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THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL

Balendra Shah sworn-in as 43rd Prime Minister

Four years after joining politics, Shah becomes youngest PM





PHOTO: SUJAN GURUNG\TRN

President Ramchandra Paudel administering the oath of office and secrecy to newly appointed Prime Minister Balendra Shah (left) and the ministers at the President's official residence, Sheetal Niwas in Kathmandu, on Friday.

BY PURUSHOTTAM P. KHATRI
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

President Ramchandra Paudel administered the oath of office and secrecy to newly appointed Prime Minister Balendra Shah (Balen) on Friday.

Earlier on Friday morning, President Paudel appointed Shah as the 43rd Prime Minister of Nepal in accordance with Article 76 (1) of the Constitution of Nepal. Shah is the youngest politician to assume the post of the Prime Minister after the People's Movement of 1990.

President Paudel administered the oath to the Prime Minister in accordance with Article 80 of the constitution. In a special ceremony held at the President's Office, Sheetal Niwas.

Alongside Prime Minister Shah, the newly appointed ministers also took their oath of office and secrecy. President Paudel administered the oath to all the newly appointed ministers.

Also, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, President Paudel formed 15-member Council of Ministers in accordance with Article 76, Sub-Article (9) of the constitution.

Born on 14 April 1990 in Naradevi of Kathmandu, Shah was elected to the House of Representatives from Jhapa-5. He secured a decisive victory over former Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, Chair of CPN-UML, by a margin of 49,614 votes.

Shah received 68,348 votes, while his nearest rival Oli garnered 18,734.

Prior to his parliamentary victory, Shah served as Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City. He resigned from the post on 18 January and joined the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), which had projected him as its prime ministerial candidate during the election campaign.

Shah took the oath of office at the auspicious time of 12:34 pm on the occasion of Ram Nawami, following traditional Vedic and Buddhist rituals. The ceremony featured recitations by 108 Brahmin priests, chants by 16 Buddhist monks, and ceremonial conch blowing.

Shah has also made history as Nepal's first Prime Minister of Madhesi origin.

Bhimsen Thapa, who ruled from 1806 to 1837 and assumed power at the age of 32, is widely regarded as the first Prime Minister of Nepal. In the 219-year history from Thapa to Shah, Jung Bahadur Rana became Prime Minister at the age of 31, though not through democratic election. Among 40 prime ministers over the period, only Marich Man Singh Shrestha came from an indigenous community.

During the Panchayat era, Tulsi Giri became Prime Minister at the age of 33 under King Mahendra's patronage. The oldest democratically elected Prime Ministers were Manamohan Adhikari and Sushil Koirala, both of whom assumed office at the age of 74. Meanwhile, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' was 54 when he became the first Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in 2008.

New practices in oath ceremony

Prime Minister Shah, who was appointed after securing a near two-thirds majority in the post–Gen-Z Movement elections, introduced several new features during his oath-taking ceremony.

Traditionally, the Prime Minister's swearing-in used to be limited to the formal administration of the oath. However, this time, Shah incorporated distinct ceremonial practices at the Presidential residence, Shital Niwas. The ceremony began with references to Vedic traditions. Prior to taking the oath, seven conch shells were sounded simultaneously. Additionally, 108 batuks (young Brahmin priests) recited Swastiwachan, while 16 Buddhist monks performed the Ashtamangala chanting.

According to yogic and spiritual beliefs, the human body contains seven primary energy centres, or chakras. It is believed that the vibrations produced by the sound of conch shells help activate and balance these chakras, from the Muladhara to the Sahasrara.

Similarly, the sounding of seven conch shells is considered symbolic of invoking the presence and blessings of the Saptarishis (seven sages). In Hindu scriptures, the number seven represents completeness and is associated with total victory, happiness and prosperity.

The ceremony was attended by high-ranking state officials including the Vice President, outgoing PM Sushila Karki and her Cabinet ministers, heads and representatives of diplomatic missions based in Nepal.

33 % women ministers

Meanwhile, five of the 15 members of the new Council of Ministers are women.

Sobita Gautam has been appointed Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Pratibha Rawal as Minister for General Administration, Sita Wadi as Minister for Women and Children, Nisha Mehata as Minister for Health and Population, and Gita Chaudhary as Minister for Agriculture.

PM Shah forms 15-member Cabinet

Prime Minister Shah has formed a 15-member Council of Ministers, with the highest number of appointments representing from Bagmati Province.

From Bagmati Province, Shishir Khanal has been appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs. Other ministers from the province include Biraj Bhakta Shrestha as Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation; Sasmit Pokhrel as Minister for Education, Science and Technology as well as Youth and Sports; Dr. Bikram Timilsina as Minister for Communication and Information Technology; and Sobita Gautam as Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. All five were elected under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) category to the House of Representatives, representing Kathmandu-6, Kathmandu-8, Kathmandu-5, Nuwakot-1 and Chitwan-3 respectively.

Gandaki Province has been allocated three ministerial positions. Dr. Swarnim Wagle has been appointed Minister for Finance, Sudan Gurung as Minister for Home Affairs, and Khadak Raj Paudel (Ganesh) as Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation. They were elected from Tanahun-1, Gorkha-1 and Kaski-1 respectively.

From Lumbini Province, Sunil Lamsal has been appointed Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Urban Development, representing Rupandehi-1.

Karnali Province has one representative in the Cabinet, with a proportional representation member Sita Badi appointed as Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens.

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New Council of Ministers

S.No.	Name	Position	Portfolio/ Responsibilities
1.	Balendra Shah	Prime Minister	Defence; Industry, Commerce and Supplies
2.	Dr. Swarnim Wagle	Minister	Finance
3.	Sudhan Gurung	Minister	Home Affairs
4.	Shishir Khanal	Minister	Foreign Affairs
5.	Sunil Lamsal	Minister	Physical Infrastructure and Transport; Urban Development
6.	Biraj Bhakta Shrestha	Minister	Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation
7.	Khadak Raj Paudel (Ganesh)	Minister	Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
8.	Sasmit Pokharel	Minister	Education, Science and Technology; Youth and Sports
9.	Nisha Mehta	Minister	Health and Population; Drinking Water
10.	Dr. Bikram Timilsina	Minister	Communication and Information Technology
11.	Pratibha Rawal	Minister	Federal Affairs and General Administration; Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation
12.	Sobita Gautam	Minister	Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
13.	Geeta Chaudhary	Minister	Agriculture and Livestock Development; Forest and Environment
14.	Deepak Kumar Sah	Minister	Labour, Employment and Social Security
15.	Sita Badi	Minister	Women, Children and Senior Citizens

WHO IS BALENDRA SHAH?

Balendra Shah is the youngest politician to become the Prime Minister of Nepal after the 1990s.

A senior leader of Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), he assumed the highest executive position at the age of 35 years, eight months and 30 days on Friday.

Born on April 27, 1990, in Kathmandu Metropolitan City-9, he is the son of the late Ram Narayan Shah and Dhurba Devi Shah.

Shah contested the election of the Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City in 2022 and won by defeating candidates from the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML with a large margin. He secured 61,767 votes while his rival Keshav Sthapit from the CPN-UML received 38,341 and Srijana Singh of Nepali Congress 38,117.

His victory as an independent candidate against major parties in his very first attempt was a remarkable feat. And even greater achievement came in the House of Representatives elections held on March 5, 2026, when he defeated CPN-UML chairman and former prime minister KP Sharma Oli in Oli's home constituency in Jhapa-5 by about 50,000 votes.

His charismatic personality was a key factor behind the landslide victory of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) in the recent election. A civil engineer, structural researcher and a popular rapper, Shah is currently pursuing a PhD at Kathmandu University.

He holds BE in Civil Engineering from Purwanchal University, Nepal, and M. Tech in Structural Engineering from Visvesvaraya Technological University, Bangalore, India.

A creative artist with multidisciplinary experience in infrastructure development, heritage conservation, and public leadership, Shah actively contributed to post-earthquake reconstruction and national development across Nepal.

He has worked on bridges, roads, and building design and construction in 65 districts of Nepal. As mayor and an engineer, his focus was on infrastructure improvement, heritage preservation, and public service delivery.

From an early age, Shah showed a strong interest in music and poetry

As a rapper, he has more than 25 songs to his credit. He is married to Sabina Kafle and has a daughter.

India, Pakistan and USA congratulate PM Shah

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday congratulated newly appointed Prime Minister Balendra Shah.

Taking to the social media platform X, Prime Minister Modi extended his congratulations to Shah on assuming office. "Your appointment reflects the trust reposed in your leadership by the people of Nepal. I look forward to working closely with you to take India–Nepal friendship and cooperation to even greater heights for the mutual benefit of our two countries," he wrote.

Similarly, India's Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar extended his warm wishes to Shisir Khanal on assuming office as Nepal's Minister for Foreign Affairs. He said he looked forward to working closely with Khanal to further strengthen the longstanding partnership between Nepal and India.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has congratulated Prime Minister Balendra Shah. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has extended best wishes to the new PM Shah, wishing him a successful term, according to RSS Taking to social media site, X, on Friday, the Pakistani Prime Minister congratulated PM Shah on assuming the post.

"Pakistan deeply values its longstanding and friendly relations with Nepal and looks forward to working closely with your Excellency to further strengthen bilateral cooperation and advance our shared goals of regional peace, stability and prosperity," the Pakistani Prime Minister stated.

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Govt decides to implement Karki-led Commission's report

Pokharel appointed govt. spokesperson

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

The new government under Prime Minister Balendra Shah (Balen) has decided to implement the recommendations of the Commission led by Gauri Bahadur Karki, which investigated the incidents of Gen-Z Movement.

In its first cabinet meeting held at the Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers in Singha Durbar on Friday, the new government also announced four key decisions, according to Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Sasmit Pokharel.

Among the decisions, the Cabinet meeting appointed Minister Sasmit Pokharel as the official government spokesperson. It also paid heartfelt tribute to all known and unknown martyrs who lost their lives during the Gen-Z Movement on September 8 and 9, 2025 and previous protests.

The Cabinet approved a "100-Point Action Plan" aimed at government reforms, which will be made public by Saturday, Pokharel added.

Regarding the Commission's recommendations, the government said that for matters concerning security mechanisms, a study committee will be formed to act on the commission's suggestions, said Minister Pokharel.

For other recommendations, the relevant agencies, including the Home Ministry, have been instructed to implement them immediately.

The Karki-led commission had recommended action, including 10-year jail terms, against former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, former Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, and former IGP Chandra Kuber Khapung, along with disciplinary measures against other senior government officials.

SEE preparations complete: NEB

'Possible fuel shortage may pose a challenge to transporting answer sheets'

BY RAMAN PAUDEL
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

This year's SEE will begin on Thursday, April 2. For this, the National Education Board (NEB) has released its examination schedule.

According to the NEB, 510,000 students will appear for the SEE this year, which is 4,000 fewer than the 514,071 students who participated last year.

The SEE has been postponed by 12 days this year due to the March 5 elections. Last year, the SEE began on March 21. The first day will feature the compulsory English exam on April 2, followed by the compulsory Nepali exam on April 3, and the compulsory Mathematics exam on April 5. Exams for Culture and Veda Vidyashram subjects will be held on April 6.

According to the board's schedule, examinations for both the old and new technical stream syllabi will be conducted from April 7-12.



Out of the total number of examinees this year, 257,527 are female, and 252,434 are male students. Additionally, 63,000 students are exempted, while the remaining students will sit in the regular examination.

The NEB has stated that SEE question papers have been delivered to all 77 districts. A total of 1,991 examination centres have been designated. The board also confirmed that question papers and answer sheets have been sent to the District Police Offices in all districts. Nepal Police will deploy approximately 12,500 personnel across the country to ensure the examinations are conducted in a safe and orderly manner.

Speaking to The Rising Nepal, Tuk Raj Adhikari, Controller of the NEB, said that most preparations for the examination have been completed. The remaining tasks include conducting orientation programmes and appointing examination centre heads.

"We are fully prepared for the SEE. The work required at the centre level has been completed. Now, only the orientation programmes at the provincial and district levels and the appointment of centre heads are left," said Controller Adhikari.

The NEB also stated that paper-based tests will be conducted in most districts immediately after the SEE concludes, in coordination with the Education Development and Coordination Unit. The board has set an annual calendar to publish the results within three months of the completion of the examinations.

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BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold	: Rs. 281,000 /-
Worked Gold	: NA
Silver	: Rs. 4,670/-

STOCK

NEPSE	: 2,950.16
Total Amount	: 13,162,298,717.48
No. of Share	: 30,438,305

Finance Minister Wagle targets 15 laws for overhaul

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 27



Newly appointed Finance Minister Dr. Swarnim Wagle has decided to repeal 15 laws and acts, including the Department of Revenue Investigation.

Finance Minister (FM) Wagle made the decision while assuming office after taking the oath of office and secrecy on Friday.

He has decided to repeal 15 laws and acts related to the Department of Revenue Investigation, as recommended in the report of the High-Level Economic Reforms Suggestion Commission 2081.

Similarly, he has also decided to immediately prepare a 100-day, half-yearly and annual action plan for the implementation of the election promise, preparing a financial status report as of March 26, 2026.

