



 41.7° C 3.4° C  
Bhairahawa Jomsom

**>> Continued on page 2**









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.

POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

# 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

KATHMANDU, APRIL 25

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 refugee scam.

Rayamajhi, Tek Narayan Pandey, a 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 general dates.

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 and Chaudhary on Rs3 million and Rs1 million 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-



POST FILE PHOTO

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 bail amount.

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.

In 2019, the then government led by KP 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 the scam.

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.

POST REPORT

KATHMANDU, APRIL 25

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 projects."

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 commercial loans.

"Our negotiation with China should focus on grants and concessional loans with interest rates at par with other multilateral financial institutions and without any strings attached," he stated.

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 said.

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



PHOTO: CESIF/X

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 spill-over, and environmental concerns. "The slow-paced 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 with its neighbours, whereby India reinvented 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 POUDEL

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.

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

"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 also rise.

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.



RSS

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 degrees 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.











# 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 six-stroke 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

Tashi Tsering.

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 points.

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 on 27 minutes.

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 two-month 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.

## Fatigue

The quest for the quadruple could now be coming back to haunt Klopp as Liverpool look to have run out of steam.

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

SPORTS BUREAU  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 25

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 Saturday.

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 States in June.

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 games.

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

## NEPAL SQUAD

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.

## WEST INDIES A SQUAD

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.

## WEST INDIES A TOUR OF NEPAL

April 27	First T20	May 2	Fourth T20
April 28	Second T20	May 4	Fifth T20
May 1	Third T20		

# HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Dear Aries, be mindful to stay grounded by 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.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

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 lead anyone on.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

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 easier to come out of your shell.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

You'll grow tired of other people's problems but 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 handled.

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 honour what your spirit craves.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

Watch your words this morning. You should 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.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

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 yourself against unexpected surprises. Tap into your gratitude.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

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

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

You may fluctuate between extroverted and 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, understanding 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 prevails, look for opportunities to clear away confusion by calming the mind. Things will improve later.

# CROSSWORD

## ACROSS

- Flagpole
- Mother-of-pearl
- Hooded robe
- vera
- Figure of speech
- Operatic song
- Bowl over
- Raccoon relative
- Not so much
- Low-ranking mobster
- Ignore
- Stage direction
- Cul-de- —
- Idiosyncratic
- Utterly infatuated
- Serv. branch
- Actress — Linney
- Org. for professionals
- Ump's cry
- Brits' boob tube
- Speckle
- La Brea — Pits
- Narrow path
- Stopped a fast
- Skilled at speaking
- Went high
- Coffee-filled vessel
- Pulls
- Claim

## DOWN

- Church service
- Singing voice
- Essence
- Painful to the touch
- Nuance
- Like an awful lot
- Spy org.
- Decompose
- Ambassador
- Printed cotton
- Neighbor of Wash.
- Genie's gift
- Endure
- Cuttlefish's output
- Dalai —
- How things are
- Estimated figure
- Everyday

## PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

S	A	V	E		B	A	S	T	E		B	L	A	B
E	V	I	L		A	D	O	R	N		R	U	D	E
L	E	N	D		L	A	P	I	S		U	N	I	T
F	R	E	E		W	A	Y		P	U	L	S	A	T
				S	A	N				S	E	A	S	
P	A	R	T		I	C	L	E		S	V	E	L	T
J	C	E		L	E	A	R	N		A	L	A	R	M
N	O	M	E		D	I	G	I	T		S	N	A	R
T	R	I	M		S		C	O	L	O	R		A	C
A	N	T		I	C	S		T	E	N	A	C	I	T
				N	A	T	E			E	R	E		
A	L	G	E		B	R	A		A	D	A	M	A	N
L	E	A	N			E	R	A	T	O		E	R	D
M	A	R	C		S	T	R	E	W		N	E	A	R
S	K	Y	E		S	H	E	E	N		T	A	K	E

4-2-24

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- Musical passage
- and void
- "M\*A\*S\*H" character
- Pennsylvania port city
- Boxer — Tyson
- Beast of burden
- Bailiwick
- Gives silent assent
- Likewise not
- Rest

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20					21				22	23				
				24				25		26				
27	28	29					30	31				32	33	34
35						36						37		
38												40		
41					42							43		
44			45						46	47	48			
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52	53	54							55			56	57	58
59							60	61	62			63		
64							65					66		
67							68					69		

# SUDOKU

9	1	7	3	8	2	6	4	5
8	4	3	7	6	5	1	2	9
5	6	2	1	4	9	3	7	8
6	9	8	2	3	1	4	5	7
1	3	5	4	9	7	2	8	6
7	2	4	6	5	8	9	3	1
2	8	6	9	7	4	5	1	3
4	5	9	8	1	3	7	6	2
3	7	1	5	2	6	8	9	4

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

8		1		5				4
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6	5					7		
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆



# Why myths are always relevant

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

India’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, writing, 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 to finish?**

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 retellings?**

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+ tourists?**

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’ in 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 us the way.

**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 of life.

**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 while the right wing clings to imaginary past and futures.

I follow the Tantrik tradition where the world will never

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 *rajas* to *tamas*.

This political discourse, with its fixation 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 human genders and sexualities.

**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 militant 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 understanding 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 the world evolves.

