Temperature: Max: 29.0°c Min: 14.8°c Coldest: Jomsom: 9.0°c Hottest: Dhangadi: 38.4°c

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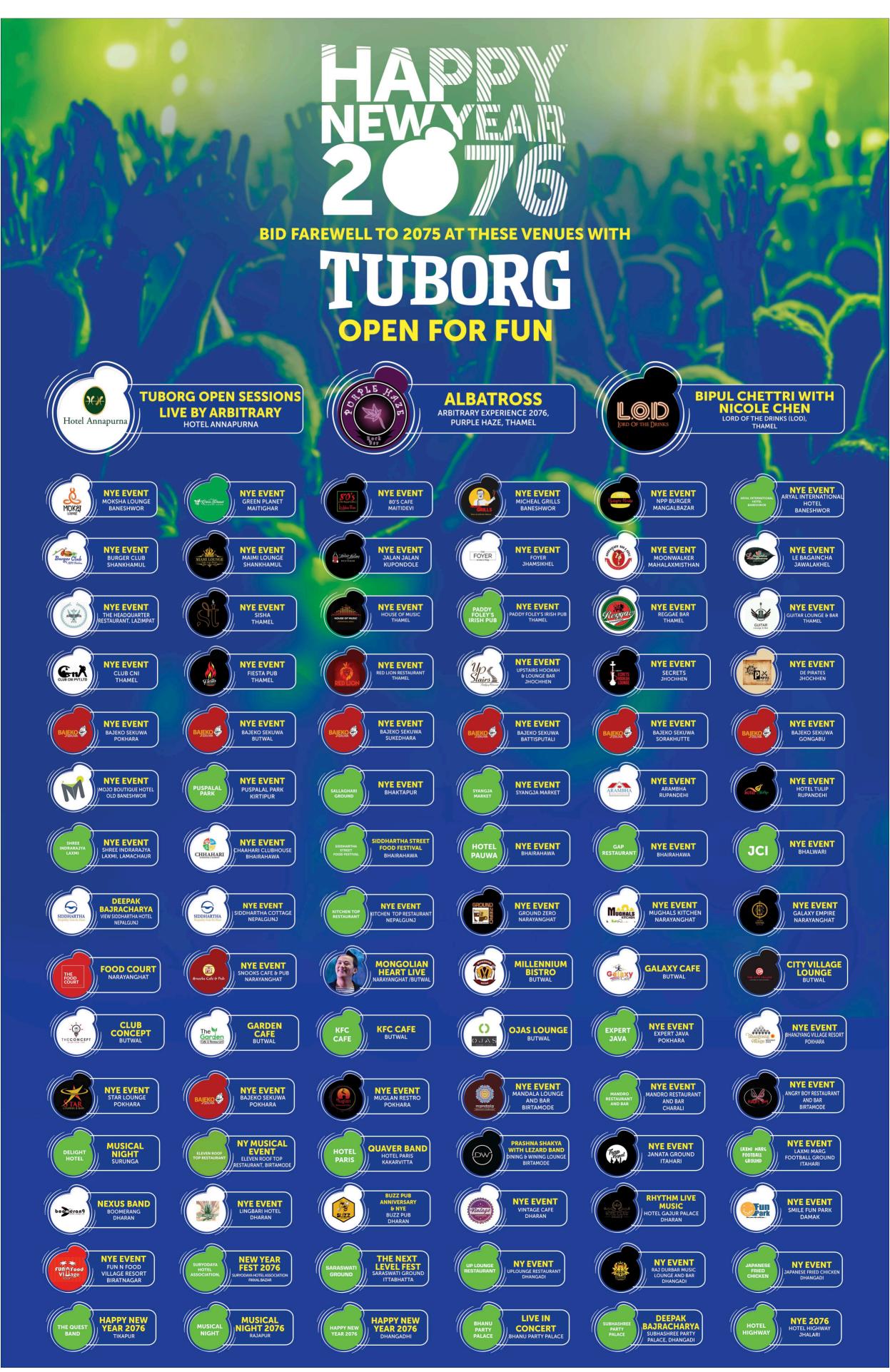
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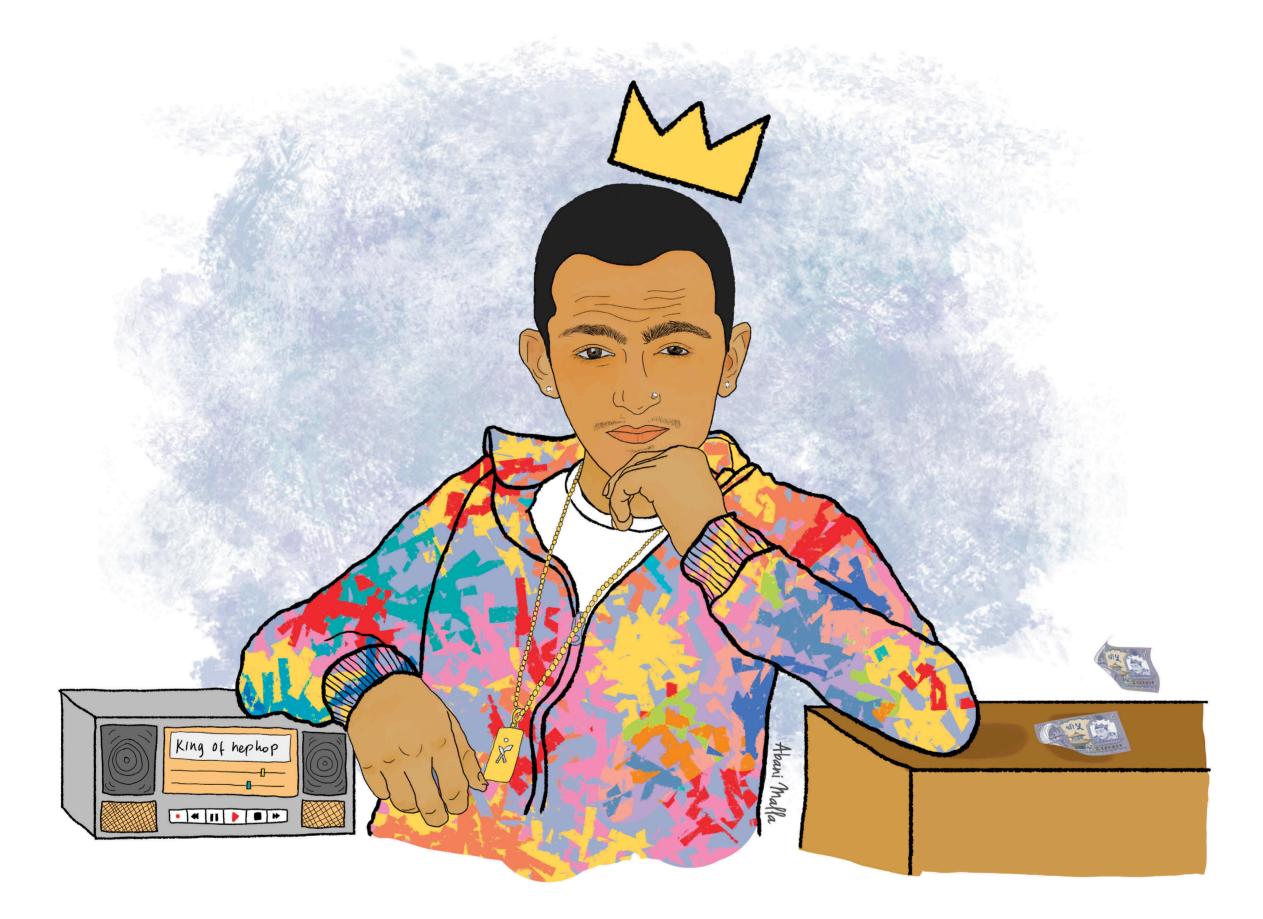




The return of Lil Buddha

Sacar Adhikari is emblematic of the new generation of Nepali rappers—brash, arrogant and ambitious

STORY & ILLUSTRATION: ABANI MALLA



acar Adhikari is angry. He's shirtless, tattooed and he's cursing. He's live-streaming on his Facebook page and within minutes, hundreds of people are watching the video. Sacar is attacking everyone, from then Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal to rapper Laure.

In 2017, videos recorded from Sacar's Facebook livestream went viral, effectively turning him into a meme. Within the span of a day or two, 22-year-old Sacar went from being semi-popular to downright infamous. He'd asked his fans to shoot Laure with a 'katta', an improvised pistol, in return for a 'heera', a diamond. People on the internet lost it.

Over a year later, hands folded at the back, Sacar stood in front of a mic, wrapped in a thick winter coat with a fur collar. Even though he's inside a studio, he's wearing sunglasses that reflect the studio lights. He has a new look: he's pierced his nose.

With Uniq Poet and G.O.D. on The Beat beside him, Sacar steps up to the mic.

"Yo, Lil Buddha on the mic, what's up, what's up, been a long time," he begins, announcing his comeback to the Nepali hip-hop scene, locally referred to as NepHop.

On January 12, 2019, two days before the two-year death anniversary of Nepali rap pioneer Yama Buddha, Sacar-who now calls himself Lil Buddha—uploaded 'King of NepHop', the first song of his upcoming album Shree Panch, to his YouTube channel. In the 10-minute-long one-take freestyle cypher, Sacar addresses his mental illness and drug use, all while proclaiming himself the greatest.

Yeah I do it for the future, psychotic rapper, psychedelic user, getting many views huh / Everybody watching going real crazy, everybody laughing Everybody asking, what the fuck happened? / They say they see my name in them tabloids and magazines

Within an hour, the video was trending as number one on YouTube Nepal and already had 18,000 views; as of today, it has over three million views.

Since then, Sacar has started a vlog, 'Sacar ko Sapana', which again has accrued over a million views in just two months. His most recent vlog, with singer Neetesh Jung Kunwar, was trending at number nine on YouTube overnight.

Sacar Adhikari isn't angry anymore. He's successful.

recalling his days as a child listening to Radio Nepal with his mother during school holidays.

"He would talk so much that I'd offer him five rupees if he just stopped talking for a while," says Radha Adhikari, Sacar's mother. "Yet he would refuse the offer and keep asking me more questions.

One afternoon, during a visit to his maternal home, Sacar found Saujan Sangraula-his youngest maternal uncle and a singer-ready with a guitar. His uncle's impromptu personal performances became a crucial factor for piquing Sacar's interest in music.

Sacar has plans to make the industry bigger and better but most importantly, he aims to 'pave roads' for emerging rappers, just like Yama Buddha wanted to.

A few minutes have passed and Sacar is still reading the menu. At a rooftop lounge in Dillibazar, the 23-year-old rapper is not the arrogant, boastful Lil Buddha. He's Sacar Adhikari: average height, skinny, dressed comfortably in a black tracksuit. A few minutes later, he finally looks up, and orders a cup of black tea

But he's still wearing the rectangular 'King of NepHop' gold chain from his latest music videotwo khukuris crossed in the middle with a diamond above them

Finally, he begins to talk, unhindered, as if rapping at a slower tempo. He starts at the beginning, "It was cool," recalls Sacar.

That day, Sacar went home with a few cassette tapes, hidden among which was one from GP-Girish-Pranil-one of Nepal's first hip-hop duos. But back then, Sacar was more interested in other forms of music.

When Radha left for Norway in 2005 for work, Sacar and his family moved in with Sangraula, and the two started to explore more music together.

"When we were living together, I was exposed to someone who could write and perform songs very well," says Sacar. "Every day, uncle and I

would discover new artists. I even started to play the guitar.'

There weren't any specific genres or artists Sacar listened to, but growing up in the 90s, he admired The Doors, Limp Bizkit, Sabin Rai, Blink-182, Audioslave, Aerosmith, Bob Marley, Iron Maiden, Metallica, Avril Lavigne, Pantera-everything that a young boy growing up in Kathmandu, exposed to the radio and MTV, might listen to.

When Radha returned from Europe in 2008, Sacar, who was now in the eighth grade, could hum Nabin K Bhattarai's songs and perform the rap from Nepsydaz's remake of 1974 AD's 'Chudaina timro maya le'.

"At first, I was surprised to see my son-this talkative boy-sing so well," says Radha.

Sangraula, Sacar's uncle, eventually left for Europe, but that didn't discourage him from pursuing his music. Back then, Sacar was singing more, not rapping. His classroom was the audience and a chair his stage. By the time he was in the tenth grade, 15-year-old Sacar was performing verses he'd memorised from his favourite songs while his classmates circled him. It was also then that Sacar smoked his first joint, after his classes were over, again circled by his close friends.

By high school, Sacar's musical tastes had changed-he had now started listening to rap. Busta Rhyme's feature on Chris Brown's 'Look at me now' was one of the first verses he admired, for its frenetic pace, says Sacar. He practised and later performed the verse in front of his friends, leaving them impressed. It was this song that introduced Sacar to 'old school hip-hop', and soon, he was researching this global phenomenon.

"It was what hooked me into rap but oddly, later I figured that it wasn't even real rap," says Sacar.

>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

the kathmandu post 02

NEWS DIGEST

Indian held with 64kg marijuana

HETAUDA: Makwanpur police arrested Samir Ahamad, 28, an Indian national from Motihari, India, in possession of 64kg marijuana on Wednesday. Superintendent of Police Mukesh Kumar Singh said Ahamad was caught with several packets of marijuana hidden in the roof liner of a car. Ahamad was travelling towards Pathalaiya from Hetauda. (PR)

Doctor shortage in Achham

ACHHAM: Health services have been affected due to a shortage of medical special ists and medical superintendent in Achham District Hospital. The hospital with 22 beds has nine posts of medical specialists, all of them vacant. Only two doctors are currently available at the hospital. Patients have been denied health services. (PR

Cameras in Dhangadhi not in working order

DHANGADHI: None of the surveillance cameras installed in Dhangadhi are in working order. As a security measure, police had installed 14 cameras in core areas of Dhangadhi three years ago. Not a single one of them are functioning these days. Pushpa Raj

Kunwar, chairman of the Dhangadhi **Chamber of Commerce** and Industry, said the cameras stopped working due to lack of regu-

lar maintenance. (PR) **Province 4** donates Rs10m to storm victims

POKHARA: The government of Gandaki Province has decided to donate Rs 10 million to the victims of rainstorms in Bara and Parsa districts. A Cabinet meeting on Thursday decided to deposit the money to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, said Ram Sharan Basnet. Minister for Physical Infrastructures Development. (PR)

WEATHER WATCH



A boy skateboards at Patan Durbar Square in Lalitpur on Friday.

POST PHOTO: SAN IOG MANANDHAR

Government plans to set up annual regional dialogue

Through 'Sagarmatha Dialogue', the government wants to raise issues of climate change, and promote Nepal's peace process and social inclusion

ANIL GIRI KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

Foreign Ministry.

putting together a concept to

can take a lead on issue like cli-

mate change. As our first and

foremost priority, the forum will

focus largely on climate change,'

said Foreign Secretary Shankar

will discuss are Nepal's success

in building an inclusive society,

the country's political and gov-

ernance systems, and the peace

Other issues that the forum

"As a mountain country, Nepal

present to the prime minister.

change, the Madhav Nepal government held a Cabinet meeting The government is planning to at Everest Base Camp in 2009. set up a flagship international

When launched, the forum, forum in Kathmandu to host diawhich officials told the Post logues with the rest of the globe would be called Sagarmatha on Nepal's concerns and exper-Dialogue, will be the third statetise, according to officials at the owned initiative for promoting and pushing foreign policy ideas. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli However, the first two think has long expressed an interest in tanks—Institute of Foreign hosting an annual forum akin to Affairs and Niti Addhyan those Singapore and India host Pratishtan-have failed to expeevery year. Officials at the dite their work due to administra-Ministry of Foreign Affairs are tive and political reasons.

the adverse effects of climate

Sagarmatha Dialogue is believed to be framed after two similar forums in the region: Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, which was launched in 2002 and has since become a track one inter-governmental security forum and an independent think tank. Singapore hosts

the dialogue every year. The second one is right in Nepal's backyard: the Raisina Dialogue, initiated by India's Ministry of External Affairs. It is structured as a multi-stak

Sunil KC, executive director at the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, observed that apart from foreign policy issues and issues that Nepal can share with the rest of the world, the dialogue should focus on multilateral issues and Nepal's reach beyond India and China.

"It should be based on an arrangement where government officials and experts can come together. Second, it should focus on trade, investment, and emerging economies. Most importantly, it should not be seen as a purely government-driven initiative. Several think tanks operating here should be made a part of it," said KC, who organises cross-country dialogue and seminars in Kathmandu on a regular basis

Officials are not sure exactly modality will be which followed while setting up the conference but they hope the forum will bring together international experts, academics, busiedia persons, govern[,] ment officials, and military officials to participate in Kathmandu.

lot more needs to be discussed and agreed upon. He, however, said the forum would be similar to the ones in Singapore and India.

The ministry has instructed the regional organisation division headed by Joint-secretary Yagya Bahadur Hamal to come up with a concept and modality after studying other international forums

Though a formal decision to initiate the dialogue is yet to be made, sources at the Foreign Ministry familiar with the developments said that a formal announcement would be made after the administration receives a report from Hamal.

Initial thoughts are to initiate dialogue on agendas pertaining to regional and global issues ranging from geopolitics to climate change to security to defence cooperation.

Officials are devising a work plan to constitute and operate the forum but are not sure if it will have an institutional set-up.

sure to technology is not new. From the dawn of radio, telephone, cassette player and walkman to cable television, PCs, gaming consoles and the internet, parenting has never been easy.

comes with an added challenge-digital

right ban. The ban, according to Singh makes the game illegal and anyone found playing the game will be arrested including internet and mobile service providers if they failed to comply with the directive, but he is unaware of how the young already know how to figure out a way to bypass the ban or other similar games that is available to download.