It has also been decided to create a roadmap for comprehensive economic and legal reforms, prioritising new bills or their amendments, including private enterprise business protection and promotion and facilitation of large development projects.

FM Dr. Wagle said that a policy would be adopted to solve the problems seen in the economy holistically, not piecemeal, and that systemic reforms would be implemented by removing discretionary powers.

He has outlined a strong reform agenda, emphasising economic restructuring, good governance, and strict action against corruption, backed by what he described as a historic public mandate.

"We have come with an important economic and political mandate. Economic transformation will not happen through regular processes, we have come to disrupt the order for it'," he said.

"There is no compromise for good governance and working for the benefit of the people. Those who do good work always get support. However, if the country is not on the track we want and is on the wrong path, I cannot love it. If you are good, you are my friends," he said.

He said that good governance, economic transformation, long-term planning and transformational planning will be done as interventions, connecting the diaspora with the Nepali economy.

"We will protect their investment and property by saying that once a Nepali, always a Nepali. Then foreign investment will come," he said.

He informed that the implementation of the recommendations of the Public Expenditure Review Commission, growth of domestic production, job creation, and formulation of a transformative budget would be prioritised.

FM Dr. Wagle said that the efforts to promote e-governance and move towards a 'paperless' and 'cashless' system have been initiated by the Ministry of Finance.

He also said that the current international situation, especially the problems seen in the Middle East region, will be analysed in detail and its impact will be managed through inter-agency coordination.

Meanwhile, according to our Tanahun correspondent, with Dr. Wagle's appointment as Finance Minister, happiness has spread throughout the district. He was elected from Tanahun in the March 5 elections.

Local residents expressed pride that a leader representing their district has taken on the responsibility of managing the country's economy.

Rajan Panta, a resident of Deurali, Vyas Municipality–12, expressed his happiness that the leadership elected by the people with an agenda of development, good governance, and economic reform has now reached the Ministry of Finance today.

He expressed the confidence that the stalled work on the Bhanubhakta Zoological Park, which has been neglected for the past eight years, would now gain momentum.

He said that although there was hope that locals would get employment opportunities through ecotourism, it was difficult to move forward with the work of the park due to politicisation, but now there is hope that it will move forward.

Panta added that locals had hoped for employment, yet neither compensation nor land ownership documents had been received, but they now believe the deadlock will be resolved.

Although it was determined that they would receive compensation of Rs. 460 million, they have not been received by the lack of budget release.

Bishwo Nath Bastola, District Chairperson of the Rastriya Swatantra Party in Tanahun, recalled that Party Chairperson Rabi Lamichhane had already announced before the election that Wagle would become Finance Minister and had prepared the budget accordingly.

Bastola expressed confidence that the district's economy would return to rhythm, saying, "Having a person with experience in economics and policy as Finance Minister is a positive message for the country. This is a proud moment for the people of Tanahun."

Anju Dahal, Secretary of Vyas Municipality for the Rastriya Swatantra Party, said that the appointment of an experienced leader as Finance Minister has increased hopes for the country's economic improvement.

Dahal added, "Now, the voice of Tanahun has directly reached the Ministry of Finance; there is no limit to our happiness."

Dr. Wagle, who has experience working at policy levels both domestically and abroad, previously served as a member and vice-chairperson of the National Planning Commission, contributing to development planning and economic reforms.

After assuming the responsibility of Finance Minister, he said that he would prioritise good governance, economic reform, and quality infrastructure development.

Born in 2031 BS in Gorkha, Wagle has received higher education in economics and public policy.

He was first elected to the House of Representatives through a by-election in 2080 BS. In the parliamentary election held on March 5, he received 38,040 votes, defeating his closest competitor, Govinda Bhattarai of the Nepali Congress, by a margin of 21,809 votes.

1ST AGRO FAIR OPENS IN PHIKKAL

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Pashupatinagar (Ilam), Mar. 27

For the first time, an agricultural fair has kicked off in Phikkal of Suryodaya Municipality-10 in Ilam.

The two-day agricultural fair began on Thursday with the aim of promoting the agricultural sector and making it more commercial.

According to Nir Bahadur Rai, Chairman of the Suryodaya Agricultural Fair oganising committee, the fair features exhibitions of floriculture businesses, agricultural products, vegetables, and livestock.

The fair is organised by the Suryodaya Agricultural Fair Committee with support from Suryodaya Municipality-10, Agriculture Knowledge Centre, Ilam, and the Floriculture Association, Ilam. A total of 15 stalls have been set up at the event.

On Thursday, stalls featuring floriculture and agricultural products were displayed. On Friday, more than 30 improved breeds of cows, sheep and goats will be exhibited, according to Pema Ugen Lama, Ward Chairperson of Ward No. 10 of Suryodaya Municipality.

At the fair, farmer Kamal Parajuli of Suryodaya Municipality-12 has displayed a radish weighing over 8 kilograms.

Similarly, farmer Ramesh Gadtaula from the same ward has exhibited a potato weighing more than 800 grams produced in his farm.

A large number of floriculture stalls from the Suryodaya area have been showcased.

Floriculture entrepreneur Manita Rai from Suryodaya Municipality- 8 has displayed more than 600,000 flowers of 26 different varieties.

The flowers are priced between Rs. 200 and Rs. 4,500 per piece for both exhibition and sale.

To support the fair, Suryodaya Municipality contributed Rs. 200,000, Suryodaya Municipality- 10 contributed another Rs. 200,000, and the Agriculture Knowledge Centre also provided financial assistance, according to Lama.

He said that awards have been arranged for the best exhibits in floriculture, agricultural products, and livestock, with first, second, and third prizes.

Lama said, "We have organised this agricultural fair for the first time to make farmers and the agricultural sector more commercial and competitive. From next year onwards, we plan to make it even grander." The organisers estimate that more than 2,000 people will visit the fair.

China probes US trade after Trump tariffs

AP
Beijing, Mar. 27

China launched two investigations into U.S. trade practices on Friday, signaling its resolve to push back against President Donald Trump's tariffs ahead of his visit in May.

The Commerce Ministry said the new probes are a response to two investigations announced by Trump earlier this month against multiple countries, including China.

A ministry statement said the two Chinese investigations were launched to safeguard the interests of relevant Chinese industries and expressed "firm opposition" to the American probes.

One will examine U.S. policies that restrict Chinese goods from entering the United States and that limit U.S. export of advanced technology products to China. The other is focused on barriers to Chinese green energy exports. The probes are expected to take six months and could be extended for another three months if necessary, the ministry said.

The Chinese investigations are the latest volley in a long-running trade war and could be bargaining chips to counter any possible new U.S. tariffs.

The U.S. Supreme Court struck down some of Trump's earlier tariffs, and he responded by launching what are known as Section 301 trade investigations.

One of those investigations is examining allegations of excess industrial capacity — which can drive up exports — and government subsidies that could give companies in China and elsewhere an unfair advantage over U.S. competitors.

The probe, which targets 16 trading partners, including the European Union, could lead to higher tariffs on imports from those economies.

The other investigation, into dozens of countries, including China, could ban the import of goods made by forced labor.

China's trade representative warned at recent talks with the U.S. in Paris that the U.S. investigations could threaten a hard-won stability in economic relations between the two countries.

The talks were meant to lay the groundwork for a Trump visit to Beijing, initially due next week. The U.S. president has delayed the trip because of the war in Iran.



PHOTO: RSS

Farmers from Pheta Rural Municipality-3, Bara planting potatoes using modern potato planter. Farmer saves half the cost compared to traditional farming.

EU APPROVES US TRADE DEAL

AP
Brussels, Mar. 27

The European Parliament voted Thursday to approve a trade deal between Washington and Brussels but with amendments added to protect European interests should the United States fail to hold up its end of the bargain.

The deal was negotiated last July in Turnberry, Scotland, by U.S. President Donald Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. It set a 15% tariff on most goods in an effort to stave off far higher import duties on both sides that might have sent shock waves through economies around the globe.

New language now says that the deal can be suspended if Washington "undermined the objectives of the deal, discriminated against EU economic operators, threatened member states' territorial integrity, foreign and defence policies, or engaged in economic coercion."

That clause was forged because of the tensions over Greenland, said Bernd Lange, a German lawmaker and head of the EU's parliamentary trade committee.

Trump drew widespread condemnation across the 27-nation bloc by threatening to take control of Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of Denmark. He has backed away from the threat, at least for now.

"If this would happen again, then immediately the tariffs would be installed," he said at a press conference after lawmakers voted. He said the the protective modifications were "weatherproofing" the Turnberry deal. The deal will now be further negotiated by EU trade representatives Maroš Šef□ovi□ and his U.S. counterpart Jamieson Greer, who are meeting Friday on the sidelines of the World Trade Organization meeting Yaoundé, Cameroon.

"We need the EU-US deal in force on both sides — delivering real certainty for EU businesses and showing that genuine partnership gets results," Šef□ovi□ said after the vote in Brussels.

There were formally two votes to introduce clauses to the deal. One passed 417-154 and the other 437-144 with dozens of abstentions each.

The U.S. Ambassador to the EU Andrew Pudzer said the vote would provide "stability and predictability" for U.S. and EU businesses and drive economic growth. "We encourage all parties to think to the future and the importance of unleashing opportunities for businesses on both sides of the Atlantic," he said.

Massive bird flu hits three Koshi districts

BY HARI PRASAD KOIRALA
Urlabari, Mar. 27



PHOTO: HARI PRASAD KOIRALA/TRN

Infected chickens being destroyed.

The recent outbreak of bird flu in Jhapa, Morang, and Sunsari districts over the past two weeks has caused the biggest loss ever recorded for farmers in the poultry sector.

According to Dr. Deepa Diwali, Senior Veterinary Officer at the Livestock Division under the Ministry of Industry, Agriculture, and Cooperatives of Koshi Province, bird flu infection has been confirmed in six farms in Morang, eight in Sunsari, and two in Jhapa so far.

In Sunsari alone, the disease has been confirmed in eight farms. However, by Wednesday, chickens, eggs, feed, local chickens, ducks, and empty crates from a total of 12 farms had already been destroyed.

By Thursday evening, poultry in four more farms—three in Sunsari and one in Jhapa—had also been destroyed.

According to Dr. Diwali, 550 broiler chickens, 59,667 layer chickens, 7,300 parent chickens, 726 local breed chickens, seven ducks, and 122,480 eggs have been destroyed by Wednesday evening.

Similarly, 24,238 kg of fodder and 7,750 empty cartons have been destroyed. He said that control measures have been adopted to prevent further damage.

To control the infection, the sale and distribution of chicken and eggs has been banned in the affected areas, he said.

Similarly, the import and export of poultry products have also been tightened. As the infection may have spread through vehicles transporting eggs and feed, such vehicles have been urged not to operate. Dr. Diwali said that this year has seen the largest bird flu outbreak in the past 2–3 years.

The infection, which was initially low pathogenic, has now transformed into highly pathogenic bird flu. Although a rapid response team has been deployed to control the outbreak, preventing its spread has become challenging.

Illegal transportation of poultry has been identified as a major cause of transmission. Authorities have urged that poultry should not be transported without a veterinary certificate.

The infection, which was initially low pathogenic, has now transformed into a highly pathogenic bird flu. Although a rapid response team has been mobilised to control the infection, it has become challenging to stop the spread of the disease.

Illegal transportation of chickens is said to be the main reason for the spread of the infection. The administration has urged people not to transport chickens without a veterinary certificate.

Farmers have been instructed to strictly adopt biosecurity in the farm, control the entry of outsiders, and immediately inform them if suspicious symptoms are seen.

According to Dr. Dev Kumar Darlami, Veterinary Officer and Information Officer of the Ministry's Livestock Division deployed in Jhapa, bird flu has been confirmed in two farms in Damak-10, Jhapa.

He said that 13,000 layer chickens have already been destroyed in one farm, and on Thursday, the ministry's technical team reached the other farm and destroyed 1,500 layer chickens and 37,800 eggs.

According to Dr. Manoj Kumar Mehta, Chief of the Veterinary Hospital and Livestock Service Expert Centre, on Thursday, 485 broiler chickens, 3,730 layer chickens, 4,200 eggs, 60,000 hatching eggs, and 3,700 chicks were destroyed from three farms in Sunsari.

The infection, which started in Sundarharaicha and Urlabari in Morang, has spread through Damak in Jhapa to Itahari in Sunsari. The impact of bird flu has caused significant economic losses in the poultry business.

Farmers are facing severe hardships as the outbreak occurred during the peak production and sales period. Bird flu was first detected in Nepal in January 2009 in Kakarbhitta, Jhapa. Since then, it has appeared sporadically, but this year it has spread widely.

Although the government has made arrangements to compensate farmers affected by the infection, farmers have expressed concern that the process will be delayed.



PHOTO: RATNA SHRESTHA/RSS

Brahmin priests and Buddhist monks reciting auspicious verses at the oath-taking ceremony of Prime Minister Balendra Shah at the President's Office, Sheetal Niwas. Newly appointed Prime Minister Shah took the oath of office and secrecy from President Ramchandra Paudel on Friday after 108 Brahmin priests and 108 Buddhist monks recited the verses.

