

THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL

Ministers sign performance contracts with PM Shah

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

Prime Minister Balendra Shah has signed performance agreements with ministers outlining the key tasks and achievements to be delivered during the current fiscal year.

During the event held at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers in Singha Durbar on Wednesday, the ministers signed the performance agreements with the Prime Minister and exchanged copies of the agreements. The agreements cover areas related to good governance, social justice and prosperity.

Prime Minister Shah signed performance agreements with Minister for Finance Dr. Swarnim Wagle, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Shisir Khanal, Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Biraj Bhakta Shrestha, Home Minister Sudan Gurung, Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Sobita Gautam, and Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation Mahabir Pun.

Similarly, performance agreements were signed with Minister for Women, Children, Gender and Sexual Minorities and Social Security Sita Badi, Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives, Federal Affairs and General Administration Pratibha Rawal, Minister for Health and Food Safety Nisha Mehta, Minister for Education and Sports Sasmit Pokharel, Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Khadak Raj Paudel, Minister for Information and Communications Dr. Bikram Timilsina, Minister for Agriculture, Forest and Environment Gita Chaudhary and Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies



Prime Minister Balendra Shah and Finance Minister Dr. Swarnim Wagle after signing a performance contract at the PM's office in Singha Durbar, Kathmandu, on Wednesday.

Gauri Kumari.

Minister for Infrastructure Development Sunil Lamsal could not attend the signing ceremony due to ill health, while Minister for Youth, Labour and Employment Ramjee Yadav was unable to attend as he had to participate in a parliamentary session.

Prime Minister Shah also signed a performance agreement with Chief Secretary of the Government of Nepal Gobinda Bahadur Karkee.

GIVE PRIORITY TO DOMESTIC GOODS: PM

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

The government has directed all government agencies to prioritise domestically produced goods and services in their procurement. The Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers issued the directive on Wednesday based on Prime Minister Balendra Shah's instructions and recent consultations with domestic entrepreneurs and businessmen.

The directives apply to federal ministries, commissions and secretariats, as well as provincial and local governments and Nepali diplomatic missions abroad. Under the directive, government offices are required to use Nepali handicraft products, wherever possible, for meetings, ceremonies, souvenirs, gifts and decorations.

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Political instability slows down lawmaking in Madhes

BY AJAY SHAH
Gaushala, Mahottari, Aug. 19

Repeated changes of government and shifts in the political power equation in Madhes Province have directly affected law-making in the Provincial Assembly. Four years into the second term of the Provincial Assembly, the pace of lawmaking has been much slower than during its first term.

Although the Provincial Assembly held 37 meetings in the last fiscal year, it passed only six bills. Three of the six were budget-related, while the other three were thematic laws.

According to the Provincial Assembly Secretariat, the bills passed were the Provincial Development Sports Bill, Girl Protection Bill and Provincial Child

Rights (First Amendment) Bill. All three were certified by the Provincial Chief in July and subsequently came into effect.

The three budget-related bills were passed only in June, towards the end of the fiscal year. This indicates that the Provincial Assembly has not been receiving enough legislative business for regular law-making. A total of 17 bills have been passed in the four years since the start of the second term. Only 10 laws and one regulation have been passed. In comparison, the Madhes Provincial Assembly enacted 66 laws during its first term.

According to Surendra Mahato, deputy secretary and information officer at the Provincial Assembly Secretariat, there is still a possibility that some bills could be passed, as the current session has not yet ended.

Some bills registered with the Provincial Assembly have been withdrawn

following committee discussions. These include bills seeking to amend the Provincial Policy Commission Formation and Operation Act 2075 and the Provincial Assembly, Municipal Assembly and District Assembly Operation Procedure Act 2077.

Similarly, the Bill to Make Arrangements Regarding Provincial Seeds 2081, the Bill to Make Arrangements Regarding the Promotion of Regional Trade and Business, and the Bill to Make Arrangements Regarding the Madhes Research and Training Institute are under discussion. The Bill to Make Arrangements Regarding Provincial Pesticide Management and the Bill to Make Arrangements Regarding Madhes Province Economic Procedure and Financial Responsibility have been registered but have yet to be tabled in the House.

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Govt okays 10% raise for federal-funded teachers, staff

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

The government has decided to increase salary grants for teachers working under federal grants, as well as early childhood development (ECD) facilitators and school employees.

A meeting of the Council of Ministers held at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers in Singha Durbar on Wednesday approved a 10 per cent increase in the existing salary grants for community teachers working under the federal teaching support quota, based on a proposal from the Ministry of Education and Sports.

CABINET DECISIONS

Under the decision, the monthly remuneration of secondary-level teachers working under the federal teaching support grant quota has been increased from Rs. 43,669 to Rs. 48,058. Likewise, the monthly remuneration of basic-level teachers has been raised from Rs. 34,730 to Rs. 38,203. Similarly, the government has increased the salary grant for ECD facilitators, school employees and school support staff by Rs. 5,000 per month.

Under the revised arrangement, the monthly remuneration of ECD facilitators has increased from Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 17,000, while that of school support staff has risen from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 15,000. The remuneration of school employees responsible for accounting has been increased from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 20,000 per month.

Announcing the Cabinet meeting

decision, Minister for Education and Sports Sasmit Pokharel, said the decision marked the first phase of addressing the long-standing problems faced by school employees and ECD facilitators working tirelessly in schools in remote areas.

He said the government was committed to ensuring their job security, professional advancement and overall career development, while working towards sustainable solutions to long-standing problems in school education through dialogue.

Minister Pokharel, who is also the government spokesperson, thanked the Finance Minister for facilitating the allocation of the necessary budget despite limited resources.

The salary increase is expected to directly benefit ECD facilitators, school employees, support staff and teachers working under the federal teaching support grant quota in community schools, where many have been working for relatively low remuneration.

The government expects the increase to boost the morale of school personnel and contribute positively to improving the quality of education.

The government has described the decision as an effort to address the problems faced by personnel working in school education and reiterated its commitment to proper management of the human resources and resources required for the school education sector.

Following implementation of the pay rise, the government will incur an additional annual financial liability of Rs. 4.68 billion. Similarly, the government approved the Software Development and Operation Committee (Formation) Order, 2083.

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RSP forms panel to amend parliamentary party statute

No dispute with PM: President Lamichhane

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) has formed a task force to amend the parliamentary party statute.

A parliamentary party meeting held on Wednesday formed a task force led by Chief Whip Kabindra Burlakoti, which has been assigned to submit a report within a week.

RSP leader and MP Ganesh Parajuli informed that the task force will revise the RSP parliamentary party statute as required and establish working procedures within the next seven days.

RSP President Rabi Lamichhane held a discussion on parliamentary etiquette and style with party MPs and ministers. During this meeting, it was

emphasized that the task force will discuss the role of MPs and Ministers. Additionally, the discussion within the task force will focus on empowering the people, engaging with the opposition, and enhancing the lawmaking process.

Meanwhile, RSP President Rabi Lamichhane has said that there is no dispute and misunderstanding between him and Prime Minister Balendra Shah.

After the RSP parliamentary party meeting, he informed media personnel that his party has no plans to recall or change any current ministers in the Cabinet.

President Lamichhane further said that it is natural for questions to be raised about some of the works done by a ministry or minister.

He also said that there is a practice within his party to ask questions and discuss weaknesses, and clarified that discussions have been held between MPs and Ministers to address the same.

House endorses bill to eliminate child labour

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

The House of Representatives on Wednesday unanimously approved a proposal seeking consideration of the 'Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Bill, 2083'.

Minister for Youth, Labour and Employment Ramjee Yadav said the bill was needed to update the 27-year-old law governing child labour in response to changing social conditions, technological development and the growing role of local governments.

Presenting the proposal, Yadav said suggestions from lawmakers would be incorporated into the bill.

He said the proposed legislation would clarify the roles of all three tiers of government and strengthen coordination in efforts to eliminate child labour.

Yadav said the experience of 14 local governments that have declared themselves child-labour-free had

demonstrated the importance of local initiatives. The bill would also provide for effective action against those employing children, he said.

During the emergency and zero-hour sessions, lawmakers raised several other issues, including flood and landslide damage caused by incessant rainfall, attacks by wild boars and monkeys, and public security.

They called for investigations into the shooting death of a man in a community forest in Kailali and the death of a three-year-old girl in Jitpur, Bara. Lawmakers also urged the government to speed up rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts for people affected by floods.

Other issues raised included excessive mobile-phone use among children, electricity supply problems in the Tarai and the need for digital awareness programmes for parents. Lawmakers also urged the government to expedite the construction of the 900MW Upper Karnali hydropower project.

The next meeting of the House is scheduled for August 24 at 1pm.

Students engage in investment activities with local govt's support

BY PREM ADHIKARI
Ilam, Aug. 19

Rong Rural Municipality in Ilam district has started involving students in income, savings, and investment from the early stages of their educational career. To develop the habit of saving among the poor and make it easier for them to pursue higher education, the local government has started involving students studying in the rural municipality in financial transactions.

The rural municipality, which has included students in the monthly child savings programme, has also connected students to the stock market.

The rural municipality has established child savings accounts for 129 students. Local government officials reported that they have initiated Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) for various companies in the names of 460 students who have D-MAT accounts and 158 students who have CRN links in the first phase.



Students participate in an income generating activity in Rong Rural Municipality of Ilam.

The rural municipality has prepared a Student Entrepreneurship Programme Action Plan 2080 with the chairman and has brought into operation a programme of saving 1 rupee per student per day, management of students without parents, student entrepreneurship and incentive programmes.

Rural Municipality Chairman Mani Kumar Syangbo informed that more than Rs. 7 million has been deposited in two years and eight months under the Child Savings Programme.

Likewise, D-MAT accounts of 460 students have been opened under the Entrepreneurship Programme.

At least 158 students have also received CRN links. Chairman Syangbo informed that 16 stocks have been transferred to the names of students so far after the rural municipality connected the students with the IPO. The rural municipality has deposited Rs. 20,000 per student into the bank account of Siddhi Hydro Power Company to facilitate the studies of 18 orphaned students within the rural municipality.

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BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold : Rs. 304,100/-
Worked Gold : NA
Silver : Rs.4,595/-



STOCK

NEPSE : 2,622.22

Total Amount : 3,298,019,571.29

No. of Share : 9,508,882

BUDDHA AIR TO RESUME
NEPALGUNJ- POKHARA
FLIGHTS

BY SIRAJ KHAN
Nepalgunj, Aug. 19

Buddha Air is set to resume its Nepalgunj-Pokhara flights from mid-September. The service was suspended from 19 May due to a decline in the number of religious tourists arriving from India and high fuel costs.

The regular Nepalgunj-Pokhara service, which connects Nepalgunj, a major transit city in western Nepal, with Pokhara, the country's leading tourist city, will resume from 16 September, according to Buddha Air Nepalgunj chief Binit Bikram Shah.

He informed the decision to resume the service was taken as demand for the flight, which also directly connects India's Uttar Pradesh with Pokhara, has been increasing. Although Buddha Air had initially announced that the service would be suspended for one month, it is now set to resume after around three and a half months.

Air passengers face troubles in lack of flights from Surkhet

BY RAJAN RAWAT
Humla, Aug. 19

Air passengers have been facing difficulties due to the lack of flights from Surkhet, the capital of Karnali Province, to the province's mountain districts.

Passengers travelling to Humla and other mountain districts have been affected after private airlines stopped operating flights more than a year ago, and Nepal Airlines, which has scheduled service, has failed to maintain regular flights.

Prem Bahadur Shahi, who was staying in Surkhet for work and was preparing to return to Humla, said he had been unable to travel home due to the lack of flights from the provincial capital. He said many passengers, including himself, had been unable to return to Humla during the monsoon season.

Shahi, who had also purchased a Nepal Airlines ticket, said the irregular service had caused considerable difficulties. He said it would be easier for passengers to make alternative

DRINKING WATER SCHEMES
GIVEN SUBSIDIES IN
ENERGY BILLS

BY ARJUN KAFLE
Syangja, Aug. 19

The Water Supply and Sanitation Division Office, Syangja, provided Rs. 10.19 million in electricity bill subsidies to lift drinking water schemes in the fiscal year 2025/26.

According to office chief Kiran Paudel, the subsidies were provided based on electricity consumption by water supply schemes under the Electricity Tariff Subsidy Procedure for Lift and Groundwater Supply Schemes, 2022.

The provincial government's programme to provide electricity tariff subsidies to lift and groundwater schemes covered 134 schemes operating in Syangja and Kaski districts.

The division office provided Rs. 5.98 million in subsidies to 100 schemes in Syangja and Rs. 4.21 million to 34 schemes in Kaski.

Paudel said schemes with monthly electricity consumption bills of up to Rs. 25,000 received a 100 per cent subsidy. Those with monthly bills between Rs. 25,000 and Rs. 35,000 received an 80 per cent subsidy, while schemes with bills between Rs. 35,000 and Rs. 50,000 received a 60 per cent subsidy.

