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THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL



PHOTO: RSS

Sirubari, located in Aandhikhola Rural Municipality of Syangja district, the first community homestay village in South Asia, continues to attract both domestic and international tourists.

Over 97 % votes under PR system counted

RSP secures over 5.01 million votes

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 10

The EC has completed the counting of approximately 97 per cent of the votes cast under the proportional representation (PR) system by Tuesday night. A total of 10,977,711 votes were cast under the PR system.

At the time this news story was filed, 10,652,697 valid votes under the PR were counted. Of them, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) secured 5,105,885, which is around 48 per cent of the valid votes.

Similarly, the Nepali Congress (NC) has secured 1,731,409 votes (16.25 %), CPN-UML has secured 1,439, 651, Nepali Communist Party (NCP) has secured 792,303 votes (7.43%), Shram Sanskriti Party has garnered 372,834 (3.49 %), and Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) has secured 328, 359 votes (3.08%).

Kul Bahadur GC, Joint-Spokesperson for the Election Commission, said vote counting under the PR system would be completed by Wednesday morning.

Only six parties--RSP, NC, UML, NCP, Shram Sanskriti Party, and RPP--have met the threshold. No other parties have surpassed the PR threshold.

According to Section 60 (11) of the House of Representatives Member Election Act, 2017, only the parties that receive at least three per cent of the total valid proportional votes are eligible to obtain seats under the proportional representation system.

According to Section 52 of the Political Parties Act, 2017, only those parties that secure at least one direct seat and cross the three per cent threshold in proportional representation will be recognised as national parties.

In the 275-member Lower House, 165 members are elected through the first-past-the-post (direct) system and 110 through the proportional representation system.

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SHRAM SANSKRITI PARTY GETS NATIONAL PARTY STATUS

BY NISHA RAI
Dharan, Mar. 10

The Shram Sanskriti Party has secured three seats in the direct elections for the House of Representatives and successfully attained national party status by crossing the required threshold in the proportional representation (PR) vote count. The party achieved this milestone within just four months of its formation.

The party claimed three seats in Koshi Province. Party chairman Harkaraj Rai (Sampang) won in Sunsari-1 with 35,741 votes, while Dhruvaraj Rai and Aren Rai triumphed in Bhojpur and Khotang with 16,663 and 16,612 votes, respectively.

According to the latest PR tallies, the party has amassed 347,785 votes. The Election Commission confirmed that while the count continues, the party, alongside Rastriya Swatantra Party, the Nepali Congress, CPN (UML), Nepali Communist Party, and Rastriya Prajatantra Party, has officially cleared the threshold.

The party was registered in October last year by the then-mayor, Harkaraj Rai (Sampang), shortly after the announcement of election.

RSP set to target domestic production, IT, power exports to achieve high growth rate

BY MODNATH DHAKAL
Kathmandu, Mar. 10

With a likely two-thirds majority win in the March 5 elections for the House of Representatives (HoR), the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) is heading to form the next government generating hopes that the governance system would be improved within a short period.

The party said in its election manifesto that it will begin the move to good governance with an investigation of the assets of the high-ranking officials who held the public posts since 1990. Illegally acquired assets will be confiscated and nationalised, it said.

This agenda has been in public discussion for the last couple of decades but no governments in the past took steps towards it. Meanwhile, the private sector has been demanding for a self-declaration of the wealth for once so that it will be a taxable asset in the future.

According to the RSP, judges for high and Supreme Courts will be appointed based on meritocratic and competitive system, not on political quotas. It has also proposed studying the possibility of live broadcasting of court hearing for transparency.

The party has also pledged to end the practice of sister organisations and party-affiliated trade unions in civil service. Formation of an autonomous board to handle civil service transfers to ensure stability is also proposed.

Likewise, by 2031, public services will be shifted to online platforms, along with a creation of national database linking to the National ID cards to streamline social security and policy implementation, to supplement the good governance initiatives.

The 'Nagarik App' and National ID card will be fully integrated, and the influence of middlemen in services such as land revenue, driving licence, and passports will be completely displaced.

The traditional paper-based decision-making system will be replaced by digital approvals, and if the decision is not made within a set timeframe, the file will be automatically approved or the official will be held accountable, read the manifesto.

"By 2031, the 'compulsion' to visit offices and meet employees to receive government services will be brought to an end, and the basic framework of a 'face-less' and 'paperless' administration will be prepared," it said.

These digital targets are easier to meet as infrastructure including the fibre-optics, broadband internet, telephony and electricity has been expanded across the country. However, in the short term, special campaigns for digital literacy should be implemented to educate and empower people in using the technology safely.

Similarly, the RSP's other announcements, like establishing Nepal as a reliable IT export country and centre for skilled youth, also match with the digital progress made so far. The IT sector will be declared a strategic industry and an autonomous IT Promotion Board will be established.

By increasing IT exports to over 30 billion annually over the next 10 years and building infrastructure—including high-speed internet and 'co-working spaces' for 'digital nomads'—Nepal will have become South Asia's best technology centre, according to the party. Current IT exports is estimated at approximately US$ 1.5 billion. The party has also announced tax discounts and easy repatriation of profits to the investors in the IT sector.

According to the experts, in order to achieve these targets, system and style of IT education in Nepal should be revamped and better connectivity should be established between the academic institutions and industry.

To create favourable environment for IT sector development, instead of exporting electricity, it will be supplied to large-scale data centres and server farms, the party said.

In terms of the broader national target, the RSP has aimed for a 7 per cent annual economic growth rate to create a foundation for a US$ 100 billion economy and per capita income exceeding US$ 3,000 within the next 5-7 years.

While the political stability can ensure policy stability and help in attracting more investment and create business-friendly environment in the country helping to achieve 7 per cent economic growth, doubling the per capita income (PCI) is rather challenging. Currently, Nepal's PCI is US$ 1496. It took one-and-a-half decades to double the per capita from US$ 721 in 2010 to 2025.

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PAKISTAN CONGRATULATES NEPAL ON HOLDING SUCCESSFUL ELECTIONS

RSS
Kathmandu, Mar. 10

Pakistan has congratulated Nepal on the successful completion of its general elections.

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar extended his heartiest congratulations to the people and the leadership of Nepal, according to the Embassy of Pakistan in Kathmandu.

In his message, the Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister said Pakistan deeply values its fraternal relations with Nepal and expressed hope that the two countries would continue to strengthen their longstanding friendship.

Dar also said he looks forward to working closely with his counterpart and the new government of Nepal to further enhance bilateral cooperation, explore new avenues of partnership, and promote regional peace and prosperity.

Two Rukum West sisters found dead in Bheri River

BY RAJU LAMICHHANE
Rukum West, Mar. 10

Two teenage girls from the same family who had gone to attend a relative's wedding in Bhalkhola of Musikot Municipality-1 from Garalagoth of Banphikot Rural Municipality-3 in Rukum West were found dead on the bank of the Sanibheri River on Tuesday morning. Another girl remains missing.

According to Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Bed Bahadur Poudel of the District Police Office, the three girls are daughters of Purna Bahadur Oli and Nirajan Oli of Banphikot-3. Purna Bahadur and Nirajan are brothers living in the same household.

DSP Poudel said the bodies of Nirajan's daughters -- Urmila Oli, 14, and Kalpana Oli, 12, -- were found on the riverbank. However, the whereabouts of Sapana Oli, 13, daughter of Purna Bahadur, are still unknown. The bodies of Urmila and Kalpana have been taken to Salle District Hospital for post-mortem examination, while a search operation is ongoing for Sapana.

Police suspect that the girls may have been swept away while attempting to cross the river on their way back home from the wedding in Bhalkhola, which lies across the river. Investigation into the incident is underway.

However, Devraj Upadhyay, a ward member of Banphikot Rural Municipality-3 who is at the incident site, said the case appears unusual. According to him, there is a suspension bridge near their home to cross the Sanibheri River and it remains unclear why the girls attempted to cross the river instead.

He said that the two deceased girls still had wedding tika on their foreheads and showed no visible injuries on their bodies. Since there was mud in their noses and ears, it is assumed they were swept away by the river. Nevertheless, the reason they tried to cross the river despite the presence of a bridge remains a mystery. The bodies of Urmila and Kalpana were found about 500 metres apart. The incident site is about 150 metres from their home.

According to ward member Upadhyay, Urmila, Sapana and Kalpana were studying in Grades 7, 6 and 5 respectively. Among Nirajan's four children, Urmila was the second daughter and Kalpana the youngest. Nirajan is currently working in India.

Sapana, the missing girl, is the youngest among Purna Bahadur's four children. He works as a daily wage labourer.

14 women elected under FPTP system

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 10

A total of 14 women candidates have been elected to the House of Representatives (HoR) under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system, accounting for 8.5 per cent of the FPTP seats. Of them, 13 are elected from the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) and one from the Nepali Congress. No women candidates from other parties secured victory under the FPTP system.

The RSP candidates elected to the Lower House include Nisha Dangi from Jhapa-1, former Deputy Speaker Indira Rana Magar from Jhapa-2, Asha Jha from Morang-5, Rubina Acharya from Morang-6, Pushpa Kumari Chaudhary from Saptari-1, Gauri Kumari from Mahottari-4, Nitima Bhandari from Sarlahi-1, Ashika Tamang from Dhading-1, Ranju Darshana from Kathmandu-1, Toshima Karki from Lalitpur-3, Sobita Gautam from Chitwan-3, Bina Gurung from Kaski-3, and Komal Gyawali from Kailali-1.

Nisha Dangi secured 45,680 votes, defeating her closest rival from Nepali Congress who received 10,550 votes. Former Deputy Speaker Indira Rana Magar won with 60,110 votes, defeating former Speaker Dev Raj Ghimire of the CPN-UML.

Similarly, Asha Jha garnered 30,434 votes, while her nearest competitor Phul Kumar Lalbani of Nepali Congress received 9,415 votes. Rubina Acharya secured victory with 55,513 votes, defeating veteran Nepali Congress leader Dr. Shekhar Koirala, who obtained only 12,850 votes.

Pushpa Kumari Chaudhary won the Saptari-1 seat with 38,195 votes, defeating Sumit Kumar of Swabhiman Party, who secured 7,847 votes. Nitima Bhandari received 44,181 votes, while her closest contender Shambhu Lal Shrestha got 7,871 votes.

Ranju Darshana was elected from Kathmandu-1 with 15,455 votes, defeating Nepali Congress candidate Prabal Thapa Chettri. Likewise, Ashika Tamang secured victory with 39,128 votes, defeating CPN-UML candidate Bhumi Prasad Tripathi, who received 15,032 votes.

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BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold	: Rs. 317,000 /-
Worked Gold	: NA
Silver	: Rs. 5,720 /-

STOCK

NEPSE	: 2,843.35
Total Amount	: 21,502,031,320.3
No. of Share	: 52,711,353



PHOTO: RSS

Visitors enjoying sunflower blooming at a farm run by Chandra Prasad Adhikari in Phulbari of Bharatpur Metropolitan City-15.

NEPSE surge dips by 32 points

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 10



The stock market, which was closed for the entire day on Monday due to three consecutive positive circuit breaks, saw a sharp decline on Tuesday.

The benchmark share market index, NEPSE, posted a double-digit fall of 32.08 points (1.11 per cent) and closed at 2,843.35 points.

On the first trading day after the election on Monday, the NEPSE rose by 6 per cent, triggering the third circuit breaker, after which share trading was closed for the rest of the day.

The NEPSE index had surged by 162.93 points to close at 2,875.44 points.

According to the Nepal Stock Exchange, the sensitive index, which measures the performance of group 'A' companies, also decreased by 4.40 points (0.89 per cent) to close at 489.69 points.

On Monday, the sensitive index had increased by 28.11 points (6.03 per cent) to close at 494.10 points.

Although the NEPSE index fell, transactions increased significantly in Tuesday's trading.

A total of 52,711,353 shares worth Rs. 21.50 billion from 329 companies were traded in 205,611 transactions on Tuesday.

On Sunday, a total of 1,143,767 shares worth Rs. 549 million from 261 companies were traded in 4,051 transactions.

According to NEPSE, the sub-indices of all groups, except non-life insurance, life insurance, and mutual funds, decreased in Tuesday's trading.

The sub-index of the manufacturing and processing group posted the highest fall of 167.86 points, followed by the hotels and tourism group and the trading group, whose indices decreased by 144.83 points and 83.66 points respectively.

Similarly, the sub-index of development banks dropped by 71.56 points, hydropower by 55.74 points, finance by 55.13 points, others by 35.54 points, banking by 19.12 points, microfinance by 9.41 points, and investment by 1.80 points.

However, the sub-index of the life insurance group increased by 70.46 points, non-life insurance by 55.77 points, and mutual funds by 0.28 points.

The share prices of 118 companies increased, while the share prices of 201 companies declined in Tuesday's trading.

On Monday, the share prices of 257 companies increased, while the share price of only one company declined.

Share prices of Reliance Spinning Mills increased by 10 per cent while the share price of Salapa Bikas Bank increased by 9.99 points.

On Sunday, the share price of Reliance Spinning Mills had decreased by 10.20 per cent.

Similarly, share price of Three Star Hydropower increased by 9.08 per cent, Kalika Power Company by 8.87 per cent and Life Insurance Corporation (Nepal) by 5.42 per cent.

However, share price of Him Star Urja Company decreased by 6.36 per cent, Miteri Development Bank by 5.87 per cent and Mailung Khola Jal Vidhyut Company by 5.74 per cent.

