

# India launching Shri Ramayana Express

## All about the unique pilgrim train including Janakpur

Major places covered in this journey are Ram Janmbhoomi and Hanuman Garhi at Ayodhya, Bharat Mandir at Nandigram, Sita Mata Mandir at Sitamarhi (Bihar), and Janakpur (Nepal), Tulsi Manas Mandir and Sankat Mochan Mandir at Varanasi, Sita Samahit Sthal at Sitamarhi (UP), Triveni Sangam, Hanuman Mandir and Bharadwaj Ashram at Prayag, Shringi Rishi Mandir at Shringverpur, Ramghat and Sati Anusuiya Mandir at Chitrakoot, Panchvati at Nasik, Anjanadri Hill and Hanuman Janm Sthal at Hampi and Jyotirlinga Shiva Mandir at Rameshwaram.



The special tourist train for those wishing to go on a pilgrimage of sites associated with Lord Ram from March 28. The special train— Shri Ramayana Express — will have ten coaches which include five sleeper class non-AC coaches and five AC 3 tier coaches. The booking will purely be on first come first take basis, it said. A similar tourism train on

this circuit was introduced last year with only sleeper class coaches which was a tremendous success. The response of the general public was such that all the available seats were booked in merely seven days. Shri Ramayana Express will commence its journey from Delhi on March 28. The interested tourists may board the train from - Delhi Safdarjung, Ghaziabad, Moradabad,

Bareilly and Lucknow. In a 16 nights -17 days tour, passengers will be visiting the tourists places associated with Lord Ram also known as the 'Ramayana Circuit of India'. Major places covered in this journey are Ram Janmbhoomi and Hanuman Garhi at Ayodhya, Bharat Mandir at Nandigram, Sita Mata Mandir at Sitamarhi (Bihar), and Janakpur (Nepal), Tulsi Manas Mandir and Sankat Mochan Mandir at Varanasi, Sita Samahit Sthal at Sitamarhi (UP), Triveni Sangam, Hanuman Mandir and Bharadwaj Ashram at Prayag, Shringi Rishi Mandir at Shringverpur, Ramghat and Sati Anusuiya Mandir at

Chitrakoot, Panchvati at Nasik, Anjanadri Hill and Hanuman Janm Sthal at Hampi and Jyotirlinga Shiva Mandir at Rameshwaram. The tourists will be offered pure vegetarian meals, accommodation and wash and change facilities in dharmashala (SL Class booking travellers) or hotels (AC Class booking travellers), all transfers and sight-seeing arrangements by non-AC buses and a dedicated tour manager of IRCTC will be travelling with them during the entire tour. Considering the 'Navratra' period, food served to the travellers will be cooked without onion and garlic. Fasting food will also

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# India continues to supply essential medicines to Nepal

Kathmandu: As Indian government has sought list of medicines Nepal need to import, minister of State of Industry, Commerce and Supply left for India to facilitate import of medicines in Nepal.

India had asked with Nepal to present a list of all-important medicines equipment. According to source in the government, Minister Dugar will present the list of essential medicines to Indian



authorities. As India is about to halt export of medicines,

considering the fallout of COVID-19, potential shortage of medicine in

Nepal has increased. India has announced to limit export of generic medicine in the face of shortage of raw materials owing to disruption of industrial output in China due to COVID-19. Even a high-level meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Ishwor Pokharel has decided to import medicines and much needed equipment from India,

The meeting has also directed concerned Nepalese health officials to hold cross border meeting regularly to share the information regarding Novel Coronavirus. The meeting also decided to import medicines and necessary equipment from India. The meeting also directed concerned agencies to print self declaration forms and provide them to all airlines coming to Nepal.



# Editorial

## Holi delight!

With Holi celebrations set to take place in various parts of the country today, it is time to make new beginnings. The festival of colors not only heralds the onset of spring, but is also an occasion for self-reflection, renewing bonds and celebrating life. Indeed, the spirit of brotherhood and amity is central to Holi. And given that we are living in highly contentious times, a festival that brings people together is certainly welcome.

However, amidst the fun and frolic of celebrations there has also been an unfortunate trend of anti-social elements using Holi as an excuse for harassment and bad behaviour. Women, particularly, have been at the receiving end. Each year cases of women beings molested in the garb of playing Holi surface from across the country. Contributing to the problem is the attitude that anything goes in playing with colours. This only encourages hooliganism, turning a festival of bonhomie into a nightmarish ordeal. It is paramount that law enforcement authorities ensure women's safety during the festival.