Schemes with monthly electricity bills between Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 80,000 received a 30 per cent subsidy, while those exceeding Rs. 80,000 received a 10 per cent subsidy.

Uralbari-Madhumalla-Rabi road remains incomplete for over half century

BY HARI PRASAD KOIRALA
Uralbari, Aug. 19

A road linking Uralbari in Morang with Madhumalla, Chulachuli in Ilam and Rabi in Panchthar has remained incomplete for more than five decades, despite being a long-standing dream of residents of northeastern Morang and southern Ilam, as well as parts of Panchthar and Taplejung.

The road was inaugurated 55 years ago, in 1971 (2028 BS), by then minister Nagendra Kumar Pradhan. The foundation stone had raised hopes among residents of southern Ilam and northeastern Morang.

Locals of Chulachuli and Sakphara in Ilam had particularly hoped that the road would allow them to travel to the district headquarters by road. However, the road has remained outside the priorities of both the provincial and federal governments, leaving residents of southern Ilam to face the same difficulties for decades.

Locals of Chulachuli Rural Municipality-6 have to travel through Morang and Jhapa to reach their own rural municipality office. This is not a new problem.

Residents of Sakphara had dreamed that the road would reduce the distance between the hills and the Tarai and allow them to travel to the district headquarters by bus. But more than five and a half decades have passed and the road is still unfinished.

During every election, political parties, both major and minor,



The road connecting Madhumalla in Morang with Chulachuli in Ilam and Rabi in Panchthar.

promise to complete the road and seek votes. But locals still cannot reach their own rural municipality office without travelling through Morang and Jhapa.

The road was reportedly overlooked during the Panchayat era because of differences between political leaders from Panchthar and Morang. Locals became hopeful after the restoration of multiparty democracy, expecting the road to be built.

In 1994, then finance minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari included the road in

the government's Red Book, raising hopes once again. However, the government did not allocate a budget for the project despite listing it in the Red Book.

After the government continued to neglect the road, locals, under the coordination of Uralbari Youth Club, organised a gathering of representatives from Morang, Ilam and Panchthar in 2007 and formed a consumer committee under the chairmanship of Lal Bahadur Shrestha.

Through local labour contributions,

financial support and persistent efforts, the committee eventually opened a road track through difficult sections of the Chure region, including Sisne, Ekai-paile, Tinchule and Chhalasukhuwa. The track reached Rabi in 2017.

Locals celebrated when an ambulance reached Phungnam for the first time after the track was opened. At present, small vehicles can travel along the road with difficulty during the dry season.

But when the monsoon begins, the hardship of around 840 households in Chulachuli-6 starts again. Streams,

Spice crop production worth Rs. 9.69B recorded in Dhankuta

BY KABIRAJ GHIMIRE
Hile, Aug. 19

Dhankuta produced 75,619 tonnes of spice crops in the last fiscal year 2025/26, according to the Agriculture Knowledge Centre, Dhankuta. Spice crops are cultivated on a total of 523 hectares in the district. Based on the average wholesale prices in the local market, the total production was worth Rs. 9.69 billion, the centre said. Ginger accounted for the largest share of production, with 44,280 tonnes harvested during the period, followed by 15,850 tonnes of garlic, 15,447 tonnes of turmeric and 42 tonnes of large cardamom.

Of the total production, 42,258 tonnes of spice crops worth Rs. 5.44 billion were exported outside the district through large traders. Of the remaining 33,320 tonnes, some was consumed locally, while some was exported through retail traders or used as gifts, said Nagendra

water flow and landslides damage several sections of the road during the rainy season.

The road track was opened under the leadership of local residents including Lal Bahadur Shrestha, Dipak Shrestha, Bhakta Shrestha and Prakash Shrestha of Sakphara-6, Phungnam.

After the track was opened, local leaders from Uralbari and Madhumalla, including Man Bahadur Shrestha, Sher Bahadur Basnet, Bedanidhi Dhakal, Devi Prasad Acharya and Sewanta Dahal, repeatedly visited government offices under successive governments, seeking budget allocations for the road. However, successive governments have provided only assurances.

Dil Kumar Rai, ward chairman of Chulachuli-6, said the road is 52 kilometres long, with around 30 kilometres falling within Chulachuli-6.

"The section from Toribari in Mikla-jung-8 of Morang to Daregauda Bhan-jyang on the Panchthar border lies within the geographical area of Chulachuli Rural Municipality-6," he said. "During the monsoon, we have to travel through Morang and Jhapa to reach our own rural municipality office."

He said the road had become like a dream for local residents. "We heard that Rs. 30 million was allocated for the road two years ago. But although the money was allocated, the road contract was never awarded," Rai said.

According to locals, the 52-kilometre road section does not have any major rivers, meaning that large bridges would not be required for its construction.

Residents say that despite living within Ilam district, they feel neglected by Ilam and overlooked by Morang.

Ginger accounted for the largest volume of exports, with 26,568 tonnes worth Rs. 2.65 billion exported from the district.

Rana, chief of the centre. According to him, farmers have increasingly been attracted to spice crops in recent years. He said crops such as turmeric, ginger and large cardamom are less affected by monkey attacks, making them increasingly attractive to farmers.

Ginger accounted for the largest volume of exports, with 26,568 tonnes worth Rs. 2.65 billion exported from the district.

Similarly, 9,510 tonnes of garlic worth Rs. 1.9 billion and 6,178 tonnes of turmeric worth Rs. 803.2 million were exported. Of the large cardamom produced, 42 tonnes worth Rs. 79.9 million were exported.

Apple picking begins in Jumla after technical approval

BY NAURATE NEPALI
Jumla (Sinja), Aug. 19

The Himalayan district of Jumla is well known for its apple production. Out of around 20,000 households, 19,000 households are engaged in apple farming.

There was a time when apples produced in Jumla could not be sold and farmers had to feed them to livestock. But the situation has changed. After road transport reached Jumla on April 14, 2007, locally produced apples began finding markets outside the district.

Today, traders visit farmers' orchards to buy and collect apples. With the expansion of the road network, the problem of apples going to waste is gradually coming to an end. Some farmers earn hundreds of thousands of rupees annually from apple farming.

Birsh Sarki of Depalgaun in Guthichaur Rural Municipality-5 is one such farmer. He earns more than Rs. 500,000 a year from selling apples. He said he is preparing to sell a similar quantity of apples this year as well.

Like Sarki, farmers across Jumla are currently busy picking apples. Farmers have started harvesting after technicians gave permission, saying the apples have developed good colour, sweetness and are ready for consumption.

Ram Bhakta Adhikari, chief of the Agriculture Development Office,



Ripe Jumla apples in an orchard ready for harvest.

Jumla, said farmers in Tila, Tatopani and Guthichaur rural municipalities

and Chandannath Municipality have started picking apples.

According to him, apples ripen earlier in these local units than in other

parts of the district. Apples in Patarasi, Hima, Sinja and Kanakasundari rural municipalities have not yet ripened, he said. Apples in these areas are expected to become ready for consumption after August 26.

The Agriculture Development Office said apples from Jumla will be allowed to be transported to markets outside the district only after the first week of September.

Adhikari urged farmers and traders not to transport apples outside the district before the third week of August.

Apple farming currently covers 4,604 hectares in Jumla, of which apples are bearing fruit on 2,378 hectares. Fuji apples have been planted on 53.5 hectares, with fruit being produced on 52 hectares, according to the Agriculture Development Office.

Jumla is expected to produce 19,500 metric tonnes of apples this year. Meanwhile, a recommendation from the agriculture development section of the concerned local government has been made mandatory for transporting apples outside Jumla district.

The Agriculture Development Office said the requirement was introduced after cases were reported of apples being transported to outside markets before they had fully matured.

Adhikari said traders buying apples must obtain a recommendation from the agriculture development section of the concerned local government.

'We have to learn to navigate through wolf world'

Marc Saxer is a political analyst and author who has lived and worked in Asia for two decades. He recently published Geopolitical Conflict in the Wolf World: Great Power Competition and the Illiberal Revolt against the Liberal Order. **Ritu Raj Subedi, Modnath Dhakal and Arpana Adhikari** caught up with Saxer to talk about his book, changing world order and international cooperation while he was in Kathmandu to launch the book. Excerpts:

The very term 'Wolf World' in the name of your book gives an impression of a dreadful picture of the global system. What kind of world is it actually? Could you briefly describe it?

The 'wolf world' is actually an analogy presented in a book by Thomas Hobbes in the 17th century during the English Civil War. Referring to the violence, anarchy, and upheaval then, he famously said, when the law of the jungle rules, a man is another man's wolf. I'm using this quote because I believe that after the end of the American-led world order. What is being called the liberal world order is actually a world in disorder.

This is backed by numbers as well. The Peace Research Institute of Oslo has measured that in 2025 there was more violent conflict and interstate war since World War II. So, you see that after the end of Pax Americana, violence is really flaring up all over the world. We have two major wars in Europe and the Middle East, and we have a situation where the rules of the game are eroding very fast. Great powers are ridiculing the rules, let alone disobeying them. That creates a new disorder in the world. The title of the book alludes to this danger. As you said, it's dreadful; it's not a good world that is emerging. But what the book does is actually exploring ways how to manoeuvre it, how to navigate it, and how to overcome it.

The Pax Americana is fading, with the world moving into a chaotic multipolar world order. Are you still nostalgic for Pax Americana?

I've been in Asia for 20 years, especially in this part of the world. What people tell me is, there's never been a liberal world order. This has always been a 'wolf world'. I understand that criticism has a lot to do with the double standards of the West, and also with the situation elsewhere. The world was indeed always a violent place. But as I said, it is getting increasingly more violent everywhere, and the trend will continue. So, I'm not nostalgic for Pax Americana, but I would say that a world that has some order, has some rules of the game, is a world that is more stable and therefore is less violent than an anarchical world.

The liberal order is cracking under the weight of its own internal structural contradictions, like that of the collapse of communism in the early 1990s. Wasn't it inevitable?

It is a twin crisis of liberalism. There is a mutual-reinforcing cycle where you see, on the one hand, that whatever you may want to call the liberal world order is collapsing. And this has implications for the hegemony of liberal thought within our liberal democracies. And this process is really reinforcing. This is not something that happened overnight. The collapse or the erosion of the liberal

world order has a lot to do with the re-emergence of great powers, including China and India. So, this historical anomaly that the United States was so powerful, what you call the unipolar moment, is over. And you see that the United States is structurally overstretched militarily, financially, and politically.

Militarily, because there are three main primary theatres of geopolitical conflict where the US hegemony is simultaneously challenged. That is by Russia and Europe, by Iran and the Middle East, and by China and East Asia, which is still peaceful. For all the great powers, there is a zero-sum game between these theatres. Russia is bogged down in Ukraine. It lost Syria in the Middle East. The US is bogged down in the Persian Gulf. On the very contrary, you see the US is actually pulling out its navy from the South China Sea. It's pulling out its missile defence from the Korean Peninsula. It's pulling out paratroopers from Japan in order to sustain its war effort. So, that means it's militarily overstretched. The US is going towards US\$39 trillion in debt. It has lost its AAA rating. So, the issue of the world reserve currency now has question marks over its fiscal sustainability.

An illiberal government in the White House has declared the very order that the United States has founded and guaranteed for 80 years obsolete. So, Trump is directly attacking not only liberal institutions in the US, but also liberal institutions on the global level. The USA has dismantled the liberal mission, which is promoting democracy and human rights, and is attacking directly free trade and the liberal international economic order. And it is defunding multilateralism, the United Nations, treaties like the Climate Treaty, COP, etc. So, the liberal hegemon is declaring the order that it founded and led for 80 years obsolete. What Francis Fukuyama called the end of history is basically the idea that somehow, at some point, all of us will develop into illiberal democracy.

You are prescribing a new social contract for the survival of liberalism. But your recipe also appears fragile in the wolf world. Who will be the real parties to this new global deal?

We have to be a bit careful if we talk about the West or if we talk about any other countries like Nepal while assigning the categories. However, I am of the strong view that the social contract is also obsolete in Europe. Basically, the economic model that was sustaining the German economy, the French economy, the Swedish economy, and even the US economy is no longer working. And you basically have to change almost every paradigm from defence policy to foreign, energy, industrial, fiscal, education, and migration policies.

In the last 30 years of German

politics, nothing has happened that was more costly than 0.1 per cent of the GDP. All the political battles, all the political upheavals, governments are falling over 0.1 per cent of GDP. And now you want to redistribute 5 per cent of GDP. How do you finance that? You can either cut the welfare state and end the social transfers to the lower third of the population. You can tax the working middle class, or you can basically tax the rich. None of that is possible in the existing social contract, which means the social contract is obsolete. So, you see several political upheavals. Why there is a new prime minister in Great Britain every six months. Why is there such a fragile government in Germany? Why is there a possibility that France goes to the right wing? Because the social contract is obsolete. It no longer works. So, if you say what I'm suggesting is fragile, that's correct. But what I say is that the old social contract is over anyway, and we have to really think about what new social contract could actually work in this world.

The shift to the might-based international order from the rule-based one has wearied the nations and people alike. What will its implications be for peace and development?

