

THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL

PRESIDENT PAUDEL
EXTENDS BEST
WISHES ON HUMAN
RIGHTS DAY



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 9

President Ramchandra Paudel has extended his best wishes for happiness, peace, and prosperity to all Nepali sisters and brothers, both at home and abroad, on the occasion of the 77th International Human Rights Day.

This year, International Human Rights Day is being celebrated under the theme "Human Rights, Our Every-day Essentials." Human Rights Day is observed worldwide on December 10, emphasising that human rights are the foundation for humans to live with dignity.

Human rights are a birthright. The Constitution of Nepal has contributed to strengthening freedom, equality, and justice by incorporating the principles mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Issuing a statement of Office of the President on the occasion, President Paudel said, "Our country, as a party to various international human rights treaties, has always been committed to and sensitive about its obligations to respect, protect, promote, and fulfill human rights."

President Paudel expressed belief that Human Rights Day will gain greater significance if the federal government, provincial governments, local authorities, social associations, organizations, media, and the private sector actively take steps to ensure that vulnerable and at-risk groups can fully realize their rights, freedoms, and access to justice.

The entire Nepali population, as well as the international community, is observing with special interest the political situation that has developed in the country following the youth movement.

A coordinated and positive role is required from the government, political parties, civil society, youth activists, and ordinary citizens to stabilize the current situation in the country.

The President deemed that everyone will support the strengthening of the democratic system by ensuring that the upcoming House of Representatives elections on March 5 are conducted in a human-rights-friendly manner.

Mahawar calls on PM, ministers, pledges support for polls, security

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 9

Additional Secretary for Northern Affairs of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, Munu Mahawar, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sushila Karki on Tuesday. According to the office of the PMO, Mahawar reached the Prime Minister's Office in Singha Durbar to meet PM Karki.

Likewise, Mahawar also called on Minister for Home Affairs Om Prakash Aryal on Tuesday.

During the meeting, held at the Ministry of Home Affairs, the duo discussed the longstanding Nepal-India bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest.

Mahawar, who arrived in Nepal on Sunday, conveyed India's full commitment to support in successful conduct of the House of Representatives election scheduled for March 5, 2026. Additional Secretary Mahawar also assured that India would help ensure the provision of necessary resources, logistics and security-related materials required for the upcoming polls. The Additional Secretary further pledged support for post-earthquake



A mesmerising view of the bell tower and surrounding foliage in the middle of the Birendranagar Valley in Surkhet district.

Photo: RSS

Four Morang local levels join hands for landfill project

BY HARI PRASAD KOIRALA
Urlabari, Dec. 9

Four local levels in Morang, which have been facing increasing challenges in managing solid waste, are now working to launch a joint integrated waste management programme.

Rangeli and Sunbarsi municipalities, along with Kanepokhari and Dhanpal-than rural municipalities, which had earlier begun the concept of an Integrated Disaster Management Centre, will now operate an integrated solid waste management facility through shared investment. Before awarding the construction contract, a team from the four local levels travelled to Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India, on Monday to observe the city's waste management centre.

The team includes the mayors of Rangeli and Sunbarsi, the chairperson of Kanepokhari, senior administrative



officers from all four local levels, and the deputy mayor of Rangeli. Rangeli Municipality has already provided one bigha of land free of charge for the facility. Once the land was allocated, the four local levels agreed to jointly invest in constructing the waste management centre, said Rajmati Ingnam, chairperson of Kanepokhari Rural Municipality.

None of the 17 local governments in Morang has built a modern dumping site. Kanepokhari has been dumping waste in a community forest area protected by the Local Rural Improvement Community Forest users, while other municipalities have been dumping waste along riverbanks.

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PM Karki reiterates govt's resolute stance against corruption

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 9

Prime Minister Sushila Karki delivered a firm and uncompromising message against corruption during a ceremony held in Kathmandu to mark International Anti-Corruption Day. Addressing ministers, senior officials, civil society representatives and journalists, the Prime Minister stressed that the government's anti-corruption agenda is not merely political rhetoric but a foundational commitment.

PM Karki reminded the audience that her administration emerged from the Gen Z movement, which demanded sweeping reforms and good governance. "This government is not just an electoral government. It is a government formed on the foundation of the Gen Z movement, demanding good governance. We are working at a rapid pace to meet those expectations," she said.

While acknowledging that some outcomes may take time, she made it clear that hesitation will not be part of the government's approach. "We will not back down from taking drastic steps against corruption to any extent," she said, adding that existing state mechanisms had already been activated to enforce anti-corruption measures.

PM Karki revealed that the government has been receiving indirect and direct threats from individuals affected by recent anti-corruption actions. "Even if some elements, alarmed by the steps taken in this direction, threaten



us, we won't be daunted. I urge officials and public servants to move forward without any hesitation and to use their professional freedom confidently," she said.

Drawing from her time in the judiciary, she noted that she had personally faced similar resistance. "I have already experienced the obstacles that arise when taking action against corruption while working in the court," said PM Karki. The government, she assured, will bring anyone who creates such obstacles under legal scrutiny.

Nepal has been observing International Anti-Corruption Day since becoming a state party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). This year marks the 22nd celebration of the day, observed under the international slogan "Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity."

PM Karki outlined Nepal's ongoing efforts to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks.

SEE PAGE 6

Panel formed to implement SC order on transport sector



Ministers held on Monday took the decision to this effect.

Speaking at a press meet organized to make the Cabinet decisions public on Tuesday, Minister for Communication and Information Technology Jagdish Kharel said, Sharad Adhikari and Yogendra Nath Karmacharya will act as members for the Commission.

Among the Cabinet decisions were the approval of the Economic Procedure and Financial Accountability (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2022, the endorsement of Dr. Govinda Prasad Sharma, Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, as the candidate for the ninth Secretary-General position of the Colombo Plan, and the declaration of Suresh Rajak, who lost his life in the Tikhauna incident, as a martyr.

SEE PAGE 6

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 9

The government has decided to form a three-member Probe Commission headed by Deepak Subedi to oversee the implementation of the Supreme Court orders related to the transport management sector.

A meeting of the Council of

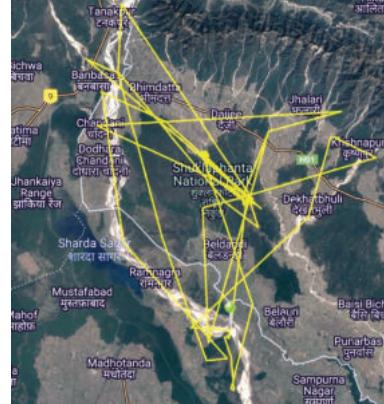


PHOTO: BCN
Satellite-tracked movement of a Shuklaphanta vulture across India.

also serves as a BCN field officer. "We hear that some medicines meant for humans, such as diclofenac and aceclofenac, are being used on livestock, which is dangerous for vultures."

These drugs, used to reduce pain in livestock, are deadly to vultures. BCN said that vultures die after consuming carcasses of animals treated with such medicines. Vultures from Shuklaphanta often travel as far as the Dodhara-Chadani border area, Palia in Duhdwa National Park and Kisapani Wildlife Sanctuary. However, no samples have yet been collected from India for testing the vultures found dead there. Only bones have been recovered, making it difficult to determine the exact cause of death.

Joshi admitted that the inability to reach the sites on time to retrieve carcasses is a major weakness. "We have installed satellite tags, but failing to search for missing vultures in time is our shortcoming," he said.

In India, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has been leading vulture conservation efforts. Diclofenac use across South Asia was banned after vulture populations crashed in the 1990s due to exposure to the drug.



Critically endangered vultures vanish after crossing into India

BY AVINASH CHAUDHARY
Dhangadi, Dec. 9

Critically endangered vultures from Shuklaphanta National Park in Sudur-pashim Province are dying or disappearing after crossing into India.

Satellite-tagged Slender-billed Vulture (dangai giddha) and Himalayan Griffon Vulture (sano khairo giddha) that migrated across the border have either been found dead or have gone missing in recent years.

In the past two years, two satellite-tagged vultures that flew into India were confirmed dead, while the whereabouts of two others remain unknown.

According to Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), in 2024, a critically endangered white-rumped vulture tagged as J-11 was found dead inside a cattle shed on the banks of the Sharda River in Tataraganj, India.

Likewise, a slender-billed vulture tagged as J-26 that travelled to Lakhimpur has not moved from a single location for a year and is presumed dead.

Similarly, a J-20-tagged white-rumped vulture was found dead near

the Nepal-India border in November, but its tag had been cut off and removed. Another tagged Himalayan Griffon Vulture, J-25, which has been stationary in India since November 27, has also gone missing. It has not moved for the past 10 days. Two white-rumped vultures tagged J-12 and J-19 were also found dead inside Shuklaphanta National Park in 2024.

According to Ankitbilas Joshi, BCN's Vulture Conservation Programme Manager, vultures nesting inside the park frequently fly into India's river systems in search of food.

"There is more carrion available across the border. But the exact reasons why vultures die there are still unknown. We have not been able to conduct post-mortem examinations on the carcasses," he said. Joshi said the trend of satellite-tagged vultures dying or disappearing in India shows an urgent need for cross-border cooperation.

BCN has tagged 15 slender-billed vultures and four Himalayan Griffon vultures in Shuklaphanta for satellite monitoring. However, only a small fraction of the estimated 300 vultures in the park are tagged.

Ornithologist Hirulal Dangoura said

that untagged vultures also likely die in India but cannot be tracked.

He added that although the harmful drug diclofenac is banned in India, other toxic veterinary painkillers -- ketoprofen, nimesulide and aceclofenac -- are still widely used.

"Controlling these drugs in India is a major challenge," said Dangoura, who



BULLION

(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold : Rs. 251,900/-
Worked Gold : NA

Silver : 3,600/-



STOCK

NEPSE : 2,614.07

Total Amount : 3,755,027,795.93

No. of Share : 8,742,084

ILLEGALLY RUN MINING INDUSTRY CLOSED

RSS
Bhojpur, Dec. 9

Authorities have closed a mining industry illegally run at Leguwaughat of Arun Rural Municipality-6 in Bhojpur district. The industry was run for long without complying with any legal procedure, officials said. Chief of District Coordination Committee Kamal Thulung said that the industry was closed following the monitoring from the officials since the crusher was found illegally extracting the natural resources from the site.

IMF approves \$1.2 billion for Pakistan from bailout

AP
Islamabad, Dec. 9

The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday approved the release of \$1.2 billion to Pakistan, giving the cash-strapped country a fresh boost as it works to recover from one of its worst economic crises in years.

The IMF in a statement said its executive board completed two reviews of Pakistan's economic programs, clearing about \$1 billion under its main loan facility and another \$200 million from a separate climate-focused program.

With the latest approval, Pakistan has received about \$3.3 billion from the IMF since last year. Under the bailout, Islamabad will receive loan installments over 37 months if it meets the agreed conditions.

Pakistan, for decades, has relied on loans from the IMF and friendly nations to meet its financing needs.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the decision, calling it recognition of the government's reform drive and the "effective implementation" of IMF-endorsed measures. He said the latest IMF decision shows Pakistan is taking the steps needed to stabilize and grow its economy after narrowly avoiding default last year.

In a statement, Sharif also praised Field Marshal Gen. Asim Munir, the country's powerful army chief and chief of defense forces, for playing a key role in supporting the reform agenda.

He also praised Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and

Baskuna village of Beni glows in shades of orange

BY THAKUR PRASAD ACHARYA
Myagdi, Dec. 9

Baskuna village of Beni Municipality-4 is recently glowing in shades of gold this season as its orange orchards have ripened beautifully.

