

Two years of Province 2 government People's trust is falling sharply

Kathmandu: The seven provincial governments have completed their two years in office. The provincial governments are trying to make their achievements public as well. But their approach is more subdued and apologetic for being unable to perform at par to their expectation, scope and potential. For this, the chief ministers, directly or squarely, are pointing fingers to the non-cooperation from the federal government in formulating required laws, devolving authority, designating the required number of technical and regular civil servants and supporting the capacity building of the sub-national governments. There was great hope among Nepalis that the first provincial government elections in



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two decades, in 2017, would finally improve accountability and help raise living standards, but a recent public opinion poll shows that their optimism has faded.

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electe d representatives in all three tiers of government. There is a yawning chasm between slogans and performance. The Nepal Communist Party (NCP) government that promised 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepalis' and 'Zero Tolerance of Corruption' is seen to not be walking its talk. Public disdain for politicians and their parties has never been greater. General dissatisfaction with all three tiers of government appears to be linked to confusion within infrastructure projects, corruption in sand mining and quarry contracts, obsession of elected

representatives with their own perks and privileges, and poor government. When asked how much they trusted political parties, nearly 45% said they did not trust them at all, while in Province 2 more than half said they had no faith in the parties. This figure has gone up: in last year's survey 38% said they did not trust the parties. Nationwide, leaders of parties do not fare much better: 54% of respondents did not trust them, and it was a whopping 63.4% in Province 2. The Province 2 government has initiated a number of programmes and passed laws about women, Dalits and the environment that will

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India set to welcome President Trump today

New Delhi: India is making grand preparations to warmly greet US President Donald Trump who is coming flying 8,000 miles to pay two days official visit. President Trump is scheduled to land in the western city of Ahmedabad on Monday for his first presidential visit to India, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has planned an epic spectacle. The city is being



scrubbed clean, and thousands upon thousands of Modi loyalists have been

drafted to stand for hours on the sun-baked streets, there to shake flags and cheer for a president who

loves nothing more than to draw a crowd. It is the second act of a budding friendship between the two men, leaders of the world's most populous democracies. Last year, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi shared a stage in Houston at a rally called "Howdy, Modi!" This one is called "Namaste Trump," which translates roughly as "Hello Trump."

But beneath the projected bonhomie lies a pricklier reality. The United States and India are strategic partners, in no small part because of a mutual concern over China, but they still can't agree on crucial issues. Even a small trade deal that was supposed to be the centerpiece of this trip has collapsed. "They've been hitting us very hard for many, many years," Trump said this week of India. But he

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Editorial

Implication of India's budget on Nepal's economy

The Parliament of India has endorsed the Union budget for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21. The union budget, presented by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 1 February 2020, is her second budget since assuming her position in the union cabinet. The total budget size for the FY 2020-21 stood at INR 16.98 trillion (NPR 26.99 trillion).

The union budget highlights on reviving the overall economy by putting a central focus on agriculture, allied and rural development, infrastructure, job creation, skilled development and the financial sector. A major emphasis has laid on deepening the corporate bond market, micro-small-and-medium enterprises (MSME's), and rural economy.

In the light of ongoing economic slowdown and social instability, this year's budget also has underscored

The new budget also has certain drawbacks which might have direct implications in Nepal's economy.

the importance of privatization and divestment to adhere to fiscal growth. A report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) revealed that more fiscal initiatives are required to revive the current slowdown in the Indian economy as India's growth forecast has been reduced to an all-time low of 4.8 percent in 11 years (FY 2009/10 to FY 2020/21). Thus, the new fiscal incentives and measures are expected to revive the sluggish Indian economy. The new budget unveiled a series of far-reaching reforms, aimed at energizing the Indian economy through a combination of short, medium, and long term measures.

However, the new budget also has certain drawbacks which might have direct implications in Nepal's economy. India's current budget is deemed to be expansionary with an aim to uplift the current struggling economy through fiscal stimulus. There is a risk that sluggish Indian economy could slow down Nepal's economic growth which is heavily reliant in terms of trade and commerce with the southern neighbour. Any changes or reforms brought in by the Indian government for their domestic economy tends to have major implications in Nepal's economy.

