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THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL



PHOTO: RSS

A road section is carved through a cliff at Kalju Bhir along the under-construction Darchula–Tinkar Road Project in Darchula district.

Finance Minister, business leaders satisfied with fresh economic revival

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 12

Finance Minister Rameshore Prasad Khanal and chairmen of private sector business organisations held discussions on contemporary economic issues.

President of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Chandra Prasad Dhakal, President of Nepal Chamber of Commerce Kamlesh Kumar Agrawal, President of Confederation of Nepalese Industries Birendra Raj Pandey and President of Nepal Trade Association Khemraj Bhandari participated in the discussions.

During the meeting, Finance Minister Khanal expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the support and encouragement provided by the private sector during his tenure as Finance Minister.

He acknowledged that restoring the business environment and boosting the morale of the private sector, which was affected by the Gen Z protests on September 8-9, 2025, had been a key challenge in the early days of his term.

He noted that, through collective efforts, these issues have been largely addressed, and the business climate has improved.

The Finance Minister said that some issues have been addressed as per the suggestions received from various sectors to maintain macroeconomic stability, create a suitable environment for investment, promote exports while protecting domestic industries, make the capital market transparent and investment-friendly, and maintain good economic governance.

He said that he would hand over information to the next Finance Minister about the tasks that remain to be completed by the Ministry of Finance during his tenure due to the current situation and policy complexities.

During the meeting, the private sector leaders present at the discussion expressed their appreciation to Finance Minister Khanal for his attention to issues raised by the business community.

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EC allocates 110 seats to six parties

Voter turnout stands at 59 %, RSP secures 57 PR seats

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 12

The Election Commission has allocated 110 House of Representatives seats under the proportional representation (PR) system to six political parties that crossed the three per cent threshold in the March 5 election.

The Commission on Thursday allocated seats based on valid votes received by parties under the PR system.

The Rastriya Swatantra Party secured 57 PR seats, receiving 47.8 per cent of the total valid PR votes.

Similarly, the Nepali Congress was allocated 20 seats, followed by the CPN-UML with 16 seats. The Nepali Communist Party secured nine seats, while the Shram Sanskriti Party and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party obtained four seats each.

With 125 seats won under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, the Rastriya Swatantra Party will have 182 lawmakers in the House of Representatives. The RSP will be short of two seats to enjoy a two-thirds majority in the Lower House.

Likewise, the second-largest party, the Nepali Congress, won 18 seats under the FPTP system, bringing its total number to 38 seats.

The CPN-UML won nine seats through direct election, taking its total number of lawmakers to 25.

Similarly, the Nepali Communist Party will have 17 lawmakers in total, including eight elected through the FPTP system.

The Shram Sanskriti Party, led by former Harka Sampang, the ex-mayor of Dharan, won three FPTP seats and will now have seven lawmakers in total. It is the newest party in the parliament.

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party, which won one seat under the FPTP system, will have five lawmakers.

EC's Joint-Secretary Narayan Prasad Bhattarai said the Commission has requested the concerned political parties to submit the names of their candidates for the PR seats within three days, as per the election law and regulations.

EC's Joint-Spokesperson Kul Bahadur GC said only six parties managed to cross the three per cent threshold required to secure PR seats. Interestingly, the HoR will have lawmakers from only six parties, as many parties that were in the previous House failed to win even a single seat this time.

"Letters will be sent to the eligible parties asking them to submit their selected candidates within three days based on the decision of their respective central committees," he said.

He further added that the Commission will then review whether the required representation criteria have been met and may seek verification from the parties if necessary.

Meanwhile, Mahabir Pun will enter the House of Representatives as an independent lawmaker.

According to GC, the verification process may take five to seven days, as parties will first need time to submit their lists and correct any errors if found.

The Lower House of the Federal Parliament has 275 members, including 165 elected through FPTP and 110 through the PR system.

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SC gives interim order not to blacklist Sah

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 12

The Supreme Court (SC) has issued an interim order against the decision to blacklist Kishori Sah Kamal, a candidate of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) from Dhanusha-1, whose candidacy had earlier been cancelled by the Election Commission.

Hearing a writ petition filed by Sah, a single bench of SC Justice Saranga Subedi on Thursday issued the interim order in the name of the Credit Information Bureau, instructing it not to blacklist Sah.

Sah filed a writ petition citing that his candidacy was canceled after the Bureau placed him on the blacklist.

He has also filed a separate petition against the Election Commission on March 3. A meeting has been called by SC for Friday to decide whether or not to issue an interim order regarding the matter.

However, Sah filed another writ at the SC, requesting removal from the blacklist. After SC's interim order, interest has grown in the vote result of Dhanusha-1.

The candidate's nomination had earlier been cancelled because he was blacklisted. The Court is expected to hear the case again on Friday.

If the Court issues a different ruling regarding the election in that constituency, where a Nepali Communist Party (NCP) candidate has already been declared elected, it could delay the submission of the election report.

Talking about the matter, EC's Joint-Spokesperson Kul Bahadur GC said that the SC has summoned both sides for a hearing on Friday.

"Whatever order is issued after that hearing will be followed accordingly," he said.'

AlthoughtThe Commission cancelled Sah's candidacy, he received the highest number of votes in his constituency. The Election Commission has declared Matrika Yadav of the NCP the winner in Dhanusha-1.

CIB takes charge of further probe into death of Inisha BK

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 12

The Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) of Nepal Police has deployed a team to assist in the investigation into the death of 16-year-old Inisha BK, who is suspected to have been raped and killed in Surkhet District.

According to police, a specialised team from the CIB led by a police inspector has been mobilised to carry out further investigation into the case. The request for support was made by the District Police Office Surkhet on Wednesday.

CIB Spokesperson and Senior Superintendent of Police Shiva Kumar Shrestha said the Bureau's expert team would reach Birendranagar by Friday to assist with the investigation.

Similarly, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Mohan Jung Budhathapa, Spokesperson for the Surkhet District Police Office, said the CIB team from Kathmandu was expected to arrive in the district on Thursday.

"We sought assistance from the CIB for further investigation into the case," Budhathapa said. "The team will begin additional investigation only from Friday."

Superintendent of Police Sudhir Raj Shahi said another team from the Nepal Police Provincial Office, Nepalgunj would also arrive in Surkhet to conduct polygraph tests and assist with technical analysis, including call detail record (CDR) examination.

According to Shahi, police have reached the final phase of the investigation but have requested additional experts to ensure that no aspect of the case is overlooked.

"The purpose is to strengthen the investigation and broaden its scope," he said, adding that many reports, including the post-mortem report, had already been received.

Police have also sent mobile phones for examination at the Digital Forensic Laboratory, while toxicological and bio-serological tests have been sent to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory.

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NOC to distribute half-filled gas cylinders from today

BY LAXMAN KAFLE
Kathmandu, Mar. 12

The Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has decided to supply only half-filled cooking gas cylinders to the market starting Friday in an effort to address the ongoing fright among consumers.

According to NOC spokesperson Manoj Kumar Thakur, consumers will now be able to purchase half-filled cylinders containing 7.1 kilograms of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

The price of the half-filled cylinder will also be set at half the current price of a full cylinder. The price of a half-filled cooking gas cylinder will be Rs. 955 per cylinder. Spokesperson Thakur said the decision was taken due to growing global demand for gas and supply disruptions caused by ongoing international conflicts.

However, the import of petroleum products and LPG from the Indian Oil Corporation has remained normal to date, he said.

Despite NOC continuing to import and distribute LPG according to regular demand, gas consumption in the Kathmandu Valley has increased significantly over the past two to three months, he said.

According to the corporation, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has disrupted the global supply of petroleum products and LPG.

Following these reports, many consumers in Nepal have started purchasing and storing LPG cylinders in number greater than their actual needs, further increasing pressure on supply in the Kathmandu Valley, Thakur said.

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Today's Supplement Highlight

Mumbai memories etched in timeless grandeur.



RSP ends dominance of left parties, Nepali Congress in Bagmati

BY RAMMANI DAHAL
Makwanpur, Mar. 12

Following Nepal's transition to federalism, the Nepali Congress and leftist parties had long dominated Bagmati Province. But in the latest House of Representatives election, they suffered a humiliating defeat, winning one seat each.

The Nepali Congress and the Nepali Communist Party (NCP) each secured victory in one constituency, while the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) won 31 in the election held on March 5. Bagmati province has 33 constituencies.

In the 2017 general election, the Nepali Congress and leftist parties had won all seats in the province. However, with the emergence of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) in the 2022 election, their dominance had already begun to shrink.

In the latest election, RSP candidates secured victory in almost all constituencies across the province, except in Rasuwa district, where Nepali Congress candidate Mohan Acharya won, and in Sindhupalchok Constituency No. 2, where CPN candidate Yuvaraj Dulal emerged victorious. Dulal had resigned from his position as a member of the Bagmati Provincial Assembly in order to contest the election.



Rabi Lamichhane



Dol Prasad Aryal



Toshima Karki



Ranju Darshana



Jagdish Kharel

The RSP achieved a clean sweep in several districts, including Kathmandu, which has 10 constituencies, Lalitpur and Chitwan with three constituencies each, and Makwanpur, Kavrepalanchok, Sindhuli, Dhading, Bhaktapur, and Nuwakot, with two constituencies each. Similarly, RSP candidates were also elected in Dolakha, Ramechhap, and Sindhupalchok.

In the 2017 general election, when the CPN-UML and the then CPN (Maoist Centre) had formed an alliance, the UML had won 20 constituencies in the province while the Maoist Centre secured seven.

Despite the left alliance, the Nepali Congress managed to win five constituencies, including four in Kathmandu and one in Rasuwa.

As in previous elections, a candidate from the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP) had won one constituency in Bhaktapur.

In the 2022 election, when the Nepali Congress, Maoist Centre, and the then CPN (Unified Socialist) contested the general election in alliance, the UML was reduced to just four constituencies.

Within the alliance, the Nepali Congress won 13 constituencies, including five in Kathmandu, while the Maoist Centre won five and the CPN (Unified Socialist) secured one.

The newly established RSP contested the election shortly after its formation and secured seven seats, five in Kathmandu and two in Chitwan, marking its entry into national politics.

Similarly, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) had won two constituencies-- Chitwan and Makwanpur. The Nepal Workers and Peasants Party also retained its traditional stronghold in Bhaktapur.

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BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold	: Rs. 317,000 /-
Worked Gold	: NA
Silver	: Rs. 5,515 /-

STOCK

NEPSE	: 2,820.44
Total Amount	: 14,551,946,230.27
No. of Share	: 41,686,405

Remittance inflows rise to Rs. 1,261B in 7 months

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 12



Over Rs. 198 billion inflows in a single month

Nepal recorded a significant surge in remittance inflows during the first seven months of fiscal year 2025/26, strengthening the country's external sector.

According to the latest macroeconomic and financial report made public by Nepal Rastra Bank, remittance inflows increased by 39.8 per cent, reaching Rs. 1,261.01 billion during the review period. In the same period of the previous fiscal year, remittance had grown by only 7.5 per cent.

During the month of Magh (mid-January to mid-February) alone, Nepal received Rs. 198.08 billion in remittances, a notable rise compared to Rs. 137.50 billion recorded in the same month last year.

In the US dollar terms, remittance inflows increased by 33 per cent to 8.86 billion in the review period. Such inflow had increased by 5.5 per cent in the same period of the previous year.

Net secondary income (net transfer) reached Rs. 1,384.27 billion in the review period. Such income was Rs. 986.34 billion in the same period of the previous year.

The number of Nepali workers, both institutional and individual, taking first-time approval for foreign employment stands at 245,153 and taking approval for renew entry stands at 227,424. In the same period of the previous year, such numbers were 274,662 and 190,886 respectively.

Forex reserves reach Rs. 3,302 billion

Similarly, the foreign exchange reserves have increased significantly in the first seven months of the current fiscal year.

According to NRB, gross foreign exchange reserves rose by 23.3 per cent to Rs. 3,302.66 billion in mid-February 2026, compared to Rs. 2,677.68 billion recorded in mid-July 2025.

In the US dollar terms, the gross foreign exchange reserves increased by 16.7 per cent to 22.76 billion in mid-February 2026 from 19.50 billion in mid-July 2025.

Of the total foreign exchange reserves, the reserves held by NRB increased by 21.2 per cent to Rs. 2926.99 billion in mid-February 2026 from Rs. 2414.64 billion in mid-July 2025.

Reserves held by banks and financial institutions (except NRB) increased by 42.8 per cent to Rs. 375.67 billion in mid- February 2026 from Rs. 263.04 billion in mid-July 2025. The share of Indian currency in total reserves stood at 21.5 per cent in mid-February 2026.

Based on the country's import levels during the first seven months of fiscal year 2025/26, the existing reserves are sufficient to cover 21.3 months of merchandise imports and 18 months of combined merchandise and services imports.

Current account surplus widens, BoP remains strong

According to NRB, the current account recorded a surplus of Rs. 493.78 billion during the review period, a substantial increase compared to the Rs. 184.14 billion surplus recorded in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

In the US dollar terms, the current account registered a surplus of 3.47 billion in the review period against a surplus of 1.37 billion in the same period of the previous year.

In the review period, net capital transfer amounted to Rs. 11.43 billion. In the same period of the previous year, such transfer amounted to Rs. 5.83 billion.

Similarly, in the review period, Rs. 10.22 billion foreign direct investment (equity only) was received. In the same period of the previous year, foreign direct investment inflow (equity only) amounted to Rs. 7.43 billion.

During the review period, Balance of Payments (BOP) remained at a surplus of Rs. 572.73 billion.

Such surplus was Rs. 284.41 billion in the previous year. In the US dollar terms, the BOP remained at a surplus of Rs. 4.03 billion in the review period compared to a surplus of Rs. 2.11 billion in the same period of the previous year.

MONITORING TO PREVENT ARTIFICIAL SHORTAGE, OF COOKING GAS

BY ARJUN KAFLE
Syangja, Mar. 12

A market monitoring drive has been carried out in various commercial centres of Syangja to discourage traders from creating an artificial shortage of cooking gas and cheating consumers through black marketing.

The administration has increased surveillance in key trading centres including Putalibazar, Rangkhola, Bayarghari, Waling and Galyang.

Under the initiative of the District Administration Office, inspections were conducted at gas dealers and shops in major markets across the district.

The administration has increased surveillance in key trading centres including Putalibazar, Rangkhola, Bayarghari, Waling and Galyang.

An integrated monitoring team led by Assistant Chief District Officer Prem Subedi conducted on-site inspections throughout the day, examining the distribution of gas, available stock and pricing.

During the monitoring, the team checked the quantity of gas cylinders, whether the cylinders contained the prescribed weight and whether dealers were issuing mandatory bills during sales.

Some gas dealers found violating the rules or not following proper procedures were immediately fined, while others were warned and instructed to follow the business conduct.

Following the inspection, Assistant Chief District Officer Subedi said there was no shortage of cooking gas in the district and warned that strict action would be taken against anyone attempting to create artificial shortages by hoarding stock.

He added that the administration would continue regular monitoring to prevent illegal activities such as creating artificial shortages or selling gas at inflated prices, with consumer protection as its top priority.

Karnali Highway still incomplete after 31 years, remains an election promise

BY PREM RAJ SIMKHADA
Kathmandu, Mar. 12



The Karnali Highway has remained incomplete for more than three decades, despite repeatedly being raised as a major election issue by political leaders.

Passengers travelling along the highway are forced to take risky journeys due to its poor condition. The narrow one-lane road, often covered with dust in dry weather and mud during rainfall, frequent landslides and repeated accidents has continued to cause hardship for both local residents and tourists.

Although political parties have repeatedly promised to upgrade the highway during elections, little progress has been made. The delay has directly affected development in the Karnali Province and limited market access for local products.

The highway was first inaugurated in 1991 by then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and has been an election agenda since 1994. However, the project remains incomplete.

The 232-kilometre highway came into operation on April 12, 1980. According to the Department of Roads, around Rs. 1.13 billion has been spent to construct 14 bridges along the highway, while nearly Rs. 2 billion from the World Bank has been used for blacktopping with Otta Seal technology and building retaining walls and safety barriers. Despite these investments, the condition of the road remains wretched.

In 2015, blacktopping work was carried out under the federal government's Road Sector Development Project with financial support from the World Bank. The Road Division Office Jumla said nearly Rs. 700 million has been spent on the road in the past three years alone. However, about 80 per cent of the asphalt has peeled off, making the road muddy during rain and dusty in dry weather.

Bus driver Dirgha Bahadur KC said driving on the highway is extremely difficult. As many sections of the road are only wide enough for one vehicle, drivers often have to reverse to allow vehicles to pass each other. While reserved vehicles can reach Jumla from Surkhet within a day, passenger buses usually have to stop overnight in Kalikot District.

"The road is only about five metres wide in most places, and many curves are poorly designed, forcing drivers to reverse while driving," KC said, adding that vehicles frequently suffer tyre bursts and mechanical damage due to potholes and the fragile terrain.

According to the Karnali Province Police Office in Surkhet, the risk of accidents along the highway remains high. Police data show that 901 people have died and 1,527 others have been injured in road accidents on the highway since 2015.

Among the deadliest incidents were a crash in Kitu of Dailekh District in March 2010 that killed 42 people and another accident in Serabada, Birtamod area of Kalikot District in October 2012 that claimed 28 lives. In the past three years alone, 301 people have died and nearly 800 others have been injured in accidents on the highway.

Chief of the Karnali Province Police, Deputy Inspector General Jayraj Sapkota, said accidents are increasing due to the narrow and difficult road conditions, overload of passengers, old vehicles and disregard for traffic rules.

Former chief of the Road Division Office Jumla, Leela Bahadur Bhandari, said the highway was not built according to proper engineering standards. He said the road should have been constructed as a two-lane highway from the beginning.

"According to engineering standards, the 232-kilometre journey from Surkhet to Jumla should take about six hours. But passengers are now forced to travel for up to 24 hours," he said.

The highway, which was initiated in 1991, faced delays due to the armed conflict and lack of budget and was completed only after 15 years. Because of the rocky terrain, the government later assigned the construction work to the Nepali Army. Although the road was eventually completed, it has not been properly upgraded.

Political parties in districts such as Dailekh District, Jumla, Mugu District and Kalikot District have frequently raised the highway's improvement as an election promise, but locals say the issue is often neglected once the elections are over.

OIL TOPS $100 AMID IRANIAN SHIPPING ATTACKS

AP
Mar. 12

The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, spiked back over $100 as Iranian strikes hit ships in the regions waters and the ongoing American-Israeli war with Iran showed no signs of slowing.

Thursday's major developments include Iranian attacks against commercial ships around the Strait of Hormuz and Iraq's port of Basra, escalating a campaign of squeezing the oil-rich Gulf region as global energy concerns mount.

The U.S. campaign of airstrikes in Iran is now in its 13th day. The Israeli military is also striking Iran and its militant ally Hezbollah in Lebanon, where more than 800,000 people have been displaced by the fighting.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that cooperation between Russia and the United States could be a "very important factor" helping stabilize global oil markets.

Peskov made the statement when asked to comment on whether Russian President Vladimir Putin's envoy Kirill Dmitriev discussed the possible easing of U.S. sanctions against Russian oil during his talks Wednesday in Florida with President Donald Trump's envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner.

