

TODAY

NATIONAL

People across the Tarai will have no respite from the sweltering heat for at least three days as there is no system in place to bring clouds or cause rainfall, the Meteorological Forecasting Division predicts. Pg 3

OPINION

Identity politics in Nepal hasn't succeeded as most identity lobbies are either absorbed in major parties or are weak in setting their agendas, writes Lok Raj Baral. Pg 4



MONEY

Private sector internet service providers have again warned that services could be disrupted as the government has not provided them foreign exchange to pay the vendors from whom they source the bandwidth. Pg 5

WORLD

Top US diplomat Antony Blinken urged Hamas on Wednesday to accept a Gaza truce plan despite an Israeli warning that the army will keep fighting the Palestinian militant group after any ceasefire. Pg 6

Eastern India experienced its hottest April on record as a heatwave scorched parts of the country amid an election, killing nine people, and the weather office on Wednesday forecast above normal temperatures. Pg 6

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Nepal coach Desai will bank on experience after retaining most players from the ACC Men's Premier Cup campaign in the final 15-man squad for the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the United States. Pg 7



West Indies A players wear mask during their match against Nepal at the TU cricket ground in Kirtipur on Wednesday. At 11:30 on Wednesday night, Kathmandu Valley ranked third among the cities with worst levels of air pollution across the world, according to IQ Air.

Is Congress debacle in Ilam, Bajhang threat to fight-election-solo proposal?

Thapa and Sharma are under fire for taking charge of the bypoll campaign but failing to secure victory.

PURUSHOTTAM POUDEL

KATHMANDU, MAY 1

Nepali Congress general secretaries Gagan Kumar Thapa and Bishwa Prakash Sharma were designated the election 'commanders' for two of the three constituencies where by-elections for the House of Representatives seats were held last year.

The Congress party also entrusted the general secretaries with leading the campaign for the by-election held for a federal seat in Ilam on Saturday. Sharma was even named the party's election commander for Ilam-2.

However, the party couldn't do well as CPN-UML's Suhang Nembang won the seat defeating the Congress candidate with a margin of 5,830 votes.

In the by-election held last year, Thapa was appointed the election commander of Tanahu-1 and Sharma of Chitwan-2.

Especially after the party's defeat in the Ilam by-election, political observers have questioned the general secretaries' views. It appears that the general secretaries believe no other Congress leader represents the party as well as they do. If it was the duo's recommendation that kept the party president from campaigning in Ilam, then their political calculations are wrong, analysts say.

The general secretaries are in trouble if they think they are the only face of change in the Congress, Pitambar Bhandari, a political analyst, told the Post. "They need to learn from Ilam's

case that the party organisation matters more than the leaders' personality."

Last year, Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) President Rabi Lamichhane was elected in the bypoll in Chitwan-2, the constituency he also won in November 2022 House of Representatives election. He lost the lawmaker position when the Supreme Court invalidated the citizenship certificate that he had surrendered as a US citizen.

Later, after reacquiring citizenship certificate, Lamichhane contested the election and defeated his competitor, Congress leader Jeet Narayan Shrestha, by a huge margin.

The Congress candidate got roughly around the same vote this time as party's 2022 PR count.

Wagle, who quit the Congress to join the RSP just ahead of the election, won from Tanahun-1, defeating Govinda Bhattarai of the Congress. The constituency had been vacant after Ramchandra Paudel got elected the country's President. The new party, RSP, snatched away Tanahu-1, traditionally a Congress stronghold.

Thapa and Sharma were elected the general secretaries from the 14th general convention held in 2021.

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NHRC to stay away from office-bearer nomination panel

Conflict victims want amendments to transitional justice bill before the process to appoint office bearers begins.

BINOD GHIMIRE

KATHMANDU, MAY 1

As demanded by victims and human rights defenders, the National Human Rights Commission has decided not to send its representatives to the committee constituted to nominate candidates for chairpersons and members of the two transitional justice bodies.

Bypassing the demand of conflict victims and rights advocates to amend the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act before starting the selection process, the government on April 12 constituted a five-member recommendation committee. Led by former chief justice Om Prakash Mishra, the panel includes the rights body chair or any member the chair picks.