Orange trees have transformed the entire village into a picturesque landscape. Traders are now approaching directly to farmers to purchase the harvest, while local farmers are busy picking oranges from dawn till dusk.

Locals, who replaced traditional paddy and millet crops with orange cultivation nearly 18 years ago, are now earning good benefits.

According to Ken Khatri, a young farmer and also a ward member of Beni Municipality-4, orchards in Baskuna, Thamdanda and Surkemela together are expected to generate orange sales worth approximately Rs. 15 million this year.

Around 40 households in the area are engaged in commercial orange farming, filling both terraced fields and hillsides with orange trees.

Tek Bahadur Khatri, another farmer shared that traders from Pokhara, Kathmandu, Dhadan and Chitwan had visited last October, purchasing entire orchards



Baskuna village glowing yellow with ripened oranges.

PHOTO: THAKUR PRASAD ACHARYA/TRN

in advance and providing initial payments.

Those who paid advances in November last week have now returned in the first week of December to begin harvesting.

"This year, the trees have given better yield than last year," he said. "Traders paid an advance of Rs. 100,000. We have around 185 orange trees in our orchard. Last year, we sold oranges worth Rs. 900,000 and this year we expect sales to reach Rs. 1 million."

Encouraged by higher profits than from traditional crops such as paddy, millet, and maize, farmers have planted orange trees across all their land.

In Baskuna commercial growers now earn between Rs. 500,000 and 2.5 million annually from oranges. For the past decade, traders have been arriving directly in the village to purchase the fruit, boosting farmers' enthusiasm.

Farmers say traders classify oranges based on size and quality, buying them at 60 to 85 rupees per kilogram.

The oranges of Baskuna are known for being juicy and flavourful, making them a favourite among buyers. "When it comes to Baskuna oranges, there is always high demand in the market," locals said.

Production of indigenous crops rises in Humla

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Humla, Dec. 9

The production of indigenous crops has increased in the Himalayan district of Humla.

Farmers have become more attracted to these traditional crops after learning about their importance and earning income from their sale.

Chief of the Agriculture Development Office, Chunamani Panthi, said that production of indigenous crops has risen across the district this year. He said that although production had been declining in recent years, awareness among farmers about the value and benefits of these crops has encouraged them to grow more.

Another reason for the increase is that farmers have started earning good income from selling these crops, which has renewed their interest in traditional farming.

Over the past two years, the Food Management and Trading Company Limited, with support from local municipalities, has been working to preserve, promote and market indigenous crops grown in Himalayan districts. This has also motivated farmers to expand production.

According to the office, overall production of indigenous crops has increased by 15 to 20 per cent compared to last year. Office data shows that in Humla, five main indigenous crops are grown.

Barley is cultivated on 642 hectares, producing 812 metric tonnes, buckwheat on 810 hectares



Humla farmer drying harvested indigenous crops.

produces 901 metric tonnes, while uwa grown on 726 hectares yields 715 metric tonnes.

Likewise, chino cultivated on

346 hectares produces 250 metric tonnes, and kaguno planted on 108 hectares yields 118 metric tonnes.

With farmers showing growing

interest in indigenous crops, the district now needs adequate irrigation facilities and modern farming systems.

Annapurna sees record tourist arrivals

BY YADU PRASAD BHATTA
Manang, Dec. 9

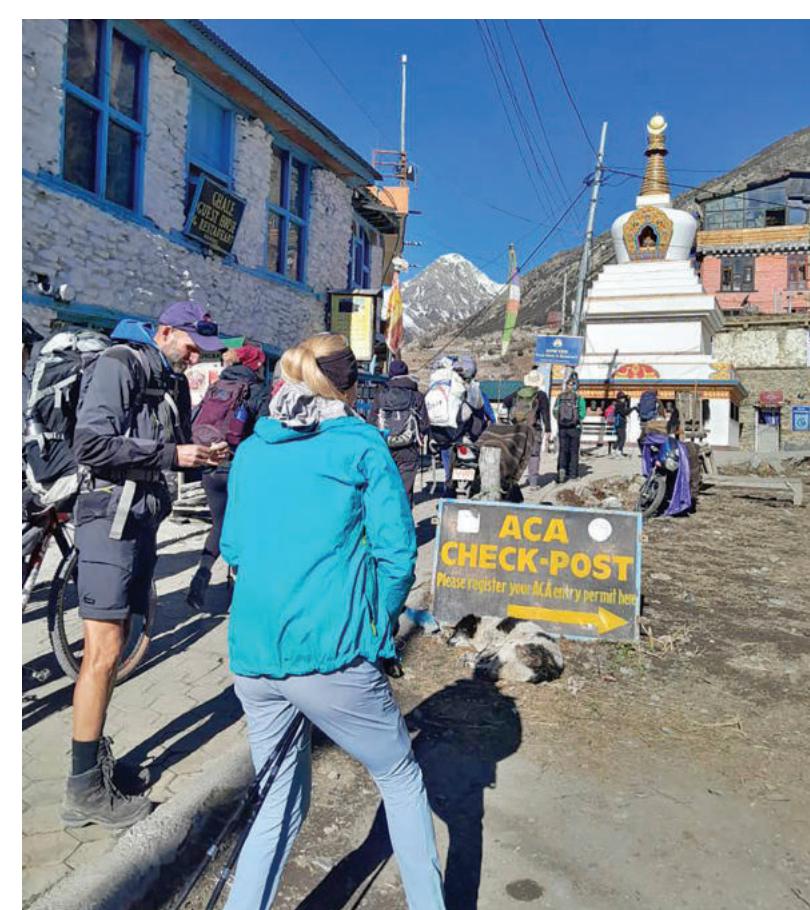
The Annapurna Conservation Area (ACAP), considered one of Nepal's premier trekking destinations, has recorded an unprecedented increase in tourist arrivals this year.

According to ACAP, a total of 273,646 foreign tourists visited the Annapurna region in 11 months from January to November. This is regarded as one of the highest arrival figures seen in Nepal's trekking tourism sector in recent years.

Of the total visitors, 115,555 were from South Asian countries (SAARC), while 158,091 came from other parts of the world. ACAP said that the globally renowned trekking routes -- Annapurna Circuit, Annapurna Base Camp, and surrounding natural and cultural sites -- continued to attract large numbers of travellers.

ACAP data showed that April was the busiest month of the year, with 44,763 foreign trekkers entering the Annapurna region. This was followed by 36,834 in March, 34,716 in May, 26,008 in June, 14,233 in July, 12,132 in August, 19,386 in September, 37,076 in October, and 27,071 in November.

Last year's total arrivals stood at 244,045. This year, the figure surpassed that number by more than 29,000 within just 11 months, setting



Foreign tourists at the Tourism Information Centre in Chame, on their way to visit Manang.

a new record. After several slow years following the COVID-19 pandemic, 2025 has emerged as a year of tourism revival, said Dhak Bahadur Bhujel, Chief of the ACAP Area Conservation Office in Manang.

According to Bhujel, improvements in trekking trails, safety measures, sanitation, local hospitality, socio-cultural diversity and Himalayan scenery have helped establish the Annapurna region as a major attraction for travellers worldwide.

Enhanced transport access, improved information services and digital promotion have also supported the rise in arrivals. He expressed confidence that tourist numbers will further increase in 2026, enabling country's mountain tourism sector to reach new heights.

Meanwhile, 6,703 foreign tourists visited Manang, part of the circular Annapurna trail, in November this year. Known for its Himalayan beauty, cultural diversity and adventurous trekking routes, Manang continued to attract a notable number of visitors.

According to the District Tourism Information Centre, the arrivals included 3,918 male tourists, 2,784 female tourists, and one other type. Of the total, 391 were from SAARC countries, while 6,312 came from other nations.

In November 2024, Manang received 6,902 tourists, around 200 more than this year.

CNI, SSF to collaborate in increasing awareness

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 9

The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) and the Social Security Fund (SSF) have reached an understanding to increase awareness about social security in the industrial sector and to encourage workers to enrol in the scheme.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in Kathmandu on Monday during an orientation and interaction programme on social security jointly organised by CNI and SSF.

Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Dr. Krishna Hari Pushkar, emphasised that the SSF is an important foundation for making workers' lives easier and more secure. He added that this agreement will play a vital role in increasing the active participation of workers and employers from all sectors and in supporting them to be integrated into the registration system.

The MoU was signed by CNI Director General Dr. Ghanshyam Ojha and SSF Executive Director Kabiraj Adhikari.

Speaking at the programme, CNI President Birendra Raj Pandey said the collaboration is highly significant for both workers and industries. He expressed CNI's commitment to continuously support industries in joining the SSF and stated that this partnership would help make the social security system more practical and accessible.

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Likewise, CNI Vice-President Bhim Ghimire said that the Fund is not merely a welfare programme but a key foundation for human capital development. He maintained that CNI would also conduct similar awareness and interaction programmes extensively at the provincial level.

Executive Director of the SSF, Kabiraj Adhikari, said that the partnership is important for further strengthening the social security system and expanding the benefits available to workers.

Gen Zers in Mahottari protest corrupt practices

BY NAGENDRA KUMAR KARNA
Mahottari, Dec. 9

Following Nepal's recent Gen-Z movement, young people in Mahottari have begun organising themselves to speak out against local problems and corruption.

Since the movement, youths from Manara Shisawa Municipality, several wards of Jaleshwar Municipality and other areas of the district have started putting pressure on elected representatives to address long-standing local issues.

Local youth Bishnu Gupta said young people are now openly raising their voices not only about problems but also about corruption at the local level. He said the Gen-Z movement made them realise their own agency and responsibility towards society, encouraging them to protest openly against corruption.

Recently, youths from Ward No. 10 in Manara Shisawa Municipality have demanded an investigation, claiming that their ward has been turned into a 'centre of corruption' and that those involved should be punished.

Local youth Dr. Ravishankar Chaudhary said that no essential development work has been carried out for years in the three villages -- Madhawa, Maruwahi and Sakari -- covered by the ward, even though large amounts of development funds have been released. He said they are demanding an inquiry because no work is visible at the ground level.

He alleged that Ward Chairperson Arun Chaudhary has been running



Gen Z youths speaking with the hospital chief, demanding improvements at the Provincial Hospital.

PHOTO: NAGENDRA KUMAR KARNA

the ward office from his own house and has been receiving rent payments from the municipality in the

names of his mother and uncle. He also claimed that money allocated for sports activities was never

provided to local youths.

Similarly, local youth Roshan Sah said the bill for a CCTV

camera installed in one place was shown as being installed at two different locations, indicating

corruption. He has demanded an investigation into the matter.

In Jaleshwar Municipality-9, youths from Phulhatta have also submitted a memorandum to the Mayor with various demands. They were angry over the fact that two ponds of archaeological importance -- Purani Pokhari and Panjera Pokhari -- were leased out without any study and demanded their conservation.

Local youth Jitukumar Singh said old pottery and remnants of ancient structures are often found on the banks of Panjera Pokhari, so archaeological experts should have been consulted. He said the encroached ponds must be protected.

Despite years of leasing the ponds to fish contractors and collecting significant revenue, the municipality has not prioritised their conservation, youths said, calling for the lease to be cancelled immediately.

Meanwhile, Gen-Z groups in Jaleshwar have also been demanding reforms in local offices, including Jaleshwar Municipality and the Provincial Hospital Jaleshwar. They have raised concerns related to hospital services, waste management, and issues in education, health and sanitation.