Peskov said "it's too early to talk about any effective cooperation yet," but added without providing details that "the issue is certainly being discussed."

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard claimed attacking a vessel off Iraq, with a video showing the moment it was struck. The footage showed explosions striking the Safesea Vishnu, flagged in the Marshall Islands, overnight.

In the footage, a man can be heard shouting: "Allah is the greatest! The destruction of an American tanker in the northern district of the Persian Gulf! I obey you Khamenei! Hail be the Islamic Republic of Iran! Soldiers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy!"

Israel Katz held a security assessment with military officials Thursday in the army's headquarters in Tel Aviv, after the largest attack yet by Hezbollah in the Iran war.

He warned Lebanon that if its government does not prevent Hezbollah from attacking, Israel "will take the territory and do it ourselves."

In a video statement released by his office, Katz said he and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the military to prepare for "an expansion" of its activity in Lebanon "and to restore calm and security to the northern communities."

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says Ukraine seeks to sign a major agreement with the United States on drone production but requires White House approval.

The deal would cover various types of drones and air defense systems operating as a single system capable of protecting against hundreds or even thousands of Iranian-designed Shahed drones and missiles, Zelenskyy said on Telegram Thursday.

Zelenskyy says he hopes U.S. officials may be more inclined to support such an agreement in light of Middle East security challenges.

Cooking gas shortage hits local consumers

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Tanahun, Mar. 12



The daily life of consumers has become difficult due to the acute shortage of cooking gas in the entire district, including Damauli, the headquarters of Tanahun.

Despite the gas crisis in the market, social activists in Damauli staged a symbolic protest on Thursday, accusing local authorities and the administration of remaining silent.

Social activists Mohammad Ghaffar Sudip and Sundar Prajapati demonstrated empty gas cylinders at Administration Chowk to draw serious attention of the government and concerned authorities.

While the Nepal Oil Corporation claims there is no shortage of gas, traders are sending consumers back empty-handed.

Mila Darai, a resident of Bhadgaun in Vyas Municipality–1, said that traders sent her back with empty-hand saying there was no gas available.

Amid this contradictory situation, the activists questioned whether ordinary people suffering from the crisis are not citizens of this country.

To strengthen their protest, they handed over an empty cylinder to Bikash Shrestha, the administrative officer at the District Administration Office, on Thursday as a form of pressure.

Activist Ghaffar said that they were forced to take to the streets because the administration had not taken concrete steps even though people did not have gas to cook their meals.

Dinesh Kumar Shrestha, Vice President of the Tanahun Chamber of Commerce and Industry, admitted that supply in the market is lower than demand, which has created management challenges.

He said that the tendency of consumers to unnecessarily stock cylinders due to fear of not getting gas has increased, which has led to an artificial shortage and it is difficult to supply gas to the traders.

Chief District Officer Shiva Lal Tiwari said the issue of the gas shortage has been taken seriously and urged consumers not to panic.

He informed that traders have already been strictly instructed not to hide gas or engage in black marketing.

Tiwari said that efforts are underway through the President of the Tanahun Chamber of Commerce and Industry to import sufficient gas.

According to traders, gas supplies are expected to arrive within two days and the situation will become normal.

NOC asks consumers to save gas, petroleum

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 12

The Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has requested consumers to use liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and other petroleum products responsibly to ensure smooth supply across the country.

Issuing a press statement, the corporation said that the ongoing problems seen in the Middle East have not yet directly affected Nepal's fuel supply.

However, as Nepal is completely dependent on imported petroleum products, the corporation emphasised the need to adopt precautionary measures to manage consumption and maintain supply stability.

The NOC said that despite supply concerns raised by some gas industries, LPG distribution in Nepal remains normal. The corporation said it had taken steps to ensure that LPG is easily available to consumers.

The corporation requested the public to purchase and use only the necessary amount of petroleum products and LPG.

"Households that typically consume one cylinder per month have been asked not to demand additional cylinders. Consumers have also been urged not to store gas cylinders unnecessarily," said the NOC.

To reduce dependence on LPG, the corporation encouraged the use of electricity wherever possible, including for cooking.

It also suggested adopting ride-sharing practices to minimise fuel consumption and avoiding the use of generators when electricity is available.

The NOC has also requested industries to reduce their use of petroleum products and LPG where possible.

Stating that imports and distribution of fuel and LPG are continuing regularly and are expected to remain stable in the coming days, it said that Nepal may still feel indirect impacts from global developments.

The corporation warned that anyone found hoarding LPG cylinders, selling petroleum products at higher-than-approved prices, or illegally marketing new cylinders would face legal action under government laws.

Election police bid farewell nationwide

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 12



PHOTO: JYOTI PANTHA

Election police in Bardiya during farewell ceremony.

Election police temporarily hired and deployed to ensure the security of the House of Representatives elections have completed their service and were formally bid farewell amidst various functions across the country.

The Nepal Police recruited 133,980 election police, while the Armed Police Force deployed 15,110 personnel for 40 days to provide security during the elections.

The House of Representatives elections were peacefully conducted March 5, and with vote counting now complete, the election police were formally bade farewell on Thursday with letters of appreciation, according to Nepal Police Spokesperson DIG Abi Narayan Kafle.

The Armed Police Force also bade farewell to its election police on Thursday. DIG Bishnu Prasad Bhatta, Spokesperson for the Armed Police Force, confirmed that those deployed for election security were bidden farewell today.

The government provided each election police officer with a salary of Rs. 34,776 for the 40-day deployment. In addition, they received Rs. 846 to cover ration and travel expenses. Daily snack allowances of Rs. 300 were also provided for four days, and separate funds were allocated for uniforms, according to DIG Kafle.

Meanwhile, our Syangja correspondent Radha Krishna Dumre said that the election police personnel deployed during the House of Representatives election were honoured and bid farewell.

The farewell and appreciation certificate distribution programmes were organised at various locations across Syangja district.

Separate programmes were held at the District Police Office, Syangja, Ward Police Office Waling, Area Police Office Chapakot and Area Police Office Chisapani.

Syangja Police Chief and SP Dadhiram Neupane said that the election police were honoured with appreciation letters in recognition of their contribution to election security.

Most of the election police personnel attended the programme and expressed that they were highly enthusiastic while performing their duties during the election.

A total of 2,115 election police personnel were deployed in Syangja district to maintain security during the election. Police personnel were brought in from other districts to address shortages in Nepal Police and Armed Police Force units.

A total of 67 personnel were brought from Tanahun, 139 from Kaski and 290 from Nawalparasi, while 1,619 election police were selected within the district.

During the election period, they were deployed at various polling centres and sensitive locations, and they played an important role in maintaining security. The District Police Office in Syangja stated that personnel who made notable contributions to election security were honoured during the programme.

RENU DAHAL TO ADDRESS NXT SUMMIT IN INDIA

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 12

Former mayor of Bharatpur Metropolitan City Renu Dahal has been invited as an honoured speaker at the prestigious NXT Summit 2026 to be held in New Delhi, India.

According to organisers, Dahal received a formal invitation from Kartikeya Sharma, a member of India's Rajya Sabha. The three-day summit will be held from March 12 to 14 at Bharat Mandapam.

The organisers aim to develop the summit into an annual calendar event in India that brings together global thinkers and leaders from policy, education, business, politics, science and technology.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend the event as the chief guest, while former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison will participate as a distinguished guest. Other speakers include India's Minister of State for Railways, Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw and Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh.

The summit is expected to bring together lawmakers from more than 30 countries, as well as professors and students from leading universities, including Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of California, Berkeley, University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, London School of Economics and Stanford University.

NEWS BRIEFS

Army airlifts postpartum woman

Kathmandu: A postpartum woman has been rescued by helicopter from Jumla district.

Asmita Nepali, 18, a resident of Tila Rural Municipality–3, was airlifted by a helicopter of the Nepali Army.

According to the Nepali Army Headquarters on Thursday, the woman was flown from Jumla to Karnali Province Hospital for further treatment after she developed serious health complications following childbirth at Karnali Academy of Health Sciences.

Family members had initially attempted to conduct the delivery at home. However, after she experienced prolonged labour and her condition became complicated, she was taken to the health academy in Jumla.

Although surgery was performed at the academy, additional complications arose, making it necessary to transfer her to Surkhet for advanced medical care.

She was airlifted to Surkhet with coordination from the District Administration Office Jumla and support from the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens.

Motorcycle found buried in Mahottari

Mahottari: A motorcycle has been found buried in a pit in the Mahottari district.

According to the District Police Office Mahottari, the motorcycle was discovered buried in a pit and covered with soil at Magarthana in Sonama Rural Municipality–6 of the district.

Local residents informed the police after noticing a suspicious object buried in the ground.

A police team reached the site following the information and recovered the motorcycle from the pit.

Police identified the motorcycle as a Super Splendour with Nepali registration number Ja 8 Pa 997. The motorcycle is currently kept at Magarthana Police Post.

Police said an investigation has begun to determine who buried the motorcycle and for what purpose.

Magarthana Police Post said that a further investigation is underway to identify the motorcycle's real owner and determine the reason for the incident. Police have also started searching for individuals related to the motorcycle.

Fugitive held in Sotang

Solukhumbu: The District Police Office, Solukhumbu, has arrested a man who had been on the run in connection with a foreign employment fraud case.

The Foreign Employment Tribunal delivered its verdict on May 24, 2015, in a case filed by Rajendra Thapa, in which the government of Nepal was the plaintiff and 48-year-old Lakubir Rai of Sotang Rural Municipality–1, Solukhumbu, was the defendant.

(TRN)

Sewar Khola Bridge makes 50% physical progress

BY LILADHAR WALI
Ghorahi, Mar. 12



Construction of the Sewara Khola Bridge in Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City-16, Dang, has seen 50 per cent physical progress. The bridge falls under the Ghorahi-Tulsipur road section, and with only about three months remaining before the construction deadline, half of the work has been completed.

According to Engineer Suresh Chaudhary of the Bridge Sector Office, Banke, the lower structure of the four-lane bridge, including the construction of pillars as part of the sub-structure, has been completed. Engineer Chaudhary stated that after completing the sub-structure, preparations are underway to begin work on the superstructure. As part of the superstructure, one of the two spans of the bridge is scheduled to be cast by mid-April.

Engineer Chaudhary said, "The bridge's sub-structure has been completed. Preparations are underway to cast one span by Chaitra. After this work is completed, the second span will be cast."

Although efforts were made to complete the bridge within the contract period, some delays have occurred, according to Engineer Chaudhary. The contract for the four-lane bridge was awarded to M.S. Raymaji Construction JV, Kathmandu, on June 13, 2023. As per the agreement, the construction company was expected to finish the bridge by June 11, 2026.

The 70-metre-long and 20.5-metre-wide bridge was contracted for Rs. 232,243,300, informed the Bridge Sector Office, Banke. So far, the construction company has received approximately 41 per cent of the payment, totalling Rs. 95,21 million. Construction company representative Prakash Rana said that although preparations were made to complete the bridge within the contract period, budget constraints have caused delays.

Once the Sewara Khola Bridge is completed, it is expected to resolve traffic problems on the Ghorahi-Tulsipur road section during the rainy season. Alongside Sewara Khola, four-lane bridges are under construction at Hapur Khola and Kala Khola, and a two-lane bridge is being built at Gwara Khola on the same road section.

POLICE FIRE WARNING SHOT IN MAKWANPUR, ONE INJURED

BY RAMMANI DAHAL
Makawanpur, Mar. 12

Police fired a warning shot in self-defence after a patrol team was attacked in Makari of Manahari Rural Municipality–1 in Makwanpur, leaving one person injured and two others detained.

According to the District Police Office Makwanpur, a police team led by Assistant Sub-Inspector Dil Bahadur Tamang from Padampokhari Police Post had gone to the area following reports of drug use and a dispute late at night when Tamang was attacked.

While questioning individuals about the incident, Tamang was suddenly attacked with a beer bottle, a khukuri and an axe, sustaining injuries to both hands.

In response, Tamang fired one round from his service pistol in self-defence, injuring Sanis Titung, 19, of Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City–12, Hattigauda, informed Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Pushkar Bogati of the District Police Office Makwanpur.

One dies in Scorpio–motorcycle collision

BY JAY KRISHNA YADAV
Inaruwa, Mar. 12

A person was killed in a road accident after a motorcycle and a Scorpio SUV collided in the Koshi Rural Municipality of Sunsari district.

The accident occurred at Koshi Katan along the East–West Highway of Koshi Rural Municipality-4.

According to police, the Scorpio (registration number S1 Ch 921), travelling from Inaruwa towards Bhantabari, collided with a 350cc Royal Enfield motorcycle (registration number Madhesh Province 06–001 Pa 0952) coming from the opposite direction, killing Sanjaya Sah of Bishnupur Municipality-2 in Saptari.

The motorcyclist, Sanjay Sah, sustained serious head injuries in the crash. He was rushed to the District Hospital in Inaruwa for treatment, where doctors declared him dead during examination.

Another injured person, 25-year-old Pushpa Sah of Rajbiraj, who was riding pillion on the motorcycle, is currently undergoing treatment. She sustained injuries to her head, arms and legs and is receiving treatment at the District Hospital in Inaruwa after being rescued from the scene.

Police said the motorcycle involved in the accident has been taken under control by the Katan Police Post. Meanwhile, the Scorpio and its driver, 25-year-old Ranjit Kumar Chaudhary of Ward No. 6, Bodebarsain Municipality in Saptari, have been taken into custody by the Area Police Office in Laukahi for further investigation.

> The motorcyclist, Sanjay Sah, sustained serious head injuries in the crash. He was rushed to the District Hospital in Inaruwa for treatment, where doctors declared him dead during examination.

According to police, the accident took place near the Katan Traffic Police Post. Preliminary investigation suggests the crash may have occurred due to over-speeding and the driver's lack of attention to the road.

In a separate incident, two people were injured when a motorcycle (registration number Pr 1–02–051 Pa 9656) lost control and crashed at Baithar Chok of Ramdhuni Municipality-4, Sunsari.

The injured have been identified as 30-year-old Susanta Chaudhary, the motorcycle rider from Khanar of Itahari Sub-Metropolitan City-13, and 24-year-old Pawan Chaudhary, a pillion rider from the same locality.

Both sustained head injuries and fractures to their left legs. They have been referred to Birat Teaching Hospital, Tankisinuwari, Morang, for treatment. The motorcycle has been taken under control by the Singiya Police Post.

Two held with illegal drugs in Sunsari



PHOTO: JAY KRISHNA YADAV

Illegal drugs seized from the suspects during the arrest in Duhabi, Sunsari.

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Inaruwa, Mar. 12

Police have arrested two individuals involved in the buying and selling of illegal drugs in the Dudhbhi Municipality area of Sunsari district.

According to the Area Police Office in Duhabi, the suspects were arrested while allegedly trading drugs on the embankment of a canal belonging to the Sunsari-Morang Irrigation Project at Chhatabeli in Ward No. 9 of Duhabi Municipality.

Acting on a special tip-off, a police team from the Area Police Office Duhabi and the BIT unit of the Koshi Province Police Office in Biratnagar arrested 54-year-old Pawan Lal Tharu of Ward No. 3, Gadhi Rural Municipality, and 33-year-old Mohammad Afzal of Ward No. 11, Itahari Sub-Metropolitan City.

During a search, police recovered 5,000 capsules of the banned drug Tramadol and 6,400 tablets of Spaspen from their possession.

Police also seized two motorcycles — Ko 5 Pa 8097 and Ko 11 Pa 2901 — that were allegedly used to transport the drugs.

The suspects, along with the seized drugs and motorcycles, have been taken to the Area Police Office in Duhabi, where further investigation is underway, police said.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Surprise is the greatest gift that life can grant us.
- Boris Pasternak

EDITORIAL

Voter Education In Vain

The high number of invalid ballots in the recent election to the House of Representatives has raised concerns about the effectiveness of voter education campaigns and the election process. According to preliminary reports, 3.5 per cent of votes cast under the proportional representation (PR) system were found to be invalid votes, while the figure was even higher under the first-past-the-post system (FPTP) system, at over five per cent. In some areas, the problem was more serious, with the percentage of invalid ballots rising above 6 per cent. The gravity of the situation becomes more apparent if we look at the data at the district level. For instance, in Dhankuta, the percentage of invalid votes cast under the FPTP electoral system was as high as 7.72 per cent.

These numbers are important as they represent thousands of citizens whose votes were not ultimately counted. It also indicates that voter education strategies are not being effective among some communities. The Election Commission had ensured that voters were educated about voting by deploying volunteers across all 6,743 wards within 753 local bodies. The programme aimed at reaching out to voters at a grassroots level by using sample ballot papers. However, these efforts did not yield the desired results. In some cases, voters stamped more than one symbol and stamped it outside the designated box, and in other cases, voters used thumbprints instead of the official stamp. Also, the ink smudged on other symbols when the ballot paper was folded, and in some cases, the ballots were inserted in the wrong box. This may be an indication that voters are not familiar with the voting process.

A scrutiny of the voting process is required. This includes the ballot paper, the information provided at the polling stations, and the voting process itself. If the voting process is complex and confusing, voters, irrespective of how well-informed they are, may end up invalidating their ballots. The issue also prompts a broader debate on the efficiency of traditional voter education strategies. Although voter education is a vital aspect, its efficiency may be questionable if based on short-term voter education strategies carried out just a few weeks prior to the elections. A long-term voter education scheme, deeply rooted in local societies, may be required for long-term voter literacy in the country. It is also high time to think about the use of an electronic voting system.

However, the decline in voter turnout in some areas and the high rate of invalid ballots may also prompt a broader debate on voter management strategies. Voter management strategies may benefit from a broader review, including voter education strategies, ballot paper and the timing of voter engagement in the electoral process. Democratic participation does not simply end at the act of voting. Rather, it also entails that the vote is being counted. Each invalid vote means a lost opportunity for citizens to exercise their democratic choice. The recent electoral exercise should be seen as an exercise for self-reflection rather than self-blame. A critical analysis of the strategies that have been put in place could be an effective way of improving the electoral process. Improved voter education and the simplification of the electoral process could be effective ways of ensuring that every voice is being heard. The participation of voters in a correct way would help for good governance and accountability.

Healing The Healers

SURABHI PYAKUREL

Who listens to the listener? Who is in favour of one who spends his/her days on others? A therapist is considered to be an emotionally resilient person who leads people through trauma, anxiety, and personal challenges in our society. However, we pay little attention to an important question: what happens to therapists who need help themselves?

It is a myth that therapists must always be stable emotionally and mentally. It is wrongly believed that when a therapist turns to therapy, s/he is not competent to assist others. This is not only an unrealistic belief, but also a very damaging one. As any other person, mental health professionals also undergo personal hardships, stress, and even times of uncertainty. It's unreasonable to expect them not to be impacted by their workplaces, which only makes matters worse for the people whose occupation is already emotionally stressful.

Therapists are human beings before being professionals. They hear the stories of torture, loss, violence, and heartbreak continuously every day. Such experiences may cause emotional exhaustion, compassion fatigue and burnout. These relentless pressures may impact their personal life, as well as the quality of care they render to their clients. So, they must be adequately supported.

