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Janakpur Jomsom

Zhu Rongji, who drove reforms and led China into the WTO, dies at 97

Zhu pushed through a dizzying array of changes as premier from 1998 to 2003 under Jiang Zemin.

◻ **JOE MCDONALD/AP**
BEIJING, AUG 12

Former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji, the impatient, sharp-tongued reformer who helped ignite China's explosive economic boom by forcing wrenching change on state industry in the 1990s and leading the country into the World Trade Organization, has died of illness, state media reported on Wednesday. He was 97.

Zhu died in Beijing at around 11 am on Wednesday, the official news agency Xinhua reported.

Once sent into rural exile to do manual labour for praising reforms in other communist countries, Zhu pushed through a dizzying array of changes as premier, China's top economic post, from 1998 to 2003 under former President Jiang Zemin.



AP/RSS
Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji in March, 2000.

Zhu clashed with Communist Party conservatives and state industry bosses as he pushed state-owned companies to become efficient and profitable. That cost millions of layoffs, but helped propel China to overtake Japan as the second-largest economy behind the United States in 2010. Building on Deng Xiaoping's 1979 reforms, Zhu is credited with supplying the resourcefulness and tenacity to push through history-making changes such as China's WTO membership, which helped to transform China into the world's biggest exporter.

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AFP/RSS
Astronomy enthusiasts make their final adjustments in the hours leading up to a total solar eclipse observation in Lodoso, Spain, on Wednesday.

Parliamentary committees struggle to hold government accountable

'Mini-parliaments' become increasingly passive, with ruling-party dominance, infrequent meetings and a lack of scrutiny weakening Parliament's oversight of the executive.

◻ **KUL CHANDRA NEUPANE**
KATHMANDU, AUG 12

On August 5, the Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee of the House of Representatives convened a meeting apparently called to discuss international concerns regarding the country's judiciary. The core agenda centred on a joint statement issued on July 24 by three prominent global human rights organisations—Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, and Human Rights Watch—claiming that the government was applying undue pressure on several Supreme Court justices to tender their resigna-

tions under the direct threat of potential impeachment proceedings.

But, rather than using these serious allegations as a starting point to conduct an independent parliamentary inquiry into potential executive interference in the judiciary, the committee spent more than four hours deliberating the motives of the watchdog groups. By the end of the lengthy session, the committee reached a controversial decision that these three international organisations should furnish clarification. The decision drew severe criticism from civil society, legal experts, and constitutional observers across the country.

A body constitutionally mandated

to keep the executive in check had effectively transformed itself into a shield for the government, asking state authorities to demand answers from the international organisations that had raised concerns about state behaviour. Critics argued that the committee had completely forgotten its primary duty and chosen instead to act as a defender of the executive.

Under established parliamentary traditions, the committee possessed full authority to launch its own factual investigation, summon judicial administrators to verify whether the government had coerced Supreme Court justices.

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Balendra Shah-led government failing inclusion test

Critics say the government is sidelining women, Madhesis, Dalits and other marginalised groups in public appointments.

◻ **RAJESH MISHRA**
KATHMANDU, AUG 12

Prime Minister Balendra Shah's 17-member council of ministers includes six women, or 35.29 percent of the cabinet. While the Khas-Arya community remains dominant, the cabinet also includes ministers from Madheshi, Janajati and Dalit communities, making the administration appear relatively inclusive at first glance.

However, appointments to constitutional and public bodies made on the recommendation of the Constitutional Council, chaired by Shah, and through cabinet decisions tell a different story

Critics say the government has fallen short of the constitutional principle of proportional inclusion, with women, Madheshis and other marginalised communities poorly represented in key appointments across the state.

The criticism goes beyond individual appointments.

Opponents say the issue is whether the government is applying the constitutional commitment to inclusion consistently when filling influential posts, rather than only when forming the Cabinet.

Public bodies such as the judiciary, Election Commission, National Planning Commission and cultural academies shape decisions that affect

citizens across the country.

The composition of these institutions is therefore a test of the government's approach to representation.

Between March 27 and August 11, the Cabinet met 28 times and made over 50 appointments.

The contrast between the cabinet and appointments to other bodies has emerged as a growing point of conten-

tion. Although the presence of six women in a 17-member Cabinet and ministers from several communities offers some diversity at the executive level, critics argue that this has not translated into comparable diversity in appointments outside the cabinet.

Immediately after the government was formed on March 27, the cabinet appointed four key advisers overseeing political affairs, administration, governance and reform, and information and technology. None was a woman.

Between March 27 and August 11, the cabinet met 28 times and made more than 50 appointments.

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Deuba coming home after 5 months abroad amid questions over his family's finances

His return ends a months-long absence from Nepal but leaves unanswered questions over his family's movements, medical treatment and finances.

◻ **MATRIKA DAHAL & YAGYA BANJADE**
KATHMANDU, AUG 12

Former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is returning to Nepal on Thursday, five months after leaving for Singapore, with his faction of the Nepali Congress preparing a rousing welcome for him.

But his return raises more questions than it answers. Deuba left Nepal for Singapore on February 25, saying he was travelling for a medical check-up. He is now returning from Hong Kong, where he is believed to have stayed for part of his prolonged absence from Nepal. His close aide Bhanu Deuba confirmed that Deuba will arrive in Kathmandu at 12:25 pm on Thursday via Bangkok.

The circumstances of his five-month stay abroad remain largely unexplained.

It is unclear when Deuba, his wife Arzu Rana and their son Jaybir moved from Singapore to Hong Kong. The couple has not publicly disclosed details of their movements or treatment, saying only at different times that they were abroad for medical care. They have not specified what ailments they were being treated for.

More significantly, questions remain over who financed their extended stay and medical treatment.

Those questions have assumed greater significance because a money-laundering investigation into the Deubas had already been launched before they left Nepal, leading to the freezing of their domestic assets and bank accounts.

Nepali citizens can obtain limited foreign currency for overseas travel and medical treatment through Nepal Rastra Bank and authorised banks, subject to approval and documentation.

However, multiple sources at the

NRB said the Deuba couple did not seek central bank approval for foreign currency exchange for medical treatment, and there is no record of such requests in recent months.

"In recent months, there has been no request from the family for foreign currency exchange for foreign travel, medical treatment, religious pilgrimage, or any other purpose," said an NRB official on condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of the matter.

"However, Nepali citizens can also obtain foreign currency exchange through commercial banks. If they obtained it that way, the information would not necessarily be available to Nepal Rastra Bank."

Close aide confirms that Deuba will arrive in Kathmandu at 12:25 pm Thursday via Bangkok.

The investigation into the Deubas had begun in November last year, before the Deubas left Nepal. The Department of Money Laundering Investigation subsequently froze movable and immovable assets registered in the names of the couple, their son Jaybir Singh Deuba and some relatives. According to investigators, the freeze order remains in effect.

Nepali politicians travelling abroad for medical treatment have often drawn public attention in the past, typically under formal arrangements or state-supported provisions in the case of former prime ministers and other public office holders. The Deuba couple had also frequently travelled to Singapore for medical treatment.

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POST FILE PHOTO
Sher Bahadur Deuba is returning amid a long-running feud in the Nepali Congress.

Nepal recognises trans identities, but its menstrual system does not

Nearly two decades after a landmark Supreme Court ruling advanced legal recognition of gender identity, Nepal's menstrual health policies and services still largely exclude trans men.

◻ **AARYA CHAND**
KATHMANDU, AUG 12

Milan Chhetri was 12 when his period first arrived. In his home in Dailekh, Karnali Province, the tradition was clear: anyone who menstruated did not stay in the house. For five days, he had to live with his sister. He could not see his father, his brothers or his grandfather. Back then, he did not have the language for what he knew about himself. He only knew that what was happening to his body felt like a punishment for something he had not done.

More than a decade later, Milan, now 24, still menstruates. He works as a social mobiliser in Thantikandh Rural Municipality, visiting schools as a part of his work. He gets his menstrual products from the schools as finding them in the market is not simple, and buying them as a man is an own ordeal in itself.

At one point, he used contraceptive injections for six months, obtained from a hospital in Surkhet, to stop his periods. But he stopped after worrying

that if complications arose, doctors who had treated him poorly in the past might do so again, and that his family would blame his identity for whatever went wrong. His periods returned. Since then, he has managed them as he always has: quietly, carefully and mostly alone.

At home, he hides the fact that he is menstruating at all. His mother worries that the family will fall ill if they find out. "In our village, menstruating people are kept away from many activities," he said.

"Sometimes you are stopped from walking on certain paths if elderly people are nearby." He refuses to go to the menstrual hut. He has learned, instead, to be invisible in other ways.

Nepal became the first country in South Asia to legally recognise transgender identities in 2007, following a landmark Supreme Court ruling. It has since been held up as a model of gender progressivism in the region. Yet its menstrual health system—from programmes distributing pads in rural districts to school lessons and clinical care—was built around a sin-



PHOTO: COURTESY OF UNITY FOR CHANGE
Drisyia Mishra, covered in blood, Punam Tamang and Ikxita Parajuli perform a skit depicting the death of a trans man at a programme organised by Unity for Change.

gle assumption: that menstruation belongs to women. For trans men, that assumption is not an oversight. It is the architecture of their invisibility.

Six hundred kilometres southeast, in Janakpur, Nishant Jha encountered the same gap under different circumstances.

He was not thinking about the risks when he started taking testosterone in 2013. He wanted a voice that matched who he was, a beard and a body that felt like his own.

A friend already using testosterone sourced it from Delhi and sold it to him for Rs250 to Rs300 a dose.

Jha took it to a doctor in Janakpur to be injected. There was no prescription, monitoring or follow-up.

He took injections for hormones for about a year. His voice changed, he grew a beard and his periods stopped. Then a senior advised him to get a proper check-up. A trip to Kathmandu and full-body screening cost Rs15,000 to Rs16,000—more than he could afford. So he stopped.

"I didn't think about side effects or how it would affect my physical health,"

he said. "I just wanted to change my body to the way I felt about it."

