Wednesday, April 1, 2026
Chait 18, 2082 | Nepal Sambat 1146 | Chaulathwo Chahre

NATION'S 1ST ENGLISH BROADSHEET

risingnepaldaily.com
Vol. LXI, No. 107 | Pages 8 | Rs. 5 | National Edition

THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL



PHOTO: TSS

Women threshing barley traditionally with the help of oxen at Malwar in Tulsipur Sub-Metropolitan City-15, Dang district, on Tuesday.

PM, Sudurpaschim lawmakers discuss development issues

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Prime Minister Balendra Shah continued his talks with newly elected MPs on Tuesday, holding discussions with lawmakers from Sudurpaschim Province at Singha Durbar, where he pledged to prioritise urgent development projects within existing budget limits.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister sought details on key projects that have remained stalled in the province and assured lawmakers that essential initiatives would be taken without delay. He highlighted that the government would not halt projects of urgent public interest, according to those present.

According to lawmaker Bharat Bahadur Khadka, MPs raised a range of pressing concerns, including the Seti Highway, hydropower projects, the Mahakali Corridor, the development of Geta Medical College, and the proposed Dhangadhi–Dipayal Expressway, operation of airports and daily flights.

There was also strong interest in improving road connectivity, drinking water supply, stopping youths from leaving the country and essential public services across the province.

Prime Minister Shah committed to immediately advancing work on Geta Medical College and the Shaheed Dashrath Chand University of Health Sciences, and province level engineering college stating that necessary budget would be arranged promptly.

He further assured that efforts to bring Gokuleshwor Airport into operation would be accelerated.

Khadka also echoed these points, saying that, according to him, the Prime Minister had responded positively to the concerns raised and expressed readiness to move ahead with priority projects within budgetary constraints.

Khadka informed that issues of drinking water, education, and health services were also brought to the Prime Minister's attention.

He said that the Prime Minster assured that he would look at the major challenges in the province and work to improve them.

Prime Minister Shah has been holding a series of consultations with lawmakers from different provinces, having met representatives from Koshi and Karnali on Monday, as part of efforts to identify and expedite critical development works across the country.

PARLIAMENT SECRETARIAT CALLS ALL-PARTY MEETING

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

The Federal Parliament Secretariat has called an all-party meeting in preparation for the upcoming parliamentary session. According to Parliament Secretariat spokesperson Ekram Giri, all parties represented in Parliament have been invited to attend the meeting at 1 pm on Wednesday.

President Ramchandra Paudel convened a joint session of both Houses of the Federal Parliament at 2 pm on April 2, following a recommendation by the Council of Ministers on March 30.

"The meeting is expected to discuss the initiation of the process for electing the house Speaker, as well as the presentation and passage of important Acts and bills. Representatives of all national parties are expected to express their views during the meeting," said Giri.

He added that the Secretariat would finalise and provide the agenda for the first sitting of the House following the all-party meeting.

On Monday, President Ramchandra Paudel convened a joint session of both Houses of the Federal Parliament at 2 pm on April 2, following a recommendation by the Council of Ministers on March 30.

Former secretaries applaud time-bound reform plan

BY ARPANA ADHIKARI
Kathmandu, Mar. 31



File photo

The first Cabinet meeting of the new government, led by Balendra Shah, has unveiled a 100-point governance reform plan.

The roadmap has been developed in line with the election manifesto of the Rastriya Swatantra Party and is to be implemented within government's first 100 days in office to reform sectors like agriculture, industry, education, health, taxation, investment, above all, governance.

This has sparked a significant shift in public sentiment, with people expressing renewed hope and satisfaction with the government's move after decades of deep frustration.

Many former government officials have also expressed their hope that the 100-point reform plan will address the long-standing problem in bureaucracy.

Talking to The Rising Nepal, Kashi Raj Dahal, former chairman of the Administrative Court, who also led the Federal Administrative Restructuring Committee, shared that political parties that participated in the elections are expected to have their implementable commitments addressed within these policies and programmes.

"Another important provision is that all offices and institutions are required to identify 10 priority tasks within seven days and begin implementation accordingly," he said.

According to him, corruption control and administrative reform are key components, while reducing the number of ministries, dissolving unnecessary committees and institutions, and introducing a one-door service delivery system constitute main priorities.

Additionally, laws related to civil service reform are to be introduced within 45 days, including provisions for performance evaluation and career progression. "A significant reform proposed is the removal of trade unions from sectors such as e public administration, schools, and universities, to ensure neutrality and professionalism," he said.

"One of the strongest aspects of this plan is the clear timeline, some tasks are set for completion within 10, 20, or 30 days; others within 60, 90, or 100 days," he highlighted. Stating that clear assignment of accountability and responsibility is another positive aspect, he said that the plan also directly addresses past distortions and aims to establish good governance and prosperity.

Former government secretary Purushottam Ojha shared that the roadmap is promising, with clear commitments, timelines, and accountability. However, it must move beyond paper into real implementation. Stating that it covers various sectors along with shared, cross-cutting priorities, he said, "One positive aspect is that it is time-bound, it clearly outlines what needs to be done and by when. Some tasks are set for completion within a month, others within three months. In that sense, it is well articulated."

Khemraj Nepal, former government secretary, said from a general overview, the plan appears very good indeed and quite impressive in many respects.

However, these former bureaucrats also highlighted the challenges that may hinder its implementation. They shared this roadmap must be implemented with strong political commitment, administrative professionalism, and cooperation from all stakeholders.

Nepal said many of the targeted work plans need to be established through legislation. "When we talk about administration, even the Civil Service Act has not yet been enacted. Only after that is in place can things properly move forward," said Nepal.

However, some progress can also be demonstrated through immediate action. For example, there was news report that chief administrative officers have now been deployed to local governments where those positions were previously vacant.

» SEE PAGE 6

No immediate LDC exit, says Minister Dr. Wagle

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31



Finance Minister Dr. Swarnim Wagle has said that the economy will be developed in a way that establishes Nepal as a nation of hardworking people.

He made this remark during a meeting with a business delegation of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce, led by its President Kamlesh Kumar Agrawal, at the ministry on Tuesday.

Minister Dr. Wagle assured business leaders that the government would create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and investment.

"The state will provide you with space to grow and expand. We have come with the determination to build the nation and strengthen the economy. Let us work hand in hand," he said.

He said that honest entrepreneurs and traders should not be unfairly penalised due to legal complications.

He pledged that the government would ensure those contributing to job creation are not subjected to unnecessary hardship.

"We guarantee that those generating employment will no longer face undue difficulties from the state," he added, urging the private sector to maintain integrity in their operations.

He also invited suggestions from business leaders on policy and regulatory reforms required to promote industrial growth, stating that the government was ready to act accordingly.

Highlighting the need for collective effort, Finance Minister Dr. Wagle called on all stakeholders to unite for strengthening the economy and achieving the country's overall development.

"I have repeatedly said this—the private sector must remain honest. In return, the state will fully support you. But we will be firm and uncompromising against deliberate wrongdoing and corruption," he warned.

Addressing concerns from the private sector about Nepal's potential graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status, FM Dr. Wagle said such a transition would not happen immediately, adding that the government understands the private sector's concerns.

Statements from Oli, Lekhak today

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Police are preparing to bring CPN-UML leader and former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and Nepali Congress leader and former Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak to the Kathmandu District Police Range, Bhadrakali, for statements on Wednesday. The district court had initially granted a five-day remand order against the duo, which is being extended as it was deemed insufficient.

They were first arrested on Saturday morning (March 28) following recommendations from the Gen Z Movement Investigation Commission led by Gauri Bahadur Karki, which suggested action over a criminal case carrying a sentence of three to ten years.

The extended custody is based on a complaint from the family of Gen Z Martyr Rasik Khatri, who died during the movement on September 8, 2025.

His mother, Rachana Khatri, is currently a proportional representation MP from Rastriya Swatantra Party. Investigations are proceeding based on this complaint.

After their arrests, Oli was admitted to Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj for medical treatment, while Lekhak is held at Nepal Police Number 2 Battalion in Samakhushi. The investigation and prosecution are being handled by the Kathmandu District Police Range, Bhadrakali.

Police Spokesperson and Superintendent of Police (SP) Pawan Kumar Bhattarai confirmed preparations to bring them for statements on Wednesday.

Meanehile, Joint Secretary and then Kathmandu CDO Chhabi Lal Rijal was arrested on Tuesday; however, his statement will not be taken on Wednesday.

SP Bhattarai said that Oli's health may prevent him from giving a statement on Wednesday, in which case it will be scheduled for another day. Due to his health issues, he participated via video conference for custody extension hearing. If both can give statements on Wednesday, the extended custody will continue through Thursday.

» SEE PAGE 6

Citizenship through mother's name still a far cry

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31



Ramesh Dahal (name changed), 36, from Kaski, has become a stateless Nepali despite being born and raised in Nepal, as government authorities have denied him citizenship. He has been deprived of citizenship because his father was an Indian citizen.

Although the government has introduced provisions to grant naturalised citizenship from the name of the mother, Dahal has still been unable to obtain it. Authorities have asked him to provide proof that he has not acquired citizenship from his father's country. However, he is unable to do so as his father has already passed away.

"I have already crossed the age of opportunities, including employment and business. How can that be compensated? Now I am taking medication for anxiety disorder," he said.

Similarly, Ramila B.K. (name changed) from Palpa received citizenship by naming her uncle as her father, as her biological father died when she was just two years old. However, her brother has been unable to obtain citizenship because their uncle refused to be listed as his father, fearing property obligations since he is a male heir.

Speaking at an interaction programme organised jointly by the Citizenship Affected People's Network (CAPN), Nationality For All (NFA), and the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights (GCENR) on "Citizenship through the Mother's Name: Reforms, Challenges, and Constitutional Amendments," participants shared that though the new constitution allows to provide citizenship through mother's name many Nepali are still unable to receive it and many are able to acquire citizenship only after long suffering.

Though the constitution has insured the rights to citizenship even from the name of mother, still many Nepali women are unable to pass their nationality to their children, resulting in many Nepalis being compelled to be stateless.

These non-citizens shared their difficulty in finding jobs, pursuing higher studies, and even getting married. Without citizenship, SIM card, PAN card, driving licence and other such benefits are also impossible.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 has established gender equality and descent-based rights as fundamental rights.

Although recent amendments to the Citizenship Act have shown some positive progress, stakeholders note that challenges remain in practical implementation. Provisions centred around the absence of father's identity have been limiting the rights of mothers, Neha Gurung, campaigner of Citizenship Affected People's Network (CAPN) said.

Under Article 11(5) and 11(7) of the constitution, mothers are required to fulfill additional conditions to confer citizenship to their children, whereas no such conditions apply to fathers. This creates a situation where women and their children are effectively treated as second-class citizens, she stated.

» SEE PAGE 6

BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold : Rs. 290,200/-
Worked Gold : NA
Silver : Rs. 4,845/-

STOCK

NEPSE : 2,851.09
Total Amount : 11,112,418,806.96
No. of Share : 27,942,779

GOLD PRICE INCREASES TO RS. 290,200 PER TOLA

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Gold and silver prices increased sharply in the Nepali market on Tuesday.

According to the Federation of Nepal Gold and Silver Dealers' Association, the price of gold increased by Rs. 6,700 per tola in a single day, reaching Rs. 290,200 per tola (11.664 grams).

Gold was priced at Rs. 283,500 per tola on Monday. Similarly, silver prices also surged by Rs. 145 per tola, trading at Rs. 4,700 on Tuesday.

According to FENEGOSIDA, the international gold price has increased by USD 71 per ounce, falling to US$ 4,565 on Sunday. The price stood at US$ 4,494 per ounce on Monday.

The geopolitical tensions have contributed to volatility, as gold prices often rise and fall in response to conflict-related uncertainty.

Policy measures in favour of farmers

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

The newly formed government has unveiled a series of major policy measures aimed at protecting farmers, improving agricultural markets, and addressing long-standing land management issues across the country.

Under the "100-Point Governance Reform Action Plan" recently announced by the government, the process of determining the minimum support price for major food crops will begin within 30 days.

The initiative aims to address the problem of farmers incurring losses due to uncontrolled market fluctuations and the lack of minimum price protection for key agricultural produce.

A new directive will be issued immediately to regulate credit-based transactions in the purchase of agricultural products.

According to the provision, payments must be made within a maximum of 25 days. If buyers fail to pay within this period, they will be required to pay the amount along with interest.

To improve market transparency, the government will launch a National Agricultural Market Information System. This system will provide farmers with daily price updates through SMS and other digital platforms, helping them make informed selling decisions.

In addition, local governments will be supported to organise weekly agricultural markets (haat bazaars) in every municipality, making it easier for farmers to sell their produce directly.



PHOTO: SHAHIDHAR PARAJULI\ TRN

Farmers planting Chaite paddy in Morang.

The government has proposed the "One Municipality, One Cold Storage Centre" programme to address storage and marketing challenges.

A feasibility study for establishing cold storage facilities in each district under a public-private partnership model will be completed within 10 days.

The government also plans to distribute soil health cards to farmers operating commercial farms within three months, helping them improve productivity through better soil management.

Under the land reform, a nationwide effort will be undertaken to address the issues of landless squatters and unmanaged settlements.

The government plans to complete the collection and verification of integrated digital data on landless squatters and unorganised settlers within 60 days.