'We investigated for a month. Once the ban is implemented, they can't play the game," he said.

"If there are other similar games, we will deal with it."

But no sooner had the ban been announced, critics were quick to point out that the gaming issue had more to do with teaching children how to have a healthy relationship with technology and that the regulation is pointless as there is a whole range of battle royal genre games to choose from beside PUBG.

"This [the ban] is unnecessary. I have been playing PUBG for some eight months now and do one or two rounds after work," said software engineer Manas Shrestha. "Perhaps the government could introduce the six-hour per day limit that PUBG is testing in India if addiction is really a problem



technology-limit children's exposure to technology.

Coming from the Apple co-founder

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, too, in

"We didn't give our kids cellphones until

In an open letter, Facebook cofounder

his second daughter in August 2017, he

emphasised the importance to make

time to go outside and play. He also hoped

All three tech billionaires who have

had so much impact in the way we use

technology in our lives have but one single parenting advice on children's use of

that his daughter will read Dr Seuss.

The case for limiting children's expo-

In the age of super-fast smartphones, social networks, online gaming and constant connectivity, parenting now parenting. On Thursday, Nepal Telecommunication Authority directed all internet and mobile service providers to ban the massively popular PUBG, an online game which has a 16+ rating for

The ban on PUBG too could easily be bypassed by using a virtual private network, which would instead raise online security issues according to marketing technologist Anil Ghimire.

"Nothing on the internet can be stopped. The understanding of the authorities on these issues is low. VPN would consume more bandwidth and we would be spending more money and time," Ghimire, one of the widely followed tech blogger said.

"There are other socio-economic factors that is largely ignored. If the game was really dangerous, it wouldn't have achieved its cult status across the world, would it? Young people smoking in cafes s more dangerous than that On Friday, as this went to press, PUBG is still openly accessible and it is not clear how the ISPs will implement the ban but according to technology experts, PUBG will remain accessible unless the PUBG servers impose a restriction on virtual private network. There is also bound to be an increase in traffic as young fans and adults, figure out a way to engage in PUBG or other online multiplayer battle royal games at the comfort of their bedrooms and in complete privacy. But concerns that games such as PUBG is addictive and has negative effects on behaviour of children cannot be ruled out completely, according to child psychiatrist Dr Gunjan Dhwonju, who occasionally plays PUBG in his spare time. "Children should not be exposed to violence in any form be it in television, movies or games," said Dhwonju, who added that gaming for some children could actually be a way to cope with their anxious feelings. "All this boils down to good parenting. Parents cannot shy away from their responsibilities to monitor their children's activities. PUBG is a rated game. They should allocate screen time for their health and safety." Technology usage is bound to increase as technology takes big leaps. The gaming industry today is an internationally recognised sport and continues to evolve as tech companies offer cutting-edge digital experience and attract young fans. "There was Farmville, Candy Crush, Angry Birds, Pokemon Go and so on. Banning something randomly is a kneejerk reaction and does little to actually solve the problem," Dhwonju said.

CAST: Partly to generally cloudy Brief rain likely to occur at some places of the eastern and central regions

| PLACES | MAX TEMP (⁰ C) | MIN TEMP (^O C) | RAINFALL (MM) | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--|--|
| Dipayal | 35.5 | 18.2 | 0.5 | | |
| Dadeldhura | 25.8 | 13.9 | 0.0 | | |
| Dhangadi | 38.4 | 23.2 | 0.0 | | |
| Birendranagar | 33.3 | 18.8 | 0.0 | | |
| Nepalgunj | 38.0 | 22.0 | 0.0 | | |
| Jumla | 24.5 | 10.8 | 0.0 | | |
| Dang | 32.4 | 20.1 | 0.0 | | |
| Pokhara | 30.0 | 20.2 | 0.0 | | |
| Bhairahawa | 35.5 | 23.6 | 0.0 | | |
| Simara | 34.6 | 22.2 | 0.0 | | |
| Kathmandu | 29.0 | 14.8 | 0.0 | | |
| Okhaldhunga | 25.4 | 13.5 | 0.0 | | |
| Taplejung | 24.2 | 14.8 | Traces | | |
| Dhankuta | 27.4 | 16.2 | 0.0 | | |
| Biratnagar | 34.7 | 21.0 | 0.0 | | |
| Jomsom | 24.0 | 9.0 | 0.0 | | |
| Dharan | 34.0 | 22.9 | 0.0 | | |
| Source: Meteorological forecasting Division, Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, Kathmandu | | | | | |



For Detailed Information Tel: 01-4443999 | 9851215758 email: batas.tractors@batas.com

proce

Das Bairagi.

"The forum is to share Nepal's cross-sectoral discussion, involvexperience with the rest of the ing a variety of global policymakworld. As the country of Mount ers, including heads of state, cab-Everest [Sagarmatha], we are facinet ministers and local governing adverse effects of climate ment officials. In recent years, change and global warming. We both forums have seen the presthought we can lead the world in ence of major private sector executives, as well as members of the

this topic," Bairagi added. In order to shine a spotlight on media and academia.

Rajan Bhattarai, foreign relations adviser to the prime minister, told the Post that the concept was discussed recently and it is still in a "very preliminary stage" to share details about because a

A work p be prepared before the design and funds get approval from the government, said officials.

The plan will also spell out the timeframe for holding the conference, and areas for collaboration with other think tanks and academic institutions, among others.



NAYAK PAUDEL

KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

Authorities arrested three Chinese nationals with 3,500 grams of gold hidden in their rectums at the Tribhuvan International Airport on Thursday.

The trio—Ma Fuming, 24, Mao Yinghua, 23 and Zhang Zhiyang, 27—had landed in Kathmandu on a China Eastern Airlines flight.

"The airport security stopped the trio when the walk-through metal detector beeped while they were making their way towards the exit. We frisked them but found nothing on them," Gajendra Kumar Thakur, chief of the airport customs, told the Post.

"They were then scanned with a hand-held metal detector which beeped once again. The three men tried to convince us that the buttons on their clothes were causing the beeps, but the security personnel did not buy their explanation."

When the trio started getting agitated, the security personnel became more suspicious and put them through a body scanner, which showed a blurred image of some object inside

WEEKLY LUCKY DRAW OF RS. 1 LAKH

LIVE

their abdomens, said Thakur.

"They were taken to the Kathmandu Medical College at Sinamangal for x-ray," Superintendent of Police Krishna Koirala told the Post. "The results showed metal in their rectums, after which the doctors gave them medicines to make them excrete."

Authorities found 1,300 grams of gold in one of the individuals' rectal cavity while the other two had hidden 1,000 grams each. The gold pieces were wrapped in condoms and placed inside their rectums.

The customs officials said the trio was used as carriers to smuggle the gold and they did not know anything about the receiver.

"During the

investigation, we found that the men were supposed to be picked at the airport someone whom they did not know," said Thakur.

The mobile phones of the individuals have been seized and the customs officials, with the help of Chinese language experts, are working on decoding the messages written in Chinese.

The trio could get a one year jail-term and around Rs20 million fine for their involvement in the smuggling. If they are unable to pay the fine, they can face jail sentence up to 10

न्तेपर वर्ष

years, according to the customs officials.

The directive came following a public interest litigation hearing at the Kathmandu District Court on Wednesday when the Metropolitan Crime Division of Nepal Police seeking a ban on PUBG said that the game has a negative effect on the behaviour of children and youth and their studies. The permission to ban the game came the same day.

According to the division chief SSP Dhiraj Pratap Singh, the litigation was a result of complaints from parents, schools and school associations regarding the effect of the game on children. "We also held discussions with psychiatrists before filing a litigation and seeking permission to ban the game," Singh had earlier told the Post.

But advocate Babu Ram Aryal who specialises in cyber law says the ban is reflective of a hazardous and potentially slippery slope for democratic values and that the country actually lacks laws on banning content such as PUBG.

"This is an issue about good digital parenting and introducing policies on technology usage in schools. The ban is completely irrational and illogical and paves way for political control," Aryal, who is closely studying the PUBG ruckus, said.

"The litigation which claims consultations with psychiatrists is also abstract and offers no details."

On Thursday afternoon when PUBG, the award winning player versus player shooter game broke the Nepali internet sphere, it inspired a range of memes and exchange of opinions on social media as concerns over the game that it is addictive, and has negative effects on behaviour of children and youth and their studies were dealt with a stern government intervention in the form of an out-



French man held on paedophilia charges



Georges Igor Himansky

JANAK RAJ SAPKOTA KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

A team from the Nepal Police Central Instigation Bureau has arrested a 69-year-old French man for sexually abusing two teenage boys in Kathmandu.

Georges Igor Himansky was apprehended with his victims, aged 14 and 15, from Thamel on Friday.

Himansky had been feeding his perverse fantasies involving young boys for years by presenting himself as a benevolent foreigner who helped children from the street and from poor economic background, according to investigators.

Himansky was associated with the NGO, Association for the Protection of Children, which made it easy for him to find vulnerable boys.

Nilkantha Acharya, executive director of APC, said Himansky used to volunteer as a yoga instructor and he had been sponsoring one of the children without the organisation's consent. Police suspect Himansky had long been entreating young Nepali boys and engaging in sexual activities with them because this was his seventh visit to Nepal.

Investigation has also revealed that Himansky had been arrested in his own country in 2000 for a paedophilia-related crime.

Himansky is the third French paedophile arrested in Nepal this year. Police had arrested two French men for sexually abusing children from Kathmandu in July.

The Central Investigation Bureau's records show that 10 foreign paedophiles were arrested from different parts of the country in the last fiscal year.

Call for competent people in transitional justice bodies

Faulty process was responsible for picking inept people in the past, rights defender says

BINOD GHIMIRE Kathmandu, April 12

The four-year tenure of the incumbent leadership of the two transitional justice commissions, which was largely unsuccessful, formally came to an end on Friday, leaving both the bodies vacant.

The recommendation committee led by former Chief Justice Om Prakash Mishra has already called for applications from interested candidates and around a dozen people, including retired judges, have applied for the positions in the five days since the vacancies were called. As the selection of the new team begins, human rights defenders and conflict victims have cautioned the government and the recommendation committee to select a competent team, after meaningful consultation, and after making sure the candidates' merit will be taken into account and not their political affiliation.

In an interaction on Friday, representatives from victims' community and human rights activists asked the Mishra-led panel to ensure that stakeholders will be selected in a transparent manner. They have also demanded that a standard be set for the selection of chairpersons and members, and a thorough evaluation be made of their competence and expertise before recommending them for the selection.

"Faulty selection process was responsible for picking incompetent people in the past. We cannot afford to repeat the same mistake," Bishnu Pukar Shrestha, a human rights defender who was present in the interaction, told the Post.

The chairperson and the members of two commissions, who retired on Friday, were selected in February, 2015, on the basis of political sharing among major political parties. And although some of them had good legal background, most of them didn't.

The leadership from the two commissions was given two years to complete their investigation into the war-era cases of human rights violations and recommend the actions against the perpetrators.

However, neither the Truth and Reconciliation Commission nor the Commission of the Investigation on

Enforced Disappeared Person could complete investigation into a single case in more than four years since their formation. The leadership from both the commissions could only collect the complaints from the victims during the insurgency with no progress in the investigation. Among around 63,000 cases, the TRC has hardly completed preliminary investigation of some 5,000 cases while CIEDP has done preliminary investigation into some 2,200 cases among 3,100 it received.

Govind Bandi, a human rights activist who has fought the cases in the courts seeking justice to the victims, said completion of the investigation process is not possible in the lack of competent team in place. "The recommendation team needs to take all the stakeholders into confidence before selecting the new leadership," he told the Post.

The umbrella bodies of the victims from the insurgency have threatened to not accept the new leadership that is selected without their consent. In Friday's interaction, they presented their demands to Mishra. Among their list of demands, victims have warned that the recommendation committee will have to take responsibility if it fails to maintain transparency in the selection process. "Competent people might not apply. Therefore, we have asked the committee to go beyond the applicants before recommendation," Suman Adhikari, former chairperson of Conflict Victims Common Platform, told the Post.

Officials at the secretariat of the recommendation committee said 12 people, including three retired judges of the High Courts and former government secretaries, have applied. "We are expecting more applicants, as there are still three days for the deadline," said Rajaram Dahal, an officer at the secretariat.

Members of the recommendation said they have taken serious note of the feedback from the victims' committee and the human rights defenders, and will take them into consideration before recommendation.

"The selection process will be fully transparent as per the aspiration of the stakeholders," Sharmila Karki, a member of the committee told the Post.

Family denied relief for lack of citizenship None of the family members of the deceased has Nepali citizenship certificate

SHANKAR ACHARYA

SUKHACHAINA (PARSA), APRIL 12 Manoj Ram, 30, of Sukhachaina in Birgunj Metropolis-18, who lost his 19-year-old brother Sanoj in the rainstorms of March 31, has not got relief from the government.

Manoj, who worked as a migrant worker in Calcutta, India, is now performing the death rituals of the deceased. "I had returned home to celebrate Holi," said Manoj.

According to him, Sanoj was killed after being crushed by a bus overturned by the rainstorms at Chainpur Chowk along the Pathlaiya Birgunj road. Sanoj was among the three who were killed in Parsa in the disaster. Sanoj's family members and relatives have been left grief stricken after his untimely death. The victim's family say they have not received relief from the federal and provincial government

or the metropolitan office.

Manoj's father, Raj Kumar, 55, said they were left out of the relief distribution process because none of the family members has the Nepali citizenship certificate.

"I came to Nepal with my family when I was five years old," said Raj Kumar, adding that his three sons including Sanoj were born in Nepal but none had gotten citizenship. "Not having citizenship has

"Not having citizenship has not only barred us from receiving the aid but the ward secretary has also expressed unwillingness to issue my son's death certificate," said Raj Kumar. Raj Kumar bemoaned hav-

ing to spend his entire life as a stateless person. "I hope my sons and grandsons don't have to suffer this pain," said Raj Kumar. Many Indian nationals received Nepali citizenship certificates in Birgunj oneand-a-half decades ago, he added. "However, all those who received the citizenship certificate were well connected Indians."



Indulge the New Year with friends and loved ones in an exquisite spread featuring our sumptuous selection of delightful delicacies.

13th April 2019 19:00 Hrs - 22:45 Hrs

Garden Terrace

Bao Xuan

Kakori

Why Arundhati Roy writes what she writes

The Booker winning author talks about staying cool during India's dark and testing times for writers

Dhading folk stage a rally

DHADING: The residents of Khahare and Aarughat, who will be affected by the construction of the mega Budhigandaki Hydropower Project, on Friday staged demonstrations in Dhadingbesi, the district headquarters of Dhading, ensation for their land and properties. They have demanded that the authorities fix the compensation for the Aarughat, Arkhet, Bishalnagar and Khahare bazaar areas. The 1,200MW national pride project is expected to affect more than 8,000 households in Dhading and Gorkha. (PR)



POST PHOTO: AASHRUTI TRIPATHY Arundhati Roy speaks at an event in Kathmandu on Friday. She is best known for her novel 'The God of little things,' and is also a

social activist. BHRIKUTI RAI

KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

Arundhati Roy keeps telling herself she is not going to write anymore. But then she keeps breaking her promise.

"And twenty years have gone by, one after the other," Roy told a gathering of international activists and artists in Kathmandu on Friday.

In a conversation with Indian filmmaker Sohini Ghosh, the Booker Prize winning author from India, said that legal cases, which have followed almost every essay she's penned in the last two decades, wear her down. "Every five or six years, a group of five male lawyers get together and file a criminal case against me," Roy told a packed room. The first time was in 1997,

The first time was in 1997, after her debut novel, The God of Small Things, was released. Back then, she had to answer charges of obscenity. In the years since, her political

essays about social and environmental justice, military occupation, and resistance have stirred the Indian establishment and led to myriad

charges, from contempt of court to sedition. And Roy isn't alone. In the last few years, a number of writers in India have faced similar or worse situations. Two years ago, Gauri Lankesh, a prominent Indian journalist critical of Hindu nationalist politics, was shot dead in the southern city of Bangalore, prompting international calls on India to safeguard freedom of expression.

Last year, Pen International, fr a worldwide association of writers, said, "In recent years" India's climate for free expresion has severely deteriorated, with writers, journalists and social media users finding determined.

themselves increasingly under attack" But the great sense of

But the great sense of urgency to "blow open mainstream consensus" is what

brings out the political essayist in her, Roy said during the conversation. Her collection of non-fiction writing from the last 20 years, compiled in a over a 1,000 pages, will be out this June.

"Non-fiction in my case has always come when I see the atmosphere darkening, kind of bullying consensus to the corporate press, the way it starts going after something," said Roy, after reading the prologue of her 2017 novel The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. The book, which is her second novel since the Booker-winning The God of Small Things, has been translated into dozens of languages.

"Of the 51 languages it is being translated to, one is Nepali," Roy told the cheering audience in the room.

Nepali artist Irina Giri was among the hundreds of people in the hall who watched Roy speak eloquently about her writing and the issues closest to her heart. Giri says it was surreal to see one of her favourite authors in person. After the nearly two-hour long conversation ended with a standing ovation, Giri followed Roy to the hotel lobby where dozens of people had lined up to get their books autographed.

"I got my book signed for the family," said Giri, who had bought a copy of The God of Small Things just that morning.

Before leaving the stage, Ghosh said we needed to "rewrite the recipe for happiness in these dark times" and asked Roy to read an excerpt from her first political essay, "The End of Imagination:" "The only dream worth having, I told her, is to dream that you will live while you're alive and die only when you're dead."