When his periods returned, the bleeding was heavier and the pain, he said, was three times worse. His cycle became unpredictable, sometimes lasting more than a week and sometimes only two days.

"I blame myself for not knowing better," he said. "Not the doctor."

Jha is now 24 and works as a legal administrative assistant at a queer youth group in Kathmandu. He has resumed hormone therapy, taking an injection every 21 days at Rs600 a dose.

His symptoms have improved, but missing an injection brings a different kind of pain in his lower abdomen. His doctor has described it as a conflict between the hormones and his uterus and suggested a hysterectomy. Jha says he cannot afford the procedure and remains nervous about it.

"I carry the feeling that I might be in my period everywhere," he said. "It is very hard to feel secure, even while taking hormones."

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Monsoon returns, water contamination rises

More than half of drinking water samples from public schools and offices in three Lalitpur local units tested positive for faecal coliform and E. coli.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, AUG 12

Drinking water supplied to schools and public offices in the three local units of Lalitpur district—Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Mahalaxmi Municipality and Godawari Municipality—has been found to be contaminated with hazardous microbes.

Of the 45 samples of drinking water collected from public schools and public offices of different parts of the three local units, more than a half tested positive for faecal coliform and E.coli, officials say.

Municipality, Kirtipur Municipality, Dakshinkali Municipality, Gokarnashwar Municipality and Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

As monsoon rains continue, most drinking water sources have been contaminated by floodwater.

Health officials say drinking contaminated water can cause diarrhoeal diseases, including cholera, dysentery, typhoid, as well as hepatitis A and E.

Though major diarrhoeal outbreaks have not been reported in the Kathmandu valley this year, health facilities have reported a

Unit at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital, Teku. “We must ensure the safety of drinking water. I would request parents to send only boiled water with their school-going children.”

As the authorities have failed to ensure the safety of drinking water, public health experts warn that the risk of a major outbreak of waterborne diseases, including cholera, remains high in the coming days.

They say even jar water sold in the market may not be safe to drink without boiling, as tests carried out in the past found the presence of faecal coliform and E. coli in samples.

Doctors say improving access to safe drinking water, strengthening sanitation and hygiene, raising public awareness, and ensuring early treatment are key to preventing future outbreaks.

The health ministry’s data show that Karnali province recorded the highest rate of diarrhoeal infection—647 per 1,000 children under five years of age in the fiscal year 2024-025, followed by Sudurpashchim province 439; Madhesh 368; Lumbini 320; Koshi 247; Gandaki 203; and Bagmati province 201.

Officials at the Integrated Health Information Management Centre under the Department of Health Services said they are still compiling data for the last fiscal year 2025-026. The available data show an infection rate of 260 per 1,000 children under five years of age.

“This number could change, as we are still compiling the available data,” said Abhaya Shrestha, an official at the centre.

At least 14 children under five died of diarrhoeal infection in the fiscal year 2023-024, four in 2022-023 and one in 2024-025.

Nepal frequently witnesses outbreaks of water- and food-borne diseases, including cholera, during the monsoon season. Thousands of people get infected as floodwaters contaminate most of the drinking water sources.

In fiscal year 2025-026, the country witnessed a major cholera outbreak in which several died and hundreds were infected, especially in Bara and Parsa districts.

The Vibrio cholera 01 Ogawa serotype was responsible for the outbreak. Health authorities had resorted to ring vaccination against cholera after all their efforts in containing the spread of the deadly disease failed.

In the fiscal year 2024-025, at least 95 cholera cases were confirmed in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Kailali, Pyuthan, Makawanpur, Rolpa, Sindhupalchok, Achham, and Rautahat districts.

Public health experts say that the risk of waterborne diseases will not decline until the country’s water and sanitation conditions improve and people have access to safe drinking water. Several other factors, including storage conditions, supply pipes, and pollution of water sources, also impact the quality of water supplied to households.

Drinking only boiled water is the best way to prevent waterborne diseases,” said Dr Samita Panta Acharya, professor of general practice and emergency medicine at Patan Hospital.

“I suggest that everyone drink boiled water. Even the quality of jar water is questionable, as it is not properly monitored.”

Government’s public appointments fail to reflect Nepal’s diversity

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Only four women were among those appointed. Representation of Madheshis, Indigenous Janajatis and Dalits was also exceptionally weak, while the Muslim community had no representation.

The pattern was also evident in appointments recommended by the Constitutional Council.

At its May 7 meeting, the council recommended Supreme Court Justice Manoj Kumar Sharma for chief justice, bypassing the senior-most justice, Sapana Pradhan Malla. Women’s rights activists criticised the government for excluding a woman from the country’s top judicial post. After parliamentary hearings and other procedures, Sharma took office on May 19.

The three appointments to the Election Commission also failed to reflect gender and regional diversity. Man Bahadur Karki was appointed chief election commissioner, with Guru Prasad Wagle and Rajib Subba as commissioners. None of the three is a woman or Madheshi.

Other appointments were made directly by the Cabinet or through executive decisions by the prime minister and line ministers.

On April 7, the Cabinet appointed the vice-chairperson and six members of the National Planning Commission. Only one woman was included, while the appointments also lacked geographical and communal representation.

On April 15, the cabinet formed a five-member property investigation commission chaired by former justice Rajendra Kumar Bhandari, again without considering gender or community representation.

Six days later, on April 21, it formed a three-member troubled cooperatives management committee that included neither a woman nor a Madheshi.

On June 2, a four-member land issue resolution committee was established under the chairmanship of Balbhadra Bastola from Kaski. The committee had no representation from the Tarai-Madhesh region, where landlessness is most acute.

The government’s appointment record has begun to draw criticism even from lawmakers of the ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP).

Speaking at a meeting of the State Affairs and Good Governance Committee on August 6, lawmaker Amresh Kumar Singh said the government had failed to uphold constitutional provisions guaranteeing proportional and inclusive representation.

“In the name of meritocracy, inclusivity and the constitution are being flouted,” Singh said, calling for a white paper on recent appointments. “Looking at the appointments made so far, it appears there are no Yadavs, Jhas, Singhs, Alams, Paswans, or Tharus left in the country.”

Singh said the exclusion of marginalised communities could not be justified in the name of merit.

“You cannot run a country by sidelining 33 percent Madheshis and 33 percent Indigenous Janajatis under the guise of meritocracy. This King Mahendra-era mindset no longer works. The constitution guarantees that the country is multi-ethnic and multi-religious,” he said.

The criticism was followed the next day by another set of appointments that drew scrutiny, this time in the cultural sector.

On August 7, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation published the names of 29 office-bearers appointed to three premier state-run academies: the Nepal Academy, the Nepal Academy of Fine Arts and the Nepal Academy of Music and Drama.

The appointments showed significant regional and communal gaps. No appointee was from Sudurpashchim province. Madhesh received no representation in the leadership and membership of the Nepal Music and Drama Academy.

Across the three academies, only two of the 29 appointees are from Madhesh, both from Siraha district, while Karnali



A cabinet meeting, Tuesday. Although the cabinet appears relatively inclusive, critics say the government has fallen short of the constitutional principle of inclusion in key state appointments.

has one representative.

The distribution prompted criticism on social media, with users questioning whether Sudurpashchim, Karnali and Madhesh provinces lacked literary and artistic figures.

Former minister Bhim Rawal wrote on social media that the appointments “bear no resemblance to the governance, justice, and fairness the RSP constantly claims to champion”.

By community, the 29 appointees comprise six Brahmin, eight Newar, nine Indigenous Janajati, two Madheshi, two Tharu, one Dalit and one Chhetri.

The appointments were finalised by the prime minister on the recommendation of a committee chaired by Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister Khadga Raj Paudel, and the decision has intensified criticism of the minister.

One recent appointment, however, was different. On August 5, Yanki Ukyab was appointed as chief executive officer of the Investment Board Nepal. This is the first time a woman has become head of the agency. Ukyab is from an indigenous community in remote Olangchungola in Taplejung district.

At the same time, critics say other appointments have not been as diverse.

Scrapping prior roles and shifting to merit

The government’s approach to public appointments has also been shaped by its decision to remove hundreds of officials appointed by previous administrations.

The government collectively relieved political appointees who had been appointed before March 26 and were serving across public bodies.

In May, it introduced the Special Provisions Relating to Removal of Public Officials Ordinance, 2026, which removed more than 1,500 officials. The government has since moved quickly to fill the vacancies created by the removals, but questions over proportional representation in the new appointments have persisted.

Government officials defend the appointments, saying they are based primarily on competitive merit rather than identity or quotas.

At a press conference, when asked by the Kantipur daily why recent appointments did not adequately reflect the constitutional principle of proportional representation, Sasmit Pokharel, minister for education and sports and government spokesperson, said the outcome reflected the results of open competition. He said that expert panels had been formed through open calls to shortlist candidates, in a process intended to minimise political interference.

“Appointments in the ministries are being conducted transparently through open competition. The application process is entirely open,” the government spokesperson said. “It was done in a way that is as inclusive as possible. However, because it relies on open calls and competition, meritocracy has taken precedence over strict inclusivity.”

Excluding appointments made to the personal secretariats of the prime minister and ministers, more than 200 positions have been filled across public bodies since the government began replacing

the officials removed under the new ordinance. Yet critics say the emphasis on open competition has not addressed the structural under-representation of women and marginalised communities.

The pattern has continued in several recently constituted public bodies.

On July 2, the government appointed a chairperson and two members to the Public Procurement Review Committee without reflecting the diversity. Similarly, when the chairperson and three members of the Electricity Regulatory Commission were appointed on July 22, none was a woman, while Indigenous Janajati and Madheshi communities were also absent.

The lack of diversity is particularly stark when multiple positions in the same institution are filled at once. Critics say appointments to bodies with a chairperson and several members are often made without considering the institution’s overall composition. The scope for maintaining representative diversity is even narrower when executive positions are filled individually.

The same issue has emerged in higher education, where Prime Minister Shah, in his capacity as chancellor, has made a series of senior university appointments.

