

OUR OPINION, THEIR OPINION

Patience is not simply the ability to wait - it's how we behave while we're waiting.
- Joyce Meyer

Read the wall or quit

A popular government must read the crisis and pain of its people in the social media wall instead of trying to erase them. It must also realise popularity in politics is a time-bound feeling which may abolish with the course of time and situation. But like the government of Bangladesh and Sri-Lanka in the recent times, the government of Nepal also failed to read the mind of its people, their resentment. So yet another prime minister and government in South Asia has fallen to the fury of protesting people on the streets. After Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, it is Nepal's turn to face a regime change. At least 22 have died, most in police action, hundreds injured and public properties torched in violence, arson, and vandalism that raged in Kathmandu, Pokhara, and other parts of Nepal for two days before the Army took charge of the situation on September 9.

The government of K P Sharma Oli brought this end upon itself with its thoughtless ban on social media. While the ban was the spark, the underlying causes reveal the seething anger and frustration of a neglected people who have had enough of Nepal's self-serving elected elite that enriched itself even as the majority slipped deeper into inequalities, deprivation, and joblessness. In Nepal, social media serves more than entertainment. For most Nepalese, the internet is also a key source of news, livelihood pursuits, and remittances, making it a survival connection in their daily life. It was equally useful for the discontented to let off steam, which they did with stories and videos of the corruption and indulgences of politicians and their 'nepo kids'. Instead of reading these writings on the wall for the depth of the economic crisis and disparities they revealed, the Oli government sought to kill the media, messages, and messengers. This set off an eruption of discontent over corruption, government failures, and opportunistic changes of prime ministers (16 since 2008), made worse by suppression of the protests. While the elected political class has discredited itself, the situation has opened the space for mischief and sabotage of multiparty democracy by monarchist forces that may well be aided and abetted by foreign powers. These powers, both near and far, have reasons for being unhappy with Nepal where the monarchy subverted their interests. The protesting Gen Z groups have alleged infiltration by external elements. Both India and China have little to gain from turmoil, instability, and the uncertain outcome of a leaderless upheaval which can be manipulated for foisting a 'popular leadership' that is promonarchy and propped up by external powers. India has tightened security along its border with Nepal. It needs to deal with this regime change with diplomatic tact: discourage the return of anti-democratic forces, isolate the corrupt, help revive the economy, and keep out extraregional interests with a proclivity for meddling in South Asia. This could be a test of New Delhi's neighbourhood policy.

Safe skies: Taiwan seeks ICAO inclusion

For decades, Taiwan has been excluded from ICAO due to political pressure from China, creating a potential gap in the global aviation network. This situation poses risks and challenges to aviation safety that Taipei seeks to address

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) convenes its Assembly once every three years. During the event, multi-lateral meetings and discussions are held to draw up global civil aviation regulations and standards. Nations abide by the conclusions drawn at the Assembly, ensuring the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation worldwide. The 42nd session of the ICAO Assembly will be held in Montreal, Canada, from September 23 to October 3. In line with its long-term strategic plan, 'Safe Skies, Sustainable Future,' ICAO is emphasising a commitment to working with all stakeholders — including member states, non-member states, NGOs, and private enterprises — to build a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive international aviation system. We call on ICAO to allow Taiwan to fully participate in its Assembly, technical meetings, and mechanisms to ensure regional aviation safety and development needs, thereby achieving safe skies amid a sustainable future.

Aviation safety and growth needs The Taipei Flight Information Region (FIR) covers one of the busiest regions in East Asia for air travel. It is an indispensable part of ICAO's network of over 300 FIRs. Taiwan's Civil Aviation Administration (CAA) is the sole entity responsible for overseeing the Taipei FIR. The CAA offers a comprehensive range of information services and manages air routes to ensure safety and efficiency for all flights and passengers arriving in, departing from, and transiting the Taipei FIR. From both a risk and safety management perspective, ICAO should permit Taiwan's CAA to participate on an equal footing with the oversight agencies of other FIRs. This will ensure that the Taipei FIR can communicate directly with other FIRs as well as with ICAO to ensure the free flow of timely information. Despite not having authority

over the Taipei FIR, China, in recent years, has declared temporary danger areas and airspace reservations and has established military exercise areas within the Taipei FIR. China has failed to comply with ICAO requirements that advance notice of at least seven days be given concerning such measures. This has severely compromised flight safety in the Taipei FIR and neighbouring FIRs.

