

**Kathmandu University**  
**Department of Computer Science and Engineering**  
**Dhulikhel, Kavre**



**A Project Report  
on**

**“Veritas”**

**COMP 303**

**(For partial fulfillment of 3<sup>rd</sup> Year/ 1<sup>st</sup> Semester in Computer Engineering)**

**Submitted by:**

**Aashish K.C. (19)**

**Urina Lama (25)**

**Neha Malla (27)**

**Shusant Sapkota (43)**

**Submitted to:**

**Dr. Gajendra Sharma**

**Department of Computer Science and Engineering**

**Submission Date: 10th March, 2020**

# **CERTIFICATION**

## **THIRD YEAR FIRST SEMESTER PROJECT REPORT**

**on**

**VERITAS**

**By:**

**Aashish K.C.**

**Urina Lama**

**Neha Malla**

**Shusant Sapkota**

**Approved by:**

**Project Coordinator**

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**Dr. Gajendra Sharma**

**Associate Professor**

**Project Supervisor**

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**Mr. Dhiraj Shrestha**

**Assistant Professor**

## **ABSTRACT**

Newspapers have been around since the 17th century helping with the delivery of current news and views of the world. Even though the world has moved significantly forward in terms of technology, newspapers are still the most reliable sources of information, but not everyone gets to read newspapers whenever they want. People have busy lives and do not get to sit around reading texts off long newspaper articles. Similarly, there are people who cannot read properly even though they have the time to spare. That's why, with the advancement in technology it would be of immense help for such people if there was a tool which could help them go through newspapers easily. Keeping that in mind, this project deals with the development of an OCR and a text-to-speech tool, allowing people to read and listen to articles easily.

Veritas uses tesseract to extract texts from the newspaper articles and uses gTTS to get text-to-speech of the extracted articles. So, people can use it to read texts off of newspapers or listen to the news articles as well. In this way, it will be beneficial, both to the people with reading disabilities and to people who are busy and cannot access TV to watch news to easily go through newspapers on the go.

### **Keywords:**

*Newspaper articles, OCR, tesseract, gTTS, text-to-speech, Computer Vision*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

It is an immense pleasure to express our sincere gratitude to our project supervisor Mr. Dhiraj Shrestha and project coordinator Dr. Gajendra Sharma for providing his valuable guidance, support and useful suggestions throughout the course of this project. The moral support and continuous encouragement we were provided with, enabled us to complete our work successfully.

We are also thankful to Kathmandu University and the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (DoCSE) for providing us with this wonderful opportunity to work on this project.

## SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviation | Full Form                     |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| OCR          | Optical Character Recognition |
| OpenCV       | Open-source Computer Vision   |
| gTTS         | Google Text-to-Speech         |

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

As the world moves forward, we as human beings are being more and more busy and lazy as well. People have a very busy life and they hardly get to sit and read books or newspapers. We are in an age where people prefer audio books over actual books due to lack of time and energy to go through them, themselves. Similar is the case with newspapers. People have less time to go through newspapers, yet, they find it very important to stay updated with the current situation of the world they are living. But there are not ways they can go through newspapers like they can in case of audiobooks.

Similarly, there are a lot of people who understand English, and can read a few known English words but cannot go through texts themselves. Those are people who do have access to mobile phones and can operate them properly but when it comes to reading newspapers, they cannot read it at all. There are not ways to go through the news if you cannot read a newspaper or if you do not watch the TV.

Veritas is a project intended for such people particularly. The word Veritas refers to truth in Roman mythology, the goddess of truth. Thus, our project 'Veritas' also speaks the truth, through the use of technological advancement, the mobile phone. Veritas extracts texts from newspapers, using the features of OCR, and then, reads out the extracted text using text-to-speech, thus, in a sense, it speaks out the truth. In this way, Veritas helps people with reading disabilities who understand simple words to read out newspaper articles and people with busy schedules to get updated with the daily news and happenings. With the world moving towards modernity, this project helps both the busy youth, and the old and elderly to have equal access to news and articles and thus makes life easier, just a little bit every day.



## 1.2 Objectives

This main objective of this project are as follows:

- To access the newspaper articles.
- To extract texts from the newspaper articles, so that they can be made available to read.
- To provide people with an option to read the news in absence of newspapers with articles downloaded from the site.
- To convert the extracted text into an audio and provide the option to listen to the news article in audio.

## 1.3 Motivation and Significance

As people move into a world where life is made easier, each day more than the last one because of technological advancements, preferences have changed a lot. People, nowadays, prefer audiobooks more than traditional books. Apps like Audible, Google Audiobooks, Kobo Audiobooks and Downpour find spaces in people's phones. People are more likely to listen to audiobooks, listen to podcasts than read books. Similar should be the case with newspapers. It is important for people to be updated with the current affairs of the world and yet it is time consuming to go through news articles. Similarly, there are people who do want to go through news articles but cannot read them. Veritas is the project which allows people to go through news easily, saving both their time and effort.

The significance of this project are:

1. This project helps extract segments of newspaper articles and allows users to go through them according to their titles.
2. It allows users to listen to articles and thus they can go through articles while they are moving, travelling or working.

## **CHAPTER 2: RELATED WORKS**

### **2.1 PressReader**

PressReader gives unlimited access to thousands of magazines and newspapers from around the world. Newspaper stories and magazine articles can be read the minute they're available on newsstands. Users can shift easily between the original page replica and a custom story layout optimized for mobile reading. Or, bring it all to life with listening mode, one-touch translation, and dynamic commenting.