The audience broke into applause, and watched Arundhati Roy take a bow and leave the stage with her unforgettable smile.

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'Inspiring' protester becomes symbol of resistance for Sudanese women

The woman at a Khartoum demonstration 'was trying to give hope,' says eyewitness

JASON BURKE

he image is striking: a young woman, alone, standing above the crowd, urging them on with songs of revolution. Taken on Monday night in the centre of Khartoum, as tens of thousands thronged the roads in front of the heavily guarded complex housing the headquarters of the military and the feared intelligence services, the picture of the woman in white with gold circular earrings has become an icon of a protest.

Lana Haroun told CNN she had taken the picture.

"She was trying to give everyone hope and positive energy and she did it," she said. "She was representing all Sudanese women and girls and she inspired every woman and girl at the sit-in. She was telling the story of Sudanese women ... she was perfect." She added: "We have a voice. We can say what we want.

We need a better life and to stay in a better place." She said when she saw the photo on her phone, "I immediately thought: this is my revolution and we are the future.

That the woman in white has become such a symbol in a country that has long known systematic repression of women by the state has surprised some observers.

But women have played a central role in the demonstrations in Sudan in recent months, with men often in a minority among the crowds calling for president Omar al-Bashir to step down.

Many well-known women activists have been detained since the first wave of protests at the end of last year.

"This regime could not crush down women and women's ability to fight for change and freedom... Sudanese women's resistance and resilience overcome this suppression," said Dr Sara Abdelgalil, head of the UK branch of the Sudan Doctors' Union, who moved to Britain in 2001 but is in contact with protest leaders.

A Human Rights Watch report described how national security services targeted women activists during crackdowns. The "public order police" arrest women and girls for their choice of dress-such as wearing trousers or exposing their hair-or for merely riding in a car with members of the opposite sex. Corporal punishments such as flogging and stoning for "morality crimes"—including



Variety

The women leading the calls for revolution in Sudan

adultery-have been used disproportionately on women and girls, the group said.

There is a long tradition of women leading from the front during waves of unrest in Sudan. One observer in Sudan said the unidentified young woman whose image went viral was wearing "the clothing worn by our mothers and grandmothers in the 60s, 70s, and 80s ... while they marched the streets demonstrating against previous military dictatorships"

Sudan adopted sharia law in 1983, but has only ever implemented it haphazardly.

Under Bashir, who came to power with the help of Islamists in 1989, some rules have been tightened. According to Sudanese non-governmental groups, some 15,000 women were sentenced to flogging in 2016.

The protests began in December when the government tripled the price of bread and quickly spread

Jehanne Henry, who works on Sudan for the international NGO Human Rights Watch, said women had played a significant role historically in political activism in the country, adding that it was difficult to tell if they were more prominent in the current protests than in previous unrest.

"For many women this regime is synonymous with all types of repression ... It is not surprising that they are seeing this as an opportunity to change things that matters to them," she said.

One difference with previous unrest is the role of social media in organising and disseminating images of the protests. This has often highlighted the role of women, who have been beaten, teargassed and attacked. So too has the work of illustrator Alaa Satir, who has portrayed groups of women protesters under the slogan "we are the revolution'

Nemat Malik, an 80-year-old nurse and a university professor in Khartoum, said she was pleased to see so many women-particularly students-taking part.

"This regime is a lot of harassment and oppression for women especially. Women have suffered a lot. They look at how you dress and they can give you lashes. That's why we should be very much interested in overthrowing this regime," she said. 4

-© 2019 The Guardian

Astral Reflections

ARIES [March 21-April 19]

Your last week of dominance, so take advantage-start pro-jects, enlist helpers, ask favours, inspire others. You'll be quite alkative, restless and travel-prone. Take a risk—you're on a superb one-day winning streak. Tackle chores. Luck is mixed, so proceed with caution. Dress, eat sensibly. Relationships confront you with joy and success. You might even fall madly in love, or spark this in another. But don't let gushing emotions nudge you into a confrontation. Dive into life's mysteries. Invest, alter your lifestyle, seek medical attention

TAURUS [April 20-May 20]

This is your last week of weariness, of feeling lonely or under the weather. Get some deep rest now if you can. The things that accompany a low energy period—government liaison, charity

LIBRA [September 23-October 22]

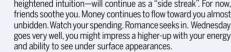
Relationships continue to be your top priority. You can merge with others in love, business, or politics, etc. Be diplomati co-operative. Others hold the power, for now. A wish might come true involving a bond or travel, or both. Get out, approach others. You'll feel popular, joyous about living. A pot of gold, in emotional terms, could await you. A Leo or Sagittarius might be involved. Rest, ponder your life and plan how to reach your next goal(s). Your energy returns so does your charisma, effectiveness and sense of timing.

SCORPIO [October 23-November 21]

It's your last week of work. Scorpio-might as well just plough into it. Your efforts could lift you up another rung on the career or status ladder, a splendid day. Continue to protect your

Receys ____ Believe It or Not!





GEMINI [May 21-June 20]

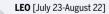


Have fun while you can, Gemini. Your popularity, optimism and extroversion remain high. Flirt, seek adventure, and like minds. Next week begins a month of guietude, withdrawal and low energy. Despite this, your optimism continues- so does your heightened sexual magnetism. You'll actually grow more talkative. Also, that quietude will be disturbed fairly often by friends and well-wishers. But for now, embrace life and her benevolence. Higher-ups continue to like you this week.

CANCER [June 21-July 22]



Remain ambitious. Cancer. This is your last week of heavy status/career pressures and opportunities, but now to mid-May your career will continue to entwine with head office government departments, or institutions. Continue to give physical dangers a wide berth—you're vulnerable. This is your last week of legal, travel and educational "favour"-so start something here, now, or let it go for some time. Expect discussions with higher-ups this week to early May. Chase money. Relationships reach agreement. Neither day is good for buying machinery



This is your last week of fully embracing/pondering legal matters, higher education, far travel, publishing, cultural and social rites, and love. Especially love. If you're in love, don't just give your heart, give your life. You might meet someone now (in a group). If married, dive into social events, hold a party or attend one. You start a month of work and career ambitions Still, a social, popular, optimistic streak will accompany you. A streak of wisdom, understanding, compassion, learning, ideas and perhaps travel tickets speeds.



VIRGO [August 23-September 22]

Soon, enlightenment and rational thoughts will return to rule your mind's nest, but for this week, let your intuition overrule 'logic". Mysteries, secrets, uncovering treasures, research medical needs, the deep, usually unseen forces of nature, sex/ lust, power and finances-these continue to fill this week, so embrace them-good outcomes likely! Bosses, parents remain testy, impatient so step lightly, smile and bear it

health all week. Eat and dress sensibly, reduce alcohol intake You might need to deal with a semi-serious health issue. If you have pain, see a doctor. You can fire up your sexual side, perhaps with a co-worker. You'll feel optimistic, playful and flirtatious. But don't chase money, nor spend carelessly this day.

SAGITTARIUS [November 22-December 21]

It's your last week of romance, but not of intense relationships. Means the starry-eyed bliss will dissolve soon, but the attraction/intensity will continue, at least to mid-May. During this time, avoid confrontations. On the positive side, at least two solid opportunities will open to you, same period. Both will have some connection to love, beauty, creative works, or a gamble. One might involve relocation. Sunday's splendid, made for lovers, travellers, adventurers-charge forth.

CAPRICORN [December 22-January 19]

The general focus lies on home, domesticity, security, real estate, Mother Nature, sales territory and other basics. Sunday, you can take one or two great, successful steps in secrets, finances, power plays, lust, medical issues, heightened intuition, commitment and consequence. Act, seek commit! You can succeed with a real estate purchase but be aware that this property will involve rather substantial work or repairs. A compassionate, understanding mood flows over vou. Be ambitious.

AQUARIUS [January 20-February 18]

This is your last week of easy but somewhat inconsequential chores. Finish up all errands, mail-outs, calls, paperwork. A streak of romance burns its way through your heart. Your gift of gab (or writing) plays a significant role-so might short trips. You could meet your equal but opposite. If unattached, one you meet this day could develop into a major, life-affecting relationship. Your social group plays a strong role. An impulsive or adventurous approach could spell failure

PISCES [February 19-March 20]

This is your last week of focusing strongly on money, earnings, purchases, memory, rote learning, and sexual friendliness Pisces. Sunday's work will succeed splendidly, and can both enhance your career standing and swell your bank account. Take a chance, a bigger step, believe in expanded horizons. Your home will be strife-prone, active, feisty. Be diplomatic. Tuesday brings relationships, too, but now more gently, and your dealings can even open opportunity's door.

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| 5:30 | Radhe Radhe | 11:00 | Headline News |
| 6:00 | Jeevan Bigyan | 11:05 | Samkon |
| 6:30 | Jyotish Manthan | 12:00 | Kantipur |
| 6:40 | Sky Shop | | Samachar |
| 7:00 | Kantipur | 12:30 | Harke Haldar |
| | Samachar | 13:00 | Headline News |
| 8:00 | Kantipur News | 13:05 | Quiz Mania |
| 8:30 | Rise N Shine | 14:00 | Headline News |
| 9:00 | Headline News | 14:05 | Nepali Movie |
| 9:05 | Surshala Idol | 15:00 | Headline News |
| | Junior | 15:05 | Nepali Movie |
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19:00 Kathmandu Beat 05 Games People Play 20:00 Security & Crime :00 Kantipur Diary Diarv 20:05 Rock Machine :00 District Diary 21:00 Kantipur Diary 21:25 News Maker Of :05 Celebrity Hour :00 International Diarv The Day :05 Kick Start 21:30 Hello Mithila :00 Kantipur Diary 23:00 Show Time 00:00 Top Ten-Rep. :00 Health & 00:10 Maa Ani Mero Education Dairy Katha :05 Quick Fix 02:00 Non-Stop Nepali :00 District Diarv Songs :05 Music Lounge 03:00 Non-Stop Hindi :00 Jyotish Darshan Songs :30 Kantipur Dairy 04:00 Non -Stop Bhajans





QFX LABIM Mall: 08:15/ 11:30/ 20:30 QFX Civil Mall: 11:30/ 20:00 QFX Chhaya Center: 14:30/ 19:45

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The return of Lil Buddha



>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Hip-hop in Nepal can arguably be dated back to 1993, when Girish Khatiwada and Pranil Timalsina formed GP, and a year later, released the first Nepali rap album Meaningless Rap. The 10-track album was greatly influenced by the stylistic trappings of East Coast hip-hop-primarily from New York in the United States, the birthplace of the movement. The album was full of rap cliches-drugs, love and braggadocio, as on the track 'Ma yesto chu'. But they were also singing about politics and social issues. The album went on to sell more than 18,000 copies.

"Their song, 'Malai vote deu', was the first song about activism that I had heard," says Sacar. The song was a satire about politicians and how they make false promises before elections. "I remember those songs as my earliest inspiration to rap music."

Following GP's unprecedented commercial other artists started to emerge in the Nepali rap community. By the early 2000s, there was a fully-fledged hip-hop community in Kathmandu, and they called their brand of music 'NepHop'. Artists like Nirnaya Da' NSK, Nepsydaz, Sammy Samrat, Madzone, DA 96, 9double7, Jehovah, and The Unity were getting regular play on the radio and on television, and they were selling out concerts But in the years that followed, and despite the long list of Nepali rappers, the movement failed to break through. It was almost as if rap was a blip on Kathmandu's musical radar-there and gone. Most rappers either stayed underground or stopped rapping. Others left the country for college or to work. The few that continued were playing to a handful of loyal fans. It was only in 2011 that Nepali rap saw a resurgence. With one music video, Yama Buddha brought rap back into the mainstream and this time, it exploded. Yama Buddha's video for his song Saathi, off of his mixtape, gained thousands of views and elevated him to overnight rap star. In 2012, Sacar had just graduated from high school and rap was fast becoming his obses sion. He was recording himself delivering free verses over Dr Dre beats, and even filmed his first single, with the help of his sister and uploaded it to YouTube. That video got a measly 2,000 views

professionally."

He had moved on from the staple hard and classic rock repertoire of the young Kathmandu man and was now listening religiously to rap. His biggest influencers were Nas, Tupac, Big L, Cassidy and KRS-One—all from the 'old school' of the rap game-while Kendrick Lamar, Dizzy Wright, Wax and Herbal T are among the contemporary and underground rappers he admires.

Later that year, while at a cafe for a smoke, Sacar ran into Yama Buddha. They were introduced by a common friend. Sacar knew Yama Buddha and although he acted calm when they first met, he said he was 'impressed and had a good feeling.'

In early 2013, a few months after they met, Yama Buddha, in collaboration with three friends, started Raw Barz, a freestyle battle league where rappers would go head-to-head against each other in insults. Raw Barz soon turned into a platform for young Nepali rap artists to show up, perform and test their

he got to know him well.

In February 2015, Sacar left for Australia to continue his studies. He enrolled at the University of Technology Sydney for Information Technology, but a year later, he dropped out and started working full-time delivering mail. He liked his job, as he owned a bike and could listen to music all day. He also had occasional gigs at bars and restaurants. Sacar was busy.

At the end of 2016, things went sour between Sacar and his then girlfriend, which he said began affecting his emotional health. The Post reached out to the former girlfriend but she refused to comment or be identified.

On January 14, 2017, Sacar returned to his apartment from work, only to hear the news Yama Buddha's suicide at his home in London. The entire Nephop community was shaken. And Sacar lost his mind.

Sacar was suffering the emotional hurt of his failed relationship, and the mental pressure of living and working in Australia. Yama was the broke the camel's back.

mixtape, Tathastu, with the track 'Sapana', a remake of Yama Buddha's original.

"To me, Sacar is a rebel. His cover of Yama Buddha's 'Sapana' was what caught my ear," says 20-year-old Gaurav Phuyal, a frequent commenter on Sacar's Instagram who's already pre-ordered his new album. "I love the reggae vibes in songs like 'Ganja nation'."

Although Sacar's album was out, he was still on drugs. His parents, desperate back home, requested his friends to take him to a hospital. Radha even acquired a visa in two days and flew to Sydney to take care of her son. Sacar was medicated but even the doctors weren't sure what, if anything, was wrong with him.

"They said he might have bipolar disorder," says Radha. "But they couldn't confirm it."

Sacar was prescribed medication for depression and eventually discharged. He returned to Nepal with his mother later that year. But back home, another crisis awaited

100,000, says Radha.

fame on video.

brand, managed by YB Records, which primarily does "rap stuff"—releasing songs organising rap battles, freestyle sessions and hosting interviews. Sacar wants to "take over" the kingdom that is hip-hop in Nepal.

His process is regimental and old-fashioned. Sacar has his own flag, literally, and an album that he says will be circulated (sold) like currency.

This new album, Shree Panch, was announced in December 2018 on Sacar's Instagram. He has a unique concept for the new album-he's printed a one-rupee note with King Birendra on the left and himself on the right, and a QR-code on the back, encouraging buyers to directly download the album.

"I love how Sacar is focused on his dream. He messed up a little when he was in Sydney but I think the pressure that international students, particularly one with a background like his, might've taken a toll on him," says Prisma Aryal, a music student and a long-time fan. "The way he can smoothly transition from pop jazz innuer His livestreamed rants had reached a wider songs to rap shows that he's tremendously audience than he'd imagined. He'd railed multi-talented." against the prime minister and other politi-But not everyone likes Sacar's new direction. His critics, and even fans, feel "less concians, leading the police to file a cybercrime case against him. If convicted, he could have nected to the song as the lyrics were wack and received five years jail time and a fine of Rs had no substance," says Phuyal. Sacar's constant cry to "save Nephop" had fans expecting Sacar's parents argued that their son that he'd be more "like Yama." wasn't mentally stable but this meant that Nephop isn't as popular as hip-hop is in the he'd have to undergo a medical evaluation. west, but the community is growing, especial-Sacar was hospitalised at the mental hospital ly since the Raw Barz series. For rap aficionain Patan for a week. But it wasn't doctors who dos, Sacar lies somewhere in the middlegathered outside his room every morning-it there are artists better than him and artists was the group of female interns who apparworse than him. He's back, he's better, but ently knew of Sacar and were fans of his some listeners say he's not the best yet. music. They mobbed him during his stay in "He's better than he was before, but like in Patan, asking him for autographs and King of NepHop, he gets outshone by others,³ selfies. Radha captured her son's newfound says Dirghayu Shah, a rap fan. "But if you're into the genre then he's like another brick in Sacar was eventually found not guilty since the wall, nothing special." he'd been under the influence and had not Sacar has plans to make the industry bigbeen mentally stable. But the whole process ger and better but most importantly, he aims had taken a toll on him. For most of 2018, to 'pave roads' for emerging rappers, just like Yama Buddha wanted to. His time in Australia Sacar stayed home, waking up late, taking a shower, and then sleeping all day. Healing helped him acquire a new perspective. took time, and Sacar invested almost a year in From the rooftop lounge in Dillibazar, Sacar getting better. But when 2019 dawned, he looks out at a panorama of his city while the knew he had to get back into the game. wind blows out his cigarette. He says he looks Sacar registered a new record label, YB forward to many of his plans, especially his (Yama Buddha) Records, and has geared up to Nepal tour, which he hopes will promote release a new album under it. NepHop in every corner of the country. "I wasn't silent, I was working in silence," "I don't really see a future for Sacar in rap," he says. "I had it all planned out because Lil Radha, his mother, says. "But then Buddha had to build his empire.' again, I don't see my headstrong son doing He came up with the King of NepHop anything else." *

"It was laughable compared to the views I get today," says Sacar. "But it was that little success that told me to start rapping

A few months after their first meeting, Sacar received a message from Yama Buddha, inviting him to take part in the first season of Raw Barz.

