Saturday, March 21, 2026
Chait 7, 2082 | Nepal Sambat 1146 | Chaulatho Amai

NATION'S 1ST ENGLISH BROADSHEET

risingnepaldaily.com
Vol. LXI, No. 96 | Pages 8 | Rs. 5 | National Edition

THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL

PM OFFERS PRAYERS AT JANAKI TEMPLE

BY DHARBENDRA JHA
Janakpur, Mar. 20

Prime Minister Sushila Karki, accompanied by her husband, offered prayers at the Janaki Temple in Janakpur, a major centre of the Hindu faith, on Friday.

Mahant Ramtapeshwor Das of the Janaki Temple performed the aarti and led the prayers in accordance with Hindu traditions. During the ceremony, Mahant Das honoured Prime Minister Karki with a garland of flowers and a chunari offered to Mata Janaki.

On the occasion, the Prime Minister also paid respect to the Sawalakh Shaligram Bhagwan, which is worshipped daily at the temple. She also participated in the Sitaram Akhand Kirtan held on the temple premises and chanted Sitaram for some time.

Prime Minister Karki, who entered the temple at 11:40 am, spent about 15 minutes offering prayers. Speaking briefly to reporters upon leaving, she said the visit was purely religious and not political. She added that visiting Janakpurdham and paying homage to Janaki Mata gave her a sense of fulfilment, and that she felt very happy.

Prime Minister Karki arrived in Janakpurdham by a Nepal Army helicopter and was received at Janakpur Airport by Madhes Province's Minister for Home, Communications and Law, Fakira Mahato, along with heads of the district's security agencies.



PHOTO: RSS

Prime Minister Sushila Karki poses for a group photograph after offering prayers at the Janaki Temple in Janakpurdham on Friday.

PM Karki thanks security, EC officials for successful elections

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

Prime Minister Sushila Karki has travelled from Karnali to the Madhes region to thank security officials, administrative staff, and the electorate for their key role in the recently concluded elections.

On Thursday, she arrived in Khalanga, Jumla, via Rara in Mugu, where she interacted with election-related government officials and local representatives. On Friday, PM Karki attended events in Surkhet, the capital of Karnali Province; Janakpur, the capital of Madhes Province; and Gaushala, Mahottari.

At these programmes, PM Karki highly praised the contributions of security personnel, administrative staff, and other stakeholders who ensured that the elections were conducted peacefully, fairly, and efficiently, despite challenging circumstances.

The Prime Minister congratulated the heads of security agencies and officials involved in election management, expressing her gratitude for their dedication, responsibility, and professionalism. She remarked, "You implemented our plans excellently. You have successfully fulfilled the commitments we set out to achieve. I am thankful for this. People are congratulating me, but the true credit belongs to you."

Officials from the security agencies also expressed their happiness at being entrusted with such a significant national responsibility, describing it as a matter of pride to work under Prime Minister Karki's leadership.

Before the elections, Prime Minister Karki visited various parts of the country to encourage the personnel deployed for election duties. Even at the end of her term, she travelled across Karnali and Madhes to honour those who contributed to the peaceful conduct of the elections.

During her visit, the Prime Minister also toured the renowned tourist site Rara, and paid respects at the Dattatreya Temple in Jumla and the Janaki Temple in Janakpurdham. She offered prayers for the nation's peace, prosperity, and the welfare of all citizens, and conveyed her wishes for communal harmony and national unity.

Delay in disclosing Karki Commission report irks Gen-Zers



PHOTO: TRN

BY PURUSHOTTAM P. KHATRI
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

It has already been 12 days since the Commission, led by former chairperson of the Special Court Gauri Bahadur Karki, submitted its report on the investigation into the Gen-Z incident to the government.

While receiving the report, Prime Minister Sushila Karki, in the presence of the commission members, had said that the government would study it and make its summary public within a few days.

However, even 12 days after the submission of the report, the main recommendations made by the Commission have not been formally disclosed. The delay in making the report public has prompted young Gen-Z campaigners to stage demonstrations almost daily in the capital, particularly at Maitighar Mandala in Kathmandu, demanding its release.

Meanwhile, public frustration continues to grow as the government delays disclosing the Karki Inquiry Commission's findings. Over the days, the Gen-Zers have intensified their agitation.

Months on, the full truth behind the turbulent days of September 8 and 9, 2025, remains elusive.

From social media campaigns to street demonstrations, young activists have renewed their movement, demanding that the report be made public. Hashtags calling for its release have gained traction online, while on Sunday, protesters gathered at Maitighar Mandala in Kathmandu, a symbolic hub for civic dissent, to voice their frustration.

Holding banners and chanting slogans, they posed a simple but pressing question: "Where is the full Karki Commission report?"

For many, the issue is no longer just about one document. It has become a broader struggle over transparency and the public's right to information in a democratic society.

The Commission, led by former justice Karki, was formed on September 21 with a three-month mandate. However, repeated extensions delayed its work, and the report was submitted on March 8, 2026. Activists believe the document has identified key figures responsible for both the state's crackdown on September 8 and the violence that followed on September 9.

» SEE PAGE 6

Nepal Gen-Z Front condemns assault on coordinator Bam

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

The Nepal Gen-Z Front has expressed strong objection to the assault on its coordinator, Raksha Bam, who was present for a demonstration at Maiti Ghar in Kathmandu.

In a statement issued on Friday, the Front condemned the incident, describing the assault on Bam as unacceptable.

"We strongly condemn the assault on our coordinator Raksha Bam during Thursday's peaceful demonstration," the Front said. "Nepal's Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to gather peacefully without weapons and the freedom of thought and expression. An attack on a protester raising their voice for truth and justice while exercising these constitutional rights is intolerable in any civilised democratic society."

The protest, which has been ongoing for six days at Maitighar, is being led by Gen-Z leaders demanding the release of the report by the commission headed by former justice Gauri Bahadur Karki, set up to investigate into the Gen-Z movement of September 8 and 9.

» SEE PAGE 6

New parliament building ready for holding sessions

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

Minister for Home Affairs Om Prakash Aryal, along with several other ministers, conducted an on-site inspection of the under-construction Federal Parliament building within the Singha Durbar complex.

The inspection team consisting Foreign Minister Balananda Sharma, Health and Population Minister Dr. Sudha Gautam, and Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Shraddha Shrestha reviewed various structures of the new building and gathered relevant information.

The ministers observed the newly constructed multipurpose hall prepared for parliamentary sessions, as well as the ongoing construction of the House of Representatives and National Assembly halls.

During the visit, Home Minister Aryal confirmed that the meeting hall is fully prepared for the oath-taking ceremony of newly elected members of the House of Representatives. He said that, if necessary, the hall could also accommodate a full parliamentary session.

"The new building is ready not only for swearing-in ceremonies but also for holding full sessions. Necessary infrastructure has been put in place for joint meetings of the House of Representatives and the National Assembly. Office space for the Speaker and arrangements for the Procedure Committee have also been completed," he said.

Commenting on the interior arrangements, Minister Aryal said that the seating plan and furniture management are satisfactory, and installation of microphones and screens is progressing rapidly. While some arrangements remain temporary, the quality of furniture and technology is high, and work is proceeding at a good pace.

According to the Department of Urban Development and Building Construction, the new parliament building is now in its final stages. Spanning more than 156 ropani, the building will host all federal parliamentary activities once completed. Pramendra Krishna Shrestha, head of the Tundi-Sec JV project responsible for construction, stated that the campus will comprise twelve structures, including the Federal Parliament building, House of Representatives and National Assembly halls, VIP chambers, parliamentary party offices, committee buildings, and other administrative offices.

» SEE PAGE 6

NC to play constructive role as main opposition

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

The Nepali Congress has accepted its defeat in the House of Representatives Election 2026, pledging to play a constructive role as the main opposition while undertaking a comprehensive review of the results. In a preliminary assessment 14-page report, issued by party vice-president Bishwo Prakash Sharma, the party acknowledged that its loss was not merely an electoral setback but the culmination of long-standing public dissatisfaction, political instability and organisational weaknesses.

The report noted that despite energising its grassroots through a recent special general convention, it failed to communicate this message of change effectively to voters within the limited 50-day window before the election. Deep-rooted frustrations over unstable governments, repeated leadership figures, policy uncertainty and delays in governance all contributed significantly to voter disillusionment. The Nepali Congress (NC) also admitted that alliances formed in recent years, though politically necessary, fuelled public resentment and weakened its ideological clarity.

A key factor identified was the growing disconnect between the party and citizens, particularly as dissatisfaction increasingly manifested through social media and street movements rather than parliamentary channels. The party conceded that its inability to act as a strong opposition voice at critical moments allowed alternative forces to capitalise on public anger. It also highlighted the rise of populism, where emotional narratives and anti-establishment sentiment overshadowed policy-driven politics.

Organisational shortcomings further compounded the defeat. Internal factionalism, poor candidate coordination and instances of non-cooperation among party leaders undermined electoral prospects.

» SEE PAGE 6

Himalayan ice melt doubles since 2000: Report

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

Glacier melt in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) has doubled since 2000, according to two major reports from ICIMOD that were released on Saturday to mark the World Day for Glaciers.

The region has lost up to 27 metres of ice thickness since 1975, putting the water and food security of nearly two billion people at risk.

Experts warn that the "Water Towers of Asia" are reaching a critical tipping point. With 12 per cent of glacier area already gone, officials are calling for urgent global action to prevent a "real-time crisis" of floods and water shortages.

The reports, Changing Dynamics of Glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalaya Region from 1990 to 2020 and HKH Glacier Outlook 2026: Insights from 50 Years of Himalayan Glacier Monitoring, provided the most comprehensive evidence yet of glacier change in the region, said a press statement issued by ICIMOD to mark the day on March 21.



The reports revealed a total loss of up to 27 metres of ice thickness since 1975, sounding an alarm for the nearly two billion people downstream who depend on meltwater from the 'Water Towers of Asia'.

According to the statement, HKH holds the largest volume of ice outside the poles, with an inventory of over 63,700 glaciers covering nearly 55,782 square kilometres. These glaciers are the source of at least ten major Asian river systems, supporting the food, water, energy, and livelihood security of billions. However, around 78 per cent of this glacier area, located between 4,500 and 6,000 metres above sea level is highly exposed to elevation-dependent warming.

"This is not a distant problem; it is a crisis unfolding in real-time, with new disasters every summer and monsoon. The fact that ice loss rates have doubled this century should shock us all into action," said Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of ICIMOD.

He said, "The HKH is at a crossroads. The rapidly escalating impacts we are seeing from water uncertainty to catastrophic floods underscore that we are in a critical decade for the cryosphere. We must scale up monitoring and invest in adaptation now. These aren't blind spots becoming surprises anymore; they are our new reality."

The analysis revealed that between 1990 and 2020, HKH glaciers lost about 12 per cent of their total area and nine per cent of their estimated ice reserves.

According to Sudan Bikash Maharjan, Remote Sensing Analyst at ICIMOD and lead author of the glacier dynamics report, the most immediate threat comes from the region's smallest glaciers.

"Between 1990 and 2020, HKH glaciers lost about 12 per cent of their total area, but the losses are most acute for the region's smallest glaciers -- those below 0.5 km² -- which are shrinking more rapidly than others," said Maharjan.

"This poses immediate risks of localised water shortages for high mountain communities and intensifies hazards like glacial lake outburst floods.

» SEE PAGE 6

BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold	: Rs. 294,500 /-
Worked Gold	: NA
Silver	: Rs. 4,895/-

STOCK

NEPSE	: 2,877.03
Total Amount	: 21,223,494,886.98
No. of Share	: 56,920,60

No fertiliser shortage in Koshi

BY SHAHIDHAR PARAJULI
Biratnagar, Mar. 20

Farmers in Koshi Province, who in previous years faced acute shortages of chemical fertiliser at the start of the planting season, have experienced relief this year, with no complaints reported so far.

In particular, there have been no reports of shortages during the winter maize and spring paddy cultivation seasons.

According to the regional office of Agricultural Inputs Company Limited in Biratnagar, fertiliser supply and stock levels in the region are currently satisfactory.

Acting Chief of the Company Kamal Pokharel said that distribution has been streamlined across 16 districts, 14 in Koshi Province and two in Madhes Province, namely Siraha and Saptari.

The latest data show that the Biratnagar office alone holds around 14,000 metric tonnes of urea fertiliser in stock.

At the provincial level, total reserves stand at 16,856 metric tonnes of urea, 2,472 metric tonnes of DAP, and 3,412 metric tonnes of potash. Of this, approximately 7,000 metric tonnes have been set aside as buffer stock for emergencies.

"We have been ensuring regular fertiliser supply throughout the winter this year," Pokharel said. "While dealers received fertiliser only three times last year, deliveries have already been made up to six times this year."

Despite high demand for urea, DAP and potash in maize cultivation, he claimed that improved supply management has prevented any shortages. In Biratnagar, the price of urea has been fixed at Rs. 750 per sack, with slight variations elsewhere depending on transportation costs.

To streamline distribution, around 750 cooperatives have been mobilised across Koshi Province. Of these, the Biratnagar office supplies fertiliser through 325 cooperatives in Morang, Bhojpur and Sankhuwasabha districts. Distribution in other districts is being managed through branch offices in Biratnagar, Birtamod, Itahari, Inaruwa and Dhankuta.

The company has also accelerated preparations for the upcoming spring and monsoon paddy seasons. Required quotas have already been determined and requested from the central office, which has initiated the tender process, raising confidence that shortages will not occur in the future.

However, Pokharel cautioned that international developments could pose challenges. "Fertiliser availability is sufficient at present, but if the ongoing conflict in the Middle East is prolonged, it could disrupt the global supply chain," he warned. He suggested that the government take timely measures to maintain a steady supply.

For now, farmers in Koshi are continuing their maize and spring paddy farming activities without concern.



PHOTO: SHAHIDHAR PARAJULI/TRN

Workers transferring fertiliser from torn sacks into new bags.