Features:

- Read publications and stories just as they appear in print
- Get publications auto-delivered so one never misses an issue
- Download full issues for offline reading
- Customize font size and type
- Listen to stories with on-demand narration
- Bookmark articles for later reading, reference or sharing
- Set My Topic alerts so that user can always see important news on their keywords



Figure 2.1.1: PressReader Web view

## 2.2 Free Online OCR

NewOCR.com is a free online OCR (Optical Character Recognition) service, can analyze the text in any image file, faxes, screenshots, PDF documents and ebooks that is uploaded, and then convert the text from the image into text that can easily be edited on the computer.

Features:

- No registration required
- Keeps user data safe and secure(all files will be removed from the server)
- Based on Tesseract OCR engine
- Multi-language recognition
- Mathematical equations recognition

- Page layout analysis (multi-column text recognition)
- Different ways to display and process the resulting text: download as file, edit in Google Docs or copy to Clipboard
- Supports low-resolution images

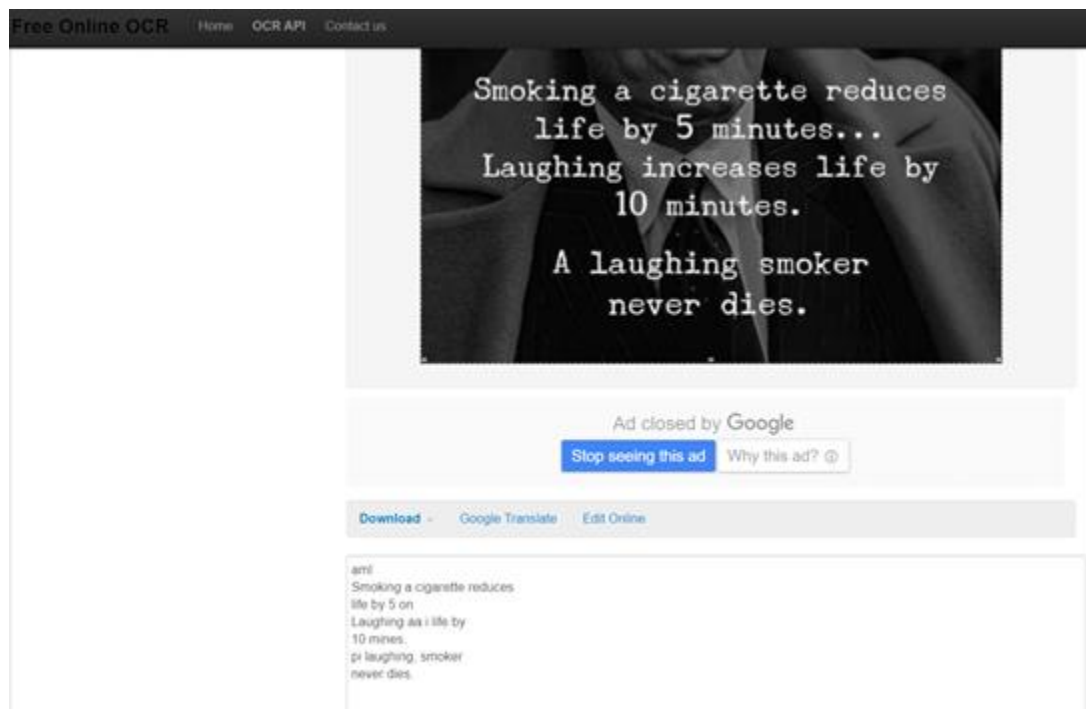


Figure 2.2.1: Free Online OCR conversion

## **CHAPTER 3: SYSTEM ANALYSIS AND DESIGN**

### **3.1 System Requirement Specification**

#### **3.1.1. Software Specification**

##### **Front End Tools:**

Flutter: Flutter is an open-source UI software development kit created by Google, used to develop applications for Android, iOS, Windows, Mac, Linux, Google Fuchsia and the web.

##### **Back End Tools:**

Python: Python is an interpreted, high-level, general-purpose programming language.

OpenCV: OpenCV is a library of programming functions mainly aimed at real-time computer vision.

gTTS: gTTS (Google Text-to-Speech) is a Python library and CLI tool to interface with Google Translate's text-to-speech API.

Flask framework: Flask is an extensible micro web framework for building web applications with Python. It is classified as a microframework because it does not require particular tools or libraries.

#### **3.1.2 Hardware Specification**

Since the application is simple, it does not require any complex hardware.

1. 32-bit architecture
2. Kernel version 3.10 or higher
3. At least 4 GB of memory/RAM
4. At least 5 GB of disk space

### 3.2 Use Case Diagram (UML Modeling)

Use Case diagram for each user passenger and bus have been presented below:

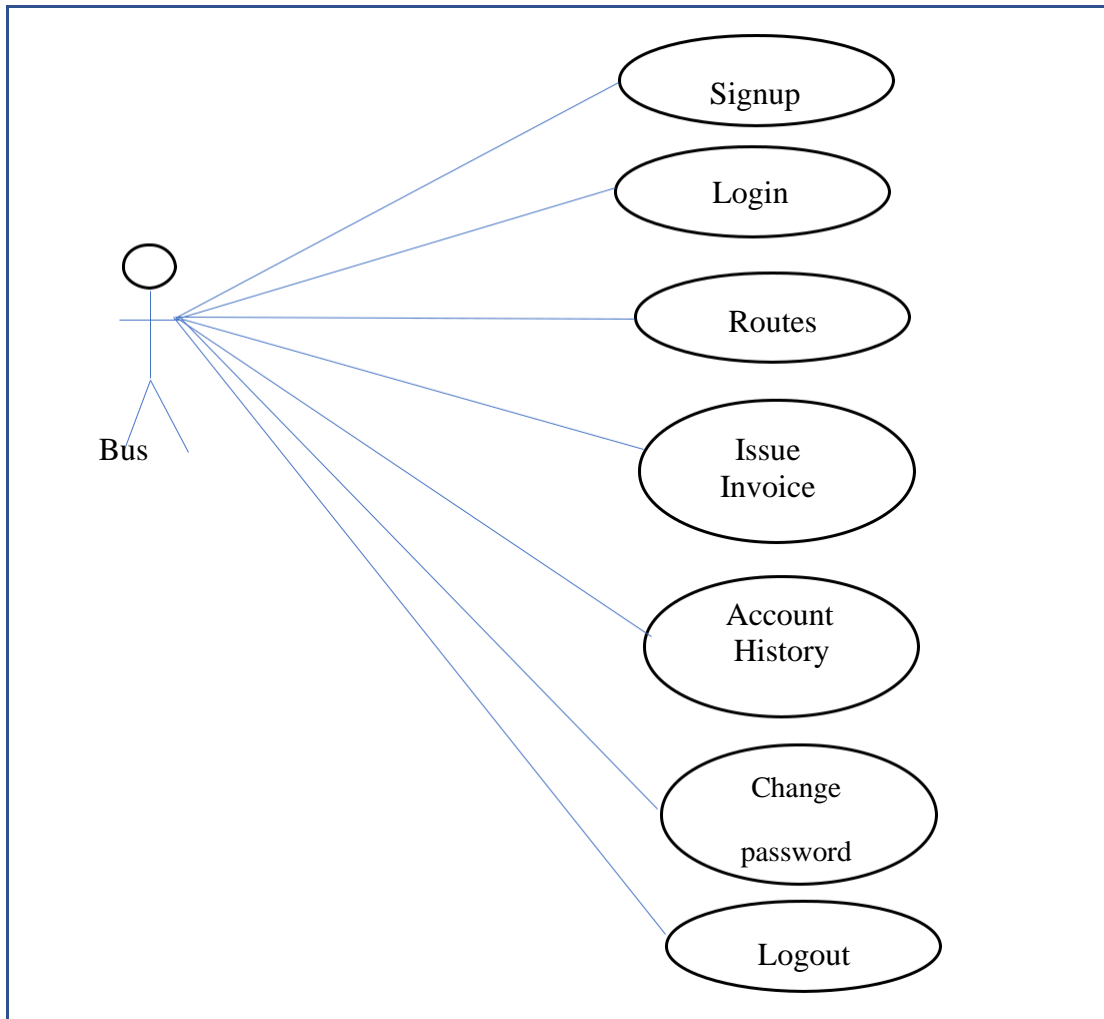
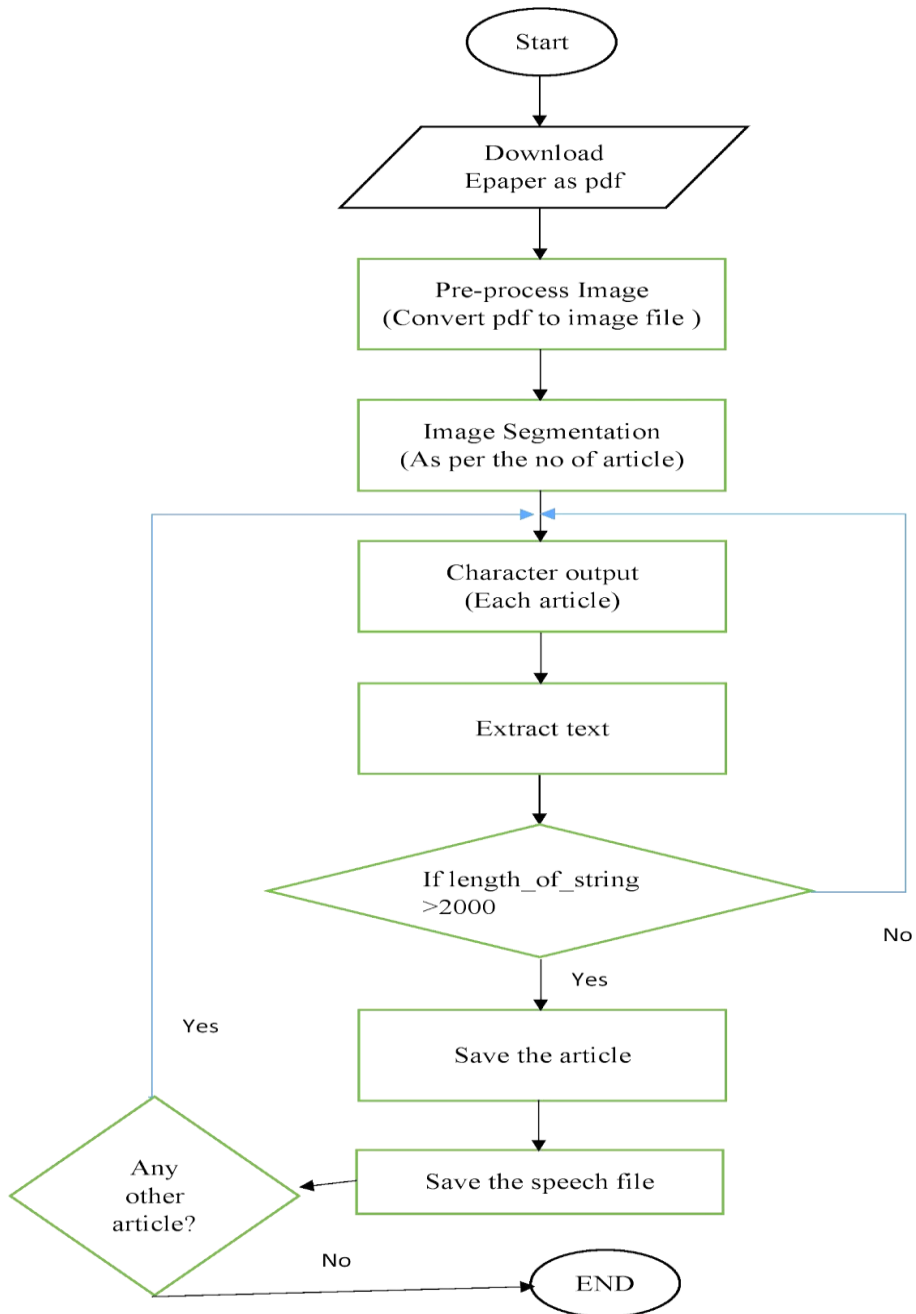