The announcement of India's new Union Budget holds strong direct impacts on Nepal's economic growth. The significant reduction in India's aid commitment to Nepal is likely to cast an uncertain shadow on the Nepal-India's bilateral relations, which in recent months has soured (due to various diplomatic and political issues). If Nepal is left with lesser and lesser amounts of financial aid (to be spent on necessary productive areas), there can also be instances of the economy opening up to other sources of financial funding. As foreign aid is one of the most significant sources of financial assistance for Nepal, the pattern of aid and its disbursements is a matter of serious concern, which can also heighten economic vulnerability if not properly looked into. Thus, this matter needs to be considered through various dialogues, schemes, policies and increased transparency, to push the economy towards prosperous economic growth, in the long-run.

On the other hand, stable inflation forecast in India could be a small relief for Nepal whilst subsidies by the Indian government on its agriculture sector could adversely impact Nepal's farmers.

China anticipates mass layoffs and social unrest

At this juncture in China's history, the economy faces multiple problems and unemployment is a factor that has begun to worry the Chinese state.

Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang issued an opinion document on 24 December 2019 titled 'Opinions on Further Improving Job Market Stability' at a State Council meeting. This document provides an indication of the Chinese anticipation that companies may begin massive lay-offs in order to offset the negative effects of the downward spiral in the economy. The Chinese premier demanded that Chinese companies regulate the procedure for firing their employees and proposed measures to prevent the outbreak of mass layoffs.

Premier Li Keqiang also called for greater emphasis on employment stability and guidance to companies that conduct economic layoffs. The aim is to prevent the risk of massive layoffs and ensure stable employment opportunity as China anticipates a grim employment situation. Premier Li Keqiang outlined six broad measures to stabilize employment.

The first measure is for government to enhance support for businesses to keep their payrolls stable. In payroll cuts, employers would be subject to regulations. Another measure proposed is to create new jobs through effective investments. Given past experience, China also wants to develop multiple channels to help job seekers find jobs or start their own businesses. One aspect that has come up for mention is the need to develop large-scale vocational training programmes. Skill development to diversify one's employability is something China has thought of but not implemented in full measure.

The Chinese state also wants to strengthen the job market information system in order to monitor the job situation. Given the large size of the job market and number of unemployed, it was also felt necessary to establish an online unemployment registration platform. The last point is to enhance the safety net to help the unemployed meet their essential needs, a reminder that the US social network system does have its value.

Li Keqiang also mentioned the need to improve emergency response mechanisms and called all regions to deal with mass social unrest due to mass layoffs in a timely manner. Local governments have been advised to coordinate the employment needs of different groups and formulate temporary response measures. Notably, the fourth plenary session of the 19th Communist Party of China Central Committee on 31 October 2019 had stressed the importance of

improving the mechanism that promoted full employment with better quality. More recently, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a government think tank released on 23 December 2019 'Social Blue Book: Analysis and Forecast of China's Social Situation 2020', which states that Chinese employment situation continues to fluctuate due to downward pressure on economy, Sino-US trade frictions compounded by cyclical, structural and frictional factors. The official unemployment rate this year has gone up to 5.1 per cent, up 0.3 percentage points from the year before. The real unemployment rate is probably even higher. A National Bureau of Economic Research study (August 2015) estimated that the actual unemployment rate in 2002-09 averaged nearly 11 per cent, while the official rate averaged less than half that. Moreover, despite some reports to the contrary, by 2009 China's labour market had not recovered from huge layoffs that occurred during the later 1990s and early 2000s as the nation transitioned from a government-controlled economy to one in which private enterprise and market forces were more at play. Aidan Yao writing in the South China Morning Post (2 January 2020) posits that China's natural growth is likely to be slowed further by both structural trends and cyclical components. Structurally speaking, an ageing population and the transition to a less capital-intensive growth model are exerting a downward pull on growth. Thus China's growth in 2020 is likely to see a further fall. The challenge for China is to perform several acts of economic activity simultaneously, while transitioning from an export led economy to a consumption-driven economy. All this demands serious market reform, which is still far away. One aspect of this can be seen in the State's reluctance to give the private sector greater access to credit. The Fourth Plenum of the Communist Party, held in October 2019, had emphasised on the "dominant role of the public sector." This was clearly at the cost of the private sector, which constitutes more than half the GDP of China. Previously, under the Third Plenum in 2013, privatisation had been the watchword but by the 19th Party Congress, the Party was preparing to make the SOEs 'global entities'. The private sector in