ECONOMIC CENSUS OFFICE OPEN IN MALANGAWA

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Sarlahi, Mar. 20

A district-level Economic Census Office has been established in Malangwa, the administrative centre of Sarlahi.

Raju Pokhrel, Chief of the Sarlahi District Economic Census Office, said the office has been set up in the building of the Agricultural Knowledge Centre in Malangwa, which will serve as the base for conducting the national economic census.

The first economic census in Sarlahi and across Nepal was carried out in 2018.

The second nationwide economic census is scheduled to take place from April 15 to June 21, 2026. District offices, including Sarlahi, have already been established to begin preparations for the census.

From April 3 to 8, enumerators and supervisors will be selected in the prescribed numbers, Pokhrel said.

Selected personnel will then receive training from April 9 to 13.

Under the slogan "Economic Census for Measuring the Economy", the census will cover all registered and unregistered industries, from small businesses to large enterprises.

The campaign will assess the status of industries and employment generation throughout Nepal.

The national economic census will collect information on the number, type, investment, employment, production, and service delivery of industries, businesses, service providers, cooperatives, and both public and private institutions.

FINANCIAL LITERACY CLASSES RUN FOR SIMKOT STUDENTS

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Humla, Mar. 20

Financial literacy classes have been organised for students studying in grades 11 and 12 in Simkot. The initiative, aimed at educating students about financial transactions, was conducted by Citizens Bank's Simkot branch.

Hem Raj Hamal, branch manager of Citizens Bank Simkot, said the programme took place at Manasarovar Model Secondary School, Simkot Rural Municipality–6, for students of grades 11 and 12. The sessions covered topics such as bank accounts, their benefits, types of accounts, including Demat accounts, and identifying counterfeit notes.

Discussions also included savings, loans, investments, banking offences, and related penalties. Students were also educated on account signatures, customer privacy, and identifying the sources of funds deposited into bank accounts.

Pokhara readies for Lakeside Festival



BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Lekhnath, Mar. 20

The tourist capital of Pokhara is gearing up to celebrate the Nepali New Year, 2083 B.S. The Pokhara Hotels Association Nepal will host the 21st edition of the Fewa New Year Festival at Lakeside from April 12-14.

The festival, held along the Lakeside road by Fewa Lake, will highlight tourism, culture, and cuisine. Association President Laxman Subedi said preparations for this year's festival are progressing at a rapid pace.

"We are organising the festival to celebrate the Nepali New Year in a special way," he said. "Various sub-committees have already been formed to manage the preparations." The association's First Vice-President Deepak Shrestha and Second Vice-President Ganeshraj Pahari have been appointed as co-coordinators of the festival.

With the aim of promoting both domestic and international tourism, the festival is expected to boost economic activity following the Gen-Z movement and recent elections. Subedi, who is also the festival's chief coordinator, added that the event will emphasise the conservation of Fewa Lake while celebrating the New Year.

The festival will feature Lok Dohori (folk duet) and other musical performances, pop concerts, dance shows, and a variety of entertainment programmes.

To promote the event, the association previously organised the 'Jaun Hai Pokhara' campaign from March 23 to 27 in several cities across eastern Nepal.

OIL STEADY, GLOBAL SHARES MIXED

AP
Hong Kong, Mar. 20

Oil prices steadied on Friday on the intensifying Iran war to around $110 a barrel, while global shares were mixed following Wall Street losses.

U.S. futures were down more than 0.4%. A Kuwaiti oil refinery came under Iranian drone attack early Friday as Tehran shows little signs of letting up on its attacks on Gulf region energy structure.

Oil prices had a roller-coaster day on Thursday with Brent crude, the international standard, briefly surging to around $119 per barrel as attacks by Iran escalated after Israel's attack on Iran's key natural gas field.

On Friday, Brent crude resumed its gain following a dip earlier in the day, rising 1.6% to $110.36 a barrel. Benchmark U.S. crude was up 0.3% to $95.80 a barrel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said late on Thursday he would hold off on further attacks on Iran's gas field at the request of U.S. President Donald Trump.

The Iran war, which is in its third week, has sent energy prices soaring and is fueling global inflation worries. Concerns are also growing over the supply of oil and gas with the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway for the energy supply located between Iran and Oman, largely closed. U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Thursday raised the possibility of lifting its sanctions on Iranian oil at sea in a potential attempt to ease oil prices.

55 injured in South Korea's auto parts factory fire

AP
Seoul, Mar. 20

A fire at an auto parts factory in South Korea's central city of Daejeon injured at least 55 people on Friday, with officials warning the toll could rise.

The National Fire Agency said 24 were seriously hurt in a blaze likely caused by an explosion. Officials could not immediately confirm whether any of the injured were in life-threatening condition.

Nam Deuk-woo, fire chief of the city's Daedeok district, said authorities were searching for at least 14 other people believed to have been inside the facility when the fire broke out.

Videos and photos from the scene showed thick gray smoke billowing from the complex and some workers jumping from a building.

The fire was reported at about 1:18 p.m. Nam said the cause was not immediately known, but the blaze appeared to have spread rapidly, with witnesses reporting an explosion.

He said the fire destroyed a factory building that firefighters were unable to enter because of concerns it could collapse.

Efforts focused on preventing the blaze from spreading to an adjacent facility and removing chemicals from the site. The agency said the facility contained about 200 kilograms (440 pounds) of highly reactive chemicals.

Some people were injured when they jumped from the building to escape, while others suffered from smoke inhalation, Nam said. Police were tracking mobile phone signals of the 14 people still unaccounted-for.

More than 500 firefighters, police and other emergency personnel were deployed, along with about 120 vehicles, evacuation aircraft and equipment, including an unmanned water cannon vehicle and two firefighting robots used in areas difficult for crews to access.

President Lee Jae Myung called for the full mobilization of personnel and equipment to contain the fire and support rescue operations.



PHOTO: AP

Black smoke rises from an auto parts plant in Daejeon, South Korea.

Dhula Chaur becomes hub for trade, services



PHOTO: SHER BAHADUR SARKI/TRN

Dhula Chaur market is now the preferred choice of residents in the Himali Rural Municipality.

BY SHER BAHADUR SHARKI
Bajura, Mar. 20

Dhula Chaur, located in Himali Rural Municipality-6 in north-eastern part of Bajura district, has recently emerged as the preferred choice among locals.

Once merely an open pasture, Dhula Chaur has become more prominent following the construction of the municipal administrative building in the area.

"My home was in Boldhik, and I used to live there. However, in recent years, due to the risk of landslides, I moved here and started trading," said Ram Bahadur Rawat, a resident of Boldhik in ward no. 6.

He said, "Initially, there was nothing here, just bare stones. Later, a few people set up two or three tin shelters. Now, with the municipal building constructed here, Dhula Chaur has been established as a proper marketplace."

Today, the market is bustling. Traders from Humla, Jumla, and Mugu come here to conduct business. Daily food supplies for the area are dispatched from this market. Due to the accessibility of essential services, locals now prefer Dhula Chaur for trade and other needs, Rawat noted.

Dhula Chaur now serves as the main market for the rural municipality. Daily supplies from this market reach all six wards of the municipality. In addition, neighbouring districts such as Humla, Jumla, and Mugu also rely on this market for their food supplies.

Previously devastated by landslides, the area is now filled with thousands of tin shelters, which have added to the market's prominence.

The land belongs to the government, and since most of the local population was living in landslide-prone areas, they gradually settled here.

"Since this area suits residents from all wards, we built the municipal administrative building here," said Govind Bahadur Malla, Chairperson of the Himali Rural Municipality.

He said, "For local safety, a temporary police outpost has been set up here. A primary health care centre is also operational to provide health services conveniently to the locals."

All the land in Dhula Chaur is government-owned, which makes formal registration in the municipality's name challenging. "We are currently taking steps to address this," Chairperson Mall said.

Makwanpur Chamber hosting agro exhibition

BY ANIL PARAJULI
Hetauda, Mar. 20

The Bagmati Province-level agriculture exhibition is set to begin in Hetauda.

Organised by the Agriculture Promotion Committee of the Makwanpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the exhibition will run from March 27 to 29 at the Palpasa Hall in Hetauda.

According to Nilam Pandey, coordinator of the committee, the exhibition will showcase agricultural produce, local crops, farming tools, equipment, and modern technologies from farmers across the province. The organisers expect the event to promote agricultural production and encourage farmers.

Meanwhile, the 59th Annual General Meeting of the Makwanpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry is scheduled for Saturday, 7 April, also at Palpasa Hall in Hetauda.

The decision was made during a committee meeting, said the Chamber's president, Pramod Singh Ranabhat.

The AGM will be inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Bagmati Province, Indra Bahadur Baniya, as the chief guest.

Central Senior Vice President of the Chamber, Anjan Shrestha, is expected to attend as a special guest. According to General Secretary Pratima Shrestha, a proposal to amend the Chamber's constitution will be presented during the meeting.



PHOTO:TRN

Makwanpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry committee meeting.

Suspension bridge brings relief to students

BY TOPLAL ARYAL
Gulmi, (Resunga), Mar. 20



PHOTO; TOPLAL ARYAL\TRN

Suspension bridge connecting Tari, Hastichaur and Palukha in Isma Rural Municipality–2.

Crossing the Chhaldi Khola had been a major challenge for locals whenever it swelled after rainfall. Residents from Tari in the Chhaldi area had no choice but to wade through the river during the monsoon to reach the large agricultural fields.

Students from Palukha Secondary School also faced a difficult choice; either take a long detour to reach school or risk crossing the river directly.

Now, a suspension bridge has been constructed to connect Chhaldi Tari and Palukha in Isma Rural Municipality–2. Built through the Road Infrastructure Development Office in Tamghas, the 146-metre-long bridge aims to make daily travel safer and more convenient for both residents and students.

The construction contract was awarded to Aastha Samjhana JV, Arghakhanchi, for Rs. 17.18 million. The contractor had agreed to complete the work by August 19, 2025, but the bridge was finished five months ahead of schedule, delighting the local community.

During the rainy season, rising water levels posed serious risks for residents, especially children, the elderly, the sick, and students. Without the bridge, students were sometimes prevented from attending school.

"Students used to cross the river reluctantly to reach school, and locals struggled to transport goods across safely. We are pleased the bridge was completed before the monsoon," said Ram Prasad Ghimire, a local resident of Isma Rural Municipality–2.

The newly built bridge is located right at the entrance of Palukha Secondary School, bringing the most joy to students and teachers. According to the school principal, Baburam Khatri, the bridge has removed the long-standing hardship that students and staff faced during heavy rainfall.

The bridge will also benefit students from nearby villages such as Sirpu, Rale, Tarai, Hulake, Gharti Phant, and Guruwa. Currently, Palukha Secondary School has 351 students.

Call for urgent action against girls' violence

BY PRAKASH BIKRAM SHAH
Dhangadhi, Mar. 20

The delegation, led by forum Coordinator Lalita Sunar, included Provincial Assembly members Akkal Bahadur Rawal, Shiva Singh Oli, Indira Giri and Janaki Kunwar.

The Parliamentary Forum for Child Rights in Sudurpashchim Province has expressed serious concern over the recent rise in rape, murder and sexual exploitation of girls and young women.

In a memorandum submitted to the Minister for Internal Affairs and Law of Sudurpashchim Province, Hira Sarki, on Thursday, the forum highlighted that terrible crimes across Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces have left communities living in fear.

The forum drew attention to the recent gang rape of 16-year-old Inisha BK in Surkhet.

The memorandum warns that such violence is causing deep psychological and social trauma to women and children.

It also called on the state to take "effective steps" to curb these crimes, demanding maximum legal penalties for perpetrators.

It also asked swift justice and fair compensation for victims and their families, protection of rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Nepal and international human rights treaties.

The delegation, led by forum Coordinator Lalita Sunar, included Provincial Assembly members Akkal Bahadur Rawal, Shiva Singh Oli, Indira Giri and Janaki Kunwar.

Upon receiving the document, Minister Sarki stressed that ending the cycle of violence requires a unified effort. "Cooperation between the government and society is essential to eliminate these acts of rape, murder and exploitation," he stated.

Ambassador hosts send-off reception for Japanese scholarship students

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

The Government of Japan offers this scholarship to international students seeking higher education opportunities in Japan, including undergraduate and research programmes, as well as specialized training and teacher training courses.

Maeda Toru, Ambassador of Japan, hosted a send-off reception at his residence for Nepali students who will pursue their studies in Japan under the Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship, provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan.

The Government of Japan offers this scholarship to international students seeking higher education opportunities in Japan, including undergraduate and research programmes, as well as specialized training and teacher training courses.

Japan began selecting Nepali students for this scholarship in 1957, just one year after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. This spring, a total of six Nepali students, five research students and one undergraduate student, will depart for Japan to strengthen their academic pursuits.

On the occasion, Ambassador Maeda congratulated the selected students and encouraged them to make the most of the excellent academic environment in Japan. He also urged them to go beyond their studies, experience different aspects of Japanese culture, and build meaningful friendships. He expressed his confidence that the knowledge and experiences they gain will enable them to contribute to Nepal's development and strengthen the longstanding ties between Japan and Nepal.

Dr. Pawan K. Bhattarai, President of the Japanese Universities Alumni Association, Nepal (JUAAN), also shared valuable insights with the students, drawing from his own experiences of studying and living in Japan.

Schools closed in Duduwa ahead of predicted strong storm

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Nepalgunj, Mar. 20



PHOTO: SIRAJ KHAN

Duduwa Rural Municipality closed schools in anticipation of strong winds.

Duduwa Rural Municipality in Banke has declared a public holiday for all schools on Friday in anticipation of strong winds and storms.

The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) issued a warning forecasting heavy winds accompanied by thunder, lightning, and rainfall from Friday through Saturday morning. Prioritising the safety of children, the municipality decided to close all schools for the day.

Narendra Chaudhary, Chief of the Rural Municipality, warned of potential risks including falling trees, damage to weak structures and rooftops, and disruptions to electricity and communications. He urged everyone to remain cautious.