However, a meeting of the constitutional rights watchdog on Tuesday decided not to send its representative unless the government makes a time-bound commitment to endorse an amendment bill, which is currently under discussion in a parliamentary committee.

"For around two years, the government said that the vacant positions would be filled once the Act is amended. We have sought a clear commitment from the government to amend the Act with a timeline before we send our representative," Surya Dhungel, a member at the NHRC, told the Post. "Conflict victims and rights defenders have also

been suggesting the same." The commission has sent its decision to the Prime Minister's Office.

A large section of conflict victims, backed by human rights advocates, had objected to the government's decision to form the Mishra-led panel without first making any significant effort to endorse the bill. The Pushpa Kamal Dahal administration, however, said the recommendation panel was formed as per the Supreme Court's January order, whose full text was issued after two months.

Rights body not to send member to panel until government commits to passing crucial revision.

The court on March 12 had asked the government to start the appointment process in the two transitional justice bodies within a month.

Constitute task forces within the commissions to carry out preliminary investigations into the victims' complaints until office bearers are appointed, it had said.

Following the court order, the victims and the human rights defenders had demanded the government and the parties endorse the bill to amend the Act by the top court's deadline before starting the selection process.

>> Continued on page 2

Clash at UCLA hours after pro-Palestinian demonstration is cleared at Columbia

Confrontations with law enforcement and more than 1,000 arrests across US campuses.

Demonstrators clash at a pro-Palestinian encampment at UCLA on Wednesday in Los Angeles.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES, MAY 1

Duelling groups of protesters clashed overnight at the University of California, Los Angeles, shoving, kicking and beating each other with sticks after pro-Israel demonstrators

tried to pull down barricades surrounding a pro-Palestinian encampment. Hours earlier, police burst into a building occupied by anti-war protesters up a demonstration that had paralysed the school.

After a couple of hours of scuffles

between pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli demonstrators at UCLA, police wearing helmets and face shields slowly separated the groups and quelled the violence. The scene was calm as day broke. UCLA cancelled classes on Wednesday and urged people to avoid the area where the clashes happened.

"Due to the distress caused by the violence that took place on Royce Quad late last night and early this morning, all classes are cancelled today," UCLA said in a statement.

Tent encampments of protesters calling on universities to stop doing business with Israel or companies that support the war in Gaza have spread across campuses nationwide in a student movement unlike any other this century. The ensuing police crackdowns echoed the removal decades ago of a much larger protest movement at the school against the Vietnam War.

There have been confrontations with law enforcement and more than 1,000 arrests. In rare instances, university officials and protest leaders struck agreements to restrict the disruption to campus life and upcoming commencement ceremonies.

>> Continued on page 2

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WORLD

Blinken urges Hamas to agree Gaza truce as he meets Israel leaders

Netanyahu on Tuesday repeated his vow to send Israeli ground forces into Gaza's far-southern city of Rafah.



A woman holds a banner and shouts slogans with families and supporters of Israeli hostages held by Hamas in Gaza during a protest calling for their return, outside a meeting between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and families of hostages in Tel Aviv, Israel on Wednesday.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JERUSALEM, MAY 1

US top diplomat Antony Blinken urged Hamas on Wednesday to accept a Gaza truce plan despite an Israeli warning that the army will keep fighting the Palestinian militant group after any ceasefire.

“There is a very strong proposal on the table right now,” said Blinken, in Israel on his seventh Middle East crisis tour since the war broke out in October. “Hamas needs to say yes and needs to get this done.”

Hamas said it would respond “with-in a very short period” to a plan proposed by mediators to halt the fighting for 40 days and to exchange a few dozen hostages for many more Palestinian prisoners. But the group’s aim remains “an end to this war”, senior Hamas official Suhail al-Hindi told AFP by telephone—a goal at odds

with the stated position of Israel’s hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The premier on Tuesday repeated his vow to send Israeli ground forces into Gaza’s far-southern city of Rafah, despite major concerns over the fate of some 1.5 million civilians sheltering there.