China, although effectively under the Communist Party has been complaining of lack of credit availability, which is allocated mostly to the SOEs. The stress on preventing lay-offs and ensuring that the job market remains stable is a policy direction that China requires as instances of private companies laying off workers, cutting perks and reducing expenditure have increasingly come to notice in the last couple of years. According to a report in The Financial Times (3 March 2019), tech firms across China went into cost-cutting mode after years of excesses. With capital rises slowing down amid the sluggish economy, startups opted to reduce expenses. According to this report, capital investments in tech startups in China began to slow down during the second half of 2019, which resulted in lower valuations for the companies. At the same time, consumers have become more price-conscious and advertisers are rethinking their spending on advertisement. All of this has obviously weighed on tech companies, who have begun to pass the pain on to employees. For instance, Didi Chuxing, the Chinese ride-hailing startup, laid off 2,000 workers or 15 per cent of their total employee headcount last year. Similarly, Dianrong, the peer-to-peer lender, laid off 2,000 personnel in 2019. Another Chinese start up, JD.com has reduced its workforce by about 10 per cent. Pertinently, startups are not only laying off employees, but are also cutting perks. For instance, ByteDance, the mobile app maker, and other Chinese tech firms are reining in perks such as free snacks, gym memberships, and slashing bonuses. At this juncture in China's history, the economy faces multiple problems and unemployment is a factor that has begun to worry the Chinese state. While China's official unemployment data has barely moved in the last several years, hovering between 4 and 5 per cent, Beijing's messaging in the last year suggests that it is unusually worried about the slowing economy and the challenges that 2020 could bring. China is more worried today about social unrest, because it is directly correlated to regime stability. That is the real message from the statements of Chinese leaders while seeking to prevent mass layoffs and ensuring that the job market remains stable.

We would not hope RJP to join govt

-In the context of amending the constitution, we have common issues, the constitution is incomplete and we are also one on the issue of inclusion.

➤ **Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has said the two-year term has been very successful. Socialist Party was a partner of government about one and half years. What's the party's view?**

• What has made the Prime Minister so admiring about his two-year tenure is how the people have felt about it. Basically, if we question the development of Nepal, the capital expenditure of the total budget is completely dismal. It is not possible to spend even 18 percent of the cost of development in other provinces except one. The Prime Minister had also made many big promises, which did not seem to be the case. With the ever-increasing cost of consumer goods, the market has seen an inescapable condition of the public. Therefore, the kind of feeling that the government is preaching is not happening to the people.

➤ **Is there nothing in common with Prime Minister's claim and what is reality?**

• No, there is no common between Prime Minister's claim and the reality.

➤ **But, one and half years the Samajwadi Party has been in the government, too. Even the party has not seen any satisfactory works of the government?**

• Normally people would think so. But, we need to understand what reality is. Parliamentary system in particular is the prime ministerial system. It has only the supporting role of other ministries but the main role is prime minister. So, in some cases we were not in a position to deliver.

However, we have made the most of our efforts.

➤ **Are there complaints that the Chairperson of the Socialist Party Upendra Yadav spent most of his time abroad while he was Deputy Prime Minister and Health Minister?**

• The allegations are completely wrong that Socialist Party President spent most of his time abroad while he was Deputy Prime Minister and Health Minister. Some of the programs under the Ministry that the Government of Nepal has to represent, some are linked to the World Health Organization and that being so, it is not relevant that the Minister should not travel abroad. On the issue, such things were brought to publicity with the intention of defaming the Socialist Party President Upendra Yadav.

➤ **Was there any other reason for leaving the Socialist Party from government after seeing the state where the constitution was not amended?**

• When we went to the government, they said that the constitution is amended by two thirds. For that, the Socialist Party should come to the government and then we went to the government, saying that we will carry forward the amendment. That is why we went to the government with the focus of the constitution amendment more than any other purpose. When our Chairperson went to the Law Ministry, the Prime Minister strongly rejected the proposal to

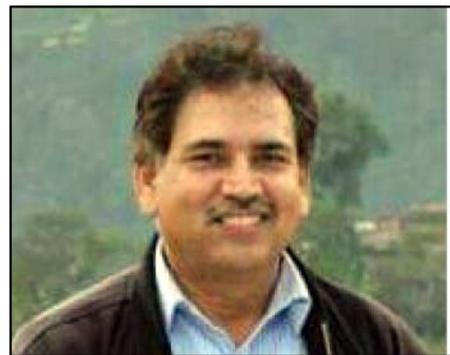
form an expert committee to identify the issues for amending the constitution. There is no other reason for Socialist Party to quit the government. We left the government as the non-implementation of two-point agreement.

➤ **After one and half years the Socialist Party came up with a proposal to form a committee to identify the issue of the constitution amendment, but why was it not addressed at starting stage?**

• In order to implement the fundamental rights envisaged by the Constitution, the Act requires laws. That is fundamentally essential for everyone. When such a proposal was brought as Law Minister by Upendra Yadav then we were clear that this government would not amend the constitution. So there was no need to stay longer in the government.