Global aviation faces many natural and manmade challenges, such as climate change, power banks, and international geopolitical strife. Taiwan, which is responsible for the considerable traffic through the Taipei FIR, makes every effort to be a responsible stakeholder in the international aviation community. To undergird regional flight safety, Taiwan again calls on ICAO to recognise the importance of the Taipei FIR and of its participation in ICAO. Safe skies and sustainable future

The CAA does its best to collect the information it can via indirect channels. It also invites aviation experts from other countries to hold training courses. This helps it to achieve international aviation safety management standards. It also adopts or modifies regulations, systems, and procedures in line with ICAO standards in ways that benefit global and regional aviation safety.

For example, the CAA has initiated a State Safety Programme and collaborates with aviation industry stakeholders through this programme to establish safety oversight systems. This has contributed to Taiwan's exceptional overall safety performance. From 2020 to 2024, the five-year moving occurrence rates of turbofan and turboprop aircraft were zero (zero accidents per million departures). The safety performance of Taiwan's aviation industry has also been remarkable. EVA Air, for instance, has been recognised as one of the world's safest full-service airlines by

AirlineRatings.com and was ranked seventh-safest in 2025.

To further sustainable development of the aviation industry, the CAA has incorporated the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (COR-SIA) into domestic law and launched a sustainable aviation fuel pilot program in April 2025. This demonstrates the determination of Taiwan's aviation industry to take concrete steps toward a net-zero transformation.

Despite these efforts, to ensure access to timely and comprehensive information, the CAA must be allowed to participate in the technical meetings and training opportunities offered by ICAO. ICAO should act in line with its No One Left Behind initiative to rectify the fact that the CAA remains unable to participate in its activities.

Taiwan needs your support Aviation safety knows no borders. For decades, the CAA has mandated and upheld the highest standards of service and safety for the Taipei FIR while meeting ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices. As a stakeholder in the international aviation community, Taiwan shares in the responsibility to safeguard regional and global aviation safety. Through participation in ICAO, Taiwan will be able to continue to work with other countries to contribute to the further development of global aviation and the well-being of all mankind.

ICAO is set to convene the 42nd Assembly with the theme "Safe Skies, Sustainable Future." It is time for ICAO to bring Taiwan into the fold. With meaningful participation, Taiwan can contribute its professional expertise in pursuit of ICAO's vision of safer skies and a more sustainable future. Taiwan's CAA is committed to working with the international community to implement the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

BY-CHEN SHIH-KAI

Turkey's Erdogan silencing opposition and cementing grip on power

Turkey's internal political landscape in 2025 has been marked by intensifying conflict and sharpening discord. Domestic political environment included detentions of opposition mayors and other personalities under the garb of anti-corruption investigations, social media restrictions, violent crackdowns, pressurising opposition figures to join ruling dispensation, etc. Municipalities run by the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), a Kemalist and social democratic political party in Turkey, have faced waves of arrests this year.

On Monday, hundreds of CHP members and leaders - considered the main rival of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) - clashed with local police before being arrested outside their party's headquarters in Istanbul.

A Turkish court on September 2 had ousted the Istanbul provincial head of CHP, Ozgur Celik and named former Deputy Chair of CHP, Gursel Tekin as the interim provincial head of the party. CHP national leader Ozgur Ozel dismissed the ruling as null and void, stating that Tekin was expelled from the party. Celik underscored that he would not hand over the post. The Turkish government has rejected accusations of political interference, commenting that the judiciary acts independently. Building on the arrest of

Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu in March this year, President Erdogan and the ruling AKP have embarked on further crackdown on the opposition groups. The arrest of Beyoglu Mayor Inan Guney on August 15 was the latest in a string of government crackdown on municipalities run by the CHP. Notably, Guney had a reputation of being non-controversial and maintained a low profile even as a Mayor. The number of CHP Mayors arrested in 2025 stands at 17, all currently in prison or under house arrest.