“We will enter Rafah and we will eliminate the Hamas battalions there with or without a deal,” Netanyahu told a group representing families of remaining hostages in Gaza.

UN chief Antonio Guterres warned that an Israeli assault on Rafah would “be an unbearable escalation, killing thousands more civilians and forcing hundreds of thousands to flee”.

Netanyahu made his threat shortly before the arrival of Blinken and at a time of tensions between the traditional allies as the Gaza war has sparked global anger and weeks of

pro-Palestinian demonstrations on US university campuses.

In talks with Netanyahu on Wednesday, Blinken “reiterated the United States’ clear position on Rafah”, said State Department spokesman Matthew Miller, two days after Blinken had last voiced opposition to an assault. Talks on a potential truce and hostage release deal to pause the bloodiest ever Gaza war have been held in Cairo, involving US, Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

An Israeli official told AFP the government will wait for an answer from Hamas until Wednesday night before it decides whether to send its envoys back to the indirect talks in Egypt’s capital.

Hindl of Hamas, speaking by phone from an undisclosed location, said there is “great interest from Hamas and all Palestinian resistance factions to end this insane war on the

Palestinian people, which has consumed everything”.

“But it will not be at any cost,” he added, stressing that the group “cannot under any circumstances raise the white flag or surrender to the conditions of the Israeli enemy”.

Egypt’s Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry called on all sides to “show the necessary flexibility” to achieve a deal “that stops the bloodshed of Palestinians”, during a visit to Cairo by his French counterpart Stephane Sejourné.

Analysts voiced doubts whether Hamas would sign up to another temporary ceasefire like a week-long truce in November that saw more than 100 hostages released, knowing that Israeli troops could resume their onslaught as soon as it is over.

“I’m pessimistic about the option of Hamas agreeing to a deal that doesn’t have a permanent ceasefire baked into it,” said Mairav Zonszein, senior analyst at the International Crisis Group. “The US and Egypt and Qatar all have very strong interests of their own, for various reasons, why they’re trying very hard now to pressure both sides into agreeing to a deal.”

A source with knowledge of the negotiations said Israel’s proposal contained “real concessions” including a period of “sustainable calm” following an initial pause in fighting.

The war started after Hamas’s October 7 attack on southern Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,170 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures.

The militants also took about 250 hostages. Israel estimates that 129 captives remain in Gaza, but the military says 34 of them are dead.

Israel’s massive retaliatory offensive has killed at least 34,568 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Widespread bombing has left Gaza filled with “more rubble than Ukraine”, a UN agency said, warning that clearance efforts will be hampered by unexploded ordnance and toxic asbestos.

Israel also imposed a siege on Gaza’s 2.4 million people that has sharply restricted access to food, drinking water, medicines, fuel and power.

Parts of India record hottest April as heatwave kills nine

REUTERS
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

Eastern India experienced its hottest April on record as a heatwave scorched parts of the country amid a general election, killing at least nine people, and the weather office on Wednesday forecast above normal temperatures for May too.

Searing heat has been cited by political analysts as one of the reasons for low voter turnout in the seven-phase parliamentary election that began on April 19, with results due on June 4.

Heatwave conditions are, however, forecast to abate gradually in the coming days. The mean temperature in eastern India was 28.12 Celsius (82.61 Fahrenheit) in April, the warmest since records began in 1901, with experts blaming a combination of factors.

“In an El Nino year, you get more heating,” said Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, chief of the India Meteorological Department, referring to a climate pattern that typically leads to hot and dry weather in Asia and heavier rains in parts of the Americas.

He said fewer thunderstorms and an anti-cyclonic circulation near India’s southeastern coast were causing heatwaves. “Wind blows from land towards the sea during an anti-cyclone

..., so land becomes warmer and temperature rises.”

In April, the eastern Indian state of West Bengal recorded the most number of heatwave days for the month in the last 15 years, followed by the neighbouring coastal state of Odisha where heat conditions were the worst in nine years. Authorities have also declared a rare heatwave in the southwestern coastal state of Kerala, where at least two deaths have been recorded due to soaring temperatures.

