

# THE KATHMANDU POST

Nepal's largest selling English daily

Printed simultaneously in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bharatpur and Nepalgunj



### **TODAY**

#### ■ NATIONAL

Supreme Court has refused to release UML leader and former minister Top Bahadur Rayamajhi and six others who are in judicial custody for their alleged involvement in a fake refugee scam. Pg 3

Amid heat wave conditions in most districts across the Tarai, health facilities of the region are grappling with an uptick in cases of diarrhoea, vomiting, and urinary infections, among other ailments. Pg 3

#### OPINION

Merely inviting foreign investors, without ensuring political and policy stability in the country and removing hassles, does not help, writes Kalyan Raj Sharma. Pg 4



### ■ MONEY

Swiss food giant Nestle on Thursday rejected accusations from an NGO that it added sugar to products in developing countries that it sold sugar-free in European markets. Pg 5

### SPORTS

Bhuvan Nagarkoti opened up a sixstroke lead over Dinesh Prajapati after third round of the Surya Nepal Kathmandu Open at the par-68 Royal Nepal Golf Club in Kathmandu on





Members of the Newar community start building the Rato Machhindranath chariot for the upcoming procession at Tabahal, Lalitpur on Thursday.

## Air pollution takes its toll on Nepal's tourism capital

As smog levels soar in Pokhara, travel trade entrepreneurs fear worse days ahead for the popular tourist destination.

DEEPAK PARIYAR POKHARA, APRIL 25

Pascal Blank and Susan Blank, a French couple, are currently in Pokhara for a sightseeing tour.

The couple was inspired to visit Pokhara after reading 'Annapurna', a book by French climber Maurice Herzog, the leader of the 1950 French Annapurna expedition.

The first ascent of the 8,091-metre Mt Annapurna I in June 1950 by Herzog put Pokhara on the global map and established it as the gateway to the Annapurna region, a haven for

In the 1970s and late 1980s, Pokhara remained a favourite destination for Western hippies. On Tuesday, the Post caught up with the couple taking in the serene Fewa Lake.

"Skies are hazy. I don't think we will here," the 71-year-old Pascal said.

They plan to trek the Ghodepani-Poonhill route, an all-year short trek suitable for everyone with a beautiful view of the Annapurna.

"Next week, our dream is going to be fulfilled. We hope there will be no pollution in the mountains," said Susan, 74. Pokhara provides a spectacular view eight-thousanders three Annapurna I, Dhaulagiri and Manaslu. Similarly, Mt Machhapuchchhre enthrals both domestic and foreign visitors. People posing for pictures with a Machhapuchchhre background is a

common sight in Pokhara.

But that could change if the pollution issues are not tackled, experts say. Nowadays, even during the spring, Pokhara is shrouded in thick haze. Locals said that since March, the sky of Pokhara has been filled with dust and haze. The air is not healthy. The mountains, too, are not visible.

Pokhara provides views of eight-thousanders Annapurna I, Dhaulagiri and Manaslu.

Dal Bahadur Shrestha and his six-member family from Sankhamool, Kathmandu reached Pumdi Bhumdi, a Pokhara, on Tuesday. But they were not able to see the mountain ranges. Even the Fewa Lake and Pokhara bazaar were covered in haze.

"This time we could not enjoy ourselves, unlike in the previous vacation," said Shrestha, who is in Pokhara for the fifth time. "It's sad when you cannot see mountains from Pokhara. The skies are hazy here.'

Until a few years ago, Pokhara, which has recently been declared Nepal's tourist capital, was an exceptional city without air pollution.

## Aftab Alam, three others get life terms over 2008 killings

Rautahat Court convicts them of killing at least two people in Rajpur of the district on the eve of 2008 CA elections.

The Rautahat District Court has handed former Nepali Congress leader and ex-minister Mohammad Aftab Alam life imprisonment in connection

with the 2008 deaths of at least two persons in a bomb blast in Rajpur of the district. Three others involved in the same case also got life terms.

On Thursday, Judge Matrika Prasad Acharya's bench issued the verdict against Alam and three others. The court slapped life imprisonment on Alam, his younger brother Mohammad Mahatab Alam, Shekh Saraj and

Badri Sahani. The court, however, acquitted Mukti Sah, another accused. 'Four suspects including Alam have been sentenced to life imprisonment as

per the existing civil code. Cases against six other suspects who are on the run-Mohammad Mobin, Shekh Fajale, Shekh Bhadi, Shahil Alam,

Gauri Shankar Sah and Shekh Jumai—have been kept pending," said Uddhav Dhodari, the court

On the eve of the first Constituent Assembly elections in 2008, some individuals were injured in a blast inside a shed in ward 4 of the then Rajpur Phardawa Village Development Committee (now ward 4 of

Rajpur Municipality).

POST FILE PHOTO

Mohammad Aftab Alam

A case had been filed against Alam and 10 others on November 4, 2019, accusing them of killing those injured in the blast. At least two of the injured were allegedly burnt alive after they were thrown into the furnace of a

brick kiln. The court issued its final verdict following a continuous hearing that began Monday. District

Attorney Badri Bahadur Karki, advocate Pushpa Raj Paudel and Dinanath Rijal argued on behalf of the plaintiff, while Gopal Krishna Ghimire among other law practitioners defended Alam and his men in the court. Police had arrested Alam

on October 13, 2019 and the Rautahat District Court had remanded him in judicial custody on November 15, 2019. The disgraced Congress leader and former minister Alam has been in judicial custody at Nakkhu jail in Lalitpur. His brother Mahatab is in Gaur Prison, Rautahat.

Police had registered charges of 'attempted murder' and 'possession and transportation of explosive materials' against Alam and his men, and they were also accused of throwing the injured people into a brick kiln "to destroy evidence". Media reports said the blast happened when Alam's men were making bombs in the shed on the eve of the elections.

>> Continued on page 2



Experience our 24x7 Client Care Centre

at +977 1 4791800/5424198



BOOK YOUR TABLE NOW: SPICE ROOM: +977 9801094524

+977 1 4248999, fnb.reservation@yakandyeti.com.np

### TikTok law kicks off a showdown between China and the US. What's coming next?

Chinese authorities may not allow sale as it could be seen as surrendering to Washington.



A TikTok content creator sits outside the US Capitol on Tuesday in Washington.

#### ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON, APRIL 25

TikTok is gearing up for a legal fight against a US law that would force the social media platform to break ties with its China-based parent company, a move almost certainly backed by Chinese authorities as the bitter

US-China rivalry threatens the future of a wildly popular way for young people in America to connect online.

Beijing has signalled TikTok should fight what it has called a "robbers" act by US lawmakers "to snatch from others all the good things that they have.' Should a legal challenge fail, observers say Chinese authorities are unlikely to allow a sale, a move that could be seen as surrendering to Washington.

Beijing may not want the US action against the popular short-form video platform to set a "bad precedent," said Alex Capri, senior lecturer at the National University of Singapore and research fellow at Hinrich Foundation. "If Beijing capitulates to the US, where does it end?"

The legislation that US President Joe Biden signed this week could allow Washington to widen its scope to target other China-related apps, such as the popular e-commerce platform Temu, and embolden US allies to follow suit, said Hu Xijin, a former editor-in-chief for the party-run newspaper Global Times. With 170 million American users, TikTok should "have more guts to fight to the very end and refuse to surrender," Hu, now a political commentator, said Wednesday on Chinese social media.

TikTok vowed to challenge the new US law, which requires its Beijingbased parent company, ByteDance, to divest its stakes within a year to avoid a ban. The company has characterized the law as an infringement on the free speech rights of its users, most of whom use the app for entertainment.

>> Continued on page 2

### **NATIONAL**

#### □ DISTRICT DIGEST

### 12 homes destroyed, elderly dead in Khotang forest fires

KHOTANG: A forest fire entered human settlements and destroyed 12 homes in Barahapokhari Rural Municipality of Khotang district on Wednesday. According to DSP Purushottam Khadka of Khotang District Police Office, the fire that broke out at Raktamala community forest around 4pm engulfed houses in ward 1 of the rural municipal ity. Forty goats were killed in the incident. Khadka said a police team led by Inspector Raju Niraula has been sent to the site to assess the damage. Fires rag ing in several community forests in the district have yet to be brought under control. Khadka said Nepal Police and Armed Police Force personnel and locals are working to contain fires. In recent weeks, there has been a sharp rise in incidents of fire across several districts. Meanwhile, a charred body of elderly man was found in a community forest in ward 1 of Rawabesi Rural Municipality on Wednesday. The deceased has been identified as 85-yearold Siddhi Bahadur Shrestha. It is learnt that the victim died while fighting the forest fire.

### Locals, police clash in Aurahi

JANAKPUR: A clash ensued between police personnel and the locals of Aurahi Rural Municipality in Dhanusha district on Thursday after the police attempted to disperse demonstrators who had been obstructing the Paudeshwar road section. Police lobbed nine tear gas shells after the crowd turned unruly and pelted stones at the security personnel. Three cops were injured in the clash, said DSP Ranjan Awale. The protesters took to the streets early on Thursday, accusing the police of not properly investigating the disappearance of two women of Paudeswar who have been missing for 10 days. Locals claimed that the duo were kidnapped by two youths of Hanspur Municipality. "Investigation is underway. Five people have been taken into police custody on charges of kidnapping and holding the victims hostage. Search for the missing is underway,' Awale said.

## Government neglect leaves villages without piped water

Bad roads extend travel time between Ilam headquarters and Mangsebung Rural Municipality to over six hours although the distance is just 80 km.

Sanuja Shankar, a 46-year-old woman from Ibhang in ward 2 of Mangsebung Rural Municipality, Ilam, walks for half an hour to fetch a bucketful of water from the nearest spring and nearly an hour to return home.

"Walking up and down the hills to fetch water is my daily routine, and I think I have spent half my age walking to spring and coming back,' Shankar said. "This is not only my problem but one of the whole village.

Like Shankar, Ramila Sambahamphe from Ibhang also suffers from the same problem every day. Sambahamphe said that she has three cattle, and every day, she needs 12 buckets of water for the cattle and four buckets for household chores.

"When election season comes, common people like us who have been suffering from the shortage of water for ages have the opportunity to share our problem," Sambahamphe said. "In the previous election, the leaders who visited our village assured us that they would install taps in every house, bring water, and distribute free pipes, but nobody showed up after winning the

She added, "This time, no candidate has even come to ask for our votes, and if they do, I am fully prepared to confront them.'

by-election has been scheduled in a Ilam constituency this weekend.

The residents of wards 1 and 2 of Mangsebung Rural Municipality in Ilam have been suffering from the drinking water shortage for ages. Even though Mangsebung Rural Municipality is only 80 kilometres away from the district headquarter, it takes more than six hours to reach wards 1 and 2 of the rural municipality by vehicle due to the bad condition of the roads.

Like Mangsebung, the folks of Deumai Municipality and Mai Municipality of the district also suffer from the problem of drinking water. The locals of these local units say they are frustrated now because the political leaders only raise this issue during the election, asking for votes, and disappear afterwards without solving

The locals of Mangsebung Rural Municipality, Deumai Municipality, and Mai Municipality also complain that they are forced to travel to Dharan or Damak due to a lack of reliable maternity services in the local units. The local



Sanuja Shankar of Ibhang in Mangsebung Rural Municipality says she walks for more than an hour every day to fetch water from a spring because there is no piped water in her village.

units are surrounded by the Phewa and Phakphok streams, and during the rainy season, most of the villages and settlements are flooded, which disconnects them from other places

Prem Kumari Rai from ward 4 of Mangsebung said that there is no motorable bridge over the Phakphok stream, due to which locals suffer a lot to reach health institutions in case of emer-

"During the monsoon of 2021, the only motorable bridge over the Phakphok was washed away," Rai said. "During the last federal elections, lots of leaders visited the areas, asking for

votes and committing to build a bridge, but nobody showed up after the election.'