Figure: Use Case Diagram of Bus and our System

### 3.3 Flow Diagram



## **CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **4.1 Discussion:**

This project was completed successfully. The project aims at segmenting newspaper into segments representing individual articles and digitizing it. The module for segmentation is developed and can be used in mobile application and website. The equipment required for this project to implement is python compiler.

### **4.2 Achievements:**

During the completion of this product, knowledge of Python, OpenCV, gTTS, Tesseract was gained. This product helps in digitalization of written data in Nepal. The developed module can be implemented in application, website.

### **4.3 Features:**

The features of Veritas are:

- The user should upload the newspaper page as .jpg or .png to the module.
- The module operates on this image and generates segments of articles.
- This generated segment is treated with the 'title' module to get a headline image corresponding to that article.
- These images are treated with tesseract to extract text.
- The text is treated with a text to speech module to generate speech.



## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

With the help of Python, OpenCV, Tesseract, gTTS the idea of making Veritas module has been successfully completed. We are glad to have managed to fulfill the major concept of the project although small detailing is still to be done due to the time limitation.

### **5.2 Limitation**

Veritas has following limitations:

- a) Text to Speech module requires internet. So the module is not fully available offline.
- b) It is static and functions properly on the image with pixel density 150dpi.
- c) It fails to segment newspapers which lack inter-segmentation lines among articles.

### **5.3 Future Enhancement**

We plan to create an application version( both mobile and web) including the dynamic article segmentation method so as to make this app more efficient and effective to use. In addition to that we also intend to make the module functions faster, smoother and even offline.

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## APPENDIX

### Gantt Chart

We divided our whole project into seven basic tasks and planned it to complete within sixteen weeks. The timeframe for this project is divided as:

| week          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Planning      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Preparation   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Work division |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Coding        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Debugging     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Documentation |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Testing       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

Figure i: Gantt Chart

**Project Started:** November 22, 2019

**Project Deadline:** March 10, 2020



People sit around a fire at Mangalshar in Lalpur on Saturday. A child sweeps through the country as it has been raining in the last couple of days.

PHOTO: KIRAN SHRESTHA

## Former Maoist leaders in ruling party fear their apprehensions about merger are coming true

The Maoists are already a minority in Nepal Communist Party as they had merged with 40 percent share in committees.

TINA PRAJNAN

KATHMANDU, JAN 4

Two years ago, when the CPN-UML and CPN (Maoist Centre) leaderships were working to announce the merger of the two parties, there were concerns and apprehensions among the rank and file of the two parties.

Second and third rung leaders expressed their concerns privately but in public, they used their leadership line. Leaders from both parties knew that the merger was a compulsory move for the Maoist party than the UML. Maoist leaders, hence, were more apprehensive. The parties merged in May 2018 to become the Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Now, as the party is attempting to conclude the unification process, leaders representing the Maoist party are increasingly insecure, as they see former UML leaders dominating from the government to the party committees.

A Standing Committee member from the former Maoist party said that Maoist leaders had abandoned by their uncommitted leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, also the executive co-chair of the Nepal Communist Party.

"Our own leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal has stopped paying attention to our concerns," said the Standing

Committee member, who spoke on condition of anonymity fearing retaliation. "Some of us are in such a situation that we have to look up to some influential second-rung UML leaders to save our positions."

Just ahead of the merger announcement, the Maoists were facing questions about whether a party that fought a bloody insurgency for 10 years was going to surrender to a traditional party like the UML.

Leaders who quit the party over the merger say they had long foreseen the current situation.

There were also concerns among Maoist leaders about whether the UML was "acquiring" their party, rather than the merger being the respectful unity of two equal entities. Party leaders now say their apprehensions were right all along.

Chakrapani Kharel, a Standing Committee member and former minister, said that the ongoing discussion on the House Speaker is an example of

the UML's continuing domination over the party.

"The Speaker's post was with us before (Kritabha Bahadur) Mahara resigned, so it should remain with us. It does not even require so much debate," Kharel, who was deputy commander of the Maoist army during the insurgency, told the Post. "We are not questioning the leadership's intention. But what is very clear is that the Maoists are left with no option than to accept what they are being given."

The Maoist find UML's claim to Speaker's post concerning. They are also concerned that if this post also goes to the UML, they will have no one to represent them in the Constitutional Council, a key agency that makes key recommendations for ambassadorial and other constitutional positions.

Leaders who quit the Maoist party over the merger with the UML say that they had long foreseen the current position of the Maoists in the Nepal Communist Party.

"The former Maoist leaders, who are once could not stand the UML, are now competing with each other to excel in the parliamentary system—a system they fought against," said Jagrit Rana, who quit the Maoist party over the merger. "In Nepal, we are seeing a unique counter-revolution led by former revolutionary leader Prachanda."

But not all Maoist leaders in the Nepal Communist Party are so pessimistic. They say that everything will fall into place once the unification process is completed and the unity convention, planned for two years after the merger announcement, is held.

According to Kharel, it's the duty of leaders to warn the leadership and keep them in the check.

"If leaders do not feel respected, the party won't remain united while we are heading for the national convention," said Kharel.

Kharel also has gripes about the unequal treatment of leaders from the two former parties.