Similarly, there could be elements looking to stir up communal tensions during Holi. Holi is an ancient festival that celebrates spring and the harvest, with multiple Hindu legends to explain its origins. The one that connects to its color wars concerns the lord Krishna, who feels embarrassed by his blue skin compared with the fair skin of his love, Radha. So his mother suggests he smudge Radha's skin with color to make him feel better.

*The central ritual of Holi is the throwing and applying of colored water and powders on friends and family, which gives the holiday its common name "Festival of Colors."*

Originally, Holi's hues came from plant sources: Green was made from ground neem leaves (*Azadirachta indica*), and yellow and red came from turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), Rajamathi explains. A popular spice, turmeric is bright yellow at neutral pH thanks to the molecule curcumin. When treated with a base, such as calcium hydroxide (also known as lime), curcumin turns red. Other plant-based colors, used either as pastes, as powders, or in water, included henna leaves as another shade of green; marigolds or chrysanthemums as yellow; flame of the forest (*Butea monosperma*), pomegranate, or red sandalwood as red; indigo as blue; and charcoal as black.

In modern times, with more sophisticated synthetic chemistry, the colors became brighter—and in some cases more toxic. Some of the more benign, modern Holi colors, called gulal in Hindi when made in powder form, are a mixture of more than 95% cornstarch blended with food-, drug-, and cosmetic-grade dyes. These pigments, known as FD&C colors in the U.S., are the same ones that bring a rainbow of colors to candy.

A festival that celebrates the victory of good over evil, Holi is a celebration of the arrival of spring and harvests to come. It's the Holi festival of colors, emotions, and happiness. And what better way to express yourself than with the vibrant colors of the rainbow?

The central ritual of Holi is the throwing and applying of colored water and powders on friends and family, which gives the holiday its common name "Festival of Colors." Come Holi, and the country is alive with mesmerizing hues of blues, yellows, magentas, greens, violets, and more. Clouds of colors dancing in the wind carry the message of love and happiness across walls, neighbors, and hearts.

Brightly colored powders are the mainstay of the Holi festival, during which men, women, and children carry powders and liquid colors to throw and smear on the clothes and faces of neighbors and relatives. While dry powder colors are called "gulal," colors mixed with water are called "rang." Tables with bags of colors line the entrance as neighbors and family await the others to enter the grounds. It's a day to celebrate and let go — loud music, local brews, and fun-filled chatter are all essential elements of the celebrations.

## Issues of confronting Pakistan in implementing Chinese projects

*Jamil Maqsood of United Kashmir People's National Party in Pakistan administrated Kashmir protested against CPEC criticising it as pro-military project.*

Students in Pakistan blocked China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) route recently on environmental issues. The environmental damages, unrestrained plundering of resources, imbalance in distribution of benefits, inadequate compensation and more importantly mysterious financing are among the major concerns among Pakistani people for resorting to protests against CPEC projects. During 2018-19, work on the 1,110 MW Kohala hydropower project in Pakistan held Kashmir was forced to stop as people in Muzaffarabad feared that the project would not just lead to several environmental damages but will reduce their water supply as well. Protests were held in 2018 in Abbottabad by locals to express their grievances for not having been compensated for the land acquired. It resulted in escalation of project cost and also the completion deadline has been extended by two years to 2026. The opposition to CPEC projects was fierce to the extent that Pakistani Minister Ahsan Iqbal had to resort to contemplating booking the protestors under anti-terrorism laws. China even advised Pakistan to rope in army to ensure smooth execution of CPEC projects. The Gilgit – Baltistan based Awami Action Committee even called for an indefinite shutdown across the region to protest against Chinese projects. The opposition to the projects is on, while protesters have threatened not to hold down their protest until Pakistan withdraws the security forces across the region. In August, 2019 Pakistan reportedly evacuated more than 50 Chinese nationals working on a dam in Pakistan administrated Kashmir (which is a disputed territory) along the confluence of Neelum and Jhelum rivers. The Chinese were shifted to safe zone by local disaster management authority. CPEC, a key pillar in mega BRI passes through Pakistan administrated Kashmir and hence the deal

is highly controversial.

