

Youth discontent could trigger another rebellion, warns Nepal PM Karki

KATHMANDU, Feb 19: Nepal's interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki on Thursday warned that failing to address youth discontent could trigger another rebellion.

Speaking on the 76th Democracy Day celebrations at the Nepali Army Pavilion in Kathmandu, she said democracy must deliver results, protect citizens' rights and ensure accountability.

Referring to the Gen Z-led protests in September last year that led to the ouster of K P Sharma Oli-led coalition government, Karki said, "That movement sought an end to corruption, nepotism and discrimination. It sought good governance and equitable justice."

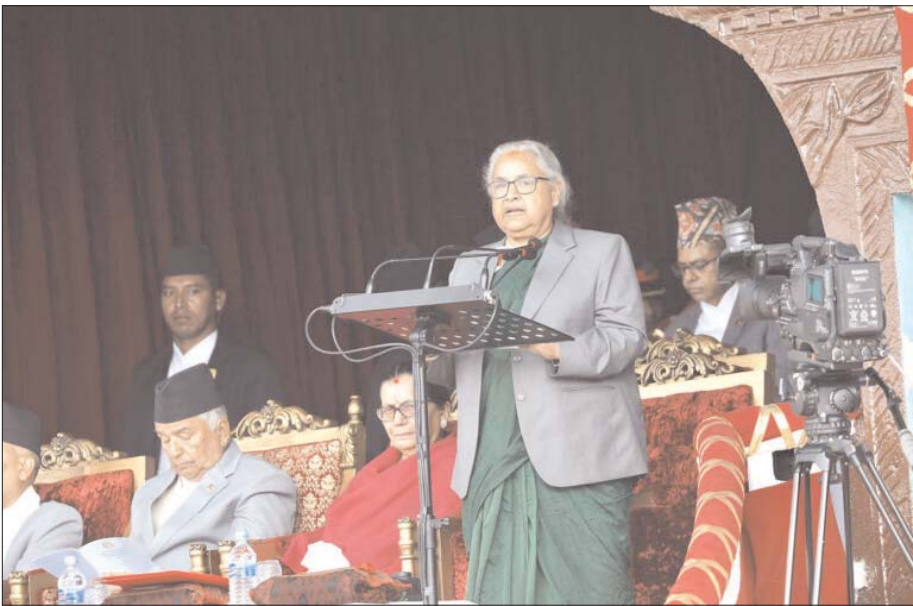
"The state must respond to this not only with generosity, but also with humility and a deep sense of duty," she added.

She warned that failing to address youth discontent could trigger another rebellion.

"No nation can progress by undermining the youth," Karki, who became interim prime minister on September 12 last year, said.

"The youth have energy, aspiration for change and moral anger," she said, adding democracy is "not only a process, but a result-oriented system".

"We embraced democracy in principle, yet in practice,



we continued to foster discrimination. We wrote equality in the Constitution; yet within our structures, we went on protecting inequality," she said.

Monopoly over power and resources has eroded public trust, fuelling rebellion, Karki added.

Separately, Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel expressed his wish that Democracy Day may help achieve national goals of sustainable peace, good governance, development and prosperity in the country.

President Paudel said that Nepalese people should never forget the 1950 revolution as it was an important foundation for the establishment of the federal democra-

tic republic.

Democracy was established in Nepal through the 1950 revolution that ended the 104-year-old hereditary rule by Rana prime ministers reducing the king to a titular head.

"Democracy Day perpetuates the importance of civil rights and also always reminds us of the immortal story of the martyrs," the president said.

Meanwhile, former King Gyanendra has said that "if we go for election without addressing the national crisis, it could invite more conflict". He did not elaborate specifically what he meant by national crisis.

"The entire country has plunged into an unnatural crisis and the people are ex-

periencing threat to the sovereignty of the country," claimed the former monarch in a video message broadcast on the National Democracy Day.

Gyanendra was indirectly hinting towards restoration of monarchy ahead of the March 5 general election which is evident from the voices raised by different pro-monarchist groups.

"We have to evaluate what we have gained from past movements and changes," Gyanendra said.

Nepal is set to hold the House of Representatives elections on March 5, the first since last year's deadly Gen-Z protests that toppled the KP Sharma Oli-led coalition government.

FICCI creates employment for 100 women through strategic industry collaboration with Nidra

JAMMU, FEB 19: FICCI FLO Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh has successfully created sustainable employment opportunities for over 100 women through skilling-to-employment initiative in collaboration with Nidra.

Under this impactful program, FICCI FLO JKL adopted a "Train the Trainer" model under Skill to Scale vertical headed by Deepti Gandotra and Iruvanthika Chowdhary, by training trainers from 20 Self Help Groups (SHGs) in stitching. Each of these Trained leaders further trained five to six women within their respective SHGs, thereby expanding the initiative's reach to over 100 women at the grassroots level.

Following the successful completion of the training phase, these women have now secured permanent employment in collaboration with Nidra, to stitch pillow covers, ensuring a steady source of income for them. This structured approach not only strengthened Local SHGs but also created a sustainable production ecosystem linking grassroots women directly to the industry.