"Leaders from both parties should be treated respectfully," said Kharel. "The Maoists are already a minority in the Nepal Communist Party as they had agreed to merge with a 40 percent share in party committees."

Leekath Neupane, a Central Committee member, who is a vocal critic of the party said the struggle between the two former party leaders will continue.

"It is becoming clearer that the party would adopt the former UML's ideology," said Neupane. "A handful of Maoist leaders may rise their voice, but as long as they get to share the spoils, will they really care?"

## Provincial and local governments barred from signing aid agreements with foreign donors

New standards on foreign aid endorsed by the Cabinet last week make Centre's role necessary in accessing resources.

POETRY MAN SHRESTHA

KATHMANDU, JAN 4

Provincial and local governments with donors for potential financing of their projects but they should approach the federal government to negotiate with the prospective donors, according to a new standard on foreign aid mobilisation endorsed by the Cabinet.

As per the standard, the provincial and local governments need to now seek the Centre's opinion for preparatory works for receiving foreign aid and getting foreign funding for their programmes and projects.

Shreshthina Nepal, chief of the International Economic Cooperation Coordination Division at the Finance Ministry, told the Post that after a provincial or local government seeks approval, the Finance Ministry would examine the project's feasibility after consulting with the relevant federal ministry. It then can give its approval for necessary preparations for the project.

But the sub-national governments will have no right to sign an agreement with donors. In case of aid agreement prepared and signed by the federal government, the aid will be mobilised through the federal government's budgetary system.

"The federal government will provide such aid to the provincial and local governments in the form of conditional grants," said Nepal.

The conditional grant is one given to a provincial or local government to finance a particular project where they cannot decide which project to finance.

But the federal government can negotiate with donors, at the request of the provincial and local governments and receive the aid, according to the new standards.

"If the foreign grant is received as per the request of the provincial or local government, the federal government will provide such amount too as a conditional grant," said Nepal.

The provincial and local governments can also receive loans from donors. For this, they can hold preliminary discussions with prospective donors but they have to convince the

federal government that the venture is profitable and can generate enough revenue and strengthen the capacity of the concerned sub-national government.

The Centre can then start negotiations with the prospective donors on the terms and conditions of the loan and receive the amount to be given to the concerned provincial or local government," said Nepal.

He added, "The Centre will provide such loans for the concerned sub-national government by signing a subsidiary agreement with the concerned provincial or local government. The responsibility of paying back the loan lies on the shoulders of concerned provincial or local government."

Under the subsidiary agreement, the interest rate on the loans to be charged by the Centre to a local or provincial government will be higher than the foreign donor's rate since the federal government will be taking the foreign exchange risk.

The federal government has been providing foreign loans for state-owned enterprises like the Nepal Electricity Authority in line with the International Development Cooperation Policy 2019, provincial and local governments can seek foreign loans, particularly in the infrastructure sector where a return can be guaranteed.

The policy says the foreign concessional loans can be used in physical infrastructure such as hydropower, solar and renewable energy, roads and bridges, irrigation, airports, railways, dry ports, and urban infrastructure development, agriculture and tourism infrastructure and in areas contributing to skills development and job creation.

Loans received from foreign export-import banks can be used only in hydropower generation and transmission, highways and bridges, railways, airports, dry ports and urban infrastructure, besides any other area of national priority.

In the case of aid to be received through international and domestic non-government organisations, the provincial and local governments have to ensure that the investment falls within their priorities.



The federal government can negotiate with donors, at the request of provincial and local governments and receive the aid.

PHOTO: PRAJNAN

## Traffic police to constitute task force to monitor public transport anomalies

Every day, personnel will be deployed in plain clothes to monitor wrongdoings by public vehicle operators.

ANUP KIM

KATHMANDU, JAN 4

Using public transport in Kathmandu is a cumbersome affair. Passengers often complain not only about being forced to travel in overcrowded vehicles but also about overcharging by taxis.

Despite traffic police's measures in the past and officials' repeated commitments to address the problems, there has been little respite for commuters.

When Senior Superintendent Rites Prasad Dhakal took charge of the Metropolitan Traffic Police Division in September, he committed to taking drastic measures to ease traffic congestion in the city as well as making things easier for public transport users.

With complaints piling at his office over the months, Dhakal last week decided to go on the roads and see the situation for himself.

On Thursday, Dhakal hung his uniform at his office and put on a pair of jeans and a jacket and travelled on public vehicles—buses, minibuses and taxis—on different routes.

"I wanted to get a first-hand experience, during my two hours of travel in public vehicles, I found a lot of problems in the public transportation sector," Dhakal told the Post on Saturday.

He said when he boarded a Nepal Yatra bus, he took the back seat and found the vehicle had been carrying more passengers than its capacity.

At the Civil Hospital's gate in New



A traffic policeman checks a taxi meter in Kalimati, Kathmandu.

PHOTO: KIM

Baneshwor, a taxi refused to take him by the meter fare. "I found minibuses with rickety seats had passengers packed like sardines," said Dhakal.

He said he did not initiate action against anyone, but warned

all those who were not abiding by the rules.

Dhakal said that he is going to form a special task force under his watch this week, and traffic police personnel will be deployed in civil dress to moni-

tor wrongdoings by public vehicles.

"The traffic rule violators will be punished as per the law. I myself will be monitoring in the field, once a week, in civil dress," said Dhakal.

The division's data shows that

around 12 million vehicles, including two-wheelers, three-wheelers and four-wheelers, are on the roads of the Valley. Of the vehicles, 82 percent are private, while only eight percent are public vehicles. The Department of Transport Management's data shows 12,616 buses, 1,241 micro-buses and 2,321 tempos are being operated in the Kathmandu Valley every day along with an estimated 10,000 taxis.

