

THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL

Life in Madhes returning to normal

Political coordination, govt action and community support restore peace and harmony



PHOTO: RSS

People participating in a peace rally organised in Nepalgunj on Saturday.

BY SACHIN POKHAREL
Itahari, Aug. 1

Life in the eastern Madhes area, which was affected for a week after the tragic incident that took place on Sunday night in Dewanganj Rural Municipality-3, Kaptanganj, Sunsari, has returned to normal significantly since Saturday.

The situation in the eastern Tarai, which had been tense after the Dewanganj incident that left two people dead and two dozen injured, is now gradually becoming peace.

Life has started returning to normal after the cremation of the deceased, an agreement was reached between the Nepal government and the local

community and the victim's families, improvements in the security system, and continuous dialogue at the political and social levels.

The situation of fear and confusion among the local residents has decreased, and local markets, transportation, agriculture, and daily economic activities have resumed.

James Karki, Chief Personal Secretary to the Home Minister, said that the local level people's representatives, political and social parties and various communities have significantly supported the efforts made by the Ministry of Home Affairs, local administration and security agencies to ease the situation and maintain peace and security.

Due to the improvement in the situation, the local administration has lifted

the curfew that had been imposed in Sunsari for the past five days, from Saturday morning.

However, considering the potential risks, prohibitory orders have been imposed in 10 different local levels of the district until 9 am on Sunday, prohibiting more than five people from gathering at one place and holding sit-ins, processions, demonstrations and meetings.

The administration has mobilized Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and other security agencies in possible security-sensitive areas.

The markets of Dewanganj, Hari-nagar, Inaruwa, Duhabi, Barju, Koshi Rural Municipality, Bhokraha Narsingh, Gadhi and nearby areas have resumed operations.

The market areas, which had been

deserted for a few days, have now seen an increase in the movement of the general public.

Local farmers have started bringing food grains, vegetables, milk and other agricultural products to the market. Consumers are easily visiting the market to purchase daily necessities.

Earlier, the Government of Nepal prioritized a coordinated initiative to manage the tensions that arose after the incident.

In coordination with the Prime Minister, Home Minister Sudan Gurung himself had visited Morang, Sunsari, Siraha, Dhanusha and other districts and had discussions with the victim's family, local people's representatives, security agencies, civil society, religious leaders and representatives of various communities.

After an agreement was reached between Home Minister Gurung and the victim's family, the funeral procession of the deceased in the Dewanganj incident was conducted with respect, and the cremation was completed.

The investigation committee formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs to find out the truth about the incident has reached the final stage of inspecting the incident site, meeting the victim's family, collecting statements from eyewitnesses and taking necessary details from the security agencies.

According to the coordinator of the committee, Bhupendra Thapa, the committee is preparing to submit a report to the government with the reasons for the incident, weaknesses in the security system and necessary suggestions to prevent such incidents from recurring in the future.

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Nirmal Purja, team confirmed dead in Broad Peak avalanche



PHOTO: TRN

World-record-holding Nepali mountaineer late Nirmal Purja (Nims Dai).

BY HARI KRISHNA SHARMA
Muktinath (Mustang), Aug. 1

World-record-holding Nepali mountaineer Nirmal Purja (Nims Dai), who set a new record for the fastest ascent of all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres without the use of supplemental oxygen, has ultimately perished on the mountain.

He went missing and was later confirmed dead while on an expedition to the Broad Peak in Pakistan. He went missing from Thursday afternoon, while he was leading a group of 10 climbers.

Along with Purja, him team members Pur Bahadur Gurung (Yukta), Nima Sherpa, Kali Pemba Sherpa (Kilu), Gyan Sherpa and Nawang Thindu Sherpa were also confirmed dead.

Purja's wish that his team, under his leadership, should climb and return safely could not be fulfilled. In 2019, Purja set a world record by scaling all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres in just six months and six days, starting with Annapurna I in his home district of Myagdi, Annapurna Rural Municipality-4.

He was preparing to achieve another rare mountaineering feat - climbing Broad Peak, the world's 12th-highest mountain, without oxygen, alongside the challenging and hazardous ascent of K2.

The late climber had already summited all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres 50 times. He also held the record for being the first climber to summit the Seven Summits—the highest peaks on all seven continents—without supplemental oxygen.

Having successfully reached the South Pole and Carstensz Pyramid, the highest peak in Australia and Oceania, two years ago, Purja had shortened his record-breaking mountaineering journey.

He was successful in spreading the message worldwide that Nepal's mountains are safe, and he often invited other climbers to join him on ascents of the highest peaks, from Asia's Everest to Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro, as well as those in South America, North America, Antarctica, Europe and Australia.

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AN INSPIRATION: PM SHAH

Prime Minister Balendra Shaha expressed heartfelt tributes to all the departed climbers, and condolences to the bereaved families, relatives, and well-wishers.

In his social media post, PM Shah said that the tragic loss of world-record holder Nirmal Purja (Nimsdai), alongside five other Nepali climbers and four foreign mountaineers, on the 8,051-metre Broad Peak has left all deeply shocked and saddened.

"While the earthly journeys of Nirmal Purja and all the departed climbers have come to an end, the story of their courage, dedication, and contributions will forever remain a source of inspiration," he said.

PM Shah also stated that mountaineering is not merely a journey to reach a summit; it is the ultimate expression of courage, discipline, sacrifice, and unshakeable self-belief that challenges the bounds of human limitation.

Likewise, Purja's company Elite Exped said in a message that it was mourning not only Nims but every life lost in this tragedy including his trusted climbing partners and guides, Pur Bahadur Gurung (Yukta) and Nima Sherpa.

"The world has lost one of mountaineering's greatest climbers; a leader who inspired millions through his courage, humility and unwavering belief that human potential is far greater than we often imagine," read the message.

It further said, "More than his extraordinary achievements, he wanted to show the world what was possible when you dared to dream bigger, believed in yourself and refused to accept limitations. Through his actions, he inspired millions of people to believe that they, too, could achieve more than they ever thought possible."

His vision, leadership and determination built Elite Exped, Nimsdai Foundation, Skydive Nimsdai and Nimsdai Store into what they are today.

UML-NCP provincial alliance

Oli, Prachanda seek to avert downfall

BY ARPANA ADHIKARI
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

After a series of splits, rivalries, and shifting political alliances, the CPN-UML and the Nepali Communist Party (NCP) have entered into a power-sharing deal at the provincial level.

UML chairman KP Sharma Oli and NCP coordinator Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' signed a three-point agreement on July 25 to form provincial governments. The U-turn in Oli and Prachanda, once sworn rivals, was necessitated by the deepening crisis both the leaders have faced within their parties as well as in national politics. The desperate move also seeks to revive the communist movement flattened by the Gen Z revolt in September last year.

As per the agreement, the UML will lead the provincial government in Koshi, Bagmati and Lumbini, while the NCP will lead Karnali and Sudur-paschim. The leadership of the government in Madhes and Gandaki provinces will be decided later through consultations, as smaller regional parties are expected to play a decisive role in government formation.

The new political equation emerged

after disputes between the Nepali Congress (NC) and the UML over the provincial governments, particularly in Karnali and Sudurpaschim.

The NC has since decided to end its governing alliance with the UML across all seven provinces. The two parties had entered into a power-sharing deal in 2024, agreeing to rotate leadership in the provincial governments.

Following the collapse of that alliance, both the NC and UML explored alternative political alignments. But the negotiation eventually resulted in a provincial power-sharing deal between the communist forces.

UML-NCP relations in the past

In the 2017 general election, the then UML and CPN (Maoist Centre) contested the election by entering an electoral alliance and secured nearly a two-thirds majority, winning 174 seats. Following the victory, the two parties merged on May 17, 2018, to form the Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

However, less than a year after the merger, disputes emerged between the then chair and prime minister Oli and another chair, Prachanda, over a power-sharing agreement involving the rotation of party and government leadership.

Oli sought to secure his position by sidelining the faction led by then senior UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal in the party's internal power-sharing arrangements.

Likewise, raising questions over the agreement on rotating leadership in both the party and government, Prachanda joined hands with Nepal to increase pressure on Oli. This leaves Oli in a minority even in the central secretariat.

» TRN SPECIAL

Following to such developments within the party and facing the possibility of a no-confidence motion within the party, Oli dissolved the House of Representatives twice. In December, 2020, the Prachanda-Nepal faction initially operated as a separate group under the NCP banner.

After the Supreme Court nullified the existence of the NCP, its constituents-UML and Maoist Centre- were revived in February, 2021. This paved the way for the separation of the two parties legally.

Later, in September 2021, a Nepal-led faction of UML split from the party and formed the CPN (Unified Socialist).

Deepmala crowned Miss Nepal

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Lalitpur, Aug. 1

Deepmala Dhakal was crowned Miss Nepal World 2026 amid a grand finale held in Pulchowk, Lalitpur on Saturday.

At the same event, Kashis Subba won the title of Miss Nepal Cosmo 2026, while Arya Nishaant was crowned Miss Nepal International 2026.

Dhakal emerged victorious after outperforming 23 finalists in one of Nepal's most prestigious beauty pageants, organised by The Hidden Treasure. She will now represent Nepal at the Miss World international pageant.

Prior to winning the national title, Dhakal had earned recognition as Miss Nepal Hong Kong International 2026.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, she is a graduate of the University of Hong Kong and has worked as an investment strategist.

Following her coronation, Miss Nepal Dhakal expressed gratitude to



PHOTO: SAGAR BASNET/TRN

Deepmala Dhakal, a Non-Resident Nepali (NRN) from Hong Kong, celebrates Miss Nepal World 2026 title on Saturday.

the organisers, judges, supporters, and her family, saying the crown carries a great responsibility.

Twenty-four-year-old Deepmala said her mother has been her biggest inspiration. Her mother had taken part in

the first Miss Nepal pageant in 1994.

Deepmala works as an investment strategist at BlackRock. She is also a taekwondo black belt holder, a marathon runner, and holds a Bachelor's degree in economics.

RSP to host International Youth Day

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

Ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) has announced that it will celebrate International Youth Day on August 12.

International Youth Day has been celebrated on August 12 each year since 1999, as declared by the United Nations.

The RSP central committee meeting held on Wednesday decided to celebrate International Youth Day.

The central committee meeting of RSP also assigned Kabindra Burlakoti to coordinate and organise the event.

Releasing a statement, RSP stated that it has formed an organising committee including Himesh Panta, Kamal Subedi, Khagendra Sunar, KP Khanal, Nisha Shrestha, Manju Singh, Sagar Bhusal, Jamuna Sharma, Arbin Shah, Hemraj Thapa, Rohan Karki, Manish Khanal, Dr. Namita Yadav, Naradmani Bastola, Udaya Narayan Sapkota, Sajan

Sharma, Kisan Prasad Timalisina, Raju Sunar, Sheikh Kasamuddin, Chandan Kumar Thakur, Bharat KC and others.

According to the press release, the RSP central committee announced that provincial presidents will serve as ex-officio members of the organizing committee.

The party also stated that it is preparing to celebrate Youth Day at various municipalities, districts, all seven provinces and the central level.

The first meeting of the organizing committee, held on Friday, decided to contact the provincial presidents about the celebration of International Youth Day. The committee assigned responsibilities to its members for coordinating this celebration in their respective provinces and agreed to form a sub-committee.

On the occasion of Youth Day, various events such as Youth Voice Dialogue, Youth Movement, Cleanliness, Sports, Blood Donation, and Policy Brainstorming will be held.

BRITAIN'S NEW LEADER SHIFTS POWER

AP
MANCHESTER, England, Aug. 1

Britain has a new hub of power: a bland modern office block about 165 miles (260 kilometers) from the prime minister's official London office and residence at 10 Downing St.

The Manchester low-rise is home to "No. 10 North," the flagship of new Prime Minister Andy Burnham's pledge to be a different kind of U.K. leader. Burnham was mayor of Greater Manchester before vaulting back into national politics, and one of his first acts was to set up a branch office in the city. It's both symbol of and engine for his pledge to give local leaders more powers and spread economic growth around the country.

Burnham calls it "a North Pole that balances the South Pole" of Westminster politics in London.

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BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold

: Rs. 284,000/-

Worked Gold

: NA

Silver

: Rs. 4,310/-

STOCK

NEPSE

: 2,685.54

Total Amount

: 3,759,722,340.76

No. of Share

: 8,851,216

NICCI, EEC HOST AI FOR DECISION MAKERS

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

The Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce & Industry (NICCI) and the European Economic Chamber (EEC Nepal), along with Bosch hosted 'AI for Decision Makers – An Executive Workshop for Leaders' on Friday.

“In today’s landscape, access to advanced AI technology is democratised, the differentiator now is strategic execution and leadership,” said Guruprasad Mudlapur, President of the Bosch Group in India and Managing Director, Bosch Limited.

According to him, real transformation occurs when organisations look beyond simple automation and combine AI with proprietary domain expertise, human judgment, and deep customer trust. The decisions regional leaders make today in building organizational capabilities will ultimately determine their competitiveness for years to come.

Veronique Lorenzo, Ambassador of the European Union to Nepal, and Udo Eugen Volz, Ambassador of Germany to Nepal attended the event supporting the promotion digital innovation, technology partnerships, and capacity building in Nepal's private sector. On the occasion, a publication titled from 'Hype to Strategy - AI for Decision Makers,' prepared by Bosch, was also officially launched, the NICCI informed in a statement.

“AI is no longer a future concept; it is a business imperative. The goal of this workshop was to help leaders understand how to adopt AI responsibly and turn it into measurable value for their organizations,” said Sandeep Kamat, Country Head for Bosch in Nepal.

Prof. Dr. Sudan Jha, Member of the National Planning Commission, discussed the evolution of AI, its potential contributions to national development, how Nepal should adopt and integrate AI into its development agenda, and the initiatives the government has already undertaken to incorporate AI into its policies and strategic plans.