He appointed Bhola Thapa as vice-chancellor of Tribhuvan University, Kishan Datta Bhatta as vice-chancellor of Sudurpashchim University and Rajan Suwal as vice-chancellor of Mid-Western University.

On July 3, further vice-chancellorial appointments were made, with Rishi Ram Kattel appointed at Agriculture and Forestry University, Shyam Narayan Labh at Janaki University, Devendra Adhikari at Pokhara University and Sujan Babu Marhatta at Purbanchal University. On July 15, Prof Dr Sunil Kumar Joshi and Bhim Bahadur Chand were appointed vice-chancellor and registrar, respectively, at the Shahid Dashrath Chand National Academy of Health Sciences in Geta, Kailali.

Across the seven consecutive university vice-chancellor appointments, not a single woman was selected to lead an institution.

The government also appointed former secretary Kishor Thapa as chairperson of the Tribhuvan University Service Commission and Khadga Bahadur KC as chairperson of the University Grants Commission. KC was appointed rector of Tribhuvan University during KP Sharma Oli’s premiership.

The Ministry of Education has defended the process, saying the vice-chancellors were selected through open competition on the recommendations of committees chaired by Education Minister and Pro-Chancellor Sasmit Pokharel.

The appointments have nevertheless added to the broader debate over how merit-based selection should be reconciled with Nepal’s constitutional commitment to inclusion. While the government says open competition is intended to reduce political patronage and prioritise qualifications, critics argue that a formally open process can still reproduce existing disparities if institutions do not actively consider gender, geography and social diversity in their final selections.



Doctors urge people to boil tap water before drinking.

“We carried out tests on water samples collected randomly from various schools and public offices some two weeks ago,” said Shree Bhadra Sharma, an official at the Public Health Office, Lalitpur. “Over 50 percent of samples were found to be contaminated. We have notified the schools and public offices and asked them to take preventive measures.”

Contaminated water is blamed for the growing incidence of waterborne diseases, including diarrhoeal infections, across the country. The rate of diarrhoeal infection among children under five has nearly tripled in the past three years.

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Health and Food Safety, the incidence of diarrhoeal infection rose to 318 per 1,000 children under five years of age in the fiscal year 2024-025. In 2022-023, the rate was 115 per 1,000, while in 2023-024 it was 127 per 1,000.

Faecal coliform and E. coli are bacteria commonly found in the intestines and faeces of warm-blooded animals. Their presence in drinking water indicates contamination by sewage or human faeces, officials say.

Similar tests were carried out by the Public Health Office, Kathmandu, a month ago, found faecal coliform and E. coli in all water samples. The samples were collected from Chandragiri

surge in diarrhoeal infections, fever, typhoid and hepatitis A and E.

Some diarrhoeal patients have also tested positive for cholera in rapid diagnosis tests.

The Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, which is responsible for controlling outbreaks of communicable and vector-borne diseases, reported that acute gastroenteritis was the most reported condition in the last week, with 721 cases.

The risk of a major outbreak of waterborne diseases, including cholera, remains high in the coming days, doctors say.

Doctors say reported cases do not capture the full extent of the problem, as many people with diarrhoeal infections do not seek hospital treatment, and instead buy medicines over the counter and recover at home.

“We all know that most of our drinking water sources are not safe and can become contaminated with floodwater,” said Dr Sher Bahadur Pun, chief of Clinical Research

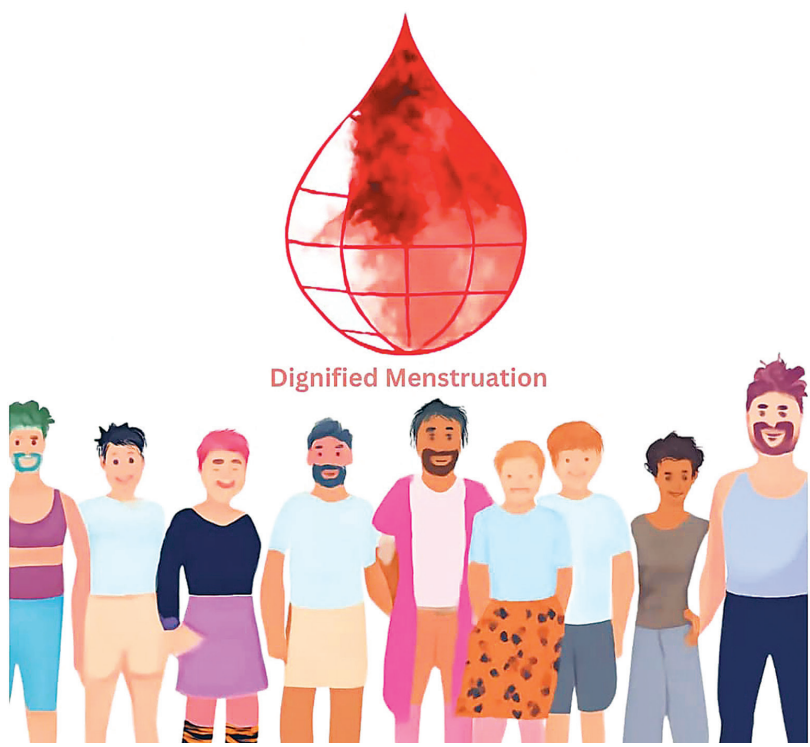
men, people with disabilities and non-binary people.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens—since renamed (The Ministry of Women, Children, Gender and Sexual Minorities and Social Security) was designated to draft the required Act. It has not done so. Paudel said the Act would provide the basis for municipal guidelines and inclusive school programmes.

The current Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act of 2018, however, refers only to “woman” and “girl”. Trans men do not appear in it. Paudel argues that such laws need to refer more broadly to people who menstruate, including “persons born with a uterus”.

The changes she proposes are relatively simple: gender-neutral toilets in public places, health workers trained to treat anyone who menstruates, inclusive language in school curricula and the formal inclusion of trans men in menstrual health programmes. The clinical system shows what happens when that inclusion is absent. Shreyashi Aryal, a gynaecologist practising in Kathmandu, said she would not feel confident treating a transgender man who walked into her clinic.

She recalled asking a patient during a routine consultation: “When did you last menstruate?” “I am a trans man. I don’t menstruate,” he replied.



A dignified menstrual health system recognises that people of different genders menstruate, and they deserve respectful, inclusive, and equitable care.

Nepal’s menstrual system does not accommodate trans men

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What connects Jha’s experience to Milan Chhetri’s in Dailekh is not geography or circumstance, but the same institutional gap: Nepal’s menstrual health system was not designed with trans men in mind.

Radha Paudel, founder of the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, has spent years documenting that gap. She interviewed 30 trans men and reached about 400 others through online surveys across Nepal, India, the United Kingdom, Australia, South Korea and Thailand. Her finding is broader than Nepal: few countries have formally included trans men in their menstrual health systems.

The number of trans men who menstruate in Nepal is itself unknown. The national census does not count trans men as a distinct category, leaving the population affected by this exclusion effectively unmeasured.

Nepal’s policy failure predates the 2025 Resolution Motion on Dignified Menstruation. A National Policy on Dignified Menstruation was drafted in 2017 but never adopted. Some awareness activities followed in 2021 and 2022. Then, on March 21, 2025, the National Assembly unanimously passed a resolution—the first of its kind in the world—calling for legal frameworks that recognise all menstruators, including trans

“I went blank,” Aryal said. She completed the consultation but later realised she had used the wrong pronouns. The patient never returned.

Aryal began her MBBS in 2003 and later completed an MD in gynaecology. Neither programme included transgender health. The Nepal Medical Council has issued no specific guidelines, leaving clinicians to rely on guidance from organisations such as the UK’s Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in the US.

A 2022 letter by gynecologists at Lumbini Medical College similarly found that reproductive health training in Nepal remains largely built around heterosexual, cisgender (gender assigned at birth) patients and leaves doctors ill-equipped to address the needs of trans men, from menstrual complications and hormone therapy to gender-affirming procedures.

The consequences are evident in Jha’s history. He took testosterone without medical monitoring, and stopping it resulted in painful and unpredictable bleeding.

“We understand we need to address their needs,” Aryal said. “But we don’t know where to start.”

The gap extends into schools. Richa Neupane, a member of the Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion the-

matic group under the National Curriculum Framework Review Task Team, said trans menstruation has never been included in Nepal’s curriculum. Her group plans to introduce language acknowledging gender and sexual minorities, with trans menstruation potentially included under comprehensive sexuality education. Whether that survives the approval process remains uncertain.

On the ground, inclusion varies. Pushpa Joshi, programme director at Yoshan Nepal, said her organisation uses “menstruating persons” rather than “women” and would include a trans student who came to collect pads or attend a session. Maya Khaitsu, executive director of Days for Girls Nepal, described a different reality. In the rural communities where her organisation works, trans men do not appear in its records.

“Discussing other levels of identity would feel like jumping ahead when we are still educating people not to stay in menstrual sheds,” she said.

The National Assembly passed the resolution motion unanimously. But the Act has not been drafted, curricula remain largely unchanged and clinical training has yet to catch up. Nepal was the first in the region to recognise, in law, that trans people exist. It has yet to fully recognise, in policy, that some of them menstruate.

‘A mere shadow of executive’: Parliament’s watchdogs go quiet

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“The fundamental purpose of a parliamentary committee is to hold state organs accountable to the people,” said Amaresh Kumar Singh, a parliamentarian from the ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party. “It is completely outside the mandate of any parliamentary committee to debate statements made by non-state actors. If an ambassador makes a public comment tomorrow, does that mean the International Relations Committee should summon the diplomat for a cross-examination?”

There are growing concerns that parliamentary committees, often described as ‘mini-parliaments,’ may be struggling to fully uphold their constitutional oversight roles. Out of 12 standing committees in the HoR, almost all are coming under public scrutiny for inaction, executive subservience, and a clear failure to address pressing public grievances.

The political arrangement of these committees further complicates their independence. While 11 committees are chaired by members of the ruling RSP, only the Public Accounts Committee is led by the main opposition Nepali Congress.