Ironically, those people who assist others in getting through life problems are not taken much care of when it comes to their own mental health. There is still a stigma around mental health in most communities. Mental health professionals, too, can be judged or even criticised once they take therapy. The stereotypes about therapists are widespread, with some thinking that a therapist should be ideal and never need care. This is a basic misconception of mental health.

A person involved in therapy is not a weak individual; rather, it means that s/he can assess themselves and are brave enough to seek help when they need it. To take help when needed is one of the most critical things all people should embrace, including those who spend their lives in service to other people.

Personal therapy and supervision at work are considered to be the key instruments of mental health practitioners. Therapy keeps therapists working through their feelings, discover their personal triggers, and observing professional boundaries. Under these circumstances, therapists work to ensure their own mental health is sound. This will make them more empathetic and self-aware, efficient workers. Like doctors who consult other doctors on medical-related issues, therapists also need professional assistance that helps them to proceed with their work and deliver quality therapy to their clients.

Normalisation of therapists' therapy also has a wider societal parameter. The fact that mental health workers are not afraid to openly recognise the importance of seeking help challenges the stigma of therapy to all. Mental health matters, and asking for help is positive and natural. Only when this happens can society truly adopt a well-being approach in which everyone, including healing professionals, is free to focus on their own mental health.

If we desire a society that upholds mental health, we must accept the fact that none is immune to emotional obstacles. A therapist is not a machine; rather, he/she is a human being with emotions, boundaries, and needs. Making them pursue therapy is not only a step in the right direction toward healthier professionals but also a step toward a more understanding and empathetic society.

When War Closes The Sky



Pramod Basnet

Modern wars no longer disrupt only borders on land. Increasingly, they also fracture the skies that sustain global aviation. The latest escalation between Iran and Israel has once again shown how quickly geopolitical conflict can destabilise the invisible infrastructure of international air travel. Following US–Israeli strikes on Iranian targets on 28 February 2026, several Middle Eastern states imposed emergency airspace restrictions as missile and drone activity intensified across the region. By the first week of March, aviation monitoring data cited by Reuters indicated that more than 37,000 flights connected to Middle Eastern corridors had been cancelled, while oil prices surged by roughly 20 per cent, sharply increasing airline operating costs.

The significance of the crisis extends far beyond delayed departures. The air corridor linking Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia, one of the busiest arteries in global aviation, has been destabilised. When instability spreads across this region, airlines are forced to redraw routes, extend flight times and absorb rising fuel costs, exposing how vulnerable the global aviation system remains to geopolitical shocks.

Airline networks

To understand why the disruption matters so widely, one must look at the geography of modern airline networks. The Middle East is not merely another region in global aviation; it functions as a bridging geography connecting several of the world's largest travel markets. Airlines based in the Gulf built their business models precisely around this strategic location. By positioning hubs in Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi, carriers such as Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways link Europe with Asia and Oceania through efficient one-stop connections. Industry estimates cited by Reuters suggest these airlines collectively carry around one-third of passenger traffic between Europe and Asia, and more than half of Europe's traffic to Australia and New Zealand.

When airspace across Iran, Iraq, Syria and the surrounding regions becomes restricted, the disruption is therefore not simply regional. It cuts directly into the operational logic of global airline networks. Carefully timed connection banks begin to unravel, long-haul flight waves slip, aircraft rotations lengthen and cargo routes must be redesigned. Closing this corridor does not remove a single market; it weakens the efficiency of an entire intercontinental aviation system. For airline planners, the deeper concern is not only cancelled flights but the loss of schedule integrity. Modern network carriers depend on precise planning, accurate block times, coordinated connection banks and high aircraft utilisation. When airlines are forced to avoid conflict zones, those assumptions quickly begin to erode.

Flights rerouted around restricted airspace often require additional contingency fuel and longer flight times. In some cases, airlines must consider technical refuelling stops as safe corridors narrow. Carrying extra fuel can create payload penalties, reducing space for revenue cargo or baggage. Longer routes also push crews closer to regulatory duty limits, sometimes requiring last-minute crew substitutions. Even a modest delay on one inbound aircraft can disrupt several later departures, spreading disruption across interconnected global schedules. Beyond economics lies an equally important issue: aviation risk governance. Modern conflicts increasingly place missiles, drones and military activity in proximity to busy civilian flight corridors.

> For Nepal, Gulf airspace therefore represents far more than a transit route. It functions simultaneously as three different corridors – labour, remittance and family reconnection.

In such conditions, the operating landscape can change within hours. Airspace that remains technically open may still be judged unsafe by airline safety departments. Decisions about where aircraft can fly increasingly resemble strategic risk management rather than routine operational planning. For Nepal, these developments highlight a deeper structural vulnerability. The country's global mobility depends heavily on the Gulf aviation network, which acts as the primary bridge between Kathmandu and the wider world. According to Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, approximately 1,729,288 Nepali citizens live and work across Middle Eastern countries, making the region the largest destination for Nepali migrant labour.

The economic importance of this migration is immense. Nepal Rastra Bank reported remittance inflows of Rs 1,062.93 billion during the first six months of fiscal year 2025/26, including Rs 192.62 billion received between mid-December and mid-January alone. For millions of Nepali households, these remittances form a vital economic lifeline. Against this backdrop, disruptions in Gulf airspace carry implications that reach far beyond airline schedules. On 8 March, Nepal Airlines announced the cancellation of several Kathmandu–Dubai and Kathmandu–Doha flights scheduled for 9–11 March, citing the volatile airspace environment across the Middle East.

Corridors

For Nepal, Gulf airspace therefore represents far more than a transit route. It functions simultaneously as three different corridors – labour, remittance and family reconnection. When instability affects these skies, the consequences quickly reach Nepali households. Workers may face travel delays; students may struggle to return to universities abroad and ticket prices can rise beyond what many migrant workers can afford. For Nepalis living in Israel and nearby regions, the crisis carries an even more immediate human dimension. Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has advised citizens in Israel and Iran to defer travel, remain alert and follow local security guidance, while providing emergency contact channels through Nepali missions abroad.

Yet leaving a conflict-affected region is rarely as simple as booking a seat. Evacuation depends on available air corridors, embassy coordination and whether nearby transit hubs remain operational. Airspace is often viewed as neutral infrastructure that is regulated, charted and predictable. Yet recent events show it is increasingly becoming a strategic instrument of geopolitics. When conflicts destabilise major air corridors, the consequences ripple through airline networks, global trade and labour mobility. For countries like Nepal, which have a globally dispersed workforce but limited long-haul aviation capacity, the lesson is clear. Dependence on distant air corridors is not merely a connectivity issue. In an uncertain world, it is a national vulnerability.

(Basnet is currently studying MSc in Air Transport Management at the University of Surrey, United Kingdom.)

'Golden Seeds' Glitter On Roof Of World



Wang Jian

Potato seeds rarely make national headlines. Yet in China's western highlands, they are becoming a strategic asset. For years, discussions about food security have focused on acreage, yields, and imports. But the real foundation of agricultural security is seeds. Without reliable, high-quality sources of seeds, productivity gains are fragile and can easily be reversed. This is precisely where Qinghai's potato seed industry enters the national picture.

Qinghai sits on the northern edge of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, often described as the "roof of the world". Its high altitude, strong solar radiation, cool temperatures, clean soils, and exceptionally low incidence of soil-borne diseases create near-ideal conditions for producing seed potatoes.

Super-clean zone

At a time when many of China's traditional seed potato regions are struggling with disease pressure, variety degeneration and declining quality, Qinghai has emerged as a rare "super-clean zone". Seed potatoes produced here are widely recognized for their good health, stability and yield potential, supplying key winter cropping areas in southern China. In other words, nature has already done much of the work. What remains is to turn this ecological advantage into lasting industrial strength.

At present, Qinghai's seed potato production remains modest relative to national demand. As southern winter cropping areas increasingly rely on disease-free and high-yield seed varieties, the limitations of the existing supply have become more apparent. The strategic expansion of potato breeding capacity would therefore deliver dual benefits. It would reinforce national seed security while providing a new source of sustainable income for local communities.

This is why Qinghai should not remain merely a regional seed supplier. With proper planning, it can evolve into a national strategic hub for potato seeds — serving both food security and rural development goals. The real bottleneck is not land, but systems. Despite the establishment of a four-tier seed propagation and extension system — at the provincial, county, township and village levels — several constraints persist.

First, the variety of structures remains too narrow. While flagship varieties such as the Qingshu 9 perform well, there is a shortage of specialised varieties tailored to fresh consumption, processing or niche markets. Breeding still relies heavily on conventional methods, while advanced tools such as molecular breeding and genomic selection are underutilized, slowing innovation.

Second, the infrastructure is aging. Many seed production facilities depend on projects launched before the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25). Equipment deterioration and capacity constraints raise costs, increase post-harvest losses, and threaten the stability of seed supply systems built over the years.

> Qinghai's potato seed industry offers a practical example of how ecological protection, technological innovation, rural income growth, and food security can reinforce one another.

Third, branding and market influence lag behind product quality. Qinghai's seed potatoes are widely used, yet the overall "Qinghai" brand has not translated into strong pricing power or high-value positioning within the national industry chain. These are not isolated problems. They reflect a broader challenge: how to connect scientific research, industrial investment and market mechanisms under the demanding conditions of high-altitude agriculture.

Any discussion of development in Qinghai must begin with ecology. As the source region of major rivers and a critical national ecological security barrier — home to areas such as the Three-River Source and Qinghai Lake — environmental protection is not a constraint, but a defining advantage. The future of Qinghai's potato seed industry lies in aligning ecological protection with technological upgrading. Abundant green electricity can power smart greenhouses, plant factories, and cold-chain storage systems, making seed breeding and storage genuinely low-carbon.

Growing green computing capacity can support molecular design breeding, precision water and fertilizer management, and full-chain quality traceability, dramatically improving efficiency and resource use. Meanwhile, low-carbon farming practices such as conservation tillage and ecological recycling can protect soil health and water resources.

Targeted policy planning

With targeted policy planning, green finance incentives, and dedicated scientific support, Qinghai's seed industry can shift toward technology-intensive and eco-friendly development models. Its "superclean" ecological status can then be converted into brand credibility, market premiums, and long-term competitiveness. Potatoes may not command headlines like soybeans or corn, but they matter deeply to farmers' incomes and to national seed security.

Qinghai's experience shows that even remote regions can transform natural endowments into irreplaceable strategic assets — if bottlenecks are addressed systematically. As China enters the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, strengthening seed security will be just as important as expanding output. Qinghai's potato seed industry offers a practical example of how ecological protection, technological innovation, rural income growth, and food security can reinforce one another.

(The author is the vice-dean of the Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences in Qinghai University, China.)
- China Daily

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

March 13, 1976

156 Nations To Take Part In Law Of Sea Parley

United Nations, New York, March 12: As many as 156 sovereign states will be taking part in the resumed law of the sea parley here starting on Monday and lasting until May 7, reports AFP.

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READER'S MAIL

Innocents Pay Price Of War

Conflict is often explained through the sterile language of political arguments, military strategies, and national interests. Governments justify their actions by speaking of security, power, or defence. Leaders debate policies in quiet rooms, and armies carry out orders on distant fields. Yet, in the heart of these manoeuvres, a painful question remains that rarely receives the attention it deserves: Why must innocent people lose their lives because of disputes between strangers in high office?

Across history, conflicts have repeatedly shown that the people who suffer the most are not the ones sitting at the decision-making tables. Civilians do not plan attacks, they do not negotiate political deals, and they do not command armies. Still, they are the ones who face the greatest consequences. Homes that took a lifetime to build are destroyed in seconds; families are torn apart, and countless lives, each one a unique world, are lost in conflicts that ordinary people never chose.

Children are the most tragic victims of this imbalance. A child has no role in international disputes and no voice in political decisions. Yet conflict can take away their safety, their education, and their future. When innocent children become casualties of geopolitical rivalries, it raises serious moral questions about the true cost of these "strategies."

The suffering does not stop with those who are killed. Survivors must carry the heavy weight of destruction and trauma. Families lose their anchors, and entire communities are left to grieve in the silence of what used to be. Neighbourhoods are displaced in an instant, forcing people to become refugees, strangers in an unfamiliar place,s trying to rebuild from nothing.

As the world watches these escalations continue, the question becomes unavoidable: How many more lives must be lost before we realise that political disputes should never come at the cost of ordinary people?

Niharika Lama
Maitighar, Kathmandu

TAILPIECE

After trying a new shampoo for the first time, a man fired off an enthusiastic letter of approval to the manufacturer. Several weeks later, he came home from work to a large carton on his porch. Inside were free samples of the many products the company produced: soaps, detergents, toothpaste, and paper items, etc. "Well, what do you think?" his wife asked, smiling. "Next time," he replied. "I'm writing to General Motors!"

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A woman goes into an antique shop and says to the owner, "When I was in here last week I saw a big mug with a flat head that holds a lot of beer. I'd like to buy it." "Sorry," replied the owner, "but I can't sell you that." "Why not?" asked the customer. "Because that's my husband."

Iran's attacks on Mideast shipping, energy infrastructure continue

AP
Uae, Mar. 12

Iran's unrelenting attacks on shipping traffic and energy infrastructure in the Persian Gulf pushed oil back above $100 a barrel on Thursday, as American and Israeli strikes pounded the Islamic Republic with no sign of an end to the war in sight.

Iran is trying to inflict enough global economic pain to pressure the United States and Israel to halt their bombardment, which started the war on Feb. 28. Iran's president said its attacks would continue until Iran gets security guarantees against another assault, indicating that even a ceasefire or U.S. declaration of victory might not halt the conflict.

U.S. President Donald Trump, speaking at a Wednesday event in Kentucky, promised to "finish the job," even though he claimed Iran is "virtually destroyed."

Iran hit a container ship off the coast of Dubai, caused a blaze near Bahrain's international airport, targeted a major Saudi oil field with a drone and forced Iraq to halt operations at all of its oil terminals after attacking its port of Basra on the Persian Gulf.

With the latest attacks, Iran flouted a U.N. Security Council resolution from the previous day demanding that it halt strikes on its Gulf neighbours, with new attacks also reported in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

Sirens wailed after midnight in Jerusalem as Israel intercepted incoming Iranian missiles, and loud booms were heard later in the day in another attack on the city, while Iran-backed Hezbollah militants launched some 200 rockets from Lebanon at the country's north.

Israel responded with what the military described as a "wide-scale wave of strikes" on Tehran and in Lebanon, where 11 people were killed in two early morning strikes.



PHOTO: AP

An oil tanker burns after being hit by an Iranian strike in the ship-to-ship transfer zone at Khor al-Zubair port near Basra, Iraq, late Wednesday, March 11, 2026.

The U.N. refugee agency meanwhile sais up to 3.2 million people in Iran have been displaced by the ongoing war. It said most have fled from Tehran and other major cities toward the north of the country or rural areas.

Iranian officials dismiss any notion of backing down

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei hasn't yet made a statement or been seen since being chosen to succeed his father Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the opening day of the conflict.

But Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian suggested online Thursday that for the war to end, the world would need to recognize Iran's "legitimate rights," pay reparations and offer guarantees against future attacks.

In addition to attacking energy infrastructure around the region, Iran has a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway leading from the Persian Gulf toward the Indian Ocean through which a fifth of the world's oil is transported.

Amid speculation that the U.S. might target Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf, Iran's main oil terminal, Iran's parliamentary speaker threatened that any attempt to take Iranian islands would "make the Persian Gulf run with the blood of invaders."

"The blood of American soldiers is Trump's personal responsibility," Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf added in a social media post.

With traffic in the strait effectively stopped, the price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, rose another 9% to more than $100 a barrel, up some 38% over what it cost when the war started. Prices have swung back and forth in recent days, at one-point surging to around $120 a barrel.

Iran and Hezbollah launch multiple attacks on Israel

It was a sleepless night for many Israelis as Hezbollah launched some 200 rockets at the country's north and deeper into Israel, according to the Israeli military, with sirens blaring almost nonstop for hours.

"The noise was extraordinary, it was really scary," said Naama Porat, a resident of the rural community of Klil, some 15 kilometres (9 miles) from the Lebanese border. She said the sound of explosions and interceptions overhead was so loud that she dashed with her son to a shelter outside before the first sirens and spent the night there.

Bangladesh's parliament convenes



PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh Nationalist Party chairman Tarique Rahman being sworn in as prime minister in Dhaka on February 17.

AFP
Dhaka, Mar. 12

Bangladesh's parliament convened Thursday for the first time since a deadly 2024 uprising plunged the country into political turmoil and following elections last month.

The government of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), took over after February 12 elections from the interim administration that had led the country of 170 million people since August 2024.

"After more than a decade and a half of fascist and subservient rule, the activities of parliament are beginning today with representatives elected by the people," Rahman told parliament.

"The BNP wants to build a prosperous, safe and democratic country," he added, calling on all lawmakers, whatever their political opinions, to work together.Rahman blamed the toppled government of Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party for undermining the previous parliament.

Hasina, 78, who has been sentenced in absentia to death for crimes against humanity, is in self-imposed exile in India.

"The fallen dictatorship made parliament dysfunctional, instead of making it the centre of all national activities," Rahman said, promising it would change under his watch.

"We will make parliament the centre of all debates and arguments aimed at resolving the country's problems."

They include tackling a sluggish economy, restoring stability and reviving growth after months of turmoil that rattled investor confidence and strained state finances.

The world's second largest garment exporter, heavily dependent on fossil fuel imports, has also been hit hard by an oil price spike caused by the war in the Middle East.

Rahman's appeal for unity is a bid to heal rifts in a country polarised by years of bitter rivalry.

A new speaker, Hafiz Uddin Ahmad, and his deputy, Kayser Kamal, were elected to office. Both are members of the BNP.The parliament building was looted during the August 2024 uprising against Hasina, but has since been repaired.

The BNP-led alliance secured 212 seats, while the BNP alone won 209 seats.The leader of the opposition is Shafiqur Rahman, who heads the Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance with 76 seats, with Jamaat alone holding 68.

Russian court convicts 19 people over deadly Moscow concert hall attack

AP
Moscow, Mar. 12

A court in Moscow in Thursday convicted 19 people of involvement in the 2024 shooting rampage in a Moscow concert hall that killed 149 people and wounded over 600 in one of the deadliest attacks in the capital in years.

A faction of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the March 22, 2024, massacre at the Crocus City Hall concert venue in which four gunmen shot people who were waiting for a show by a popular rock band and then set the building on fire.

All 19 defendants were handed lengthy prison terms: 15 were sentenced to life in prison, one was handed 22 1/2 years in prison, and three others were given 19 years and 11 months each.

The trial began in August 2025 in a military court, as is customary for terrorism charges, and took place behind closed doors, with the authorities citing security concerns.

President Vladimir Putin and other Russian officials have claimed, without presenting evidence, that Ukraine had a role in the attack. Kyiv has strongly denied any involvement.

> The trial began in August 2025 in a military court, as is customary for terrorism charges, and took place behind closed doors, with the authorities citing security concerns.

The Investigative Committee, Russia's top criminal investigation agency, has said that the attack had been "planned and carried out in the interests of the current leadership of Ukraine in order to destabilize the political situation in our country." It also noted the four suspected gunmen tried to flee to Ukraine afterward.