The sessions covered enterprise AI trends, high-impact AI opportunities, AI investments, Large Language Models (LLMs), AI governance, and actionable adoption roadmaps. Through interactive strategy exercises, senior executives from diverse sectors gained hands-on insights to seamlessly integrate AI into their long-term business planning.



PHOTO: NAVIN RAJ KUIKEL

Farmers in Kauré Simpani in Madhya Nepal Municipality, planting finger millet.

ISPAN gets 15-day extension to clear valley's tangled cables

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

The Internet Service Providers' Association Nepal (ISPAN) has got an additional 15 days to complete the management of tangled, hanging and unused internet, telephone and cable wires installed on electricity poles in the Kathmandu Valley.

At a meeting of stakeholders held at the Ministry of Information and Communication on Friday, ISPAN said it needed additional time to complete the task. Representatives from the Ministry of Information and Communication, Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA), Nepal Telecom, ISPAN and other concerned agencies attended the meeting. Speaking at the meeting, Minister for Information and Communication Dr. Bikram Timilsina directed the concerned bodies to complete the wire management work within the revised deadline, while discussing the progress, challenges faced during implementation and possible solutions.

Reiterating the government's commitment to resolving the problem, Minister Dr. Timilsina said that visible results must be achieved. “The government will bring the wire management issue to a logical conclusion. Some time may be required during implementation, but the deadline can no longer be extended,” he said.

He urged ISPA-Nepal to promptly inform the government about difficulties and solutions required from its side. He also stressed that managing

unmanaged cables was the legal and professional responsibility of service providers, saying the current situation could have been avoided if the work had been carried out earlier.

For a long-term solution, Minister Dr. Timilsina instructed officials to study a system where multiple service providers could share a single infrastructure facility. He also expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of both service providers and regulators, stating that failure to complete the work on time reflected shortcomings on the part of both ISPAN and the Nepal Telecommunications Authority.

“The government will support efforts to resolve the problem, but a tendency to delay work is unacceptable,” he said.

“ISPAN has again requested for 15 more days. Earlier, you had committed to completing the work by 15 August. Now, there must be a credible basis that the work will be completed within the newly requested period,” Minister Dr. Timilsina said.

ISPAN Chief Executive Officer Subash Khadka informed the meeting that around 58 per cent of the work had been completed so far out of six routes identified for the first phase in the Kathmandu Valley. He said cable management work was also under way in other parts of the country.

Khadka said a separate infrastructure company would be necessary for a permanent solution to the issue. ISPA-Nepal also raised concerns that adequate infrastructure had not been developed for managing internet and cable wires when the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) carried out undergrounding of electricity lines.

NOC urges not to hoard gas cylinders

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

The Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has assured the public that the supply of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) remains normal across the country and urged consumers not to purchase cylinders unnecessarily.

Issuing a public notice on Saturday, the corporation said that despite media reports claiming a shortage of cooking gas in the market, its records show that LPG is being supplied daily in line with the demand.

The corporation said that it had already made arrangements for the sale and distribution of fully filled 14.2-kilogram LPG cylinders following its decision on July 15, 2026.

However, it said that some consumers have complained about difficulties in obtaining gas after the introduction of the new cylinder distribution system.

The NOC requested all LPG bottling industries to ensure smooth and adequate market supply.

It also instructed dealers to give priority to household consumers and maintain records of buyers, including their names, addresses and contact numbers, to ensure systematic distribution.

According to Manoj Kumar Thakur, spokesperson for the NOC, more than 100 LPG bullets are currently being loaded and dispatched daily from the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).

“There is no problem importing LPG from IOC. More than 49,000 tonnes of LPG entered Nepal in July. Of this, around 26,500 tonnes entered during the last 15 days of the Nepali month of



Saun. This shows that there is no need to worry about the supply of cooking gas,” he told The Rising Nepal.

However, he said that demand for LPG had increased in recent days after the NOC resumed supplying fully filled LPG cylinders.

“The demand for LPG declined over the last four months—Chaitra, Baisakh, Jeth and Asar—when the NOC distributed half-filled cooking gas cylinders. After it started supplying fully filled cylinders from July 15, consumers rushed to refill their empty cylinders, creating temporary demand pressure,” he said.

The monthly demand for LPG stood at around 32,000 to 38,000 tonnes over the past four months, compared to the normal monthly consumption of 45,000 to 46,000 tonnes.

He urged consumers to purchase LPG only when necessary instead of rushing to refill all their empty cylinders at once, so that supplies

remain available for those who need them most. This shortfall has now created additional pressure on demand, he added.

To ease supply pressure in the Kathmandu Valley, the corporation has also arranged for the sale and distribution of cylinders of Nepal Gas, HP Gas, Everest Gas, Sugam Gas and Shreeram Gas from its Teku office starting from Saturday, between 11:00 am and 5:00 pm.

The cylinders will be distributed through the respective gas companies.

The corporation has asked consumers who fail to obtain LPG cylinders to contact its hotline at 01-5971902 during office hours.

Stating that the transportation and distribution of LPG are continuing without disruption and will remain regular in the coming days, the NOC appealed to consumers to buy gas only as required and not to hoard cylinders.

Road closures hit apple harvest



PHOTO: SHER BAHADUR SARKI/TRN

Apple orchard in Bajura.

BY SHER BAHADUR SARKI
Bajura, Aug. 1

The farmers in Bajura are facing a lot of trouble for transporting apples as the road is closed every year during the apple ripening season.

The Martadi-Kolti road has remained obstructed since the end of May and is unlikely to reopen before November.

Local farmers, who have increasingly turned to apple farming as a source of livelihood, said they are forced to suffer

losses each year because the road closes just as apples ripen.

Apples in the district generally ripen from late July to mid-September. Unfortunately, the Martadi-Kolti road is also typically closed during this period. Although the road has been blocked since May, it has yet to reopen.

Prakash Rokaya, an apple farmer from Budhinanda Municipality-9, said, “I have around 400 to 500 apple trees, and most of them have yielded a good crop this year. The apples are now ready for harvest, but with the Martadi-Kolti road closed, I am worried about how I will get them to the market.”

He said, “If the road was open, traders would come directly to the garden to buy the apples. But because the road is closed, they do not come here, and it is impossible for us to carry the apples to the market on our back.”

Farmers said they face the same problem every year because of the prolonged closure of the Martadi-Kolti road. Although they have repeatedly raised the issue with the concerned authorities, no concrete action has been taken to address their issues, Rokaya said.

The eastern and northern parts of the district—including Budhinanda

Municipality and the rural municipalities of Himali, Swamikartik Khapar and Jagannath—are major apple-producing areas.

In recent years, apples produced in these areas have been supplied to markets across the country. While farmers in Himali, Swamikartik Khapar and Jagannath can transport their apples through the Karnali Corridor to different parts of the country, producers in Budhinanda Municipality continue to struggle to reach markets because of the prolonged closure of the Martadi-Kolti road.

Although the road remains operational during the winter, it is frequently blocked throughout the monsoon season, making it difficult for farmers to transport their harvest to the market.

In the past, farmers cultivated only local apple varieties. However, they have now started growing improved varieties such as Gala, Fuji and Golden.

According to the Agriculture Knowledge Centre, Bajura, around 600 tonnes of apples produced in the district have been sold annually in different cities across the country in recent years. Apple cultivation currently covers about 170 hectares of land in the district.

Last year, around 1,020 tonnes of apples were produced in Bajura, said Jasiram Sahani, Chief of the Agriculture Knowledge Centre, Bajura. “We have been providing transportation subsidies to help farmers deliver their apples to markets,” he said.

1M tourists visit Annapurna Region



BY NABIN RAJ KUIKEL
Lamjung, Aug. 1

A record number of tourists visited the world-renowned Annapurna region in the fiscal year 2025/26. According to the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), more than 1.1 million domestic and international tourists travelled to the region during the year.

ACAP said that 508,476 foreign tourists visited the Annapurna region in the fiscal year 2025/26, the highest number ever recorded. Besides foreign visitors, the number of domestic tourists was even higher. According to ACAP statistics, more than 600,000 Nepali tourists visited the Annapurna Conservation Area during the same period.

According to ACAP Chief Dr. Rabin Kadariya, of the total foreign visitors, 384,145 were from SAARC member countries, while 124,331 were from non-SAARC countries. He said that this

is the highest foreign tourist arrival recorded in the region.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a total of 183,358 tourists visited the Annapurna region in the fiscal year 2018/19. The number dropped to 104,165 in 2019/20 and plunged to just 4,961 in 2020/21 due to the pandemic.

Tourist arrivals gradually recovered in the following years. A total of 75,824 tourists visited the region in 2021/22. As the impact of the pandemic eased, arrivals increased to 172,510 in 2022/23, followed by 222,180 in 2023/24 and 278,113 in 2024/25.

Among foreign visitors in the fiscal year 2025/26, Indian tourists accounted for the largest share, with 375,797 arrivals. Similarly, a total of 12,539 visited from China and 9,884 tourists from United States of America and 8,859 tourists from United Kingdom.

Likewise, 7,939 tourists arrived from France, 7,848 from Malaysia, 7,634 from Germany, 7,484 from Bangladesh, 7,095 from Australia and 6,398 from Israel.

Chhayanath gaining traction gradually

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Mugu, Aug. 1

The arrival of pilgrims at the Chhayanath pilgrimage site in Mugu, a shared centre of faith for Hindus and Buddhists, has begun to increase with the Janai Purnima festival approaching.

Every year, thousands of devotees from districts including Jumla, Kalikot, Dailekh, Jajarkot and Humla visit Chhayanath Dham to seek salvation, perform rituals for the liberation of departed ancestors and observe other religious rites.

Located in the forest area of Dolpu village in Mugum Karmarong Rural Municipality, Chhayanath is regarded as an ancient pilgrimage site by Hindus. Buddhist devotees also visit the site with equal reverence.

According to Buddhist scholar Lama Guru Dorje Lama, Buddhists traditionally worship the three differently coloured peaks of Chhayanath Himal as manifestations of Manjushri Buddha, Avalokiteshvara Buddha and Vajrapani Buddha. This tradition, he said, has made Chhayanath a symbol of religious and cultural harmony between Hinduism and Buddhism.

According to Chhayanath Temple priest Purna Prasad Chaulagain, there is a widespread belief that bathing at Chhayanath and worshipping there brings liberation from sins, while offering pinda, ritual offerings for departed ancestors, brings spiritual merit.

It is also believed that dhamis, traditional spiritual practitioners, attain spiritual powers by bathing in the sacred waters of Chhayanath.

He said the temple is opened only during Janai Purnima each year, when large numbers of devotees



Chhayanath pilgrimage site, a shared centre of faith for Hindus and Buddhists.

PHOTO: HARI KRISHNA AIDI

gather at the site. During the rest of the year, the pilgrimage site remains largely deserted because of the extreme cold and difficult terrain.

It takes about two days of walking from the district headquarters, Gamgadhi, to reach Chhayanath Dham. To make the pilgrimage more accessible, an idol of Chhayanath has been installed at Chainagaun near Gamgadhi, where daily worship is performed.

Every year, on Janai Purnima, Aunsi and Saptami, idols of Shiva-Parvati, Ganesha, Buddha and various goddesses, made of ancient multi-metal alloys, are carried from the temple at Chainagaun to Chhayanath Dham in

accordance with special religious rituals. After the Janai Purnima worship is completed, the priests return to Chainagaun with the idols.

According to Dhankarna Malla of Soru Rural Municipality-5, the tradition of offering pinda to Chhayanath before performing the ritual at Kashi in Varanasi, India, is still maintained. This, he said, indicates that the religious significance of Chhayanath extends beyond Nepal.

Priest Asine Hamal said many devotees were still unaware of the historical and religious significance of Chhayanath Dham due to inadequate publicity and promotion.

Chhayanath is currently being connected by an access road with financial support from the Karnali Provincial Government and facilitation by the Division Forest Office, according to Chhayanath Karmarong Rural Municipality chairperson Chhiring Kyapne Lama.

He expressed confidence that Chhayanath could become a major religious tourism destination if the Karnali Provincial government develops the necessary infrastructure in accordance with a master plan, creating new employment and income-generating opportunities for local residents.

Madhes govt urges parents to keep children away from protest

BY LAXMI CHAUDHARY
Janakpurdham, Aug. 1

Amid the tense situation appeared in some districts of Madhes Province in recent days, the provincial government has urged every parent to be more responsible for their children's activities.

On Saturday, Fakira Mahato, the Home, Communications, and Law Minister of the Provincial government, expressed concern over the rising participation of children and youth in protests, rallies, and crowds.

The minister also urged parents to keep their children away from such activities and pay special attention to their safety.

The appeal states that parents should monitor their children's daily activities, protect them from rumors, incitement, provocation and violent activities.

It has also been requested not to send children out of the house except for essential work and to raise awareness about misleading and inflammatory content being spread on social media.

Minister Mahato has urged parents to inspire their children to choose the path of education, humanity, harmony and tolerance, stating that wrong decisions taken on impulse can have a serious impact on the future of the youth.

He said that not only the government but also the citizens have an equal role to play in maintaining peace, social harmony, religious tolerance and law enforcement. Minister Mahato has also called on all parents, youth and citizens to exercise restraint and contribute to maintaining social unity and peace.

Considering the unusual situation appeared in various places in the province,

security agencies have increased surveillance. The provincial government has stated that the active cooperation of the citizens is necessary to prevent possible unpleasant incidents and maintain a peaceful environment.

Don't spread misleading content

Meanwhile, **Our Saptari Correspondent** reports: The District Administration Office, Saptari, has urged everyone not to spread misleading and provocative content on social media to maintain peace, security, order, and religious harmony in the district.

On Saturday, Chief District Officer Shyam Krishna Thapa issued a notice requesting cooperation from civil society, religious leaders, intellectuals, media personnel, and all stakeholders to maintain social harmony.