Women sustaining their livelihood through Bhorla leaves

BY DHIRENDRA PRASAD SAH
Rajbiraj, Mar. 10



PHOTO: DHIRENDRA PRASAD SAH/TRN

Traditional leaf plates and bowls (duna–tapari) made by women of Birendra Bazaar of Rupani Rural Municipality–6 in Saptari.

For impoverished women in Birendra Bazaar of Rupani Rural Municipality–6 in Saptari, Bhorla leaves commonly used during feasts and gatherings have become a major source of livelihood.

Dozens of women collect these leaves from nearby forests early in the morning, bring them to the market, and sell them for making traditional leaf plates and bowls (duna–tapari).

The income from the sale of these leaves helps them cover their daily household expenses.

Women who rely on these leaves to make a living and meet their household expenses go to the nearby forest in the morning. The leaves collected after working hard all day are bundled and brought to the market. After that, they are busy tying and selling the leaves all day.

Local resident Sunita Sardar said, "Our only concern is feeding our families. The little money we earn from tying or selling leaves throughout the day is what keeps our households running."

Bhorla leaves are mainly used to make traditional plates and bowls.

Recently, its demand has increased as an alternative to plastic plates during feasts, pujas and festivals. Currently, a plate made of Bhorla leaves is sold in the market for around Rs. 80-100 per 100 pieces.

According to another local woman, Rina Sardar, they can earn Rs. 500 to 800 a day, but the work is far from easy.

"There is fear of wild animals in the forest, and we have to endure heat and rain. Even after bringing the leaves to the market, we don't get a fair price," she complained.

She added that political leaders promise employment and development during elections, but so far there has been no proper market system or support for poor women.

"If we received a fair price for the leaves we collect, our lives would be somewhat easier," she said.

However, the market is gradually changing.

Sagar Sah, who has been selling snacks in Bhorla leaf plates for three generations, said, "Since Bhorla leaves have become difficult to find, we have started using paper plates and bowls instead of Bhorla's plates."

According to Bhorla leaf trader Laxmi Das, the availability of ready-made paper plates and bowls in the market has slightly reduced the attraction toward Bhorla leaves.

Nevertheless, Das emphasised that Bhorla leaves remain important from environmental and health perspectives.

Dinesh Kumar Yadav, a member of Madhes Academy, said that at a time when products are increasing pollution, natural products like Bhorla leaves are a safer alternative.

If the local government and concerned bodies can establish a systematic market, collection and processing centre for such organic products in the Rupani and Rajbiraj areas, it seems that the living standards of hundreds of women like Sunita and Rina can be improved.

Amit Sancheti of Saptari Chamber of Commerce and Industry said, "Policies should be introduced to make Bhorla leaves a sustainable source of commercial income. If organised markets and professional security are ensured, it could bring a major transformation in the lives of women here."

Gold dearer by Rs. 3,800 per tola

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 10

The prices of gold and silver increased sharply once again in the Nepali market on Tuesday.

According to the Federation of Nepal Gold and Silver Dealers' Association (FENEGOSIDA), the price of gold rose by Rs. 3,800 in a single day on Tuesday.

The price of gold reached Rs. 317,000 per tola (11.664 grams) today.

The price of the precious yellow metal, which had increased on Sunday, declined on Monday. However, its price increased again in the domestic market on Tuesday.

Gold was traded at Rs. 313,200 per tola on Monday, while it was traded at Rs. 316,900 per tola on Sunday. Gold was priced at Rs. 313,300 per tola on Friday last week.

Likewise, the price of silver also increased by Rs. 310 per tola, reaching Rs. 5,720. Silver was traded at Rs. 5,410 per tola on Monday.

The prices of gold and silver have been fluctuating significantly in the domestic market in line with trends in the international market over the past couple of months.

Earlier, on January 29, the price of gold had reached Rs. 339,300 per tola, while silver was priced at Rs. 7,505 per tola.

According to FENEGOSIDA, the price of gold in the international market increased by US$ 69 per ounce to US$ 5,163 today.

Gold was priced at US$ 5,094 per ounce on Monday in the international market. Similarly, the price of silver reached US$ 88.27 per ounce in the international market today.

District Agro Office distributes apple, walnut saplings

BY NANDA SINGH
Raling (Humla), Mar. 10

The District Agriculture Development Office in Humla has distributed apple and walnut seedlings to the farmers.

According to an agreement with the farmers in the district, the Office in Humla has been distributing apple and walnut plants, as informed by the office's chief, Chudamani Panta.

In the past, the plants were purchased from other districts, now they have been supplied by agricultural farms in Humla.

According to Panta, for the fiscal year 2025/26, the Agriculture Development Office purchased 7,000 walnut plants and 6,000 apple plants, which were sold and distributed to farmers at a subsidised price.

Under the Apple and Walnut Development Programme and the Apple and Walnut Orchard Establishment and Development Programme, the Office had signed agreements worth Rs. 1 million with 60 agricultural farms in the district in the month of Magh (mid-January to mid-February).

As per the agreement, 550 apple and 350 walnut plants were purchased from the Horticulture Development Centre at Dharma Deuli in Chankheli. The remaining plants were purchased from farmers in Sarkegad, Kharpunath, and Namkha municipalities.

> Under the Apple and Walnut Development Programme and the Apple and Walnut Orchard Establishment and Development Programme, the Office had signed agreements worth Rs. 1 million with 60 agricultural farms in the district.

After purchasing the plants, the Office in Humla coordinated with the agricultural branches of various municipalities to carry out the distribution. A while ago, some plants were distributed in coordination with the municipalities of Tanjakot, Adanchuli, Chankheli, and Sarkegad, but now, there has been a rush of farmers coming daily to collect their saplings from the higher regions of Namkha, Simkot, and Kharpunath.

Panta said that each farm is being provided with 500 walnut and 1,000 apple plants. The plants are being sold at Rs. 130 per apple plant and Rs. 550 per walnut plant.

Oil price drops, stocks rise after Trump signals Iran war nearly over

AGENCY
New York, Mar. 10



Oil prices fell sharply on Tuesday after US President Donald Trump said that the war in Iran would come to an end "very soon".

Crude had reached almost $120 a barrel on Monday over fears that the conflict would cause lengthy disruption to energy supplies from the Middle East, but dropped back to around $90 following Trump's comments.

Although oil prices are still significantly higher than they were before the war, European stock markets rebounded with London's FTSE 100 index rising 1.9%. Gas prices also receded. Trump said he thought "the war is very complete, pretty much", although he later warned Iran to not block the Strait of Hormuz, a shipping route crucial to global energy supplies.

"If Iran does anything that stops the flow of Oil within the Strait of Hormuz, they will be hit by the United States of America TWENTY TIMES HARDER than they have been hit thus far," he wrote on social media.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said "in response to Trump's nonsense", that Iran's armed forces will "not allow the export of a single litre of oil from the region".

Trump told a news conference in Florida: "We took a little excursion because we felt we had to do that to get rid of some evil. Then, I think you'll see it's going to be a short-term excursion."

Brent crude fell below $84 a barrel at one point before rising to $90.21 on Tuesday.

Gas also dropped, with UK prices for month-ahead delivery falling by more than 10% to 123p a therm, well below Monday's peak of 171p.

The fall in oil prices has given traders a moment to "exhale", but energy markets remain in a state of "total tug-of-war", said Alberto Bellorin, founder and managing director oil and gas investment firm InterCapital Energy. Oil trading will "remain incredibly twitchy", he said, and prices are likely to spike if the conflict escalates and fall if it seems to be easing.

European stock markets followed the relief rally seen in the US and Asia earlier. Germany's Dax index climbed 2.6% and the French Cac 40 rose 2.1%.

Earlier in Asia, Japan's Nikkei 225 had closed up 2.9%, recovering some of Monday's losses, while South Korea's Kospi gained 5.4%. Stock markets in the region had been hit hard on investor concerns that disruptions in the Gulf could mean higher inflation and rising interest rates.

The Strait of Hormuz is crucial to the global energy market as around a fifth of the world's oil passes through the narrow waterway. But traffic through the narrow passage has all but halted since the war started more than a week ago. The boss of Saudi Arabia's Aramco, the world's biggest oil exporter, has warned of "catastrophic consequences" for markets if the route remains blocked.

Amin Nasser said global stocks of oil were at the lowest for five years and the supply disruptions meant these would be used at a faster rate. "The longer the disruption goes on... the more drastic the consequences for the global economy," he said.

On Monday, G7 nations said they were ready to take "necessary measures" to address the global supply of energy in the light of surging oil prices.

A meeting between G7 leaders and the International Energy Agency (IEA) ended without a final decision on whether the nations would release oil from stockpiles, though the matter was discussed.

Robin Mills, chief executive of Qamar Energy, an energy consultancy based in Dubai, told the BBC that there was a reluctance to use this option too early as "once the strategic reserves are gone, they're gone". However, he acknowledged it was a tough decision.

"If you believe the war is over, as Donald Trump says, then you don't need to use them. But if you believe the disruption is continuing, now is the time to put a bit of oil back and calm the market," he said.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves said on Monday that the UK had used the G7 meeting to urge "immediate de-escalation" in the Middle East and guaranteed security for vessels in the region.

"I stand ready to support a co-ordinated release of collective IEA oil reserves," she said. Before the Iran war, financial markets had been expecting a cut in UK interest rates at some point this year. But these expectations vanished after the spike in oil prices raised the prospect of higher inflation.

The yield, or interest rate, on two-year government bonds - which indicates how much it would cost to borrow money for two years - was down to 3.87% having peaked at 4.15% on Monday. Before the conflict began the yield stood at 3.5%.

More than 400 candidates lose deposits in Koshi

BY SACHIN POKHREL
Biratnagar, Mar. 10



A total of 495 candidates had entered the electoral race in the province. Among them, 404 candidates were affiliated with forty different political parties, while 91 contested as independent candidates.

More than four hundred candidates who contested in 28 constituencies across the fourteen districts of Koshi Province have forfeited their election deposits.

A total of 495 candidates had entered the electoral race in the province. Among them, 404 candidates were affiliated with forty different political parties, while 91 contested as independent candidates.

In Sunsari-1, 24 candidates lost their deposits. Out of the 26 candidates who contested in Sunsari-1, only the winning candidate, chair of the Shram Sanskriti Party Harkaraj Rai 'Sampang' and Goma Tamang 'Sarin' of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) managed to retain their deposits, according to the office of the returning officer.

Among the 26 candidates in Sunsari-1, 19 represented various political parties and seven were independent.

Candidates from major parties, including the CPN-UML, Nepali Congress (NC) and the Nepali Communist Party (NCP), also failed to secure enough votes to retain their deposits, said Returning Officer Divyaraj Ghimire.

Those who forfeited their deposits include Surya Bahadur Bhattarai of the Nepali Communist Party, Tikaram Limbu of CPN-UML and Sujendra Tamang of the NC.

Six candidates in Dhankuta fail to cross 100 votes

According to our Pakhribas correspondent Santosh Subedi, six candidates contesting the House of Representatives (HoR) election in Dhankuta failed to secure even 100 votes. Out of the 17 candidates who had filed nominations, these six could not cross the 100-vote mark.

According to the final results released by the Office of the Chief Returning Officer, those who lost their deposits include Uttam Sakhakarmi of the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, Prem Bahadur Thapa of the Aam Janata Party, Bal Kumar Tamli of the Federal Democratic National Forum, Sagar Rai of the Mongol National Organisation, and independent candidates Man Kumar Yonjan and Jitendra Rai.

Nine out of 12 candidates lose deposits in Solukhumbu

According to our Solukhumbu correspondent Santosh Raut, nine of the 12 candidates who contested the House of Representatives election from the district lost their deposits.

Those who forfeited their deposits include Rishidhan Rai of the Rastriya Swatantra Party, Biyas Rai of the Shram Sanskriti Party, Pemba Chhiri Sherpa of the Ujyalo Nepal Party and Rajendra Basnet of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP).

Similarly, Lakpa Sherpa of the Janata Samajbadi Party Nepal (JSP-N), Shridhwaj Tamang of the Miteri Party Nepal, Man Kumar Gurung of the Mongol National Organisation, Gunaraj Bhattarai of the Aam Janata Party and Kamal Bahadur Magar of the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party also lost their deposits.

In Jhapa, 78 out of 90 candidates lose deposits

According to our Birtamod correspondent Leelaraj Khadka, while RSP candidates secured victories in all five constituencies in Jhapa, most other candidates lost their deposits.

Out of the 90 candidates who contested in the district, 78 forfeited their deposits, according to the District Election Office, Jhapa.

Apart from the winning candidates, only a few managed to retain their deposits, KP Sharma Oli, chairperson of CPN-UML, former Speaker Devraj Ghimire of the same party and former Member of Parliament Lal Prasad Sawa Limbu.

From the Nepali Congress, Keshav Raj Pandey (Jhapa-1) and Deu Kumar Thebe retained their deposits, while Rajendra Kumar Lingden, chairperson of the RPP, and Kewal Ram Rai of the Shram Sanskriti Party Jhapa-1 also managed to retain theirs.

According to the Election Office, nearly all other candidates from major parties in Jhapa lost their deposits. In Jhapa-1, 12 of the 15 candidates lost their deposits. In Jhapa-2, 16 of the 18 candidates forfeited their deposits, with only the winner and runner-up retaining theirs.

Similarly, in Jhapa-3, 15 out of 17 candidates lost their deposits. In Jhapa-4, 13 of the 16 candidates forfeited their deposits; only the runner-up Lal Prasad Sawa Limbu of CPN-UML and NC candidate Dev Kumar Thebe managed to retain theirs.