The government's action plan includes conducting a household survey in coordination with the local level to resolve the problem of landless squatters and unorganised settlements within 1,000 days, and implementing clear criteria (cut-off date, income level, other property ownership) for identifying real beneficiaries.

According to the programmes, land records, including public, unregistered, and trust (guthi) lands, will be updated and digitised using GIS-based systems. Verified landless households will either receive land in phases or be rehabilitated through integrated housing projects, particularly in densely populated urban areas.

A public dashboard will be introduced to ensure transparency in land distribution and rehabilitation.

In addition, the government has committed to strengthening the protection of public land by creating digital records, enhancing monitoring systems, and launching immediate action against encroachment.

> Under the "100-Point Governance Reform Action Plan" recently announced by the government, the process of determining the minimum support price for major food crops will begin within 30 days.

Buddha Park set to open in Ilam



PHOTO: PREM ADHIKARI/ILAM

The 65-foot-tall Buddha statue built at Baudhdham in Ilam.

BY PREM ADHIKARI
Pashupatinagar (Ilam), Mar. 31

A newly built Buddha Park featuring a 65-foot-tall statue of Buddha in Suryodaya Municipality-3, Baudhdham, Ilam, is set to come into operation.

Chief Minister Hikmat Kumar Karki will inaugurate the park on April 1, which has been constructed with joint investment from the Koshi Province Government and Suryodaya Municipality.

According to the Gautam Buddha Memorial Foundation, the inauguration ceremony will include a pran pratishtha (ritual consecration) of the Buddha statue.

The ritual will be conducted by Buddhist spiritual leader Khenchen Namdol Chhiring Rinpoche and other religious figures from 6:00 am to 12:00 noon on the same day.

Spread across 17 ropani of land, the park is expected to become a major attraction for tourists.

Located about two kilometres from Pashupatinagar along the Nepal-India border, Baudhdham has already been drawing a growing number of Indian visitors.

Local tourism entrepreneur Bimal Dewan said the site is increasingly becoming a first stop for tourists travelling to Darjeeling, a popular hill destination in India.

The construction of the Buddha Park began in the fiscal year 2015/16 with funding from the Mechi Tourism Promotion Development Committee. After Nepal adopted a federal structure, the project was continued and completed with support from the Koshi Province Government and Suryodaya Municipality.

The provincial government has been allocating budget for the project since the fiscal year 2018/19, while the municipality contributed an additional 30 per cent to complete the park, according to Acting Mayor Durga Kumar Baral.

Baral expressed confidence that the park will attract tourists not only from Nepal and India but also from third countries.

A total of Rs. 80 million has been spent on the construction of the park, with contributions from the Koshi Province Government, the Mechi Hill Tourism Development Committee, and Suryodaya Municipality.

Alongside the park, local tourism entrepreneurs have also developed additional infrastructure to support visitors.

CNI, Minister Wagle discuss ways to bolster economy

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

A business delegation from the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) met Finance Minister Dr. Swarnim Wagle and discussed the country's economy, as well as the government's commitment to economic growth and private sector development.

The delegation, led by CNI President Birendra Raj Pandey, met Dr. Wagle on Monday evening.

During the discussion, Minister Dr. Wagle said that a strong government has been formed with high public expectations and trust.

He highlighted that this is a crucial moment to steer the country toward prosperity.

According to him, the political stability long sought by the private sector has now been achieved, and the focus must shift toward economic advancement.

The Finance Minister noted that the government is preparing a different and more progressive budget aimed at creating a private sector-friendly economic environment.

He revealed that, on the very first day in office, the government has decided to scrap 15 laws to signal its liberal and supportive stance toward businesses.

Wagle clarified that while the government promotes a liberal economy, it will continue to enforce necessary regulations to prevent misuse.

He encouraged entrepreneurs to operate with honesty, assuring them of full government support. Addressing industrial development, the Minister proposed the establishment of model industrial parks and urged the private sector to facilitate the entry of large multinational companies.



PHOTO: TRN

Finance Minister Dr. Swarnim Wagle discussing with Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) team on Tuesday.

He pledged that the government would provide all necessary support to create an investment-friendly climate.

Finance Secretary Dr. Ghanshyam Upadhyaya urged businessmen for providing suggestions on the provisions of the laws that have made it difficult to facilitate investment and the arrangements that need to be made.

CNI President Pandey suggested that the government should pay special attention to the immediate, medium and long-term issues to achieve the expectations of good governance and high economic growth desired by the general Nepali people.

Welcoming Minister Wagle's commitment to the second phase of economic reform and the repeal of many irrelevant and outdated laws, President Pandey expressed confidence that the government would focus clearly on the overall economy in the upcoming budget.

He suggested that the government should adopt a policy to encourage manufacturing industries to create employment, achieve high economic growth, and replace imports.

He emphasised the need to break the narrative that earning money is a crime.

He said that the government should also play a positive role in creating a narrative that legally acquiring wealth and earning money is not a crime.

He informed that the CNI is studying how the current economy of about USD 45 billion can be made into 100 billion dollars within next 10 years and will submit the report to the government soon.

Labour market in Rajbiraj

BY SUDHA DEV
Saptari, Mar. 31

A daily labour market has been evolving in Rajbiraj Bazaar of Saptari, where workers gather every day in search of wage labour. Labourers from different parts of the district begin arriving early in the morning at Gajendra Chowk in Rajbiraj, assembling one after another.

The workers who gather here wait for job opportunities. According to locals, employers select workers based on their preference and negotiate daily wages before taking them to work. Kiran Das of Rajbiraj-3 said that although labourers come to Rajbiraj every day with hopes of earning enough to feed their families, even those who find work can only manage daily household expenses with the wages they earn after a full day of labour.

Both men and women come to this labour market seeking work, but there is no certainty about who will get a job on any given day. Kiran Chaudhary from Krishna Savaran Rural Municipality said that she visits the market daily in search of work. She said that she only avoids coming if she is directly called for work in her village; otherwise, she comes here whenever she cannot find work elsewhere.

Deepak Kumar Sardar, a resident of Ward No. 6 of Bishnu Rural Municipality, said that he comes to this labour market every day carrying his lunch, hoping to find work. If he gets a job, he works all day and returns home, but on days when he does not find work, he is forced to return empty-handed. He added that regardless of whether he gets work or not, this is the place he comes to search for opportunities.

Advocate Rajendra Prasad Dev stated that this labour market has been functioning for nearly three decades. He said that since Rajbiraj is the district headquarters, people from various areas began gathering at this main intersection, formerly known as Tribhuvan Chowk and now called Gajendra Chowk, in search of work. As a result, locals started coming here to hire daily wage labourers.

Wages in this market vary depending on the type of work and the worker. General labourers earn between Rs. 500 and Rs. 800 per day, while skilled workers earn between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 1,500 per day. The wages are determined based on the worker's physical strength, efficiency, and ability.



PHOTO: SUJAN GURUNG/TRN

Watermelons brought for sale at the Kalimati Fruit Market. Traders have informed that these melons are sold for Rs 40 to Rs 45 per kg.

GAS PRICES ECLIPSE $4 A GALLON IN US

AP
New York,Mar. 31

U.S. gas prices jumped past an average of $4 a gallon for the first time since 2022 on Tuesday as the Iran war pushed fuel prices to soar worldwide.

According to motor club AAA, the national average for a gallon of regular gasoline is now $4.02 — over a dollar more than before the war began. The last time U.S. drivers were collectively paying this much at the pump was nearly four years ago, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The price is a national average, meaning drivers in some states have been paying well over $4 a gallon for a while now. Prices vary from state to state due to factors ranging from nearby supply to differing tax rates.

Since the U.S. and Israel launched a joint war against Iran on Feb. 28, the cost of crude oil — the main ingredient in gasoline — has spiked and swung rapidly. That's because the conflict has caused deep supply chain disruptions and cuts from major oil producers across the Middle East.

Sections of Madan Bhandari Highway remain incomplete

BY TOP LAL ARYAL
Gulmi, Mar. 31



PHOTO: TRN

Track of Madan Bhandari Highway in western Nepal.

Construction work is currently under way on two sections of the nationally important Madan Bhandari Highway that passes through Gulmi.

However, work on the western Simaltari-Sautamare section remains incomplete. Among the two sections contracted in the same year (2022), the first section from Ridi to Tamghas is about 95 per cent complete. In contrast, even more than three years after the contract was signed, only about 30 per cent of the physical progress has been achieved on the Simaltari-Sautamare section.

In the new government's 100-point action plan, controlling delays in development projects has been given priority. This has raised hope among citizens and even among the offices responsible for implementing the project that work will progress. Of the 31.8-kilometre road from Simaltari in western Gulmi to Machhi in Pyuthan, 16 kilometres up to Sautamare lies within Gulmi district.

According to the Madan Bhandari Highway Project Office, the contract for this road construction was signed with Shrestha Saksham JV on October 23, 2022. Information officer and engineer Prabhat Tiwari stated that the contract was awarded at Rs. 1.45 billion. However, so far, only 30 per cent physical progress and 23 per cent financial progress have been achieved.

The contractor has not been able to maintain momentum since the beginning. Currently, apart from road widening, drainage work and machine wall construction have been carried out from Simaltari to Dwanetas. According to Engineer Tiwari, the office has taken all possible measures (except terminating the contract) to facilitate the contractor's work. The deadline has now been extended again until mid-January 2027. He said, "We have already facilitated in every possible way. This time we will wait only one more week. If progress is not visible in the field, the contract will be terminated."

The contractor has not carried out any work for the past two months. Due to delays in road construction, settlements are at risk. For the past three years, locals have continued to suffer from dust in the dry season and mud during the rainy season.

Because the contractor has not been working regularly, local governments have also faced criticism. Sarita Khadka, Vice Chairman of Madane Rural Municipality, said they have been forced to endure heavy criticism due to risks such as landslides, flooding, and damage to settlements and farmland during the rainy season. She added that despite repeatedly drawing the attention of both the contractor and the project office to the risks and lack of progress, no improvements have been made.

Due to the extremely slow progress of this national pride project, criticism has come not only from locals but also from officials, political leaders, and leadership at higher levels. Drona Khatri, Chief of the District Coordination Committee, said that despite repeated monitoring and efforts to draw the contractor's attention, no visible progress has been made, but there is now hope that the new government's initiatives will bring improvement.

Disaster risk reduction strategy begins in Banke

BY SIRAJ KHAN
Nepalgunj, Mar. 31

Chief of the District Coordination Committee, Banke, Gyanendra Kumar Chaudhary, said the initiative aims to develop a permanent strategy to make disaster management more effective throughout different seasons.

Work has begun on formulating a district-level strategy to minimise seasonal disasters such as fires, heatwaves, floods, inundation, and cold waves in Banke district.

Chief of the District Coordination Committee, Banke, Gyanendra Kumar Chaudhary, said the initiative aims to develop a permanent strategy to make disaster management more effective throughout different seasons.

Speaking at an inter-municipality coordination meeting organised by Duduwa Rural Municipality, he said that all local levels in the district have agreed to move forward with a strategic approach focusing on risk reduction, preparedness, and proper mobilisation of resources.

Participants at the meeting, including heads of local units, stressed the need for timely preparedness and effective implementation plans to tackle potential disasters, such as fires and heatwaves during summer, floods and inundation in the monsoon, and cold waves in winter.

Mayor of Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolitan City, Prashant Bista, said various initiatives are already underway in urban areas to reduce disaster risks, adding that coordinated efforts at the district level would be crucial.

Similarly, the Mayor of Kohalpur Municipality, Purna Prasad Acharya, highlighted the high risk of fire incidents during the summer and underscored the need to prioritise fire brigade management and strengthen preparedness mechanisms.

Chairperson of Duduwa Rural Municipality, Narendra Kumar Chaudhary, said that Banke is highly vulnerable to disasters and emphasised the importance of coordination and collaboration among all agencies. He stressed that all eight local units in the district must work effectively through developing mechanisms, managing resources, and mutual cooperation.

The meeting was attended by Chief Gyanendra Kumar Chaudhary of the District Coordination Committee Banke, Assistant Chief District Officer Purna Bahadur Khatri, the chief administrative officers of all eight local levels, disaster focal persons, and other stakeholders.

According to Rupen Gyawali, Information Management Officer at the Local Emergency Operation Centre, disaster focal persons from all local levels also presented their progress reports, and consensus was reached on developing the district-level disaster risk reduction strategy.

Distribution of new textbook kicks off in Karnali

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Khajura, Mar. 31

A timetable has been set for the sale and distribution of textbooks in other districts of the Himalayan region.

Janak Education Materials Centre Limited, Provincial Press, Nepalgunj has begun distribution of the textbooks for the academic session 2083.

According to Rudra Khanal, Chief of Janak Education Materials Centre Provincial Press, the sale and distribution of new textbooks has started from Monday. Books have been distributed for the Himalayan districts of Humla and Dolpa of Karnali Province, Khanal informed.

A timetable has been set for the sale and distribution of textbooks in other districts of the Himalayan region.

He added that the textbooks required for the new academic session have arrived at the Neapalgunj warehouse to be distributed in the districts of Karnali and Lumbini.

"The textbooks required for the districts of Lumbini and Karnali have arrived at the Nepalgunj warehouse, currently we have about 85 per cent of textbooks in the warehouse. We are distributing books to the Himalayan, hilly and Tarai districts in order of priority," Khanal said.