The distance from Mangsebung to Domukha in Jhapa is only 55 kilometres, but due to difficult and risky routes, the locals have to travel 155 kilometres through the Mechi Highway to reach Jhapa. During the rainy season, locals are trapped in Mangsebung because they lose access to road networks.

"After winning elections in this area, the MPs and ministers become big personalities and do not care about the problems of the locals," Rai said. "We are fed up with the lies of leaders who always say they will build good roads and bridg-

es but do nothing." The local residents, who are struggling with several problems from drinking water to health and infrastructure, were planning to tell their problems to the candidates for the by-election, but sadly, nobody showed up in the rural, remote settlements, they say.

"Everybody was prepared to confront them, but again, we got disappointed," said Dambar Thapa, another local from Ibhang. "Maybe the leaders were aware that we would ask them difficult questions regarding our problems.

### Rautahat court keeps cases pending for six absconding suspects in Rajpur incident

In the chargesheet, Alam and his men were accused of throwing Trilok Pratap Singh and Osi Akhtar, among others, who were severely injured in the blast, into the kiln's furnace, in an attempt to destroy evidence of bomb-making

Following the incident, Trilok's Shrinarayan Singh and Akhtar's mother Roksana Khatun filed complaints against Alam and his accomplices. Alam and three others had been arrested a few months after the explosion, but they were later released. Khatun was shot dead by an unidentified group in 2011.

Two months after the Rajpur inci-

dent, on June 23, 2008, Alam had turned himself in to police when a complaint was filed accusing him as the primary accused. The Office of the Attorney General, however, on July 14, 2008, decided against pursuing a criminal case against Alam and five others.

Responding to a writ petition filed on behalf of the victims, the Supreme Court in May 2012, four years after the incident, had ordered that the case should proceed.

Alam was elected from Rautahat constituency-2 in the first Constituent Assembly elections in 2008. However, he lost the second Constituent Assembly elections in 2013, before going on to win the 2017 legislative

**Nepal Oil Corporation Limited** 

**Aviation Fuel Depot** 

Sinamangal, Kathmandu, Nepal

elections. Alam served as labour and transport minister in the Madhav Kumar Nepal-led government.

Alam is a nephew of the late Nepali Congress leader Sheikh Idrish. He had emerged as a prominent Congress leader in Rautahat after Idrish's demise. Alam, who was considered close to the late Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala, faced allegations of ballot stuffing and rigging in every election he contested.

After Alam was arrested and sent to judicial custody, his younger son Dr Mohammad Rajik Alam joined politics. He was elected mayor of Rajpur Municipality in the 2022 local elec-

### TikTok may lean on First Amendment rights to challenge new US restriction

>> Continued from page 1

"We believe the facts and the law are clearly on our side, and we will ultimately prevail," the company wrote on the social platform X.

The fight over TikTok has increased tensions between the US and China, with both vowing to protect their economic and national security interests. US lawmakers are concerned the Chinese ownership of the app could allow Beijing to exert unwanted influence in the US, especially on young minds. The law has followed a string of successes by Washington in curbing the influence of Chinese companies through bans, export controls and forced divestitures, drawing proon suppressing China's rise through economic coercion.

The US has forced other Chinese companies to divest before, including in 2020, when Beijing Kunlun, a Chinese mobile video game company, agreed to sell the gay dating app Grindr after receiving a federal order. But TikTok, created by a Chinese company only for the overseas market and evidence of the nation's tech powers on the global stage, is a high-profile case that Beijing does not want to

National dignity is at stake and could "take precedence over the financial interests of ByteDance investors," including global investors who own 60 percent of the company, said Gabriel Wildau, managing director of the New York-headquartered consulting and advisory firm Teneo.

A legal challenge from the company is expected to lean on First Amendment concerns and could drag on for years. Beijing is betting on a legal win, analysts say

What to do if TikTok doesn't prevail is likely still being debated with the Chinese leadership, said Dominic Chiu, an analyst with Eurasia Group. President Xi Jinping, who will have to



TikTok is gearing up for a legal fight against a US law that would force the social media platform to break ties with its China-based parent company or face a ban.

sign off on whether to permit or prohibit the sale, probably has not made the final decision, Chiu said.

Luckily for Xi, there is no urgency for Beijing to decide, said Sun Yun, director of the China program at the Washington-based Stimson Center. "A lot of things could change," she said.

If lawmakers get their wish and a sale does occur, it's likely to be a challenging and messy process for TikTok, which would have to disentangle its US operations from everything else.

For one, the price tag for TikTok's US business-which is unknown-is expected to be high enough to severely limit the pool of investors and companies who'd be able to afford it. Some investors—including former Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin—have already positioned themselves as

potential buyers of a US version of TikTok. ByteDance, which is privately held, is valued at \$220 billion, according to market tracker Pitchbook.

And there's uncertainty about what would happen with the TikTok algorithm, the secret sauce that feeds users short videos based on their interests and has contributed to the platform's status as a cultural jugger-

ByteDance would be barred from controlling the algorithm of a US spinoff of TikTok. Many experts believe Chinese authorities would block any sale of the technology that populates people's TikTok feeds under export regulations revised in 2020, when then-President Donald Trump unsuccessfully tried to ban TikTok

through an executive order that was blocked in federal courts. Some, including Mnuchin, have said TikTok would need to be rebuilt in the US using new technology. But it's unclear what that might look like, or how well it can reproduce the type of video recommendations users have

grown accustomed to seeing. Robin Burke, a professor of information science at the University of Colorado Boulder, says some aspects of the algorithm might be replicated by industry insiders. But he also noted there are areas where TikTok appears ahead of its competitors and duplication might

prove challenging. "TikTok has all the experience, they have all the data,' Burke said. "I think it's unlikely that a US businessif they don't inherit the technology from the parent company-would be able to build something Certainly not right away."

Tel: +977-1-4111135, Email: nocafsfinance@gmail.com

### **Invitation for Electronic Bids**

Contract Identification Number: NOC/AFD/ICB/G/2023/24-02 Date of Notice Publication: 26 April 2024

The Nepal Oil Corporation Limited (NOC), Aviation Fuel Depot (AFD), Sinamangal, Kathmandu invites Electronic Bids from eligible bidders for the procurement of Goods "Supply and Delivery of Refueller Parts at NOC/AFD, Sinamangal, Kathmandu, Nepal" under International Competitive Bidding (ICB) - Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure. Under the Single Stage, Two Envelope Procedure, Bidders are required to submit simultaneously two

separate Bids, one containing (i) the Technical Bid and the other (ii) the Price Bid as per the provision of ITB 23 of the Bidding Document. Eligible Bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the office of

NOC/AFD, Sinamangal, Kathmandu, Nepal or or may visit e-GP system of PPMO: www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp.

A complete set of Bidding Document for the task in English is available online and may be downloaded for e-submission from the e-GP system of PPMO: www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp. Bidders, submitting their bid electronically, should deposit the cost of the Bidding Document (nonrefundable fee) of Nepalese Rupees 3,000.00 or equivalent United States Dollars (USD) to the NOC/AFD's Current Account Number: 1690100000047001, Rastriya Banijya Bank Ltd., Trivuwan Antarastriva Bimansthal, Airport Gauchar, Kathmandu branch and scanned copy in PDF format of the voucher/receipt of the deposited amount must be submitted/uploaded along with the Electronic Bid.

Pre-bid meeting shall be held at NOC/AFD, Sinamangal, Kathmandu, Nepal at 1:00 P.M. local time on 26 May 2024.

Interested eligible and qualified Bidders are required to submit the Electronic Bids through e-

GP system of PPMO: www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp on or before 1:00 P.M. local time on 10 June 2024. Submitted Electronic Bids will be opened in the presence of Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at 1:15 P.M. local time on 10 June 2024 at the office of NOC/AFD, Sinamangal, Kathmandu,

Bids must be valid for a period of 90 days counting from the date of bid opening and must be accompanied by a scanned copy of the bid security in PDF format, amounting to a minimum of Nepalese Rupees 320,000.00 or equivalent USD, which shall be valid for a minimum of 30 days beyond the bid validity period (i.e., Valid up to a minimum of 7 October 2024).

If Bidder wishes to submit the bid security in the form of cash, the cash should be deposited in NOC/AFD's Current Account Number: 1690100000047001, Rastriya Banijya Bank Ltd., Trivuwan Antarastriva Bimansthal, Airport Gauchar, Kathmandu branch and scanned copy in PDF format of the voucher/receipt of the deposited amount must be submitted/uploaded along with the Electronic Bid.

10. Other details are provided in the Bidding Document available in the e-GP system of PPMO: www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp.

डाक्नेश्वरी नगरपालिका नगर कार्यपालिकाको कार्यालय

### बोलपत्र स्वीकृत गर्ने आशयको सूचना

यस नगरपालिकाको कार्यालयबाट मिति २०८०।१९।२३ गते The Kathmandu Post पत्रिका तथा इ-विड मार्फत प्रकाशित बोलपत्र आह्वान सम्बन्धी सुचना अनुसार रितपूर्वक पेश हन आएका बोलपत्रहरूमध्ये मुल्यांकनबाट सारभुत रुपमा न्युनतम मुल्यांकित प्रभावग्राही देखिएको देहाय बमोजिमका बोलपत्र स्वीकृतिका लागि छनौट भएको हुँदा सार्वजनिक खरिद ऐन, २०६३ को दफा २७ (२) र सोही ऐनको दफा ४७ को प्रयोजनको लागि सम्पूर्ण सरोकारवालाहरूलाई जानकारीका लागि यो सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ ।

सि.नं.	ठेक्का आई.डि. नं.	योजनाको नाम	छनौट गरिएका बोलपत्रदाता	स्वीकृत बोलपत्रको रकम (मु.अ. कर सहित )
٩	DKMUN-NCB- GOODS-01- 080/81	Procurement of steel parts, steel deck and other with Transportation for Dakneshwori	Junkiri Industries P. Ltd., Butwal	३१,३७,६५७।४४ (एकतीस लाख सैंतीस हजार छ सय सन्तावन्न रुपैयाँ चौवालीस पैसा मात्र)
	-			प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृत



Men at work on the premises of Dharahara at Sundhara, Kathmandu on Thursday. Even though the rebuilt tower, after the original was destroyed in the April 25 earthquake nine years ago, was inaugurated in 2021, peripheral work has yet to be completed

## Supreme Court refuses to release former minister and secretary accused in Bhutanese refugee scam

Among the 10 who had moved the court, three have got bail or are released on general dates.

POST REPORT

Upholding the subordinate courts' order, the Supreme Court on Thursday refused to release CPN-UML leader and former deputy prime minister Top Bahadur Rayamajhi and six others who are in judicial custody for their alleged involvement in a fake Bhutanese refu-

Rayamajhi, Tek Narayan Pandey, suspended government secretary, Indrajit Rai, an adviser to former home minister Ram Bahadur Thapa and Nepali Congress leader Ang Tawa Sherpa, among others, had moved the top court against the ruling of the subordinate courts to send them to judicial custody. Among the 10 who had moved the court, three have got bail or are released on

A division bench of Justices Kumar Regmi and Tek Narayan Dhungana directed to release Sherpa and Govinda Chaudhary on bail and Shamsher Miya, former chairperson of Nepal Hajj Committee, on general dates.