In the much-talked about Jhapa-5 constituency, all candidates except the runner-up KP Sharma Oli lost their deposits. Out of 24 candidates in the constituency, 22 forfeited their deposits.

Nine candidates lose deposits in Taplejung

According to our Taplejung correspondent Chandra Pandak, nine candidates who contested the House of Representatives election in the district lost their deposits. Out of the 13 candidates contesting in the district's only constituency, nine failed to secure enough votes.

According to the Office of the Chief Returning Officer, those who lost their deposits include Birendra Shrestha of the RSP, Kirtiman Maden of the Ujyalo Nepal Party and Muksam Labung of the Federal Democratic National Forum.

Also forfeiting their deposits were Indra Prasad Thapa of the RPP, Narapati Paudel of the Nepali Communist Party, and Arun Subba Lechharbo of the JSP-N.

Likewise, Surya Gurung of the JSP-N, Santa Bahadur Limbu of the Mongol National Organisation and Indra Kumar Limbu of the Nepal Janamukti Party also lost their deposits.

DAO THANKS STAKEHOLDERS FOR SUPPORT IN HOLDING POLLS

BY ANIL PARAJULI
Hetauda, Mar. 10

The District Administration Office, Makwanpur, has expressed gratitude to all those who supported the successful conduct of the House of Representatives election held in the district on March 5.

Issuing a notice on Tuesday, the administration thanked all stakeholders for helping conduct the election in a clean, free, fair, peaceful and fearless environment while complying with the code of conduct devvised by the Election Commission.

The administration extended its appreciation to voters, residents of Makwanpur, political parties, candidates and people's representatives. It also thanked the Chief Election Officer, election officers, provincial election officers and election code of conduct monitoring officers.

Similarly, the administration expressed gratitude to the security agencies including the Nepali Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force Nepal, the National Investigation Department and election police personnel.

Chief District Officer Basanta Adhikari also thanked civil servants, teachers and schools, civil society members, journalists and media personnel, observers, volunteers, non-governmental organisations, transport entrepreneurs, the private sector and other concerned individuals and institutions for their support.

Floods, erosion worsen in Dadeldhura



PHOTO: PUSHKAR BHANDARI
The Rangun-Pantura River entering Thannajhala settlement after breaking the embankment built eight years ago.

BY PUSKAR BHANDARI
Dadeldhura, Mar. 10

Despite spending more than Rs. 2 billion over the past two decades to build embankments along rivers in the Jogbuda area, authorities have failed to protect settlements and fertile land from floods and erosion.

Because the budget was released in small portions, durable embankments could not be constructed, leaving dozens of settlements along the Rangun-Pantura rivers gradually deserted.

"We came here from Achham around 1978/79 (2034-35 BS). At that time, the area was covered with dense forest filled with trees such as khair and sisau. There were no motorable roads then," said Bajir Saud of Thannajhala in Parashuram Municipality-6. According to him, after the government introduced a policy to collect timber, large sections of the forest were cleared and the khair trees were taken away. Later, settlements began to expand. People gradually started living in Jogbuda, Kainpani, Simalkhet, Parashuram and Kuna.

"As one person arrived, others followed and the settlement kept growing. Hillsides were also cut to make farmland. But since around 2004, annual floods have started washing away both farmlands and houses," Saud said.

Locals said that although the government has built embankments, they have failed to provide long-term protection.

"We pay taxes to the government, but we have not received justice even after our houses were swept away," Saud complained.

"We have neither been resettled nor has a durable embankment been built here. Where are we supposed to go now? Our homes and land have been washed away and we have no money. Floodwaters have entered from Sargauda settlement to Simalkhet, leaving people here in distress," he said.

Many locals are still living in the same area. Some families have settled near the community forest, while others continue temporary farming on the riverbed.

According to residents, a few years ago when the government constructed embankments, many families who had moved near the community forest returned to the riverbed area. They prepared farmland and built temporary houses there.

"We made fields using money earned by family members working in India and hiring bulldozers," Saud said. "But the Rangun-Pantura rivers broke the embankments again and washed everything away. Now many people in the village have been displaced."

He said that in the past, even when floods occurred, the dense forest helped protect farmlands and settlements. Trees and bushes would slow down the floodwater. "Now the Rangun belt is as empty as a mirror. After all the trees were cut, the river's flow began hitting the settlements directly," he said. "Now it feels like even a small amount of rain can bring water into the village."

The Jogbuda area stretches westward from Siddathan of Parashuram Municipality-12, crossing the Pantura River and covering settlements such as Sargauda, Thannajhala, Simalkhet and Kuna in Ward No. 6 up to Tatapani.

Locals said that after 1995, infrastructure such as roads, electricity, drinking water systems, irrigation, schools and health posts gradually developed in these settlements.

"Jogbuda first got road access when Ganesh Bhatta was a minister," Saud said. "Later, when Sher Bahadur Deuba became Home Minister, other development works were also carried out. But the area could not become stable as floods kept sweeping everything away."

Residents said that gabion embankments were constructed from Sargauda to Simalkhet, but they did not last long. About half a dozen small streams that merge with the larger Rangun and Pantura rivers eventually washed away the structures.

Around 2018-19, nearly 20 kilometres of wire-mesh embankments were built at a cost of millions of rupees. Afterwards, a permanent irrigation canal was also constructed in the fields.

However, locals said floods have once again washed away farmland in recent years after parts of the embankment collapsed. The irrigation canal, however, remains intact.

चैत अङ्कका
विशेष आकर्षण



- उत्तरवर्ती नेपाली कविताको स्वरूप
- लीलाबहादुर क्षत्रीसम्बन्धी विशेष लेख
- मिलारेप्पाको गुफामा
- सतीदेवीको प्राणप्रतिष्ठा
- ज्याँ पाल सार्त्रको संस्मरण
- प्रा.डा. अभि सुवेदीको नाटक : शिल्पीको घाम
- डा. दुबसु क्षेत्रीको अन्तर्वार्ता
- कविता : डा. बेन्जु शर्मा/दिनेश अधिकारी/श्रवण मुकारुङ/उषा शेरचन/प्रज्वल अधिकारी

Leopard rescued in Lalitpur

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 10



A technical team from the Central Zoo in Jawalakhel rescued a leopard from a store room of Machhapuchchhre School at Kusunti Height in Lalitpur on Tuesday.

The rescue was carried out after tranquillising the animal with a dart, with joint support from police at Satdobato, the District Forest Office Lalitpur, and the Lalitpur Metropolitan Police.

According to Central Zoo Chief Satya Narayan Sah, the leopard, estimated to be about 10 years old and weighing around 60 kg, has been kept at the zoo's wildlife hospital for treatment following the rescue. He said the animal will be released back into its natural habitat after it recovers. The zoo has rescued 241 wild animals, birds and mammals over the past year. Of them, 57 animals and birds were treated and released back into their natural habitat.

Currently, the zoo houses more than 1,300 wild animals of 115 species.

Case No. : 082-Cp-0713 Case : divorce Case Section : 1 (Simple)

This is a 21 day notice issued by the Sarlahi District Court, Malangwa Sarahi.

In the case filed by Mr. Ajay Kumar Agrawal, against the defendant Mrs. Diksha Gupta Agrawal, aged 40 years, daughter of Amarnath Gupta and daughter-in-law of Pawan Kumar Agrawal, currently residing at her maternal home in West Bengal State, District West Medinipur, Kharagpur Municipality, Puratan Bazar, under Kharagpur Police Station, India, seeking divorce. Pursuant to the Court's order dated 2082/10/11 (2025/01/25 A.D.) it was directed that a 21 days court notice be published in a national daily newspaper in the name of the defendant. Therefore, the defendant is hereby required to appear before this Court, either in person or through a legally authorized representative, and submit a written response within 21 days from the date of publication of this notice (excluding travel time). If the defendant fails to appear within the prescribed period, the case shall be decided in accordance with prevailing law, and no subsequent claim or objection shall be entertained.

Issued on : 2026/03/11

Krishi Samagri Company Limited
Head Office, Kathmandu Nepal

Approval of Technical Bids and Opening of Price Bids

(Publication Date: March 11, 2026)

This is to inform all concerned that Krishi Samagri Company Limited has decided to open the Price bids of the following bidder for the execution of the Supply and Delivery of Chemical Fertilizer Urea (46-0-0) -30,000±2% under IFB No: KSCL/U/ICB-192/082/083 and Supply and Delivery of Chemical Fertilizer DAP (18-46-0) -30,000±2% under IFB No: KSCL/D/ICB-193/082/083 published on January 22, 2026 in "The Rising Nepal" and www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp as their bids are found substantially responsive in accordance with the Instructions to Bidders. Successful bidders are invited for their or authorized representative's presence in the following date, time and place:

IFB No.	Name of the bidder	Address
KSCL/U/ICB-192/082/083	1. M/S Sun International FZE	Dubai, UAE
	2. M/S Aditya Birla Global Trading (Singapore) Pte. Ltd.	Singapore
KSCL/D/ICB-193/082/083	1. M/S Aditya Birla Global Trading (Singapore) Pte. Ltd.	Singapore

Price bids opening date, time and place:
Date : March 19, 2026
Time : 14:00 hours (Nepal Standard Time)
Place : Krishi Samagri Company Limited, Head Office, Kathmandu Nepal

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.
-Mark Twain

EDITORIAL

Deepening Pollution Crisis

Air pollution is no longer limited to cities. It has started affecting life even in the clean hills of Nepal. The recent haze in Dadeldhura district is testimony to the fact that environmental issues transcend geographical boundaries. Typically known for its clear skies and breathtaking view of the snow-capped Himalayas, Dadeldhura has recently experienced poor visibility due to worsening air quality. Locals have found it difficult to see one hill from another, although the Himalayas, standing in the north, are usually clearly visible during this period. According to reports, polluted air emanating from factories in Nepal's Tarai region and neighbouring India has covered the hills, making the sky unusually dark.

As a result of this worsening air quality, with the air quality index rated as unhealthy, residents in the region are already experiencing breathing difficulties and irritated eyes. The prolonged exposure to polluted air causes health issues, including respiratory problems and heart disease, affecting the most vulnerable groups, including children and the elderly. This worrying trend shows that air pollution is fast becoming a major cross-border environmental issue in the region, and that requires urgent attention.

Pollution is entering the country not only from outside. Rapidly growing cities, unregulated building practices, the burning of garbage, and the increase in the number of vehicles are adding to the pollution across the nation. Development is a necessity if the country is to grow economically, but it should be balanced with environmental protection. If the current trend of pollution continues, it will affect our booming tourism industry. The concerned authorities should not delay in taking steps to curb pollution.

Air pollution directly affects human health. Hospitals have already started reporting increased cases of respiratory problems, eye irritation, and breathing difficulties. The problem is particularly acute among children and the elderly. Now, the policymakers should think outside the box and consider the bigger picture. Waiting for the rain and the wind to blow the pollution away is not a strategy. It is merely postponing the problem.

A more holistic approach is required, including both individual and regional action. At the national level, more stringent monitoring of emissions from industries, more efficient management of dust emanated from construction sites, and more stringent enforcement measures against open burning can help minimise local-level pollution. In addition, more green spaces in cities and efficient transportation systems can help clean up the air in the long run.

It is equally important for the nation to establish a more efficient monitoring system for air quality so that immediate measures can be taken when pollution levels escalate. At the regional level, Nepal must engage in dialogue with its neighbouring countries, including India and Bangladesh, regarding regional-level air pollution. Since all three countries in this region share similar environmental problems, a joint approach can help solve these issues more effectively.

Climate diplomacy on this issue can help build stronger relations while addressing a problem faced by millions of people. The recent phenomenon of haze in the western hills should be viewed as a problem and also a challenge. The joint efforts of all concerned determine the country's environmental conditions. Clear skies in the western hills should be the result of a commitment to a healthy environment.

Winter Olympics

DIXYA POUDEL

What does it take to be an athlete? Is it speed, strength, discipline or all of the above? Very often, sports are considered the pinnacle of discipline. Who else trains around the clock if not for athletes? In a way, thousands of hours of practice culminate in a matter of minutes in a sports activity. We may think that the victory in a game is determined by itself but it is actually determined by the hours of training long before the game even begins. It is akin to the surface of the iceberg; only 10 per cent of it is visible; the rest is out of sight beneath the water.

From February 6 to 22, 2026, the Winter Olympics were held in Italy as an eagerly awaited athletic event. Termed the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, the 25th edition of the Winter Games was as spectacular as ever. The motto of the event was, "IT's Your Vibe," and it featured a mascot called Tina (a white stoat). The opening and closing ceremonies were visually outstanding and overall, 2,900 athletes competed to win the gold. However, it was most unfortunate that Nepal was unable to participate.

As such, the Winter Olympics 2026 made history with a whopping 47 per cent participation of women. It also saw the Olympic flames lit in both Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo simultaneously. The highlight of the games was the new sport, Ski Mountaineering that made its debut featuring sprint and relay events. Millions of people viewed the games on the screens. Many Olympians were put in the global spotlight as their dedication and discipline in sports were applauded by viewers throughout the world.

It also brought forth the age-old question of mind over matter. It is not just a motivational cliché but a reference to the physiological reality wherein the brain overcomes the body's instinct to give up. Top-notch athletes have a remarkable command of their bodies. When the body screams in pain and breathing becomes strained, they access deeper 'reserve tanks' of strength and energy. Their self-talk is on another level as they transform their narrative of pain, pushed forward by the visualisation of victory.

Mind over matter for athletes means a state of flow, which is a neurological shift fueled by a potent mixture of brain chemicals-dopamine, endorphins and anandamide. They act as natural painkillers as well as performance enhancers, allowing the athlete to perform their sports with high precision and minimal conscious effort.

