Temperature: Max: 27.9°c Min: 17.0°c
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Coldest: Jumla: 12.0°c Hottest: Nepalgunj: 38.8°c

the kathmandupost

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NEPAL'S LARGEST SELLING ENGLISH DAILY
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money
Renewal of power purchase pact with India soon: NEA

GO VOTE FOR DEMOCRACY

Nation goes local first time in 20 years as people elect representatives at their level to bring governance to grassroots

Voters **4,956,925**
(Voters across country: **14,054,482**)
Total polling centres **6,642**

1997
The last time country voted in local elections

Number of districts
34

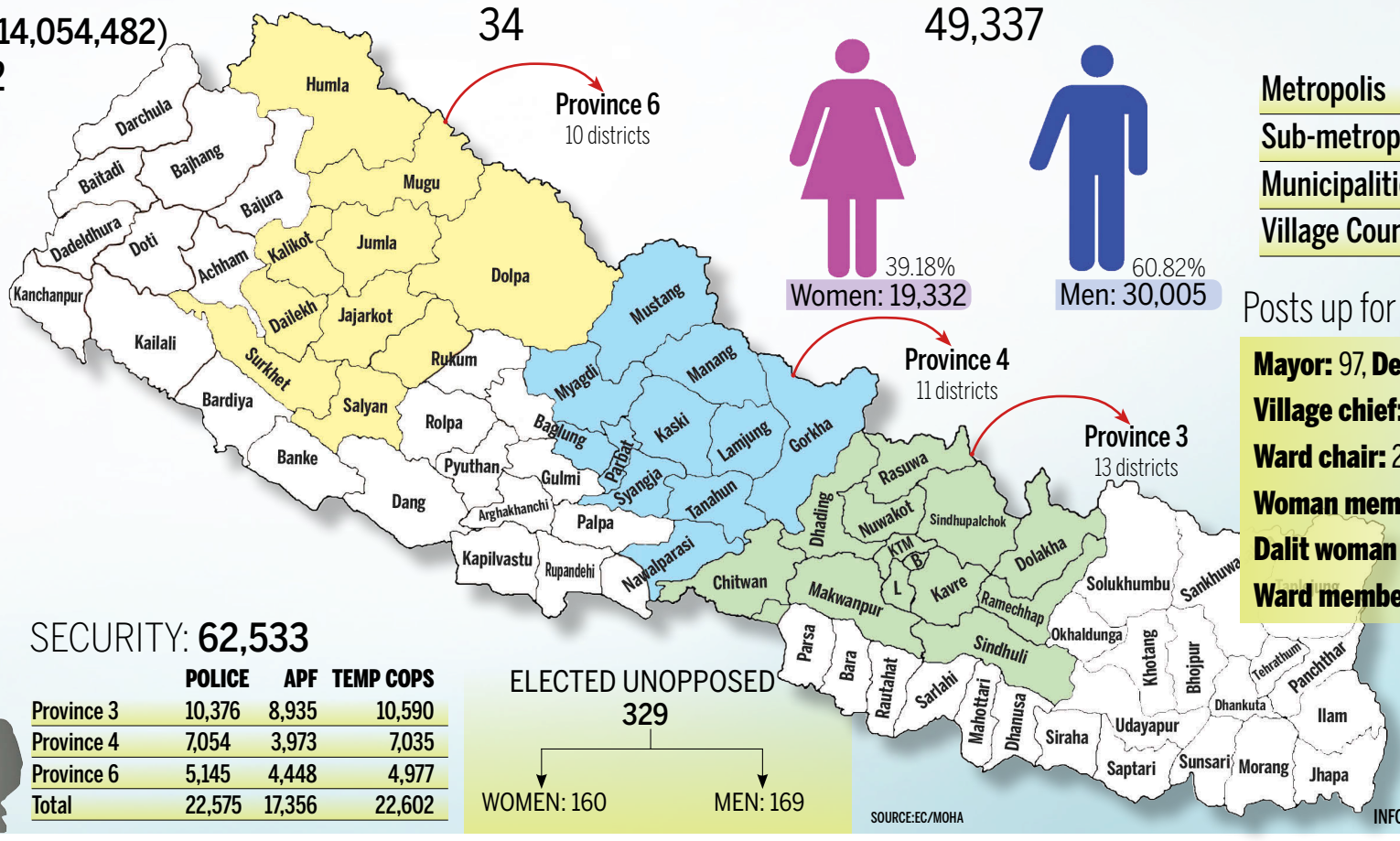
Number of candidates
49,337

Number of local units
283

Metropolis	4
Sub-metropolis	1
Municipalities	92
Village Councils	186

Posts up for grabs **13,556**

Mayor: 97, **Deputy mayor:** 97
Village chief: 186, **Dy chief:** 186
Ward chair: 2,598
Woman member: 2,598
Dalit woman member: 2,598
Ward member (Open): 5,196



SECURITY: **62,533**

	POLICE	APF	TEMP COPS
Province 3	10,376	8,935	10,590
Province 4	7,054	3,973	7,035
Province 6	5,145	4,448	4,977
Total	22,575	17,356	22,602

ELECTED UNOPPOSED
329
WOMEN: 160 MEN: 169

VOTING TIME
7am to 5pm

SOURCE:EC/MOHA
INFOGRAPHICS: RAJ KUMAR POUDYAL

PREZ, PM URGE ALL TO MAKE ELECTIONS A SUCCESS

KATHMANDU: President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal have called on all to make Sunday's local level elections a grand success and called on all eligible voters to exercise their right to franchise. In her message, President Bhandari, who is currently on a visit to Sri Lanka to attend the United Nations Vesak Day celebrations, has highlighted the importance of Sunday's vote as a first step towards holding the three tiers of elections that must be held by January next year.

"I believe this election will open the door of economic prosperity and stability in the country by empowering the local level," reads the message by the President. She has also made an appeal to the countrymen to exercise their voting right as guaranteed by the constitution.

Similarly, PM Dahal has called on members of the public for their active participation in historic polls, first after 20 years and since the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal.

"I would like to urge all to actively participate in the polls and exercise their sovereign right to vote," said PM Dahal. **(PR)**

NEWS DIGEST

Cyberattacks wreak global havoc

LONDON: Cyber security experts rushed to restore systems on Saturday after an unprecedented global wave of cyberattacks that struck targets ranging from Russia's banks to British hospitals and a French carmaker's factories. The hunt was on for the culprits behind the assault, which was being described as the biggest cyber ransom attack ever. State agencies and major companies around the world were left reeling by the attacks which blocked access to files and demanded ransom money, forcing them to shut down their computer systems.

(Details on Pg 5)

Trump tells ousted FBI chief not to talk to media

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump warned ousted FBI Director James Comey on Friday not to talk to the media, a highly unusual move that prompted fresh charges the president is trying to silence the man who led an investigation into possible collusion between Trump's election campaign and Russia. On Twitter, Trump appeared to suggest that if Comey gave his version of contacts between them, the administration might produce tapes of conversations, although it was not clear if such tapes exist. The veiled threat added to the storm over Trump's abrupt firing of Comey on Tuesday. **(Details on Pg 5)**

Ebola outbreak in Congo, one dead

KINSHASA: At least one person has died from the Ebola virus in Democratic Republic of Congo, the Health Ministry and the World Health Organization (WHO) has said, signalling a new outbreak of the disease which killed thousands in West Africa.

(Details on Pg 5)

All set for polls

■ Election Commission chief Ayodhee Prasad Yadav at a press meet organised to disseminate information about Sunday's first phase of local level elections in Kathmandu on Saturday. POST PHOTO: NIMESH JANG RAI

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

All poll-related preparations have been completed and credible security arrangement is in place, the Election Commission said on Saturday, on the eve of the first phase of local level elections, calling on all to exercise their right to franchise freely and without any fear. "Election is the backbone of democracy. People can realise the importance of democracy through election. Election encourages elected representatives to be accountable to the people," said Chief Election Commission Ayodhee Prasad Yadav at a press meet organised to disseminate information about Sunday's vote. "The EC is confident that people will cast their secret ballots freely and without coming under the influence of any intimidation, temptation or threat."

Credible security arrangement has been put in place, said Yadav, dispelling concerns about some activities by the cadres of the CPN led by Netra Bikram Chand.

"A few incidents by Chand's party should not deter anyone from participating in the elections," he said.

"Some incidents had taken place during the Constituent Assembly elections in 2013 and 2008, but they didn't stop the elections."

Voting will take place from 7am to 5pm on Sunday in 34 districts of three provinces—3, 4 and 6—to elect 13,556 representatives in 283 local units. The local level elections, first after 20 years and since the promulgation of the constitution, are finally taking place on Sunday for which extensive negotiations at the political level had taken place, especially in view of the agitating Madhes-based parties' calls for statute revision before polls.

> Voters will, for the first time under the new constitution, instate elected representatives in village and municipal councils which will have more powers and budget

A revised constitution bill tabled in Parliament led to a deal on holding the local polls in two phases, with the second one slated for June 14 after the completion of the first phase on May 14.

With a view to ensuring participation of maximum number of voters, the EC has also decided to allow people to vote with any valid ID cards issued by the government in case they do not have voter ID cards. Those without voter ID cards, however, must have their names on voter list to cast their ballot.

People on Sunday will vote to elect mayors and deputy mayors, village chiefs and deputy chiefs and ward chairpersons and ward members.

"This election will be important for women and Dalits because the Local Level Election Act has made it mandatory for the political parties to pick 50 percent women candidates for the post of either chief or deputy chief of local units," said Yadav.

At ward level, 40 percent representation of women including that of Dalit women is guaranteed after the elections. There are a total of 49,337 candidates and 39 percent of them are women.

"This election will boost women's confidence and self-respect," said Yadav.

One of the most important aspects of the local level elections is this will rid the grassroots corruption that is deeply entrenched at the local level.

Voters will, for the first time under the new constitution, instate elected representatives in village and municipal councils which will have more powers and more budget than the village development councils and district development committees.

INTERVIEW AYODHEE PRASAD YADAV

'Fully prepared to hold first phase of local polls today'

Nepal is holding local level elections after two decades. On the eve of Sunday's vote, **Prithvi Man Shrestha** talked to Chief Election Commissioner **Ayodhee Prasad Yadav** about the Election Commission's preparations, security situation and voter education. Excerpts:

Despite initial uncertainties, the country is finally geared for the local polls, first time in 20 years. What do you want to say to voters?

We are fully prepared for holding the local elections on Sunday. It is like both driver and passengers have already been seated on the bus and it is now the time to drive.

The polling centres are being set up in all the places where the first phase of local elections is taking place. All the logistics--election materials, ballot boxes and ballot papers--have reached the polling centres. From polling officers to security personnel, all are at the polling centres. Election officers are doing their duties in consultation with the local political parties and other stakeholders. Voter identity card distribution and election education programme have been carried out from the polling centres side by side for three days. The EC is coordinating with the Central Security Committee. A practical security plan for the elections has been implemented to ensure that no untoward accident takes place during the elections.

I would like to request voters, civil society, poll observers, media people, political parties and government officials to contribute to holding the local elections peacefully.

How is this local election different than others held in the past?

The local election is taking place in the country for the first time in 20 years. A large number people are casting their votes for the first time in their lives. More significantly, this election will ensure inclusive participation and representation of women and Dalits. We are also witnessing a significant participation of political parties and candidates. We had to increase the size of the ballot paper because of the number of parties participating in the elections.

People seem to be confused particularly over voting for open category ward members. What is the EC's assessment of effectiveness of the voter education programme?

There was not enough time for the EC to carry out an extensive voter education programme. However, we deployed volunteers to educate people about the voting process based in each polling centre. There will be 1,000 voters at a polling centre on an average. The volunteers have reached the doorstep of all the voters. Candidates and other stakeholders have also helped in the process.

Yes, we are aware of the questions raised over voter education. But the EC is confident that the voters have learned and are learning and they will vote correctly. Because of large ballot papers and relatively little time for voter education, the possibility of a higher proportion of invalid votes cannot be fully ruled out this time.

Cadres of the CPN led by Netra Bikram Chand have looted some election materials and are accused of planting bombs in different parts of the country. What security threat do they pose?

We are determined to hold the elections despite threat. They obviously threaten the elections but their activities are within control. A few incidents such as looting of election materials have taken place. We have immediately controlled such incidents and arranged for alternative supplies. The government's security mechanism is capable of mitigating any security threat from them. So people can trust the security arrangement for the polls. Elections will take place even in the areas where such incidents have been reported.

A few days ahead of the polls, a person lost his life in election-related violence in Dolakha. You expressed concern about it. What is the situation now?

The time for election related violence was taken over by the silence period. Since the Dolakha incident, we have not observed another major incident of violence. We have been strictly monitoring violation of the silence period which has been in effect since Thursday midnight.

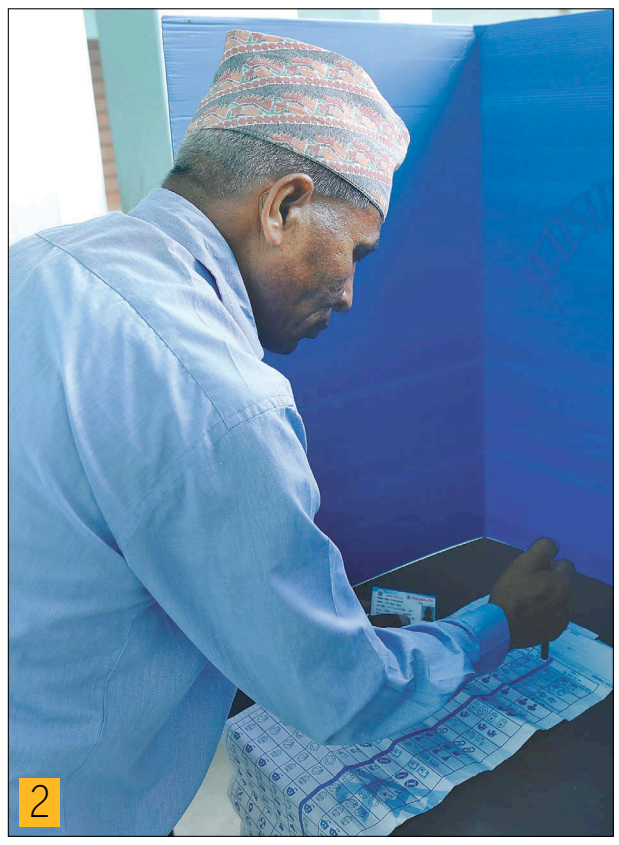
The EC also sent a team to probe the Dolakha incident. What is the team's conclusion?

This is an incident the local administration should deal with but we also sent a separate team led by an election commissioner to probe the case. We will take an appropriate decision after the team presents its report. We have initiated a legal process about the incident. Voting will take place in Dolakha on schedule despite the incident.

How about implementation of the election code of conduct? There is concern about the EC being lenient on the matter.

You have heard from the prime minister and senior political leaders that the code of conduct is strict. Some might say it is ineffective. But this is a subjective issue. Adherence to the code this time has been better. Candidates and the parties seem to be following the code of conduct relatively better than in the past.

run-up to the vote



1) A policeman inspects outbound vehicles in Dhulikhel, Kavre, on Saturday. 2 & 3) Officials perform a voting rehearsal at a polling booth in Chabahil, Kathmandu as a policeman stands guard. 4) A polling booth being prepared in Kapan, Kathmandu, for Sunday's vote.

POST PHOTOS: KESHAV THAPA, MILAN ADHIKARI & NIMESH JANG RAI

PM appeals to voters to exercise their sovereign right freely

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

On the eve of the first phase of local level elections being held in three provinces on Sunday, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has appealed to voters to exercise their sovereign right by actively participating in the historical polls.

"This election may be considered as the first opportunity to exercise the sovereign rights of the Nepali people in a true sense," PM Dahal said in his appeal to the people, adding that the new constitution has vested sovereignty in the people.

Many people say that local polls are being held after two long decades, PM said, "but this type of election is being held for the first time in the country's history".

"This vote can be taken as an important step to lead the ongoing peace process to a logical conclusion. On the other hand, it is also a stepping stone for establishment of the federal system of government by toppling the unitary system in the country.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal

> Says this election will take the powers and resources concentrated in Singha Durbar to people's doorstep

"Right after this election, the door will open to all the rights and resources concentrated in Singha Durbar to reach the people's doorsteps," PM Dahal said.

In terms of inclusiveness, this election is historic, the PM said. "At least 40 percent female candidates would be elected including one Dalit woman from each ward."

With the requirement to field one female candidate in the top two positions--mayor, deputy mayor or chief and deputy chief, a large number of women would be elected from the polls. This is a milestone for women's empowerment and developing leadership among women who have been confined to kitchen for centuries.

"Since all the security arrangements are in place, I request all the people to vote for the candidates of their choice freely," he said.

He also thanked the international community for helping make this historical democratic exercise a success.

HEALTH MINISTER THAPA ESCAPES POSSIBLE SCUFFLE WITH UML CADRES

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

Nepali Congress leader and Health Minister Gagan Thapa escaped a possible scuffle with CPN-UML cadres at Kapan in Kathmandu on Saturday, accusing him of violating the election code of conduct.

Local UML cadres had surrounded Thapa's vehicle and tried to manhandle him, shouting slogans against the NC leader.

Minister Thapa said he escaped simply because a debate could turn ugly as the crowd was in no mood to listen to him.

The minister clarified that he had reached there to meet his relatives and party colleagues, rather than meeting voters.

Health Minister Thapa claimed to have been following the election code of conduct strictly. He clarified that no code would bar him from visiting his friends and relatives in private.

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NEWS DIGEST

PM Dahal in Bharatpur to cast his ballot

CHITWAN: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' arrived in Chitwan on Saturday for casting his vote in the first-phase of local-level elections taking place on Sunday. Dahal is scheduled to cast his vote at the Laxmi Secondary School, Lanku polling station at Bharatpur Metropolitan City-4. With his daughter Renu Dahal contesting for the mayoral post of Bharatpur Metropolitan City, the election has been watched with keen interest at the national level. PM's spouse Sita Dahal is, however, voting at the Lower Secondary School, Shantipur polling station at Shivanagar in Chitwan, according to the PM's administrative advisor Narayan Dahal.

CPN cadres destroy poll materials

MUGU: The Netra Bikram Chand-led Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) on Saturday destroyed election materials after confiscating them from Nepal National Basic School at Shobha Gaun of Rara Chhaya Nath Municipality in the district. Around 300-400 cadres of the party took the materials under their control while the security forces were having meal. Chief District Officer Sharad Kumar Pokharel has, however, assured the election process would begin at the stipulated time, saying that additional security forces and election materials had been dispatched there. **(RSS)**

KMC gears up to welcome new mayor after 15 yrs

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

The office of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) is gearing up to welcome a new mayor after a gap of 15 years. Electorate of 32 wards of the metropolis are voting to select their choice of mayor along with other local authorities on Sunday. The metropolis has been without the elected chief since July 16, 2002. The previous local level elections were held in 1997.

The mayor's office has been set up on the sixth floor of JDA Complex--where the KMC has been running its office temporarily.

After its own building in Baghdurbar was badly damaged by the earthquake in 2015, the KMC had run its offices from the Rastriya Sabba Griha in Bhrikutimandap until last year. However, the metropolis has since relocated to Sundhara following an order from the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority.

"We are excited to welcome our new mayor. This is going to be course of change for metropolis and its people," said Nawaraj Dhakal, the administrative chief at the KMC. He said a few staff had been deployed to arrange the office and other requirements, including a computer and furniture.

Office room for the mayor, vehicle and other facilities have almost been confirmed, according to KMC officials. "We will finalise everything at a meeting on Sunday evening," said KMC's Chief Executive Ishwor Raj Poudel. The newly-elected mayor will have a salary of Rs60,000, along with other facilities like a vehicle, telephone and stationeries.

Publishing the report on local level restructuring in Nepal Gazette in March, the government has replaced country's village development committees and municipalities by 744 local units. The first round of local elections on Sunday will elect 13,556 representatives in 283 units in provinces 3, 4 and 6, with the vote for the remaining units in provinces 1, 2, 5 and 7 scheduled for June 14.

There are now four metropolises, 13 sub-metropolises, 246 municipal councils, 481 village councils and 6,680 wards across the country in place of 3,157 VDCs and 217 municipalities that came into existence after the reinstatement of democracy in 1990. The constitution grants 22 absolute powers to the local units while they share 15 more powers with the central and provincial governments.

"We are looking forward to working with the elected mayor. All the KMC staffers are very excited," said CEO Poudel, who will be assisting the mayor on day-to-day basis.

He said the metropolis had written to the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, asking for a permission to run KMC's offices in Babarmahal after the District Development Committee—the current occupant--relocates its offices elsewhere.

all set

▪ A polling centre set up at Janasewa Higher Secondary School for Sunday's local level elections, at Ghusra in Surkhet. Voting will take place from 7am to 5pm on Sunday in 34 districts of provinces 3, 4 and 6 to elect 13,556 representatives in 283 local units. POST PHOTO

Quake-displaced return to cast vote

ANISH TIWARI
SINDHUPALCHOK, MAY 13

Three hundred displaced earthquake-affected families living in the temporary camps at Banskharka, Kharigaun and Kafle in Sangachokgadhi Municipality have returned to their villages to cast their votes in Sunday's local level elections.

Having endured pitiful conditions for more than two years since the earthquake in 2015, the victims say they are going to give votes to the parties or individual candidates in hope of their safety and resettlement. They have been displaced from their villages after the devastating quake posed landslide risks in the remote settlements.

▪ A temporary settlement in Sangachok, Sindhupalchok. POST PHOTO

Only children and physically-challenged people are left in the displaced camps as people moved to remote Syaule, Selang, Golche, Gumba, Batase, Boldegaun and Paripangtang villages to exercise their franchise. Quake victim Dil Bahadur Shrestha said he and many others were all pinning their hopes that representatives they elect would relieve them of the current situation. "Leaders have assured us of resettlement in safer location," said Shrestha.

Another displaced Minmaya Gurung, 73, of Banskharka said that the candidates reserved vehicles to take people to the voting centres. "I am also going to village with my son to cast vote," she said.

"We are going to cast votes for leaders in a hope that they will become the voice of displaced families," said Top Bahadur Lama of Bolde.

Quake survivors in the remote parts of the district are reeling under the shortage of essential medicines. There are no health posts in Banskharka, Kharigaun and Kaflegaun areas. The displaced families are also facing water shortage as the water sources dried up in the quake-hit areas.

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CostaConcordia captain jailed

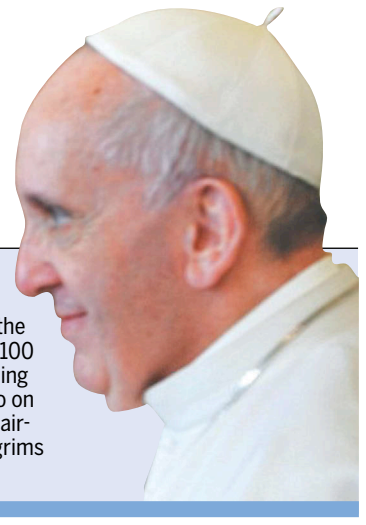
The former captain of the CostaConcordia cruise liner was sentenced to 16 years in prison on Friday by Italy's highest court for his role in the 2012 shipwreck, which killed 32 people off the Tuscan holiday island of Giglio. Francesco Schettino was originally found guilty in 2015 of manslaughter, causing a shipwreck and abandoning his passengers.

US, Saudi near $100b arms deal

The United States is close to completing a series of arms deals for Saudi Arabia totaling more than $100 billion, a senior White House official said. The official said the arms package could end up surpassing more than $300 billion over a decade to help Saudi Arabia boost its defensive capabilities.

Pope makes shepherd kids saints

Pope Francis made two shepherd children saints at the Fatima shrine complex in Portugal on Saturday. It is 100 years since the two—and a third child—reported seeing the Virgin Mary while tending sheep. The third is also on the way to sainthood. The Pope arrived at a military air-base north of Lisbon on Friday and later greeted pilgrims in Fatima. More than a million are expected.