According to the weather Department, strong winds are expected across districts in Lumbini and Koshi Provinces, with gusts reaching up to 119 km/h in the Tarai regions around Nepalgunj and Dang. The municipality has also issued a public notice advising residents to stay alert in view of the likely severe weather.

Similarly, Kohalpur Municipality has urged residents to take precautions. During the storm, the public is advised to avoid weak structures, tall trees, telephone and electricity poles, and wires, to refrain from touching downed power lines, to switch off electrical equipment, and to avoid high-risk areas, said Kohalpur Chief of Municipal Police, Bir Bahadur Thapa.

Banke Disaster Management has also urged vigilance, stating that all preparations have been completed and authorities remain on high alert to protect residents from potential hazards.

Muslim community distributes new clothes to inmates on Eid

BY SIRAJ KHAN
Nepalgunj, Mar. 20



PHOTO: TRN

New clothes for prison inmates being handed over to the prison management.

On the occasion of Eid, the great festival of the Muslim community, new clothes have been distributed to inmates in Naubasta and Nepalgunj prisons in Banke by the Muslim community of Banke.

As Eid falls on Saturday, the Nepalgunj Muslim Society, Banke, distributed new clothes as Eid gifts to fasting prisoners in Naubasta Prison in Kohalpur and Nepalgunj Prison on the eve of the festival, said Abdul Hakim Halwai, president of the society.

He said that a total of 54 inmates, 39 from Naubasta Prison and 15 from Nepalgunj Prison, received new clothes to wear on Eid.

The society's senior advisor and former president, Munna Mansuri, said that the clothes were handed over to the prison management at both locations for distribution to the prisoners.

Earlier last week, the society had also distributed various food items for the fasting month of Ramadan to prisoners in Naubasta and Nepalgunj prisons.

Meraj Ahmed Himalaya, secretary and spokesperson for the Muslim Society Banke, said that the prisoners were provided with new clothes to ensure that everyone could experience the joy of Eid equally.

Vice-President of the society, Firoz Warsi, and others were also present on the occasion.

Similarly, the Nepalgunj Muslim Society, Banke, has extended its warmest wishes and congratulations to all citizens on the occasion of the great festival of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The festival of Eid will be celebrated on Saturday across Nepal. A collective prayer will be offered at the Eidgah in Nepalgunj at 8 a.m., according to the Nepalgunj Jama Masjid and Eidgah Management Committee.

SAPTARI POLICE PROBE CHILD ABUSE CASE

BY SUDHA DEO
Bhardaha (Saptari), Mar. 20

Saptari police have launched an investigation following allegations that a 14-year-old girl, who worked as a domestic worker, was impregnated and later forced to undergo an abortion.

The victim, from Laxmipur in Surunga Municipality-3, had reportedly been working as a child labourer in the home of local Maheshwar Yadav for the past eight years.

A formal complaint has been filed at the Kadarabona Area Police Office, alleging that after the girl became pregnant, she was forced to terminate the pregnancy and has since been moved to an unknown location.

The complaint, filed by the girl's sister-in-law, said that the family only recently discovered the pregnancy. When they asked the homeowner, Yadav denied any knowledge of the matter. However, neighbours have alleged that the suspects took the girl to a secret location to perform an abortion.

The victim's family is calling for a full investigation into Yadav, his family members and any other individuals involved. Despite the filing of the report, police have yet to locate the girl or the suspects. Officers who visited the Yadav's residence found the property empty.

Saptari Police Spokesperson, DSP Damber Bahadur Puri, said that while there were reports that the girl had been taken by an individual identified as Ashiya Devi (a relative from Surunga-4), both remain missing.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

The greatest wealth is to live content with little.
-Plato

Lawful Power Of State Key To Public Order



Dev Raj Dahal

The use of the state's lawful authority is central to the evolution of a reasonable public order in society. It coordinates the functions of many institutions and authorities created to serve people and protect them from harming each other. Its lawful monopoly on power is vital to create security, execute the constitution, avert anomies, provide public goods and keep social cohesion and peace. But when its institutions lose core power, it cannot stop the state of nature or private violence, raise taxes to finance its own capabilities to use national self-determination in politics, leadership and public policies, regulate public and private sectors, serve public interests to rally the loyalties of people and gain international recognition of its sovereignty.

Polity can release the potential for national cohesion only if the state can consolidate its institutions; stabilise politics through the people's fair representation in civic bodies, build trust in rule and distribute power, resources, rights and identities in a tuneful way. The Nepali state and people are tied by mutual expectations and duties to each other. The shifting paradigm of the state from patronage to entitlements entails post-feudal and post-bureaucratic statecraft. The onset of democracy in Nepal has followed effective pluralisation of state power. Political leaders had weathered the coordinating capacity of countervailing societal power of political parties, civil society, business, interest groups, the deep state and global regimes and brought them under a rule-based public order.

Shared policy space

These horizontal non-state entities have shared policy space with the Nepali state under the banner of countless planning meetings but failed to assume mutual accountability for policy failure. Ideologically, these forces are more integrated into the international system to counterbalance the Nepali state and people than into the national culture, needs and context of the people. Globalisation has further eroded the Nepali state's sovereignty from above and skewed its constitutional outreach, thus forcing it to accept several conditions. It has distorted the social, economic and cultural priorities of the Nepali welfare state. Realisation of all 31 constitutional rights of the people and their four duties remains tough.

The state is overburdened by international human rights, environmental and legal obligations and lacks matching resources to meet them and spur economic diplomacy by reducing external dependence. Nepal, as a rentier state, is financially dependent on the global capital market for its survival and its planners seem unable to invent apt development policies. It is destined to accept many external prescriptions, including the ideology of the Washington Consensus that converted its economy from a production to a consumption model. The capital expenditure for development is around 20 per cent. Tax breaks for the corporate elites, while there is no such bonus for the production sector. This has converted it into a subsidiary state where the poor subsidise the comfort of elites. To be sure, business is neither above the constitution nor the people. Its exclusive profit motive collides with corporate ethics and constitutional vision.

The nation's bleak economic basics, except in the areas of hydropower, IT and remittance, cannot fetch macro-economic stability vital for structural reforms in agriculture, industry, commerce, service, finance, technology and governance. Nepali civil society, NGOs and professional groups do not claim the state for welfare functions but become congruent with global regimes' incentives and policies. Workers' remittance contributes 28 per cent to national income, which is bigger than the income from tourism, foreign aid, FDI and the share of capital. Similarly, the flow of development cooperation has not set free the forces of production. As the Nepali government joined the global race to reinvent the state in a minimalist image against the liberal spirit of the constitution, it was supposed that people themselves are responsible for their well-being.

The state eschewed an interventionist role in the real economy and veered to the symbolic economy. As a result, people's sovereignty as spelt out in the constitution has become hard to realise. Its multi-level governance is facing not only a resource crunch to expedite progress but also corruption, irregularity and unsettled accounts. Stabilisation of society and linking it with the state's imperative to keep security, discipline and public order linger. Resolution of these problems is vital to enable people to constructively engage in their personal and collective pursuits. Subsidy cuts in agriculture and reckless privatisation of all import-substituting state industries weakened the social role of the state.

Attentively, the regime leveraged youths in the global job markets to bring more remittances and fund the swollen size of political classes. Neoliberal reading of farewell to Nepali state trimmed its autonomy, capacity, strength and embeddedness and unleashed conflict boom, thus weakening its capabilities to promote the core state functions (security, rule of law, adjudication, health, education and infrastructure development) and wellbeing of people as a part of social contract. The soft power of culture, spirituality and social spirit of people is holding the unity of the Nepali state and society against the centrifugal bent of ideological zealots and pre-modern and postmodern forces.

The central question about which strategy is suitable and most appropriate to rebuild the state and complete the peacebuilding with full execution of transitional justice remained vague. The temptation of political leaders for a shortcut way to political power left the tasks of institutional integrity of the state in a lurch. It has fostered insidious factionalism, fragmentation of power and social resistance of youth against the stabilisation of client networks for the realisation of their demands for power, resource and representation. Client groups waltz around individual leaders and discourage the institutionalisation of political parties as modern engines of democracy.

> Impersonal state institutions are therefore important to implement a legitimate monopoly of power and set an edifice of a unitary legal order for social modernisation

Strong interest groups exist both within Nepali political parties and outside whose interest is to seek rent by any means. Lack of inner-party democracy has reduced the size of mainstream parties. Similarly, their pre-modern political solidarities and various national inclusive commissions lost their utility. New parties seek to define the Nepali state based on national culture, land, labour and citizenship. As the economic strength of the state withered due to inapt policies, the regime had formulated many non-implantable laws and increased entitlements to Nepalis, which are unaffordable, while its performance remained sclerotic. Frequent change of governments and shifting coalition partners had made the government unsteady, weak and drifting.

In a nation where the structures and constitutional bodies are largely partisan, recruiting party-affiliated transactional leaders and authorities who hardly act impersonally in the public and national interests and muster the public trust in rule. It has lingered the traits of the ancien regime, thus carrying the peril of perpetuating patronage and provoking the fury of the youth for a political jolt, a gear change for hewing a new path. Only a functional democracy is capable of supporting the state to keep a balance between partisan and public goods for the maintenance of lawful public order. It defends the reasons of the state and its ability to execute the constitution and resolve conflict through negotiation and compromise, not the negation of rivals that Nepali parties and various regimes have followed against their rivals.

Now, youths have learned how the politics of negation pays off. Democracy respects legitimate dissent to keep its dynamic, while negation fosters a political culture of division between them and us, not as co-citizens of the common state. The state can retain the lawful monopoly on power if its leaders and people reclaim the state for the welfare of the masses. Impersonal state institutions are therefore important to implement a legitimate monopoly of power and set an edifice of a unitary legal order for social modernisation. When politics is influenced from behind the scenes, and many grand scams and destruction remain veiled, it is a worrying secret for the Nepali state to keep its integrity and capacity.

Political order polarises and unravels if political parties do not find common ground on national issues but only blame each other to flog democratic duties and responsibilities. Political dysfunction has occurred where each political party, in a struggle for a monopoly on power, stifled the creative opinion and ideas flowing from the other side and constantly outmaneuvered to preserve its own advantage by any means. It does not contribute to building a modern state and balance the power of the state and society in a fair equilibrium.

This means new Nepali political leaders have to tackle the future of generational divide and also the past's human rights abuses to shape a new era of equity, order and peace. This can liberate the state from the capture of the powerful and cultivate the peaceable conduct of all in private and public affairs. The size and scope of the state do not matter so long as it performs constitutional duties, contributes to the civilised life of Nepalis and creates self-corrective mechanisms of society, economy and polity to save the polity from the ferocity of the sub-system's instrumental gamble. Nepali state institutions have organised the society and endlessly lubricated the stability of the life of its nature, culture and elements of sovereignty.

The elite's revolt against the state's ability to stabilise the security situation and create law and order has tormented its democracy. Nepali welfare state stagnates under its own weight of inflated promises if leadership does not build institutional capacity for a productive economy, restore all illicitly privatised industries, stop subsidising the sprawling elites, support people and internalise innovation, problem-solving and adaptability to the competitive spirit of geopolitics. Bringing the Nepali state back to society from neo-liberal globalization of capital, labour, youths and professionals is vital to ensure the accountability of politics to govern.

Trilemma

When so many spoils have trickled up, the Nepali state continues to face a trilemma among the need to assert national self-determination entailed by democracy and popular sovereignty, elites' interests in the monopoly of power, position and resources that also control democratic institutions and the spree of reckless globalisation that entails the consistency of the state to new technology, economy, regimes and laws. The resolution of this trilemma is vital so that it does not fade the ecological, social, economic and political bases of the state's sovereignty.

Leaders have to rethink how their ineptitude to know the anatomy of the state and subordinating it to polity, government and political parties has damaged its cohesive elements to penetrate society, keep public order and provide essential public goods essential to draw their loyalties in a robust and resilient way. It is important in Nepal to educate the policy and decision makers to know institutional distinctions and their vital roles in nation-building so that institutional and policy capture does not occur and their functions and services to people spur impartiality.

(Former Reader at the Department of Political Science, TU, Dahal writes on political and social issues.)

Price Of Happiness

DIMITRIOS TSATIRIS

If you could grant your loved ones a single wish, what would it be? My wish is for my loved ones to be happy. On the surface, this sounds cliché. Most people associate happiness with a feeling that comes and goes. Why would I bestow on them such a fleeting favour?

In reality, I wish something deeper for my loved ones. I want them to feel fulfilled with the trajectory of their lives. I want them to discover who they are and what they stand for. I hope they derive meaning from the pursuit of goals aligned with their values. When using the term happiness, I am not referring to a feeling. Rather, I am speaking of the concept of eudaimonia. Coined by Aristotle, eudaimonia represents an enduring sense of fulfillment stemming from living a meaningful life. Meaning is derived from knowing who you are and pursuing goals that are aligned with your values.

In the words of Aristotle: "Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and the end of human existence." When viewed from this perspective, my wish for happiness obtains deeper significance. The question then becomes, how do we find happiness? In search of an answer, we look at society for clues. According to popular narrative, happiness is found in the pursuit of money, fame, power, and success. In other words, become a high-income professional, make a boatload of money, climb the professional ranks, and accumulate a bunch of Instagram followers.

The pursuit of status symbols does not lead to happiness. Take money as an example. Yes, making money solves many life problems. I come from humble beginnings and understand the value of a dollar. However, after a certain point, making more money does not increase happiness. A study of millionaires supports this point. It found that the majority believed they needed more money to increase their level of happiness. This pattern even held for decamillionaires! Yes, the majority of people with a net worth of at least $10 million believed they needed more money to increase their level of happiness.

The same holds for professional success. When I was younger, I believed that becoming a physician would unlock the code to happiness. Little did I know about the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and burnout plaguing physicians. A survey of 7,643 physicians, published in 2025, found that 45.2 percent of physicians were burned out. These findings are not limited to physicians. A look at other professional groups reveals similar trends. According to a national survey of 12,825 licensed attorneys, 21 percent engaged in problematic drinking and 28 percent experienced symptoms of depression. According to a 2021 survey of dentists, 54 percent were found to be at medium or high risk for depression.