So let us come again to the question, what does it take to be an athlete? It seems it takes a lot more than discipline, training and vitality of the body. It means challenging the limits of the mind. While most of us are in bed snoozing the alarm, a resolute athlete is already awake for training. Besides the rigorous training of the body, there is also a more subtle training of the mind. The more the mind goes into a flow state in any sport, the higher the chances of victory.

The Winter Olympics 2026 is currently being followed by the Winter Paralympics. As such, the world remains enthralled by the achievement of the athletes who compete in each category of such events with extraordinary dexterity and grace.

Left Dominance Ends With RSP's Sway



Bishnu Prasad Gautam

Elections to the House of Representatives (HoR) have concluded peacefully. Vote counting under both the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR) systems has also ended. The elections, which had seemed nearly impossible when announced on September 12 last year and even after the Election Commission (EC) made public the election schedule on October 7, concluded without any unwanted incidents. No violence was reported, nor was re-polling required in any constituency.

It is the first parliamentary election in Nepal to be entirely free of violence. The government, particularly Prime Minister Sushila Karki and the members of her Cabinet, deserve kudos for holding peaceful elections on the scheduled date. It will also be an injustice not to commend the EC for accomplishing the key tasks in such a short timeframe. The election results have also dispelled widespread speculations that no party could secure a majority under the existing electoral system. The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) not only achieved a simple majority but came close to a two-thirds majority in the 275-member HoR. The party won 125 of 165 seats under the FPTP electoral system and secured over 48 per cent of votes under the PR system.

Rare feat

The seats won by RSP under FPTP account for 75 per cent of the total, which is a rare feat for a single party in the country's electoral history. The Nepali Congress (NC) had won a two-thirds majority in the first parliamentary election in 1959 by securing 74 of 109 seats (67.8 per cent). Even the CPN-UML and the CPN-Maoist Centre together won only 116 FPTP seats when they forged an electoral alliance in 2017. No single party has managed to garner over 35 per cent of the votes under the PR system since its introduction in 2008.

Balendra Shah (Balen), the RSP's prime ministerial candidate, made this seemingly impossible feat possible by leading the party's nationwide electoral campaign. He not only defeated powerful UML chairman KP Sharma Oli in the latter's home constituency in Jhapa with a margin of about 50,000 votes, but also generated a wave in favour of the party across the Tarai from Jhapa in the east to Kanchanpur in the west and in the urban centres of the valleys and hills. Many leaders, including Nepali Congress president Gagan Kumar Thapa were swept aside by the 'Balen wave' in Sarlahi - 4. Thapa lost election to RSP candidate Amaresh Kumar Singh.

Shah quit the post of Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City on January 18, joined the RSP, and addressed the party's first election rally in Janakpur the following day. His nine-minute address of January 9 proved pivotal in the party's resounding victory. A rapper by background, Shah had previously won the mayoral race in 2022 by defeating the candidates of the big parties like the NC and the UML. This time, he further cornered them in the parliamentary elections. The NC won only 18 seats under the FPTP electoral system while the UML won nine, and the Nepali Communist Party, led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', seven.

The RSP swept the Kathmandu Valley, winning all 15 seats across its three districts, and 30 of the 32 seats in the Madhes Province. It also won all seats in the plains of Koshi, Lumbini, and Sudurpaschim provinces, and 15 of 18 seats in Gandaki province. The UML failed to win even a single seat in Madhes, Bagmati, and Gandaki provinces, while the NCP did not win any seat in Gandaki, Sudurpaschim and Koshi provinces. However, the RSP won only one seat in Karnali and other seats were shared by older parties. Prachanda has been elected from Rukum East.

> The RSP campaigned on these promises, and voters responded. Now, the RSP and its forthcoming government must deliver on these aspirations.

For the old parties, the elections were humiliating. The NC, which was the largest party in the previous HoR with 89 seats, is likely to secure only 37 seats this time. The communists and the Madhes-centric parties fared even worse. None of the mushroomed Madhes-based parties, which had made a meaningful presence in the parliament right from the first Constituency Assembly elections, won a seat. For the first time since 2008, the HoR is free from communist dominance as well as old leaders. While the Maoist Centre and the UML won nearly a two-thirds majority in the 2017 elections and remained the largest force after the 2022 elections, with 78 members of the UML and 32 of the Maoist Centre. But now they are reduced to 41 lawmakers combined.

Likewise, the RPP that had 14 seats in the previous HoR won only one seat under FPTP system. However, the newly formed Shram Sanskriti Party of former Dharan Mayor Harka Raj Rai won three seats under the FPTP system and got the status of a national party. Rai won from Sunasri-1, surviving the 'Balen wave'. The feat achieved by Rai's party resembles that of Rabi Lamichhane's RSP, which won 21 seats in the 2022 elections held juts five months after its formation,

With the RSP's landslide victory, its senior leader, Balendra Shah, is poised to become the new Prime Minister, probably the youngest Prime Minister under Nepal's parliamentary system. Voters who placed their trust in him and his party are eagerly waiting for his appointment, expected within two weeks.

Public expectations

Obviously, the people voted for the RSP to establish good governance, end the syndicate of the old parties, which had been in power since 1990, control corruption, accelerate development in the country, and create jobs for youth so that they need not seek employment abroad. The RSP campaigned on these promises, and voters responded. Now, the RSP and its forthcoming government must deliver on these aspirations.

As said above, Nepali people have straightforward demands—good governance, corruption control, development of the nation and job creation, and punishment to the wrongdoers—and they can be accomplished if the leadership works honestly. The RSP's new government will have no excuse to betray voters' trust, although it faces significant challenges, mostly due to the latest situation in West Asia and beyond, which require immediate attention.

(The author is Acting Editor-in-Chief of this daily.)

Development At Environmental Cost



Garima Dahal

Nepal stands at a decisive crossroads. We dream of international airports, expressways, hydropower corridors, large buildings and complexes, mining, and international standard stadiums. Development has thus come to be equated with the visible infrastructure: concrete, steel, asphalt and floodlights. And the question is whether development really occurs at the expense of our environment? Nepal's development narrative is becoming more of a trade-off book. Take the case of the Nijgadh International Airport. The project, reportedly as a revolutionary aviation development, is scheduled to deforest around 7,500 hectares of woodland, one of the biggest deforestation plans in the country's history.

It has been estimated that an excess of two million trees might be cut. In addition to the number of trees, the site serves as a wildlife corridor, connecting habitats in the area of Parsa National Park, which is home to some endangered species like the Bengal tiger and Asian elephant. Hydrologists have also cautioned that the clearing of forest cover on this scale may increase soil erosion and the recharge of groundwater, exposing downstream towns such as Birgunj and Kalaiya to the risk of floods. Once ecological protection is subordinated to the need to build the political crisis, development starts to look like mining.

Tension

The same tension can be observed in the Pokhara International Airport. The Ritthepani Hill had to be cleared off and the natural scenery was changed forever. The danger to the bird species, such as the endangered vultures, has also been cited by environmental observers as a result of the flight-path planning in a biodiversity-harboring zone. There might be better connectivity due to infrastructure, but the environmental cost was not insignificant or fully expected.

The 76-kilometre Kathmandu-Tarai Fast Track traverses the ecologically sensitive, but fragile belt, the Chure (Shiwalik), which is already prone to water erosion. The rate of slope instability and fragmentation of habitat has been accelerated due to road construction. The Chure is a natural sponge that controls the movement of the water between the hills and the plains. It is dangerous to disturb without a stringent ecological mitigation, which has long-term hydrological implications.

Even the areas that are under protection are not safe anymore. The expansion of hydropower, though very important to the energy aspirations of Nepal, is also encroaching on biodiversity hotspots. Other hydropower projects like the Tanahu Hydropower have been criticised because of cutting more trees than are mentioned in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), which makes one wonder whether the regulations are being enforced. On the same note, the East-West Highway expansion around Chitwan National Park has increased the risk of collisions between wildlife and a lack of proper ecological planning.

The redevelopment of the Kirtipur Cricket Ground, which was carried out to develop an international standards stadium, cost hundreds of trees in a land that lies within the already suffocating Kathmandu Valley. They were not trees somewhere in a remote forest that could be ignored by the development planners. They were trees in an overcrowded hill city, cleared off to build floodlights and concrete stands. We are a nation that cannot afford to lose a single tree in the valley, where the quality of the air is already among the worst in South Asia, and where we cleared a cricket pitch. That is not development. That is a nation that no longer appreciates what it cannot afford to lose.

> When we continue to build at the expense of our ecological baselines, the price will not be only environmental but also generational.

The Department of Forests and Soil Conservation has recorded that each year, thousands of hectares of forest land have been diverted to roads, transmission lines, hydropower and urban sprawl, not just around the immediate footprint of the construction, but beyond. Indicators of air quality are also disastrous. According to the statistics provided by the Department of Environment, the PM2.5 rates in Kathmandu Valley often exceed the safe thresholds of the World Health Organisation (in some cases, it reaches levels that are 20 times higher than those), especially during the peak construction seasons when dust, car emissions, and open excavation collide.

The effect on wildlife is also evident: conservation reports associated with Chitwan National Park and Parsa National Park report increased rates of roadkills and corridor disturbance due to highway widening and residential development. The presence of river systems down the river systems below key hydropower and road projects increases sediment load, which impacts aquatic biodiversity and irrigation systems. These are not some abstract projections, but measurable changes in ecological bases that take place during one development cycle.

Structural impacts

As this course keeps unfolding, the resultant effect will be structural and not incidental. The impact of environmental degradation is hardly immediate in its entirety; it builds up. Today, the soil erosion in the Chure will choke the rivers with sediments tomorrow. The fragmentation of wildlife corridors in the present is the local extinction in the future. The low quality of air in the present day is a liability on both the long-term health costs of the population, productivity, and the burden on overstretched urban health systems. When development is done unaccounted ecologically, development just shifts the costs to the future.

There is no opposition to development; Nepal needs it. However, development should not be at the cost of clearing forests, destabilising hills, breaking wildlife corridors, and squeezing university green space. When all projects require an environmental trade-off, we ought to doubt the model itself. When we continue to build at the expense of our ecological baselines, the price will not be only environmental but also generational.

(Dahal is pursuing a bachelor's degree at St. Xavier College Maitighar, Kathmandu.)

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

March 11, 1976

S. Arabia, S. Yemen Agree To set Up Normal Relations

Riyadh, March 10: Saudi Arabia and Marxist South Yemen have agreed to establish normal relations, a joint communique announced here today, reports AFP.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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

READER'S MAIL

Support Mental Health Patients

This is in reference to a news report, *"Seventh grader in Baitadi struggles as parents battle mental illness,"* published in this daily on March 9. The situation highlighted in the report is serious but it is often an overlooked problem in Nepal: the lack of accessible mental health services for vulnerable families, especially in rural areas. Mental health issues are still highly stigmatised, and many individuals affected by such issues have been unable to seek early intervention because of poverty, inaccessibility of health facilities, and lack of awareness.

This case should be a wake-up call for policymakers and local governments, as well as social organisations, to step up efforts to promote mental health services in remote areas. Mobile health services and easier access to social security benefits can greatly help the affected families.

Moreover, the help that is offered to these vulnerable groups should go beyond just material support. Instead, help must be provided through assistance, follow-ups, and coordination among the government, health centres, and the people. Mental health is not just a medical problem but also a social concern that affects families and society. More focus must be put into making sure that people in such circumstances do not feel left behind.



Angela Ghising
Maitighar, Kathmandu

TAILPIECE

A woman sat down on a park bench, glanced around and decided to stretch out her legs on the seat and relax. After awhile a beggar came up to her and said, "Hello, Luv, how about us going for a walk together?"

"How dare you!" said the woman, "I'm not one of your cheap pickups!"

"Well, then," said the beggar, "what are you doing in my bed?"

+++

During a terrible storm, all the highway signs were covered with snow. The following spring, the state decided to raise all the signs twelve inches at a cost of six million dollars. "That's an outrageous price!" said a local farmer, "but I guess we're lucky the state handled it instead of the federal government." "Why's that?"

"Because knowing the federal government, they'd decided to lower the highways."

Iran attacks targeting Israel, Gulf countries

AP
Dubai, Mar. 10

Iran launched new attacks on Tuesday at Israel and Gulf Arab countries as it kept up pressure on the Middle East in a war started by Israel and the United States that has sent oil prices surging and stunned global economies.

Sirens warned of incoming missiles in the futuristic business hub of Dubai, and in Bahrain, authorities said an Iranian attack hit a residential building in the capital, killing a 29-year-old woman and wounding eight others.

Saudi Arabia said it destroyed two drones over its oil-rich eastern region and Kuwait's National Guard said it shot down six drones.

Later in the morning, sirens also sounded in Jerusalem, and sounds of explosions could be heard in Tel Aviv as Israel's defense systems worked to intercept incoming fire, not long after the military said it detected an Iranian missile launch.

"We are definitely not looking for a ceasefire," Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, wrote on X. "We believe that the aggressor should be punched in the mouth so that he learns a lesson so that he will never think of attacking our beloved Iran again."

Another top Iranian security official, Ali Larijani, appeared to threaten U.S. President Donald Trump himself, writing on X that "Iran doesn't fear your empty threats. Even those bigger than you couldn't eliminate Iran. Be careful not to get eliminated yourself." Iran has been accused of plotting attempts to kill Trump in the past.

Witnesses reported hearing several explosions in Tehran in the afternoon as Israel commenced a new wave of airstrikes.

