday.

The series is a buildup for next month's T20 World Cup, which will be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

Pakistan, which plays all its World Cup games in Sri Lanka, is scheduled to host Australia for a three-match T20 series before the World Cup begins from Feb. 7. Sri Lanka is also due to host England in a white-ball series later this month.

Sabalenka advances to the Brisbane Int'l final

AP
Brisbane, Jan. 10



Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka has advanced to the Brisbane International final for the third year in a row after a 6-3, 6-4 win Saturday over Karolina Muchová.

Sabalenka clinched the semifinal at Pat Rafter Arena on her fourth match point to advance to Sunday's final against Marta Kostyuk, who beat fourth-seeded Jessica Pegula 6-0, 6-3.

It was Kostyuk's third win in a row over a top-10 opponent. She came into the match with only one win in five previous matches against the American.

On Friday, in a rematch of last year's Australian Open final, Sabalenka broke Madison Keys in five straight service games on the way to a 6-3, 6-3 win. Last year at Melbourne Park, Keys beat Sabalenka for her first Grand Slam singles title.

The Brisbane International is a tuneup event for this year's Australian Open, which begins Jan. 18.

Although three match points slipped away amid a late flurry of pressure from the Czech player, Sabalenka sealed victory when a Muchová shot sailed long.

"I always try to stay in the present," Sabalenka said. "I worked really hard and each match against her is just another opportunity to get the win and I'm super happy that today was the day when I was able to get the win. She is such a great player and I always enjoy battles against her."

With 32 winners and all four break points saved, Sabalenka will look to carry that momentum into her 13th WTA 500-level final on Sunday.

In the men's tournament at Brisbane, Brandon Nakashima beat Aleksandar Kovacevic 7-6 (4), 6-4 in an all-American semifinal. Nakashima will play the winner of the later semifinal between top-seeded Daniil Medvedev and American Alex Michelsen in Sunday's final.

It will be Nakashima's first ATP Tour final in four years. The 24-year-old American has not lost a set this week.

"We're really good friends," Nakashmia said of Kovacevic. "We have been practicing a lot the last month or so and it's great to see him playing well at these kind of tournaments. It was a super tough match, right from the beginning."

Meanwhile, Belinda Bencic won her eighth match of the week and combined with Jakub Paul in the deciding mixed doubles to defeat Belgium's Elise Mertens and Zizou Bergs 6-3, 0-6, 10-5 Saturday to qualify Switzerland for the United Cup final.

Bencic has won all four of her singles matches and four in mixed doubles this week in the team event. Paul, who won just six tour-level doubles matches last year, hit several down-the-line winners at crucial moments to lead Switzerland into Sunday's final against either the defending champion United States or Poland, who played their semifinal later Saturday.

"He's so brave it's unbelievable," Bencic said of Paul. "I tell him to go (for it) and he actually goes. It's crazy."

Earlier, Bencic extended her undefeated season-opening singles streak when she beat Mertens 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (0) to put Switzerland ahead 1-0. But Stan Wawrinka, who will retire at the end of this season, was beaten 6-3, 6-7 (4), 6-3 by Bergs to send the match to a mixed doubles decider at Ken Rosewall Arena.

The turning point in the Wawrinka-Bergs match came in the eighth game of the third set when Bergs broke Wawrinka's serve to go up 5-3, then held serve to win the match.

Tournament organizers started play 30 minutes earlier than scheduled with searing temperatures of up to 43 Celsius (109 Fahrenheit) in the forecast for Sydney.Bencic had won all six sets in her first three matches at the United Cup. She was two games away from another two-set win before Mertens pushed the match the distance.

Indo-Nepal T20 cricket championship in Bhadrapur

RSS
Jhapa, Jan. 10

The Koshi Pathibhara Indo-Nepal T20 Championship Cup Cricket Tournament will be held at the newly constructed Mechi Stadium in Bhadrapur from February 4 to 8, organised by the Bhadrapur Cricket Club.

The tournament will feature eight teams, including four from Nepal and four from India. The champions will receive a cash prize of Rs 500,000, while the runners-up will be awarded Rs 300,000, according to organising committee coordinator Manoj Subba.

Subba said the Indian teams participating in the tournament are Rhinoland Cricket Academy, Guwahati; Global Star Cricket Club, Lucknow; Cricket Coaching Academy, New Delhi; and Snow Lion Team, Sikkim.

The Nepali teams include Bhadrapur Cricket Club, Biratnagar Kings Development Squad, Pokhara Avengers Gandaki Heroes Development Squad, and Kathmandu Gorkhas Development Squad. Subba added that the Indian teams will include players who have competed in the Ranji Trophy, as well as players who have previously played in the Nepal Premier League (NPL) for Nepali clubs.

England's players and management face performance review after Ashes loss

AP
Sydney, Jan. 10

England's players and management are undergoing a performance review following the 4-1 Ashes series defeat in Australia, with England Wales Cricket Board chief executive Richard Gould vowing to "implement the necessary changes" over coming months.

Gould issued a statement after England's five-wicket loss in the fifth test Thursday, highlighting disappointment in the campaign after the squad traveled to Australia with high expectations of ending a long drought Down Under.

The planning, tactics and preparation of head coach Brendon McCullum and cricket director Rob Key will be part of the review, along with "individual performances and behaviors" and the team's ability to adapt and react to conditions.

"This Ashes tour began with significant hope and anticipation, and it is therefore deeply disappointing that we have been unable to fulfill our ambition," Gould said. "While there were moments of strong performance and resilience, including a hard-fought victory in the fourth test in Melbourne, we were not consistent enough across all conditions and phases of the contest."

Gould said the cricket board was "determined to improve quickly" as the team prepares for the Twenty20 Cricket World Cup in India and Sri Lanka next month.

England captain Ben Stokes said the performances were "so far below the level that this team can operate at."

He suggested one reason might the ability of opposing teams to counteract England's attack-at-all costs "Bazball" approach, which is a vast departure tactically from conventional test cricket.

"We are now playing against teams who have answers to the style of cricket that we have been playing over quite a long period of time," Stokes said. "In the first couple of years (under McCullum), teams found it difficult to try and come up with anything to combat the way that we played.

"But there's moments in games throughout the (Ashes) series, and even before that, where we've almost gifted the flow of the game back to the opposition."

Stokes said England had to be prepared to rethink its approach, having lost 14 test of the 28 test matches it has played since the beginning of 2024.

"When a trend is happening on a consistent basis in the way that you don't want it to happen, that's when you do need to go back and go look at the drawing board and make some adjustments," he said.

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