In addition to the arrests, a number of opposition Mayors have defected to the ruling AKP. Nine of them, including Aydin Mayor Ozlem Cercioğlu, defected on August 14. Overall, 56 Mayors from opposition parties and independents have joined the AKP since the last elections. The political purge has significantly weakened the opposition by removing key local leaders, disrupting municipal governance in opposition CHP strongholds, affecting cohesion and limiting their ability to mobilise ahead of future elections. However, despite aggressive moves to squash opposition, protests continue with weekly rallies and strikes, highlighting deepening divisions ahead of potential early elections.

Compounding political instability, Turkey has faced severe economic challenges over the last three years with persistent high inflation fueling dis-

content. The annual inflation rate averaged 54 per cent in 2023, primarily driven by unorthodox monetary policies of Erdogan. This surged to 59 per cent in 2024. The year 2025 has seen inflation moderating a bit, dropping from 42 per cent in January to 34 per cent in July, this year.

The rising food and housing prices in Turkey have also hit the common man hard. The Turkish Lira's 16.3 per cent depreciation following Imamoglu's arrest in March triggered market turmoil resulting in intervention from the Central Bank of Turkey to the tune of USD \$25 billion from its reserves. Broader issues, including high employment, judicial corruption and a 'Not Free' rating from Freedom House, have amplified calls for economic reforms.

Meanwhile, the Erdogan government has stoked nationalist passions and played up foreign policy triumphs in its bid to divert attention from the economic and political challenges. Portraying Turkey as a rising player through pro-government media to rally national pride, the Erdogan administration has been trying its best to divert attention from protests and economic hardships.

Turkey has seen moderate successes in the foreign policy sphere. The collapse of the Assad regime in Syria has positioned Turkey as a significant player in the region. Recent engagement with Syria

includes signing of a military cooperation accord on August 14 this year, under which Turkey will provide weapon systems, equipment and logistical support to the new Syrian government.

Turkey's defence cooperation with Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives, framed as partnerships with Muslim-majority nations, resonates with the country's public. Ankara's collaboration with Islamabad includes a USD \$900 million deal signed in July this year to provide advanced Bayraktar TB2 and Akinci drones along with over 700 loitering munitions. Turkey's declaration of closing airspace, banning ships and severing ties with Israel over Gaza actions positions the country as a defender of shared values. The 'Terror-Free Turkey' campaign resulting in arms surrender by some members of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has also been appreciated.

A multi-party 'National Solidarity Brotherhood and Democracy Commission', led by Speaker of the Grand National Assembly, Numan Kurtulmus has been formed to resolve legal and constitutional hurdles to solve the Kurdish problem. However, it is likely to be a medium to delay the said campaign closer to the election period to allow Erdogan to extract political mileage of being 'protector of national unity'.

Separately, the ruling AKP has launched 'Century of Turkey Meetings' with the objective of

mobilising public support for forthcoming election milestones, reaffirming AKP's central role, strengthening national unity and restoring electoral momentum. The campaign emphasises progress across key sectors, including healthcare, infrastructure, energy, education, diplomacy and technology. The evolving policy orientation is an attempt towards a recalibration from security driven paradigm to reconciliation driven, development-oriented governance model.

By initiating corruption cases against the opposition leaders, AKP intends to sell it to the public that even CHP leaders are not happy by the rampant corruption. Recent polls, however, indicate a shifting landscape, wherein the opposition CHP leads with 33.3 per cent support compared to AKP's 30.2 per cent. Averages of 16 polls in July indicated that 67 per cent of Turks want the Erdogan era to end and support for jailed Mayor Imamoglu has risen.

While the Erdogan administration has boosted nationalistic pride, domestic instability in Turkey and broader changes in the international arena remain; with possible headwinds for Erdogan's plans to secure re-election or amend the constitution to extend his rule. Erdogan has been accused of trying to neutralise the opposition momentum before elections.