Instances of conflict between Pakistan government and people living in northern Gilgit – Baltistan region to western Baluchistan and southern Sindh provinces are emerging constantly. The people in the region have concern that major benefits of projects are being extended to politically strong province of Punjab especially when the resources for construction work are being procured from other provinces thereby denying economic benefits to the region. Syed Masood Alam, an expert based in the north western Waziristan region warned that the conflict sparked by CPEC has the potential of causing widespread bloodshed in Pakistan. On this ground people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Baluchistan and Sindh provinces are against the CPEC. Especially the separatists in Baluchistan have already vowed to oppose the CPEC project criticising it a further exploitation of their resources and rights. Various groups in Baluchistan have organised protests not only in Pakistan but also in different parts of the world including Seoul, London and Berlin against CPEC projects. Laku Luhana, Chairman, World Sindh Congress said CPEC was not an economic project but rather a matter of life and death for the Baluchis and the Sindhis. He protested against capturing the land and coastal lines for implementing the projects. The people hold protests against not adequately compensating for the acquired land. The fishermen of coastal city Gwadar continued their strike in the new year as well against the construction of six lane East Bay Expressway. The shutdown of fish export due to protests has impacted negatively on Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. Jamil Maqsood of United Kashmir People's National Party in Pakistan administrated Kashmir protested against CPEC

criticising it as pro-military project. The protesters also demanded the release of their associates in jail. Once the railway line is constructed in Baluchistan, there is possibility of attack on railway by guerrillas of Baluchistan and local government. There is also a big strategic risk in despatching troops to safeguard the railway line. Strategic location of Baluchistan has great significance as it is a strategic passageway. Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) is a separatist military organisation. People of Baluchistan are under suppression and can be considered as an opposition force of Pakistan. The size of this force is not much but operational capability is strong. This force is not unreasonable and incommunicable. China should not blindly rely on Pakistan in tackling BLA. There is a genuine need to provide employment and guarantee of livelihood to them in Baluchistan. China is worried about the uncontrolled risk posed by Pakistan's domestic terrorist activities. There is a wide gap between rich and poor of two regions namely Baluchistan and Punjab province. The survey undertaken in 2015 found that people's livelihood economic project can not be constructed at Gwadar. Gwadar port is a military port though China never say so. The continuous rise of Pakistan extremist religious groups terrorist activities like attack on Chinese Consulate in Karachi created an impression that people are against CPEC. These terrorist organisations have reached the grass root level of Pakistan and enjoy the support of many people. Pakistan has paid lip service without annihilating terrorist organisations inspite of warnings from US. It remains a question if China will be able to continue project after Pakistan succumbs to pressure of IMF on transparency issue. China is under pressure to consider more political aspect and less economic aspect while dealing with Pakistan.

# 33% women excluded in Province 2 Cabinet

➤ **What is your message on 110th International Women's Day?**

• First of all, on the occasion of 110th International Women's Day, I would like to express my best wishes to all women. We have achieved many achievements by looking back on the women's movement. But we still feel that we are in a state of political transition. The women's movement still has not even reached out to women from villages. This movement also not reached to the door of farmers and informal workers. Similarly, the women of this country are divided into two sections on the issue of citizenship. Not all women have become equal citizens. The women's movement is divided here by nationalism and racism. Although we have achieved significant achievements in the political field, much remains to be done to improve the standard of living of women.

➤ **Important provisions have been made to guarantee gender equality in the constitution of Nepal, but why not practically?**

• The law came in the preamble of the constitution. We have many good and progressive sections of fundamental rights. The consciousness of that law has not yet reached the society. Consciousness develops on the basis of knowledge and experience. Most importantly, to develop consciousness based on the law, a lot of work has to be done to spread the consciousness on the basis of the experience of our judiciary, police and administration. Even now, there has been no

change in violence against women. Women are victims of domestic violence, public violence and politically. The government needs to invest heavily in the judiciary to expand the awareness based on the law. There is also a need to think about how women officers can work independently in the police administration.

➤ **Why not raise awareness on issues of gender equality?**

• It also has weaknesses in the state and public representatives. People's representatives appear to have participated in much violence against women. Society is always traditional and conservative. The state must create alternative structures to transform traditional or conservative societies.

*People's representatives appear to have participated in much violence against women. Society is always traditional and conservative. The state must create alternative structures to transform traditional or conservative societies. Without the clear will and purpose, we cannot achieve such an easy goal.*

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➤ **The Samajwadi Party, which you are affiliated, has been raising issues of proportional inclusion, gender inclusion. Your party also in the government in Province 2 but has not done justice to a woman?**

• This problem belongs to the entire nation. It has to start with the federal government. The federal government

also excludes 33% women from the cabinet. Women were brought to the committees of parliament but women were not represented in the executive post. This is a problem of all state governments. There is a joint government of both RJP and Samajwadi Party in Province 2. Both parties should take responsibility. First of all, let's start with the center then come to the state. Why not give a woman an executive position? Educated women have become MPs. The state government has also failed in this.

➤ **Now that the federal government does not participate in the cabinet with 33% of the women, so does it not matter that the province has not done so?**

• Even though our party has the Chief Minister in the province, the proportional inclusion comes from the Madhes movement. In this, the Chief Minister can take initiative and ensure that. The main problem is our electoral system. Women cannot be elected through direct electoral system. Therefore, there is a need to improve the electoral system to keep 33% of the women in the government's executive post. On the one hand proportional



**Sarita Giri**

Deputy Parliamentary Party leader, Socialist Party

inclusiveness, but the electoral system seems to place women at the bottom. After all, the government is weakening the women who came from proportional inclusion principles. It is not just to represent women, to show them.

➤ **You have been accused of discriminating against women in the matter of citizenship, what is the law?**

• Our bottom line is that the legal provision regarding citizenship in the interim constitution should be considered as the Constitution of Nepal. In the matter of nationality, only the hill people have the mentality of representing the nationalism or nationality of Nepal and the women of different communities (Madhesi, Tharu, Muslim, Indigenous people) cannot be a symbol of Nepali nationality. The existing constitution

has revived the tradition of citizenship during the Panchayat period. The country is in a state of division, mentally and emotionally, by reviving it. This cannot be done without repealing the citizenship law in the interim constitution to bridge the situation of division. Even in the interim constitution, we have not come up with the citizenship system of women. In most developing countries of the world, arrangements have been made for citizenship in the name of the mother. Nepal has presented itself as very progressive but regressive on women's issues. We are also preparing for the movement because the Government of Nepal cannot make constitutional law contrary to the Convention against the violence against women.

## India launching...

be available for the tourists including Sabudana Khichdi, fruits, curd and potato chat, IRCTC said. Interested tourists may opt SL Class package at a cost of 16,065 per person, whereas the AC Class package will cost 26,775 per person.

Further, to cover the tourist places of Ramayana Circuit of Sri Lanka along with the Indian Ramayana Circuit, an add-on tour to Sri Lanka has been launched with limited 40 seats. Those interested to travel in both these circuits will be required to de-board the Ramayana Express Tourist Train on the 15th day at Chennai on April 11, from where they will be taken on a flight in economy class by the Sri Lankan Airlines to Colombo.

The tourists will be offered three nights stay in Sri Lanka at Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Negombo. This Sri Lankan leg will be charged additionally at 37,800 per person.

This leg of the journey includes

Sita Mata Mandir, Ashok Vatika, Vibhishana Temple and the famous Shiva Temple at Munneshwaram - Munnavari and much more, it said. The return journey will be booked by flight in economy class from Colombo to Delhi. The tourists will reach Delhi on April 15, IRCTC added.

On board the Shri Ramayana Express, there will be actors dressed up as Ram, Laxman and Sita (one wonders whether there will also be a Hanuman, complete with his tail) to entertain passengers on the trip. Now, what is one to think of all this? Sitamarhi is in Bihar, Nandigram in West Bengal and Janakpur is in Nepal. Will the train go eastwards and then northwards, before resuming its journey southwards?

Nasik was a place visited by Lord Ram during his exile. And why has Sabarimala been left out? Is it because there

may be menstruating women on the train? But Lord Ram ate plums given by the tribal woman Shabari there, and there is even a Pampa river there (in which I have bathed!), which is mentioned in the Ramayan. So how could it be left out of the itinerary?

And will the matter end with the Shri Ramayana Express? There may soon be a demand by Krishna bhakts for a similar train, a 'Lord Krishna Express', starting from Mathura, going all over 'Braj Mandal' and then proceeding to Puri in Odisha (to see the Jagannath temple), Kurukshetra in Haryana (to see where the Mahabharat war was fought), Nathdwara in Rajasthan and, ultimately, to Dwarka in Gujarat (where Lord Krishna shifted to avoid war with Jarasand).

There may be a demand by Shiva bhakts for a 'Bholenath Express' starting from Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar in

Tibet to Kathmandu in Nepal (to have darshan of Lord Pashupatinath), Kedarnath in Uttarakhand, Varanasi (where the Kashi Vishwanath temple stands) and then all the way south to Tamil Nadu, to visit Tanjore (to see the famous Shiva temple with its massive Nandi bull) and to Madurai (where Shiva's wife Parvati, known as Meenakshi, resides). And why should other bhakts, not only Hindus, but also of other faiths be left behind?

For instance, Sikhs would like a 'Sat Sri Akal Express' from Nankana Sahib in Pakistan (the birthplace of Guru Nanak, who founded the Sikh religion) to Amritsar (to visit the Golden Temple), Kulu (to see Manikaran Sahib), Hemkund Sahib in Uttarakhand, Tegu Bahadur Sahib in Assam, Patna Sahib and other places. And, of course, Muslims should have a train travelling all the way to Mecca and Medina, and Christians to their Holy Land.

### FM Gyawali expresses solidarity in China's fight against COVID-19



Kathmandu: Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi held a telephonic conversation. According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gyawali expressed solidarity in the fight against COVID-19 that was originated in China in November last year. The duo also discussed the matters of bilateral relations, the MoFA said. On his part, Wang wished for speedy recovery of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

## Nepal to urge India to ease ban on export of medicines

Kathmandu: The government will urge the Indian government to ease the ban on export of 13 kinds of essential medicines the latter imposed after coronavirus outbreak.

Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatiwada, who is also filling in as communication minister after resignation of Gokul Baskota, said during the weekly press conference on Thursday that the high-level coordination committee has decided to urge India to lift the ban.

The meeting called by Prime Minister (PM) KP Sharma Oli at Baluwatar on Saturday to discuss preparations to stop coronavirus outbreak had formed a high level coordination committee under Deputy PM and Defense Minister Ishwore Pokharel. The committee also includes home, tourism, health and education ministers.

Khatiwada revealed that the government has stock of the medicines banned by India. Spokesperson at the Health Ministry Bikash Devkota said



the ministry has discussed with the Department of Drug Administration and pharmaceutical companies to ensure that there is no scarcity of medicines.

India has banned export of 13 active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and their formulations including paracetamol, tinidazole, metronidazole, acyclovir, vitamins B1, B6 and

B12, progesterone, chloramphenicol, erythromycin and clindamycin salts, neomycin and ornidazole.

The coordination committee has also decided to make arrangements for quarantine and security at six border points with India. Khatiwada said team of health personnel will be mobilized in all 37 border points used for transportation.

# RPP and RPP U to unite



Kathmandu: The Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (United) and Rashtriya Prajatantra Party have announced unification between the two parties. The two parties finally agreed to become one after long discussion and dialogue. RPP (United) chairpersons Pashupati JB Rana and Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, and RPP Chair Kamal Thapa signed the approach paper to the unification.

Accordingly, the new party will have three presidents. The declaration assembly will be held on March 11. The three presidents will decide on the central committee composition, division of responsibilities and day-to-day affairs of the party. The Unified RPP has decided to adopt the principle of democracy with the monarchy and Santa Hindu State. Likewise, it shall follow local self-governance, liberal economy, and non-aligned foreign policy. An interim statute will be developed accordingly. The statute will be drafted and presented by a committee within the next six months. As per the agreement, the general convention of the unified party will be held within the next 18 months. The election symbol of both the parties has been withheld for six months. RPP flag will be used by the new party as well.

## Chinese President wishes speedy recovery of PM



Kathmandu: President of China Xi Jinping wished for a speedy recovery of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli. According to Chinese Embassy in Nepal, President Xi who is also the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China sent an oral message to PM Oli who underwent a successful kidney transplant at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH) in Kathmandu.

"I noticed that Prime Minister Oli just had a kidney transplant surgery. On behalf of the Chinese government and people as well as in my own name, I would like to extend sincere solicitude to you and wish you an early recovery," Xi said in his message. In his message, he said that he is willing to work together with PM Oli to lead the relations between the parties and the countries to keep moving forward, deepen bilateral cooperation in various fields, and bring more benefits to both peoples.

increased significantly in the peacekeeping operations. From Nepal Army alone, a total of 1,401 female peacekeepers have participated in the UN peacekeeping missions, while 181 women personnel are currently serving in various UN missions.

Other largest troops contributing countries to the UN Peacekeeping Operations include Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Rwanda.

## Nepal is now the fourth largest troops contributing country to UN Missions



Kathmandu: Nepal has emerged as the fourth largest Troops and Police Contributing Country (TPCC) in terms of the number of peacekeeping forces sent to serve in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations around the world. Nepal has been able climb to the fourth position since January 1, 2020 with an increased

participation of Nepali peacekeepers in various 12 UN peacekeeping missions around the world. Until then, Nepal was the fifth largest troops contributing nation to the UN peacekeeping missions. Altogether 5,658 security personnel from Nepal are currently serving in the UN peacekeeping missions. These

include contingents, military observers and staff officers, according to Nepal Army. The NA has sent 5096-strong force and Nepal Police and Armed Police Force together have sent 562 security personnel to the UN Peacekeeping missions. They are serving in UN missions in Congo, South Sudan, Sudan, Western Sahara, Israel, Lebanon, Mali, Syria, Central African Republic, Iraq and Libya.

Besides Nepal's elevation to the fourth largest troop-contributing country, Nepal Army's Major General Ishwar Hamal has been appointed as the Head of the Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) to Golan Heights. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Major General Hamal as force commander of the UNDOF on February 24.

Nepal for the first time started its participation in the UN Observation Group in Lebanon in 1958. Since then, 129,899 security personnel have already served in the peacekeeping missions. In recent years, the participation of women security personnel has also

## Alertness placed in Janunaha checkpoint to prevent coronavirus outbreak

Ranjha: In order to check possible transmission of coronavirus through surface route, Nepalgunj sub-metropolis has placed alertness measure at Jamunaha checkpoint along Nepal-India border.

The health section of Nepalgunj sub-metropolis has set up a health screening desk to examine the health of people entering into Nepal from India, shared health section coordinator Ram Bahadur Chand.

Two health workers have been mobilized at Jamunaha checkpoint by managing necessary infrastructure and screening instruments, he said. Hundreds of Nepali enter



Nepalgunj from India via Jamunaha checkpoint every day. Health check-up service has been provided to the interested people and patients at border transit point.

“We provide health screening

service to the patients and keep them under monitoring. However, we do not have capacity enough to provide screening service to all those traveling through the checkpoint”, Chand added.

“Existing infrastructure and human resources would not be enough to expand the service. However, we are coordinating with the concerned agencies for this”, he further said.

Health worker Dhan Prasad Neupane said people’s health screening is being carried out at the desk through the inferred thermometer. An inferred thermometer is a device that measures the temperature of the human body from a distance without contact.

The health help desks were set up along border entry points after a joint meeting of the security officials from Banke and Bardia districts and Indian border authorities decided to put high alert measures.

## Journalist Sah murder accused held after 12 years



Birgunj: Police in Bara district of southern Nepal have arrested a man, who is accused of murdering local journalist Birendra Sah 12 and half years ago.

Kundan Phaujdar, a resident of Gadhal, Baragadhi rural municipality-6 of Bara district, was arrested at his house at around 2 am today, informs SP Krishna Pangei,

the chief of the District Police Office.

When the police reached his house to arrest him, a few locals had tried to obstruct the law enforcement personnel. The police had to open a few fires in the air to contain the situation, according to him.

Sah, a local reporter of Avenues TV, was kidnapped from local Pipara Bazaar before the murder on October 5, 2007. Phaujdar was associated with the CPN-Maoist party, which had just joined the peace process then. He was absconding since the murder and the police were accused of sparing him from action owing to his political nexus. DSP Govinda Puri of the Simara Area Police Office in the district says Phaujdar will be taken to the District Court today as a case on the murder is pending there.

## India seeks list of essential drugs that Nepal needs

Kathmandu: The Indian government has sought a list of the essential drugs and other necessary drug materials it needs to supply to Nepal.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Ishwar Pokharel, who heads a high-level coordination committee formed by the government to counter the threats posed by the global epidemic of coronavirus, informed that India has communicated about its willingness to relax the restriction of the drugs needed for Nepal. “We corresponded with the Indian government to provide the necessary raw materials and life-saving medicines yesterday,” said Pokharel, adding, the southern neighbour is positive on the supply of drugs to Nepal.

The Indian government has stated that its move follows disruption in the supply of raw materials from Hubei in China for the past two months. Hubei is a major supplier of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) used in several



medical formulations.

India has banned the export of APIs that are used to produce paracetamol, tinidazole, metronidazole, acyclovir and vitamin B1, B6, B12, progesterone, chloramphenicol, erythromycin salts, neomycin, clindamycin salts and hormones, such as progesterone, among others which are essential during pregnancy and menstruation.

As the Indian government has also restricted the export of 26 APIs, the decision is certain to hit the Nepali market as most of the local pharmaceutical companies rely on India for the raw materials.

## India announces to isolate Nepalese at Indian international airports



New Delhi: Nepal has only one reported case of novel

coronavirus and Nepal government has recently geared up health checkup in Tribhuvan International Airport and other border areas, Indian government has placed Nepal in the list of highly affected countries with China, Korea and Italy.

Indian authorities have started to treat Nepali air passengers like other 12 countries

segregating them from rest of the passengers. An Airport Authority of India (AAI) spokesperson said passengers from Nepal including other twelve countries would not be allowed to mix with other passengers at International Airports in India.

According to the spokesperson, the passengers

from the 12 countries would not be allowed to mix with other passengers during “health screening, immigration and conveyer belt areas”.

India Today reports that these countries are China, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Iran, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Nepal and Indonesia.

# Activists slam Pak's narrative on India's move

Geneva: Activists and journalists from Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), along with European Parliamentarians and foreign experts hailed the Indian government's decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution.

The discussion in this regard took place at an event titled 'Jammu and Kashmir: Sifting facts from fiction' held at Geneva Press Club on the sidelines of the ongoing 43rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

The discussion also focused on Pakistan's interference in Jammu and Kashmir amid its deteriorating human rights record.

Nathan Gill, Former Member of European Parliament praised the Indian government's decision to abrogate Article 370, saying that it was appropriate to fight against terrorism in the region and give equal treatment to the people in Kashmir.

"The Union Territory has seen a new dawn and people here have seen themselves as equal citizens in India", said Gill while speaking at the event.

"The way you fight against terrorism is for the people to say, 'enough is enough', and to turn against it. The abrogation of Article 370 will eventually lead to the people of Pakistan occupied Kashmir demanding more and more for their rights



and for them to be reintegrated for the rest of the Indian community," he said.

Syed Tehmeena, a woman activist from Kashmir valley said at the event that the women in the region will enjoy better rights after the abrogation of Article 370.

She said, "A Kashmiri girl who will marry outside Kashmir will now not lose her property rights. A Kashmiri woman who married outside Kashmir in the past, she and her children were not having the right to own a property in Kashmir. Now they can buy a land and house, which is her right".

Tehmeena added that Pakistan has no right to interfere in the Kashmir issue, rather it should work to improve its own legislation and government system.

"Pakistan has worked to improve its film industry and

theatres, whereas our theatres were forced to close by carrying out attacks", said Tehmeena.

A short documentary was also screened which showed how Pakistan invaded Kashmir and illegally occupied the region.

Another video also exposed Pakistan's drive towards spreading fake news on Kashmir since after the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A on August 5, last year. It highlighted the way Pakistan is working on giving it a communal colour by spreading fake news.

Gianna Gancia, a Member of the European Parliament highlighted the deteriorating human rights situation in Pakistan, especially the people from minority communities. She said, "India's move to introduce the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) will help the persecuted minority community to get citizenship in India".

Brian Toll, Former Director of the European Commission said that

Kashmir is the most beautiful part of the world where people are known for their hospitality. However, it faced the worst years because of the rise in terrorism with the support of Pakistan. Mohd. Sajjad Raja, President, JKNAP, UK, who hails from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) said that Pakistan is the occupier of Jammu and Kashmir. "Islamabad calls it 'Azad' or Free Kashmir which is total fiction." "I am from that part of the world and there is no freedom to the people in Pakistan occupied Jammu & Kashmir. We have no constitutional, legal, religious or social rights there. All banned terror organisation are free to work in our part of Jammu and Kashmir", said Raja. He said that the people in PoK have no human rights, which is a fact and not fiction.

Senge Sering, President, Gilgit Baltistan Studies said that Pakistan has used GB as a launchpad for terrorists "as everybody knows that Kargil war as it was initiated, orchestrated from Gilgit Baltistan."

Speaking to ANI prior to the event, Sering said that the conference was aimed at challenging and counter Pakistan's narrative on Kashmir.

"We believe that the international community should have a chance to access the reality of Jammu and Kashmir. When it comes to reality, it is about its history, demography, political situation and relation with India," he said.

## Indian Ambassador Kwatra calls on Vice President, leaders

Kathmandu: Newly-appointed Indian Ambassador to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra has gifted books with an article written by Prime Minister KP Oli about India's Father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi to Vice-President Nanda Bahadur Pun and ministers. During courtesy calls on Vice-President Pun, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense Ishwor Pokhrel and Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali, Ambassador Kwatra gifted books 'What's Gandhi means to me' to them.

After presenting a letter of credence to President Bidya



Devi Bhandari, Kwatra paid the courtesy call and gifted the books that is a collection of inspiring and interesting incidents from Gandhi's life and hoped that Nepal-India relation will reach newer heights.

Likewise, Ambassador Kwatra has paid a courtesy call on the senior leader of Nepal Communist Party (NCP) Madhav Kumar Nepal. In the meeting, Ambassador Kwatra and Nepal discussed issues related to bilateral interest and relations between the two

countries, informed leader Bishnu Rijal.

Ambassador Kwatra coincidentally visited NCP leader Nepal on the occasion of the latter's birthday, Rijal posted a message on his Twitter account.

Similarly, Kwatra paid a courtesy call on Nepali Congress (NC) President Sher Bahadur Deuba on Friday.

In the meeting held at Deuba's residence in Budhanilkantha, Ambassador Kwatra and Deuba discussed issues related to bilateral interest and relations between the two countries. Deuba wished Kwatra for his successful tenure and hoped Nepal-India relation will reach new heights, according to Deuba's Personal Secretariat.

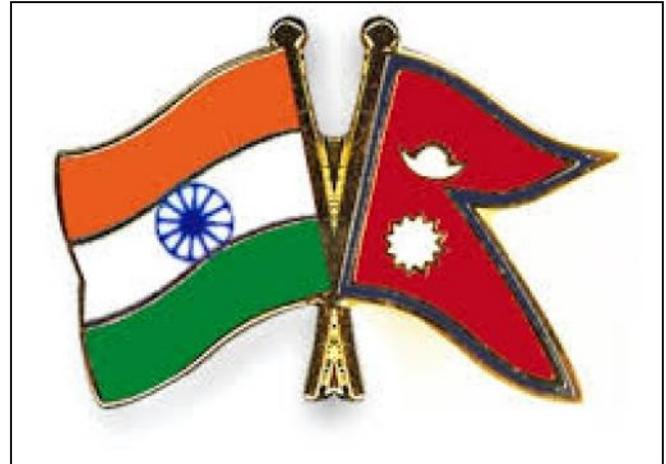
## Indian envoy submits credentials to President Bhandari



Kathmandu: The newly-appointed Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Vinay Mohan Kwatra presented his credentials to President Bidya Devi Bhandari amidst a special ceremony held at the President's Office in Shital Niwas. After submitting his credentials to President Bhandari, Ambassador Kwatra has already started holding courtesy calls on Nepalese political leaders. On Thursday itself, Ambassador Kwatra paid a courtesy call on Vice President Nanda Bahadur Pun at the latter's office.

Ambassador Kwatra is the 25th Ambassador of India to Nepal. He succeeds Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri, who completed his tour of duty earlier in December. Kwatra arrived in Kathmandu on March 1 to take up his diplomatic assignment. He was appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Nepal by Ministry of External Affairs of India on January 30. Kwatra has the experience of working in the UNO and various diplomatic missions to the USA, China and France.

## Officials from Nepal, India agree on seven issues of common interests



Baitadi: A meeting of the district-level coordination committee of Nepal-India held in Baitadi district ended with a seven-point agreement on issues of the bilateral interests. Chief District Officer (CDO) of Baitadi Ananda Poudel said that issues of law and order, disaster management, construction of a motorable bridge in Jhulaghat and others were agreed at the meeting, which was attended by the officials of bordering districts from Nepal and India. Similarly, the officials have

agreed to exchange information during and prior to disasters as well as set up a health desk as a precaution measure against Covid-19. CDO Poudel shared that the meeting of the committee now would be held every three months.

During the meeting, CDO of Baitadi Poudel, CDO of Darchula Yadunath Poudel and others were present from Nepal while District Magistrate of India's Pithauragadh Dr. Bijay Kumar Jogdande and others were present from the Indian side.

## Mahamurkha title awarded to Province 2 CM



Janakpur: Chief Minister of Province 2 Lalbabu Raut has been awarded with this year's Mahamurkha (biggest fool)

title.

The title is presented by the Mithila Theatre Art Council on the occasion of Holi festival. It has been a tradition for the past 25 years.

Similarly, Provincial Assembly members — Manish Suman, Parameshwor Saha, Ram Ashish Yadav and Ram Chandra Mandal were awarded Patmurkha, Bhavakauwa, Harashankha and Silaut Shankar title respectively. Likewise, Deputy-mayor of Janakpur Sub-metropolitan City Rita Kumari Mishra was awarded with Tunmusari title while litterateurs Roshan Janakpuri, Balram Thakur,

executive director of Broader Janakpur Development Area with Dalbhogana and Kharsarilal title respectively.

The Council also awarded Sushil Karna with Banshakullari title as well as Dhanusha Chair of Federation of Nepali Journalists Anil Mishra with Lodhashankar, Maithali campaigner Jeevannath Chaudhary with Gharghusana and poet Poonam Jha Maithil with Agalbadali, among other titles. On the occasion, CM Raut said Mithila culture was exemplary and the Council had shown a path of inspiration by reflecting on various aspects of life.

## Karnali government decides to seal Nepal-China border

Surkhet: Karnali Province government decided to seal its border points along the Nepal-China border to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19. Spokesperson of the provincial government and Provincial Minister for Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives Bimala KC informed that the decision was made as part of provincial government's precautionary measures to prevent and contain coronavirus.

The province government also urged the public not to hug or shake their hands with others. "Similarly, organizing public functions, assemblies, fairs, festivals and gatherings within the province is restricted," Minister KC said while unveiling the province cabinet decisions.