The scene is set: Sacar on one side and Uniq Poet on the other. They're surrounded by a hooting, booing audience. Yama Buddha motions for quiet. They toss a coin and Uniq goes first

This was the first time Sacar met Utsaha 'Uniq Poet' Joshi, who he'd go on to collaborate with later. Although they went to the same school, they had never known each other

"I had battled before, but it was Sacar's first time," says Joshi. "Then, it was easy for me to tackle him, but now he's gotten quite good at it.'

The first few days, Sacar sneaked out of the house to attend the event. Later, as his videos went viral, his mother learned of his activities.

"I was fine with the rap, but I asked him to stop using such language," says Radha. "But he told me this is how it is." Since it was a rap battle, insults and coarse language were common at Raw Barz

Sacar's father, Keshab Adhikari, was also supportive.

By the end of the first season of Raw Barz, Sacar had won a small but growing fan following and had built connections with the Nepali rap community, especially Yama Buddha, or 'Yama dai' as he calls him. Yama Buddha was a mentor to many newcomers in the rap game and Sacar, too, placed him on a pedestal once

"I stopped caring about anything, nothing mattered anymore," says Sacar.

He started doing psychedelics and hard drugs. And within a few weeks, he started going online on Facebook, streaming videos of him spouting conspiracy theories and asking for hits on other rappers. He was angry, harsh and not in the right state of mind. He blamed other rappers for Yama Buddha's suicide and even abused his own sister. His mother, back in Nepal, started receiving phone calls and visits from friends and relatives. Sacar had lost control.

"I remember doing those things," says Sacar. "But I can't figure out how I was doing it. I just know that I wasn't sane."

....

Sacar admits he is stubborn. Once he plans to do something, he says he doesn't listen to anyone, especially when he's intoxicated and out of his mind. In the midst of his breakdown, Sacar somehow managed the time to record a new album. He felt the need to complete his dream of 'paving the roads of NepHop', abandoned halfway due to the death of Yama Buddha.

In 2017, he acquired a new stage name, Lil Buddha as a tribute to Yama Buddha.

"In hip-hop, the day you name yourself, you become a man," he says. "It's not about the gender, it's about an attitude."

In August of that year, he dropped his first



Sacar with Yama Buddha, the rapper who was a mentor to many newcomers.

"In hip-hop, the day you name yourself, you become a man," says Sacar. "It's not about the gender, it's about an attitude."



Sacar with Girish Khatiwada of GP, Nepal's pioneering rap duo.

PHOTOS COURTESY: SACAR ADHIKAR

The artist who uses Mithila painting to challenge social norms

Ranju Yadav's paintings mock and satire what are considered society's norms: gender inequality and the caste system

TSERING NGODUP LAMA

hen Ranju Yadav was a ninth grade student in Rajbiraj, an incident from a nearby village made a lasting impression on her. A woman was murdered by her in-laws because her parents had not paid enough of a dowry.

"I cried when I heard that news. It disturbed me so much," says Yadav. "I remember wondering what could be done to stop such murders

In 2013, 27-year-old Yadav completed her first-ever professional Mithila painting. In the middle of the painting is a man on a scale being weighed against several boxes, a car, a motorcycle, and jewellery-things that are normally given as part of a dowry. In the four corners of the painting are four more illustrations-a woman getting ready for marriage; her marriage ceremony; her in-laws demanding more dowry; then torturing her and then setting her on fire. Yadav named the painting 'Dowry Killing', and put it up as part of her first exhibition, in 2017. The painting, Yadav says, depicts a reality that's prevalent in many parts of the country.

Born in Thalha village in Saptari district, Yadav spent her childhood watching her grandmother, mother and aunt do Mithila painting. "They would paint on the walls and floors of our house," she says. "When I was old enough, I started painting with them."

When Yadav was 12, she moved to Rajbiraj to live with her uncle and aunt-their house was made of concrete.

"I was used to painting on mud walls and floors, and my uncle's city house had no mud walls," she says. "Luckily, the house's front area had a small mud-plastered section, and that was where I would paint. I would make colours from tree leaves, cow and buffalo dung, and coal. I would also decorate my school copies with elaborate Mithila drawings.

Every time she started painting, Yadav says, she would lose track of time.

But despite her interest in painting, she had never imagined that she'd become a painter later in life. "I wanted to become a singer/dancer. I loved watching dancing and singing reality shows, and I wanted the life of the participants I saw on TV," she says.

As Yadav grew older, she outgrew her fascination with reality shows. She studied to become a teacher and got a bachelor's degree in education in 2012, and in 2016, she completed her Master's in Arts, specialising in Maithili.

"What I wanted out of my life kept changing, but one thing that remained constant through all these years was my love for painting," says Yadav.

In 2010, Yadav got married and moved to



Ranju Yadav's paintings being exhibited during her first solo exhibition 'The colours of change' held at Nepal Art Council from March 30 to April 5.

Kathmandu. "I had started making Mithila paintings on cloth, and when I moved to Kathmandu, I brought them with me," she says. She placed one of her paintings on the TV table in her new home in Kathmandu.

"Even in Kathmandu, I continued painting, but even then I never really thought about pursuing painting as a career. It was something I loved doing during my leisure hours," she says

But things changed when she met Ajit Sah, a senior Mithila artist, in 2013. "Ajit Sah visited my family, and when he saw the tablecloth on the TV table, he was very impressed. He encouraged me to pursue art seriously and even agreed to guide me," she says. That year, she finally started painting on paper.

Under Sah's mentorship, Yadav started to improve. "When Ajit moved to the US, he would teach and train me via Skype. I would show him my work and he would suggest where I needed to make improvements. I owe a lot to him," says Yadav.

When Yadav had her first group exhibition in 2017, where she exhibited her 'Dowry Killing', Mithila painting had already become hugely popular. But according to her, she was the first Mithila painter to use the artform to comment on a prevalent social reality.

"As a 16-year-old girl in Rajbiraj, I cried feeling helpless when I heard about a dowry killing. Almost 16 years after that incident, I was using an artform that I loved to spread awareness about an issue that I feel strongly about," says Yadav.

In 2018, she was part of a group of Nepali artists who travelled to Dhaka, Bangladesh to take part in a Nepal Art Fair. That year, she became the first person from her village to travel abroad.

"Many in the village asked me how I had travelled so far without my husband," says Yadav. "Even in 2018, for many in my village, it was unthinkable for a woman to go abroad without being accompanied by a male member of the family.'

In many of her paintings, Yadav mocks and satires what are considered society's norms: gender inequality and the caste system.

"Having grown up in Rajbiraj, I have heard deeply upsetting stories of girls' parents being forced to spend huge amounts of money on dowries, dowry killings and sex-selective abortion," says Yadav. "Through my paintings, I raise awareness against these practices.'

One of the paintings in her first solo exhibition, which was recently held from March 30 to April 5, was titled 'Confronting Challenge'. In the painting, a woman wearing a bright red sari is stopping a bull by grabbing its horns. The painting, Yadav says, shows a woman's strength-physical and psychological.

In another painting titled 'Education is Power', there are four illustrations of a woman working in an office, using a telescope, piloting an airplane, and giving a speech. The centre of the painting is a woman reading a book.

"If you provide girls with an education, they, too, can become officers, scientists, pilots, and politicians," says Yadav.

Another painting titled 'Disaster Tourism' mocks the government's indifference towards those whose daily lives are upended by natural disasters. In the painting, several helicop-

ters hover above a flooded village where people are shown sitting on the roofs of houses inundated with water, livestock and people are wading in the depths. The people in the helicopters, says Yadav, represent politicians who visit disaster sites but don't actually do enough to help the victims.

The paintings that Yadav exhibited in her

solo exhibition were all made in the last three years. "I have spent 12 to 15 hours a day just painting, and one painting takes me anywhere between two weeks to a month to finish," says Yadav. "To be able to raise awareness against issues that you strongly believe in and also have an audience is empowering.



More women should have such platforms." *

Five damaging myths about video games-let's shoot 'em up

PETE ETCHELLS

ideo games are one of the most misunderstood forms of entertainment. In one sense, it's easy to see why: if you haven't had much interaction with them, watching someone play one can be a pretty unsettling experience. Gamers can often give the impression that they're glued to the screen, absorbed in what feels like the digital equivalent of junk food. At best, it seems like a pointless thing to do; at worst,

we worry that games are socially isolating, or actively harmful. If we take a little time to uncover the true nature of video games, though, we find a very different story playing out...

1. 'Video games cause us to become more violent'

One of the longest-standing tropes about video games is that violent ones-like Call of Duty or Fortnite-can cause players to become more aggressive in the real world. It's a worry that becomes acutely salient in the context of mass shootings. Video games often take centre stage in the ensuing media analysis of such atrocities, with insinuations that not only do the perpetrators play violent games, but that they were driven to the act because they play games.

Such accusations often fall flat in the face of subsequent forensic analysis. Indeed current scientific evidence suggests that the link between games and aggression is actually weak. In a recent study published in Molecular Psychiatry participants were asked to play a violent game (Grand Theft Auto V), a non-violent game (The Sims 3) or no game at all, every day for a period of two months. Using an array of questionnaires and behavioural measures to test aggression, sexist attitudes and mental health issues, the study's authors found that playing the violent video game had no significant negative effects on any of these measures.

In a similar vein, research published this year in Royal Society Open Science showed that in a survey of more than 2,000 teenagers and carers in the UK, there was no evidence that playing violent games caused the teens to either become more aggressive or less social.

Two studies aren't going to give us the whole story, of course, but the emerging picture from the research literature is that video games don't appear to have a meaningful impact on aggressive behaviour, and certainly aren't the root cause of mass acts of societal violence.

2. 'Video games are addictive'

In the summer of 2018, the World Health Organization formally included "gaming disorder" in its diagnostic manual, the International Classification of Diseases, for the first time. It was a decision that ignited a furious debate in the academic community. One group of scholars argued that such a diagnostic label will provide greater access to treatment and financial help for those experiencing genuine harm from playing video games. Others (myself included) argued that the decision was premature; that the scientific evidence for gaming addiction simply wasn't accurate or meaningful enough (yet).

Part of the problem lies in the checklists used to determine whether a disorder exists. Historically, the criteria



for gaming addiction were derived from those used for other sorts of addiction. While that might be a reasonable place to start, it might not tell us the whole story about what the unique aspects of gaming addiction look like. For example, one of the standard criteria is that people become preoccupied with games, or start playing them exclusively, instead of engaging in other hobbies. However, these don't sit very well as a benchmark for what you might consider to be "harmful" engagement, because games themselves (unlike abused drugs, say) are not inherently harmful.

Also, using this as a criterion has the potential to inflate the prevalence of addiction. While there will be people out there for whom gaming can become problematic, the chances are that this is a small group.

Moreover, some research suggests that gaming addiction is fairly short-lived. Data looking at players over a six-month period has shown that of those who initially exhibited the diagnostic criteria for addiction, none met the threshold at the end of the study.

This is not to say there isn't anything about games to be worried about. Increasingly, and particularly in the case of mobile games, gambling-like mechanisms in the form of in-app purchases and loot boxes are being used as sources of income. Here, some emerging research suggests a correlation between people who spend money purchasing loot boxes to acquire new in-game items and scores on measures of problematic gambling. This work is preliminary, and we don't yet know the causal direction

of the relationship, but it points to the fact that there are some aspects of games marketing and monetisation that we need to be wary of.

3. 'Gaming leads to social isolation'

The stereotypical view of a gamer is a pasty white teenager playing alone in his or her bedroom. It's understandable that something about that situation seems unhealthy or unnatural. But this view usually comes from a misunderstanding of what video games really are. Games, since their inception, have been designed as social experiences. Whereas in the first 30 or so years of their existence this was restricted to people playing multiplayer games with each other in person, the advent of high-speed, ubiquitous internet access means increasingly that those interactions are moving online. Rather than isolating people, online gaming has the potential to bring us together in myriad new ways, to form close-knit communities based around common interests and hobbies.

Take Mats Steen, for example. Mats was born with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a devastating disease that causes progressive muscle deterioration. As he grew up, to the outside world-to his family, even-he appeared to become isolated and withdrawn. After he died in 2014 at the age of 25, a different picture emerged—one in which Mats lived a full and happy life in the online world of Azeroth, the setting for Blizzard's long-running game World of Warcraft. Far from being alone, Mats was surrounded by friends in this world, and they clubbed together to travel to Norway for his funeral.

For Mats, like so many other people around the world, the value in playing video games was not just in their ability to help him escape, but in their ability to help us connect with each other.

4. 'It's a meaningless waste of time'

I often get this criticism as a games researcher—couldn't I be doing something better with my time? There's a certain dissonance to the notion, in a way: somehow, we are able simultaneously to worry that games are the root cause of many of society's problems, yet also consider them to be a pointless or vacuous thing to do. Why play them when you could go outside, or engage in more culturally enriching forms of art? But this comes from a misunderstanding about the creative power that games possess. They provide us with an opportunity to experience our world and other fantastical places in a way no other form of media comes close to.

As novelist and games designer Naomi Alderman outlined in a 2013 radio essay: "While all art forms can elicit powerful emotions, only games can make their audience feel the emotion of agency. A novel can make you feel sad, but only a game can make you feel guilty for your actions.

Video games place you at the centre of the story—you are an active participant, instead of a passive observer. They offer us a safe place to interrogate and test the emotional consequences of our actions. Far from being a meaningless waste of time, then, games help us explore what it means to be human, to explore notions of love and loss, and to allow us to travel to far-off incredible places, to become incredible people-all from the comfort of our own home

5. 'It's purely entertainment'

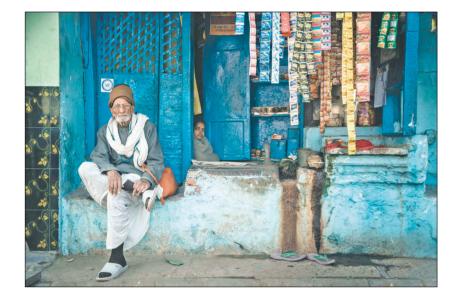
Video games, obviously, were a product of scientific development. Increasingly, that relationship is becoming symbiotic-in part because of their power to draw us in, video games are being leveraged in the course of scientific study. The best examples of this achieve two things: they act as fertile ground for collecting scientific data, while at the same time being an entertaining game experience.

An example of this is the recent mobile game Sea Hero Quest. Developed in 2016, Sea Hero Quest is a living, breathing virtual laboratory where the game acts as an experiment. Players are tasked with memorising a map, and then navigating a cartoonish fishing boat around a series of waterways, visiting a set of buoys in a specific order. That data is being used by scientists at University College London and the University of East Anglia to understand how spatial navigation abilities vary across the globe, and across the lifespan.

This sort of knowledge is crucial in developing a deeper understanding of how such abilities start to decline and go wrong in the case of neurodegenerative disorders like Alzheimer's disease. Within six months of launch, the game had been downloaded by nearly 4 million people from every country in the world, and the hope is that in the future, data from the game will help inform new approaches towards diagnosing and treating dementia. * -©2019 The Gu

Expression







Vitality of Varanasi

PHOTOS & TEXT: ROBIC UPADHYAY

PHOTOS & TEXT: ROBIC UPADHYAY he streets of India never cease to amaze me— their sights and smells, their sounds and silenc-es. In the city of Varanasi, there is spirituality, timelessness, culture, honesty and absurdity. From the holy banks of the Ganges to its uptown malls, the city brims with chaos and contradiction. On one hand, Varanasi is an assault to the senses; on the other, it is food for thought. Each evening, as the sun's dying rays reflect off the expansive waters of the Ganges, hundreds of devo-tees and tourists gather on the *ghats* of the old Banaras for the evening *aarti*. This everyday ceremo-ny reverberates with hymns, prayers, rituals and a palpable sense of spirituality. The *aarti*—an ornate oil lamp, lined with dozens of flames burning—is offered to the mother of all rivers, in an orchestra-like synchrony. like synchrony.

The mornings are punctuated by a cacophony of Siberian migratory birds that spread their wings to begin a journey spanning thousands of kilometres

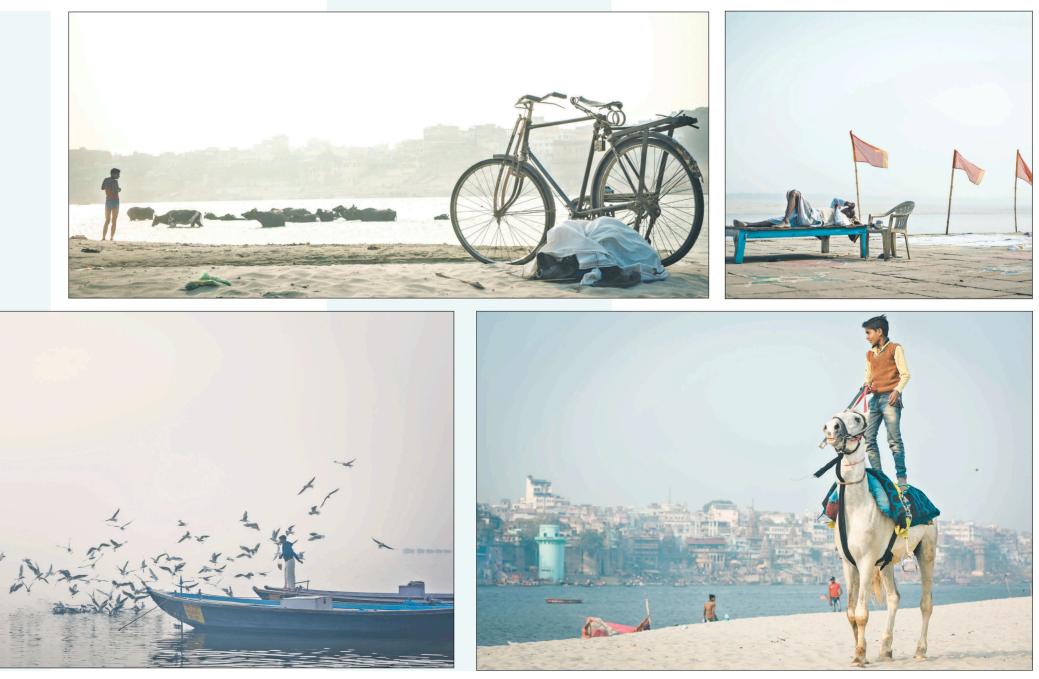
begin a journey spanning thousands of kilometres with the onset of winter every year. Looking at the river Ganges, one laments that it has been contaminated with toxic, human waste. Yet, people take a dip in it and even drink its waters. May be, if you have enough faith and conviction, you can actually transcend the filth. The most frustrating part about the *ghats* are the innumerable stalls making a profit out of the faiths of thousands of pilgrims. Devotees looking around for a spiritual experience or just for a quiet time along the banks of this calm river are constantly be pestered by annoying salesmen who want to sell you everything—from *pooja* parapherna-





lia to *ganja*

Caught between chaos and solace, tradition and modernity, motion and stagnation, spontaneity and eternity, life and death, Varanasi is a city that make you wonder, if not wiser.