The four, all identified as citizens of Tajikistan, were arrested hours after the attack and later appeared in a Moscow court with signs of being severely beaten.

Those tried alongside them included three men who sold the suspected gunmen a car, a man they rented an apartment from, and 10 others accused of terrorist ties, according to independent Russian news site Mediazona.

Zelenskyy: Ukraine awaits US approval for drone deal

AP
Kyiv, Mar. 12

Ukraine is awaiting White House approval for a major drone production agreement proposed by Kyiv last year, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday, as countries scramble to modernize their air defenses after the Iran war exposed shortcomings.

The proposed U.S.-Ukraine deal would cover various types of drones and air defenses that operate as a single system capable of protecting against swarms of hundreds or even thousands of Iranian-designed Shahed drones and missiles, Zelenskyy said in a message on social media.

"We have not yet had the opportunity to sign this document," he said.

Russia has fired tens of thousands of Iranian-designed Shahed drones at Ukraine since it invaded its neighbor just over four years ago. It launched a swarm of more than 800 drones and decoys in its biggest nighttime barrage. Iran has responded to joint U.S.-Israeli strikes by firing the same type of drones at targets in the Middle East.

Ukraine has pioneered the development of cut-price drone killers, some of which cost a few thousand dollars, that have rewritten the air defense rule book.

The conflict unfolding in the Middle East might prompt American officials to sign the drone production proposal, Zelenskyy said.Ukraine is keen to lock in future foreign support for its ongoing effort to thwart Russia's invasion, and drone production agreements could bring Kyiv some diplomatic leverage in negotiations with Moscow.

U.S.-mediated talks seeking to stop Europe's biggest conflict since World War II are on hold due to the Iran war.

Zelenskyy arrived in NATO member Romania on Thursday, a day before he visits French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, as new research indicated Russian oil revenue that helps drive its invasion of Ukraine has risen since the Iran war began.

Russia's daily revenue from oil sales during the Middle East conflict, which has brought a sharp increase in the price of crude, has been on average 14% higher than in February, according to the nonprofit Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.



PHOTO: AP

An instructor from the Ukrainian company General Cherry demonstrates the operation of an anti-air interceptor drone designed to destroy Russian attack drones in Kyiv region, Wednesday, March 11, 2026.

PRISM

Runners earn record for marathon

Sweden: A group of runners held a certified event over 3,000 feet underground, earning them a Guinness World Record for the deepest marathon.

The marathon took place in Garpenberg, Sweden, and featured 55 runners from across 18 countries. The course measured 3,669 ft. and 10 inches underground.

Guinness World Records noted that the depth is between the height of the world's tallest waterfall, Angel Falls, and the U.K's highest mountain known as Ben Nevis.

Runners had to wear headlamps to compete in the event, which contained 11 laps and raised around $1million for charity.

"It' hot, it's humid, it's a bit dusty, but we're good," one of the competitors told Guinness World Records.

The event was a joint venture between companies BecomingX, ICMM and Boliden.

Hauler crash leaves 40 cows on loose

Virginia: A livestock hauler carrying cows near Winchester, Va., crashed, leaving 40 cows loose in Frederick County.

The livestock hauler was moving 110 cows when he overturned his vehicle near Route 37 and Tasker Road on Monday night.

The cows scattered following the crash with the sheriff's office and animal control working together to recover the cattle. The road was shutdown close to seven hours.

Some of the cows went west towards Interstate 81 and east into a wooded area.

The Frederick County Sheriff's Office is warning residents to look out for the cows if they are driving near the crash.

Agencies

TODAY IN HISTORY

1639 – Harvard College is named after clergyman John Harvard.
1781– William Herschel discovers Uranus.
1848 – The German revolutions of 1848–1849 begin in Vienna.
1884 – The Siege of Khartoum begins. It lasts until January 26, 1885.
1930 – The news of the discovery of Pluto is announced by Lowell Observatory.
1969 – Apollo 9 returns safely to Earth after testing the Lunar Module.
2012 – The Sierre coach crash kills 28 people, including 22 children.
2016 – The Ankara bombing kills at least 37 people.

China projects stability amid Middle East war

AFP
Beijing, Mar. 12

China's leaders wrapped up nine days of annual legislative meetings in Beijing on Thursday, projecting an image of domestic stability seemingly unaffected by the war in key trading partner Iran.

Officials under President Xi Jinping vowed to boost domestic consumption and invest in new technologies including artificial intelligence to drive growth, while making few changes to China's policy roadmap for the next five years.

There was also little signalling whether the United States and Israel's ongoing strikes against Iran -- a major supplier of oil to China -- would disrupt US President Donald Trump's expected visit to Beijing this month.

Experts say the execution of business as usual is by design.



PHOTO: AFP

Chinese President Xi Jinping applauds during the closing session of the National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 12, 2026.

This year's "Two Sessions" political gathering -- parallel meetings of the parliament and a consultative body -- saw Beijing announce a steady seven-percent boost to China's annual defence budget, and approve laws on development planning, ethnic unity and a new environmental code.

Experts say the image projected by the gathering is one of "continuity".

"The message from the Two Sessions this year is all about security, continuity... and instilling confidence in both the government itself and the rest of the stakeholders in China," said Drew Thompson, a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.Changhao Wei, founder of analysis site NPC Observer, said the laws "all seek to entrench and legitimise the Party's policies and practices".

However, rights advocates warn the new "ethnic unity" law, which aims to "strengthen cohesion" within China, could further marginalise minority groups such as the Uyghurs and Tibetans.Along with its economic goals, Beijing published a draft of its 15th Five-Year Plan last week, mapping out national development goals until 2030.

The plan focuses on boosting consumption, as well as on technological development across fields including AI, high-end manufacturing and energy and resource security.

"It's pretty clear... Beijing very much wants to master chips, it is at the heart of the self-reliance drive on technology," said Damien Ma, director of Carnegie China.The head of China's top economic planning body told a press conference that leaders had "the boldness and confidence to cope with various risks and market fluctuations", thanks to the scale of the Chinese economy.

Zheng Shanjie vowed that China's "AI related industries" would be valued at more than 10 trillion yuan ($1.45 trillion) -- seven percent of the country's total GDP last year -- by the end of 2030.

However, the focus on specific industries comes as overall expansion targets has steadily fallen.



PHOTO: SAGAR BASNET/TRN

An excavator being used to clean the Dhobikhola River at Maitidevi in Kathmandu.

MBAHS launches academic block construction

BY ANIL PARAJULI
Hetauda, Mar. 12

The provincial government has allocated a budget for the construction of the building so that the academy can run its academic programmes from its own premises.

The foundation stone for the academic building of the Madan Bhandari Academy of Health Sciences has been laid at Bhutandevi in Hetauda-10 on Thursday.

Chief Minister of Bagmati Province, Indra Bahadur Baniya, laid the foundation stone at a ceremony and directed the contractor to complete the construction within the stipulated timeframe while maintaining quality standards. He said there should be no delay in the construction work under any pretext.

The provincial government has allocated a budget for the construction of the building so that the academy can run its academic programmes from its own premises. Currently, the academy has been operating its programmes from rented spaces in different locations.

The building will be constructed using prefabricated boards and is expected to be environmentally friendly and earthquake-resistant. It will include classrooms, administrative offices, laboratories and other necessary infrastructure to support various health education programmes.

According to Amar Singh Adhikari, Chief Administrative Officer of the Madan Bhandari Academy of Health Sciences, the total estimated cost of the project is Rs 86.1 million. The contract agreement was signed on March 9, and the building is scheduled to be completed by June 29, 2026.

Former Chief Minister Dormani Poudel, Minister for Physical Infrastructure Development Dinesh Chandra Devkota, Health Minister Kiran Thapa, provincial assembly member Eka Lal Shrestha, Vice-Chancellor Pradeep Gyawali and Registrar Bhim Sagar Guragai, among others, were present at the ceremony.

UML CC MEMBER THAPA DIES OF HEART ATTACK

RSS
Gandaki, Mar. 12

The central committee (CC) member and the Kaski district in-charge of the CPN (UML), Krishna Thapa, died of a heart attack on Thursday.



District committee chairman of CPN (UML) Kaski Bain Bahadur Adhikari Chhetri confirmed that Thapa collapsed while delivering his speech at the party meeting Thursday afternoon and was rushed to the Manipal Teaching Hospital in Pokhara. The doctors in the hospital pronounced Thapa's demise.

Thapa was elected the Mayor of Pokhara Sub-Metropolitan City in the local level elections held in 2054 BS and the Gandaki Province Assembly Member in the elections of 2074 BS.

US will permanently close the consulate in Peshawar, Pakistan

AP
WASHINGTON, Mar. 12

The State Department will permanently close the U.S. consulate in Peshawar, Pakistan, which has been America's closest diplomatic mission to the Afghan border and was a primary operations and logistics point before, during and after the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan.

The department notified Congress this week of its intent to close the consulate and said it would save $7.5 million per year, while not adversely affecting its ability to advance U.S. national interests in Pakistan, according to a copy of the notification obtained by The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The move has been under consideration for more than a year since the Trump administration began downsizing nearly all federal agencies and is not related to the Iran war, which has sparked protests in various Pakistani cities, including Karachi and Peshawar, where the U.S. consulates temporarily suspended operations.

The administration's cuts to the State Department last year included the dismissal of several thousand diplomatic personnel and the near wholesale firing of staffers with the U.S. Agency for International Development, which it entirely dismantled. The Peshawar consulate, however, is the first overseas diplomatic mission to be closed down entirely because of the State Department's reorganization.



PHOTO: AP

Muslim worshipers arrive to observe 'Itikaf', during the last ten days of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan, at a mosque, Peshawar, Pakistan, Tuesday.

The Peshawar consulate employs 18 American diplomats and other government personnel and 89 local staff, according to the notice, which is dated Tuesday and said the department would spend $3 million to close it down. More than half of that amount, $1.8 million, would pay for the relocation of armored trailers that had served as temporary office space, it said.

The rest will go toward moving the consulate's motor pool fleet, electronic and telecommunications equipment and office furniture to the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad and the remaining consulates in Karachi and Lahore, the notice said.

Because of its proximity to the Afghan border and Kabul, the Peshawar consulate had been a key jumping-off facility for overland travel into Afghanistan as well as a point of contact for American citizens in northwestern Pakistan and Afghan nationals seeking U.S. assistance.

The notification said consular services for American citizens and others would be handled by the embassy in Islamabad, which is about 114 miles (184 kilometers) away.

"The closure would not adversely affect the mission's ability to advance core U.S. national interests, assist U.S. citizens, or to conduct adequate oversight of foreign assistance programs because all of those functions would continue to be performed by U.S. Embassy Islamabad," it said.

REPRESENTATION OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN HOR WEAKENS

RSS
Kathmandu, Mar. 12

The results of the March 5 election to the House of Representatives have been made public of both the first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR) system.

The results so far shows a very weak representation of the marginalized groups, with only 14 people of 165 (8.48 percent) directly elected.

Accordingly, the Rastriya Swatantra Party came first, the Nepali Congress came second, the CPN (UML) third, and the Nepali Communist Party came fourth.

The results so far shows a very weak representation of the marginalized groups, with only 14 people of 165 (8.48 percent) directly elected. There are 26 indigenous (15.76 percent), 28 Madhesi (16.97 percent), five Tharu (3.3 percent), four Muslim (2.42 percent), and one Dalit (0.61 percent) elected through the FPTP system.

Looking at Dalit representation in this election, the Nepali Congress had fielded only one candidate from the Dalit community as Joint General Secretary Prakash Rasaili from Bajhang. The UML had fielded Chakra Snehi as a candidate from Dadeldhura and Bimala BK as a candidate from Bardiya-2.

Similarly, the Nepali Communist Party had fielded Padam Bishwakarma from Syangja-2 and Man Bahadur Sunar from Kanchanpur-3. The RSP had given tickets to Khagendra Sunar from Banke-3. Of them, only Khagendra Sunar has won.

CIB takes charge...

"Once all the reports arrive and are analysed together, we will be able to reach a conclusion," SP Shahi said, noting that a separate investigation team has also been formed at the district level.

A team of forensic specialists led by Dr. Arvin Shakya from Bheri Hospital conducted the autopsy at Provincial Hospital, Surkhet and submitted its report. According to the report, the victim suffered severe injuries to sensitive organs during sexual assault, leading to excessive bleeding and death. Police, however, said the details had not been officially disclosed as the investigation is still ongoing.

Inisha BK, originally from Gurbhakot Municipality-6, Badakhola, had been living with her family in Birendranagar-1 and was a Grade 11 student at Usha Bal Batika School.

According to police, she left home on Saturday morning saying she was going to attend tuition classes. At around 9am she was found unconscious in the Janajagaran Community Forest area in Birendranagar-4. Doctors at the provincial hospital later declared her dead after she was brought there by police.

Police detained a 16-year-old boy on the same day who reportedly claimed he had been in a relationship with the victim. Based on a complaint filed by the victim's family on March 7, several other boys aged 15, 16 and 17 have also been taken into custody for investigation, police said.

Investigators said the detained boy claimed he had gone for a morning walk with the victim, during which sexual intercourse took place and heavy bleeding occurred. He reportedly told police he sought help from friends to take her to hospital after she lost consciousness.

However, the victim's family has alleged that she was gang-raped and murdered. Police said all the suspects are classmates of the victim, but their identities have not been disclosed as they are minors.

Nationwide concern and calls for fair investigation

The incident has drawn attention nationwide, with political leaders, rights activists and artists calling for an impartial investigation. Many people have shared the victim's photo on social media, demanding justice.

On Wednesday, family members and relatives staged a protest in Birendranagar demanding a fair investigation. The victim's mother, Tila BK, also met Chief District Officer Jagadishwar Upadhyay, demanding justice and strict punishment to those responsible.

RSP ends dominance...

However, this time, the Nepali Congress had been reduced to just one constituency, while the traditional strongholds of communist parties had also collapsed.

The long-standing leftist legacy in Dolakha district was broken, with a non-leftist party, the RSP, winning the seat in the March 5 elections.

Likewise, in Bhaktapur Constituency No. 1, considered the traditional stronghold of the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party since 1990, the RSP broke the dominance and secured victory. The NWPP, which had maintained influence in Bhaktapur since the Panchayat era, suffered defeat this time.

Declining RPP

The election also indicates a downward trend for the non-leftist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). Although the party had won two constituencies--Makwanpur and Chitwan-- in the 2022 election, most of its candidates lost even their deposits in the latest election.

Deepak Bahadur Singh of the RPP, who had defeated candidates from the UML-aligned RPP Nepal alliance and the Nepali Congress–Maoist Centre alliance in 2022, failed even to retain his deposit in this election. While he had previously been elected with more than 27,000 votes, he secured only 4,574 votes this time.

RPP leader Kamal Thapa, who had contested and lost in Makwanpur Constituency No. 1 in 2017 in alliance with the Nepali Congress and again in 2022 under the UML's sun election symbol, also lost in this election.

Having previously finished as the runner-up in both elections in Makwanpur, Thapa contested this time from Kathmandu Constituency No. 5, where he secured only 1,922 votes.

UML falls to zero

In the 2017 election, the CPN-UML had emerged as the largest party in Bagmati Province by winning 20 of the 33 seats. However, in the March 5 polls, the party failed to win even a single seat in Bagmati province.

In 2017, the UML had won one seat each in Dolakha, Kavrepalanchok, Sindhupalchok, Bhaktapur, Sindhuli, and Nuwakot; both seats in Makwanpur and Dhading; six seats in Kathmandu; and two seats each in Lalitpur and Chitwan, totalling 20 constituencies.

In the 2022 election, UML candidates had managed to win only four constituencies, in Kathmandu, Kavrepalanchok, Makwanpur, and Lalitpur. In the current election, even its traditional strongholds, including Makwanpur, have collapsed.

Finance Minister, business...

They emphasised that political stability is essential for overall national development and prosperity, and expressed optimism following the results of the recent elections.

On behalf of the private sector, they thanked the current government for creating a fear-free environment for the elections, according to a press statement issued by the Ministry of Finance.

During the meeting, they drew the attention of the Finance Minister over the issues that remain to be addressed, such as the need to move to multi-rate VAT, the need to reduce tax on the import of raw materials and on the import of finished goods by at least two levels, need for the government to emphasise weightless/boundaryless production and export promotion, need to examine the effectiveness of regulatory bodies, and need to reduce high rates of excise duty.

NOC to distribute...

Considering the current situation, the corporation has decided to reorganise the LPG supply and distribution system to ensure wider availability for consumers, he added.

He explained that the move aims to stabilise the market and ensure broader access to cooking gas for consumers.

"With half cylinders, gas will reach more households," he told The Rising Nepal. "Where 2,000 consumers previously received gas, now up to 4,000 consumers will be able to get it." He expressed his belief that distributing half-filled cylinders will help discourage unnecessary hoarding of gas.

He said that wealthy households with multiple cylinders, as well as hotels and restaurants, are hoarding gas, which has hit ordinary consumers hard.

According to him, people are less likely to stockpile smaller quantities, meaning those who genuinely need gas will be able to purchase it more easily. The NOC has urged all consumers to cooperate with the new arrangement and purchase LPG cylinders accordingly.

EC allocates 110...

Voter turnout

The voter turnout in the March 5 election remained above 59 per cent under the FPTP system, while a slightly higher number of votes were cast under the PR system, EC said.

According to EC, out of 18,903,689 registered voters, 11,168,032 votes were cast under the FPTP system.

Likewise, among the votes cast, 10,559,017 votes (94.55 per cent) were valid, while 609,015 votes (5.45 per cent) were declared invalid.

Likewise, under the PR system, 11,280,617 votes were cast, slightly higher than the FPTP ballots. The voter turnout under the PR system was recorded at 59.67 per cent of the total registered voters.

Of the total PR votes, 10,835,025 votes (96.05 per cent) were valid, while 445,592 votes (3.95 per cent) were invalid.

EC directs to submit expenditure details within 35 days

Meanwhile, the Commission has directed all political parties and candidates who participated in the House of Representatives election to submit a detailed report of their election campaign income and expenditure within 35 days.

The deadline is calculated from the date the results of the election held on March 5 were announced.

Under Section 72(4) of the House of Representatives Election Act, 2074 candidates under the FPTP system must submit their expenditure report to the respective district election office, while political parties under the PR system must submit their report in the format prescribed by the Commission, EC's Joint-Secretary Bhattarai said

Similarly, according to Section 31(2) of the Election (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2073, the expenditure details must be made public for the information of the general public, he added.

Political parties and candidates are required to publish the expenditure details through any of the approved media channels and submit proof of publication, such as a photograph or screenshot, to the Commission or the relevant election office.

The EC has also warned that political parties or candidates who fail to submit the expenditure report within the stipulated time, do not make it public, or fail to provide proof of publication will be subject to action under the Election (Offence and Punishment) Act.

Producers tease 'KPop Demon Hunters' and 'Sinners' celebrations

AP
Los Angeles, Mar. 12



The K-Pop Demon Hunters hit "Golden" has been performed several times over the past few months. Singers EJAE, Audrey Nuna and Rei Ami have appeared on Jimmy Kimmel and Jimmy Fallon's shows, the Brit Awards and even the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade. However, when they take to the stage at the Oscars on Sunday, it will not simply be their usual song-and-dance routine.