Jaleshwar youth Sanjit Pathak said it is admirable that young people are organising themselves for transparency, good governance and development. He added that youths have become more active after the Gen-Z movement.

He urged them to move forward collectively, based on study and research, rather than personal grievances.

Administrative Centre of Lumbini nearing completion

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Bhairahawa, Dec. 9

Lumbini Province has built its administrative centre building in the capital, Bhaluwang, while other provinces are still struggling to arrange land and buildings. Construction of the administrative centre located in Rapti Rural Municipality is nearing completion.

Less than three years after the foundation stone was laid, the structure, which was built at Rs. 4 billion, is set to be handed over to the provincial government by mid-January 2026. Former Chief Minister Leela Giri laid the foundation stone for the administrative centre's building in February 2023.

Pradeep Bhattarai, the Project Engineer, informed that 95 per cent of the structural progress has been completed. According to Bhattarai, all the structures will be handed over to the government by the stipulated deadline of January 1, 2026. He also informed that the construction of the outer compound, blacktopping of the access road, installation of lighting, and painting are in the final stages.

The cost of the administrative centre, spread over 17 bighas of land in Bhaluwang, is Rs. 4.21 billion, including VAT. As part of the administrative centres, the contractor company has built 10 different buildings, including the Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers. A six-story building of the office of the Chief Minister contains 96 rooms, with two lifts. Nine other ministry buildings are five stories high, each with 54 rooms. Similarly, each building has underground parking, a lift, disability-friendly structures, and an installed HVAC system.

Preparations are underway to construct a green garden on the premises of the administrative centre. These structures are also expected to fulfil the needs for 50 years.

Deukhuri of Dang district was announced as a permanent provincial capital on 20 October 2020. However, the decision had long been criticised due to a lack of infrastructure in the capital.

Lumbini Province has also announced its ambitious project to make a modern city based on river civilisation. Under the project, a convenient, well-organised, and sustainable city will be built within 20 years with an investment of one trillion rupees, encompassing 14 wards of Rapti, Gadhawa, and Shitaganga municipalities.

Traditional homes collapse as owners migrate

BY THAKUR PRASAD ACHARYA
Myagdi, Dec. 9

Traditional houses built with local craftsmanship in Rumma village of Malika Rural Municipality-5, Devisthan, have begun to collapse.

As families have migrated elsewhere, many homes now stand abandoned, causing the village's identity to fade.

Just a decade ago, the village was lined with neat, traditionally built houses that were regularly repaired and maintained. Presently, most of these houses are falling apart, with bushes spreading across the courtyards and porches. The structures began to deteriorate after years without upkeep.

Of the 43 houses in Rumma, 37 are now empty. Farmlands surrounding the village also remain fallow. With residents moving away, the settlement has become quiet and deserted.

According to Ward Chairperson Mim Pun, people have been relocating to towns and cities, and some families also own homes in other parts of the village, leaving the old houses deserted.

"Most residents have houses in two places. In the past, they used to live here for a few months each year, but now they stay only in the lower settlements, leaving these houses empty."



Abandoned houses in Rumma village.

PHOTO: THAKUR PRASAD ACHARYA

As people stopped living in them, the traditional homes have fallen into

disrepair," Pun said. As the traditional houses represent the village's identity,

the ward office has urged homeowners to repair and preserve them.

Human-elephant conflict intensifies in Morang

BY HARI PRASAD KOIRALA
Urlabari, Dec. 9

Fear of wild elephants has increased over the past week in Belbari-8 and 10, and Kanepokhari-7 of Morang district.

Elephants spend the day in the northern forests but enter nearby settlements in groups after nightfall, creating panic in villages bordering the jungle.

According to Chharan Gurung, Ward Chair of Kanepokhari-5, around 24 to 25 elephants are currently staying in the forest north of Bhaunne in Belbari-10. He said elephants have caused major damage to sugarcane, paddy and banana crops in Ward No. 5, where banana cultivation is widespread.

Gurung said herds of elephants have destroyed banana farms belonging to Hemanta Bisht, Kumar Bisht, Keshar Gurung and Hari Adhikari. They have also damaged Bambadur Raft's sugarcane and paddy fields. The house of Kumbhakarna Sarki has been completely destroyed, while two other houses have suffered minor damage.

"We have not yet been able to determine the full scale of the damage. We collected details this morning, but more damage continues to occur at night," he said. Losses are



estimated to have already exceeded Rs. 2.5 million.

Elephant disturbances have also increased in Kanepokhari Bazaar, which lies along the East-West Highway. Elephants have been targeting fruits displayed for sale at the market.

Fruit sellers now cover their produce at night, as elephants come almost daily to eat them. Storing fruits indoors carries even greater risk, so traders have not adopted stronger protective measures.

Fruit and vegetable vendor Meena Sah said elephants have been troubling the market continuously for the past week. On Tuesday night, elephants destroyed a field of yams

grown by Dinesh Limbu of Chhatra Tole in ward No. 7.

Although locals stay vigilant throughout the night and light fires at different points to prevent elephants from entering the settlement, the animals still enter the village and cause destruction, Thami said.

According to Shailendra Yadav, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of National Parks, Recreation and Wildlife Management at the Institute of Forestry, Hetauda, elephants frequently come to Morang for breeding. Nepal's forests may provide a safer environment for breeding than India's, he added.

A study last year found that two

elephants gave birth and raised calves in the forests of Morang. He said forests are now primarily viewed as resources to meet human needs, rather than being conserved for eco-tourism and biodiversity, which has contributed to elephants entering settlements.

He added that Nepal has three distinct elephant zones -- Mechi to Bagmati, Bagmati to Dang, and Dang to Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve. If the same herd remains in one area for long periods, it leads to genetic problems. Therefore, biological corridors that allow movement between all three zones are essential, even if it requires relocating human settlements to create elephant routes.

Elephants are highly intelligent animals, Yadav said. Studies have shown that a mother elephant may attack or kill a mahout if she realises he has abused her calf. This is why elephants tend to cause greater damage where their natural routes have been obstructed. Elephants moving in groups usually do not cause harm, solitary elephants tend to be aggressive.

Yadav added that methods commonly used in Nepal -- lighting fires, blowing sirens and throwing stones -- do not reduce elephant conflict and may even worsen it. He urged communities to be especially cautious of elephants that have separated from their herds.

Bhairav Secondary School in Sinja gets sanitary pad dispenser

BY NETRA SHAHI
Jumla, Dec. 9

Nabil Bank's Sinja branch, under its corporate social responsibility initiative, has donated a sanitary pad vending machine to Bhairav Secondary School in Narakot, Sinja.

The school has stated that, in the first phase, sanitary pad vending machines have been handed over to the school to make menstrual health management safer and easier for teenage girls.

According to Headmaster Man Bahadur Rokaya, the machine has been provided to the school, and it will now be easier for girls to manage menstruation.

Meanwhile, the Nabil Bank branch office shared that the menstrual friendly sanitary pad vending machine was distributed under the social responsibility programme, and a water purification machine will also be made available within a week.

According to him, assistance worth Rs. 6,00,000 will be provided in the form of sanitary pad vending machines and



PHOTO: NETRA SHAHI

Sanitary pad vending machine handover programme at Bhairav Secondary School, Narakot, Sinja

drinking water purification machines. Speaking at the handover ceremony, Sinja Rural Municipality Health Branch Chief Lalit Rokaya expressed heartfelt gratitude for Nabil Bank's support, calling it highly effective. He suggested that similar assistance should be extended to other schools as well. Hari Bahadur Rawat, Head of Nabil Bank's Sinja branch, said he was happy to run a social responsibility programme that directly benefits the community, and expressed the bank's commitment to continue supporting educational and community-oriented projects in the days ahead.

EDITORIAL

Narrow Trade Deficit

International trade is vital for promoting economic growth, creating jobs and providing consumers with a wider range of goods at competitive prices. But to reap these benefits, a country must be able to compete effectively in global markets. Competitiveness depends largely on the quality and price of the products it offers to international buyers. Nepal, lacking strong competitiveness for many years, has struggled to fully benefit from global trade.

However, recent shifts in Nepal's foreign trade offer a note of optimism. After a long period of sluggish external activity, exports posted an unprecedented rise in FY 2024/25, growing by more than 70 per cent. Encouragingly, this momentum has continued into the first four months of the current fiscal year 2025/26. Yet imports continue to overwhelm the trade basket, resulting in a surge in the country's trade deficit.

According to a news report published in this daily the other day, Nepal's exports rose by 77.51 per cent to Rs. 93.49 billion in the first four months of the current fiscal year, while imports increased by 18.71 per cent to Rs. 609.45 billion. During this period, Nepal recorded a trade deficit with 113 of its 142 international trading partners. Although the country maintained a trade surplus with 29 nations, the surplus amounts were too small to make a meaningful dent in the widening overall deficit. Nepal's total trade deficit has reached Rs. 515.95 billion during the review period, up from Rs. 460.72 billion in the corresponding period the previous fiscal year. The deficit continues to be driven by persistently high imports and modest growth in export-oriented production.

The highest deficits were with Nepal's two largest trading partners—India and China. The trade deficit with India reached Rs. 261.41 billion, while the deficit with China stood at Rs. 132.27 billion. Nepal imported goods worth Rs. 337.92 billion from India and exported goods worth Rs. 76.50 billion to India. India accounts for nearly 60 per cent of Nepal's total trade, absorbing more than 81 per cent of Nepal's exports and supplying around 56 per cent of its imports. Similarly, Nepal imported goods worth Rs. 132.56 billion from China but exported only Rs. 299 million to the northern neighbour. Other countries contributing to high trade deficits include Argentina, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Brazil, Malaysia, Australia, Qatar, the USA and Canada.

Despite the overall deficit, Nepal did record trade surpluses with 29 countries, including American Samoa, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, Colombia, Congo, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Fiji, Georgia, Iceland, Iraq, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon and the Maldives. Denmark emerged as Nepal's highest surplus partner, followed by Romania, Sweden, Niger and Colombia.

These statistics clearly indicate the need for Nepal to accelerate export growth and pursue strategic import substitution to rein in the widening trade gap. This requires revisiting both the direction and composition of Nepal's trade. Diversifying export products and trading partners, reducing excessive concentration on India and China, identifying new export destinations, mobilising diplomatic missions for export promotion, and encouraging investment in industries that can substitute imports are key policy measures that could help narrow the deficit and strengthen the country's external sector.

Coffee Lifts Our Mood

DIXYA POUDEL

How time has flown by and it is already winter season! Winter might be gloomy but you can depend on a cup of coffee to brighten the day. Certainly, nothing brings people together than a piping hot drink in winter. People unite in conversations about the weather and daily grievances over tea or coffee. Entering a café this season, one is welcomed with the aroma of brewed coffee. As such, coffee culture is growing by the minute in Nepal. Now there are budding cafes in every nook of cities like Kathmandu and Pokhara, catering to both the locals and tourists.

Walking on the streets of Thamel in Kathmandu, the aroma of coffee is likely to invite passersby to step into the fashionably decorated cafes. It is one of the highlights of strolling in the streets of Kathmandu with people bustling about their errands. Whether it is Thamel, Asan or Patan, Kathmandu streets never lack a dull moment with every other step leading to a newly opened cafe or small chha shops. Tourists find the capital city of Nepal as intriguing as its people and their hospitality.