With complaints piling, top traffic official decides to go out and see situation for himself.

The Division deploys 1,300 traffic police personnel on the streets of Kathmandu Valley to manage traffic.

"There has not been an increase in traffic police quotas for more than half a decade. The current number of traffic police personnel is inadequate," said Dhakal.

The Metropolitan Traffic Police Division has set up a hotline num-

ber also requested passengers to lodge complaints via social media platforms—the Facebook page, Metropolitan Traffic Police Division, and the twitter handle, @ValleyTraffic.

"We have a system in place which ensures traffic personnel can reach the site within five minutes of getting a complaint via phone call," said Dhakal.

Data at the traffic police office show that it receives an average of 2,500 complaints every day via phone calls, mostly regarding the overcharging of passengers, taxis refusing to switch on meters, and misbehaviour by bus conductors and drivers. Around 40 complaints are registered via social media on a daily basis.

Last year, the division office took action against more than 10,000 errant taxi drivers for violating traffic rules in five months.

Taxi drivers refusing to go by the meter or declining to go to the designated places are fined Rs4,000, while those drivers who are found tampering the meter are sent to the Nepal Standards and Metrology Department for further action.

Advocates of consumer rights commended the traffic officer's move to send officials on the ground to curb irregularities, but they called for putting up a proper system in place.

"This is a good deed, but it's old fashioned," said Hari Matani, secretary at the Forum for Protection of Consumer Rights Nepal. "The traffic police office should put a system in place."





People sit around a fire at Manangbaw in a village on Solu Khumbu. A child seen through the country as it has been winter in the last couple of days.

## Former Maoist leaders in ruling party fear their apprehensions about merger are coming true

The Maoists are already a minority in Nepal Communist Party as they had merged with 40 percent share in committees.

By R. P. K. P.

Two years ago, when the CPN (UML) and CPN (Maoist) Centre leaderships were working to announce the merger of the two parties, there were concerns and apprehensions among the rank and file of the two parties. Second and third rung leaders expressed their concerns privately, but to public, they took their leadership line. Leaders from both parties knew that the merger was a compilation more for the Maoist party than the UML. Maoist leaders, hence, were more apprehensive. The parties merged in May 2018 to become the Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Now, as the party is attempting to conclude the unification process, leaders representing the Maoist party are increasingly insecure, as they are former UML leaders dominating from the government to the party committees.

A Standing Committee member from the former Maoist party said that Maoist leaders had abandoned by their untested leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, also the executive vice-chair of the Nepal Communist Party.

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Just ahead of the merger announcement, the Maoists were facing questions about whether a party that fought a bloody insurgency for 10 years was going to surrender to a traditional party like the UML.

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There were also concerns among Maoist leaders about whether the UML was "acquiring" their party, rather than the merger being the respectful unity of two equal entities.

Party leaders now say their apprehensions were right all along.

Chakrapani Khanal, a Standing Committee member and former minister, said that the ongoing discussion on the House Speaker is an example of

the UML's continuing domination over the party.

"The Speaker's post was with us before [Krishna Bahadur] Mahara resigned, so it should remain with us. It does not even require so much debate," Khanal, who was deputy commander of the Maoist army during the insurgency, told the Post. "We are not questioning the leadership's intention. But what is very clear is that the Maoists are left with no option than to accept what they are being given."

The Maoists find UML's claim to Speaker's post unreasonable. They are also concerned that if this post also goes to the UML, they will have no one to represent them in the Constitutional Council, a key agency that makes key recommendations for ambassadorial and other constitutional positions.

Leaders who quit the Maoist party over the merger with the UML say that they had long foreseen the current position of the Maoists in the Nepal Communist Party.

The former Maoist leaders, who once could not stand the UML, are now competing with each other to excel in the parliamentary system—a system they fought against," said Jagrit Kanyamali, who quit the Maoist party over the merger. "In Nepal, we are seeing a unique counter-revolution led by former revolutionary leaders."

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"The federal government will provide such aid to the provincial and local governments in the form of conditional grant," said Nepal.

The conditional grant is one given to a provincial or local government to finance a particular project where they cannot decide which project to finance.

But the federal government can negotiate with donors, at the request of the provincial and local governments and receive the aid, according to the new standards.

"If the foreign grant is received as per the request of the provincial or local government, the federal government will provide such amount too as a conditional grant," said Nepal.

The provincial and local governments can also receive loans from donors. For this, they can hold preliminary discussions with prospective donors but they have to convince the federal government.

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federal government that the venture is profitable and can generate enough revenue and strengthen the capacity of the concerned sub-national government.

The Centre can then start negotiations with the prospective donors on the terms and conditions of the loan and receive the amount to be given to the concerned provincial or local government," said Nepal.

He added: "The Centre will provide such loans for the concerned sub-national governments by signing a subsidiary agreement with the concerned provincial or local government. The responsibility of paying back the loans lies on the shoulders of concerned provincial or local government."

Under the subsidiary agreement, the interest rate on the loan to be charged by the Centre to a local or provincial government will be higher than the foreign donor's rate since the federal government will be taking the foreign exchange risk.

The federal government has been providing foreign loans for state-owned enterprises like the Nepal Electricity Authority in line with the International Development Cooperation Policy 2018, provincial and local governments can secure foreign loans, particularly in the infrastructure sector where a return can be guaranteed.

The policy says the foreign concessional loans can be used in physical infrastructure such as hydropower, solar and renewable energy, roads and bridges, irrigation, airports, rail ways, dry ports, and urban infrastructure development, agriculture and tourism infrastructure and in areas contributing to skills development and job creation.

Loans received from foreign export import banks can be used only in hydropower generation and transmission, highways and bridges, rail ways, airports, dry ports and urban infrastructure, besides any other area of national priority.