Perhaps you believe that buying your dream car or house will make you happy. If this is the case, let me spare you the disappointment. Your sense of satisfaction will fade away along with the shine of your new possession. You are more likely to struggle with envy the moment you notice someone parking their fancier car at their bigger home. The question remains: where do you turn to find happiness? If you want to find happiness, the enduring kind that Aristotle refers to, then you need to pay a price. First, you have to consistently work towards it. Happiness does not come naturally for most of us because, from an evolutionary perspective, the job of your brain is not to make you happy. Its job is to help you survive by keeping you dissatisfied. A sense of dissatisfaction promotes survival. For our ancestors who lived in precarious times, a scarcity mentality motivated them to accumulate resources to endure barren periods.

Practicing mindfulness and gratitude can help counterbalance your brain's evolutionary tendency to focus on the worst-case scenario. Such practices can help you be more present and appreciate blessings in your daily life instead of being dependent on achieving a future goal for happiness. In addition, invest your time and energy in improving the quality of your relationships. According to the longest-running study on happiness, good quality relationships keep us healthier and happier. Don't make the mistake of sacrificing your loved ones in pursuit of status symbols. This trade-off will leave you feeling empty and riddled with regrets.

Finally, you are more likely to find happiness if you embrace life's pain points. People often assume that happiness is devoid of suffering. This is not true. You cannot experience happiness without an accompanying pain point. Thinking about some of your most joyful life milestones will illustrate this point. The dream house or car you purchased has come with frustrations due to requiring unexpected repairs. The person you fell in love with and have married is the one you have had arguments with. The children you are raising are a source of worry at night. Happiness cannot be separated from pain. Recalibrate your expectations by having a more realistic perspective of what happiness truly represents.

-Psychology Today

Ready To Share Development Dividends



Zhang Maoming, Ph.D.

The 14th National People's Congress recently concluded its fourth session in Beijing, reviewing and approving the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) for National Economic and Social Development. The Outline sets 20 key targets for the next five years, including targets for GDP growth, the urbanisation rate, the growth rate of research and development spending across society, the growth of per capita disposable income, and the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP.

It proposes 109 major projects across six areas: fostering new, high-quality productive forces; building a modern infrastructure system; promoting integrated urban and rural development; ensuring and improving people's well-being; advancing the green and low-carbon transition; and safeguarding key areas. Together, these elements paint a magnificent picture of Chinese modernisation in the next five years. During the 15th Five-Year Plan period, China will be a country of comprehensively deepening reform. China will continue to refine systems for property rights protection, market access, information disclosure, social credit, mergers and reorganisations, and market exit.

Orderly market system

China will break down local protectionism and market segmentation, and work to build a unified, open, competitive, and orderly market system, accelerating the creation of a unified national market. China will leverage the leading role of economic structural reform, adhere to the principle of combining an efficient market with a well-functioning government, strengthen coordination between fiscal and monetary policies, reinforce both counter-cyclical and cross-cyclical adjustments, and implement more proactive macro policies. These efforts aim to ensure that personal income grows in step with economic growth, and that labor remuneration rises in tandem with productivity.

Through comprehensively deepening reform, China will steer high-quality development and set a fine example of shared development and common prosperity. During the 15th Five-Year Plan period, China will be an even more connected and opening-up country. China will accelerate high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, deepen collaboration on key economic corridors and pivotal ports, and ensure the smooth flow of multiple connectivity pathways across land, sea, air, and cyberspace. China will promote the orderly expansion of opening up in sectors such as telecommunications, the internet, education, culture, and health-care.

China will continue to successfully host major expositions, including the China International Import Expo, the China Import and Export Fair, and the China International Fair for Trade in Services; and develop the Hainan Free Trade Port to high standards, enhancing the quality and efficiency of foreign trade, and actively expanding high-standard opening up. China will channel foreign investment into the areas such as advanced manufacturing, modern services, high technology, energy conservation, and environmental protection.

China will encourage foreign-invested enterprises to participate in industrial collaboration and support the rational and orderly cross-border deployment of industrial and supply chains. With an open mind as vast as the ocean, China will strengthen connectivity with the world, share its mega-market, and deepen global industrial and supply chain integration. During the 15th Five-Year Plan period, China will be a country of sustained innovation and development. China will

> As a friendly neighbour linked by mountains and rivers, China welcomes Nepal to share the development opportunities during the 15th Five-Year Plan.

CHINA'S 15TH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

implement strategic deployments in science and technology, focusing on AI, quantum technology, biotechnology, and new energy.

R&D spending across society will maintain an average annual growth rate of over 7 per cent, securing decisive breakthroughs in core technologies in key areas, and producing a number of major, original, and leading scientific and technological achievements. China will further advance the Digital China initiative, fully implement the "AI +" action plan, promote the deep integration of the digital economy with the real economy, and enhance the digital and intelligent level of government governance.

China will also foster a new paradigm for high-level scientific and technological opening-up and cooperation, build an open innovation ecosystem with global competitiveness, and support joint efforts with scientists and researchers worldwide to tackle fundamental and cutting-edge scientific questions, co-advancing global technological innovation. China will be a consistently stable and orderly country. It will continue to promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, advocate an equal and orderly multipolar world, and champion a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation, remaining a constructive force and serving as an anchor of stability in a world full of uncertainties.

China will firmly support developing countries in safeguarding their national sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, will uphold the international rule of law, fairness, and justice, will oppose all unilateral acts, power politics and bullying, and push for a ceasefire and end hostilities, easing geopolitical tensions, and safeguarding world peace and stability. China will steadfastly uphold a fair and open international economic and trade order, oppose the indiscriminate imposition of tariffs and acts of decoupling and severing supply chains, firmly support trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, and work to maintain the stability of international energy prices and keep global industrial and supply chains unhindered.

New opportunities

Nepal successfully held the election of the House of Representatives, and a new government will be formed soon, bringing new opportunities for the country's development. Nepali people aspire deeply to unlock growth potential through reform, share opportunities for cooperation through connectivity, achieve leapfrog development through innovation, and create a predictable internal and external environment through stability. As a friendly neighbour linked by mountains and rivers, China welcomes Nepal to share the development opportunities during the 15th Five-Year Plan.

China stands ready to enhance experience exchanges on governance, jointly advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, expand mutually beneficial cooperation in trade, investment, and infrastructure connectivity, continuously deepening the China-Nepal Strategic Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship for Development and Prosperity, and jointly building a China-Nepal community with a shared future.

(The author is the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Nepal.)

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

March 21, 1976

62 Land Cases Disposed Off

Kathmandu, March 20: A team sent to settle cases concerning land in different villages of the Panchayats of Kathmandu district has so far disposed off 62 cases, reports RSS.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

TRN welcomes articles, letters and comments from our valued readers and contributors.
Please email your contributions to:
trnfeatures@gmail.com
trnfeatures@hotmail.com
Or send them to
P.O. Box 23, Kathmandu, Nepal

READER'S MAIL

Impart Practical Skills To Youths

In Nepal, a growing concern is emerging regarding the frustration experienced by educated youth. Despite completing higher secondary education and university degrees, many young citizens face limited employment opportunities and uncertainty about their future. A major reason for this is the gap between academic learning and practical skills demanded in the workplace.

While students often acquire strong theoretical knowledge, opportunities to gain hands-on experience remain limited. Labs, internships, projects, and skill-based workshops are often insufficient or missing altogether. As a result, graduates frequently struggle to meet the expectations of employers, leading to underemployment or unemployment. This mismatch not only frustrates young citizens but also limits their potential contributions to the nation's development.

The slow pace of economic growth and inadequate job creation further aggravate the situation. Many graduates feel compelled to seek education or employment abroad, reflecting both a desire for better opportunities and concern over prospects within the country. If this trend continues, Nepal risks losing a significant portion of its educated human resources, which are essential for sustainable development.

Policymakers and educational institutions must prioritise practical learning alongside theory. Integrating internships, laboratory work, and project-based learning into the curriculum can equip students with skills directly applicable to jobs. Promoting entrepreneurship and vocational training can further bridge the gap between education and employment. By preparing youth to face real-world challenges, Nepal can reduce frustration among educated citizens and harness their potential to drive economic and social development.

Aarya Yonjan
Kathmandu

TAILPIECE

A blonde with two red ears went to her doctor. The doctor asked her what had happened to her ears and she answered, "I was ironing a shirt and the phone rang - but instead of picking up the phone, I accidentally picked up the iron and stuck it to my ear." "Oh Dear!" the doctor exclaimed in disbelief. "But, what happened to your other ear?" "The jerk called back!"

+++

Jennifer watched as the cashier rang up her purchases. "Cash, check or charge?" she asked, after folding the items Jennifer had bought. As Jennifer fumbled for her wallet, the cashier noticed a remote control for a television set in her purse.

"Do you always carry your TV remote with you?" the cashier inquired. "No," she replied. "But my husband, Jeff, refused to come shopping with me, so I figured this was the most evil thing I could do to him."

Iran hits Kuwaiti oil refinery

AP
Dubai, Mar. 20



PHOTO: AP

A general view of Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery in Kuwait.

A Kuwaiti oil refinery came under Iranian drone attack early Friday and sirens in Israel warned of incoming fire, while explosions boomed over Tehran from Israeli strikes as the country marked the Persian New Year.

The war that has rocked the global economy neared the end of its third week with Iran showing no signs of letting up on its attacks on Gulf region energy structure.

Kuwait said two waves of drone strikes at its Mina Al-Ahmadi oil refinery sparked a fire and crews were working to control the blaze.

The refinery, which can process some 730,000 barrels of oil per day, was already damaged Thursday in another Iranian attack. It is one of three oil refineries in Kuwait, a tiny, oil-rich nation on the Persian Gulf.

Iran stepped up its attacks on energy sites in Gulf Arab states after Israel on Wednesday bombed Iran's massive South Pars offshore natural gas field in the Persian Gulf.

Loud explosions could also be heard in Jerusalem after the Israeli army warned of incoming Iranian missiles.

In a rare statement, the country's new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei said Iran's enemies need to have their "security" taken away. Khamenei hasn't been seen since he succeeded his father, the 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike on the first day of the war.

His remarks came in a statement issued on his behalf and sent to President Masoud Pezeshkian, after Israel killed Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib earlier this week.

Heavy explosions shook Dubai as air defenses intercepted early incoming fire over the city, where people were observing Eid al-Fitr, the end of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, and mosques made the day's first call to prayers.

Bahrain's Interior Ministry said a fire broke out after shrapnel from an intercepted projectile landed on a warehouse, and Saudi Arabia reported shooting down multiple drones targeting its oil-rich Eastern Province.

The renewed attacks came after an intense day that saw Iran hit energy infrastructure around the region and launch more than a dozen missile salvos at Israel following the attack on South Pars.

South Pars, the Iranian part of the world's largest gas field, is located offshore in the Persian Gulf and owned jointly with Qatar. With some 80% of power generated in Iran coming from natural gas, the attack posed a direct threat to the country's electricity supplies.

Late Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the country would hold off on any further attacks on the gas field at the request of U.S. President Donald Trump after the Iranian response sent oil prices skyrocketing.

The Israeli prime minister also claimed Iran's capability to produce ballistic missiles had been taken out, but the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard insisted in comments released Friday that they were still in production.

"We are producing missiles even during war conditions, which is amazing, and there is no particular problem in stockpiling," spokesman Gen. Ali Mohammad Naeini was quoted as saying in Iran's state-run IRAN newspaper.

Naeini, who was killed early Friday in an airstrike, according to Iranian state television, said Iran had no intention of seeking a quick end to the war.

"These people expect the war to continue until the enemy is completely exhausted," he said. "This war must end when the shadow of war is lifted from the country."

Beyond Iran's attacks on its Gulf Arab neighbors, its stranglehold on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil and other critical goods are transported, has caused rising concerns of a global energy crisis.

War pressures mount on Ukraine amid Russian push

AP
Washington DC, Mar. 20

With U.S.-brokered Ukraine peace talks on hold due to the war in the Middle East, Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to try to expand his military gains via new offensives against his southern neighbor that could put even more pressure on Kyiv.

Windfall revenues from surging global oil prices are filling Moscow's war coffers and U.S. air defense assets are being drained quickly by Iranian attacks across the Gulf, raising concerns that little will be left available for Ukraine in the fifth year of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Ukraine's European allies have promised to maintain their steadfast support, but bickering over a major 90 billion euro ($106 billion) European Union loan to cover Kyiv's military and economic needs for two years has reflected the mounting challenges.

The refusal by NATO allies to commit naval assets to help restore tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has drawn an angry rebuke from President Donald Trump, highlighting another emerging fault line that is fraught with potential repercussions for Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has sought to hold Washington's attention by offering its expertise in defending against Iranian Shahed drones, sending over 200 military experts to the Gulf. Trump, however, has shrugged off Zelenskyy's offer of help, saying the U.S. doesn't need Kyiv's assistance.

As new signs of a rift emerge in Western alliances, Putin and his generals are pondering plans for the spring and summer campaign across more than the 1,200-kilometer (about 750-mile) front line.

The Russian military appears to be readying for a renewed push to claim the part of the eastern Donetsk region that remains under Ukraine's control, as well as possible offensives in several other sectors.

Analysts have observed that Moscow has been building up reserves and its operations are expected to gain tempo as the spring warmth dries the terrain.

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War has noted that Russian troops have stepped up artillery barrage and drone attacks, seeking to weaken Ukrainian defenses before ground attacks.

Ukraine has sought to derail the Kremlin's plans by launching counterattacks in the Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions, where Russian forces have sought to carve out bridgeheads with an aim to advance toward the regional capitals, which are key industrial hubs.

The ISW said in a recent battlefield assessment that Ukraine's successful retaliation in the Dnipropetrovsk region will likely continue to force Russia to "choose between defending against the Ukrainian counterattacks and allocating manpower and materiel for offensive operations elsewhere" on the front, possibly spoiling the anticipated Russian offensive.