"The court has directed to release Sherpa lion bail, respectively. They will be released on general dates," said Govinda Ghimire, information officer at the court.

"The division bench, however, has upheld the decision of the subordinate courts in case of other petitioners.

After over two weeks of hearing, the Kathmandu District Court on June 16 last year had sent 16 out of 18 defendants in the scam including Rayamajhi and Nepali Congress leader and former minister Bal Krishna Khand to judicial custody.

Challenging the decision, they had moved the Patan High Court seeking their release. They had refused their involvement in the crime. After weeks-long hearing the court upheld the district court's ruling in the case of nine accused while directed to release oth-



Top Bahadur Rayamajhi

Along with Keshab Dulal, Sanu Bhandari, Pandey and Rai are the prime accused in the scam.

ers-on bail and without. It had ordered authorities to release Sandeep Rayamajhi, son of former deputy prime minister Rayamajhi, on a bail of Rs3 million, and Bhutanese refugee leader Tek Nath Rizal, Ram Sharan KC and Hari Bhakta Maharjan on bail of Rs1.5 million each.

The division bench of judges Janak Pandey and Prakash Kharel, however, was divided on Khand's case. While Pandey stood for his release for Rs3 million in bail, Kharel wanted

the continuation of the custody. The decision was presented before a single bench of Judge Krishna Ram Koirala on December 14 last year who ruled that the district court's decision to send Khand into judicial custody was unjustified. In line with Pandey, he directed the Congress leader be released on a bail of Rs3 million. Khand was released the next day after he submitted the

The decision to release him met with criticism but the Office of the Attorney General has been reluctant to challenge the high court's decision in the top court. It is normal practice for the office to file petitions against the lower court's decision in the higher courts

if their rulings are against their charge sheet. On May 24, 2023, the District Attorney's Office, Kathmandu had filed criminal cases at the District Court against 30 individuals accused in the scam.

They have been charged with four types of crimes—treason, organised crime, fraud and forgery. The accused have been charge-sheeted for collecting Rs288.17 million from 115 victims-ranging from Rs150,000 to Rs4.8 million each—by promising to send them to the United States as Bhutanese refugees.

Sharma Oli had formed a task force under then joint secretary Bal Krishna Panthi to recommend ways to manage Bhutanese refugees who remained in Nepal after the end of the third-country resettlement programme.

The task force submitted a report including 429 Bhutanese refugees who had been left behind. Later, the racketeers, in collusion with some top officials, prepared another report and added hundreds of other people to the list of refugees.

Along with Keshab Dulal, Sanu Bhandari, Pandey and Rai are the prime accused in

Final hearings on the case which involves senior leaders from the major parties, however, is yet to begin. The Kathmandu District Court will hear the matter.

### Nepal should have same yardstick for development and economic cooperation with all nations, says Mahat

The ex-finance minister also questions the rationale behind a railway line between China and Nepal that would take billions of dollars to build.

Former finance and foreign minister Prakash Sharan Mahat has said that Nepal should adopt a uniform yardstick on development and economic cooperation with all countries including India, China, and the United States

Speaking at a function titled "Reflecting on BRI: Experiences and Lessons from South Asia", organised by the Centre for Social Innovation and Foreign Policy (CESIF) in the Capital on Thursday, Mahat said that while seeking and accepting foreign development and economic assistance, Nepal should have the same yardstick for all, should keep national interest at the core and should accept foreign loans or grants only after careful negotiation.

"Nepal should have the same approach to financial support from all sources because where the support comes from does not matter so much, as long as it serves the country's national interest. While we struggle to utilise low-interest multilateral loans from the World Bank and ADB, we should critically examine, compare, and question the terms and conditions of bilateral loans that have market rate and short-term repayment periods," he said.

Mahat also pointed out the lack of homework on Nepal's part in bilateral or multilateral negotiations. "Only later do we engage in debate and discussions," he said. Mahat was the foreign minister when Nepal signed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with China in 2017. This proves that he is not anti-BRI, Mahat said. "Still, we cannot afford costly commercial loans to build

Mahat also questioned the rationale behind a railway line between China and Nepal that would take billions of dollars to build. "What we are going to export if we extend the rail from China to Kathmandu?" he asked, arguing that the railway between Nepal and China would be feasible only if India and China agree to build it through Nepal.

"When I talk to Chinese diplomats and scholars, I tend to tell them that Nepal would adopt similar yardsticks in both loan and grant and with all countries. We do not have second thoughts and opinions in this respect," said Mahat, explaining how long and difficult it had been for him to negotiate BRI terms with the Chinese in 2017. He said that during the negotiations, some of the clauses and proposals presented by the Chinese side such as free trade agreement and the use of Chinese currency for bilateral trade were amended.

Speaking at the same function, Raj Kishore Yadav, chairman of the International Relations and Tourism Committee of Parliament, stressed the need for wider discussion on BRI in Parliament, urging the Nepal government to release the BRI memorandum of understanding signed with China in 2017. He added that the government should clarify the current status of negotiation on BRI and should not opt for any

"Our negotiation with China should focus on grants and concessional loans with interest institutions and without any strings attached,'

Mahat also voiced concerns over the BRI framework agreement not being public even seven years after its signing, and said any partnership should respect Nepal's sovereignty and should be based on win-win cooperation.

"The text of the BRI implementation plan, which is being considered by Nepal and China, has yet to be public. It should be made public. It should be discussed and geared towards finalising the modality and partnership. There is not enough discussion on the financing modality as well as on taking commercial loans from China, which also demands detailed discussion," he

The seminar aimed to weigh the opportunities and challenges China's Belt and Road



Prakash Sharan Mahat speaking at the event, Thursday

Initiative has for Nepal in light of the experiences of regional neighbours that have implemented projects under it. The seminar was held at a critical time of accelerated Chinese push for the BRI implementation plan agreement with Nepal.

Welcoming the participants, Executive Chairperson of CESIF Vijay Kant Karna raised concerns about the rationale and significance of the BRI implementation agreement, and called negotiating projects on an individual basis. "A single financing and implementation modality may not fit projects of different nature," he said.

Talal Rafi, economist and fellow at Oxford Global Society, Sri Lanka, discussed issues concerning BRI projects in Sri Lanka and presented some of the positive aspects. Although International Sovereign Bank debt ranks above the Chinese bilateral debt, Sri Lanka's experience with BRI shows a lack of transparency, ad-hoc planning, selection of projects without viability assessment, lack of technological spillover, and environmental concerns. "The slowpaced debt negotiation with China is delaying the economic recovery process," he said.

Mostakim Bin Motaher, associate professor at Jahangirnagar University of Bangladesh, highlighted that China's presence in the Bangladeshi infrastructure has surged significantly in recent years, with deep trade and investment ties. Some of the common features of the projects financed by China are cost escalation, non-transparent or absent bidding procedures, and delays in execution.

Constantino Xavier's presentation cited three reasons for India's decision to stay out of the BRI: the China-driven and led unilateral nature of the initiative, Chinese economic and strategic interests behind the Initiative being unfavourable for India, and the concern about the capacity to absorb capital. He also highlighted how this decision has affected India's relations its delivery system. "Nepal needs to rely on itself and develop its capacity," Xavier stressed.

Following country-specific presentations, the seminar hosted two panel discussions. The first brought together Nepali experts to probe current developments and Nepal's concerns on BRI negotiation. The panel hosted Madhu Raman Acharya, Rameshore Khanal, Akhilesh Upadhyay, and Amish Mulmi.

The speakers called for transparent discourse and strategic negotiation for Nepal's effective role in the BRI. Citing the example of Pokhara International Airport, Acharya reiterated that China has been "shifting the goalpost" on BRI and emphasised that Nepal should have its own "objective assessment of each project," as the initiative entails China's strategic and economic interests.

## Sweltering heat causes distress across Tarai

A report from the World Meteorological Organisation says the impact of heatwaves became more severe in Asia in 2023.

ARJUN POUDEI KATHMANDU, APRIL 25

Amid heat wave conditions in most districts across the Tarai region, health facilities of the region are grappling with an uptick in cases of diarrhea, vomiting, and urinary infections, among other ailments.

Hospital said that 10 to 15 diarrhoeal patients have been visiting the hospital every day.

Doctors at the Lumbini Provincial

"Cases of diarrhoea have risen in our hospital," said Dr Sunil Sunar, who serves at the hospital's Emergency Department. "Also the number of people suffering from fever, dehydration, urine infections and heat stroke may rise in the coming days if temperatures keep rising.

The Meteorological Forecasting Division of the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology on Monday issued a heat wave warning for five days after the maximum temperature in some Tarai districts crossed 40 degree Celsius. Bhairahawa of Rupandehi district recorded 43 degrees Celsius.

The department in a special bulletin said that temperatures in hilly areas, valleys and gorges could

Experts say a heat wave occurs when the maximum and minimum temperatures at a location are unusually high over a period of three consecutive days. One could feel tiredness, weakness, thirst, headache, leg cramps, muscle

pain, vomiting, dizziness and fainting due to exposure to excessive heat, according to the department. Heat-related illnesses include heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat syncope (fainting). Heat stroke is the most severe form of

heat-related illness and requires

immediate medical attention. "Warm and dry weather conditions are expected to continue for the next couple of days in the Tarai region, as no rainfall activity is in sight," said Rojan Lamichhane, a meteorologist at the division. Some places in the mountainous and hilly districts could witness light rainfall but that does not help lower the Tarai heat.

Officials said people should take precautions, if the maximum temperature in their place exceeds 40 degrees Celsius. They advised people not to venture out of home in the afternoon, take sufficient fluids and water to remain hydrated, and wear cotton clothes so as to avoid adverse effects of the scorching heat.



Children cooling themselves in Gotamane pond in Jaleshwar, Mahottari earlier this week.

Locals, however, complained that these suggestions are good only for

those who can afford to stay at home. "These suggestions are good for those who work indoors,"said Brijesh Kumar Chaudhary of the Maharajgunj

Municipality in Kapilvastu district. "Life has become difficult. Hot air starts blowing after 10 in the morning. Incidents of fire have also been rising with the rise in temperatures.'

According to the Meteorological

Forecasting Division, the maximum temperature of Bhairahawa reached 41.7degree Celsius, Janakpur 41.2, Biratnagar 38.3, Simara 39.7, Nepalgunj 39.1 and Dhangadhi 39 Celsius on Thursday. Kathmandu recorded 33.5 degrees Celsius, which is the maximum temperature this year. Kathmandu recorded 36.6 degrees Celsius on May 7, 1989, the most extreme temperature ever recorded.

The World Health Organisation said that heatwaves are among the most dangerous of natural hazards, but rarely receive adequate attention because their toll and destruction are not always immediately obvious.

People's exposure to heat is increasing due to climate change. Globally, extreme temperature events are observed to be increasing in their frequency, duration and magnitude, according to the UN health body.

Meanwhile, a new report from the World Meteorological Organisation said that the impact of heat waves became more severe in Asia in 2023.

"Asia is warming faster than the global average. The warming trend has nearly doubled since the 1961-1990 period," the report stated. "Many countries in the region experienced their hottest year on record in 2023, along with a barrage of extreme conditions from droughts and waves to floods and storms.

According to the report, Asia remained the world's most disaster-hit region from weather, climate and water-related hazards in 2023. Floods and storms caused the highest number of reported casualties and economic losses, according to the report of the organisation, a specialised agency of the United Nations whose mandate covers weather, climate and water resources.

"Climate change exacerbated the frequency and severity of such events, profoundly impacting societies, economies and most importantly, human lives and the environment that we live in," the report quoted WHO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo as saying.

Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the climate crisis and has witnessed extreme weather events over the past decade and a half.

The average annual maximum temperature of Nepal has risen by 0.056 degrees Celsius, according to a study conducted by the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology in 2017. The study shows most districts witnessed increasing temperatures annually.



**OUR VIEW** 

### Spiked spices

A safer food system that prioritises the well-being of consumers is the need of the hour.

Masala, or a mixture of spices, has been part of our daily food since time immemorial, and it's hard to imagine lip-smacking, savoury food without them. Among the many brands available, Indian products like MDH and Everest are popular in Nepali kitchens. Unfortunately, some of these so-called "kitchen kings" (MDH's Madras Curry Powder, Sambhar Masala Mixed Masala Powder, Curry Powder Mix Masala Powder and Everest's Fish Curry Masala) have recently been banned in Hong Kong and Singapore. They have been found contaminated with harmful ethylene oxide (a carcinogenic pesticide) exceeding permissible limits. The presence of carcinogenic in these spices is "unsuitable for human health", as exposure to it can lead to lymphoma, leukaemia and stomach and breast cancers.

This discovery has upset MDH and Everest masala lovers worldwide, including in India, the largest producer, consumer and exporter of these spices. In response, the country is investigating the underlying cause of the ban, and the Indian food security regulator has ordered a quality check of these products. According to reports, however, the United States Food and Drug Administration found Salmonella, a bacteria that causes diarrhoea, in Everest's spice mixes in 2023.

Nepal's Food Technology and Quality Control Department has also pledged to test the masala brands. But Nepal seems to be taking a wait-and-see approach, while Hong Kong and Singapore have already restricted their use. In the recent Post report, the food authority said, "Countries have their own acceptable limits of pesticide use, and if these masala products are found crossing limits set by the department, it will direct authorities concerned to recall the products from the market." This doesn't sound convincing enough as the products sold in those countries are available in Nepal too. One wonders what's stopping our authorities from following

During high-demand times like Dashain and Tihar, not only are these spices consumed in large quantities, but they are also mixed with other substances. Several food manufacturing companies bring high-adulterated products that harm people's health. Pesticides are rife in fruits and vegetables found in markets. Yet Nepal lacks robust food-standard surveillance and regulatory mechanisms. In February this year, the Agriculture, Cooperatives and Natural Resources Committee of the House of Representatives passed a bill on food purity and quality with strict penalties for manufacturing of adulterated and low-quality foods. The bill, however, will not be of much use if the number of food testing labs and inspectors who can investigate the matter are not increased,

Now is the time to push for public health and safety by taking proactive measures. As the consumer rights activists have pointed out, Nepal should follow in the footsteps of Hong Kong and Singapore and recall tainted spices from the market before it is too late. People should also be made aware of the health risks associated with these spices and taught proper food-handling practices. This can also be an opportunity to push local masala producers to bring out quality products—or face the consequences. Manufacturers are responsible for ensuring quality of their products and adhering to international food standards and norms. What we need. A safer food system that prioritises the well-being of consumers is the need of the hour.

### THEIR VIEW

### Bangladesh-Qatar relations

The Qatari Emir's visit promises increased trade and collaboration prospects.

The recently concluded two-day visit of the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is a positive sign for Bangladesh's efforts to strengthen regional ties through productive bilateral relationships. The prospect of increased trade, and collaboration on overseas employment, energy, infrastructure, and welfare bodes well for both nations, especially when conflicts in Europe and the Middle East have begun to threaten global commerce and harmony. On the 50th year of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Qatar, this state visit underpins both Bangladesh's goals of formulating meaningful deals with an array of global partners with LDC graduation on the horizon and Qatar's ambitions of coming out as a voice of reason and reliability from a region that has suffered from long-standing turmoil.

Qatar's role in mediation and multilateral diplomacy, as displayed by its involvement in the 2008 Lebanon conflict, the US-Taliban peace talks, and the current Israeli war on Gaza, has been appreciated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and it represents an alignment of interests between the two nations in terms promoting global peace and cooperation.

Bangladesh stands to gain a lot from pursuing close ties with Qatar, as the Arab Gulf state—with whom Bangladesh conducts over \$3.5 billion worth of trade—is already a major exporter of LNG, fertiliser, and other petroleum products to Bangladesh, alongside being the destination for a significant portion of migrant Bangladeshi workers. The two countries have signed 10 deals and five memoranda of understanding (MoU), spanning maritime infrastructure, trade, investment, tax evasion, education and research, sports, and diplomacy. The petroleum-rich Qatari state's large sovereign wealth fund can prove to be a significant source of foreign direct investment for Bangladesh's Special Economic Zones, and Bangladeshi officials must follow up this promising state visit by creating the right environment of confidence for Qatari investors to finance manufacturing and heavy industries in

Bangladesh's largest stake in Qatar remains the nearly four lakh individuals who have migrated to the Gulf state searching for employment, providing Bangladesh with invaluable remittance. However, various cases of worker abuse in Qatar have been widely reported, including wage theft, contract violations, and sickness related to working conditions. It is encouraging to see that an MoU on employment was signed between the two countries, aimed at addressing Bangladeshi migrants' problems and creating opportunities for skilled manpower, but it remains to be seen if this trans-

lates to any improvement of conditions for migrant workers. Given the alarming track record of migrant rights violations in Qatar, ensuring the rights and protection of Bangladeshi workers must be front and centre of any bilateral discussions between Bangladesh and Qatar.

- The Daily Star (Bangladesh)/ANN

## Dissecting PhD sagas—I

POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE

The mission of a PhD programme should be to help students become researchers during their studies.

PRATYOUSH ONTA



Two weeks ago I got a phone call from a friend I first met in the early 1990s. He told me he was applying to a PhD program at one of the universities in Nepal. He further said the university required its PhD applicants to have published two research articles as part of its eligibility requirements. The friend had written an article to meet this requirement and asked me to quickly read it to see if it would make the "cut" in one of the journals I edit. After reading his article, I told him that it was not good enough for the journal since, at under 2,500 words, it was too short in length and shallow in its analysis (meaning, it would be "desk rejected" if submitted formally).

This encounter got me thinking. In the Fall of 1987, as a senior student in college, I applied to some of the best economics PhD programs in the USA. My major in college was economics, but I had taken quite a few maths courses. My GPA was good and I assume that my college teachers wrote decent recommendations for me. Based on these credentials, I hoped to get into one of the better PhD programs (although I was already having doubts about pursuing economics as an intellectual vocation). While several universities turned me down, my application was accepted by several good economics PhD programs, including the one at the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), where I enrolled

None of the 10 universities I had applied to then said I needed to have published research articles to be eligible to apply. If there had been such a requirement, my application would have been disqualified immediately since I had not done much original research in economics while in college, let alone publish anything related. Later when I abandoned the study of economics and began to pursue a PhD in history at UPenn, the new department also did not say that this was a requirement to approve my inter-

So what exactly is the point of this eligibility requirement—two research

articles published before you can join a PhD program—for potential applicants? As we all know, universities require that applicants submit all kinds of documents as part of their applications. These would include transcripts which detail the courses they have taken and the grades obtained in previous BA and MA level studies; scores from standardised tests (such as GREs) when appropriate; recommendation letters; personal statements regarding why they want to pursue a particular doctoral program given their previous academic and work backgrounds; and in some cases, a writing sample and (especially in European universities), a proposal for the doctoral research you want to do. The last requirement is usually not in the PhD programs with a long coursework com-

also interview shortlisted applicants. All of these documents (and the interview) provide various signals and help in an overall assessment of any applicant's suitability for the concerned PhD program, namely, figuring out whether or not he or she is ready for a multiple-year research odyssey. Perhaps, some universities, including the one my friend is applying to, think that the already published research articles provide stronger signals than all of the other documents I have mentioned above. If so, that university and others with similar requirements are mistaken regarding the primary mission of their PhD programs.

ponent. These days, some programs

The main mission of any PhD programme in any discipline ought to be that those students who enroll in it learn to become researchers during their studies. This process would entail learning to read what other people have written on various themes of the particular discipline's concern, identifying a knowledge gap, designing a research project to fill that gap, executing the research using credible methods, and writing the dissertation. The student joining a PhD program shouldn't be expected to know all of these things prior to their doctoral training. The whole point of the PhD training spanned over several years—is to learn to do all of the above at a fairly good competence level through recursive efforts under the supervision of relatively senior scholars in your field. Yes, applicants need to demonstratethrough their entire application package—that they are capable of joining the research adventure. However, the other documents submitted as part of the application process should be enough for such an evaluation.

If you agree with the way in which  $\boldsymbol{I}$ have characterised the primary mission of any PhD programme, then you would certainly agree that from the point of view of the potential applicants, institutionalising the need for already published research articles as part of their application works as a barrier to entry. The universities in Nepal that have this requirement are not welcoming places for potential PhD students hoping to be nurtured through the doctoral training process. Instead, this requirement signals that the very start of their PhD programmes—the applicant selection process-suffers from a bureaucratic mindset about which I have written previously (Structural ills of our universities, 20 January 2023).

There is more to my friend's story. He already has a bachelor's degree in his field of work and a master's degree in a related field. He has more than 32 years of work experiences that encompass

ground-level hands-on work to top-level managerial positions in various projects. In all these years of working in different capacities, he has amassed a vast amount of knowledge about his field. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that he is one of the most knowledgeable persons about his field. But as far as I know, he has never claimed to work as an academic researcher and that should not be a disqualification if he now wants to become a PhD aspirant. Quite the contrary, the university in question should welcome him with open arms.

If I were the admissions dean of the school in which my friend's proposed PhD program is located, I would have told him to just write a long personal statement explaining why he wants to do a PhD at an age when some of our mutual friends are thinking about retirement and what he wants to do subsequently with that training. If my university was also one that espoused industry-academia collaboration, I would have considered his application to fit this rubric perfectly. This would be so since the point of such a collaboration is not to invent a technology all the time that can be marketed but to bring the considerable knowledge possessed by industry insiders (like my friend) and give them academic space to articulate that knowledge. Our universities are champions of stupid mantras but are rather slow in providing such flexibility. Without flexibility, PhD programs cannot be inclusive in the more expansive sense of the word.

But is anyone who gatekeeps the admission process in Nepali universities actually reading this?

The second installment of this column will be published next fortnight.

## Creating a space for investment

We must remove bureaucratic hurdles and guarantee returns to attract foreign investors.

KALYAN RAJ SHARMA



Nepal is all set to host the third Nepal Investment Summit on April 28-29. This event will bring together business leaders and investors from India, China, Bangladesh, Japan, the UK, the USA, the UAE, Sri Lanka, and others. As the government prepares for the summit and hosts various pre-Investment Summit seminars through its diplomatic missions in major countries, it is pertinent to consider its significance and impact.