Wild elephant woe in Sarlahi

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Sarlahi, Mar. 27

Every year, wild elephants come here during the monsoon season to damage the maize crop. Dhruba Prasad Prasai informed that three wild elephants suddenly appeared on Thursday night.

Farmers are worried after wild elephants started damaging crops in Sakhuwa Mouja, Haripur Municipality-2, Sarlahi.

Every year, wild elephants come here during the monsoon season to damage the maize crop. Dhruba Prasad Prasai informed that three wild elephants suddenly appeared on Thursday night.

Prasai said that the group of elephants has damaged the maize crops of Shyam Upreti, Santosh Upreti and Indra Bahadur Khadka. This area, which is used for commercial maize farming, is now surrounded by dense maize fields.

Local farmers have said that they are worried after elephants started damaging the remaining maize fields, after being damaged by wind and hail.

Every year, wild elephants come to various parts of Haripur, Bagmati, Barhathawa, Hariban, Lalbandi and Ishwarpur in Sarlahi and damage the homes and crops of locals.

The elephants have been staying in this area for some time and then returning to Parsa National Park from where they came. Foresters said that wild elephants travel back and forth annually along the paths where their ancestors used to live and walk.

The Forest Office has urged people not to tease elephants and to scare them away by lighting torches and banging dishes when they come into settlements.

87 NEW TB PATIENTS IDENTIFIED IN BAITADI

BY KESHAV RAJ BHATTA
Baitadi, Mar. 27

In the current fiscal year, Baitadi district has reported at least 87 new tuberculosis cases, including three fatalities related to the disease.

According to Khagendra Karki, Information Officer of the Health Office, Baitadi, 66 of those infected with tuberculosis are men and 21 are women. All the patients are taking their medicines regularly, Karki informed.

In the last fiscal year, 203 tuberculosis patients were recorded in the district and 8 died. Although the number of infected people has decreased in the current year, the health office has stated that the challenge remains due to low participation in testing.

Problems arise when tuberculosis patients do not come for testing, Information Officer Karki said, adding that there is difficulty in identifying the disease due to people's indifference to undergoing tests in the camps that are conducted.

The campaign has been intensified by conducting health camps at various places in the district to identify tuberculosis patients.

It is said that the 'Tuberculosis-Free Municipality Campaign' is currently being operated in Surnaya Rural Municipality and Purchaudi Municipality.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, on the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day, the Health Office, Baitadi, organised an interaction programme with media persons and stakeholders.

Drive to build safe house for Jit Bahadur's family

BY SHANKAR KC
Salyan, Mar. 27



PHOTO: SHANKAR KC

The House of Jit Bahadur in the middle of Jungle in Salyan.

The dense forest along the Salyan-Surkhet border lies far from human settlement. After nightfall, nothing can be heard except the sounds of animals and the wind. In the middle of this jungle, the family of Jit Bahadur Sarki from Bangaun, Ward No. 7 of Kalimati Rural Municipality, has endured years of hardship. Forced to survive inside a fragile hut made of wood and straw, the family continues to endure extreme poverty.

For nearly 45 years, Jit Bahadur's family has lived in this forest hut without even the most basic facilities for safe shelter. They have neither a safe house nor a stable source of income. Struggling to get by each day, their biggest dream is simply a small, secure home.

"We don't need anything big," he said. "If only someone could build us a small house to live in."

His wife, Pansari, said that during the monsoon, rainwater seeps into the hut, making it impossible to sleep, while winters bring unbearable cold. Recently, their lives had been further overshadowed by the fear of tiger attacks. After three people were killed by a tiger in the area not long ago, the family now lives in constant anxiety.

"We have a child. If we had a proper house, we could leave the child safely inside and work outside," she said. "But here, we are always afraid. We never know what might happen."

During the months of April and May, frequent forest fires force them to abandon their shelter and flee to safer places.

To earn a living, the family has built a small shed where they raise cows and goats. Although this is their main source of income, it is not enough to sustain them. They own no ancestral property, have no land in their name, and even the crops they grow on public land are often destroyed by animals before they can harvest them. At times, they survive by selling goats and by doing daily wage labour, just enough to manage two meals a day.

According to locals, tiger attacks have been increasing in recent times in Ward No. 7 of Kalimati and surrounding areas. Incidents of livestock being killed in sheds occur almost daily. In such a high-risk environment, it is easy to imagine how unsafe it is for a family of five to live in a weak hut. This is the harsh reality of a family struggling to survive against all odds.

Ward Chairman Mitralal Rijal of Kalimati-7 said that Jit Bahadur's house is located about one and a half kilometres inside the forest, away from the village. Given the family's extremely vulnerable condition, building a safe home has been identified as the top priority. He added that an initiative to raise funds had already begun, with some personal contributions as well.

Although the rural municipality had a corrugated sheet distribution programme, the family has been unable to utilise it due to their lack of financial capacity to build a house.

Under the government's People's Housing Programme, many poor and Dalit families have received homes. However, Jit Bahadur Sarki has yet to benefit from the scheme. Recognising this hardship, a support campaign has now been launched.

The fundraising effort is being led by local social activist Himal Magar in coordination with the ward office. According to him, the campaign has just begun and has so far collected around Rs. 20,000 in contributions.

FIVE HELD IN CONNECTION WITH THEFT

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

The police have arrested five individuals in connection with a burglary at the home of Bikram Thapa Magar in Chandragiri Municipality-15, Tinthana, where gold jewellery, mobile phones, and cash were stolen.

Those apprehended include, Prashanna Adhikari, 22, resident of Tarkeshwar Municipality-10, originally from Phulkharka, Dhadhing Gangajamuna Rural Municipality-7, Lakpa Sherpa, 29, resident of Samakhusi, Kathmandu Metropolitan City-26, originally from Khijidemba Rural Municipality-9, Okhaldhunga, Pradip Gurung, 28, resident of Mhepi, Kathmandu Metropolitan City-26, originally from Kawasoti Municipality-17, Nawalparasi East, Sagar Kami, 28, from Naukunda Rural Municipality-5, Rasuwa and Gaurav Gunaji More, 28, resident of Nayabazaar, Kathmandu Metropolitan City-15, originally from Khorbesti village, Solapur Taluka, Maharashtra, India.

The theft took place on March 12. Following an investigation by the Kathmandu Valley Crime Investigation Office, Prashanna was arrested in Mitrannagar, Lakpa in Kapurdhara, Pradip in Mhepi, Sagar in New Bazaar, and Gaurav in Nayabazaar.

Police also recovered three gold bars weighing 23.3 grams in total and one motorcycle from the group. The suspects have been handed over to the Thankot Police Station for further investigation and legal action.

At 118, Seti Maya is oldest citizen in Nepal

BY ANIL PARAJULI
Hetauda, Mar. 27



PHOTO: ANIL PARAJULI

Seti Maya Pakhrin, believed to be the oldest woman of Nepal.

Seti Maya Pakhrin, a resident of Kolangti in Ward No. 3 of the remote Raksirang Rural Municipality in Makwanpur, is possibly the oldest living citizen in Nepal. According to her citizenship certificate issued by the District Administration Office, Makwanpur, on February 22, 1988, her date of birth is recorded as October 18, 1907 (1964 BS), with her birthplace listed as the then Khairang VDC Ward No. 4. Based on this record, she is currently 118 years old.

After the death of her husband, her family gradually stopped caring for her. With no support, she began living with a relative by social ties, her brother-in-law, seeking shelter. Three years ago, in 2022, Seti Maya Pakhrin married 87-year-old Chandra Bahadur WaiBa. Since then, the two have been living together, supporting each other. Chandra Bahadur has two sons and four daughters.

Neglected by her family, Seti Maya was left uncertain about where to go and how to survive. In the final phase of her life, with no one to rely on, she turned to Chandra Bahadur for support and began living with him. Recalling that time, Chandra Bahadur said, "She was deeply distressed, wondering where to go, where to live, or even where to die. She even thought about ending her life by jumping off a cliff. When she came and said she wanted to stay with me, I agreed."

After his wife passed away, Chandra Bahadur had been living alone for nine years. Now, Seti Maya has become his companion and support. Both elderly and physically weak, they depend on each other. Although Seti Maya used to cook and manage household chores, she recently fractured her hand after falling in the yard and is now on medication. "She used to wash clothes and cook meals, but now her hand is broken. I also have problems with my legs," Chandra Bahadur added.

About a week ago, after her hand was fractured, it was treated at home using traditional methods, with bamboo splints tied around it. They have not gone to the hospital due to fear that doctors might recommend amputation. Instead, they believe the injury will heal with home remedies.

A team, including rural municipality chair Raj Kumar Malla, Ward No. 3 Chair Uttam Waiba, and health workers, visited the elderly couple, honoured them, and provided fruits on behalf of the municipality. After assessing their health condition, arrangements have also been made to send health workers to their homes for necessary treatment. "They are like living gods to us. We will serve them here at their home," Chairman Malla said.

200 Mustang students to sit for SEE

BY HARI KRISHNA SHARMA
Muktinath, Mar. 27

Since there is only one exam centre in Mustang, the only SEE exam centre has been designated at Janahit Secondary School in Jomsom, informed the Information Officer, BK.

Around 200 students from the Mustang district will take part in the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) to be conducted from April 2.

According to the Education Development and Coordination Unit, Mustang, a total of 198 students, including 186 regular students and 12 grade advancement students, will participate in the exam.

Chandra Singh BK, Information Officer of the Education Development and Coordination Unit, Mustang, informed that there are 101 male students and 85 female students from nine community, one private, and two religious schools in Mustang. Similarly, six male students and six female students will participate in the exam for grade advancement.

Since there is only one exam centre in Mustang, the only SEE exam centre has been designated at Janahit Secondary School in Jomsom, informed the Information Officer, BK.

"Those who went out of the district for mobile schools for the examination are returning to participate in the examination. Since the number of students is low, only one centre has been designated in the entire district," Information Officer BK said.

In the district, Janahit Secondary School, Janaadarsha Amar Singh Secondary School, Gyanodaya Secondary School, Yogendra Secondary School, Janabal Secondary School, Janashanti Secondary School, Janahit Khulla, Dhaulagiri Residential Secondary School, Jana Normal Secondary School, Nalanda Buddhist School are in Lower Mustang, while Divya Deep Secondary School of Lomanthang Rural Municipality will participate in the examination from Chosher and Pal and Namgyal Gumba.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.
-Albert Einstein

Civic Consciousness: Heart Of Electoral Democracy



Dev Raj Dahal

The aim of education in Nepal, as described by great sages, is to cultivate awakened persons enthused with core national ideals and universal values who can perform duties to the state of which they are members. Public investment in education is deemed to be the promotion of public goods. It defines human existence as a part of the cosmic web of life and, therefore, their liberty is rule-based, not system-disruptive. The notion of the divinity of people, Janata Janardan, has built an edifice of eternal consciousness of Nepalis, which enabled them to pass judgment of a higher order of dharma-based justice beyond the canons of law and morality. Civic awareness operates in a cycle of karma and a moral balance with the universe.

Civic maturity enables one to act beyond self-interest and self-aggrandisement. This consciousness still resonates among many Nepalis who combine the fusion of classical ideals with the habits of modern democratic practices. One key concern for patriarchal Nepali leadership is how to address the changing nature of political culture brought by the cohort of new generation of leaders who are concerned with generational justice or the concept of togetherness in shaping the nation's future. The cohort of this new generation has defined electoral politics with a new view and has engaged in anti-corruption and anti-cronyism campaigns seeking to set up good governance. Their sheer appeal to the voters' support for a stunning electoral victory emotionally thronged Nepali voters.

Motives

This brought a shift in the organisational and leadership structures of established political parties governed by patriarchal mentality and frequent forging of coalition partners in governance, irrespective of ideological antinomies. Their long reign in power disconnected them from the people's psychology and their cadres, thus remaining far from the constitutional vision of an inclusive and egalitarian society. The dazzling electoral success of this cohort can be attributed to the deep contradiction in the leadership of old parties, their past misdeeds and not taking their promises seriously, while its mobilisation of diaspora, digital platform and electoral campaigns for a vision of good governance. The motives and voting behaviour of Nepalis showed a startling turn.

The modern idea of popular sovereignty entrenched in the Nepali constitution requires people to prudently exercise their democratic rights and duties, commit to constitutionalism, the common good and build social solidarity to improve the ecological, economic, ethical and political standards. Nepali institutions of enlightenment have not done sufficient groundwork to transform Nepali people into active and informed citizens bound together by cultural tradition, constitution, democratic ideals and institutions of the state, not only suborning the market and civil society and treating people paternalistically as infants. The voting turnout on March 5, 2026 parliamentary elections showed a remarkable decline from an average 65 per cent in the past to about 60 per cent.

This demands a longer duration of voters' education and a disaggregated approach among various social strata of the population. The scale of education, skill, intelligence and exposure among them is uneven. This is not only the problem of the Election Commission but also of political parties, media, civil society and educated persons. Non-voting in five polling booths, alienation of certain forces, a culture of sabotage in the establishment parties and poor outreach of voters' education might be attributed for this sordid state of affairs. The other element is the mass migration of Nepali youths to the international labor market and their inability to come to cast their ballots to claim equal opportunity and equal welfare. Still they have played key roles in digital electoral campaigns.