Talking into the night

Sometimes, conversations touch on more than words. They become fingers, hands held carelessly and the smell of bodies that seek familiarity.

PRATEEBHA TULADHAR

t has started to spray. We're about to step out for lunch. We're both starving. Let's borrow this huge umbrella, I say. I pick an abandoned umbrella from the reception, the largest one available. It's enormous, the size of a restaurant shade, black with an orange lining. We step under the umbrella and it's like stepping inside a room. We start walking together. Slowly. This is nice, you say. Yes, I say. But I can't tell if you mean the size of the umbrella or the rain. I also want to ask if you mean it's nice that we're walking under the same umbrella in the rain. But I don't ask. How do you ask a stranger such questions?

There's a brief awkward silence. I'm perturbed by your presence. I can't tell if we're strangers, because there was something in the moment I plopped myself across the table from you in our very first meeting that dissipated all strangeness. I had walked into a crowded restaurant and found you sitting alone at a small table, waiting. You apologised on behalf of the table. I apologised for my lateness and we laughed and continued talking.

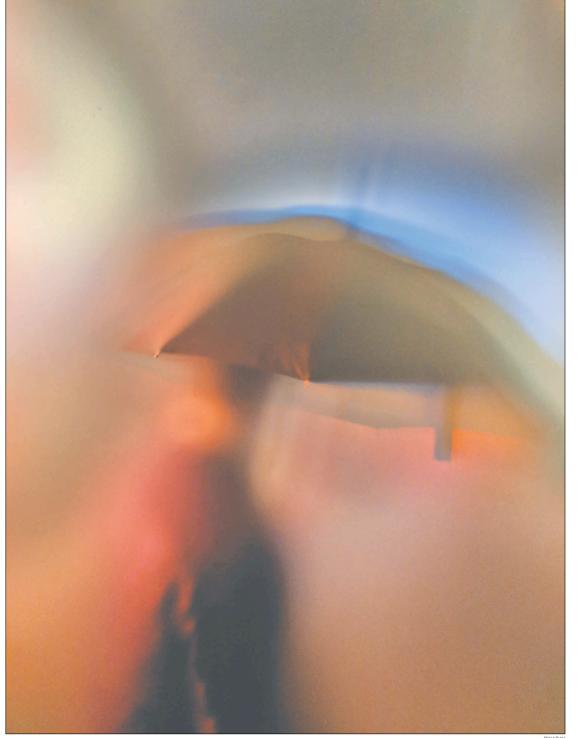
We spent the evening eating, talking, walking, then drinking on a deserted terrace. The bile from my past that usually spills out in contrived laughter had caught an honest flow that evening. I was telling you of my fears, the sufferings and trage-

dies of those I love, and the abject lack of want. You listened. We caught on a tone. We both spilled on the terrace of that abandoned restaurant in Durbar Marg. And as we spilled, our silences punctuated the rivulets of our minds like little barrages, holding together a sea that cannot be contained.

Later, walking down the deserted stairway, I felt like you'd almost stopped for a moment to say you wanted to pause. But you hadn't. I think I had imagined it.

As we walked into the night, at one point, you stopped by the pavement and pushed scattered pebbles back into the flowerbed from the slabs of stones, arranging them neatly. Your toenails, painted cream, shone in the semi-darkness from under the strap of your sandals. And then I asked, OCD? You looked up at me, smiled and told me to shut up, and we both laughed again.

You took sips from the green beer bottle as we walked. I didn't know if it was okay for us to do that, but I liked it that you appeared so liberated, putting the bottle to your mouth and looking up at the sky. Then, two policemen caught up and warned us about the bottle. I apologised quickly, more in an attempt to protect you than to voice regret. And my thoughts brimmed on fear. Were they going to touch us? After announcing a list of prescribed behaviour for good girls, they left us to our beer bottle and the endless pavements. In a small way, we



now shared a crime. And maybe it made us partners in our feeble act of defiance

You continued to drink from your bottle and I continued to walk alongside you. The streets were quiet and we permeated them, even with the smallness of our existence. Specs in a universe.

The evening was strangely familiar and surreal. I had never before fallen headlong like a shooting star

into an abyss, one where I could finally bury all my demons and ghosts, and still have them accepted as a part of me. It felt like the monster in me had risen that day in greed, a greed for the quietness of a conversation.

The evening was strangely familiar and surreal. I felt like I had never before fallen headlong like a shooting star into an abyss, one where I could finally bury all my demons and ghosts

The tone we conversed in was not jarring to my ears, like my own words often are to me.

For a moment, I wondered if I had mistaken myself for someone else. I was walking beside you, such a tender young person, offering to you only my endless years of meaninglessness. What I saw in you that evening was a reflection of my own brimming need for conversation. Sometimes, conversations touch on more than words. They become fingers, hands held carelessly and the smell of bodies that seek familiarity. But that evening, I was too much in my element to challenge my own apprehensions. I look back and think there was something un-nameably pleasant to that night.

That pleasant feel is borrowed over to this moment of us walking under the same umbrella.

Do you like rain, you ask me. How strange that you should ask, I think. Everyone knows I'm crazy about rain. Then it strikes me that you hardly know me. So, I answer: I love rain! After an almost pause, I add: I think everyone likes rain. Not everyone, you say. There are people who complain about it.

Maybe in countries where the rain is polite, I hear myself say. Polite? You ask and smile. Then I elaborate. I guess rain would have to be as mad cruel and intense as it gets in South Asia, for one to love it. It's so unforgiving, yet beautiful in its brutality.

We're inside the restaurant now. Is it going to rain in the mountains where I'm going, you ask me. Maybe, I say. Mountains are unpredictable. *

Cut them down

This is the story of a massacre—a mass slaughter that no one prevented and no one spoke of

Their remnants were dragged on our streets, past our homes. I was surprised. I still am surprised—by the absence of blood on the path

UMESH BAJAGAIN

o which bearing witness is not easy—I will. There was a massacre in our neighbourhood. We witnessed a had been. We were to kill all those that had stood in our path to development. It was indeed a political battle.

They, our guardians, agreed to start with the elderly and then, ones with strong sturdy arms and health, vigour and stamina. No mercy was bestowed upon them. The weaker were taught not to get involved

ground was to be spared. "Start with the sturdier ones but leave no younger heads unchopped". Everyone was to be maimed. "Hit them hard, let them bleed; leave them mutilated and cut off their extremities. Be brutal"—everyone was told. I knew they were weaker and we were stronger. It

Early in the morning, the team set

out to the battleground. We were

organised. Children were to by stand

and bear witness to the adults' per-

formance. When we reached there,

they were waiting for us. I still won-

der how they could not defend themselves. I bet they sensed our strength.

If I had been them, I'd surely protest,

arm and defend myself to my last

breath. But they surrendered.

win.

against our proud chests and aside our brilliant brains.

That day, countless trees were martyred. Their death gives me peace. We do not talk about them anymore. I wonder why we shouldn't talk about such human bravery, as if we've committed a crime. We have broken no aw. If there is no one to punish us we have nothing to fear. And as far as the trees are concerned, humans are not to fear those non-humans, for they are lesser than us. What difference does it make if we use them to feed ourselves? Some people say we're brutal. They say, "to murder something living, we call sustenance". These people are unaware of our silent sophisticated euphemistic language. For them to choose: chopping, utilisation, conservation, beautification, collateral damage, you choose. We fed on those trees, the same ones that fed us with cool air during the summer. But, things are different. Now we have built them into our rooms. We can now change the speed of the wind inside our homes and not require them to be fed on. Trees have become useless now. Anything and everything that is useless has to face the same fate at our hands. I often visit that battlefield and imagine how those trees attained salvation at our hands. A bridge sits over the canal on both sides of which those tall trees used to stand. When, at times, I stand on that bridge, I can see far off into the highway, where vehicles run leaving beautiful trails of smoke. I see the recently built processing plant far off in the distance. I cannot say for sure, what it does, for I do not know exactly what projects such mighty black smoke hundreds of metres into the sky. Those trees were blocking the way to the beautiful highway and the silent industry far away in the horizon-both of which are striving for development in my world. Trees are awful-they block scenery, they impede human development, and they are a hindrance to the beauty of the journey of blackness from our chimneys to the relentless sky. They block our view and make us blind. Their absence enables us to enjoy the setting sun. I, by now, have realised that we gave redemption to those trees and helped humanity. We must. Our man behind the axe is unstoppable and no one has the right to strip off development from his backyard. We have every right to see things. We must cut anything that comes on our path. Then, we were ambushed; now is different. We must act. We have to see. Nothing can blind us, not even the trees.

till don't talk about it heard anyone invoke this tragedy since then.

Most of us chose to live with it. We

mass slaughter and kept silent.

Back then, time was a matter of pride for everyone in our neighbourhood. As children, we witnessed our guardians confront 'them'. A day before the incident, everyone was discussing it. They were recruiting and planning meticulously. They were teaching who 'we' were and who 'they'

in the gallantry because it was not in their repertoire. Weapons were sharpened. They got together everything they had. We were told that anything that can inflict 'great pain' would do.

The day came. Everyone was united. They were motivated. They wore rage and anger; our guardians were unstoppable. No one on the battle-

We picked their leaders, kicked them and hit them hard, thrashing them to the floor one by one. We severed their veins, scarred their tissue, and chopped off their extremities, spilling their blood violently into the flowing canal. The canal refused to change its colour. Its unmitigated indifference bought us more courage and we went for more blood. The passers-by watched us in amazement. Some couldn't maintain their composure and walked off in disgust; some booed us while others counted our strikes and pushing us to go harder. Hundreds were martyred that day, none from our side. Their remnants were dragged through our streets, past our homes. I was surprised. I still am surprisedby the absence of blood on the path. What happened to their blood? Did we collect every drop as we do with our goats, with clinical perfection, when we chop their heads off? Were they equivalent to goats in the pursuit of our happiness? When our parents brought them home, it was a matter of pride for everyone. Happiness was all around, except for us, the children, who remained puzzled for they were our spiritual friends. We were told we had to be happy. But we weren't convinced. We thought maybe they were logical tropes that we children were not supposed to understand. Everyone was happy. We cooked food. We ate. In our front yard, we lay the mutilated remnants of those beings and slept inside our homes unharmed.

No one was mourning the next morning. We, the children, went to the crime scene to see what was left of them. There were no bodies, they were gone. The river was flowing, the colour unchanged. The wind was blowing, but we couldn't see it. We had to look into the fluttering in the distance to sense the wind blowing



Books are pathways to understanding life

Bhupeen, the poet known primarily for his powerful performances, is a university lecturer by profession. But in the decades since he started writing poetry, he has published three collections—Kshatigrasta Prithvi ra Mool Sadak, Hajar Barshako Nidra, and Suplako Hawaijahaj. Having also dabbled in non-fiction in recent years, his first novel Maidaaro will soon hit the shelves. For his writing, Bhupeen has won the Uttam Shanti Puraskar and the International Nepali Literature Society Award among others. The Post's **Asmita Manandhar** spoke to him about his favourite reads and the inspiration behind his writing. Excerpts:

How did you first come to love books?

I grew up in a *lahure* family. My father and brothers were in the military so there wasn't much of a reading environment at home. When I was in the seventh or eighth grade, I found Bhupi Sherchan's poetry collection *Ghumne Mech Maathi Andho Maanche* among my father's belongings. After reading the collection, I realised that poetry can be powerful. It was then that I was drawn towards books.

I have a thirst to understand the juxtaposition of past and current social and philosophical ideas, which I can only acquire through reading

Bookworm Babbles

Then, I began sending poems to the children's programme on Radio Nepal. When my poems were recited, my mother used to shed tears. This encouraged me to read and write more as I realised the power of the written word. The local library near my home was my second home. I read everything from Dinesh Adhikari and Shyamal to Russian writers. Later, when I met Sarubhakta, he encouraged me to read books on philosophy and sociology.

What was the last book you read?

The last book I read was a memoir, *Chhuteka Anuhar*, by Ramesh Saayan. He has beautifully detailed even the smallest events from his



childhood to his youth. I really enjoyed the whole read, but I always believe that a book should also have philosophical reflections, in addition to its descriptions. This was missing in Sayaan's book. currently

illuminating so far.

I'm

Path.

reading

White Clouds by Thich

Nhat Hanh, which is a classic

recounting of the life and teachings

of Gautam Buddha. It is really

feeding my desire to learn different

philosophies, and it has been

Old

What is your current read?

What books are currently on your wish list?

There are two books that I've never managed to complete, even after trying multiple times—*One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy. I would really like to finish these books in the future.

recommend as must-reads? There are many books that have been my favourites over the years and have

What books would you

shaped my thought process as a reader and a writer. Among books from international writers, I'd like to pick *Mother* by Maxim Gorky, *The Song of Youth* by Yang Mo, *The Good Earth* by Pearl S Buck, *Sidhhartha* by Herman Hesse, *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, 1984 and *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, *Howl and other poems* by Allen Ginsberg, and the poetry collections of Pablo Neruda and Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena.

From Nepali writers, I would recommend Pagal Basti by Sarubhakta, Ular by Nayan Raj Pandey, Pretkalpa by Narayan Dhakal, Dhobighat Express by Roshan Sherchan and Samjhanaka Kuinetaharu and Afnai Aakha ko Layama by Khagendra Sangraula.

Why is it important to read and write?

It is important to comprehend the current time and society that we live in. Books are pathways to understanding life. There are many who have lived their lives without really thinking about these things, but as a writer, I have a thirst to understand the juxtaposition of past and current social and philosophical ideas, which I can only acquire through reading and writing.

What book have influenced you the most and why?

Herman Hesse's *Sidhhartha* and George Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm* have shaken my thought process. I was forced to ponder long after reading these books due to their philosophical themes.

How do you draw inspiration for writing?

I mostly draw inspiration from my travels. When we are moving, our senses are experiencing constant changes in sights and sounds, and that is when I am able to develop my writing. *

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Sarraf, Paudel lead Nepal to emphatic win over Singapore



Pawan Sarraf with the man-of-the-match award after helping Nepal beat Singapore in the ICC U-19 World Cup Asia Qualifier match at the Selangor Turf Club in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Friday.

SPORTS BUREAU Kathmandu, April 12

Allrounder Pawan Sarraf and skipper Rohit Kumar Paudel sealed an emphatic 217-run win over Singapore in the first match of the ICC U-19 World Cup Asia Qualifier at the Selangor Turf Club in Kuala Lumpur on Friday. Put into bat first, Nepal over-

came a poor start to post a massive 282 runs in 46 overs. Singapore delayed the inevitable for 31 overs before finally being dismissed for a paltry 65 runs.

Nepal were reeling at 18-2 by the sixth over after losing opener Rit Gautam (1) and No 3 batsman Aasif Sheikh (8) cheaply. But Gautam's opening partner Sarraf and skipper Paudel put on a 90-run third wicket stand to consolidate the Nepali innings. Sarraf fell three runs short of a half century after hitting four boundaries and two sixes. Sundeep Jora (0) walked in to join Paudel but lasted just two balls, falling prey to Pramesh Singhavi.

Paudel held his nerves at the other end and put on meaningful partnerships with Bhim Sharki, Kushal Malla and Rashid Khan to propel the team's total. The Nepal skipper added 36 runs for the fifth wicket with Sharki (26), 16 for the sixth wicket with Malla (10) and another 77 for the seventh wicket with Rashid Khan. Paudel was unlucky not to have completed his century, falling five runs short to Atharva Gune.

Paudel's composed 105-ball knock included seven boundaries and a six, while Khan too fell two runs shy of a half century after clobbering four boundaries and two sixes in his 47-ball knock. Kamal Singh Airee also helped swell the Nepali total playing a 31-run cameo. Airee struck three sixes and a four in his 18-ball innings. Gune was pick of the Singapore bowlers with figures of 4-37 from eight overs. Raoul Sharma and Vinit Mehta also claimed two wickets each for Singapore.

Singapore were never in contention after losing half their team for 42-5. Malla triggered the Singapore collapse, first combining with Khan to run out Arnaav Chabria (2) before having skipper Aman Desai (1) stumped off wicketkeeper Sheikh. Malla also accounted for Sai Venugopal, who scored a painstaking 18 off 45 balls.