In the case of aid to be received through international and domestic non-government organisations, the provincial and local governments have to ensure that the investment falls within their priorities.

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## Traffic police to constitute task force to monitor public transport anomalies

Every day, personnel will be deployed in plain clothes to monitor wrongdoings by public vehicle operators.

By R. P. K. P.

Using public transport in Kathmandu is a cumbersome affair. Passengers often complain not only about being forced to travel in overcrowded vehicles but also about overcharging by taxis.

"Despite traffic police's measures in the past and officials' repeated commitments to address the problems, there has been little respite for commuters."

When Senior Superintendent Bhim Prasad Dhakal took charge of the Metropolitan Traffic Police Division in September, he committed to taking traffic measures to ease traffic congestion in the city as well as making things easier for public transport users.

With complaints piling at his office over the months, Dhakal last week decided to go on the roads and see the situation for himself.

On Thursday Dhakal hunk his uniform at his office and put on a pair of shoes and a jacket and travelled on public vehicles—buses, minibuses and taxis—on different routes.

"I wanted to get a first-hand experience. During my two hours of travel in public vehicles, I found a lot of problems in the public transport system."

Dhakal told the Post on Saturday. He said when he boarded a Nepal Interlog bus, he took the back seat and found the vehicle had been carrying more passengers than its capacity.

At the Civil Hospital's gate in New



A traffic policeman checks a taxi meter in Kathmandu.

Baneshwor, a taxi refused to take him by the meter fare. "I found minibuses with rickety seats, had passengers packed like sardines," said Dhakal.

He said he did not initiate action against anyone, but warned

all those who were not abiding by the rules.

Dhakal said that he is going to form a special task force under his watch this week, and traffic police personnel will be deployed in civil dress to monitor

wrongdoings by public vehicles.

"The traffic rule violators will be punished as per the law. I, myself, will be monitoring in the field, once a week, in civil dress," said Dhakal.

The division's data shows that

around 12 million vehicles, including two-wheelers, three-wheelers and four-wheelers, are on the roads of the Valley. Of the vehicles, 92 percent are private, while only eight percent are public vehicles. The Department of Transport Management's data shows 15,016 buses, 1,241 micro-buses and 2,625 tempos are being operated in the Kathmandu Valley every day along with an estimated 10,000 taxis.

With complaints piling, top traffic official decides to go out and see situation for himself.

The Division deploys 1,300 traffic police personnel on the streets of Kathmandu Valley to manage traffic.

"There has not been an increase in traffic police quotas for more than half a decade. The current number of traffic police personnel is inadequate," said Dhakal.

The Metropolitan Traffic Police Division has set up a hotline number 103 for commuters to file complaints whenever they are cheated or face any problem on the roads. The traffic police office has appealed to all 103 if they face hassles while using public vehicles.

Apart from that, the division office

has also requested passengers to lodge complaints via social media platforms—Facebook, page Metropolitan Traffic Police Division, and the Twitter handle, @valleytraffic.

"We have a system in place which ensures traffic personnel can reach the site within five minutes of getting a complaint via phone call," said Dhakal.

Data at the traffic police office show that it receives an average of 2,500 complaints every day via phone calls, mostly regarding the overcharging of passengers, taxis refusing to switch meters, and misbehaviour by bus conductors and drivers. Around 40 complaints are registered via social media on a daily basis.

Last year, the division office took action against more than 10,000 errant taxi drivers for violating traffic rules in five months.

Taxi drivers refusing to go by the meter or declining to go to the designated places are fined Rs1,000, while those drivers who are found tampering the meter are sent to the Nepal Standards and Metrology Department for further action.

Advocates of consumer rights commended the traffic office's move to send officials on the ground to catch irregularities, but they called for putting up a proper system in place.

"This is a good drive, but it's old-fashioned," said Hari Mainali, secretary at the Forum for Protection of Consumer Rights Nepal.

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VIJAY KUMAR  
KATHMANDU, JAN 4

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The division's data shows that

around 1.2 million vehicles, including two-wheelers, three-wheelers and four-wheelers, are on the roads of the Valley. Of the vehicles, 92 percent are private, while only eight percent are public vehicles. The Department of Transport Management's data shows 12,616 buses, 1,343 micro-buses and 2,525 tempos are being operated in the Kathmandu Valley every day along with an estimated 10,000 taxis.

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## Segment 1

# Former Maoist leaders in ruling party fear their apprehensions about merger are coming true

The Maoists are already a minority in Nepal Communist Party as they had merged with 40 percent share in committees.

VIJAY KUMAR  
KATHMANDU, JAN 4

Two years ago, when the CPN-UML and CPN (Maoist Centre) leaderships were working to announce the merger of the two parties, there were concerns and apprehensions among the rank and file of the two parties.

Second and third rung leaders expressed their concerns privately, but in public, they toed their leaderships' line. Leaders from both parties knew that the merger was a compulsion—more for the Maoist party than the UML. Maoist leaders, hence, were more apprehensive. The parties merged in May 2018 to become the Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Now, as the party is attempting to conclude the unification process, leaders representing the Maoist party are increasingly insecure, as they see former UML leaders dominating from the government to the party committees.

A Standing Committee member from the former Maoist party said that Maoist leaders feel abandoned by their uncontested leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, also the executive co-chair of the Nepal Communist Party.

"Our own leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal has stopped paying attention to our concerns," said the Standing

Committee member, who spoke on condition of anonymity fearing retribution. "Some of us are in such a situation that we have to look up to some influential second-rung UML leaders to save our positions."

Just ahead of the merger announcement, the Maoists were facing questions about whether a party that fought a bloody insurgency for 10 years was going to surrender to a traditional party like the UML.