Unfortunately, one of the major differences is that war as a means of politics, as Carl von Clausewitz said, is back. We see that in action everywhere. Coercion as a means of geo-economics is back. We see that everywhere. So, basically, it's not only that there is no longer universally

If there is no consensus on a country's overall geopolitical posture, external power will exploit it. If political camps orient towards different sides, the country can become a chessboard for great powers to divide and rule.

accepted rules, but also the unwritten rules of the game of change.

You cannot have export-led growth in a protectionist world. And you cannot do catch-up industrialisation if technology transfers are weaponised, if value chains are weaponised. And if industrial policy in every major economy, especially China, means that there is so much overcapacity that these industrial overcapacities would be dumped in your market, which would wipe out your domestic industries, and that actually means de-industrialisation. So, for a lot of countries in the region, development now is going backwards. And that means, in the wolf world, we have to learn how to manoeuvre between great powers not only if there is rivalry, but also when it comes to economic development.

Where do you get your energy, critical minerals and weapons if it's no longer



>> INTERVIEW

possible to buy it on the world market? Geo-economics means that the main distribution mechanism is no longer a free market. Most of the countries in

the region are saying that they want to hedge and balance. It sounds very good on paper, but if you need to do all the things that you need to do, you need to be aligned.

You have suggested Europe should focus on territorial defense, stabilisation of its neighbourhood, selective hedging among great powers and pursuit of strategic autonomy within a reformed EU. Can this idea be exported to other regions, such as SAARC and ASEAN?

Let's start with Europe, because Europe is currently in a very vulnerable position for several reasons. First, the EU is a historically unique experiment, a kind of super-state built through treaties and law rather than as a traditional nation-state. It is, in a sense, a micro rule-based order. The question is whether such a rule-based order like Europe can survive in a

wolf world where rules are increasingly being challenged.

Second, Europe has a war on its flank and there is growing doubt about the United States as a security guarantor. The US has usually performed two functions. First, it secure Europe by keeping Russia out and second securing smaller European state against German hegemony. If the US withdraws as an offshore balancer, fears of German hegemony could return and potentially weaken the EU.

Third, Europe has lost ground economically and technically. I think Europe is in a very difficult situation and is vulnerable. Therefore, I would argue that Europe should focus on its own continent rather than distant regions where it has limited core interests. This strategy cannot simply be exported elsewhere. There is no other region as integrated as Europe. ASEAN comes closest, but it too faces internal divisions, with some members aligned with China and others with the US. And ASEAN has the principle to make decision unanimously. So that means both superpowers have veto power, which means that ASEAN could be paralyzed. So that means even ASEAN has big trouble and SAARC is not even close to that.

What should be the strategies of small nations like Nepal in the great power game?

Obviously, I'm not an expert on Nepal, but I can share what I have learned

from other countries. If there is no consensus on a country's overall geopolitical posture, external power will exploit it. If political camps orient towards different sides, the country can become a chessboard for great powers to divide and rule.

Domestic politics should be contested; that's democracy. But when it comes to foreign policy, there should be some broad consensus, not on every policy but on the country's overall orientation, whether to lean towards one side or the other, or remain neutral. Such consensus can help shield the country from external meddling.

Located between the two giants' neighbours, Nepal faces difficulty in navigating geopolitical challenges. As a geopolitical expert, what would you like to suggest for it to tackle problems in its neighbourhood as well as benefit from them?

Nepal's greatest challenge is obviously being a landlocked country, with only two neighbours. It may be useful to look at Mongolia, which also has two large neighbours, Russia and China. Mongolia has developed a 'third neighbour policy' engaging countries such as the US, European states, Japan and South Korea, among others, to create more options and reduce its vulnerability. If you only have two borders, you cannot escape that reality. But engaging other countries gives you more options and having more options is certainly better than having none.

Two arrested over suspected rape and murder of 3-year-old minor

BY SHIVASHANKAR MISHRA
Bara, Aug. 19

Police have arrested two persons, including a magic van assistant driver, in connection with the suspected rape and murder of three-year-old Garima Chaudhary, who had been missing for three days.

The arrested have been identified as 16-year-old Suman Thapa of Jeetpursimara Sub-Metropolitan City-2 and 24-year-old Progress Chaudhary of Jeetpursimara-1, the owner of the magic van. Bara Superintendent of Police Narendra Kunwar confirmed their arrests at a press conference held on Wednesday.

Police have obtained a four-day remand from the Bara District Court and registered a case against both suspects on charges of rape and murder, SP Kunwar said. Police have also taken control of the magic van, bearing registration number Na 1 Ja 7758, which is suspected to have been used in the incident.

According to the preliminary police investigation, Suman is suspected of luring the girl with the promise of chocolate and taking her to an abandoned house some distance from the settlement at Dasdhure in Jeetpursimara-1. Police suspect that she was sexually assaulted and subsequently killed there.

However, police said it would only be possible to establish whether the girl



was sexually assaulted and determine the exact circumstances of her death after the post-mortem examination and further investigation.

The girl went missing from the middle of the settlement at around 8:30 am on Sunday. Despite searches by her family and local residents, she could not be found until her body was discovered on Tuesday evening inside an abandoned house in Bhakti Tole, about 150 metres south of her home. The house had reportedly been vacant for around five months.

Local residents alerted police after noticing a foul smell coming from the house and seeing the girl's body through a window. Police said the body was found naked, with swelling and visible injuries to the genital area. The girl's underwear and other clothes were also recovered from the scene.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Dilip Chhetri of the Area Police Office, Simara, said the circumstances at the scene provided grounds to suspect that the girl had been raped and murdered.

"The nature of the incident and the preliminary evidence indicate that she may have been killed following sexual violence. However, a final conclusion can only be reached after the post-mortem examination and further investigation," he said.

Given the sensitive nature of the case, police brought a trained sniffer dog from Birgunj to assist with the investigation. A police team led by SP Kunwar has also inspected the crime scene and is overseeing the investigation.

Police have prepared a scene-of-crime report and sent the girl's body to the Provincial Hospital in Kalaiya for post-mortem examination. Police Inspector Prakash Thapa has been designated as the investigating officer.

Police said they were questioning the two suspects and collecting evidence regarding their possible roles in the incident. Investigators are also gathering evidence from the crime scene, the magic van and other potential locations, while examining whether any other individuals were involved.

Police said they would draw conclusions only on the basis of evidence, as the investigation into the circumstances surrounding the girl's death is still under way.

COAS SIGDEL CONFERS INSIGNIA ON NEWLY PROMOTED OFFICERS

BY ANIL PARAJULI
Hetauda, Aug. 19



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

Chief of the Army Staff General Ashok Raj Sigdel conferred the insignia of the rank of Major General on Technical Brigadier General Bishwo Bandhu Pahadee at a ceremony held at the Army Headquarters on Wednesday.

Pahadee was promoted to the rank of Major General, the two-star general, effective from August 11.

On the occasion, General Sigdel also conferred the insignia of the rank of Technical Colonel on Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Indira Acharya, who was recently promoted to the position from Lieutenant Colonel.

The ceremony was attended by the Chief of Staff, senior general officers, other army officers, the newly promoted officers and their family members.

Two girls die, one missing in Makwanpur flood

BY ANIL PARAJULI
Hetauda, Aug. 19

The bodies of two schoolgirls who were swept away by a local river at Basudev in Bastipur of Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City-19 have been recovered.

Four girls were swept away by the stream at around 4:00 pm on Tuesday while returning home after attending classes at Nirmal Secondary School. One of them was rescued safely, while the bodies of two others were recovered from separate locations in the district.

With the recovery of the latest body, one girl remains missing.

Eight-year-old Rosani Syangtang, a Grade 2 student from Bastipur, Hetauda-19, was found about 500 metres downstream, lodged among the roots of a tree, according to Madhav Prasad Kafle, Deputy Superintendent of Police and information officer at the District Police Office, Makwanpur. She was rescued and taken to Hetauda Hospital, where she died during treatment.

Police said 12-year-old Binita Bhlon of grade seven was recovered on Tuesday afternoon. Another 11-year-old girl Sumitra Bhlon of grade 5, is still missing.

Meanwhile, 13-year-old Seema Bhlon, a Grade 6 student, managed to swim to safety after being swept away

by the current. She sustained an injury to her head and is receiving treatment at Hetauda Hospital.

The students were swept away when the water level suddenly rose as they were crossing a makeshift bridge on the route.

Following the incident, a search and rescue operation was launched with 20 police personnel deployed from the Area Police Office, Newarpani, under the command of a police inspector, and from the District Police Office, Makwanpur, under the command of Superintendent of Police Shyam Bahadur Khatri.

For further search and rescue efforts, 11 personnel from the Disaster Management Battalion in Hetauda, under the command of Police Inspector Bijay Raj Timalisina; 17 personnel from Armed Police Force Nepal No. 14 Battalion Headquarters, Hetauda, under the command of Assistant Superintendent of Police Nawan Kumar Khadka; and a team from the Nepali Army were also mobilised, police said.

The search for the missing students was suspended after nightfall, according to Prabodh Bidari, headteacher of the school. He said the search would resume at 6am on Wednesday.

As two students remain missing, security personnel, with the assistance of local residents, will resume the search early in the morning, he said.

EDITORIAL

Bringing Bodies Home

Every day, over 2,000 Nepali youths leave the country in search of better prospects for employment and education abroad. In the last month alone, over 70,000 youths left the country. The majority of Nepalis choose to work, study and settle on foreign soils out of compulsion. The dearth of jobs, insufficient pay, economic hardships and lack of quality education have driven them into the alien lands. The story of Nepali migrant workers is far from a cause for rejoicing. Of course, they are the unsung heroes whose remittances have kept our economy floating. But their tears, blood and hardships impel us to think over the relevance of out-migration. Its social costs have overshadowed the economic achievements. Every day, around four bodies of Nepali migrant workers arrive at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. According to the official data, about 1,500 Nepali migrant workers die annually, a fact that lays bare the failure of our development model and political system we never tire of appreciating.

Nepalis have to work in difficult, dirty and dangerous conditions. The poor safety measures, workplace accidents and excessive temperatures result in the deaths of many Nepali workers. A lot of others also succumb to sudden cardiac arrest. The Nepal government has to spend a considerable amount of money and time to bring their bodies back home. The challenges also lie in managing the bodies of those who have gone abroad through illegal channels. Hundreds of Nepalis have been stranded in foreign lands – some are in jails, some in hospitals and some others have died but their bodies are yet to be brought to the country.

The other day, Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal highlighted this matter in the parliament and said that the government is preparing some legal basis to bring back the bodies of those lying in the morgues of foreign hospitals. He was responding to a query of lawmaker Ashika Tamang. She demanded that the body of Santosh Rai, a local of Jugeedi in Dhunibesi Municipality of Dhading district, be repatriated from a hospital in Cambodia at the earliest. Rai died while undergoing treatment at Calmette Hospital in Cambodia on 14 May 2026. The Nepali Embassy in Bangkok had informed that approximately US\$1,000 would be required to bring Rai's body back to Nepal, including outstanding medical and mortuary charges and airfare. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs faces financial constraints for the rescue, relief and repatriation of Nepalis stranded abroad. To pool resources, it has prepared the 'Procedure for Administering the Budget Allocated for the Rescue, Relief and Repatriation of Nepali Citizens Stranded Abroad, 2083' and is awaiting approval from the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

The government has allocated Rs. 150 million in the current Fiscal Year 2026/27 for the rescue, relief and repatriation of Nepali citizens stranded abroad. As this amount is insufficient for the purpose, the Foreign Ministry sought additional budgetary arrangements. The procedure proposes a maximum expenditure of Rs. 1.2 million per person to repatriate a stranded citizen's dead body, according to a news report of this daily. The government can bring the body of Rai only after the Finance Ministry approves this procedure and sanctions the budget. Unsatisfied with the answer of Minister Khanal, lawmaker Tamang walked out of the House meeting, disobeying the instruction of the Speaker. This is indeed an unusual scenario. It is the duty of the state to repatriate the bodies of Nepalis who travelled abroad either through irregular or regular channels. The lengthy legal process must not hamper and delay this task.

Journalism In AI Age

LUCIA DEON

Around the world, news consumption continues to move away from traditional journalistic outlets. As reported in the Reuters Digital News Report 2026, social media and video platforms are, on average and for the first time, more popular news sources than the websites and apps of news organisations themselves. Moreover, an increasing number of users are experimenting with AI chatbots. At the same time, support for journalistic principles such as impartiality persists.

In discussions about independent journalism, "Big Tech" plays a central role – the handful of technology companies that operate the social media platforms and search engines from which information today is gleaned. They possess not only cloud storage and computing power but also data analysis capabilities and high-reach distribution channels – and thus the essential prerequisites for the creation and publication of digital news content.

Journalists worldwide are grappling with the question of how they can reduce their dependence on Big Tech. The Journalism Cloud Alliance (JCA) aims to provide an answer to this. Its objective is a shared technical infrastructure for different newsrooms. This is intended to improve cybersecurity for journalists and make it more affordable, whilst also enabling greater bargaining power vis-à-vis Big Tech.