The producers behind the 98th Academy Awards aim to celebrate not only the song but also the cultural phenomenon of the film itself. That reasoning is why the only other nominated song set to receive a moment during the broadcast is "I Lied to You", from Sinners — a blockbuster and the most-nominated film of all time.

"We have two really unique stories that are going to be celebrated on stage," said Oscars executive producer and showrunner Raj Kapoor. "They're bigger than just the songs. They're really about filmmaking and craft."

Miles Caton and Raphael Saadiq will be present for the Sinners segment, which intends to explore the role music plays in the film. The performance will feature ballerina Misty Copeland, blues musicians Eric Gales, Buddy Guy and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, actors Jayme Lawson and Li Jun Li, along with Brittany Howard, Bobby Rush, Shaboozey and Alice Smith. Kapoor added that filmmaker Ryan Coogler has also been involved in shaping the segment.

Kapoor and executive producer Katy Mullan, who won Emmys for their work on the 96th Oscars, have spent months preparing Sunday's ceremony, which will mark the return of host Conan O'Brien.

"His humour, his tone and his reverence for the art form — he genuinely cares about making this a true celebration," Mullan said. "We've been in tears of laughter … there are so many great moments he's going to bring to the show."

One of the ceremony's themes this year is the "human touch", Kapoor said — from the set design to the filmed packages.

"It's really the story of how we feel this connection and how the heartbeat of cinema is unmistakably human," Kapoor explained. "Hopefully the entire show — how Conan makes you feel and everything around it — will feel as though it has been shaped by human hands and human creativity."

The show will also bring back its "fab five" format, first used to highlight the acting nominees in 2024 and later applied to costume design and cinematography in 2025. This year, it will be used for the newly introduced casting award.

"Because it's a new category, we want to celebrate it with a moment where we not only have incredible stars speaking about the nominees but also giving context and insight into what casting directors actually do," Mullan said. "Viewers will see many stars people love on stage discussing the outstanding nominees this year."

TRN's reporter Pandak honoured

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Taplejung, Mar. 12



The Rising Nepal's Taplejung correspondent Chandra Pandak has been honoured with a cash prize.

Pandak was awarded by Pathibhara Yangwarak Rural Municipality on the occasion of its establishment day after being evaluated as the district's outstanding journalist.

He received a cash prize of Rs. 25,000 along with a certificate of honour. During a programme held on Wednesday at the rural municipality's administrative centre in Thechambu, the municipality honoured and rewarded Pandak and other individuals selected as outstanding in various fields.

Chairperson of the rural municipality, Keshar Kumar Subba, said that journalist Pandak was awarded in recognition of his contribution through journalism in making public service more effective.

Likewise, on the occasion of the ninth establishment day, the rural municipality also honoured outstanding farmers, employees and a teacher within the municipality.

The honoured farmers include Kul Raj Neupane of Ward - 1 Nangkholyang, Tula Ram Bhattarai of Ward - 2 Thechambu, Samjha Limbu of Ward - 3 Tiringe and Ram Kumar Bhandari of Ward - 6 Thumbedin.

Each honoured farmer received a cash prize of Rs. 50,000 and a certificate of honour.

Among the outstanding employees working under the rural municipality and its subordinate offices, Health Assistant Bikash Pun, Assistant Fourth Level Pipalaman Ganchaki and office helper Sita Devi BK were awarded.

Likewise, Abhishek Menyangbo was honoured as the outstanding teacher.

The honoured employees and the teacher received a cash prize of Rs. 15,000 each along with certificates of honour, according to the rural municipality.

The rural municipality has been celebrating its establishment day every year since local levels were established in 2016 in accordance with the federal structure.

Sentencing delayed for actor convicted of sexual assault

AP
Las Vegas, Mar. 12



The sentencing of former actor Nathan Chasing Horse, following his conviction for sexually assaulting Indigenous women and girls, has been delayed by one week.

The hearing had been scheduled for Wednesday, but Jessica Peterson agreed to move the sentencing to 18 March. The decision will bring to a close a case that sent shockwaves throughout Indigenous communities across North America.

The sentencing of the Dances With Wolves actor comes about a month after a Nevada jury found him guilty on 13 of the 21 charges he faced. Many of the convictions relate to his conduct with a victim who was 14 when the assaults began. Chasing Horse was acquitted of several other sexual assault charges.

He faces a minimum prison sentence of 25 years.

Following the trial, his lawyer Craig Mueller filed a motion for a new trial, arguing that a witness was not qualified to testify about grooming and that the statute of limitations had expired. The judge rejected the request.

The sentencing marks the culmination of a years-long effort to prosecute the former actor after he was first arrested and indicted in 2023. That arrest reverberated across Indigenous communities, prompting law enforcement agencies in other US states and Canada to pursue additional criminal charges.

The British Columbia Prosecution Service said Chasing Horse was charged with sexual assault in February 2023 in relation to an alleged offence in September 2018 near Keremeos, a village about four hours east of Vancouver. Proceedings were paused in November 2023 due to the US case but resumed the following year.

After all appeals in the United States are exhausted, prosecutors in British Columbia will consider the next steps, communications counsel Damienne Darby said in an email on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service in Alberta confirmed that a warrant for Chasing Horse remains outstanding and that officers are in contact with the Alberta Crown Prosecutors Office regarding the matter.

Prosecutors in Nevada told the court that Chasing Horse used his reputation as a Lakota medicine man to exploit Indigenous women and girls.

Deputy District Attorney Bianca Pucci told jurors that for nearly two decades Chasing Horse had "spun a web of abuse" that trapped numerous women.

Jurors heard testimony from three women who said he sexually assaulted them. The jury ultimately returned guilty verdicts on several charges relating to all three complainants.

After appearing as Smiles a Lot in Dances With Wolves, directed by Kevin Costner, Chasing Horse — who was born on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota — travelled widely across Indigenous communities, attending powwows and conducting healing ceremonies.

Several victims told the court they had taken part in these ceremonies or sought medical or spiritual guidance from him.

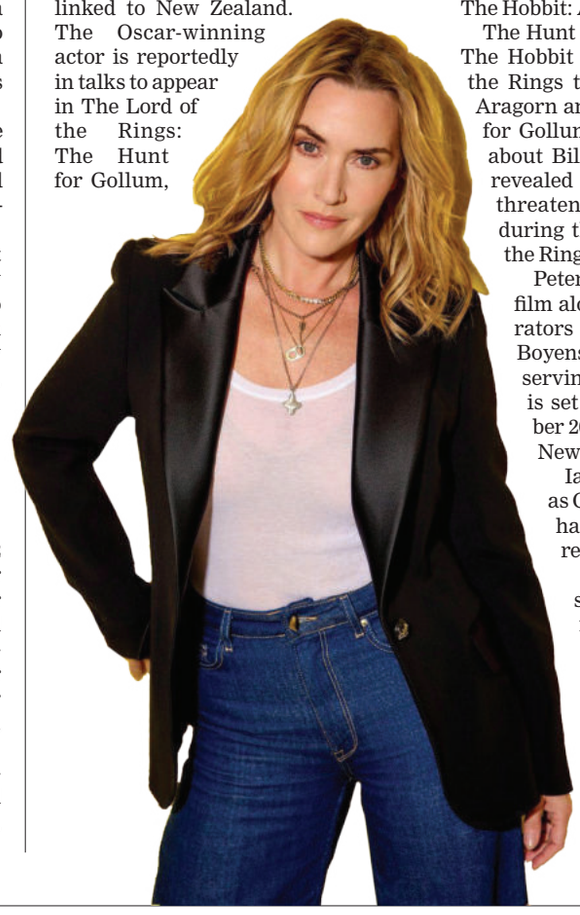
The main accuser was 14 in 2012 when Chasing Horse allegedly told her that spirits demanded she give up her virginity to save her mother, who had been diagnosed with cancer. Prosecutors said he then sexually assaulted her and warned that if she told anyone, her mother would die. According to Pucci, the abuse continued for years.

Chasing Horse denied the allegations, while his lawyer challenged the credibility of the main accuser, describing her as a "scorned woman".

Kate Winslet in talks to join New Lord of the Rings

AGENCIES
New York, Mar. 12

Kate Winslet has finished her time in the Avatar universe but is now set to join another major franchise closely linked to New Zealand.



The Oscar-winning actor is reportedly in talks to appear in The Lord of the Rings: The Hunt for Gollum, which is scheduled to begin production in the country later this year.

Details about Winslet's role have not yet been revealed. Andy Serkis will direct the film and return as Gollum, the tragic character he first portrayed in The Lord of the Rings film trilogy in the early 2000s and later reprised in The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey.

The Hunt for Gollum is set between The Hobbit trilogy and The Lord of the Rings trilogy. The story follows Aragorn and Gandalf as they search for Gollum to uncover information about Bilbo Baggins' ring — later revealed to be the One Ring that threatens all of Middle-earth during the events of The Lord of the Rings.

Peter Jackson is producing the film alongside long-time collaborators Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, with Zane Weiner also serving as a producer. The film is set for release on 17 December 2027 through Warner Bros.' New Line Cinema division.

Ian McKellen is returning as Gandalf, while Elijah Wood has strongly hinted he may reprise his role as Frodo.

Winslet has received seven Academy Award nominations and won in 2009 for The Reader. She was most recently seen as Ronal in Avatar: Fire and Ash, directed by James Cameron. Last year, she also directed the family drama Goodbye June, written by her son, Joe Anders.

RENÉ REDZEPI RESIGNS FROM NOMA

AP
Denmark,Mar. 12

René Redzepi, founder and celebrity chef at the iconic Danish restaurant Noma that won three Michelin stars and other international accolades for its innovative "New Nordic" cuisine, has stepped down from his post following allegations of abuse and assault at the Copenhagen landmark.

Redzepi has been dogged for years by reports of mistreatment of his staff as well as his yearslong use of unpaid interns to staff the pricy restaurant, which was ranked first on the World's 50 Best Restaurants List five times. But the criticism recently came to a head on social media, and an article in the New York Times detailed former employees' accounts of abuse just days ahead of the opening of a Noma Los Angeles pop-up.

Sponsors have since pulled their funding for the Southern California residency, which opened Wednesday to a small gathering of protesters and where a meal will cost $1,500. Redzepi announced his resignation on Instagram soon after.

"I have worked to be a better leader and Noma has taken big steps to transform the culture over many years," he wrote on Thursday. "I recognize these changes do not repair the past. An apology is not enough; I take responsibility for my own actions."

Redzepi was knighted in 2016 to Denmark's Order of Dannebrog by then-Queen Margrethe II.

Billie Eilish to make acting debut

AGENCIES
New York, Mar. 12



Billie Eilish is set to make her feature film acting debut in Sarah Polley's adaptation of Sylvia Plath's novel The Bell Jar.

Academy Award winner Polley will adapt the screenplay and direct the film, marking her first project since winning the Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay for Women Talking in 2023. Eilish herself is a two-time Oscar winner, having co-written the original songs for Barbie and No Time to Die with her brother Finneas.

The Bell Jar is the only novel written by American writer and poet Sylvia Plath. The semi-autobiographical story — which Eilish has long been known to admire — follows a young woman's descent into mental illness amid the restrictive social expectations placed on women in the 1950s. Widely regarded as a literary classic, the book was first published under a pseudonym in 1963, shortly before Plath's death.

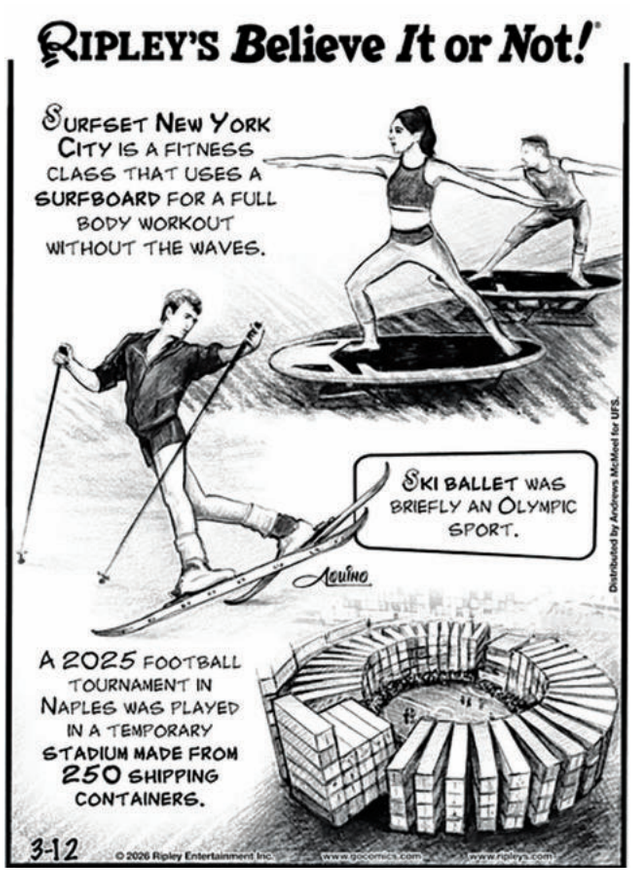
Polley's adaptation, which has been in development with Eilish for some time, has been picked up by Focus Features. The film will be produced by Joy Gorman Wettels (Little House on the Prairie, 13 Reasons Why), alongside Plan B Entertainment and Studiocanal. Wettels first developed the project through her company Joy Coalition, assembling the package with Eilish and Polley before partnering with Plan B and Studiocanal, and later bringing Focus Features on board.

Eilish previously made her acting debut in the Prime Video series Swarm, co-created by Donald Glover and Janine Nabers and starring Dominique Fishback. Her performance was widely praised, earning her the People's Choice Award for TV Performance of the Year and a nomination for Best Supporting Performance in a New Scripted Series at the Independent Spirit Awards.

The 10-time Grammy winner is also expanding her work in film by co-directing the forthcoming concert tour documentary Billie Eilish: Hit Me Hard and Soft – The Tour with Avatar and Titanic director James Cameron.

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ANFA APPOINTS ITALIAN ARENA AS NEPAL COACH



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 12

The All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) has appointed Italian coach Guglielmo Arena as head coach of the Nepal national men's football team.

The appointment letter was handed over by ANFA General Secretary Kiran Rai at the ANFA Complex in Satdobato on Thursday.

Arena's first assignment will be Nepal's home fixture against Hong Kong, China at Dasharath Stadium on 26 March, followed by an AFC Qualifier against his former side Laos on 31 March.

An AFC Pro-licence holder, Arena has managed clubs across Africa, Asia and Europe since 2003, including sides in Burkina Faso, Switzerland, Benin, Morocco, Singapore, Algeria, the UAE and Zambia.

The 52-year-old, who holds both Italian and Swiss citizenship, has also coached Morocco's RC Oued Zem (2022) and COC Meknes & IZ Khemisset (2009–10), Swiss clubs US Collombey-Muraz (2007) and FC Conthey (2018–19), and UAE outfits Al Urooba (2013–14), Dibba Al-Hisn and Dubai CSC (2015).

He previously served as assistant coach in China in 2014 and oversaw both the U23 and senior teams of Laos in 2023.

Arena succeeds Australian Matt Ross, who resigned last October after seven months in charge. Ross had been appointed on 2 March 2025 and submitted his resignation via WhatsApp.

Women's League fixture

Meanwhile, The ANFA on Thursday unveiled the fixture for the Martyrs' Memorial ANFA Women's League 2025.

The competition features the top five teams from last season's second round alongside five teams from the qualifiers. APF, Police, Tribhuvan Army FC, Bagmati FC and Waling Municipality had reached the second round last season, but Waling withdrew this year citing financial constraints.

Rapti FC has replaced them. From the qualifiers, Sankata FC, New Road Team (NRT), Church Boys United, Jhapa FC, and RS Pokhara advanced to the league.

According to the fixture, NRT will open the tournament against Sankata on 18 March, followed by Rapti's clash with Bagmati Youth in the second match of the day. Two matches will be played daily, scheduled for 11:00 am and 3:00 pm.

Champions League

Real Madrid dominate Man City, PSG beat Chelsea, Arsenal salvage draw

AP
London, Mar. 12



PHOTO: AP

Real Madrid's Federico Valverde, center, celebrates after scoring his third goal during a first leg round of 16 Champions League soccer match against Manchester City in Spain.

Even without a host of Galacticos, Real Madrid was far too strong for Manchester City in the latest Champions League clash of these titans.

A 3-0 win at the Bernabeu on Wednesday put Madrid in control of this round-of-16 tie at the halfway mark after a stunning first-half hat trick by Federico Valverde. The Uruguay international took on the responsibility of inspiring the record 15-time champion in the absence of injured stars Kylian Mbappe, Jude Bellingham and Rodrygo.

"We are Real Madrid and you should never consider us dead," Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa told broadcaster Movistar.

The victory could have been even more commanding, but Vinícius Júnior's casually taken second-half penalty was saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Defending champion Paris Saint-Germain beat Chelsea 5-2 and tiny Bodø/Glimt is also in sight of the quarter-finals after a 3-0 win over Sporting Lisbon.

Arsenal drew 1-1 with Bayer Leverkusen.

Madrid masterclass

By fulltime at a rocking Bernabeu, the only comfort City could cling to was the fact that it could have been so much worse.

When Vinícius stood over the ball on the penalty spot shortly before the hour mark, he looked certain add to the lead. But the Brazil forward skipped in his run-up and hit a weak side-footed effort that Donnarumma pushed away.

It will still take a massive turnaround to see City advance after being outclassed by Madrid.

Valverde's hat trick featured three outstanding goals. The pick of the lot was his third when he flicked the ball over the head of City defender Marc Guehi before volleying home.

TV cameras caught Bellingham watching in the stadium with his mouth wide open in awe of the move.

City manager Pep Guardiola will likely be worrying that history is set to repeat itself after his team was eliminated at the hands of Madrid in each of the last two seasons.

"Our game was not as bad as this result," Guardiola said. "I'm not someone to say we are going to turn it round, but we will try."

PSG takes control against Chelsea

After losing to Chelsea in the final of the Club World Cup last year, PSG got some revenge.

A three-goal advantage after the first leg saw Luis Enrique's team take a big step toward the last eight.

Chelsea had twice leveled the game, but a mistake by goalkeeper Filip Jørgensen, who gave the ball away on the edge of his box in the 74th minute, allowed Vitinha to lift a shot into the open net.

PSG substitute Khvicha Kvaratskhelia scored twice more to leave Chelsea with a mountain to climb back at Stamford Bridge.

"This is our most important moment in the competition," Luis Enrique said. "We'll try to play the second leg in the same way as we did today. We'll try to win the game. That's the best mentality as if we're thinking about defending our lead, it could be a big mistake."

There's no stopping Bodø/Glimt

Bodø/Glimt's fairytale run just keeps on going.

Manchester City, Atletico Madrid and Inter Milan have been left in the tiny Norwegian club's wake. Now Sporting Lisbon's Champions League hopes are hanging by a thread.

Bodø/Glimt — located north of the Arctic Circle and farther north than any team in Champions League history — took full advantage of playing the first leg at home and led 2-0 at halftime through Sondre Fet's penalty and Ole Blomberg's goal just before the break.