Nepal needs foreign investment to fill the financing gaps and obtain economic development. Located between two economically prosperous neighbours, the country has immense opportunities for the production and service sectors. However, we lag in economic growth and face trade deficits. According to the Department of Foreign Employment, 771,327 youths went abroad for foreign employment in the fiscal year 2022-23, mostly to the Gulf nations and Malaysia. This means that the workforce is leaving the country in droves. The agricultural lands remain fallow. The industry sector has performed poorly, and agricultural production is still insufficient to sustain the demand. Farmers and debtors are on the streets protesting. According to the Centre for Crop Development and Agro Bio-diversity Conservation, Nepal produces only about 5.5 million tonnes of rice instead of approximately 7.9 million tonnes needed for self-sufficiency

### Foreign investments

We have had some foreign investments in mega and small projects. Examples include Indian investment in the Arun or Upper Karnali hydro project, Chinese investment in the Hongshi and Huaxin cement projects, Korean invest-

in the Upper Trishuli hydro pro ject, and Singaporean investment in the Risen Solar project. However, new investments are a rarity, with some big companies even leaving the country. Citing the challenging business landscape in Nepal, Malaysia's Axiata Group, the parent company of Ncell, decided to exit Nepal at the end of last year. Before the summit, a thorough analysis of the reasons is imperative to

address the investors' concerns. Let's take the case of Nepal's northern neighbour, China, the largest foreign direct investment (FDI) source and second-largest trading partner, followed by India. There has been a huge surge in Chinese investment commitments in the Nepali market in the past few years. Chinese companies have shown great interest in investing in Nepal, particularly in the hydro-energy sector. This has been the most sought-after area for Chinese investment.

signed a power trade agreement in January to export 10000 megawatts (MW) of hydroelectricity to India in the next decade. The contract is said to be for 25 years and will be automatically renewed. This means that Chinese investment

doesn't have space in the Nepali energy Amid this reality, Chinese investors lost confidence in investing in Nepal. The government hosted pre-investment summits in different Chinese cities like Beijing (March 26), Chengdu (March 25) and Yiwu (March 28). The Investment Board of Nepal briefed about the investment environment and shared the relevant Acts, policies and the possible investment sectors. Deputy Prime Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha called the investors for participation in the summit after attending the event in Beijing and welcomed investments.

Many Chinese companies invested in hydropower projects like Upper Marsyangdi A, Upper Tamakoshi, Langtang-Bhotekoshi projects, and others with the hope that they would successfully generate benefits for Nepal and themselves. But India's reluctance to import Nepal's electricity with Chinese involvement, be it in investment, equipment, or even manpower, has had a dampening effect. This decision pushed back Chinese investors who lost hope in their Nepali

Chinese friends who shared that there is no hope for the Nepali investment scene. They are mostly interested in the hydro sector, and according to them, if the generated power cannot reach the market, their investment, time, effort and energy is wasted. As they are unsure what will happen next, Chinese investors are stepping back from investing in other sectors, too. Before calling them for investment again the Nepal government should be able to answer their concerns and proon their investments and a robust financial foundation.

Regarding India, many hydropower projects are facing legal and local hurdles. There is an example of a project deal between Nepal and Grandhi Mallikarjuna Rao (GMR) Energy of India to develop the Upper Karnali Hydropower, which faced court and other delays. Most power projects have cost and time over-run. Problems in land acquisition and local protests have been common as forest hurdles.

### Removing hurdles

Not just hydropower, another prospective sector, tourism, also has its constraints. The road connectivity of Kathmandu to major cities Pokhara, Lumbini and Chitwan says it loud and clear. The poor road condition adds the time and cost burden to projects, and also on trade. Air connectivity and unequal fare treatment between domestic and foreigners have been an outstanding issue forever. The lack of youth and hence the shortage of skilled manpower in the country is another constraint.

Nepal needs to create an enabling environment for investment in the country, but before that, it should sustain trust among investors. Merely inviting foreign investors, without ensuring political and policy stability, ending administrative mechanisms, creating hassle-free processes, and clarifying legal and policy issues, isn't ideal.

The impact of the investment summit should be measured in the long run. Our acts and regulations should be clear, our policies should be investment-friendly, the bureaucratic system should be smooth, and investment return should be guaranteed. Without these, investors wouldn't be attracted towards Nepal. Otherwise, why would they be interested in Nepal's old narrative of a peaceful environment and inexperienced labour when they can invest equally in other countries and earn better returns? We must consider these issues to ensure that the upcoming summit does not become just a regular conference of foreigners, with investment commitments but no implementation.

Sharma is the chair of Nepal-China Friendship Forum(NCFF).



### MONEY

#### **FOREX** 133.61 **US** Dollar 143.35 Pound Sterling 146.39 Swiss Franc 87.29 Australian Dolla Canadian Dollar 97.76 Singapore Dollar 8.59 Japanese Yen (10) Chinese Yuan Saudi Arab Riyal 35.62 36.65 Qatari Riyal 3.61 Thai Bhat 36.38 **UAE Dhiram** Malaysian Ringgit 27.97 Korean Won (100)

SHARES								
Neps	e (in pe	ercent)	1	1,965.93 <sub>pts</sub> -0.16%				
		HIGHES	T LOSER	S				
SABSL -6.09	MKHL -5.45	NRN -5.1	MLBS -3.94	UNLB -3.81	MEHL -3.17			
	MODERATE LOSERS							
BPCL N -0.1	NIBD2082 -0.09	LBBLD8 -0.08	9 BHPL -0.06	BARUN -0.04	HRL -0.02			
MODERATE GAIN								
JALPA 0.08	LBBL 0.05	JBBL 0.04	TVCL 0.02	AHL 0.02	SWBBL 0.01			
HIGHEST GAINERS								
MPFL 9.99	PFL 7.89	SMFBS 6.79	GIBF1 6.79	BFC 6.34	SIFC 5.03			

BULLION	PRICE PER TOLA		
Fine Gold	Rs 135,800		
Silver	Rs 1,655		
	SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA		

### □ BIZLINE

### US to give Micron \$6.1 billion for American chip factories

**WASHINGTON:** Micron is set to receive up to \$6.1 billion in grants from the US government to help build its semiconductor plants in New York and Idaho, the White House said Thursday. The award, to be announced by President Joe Biden as he travels to Syracuse, New York, is the latest in a series of efforts by Washington to bring semiconductor production back to the country. The United States has been working to ensure its lead in the chip industry, especially with regards to the development of artificial intelligence—both on national security grounds and in the face of competition with China. (AFP)

### Deutsche Bank profits soar on strong investment banking arm

FRANKFURT: Deutsche Bank reported Thursday a 10-percent jump in first-quarter profits on booming business at its investment banking divithe boost from higher interest rates fades. Net profit attributable to share holders at Germany's biggest bank came in at 1.28 billion euros (\$1.37 billion), up from 1.16 billion a year earlier. Sales rose one percent to 7.78 billion euros, better than analysts from FactSet had predicted. Revenues at the group's investment banking jumped 13 percent, propelled by an increase in deal-making. In contrast, sales at the retail banking division declined slightly year on year, as the effect of the European Central Bank's rate hikes fades. (AFP)

### BHP launches \$38.8 billion takeover bid for Anglo American

SYDNEY: Australian mining giant BHP confirmed on Thursday a \$38.8 billion takeover bid for British rival Anglo American, a colossal deal with the potential to fundamentally reshape the sector. Both companies have been wrestling with the transition away from traditional money makers such as gas and coal, increasingly eyeing opportunities to mine metals and critical minerals. BHP confirmed in a statement to the London Stock Exchange it interested in Anglo American's "world class copper assets", which include operations in Peru and Chile. "The combination would bring together the strengths of BHP and Anglo-American in an optimal structure," the statement said. (AFP)

### Meta sued in Japan over celebrity investment scams

TOKYO: Four scam victims in Japan sued Facebook on Thursday after being hoodwinked by fraudulent online investment ads that used images of celebrities without their consent, their lawyer said. Online hoaxes posted on Facebook and other social media channels in Japan led to 27.8 billion yen (\$178 million) in losses last year, according to the National Police Agency. The four filed the case with Kobe District Court demanding Facebook Japan, owned by US group Meta, pay 23 million yen (\$148,000) in damages, according to their lawyer. (AFP)

## Smog, poor visibility threaten Pokhara's appeal to tourists

>> Continued from page 1

Now, during the spring, one of the country's peak tourist seasons, the bowl-sized city is blanketed in smog and haze. Flights are cancelled or delayed due to the poor visibility caused by the haze.

Even with the current level of eye-searing smog, travel trade entrepreneurs are bracing for worse days ahead in the popular tourist des-

Pokhara in west-central Nepal is the second most popular tourist destination in the country after the capital Kathmandu.

There are spillover effects of smog pollution in other villages of Kaski.

"Foreign tourists are reluctant to go on sightseeing tours when the skies are covered with thick smog," said Ananda Gurung, president of Pokhara City Tour Guide Association. "Pollution could soon emerge as a big problem.'

'Tourists have started to shorten their stays," according to Gurung.

Pomnarayan Shrestha, president of the Pokhara Tourism Council, said if the government does not act on time, pollution could have serious consequences for Pokhara's burgeoning tourism industry.

There are spillover effects of smog pollution in other villages of Kaski.

Sikles village, situated at the northeast of Pokhara, was once a favourite hill station for tourists to view Annapurna mountains. But the area is also covered by pollution

Paras Gurung, president of Sikles Hotel Management Committee, said growing wildfire has been making the



Pokhara in west-central Nepal is the second most popular tourist destination in the country after the capital Kathmandu.

Recently, a wildfire has spread in the nearby forest of Taprang, he said.

Tourists inquire whether mountains are visible from Sikles, he said. "We cannot lie to our guests. But if the situation does not improve, we will lose everything. Many bookings have been cancelled."

Tourists in Sikles have started to cut short their stay because of the pollution, Gurung said.

"There were wildfire cases in the past but for a short period. In the last 2-3 years, the smog billows from the forest and remains in the skies for

longer, until the rain arrives," said

Smog has spread from Pokhara to the Annapurna areas. Mountains are not visible from Ghandruk as well, a popular tourist spot, said Hira Malla, a trekking guide.

Malla said that he was hired by two

foreigners for Mardi, Ghandruk and Ghorepani-Poonhill-Khopra treks for 14 days, but they requested to shorten the itinerary due to the haze-covered skies.

'We then returned to Pokhara on the 11th day.'

According to IQAir, an international company that monitors air pollution, the air quality in Pokhara reached an "unhealthy" level on Monday, with an AQI reading of 164.

On Tuesday, it was 152. Due to poor visibility caused by pollution, flights were halted at the Pokhara International Airport for

Hum Bahadur Gurung, a sustainable development activist, said that apart from wildfire, pollution that travels miles from India often causes haze in Pokhara.

"It has impacted the mountain villages. The impact can be dire for the rural economy which depends on tourism," Gurung said. The income of hotels and homestays

will decline if the tourist number drops because of air pollution, he said. According to the Forest Division Office, Pokhara, wildfires have spread in 5,000 hectares of forests since

February. In addition, farmers in most of the southern Tarai plains light

farm fires before planting maize. Experts said that Nepali farmers too started to use fire to burn vegetation due to the shortage of manpower to collect the straw. In past years, the majority of farmers did not burn veg-

etation and preferred to handle straw in other ways to feed their livestock. Komal Raj Kaphle, chief of the Forest Division Office, Kaski, said that to minimise the forest fires, the community has the main role to play.

"There is a need to create awareness among the people not to ignite a flame in the forest. The forest ministry needs to make a detailed plan to raise awareness," he said.

## The Myanmar 'water brothers' salvaging shipwrecks on the tide

**□** AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE YANGON (MYANMAR), APRIL 25

Diving into the darkness of the Yangon River, Than Nyunt starts another murky sortie in his monthslong mission to salvage a sunken ship

using the power of the moon.

His target is a 53-metre (174-foot) long cargo vessel resting on the silty riverbed in Myanmar's commercial hub, whose steel carcass will fetch a tidy sum as scrap—if he can get it to shore.

A hose running from his mask up to an oxygen pump on the boat is his lifeline and only means of communication—one tug on it from a colleague means "come up quickly"

He stays in the dark depths for up to three hours at a time, attaching cables to the wreck. The cables run up to the shore. When it rises on the next tide, it will drag the shipwreck a few metres along the bed.