NEWS DIGEST

NKorea open to dialogue with US: Report

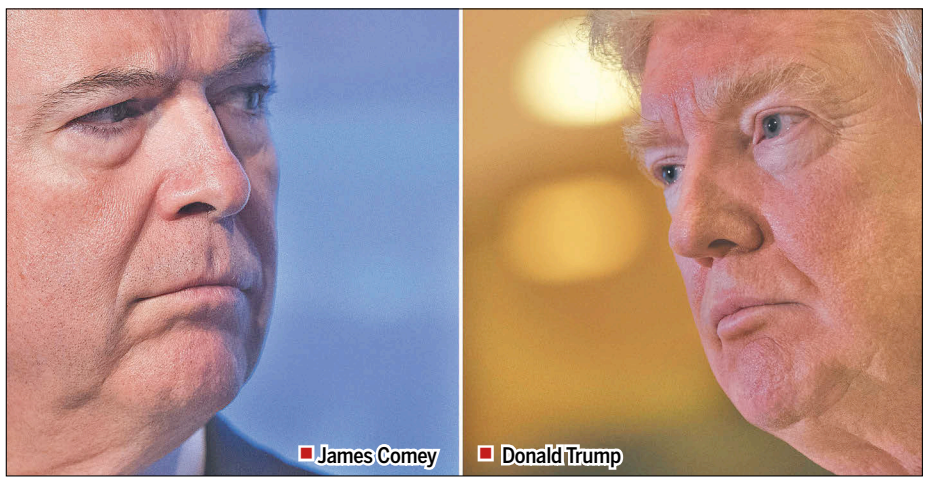
SEOUL: A senior North Korean diplomat who handles relations with the United States said on Saturday Pyongyang would have dialogue with the US administration if conditions were right, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported.Choe Son Hui, North Korea's foreign ministry director general for US affairs, made the comment to reporters in Beijing as she was travelling home from Norway, Yonhap said. "We'll have dialogue if the conditions are there," she told reporters when asked if the North was preparing to hold talks with the Trump administration, according to Yonhap. When asked if North Korea was also preparing to talk with the new government in South Korea, of liberal President Moon Jae-in, Choe said: "We'll see." The comments by Choe came amid stepped up international efforts to press North Korea and ease tension over its pursuit of nuclear arms.

New Ebola outbreak in Congo, one dead

KINSHASA: At least one person has died from the Ebola virus in Democratic Republic of Congo, the Health Ministry and the World Health Organization (WHO) has said, signaling a new outbreak of the disease which killed thousands in West Africa. The case was confirmed from tests on nine people who came down with a hemorrhagic fever in Bas-Uele province in the northeast of the country on or after April 22, a ministry statement said. Three people have died of fever. Other samples are still being tested, and six people remain hospitalised. "Our country must confront an outbreak of the Ebola virus that constitutes a public health crisis of international significance," the ministry said. An investigation team led by the ministry of health with WHO support was expected to reach the scene of the outbreak in the coming days, the WHO said. "It is in a very remote zone, very forested, so we are a little lucky. We always take this very seriously," the WHO's Congo spokesman, Eugene Kabambi, said. **(AGENCIES)**

Trump warns Comey not to talk to media

The White House has said Comey's firing was unrelated to Russia probe



James Comey ■ Donald Trump

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, MAY 13

Donald Trump warned ousted FBI Director James Comey on Friday not to talk to the media, a highly unusual move that prompted fresh charges the president is trying to silence the man who led an investigation into possible collusion between Trump's election campaign and Russia.

On Twitter, Trump appeared to suggest that if Comey gave his version of contacts between them, the administration might produce tapes of conversations, although it was not clear if such tapes exist. The veiled threat added to the storm over Trump's abrupt firing of Comey on Tuesday.

Critics have assailed Trump for dismissing the FBI chief just as the agency is investigating alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 US election, and possible Moscow ties to theTrump presidential campaign.

The New York Times reported the president asked Comey in January to pledge loyalty to him and that Comey refused to do so. Such a request would undermine the standing of the FBI chief as an independent law enforcer and further fueled charges that Trump has overstepped the norms of his office.

"James Comey better hope that there are no 'tapes' of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press!" Trumpsaid in a string of Twitter posts on Friday.

Trump told Fox News he did not ask Comey to pledge loyalty and only wants him to be honest. Trump said he would not talk about the existence of any tapes.

CNN said Comey is "not worried about any tapes" Trumpmay have, citing an unnamed source familiar with the matter.

Treasury unit to share records with Senate over Russia links: WSJ

WASHINGTON: A unit of the U.S. Treasury Department that fights money laundering will provide financial records to an investigation by the Senate into possible ties between Russia and President Donald Trump and his associates, the Wall Street Journal reported on Friday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The Senate Intelligence Committee asked for the records from the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network late last month, the Journal cited the people as saying.

One person said the records were needed to decide whether there was collusion between Trump associates and Russia during the 2016 campaign, the Journal said.

The top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Mark Warner, told MSNBC that Congress would want to look at the tapes, if they exist.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation probe and parallel congressional investigations have clouded Trump's presidency since he took office on Jan. 20, threatening to overwhelm his policy priorities.

Democrats accuse the Republican president of trying to dent the FBI probe by firing Comey and have called for a special counsel to investigate the Russia issue.

The No. 2 Democrat in the Senate, Richard Durbin, went further on Friday and said Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein should appoint an independent special prosecutor to pursue possible criminal charges related to Comey's firing, although he did not specify if he meant such charges should be against Trump.

But Rosenstein does not see the need at this time for a special prosecutor, CNN reported. The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters.

Trump told Fox News in an interview he did not think an independent probe was necessary.

In a statement, Durbin said that what he characterized asTrump's admission that he fired Comey because of the Russia probe was "dangerously close to obstruction of justice."

Durbin said Trump's tweet on Friday "could be construed as threatening a witness in this investigation, which is another violation of federal law."

Comey declined an invitation to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee in a closed meeting on Tuesday for scheduling reasons, said Warner's spokesman. An official familiar with the matter told Reuters that Comey had agreed in principle to testify behind closed doors at some point.

As has happened on previous occasions since Trump took office, different versions rapidly circulated of an event—in this case phone conversations between Comey and Trumpand a dinner they had at the White House.

The New York Times said Comey told associates he declined to make a pledge of loyalty to Trump when the president requested it while they dined just seven days after his inauguration. Comey instead told Trump he could count on his honesty, the Times said.

Trump says Comey had told him three times he was not under investigation in the Russia probe. He said in an interview on Thursday with NBC News that Comey gave him this assurance during the White House dinner and in two phone conversations. Trump said Comey wanted to have the dinner because he wanted to stay on in the job.

The White House initially said Trump fired Comey on the recommendation of the top Justice Department officials: Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Rosenstein. In the NBC interview on Thursday, Trump said he would have fired Comey regardless of any such recommendations.

The White House has said Comey's firing was unrelated to the Russia probe. On Thursday, Trump told NBC he knew he ran the risk that by firing Comey he would "confuse people" and "lengthen out the investigation" into ties to Russia.

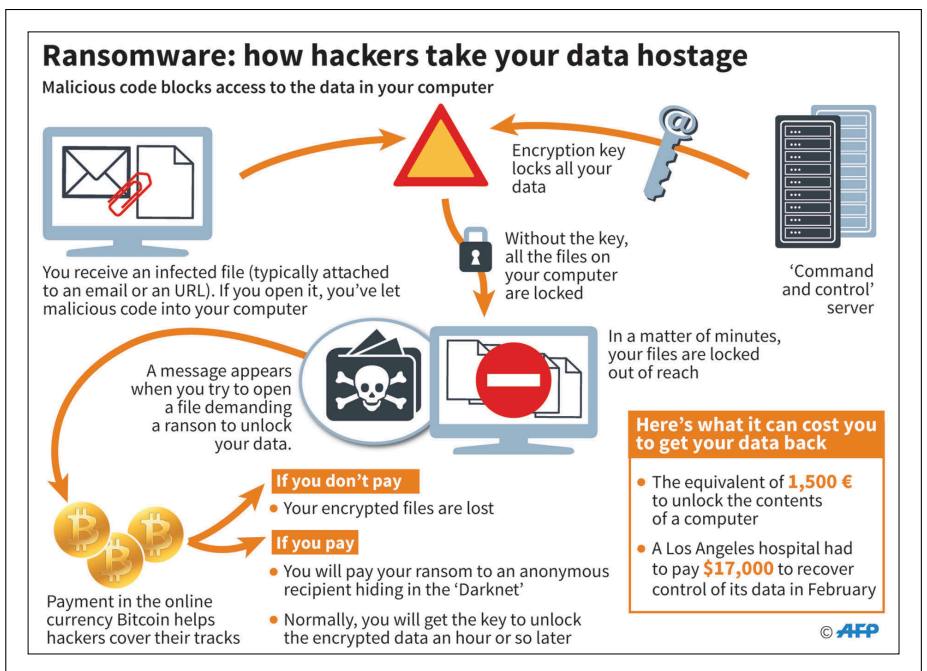
The president said he never pressured Comey into dropping the FBI investigation, and added that there was no "collusion between me and my campaign and the Russians."

Comey had angered Democrats over his handling of the probe of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server while she was secretary of state.

Trump is considering 11 people to replace Comey, a White House official said. Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe, Republican Senator John Cornyn, New York Appeals Court Judge Michael Garcia and former Assistant Attorney General Alice Fisher will be interviewed on Saturday for the post, an administration official said.

US intelligence agencies concluded in January that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a campaign of interference in the election aimed at tilting the vote inTrump's favor. Moscow has denied any such meddling.

As part of the Russia investigation, the Justice Department last month requested former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort's banking records, the Wall Street Journal reported, citing sources familiar with the matter.



Massive cyberattacks wreak global havoc

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, MAY 13

Cyber security experts rushed to restore systems on Saturday after an unprecedented global wave of cyberattacks that struck targets ranging from Russia's banks to British hospitals and a French carmaker's factories.

The hunt was on for the culprits behind the assault, which was being described as the biggest cyber ransom attack ever.

State agencies and major companies around the world were left reeling by the attacks which blocked access to files and demanded ransom money, forcing them to shut down their computer systems.

"The recent attack is at an unprecedented level and will require a complex international investigation to identify the culprits," said Europol, Europe's policing agency.

The attacks, which experts said affected dozens of countries, used a technique known as ransomware that locks users' files unless they pay the attackers a designated sum in the virtual Bitcoin currency.

Mikko Hypponen, chief research officer at the Helsinki-based cyber security company F-Secure, told AFP that the attack was "the biggest ransomware outbreak in history", saying that 130,000 systems in more than 100 countries had been affected.

He said that Russia and India were hit particularly hard, in large part because the older Windows XP operating software is still widely used in the countries.

The attacks apparently exploited a flaw exposed in documents leaked from the US National Security Agency (NSA).

The attacks hit a whole range of organisations and businesses worldwide.

French carmaker Renault was forced to stop production at sites in France and Slovenia, saying the measure was aimed at stopping the virus from spreading.

In the United States, package delivery group FedEx acknowledged it had been hit by malware and said it was "implementing remediation steps as quickly as possible." Russia's interior ministry said that some of its computers had been hit by a "virus attack" and that efforts were underway to destroy it.

> State agencies and major companies around the world were left reeling by the attacks which blocked access to files and demanded ransom money

The country's central bank said the banking system was hit, and the railway system also reported attempted breaches.

The central bank's IT attack monitoring centre "detected mass distribution of harmful software" but no "instances of compromise", it said.

Russia's largest bank Sberbank said its systems "detected in time attempts to penetrate bank infrastructure".

Germany's Deutsche Bahn computers were also impacted, with the rail operator reporting that station display panels were affected.

In a statement, computer security group Kaspersky Labs said it was "trying to determine whether it is possible to decrypt data locked in the attack—with the aim of developing a decryption tool as soon as possible."

On Saturday, a cyber security researcher told AFP he had accidentally discovered a "kill switch" that could prevent the spread of the ransomware.

The researcher, tweeting as @MalwareTechBlog, said that the discovery was accidental, but that registering a domain name used by the malware stops it from spreading. Computers already affected will not be helped by the solution.

But @MalwareTechBlog warned that the "crisis isn't over" as those behind it "can always change the code and try again". The malware's name is WCry, but analysts were also using variants such as WannaCry.

Britain's National Cyber Security Centre and its National Crime Agency were looking into the UK incidents, which disrupted care at National Health Service facilities, forcing ambulances to divert and hospitals to postpone operations. Pictures on social media showed screens of NHS computers with images demanding payment of $300 (230 pounds, 275 euros) in Bitcoin, saying: "Ooops, your files have been encrypted!"

It demands payment in three days or the price is doubled, and if none is received in seven days the files will be deleted, according to the screen message.

"Ransomware becomes particularly nasty when it infects institutions like hospitals, where it can put people's lives in danger," said Kroustek, the Avast analyst.

REDRAWING POLITICAL MAP

France's Macron faces first challenges ahead of swearing in

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS, MAY 13

Tensions over president-elect Emmanuel Macron's bid to redraw France's political map have burst into the open as a key ally was briefly angered ahead of crucial parliamentary elections next month.

Macron annoyed fellow centrist Francois Bayrou and faced mockery from his opponents after his La Republique En Marche (REM, Republic on the Move) party unveiled more than 400 candidates for crucial parliamentary elections in June.

"It's a big recycling operation for the Socialist party," Bayrou told L'Obs magazine, adding that candidates from his MoDem party had been offered only 35 constituencies instead of the 120 he expected.

Bayrou, a veteran centrist and presidential candidate, threw his support behind Macron at the end of February at a crucial time when the 39-year-old president-elect's campaign needed new momentum.

"When I offered him my support, he was at 18 percent," Bayrou added bitterly.

However, by Friday evening Bayrou announced a "solid and balanced" draft agreement had been reached with Macron's party regarding the list of candidates, putting an end to 24 hours of tension.

Macron, who will be inaugurated on Sunday, has promised to refresh France's parliament and his party unveiled 428 out of 577 candidates on Thursday.

Half of them have never held elected office, including a retired female bullfighter and a star mathematician, and half of them are women.

The initial reaction from three out of four voters was positive, a survey published Friday by the Harris Interactive polling group suggested.

"Probably the biggest success of Emmanuel Macron is having motivated so many people who were outside of politics to have committed themselves to try to renew things," his spokesman Benjamin Griveaux said on Friday.

■ French President Francois Hollande speaks with newly elected president Emmanuel Macron in Paris during a ceremony to mark the anniversary of the abolition of slavery and to pay tribute to the victims of the slave trade. AFP/RSS

But as well as angering Bayrou, REM was forced to correct its list after around 10 people said they had not agreed to stand for the party or had never applied to be a candidate.

One was Mourad Boudjellal, the wealthy president of Toulon rugby club, who said that while he was flattered about being approached, "it is not my ambition" to enter politics.

The vice-president of the far-right National Front, Florian Philippot, accused Macron of "amateurism."

The parliamentary selection process is seen as a tricky and risky balancing act for Macron, who will take over from unpopular Socialist Francois Hollande.

Without his own parliamentary majority, the former investment banker will find it hard to push through his planned reforms of the labour market, pensions, unemployment benefits and education.

Macron, a former economy minister in Hollande's government, has so far failed to attract centrist members of the right-wing Republicans party, but still believes some will cross over before he announces his final list next Wednesday.

Before then, he faces other crucial decisions on his staff at the Elysee Palace and his first government. The most important will be his choice for prime minister, who will head the government until at least the parliamentary elections on June 11 and 18 and perhaps beyond.

Amid feverish speculation in the French media—will he pick a loyal supporter or someone from the rightwing Republicans?—nothing has leaked from his small group of aides.

The choice will send a strong signal about Macron's intentions, and he has promised to pick someone with past experience of parliament and capable of managing a majority. His declared preference is for a woman.

Immediately after his swearing-in, Macron will head to Berlin to meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel to start discussions about his ambitious plans for reforming the European Union.

Macron wants to deepen integration in the 19-country eurozone, giving the zone its own budget, and wants to toughen the EU's response to "unfair" industrial competition from countries such as China.

Once in office, the new president will have to decide how to press ahead with his controversial plans to loosen labour laws in France—the centrepiece of his effort to fight unemployment.

The country's powerful trade unions and other leftwing opponents are expected to contest the move with mass demonstrations of the kind seen when Hollande tried to alter labour laws last year. "The problem with promising change is that people always support it in general, but unfortunately then frequently disagree with it in particular," former British prime minister Tony Blair wrote in Le Monde newspaper.

Blair, to whom Macron is frequently compared, gave the new French president advice, including picking his battles in the early part of his term and spending his political capital wisely.

Happy family, happy world

Children and the elderly first, this is the message of International Day of Families

ANGUR BABA JOSHI

Families are the basic building blocks of societies worldwide. The wellbeing of families means the wellbeing of the world. Therefore, this issue deserves maximum attention for the welfare of the global human family. The United Nations has designated May 15 as International Day of Families, and we have been observing it since 1994. The International Day of Families is expected to awaken the government to address family issues, and formulate and implement policies and programmes accordingly. There are certain basic needs which every family has to have to be able to discharge its role as a healthy building block of the entire human family. They are: good food, clothing, shelter, education and health care. Many families in the least developed countries and developing countries do not have all of them. It is very sad that in Nepal, there are still many families that do not possess even one of them.

Social progress

Children and youths in a family deserve first priority, and then grandparents and parents respectively. Families are major agents of sustainable development at all levels of society, and their contribution to that process is crucial for its success. Since the children of today are the citizens of tomorrow, all other family members are expected to promote early childhood education and lifelong learning opportunities for them. Timely immunisation, proper balanced food, appropriate exercise, play and entertainment have to be provided for the balanced physical and emotional wellbeing of children and youths.

This year, the focus of International Day of Families is social progress and a better standard of living. A happy family environment and a proper balance between work and family are important to improve the health and emotional outcome of all family members. The special day also draws our attention to equality between the sexes, women's equal participation in employment with equal pay and shared parental responsibility which are essential elements of a modern family policy. It is said that the basic foundation of humanity is laid during childhood through the loving care of the parents, especially the mother. Therefore, it is very important to promote women's employment, equality between the sexes and shared parenting.

A child's development involves multi-dimensional development covering all four dimensions of human existence—physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. The body which is the physical existence, is controlled by the mind which, in term, is controlled by the intellect. The fourth level of our existence is our consciousness which enlivens all the other three. This is our spiritual existence, without which the other levels are of no use. It is most important that children are made aware of all these levels of existence and child development efforts cover all these simultaneously. This will bring peace and happiness to all the members of the family, which is the ultimate goal of human life. Unbalanced child development creates problems for the individual, family and society at large. For example, intellectual development alone is not enough. Even dacoits are quite intelligent. What we need is intelligence balanced with the power of discrimination as to what is right and wrong.

Care and involvement

After the children and youths, the grandparents also deserve proper attention. The problems of senior citizens are well-known. In a joint family, the younger generation greatly benefits from the knowledge and experience of the grandparents, and the grandparents too get emotional satisfaction from their children and grandchildren which is very good for both. As people are becoming more and more self-centred with a reduced spirit of tolerance, forbearance and sense of responsibility towards the elderly, the condition of grandparents is becoming worse as unwanted members of the family. Yes, there are old people's homes and government gratuity for senior citizens. However, they are no emotional substitutes for family care and involvement.

Along with increased gratuity for the elderly, the government should pass a law that forbids children from claiming parental property as a birthright and abandoning the parents. Parents should have the full right to will their property to whoever looks after them. This might encourage families to accept and take good care of their senior members. In case of intestate succession, both daughters and sons should get an equal share. Having worked very hard to raise the family during the prime of their lives, it is very hard and disappointing for the elderly to be neglected in their twilight years. The elders, for their part, should not interfere in how their children manage the household. It can work beautifully as it has for this writer with four generations—a 103-year-old great-grandmother, 86-year-old mother, 67-year-old father, 60-year-old mother and 40-year-old great-grandchild and his wife—all living under the same roof.

With an increasing number of career women working outside the home, it is important that the husband cooperates with the wife in household management, from cleaning and cooking to childcare. It is a necessity that both boys and girls are taught home service in school. It is also important that more day-care centres are opened to take good care of children of working mothers in nuclear families so that they can perform their work well. Last but not least, it is also necessary that the school curriculum includes a compulsory special course covering all the dimensions of a 'happy family life' for all generations. This is the message of International Day of Families.

Joshi is a social activist and educator

Return to direct democracy

A truly democratic society is a community deeply engaged in local decision-making

SIMONE GALIMBERTI

Local elections have been heralded as a return to genuine democracy and a more accountable system of decision-making that can deliver better, more inclusive and more transparent public services and infrastructure for the benefit of the general population.

There are big expectations with the tangible impacts the local elections will generate. The new local bodies hold considerable powers and directly touch the lives of the people. We should remind ourselves that democracy is not simply casting ones vote on election day, but something much deeper. A truly democratic society is a community of people deeply engaged local decision-making. It is a place where citizens, regardless of their level of education, feel compelled to have their voices heard so that better action can be taken.

Fostering public involvement

The task of governing is given to elected citizens who have a mandate to govern on behalf of the citizens who elect them. Liberal democracies around the world are founded on this principle. Since the end of the Second World War, this model has been serving its purpose, allowing citizens to periodically choose their candidates. But this model is not perfect and it is not immune from criticisms, such as the fact that it has been conceived in western countries to best suit the socio-economic and political evolution of western societies.

Scholars and activists have been calling for a return to a more direct form of democracy where citizens have a bigger role to play in the shaping of public affairs. Direct democracy can mean different things at the same time. It can mean radical forms of direct participation in the public life to hybrid models that can combine elements of representative democracy with a more accentuated participation of citizens.

In an era of fast internet and smart phones, we should also take into consideration the role that technology can play in fostering public involvement in decision making. One extreme model is the one used in the self-governing towns of ancient Greece where elected officials were prevented from turning into "professional" politicians. Also, all the major decisions were taken only after thorough consultation and debate involving all those entitled to vote. Beautiful as it might sound, this model in its integral form is too utopist to be achieved.

There are certainly many other ways to have a stronger direct democracy in place: for example, you have the Swiss model where locals are often called to take a stand through referendums that are held on decisions of vital national interest but also on more localised issues.

Participatory budgeting

Most of these forms of direct democracy would require special laws to be framed in a constitution that supports participatory forms of policy making. None of this would be practical or possible in the current context of Nepal. I am advocating a more practical and achievable form of participation that stems from the genuine desires of citizens to first understand issues and express their opinions. Engaged communities could be established throughout Nepal; these would need to be based on the principles of accountability and participation. Local bodies must be responsive to local needs and offer people places where they can express their views, which will then be taken into consideration before official deliberation. One way to do this is through the concept of participatory budgeting where certain levels of participation and transparency are established on the way resources are allocated and spent. We are not talking about overtly complex ways of doing things. For example, the concerns of the people should be heard through consultations before allocating certain resources for public work. It is about making sincere efforts to listen to the people and being ready to change plans if problems are highlighted or better ideas are proposed.

Better forms of governance will also come from publishing the expenses incurred by different sections of a local body thanks to simple but "real" social audits. Participatory budgeting can also be a progressive alternative and include real participatory planning and decision-making. It can be done when citizens are truly entitled to spend money the way they want and can propose and vote for new initiatives or infrastructure. Belo Horizonte in Brazil was the pioneer in this advanced form of participatory budgeting.

In Nepal there are plenty of top down accountability and participatory regulations. External development partners have been investing huge amounts of money in good governance at local levels. Moreover, there is already a tradition of consensus building that stems from longstanding cultural practices.

Now it is time to leverage existing regulations and donor-led projects to start a new era of local governance. This is based on common practices that can also be implemented informally to start with and gradually institutionalised. While having an open government inclusive mobile app can make the process stronger and easier to understand, going back to old traditions of public consultations and public hearing may be a better idea. The "good governance" initiatives already in place can help with setting standards and re-institutionalising ancient bottom-up procedures. However, they won't be decisive in making local government functional and effective.

Instead, what will make a difference will be the level of commitment and ownership shown by local youths, elders and other members of the communities alike to take the lead and push for more participation, accountability and transparency locally.

Future local office holders have huge tasks ahead of them. We need to have local communities fully on board to make sure that federalism will not fail and generate even more disillusion with the way decision-making works in Nepal.

Galimberti is co-founder of ENGAGE and editor of Sharing4good

Masters of disguise

Animals and insects change their forms to look like species that predators avoid

HEADS AND TAILS

MANEKA SANJAY GANDHI
gandhim@nic.in

Mimicry, by changing form, shape and colour on the spot, is unique to animals. Imagine if you went into a Chinese, or African, neighbourhood and had to defend yourself by looking Chinese or African. Or if you had to change your colour to black or white or polka dotted? Or become shorter, fatter, change the shape of your nose, increase the number of arms. We can't do a single thing at will even if our lives depend on it.

But animals and insects do it easily. They change their forms to look like species that predators avoid. They smell different, they change their shapes and colours to blend in with the background, or with their prey, or look like blobs of inanimate matter. They have learnt to eat without being eaten.

Deliberate mimicry

The Mock Viper of Asia is a mild, harmless snake. It looks like a Viper with a triangular head, but the Viper is a dangerous snake. The only difference is that the Mock Viper has round pupils. True Vipers' pupils are vertical slits. The Mock Viper knows it is harmless but it is so clever that, when threatened, it squeezes the shape of its pupils to look like the slits of a true pit Viper and then, in the panic this causes, it flees.

Appearing dangerous is the first defence. Another snake in this region, the Malayan Bridle snake, mimics a venomous snake, called the Malayan Krait, not just in its coloration, but by hiding its head under its coils when threatened.