Along with firing missiles and drones at Israel and at American bases in the region, Iran has also been targeting energy infrastructure and traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for traded oil, sending oil prices soaring.

The attacks appear aimed at generating enough global economic pain to pressure the U.S. and Israel to end their strikes.

Brent crude, the international standard, spiked to nearly $120 on Monday before falling back but was still at around $90 a barrel on Tuesday, nearly 24% higher than when the war started on Feb. 28.

Trump, who has previously said that the war could last for a month or longer, sought to downplay growing fears that it could take even longer, saying it was "going to be a short-term excursion."

Still, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed the strikes on Iran would continue.

"Our aim is to bring the Iranian people to cast off the yoke of tyranny, (but) ultimately it depends on them," Netanyahu said during a meeting with Israel's hospital and health system leaders. "There is no doubt that with the actions taken so far, we are breaking their bones."

Iran has effectively stopped tankers from using the Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman — the gateway to the Indian Ocean — through which 20% of the world's oil is carried.

Attacks on merchant ships near the strait have killed at least seven sailors, according to the International Maritime Organization.

A bulk carrier likely came under attack in the Persian Gulf on Tuesday off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, with the captain reporting a splash and a loud bang nearby, according to a monitoring center run by the British military.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard doubled down, saying in a statement that it "will not allow the export of even a single liter of oil from the region to the hostile side and its partners until further notice."

Meanwhile, Amin Nasser, the president and CEO of Saudi Arabia's oil giant Aramco, said tankers were being rerouted to avoid the Strait of Hormuz, and that its East-West pipeline would reach its full capacity of 7 million barrels a day being brought to the Red Sea port of the Yanbu this week.

"The situation at the Strait of Hormuz is blocking sizable volumes of oil from the whole region," he said, adding that tighter supplies would likely push the price per barrel globally even higher, translating to higher costs for gasoline and jet fuel.

Five members of the Iranian women's soccer team who were in Australia for a tournament when the Iran war began were granted asylum, Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke told reporters in Brisbane. The team drew widespread news coverage in Australia when players didn't sing the Iranian anthem before their first match.

The 26 players had arrived for the Women's Asian Cup last month, before the war started. They were knocked out over the weekend, raising the prospect of having to return home to a country under attack.

Burke, who posted photos on social media of the women smiling and clapping as he signed documents, said all players on the squad had been offered asylum.

As the conflict spread across the region, Israel launched multiple attacks on the militant Hezbollah group in Lebanon, which responded by firing missiles into Israel.



PHOTO: AP

People gather in a rally to support Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, the successor to his late father Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as supreme leader, in Tehran, Iran.

Netanyahu touts strikes as Iran vows fight

AP
Tel Aviv, Mar. 10

Iran fired drones and missiles at Israel and Gulf states Tuesday as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed his country will keep striking the Islamic Republic, saying the aim of the campaign was the popular overthrow of its government.

"Our aim is to bring the Iranian people to cast off the yoke of tyranny, ultimately it depends on them," Netanyahu said during a meeting with Israel's hospital and health system leaders. "But there is no doubt that with the actions taken so far, we are breaking their bones."

U.S. President Donald Trump sent contradictory signals about how long the war could last, fueling uncertainty that is causing markets to swing.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf dismissed any suggestion Tehran sought a ceasefire in the war and would keep fighting.

Trump late Monday told Republican lawmakers that the war was likely to be a "short excursion," but hours later threatened in a social media post that the U.S. would dramatically increase attacks if Iran tried to close the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian security official Ali Larijani wrote a message on X after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to attack Iran "TWENTY TIMES HARDER" if Tehran stopped oil flowing through the Strait of Hormuz.

Larijani wrote: "The sacrificial nation of Iran doesn't fear your empty threats. Even those bigger than you couldn't eliminate Iran. Be careful not to get eliminated yourself." Iran has been accused of plotting attempts to kill Trump in the past.

A spokesman for Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard has threatened to not allow "a single liter of oil" to leave the Persian Gulf. Ali Mohamad Naeini has made the comment in a statement.

He says Iran "will not allow the export of even a single liter of oil from the region to the hostile side and its partners until further notice."

"Their attempts to reduce and control oil and gas prices will be temporary and ineffective," he said. "Trade in wartime conditions is subject to security considerations."

A ship likely came under attack in the Persian Gulf off the coast of the United Arab Emirates' capital, a center run by the British military says.

The possible attack on the bulk carrier would expand the radius of ongoing assaults against shipping by Iran during the war.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center reported the incident, saying a captain aboard the vessel reported seeing "a splash and heard a loud bang in close proximity of a bulk carrier."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov says Russia remains ready to help broker an end to the war in the Middle East.

Following Russian President Vladimir Putin's call on Monday with U.S. President Donald Trump, Peskov said that Russia's mediation offers "are still on the table."

Israel's military says it has launched new airstrikes targeting Iran's capital, Tehran. Witnesses reported hearing several explosions in the city as the Israelis began their airstrikes.

The Persian Gulf country was attacked with three missiles and a drone as Iran keeps up its strikes in the Middle East, authorities said.

One strike hit a residential building in Bahrain's capital, Manama, killing a 29-year-old woman and wounding eight others, the Interior Ministry said.

UN troops resist expulsion from town

AP
Juba, Mar. 10

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan said Monday that it would not comply with a government order to shut down its base in Akobo, an opposition stronghold near the Ethiopian border where tens of thousands of refugees have fled.

On Friday, the South Sudanese army ordered U.N. peacekeepers as well as NGOs and civilians to vacate the town ahead of a planned assault.

But the mission refused to leave and said it would provide "a protective presence for civilians" in the town, adding that the safety and security of its personnel "must be fully respected at all times."

The U.N. Mission said it was engaging "intensively with national, state and local stakeholders" regarding this order. "Any military operations in and around Akobo gravely endanger the safety and security of civilians," said mission chief Anita Kiki Gbeho.

The South Sudanese government has been fighting opposition forces since a 2018 peace deal broke down about a year ago.

A dramatic escalation took place in December 2025, when opposition forces seized several government outposts in northern Jonglei. A government counter-offensive repelled their forces a month later and displaced over 280,000 people. Tens of thousands have sought refuge in Akobo, where a small contingent of U.N. peacekeepers is stationed.

Fearing the looming government assault on Akobo, humanitarian workers were evacuated over the weekend, and a mass exodus of the population has also begun.

Local officials contacted by the The Associated Press said fleeing civilians faced danger and widespread shortages of essential supplies. Dual Diew, the Akobo County health director, who has fled to Ethiopia, said there were 84 wounded patients at the hospital. "We have most of them with us here now," he said, adding that they lack medicine and basic nursing equipment.

Christophe Garnier, the leader of Doctors Without Borders in South Sudan said the organization had to evacuate its staff from Akobo on Saturday and learned of the subsequent looting of its hospital and the ransacking of its office.

"People in Akobo must now either flee without protection or remain at risk of being killed, while losing access to healthcare and other essential services," he said.

The three Western governments that have played a major role in the peace process — the U.S, U.K., and Norway — sent a letter to President Kiir on Monday urging that the army's evacuation order be revoked and warning of "further deaths, displacement and suffering for the South Sudanese people" if the offensive on Akobo is implemented.

Russia, Ukraine claim gains as talks stall

AP
Kyiv, Mar. 10

Russian and Ukrainian officials are making contradictory claims of battlefield successes in their 4-year-old war, with Ukraine saying it has pushed Moscow's forces back in some places on the front line but the Kremlin insisting that Russia's invasion of its neighbor is making progress.

At the same time, Russia's almost daily aerial attacks on civilian areas of Ukraine continue, with overnight drone strikes on two cities injuring at least 14 people, including two children, emergency services said Tuesday.

Ukraine's air force said that it shot down 122 out of 137 drones that Russia launched during the night.

U.S.-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine are on hold as Washington's attention is gripped by the Iran war, which has drawn the international spotlight from Ukraine's plight as it strives to hold back Russia's bigger army.

Despite being short of soldiers, Ukrainian forces have recently retaken nearly all the territory of the southeastern Dnipropetrovsk industrial region during a counteroffensive, driving Russian troops out of more than 400 square kilometers (150 square miles), Maj. Gen. Oleksandr Komarenko said in an interview published Tuesday by local media outlet RBC-Ukraine.

He described the overall situation on the front line as difficult but under control, with the heaviest fighting continuing near Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine and Oleksandrivka in the south, where he said Russian forces have concentrated their main effort.

There was no independent verification of his description of the military situation.

However, the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said late Monday that recent Ukrainian counterattacks "are generating tactical, operational and strategic effects that may disrupt Russia's spring-summer 2026 offensive campaign plan."

Meanwhile, a Kremlin aide said that Russian President Vladimir Putin told U.S. President Donald Trump late Monday that Russian forces are "advancing rather successfully" in Ukraine.



PHOTO: AP

Rescuers put out the fire at a residential neighborhood following Russia's drone attack in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

PRISM

Loose pigs chaos in Tennessee

Tennessee: Residents of a Tennessee neighborhood said a group of at least six pigs have taken up residence in the area and show no sign of leaving.

Locals in the Tunnel Boulevard neighborhood of Chattanooga said they first started noticing the pigs a couple weeks ago, and up to six of the animals have been spotted at the same time. They said the pigs do not appear afraid of humans, and will casually stroll into -- and dig up -- their yards.

Neighbors said they have contacted agencies including the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, local animal control and the McKamey Animal Center, but thus far no one has been able to help.

Blindfolded woman identifies 19 Barbie dolls in 3 minutes

German: The German woman who holds the Guinness World Record for the largest collection of Barbies earned a second title by identifying the dolls while blindfolded.

Bettina Dorfmann, whose collection of 18,500 Barbie dolls earned her a Guinness World Record, appeared on the record-keeping organization's German-language TV series The Great Show of World Records to make an attempt at a second title.

-Agencies

Kim's sister criticises joint US-South Korea drills

AP
Seoul, Mar. 10

The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Tuesday criticized the United States and South Korea for proceeding with their annual joint military exercises at a perilous moment for global security, and warned that any challenge to the North's safety would bring "terrible consequences."

The statement by Kim Yo Jong came a day after the allies started their 11-day Freedom Shield exercise involving thousands of troops, while Washington participates in an escalating war in the Middle East.

Without directly referring to the Iran war, Kim said the U.S.-South Korea drills undermine regional stability at a time when the global security structure is "collapsing rapidly and wars break out in different parts of the world due to the reckless acts of outrageous international rogues."

Freedom Shield is one of two annual command post exercises conducted by the militaries of the United States and South Korea. The largely computer-simulated drills are designed to test the allies' joint operational capabilities, while incorporating evolving war scenarios and security challenges.

Freedom Shield will be accompanied by a field training program called Warrior Shield.

Mentioning the country's expanding nuclear program, Kim Yo Jong said that North Korea will continue to bolster its "destructive power" against what it sees as external threats and "constantly and repeatedly convince the enemies of our war deterrence and its fatality."

North Korea has long portrayed the allies' joint drills as invasion rehearsals and often used them as a pretext to ramp up its own military demonstrations or weapons tests. The allies say the exercises are defensive in nature.

Meanwhile, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung acknowledged that some U.S. "air defense weapons" based in South Korea could be relocated, but said that such moves wouldn't seriously undermine defenses against North Korea.

His comments followed media speculation that the United States was moving some Patriot missile defense systems and other equipment from South Korea to support operations in the Middle East.

"Our government has expressed opposition to such moves, but it's also an undeniable reality that we cannot fully control the situation according to our wishes," Lee said at a Cabinet meeting.

Last week, North Korea's Foreign Ministry described the U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran as an "illegal act of aggression" carried out under the pretext of "fake peace."



PHOTO: AP

A soldier stands at a North Korean military guard post flying a national flag, seen from Paju, South Korea, near the border with North Korea.

TODAY IN HISTORY

843 – Triumph of Orthodoxy: Empress Theodora II restores the veneration of icons in the Orthodox churches in the Byzantine Empire.

1343 – Arnošt of Pardubice becomes the last Bishop of Prague (3 March 1343 O.S.), and, a year later, the first Archbishop of Prague.

1387 – Battle of Castagnaro: Padua, led by John Hawkwood, is victorious over Giovanni Ordelaffi of Verona.

1641 – Guaraní forces living in the Jesuit reductions defeat bandeirantes loyal to the Portuguese Empire at the Battle of Mbororé in present-day Panambí, Argentina.

1649 – The Frondeurs and the French government sign the Peace of Rueil.



PHOTO: RSS

Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla, Attorney General Sabita Bhandari and others attending a programme organised by the Supreme Court to mark International Women's Day and Women Judges' Day in Kathmandu, on Tuesday.

Term of 149,090 election police ending on March 12

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 10

Election police (temporary police) recruited to ensure security for the House of Representatives elections have now completed their service.

The Nepal Police deployed 133,980 election police personnel, while the Armed Police Force deployed 15,110, for a 40-day election security operation.

The House of Representatives elections were conducted peacefully on March 5, and with the vote counting now publicly concluded, preparations are underway to formally bid farewell to the election police.

They will be honoured with a 'letter of thanks,' said Nepal Police Spokesperson and Deputy Inspector General Abi Narayan Kafle.

Nationwide farewell ceremonies for the election police are scheduled for March 12. "On Thursday, Mach 12, the Headquarters and respective police units will bid them adieu across the country," Kafle confirmed.

The Armed Police Force will also bid farewell to its 15,110 election police personnel, according to APF spokesperson DIG Bishnu Prasad Bhatta.