Now there are top-notch cafes in the city that beckon people to cosy up with a cup of coffee, whether imported, locally-grown or organically sourced. In the winter time, the aromatic flavour of richly brewed coffee is most likely to wake away the cold. What makes coffee stand out among other beverages? Not to shade tea lovers, but coffee is a caffeine-rich beverage that is hard to rival. Caffeine is a chemical compound that provides a jolt of energy, instantly perking up

one's mood. It is thus not surprising that most people ritually take coffee in the mornings to better cope with the day ahead.

The caffeinated drink is even more welcoming in the winter. The foggy mornings and portentous cloudy weather can dampen one's prospects for the day, but with a sip of coffee, suddenly the world becomes brighter, friendlier and more approachable. And the day ahead, the commute to office, school or college and the weather seem agreeable. In the height of winter, conversations in a café are equally welcoming with a cup at hand and a friend to converse with.

However, over-caffeination

can be problematic as it can cause jitteriness, dizziness and even insomnia due to its stimulating properties. Caffeine is a psychoactive drug and like most drugs, it can lead to addiction.

As they say, everything is better in moderation. Thus, while coffee is an instant pick-me-up beverage, it is necessary to moderate its consumption. In the mornings, it is recommended to consume coffee an hour after breakfast. Caffeine on an empty stomach could lead to adverse health problems. Also, it is best to consume coffee without sugar if possible.

The allure of coffee is that it tastes even more flavoured without sugar. Many thus take their coffee brewed, black and without sugar. But if you prefer a frothy milk coffee with sugar or even cocoa, indulge in it guilt-free, albeit in moderation. As people struggle to cope with the cold in winter, a steaming cup of beverage is certainly welcome. And coffee not only bursts with flavour, but it is also stimulating, rejuvenating and mood-lifting, especially when the weather is so melancholy.

Adhere To Anti-nuclear Treaties

Yuba Nath Lamsal

The world is faced with multiple crises ranging from poverty, economic downturn, global income inequality and armed conflicts to climate change catastrophes. As armed conflicts escalate in different parts of the world, the spectre of nuclear war seems to be looming large. This is not a mere intellectual assumption but is based on the behaviour and rhetoric of leaders of some nuclear-powered countries.

Some nuclear-powered countries are already at war. Russia is at war with Ukraine, while Israel is in armed conflict with Palestinians, which has ravaged Gaza and its adjacent areas, killing tens of thousands of civilians. The chances of escalating war in the entire Middle East are high. Israel has already attacked several sites in Lebanon, Yemen and Syria, suspecting hideouts of anti-Israeli militant outfits and also the nuclear sites of Iran. Tehran has designated Israel as the enemy and threatened to eliminate Israel from the map of the world. Similarly, several Arab countries have expressed their indignation at Israel's behaviour over the Palestinian issue.

Conflict-prone world

The scenario in other parts of the world is also dangerously pathetic. A recent case is Venezuela, where the crisis appears to be deepening, raising fears of war in Latin America. Africa has witnessed multiple armed conflicts of different natures, both between states and non-state actors. East Asia is also not free from tension. The South China Sea and East China Sea are newer theatres of conflict.

Even in our neighbourhood, armed conflicts took place between India and Pakistan some months ago, while India and China too have engaged in occasional skirmishes along their Himalayan border. So the entire world is conflict-prone.

While some nuclear powers are already at armed hostilities and some are waging proxy wars, there is a chance that such a scenario may one day lead to nuclear disaster. The recent remarks of US President Donald Trump and the behaviour of some other leaders like Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korea's ruler Kim Jong Un have sent a shudder worldwide with fear of renewed nuclear arms race and ultimately nuclear war. So far, a total of 191 countries have signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and have been parties to it. But not all countries seem to be honestly abiding by this treaty's provisions.

While some countries continue to ignore international treaties and initiatives concerning nuclear non-proliferation and test ban treaties and anti-nuclear weapon instruments, some have gone against their own commitments. Russia has withdrawn the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), implying that Moscow now intends to build new nuclear arsenals and conduct tests. There are also some other nuclear-powered countries that have not signed the NPT and also the CTBT. These events and developments have heightened worries and concerns all over the world.

In response to Russia's decision to withdraw from the CTBT, US President Donald Trump recently issued a statement stating Washington's possible resumption of nuclear weapon testing. The European Leadership Network's (ELN) on Protecting the NPT, an anti-nuclear weapon proliferation initiative, quickly reacted, calling upon all states to abide by the UN and other international treaties concerning nuclear weapon proliferation

but also for the entire environment and ecosystem. The repercussions of the nuclear weapons remain for generations as the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to suffer the consequences of the atomic bombing of 2045. Thus, the nuclear wars, proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear testing must be totally banned.

Urgency

It is thus very urgent for people in all walks of life in the world to get united and act collectively in persuading their governments to abide by the NPT, CTBT and other similar international initiatives against proliferation, test and use of nuclear weapons. The other important initiative is the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) that seeks the complete abolition of all nuclear weapons, including a ban on the production, testing and use of nuclear arms. This treaty was adopted by the United Nations in 2017 and entered into force in 2021.

However, several countries have yet to sign and ratify this important treaty. It is thus high time that all people exert pressure on their governments to ratify all anti-nuclear weapon-related treaties, including TPNW and sincerely abide by them for the larger safety of the entire humanity and the planet earth. Of nine nuclear powers, five are in Asia: China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. Asia seems to be in a more dangerous situation, given the nature of mutual rivalry and animosity among these Asian nuclear powers. Nepal is surrounded by two rival nuclear powers. Nepal, thus, needs to play a more proactive role in persuading countries to denuclearise the region. For this, Nepal needs to first demonstrate its commitment by ratifying the TPNW.

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

Moving On Path Of Violence-free Nepal

Namrata Sharma

10th December, the Human Rights Day, marks the last day of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence observed all over the world by activists, policymakers and people from all walks of life. This campaign has been observed since 1991 to demonstrate a commitment to ending violations of girls' and women's human rights. It commences on 25th November, which is observed as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Since the first Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991, it has been observed every year.

As elections are around the corner in Nepal, the prospective candidates must be committed to leading the country towards becoming violence-free. Different political parties preparing to contest the election are now working on their election mandates and selecting candidates.

This election is a historic one in Nepal. It is being held because a movement in September 2025 by Gen Z youth was able to oust the then government led by KP Sharma Oli overnight.

The revolution was rooted in the fact that Nepali people, especially the youth, were fed up with the escalating rate of corruption, where families of political party leaders flaunted their wealth while the majority of the youth lacked access to proper education and livelihood opportunities.

PM Karki has been requesting all mainstream political parties to contest the elections. The Election Commission of Nepal says it can hold the elections, and the government needs to ensure a peaceful and safe voting environment. The latest news is that 114 political parties with 107 election symbols will be contesting the upcoming elections for the House of Representatives. Altogether 102 political parties will contest with single election symbols, while twelve political parties will contest in five different groups with common symbols.

The excitement to form new parties and enter parliament can be seen as a positive sign. However, the mushrooming of parties and the contesting of 114 political parties might lead to another hung parliament, raising the question of whether Nepal will have a stable five-year period to establish peace, security and move towards development. In the past few days, there have been a series of arrests and cases exposed related to corruption amounting to billions of Nepali rupees. Former ministers, secretaries and government officers have been named as the guilty, and cases are

being filed against them.

Therefore, the situation in the country is far from stable or peaceful. Before the March elections take place, a lot needs to be put in order. Also, as the voting sheets will have so many symbols, it will be difficult for people to cast their votes for their desired candidates. Therefore, voter education is required. To clean all forms of corruption—social, economic, traditional, cultural or political—it is important to have honest and committed people as lawmakers. The challenge today is for all political parties contesting the election to come together and field candidates who are educated, from a younger generation, and experienced enough to help the country progress towards development and economic growth. The candidates must have a track record of honesty and of not being involved in any corruption scandals.

Nepal has been part of several international treaties and campaigns to end violence and provide equal opportunities for all its population, no matter what gender, caste, class or community they belong to. Unfortunately, institutionalising democracy and establishing human rights is still a struggle in this country, leading to one of the worst uprisings in September 2025, where

75 innocent people were killed. To end violence of any sort—gender-based violence, criminal activities or massive financial corruption—only those who have never engaged in such actions can truly address injustice. Therefore, the need today is to field candidates who have demonstrated these qualities in their past work and who can serve Nepal better than previous representatives.

Stability

It is also important for Nepali voters to decide what they want to achieve from this election. It will be nearly impossible to read the election manifestos of all 114 political parties registered to contest. However, it is both important and possible for people to check the candidates who will be fielded. It is also important to ensure that at least one political party with credibility in ending corruption is given a simple, if not full, majority. The aim of electing the new government should be to ensure they run the full five-year term they are mandated. This will help the country move towards peace and stability.

As we reflect on the last day of the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence, we must also think about why such violence continues despite favourable laws and numerous initiatives. It is mainly because lawmakers are more interested in their own petty needs than in serving the constituencies they claim to represent. Voting for honest, experienced and educated youth to become the new representatives in Nepal's parliament will be one step towards addressing this.

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

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

December 10, 1975

Instruction To Corporations

Kathmandu, Dec 9: His Majesty's Government has given special instructions to the state-owned corporations to enhance their efficiency in order to ensure better services to society, reports RSS.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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READER'S MAIL

Support For Injured Gen Z Youths



I am writing in reference to the news report 'Govt to provide education, health and employment support for those injured in Gen Z Uprising' published in the digital edition of this daily on December 8, 2025. The Cabinet meeting has approved the "Gen Z Injured Relief Assistance Procedure 2025," which will provide support to those mutilated or injured in the two-day September protest. The September protest will be remembered in history as one of the turning points in Nepal. Gen Z took to the streets to protest against the corrupt government amid a social media

ban. It quickly turned violent as guns were fired to quell the crowd.

Ultimately, the Gen Z toppled the KP Sharma Oli-led government and established an interim government that is set to conduct elections in March. Certainly, the sacrifices of the protesters who lost their lives or sustained injuries should be commemorated, which is why the support for the injured ones will be highly appreciated.

Radhika Ghimire
Sindhuli

TAILPIECE

Donald MacDonald from Scotland went to study at an English university and was living in the hall of residence with all the other students there. After he had been there a month, his mother came to visit him (no doubt carrying reinforcements of tatties, salt herring, oatmeal and whisky). "And how do you find the English students, Donald?" she asked.

"Mother," he replied, "they're such terrible, noisy people. The one on that side keeps banging his head on the wall and won't stop. The one on the other side screams and screams all night."

"Oh Donald! How do you manage to put up with these awful, noisy English neighbors?"

"Mother, I do nothing. I just ignore them. I just stay here quietly, playing my bagpipes."

Jakarta office fire kills 22



Rescuers carry out the body of a victim from the site of a fire in Jakarta, Indonesia.

AP
Jakarta, Dec. 9

A fire ripped through an office building in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, on Tuesday, killing at least 22 people, including a pregnant woman, police said.

Flames engulfed the seven-story building, sending thick black smoke billowing into the sky and causing panic among nearby residents and workers in a neighborhood in Central Jakarta.

The fire, which broke out around midday, is believed to have started

on the first floor of the building in the Kemayoran neighborhood before spreading to other floors, Central Jakarta police chief Susatyo Purnomo Condoro said.

Hundreds of personnel and 29 fire trucks were deployed to try to contain the blaze. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

Many workers in the building, which was used as a sales and storage office for a drone company, were out for lunch when a battery started sparking in a storage and testing area, said Condoro, citing several witnesses.

The fire was extinguished after

three hours of intense effort. At least 22 bodies — seven men and 15 women, including a pregnant woman — were recovered from the building and taken to the police hospital in East Jakarta for identification.

"It is suspected that a short circuit or thermal failure in the drone battery triggered an explosion and fire," a survivor named Dimitri, who like many Indonesians uses a single name, told local television.

"Some colleagues on the upper floors tried to escape by moving to the rooftop while calling for help," he added.

Television reports showed the tense

evacuation of more than a dozen trapped workers, including many women, from the sixth floor using an emergency ladder extended by firefighters. Each person had to be lowered one-by-one from the building, and several struggled to breathe due to the thick smoke while waiting for their turn.

Families anxiously awaited news at hospitals or near the building rented by PT Terra Drone Indonesia, a company that provides unmanned aerial vehicle technology for various industrial sectors such as construction, mining, oil and gas, energy, plantations and urban planning.

PHOTO: AP

SUGARCANE FARMERS UNHAPPY WITH SUPPORT PRICEBY JANARJAN KHATRI
Sarlahi, Nov. 9

Sugarcane farmers have expressed dissatisfaction with the minimum support price set by the government for the current fiscal year.

On Monday, the Cabinet fixed the support price for sugarcane at Rs. 620 per quintal for fiscal year 2025/26, along with an additional government subsidy of Rs. 70 per quintal.

However, farmers argue that the price was set without proper consultation. According to Shyambabu Ray, Acting Chair of the Nepal Sugarcane Producers' Federation, farmers had demanded that the price be determined only after a tripartite discussion between the government, sugar mills and producers.

"The price was fixed unilaterally. We were not consulted at all," he said.

Earlier this month, leading sugarcane farmers from a dozen sugar-cane-producing districts had met the Agriculture Minister, Agriculture Secretary and other officials, urging the government to hold a tripartite meeting before setting the price.

Last year, the minimum support price was Rs. 585 per quintal. The government has increased the rate by Rs. 35 this year. Farmers note that sugarcane prices in India have risen by the equivalent of Rs. 48 per quintal, and insist that Nepal should adjust its rates accordingly due to increased production costs.

Inardev Baitha, a farmer from Hazariya in Barahathwa Municipality-3, criticised the government for failing to match prices with rising expenses.

"Sugarcane is not like ordinary crops. Costs rise every year, but the price does not increase accordingly," he said. He added that he has reduced his sugarcane cultivation from 12 bighas to six bighas due to low returns, and may switch to other crops if prices remain inadequate.

The Nepal Sugarcane Producers' Federation had demanded a minimum price of Rs. 633 per quintal, but the government stuck to Rs 620.

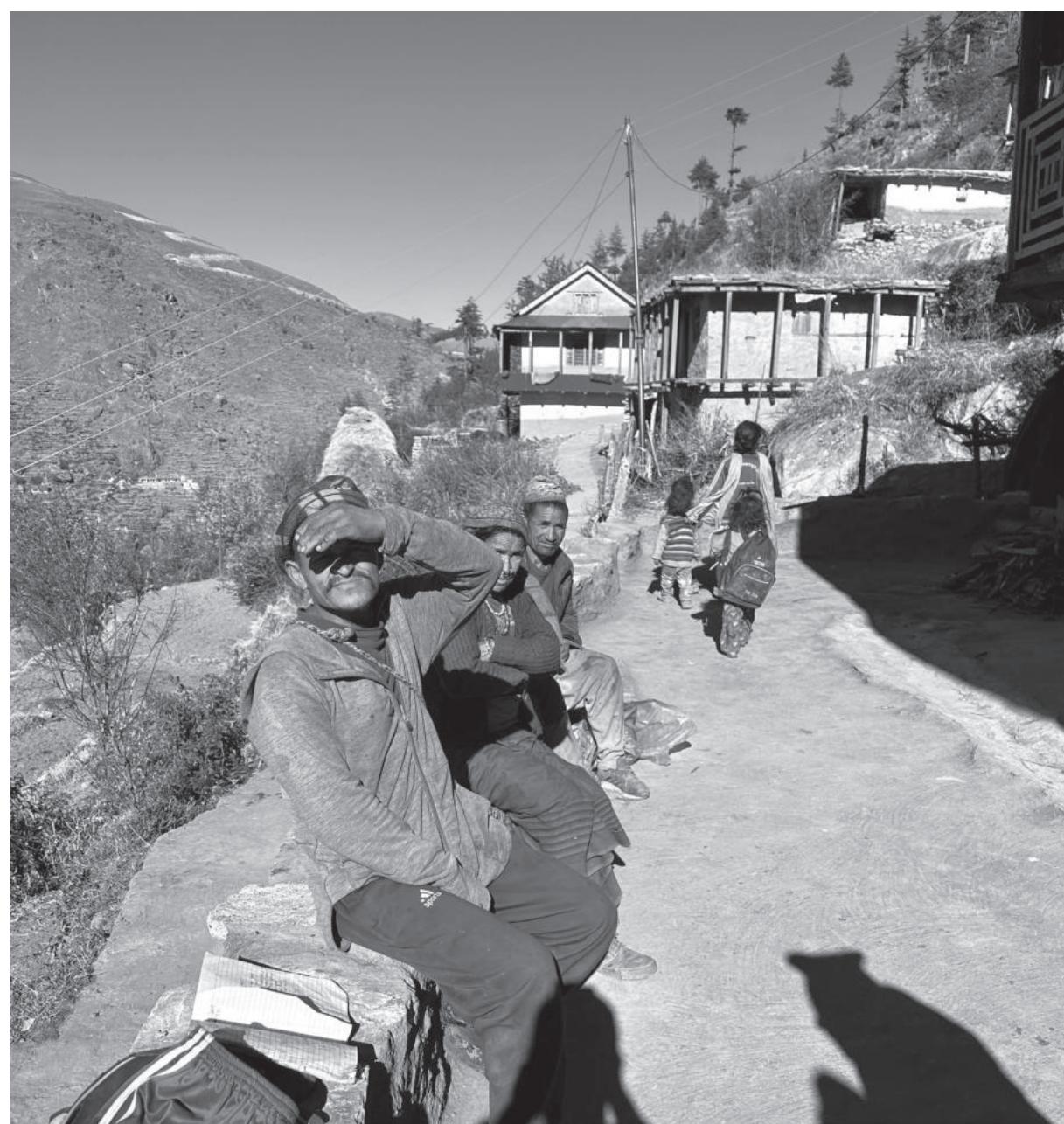
Farmers have also expressed dissatisfaction, stating that the government has yet to decide on the remaining Rs. 35 per quintal subsidy from last year. Of the promised Rs. 70 subsidy per quintal, only half was paid. Sugarcane farmers were preparing to launch protests from November 30 demanding payment of last year's unpaid subsidy.

Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development, Dr. Madan Prasad Pariyar, had demanded time until the mid-December to resolve the issue.

Leading sugarcane farmer and Godaita Municipality Mayor Devenendra Kumar Yadav accused the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance of deliberately delaying the payment.

"Each ministry shifts the responsibility onto the other. It seems the government has quietly decided not to pay the remaining Rs. 35," he said.

Meanwhile, with the price announced, sugar mills are preparing to begin crushing.

PHOTO: RSS
WINTER LEISURE: People bask in the Sun at Dewartoli village in Tilagupha Municipality-2 of the mountainous district of Kalikot.**Hetauda looks dreary with bulldozed houses**BY RAMMANI DAHAL
Makawanpur, Dec. 9

The Road Division in Hetauda has come under fire after road-widening works along the highway stretch of Hetauda Sub-metropolitan City left houses partially demolished and abandoned in dangerous condition.

Using dozers to tear down structures, the division has left many buildings half-demolished and unstable, posing serious risks to pedestrians, motorists and residents.

Only the corners and fragments of some houses remain standing along the road, creating what locals describe as an open danger zone.

For the past four days, debris from demolished houses, along with toppled trees, telephone lines and internet cables, has been strewn along the roadside.

Despite the obvious hazards, neither the Road Division nor the Hetauda Sub-metropolitan City Office has taken steps to clear the rubble.

The situation has worsened with waste piling up in Hetauda's main

market, where traders have been discarding plastic and rubbish from make-shift shops and stalls.

Hetauda Sub-metropolitan City spokesperson Sabin Neupane confirmed that the city's executive meeting recently decided to coordinate with the Road Division to facilitate the removal of leftover debris. However, noticeable progress has yet to be seen.

The haphazard demolition has created new risks for traders as well. Some have begun displaying goods for sale on the roadside in front of partially demolished buildings, heightening the danger for both sellers and customers.

After public complaints, the Sub-metropolitan City issued warnings on Tuesday, broadcast via loudspeaker, urging traders to stop selling goods along the road.

Local resident Anil Agrawal said that the debris and half-collapsed structures are making daily movement increasingly difficult. "There are wires hanging everywhere, broken poles, and piles of bricks and rods blocking the path. It has become unsafe for everyone," he said.

Pedestrians, including the elderly,



people with disabilities and the sick, are being forced to navigate precarious routes cluttered with fallen electricity poles, dangling cables, and

debris-strewn sidewalks. Ashoka trees uprooted during the demolition still lie unattended along the roadside.

Construction workers clearing some

of the damaged structures have also been seen working without proper safety measures. Labourers collecting recyclable items in handcarts appear similarly unaware of the risks posed by unstable buildings around them.

Because only the front portions of many houses were demolished, the remaining structures have been left weakened and liable to collapse at any moment. Many of these buildings, constructed with mud and other fragile materials, now pose an even greater threat.

The Road Division issued a 15-day notice on November 21 to remove all houses and structures within 25 yards on either side of the highway, from Ratomate through Buddha Chowk to Rapti Bridge, and from Buddha Chowk to Samari Bridge.

On Saturday, dozers were deployed to demolish around 500 houses in line with the notice.

However, a Supreme Court order on Friday ordered the Road Division not to proceed with the notice. Despite this, the demolition using dozers continued on Saturday, although further widening work has since been put on hold.

141 cases of violence against women in Madhes in six monthsBY LAXMI CHAUDHARY
Janakpur, Dec. 9

Symbolic image of domestic violence.

Violence against women in Madhes Province has seen a worrying rise, according to recent statistics.

A report released on Tuesday by the Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) in Madhes Province revealed that in the past six months, 141 cases of violence against women were recorded across the province.

Among these cases, the majority were cases of domestic violence, with 84 incidents. Other types of violence included 24 cases of social violence, 20 cases of sexual violence and 13 cases of other forms of violence.

The report, compiled from direct complaints and news reports from the local media, covers incidents that occurred in Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Bara, Rautahat, Siraha, and Saptari, with the exception of Parsa, between March and September.

The highest number of cases were recorded under domestic violence, which overtook all other types of violence. The findings suggest that dowry continues to be a key factor behind most of these incidents.

The WOREC Madhes Province, led by Bina Kumari Singh, confirmed that eight incidents in the past six months were directly linked to dowry demands.

However, she explained that in many other cases, dowry inadequacy or the pressure for additional dowry was at the root of the violence.

The report highlighted common

patterns of abuse, such as physical assault for bringing insufficient dowry, continuous mental and physical torture to demand more dowry, and women being expelled from their homes for not giving birth to a son.

The report further emphasized that the deep-rooted social acceptance of the dowry system in Madhes Province remains the primary driver of violence against women.

Despite legal prohibitions on the practice, the silent support of families and society continues to allow the dowry system to thrive.

One of the key conclusions of the report is that in order to reduce violence against women in the long term, changing traditional mindsets, making dowry demands socially unacceptable, and empowering women are crucial steps.

The report calls for significant societal change to address these deeply entrenched issues, stressing that a collective effort is needed to challenge the status quo and prevent further harm to women in the region.

PM Karki reiterates govt's...

Since ratifying UNCAC in 2011, Nepal has implemented strategies aimed at criminalising all forms of corruption, facilitating extradition, enabling mutual legal assistance and ensuring the recovery of illegally acquired assets. The government is currently rolling out its Second National Strategy and Action Plan against Corruption, 2025.

She cited findings from the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and various organisations, which highlight the persistence of issues such as an expensive electoral system, a culture of secrecy, weak monitoring and high discretionary powers. "Corruption is a crime committed by powerful individuals, making its investigation complicated," she said.

Pedestrians, including the elderly,

nevertheless, she stressed that her administration is committed to supporting the CIAA and enhancing institutional capacity.

A notable portion of her speech focused on personal responsibility. PM Karki highlighted that controlling corruption is not the responsibility of one agency alone. "One cannot escape by blaming the others. The head of each agency and office is responsible for controlling corruption in that agency," she said.

She urged all public officials to reflect on their own behaviour. "Let us examine our actions and behaviour with our souls as witnesses; how honest and committed are we in fulfilling our responsibilities?" she asked.

PM Karki also referred to the

Panel formed to implement...

Further, the Cabinet meeting has decided to induct Joint Secretary Rajendra Kumar Paudel from the Office of Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) as Chief Secretary to the Office of Chief Minister and Council of Ministers of Koshi Province.

The government has also transferred

Mahawar calls on PM, ministers...

He also extended an invitation to Home Minister Aryal to visit India at a mutually convenient time.

During the talks, Minister Aryal drew attention to the need to expedite the construction of the dry port currently under construction in Dodhara-Chadani of Kanchanpur district.

He said the present government has been playing an effective role in

four Joint Secretaries of the Judicial Services and approved the visit of Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development Dr. Deepak Kharal to Thimphu of Bhutan for taking part in the 3rd Science, Policy, and Finance Dialogue for Regional Air Quality Management in the Indo-Gangetic Plain and Himalayan Foothills.

promoting good governance, enforcing the rule of law, improving service delivery and maintaining public security.

Highlighting concerns regarding cross-border crimes, theft, smuggling and the trafficking of illegal goods, Minister Aryal stressed the importance of enhancing the capacities of security agencies on both sides. He emphasised

youth-led anti-corruption demonstrations held on September 8 and 9, terming them a wake-up call for those in public office.

She warned that public frustration should not be ignored. Unnecessary delays, shirking responsibilities and bribery, she noted, cannot be tolerated under any pretext.

PM Karki expressed confidence in Nepal's growing public awareness and the commitment of civil servants to uphold integrity. Ending corruption, she said, is essential for justice, prosperity and good governance. She called on the three tiers of government, civil society, private sector and the media to join forces.

"Together, we will achieve the dream of a corruption-free society," she said.

(IGP-HF) from December 15 to 16.

Further, the government has promoted one Brigadier General to a post of Major General, added the term of one Brigadier General and transferred three Colonels and given approval to conduct O&M survey of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and units under the Ministry.

the need for more effective information-sharing mechanisms between counterpart agencies.

Minister Aryal also underscored the need for both sides to accelerate the construction of the Nepal Police Academy being built in Panauti, Kavre.

Mahawar also called on Minister for Communication and Information Technology Jagdish Kharel.

Four Morang...

After 13 goats grazing near the Kanepokhari dumping site died, locals banned waste disposal there. As a result, waste collection in Kanepokhari has stopped, said Yubaraj Bhujel, chief of the Municipal Police.

According to him, after the goats died on November 11, 2025, locals dug pits in the forest to bury the waste. The entrance to the dumping site has now been fenced with wire mesh.

According to Ingnam, the Koshi Province Government has committed Rs. 50 million, the Swiss Government Rs. 20 million and Habitat Rs. 10 million to the integrated waste management project -- ensuring a total of Rs. 80 million in funding.

The four local units have agreed to contribute their share of the remaining cost of the Rs. 130 million projects based on use and consumption.

A study of waste generation, volume produced in major market areas and household membership is currently underway in all four local levels.

Jibachh Prasad Gachchhadar, Chairperson of Dhanpalthan Rural Municipality, said his municipality joined the project after Rangeli provided land free of cost. Dumping waste along riverbanks had created health risks, and the joint project aims to offer a lasting solution to the garbage problem, he said.

Earlier, the same four local levels initiated construction of an Integrated Disaster Management Centre under the Integrated Disaster Management Programme to coordinate all disaster-related functions from a single location. The centre is currently under construction in Dervesa of Ward No. 8, Rangeli Municipality.

Third Nepal-India Cultural Festival held in Lumbini



BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Lumbini, Dec. 9

The Third edition of the Nepal-India Cultural Festival has been successfully concluded in Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha.

The event was organised by the Embassy of India in Nepal in collaboration with the Lumbini Development Trust on Monday evening in front of the Baby Buddha statue.

The festival was attended by Lumbini Province Chief Krishna Bahadur Gharti, leaders of various political parties, representatives of local governments, officials and staff of the Lumbini Development Trust, officials from the Indian Embassy, local residents, tourism entrepreneurs and representatives of security agencies.

Centred around the core values of Buddhism, the festival celebrated the rich cultural heritage, traditions and friendly relations shared between India and Nepal.

The event featured impressive performances by renowned artists from both countries.

A six-member ICCR team led by India's Sandhya Kunjann Menon Das presented an Odissi dance performance based on Buddhist themes. Likewise, Nepali band Ghughu Mugu performed traditional music.

According to the Indian Embassy, the programme further strengthened the long-standing cultural and historical ties between the two countries.

The festival was jointly inaugurated by Lumbini Province Chief Krishna Bahadur Gharti Magar, Additional Secretary (North) at India's Ministry of External Affairs, Munu Mahawar, Vice-Chairman of Lumbini Development Trust Dr. Lharkyal Lama and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, Dr. Rakesh Pandey.

The Embassy also stated that there was notable participation from members of civil society, academics, senior monks and members of the Lumbini Development Trust.

DHANKUTA CELEBRATES YOMARI FESTIVAL

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Pakribas, Dec. 9

A Yomari Festival has been organised in Sirana Bazaar in Dhankuta featuring various cultural programmes.

The event was coordinated by the Sirana Bazaar Youth Group and organised by Newa Puch Dhankuta, with support from Nepal Bhasa Misa: Khal, Newa Misa Dey Dabu, Nepal Khadki Society, Joshi Society, and Shakya Society.

During the festival, Yomari and different Newari snack items were prepared. Yomari is traditionally made and consumed more widely by the Newar community.

In the Newar language, 'Ya' means 'favourite' and 'mari' refers to 'bread', symbolising a favourite bread or delicacy. Yomari is prepared by stuffing molasses, jaggery, condensed milk and sesames seeds inside rice-flour dough and is usually eaten hot.

The festival was organised to preserve Newari art and culture, said Nabin Kishor Shakya, Chairperson of Newa Puch Dhankuta. He further added that Newari snacks, attire, art, culture, traditions, and rituals are gradually disappearing, so the festival aims to preserve identity and inform the younger generation about history.

The five-day event was held from December 3 to 7, featuring stalls offering various Newari delicacies.

At the meantime, many organisations have started organising rallies and fairs to celebrate and preserve the festival. This year, a rally is being organised from Basantapur. It will pass through Tengal, Chhetrapati, Thahiti, Ason, Indra Chowk, Ombahal, Lagan and Maru before returning to Basantapur.

Similarly, 'Dhulikhel Yomari Festival' is scheduled for Tuesday in Dhulikhel of Kavrepalanchowk.

2nd edition of 'Samalochak Ka Aankhama Harihar Khanal' launched

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 9

The second edition of the book 'Samalochak Ka Aankhama Harihar Khanal' has been released amid a programme held in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

The programme was held at the Nepal Academy of Fine Arts, which was attended by Editor Achyut Ghimire, Chancellor of the Academy Narad Mani Hartamchali, former Chancellor K. K. Karmacharya, Dr. Tulsi Bhattacharai, Prof. Dr. Khagendra Prasad Luintel, senior litterateur Dayaram Shrestha, author Harihar Khanal and many other writers.

The book is edited by Prof. Rajendra Subedi and Tej Bilas Adhikari. The publication of the book and the organisation of the event were carried out by Aalekh Literary Monthly.

Providing an extensive review of the book, Prof. Dr. Ram Prasad Gyawali remarked that a critics serve as a mirror, allowing the author to understand their own strengths and weaknesses.

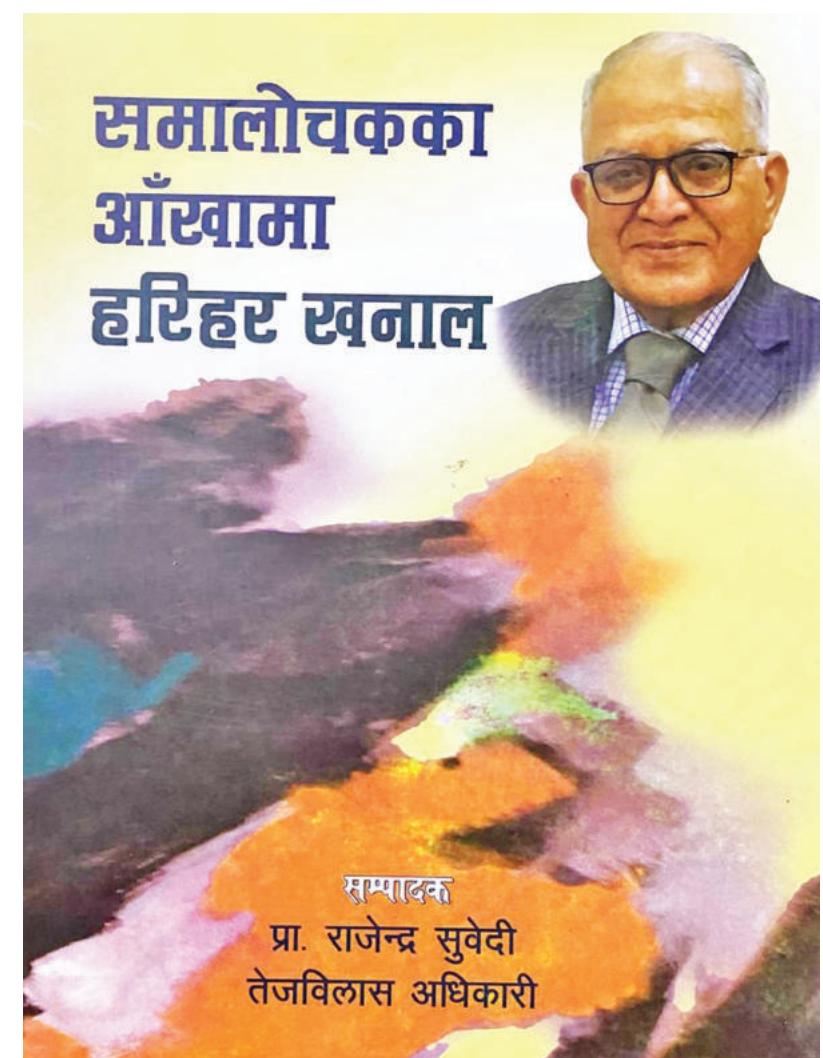
"It is a rare anthology of opinion, analysis and interpretation on the creation of a single writer that is worth reading. Khanal's contribution to Nepali literature can be explored and understood through this book," he said.

Prof. Gyawali commented that Nepal has collectors but not editors.