According to Khanal, they have started distributing books to Humla and Dolpa in Karnali Province since Monday. Similarly, some vendors there have come and taken the necessary books there.

He said that in the last fiscal year, 1.473 million books worth Rs. 196 million were sold through 120 vendors in different districts and the target is to sell 1.59 million books worth Rs. 210 million in this fiscal year.

Janak Education Materials has been selling and distributing necessary textbooks for grades 5 to 12, but it has also started selling and distributing books for grade 3 from last year.

13 injured in separate accidents in Makwanpur

BY RAMMANI DAHAL
Makwanpur, Mar. 31

Thirteen individuals have been injured in two separate road accidents in Makwanpur.

In the first incident, two individuals were injured after a Scorpio jeep collided with a motorcycle along the Kanti Lokpath road section at Sanopokharachok, on the border of Ward Nos. 2 and 5 of Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City, late Monday night.

According to the Bagmati Province Police Office, Hetauda, the Scorpio (registration Ba.Pr.03–001 Cha 3669), travelling from Buddhachok towards Piple, struck a motorcycle (registration Ma.Pr.03–027 Pa 4298) that was approaching from an inner road via Manakamana Chok.

The injured have been identified as motorcycle rider Ganesh Rana Magar, 26, of Hetauda-8, Kamane, and pillion rider Bishal Bishwakarma, 22, of Hetauda-4.

Both are receiving treatment at Hetauda Hospital. The Scorpio driver, Dinesh Rai, 39, of Hetauda-17, Chuchchekhola, has been taken into police custody.

In a separate incident on Monday, 11 people were injured when a Magic van met with an accident near the road leading to Riddhi Siddhi Cement Industry at Ratomate, Hetauda-15, along the East-West Highway.

Police said the vehicle (registration Na 1 Ja 8535), which was heading towards Hetauda Bazaar, lost control after its front right tyre burst and overturned into a roadside drain.

The injured include Sushmita Thing, 18; Rupraj Moktan, 17; Rahul Dong, 20; Rijan Rumba, 15; Bikash Lama, 19; Karuna Waiwa, 17; Raksha Lama, 18; Urmila Ghimire, 19; Samik Pakhrin, 19; Sita Bhomjan, 18; and Hiunisa Thokkar, 19. All are undergoing treatment at Hetauda Hospital.

The driver, Navaraj Syangtan, 34, of Hetauda-15, Bhorle, has been detained and handed over to the District Police Office, Makwanpur.

Meanwhile, our district Correspondent, Dhirendra Prasad Sah from Rabiraj, stated that police in Saptari have arrested a driver who had been absconding in connection with a fatal road accident case.

The accused, identified as Tribhuwan Sada, 30, of Kanchanrup Municipality-3, Baramjhiya, was apprehended on Monday.

According to Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Dambar Bahadur Puri, the incident occurred on January 13, 2025, along the Kanchanpur–Phattepur road section under Pauda Khola in Kanchanpur Municipality-6.

A motorcycle (registration Pra.2–01–113 Pa 7788), driven by Sudip Kumar Chaudhary, approximately 21, of Dakneshwori Municipality-2, collided with a tractor (registration Ko 1 Ta 8794) coming from the opposite direction.

Severely injured in the crash, Chaudhary was taken to a hospital in Darbhanga, Bihar, India, where he died during treatment on March 15, 2025. Following his arrest, Sada has been remanded in custody for five days for further investigation.

CEO OF SUN NEPAL LIFE INSURANCE ARRESTED

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Chief Executive Officer of Sun Nepal Life Insurance Company Limited, Raj Kumar Aryal, has been arrested on charges related to offences under the Securities Act-2006.

According to the Central Investigation Bureau CIB, the case stems from discrepancies found in documents submitted by the company to regulatory bodies regarding the allocation of shares to its employees.

While providing details and supporting documents as requested by regulators, inconsistencies were discovered between the original application forms and their copies submitted to different agencies.

Based on a preliminary investigation report by the Nepal Securities Board, it was determined that the company had allegedly violated Section 100 of the Securities Act, 2006, according to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shiva Kumar Shrestha.

Following the findings, arrest permission was obtained from the Kathmandu District Court. Aryal, a 51-year-old resident originally from Gulmi District and currently residing in Baneshwor, Kathmandu, was apprehended on March 30 from New Plaza, Putalisadak of Kathmandu Metropolitan City-29.

Media, activitists advocates coverage of women entrepreneur's issues

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31



Media professionals and human rights activists emphasised the need for mainstream media to give greater space to stories of women entrepreneurs, including small-scale ventures, in a positive and inspiring manner.

In an interaction programme on the role of media in promoting women's entrepreneurship organised by Sancharika Samuha Nepal, participants shared that Nepalese media are dominated by political news, which requires to change.

Editor-in-Chief of Barakhari, Hari Bahadur Thapa, stressed the need to bring forward inspirational stories of women entrepreneurs as a positive step that can motivate others.

Woman entrepreneur Shyam Vadan Shrestha shared her experience, stating that despite managing family responsibilities alongside business, women entrepreneurs receive limited media coverage and require greater support for promotion and market access.

Human rights activist Charan Prasai stressed the importance of addressing women's entrepreneurship from a human rights perspective, while advisor and former chair of Sancharika Samuha, Babita Basnet, highlighted the role of digital platforms in expanding outreach.

Sancharika Samuha President Kamala Panthi pointed out that media still tends to prioritise negative stories such as violence and abuse over women's achievements.

During the programme, it was shared that Sancharika Samuha, with support from GIZ Nepal, has published 21 fellowship stories titled "Udyami Mahila", highlighting the struggles and successes of women entrepreneurs across the country.

Husband confirms killing wife in Kalikot

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Kalikot, Mar. 31

A woman who was found dead under suspicious circumstances inside her home in Narharinath Rural Municipality-3, Kumalgaun, Kalikot, has been confirmed to have been murdered.

The deceased, 26-year-old Manpura Adhikari Budha, was found dead at her residence on Monday. Police investigations have revealed that her husband, Kashi Ram Budha, 29, killed her by attacking her with an axe.

According to Police Inspector Barma Yadav, Information Officer at the District Police Office, Kalikot, preliminary investigations indicate that the accused committed the murder following a domestic dispute, which he has reportedly confessed to.

Police were alerted by locals on Monday morning and reached the scene, where they recovered the body. DSP Him Bahadur Khatri said that the nature of the head injuries led investigators to suspect homicide from the outset, prompting them to question the husband first.

The accused has been taken into custody. Police confirmed that the incident occurred on Sunday night.

Further investigation and evidence collection are ongoing. Locals have also claimed that similar unexplained deaths have occurred in the area in the past, though many cases have remained unresolved.

Fishtail University Fair to be held

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Pokhara, Mar. 31

Fishtail Academy School in Kaski is set to organise the 'Fishtail University Fair 2026'. The school, located in Pokhara-17, Tallo Birauta, has announced that the event will be held on April 4 within the school premises. The school stated that the programme will provide an opportunity to obtain a wide range of information about higher education from a single venue.

According to the Principal, Abhishek Rai, the event will take the form of an educational fair aimed at promoting the message, 'Let us pursue higher education within the country and contribute here.' Rai further added that various universities and higher education institutions from across the country will participate, offering information about their programmes and addressing queries from students and parents seeking guidance for higher studies.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.
-Rudyard Kipling

EDITORIAL

Dialogue For Results

Prime Minister Balendra Shah has started holding meetings with lawmakers elected from different provinces. The consultations between Prime Minister Shah and lawmakers from Koshi and Karnali provinces, the other day, signal a welcome shift towards cooperation among political parties and a commitment to good governance. At a time when public trust often hinges on leaders working as much as they speak, such engagements foster an impression of inclusivity. The true test, however, lies not only in meetings alone but in how effectively these discussions are implemented and influence decision-making. The meetings have, no doubt, highlighted pressing issues such as poor infrastructure, underperforming agriculture, recurring disasters, and inequal access to education and healthcare. These issues have been around for a while. They have been continuing problems under successive administrations, often taking centre stage during the budget season with added emphasis. The issues range from tea farmers struggling with market inefficiencies to communities facing poor road connectivity and development stagnation.

The government's intent to prioritise good governance and infrastructure development is a paramount step that the nation has long been awaiting. However, this intent needs to be matched with a plan of action. The risk is that these measures will stay on paper, while their implementation will fail to take off due to bureaucratic lethargy, political considerations, or a failure to coordinate efforts at the three layers of government – federal, provincial and local. The meeting also dwelt on disaster management, which is a critical aspect, especially in a situation where the repair of infrastructure like roads and bridges damaged by monsoon rains is still pending. The focus is on building back better so that these structures are resilient enough to withstand future disasters. Another important factor is the need to strengthen the local economy. The issues of poor management of agriculture and the migration of youth are indicative of more serious issues. If the returns from agriculture are not satisfactory, and there is no future for the youth, then development is not sustainable. Thus, it is essential to look beyond the development of infrastructure. The expansion of the market system, skills, and entrepreneurship can help in more sustainable development.

The lawmakers have also raised the issues of tourism and natural resources, which have potential that has not been utilised. The areas that are rich in natural beauty and resources are not being exploited properly because of poor development of infrastructure. The guarantee of equitable treatment in all provinces is a positive note. Balanced regional development has been a long-standing aspiration of our nation. It is crucial to ensure equitable treatment in budgetary allocations. However, it is also essential to recognise the distinct needs of different regions. Ultimately, such meetings of lawmakers represent an opportunity. They offer a chance to bring national priorities in line with regional realities. In order for this process to bear fruit, discussions must transcend consultation into accountability. The citizens are very hopeful about the recent government, and they want visible changes. People will not judge success by what is said in meetings; they will judge it by what is done in their lives. It is a litmus test of whether our government is capable of moving from dialogue into action, intention into implementation, and commitment into results.

Global Turmoil

DIXYA POUDEL

With the economy unsteady in the wake of the Middle East conflict and fuel crisis, it isn't surprising that there is a sense of insecurity worldwide. Usually, it is anxious individuals who are prone to paranoia but nowadays, even those with a level-headed temperament are fearful for their future. Many people have lost their economic stability and are dependent on government subsidies. It has strained the fiscal budgets of the governments, only adding to the panic in the general public.

The media further tends to aggravate the circumstances. Turn on the television and the news is rife with war, famine, extreme weather, corruption, inflation and financial crises. Tune to the radio, log onto the internet or simply read a newspaper and you are blasted with a feeling of doom as the threat of a third world war looms large. Apocalypse, which is destruction on a catastrophic level, might seem like a far-fetched reality but history has shown that apocalypses can occur on a global scale. The first and second world wars are considered to have been apocalyptic. They cost human lives and loss of properties, as many nations took decades to mend.

Given such a turbulent history of the world, it is natural that people, organisations, institutions or even nations are anxious about the future. Fear is wired in human nature and it protects an individual from harm. However, when fears escalate collectively, it can lead to societal paranoia. And when people are collectively insecure towards their livelihood, future, family and loved ones, life can be quite strenuous.

As of the latest, the oil price has risen as high as $115 per barrel. As the Middle East turmoil is taking no time to abate, the fuel crisis has become quite volatile, resulting in an unstable economic market. Before the 2025-2026 conflict, the region had been exporting about 20-22 million barrels per day. This accounted for about 40 per cent of the entire globally traded oil. Most of it flowed eastward to Asia, with China, India, Japan and South Korea being its prominent buyers. Despite their global utility, non-renewable sources of energy are environmentally pollutive.

Crude oil is the liquid form of petroleum before being refined. Ignition of petroleum leads to the production of greenhouse gases like methane, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and sulphur oxides, among others. These gases lead to climate change, another crisis that the world continues to face. When it comes to world peace, it may get worse before it gets better, which is why it is necessary to collaborate, unite and brainstorm for world solidarity. Instead of squabbling over petty matters, world leaders today need to work together.

It is essential to focus on building a world that guarantees each individual not just equal rights and opportunities but also a sense of enduring peace. Economic stability brings with it a sense of safety and it enables a person to explore varied options in life, whether it is saving for the rainy day or following one's passion. Then there is political and social stability that can strengthen a society. It is then fair to conclude that, as the world has gone off-kilter due to the Middle East conflict and resulting fuel crisis, a call for a diplomatic solution is required more than ever.

Development Diplomacy For Prosperity

Yuba Nath Lamsal



With the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) securing almost two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives, the lower chamber of parliament, the party's senior leader, Balen Shah, has assumed the office of prime minister. The new RSP government is now set to implement its commitments expressed in the election manifesto on a priority basis. It has promised to address several issues but its urgent focus seems to be on good governance, the economic sector and foreign policy front around which many other issues revolve.

Foreign policy is definitely a key area of governance. Pragmatic and astute handling of foreign policy plays a key role in the success and failure of any government, especially in countries with geopolitical complexities like ours. This is so because foreign policy is the extension of domestic policy and foreign policy conduct is closely linked with several other matters, including national security, economic prosperity and national interests. The international situation is already volatile with conflicts in the Middle East and Europe. Our region is likely to be hit harder as the Middle East war has already disrupted the energy supply line.

Conflict for domination

The 21st century's geopolitics is starkly different from that of the last 100 years. Asia has emerged as the epicentre of international power rivalry owing mainly to China's rise. The US has taken China's rise as the principal threat to its dominant role in the world. History is witness that the existing superpower always seeks to contain the emerging superpower. This, according to American political scientist Graham Allison, makes conflict inevitable between the reigning superpower and the rising superpower. The United States, the existing superpower of the day, has the sole strategic objective to contain the emerging superpower China. Accordingly, these two powers have their own strategies and counter-strategies in the region.

India is also a rising power and another key player in Asian geopolitics. India considers South Asia as its sphere of influence and does not want other powers to poke their nose in South Asian affairs. This creates triangular geopolitical rivalry in our neighbourhood, which has added challenges to countries like Nepal in handling foreign policy and diplomacy, aligning with their national interests. India and China are our immediate neighbours with whom we have multi-layered engagements and relations. These two neighbours have their own concerns and interests, which sometimes match and often collide. American presence in the Indo-Pacific region is already visible, which Beijing may have taken with unease.

Additionally, Nepal's geographical location is in itself strategic in the present complex geopolitical situation. Thus, Nepal needs to navigate its diplomacy, taking all these factors into serious consideration. Safeguarding our national interest is our core objective but at the same time, we must address the core and genuine concerns of our neighbours as well as other development partners. It thus requires greater balance and strategic acumen. The task is definitely challenging but achievable, as Nepal has successfully proven its diplomatic smartness even during the toughest time in history, when international power rivalry was more critical.

Amidst this tough time of intense power rivalry in Asia and the Pacific region, the RSP has risen to the saddle of power with the colossal responsibility of enhancing the country's larger interest, international image and diplomatic standing in the community of nations through pragmatic foreign policy handling and astute diplomatic knack. The RSP leaders seem to be well aware of current geopolitical complexities and Nepal's foreign policy and diplomatic compulsions that necessitate us to handle diplomacy in a smarter manner in order to maximize national interests and translate them into national prosperity.

> This is a hybrid term of official, political, economic, public diplomacy and all other forms and methods of diplomacy.

The RSP in its election manifesto has articulated some of the key issues and priorities to be taken up by the government for the larger national interest of the nation. Given the geo-political location and other complexities, Nepal cannot afford to depart from the long-held positions and policies of non-alignment. Geography, geopolitics, the behaviour of neighbours and national strength shape a country's foreign policy. The new government, perhaps, understands this reality and is expected to move ahead accordingly.

It is necessary to focus on economic diplomacy for prosperity. In this connection, the RSP has coined a new phrase, 'development diplomacy', implying that efforts of our diplomacy will be focused on the country's economic prosperity. Development diplomacy is a combination of all other diplomatic strategies, tools and tactics applied so far, mainly concentrating on the economic and social development of the country. This is a hybrid term of official, political, economic, public diplomacy and all other forms and methods of diplomacy.

Apart from promoting friendly and cooperative relations with all our friends, especially key development partners, development or economic diplomacy seeks to emphasise areas of enhancing economic cooperation, bringing investment, enhancing export trade, promoting tourism, and creating a safe and dignified atmosphere for our diaspora working in different countries. This requires enhancing our internal strength, competitiveness and resilience so that friends and investors can better trust. For this, reforms in our legal and administrative mechanisms are needed so that investors and business persons may not face bureaucratic and other multiple hurdles.

Potential

Nepal definitely has potential for investment and trade, which we should effectively showcase in the world. Nepal has immense soft power. We have Pashupatinath, Lumbini, the world's highest peak, Sagarmatha (Mount Everest), mighty Himalayas, unique nature and rich art, architecture and culture. These are Nepal's prime assets that can attract tens of millions of tourists. But we have not fully realised these potentials. Now, the focus of economic and development diplomacy should be to promote these assets abroad.

Our missions abroad are our mouths, ears and eyes that can play a more proactive role in advancing development diplomacy. But the missions are poorly equipped and are facing problems, including inadequate budget and staff, which have impeded their efficiency and effectiveness. Similarly, the Foreign Ministry, too, needs to be restructured and strengthened to enable it to effectively act commensurate with our objectives and priorities in foreign policy and the diplomatic front. We have a large number of Nepali diaspora in different countries. Nepal should effectively mobilise them for our diplomatic outreach but we have not been effective so far. Development diplomacy, perhaps, would focus on these areas and maximize benefits for the larger interest of Nepal.

(The author is a former chief editor of this daily and a former ambassador. lamsalyubanath@gmail.com)

Make Education Relevant To Local Levels

Namrata Sharma



Nepal is now in the hands of a young, energetic, educated, and popular prime minister, with a 15-member cabinet that includes five women. This is the first time the Cabinet has had 33 per cent women ministers as per the constitution. Most of the faces in Prime Minister Balendra Shah's cabinet are individuals who have never been part of any political party. However, they are all well-educated and represent different communities, including the Badi community, whose existence has been shaped by traditional practices rooted in age-old feudal systems.

This cabinet has started its work strongly from the beginning by taking actions that people did not expect so early, but were hoping for. Along with taking action against corruption and injustice, the government has also initiated reforms in education, the armed forces, and the civil services, among others. The beginning of this government is indeed a silver lining on the dark clouds that were hovering over Nepal. Now is the time for all Nepalis, and those closely observing the country's development, to support this youth-led government in achieving its goals and moving towards a country where all daughters are safe and all youth have access to necessities and livelihood opportunities, so they do not have to leave Nepal for greener pastures.

Education reform

While Prime Minister Shah and his team move ahead with reforms, one suggestion is to closely examine what the development approach of the country should be now. After over 30 years of experience in the media and development sector, I would like to propose a few simple steps that could be initiated. The vision should be to enable all Nepali children to fill their own "pet (stomach) and pocket" themselves. We need to reform the education system, both at home, in communities and in schools and universities, ensuring there is no discrimination among girls, boys, and transgender children. Children need to be taught life skills such as taking care of themselves, maintaining personal hygiene, and developing skills to meet their financial needs independently. They should also learn to respect their own rights as well as the rights of others.

All children, regardless of gender, class, or caste, need to be educated together. They should learn professional skills and be taught to carry out household chores as they grow up, so they can manage their lives independently and lead simple, healthy, safe, and secure lifestyles. As children grow, it is equally important to educate them about their rights, and that no adult or anyone else has the right to abuse them physically, mentally, sexually, or in any other way. At the same time, they must also understand that they themselves cannot violate the rights of others. There are still many instances where daughters are expected to handle all household chores while also attending school, whereas sons are often not encouraged to learn these essential life skills, such as cooking, cleaning, and maintaining a home.

By the time children complete Grade 12, they must be equipped with the skills to take care of their personal needs and be able to recognise and say "no" to any adverse situations. There are many instances of physical and sexual abuse of children, often by individuals within their own families, friends, teachers, or neighbours. The education system, starting from the primary level, needs to incorporate life skills that help children recognise such risks and report them to trusted adults. In many Scandinavian countries, children are taught from an early age how to protect themselves and, in situations where they cannot, how to remain calm and report incidents immediately to government systems, either via phone or by approaching the nearest police or social service centres. While reforming Nepal's education system and revising the curriculum, these aspects need to be incorporated.

> Along with taking action against corruption and injustice, the government has also initiated reforms in education, the armed forces, and the civil services, among others.

Basic education must continue to include subjects such as science, mathematics, geography, history, moral education, and languages, together with media literacy. However, it should also include a value system that respects all religions and cultures, allowing children to preserve their own traditions while respecting others. As climate change continues to negatively impact all aspects of life, there is a need to revise the curriculum so that children learn how to use digital platforms effectively and understand how to improve agriculture, industry, and environmental conditions in their local areas. This will support balanced development across Nepal and reduce the need for migration to urban areas for education and employment.

One example is a community development project I was involved in, which focused on strengthening local communities using their own resources. Canada provides exemplary models through its cooperative and credit union systems. While implementing the Community-Based Economic Development Project (CBED) in Jumla during the late 1990s, there were notable outcomes that deserve renewed attention today. Communities formed agricultural cooperatives that focused on developing seeds suited to local conditions, including crops such as carrots, which were later exported to neighbouring districts, boosting the local economy. User groups managed small hydropower systems that met local electricity needs.

Cooperatives

Women formed savings and credit cooperatives, which helped them develop financial management skills and access funds within their communities, especially in the absence of formal financial institutions. These cooperatives also empowered women to advocate for their rights and raise their voices against domestic violence. Similarly, the Small Farmers Development Project of Nepal, initiated in the 1970s, adopted a community-based approach that helped local farmers form cooperatives, improve agricultural output, and mobilise local financial resources. Unfortunately, the cooperative movement has since been tarnished by fraud and embezzlement.

Additionally, governments have often lacked the foresight to prioritise national development, focusing instead on personal and vested interests. As a result, financial support from institutions such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and International Monetary Fund has not been fully utilised for the country's benefit. The new government must now review past experiences and develop strategies that prioritise local development approaches, thereby building a self-reliant and prosperous Nepal.

(Sharma is a senior journalist and rights advocate. namrata1964@yahoo.com X handle: NamrataSharmaP)

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

April 1, 1976

Polish Envoy To Nepal Named

Kathmandu, March 31: Mr Jan-Czapla has been appointed Ambassador to Poland to Nepal, it is learnt from the Foreign Ministry of His Majesty's Government, reports RSS.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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

READER'S MAIL

High Hope On New Government



I am writing in reference to a news report titled *"Newly appointed Ministers sworn-in, 15-member Cabinet formed,"* which was published in the digital edition of this daily on March 27, 2026. After the Gen Z revolt, the interim government, led by Sushila Karki, pledged to hold elections successfully on March 5th.

And it was a success due to which Nepal has now a new government helmed by Balen Shah. Already, the government has formed a 15-member Cabinet among which five are women. The newly formed government has also taken steps to implement a probe report on the Gen Z revolution.

Major leaders have been interrogated as the government pledges to bring justice to those affected. While Nepalis are looking forward to sweeping reforms in the nation, there are high hopes for the government. The votes that Nepalis cast should lead to the betterment of the nation.

Sarita Thapa Jhapa

TAILPIECE

Out in Kansas, tornadoes often hit with sudden devastation, without warning, and with unusual patterns of destruction. In one case, a house was completely whisked away leaving only the foundation and first floor. A silver-haired farm lady was seen sitting dazed, in a bathtub, the only remaining part of the house left above the floor.

The rescue squad rushed to her aid and found her unhurt. She was just sitting there in the tub, talking to herself. "It was the strangest thing... it was the strangest thing..." she kept repeating dazedly.

"What was the strangest thing, Ma'am?" asked one of the rescuers.

"I was visiting my daughter here, taking a bath, and all I did was pull the plug and the whole darned house suddenly drained away."

THAI MONARCH ENDORSES CABINET

AFP
Bangkok, Mar. 31

Thailand's king endorsed the new cabinet of second-term Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, with the nephew of jailed ex-leader Thaksin Shinawatra made a deputy prime minister, the Royal Gazette said Tuesday.

The cabinet posts, mostly reserved for members of Anutin's party, include six deputy prime minister positions -- one of which was given to Yodchanan Wongsawat, the top candidate of Thaksin's Pheu Thai party in the general election last month.

Anutin's Bhumjaithai party won the most seats in parliament in the February 8 poll, putting the conservatives at the head of the new ruling coalition.

But without an outright majority, Bhumjaithai allied with the third-placed Pheu Thai of tech billionaire Thaksin, who is serving a one-year prison sentence for corruption. Yodchanan, a biomedical engineering professor, was also made minister for higher education, science, research and information.

Anutin himself will pull double-duty, also serving as interior minister. Bhumjaithai members and its loyalists hold 32 cabinet positions, including the economic and defence portfolios, with several ministers from Anutin's first short-lived term being re-appointed.

Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow will retain his position as Thailand's top diplomat, as will the ministers of finance and commerce -- all three of whom were also made deputy prime ministers. The justice and defence ministers also fall within the camp of the pro-military and pro-monarchy Bhumjaithai.

Pheu Thai was allotted nine minister jobs, including agriculture, labour, education and social development. The new government is expected to offer its policy positions before parliament next week, according to local media.

Iran fires missiles after Trump warning



PHOTO: AFP

Israel has relentlessly pounded Lebanon, including central Beirut, as it seeks to deliver a heavy blow to Iran ally Hezbollah.

AFP
Tehran, Mar. 31

Iran fired missiles across the Middle East on Tuesday as its capital was hit by fresh explosions, after US President Donald Trump threatened the country's key oil export hub, power stations and desalination plants.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump's partner in attacking Iran, said more than half of his military aims had been achieved, but both leaders refused to put a timeline on an operation that has ignited a month-long regional war and jolted global markets.

As sirens rang out in Jerusalem, Israel's military said it had responded to fresh Iranian missiles, while local Iranian media reported new explosions in Tehran that caused "power outages in parts" of the capital.

Israel's military also reported Tuesday that four more of its soldiers had been killed in combat in southern Lebanon, where the war has spilled and where they are clashing with Iranian-backed Hezbollah.

Before the latest strikes on Tehran, Israel issued a warning on X to residents of an area in the west of the city saying it would "attack military infrastructure" there. Iran, meanwhile, fired a new salvo of missiles at Gulf nations it accuses of serving as a launchpad for US strikes.

In Dubai, four people were wounded by falling debris from intercepted projectiles while an Iranian attack sparked a fire at a Kuwaiti oil tanker in the city's port, said authorities in the financial hub whose reputation for stability has been shaken by the conflict. In Saudi Arabia, authorities said they intercepted eight ballistic missiles, hours after Iran's top diplomat called on Riyadh to "eject US forces".

Trump warned Monday that if Iran did not strike a war-ending deal -- which included reopening the vital Strait of Hormuz shipping lane -- US forces would destroy "all of their Electric Generating Plants, Oil Wells and Kharg Island (and possibly all desalinization plants!)."

But the Wall Street Journal reported he also told aides he was willing to end the war even if the strait remains largely closed --likely strengthening Tehran's control on the waterway. Refusing to back down, an Iranian parliamentary committee voted to impose tolls on vessels in the strait, the passageway through which one-fifth of global oil passes, and completely ban ships from the United States and Israel.

The strait had been open before the war, but Secretary of State Marco Rubio has recently spoken of building a "coalition" to oppose the Iranian tolling plan. "It sets an incredible precedent," Rubio told Al-Jazeera of the tolls. "So this means that nations can now take over international waterways and claim them as their own," Rubio said of the waterway the US president recently called the "Strait of Trump".

Trump said the United States was speaking to a "more reasonable regime" in Tehran, which has denied any talks and accused him of lying about negotiations as cover while readying a ground invasion. For Israel's part, Netanyahu said his military had achieved key objectives including "wiping out" industrial plants in Iran and coming "close to finishing their arms industry".

"It's definitely beyond the halfway point. But I don't want to put a schedule on it," Netanyahu told US broadcaster Newsmax. The war, and the spiraling price of oil, has been unpopular in the United States, where Rubio again said Monday that it would last "weeks" more and not months.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, whose country is feeling the economic pinch of the war, appealed directly to Trump to find an offramp. "Please, help us to stop the war; you are capable of it," Sisi told a press conference.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, whose country is acting as an intermediary between Tehran and Washington, was set to travel to Beijing for talks Tuesday on "global issues of mutual interest" with counterpart Wang Yi.

Russia sending oil to Cuba



PHOTO: AFP

The Anatoly Kolodkin, a tanker under US sanctions, on its way to the port of Matanzas, east of Havana, with 730,000 barrels of crude oil.

AFP
Matanzas, Mar. 31

A Russian oil tanker was set to deliver the first crude shipment to Cuba since January on Tuesday after Washington gave the crisis-hit island a reprieve from an effective fuel blockade.

The Anatoly Kolodkin, a tanker under US sanctions, was on its way to the port of Matanzas, east of Havana, with 730,000 barrels of crude.

US President Donald Trump's decision to let Russia deliver the oil avoids a confrontation with Moscow and provides temporary relief to a country that has endured blackouts, fuel rationing and dwindling public transportation. "We'll welcome it with open arms. You have no idea how badly we need that oil," said Rosa Perez, a 74-year-old retiree whose home in Matanzas had lost power again.

"Let's see if things improve for us, even just a little... I can't take it anymore," she told AFP, voicing hope that more shipments will follow. Trump said Sunday that he did not object to Russia or others sending oil to the island because Cubans "have to survive." The White House denied however that there was any change to US sanctions policy.

"We allowed this ship to reach Cuba in order to provide humanitarian needs to the Cuban people. These decisions are being made on a case-by-case basis," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said.

Cuba was cut off from oil supplies in January after US forces ousted its main regional ally, Venezuela's socialist leader Nicolas Maduro, and Trump threatened tariffs on countries that send crude to the country.

The US president has mused about "taking" the communist-ruled island, though Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel confirmed in March that Cuban and US officials had held talks.

Ricardo Herrero, executive director of the Cuba Study Group, a nonpartisan policy group in Washington, said the aim of restricting oil was to force Havana "to make real concessions at the negotiating table." "The strategy here is to drive the system to the brink," Herrero told AFP. "But it's not to precipitate a full-blown societal or humanitarian collapse."

"It's all consistent with idea that the US holds all the cards and they'll decide when to hold, when to fold and when they go all in," he said.

Cubans have endured seven nationwide blackouts since 2024, including two in March, and fuel prices have soared. The blackouts as well as persistent shortages of food and medicine have fueled public frustration and some rare protests. Analysts said the Russian oil would buy the Cuban economy only a few weeks.

Jorge Pinon, an expert on Cuba's energy sector at the University of Texas at Austin, said the more urgent need is diesel, which could be used for backup power generators or for transportation systems to keep the economy running. It would take a month to refine the oil and deliver the diesel, which would be enough to cover demand for about two weeks, he said.

China bans ashes in flats

AFP
Beijing, Mar. 31

Chinese authorities have banned entombing cremated remains in cheap apartments, a practice that had gained popularity as mourners took advantage of the subdued housing market to dodge rising funeral costs.

"Bone-ash apartments" are units in often barely occupied residential complexes used by some families as resting places for their loved ones' remains. They can be cheaper than a public cemetery plot, according to local media, as well as giving families more control over the site.

Acquiring one "kills two birds with one stone", Carsten Herrmann-Pillath from Germany's Erfurt University told AFP. "It's an investment and eases the (process of carrying out) ritual practices."

But regulations that came into force on Monday explicitly ban "the use of residential dwellings specifically for the interment of ashes". Bone-ash apartments are often identifiable by sealed-off windows or closed curtains, according to Chinese media reports.

A resident quoted by the Communist Party-run Legal Daily newspaper described peeking inside an apartment in his estate to see two candlesticks around a black box and a black-and-white portrait, a typical arrangement in China for commemorating the dead.

The ban comes days before the Qingming Festival, also known as Tomb Sweeping Day, when families traditionally visit relatives' graves to tidy them and make ritual offerings.

Human remains are only permitted to be buried in designated areas such as public cemeteries, according to the State Council, China's cabinet. Demand for cemetery plots is increasing though, as China's population ages and deaths outpace births.

In 2020, funerals cost nearly half of the country's average annual salary, according to a survey by British insurance firm SunLife. On Tuesday, China's market watchdog announced new rules to tackle fraud and a lack of transparency in funeral pricing to "reduce the burden of funerals on the masses".

The price of apartments meanwhile has continued to fall as consumer confidence remains low and a long-running property sector crisis lingers. Debt and stalled construction have plagued leading firms since 2020, when curbs on excessive borrowing and speculation dramatically narrowed access to credit.

Mongolia's third PM faces turmoil

AP
Ulaanbaatar, Mar. 31

Mongolia has named its third prime minister in nine months as the ruling party tries to overcome internal power struggles at a time of mounting economic pressures and political infighting at home.

The hope is that Uchral Nyam-Osor can manage the divisions in the Mongolian People's Party that toppled his two predecessors and brought him to power. He called for unity after parliament confirmed his appointment Monday night.

"As others unite to confront crises, we cannot afford political infighting that weakens our economy," he told lawmakers.

Uchral was elected as leader of the Mongolian People's Party and speaker of the parliament last November. Before entering politics, he was a popular hip-hop artist known as "Timon."

The 39-year-old lawmaker has positioned himself as a reform-minded leader focused on modernizing the country's regulatory environment.

He wants to end a Soviet-era system that gives officials the power to issue permits, creating fertile ground for corruption. Mongolia transitioned to democracy in 1990 after decades of Communist rule.



FILE PHOTO: AP

Mongolian Prime Minister Gombojavyn Zandanshatar in Vladivostok, Russia.

Ucrhal is a former minister of digital development and communications who promoted transparency reforms and digital governance initiatives. He has played a role in efforts to attract foreign investment to the resource-rich country, including a uranium-related agreement with France's Orano Group in early 2025.

The Mongolian parliament has been paralyzed following a boycott earlier this month by the opposition Democratic Party and infighting in the ruling party. Together, that meant not enough members were showing up for the legislature to hold votes.

The previous prime minister, Zandanshatar Gombojav, who submitted his resignation Friday to resolve the crisis, had come under pressure because one of his senior ministers faced corruption allegations.

Uchral was seen as a compromise between factions in the Mongolian People's Party loyal to the president and the supporters of another former prime minister, Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai.

A total of 107 of the parliament's 126 lawmakers voted Monday night, with 88 supporting Uchral — or 82% — clearing the way for him to take office.

Zandanshatar, who is close to the president, had replaced Oyun-Erdene, last June. All three prime ministers are from the Mongolian People's Party.

Uchral warned Monday that Mongolia is entering a period of three overlapping crises: rising global fuel prices, volatile commodity markets and deepening domestic political divisions.

PRISM

Capybara triplets born at Palm Beach Zoo

Florida: The Palm Beach Zoo in Florida announced the births of three healthy capybara pups and shared video of the animals exploring their habitat on Thursday.

The zoo announced on Tuesday that the triplets were born recently to parents Iyari and Zeus. Iyari came to the zoo in 2024.

"The family is enjoying their time together behind the scenes and their adventures are too cute not to share," the zoo said on social media. A follow-up Instagram post on Thursday showed the babies exploring the capybara habitat for the first time.

Robots wreck Chicago bus shelters

Chicago: Two delivery robots crashed into two bus shelters in Chicago within a matter of days -- and one of the incidents was caught on camera.

The first crash occurred Sunday, when a delivery robot owned by Serve Robotics crashed into a Chicago Transit Authority Grand and Racine bus shelter, shattering the glass.

The crash, which was caught on camera, shows the robot stop and remain in place after causing the glass to shatter.

-Agencies

TODAY IN HISTORY

285– Roman emperor Diocletian names Maximian his co-emperor ("Augustus").
527 – Byzantine Emperor Justin I names his nephew Justinian I as co-ruler and successor to the throne.
1572 – In the Eighty Years' War, the Watergeuzen capture Brielle from the Seventeen Provinces, gaining the first foothold on land for what would become the Dutch Republic.
1725 – J. S. Bach's later Easter Oratorio in its first version is performed at the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig on Easter Sunday.
1789 – In New York City, the United States House of Representatives achieves its first quorum and elects Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania as its first Speaker.
1833 – The Convention of 1833, a political gathering of settlers in Mexican Texas to help draft a series of petitions to the Mexican government, begins in San Felipe de Austin.

CZECH POLICE NAB SUSPECT

AP
Prague, Mar. 31

Czech police said Tuesday that they have arrested a foreign national who claimed responsibility for using Molotov cocktails to attack a Russian cultural center in Prague last week.

They said the male suspect turned himself in on Monday and that he acknowledged planning the attack since last summer on the Russian House, which is funded by the Russian state but doesn't have diplomatic status.

Police did not name the man's nationality or give any other details. The incident in the Czech capital took place late Thursday.

A photo showed a broken window while two windows and a wall of the building were partly covered with smoke. The building did not catch fire, however.

The center said it organizes cultural, educational and scientific programs and offers Russian language courses.

Japan deploys long-range missiles

AP
Tokyo, Mar. 31

Japan's first long-range missile was deployed at a southwestern army camp, officials said Tuesday, as the country pushes to bolster its offensive capabilities.

The upgraded Type-12 land-to-ship missiles, developed and produced by Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, became operational at Camp Kengun in Kumamoto prefecture.

"As Japan faces the most severe and complex security environment in the postwar era ... it is an extremely important capability to strengthen Japan's deterrence and responsiveness," Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi told reporters. "It demonstrates Japan's firm determination and capability to defend itself."

The upgraded Type-12 missile has a range of about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles), a significant extension from the 200-kilometer (125-mile) range of the original that would allow it to reach mainland China.



PHOTO: AP

Type-12 land-to-ship missile launcher shown at Camp Kengun in Kumamoto, Japan.

The deployment of the long-range missile gives Japan a "standoff" capability, meaning it can strike enemy missile bases from afar, marking a break from the self-defense-only policy the country long followed under its pacifist constitution.

Residents opposing the deployment near the residential area staged protests outside the Kengun camp, saying it would escalate tension and increases risks the area could be targeted by potential enemies.

Japan rolls out more weapons systems to protect southwestern islands

Also Tuesday, a hypersonic glide vehicle, a new weapons system designed for island defense, was deployed to Camp Fuji in the Shizuoka prefecture, west of Tokyo. Additional deployment of the upgraded Type-12 missiles and HGVs at other locations in Japan, including Hokkaido in the north and Miyazaki in the south, are planned by March 2028.

Japan also plans to deploy U.S.-made, 1,600-kilometer (990-mile)-range Tomahawk cruise missiles on Japanese destroyer JS Chokai later this year, and eventually on seven other destroyers.

Takaichi boosts defense spending to counter China

Japan considers China its main regional security threat and has fortified the country's southwestern islands near the East China Sea in recent years.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi 's Cabinet in December approved a record defense budget plan exceeding 9 trillion yen ($58 billion) for the fiscal year beginning April and aims to fortify its strike-back capability and coastal defense with cruise missiles and unmanned arsenals.

NC MOBILISE LEADERS TO REVIEW MARCH 5 ELECTIONS IN PROVINCES

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

The Nepali Congress Central Working Committee meeting has decided to initiate an intensive nationwide review to evaluate its electoral performance and determine its future political course.

The party has mobilised central representatives to conduct thorough field studies and hold discussions with candidates across all 165 constituencies.

General secretary Pradeep Paudel confirmed that these high-level review programmes would be managed by district working committees in coordination with provincial officials and regional presidents. The objective is to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the voting patterns and local challenges faced by party candidates contesting the elections under the first-past-the-post and proportional representation systems during the recent elections.

The provincial review sessions are scheduled to commence in Koshi Province, where Dr. Dila Sangraula Pant will lead the discussions in Biratnagar on April 6. Similarly, Farmullah Mansoor will coordinate a gathering of Madhes Province in Janakpur on April 8. S

Shortly thereafter, Yogendra Chaudhary will oversee the review for Lumbini Province in Dang on April 9, while Devraj Chalise will lead the Gandaki Province session in Pokhara on April 10.

The final leg of the review will see arna Bahadur Budha coordinating the Karnali Province programme in Surkhet on April 16 followed by Prakash Rasaili Snehi's session for Sudurpaschim Province in Kailali on April 18.

The nationwide tour will conclude in Bagmati Province, where Bahadur Singh Lama will chair the meeting in Hetauda on April 20. By engaging directly with grassroots leadership in every province, the Nepali Congress aims to strengthen its internal structure and refine its strategy for the upcoming political term.

BAJAGAIN NAMED PM'S PRESS FACILITATOR



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Surendra Bajagain has been appointed as the press facilitator to Prime Minister Balendra Shah (Balen).

The Secretariat of the Prime Minister informed on Tuesday about Bajagain's appointment with benefits equivalent to those of a section officer in the Prime Minister's personal secretariat. Bajagain previously served as press coordinator when Shah was the Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City. A permanent resident of Lalitpur, he is actively engaged in journalism and IT sector.



PHOTO: RSS

Tourists enjoy the mesmerising view of Dhumba Lake at Samlegaun in Gharpajhong Rural Municipality-5, Mustang, on Tuesday.

Classifying land within Phewa Lake criteria moves forward

BY SANTOSH SUBEDI
Kaski, Mar. 31

Pokhara Metropolitan City Mayor Dhanraj Acharya has said that the classification of land falling within the 65-meter standard of Phewa Lake is underway.

He informed that, according to the standard, the area within 65 meters has been registered as contaminated and compensation amounts are being determined.

"This is a very sensitive matter; not a single plot has been left out. Another issue is that the plots may have been shifted during the survey conducted around 1975/76 and during the re-survey later. Therefore, the technical committee is working to double-check and re-verify everything," he said.

Mayor Acharya stated that there is a plan to establish a buffer zone for the lake, beginning with government offices that fall within the lake's standards. Implementation will start with government buildings and structures.

Work will begin to clear the 65-meter area where the Tourism Board, the Metropolitan Education Office, and the Nepal Police headquarters are located. The Metropolitan has also allocated a budget for this.

The task of installing 1,055 pillars has been completed, maintaining the highest water level in the lake at 75.95 meters. Earlier, the technical sub-committee formed by the Supreme Court's Judgment Implementation Facilitation Committee had demarcated boundaries for installing 1,055 digital poles along the banks of Phewa Lake.

Mayor Acharya said that the work of separating contaminated land within the 65-meter standard by a team of technicians has reached its final stage. He explained that the first phase of demarcation was completed by determining the "high flood point" of the lake, as ordered by the Supreme Court.



PM Shah committed to immediately advancing work on Geta Medical College and the Shaheed Dashrath Chand University of Health Sciences, and province level engineering college.

According to him, after an 18-month-long technical study, the high water level (high flood point) of Phewa Lake has been identified and an area of 65 meters beyond it has been allocated. The metropolis plans to begin evaluating the lands to be compensated in the third phase.

Mayor Acharya clarified that no one will be forced to vacate land without compensation.

He said, "After completing a long study and research of almost 18 months, on June 31, 2026, we formally started the work of installing poles along the banks of Phewa Lake with the Chief Minister, myself, the CDO, friends from other political parties and security agencies."

"Our announcement was to complete the work within this fiscal year. Accordingly, we installed all 1,055 poles wherever possible. In many places on steep slopes, rocky areas, or where poles could not be buried, we left markers to indicate the boundaries," he added.

CJ RAUT RETIRES



RSS
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Chief Justice Prakashman Singh Raut has retired due to age limit, 65 year-old, on Tuesday.

Senior most Justice at Supreme Court, Sapana Pradhan Malla, bade farewell to CJ Raut amidst a function.

Raut was appointed the Chief Justice on October 6, 2024. His term for service expired with his age completing 65.

With Raut's retirement, senior most Justice Malla will be handling the responsibility of Officiating Chief Justice.

Meanwhile, the Judicial Council has recommended the senior most Justice Malla and Justices Kumar Regmi, Hari Phuyal, Dr Manoj Kumar Sharma, Dr Nahakul Subedi and Til Prasad Shrestha for the post of the next Chief Justice. The constitution has the provision that Constitutional Council makes a recommendation of Chief Justice a month before the CJ retires. Once the parliamentary hearing endorses the recommended names, he/she is appointed by the President.

Former Kathmandu CDO Rijal released on bail

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Former Chief District Officer of Kathmandu, Chhabi Rijal, has been released.

According to Superintendent of Police (SP) Pawan Kumar Bhattarai at the Kathmandu District Police Range, Rijal was freed on bail under the responsibility of a guarantor. Earlier on Tuesday morning, he was apprehended from Subidhanagar, Kathmandu, in connection with the Gen Z protests.

"All necessary documents have been obtained from him. After completing the process, he was released on the condition that he will appear when required," Bhattarai said. Rijal has been released under the custody of his nephew.

A high-level probe commission formed to investigate the Gen-Z protests held on September 8 and 9 had recommended action against him.

The commission suggested investigation and prosecution under Section 181 of the National Penal Code 2017, which relates to causing death through negligence. The offence carries a penalty of up to three years' imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs. 30,000.

A Cabinet meeting held on Friday last week, had decided to implement the commission's report for individuals other than those within the security apparatus.

On Saturday, former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and former Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak were arrested.

At the time, it had been stated that the Chief District Officer would not be arrested, as the position also serves as chair of the District Security Committee. However, Rijal was detained on Tuesday morning before being released shortly afterwards.

When asked whether the Cabinet decision had led to his release, police spokesperson Bhattarai said the matter remained under consideration.

"The Cabinet decision mentions two aspects. We are assessing what should be done in their case and will proceed accordingly," he said. "For now, he has just been released."

A high-level probe commission formed to investigate into the Gen Z protest had identified Rijal as responsible and recommended legal action against him. He was serving as the CDO of Kathmandu during the protests held on September 8 and 9.

Floods shut down BP Highway

RSS
Kavrepalanchok, Mar. 31

Traffic has been suspended indefinitely on the BP Highway from this evening. The District Police Office, Kavrepalanchok, has stated that traffic operation has been suspended considering the risk to the travelers following heavy rains triggered floods in the Roshi river in the Bhakunde-Nepalthok section of the highway.

According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Rabin Bista, traffic has been suspended considering the risk of flooding in the Roshi river due to heavy rains in Panauti, Namobuddha, Katunje, Mangaltar Taga, Kavrebhanjyang and other places in the southern part of the district.

Vehicles already on the highway are currently being held at the entry points at Kavrebhanjyang in Dhulikhel and Nepalthok in Sindhuli.

Former secretaries applaud...

That is a very positive step, he added. The process typically begins with personnel, then resources, and then laws and regulations, after that, implementation can truly take off, he added.

According to Dahal while this serves as a roadmap and vision document, translating it into practice requires strong political will.

"Decisions must be implemented with integrity, free from pressure, influence, or any bias. There must be no protection for wrongdoing," he added.

He further highlighted the important role of the bureaucracy in its implementation. "Currently, employee morale is low, and professionalism must be strengthened. Civil servants need clear incentives and motivation to implement policies effectively, as they are the ones responsible for execution," he added.

Highlighting that Nepal has a history of political non-cooperation, where opposition parties often undermine the government, he said this culture must change. Political parties should support good initiatives and oppose only what is harmful.

Ojha said implementing the roadmap will require considerable effort. It is not impossible, but it cannot be achieved by the political leadership alone. The bureaucracy and administrative machinery must also actively cooperate and take responsibility."

"Many components involve research and analysis, which require data collection, understanding, and evaluation. Naturally, this takes time, so a higher level of commitment and hard work will be necessary," he added.

Dahal highlighted five key elements necessary for its success. They are: the Parliament must fast-track essential legislation, the government must ensure effective monitoring and daily oversight, the judiciary must remain independent and uphold constitutional and legal principles, civil society and media must act as watchdogs and citizens must remain aware, engaged, and hold the government accountable.

Nepal said there are serious budget constraints. "One of the challenges for the government is preparing the budget. This is because many unfinished commitments from the past must now be addressed. So far, much of the discussion has focused on infrastructure projects, but the situation is broader than that."

As mentioned, therefore, the upcoming budget, which must be presented in Parliament by the end of May, will be crucial. "Once the programmes and priorities are clearly outlined in that budget, we will be in a better position to form a more informed opinion," Nepal said.

Citizenship through mother's...

In practice, obtaining citizenship through the mother involves administrative barriers, complicated documentation requirements, pressure for self-declaration, and sometimes even legal risks. This has caused psychological, social, and economic impacts on affected families.

Participants of the programme demanded to ensure the right to obtain citizenship through mother's name in an equal, dignified, and hassle-free manner, and to urge the government to eliminate remaining discriminatory provisions in the constitution.

According to Citizenship Affected People's Network, various studies have shown that equal citizenship rights play a significant role in a country's economic and social development. Children and youth who can easily obtain citizenship through their mother gain better access to education, healthcare, banking services, and employment opportunities.

At a time when 172 out of 195 countries worldwide, approximately 88%, have ensured gender equality in their citizenship laws, Nepal still faces legal and practical barriers. Although Nepal's constitution provides for citizenship through the mother's name, these provisions are conditional and ultimately dependent on the father's identity.

It was highlighted that only 24 countries, including Nepal, still maintain gender-discriminatory citizenship laws affecting a mother's ability to confer citizenship to her children. In the Asia-Pacific region, only four countries including Nepal and in South Asia, Nepal alone retains such discriminatory provisions.

Statements from Oli,...

Meanwhile, the TU Teaching Hospital on Monday night also said Oli now recuperating can be discharged from the hospital citing his medical condition as fair.

"The statement does not have to be taken tomorrow (Wednesday). It can be done when his health allows and remains normal," Bhattarai said. Police will request a further extension from the district court if necessary.

The district court had initially granted the five-day extension to allow for the review and analysis of case documents and investigation reports.

Yak death surge in Taplejung following wild dog attacks

BY CHANDRA PANDAK
Taplejung, Mar. 31



Farmers in Taplejung have been greatly worried after wild dogs began attacking and killing yaks in the high Himalayan grazing areas.

According to yak herder Nupu Sherpa, wild dogs have recently been preying on livestock, causing significant losses. A few days ago, one of his yaks was killed by wild dogs while grazing in a pasture. Sherpa said the incident occurred in the Jaljale area above Fakrumbha in Maivakhola, where his yak was attacked and eaten. The loss of a single animal is estimated at around Rs. 80,000. He added that similar incidents have affected other farmers in the district as well.

Livestock herders said that yaks raised in high-altitude pastures are often vulnerable to attacks from wild animals such as wild dogs and wolves. The loss of a single animal can cost farmers between Rs. 75,000 and Rs. 90,000.

Farmers also said that the number of yaks in the district has increased over the past seven to eight years, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, many of these animals were exported to Tibet, an autonomous region of China, but trade was disrupted during the pandemic, leading to a rise in livestock numbers.

Sherpa alone owns around 90 yaks. Dozens of farmers in Himalayan areas such as Papung, Olangchung Gola, Yangma and Ghunsa rely on yak herding as their main source of livelihood.

Farmers said that they have been facing growing difficulties due to limited trade opportunities since the pandemic, along with the rising number of livestock. The recent increase in attacks by wild animals has added to their concerns.

They have urged the government to facilitate the resumption of trade and export of yaks to Tibet.

Lyricist Thapa advocates for intellectual rights

BY AMAR RAJ NAHARKI
Tanahun, Mar. 31

Basanta Bityasi Thapa is one of the prominent names tirelessly working to establish a distinct identity and existence as a lyricist.

Born in Archale, Myagde-7, Tanahun, Thapa is currently leading the Lyricists Association of Nepal (LAN), the umbrella organisation for songwriters, for his second consecutive term as President.

Active is Nepali songwriting for over three and a half decades. He has been vocal in advocating for creators' rights, consistently pressuring the state to ensure royalties, copyright protection, and due respect for lyricists.

Thapa's musical journey began in 1985, driven by a deep-rooted interest in literature and songwriting.

His first recorded song, 'Aankhako Parelima', was released in 1991, featuring music by Bijay Singh Munal and vocals by Sabita Kharel.

Since then, out of his more than 200 creations, over 100 songs have been recorded by renowned singers.

His popular hits include 'Ritto Sadakma Khojchu Timilai', 'Aashwasan Nadeu Mero Jindagilai', 'Najarko Doshi Bani Kina Jhulkinchau', and 'Binti Aalo Mero Ghauma Nunchuk Nacharideu'.



Renowned artists such as Aananda Karki, Nabin K. Bhattarai, Rajesh Payal Rai, Ram Krishna Dhakal, and Anju Panta have lent their voices to his lyrics. As a literary figure, Thapa has published seven lyrical albums and one book of lyrics to date.

His notable works include albums like Pratibimba 3-Abiral, Anurodh, Thulnani, Gahana, Mitrata, Dashak, and Kohi Chan Ki.

His book of lyrics titled 'Khusi Ramne Othbhari' is already in the market, while two new albums, 'Timi Mero Sathi' and 'Maunata', along with a book titled 'Seemapari Ma', are in the final stages of publication.

Balancing his creative pursuits with organisational responsibilities, Thapa has played a significant parental role in bringing lyricists from outside the capital into the mainstream.

Thapa emphasises that a song cannot exist without a lyricist, yet their names often remain in the shadows.

He maintains that the movement for creators' rights will not rest until royalties and copyright protections are practically ensured.

In line with this mission, the Lyricists Association of Nepal, in collaboration with the Film Development Board, is organising a workshop titled 'The Role of Songs in Cinema and the Rights of Lyricists' in Kathmandu on March 31.

According to Thapa, the primary objective of the programme is to end the trend where lyricists are sidelined despite their crucial contribution to the success of films.

Preparations for NIFF conclude

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31



The preparations for the 9th edition of the Nepal International Film Festival (NIFF) have been completed.

Organised by the Nepal Film and Cultural Academy (NFCA), the festival is scheduled to take place from April 2 to 6.

NIFF President KP Pathak said, "Immediately after the pre-event, we have entered the main event. Foreign guests have already started arriving."

He added that the special guest for the opening ceremony, renowned Bollywood director Ramesh Sippy, will arrive in Nepal on April 1.

Actress Kiran Juneja and Indian film producer of Nepali origin Neelkanth Regmi will also attend the festival.

The opening ceremony will be held at Civil Mall on April 2.

On the second day of NIFF, a dialogue programme titled Cinema Dialogue: With Ramesh Sippy and Rajesh Hamal is scheduled at the Tourism Board.

The session will feature a conversation between director Sippy and legendary actor Rajesh Hamal, focusing on their personal experiences, cinematic journeys, and the future of film.

The festival will also include a five-day AI film workshop aimed at young filmmakers. In addition, a Feature Pitch programme has been arranged to connect writers directly with producers, allowing them to present their story ideas.

This edition will feature 88 films from 40 countries competing in the festival. Additionally, six Chinese and four Russian films will be screened outside the competition.

Russian Film Days will be organised at the Russian House, where films screened on other days can also be viewed free of charge.

A Xizang Panorama section has also been introduced, showcasing six Chinese films and documentaries. These screenings will be free of charge at the Tourism Board and Chhaya Centre.

However, films in the competition category will be screened for a fee at Civil Mall and Chhaya Centre.

In total, 10 interactive programmes have been arranged, where filmmakers from various countries will share their experiences and insights.

Shrestha deliberates on translators' honesty

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

The Society of Translators Nepal featured author Avaya Shrestha in its third episode of Anubad Bimarsha (Translation Discourse).

During the virtual session held via Zoom on Sunday evening, chaired by Dr. Bal Ram Adhikari, the President of the Society, prominent poet, short story writer, and journalist Shrestha shed light on the practical sides of translation.

Sharing his perspectives on the theme 'Translation: Experience and Perspective,' Shrestha emphasised that being an expert in languages alone is not enough for a translator; a high level of integrity is important.

Criticising certain malpractices within the Nepali translation sector, he remarked, "The tendency of claiming to translate from the original source while actually relying on Hindi versions has undermined the dignity of translation."

He claimed that such deceptive acts go against the fundamental ethics of translation.

Shrestha mentioned that he was fortunate to have read world-class literature, including Russian fiction, through translated books. "They inspired me to translate world-class short stories for Nepali readers who cannot read English," he said.

He also revealed that he is going to publish a book of translated world-class short stories titled Mahan Katha (Great Short Stories).

Shrestha, who has translated works of global literary icons ranging from poets like Shelly, DH Lawrence, Brecht, Pablo Neruda to fiction writers Chekov, Guy de Maupassant, Milan Kundera, and Marquez into Nepali, defined poetry translation as a quest for 'internal rhythm.'

He further shared his experiments in adapting Gabriel García Márquez's long and intricate sentences to suit the linguistic nature and consciousness of Nepali readers. "I have analysed Marquez's single long sentence into multiple shorter ones while translating it into Nepali," he said.

Shrestha also discussed the translation process and the socio-psychological nuances of French short story master Maupassant's famous stories such as 'The Necklace,' 'Fancy Love,' 'The Ball of Fat,' 'In the Bed Room' and 'The Signal.'

He stressed the need for state institutions like the Nepal Academy to send Nepali translators abroad for translation studies and organise international-level workshops and training programmes to ensure the quality of the translation.

Moderator Chandra Bahadur Lama announced the presentation of a 'Digital Certificate of Appreciation' to Shrestha on behalf of the Society. Society chair Dr. Bal Ram Adhikari expressed the Society's commitment to making the discourse series even more effective by involving more academic figures, established writers, and expert translators in the future.

TAYLOR SWIFT FACES SHOWGIRL TRADEMARK LAWSUIT

REUTERS
Las Vegas, Mar. 31

Pop megastar Taylor Swift has been sued by a Las Vegas performer who claims her latest hit album, The Life of a Showgirl, infringes trademark rights.

Maren Wade filed the complaint on Monday, arguing that the album's marketing could "drown out" her long-running stage show Confessions of a Showgirl. She has asked the court to prevent Swift from causing confusion with the similar title.

Representatives for Swift and her label, Universal Music Group, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.Wade's solicitor, Jaymie Parkkinen, said they respect Swift's success but stressed that trademark law exists to protect creators at all levels.

Released in October, Swift's 12th album became the biggest-selling record of 2025 and broke streaming records on Spotify.

According to the complaint, Wade began her Confessions of a Showgirl column in 2014 and later developed it into a touring stage production. She claims the United States Patent and Trademark Office previously rejected Swift's trademark application for Life of a Showgirl due to potential confusion with her existing brand.

Wade alleges that Swift's continued use of the title risks overshadowing her work and leading audiences to mistake the original for an imitation. She is seeking an injunction to block use of the "Showgirl" branding, along with unspecified damages.

Celine Dion announces first concerts since stiff-person syndrome diagnosis

AP
Los Angeles, Mar. 31

Celine Dion will return to the stage this autumn with her first run of concerts since revealing her diagnosis with stiff-person syndrome, announcing a five-week limited engagement in Paris. The Grammy-winning singer said on Monday that she will perform 10 shows at Paris La Défense Arena from 12 September to 14 October, marking a major milestone after years away from touring due to the rare neurological condition she disclosed in 2022.

In an emotional video message delivered beneath the Eiffel Tower on her 58th birthday, Dion thanked fans for their support during her health struggles and said she feels "strong" and "excited" to return to the stage.

"Over the last few years, every day that's gone by, I've felt your prayers and support," she said. "This year, I'm getting the chance to see you, to perform for you once again in Paris."

The shows, titled Celine Dion Paris 2026, will feature her catalogue of hits in both English and French. The production is being developed with creative director Willo Perron.



Dion has largely stepped back from performing since cancelling her Courage World Tour as her condition progressed. She made a brief but widely watched return at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Paris Olympics, performing atop the Eiffel Tower.

With nearly 260 million albums sold worldwide, Dion remains one of the best-selling and most decorated artists in pop music history, known for hits including My Heart Will Go On and Because You Loved Me.

Artist presale registration for the Paris shows runs until 2 April, with ticket access beginning on 7 April. La Défense Arena has a capacity of 40,000 spectators and was one of the venues used during the Olympics.

HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

ARIES: Courage can build reliable bridges. Your 7th House of Caring is lit by the Full Moon tonight, asking for kindness regarding promises, expectations, and collaborations, whether they involve friends, clients, or loved ones.

CANCER: Gentle comfort calls you closer to home. The Full Moon highlights your 4th House of Traditions, nudging you to think about what makes your residence a true home base. Does it need any help becoming a more comfortable place?

LIBRA: Your reflection can show the bravery you wish you felt. A Full Moon in your sign highlights all your best qualities, then nudges you to refresh your personal presentation with that confidence as your guiding star.

CAPRICORN: By afternoon, your focus sharpens on goals. Your 10th House of Respect comes into focus under the Full Moon, whether you're polishing a presentation, updating a portfolio, or confirming expectations with a supervisor.

TAURUS: Simplicity is key to success at present, especially regarding your daily routines. The Full Moon spotlights your 6th House of Health, helping you refine habits, tidy your desk, or just do something that makes your mind and body feel good.

LEO: Your voice carries warmth today. As the Full Moon lights your 3rd House of Communication, reach out with a heartfelt call, welcome or offer neighborly support, and confidently share your ideas or creations with others.

SCORPIO: What quiet truth wants a little space? Your 12th House of Inner Work can flourish with the Full Moon's nourishing light. If possible, set aside some time today to journal, listen to your favorite music, or just take a nap!

AQUARIUS: A wider view refreshes your thinking today. The Full Moon brightens your 9th House of Travel, supporting your efforts around travel, education, or otherwise expanding your mind.

GEMINI: What playful idea wants center stage now? Creative expression takes the spotlight as the Full Moon brightens your 5th House of Play, encouraging you to share a joke or finish a sketch.

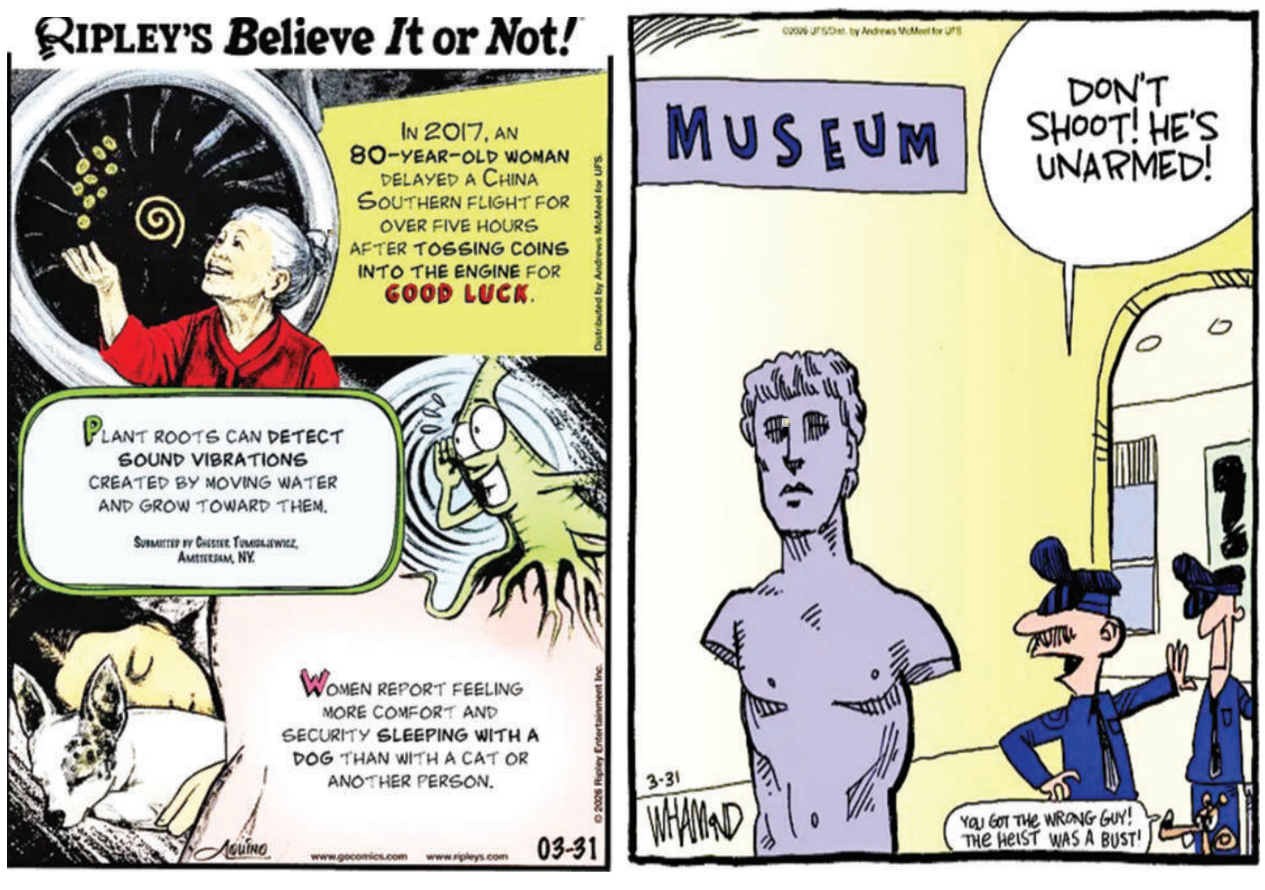
VIRGO: Precision helps you choose what truly counts. Tonight's Full Moon empowers your 2nd House of Manifestation, which presents you with a chance to bring your desired future into reality.

SAGITTARIUS: Adventure finds you through familiar friends. The Full Moon brightens your 11th House of Humanity – its presence there can motivate you to reach out and get together with a group to make a real difference.

PISCES: Where do you need deeper trust right now? Trust takes center stage as the Full Moon draws attention to your tender 8th house, encouraging honest talks about money, shared accounts, or emotional support.

CARTOON

gocomics.com



Minister Pokhrel pledges grassroots sports development in Nepal



PHOTO: NSC

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Newly appointed Minister of Education, Science and Technology and Minister of Youth and Sports, Sasmit Pokharel, has stressed that sports must be developed from the grassroots level to ensure the production of athletes.

He made the remarks during a welcome programme organised by the National Sports Council (NSC) on Tuesday. By provision, the Sports Minister serves as Chairperson of the NSC Board.

Pokharel announced plans to include sports in the school curriculum to strengthen grassroots development. "As policymakers, we will work with the Curriculum Development Centre to integrate sports into the school curriculum," he said.

"The main problem in Nepali sports is that players are not nurtured from a young age. If we could provide proper diet and training from early childhood, the development of sports would accelerate significantly. The government's main goal over the next five years is to produce athletes from the grassroots," Minister Pokharel added.

Highlighting both challenges and opportunities in the sector, he emphasised that results must be demonstrated through action rather than words. As Minister and NSC Chairperson, he further noted that the skills of all stakeholders should be recognised and utilised for the long-term development of sports.

Member of Parliament from the Rastriya Swatantra Party, Dr Achyutam Lamichhane, said collective effort is needed to uplift the nation's sporting sector. He also underlined the importance of making the Nepal Institute of Sports Science (NISS) more effective.

NSC Member Secretary Ramcharitra Mehta provided a brief overview of the NSC Board and Executive Committee's structure, areas of work, budget, physical infrastructure, national sports associations, staff positions, pending awards for athletes, special training under Mission–2026, internal resources, and legislative amendments.

Nepal end Asian Cup Qualifiers with defeat



PHOTO: AFC

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Nepal concluded their AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers with a 1-0 defeat to Laos in Vientiane on Tuesday.

In their final Group F fixture at the Lao National Stadium, Nepal conceded in the 48th minute when Laos captain Bounphachan Bounkong chipped past goalkeeper Kiran Kumar Limbu.

The result left Nepal bottom of the group in fourth place. Vietnam topped the standings with 18 points to secure qualification, while Malaysia finished second on nine points and Laos ended third with six.

Nepal were unable to give their new head coach, Guglielmo Arena, a winning start.

The match marked Arena's debut in charge of the national side.

Bounphachan missed a golden chance in the 11th minute, firing straight at Limbu in a one-on-one. Laos dominated possession but failed to convert early pressure, with Phetdavanh Somsanid heading wide and Bounphachan twice off target. Chony Wenpaserth came closest before the break, his thunderous strike from 18 yards rattling the underside of the crossbar before Limbu saved his follow-up header.

Nepal's best opportunity arrived five minutes before half-time when Gillespye Jung Karki broke through three defenders but shot wide. He missed again moments later from outside the box.

Three minutes into the second half, Bounphachan finally made the breakthrough, evading Nepal's defence and lifting the ball over Limbu from close range.

Nepal pressed for an equaliser, but efforts from Abishek Limbu and Karki failed to trouble goalkeeper Keo Oudone, as Laos closed their campaign on a high.

POLICE SECURE SIX-WICKET WIN OVER KOSHI

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Mar. 31

Nepal Police Club recorded a commanding six-wicket victory over Koshi Province in the Men's PM Cup in Birgunj on Tuesday.

With their third win in five matches, Police moved level on seven points with Madhesh Province and Tribhuwan Army Club, but climbed to the top of the standings thanks to a superior net run rate. Koshi, meanwhile, slumped to their fourth straight defeat and remain bottom of the table with just one point from five matches.

Electing to field first at the Narayani Cricket Ground, Police bowled out Koshi for 162 in 42.5 overs. In reply, Police endured a shaky start, losing four wickets for 11 runs inside eight overs.

But Rashid Khan and skipper Aarif Sheikh steadied the innings with an unbroken 154-run partnership. Khan struck 73 off 90 balls, while Sheikh played a fluent captain's knock of 81 from 79 deliveries, guiding Police to 165 for 4 in 33.5 overs with 97 balls to spare.

Bipin Mahato took two wickets and Dipesh Kandel one for Koshi, but their efforts were not enough to prevent another defeat.

Earlier, Left-arm spinner Dinesh Kharel starred with a superb spell of 5 for 21, dismantling the middle and lower order of Koshi. He was supported by Sagar Dhakal (2 for 14) and Lalit Rajbanshi (2 for 34).

Captain of Koshi Sujan Thapaliya fought hard with 48 off 42 balls, while opener Suman Shrestha made 43. Shrestha shared a 41-run stand with Ankit Subedi (26) and later added 74 with Thapaliya for the third wicket.

However, once Thapaliya was run out by Karan KC in the 32nd over, Koshi collapsed, losing six wickets for just 12 runs.

SNIPPETS

Undav rescues Germany late in Ghana friendly

Stuttgart (AFP): A last-gasp Deniz Undav goal saved Germany's blushes in an unconvincing 2-1 win over Ghana in a friendly in Stuttgart on Monday. Germany dominated possession and field position against the visitors but needed a Kai Havertz penalty to break through just before half-time. A counter-attacking Abdul Fatawu goal drew the visitors level and the lifeless match looked on track for a draw until Stuttgart striker Undav's 88th-minute effort put Germany back in front. The home fans chanted Undav's name until the striker was brought on at half-time. The former Brighton forward told ARD: "It was crazy to hear how the fans stood behind me," adding "it was a perfect evening. Got the win, scored a goal -- top."

Anjan Bista launches youth football boot camp

Kathmandu (TRN): Nepal national football team's star striker, Anjan Bista, is set to launch a football training centre aimed at identifying and nurturing junior and youth talent. At a press conference held on Tuesday, it was announced that the centre, named Next Gen Boot Camp, will host a special ten-day football training programme. The camp will be open to players aged between 8 and 16. The training sessions will run daily from 8 to 10 in the morning at the Buddhibikas Football Ground in Lalitpur, from 4 to 13 April. Licensed coaches accredited by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) will conduct the training. The participation fee has been set at Rs 8,500 per player.

Times, Golden Gate win

Kathmandu (TRN): Times and Golden Gate recorded victories in the Himalayan Java National Basketball League (HJNBAL). Times defeated Solo Basketball Club 95–72 at the Dasharath Rangashala Covered Hall in Tripureshwor on Monday evening. Times took control early, winning the first quarter 28–25 and the second 28–8 to lead 56–33 at half-time. They added the third quarter 21–18, while Solo claimed the fourth by the same margin. With their tenth consecutive win, Times now have 21 points from 11 matches. Solo, meanwhile, suffered their ninth defeat and remain on 13 points from the same number of games. In another fixture, Golden Gate Basketball Club outclassed Play Box Arena 112–59. The victory marked Golden Gate's tenth win in 11 matches, taking them level with Times on 21 points.

Calls grow for 15-year-old Suryavanshi to make India bow

AFP
New Delhi, Mar. 31

There were growing calls Tuesday for teenager Vaibhav Suryavanshi to be fast-tracked into India's senior national team after slamming a 17-ball 52 to launch his IPL season.

The batsman turned 15 last week, making him eligible to represent India under International Cricket Council rules, having already starred for his country at youth level.

On Monday he smacked four fours and five sixes as Rajasthan Royals chased down a target of 128 with 7.5 overs to spare against Chennai Super Kings in Guwahati.The teenager made history in last year's IPL in a dazzling debut season highlighted by a 35-ball century, the second fastest in the history of the T20 tournament.

Spin bowling great Anil Kumble compared Suryavanshi to batting legend Sachin Tendulkar, who made his full international debut aged 16.

"Yes, absolutely. If a player shows this level of consistency, he should be fast-tracked, just like Sachin Tendulkar," Kumble said on JioHotstar.

Suryavanshi has already made his mark at youth international level, hammering 175 off just 80 balls as India beat England in the Under-19 World Cup final in February.



Former India batter Ambati Rayudu described Suryavanshi as "a cut above a lot of youngsters in the country".

"He's a talent that will definitely do wonders for Indian cricket," Rayudu said on ESPNcricinfo. "I don't know when, but definitely in the future."

Inside the Rajasthan Royals camp, the leadership group has been focused on shielding the prodigy from the pressures of early fame.

"What I tell him is that you're going to play 14 games (in this season's IPL) and regardless of what goes on in the game, it shouldn't bother you," captain Riyan Parag said. "What goes around in the media shouldn't bother you."

He added following Monday's latest eye-catching display: "Like everyone in the stands, we also had this feeling of 'wow', wondering how he is able to do this. "He is a talent and I am very glad that he is in our team, and not the opponent's," he said.

Pakistan cricketer Naseem fined record $71,500

AFP
Karachi, Mar. 31

Fast bowler Naseem Shah has been slapped with the biggest fine in Pakistan cricket history after criticising a politician on social media.

Shah's whopping $71,500 punishment is the latest incident to rock the T20 Pakistan Super League during a turbulent opening week.

Fellow fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi has also been fined $3,500 for breaking the tournament's tight security protocols and batsman Fakhar Zaman is facing ball-tampering charges.

The PSL is taking place behind closed doors without fans -- and only at two venues instead of six -- because of fuel supply concerns caused by the Iran war.

Naseem aimed a barb at Punjab chief minister Maryam Nawaz, who was the guest of honour at a slimmed-down PSL opening ceremony before last Thursday's match between Lahore Qalandars and Hyderabad Kingsmen.

In a post on X, swiftly deleted after being widely shared, Naseem mocked Nawaz's arrival, saying: "Why is she treated like the Queen at Lord's?"

He later claimed his account had been hacked, but the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) did not agree and ordered him to appear before a three-man disciplinary committee.

Naseem, who plays for Rawalpindiz, apologised before the committee imposed the record fine.

Afridi was fined by the Qalandars for breaching security protocols at his team hotel in Lahore, one of two host cities along with Karachi for this year's tournament.

Punjab Police said Afridi was refused permission to take visitors to teammate Sikander Raza's room but did so anyway.

Zaman is awaiting a decision on a ball-tampering charge after an incident in the Qalandars' match against Karachi Kings on Sunday.

The Kings, who needed 14 to win off the final over, were awarded five penalty runs when the umpires decided that Pakistan international Fakhar had altered the condition of the ball.

The ball was changed at the request of the Kings, who then knocked off the nine remaining runs they needed to win.

Fakhar was charged with violating the playing condition "which makes it an offence to take any action which changes the condition of the ball", said a PSL statement on Monday. If the charge is upheld, Fakhar could be banned for one to two matches.

Mind games: How football stars are fuelling chess boom

AFP
London, Mar. 31

Erling Haaland and Mohamed Salah are among the Premier League stars "addicted" to chess, helping to spark a surge in the game's popularity among younger people.

Manchester City striker Haaland is so fascinated by the game that he recently invested in a ground-breaking new chess tour to capitalise on the increased profile bestowed by its celebrity players.

As well as Haaland, Liverpool forward Salah and England team-mates Harry Kane, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Anthony Gordon are all avid chess players.

Salah is obsessed by playing the faster 'blitz' version of chess using an anonymous online profile.

"I'm addicted to chess. Every day, literally every day," the Egyptian said.

Arsenal midfielders Martin Odegaard and Eberechi Eze are both keen players, with the latter winning an amateur tournament in 2025.

Chess grandmaster Magnus Carlsen, a five-time world champion, is a huge football fan and the Norwegian's love for both games has played a role in the surprise crossover.

Alexander-Arnold often plays chess with his brothers and once levelled-up to face Carlsen, who defeated the Real Madrid defender in a 17-move rout that lasted just five minutes.

AC Milan winger Christian Pulisic has the queen chess piece tattooed on his arm in tribute to his grandfather, who taught him the game as a child.

France World Cup winner Antoine Griezmann and Real Madrid's Dani Carvajal are also aficionados.

On the surface, the contemplative, cerebral nature of chess is a stark contrast to the physicality and aggression of football.

But dig deeper and there are more similarities than you would expect.



"Chess is an incredible game. It sharpens your mind, and there are clear similarities to football," Haaland said.

"You have to think quickly, trust your instincts, and think several moves ahead. Strategy and planning are everything."

'It's remarkably similar'

Backed by the International Chess Federation (FIDE), the new tour will feature four tournaments each year in different cities, with a world champion crowned across three disciplines -- fast classic, rapid and blitz.

Each season will have a minimum prize pool of £2 million ($2.7 million).

"Seeing a world-class athlete like Erling Haaland join the Total World Chess Championship Tour is a powerful signal of the global attention and cultural relevance that chess enjoys today," FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich said.

Chess has its roots in seventh century India.

But those humble origins are a far cry from the technology fast-tracking the chess boom, with online apps taking over from the traditional board as the game's most common battleground.

Online play rocketed during the Covid-19 pandemic and, according to FIDE, at least 1.5 billion people now have a chess app on their phone.

Netflix series "The Queen's Gambit" and the impact of celebrity influencers, including footballers, have all contributed to the boom transforming the previously staid image of chess.

The strategy involved in chess also appeals to football managers looking for a mental edge in their tactical battles on the pitch.

Quoted in the book 'Pep Confidential', Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola said: "You have no idea how similar the two things are."

Avid Real Madrid fan Carlsen sees his game through the same lens as former Barcelona coach Guardiola: "In chess and football, the important thing is to control the middle. If you control the middle, you control the pitch or the board," he said.

"In terms of space, it's remarkably similar."

But will the satisfaction of a successful checkmate ever replace the thrill of scoring a winning goal for chess-fixated footballers?

For Kane, his true love remains football, leaving chess as the perfect way to relax.

"I use chess to switch off," he said. "It's such a mental game. You have to focus on every moment."

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