The work is slow and dangerous but addictive, said Than Nyunt, 58.

He says he has salvaged around 40 ships, from cargo boats to passenger ferries, since he started diving over four decades ago.

"After I excavate one ship I always want to do it again and again," he told AFP from the river, wearing a Manchester United jersey and a pair of gardening gloves.

"Besides making money, I want to know the condition of the wreck... I also talk with ship owners about the ship's history, and we both are delighted when we can salvage them." The team's current shipwreck—the Mya Nadi (Emerald River)—is an old friend for Than Nyunt. He salvaged the vessel in 1981 for its owner, who fitted it with a new engine and set it

Around eight years ago it sank again. There are between 20 and 30 wrecks on the bed of the Yangon, according to Than Nyunt.

In World War II, fierce fighting between **Japan and Allied forces** sent many vessels to the riverbed.

During the British colonial era, the water thronged with ships taking away teak wood and rice from the hinterlands and bringing in workers from abroad. In World War II, fierce fighting between Japan and Allied forces sent many vessels to the riverbed.

Cyclone Nargis, which devastated Myanmar's Irrawaddy Delta in 2008, killing at least 138,000 people, sent more to the bottom.

It left the riverbed a rich, if risky, hunting ground for salvagers.

Wrapping a metal chain around his body to weigh himself down, Thet Oo, 38, prepares for a shift unclogging silt

from the 'Emerald River'. Working in the darkness, as much as 25 metres (80 feet) down and buffeted by strong currents is risky, he says

"My life is in the hands of the man holding the oxygen pipe... If something happens to the oxygen machine, I can only know if he gives a signal to me." That signal is a tug on the oxygen tube, warning the diver to come up.

"However much we argue on the boat, we have to act like brothers when we are under the water," said Than Nyunt.

Pulling the wrecks using the tidal surges of the river is organic but plodding and requires much patience. "We don't have a heavy-duty crane

to pull the ships," says Than Nyunt. When the tide rises by up to 12 feet,

we can expect the ship to move up to 10 feet and we can pull it to land." After more than four months work, the skeleton of the Emerald River is visible in salvage, the team fix tyres and sandbags to the wreck to anchor it in place.

Another team then moves in to dismember the wreck, working with blowtorches in knee-deep water. A scrap dealer will buy the metal and melt it down to be used again. Divers in Than Nyunt's team can earn 25,000 to 30,000 kyat each day (\$12 - 14).

He has salvaged boats all over Myanmar, and doesn't want to stop.

"I don't smoke, drink or use drugs in my life... and I have the ambition to work for as many years as possible," he said. "I'm 58 years old right now and I can work for the next 10 years, because I'm like a sportsperson who is always active.

### Nestle denies adding sugar to baby food in lower-income countries

☐ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE **ZURICH, APRIL 25** 

Swiss food giant Nestle on Thursday rejected accusations from an NGO that it added sugar to products in developing countries that it sold sugar-free in European markets.

"There is no double standard," the company said in a statement. "We apply the same nutrition, health and wellness principles everywhere.

In a report published last week, Swiss NGO Public Eye said that "two of the best-selling baby-food brands marketed by Nestle in low- and middle-income countries contain high levels of added sugar, while such products are sugar free in its home coun-

Nestle, which owns infant milk brands including Laboratoire Guigoz and Nestle Nidal, said its formula for babies under 12 months of age do not contain added sugars. It said it has been phasing out added sugars worldwide in products for children older than one year.

"Our range of cereals for infants and young children are available with and without added sugars in many parts of the world—in Europe as well as in markets in Asia, Latin America, and North America," the company said.

"We are continuing to roll out options with no added sugar, and our ambition is to have these available everywhere we offer infant and nutrition products," it said.

In its report, Public Eye cited the Cerelac brand of flour-based cereals for six-month-olds, which it said had more than five grams of sugar per portion in Ethiopia and six grams in Thailand while it had none in Germany or Britain.

Published the day before Nestle's annual general meeting, the report added to the pressure the company was already facing from the ShareAction NGO and activist shareholders who demanded a vote on the health impact of Nestle products.

**Report says Cerelac brand** for six-month-olds had more than five grams of sugar per portion.

The motion failed, but it forced company executives to address the issue at

Public Eye's report also came on top of warnings by French regulators about contamination of Nestlebranded mineral waters in France.

The flow of negative news "is raising concerns among shareholders,' Jean-Philippe Bertschy, an analyst at Vontobel, said in a commentary.

### Car giants vie for EV crown at Beijing's Auto China show

■ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING, APRIL 25

Chinese car giants locked in a cutthroat price war descended on the capital for the start of the Auto China show Thursday, vying to draw consumers and headlines in the world's biggest electric vehicle market and abroad.

China's EV sector has exploded in recent years, and firms are now engaged in a no-holds-barred battle to offer customers the coolest accessories at the lowest prices.

EV makers from China have made inroads into markets from Europe to Southeast Asia and Tesla's Elon Musk described them in January as "the most competitive car companies in the world". Beijing's Auto China show, which

firms square off in a bid to draw customers at one of the country's biggest car shows Thursday saw crowds surge into the convention complex hosting the event, which takes place every other year but

had not been held since 2019 because

of the pandemic.

lasts until May 4, sees dozens of

Several of the Chinese automotive world's top stars addressed audiences at the expo-including CEOs He Xiaopeng of XPeng and Lei Jun of Xiaomi-while vistors milled around



A BYD 07 EV model electric car is displayed at the Beijing Auto Show on Thursday.

the booths, snapping pictures of the shiny new vehicles on display.

There are a staggering 129 EV brands in China, but just 20 have managed to achieve a domestic market share of one percent or more, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Chinese consumers, especially in the premium market, expect smart functions in their EVs, something domestic firms are far better placed to

provide than foreign companies, experts said. Chinese EV makers "are looking at

the car much more like Apple looks at the phone or the iPad or the laptop. They're looking to really amp up the experience", said Daniel Kollar, head of automotive and mobility at the consultancy Intralink. "That's... what the Chinese consum-

er expects." For established foreign

firms trying to compete in the Chinese market, that poses a challenge.

"Companies like VW and Stellantis, they are trying to take an 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em' approach," Kollar

"That's why you're seeing partnerships pop up with the likes of XPeng. They feel like they're behind and the best way to jump to the front of the line is to partner with some of these native smart EV (original equipment manufacturers)."

Among the most closely watched firms at Auto China is BYD-"Build Your Dreams"—a Shenzhen-based battery and automotive giant that beat Tesla in last year's fourth quarter to become the world's top seller of EVs.

quarter of this year, but BYD remains firmly on top in its home market. The firm is expected to unveil its first electric pickup—the BYD Shark—

Tesla reclaimed that title in the first

at the event. The Shark's price has yet to be disclosed, but BYD has said it will be

equipped with the firm's dedicated off-road technology platform. The show comes amid an intensifying price war between EV companies, made all the more competitive as con-

sumer spending slows in China. On Monday, Beijing-based Li Auto slashed the prices of its models by up to 30,000 yuan (\$4,141).

That followed a decision by Tesla in China to lower its prices by 14,000 yuan. And as competition turbo-charges in China, the rapid expansion of its EV production has raised eyebrows in the West, where regulators fret that an oversupply of cheap Chinese vehicles could outprice local competitors. Beijing has labelled foreign concerns of overcapacity "groundless", insisting that the success of its EV sector is down to innovation and advanced supply chains, not subsidies.

But it had long given EV firms a boost, funnelling generous amounts of state cash towards domestic manufacturers and offering purchasing discounts in a bid to spur growth and speed up the shift towards clean-energy cars.

Those central government retail subsidies were phased out in late 2022. But as firms push aggressively into countries across Europe, Southeast Asia and Latin America, they are increasingly under the spotlight.

The European Union launched an investigation last year into Chinese state EV subsidies, which it said had given companies from the country an 'unfair" leg up in the local market.

The probe coincides with reports of Chinese vehicles piling up at European ports, as logistics networks struggle to cope with the surge and local consumers are slow to buy them.

### SPORTS | MEDLEY

## Nagarkoti opens up six-stroke lead

The former Nepal number one pro cards 5-under 63 for a 54-hole total score of 7-under 197.



Bhuvan Nagarkoti plays a shot during the third day of the Surya Nepal Kathmandu Open at the par-68 Royal Nepal Golf Club in Kathmandu on Thursday.

#### SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU, APRIL 25

Bhuvan Nagarkoti opened up a sixstroke lead over Dinesh Prajapati after third round of the Surya Nepal Kathmandu Open, the seventh event under Surya Nepal Golf Tour 2023-24, at the par-68 Royal Nepal Golf Club in

Kathmandu on Thursday. Nagarkoti carded 5-under 63 for a 54-hole total score of 7-under 197. He is six shots ahead of Prajapati, who played 1-over 69 for a 1-under 203 total.

Toran Bikram Shahi and Niraj Tamang shared the third position at even-par 204. Shahi produced the best card of the day with a bogey-free 7-under

61 while Tamang carded 1-under 67. Dhana Bahadur Thapa and Sanjay Lama are tied for fifth place at 2-over 206. Thapa carded 2-under 66 and Lama played even-par 68.

Three pros, Subash Tamang, Jayram Shrestha and Rabi Khadka, share the seventh position at 3-over 207. Tamang carded 68, Shrestha played 69 and Khadka faltered to 3-over 71.

Rame Magar is 10th at 5-over 209 after he played 4-over 72.

In the amateur section, Sadbhav Acharya moved to the top with a total score of 6-over 210. He played 3-over 71

and opened up a five-stroke lead over

Overnight leader Tsering played 9-over 77 and slipped to second at 11-over 215. Rahul BK is a distant third at 227 after he played 7-over 75.

Leader Nagarkoti took the turn at an impressive 6-under 28 with the help of four birdies on the first, second, fifth and sixth holes and an eagle on the fourth hole. After taking the turn, Nagarkoti played 1-over 35. He carded birdies on the 12th, 14th and 18th holes but faced bogeys on the 11th and 17th holes apart from a double bogey on the 16th hole.

Prajapati played 1-over 35 on the front nine and carded even-par 34 on the back nine. He dropped shots on the first and fifth holes against a birdie on the second hole. After taking the turn, Prajapati carded three birdies on the 10th, 13th and 14th holes but he suffered a triple bogey on the 11th hole.

Shahi carded 4-under 30 with the help of birdies on the second, fourth, fifth and eighth holes. After taking the turn, he carded 3-under 31 after he carded birdies on the 10th, 11th and 17th holes.

Tamang carded 2-under 32 on the front nine after he carded birdies on the fifth and eighth holes. He suffered four bogeys on the 10th, 12th, 16th and 18th holes against three birdies on the 11th, 13th and 15th holes on his way to playing 1-over 35 on the back nine.

## Klopp's Liverpool farewell fizzles out tamely

Four wins in nine games has seen the Reds crash out of Europa League and FA Cup as well as falling off the pace at the top of the Premier League.

☐ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LIVERPOOL, APRIL 25

Jurgen Klopp's nearly nine years at Liverpool have been filled with memorable milestones but an unwanted first of his reign leaves his final

few weeks at Anfield with little left to play for. Klopp tasted defeat in the Merseyside derby at Goodison Park for the first time in nine visits as a 2-0 defeat against Everton left the Reds' dreams of sending their manager off as a Premier League winner in tatters.

Just a few weeks ago, Liverpool were on course for a potential quadruple but have come off the rails. A run of four wins in nine games has seen Klopp's men crash out of the Europa League and FA Cup as well as falling off the pace at the top of the Premier League.