Crown princess speaks on Epstein links

AP
Oslo, Mar. 20

Norway's crown princess said she was manipulated and deceived by the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, and felt unsafe during a 2013 encounter with the American financier at his Palm Beach, Florida, mansion.

Mette-Marit is married to Crown Prince Haakon, the heir to the throne. She and Haakon spoke Thursday to Norwegian broadcaster NRK in a 20-minute interview that occurred the same day the criminal trial against her son, Marius Borg Høiby, concluded.

Prosecutors have sought a prison sentence of seven years and seven months for the charges against Høiby, who denies the rape allegations. He is Mette-Marit's son from a previous relationship. A verdict is expected in early June.

Thursday's NRK interview did not contain any explosive revelations but marked the first time the royal couple has sat down with reporters to address the fallout over the crown princess' ties to Epstein.

Their relationship has raised questions over her judgment, though she is not accused of any wrongdoing. The interview was time-limited due to Mette-Marit's health; she has pulmonary fibrosis, which causes serious breathing problems.

Mette-Marit has previously apologized for the situation she put the royal family in. She first met the financier in 2011 and their contact continued into 2014. The Epstein files contained several hundred mentions of the crown princess, who said in 2019 she regretted having had contact with him.

Epstein killed himself in 2019 while awaiting trial on charges that he sexually abused underage girls at his homes in the U.S. Mette-Marit told NRK she didn't know he was a sex offender and abuser, she only saw him interact with adults and never witnessed anything illegal.

She also told NRK she feels a sense of guilt for Epstein's victims and has spent years processing their relationship and the allegations against him. She said she takes responsibility for not researching his background thoroughly.

The Epstein files include email exchanges between the two, and showed a relationship that some perceived as a close friendship. In one message, Mette-Marit wrote to Epstein, "you tickle my brain."

In October 2012, Epstein wrote that he was in Paris "on my wife hunt." Mette-Marit replied that Paris was "good for adultery" but "Scandis" were "better wife material."

Somaliland centre rescues cheetahs from trafficking

AFP
Hargeisa, Mar. 20



PHOTO: AFP

The long, slender, spotted felines yawn, stretch, and purr loudly as the staff approach the vast, highly protected complex run by Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in the Geed-Deeble savannah of Somaliland.

The 127 cheetahs living in a Somaliland sanctuary were all torn away from their mothers to be kept as pets in the Gulf, survivors of a trade that threatens the very survival of the species.

The long, slender, spotted felines yawn, stretch, and purr loudly as the staff approach the vast, highly protected complex run by Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in the Geed-Deeble savannah of Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia. There are just 600 cheetahs estimated to be living in the Horn of Africa -- out of some 7,000 living in the wild worldwide -- meaning the NGO supports a sizeable percentage of the population.

Cheetahs are considered "critically endangered" across Africa, except in its southern region where they are most abundant, by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. "Boys, come say hello!" calls director Chris Wade to the youngest cheetahs, their hair still shaggy on their heads as they run towards him across a large enclosure.

Eight arrived at CCF together "in a horrible state, dehydrated, riddled with parasites," said Wade. They were part of a group of 11 cubs rescued last year by Somaliland authorities from a smuggling boat. "We put them in intensive care, but three of them died in three days," he said with a sigh.

Many are captured in Somaliland or neighbouring Ethiopia before being transported to Yemen via the Gulf of Aden, and then on to Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The villagers who grab the animals get $50 to $100. The final price is $15,000 to $20,000, said Wade.

Admiral Ahmed Hurre Hariye, commander of the Somaliland coastguard, said they intercepted the boat with the 11 cubs on board thanks to an intelligence tip-off, and showed AFP a video of the cheetahs being found in the shallow hold.

The Emirates passed a law in 2016 criminalising possession and trade of dangerous animals, as did Saudi Arabia in 2022. "But I'm seeing new cheetahs popping up on Facebook accounts and posts," animal trafficking expert Daniel Stiles told AFP.

"At least in UAE, some cheetahs are still coming in," he said. For every cheetah cub that reaches its destination, four or five die en route, said Laurie Marker, founder of CCF.

PRISM

Pakistani man performs 66 thumb pushups in one minute

Islamabad: A Pakistani athlete broke the same Guinness World Record for a third time by performing 66 thumb pushups with one leg raised in one minute.

Muhammad Arshad, who has broken more than 14 Guinness World Records for feats of athleticism, earned the title for the most thumb push-ups with one leg raised in one minute for a third time in May 2025, the record-keeping organization said.

"Thumb push-ups are one of the most difficult and rare exercises, requiring exceptional strength, balance and mental toughness," Arshad told Guinness World Records. "This uniqueness is what drew me toward them."

He said keeping balanced on his thumbs with one leg bent at a 90-degree angle was one of the biggest challenges during training.

Live possum snuggles stuffed toys at airport store

Tasmania: Workers and travelers at an airport in Tasmania, Australia, had an unusual encounter when a live possum was found snuggling with stuffed toys inside a store.

Hobart Airport in Cambridge shared video on social media showing the possum relaxing with the plush toys on a shelf at the Lagardere AWPL store. Liam Bloomfield, multi-site manager for Lagardere AWPL, said staff members spotted the animal about 11:45 a.m. Wednesday.

"We found the possum sitting within the native plush," Bloomfield told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. "It looked like he was pretty comfortable with his friends there."

Bloomfield said the possum did not appear to be stressed, but it caused a stir when it climbed down from the shelf and went for a tour of the airport.

Agencies

India to unleash low-cost injections to fight obesity

AFP
Mumbai, Mar. 20



PHOTO: AFP

India's weight-loss drug sales are projected to soar to over half a billion by 2030.

A deluge of weight-loss drugs is set to transform the global fight against obesity as India prepares to unleash low-cost generic versions of injections like Ozempic after a key patent expired Friday.

The move will dramatically widen access to treatments that have long been considered a luxury, especially in middle-income countries, where soaring demand has collided with steep prices. At clinics across Mumbai, doctors say they are already preparing for an influx in new patients.

More than 50 people walk into endocrinologist Nadeem Rais's office every week seeking weight-loss injections. "We have around 70 to 80 patients on active treatment right now," he told AFP. "When generics come out and prices drop, that could go up to 200 easily."

His colleague Sunera Ghai agrees saying that demand is "very high" but many "probably aren't taking it just because it is truly a luxury item at this point".

By the end of 2026, core patents on semaglutide will have expired in 10 countries that represent 48 percent of the global obesity burden, according to a study published earlier this month by researchers. These include Brazil, China, South Africa, Turkey and Canada, the study said.

Launching soon

For India's drug giants, this marks the start of an aggressive new race. At least four major firms have already prepared generic semaglutide injections, regulatory filings and compliance documents viewed by AFP show.

Some, including Zydus Lifesciences, have announced "Day 1" launches, suggesting generic versions may become available as soon as this weekend in India. Research firm Pharmarack estimates the Indian market will soon be flooded with options.

"What we understand is, there will be more than 50 brands that will be launched in the market and there are more than 40 players who will be launching these drugs," Pharmarack's vice president Sheetal Sapale said.

The timing aligns with India's shifting health landscape.

While the country still accounts for a third of the world's undernutrition according to the World Health Organization (WHO), rising incomes and urban lifestyles have pushed obesity rates sharply upward.

Government data released March last year shows 24 percent of women and 23 percent of men are overweight or obese in India. "Once a person starts earning money, he becomes more sedentary here," says bariatric surgeon Sanjay Borude.

"While in first-world countries, the more the money, they become more active and devote time for their health, this is reversed in India." These flipped economics have worked well for big pharma players like Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk who have been cashing in on the market.

India's weight-loss drug sales have grown tenfold in five years to $153 million as of 2026, and are projected to soar to over half a billion by 2030. But using such drugs can cause side effects including nausea and gastrointestinal issues.

Eli Lilly's Mounjaro became the country's top-selling drug by value last year, surpassing even common antibiotics. Still, high prices -- often 15,000 to 22,000 rupees ($161–$236) a month -- limit access, says Swati Pradhan, who runs a weight-loss clinic in Mumbai.

She expects patient numbers to rise once generics push treatment costs closer to 5,000 rupees ($60) a month. The global impact may prove even more profound. India supplies more than half of Africa's generic medicines, and cheaper semaglutide could become a lifeline for countries where obesity is rising rapidly but treatment remains unaffordable.

"Lower-cost semaglutide could significantly expand access to effective treatment particularly in middle-income countries where price has been a major barrier," Simon Barquera, president of the World Obesity Federation, told AFP.

"Generic products are an important step in breaking the access barrier, now that the scientific one has been overcome." Indian firms will be a key driving force, with Dr Reddy's Laboratories aiming to launch its version of semaglutide in Canada by May 2026.

For patients like 46-year-old Sukant Mangal, who lost nearly 30 pounds in eight months, wider access could not come soon enough.

Many he knows simply abandoned treatment mid-way when they realised they would have to spend 20,000 rupees ($214) a month for seven to eight months. "Had it been cheaper, (it) would've been much easier to have it."

TODAY IN HISTORY

1919– The Hungarian Soviet Republic is established becoming the first Communist government to be formed in Europe after the October Revolution in Russia.

1921 – The New Economic Policy is implemented by the Bolshevik Party in response to the economic failure as a result of war communism.

1925 – Syngman Rhee is removed from office after being impeached as the President of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea.

1925 – Ravel's opera L'enfant et les sortilèges, to a libretto by Colette, is premiered at the Opéra de Monte-Carlo.

1928 – Charles Lindbergh is presented with the Medal of Honor for the first solo trans-Atlantic flight.

1934– The landmark Australian Eastern Mission led by John Latham departs on its three-month tour of East and South-East Asia.

EID-UL-FITR TODAY

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

Vice-President Ram Sahay Yadav has extended his heartfelt wishes for happiness, peace, prosperity, and good health to all Nepali Muslims at home and abroad on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. He expressed his hope that the festival would inspire a spirit of broader national unity.

Eid-ul-Fitr, celebrated following the discipline of Roza (fasting), self-restraint, and the devotion of Namaz (prayers), is a symbol of spiritual purity and advancement. This festival teaches the lessons of patience and self-control, said a press statement issued by Office of the Vice-President.

The traditions of Iftar and communal prayers strengthen the bonds of unity and coexistence within our country and communities, while the practice of charity fosters compassion for the poor and those in need, the Vice-President said.

Meanwhile, Muslims all over the country are celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr by exchanging greetings and best wishes and relishing delicacies on Saturday.

The festival marks the end of the month-long Ramadan fast.

The Muslim community of the Kathmandu Valley will celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, the great festival of peace and harmony, by organising various programmes on Saturday.

Eid-ul-Fitr will also be celebrated in different parts of Banke district with grand fairs and mass prayers wishing for peace and prosperity in the nation.

The formal programme of Eid-ul-Fitr will start with mass prayers at the Central Eidgah in Nepalgunj in the morning.

A large number of Muslim clerics, leaders, and members of the general public who will gather at the Eidgah for mass prayers will offer collective prayers for the country's peace, prosperity and unity.

Religious leaders will wish for peace, prosperity, and development in the country. They will say that Eid is a festival of peace and brotherhood and that it will help unite everyone.

After the Eid prayers, people will exchange greetings with each other by organising Eid unity programmes.

WOMAN VISITOR DIES IN RARA

BY HARI KRISHNA AIDI
Mugu, Mar. 20

A female tourist visiting the popular destination of Rara Lake has died.

According to Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Rabiraj Thapaliya of the District Police Office, Mugu, the deceased has been identified as 30-year-old Sadikshya Ghimire, a resident of Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

DSP Thapaliya said Ghimire died at around 7:25 am on Friday while undergoing treatment at the District Hospital, Mugu. She had arrived in Mugu on March 17 along with two companions for a visit to Rara.

The two accompanying individuals have been identified as Shishir Koirala and Bishal Subedi, both from Banke district, police said. The trio had been staying at a hotel in Salleri, in the Rara area.



PHOTO: SUJAN GURUNG/TRN

People walk under umbrellas amid rainfall in Kathmandu on Friday. The downpour, accompanied by strong winds, lightning and hailstorms, was caused by a westerly low-pressure system.

New HoR members to take oath on March 26

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

The Federal Parliament Secretariat has issued a formal notice calling on newly elected members of the House of Representatives to attend their oath-taking ceremony in Kathmandu.

According to the Secretariat, the oath ceremony will be conducted in accordance with Article 87 and Clause (5) of Article 91 of the Constitution of Nepal, as well as Section 75 of the House of Representatives Member Election Act, 2074. Members elected in the recent House of Representatives elections are required to be present at the designated venue ahead of the scheduled proceedings.

> The lawmakers are requested to bring their original and copy of their election certificate issued by the Election Commission.

The ceremony is set to take place at the multipurpose hall of the under-construction Federal Parliament Building in Singha Durbar on Thursday, March 26, beginning at 2:00 pm. Attendees have been instructed to arrive at least two hours prior to the event.

The lawmakers are requested to bring their original and copy of their election certificate issued by the Election Commission, a copy of their Nepali citizenship certificate, and two recent passport-sized photographs. They are also expected to attend the ceremony in formal attire or in a dress reflecting their cultural identity.

The notice further states that members wishing to take the oath in a mother tongue other than Nepali must submit a translated version of the oath, following the prescribed format under the law, at least three days before the ceremony, to the Secretariat.

In addition, District Administration Offices across the country have been asked to disseminate the information to elected representatives in their respective districts. The notice was issued by Padma Prasad Pandey, Secretary-General of the Federal Parliament Secretariat on Thursday evening.

Most parts of country receive rainfall

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

Parts of the country, including the Kathmandu Valley, saw light to moderate rainfall on Friday, accompanied by lightning and thunderstorms. Some areas also experienced hailstorms, which caused significant damage to crops and vegetation.

Barun Paudel, a senior meteorologist at the Meteorological Forecasting Division (MFD), stated that the current weather system is expected to clear by Sunday.

As the system moves eastwards, light to moderate rainfall, accompanied by lightning and thunderstorms, is likely to affect several eastern districts.