➤ **When Socialist Party was in the government, the issue of unity with RJP was raised strongly. But, this issue has become slow now, why?**

• The talks were held at various stages for unity between the Socialist Party and the RJP. RJP came to cooperate with the NCP during the last National Assembly elections. Then the unity talks are somewhat backward. At present, the cooperation between the RJP and NCP has ended. Dialogue and talk are now underway for formal and informal unity. In the context of amending the constitution, we have



Navraj Subedi

Vice Chairperson, Socialist Party

common issues, the constitution is incomplete and we are also one on the issue of inclusion. Many of our assumptions have also been found in issues related to identity. So if these two parties get together, they do well for the country and the people. We are optimistic, it may take a while but there is no alternative to unity.

➤ **Now your party is talking about the issue of unification while RJP is ignoring it. It is also called that RJP is attempting to join the government. Under this situation, could unity possible?**

• In various media and form leaders, it was heard that RJP could join the government if the demands are addressed. From the issue of amending the constitution, the release of Resham Chaudhary, withdrawal of cases filed against Madhesi leaders and cadres etc. are the conditions presented by the RJP for participation in the government. As we know Prime Minister is not agree on RJP's conditions. We also know that RJP could not immediately join the government as the talk of unity with is still

going on.

➤ **The Socialist Party also joined the government on the condition of amendment of the constitution and the demand was not addressed so what is the future move of the party in coming days?**

• We have been pushing the issue that constitution amendment also in the party's internal forums. In this regard, we are holding discussion, debate and talk with all the parties who are in favor of the constitution amendment including RJP.

➤ **The party formed an alliance with Nepali Congress for National Assembly elections, is there any possibility of cooperation in the coming days?**

• The role of opposition is even very weak within and outside Parliament. In the issue of Speaker, appointing the officials of universities, appointment of office bearers of constitutional bodies, it was seemed that the role of opposition in support of ruling. So making the opposition strong, we made an alliance with Congress. We hope, Congress also to support us on the issue of constitution amendment.

Two years of Province...

have a long-term salutary effect on the lives of people. So, from the work it has done so far in these crucial areas, the government seems willing to do things for its people that will be an example for other provinces. It knows that the country and the world is watching whether the experiment of federalism will work in Nepal. And for any social or political entity to succeed in changing society and improving people's lives, the flow of ideas in the governing circles is essential.

Province 2 is unlike any other province. The people of the province were the driving force behind federalism. Peoples of the plains, originally called the Madhesis, wanted localised governance because they felt excluded and discriminated by the Nepali state right from its inception in the 18th century. The discrimination was wide-ranging—people felt it in language, culture, and access to state mechanisms. So, they struggled for federalism; after a long and hard struggle, they got it—albeit partially. The western Tarai-Madhes, traditionally the land of the Tharus, remains to be formed as a province in itself like Province 2 where mostly caste Madhesis live. Yet, even in this truncated province, some changes are palpable.

The differences between the federal government and provincial government have surprised one and all, given the fact that the six provincial governments have belonged to the ruling party of the Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli while one belongs to the party which is a coalition partner with the central government. In spite of being an integral part of the ruling governments, the provincial government heads congregated in

Pokhara to step up their pressures on the central government and on the Prime Minister to provide them with more power, policies and resources.

The nine point recommendations that sought power from the central government to “function as effectively as elected province governments’ appear to have some genuine points, though. Through their recommendations, the chief ministers wanted to make the idea and principle of federalism effective by empowering their respective province governments with legislative, administrative and economic rights.

Some of the key points of the nine-point recommendations, that highlighted decentralisation of legislative, financial and administrative powers to the provincial governments, included the formation of a high-level body chaired by the PM for the implementation of federalism, formation of a permanent inter-state coordination council which may work as bridge between the central and the provincial governments, senior government secretaries should be made chief secretaries of province governments, integration of bureaucrats, fixing criteria through provincial laws to form civil service commission to hire employees, formation of necessary laws by the federal government to set up provincial police force.

Also included in the recommendations are the points such as making the district administrative offices accountable to the provincial governments, urgently

deploying of the office units and employees as per the recommendations of each province, distribution of natural and economic resources to the provinces, implementation of a system for sharing the revenues based on equitable principle, sorting of projects to be constructed in each province as per the requirement and viability. The Pokhara meeting and 9-point demand, also called a common concept paper, suggested that the provincial governments are in an urgent need of legislative, administrative and financial power to exercise their rights to undertake projects and to deliver services to the people without any hindrance.