The government has registered only 12 bills in the lower house so far. Among them, merely two bills are undergoing detailed clause-by-clause discussions within committee chambers, while the remaining 10 sit idle in the parliament. As grievances multiply across the country, mini-parliaments remain remarkably silent and disengaged from citizens’ concerns.

Within the past four months, the country witnessed a cascade of critical events that directly impacted everyday citizens. Farmers across the country faced severe shortages of chemical fertilisers during the peak planting season, compounded by systemic corruption in distribution networks and a total lack of timely procurement planning. The landless squatters were forcibly evicted without proper relocation plans or social safety nets. Freedom of the press faced visible pressure when there were attempts to restrict operations at major media houses following critical reporting on the government.

Simultaneously, the self-immolation of Ganesh Nepali highlighted systemic economic neglect, while the arrests of Gen Z youth activists, including Majid Ansari, sparked public outrage regarding civil liberties, youth rights, and freedom of speech. At the southern border, citizens endured harassment due to sudden and strict customs enforcement, while everyday consumers struggled with shortages of cooking gas in urban markets. Basic administrative services ground to a halt as long queues formed at passport centres, smart driving licence distributions were suspended due to management disputes, and traffic fine structures were sharply increased without public consultation or clear legal justification.

In the economic sphere, private sector leaders voiced growing anxiety over arbitrary arrests, raids on private residences, and high-handed financial investigations that shattered investor confidence and threatened business operations across key industrial sectors. Constitutional balance suffered a setback when reports emerged that officials from the Prime Minister’s Secretariat had summoned the chief commissioner and commissioners of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority to the Prime Minister’s Office, detaining them in discussions for nearly five hours regarding a controversial passport procurement contract. The incident raised serious questions about executive intimidation of independent constitutional watchdogs.

Furthermore, public anger mounted when the Cabinet chose to prorogue



Speaker Dol Prasad Aryal (left, in light grey coat) administers the oath of office and secrecy to the chairpersons of 12 parliamentary committees at Singha Durbar in Kathmandu on April 17.

parliamentary sessions simply to issue eight ordinances, bypassing legislative debate, public accountability, and democratic scrutiny. Academic integrity was compromised when the MBS question paper at Tribhuvan University leaked on WhatsApp just five minutes after the exam began. Meanwhile, frequent failures in government digital systems disrupted essential public services, leaving ordinary citizens unable to obtain basic administrative documentation. Additionally, public resentment flared when the government reinstated personal secretarial allowances for MPs—a benefit abolished in October last year by Sushila Karki’s government following the Gen Z movement.

Hari Bahadur Thapa, a journalist who has reported on parliamentary affairs for over three decades, says that parliamentary committees have lost sight of their fundamental democratic mandate. “A parliamentary committee is not merely a drafting room for legislative clauses,” Thapa told Kantipur. “It is the primary democratic forum where the questions raised on the streets, in the media, and throughout society must find formal answers.”

Thapa added that the committees are meant to hold the executive branch accountable on national security, law enforcement, public policy implementation, and administrative overreach. “Today, our committees are failing completely in this duty,” he said.

Thapa recalled how parliamentary oversight functioned in earlier decades, citing a benchmark case from September 2000. On 22 September, 2000, following a brief investigative report published in Kantipur daily concerning financial irregularities in the lease of a Lauda Air aircraft by the national flag carrier, the Public Accounts Committee convened an emergency meeting within hours to initiate a full-scale parliamentary investigation. That probe ultimately led to high-profile accountability measures.

“Contrast that historical precedent with what happened recently regarding the passport contract,” Thapa said. “When reports emerged that members of the prime minister’s private secretariat held constitutional commissioners inside the Prime Minister’s Office for five hours, the State Affairs Committee should have summoned the people concerned. Instead, there was absolute silence.”

The passivity, however, is not

limited to committees led by the ruling party. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), traditionally chaired by the main opposition party to guarantee independent financial oversight, has fared no better under the leadership of Congress lawmaker Bharat Bahadur Khadka.

Historically, the PAC was known as one of the most feared and effective oversight bodies in Nepal. It successfully investigated massive financial corruption scandals, including the controversial purchase of two wide-body airbus aircraft by Nepal Airlines Corporation, where the committee calculated specific financial losses, identified responsible officials, and formally instructed the CIAA to file criminal corruption charges against political leaders and top bureaucrats. Similarly, the committee earned national attention by launching independent investigations into multi-billion-rupee cost overruns and construction irregularities at Pokhara International Airport and Gautam Buddha International Airport in Bhairahawa.

In stark contrast, the present Public Accounts Committee has remained passive amid severe contemporary economic controversies. When widespread public complaints emerged regarding recent budget reallocations and unusual customs clearance procedures for imported electric vehicles, the committee conducted only a cursory discussion without launching a formal investigation.

Furthermore, after the national budget bill had been formally passed by Parliament and signed into law by the President, Prime Minister Balendra Shah announced via a personal Facebook post that the government would withdraw the newly enacted equity tax imposed on health and education services. This decision sparked a fierce constitutional debate over whether a prime minister could unilaterally alter statutory tax laws through social media posts without legislative approval. Yet, the PAC ignored the matter entirely.

PAC Chairman Khadka defends his committee’s performance, arguing that comparing the current committee to past investigative bodies overlooks structural political constraints. The PAC met on Tuesday after a gap of more than a month, having last convened on July 11. According to Khadka, the Tuesday meeting brought together the finance minister and finance secretary to evaluate structural

damages resulting from public property fires during the Gen Z protests.

“People assume the committee is inactive simply because we are not engaging in aggressive media stunts or political brawling like in previous years,” said Khadka. “We are working quietly and methodically to settle long-pending audit accounts that remained stagnant for sixteen years. However, observers must understand our practical constraints.”

The ruling party holds an absolute majority in the committee, Khadka went on. “Out of 26 members on the Public Accounts Committee, 15 belong to the RSP,” he said. “If they choose to boycott a meeting, we cannot even meet quorum.”

The Public Accounts Committee has remained passive amid economic controversies.

Veteran journalist Thapa rejects the argument that procedural routine equates to effective parliamentary oversight. “Settling historical audit arrears is routine administrative work,” Thapa argued. “The primary duty of the Public Accounts Committee is to investigate ongoing financial irregularities and policy corruption. If parliamentary committees turn a blind eye when citizens, civil society, and the media raise urgent questions about state power, where else can the public turn for answers?”

The decline in parliamentary scrutiny is equally evident in the State Affairs and Good Governance Committee, arguably the most powerful committee in Parliament, which supervises the Prime Minister’s Office, Home Ministry, Defence Ministry, CIAA, and Election Commission.

On July 26, when violent communal tensions erupted in Sunsari district, leading to security forces opening fire and killing four citizens across two eastern districts, the committee failed to hold a single meeting. RSP lawmaker Singh, a committee member, admitted that failing to hold the executive accountable for the Sunsari fatalities represented a grave failure.

“Four citizens lost their lives to police bullets, yet the committee was

nowhere to be seen,” Singh said. “Failing to summon the prime minister or the home minister was an undeniable blunder.”

Ramhari Khatiwada, a Congress lawmaker who chaired the State Affairs Committee during the previous Parliament, echoed these concerns, noting that during his tenure, he repeatedly summoned sitting prime ministers, including KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, to appear before the committee and answer direct questions regarding state decisions.

“However, serious questions are currently being raised about the prime minister, home minister, and other executive leaders, but the committees have failed to hold them accountable,” Khatiwada said. “The HoR and its members appear to have become a mere shadow of the executive.”

Historical records show that then prime minister Oli appeared before parliamentary committees on multiple occasions, including in November 2019 to brief lawmakers on diplomatic steps following India’s publication of a new political map featuring Limpiyadhura, Kalapani, and Lipulekh, in August 2024 to discuss the Corruption Prevention Act 2002, and in October 2024 to debate revisions to the CIAA Act 1991.

Similarly, former prime minister Dahal appeared before the committee in December 2023 regarding the Ncell telecommunications share deal, and in January 2024 during discussions on the Constitutional Council Bill.

Surya Kiran Gurung, former general secretary of the Parliament Secretariat, attributes the current institutional weakness to a profound lack of respect for parliamentary procedures within the ruling establishment.

“We see lawmakers reprimanding an army officer or a department director in public, while government ministers openly use aggressive rhetoric against contractors,” Gurung said. “Yet, when it comes to bringing those very ministers into committee rooms to answer for their statements, Parliament falls silent. The Speaker is the constitutional guardian of the HoR, but current circumstances show a leadership unable to enforce legislative authority. It has been more than two months since the prime minister last delivered an address to Parliament.”

Gurung added that, following major communal clashes in the Tarai-Madhesh region, the prime minister was constitutionally obligated to address the nation through the floor of the House while Parliament was in session. “Addressing these issues through external public speeches while ignoring Parliament undermines democratic norms,” he said.

The situation of other committees reveals a similar pattern of administrative routine replacing active political oversight. The International Relations and Tourism Committee under Chairperson Sumnima Udas held eleven meetings, but focused primarily on formal courtesy visits with foreign diplomats—including the Russian Ambassador on July 6, German Ambassador on May 5, and French Ambassador on April 28—rather than conducting substantive foreign policy debates.

The Finance Committee held meetings 22 times. It met on the Nepal Rastra Bank Act Amendment Bill while ignoring broader economic stagnation. The Education Committee met 13 times on forensic lab legislation while neglecting the long-delayed School Education Bill. The Industry and Commerce Committee met 13 times but ignored cooking gas shortages and market price volatility. The Infrastructure Committee met six times, ignoring highway deterioration and failing to question the infrastructure minister when he publicly threatened to break contractors’ legs during a field visit.

In response to criticisms regarding the August 5 meeting, Samikshya Baskota, chairperson of the Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee, strongly defended her committee’s jurisdiction. “As a mini-parliament, we hold full authority to gather facts and issue directions on matters within our legislative domain,” Baskota said. “We spent four hours conducting an open discussion on judicial independence. Representatives from Amnesty International, the ICJ, and Human Rights Watch were invited but declined to attend. The narrative that our committee has become an agent of the executive is completely false.”