At national level, there are already examples of several smaller newsrooms joining forces, such as those under the umbrella of the Danish Press Publications Collective Management Organisation (DPCMO) in Denmark and Country Press Australia (CPA) in Australia. This strategy has strengthened the position of smaller media organisations in negotiations with Google and Facebook regarding fair remuneration for news content on their platforms and search engines.

Two of the key challenges facing the JCA's alternative cloud

infrastructure were raised during a panel discussion on journalism and Big Tech at the Global Media Forum (GMF) in Bonn in June. Firstly, it is likely to prove difficult to create a uniform system that meets the various legal requirements to which newsrooms worldwide are subject. Data protection legislation and press law differ considerably from country to country; there are even differences within the European Union. Journalistic workflows in democracies differ from those in autocracies.

The second problem concerns monetisation. Initially, the JCA was funded through philanthropic donations. In order to be able to offer services and technologies in the long term, the JCA could explore different revenue models such as membership fees, usage-based service charges or public funding. However, many small newsrooms, especially in countries where the press is underfunded, are already struggling with financial constraints. They may not be in a position to contribute to a model that requires additional costs from them. Additionally, it may prove difficult to encourage the public to get on board, now that people have become accustomed to receiving their news with little or no direct charge.

This year's Global Media Forum in Bonn was held under the motto "Journalism out loud". The slogan refers to the call for independent journalism to speak out more forcefully in the face of a global political landscape characterised by rising nationalism, efforts to increase state control over the digital sphere and deepening polarisation within society.

The future of journalism will not be determined by the nature of its content or distribution mechanisms alone, but by the choices made by those who control the infrastructure upon which it depends. Structural change is needed to ensure a diverse media landscape based on pluralism and equity. Journalists have a vested interest in halting the trend towards growing dependence on Big Tech.

-Development And Cooperation

Can Judges Become Good Mediators?



Mukti Rijal

Nepal has increasingly promoted mediation as a key method of dispute resolution. Although mediation has long functioned as a social institution for community governance and dispute settlement, its modern application within the formal legal system is relatively recent. The former Civil Code, later replaced by the Civil and Criminal Procedure Codes, permitted out-of-court settlement of cases pending before the courts. Drawing on that provision, Nepal's judiciary introduced court-annexed mediation through amendments to court rules almost three decades ago, but its practical use remained limited.

Since the enactment of the Mediation Act 2011, however, mediation has continued to expand, particularly in institutional development and practical application. The Act also encouraged members of the Constituent Assembly to recognise consensual dispute resolution in the Constitution. The Constitution of Nepal now obliges the government to promote alternative dispute resolution, including mediation, and establishes Judicial Committees led by municipal deputy mayors or vice chairpersons of rural municipalities, granting them constitutional authority to hear and resolve community disputes.

Institutionalising mediation

More recently, the judiciary has played a leading role in institutionalising mediation, and the court-rule amendments incorporating mediation into the court system have gained

practical significance.

Nepal therefore now has a substantial institutional foundation for mediation. Mediation-friendly court rules, the Mediation Act, and the Mediation Rules provide the main legal framework. Mediation infrastructure exists across the court system, though it remains modest and requires significant improvement. Nepal has recently taken another step by proposing amendments to the Mediation Act to introduce judge-led mediation.

It is important to distinguish court-referred mediation from judge-led mediation. In ordinary court-referred mediation, a judge refers the case to an independent mediator or panel of mediators to facilitate settlement. In judge-led mediation, a serving judge actively facilitates settlement, sometimes through legal evaluation, reality testing, and suggestions. This model has been used for years in several jurisdictions, including Singapore, Canada, Australia, and China, although institutional safeguards and practices vary considerably.

The strongest argument for judge-led mediation is that judges bring authoritative knowledge of the law, evidence, and likely judicial outcomes—qualities that ordinary mediators may not possess. A judge can, in effect, tell the parties: "I am not deciding your case, but I can help you understand the legal and evidentiary risks of continuing." This guidance can be especially powerful when parties hold unrealistic or exaggerated claims and expectations. Experience from jurisdictions where judge-led mediation is practiced suggests several advantages, including greater credibility, better reality testing, earlier identification of settlement options, and improved access to justice.

However, judge-led mediation raises serious concerns when judges perform

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dual roles. If a judge mediates a case and later decides the same dispute, parties may reasonably fear that information disclosed during mediation could influence the final judgment if settlement fails. When the mediator is also the judge assigned to hear the case, participation may no longer appear fully voluntary.

The proposed amendment to Nepal's Mediation Act addresses this "double-hat" problem by providing that a judge who conducts mediation may not adjudicate the dispute if mediation fails and the case returns to the bench. Without this separation,

Need To Digitise Nepal's Bureaucracy



Rabin Sharma

Moving everything online has become the new initiative that the current government aims to achieve, i.e., "Digital-first." For most young people, online means getting things done within a few clicks, without having to visit traditional brick-and-mortar offices. The paradigm shift from 'bricks to clicks' has been underway since the early 2000s and received its biggest breakthrough during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The author remembers when one of the government offices publicly announced that its procedures would now move online. It was a moment of cloud nine, as visiting government offices is among the least favourite things to do due to complex procedures and redundant tasks. However, the concept of moving 'online' was limited to downloading a form, printing it, filling it out with a pen, visiting the office, waiting in a queue for hours, and submitting it accordingly. It was nothing more than a prank.

Global interconnectedness

In the context of e-commerce, global interconnectedness has made products much easier to procure. For instance, international confectioneries and food items that people were once exposed to only through television, such as Hershey's, Takis, granola, and many others, can now be easily consumed in Nepal as they

are readily available in convenience stores. The cross-cultural exposure of Nepali people, the influence of the diaspora, and returnee migrants have also sparked a sense of brand consciousness.

A person who is accustomed to consuming a particular brand overseas also tends to seek the same brand upon returning home. In most cases, these products are available in modern trade stores. However, in specific cases, they have to be procured online, mainly through international e-commerce websites. The shipment process typically takes between two weeks and a month. In such cases, the Government's General Post Office (GPO) plays an important role in receiving, storing, and distributing the parcels.

For someone who expects the bare minimum from the government, especially in terms of assistance with products ordered through international e-commerce websites, the role of the GPO appears surprisingly progressive. Once the product arrives at the post office, a text message is sent to the customer, informing them of its arrival and requesting them to collect the item.

The journey of the end recipient, however, is far from straightforward. For instance, to receive a pair of sunglasses ordered through an e-commerce platform, one has to go through several stages before finally getting the product into hand. A visit to the GPO office is mandatory because Nepal does not yet have a proper postal delivery system like many other countries. This is also due to the absence of standardised street names, house numbers, and other geographical identifiers, making it difficult to identify the exact destination for

There should be a proper framework to store and locate information digitally, facilitated by simple API-enabled software.

home delivery.

Collecting a parcel from the GPO within the prescribed time period begins with officials verifying the customer's credentials and SKUs, along with collecting a photocopy of an identity card, requiring the completion of a form, and again matching the details with the name on the delivered parcel. At times, the ordered product cannot be located immediately, leaving the customer with no option but to return later or leave empty-handed. Once the package is received, the customer is asked to see an official at a different building to pay customs charges. Afterwards, the parcel is weighed, and six separate printouts stating the customs fee are issued.

Some of these receipts must then be taken to the bank to pay the customs duty, where the bank accepts only cash payments. The bank then issues another receipt, which must be taken back to the customs office for manual verification and stamping before taking the parcel home. Sometimes, even for a nominal customs payment, the cost of producing all these printouts exceeds the amount of tax itself. This is an alarming aspect, particularly in the context of

the dual role can undermine voluntariness and discourage parties from speaking openly.

Judge-led mediation may also invite premature judicial pressure. A judge might form an early view of the fair outcome and push the parties toward a quick settlement. However, mediation is not about judicially defining fairness; parties may have interests, needs, and priorities that legal merits alone do not capture. A trained mediator is often better suited to explore those concerns. Overreliance on judges as mediators, if adopted, could also weaken Nepal's independent mediation profession and slow the growth of a professional mediation system.

Lessons

Lessons from Canada and Australia are useful in this context. Canada uses judicial settlement conferences in which judges help clarify issues, narrow unsupported claims or defences, and facilitate settlement. This experience shows that judicial settlement facilitation can be effective when it remains distinct from conventional mediation—a distinction Nepal should preserve.

Australia's experience shows that judicial mediation can be valuable in complex litigation because judges offer legal expertise, procedural authority, familiarity with the dispute, and an understanding of litigation risks. It also highlights the need for safeguards that keep mediation separate from later adjudication and for specialised judicial mediators, rather than assuming that every trial judge can or should serve as a mediator. This offers a useful framework for assessing Nepal's proposed practice of judge-led mediation.

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an 'environment-friendly' and 'digital-first' government.

Apart from the irony surrounding environmental sustainability, one also encounters a noticeable breach of communication etiquette at government offices. More often than not, the public find themselves involved in unnecessary verbal confrontations. This could be because of insufficient training in customer service.

Way Forward

Paperless systems have been in the limelight for a long time and are one of the most effective methods in Document Management Systems. Nobody wants to take home a stack of papers and receipts after receiving a tiny parcel containing a pair of sunglasses. Also, cash transactions at banks are considered inevitable, as claimed by the bankers themselves, because there is no other appropriate option besides cash in terms of customs procedures.

However, a QR transaction would be instrumental in reducing queues, or payments could even be made online before the public visits the office. Likewise, there should be no requirement to submit a physical form along with a physical copy of an identity card. There should be a proper framework to store and locate information digitally, facilitated by simple API-enabled software. Nepal has a highly intellectual and tech-savvy population looking for jobs; simple outsourcing to leverage this talent would not only help the government but also create employment.

(Sharma is an alumnus of Harvard Kennedy School Executive Education in AI and Policy.sharmaroven@gmail.com.)

READER'S MAIL

Makwanpur's Sustainable Success

This is about the news report headlined "Sustainable forest management creates jobs," which appeared in this daily on August 20. According to the report, sustainable forest management



in Makwanpur is helping conserve forests while creating green jobs for local communities.

Locals are finding employment in activities such as thinning forests, constructing fire lines, collecting and transporting timber and firewood, processing wood, and making furniture.

Nepal's sustainable forest management practice is exemplary and lauded globally. At a time when the world is losing the green

its rich biodiversity and prevent habitat loss and species extinction, but it has also gone a long way to combating climate change. This is so because forests absorb and store carbon dioxide. The government should take concrete steps to monetize this success so that those putting their tireless efforts into this will be able to benefit from it as well.

Nikeesa Neupane Dang

TAILPIECE

Reaching the end of a job interview, the Human Resources Person asked a young Engineer fresh out of MIT, "And what starting salary were you looking for?"

The Engineer said, "In the neighbourhood of \$125,000 a year, depending on the benefits package."

The interviewer said, "Well, what would you say to a package of 5 weeks' vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, a company matching retirement fund for 50% of your salary, and a company car leased every 2 years -- say, a red Corvette?"

The Engineer sat up straight and said, "Wow! Are you kidding?"

And the interviewer replied, "Yeah, but you started it."

Zelenskyy office faces corruption probe

AP
Kyiv, Aug. 19

Ukrainian anti-corruption agencies announced Wednesday that they are investigating senior officials in President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office, a day after the country's recently fired defense minister called for national elections despite the ongoing fight against Russia's invasion. The political drama was as an unwelcome distraction for Zelenskyy as Ukraine's war with its bigger neighbor stretches into its fifth year.

Investigators are conducting an operation to expose a criminal organization allegedly led by a sitting and a former lawmaker, involving senior officials from the presidential office and other individuals, according to a joint statement from Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office.

Further details would be released later, the agencies said in a joint statement. The revelation brought another test of Zelenskyy's political resilience as he remains dogged by high-level graft investigations.

Last year, his chief of staff Andriy Yermak resigned and was later named as a suspect in a major graft probe involving a luxury construction project in the biggest threat to Zelenskyy's government since Russia's invasion in February 2022.

Also last year, a major embezzlement and kickbacks scandal involving the state-owned nuclear power company brought the resignations of Ukraine's justice and



PHOTO: AP
People sing and hold up their cell phone flashlights during a rally to protest the dismissal of Mykhailo Fedorov as Ukraine's Defense Minister in Kyiv.

energy ministers. The European Union has identified deep-seated corruption as one of the major hurdles to Ukraine's desired membership of the block.

Zelenskyy is already under pressure over his firing last month of Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, one of the longest-standing members of his team and a close ally since he helped Zelenskyy win the 2019 presidential election.

Zelenskyy, seeking to reconcile tensions between the defense ministry's young and tech-savvy innovators and Ukraine's seasoned, Soviet-trained battlefield leaders, risked angering both sides by reshuffling his wartime leadership.

He ousted both Fedorov, whose changes to military procurement aimed to stamp out corruption, and commander-in-chief Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi.