Central and northwestern India, which includes major wheat producing states that typically witness heatwaves this time of the year, have been largely spared due to intermittent thundershowers last month, Mohapatra said.

The weather office said rainfall in May is likely to be normal and that it expects more showers during the second half of the monsoon season in August and September as compared to June and July due to the La Nina climate pattern, which typically brings higher rainfall to India.

Monsoon is the lifeblood of India’s economy, delivering 70 percent of the rain needed to water crops and recharge reservoirs, and the met department has predicted that India will receive above normal monsoon rainfall in 2024.



A drone view of women drawing water from a well on a hot day in Kasara, India, on Wednesday.

BRIEFING

Russian attack kills two, injures six in Ukraine’s east

KHARKIV: A Russian attack killed at least two people and injured six on Wednesday in the Ukrainian town of Hirnyk, just over 12 km from the most tense frontline area, a local official said. Russian troops used a multiple rocket launcher for the strike, regional governor Vadym Filashkin said on the Telegram messenger. Images he shared alongside the post showed private houses destroyed by fires and damaged by blast waves. Hirnyk is just about 12-15 km from the active combat zone near Ukraine’s Maryinka in the Donetsk region, where Russian troops have stepped up their offensive push. Ukraine’s Army Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi has recently described the situation in the Maryinka area as one of the most difficult. Outgunned and outnumbered Kyiv troops are desperately waiting for an inflow of fresh ammunition and weapons delayed for months by political wrangling in the US Congress. Although some weaponry has been already coming, President Volodymyr Zelensky urged a significant acceleration in the speed of deliveries, saying the whole battlefield situation directly depended on it. (REUTERS)

Scottish government survives no confidence vote after leader’s resignation

LONDON: The Scottish government survived a vote of no confidence on Wednesday, giving the Scottish National Party (SNP) a chance to pick a new leader to replace outgoing First Minister Humza Yousaf. Yousaf’s decision to step down as first minister and SNP leader on Monday has thrown the party into chaos and boosted hopes in Britain’s opposition Labour Party that it can regain Scottish seats to win a national election later this year. Polls show that Labour is ahead of or level with the SNP in Scotland for the first time in a decade. Yousaf said he would resign after he ended a coalition with the Green Party. It means the SNP are seeking a third leader in little over a year, undermining what had once seemed like its iron grip on power in the devolved Scottish government. While the Greens made Yousaf’s position untenable by withdrawing their confidence in him personally, they voted with the SNP against Wednesday’s vote of no confidence in the Scottish government. The no confidence motion was defeated by 70 votes to 58. Defeat for the government would have led to the resignation of all ministers and most likely triggered a Scottish election. (REUTERS)

Trump returns to his campaign facing a warning of jail time if he violates a trial gag order

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WAUKESHA, WISCONSIN, MAY 1

Donald Trump on Wednesday is using a one-day break from his hush money trial to rally voters in the battleground states of Wisconsin and Michigan, a day after he was held in contempt of court and threatened with jail time for violating a gag order.

His remarks are being closely watched after he received a \$9,000 fine for making public statements about people connected to the case. In imposing the fine for posts on Trump’s Truth Social account and campaign website, Judge Juan M Merchan said that if Trump continued to violate his orders, he “will impose an incarcerationary punishment.”

The former president is trying to achieve a balancing act unprecedented in American history by running for a second term as the presumptive Republican nominee while also fighting felony charges in New York.

Trump frequently goes after Merchan, prosecutors and potential witnesses at his rallies and on social media, attack lines that play well with his supporters but that have potentially put him in further legal jeopardy.

Trump insists he is merely exercis-



Donald Trump

ing his free speech rights, but the offending posts from his Truth Social account and campaign website were taken down. Merchan is weighing other alleged gag-order violations by Trump and will hear arguments on Thursday.

Trump appeared frustrated after the ninth day of the trial came to an end, saying he should be out in Georgia and New Hampshire instead of sitting in court.

“They don’t want me on the campaign trail,” he told reporters.

Trump has often called this case and other criminal cases against him “election interference,” saying they

keep him from campaigning for the presidential election in November.

The gag order bars him from making public statements about witnesses, jurors and some others connected to his hush money case.

Manhattan prosecutors have argued Trump and his associates took part in an illegal scheme to influence the 2016 presidential campaign by purchasing and then burying negative stories. He has pleaded not guilty.

Trump’s visits to Wisconsin and Michigan mark his second trip to the swing states in just a month.

For the previous rallies, the former president largely focused on immigration, referring to people who are in the US illegally and who are suspected of crimes as “animals.”

Meanwhile, Democrats are hoping to remind voters ahead of these visits about Trump’s position on abortion, which Trump has been openly concerned about being a political liability for him and Republicans.

Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan met on Wednesday with half a dozen women, including a family doctor, and warned that a second Trump term would threaten abortion rights even in her state, which enshrined those rights in

its state constitution after the Supreme Court overturned national rights to the procedure.

Whitmer appeared with the women at a bookstore in Flint surrounded by signs that read “Stop Trump’s Attacks on Health Care” and “Stop Trump’s Abortion Ban.” She told reporters not to believe Trump’s contention in a Time Magazine interview that Republicans would never have enough votes in the US Senate to pass a national abortion ban.

“We cannot trust anything that Donald Trump says when it comes to abortion. So no one should take any comfort in the fact that, yes, he wants an abortion ban, but he won’t get it because he doesn’t think we’ll have 60 votes in the Senate. Baloney,” she said. “No one would have imagined we’d be here in this moment.”

Wisconsin and Michigan are among a handful of battleground states expected to decide the 2024 election.

For Trump to win both states, he must do well in suburban areas like the areas outside of Milwaukee and Saginaw, Michigan, where he will hold Wednesday’s events. He underperformed in suburban areas during this year’s primary even as he dominated the Republican field overall.

Most Americans see TikTok as a Chinese influence tool, poll finds

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, MAY 1

A majority of Americans believe that China uses TikTok to shape US public opinion, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted as Washington moves closer to potentially banning the Chinese-owned short-video app.

Some 58 percent of respondents to the two-day poll, which closed on Tuesday, agreed with a statement that the Chinese government uses TikTok, which is owned by China’s ByteDance, to “influence American public opinion.” Some 13 percent disagreed, and the rest were unsure or didn’t answer the question. Republicans were more likely than Democrats to see China as using the app to affect US opinions.

TikTok says it has spent more than \$1.5 billion on data security efforts and would not share data on its 170 million US users with the Chinese government. The company told

Congress last year that it does “not promote or remove content at the request of the Chinese government.”

TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

President Joe Biden last week signed legislation giving ByteDance 270 days to divest TikTok’s US assets or face a ban.

TikTok has vowed to challenge the ban as a violation of the protections of free expression enshrined in the First Amendment of the US Constitution, and TikTok users are expected to again take legal action. A US judge in Montana in November blocked a state ban on TikTok, citing free-speech concerns.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll found 50 percent of Americans supported banning TikTok, while 32 percent opposed a ban and the rest were unsure. The poll only surveyed US adults and doesn’t reflect the views of people under age 18, who make up a significant portion of TikTok’s users in the United States. About six in 10



TikTok logo is placed on the US and Chinese flags in this illustration taken, on April 25.

poll respondents aged 40 and older supported a ban, compared with about four in 10 aged 18-39.

The poll showed 46 percent of

Americans agreed with a statement that China is using the app to “spy on everyday Americans,” an allegation Beijing has denied.

Evacuation continues following Indonesia’s Ruang volcano eruption

REUTERS
JAKARTA, MAY 1

Hundreds residents of Indonesia’s Tagulandang island were waiting at the island’s port to be evacuated on Wednesday, footage from National Search and Rescue Agency showed, while grey smoke continued to erupt from Ruang volcano.

Indonesia’s Ruang volcano erupted on Tuesday, spewing lava that prompted authorities to evacuate more than 12,000 people from the nearby Tagulandang island.

The Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation (PVMBG) raised the alert status of Ruang to the highest level after yesterday’s eruption, and warned the residents of Tagulandang island that a tsunami could be triggered by volcanic material collapsing into the ocean.

“Personnel of Manado Search and Rescue Agency are evacuating 109 Tagulandang residents to Munte port, while hundreds are still waiting in Minanga port to be evacuated,” the National Search and Rescue agency said in a statement on Wednesday.

Nepal bank on experience at T20 World Cup

Cricket Association of Nepal announces a 15-member squad adding Kamal Singh Airee and Sagar Dhakal. Binod Bhandari, Aarif Sheikh, Bibek Yadav, Lokesh Bam and Aakash Chand have been left out.



Players of Nepal celebrate a wicket of West Indies A during the third T20 match at the TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur on Wednesday.

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, MAY 1

Nepal coach Monty Desai will bank on experience after retaining most of the players from the ACC Men's Premier Cup campaign in the final 15-man squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the United States.

The announcement came hours after Nepal suffered a huge 76-run defeat against the West Indies A in the third T20 in Kirtipur that handed the visitors a 2-1 lead in the five-match T20 series.

With the T20 World Cup just a month away, coach Monty Desai will still be desperate to address Nepal's struggle with the bat which is turning out to be a big headache, again.

Nepal's team will be led by regular captain Rohit Paudel, who has regained his form at a perfect time. Paudel scored an unbeaten century that helped Nepal win the first T20 against the West Indies A. He also played an unconquered knock of 48-ball 71 in the second T20 but could not save his team from defeat.

Desai rested Paudel on Wednesday, and in his absence, the hosts could not match the tempo of a strong West Indies A team and could only manage 151 runs in their chase of a massive 228-run target that was set with the help of an unbeaten century from Johnson Charles and a half-century from Andre Fletcher.

Batters Binod Bhandari, Aarif Sheikh, Bibek Yadav and Lokesh Bam—

who were heavily experimented in the build-up to the World Cup—were all left out from the T20 World Cup squad after their dismal performance continued in the series against West Indies A as well.

Veteran cricketer Bhandari travelled to Hong Kong with the national side to participate in the Hong Kong T20 Series following his decent performance at the Prime Minister Cup. He was part of Nepal A team's all five games against Ireland A. But his outings have not been very satisfactory, with his 27 against PNG being the highest score of his last nine games.

Aarif was also out of form. Since his unconquered knock of 93 in a T20 match against visiting Ireland A a month ago, his handling with the bat has been a big disappointment. He has scored just 15 runs in his last four games.

Yadav was seen as a bright prospect for Nepal in November last year when he smashed three consecutive sixes to Oman's Bilal Khan off the last over in the T20 World Cup Asia Qualifier.

He carried that aggression to Nepal's Tour of Hong Kong in March, blasting a four-ball 19 (not out) against Papua New Guinea that also featured three sixes off the last over. However, he has failed to touch the double digit figures in his last five T20 games.

Lokesh Bam scored a century against Ireland A in Nepal's first T20 match in March but has not been able to carry on with that form.

Anil Sah, however, has made his cut to the World Cup squad despite failing to impress in his recent matches. Sah returned to international cricket in February with a bang, scoring a fifty and an unbeaten century against Canada in the home ODI series. But he has lost his form since. He was dismissed cheaply for five runs in the first T20 and one run in the second T20 against West Indies A. On Wednesday, he

NEPAL SQUAD FOR T20 WORLD CUP
Rohit Paudel (captain), Asif Sheikh, Anil Kumar Sah, Kushal Bhurtel, Kushal Malla, Dipendra Singh Airee, Lalit Rajbanshi, Karan KC, Gulsan Jha, Sompal Kami, Pratis GC, Sundeeep Jora, Abinash Bohara, Sagar Dhakal and Kamal Singh Airee.

played 15-ball 14.

Fresh from a record-equalling feat of six sixes in an over against Qatar in the ACC Men's T20 Premier Cup in Oman, all-rounder Dipendra Singh Airee will be in the mix as always, alongside wicket-keeper and batsman Aasif Sheikh and Kushal Malla. Sheikh has been rested for the West Indies A series.

Desai's love affair with out-of-shape Kushal Bhurtel will continue at the World Cup despite the opener experiencing the lowest point of his career. He was dismissed for a duck for a three

match in a row during the Premier Cup in Oman and has continued his poor show back at home (in the series against West Indies A) as well. There were questions whether his selection would be a right choice but Desai has no option but to hope Bhurtel will regain his form for the global event.

Gulsan Jha will also travel with the squad as one of the young players, while Pratis GC has also kept his place.

All-rounder Sompal Kami is the only player from Nepal's debut 2014 World Cup campaign in Bangladesh and will lead the fast-bowling with a mature Karan KC, while Lalit Rajbanshi will lead Nepal's spin attack.

Spinner Sagar Dhakal and pacer Kamal Singh Airee are the only new changes from a squad that had a disastrous Premier Cup campaign.

Kamal took 10 wickets in Nepal A's two series (OD and T20) against Ireland A. However his bowling spell against West Indies A has proved expensive after conceding 53 runs in each of his two innings.

Dhakal took 2-19 in the second T20 and 1-41 in the third T20 against West Indies. He also picked four wickets for Nepal A in three T20 matches.

Nepal are in Group D alongside the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and South Africa. They open their World Cup against the Dutch on June 4.

Nepal are appearing at a World Cup for the only second time.

Real Madrid stars keen on Kroos stay after Munich masterclass

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MUNICH, MAY 1

Toni Kroos has not decided where his future lies but his team-mates are hoping he chooses to stay at Real Madrid after his Champions League masterclass against Bayern Munich.

The experienced 34-year-old German midfielder shone for Real in their 2-2 semi-final first leg draw at his former stomping ground in Bavaria on a gripping Tuesday night.

Kroos's contract expires in the summer after a decade with the record 14-time Champions League winners.

"I want to win as much as possible this season— I don't think about the future," he said after the game.

Looking beyond obvious standout Vinicius Junior, who netted both of Madrid's goals against Bayern, Kroos was Madrid's finest player in a match where Los Blancos could have been beaten.

Thomas Tuchel's Bayern created more chances and Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said they were at their best, compared to his side which only showed their top level in flashes.

Kroos was by contrast supremely consistent and his superb ball for Vinicius helped Madrid take the lead.

The former Germany international was a step ahead of everyone else on the pitch, pointing to Vinicius where he planned to play the ball, a pass which didn't seem to be on.

Vinicius, closely acquainted with Kroos's quality, made the right run and the veteran threaded the needle with his slide-rule pass.

"We train together so much, I know Kroos very well and he knows me very well," explained the Brazilian forward.

Vinicius' strike-partner Rodrigo said he would love Kroos to stay.

"We always tell him (Kroos) to stay, not just one but many years more, age doesn't matter," Rodrigo told Movistar.

"He's so masterful, with such class, I love playing with him, I hope he keeps going."

'No words'

Kroos made some vital interceptions in midfield, was a threat from set pieces and in the first half hour did not misplace a single pass.

By half-time only one of his 49 had gone astray and by the end 79 out of 82 found their target.



Looking beyond obvious standout Vinicius Junior, who netted both of Real Madrid's goals against Bayern Munich, Toni Kroos was the finest player in a match where Los Blancos could have been beaten.

The midfielder showed his experience as well as his class, having a word with Madrid goalkeeper Andriy Lunin, telling him to stay calm after a hurried clearance.

It was Kroos charging up the outside early in the second half, with Manuel Neuer beating his effort to safety at full stretch after a slick move.

He was booked for a tactical foul on Bayern striker Harry Kane and took the armband after Nacho Fernandez was substituted.

The Bayern match is Kroos' 10th semi-final tie and the only player who has lifted the trophy more is former Madrid winger Paco Gento, a six-time winner.


Kroos and several other players are tied on five.

The German did not look happy to be replaced in the final stages, given the calibre of his performance.


"(It was) just for more energy, Kroos played a very good game," explained Ancelotti.

"There are no words to define him. He is a top player, crucial for our game, for the way he controls the speed (of the game), and for his passes."

HOROSCOPE




ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Your focus reaches beyond yourself, into the community. This makes it easier to clear away connections with those who trigger you politically or no longer serve your highest good. You'll feel like going within to take an honest look at yourself.




TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
You may feel slightly overstimulated when you awaken. Reclaim control by returning to structures that have served you in the past, especially if you've been lagging within your responsibilities or personal boundaries have faltered. You will be nudged to expand your network.




GEMINI (May 21-June 21)
The early hours will give you strange dreams that could cause you to lose focus. Take a moment to connect with your spirituality once you've awakened, but remember that empowerment comes when you find ways to marry the fantastical with reality.



CANCER (June 22-July 22)
Give yourself space to let go of any thoughts, emotions, or ideas you're ready to release, darling Cancer. The day creates an opportunity to reverse behaviours and patterns in the name of personal transformation. You'll sense an elevating shift this afternoon.



LEO (July 23-August 22)
Work from the heart center as the day nudges you to invest in your relationships. Use this energy to correct any issues within your dynamics while considering how you can evolve as a companion. Your feelings intensify this afternoon.



VIRGO (August 23-September 22)
The morning triggers strange dreams that could lead to enlightenment around your work situation. Expect to see some changes within your daily routines throughout the next five months. Your thoughts drift toward sweeter themes as afternoon rolls in.



LIBRA (September 23-October 22)
Take pride in your actions, dear Libra. The day encourages you to be your own, unique brand of bold. You may find yourself revisiting old styles, interests, or projects, kicking off a five-month period of nods to the past.



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)
Waves of emotion could trigger intuitive or romantic dreams in the early hours, dear Scorpio. Use this energy to get in touch with your feelings, stripping back any pretenses you've created for yourself. The atmosphere shifts as afternoon rolls in.



SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)
Keep your mind active, dearest Sagittarius, unlocking a world of creative and intellectual potential. Use this energy to empower yourself with words, being mindful of how your ideas are received. The day asks you to get in touch with your emotions.



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)
Remember that it's okay to take your time manifesting new ideas, learning, or unpacking your thoughts. Use the energy to slow down and breathe. You may notice some stagnancy within your goals, marking a five-month period of reflection.



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)
Your emotions could reveal interesting truths through the dream realms, dear Aquarius. Revitalise your image without forgetting who you are throughout the next five months. A supportive energy takes hold this afternoon.



PISCES (February 19-March 20)
The morning, dear Pisces, brings activity to your mind that could trigger enlightening dreams. Use this energy to acknowledge your patterns, looking for opportunities to grow and improve. Your energy levels pick up this afternoon, putting you in a popular place.

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Some recyclables
5 Sage in a turban
10 Shambles
14 Freshly
15 Long-neck bird
16 Lustrous stone
17 Kind of bean
18 Piano man — John
19 Mexican money
20 Beaten
22 — in a teacup
24 Turnstile
25 John Doe, aka Richard —
26 Check
28 Improperished
34 Lots and lots
36 Greek letter
37 "Wham!"
38 Soft food for babies
39 Truly vertical
41 United
42 Actress — MacGraw
43 "You — to be there"
44 Breadwinner
47 Got back
51 Proximate
52 SUV
53 Love god
55 Self-denying

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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

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DOWN

1 Baby animal
2 Dye plant
3 Verne's captain
4 Strut
5 Baking item
6 Joined metal parts
7 Museum pieces
8 Debatable
9 Swim ring (2 wds.)
10 Child
11 Sword
12 Talk back to
13 Opening in a door
21 "— of Thrones"
23 Miss Piggy's perfume
26 Climb
27 Subject

29 Work by Chopin
30 — Browne belt
31 "Once — — midnight dreary ..."
32 Printer ink
33 Pitcher
34 Mast
35 Globular
40 Household god
45 Presently
46 Protected public land
48 Big cat
49 Cistern

50 Develop
54 Contract
55 Remotely
56 Long seat
57 Abbr. in biz
58 Actor — Gooding Jr.
60 Prod
61 Org.
62 — -tat-tat
65 Situate

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					39	40					41			
42					43				44	45	46			
47			48	49				50		51				
			52					53	54					
55	56	57				58		59			60	61	62	
63					64		65				66			
67					68						69			
70					71						72			

SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