Baskota maintained that having a ruling party majority “does not mean our decisions are dictated by the government.”

“Our duty is to enforce executive responsibility while safeguarding judicial independence based strictly on verified facts,” she said.

Questions await Sher Bahadur Deuba, who is arriving today

>> Continued from page 1

After the September 2025 Gen Z protests, the Deubas flew to Singapore on October 27, also citing medical treatment. The couple had been beaten by demonstrators on September 9, the second day of the uprising, and their trip was understood to be related to medical care. They returned to Kathmandu on November 14, after 18 days.

Their latest departure, however, came shortly before the March 5 elections and was followed by a much longer stay abroad. Deuba had been ousted as Nepali Congress president through the party’s special convention in January. His party subsequently suffered a humiliating defeat in the elections, while the Rastriya Swatantra Party came to power and its senior leader Balendra Shah became prime minister.

The Deubas did not return to Nepal after the election.

It was during this period they were believed to have moved from Singapore to Hong Kong. In late April, the government recalled Nepal’s Consul General in Hong Kong, Bindeshwar Prasad Lekhak, after receiving information that he had hosted the Deubas and provided support to individuals under investigation. The couple was said to have been staying in the coastal town of Stanley. Videos of the Deubas strolling in Hong Kong have surfaced on social media from time to time, although the couple never explicitly confirmed that they were in Hong Kong.

Days after the Balendra Shah government came to power, arrest warrants had been issued against the Deubas at the request of the DoMLI.

After news of the warrants became public,

Deuba said in a Facebook post on April 8 that he had not engaged in corruption.

“I learned through the media that an investigation into money laundering has been initiated against me and my family ... There has been misleading and false propaganda regarding the property of me and my family. Under Nepal’s laws, while holding public office, we have submitted a true and accurate account of our assets to the concerned government authorities,” he said. “We are currently abroad for medical treatment and ... the treatment process is still ongoing. The truth will come out in due course of time.”

In a bid to bring the Deubas back to Nepal, the government had even requested an Interpol Red Notice, but the global police network declined the bid. The Supreme Court subsequently annulled the arrest warrant on May 25.

The couple has maintained the same position in subsequent communications with Nepali authorities. Through email correspondence with the DoMLI and the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), they have said only that they are abroad for medical treatment, without providing specific details.

On June 11, the Deubas emailed the DoMLI saying they were ready to return to Nepal and cooperate with the investigation, but requested that the authorities facilitate their return.

Five days later, on June 16, the CIAA served a notice at the Deubas’ Budhanilkantha residence directing Arzu Rana to appear within three days to record her statement in connection with the passport procurement case. The following day, Rana emailed the anti-graft agency saying she was abroad for medical treatment and therefore unable to appear with-



Deuba is returning just as leaders of his faction have stepped up their challenge to Congress chief Gagan Thapa.

in the stipulated deadline.

According to an official involved in the investigation, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the CIAA received Rana’s email at around 2:30 pm on June 17.

“Apart from the email, we have had no other communication with Arzu Rana through any other means,” the official said.

The ongoing money-laundering probe also involves Jaybir: a DoMLI chargesheet filed on

July 16 says companies owned by Jaybir received Rs26 million from controversial businessman Deepak Bhatta, who is currently in police custody. Investigators suspect the money was proceeds of financial crimes.

Deuba, 79, is returning to Kathmandu as the legal battle over the leadership of the Nepali Congress has been reopened at the Supreme Court. On April 17, the court had recognised the Gagan Thapa faction as the official Nepali Congress, months after Thapa ousted Deuba through a special general convention. Last week, however, the Supreme Court allowed a review petition, sending the case back for a fresh hearing before a three-justice bench.

The outcome of the new hearing will determine the party’s official status.

Deuba is returning just as leaders of his faction have stepped up their challenge to Thapa. It is unclear how long Deuba will remain in Nepal. Since Arzu Rana and Jaybir have not accompanied him, Congress leaders say Deuba could return to Hong Kong.

Investigating officials from the DoMLI and the CIAA say the source of funding for the couple’s prolonged stay abroad and medical treatment will be among the questions they face once they appear before the agencies.

Leaders close to Deuba say he is returning to Nepal in line with his commitment. However, it has not yet been decided whether he will personally appear before the DoMLI to give a statement after his return. Bhanu said the matter would be discussed after his arrival. Some have claimed that Deuba plans to stay in Nepal for some time before leaving again, a claim Bhanu denied.

“Nothing has been decided about whether he will leave again or not,” he said.

WORLD

Colombia in mourning for earthquake victims

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BOGOTÁ, AUG 12

Colombia on Wednesday declared three days of mourning for victims of an earthquake that demolished buildings in the west of the country, killing more than 200 people.

At 7.4 magnitude, Monday’s quake was the strongest to hit Colombia in a century.

The government said flags would be lowered to half-staff on official buildings, as well as at Colombian embassies around the world, “in honour of all the dead.”

Frantic attempts to find survivors continued, as authorities revised the death toll down to 216 after local officials in Cali corrected earlier figures. In Pereira and in Cali, emergency crews used cranes, dogs and heavy machinery to search ruined buildings while volunteers formed human chains to clear debris by hand, hoping to reach people still trapped beneath collapsed structures.

The first two days after an earthquake are crucial for finding survivors under rubble, with some experts saying there is a 72-hour window, after which hopes quickly tail off.

There was joy on Tuesday when rescuers pulled out 32-year-old Daniela Largo.

“We were losing hope and then we

received a call,” said her mother Sandra Milena Perez in Pereira.

Perez said a local resident heard cries for help beneath the rubble and joined neighbours in removing debris before professional rescuers arrived.

From the air, neighbourhoods in Cali appeared flattened, with piles of grey rubble replacing entire blocks of homes and apartment buildings.

Nearby, cars lay crushed beneath fallen walls and concrete slabs.

The quake overwhelmed parts of the health system, turning the rescue effort into one of Colombia’s largest disaster responses in years.

Many survivors spent the night outdoors, either because their homes were damaged or because they feared aftershocks. One park in Pereira was transformed into a makeshift shelter with tents and mattresses.

“We lost everything, but we’re alive,” said 23-year-old John Tabasco, who was camped there with his wife and seven-month-old son.

In Cali, part of the Hospital Universitario del Valle collapsed during the quake, forcing doctors to move patients into a parking lot and treat some in the open air. Many Colombians mobilised to help.

Thousands brought water, food and supplies to affected neighbourhoods, while long lines formed outside blood donation centres.



A woman walks past the rubble of a collapsed building after an earthquake in Pereira, Colombia on August 11.

Trump says Secret Service, military wanted him off Air Force One in Turkey due to threat

WILL WEISSERT/AP
WASHINGTON, AUG 12

President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that he slipped away from Air Force One after a trip last month in Turkey because the Secret Service and military wanted him on a “different plane” due to a threat that he insisted didn’t scare him.

Trump downplayed the extraordinary nature of the subterfuge involved in his flight, which saw him stow away in an airport catering container to sneak onto another plane while Air Force One was sent into the sky, essentially as a decoy.

He also downplayed the risk to the people—White House officials, security and support staff, and reporters—he left on the plane.

“They wanted me to go on a different flight, different plane,” Trump told reporters after returning from an event in Ohio, saying he had little choice in the matter.

“I guess there was a threat out there. I didn’t really ask too much about it,” he said.

“I get a lot of threats.”

His comments confirmed a report that first appeared in The Washington Post saying that Trump, following a NATO summit last month, was spirited onto a different plane because of a credible threat from Iran. The action was kept secret for weeks, until the newspaper’s story.

“I think actually the plane that I flew on was at greater risk,” Trump said Tuesday, who did not provide many details about the action. But he said the incident did not scare him.

“I don’t worry about anything, to be honest,” Trump said. “Whatever it is. You know my attitude? Whatever!”

Presidents often take secret trips—but not like this

Commanders in chief have sometimes kept overseas trips covert for security reasons, with schedules and logistics kept classified until after for safety reasons. But the fact that Trump’s whereabouts were concealed at the time and for weeks afterward is believed to be unprecedented.

“We have absolutely seen the president fly on unmarked or decoy planes before, into Iraq, Afghanistan, other war-zone-like places,” said Garrett M Graff, author of “Raven Rock: The Story of the US Government’s Secret



President Donald Trump talks to reporters after arriving on Air Force One on Tuesday.

Plan to Save Itself—While the Rest of Us Die.”

“But this was an ongoing secret that I don’t think we’ve ever seen before.”

After hiding in the catering vehicle and being moved to the other plane, Trump stopped in Britain, sneaked back aboard the presidential plane undetected, and even later scoffed when asked about potential danger.

“If I go, you go. Right?” he told reporters then—gliding past the fact that if the plane had been shot down, the president wouldn’t have been aboard.

Many details about what happened remain unknown

The president’s flight out of Turkey made headlines at the time because he had arrived aboard a luxury jet gifted by Qatar, which was not equipped with some of the same missile detection and countermeasure systems found on older presidential jets.

Trump ended up travelling in a smaller government aircraft from Turkey to the United Kingdom, only to secretly reboard the decoy jet, then

descend from it and climb back aboard the Qatari plane.

Presidents have regularly tested the confines of their office, pushing their security advisers to visit war zones as a show of American presence and their own leadership. Usually, this happens in the form of trips that aren’t announced until the president is deemed to be out of harm’s way.

What’s different this time is that Trump was covertly separated from the rest of his travelers—including the press pool meant to provide independent coverage of the president and his actions—and, instead of informing the public about what occurred once the risk had passed, the White House still hasn’t fully revealed what took place.

Graff said the presence of the White House press corps is as much about protecting “the presidency and democracy” as it is about covering the story.

“This shows that the White House just fundamentally doesn’t understand how important that role is,” he said.

Zhu made his name as a deputy premier in the 1990s

>> Continued from page 1

Those changes helped to keep economic growth above 8 percent a year from 2000 to 2010, peaking at 14.2 percent in 2007.