The Milk snake is harmless, but changes itself gradually to develop bands like the venomous coral snake. Is this mimicry or a coincidence? Definitely deliberate mimicry, because it happens only in those regions where the Milk snake and Coral snake are found together. In other regions, the Milk snake doesn't look anything like the Coral snake. Likewise, the harmless Scarlet King Snake is born with white bands. But young snakes start developing the colouring of the Coral snakes with the yellow, apricot, or tangerine coloured banding.

The Hognosed snake pretends to be dead and gives off a rotting smell. But before that it mimics a rattlesnake, raising its head as if about to strike and making a rattling sound. It's not just defence, animals that hunt need to be clever too. Either they adopt amazing disguises or they fool their prey into believing they are harmless while they get close to them.

The Green Lacewing larva feeds on Woolly Alder Aphids who are protected by ants. So it plucks the white waxy wool from an Aphid's back, attaches it to its own and fools the ants into believing it is part of their flock. Once inside the circle, it eats the Aphids.

Fooling prey

The Zone-tailed Hawk feeds on live animals, but it mimics the flight of a vulture who is a carrion eater. Small animals are deceived by the gliding flight, and vulture like outline, and are then snatched up.

The Cleaner Wrasse fish is harmless and its function is to eat the parasites on larger fish. Large fish stand in line to be attended to. The Sabre Toothed Blenny has black and blue markings like the Cleaner and loiters at cleaning stations, imitating the Wrasse's swimming pattern. It comes close to large fish and bites a chunk out of them before darting away.

The Dusky Dottyback is a small, 3 inch, harmless looking fish which lives in our Indo pacific coral reefs. It ranges in colour from pink to grey, but can change into any colour—green, yellow, brown—to match its prey. It tricks baby fish of larger species into thinking it is one of them. Then it eats them. Its favourite prey are baby Damselfish. This unique talent allows the Dottyback to easily approach Damselfish without detection and, by the time one group has alerted itself, it moves to new groups of fish and new colours.

The Cheilinus Wrasse is a carnivorous fish of the coral reef. It changes its colour to mimic harmless plant eating fish, like Goatfish or Parrotfish, and swims in their schools until it gets close to its prey. But different Wrasses use the power of mimicry to do different things. The Potters Wrasse mimics the Potters Angel—a larger, more spiny, harder to catch fish. The slender Trumpet fish swims vertically in the soft coral branches and changes its colour to match its background. It is almost invisible to the small animals that it hunts.

The Marine flatworm increases its size to look like a sea slug, which is avoided by aquatic predators because it emits a poisonous and malodorous substance.

The Bushveld Lizard in Southern Africa mimics notorious and noxious 'Oogpister' beetles when young. While the adults blend with the red-tan colours of the Kalahari semi-desert, the lizard juveniles are jet-black and white and move with stiff, jerky movements and arched backs. Predators avoid the threat of the pungent, acidic fluid sprayed by these beetles when threatened.

Metalmark moths are hunted by jumping spiders. So they make themselves look like the spiders that hunt them. How does a moth with wings mimic an arachnid with eight legs? When a Metalmark is confronted by the spider, it arranges its wings to mimic the spider's pose, looking like a bigger, meaner, spider.

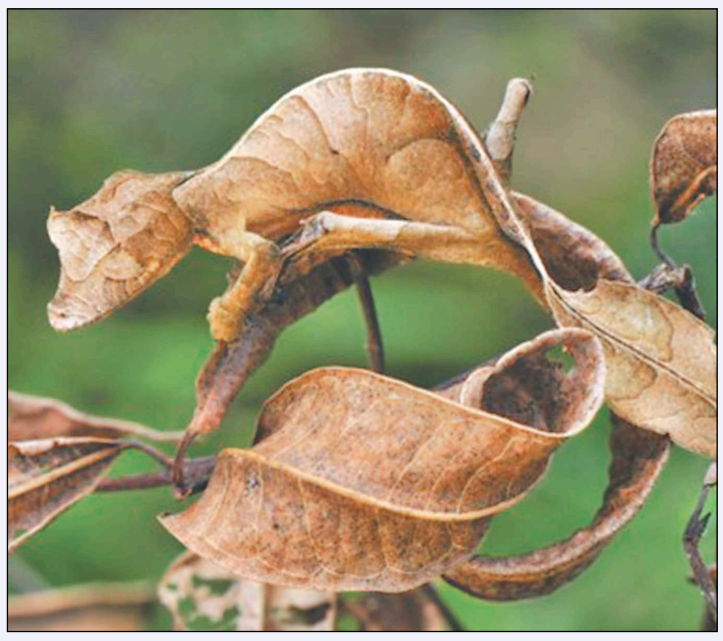
Capturing other insects becomes easier for ant-mimicking spiders who align six of their legs to look like ant legs and the extra pair to look like the antennae of a six-legged insect. Passing for a non-threatening ant allows them to get within easy striking distance of their prey.

Being of magic

Before butterflies rise to dazzle the world with their beauty, they have to spend days as defenceless caterpillars waiting to be eaten. Many masquerade as something that's actually dangerous. Some, when faced with a predator, retract their heads backward into themselves, causing a bulge that looks like the head of a snake. The snake "eyes" are just spots on the caterpillar's sides. Some even extend appendages from the top of their head to mimic a forked snake tongue.

The Oscar goes to the king of all mimics: the mimic Octopus, Thaumoctopus mimicus, an eight tentacled creature that can look like anything it wants to: a seasnake, a foul tasting flatfish, a shrimp, a seahorse, stingray, anemone, starfish, lionfish, crab . Inhabiting the coast of Indonesia, this creature is so good at not being an octopus that it eluded human discovery until 1998. In any other civilization it would be preserved as a being of magic. In this world, it is killed in the millions and eaten.

To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org



Letter to the EDITOR

VOTE FOR WOMEN

■ From mayor of the Kathmandu Metropolitan city to ward chairperson, a significant number of women are coming onto the battlefield of the local level elections **('Female politicians displeased with sexism in nomination process', May 5, Page 2)**. Although many Nepali women's role is still confined to carrying out household chores, they are increasingly engaged in a variety of occupations. We should make it possible for capable women to rise in power so that they can play an important role in serving the country.

Saroj Wagle, Dumarwana, Bara

NOT SURPRISING

■ This is not a criticism of Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar, who made political history by holding the post of Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) 12 times during his political journey **('Gachhadar senior DPM: PM's Office', May 10, Page 2)**. He seems to be a real politician who knows how to play the political game and grab opportunities while the other Madhes-based political leaders are still struggling to stand on their feet. But what happened to the four point agreement that his party made with the Dahal-led coalition government? The CPN-UML will not let the constitution amendment bill through the House, but if the government fails to amend the constitution as demanded by some parties, then they will not participate in the second phase of the local level elections. If the second phase elections are not held, the authenticity of first phase elections will also remain questionable and the chance of the other two elections being conducted by January 21, 2018, in accordance with the new constitution, will be slim, directly affecting the implementation of the statute. There is no such provision in the constitution that allows Parliament to continue to function beyond January 2018. The time has come for senior leaders of major political parties to set aside their self-centred and egoistic politics and work towards bringing disgruntled parties on board and holding all the elections on time.

Rai Biren Bangdel, Maharjgunj

RIP SHERCHAN

■ The Nepali government should

never have allowed an 85 year old man to attempt to summit Everest **('Sherchan, 85, dies on Everest during worldrecord bid', May 7, Page 1)**. Sherchan could not have even passed a fitness test to hold a job in a Nepali trekking company, so how was he qualified to attempt an Everest summit? That is not a qualification that should be granted to aged people. Instead, they can contribute a lot in the fields of education, health, tourism, hydro-power, medicine, agriculture, urban development, masonry, carpentry, NGOs, tutoring public servants and so on, where physical prowess is of little use. Nepal must come up with laws to benefit from the experience of such people to transform into a developed country. Sherchan would have certainly made a dignified president emeritus of the Nepal Mountaineering Association or a tourism mascot. He already had his moment of glory when he summited Everest at the age of 76 as the oldest person to ever climb the mountain; this record was later superseded by an 80-year-old Japanese.

Manohar Shrestha, Kathmandu

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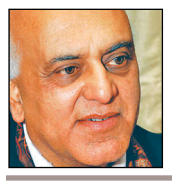
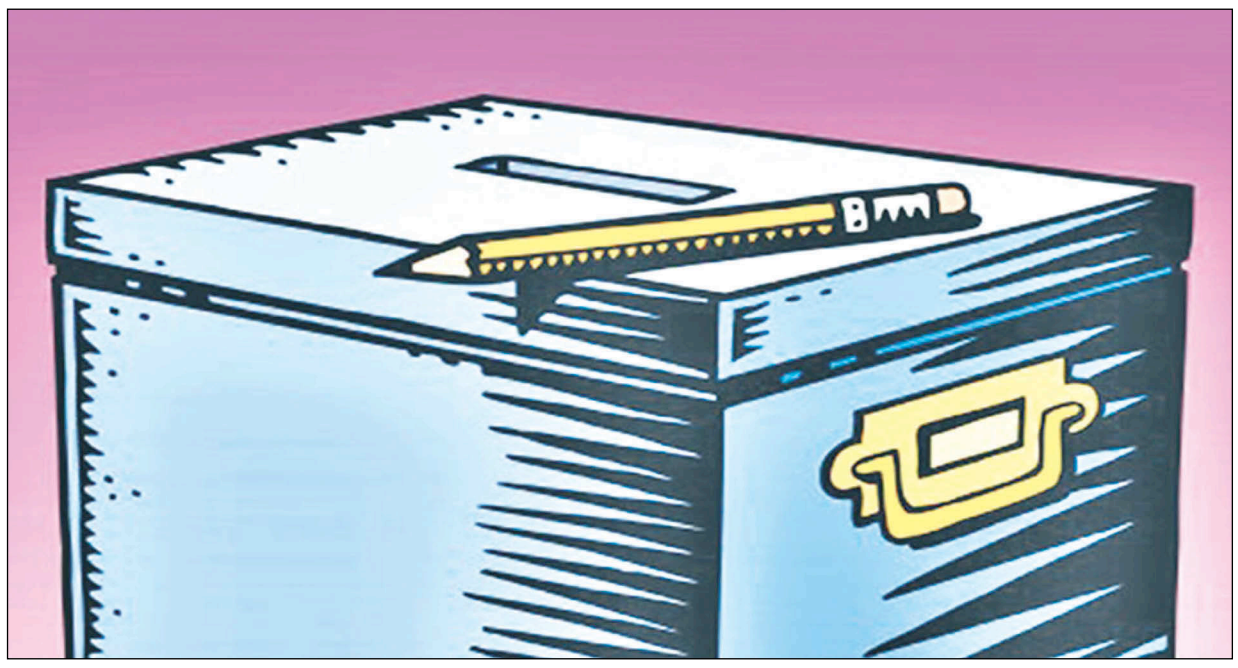
Silence period in voting

Local governments should be of, by and for the people, not for the elitist metropolitan dreamers



WORDS & ECHOES

ABHI SUBEDI



The above news headline struck me as a metaphor of the election that is underway. The metaphorical meaning is that there are many unanswered questions, many quirks and silences not revealed fully in this election. The question as to why it took nearly two decades to hold local elections itself demands an answer. The irony is that Nepal took major political turns in recent decades, one in 1990 and the other in 2006. Major national elections were held during this period.

But despite the high level of political consciousness, party activities, and moments of turbulence and peace, dialogues and failures, hopes and fiascos that mark the political narratives of this period, the local level elections continued to be stalled. It looked as though the political parties during this period even forgot that there should be elections at the local levels. The local level political activities were considered ancillary to national politics and did not deserve to be considered as part of the national political anxiety. People suffered as a result of the non-existence of the locally elected governments and bodies. People travelled miles to get a simple document signed by the few *karmacharis* (bureaucrats) stuck in the headquarters. As a result, the degree of people's suffering continued to increase day by day.

The political parties, which were interested in metropolitan politics, became more and more insensitive to the needs of the people. The sufferings were endured silently; complaints were made silently; loud calamities occurred, but the victims confronted them silently and with equanimity. During the last two decades, a unique and almost bizarre kind of urban culture developed in Nepal. Political parties and cadres all left their local bases because there was nothing there for them. People thronged the Capital and other big cities, as doing so was more productive and useful for them.

Common people's hardship

As a result, the distance between the cities and the countryside widened. It became fashionable for parties to declare that the future programmes would be *rajdhani-kendrit* or Capital-based because of which, a privileged, elitist and lazy class emerged whose only forte became to make the best use of the available opportunities. The relevance of any project lay in the only question of how much money it would bring to them. They went to their localities only with a patronising and money-making purpose—to sell the narratives of hardship of the local people through 'projects'. For them, people's suffering became ATM cards that they could swipe in the Capital and abroad.

All these privileges and habits of the political parties and bureaucrats gave them a tremendous capacity to forget the countryside and the need for creating the local level governing mechanism. This amnesia was seen in its worst form when the big earthquake of April 2015 hit several regions, including the Khumbu Valley and the Nepal Mandala. This aspect of forgetting worsened after that calamity. People of the remote villages of Gorkha, Sindhupalchowk and other hard-hit areas found themselves marooned physically, politically and administratively. Their misery increased when they were compelled to carry documents that they could not read or decipher. They carried those mysterious papers and travelled for days to wherever the officials were stationed.

They found the office with great efforts, only to be told that their documents were not filled properly and that they should come again. They exhausted whatever money they had on these absurd travels. Many quake survivors became like the mythological Greek king Sisyphus, rolling immense boulders up a hill of hardship, only to watch it come back to hit them, repeating this action for eternity. This narrative was and continues to be directly related to the fact that there were no elected local level authorities. Many, if not all, politicians were heard saying every now and then that the cause of people's suffering was the absence of elected local level bodies. Such behaviour on the part of the politicians is called *bujhpachaunu* (to feign ignorance). Successive political parties and leaderships continued to practise such conduct.

But the reality is that the political planners who have put off the local level elections for so long fail to understand the power of the people from villages, small towns and the nooks and crannies of the cities. I was very moved to hear the president of the Nepali Folklore Society, Tulsi Diwas, say a few days ago that Nepali folklore represents the enduring saga of the common Nepali people. The local self-government should facilitate the stories of common Nepalis, not stifle them. The earthquake narratives speak loudly about these stories. But people's capacity to endure has a limit, especially when their land holdings are dwindling and their children have been leaving the country to work in the harsh conditions of the deserts.

Fairy tales

That the elections are finally underway fills us with a sense of hope and relief. But there is a caveat. Will the political system let this mechanism work? Will the so-called constitutional wrangling facilitate the establishment and functioning of the local governments? Looking at some clueless approaches of our political parties, we cannot be very optimistic. The greatest scepticism about the smooth functioning of the local level bodies stems from the fairy tales told by the parties in their manifestos.

I was struck by an underlying sense of distance and misnomer when I carefully read these fairy tale projects the other day. These election promises indicate their distance from reality. Hardly do any manifestos address the simple and quotidian reality of people. The dream that lurks behind the surrealism of the political manifestos shows how the distance between what is called a metropolitan fantasy and the reality of the countryside is painted in them. I hope the soon-to-be-elected local governments will be of the people, by the people, for the people and not for the elitist metropolitan dreamers.

Taking the wheel on road safety

Why good public policy holds the key to safer roads

POONAM KHETRAPAL SINGH

Motor travel has had a profound impact on the modern world. Road networks have linked communities. Local transport systems have changed lifestyles. And ever-greater mobility has advanced social and economic progress. The simple joy of driving, meanwhile, has rapt enthusiasts since an engine was first hitched to four wheels and a drive shaft.

And yet despite these common goods, there is a tragic downside: mass injury, disability and death. In the WHO South-East Asia Region, approximately 316,000 people die every year on the roads, equating to around 865 fatalities each day. Twenty to 50 times that number are injured or disabled and require long-term care. Road fatalities are the leading cause of death among young persons, while road safety incidents are costing upwards of 3 percent of GDP. That's before accounting for medical expenses.

This devastating toll is often chalked up to rising rates of vehicle ownership. Not true. High income countries account for just 10 percent of road deaths, despite having 46 percent of the world's motor vehicles. It is also explained away by reference to 'human error'. That's a fallacy. The vast majority of 'accidents' could have been avoided by better use of road safety technology such as barriers, rumble strips or signage. Their impact could also have been lessened by safer vehicles.

Four key areas

Though the behaviour of road users matters, poor public policy is at the root of the problem. The upshot? Good policy can bring about immediate change. Action in four key areas can diminish injury and death on roads across the region, and help achieve the Sustainable Devel-opment Goal of halving the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020.

First, road safety authorities must have the data needed to act efficiently. Good data allows authorities to analyse and understand the factors causing road crashes, as well as to devise and implement cost-effective solutions. This could be as minor as installing a guardrail on a switchback, or as substantial as demolishing a high-risk road and building it anew. Clear lines of responsibility and partnership among government agencies and stakeholders can help this process, especially given the problem's multi-sectoral nature.

Second, infrastructure must be tailored to the needs of vulnerable road users. On average 50 percent of road deaths across the region occur among pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. In some countries this figure rises to more than 80 percent. Bicycle lanes, pedestrian crossings and enforcement of helmet laws among other interventions can dramatically reduce these numbers. And they can do so in a way that makes our cities less car dependent.

Third, motor vehicles must be manufactured to higher safety standards. Just two of the region's countries currently apply any of the seven priority international vehicle safety standards, such as seat belts and electronic stability control. Not a single country applies all. Priority safety features should be present in all new vehicles; the inclusion of more advanced technologies should be encouraged. Consumers have immense power in making this happen, and in creating a groundswell for national regulations to be harmonised with global standards.

Finally, responsiveness to post-crash emergencies must be increased. When every second counts, a nationwide emergency phone service is critical. So too are efficient pre-hospital response and hospital trauma care systems. On all counts, more work is needed. In addition, steps should be taken to enhance early rehabilitation and support for road crash victims. This will help avoid long-term complications and enhance quality of life. It will also reduce health care usage over the life-course.

Individual actions

Still, as safe as our roads become, they will never be entirely human-proof. Each one of us can limit the prospect of an incident and protect ourselves and our loved ones by slowing down, by desisting from drink-driving, by using seat-belts and child restraints, and, when riding a motorcycle, by wearing a helmet. These actions will reinforce government-led initiatives, and will also promote society-wide change.

This emphasis on broad-based ownership is crucial. Though motor travel is a welcome marker of development and increased autonomy, its public health impact is shared across society. As motor vehicle ownership in the region increases, and as countries seek to advance public health and productivity, creating safer roads through good public policy is both readily achievable and necessary. Taking the wheel on road safety is a duty that cannot be foregone.

Singh is Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia

Not quite half the sky

Intricacies that limit women's participation in politics must be brought to the fore

ANJITA PARAJULI
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Nepal is on the verge of making history with the first local election in 20 years that is taking place today. As many as 19,332 women are taking part in the polls being held under the federal set-up, and 5,196 among them are assured posts as per the Local Level Election Act 2017, which says that at least 40 percent of the members of the ward committee should be women. Additionally, it is likely that women will win a few hundred more posts in other categories. It is exciting to see women from all social arenas filing candidacy—ex-combatants of the People's War, women from highly marginalised groups like the Chepangs and women who would not have participated in the election if not for the proportional representation provision in the constitution. Creating this critical mass of women in political leadership will have ripple effects throughout families, communities and the country.

Highlighting limitations

Despite the encouraging scenario, women have yet again been cheated out of constitutional and legal provisions which are in place to create a more equitable and inclusive society. The Local Level Election Act requires political parties to field at least 50 percent women candidates, but women make up only 39.3 percent of the candidates as shown by the numbers released by the National Election Commission. Women head key state organs in Nepal and the participation of women in politics is increasing. However, fewer women were elected to the Constituent Assembly in 2013 than in 2008, and the current Cabinet has only one woman as full minister. This shows the need for serious attention in bringing into the spotlight the intricacies that limit women's participation in politics.

Violence against women in politics (abbreviated as VAWIP) has been identified as one of the most critical issues that limits women's political participation. VAWIP also encompasses religious, cultural and social dimensions, such as domestication and subservience of women and limited access to economic resources that curtail women's political rights and opportunities. A study carried out by the Centre for Social Research and UN Women in Nepal, India and Pakistan showed some interesting, but deeply worrying, trends with regard to violence against women in politics. According to the study, 100 percent of the Nepali respondents agreed that women have the right to participate in electoral politics, but 90 percent of them also believed that a woman should not ignore her domestic responsibilities, even as an elected candidate.

This research finding reflects the obvious social reality that not even 10 percent of the domestic work given up by Nepali women who have entered the workforce has been taken over by men. The status of a daughter-in-law is the lowest in the family, but she has to do most of the household duties. She may get help from her mother-in-law and other family members, but this comes at a price in the form of emotional harassment. The report also shows that while prevalence of physical violence is quite low in Nepal, there are high levels of character assassination and emotional blackmail—54 and 52 percent of the respondents from Nepal said that women faced such forms of violence during elections and while in public office.

Independent participation

Besides these direct forms of violence, patrilocality and limited access to economic resources are other critical factors that pose a challenge for women to participate in politics independently. The recent suicide of a Dalit woman candidate in Dhading district—apparently due to a family dispute over managing election expenses—points to the gravity of the issue. Lack of an income source and limited access to property and decision making are the greatest challenges for women.

Similarly, patrilocality requires women to move in with the husband's family after marriage, and a woman who has to leave her family, social network and support base behind when she comes to a new place is severely disadvantaged, as popularity and familiarity are important factors for election candidates. Some women may be lucky and receive support from the family—especially owing to the provision of special quotas for women—as a means to keep power within the family, but this would be next to impossible for women who may have a political ideology that differs from the family's.

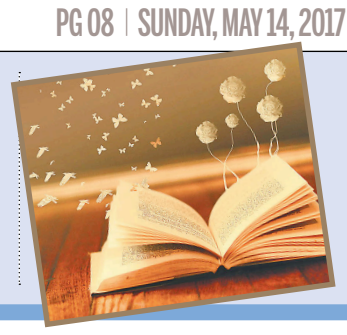
As more and more women are entering the public and political arenas, it has become crucial to create a level playing field where women can claim participation and leadership at all levels and execute them fully. This requires the commitment of all men and women from the personal sphere of the family to the political will of the state. The exclusive commitment of political parties to promote women leaders within their party structure is also very important, especially to address the claim that political parties cannot find qualified women candidates to fill leadership positions. Let all social, economic and political barriers be broken so that we can truly fulfil Nepal's constitutional vision for women and the country.

Parajuli is associated with the Nepal Youth Foundation

the kathmandu post
et cetera
PG 08 | SUNDAY, MAY 14, 2017
kathmandupost.ekantipur.com

Stories of LGBTIQ

One World Theatre is presenting a play, The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later, at Nepal Tourism Board on May 19. The play will feature stories mostly based on strong, personal narratives from LGBTIQ authors in Pride Climbing Higher, an initial writing project from Creative Nepal in collaboration with Blue Diamond Society (BDS).



Poetry at Taragoan

Quixote's Cove is hosting this month's edition of Nepal Reads at Taragoan Museum on May 27. The discussion series which will revolve around the poetry anthology These Fine Lines will also feature lively discussions and conversations among fellow creative and kindred spirits at the museum premises.

An evening with Alok Vaid-Menon

New York-based trans writer, entertainer and performance artist Alok Vaid-Menon is coming to Kathmandu later this month. The artist will be performing at a show being organised by Word Warriors at Nepal Tourism Board, on May 22. The tickets for the show are priced at Rs 300 (pre-sale) and Rs 500. For more info, contact: 01-5536974.

on art & architecture

A PORTRAIT OF THE SHILPAKARS

The skilled wood-carvers behind the on-going rebuilding of Patan's monuments

PHOTOS: SOPHIA L PANDE

Bal Krishna Shilpakar

SOPHIA L PANDE

If you go to Patan and wander around, either on your own, or even with your guests, there is a chance that you could miss the treasure that lies behind the Patan Durbar Palace Complex. Accessible to the public through the newly-restored Mul and Sundari Chowks, the twenty-five year old Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust's (KVPT) wood carving workshop is situated in the Bhandarkhal Gardens, just at the back of the now operational, also newly-restored Bhandarkhal Tank (or pond) that is teeming with fish. Aside from Saturday, which is their day off, fifteen Shilpakars can be seen from 10 am to 5 pm every day, working on restoring and re-carving the wooden elements of the collapsed Char Narayan Temple and the Vishveshvara Temple that was badly damaged during the earthquake.

The Shilpakars, by definition are wood-carvers who date from the Malla era, their craft handed down from parents to children, generation after generation. Tirtha and Bal Krisha Shilpakar are the scions of that inheritance, recruited to work for the KVPT from their homes in Bhaktapur, their skills tapped for the delicate but rigorous work of mending, and carving the wooden aedicules, portals, tympana, struts, and other essential components of the monuments that collapsed two years ago in the earthquake and took such a toll on the houses of worship across the Valley.