Speaking on the initiative, Aarti Chowdhary, Chairperson FICCI FLO JKL, stated: "At FICCI FLO JKL, our commitment has always been to ensure that skilling leads to



real economic independence. Through this collaboration, we have successfully converted training into assured employment, completing the full circle of employment. This initiative reflects our promise and our purpose – to create meaningful, measurable impact in the lives of women.

Addressing the gathering Mr. Sahil Anand, Managing Director Nidra Shared: As responsible entrepreneurs, we believe it is our Socio-Economic duty to contribute towards the upliftment of women at the grassroots level. We have always valued initiatives that empower

women at the grassroots level, and this collaboration with FICCI FLO JKL aligns perfectly with that vision. We are pleased to support this initiative and look forward to continuing our association to create more such meaningful opportunities.

Members present at the event include Mrs. Varuna Anand-National Initiative Head Partnership & Collaborations, Mrs. Ruchika Guota-Imm. Past Chairperson, Mrs. Varsha Bansal-Sr. Vice Chairperson, Mrs. Rupika Sahai-Vice Chairperson, Mrs. Sona Mehta-Treasurer, Mrs. Nandita Bajaj-Secretary. Mrs. Deepti Gandotra & Mrs.

Iruvanthika Chowdhary.

This initiative stands as a true reflection of FICCI FLO JKL's guiding Motto, "The Power To Empower". By transforming skill development into sustainable livelihood opportunities, the chapter has once again demonstrated its unwavering dedication to women's economic empowerment and grassroots upliftment.

FICCI FLO JKL remains committed to fostering similar Partnerships that bridge the gap between training and employment, ensuring long-term, scalable impact for women across region.

Indian-origin Singaporean woman jailed for slapping taxi driver over fare

SINGAPORE, FEB 19: An Indian-origin Singaporean woman was sentenced to two weeks in jail on Thursday for voluntarily causing hurt by slapping a taxi driver allegedly over fare at a police station.

Shalini Devarajan, 36, refused to pay her taxi fare of SGD 24 (USD19) because she had no cash and rejected the payment options suggested by the driver.

After the woman challenged him to take her to a police station, the 73-year-old taxi driver complied – and that is where she slapped him, according to a Channel News Asia report.

The court heard that the victim was driving a taxi flagged down by another man at about 3 pm on November 11, 2025.

Devarajan boarded the cab alone and the victim was instructed to take her to her apartment block in Yishun housing estate.

The victim noticed that



Devarajan reeked of alcohol. He drove the sleeping woman to her destination.

When they reached the block's shelter, the driver woke her up and told her the fare was SGD 24.

Devarajan said she had neither cash nor any means of cashless payment. She proceeded to call someone before saying that she needed to go up to her unit to get the money.

The driver asked her to leave her phone behind before going up, but she refused. The driver also suggested following her up to the unit, but she refused.

At about 4.20 pm, Devarajan slapped the driver once on his left cheek, causing him pain.

The victim later went to the hospital for treatment and received one day of medical leave.

The taxi fare was not paid and Devarajan was arrested that same day.

The prosecution sought compensation of about SGD 172 for the victim's medical bills, but Devarajan claimed she had no funds or money at all.

In her mitigation, Devarajan stated she did not realise she had a SGD 50 note in her pocket when told the fare. (PTI)

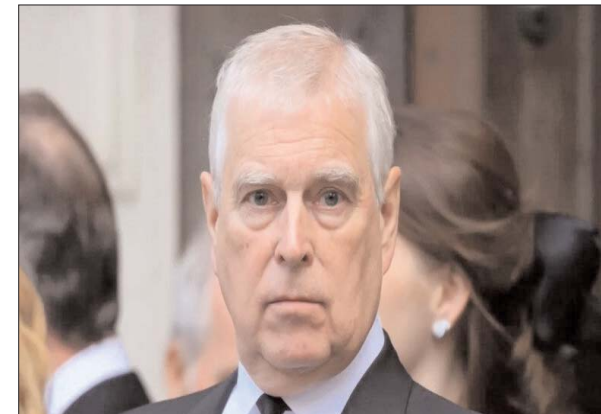
LONDON, FEB 19: The UK police on Thursday arrested Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, the younger brother of King Charles III, on suspicion of misconduct in public office following damaging allegations over his association with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Thames Valley Police said they are carrying out searches at addresses associated with the former prince in Berkshire and Norfolk, while he remains in police custody.

While the force said they will not be naming the arrested man, it is being widely reported that the arrest involves Andrew, who turned 66 on Thursday.

"Following a thorough assessment, we have now opened an investigation into this allegation of misconduct in public office," said Oliver Wright, Assistant Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police. "It is important that we protect the integrity and objectivity of our investigation as we work with our partners to investigate this alleged offence. "We understand the significant public interest in this case, and we will provide updates at the appropriate time," he said.

In UK law, an arrest requires police to have reasonable grounds to suspect an offence has taken place and reasonable grounds for believing that it is necessary to



arrest the person in question.

Earlier, when asked about the allegations against Andrew during his time as a former trade envoy in the then government's Department of Business over a decade ago, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer told the BBC that no individual is above the law.