According to the notice, it has been requested not to post, repost, like, comment, or share misleading news, rumors, photos, or videos that spread religious or social hatred, increase hatred or incitement, and affect peace and security through social media, including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

The administration has stated that it is monitoring the social media activity of individuals who post or share such content. Additionally, it has requested the immediate removal of any previously shared content. Similarly, the administration has warned against displaying sticks, spears, swords, and other weapons during the protest.

Since the use of children in the protest is prohibited by law, the organizers have also been warned that action will be taken in accordance with prevailing law if they use children in the protest.

BODY OF TAMANG KILLED IN KUWAIT BROUGHT HOME

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

The body of Som Kumar Tamang, a Nepali national from Terhathum who was killed in an attack in northern Kuwait last Thursday, has been brought to Nepal on Saturday on a Kuwait Airways flight.

The Embassy of Nepal in Kuwait said in a statement that it coordinated with the local authorities and the concerned company to complete the necessary procedures for repatriating the body to Nepal.

Tamang, 44, was killed in a drone attack in the northern region of Kuwait on Thursday, July 30. He was employed as a driver in Kuwait. The Embassy expressed its grief over the death of Tamang, paid heartfelt tribute, and offered prayers for the peace of the departed soul.

Stating the situation as sensitive, it has advised all Nepalis in Kuwait to exercise restraint, remain in safe locations, and strictly observe all safety guidelines issued by the Government of Kuwait.

Villagers in Mugu survive on rice, salt water as drought deepens food crisis

BY HARI KRISHNA AIDI
Mugu, Aug. 1

While continuous rainfall has increased the risk of floods and landslides across many parts of the country, people of Bhii village in Soru Rural Municipality-3 in western Mugu are facing a severe food crisis due to prolonged drought.

With fields drying up for lack of rain, many families are surviving on plain white rice bought from the market, eaten only with salt water.

Insufficient rainfall this year has left crops such as chilli, leafy vegetables, beans, proso millet, foxtail millet, finger millet and horse gram withering in the fields in Bhii village and nearby Galba in Adanchuli Rural Municipality-1 of neighbouring Humla.

Farmers, who rely entirely on rainfall for cultivation, fear the food shortage will worsen if the dry spell continues.

Seventy-one-year-old farmer Dal Bahadur Karki said all crops were drying up even though the monsoon season was well underway.

"We are carrying water from springs



Janatara Dhami of Bhii village, Soru Rural Municipality-3, Mugu, irrigates chilli plants with water she has carried from a spring.

PHOTO: HARI KRISHNA AIDI

to save our chilli plants and vegetables. There has been no harvest and no employment. We are surviving on

rice bought on credit from local traders, and our debts keep increasing," he said. Similarly, 75-year-old farmer

Padme Kumal said there were no vegetables to eat, forcing families to live on plain rice with salt water. "The lack of

rain has affected not only farming but also made our daily lives extremely difficult," he said.

Bhii village has around 380 households spread across eight settlements. The remote village, which borders Humla and Bajura districts, is about a two-day walk from the district headquarters, Gamgadhi.

Locals said they have to carry water from springs to irrigate their vegetable fields, while many local water sources have begun to dry up because of the prolonged drought. The shortage of water has also led to the death of some livestock.

Singh Bahadur Dhami, ward chairperson of Soru Rural Municipality-3, said the people of Bhii depend entirely on rainfall throughout the year, and the village becomes almost like a desert when the rains fail.

He said relocating the settlement could become a long-term option if the drought continues.

Dhami added that a detailed project report (DPR) has already been prepared for a lift irrigation project to bring water from the Humla Karnali River to Bhii village. He urged the concerned authorities to implement the project as soon as possible.

Pregnant women continue to face abuse

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

Despite legal provisions guaranteeing dignified maternity services under the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act, a newly released report shows that many pregnant women in Nepal continue to face abuse and violence.

The report explores the abuse, violence, and rights violations faced by women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period in Nepal, was released by the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) on Friday.

It examines the abuse, violence, and rights violations experienced by women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

According to the report, more than one-third of women experience violence during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

Most victims are housewives, while the perpetrators include family members, relatives, neighbours, husbands, and, in a significant number of cases, healthcare service providers.

The report also found that emotional violence is the most common

- More than one-third of women experience violence during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. Most victims are housewives, while the perpetrators include family members, relatives, neighbours, husbands, and, in a significant number of cases, healthcare service providers.
- The report also found that emotional violence is the most common form of abuse, followed by physical and sexual violence.

form of abuse, followed by physical and sexual violence. The research shows that women living in urban areas experience more violence than those in rural areas. It also found that pregnant women in Madhesh Province and women in Sudurpashchim Province experience higher level of emotional violence during childbirth and the postpartum period.

According to FWLD advocate Binod Chandra Devkota, the fact-finding survey covered 1,680 women, including pregnant women and women in the postpartum period, living in metropolitan cities, sub-metropolitan

cities, municipalities, and rural municipalities.

He said the study was conducted in 28 municipalities across 14 districts in all seven provinces. The findings show that 38.4 per cent of pregnant women, 37.9 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous 42 days, and 35.9 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous three months experienced violence.

Similarly, 30.7 per cent of pregnant women, 32.7 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous 42 days, and 30 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous three months

experienced emotional violence.

The data further show that 4.5 per cent of pregnant women, 3.2 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous 42 days, and 4.5 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous three months experienced physical violence. Likewise, 16.1 per cent of pregnant women, 9.5 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous 42 days, and 16.4 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous three months experienced sexual violence.

Family members and relatives were identified as the most common perpetrators of violence during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. The report found that 60 per cent of pregnant women, 64.4 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous 42 days, and 71 per cent of women who had given birth within the previous three months experienced violence from family members and relatives.

FWLD Executive Director and Advocate Sabin Shrestha said the fact-finding study was conducted to identify and comprehensively document the various forms of abuse, violence, and rights violations faced by women during pregnancy, labour, childbirth, and the postpartum period in Nepal.

Red Cross to have a woman leader every third term

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

The recent amendment to the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) statute has ensured that women would reach the top leadership of the organisation. The amended statute has introduced a provision reserving one out of every three leadership terms exclusively for women.

With the implementation of the revised statute, only women will be eligible to contest the presidency of the federal committee during every third term.

The new provisions will come into effect from the upcoming elections at the provincial and local levels, ensuring that women assume the position of chairperson in accordance with the rotation system, said the NRCS on Friday.

Based on the alphabetical order of the provinces' names, four provinces will field only female candidates for the chairperson's post from this year's elections, while the remaining three provinces will have open competition. At the local level, only women will be eligible to

contest the chairperson's post in 50 per cent of local units in each district, selected according to alphabetical order, while the remaining local units will hold open contests.

The statute also guarantees that women will make up at least 33 per cent of every organisational structure within the NRCS. According to its President Dr. Bishal Kumar Bhandari, the provision was introduced because women remain significantly underrepresented in leadership positions at the local, district, provincial and federal levels throughout the organisation's history.

"From the perspective of social transformation and women's participation, the NRCS's statute is historic. It has been redesigned with the aim of increasing women's participation in humanitarian service. Women involved in the Red Cross movement will now have the opportunity to lead the organisation," he said.

The amended statute retains the existing provision that only women may contest the posts of vice-president at the local, provincial and federal levels. It also ensures the participation of young women in every organisational structure.

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.
- Pablo Picasso

EDITORIAL

Fair Finance Matters

The five-point agreement between the government and the representatives of the victims of microfinance has given a sigh of relief since the protest and hunger strike going on in the country has come to an end. The choice to solve the issue in a peaceful way is indeed praiseworthy. However, the history of Nepal has shown that many accords were made with the hopes and expectations of people, yet later they became part of the list of failures due to lack of political will-power and proper implementation. The accord's main commitment is the implementation of recommendations made in a report, which was compiled almost two years ago. If the report had provided solutions to the problems in the microfinance industry, what would be the need for public demonstrations and hunger strikes to make the government consider the report ?

The rising resentment among the borrowers cannot be justified, considering the reports received from across the nation about people caught in the vicious cycle of debt, taking multiple loans, being subjected to stringent recovery methods and being under constant mental stress. These practices have led to the loss of faith in institutions, which were established to ensure financial inclusion and poverty alleviation.

The very idea behind microfinance was to strengthen economically weak citizens by providing them with credit, where banks do not operate. But when profit becomes more important than people, the essence of microfinance gets lost. One must realise that not all borrowers are victims and not all microfinance institutions are exploiters. The lending process requires reciprocity. Borrowers have to fulfill their promises to repay the loan, while the lenders should respect the code of ethics. The accord addresses the issues of blacklisting, collateral auction, and rehabilitating distressed borrowers in the right manner. Of equal importance is the pledge to sue those engaged in illegal loan recovery practices. It is unacceptable to use coercion or threats in an effort to pressure borrowers to pay back their loans.

However, the higher burden now falls on the regulators. It is obvious that only setting out guidelines will not bring change in the industry if monitoring is not efficient enough and non-compliance does not get penalised. The continuous criticisms raised against particular institutions show that regulators have acted too much in response rather than being proactive. The regulators need to ensure compliance, consumer protection, and transparency in lending. Furthermore, potential borrowers should be informed in advance about interest rates, repayments, penalties, and defaults. Financial literacy is as important as financial inclusion. Additionally, the government itself is responsible for restoring confidence by working according to the specified timeframe. Otherwise, procrastination will only increase the mistrust of the people and prove to them that the authorities act only when citizens take to the streets. A healthy democracy should address the concerns of its citizens through its institutions instead of hunger strikes or protests.

In that sense, it is better to consider the present agreement as the start of the reform rather than its end point. The microfinance market of Nepal will be of vital importance to the development of the country and to further progress of women's entrepreneurship and financial inclusiveness. However, the long-term prosperity of this sector requires transparent and regulated practices. The real victory of the government depends on the creation of fair microfinance system that promotes development of the country.

Invisible Care

SWAANSH MAHAT

Care work rarely announces itself as work. It appears as tea made before everyone wakes up, uniforms washed without discussion, medicine remembered on time, meals planned around other people's schedules, and emotional tension quietly absorbed so the house can continue functioning. In many Nepali homes, this work is mostly done by women, daughters, mothers, daughters-in-law and grandmothers. It is constant, necessary and often invisible.

Because it happens inside the home, it is treated as natural. Because it is unpaid, it is treated as less valuable. Because it is expected, it is rarely thanked. A person may spend the entire day keeping a household alive and still be asked what they did. This is one of the quiet injustices of family life.

Nepal speaks often about employment, productivity and development, but the labour that makes all other labour possible remains underappreciated. Someone cooks so another person can leave for office. Someone watches the child so someone else can work. Someone cares for the elderly so the family can function. Someone remembers the emotional needs of everyone, while their own exhaustion remains unnamed.

Care is not weakness. It is infrastructure. The problem is not only that care work is invisible to society. It is also invisible inside families. Children may grow up believing food appears, clothes are folded, guests are welcomed, and sick relatives are cared for because someone simply has

time. They do not always see the planning, fatigue, repetition and sacrifice behind it. This invisibility has consequences. It limits education for some girls. It keeps women from paid work. It reduces rest for mothers. It creates resentment that is rarely spoken. It teaches men that helping at home is kindness rather than responsibility. It makes love feel like duty without recognition. A fairer society must begin by naming this labour. Families should not wait for exhaustion before noticing care. Work inside the home should be shared, not assigned by gender. Boys should learn to cook, clean, care and remember. Girls should not be trained to serve quietly while their ambitions are treated as secondary. Elderly care, childcare and household management should be understood as collective responsibilities.

This change does not destroy family values. It deepens them. Respect is not shown only through words. It is shown when everyone carries part of the burden. It is shown when a mother is allowed to rest without guilt. It is shown when daughters are not automatically expected to adjust. It is shown when sons do not wait to be asked before helping.

The home is the first place where justice is practiced or ignored. If Nepal wants equality outside the home, it must begin inside it. The labour that holds families together should not remain hidden simply because it is done with love. Love may motivate care, but it should not be used to excuse imbalance. Invisible work deserves visible respect.

The first step is simple: stop calling care natural when it is labour, time, patience and sacrifice performed every day at home.

Friction And Fixes In Madhes

Dr. Rajeshwar Kushwaha



A volatile wave of communal friction across the plains of Madhes—spanning key Madhes hubs like Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, and Sarlahi districts—has once again exposed the fragile underbelly of Nepal's social cohesion. The state's response to these flashpoints has followed a predictable and flawed pattern: executive speeches, high-level visits by the Home Minister, multi-party summits, and the routine formation of ad-hoc inquiry commissions. Yet, despite these reactive gestures, the structural triggers of communal polarisation remain unaddressed because central authorities continue to treat deep-seated socioeconomic grievances as mere short-term security crises.

When young people have few economic prospects, no formal employment horizons, and a pervasive feeling of being ignored by the centre, they become remarkably easy targets for bad actors looking to weaponise rumours and exploit raw nerves. Minor neighbourhood disputes over trivial matters, local festival routes, or random social media posts snowball into regional security crises precisely because the state has failed to build genuine, community-level trust.

Structural rot

Fixing this structural rot requires a fundamental overhaul of how local security actually operates on the ground. We need law enforcement that genuinely reflects the region's diversity—including meaningful, proportional representation of Madhesi youth within law enforcement agencies and officers who are fluent in local languages. This must be backed by transparent,

community-led mediation channels that can de-escalate tensions long before they boil over into physical violence.

Historically, the social matrix and everyday fabric of Madhes have been wonderfully pluralistic, built on centuries of inter-communal coexistence, shared cultural traditions, and mutual economic ties, where neighbours lived side by side regardless of background. But that traditional harmony is currently taking a heavy beating from two invisible, modern fronts: unregulated digital echo chambers and opaque financial inflows.