Bal Krishna and Tirtha, two wood carvers at the workshop, are both Shilpakar by name but unrelated, living in different wards in Bhaktapur. Their homes were badly damaged during the earthquake, which distressed them, but seeing the temples of Bhaktapur in ruin was almost as distressful.

With no dearth of work, even before the earthquake hit (their own workshops are constantly providing wood carvings for private and public buildings) they feel differently about working on rebuilding the Char Narayan Temple from the ground up. It is a different kind of feeling to be involved with such an important temple, one that will remain for generations to come, that they can show to their grandchildren, pointing to specific sections that were carved with their own bare hands.

Coming from Bhaktapur to Patan is an ordeal for the men. The road is so congested that they must allocate an hour and half each way. They wake up at 6 in the morning, eat their first main meal of the day, bhaat, and then proceed to make ready to leave for work. These days though, Bal Krishna comes with his brother, who is also employed at the workshop, on a motorbike, Tirtha drives a motorbike as well. They come in through the gardens, relax for a few moments if they are early, and start work at 10 am sharp.

Tirtha Shilpakar

> With no dearth of work, even before the earthquake hit they feel differently about working on rebuilding the Char Narayan Temple from the ground up. It is a different kind of feeling to be involved with such an important temple, one that will remain for generations to come

Tirtha who heads the eleven wood workers dedicated to the Char Narayan Temple allocates the tasks. Every man steadily does his job, finishing a wooden element and then returns to Tirtha for the next step. Tirtha and all the men work, in turn, with Bijaya Basukala, who coordinates and works with the team to make sure that all pieces will be true to form, and will fit together for the crucial joining that lays out and dictates how the final structure of the temple will come together.

Over the last two years, work has steadily progressed, the pieces of the Char Narayan temple that were salvaged by the community and KVPT have been marked, assessed, reworked, carved from scratch and soon the Shilpakars will move to the site itself to assemble the first floor of the temple which houses four intricate doors that are aligned in the cardinal directions. Once the tri-partite doors are onsite, the joins will be made by the stone workers to key the wooden doors into the base of the temple, the walls can be laid, and the brick workers can start their work. Then the even more difficult work of the roof will commence with the Shilpakars and workers perching on the precarious edges as they assemble and attach the complex struts and other wood components.

The work of the Shilpakar is not just inherited, it requires innate skill, dedication, and focus. Bal Krishna, who is given to poetics, talks of how his work pervades his days and nights; he dreams of how to solve problems he encounters during the day, his brain running continuously even when he is at home, trying to figure out how to do things best; *"Kura le kura sikauncha, kaam le kaam,"* he says, meaning that the more you work the more you learn, the more you talk, the more you learn how to talk. Tirtha agrees with this statement.

The highly skilled craftsmanship they are doing here today in Patan is hallowed, they are aware of that, and it delights them, but again, in the words of Bal Krishna, as a dancer wishes to dance in front of an audience, so too do these artists feel gratification in being able to work for a public monument, in full view so that people may see the labour that leaves splinters in their hands (a pair of tweezers live permanently in Bal Krishna's pocket), and follows them in their dreams.

fiction park

HOME

By a skinny bridge in Amsterdam, I took a long breath, and asked myself what are people and places made of. What does it take to accommodate someone in our hearts, in our lives, and in our countries

DIPENDRA GAUTAM

As I peddled through the bumpy, gravelly road disfigured by potholes, towards the northern fringes of the plains, my bike stumbled upon an enigma. As the sun went down and the wind gushed through, a fragrance from the lush paddy fields wafted in the air.

My bike, which was perfect for my height and weighed only one-tenth of my weight, was branded 'Chaudhary's' on its back. There's more imagination to cycling than one imagines, there's more freedom to it than just the air that one feels against their face. The thriftiness of the two-wheeler comes with its own cheap thrills.

I would often stop for a couple of *Bhakka*, steamed snack prepared with fresh rice flour—a typical eastern Nepal delicacy, at one local shop. I would then walk towards the bridge, take a seat in the open green grass and then return with the golden dusk facing against me. It was a routine that kept me connected to my roots.

But there was something atypical about this particular day. I had to wait longer than usual to get my *Bhakka*. There was one other person waiting for her share as well. It looked like I had to wait for at least 30 minutes, so I just started a conversation with the other customer, well, I tried to. "Looks like it is going to take much longer than usual," I said, as I tried to control my accelerated heartbeat.

She gave me a soft smile with her beautiful rose-coloured lips. There something about her that immediately drew me towards her.

"This is the first time I am seeing you here. Are you new to the neighbourhood?"

"Not so new." It looked like she could entertain small talk as there was absolutely nothing else to do as we both waited for our *bhakkas*.

But two questions down, I had already run out of things to ask. The small talk was getting smaller by the moment. And my attraction towards her: larger. I had exhausted all references; I had asked her about her school, about her home, about what she did. And each time that she unwillingly replied with a word or two, I only wanted to know more.

"What's your name?"

"Shleshma"

That was it. She collected her *bhakka*, and left with a goodbye.

As she left, I couldn't help my eyes that insisted on following her. The Didi at the counter probably noticed my prying, "She is a Bhutanese refugee. Her family recently came to the neighbourhood." She voluntarily filled me in about a stranger I had just met.

As I waited for my *bhakkas* I took the liberty to empathise with her; what difficulties she must have had to face when the family decided to leave a self-proclaimed Shangri-la to cross over to this side of the world.

The next day, I had to see her again. I checked my watch and peddled through the same road as fast as possible. I wanted to see her as much as I wanted to eat the *bhakka*.

When she arrived, my accelerating heart skipped a beat. She coyly walked towards the shop holding a cone of chatpate in one hand. We exchanged brief smiles before she asked for her *bhakka* with her other hand. This time, the smile was friendlier, it was warmer.

In the days that followed, we would arrive at the shop at the same time. Eventually, we exchanged not just smiles but also phone numbers. We met each other for a brief five minutes in the day, and spent hours talking to one another in the night. We'd start our days with texts and end our days with phone calls.

I was falling in love, she was falling in love. We had started dreaming of being home to one another.

It was a chilly morning and I was all snuggled under the blanket when the text arrived, "We are travelling to Norway next week." What, why, how—there were many questions screaming from inside my head. "We have been told to accompany the organisation representatives. I don't think we'll ever meet again. My time in your country has come to an end."

'Your country.' We had been breathing the same air, seeing the same sun, sharing the same terrain, but it was my country and not hers.

I would never see Shleshma ever again, just like she'd never see her home at Bhutan ever again. Even as we spoke the same language, shared the same beliefs, celebrated the same festivals, we were worlds apart. She was fighting a fight that I couldn't even begin to internalise.

I had lost her.

It was after a decade that I bought a ticket to Oslo. I wanted to see her. I even proposed to meet, but didn't hear from her for several weeks. When I did, I was in a different city, and in a different country altogether—Amsterdam, a city of strangers.

> I would never see her ever again, just like she'd never see her home ever again. Even as we spoke the same language, shared the same beliefs, celebrated the same festivals, we were worlds apart. She was fighting a fight that I couldn't even begin to internalise

It read: I wish I had the time to just leave everything I am doing just to come see you by a *bhakka* shop. This is a beautiful country, but life here is difficult. One has to earn a living. Every second of every day matters. I have lost home once, I can't lose it again. I have built a life here and I can't threaten it with encounters that might induce feelings that I don't want to feel. My life is made of potatoes and evening wines, I don't want to go back to chatpate and *bhakkas*. I'll see you when we cross our paths again.

By a skinny bridge in Amsterdam, I took a long breath, and asked myself what are people and places made of. What does it take to accommodate someone in our hearts, in our lives, and in our countries? Why is it so difficult to love and share?

WRITE TO US

Directions:
Read the following carefully!

01: Stories should be original, and must be balanced by i) Plot (beginning), ii) Narrative (middle), iii) Dialogues, and iv) Conclusion (proper ending)
02: Entries must carry at least 1,050 and not more than 1,500 words
03: Neat typing, correct spellings (UK English) and proper cases are essential in the texts
04: Submissions must include the writer's full name, present status and complete postal/contact/email addresses

Entries must be sent to
fictionpark@kmg.com.np

Hunnam keen to join GOT

Actor Charlie Hunnam has said he would love to join the cast of Game of Thrones despite having been forced to initially turn down an offer because of scheduling conflicts. "I would love to do a Game of Thrones cameo, they offered me a cameo but I was shooting something else so I wasn't able to do it but maybe in the future, who knows," Hunnam said.

BORN TODAY

American entrepreneur **Mark Zuckerberg** is 33
English singer **Olly Murs** is 33
American actor **Miranda Cosgrove** is 24
Australian actor **Cate Blanchett** is 48
American director **George Lucas** is 73

Maisie cast in Xmen

GOT star Maisie Williams is set to join the cast of new X-Men spinoff film New Mutants. Writer and director Josh Boone set his sights on her last year but could only confirm the casting when the movie was green-lit this year. New Mutants will focus on the "angst-driven" adventures of a group of teenage mutants.

BAAHUBALI SET TO AMASS RS 200 MILLION IN NEPAL

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

Baahubali 2, which opened to a record first-day collection of Rs 20 million in Nepali box office, has collected Rs 180 million in just two weeks, the highest collection ever amassed by a movie in Nepali box office. Previously, Nepali movie Chhakka Panja had collected around Rs 160 million during its run at theatres last year.

Baahubali 2 which has collected over INRs 100 billion worldwide, had collected Rs 130 million in its first week here in Nepal. In the past weeks the ongoing preparations for the local level election affected tickets sold at theatres, but the movie still amassed Rs 50 million, reports Kantipur Daily.

Niraj Poudel, managing director at the Gopikrishna Movies, Baahubali's official Nepali distributer said, "The SS Rajamouli directorial received single release across 125 movie theatres in the country. The collections for the first week were overwhelming and with the current pace, despite the local level elections, we are hopeful that it will earn around Rs 200 million here in Nepal." He added that the movie has 100 percent occupancy on the weekends and 80 percent occupancy on weekdays.

The film stars Prabhas, Rana Daggubati, Anushka Shetty, Tamannaah Bhatia, Sathyaraj and Ramya Krishnan.

"The mass hysteria Baahubali: The Conclusion has aroused in Nepal is yet another manifestation of the Bollywood hegemony in the Nepali cine sphere," said Bishnu Sharma of the entertainment website Moviemandu.com and an observer of Nepali box office. "This also shows the taste of Nepali moviegoers at large."

EXPERIMENTAL VIDEO, HAMI NEPALI, LAUNCHED

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

As the nation gears up for the first phase of the local election, the folk-rock ensemble Nepathya has launched a video for their new song Hami Nepali. Shot through an experimental double exposure effect, Hami Nepali, calls for unity among various ethnicities.

Nepathya, which is celebrating the silver jubilee of their formation this year, have announced their intent to release something new for their fans each month. "This is the gift to our audience for the month of May." said Amrit Gurung, the frontman of the band, "We look forward to sharing another video with you in June," he added.

Nepathya has been releasing singles from their upcoming 10th album throughout this year. After Koshi ko Paani, Rama Rama and Sirfula, Hami Nepali is the fourth release from their new album.

Created by a team of filmmaker led by Shashank Shrestha, the video casts a silhouette image of the band members performing, which in turn has been filled with visual sequences of various images representing Nepal.

The song Hami Nepali written by Rabindra Mishra has been performed by the band at various recent concerts.

"Along with folk songs, we will keep on presenting songs related to social issues," Gurung added, "Music is a great medium to unite people and we are doing just that," he added.

The song was released through Nepathya's official YouTube channel.

Rock the vote

THE GUARDIAN
LOS ANGELES, MAY 13

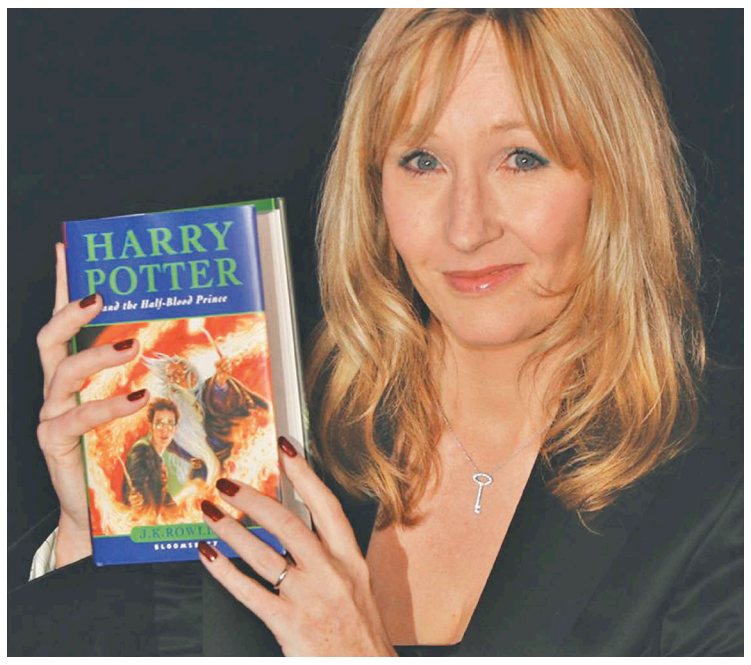
Dwayne Johnson has said that there is "a real possibility" that he will one day run for US president.

The wrestler-turned-actor, best known for his appearances in the Fast and the Furious franchise, made the comments during an interview with GQ in which he also criticised Donald Trump's notorious travel ban.

Johnson, who has spoken previously about a possible career in politics, said that he began to consider the prospect of a presidential run after reading an article in the Washington Post that suggested him as a viable candidate.

"A year ago it started coming up more and more," he said. "There was a real sense of earnestness, which made me go home and think, 'Let me really rethink my answer and make sure I am giving an answer that is truthful and also respectful.'"

Johnson, who did not declare allegiances to either the Democrats or Republicans, said his campaign would be built on cooperation and inclusion. Johnson also revealed that he was approached by the presidential campaigns of both Trump and Hillary Clinton for an endorsement, but declined the offers.



Rare Harry Potter prequel stolen

REUTERS
LONDON, MAY 13

A rare Harry Potter prequel handwritten by author JK Rowling on a postcard has been stolen during a burglary in central England, police said on Friday as they appealed for help from fans of the wizard across the world.

The 800-word story, set three years before Harry Potter is born and which sold for $32,152 at a charity auction in 2008, was stolen from a property in Birmingham.

"Please don't buy this if you're offered it," Rowling wrote on Twitter. "Originally auctioned for @englishpen, the owner supported writers' freedoms by bidding for it."

The proceeds of the auction were donated to English PEN, an organisation which champions freedom of expression, and to Dyslexia Action.

"The only people who will buy this unique piece are true Harry Potter fans. We are appealing to anyone who sees, or is offered this item for sale, to contact police," said Constable Paul Jauncey from West Midlands Police.

Handwritten over two sides of an A5 postcard, the untitled prequel features the characters Sirius Black and Harry's father James. It opens with a youthful Sirius and James cornered by two irate policemen at the end of a high-speed motorcycle chase.

After an exchange of words with the policemen, the two teenagers make their escape using a touch of magic. The card concludes with the words "From the prequel I am not working on—but that was fun!"

More than 450 million copies of the seven original Harry Potter books have been sold worldwide in 79 languages. The movie franchise has grossed more than $7 billion worldwide.

Hidden Beatles footage put on sale

REUTERS
LONDON, MAY 13

Footage of The Beatles on the set of their 1965 film Help! is being offered for sale after 50 years if being hidden in storage. The film was shot by Australian-born actor Leo McKern, who played a villainous cult leader in the film, and shows the band in unguarded moments behind the scenes on the set.

"This is footage taken in 1965 of people who at the time were the most famous people on earth at the pinnacle of their collective career," Neil Pearson, a London rare book dealer who is selling the footage, told Reuters.

The band feature in around 10 minutes of the footage, which comes on the original 8mm film cassette on which it was shot, labeled by McKern as "snow scenes," which also features footage of the actor's family.

The footage includes scenes showing the band tobogganing, joking around while playing instruments in a brass band, as well as more private moments, including Paul McCartney smoking a cigarette and taking photographs, according to the vendor's description. McKern, who died in 2002, later achieved acting fame in films such as A Man For All Seasons, Ryan's Daughter and the lead role in television hit Rumpole of the Bailey.

The film has not yet been seen in public, though a portion of it is due to be aired on British television on Friday. It doesn't come cheap for any Fab Four memorabilia fans — the footage commands an asking price of $45,101.

TEEN SUICIDE SERIES TRIGGERS ALARM

Hit Netflix series 13 Reasons Why is drawing flak for 'glorifying suicide'

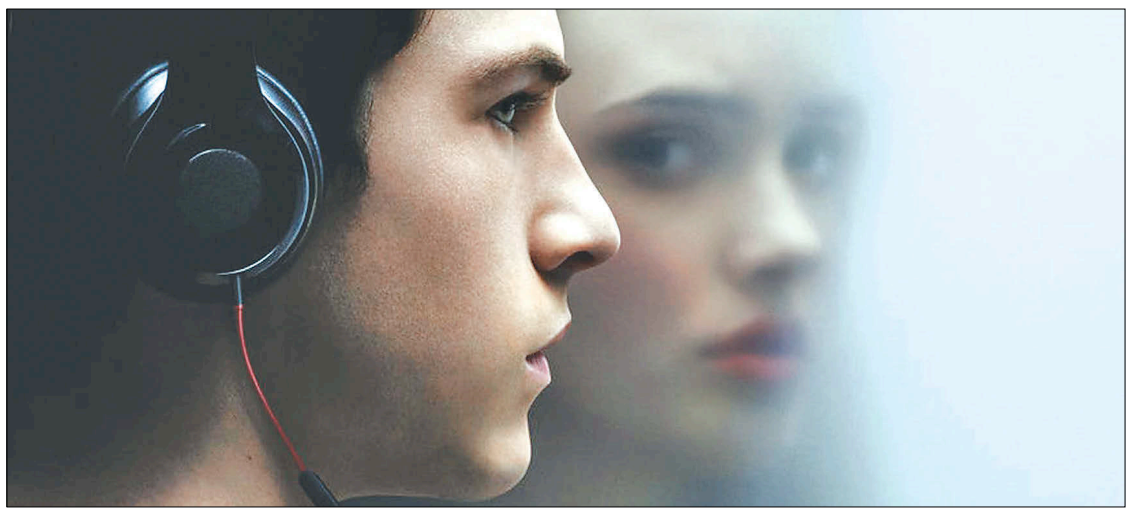
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES, MAY 13

13 Reasons Why, a hit Netflix show in which a teenager slits her wrists and leaves behind 13 tapes as clues to what made her do it, has alarmed US mental health experts who fear it glorifies suicide.

While the show's creators insist they are performing a public service, they tread a very fine line between casting light on the number two cause of death among American teenagers and causing youths to think it is cool to kill yourself.

Hannah Baker, played by Australian newcomer Katherine Langford, narrates her tapes in a disconcertingly perky voice with unlikely self-assurance that can make the series feel like a perverse scavenger hunt for what prompted her revenge-suicide.

In the month that followed its March 31 release, there were some 11 million tweets about the show, based on a 2007 young adult novel by Jay Asher and adapted by Tony Award winner Brian Yorkey with a team that includes singer-actress Selena Gomez.



Netflix, which does not release audience ratings, is banking on the show's popularity, and has just announced a new season for next year. At the start of each series, a banner dutifully directs the audience to a website with suicide prevention resources. But the likelihood that teenagers watching the show will pause to read the notice or follow its recommendations is slim.

And making a show out of a trauma so pervasive among American teens has schools and psychologists worried it could trigger copycat suicides. "We do not recommend that vulnerable youth, especially those who have any degree of suicidal ideation, watch this series," the National Association of School Psychologists said in a long memo posted on its website.

"Its powerful storytelling may lead impressionable viewers to romanticise the choices made by the characters and/or develop revenge fantasies," the association said.

Netflix, which did not respond to requests for comment, advises that the show is intended for "mature audiences" aged 17 and older and posted warnings at the start of the most graphic episodes. But educators and mental health professionals caution that youths are still watching.

The show also fails to address mental illness, though it delves into cyber bullying, slut shaming, alcohol abuse and drunk driving.

Hundreds of American school districts have sent letters to parents since the show first aired warning them that it "romanticises and sensationalises" suicide just as educators are fighting a scourge of teens attempting to take their own life.

The JED Foundation, an anti-teen suicide group, teamed up with suicide awareness group SAVE to issue a 13-point memo to help parents, teachers and others navigate the series with teens watching. Paris Jackson, the 19-year-old daughter of Michael Jackson who attempted suicide four years ago, warned on Instagram about the series. "Please only watch this show with caution and keep in mind that it may put you in a dark place If you're struggling please don't watch it," she wrote.

"It is also an extremely triggering thing to watch."

TODAY'S HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
*****
Be prepared to be amazed at someone's total selflessness today—you wouldn't expect it from this person. For now, sit tight: wait and see what's in store. If it happens to come from an authority figure, you'll be able to repay him or her in short order.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
***
At the moment, you have an awful lot to share. So let everyone know what's on your mind. You're not good at holding your tongue anyway, especially when you feel a good air-clearing session is the best solution.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)
**
Whenever there's a problem—at work, at home, well, just about anywhere—people come to you for solutions. But helping is one thing; enabling is quite another. You're not thrilled about the current position you've been put in.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)
****
Now that you've actually been given a chance to sit back and relax, don't mess around. You're officially off duty now, so why not indulge in some serious leisure, with lots of good food, stupid movies and fun friends?

LEO (July 23-August 22)
***
Secrets are definitely in the air. Do your due diligence and try to uncover the furtiveness before you commit to anything. If you've known this shady person for a long time and you tend to trust them, don't get carried away.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)
**
When it comes to romance, don't rush into anything you're uncomfortable with. After all, you've always been attracted to intense people. Someone who answers that description will be along shortly.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)
***
You're smart enough to know that a change of scenery can work wonders, and you've never been afraid to create distance between you and a persistent issue. So now that you are done putting all your energy, isn't it time for a trip?

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)
***
You're not in the mood to mingle much right now, but like it or not, here comes your crowd of fans. It's no use trying to hide any longer. Just buck up and do your best to be pleasant. After all, they've invested a lot of their energy into being there for you.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)
****
You're in the mood for secrets, mysteries and the kind of people who can pick a lock one minute and dress up in formal attire the next. If you're looking for your partner in crime, make the call. You're ready to pull a disappearing act.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)
****
If anyone can sweet talk their way into an extended conversation, it's you—and you're an expert at putting others at ease. This skill will come in handy today when you meet a dark stranger, who maybe isn't such a stranger at all.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)
***
You won't stand for anyone who wants to play games or gives you anything less than 100 percent. It's all about depth, intensity and focus for you now—and that goes for even the most casual encounters.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)
****
You need to figure out what's important to you and what's not. It's time to take stock of what's going on in your life. The good news is that your significant other, trusted friend or mentor is more than willing to talk about it.

LAUGH OUT LOUD

A man went to his lawyer and told him, "My neighbour owes me $500 and he won't pay up. What should I do?" "Do you have any proof he owes you the money?" asked the lawyer. "Nope," replied the man. "OK, then write him a letter asking him for the $5,000 he owed you," said the lawyer. "But it's only $500," replied the man. "Precisely, that's what he will reply and then you'll have your proof!"

■■■

Teacher: "What is the chemical formula for water?"
Student: "HIJKLMNO."
Teacher: "What are you talking about?"
Student: "Yesterday you said it's H to O!"

■■■

Q: What's the difference between a guitar and a fish?
A: You can tune a guitar, but you can't tuna fish.