The move sparked days of street protests in support of Fedorov. For Zelenskyy, it was the second time in a year that a wartime decision triggered a strong public backlash, after he moved in mid-2025 to curb the powers of anti-corruption agencies.

Fedorov, in a video address posted to YouTube late Tuesday, called for elections to be held in Ukraine in a bombshell statement that appeared to directly confront Zelenskyy, who says a ballot can't

be held under the martial law that is currently in place due to the war.

"We must find a legal, safe and realistic mechanism that will allow Ukraine to restore a full democratic process even amid a prolonged war," Fedorov said.

He said Ukraine is facing a systemic crisis in how it is governed, arguing that the current system is oriented toward protecting itself and resisting change. He also condemned corruption among officials without naming anyone, saying it had weakened Ukraine's ability to fight the war.

Zelenskyy's office did not immediately comment on Fedorov's address. It was not immediately clear whether Fedorov's appeal for a ballot would resonate with Ukrainians.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has balked at negotiating a peace deal directly with Zelenskyy, says the Ukrainian president is an illegitimate leader because his term expired in 2024.

Fedorov published his speech hours after Ukraine's Parliament received Zelenskyy's formal nomination of Yevhenii Khmara as the new defense minister, a move that effectively closes the door to Fedorov's return to the post, which he has sought, any time soon. Lawmakers were due to debate the president's candidate on Wednesday.

The political disarray comes after recent successes in the war for Ukraine. Using its innovative drone technology, it has repeatedly hit Russian oil facilities, causing fuel shortages. It has also shocked the Russian public by striking warehouses of Wildberries, Russia's biggest online retailer, and stalled front-line advances by Russia's bigger army.

China builds data centres to power AI

AFP
Guian New Area (China), Aug. 19

In China's hilly Guizhou province, a cluster of European-style buildings complete with clock tower and multi-arched bridge emits a low, permanent hum -- a clue to its unexpected identity as tech giant Huawei's largest data centre.

They are part of a government strategy that has seen much of the digital infrastructure for breakneck AI development across China's eastern seaboard established in the country's less populated, rural west. The build-out is ongoing. China is on course to nearly double its data centre capacity within the next five years, as a tech race with the United States intensifies and countries everywhere try to swerve a computing crunch that could stymie AI expansion.

The projects have transformed some places -- such as Guian New Area, where the Huawei data centre and others are located. "It used to be a barren mountain, but since the area has developed, transportation has become more convenient, trade has picked up, business opportunities have emerged," local shopkeeper Shu Peihua said.

When AFP visited last month, street vendors were catering to data centre workers on their lunchbreak near a roadside banner calling for "promoting high-quality development", a government tech policy catchphrase. In Europe and the United States, data centre construction has often been met with resistance from local communities citing concerns around energy prices, as well as environmental issues such as water usage and noise.

Dissent in China is tightly controlled, however, especially around

central government policy. Still, Guian residents who spoke to AFP were positive about the changes to their area. A vendor selling savoury pancakes, who did not give his name, said two universities had been established since the facilities were built.

Another local, Li Xixiu, said the main road had been developed because of the centres, which in general had "really boosted the economy of this entire area". "All the villagers in our neighbourhood now find jobs nearby, unlike before, when they had to go to other places," Li said. In 2021, the government gave its strategy a name: "Eastern Data Western Computing". The logic of construction in places like Guizhou, with its cooler climates, abundant renewable energy and empty space, is multifaceted. AI processing is extremely energy intensive, and China has demanded that data centres draw 80 percent of their power from renewable sources by the end of this decade.

That makes regions like Guizhou and Inner Mongolia, which have massively expanded renewable capacity like solar and wind, ideal for operators looking to meet those commitments, said Simeng Deng, a senior analyst at Rystad Energy. Energy-guzzling server farms could also help solve renewables' issue of curtailment, or the over-production of energy. The data centres "can be an engine to digest or absorb the surplus of renewable power generation", said Deng. Developing previously neglected parts of the countryside is another potential benefit.

Despite the enthusiasm of the locals AFP met though, some researchers question the overall economic gains to host regions. Data centres don't necessarily create a "huge spillover effect" on local jobs, said Andrew Stokols from Singapore Management University.

Fake polling highlights danger of unvetted election surveys

AP
New York, Aug. 19

Locked in a competitive reelection race, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass declared on social media last week that a new poll was evidence that her campaign was "gaining momentum."

Just a few days later, the truth emerged: The poll was fabricated.

The California results were among at least three "polls" across three states posted online this month by Median Strategies, a previously unknown organization that admitted to the Los Angeles Times on Monday that the purported results were fake. The company wrote before shuttering its website this week that it "was created as a short-term social experiment examining how purported polling information could enter and spread through the political information ecosystem without independent verification."

The post offered no explanation of who was behind the "experiment" or

for what purpose.

The trajectory of the California poll offers a cautionary tale about the perils of trusting unvetted polling. While high-quality independent polls still exist, they appear amid a slew of other surveys produced by outside groups, campaigns or super PACs or using undisclosed or questionable methodologies. It can be a struggle to make sense of the findings -- and as the latest episode shows, even campaigns may end up falling for falsified data.

"This is much bigger than one fake poll," said Chris Wilson, a veteran Republican pollster who now leads the public opinion firm EyesOver. "It's never been easier to make invented numbers look legitimate, and campaigns and outside groups have every incentive to amplify anything favorable before anyone verifies it."

The Median Strategies fake polls, none of which appeared in AP coverage, claimed to evaluate support in the Democratic primary for governor in Wisconsin, the gubernatorial race in Nevada, and the mayoral race in Los Angeles.

350 aid workers killed last year: UN

AFP
United Nations, Aug. 19

The number of aid workers killed worldwide in 2025 reached 350, with the most fatalities in Gaza and Sudan, the United Nations said Wednesday, calling attacks on humanitarian workers "unacceptable."

Some 186 humanitarian workers were killed in Gaza -- the deadliest place for aid workers for the third year running -- followed by Sudan with 71 killed. 2025's death toll was slightly lower than that of 2024, when 377 aid workers were killed.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) cited the figures from the research and advisory group Humanitarian Outcomes in a statement marking World Humanitarian Day. "More than 1,000 aid workers have been killed in just three years and that is utterly unacceptable," Tom Fletcher, under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, said in the statement.

"But just calling it out will not protect the next aid worker. States must uphold international humanitarian law and use every tool to protect civilians and our colleagues," he said. "And for those



PHOTO: AFP
Displaced Palestinians receive food from a charity kitchen at a refugee camp in Gaza.

who break the rules, there must be real consequences." Since the start of 2026, 82 more aid workers have been killed, with 97 more injured and 39 abducted worldwide.

OCHA voiced particular concern over the proliferation of armed drones "that are putting lethal power into ever more hands and sending more explosive weapons into towns and cities."

In Sudan, armed drones caused 80 percent of civilian deaths in the first four months of 2026, hitting markets and health facilities, the statement said, also noting casualties from drone attacks in the Russia-Ukraine war. "Weaponized drones have become the new face of an old danger: the deliberate or reckless destruction of civilian life," Fletcher said.

MAN ARRESTED OVER PIPELINE EXPLOSIONS

AP
Paris, Aug. 19

A Ukrainian man was arrested Wednesday in Croatia in connection with the 2022 undersea explosions that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines between Russia and Germany, Germany's federal prosecutor said.

Ukrainian national Vladimir Z., whose last name was not given in line with German privacy rules, was arrested in Pula, Croatia, by local police acting on a European arrest warrant.

"Vladimir Z. is a trained scuba diver who was part of a group of individuals who planted explosives on the 'Nord Stream 1' and 'Nord Stream 2' gas pipelines near the (Danish) island of Bornholm in September 2022," prosecutors said.

He was "strongly suspected of jointly causing explosions, anti-constitutional sabotage, and destruction of buildings and structures," they added.

Undersea explosions on Sept. 26, 2022, damaged the pipelines, which had been built to carry Russian natural gas to Germany under the Baltic Sea. The damage added to tensions over the war in Ukraine as European countries moved to wean themselves off Russian energy sources after the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Farmers warn of drought toll on grain harvest

AFP
Berlin, Aug. 19

Germany's grain harvest is expected to fall by seven percent this year after months of severe drought and heatwaves, the German Farmers' Association (DBV) said Tuesday. "An overly dry spring and a heatwave in the second half of June were defining factors" leading to what the group described as a "below-average grain harvest" forecast at 41.9 million tonnes.

That is also 1.5 percent lower than the average grain harvest of 42.5 million tonnes over the past five years, according to Joachim Rukwied, the DBV president. Germany, along with much of Europe, has seen record-breaking temperatures this summer along with limited rainfall, sending river levels down and withering swathes of countryside.

Rukwied described "enormous regional differences" in the harvest, with farmers in southern and western Germany in particular suffering from a lack of rain amid the heat and reporting "low yields, or even total crop failure in some cases". He said it was now too late in the growing season in areas "where drought damage is severe" to expect any help from a change in the weather.

Compounding problems for German farmers, according to the DBV, are notably higher input costs due to the global shortages of oil and other raw materials from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz during the Middle East war.

The resulting scarcity has pushed up prices of diesel fuel, fertilisers and



FILE PHOTO: AFP
A combine harvester in Gross Machnow, eastern Germany, at the start of the country's harvest in early July.

pesticides. "Overall, the poor harvest comes at a time of economic precariousness," the group said Tuesday. "Significantly lower yields -- combined with low producer prices on the one hand and high costs for inputs such as diesel, crop protection products, and fertilisers on the other -- are placing an enormous strain on the liquidity of many farms."

Rukwied asked the German government to launch an emergency aid programme for farmers including early payouts of farm subsidies, more state aid for fertiliser purchases and cuts to diesel fuel taxes.

The winter rapeseed crop was "hit hardest, with a 20 per cent drop in yield", Rukwied noted, adding that pests took a toll in addition to the drought and heat. Winter barley fared better, with yields down by only four percent, which the DBV attributed to a larger planted area this year and the fact that the crop had "largely reached maturity before the heatwave and could be harvested earlier".

The apple harvest in Germany is also expected to take a hit from the parched weather, Germany's Federal Statistical Office said in a report also released

Tuesday. The total apple haul is forecast to drop 17.9 percent from last year's exceptionally large crop, and be down 5.4 per cent compared to the average harvest over the past decade.

Apples are by far the most widely harvested tree fruit in Germany, and the agency said the decline was due to "recurring heatwaves and persistent dry weather during the spring and summer of 2026". "As a result, many apples are dropping from the trees prematurely, remaining very small, or suffering from sunburn damage," the agency said.

PRISM

Bear enters home, eats leftover KFC

Kentucky: A Kentucky woman awoke to discover a bear had wandered into her house through an open door and feasted on her leftover fried chicken.

Kendra North said she and her partner had the front door of their Harlan County home open Wednesday night for air circulation and forgot to close it before going to sleep.

North awoke to a phone call from her sister, who had spotted a bear from her nearby home. She discovered the bear had entered her home and eaten her leftover KFC -- and destroyed her glass table in the process. "I'm a little sad over my KFC," North told WDKY-TV.

North said she spotted another bear on her porch while she was cooking sloppy joes two days later. She said the sightings have taught her a valuable lesson. "I keep that front door shut good though at night now, and apparently 7 p.m. is bear time now too," North told WLKY-TV.

Corgis and owners descend for annual race

Lithuania City: The annual Corgi Race Vilnius in Lithuania featured about 150 short-legged canines from nine different countries.

The Saturday event featured multiple races, costume contests, a "smartest nose" tracking competition, puzzle-solving contests and a " Mightiest Voice" barking contest.

Participating corgis and owners hailed from nine countries including Latvia, Poland, Estonia, Germany, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Britain and the United States.

The first Corgi Race Vilnius was held in 2020 as a friendly contest between two corgis and their owners. Subsequent years have seen it become an international event.

Agencies

TODAY IN HISTORY

- 1905– Sun Yat-sen, Song Jiaoren, and others establish the Tongmenghui, a Republican, anti-Qing revolutionary organisation, in Tokyo, Japan.
- 1914– World War I: Brussels is captured during the German invasion of Belgium.
- 1920– The first commercial radio station, 8MK (now WWJ), begins operations in Detroit.
- 1920– The National Football League is organized as the American Professional Football Conference in Canton, Ohio
- 1938– Lou Gehrig hits his 23rd career grand slam, a record that stood for 75 years until it was broken by Alex Rodriguez.
- 1940– In Mexico City, exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky is fatally wounded with an ice axe by Ramón Mercader. He dies the next day.
- 1944– World War II: The Battle of Romania begins with a major Soviet Union offensive.
- 1948– Soviet Consul General in New York, Jacob M. Lomakin is expelled by the United States, due to the Kasenkina Case.

INDIAN ARMY CHIEF RETURNS HOME

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

Indian Army Chief General Dhiraj Seth and his wife, Komal Seth, have concluded their four-day official visit to Nepal and returned to India Wednesday.