According to the DHM, several stations recorded significant rainfall during a three-hour window ending at 18:15 on Friday. Makawanpurgadhi registered the highest volume at 44.2mm, followed by Chisapanigadhi with 35.6mm. Other areas also saw substantial downpours, including Kirtipur (33.2mm), Bhorleni (29.8mm), and Besisahar (29.4mm).

Due to the heavy rainfall, high winds and hailstorm, flight operations in Kathmandu have been disrupted.

According to officials at Tribhuvan International Airport, a China Eastern flight arriving from Kunming was forced to divert to Kolkata, India, after being unable to land in the adverse conditions.

KATHMANDU DAO ISSUES FINAL NOTICE FOR GEN-Z PROTEST VICTIMS

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

The District Administration Office, Kathmandu, has issued a final notice for individuals injured during the Gen-Z protests, particularly those who missed earlier classification processes.

In a public notice on Friday, the administration stated that the classification of such injured individuals will be conducted for the last time on April 3, 2026.

According to Assistant Chief District Officer Mukti Ram Rijal, the decision aims to accommodate those who were unable to attend previous proceedings due to various reasons.

The administration has urged eligible individuals to appear at the District Administration Office, Kathmandu, by 12 noon on April 3 to take part in the classification process.

Applicants are required to bring original documents related to their treatment and medical examinations, along with their Gen-Z injured identity card. The injured individual must be present in person, stated the notice.

As per the administration, most of the injured have already been classified by a committee led by the Chief District Officer, in accordance with the "Procedure for Classification of Injured in Gen-Z Demonstrations, 2082".

The office clarified that the majority of classifications were completed earlier on November 21 and 28, 2025, and February 1, 2026.

NEPALIS STRANDED IN TRANSIT START LEAVING FOR DESTINATIONS

RSS
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

Nepali citizens were stranded at various transit points while travelling to their destinations following the unrest in West Asia. However, with recent easing of situation, they have begun continuing their journeys.

In the beginning, difficulties were reported from Doha, Dubai, Jeddah and Kuwait cities. Now, though limited, flights have resumed in Doha and Qatar and all the Nepalis who were stranded there have left for their respective destinations.

Fifty-two Hajj pilgrims, who were in troubles at Jeddah of Saudi Arabia, returned home on March 19. Similarly, 33 Nepali citizens have got their visa ensured to travel to Saudi Arabia from Kuwait City.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a press conference on Friday to share information about the latest developments in West Asia, and efforts made so far for the safety and support of Nepali citizens there.

Friday marks 21 days since the eruption of unrest in West Asia. Despite various efforts to thwart the unrest, drone and missile attacks targeting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations continue.

> Fifty-two Hajj pilgrims, who were in troubles at Jeddah of Saudi Arabia, returned home on March 19.

Ministry Spokesperson Lok Bahadur Chhetri said at the press meet that one Nepali was killed in the UAE in the attack, and 20 Nepalis have sustained minor injuries. Among the injured, all except one have been discharged. The one still in the hospital is, however, out of a life- threatening condition.

Besides these incidents, all the Nepali citizens residing in such areas are safe, it is said. Following the unrest in West Asia, the Ministry had formed an Emergency Response Team, comprising representatives from various bodies under the convenorship of the Ministry Secretary. The Team has already held its third meeting. The Emergency Control Room established at the Ministry is operating round-the-clock.

The number of Nepali citizens officially registered for necessary coordination and potential rescue from the region has reached 82,100 as of Friday.

Meanwhile, seven Nepalis have been arrested for creating and sharing content, including uploading videos and photos on social sites that could spread fear or panic. "It is the responsibility of everyone to abide by security protocols, and rules and regulations of the country where they are residing, and it applies during the crisis as well," Chhetri added.

In the given adversity, notices, advisories and directives issued for the public and others are legally binding, and any violation may result in fines, imprisonment, deportation and other severe legal consequences, he warned.

New parliament building...

As part of the visit, the ministers also took part in tree planting within the new Federal Parliament complex. Home Minister Om Prakash Aryal, Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Anil Kumar Sinha, Minister for Forests and Environment Madhav Prasad Chaulagain, Foreign Minister Balananda Sharma, Health and Population Minister Dr. Sudha Gautam, and Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens Shraddha Shrestha planted Rudraksha, Camphor, Juniper, and Samika saplings in the premises.

Himalayan ice melt...

The danger is magnified because three-quarters of the region's glaciers fall into this vulnerable size class. We are not just losing ice; we are facing a rapid escalation of risks," he said.

The HKH Glacier Outlook 2026 synthesises data from 38 monitored glaciers, revealing that widespread wastage has doubled post-2000, signalling that parts of the Himalayan cryosphere may be nearing critical tipping points toward irreversible retreat.

Yet, the reports highlighted a critical data gap -- of those 38, only seven meet the global benchmark monitoring standards of the World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS). Major glacierised regions including the Karakoram, Sikkim, Zanskar, and Bhutan remain largely unmonitored.

"We are trying to navigate a rapidly changing future with an incomplete map," said Mohd. Farooq Aslam, a cryosphere specialist at ICIMOD and one of the report's authors.

"Large parts of the Himalaya remain blind spots. Without expanding our monitoring networks and standardising methodologies, accelerated changes in water flows and cryosphere risks could remain undetected until the impacts are severe. Sustained monitoring of representative glaciers like Mera and Rikha Samba in Nepal, and Chhota Shigri in India, is critical, they are our early warning indicators for the entire mountain system."

The reports also highlighted that glacier losses are spatially skewed, with the highest percentage of area loss in the eastern Hengduan Shan Mountains, where some areas lost up to 33 per cent of their glacier area in just three decades. However, the largest absolute area losses are concentrated in the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra basins, where over 74 per cent of the region's glaciers are found, underlining their critical vulnerability.

The larger glaciers above 10 km² hold nearly 40 per cent of the region's natural water reserves. The heavily glaciated Karakoram range, home to 18 of the 25 largest glaciers, remains highly vulnerable to long-term water, food, and disaster risks with ramifications for the entire region.

With 2025 designated as the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation and the start of the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences (2025 to 2034), these findings serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for action.

NC to play constructive...

The party also acknowledged its failure to counter negative narratives regarding corruption, delays in public service delivery and the perception that little progress had been made in the country over decades. Additionally, it admitted that it could not effectively communicate its contributions to economic development, particularly the expansion of the private sector and infrastructure growth.

Economic anxieties among voters, including fears of instability similar to Sri Lanka's crisis and frustrations over unemployment and foreign migration, also played a role. The party recognised that it failed to inspire confidence in economic recovery or present a convincing vision for the future.

Despite the defeat, the Nepali Congress emphasised that its core political and economic principles—parliamentary democracy, federalism and a liberal economy with social justice—remain widely accepted across the political spectrum. It also stressed that the party retains organisational strength and renewed internal energy following leadership changes.

The Central Working Committee is scheduled to discuss the proposed rejection of the resignation of party president Gagan Thapa, by vice-president Sharma, who had offered to step down on moral grounds. The report argued that holding him solely responsible would be unjust, as the defeat was collective. It further stated that his leadership had only been in place for a short period following the special general convention, making it unreasonable to expect transformative electoral results so quickly. Instead, it argued that the greater moral responsibility at this stage was to stabilise the organisation, address weaknesses and guide it through a period of recovery.

The Nepali Congress has pledged to conduct a deeper review and restructure its organisation, aiming to rebuild public trust and adapt to evolving political and technological challenges. The committee meeting is scheduled to continue on Sunday at 8 AM to discuss these points. It is also set to announce the date for the 15th general convention.

Delay in disclosing...

The government's decision to keep the report confidential has only deepened suspicion.

"Young people are not merely asking for a report," said one campaigner. "We are asking for accountability and our right to know."

Prominent Gen Z activist Rijon Rana has accused the Prime Minister of failing to match promises of transparency with action. He warned that the commission must not become "another tool to weave conspiracy theories while keeping the truth hidden", urging the government to honour its commitments.

Rana also addressed newly elected representatives, many of whom rose to prominence through the same wave of public discontent. He reminded them of their responsibility to uphold transparency commitments made with the interim government and to ensure the report's recommendations are implemented.

Echoing similar sentiments, Rakshya Bam, coordinator of the Nepal Gen-Z Front, stressed that the sensitive nature of the events cannot justify secrecy. "These incidents are indeed sensitive," she said, "but that must not become an excuse to keep the truth away from the public."

For others, the delay evokes troubling memories. Activist Majid Ansari drew parallels with past commissions whose findings were never fully disclosed. "Will this report also be shelved like previous ones?" he asked, questioning whether justice for victims would once again be denied.

The human cost of the unrest remains a painful reality. Activist Tanuja Pandey spoke of losing friends during the protests and the lingering uncertainty surrounding their deaths. "Who is responsible?" she asked. "We are waiting, not just for days to pass, but for truth and justice."

On social media, youth like Sanken Rai have framed the issue not as a plea for justice, but as a demand for a fundamental right. Others, including Jasmin Ojha, have underscored a core democratic principle: that truth is not the state's private property, but the people's entitlement.

Even lighter remarks carry a serious undertone. Activist Amit Khanal quipped that citizens should at least be allowed to "prepare for an open-book test" if the report is eventually revealed, a reflection of both frustration and scepticism.

As pressure mounts, more young voices continue to join the call, insisting that the report must clarify both the state's actions and the political manoeuvring that followed the unrest.

Despite the Commission completing its work, the government has yet to show any urgency in making its findings public. "Our message is clear: no more secrecy, no more delay, the truth must come out," said activist Pandey.

Nepal Gen-Z...

During this demonstration, some injured protest leaders shouted slogans against Raksha Bam.

The Front stated that such mistreatment of protesters only weakens the movement.

"All participants in this movement, injured protesters, families of martyrs, activists, and leaders, are partners on the same journey. Disagreements and questions may arise, and pain can sometimes turn into anger. But the answers to these questions should be sought from the state, not from each other," the Front added.

"The state continues to withhold the truth, and the likelihood of the commission's report not being released is growing. In such a situation, assaults on individual protesters will further weaken the movement."

Karan Singh's humble beginning to film producer

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20



Karan Singh, who was born in Tansen, Palpa, was a great fan of Nepali films. He used to travel from Palpa to Butwal to watch film shoots.

The same Karan is now an experienced production executive of the booming Nepali film industry. He is also the executive producer of this year's most successful film, 'Aa Bata Aama'.

Karan began his career in 2001 with the film 'Yastai Rahechha Jindagi' as a production executive helper.

He was brought into the film industry by producer and actor Keshav Bhattarai. For that reason, he considers Bhattarai his godfather.

"After that, I worked as a helper in three to four films. From the age of 17, through the film 'Hami Sathi Bhai', Dilip Rayamajhi, Sunil Dutta Pandey and director Ravi Aryal trusted me and gave me the opportunity to work as a full production executive," he said.

So far, Karan has worked as a full production executive for 70 Nepali feature films, about 10 foreign films, and more than 300 music videos. He has demonstrated his capability as a full production executive in films such as 'Kasle Choryo Mero Man', 'Gorkha Paltan', 'Lutera', 'Kismat 2', and 'Hrashwo Deergha'.

In 2021, he worked as a line producer for the 'Mount Everest Fashion Runway' held in Everest Base Camp, through which he also received a certificate from the Guinness Book of World Records.

He made his debut as an executive producer with the film 'Mayavi', and later appeared as an executive producer in 'Aa Bata Aama'. The film 'Aa Bata Aama' is directed by Chandra Panta, and Karan has collaborated on most of his films.

"In my family background, no one was involved in the film industry. Neither family members nor relatives were connected to this field. I had an interest in films from the beginning. I entered this field while still studying," he said.

"Joining the film industry was a kind of imagination. When you pursue a profession that your heart truly desires, even failure feels like success. Having reached this point, I have an identity within the industry, and I am proud of this."

He also has experience in distributing the film 'Gorkha Paltan' across Nepal. While releasing the film, he watched it together with audiences in every cinema hall.

"I have also watched 'Mayavi' and 'Aa Bata Aama' sitting with the audience. If a film is made well and touches the hearts of viewers, it does not betray the audience, the producer, or the director," he said.

AKSHARAMA KALA COMPETITION AND EXHIBITION BEGINS

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

The Aksharama Kala Competition and Exhibition 2082 has commenced on Friday.

Organised by Nepal Commercial Artists Association in collaboration with Nepal Academy of Fine Arts, the programme was inaugurated by the Academy's Chancellor, Naradmani Hartamchhali.

He said that exhibitions such as Aksharama Kala require not only emotion in art and intellect within emotion, but also identity, initiative, and access.

He further emphasised the need to consider how message- and information-based creations can be presented in an aesthetically appealing manner.

Newly elected member of the House of Representatives, Hariprasad Bhusal, expressed his happiness at being present at a programme related to his field of work, which is art.

He said that he is always ready to collaborate with the Academy on policy-level initiatives related to this sector.

Member Secretary of the Academy, Devendra Kumar Kafle, noted that the programme is significant as it brings together creators connected to diverse fields.

He added that the Academy has been working towards the development and promotion of fine arts by including artists from various disciplines.

The exhibition, featuring 44 artworks, will conclude on March 21.

Folk Cultural Festival kicks off



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

The 13th International Folk Cultural Festival- 2026 began on Friday in Kathmandu.

Aimed at preserving and promoting Nepali folk culture, the festival has been organised by the Everest Nepal Cultural Group.

According to the organisers, the event was originally scheduled to take place from February 27 to March 8 but had to be postponed due to a clash with the election schedule.

The festival, which began on Friday, will continue until 28 March. Artists from various countries, including Botswana, Estonia, Germany, India, Israel, Poland and Turkey, are participating in the event. Throughout the festival, they will showcase their national identities through traditional costumes, folk dances, songs and cultural performances, informed the organiser.

In addition, international artists will visit different schools across the Kathmandu Valley to present cultural programmes and interact with students.

This year, the festival has expanded beyond Kathmandu to include Pokhara, Lalitpur, Panchkhal (Kavre) and Budhanilkantha.