Due to dearth of resources and due to their inability to exercise economic, administrative and legislative powers, all province governments have drawn flak from the people, while many think them as white elephants that have caused enormous burden on the tax payers. The dearth of resources and revenues at the central level has also made the matter worse for the provincial governments while the centre's reluctance to devolve power has caused troubles to the provincial authorities in delivering on their promises made to the people.

It appears that the federal governments are unable to decentralise the legislative, economic and administrative powers swiftly because of various constraints posed by constitution and by its lack of sufficient economic resources. In the meantime, the federal government appears unwilling to give powers to the provincial governments on the issues related to the issuance of citizenship and passports, setting up of police and security

forces as well handling border issues with neighbouring countries.

The federal government is also unwilling to provide the provincial governments with authority to impose various forms of taxes just because it would not only create problems to the people and businesses but would also invite a wider criticism for the government at the centre. In the recent times, the government has come under attack for the increasing level of taxes imposed at central, provincial and local level for the same products, services and private assets of the citizens.

A large section of masses and business houses of the country have started raising suspicion over the effectiveness of federalism and three-tier governments because of the rising level of taxes imposed by the ‘cash-strapped’ provincial and local governments. This situation has caused lots of problems to the central government in recent times, leading to the unpopularity of the government.

It seems that the central government won't be very forthcoming in respecting the recommendations of the chief minister, at least for the time being. We know that unless the federal government considers the recommendations in positive light and decentralises the legislative, administrative and economic powers, the provincial governments would remain a toothless-tiger, ineffective in delivering services and undertake development works, thus failing to live up to people's expectations and rendering idea and principle of federalism ineffective.

India set to welcome...

was quick to add: “I really like Prime Minister Modi.” Modi seems to have enticed Trump to fly 8,000 miles and spend two days in India by his promise to stage a huge, tightly controlled show, with Trump at its center. The president has

repeatedly claimed that he has been guaranteed a crowd of five million to seven million people lining the roads to greet him, and on Thursday he upped that to 10 million. Ahmedabad officials said it would be nowhere near that, more like

100,000 along the road and another 100,000 waiting for Mr. Trump in a new cricket stadium, the world's largest, where he will hold a rally. Image India is pulling out all the stops for Trump's visit. Here, workers are readying the street

the president's motorcade will follow in Ahmedabad. Trump is popular in India, where he is seen as a strong leader, tough on terrorism, pro-business and friends with Modi. The two share a similar brand of divisive, populist politics.

All to get united to achieve the goal of prosperity: PM Oli

Kathmandu: Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has expressed best wishes on the occasion of the National Democracy Day by urging all to get united to achieve the goal of a national prosperity and people's happiness a success. In a message issued on the occasion of Democracy Day, PM Oli paid his tribute to all the known and unknown martyrs who had sacrificed their lives in the democratic movements which ushered in people's rights by overthrowing the regime of by-birth superiors.

"Today is the day when the autocratic Rana rule was overthrown through the people's movement. Falgun 7, 2007 BS (February 19, 1951) is considered as the beginning point of the bright era in the history of Nepal," said PM Oli.



He expressed his best wishes to all Nepali sisters and brothers on the occasion of the day that marked the beginning of the democratic governance by ending the oligarchic and autocratic regime.

In his message, PM Oli expressed his heartfelt condolences to martyrs

Sukraraj Shastri, Gangalal Shrestha, Dasrath Chand, Dharma Bhakta Mathema and all known and unknown martyrs in the long struggle for the achievement of democracy.

"We recall the day as a point when the country set itself free from oligarchic and barbarous behaviour in the social, political

and governance system and onset of bright and beautiful morning," he said.

PM Oli has assured that the country had been moving ahead on the path of prosperity, development and good governance in line with the values of democracy.

"Along with the end of political transition, we are making headway towards good governance and development. We are now headed towards the direction of realising complete democracy, along with economic development and social justice," he added.

"We have targeted to Nepal's advancement from a least developed country to a developing one by 2022 and achieve Sustainable Development Goals by 2030," said PM Oli.