**Leaders who quit the party over the merger say they had long foreseen the current situation.**

There were also concerns among Maoist leaders about whether the UML was "acquiring" their party, rather than the merger being the respectful unity of two equal entities.

Party leaders now say their apprehensions were right all along.

Chakrapani Khanal, a Standing Committee member and former minister, said that the ongoing discussion on the House Speaker is an example of

the UML's continuing dominion over the party.

"The Speaker's post was with us before [Krishna Bahadur] Mahara resigned, so it should remain with us. It does not even require so much debate," Khanal, who was deputy commander of the Maoist army during the insurgency, told the Post. "We are not questioning the leadership's intention. But what is very clear is that the Maoists are left with no option than to accept what they are being given."

The Maoists find UML's claim to Speaker's post unwarranted. They are also concerned that if this post also goes to the UML, they will have no one to represent them in the Constitutional Council, a key agency that makes key recommendations for ambassadorial and other constitutional positions.

Leaders who quit the Maoist party over the merger with the UML say that they had long foreseen the current position of the Maoists in the Nepal Communist Party.

"The former Maoist leaders, who once could not stand the UML, are now competing with each other to excel in the parliamentary system—a system they fought against," said Jagrit Rayamajhi, who quit the Maoist party over the merger. "In Nepal, we are seeing a unique counter-revolution led by former revolutionary leader Prachanda."

But not all Maoist leaders in the Nepal Communist Party are so pessimistic. They say that everything will fall into place once the unification process is completed and the unity convention, planned for two years after the merger announcement, is held.

According to Khanal, it's the duty of leaders to warn the leadership and keep them in the check.

"If leaders do not feel respected, the party won't remain united while we are heading for the national convention," said Khanal.

Khanal also has gripes about the unequal treatment of leaders from the two former parties.

"Leaders from both parties should be treated respectfully," said Khanal.

The Maoists are already a minority in the Nepal Communist Party as they had agreed to merge with a 40 percent share in party committees.

Lekhnath Neupane, a Central Committee member, who is a vocal critic of the party, said the struggle between the two former party leaders will continue.

"It is becoming clearer that the party would adopt the former UML's ideology," said Neupane. "A handful of Maoist leaders may raise their voice, but as long as they get to share the spoils, will they really care?"

## Segment 2



# Provincial and local governments barred from signing aid agreements with foreign donors

New standards on foreign aid endorsed by the Cabinet last week make Centre's role necessary in accessing resources.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA  
KATHMANDU, JAN 4

Provincials and local governments can hold initial discussions with donors for potential financing of their projects but they should approach the federal government to negotiate with the prospective donors, according to a new standard on foreign aid mobilisation endorsed by the Cabinet.

As per the standard, the provincial and local governments need to now seek the Centre's opinion for preparatory works for receiving foreign aid and getting foreign funding for their programmes and projects.

Shreekrishna Nepal, chief of the International Economic Cooperation Coordination Division at the Finance Ministry, told the Post that after a provincial or local government seeks approval, the Finance Ministry would examine the project's feasibility after consulting with the relevant federal ministry. It then can give its approval for necessary preparations for the project.

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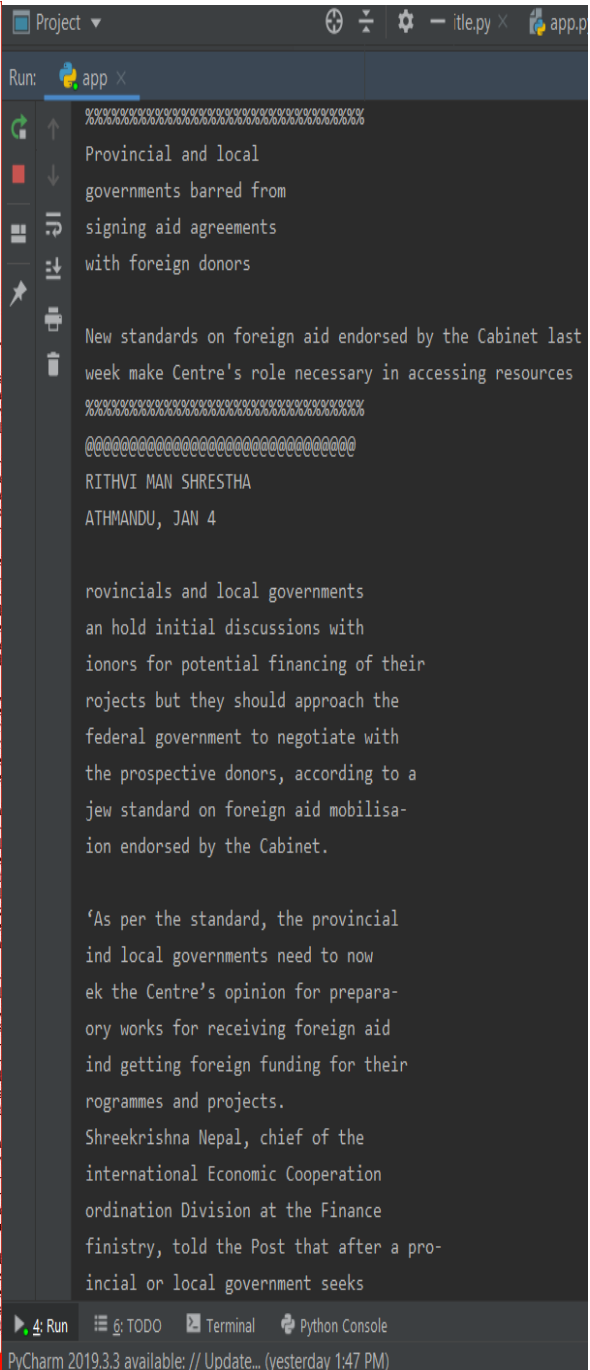
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Segment 3 and its corresponding extracted text