Decline in voting turnout is not a problem so long as people have faith in the social contract, the constitution, political parties and polity and they retain a stake in the election system. What is worrisome is the penchant of all political parties to reform constitution, party and electoral laws and sordid tack of ownership in them thus turning Nepali politics an open-ended. Civic engagement demands institutional participation to make political life orderly. Anomic and extra-constitutional activism can easily erode the legitimacy of the overlapping nature of different modes of Nepali life. Leaders have to evolve a rationality of altering the constitution as per internal needs, not external regime change strategy.

Voting is a civic duty of people based on public-spiritedness and a voluntary act to select the best leaders capable of keeping their hope and trust alive and fostering national identity. It helps to control entropy occurring in the political system, either by law-breaking tradition or unsocialised conduct that no longer commits to democratic values and relishes a passion for power, patronage and privileges. Nepal's invalid voting patterns followed incremental growth of 5.45 per cent despite the growth of the nation's literacy to 76 per cent. Out of 188,03,698 total voters of the nation's 30 million population, the votes of 600,901,5 people have been simply wasted. In the previous two elections, the pattern of invalid votes stood at 5.18 per cent and 5.06 per cent respectively.

This pattern varies across geography and human development indicators. It means educating ordinary Nepalis about the act of voting, proper use of stamping the ballots without crossing the boxes, knowledge about civic and electoral processes, and the code of conduct is vital to increase valid voting turnout and improve their commitment to democracy. The Election Commission, political parties' schools, media, civil society, community organisations and the mass of educated people can reflect, audit and reappraise as to how to reduce the scale of invalid voting, follow proper educational strategies and play creative roles. Non-partisan methods of civic education can have multiplier effects on the cognition, attitude and conduct of people in electoral games.

> One key concern for patriarchal Nepali leadership is how to address the changing nature of political culture brought by the cohort of new generation of leaders who are concerned with generational justice.

Voters' education is a lifelong process. Each election witnesses the addition of about 1 million new voters. But to increase the stake of Nepalis in democracy and preparation for role occupancy in the public and state institutions requires continuous training in civic education, an education about enlightenment. It links theories and ideals of democracy to actual practice and contributes to the creation of civic culture. Civic culture is vital in Nepal. It resolves a tension between democratic aspiration for change and constitutionalism, the balance between rights and duties and modernity and continuity of sane tradition. Civic education equally helps make voters rational and tempers the overflow of irrational forces — instinct, emotion and psychological drives that produce biased and uninformed voters.

Crowd behaviour is impulsive, which can be controlled by moral education, law, institutions of the state and the ability of leadership to socialise voters and cadres. An election is not just a one-day event of casting ballot papers in a ballot box. It is a series of events that involves all pre-election security, political, administrative, financial and campaign environment, election day safety, accessibility and security of voters, authorities, leaders, election posts and materials and post-election milieu linked with the effects of leadership selection, its acceptability by the losers and legitimacy to form the government. It is a reflective phase where leaders of political parties can assess the causes and consequences of their electoral outcome.

The democratic duty of people's engagement lasts till the next election takes place in articulating their demands, mobilisation of opinion, organising deliberation on local and national problems, exerting pressure on leadership for their accountability and transparency in functioning and acting as a bridge between the political world of elites and the social world of the masses. The tendency of Nepali leaders to promote only party-minded socialisation of cadres has indoctrinated them for instrumental politics of vote-catching and vote-maximising, not developing critical civic virtues to differentiate facts from propaganda and misinformation that only generate stirring words, misinformation, false awareness and manipulation of public opinion.

Nepal's every election has shown voters' shifting partisan attachments. This is the reason public policies are often divorced from public opinion. It does not promote consciousness of voters and the ability to rationally judge about leadership, issues, ideologies, organizations and programs beneficial to them. The instrumental nature of politics negates the other, turns militant and in the process undermines lawful opposition that is essential to keep democratic alternatives and democratic equilibrium, whereby leaders do not resort to authoritarian, populist and radical action. This is the reason stability of democracy requires shaping a strong middle path that avoids the extremism of all extremes. Political institutionalization of the Rastriya Swatantra Party is vital.

Electoral trend

Nepal's election has also followed another continuity of the electoral trend of defeating the dominant parties. Nepali psychology to lend support to the victims of power politics is moving. When their aspiration for a better life, liberty and progress was sidelined, they silently expressed their opinion through ballot papers beyond the imagination and expectation of the incumbent political classes. In a nation of minorities, the dominant political parties must have the ability to balance the aspirations of minorities expressed through opposition parties, social movements and other peaceful protests, thus involving a politics of compromise for the optimisation of interests of all sides. This optimisation process harnesses the source of governmental and political stability in the nation.

As Nepali politics shifts from personality of leaders to achievement orientation, from empirical division of society for constituency expansion to building overlapping values across the political spectrum, from order and fixed rule to flexibility and autonomy, voters are also switching from excessive party-mindedness to free-floating, exercising conscience. In this sense, the growing distrust of old established parties marked their political decline. This has changed the style of political communication and, therefore, voters' education too needs strategising outreach strategies so that the consciousness generated thus remains un-deconstructed.

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

Value Of Ordinary Day

IRA BEDZOW

When students or professionals sit down across from me for what I call a "Flourishing Chat," which is a mix between life, professional, and health coaching, they rarely begin with a crisis. More often, they say something like, "I know what I want to do… I just don't feel that great about it." They describe futures that sound impressive: consulting, medicine, law, leadership roles at major companies. The plans are polished. The résumés are strong. From the outside, everything looks ready to go.

Then I ask a different question: "What would your ordinary Tuesday look like at this job?" I don't want to know about the title on their business cards or their starting salary. I want them to tell me what time they'll wake up, who they will spend their days with, what kinds of problems they will solve, what their evenings feel like when they come home tired.

At this point in the conversation, every time, students, and sometimes even professionals, can't answer my questions. The conversation turns into silence. They have thought about what role they want, but they haven't yet thought about what the role entails – or how it fits with the activities they like to do and the people they care about. We are taught early to think of success as a possession. We accumulate credentials, milestones, promotions, and recognition. We pursue outcomes that can be measured and displayed. Yet even if we mark our life journey with milestones, most of our time travelling will be in the everyday steps we take along our way.

How we travel will not only determine which path we take, it will also determine which milestones are worth marking. The philosopher Aristotle distinguished between external goods – wealth, status, honour – and what he called eudaimonia, which is what today we call flourishing or living a good life rooted in activity rather than possession. Flourishing isn't something you own; it's something you do. It is a way of living that aligns one's actions with one's character and in accord with their values.

When I talk about this type of flourishing, most people agree that it sounds nice in theory. Yet when it comes to making personal and professional decisions about their lives, they often revert to their old habits of choosing the path that looks most successful from the outside rather than one they can get excited about actually living day to day. I see this tension regularly with students who feel pulled toward careers they are not sure they will enjoy, but I also see it with professionals at almost every stage of their careers. Ambition is framed as climbing a ladder rather than finding better ways to act on one's values so that you can have greater impact on oneself and others. Success is an external metric rather than an internal measure of alignment.

This isn't anyone's fault. Our culture reinforces the idea that success happens at the finish line. Social media compresses lives into highlight reels: the graduation photo, the new job announcement, the promotion. We see the trophies, not the ordinary weekday mornings that make up a life. I learned this lesson myself early in my career. Like many ambitious young professionals, I believed that hard work meant sacrificing the present so that future happiness could eventually arrive. Like the lesson of the famous "marshmallow test," I thought it demonstrated the capacity to achieve success: A noble ability to endure now so I can enjoy later.

While endurance is an important ability – and it is important to put in the time to become great at what we do – it is equally important to consider what we are enduring for. Is it to achieve for the sake of achievement, or is it to be able to successfully accomplish the things we truly care about doing? Psychologists sometimes talk about the "arrival fallacy," which is the belief that reaching a certain goal will bring lasting fulfilment. The problem is that achieving these goals rarely transforms daily life in the ways we expect. We adapt quickly. We keep running on that "hedonic treadmill." New pressures replace old ones. The future we imagined becomes simply the new normal.

Meanwhile, the real question remains unanswered: Do I actually like how I spend my days? This is why, in these flourishing chats, I push my conversation partners toward the details – towards painting as complete a picture as they can. Not because I want to discourage ambition, but because ambition is healthier when it is grounded in reality and in self-reflection.

This perspective doesn't make decisions easier. In fact, it can make them harder, because we now have to think beyond external validation and ask ourselves what actually sustains us. We must be honest about trade-offs we are willing to make and have the courage to choose paths that may not look impressive from other people's vantage points. Yet, taking this view of success also offers something liberating, because now our everyday isn't a means to a few momentary milestones. Life is embraced through the ordinary days we spend living it.

-Psychology Today

Materialism, Consumption And Individual Identity



Bipyum Chaulagain

Materialism primarily relates an individual's state of well-being to the material possessions that they own. It posits the meaning of action for human beings as the sole purpose of acquiring material goods. Materialistic consumerist rhetoric promotes the idea that the acquisition of material goods leads to happiness, thereby incentivising individuals to engage in consumption. Consumption and the act of purchase are directly related to the formation of identity in correlation with the purchased object. When an individual buys something that falls outside of the scope of need or if the purchase made is repetitive in nature, then an identification with the object of purchase can be said to have been made by the individual's self.

On a psychological level, consumption and materialism can also be a coping mechanism. Such an orientation helps to alleviate anxiety and calm the nerves. Popular methods such as "retail therapy," which relates to the act of shopping to improve one's feelings or moods, exist, which can be looked at as the outlet of a materialistic value-oriented society. Such value orientation decides the purpose of an individual's life and plays a crucial role in the formation of identity. On the other hand, the act of purchase can also have deeper psychological connotations. Individuals identify themself with the object of purchase, or they utilize the act of purchase to alleviate existing anxieties within themselves.

Objectification of relationship

Furthermore, such individuals are also more likely to engage in acts that are detrimental to the environment and ecology as a whole. On a human level, individuals with materialistic value orientations are more likely to objectify their human relationships. This means that such people are more likely to have a perception of relationships that lead to an end and do not view their relationships as an end in themselves. Ecologically, such people have been reported to have a larger carbon footprint and are also less likely to engage in activities such as recycling, which contribute to the environment's overall well-being.

While a plethora of research has shown that excessive buying helps to ease negative feelings and entice positive feelings within an individual, it has other grave effects that escape the circumference of the narrative. Compulsive buying, which is an identified form of extreme buying, is found to have negative implications that far exceed the pleasure that buying provides. Such types of buyers are found to have a lower level of self-esteem, comparatively higher levels of depression, polarized mood states, and anxiety reactions. Among all the forms of extreme buying guilt, embarrassment at their low levels of self-control and financial difficulties are some drawbacks that can be traced.

However, despite the drawbacks that human orientation, such as materialism and consumerism, posits, society as a whole has been organised around the functions of materialism and consumerism. Governments around the world are concerned with the level of citizen participation in the general market as it directly corresponds to the flourishing of the economy. The economic health of a country is measured by metrics such as Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which take into account the involvement of the population in the goods and services market.

> There needs to be a societal emphasis on the progress towards intrinsic human values and their importance in the society before other materialistic values.

Taking social aspects of human society into consideration, materialism has been deeply rooted in cultural and social beliefs. Objects that cost more or are viewed as rare have been established as symbols of status, and a judgement heuristic that takes that into account has become ingrained in human beings. Furthermore, the pursuit of wealth has been instituted as one of the major purposes of human existence, and the general pathway of human life (birth, education, work, retirement, death) revolves primarily around the accumulation of wealth and expenditure of the accumulated wealth for goods and experiences.

Value orientation

As such, it is not possible to change such a value orientation of society, and even attempts at such a task are guaranteed to be futile. Ways such as media literacy about advertisement and digital propaganda go a long way in placing human values and society before materialism. The inclusion of media literacy into classroom curriculum would help youth to be aware about how various forms of propaganda function on a societal level. It teaches students not only about materialistic propaganda but also other manners of propaganda, whether they are political or social. On a personal level, there exist multiple ways for regulation for such orientation, which all revolve around the internalization of values and determining the priority of one's life.

Furthermore, there needs to be a societal emphasis on the progress towards intrinsic human values and their importance in the society before other materialistic values. The moderation of working hours with more emphasis on personal development that is not directed towards the development of self in order to be more appealing to employers or job roles but towards the enrichment of the soul must be attempted by every individual. In essence, what society has offered human beings as the methods for coping with mortality and everyday hassles must be judged before the purpose and the essence of being a human being.

(Chaulagain is a psychology student at St. Xavier's College, Maitighar.)

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

March 28, 1976

Biratnagar To Have Automatic Lines This Year

Biratnagar, March 27: Biratnagar will be having automatic telephone lines in early May this year, reports RSS.

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READER'S MAIL

Pollution Puts Public Health At Rick



This is in reference to a news report *"Air pollution remains a major public health issue in Nepal"*, published in this daily on 26 March. Air pollution has become an everyday reality in Nepal, especially in Kathmandu, and it is deeply worrying. The recent report clearly shows how serious the situation has become, with pollution levels remaining dangerously high and affecting people's health on a large scale.

Authorities and citizens alike should take note of the fact that air pollution accounts for almost 19 per cent of all deaths in the nation. The situation is still getting worse due to major sources like open waste burning, industrial operations, vehicle emissions, and forest fires. Cross-border pollution and seasonal factors exacerbate the issue. Children, the elderly, and pregnant women are among the vulnerable groups most at risk for long-term health issues like heart problems and respiratory disorders. Effective policy implementation is still lacking despite awareness campaigns and advisories. The government must ensure stricter regulations like investing in clean energy infrastructure, promoting sustainable transportation and active monitoring of air quality. On other hand citizens should also adopt environmentally responsible practices.

Bhawana Jain
Maitighar, Kathmandu

TAILPIECE

A man walks into a bar and says to the bartender, "I bet you fifty dollars that I can bite my right eye." The bartender says, "Yeah, right! I've never seen anyone do that!" So the man takes out his glass eye and bites it. The angry bartender pays the man his fifty dollars and the man walks away.

He comes back half an hour later and says, "I bet you fifty dollars I can bite my left eye." Now the bartender becomes really skeptical. She says, "I just saw you walk in here -- you can't be blind!" So he takes out his fake teeth and bites his left eye. The bartender pays him his money and he walks away.

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A man went to the police station wishing to speak with the burglar who had broken into his house the night before.

"You'll get your chance in court," said the desk sergeant.

"No, no, no!" insisted the man. "I want to know how he got into the house without waking my wife. I've been trying to do that for years!"

Israel launches fresh strikes on Iran

AP
Dubai, Mar. 27



PHOTO: AP

Pro-government supporters chant slogans and wave Iranian flags during a rally, in western Tehran, Iran.

Israel launched a new wave of strikes on Iran on Friday after U.S. President Donald Trump claimed talks on ending the war were going well and gave Tehran more time to open the Strait of Hormuz, though there have been no signs of Iran backing down.

With stock markets reeling and economic fallout from the war extending far beyond the Middle East, Trump is under growing pressure to end Iran's chokehold on the strait, a strategic waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil is usually shipped.

The United States has offered Iran a 15-point proposal for a ceasefire that includes it relinquishing control of the strait, but at the same time has ordered thousands more troops to the region — possibly in preparation for a military attempt to wrest the waterway from Iran's tight grip.

With time running out on a deadline set by Trump for Iran to open the strait, after which he had threatened to destroy Iran's energy plants, he pushed his self-imposed deadline back to April 6 on Thursday, saying that talks on ending the conflict were going "very well." Iran, however, maintains it is not engaged in any negotiations.

Israel's attack Friday "in the heart of Tehran" targeted sites used by Iran to produce ballistic missiles and other weapons, the Israeli military said. It also hit missile launchers and storage sites in western Iran.

Smoke also rose over Beirut, although Israel did not immediately report hitting the Lebanese capital, while air raid sirens sounded in Israel as the military said it was working to intercept Iranian missiles. Iran kept firing missiles and drones at its Gulf Arab neighbors, with sirens warning of attacks in Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia's Defense Ministry said it shot down both missiles and drones targeting the capital, Riyadh.

Kuwait said both its Shuwaikh Port in Kuwait City and the Mubarak Al Kabeer Port to the north, which is under construction as part of China's "Belt and Road" initiative, had sustained "material damage" in attacks.

It appeared to be one of the first times a Chinese-affiliated project in the Gulf Arab states came under assault in the war. Throughout the conflict, China has continued to purchase Iranian crude.

After Wall Street's worst day since the war began, Asian shares mostly fell Friday over growing doubts about the chances of de-escalation. Oil prices rose again, the Brent crude, the international standard, at $107 a barrel in morning trading, up more than 45% since Israel and the U.S. attacked Iran on Feb. 28 to start the war.

Iran's stranglehold on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, has caused growing concerns of a global energy crisis, and appears part of a strategy to get the U.S. to back down by roiling the world economy. A Gulf Arab bloc said Thursday that Iran is now exacting tolls from ships to ensure their safe passage through the waterway.

Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff said Washington had delivered a 15-point "action list" to Iran for a possible ceasefire, using Pakistan as an intermediary. The list includes restrictions on Iran's nuclear program and re-opening the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has rejected the U.S. offer and put forth its own five-point proposal, which includes reparations and recognition of its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

UN demands Syria Druze probe

AP
Beirut, Mar. 27

A United Nations inquiry said Friday that there is "no indication" Syria has investigated violations its forces committed during sectarian clashes last summer in which at least 1,700 people died, the vast majority from the Druze religious minority.

In a scathing report, the U.N. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic urged Syria's government to investigate the leadership of its security forces that allowed or organized sectarian attacks against the Druze community.

The report estimates about 200,000 people were displaced in the violence in Sweida, the heartland of Syria's Druze community. Among the dead were almost 200 women and children.

In mid-July, armed groups affiliated with Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri clashed with local Bedouin clans, spurring intervention by government forces who effectively sided with the Bedouins.

Targeted sectarian attacks, first against the religious minority group, and later the Bedouin community, and a series of abductions further soured ties.

Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa has vowed to investigate the events and hold perpetrators on all sides to account, including government forces.

U.N. investigators spent weeks in Syria, interviewing more than 400 survivors, officials, and alleged perpetrators. They visited affected areas, including those under government control and those under de facto rule of an Israeli-backed umbrella group of local armed Druze factions.

Damascus needs to address whether "certain practices are tolerated" within elements of its security agencies, the report said, referring to the violence. It called for identifying members of the leadership who allowed it to happen and removing them.

Armed tribal fighters from other parts of the country mobilized into Sweida to support government forces and elements of the authorities appeared "unwilling or unable" to confront them, the report said.

The dayslong summer clashes in Sweida marked a setback for al-Sharaa, who has been striving to assert his government's full authority across the war-torn country and appeal to Syria's minorities. Though some prisoner swaps have taken place, there has been no viable reconciliation. Human rights group criticize Damascus for the lack of viable accountability measures for attacks on civilians.

The report described "widespread looting and systematic burning" during the government-led advance, as well as killings and abductions of civilians. Tribal fighters targeted almost every home in 35 villages in the province that were mixed or Druze-majority.

"Particularly, the Druze population has been subjected to severe sectarian violence, leading to massive displacement that is expected to persist for an extended period," the report said.

Some of the bodies were found months after the ceasefire, some on streets or in fields, and in other instances burned or mutilated, the report said.

German rail losses grow, trouble looms

AFP
Frankfurt, Mar. 27

Germany's beleaguered state railway operator Deutsche Bahn said Friday its losses widened last year and warned passengers to brace for less-than-perfect service for years to come.

Deutsche Bahn lost 2.3 billion euros ($2.6 billion) in 2025, compared to a loss of 1.8 billion euros a year earlier, hit by a 1.4-billion euro blow to the value of the long-distance division, DB Fernvekhr.

In bad news for long-suffering passengers, DB head Evelyn Palla told a press conference that the write-off resulted from expectations of a poor service stretching into the future. "We have reassessed our future revenue forecasts, basing them on the actual state of our infrastructure," she said. "And this remains inadequate."

Long derided at home, DB made headlines abroad during the 2024 European Football Championships after fans and even players arrived at destinations hours later than planned. Almost 40 percent of long-distance services arrived late last year -- not including trains that were cancelled, which are not counted in punctuality statistics. Germany's government has promised to borrow and spend billions on renewing the network. But Transport Minister Patrick Schnieder in September pushed back a punctuality target of 70 percent for long-distance trains to 2029 from 2026.

> There is a long way ahead of us," she said. "It will take at least 10 years to get German railways back into good shape. We need to recognise this reality and put it into our numbers."

Speaking on Friday, Palla said it would take time for the railway to improve both its financial performance and its service. "There is a long way ahead of us," she said. "It will take at least 10 years to get German railways back into good shape. We need to recognise this reality and put it into our numbers."

Though fully-owned by the government, DB is nevertheless under pressure to boost profitability.

US jobless claims rise to 210,000

AP
Washington, Mar. 27

The number of Americans applying for jobless aid inched up last week as employers continue to retain workers despite a labor market that has weakened considerably in the past year.

U.S. applications for jobless aid for the week ending March 21 rose by 5,000 to 210,000 from the previous week's 205,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's right in line with the 210,000 new filings analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet were expecting.

Filings for unemployment benefits are considered representative of U.S. layoffs and are close to a real-time indicator of the health of the job market.

While weekly layoffs have remained in a healthy range mostly between 200,000 and 250,000 for the past few years, a number of high-profile companies have announced job cuts recently, including Morgan Stanley,Block, UPSand Amazon.

Earlier this month, the Labor Department reported that U.S. employers unexpectedly cut 92,000 jobs in February, a sign that the labor market remains under strain. Revisions also slashed 69,000 jobs from December and January payrolls, nudging the unemployment rate up to 4.4%.



PHOTO: AP

A now hiring sign sits on the side of the road in Garland, Texas.

The surprisingly weak employment picture in February adds to the economic uncertainty over the war with Iran, which has caused oil prices to surge more than 40% and saddled business and consumers with higher costs.

This comes at a time when inflation was already relatively high in the U.S.

The Commerce Department recently reported that the Fed's preferred inflation gauge rose 2.8% in January compared with a year earlier. That's above the Fed's 2% target and the latest sign that prices were persistently elevated even before the Iran war caused spikes in oil and gas costs.

That persistent inflation, combined with the uncertainties brought on by the conflict in the Middle East, led the Fed to leave its benchmark lending rate alone at its last meeting. Central bank officials voted to raise the rate three times to close 2025 out of concern for a weakening job market.

Scientists dive beneath polar ice

AP
Kilpisjärvi, Finland Mar. 27



PHOTO: AP

A diver swims under the ice during a Polar Scientific Diving class in Kilpisjärvi, Finland.

As bubbles rippled across the frigid Finnish lake, diver Daan Jacobs emerged from a hole carved out of the thick, crackling ice.

The journey had taken him 8 meters (26 feet) beneath the surface, where sunlight filtered through the Arctic ice and fish swam around a rock formation.

It's a remote place few will ever see, especially in winter, when snow blankets the ice and temperatures on land approach minus 40 degrees in both Celsius and Fahrenheit.

But Jacobs, a biodiversity adviser in the Netherlands, is one of a growing number of fortunate underwater explorers.

He was part of the Polar Scientific Diving class in the far north of Finland earlier this month, a program designed by the Finnish Scientific Diving Academy to train the next generation of scientists and researchers to dive beneath the Arctic and Antarctic ice to study the flora and fauna below.

"The view is beautiful," Jacobs said, gulping for air following his 45-minute dive.

The Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of the planet. From impacting worldwide weather patterns to making the polar bear population smaller, weaker and hungrier, because they rely on the sea ice to hunt from, higher temperatures at the North Pole spell disaster for the entire globe.

In Antarctica, meanwhile, global warming is leading to melting of ice sheets, prompting sea level rise and disrupting ocean ecosystems.

So scientists need to study what's underneath the remaining Arctic — and Antarctic — ice, and determine how climate change is affecting the plants and animals that have traditionally survived along the seafloor with little to no sunlight. But carrying out such research requires specialized scuba diving skills plus the proper scientific background — qualifications that experts say only a few hundred people in the world currently have.

The Finnish Scientific Diving Academy's class aims to not only train more divers, but also to convince the world that the polar ice crisis requires additional research.

"Because it is melting so fast, we need to have more people deployed there — more science to be done — to understand better what happens," said Erik Wurz, a marine biologist and one of the class's scientific diving instructors. "We have to do more and we need to be fast to save this unique ecosystem in the Arctic, but also the Antarctic."

And in a world that's increasingly outsourcing work to artificial intelligence and robots, British Antarctic Survey marine biologist Simon Morley said that human hands are still necessary for this.

Dragging nets across the seafloor would destroy the habitat, and a remotely operated submersible or robot can usually only pick up one specimen at a time.

During each 10-day session, the academy's instructors drill a dozen experienced divers on a frozen lake at the University of Helsinki's Kilpisjärvi Biological Station. The program began in 2024 and the demand has allowed them to add a second session per year.

The participants range from marine and freshwater biologists and other scientists to highly skilled recreational divers and documentary filmmakers.

Ruari Buijs, a marine biology and oceanography student at the University of Plymouth in England, ultimately wants to work in Antarctica and research marine megafauna. He enrolled in this month's polar diving class in an effort to be more employable upon graduation.

"I thought this would be a very good stepping stone toward that goal," he said.

Meanwhile, Caroline Chen, a scientific diver and research assistant in Germany, said it's her dream to dive in the polar regions. She believes that her experience in this course will help her design future experiments in such challenging conditions.

The students must learn more than just diving under ice that's nearly a meter (around three feet) thick and into water temperatures that hover just above freezing. For starters, there's the frigid air temperatures and whipping winds over Lake Kilpisjärvi.

That challenges the topside support team, which must operate equipment to keep the diver safe while fending off their own risk of frostbite. They also have to learn how to become safety divers in case of an emergency, like if the primary diver can't find the hole in the ice to surface after 45 minutes below.