General Seth visited Nepal at the formal invitation of Chief of the Army Staff General Ashok Raj Sigdel. He and his wife were seen off at Tribhuvan International Airport by Lieutenant General Pradeep Jung KC, Vice-Chief of the Army Staff of the Nepali Army, and his wife.

During the visit, General Seth was conferred the honorary rank of General of the Nepali Army by President Ramchandra Paudel.

He also paid separate courtesy calls on President Ramchandra Paudel, Prime Minister and Defence Minister Balendra Shah, and Chief of the Army Staff General Sigdel during his stay in Nepal.

The visit is expected to further strengthen and deepen the cordial military relations between Nepal and India, according to Brigadier General and Spokesperson for the Army Headquarters, Rajaram Basnet.



Rastriya Swatantra Party President Rabi Lamichhane addresses a party meeting attended by ministers and lawmakers in Kathmandu on Wednesday.

PHOTO: SUJAN GURUNG/TRN

Red Cross seeks clarifications from provincial committees



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) has sought clarifications from the seven provincial and 15 district committees for their alleged involvement in political activities and failure to fulfill the duties mandated by the statute of the organisation.

Issuing letters on Wednesday, the NRCS has asked for written clarification within three days as mandated by its Central Ad-hoc Committee meeting on Monday. It also asked them to clarify what reasons and circumstances led to involvement in activities contrary to maintaining transparency, acceptability, and integrity in the organisation.

In case of failure of the satisfactory response, the respective committees can be dissolved, according to the NRCS source. The district committees that are asked for clarifications are Sunsari, Rautahat, Sindhupalchowk, Chitwan, Makwanpur, Kapilvastu,

Bhojpur, Saptari, Sankhuwasabha, Rasuwa, Bara, Syangja, Kavrepalanchowk, Tanahun and Parsa.

The letter read that contrary to the NRCS statute, office bearers and members of those committee have engaged with various political parties and their sister organisations, thereby violating the fundamental principles of the Red Cross.

"Serious challenges have emerged regarding maintaining the Society's acceptability, transparency, and integrity. Vehicles, financial assets, and other resources have been misused," it said while adding that the repeated reminders issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross (Compliance and Mediation Committee) regarding integrity, honesty, and good governance within the NRCS have also been disregarded.

According to the NRCS, head office, those committees have also failed to update membership details, execute the central regulations and directives, abide by the central policies, and submit regular reports to the central office.

NCC, UN discuss Nepal's economic priorities

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

President of Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC) Kamlesh Kumar Agrawal and UN Resident Coordinator to Nepal Lila Pieters Yahia have discussed Nepal's economic priorities and challenges associated with its graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed employment generation, investment promotion, export expansion, youth entrepreneurship and sustainable economic development, according to the NCC.

President Agrawal said Nepal should view LDC graduation not merely as an achievement but as the beginning of a new phase of economic transformation.

He stressed the need to prepare immediately for possible impacts on trade preferences, concessional financing and other facilities following graduation.

President Agrawal emphasised the need for a post-LDC competitiveness and export strategy focused on productivity, quality, standards, infrastructure, market access and export competitiveness.

He also sought necessary technical and policy support from the United Nations to help Nepal address the challenges associated with LDC graduation.

Agrawal said Nepal's large youth

population is a major strength for economic development and stressed the need to create employment and entrepreneurship opportunities within the country.

He said Nepal should gradually move away from excessive dependence on remittances and transition toward a production, investment and export-led economy. He sought UN support for generating productive employment in manufacturing, tourism, information technology, agriculture, hydropower, construction and services.

Highlighting the importance of youth entrepreneurship and startups, Agrawal called for stronger industry-academia collaboration, market-oriented skills development and greater emphasis on vocational education.

For achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agrawal stressed the need for stronger cooperation among the government, private sector, civil society and citizens.

He proposed establishing a mechanism for regular engagement between the NCC and the United Nations, including an annual forum for discussion on SDG related issues.

UN Resident Coordinator Yahia said the suggestions put forward by the Nepal Chamber were important and expressed her willingness to maintain regular dialogue and cooperation with the private sector.

She said regular consultations among the Nepal Chamber, other private-sector federations and the United

Nations every two to three months could be useful. She also suggested that development partners, including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, could be invited to such discussions when appropriate. On LDC graduation, Yahia stressed that Nepal now needs to move seriously toward implementing a transition strategy.

She said a task force involving the government, private sector and relevant stakeholders could be formed to coordinate and implement a smooth transition strategy, with the United Nations ready to provide support.

She emphasised that LDC graduation is ultimately Nepal's responsibility, while the United Nations can provide support and facilitation.

She also stressed the need for the private sector to engage actively with the government in implementing the transition strategy.

Yahia said Nepal needs to strengthen its commercial and judicial systems, adopt international standards, improve commercial laws and enhance institutional capacity to attract foreign investment.

She noted that Nepal still has significant groundwork to do to become a competitive destination for international investors.

She said Nepal has a limited window of opportunity to capitalize on its young population and should focus on expanding employment and productive economic activities in the coming years.

CHIEF MINISTER BHATTA WINS VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

BY AVINASH CHAUDHARY
Dhangadhi, Aug. 19

The newly appointed Chief Minister of Sudurpaschim Province, Khag Raj Bhatta, has received a vote of confidence from the Provincial Assembly.

He secured the vote of confidence at a Provincial Assembly meeting on Wednesday. Bhatta was appointed Chief Minister on August 14 under Clause (2) of Article 168 of the Constitution. Under the constitutional provision, a chief minister appointed in this manner must secure a vote of confidence from the Provincial Assembly within one month. A total of 46 Provincial Assembly members were present at the meeting. Of them, 31 voted in favour of Bhatta's motion of confidence, while 15 voted against it, Speaker Bhim Bahadur Bhandari said.

Bhandari announced that the motion had secured a majority based on the number of members currently in the Provincial Assembly.

The Nepali Communist Party (NCP) and the CPN- UML are running a coalition government in the province. Bhatta received support from 20 NCP members and 11 UML members. Provincial assembly members from the opposition Nepali Congress and Rastriya Prajatantra Party voted against the motion. Seeking a vote of confidence, Chief Minister Bhatta said good governance, sustainable development, production, employment and change were the government's main priorities.

He said the government would turn possibilities into opportunities, opportunities into production, production into prosperity and prosperity into the pinnacle of progress.

Stating that development would no longer be focused only on cities and a few areas, Bhatta said, "We will integrate the mountains, Himalayas and Terai by ensuring equal opportunities and equal priorities and adhering to the principle of balanced, proportional and inclusive development."

FOUR PCN MEMBERS ASSUME OFFICE

RS5
Kathmandu, Aug. 19

Four newly appointed members of the Press Council Nepal assumed office on Wednesday.

During a program organised at the Council office in Sanchargram, Kathmandu, PCN Chair Umesh Shrestha administered the oath of office to new members Namrata Sharma, Prakash Bhakta Mathema, Rabiraj Baral and Upasana Ghimire.

On the occasion, Chair Shrestha said it was a welcome step to have veteran members in the field of journalism as members, and that all need to work together to bring about changes in the functioning of the Council.

Govt okays...

The government has also decided to accept Japanese grant assistance of approximately Rs. 2.73 billion for a project aimed at improving air traffic control at Tribhuvan International Airport.

FM Khanal to lead delegation to UN

The government has also approved the participation of a Nepali delegation led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly, to be held in New York, United States.

The government also approved the participation of a Nepali delegation led by a joint secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs in the 14th meeting of the Border Management to be held in India on August 20 and 21.

The Cabinet approved the establishment of a Sub-Centre of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) in Nepal.

According to Minister Pokharel, the government approved the signing of a bilateral air services agreement between Nepal and Saudi Arabia and the submission to the Federal Parliament of a bill seeking to amend the Payment and Settlement Act, 2075 BS.

Further, the government endorsed the submission to the Federal Parliament of a bill seeking to amend the Citizen Investment Trust Act, 2047 BS.

The government also promoted Joint Secretary Kamal Prasad Bhattarai to the gazetted special class and appointed him as Chief Secretary of the Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers of Bagmati Province.

Political instability slows down...

Provincial Assembly members say political instability is the main reason behind the lack of expected progress in lawmaking. They say political parties have focused on forming and dissolving governments and managing shifts in the power equation, rather than prioritising the formulation and introduction of necessary bills. Deputy Speaker Babita Kumari Raut Ishar said the Provincial Assembly has been unable to function effectively because of changes in the power equation and political infighting.

"We have not been able to work properly because of changes and reshuffles in power. If this had not happened, the Provincial Assembly could have done a better job," she said. Janmat Party Provincial Assembly member Chandan Singh also said lawmaking had been

affected because the government had not provided enough bills to the Provincial Assembly. He said the government had been unable to formulate laws in line with people's expectations because it was focused on retaining power.

Over the past year, there have been several changes of government in Madhes Province. After the then-Chief Minister Satish Kumar Singh resigned following the Gen Z movement, Jitendra Prasad Sonal of the Democratic Socialist Party became chief minister. He stepped down after failing to secure a vote of confidence.

Saroj Kumar Yadav of the UML then became chief minister but also failed to win a vote of confidence and subsequently resigned. A government was then formed under the leadership of Krishna Prasad Yadav of the Nepali Congress

Students engage in investment...

The rural municipality has stated that the company has deposited the amount in the students' accounts after the procedure for orphaned students was formulated.

As students have joined the stock market, IPOs from various companies have started flowing to them. Apollo Hydro's stocks have been transferred to the name of Nihit Rai of Ganesh Basic School. The stocks of Kangal Hydro have been registered in the names of Pratim Rai of Ganesh Basic School, Sonia Rai, Simon Rai of Uma Maheshwar Secondary School and Yuniska Dahal of Shantipur Secondary School.

The stocks of Saniguard Hydro have been registered in the names of Pratim Rai and Pranisha Sunuwar of Ganesh Basic School, Subihan Bhujel and Agam Rai of Shankar Basic School, according

to the rural municipality.

The stocks of Sarvottam Paints have been registered in the name of Kushal Rai of Saraswati Secondary School and Mount Everest Hydro IPO in the name of Rashi Rai of Ganesh Basic School.

Similarly, the stocks of Taksar Pikhuva Khola Hydro have been registered in the name of Arya Saru Magar of Uma Maheshwar Secondary School.

According to Shruti Tamang, Head of the Education, Youth and Sports Branch of the rural municipality, the stocks of Everest Colour have been registered in the names of Yuniska Dahal and Sukriti Khadka of Shantipur Secondary School.

Local representatives informed that after the rural municipality formulated a procedure for students without parents, the amount has also started to be deposited in the accounts of students.

with the support of an alliance of various parties.

JSP provincial assembly member Upendra Mahato said the Provincial Assembly was also affected when political developments at the centre influenced the provincial government. He said the Assembly's regular work had been disrupted by power-sharing arrangements.

Despite the slow pace of lawmaking, the Provincial Assembly spent Rs300.316 million in the last fiscal year. It spent around 65 per cent of the Rs462.384 million budget allocated to it.

Political analyst Roshan Janakpuri said people's trust in the province was weakening because political parties were focused more on gaining and sharing power than on institutionalising the federal structure.

Currently, while the guidelines are being finalized, the rural municipality is offering a monthly allowance of Rs. 2,000 under the programme called the 'Bright Future Allowance' for students.

Furthermore, for students who are orphaned, an allocation of Rs. 10,000 per student is provided. Additionally, a total of Rs. 30,000 has been deposited for each student, with Siddhi Hydro contributing Rs. 20,000 of that amount.

The rural municipality has also been conducting education for orphaned students in the rural municipality to organize the education sector.

"For the first time in the country, we have connected students to the stock market. Our goal is for students to build the capital they need along with their studies," Rural municipality chairman Syangbo said.

Give priority...

Similarly, priority must be given to domestically produced goods when purchasing stationery and printing materials, furniture and furnishings, construction materials, machinery, tools and equipment, agricultural and livestock products, and food and beverages.

"The move has been taken to ensure the full implementation of existing legal provisions governing public procurement," the statement issued by the Prime Minister's Secretariat read.

The initiative aims to increase the contribution of domestic production to the national economy, substitute growing imports, promote locally produced goods, protect local skills and enterprises, and create employment opportunities within the country by strictly enforcing existing legal provisions.

The directive clarifies that domestic goods must be procured in accordance with the Public Procurement Act, 2007, and other prevailing laws, while ensuring their availability, quality, price and safety standards.

Public bodies must also make it mandatory to include provisions giving priority to domestic products when preparing tender documents.

To ensure effective implementation, heads of concerned agencies will be required to regularly monitor the procurement of domestic goods, while ministries will conduct quarterly inspections to ensure the use of locally produced products.



Dhimal community seeks to translate 'recognition' into concrete results

BY BISHNU PRASAD POKHAREL
Damak, Aug. 19

The Dhimal community, which has preserved its language, culture, traditions and traditional way of life for generations in the eastern Tarai, is now being recognised by local governments.

In 2017, the then Mayor of Damak Municipality, Romanath Oli, had declared the Dhimal community as the first citizens of the town through its first municipal assembly.