On one side, viral misinformation preys heavily on the anxieties of jobless youth, turning digital platforms into weapons of mass division. On the other side, informal money from various international foundations, religious entities, and Gulf-based sources flows into the region entirely off the radar of the central government and the Nepal Rastra Bank. This financial opacity distorts local power dynamics, creates unhealthy and aggressive competition between religious organisations, and introduces external influences that run contrary to local social integration.

If the state wants to stop social diversity from sliding into violent polarisation, it needs to step up its regulatory oversight. That means keeping a transparent, watchful eye on how unmapped funds move through border regions, auditing community organisations, and holding local influencers directly accountable when they cross lines into hate speech and incitement.

The open border between Nepal and India is an absolute lifeline for the economy, trade, and socio-cultural fabric of Madhes. Yet, in an evolving and complex South Asian security environment, this high degree of permeability presents distinct strategic challenges that require sophisticated diplomacy and administrative coordination rather than heavy-handed militarisation.

Regional demographic shifts, cross-border criminal networks, and the potential infiltration of rogue third-country elements

Fostering local economic activity, supporting small-scale industries, and generating youth employment in Madhes are vital preconditions for enduring peace.

mean that instability in Madhes directly impacts the national security of both Nepal and India. Rather than deploying armed troops in border townships—which only serves to agitate local traders and citizens—Kathmandu must strengthen intelligence-sharing protocols and modernise joint administrative coordination between border districts. A stable, peacefully governed Madhes naturally aligns with the security interests of both neighbours, proving that local stability is intrinsically linked to regional geopolitics.

Today, communal friction usually starts on a smartphone screen long before it spills onto physical pavement. The proliferation of deepfakes, coordinated hate speech, and viral disinformation across platforms like TikTok, WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube has completely outpaced traditional police intelligence gathering. Relying on internet shutdowns, heavy-handed censorship, or brute force is a lazy substitute for modern governance. To overcome these institutional blind spots, the state must transition toward a modern digital governance model. First, the Cyber Bureau of Nepal Police must deploy localised AI tools to monitor incendiary key phrases and digital trends in local languages, allowing local administrations to intervene before digital outrage turns into physical violence.

Second, educational institutions across Madhes need targeted programmes to teach youth media literacy, enabling them to

verify viral content before sharing it, while local governments mobilise youth as digital peace ambassadors to counter rumours in real time. Finally, every municipality ward in sensitive zones must establish a permanent peace committee comprising ward chairs, religious gurus, local priests, imams, and civil society representatives. These committees should formally negotiate rules, procession routes, and festival guidelines well in advance, creating an institutionalised culture of local governance.

Lasting Harmony

Ultimately, lasting social harmony is built on something very simple yet profoundly difficult to execute: economic interdependence. When communities share a joint economic stake in each other's livelihoods through trade, agriculture, market networks, and daily employment, the incentives for communal violence completely collapse. Economic cooperation fosters a sense of shared interest that transcends narrow caste and religious identities. Therefore, fostering local economic activity, supporting small-scale industries, and generating youth employment in Madhes are vital preconditions for enduring peace.

Madhes is not merely Nepal's granary; it is the political and economic spine of our federal republic. While executive speeches and political summits signal high-level attention, they are no substitute for structural policy reform. The state must abandon its counterproductive reliance on militarised quick-fixes and commit to a coherent, long-term strategy—one rooted in inclusive security, digital governance, transparent financial regulation, and diplomatic alignment on regional security. Only by addressing the root causes of alienation and embracing modern digital and structural solutions can Nepal secure enduring peace in Madhes.

(The author is a Research Director at the Governance Innovation Lab.)

Roads, Regimes And Reliance

Ram Sharan Sedhai



Nepal's political history is long. Its road history is short. Completed in 1917, the Amlekhgunj-Bhimphedi Road is the first motorable road and the 500-metre-long Churiyamai Tunnel is the first road tunnel of Nepal. Infrastructure Development Minister Sunil Lamsal, Japanese Ambassador to Nepal Maeda Toru, and President of Japan International Cooperation Agency Akihiko Tanaka jointly inaugurated Nagdhunga Tunnel on Tribhuvan Highway on July 27, 2026. Mainstream news media reports adjectivised it as the country's first road tunnel. No one remembered Dilli Jung Thapa and the road and the tunnel he engineered. This is an insult and an injustice to history. History may be forgotten, but it never forgives.

April 13, 1962 is a watershed in Nepal's infrastructure development. King Mahendra laid a foundation stone at Gaidakot of Nawalparasi District on that day to ensure free mobility of his people and their goods across the country, and gradually reduce sovereign Nepal's reliance on India even to move from one part of the Tarai to another, the southern plain belt of the country. However, it took 38 years to complete the construction of the road monikered as Mahendra Highway.

Lifeline

Roads are not only the means to move from one place to another. They are pathways for learning, widening experience, advancing prosperity and creating

opportunities for progeny. They are instruments for political integration, social transformation and state building. The earlier countries built roads, the sooner they became economically sound and made many achievements. Roads are prerequisites to national integrity, economic independence, trade and transit, and a lifeline for rescue, relief and rehabilitation during and after major natural disasters. Roads are also instrumental in promoting tourism - facilitating both domestic and foreign visitors - and language.

An English adage, 'All roads lead to Rome,' stems from the reality that roads were first developed in Rome, the capital of Italy. The Romans were ingenuous to build roads even before the invention of wheeled vehicles. The oldest major Roman highway - Via Appia or Appian Way - began in 312 BC, also called the 'Queen of Roads', revolutionised trade, military movement and administration throughout the Roman Republic, which later became the Roman Empire.

Despite being aware of the importance of roads, Nepal has hardly been able to connect the district headquarters of remote hilly areas, particularly in the western part of Nepal, due mainly to flawed development model; absence of political will; inefficiency coupled with corrupt bureaucracy; difficult mountainous terrains; landslides; floods; unstable geology; earthquakes, numerous rivulet, stream and river crossings; poor engineering; and high construction and maintenance costs.

Therefore, compared with the South Asian countries, barring a few exceptions, Nepal lags in road construction and maintenance. According to estimates, India has a road network of approximately 6.7 million km; Bangladesh 370,000 km; Pakistan 264,000 km; Sri Lanka 114,000 km; Nepal 90,000 km; Bhutan 18,000 km, and the Maldives has insignificant road network, as the majority of its area is covered by water.

Given the unstable geology, recurring hefty maintenance costs, frequent blockade of roads due to landslides triggered by heavy rains and earthquakes, long and feasible tunnels are the Hobson's choice.

According to the Department of Roads, Nepal had a total of 376 km of road in 1951, when Nepal transitioned to democracy from a 104-year-old Rana regime. During the Rana oligarchy, Nepal deliberately kept itself aloof from other countries for fear of invasion by them and possible revolt by the people against their rule; opening up Nepal could render the people aware of their political rights. By 1990, a watershed in Nepal's political history, when the 30-year-old party-less Panchayat system was abolished, the total road network reached 7,330 km.

The development of infrastructure is contingent on the accountability and prudence of a political system and the form of the government. The more accountable the government is, the faster the growth of infrastructure becomes. Those who criticize democracy for stagnation, must awake from their slumber. Besides the unfettered political rights that democracy has bestowed, it has paved the way for development. Nepal's road network grew from 7,330 km in 1990 to about 90,000 km in 2026, a dazzling growth of about 90 percent in 35 years. The 2,688-km Nagdhunga Tunnel can be considered a signature achievement in road engineering.

Along with the spectacular achievements in road construction in post-1990, the successive governments till 2015, and the federal, provincial and local governments thereafter have earned notoriety for 'dozer-driven

corruption-induced' road construction and expansion projects, largely known as '(bull)dozer terror'. The public perception of elected representatives is so pervasively negative that a mayor of a municipality in Rupandehi District told this writer that they don't embezzle money from road construction, but build roads to fatten their pockets.

With the federated state structure, the provincial and local governments have been delegated much authority. And there have been cases of elected representatives owning and operating excavators used in road construction, particularly in hilly areas. Despite enhanced connectivity round-the-year through increasing road network, it has also increased perils such as environmental degradation resulting in rising air pollution in cities, displacement in villages, soil erosion, deforestation and sedimentation.

Challenges

Disadvantages apart, roads have become an indispensable part of human society. Roads ensure public access to public services, education, healthcare, livelihood, poverty reduction, core and periphery connectivity, trade and transit, border security, national integration, disaster response and tourism promotion.

Nepal faces multiple challenges in constructing and maintaining roads. Besides, road building is an uphill task in terms of time and resources. The main engineering challenges include recurrent floods, landslides, steep gradients, river crossings, and seismic risks. Therefore, the alternative is a tunnel. Don't waste scarce resources on reinventing the wheel. Wherever possible, go for tunnels. Given the unstable geology, recurring hefty maintenance costs, frequent blockade of roads due to landslides triggered by heavy rains and earthquakes, long and feasible tunnels are the Hobson's choice.

(Sedhai is a freelance writer.)

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

August 2, 1976

Motorable Road Construction

Kathmandu, Aug ust 1: Construction of a motorable road connecting three wards has been started at Dallu village panchayat, reports RSS.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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Laudable Measures

This is about the news report headlined "Education arranged for children affected by squatter eviction," carried by this daily on August 1. According to the report, Minister for Education and Sports Sasmit Pokharel has pledged to ensure the children affected by the removal of squatter settlements in the Kathmandu Valley won't face any disruption in their education.

Arrangements are said to have been made for them to continue their studies uninterrupted. Besides, they have been provided with transportation facilities, snacks, tiffin boxes, school uniforms, bags, stationery, water bottles, sanitation materials, and sports materials.

By taking such laudable measures, the minister has shown that the state is there for students when in need. One should bear in mind that the importance of education is second to none. Another equally



important step to be taken is to check on their mental health, which might have worsened as a result of having to lose their house. After all, sound mental health is the foundation on which academic progress is built.

Nirbhaya Koirala Pokhara

TAILPIECE

A police officer in a small town stopped a motorist who was speeding down Main Street. "But officer," the man began, "I can explain." "Just be quiet," snapped the officer. "I'm going to let you cool your heels in jail until the chief gets back..." "But officer, I just wanted to say..." "And I said to keep quiet! You're going to jail!"

A few hours later, the officer looked in on his prisoner and said, "Lucky for you that the chief is at his daughter's wedding. He'll be in a good mood when he gets back."

"Don't count on it," answered the fellow in the cell. "I'm the groom."

Spain-Morocco border toll hits 67

AP
Ceuta, Aug. 1

The death toll in Spain's Ceuta border crisis with Morocco has climbed to 67, the Spanish government said Saturday. They included some who drowned and some who were killed in a stampede to cross a breakwater barrier.

Spain announced it was installing a 500-meter-long containment barrier along the breakwater fence into the sea after between 50,000 and 60,000 migrants breached the tiny Spanish territory's frontier between Thursday and Friday.

A handful of exhausted migrants who swam to Ceuta's urban Tarajal beach Saturday morning were met by soldiers who escorted them back across the border. Spain's interior ministry says the majority of those who entered the Spanish territory in North Africa have already returned to Morocco.

After days of chaos and streets packed with people who had hoped for a better life in Spain, residents of Ceuta woke up Saturday to an uneasy calm. Even so, security for residents of the autonomous city of 84,000 remained bruised. "Life in this city has been disrupted as a result of the border incident," said Ceuta's President Juan Jesus Vivas.

"The return of people has begun satisfactorily but the process must be completed," he said. "The city has not yet returned to normal." In Morocco, at Tangier's main railway station, migrants back from Ceuta or who had hoped to reach the European Union slept on the ground, exhausted, as passersby watched from a distance.

"I tried to cross, but I failed. I stayed near the border with Ceuta for two days, but I couldn't find anything to eat," said Abdalah, an aspiring migrant who asked that his last name not be published out of fear of retaliation for trying to cross illegally. On the road leading to the Moroccan town of Fnideq, which borders Ceuta, many migrants were seen walking



Migrants entering Ceuta from Morocco.

Photo: AFP

toward the fence, some barefoot, apparently hoping to try their luck.

Taxi drivers and bus operators were refusing to take them, fearing retaliation from authorities. Police officers were deployed along the road, stopping and checking every vehicle heading toward Fnideq.

But some who had made it to Ceuta were determined to stay. Among them was Mohamed Hatri, a 23-year-old Moroccan. "They've closed everything down so that we can't buy anything to eat, to force us to return to our country," he said. "But even if they close it down ... we're round to stay here, whether we're hungry or not." — Oubachir reported from Fnideq, Morocco.

Meanwhile, almost all of the tens of thousands of migrants who entered Spain's enclave of Ceuta in North Africa had left by Saturday, officials said, as some EU countries bolstered their border controls over the sudden influx.

An estimated 60,000 migrants entered Ceuta over just a few days from neighbouring Morocco, the enclave's regional president Juan Jesus Vivas told reporters, but by Saturday Spain's interior minister said almost all had left. "The situation has been almost entirely reversed," Fernando Grande-Marlaska told reporters.

Under the watch of Spanish soldiers and police on Saturday morning, the remaining young migrants continued crossing back over the border to Morocco, AP journalists saw. Any who lingered too long on the coastal path were immediately ushered back out by the soldiers. To cross into Ceuta, many swam around a small border barrier that juts out into the Mediterranean.

At least 67 people died in the attempt, said Grande-Marlaska providing updated figures Saturday. "We hope to go to Europe to work and earn a living. That's it," Souleye Bodian, 19, a Senegalese migrant told AFP outside a

migrant centre in Ceuta where dozens of other sub-Saharan African migrants waited for officials. "We all know that in Africa there isn't much opportunity," he said. The sudden influx of migrants had sparked political panic in Europe.

Twenty-two EU countries issued a joint open letter on Saturday calling for a video meeting of the bloc's interior ministers "as a matter of urgency" to agree a speedy coordinated response, and to "prevent further uncontrolled crossings". France has tightened checks on its border with Spain and said it would increase its police presence there fivefold to 334 officers and gendarmes by Saturday.