KANTIPUR TV

5:00	Shuvarambha/ Bhaktisur	11:00	Headline News	16:30	New Entry
5:30	Radhe Radhe	11:05	Baliyo Ghar	17:00	Headline News
6:00	Jeevan Bigyan	11:30	Ditha Sab	17:05	Call Kantipur
6:30	Jyotish Manthan	12:00	Kantipur Samachar	18:00	Kantipur News
6:40	Sky Shop	12:30	Info Plus	18:30	Score Board
7:00	Kantipur Samachar	13:00	Headline News	19:00	Kantipur Samachar
8:00	Kantipur News	13:05	Music Summit	19:30	Market Watch
8:30	Rise N Shine	13:30	Cinema Fest	20:00	Kantipur Samachar
9:00	Headline News	14:00	Kantipur Samachar	21:00	Sajha Sawal
9:05	Pulsar Dareventure	14:30	Rise N Shine	22:00	Surshala Idol Junior
10:00	Kantipur Samachar	15:00	Headline News	22:30	Kantipur News
10:30	Twakka Tukka	15:05	Pulsar Dareventure	23:00	Kantipur Samachar
		16:00	Kantipur Samachar	23:30	Market Watch

KANTIPUR FM

00:00: Non Stop Nepali Adhunik Songs	08:05: Namaste Nepal	15:15: Raiwar
01:00: Non Stop Nepali pop songs	09:00: Kantipur Diary	16:00: Music and More
02:00: Non Stop Hindi Songs	09:10: Traffic Updates	17:05: Sathi Sanga
04:00: Non Stop Bhajan Songs	09:15: Shuffulin'	18:00: Hilkor
05:00: Bhakti Anusthan	10:05: Wish you all the best	18:30: Kantipur Diary
06:30: Kantipur Diary	11:05: Preeti Ajaki Naari	19:00: Chart Busters
07:00: The Headliners	12:00: Kantipur Diary	20:05: Hungama Hungama
07:30: Apanga Awaj	12:10: The Turning Point	21:00: Kantipur Diary
	13:05: Ke cha Nepal	21.30: Indreni
	15:00: Kantipur Diary	22:00: Romantica
		23:00: Jeevan Sangeet

CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Q-tip
5 Change the length of a dress
10 Number of Muses
14 Sand mandala builder
15 "Toodle-oo!"
16 Yield to
17 Desktop picture
18 Dosage units
19 Clamp
20 Kind of net
22 Stickups
24 Kiel conjunction
25 Gator kin
26 Social graces
29 Sweet
33 "Same here!"
34 Chase away
36 It has long arms
37 Ms. Hagen of films
38 Trinket on a bracelet
39 Like Willie Winkie
40 Trail behind
41 Winter Olympics event
42 Lost cause
44 Sedition
47 Chocolate dessert
48 Hearty enjoyment
49 Cereal grain
50 King's house
53 Grabbed
58 Eurasian range
59 Wolfpack member (hyph.)
61 "The Mammoth Hunters" heroine
62 Stick together
63 Show to be true
64 Electronic junk mail
65 Fountain treat
66 Jaded
67 Answering machine sound

DOWN
1 Lithe
2 Baylor University site
3 Gen. — Halftrack
4 Feast
5 Turbulent water
6 Prepare for print
7 Port near Kilauea
8 Sushi fish
9 Soup morsel
10 Tenderfoot
11 Stork cousin
12 Fit one inside the other
13 Potato buds
21 Till
23 L-o-n-g time
25 Mundane task
26 Fully developed
27 Hindu lute
28 Put on a play
30 Bored responses
31 Fencing swords
32 Tractor pioneer
34 Switch a freight car
35 Old crone
38 Zoom-in shots (hyph.)
42 Kind of cheese
43 One rejected by a community
45 Showy flower
46 Dry, as wine
47 Like a castle
50 Jowly canines
51 A Guthrie
52 Extol
53 Grime
54 Basilica area
55 Injection
56 Lots of spirit
57 Slangy lady
60 Two-piece part

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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

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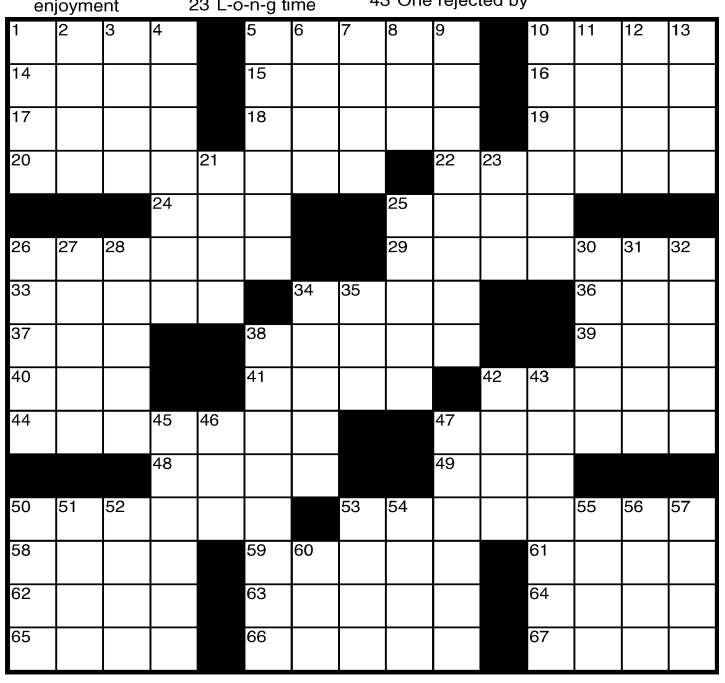

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

No.SC3082 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

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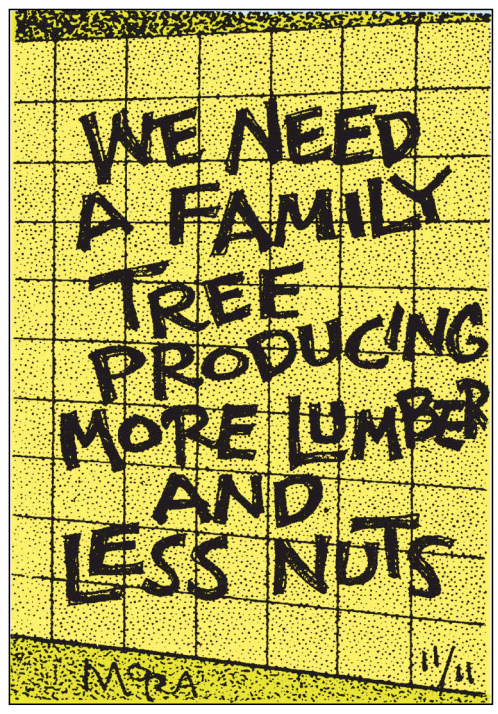
GRAFFITI



WORD GAME

TODAY'S WORD -- ENTRUST

(ENTRUST: en-TRUST: To give to another for care, protection, etc.)

Average mark 23 words
Time limit 35 minutes

Can you find 32 or more words in ENTRUST?
The list will be published tomorrow.

YESTERDAY'S WORD -- HAZARDED

hard	hear	area	daze
hare	heard	raze	dead
hazard	herd	read	dear
haze	adder	rhea	dread
hazer	adze	dada	
head	ahead	dare	

To purchase the Word Game book, visit **WordGameBooks.com**. Order it now for just $5 while supplies last!

RULES OF THE GAME: 1. Words must be of four or more letters. 2. Words that acquire four letters by the addition of "s," such as "bats" or "dies," are not allowed. 3. Additional words made by adding a "d" or an "s" may not be used. 4. Proper nouns, slang words, or vulgar or sexually explicit words are not allowed. To contact Word Game creator Kathleen Saxe, write to Word Game, Kathleen Saxe, Universal Uclick, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, MO 64106, or kzsaxe@gmail.com.

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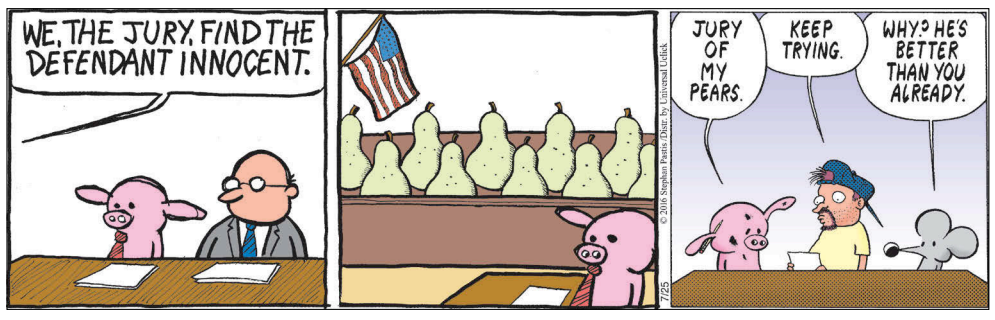
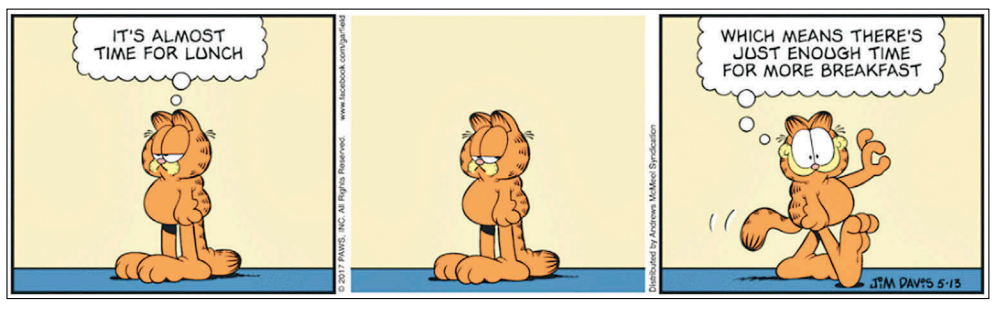
STRIPS

DILBERT

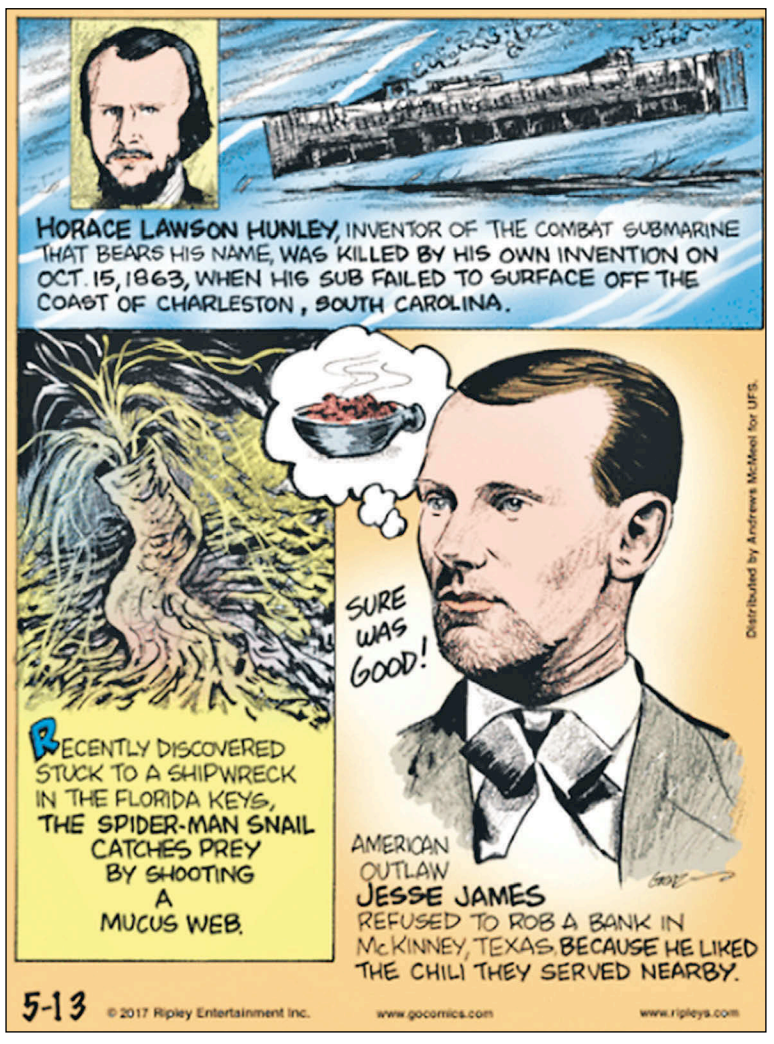
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

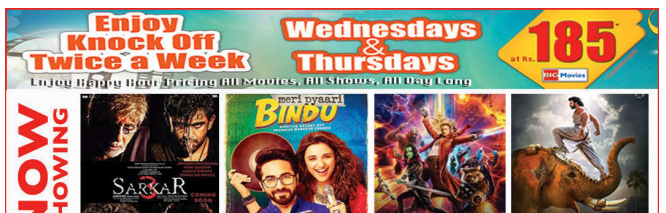


GARFIELD



RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT





NOW SHOWING

Sarkar 3: 3:00 pm, 6:00 pm, Meri Pyaari Bindu: 3:30 pm
Guardians Of The Galaxy 2: 9:15 am, 11:45 am
Bahubali 2 The Conclusion: 8:00 am, 9:00 am, 11:30 am, 12:15 pm, 2:15 pm, 3:30 pm, 5:45 pm

BIG Movies 4011643/45 01-2112233 | www.bigmovies.com.np Like us on facebook/bigmoviesnepal

FILMS

BAHUBALI 2: THE CONCLUSION
QFX LABIM Mall: 09:00/12:45/15:00/16:15/19:45
QFX Civil Mall: 11:45/14:45/15:30/19:15
QFX Jai Nepal: 11:15/14:45/18:15
QFX Kumari: 11:45/19:00

SARKAR 3
QFX Kumari: 12:15
QFX Civil Mall: 18:15
QFX LABIM Mall: 18:30

GUARDIANS OF GALAXY VOL.2 3D
QFX LABIM Mall: 09:15/12:30/16:00/19:00
QFX Civil Mall: 12:15/15:15/18:30
QFX Kumari: 15:15/18:30

MERI PYAARI BINDU
QFX Civil Mall: 11:30
QFX LABIM Mall: 11:45
QFX Kumari: 15:30

EVENTOGRAPH

FOOD & DRINKS

Savour the cardamom and saffron spice, slow-cooked kebabs and kormas at **Indian restaurant serving Awadhi cuisine**. contact: 427399, at Soaltee Crowne Plaza

Dining Park Restaurant & Lounge bar with a Coffee and Bakery Hub and Bar and Fine Dining. Boasting facilities including Private VIP Lounges, a conference hall and a terrace garden. Open 6am-10 pm. Mid-Baneshor.

Weekends brunch @ Hyatt Regency—treat yourself with a lavish buffet lunch, splash by the swimming pool or laze around outdoor, Jacuzzi, all for just Rs 2300 plus taxes per person. Contact: 4491234

Sandwich and Crepes: Taste the sandwiches and crepes at The Lounge from 11 am to 6 pm everyday. For further details call Hyatt Regency at 4491234.

Krishnarpan—a specialty Nepali Restaurant at **Dwarika's**, 6 courses to 22 courses Nepali meal served. Opening Time: 6 pm-11 pm. Prior reservations required, c**ontact: 4479448**

China Garden offers delectable dishes from across Asia, including Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese. **Timings: Lunch: 1230-1445 hrs, Dinner: 1900-2245 hrs, contact: 427399 at Soaltee Crowne Plaza**

Relax and Unwind this summer at Waterfront Resort, Sedi Height, Pokhara @ Rs. 6000 Nett per night on Bed & Breakfast basis. Contact: 9801133378 / 9849143552

We serve nothing but the finest **Arabica coffees** at great value prices **at Barista Lavazza Coffee Restaurant,** Lazimpat, **Contact: 4005123/4005124**

Rosemary Kitchen and Coffee shop, Thamel, opening hours: 7:00 am to 10:00 pm offers an International cuisine in reasonable prices. Contact 01-4267554

The Italian restaurant serves authentic Italian cuisines in an elegant ambience for both lunch and dinner. **Timings: Lunch: 1230-1445 hrs, Dinner: 1900-2245 hrs, Contact: 427399, at Soaltee Crowne Plaza**

Garden Terrace offers an authentic world cuisine, providing diners with the unique experience of observing their selected dishes being prepared by chefs. **Contact: 427399 at Soaltee Crowne Plaza**

Mako's offers traditional **Japanese food** served. Don't miss out on Mako's special Tempuras, and green tea ice cream, Time: 11: 30-14:30 & 19:00-22:00, contact: 4479448

Bourbon Room, Lal Durbar Marg is open for lunch from 12 noon. Enjoy affordable and delicious meals starting from Rs 99! We are currently offering Indian & chinese combos along with momos. **Call: 4441703**

Out-of-Africa Lunch amid rural splendor: Sat & Sun from 1130 to 1630 hours at **The** Watering Hole, Indrawati River Valley. For prior reservation contact: indrawatiresort@gmail.com

Every Friday evening enjoy **Starry Night BBQ** from 7 pm onwards at **Shambala Garden Café at Hotel Shangri La** with live musical performance by Ciney Gurung. Contact: 4412999

Kaiser Cafe Restaurant & Bar at The Garden of Dreams, opening time: 9 am till 9 pm, offers an international cafe menu serving breakfast, lunch, dinner, specialty tea's, coffees and pastries, **contact: 4425341**

Manny's Eatery and bar introduces a special lunch package that is affordable, tasty, nutritious and quick enough to fit your lunch break**, Jawalakhel, Shaligram complex, 5536919**

Enjoy a Barbecue Buffet at the Radisson Hotel, wide selection of mixed fresh grills and vegetables together with a choice of salads and a delicious dessert buffet at a rate of Rs. 1,350 plus taxes per person. Contact: 4411818

Make your weekend more exciting with family and friends with sumptuous Satey, Dimsums, Mangolian Barbecue and Pasta at The Cafe from 12:30 noon to 4:00 pm. Call: Hyatt Regency, at 4491234

Hotel Narayani Complex, Pulchowk, Lalitpur presents Shabnam & Cannabiz Band every Wednesday and Rashmi & Kitcha Band every Friday, 7:30 PM onwards @ Absolute bar P Ltd; **Contact: 5521408**

Enjoy **Bubbly Brunch** every Saturday from 11 am to 3 pm at **Shambala Gardena and Club Sundhara**. Contact: 4412999

Embers Bar, Pulchowk, in all its sophistication and glory is happy to announce Happy Hours every 6-7pm. It will be hosting a Barbeque night every Friday from 6:30-9:30pm

The Toran, an ideal location for all day lounging and informal dining offers multi-cuisines. **Contact: Dwarika's Hotel, 4479488**

Latin—Gypsy Jazz at The Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu with Hari Maharjan feat Monsif Mzibiri, 7 pm onwards, Wednesdays & Fridays. **Contact: 4411818**

The most delightfully awesome chicken momos & yummy rich chocolate cake on this part of the planet @ **Just Baked Bakery & Cafe, Battisputali**, offering much more specialties at affordable price.

MUSIC

Enjoy live DJ nights, on every Sunday chill out/ ambient, Wednesday tech/ funk house & Friday psy/ proggy/ full on from 6:00 pm to 10 pm at garden and 7:00 pm onwards at club at **Funky Buddha Resturant & Bar,** contact: 4700091

Enjoy snacks and drinks from 4:00 pm to 11:00 pm every day and **nightly live music from "The Corner Band"** except Tuesday and Saturday from 7 pm to 11:00 pm **at Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel. Contact: 4411818**

Every Friday BBQ from 7:00 pm at Fusion Bar & Pool side at Dwarika's Hotel with live band "Dinesh Rai and Sound of Mind". Price Rs 1600/ includes BBQ dinner and a can of beer or a soft drink. Contact: **4479448**

Starry Night BBQ—every Friday Evening from 7:00 pm **at Shambala Garden Café, Hotel, Shangri-La only @ Rs 1799 net per person and live performance by Ciney Gurung. Contact: 4412999**

MIND & BODY

Set within the historic Garden of Dreams, the **Kaiser Cafe Restaurant and Bar, Thamel,** offers a continental menu and serves as an atmospheric venue for anything from a quiet coffee or intimate meal. **Contact: 442534**

Tranquility Spa at Hotel Radisson, now offering Body Scrubs for Rs 3,000 (50 percent discoun for members). Opening hour 8.00 am-8.00 pm. Contact Number: 01-4423888, 01-6200086

Trisara offers food and drinks along with good music and great times. Sunday- Live Music by Barbeque Night, Monday, Wednesday- by Positive vibes, Tuesday, Saturday-By Jyovan Bhuju, Friday-Live Music by Dexterous

Jasmine Fitness Club and Spa, Fully equipped gym and spa; Zumba, aerobics and cardio classes; therapeutic massage; beauty parlour and men's salon. Tripureshwor; Contact: **4117120**

OTHERS

Ayurveda Health Home has been providing **ayurvedic treatments/ massages, sirodhara & counseling** for stress, detox & rehabilitation. Dhapasi, Kathmandu: 01-4358761, Lakeside Pokhara 061-463205

Revolution Cafe, AmritMarg, Thamel, away from busy crowed street, offers great music, fast wi-fi and wide menu with reasonable prices. Operation hours: 7 am to 10 pm, contact: 4433630

Learn cardio, gym, aerobics, zumba, spa, boxing, kick-boxing, b-boying, bollywood dance at **Oyster Spa and Fitness Club,** Sinamangal. Time: Sunday to Friday from 5 am to 8 pm. Contact: 4110554

GETAWAY

Experience **The Last Resort**, the perfect place for family fun adventure and relaxation. Special packages for residents. **Contact: 4700525/ 4701247 or mail us at info@thelastresort.com.np**

Asia World Travel Pvt Ltd presents fascinating luxury escapades to amazing destinations: Prague, Ladakh, Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Mount Kailash and Panchpokhari in North East Nepal. **Contact: 6222604**

Jungle Safari Lodge, Sauraha Chitwan offers 2 Nights 3 Days package only for Rs 6500 per person. **Suman 9851008399**

Much needed getaway—1 night/2 day package @ Hyatt Regency. **Enjoy luxury stay** of a five star hotel for a couple with breakfast and access to spa facilities for just Rs 9999 plus taxes per person only. Contact: 4491234

Experience the **Gyakok @ Shambala Garden, Hotel Shangri-la** only @ Nrs.1700 Nett per person and Nrs.3000 Nett for couple. For more details and reservation: 4412999

McLaren accept Alonso ultimatum

McLaren-Honda boss Zak Brown said he accepted Fernando Alonso's challenge to give him a race winning car for next year, and had no concerns at him leaving the circuit to play tennis after another engine failure. The American said on Friday that he had watched the two-time champion Alonso issuing his personal ultimatum.

Young banned for four years

Jason Young, a 2012 US Olympic discus thrower, was issued a four-year doping ban Friday by the US Anti-Doping Agency for a non-analytical violation involving prohibited performance-enhancing substances. The 35-year-old Texan, was suspended for using and having multiple growth hormone agents since January of 2013.

Juventus get Benatia's full rights

Defender Medhi Benatia has signed a contract that will keep him at Juventus for three more seasons after the club exercised an option to purchase his full rights from Bayern Munich for 17 million euros ($18.5 million). The 30-year-old Morocco captain had been playing for Juventus on a season-long loan.

SPORTS DIGEST

Boxer Fury's return on hold

LONDON: Tyson Fury's bid to return to the ring is on hold after a UK-Anti Doping hearing involving the former world heavyweight champion was postponed. Fury had been hoping to make his comeback with a bout in July, but the controversial British fighter is still waiting for a final ruling from UKAD after the hearing into a suspended drugs ban started on Monday. The hearing was due to rule on allegations Fury and his cousin and fellow heavyweight Hughie Fury tested positively for nandrolone in 2015. **(AFP)**

Rogers happy with Celtic's 100

GLASGOW: Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers said he was proud of his side's defensive performance as they defeated second-place Aberdeen 3-1 on Friday to maintain their unbeaten run and hit 100 points. The champions raced into a three-goal lead at Pittodrie after just 11 minutes thanks to quick-fire goals from Dedryck Boyata, Stuart Armstrong and Leigh Griffiths. Jonny Hayes pulled one backed a minute later. **(AFP)**

US pro shoots 127 in qualifying

LOS ANGELES: An American professional golfer, who was trying to qualify for the 117th US Open, stumbled his way to a 55-over 127 at a tournament in Alabama on Wednesday. Clifton McDonald shot a 68 on the front nine and finished with a 127 at the Robert Trent Jones golf course. McDonald's scorecard was posted on Twitter by a fellow competitor Lee McCoy. **(AFP)**

Hyderabad enter playoffs

■ Sunrisers Hyderabad captain David Warner plays a shot against Guajarat Lions during their Indian Premier League match in Kanpur on Saturday. PHOTO COURTESY: CRICINFO/BCCI

AGENCIES
KANPUR, MAY 13

Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday became the second team to enter the Indian Premier League playoffs after beating Gujarat Lions by eight wickets in the last league match of both the teams.

With the win, Sunrisers now have 17 points in 14 matches and are placed second on the points table after Mumbai. They, however, can be replaced by Kolkata and Pune, if anyone of them win their last league match.

For Hyderabad, skipper David Warner (69 not out off 52) and Vijay Shankar (63 not out off 44) hit unbeaten fifties after two early wickets. The duo added 133 runs in 15.1 overs and hit 18 fours between them to chase down 154 runs in 18.1 overs.

Earlier, Gujarat squandered an excellent start to post a total of 154 runs. Asked to bat first by Hyderabad skipper Suresh Raina, Gujarat rode on power packed batting by Ishan Kishan and Dwayne Smith to cross the 100-run mark in the 10th over and were in a comfortable position at the halfway stage of their innings.

However, they seemed to inexplicably lose their wits and lost 10 wickets in the space of just 43 runs to be all out in 19.2 overs. Mohammed Siraj and Afghan leg-spinner Rashid Khan were the lynchpin for Hyderabad as they produced some excellent bowling to contain Hyderabad batting line-up. Siraj posted figures of 4-32 in his four overs while Rashid returned 3-34. Pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar had figures of 2-25.