For their 40-day deployment, the government has provided each election police with a salary of Rs. 34,776. In addition, they received Rs. 846 to cover rations and travel allowances, and for four days of duty, a daily meal allowance of Rs. 300. Separate funds were allocated for uniforms, DIG Kafle added.

"The payments have been made in installments. Many have already received their perks and mentioned facilities, while some are still in the process of receiving them."

In total, the two forces deployed 149,090 election police, with security officials reporting that approximately Rs. 7.83 billion was spent on their service benefits. While the Armed Police Force spent around Rs. 700 million.

Tragically, 11 election police personnel died on duty, and one Nepal Police constable was killed in an accident during the elections in a road accident in Sindhuli.

The government will provide Rs. 2 million in insurance to the families of those who died while on duty. DIG Kafle stated, "If a personnel dies on duty, their dependents are entitled to the insurance compensation."

Election police who fell ill during the operation were treated by the government.

Waste processing centre to be built in Gharpajhong

BY HARIKRISHNA SHARMA
Muktinath (Mustang), Mar. 10

Gharpajhong Rural Municipality in Mustang is set to establish a waste collection and management centre to separate biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste.

In partnership with the Gandaki Provincial Government, the rural municipality will build a waste processing centre equipped with modern facilities in Jomsom, the district headquarters and a waste collection centre in Marpha at Rs. 12 million.

Chairman of the rural municipality, Mohan Singh Lalchan, said that Rs. 8.4 million has been allocated by the Gandaki Provincial Government and Rs. 3.6 million by the rural municipality to implement the project.

The initiative aims to maintain a clean and attractive Gharpajhong as waste management has become increasingly challenging with the growing number of tourists.

"We have launched this project not only for waste management but also to generate income from waste. We are also planning to purchase vehicles to collect waste after it is separated at the household level," Lalchan said.



PHOTO: TRN

Gharpajhong Rural Municipality Chairman Mohan Singh Lalchan signing an agreement with the Gandaki Provincial Government to establish a waste collection and management centre.

A van will be purchased with the allocated budget to collect biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste from all five wards of the rural municipality.

Members of the rural executive and local community representatives involved in waste management have also conducted observation visits to local governments in Gandaki Province that have successfully implemented effective waste management systems.

According to Lalchan, households will be encouraged to separate waste into biodegradable and non-biodegradable categories from the beginning. Dustbins and plastic bags will also be provided for waste collection.

The rural municipality, which includes the district headquarters and serves as a gateway for tourists travelling to the Muktinath Temple and Upper Mustang, has been carrying out various beautification programmes to make the area clean and attractive.

To support this effort, the municipality has been conducting training and awareness programmes for residents on waste management practices. The rural municipality has also tightened restrictions on the use of beer bottles.

Biodegradable waste will be turned into compost at the household level, while non-biodegradable waste will be sold. The income generated will be used to purchase materials and equipment required for waste management.

Meanwhile, the Jomsom office of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) has signed an agreement with Green Waste Management Pvt. Ltd. in Pokhara to recycle non-biodegradable plastic waste collected from Baragung Muktikshetra, Gharpajhong and Thasang rural municipalities.

According to ACAP Jomsom Chief Rajesh Gupta, non-biodegradable waste is collected and transported to Pokhara by truck for recycling. Waste management remains a challenge in all five local levels of Mustang district.

Jihadis intensify attacks against Nigeria's military

AP
ABUJA, Nigeria, Mar. 10

Jihadi extremist groups, including Boko Haram and one of its factions, have been blamed for intensified attacks targeting Nigeria's military bases in the northeast of the country in the last week.

At least two officers and several soldiers have been killed in the attacks, which analysts say shows a remarkable level of coordination. Over the weekend, Islamic extremists launched at least six attacks in Borno and Yobe states and in the wider Lake Chad region, spiriting away trucks and military hardware from the bases, according to security analysts and security reports.

The Nigerian military said in a statement that the latest attacks between Sunday and Monday were an "attempt by the terrorists to overwhelm troop positions."

Military spokesman Sani Uba said late Monday that the troops lost an unspecified number of soldiers and a military officer, without providing further details.

Over 97 % votes...

The RSP has secured more than a two-thirds majority of seats in the direct elections.

In proportional representation as well, it is close to obtaining a majority of seats.

Counting of FPTP votes completes

Likewise, the vote counting for the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system has been completed in all 165 constituencies.

As of now, six political parties have secured seats in the House of Representatives (HoR). The RSP has emerged as the dominant force in the election, securing 125 seats under the FPTP electoral system and leading the vote count in the proportional representation (PR) system.

The Nepali Congress (NC) has won 18 seats, while the CPN-UML has claimed nine constituencies and NCP has won eight seats.

The newly formed Shram Sanskriti Party has secured three seats, surpassing the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), which has won one seat.

Additionally, independent candidate and former minister Mahabir Pun has been elected to the Lower House from Myagdi district of Gandaki Province. He is the only independent candidate to win the election this time.

PR seats according to votes

The number of proportional representation seats will be determined based on the total valid votes obtained by each party.

Votes received by parties that obtain less than three per cent of the total valid votes will not be included in the calculation. On that basis, the minimum number of votes required per seat will also be determined.

According to the Proportional Representation Election Directive, seats are allocated by dividing the total votes received by each party by the number corresponding to seat allocation.

When determining seats, parties must ensure that at least 33 per cent of the total members in the Federal Parliament are women.

Political parties may calculate this 33 per cent representation across both houses of the Federal Parliament.

Based on the number of seats obtained, the EC will request political parties to submit a list of candidates that also complies with inclusive representation groups.

After the Commission notifies parties of the number of seats allocated, the party's central committee or authorised body must select the candidates who will be elected and submit their names to the Commission.

When submitting the list, parties must ensure representation according to legally prescribed percentages for Dalit, Indigenous nationalities, Khas Arya, Madhesi, Tharu, and Muslim communities, based on the population and the number of seats obtained by the party.

The law also requires parties, where possible, to include representation from backward regions and persons with disabilities.

Parties that receive less than 10 per cent of the total proportional seats must submit a list ensuring that at least one-third of the elected candidates are women.

When selecting candidates from inclusive groups, parties cannot bypass higher-ranked candidates in the list in favour of those ranked lower.

If errors are found in a submitted list or if it does not meet the requirements of inclusive representation, the Election Commission will allow the concerned political party to correct it.

RSP set to target...

It has set a target to transition Nepal from the remittance-based economy to production and export-oriented economy. It has presented increased electricity generation as a supportive pillar to this target.

According to the RSP, internal electricity consumption will be increased to 8,000 MW and import of LP gas in household and industrial sectors will be reduced by 50 per cent.

The party has also set a target to reduce foreign employment by 20 per cent through the creation of 'Nepal Production Fund' and 'Remittance Investment Fund' to mobilise 30 per cent of capital obtained from foreign employment in national pride projects and industrial infrastructure.

14 women elected...

Toshima Karki won Lalitpur-3 with 43,096 votes against Nepali Congress candidate Jitendra Kumar Shrestha, who received 9,045 votes. Sobita Gautam was elected from Chitwan-3 with 59,277 votes, defeating CPN (Maoist Centre) leader and former Chitwan mayor Renu Dahal, who received 20,615 votes.

Similarly, Bina Gurung secured 37,750 votes, defeating her closest rival Manoj Gurung, who received 12,780 votes. Komal Gyawali won Kailali-1 with 17,826 votes, while her nearest competitor received 12,867 votes.

Basana Thapa of Nepali Congress is the only woman from her party elected through the FPTP system. She won the Dailekh-1 seat with 12,372 votes, narrowly defeating CPN-UML candidate Rabindra Raj Sharma, who secured 11,796 votes.

Of the total candidates who contested the election under the FPTP system, around 10 per cent of them (3,484) were females. Of them, RSP had fielded the highest number of women candidates at nine per cent, while the established and old parties like, the UML, NC, NCP and Rastriya Prajatantra Party fielded just 6 per cent female candidates.

The number of women elected directly to the House of Representatives has increased compared to previous elections. In the 2022 election, nine women (5.5 per cent) were elected under the FPTP system, while only six women (3.6 per cent) won in the 2017 election.

Earlier, in the 2008 Constituent Assembly (CA) election, 30 women were elected directly out of 240 seats under the FPTP system. However, the number dropped to just 10 women in the 2013 CA election, representing 4.17 per cent of the seats.

Compared to the previous elections, the latest poll has seen a higher number of women elected through the FPTP system.

Although there are only 8.5 per cent women candidates elected from the direct poll in the Lower House, the number of women will increase further through the proportional representation (PR) system, as the Constitution requires at least 33 per cent representation of women in the federal Parliament through a combination of FPTP and PR seats.

Although most political parties nominate women in constituencies where they are unlikely to win, the unexpected surge of the RSP in this election led to many of its female candidates securing victory.

Australia grants asylum to 5 members of the Iranian women's soccer team

AP
GOLD COAST, Australia, Mar. 10

Australia granted asylum to five members of the Iranian women's soccer team who were visiting the country for a tournament when the Iran war began, a government minister said Tuesday.

The announcement followed days of urging by Iranian groups in Australia and by U.S. President Donald Trump for the Australian government to help the women, who had not spoken publicly about a wish to claim asylum. The team drew speculation and news coverage in Australia when players didn't sing the Iranian anthem before their first match.

Early Tuesday, police officers transported five of the women from their hotel in Gold Coast, Australia, "to a safe location" after they made asylum requests. There, they met with Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke and the processing of their humanitarian visas was finalized.

"I don't want to begin to imagine how difficult that decision is for each of the individual women, but certainly last night it was joy, it was relief," said Burke, who posted photos to social media of the women smiling and clapping as he signed documents. "People were very excited about embarking on a life in Australia."

The women granted asylum were happy for their names and pictures to be published, he said. Burke added that the players wanted to make clear that they were "not political activists."

Iran warns of possible impact on World Cup

Iranian state TV said the country's football federation asked international soccer bodies to review what it called Trump's "direct political interference in football," warning such remarks could disrupt the 2026 World Cup, which begins in North America in June.

Naghmeh Danai said she was invited as a migration agent and member of the Iranian-Australian community to visit the women at a hotel Monday night and to reassure them about what was available to them in Australia.

"I told them that if you accept this offer, you will have a great future here. You will have more respect. You won't be under a lot of suppression that you have been in your country. And they were thrilled," Danai said.



PHOTO: AP

Australia's Minister for Home Affairs Tony Burke, center, poses in an undisclosed location with five Iranian women soccer players who have been granted asylum in Australia, Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

"At the same time, it's understandable that it was a very hard decision for them to make when they have family back home and when they just came here to compete," Danai added.

The Iranian team arrived in Australia for the Women's Asian Cup last month, before the Iran war began on Feb. 28. The team was knocked out of the tournament over the weekend and faced the prospect of returning to a country under bombardment. Iran's head coach Marziyeh Jafari said Sunday the players "want to come back to Iran as soon as we can."

An official squad list named 26 players, plus Jafari and other coaches. Burke said the offer of asylum was extended to all on the team.

A commotion erupted Tuesday afternoon outside the team's hotel as members of the public knelt or lay in front of the team bus.

The protesters, some wearing red, white and green clothing or holding pre-Revolution Iranian flags, tried to prevent the bus from departing the hotel, but it was delayed by only minutes. Some chanted "Save our girls" and "Please act now."

An Iranian-born protester who sat in front of the bus, Hadi Karimi, said the demonstrators had attempted to create more time for the team members to talk to Australian authorities.

"We haven't slept," Karimi said, referring to the time between the team's last game and its departure. "We were there. That means it works. We did something."

The women flew to Sydney Airport, where police evicted protesters from the international terminal before the team boarded an international flight to Kuala Lumpur, the Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported.

The ABC reported that Burke had confirmed more members of Iran's delegation have sought asylum in Australia, without giving details.

Burke's office did not immediately respond to the AP's request for confirmation of the Iranians' departure or comment on whether any additional women had opted to stay in Australia.

Burke was expected to provide an update Wednesday.

The home affairs minister didn't detail what threats the players faced if they returned to Iran.

Pun selling books after election victory

BY THAKUR PRASAD ACHARYA
Myagdi, Mar. 10

While some candidates who won the election are busy celebrating, Dr. Mahabir Pun, who won the House of Representatives election from Myagdi as an independent candidate with double votes, has travelled to Pokhara to sell his autobiography, making use of his free time.

Pun, the founder of the National Innovation Centre, said he went to Pokhara to raise financial resources for the organisation. On the first day alone, he sold around 800 books and earned about Rs. 600,000.

According to Pun, the book sales are aimed at collecting funds to operate an agricultural tools factory in Birgunj through the National Innovation Centre.

A large crowd gathered in Pokhara to buy books from Pun. He said he would continue selling books in Pokhara for a few days, making productive use of his spare time.

He said, "After winning the election, I have a few days of free time."

The final nationwide results have not yet been announced. Although the final results of the direct elections have come, the proportional representation vote counting is still ongoing.

Only after all the results are out will the oath-taking and parliamentary meeting likely take place. So I decided to use this free time to sell books."

He added that he earned around Rs. 600,000 on the first day through book sales.

For the past three years, Pun has been selling his autobiography to raise the necessary funds to operate the agricultural tools factory in Birgunj through the National Innovation Centre, which he founded.

Pun was elected from Myagdi with 22,850 votes.