Italy suspended its Schengen agreement with Spain allowing for visa-free movement between borders as of Saturday for one month. Several European countries had suggested Spain's membership in the Schengen free movement zone should be suspended, though that was virtually impossible in practice.

Russian missile kills 9 Ukrainian

AP
Kyiv, Aug. 1

Russia launched an intense barrage of ballistic missiles and drones overnight into Saturday, killing at least nine people and wounding 30 civilians in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, authorities said.

The strikes follow a major Russian attack two days earlier that killed at least 10 people and wounded more than 50 others across Ukraine, as Moscow apparently looks to exploit Kyiv's critical shortage of Western-supplied anti-ballistic missile defenses. The relentless cycle of attacks dims the potential of reaching a diplomatic end to Russia's more than 4-year-old invasion of its neighbor.

Russia's defense ministry said Saturday it had launched a "massive strike" against "Ukrainian military-industrial complex facilities and logistics centers in Kyiv."

A five-story residential building in the city's Solomianskyi District was damaged by falling debris and a fire broke out. Rescue workers evacuated 35 people from the upper floors of the building and two people died, with eight reported injured, including two children, according to Ukraine's state emergency service.

In the Darnytskyi District of Kyiv, seven people were killed and another 14 injured after the attack caused fires and damage to houses, vehicles, an administrative and non-residential building, the emergency services said.

Elsewhere, emergency workers extinguished a fire in a non-residential building in the capital's Shevchenkivskyi district. There was no additional information about earlier reports by the district mayor that people were trapped in another residential building.

Damage to commercial and residential buildings was reported in two other city districts. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pressed the United States and other Western partners over Ukraine's need for more Patriot anti-ballistic missile defense systems to counter missile attacks from Russia.

"Every package of ballistic missile interceptors saves the lives of our people. And every night without them results in more casualties," he wrote on X following the latest attacks.

The Ukrainian leader late Friday said he spoke to U.S. Vice President JD Vance and discussed a meeting with President Donald Trump earlier this week in Washington, which Zelenskyy described as "positive and productive."

"The Russian air strikes on our country continue and air defense, specifically interceptors for Patriot systems against ballistic missiles, remains a top priority," Zelenskyy said Friday in a post on Telegram.

At a NATO summit in Ankara in July, Trump said the U.S. would give Ukraine a license to make Patriot systems, but he appeared to move away from that commitment on Friday during a Cabinet meeting at the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland, saying he had not yet made a final decision on the matter.

From a basement shelter where she was taking cover as a second air alarm sounded for another wave, Liudmyla Nakonechna, 64, described how she was woken by loud explosions at 1:30 a.m.

"I ran into the corridor and was standing there when the bathroom door was blown off its hinges and struck me in the leg," said Nakonechna, whose health is poor after undergoing cancer treatment. "I heard the sound of shattering glass. My balcony was covered in glass and it was completely blown apart, while the windows in my bedroom were also blown out."

Iranian pilgrims flood Iraq

AFP
Zurbaityah (Iraq), Aug. 1

Under a blazing sun, clad in black and clutching portraits of their slain leader Ali Khamenei, Iranian pilgrims streamed across the border into Iraq to observe the Arbaeen, the most revered event in Shia Islam. Some stamped on a portrait of US President Donald Trump, others raised their fists or flashed victory signs, as fresh strikes rattled the region, drawing Iraq back into the Middle East war.

Amir, a 55-year-old pick-up driver, has been attending the Arbaeen ceremonies in Iraq for years, but said that this time is different. "The difference is that we are at war. Now, the United States is attacking us... yet this crowd that you see has left everything behind" to attend, the father-of-three added, at Iraq's al-Zurbaityah border crossing.

Arbaeen, which means forty in Arabic, marks the 40th day of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Mohammed and a founding figure in Shia Islam. It is one of the world's largest religious gatherings, with millions flocking each year to Iraq to visit the city of Karbala, where Hussein and his brother Abbas are buried.

This year's pilgrimage comes amid a war launched by a US-Israeli attack on Iran on February 28, which has not left Iraq unscathed. The war erupted only weeks after Iranian authorities cracked

down on widespread anti-government protests triggered by the high cost of living in a country enduring harsh US economic sanctions.

Just hours before Amir entered Iraq, US-Saudi strikes killed 20 militants, including five Iranians, across seven Iraqi province, after Riyadh accused pro-Iran armed groups of attacking its territory. "There is anxiety and fear," Amir said, complaining that the Iranian economy is suffering. "We are standing against them, and we will resist, even if we have to survive on dry bread."

The bond between Iraq and neighbouring Iran, both Shia-majority countries, runs deep and is shaped in both religion and politics. Earlier this month, the remains of Khamenei, who was killed in the war's initial strikes, were brought to Karbala and the nearby holy city of Najaf, where huge crowds mourned him as part of a six-day funeral procession that began in Tehran and concluded with his burial in the Iranian city of Mashhad.

Pilgrim Fatemeh Moradi, 52, has been to the Arbaeen at least five times before, but said that this year is for "our martyred leader, on his behalf and on the behalf of all the martyrs". Moradi lost many relatives during the war, but for her "martyrdom is a sense of pride".

Devoted Shia Muslims take pride in martyrdom, commemorating the Battle of Karbala in 680 where Hussein was killed by Umayyad caliph Yazid. During Arbaeen, they show their grief, mourning with weeping and wailing in memory of Hussein.

France blaze-hit region calms

AFP
Lège-Cap-Ferret, Aug. 1

People in France's fire-hit southwest were "coming up for air", officials said Friday, after firefighters managed to stabilise a massive blaze that had burned for nine days.

Most of the 220,000 people who had been evacuated from the flames, which at one stage seemed to be heading for the city of Bordeaux, have now been allowed home. "The crisis isn't over, the fire isn't under control yet, but we're making progress," said Sophie Brocas, prefect of the southwestern Gironde region. "We're coming up for air."

But another blaze in the southeastern Var region flared up and was threatening villages roughly 80 kilometres (50 miles) northeast of Marseille, forcing the evacuation of 2,500 people. Strong winds were fanning the flames the Var fire, which spread rapidly and burnt 1,000 hectares in just a few hours, officials said. "The fire is spreading, fuelled by the mistral wind," senior provincial official Simon Babre told AFP.

Human-caused climate change has made the extreme conditions that are fuelling infernos in western Europe twice as likely than in a pre-industrial climate in France, scientists said this week. People in Var were jolted into the reality that their countrymen hundreds of miles to the west have been living through for the past week.

Emma Leray, who lives in the fire-hit village of Correns, said she saw



Photo: AFP

At least 200 homes destroyed, two firemen killed in fires in France.

her "garden in flames". "It was panic. We didn't get any warning. We just had time to grab our two cats and flee by car... picking up a neighbour along the way," she recalled.

"Our neighbours, who have vineyards, were trying to put out the flames with branches and a fire extinguisher we gave them." Hundreds of firefighters have been drafted in, along with planes and helicopters.

Temperatures have reached 38C in Var, which is under an orange heat wave alert until Saturday midday. Fuel

transport and gas cooker lighters are banned throughout the region until Monday morning. Across the country in the Gironde region, locals and officials were coming to terms with a fire that had ravaged 42,000 hectares.

The authorities said the blaze had been stabilised thanks to "favourable" overnight conditions. Firefighters would now need to clear woodland undergrowth and tackle the fire's edges towards the dunes. At least 200 homes were destroyed and two firemen killed in the fires.

SEARCH ENDS AT QUAKE-HIT MALL

AFP
Tokyo, Aug. 1

Japanese officials said Saturday they had ended rescue operations at a shopping mall devastated by an explosion following a powerful earthquake that killed at least 36 people.

A total of 12 people were pulled from the site, including seven who were confirmed dead, according to the disaster management office of the Kumamoto region, hit by the 7.1-magnitude jolt on Tuesday.

"We conducted a thorough search over the past two days in collaboration with the fire service, the Self-Defence Forces, and other regional police units," to ensure no one remained missing, a police official told a disaster management meeting on Saturday. "We found no such individual," he added.

A spokesperson for Aeon, operators of the mall, told AFP that the seven people who died were employees of tenant stores. On Friday, rescue operations were terminated at a paper factory where a smoke-stack collapsed.

Captains recall scramble after drone attack

AFP
Cairo, Aug. 1

Marine officers who battled fires aboard two gas vessels struck in a drone attack on Egypt's port of Damietta feared the ships were "a bomb waiting to explode" that could have destroyed the entire port and ripped through the city beyond.

The US-owned Energos Winter floating storage and regasification unit and the Greek-owned LNG tanker GasLog Salem -- which were moored side by side at the Mediterranean port -- have a combined carrying capacity of 300,000 cubic metres. "The entire port could have exploded, along with parts of the city of Damietta," said one officer, recalling fears that the flames could spread to nearby LNG infrastructure in the Nile Delta city of more than 300,000 residents.

"As I was putting out the fire, I was only thinking about protecting the port and the lives of the people in Damietta,"



Photo: AFP

Egypt's Mediterranean port of Damietta struck by an unprecedented drone strike on two gas vessels.

he told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. Wednesday's strike, the first drone attack on Egyptian territory since the outbreak of the Middle East war, has not been claimed and Egypt has not accused any group or country of carrying it out.

A security official briefed on the ongoing forensic investigation told AFP it could take a long time for Cairo

to release its results. A second captain said he and his colleagues had been told they must not return alive, and to "say our last prayers" before heading out to fight the blaze.

The officers first heard an explosion aboard the GasLog Salem at around 2:10 pm (1110 GMT) on Wednesday. "About 10 minutes later, we heard a second explosion on the Energos Winter," he

PRISM

Canadian drag show breaks record

Ottawa: A drag show at the Cowboys Music Festival in Alberta broke a Guinness World Record with 7,423 attendees -- including RuPaul. The "Drag Me to Cowboys" show on July 11 featured drag performers including RuPaul, Sasha Velour, Sasha Colby, Nearah Nuff, Roxxy Andrews and Coco Montrose.

The festival, which marked its 30th anniversary this year, broke the Guinness World Record for the largest attendance at a drag artist stage show. Guinness World Records Adjudicator Tina Shi remotely reviewed the event and used specialized software to confirm there were 7,423 people in attendance.

"It shows that queerness is celebrated and welcome in Alberta," Farrah Nuff, who hosted the show, told the Calgary Herald. "It shows that on the biggest stages and in the biggest celebrations in Canada and Alberta, that queerness is absolutely a vibrant part of our communities."

Iguana scares FedEx store employees

Tennessee: Workers at a Tennessee FedEx store were sent running for cover when a large iguana burst out of its box and took off running through the store.

Roderick Duncan went to the FedEx store in Memphis to pick up his new pet iguana, and employees asked to see what was inside the box labeled "live animal."

A video recorded at the scene shows Duncan open the box and start to remove the iguana from a bag when the lizard suddenly bursts out and dashes behind the counter.

The footage shows panicked employees running for cover. "He was bigger, way bigger than I expected. So it was a shock to me when he took off runnin'," Duncan told WMC-TV.

Agencies

TODAY IN HISTORY

- 1610 – During Henry Hudson's search for the Northwest Passage, he sails into what is now known as Hudson Bay.
- 1776 – American Revolution: The signing of the United States Declaration of Independence by the Second Continental Congress takes place.
- 1784 – The first British mail coach service runs from Bristol to London.
- 1798 – French Revolutionary Wars: The Battle of the Nile concludes in a British victory.
- 1830 – July Revolution: Charles X of France abdicates the throne in favor of his grandson Henri.
- 1858 – The Government of India Act 1858 replaces Company rule in India with that of the British Raj.
- 1869 – Japan's Edo society class system is abolished as part of the Meiji Restoration reforms.



PHOTO: RSS
Elderly citizens weaving traditional janai (sacred thread) at a wayside rest platform (Chautara) of Purano Gaun in Tallo Gagangaunda, Ward No. 32 of Pokhara Metropolitan City, in Kaski district as the Janai Purnima festival approaches.

Trump threatens more strikes on Iran

AP
CAIRO, Aug. 1

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened more strikes on Iran as the United States presses for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. Hours later on Saturday, Kuwait said it responded to a new round of drone attacks from Iran while a tanker was struck in the strategic waterway.

Meanwhile, Israel carried out heavy strikes on the Gaza Strip after the Palestinian militant group Hamas agreed to disarm.

Speaking to reporters Friday during

a meeting with members of his Cabinet at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland, Trump said "we just want to win" in Iran and signaled that he expected U.S. military action to continue for some time.

He said the U.S. will hit Iran "very hard" until they can't take it anymore.

Later that day, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt expressed the U.S. administration's frustration anew, charging that Tehran last month signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. on a truce but then quickly "broke it, shot at commercial ships, and killed American soldiers."

"President Trump is not going to stand by and allow this terrorist behavior to

occur," Leavitt said in a statement on Friday evening. "Iran will continue to pay until they come to the table in, what President Trump deems, a meaningful way."

On Saturday, the U.S. State Department issued new security alerts for Americans in 10 countries in the region to exercise heightened caution due to the escalating tensions with Iran.

The warnings — covering Bahrain, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates — urged U.S. citizens to prepare for the possibility of flight cancellations, temporary airspace closures and other travel disruptions.

Kuwait's military said Saturday that its forces were responding to drone

attacks, which were part of Iran's assaults on the country.

In a statement, Maj. Gen. Saud Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi, spokesman for Kuwait's Defense Ministry, said the drones hit "a number of vital facilities," including a government structure in the country's north. He said there were no casualties.

The British Navy said Saturday that a tanker was struck and a separate explosion hit close to a vessel in the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Oman. No casualties were reported in either incident, it said. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization said an unknown projectile hit the vessel on Friday 11 nautical miles northeast of Lima, Oman.