Kishan was the top scorer among the Gujarat batsmen with 61 runs off 40 balls with five boundaries and four sixes. Bravo plundered 54 runs with seven hits to the fence and two sixes studding his 33-ball knock.

On Friday, Rising Pune Supergiant failed to clinch a playoff spot when they lost to Delhi Daredevils by seven runs. Supergiant, lying third overall, have one last shot at confirming a playoffs berth when they host Kings XI Punjab on Sunday. Delhi, not in the playoffs running, made 168-8 and defended it.

Supergiant needed 25 off the last over bowled by seamer Pat Cummins, and Manoj Tiwary smashed two sixes off the first two deliveries. But Cummins conceded just five off the next three balls and Tiwary was dismissed off the last delivery for 60 off 45 balls.

Supergiant finished at 161-7. Karun Nair's 64 and Rishabh Pant's quickfire 36 fueled Delhi after captain Zaheer Khan won the toss and opted to bat first. They aimed for 170 but Supergiant seamer Jaydev Unadkat and Ben Stokes took two wickets each.

Nair struck nine fours before he fell in the penultimate over to Stokes. Supergiant's chase was revived by Tiwary and Stokes, with 33, until Mohammad Shami struck two vital blows and ran out Mahendra Singh Dhoni off a direct throw. Stokes missed Shami's low full toss and holed out to Corey Anderson, and Dhoni was caught by surprise when Shami struck his wickets from short fine leg to the non-striker's end.

Summaries

Sunrisers Hyderabad 158-2 in 18.1 overs (D Warner 69 not out, V Shankar 63 not out; P Kumar 2-22) **beat Gujarat Lions 154** all **out in 19.2 overs** (I Kishan 61, D Smith 54; M Siraj 4-32, R Khan 3-34) **by eight wickets**
Man-of-the-match: M Siraj (Hyderabad)

■■■

Delhi Daredevils 168-8 in 20 overs (K Nair 64, R Pant 36; J Unadkat 2-29, B Stokes 2-31) **beat Rising Pune** Supergiant 161-7 in 20 overs (M Tiwary 60, S Smith 38; Z Khan 2-25, M Shami 2-37) **by seven runs**
Man-of-the-match: K Nair (Delhi)

Nadal sets up semi-final clash with Djokovic

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID, MAY 13

madrid open

Rafael Nadal will aim to keep his unbeaten start to the clay season going when he meets Novak Djokovic for a 50th time in the Madrid Masters semi-finals on Saturday.

Nadal is now 13-0 on clay this year as he swept aside Belgian ninth seed David Goffin 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 much to the delight a boisterous home crowd under the roof on the Manolo Santana centre court. Djokovic had an even easier day as he moved into the last four without hitting a ball on Friday as Kei Nishikori withdrew with a wrist injury. The Serb has a marginal 26-23 head-to-head record against Nadal.

However, the two haven't met for nearly a year during which time Djokovic's form has dramatically dipped. "It's going to be a very tough match against one of the best players in the history of the sport," insisted Nadal. "I've been playing at a high level for many weeks, but I know tomorrow is a day when either I'll have to play really well or I'm not going to have many chances."

Nadal eased past Goffin 6-3, 6-1 in their only previous meeting on his way to winning the Monte Carlo Masters last month before also lifting a 10th Barcelona Open. And only poor returning on his break point opportunities denied Nadal just as convincing a scoreline as the Spaniard took only two of his 14 chances.

On the other side of the draw Uruguayan Pablo Cuevas advanced to his first ever Masters series semi-final by outlasting German wonder kid Alexander Zverev 3-6, 6-0, 6-4. The Uruguayan will face Dominic Thiem in the semi-finals after the Austrian swept aside Andy Murray's conqueror Borna Coric 6-1, 6-4.

In the Women's Madrid Open, defending champion Simona Halep cruised back into the final for the third time in four years with a 6-2, 6-3 success over Latvia's Anastasija Sevastova. Halep will face Kristina Mladenovic, who beat Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-4, 7-6 (7/4).

■ Rafael Nadal of Spain serves to David Goffin of Belgium during their Madrid Open quarter-final match on Friday. REUTERS

Oosthuizen, Stanley in lead as big names tread water

REUTERS
PONTE VEDRA BEACH, MAY 13

■ Louis Oosthuizen tees off on the 16th hole during the Players Championship in Ponte Vedra Beach on Friday. REUTERS

Sweet-swinging South African Louis Oosthuizen and American journeyman Kyle Stanley wielded hot putters to share the halfway lead at The Players Championship on Friday as Vijay Singh turned back the clock to move within three strokes.

Oosthuizen matched Stanley for the best round of the day, six-under-par 66 at the TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra, Florida. They were at nine-under 135, two strokes ahead of American J.B. Holmes on a day when the top four on the leaderboard played in the more amenable afternoon conditions. Many of the big names have work to do, defending champion Jason Day trailing by seven shots, with Dustin Johnson, Sergio Garcia and Rory McIlroy nine behind.

"I've been playing well for a while now," Oosthuizen told reporters, happy to reap reward for his recent focus on putting. Apart from winning the 2010 British Open by seven strokes at the home of golf, St Andrews, Oosthuizen lost two majors in the playoffs, the 2015 British Open, which was also at St Andrews, and the 2012 US Masters. Stanley notched his lone PGA Tour victory in Phoenix in 2012.

Ooshuizen has not quite kicked on as many expected, but has been quietly working his way back into form.

"My putting has been a little bit inconsistent, but from a ball-striking standpoint, I'm not really sure I can ask much more out of what I've been doing this year," said Stanley. Lurking close was 54-year-old Singh, who despite a few strands of grey hair is not out of place against men half his age.

"I haven't won in donkey's years (but) I think I still can compete out here, and as long as I think I can compete, I'll play here," said the Fiji-born winner of three major championships, who lives near the course and is a constant presence at the driving range. Singh, who temporarily supplanted Tiger Woods atop the world rankings in 2005, has not triumphed on the PGA Tour since 2008, but hope springs eternal. "If you think you're coming out here just to make the numbers, you'd better stay home," he said after bogeying the last for a 68.

KARKI CLAIMS AMBASSADOR'S CUP GOLF TITLE

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

Pavitra Kumar Karki clinched the title of the Indian Ambassador's Cup golf tournament at Gokarna Golf Club on Saturday. The 13 handicap player Karki finished with 40 stableford points.

Vijay Shrestha Einhaus secured second position on count back after he was tied on 39 points with Prithivi Malla. The tournament was played on a stableford 3/4 handicap format. The winner and the runner up received trophies and gift hampers.

Tashi Tshiring won the best gross award on count back with 38 points after being tied with Einhaus. Brig Gen BB Thapa won the senior's category (60 and above age category) with 38 points. Dr Rita Thapa was the ladies winner with 17 points.

Pemba Sherpa got the best front and back nine scores with 20 points each. Ridesh Singh (longest drive), Ang Tshiring Sherpa (closest to the pin) and Norbu Sherpa with four birdies (most birdies) won the other individual awards.

Dr Bhek Bahadur Thapa received the seniormost men golfer award and Dr Rita Thapa got the senior most senior ladies golfer award. In all, 80 golfers took part in the tournament organised by the Embassy of India, Kathmandu.

Indian Ambassador to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri, Chief of the Army Staff Gen Rajendra Chhetri and Managing Director of Gokarna Forest Resort Ang Tshiring Sherpa among other distributed the prizes to the winners.

Payyade win but NCS win series 4-1

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

Visiting side Payyade Sports Club of Mumbai signed off from their five-match Youth Bilateral Home & Away Series Twenty20 Series with a consolation victory as hosts Nepal Cricket School (NCS) won the contest 4-1 at the TU Grounds.

In the fifth and final match, Payyade defeated NCS by three wickets after bundling out the hosts for 90 runs in 20 overs. Payyade replied with 91-7 from 18.2 overs. Nakul Pandya contributed an unbeaten run-a-ball 27 with a boundary to give Payyade their only victory in the tour so far. The two sides will now clash in a three-match 50-over series beginning from Monday.

Om Singh Verma (17) and Raj Shah (10 not out) were other contributors for Payyade. Atharva Poudel picked up 3-19 from four overs for NCS and Ayush Baniya had the figures of 2-9 from 3.2. Earlier, Rojin Shrestha scored a 29-ball 27 with a boundary but his performance alone was not enough for NCS to reach triple figures.

Sambhav Shrestha (15) and Anmol Khadka (11) were other batsmen to reach double figures. Samay Jignesh Vyas took 2-26 for Payyade.

NCS had already claimed the series 3-0 after winning their both matches on Friday and they once again prevailed over Payyade registering a three-wicket win in Saturday's first Twenty20. Payyade managed to reach 103-8 in 20 overs but a sensible 40-ball 35 not out from Sambhav Shrestha saw NCS reply with 104-7 in 19.2 overs.

Shrestha hit two boundaries in his innings. Anmol (19) and Rojin Shrestha (17) were other valuable contributors for NCS. Smit Viral Dasadia and Mithil Karekar picked up two wickets for Payyade. The visitors had crawled to triple figures after Vineet Yadav made 36 not out from 44 balls with a boundary. Rajketan Singh (19) and Kabir Mishra (15) also made runs in double figures for Payyade.

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out of the blue

How Conte steered Chelsea to title

REUTERS
LONDON, MAY 13

When Chelsea announced last April that Italian Antonio Conte would become their manager they knew they had signed a winner. Three titles in as many years with Juventus is hardly coincidence but even Roman Abramovich could not have expected the arrival to trigger such an instant change in fortune.

Conte is the club's fifth and most charismatic Italian manager. If you asked for the defining image of their season it would surely be of the controller on the sidelines - fists clenched, mouth wide open, knees bent and body taut with emotion - joyously celebrating one of their 76 goals that sealed a sixth top-tier English title. Conte galvanised a club still so traumatised by the painful departure of manager Jose Mourinho that they had forgotten their previous role as serial trophy gatherers under Abramovich.

Although this year's champions will not match the 95 points accumulated by Mourinho's 2004-05 title-winners, they need a point to beat the 87 achieved by the Mourinho mark II side of 2014-15, the last time Chelsea topped the Premier League.

As an achievement, however, Conte's ranks as one of the finest of the Abramovich era because this title was so unexpected. Out of the blue, in fact. When the season began, most critics assumed that the best team in Manchester would prove England's finest and, by the end of September, little had happened to change that view.

Chelsea's 3-0 loss at Arsenal left Conte's side eight points adrift of the early leaders, Pep Guardiola's Manchester City. Defeat at The Emirates saw Conte pull off what many said was a masterstroke by switching to the 3-4-3 formation which laid the foundations for the title success.

But, amid all the talk of tactical tweaking, it is easy to forget how easy it is to get these experiments wrong. A back three only works with hard-running midfielders, flying wing-backs and an error-free central defence. So Conte's achievement was really to spot what was possible with the players he had.

The transformation was remarkable. Nemanja Matic, whose career had been floundering, was instantly revived as N'golo Kante's foil in midfield, outcast Victor Moses called up to take on new defensive duties as a wing back and multiple flapper David Luiz recast as Mr Dependable at the heart of the defence. Their team mates believed they could make the system work, with player-of-the-season Kante doing the dirty work and Eden Hazard enjoying his freedom to roam and score vital goals as Chelsea embarked on a 13-game winning streak that transformed them into title winners.

When Conte was asked to take the tough decisions he did so, with apparent firmness and fairness. So Branislav Ivanovic, who had become a symbol of Chelsea's decline, was sold and club stalwart John Terry forced to sit on the sidelines. Even Diego Costa, whose 20 goals turbo-charged the title push, was confronted when a lucrative January move to China was mooted.

"I was clear with him," Conte said when discussing what became reported as a training ground altercation. "I raised my voice and the player understood. Now everything is perfect." His tough-talking strategy at training contrasted with the blandness of his public offerings, when any whiff of controversy was waved away with platitudes and Italian mis-speak.

After the rancour under Mourinho last season, the effect was to return a sense of order to the club while others, notably Arsenal, acted out their own soap opera in full view of everyone. Chelsea set out to quietly accumulate points, never looking back after moving to the top of the table on November 20.

The absence of European football undoubtedly helped the title push, as did consistency of selection, with Conte able to name his recognised first team far more often than his rivals. While Guardiola chopped and changed at City, and Juergen Klopp and Mourinho counted the cost of injuries at Liverpool and Manchester United, Chelsea continued with their winning formula and stymied Tottenham's late challenge.

All the time, Conte, the serial title winner, was steering them home with a sense of inevitability.

■ Players of Chelsea celebrate after winning the English Premier League title following a 1-0 victory over West Bromwich Albion at the Hawthorns on Friday. REUTERS

City beat Leicester after bizarre penalty incident

MANCHESTER: Leicester had a late penalty ruled out in unusual fashion as Manchester City held on for a 2-1 win to move into third place in the English Premier League on Saturday.

Riyad Mahrez was adjudged to have kicked the ball against his standing foot as he slipped in taking the 77th-minute penalty, which span high into the top corner. The referee disallowed the goal, holding up two fingers to show that Mahrez had taken two consecutive touches. Goals by David Silva in the 29th minute and Gabriel Jesus, from the penalty spot, in the 36th gave City a 2-0 lead at Etihad Stadium.

Leicester had been outplayed up to that point, but replied through Shinji Okazaki's acrobatic volley in the 42nd and caused City problems in the closing stages. City climbed two points above Liverpool, who dropped to fourth place ahead of their match away to West Ham on Sunday, in the race for a top-four finish and qualification for next season's Champions League.

One win from their last two matches, at home to West Bromwich Albion and away to Watford, should be enough for City to finish at least in fourth place.

City hav had problems dealing with Leicester's counter-attacking style and pace on the break, losing 3-1 at home last season and then 4-2 in December. But two early goals settled City here while the defense coped better with the dangerous Jamie Vardy up front.

The visitors also challenged the referee's decision to award City's opening goal - and they might have had a point. Raheem Sterling was in an offside position and appeared to be right in Leicester goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel's line of vision when Silva took a first-time shot from Sane's cross. **(AP)**

EPL results

Man City	2-1	Leicester
Everton	1-0	Watford
West Brom	0-1	Chelsea

STANDINGS

Teams	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PTS
Chelsea	36	28	3	5	76	29	87
Spurs	35	23	8	4	71	23	77
Man City	36	21	9	6	72	38	72
Liverpool	36	20	10	6	71	42	70
Arsenal	35	20	6	9	68	42	66
Man Utd	35	17	14	4	51	27	65
Everton	37	16	10	10	60	41	58
West Brom	36	12	9	15	41	46	45
Leicester	36	12	7	17	46	56	43
Southampton	35	11	9	15	39	46	42
Bournemouth	36	11	9	16	52	65	42
West Ham	36	11	9	16	45	59	42
Stoke	36	10	11	15	39	52	41
Burnley	36	11	7	18	37	51	40
Watford	36	11	7	17	37	58	40
Palace	36	11	5	20	46	61	38
Swansea	36	10	5	21	41	69	35
Hull	36	9	7	20	36	69	34
Middlesbrough	36	5	13	18	26	48	28
Sunderland	35	6	6	23	28	60	24

FIVE KEY PLAYERS IN TITLE TRIUMPH

■ **DAVID LUIZ**

The news that Chelsea had agreed to pay £30 million to re-sign David Luiz from Paris Saint-Germain was met with mockery by fans. In his previous stint at Chelsea, Luiz's penchant for hazardous sorties from centre-back had seen him branded a liability and there was puzzlement when he was brought back. But the Brazil international has proved to be an extremely shrewd acquisition by Antonio Conte, slotting neatly into the centre of Chelsea's back three and spreading reassurance with his aggressiveness in the duel and calmness on the ball.

■ **VICTOR MOSES**

Moses barely made a mark during his first four years as a Chelsea player after being signed from Wigan Athletic in 2012 and was successively loaned out to Liverpool, Stoke City and West Ham United. But the Nigeria winger has been one of the chief beneficiaries of Conte's 3-4-2-1 system, adopted during September's 3-0 defeat at Arsenal. Though a winger by trade, Moses has adapted enthusiastically to life as a wing-back and his flying raids down the right flank have become a key component of Chelsea's counter-attacking strategy.

■ **N'GOLO KANTE**

Leicester City succeeded in keeping Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez at the King Power Stadium following last season's fairytale title win, but they lost perhaps their most precious jewel when Kante left for Chelsea in a £32 million deal. The unassuming France international picked up where he had left off at Leicester, suffocating opposition midfields with his relentless activity and uncanny knack for recovering possession.

■ **EDEN HAZARD**

The star of Chelsea's previous title success in 2014-15, Hazard underwent an inexplicable slump last season, scoring just four Premier League goals as Chelsea limped to a dismal 10th-place finish. But the Belgian winger has been back to his brilliant best this season. Hazard has been free to sew panic in Premier League defences with his devilish dribbling and incisive passing. His 15-goal tally is his best in a league campaign since he joined Chelsea from Lille in 2012.

■ **DIEGO COSTA**

Like Hazard, Costa experienced a mystifying dip in form under Jose Mourinho last season and often seemed more interested in seeking trouble with opposition defenders than finding the back of the net. This season has been far from straightforward. The Brazil-born Spain international has managed to keep his eye on the ball, giving Conte a rugged attacking spearhead and scoring 20 league goals for only the third time in his career.

Shakib expecting B'desh to improve

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DUBLIN, MAY 13

■ Shakib Al Hasan

Shakib Al Hasan expects Bangladesh to improve the longer the Tri-Series in Ireland goes on after conceding it took time to get used to conditions in their opening game against hosts on Friday.

Bangladesh lost their first four wickets inside 15 overs but an unbroken stand of 87 between Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah put them back in control before rain ended the game after 31 overs. "It is different to what we are used to early on and it was not easy, but as the ball got older and softer the ball was coming nicely onto the bat," said Shakib who was captaining the team in place of Mashrafe Mortaza, who was serving a one-game suspension.

"It was good experience, and we are now looking forward to the next game, against New Zealand (on Wednesday)," he added. Tamim Iqbal's hopes of scoring the first century of the series were cut short by the rain when he was 64 not out, having hit eight boundaries but Shakib was impressed by his batting as the opener led his side's recovery after losing four wickets for 70.

"Tamim played beautifully," said Shakib. Indeed, Shakib believed that on the small Malahide ground, which will stage all four Ireland games in the six-match series, 300 is only a par score and they remained on course for that at 157-4, with 19 overs remaining.

The New Zealanders may have 10 players still involved in the Indian Premier League but Shakib expects them to provide formidable opposition on the next two Wednesdays. They will also be seeking revenge from the last time they met the Blackcaps. "They have a new team, as they are still in the IPL so they will be missing some experience, but they are still the second ranked (sic) team and they will come hard at us," he added.

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CROSS CURRENCY

	USD	EUR	JPY	GBP	CHF	CAD	AUD	INR	NR
NR	103.2100	112.2000	0.9080	132.6800	102.4300	75.3400	76.3400	1.6015	
INR	64.3180	69.9520	0.5652	82.6550	63.8120	46.8921	47.4310		0.6244
GBP	0.7781	0.8461	0.0068		0.7719	0.5677	0.5740	0.0121	0.0075
JPY	113.8600	123.7900		147.0588	112.9600	83.0700	84.0100	1.7693	1.1013
EUR	0.9197		0.0081	1.1819	0.9124	0.6708	0.6786	0.0143	0.0089
USD		1.0873	0.0088	1.2852	0.9921	0.7289	0.7378	0.0155	0.0097

HOW TO READ THE TABLE
The chart shows the rates of nine world currencies. Move across the table to find rates of exchange between any two currencies. One unit of the currency mentioned vertically is worth that amount in the currency mentioned horizontally.

FOREX

US Dollar	103.21
Euro	112.20
Pound Sterling	132.68
Japanese Yen	0.91
Chinese Yuan	14.95
Qatari Riyal	28.34
Australian Dollar	76.34
Malaysian Ringit	23.75
Saudi Arab Riyal	27.52

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

GE backs Nafta and Mexico trade

Page II General Electric on Friday praised Mexico as a big part of its future and said the company is 'very supportive' of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) that US President Donald Trump has threatened to ditch.

Renewal of power purchase pact with India soon: NEA

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), the state-owned power utility, is preparing to give continuity to power imports from India via Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur cross-border transmission line in the wet season as well.

NEA has already written to NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVVN), the Indian state-owned nodal agency, to begin negotiations for the supply of electricity, as the power purchase agreement for imports of energy from Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur cross border transmission line is expiring at the end of May.

The meeting with NVVN, according to NEA, will be held in Kathmandu soon. NVVN CEO is visiting Nepal to negotiate terms and conditions for power trade.

"We decided to give continuity to imports considering the domestic electricity demand," said Prabal Adhikari, chief of power trading department of NEA. "However, imports will be reduced, as domestic hydropower projects are likely to ramp up electricity generation in coming days due to higher water level in river basins."

Nepal is currently importing 135 MW of electricity through the Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line at IRs3.60 per unit

Nepal is currently importing 135 MW of electricity through the Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line at IRs3.60 per unit.

Nepal will seek to import 80 MW of electricity using the transmission line at the time of renewing the power purchase agreement. But the actual quantum will be determined at the meeting.

NEA will request NVVN not to change the electricity tariff at the time of renewing the agreement. The authority had made the same request to NVVN during the energy secretary-level Joint Steering Committee meeting in February.

Nepal has been importing electricity from Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line since February after former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi jointly inaugurated the cross-border transmission line. Initially, Nepal was importing 80 MW of electricity from the cross border transmission line. The import was later raised to 145 MW after the onset of the dry season when electricity generation in the country dropped by almost 60 percent.

The import of electricity from Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line has played a crucial role in eliminating power cuts from the Kathmandu Valley and other major cities of the country.

NEA is currently importing 369 MW of electricity from India through nine different cross-border transmission lines. A big chunk of power is imported through Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur, Kataiya-Kushhawa, Tanakpur-Mahendranagar and Ramnagar-Gandak transmission lines.

The authority, according to Adhikari, is planning to reduce imports from other cross-border transmission lines too in the coming days as domestic power generation is expected to go up.

First vehicle test centre receives few clients

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

The country's only vehicle fitness centre, which came into operation in mid-April, bears a deserted look, as very few vehicle operators are visiting the facility to conduct complete health check-up of their automobile.

The government had set up a hi-tech Vehicle Fitness Test Centre (VFTC) in Teku to reduce cases of motor accidents by monitoring the health and roadworthiness of public vehicles. But the centre has monitored only 70 vehicles since it began its operation a month ago. The fitness test centre has the capacity to test 30 big and 30 small vehicles per day.

The centre conducts complete health check-up of vehicles, such as emission, and condition of chassis, brakes, horns, headlights, suspension and wheel load using a computerised system. Prior to the establishment of the centre, the government used to check worthiness of vehicles manually before letting them ply on the streets.

"Since the centre came into operation, we have been testing health condition of public buses that travel 250 kilometres or more at a time and micro buses. However, the response hasn't been great," said Ram Chandra Poudel, senior divisional engineer at the VFTC. "Even though it is mandatory for vehicles to get clearance from the centre every six months, the response is not as per our expectation."

Micro buses plying on the roads of the Kathmandu Valley and long-distance buses that start their journey from or end their journey in Kathmandu must get clearance from the fitness test centre. The Department of Transport Management (DoTM) estimates presence of 2,500-3,000 such vehicles.

"Considering this number, we were expecting brisk business as the centre is the only authorised body to conduct these tests. Sadly, that hasn't happened," Poudel said. But he is optimistic about the eventual rise in flow of clients, as vehicle permits cannot be renewed unless approval is extended by the fitness test centre.

The centre was designed at a cost of Rs60 million and was supposed to come into operation as early as 2009. However, it took time for the centre to come into operation, because Nepal Transport Corporation, where the VFTC is located, failed to clear its due electricity bills worth Rs6 million, which rendered the facility without power. The centre, at that time, also faced problems related to staff recruitment and documentation.

Because of the delay in opening of the centre, some of the equipment have worn away making them dysfunctional.

"Since the centre was ready for operation in 2012, but remained idle for a long time, few equipment have become dysfunctional," Poudel said. "But we are fixing those." The World Bank is providing technical and financial assistance to repair those equipment.

As the road traffic in the Kathmandu Valley is continuously increasing, the DoTM is planning to open six more fitness test centres in the near future.

INSIDE

China says all welcome at Silk Road forum

China welcomes all countries to a forum this weekend on China's new Silk Road plan, the foreign ministry said on Saturday, after the United States warned China that North Korea's attendance could affect other countries' participation. The disagreement over North Korea threatens to overshadow China's most important diplomatic event of the year. Pg: II

Chitwan to remain open for tourists on election day

BIMAL KHATIWADA
CHITWAN, MAY 13

Domestic and foreign tourists visiting Chitwan during phase one of local polls will not face any problem in travelling around the district, as vehicles have been arranged to facilitate their movement. Also, tourist hotels and restaurants will remain open on that day.