Many of the words on Khanal's personality and writings—from earlier years to the present—have been included in this work. It includes 65 articles, including five in English language, contributed by 58 authors.

"This is an effort to give a wholesome insight into the work and personality of Harihar Khanal, who has made an immense contribution to Nepali literature and education," said Adhikari.

Born in July 1948 in Kaski, Associate Professor Khanal was engaged in teaching



for more than four decades and served as the Campus Chief at saptagandaki Multi-Purpose Campus in Bharatpur, Chitwan.

A renowned creative writer, Khanal has authored nearly two and a half dozen books, including short stories, novels, diaries, essays, memoirs, travelogues, literary interviews, criticism, and translation.

The 440-page volume includes critical analysis, interpretation and commentaries on creations by Khanal published in newspapers. The first edition of the book was published in 2013.

Coldplay, U2, Ed Sheeran lead Pollstar's millennium touring rankings

AP
New York, Dec. 9

Much has been said about the global touring economy in recent years. For instance, tours earning over a billion dollars is a new phenomenon of the 2020s—first achieved by Taylor Swift in 2023 with her landmark Eras Tour, and more recently by The Weeknd. But who are the most popular touring artists of the last two decades based on ticket sales? The answer may surprise you.

On Monday, ahead of Pollstar's 2025 year-end issue, the concert trade publication revealed its list of the top 25 "Most Popular Touring Artists of the Millennium," based on ticket sales from 1 January 2001 to the end of 2025. Leading the chart is Coldplay with 24.8 million tickets sold. Next is U2 with 20.2 million tickets, followed by Ed Sheeran with 19.6 million. Dave Matthews Band comes in fourth with nearly 19.6 million tickets, and Swift rounds out the top five with approximately 18.9 million—impressive considering her debut album was only released in 2006.

Pollstar's chart is compiled from reported and estimated box-office data from events held between 2001 and 2025.



Swift is the only woman included in the top 10. She is followed by Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Kenny Chesney, Metallica, Bon Jovi and Elton John. In fact, just four women appear in the top 25: P!nk sits at No. 11 with nearly 13 million tickets sold; Beyoncé at No. 13 with 11.8 million; and Madonna at No.

15 with almost 11 million.

Do not confuse tickets sold with money earned. In 2023, Swift's Eras Tour became the first to surpass the billion-dollar mark, according to Pollstar's year-end charts. She then beat her own record: in December 2024, Pollstar reported that the tour had generated \$2.2 billion across its

nearly two-year run, extending its lead as the highest-grossing tour of all time. According to the new ranking published Monday, Swift has grossed over \$3.1 billion this millennium.

By comparison, Coldplay—who leads in number of tickets sold—follows with an overall gross of nearly \$2.5 billion.

HOROSCOPE

[tarot.com](#)

ARIES: This is a day to trust your quiet inner compass. Spiritual Neptune stations direct in your 12th House of Secrets and Healing, turning attention inward where rest restores courage and reflection dissolves old guilt.

CANCER: Cancer, your feelings point you toward meaning. Beliefs evolve as elusive Neptune stations direct in your 9th House of Travel and Learning, encouraging you to explore ideas instead of clinging to one story.

LIBRA: Balance returns as boundaries feel easier. Your 6th House of Work and Wellness opens gently as dreamy Neptune stations direct, inspiring you to bring gentle order to tasks and your care routines.

CAPRICORN: Your words shape real understanding, Capricorn. Nebulous Neptune stations direct in your 3rd House of Communication and Local Life, helping you speak plainly and turn foggy chatter into useful conversations.

TAURUS: Small steps bring satisfying, steady momentum. Imaginative Neptune stations direct in your 11th House of Friendship and Community, helping you revive a shared dream with people who value reliability and kindness.

LEO: How are you doing with the idea of trust these days? Faith in the world around you deepens when fanciful Neptune stations direct in your 8th House of Intimacy and Shared Resources.

SCORPIO: When tension meets insight, the truth comes out. Spiritual Neptune stations direct in your 5th House of Creativity and Joy, urging you to revive a passion project and bring more play into daily life.

AQUARIUS: Dust off that savings plan, Aquarius. Your 2nd House of Money and Values clear as elusive Neptune stations direct, inviting you to align spending habits with your values and skip purchases that blur priorities.

GEMINI: This day looks clear and surprisingly focused. Your 10th House of Career and Status steadies as nebulous Neptune stations direct, prompting you to define what success means before you chase another clever idea.

VIRGO: Practical calm spreads through your plans. Partnership clarity returns as illusory Neptune stations direct in your 7th House of Partnerships, helping you see a dynamic for what it is and invite agreements without lowering your standards.

SAGITTARIUS: Optimism finds a workable path today. Your 4th House of Home and Family refreshes as imaginative Neptune stations direct, encouraging you to reshape your space so it supports adventures and recovery.

PISCES: Soft confidence rises from within. Your view of yourself brightens as deceptive Neptune stations direct in Pisces. This transit clears fog from your metaphorical mirror and invites you to realize your own strength again.

'One Battle After Another' leads Golden Globe nominations

REUTERS
Los Angeles, Dec. 9

Dark comedy "One Battle After Another" racked up a leading nine Golden Globe nominations on Monday, positioning the Leonardo DiCaprio thriller as an early favorite on Hollywood's road to the Academy Awards.

The movie directed by Paul Thomas Anderson stars DiCaprio as a washed-up revolutionary who springs into action when his daughter's life is in danger. The Warner Bros. opens new tab film will compete in the best movie musical or comedy category against "Marty Supreme" and "Bugonia," among others.

Norwegian family drama "Sentimental Value" claimed eight nominations, just ahead of supernatural horror film "Sinners" with seven. Both were nominated for the movie drama prize alongside Guillermo del Toro's take on "Frankenstein" and "Hamnet," a story about the family of William Shakespeare.

"Frankenstein" is a film I have been wanting to make for as long as I can remember, and to have it embraced in this way means so much to me," del Toro said in a statement.

Acting nominees included DiCaprio



and "One Battle" co-stars Benicio Del Toro, Sean Penn, Chase Inifiniti and Teyana Taylor, who said the nominations left her "speechless and teary-eyed." George Clooney and Adam Sandler received nods for "Jay Kelly," as did Dwayne Johnson for "The Smashing Machine" and Jessie Buckley for "Hamnet."

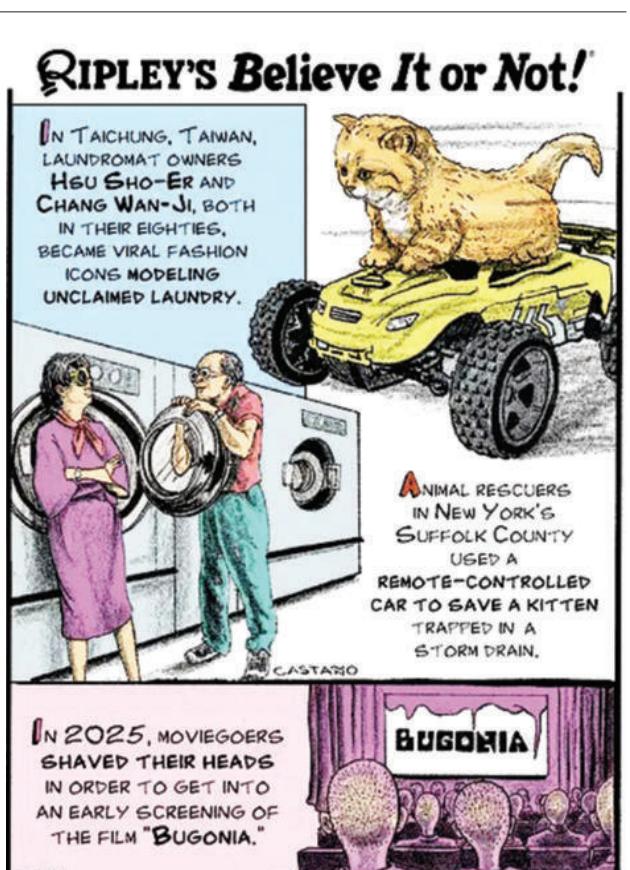
Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo earned nominations for their roles in "Wicked: For Good," though the second part of Universal Pictures' "The Wizard of Oz" prequel failed to make it into the musical or comedy field.

The Globes are among first Hollywood accolades to be handed out before the film industry's top honors, the Oscars, in March. The Globes telecast is scheduled for Jan. 11.

Voters for the Globes are entertainment journalists from around the world.

CARTOON

[gocomics.com](#)



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IN TAICHUNG, TAIWAN, LAUNDROMAT OWNERS HSU SHO-ER AND CHANG WAN-JI, BOTH IN THEIR EIGHTIES, BECAME VIRAL FASHION ICONS MODELING UNCLAIMED LAUNDRY.
ANIMAL RESCUERS IN NEW YORK'S SUFFOLK COUNTY USED A REMOTE-CONTROLLED CAR TO SAVE A KITTEN TRAPPED IN A STORM DRAIN.
IN 2025, MOVIEGOERS SHAVED THEIR HEADS IN ORDER TO GET INTO AN EARLY SCREENING OF THE FILM "BUGONIA."

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Sudurpaschim Royals storm into final of NPL

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Dec. 9

Sudurpaschim Royals stormed into the final of the Nepal Premier League for the second successive season after thrashing Biratnagar Kings by 77 runs in Qualifier 1 at TU Cricket Ground, Kirtipur, on Tuesday.

The emphatic win booked Sudurpaschim a direct berth in the grand final, scheduled for 13 December, leaving them just one victory away from lifting the coveted trophy. Biratnagar, however, still have a lifeline — they must win Qualifier 2 on 11 December against the winner of the Eliminator between Lumbini Lions and Kathmandu Gorkhas. This was Biratnagar's second defeat to Sudurpaschim, having gone down by 90 runs in the inaugural season.

Having fallen short in the first edition, Sudurpaschim arrived this season with clear intent to go all the way. They showcased grit and consistency, winning six matches on the trot to finish top of the table and secure a spot in Qualifier 1. Their only blemish came against Biratnagar in the final league fixture last Saturday.

But on Tuesday, the Royals bounced back in style, avenging that six-wicket loss with a dominant all-round display.

The clash between the top two sides was expected to be a nail-biter, but it turned into a one-sided affair. Biratnagar, who had chased clinically last weekend, collapsed spectacularly this time. Chasing a modest 156, they were bundled out for just 78 in 14.1 overs, undone by disciplined bowling and sharp fielding from Sudurpaschim.

Biratnagar's batting line-up crumbled from the outset. Sam Heazlett fell for a golden duck, Martin Guptill was run out for 2 at the end of the first over,



PHOTO: BIKASH/TRN
Sudurpaschim Royals' opener Binod Bhandari raises his bat after completing a half-century against Biratnagar Kings in Qualifier 1 of the Nepal Premier League 2025 at TU Cricket Ground, Kirtipur, on Tuesday.

and Naren Bhatt followed suit with another duck in the second. Reeling at 3 for 3, the Kings never recovered. Faf du Plessis offered brief

resistance with a fighting 36 off 29 balls, while Basir Ahmad chipped in with 12. But skipper Dipendra Singh Airee's clever caught-and-bowled dismissal of Ahmad left Biratnagar tottering at 42 for 4. Lokesh Bam and Narayan Joshi departed cheaply, and when du Plessis holed out attempting a big hit, the chase was effectively over.

Marchant de Lange's cameo of 15 off 11 balls provided fleeting entertainment before he too perished. The tail folded quickly, with captain Sandeep Lamichhane last man out in the 15th over.