Tarai unrest impacts cottage, small enterprises

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

The Federation of Nepal Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI) said that cottage and small industries, which largely depend on limited capital, local markets and daily business transactions, are the hardest hit by unrest, shutdowns, vandalism and disruptions to market activities. Such situations weaken the confidence of entrepreneurs and adversely affect production and supply chains, it said in a statement on Saturday.

It has expressed serious concern over the recent tense situation, social unrest and violent incidents that began in Dewanganj-Kaptanganj of Sunsari district and spread over several other districts across the Tarai. Paying tribute to those who lost their lives in incidents, it urged all concerned parties to exercise restraint in order to safeguard peace,

social harmony and economic activities.

The FNCSI noted that Nepal is a country with a shared identity built on diverse ethnic communities, languages, religions and cultures, and that social harmony, tolerance and mutual trust are the foundations of national stability and economic prosperity.

It warned that such incidents have direct and long-term negative impacts on cottage and small industries, local production, trade, tourism, employment and the overall economy.

It called on all stakeholders to exercise restraint while preserving social and religious harmony.

Through the statement, the FNCSI also urged the Government of Nepal, local authorities and security agencies to ensure effective law and order in the affected areas, guarantee the safety of businesses and the lives and property of the public, and immediately create an environment in which economic activities can continue without disruption.

Venezuelans watch talks between the govt and opposition

AP
Caracas, Aug. 1

Venezuelans are watching the start of a round of U.S.-backed talks between the ruling party and the opposition on Saturday with cautious optimism after several previous negotiations failed to bring reconciliation.

The latest talks follow the January capture of then-President Nicolás Maduro by U.S. forces, and will focus on strengthening democracy and restoring rights after nearly three decades of socialist rule.

The talks will be led by members of Venezuela's overwhelmingly pro-government National Assembly and a

group of former opposition lawmakers who previously attempted to oust Maduro. U.S. officials say they will have a facilitating role.

"I hope these people (the government) finally understand that we won't move forward with the usual arbitrary actions; they must respect agreements," said Soraida Martínez, a 58-year-old homemaker. "Both sides need to make concessions for the good of the country."

Saturday's meeting comes nearly seven weeks after a gathering in Caracas between National Assembly chief Jorge Rodríguez — the brother of Acting President Delcy Rodríguez — and former lawmaker Dinorah Figuera, who briefly returned to Venezuela after nearly eight years in exile.

Life in Madhes returning...

There was also increased activity at the political level to normalize the unusual situation that arose after the Dewanganj incident. With the Prime Minister's initiative and activism, leaders of various political parties have urged people to exercise restraint, maintain social harmony, and trust in the legal process.

After the ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party President Rabi Lamichhane led the initiative to create an environment to reduce tension by communicating and coordinating with various political parties, religious leaders, and community representatives from the central level, the unusual situation in the eastern Madhes has improved, and life has returned to normal.

Sunsari Chief District Officer (CDO) Ishwari Prasad Aryal said at a press conference organized in Inaruwa on Saturday that the security situation in the district is under control.

He informed that surveillance has been increased on activities that spread rumours and disrupt social harmony through social media. CDO Aryal stated that the local administration is dedicated to ensuring peace and security for the general public. He noted that since the implementation of the prohibitory order, there has been a peaceful revival in the local market, traffic has resumed, and life is gradually returning to normal.

"The situation has improved a lot compared to the previous situation. Citizens are gradually returning to their regular work. Security agencies are fully alert and coordination is being done with all parties to maintain peace and social harmony," said CDO Aryal.

Although a security alert is maintained in the districts including Sunsari, Morang, Siraha, Dhanusha and others, daily life is returning to normal.

Siraha's Chief District Officer (CDO), Surendra Poudel, announced that life in the district is returning to normal after

the curfew imposed in all areas, including Golbazar, Lahan, and Siraha Bazaar, was lifted.

According to CDO Poudel, public and private vehicles have started operating on the roads.

He added that business activities are gradually returning to normal and the transportation, sale, and distribution of agricultural products have also become easier.

Meanwhile, daily life in Janakpurdham, the capital of Madhes Province, has gradually returned to normal after a curfew imposed on Thursday, 30 July, was lifted on Saturday morning.

The District Administration Office (DAO), Dhanusha, lifted the curfew from 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, allowing normal activities to resume.

Markets, commercial establishments and financial institutions have begun reopening, while both public and private transport services are operating regularly. The city has become increasingly busy as residents return to their daily routines.

However, prohibitory orders remain in force and the Nepal Police, Armed Police Force Nepal and other security agencies have been placed on high alert to prevent any untoward incidents. The administration said security surveillance is being maintained in sensitive areas. The DAO stated that the law-and-order situation is gradually returning to normal. It also urged the public not to believe in rumours, to comply with the law, and to help maintain social harmony.

Earlier, following tensions between two communities, the Dhanusha administration had imposed a curfew in various parts of Janakpurdham from 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, until Saturday morning.

Although the curfew has now been lifted and normal life is gradually resuming, the administration said security measures remain stringent and the prohibitory order will continue.

Nirmal Purja,...

He first trekked to Everest Base Camp in December 2012. That same year, he began his climbing career by ascending Lobuche Peak (6,119 metres).

Over a period of 12 years, Purja laid the foundation for climbing not just one but all 14 of the world's highest peaks - eight in Nepal, and the rest in Pakistan and China.

Born in Dana, Annapurna Rural Municipality-3, in northern Myagdi, Purja repeatedly climbed Dhaulagiri (the seventh-highest) and Annapurna (the tenth-highest) in his home district.

In 2003, he was selected for the British Army and as Corporal Nirmal, he earned the Champion Recruit title during basic training and joined the Queen's Gorkha Engineers.

Purja, who served in British Army for 16 years, also worked as a mountain expert at the UK Ministry of Defence. He led the successful Everest ascent by 13 British Gurkhas during the Gurkha Expedition 2017 and successfully rescued another climber who was awaiting death on Everest.

He was awarded the prestigious MBE by the British monarch. Known as the 'Snow Leopard' in the British Army, Purja was the first Nepali to receive this award.

Kamal Bahadur Purja, the elder brother of the late climber and founder of Elite Exped, said that Purja also provided free rescue and emergency assistance to stranded climbers. He said, "My brother has left behind not only records but also many unfinished tasks, much work remains to fulfil his dreams."

Purja, who had three brothers and a sister, had already lost his parents.

The documentary '14 Peaks: Nothing Is Impossible', which documented Purja's world-record ascent of all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres under his 'Project Possible', was presented on Netflix in 31 languages across 191 countries.

Purja invested Rs. 50 million of his personal funds to build housing for porters in the Everest region. He supported those affected by floods and landslides in Nepal, Pakistan and other countries.

He also established an endowment fund of Rs. 4 million to boost attendance at a community school in his birthplace and to attract students to their studies.

The fund supports basic-level schools in educational activities and provides awards to students achieving top marks in Class 8, SEE, and Class 12 at Gyanprakash Secondary School, according to the school's headteacher, Shanta Bahadur Nepali.

Oli, Prachanda seek to...

Rejecting the allegation, UML chairman Oli had already clarified that informal consultations had been held with the party's vice-chair Bishnu Prasad Paudel and Shankar Pokharel.

However, the party vice-chair Gokarna Bista underscored that there was no institutional dialogue while making any decisions.

Talking to The Rising Nepal, Bista said, "There has been no institutional discussion within the party regarding UML-NCP cooperation. The agreement has already been reached and made headlines in the media outlets before the party leaders knew it," he added.

Expressing his dissatisfaction with how major decisions are often made through individual whims rather than formal internal party consensus, he said:

"We have long followed a practice where such decisions depend largely on individual leaders' choice about when to align with a particular party or move further away from another. And this is the situation we have inherited."

However, the chief of the UML publicity department, Neeraj Acharya, denied the allegation, arguing that there was no dispute within the UML over the agreement.

The decision was taken after informal discussions among the senior leaders and office-bearers. "Since this is related to forming provincial governments, party leadership has the authority to take such decisions after consultations," he added.

Likewise, reports have surfaced suggesting that the NCP co-coordinator Madhav Kumar Nepal is dissatisfied with this new development. However, he had already clarified that the agreement was prepared after consultation between Prachanda and himself.

NCP senior leader Narayan Kaji Shrestha said that Nepal had no policy-level disagreement over the issue. "He might have talked about the technical aspects instead."

by necessity, not by the personal ambitions of any leader," he said.

UML's Acharya defended that the coalition government was necessary because no party has a clear majority in any province.

Critics question the political rationale behind the alliance

Despite party leaders defending the partnership, political analysts and critics have questioned not only the process through which the agreement was reached but also its political rationale.

They have described the agreement as being driven primarily by the pursuit of political power.

Political analyst Jhalak Subedi said the partnership appeared to be primarily a strategic effort to consolidate power and regain influence lost by both parties since their split.

"This alliance serves as a political survival tool for senior leaders facing internal party challenges and external threats to their long-term careers," he suggested.

Asked about party leaders' claim that the alliance was necessary to safeguard democracy from all alleged threats, Subedi said the concerns were linked to the Prime Minister's working style. In that context, the situation may have been interpreted as posing a risk to democratic institutions.

"Such claims naturally emerge when a party is in opposition," he said.

Echoing a similar view, Hari Roka, another political analyst, argued that the current political alliance is a temporary tactic born of a leadership crisis rather than a meaningful ideological shift.

He also linked the development to the government's approach towards the opposition. "If the government's attitude towards the opposition becomes increasingly rigid, other forces may feel compelled to unite."

A temporary arrangement or a step toward long-term left unity?

The agreement between the two parties came just weeks after Oli, Prachanda, and Nepal and NCP senior leader Jhalanath Khanal shared the same stage at an event on June 28, marking the 75th birth anniversary of the late communist leader Madan Bhandari.

During the event, the leaders stressed the need for greater unity among Nepal's left forces.

The understanding to form a coalition government in provinces and extend cooperation until the coming local elections is viewed as an attempt to translate the long-discussed idea of left unity into a practical political arrangement.

Shahi said the current cooperation

was limited to provincial power-sharing and should not be interpreted as an immediate move towards party unification.

However, he said the long-term goal remained greater unity among left forces. He stressed that the environment for unification was not currently favourable, mainly due to deep mistrust between the parties, particularly between the UML and the former Maoist party following the past disagreements and perceived betrayals.

Shahi said the present arrangement should be viewed as a 'testing period' for cooperation rather than a step towards immediate merger.

He warned that the alliance could still collapse if the agreement was not implemented or if leaders pursued personal interest over broader political goals.

Talking about the unity among the left wings, political analyst Roka said that the alliance lacks long-term viability because it was arranged by high-level leaders to escape political pressure.

He said lasting cooperation requires a shared ideology, political principles, vision and programme. "I do not see much possibility of it. A genuine political crisis must also be felt by party cadres and supporters. However, the current alliance lacks internal consensus."

Likewise, Subedi said merely bringing together top leaders would not ensure political unity, recalling that similar efforts had been made in the past but eventually ended in division.

NCP leader Shrestha, however, clarified that the alliance was formed not for the unity of the left wings, but solely for a provincial power-sharing arrangement.

"There has been no discussion about broader left unity or party merger. Party unity is not our main agenda at present. This is only a short-term policy of cooperation to form governments," he added.

Echoing the view, UML's Acharya said that understanding was limited to forming provincial governments and that there was no agreement beyond power-sharing at the provincial level.

Roka said the largest grassroots political base in Nepal still belongs to the left, particularly communist forces.

He, however, said that Nepal's communist movement is currently facing a crisis, arguing that the communist parties had moved away from ideological and theoretical debate.

He suggested that the communist parties should follow a proper process by holding discussions within their organisations and consulting the rank and file before reaching such an agreement.

Britain's new leader...

Critics have called it a gimmick. It's certainly a novelty. While past British leaders have spent weekends in their local constituencies, or at the prime minister's official Chequers country retreat, none in living memory has had a large-scale office outside London. Burnham plans to work there at least one day a week, alongside a full-time staff of aides, experts and civil servants.

"It's not another office," Burnham said Friday. "It is a fundamental change to the way the country thinks about growth and investment."

Burnham believes Manchester

holds the key to avoiding the fate of Keir Starmer, his predecessor as Labour Party leader and prime minister. Starmer stepped down in July after two years in office, following missteps, policy U-turns and his failure to get Britain's sluggish economy growing.

During nine years as Manchester mayor, Burnham was praised standing up to central government on behalf of a proud, battle-scarred northern city that gave birth to the Industrial Revolution, movements for social change and a dynamic music scene.

Power of Mindset by Dr. KC launched



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

A book authored by the management expert and educationist Dr. Rajendra KC, titled 'The Power of Mindset', was officially launched in Kathmandu on July 31. Dr. KC, who has extensive experience in Nepal's management and education sectors, prepared this publication after conducting a comprehensive gap analysis among four key stakeholders: parents, teachers, management, and students. He states that the book is research-based, grounded in empirical experiences from various fields, supported by verified data and statistics, rather than mere speculation.

The book is organized into four initial subsections: the paradigm shift in Nepalese pedagogy, history and modern ideas, teaching models, and the transition from physical to online blended learning methods. The second

section scrutinises the gaps among the four educational stakeholders. The third section offers an extensive conclusion emphasising the necessary initiatives and policy reforms to transform the current traditional education system into a market-oriented one. The fourth section discusses innovative educational models within the context of multigenerational insights. The final, fifth section provides a detailed scenario titled 'Story to Awaken', aimed at redirecting the educational sector's past failures towards success.

Dr. KC is also the founding principal of the Southwestern State Educational Group and has previously published a book titled 'Baikalpik Soch' (Alternative Thinking). He has authored numerous research articles published in various national and international journals. Dr. KC asserts that the transformation of the country's education sector cannot be achieved within the existing mindsets, policies, and approaches.