Regional Hotel Association Nepal has arranged cars and buses with green registration number plates for domestic and foreign tourists visiting Chitwan on local election day which falls on Sunday.

These cars and buses will pick up tourists from airports and other locations and take them to their destinations.

"We made this arrangement to facilitate movement of tourists," Suman Ghimire, president of the association, said.

These services are being offered as the government has barred movement of public and private vehicles on Sunday when the first phase of local level elections will take place in 34 districts, including Chitwan.

Chitwan is home to the country's most visited Chitwan National Park, where 68 species of animals, including Bengal tigers and one-horn rhinos, reside. Recently, tourists have started tossing out the popular jungle safari destination from the list of must-visit destinations in Nepal because of the sorry state of the 36-km Muglin-Narayangadh highway, which is the gateway to Chitwan from Kathmandu and Pokhara.

"The transportation services will not only be offered to tourists visiting Chitwan National Park but those visiting Meghauli and Kasara," said Ghimire, adding, "Vehicles will have to obtain special passes from the association to operate their cars and buses on the election day." The association is offering this service after getting permission from the Election Office, according to Ghimire.

Lately, the flow of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Chitwan has been increasing. "The number, however, has gone down in the last two days because of the election, but we expect the flow to revive upon completion of the first phase of local elections," Ghimire said.

Tourists visiting Chitwan on election day will not face any problem in finding places to stay and eat as well, according to those engaged in travel trade.

"We will be providing regular services on Sunday as well," said Subodh Pradhan, promoter of Sarang Wildlife Sanctuary in Megauli. "So, tourists need not worry." Also, services such as elephant and jeep safari and canoe riding will be available as in regular days.

Meanwhile, in Kathmandu, Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) is providing shuttle bus service for tourists and other passengers from Tribhuvan International Airport on the local election day.

"We have arranged shuttle bus service to and from the airport to major five-star hotels to facilitate movement of travelers", said Sudan Subedi, a senior official at the NTB.

PURSUIT OF RICHES

EPA allows mine company to pursue permits near Alaska bay

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JUNEAU, MAY 13

In a sharp reversal, the US Environmental Protection Agency has cleared a way for a company to seek permits to develop a massive copper and gold deposit near the headwaters of a world-class salmon fishery in southwest Alaska.

As part of a court settlement with the Pebble Limited Partnership, the EPA agreed to begin the process of withdrawing proposed restrictions on development in the Bristol Bay region, an area that produces about half of the world's sockeye salmon.

The agreement , signed on Thursday but released on Friday, comes four months into the Trump administration, which supporters of the proposed Pebble Mine hoped would give it a fairer shake than they believed they received under President Barack Obama.

The mining industry has seen promising signs from the administration, including a willingness to take a different look at projects and to review regulations seen as overly burdensome, said Luke Popovich, a spokesman for the National Mining Association.

"I think the public is in no danger of seeing genuine environmental protection diminished," he said. "We're simply asking for a more efficient process."

Environmental groups see the Pebble agreement as potentially giving a go-ahead to industry to challenge EPA actions or to seek permits about which they previously might have been uncertain.

A worker with the Pebble Mine project digs in the Bristol Bay region of Alaska near the village of Iliamma, Alaska. AP

"It obviously sends a psychological message to big mining companies that if they were nervous about getting permits in the past ... that this is their golden opportunity to get their mine through the process," said Brett Hartl, government affairs director for the Center for Biological Diversity environmental group.

Critics of the Pebble settlement called it a backdoor deal and a slap in the face to residents of the region who petitioned the EPA in hopes of securing environmental protections.

Pebble sued in federal court over what it claimed was EPA's collusion with mine opponents to block the project, after an EPA study concluded large-scale mining posed significant risk to salmon in the Bristol Bay region and could adversely affect Alaska Natives in the region, whose culture is built around salmon. A review by EPA's inspector general last year found no evidence that the agency predetermined the study's outcome.

In a release, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said the agreement "will not guarantee or prejudge a particular outcome, but will provide Pebble a fair process for their permit application and help steer EPA away from costly and time-consuming litigation."

"We are committed to listening to all voices as this process unfolds," Pruitt said.

Tom Collier, CEO of the Pebble partnership, said this is a different EPA than his company dealt with under Obama and is committed to "due process."

"It's a day for Pebble Mine to really have a new start," Collier said.

Court documents showed the two sides had been exploring ways to resolve the case since August, when Obama was still in office.

Dennis McLerran, a regional EPA administrator under Obama who worked on the Bristol Bay issue, called Pebble's lawsuit "nuisance litigation," and said a settlement was inevitable because of the time and money involved to keep fighting in court.

But he said terms calling for EPA to initiate a process to withdraw proposed restrictions on development mark a significant departure from the prior administration. It's unclear how that process will be carried out.

The proposed mine has been hotly debated for years. Environmental activists like actor Robert Redford opposed development and multinational jewelers said they wouldn't use minerals mined from the Alaska prospect. The EPA study provided the basis for the agency in 2014 to invoke a rarely used process under the federal Clean Water Act that supporters of the proposed mine feared could result in the project's veto before it goes through the permitting process.

While the EPA proposed restrictions on development, they were never finalised. A judge ordered the agency to stop work related to that process while the lawsuit was pending.

Collier said he hopes this year to initiate the permitting process, which can take years. He also said the company is pursuing a smaller project than most people probably think.

McLerran said he's concerned Pebble will file for a smaller-footprint mine with the intention of eventually fully developing the massive deposit. A small footprint mine would not be economically viable at that remote site, he said.

Northern Dynasty, which owns the Pebble partnership, has called the Pebble deposit "one of the greatest stores of mineral wealth ever discovered"—containing copper, gold, molybdenum and silver. Northern Dynasty has been seeking a partner since 2013, when a subsidiary of London-based Anglo American PLC announced plans to withdraw.

NEWS DIGEST

US retail sales rise in April

WASHINGTON: US retail sales rose to a three-month high in April, pointing to a pickup of US economic growth in the second quarter of the year, the Commerce Department reported on Friday. Retail sales rose 0.4 percent from the previous month to a seasonally adjusted $474.9 billion in April, following a revised 0.1 percent increase in March, the Commerce Department said. It was the strongest sales gain in three months. Year on year, total retail sales rose 4.5 percent last month. In April, purchases of motor vehicle and parts rose 0.7 percent and sales of building material and garden equipment increased 1.2 percent, while online retail sales climbed 1.4 percent. As consumer spending is a major driver of US economic growth, the upbeat retail sales report in April suggested a pickup of US economic growth in the second quarter of the year. **(XINHUA)**

China greenlights 10 IPOs

BEIJING: The China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) has approved the IPO applications of 10 companies. The companies will raise no more than 6.2 billion yuan ($899 million), a statement said late on Friday. Five companies will be listed on Shanghai Stock Exchange, two on the Shenzhen stock market's Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Board and three on the ChiNext, China's NASDAQ-style board. The firms and their underwriters will confirm IPO dates and publish prospectuses following discussions with the exchanges. Under the current IPO system, new shares are subject to approval from the CSRC. China is gradually switching from an approval-based IPO system to a more market-oriented one based on registration. **(XINHUA)**

Spain's consumer prices rise 2.6pc

MADRID: Spain's consumer prices rose by 2.6 percent in April when compared with the same month of a year earlier, according to data of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) published on Friday by Spain's Statistical Office (INE). Prices of items related to leisure and culture rose by 3.4 percent in April year-on-year, those related to housing rose by 5.4 percent and those of hotels, cafes and restaurants increased by 2 percent. Prices of clothing and shoes rose by 0.3 percent in the fourth month of the year, those of transport rose by 6.2 percent and those of food and non-alcoholic drinks by 1.1 percent. The INE also reported that consumer prices rose by 1 percent from March to April with prices of clothing and shoes rising by 10.2 percent, those of leisure and culture increasing by 1.5pc and those related to the hotel industry rising by 1 percent. **(XINHUA)**

China says all welcome at Silk Road forum

REUTERS
BEIJING, MAY 13

China welcomes all countries to a forum this weekend on China's new Silk Road plan, the foreign ministry said on Saturday, after the United States warned China that North Korea's attendance could affect other countries' participation.

Two sources with knowledge of the situation said the US embassy in Beijing had submitted a diplomatic note to China's foreign ministry, saying inviting North Korea sent the wrong message at a time when the world was trying to pressure it over its repeated missile and nuclear tests.

The disagreement over North Korea threatens to overshadow China's most important diplomatic event of the year for an initiative championed by President Xi Jinping.

Asked about the US note, the foreign ministry said in a short statement sent to Reuters that it did "not understand the situation".

"The Belt and Road initiative is an open and inclusive one. We welcome all countries delegations to attend the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation," it said.

The ministry did not elaborate. It said on Tuesday North Korea would send a delegation to the summit but gave no other details.

The United States is sending a delegation led by White House adviser Matt Pottinger.

Despite Chinese anger at North Korea's repeated nuclear and missile tests, China remains the isolated state's most important economic and diplomatic backer, even as Beijing has signed up for tough U.N. sanctions against Pyongyang.

China has over the years tried to coax North Korea into cautious, export-oriented economic reforms, rather than sabre rattling and nuclear tests, but to little avail.

China has not announced who North Korea's chief delegate will be, but South Korea's Yonhap news agency said Kim Yong Jae, North Korea's minister of external economic relations, would lead the delegation.

> Leaders from 29 countries will attend the forum in Beijing on Sunday and Monday, an event orchestrated to promote Xi's vision of expanding links between Asia, Africa and Europe

Leaders from 29 countries will attend the forum in Beijing on Sunday and Monday, an event orchestrated to promote Xi's vision of expanding links between Asia, Africa and Europe underpinned by billions of dollars in infrastructure investment.

Delegates will hold a series of sessions on Sunday to discuss the plan in more detail, including trade and finance. China has given few details about attendees.

Some Western diplomats have expressed unease about both the summit and the plan as a whole, seeing it as an attempt to promote Chinese influence globally.

China has rejected criticism of the plan and the summit, saying the scheme is open to all, is a win-win and aimed only at promoting prosperity.

Zhang Junkuo, deputy director general of cabinet think-tank the State Council Development Research Centre told reporters there were "misgivings, misinterpretations and misunderstandings" about the initiative.

"We must increase communication and exchanges so as to broaden our areas of cooperation and consolidate the basis for cooperation," Zhang said.

In an English-language commentary on Saturday, China's state-run Xinhua news agency said the new Silk Road, officially called the Belt and Road initiative, would be a boon for developing countries that had been largely neglected by the West.

"As some Western countries move backwards by erecting 'walls', China is contriving to build bridges, both literal and metaphorical. These bridges are China's important offering to the world, and a key route to improving global governance," it said.

Some of China's most reliable allies and partners will attend the forum, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

There are also several European leaders coming, including the prime ministers of Spain, Italy, Greece and Hungary.

Xi offered Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of deeply indebted Greece strong support on Saturday, saying the two countries should expand cooperation in infrastructure, energy and telecommunications.

Costa Rica woos tourists from EU

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SAN JOSÉ, MAY 13

Increasing numbers of Europeans are boosting Costa Rica's thriving tourism industry, but lagging infrastructure and regional connectivity are crimping its potential, an investment conference in San Jose heard on Friday.

The country stands head and shoulders over the rest of Central America in tourism numbers, receiving 2.9 million visitors a year, many attracted by its eco-friendly image, Tourism Minister Mauricio Ventura told a seminar of French foreign trade advisers from across the region.

Americans account for around 40 percent. Europeans represent a quarter, but their numbers are rapidly growing following the introduction over the past year of direct flights Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland.

Europeans also spend more time in the country—an average of 18 nights compared to 12 for Americans—meaning more tourism revenue, Ventura said.

"Other countries in Central America have a great deal to do to improve" their images to achieve Costa Rica's level of success, said Thierry de Pierrefeu, former Honduran tourism minister.

He noted that the reputation for violence in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras scares off most tourists.

Pia Lackman, the manager for Air France-KLM in Central America, said her airline had found its new direct flights to Costa Rica to be "very successful."

But she pointed out that airlines need "a mix of tourism and business" travelers on their long-haul flights, and that there were few of the latter flying to Costa Rica.

There was also a lack of connectivity, she said, explaining that the region's flight hub was neighboring Panama, which received far more Air France flights.

The seminar also presented investment round-table discussions, including on public-private partnerships (PPP) to get big infrastructure projects built.

They were needed in Costa Rica because "it must be recognised we're a poor country, we're not a country that generates wealth," for instance from oil, said Guiselle Alfaro Bogantes, deputy minister for infrastructure and concessions.

But the attendees were reminded that a PPP to modernise San Jose's airport 17 years ago got bogged down in a costly legal fight between the government and the firm chosen to run it, causing the parent company to go bankrupt.

GE backs Nafta and Mexico trade

REUTERS
MONTERREY, MAY 13

General Electric on Friday praised Mexico as a big part of its future and said the company is "very supportive" of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) that US President Donald Trump has threatened to ditch.

GE Chief Executive Officer Jeff Immelt said on a visit that Mexico had great potential and was not properly understood. He touted the conglomerate's Mexican operations and the trade deal binding Mexico, Canada and the United States.

"GE as a company, we're very supportive of Nafta," Immelt told employees at an event to mark the expansion of operations in the northern city of Monterrey. He said the trade accord could be modernised, as Mexico has argued.

Immelt sits on a Trump-appointed manufacturing council that Mexico has targeted for lobbying as Mexico and Canada push US business leaders to defend Nafta.

The GE boss said trade meant "win-win" opportunities across North America.

"We will continue to work constructively in the context of wanting to see a close relationship between the US and Mexico," he said, noting that GE's exports to the rest of the world from Mexico were worth $3 billion.

"We're optimistic about Mexico, we're optimistic about what we can do here," Immelt added, saying Latin America's number 2 economy would be a "big part" of GE's future. Earlier this month, Immelt urged the Trump administration to avoid protectionist policies, calling on it to level the playing field for US companies with tax reform, revived export financing and improved trade agreements. Trump touts a "Buy American" policy and has railed against US companies moving operations to Mexico. He has threatened to ditch Nafta, a lynchpin of the Mexican economy, if he cannot rework it to secure better terms for the United States.

Unlike some US companies, GE has not backed off plans in Mexico, risking broadsides from Trump on Twitter.

Earlier, the Mexican presidency said in a statement that GE had stated an interest in doubling purchases from Mexican suppliers next year. Immelt did not mention this.

Vladimiro de la Mora, CEO for Mexico, said the figure came from an announcement last year and did not mean GE aimed to double purchases between this year and 2018.

On Thursday, GE said it had won a contract to provide plants producing two new gigawatts of power in Mexico and secured a separate $120 million, multi-year service deal.

De la Mora said GE could not yet reveal details of the 2 GW deal, but it was "likely" the value of the total investment in the power plants would exceed $500 million.

■ General Electric Chief Executive Jeff Immelt (left) shakes hands with Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo. REUTERS

new venture

■ People attend the opening ceremony of the first stage of the trade and logistics subpark in the Belarus-China industrial park Great Stone near Minsk, capital of Belarus, on Saturday. The first stage of the trade and logistics subpark in the Belarus-China industrial park Great Stone near Belarusian capital, Minsk, was commissioned on Friday. XINHUA

Boeing resumes 737 MAX test flights

REUTERS
CHICAGO, MAY 13

Boeing Co said on Friday it resumed test flights of its $110-million 737 MAX 8 jetliner, just two days after saying it had grounded the entire fleet to address an engine problem.

The resumption of flights, which the plane maker said was backed by air safety regulators, is good news for Boeing and engine-maker CFM International, a joint venture between General Electric Co and Safran SA of France.

CFM had said flaws in the forging of a disc inside the engine could have led to cracks. Boeing grounded the fleet late last week, and announced it on Wednesday, just days before it planned to deliver its first 737 MAX 8 to an airline.

Inability to fly the plane could have threatened Boeing's ability to deliver the new jetliners on time.

The company said a 737 MAX 8 took off around 12:15 pm Pacific Time on Friday.

Boeing spokesman Doug Alder said regulators supported the resumption of flights.

"Our plan remains to start deliveries this month," he said, noting the flights are with planes that do not have the suspect discs.

Alder declined to say when the inspection and possible repair of any engines with the suspect discs would be complete. The engines, known as the LEAP-1B, were being shipped back to plants in Lafayette, Indiana, and Villeroche, France, for inspection. Safran Aircraft Engines Chief Executive Olivier Andries told reporters on Thursday that the company hoped to fix the problem "within a few weeks."

Alder also declined to estimate the potential cost, or say whether any faulty discs had been found so far.

FINANCIAL DILEMMA

Berlin backpackers in a bind: To fund Pyongyang or not?

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BERLIN, MAY 13

It's an unusual dilemma that tourists in Berlin have to grapple with—will getting into a hostel bunk bed help finance North Korea's nuclear ambitions?

Backpackers staying at the Cityhostel found themselves struggling with precisely this question after learning that Pyongyang owns the property and is making money from it.

"Oh no, we're funding the North Korean embassy! We're sorry. Very sorry," said British tourist Alex Smith.

"We didn't realise we were funding North Korea."

By booking a room in the Soviet-style building, "my friend made a big mistake", he said, turning to his travel companion and calling him a "silly, silly boy". Cityhostel found itself at the centre of a storm after German media reported Tuesday that the North Korean embassy was not just the guesthouse's neighbour but also the owner of the prime real estate.

Rented out since 2004, the property brings in about 38,000 euros ($41,000) a month in rent for Pyongyang, the public broadcaster ARD reported.

The German government said Wednesday that it would shut down the hostel because the site had been leased by Pyongyang in violation of UN rules. Tougher sanctions implemented last November require UN member states to only allow "North Korean foreign representations to carry out diplomatic and consular activities".

> The hostel brings in about $41,000 a month in rent for Pyongyang according to public broadcaster ARD

"Any kind of commercial activity on the site of the embassy or in relation to the embassy is prohibited," said German foreign ministry spokesman Martin Schaefer.

"Cityhostel in Berlin constitutes neither a diplomatic nor consular activity of a North Korean foreign representation," Schaefer said, adding that Germany would "shut down the financial source to the North Korean regime as quickly as possible".

Over the past 11 years, the UN Security Council has imposed six sets of sanctions on Pyongyang—two adopted last year—to ramp up pressure and deny the regime hard currency to fund its rocket and atomic programmes.

Cityhostel's employees told AFP they were unaware of the North Korean link, but would not say more.

The hostel's management, a Berlin company registered as GBI, said in a statement that it "regrets having been taken hostage by international politics".

It had "frozen rental payments" until further clarification, it said.

Within walking distance of major tourist sites like Checkpoint Charlie and the Brandenburg Gate, Cityhostel Berlin offers dorm beds for as little as 16 euros ($17) a night.

The hulking grey building that serves as the hostel is separated from the gated North Korean compound by a metal fence.

Canadian traveller Alexandra Brosseau said that "we don't have a lot of money so we decided to go there, but if we had known, we wouldn't have come here".

"It should be written somewhere, like on reviews or something." Italian backpacker Emmanuel Giorno, 28, agreed: "Spending money on the North Korean regime really isn't great."

Others, like Swiss tourist Diana Vukovic, had a laugh about it. Nothing in the hostel hinted at its North Korean link, she said, though she conceded that inside, it did feel "a little bit like a prison".

■ The hostel financing North Korea's nuclear ambitions. AFP/RSS

NEWS DIGEST

Oil prices edge up slightly

NEW YORK: Oil prices ended slightly higher on Friday as US drillers added oil rigs for a seventeenth straight week. The number of rigs operating in US fields increased by 9 to 712 this week, marking a sixteenth straight weekly gains, oilfield service company Baker Hughes reported on Friday. Oil prices rebounded strongly in the past two days, with both US oil and Brent crude jumping over four percent, as US crude inventories fell by 5.2 million barrels last week, notching the biggest one-week drop in US crude stockpiles so far this year. The West Texas Intermediate for June delivery edged up $0.01 to settle at $47.84 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, while Brent crude for July delivery added 0.07 dollar to close at 50.84 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange. **(XINHUA)**

JSE slips as local currency firms

JOHANNESBURG: The Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) tumbled on Friday weighted down by the strength of the South African rand. The JSE was pulled down by the Richemont, one of the biggest shares on the bourse which dropped 5.09 percent on Friday following the release of its full-year results. This weighed down on the industrial and overall indices. The Industrial index closed 0.45 percent down and led to the all-share index losing 0.09 percent to 54,063.34 points. The blue chip top 40 index was 0.12 lower at 47 430.43 points. The South Africa's rand firmed to R13.38 against the US dollar at the close of session, supporting rand-hedge stocks and gold miners. **(XINHUA)**

Piramal looking to expand into real estate

MUMBAI: Indian conglomerate Piramal Enterprises said it is looking to expand its real estate development business and also expects to have a licence to start providing home mortgages by July. The Mumbai-based group, whose interests range from pharmaceuticals to financial services and real estate financing in India's big cities, said it now plans to finance top property developments in second-tier cities. "Till now our focus was more on the Tier 1 cities and Tier 1 developers in those cities," billionaire Chairman Ajay Piramal told Reuters on Friday in an interview after the group announced a 61 percent jump in fourth quarter net profit. The group said in January that it planned to start offering mortgages and Piramal said it should have a licence by July. Piramal has also formed a joint venture with private equity firm Bain Capital to explore opportunities to buy stressed assets. **(REUTERS)**

largest hydropower project

Clouds drift over the Three Gorges Dam, a gigantic hydropower project on the Yangtze River, in Yichang City, central China's Hubei Province, on Saturday. The final cost of the project was $37.23 billion, several times the original estimate of $8.35 billion. It generates 22,500 MW and also displaced over a million people. XINHUA

SA to expand nuclear plants

REUTERS
JOHANNESBURG, MAY 13

South Africa plans to sign new, more transparent nuclear power agreements with five foreign countries after a high court blocked a deal with Russia due to a lack of oversight, the energy ministry said on Saturday.

South Africa signed intergovernmental agreements with Russia, France, China, South Korea and the United States in 2014 as part of plans to build a fleet of nuclear power plants at a cost of between $30 billion and $70 billion.

Many investors view the scale of the nuclear plan as unaffordable and a major risk to South Africa's financial stability, while opponents of President Jacob Zuma say the deal will be used as a conduit for corruption. Zuma denies allegations of wrongdoing.

State energy firm Eskom says nuclear power should play a role in South Africa's energy mix and will help reduce reliance on coal.

The Western Cape High Court found last month that the agreement with Russia lacked transparency and offered Moscow favourable tax rules while placing heavy financial obligations on South Africa.

The energy ministry said it had "major concerns" about the court judgement but would not appeal the ruling. It will continue with nuclear energy plans adhering to stricter procedural guidelines, including consulting parliament.

"There is no intention to table the current agreements but (we) will embark to sign new agreements with all five countries and table them within reasonable time to parliament," the ministry said in a statement.

Eskom on Friday reinstated its former chief executive Brian Molefe, a Zuma ally who has supported the nuclear power plan.

Molefe stepped down five months ago after being implicated in a report by the country's anti-graft watchdog into alleged influence-peddling. He denied any wrongdoing.

Some analysts say former finance minister Pravin Gordhan was fired partly because he resisted pressures from a political faction allied to Zuma to back nuclear expansion.

New Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba has said nuclear expansion will only be pursued if it is affordable.

Bara-Parsa Industrial corridor lacks power

SHANKAR ACHAYRA
PARSA, MAY 13

Factories operating at Bara-Parsa Industrial corridor are continually being marred by increasing power cuts and low voltage of electricity when power is available. The problem has aggravated since last week and the corridor is facing power cut up to 8 hours a day. And when the electricity is available, the voltage is so low that machines cannot operate.

Pradip Kedia, former chairman of Birgung Chamber of Commerce, complained about the situation to the Post. This problem of prolonged power cuts came from nowhere when Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) was planning to eliminate load shedding at the industrial corridor, according to Kedia.

"How can we run factories when power cuts last for eight hours?" questioned Kedia. "Even when there is electricity, the voltage is so low that heavy machineries can't be operated and many industrialists have failed to produce goods as planned."

The NEA, instead of supplying uninterrupted electricity supply to one of the largest industrial corridor, has been apathetic to our problem, according to the industrialists of the corridor.

"Three months ago when Energy Minister Janardan Sharma and NEA Managing Director Kulman Ghising visited the district, they had promised to eliminate power cuts from the industrial corridor soon," said Kedia. "But, the power cuts increased instead."

Hari Pant, a hotel entrepreneur also complained about the power cuts and said it has affected his business seriously. "It has been very difficult to operate hotel due to power cuts," said Pant.

Om Prakash Sharma, chairman of Birgunj Chamber of Commerce also complained that the state-owned power utility's apathy has aggravated the problem for industrialists. "The NEA has freed major cities of the countries from load shedding but has not given any attention to the country's important industrial corridor," said Sharma.