Workshop on India funded post-quake projects in education



Kathmandu: The Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), Roorkee, India organized a workshop on the post-earthquake reconstruction of schools and other educational facilities in Nepal Kathmandu. The workshop was organized in collaboration with Central Level Project Implementation Unit (Education), Government of Nepal, Indian Embassy in Kathmandu said in a statement. The workshop was attended by relevant stakeholders such as officials of CLPIU (Education) and DLPIU (Education), Government of Nepal, contractors and site engineers. The workshop was

held to pave the way for effective project implementation covering the aspects of Project Execution Guidelines, Good Construction Practices, Monitoring and Reporting to achieve the best quality of construction. The workshop aimed to provide best practices for delivering End to End construction management at all stages of the project – pre-construction, construction and post-construction. The government of India is supporting the reconstruction of 70 schools and one library as part of its post-earthquake assistance in the education sector.

No possibility of merging Banke, Bardiya in Karnali State: Prachanda



Surkhet: Chairperson of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has said no discussion was held to merge Banke and Bardiya districts in Karnali State for the time being.

Talking to media persons at Surkhet airport, Chairman Dahal said although geographical adjustment could be reconsidered in State territory, it was not possible immediately. The NCP Chairman mentioned that the federal government should address Karnali in a special manner in course of framing policy and programme. Mentioning the party's State gathering had raised the issue that

Karnali State should be specially addressed in the next policy and programme and budget, Dahal shared that the party would give necessary direction to federal government on this matter.

Also the former Prime Minister, Dahal expressed the view that ways would be paved for the State to formulate laws on the appointment of employees in view of the human resources crunch. He committed that he would provide assistance from his side for expanding Surkhet airport.

Government of trying to impose totalitarianism: Yadav



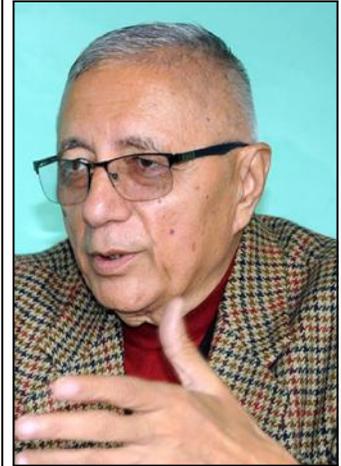
Biratnagar: Chairman of Samajwadi Party-Nepal Upendra Yadav said the government's disregard of the need to amend the statute had weakened federalism. Speaking at a press meet organised by Press Nepal in

Biratnagar, Yadav argued that amendment to the constitution was indispensable to empower the province. Yadav accused the incumbent government of trying to impose totalitarianism in the country. He charged that the government was

making bills to curtail the free press, bring the Nepali Army under the prime minister and seize people's right to privacy. Yadav said his party had quit the government after the government failed to implement the agreement inked with his party. He charged that Prime Minister Oli was against federalism. "When I presented the proposal to amend the constitution at the Cabinet meeting, Oli rejected it. It shows Oli is against federalism," Yadav said.

Yadav alleged that the government was working to weaken federalism. Instead of empowering the provinces by formulating laws, the government is making laws against the spirit of democracy and federalism, Yadav alleged.

General Convention will change central leadership in Congress: Koirala



Udayapur: Nepali Congress (NC) central member Dr Shekhar Koirala has claimed that the upcoming 14th general convention of the Nepali Congress would change its central leadership.

"Role of Nepali Congress would is ever be spectacular in safeguarding and consolidating democracy", Dr Koirala said in his address to the three-day district party improvement training organized by NC Udayapur.

NC Udayapur Spokesperson Madan Raj Katuwal quoted Dr Koirala as saying, "The party should not be weakened due to factions and sub-factions". Leader Koirala also urged the government to shun political stubbornness as it would invite crisis to democracy.

NC central member duo, Gururaj Ghimire and Badri Pandey said all party cadres should unite and perform together to bring back party to the earlier stage. NC Udayapur President Bidur Babu Basnet expressed confidence that the training would help consolidate the organizational base of NC.

India rejects UN mediation offer on Kashmir

New Delhi: The Indian government on Sunday rejected a mediation offer proposed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Kashmir. "India's position has not changed. Jammu and Kashmir has been, is and will continue to be an integral part of India. The issue that needs to be addressed is that of vacation of the territories illegally and forcibly occupied by Pakistan. Further issues, if any, would be discussed bilaterally. There is no role or scope for third party mediation,"

MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said in response to a media query regarding comments made by Guterres in Islamabad. "We hope the UN Secretary-General would emphasize on the imperative for Pakistan to take a credible, sustained and irreversible action to put an end to cross-border terrorism against India, which threatens



the most fundamental human right – the right to life, of the people of India, including in J&K," he added.

The UN chief, who arrived in Pakistan on a four-day visit, addressed a press conference along with Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, wherein he also expressed his "deep concern" over the situation in Jammu and Kashmir and tensions along the

Line of Control (LoC).