Liverpool trail leaders Arsenal (77) by three

What has gone wrong to leave Klopp's fitting farewell at risk of fizzling out?

#### Slow starts

Liverpool's habit of fighting back from losing positions was lauded earlier in the campaign as a sign of the "mentality monsters" Klopp has created throughout his time at Anfield.

They have amassed 27 points after falling behind in the Premier League alone this season, but have seen their luck run out after falling behind to Crystal Palace and Everton in shock defeats over the past 10 days.

In all competitions, Liverpool have conceded the opening goal 22 times this season.

They never recovered from a sluggish start at Goodison as Everton wasted a number of chances and had a penalty overturned by VAR even before Jarrad Branthwaite opened the scoring

A 2-0 win against Liverpool at the Goodison Park moved **Everton eight points above** the relegation zone.

#### Wasteful finishing

Liverpool's forward line has also gone off the boil come the business end of the season.

They have failed to score from open play in four their last five games.

Mohamed Salah has looked out of sorts since returning from a hamstring injury picked up at the Africa Cup of Nations.

Luis Diaz and Darwin Nunez were again guilty of wasting huge chances against Everton.

And Diogo Jota, often heralded as the most natural finisher at the club, has been sidelined again by injury after just returning from a twomonth layoff. "You can see we are in a rush in front of goal," said Klopp. "We create a lot but we don't score often enough. You can see that and that's the problem. You have to fight through these periods. It's not a problem of attitude, the boys want it but it is my job to bring them into a situation where they feel confident to do it."



Liverpool's manager Jurgen Klopp tasted defeat in the Merseyside derby at the Goodison Park for the first time in nine visits, on Wednesday.

The quest for the quadruple could now be coming back to haunt Klopp as Liverpool look to have

They have played 54 games this season and will have four more before the end of the campaign. A number of academy graduates stepped up during an injury crisis in the early months of 2024 and helped ensure Klopp did at least secure some silverware in his final season by winning the League Cup in February.

Yet, just as they are getting major players back with Alisson Becker and Trent Alexander-Arnold returning in recent weeks, those that have been relied on most during the winter months are fading.

Klopp admitted after the Palace match that midfield duo Alexis Mac Allister and Wataru Endo are struggling due to the burden placed upon them earlier in the campaign.

"Players who played all the games are less fresh but it is the same for the other teams. I don't want that to be an excuse," added Klopp.

"A lot of things come together so it is not great timing. I would prefer to be sitting here winning 4-0 and flying but the job is to win football games and the more you win, the more successful you are. "In the moment we didn't win enough to get anything from the season.'

### Nepal name squad for T20 series against West Indies A

Cricket Association of Nepal on Thursday announced a 16-man squad for Nepal's upcoming five-match T20 series against West Indies A. The series will begin on

Nepal are hosting a West Indies cricket team for the first time in their history. The matches will take place at TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur.

The series will serve as a preparatory tournament for Nepal's upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup, which is scheduled to be held in the West Indies and the United

Nepal coach Monty Desai has called up the same squad that failed to live up to their billing in Al Amerat Oman during the recently concluded ACC Men's T20 Premier Cup. Nepal failed to defend their trophy they won in 2023—which was a one-day international tournament—and could not qualify for the 2025 Asia Cup after losing to the eventual champions United Arab Emirates in the semi-finals by six wickets.

Nepal also missed out on the 2024 ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup after losing their third-place playoff match against Hong Kong by four wickets.

However, the squad includes two newcomers in Aarif Sheikh and Aakash Chand.

Aarif was an important member of the Nepal A team who played two series against Ireland Wolves earlier this month in Kathmandu. Sheikh had scored 49 (26) and 93 not out (48) against the visiting Ireland team in the first and third T20 respectively. Ireland Wolves won the three-match T20 series 2-1.

Aarif was also a member of Nepal A's squad that played three-match one-day series against Ireland Wolves. He was dropped in the third one-day after he was dismissed for a duck in the first and second one-day

Series in Mong Kong, where he took seven wickets in his three innings. Chand rose to limelight in January when his five-wicket haul against Afghanistan U-19 helped

for Super Six stage of the ICC U-19 Men's Cricket World Cup. Nepal have faced off against a West Indies team only

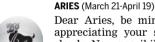
once before, during the 2023 Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe in June last year. Nepal lost to the West Indies by 101 runs.

Rohit Paudel (C), Kushal Bhurtel, Aasif Sheikh, Anil Sah, Kushal Malla, Sundeep Jora, Dipendra Singh Airee, Gulshan Jha, Bibek Yadav, Pratis GC, Karan KC, Sompal Kami, Abinash Bohara, Lalit Rajbanshi, Aarif Sheikh and Aakash Chand.

Roston Chase (C), Alick Athanaze, Fabian Allen, Kadeem Alleyne Joshua Bishop, Keacy Carty, Johnson Charles, Mark Deyal, Andre Fletcher, Matthew Forde, Obed McCoy, Gudakesh Motie, Keemo Paul, Oshane Thomas and Hayden Walsh.

	May 2 May 4	Fourth T20 Fifth T20
--	----------------	-------------------------

### HOROSCOPE



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

**CROSSWORD** 

appreciating your surroundings and moving slowly. New possibilities could emerge around almost any corner, so be sure to ask your higher power for guidance if you're looking to expand.

Try not to read into situations that have felt a

bit wonky, trusting that things will continue to

normalise. Engage in some harmless flirting if

you need a pick-me-up later today, but try not to

Don't hide away from love and genuine support

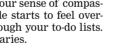
when it presents itself. This day could trigger

fears around love, especially if you've been

burned in the past. Luckily, you'll find that it's



CANCER (June 22-July 22)





LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

also take care to avoid unkind gossip, or your words could lead to burned bridges. Instead, use your day to promote positivity, focusing on the joys that lie ahead.

You'll be reminded that love has the power to

build up and destabilise, dearest Scorpio.

Maintain your footing by moving slowly within

matters of the heart, taking care to guard your-

self against unexpected surprises. Tap into



**CAPRICORN** (December 22-January 19)

highly private this morning, dear Capricorn. This afternoon, try to calculate your words and actions when they're demonstrated publicly, serving yourself the stress or anxiety that often follows impulsive decision-making.

### AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)



It may be difficult to socialise in meaningful ways today. Do your best to honour your own needs before extending aid to others, under-



standing that you must first take care of yourself before you can truly support others.

### PISCES (February 19-March 20)



Your mind may struggle to keep up with your responsibilities this morning, dearest Pisces. Don't put pressure on yourself if brain fog pre-

vails, look for opportunities to clear away confusion by calming the mind. Things will improve

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

ADORN

LAPIS

ARTICLESVELTE

I C E L E A R N A L A R M

NOME DIGIT SNAP

TRIMSCOLORGACT

ANTICSTENACITY

ERATO

STREW

SHEEN

#### **ACROSS** 1 Flagpole 5 Mother-of-pearl

10 Hooded robe

14 - vera 15 Figure of speech 16 Operatic song 17 Bowl over

18 Raccoon relative 19 Not so much 20 Low-ranking

mobster Ignore **Stage direction** 26 Cul-de- — 27 Idiosyncratic

30 Utterly infatuated 35 Serv. branch 36 Actress

Linney

37 Org. for

professionals Ump's cry 39 Brits' boob tube 40 Speckle 41 La Brea

42 Narrow path 43 Stopped a fast speaking

44 Skilled at 46 Went hiğh 49 Coffee-filled vessel

52 Claim

55 Head honcho (2 wds.) 59 Composer

easier to come out of your shell.

Satie 60 Relative by

money 64 Victory goddess 65 Din

67 Some shirts 68 Cupidity Poseidón's

#### domain **DOWN**

1 Church service 2 Singing voice

3 Essence 4 Painful to the touch

6 Like an awful lot

8 Decompose 9 Ambassador

10 Printed cotton Wašh.

25 How things are 27 Estimated figure

13 Endure output 23 Dalai -

28 Everyday

marriage (hyph.) 63 Continental

66 Snow vehicle

5 Nuance

Spy org.

11 Neighbor of 12 Genie's gift

21 Cuttlefish's

29 Musical passage — and void

LEND

32 "M\*A\*S\*H" character 33 Overact 34 Out of fashion

36 Slimmed-down 39 Growing in popularity

42 Go bad

45 Tremors

46 Hoodwinked

thumbs-up

Gives a

48 Evaluate 51 Lower in

prestige 52 Dimple 53 Pennsylvania port city 54 Boxer — Tyson 56 Beast of burden

57 Bailiwick

58 Gives silent assent 61 Likewise not 62 Rest

# 15 18

16 19 25 28 29 30 33 40 38 39 42 43 51 50 54 53 60 61 63 65 66

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



69

Bowler Chand did not play any part in the Ireland Wolves tour of Nepal. But he travelled with the senior men's cricket team to take part in Hong Kong T20I

Nepal U-19 produce a rare one-wicket win and qualify

### NEPAL SQUAD

WEST INDIES A SQUAD

WEST INDIES A TOUR OF NEPAL

try not to lose touch with your sense of compassion. If dealing with people starts to feel overwhelming, find escape through your to-do lists. Don't hesitate to set boundaries

LEO (July 23-August 22) Looming responsibilities could put a damper on your mood this morning. Though you'll crave

fun, excitement, and lots of attention, you could

regret it later if you neglect important tasks. Focus on your to-do list, getting urgent items

our what your spirit craves

UNIT

PULSATE

ERE

ADAMANT

ERDA

SEAS

VIRGO (August 23-September 22) There's a chance you've been giving too much of yourself away recently. Try to spend some extra downtime at home, finding fun ways to relax the mind, body, and spirit. Be sure to hon-

your gratitude.

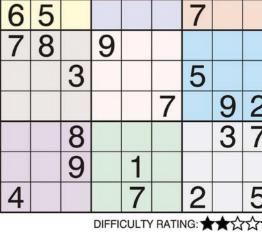
SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Avoid the temptation to rush through tasks and understand the importance of finding your

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

mark before shooting the arrow. It'll also be important that you support yourself physically with healthy nutrients and plenty of water. Do something exciting.

**SUDOKU** 



be right or left, it will always be oscillating

between different ideas over time and

space which is why we have the concept of

'Kala Bhairava'. We move from high to

lows, from gunas (qualities)—sattva to

This political discourse, with its fixa-

tion on left and right ideologies, lacks

maturity. You can't have only the trees

that you like in a forest. Nature wants all kinds of trees to exist, and that's true for

What role do artists and intellectuals play

in the social justice movement in regions where LGBTQIA+ rights are under threat?

In my writings, I avoid terms like "social

justice", as these are combative and mili-

tant ways of functioning that are popular

in the West. Kindness and gentleness is

what should be expressed through art, and

by artists and intellectuals. Nothing is

under threat, it's just the world is afraid of

change and diversity because diversity

can be difficult. We cannot force someone

to accept diversity by just posting rules,

notices, and doing workshops. We all have

to be intellectually kind and understand-

ing from both sides and to ourselves

because kindness is on short supply today.

We should learn from the dramatic dances

of Tantrik gods to assimilate and make

everyone comfortable with differences as

What could Nepal hosting the Pink

Conference mean for its less queer

human genders and sexualities

rajas to tamas.

## Why myths are always relevant

India's best selling mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik talks about storytelling, queer characters and Pink Tourism.

ndia's best selling mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik visited Nepal as one of the keynote speakers for Nepal's first Pink Tourism International Conference, held last week in Kathmandu.

Pattanaik, who is also an illustrator, has penned more than 50 books and over a thousand columns. He writes on the relevance of mythology in modern times, especially in areas of management, governance and leadership

In an interview with the Post's Aarati Ray, he shared his views on Pink Tourism in Nepal, LGBTQIA+ rights, his literary works and challenges to mythology

Which aspect of your work do you feel closest to-mythology, illustrating or speaking?

I enjoy speaking the most. When you are talking to people, you engage with questions which allows you to explore the subject in depth. Talking to people, and giving lectures is my favourite.

What's your favourite among your works? What proved to be the most challenging

Well, I don't have a favourite book. It's like a parent being asked to choose their favourite child. However, 'My Gita' was quite challenging as I had to explain a very complex idea in simple terms

#### How do myths influence discussions on inclusion and acceptance?

Mythology is how people imagine the world, and we are constantly reimagining ourselves in different ways. A hundred years ago, people believed women should not be educated. Today, these things are changing with our imagination, and expanding with wisdom. That's what mythology does, it helps you negotiate the way through human insecurities, making it significant in inclusion.

#### Do mythology, tourism and LGBTQIA+ rights intersect?

Yes, of course. Mythology shapes how we deal with our desires and social expectations. It influences how we interact with our families and communities, who are surprised when our desires do not match theirs. This impacts human relations. There are numerous LGBTQIA+ stories and references in Mahabharata, Tantra, Jataka, Ramayana which are thousands of years old but are not taught or mentioned in the mainstream narrative today.

Mythology also plays an important role in understanding different cultures as well. For instance, Nepali mythology and culture are diverse, drawing from various influences such as Buddhism, Tantrism, Tibetan traditions, Hinduism (particularly Shiva Shakti), Brahminical practices, and local tribes like Kirat. This is the result of Nepali imagination which created art, and architecture unique from other parts of the world. People should

come to this land to see these. For me, I am interested in Tantra-Hinduism, where Hinduism and Buddhism overlap. This synthesis, distinct from Hinduism found in India, makes Nepal a must-visit destination for those interested in mythology and spirituality.

Do you see any changes in how LGBTQIA+ characters are depicted in modern

I see the focus is more on men's love today, so lesbian representation is lacking. People also confuse trans queer people with gay and lesbian people. Still, there is definitely more representation in stories today, which is a good shift from what it was 30 years ago. The shift will keep happening as we become more comfortable with ourselves and our sexualities.

What elements of Nepali culture and mythology can attract LGBTQIA+

While exploring temples in Nepal, I have seen ancient Tantrik ideas embracing gender and sexual diversity, influenced by strong matriarchal traditions. These concepts are portrayed in Nepal delicately with 'soul' Hindu-

Buddhist Tantrik tradition, which is different from Western combative attitudes towards sexuality. This difference and diverse depictions in Nepali temples, art and deities, which show different forms of sexuality, can greatly attract tourists.

Nepal also needs to highlight Tantrik traditions better. India tends to eclipse these ideas but I believe Nepal will show

How do you respond to critics who claim your LGBTQIA+ interpretations of Indian mythology are too progressive or clash with conservative cultural values?

Well, everyone is entitled to their opinions. Just as that world of old Brahmins who thought they were purer than others is gone, the world of heterosexuality being the only way is also fading.

I embrace nature and Tantra, which teaches us about the fluidity of purusha(spirit) and prakriti (matter). Tantra also taught me to embrace diversity and go beyond right or wrong, as right and wrong are Judeo-Christian traditions alien to the Tantrik world.

#### What challenges do globalisation and digitalisation pose to storytelling and mythology?

The biggest challenge is that in social media, people are not interested in wisdom. Rather, they love drama and climax. Similarly, modern storytellings prefers heroes, villains and victims, while Tantrik stories lack these clear distinctions as it believes in a continuous rhythm

How do you see the current left and right leaning mythologies, political ideologies and discourse?

Left and right leaning mythologies stem from a linear thinking rooted in the Middle East, based on the idea of God as a judge. Left wing clings to creating revolution

& DEVDUTT 0

PATTANAIK

wing clings to imaginary past and futures.

while the right

follow the Tantrik tradi-

Nepal's progressiveness is far ahead of where the curve when compared to its neighworld bours which is admirable. It is showing will never the world how to be kind. I think Nepal, as

the world evolves.

friendly neighbours?

the land of Gautam Buddha, needs to continue doing this. Eventually, everyone will all come around to accepting the LGBTQIA+ community, as love always wins over arrogance.

What are your hopes for the future of Pink Tourism in Nepal and India?

Pink Tourism has a long way to go in India, as it not as accepting of queer culture. Our thinking is dominated by old school Brahminical, Christian and Islamic ideologies.

Nepal has progressed a lot in accepting LGBTQIA+ community and I feel this should bring 'Laxmi' (wealth and prosperity) to the entrepreneurs here. So, prosperity for Nepal, joy and wisdom for the tourists, and peace to the world is what I hope for.

## Finale of Prime Bizfest today

POST REPORT

College's Management Club is organising the finale of Prime Bizfest at the colbachelor's building in Khusibun, Kathmandu, on Friday. The week-long event brought together aspiring entrepreneurs to share innovative ideas amongst themselves.

Fifteen teams participated in a mentorship programme organised during the festival. All teams will present what they have learned during the various workshops of the programme through presentations on Friday.

The finale will also have a panel discussion on 'Why Nepal', encouraging the youth to study and work in Nepal instead of mov-

ing abroad. Anil Kesary Shah, the former CEO of Nabil Bank, Zenisha Moktan, the retail director at IMS group, and Aabhushan CEO of Jeeve Health, are the panellists for the event.

The panel discussion will be followed by a treasure hunt in which teams (from the mentorship programme) who secure a spot in the top 10 of the competition can participate. The treasure hunt will have clues and questions based on workshops. Teams who secure top five spots in the treasure hunt will proceed to the grand finale of Prime BizFest and pitch their startup ideas to the judges. The winner will be awarded with a cash prize of Rs50,000.

An open mic session, with performances by popular stand-up comedian Sujan Zimba and the college's students, will close the event.



### New York appeals court overturns Weinstein's 2020 rape conviction

This ruling reopens a painful chapter in America's reckoning with sexual misconduct by powerful figures.

■ MICHAEL SISAK

York's highest court on Thursday overturned Harvey Weinstein's 2020 rape conviction, finding the judge at the landmark #MeToo trial prejudiced the ex-movie mogul with "egregious" improper rulings, including a decision to let women testify about allegations

that weren't part of the case. "We conclude that the trial court erroneously admitted testimony of uncharged, alleged prior sexual acts against persons other than the complainants of the underlying crimes," the court's 4-3 decision said. "The remedy for these egregious errors is a new trial."

The state Court of Appeals ruling reopens a painful chapter in America's reckoning with sexual misconduct by powerful figuresan era that began in 2017 with a flood of allegations against Weinstein. His accusers could again be forced to relive their traumas on the witness stand.

The court's majority said "it is an abuse of judicial discretion to permit untested allegations of nothing more than bad behavior that destroys a defendant's character but sheds no light on their credibility as related to the criminal charges lodged against them."

In a stinging dissent, Judge Madeline Singas wrote that the majority was "whitewashing the facts to conform to a he-said/shesaid narrative," and said the Court of Appeals was continuing a "disturbing trend of overturning juries' guilty verdicts in cases involving sexual violence.'

"The majority's determination perpetuates outdated notions of sexual violence and allows predators to escape accountability," Singas wrote.

Weinstein, 72, has been serving a 23-year sentence in a New York prison following his conviction on charges of criminal sex act for forcibly performing oral sex on a TV and film production assistant in 2006 and rape in the third degree for an attack on an aspiring actress in 2013.

He will remain imprisoned because he was convicted in Los on. Weinstein was acquitted in Los Angeles on charges involving one of the women who testified in New

Weinstein's lawyers argued Judge James Burke's rulings in favour of the prosecution turned the trial into '1-800-GET-HARVEY'.

The reversal of Weinstein's conviction is the second major #MeToo setback in the last two years, after the US Supreme Court Weinstein, including famous actresses such as Ashley Judd and Uma Thurman. His New York trial drew intense publicity, with protesters chanting "rapist" outside the courthouse. Weinstein is incarcerated in

the #MeToo movement. Dozens of

women came forward to accuse

New York at the Mohawk Correctional Facility, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northwest

refused to hear an appeal of a Pennsylvania court decision to throw out Bill Cosby's sexual assault conviction.

Weinstein's conviction stood for more than four years, heralded by activists and advocates as a milestone achievement, but dissected just as quickly by his lawyers and, later, the Court of Appeals when it heard arguments on the matter in

Allegations against Weinstein, the once powerful and feared studio boss behind such Oscar winof Albany.

He maintains his innocence. He contends any sexual activity was consensual.

Weinstein lawyer Arthur Aidala argued before the appeals court in February that Burke swayed the trial by allowing three women to testify about allegations that weren't part of the case and by giving prosecutors permission to confront Weinstein, if he had testified, about his long history of brutish behavior.

Aidala argued the extra testimo-

Angeles in 2022 of another rape ners as 'Pulp Fiction' and ny went beyond the normally opportunity, intent or a common scheme or plan, and essentially put Weinstein on trial for crimes he wasn't charged with.

Weinstein wanted to testify, but opted not to because Burke's ruling would've meant answering questions about more than two-dozen alleged acts of misbehavior dating back four decades, Aidala said. They included fighting with his movie producer brother, flipping over a table in anger and snapping at waiters and yelling at his assistants.

"We had a defendant who was begging to tell his side of the story. It's a he said, she said case, and he's saying 'that's not how it happened. Let me tell you how I did it," Aidala argued. Instead, the jurors heard evidence of Weinstein's prior bad behavior that "had nothing to do with truth and veracity. It was all 'he's a bad

Weinstein's conviction stood for more than four years, heralded by activists as a milestone achievement.

Aidala also took issue with Burke's refusal to remove a juror who had written a novel involving predatory older men, a topic the defense lawyer argued too closely resembled the issues in Weinstein's case.

The Court of Appeals agreed last year to take Weinstein's case after an intermediate appeals court upheld his conviction. Prior to their ruling, judges on the lower appellate court had raised doubts about Burke's conduct during oral arguments. One observed that Burke had let prosecutors pile on with "incredibly prejudicial testi-

mony" from additional witnesses. In appealing, Weinstein's lawyers sought a new trial, but only for the criminal sexual act charge.





INTRODUCING THEDELLARANGE

**ELEVATE YOUR** COOKING EXPERIENCE WITH 3D DUAL FLAME TECHNOLOGY.

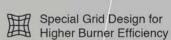


### **Dual Flame Burners**

- . High performance 4.5KW Burner with Dual Flame Technology
- · Lower Single Flame of 1.5KW provides versatility in product usage
- \* 3D Flame for Higher Efficiency, low gas consumption









Faber Approved Partner: UHS Holdings For corporate enquires please write to us at: nabaraj@uhsholdings.com FRANKE'S EXPERT

www.fabernepal.com

**FABER CARE** 9801037072



FABER PLATINUM STUDIOS KATHMANDU KAMALADI-9802350082, TEKU-9802350675, KALANKI-9801037063, MAHARAJGUNJ-9801191392, PEPSICOLA-9802350982, BATTISPUTALI-9801201680, LALITPUR SATDOBATO-9801191462, KUMARIPATI-9801191058, POKHARA NEWROAD-9802350292, CHITWAN BHARATPUR-9820110141, BUTWAL MILANCHWOK-9802350983, FOR TRADE ENQUIRY CONTACT - MR. NABARAJ - 9801038790