Special programmes will also be held at historic and UNESCO World Heritage sites such as Patan Durbar Square and Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square.

According to the organisers, more than 260 artists from various countries are taking part in the festival. However, participation from some countries may decline due to international flight and travel-related issues.

The organisation has been promoting Nepali cultural diversity globally for the past two decades. So far, 12 editions of the festival have been completed, featuring over 9,000 artists from more than 86 countries.

18D cinema launched in Pokhara

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Pokhara. Mar. 20



Fly Nepal Entertainment has launched 18D Cinema in Pokhara on Friday. This is the first time such a cinema has been introduced in Nepal. Fly Nepal has brought it into operation at Disneyland Lakeside in Pokhara.

The cinema was formally inaugurated by legendary actor Rajesh Hamal. He said that Pokhara, as a city of cinema, will now experience a different style of entertainment.

"Pokhara is a beautiful city in itself. Many films are shot here, and it is also considered significant from a film business perspective. This is not just a cinema but a journey into a new world," he said.

Ram Thapa, head of Fly Nepal Entertainment, said that following its successful operation in Kathmandu, the overwhelming love and positive feedback from audiences led to its expansion to Pokhara.

He added that the technology here is even more advanced than in Kathmandu.

He added that the aim of Fly Nepal is to provide audiences with a new kind of entertainment experience by combining high technology with creative storytelling.

"This cinema has many special features. Audiences can enjoy thrilling films lasting from 10 to 30 minutes. It is suitable for all age groups and offers a direct experience without the need for glasses or headsets," he said. He also added that the cinema allows the audience to enter 17 different narrative worlds.

Himal Thapa, director of Fly Nepal Entertainment, said that in a city known for adventure activities like Pokhara, the cinematic experience will now become even broader.

"Now, the people of Pokhara can experience adventure not only in the outside world but also within immersive experiences," he added.

ABC cancels 'Bachelorette' season with Taylor Frankie Paul

AP
Los Angeles, Mar. 20

ABC has pulled the forthcoming season of The Bachelorette, starring Taylor Frankie Paul, just three days before its scheduled premiere, citing a recently surfaced 2023 video in which she appears to assault her former partner while her young daughter looks on in distress.

The cancellation of the already filmed 22nd series is unprecedented. While ABC's parent company, The Walt Disney Company, pointed to the older footage, the decision also comes amid an ongoing domestic abuse investigation involving Paul and Dakota Mortensen, the father of her youngest child.

"In light of the newly surfaced video, we have decided not to proceed with the new season of The Bachelorette at this time, and our focus is on supporting the family," Disney Entertainment Television said in a statement.

A representative for Paul responded, claiming she had endured years of abuse in silence.

Prior to her casting, Paul rose to prominence through the reality series The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives, which has since paused production.



In the 2023 video, published by TMZ, Mortensen is seen attempting to fend Paul off while recording on his phone. She appears to punch and kick him before throwing chairs, shouting repeatedly. He is heard pleading with her and reminding her that her daughter is watching, as a child's cries are audible in the background.

The footage aligns with Paul's 2023 arrest, when she faced charges including aggravated assault and domestic violence in the presence of a child. She later pleaded guilty to a misdemeanour assault charge, with other charges dismissed.

Paul's spokesperson said she is "grateful for ABC's support" as she prioritises her family's safety, adding that she is now seeking support and preparing to share her account publicly after years of alleged abuse and threats.

Mortensen has denied the allegations, describing them as "baseless" and stating he is focused on his son's wellbeing.

Authorities in Draper City, Utah, have confirmed an open domestic violence investigation involving both parties, with allegations made on both sides.

ABC will instead broadcast a repeat of American Idol this Sunday.

Paul had been promoting The Bachelorette as recently as Wednesday, including appearances on Good Morning America and the red carpet ahead of the Academy Awards.

Her casting had already been seen as unconventional. Unlike most leads, who are typically selected from former contestants of The Bachelor, Paul was chosen following her viral fame within the #MomTok community.

Her selection also aligned with Disney's streaming strategy, linking to her role in The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives. However, the controversy has now halted both that programme and her Bachelorette season, with co-star Mikayla Matthews stating the cast felt uncomfortable continuing filming.

What was intended as a bold casting experiment has ultimately unravelled under serious allegations and public scrutiny.

HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

ARIES: Mental focus can currently nurture surprising inner strength. Rest deepens when you honor unseen needs, as Mars trines auspicious Jupiter, lining up your 12th House of Peace with your 4th House of Family.

CANCER: Today's energy is pensive, particularly regarding your personal beliefs. Exploring alternate points of view could be easier than usual as passionate Mars in your inspirational 9th house trines optimistic Jupiter in your very own sign.

LIBRA: Afternoon tasks will be easier when you get into a rhythm. Vivacious Mars dances with jolly Jupiter, energizing your 6th House of Practice and your 10th House of Ambition.

CAPRICORN: A thoughtful tone should guide every message you share now. With Mars energizing your communication and Jupiter supporting connections, you're encouraged to speak honestly, express clearly.

TAURUS: This morning invites thoughtful connection with friends. Your 11th House of Hopefulness lights up as enterprising Mars harmonizes with jovial Jupiter in your talkative 3rd house. This is an ideal atmosphere for collaboration!

LEO: Personal sharing will be easier when everyone involved feels calm and safe. Mars forms a flowing trine with Jupiter, invigorating your 8th House of Intimacy and your 12th House of Secrets.

SCORPIO: Creative risks reveal truths you can trust. Your 5th House of Play surges with the positive tide of Mars and Jupiter's alliance, helping you share your voice with courage and take delight in meaningful self-expression.

AQUARIUS: Money matters may take center stage today, drawing your attention to income and daily work. Mars and Jupiter work together harmoniously, helping you stay motivated, make smarter financial choices.

GEMINI: Career clarity grows as conversations find direction. Ambitious Mars trines Jupiter, the Greater Benefic, energizing your 10th House of Power and your analytical 2nd house. Steady efforts to gain visibility could start paying off at any moment!

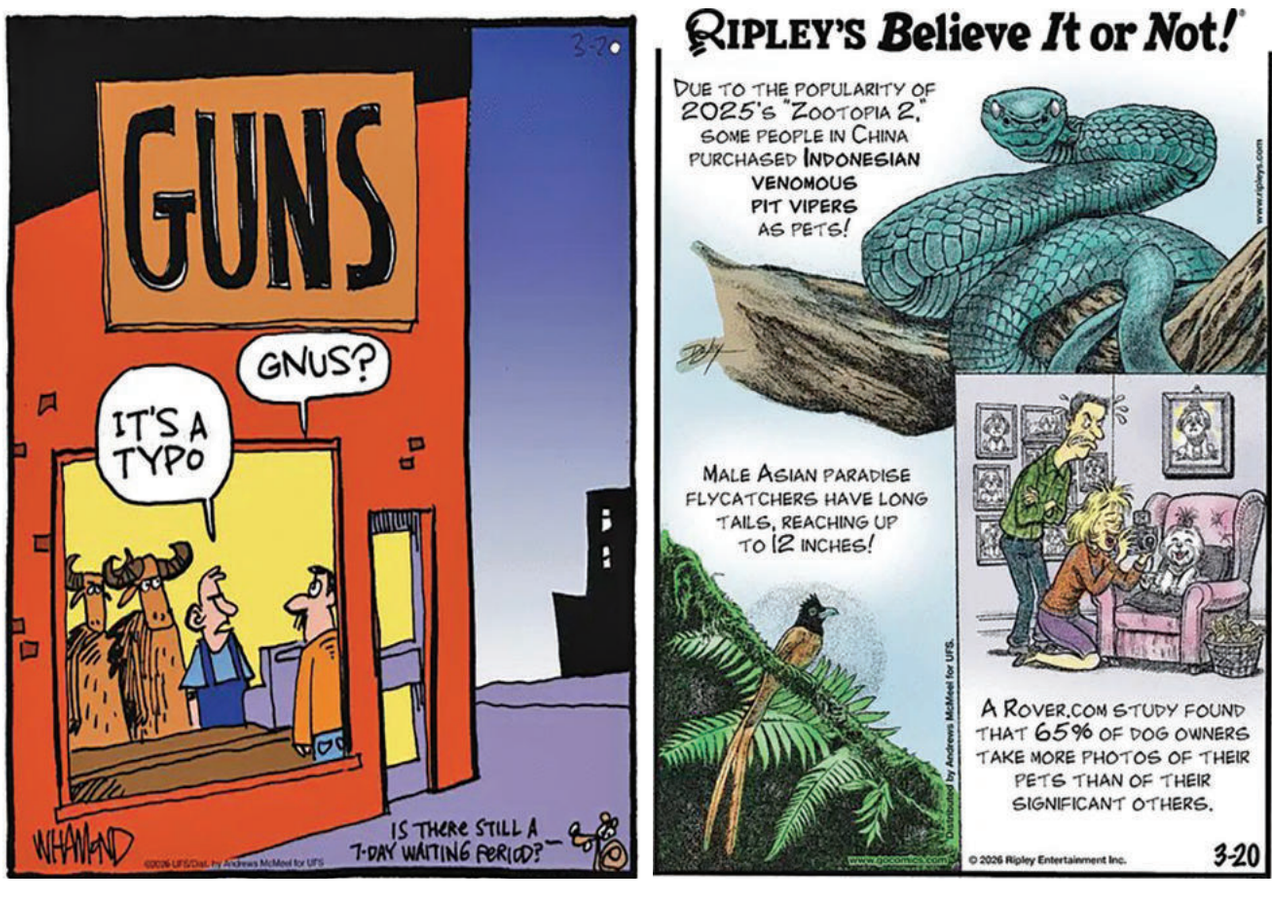
VIRGO: Teamwork benefits from clear agreements. Alliances often need specific roles defined, and under today's Mars-Jupiter trine, you'll be able to do so with empathy. It affects your cooperative 7th house and your community-minded 11th house.

SAGITTARIUS: Your home shows your truths -- or at least, it should. Aggressive Mars in your domestic quadrant is softened by its trine to indulgent Jupiter in your meaningful 8th house..

PISCES: Cosmic fortune is showering over you! Your sense of self gains bold traction as Mars (currently in your sign!) trines extravagant Jupiter. They're empowering you to introduce yourself with renewed confidence and a welcoming smile.

CARTOON

gocomics.com



Surya Nepal Western Open

Nagarkoti wins third straight title of a season



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 20

Bhuvan Nagarkoti claimed the Surya Nepal Western Open crown, the fifth event of the Surya Nepal Golf Tour 2025–26, at the par-69 Himalayan Golf Course on Friday.

Nagarkoti carded an even-par 69 in the final round to finish on a 54-hole total of three-under 204, securing a one-stroke victory over Sanjay Lama.

The win marked his third consecutive triumph of the season and the 14th of his career. Alongside the trophy, he pocketed NPR 170,000.

Earlier this season, Nagarkoti had lifted the Surya Nepal NPGA Tour Championship in Bardibas and the Surya Nepal Kathmandu Open at RNGC.

Lama finished runner-up on two-under 205 after producing a superb four-under 65 in the closing round, earning Rs. 125,000.

Amateur Rahul Bishwakarma also impressed with a four-under 65 to take third place on one-under 206. Sukra Bahadur Rai was fourth overall and third among professionals, carding a four-over 73 for a two-over 209 total, which brought him Rs. 100,000.

Jayram Shrestha finished fifth among the professionals on seven-over 214 after a six-over 75, collecting Rs. 82,000. Local pro Bhu Bahadur Gurung came sixth overall at eight-over 215, following a three-over 72, and received Rs. 72,000.

Dinesh Prajapati and Bhuwan Kumar Rokka shared seventh place at 10-over 217. Prajapati fired a fine two-under 67, while Rokka carded three-over 72; both earned Rs. 65,000.

Toran Bikram Shahi finished ninth at 12-over 219 after a two-over 71, taking home Rs. 51,000. Ramesh Adhikari (76) and Suresh Tamang (75) shared 10th place at 13-over 220, each earning Rs. 44,000.

Nagarkoti's final round featured a steady front nine of even-par 34, with a bogey at the sixth offset by a birdie at the eighth. He matched that with an even-par 35 on the back nine, carding birdies at the 10th and 13th against bogeys at the 12th and 17th.

Lama, meanwhile, turned in one-under 33 after birdies at the first, seventh and eighth, countered by bogeys at the second and sixth. He then surged with a three-under 32 on the back nine, briefly drawing level with Nagarkoti at three-under. His charge included birdies at the 10th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th, though bogeys at the 12th and 18th proved costly.

Amateur Bishwakarma's round was highlighted by birdies at the first, fifth, 16th and 17th, plus an eagle at the 13th, offset by bogeys at the seventh and 18th. He claimed the amateur trophy with a commanding 22-stroke margin over Kishan Pariyar, who signed for a 10-over 79 to finish on 21-over 227.

Prizes were presented by Surya Nepal Pvt Ltd Deputy General Manager Keshav Pradhan and Nepal Golf Association President Tashi Ghale. The 54-hole tournament featured 26 professionals and 16 amateurs, with a total prize purse of NPR 1,050,000 awarded to the top 18 professionals.

The 26th edition of the Surya Nepal Western Open concludes with the Pro-Am event on Saturday.

Forest survive shoot-out to reach Europa League quarters, Villa advance

AFP
London, Mar. 20

Nottingham Forest reached the Europa League quarter-finals after Midtjylland missed all three of their penalties in the last-16 second-leg shoot-out, while John McGinn inspired Aston Villa's 2-0 win against Lille on Thursday.

Vitor Pereira's Forest won 2-1 after extra-time at the MCH Arena in Denmark to level the tie at 2-2 on aggregate.

That set up the farcical shoot-out as Midtjylland's Cho Gue-sung and Aral Simsir both hit the post before Edward Chilufya slipped and blazed over in the shoot-out.

Morgan Gibbs-White, Ibrahim Sangare and Neco Williams converted Forest's three kicks to extend the club's first European campaign since 1995-96, when they reached the UEFA Cup quarter-finals.