But once they're underwater, the divers say it's an incredible experience. During this month's session, the group dived beneath ice roughly 80 centimeters (around 2½ feet) thick.

PRISM

3 kittens rescued from a car engine

California: Animal care personnel in California's Los Angeles County rescued three kittens found taking shelter in the engine compartment of a vehicle.

The County of Los Angeles Palmdale Animal Care Center said on social media that a local resident visited recently to report meowing coming from under the hood of their car.

An officer "was able to pull each kitten out of the engine completely unharmed (but a little dirty)," the post said. The kittens have been placed in a foster home while they recover from their "bumpy ride."

Woman's pizza run nets $2M

Michigan: A Michigan woman made a pizza run on her lunch break and ended up winning a record-breaking $822,159 Club Keno The Jack prize from the Michigan Lottery.

Shelby Township resident Sue Strong, 65, told Michigan Lottery officials she was picking up pizza on her lunch break and dipped into Party Palace Liquor on Schoenherr Road in Shelby Township for a Club Keno ticket.

"I regularly play Club Keno, and I always add The Jack to my ticket," Strong said. "I went out and bought a Club Keno ticket and pizza on my lunch break and then watched the drawings on my phone while I ate. When I saw all my The Jack numbers come in and the jackpot reset to $10,000, I was shocked! It was nerve wracking and exciting, and to be honest, I've hardly slept since!"

Lottery officials said Strong's $822,159 jackpot is a new record for Club Keno The Jack. The previous record was a $677,141 jackpot won in March 2025.

Strong said her winnings will go toward paying bills, sharing with her family and giving a boost to her savings.

Agencies

TODAY IN HISTORY

1920– Palm Sunday tornado outbreak of 1920 affects the Great Lakes region and Deep South states.
1939– Spanish Civil War: Generalissimo Francisco Franco conquers Madrid after a three-year siege.
1941– World War II: First day of the Battle of Cape Matapan in Greece between the navies of the United Kingdom and Australia, and the Royal Italian navy.
1942– World War II: A British combined force permanently disables the Louis Joubert Lock in Saint-Nazaire in order to keep the German battleship Tirpitz away from the mid-ocean convoy lanes.
1946– Cold War: The United States Department of State releases the Acheson–Lilienthal Report, outlining a plan for the international control of nuclear power.



PHOTO: RSS

Newly appointed Prime Minister Balendra Shah chairing the first meeting of the Council of Ministers in Singha Durbar on Friday.

Minister Gurung assumes office

'Commission's report on Gen-Z Movement must be implemented'

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

Newly appointed Minister for Home Affairs Sudhan Gurung has emphasised that the recommendations of the Gen-Z Movement Investigation Commission must be implemented immediately.

Assuming office at the Home Ministry on Friday, Minister Gurung said that the report prepared by the Karki Commission would be put into action without delay.

"As per the Prime Minister's decision regarding the Gen Z Movement, it must be implemented immediately. No one will be spared," he said.

The government had formed a fact-finding commission under former Justice Gauri Bahadur Karki to investigate the Gen Z Movement of September 8 and 9, 2025.

Outgoing Prime Minister Sushila Karki had decided to implement the commission's recommendations.

Minister Gurung said that the Home Ministry holds the primary responsibility for implementing the report. "The Home Ministry takes the first responsibility for executing the report. Accordingly, I will instruct the heads of security agencies," he said.

According to the Ministry's Spokesperson, and Joint Secretary Ananda Kafle, Minister Gurung also instructed the subordinate bodies to organise traffic management in such a way that the people do not face inconvenience due to VIP movements.

Minister Gurung made it clear that blocking roads for ministers or other distinguished persons, leaving citizens stranded in traffic for hours, is no longer acceptable. Minister Gurung instructed the Home Secretary to revise related procedures to prevent such incidents.

He has further committed to fast-tracking services for the people.

Minister Gurung stated that he would work in accordance with the mandate of the Gen-Z movement and requested the police to report any issues faced by citizens so that they could be addressed under the coordination of the Home Ministry.



PHOTO: SAGAR BASNET\TRN

Newly appointed Home Minister Sudhan Gurung assuming the office at the Home Ministry at Singha Durbar on Friday.

Minister Gurung also stressed the importance of providing citizens with easier access to services. To achieve this, he called for an effective 'single-window system', where applications submitted to one place would be processed efficiently.

He further warned that anyone caught taking bribes would face immediate action and urged the public to report any such instances to the police without delay.

Minister Gurung emphasised action over words: "I prefer to act rather than speak much. I will deliver results," he said.

He also urged media organisations to act as partners in national development and advised them to exercise heightened vigilance in news reporting.

Meanwhile, families of those who lost their lives in the Gen-Z Movement have congratulated Home Minister Gurung upon his appointment as the Minister.

From Gen-Z Movement commander to ministers

Minister Gurung, who rose to prominence during the protests on September 8 and, has formally entered politics with the Rastriya Swatantra Party ahead of the elections.

On Friday, he was sworn in as new Minister of Home Affairs.

Elected as a Member of Parliament from Gorkha-1 in the recent elections, Sudhan, who led protesters during the Gen-Z movement, will now oversee the country's security forces, including the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force, under the Home Ministry.

Minister Gurung initially described himself as merely distributing water during the protests, but by the end, he established himself as the 'commander of the movement.'

He played a decisive role in halting the protests and negotiating with the army, as well as in the process of selecting the interim Prime Minister.

He was instrumental in discussions with Chief of the Army Staff Ashok Raj Sigdel during the formation of the post-protest election government, initially supporting Balendra Shah as Prime Minister.

However, Balen expressed his intention to contest the election independently rather than lead the interim government. Following this, Sudhan and his team approached Sushila Karki for the Prime Ministerial post. He also participated in dialogue with President Ramchandra Paudel on behalf of the Gen-Z movement during this period.

From the dissolution of Parliament to the formation of the Karki-led government, Sudhan consistently acted as a leader of the protesters.

Minister Gurung was initially uncertain about contesting the elections himself, at times suggesting he would return to social work rather than political office. He also serves as President of the Hami Nepali Foundation.

Even after proportional representation lists were submitted, Sudhan's decision to run remained unclear, while Balen, Rabi Lamichhane, and Kulman Ghiisng made separate preparations.

Sudhan actively worked to bring Balen, Rabi, and Kulman together, facilitating unity between Balen and Rabi and positioning Balen as a senior leader of the Rastriya Swatantra Party and future Prime Minister.

Sudhan continued to play a role in consolidating the Rastriya Swatantra Party, even when Kulman Ghising prepared to contest separately with the Ujyalo Nepal Party. Though Kulman eventually parted ways, Sudhan entered the Rastriya Swatantra Party alongside Balen. He campaigned from Gorkha-1 while Balen contested from Jhapa-5.

Following his election with 29,896 votes, speculation about his ministerial role was rife.

Born on July 9, 1987 in Chumnubri Rural Municipality-3, Sirdibas, Gorkha, Minister Gurung spent his childhood in Kathmandu.

After completing his studies in the capital, he trained in disaster management and emerged as a social activist following the 2015 earthquake, raising both national and international aid for relief and rescue operations.

Minister Timilsina assumes office, emphasises teamwork

RSS
Kathmandu, Mar. 27



Newly appointed Minister for Communication and Information Technology, Dr. Bikram Timilsina, assumed office at the ministry in Singha Durbar on Friday.

Addressing the employees, the heads and representatives of line bodies after assuming the office, Minister Timilsina shared that fulfilling the responsibility rather than attaining a position is his priority.

He appealed one and all to restore the people's trust in politics and administration, adding the country is seeking an outlet. "We should raise hope by improving the situation where a message is being disseminated that politics is wrong," he stressed.

Minister Timilsina mentioned that the Ministry would fully support in accordance with Prime Minister Balendra Shah's 'Mission' and 'Vision'.

He urged the employees to work with a sense of teamwork using their honesty and capability.

Similarly, Secretary at the Ministry, Laxmi Kumari Basnet, briefed the Minister about the Ministry's major activities, policy, and plan as well as law.

NC, UML congratulate PM Shah

RSS
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

The Nepali Congress (NC) has congratulated newly appointed Prime Minister Balendra Shah and members of the Council of Ministers.

The party also extended best wishes for their successful tenure.

Posting a message in social media on Friday, party President Gagan Kumar Thapa congratulated Prime Minister Shah and the newly appointed ministers, wishing them success in their new role and responsibilities. Thapa also pledged that the Nepali Congress would provide constructive support and cooperation to the government's positive efforts aimed at national development, protection of citizens' rights and promotion of good governance.

Likewise, CPN (UML) chairman KP Sharma Oli has also congratulated Prime Minister Shah and his newly formed cabinet.

Taking to social media, Oli, wrote, "Heartfelt congratulations to senior leader of the Rastriya Swatantra Party, Shah, on his appointment as Prime Minister." Oli, also former Prime Minister, added, "I also extend my best wishes to Prime Minister Shah and all members of a new cabinet for a successful tenure."

Banke witness sharp surge in cataract patients

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Nepalgunj, Mar.27

Rural areas of Banke experience a sharp increase in the number of cataract patients. Although eye treatment camps have been organised in different rural areas of the district from time to time, the district is witnessing a high number of cataract patients.

According to Fateh Bal Eye Hospital in Nepalgunj, many cataract patients were found in free eye treatment camps conducted in various local levels of Banke last year, and this year, the number of such patients continues to rise.

Similarly, a significant number of cataract patients have also been identified in the ongoing free eye screening camp in Kohalpur Municipality. According to Mayor Purna Acharya of Kohalpur Municipality, 985 people received services in a three-day free eye treatment camp jointly organised by Tilganga Eye Foundation and Kohalpur Municipality. Among them, 168 cataract patients were identified who require surgery.

He further informed that 168 patients have been selected for cataract operations, and they will receive free surgical treatment.

According to the municipality, 266 patients received eye check-up services at a camp held at the Urban Health Promotion Centre in Ward No. 15.

Among them, 177 were women and 89 were men. During the screening, 42 patients were selected for cataract surgery.

Likewise, in a camp held at Rajhena Health Post in Ward No. 4, 355 people received services, including 225 women and 130 men. Among them, 69 patients were selected for cataract surgery.

Similarly, in a camp conducted at the Basic Health Service Centre in Ward No. 2 on Monday, 274 people received services.

Among them, 167 were women and 107 were men, and 58 patients were prescribed cataract surgery.

Through these free eye treatment camps, patients suffering from eye-related problems in rural and urban areas are being provided free services, helping expand access to treatment, said Mayor Acharya.

The free eye camp in Kohalpur will continue until March 29. Cataract surgeries for the selected patients will be conducted free of cost at Kohalpur Municipal Hospital.

Balendra Shah sworn-in...

Sudurpashchim Province has two ministers, both proportional representation members from Kanchanpur. Gita Chaudhary has been appointed Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development, while Pratibha Rawal has been appointed Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation.

From Koshi Province, Nisha Mehta has been appointed Minister for Health and Population as well as Drinking Water, representing Sunsari.

Meanwhile, Dipak Kumar Shah, elected from Mahottari-2 in Madhes Province, has been appointed Minister for Labour and Employment.

India, Pakistan...

Likewise, the United States of America (USA) congratulated the newly appointed Prime Minister Shah. Taking to a social media, Facebook on Friday, the US Embassy in Kathmandu, congratulated PM Shah and expressed willingness to work with Nepal to advance mutual prosperity and regional stability.

SEE preparations...

Answer sheet evaluation will begin immediately after the exams, with results expected to be published in the first week of July.

However, NEB officials noted several challenges due to the tight schedule caused by the March 5 elections, which delayed the SEE by two weeks. A possible fuel supply shortage has also been identified as a major concern, as it could directly affect transportation.

"Examinations have been delayed by two weeks due to the elections. As a result, we will have only 75 days after the examinations, despite the responsibility to publish results within 90 days.

Nevertheless, we will complete all examination tasks within the stipulated timeframe. We have also considered potential challenges, such as fuel shortages, which may create transportation difficulties," Controller Adhikari added.

North Korea, Belarus sign friendship treaty

AP
Pyongyang, Mar. 27

Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held talks in North Korea's capital on Thursday and signed a friendship and cooperation treaty as the two Russian allies draw closer in the face of their confrontations with the U.S.-led West.

Lukashenko, who was in Pyongyang on a two-day official visit, hailed the document as "fundamental," and said that relations between the two countries are "entering a new stage," according to his press service. North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Friday that the leaders discussed boosting high-level cooperation and visits and exchanged their views on unspecified "international and regional issues of mutual concern."

Belarus is a close ally of Russia. Lukashenko allowed Moscow to use Belarusian territory as a staging ground for the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and later authorized the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus.

Kim has also tilted his foreign policy toward Moscow in recent years, sending thousands of troops and large quantities of weapons to support Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine while portraying the North as part of a united front against Washington.



PHOTO: AP

North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, right, and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko shake hands in Pyongyang, on Thursday.

Lukashenko and Kim last met in September 2025 in Beijing.