"Anybody who has any information should testify. So, whether it's Andrew or anybody else, anybody who has got relevant information should come forward to whatever the relevant body is, in this particular case, we're talking about Epstein, but there are plenty of other cases," said Starmer.

"Anybody who has got information relating to any aspect of violence against women and girls has, in my view, a duty to come forward, whoever they are."

"One of the core principles in our system is that everybody is equal under the law, and nobody is above the law, and it is really important that

is applied across the board. "That is the principle. It's a long-standing principle, it's a very important principle of our country, our society, and it applies, and it has to apply in this case, in the same way as it would apply in any other case," he said.

The arrest follows a series of shocking allegations over the past few weeks as the Epstein files were released by the US Congress, with Buckingham Palace issuing an unprecedented statement earlier this month to say that it "stands ready" to support a police investigation into the conduct of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor.

"The King has made clear, in words and through unprecedented actions, his profound concern at allegations which continue to come to light in respect of Mr Mountbatten-Windsor's conduct," the Palace said at the time.

"While the specific claims in question are for Mr Mountbatten-Windsor's to

address, if we are approached by Thames Valley Police we stand ready to support them as you would expect."

"As was previously stated, Their Majesties' [Charles and Camilla] thoughts and sympathies have been, and remain with, the victims of any and all forms of abuse," it stated.

It followed the 77-year-old monarch being heckled by members of the public during royal visits.

Prince William and Kate Middleton's office had also been forced to issue a statement on behalf of the Prince and Princess of Wales as the royal circles came under mounting pressure over the issue.

"I can confirm the Prince and Princess have been deeply concerned by the continuing revelations. Their thoughts remain focused on the victims," Kensington Palace said at the time.

Andrew, who had been stripped of all his royal titles of Prince and Duke of York by the King last year, has consistently and strenuously denied any wrongdoing.

"We will not be naming the arrested man, as per national guidance. Please also remember that this case is now active so care should be taken with any publication to avoid being in contempt of court," Thames Valley Police cautioned after the news of his arrest broke. (PTI)

Rubio plans to update Netanyahu on US-Iran talks in Israel next week, officials say

WASHINGTON, FEB 19: Secretary of State Marco Rubio plans to travel to Israel next week to update Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the US-Iran nuclear talks, two Trump administration officials said.

Rubio is expected to meet with Netanyahu on Feb. 28, according to the officials, who spoke Wednesday on condition of anonymity to detail travel plans that have not yet been announced.

The U.S. and Iran recently have held two rounds of indirect talks over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program. Officials from both sides publicly offered some muted optimism about progress this week, with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi even saying that "a new window has opened" for reaching an agreement.

"In some ways, it went well," US Vice President JD Vance said about the talks in an interview Tuesday with



Fox News Channel. "But in other ways, it was very clear that the president has set some red lines that the Iranians are not yet willing to actually acknowledge and work through."

Netanyahu visited the White House last week to urge President Donald Trump to ensure that any deal about Iran's nuclear program also include steps to neutralize Iran's ballistic missile program and end its funding for proxy groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

Trump is weighing whether to take military action against Tehran as the administration surges military resources to the region, raising concerns that any attack could spiral into a larger conflict in the Middle East.

On Friday, Trump told reporters that a change in power in Iran "seems like that would be the best thing that could happen." He added, "For 47 years, they've been talking and talking and talking."

The Trump administration has dispatched the USS

Gerald R. Ford, the world's largest aircraft carrier, from the Caribbean Sea to the Mideast to join a second carrier as well as other warships and military assets that the US has built up in the region.

Dozens of U.S. fighter jets, including F-35s, F-22s and F-16s, have left bases in the U.S. and Europe in recent days to head to the Middle East, according to the Military Air Tracking Alliance, a team of about 30 open-source analysts that routinely analyzes military and government flight activity.

The team says it's also tracked more than 85 fuel tankers and over 170 cargo planes heading into the region.

Steffan Watkins, a researcher based in Canada and a member of the MATA, said he also has spotted support aircraft like six of the military's early-warning E-3 aircraft head to a base in Saudi Arabia.

Toxic gas leak at mine in Nigeria kills 37 people

ABUJA, FEB 19: A toxic gas leak at a mine in north-central Nigeria killed 37 people and led to the hospitalisation of 26 others, according to police.

The incident occurred in the early hours of Tuesday in Kampani Zurak community, located in the Wase area of Plateau state, police spokesman Alfred Alabo said in a statement.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that the miners were affected due to a sudden discharge of lead oxide and other associated gases like sulphur and carbon monoxide which are toxic



and poisonous to humans, particularly in a confined or poorly ventilated environment," he said.

"The corpses of the deceased victims have been released to their families for burial according to their re-

ligious practices."

The Nigerian government has closed the mining site and an investigation into the leak is underway.

The miners were unaware of the toxic nature of the emissions and continued their operations, Nigeria's Minister of Solid Minerals Development Dele Alake said in a statement.

It's not clear what was being mined at the site and whether the mine was operating legally. Nigeria is trying to rein in illegal gold mining operations across the country that have killed hundreds of people over the years. (AP)