Man-of-the-match Sarraf polished off the Singapore tail with a burst of three wickets after Surya Tamang had Singapore's top scorer Ishaan Sawney caught by Sharki. Sawney scored 20 off 54 balls with four boundaries and a six. Apart from Sawney and Venugopal, none of the other Singapore batsmen scored runs in double figures.

After falling three runs short of a half century, Sarraf also shone with the ball with an exceptional figures of 3-5 from six overs, five of which were maidens. Malla took 2-17 and Tamang 2-15. In other matches, UAE beat Malaysia by five wickets and Kuwait defeated Oman by eight wickets. Nepal will take on the UAE in their next game on Saturday.

Apart from Nepal, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman, hosts Singapore and the United Arab Emirates are fighting for a single berth available for the U-19 World Cup in South Africa next year. The winner of the Asia Qualifier will join Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the West Indies and Zimbabwe in the tournament next January and February.

Summary

Nepal 282 in 46 overs (RK Paudel 95, R Khan 48, P Sarraf 47, KS Airee 31; A Gune 4-37, R Sharma 2-36, V Mehta 2-30) beat Singapore 65 in 31 overs (I Sawney 28; P Sarraf 3-5, K Malla 2-17, S Tamang 2-15) by 217 runs Man-of-the-match: P Sarraf

Province 2 rule men's wrestling

SPORTS BUREAU Kapii vastu april 12

Province 2 wrapped up the men's wrestling events under the eighth National Games ending up with six out 10 available gold medals in Banganga Municipality in Kapilvastu on Friday.

Province 2 claimed 57kg, 61kg, 65kg, 79kg, 92kg and 125kg gold medals to get the better of second-placed Province 5, who took three gold. Naresh Yadav won the 57kg weight division gold defeating Tilak Deuja of Tribhuvan Army Club in the final. Jay Mangal Yadav took the 61kg gold beating Jadu Lal Yadav of Province 3.

Nepal Police Club (NPC) wrestler Ritesh Prasad Yadav lost to 12th South Asian Games bronze medallist Saroj Yadav in the 65kg gold medal fight. Punni Lal Raut won the 79kg gold overcoming Sunil Kumar Sah of Province 3. In the 92kg final, Sumir Sah defeated NPC wrestler Sagar Kumar Yadav and the sixth gold for Province 2 came for Raj Yadav who saw off Karan Bhatta of Province 7.

Province 5 won the 74kg final through Baijnath Yadav after he defeated Mukhtar Alam of Province 2. The other two gold for Province 5 came in the 86kg and 97kg with Bhuwaneshwor Yadav and Ramesh Gotame winning their respective final matches. Suresh Chunara won the only gold for TAC in men's wrestling defeating Manoj Prasad Yadav in the 70kg final. Province 7 added three more gold in their kitty to finish with six gold in the women's wrestling. Neeraj Aaujji won the 65kg gold beating Sumitra Magar of TAC in the final. Bimala Sunar won the fifth gold for Province 5 with victory over Nirmala Jagari of NPC in the 68kg final. The other gold came for Laxmi Khatri in the 72kg final easing past Rekha Rawal of NPC.

Sushila Chand of TAC won the 62kg gold defeating Sapana Chand of Province 7. Province 1 won the 76kg gold with Srijashu Giri overwhelming Laxmi DC of Province 5. On Thursday, Province 7 had claimed gold medals in the women's 50kg, 53kg and 55kg. Ramesh Gotame and Srejashu were adjudged the best players of the event. Meanwhile, departmental teams dominat-

ed the table tennis on the third day of the Games at the Ghorahi covered ball on Friday. NPC clinched the mixed doubles and men's doubles gold medals while Nepal Armed Police Force (APF) Club won the men's team event title. Santu Shrestha and Nabita Shrestha combined to beat NPC teammates Binesh Khaniya and Alina Maharjan in the mixed doubles final while Santu and Binesh defeated Mani Kumar Lama and Bilash Shrestha of APF in the men's doubles final. APF, meanwhile, saw off Tribhuvan Army Club to clinch the men's team event gold. (Manoj Paudel in Kapilvastu and Durgalal KC in Ghorahi contributed to this report)

Marquee players, teams unveiled for Women's Champions League

ADARSHA DHAKAL KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

Queen's Event Management Pvt Ltd on Friday unveiled the marquee players and team owners for the upcoming Women's Champions League scheduled for May 17-25 at the Tribhuvan University Stadium.

The Twenty20 event is announced as country's second franchise competition in which the women cricketers will be picked up through draft. The players will have a set price and the franchises will pick the players according to their turn. A total of five city-based franchises are competing in the WCL.

Three out of five franchises who competed in the Pokhara Premier League have also bought the teams in the WCL. PPL champions Pokhara Paltan, runners-up Chitwan Rhinos and Biratnagar

Titans are the three franchises also buying team in the women's event. PPL was also organised by Queen's. Other two teams include Lalitpur Falcons and Capital Royals Kathmandu--the franchises who play in the Everest Premier League Twenty20 in Kathmandu as Lalitpur Patriots and Pokhara Rhinos respectively. Falcons have former national

Falcons have former national team skipper Nary Thapa as the marquee player and is owned by Srijana Joshi. Binayak Pokharel owns the Paltan which has national team vice-captain Sita Rana Magar as the marquee player. National team skipper Rubina Chhetri will take the reins of Royals owned by Deepa Agrawal.

Indu Berma is the marquee player for Rhinos owned by Mingma Dandu Sherpa, while Paras Luniya is the owner of Titans and will be led by Sarita Magar. The marquee players were happy to be part of another professional Twenty20 league. NCL Sports Pvt Ltd had also held auction of the women cricketers for the upcoming Women's Cricket League.

"We are very thankful to the organisers of the tournament because they have revived the women's cricket which was already in a comma because of the unavailability of the tournaments. Its something which we had longed for a lot," said Paltan marquee Rana Magar. Paltan owner Pokharel said they were ready to have a go at a women's Twenty20 competition.

"PPL was a successful tournament for us and that was where we signalled our arrival in domestic franchise cricket winning the title. It would be perfect for us if we can claim the title of the WCL and clean sweep the two events under the Queen's," Pokharel said.

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| CROSS CURRENCY | | | | | | | FOREX | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|--------|----------|----------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------------------|--------|
| | USD | EUR | JPY | GBP | CHF | CAD | AUD | INR | NR | US Dollar | 110.95 |
| NR | 110.9500 | 125.5700 | 9.9100 | 145.2300 | 110.9100 | 83.2500 | 79.5900 | 1.6015 | | Euro | 125.57 |
| INR | 69.1700 | 78.2730 | 6.1770 | 90.5370 | 69.2220 | 51.9577 | 49.6020 | | 0.6244 | Pound Sterling | 145.23 |
| GBP | 0.7639 | 0.8644 | 0.0068 | | 0.7635 | 0.5731 | 0.5478 | 0.0110 | 0.0069 | Japanese Yen | 9.91 |
| JPY | 111.9500 | 126.6800 | | 147.0588 | 111.8900 | 83.9800 | 80.2800 | 0.1619 | 0.1009 | Chinese Yuan | 16.54 |
| EUR | 0.8834 | 120.0000 | 0.0079 | 1,1569 | 0.8830 | 0.6627 | 0.6335 | 0.0128 | 0.0080 | Qatari Riyal | 30.47 |
| | 0.8834 | | | | | | | | | Australian Dollar | 79.59 |
| USD | | 1.1320 | 0.0089 | 1.3091 | 0.9994 | 0.7502 | 0.7171 | 0.0145 | 0.0090 | Malaysian Ringit | 26.97 |
| 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 horizontally is worth that amount in the currency mentioned vertically. | | | | | | | | | | | |

IMF, World Bank urge caution with China loans Page II Increased lending by China to developing nations is increasingly under the spotlight amid concerns that growing debt burdens and onerous conditions could sow the seeds of a crisis.

Government spent Rs 222.83b in last month of fiscal 2017-18

20.55 percent of the total budget of over Rs1 trillion was spent in mid June-mid July

RAJESH KHANAL KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

The government's habit of slow capital spending was painfully obvious during the last month of the fiscal year 2017-18, where government agencies spent Rs222.83 billion in one month.

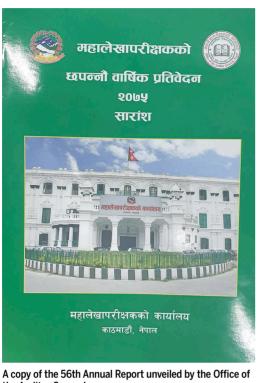
According to the report unveiled by the Office of the Auditor General on Friday, government agencies spent 20.55 percent of the total allocated budget of over Rs1 trillion for the fiscal year in mid June-mid July, the last month of the fiscal year.

It showed that government offices only sped up their expenditure in the last week of 2017-18, spending 10.87 percent of the allocated budget or Rs117.92 hillion

"It shows that a lack of effective implementation of the electronic procurement system, delays in awarding contracts and low capacity of the contractors are still in place, reads a report that was presented before the President on Friday.

Low utilisation of foreign assistance, lack of proper planning for construction of national pride projects and awarding contracts without conducting the necessary prepara tion were some of the underlying problems highlighted by the report. Targeting to improve the quality

of development work, the constitution has maintained the budget announcement in advance to allow the government more time to spend the allocated funds. In the past, the budget announcement was made in



the Auditor General

the mid-June to mid-July period. Now, after the changes, the budget announcement is made on May-end.

To tackle the persisting problem of slow capital spending, the Finance Ministry last year even issued a timebound action plan, giving line ministries deadlines to complete development works. The ministries and

Per capita debt of Nepalis surges to Rs31,750

KATHMANDU: Per capita the total debt of the govdebt of Nepalis has increased by Rs7,043 in 2017-18. A report unveiled by the Office of Auditor General shows that the debt burden per Nepali has gone up to Rs31,750 from Rs24,707 in the last fiscal year. The report stated that

implementing bodies were asked to procureprepare ment plans, detailed designs of the projects and cost estimates and issue tender notices within the first month of the fiscal year. They were also instructed to award the tender within the first

quarter of the fiscal year. But the ministry's plan has not shown any effective outcomes, shows the government audit report.

The tax dues of the government has reached Rs252 billion, with an additional Rs900 million due amount in the first nine months of the current fiscal year. As of 2017-18, the government was left to collect tax of ernment was Rs915.31 billion till 2017-18, an increase from Rs217.62 billion over the period. Of the total debt, the internal debt and the external debt of the gov-

ernment is Rs391.16 billion and Rs 524.15 billion respectively. (PR)

worth Rs161 billion. The Office of the Auditor General pointed out the inability of the government in monitoring the extended tax bases and tax collection mechanism

The report shows that the amount of arrears has increased by 37 percent to Rs683.66 billion in the current fiscal year. It includes the unspent amount by all three tiers of government, district coordination committee, tax dues and reimbursement in the foreign aid.

Of the total amount, the arrears amount with the offices of federal government stands at Rs286 billion. The amount with the provincial governments and local governments are 195 million and Rs35.99 billion respectively. The figures show that the problem is severe when it comes to spending capacity of the offices at the local levels

Reconstruction work at Tatopani border nearing completion

PRAHLAD RIJAL KATHMANDU, APRIL 12

Reconstruction work at the Tatopani transit point on the Nepal-China border is nearing completion. The border crossing has remained closed since 2015 after much of the infrastructure was destroyed by an earthquake.

Along with the restoration works, a new dry port has been built at Larcha near the border. The dry port project was initiated five years ago but it came to a standstill after the earthquake subsequent Bhotekoshi and River floods that caused extensive damage to the trade route.

The quake and floods damaged the Tatopani-Piplang road, Liping road, Friendship Bridge and other infrastructures along the highway, forcing authorities to close the Tatopani crossing and divert commercial traffic to the Rasuwagadhi-Kerung transit point further west on the Nepal-China border.

Last May, the Nepal Intermodal Transport Development Board and China's Commerce Ministry signed an agreement on China Aid Post-Disaster Recovery for the Tatopani Frontier Inspection Station Project, raising hopes for an early reopening of the Tatopani transit point.

Following the agreement, the Chinese government appointed Chinese Railway Construction Company to build the dry port at

AST

Larcha which is spread over 27.5 million square feet and the Liping road that connects it with Tatopani. The dry port project was funded by the Chinese government and was built at an estimated cost of RMB147 million. Tianshun Road and Bridge Company which is rebuilding the Friendship Bridge has expedited work and expects to finish

it by May 29. DSP Krishna Gopal Gurung of the Armed Police Force said that the Chinese construction crew had raised the pillars of the bridge and were working to finish the cement filling works. Officials said vehicular movement would resume immediately after workers finish the cementing filling works on the bridge.

"A Chinese construction crew is currently blacktopping the 7-km road from Khasa to the Friendship Bridge, while the Roads Department is repairing road sections damaged by landslides at Jure," Gurung said. "We have been informed that the border point will officially reopen on May 29." Nepali customs officials said that more than 85 percent of the restoration works at the transit point had been completed while the dry port was ready to come into operation.

"The construction of infrastructure is in the final phases, and the ministry has deployed a working team to fulfil all other logistical requirements and provide the customs office with a high-speed internet connection within a month to ensure smooth flow of cargo on the route," Joint Secretary Navaraj Dhakal of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies said.

"The Roads Department has also speeded up the construction of retention walls and reconstruction of damaged portions of the Kodari Highway and small bridges. The trade route which is expected to reopen soon following a prolonged halt will now facilitate increasing trade between Nepal and China, he added.

The dry port has parking bays for 200 lorries, agricultural quarantine facilities, a border inspection building, cargo warehouse litigation-warehouse, a parking lot with a capacity to accommodate at least 158 large containers and 33 cars. Construction crews have also repaired the main office, customs office and yard, storage, check pass yard, check post, bank and residential build ings damaged by the earthquake. An official team including Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali and representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers and the Foreign and Physical Infrastructure ministries visited Tatopani on Tuesday and inspected the progress achieved in the reconstruction work



Nepal Ice

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INTERNATIONAL FASHION WEEK

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DATE: 2075 CHAITRA 28, 29, 30 VENUE: SKY SPORTS CLUB, NEW ROAD, POKHARA



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Cambodia

rice tariff

appeals EU

BRUSSELS: Cambodia on Thursday said it would

take the EU to the European court after

Brussels slapped the

Asian country's rice

after the European

executive arm, in

imports with expensive

tariffs. The move comes

Commission, the EU's

January imposed duties

on Indica rice imports

from Cambodia and

plained of a "signifi-

rice imports over the

last five years, which

in Italy. The market

fell over this period

from 61 percent to 29

percent, the commis-

sion said. "The safe-

guard measures are

from the Cambodian

Rice Federation said.

"The reintroduction of

import duties is detri-

Cambodian economy

and its industry, but

above all to its people,"

Chevron to buy

Petroleum for

CALIFORNIA: Chevron

Anadarko Petroleum

Corp for \$33 billion in cash and stock to

strengthen its presence

in the Permian basin

and beef up its LNG

shares soared 33 percent in light premarket trading, while Chevron shares fell 1.5 percent.

"The combination of Anadarko's premier, high-quality assets with our advantaged portfolio strengthens our

leading position in the

Permian, builds on our deepwater Gulf of

Mexico capabilities and

will grow our LNG business," Chevron Chief

Michael Wirth said in a

Executive Officer

statement. (REUTERS)

China's auto

straight month

sales sink

for ninth

business. The offer of

\$65 per share represents a 39 percent premium to Anadarko's Thursday close. Anadarko's

Corp said on Friday it

would buy smaller rival

mental to the

it said. (AFP)

Anadarko

\$33 billion

fundamentally misguid-

ed and a misapplication of EU law," a statement

cant" increase in Indica

had punished European

producers, most notably

share of EU producers

Myanmar for three years. The EU had com-

World

monev

snags and supplier delays are

prepare Airbus for a new

type of strategic battle

with Boeing and their future

competitor China, focusing at

least as much on leaner,

more robotic production

methods as lavishly staged

be to settle and remotivate

Airbus' 130,000 staff after a

multi-national bribery probe

and internal investigation,

now in its fourth year, as well

as the recent decision to end

production of the flagship

new team following scheduled

retirements and an ongoing

board-led clearout as Airbus

responds to pressure to re-in-

vent itself in order to win a

settlement and avoid charges

No Airbus executives

have been accused of wrong-

doing, but a British judge said

when setting fines for Rolls-

in the bribery probe.

Faury heads a mainly

A380.

His immediate priority will

order announcements.

Insiders say Faury hopes to

delaying schedules.

NEWS DIGEST IMF, World Bank urge caution with China loans

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON, APRIL 12

Increased lending by China to developing nations is increasingly under the spotlight amid concerns that growing debt burdens and onerous conditions could sow the seeds of a crisis.

The global development lenders, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, are calling for more transparency about loan amounts and terms, and cautioning governments against relying too much on debt.

At the spring meetings of the institutions on Thursday, newly-installed World Bank President David Malpass warned that "17 African countries are already at high risk of debt distress, and that number is just growing as the new contracts come in and aren't sufficiently transparent."

IMF chief Christine Lagarde said the high debt levels and number of lenders, who do not all conform to international norms, also complicate any future efforts to restructure a country's debt.

"Both the bank and the IMF are working together in order to bring about more transparency and be better able to identify debt out there, terms and conditions, volumes and maturities," she said at a news briefing.

"We are constantly encouraging both borrowers and lenders to align as much as possible with the debt principles" set by international organisations such as the Paris Club and Group of 20. An IMF report issued this

week warned that rising debt levels around the world-gov-



IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde speaks at the Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and IMF in Washington, US,

ernment and corporate borrowing-poses a risk to the global economy.