The municipality also decided to prioritise the participation of the Dhimal community in official functions and public ceremonies.

Following suit, various local governments in Jhapa and Morang have declared Dhimal people as the 'first citizens' or 'first people' of the area.

This declaration has publicly acknowledged the historical identity of the community. However, there have been complaints that such recognition has remained largely symbolic and has not brought significant changes to the everyday lives of the Dhimal people.

Nevertheless, members of the community regard the honour given by local governments as a matter of pride.

According to the National Census 2021, the population of the Dhimal community in Nepal stands at 25,643.

A large proportion of them reside in Jhapa and Morang districts. Possessing their own language, culture, traditional attire, social structure and customary lifestyle, the Dhimal community represents one of the unique identities of the eastern Tarai.

He said that this decision was recorded in history as the first



A statue of the Dhimal community at the main entrance of Damak Municipality, which was vandalised during the Gen Z movement.

PHOTO: BISHNU PRASAD POKHAREL

significant event in which a local government formally recognised the history and contribution of the Dhimal people.

Although a statue, symbolising the Dhimal community, had been erected at the main gate of the municipal office, it was later destroyed during the Gen Z movement by protesters. According to Damak Mayor Ram Kumar Thapa, despite the declaration of the Dhimal community as first citizens, there is still a need to establish a clear legal basis and institutional framework for such recognition.

He said that the local government remains committed to preserving the

traditional lifestyle and cultural heritage of the Dhimal community and ensuring their rights. Local governments including Belbari, Pathari-Shanishchare and Uurlabari in Morang also recognised the Dhimal community as the first inhabitants or first citizens.

Koshi Provincial Assembly member and Dhimal community leader Nambar Lsal Dhimai said that local governments which have declared the Dhimal people as first citizens should also adopt the Dhimal language as an official language for government business. According to him, the term 'first citizens' should not merely signify honour

but should serve as a basis for securing rights. He said that the community's key demands include the preservation of the Dhimal language, education in the mother tongue, targeted scholarships for children, employment opportunities and meaningful participation in policymaking.

One of the greatest challenges facing the Dhimal community is the preservation of its mother tongue. Community leaders said that as the use of the Dhimal language declines among younger generations, the issue of language transmission is becoming increasingly serious.

'Pension Patta' tells story of ex-Gurkha soldiers

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Leknath, Aug. 19

The team of the Nepali film 'Pension Patta', which is set to be released on September 11, is currently in Pokhara.

The film tells the story of Nepali ex-Gurkha soldiers and reflects various changes and problems in Nepali society. The team shared details about the film at a press conference on Wednesday. At the press conference organised by the Federation of Nepali Journalists, Kaski, writer and director Maotse Gurung said the film was based on the problems faced by many Nepali families when they are unable to receive a mother's pension.

The film shows the problems, struggles and social circumstances that arise when a family cannot easily receive the pension benefits following the death of a former Gurkha soldier. "Many families face problems when they cannot receive their mother's pension."

I felt this issue should be presented through a film, and that became the story," Gurung said. "This is the story of ordinary people. Pension Patta is about you and me and our society."

Actor Dayahang Rai said he expected the film to connect with audiences because it tells a story from Nepali society. He said Pension Patta presents love, emotions, relationships and social structures in a simple way.

Rai said pension documents played an important role in Nepali society 30 to 40 years ago and that the



contribution of former Gurkha soldiers to society and the country should be remembered.

"Pension Patta is the story of every society. It speaks about emotions, love and social structures," said Rai. "The film is about finding a lost pension document while also showing the society and circumstances around it."

Actress Sol Gurung said she joined the film because she liked the story. She expressed confidence that audiences would enjoy the film.

Another actress, Manika Gurung, said the film deals with a relevant issue and expressed confidence that it would be well received by audiences.

The film features Dayahang Rai, Gaumaya Gurung, Wilson Bikram Rai, Buddhi Tamang, Sunil Thapa, Maya Gurung, Bishwas Gurung, Sol Gurung, Manika Gurung, DV Gurung and Panchasubba Gurung (Dilu), among others.



PHOTO : SAGAR BASNET

People observing photographs of Bangladesh captured by Chinese and Bangladeshi photojournalists at an exhibition organised by the National Photojournalists Group, Nepal, in Kathmandu on Wednesday, marking the 187th World Photography Day.

Madonna leads 2026 MTV VMA nominations

AP
New York, Aug. 19

Madonna leads the 2026 MTV Video Music Award nominations, the network announced Tuesday.

The pop superstar has been nominated in every decade of her musical career. She has 19 competitive MTV VMA wins and in 1986 became the first solo female artist to receive the Video Vanguard Award.

She is up for 11 awards at this year's ceremony, including video, artist and song of the year as well as best collaboration, dance, direction, art direction, cinematography, editing, choreography and visual effects. If she were to sweep, she'd tie Beyoncé and Taylor Swift for the title of most-awarded musician in VMA history. They have 30 each. (Eminem is the male artist with the most VMAs, with 15.)

Speaking of Swift: She follows Madonna with the second-most nominations, with nine. If she takes home even one award, she will become the most-awarded artist in VMA history.

Swift is up for video and artist of the year as well as best pop, direction, art direction, cinematography, editing, choreography and visual effects.

Madonna and Swift are followed by Ariana Grande and Sabrina Carpenter with seven nods to their name as well as Bruno Mars, PinkPantheress and Zara Larsson with five. Blackpink's LISA has four and Shakira, Tate McRae, GENER8ION and Yung Lean are tied for three.



Rounding out the artist of the year category nominees are Grande, Mars, Carpenter and Morgan Wallen, in addition to Madonna and Swift.

The top prize of the night, video of the year, sees Swift's "The Fate of Ophelia" compete against Madonna's "Confessions II — The Film," Grande's "Hate That I Made You Love Me," Mars' "I Just Might," Carpenter's "Tear" and GENER8ION's "Storm" starring Yung Lean.

The two-hour show will broadcast live

on CBS on Sunday, Sept. 27, at 7:30 p.m. Eastern and 4:30 p.m. Pacific, from the Peacock Theatre in Los Angeles. It will also simulcast on MTV and be available to stream on Paramount+ in the U.S.

The show will become available to stream globally the next day on Paramount+ and MTV.

CBS is home to a number of award shows, including the Tony Awards and the American Music Awards. It has aired the Grammys since 1973, though

that show will head to ABC in 2027.

This year's Video Music Awards features 26 first-time nominees, which include GENER8ION and Yung Lean (with their aforementioned three nods for their "Storm" collaboration) and the K-pop boy band CORTIS and viral "Boston" singer Stella Lefty with two each. Other notable first-time nominees include Don Toliver, Kali Uchis, Noah Kahan, Olivia Dean, Tucker Wetmore and Sienna Spiro.

HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

ARIES: A money or trust conversation may need clearer terms. The Moon in Scorpio moves through your 8th House of Intimacy, Shared Resources, and Vulnerability while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 5th House of Creativity and Play.

CANCER: A clear budget can make today's fun easier to enjoy. The Moon in Scorpio moves through your 5th House of Creativity, Romance, and Play while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 2nd House of Money and Self-Worth.

LIBRA: A group plan feels lighter when the financial piece is clear. The Moon in Scorpio moves through your 2nd House of Money, Values, and Self-Worth while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 11th House of Friends and Community.

CAPRICORN: A shared goal needs terms that everyone can respect. The Moon in Scorpio moves through your 11th House of Friends, Community, and Future Plans while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 8th House of Shared Resources, Trust, and Mutual Support.

TAURUS: An expectation close to home may need clearer communication today. The Moon in Scorpio moves through your 7th House of Partnership while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 4th House of Home, Family, and Emotional Roots.

LEO: It is easier to share your feelings today when your words stay simple. The Moon in Scorpio moves through your 4th House of Home, Family, and Emotional Roots while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 1st House of Self.

SCORPIO: Your authority grows when your message is direct and easy to follow. The Moon moves through Scorpio and your 1st House of Self while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 10th House of Career, Reputation, and Authority.

AQUARIUS: A shared goal becomes easier when everyone understands the next step. The Moon in Scorpio moves through your 10th House of Career, Reputation, and Authority while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 7th House of Partnership.

GEMINI: Your day runs better when you focus on one thing at a time. The Moon in Scorpio moves through your 6th House of Work, Health, and Daily Habits while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 3rd House of Communication.

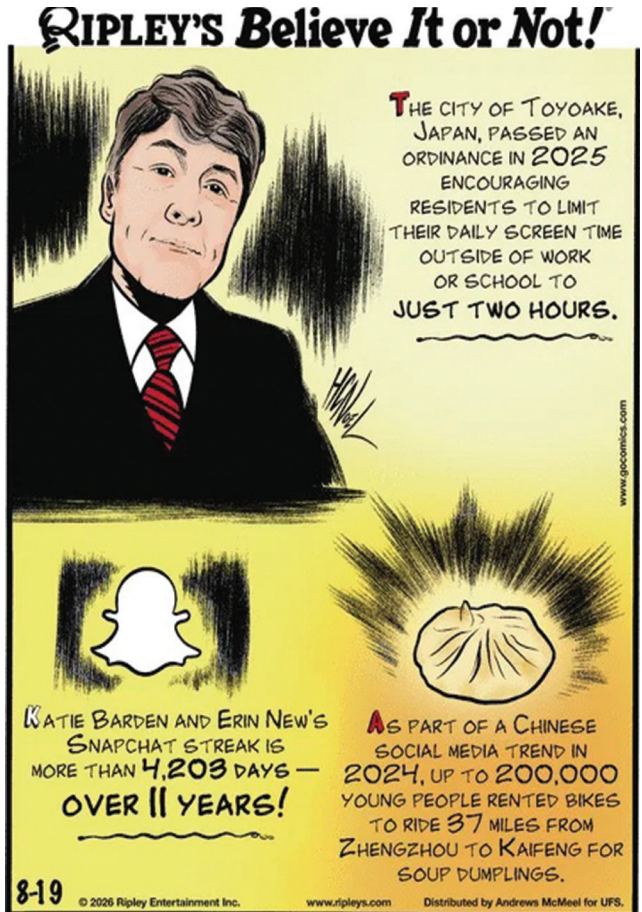
VIRGO: A thoughtful pause can make your message more useful. The Moon in Scorpio moves through your 3rd House of Communication while squaring Mercury in Leo and your 12th House of Solitude and Hidden Patterns.

SAGITTARIUS: A little quiet can help your next big idea take shape. The Scorpio Moon in your 12th House encourages solitude, while its square to Mercury challenges your beliefs, learning, travel, and perspective.

PISCES: A bigger vision becomes clearer when details are supported. The Scorpio Moon in your 9th House inspires learning, travel, and belief, while its square to Mercury challenges your work, health, and daily habits.

CARTOON

gocomics.com



Suthar shines as India crush Sri Lanka in 600th Test

AFP
Galle, Aug. 19

Left-arm spinner Manav Suthar finished with a haul of 10 wickets as India thrashed Sri Lanka by 165 runs in the first Test in Galle on Wednesday to take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

Suthar, playing only his second Test, impressed with his line and length to ensure India a memorable win in their 600th Test match.

Suthar took four wickets in the first innings and kept up the fine show to take 6-55, helping bowl out the hosts for 206 shortly after lunch on the final day.

Set a target of 372 runs, Sri Lanka's batters failed to apply themselves other than Sonal Dinusha, who top-scored in both the innings.

Indian captain Shubman Gill called the victory "very satisfying".

"We were in a comfortable position, but were not sure if the match would go on (because of the weather), but the team responded well," he said.

Gill also praised Suthar and the batsmen for their effort on a wicket that was not easy to score runs off.

"He (Suthar) has been bowling magnificently. Looks like a very promising guy and someone who can play for India for a long time," he said.

India claimed two wickets in the morning session after Sri Lanka resumed on an overnight score of 84-4 and then quickly ran through the tail.



Photo: AP

India's Manav Suthar celebrates the dismissal of Sri Lanka's Prabath Jayasuriya during the day five of the first cricket test match in Galle, Sri Lanka, Wednesday.

Captain Dhananjaya de Silva (59) and first innings centurion Dinusha tried to fight back, batting for over two hours to add 95 runs for the fifth wicket.

'It was not easy'

De Silva, who had been dismissed off a no ball early in his innings, looked set to make the most of the reprieve, posting his 20th half-century.

But his knock ended after he

attempted a sweep shot off Ravindra Jadeja and was caught at short fine leg by Suthar.

"It was not easy (batting fourth in Galle)," said de Silva.

"They won the toss, got the runs on the board, and with our batting, we lost wickets and it went downhill from there."

Wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella posted a half-century in the first

innings but couldn't make an impact in the second.

Dickwella fell for 10 when he attempted to hit Prasadhi Krishna over the slips but ended up edging one to the wicketkeeper.

Suthar triggered a late-order collapse with a triple-wicket maiden after lunch and then in his next over claimed the last wicket of Keshara Nuwantha as Sri Lanka folded 36 minutes after lunch.

The last four wickets fell for seven runs with Suthar claiming all four.