"Yes, we didn't have close cooperation, largely due to our own fault. But I am sincerely pleased to note that cooperation has now significantly intensified," Lukashenko said after Thursday's meeting.

Leveraging his closer ties with Putin, Kim has been pursuing an increasingly assertive foreign policy aimed at expanding relations with countries confronting Washington as he seeks to break out of isolation and strengthen his regional influence.

Chang Yoon-jeong, a spokesperson for South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles affairs related to North Korea, said the meeting with Lukashenko aligns with Kim's foreign policy embracing the ideas of a "multipolar world order" and an "anti-West alliance." The countries could also be pursuing stronger three-way cooperation with Moscow, she said.

Lukashenko, however, has also been improving relations with the Trump administration, which announced Thursday it had eased restrictions on a group of Belarus-linked financial and potash companies. The move comes as the war in the Middle East squeezes global fertilizer supplies and limits access for some U.S. farmers.

Seto Machhindranath chariot procession moves through Kathmandu streets

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

The festival of Seto Machhindranath, known locally as Jana Baha Dyo, began on Thursday with the pulling of its chariot from Teendhara Pathshala, Jamal, to Ason. The procession continued on Friday, with the chariot pulled from Ason via Keltol, Indrachowk to Hanumandhoka.

President Ram Chandra Paudel, in his capacity as head of state, also came to worship Seto Machhindranath on Thursday evening.

On the third day, the chariot will be pulled from Hanumandhoka to Lagan via Chikanmugal, Jaisedeval, and Jyavahal. On the fourth day, a circumambulation of the sacred tree, considered the mother of Machhindranath, will be performed in Lagan.

On the final day, March 30, the idol will be placed on a khat in Lagan and carried to Janabahal via Jyabahal, Dya La, Yutunani, Kohiti, Bhimsensthan, Maru, Yatkha, Naradevi, Kilagh, and Bhedasingh.

The chariot procession of Seto Machhindranath begins every year on the eighth day of Chaitra Shukla Ashtami. It starts from Jamal in Kathmandu and ends in Janabahal on the full moon day of Chaitra Shukla Astami. Seto Machhindranath is worshipped as the god of rain and prosperity, as well as a deity who removes evil, protects from premature death, and safeguards people from unrest and insecurity.

People participate in the Jatra believing that worshipping Machhindranath invites Goddess Laxmi into their homes, bringing happiness, peace, and prosperity.

According to legend, in ancient times, a farmer discovered a white statue of Machhindranath while digging a field in Jamal, Kathmandu. When the statue was placed in his storeroom, there was no shortage of food, and the household experienced happiness, peace, and prosperity. Diseases and ailments also began to disappear. It was believed that the idol was divine and not appropriate to keep at home. Therefore, it was taken from Jamal and placed in Janabahal. Since then, the chariot procession has begun from Jamal, the place where the idol was found.

The festival of Seto Machhindranath, a deity revered by both Hindus and Buddhists, lasts for five days, from Chaitra Shukla Ashtami to the full moon. The deity is called Seto Machhindranath because the idol is white. Other names include Karunamaya and Arya Avalokiteshvara.



PHOTO: SUJAN GURUNG

Rath Yatra of Seto Machhindranath (Arya Avalokiteshwar), revered as the god of rain and seasons.

THE OSCARS ARE LEAVING HOLLYWOOD

AP
Los Angeles, Mar. 27

The Oscars are leaving Hollywood.

In 2029, the year the broadcast moves from ABC to YouTube, the ceremony itself will relocate from its long-time home at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood to downtown Los Angeles, specifically the Peacock Theater, 9 miles (14.5 kilometres) away. The Academy announced on Thursday that it has reached a 10-year agreement with AEG, which operates the L.A. Live complex where the Peacock Theater is situated.

It is a surprising move, given that the Dolby Theatre was developed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences itself, expressly as a home for the Oscars. The ceremony has been held there since 2002 (with the exception of the COVID-driven scaled-down show at Union Station in 2021) and has provided an especially stable home for the awards, which have never remained in a single venue for such a long period. In its early years, the Oscars moved between various Los Angeles hotels before transitioning to theatres in the mid-1940s.

The downtown Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, a fine arts facility that is home to the LA Opera, became closely associated with the Oscars when it hosted the ceremony from 1968 to 1986. The event then alternated between the Chandler and the Shrine Auditorium, next to the University of Southern California, until the long-term move to Hollywood.

The Dolby Theatre will continue to host the ceremony during its final years on ABC, concluding with the 100th Academy Awards in 2028.

The Peacock Theater is located next to the Crypto.com Arena, home to the Los Angeles Lakers and Kings. The theatre has hosted the Emmy Awards almost every year since 2008 and, in recent years, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremonies.

In its announcement, the Academy stated that, under the agreement, AEG will make significant upgrades to the theatre and its technical setup, and will "collaborate closely with the Academy to incorporate bespoke design elements needed to accommodate the Oscars ceremony."

The Peacock Theater, previously known as the Nokia Theatre and Microsoft Theater, opened in 2007 as the then-Staples Center site expanded into the L.A. Live entertainment complex. It hosted concerts by the Eagles and the Chicks to mark its opening.

The theatre's capacity of around 7,000 is approximately double that of the Dolby. Its plaza is also larger and more open-air than the Dolby's Ovation Hollywood complex, which has more of an enclosed shopping centre feel. Like Hollywood, L.A. Live also features multiple hotels, essential for the logistics of the Oscars.

There is also a cinema on-site, though its Regal multiplex lacks the historic character of the TCL (formerly Grauman's) Chinese Theatre next to the Dolby on Hollywood Boulevard.

"For the 101st Oscars and beyond, the Academy looks forward to closely collaborating with AEG to make L.A. Live the perfect backdrop for our global celebration of cinema," the Academy's CEO Bill Kramer and its president, Lynette Howell Taylor, said in a joint statement.

Taylor Swift triumphs with seven iHeartRadio Awards

REUTERS
Los Angeles, Mar. 27

Music superstar Taylor Swift claimed a leading seven trophies at the iHeartRadio Music Awards on Thursday, including Artist of the Year and Best Pop Album for her upbeat record The Life of a Showgirl.

On stage at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, Swift urged artists to give themselves time to develop their craft without seeking immediate feedback online. She revealed that, as a teenager, she had spent "thousands of hours" playing guitar, writing songs, making mistakes and learning privately.

"I'm a firm believer that anything you feed your mind, it will internalise, and anything you feed the Internet it will attempt to kill," she said, holding the Album of the Year trophy. "And I don't want that for your dreams."

Swift, wearing a seafoam green velvet corset and matching miniskirt with light pink bead accents, also took home Song of the Year and Best Music Video for The Fate of Ophelia.

Olympic figure skating gold medallist Alysa Liu presented the Artist of the Year award to Swift, who praised Liu's Olympic performance. "You brought me so much happiness," Swift said.

Earlier, Swift told the crowd that Showgirl was inspired by the positivity she felt from fans during her



Swift also credited her daily life with fiancé Travis Kelce for similar energy. "So thanks for all the vibes," she said to the NFL star, who was seated in the front row wearing a brown leather jacket. The couple announced their engagement in August.

Fifth Ilam Literature Festival in May

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

The fifth edition of the Ilam Literature Festival is all set to begin on May 1 and 2, promising a vibrant confluence of literature, culture, and tourism.

The festival is being organised jointly by Ilam Nagar Sahitya Pratisthan and Ilam Sahitya Samaj.

Conceived as an international-level event, it seeks to seamlessly bridge literature and tourism while positioning Ilam on the global cultural map.

Held annually with the aim of promoting Ilam's tourism through literary engagement, this year's edition is expected to be especially grand. According to a press statement issued on Friday by Prakash Thamsuhang, president of Ilam Nagar Sahitya Pratisthan, preparations are underway to deliver a richly curated and expansive programme.

The festival will host thought-provoking discussions and dialogues across a wide spectrum of themes, including literature, art, spirituality, culture, politics, tourism, environment, and technology. Distinguished writers, scholars, and artists from Nepal, as well as from India, particularly Sikkim, Siliguri and Darjeeling are expected to attend the event.

The two-day festival will offer an engaging array of creative programmes, including literary panels, poetry recitations, book launches, interactive sessions, and cultural performances. It also aims to foster meaningful exchanges of ideas and encourage collaboration among creators from both within the country and beyond.

According to the organisers, the fifth edition of the festival is expected to further consolidate Ilam's reputation as an emerging literary destination, while significantly contributing to the promotion of tourism. The festival is envisioned as a platform that brings Ilam's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage into focus through a literary lens.

"The event will be a memorable and enriching experience for literature enthusiasts, tourism entrepreneurs, and local residents alike," the statement notes, adding that the festival aspires to evolve into a dynamic hub for cross-border literary dialogue.

The statement read, "The festival will establish Ilam as an international literary centre, contributing not only to creative expression but also meaningfully advancing tourism promotion."

The organisers underscore their broader goal of presenting Ilam's unique identity to the world through the power of literature and culture.

The official logo of the festival was also unveiled at an event held on Wednesday. The design symbolically weaves together elements such as the red panda, the spirit of literature, and the essence of tourism.

A special highlight of the festival will be a civic felicitation ceremony honouring vibrant literary figure Bairagi Kainla in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Nepali literature.

In addition, the Hangyug-Junita Foundation has announced that, starting this year, it will present an award carrying a purse of Rs. 50,000 to an energetic author during the festival.

HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

ARIES: Start where your courage feels needed. With structured Saturn in your sign, its sextile with powerful Pluto has a deep impact on your identity. You can introduce yourself and launch an idea with calm assurance.

TAURUS: Focusing will help you understand today's truths. Your 12th House of Subtleties and your 10th House of Striving are under the influence of this Saturn-Pluto sextile, giving you space to release a worry you've carried for too long.

GEMINI: What connections could help your ideas grow? Teamwork thrives when promises are specific, and as tough Saturn sextiles excavating Pluto, your friendship zone and your travel sector combine.

CANCER: This morning favors poise and grace, especially at work. The collaboration of Saturn and Pluto unites your ambition quadrant with your more tender 8th house, so you might need an ally's support to reach your true potential.

LEO: When steady effort meets bold curiosity, horizons widen. With responsible Saturn sextiling Pluto, the Cosmic Detective, your 7th House of Connections adds social support to the far-flung plans of your curious 9th house.

VIRGO: Get ready to talk about the tough stuff. During Saturn and Pluto's sextile, your cautious 8th house and your stolid 6th house combine delicate topics with practical know-how.

LIBRA: Balancing your life is easier said than done, but right now, it IS possible. Saturn in your companionable 7th house is encouraging Pluto in your playful 5th house.

SCORPIO: What routines would make your day flow better? Your 6th House of Work and Health gains traction as karmic Saturn sextiles unearthing Pluto, potentially inspiring you to design a less-stressful checklist.

SAGITTARIUS: A single spark of inspiration can unleash a wildfire of creativity. That said, it'll probably require some effort to polish whatever you're working on, with both Saturn and Pluto involved.

CAPRICORN: The afternoon encourages practical care at home, as Saturn in your fourth house reminds you space needs attention, while its sextile to Pluto in your second house sharpens focus on finances, values, and material stability.

AQUARIUS: Your words carry weight, so use their power carefully. With restrictive Saturn sextiling dark Pluto, your 3rd House of Communication asks for clear boundaries, so you may draft a firm statement regarding recent issues.

PISCES: Small choices ought to honor your current needs. Boundaries protect self-worth, and as Saturn in your 2nd House of Logic sextiles Pluto in your cautious 12th house, you know how to stand by your own rules.

CARTOON

gocomics.com





PM Cup

Patel fires Madhesh top

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

Madhesh Province jumped to the top of the table while Sudur Paschim registered their second win in the PM Cup on Friday.

Bishal Patel's fifer helped Madhesh secure a hard-fought 25-run victory over Lumbini Province in the PM Cup at Janakpur.

Batting first after winning the toss, Madhesh were bowled out for just 124 in 38.1 overs. In reply, Lumbini faltered against Patel's incisive bowling and were dismissed for 99 in 26 overs.

The left-arm medium pacer tore through the top order, finishing with outstanding figures of 5 for 24. He dismissed opener Ranjeet Khadka, one-man down Aakash Tripathi and two-man down Prajjwol Thapa for ducks to make Lumbini totter at 10.3 within the fifth over. He also dismissed Dhruba Sunar for four and Nirmal Gurung for a duck to complete his fifer.

Despite a fighting 30 from Sumit Shrestha and a late 16 from Sandesh Thapa, Lumbini were dismissed for 99 in 26 overs. Captain Dev Khanal and Santosh Yadav chipped in with identical 12 runs.

Pradip Paswan chipped in with two wickets, while Mohammad Aadil Alam, Rupesh Singh and Aashik Baitha claimed one apiece.

Earlier, Mayan Yadav top-scored with 31 for Madhesh. Alam struck a brisk 23, whereas Pawan Sarraf (19) and Arniko Yadav (11) chipped in with two-digit scores.

Lumbini's bowlers Santosh Yadav (3-13) and Sandesh Thapa (3-38) shared six wickets between them to constrain Madhesh to a modest total. Ajaya Chauhan took two and Nirmal Gurung took one.