**What could Nepal hosting the Pink Conference mean for its less queer friendly neighbours?**

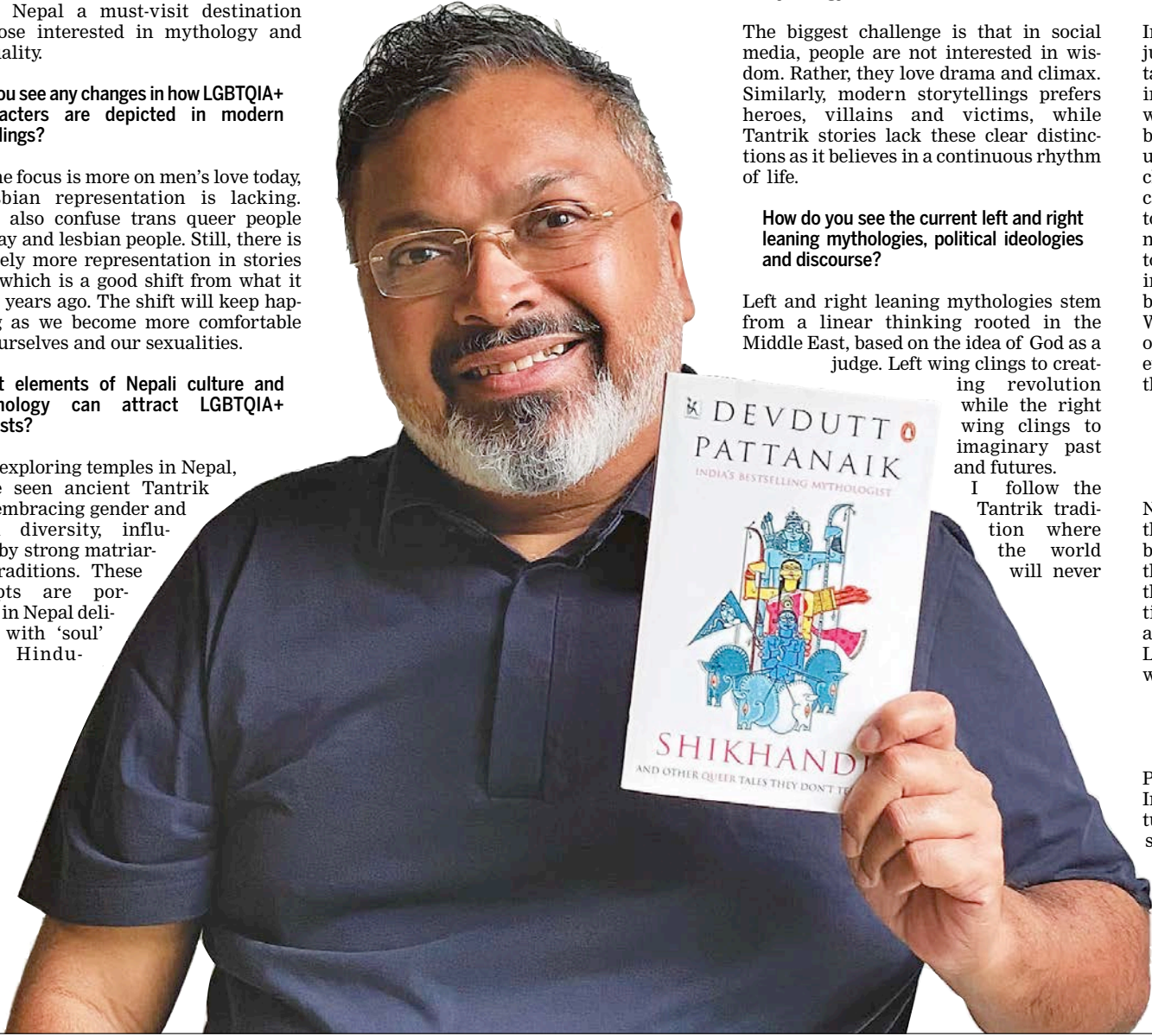
Nepal’s progressiveness is far ahead of the curve when compared to its neighbours which is admirable. It is showing the world how to be kind. I think Nepal, as the land of Gautam Buddha, needs to continue doing this. Eventually, everyone will all come around to accepting the LGBTQIA+ community, as love 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.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEVDUTT PATTANAIK



## Finale of Prime Bizfest today

□ POST REPORT  
KATHMANDU

Prime College’s Entrepreneurial Management Club is organising the finale of Prime Bizfest at the college’s bachelor’s building in Khushibun, 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 Jyoti Kansakar, the founder and 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.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRIME COLLEGE

## 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  
NEW YORK, US

New 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 figures—an 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/she-said 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

Angeles in 2022 of another rape and sentenced to 16 years in prison. Weinstein was acquitted in Los Angeles on charges involving one of the women who testified in New York.

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

ners as ‘Pulp Fiction’ and ‘Shakespeare in Love’, ushered in the #MeToo movement. Dozens of women came forward to accuse 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 New York at the Mohawk Correctional Facility, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northwest

ny went beyond the normally allowable details about motive, 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 guy.’”

**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 testimony” from additional witnesses.

In appealing, Weinstein’s lawyers sought a new trial, but only for the criminal sexual act charge.

— Associated Press



AP/RS

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 February.

Allegations against Weinstein, the once powerful and feared studio boss behind such Oscar win-

of 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-





A sleek, black and silver range hood is shown in a kitchen setting. It features a large circular fan at the top and a control panel with various buttons and a digital display. A bowl of food is on the stove below it, and steam is rising from it.

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FL SW SC BK 90



**BLDC Motor**  
**1800m<sup>3</sup>/hr Suction**



Twin Suction



Steam Cleaning



Double Stage Oil Tray



Low Noise 52dB



Smoke Sensor Automatic Speed



A black gas cooktop with five burners is shown on a white marble countertop. A small potted plant is next to it.

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THE **DELLA** RANGE

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- Lower Single Flame of 1.5KW provides versatility in product usage
- 3D Flame for Higher Efficiency, low gas consumption



Auto Burner Shut off for Superior Safety



Cast Iron Pan Support



Auto Ignition



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