Sanjay Dutt calls film industry 'cut-throat'

AGENCIES
New Delhi, Aug. 1

Sanjay Dutt has spent over four decades in the film industry, witnessing its many transformations firsthand. From navigating a turbulent personal life to watching Bollywood evolve over the years, the actor has seen the industry through some of its most defining moments. In a recent conversation with AIG Hospitals' YouTube channel, Sanjay reflected on how, in his view, the film fraternity has fundamentally changed since he began his career.

'Bollywood has become much more cut-throat'

Looking back on the early years of Bollywood, he said, "When I started, the industry felt like a family. Everyone was together, everyone was helping one another. Now it's become much more cut-throat, much more competitive. Hollywood is different from here."

Explaining what he admires about the film industry in the West, he added, "Over there, everyone is very united. The actors are together, the writers are together. There are industry bodies that support everyone. Even if you look at the Oscars, there's such a strong sense of togetherness. Whenever an actor goes up to receive an award, there's no jealousy, you can genuinely see everyone celebrating each other. It's beautiful."

'Like playing gangsters'

When asked which of his performances remains closest to his heart, he admitted with a laugh that he enjoys playing gangsters the most.



However, he said the role that truly left an impact on him was Munna Bhai. "I basically like playing gangsters. But honestly, one role that was truly special for me was Munna Bhai. In fact, that role taught me so much about being a doctor, especially

through Munna Bhai MBBS. What I realised while doing that film, and through my own journey with my mother and everything else, is that doctors have so many patients and are so busy that sometimes they forget the human touch."

BOLLYWOOD ACTRESS SHETTY OFFERS WORSHIP AT PASHUPATINATH TEMPLE



RSS
Kathmandu, Aug 1

Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty visited the Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu to offer her worship.

According to Sushil Kumar Gautam, an Archeology Officer of the Pashupati Area Development Trust, Shetty arrived at the temple as a pilgrim this morning.

The visit coincides with the month of Shrawan, a holy period for Vedic Sanatan Hindus, during which devotees from around the world travel to Nepal to pay their respects at the Pashupati Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva.

Actor Vijay Varma recalls casting couch experience

AGENCIES
New Delhi, Aug. 1

Vijay Varma has built one of the most versatile careers in recent years. From Gully Boy and Darlings to Dhaad, each project has showcased a different facet of his craft, with the actor consistently delivering performances that are both distinct and memorable.

Whether in a leading role or a brief appearance, Vijay has always found a way to leave a lasting impression, cementing his place among the finest actors of his generation. Recently, the actor opened up about the struggles he faced before finding success, recalling how his early attempts at modelling left him deeply discouraged after an uncomfortable encounter with a model coordinator.

'Model coordinator misbehaved with me'

Speaking to Prakhar Gupta on his YouTube channel, Vijay said, "I tried modelling in Hyderabad, just small-time, amateur-level work. But I came across this weird model coordinator. He started to misbehave with me a little bit, like just trying to get a little touchy-feely. I said, 'Bro, what is this? What are you doing?' So I got discouraged immediately.

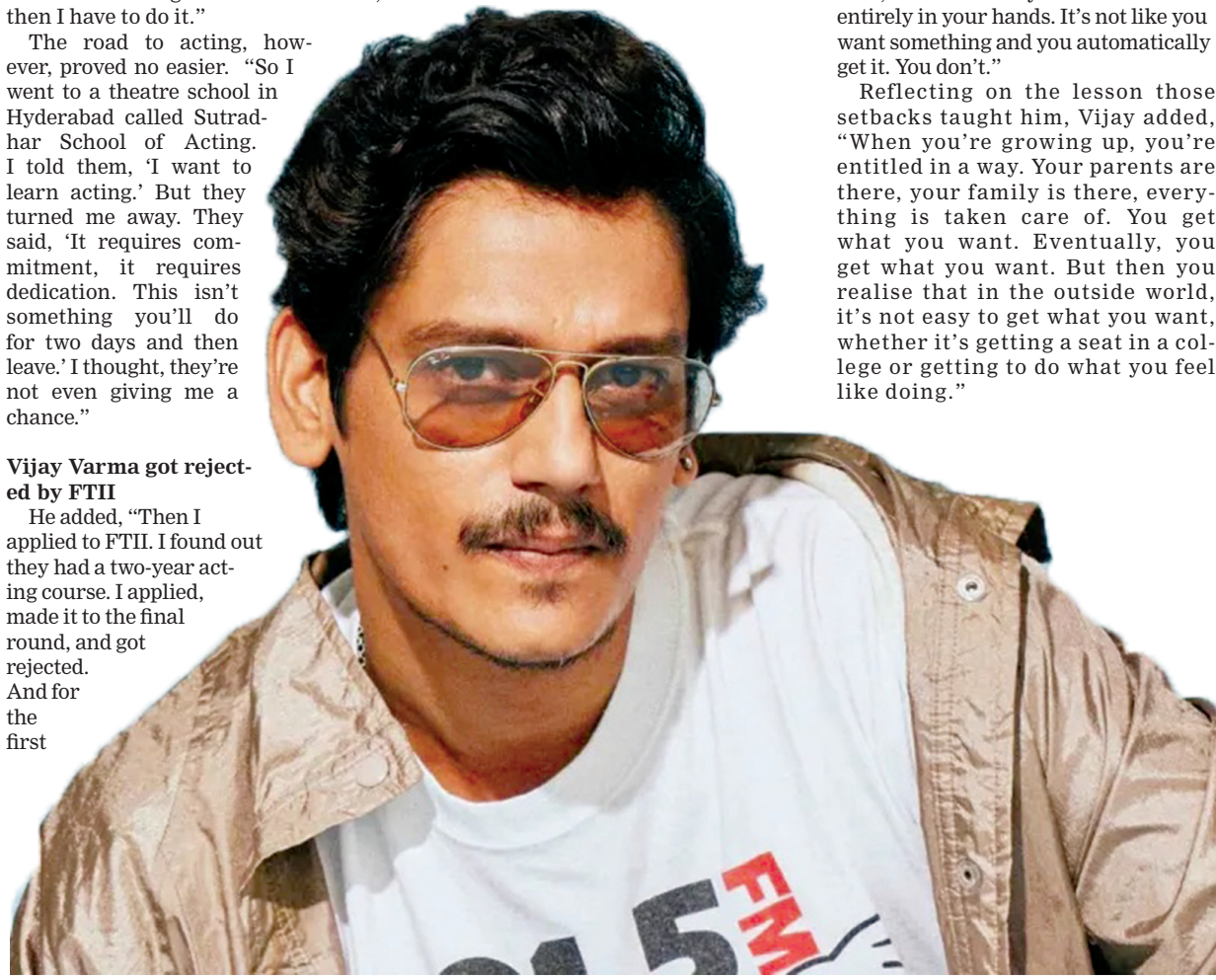
You get discouraged very quickly when you're still inexperienced. Then I thought, I think I should address it

head-on. If acting is what I want to do, then I have to do it."

The road to acting, however, proved no easier. "So I went to a theatre school in Hyderabad called Sutradhar School of Acting. I told them, 'I want to learn acting.' But they turned me away. They said, 'It requires commitment, it requires dedication. This isn't something you'll do for two days and then leave.' I thought, they're not even giving me a chance."

Vijay Varma got rejected by FTII

He added, "Then I applied to FTII. I found out they had a two-year acting course. I applied, made it to the final round, and got rejected. And for the first



time, I realised that your dreams aren't entirely in your hands. It's not like you want something and you automatically get it. You don't."

Reflecting on the lesson those setbacks taught him, Vijay added, "When you're growing up, you're entitled in a way. Your parents are there, your family is there, everything is taken care of. You get what you want. Eventually, you get what you want. But then you realise that in the outside world, it's not easy to get what you want, whether it's getting a seat in a college or getting to do what you feel like doing."

Jumanji Open World's trailer released



AGENCIES
New Delhi, Aug. 1

After the global success of Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle (2017) and Jumanji: The Next Level (2019), which together made more than \$1.7 billion worldwide, the first trailer for Jumanji: Open World is finally here. The film marks the third and final instalment in the rebooted Jumanji series, with the core cast, Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, Kevin Hart and Karen Gillan, returning for yet another adventure. Going by the three-minute trailer, the film promises to retain the franchise's trademark mix of humour, action and spectacle.

This time, however, the game is no longer confined to its console. Instead,

the trailer flips the familiar premise on its head as the game's characters spill into the real world, bringing chaos along with them. Johnson, Black, Hart and Gillan appear as the video game avatars navigating reality for the first time, while Alex Wolff's character explains the problem: "They're video game characters, but they're stuck in demo mode."

The "demo mode" glitch leads to a series of comic moments, with Johnson's Dr Smolder Bravestone unexpectedly switching to a Spanish accent and other bizarre malfunctions disrupting the team's mission. "I'm beginning to suspect that we're not in Jumanji," Black's Professor Shelly Oberon remarks, as the trailer escalates into large-scale action set pieces featuring stampeding ostriches, rhinoceroses and giant lizards loose in the real world. The stakes become clear when Wolff's character tells the group, "The only way to stop this is to get you guys back into the game."

Directed by Jake Kasdan, Jumanji: Open World also stars Danny DeVito, Lamorne Morris and Nick Jonas. The film continues the modern reinvention of the beloved franchise, which began with the 1995 original starring Robin Williams.

Jumanji: Open World is scheduled to release in theatres on December 25, setting up a major holiday box office clash with Dune: Part Three and Avengers: Doomsday.

HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

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ARIES: Your energy needs a clear focus. Early today, the Pisces Moon may stir private doubts or behind-the-scenes frustration as Venus highlights work and wellness . Do not confuse restlessness with readiness, especially if irritation rises before you know what you want.
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CANCER: Your big vision needs a practical next step. It is easy to romanticize an idea while getting picky about the details as the Pisces Moon in your 9th House of Beliefs opposes Venus in your 3rd House of Communication.
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LIBRA: If the arrangement is not working, stop decorating it. The Pisces Moon in your 6th House of Work and Wellness opposes Venus in your private 12th house, so fatigue, resentment, or unspoken expectations could leak into daily tasks.
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CAPRICORN: A conversation gets easier when you stop editing the message. Early on, the Pisces Moon in your 3rd House of Communication opposes Venus in your 9th House of Perspective, creating tension between what sounds nice and what is actually true.

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TAURUS: Pleasure and obligation may compete for your attention. The Pisces Moon in your 11th House of Friends opposes Venus in your 5th House of Creativity, so a group plan could clash with what you actually want to enjoy.
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LEO: Your big vision needs a practical next step. It is easy to romanticize an idea while getting picky about the details as the Pisces Moon in your 9th House of Beliefs opposes Venus in your 3rd House of Communication.
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SCORPIO: Creativity feels better when you stop managing everyone's reaction. Early on, the Pisces Moon in your 5th House of Self-Expression opposes Venus in your 11th House of Community, so your expectations may clash with feedback or comparison.
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AQUARIUS: A money conversation may need fewer hints and more numbers. Early on, the Pisces Moon in your 2nd House of Resources opposes Venus in your 8th House of Shared Commitments, stirring tension around budgets, favors, trust, or emotional debt.

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GEMINI: Public expectations and private needs may pull at each other. The Pisces Moon in your 10th House of Career opposes Venus in your 4th House of Home, so work pressure could bump against family, rest, or emotional bandwidth.
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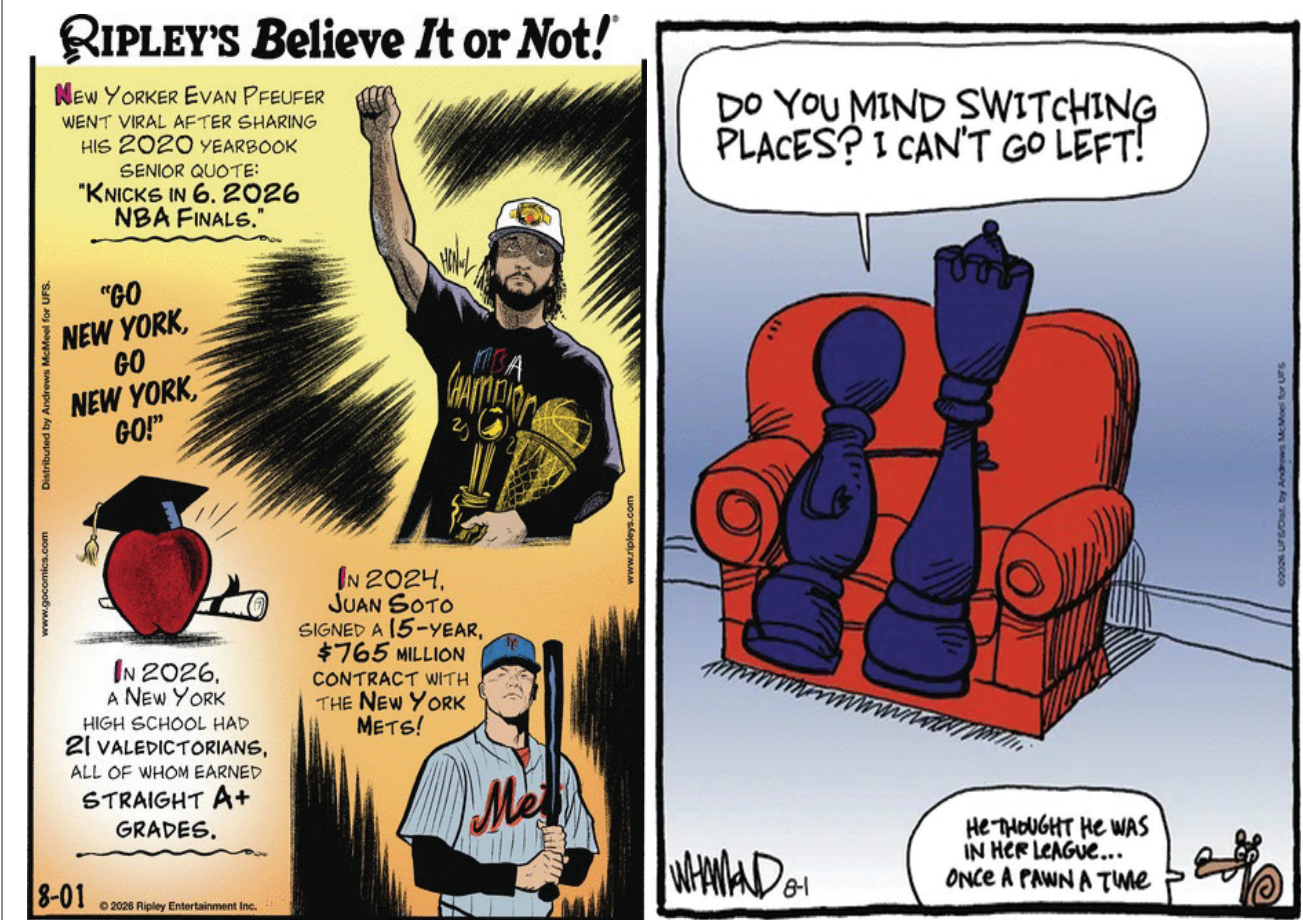
VIRGO: A relationship may reflect what you have been working hard to edit out. The Pisces Moon in your 7th House of Partnership opposes Venus in Virgo, making another person's needs hard to ignore while your own standards get louder.
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SAGITTARIUS: Home and ambition may need a more honest handoff. Early on, the Pisces Moon in your 4th House of Home opposes Venus in your 10th House of Career, so family needs, private emotions, or household mess may compete with public responsibilities.
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PISCES: Your needs deserve to be communicated before they become a mood. Early on, the Moon in Pisces opposes Venus in your 7th House of Partnership, making it easy to feel pulled between self-protection and keeping someone close.