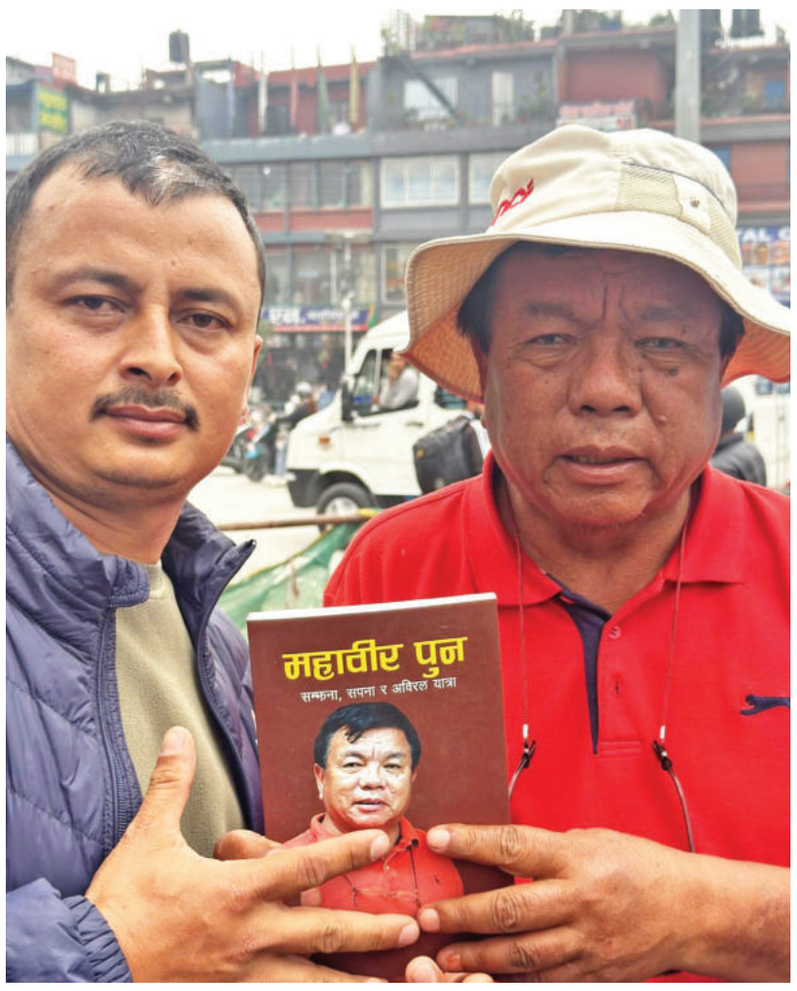


PHOTO: TRN

Mahabir Pun selling books.

NEPAL TO TAKE PART IN CANNES

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 10

Nepal will make an official participation in the 79th Cannes Film Festival, one of the world's most prestigious film festivals.

With the objective of promoting Nepali cinema internationally, expanding collaboration, and increasing access to the global market, the Film Development Board Nepal is preparing to represent Nepal at the festival, which will be held in Cannes from May 12 to 23.

This year, a special 'Nepal Pavilion' (stall/booth) will also be set up at the festival through the collaboration between the Film Development Board and the Nepal Tourism Board.

Through this stall, Nepali films, film projects, posters, trailers and other promotional materials will be presented to distributors, producers, film funds, festival representatives and audiences in the international film market.

According to the Board, Nepali filmmakers who attend the Cannes Film Festival individually will also be able to share the Board's stall to present their films and projects at the international level.

This is expected to create an important opportunity to connect Nepali cinema with the global film market.

The Film Development Board has stated that it views this initiative as a historic opportunity to establish the Nepali film industry on the global film stage.

Nepali filmmakers interested in participating in the Cannes festival have been requested to coordinate with the Board in order to display their materials.

Najir Husen, Aakriti Budhathoki to do 'Muktipur'



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 10

'Muktipur', which is being made on a story of revenge, was officially launched on Tuesday.

The film will feature Najir Husen, Gaurav Pahari, Prakash Shah, Evanraj Upreti and actress Aakriti Budhathoki in lead roles.

Aakriti Budhathoki will make her silver-screen debut as an actress through this film.

Shooting also began on Tuesday after performing a clap and script worship at the Indrayani Temple in Basundhara, Kathmandu. The production team, cast and technicians were present at the auspicious occasion.

The film will be directed by Sunil Pandey and produced under the banner of Sahiba Films Production in collaboration with Everest Film Academy.

Pandey, who has experience directing several short films and documentaries, will have directorial debut on the big screen in Muktipur. The story of the film has also been written by Pandey himself.

Everest Film Academy, one of the leading institutions in the film sector that has been providing education in acting, directing, editing, cinematography and sound for the past ten years, is stepping into film production for the first time.

The film is produced by Bijay Rajbanshi and Roshan Paswan, with Bishal Shrestha as executive producer and Keshav Gautam as co-producer.

The crime-revenge genre film will revolve around a story of retaliation.

Actor Husen expressed confidence that Muktipur will be an important milestone in his career.

Budhathoki, who has experience of acting in music videos, said she is excited about performing on the big screen.

The film has gone on the floor with a 40-day shooting schedule, while its release date has not yet been finalised.

Margot Robbie, Oprah watch Blazy transform Chanel

AP
Paris, Mar. 10

Six months into his tenure at the Parisian house, Matthieu Blazy is still laying the groundwork. On Monday at Paris Fashion Week, the designer staged his second ready-to-wear collection for Chanel beneath brightly coloured cranes rising from a holographic floor — a clear signal that the construction is ongoing.

For Parisians who have spent years looking up at the real cranes above Notre-Dame Cathedral, the set may have felt less dreamy than intended.

Inside the Grand Palais, however, the audience suggested the foundations are firm. Margot Robbie, Oprah, Jennie, Kylie Minogue, Lily-Rose Depp, Teyana Taylor and Olivia Dean were all in attendance to watch the next stage take shape.

Blazy took inspiration from a line by Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel: "We need dresses that crawl and dresses that fly."

The collection revolved around that tension — the ordinary against the spectacular, function against fantasy — delivered with a discipline that his expansive debut last October occasionally lacked.

The opening looks were deliberately austere.



Black knitted zip-ups, tweed blousons and boxy overshirts appeared with little more than four gold buttons to indicate they belonged to Chanel. In the vast runway space they risked feeling underwhelming.

But Blazy's intention was architectural. The suit, he explained, is "the first brick" — and everything else grows from it.

Paris Hilton launches fund for business women

AP
Los Angeles, Mar. 10

The pop culture star, advocate and entrepreneur Paris Hilton has launched an initiative to support female small-business owners affected by disasters, expanding her philanthropic work for women entrepreneurs nationwide following the 2025 Los Angeles fires.

Hilton is donating $350,000 to launch the Back in Business Recovery Fund, with a target of raising at least $1 million by the end of March.

"Women-owned businesses are truly at the heart of so many of these communities," Hilton told The Associated Press. "I want to help lift them up and support them, shine a light on their work and genuinely make a difference in their lives."

The new initiative is a partnership between Hilton's social impact organisation 11:11 Media Impact and GoFundMe.org, the non-profit partner of the fundraising platform GoFundMe, which will contribute $100,000 to help launch the fund.

Hilton and these organisations previously distributed more than $1 million in cash grants to 50 women-owned small businesses after the Los Angeles fires, which also destroyed Hilton's own home in Malibu.



Losing the home where she was raising her young children has been "very emotional," Hilton said, and prompted her to think about other mothers who had lost not only their homes but also their income needed to support their families.

Grants of up to $25,000 were awarded to owners of childcare centres, bakeries, bookshops, dance studios and salons damaged by the Eaton fire, which devastated the community of Altadena. The funds helped cover rent, wages, replacing equipment and rebuilding.

A year later, 90 per cent of the businesses that received grants are still operating, according to the Pasadena Women's Business Center, which also received funding to provide technical support and mentorship to affected enterprises.

Among the grant recipients was Renata Ortega, who ran her floral design company, Orla Floral Studio, from a converted garage beside the Altadena home she shared with her husband and their three dogs.

Ortega was unsure how she would keep her business going after the fire destroyed both her house and her studio space, including all of her floral and event equipment.

"Nothing prepares you for that level of loss," she told The Associated Press. "I didn't think I would be able to get back on my feet because it took me years to build up the inventory I had."

She also worried about the staff she employed and the flower market vendors who relied on her business.

The grant helped Ortega pay the deposit for a studio space and purchase a much-needed floral cooler. Orla Floral Studio is now "booked and busy", she said. She has been able to keep her staff and hopes to hire another employee soon.

She credits much of her recent growth to the grant.

"It directly helped us get back into business — not just back, but better than ever," she said.

The support also gave Ortega a motivational boost as she worked to rebuild both her home and her livelihood.

"You have to keep going and keep pushing forward," Ortega told herself, "because if someone like Paris Hilton notices your story and believes you're important, then you have to believe in yourself and recognise that you're important too."

HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

ARIES: Your curiosity points toward a bigger path. The Moon in your 9th house trines cautious Chiron in your sign, strengthening this influence. Learning something new now may spark meaningful personal growth, especially in your beliefs and worldview.

TAURUS: Deep discussions need plenty of preparation beforehand! Your 8th House of Intimacy and your 12th House of Secrets can benefit from this supportive trine between the nurturing Moon and therapeutic Chiron.

GEMINI: What would a fair conversation look like in this moment? Your 7th House of Coalitions is soothed by the moody Moon's trine with apprehensive Chiron in your companionable 11th house.

CANCER: This morning favors small, caring routines. A supportive lunar trine with Chiron, the wounded healer, activates your 6th House of Work and 10th House of Career. Establishing a steady routine at work will help manage tasks and responsibilities smoothly.

LEO: Courage doesn't have to be something serious. As the intuitive Moon trines tender Chiron, your play zone and your travel quadrant are lit up with cosmic potential. You might share vacation plans with a friend.

VIRGO: Home runs smoother when you make clear choices. The Moon uplifts vulnerable Chiron, highlighting your 4th house of home and 8th house of depth. Even small repairs or chores may reveal useful insights about shared emotions and relationships.

LIBRA: Your words can shape kinder outcomes. It's a good time to speak plainly and clear lingering misunderstandings. The Moon and Chiron connect across your communication sector and cooperative 7th house, encouraging honest dialogue and stronger relationships.

SCORPIO: The universe rewards calm, grounded decisions. The Moon in your 2nd House of Resources trines healing Chiron in your practical 6th house. Handle money matters thoughtfully, making choices that honor your skills, effort, and true personal wort.

SAGITTARIUS: Your voice matters more than usual. Chiron and Luna's trine impacts your playful 5th house, but with the Moon in your sign, it goes beyond that light-hearted energy to imbue your presence with cosmic power!

CAPRICORN: Quiet time helps you gather your strength. Your 12th House of Secrets draws attention as the temperamental Moon trines edgy Chiron in your household-focused 4th house. Resting supports your long-term resilience.

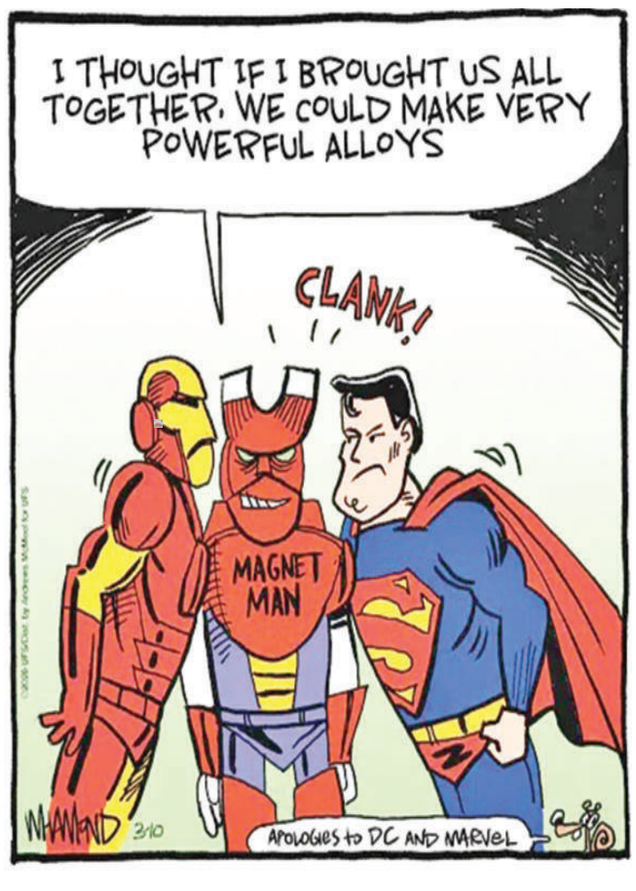
AQUARIUS: A Upcoming group efforts will work better when you accept imperfections. Today hosts a gentle Moon-Chiron trine, empowering your friendly 11th house and your verbose 3rd house.

PISCES: Compassion paired with structure steadies your path. The Moon's supportive trine to Chiron highlights your 10th House of Career and 2nd House of Resources, helping you manage responsibilities, timelines, and shared materials with calm awareness and practical care today.

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ANFA and NFPA agree to stage A-Division from April 13



PHOTO: BIKASH/TRN

Nepal Football Players' Association president Bikram Lama speaks at a joint press conference organised by the All Nepal Football Association at the ANFA Complex in Satdobato on Tuesday.

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 10

The All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) and the Nepal Football Players' Association (NFPA) have agreed to stage the opening match of the A-Division League on 13 April.

The announcement was made at a press conference in Kathmandu on Tuesday. ANFA spokesperson Suresh Shah said the deal covered not only the start date but also other twp demands raised by the NFPA.

Nepal's top-tier league has been inactive for more than 1,000 days. On Sunday, the NFPA padlocked ANFA headquarters in protest, demanding clarity. The lock was removed after Tuesday's agreement.