Guterres also said that it was important for India and Pakistan to de-escalate "militarily and verbally" and exercise "maximum restraint", amidst tense relationship between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. Tensions between India and Pakistan spiked after New Delhi abrogated the special status of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5 last year.

Laxman Tharu breaks fast



Kathmandu: The coordinator of Tharuhat Tharuwan Rastriya Mukti Morcha, Laxman Tharu, has ended his indefinite hunger strike.

Tharu had launched the fast-unto-death on February 13

putting forth various demands including the withdrawal of 'fake' cases regarding the Tharuhat Movement. After his health condition worsened, he was admitted to the Provincial Hospital.

Tharu agreed to break the fast after local political leaders agreed to help him meet the demands. Tharu sipped juice from the hands of Kailali's Chief District Officer Yagya Raj Bohora to break the fast.

Application for Wai Wai Glocal Teen Hero – India 2020 is now open

Kathmandu: Glocal Pvt. Ltd. in collaboration with Embassy of India launched the second edition of Glocal Teen Hero India 2020.

Glocal Pvt. Ltd and CYDA (the India Partner) are pleased to announce the opening of Wai Wai Glocal Teen Hero – India, 2020 to search the fantastic teen form India.

Glocal Teen Hero is an initiation of Glocal Khabar (a concern of Glocal Pvt. Ltd.) to bring out the teenagers who are doing something beyond their academics and are active to create a positive effect in their society. It is a platform for teenagers to share their initiation, creativity, and enthusiasm which will then motivate them and more of the other teenagers in the nation to develop entrepreneurial thinking.

Glocal Teen Hero is the first-ever program which has designed to recognize



dedicated, passionate, and innovative teenagers. It also aims to take GTH to all the South Asian Countries by 2020. Likewise; India is the first country to host the Glocal Teen Hero franchise. Glocal Teen Hero India is a fully-funded program exclusively for Indian Teenagers which supports the

teenager's initiation and help in developing motivational factors to initiate more. The overall purpose of this program is to motivate and encourage teenagers to step out of their comfort zone, be creative and nurture entrepreneurial thinking. It also acts as a great platform for teenagers to network with delegates from various industries in India. It is an opportunity of a

lifetime, not only to the winner, but all the applicants, finalists and other teenagers to develop themselves through networking, collaboration and pooling of opportunities.

At first, Glocal's 20 under 20 shall be announced from total applications through interview and document review. After that, the top 6 finalists will be shortlisted for the final round of the Wai Wai Glocal Teen Hero – India based on initiation and the impact of their work, and then the finalist will be interviewed individually to measure their personality, domain knowledge, and vision. Applications for Wai Wai Glocal Teen Hero – India has already opened from January 07, 2020. The participants will be judged by a 3-members jury team comprising of Adv. Vandana Hemant Chavan, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha; Mathew Matham, Secretary, CYDA, Pune and Prof. Ujjwal K. Chowdhary, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Adamas University.

Commendation Medal to Dr. Ahiraj



Kathmandu: Nepal Army has presented 'Chief of Army Staff Commendation Medal' to eight journalists including Editor of Madheshvani Dr. Rajesh Ahiraj on the occasion of Mahashivaratri and Army Day.

At a programme organised at Army Pavilion, Tuindekhel, Chief of Army Staff, Purna Chandra Thapa, presented the medal to eight journalists of national media for covering the Army beat news.

The journalists are Purushottam Khatrai (The

Rising Nepal), Narayan Prasad Neupane (Rastriya Samachar Samiti), Gajurhan Rai (Nepal Television), Deepak Rijal (Nepal Samacharpatra), Dilip Thapa Magar (Sarokar Television), Parsuram Kafle (Naya Patrika) and Hanshawati Kurmi (Radio Nepali Sena). Similarly, different personalities including historians— Dinesh Raj Panta and Prof Dr Tri Ratna Manandhar were also honoured with different award for their notable contribution in various sectors of the society.

Nepal Army Day observed



Kathmandu: Nepal Army organized a special ceremony to observe the Nepal Army and Maha Shivaratri festival at Tudikhel in the heart of the capital.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari, who is also the supreme commander of the Nepal Army, paid homage to the martyrs at the "Bir Smarat".

Vice President Nanda Bahadur Pun, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, Chief Justice Cholendra Sumshere Rana, Speaker of the House of Representatives Agni Prasad Sapkota, National Assembly Chairperson Ganesh Prasad Timalisina, cabinet ministers and senior government officials were

present during the ceremony.