CARTOON

gocomics.com



KAZI MD.
SALAHUDDIN
RE-ELECTED SAFF
PRESIDENT

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

Kazi Md. Salahuddin has been re-elected President of the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) at the SAFF Ordinary Congress held in Thimphu, Bhutan, on Saturday. Salahuddin was elected unopposed by the Congress, which was attended by representatives from all SAFF Member Associations as well as officials from FIFA and the AFC, according to a press release issued by SAFF. Following his re-election, Salahuddin expressed gratitude to the Member Associations for their continued trust and confidence.

He reaffirmed his commitment to advancing football across South Asia through new competitions and expanded capacity-building initiatives. He stressed that the region's footballing potential could reach unprecedented heights through unity, collaboration, and a shared vision among all stakeholders. "I am deeply honoured to have been elected to serve South Asian football for the next term. I accept this responsibility with humility and a firm commitment to work in the best interests of our game and our region."

"The years ahead present significant opportunities for South Asian football. Together, we must continue to strengthen governance, enhance competitions, invest in youth development, advance women's football, improve technical standards, and create greater opportunities for players, coaches, referees, and administrators throughout our Member Associations," he added. According to SAFF, Jaswar Umaru Lebbe, President of the Football Federation of Sri Lanka, was also elected unopposed as Vice President. Zimbiri of the Bhutan Football Federation was elected unopposed as the Female Executive Committee Member.

FIFA scraps controversial private investment plan after backlash

AFP
Geneva, Aug. 1

FIFA President Gianni Infantino on Saturday said he was abandoning a controversial plan to allow private investment in the World Cup after fierce backlash. Pressure mounted on Infantino on Friday with the resignation of senior advisor Carlos Cordeiro, who called the idea "a bad deal for FIFA's member associations, a bad deal for football, and a bad deal for the long-term future of the game".

FIFA president Gianni Infantino said on Saturday he has scrapped a plan to allow private investment in the World Cup following fierce backlash from football officials worldwide.

"Our purpose has always been – and will always be – to unite and improve," Infantino said in a statement.

"As a result, this proposal will not proceed."

FIFA, world football's governing body, had floated the plan on Tuesday, saying it could raise up to \$4.2 billion based on a valuation of \$20 billion for a new FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE), a commercial subsidiary it proposed to run events such as the World Cup and Club World Cup.

It said that, if approved, the project could provide each of FIFA's 211 member associations with a one-off payment of \$20 million in early 2027 and increase their funding allocation for the 2027-2030 cycle from \$8 million to \$20 million.

The Asian Football Confederation, which represents 47 member nations, welcomed the plan's withdrawal on Saturday.

Any initiative that may impact global football should be "presented and discussed with the Confederations, the FIFA Council, Member Associations (MAS) and other stakeholders in a timely, transparent and meaningful manner," the Kuala Lumpur-based body said in a statement.

The Mexican Football Federation also welcomed the move, saying that



FILE PHOTO: AP

"unity among all the Confederations and Federations has been prioritised for the good of football".

Earlier this week, European football's governing body UEFA said none of its national teams would participate in any FIFA competition "for so long as these proposals remain alive".

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and North American and Caribbean federation (CONCACAF) also condemned the move.

"The World Cup cannot be treated as an investment product," UEFA said in a statement. "No part of it should ever be surrendered to private investors. The World Cup is not for sale."

Pressure mounted on Infantino on Friday with the resignation of senior advisor Carlos Cordeiro, who called the idea "a bad deal for FIFA's member associations, a bad deal for football, and a bad deal for the long-term future of the game".

South American confederation CONMEBOL, whose president Alejandro

Dominguez is regarded as a close ally of Infantino, demanded further information on the "scope, structure, governance and potential effects" of the project.

'Created divisions'

In the late-night statement announcing the plan was dead, Infantino said the project was conceived as a means of strengthening member associations, and that it would only have gone ahead if a majority supported it.

"Having listened carefully to all the views, it has become clear that the project has created divisions of a nature that, regardless of the level of support, are no longer in the interest of the objective set out in the first place," he said.

FIFA had tried to fend off the critics, saying in a statement early Friday that it would continue consultations with member associations and insisting that "nobody is selling football".

But the pressure mounted, and not just within the football community.

UEFA says it has lost confidence in FIFA's Infantino

AP
Nyon, Aug 1

UEFA says it has lost confidence in FIFA President Gianni Infantino and that "no option should be off the table" as it will pursue a full review of his now abandoned plan to sell stakes of the World Cup to private equity investors.

Infantino was forced to scrap the plan early Saturday after his senior adviser who sat on a White House panel resigned and Asia's soccer body joined Europe and North America in opposing it.

Infantino had proposed creating a \$20 billion company to run the World Cup with private investors, but drew backlash that grew every day since Tuesday's announcement.

"We must identify those responsible and hold them to account," UEFA said on Saturday. "No option should be off the table. The current FIFA leadership has not only lost UEFA's confidence but also that of many other members of the football family."

The governing body of European soccer, headed by Aleksander Čeferin, issued its blistering statement hours after FIFA announced it was withdrawing its private equity plan.

"We cannot keep going on like this with secret schemes on fast-track

timescales, cooked up by faceless individuals and of dubious benefit to the game," UEFA said.

"It is right that, in the coming days and weeks, UEFA will work with its associations and in close cooperation with other confederations to reflect on how this happened and devise a plan to make sure that it cannot occur again."

UEFA's 55-member nations agreed to boycott the World Cup and all other FIFA competitions over Infantino's plan on Thursday. North America's CONCACAF and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) also said they opposed the plan.

The AFC said on Saturday it welcomed the scrapping of FIFA's proposal to allow private investment in the World Cup.

AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa "welcomed the withdrawal of the proposed FIFA Forward Enterprise," the Kuala Lumpur-based body said in a statement.

Any initiative that may impact global football should be "presented and discussed with the Confederations, the FIFA Council, Member Associations (MAS) and other stakeholders in a timely, transparent and meaningful manner," said the AFC, which represents 47 member nations, including Australia, China, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

"Moving forward, my intent is to bring all interested parties back together in the coming days and weeks in the spirit of shared interest in our game, and with the objective to continue growing football everywhere, particularly in those countries that mostly need our support," he said.

Chelsea winger Mudryk cleared to play

AP
London, Aug. 1

Chelsea winger Mykhailo Mudryk has been cleared to play after the English Football Association and the World Anti-Doping Agency resolved his doping case.

Mudryk, one of the most expensive players in world soccer, hasn't played since late 2024. He failed a drug test while on international duty for Ukraine. The test revealed an "adverse finding" of the prohibited substance meldonium.

He was suspended for four years by the FA in January and appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in April. Changes to WADA procedures in the interim meant that if he was tested now and produced the same result, doping charges would not be brought.

"Changes have been made ... which, while not retroactive, mean that if Mr Mudryk's sample was collected today, the concentration of meldonium in the sample would not have been reported and no anti-doping rule violations would have resulted," the FA said on Friday.

"Further to that development and to other circumstances of the case, the FA and Mr Mudryk have now — with the agreement of WADA — resolved the appeal proceedings."

The FA added Mudryk admitted to the doping offense and agreed to



Chelsea hit with \$13M fine

Meanwhile, Chelsea was fined 10 million pounds (\$13.4 million) and given a suspended two-window transfer ban on Friday after appealing penalties for breaching English Football Association agent rules.

The club was initially given a suspended six-point deduction along with the fine but the points penalty has been replaced by the suspended transfer ban.

The FA confirmed the sanctions on the west London club, which admitted to 74 breaches in total of FA regulations covering agents, working with intermediaries and third party investment in players.

The club owners self-reported the breaches to the soccer authorities in 2022, when they were in the process of buying Chelsea from Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich.

The six-point deduction, suspended until June 30, 2027, was imposed by the independent commission which initially heard the case. But the club appealed against that. An appeal board instead replaced the points penalty with the suspended two-window transfer ban.

Chelsea previously entered sanction settlements in regard to this matter with the Premier League and UEFA.

Gurung, Maharjan cruise into quarterfinals



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 1

Rajan Gurung has advanced to the quarterfinals of the inaugural Kathmandu Khel Mandal (NRT) Nepal Top 16 Grand Masters Snooker Championship after securing his second consecutive victory.

On the fourth day of the tournament, held Saturday at the Tripureshwor-based club premises, Gurung comfortably defeated Ayush Gautam 4-0 in a best-of-seven match. Earlier, he had overcome Bikash Maharjan 4-2.

After losing to Gurung, Maharjan kept his hopes alive by beating Aman Karki 4-0 on Saturday to reach the last eight.

Similarly, Rajan Lama, who had suffered defeat in his opening match, bounced back in his second game to edge Jay Maharjan 4-3 in a thrilling contest, keeping his quarterfinal chances intact. Jay and Aman, meanwhile, suffered their second successive defeats.

The championship features Nepal's top 15 players along with one entrant from the organisers. The 16 competitors have been divided into four groups, with the top two from each group progressing to the quarterfinals.

EDDIE HOWE RESIGNS AS NEWCASTLE BOSS TO 'RECHARGE'

AFP
London, Aug. 1

Eddie Howe confirmed on Friday he had stepped down as Newcastle manager to "recharge and take a break" following a turbulent end to his five-year spell at St James' Park.

Howe revitalised a club that had struggled for decades, securing a first major trophy in 56 years by winning the League Cup in 2025. The former Bournemouth boss also led Newcastle to Champions League qualification in 2023 and 2025.

But the Magpies struggled to a 12th-place finish in the Premier League last season and have endured a difficult summer transfer window.

Howe oversaw Wednesday's 4-1 pre-season friendly defeat at Bristol City and it emerged hours later that he was set to leave. Newcastle announced the Englishman's departure on Friday, saying they had accepted his decision to step down and thanking him for his "extraordinary contribution".

"After a period of personal reflection, I have decided that now is the right time for me to step away from my role as head coach of Newcastle United," Howe said in a club statement.

"After nearly five years of giving my life, heart and soul into the club with unrelenting energy, I feel that it is in the best interests of both myself and the club to step away, recharge and take a break."

Richarlison, Tonali fire 10-man Spurs to 2-1 win over Chelsea

AFP
Sydney, Aug. 1

Brazil striker Richarlison scored a 90th-minute winner and club record signing Sandro Tonali got his first goal as 10-man Tottenham beat London rivals Chelsea 2-1 in a feisty pre-season friendly in Sydney on Saturday. Both sides fielded strong line-ups and Spurs struck first on 19 minutes through Tonali's deflected shot before Estevao levelled the scores barely two minutes later.



Tottenham defender Kevin Danso was given a straight red card just three minutes after coming off the bench at the break for bringing down Joao Pedro, with Chelsea dominating second-half proceedings. But in front of 80,363 fans at Stadium Australia, they failed to capitalise and Spurs stunned them with a late winner.

"Very happy, especially for the first half because we played very well," said Spurs manager Roberto De Zerbi.

"The red card was no good for us, but also (not) for Chelsea because with the condition of the pitch, all players behind the line of the ball, it was tough for them.

"But we won a good game, a good test." The loss means new Chelsea manager Xabi Alonso will head to Hong Kong for a clash with Juventus on Wednesday on the back of his first defeat, following a 6-4 victory over Western Sydney Wanderers in midweek. "It was a really competitive game," said Alonso.

"The second half was really tight, after the red card we had a few very good chances to score. We missed them and at the end, very silly to concede that late goal, but I think that has been a good test for everyone." The Spaniard has overseen a string of high-profile signings since being appointed, headlined by Morgan Rogers from Aston

Villa, as he bids to rejuvenate the club after their disappointing 10th in the Premier League last season.

Spurs, who fared even worse, coming 17th to narrowly miss relegation, have also been on a spending spree with Matheus Fernandes arriving from West Ham and Tonali from Newcastle. They fly home after a 2-0 win over Auckland FC and 1-1 draw with Sydney FC. Most of Chelsea's close-season signings have yet to link up with the squad, including Rogers. But right-back Marco Palestra, who joined from Atalanta, got his first minutes while Cole Palmer and Estevao started.