The win lifted Madhesh to the top of the table with five points from three matches. Lumbini are on three points from three matches.

Sudur Paschim Province registered a commanding seven-wicket win over Koshi Province at Birgunj. The second win earned them four points from three matches and lifted them to fourth position.

Opting to field first, Sudur Paschim bowled out Koshi for just 130 in 43.4 overs. In reply, Sudur Paschim chased down the modest target in just 19.5 overs, finishing at 131 for 3.

Khadak Bohora stole the show with a blistering 66 off 45 balls, smashing nine fours and three sixes at a strike rate of 146.

Thagunna remained unbeaten on 25, while Lokendra Chand added six not out to see Sudur Paschim home comfortably.

Bipin Mahato picked up two wickets and Gyanendra Shrestha took one as the rest of Koshi's bowlers failed to deliver and Sudur Paschim cruised to victory with 181 balls to spare.

Earlier, Koshi's batting never found momentum, with opener Suman Shrestha grinding out 24 from 89 balls and Shiwash Bajgain adding 25.

Dipesh Kandel's 20, Shakib Haq's 15 and Firdosh Ansari's 18 were other notable contributions for Koshi as wickets fell regularly.

Hemant Dhami produced a brilliant spell with the ball, picking 4 for 26 in his nine overs, and was adjudged Player of the Match. Kiran Thagunna chipped in with two wickets, whereas Narayan Joshi and Saurya Shrestha claimed one wicket apiece.

Koshi suffered their third consecutive loss and stay in ninth place with one point.

Italy stay in World Cup hunt as Wales, Ireland suffer penalty heartbreak



PHOTO: AP

Teammates run towards Italy's Sandro Tonali, left, who scored his side's first goal during the World Cup qualifying play-off soccer match against Northern Ireland, in Bergamo, Italy.

AFP
Paris, Mar. 27

Italy will face Bosnia and Herzegovina for a place at the 2026 World Cup after beating Northern Ireland 2-0 on Thursday, as Wales and the Republic of Ireland suffered agonising penalty shootout defeats in their qualifying play-off semi-finals.

Sandro Tonali and Moise Kean struck second-half goals in Bergamo to keep four-time World Cup winners Italy on track to end a 12-year absence from the tournament.

Italy missed the last two editions in Russia and Qatar but Tonali's powerful drive and an excellent finish from Kean nudged Gennaro Gattuso's team a step closer to a return to international football's biggest stage.

"We had to work hard because it was not easy tonight," said Gattuso. "We knew this game would be tough, all we can do now is try to recharge the batteries."

Italy will take on Bosnia in Zenica next Tuesday. A late header from 40-year-old Edin Dzeko cancelled out Dan James' superb opener for Wales and forced extra time in Cardiff, where Bosnia scraped through 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw.

Viktor Gyokeres scored a hat-trick in Sweden's 3-1 win over Ukraine.

Arsenal striker Gyokeres netted his first goals of the qualifying campaign to lead Sweden to the brink of the finals, despite a dismal group stage in which they picked up just two points in six matches.

Sweden got another chance as a result of their UEFA Nations League performances and Gyokeres turned in from close range early on against Ukraine, unable to play at home because of the war with Russia and instead having to move the tie to neutral ground in Valencia, Spain.

Gyokeres tucked away his second six minutes after the break and converted a penalty to complete his treble and seal victory for Graham Potter's team, with Matvii Ponomarenko grabbing a late consolation for Ukraine.

Sweden will play Poland in Stockholm for one of four remaining European tickets to the World Cup.

Robert Lewandowski helped Poland come from behind to scrape past Albania 2-1 after Arber Hoxha gave the visitors the lead in Warsaw.

Lewandowski headed in from a corner to bring Poland level with his 89th goal for his country before Piotr Zielinski grabbed the winner.

Czech Republic goalkeeper Matej Kovar saved two penalties in a shootout to steer his team past Ireland in Prague. Ireland looked well placed for a first trip to the World Cup since 2002 as Troy Parrott's penalty and own goal by Kovar put them 2-0 ahead.

Patrik Schick pulled a goal back from the spot and Ladislav Krejci powered in a header on 86 minutes to level at 2-2 and send the semi-final to extra time.

Finn Azaz and Alan Browne both missed in the shootout as the Czechs lined up a showdown at home to a rampant Denmark.

The Danes eased to a 4-0 victory over North Macedonia in Copenhagen with all the goals coming in the second half. Mikkel Damsgaard broke the deadlock and Gustav Isaksen scored twice in as many minutes before Christian Norgaard added a fourth.

Kosovo are on the brink of a first appearance at any major tournament following a wild 4-3 win away to Slovakia.

Slovakia twice led in Bratislava through goals from Martin Valjent and Lukas Haraslin, but Kosovo fought back with efforts from Veldin Hodza and Fisnik Asllani.

Kosovo, who were only admitted to UEFA and FIFA competitions a decade ago, then went in front courtesy of Florent Muslija and got another goal from Kreshnik Hajrizi. Ferdi Kadioglu scored a second-half winner for Turkey in a 1-0 victory over Romania in their play-off semi-final in Istanbul.

Turkey, quarter-finalists at Euro 2024, are bidding to reach the showpiece tournament for the first time since finishing third in South Korea and Japan 24 years ago.

Bolivia, Jamaica close in on World Cup

Bolivia and Jamaica moved to within one win of returning to the World Cup after decades-long absences on Thursday after securing opening victories in FIFA's intercontinental playoff tournament in Mexico.

Bolivia, chasing their first World Cup appearance since the 1994 finals in the United States, came from behind to defeat Suriname 2-1 in Monterrey.

The South Americans' victory sends them into a winner-takes-all playoff against Iraq next Tuesday, with the victor advancing to a World Cup group of death alongside France, Norway and Senegal.

Jamaica, who are aiming to qualify for the World Cup for only the second time in history following a lone appearance at the 1998 finals in France, defeated New Caledonia 1-0 in Thursday's other game in Guadalajara.

The Reggae Boyz will now play the Democratic Republic of Congo next Tuesday for the right to a berth in World Cup K alongside Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal, Colombia and Uzbekistan.

SNIPPETS

Nepal into semifinals

Kathmandu (TRN): Nepal advances to the semifinals of the Men's SAFF U20 Championshiop following a 1-1 draw against the Maldives on Friday. The draw lifted Nepal to the top of the standings with seven points and won the Group A. They defeated Bhutan and Sri Lanka earlier. At the National Football Stadium in Male, Nepal's Nishan Raj Lawat and Maldives' captain Mohammad Imranan scored one goal each. Imran scored in the 15th minute to give Maldives the lead. With 3 minutes left in the scheduled time, Nishan scored an equalizer for Nepal. Nishan took advantage of Subash Bam's free kick to score the goal. With this result, Nepal has won the group with 7 points from 3 matches. Sri Lanka, who are in second place with 3 points, will not become the group winner even if they beat Bhutan in today's second match.

Stopping politicisation in sports top priority, says Minister Pokhrel

Kathmandu (TRN): Newly appointed Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Youth and Sports, Sasmit Pokharel has said that stopping the increasing politicization in Nepal's sports sector will be his top priority. Briefing media persons after assuming the charge of the minister today, he said that Nepal's sports sector has been affected by excessive politicization. "The problem of Nepal is that politics does not happen where it should be done, politics happens where it should not be done," he said. Minister Pokharel expressed the view that the sports sector should be led by players and people related to sports. For that, he said that there is a plan to move forward by including people with experience and expertise in the National Sports Council and other bodies related to sports.

France shrug off red card to beat Brazil

Foxborough (AFP): Kylian Mbappe moved to within one goal of equalling France's all-time scoring record with the opener in a 2-1 win over Brazil as two of the leading World Cup contenders faced off in a glamour friendly in the United States on Thursday. Mbappe ran through to beat goalkeeper Ederson with a delightful chipped finish to give France the lead just after the half-hour mark at the Gillette Stadium near Boston, home of NFL side the New England Patriots. France, World Cup winners in 2018 and runners-up in 2022, had defender Dayot Upamecano sent off early in the second half but shrugged that off to double their lead courtesy of Hugo Ekitike on 65 minutes. Carlo Ancelotti's Brazil did pull one back 12 minutes from time via a close-range finish by Juventus defender Gleison Bremer.

ANFA Prez demands immediate withdrawal of NSC suspension

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 27

All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) President Pankaj Bikram Nembang has denounced the National Sports Council's (NSC) decision to suspend the football body, calling it unjust and politically driven.

Addressing ANFA Congress representatives in Jhapa on Friday, Nembang demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the three-month suspension, arguing that the NSC had no legal grounds for its action.

ANFA had postponed its general congress and election, scheduled for Thursday in Jhapa, following the suspension. Nembang criticised the Council and insisted that ANFA must be allowed to operate independently in line with FIFA and AFC statutes.

He stressed that political or government interference in football's technical and administrative matters must end.

"I hope that the newly formed government and its sports-loving minister would rescue Nepali football from its current crisis."

He insisted that the association had established good governance in football. "Removing controlled-FIFA funds is itself good governance. We can proudly say that we have ensured transparency in football and will continue to do so in the future," he said.

ANFA General Secretary Kiran Rai underlined that football is governed internationally and that FIFA's one pole principle and autonomy must be respected.

"External interference could lead to Nepal's suspension from FIFA, disrupting the football's development. If ANFA remains suspended, the NSC must assume full responsibility for football."

Rai expressed his concern that the Men's national team, due to play Laos, and the women's team, set to compete in FIFA Series in Thailand, had not yet received the necessary approvals from the Council. Without state clearance teams cannot travel abroad, raising legal complications, Rai said.

Rai also urged the NSC to consider the future of ANFA's four academies and other tournaments.

He rejected claims that ANFA leaders were motivated by personal ambition, saying they were committed only to safeguarding football.

ANFA Chief Executive Officer Indraman Tuladhar said the election was postponed on the advice of FIFA and AFC.

He suggested the government may not have fully understood the matter. "I am hopeful that FIFA and AFC themselves would clarify the issue to the authorities."

Transgender women banned from competing in Olympic games

AFP
Geneva, Mar. 27

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) said on Thursday only "biological females" will be allowed to compete in women's events, preventing transgender women from competing.

The IOC is reintroducing testing for gender to determine eligibility to take part in women's events from the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics onwards.

The move will also rule out many athletes with differences in sexual development (DSD).

In a major shift of policy, the IOC is abandoning rules it brought in in 2021 which allowed individual federations to decide their own policy and is instead implementing a policy across all Olympic sports.

"Eligibility for any female category event at the Olympic Games or any other IOC event, including individual and team sports, is now limited to biological females, determined on the basis of a one-time SRY gene screening," the IOC said in a statement.

They will be carried out through a saliva sample, cheek swab or blood sample. It will be done once in an athlete's lifetime.



FILE PHOTO: AP

OC President Kirsty Coventry.

IOC president Kirsty Coventry said: "The policy we have announced is based on science and has been led by medical experts.

"At the Olympic Games even the smallest margins can be the difference between victory and defeat.

"So it is absolutely clear that it would not be fair for biological males to compete in the female category. In addition, in some sports it would simply not be safe."

In a press conference later, Coventry added: "I do feel that this policy is a policy that is supporting equality and fairness and the protection of the safety on the field of play."

Removes potential Trump clash

The new policy removes a potential source of conflict between the IOC and US President Donald Trump as the Los Angeles Olympics comes onto the horizon. Trump issued an executive order banning transgender athletes from women's sport soon after he came to office.

While sports such as swimming, athletics, cycling and rowing have brought in bans, many others have permitted transgender women to compete in the female category if they lowered their testosterone levels, normally through taking a course of drugs.

World Athletics welcomed the change of tack. "We have led the way in protecting women's sport over the last decade," said a spokesperson for track and field's international body.

"Attracting and retaining more girls and women into sport requires a fair and level playing field where there is no biological glass ceiling.

"This means that gender cannot trump biology. A consistent approach across all sport has to be a good thing."

Gender testing was first introduced at the 1968 Olympics and last used at the 1996 Atlanta Games but then scrapped after criticism from the scientific community.

The new policy is set to face some opposition too, especially in relation to athletes with DSD, the rare condition in which a person's hormones, genes and reproductive organs may have a combination of male and female characteristics.

The British Journal of Sports Medicine said in an article this month there was "no scientific data of acceptable quality regarding sport performance advantage of people with DSDs possessing an SRY gene."

It added: "Evidence regarding their athletic performance is extremely limited and problematic."

The best-known DSD athlete of recent years is South African runner Caster Semenya, the two-time Olympic women's 800m champion who has male XY chromosomes.

The IOC is bringing in the new policy after the women's boxing competition at the 2024 Paris Olympics was rocked by a gender row involving Algerian fighter Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan.

Khelif and Lin were excluded from the International Boxing Association's 2023 world championships after the IBA said they had failed eligibility tests.

However, the IOC allowed them both to compete at the Paris Games, saying they had been victims of "a sudden and arbitrary decision by the IBA".

Both boxers went on to win gold medals.

Lin has since been cleared to compete in the female category at events run by World Boxing, the body that will oversee the sport at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

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