Nepal Army personnel demonstrated celebratory firing from rifles and canons, March past, military skills and drills during the program. The signifying banner of Army Day 2076 and showering of flowers were displayed by Nepali Army helicopters.

Various army battalions presented the march-past. Various military arts and skills were demonstrated. Every year, the Nepali Army observes the 'Army Day' on the auspicious occasion of Maha ShivaRatri, the Hindu festival.

India's Tea Board pushes for quality check of brew from Nepal



Calcutta: Amid concerns that CTC variety from Nepal was being sold as Darjeeling tea to consumers, Tea Board has asked the Commissioner of Customs, Kolkata (Land), to check the quality of brew arriving from that country at FSSAI-accredited laboratories.

According to a Tea Board official, brew from the neighboring country cannot be banned as the treaty signed between the two countries has provisions for its import. Under the treaty, India imports tea from Nepal at zero duty, the official said.

"As the plucking season in Darjeeling has arrived, we have asked the Customs department to check if the quality of tea from Nepal conforms to FSSAI parameters," he told PTI.

Arun Kumar Ray, Deputy Chairman of Tea Board, said the agency has sought help from a laboratory in Mumbai, which can

differentiate between Darjeeling and Nepal teas. "We have asked the Customs authorities to discard tea coming from Nepal if it does not comply with the FSSAI norms," Ray said.

While Darjeeling produces around 9 million kg of orthodox variety annually, nearly an equal amount of the brew is imported from Nepal under the treaty.

Secretary-general of the Indian Tea Association (ITA) Arijit Raha said that the entire volume of tea from Nepal should be thoroughly checked at the land customs points. "Any attempt to sell Nepalese CTC variety as Darjeeling should be thwarted," he said.

Earlier, Ray had said traceability of Darjeeling tea was a cause for concern, and the ITA has expressed doubts over the quality of tea being sold in the market. He had also suggested that the entire volume of Darjeeling tea produced to be sold through auction to discover the real price and stop unhealthy practices. In 2019, around 8 million kg of Darjeeling tea was produced, of which 4 million kg was exported.

Free internet for parents insuring their daughters



Lahan: The government of Province 2 is providing free internet service to parents who have joined the daughter's education insurance program. The government has announced three months of free internet connection to the parents who have insured their daughters. The provincial government began the 'Chief Minister Educate Daughters, Save Daughters' campaign on in January 2018.

The daughters' insurance scheme is now available in all the eight districts of the Province 2. The parents visiting the insurance camps set up by the provincial

government are providing free internet service for three months.

The Subisu Cable Net Private Limited has been hired to provide free internet connection service. The parents of Ragini Kumari Mandal in ward no. 10 of Sukhipur municipality in Siraha were the first to receive the free internet service, said the Subisu cable Lahan Manager Sanjib Pathak. In Siraha district alone, more than 2500 daughters have been insured under the 'Chief Minister Educate Daughters, Save Daughters' of the State government.

Police rescue two Nepali women from captivity in India



Parasi: Two women, who were taken captive in India for the past six months, have been rescued on Thursday night.

A police team deployed from Border Police Post, Maheshpur of Nawalparasi, rescued them from Kamtabazaar of Maharajganj district in India, with the support of Maiti Nepal

and Indian Police. The rescued women are sisters of the same family of Bardaghat in Nawalparasi. Police rescued them after their mother filed a complaint asking police to rescue her daughters.

DSP Birendra Thapa at the District Police Office says that further investigation into the case is underway. He adds, "A search for the involved in the incident is on." The mother of the women says that a woman had taken them with herself in India, alluring them of providing good jobs in a shop but had given physical, mental and financial torture later.

Non-cooperation from bureaucracy hindered government work: Raut

Janakpurdham: Province 2 Chief Minister Lalbabu Raut complained that non-cooperation from the bureaucracy had hindered his government's work. CM Raut charged that though some employees were good, a majority of them were not sincere in carrying out their duties. "Employees deployed to Province 2 are dishonest and have faced the music for not performing their duty in the past," he added.

Speaking at a programme organised to mark the 59th anniversary of Rastriya Samachar Samiti in Janakpurdham, Raut held that Province 2 government had spent more budget than the federal government.

He acknowledged that province



government had failed to work as per people's needs and aspiration, but blamed it on lack of cooperation from the federal government. He urged the central government to send employees as per the need of the province government.

CM Raut said the media had played a great role in establishing federalism and republicanism in the nation. He urged journalists to report news and air views in a factual and objective manner.