China has been lending throughout the developing world as part of its "belt and road" initiative, especially focusing on resource-rich nations. But the loans have come under increasing scrutiny. Mozambique has been engulfed in scandal over \$2 billion in fraudulent loans that were hidden from the

public. And Lagarde said, "It's clear that any debt restructuring programmes going forward in the years to come will

be more complicated than debt restructuring programmes that were conducted 10 years ago, simply because of the multiplicity of lenders, and the fact that not all public debt is offered by members of the Paris Club.'

Malpass acknowledged that lending can help economies grow "but if it's not done in a transparent way, with good outcome from the build-up of debt, then you end up having it be a drag on economies."

He cautioned that "history is full of those situations where too much debt dragged down economies.

The G20 has called on the two Washington-based lenders to collect data on debt to get a better handle on the amounts

and loan conditions. "I'll be reporting to the G20 on the progress during our meetings coming up this week, and the keys are to have transparent disclosure of the debt as it is being created, and also then have the focus on good outcomes in terms of quality

projects," Malpass said. "This is critical for poor countries as they try to move forward to have the projects associated with good quality programmes and full disclosure of the debt.'

China also has a growing role as a donor to the World Bank fund that provides low-cost loans to the poorest countries.

CEO axes separate role of planemaker boss

- Unveils new, tighter Airbus management structure
- Increases focus on production technology, data
- Takes over firm unsettled by corruption probes



leaner management

REUTERS

New

PARIS, APRIL 12

Chief Executive

Guillaume Faury imposed his

mark on Airbus with a simpli-

ers to leave the scene of recent

tive panel lifting engineering,

communications and sales to

anniversary as a planemaker

this year and its 20th since the

announcement of a pan-Euro-

pean merger that resulted in

Airbus celebrates its 50th

"We are in a period of

rivalry with Boeing.

power battles.

Bregier.

the top table.

New Airbus CEO charts

modernisation path under

Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury

the creation of a wider Franco-German aerospace company, now integrated back into Airbus itself.

The new shake-up effectively completes that transition.

Airbus is expected to shift away from the adventurist spirit and public baiting of US rival Boeing of earlier years to a focus on advanced production methods increasingly imported from the car industry, where Faury spent four years in senior manufacturing and research roles at

The methodical former milrun the planes division when itary flight test engineer set Bregier fell last year, on out his priorities to sharehold-Thursday eliminated the post ers on Wednesday. from a new 12-person execu-

"I see fantastic challenges.. we have to invent new production systems and leverage the power of data," Faury said

Airbus has a huge list of orders for its A320neo, which competes with Boeing's currently grounded 737 MAX, but Royce in 2017 that firms hoping to win such settlements must effectively become a different company with new management. Reuters reported Tuesday that more than 100 people were dismissed for eth-

ics and compliance reasons last year, fuelling internal accusations of a witch hunt. Airbus declined to comment.

Hong Kong Airlines seeks \$255 million from backers to keep licence

the airlines' dealings with

comment on its financial

activities. HNA declined to

Licensing Authority (ATLA)

demanded the airline detail

Air

Just weeks earlier, Hong

comment.

Kong's



ALTA's demand came after a travel insurer in January dropped protection against the airline's collapse, prompting the airline to reassure customers it was operating as normal. A month before, the airline suffered a series of executive departures.

Meanwhile, the formerly uisitive HNA-

Boeing makes 96 flights to test software on troubled Max jet

ASSOCIATED PRESS DALLAS, APRIL 12

Boeing's CEO says crews have made 96 flights to test a software update for its troubled 737 Max jet and will make more in coming weeks as the company attempts to convince regulators to let the plane fly again.

Dennis Muilenburg also said on Thursday that the company has met with pilots and airline officials in the US a abroad, noiding ilight-sin ulator sessions to demonstrate the software changes. Aviation The Federal Administration, which will consider whether the plane can resume flying in the US, plans to meet on Friday with safety officials and pilots from American, Southwest and United, the three US carriers that were using the Max jet.



exceptional change in our industry and we need to prepare Airbus for the opportunities and challenges ahead,' Faury said in a statement. "We will utilise new digital

technologies to optimise our industrial system," he added.

stayed out of the spotlight as Enders quarrelled with then planemaking chief Fabrice Faury, who moved over Peugeot maker PSA Group. from the helicopters unit to

Airbus was until recently a very public battleground for Franco-German industrial rivalries and personal power struggles, but Faury

BELJING: China's auto sales fell again in March but the contraction in the biggest global market was smaller than in recent months, an industry group reported on Friday. Sales of SUVs, sedans and minivans in the industry's biggest glob al market fell 6.9% from a vear earlier to just over 2 million, according to the China Association of Auto Manufacturers. It was the ninth straight month of decline. The slump comes at an awkward time for global and Chinese automakers that are spending heavily to develop electric vehicles under government pressure to boost sales. (AP)



A Hong Kong Airlines passenger plane taxies on the tarmac at Hong Kong Airport in Hong Kong, China.

REUTERS HONG KONG, APRIL 12

other HNA firms, including querying the prices paid to Hong Kong Airlines sharelease planes from affiliates as holders have demanded to see well as the cost of materials 2018 accounts before considerbought from them, the sources ing providing at least HK\$2 said, declining to be identified billion (\$255 million) needed as the information was not to ensure the carrier-part public owned by the indebted HNA Hong Kong Airlines said, as Group-keeps its licence, two a private company, it does not

sources said. The demand came at a tense extraordinary shareholder meeting last week and at which former majority owner HNA did not speak at all, the sources said of the discussion, which has not previously been reported.

plans to improve finances. ATLA declined to comment

Shareholders questioned further on Friday

–a planes-to banking Chinese conglomerate—has been working to improve finances since China cracked down on aggressive debt-fuelled foreign dealmaking began in mid-2017.

At that point, a \$50 billion spree had netted HNA assets including the single largest stake in Deutsche Bank. It has since been selling off holdings, including low-cost carrier Hong Kong Express Airways last month.

At last week's meeting, Hong Kong Airlines executives told shareholders that without fresh funds, the airline's operating licence was at risk, said the people familiar with the matter.

Executives then discussed raising HK\$2 billion via share Transport placements, the people said. Such a move would significantly dilute the holdings of shareholders if they do not participate.

An FAA spokesman said the agency wants to hear from the airlines and pilots before deciding what Boeing must do before the plane is allowed to fly. Regulators around the world grounded the Max last month after deadly crashes involving the plane

Indonesia and Ethiopia. In both cases, faulty information from a sensor caused anti-stall automation to kick in when it wasn't needed and push the plane's nose down. Pilots struggled to counter the plane's actions but were una-

- - -----A Boeing 737 MAX 8 takes off during a flight test in Renton, Washington.

ble to avoid crashing.

Regulators in Europe and China are conducting their own reviews of the plane, and company insiders and analysts expect foreign regulators to take longer than the FAA to approve the Max's return to service

representatives Boeing have visited the United Kingdom, Singapore and China to discuss its work on the Max with pilots and airofficials, including line demonstrating the software update in flight simulators, Muilenburg.

The Boeing CEO spoke during a leadership forum at the George W. Bush Presidential Centre in Dallas, as the former president sat in the front row. Muilenburg did not take any questions, and left immediately after his remarks.

Separately, Sen. Edward Markey and other Senate Democrats introduced a bill that would require aircraft makers to provide airlines with all safety equipment now considered optional and to do it at no extra charge.

The planes that crashed in Indonesia and Ethiopia did

not have two optional displays that might have alerted the pilots to the malfunctioning sensors suspected of playing a role in the crashes. Markey said if they had been installed, the crashes might have been avoided.

REUTERS

The Air Line Pilots Association endorsed the legislation.

A Boeing spokesman said the company's planes are equipped with "all critical features" necessary for safety. Boeing has said it will provide the two displays free of charge in the future.

Uber reveals strong growth, huge losses ahead of IPO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL 12

Uber is providing a look under the hood of its business in the lead-up to its hotly anticipated debut on the stock market, revealing strong growth but an ongoing struggle to overcome huge losses and repair its reputation.

Documents released Thursday offered the most detailed view of the world's largest ride-hailing service since its inception a dec ade ago.

The massive filing shows Uber has been generating the robust revenue growth that entices investors, but also racked up nearly \$8 billion in losses over its 10 years in existence, which mirrors the same trend challenging Lyft, Uber's main rival in the US Uber's revenue totaled \$11.3 billion in 2018, a 42% increase from \$7.9 billion in 2017, and a giant leap from

\$495 million in 2014.

The company posted a profit of \$997 million last year, but that doesn't mean its ride-hailing service suddenly started to make money-far from it. The positive result stemmed from a windfall that Uber generated from the sale of its operations in Russia and Southeast Asia. The company said it sustained an operating loss of \$3 billion.

The San Francisco company also disclosed a legal cloud hanging over its head as government authorities and regulators investigate whether the company broke any laws

Among other things, Uber revealed the US Justice Department is conducting a criminal investigation into a yearlong cover-up of a massive computer break-in during 2016 that heisted personal information belonging to millions of passengers and driv-



A traveller tries to book a ride with Uber at LaGuardia Airport in New York.

ers. The probes are among the many risks that investors must weigh as they mull whether to jump into one of the biggest IPOs in years.

Über CEO Dara Khosrowshahi acknowledged the self-inflicted

wounds that damaged the ride-hailing service's reputation while trying to make the case that the company has rehabilitated itself since he took over 18 months ago.

He struck his note of contrition

and optimism in a letter included in the federal documents.

"Some of the attributes that made Uber a wildly successful startup-a fierce sense of entrepreneurialism, our willingness to take risks that others might not, and that famous Uber hustle-led to missteps along the way." Khosrowshahi wrote, closing his letter by assuring he will run Uber with integrity.

Reaching profitability has proven to be a challenge for both Uber and Lyft. Paying drivers is a huge expense, and Uber's fierce competition with Lyft for customers has led both companies to offer rides below cost. Drivers for both companies complain about declining earnings, and they can easily switch between platforms, making it difficult for either company to further reduce driver costs and keep fares cheap for passengers. Uber said it plans to give bonus-

es to qualified drivers and is setting aside an undisclosed portion of its stock for drivers to buy.

Its unprofitable history may force Uber to eventually raise its ride-hailing prices unless it can reduce its costs by shifting to driverless cars or expand into other markets and lines of business

But Uber's operating losses declined from \$4 billion in 2017 to \$3 billion in 2018, indicating it could be heading in the right direction.

"They're showing that they're capable of controlling their costs, which has been a concern of ride sharing companies in general," said SharesPost analyst Alejandro Ortiz. "That's a sign that will be looked on favourably in the next few weeks."

Lyft beat Uber to the stock market last month with an IPO that raised \$2.3 billion, but its shares

have been backsliding after an early run-up. Lyft's stock currently is hovering around \$61, down from its IPO price of \$72.

The rocky start may have prompted Uber to tamp down its IPO ambitions. The company is expected to try to raise roughly \$10 billion and seeks a market value of \$90 billion to \$100 billion, according to the Wall Street Journal. That's below earlier estimates of \$120 billion.

In the end, Uber is widely expected to be the biggest technology IPO since Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group went public in 2014. And it's likely to be the largest among US tech companies since Facebook took its bow on Wall Street seven years ago at a time when most people hadn't ever considered using an app on their smartphone to summon a ride from strangers driving their own cars

money

NEWS DIGEST Tesla begins

offering leases for Model 3

CALIFORNIA: Tesla Inc on Thursday started leasing out its Model 3 sedan in the United States, in a financing option that would increase the electric car maker's customer base. Tesla said its customers in the United States would be able to lease any Model 3 variant for a small down payment and monthly payments thereafter, but they will not have the option to buy the car at the end of the lease. Tesla said that it would begin bundling its autopilot software as a standard feature on all cars, raising the base price, and

would drop the entry-level Model 3 Standard from online ordering. As a result, the lowest-priced Model 3 available for order on its online menu in the United States is now the \$39,500 Standard Plus, which includes Autopilot. (REUTERS)

Amazon Japan raises Prime membership fee by 26 percent

TOKYO: Amazon.com Inc's Japanese unit raised the membership fee for its Prime service by 26 percent on Friday, the first such hike since it was launched in the country 11 years ago. The new annual Prime membership fee is 4,900 yen (\$43.86) versus 3,900 yen previously, Amazon said in a statement. The e-commerce giant did not provide a rea-

son. Prime membership fees in Japan are far below the \$119 annual fee in the United States, helping attract Japan's thrifty consumers. The e-commerce giant has grown rapidly in Japan, exerting pressure on home-grown players like Rakuten. (REUTERS)

Indian government to probe Jet Airways as airline teeters



Jet Airways employees hold placards as they gather for a protest march at the Chattrapati Shivaji International airport, in Mumbai on Friday.

planes out of a fleet of 119.

That is below the 20 required

by Indian aviation regulators

Thousands of customers

All of Jet's long-haul flights

Thursday and Friday ser-

Close of play Friday is the

A consortium of lenders led

April 30 to make a formal bid.

Etihad, are interested in bid-

trol of Jet Airways last month

ding according to reports.

Several airlines, including

The consortium took con-

due to non-payment.

to fly overseas

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MUMBAI, APRIL 12

India's government said on Friday it would investigate Jet Airways' ability to keep flying as the debt-stricken carrier fights for survival.

The announcement came have been stranded in recent after Jet cancelled most of its weeks after hundreds of international flights Thursday and as lenders desperately flights were cancelled, in some seek a buyer to keep the beleacases with little or no notice. guered airline running. were cancelled on Thursday,

A collapse would deal a blow to Prime Minister including to London, Paris Narendra Modi's pro-business and Amsterdam. They were reputation as Indians vote in a due to run later on Friday. mega six-week-long election that started Thursday.

vices to Colombo and Aviation minister Suresh Singapore were also cancelled. Prabhu tweeted that his ministry would "review issues deadline for prospective bidrelated to Jet Airways" and ders to express an interest in "take necessary steps to miniacquiring a 75-percent stake mise passenger inconvenience in the airline. and ensure their safety".

Jet was until recently by the State Bank of India India's second-biggest airline started the stake sale process by market share but is close to on Monday. Any interested going under with debts of parties will then have until more than \$1 billion.

The Mumbai-based carrier has been forced to ground the majority of its fleet after months of defaulting on loans and struggling to pay lessors and staff.

It told the Bombay Stock Exchange Thursday that it

had grounded 10 more planes resolution plan. The deal saw founder Naresh Goyal step The airline is believed to down as chairman. now be operating just 16

Etihad Airways, which owns a 24-percent stake in Jet, has submitted an expression of interest to buy a controlling stake of up to 75 percent, according to Indian business dailies.

Goyal has also not given up hope of retaking control of the airline, papers say, although it is unclear that he would be able to put the necessary funds together.

Alarm bells for Jet Airways first rang in August when it failed to report its quarterly earnings or pay staff, including pilots. It later reported a loss of \$85 million.

In February, it secured a \$1.19 billion bailout from lenders to bridge a funding gap, but its crisis has deepened.

The carrier has been badly hit by fluctuating global crude prices and a weak rupee, as well as fierce competition from budget rivals.

Mismanagement has also plagued the airline with analysts tracing the start of Jet's financial problems to its 2006 purchase of Air Sahara for \$500 million in cash.

after creditors injected \$218 Goyal reportedly ignored million of "immediate fundthe advice of associates who ing support" as part of a debt said the cost was too much.

Malaysia revives China-backed rail link after a cost cut

ASSOCIATED PRESS KUALA LUMPUR (MALAYSIA), APRIL 12

Malaysia's government said on Friday it has decided to resume a China-backed rail link project, after the Chinese contractor agreed to cut the construction cost by one-third.

The deal follows months of vacillating over the East Coast Rail Link, which connects Malaysia's west coast to eastern rural states and is a key part of China's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.

It should also help bolster ties between China and Malaysia that were strained when Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad suspended the project after his election last May.

The prime minister's office said in a statement that the construction cost of the first two phases of the project will be cut to 44 billion ringgit (\$10.7 billion), down from the original cost of 65.5 billion ringgit (\$15.9 billion).

Slowing growth

It welcomed the signing of a supplementary agreement between Malaysia Rail Link Sendirian Berhad and stateowned China Communications Construction Company Ltd. to

revive the project. "This reduction will surely benefit Malaysia and lighten the burden on the country's financial position," the statement said.

In Beijing, Malaysian chief negotiator Daim Zainuddin told Malaysian media that the rail link will be 40 kilometres (24.8 miles) shorter at 648 kilometres (402.6 miles) but will remain a double-track line.

Daim was quoted by the New Straits Times newspaper as saying the cost savings was a "big achievement." The lower cost also means the government can save in terms of interest on a lower loan, he said.

He said the agreement will bolster bilateral relations and encourage more Chinese companies to invest in Malaysia.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Lu Kang, hailed the agreement.

"We are happy to see that the two sides have reached a settlement through friendly negotiation. I also hope that the two sides can resume the project construction as soon as possible," he told reporters.

Mahathir's government has axed or reviewed large-scale infrastructure projects to rein in surging national debt that it blames mostly on corruption in the previous government.

The government last year suspended works on the rail link pending renegotiations.

Mahathir initially suggested the rail project will be called off because the high cost could burden the country with debt for decades. But he later said negotiations were ongoing and the government hadn't made a final decision.

The project is largely financed by China and the main contract was awarded in 2016 to CCCC by former Prime

Minister Najib Razak. Mahathir's government has said the final cost could balloon to more than 100 billion ringgit (\$24.2 billion) but bids to terminate the project could pose a challenge to the government, which would have to pay compensation and risk angering China, Malaysia's largest trading partner.