He fought corruption and conservatives

Named premier in 1998 at age 69, Zhu became a popular figure by criticising official bungling and graft and accepting blame when the government fell short. His demanding style earned him the nicknames Boss and Zhu Fengzi, or Madman Zhu. “I have prepared 100 coffins here—99 for corrupt officials and one for myself,” Zhu said in 1998, according to the party newspaper People’s Daily. Zhu ranked No 3 in the party hierarchy behind Jiang and Li Peng, chairman of the ceremonial legislature, the National People’s Congress. But he was a technician without his own power base. Zhu complained that allowed officials to ignore his orders. Zhu made his name as a deputy premier in the 1990s by crushing

inflation. He enforced price controls and cut off loans to money-losing state companies, rebuffing resistance by local leaders—a pattern Zhu would repeat as he fought conservatives over the pace of reform.

Zhu led efforts to secure WTO membership following marathon negotiations that began in the 1980s. That status would enshrine free trade as a national commitment, giving Zhu a tool to force local officials to stop protecting favored companies. Zhu’s campaign was nearly derailed when he went to Washington in 1999 with market-opening concessions to win US endorsement of the WTO bid. The Clinton administration rejected the offer as inadequate, while his political enemies at home accused him of offering too much, but Zhu survived and China went on to join the body in December 2001.

Zhu launched China’s home ownership boom in 1998 with an initiative to sell apartments owned by state companies. Families rushed to

buy, and within a decade the majority of urban housing was privately owned.

Still, Zhu was less an advocate of free enterprise than a skilled bureaucrat who carried out party orders to whip state industry into shape.

Zhu showed no interest in privatising the economy. He played a key role in drafting plans in the 1990s to turn banks, airlines, oil companies and other enterprises into profit-oriented corporations but to retain government ownership.

Zhu stood out for admitting official failings

Born October 23, 1928, in Mao Zedong’s home province of Hunan, Zhu paid an early price for his willingness to take risks and speak out.

After a start as an economic planner, his career went into a 22-year eclipse when he was labelled a “rightist” in 1957 for praising reforms in Hungary and Yugoslavia. He was banished to the countryside during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution to do manual labour.

Rehabilitated in 1979, Zhu rose swiftly, becoming deputy Shanghai party secretary in 1987 and mayor next year. As mayor in 1989, Zhu gained a reputation for moderation when he placated protesters and pledged not to call in the military.

“He managed to defuse, with considerable subtlety, a tense political situation that could have developed into localised violence or worse if the military had felt it necessary to intervene,” wrote Australian diplomat Shelley Warner in the 1991 book “The Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from the Provinces.”

Zhu’s boss, Jiang, would soon be called to Beijing by Deng and made party leader. Zhu was named deputy premier in 1991 and joined the party’s ruling Standing Committee in 1993.

Zhu broke with the leadership’s stance of infallibility by admitting and taking blame for official failings. In 1998, after summer floods killed 4,150 people, Zhu complained some barriers were no stronger than bean curd.

Erdogan eyes expansion of regional defence pact

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISTANBUL, AUG 12

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Wednesday he hoped more countries would join a defence agreement signed last week between Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan aimed at stabilising a region wracked by conflict.

The so-called Mecca Joint Defence Agreement was signed on Friday as the Middle East grapples with fallout from the US-Iran war which has dragged in regional players and disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea.

“Our vision for it is not limited to the three countries,” the Turkish leader told the London-based Al-Sharq al-Awsat daily. “Rather we aspire for it to grow, and perhaps appropriate conditions will emerge one day for all countries of the region to gather under its umbrella.”

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Saturday said Turkey expected Egypt to join the pact “in the next stage”, telling the Anadolu state news agency only “a few technical issues” stood in the way.

Egypt has not commented on the agreement nor on the remarks by Fidan, who will visit Cairo on Thursday and Friday.

Cairo has robust military cooperation with Ankara, but has given no indication it intends to sign up to the new security alliance, which contains a NATO-style clause saying any attack on one would be seen as an attack on all.

The five-month US-Iran war has upended the security architecture in the region and forced a rethink of decades of conventional wisdom rooted in US military supremacy.

Erdogan said the pact emerged out of the “new circumstances” in the Middle East with regional players seeking to assume greater responsibility for their own security and stability.

“Regional issues should be resolved by regional actors, and with this action, we consider that we have taken a first step toward achieving that goal,” he said.

“Resolving regional issues must be carried out away from formulas imposed from the outside. We know very well that solutions imported from abroad only bring disasters,” he told the Saudi-owned newspaper.

The pact, which consolidates three major US allies into an alternative security architecture that rejects Israel’s hegemony, seeks to boost security cooperation, while also opening the way for “developing joint projects in the defence industries”, Erdogan said.

In Taiwan, Chinese-born spouses face questions of loyalty and discrimination

HUIZHONG WU/AP
TAIPEI, TAIWAN, AUG 12

The day after Li Chen-hsiu was sworn in as a member of Taiwan’s Legislature, she was questioned about whether she belonged—about her nationality, about her identity and ultimately about her loyalty to Taiwan.

That’s because Li is a “mainland spouse”—born in China and a citizen of Taiwan through marriage. She’s part of a community of some 369,000 people on the island who are subject to rapidly changing policies—and some say discrimination—as tensions rise with China and Taiwan’s government questions the spouses’ allegiances. For the two months she served before being forced out of the legislature, Li was the country’s only China-born lawmaker who had immigrated to Taiwan by marriage.

“It’s only because of Taiwan which has this free and democratic system, and the Taiwan People’s Party which was willing to give a political newcomer a chance, that I could have this opportunity,” she told The Associated Press in July. But now, fears of a military invasion by China have complicated Taiwan’s policy toward spouses like Li. She is part of a diverse group that includes multiple generations, from those who married retired Chinese soldiers and came to Taiwan in search of better economic opportunity to a younger, more educated and wealthier group that met after both sides relaxed their borders.

70 years of silence and tension drive the issue

China and Taiwan split during a civil war in 1949, with the Nationalist Party fleeing to the island. For decades, the

two sides banned all contact, until 1987 when Taiwan’s residents were allowed to visit their family members in China for the first time. Tensions have fluctuated, but have been high since independence-leaning Tsai Ing-wen was elected Taiwan’s president in 2016, and China cut off official contact.

Today, China sends military planes and navy ships toward Taiwan daily as part of military exercises. It has also stepped up its diplomatic campaign to isolate the island on the international stage, poaching allies, keeping Taiwan out of international organizations and targeting the island with misinformation.

That threat is raising fears on the island about who’s loyal to Taiwan. A New Taipei court sentenced Hsu Chun-ying, head of an organization

dedicated to helping spouses, to seven years in prison Tuesday for acting on Beijing’s behalf to spy on Taiwan and interfere with its politics.

Historically, ‘mainland spouses’ were brides of soldiers

Mi Zhengrong, 72, met her husband through relatives in China’s Hubei province. Her husband was one of the veterans of the civil war who had fled to Taiwan and later were allowed back into China to visit their hometowns for the first time. Many of them had been unable to marry in Taiwan and brought back women from China. Mi and her husband got married and lived in China, but her husband missed Taiwan—so they moved to the island in 2002. Her husband passed away after 12 years together.

She then married a neighbour in Taiwan, and they were together for nearly a decade. For the last two years, she said, he was paralyzed, and she had to take care of him round-the-clock.

Mi is now fighting to get her second husband’s pension, for which she would be eligible if they’ve been married for 10 years. But he passed away 13 days before they met that threshold. The military initially gave her the pension, but took it away after they realized the marriage fell short. Mi lives on about 10,000 New Taiwan dollars a month (\$330), of which about a third goes to rent.

Still, she said, she prefers Taiwan. “How many of us want to go back?” she said. “No one wants to go back.”

Taiwan’s government had been changing laws to integrate the commu-

nity into society by shortening the time it takes for them to get Taiwanese citizenship and allowing them to work.

Now, the island is scaling back the integration of “mainland spouses.” Last spring, Taiwan’s government deported three women who had advocated on social media for reunification with China by force. Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council, which governs the island’s relationship with China, said the women represented “repeated threats to Taiwan’s national security and social stability.”

Taiwanese immigration authorities also issued a notice to 12,000 spouses who already held Taiwanese citizenship to provide proof they cancelled their household registrations in China or have their citizenship revoked.



Li Chen-hsiu speaks in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan, on July 21.



Shang Guan, who moved to Taiwan in 2021, seen in Taipei on July 20.

INTERVIEW

Sandeep Lamichhane on the captaincy, Rohit’s legacy, ODI survival and Asia Cup qualification

In an interview with Kantipur, the newly appointed captain talks about the daunting task of guiding a struggling team through a critical phase for ODI survival.

As the Nepal national cricket team gears up for a gruelling stretch of must-win fixtures to salvage their ODI status and secure a spot in the Asia Cup, the mantle of leadership has shifted once again. Stepping back into the role of captain, Sandeep Lamichhane faces the daunting task of guiding a struggling batting order through challenging away conditions, all while carrying the weight of a nation’s expectations.

Lamichhane was training in the nets at the TU International Cricket Ground on Wednesday when he opened up to Kantipur’s Subash Rokaya about taking over the reins from Rohit Kumar Paudel, navigating his own recent wicketless streak, and why he remains confident in Nepal’s cricketing future. Excerpts:



Sandeep Lamichhane was re-appointed the captain of the Nepali national team across the ODI format on Monday.



POST PHOTOS

How much of a challenge is this responsibility that you have got again?

I see this as an opportunity. It’s less about the title of captain and more about how we move forward together as a team. Of course, there is a lot of responsibility on my shoulders to keep the boys united. Rohit left a great legacy and set a standard for us, and I guess my job is to carry that forward.

If we can set a standard for the future that shows exactly why cricket is important to this country, that’s what we aim to do. Of course, to set that standard, these remaining four games of the World Cricket League, along with the Asia Cup qualifiers—the Premier Cup—are crucial. Every single opportunity coming our way right now is incredibly important, and we have no alternative left but to win. So, we are trying to get as much out of this group as possible, utilising everyone’s efforts and skills to make Nepal win.

How do you sum up Nepal’s League-2 journey so far?

Looking at recent games, we shouldn’t have put ourselves in a position where we have to depend on other teams. But given the current scenario, we have to play the equations. We need to figure out when to attack and when to be defensive. If we win our remaining four CWC League-2 games, we will definitely be in a strong position to save our ODI status. It’s all about taking it one game at a time. For now, there’s no alternative to winning.

Nepal’s recent away performances haven’t been memorable. We have more games on foreign soil. Going into new conditions again, what

needs to be the primary focus?

The recent conditions we played in were heavily stacked against us. It’s not that we didn’t try. We gave it our all, but the results just didn’t go our way. Still, I feel we put up a good fight in every game. Of course, getting bundled out for 157 doesn’t reflect the standard of our national team. It was largely the conditions that pushed us back.

Looking ahead to Oman and Malaysia, we will prepare thoroughly. We’ll try to find similar pitches during practice and put in the hard yards. If we stick together and execute our plans, I’m highly confident this team will deliver a good result.

During the Netherlands tour, you went wicketless in three consecutive games—a rare occurrence for you. With both your individual form and the team’s batting form needing a turnaround, what kind of homework is required?

To be honest, I don’t really believe in this concept of “form”. Hitting a hundred one day and getting a zero the next doesn’t mean your form is just coming and going; it’s about consistency. The conditions were challenging, and you also have to give credit to the opposition. The way Namibia and the Netherlands played against us was commendable.

A lot depends on my role in the middle overs. If I can control the run rate in the middle, it makes the job easier for the fast bowlers at the death, just like Karan dai and Som daju did for us up front in the past. If the pacers strike early and I keep things tight in

the middle, we have a team capable of producing great results.

You’ve played under several captains across different formats—Paras Khadka, Gyanendra Malla, Dipendra Singh Airee and Rohit Kumar Paudel. How would you reflect on Rohit’s tenure and the success he achieved?

I guess no one really needs to say much about Rohit because he has been very kind, very sweet. Look at the circumstances under which he took Nepal forward—it takes immense guts to unite everyone and carry the team like that when our cricket was practically falling apart. We’ve seen him since he was very young. He always had that very calm nature.

To suddenly get such a massive opportunity and responsibility, and to shoulder it the way he did—a leader isn’t made overnight.

He proved himself time and again across every tournament, be it as a batter, as a captain, sometimes as a bowler, and as a fielder—he is a gun fielder. From every possible angle, he gave his absolute best. You can’t even rate him, because he has been fantastic.

I guess if you don’t have that deep desire inside you—to go out on the field and say, ‘I want to play, and I want to win the game for the team and for the country’—then I don’t think we are truly carrying that passion.

But that passion has always been there in this Nepal team. The mark we have left behind, that obsession—be it during Paras dai’s era, under Gyanendra dai’s captaincy, or under Rohit—we created a legacy together.

Rohit made his friends, his family, and the entire nation proud. Whenever he looks back at his cricketing journey, he will know one thing for certain: he did more than everything within his capacity to make Nepal proud, and all of us are immensely proud of him for that.

So of course, my role now is to carry forward the legacy he created as captain. I’ll need everyone’s support, love, and blessings, and as captain, I will give my absolute best to push that legacy forward.

You are generally known as a more aggressive, attacking player compared to Rohit’s calmer demeanour. Will we see any difference in the team’s mentality under your leadership?

No, I don’t think so. It’s true that a person’s nature on and off the field can be different. On the field, my natural game is attacking. But as a leader, you have to adapt to what the team needs and the nature of the other players. If Lalit is naturally a defensive bowler, there might be times he needs to attack. If Karan dai is an attacking bowler, sometimes he needs to defend.

We will adopt aggressive or defensive options based purely on the match situation.

About the ACC Premier Cup—will Nepal qualify for the Asia Cup for a second time?

Of course, we will.

How?

By playing good cricket. By going out there, bringing in good results, and executing proper plans. We have to play for Nepal, which we always do. The passion and obsession every player has inside them isn’t something you can just show off. We know our recent results haven’t been there, and that hurts—it’s in everyone’s hearts. Because of that, we have no other option left but to show it through our results.

Looking at the squad for the Premier Cup, there are experienced players, but also players making a comeback. There are changes in every department except spin. What is your plan regarding the returning players?

I want them to enjoy their game. I’m not the kind of captain who puts pressure on players. My role is simply to extract the absolute best from them and properly utilise whatever skills they bring. Everyone in this squad is incredibly talented. It’s just about going out there and expressing yourself.

As the ODI captain, what is your message to the fans?

Rather than making a commitment, I just want to promise that we will put our heart and soul, our blood and sweat, into every game for this country. Please keep your love and blessings coming. Every player in this dressing room needs it. Your support gives us incredible energy, especially when we lose—that’s when your belief matters the most. We will win, we will do well, and we will prove exactly why Nepal is considered one of the best Associate teams in the world.

HOROSCOPE



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Prioritise your health with a nutritious breakfast, plenty of water, and gentle exercise, and build these habits into your routine. Show romantic interest with warmth and sincerity, but avoid teasing that could be mistaken for criticism.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Refine ideas already in motion, strengthen your message, and give thoughtful attention to details that make your work stand out. Care for the people you value, but give yourself equal attention to avoid exhaustion.



GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Identify recurring patterns and the emotions behind them, considering how earlier influences may still shape your responses. Share and strengthen your talents to stand out, and manage sudden changes in mood without letting them disrupt your progress.



CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Share your ideas openly and create space for others to express their own ambitions without fear of judgment. Accept different perspectives, avoid overthinking minor details, and focus on making steady progress.



LEO (July 23-August 22)

Focus on practical steps that support your project or career transition, and speak clearly about what you need. Protect your concentration by limiting distractions, reducing unnecessary screen time, and staying committed to important tasks.



VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Step forward confidently when opportunities arise to connect, contribute, or make yourself visible. Stay grounded, remain aware of your surroundings, and handle difficult peers or unnecessary barriers with patience.



LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

Organise your priorities before making major commitments, and strengthen negotiations or partnerships with careful preparation. Ask trusted contacts for referrals or introductions, support capable peers in return, and stay attentive to useful insights that could influence your next step.



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

Seek feedback and second opinions to strengthen your efforts, and use constructive responses as motivation to improve. Keep high standards in relationships, reflect on the qualities you value most, and avoid letting jealousy damage important connections.



SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Focus on your own work instead of petty competition, and approach career goals, partnerships, and negotiations with confidence. Support colleagues where appropriate, maintain a positive attitude, and set firm boundaries with overly demanding companions.



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

Draw strength from supportive relationships, stay grateful, and challenge yourself to pursue meaningful goals or explore something new. Share ambitions with trusted partners, define responsibilities clearly, and work together to avoid confusion.



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

Reflect on how far you have come, and revisit useful skills or techniques that can support your next steps. Spend time with uplifting loved ones, and avoid jumping to conclusions when jealousy or uncertainty arises.



PISCES (February 19-March 20)

Seek encouragement from supportive loved ones, and offer the same kindness to someone who needs it. Discuss shared goals and commitments practically, strengthen teamwork, and stay patient with companions who seem unusually moody.

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- Sargasso and Salton
 - Health resorts
 - Dir. letters
 - Sour
 - Speed
 - Track and field event
 - Manipulator
 - Increased
 - Spoken
 - Make potable, as brine
 - Wisdom
 - Least little bit
 - Actor — Wahlberg
 - At last
 - Hold sway
 - Prohibit
 - Convicted criminal
 - Eagle’s nest
 - Press
 - Passover meal
 - Went to the bottom
 - Make a point
 - More recent
 - Poor grade
 - Composition for piano
 - Peas and beans
 - Stack
 - A flower
 - Lumps of fried batter

- DOWN**
- Component of some walls
 - Facilitate
 - War god
 - Variety
 - Goes back and forth
 - Baby food
 - Snakes
 - Water vapor
 - Wraparound dress
 - “Begone!”
 - Like a moray
 - Painter — Degas
 - Colorado range
 - Do nothing
 - Field
 - TV host
 - Steve — Comedy

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

R	E	A	P		A	C	A	D		M	A	S	S
A	L	L	I		F	A	D	E	D	I	S	L	E
R	A	M	P		T	R	A	C	E	S	T	O	W
A	N	S	E	R		S	M	A	S	H	I	T	S
				I	O	N		L	I	A	M		
T	R	A	N	S	I	T		S	T	A	K	E	S
R	O	D		E	X	E	M	P	T		S	O	L
A	G	O	G		A	O	L		H	A	I	R	
C	U	R	E		G	R	O	O	V	E		L	O
T	E	E	T	E	R		D	I	C	T	A	T	E
				A	F	A	R		P	R	O		
N	I	G	H	T	T	I	M	E		U	R	B	A
O	G	E	E		E	V	A	D	E		P	A	V
A	N	N	A		R	E	M	I	T		O	B	O
H	I	E	D		T	A	T	A		R	E	N	D

7-7-26

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- Metal mass
 - Sing a certain way
 - Level of quality
 - Dressed to the —
 - Motorcoach
 - Stair post
 - Get with effort (with “out”)
 - Blew up
 - Troops unit
 - Redact
 - Law
 - Put into office
- Yogi
 - False belief
 - Wear away
 - Mellow
 - Desktop picture
 - “For goodness’s —!”
 - Secrete
 - “East of —”
 - Chair
 - Half score

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13			14		15		
16					17					18		
19					20			21		22		
				23			24		25			
	26	27					28		29		30	31
32					33			34		35		36
37			38		39			40		41		
42					43		44			45		
	47				48		49			50		
					51		52		53			
54	55	56					57		58		59	60
62						63		64		65		
66						67				68		
69						70				71		

SUDOKU

8	2	1	9	7	4	6	3	5
6	5	9	2	1	3	7	8	4
3	7	4	6	8	5	1	9	2
5	4	7	1	3	2	8	6	9
2	9	8	7	4	6	3	5	1
1	3	6	8	5	9	2	4	7
7	6	2	4	9	8	5	1	3
9	8	3	5	2	1	4	7	6
4	1	5	3	6	7	9	2	8

YESTERDAY’S SOLUTION

3				7		8		
							4	8
8				5		4	3	7
	6		8					5
1		3				8		4
4					6		3	
5	2	4	3		9			7
7	1							
				4	5			9

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

INTERVIEW

We lack stories representing children from diverse cultural backgrounds

Nepal needs stories featuring illustrations of kids who look like them, the places they belong to, the names they recognise and plots they can call their own.

Anuradha, a creative writer, editor and translator based in Kathmandu, believes in the power of children’s literature for development. She has penned over 30 picture books and acclaimed chapter books like ‘Mero Kathako Alien’ and ‘Yeti Bhetne Ketī’, dedicating her career to writing for children. Her international acclaim includes ‘The Story of Babur: Prince, ‘Emperor, Sage’ (2022), which is translated into eight languages, was listed in The Guardian’s best new picture books and novels in 2022, and was long-listed for the 2023 Young Quills Award. She is a lifelong member of the Nepalese Society for Children’s Literature (NESCHIL).

Her contribution to children’s literature has brought her several honours, including the Excellence in Education Award (2025), the Premdhoj Pradhan Foundation Samman (2023) and the Paarijaat Baal Sahitya Bishesh Puraskar (2009, 2010). In this interview with The Post’s Aarati Baral, Anuradha discusses her journey as a writer and the state of children’s literature in Nepal.

How did you discover the love for reading, and what inspired you to become a writer?

When I was little, my father would make me sit on his lap and read comics such as ‘Asterix’ and ‘Tintin’ to me. Reading was encouraged at home. My father’s job involved frequent transfers, so I changed schools often. Looking back as a writer, travelling from one place to another and changing schools was a great experience because it helped me craft stories with the children of those places in mind. However, as a young student, I couldn’t make many friends; I spent much of my time in hostels and grew introverted, which drew me into books.

As for writing, I rarely wrote anything beyond the school magazine. One day, my mother urged me to enter a ‘Parijat writing competition’. After some typical mother-daughter bickering, I wrote a story just for her and ended up winning a special

award! I also won the award the following year, which made me realise I could actually write.

I didn’t start with a grand vision for children’s literature, but I naturally gravitated towards it. Today, I focus exclusively on picture and chapter books for children. I cannot seem to write for adults; even when I try, the narrative inevitably ends up as a children’s story.

Many children today spend more time on screens than with books. How should children’s literature respond to this shift?

I dislike framing this as a competition. When TVs first emerged, people raised the same alarms about kids being ruined. We must accept that times are changing. I am less concerned about screens, television or movies than about video games. Research demonstrates clear risks of brain rewiring and intense addiction to video games.

Reading offers something technology cannot, but as writers, we must evolve alongside our audience. Today’s children live in a world very different from ours. We must incorporate digital realities into our writing to match their developmental level. It isn’t about competing with screens, but about ensuring our books carry an equal pull.

How important is it for Nepali children to read stories rooted in their own language, culture and folklore?

In children’s literature, books serve as both a “window and mirror”. As a mirror, stories allow children to see themselves reflected, helping them build their identity. As a window, they show children the world beyond their immediate surroundings. Windows are important; “mirror stories” are a necessity. The reality is different in our case. Existing stories often fail to represent the broad spectrum of indigenous cultures and lack necessary social inclusion. Where are the stories for children from the Tarai where they can see their own lives? They need stories featuring illustrations of kids who look like

them, the place they belong to, names they recognise and plots they can call their own.

Should children’s books address difficult issues like migration, climate change and inequality, or protect childhood innocence?

I believe that shielding children from reality is wrong. People used to argue that heavy topics belonged exclusively to adult literature. Yet children witness pets dying, lose family members and experience floods and landslides firsthand. We shouldn’t hide these everyday realities from them.

It comes down to presenting matters in an age-appropriate way. Children observe these issues daily, and they are the ones who will shape tomorrow’s society. Giving them the right awareness now prepares them to distinguish right from wrong and solve these problems later in life.

Children’s books are often dismissed as trivial. Why should even adults read them?

CS Lewis said that a children’s story enjoyed only by children is not a good children’s story. When adults read children’s books, they can grasp complex issues with striking clarity. Reading a children’s book about grief, for instance, can help an adult reader heal by offering a direct, comforting perspective.

Simplifying complex human truths into concise language is remarkably difficult. You cannot feed children cheap fabrications like telling them everyone turns into a star when they die. Striking that delicate balance between truth and simplicity makes these books vital for adults, too.

How can Nepali authors avoid reproducing stereotypes related to gender, caste, ethnicity or disability while portraying society honestly?



POST PHOTO: AARATI BARAL

Respecting culture doesn’t mean following it uncritically. We must retell our traditional stories. But in doing so, we don’t have to follow outdated tropes blindly. For example, the princess doesn’t have to sit around waiting for a prince.

Historically, picture books depicted mothers cooking in the kitchen while fathers arrived home in suits carrying briefcases. I emphasise the need for a realistic balance, depicting a father cutting vegetables while the mother cooks, or sharing responsibilities. Our literature must evolve just as global children’s media is correcting representations of skin colour and gender roles.

Is children’s literature in Nepal reaching the children who need it most, or is it confined to urban readers?

Children’s books are needed everywhere. However, books rarely reach children in remote regions. Even basic textbooks fail to arrive on time there; children’s literature becomes a secondary priority. Although the government allocates funds for libraries, money is frequently mishandled. Even in schools with libraries, books are locked inside damp cupboards to be ruined by termites. While some organisations actively distribute books to villages, coverage is far from complete.

Some private schools mandate extra reading programmes from grade one onwards. However, this is rare in government schools, though the interest is certainly there. Furthermore, even in cities, while they build futsal fields and skating parks under the guise of becoming ‘smart cities,’ they neglect public libraries, which are accessible to everyone. A city cannot be smart without accessible libraries.

How do you research and authentically represent communities outside your lived experience?

Drawing from experience is ideal. Having lived in Tarai during my childhood, writing about it feels natural. But when writing about regions I haven’t lived in long-term, like the mountains, I keep settings simple to maintain authenticity without overstepping. For example, my book ‘The Girl Who Met Yeti’ uses a simple premise about a mountain girl who meets a yeti that loves *chhurpi*, supported by basic observations and research on Google.

When tackling culturally intricate topics, extreme care is mandatory. For my upcoming book on the traditional *Lakhe* dance, I am reading extensively and directly consulting community members. Proper research is non-negotiable.

Call for contributions

The Kathmandu Post invites well-researched and creative pitches for ‘Fiction Park’ stories and feature articles—travelogues, book reviews, and pieces on technology, culture, and lifestyle. To ensure your articles get our attention, please keep the following things in mind when inquiring about and submitting your pieces.

All your stories should be pitched to the Features desk, not the editor. Email your piece or pitch (along with a high-resolution headshot and a one-line bio) to tkpfeatures@gmail.com.

We will respond only to well-written stories and pitches that have original ideas. Plagiarism will lead to blacklisting. We suggest that you Google your pitch before writing to us. If you’re submitting an article that the Post or other publications have already covered, tell us why your piece offers something new.

The Post receives dozens of pitches every day from aspiring writers and students. We cannot respond to every single email, but if we like your idea, we will get back to you.

A decade of Pokémon Go: how nostalgia and community keep the game alive



PHOTOS: THE CONVERSATION

A player enjoying Pokémon Go Fest 2026 in Bangalore, India.

LINCOLN GERAGHTY

When Pokémon Go celebrated its tenth anniversary in July 2026, much of the reaction from players around the world was less about the game’s future than its past.

Social media was flooded with screenshots from 2016, with memories of first “catches” and stories of crowded parks filled with players discovering an entirely new way to play Pokémon.

The game uses augmented reality technology so players can collect and interact with Pokémon (pocket monsters) on their mobile phones as they go about their daily life. The game’s original marketing encouraged exploration, social interaction and immersion.

The nostalgia fans feel toward the game is hardly surprising. Over the past decade, nostalgia has become one of the most powerful forces in contemporary entertainment culture and brand recognition. From film reboots and legacy sequels to anniversary celebrations in gaming, media industries increasingly rely on audiences’ emotional connections to the past.

My research on Lego fandom and nostalgia suggests that fans use these memories not simply to revisit earlier experiences, but to reinforce a sense of identity and belonging. For many players, remembering Pokémon Go in 2016 is also a way of remembering where they were, who they played with and how the game became part of their lives.

Yet focusing solely on nostalgia risks obscuring an important reality: Pokémon Go is not merely surviving. It remains one of the most successful mobile games ever made.

The anniversary celebrations offer us a reminder of the game’s remarkable reach.

Major live events in 2026 drew extraordinary crowds, with more than 150,000 ticketed attendees in Tokyo, around 103,000 in Chicago, and over 74,000 in Copenhagen.

Ten years after launch, few games can still persuade so many people to travel across countries and continents to participate in a shared experience.

These gatherings demonstrate one of Pokémon Go’s most significant achievements. Unlike most digital games, its most meaningful experiences often happen away from screens. Walking through cities, exploring parks and meeting other players remain central to its appeal.

The game has created opportunities for friendship, local community building and collective exploration that many players value as much as the gameplay itself.

Local community ambassadors organise meet-ups, share resources, welcome new players and provide social connections that extend beyond Pokémon.

For long-term players, the reward is often not adding another creature to a collection, but maintaining friendships and rituals developed over years of shared play. The game’s lasting significance lies not only in augmented reality technology, but in the social infrastructure that players have created around it.

Fears for the next chapter However, the anniversary has also highlighted tensions that have become increasingly visible within this community. The sale of the gaming division of Niantic (which created and developed Pokémon Go in partnership with The



Players at a Pokémon Go festival in Dortmund, Germany.



Scan the code for a related video.

— The Conversation