Scott Kuggeleijn, Harmee Singh and Abinash Bohara bagged two wickets apiece. Bohara, with figures of 2 for 22, climbed to the top of the tournament's wicket-takers chart with 16 scalps, edging past Lamichhane on 15.

Earlier, put in to bat, Sudurpaschim posted 155 for 7 in their 20 overs, thanks largely to opener Binod Bhandari's composed knock. The in-form batter struck three fours and two sixes in his 63 off 52 balls, registering his second fifty of the season. He held the innings together as wickets fell around him.

Mukhtar Ahmed managed 10 before falling in the third over, while Sheldon Jackson added a brisk 20 off 11 balls before being stumped.

Ishan Pandey contributed 13. Airee was run out cheaply, and cameos from Harmee Singh (14) and Aarif Sheikh (20) lifted the total. Bhandari eventually holed out in the penultimate over, taking his season tally to 264 runs — second only to Pokhara Avengers' Adam Rossington (323).

Biratnagar's de Lange and Pratis GC picked up two wickets each.

Sudurpaschim, who also topped the table in the first edition, have once again underlined their credentials as title favourites. Biratnagar, meanwhile, must regroup quickly if they are to keep their campaign alive in Qualifier 2.

Fracturing Madrid need Mbappe magic in Haaland showdown

AFP
Madrid, Dec. 9

Real Madrid desperately need superstar Kylian Mbappe at his magical best on Wednesday in a pivotal Champions League clash against Manchester City and unstoppable striker Erling Haaland.

After just two victories in seven matches, fractures have emerged in Xabi Alonso's Madrid project, with some Spanish media reporting a defeat against City could lead to a premature dismissal.

So often this season Madrid have been overwhelmed but been rescued by Mbappe's lethal brilliance, scoring 25 goals in 21 games to lead the scoring charts both in Spain and in the Champions League.

Pepe Guardiola's City



are spearheaded by Norwegian international Haaland, who has 20 goals in 20 games across all competitions and, along with Bayern Munich's Harry Kane, is Mbappe's only rival as the standout star of the current season.

The pair have also been drawn against each other at next summer's World Cup in the United States, with Mbappe's France to face Haaland's Norway on June 26 in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

The first chapter of that battle will be played out at the Bernabeu, where former Barcelona coach Guardiola would relish being able to add to Madrid's misery.

This season City are structured around Haaland, playing to the forward's strengths and aiming for the majority of their moves to end with the ball at his feet in front of goal.

What structure Alonso tried to impart at Madrid has crumbled away amid a tussle for power with the players, although Mbappe's quality has made them their key figure.

"The team is a flat, uninspired group clustered around Mbappe, whose goals merely mask the crisis," wrote Spanish newspaper AS on Sunday after a 2-0 home defeat by Celta Vigo.

"If he takes a day off, there's no alternative."

Mbappe has been Madrid's one constant this season, thriving when the team was doing well during a run of 13 wins from 14 matches, but also in recent weeks amid their struggles.

After a slow start to life in Spain following his move from Paris Saint-Germain in the summer of 2024, Mbappe found his top gear in the second half of last season.

In 2025 he has scored 55 goals for his club, four short of the 2013 record of 59 set by Cristiano Ronaldo, his childhood idol and Real Madrid's all-time top goalscorer.

Splintering Madrid

Mbappe has emerged as a unifying

force at Madrid, even as the team splinters around him.

Alonso arrived aiming to impose himself as a coach cut from a different mould than Carlo Ancelotti and Zinedine Zidane before him, considered excellent man-managers, but with less of a tactical and technical focus.

With Mbappe as his only untouchable outfielder, Alonso started the season by rotating Vinicius Junior with Rodrygo Goes and Dani Carvajal with Trent Alexander-Arnold, constantly shuffling his pack.

Jude Bellingham was sidelined after shoulder surgery and Arda Guler was thriving in midfield.

The team ground out results but discontent among some star players grew, coming to a head with Vinicius' fit of rage after being substituted in the Clasico in October, which Madrid won.

Bellingham's return from injury further forced Alonso's hand over selection, along with Fede Valverde's reticence to play out of position at right-back.

A string of away matches, in part because the club were hosting an NFL game at the Bernabeu, contributed to their recent slump as the signs of Alonso's ideas about pressing have diminished and the big-name players start every match.

After a 1-1 draw at Girona at the end of November Mbappe called on the team to "show who we are" and "change this dynamic".

"It's not just about goals for Kylian... but he does other hugely fundamental things like leadership, influence, helping his team-mates, and that's so important day to day," said Alonso, appreciating the calls for unity from Mbappe.

It was a question of millimetres, but would again have been a case of Mbappe papering over the deepening cracks. And yet against the might of City and Haaland, in the eye of the storm, for Alonso even that would do.

SNIPPETS

Hydration breaks in World Cup

Zurich (AP): FIFA says it will include three-minute hydration breaks in each half of every game at next year's World Cup, not just those played in hot weather. The referee will stop the game 22 minutes into each half for players to take drinks, regardless of the temperature, the host country — the United States, Canada or Mexico — or whether the stadium has a roof and air conditioning. The change may also be a hit with broadcasters, since it makes the game schedule more predictable. FIFA said it was first announced when the governing body's chief tournament officer for the 2026 World Cup, Manolo Zubiria, attended a meeting with broadcasters. He indicated that referees may have some flexibility if there's a stoppage shortly before the 22-minute mark for an injury. "This will be addressed on the spot with the referee," Zubiria said. FIFA said the move is a "streamlined and simplified version" of an earlier practice of having breaks after 30 minutes over a certain temperature threshold, once set at 32 degrees Celsius (89.6 Fahrenheit) on the wet bulb global temperature system.

Hay to debut for New Zealand

Wellington (AFP): Injury-hit New Zealand will give a debut to wicketkeeper Mitch Hay in the second Test against the West Indies in Wellington after Tom Blundell was ruled out on Tuesday. Captain Tom Latham said there could be at least one more debutant for Wednesday's match after his side suffered several injuries in the drawn first Test in Christchurch. seamers Matt Henry and Nathan Smith are out for the rest of the series after suffering calf and side-strains respectively. Blundell was injured while batting. One of seaming all-rounder Kristian Clarke or pace bowler Michael Rae will come in for their first Test appearance. Latham encouraged them to bring their domestic form to the Test arena. "Sometimes, myself included, when I've come into the squad, you want to come and do something special," Latham said. "But at the end of the day doing what they've been doing to get to this point will hold them in good stead."

England's Wood, Australia's Hazlewood out of Ashes Series

AFP
Sydney, Dec. 9

Fast bowler Mark Wood will play no further part in the Ashes tour and is to fly home from Australia at the weekend, England announced Tuesday.

Wood, 35, returned to action in the first Test in Perth after surgery kept him out for eight months, only to miss the second match in Brisbane after his left knee flared up again.

"Wood will return home later this week and will work closely with the ECB medical team on his rehabilitation and recovery," said an England statement.

Wood said he was "gutted" in a lengthy post on social media. "After extensive surgery and months of work and rehab to get back into the Test arena, my knee just hasn't held up," he said.

Wood will be replaced in the squad by Matthew Fisher, 28, who won his only Test cap on a tour of the West Indies in 2022. Fisher has been with the second-string England Lions



PHOTO: AGENCIES
England's Mark Wood

squad in Australia.

His career has been blighted by injuries and the Perth Test ended a 15-month absence from Test cricket, first because of an elbow injury, then the knee. Wood bowled only 11 overs in Perth without taking a wicket.

Hazlewood out

Australia earlier announced that their fast bowling spearhead Josh Hazlewood would

miss the whole of the Ashes series after sitting out the first two Tests with injury.

Coach Andrew McDonald told reporters that Hazlewood had suffered problems in recovering from hamstring and Achilles injuries.

"We thought he'd play a huge part in the series. But really feel for him that he won't get that opportunity," said McDonald.

Hazlewood will now aim to be fully fit for the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, which begins in February.

Fellow fast bowler Pat Cummins looks certain to return as captain when Australia look to wrap up the series in next week's third Test in Adelaide.

The 32-year-old Cummins has been sidelined since the tour to the West Indies in July with a lower back injury.

McDonald said that Cummins had come through a match-like workload in training last week and was ready to play.

"This is something we've done with Pat before with longish layoffs, where we've put some time and effort into rebuilding his body," said McDonald.

Man Utd back on track after Fernandes inspires Wolves rout

AFP
Wolverhampton, Dec. 9

Ruben Amorim said Manchester United had "improved a lot" after they climbed back into the race to qualify for the Champions League as Bruno Fernandes inspired a 4-1 rout of woeful Wolves on Monday.

Amorim's side recovered from their disappointing draw with lowly West Ham last week thanks to Fernandes' double and goals from Bryan Mbeumo and Mason Mount at Molineux.

Jean-Ricner Bellegarde had cancelled out Fernandes' opener with Wolves' first goal in six games in all competitions and their first in the top-flight since October 26.

Bruno Fernandes, left, celebrates after scoring during the Premier League soccer match against Wolverhampton Wanderers in England.



PHOTO: AP
Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes, left, celebrates after scoring during the Premier League soccer match against Wolverhampton Wanderers in England.

that sixth-placed United avoided an embarrassing result against bottom of the table Wolves as they moved within one point of the top four.

"I really enjoyed how we played the second half. We had good pace, good quality in the decisions. We finished the game and Wolves is in a difficult moment. It was a good evening," Amorim said.

"We had some games against teams in better moments and had many shots. We need to improve the quality of the shots. We need to focus not just on scoring but protecting our goal."

"I think we improved a lot. If you compare last season and this season we are creating so much more chances and scoring more goals and having more real situations of danger, so I'm really pleased with that."

Wolves' eighth successive league defeat equalled their worst top-flight run since 1981-82 and left boss Rob Edwards still waiting for his first victory since arriving from Middlesbrough to replace the sacked Vitor Pereira in November.

Wolves have just two points after 15 games and if they fail to win either of their next two against Arsenal and Brentford they will equal Sheffield United's longest winless start in the Premier League of 17 matches.

Derby's Premier League record low of just 11 points in a single season is also under threat from dismal Wolves.

Pulisic sends Milan top

USA playmaker Christian Pulisic scored twice in 10 minutes on Monday as AC Milan came from behind to edge Torino 3-2 to move to the summit of Serie A.

Pulisic was a second-half substitute in Turin and turned the game on its head having entered the fray after 67 minutes.

Milan go above Napoli on goal difference and head to eighth-placed Sassuolo next Sunday.

Nikola Vlasic and Duvan Zapata had claimed an early advantage for the home side, who are now 16th looking for a first win since October 26.

Pulisic, 27, was named on the bench

after suffering from flu symptoms, with Milan boss Max Allegri sitting out a touchline ban.

The hosts raced to an early lead as Vlasic converted from the penalty spot and Zapata made it 2-0 after 17 minutes.

Seven minutes later Rabiot halved the deficit with a sublime effort from more than 25 metres out.

With 34 minutes to play Milan's Ruben Loftus-Cheek had a superb chance to equalise but Torino goalkeeper Franco Israel stopped the Englishman's impressive head.

Pulisic then entered the fray and made an immediate impact netting with his first touch from short range.

The 82-time international completed the comeback with 13 minutes left with a superb low half-volley.

During injury-time Pulisic was denied his hat-trick, and his eighth goal of the campaign but Christopher Nkunku was judged to be offside.

It was enough to send AC Milan to the top of the table although those early defence errors are a cause for concern.