Apart from the rail link, the government last year also cancelled two China-backed pipelines costing 9.3 billion ringgit (\$2.3 billion) after discovering that 90 percent of the project's costs had been paid but only 13 percent of work had been completed.

The government has said it is investigating whether any money in the rail project had been channeled by Najib's government to repay debts at the 1MDB state investment fund.

A massive financial scandal at 1MDB led to the election loss of Najib's coalition last May and Najib is currently on trial for multiple corruption charges linked to 1MDB.

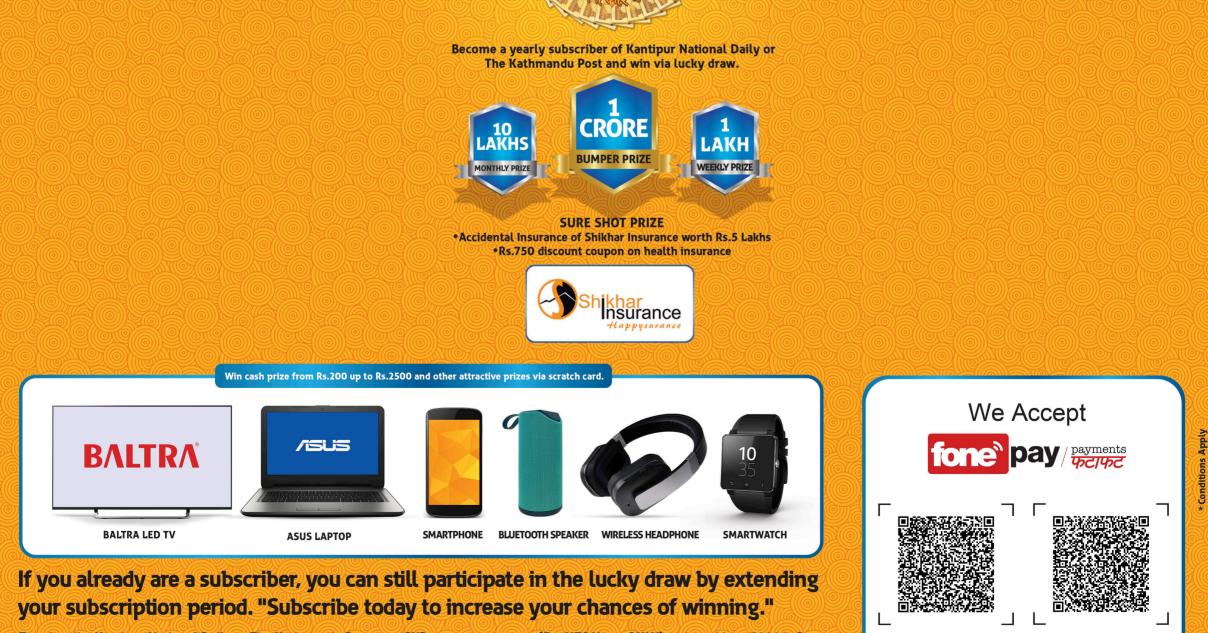


Wind turbine blades wait for export at a port in Lianyungang in China's eastern Jiangsu province. China's imports plummeted in March while exports rose sharply, official data showed on Friday, adding to worries about slowing growth in the world's number two economy amid a US trade war.









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BIZLINE

European airline giant Lufthansa plans to ditch in-flight food subsidiary

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: European airline giant Lufthansa has begun the process to sell off catering subsidiary LSG, the world's biggest in-flight food supplier, the firm said on Thursday. "Lufthansa's board decided to begin a formal sale process for the possible sale of LSG, in whole or in part," a spokesman told AFP. Bosses were looking especially closely at "potential strategic investors from the catering sector" to take over the business, he added. As well as Lufthansa, passengers on some 300 other carriers tuck into LSG food on board, including United Airlines, American Airlines and LATAM-as well as "a growing number" of European rail operators, according to the group's 2018 annual report. The subsidiary employs 35,500 people around the world and served up revenues of 3.2 billion euros (\$3.6 billion) last year, with 75 percent of the turnover coming from clients outside the Lufthansa group. But it only managed operating profit of 110 million euros, for an operating margin of 3.6 percent. That was well below the group-wide figure of 7.9 percent and the airline industry average of 10.7 percent. Lufthansa has "several times" indicated that a "new ownership structure" was an option for LSG, the group spokesman said. (AFP)

Japan Display to come under Chinese group's control after \$2.1b bailout

TOKYO: Apple Inc supplier Japan Display said on Friday it has signed a long-awaited deal under which it will receive a 232 billion ven (\$2.1 billion) bailout that will give a Chinese-Taiwanese group a near-majority stake in the firm. The group which includes Taiwanese flat screen maker TPK Holding and China asset manager Harvest Group, will inject up to 80 billion ven by buying shares and bonds. As a result, it will own a 49.8 percent stake and become the largest shareholder in the company in place of the Japanese government-backed INCJ fund, effectively ending the government's efforts to keep the last remaining domestic display maker out of foreign hands. INCJ will also join the bailout by accepting a debt-to-equity swap totalling 75 billion yen and extending senior loans worth 77 billion yen. It's stake will fall to 12.7 percent from 25.3 percent after the deal. The rescue funding comes as a late shift to organic light-emitting diode (OLED) screens and slowing iPhone sales have threatened Japan Display's survival. Japan Display expects to post its fifth straight year of net losses in the year ending this month, as disappointing sales of Apple's iPhone XR, the only model with LCD screens, dashed hopes for a turnaround. The Apple business accounted for more than half of Japan Display's revenue over the last four years. (REUTERS)

Japan slams WTO ruling on South Korea Fukushima food row

TOKYO: Japan Friday attacked an "extremely regrettable" ruling by the World Trade Organisation that upheld a ban by South Korea on some seafood from Fukushima imposed after the 2011 nuclear disaster. The WTO's highest court overturned an earlier judgement from 2018, handing Seoul a final victory in a legal battle that has dragged on for years. "Even though the ruling did not acknowledge that South Korea's measures comply with the WTO rules, it is extremely regrettable that Japan's argument was not approved," said the foreign ministry in Tokyo. "There is no change in Japan's position of demanding South Korea lift all the restriction measures, and we will pursue this via talks with South Korea," added the ministry in a statement. Foreign Minister Taro Kono urged South Korea to "correct its policy" but acknowledged that Japan had now run out of legal recourse. Fearing radioactive contamination, Seoul imposed a partial ban on seafood imports from the region after the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi plant. Tokyo first took the row to the WTO in May 2015, requesting consultations—the first step under the global trade body's settlement system. But talks broke down. prompting Japan to seek a WTO ruling in August 2015. The WTO panel ruled in 2018 that South Korea should lift its ban but the so-called appellate court quashed this, the final word on the subject. According to Fukushima authorities, four countries and regions-China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau—have maintained a ban on importing a broad range of locally-produced foods. South Korea, Singapore, the United States and the Philippines have partial hans in place (AFP)

Made-in-Nepal leather goods in high demand

A showcase of readymade leather jackets seen at Latido.

According to Shah, the US, China,

Canada, UK and Japan are the

major export markets for Nepali

Preferences Act provides duty-

free access for 77 Nepali products

that have high potential in the

world's largest economy. The

goods include certain carpets and

pashmina, headgear, shawls,

scarves, travel goods and a num-

ber of leather items. Local prod-

ucts are given similar privileges

According to the statistics of

in the European Union too.

The US under its Trade

leather products.

KRISHANA PRASAIN KATHMANDU APRIL 12

Demand for locally manufactured leather goods has swelled due to the improved quality of domestic products, said traders. Made-in-Nepal jackets, bags, wallets, belts and accessories are the largest selling items among leather goods. As per manufacturers, demand has also gone up because local factories are producing customised products.

The number of domestic manufacturers has also increased with the rise in sales of local products, said traders. Rhino Nepal Leather Craft, Latido Leathers and Human Fit Craft are among the brands that have gained a large share of both local and foreign markets.

Bilal Ahemad Shah, managing director of Latido Leathers, said people were switching from low quality foreign brands to trendy local products. According to him, better quality local products that are available at relatively cheaper prices compared to similar imported goods have also attracted consumers.

Rhino Nepal Leather Craft has been in the business for the last one and a half decades. Amit Shah, managing director of the company, said they were focusing on expanding exports to countries which have provided duty-free access for Nepali products.

Earning a living



A street vendor stands next to his stall in front of a jewellery shop in Istanbul, Turkey. The Turkish economy contracted 3 percent in the fourth quarter of last year after a currency crisis devalued the lira by nearly 30 percent against the dollar. It drove inflation to a 15-year high.

NIMBUS কम खाऔं हीं Best ज्वाउ Byanian

MARKET WATCH

| RETAIL PRIC | E | |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Vegetables | Unit | Price (Rs) |
| Red Potato | kg | Rs45 |
| White Potato | kg | Rs33 |
| Onion (Indian) | kg | Rs45 |
| Tomato Small | kg | Rs45 |
| Carrot | kg | Rs35 |
| Tomato Big | kg | Rs65 |
| Squash | kg | Rs35 |
| Cabbage | kg | Rs25 |
| Brinjal Long | kg | Rs45 |
| Cow Pea | kg | Rs105 |
| Cauliflower | kg | Rs45 |
| Fruits | Unit | Price (Rs) |
| Apple | kg | Rs125 |
| Pomegranate | kg | Rs145 |
| Pineapple | kg | Rs105 |
| Cucumber | kg | Rs85 |
| Рарауа | kg | Rs65 |
| Banana | Doz | Rs105 |
| Lime | 100Pcs | Rs245 |

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





the Department of Customs,

export earnings from leather

handbags, suitcases and belts

increased 7.56 percent year-on-

year between mid-July and

mid-January of the current fiscal

year. The country exported leath-

er products valued at Rs121.14 mil-

lion over the review period. Shah

said they were receiving an

increasing number of orders from

Nepali manufacturers of leath-

er goods import processed leather

mostly from India. The raw mate-

rials are also sourced from

abroad recently.

Bazaar

Royal Dutch Shell sells stake in Gulf of Mexico field for \$965 million

THE HAGUE: Royal Dutch Shell on Thursday agreed to sell its 22.45 percent stake in the Caesar Tonga field in the Gulf of Mexico for \$965 million in cash to a subsidiary of Israeli energy conglomerate Delek Group. Located in the Gulf of Mexico, 300 km south of Louisiana, the field's current production rate is 71,000 barrels per day of oil equivalent, with 90 percent of the output being oil. The Caesar Tonga field has 30 more years of life and assuming no change in the rate of production, Delek's interest reflects 78 million barrels of oil equivalent reserves, Delek, Israel's government-owned gas retailer, said. As part of the deal, Delek will sign a long-term agreement with a Shell affiliate to purchase oil produced from the field for 30 years at either market prices or prices matched to third-party offers. Delek Chief Executive Asaf Bartfeld said the deal, along with exploration in the North Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, would boost its position in the international energy market. Shell said the deal was likely to close by the end of the third quarter and the latest stake sale would contribute to its ongoing divestment programme. (REUTERS)

Apple in Dutch antitrust spotlight for allegedly promoting own apps

REUTERS BRUSSELS, APRIL 12

Apple, already the subject of EU antitrust scrutiny, on Thursday became the target of a Dutch investigation for allegedly favoring its own apps on its popular App Store.

Dutch competition agency ACM suggested the investigation may be expanded to Google's Play Store in future because of similar business practices by the company. Both services are lucrative money spinners for Apple and Google. The investigation was triggered by Dutch apps for news media which provided indications of possible anti-competitive behavior by the iPhone maker during the agency's study into app stores, ACM said.

"ACM will investigate, among other aspects, whether Apple acted in violation of the prohibition of abuse of dominance, for example, by giving preferential treatment to its own apps," the Dutch enforcer said in a state-

ment. The investigation will also look into Apple's requirement that app developers use its payment systems for in-app purchases and pay a 30 percent fee in the first year, and also difficulties app developers face in using all functionalities of an iPhone.

"ACM is calling on app providers to come forward if they experience any problems with Apple's App Store, but also if they experience similar problems with Google's Play Store. ACM will use that information in its investigation," the Dutch watchdog said. Apple said it treats all app developers equally.

Bangladesh, Pakistan and New

Zealand. Sheep and buffalo skins

are commonly used raw materials

market, a number of manufactur-

ers have started offering

after sales service for leather

products. Bikki Bajracharya,

production manager at Human

Fit Craft, said his company

provided after sales service for a

nominal fee. According to him, a

shortage of skilled manpower is

among the major challenges in

To capitalise on the growing

in domestic products.

the industry.

"We are confident (ACM's) review will confirm all developers have an equal opportunity to succeed in the App Store," the company said in a statement.

Google declined to comment.

The European Commission, which is looking into Swedish music streaming service Spotify's complaint that Apple abuses its position, said the Dutch investigation was in line with its own case.



Rs 59,600 Fine Gold Silver Rs 720 SOURCE: FENEGOSID

INT'L MARKET

| Energy | Price (US\$) | %Change |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------|
| Brent Crude Futr (Bbl) | 71.65 | 1.16 |
| Gas Oil Fut (Ice) (Mt) | 636.00 | 0.51 |
| Gasoline Rbob Fut (Gal) | 203.82 | 0.36 |
| Natural Gas Futr (Mmbtu) | 2.68 | 0.49 |
| Agriculture | Price (US\$) | %Change |
| Cocoa Future (Mt) | 2,398.00 | 0.84 |
| Coffee 'C' Future (Lb) | 93.25 | 0.59 |
| Corn Future (Bu) | 369.25 | 0.14 |
| Cotton No.2 Futr (Lb) | 78.29 | 0.71 |
| Rough Rice (Cbot) (Cwt) | 10.28 | -0.10 |
| Soybean Future (Bu) | 910.00 | 0.14 |
| Soybean Meal Futr (T) | 311.4 | 0.13 |
| Soybean Oil Futr (Lb) | 29.38 | |
| Sugar #11 (World) (Lb) | 12.86 | 0.31 |
| Wheat Future(Cbt) (Bu) | 467.25 | 0.38 |
| Industrial Metals | Price (US\$) | %Change |
| Copper Future (Lb) | | 2.15 |
| Precious Metals | Price (US\$) | %Change |
| Gold 100 Oz Futr (T Oz) | 1,297.10 | 0.29 |
| Silver Future (T Oz) | 15.02 | 1.00 |
| | | |

Crude oil touted as health cure in Azerbaijan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NAFTALAN (AZERBAIJAN), APRIL 12

Immersed up to her neck in a dark viscous liquid, Sulfiya smiles in delight, confident that the fetid substance will cure her painful condition.

Sulfiya, a Russian woman in her 60s, has travelled to Azerbaijan's north-western city of Naftalan in the hope that crude oil baths at a local sanatorium will end her years of suffering from polyarthritis, a disease affecting the joints.

"This is so pleasant," she enthuses, despite the reek of engine oil. Her naked dip in oil heated to just above body temperature lasts 10 minutes, after which an attendant scrapes the brown oil off her skin and sends her into a shower.

The native of Russia's Tatarstan region said she and her friends "have long dreamed of coming" for treatment in

Naftalan. The petroleum spa resort in the oil-rich Caucasus country is a draw for visitors despite its proximity to Nagorny Karabakh, a region disputed between Azerbaijan and Armenia in a long-running armed conflict.

After 10 days of bathing in crude oil Sulfiya says she now feels "much better" and has even reduced her medication for the polyarthritis that she has had for 12 years.

"It is a gift from God," agrees 48-year-old Rufat, an Azerbaijani journalist and opposition party member who is undergoing treatment in the sanatorium called Sehirli, or "magic" in Azerbaijani.

Azerbaijan's vast oil deposits were discovered in the mid-19th century, making what was at the time part of the Russian Empire one of the first places in the world to start commercial oil production.



A man bathes in a tub filled with Naftalan crude oil during a treatment session at Sehirli Naftalan Health Centre.

Oil exports to markets all over the world are the largest sector of Azerbaijan's economy, but the crude that comes from subsoil reservoirs in Naftalan is not suitable for commercial use. Instead the local oil is used to treat muscular, skin and bone

conditions as well as gynaecological and neurological problems. According to a legend, which spa staff readily tell clients, the healing properties of Naftalan's "miraculous oil" were discovered by accident when a camel left to die near a pool of oil was cured.

The small town of Naftalan some 300 kilometres (185 miles) from the capital Baku became a popular health resort for Soviet citizens in the 1920s.

"In the past, when there weren't any hotels or sanatoriums, people would come to Naftalan and stay with locals," said one of the doctors at the Sehirli sanatorium, Fabil Azizov, sitting in her office under a portrait of strongman President Ilham Aliyev. "But as time passed, sanatoriums were built and treatment methods developed."

Some specialists warn the method has dangerous side effects. "Despite the stories of past cures, the use of crude oil for medicinal purposes has been condemned by Western doctors as potentially carcinogenic," former journalist Maryam Omidi wrote in a 2017 book published in Britain about Soviet-era sanatoriums. In fact,

the oil at Naftalan is almost 50 percent naphthalene, a carcinogenic substance found in cigarette smoke and mothballs that in large amounts can damage or destroy red blood cells.

But doctors and patients at Naftalan brush aside any misgivings and the sanatorium even has a small museum displaying crutches that once belonged to patients who have recovered from their illnesses.

During its heyday in the 1980s, Naftalan would host more than 70,000 visitors a year.

But in 1988, a bloody war began with neighbouring Armenia for the control of Azerbaijan's separatist Nagorny Karabakh region, which unilaterally proclaimed independence from Baku in 1991. The conflict claimed the lives of some 30,000 people from both sides and forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes