

EDITORIAL

Increase nation's forest cover

Every citizen of India is expected to plant a sapling in the Van Mahotsav week. Also, awareness campaigns amongst people about the benefits and harmfulness of trees. It needs to be understood that trees are the best effective way to prevent global warming and reduce pollution. While planting the trees, we must go with indigenous native trees as they readily adapt to local climate, integrate into eco-system and have a high survival rate. Besides, such trees are helpful in supporting the whole of the biodiversity including our local birds, insects and animals. With the support of Van Mahotsav, the nation's forest cover has successfully increased, and it has contributed to the cause of environmental protection awareness-raising. Additionally, the event had a significant role in improving the environment and leading to a rise in the amount of greenery around the nation. Planting trees at one's residence, place of education, or other institution is one way to take part in the Van Mahotsav festivities. Additionally, anyone can take part in a variety of festival-related events like rallies, lectures, and workshops. Another fantastic approach to take part in the festivities is by producing nature paintings and village paintings that highlight the beauty of nature. The festival's celebration has gone a long way since it was first established. It has contributed significantly to the country's increased green cover and is now recognized as a national holiday. The event also acts as a platform to promote awareness about the necessity of environmental preservation and ensuring a sustainable future for future generations. Let's all make a commitment to help the environment and improve the quality of life on our planet as we wrap up this blog. Let's celebrate the beauty and significance of trees and promote a sustainable future for ourselves and future generations. Technically also, celebration of this festival in July has the beneficial due to onset of monsoon and the active nature of cambium in warm weather. It is not the celebration of planting trees but it is the festival of life, peace and hope. As part of the celebrations, millions of saplings are planted by people from all over the country and peoples are encouraged to plant trees than to cut them. The need of the hour for the country is the greenery. Thus, the preservation of nature has become an integral part of our life due to the present day numerous environmental challenges.

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Pushpa Kamal Dahal falls from grace

BY
K S TOMAR

The new coalition, dominated by the pro-India Nepali Congress, will now be led by the communist leader Oli who will have a daunting task of ensuring political stability

Politicians have been grabbing the power by following Machiavavillan principle of showing complete disrespect to means, the morality and values. This is true of Pushpa Kamal Dahal who fell from the grace after facing humiliating defeat while seeking trust vote in Nepal parliament.

While seeking trust vote in Nepal parliament, Prachnda faced the worst type of humiliating defeat as he got 63 votes (Rashtria Swatantra Party-21, CPN(US)-10 and his party-32) as against 194 votes of new coalition combination of Nepali Congress(89 MPs) and Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)(78 MPs) which also got support from other smaller parties like Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Janata Samajwadi Party (Upendra faction) etc. in the house of 275 where majority mark was 138 only. Oli has staked claim after president Ram Chandra Poedel invited the political parties having strength to form the government.

In a positive move, Dr. Rajan Bhattarai, the Foreign Affairs Department chief and a Standing Committee member of the CPN-UML emphasized that CPN-UML believes that Nepal's progress or the welfare of its people can be achieved only by adopting a Pro-India stance. He made it clear that the party's chairman, KP Sharma Oli, is keen on taking Nepal-India relations to new heights thereby aligning with the requirement and urgency of the modern era.

Due to fragile nature of democracy in Nepal, unabated and persistent instability has been trademark of the government which is evident from 16 time change of guards in the span of 13 years thereby hitting the interests of the common people in the country besides pushing the country into financial crisis and debt liabilities especially huge loans advanced by China.

In a midnight swoop and a dramatic turn of events on July 9, a secret deal was clinched between two former Prime ministers viz. Sher Bahadur Deuba of Nepali and K.P.S. Oli of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) which sealed the fate of current PM, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Prachanda. In this manner, yet another coalition of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Nepali Congress came into existence today following the humiliating defeat of Prachanda, a diehard loyalist of China on the

floor of house. New regime will be headed by Ex PM, Oli which had preceded withdrawal of the support to current PM, on July 3, 2024 thereby reducing it into minority. The Janata Samajwadi party led by Ashok Rai having 7 PMs also withdrew the support and recalled three ministers from Prachanda government.

The coalition government will be dominated by Pro India, Nepali Congress, though a die-hard communist leader, former PM, Oli will be heading it for a term of one half year which will be followed by a takeover by former PM, Deuba of Nepali congress as agreed by two coalition partners.

Foreign policy experts say that major factors responsible for the collapse of coalition of Prachnda-Oli, duo, included Power Struggle, style of functioning of prime minister, Policy Differences, Coalition Dynamics and Coalition Dynamics which may lead to more stable dispensation comprising of Nepali Congress, Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Janata Samajwadi party. Amidst the toppling game, midnight power sharing agreement between two former Prime ministers, viz. Sher Bahadur Deuba, and Nepali Congress and K.P.S. Oli chairman of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) was signed on July 5, 2024 thereby leading to a sudden change of regime in Nepal. New coalition government



of Oli and Deuba is bound to face multiple challenges which will be key to success otherwise its fallout could be midterm polls. The fragile nature of the new government consisting of the communists (Pro China) and Nepali Congress (Pro India) having opposing ideologies could pose a major challenge to keep them in unison and amalgamated.

Oli and Deuba combine will be under compulsion to keep equi-distance with two regional powers viz. India and China which have got geo-political and strategic interests in the affairs of Nepal. Oli's previous stint as PM was marked by his extreme Anti India action of redrawing the map which had shown Indian territories including Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani as part of Nepal. It had exasperated India which

rejected this misadventure thereby terming it as baseless besides being an attempt to spoil ties. Now, as dominant partner in the coalition, the onus of checking this tendency will lie on Deuba to prevail upon Oli to come out of Anti-India mentality and protect age-old relations between two nations.

The communists regimes led by Prachanda always gave clear indications about the commitment to China which will expect new government to go ahead with Belt and Road (BRI) initiative especially when outgoing PM has approved the proposal which had been signed between two countries on May 12, 2017.

It will be an uphill task for Oli to stick to his predecessors' resolve to toe China's line about BRI as Nepali congress is totally opposed to it

hence chances of any progress seem to be remote. It will be a test of the new government to deal with India's Agnipath scheme which is one of the major irritants so far. Nepal's border issues with India, including disputes over territories require a multifaceted approach.

Strengthening the Nepal-India Joint Boundary Commission to expedite the resolution of boundary issues through technical and diplomatic means may yield positive results. The survival of the coalition will depend solely on mutual trust of partners and balanced diplomatic strategy and refrain from offending two regional giants which had been lacking in the past.

(Writer is a senior journalist and a political analyst; views are personal)

Unsubscribe to Stress!

BY
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MANDAL

By consciously choosing what we consume and share, we can influence social media platforms to prioritise content that fosters growth

We have reached an age wherein people are just as ready to tie the knot with their smartphones as they would be with another person. Keeping the dreadful reality of objectophilia aside, there is no denying that we are heavily dependent on the internet and social media. As a generation that grew up with a strong influence of the World Wide Web, the boundaries between a virtual and physical world are ever so blurry. The pandemic-induced lockdown further aided this ambiguity when our devices served as forms of human communication for two years.

Consequently, the question of whether social media can compensate for genuine connection has burdened the minds of many. There is no denying that social

media has helped many individuals find others similar to them in numbers that would have been impossible before the advent of online communication. Communities have formed and connected from all over the world. Social media offers many benefits; however, the question prevails — do the pros outweigh the cons? What is it really doing to our mental health?

Negative Effects

A survey was conducted to understand the subjective experiences of social media users concerning their mental health. It was reported that nearly 70% of respondents feel like their mental health has been affected by their time on social media. Approximately 40% stated that they spent more than three hours a day online. Despite social media having various social benefits, the sheer amount of time spent on these platforms can damage one's mental well-being. (Awan, 2023).

The results suggest that there is no clear public opinion on whether social media can be used to manage one's mental health positively; however, there is a clear indication that the negative effects are prevalent. To quote one respondent, "We can't remember the good for long & we can never

forget the bad. So it (social media) does affect us mentally & seeps into emotional duress."

Our actions can compel companies to reshape their digital spaces into more peaceful and accepting communities that encourage understanding, empathy

What exactly about social media leads to this distress? One common association is the perception of perfection it promotes. Individuals become fixated on their public image. Social media provides tools to meticulously craft our identities to match our ideals, intensifying the natural inclination to compare ourselves to others. Failing to meet the standards set by others' fabricated realities can lead us to view their lives as more desirable than our own (Bailey et al, 2017).

Threat to Mental Health

Furthermore, increased levels of hateful content and cyberbullying pose a significant threat to mental health on social media. The global number of social media users has surged to an astonishing 4.9 billion (Wong, 2023). This level of mass consumption turns us into indistinguishable voices among billions. According to the theory of deindividuation,

such anonymity can lead individuals to behave in ways that diverge from their true morality (Douglas, 2019). This phenomenon manifests online through increased levels of hateful content and cyberbullying.

More than 50% of the participants of the survey reported they have come across hateful content on social media on multiple occasions. In a way, social media has become the megaphone amplifying the hate that already exists. The distinction between what is considered 'dark humour' and what is downright harassment is not as easily ascertained as it should be, owing to the virtual environment.

Doomscrolling, fueled by social media algorithms designed to prioritise content that engages us the most, leads us into a cycle where we unknowingly spend hours online reinforcing our own beliefs without achieving much else. Individuals find this addictive and it has a detrimental effect on mental health, aggravating depression and anxiety. A significant contributor to this addiction is social media platforms shifting their focus from connecting people to maximising profit. A spokesperson for the 5Rights Foundation, speaking with Damian Gayle of the Guardian

(2021), emphasised this concern: "In their pursuit of profit, these companies are stealing children's time, self-esteem, and mental health, and tragically, sometimes their lives."

The Verdict

Uninhibited consumption of social media can be an active addiction. Similar to other addictions, the first step to breaking the cycle is recognising the problem, especially when its effects are evident in our personal lives. To raise awareness about this issue, widespread media literacy campaigns could be implemented. Moving in the right direction starts with individual action, but given that more than half of the world's population uses these platforms, governments and the companies responsible for them must also play a regulatory role. Potential measures they could take include labelling controversial content, implementing time management tools, establishing healthier notification practices and involving mental health professionals in designing user interfaces.

The undeniable truth is that social media has become an integral part of our lives, influencing how we perceive and interact with the world around us. As individuals, we navigate through both the positive and negative

aspects it presents. However, the power to shape the impact of social media lies in our hands collectively. On an individual level, we can contribute to a healthier online environment by engaging with content that promotes mental well-being and positivity and refraining from sharing misinformation. By consciously choosing what we consume and share, we can influence social media platforms to prioritise content that fosters growth and personal development, rather than perpetuating negativity and division.

Ultimately, our actions can compel companies to reshape their digital spaces into more peaceful and accepting communities. This transformation can turn social media from a breeding ground for hate into a platform that encourages understanding, empathy and constructive dialogue. By actively participating in this shift, each of us plays a crucial role in shaping the future of social media and its impact on society.

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