Kasper Hogh scored in the 71st to put his team on the brink of the next round.

Bodø/Glimt was already the first Norwegian team to the advance to the knockout rounds of the Champions League and could now go even further.

Havertz haunts Leverkusen

Kai Havertz returned to haunt Bayer Leverkusen and seal a late draw for Arsenal.

The Germany international struck an 89th-minute penalty against the team where he started his career and leveled the round-of-16 first leg tie at BayArena.

"I know the stadium well and have taken many penalties from this spot," said Havertz, who left Leverkusen for Chelsea in a $95 million deal in 2020.

Premier League leading Arsenal fell behind on Robert Andrich's goal just after halftime. But Malik Tillman fouled Noni Madueke in the box, and Havertz fired low past Janis Blaswich from the spot.

"The time between the penalty whistle and the penalty kick felt like an eternity," Havertz said. "But in the end, you have to be mentally present in those moments."

Premier League dominance halted

After dominating the league phase of this year's tournament, Premier League teams were brought down to Earth in the round of 16.

Man City, Chelsea and Tottenham all fell to heavy defeats, while Liverpool also lost to Galatasaray.

In all, none of England's six teams in the knockouts won their first leg, with Arsenal and Newcastle both picking up draws.

Arsenal will be favorite to overcome Leverkusen at home and Liverpool only has to overturn a 1-0 deficit in its second leg at Anfield.

But City, Chelsea and Tottenham face big deficits, while Newcastle travels to Camp Nou to play Barcelona.

'New regulations take bravery out of F1'

REUTERS
Shanghai, Mar. 12

The new Formula One engine and chassis regulations for the 2026 season have taken some of the bravery out of the sport, several drivers said ahead of this weekend's Chinese Grand Prix, as teams grapple with the biggest rules overhaul in decades.

Last weekend's season-opening race in Australia drew a mixed response from fans and drivers. Some praised an increase in overtakes due to new 'Overtake' and 'Boost' modes, while others compared the on-track action to racing video game Mario Kart.

With more power generated by electricity this season than from last year's engines, there is greater emphasis on being tactical with energy deployment and regeneration.

That has led drivers to sometimes be best served by lifting off the throttle on high-speed straights and coasting into corners, rather than slamming on the brakes, to ensure they have sufficient battery to deploy elsewhere.

"We used to fight for our life," twice world champion Fernando Alonso told a news conference on Thursday, including the Shanghai circuit's fast and sweeping Turn 8 in a list of nail-biting corners from various tracks around the world.

"We were challenging the limits of the physics going through those corners, and the driver had to use all the skills and be brave in some moments as well," he added.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc told reporters he had enjoyed racing Mercedes' George Russell towards the beginning of last weekend's race, which the Briton won, but agreed the regulations had changed what gave drivers an edge over the field.

"It's a bit more strategic than it used to be in the past, where it was more who was braking later kind of battles," the eight-times race winner from Monaco said.

"In the past, you could take quite a lot of risk and make an overtake work. Now, it's always: 'If I have this action now, what will happen in the next straight, in two straights time?'"

McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Williams driver Carlos Sainz sounded less impressed.

"It's a very different kind of challenge. It's not quite as simple as just who's the bravest and who's willing to carry the most speed," Piastri said, when asked if he agreed with Alonso's assessment.

Iran World Cup withdrawal threat leaves FIFA pondering options

REUTERS
Los Angeles, Mar. 12

The statement from Minister of Sport Ahmad Donyamali on Wednesday, that Iran could not take part in a World Cup being co-hosted by the United States, offered the clearest indication yet of the potential for a first withdrawal from global football's showpiece event in the modern era.

While that has not officially happened yet, minds at FIFA must now address more urgently the prospect of having to replace the Iranians in the tournament kicking off in the US, Mexico and Canada in June.

Donyamali said it would be impossible for Iran to take part after air attacks launched by the US and Israel on Feb 28 killed Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, triggering a region-wide conflict.

While it always seemed counter-intuitive that Iran would take part in a World Cup while at war with one of the co-hosts, FIFA were on Tuesday still clearly banking on Team Melli lining up for their first group game against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15.

That remains to be seen.

A withdrawal would be governed by Article Six of the World Cup regulations which, while stipulating a series of financial penalties for such a move, also states that FIFA would be at liberty to call up any nation it chooses to fill the void.

"There's no modern precedent for this and, according to FIFA's own tournament regulations, they have full discretion to do whatever they want in the case of a team withdrawing," James Kitching, FIFA's former Director of Football Regulatory, told Reuters.

"That means, for example, a team that withdraws wouldn't have to be replaced by a team from the same confederation, or even replaced at all. Whether either of those scenarios would be politically tenable is a different question.

"The tournament regulations also provide disciplinary sanctions for any federation whose team withdraws. However, if Iran withdrew for any reason related to this current conflict, I doubt FIFA would impose any sanctions given the circumstances."



The Iranians qualified for a fourth successive World Cup by topping Group A in the third round of Asian qualifying last year and a replacement from the world's most populous continent would make most sense, even if that is not as straightforward as it may seem.

Iraq are due to participate in the intercontinental playoffs in Mexico this month for a spot at the finals while the United Arab Emirates, who lost to the Iraqis in an eliminator in November, have also been mentioned as a potential candidate.

The travel freeze in the Middle East caused by the conflict is impacting Iraq's ability to get to Mexico and prepare for their match against either Bolivia or Suriname on March 31.

Iraq coach Graham Arnold has proposed FIFA postpone that fixture until closer to the finals, saying that would be fair to the Iraqis and allow the Iran situation to play out further.

"Let Bolivia play Suriname this month and then a week before the World Cup, we play the winner in the US - the winner of that game stays on and the loser goes home," Arnold told the Australian Associated Press on Monday.

"In my opinion, it also gives FIFA more time to decide what Iran is going to do. If Iran withdraws, we go into the World Cup and it gives the UAE, who we beat in qualifying, the chance to prepare for either Bolivia or Suriname."

FIFA has yet to comment on Donyamali's statement while a source at the Asian Football Confederation said it "is closely monitoring the situation and remains in contact with FIFA" over the potential replacement of Iran.

"Matters relating to the World Cup fall under FIFA's remit," the source said. "At this stage, it would be premature to speculate further."

World Cup places are much coveted by the confederations, however, and it is likely that the AFC would lobby hard for the replacement to come from Asia.

With Europe's final participants in the World Cup also decided at the end of March, Kitching believes FIFA will not make any firm decisions until early April.

"I would expect a decision is not going to be made until after the final playoffs are finished and for FIFA to take a pragmatic and consultative approach to the situation," he said.

SNIPPETS

Himalayan Queens Gambit on March 15



Kathmandu (TRN): The second edition of the Himalayan Queens Gambit will be held on 15 March at Thapathali Chess Park, Kathmandu. Organised under the World Chess Federation's FIDE Women's Chess Marathon, the event is expected to attract more than one hundred players.

"In partnership with the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess, tournaments are being staged worldwide throughout March. We are hosting Nepal's only event under this initiative. To provide opportunities for newcomers, the one-day competition will be celebrated as a festival for unrated players, with around one hundred participants." said Monalisha Khumbu, founder of the Himalayan Chess Academy. For its organisation, the Academy has collaborated with Props Nepal. The cooperation agreement was signed by Academy founder Khumbu and Props Nepal chief, Deepa Shrestha. Meanwhile, the Himalayan Chess Academy will also celebrate its second anniversary on 14 March.

FIFA cuts operating budget

Los Angeles (Reuters): FIFA has slashed more than US$100 million (S$128 million) from its operating budget for this summer's World Cup in North America, The Athletic reported. In its annual report in 2024, the world football governing body's projected budget for the 2023-26 cycle included US$1.12 billion for operational expenses out of a total budget of US$3.756 billion. The US$1.12 billion included US$280 million for technical services, US$159 million for event transport, US$145 million for safety and security, and US$79 million for guest management.

A FIFA spokesperson issued a statement to The Athletic for Tuesday's story. "FIFA is constantly reviewing budget efficiencies to ensure costs are controlled, so that as much revenue as possible can be invested in the development of football around the world. This should not surprise anyone, as budget reviews are routinely applied prior to all our tournaments and events," read the statement. The 48-team World Cup is taking place at 16 venues across the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19.

Draper ousts Djokovic

Indian Wells (AFP): Novak Djokovic was dumped out by Jack Draper in a slugfest Wednesday as the defending champion won 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) to reach the quarter-finals at Indian Wells. World number one Carlos Alcaraz sailed into the last eight of the Masters 1000 event for the fifth straight year and there were straight-sets wins for Daniil Medvedev and Cameron Norrie.

Draper won't have long to savor the victory, with a quarter-final against two-time finalist Daniil Medvedev coming up on Thursday. Medvedev beat American Alex Michelsen 6-2, 6-4. Alcaraz advanced with a sparkling 6-1, 7-6 (7/2) victory over Casper Ruud, extending his perfect start to 2026.

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A Pearl On Mumbai's Shoreline



Mukti Rijal



I have been to several prominent cities in India, including Kolkata, Chennai, and New Delhi, and stayed there for months. However, I had not had the opportunity to see Mumbai in Maharashtra – the much-touted commercial and financial hub of India. Thankfully during the previous months my family members joined with me to travel to such destinations as Goa, Mumbai, Ahmadabad and their adjoining areas in India as part of an itinerary package. After visiting Goa and its several scenic beaches, including the famous Calangute, for three days, we took a bus and reached Andheri in Mumbai.

We were picked up by car driver Surya Kumar Yadav at Andheri and taken to the Subha International Hotel, where we were put up for three days. I requested the driver to take us to a nearby bookshop to get reading material that would let us know about the past and present of Mumbai. I found a book titled "Bombay: Meri Jaan: Writings on Mumbai" edited by Jerry Pinto and Naresh Fernandes, and it is extolled as a wonderful collection of writing – poetry, fiction, theatre, social history, memoirs, and journalism – on India's most cosmopolitan city. As I flipped over the pages of the book, I got stuck at the write-up titled "War comes to Bombay" written by Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, which was an extract of his highly readable book Bombay, My Bombay: The Love Story of the City, published in 1987.

Abbas was a popular columnist in the Bombay-based Blitz weekly, edited by R.K. Karanjia, which was one of the popular magazines across India and overseas during the seventies. While at Mumbai, I made it a point to ensure that the city tour itinerary afforded us the opportunity to catch a view of the famous Taj Mahal Hotel, opened way back in 1903 by India's well-known patriotic industrialist Jamsetji Tata, the forefather of Ratan Tata, who passed away a few months ago. About this hotel, it is said that Shah Jehan's dream in marble was born out of his love for his wife. Jamsetji's handiwork, the Taj Mahal Hotel, was born out of a love for his city, Mumbai.

I have stayed in the impressive Tata's Taj Hotel, New Delhi, twice in the past as a sponsored guest. New Delhi's Taj also epitomises and offers the best a hotel can do for its clients. In New Delhi, when the Taj Mahal Hotel was built, marble cutters from Makrana, painters from Rajasthan, carpet weavers from Panipat, mural artists from Pune and block printers from Kolkata were employed. It is said that till 1970 the Tata Indian Hotels Company Limited had only one historic hotel in Mumbai.

The Tatas then took over the old palaces of the Maharajas in Rajasthan, restoring and refurbishing them to their former glory. One was in the pink city of Jaipur, and the other was further down in Udaipur. The Lake Palace hotel in Udaipur is a small island set like a pearl in the tranquil waters of Lake Pichola. A complex of three hotels was created in Goa, including one having a typical Goan village ambience. RM Lala, in his book Creation of Wealth, focused on Tata's contribution to the development of modern India and writes, "As India enters the 21st century, the Taj Group, which has grown into a chain of sixty-four hotels, shows no sign of slowing down.

My interest in catching at least a superficial view of the Taj Hotel had been evoked, among others, by the fact that it had been a target of a terrorist attack on 26 November 2008. I had read a comprehensive story about the terrorist attack on this hotel which was published in major newsmagazines both in India and abroad.

According to news reports, the siege at the Taj hotel began on the night of 26 November and ended on 29 November 2008 after Indian security forces regained full control. The attacks occurred at multiple locations in Mumbai simultaneously. Ten armed Islamic militants carried out the attack. The militants, according to reports, chose Taj because it was a symbol of Indian pride and economic progress located near the Gateway of India, an iconic landmark. Indian commandos killed the terrorists barricaded in the hotel to end the three-day battle. At least 31 people had died at the Taj.

Approximately 450 people were staying in the Taj Mahal Palace and Hotel at the time of the siege. The attack was planned, according to the reports, using information compiled by David Headley, a Pakistani-American, who had stayed at the hotel multiple times and had gathered intelligence on its layout and security measures.

Soon after this, Tata chairman late Ratan Tata is reported to have said in an interview with CNN's Fareed Zakaria that they had received advance warning of the attacks and that some countermeasures had been taken. The less-damaged sections of the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower hotel reopened on 21 December 2008. According to the reports, it had taken several months to rebuild the popular heritage section of the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel.

As we were walking near the Gateway of India, bathed in the golden light of afternoon, the Taj Hotel's domes gleamed against the Arabian Sea. Its red-stone façade exuded a quiet majesty. We had requested the hotel guards enter the lobby. We were allowed to enter the exuberant lobby. We found soaring ceilings and soft lighting, carpets and floral arrangements were very attractive. Framed photographs captured decades of royal visits, international dignitaries, and cultural icons.

In fact, Taj is not just architecture; it is a living testimony to beauty, courage, and the enduring citadel of human initiative. Standing by the Arabian Sea, watching the sun set behind its domes, I understood why generations of dignitaries, leaders, and travellers had been lured by the grandeur of the hotel.

The hotel has been popular with international tourists, diplomats, and business leaders. Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata believed that India deserved hotels that could rival the best in the world so that travellers, dignitaries, and artists could experience comfort, luxury, and elegance in equal measure. At a time when luxury hospitality was largely dominated by colonial powers, Tata's vision was rooted in innovation and Indian identity.

The hotel was designed to offer world-class services while reflecting India's rich artistic heritage, aiming to provide a welcoming environment for all guests, regardless of their background, in contrast to the exclusivity of colonial-era establishments. In the book 'Creation of Wealth', written by R.M. Lala, there is an interesting story as to why Jamsetji started the Taj Hotel in Bombay.

When he was reportedly refused admission to a hotel in this city which was reserved for Europeans only, he felt offended by this humiliation; he started building this hotel. From the day it opened, the Taj Hotel was recognised as one of the best in the world. In his foreign travels, Jamsetji made most of the purchases for the hotel himself, lavishing the Taj with the finest equipment Europe could offer. Jamesetji had already spent twenty-five lakh rupees on it, at a time when one could build a mansion for a mere one lakh rupees. According to RM Lala, as Taj was one of the first buildings in Bombay to be lit by electricity, it attracted a number of onlookers.

Between Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo and Raffles Hotel in Singapore, there was nothing like the Taj. The Taj Mahal hotel features in over 90 travelogues, biographies and novels. Louis Bromfield's book titled "One Night in Bombay" revolves around the Taj. The hotel was the subject of a four-part BBC documentary series called Hotel India.

The hotel was a shooting location for Christopher Nolan's film Tenet, released in August 2020, among others. The hotel's corridors, lounges, and sea-facing balconies enchanted royals, artists, writers, and ordinary travellers. Every corner seemed to echo with music, laughter, and the polite clink of teacups. According to reports, it has hosted an illustrious array of dignitaries whose visits have added to the hotel's legendary status. Among Indian leaders, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru frequented the hotel for diplomatic gatherings, often praising its blend of elegance and warmth. Indira Gandhi visited for state functions, remarking on the hotel's "majestic interiors and seamless service".

Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom had stayed here during her official visits, reportedly enchanted by the grand domes. A common theme runs through all these accounts: guests are enchanted not only by the Taj's architectural splendour but also by its human touch, where tradition and luxury coexist in seamless harmony. According to reports, among global leaders, the hotel has hosted several US presidents during their official visits to India. Clinton reportedly admired the seaside view from the Sea Lounge, calling it "a magnificent blend of tradition and modernity".

Other luminaries include Prince Charles and Princess Diana, who stayed at the Taj during official and private tours. International artists, writers, and filmmakers — from Diana Ross to Amitabh Bachchan in Bollywood circles — have also lauded the hotel for its warmth, impeccable service, and historic charm. Many memoirs and travelogues describe the grand staircases, marble floors, and crystal chandeliers as unforgettable experiences. Guests have reviewed that the hotel feels like both a palace and a home, where history, culture, and personal comfort coexist in harmony.

As I looked at the grandeur of the Taj from the side of the Gate of India, I realised that the Taj is not merely a building; it is a living reflection of the best of Indian culture and traditions. Its grandeur lies not just in stone and marble but also in the vision of its founder. In September 1889 Jamsetji had announced an offer that was to astonish the men of the day. He decided to set aside fourteen of his buildings and four landed properties in Bombay for an endowment to establish a university of science. RM Lala, in the chapter titled "Impulse of Learning", writes about the content and quality of philanthropy of the Tatas.

He quotes Jamsetji, who had spelt out his views on philanthropy elaborately, saying, "There is one kind of charity common among us, and which is certainly a good thing. It is that patchwork philanthropy clothes the ragged, feeds the poor, and heals the sick. I am far from decrying the noble spirit that seeks to help a poor or suffering fellow.

However, charitable hospitals and poor asylums are comparatively more common and fashionable among us Parsis. A nation or community advances more by uplifting the best and most gifted than by propping up its weakest members. I prefer this constructive philanthropy, which seeks to educate and develop the faculties of the best of our young men."

(The author is presently associated with Policy Research Institute (PRI) as a senior research fellow.)



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Idle Wisdom Must Serve Villages



Chhabi Khadka



The Kathmandu Valley has become a garrison for a vast army—not one preparing for the next operation, but one living in a state of comfortable post-war peace. This is an army not of weapons but of wisdom. It is comprised of retired civil servants, military and police officers, professors, technocrats, consultants, lawyers and the parents of those employed abroad.

They meet at marriage parties and bratabandha ceremonies in lavish banquet halls and party palaces flourishing along the Ring Road. High dignitaries from the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), as well as businesspersons who share a common origin, ferry many of them there. In the corners of these halls, they engage in panel-like discussions, striving to devise practical solutions for the country's ongoing problems. Their arguments are often provocative, sparking the interest of bystanders. The opinions that surface reveal sharp ideas in critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making.

They discuss the migration of youth from villages to cities and then to foreign lands. The fault, they say, lies in our education curriculum, the heavy cost of healthcare, water scarcity, unemployment and air pollution. These arguments are "handy" for these grey-haired elites, who critique the actions and inactions of responsibility holders—from local communities to the highest echelons of power. Outside social events, one can find them at the annual general meetings of banks and financial institutions, serving as advisers, coordinators or partners. At times, these discussions turn into long debates or rivalries, with participants blaming one another while defending themselves. This cycle of meeting and discussing has become the annual ritual of our capital.