NFPA president Bikram Lama described the settlement as the end of a long struggle. "For years we were told the league would resume, but no date was ever fixed. We were compelled to escalate our protest, even to the point of locking the ANFA complex. Now, at last, there is clarity," he said.

ANFA competitions director Sanjeev Mishra confirmed that the calendar for the ongoing National League will be revised and wrapped up as soon as possible.

"The opening match of the A-Division League will be played on 13 April, with regular fixtures starting from 3 May," he said.

The last edition of the league was held in 2022, and the long break had raised doubts over its future. Shah added that the fate of Three Star Club and APF Club will be decided once an official ruling is made.

The players also secured agreement on contributions to the Welfare Fund, which will be deposited soon. Shah said one instalment of the player awards will be also paid within March, with further payments to follow.

Clubs call for reform

Separately, First Division clubs have urged ANFA to honour agreements previously signed with them.

At a press conference at ANFA headquarters on Tuesday, Himalayan Sherpa Club president Karma Chhiring Sherpa said clubs were preparing to submit a formal letter of concern.

The clubs expressed dissatisfaction with ANFA's leadership, calling for reforms and immediate implementation of past commitments.

In a statement issued on Monday, they demanded steps to make football management transparent, organised and professional.

They warned that while football remains hugely popular in Nepal, poor leadership and irresponsible decisions have stalled its growth. Particular concern was raised over the failure to enforce agreements relating to the Martyrs' Memorial League.

The clubs outlined several key demands, insisting they must be addressed quickly for the long-term development of the game. They cautioned that unresolved issues dating back three years must be tackled without delay, or they would be forced to take further action in the interests of Nepali football.

Women's Asian Cup

Japan roll on as Taiwan and Philippines reach QFs

AP
Perth, Mar. 10

Japan kept its perfect defensive record intact to reach the quarterfinals of the Women's Asian Cup without conceding a goal as Taiwan and the Philippines also qualified Tuesday.

On a day when the action on the field was overshadowed by five players from the Iranian team being granted asylum by host nation Australia, Japan's 4-0 win over Vietnam ensured a spot for the Philippines on goal difference.

Collisions between players marred Taiwan's 3-1 win over India. Both teams' goalkeepers were taken off after blows to the head.



PHOTO: AP

Japan's Maika Hamano celebrates after scoring her team's second goal during the Women's Asian Cup soccer match against Vietnam in Perth.

Japan keeps perfect record

Japan heads into its quarterfinal matchup against the Philippines with three wins from three games and a tournament-leading 17 goals. Japan is the only team yet to concede at the Asian Cup.

Vietnam started against Japan knowing that a three-goal loss would end its chances of qualifying as one of the best third-place teams if Taiwan avoided defeat to India.

Vietnamese goalkeeper Khong Thi Hang made a series of impressive saves to limit Japan to a 1-0 halftime lead but was constantly under pressure from an opponent which had scored 11 goals against India.

Riko Ueki headed Japan's opening goal, her fourth of the tournament, before Maika Hamano, Aoba Fujino and Kiko Seike all scored against a tiring Vietnamese defense. Japan will meet the Philippines in the quarterfinals.

Vietnam's Duong Thi Van was taken off late in the game after a clash of heads with Japan's Mina Tanaka.

Injuries for Taiwan and India

Taiwan heads to a quarterfinal meeting with China after a win over India which ended with concerns over the welfare of key players on both teams.

Su Yu-hsuan gave Taiwan the lead before Manisha Kalyan's free kick off the crossbar brought India back into the contest. Taiwan restored its lead when a penalty bounced off the post and in off Indian goalkeeper Elangbam Panthoi Chanu for an own goal.

Taiwan was leading 2-1 when its goalkeeper Wang Yu-ting was taken off following a head injury assessment. The immediate cause wasn't obvious but Wang had previously played on after an earlier collision when Sanfida Nongrum's shoulder made contact with her head.

Chen Yu-chin made sure of the win with Taiwan's third goal on the break but two Indian players ended up stretchered off after they collided while trying to stop her.

Goalkeeper Panthoi charged out toward Chen and was leaping to attempt a save when defender and captain Sweety Devi's knee struck her in the face. Panthoi was taken off on a stretcher with severe swelling on her face and Devi was briefly motionless on the ground before being taken off the field.

It was the second time Panthoi had treatment after being struck on the head. In the first half she was hit by a shot which caused her to fall back and her head hit the ground.

Australia grants asylum

Australia granted asylum to five members of the Iranian women's soccer team who were visiting the country for a tournament when the Iran war began, a government minister said Tuesday.

The announcement followed days of urging by Iranian groups in Australia and by U.S. President Donald Trump for the Australian government to help the women, who had not spoken publicly about a wish to claim asylum.

"I don't want to begin to imagine how difficult that decision is for each of the individual women, but certainly last night it was joy, it was relief," said Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke.

The Iranian team arrived in Australia for the Women's Asian Cup last month, before the Iran war began on Feb. 28. The team was knocked out of the tournament over the weekend and faced the prospect of returning to a country under bombardment.

Four years after banning Russia, FIFA and IOC passive in the face of war

AFP
Lausanne, Mar. 10

Four years after world sport rushed to ban Russia for invading Ukraine, the leading governing bodies are reacting guardedly to the US-led attack on Iran, raising accusations of double standards.

Both wars broke out immediately after the end of a Winter Olympics -- and before the start of the subsequent Paralympics and ahead of a summer World Cup.

Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine four days after the closing ceremony of the 2022 Beijing Winter Games. US and Israeli bombs started falling on Iran six days after the flags came down on the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics.

In 2022, it took four days for football's World and European governing bodies, FIFA and UEFA, with the support of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), to expel all Russian and Belarusian teams.

The IOC condemned "the violation of the Olympic Truce by the Russian government and by the Belarusian government that supports it".

This time, the IOC merely called for guarantees of "the safety of athletes" travelling to the Paralympics in Italy, particularly "those likely to be affected by the most recent conflicts".

FIFA Secretary General Mattias Grafstrom said his body was "monitoring the situation".

"Some observers have noted how Russia was banned from FIFA competitions following its invasion of Ukraine, though no discussions appear to have taken place about similar action being taken against the US," said Simon Chadwick, a specialist in sports geopolitics at EMLyon business school.

There are differences between the wars. Russia launched a land invasion with the conquest of territory among its stated goal. That has not been one of the justifications offered for the American/Israeli air attack.

'Blatant avoidance'

While it would be hard to stage this summer's 48-team World Cup without the United States, one of the hosts, expelling Russia in 2022, ahead of a European qualifying playoff game against Poland, solved a problem.

Russia, the host of the 2018 World Cup finals, started European qualification but was then banned from the 2022 finals in Qatar as part of a long-running investigation into state sponsored doping. Expelling Russia allowed FIFA to avoid potential embarrassment.

This time, FIFA President Gianni Infantino -- normally highly visible on social media -- has refrained from comment.

"This is blatant avoidance," Pim Verschuuren, a specialist in sports management and geopolitics at the University of Rennes II in France, told AFP.

He said Infantino, and IOC chief Kirsty Coventry, were showing "pragmatism" in the face of political reality.

"In 2022, the political pressure



was so intense that the IOC was forced to exclude the Russians," he said. "Today it can't afford to single out and antagonise the United States."

In addition to hosting the World Cup, the US will also host the next Olympics, in Los Angeles in 2028.

"There is a form of power monopoly in sports governance," Verschuuren said. "Sport is in the hands of the United States, with funding from its Gulf allies."

While the IOC is trying to maintain a distance from Washington, Infantino is nurturing a close relationship with the U.S. administration, creating a special "FIFA Peace Prize" for Donald Trump. "This is beyond ridiculous," a source close to football's governing bodies told AFP. "But it's quite rational, because he wants his World Cup to go well."

'Beyond ridiculous'

Iran trails only Russia as the world's most sanctioned country and the long-standing restrictions have left it economically isolated. Even though it has qualified, it could miss the World Cup.

"It is hard to see which countries might object to this," said Chadwick, adding it has "a sport industry so small that it is almost globally imperceptible. The removal of Iran from a commercial, economic and political perspective would be of little concern.

"The removal of an adversary would give Donald Trump and his government the arena in which to project the image and values that it wants to."

Iran's most powerful allies offer little help. Russia, whose athletes got to the fly their flag again at the Paralympics, is focusing on eroding its bans. China lacks influence in world football and has kept a low Olympic profile since the 2022 Games.

'FIFA World Cup is too big to be postponed'

AP
Dallas, Mar. 10

FIFA's World Cup chief operating officer says the tournament is "too big" to be postponed because of global turmoil caused by the U.S. and Israeli war against Iran.

Speaking Monday at the International Broadcast Center for the 48-nation tournament, which starts June 11, Heimo Schirgi said FIFA continues to closely monitor the Iran war and its fallout.

"If had a crystal ball I could tell you now what is going to happen, but obviously the situation is developing, Schirgi said.

"It's changing day by day and we are monitoring closely. We're working together with all our federal partners and also our international partners in evaluating the situation, and we basically take it day by day and at some stage we will have a resolution. And the World Cup will go on obviously, right? The World Cup is too big and we hope that everyone can participate that has qualified."

The tournament, expanded from 32 nations to 48, is scheduled for 11 U.S. venues plus three in Mexico and two in Canada. While the Trump administration has imposed a travel ban on four of the nations that have qualified — Iran, Ivory Coast, Haiti and Senegal — it says it will make an exception for players, team officials and immediate relatives.

Schirgi said FIFA is in constant contact with Iran's soccer federation for updates, but he wouldn't share any details about those conversations.

FIFA officials were in Dallas for the announcement of plans for the city's fan festival that will operate for 34 days during the World Cup and to view construction of the broadcast hub at the downtown convention center — about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from AT&T Stadium, the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys where nine matches will be played.

"Given the state of the world today, this will be a great opportunity to bring everyone together," Schirgi said. "For you who have not experienced the World Cup, the World Cup is very special because it's truly global and it brings everybody together. We witnessed that in Qatar, in Russia, everywhere. People were amazed how international this whole thing is."

Schirgi also addressed FIFA's surprise decision last month to add a 48-hour window for ticket sales. FIFA has been criticized for ticket prices as high as $8,680 for category one seats — the best in the lower bowls — $5,575 for category two and $4,185 for category three. Tickets for the first round range as high as $2,735 for category one, $1,940 for category two and $1,120 for category three.

"It was basically giving an opportunity to fans who have applied and were not successful for tickets in their category to offer them a different category of tickets," Schirgi said "So if you have applied for a category three ticket for a specific match and you haven't got it because we don't have enough category three tickets, we offered those people because they applied early — we said instead of having a category three ticket, would you like a category two ticket?"

SNIPPETS

India cricket team to pocket $14mn

New Delhi (AFP): India's all-conquering men's cricket team will pocket $14 million after lifting the T20 World Cup for a record third time, the country's cricket board said on Tuesday. The co hosts and pre tournament favourites swept aside New Zealand by 96 runs in Sunday's final in Ahmedabad to become the first team to retain the trophy and the first to win it on home soil. Cricket commands an unrivalled following in the world's most populous country, with top players enjoying star status and the game serving as a rare unifying force in an otherwise diverse nation. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the world's richest and most powerful cricket body, praised the players, support staff and selectors for the "historic achievement" as it announced the cash reward. The victory cemented India's place "among the most successful teams in the history of the format", BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said in a statement. The prize money will be shared among the entire team, including coaches and support staff. The Indian team will separately receive $2.34 million from the International Cricket Council while runners-up New Zealand will earn $1.17 million.

Jay Trophy preponed

Kathmandu (TRN): The final of the Jay Trophy Men's Elite Cup cricket tournament will be staged on 17-19 March at the Upper Mulpani Cricket Ground in Kathmandu. Nepal Cricket Association (CAN) spokesperson Chhumbi Lama confirmed the rescheduled issuing a press statement on Monday. With League 2 currently suspended, the Jay Trophy final has been brought forward. The fixture had originally been moved from 1-2 March to 5-7 April owing to the House of Representatives election, but will now be played a month earlier. Although the competition was contested in a two-day format, the final will be extended to three days. The league stage concluded on 27 February, producing Nepal Police Club and Tribhuvan Army Club as the finalists. Police, Army, Nepal APF Club and Bagmati Province all featured in the tournament, having qualified by finishing in the top four of the previous Prime Minister Cup. The same two sides met in last year's final, when Police defeated Army to lift the trophy. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Cup men's national cricket tournament will begin on 21 March in Parsa and Janakpur of Madhesh Province. CAN released the fixture list on Monday, with some opening matches scheduled for the TU Cricket Ground and Mulpani in Kathmandu. Most fixtures, including the final, will be played in Madhesh Province. The Prime Minister Cup will run until 17 April 2026.

West Ham set up FA Cup quarterfinals with Leeds

London (AP): West Ham will face Leeds United in the FA Cup quarterfinals after beating Brentford 5-3 in a penalty shootout following a 2-2 draw after 90 minutes and extra time on Monday. The tie was decided when stationary West Ham goalkeeper Alphonse Areola saved Dango Ouattara's woefully taken Panenka effort in the shootout. His effort, the third of Brentford's five, was the only penalty kick not converted. They can look forward to an enticing home game against Leeds, one of the two all-Premier League encounters. The other has Manchester City facing Liverpool on the weekend of April 4-5. Third-tier Port Vale, the lowest-ranked team left in the competition after its shocking win over Sunderland on Sunday, must travel to Chelsea and Arsenal was drawn away to second-tier Southampton.

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