NEA Birgunj Distribution Centre Chief Chutun Kumar Shribastav, told the Post that demand for electricity has increased at the corridor whereas there is no additional electricity to meet the demand.

"We will be able to solve the problem if our head office supplies us additional power to distribute at the corridor," said Shribastav. "Otherwise we will have to get additional power from India."

EU could pay Brexit bill to Britain: Johnson

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, MAY 13

The European Union could end up paying a Brexit bill to Britain instead of the other way round, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson told The Daily Telegraph in an interview on Saturday.

Asked if he believed that Britain might end up receiving a payment, Johnson replied: "I do, I think there are very good arguments".

"There are assets that we share, that we have paid for over the years and there will need to be a proper computation of the value of those assets," said Johnson, one of the leading lights in last year's Brexit referendum campaign.

Johnson dismissed as "absurd" the various estimates for the exit fee that would have to be paid by Britain, which some reports have said could be as high as 100 billion euros ($109 billion).

"They are going to try to bleed this country white with their bill," he said, threatening that Britain could "definitely" walk away from the negotiations without paying anything.

Boris Johnson

The payments that London must make to settle financial commitments made when it was a member are considered one of the most difficult Brexit issues and are a top priority for the talks.

A report in the Telegraph earlier this week said British officials estimated that Britain was entitled to £9 billion ($11.6 billion, 10.6 billion euros) in funds held by the European Investment Bank and £14 billion of other EU assets including property and cash.

Johnson also criticised the "shameful" leaking of details of a meeting in Downing Street last month between Prime Minister Theresa May and European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker.

"Brussels is ruthless in its negotiating techniques. They are going to play dirty. We have got to be very wary and intellectually very firm," the former London mayor said.

Quoting the famous Eagles hit, he added: "Jean-Claude Juncker thinks it's the Hotel California where you can check out but you can never leave. He is wrong."

Tensions between Brussels and London have risen in the run-up to Britain's general election on June 8, with the government accusing EU officials of "meddling" in the election campaign

US lists caribbean nations as money launderers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GEORGETOWN, MAY 13

The 15-nation Caribbean community is angry at the United States for labeling virtually all members of the regional trade bloc as money laundering jurisdictions and plans to mount a stiff lobbying effort in Washington, its leader said on Friday.

Caricom Secretary General Irwin La Rocque said the United States's listing 14 member states in its 2016 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report could have devastating effects on the region. Most of the countries have economies heavily dependent on tourism and financial services such as offshore banking and economic citizenships. "I think these unilateral blacklistings are not helping anything," he said, adding that "there ought to be some discussion and transparency on how these lists are arrived at." The only Caricom member state not blacklisted by Washington was Montserrat, a British overseas territory.

La Rocque insisted CARICOM members comply with international norms for fighting money laundering. He added, "Suddenly we see these unilateral blacklistings. This is not the way to do it."

Apple to invest $200m in Corning

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HARRODSBURG, MAY 13

Apple says it will invest $200 million in a rural Kentucky facility that it credits with rescuing the company's signature smartphone from a design flaw that would have led to scratched screens.

The California-based company announced on Friday it would give the money to Corning Inc. to use at its facility in Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Apple and Corning first teamed up 10 years ago when former Apple CEO Steve Jobs ordered the plastic screen on the company's first iPhone to be replaced with a scratch-resistant glass just a few months before the product was to launch.

Since then, Corning says it has made 552 million square feet (51 million square meters) of its Gorilla Glass product for iPhones and iPads, or roughly enough glass to cover 10,000 football fields.

"All of that work happened right here in Harrodsburg, and Apple owes you a big thank you," Apple Chief Operating Officer Jeff Williams told workers at Corning's Harrodsburg facility on Friday.

Williams said the money is the first of $1 billion the company plans to spend on US-based companies from its Advanced Manufacturing Fund. "It's only fitting that the first commitment from that fund be for Corning and specifically for Harrodsburg, where so much of our history is," Williams said.

Williams was joined by US Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and Corning CEO Wendell Weeks.

Officials from both companies did not say if the money would bring more jobs to Kentucky, or if the state offered any tax incentives for the investment. Corning officials said the money would be used "to sustain" the 400 employees who work in Harrodsburg. Officials said the partnership between Apple and Corning has produced 1,000 jobs in the United States.

UNEXPECTED REALITY

Snap earnings 'miss' shows misreading of analyst 'expectations'

REUTERS
SAN FRANCISCO, MAY 13

A widespread view on Wall Street this week was that Snap Inc fell short of revenue forecasts when it posted its first quarterly results as a public company, triggering a big selloff in its shares.

In fact there were two distinct camps of forecasters, which suggests the earnings "miss" was a matter of interpretation, and other factors were behind the stock decline.

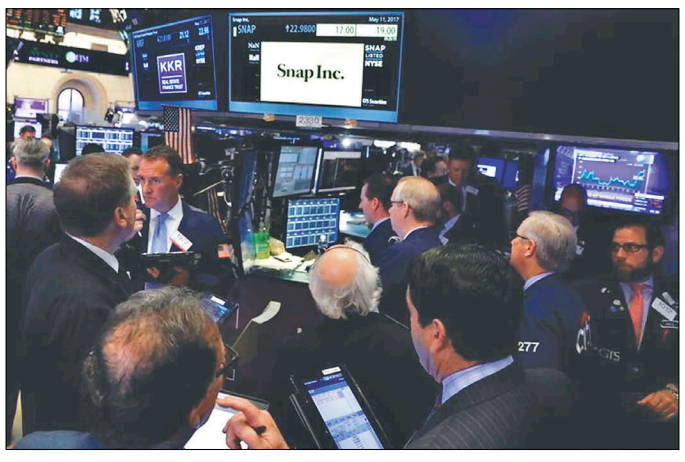
A Reuters review of 19 predictions heading into Snap's earnings report on Wednesday shows that analysts affiliated with the underwriters of Snap's initial public offering in March had far lower revenue expectations than investment firms not involved in the IPO.

Nine investment firms that were not underwriters predicted on average that Snap's revenue would grow slightly from the prior quarter to $168.4 million, even though the company in its IPO prospectus had estimated a decline due to the seasonal nature of its advertising business.

Analysts affiliated with 10 underwriters forecast on average that revenue would hit $138.4 million, $30 million below the estimate of the non-underwriting firms.

Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S, which like Reuters is a unit of Thomson Reuters Corp (TRI.TO), published an analyst average of $158 million.

Just after 1 p.m. Pacific Time (2200 GMT), Snap reported $149.6 million in revenue, well below the average forecast but comfortably beating the estimates of the bullish analysts affiliated with the underwriters. In principle, all analysts work from the same numbers. But analysts affiliated with Snap's underwriters, for example, may have followed the company for a longer period of time.



Traders gather at the post where Snap Inc. is traded, just before the opening bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. REUTERS

At investment firms, stock analysts are walled off from the investment banking business, and there is no evidence they shared information on Snap.

Analysts with "buy" ratings on a stock have an incentive to set quarterly estimates that the company is likely to beat, because upbeat results tend to boost stock prices. But a bearish analyst could be driven to put forward a high estimate that the company is likely to miss.

With the first-quarter reporting season nearly complete, 75 percent of S&P 500 companies' earnings per share beat analysts' expectations, while only 18 percent of companies missed, according to Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S.

"The volatility in the stock was the function of an incredibly difficult setup where the most bullish financial expectations corresponded with the most bearish sentiment," said James Cakmak, an analyst at Monness, Crespi, Hardt & Co. His firm, not an underwriter, expected revenue at $169.9 million.

Going into Snap's earnings announcement after the market close on Wednesday, anticipation was high about what kind of user growth the company's Snapchat messaging app would show and how much ad revenue it was bringing in. Ahead of time, the Venice, California-based firm said in securities filings that it expected a seasonal decline from its $165.7 million in revenue during the final quarter 2016.

Not everyone believed Snap's warning, though.

"Some people may have taken these words more literally, and some less so," said Shebly Seyrafi, managing director at FBN Securities.

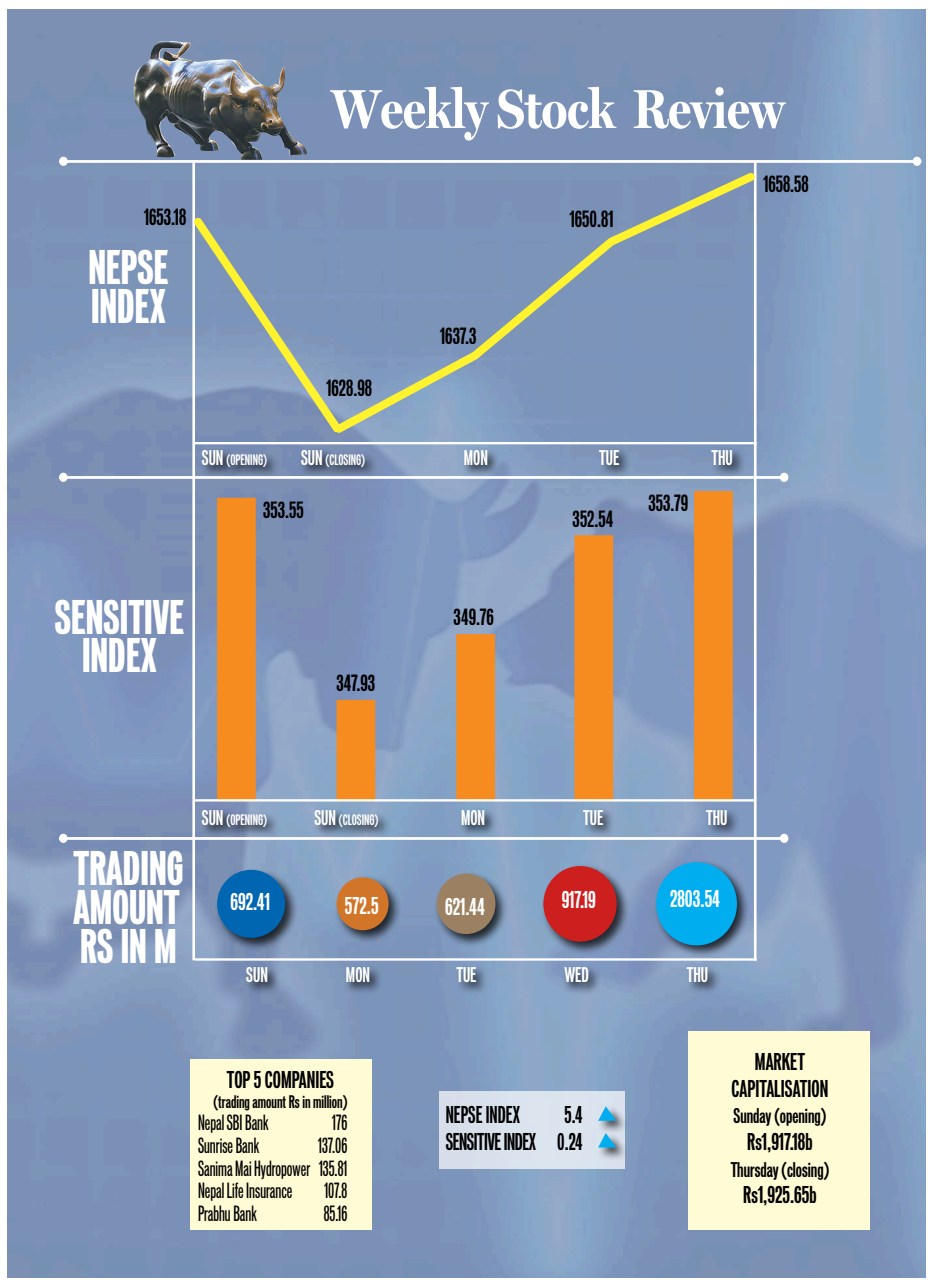
FBN was on the high end of the estimates, at $195.6 million, because "it is not uncommon for high-growth companies to grow through Q1," Seyrafi said in an interview on Thursday.

In Snap's case, it did not, and the stock plunged as much as 24 percent after hours on Wednesday to $17.58. On Friday, it rose 6 percent to $19.14.

But the share reaction cannot really be explained by missed forecasts, because a close reading shows that any shortfall was marginal at best.

Snap seemed to have missed a different kind of expectation, or maybe hope, that it would blow past forecasts. When that did not happen, the stock sank.

Nepse inches up marginally



POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 13

Nepal Stock Exchange (Nepse) increased marginally by 5.4 points to close at 1,658.58 points last week, with investors staying away from the market citing a myriad of reasons, from uncertainty of the country's political situation to the government's inability in announcing the budget.

The secondary market opened at 1,653.18 points on Sunday and promptly plunged 24.2 points to close at 1,628.98 points. On Monday, the market gained 8.32 points to close at 1,637.3 points, followed by a gain of 13.51 points on Tuesday.

Following the public holiday on Wednesday, the market index added 7.77 points on Thursday, the last day before the local election that has been scheduled for Sunday. On average, the market inclined up 0.32 percent last week.

Anjan Raj Poudel, managing director of Thrive Brokerage House, said the capital market last week was mainly affected by political developments along with the controversy surrounding the date of the government budget announcement on account of the local election. "In addition, the uproar made by Tarai-based political parties demanding an amendment to the constitution before elections shook investors' confidence", Poudel said.

Along with the Nepse index, the sensitive index that measures the performance of Group 'A' companies also inched up 0.24 points to close at 353.79 points. The slight drop in the sensitive index was due to losses in the commercial banks sub-index, the group that holds a lion's shares in the secondary market.

With the rise in Nepse index, the average value of the shares listed in stock market also rose Rs8.47

billion, with market capitalisation increasing to Rs1,925.65 billion from Rs1,917.18 billion over the week.

Except commercial banks, indices of the remaining nine trading groups posted gains last week. Hydropower witnessed the largest gain of 115.25 points to close at 2,108.59 points. Poudel said the rise in the group's index was due to a number of hydropower companies posting good amount of profit in their third quarter report. According to him, investors were also attracted by the shares of Butwal Power Company that will be issuing its further public offerings shortly.

The hotel sub-index followed in second place of highest gainers, posting a gain of 66.34 points to close at 2,258.06 points. Insurance group gained 37.34 points, 'others' gained 19.38 points, development bank gained 16.24 points, manufacturing gained 13.31 points while the sub-indices of finance companies and trading rose 3.91 points and 1.41 points respectively.

Commercial bank sub-index was the only losing group of last week. The group shed 9.32 points to close at 1,500.86 points.

Last week, Nepal SBI Bank observed the largest turnover of shares worth Rs176 million. According to Poudel, investors were attracted to stocks of the bank as the company observed book close along with offering 40 percent right shares.

Similarly, Sunrise Bank's stocks worth Rs137.06 million were transacted. Sanima Mai Hydropower, Nepal Life Insurance and Prabhu Bank were also among the top five companies in largest turnover.

Likewise, promoters' shares of World Merchant Banking and Finance Limited, with 497,000 units traded, topped in terms of number of transacted shares.

Last week, the shares of 153 listed companies were traded. Despite a small rise in Nepse, the transaction amount dropped 17.57 percent to Rs2.80 billion. The traded number of shares also declined to 4,994,170 from 5,384,790 units.

RIGHT SHARES/BONUS SHARES

COMPANY	TYPE	UNITS
Om Development Bank	Bonus	3,074,321
Manaslu Bikas Bank	Bonus	330,354
Mega Bank Limited	Bonus	5,315,940.74
Sewa Bikas Bank	Bonus	808,554.88
Sewa Bikas Bank	Right	5,106,662
Mega Bank Limited	Right	386,882
Synergy Power Development Limited	General	7,000,000
Forward Community Microfinance	General	2,000,000

MARKET WATCH

RETAIL PRICE

Vegetables	Unit	Price (Rs)
Red Potato	kg	Rs35
White Potato	kg	Rs25
Onion (Indian)	kg	Rs65
Tomato Small	kg	Rs55
Carrot	kg	Rs65
Tomato Big	kg	Rs55
Squash	kg	Rs35
Cabbage	kg	Rs25
Brinjal Long	kg	Rs55
Cow Pea	kg	Rs55
Cauliflower	kg	Rs65
Fruits	**Unit**	**Price (Rs)**
Apple	kg	Rs115
Pomegranate	kg	Rs190
Pineapple	kg	Rs115
Cucumber	kg	Rs65
Papaya	kg	Rs65
Banana	Doz	Rs105
Lime	100Pcs	Rs675

DAILY COMMODITIES

Commodities	Unit	Price (Rs)
Pokhreli Rice	kg	Rs75
Jeera Masino Rice	kg	Rs70
Indian Basmati Rice	kg	Rs100
Mansuli Rice	kg	Rs55
Sona Rice	kg	Rs50
Beaten Rice(Taichin)	kg	Rs130
Beaten Rice	kg	Rs60
Big Mas	kg	Rs260
Small Mas	kg	Rs240
Big Mung	kg	Rs180
Musuro(No. 1)	kg	Rs150
Musuro(No. 2)	kg	Rs130
Rahar	kg	Rs200
Chana(Big)	kg	Rs220
Chana(Small)	kg	Rs180
Chilli Powder	kg	Rs350

GASOLINE WATCH

IndianOil SERVO 4T ENGINE OILS
100% PERFORMANCE. EVERYTIME.

Petrol (Per Litre) Rs 101.50/-
Diesel (Per Litre) Rs 77.50/-
Kerosene (Per Litre) Rs 77.50/-
LPG (Per cylinder) Rs 1375/-
Source: Nepal Oil Corporation

BULLION

PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 53,300
Silver	Rs 740

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

INT'L MARKET

Energy	Price (US$)	%Change
Brent Crude Futr (Bbl)	50.84	0.14
Gas Oil Fut (Ice) (Mt)	448.75	-0.06
Gasoline Rbob Fut (Gal)	157.91	0.19
Natural Gas Futr (Mmbtu)	3.42	1.42
Agriculture	**Price (US$)**	**%Change**
Cocoa Future (Mt)	2,015.00	3.23
Coffee 'C' Future (Lb)	134.95	0.52
Corn Future (Bu)	371	0.47
Cotton No.2 Futr (Lb)	82.18	3.79
Rough Rice (Cbot) (Cwt)	10.41	-2.16
Soybean Future (Bu)	963.00	-0.34
Soybean Meal Futr (T)	313.3	-0.51
Soybean Oil Futr (Lb)	32.84	1.08
Sugar #11 (World) (Lb)	15.51	-0.77
Wheat Future(Cbt) (Bu)	432.75	-0.23
Industrial Metals	**Price (US$)**	**%Change**
Copper Future (Lb)	252.4	0.64
Precious Metals	**Price (US$)**	**%Change**
Gold 100 Oz Futr (T Oz)	1,227.70	0.29
Silver Future (T Oz)	16.46	0.35

Poland's outlook lifted

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WARSAW, MAY 13

Global ratings agency Moody's on Saturday lifted its outlook for Poland to stable from negative, a decision that reflected "reduced risks of loose fiscal policy" by its populist rightwing government.

Moody's left unchanged its A2 investment grade for the EU's largest eastern economy that has yet to join the eurozone.

The change reverses the agency's May 2016 downgrade to negative, its first in over a decade.

The agency said the improved outlook was due to reduced fiscal risks, with the deficit in line with "the 3.0 percent of GDP limit and public debt stabilising at or near the current level of 55 percent of GDP."

It added that "uncertainties stemming from government policies will remain contained, which in turn will ease the downside risks to the business climate and investment flows."

> Moody's left unchanged its A2 investment grade for the EU's largest eastern economy that has yet to join the eurozone

But critics still warn that generous spending by the Law and Justice (PiS) government—including a popular new universal child allowance—will bloat public finances in the country of 38 million. Development and Finance Minister Mateusz Morawiecki called Moody's move "rational" after the risks it perceived had "not materialised".

The agency also said it would keep its foreign debt grade at A2, reflecting Poland's "economic resilience as... a large, diversified economy that has shown robust real GDP growth irrespective of external headwinds."

"It is also supported by the country's institutional strength and limited vulnerability to domestic and external shocks," it said.

Elected in October 2015 on a populist spending platform, the PiS introduced the generous child-benefit subsidy and reverted to a lower retirement age.

Other measures include institutional changes to the constitutional court and public media that critics both at home and abroad have slammed as undermining democratic checks and balances.

The EU has threatened sanctions over what it views as rule of law violations.

Poland remains one of the EU's most vibrant economies, clocking uninterrupted annual growth since it shed communism in 1989.

EU stocks upbeat but retail earnings down

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK, MAY 13

Equity markets in Frankfurt and London finished at records on Friday, while US stocks were dented for a second straight session by weak retailer earnings.

European equity markets, already in a more upbeat mood after France's market-friendly presidential election outcome last weekend, pushed higher after data showed the German economy expanded at a robust 0.6 percent in the first quarter, compared with the previous three months.

The DAX index in Germany closed up 0.5 percent, while Paris rose 0.4 percent. The euro also advanced against the dollar, which fell on lackluster US economic data.

Emmanuel Macron will be sworn in as French president on Sunday and is expected to line up a government the following day, giving a first indication of the outlook for his economic reform plans.

Analysts have cheered his victory last Sunday.

"Political uncertainties are either out of the way or have receded further," said analyst Florian Hense of Berenberg bank. London's benchmark FTSE 100 index reached a new record closing high as sterling weakness boosted the earnings outlook for big British exporters.

In the US, both the Dow and

> London's benchmark FTSE 100 index reached a new record closing high as sterling weakness boosted the earnings outlook for big British exporters

S&P 500 finished lower after disappointing results from J.C. Penney and Nordstrom. Both of those department store chains fell steeply, while other retailers, including Wal-Mart Stores, Best Buy and Gap, posted smaller declines. Earlier in Asia, traders took a step back ahead of the weekend with confidence rattled by a series of below-par Chinese data and the lingering fallout of Donald Trump's shock firing of the head of the FBI, which some fear could lead to a crisis that will knock the president's economy-boosting agenda off center.

Tokyo's Nikkei index closed down 0.4 percent from a 17-month high, but Hong Kong rose 0.1 percent, extending a rally to five days. Bloomberg News reported, without naming sources, that China had made preparations to support the Hang Seng Index if needed ahead of the expected visit of President Xi Xinping to the city for the July 1 handover celebrations.

Shanghai—which has fallen about seven percent in the past month on worries about a state crackdown on leveraged investing—ended up 0.7 percent with speculation mainland shares were also being given state backing.

COOLING PRICES

India's inflation eases

REUTERS
NEW DELHI, MAY 13

India's consumer inflation eased in April to its lowest in at least five years, reviving a debate on whether the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should revisit policy easing even as most analysts expect it to hold rates for the time being.

Consumer prices rose by an annual 2.99 percent, compared with March's 3.89 percent, data released by the Ministry of Statistics showed on Friday.

The rise was lower than the 3.49 percent forecast by economists in a Reuters poll, and the lowest since India started publishing an economy-wide consumer price index in 2012.

It is also more than a full percentage point below the 4 percent mid-term inflation target of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which has struck a hawkish tone and expressed concern about upside risks to inflation.

"Given the fragile nature of growth, there is a strong reason why RBI should return its stance to accommodative rather than the current neutral," said Rupa Rege Nitsure, group chief economist at L&T Finance Holdings.

Other economists said, however, that with price pressures set to pick up again in the second half of this year the RBI would be more likely to hold its main policy rate at 6.25 percent over the coming months.

"For the first half we expect the numbers to be fairly below RBI's trajectory," said Anjali Verma, economist at PhillipCapital India.

"However, in the second half it will be nearing 5 percent, which is in line with RBI's trajectory

and therefore a rate cut is not anticipated."

India's improving inflation performance has pushed real interest rates - the amount by which they exceed inflation - strongly into positive territory. That has attracted buyers to the bond market and driven stocks to double-digit percentage gains in the current year to date.

On Friday, India released a new series of industrial output and wholesale inflation data, revising the base year to 2011/12 from 2004/05.

Wholesale prices rose by 3.85 percent in April from a year ago, while industrial output grew at 2.7 percent in March, government data showed.

The WPI and IIP data based on new series were not statistically comparable with the earlier data based on 2004/05 base year, T.C.A. Anant, India's chief statistician, told reporters.

India changed the base year for the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and Consumer Price Index based inflation data about two years ago while continuing with the old base year for other macro indicators.

The delay in revising the base year had often confused the markets and policymakers who have struggled to analyse discrepancies between the volume growth record by the IIP and value-added numbers reflected in GDP.

The base year reset is expected to bring in more accuracy in measuring the level of economic activity as well the national income.

The new IIP series will cover a new basket of commodities and assign new weights to them, removing obsolete items like typewriters and floppy disks. Ideally, they should move in the same range, as value addition at constant prices could address the price factors and broadly reflect physical growth.

economic discussion

■ Jin Liqun(second from left), president of the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), attends the World Economic Forum on Asean in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on Saturday. Jin Liqun, president of AIIB, said that the multilateral development bank is committed to lending strong support to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) for infrastructure development. XINHUA