Yet most of these senior and elite groups have either left their ancestral homes or forgotten them—a defining condition of present-day Nepal. These are the same people who began their lives in local schools and who still carry memories of the misty village mornings, the scent of kitchen smoke, the damp earth of the khet, and the sound of the school bell ringing across the hills. For the new generation, those ancestral village homes once served as the source code of success while living in the crowded suburbs of Kathmandu or the high-rises of Tokyo, Texas, Sweden or Sydney.

An ocean of experience and wisdom—from high-ranking officers to thinkers who climbed the ladders of opportunity—now sits unused and unharnessed, idling inside glittering villas and towering flats behind iron gates.

> We need Gen Z innovators to create AI-driven platforms that link retired wisdom with rural needs, bridging the knowledge gap between those with expertise and those in need.

Silent responsibility

The daily ritual for many seniors is to scan the morning headlines and watch the news. The general tendency is to watch—and sometimes bellow at the screen—rather than ask, "Why?" and "How?" We see reports of donations and support from foreign governments, UN agencies, INGOs and benevolent individuals far from our soil. The collected savings of foreign schoolchildren, taken from their snack money, have become a primary source of midday meals for our children in schools across the country.

At present, the World Food Programme (WFP) is the main donor to our national school nutrition programme, fortifying rice with iron and zinc to fight the stunting that threatens our youth. The United States provides the lentils and fortified oil that keep classrooms full. Finland is developing green kitchens, replacing traditional chulos with clean induction stoves in remote schools in Karnali. South Korea is implementing the Zero Hunger Communities programme, which aims to eradicate hunger and improve nutrition, while Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supports school gardens to provide fresh greens for the next generation. While we thank these governments and agencies for supporting our future leaders during this painful formative period, where are we?

Organisations such as Teach for Nepal are actively striving to close this gap. It is a movement of outstanding university graduates and young professionals who commit two years to teaching in public schools. They focus on ending educational inequity, ensuring that a child's path in life is not determined by their birthplace, and they work to provide essential resources and support systems that enhance opportunities for underprivileged students. Beyond academics, they provide mentorship and have become a frontline force in transforming the very schools our elites once attended.

There are hundreds of individuals on the forefront providing clothing, books and computers, or establishing scholarship funds. Some mothers' groups are joining hands to prepare midday meals. Local governments have also started contributing, with a national budget of about Rs 10 billion annually.

But the majority of us are busy elsewhere. Our culture often directs our donations toward the religious sector. While that has its place, those contributing solely to religious causes need to review their strategy. Could we consider delving deeper into the news to fully grasp the seriousness of the situation? Why have we abandoned the most essential duty of a society—to provide the bare minimum of food to our children—and instead relied on the kindness of friends from far away?

We have kept our "Hari" (inner self) in silent mode, convincing ourselves that the government or donors have it under control. We remarked on the Rs 84.45 billion economic loss during the Gen Z movement of Bhadra 2025 as a political problem, failing to observe that it is a fault line triggered by our own collective inaction.

We must realise that as we abandon our villages, we create a vacuum for leadership, mentorship and investment. While we built our private empires, our ancestral homes (paitrik ghar) and the lands we once tilled have become empty and barren. Much of our land has turned into jungle; monkeys have begun ruling where we once thrived.

Our unproductivity in Kathmandu is a betrayal of the village. Returning to the village is not a retreat; it is a redeployment to the strategic frontier. A retired professional can act as a moral beacon who stabilises School Management Committees (SMCs), protecting them from local political infighting and applying the efficiency skills they practised for forty years.

The Vedic call to modern sannyasa: our struggle with the status trap is a spiritual failure to honour our own civilisation's wisdom. Hindu tradition defines the four stages of life. By age 65, we are meant to transition into Sannyasa Ashram, the stage of renunciation. The Vedic command is clear: leave the home to the sons.

In modern terms, this means the retired elite must vacate seats of power to make way for the younger generation. We must surrender the keys to the state and the titles of the past.

However, sannyasa is not an escape into idle silence; it is a transition from self-interest to selfless service. By taking our wisdom to the primary schools in our villages, we practise modern sannyasa. We renounce the ego of the general to embrace the humility of the mentor. To cling to government posts after sixty is not just a national waste; it is a violation of our ancestral dharma.

Village legacy

In the noble days of our grandfathers, our family's prestige was measured by how much we contributed to the village: kulo, pani, pokhari, and the chautari beneath the cool shade of the pipal tree. Today, we measure it by the height of our compound walls in the city. We have traded community impact for private isolation.

But true success is not how far we have run from our origins; it is how much power we have to return and transform them. The world is watching our villages and recognising their potential—particularly in sustainable development and community resilience—as models for innovative practices that can be adopted globally. It is imperative that we take the lead.

We must reclaim this vast resource of life experience and wisdom that present-day Nepal currently wastes. We need Gen Z innovators to create AI-driven platforms that link retired wisdom with rural needs, bridging the knowledge gap between those with expertise and those in need.

If we visit our village. Let us go as auditors of our future. Check the plate: Is the school meal fresh? Check the kitchen: Is it healthy? Check the home: Can our empty house become a hub for nutrition and health? Let us not allow the story of our families to end with a "For Sale" sign and a rusted lock. Our ancestors are watching. The children are waiting. The soil—the very dust that formed us—is calling us back to our ancestral homes.

(The author is a retired brigadier general of the Nepal Army.)

Promoting Safe And Sustainable Agriculture



Dilli Ram Sharma, PhD



The agricultural sector is the main pillar of Nepal supporting the economy, and millions of people rely on it as a source of livelihood. But with the rise in usage and improper application of pesticides, it has become a major cause for health and environmental hazards, which can no longer be overlooked. This article is written in the form of a suggestion to the government and concerned authorities regarding how to avoid the risks associated with the use of pesticides in Nepal, which, according to a study, is a major cause of health hazards for both the users and those who consume the products and is even linked to suicide cases. Hence, it is most imperative for the government to take immediate and stringent steps in this regard, and farmers and authorities should follow suggestions given by experts.

The vision for pesticide risk reduction shall be "to ensure safe, sustainable, and residue-compliant agricultural production systems that protect consumers' health, farmers' well-being, and the environment." The overarching goal shall be to reduce pesticide risks to human health and the environment through strengthened regulation, improved monitoring mechanisms, enhanced capacity building for farmers, and increased consumer awareness.



Strategic objectives to be achieved in the next ten years shall include the strengthening of activities in the area of regulatory reform and enforcement, as well as the reduction in the percentage of vegetable and fruit samples that exceed the MRLs by 70 per cent in 2035 in accordance with the Codex standard. At the same time, the level of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practice adoption shall be enhanced to 80 per cent of all commercial vegetable farmers in the country.

In addition, a fully functional National Pesticide Residue Monitoring Network shall be developed in all provinces of the country to ensure effective surveillance and compliance with pesticide residue standards.

In the same vein, strategies shall be developed to reduce reported cases of pesticide poisonings among farmers by 60 per cent and increase public awareness of safe food handling practices, targeting at least 80 per cent of all urban households. The existing pesticide registration policy across the nation is weak and in urgent need of review and updating by 2026/27.

This includes the phasing out of HHPs, ensuring compliance inspection for pre-harvest intervals, and strengthening the system of agroveterinary licences, as well as the implementation of applicator certification, which should be made mandatory by 2029. Another factor is the absence of advanced residue labs, a national reference lab, and a national pesticide residue database in all the provinces of the country.

Farmers need proper knowledge of safe pesticide application methods and a clear understanding of the adverse impacts on health and the environment.

Therefore, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) technology should be expanded through Farmer Field Schools in all provinces by 2029. To encourage the use of IPM, financial support should be given to the biological controls, climate-resilient and pest-resistant varieties, and the development of mobile advisory tools.

To protect users' health, farmer health awareness campaigns must be conducted, subsidised Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be made available, pesticide poisoning reporting systems should be strengthened, and coordination with Poison Information Centres should be enhanced by 2028. It is also paramount to mobilise the Protection of Consumer Rights authorities to launch public awareness campaigns on proper washing and safe food preparation practices.

A safe produce certification scheme should be introduced, traceability pilot projects should be implemented in major wholesale markets such as Kalimati and Balkhu, and food safety education should be integrated into school curricula to help minimise pesticide residues in fruits and vegetables. An action programme should also be developed to support university-led research on long-term pesticide exposure, conduct national poison surveys in pesticide-using communities, and establish performance monitoring indicators and impact evaluation programmes by 2030. In order to develop a strategic plan, careful budgeting and resource mobilisation is required. Funding sources should be identified and allocated through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD), with cost-sharing arrangements from provincial governments, public–private partnerships, and coordination with national and international organisations and development partners. This ten-year action plan is a realistic, measurable, and structured roadmap for the change that needs to be brought about in the management of pesticides in Nepal.

With political commitment and financial support, it is possible to make significant progress in minimising the risk of pesticides while maintaining the level of productivity and food security. Coordination would also be required with the country's experts, research institutions, universities, and international organisations, civil society groups, consumers' forums, and development partners. Technical assistance would also be required to improve the laboratories' capacity, risk assessments, training programmes for the farmers, and application of global best practices. International assistance would also be required to improve the level of financial assistance, better compliance with the Codex standards, and capacity to manage pesticides to increase the export capacity.

(The author is a former director general of the Department of Agriculture.)

A Foreign Minister's Period-specific Memoir



Madan Kumar Bhattarai

Book: Nakabandi Ra Bhurajniti: Kutnitima Mero Anubhab Ra Anubhuti
Author: Kamal Thapa
Publishers: Sambardhan Publications, Kathmandu, 2024
Pages: 304
Price: Rs 750/-

Since the practice of formally naming a foreign minister came into being in Nepal after the epochal political and systemic change of 1951, two things have remained particularly noteworthy in our context. First, many prime ministers have either handled the portfolio with or without a ceremonial minister of state as a cosmetic exercise or taken direct interest, forcing their foreign ministers either to play second fiddle or stay worklessly comfortable or humiliated, as the case may be, as mere silent spectators.

While there is less evidence of any qualitative strength on the part of holders of the post of chief executive to directly look after foreign affairs, there is a conjecture that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhou Enlai, who remained inaugural foreign ministers as well in their respective countries, with different orientations but common traits of being efficient foreign policy hands, might have inspired our people to follow the same course. Second, the appointment of an independent foreign minister typically selects the most educated and enlightened individuals from the pool. However, this practice has faced significant challenges recently, especially in the aftermath of 1990, when prime ministers began to show greater interest in foreign affairs or appointed virtually dummy foreign ministers, regardless of their merit or orientation.

Belonging to a different party in the coalition further erodes the authority of a foreign minister. Dr Arzu Rana Deuba may be an exception in this connection.

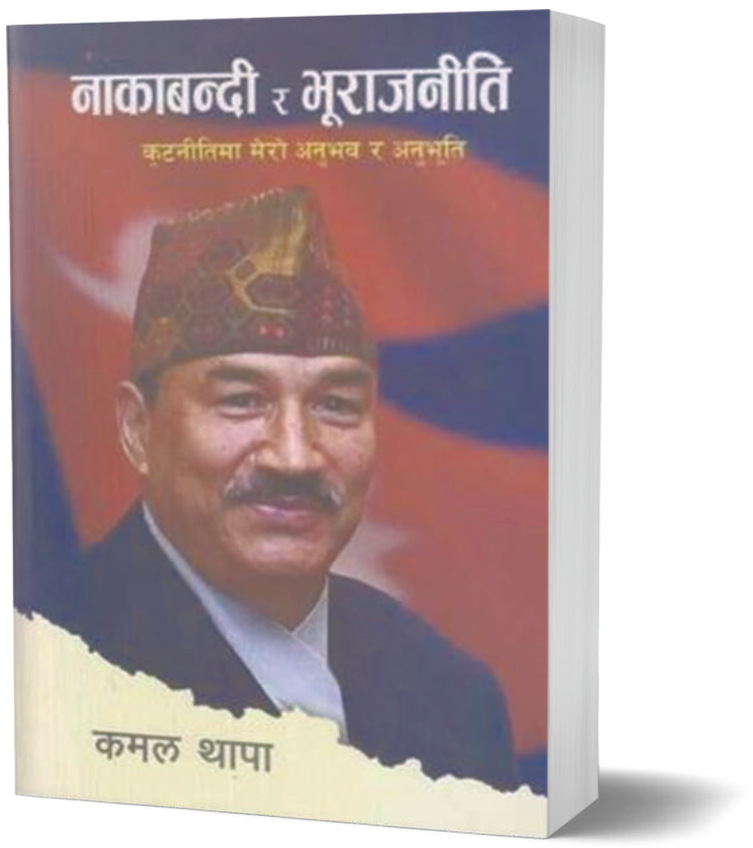
Over the years, we have found that some academics, too, handle foreign affairs. This included people of the strength and profile of Matrika Prasad Koirala, Dr Dilli Raman Regmi, Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, Rishikesh Shaha, Pashupati Shumshere, Dr Prakash Chandra Lohani, Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat and Dr. Babu Ram Bhattarai, etc., with some of them handling foreign affairs only for a few days.

Only a few foreign ministers have published stories of their tenures. Among them, Dr Regmi and Shaha, sharing a closer friendship, have been prolific writers, but their works pertain more to history than memoirs, even though Shaha has depicted some aspects of his ministerial role in his writings.

Foreign ministers who have penned memoirs include Surya Bahadur Thapa (posthumous) and Dr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, incidentally using a common writer, Hari Bahadur Thapa, to serve as what can be called a de facto ghostwriter. Another beautiful book by a foreign minister is from Shailendra Kumar Upadhyay in English with an intriguing title, Tryst with Diplomacy.

It is, therefore, quite admirable that Kamal Thapa has brought out a book and filled a gap in the sense that it provides a cogent description of what went wrong in inspiring India to impose recurrent embargoes against Nepali people. There is absolutely no doubt that he is among the few people in the post-1990 era and all the more so in the republican order who can be taken as one with appropriate acumen for the position of foreign minister.

The other plus point is that Thapa is perhaps among the very few people who have enjoyed political responsibilities for a long spell. He is the only person to become foreign minister three times in three political dispensations. It is an entirely different matter that in the Nepali context, any demarcation based on political creed or ideology tends to be badly blurred, inviting accusations of rank opportunism, a factor even involving Thapa for his supposed political gyrations in terms of seeking positions. On the most personal side, we have known Kamal Thapa for a long time and consider him a keen sportsman, sober gentleman, and strict disciplinarian in conduct.



The book has a self-explaining title, NAKABANDI RA BHURAJNITI: Kutnitima Mero Anubhab Ra Anubhuti, that can roughly be translated as 'Embargo and Geo-politics: My Experiences and Reflections in Diplomacy'. With six broad chapters and 60 sub-chapters, the book has a comprehensive pictorial gallery depicting involvements in the foreign policy process. One significant attribute is that it has a longer prologue of 18 pages.

While the book tends to discuss a broad range of things associated with diplomacy in a rather passing manner, the crux of the matter pertains to the domain of Nepal-India relations, as indicated by the very title. While people may contest the points and arguments raised by Thapa depending on their political orientations and approaches, there is absolutely no doubt that the book gives a fantastic survey of bilateral relations and their thorns, both geopolitical and man-made.

It also deals with the styles of work of political leaders and even Ambassador Deep Kumar Upadhyaya, who had two short terms as Nepal's top representative to New Delhi. First relieved by the government, Upadhyaya was re-appointed but sought premature termination to contest elections. He created a record in our diplomatic history by being his own successor within a brief gap of vacancy, a trend repeated by one of his successors, Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma, in New Delhi in the recent period.

The book lays bare vacillating stances of our political leadership and lack of scruples and principles in dealing with major policy issues triggering various problems of far-reaching repercussions. Besides Nepal-India relations, the book gives an account of how Nepal and China signed agreements pertaining to alternate transit facilities to Nepal, an area generally interpreted by Indian leadership as utterly anti-Indian. It also exposes India's lack of cogent and consistent thought in dealing with Nepal unnecessarily throwing spanners and barriers in the context of smooth ties of friendship and cooperation that should have been the guiding strand of our mutually friendly relations from time immemorial.

One major departure in the book is that it does not carry any introductory passage from dignitaries, as is the general trend. The author also falls short of making concluding observations, possibly taking cues from two veteran Russian diplomats, Andrei Andreyevich Gromyko (1909-1989) and Anatoli Dobrynin (1919-2010), as both seemed to have anathema with the word 'conclusion' in writing their memoirs.

One lacuna of the book is a plethora of proof mistakes, including some factual errors that have crept into the text, but they don't affect the usefulness of the work. In a nutshell, it is an admirable endeavour in the field of literature relating to our diplomacy. Thapa truly deserves sincere appreciation and congratulations.

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

FUTURE WATCH

(Based on birth names)

From March 13th to 19th, 2026 - D. N. Lohani

ARIES — Income and expenditure will maintain balance. The major period is favourable. Students will have to work harder. Major tasks will be completed successfully till Tuesday. Expenditure level can rise on Thursday.

TAURUS — Initial period is ordinary. Success without struggle is unlikely. Hardship will be key to success. Circumstances will improve from Tuesday. Love life will take a progressive course.

GEMINI — Initially you will retain some progress. Doubts and confusion can reside within oneself. You may have to tackle obstacles until Wednesday. Relatives won't cooperate. Opponents will remain active. Prayer of Lord Ganesh will help.

CANCER — An advantageous week is in the store. You will advance ahead, overcoming emerging challenges successfully. Doubts and confusion can reside within oneself. The study will take a progressive course. You will be able to create a new article.

LEO — Lack of leading ability can create some problems. Others can defy your order. A health disorder is predicted. Seasonal disease can create some problems. Students will have to work harder. Lack of concentration can create some problems.

VIRGO — Employees can experience a transfer. Opponents can influence business. Regular gain will provide some support. A health disorder is predicted. Students will have to work harder.

LIBRA — Initially you may have to tolerate health issues such as a cold. You will find it difficult to save. The desire to save will fade away. Opponents will remain active. The prayer of Bhagwati will help you beat them.

SCORPIO — Travel is in store for you. Hardship will be key to progress. Lack of support from others can create some problems. Expenditure level can rise. The family will cooperate. The first half is better. Prayer of the sun will help.

SAGITTARIUS — A pleasant event can take place on Friday. The mind will be diverted toward entertainment rather than work. The study will continue as usual. Trade and profession both will turn profitable. Arguments with relatives can occur. Prayer of Bhairab will help.

CAPRICORN — Expenditure level will rise today. You may have to attend celebrations or similar events from tomorrow. Students will have to work harder. A prayer of Bagalamukhi will help. Business will turn profitable. A stomach disorder is predicted.

AQUARIUS — An ordinary week is in the store. Expenditure level will rise. You will find it difficult to save. Study related expenses can rise. Religious activities can keep you busy. Prevailing instability can create some problems. Employees will experience some progress.

PISCES — Fear and confusion can reside within oneself. A health disorder is predicted. The first half will provide some gain. Expenditure level will rise during the latter half. A profession will yield limited return.

Book Review

Strong Emotional Impression



Sushma Shakya

Book: Dhanyabad Zindagi
Genre: Poetry
Poet: Rabi "Nepali"
Publisher: Tika Bhattarai
Published in 2082 BS
Pages: 104
Price: Rs 200
ISBN: 978-9937-9782-1-7

Rabi Nepali's Dhanyabaad Zindagi, a collection of fifty-three poems, leaves a strong emotional impression. Many of his poems open with a tone of heaviness or pessimism, yet almost every piece moves towards light, hope and resolution. This shift becomes one of the defining traits of his work, and it encourages the reader to rise with him.