The 25-year-old Dinusha (84) put up a solid effort despite little support from his teammates.

Playing his fourth Test, he showcased maturity beyond his age, taking on India's spinners with nimble footwork.

He was dismissed when Dhruv Jurel at leg slip took a bat-pad catch. He faced 128 deliveries during his defiant knock and hit eight fours and one six.

Apart from Suthar, the other stand out performer for India was top-order batter Devdutt Padikkal, who posted 167 and 44 in the game, having come in as a late injury replacement.

"The wicket had its natural wear and tear (but) it was a good Test wicket," Padikkal said.

"Turned a lot more from the third day onwards. In the end, it was all about who came out on top with their skill-set."

The teams now head to Colombo for the second Test match starting on Sunday.

Rodri joins La Liga champions Barcelona from City



AFP
Barcelona, Aug. 19

Spain's World Cup-winning captain Rodri said he was ready to "feel that excitement again" after completing his move to Barcelona from Premier League side Manchester City on Tuesday.

In a statement on their website, the La Liga champions said the 30-year-old has signed a deal that will run until 2030, bringing an end to one of the longest-running transfer sagas of the summer.

After two failed bids, Barca and Man City reached a deal on Sunday, which a source from the English club told AFP would go up to 76.5 million euros (\$88.6 million), including bonuses.

Rodri then arrived in the Catalan capital the following day to thresh out personal terms with his new club.

"I'm very happy and excited about this new stage in my career," Rodri said during his unveiling on Tuesday.

"It's a fresh challenge, a chance to experience new things and feel that excitement again."

After seven trophy-laden years at Man City, the former Atletico Madrid and Villarreal player was reported to be close to joining Real Madrid, before finally opting for their arch-rivals.

The midfielder has struggled with injuries over the past two seasons but shone as Spain won their second World Cup in North America last month.

Despite Barca's recent dominance of La Liga, they have failed to lift European club football's biggest trophy since 2015, when the club's star-studded attack of Lionel Messi, Neymar and

Luis Suarez fired them to their fifth Champions League title.

"It's a pleasure to be at Barca. I'll give 100 percent of everything I have," Rodri said.

"I'm here to compete for everything, for big things like the Champions League.

"I've come to a hugely ambitious club that really suits my personality, so I'll try to help in every way I can to achieve our objectives this season."

To help him achieve these goals is a Camp Nou dressing room replete with familiar faces from Rodri's Euro 2024 and World Cup successes with Spain, including Lamine Yamal, Pedri and Dani Olmo.

He will also join up with new teammates, widemen Anthony Gordon and Karim Adeyemi, after the pair joined Barcelona earlier in the close season.

One of Pep Guardiola's most trusted lieutenants at City, Rodri said he believed his new coach at Barcelona, Hansi Flick, would "bring a lot to my career". (Flick has) a style that I think is somewhat different from what I've experienced before, so it will be enriching and help me grow as a player," he added.

Rodri was a vital figure for Guardiola during their time together at the Etihad Stadium, leading City to the 2023 Champions League and four Premier League titles among 12 major trophies. "I am leaving the club with a huge sense of pride about what we have achieved and gratitude too for so many amazing memories," Rodri said in a statement on City's website.

"What we have done together in these years is something both very special and unforgettable."

VILLA SIGNS JAPAN GOALKEEPER SUZUKI

AP
Birmingham, Aug. 19

Aston Villa signed U.S.-born Japan goalkeeper Zion Suzuki from Parma on Wednesday, a transfer that raises doubts about the future of Argentina international Emi Martinez at the Premier League club heading into the new season.

The 23-year-old Suzuki, who was Japan's goalkeeper at the World Cup this summer and made a memorable save onto the post from Brazil star Vinicius Junior's shot, moved in a deal worth up to 35 million euros (\$40 million), The Athletic reported.

Martinez, Argentina's World Cup-winning goalie in 2022, has been first choice for Villa for six years but has been close to leaving for the past two offseasons. Juventus reportedly tried to sign him in recent weeks and Martinez wasn't involved in the UEFA Super Cup loss to Paris Saint-Germain last week.

Suzuki was born in New Jersey, grew up in Urawa, Japan, and moved to Belgium to play for Sint-Truiden in 2023 before joining Parma the following year. Villa won the Europa League last season and also finished fourth in the Premier League, so will play in the Champions League this season.

Palace adds Gozo

Crystal Palace added to its squad for another European campaign by signing United States youth international Xavier Gozo in a club record sale for Real Salt Lake.

The Conference League titleholder signed the 19-year-old winger to a five-year contract late Monday. The transfer fee was reportedly \$15 million.

Palace starts the Premier League at Everton on Saturday and will play in the second-tier Europa League. UEFA makes the league phase draw in Monaco next week.

David promised to Brighton

After scoring at the World Cup for Canada, forward Promise David is moving to Brighton on loan from Union Saint-Gilloise.

Brighton said its deal for the 25-year-old David "includes an obligation to buy should certain criteria be met." He played in four of co-host Canada's games at the World Cup and scored in a 2-1 loss to Switzerland in the group stage.

Elvedi to Leeds

Leeds got a solid defensive addition by signing Switzerland veteran Nico Elvedi from Borussia Mönchengladbach for a reported 8 million euros (\$9.3 million).

Elvedi has been to the past three World Cups and played every minute of Switzerland's six-game run to the quarterfinals, ended by a hard-luck loss against Argentina last month.

Japan target record medal haul at home Asian Games

AFP
Tokyo, Aug. 19

Japan are aiming to win more medals than ever before at their home Asian Games next month in Nagoya, chef de mission Kosei Inoue said Wednesday after the team's inauguration ceremony.

Japan's biggest Asian Games haul came the last time they hosted the multisport spectacular, winning 218 medals including 64 golds in Hiroshima in 1994.

Japan are sending more than 1,400 athletes and officials to this year's Asian Games, which take place in Nagoya and the wider Aichi area from September 19 to October 4.

Inoue, a former Olympic champion in judo who also won Asian Games gold in Bangkok in 1998, said he had high hopes for this year's crop of athletes.

"We won 218 medals at the Hiroshima Asian Games, so in that sense it's a very high hurdle," he said.

"But we want to do everything we can to at least match that level and, if we can, surpass it."

Japan finished second in the medal table in China's Hangzhou in 2023, winning 188 in total, with 52 golds.

That figure was dwarfed by the host nation, who topped the table with 383 medals, including a whopping 201 golds.

"The level in Asia, with China at the centre but also further away in Central Asia, has really improved," said Inoue.

"More and more Asian athletes are thriving on the world stage."

Japan's team for the Asian Games includes Paris Olympics champions Shinnosuke Oka in gymnastics and Haruka Kitaguchi in javelin.

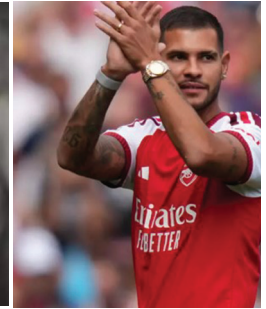
Five Premier League stars to watch this season



Morgan Rogers



Elliot Anderson



Bruno Guimaraes



Sandro Tonali



Jeremy Jacquet

AFP
London, Aug. 19

The new Premier League season kicks off on Friday, setting the stage for a galaxy of stars to shine in the 2026-27 campaign. AFP Sport looks at five players to watch:

Morgan Rogers (Chelsea)

Signed for a British record £117 million (\$158 million) from Aston Villa, the England midfielder will be expected to lead the Xabi Alonso revolution at Stamford Bridge.

Rogers is Chelsea's marquee close-season recruit and must live up to his eye-watering price tag if Alonso is to revitalise the Blues after their dismal 10th-place finish in the Premier League last season.

The 24-year-old arrives fresh from helping Villa end their 30-year trophy drought by winning the Europa League.

Rogers' friendship with Chelsea forward Cole Palmer from their time together in Manchester City's youth academy will help his acclimation, but Alonso must find a way to harness the talents of two players that operate in similar areas of the pitch.

Elliot Anderson (Manchester City)

The 23-year-old held the record as the most expensive British player for just a matter of days before being eclipsed by Morgan Rogers' move to Chelsea.

Signed from Nottingham Forest for £116 million, Anderson has the formidable task of replacing the prodigious output of Rodri and Bernardo Silva.

Spain World Cup winner Rodri has joined Barcelona, while Silva moved to Real Madrid, leaving a huge void in City's midfield that Anderson must fill for new boss Enzo Maresca to enjoy a successful debut season.

Anderson's astute reading of the game, smooth passing and composed demeanour earned the England international his big-money move and a massive pay rise.

Now he has to justify that huge expense as City try to dethrone champions Arsenal after two years without a Premier League title.

Bruno Guimaraes (Arsenal)

The Brazil midfielder was Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta's consolation prize after missing out on Morgan Rogers.

The Gunners declined to match Chelsea's record-breaking offer

for Rogers and pivoted to Guimaraes, who makes the champions' already formidable squad even stronger.

Arsenal paid £75 million to sign the Newcastle captain and he will slot in alongside Declan Rice and Martin Odegaard in midfield.

"Since the first day he came in, it has been such a natural thing," Arsenal captain Odegaard said of Guimaraes' transition.

"Although we had some big fights with him in the past, he has just come in as a real natural part of the team.

"He can win the ball, he's a fighter. But he also has so much quality and is calm on the ball."

Sandro Tonali (Tottenham)

The Italy midfielder took just 10 minutes to agree to become Tottenham's record signing. Now he must show that rapid decision was the right move for himself and his new club.

With his relentless work ethic and quality in possession, the 26-year-old was a key figure in Newcastle's renaissance before their dip last season.

Looking to take his career to new heights, Tonali was quickly convinced to join Tottenham manager Roberto De Zerbi's overhaul of a club that are looking

upwards after narrowly avoiding relegation in May.

"When you are happy after a 10-minute chat, everything is perfect," said Tonali, who acknowledged the size of his fee brings "a lot of pressure".

Jeremy Jacquet (Liverpool)

Jacquet has been signed to quell the mounting concern about a creaky defence that lacked the authority of Liverpool's title-winning unit in 2025.

Now 35, Virgil van Dijk no longer looks impregnable.

The Liverpool captain's struggles were exacerbated by the woes of his defensive colleagues last term.

Ibrahim Konate has joined Real Madrid, while Andrew Robertson moved to Tottenham.

Jacquet, 21, had to wait for his Anfield move after a £60 million switch from Rennes was agreed in the winter transfer window.

And Van Dijk acknowledged their nascent partnership at the heart of Liverpool's defence is a work in progress.

"It's pretty clear that you need to form a connection together and that takes a bit of time," he said.

"That's absolutely normal, but hopefully we can get that going as quickly as possible."

SNIPPETS

Nepali tennis squad heads to India for training

Kathmandu (TRN): A four-member Nepali tennis team departs for Bengaluru, India, on Thursday for a specialised training camp ahead of the 20th Asian Games, to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan. The squad includes three players, Pradeep Khadka, Nishan Shrestha, and Swastika Bista, who will undergo rigorous preparation at the Rohan Bopanna Tennis Academy. They will be accompanied by coach Renu Devi Konda. The team is scheduled to return to Nepal on 8 September. Two other athletes selected for the Asian Games, Abhishek Bastola and Shivali Gurung, are currently pursuing training programmes abroad, according to the Nepal Tennis Association. The team was bid farewell during a formal programme in Kathmandu on Wednesday. The 20th Asian Games are scheduled to take place from 19 September to 4 October 2026.

Xtreme Energy named title sponsor for NVL

Kathmandu (TRN): The Nepal Volleyball League (NVL) has secured Xtreme Energy as its title sponsor for a three-year term. Kedia Group, the event organiser, announced the partnership at a press conference in Kathmandu on Wednesday. The sponsorship agreement, valued at 27.5 million rupees, was signed by Ashwin Kedia, Managing Director of the NVL, and Sonia Rana, Business Head of Xtreme Energy. The inaugural edition of the franchise-based tournament will take place from 4 to 12 September at the National Sports Council (NSC) covered hall in Tripureshwar. The event was rescheduled from its original August dates by the organisers last Friday. Six franchise teams will compete in this debut edition: Khaptad Falcons, Madhesh Warriors, Sagarmatha Smashers, Kathmandu Reds, Annapurna Spiker Kings and Karnali Shivaraj.



Sunuwar, Shah to attend World Triathlon seminar

Kathmandu (TRN): Technical officials Yuvraj Sunuwar and Chahana Shah are set to participate in the Seoul World Triathlon Technical Officials and Event Organisers Level 2 Seminar 2026. The three-day event, organised by the Korea Triathlon Federation, will be held from 21 to 23 August. Nildendra Raj Shrestha, President of the Nepal Triathlon Association, bid farewell to the pair on Wednesday, wishing them a successful visit to South Korea. Also in attendance at the ceremony were Niraj Shrestha, Treasurer of the Nepal Triathlon Association; Gyan Krishna Prajapati, President of the Bagmati Province Triathlon Association; and Level 2 coach Sanubhai Paudel.