The Premier League strugglers will play Porto in the quarter-finals after the Portuguese outfit beat Stuttgart 2-0.

William Carvalho and Victor Froholdt netted to clinch Porto's 4-1 aggregate victory, with Stuttgart's Nikolas Nartey sent off in the closing stages.

Forest's understudies rose to the challenge and took the lead in the 41st minute. Climbing to meet Nikola Milenkovic's flick, Nicolas Dominguez craned his neck to loop a header over Elias Olafsson from six yards.



PHOTO: AP
Midtjylland's Valdemar Byskov, right, and Nottingham Forest's Zack Abbott in action during the Europa League soccer match in Denmark.

Midtjylland were breached again in the 52nd minute when Ryan Yates lashed home from 25 yards before Martin Erlic's 69th minute reply for the hosts set up the shoot-out.

At Villa Park, Unai Emery's side, defending a 1-0 first-leg lead, went ahead in the 54th minute with a perfectly executed route one move.

Emiliano Martinez launched a mammoth kick towards Jadon Sancho and his pass across the Lille penalty area was tucked away with aplomb by McGinn. It was the Scotland midfielder's first goal since January 3 after two months on the sidelines with a knee injury.

Leon Bailey's 86th-minute tap-in from Ollie Watkins' pass ensured Villa advanced to a European quarter-final for a third successive season.

Villa's quarter-final opponents will be Bologna, who beat Roma 4-3 in an all-Italian thriller at the Stadio Olimpico.

After a 1-1 draw in the first leg, Jonathan Rowe put Bologna ahead in the 22nd minute, but Roma's Evan N'Dicka equalised 10 minutes later.

Federico Bernardeschi's penalty in first half stoppage-time and Santiago Castro's 58th minute strike put Bologna 3-1 up.

Roma's Donyell Malen converted a 69th minute penalty and Lorenzo Pellegrini equalised in the 80th minute.

But Nicolo Cambiaghi slotted home for Bologna in the 111th minute.

Real Betis thrashed Greek side Panathinaikos 4-0, booking a tie against Sporting Braga, who routed Ferencvaros 4-0 on Wednesday.

Celta Vigo beat nine-man Lyon 2-0 in France to secure a 3-1 aggregate win.

Celta will play Freiburg for a place in the semi-finals after the German side crushed Genk 5-1.

NZ beat SA to lead series 2-1

AP
Auckland, Mar. 20

Tom Latham carried his bat for 63 and put on 96 for the first wicket with Devon Conway to set up New Zealand's eight-wicket win over South Africa in their third Twenty20 on Friday.

Conway made 39 and Latham reached his fourth T20 half-century, helping New Zealand's cricketers pass South Africa's 136-9 with 22 balls remaining to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

Batting conditions have been tricky and matches in the series have been low-scoring. South Africa won the first by seven wickets, chasing down New Zealand's 91, and the Black Caps won the second by 68 runs, bowling out the opposition for 107.

South Africa batted out 20 overs for the first time on Friday, helped by a lively unbeaten 26 from 20 balls by Nqobani Mokoena in his first international innings.

Latham and Conway began their run chase quietly, taking five runs from the



first two overs and 12 from the first three. They then took 14 from the fourth over, bowled by Mokoena, and 21 from the fifth by Lutho Sipamla to set New Zealand on the way to a comfortable win.

Conway fell in the 11th over, caught in the deep by Rubin Hermann off Keshav Maharaj and Tim Robinson was out for 17 in the 17th over when the scores were tied. Nick Kelly came out and hit a single for the winning run from the next ball.

The pitch at Eden Park typically is quick and bouncy and it provided that again but also held up at times. New Zealand used six bowlers and all six took wickets, including the spinners who helped their team make inroads in the South Africa top order.

Pace bowler Lockie Ferguson took 1-9 from four overs.

Santner found turn and, after coming on in the fifth over, dismissed Jason Smith (10) and Connor Esterhuizen (15).

Smith tried to cut a ball and mistimed his shot when the ball turned back from outside off. Esterhuizen scored all his runs in the third over before trying to hit Santner to the short, straight boundary but finding Kelly at mid-on.

Earlier, South Africa was 41-3 at the end of the powerplay and 61-5 at the midpoint of its innings.

George Linde and Gerald Coetzee put on 34 for the seventh wicket with Linde scoring 23 from 19 balls and Coetzee 16 from eight deliveries.

When Coetzee was out, South Africa was 103-8 in the 15th over and in danger again of being bowled out inside 20 overs. But Mokoena put on an unbroken partnership of 24 with Lutho Sipamla for the 10th wicket, South Africa's highest for that wicket in T20s.

O'SULLIVAN MAKES HISTORY WITH HIGHEST-EVER BREAK

AFP
Beijing, Mar. 20

Seven-time world champion Ronnie O'Sullivan made professional snooker history on Friday by crafting the highest break ever of 153 at the World Open in China. The 50-year-old Englishman pulled off the feat against Ryan Day of Wales on his way to sealing his place in the semi-finals in Yushan with a dominant 5-0 victory.

O'Sullivan, regarded as the best player snooker has ever produced, was aided by a free ball and started his break with the green, followed by an opening black. He then reeled off the 15 reds, complemented by 13 further blacks and two pinks, before nonchalantly clearing up the colours to nail the eye-popping record. The previous highest break was 148 by Jamie Burnett in 2004.

SNIPPETS

PM Cup winner to get Rs. 1M

Kathmandu (TRN): The Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) has confirmed prize money for the forthcoming Prime Minister Cup One Day National Cricket Tournament. In a statement issued by the governing body, CAN said the winners of the PM Cup will receive Rs 1,000,000, while the runners-up will be awarded Rs 500,000. The competition is scheduled to begin on 21 March in Kathmandu. Originally slated to open at the TU Cricket Ground, the tournament will now commence at the Lower Mulpani Cricket Ground. Matches will also be staged in Parsa and Janakpur. "All preparations for the tournament have been completed," CAN noted in its release.

Airee to play at EU T20 Belgium

Kathmandu (TRN): Nepal all-rounder Dipendra Singh Airee is set to feature in the EU T20 League Belgium after signing for JB Bruges. The Belgian side confirmed Airee's acquisition via social media. JB Bruges is owned by Dream Sports, which also operates the Janakpur Bolts franchise in the Nepal Premier League (NPL). Airee, however, represents Sudurpaschim Royals in the domestic competition. The club has already secured the services of New Zealand's hard-hitting opener Colin Munro and South Africa's Rassie van der Dussen. The tournament draft is scheduled for 24 March, with 18 Nepali players expected to take part. Six teams will compete in the inaugural EU T20 Belgium, organised in collaboration with the Belgium Cricket Federation. Among the entrants, Liège Red Lions have signed Nepal leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane.

Diyali, Magar strike gold

Kathmandu (TRN): Babin Kumar Diyali and Sachikala Magar of Prisoner Assistance Mission (PAM) captured gold medals at the eighth NECOS International Judo Tournament on Friday. Organised by the Nepal Judo Association under the Nepal Confederation of Sports (NECOS), the event saw Diyali defeat Simon Tamang of MMAC in the men's under-40kg final. Other gold medallists included Nitesh Sahani of Koshi Province (under-20kg), Ashwin Tamang of Nagarjun Valley Academy (under-30kg), and Jigme Yoezer of Gelephu Judo Club, Bhutan (under-56kg). Sahani overcame Bishnu Giri of PAM, Ashwin beat Kamlesh Pasi of Karnali Province, while Jigme defeated Buddha Gurung of MMAC Judo Club in their respective finals.

In the women's competition, Dorji Tandin Wangmo of Pelkhil Dojo Club, Bhutan, claimed the under-53kg crown by defeating Kopila Tamang of Nuwakot Dojo. Pelkhil's Chhimi Tshogyel secured gold in the under-32kg division against Krishna Mahatara of PAM, while PAM's Magar triumphed in the under-36kg final over Shiksha Shrestha of Bal Bikash Judo Dojo. The three-day tournament is being staged at the Multi-Purpose Martial Arts Centre (MMAC) in New Bazaar.

Is soccer no longer Italy's best sport? The Azzurri face World Cup playoff amid others' success

AP
Rome, Mar. 20

Italy is coming off a record performance at the Winter Olympics.

Kimi Antonelli just became the second youngest driver at 19 to win a Formula One race and is considered The Next Big Thing in auto racing.

The Azzurri rugby squad beat England for the first time in the Six Nations.

Jannik Sinner is back to winning ways on the tennis court.

Italy's men and women are the world champions in volleyball.

Even the country's unheralded baseball and cricket teams have broken barriers recently.

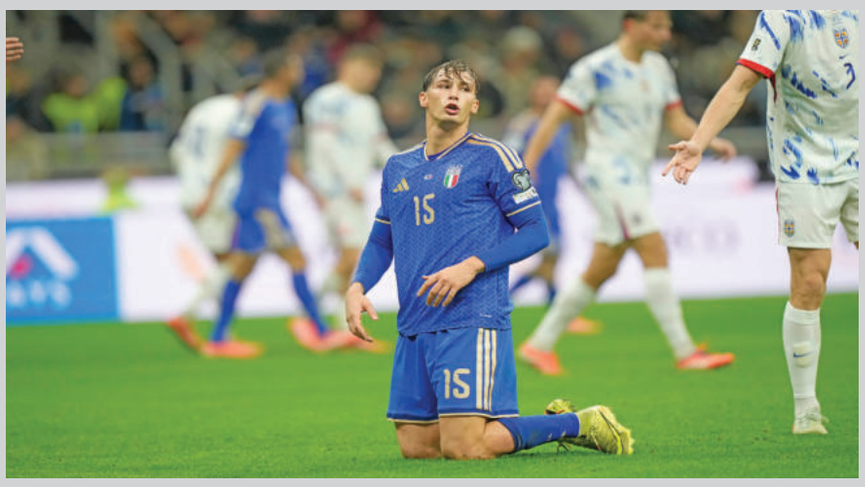
Yet there's one big team from Italy that continues to struggle. The once-dominant men's soccer team is at risk of failing to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup.

The four-time World Cup champion needs to beat Northern Ireland in the playoffs next Thursday in Bergamo and then either Wales or Bosnia and Herzegovina away to avoid going at least 16 years without even playing a match at soccer's biggest event.

"Sports are about cycles but this one in soccer has gone on for too long," Italy Sports Minister Andrea Abodi says.

An entire generation — basically anyone under 15 — has no memory of the last time Italy played in the World Cup: An elimination loss to Uruguay in 2014 in Brazil remembered for Luis Suarez's bite of Giorgio Chiellini's shoulder.

"For generations of Italians, the World Cup was the time when the country came together and waved our flag," Abodi tells La Stampa. "Our national spirit now extends beyond soccer but it would still be nice to share those emotions with younger fans."



Doomed qualifying campaign

Italy's qualifying campaign was doomed in the opening match by a 3-0 loss at Erling Haaland's Norway — leading to coach Luciano Spalletti being replaced by Gennaro Gattuso.

The Azzurri then went on a six-match winning streak before losing again to Norway in November to finish second in their group and end up in the playoffs again — the stage where Italy was eliminated by Sweden before the 2018 World Cup and by North Macedonia in 2022.

NIreland troubled Italy before

Ranked 13th, Italy will be a heavy favorite against No. 69 Northern Ireland.

But the Azzurri should be reminded that their last meeting, a 0-0 draw in Belfast in 2021, plunged the recently crowned European champion into the playoffs for the 2022 World Cup.

Italy has won all seven of its home games against Northern Ireland and the opponent's captain, Liverpool right back Conor Bradley, is out injured.

Northern Ireland coach Michael O'Neill was also appointed Blackburn manager last month in an arrangement that sees him splitting duties.

20 years since knockout match

Italy's World Cup struggles go back all the way to 2010 and 2014, having failed to advance from its group on both occasions.

The Azzurri's last World Cup knockout match was when they won the title in 2006 by beating France in a penalty shootout — a match remembered more for Zinedine Zidane headbutting Marco Materazzi.

So it's no accident that members of the 2006 squad are involved in trying to revive the Azzurri's fortunes — starting with Gattuso.

Former goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, who holds the record with 176 appearances for Italy, is the national team's delegation chief and had a role in selecting Gattuso.

Also, former fullback Gianluca Zambrotta and former midfielder Simone Perrotta are working in the Italian federation's youth development program.

Even with Gattuso and Buffon making their cases, the national team was not able to convince soccer authorities to set up a training camp in the four months since Italy last played.

Instead, Gattuso and Buffon embarked on a tour up and down Italy — plus trips to London, Saudi Arabia and Qatar — to share dinners with the squad's players and maintain team spirit.

Struggles go beyond

Serie A has gone from being a destination for the world's best players in the 1990s and early 2000s to a competition that now attracts castoffs past their prime from other leagues.

No Italian club has won the Champions League since Inter Milan in 2010.

Italy won the European Championship under Roberto Mancini in 2021 but it was also under Mancini that the Azzurri failed to qualify for the following year's World Cup.

Mancini left the team in chaos by resigning to take on a lucrative job as Saudi Arabia coach in 2023.

Spalletti had little time to prepare Italy for Euro 2024 and the Azzurri were eliminated by Switzerland in the round of 16.

Too much attention to tactics

With the national team's struggles in mind, federation president Gabriele Gravina this week unveiled a new youth development program he says is aimed at "overcoming a sort of extreme tacticalism that really worries me."

Gravina suggests Italian clubs and coaches need to move away from defensive tactics that prioritize "winning at all costs."

Perhaps the soccer team could learn some lessons from Italy's successes in other sports, too.

Published by Chairman **Gobinda Prasad (Akhanda) Bhandari** and General Manager **Lal Bahadur Airi** for the Gorkhapatra Corporation • Printed at G.S. Press, Kathmandu • Acting Editor-in-Chief: **Bishnu Prasad Gautam**
Phone: Editorial 5322279, trnfeatures@gmail.com • Advertisement 5327493, 5331394, E-mail: mgorkhapatra@gmail.com • Distribution 5320638 • Registered No. 29/028/022 • G.P.O. 30/053/54