One of the pieces that stand out is 'Adhyaro Raat'. Readers may connect deeply with the exhaustion the poet expresses as an honest, ordinary individual carrying many roles in society. Although the poem carries a tired tone, his love for nature appears again as his source of healing. Nature becomes his constant companion in sadness, and this pattern repeats across the collection.

Throughout the book, the poet reveals his pain, the dualities of life, his struggles, gratitude and moments of inner reflection. In a fast, overwhelming modern world, these poems echo the quiet suffering and resilience of common people. They feel close and familiar.

'Timro Khojima' is one of the more symbolic poems in the collection, open to many interpretations. A reader searching for happiness may feel the poet is seeking the same. Someone focused on their dreams may see determination and purpose. Others might read it as a spiritual search, or the poet might be looking for God or a divine presence. Even when people try to pull him away from his path or claim that his search does not exist, he stays firm. He suggests that his search will continue not only in this life but beyond it. The poem's "you" can be seen as his goal, aspiration, or the divine he seeks. His way of writing shows a quiet brilliance in how he chooses and shapes his words.

'Ma Bhitrako Ma' carries a deep, universal message. It invites the reader to look inward and recognise parts of them in the poet's reflection. This poem blends calm imagery with inner restlessness.



The repeated sound of 'vulvul' beautifully mirrors the poet's own restlessness, almost like a heartbeat of anxiety. Comparing that inner movement to a hidden spring rising inside a mountain is a powerful metaphor; it suggests something deep, natural and uncontrollable growing within him.

As the poem moves forward, the poet admits he is confused, overwhelmed and searching. The honesty in lines like 'Ma Kehi Harairahechu' and 'Ma Kehi Khoji Pani Rahechu' makes the poem relatable, because it mirrors the uncertainty many people feel. The closing reflection brings the poem into a spiritual dimension. The poet wonders whether the peace he seeks is God, truth or simply his own inner self. This unresolved question leaves the reader gently suspended, which suits the theme of searching.

> Dhanyabaad Zindagi offers a rich blend of emotion: political concern, satire, personal grief, hope and quiet resilience. Rabi Nepali's voice often feels like he is speaking the reader's own emotions. The collection is worth reading for the honesty it carries and the many shades of human experience it brings to light.

The satirical poem 'Buddhako Bansaj' offers a clever contrast. The poet calls himself a descendant of Buddha, a figure of non-violence, yet becomes irritated by a cuckoo's repetitive call and kills it with a stone. The irony is sharp and effective. This poem uses a simple dialogue between the speaker and a cuckoo to reveal a sharp irony. The speaker proudly calls himself wise, peaceful and a descendant of Buddha, yet loses patience when the bird keeps asking, 'Ko Ho Ko Ho?' In a moment of frustration, he kills the very creature he should have treated with calm and compassion. The final image of the bird's lifeless eyes staring back creates a strong emotional weight. The poem shows how easily people forget their own values, making it a concise but powerful satirical reflection on human nature.

Poems like 'Jharipokhari' show his admiration for nature and his ability to play with language in a lively way. Meanwhile, 'Timro Pratikshyama' speaks across ages and experiences. Whether you are a student, dreamer, patriot, optimist, pessimist, struggler, or homemaker or simply tired of life's demands, the poem feels personal. It carries the sense that the poet is voicing your own thoughts.

Some pieces also reveal his political side. They suggest he cannot tolerate injustice and carries a rebellious love for his country. A few of the poems read more like reflective philosophical pieces than traditional verse. For example, 'Aama' is written in a simple and direct narrative style. A poem usually carries some rhythm, imagery or emotional layering, but here the focus is on telling what happened and what the poet wants to say. Because of that, it reads more like a short moral story or a reflective paragraph than a lyrical piece. The message is beautiful, but the style is simple, direct and conversational rather than poetic.

One thing readers may notice is his repeated use of certain words across the collection. This repetition seems to reflect the poet's personal attachment to those expressions. Since the poems come from his own lived feelings, this becomes natural and understandable.

Overall, Dhanyabaad Zindagi offers a rich blend of emotion: political concern, satire, personal grief, hope and quiet resilience. Rabi Nepali's voice often feels like he is speaking the reader's own emotions. The collection is worth reading for the honesty it carries and the many shades of human experience it brings to light.

(An energetic poet, Shakya writes on art, culture and literature.)

One Health Is Nepal's Best Investment



Dr. Binaya Chalise

In 2023, Nepal levied a hidden tax on its own economic growth. It was called Lumpy Skin Disease. By the time the rains receded, the pathogen had infected more than 1.5 million cows and buffaloes and killed tens of thousands. The official ledger recorded a livestock crisis. But the real ledger told a deeper story: an estimated $400 million to $1 billion in losses that never entered our national accounts. The economic mechanics were brutally clear. In the hills, farmers lost their oxen on the eve of planting, leaving fields fallow. In dairy belts, milk yields crashed by as much as 80 per cent, emptying urban shelves and pushing prices upward. What collapsed was not merely animal health but living capital—the primary savings account for countless rural households. Yet the institutional response diagnosed two separate problems. Agriculture counted dead animals. Health monitored human wards for a disease that, thankfully, does not infect people. Managed in parallel silos, the crisis's full cost remained invisible to any single authority.

To a biologist, these are different species. To an economist, this is a textbook market failure. We absorbed a billion-dollar shock because interconnected biological risks were treated as isolated administrative tasks. This fragmentation is not accidental. It is a self-imposed drag on national prosperity.

Irrational outcomes

Nepal's difficulty in operationalising One Health is often described as a coordination failure. That diagnosis is correct but superficial. The deeper problem is fiscal architecture. Ministries behave rationally within a system that rewards fragmentation and undervalues prevention.

The first defect is budget identity. In the Red Book, One Health has no consolidated line item, shared code, or pooled fund. When cross-sectoral threats emerge, officials must improvise within narrow departmental envelopes, slowing joint action. In government, what is not coded in the budget does not functionally exist.

This produces a classic incentive failure. No civil servant is promoted for a crisis that never occurs. Performance systems reward visible outputs—hospital beds filled, compensation paid—not disasters quietly averted. This is the prevention paradox: prevention's benefits are dispersed and delayed, while its costs are immediate and local. Underinvestment becomes rational.

Externalities deepen the failure. Biological risks created in one sector are often paid for in another. An unregulated farm may cut waste-management costs, while the resulting disease burden appears later in public health spending. At the same time, data on animal illness, land use, climate, and human disease remain trapped in institutional silos, losing their value as an early-warning system.

Pandemics, in this light, are not sectoral accidents. They are systemic risks—closer to financial contagion than clinical events. Treating them with narrow vertical budgets is like stabilising a currency by regulating a single bank. Until we internalise these cross-sectoral costs and give One Health a genuine fiscal home, it will remain a slogan. The nation will continue paying the price of fragmentation.

Livestock, living capital

To understand why One Health matters economically, we must move from the language of animal welfare to the logic of capital preservation. In rural part of the country, livestock is the household economy's core productive asset. A cow or buffalo generates daily cash flow, provides nutrition, and functions as liquid collateral. For millions excluded from formal finance, livestock serve simultaneously as savings accounts and insurance policies. When disease destroys this capital, the result is a balance-sheet shock. Families withdraw children from school, sell land, or incur high-interest debt. A veterinary event quickly becomes a development setback.

These micro-shocks accumulate into macroeconomic fragility. Livestock disease disrupts supply chains, fuels inflation, and weakens rural demand. The calculus extends further—to natural capital.



> They require the political will to recognise that fragmented prevention is a luxury the nation cannot afford. In public finance, the most efficient crisis is the one that never reaches the ledger.

Degraded forests and polluted waterways are not only environmental concerns; they are depreciating public-health infrastructure. Neglect turns them into subsidised habitats for pathogens, imposing hidden costs through rising health expenditure, lost productivity, and diminished tourism confidence. In a landscape-dependent economy like our country, a failing ecosystem is a failing balance sheet. The efficiency logic is then undeniable. Protecting living and natural capital upstream is exponentially cheaper than managing collapse downstream.

Vaccinating animals, monitoring vectors, or preserving ecological buffers costs a fraction of emergency treatment, mass culling, or outbreak response. This is not soft social spending. It is a high-yield public investment in national resilience. Seen this way, One Health is not an appeal for inter-ministerial courtesy. It is a strategy to stabilise markets and shield a climate-vulnerable economy from biological volatility. Ignoring it is an active fiscal choice—one that guarantees higher costs later.

From grants to systems

The country now has a rare opportunity to act. New global financing instruments, such as the World Bank's Pandemic Fund, offer more than temporary project support. Properly used, they can catalyse structural reform.

The risk is familiar: the project trap. External grants often finance workshops, equipment, and pilot systems that disappear when funding ends—creating islands of excellence without altering underlying incentives for ministerial silos.

This moment requires a strategic pivot led by the Ministry of Finance. Pandemic financing should be treated not as money to spend but as seed capital for systems that no longer depend on grants.

\The real question is not how to exhaust funds, but how to build permanence. Donors increasingly support fund integration, data sharing, and prevention when matched by domestic fiscal commitment.

The nation already shows technical feasibility. Integrated surveillance for antimicrobial resistance and selected zoonoses proves cross-sectoral collaboration can work. The bottleneck is not expertise.

It is institutional permanence. If pandemic fund resources are used to embed coordination in budgets, data systems, and accountability structures, we will unlock future financing while lowering long-term biological-risk costs. The shift is simple: from purchasing emergency response to building economic resilience.

Accountability

If One Health is fundamentally an economic risk-management problem, then its solutions must be structural, not advisory. We must move beyond coordination committees and build three pragmatic pillars of accountability. First, the country must create a joint fiscal instrument. A conditional, multi-sectoral budget window—released only upon joint planning by health, agriculture, and local authorities—would transform coordination from aspiration into requirement. In public administration, money is the strongest coordinating force. When it is contingent on collaboration, silos naturally dissolve.

Second, the country must build a digital nervous system. The nation does not lack data; it lacks integration. A unified, real-time biosurveillance dashboard linking veterinary, clinical, and environmental signals would convert fragmented information into national early warning. Biological risk deserves the same urgency with which we track remittances and inflation.

Third, authority must sit above sectoral silos. A One Health secretariat buried within any single line ministry, whether health or agriculture, is doomed to parochial priorities. It must be housed where planning, finance, and accountability converge—within the National Planning Commission or a dedicated cell under the Prime Minister's Office. Its mandate: to quantify systemic risk and veto fragmented spending.

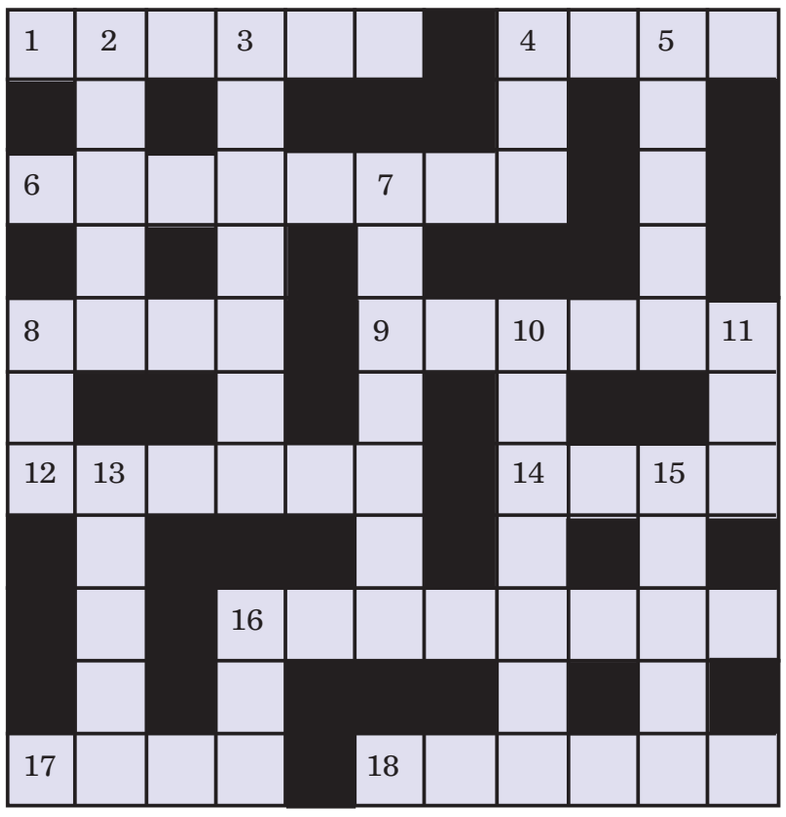
None of these reforms require vast new expenditure. They require the political will to recognise that fragmented prevention is a luxury the nation cannot afford. In public finance, the most efficient crisis is the one that never reaches the ledger.

In the hills, where the loss of a single ox can erase a harvest, the cost of fragmented prevention is already understood. We now face a decisive fiscal fork: will we continue financing disaster, or will we begin financing resilience?

This is not a debate about public health philosophy. It is the ultimate test of economic stewardship. Pathogens will keep crossing species, sectors, and borders. The only question is whether our budgets and institutions will move just as freely.

(Dr. Chalise is an academic researcher specialising in public policy and development.)

TRN CROSSWORD PUZZLE NO. 1872



Last date of entry:
March 18, 2026

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

Name: .....

Address: .....

Across

1. A severe scolding
4. Extremely poor in quality
6. A period when electric power has failed
8. A tool to stabilize navigation systems
9. To penalise someone for wrongdoing
12. To make the sound quieter
14. A ray of light
16. Political activities before the election
17. A rude word for a stupid person
18. To stick firmly to something

Down

2. A mixture of metals
3. To meet an opposing person to compete
4. A small bed for a baby
5. A bottomless hole
7. To crush by abuse of power
8. A sticky substance from a tree
10. A person without courage, confidence
11. The edge of the clothes turned under and sewn
13. A break in the skin
15. Sign of things in the future
16. A colour

Solutions to TRN Crossword Puzzle No. 1871

ACROSS: 1. BALLOT 4. MASK 6. COSMETIC 8. AFRO 9. AFFORD 12. CRUNCH 14. RAPT 16. TRAVESTY 17. CRUX 18. CATCHY

DOWN: 2. ALOOF 3. LAMPOON 4. MAC 5. STEER 7. TRACHEA 8. ARC 10. FORFEIT 11.DOT 13. RADAR 15. PITCH 16. TAX

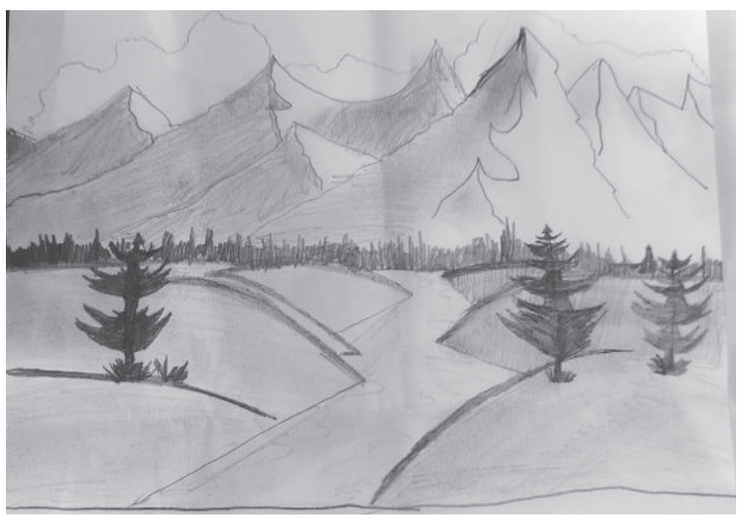
LUCKY WINNER

Archana Devi Shrestha, Nhyokha, Kathmandu
Khagendra Nath, Bagbazar, Kathmandu
Ram Darshan Rajbhandari, Jawalakhel

CREATIVE CORNER



Prajwol Wagle, Grade: XI, LRI School



Aadarsha Poudel, Grade: VIII, Liver Pool Secondary School

QUIZ OF THE WEEK 38

Questions	Answers
1. When was the 'Sati Pratha' abolished in Nepal?	
2. What is the national flower of Nepal?	
3. Which is the largest industrial area in Nepal?	
4. What is the full form of 'ATM'?	
5. What is the estimated world population in the year '2050'?	

LUCKY WINNER

Smriti Shrestha, Lalitpur -14

Visit To UK Parliament



Abhinav Saud

For many years, I dreamed of visiting the UK Parliament after hearing about it from my father. Even when I was living in Nepal, I imagined how it would look inside. I thought I might never get the chance – until our Dartford Nepali community organised a trip for 40 children and 10 parents with support from the local member of parliament from Dartford, Jim Dickson. I was so excited!



Our coach was arriving at 8am, so I woke up at 7am, brushed my teeth, got ready, and left home at 7:45am with my mum. When we reached the bus stop, I was surprised. I thought the coach might be boring and uncomfortable, but it was amazing! It was huge and had red lights along the ceiling, armrests, curtains, and even a toilet in the middle. We sang songs together and could also choose songs to play. And parents danced too.

My friends and I quickly ran to sit at the back. I sat right in the middle. The coach driver was very friendly, which made the journey even better. We travelled for about two hours from Dartford to Westminster. I looked out of the window and felt happy that my dream was coming true.

When we arrived, the Parliament building looked grand and important. At the entrance, we had to go through security. We took off our coats and bags before going inside. Soon, we were given special audio guides that headphones connected to a small device. Through them, we could hear our guide clearly. Her name was Ruby, and she was calm and kind. She explained everything in a way we could understand.

We walked through many beautiful rooms. One room had bright lights and detailed decorations on the walls. Another room had statues of famous members of Parliament. We learnt about the first woman MP and heard that parts of the building were damaged during the Second World War, and some marks can still be seen today. I thought it was amazing that such an old building is still standing and being used. In another room, we saw kings' and queens' pictures, such as Bloody Mary's, King Charles I's, King Charles VIII's, and others'. Awesome!

Meanwhile, we visited two different chambers: the House of Commons (the green chamber) and the House of Lords (the red chamber). We also saw the chairs of the king and queen, which were made from 23.5-carat gold. The paintings were large and very detailed. In another room, we saw long benches where MPs sit and speak. There were microphones fixed on the desks. In the final room, we saw very grand chairs used for important ceremonies. Everything looked royal and historic.

In between, kids raised so many of our conicities and questionnaires, and Ruby answered the queries and appreciated the children for the curiosity as well. At the end of the tour, we thanked Ruby, returned our audio guides, and took group photos. I felt proud and grateful to be there. When we went outside, I found a surprise in my bag – my mum had packed pasta for me! I started eating carefully because it was very crowded. Some of my friends were eating snacks too.

On the way back, I couldn't get a seat at the back this time, but my seat still had a comfortable armrest. The best part was when we went through a tunnel, and the blue lights inside the bus made everything look magical. We played songs and took more photos together. When I finally got home that evening, I felt worn out but very happy. That night, as I lay in bed, I smiled because my dream of visiting the UK parliament had finally come true.

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