By-Baidya Bikash Basu

A Journey into the Many Dimensions of Happiness

Happiness. We all seek it, talk about it, and often measure our lives by it, yet it remains elusive for many. Sometimes it feels like a sudden burst of joy; other times it hides behind the routines and challenges of daily life. What makes happiness so intriguing is that it resists a single definition. It is not merely the thrill of a pleasant moment, nor a permanent state of bliss. It is richer, layered, and deeply personal.

Through this column, The Middle Path, we will explore the many dimensions of happiness—not as a fleeting emotion, but as a deeply rooted way of living. This journey will unfold across the Psychology of Happiness, the Science of Happiness, the Art of Happiness, the Alchemy of Happiness, and the Spirituality of Happiness. Each perspective adds to our understanding, and together they may contribute to what I hope becomes a shared conversation on living well—and perhaps, over time, a "Happiness Bible."

The seed for this exploration was planted through decades of interactions with wise friends, mentors, and spiritual guides. I was fortunate to work closely with my ex-boss and informal happiness coach, Mr. Subhash Mohindru. His deep interest in Buddhism and human well-being opened doors for me to meet remarkable thinkers such as Matthieu Ricard, often described as the happiest man in the world, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Along with other wise souls I encountered, these experiences shaped my understanding of happiness not as an abstract pursuit but as a lived experience.

The Psychology of Happiness Let us begin with psychology—the study of the mind. Pleasure, joy, happiness, and bliss form a continuum, each with its role in shaping our lives. Pleasure is sensory and short-lived, arising from a favourite meal, a good song, or a beautiful view. Joy is deeper, springing from meaningful connections, creativity, or acts of kindness. Happiness is more sustained—a state of balance that helps us navigate life with steadiness. Bliss, at the far end of the spectrum, is transcendence, a state of being untouchable by circumstances.

The Science of Happiness Science brings precision to this exploration. Neuroscience shows how brain chemistry—dopamine that rewards effort, serotonin that stabilises mood, and oxytocin that strengthens bonds—affects our well-being. Positive psychology, pioneered by Martin Seligman, gives us practical tools: practising gratitude, nurturing social ties, cultivating optimism, and engaging in acts of kindness. Science does not replace wisdom traditions, but it helps validate them in ways modern minds can appreciate.

The Art of Happiness If science explains what fosters happiness, art teaches us how to live it. The art of happiness lies in daily choices: how we respond to setbacks, how we nurture relationships, and how we create beauty and meaning in small ways. Each of us paints a personal "happiness canvas." For one, it may be music; for another, gardening; for yet another, mentoring young people. There is no fixed formula. The art of happiness is deeply personal and endlessly creative, reminding us that we are co-creators of our own joy.

The Alchemy of Happiness Alchemy, historically associated with transforming base metals into gold, is about transformation in this context. The alchemy of happiness is the ability to turn ordinary experiences—even painful ones—into opportunities for growth. It is finding meaning in setbacks, resilience in suffering, and wholeness in imperfection.

The Spirituality of Happiness Beyond psychology, science, art, and alchemy lies a dimension that transcends them all—spirituality. Every tradition has spoken of happiness in spiritual terms. In Sikhi, there is Sehaj—a natural state of balance and ease. In Zen Buddhism, Satori points to flashes of awakening. Hindu philosophy speaks of Ananda, the bliss of union with the self and the divine. Christianity describes a "peace that surpasses all understanding," while Sufism celebrates the ecstasy of divine love. Each path, though unique, reminds us that happiness ultimately flows from a sense of connection—with ourselves, with others, and with the divine.

A Collaborative Journey This series is not meant to be a monologue. I invite you, the readers, to share your reflections and experiences. Whether you are 20 or 80, whether your happiness springs from family, work, faith, or creativity, your voice matters. Together, we can explore how happiness evolves at different stages of life, how technology reshapes our inner world, and how timeless wisdom can anchor us in a fast-changing society. Ultimately, the aim is not just to understand happiness, but to live it. The true measure of happiness is whether it weaves itself into the fabric of our daily lives—how we treat people, how we carry ourselves in challenges, and how we share joy with others. If we succeed, even in small ways, we move closer to building not only happier individuals but also a happier society. That, perhaps, is the promise of The Middle Path.

By-Maninder sood