Coldest: Jomsom: 4.0°c Hottest: Bhairahawa: 35.7°c emperature: Max: 29.7°c Min: 11.7°c

athmandubo

Vol XXVII No 60 | 12+4 Pages

CAPITAL EDITION . PRINTED SIMULTANEOUSLY IN KATHMANDUL BIRATNAGAR, BHARATPUR AND NEPALGUN

NEPAL'S LARGEST SELLING ENGLISH DAILY



PHOTO: PASANG TENZING SHERP

For this season's Everest climbers, it's all systems go-except the weather

Bad weather may force a record number of climbers to rush up and down the summit

Normally, there is a two-

SANGAM PRASAIN KATHMANDU. APRIL 18

Heavy footfalls are expected on Mount Everest this spring, as a record 374 fee-paying climbers—12 of them Nepalis—have been cleared to scale the world's highest peak. And given the erratic weather pattern this season, many climbers are concerned that they could be left with a small window to make it to the top, and face a traffic jam during the final days of ascent.

Ang Tshiring Sherpa, former president of Nepal Mountaineering Association,

said considering a large number of Everest aspirants waitweek window for the suming for a chance to mount a bid miteers to complete their for the summit, a "traffic jam" climb before monsoon begins. on the slopes cannot be ruled But as weather conditions conout this year. tinue to fluctuate, some sum-

"It will depend on weather. miteers say the climbing win-If the weather does not behave dow could get even narrower, well, all climbers could scrampushing them to attempt the ble to climb the peak during a climb within a week, and short weather window causing increasing the chances of a a traffic jam," he said. traffic jam. official at the An

A traffic jam is potentially Meteorological Forecasting dangerous particularly at the Division told the Post that they Hillary Step, a vertical rock don't forecast multi-day weathface at 8,790m, which many er event and are not able to climbers said was dislodged in predict the changes in weather the 2015 earthquake. This is pattern in May. the last steep challenge, when

exhausted climbers are forced to wait there for several hours, awaiting their turn to climb up or come down on a single rope.

According the to Department of Tourism, the authority that issues climbing permits, this year has the highest number of climbing permits issued for Everest in a single season.

"Applications have stopped coming but we have estimated that the number of fee-paying Everest aspirants could reach 380 this season," said Surendra Thapa, spokesperson for the department. "With each climber hiring at least one local

climbing guide, the total number of individuals on the mountain may reach 1,000 this season,' he said. Normally, permits are issued

until April-end >> CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Ask any shopkeeper in Thamel if they accept payments via WeChat or Alipay, and there's a fairly good chance that they do. The answer is in the affirmative especially among Chineseowned and operated businesses along the Amrit Marg, which has earned the moniker 'Little China,' owing to an influx of Chinese establish-

TSERING D GURUNG

KATHMANDU, APRIL 18

ments in the area. From a bijou noodle shop to a big hotel, the majority of businesses in the area accept payments via WeChat and Alipay, two of China's most popular mobile payment platforms. Together, the two digital payment systems control over 90 percent of the country's domestic market share.

"I was pleasantly surprised to learn that I could pay for a meal here using WeChat Pay," said Tenzin, a Chengdu-based businessman who regularly travels to Kathmandu for

work. "So far all the Chinese restaurants I have visited in Thamel have accepted WeChat Pay.

Chinese payment

platforms are illegal,

but officials say they

can't control them

Majority of the Chinese-run businesses use popular

Chinese digital wallets to sell goods and services

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2019 (06-01-2076)

Like Tenzin, who asked only to be identified by his first name, a growing number of Chinese visitors are using their digital wallets to pay for goods and services in Nepal, particularly while dealing with fellow Chinese nationals who already have access to WeChat Pay and Alipay. But while the acceptance of such payment methods has made life convenient for Chinese tourists, these transactions bypass formal banking channels, and as such are in violation of the country's Foreign **Direct Investment and Foreign** Exchange laws, say experts.

Under Nepali law, any outbound transaction from the country must be first approved by Nepal Rastra Bank, the country's central bank. When people use these platforms, the transaction is made from one Chinese account to another which means the money

Chinese friends and businessmen in the area whenever a customer wants to pay using the mobile platforms. "The customer will transfer money to my friend's WeChat Pay account who will then pay me in Nepali rupees here, said the store owner. "I don't know if it's legal or illegal. I do it because if I don't accept such payments, then I lose

technically doesn't enter Nepal.

owner in Thamel who refused

to be named fearing backlash

from his customers who are

primarily Chinese. "In China.

people rarely use cash these days so they find it cumber-

some to carry cash while trav-

in antiques, said he doesn't

have an account on either of

the two platforms as one needs

to have a Chinese bank account

to avail of their services. So he

relies on assistance from his

The store owner, who deals

elling."

"It's just a matter of convenience," said one store

business >> CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



process puts government in a bind

Officials say the agency has tried to portray Nepal in a way that inaccurately shows the country has done nothing

ANIL GIRI

KATHMANDU, APRIL 18

A letter from the United Nations addressed to Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali in relation to Nepal's transitional justice process has put the government in a bind, as officials said the agency should have waited for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to acknowledge the receipt of the missive before it was put into the public domain.

Five special rapporteurs under Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner on April 12 wrote to the Nepal government, seeking transparency in the selection of leadership of two transitional justice bodies and asking to amend the existing Transitional Justice Act at par with international standards. The letter was sent through the Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations Office in Geneva

Senior officials at the Prime Minister's

Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have also objected to the content of the letter, which came to public notice on Wednesday

"The letter wrongly tries to portray that nothing has been done so far in the transitional justice process. We have reservations about it," a senior official at the Prime Minister's Office told the Post on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to speak to the media.

>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Nepal has a hockey team. But it doesn't have a single hockey field.

The National Games in Nepalgunj is a reminder of how pathetic infrastructure and lacklustre organisation have abandoned a promising sport in the region

ADARSHA DHAKAL

NEPALGUNJ, APRIL 18

When Satya Narayan Chaudhary, the captain of the Army Club's hockey team, took up the sport over a decade ago, he had imagined playing in a smooth green fieldjust like they do in most countries where the sport is popular. But to his dismay, Chaudhary has never had a chance to see a proper hockey field at home.

"My entire career in hockey has been spent playing on a terrible field," Chaudhary said. "It is only during international tournaments we get to see a proper, green hockey field."

week, 38-year-old This Chaudhary was playing his



Hockey matches were played on poor fields during National Games.

last domestic game in the mental arch-rivals Nepal Police National Games final. He led Club in a penalty shoot-out the Army team to its eighth after the game ended in a tie National Games gold on during the regular 70 minutes. Tuesday, beating their depart-For a moment, the Army

dugout at the Mangal Prasad Higher Secondary School ground went through a jubilant celebration, but soon, the reality hit them. For the Army team and most Nepali hockey players, it's a routine thingthe game has always been organised in haste and without proper infrastructure for decades. No one knows what's next in store for the hockey players after the National Games are over.

Hockey is played in Nepal without a proper field. Chaudhary says the ground where his team usually trains, at the Army Physical Fitness and Training Centre in Lalitpur, has the best surface for the game. But it's not a hockey field-it's for football. >> CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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Government to administer vitamin A, deworming tablets to 2.6m children

Department of Health Services, however, says coverage rate has declined in city areas, particularly in comparison to last year

ARJUN POUDEL KATHMANDU, APRIL 18

As many as 2.6 million children aged six months to five years are expected to be administered with vitamin A supplements and deworming tablets as part of a nationwide campaign to be held on Friday and Saturday

Nutrition Section under the Family Welfare Division of the Department of Health Services, which is responsible to run the campaign, said all necessary preparations to administer the supplement and deworming tablets have been completed

"We would like to request all parents to make sure that their children aged six months to five years are administered with the vitamin A and deworming tablets," Kedar Parajuli, chief of nutrition

Former lawmaker Yadav, RJP-N leader Mandal held for forgery

ABADHESH KUMAR JHA RAJBIRAJ, APRIL 18

Saptari police has arrested BP Yadav, former lawmaker of then Madhesi Janadhikar Forum-Nepal, and Hari Narayan Mandal, central member of Rastriya Janata Partyp-Nepal, in a forgery case

Yadav and Mandal were arrested on Thursday on charges of forging government stamps and documents, and forming a fake consumer committee to receive government budget.

Superintendent of Police Rajendra Bista said Yadav and Mandal were taken custody after investigation found that the duo was involved in forging government

section of the division said. The section estimates that there are 2.6 million children aged six months to five years in the country, who need vitamin A supplement and

deworming tablets. The vitamin A campaign is largely a success story in Nepal, as it has immensely helped tackle the issue of vitamin A deficiency among children, which used to a major public health problem in the country.

The coverage rate, however, has been declining by the year. The programme had a coverage rate of over 94 percent, the highest among health campaigns and programmes in the country in the past. But last year, only 85 percent children were administered the vitamin A supplement and deworming tablets.

The nutrition section said

that the coverage rate was much lower in big cities, metropolises and submetropolises in comparison to remote districts and far-flung villages. "Reaching out to elite

groups, educated people and people residing in apartments and colonies has emerged as a main challenge to us," said Parajuli. "They neither give access to female community health volunteers nor listen to them.

Likewise, floating population, slum settlements and lack of exact data are some of the other issues that have hindered the drug administration process, according to Narendra Bajracharya, chief of Health Department at Kathmandu Metropolitan City. "We do not know exact number of children in our metropolis," said Bajracharya. "We have been setting targets on

the basis of 2011's census data." In Kathmandu, of the estimated 80,000 children aged six months and five years, only 62,000 (77 percent) were administered vitamin A and

deworming tablets last year. The government has been conducting such nationwide campaigns twice a year since 2003-in October and in April. This year, the Health Ministry requested UNICEF for vita min A supplements and deworming tablets after provincial governments failed to procure it on time. Out of seven provinces throughout country only Sudurpaschim Province managed to purchase the vitamin A supplement and deworming tablets. Except Province 2, all the other provinces sought help of the federal government to purchase the medicines

For this season's Everest climbers, it's all systems go-except ...

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The highest number of climbers are from India (87), followed by the United States (68) and China (62) and the United Kingdom (42).

Climbing will start from mid-May, and the mountaineers have already started spending time on the lower reaches of the Himalayas acclimatising themselves.

During the final phase of ascent, climbers are exposed to risks of thin air and many could run out of oxygen as well.

In May 2012, four climbers—Ha Wenyi from China, Eberhard Schaaf of Germany, Nepal-born Canadian Shriya Shah and South Korean mountaineer Song Won-bin-died from exhaustion and altitude sickness while descending from the summit.

An estimated 150 climbers had left for the summit on a single day-May 18, 2012, that had caused a traffic jam on the tallest peak in the world.

One of the reasons Everest sees a huge number of climbers is the fee they pay to the government and the money they spend. Foreigners pay \$11,000 to obtain the climbing permit and spend between \$40,000 and \$90,000 to climb Everest. As all expenditures are non-refundable, climbers scramble to climb the peak at any cost, which often could lead to overcrowding on top of the world

Some climbers say that they don't anticipate a traffic jam this spring because of a fixed climbing timetable for each expedition. "To avoid traffic jams, there is a mechanism in place. Climbing leaders and high-altitude guides meet and fix departure timetables for each team," said Kami Rita Sherpa, one of the most experienced climbers who plans to break his own record by scaling Everest for a 23rd time this

season. Despite the risks, the number of climbers continues to grow every year, and for Nepal, that's at least a positive news. According to the department, it collected Rs436 million in royalty by issuing



The government has issued permits to a record 374 climbers to scale the Everest this year.

climbing permits for Everest alone. The climbing season also generates hundreds of well-paying jobs.

"As climbing Everest has become much safer with improved climbing gears and weather technology, the number of people who apply for a permit has been rising," said Thapa

According to the department's statistics, 863 individuals were issued the climbing permits last year, including 349 fee-paying climbers and 514 high-altitude climbing guides. A record 563 people, including 261 fee-paying climbers, stood atop the hallowed peak. The high-altitude climbing guides do not need to pay climbing fees.

For the last three years, the success rate of climbing Everest has averaged at 70 percent. In 2015, 356 mountaineers had acquired climbing permits. But there were no Everest bids in the spring of 2015, due to avalanches set off by the devastating April 25 earthquake that killed 20 climbers, including guides and helpers at the base camp. The government had then

extended their permits for two years until 2017. According to the expedition

organisers, icefall doctors mobilised by the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee have already opened a climbing route from base camp to Camp II (6,400m).

"Climbers have started acclimatising up to camp II after the route was opened,' said Mingma Sherpa, chairman of Seven Summit Treks, one of the leading expedition companies. "We are expecting the first climb to take place on May 10 if the weather behaves well."

The climbing time from begins at 11 pm or midnight, base camp (at 5,364 metres) to so that climbers can reach the Camp I (5,943 metres) is five hours. The Khumbu Icefall, the most treacherous part of the route, lies between these two camps

Most of the climbers try to cross the Khumbu Icefall during the early morning, before the sunrise. As sunlight warms up the ice, the chances of crevasses opening up or ice blocks falling become much greater

It takes four hours to reach Camp II (6,400 metres) from

descent during the day. Expeditionists said the difficulty level of climbing would depend also on whether the snow up in the region is fresh or frozen. "The winter season dropped large amounts of snow on Everest areas and if it's frozen, it could make climbing relatively easy," said Ang

Tshiring. "But if there is fresh

snow, it could make climbing

difficult.

Camp I, which expeditionists

describe as the most exciting

and easiest part of the route.

From Camp II to Camp III

(7,162 metres), the average

walking time is seven hours,

while from Camp III to Camp

IV (8,000 metres) or South Col,

the average walking time is

It is the Camp IV from

where, climbers say, the ulti-

mate thrill begins, as it is the

last point from where the

Everest push starts. It takes

climbers up to 10 hours to

reach the summit (8,848

metres) from Camp IV.

Normally, the summit push

summit and begin their

nine hours.

Chinese payment platforms are illegal, but officials say they ...

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ernment has to monitor, and control, Keshari Shah, CEO of Nabil Bank.

UN letter on transitional justice process puts government ... >> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In the letter, the UN rapporteurs have sought the Nepal government's clarification on any measure it has taken or intends to take to bring Nepal's legislation in conformity with international norms and standards and what it has done or is planning to do to enhance the effectiveness of the two transitional justice bodies. They have also sought information

regarding the measures Nepal government has taken or is planning to take for effective participation of victims in the design and implementation of the transitional justice processes The letter was sent a little

over a month after Gyawali, during his speech at the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, assured the international community that Nepal would amend its Transitional Justice Act in line with the Supreme Court ruling and international commitments. He had also said that there

Nepal government to recall the ruling from the Supreme Court. Even as the government has extended the terms of the two transitional justice bodies, it is yet to amend the Transitional Justice Act in line with the Supreme Court ruling and international obligations, despite repeated promises

In 2015, the Supreme Court struck down the amnesty provision and said the consent of the victims was necessary for any reconciliation.

Though the letter has stopped short of making a direct reference, it does carry a hint that there has been a lack of consistency in the government's claims and its actions

The international community in the past also called on the government to take the transitional process to a logical conclusion by amending the Act and taking the victims into confidence.

In January, nine foreign embassies based in nandu, at the initiative

Post that Nepal has always been open to inviting the rapporteurs

"Two UN special rapporteurs came last year alone. We will take necessary decision about the request soon," said the official. He also said that Nepal is serious about concluding the transitional justice process adhering to the international standards and the Supreme Court's ruling.

In his brief comment on the UN letter, Minister for Communication and Information Technology Gokul Banskota said on Thursday that there would be no blanket amnestv in cases of human rights violations committed during the decade-long insurgency.

"Nepal is capable of handling the transitional justice process on its own,' Baskota told reporters during the weekly media briefing at Singha Durbar.

Government officials said they received the letter only on Wednesday evening. It was

nents and stamp

Bista and Yadav had also formed a fake consumer committee to mobilise Rs 2.5 million budget issued by the Physical Infrastructure Development Ministry in Province 2

Police said they had forged letter pads and stamps of Krishnasawaran Rural Municipality with the intent of misappropriating the budget.

The District Court has remanded Yadav and Mandal to judicial custody pending further investigation.

Police suspect that some employees of Siraha Infrastructures Development Division Office might have helped Yadav and Mandal.

SP Bista said police were investigating the possible involvement of other individuals in the case.

planket amnest ouia be no in cases of serious human rights violations.

committee led by former chief

select the members and chair-

persons of the commissions.

the two commissions.

for

The UN concern over clarify its plans to take the selection of members and transitional justice process chairpersons of the Truth and forward in 2019 and ensure Reconciliation Commission broader consultation with the and the Commission on the stakeholders. Investigation of Enforced

"Without broad public trust Disappeared Persons comes in the process, Nepal will not weeks after the government be able to bring closure to the formed a recommendation wounds and grievances that persist from the conflict era, justice Om Prakash Mishra to nor be able to complete the peace process," the foreign missions said.

In the latest strongly-word-The committee has called applications from ed letter, the UN has also candidates to work as Nepali officials nudged chairpersons and members of about the pending requests for a visit from the Special More than a decade after Rapporteur. "We look forward to receiving your invitation to the Comprehensive Peace

Agreement, conflict victims visit the country soon," the are still waiting for justice. letter said The UN rapporteurs, in senior government Α their letter, have asked the

' vet when the gove of the UN, issued a statement ment is planning to respond to asking the government to the United Nations.

The officials said the government will study the letter and reply to the high commissioner's office at an appropriate time. "We will reply to all concerned after studying the letter," Bharat Raj Paudyal, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told the Post.

The official at the Prime Minister's Office said the government is open to taking technical support, if need be, from the UN, which could be for, say, forensic study. "We are open to the UN's support if we need, but the transitional process will move ahead on the homegrown modality," he said.

Binod Ghimire contributed to official, however, told the the report.

of Chinese ong with the possibility business owners using these platforms to repatriate money and evade taxes in Nepal, economists say the unregulated use of such platforms will also have a significant impact on the country's earnings from Chinese tourists.

"A large number of Chinese tourists visit Nepal but if in-country per capita Chinese tourist spending goes down, then it will have a negative impact in terms of forex earning and balance of payment accounting," said Chandan Sapkota, an economist currently based in Tokyo.

More than 150,000 Chinese tourists visited Nepal last year, a nearly 50 percent rise from 2017. And the number is only expected to grow as infrastructure projects linking the two countries complete.

In recent years, Chinese tourists have been known to be the biggest spenders. In 2017, Chinese visitors spent \$258 billion, nearly double of what Americans spent the same year, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Experts say that for the local economy to benefit from Chinese tourists, the govvia WeChat Pay and Alipay. Otherwise, the country will lose much of its revenue as the income goes directly to China.

"The tourism sector is considered to have a multiplier effect in terms of growth, income and employment," said Sapkota. "If money is paid in China via WeChat, then we won't realise those benefits here.'

One possible solution could be for local banks and companies to partner with WeChat Pay and Alipay, something that an increasing number of countries around the world are already doing, to accommodate Chinese buyers' preference for mobile payment while ensuring the money passes through the country's formal banking channels.

Last year, Nabil Bank signed an agreement with Union Pay International to facilitate QR code payment service in Nepal. As per the agreement, Chinese tourists will be able to use their Union Pay app to pay for goods and services at thousands of businesses under Nabil's network across the country, said Anil

want Chinese tourist money in the country," said Shah, "and we hope that by adapting to their payment habits they will be encouraged to spend their money here."

In a phone interview with the Post, Bhisma Dhungana, chief of forex division at Nepal Rastra Bank, said his office is aware of Chinese businesses using mobile payment platforms. But authori ties still have not figured out how to bring them under the central bank's control.

"We are working on a solution to monitor and regularise such transactions,' said Dhungana. "It's not that easy because we are dealing with technology-based transactions." Dhungana said the bank is currently reviewing the application of SwiftPass, the Chinese mobile payment technology company, which supports WeChat Pay, Alipay and UnionPay. But until SwiftPass receives a licence to operate in Nepal, he said transactions via WeChat Pay and Alipay are illegal.

"Anyone caught engaging in such transactions will be held accountable," he said.

Nepal has a hockey team. But it doesn't have a single hockey field.

> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"This is the worst surface we have ever played on," said Chaudhary, after his team's gold medal triumph at the high school ground that has barely any grass. On any other day, the ground also plays host to cricket or football tournaments. It is, in fact, so overused and least looked after that the ground is not suitable for any sports. "The surface is very hard because there is no grass. We don't have any idea when the ball bounces. On a surface like this, we can't make a proper run and have a high chance of getting injured,' Chaudhary said.

If the condition of hockey infrastructure is any indication, then it's no surprise that Nepal's international appearance in hockeyespecially in the South Asian Games-has equally been a debacle. The national team conceded 79 goals when men's hockey was last included in the 2010 edition in Dhaka. Their biggest defeat so far is 24-0 against Bangladesh in 2010,



A glimpse from a hockey match during the eighth National Games in Nepalgunj.

when they scored only one goal throughout the tournament.

In modern-day hockey, the game is played in three surfaces, all of which have to be extraordinarily smooth. For outdoor hockey, traditionally, the grass makes the best field; indoor hockey is played on a synthetic surface. In recent years, astroturfs have replaced the grass field in outdoor hockey.

At the National Games, the women's hockey field, hosted at the Shukra Secondary School, was comparatively worse. Athletes could not even spot the ball during an on-field challenge because it would get invisible in the puff of dust. But it is not just the scarcity of a proper field Nepali hockey players have to deal with. Today, the sport neither has quality players nor coaches or match officials. The final between the Army and the Police was officiated by a referee imported from India. The Police team includes a few Nepalis who were raised in India and play the

sport there. Many Hindi-speaking Nepalis crossed the border just to play in the National Games.

Former national player Shafiq Ahmed Siddiqui, now a treasurer with Banke District Hockey Association, said getting players from India during big games won't help the sport's future in the coun-"These boys play in India try. because there are better opportunities for them," said Siddiqui. "Nepal has to produce its own players to make sure the game goes on.'

For Siddiqui, it's a frustrating sign that none of the representatives from the local organising committee of the National Games was present to monitor the tournament. 'The district association doesn't have a bank account and the central body doesn't have any plan," Siddiqui told the Post. "The National Sports Council has no idea how it needs to think about hockey."

The country hosted its eighth National Games after the government finally released Rs850 million to the local organising committee. But hockey, for which an astroturf could have been procured for Rs3.5 to Rs4 million, only received around Rs 250,000.

"That was the only budget allocated for hockey and we had to make do with the grounds that were available," said Bhim Oli, coordinator of the venue management committee. Later this year, Nepal is supposed to host the South Asian Games-but only if the country can complete the construction of all infrastructure on time. Even if most facilities will be finished on time, Nepal will still not have a proper field designated for hockey—one of the 27 games in the event.

"We are hosting a big tournament but I don't know where we're going to play hockey," Chaudhary said. "But if the government actually wanted, it's not too late to build a proper facility before the impending games.'

News

Asset verification process of transport operators set to become free of hassles

Public transport operators are yet to register as companies under new rules

CHANDAN KUMAR MANDAL **KATHMANDU, APRIL 18**

The government has said it is making efforts to minimise procedural hassles for registering erstwhile public transport committees as companies to encourage the public transport operators to become

tax-paying companies. A seven-member committee, formed under Director General of the Department of Transport Management Kumar Prasad Dahal, has recommended that the government ease the registration process for transport companies. As per the recommendation

of the committee, the government should allow verification of the property belonging to previous transport committees by officials at any transport management offices in the country before making them register as companies at the Office of the Company Registrar.

"According to the existing laws, verification of properof such committees ties should be done by courts, which is likely to take long,' Dahal told the Post. "We have tried to remove the policy obstacles through this recommendation."

Public transport committees are reluctant to register as companies since the government launched a crackdown on their syndicates. As part of the action, transport operators were required to register as companies at the Office of the Company Registrar as per the amendment made to the Transport Management Directives-2004

last year. The amendment made it mandatory for transport entrepreneurs to register as private companies, which were earlier listed with several transport committees and associations nationwide. However, a year into the

political vicissitudes"

government decision, a majority of transport operators have yet to register as companies on various pretexts while the government kept on extending the deadlines on several occasions. The new deadline for registration as companies is set for June 1.

"They had said it would be difficult for their 300,000 stakeholders or members to go for registration as companies in a short timeframe. And also the task of property verification is tough. Therefore, we decided to make it simpler," added Dahal.

As there are only three company registrars—in Itahari and Kathmandu, Butwal, public transport entrepreneurs spread around the country had said that all of them cannot travel to these offices for registration while verification of the property also remains a tough task, according to Dahal.

Now onwards, all the mem-

bers of transport committees can register at any of the transport management offices and submit their property documents for verification. The chief of the transport management office or a section officer can verify the property and initiate the process for company registration.

The government hopes that simplifying the procedure will persuade transport entrepreneurs to register at the company registrar's office soon. "Members of the transport

committees can agree that they are ready to hand over their property to a certain company. The years-long practice of having property under the committee is now being transferred to companies This takes time," said Dahal. "The transport committee representatives are satisfied with the latest facilitation. We are positive they will soon register as private companies.

Kathmandu metropolis unveils master plan and mobile app for 2.2 km heritage trail

ANUP OJHA KATHMANDU, APRIL 18

Marking the World Heritage Day on Thursday, the Kathmandu Metropolitan City unveiled a master plan to link two world heritage sites— Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square and Swayambhunath Stupa which lies in 2.2km walking distance.

The city also unveiled a new mobile app "World Heritage to World Heritage Trail" where a visitors can get the information about historical monuments that fall along the trail without the need for a human guide.

Addressing the master plan unveiling ceremony, Kathmandu Mayor Bidya Sundar Shakya said opening of the trail will help connect the locals with tourists and improve their socio-economic status.

"We want to connect locals and their everyday lifestyle to preserve the heritage, art and culture. This time we have a master plan, and we are in its execution phase," said Shakya



Kathmandu Metropolitan City officials unveil the master plan for the 2.2km heritage trail linking Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square and Swayambhunath Stupa, two of Kathmandu's UNESCO world heritage sites, on Thursday.

POST PHOTO: FLITE IOSH

promoting local arts, culture

and the way of life; and estab-

lishing library and museum

and information help desk

Lawmaker Jeevan Ram

"If we could only show visi

for visitors.

The metropolis has set itself a three-year target to implement the master plan.

The 2.2 km trail hosts around 400 households, 80 percent of them belong to the Newar community.

Shrestha said there are 20 his-The master plan talks about torical monuments between giving a traditional look to the two different UNESCO world trail; offering subsidies to heritage sites to renovate their locals houses into traditional from; tors the monuments and cultures, it will further promote our culture and heritage globally," he said.

The trail passes through Maru Ganesh, Maru Hiti, Banja Hiti, Dami Tole, Sunta Galli, Michya Galli, Bhelu Mahadev, Dallu, Nipu Hitti and Bhuikhel before ending at Swayambhunath.

The entire length of the trail connects the ward 15, 18, 19, 20, 23 and 24 of Kathmandu. The metropolis has allocated Rs 100 million for the construction of infrastructure in the first phase of the master plan.

"The metropolis has also come up with several new plans to improve the trail and attract visitors in view of the tourism year 2020," said Ward Chairperson of Kathmandu-18 Nuchhe Kaji Maharjan, also the coordinator of the Cultural and Tourism Committee of the metropolis.

Before unveiling the master plan, officials from the metropolis, locals and heritage conservationists had organised a march from Bhuikhel from Swayambhunath to Hanuman Dhoka.

Nepal has failed to ensure full press freedom: Reporters Without Borders

NAYAK PAUDEL

KATHMANDU, APRIL 18

Nepal's position in the World Press Freedom Index 2019 has remained unchanged at 106, according to Reporters Without Borders, which says the environment for journalists working for independent media outlets in the country is still extremely difficult.

"In late 2017, the first local, provincial and parliamentary elections in 20 years were marked by many violations of the freedom to inform. But the government formed in 2018 under KP Oli failed to take

steps to ensure respect for the 'full online about a local businessman freedom of the press' enshrined in under laws intended to authentithe preamble of Nepal's 2015 consticate electronic transactions and tution," Reporters Without Borders, an advocacy group on issues relating to freedom of information and freedom of the press, said on Nepal's press freedom situation, which it described as "victim of

The report comes amid growing

concerns among journalists over

the government crackdown on

press freedom. Government author-

ities earlier this week arrested

Arjun Giri, an editor of a weekly in

Pokhara, for publishing a story

discourage cyber crime and not related to journalists or media. Last year, Ram Sarraf, a Birgunjbased journalist, was accused of cyber crime under the Electronic Transaction Act and taken to court

for publishing a story online. Reporters Without Borders has also expressed concern over the new criminal code the government has introduced. "The new criminal code adopted in August 2018 poses major new threats to press freedom because several of its provisions hamper investigative reporting and restrict criticism of public figures,' Reporters Without Borders said. "Another disturbing development was the anti-media rhetoric which government representatives began using and which was widely reproduced in the government's newspapers, radio stations and TV channels."

Last Minister for year, Communication and Information Technology Gokul Banskota ordered state media to muzzle--and counter--news items related to Nirmala Pant, a 13-year-old girl from Kanchanpur who was raped

and murdered, and Dr Govinda KC, who was then staging a hunger strike demanding reforms in the medical education sector.

The minister, who had summoned editors of five state media outlets, had gone to the extent of ordering them to counter reports published by private media, and effectively discredit and mitigate their trenchant coverage of government's inaction in both

The Oli administration had met with severe criticism from public and the media for failing to nab the culprit(s) in the rape and murder case. The government was also criticised for not paying heed to Dr KC's hunger strike and the

former agreements. Experts said Nepal can further slip in press freedom index if the government continues to take harsh measures against the media and mediapersons.

"A stable government must be able to form policies to ensure press freedom," said Taranath Dahal, chairman of Freedom Forum, a civil liberty group. "While Nepal's position has remained unchanged this year, there are already concerns over press freedom in Nepal."

Nepal had fallen six places to 106 in the 2018 report.

"With the threat of prosecution and continuing violence in the field, the environment for journalists working for independent media outlets is extremely difficult,' Reporters Without Borders said.

Among the South Asian countries, Nepal ranks third after Bhutan (80) and Maldives (98) followed by Afghanistan (121), Sri Lanka (126), India (140), Pakistan (142) and Bangladesh (150).

Norway tops the World Press Freedom Index 2019 while Turkmenistan ranks last.





the kathmandu post 04

NEWS DIGEST

Rainfall affects communications **BAJURA:**

Communication services in Budhinanda Municipality and Himali, Swami Kartik and Jagannath rural municipalities of Bajura district have been disrupted due to continuous rainfall since Wednesday morning. Madhav Prasad Pandey of Nepal Telecom Bajura Branch said telephone services were down in the areas as solar towers could not charge to its full capacity due to lack of sunshine. (PR)

Editor Giri freed from custody

KATHMANDU: Arjun Giri, editor of Pokharabased Tandav weekly, was released from police custody on Thursday. Giri was arrested under the **Electronic Transaction** Act for publishing a news about alleged financial fraud committed by Bipendra Raj Batas of Batas Organisation on April 15. (RSS)

Man flees after

cheating 6 men MORANG: Morang police is after a man who is on the run after swindling Rs 2.4 million from six persons The District Police Office said an arrest warrant has been issued against Raian Raihanshi of Dhannalthan Rural Municipality-3 based on complaints filed by the victims at the Labour and Employment Office. Rajbanshi is accused of taking Rs400.000 from each of the six men. (PR)



People walk to their destinations as a shutdown enforced by the Communist Party of Nepal grounded vehicles in Kalikot district.

Strike disrupts life in Sudurpaschim

SUDURPASCHIM BUREAU DHANGADHI, APRIL 18

various

of Nepal.

ness

ed anywhere between Rs500 and Rs1,000 from the public Normal life was affected in while travelling through the of Mahendranagar-Dhangadhi districts Sudurpaschim Province on route. The normal fare on the route is Rs130. Thursday due to the banda called by the Netra Birkam **Explosives found in** Chand-led Communist Party Bajhang

Hundreds of passengers Police seized explosives were left stranded because of from a Bannichaur forest in the strike, while traders also Chhabis Pathibhera Rural complained that their busi-Municipality-3 of Bajhang dishad been affected trict on Wednesday night. throughout the day. "Banda According to the District organisers should search for Police Office, three Chand other alternatives of protest," party cadres fled the scene said Bhagat Bahadur Thapa, a leaving explosives in the forest hotel entrepreneur in after learning that a police patrol team was approaching.

Dhangadhi-2. In Mahendranagar, people DSP Surya Bahadur KC

said they seized explosives, said that small vehicles extortincluding six detonators and electric wires from the incident site.

Two vehicles torched on Tribhuvan Highway

HETAUDA: An unidentified group torched two vehicles at separate places along the Tribhuvan Highway on Wednesday night. The District Police Office in Makwanpur said that a mini truck was torched at Bhimphedi Rural Municipality-9 and a Bolero jeep was torched at Thaha Municipality-4. According to police, Chand cadres torched the vehicles to make

Thursday's strike successful in the district.

In Nawalparasi, a truck with Indian registration number was torched at Kawasoti-16 along the East-West Highway. An unidentified group set the Kathmandubound vehicle on fire, police said.

Meanwhile, IEDs were recovered in Pokhara, Bandipur, Baglung Municipality, Gaidakot and Devchuli of Nawalparasi. The Nepal Army (NA) team defused the explosive. A NA soldier was injured while defusing the explosive at Nadipur area in Pokhara. (With inputs from our district

Health insurance fails to attract Baitadi folk

TRIPTI SHAH **BAITADI, APRIL 18**

The Health Insurance Board of Nepal envisions improving the overall health situation of Nepali people through universal health coverage by increasing access to, and utilisation of, necessary quality health services. However, residents of Baitadi, a district in the country's Farwest, seem less attracted to the health insurance schemes introduced by the government. So far only 6,578 individuals out of 250,000 Baitadi inhabittals in Nepal. ants have taken health insurance coverage, according to

male and 936 female.

citizens travel to India for

health check-ups and treat-

ment as they do not trust the

health services provided by

the government hospitals in

Nepal. This distrust stems

from the lack of well-facilitat-

ed infrastructure and quality

service in government hospi-

Rajendra Bhattarai, a local, said that since people rely on statistics provided by the neighbouring Indian towns Health Insurance Board, even in case of minor ailment, Baitadi. Among them 3,642 are they see it unnecessary to get insured in Nepal. A majority of Baitadi

"We are compelled to rush to India for medical treatment. What do we do with the health insurance here?" asked another local Sudarshan Bohara.

Officials at the Insurance Board said that even those who have subscribed to health insurance policies have started discontinuing the renewal of their policies. "Even the people who

understand the importance of health insurance have no interest in getting insured in Nepal. They travel to nearby Indian town of Pithauragadh when they need health services," said Jaman Singh Badal,

"Even the local government leaders and civil employees do not have health insurance here. Forget about the ordinary citizens," he said, adding that people's representatives

could play a crucial role in their respective communities to attract people towards health insurance by setting their own examples.

The health insurance programme was introduced in late 2016, according to which a five-member family was required to pay a premium of Rs 2,500 while filling a form and pay the equal amount during the renewal of the policy. Meanwhile, a family exceeding five individuals was required to pay Rs450 per additional member.

Palpa local units implement plan to turn private schools into community bodies

MADHAV ARYAL PALPA, APRIL 18

In a bid to reform the school sector, two local units in Palpa have begun implementing their plan to close all private schools and turn them into community schools in their administrative areas so that children from all backgrounds can have access to an education.

Purbakhola Rural Municipality and Gulmi Durbar Rural Municipality both initiated the 'no private school' plan with the formal start of a new academic session that began on April 15. While all schools in Purbakhola have been merged, in Gulmi Durbar only one private high school has become a public educational institution as of now.

Purbakhola Rural Municipality had five private schools, all up to grade 5, and 37 community schools. All the private institutions have been merged with close by community schools, according to Nuna Bahadur Thapa, chief of the rural municipality. He also added that the private schools based in Jalpa, Birkot and Devinagar have been merged with community schools in their respective areas.

"The private schools are now running under the name of the community schools they have been merged with. The teachers and other non-teaching staff of the private schools conduct classes in their own buildings, now termed as the 'English block' of the community school," said Thapa. Students from the private schools will pay their regular private school fees to the community school it has been merged with for this year.

Gulmi Durbar, Gaurishankar Boarding High School, a private school, has



The Purbakhola Boarding School will bear the sign board of the state-run Uddabudda Secondary School.

been merged with local Ishwori Secondary School. "This is the first time something like this is being done. We will gradually merge other private institutions also in the coming year," said Ashok Kumar Thapa, the rural municipality chief. There are 41 community schools and six private schools in the rural municipality.

A task force under the chairmanship of Thapa had been formed last year to study the feasibility of the merger. On the basis of a report prepared by a five-member committee, and after several meetings held over the issue, the local unit decided to go ahead with the merger. The decision has influenced a total of 585 students and 53 teaching and non-teaching staff in the private schools of the two local units.

"It [merging all private schools to community institutions] is a new practice in the country. The rural municipali-

ty decided to provide perks and salaries to the teachers of those merged school through the community schools," said Mohan Dhakal, the information officer at the local unit. According to Thapa, the

teaching and the non-teaching staff will--starting this academic session--draw their salaries from the rural municipality's private source fund. "The local body will formulate necessary laws over the matter for next year," he added.

Purbakhola Rura Municipality has also adopted another reformative step: it has started to provide school education in English medium from the current academic session.

"All the classes from pre-primary to grade 12 will be taught in English within the next 12 years," asserted Thapa. "We took the decision to impart quality education and bring uniformity in all the educational institutions throughout the local body."

an insurance registration employee

correspondents)



Government of Nepal Ministry of Urban Development Department of Urban Development and Building Construction **Regional Urban Development Project Project Coordination Office (PCO)**

Invitation for Expression of Interest International Solid Waste Management Expert for RUDP, **Integrated Solid Waste Management Sub- Project**

Package No. RUDP/PCO/ICS 4 **Publication Date: 19 April 2019**

Government of Nepal has signed a loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for financing the Regional Urban Development Project (RUDP) with the objective of boosting economic development in eight project municipalities - Dhangadhi SMC, Bheemdatt, Godawari and Shuklaphanta in the Far Western Province (Group B), and Biratnagar, Birgunj, Nepalgunj and Siddharthanagar in other Provinces (Group A) - through planning, institutional support and strategic investments in urban infrastructure over a period of 5 years. RUDP also intends to trigger regional economic development by stimulating economic potentials of the project municipal areas, and thus, to help those act as an economic corridor and urban cluster conglomeration. It has sub-project components grouped into three interactive categories: physical infrastructure improvement, urban management and institutional development, and implementation assistance. Categorically, it comprises of sub-projects including Wastewater Management, Surface Water Drainage, Solid Waste Management, Road Improvements, and allied services along with the institutional capacity building in these areas.

Under the Ministry of Urban Development (Executing Agency, EA), the Department of Urban Development and Building Construction is implementing the RUDP through its Project Coordination office (PCO). The project components in each municipality are implemented through Project Implementation Unit (PIU). Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) and sanitary landfilling being new approach to the project municipalities, RUDP is recruiting international expertise for providing technical guidance to RUDP implementing stakeholders especially for resource recovery, technical design, construction, operation & maintenance of ISWM sub-project

PCO on behalf of RUDP invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from interested individual Expert for short-listing as International Solid Waste Management Expert for extending their services for capacity building of the concerned government officials especially urban planners, environmental officers, municipal decision makers and officials. and associated consultants; providing technical assistance to the municipalities in the field of ISWM as well as to familiarize on the international practices in ISWM especially 3R, resource recovery and design, construction, operation and maintenance of ISWM sub-projects. The Expert will directly report to the RUDP Project Director. S/he shall provide 5.5 months intermittent input spread over a period of 10 months including 4.0 months in PCO/Project municipalities and 1.5 months in her/his home office. This assignment is estimated to be of NRs.1,75,39,000.00. i.e. approximately US\$ 157,408.00 exclusive of VAT and contingencies.

Received EOIs will be shortlisted against a set of pre-approved criteria and the Terms of Reference will be sent to the Short-listed Experts. Shortlisted candidates will be ranked by their qualifications and experience. Interested individuals may visit ADB's website (http:/cms.adb.org - Consulting Service Recruitment Notice) and submit her/his EOI online there by 03 May 2019. The client reserves the right to accept or reject all EOI's without assigning any reason. For further details, interested individuals may contact:

Rabindra Bohora (Mr.), Project Director, PCO, Regional Urban Development Project, DUDBC, Ministry of Urban Development, Kathmandu, Nepal. Email: pddudbc@gmail.com; Tel: +977-(1)-4262535; Fax + 977-(1)-4262729

Free uniforms, materials to attract students



The local government hopes to bring all eligible children to school this year.

AMRITA ANMOL BUTWAL, APRIL 18

In an attempt to bring all children of school-going age to the school system, Kotahimai Rural Municipality has started distributing school uniforms, bags and stationeries to the students enrolled to the Early Childhood Development (ECD)-a pre-school facility in public schools-of all community schools and Madrasas.

Kotahimai, a remote local unit of Rupandehi district, has 14 community schools, six Madrasas and two community organisations that have been operating the ECD centre. Chandra Bhusan Yadav, chief of the rural municipality, said that the local unit took the decision in order to successfully bring all the children of school-going age to the school system and control the dropout rate.

According to him, many children in Kotahimai are out of school as they cannot afford to buy school supplies due to financial problems. "The guardians will be free of financial burden when the schools provide uniforms, bags and stationeries to the children. We expect the guardians to send their wards to schools without worrying about the cost," said Yadav. The rural municipality has allocated Rs 1.4 million for the distribution uniforms and educational materi-

als to the new students. "A huge number of people in Kotahimai live below the poverty line. They do not have the money to spend on pre-school education for their children. Therefore, we have launched this programme targeting the children of ECD," said Ganesh Ghimire, administrative officer of the local unit.

Rs 1,200 is spent on buying uniform and school supplies for each student. Around 1,000 children were enrolled in ECD centres in the local body last year. The education committee estimates that around 1,100 children will be enrolled in the ECD centres this year. However, around 200 children of school-going age in Kotahimai are still out of school. Children from Muslim community, impoverished families, children of daily wage earners in various factories and industries are deprived of school education.

The local unit claimed that it would bring all the children of school-going age to the school system this year. "We have been carrying out school enrolment campaign effectively and counselling the guardians," claimed Ghimire.

The school enrolment drive was formally launched across the country on Monday with an objective to bring all the children of school-going age to the school system.

Student organisations padlocked central office of Pokhara University

DEEPAK PARIYAR

LEKHNATH, APRIL 18

Three student organisations have padlocked the central office of Pokhara University demanding that D-plus students should not be allowed to pursue bachelor's degree in management programme.

The offices of the university's vice chancellor, registrar and exam controller in Dhungepatan. Pokhara, are shut from Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Vice-chancellor Chiraniibi Sharma and Registrar Govinda Sharma are out of contact.

According to the Exam Controller Office, 344 D-plus students from 38 high schools have signed up for management programme at the university.

As per the National Examination Board, students securing 30 to 40 percent marks in their higher secondary examinations fall under D-plus category

The protesting student organisations say the university is trying to enrol D-plus students even though they do not have the grades (higher than 30 to 40 percent marks) to apply for management programme

According to the academic calendar, the first semester exams of bachelor's level should have started on March 14. However, the exams could not be conducted on time due to enrolment dis pute concerning some students.

The first semester finals of the management stream have been postponed to May 16 as the academic council of the university could not make a decision the fate of the D-plus students.

There are around 600 management students at the central college of the university.

Bharat Ram Dhungana, exam controller, said that the academic council could reach a decision despite several meetings.

"The future of 30,000 students is at stake. Postponement of exams affects students and their education which in turn taints the image of university.

Colleges affiliated to the university, however, claimed that they had admitted students to as per the notice issued by the university.

"As there's no specific standard of the university, colleges have enrolled students who got D-plus in some subjects," said Nara Bahadur Bista, general secretary of Association of Educational Institution affiliated to the university

the kathmandu post 05

World

NEWS DIGEST

Indonesia warns against unrest as Widodo rival rejects results

JAKARTA: Indonesian authorities warned on Thursday against unrest as a firebrand ex-general rejected unofficial election results that appeared to hand President Joko Widodo another term as leader of the world's third-biggest democracy. National Police Chief Tito Karnavian said Wednesday's "smooth and safe" polls would not be disrupted by demonstrations, and warned of arrests. "If there are any illegal or unconstitutional actions that threaten public stability and security, (authorities) will take firm action," he said. "We won't tolerate it. "I urge everyone against mass demonstrations, whether it's to celebrate or to express dissatisfaction" at the results, Karnavian added. This year's campaign was punctuated by bitter mudslinging and a slew of fake news online-much of it directed at the presidential contenders. Authorities said Thursday they had seen a spike in false reports and hoaxes, with some calling for chaos in the streets and for Indonesians to commit violence in response to the results. However, the capital Jakarta was quiet Thursday after as many as 190 million voters in the Muslim-majority country cast ballots in the one-day poll-which featured a record 245,000 candidates-to elect a new president, parliamentarians and local legislators

Death toll tops 200 in battle for Libya's Tripoli: WHO

TRIPOLI: At least 205 people have been killed and more than 900 wounded in the battle for control of the Libyan capital Tripoli, the World Health Organization said on Thursday, Fighting broke out on April 4 when military strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive to take Tripoli, seat of the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA). Reporting at least 205 people dead and 913 wounded. WHO said it was keeping medical and surgical teams deployed at field hospitals near the front lines. More than 25,000 people have been displaced by the clashes between GNA forces and Haftar's fighters south of Tripoli, including 4,500 over the previous 24 hours, the International Organization for Migration said on Wednesday. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said it was the highest single-day increase in displacement.

Defiant Rakhine rebels say 'no peace by prayer' in battle with Myanmar army

PANGHSANG (Myanmar): Rakhine rebels locked in a vicious fight with Myanmar's army will not "get peace by praying", its commander said as he vowed his forces will fight on despite being outnumbered and under aerial assault. The increasingly bloody battle in western Rakhine state is between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army (AA), which claims to be fighting for more autonomy for ethnic Rakhine Buddhists in one of the country's poorest states. With the region under strict lockdown, it is difficult to get a precise death toll, though the military has confirmed over 20 of its security forces have been killed by the AA since January. Speaking to reporters Wednesday from the safety of the Wa region of eastern Shan State, which borders China, AA chief Tun Myat Naing said his forces have no intention of giving up their armed struggle. "We are not the ones to give up. We have to fight the war," said the bespectacled major-general. "We will not get peace by praying."

Strong 6.1-magnitude quake hits Taiwan, injuring 17 people

TAIPEI: A 6.1-magnitude earthquake jolted Taiwan on Thursday, the US Geological Survey said, disrupting traffic and injuring 17 people. In the capital Taipei, highrises swayed while some panicked schoolchildren fled their classrooms in eastern Yilan county, according to reports. The quake was felt across the island and a highway connecting Yilan and Hualien was shut down, authorities said. An official at the Hualien county fire department told AFP that two people were injured by falling rocks. The National Fire Agency said one, a Malaysian male tourist, had been rushed to hospital in a critical condition after suffering a cardiac arrest, a leg fracture and head injuries. The agency added that there were also 15 injuries reported around Taipei and that two buildings in the city were temporarily evacuated due to structural damages after the tremor. Taipei's metro system was closed for over an hour for safety checks following the quake, while the Taiwan Railway Administration also suspended some of some of its services in the east coast zeral hours officials said. The quake struck at pm (0501 GMT) at a depth of 19 kilometres (11.8 miles) in eastern Hualien county.

Simulation for Mars exploration



An electric 4WD vehicle designed to represent a vehicle used for an imagined Mars exploration drives near the C-Space Project Mars simulation base in the Gobi Desert outside Jinchang, Gansu Province, China, on Thursday.

Pyongyang demands Pompeo's removal from **US** nuclear talks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SEOUL, APRIL 18

North Korea on Thursday demanded the removal of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo from talks over its banned nuclear programme, hours after the isolated state claimed to have tested a new kind of weapon.

Describing Pompeo as "reckless" and immature, the foreign ministry said it wanted him replaced by another interlocutor, a demand that significantly ups the ante in a sensitive diplomatic standoff.

Pyongyang and Washington n at loggerhe the collapse of a summit between Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump earlier this



A file photo shows North Korean leader Kim Jong-un with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Pyongyang last year.

studies at Dongguk University in Seoul.

"Those in Pyongyang are taught not to stay silent when their supreme leader has been personally attacked," Koh added

Since the beginning of the thaw in relations between the and North Korea, US Pyongyang has been far happier to deal directly with Trump, who critics fear is too soft on the regime and is not sufficiently versed in diplomacy.

The US president has made much of his personal relationship with Kim, musing on several occasions about their for each other

Sporadic violence as millions vote in second phase of India's election

- PM Modi's party runs aggressive campaign, courts nationalist base
- Opposition eyes promise of handouts to poor to lure votes

REUTERS BENGALURU/NEW DELHI, APRIL 18

Millions of voters across swaths of southern India cast ballots early on Thursday in the second phase of a mammoth, staggered general election, as sporadic violence

national issues," said Manjunath Munirathnappa, a voter in Bengaluru, who hoped lawmakers would resolve infrastructure woes, such as traffic congestion and

lies. "People are talking about

inadequate water supply. "But only when they fix the local issues will there be progress." The election, in which

Madeira in mourning after 29 German tourists die in bus crash

CANIÇO (Portugal): The Portuguese island of Madeira on Thursday began three days of mourning after 29 German tourists died after their bus spun off the road and tumbled down a slope before crashing into a house. Drone footage of the aftermath of the accident near the town of Canico showed the badly mangled wreckage resting precariously on its side against a building on a hillside, the vehicle's roof partially crushed and front window smashed. Rescue workers attended to injured passengers among the undergrowth where the bus came to a halt, some of them bearing bloodied head bandages and bloodstained clothes, others appearing to be more seriously hurt. Local authorities said most of the dead were in their 40s and 50s. There were 11 men and 18 women were among the victims and all of them were German. They were among the more than one million tourists who visit the Atlantic islands off the coast of Morocco each year, attracted by its subtropical climate and rugged volcanic terrain. (AGENCIES)

year "I am afraid that, if Pompeo engages in the talks again, the table will be lousy once again and the talks will become entangled," Kwon Jong Gun, director general of the ministry's Department of American Affairs said, according to the official KCNA news agency.

"Therefore, even in the case of possible resumption of the dialogue with the US, I wish our dialogue counterpart would be not Pompeo but... (another) person who is more careful and mature in communicating with us."

It is not the first time North Korea has singled out Pompeo for special criticism. When the secretary of state met with North Korean officials in Pyongyang in July last year, he was condemned for his "gangster-like" insistence that the North move towards unilateral disarmament.

Kwon, whom KCNA said was responding to a question from one of its journalists, said leader Kim had made clear that the US attitude has to change

He said Pompeo was standing in the way of a resumption of talks

"We cannot be aware of Pompeo's ulterior motive behind his self-indulgence in reckless remarks; whether he is indeed unable to understand words properly or just pretending on purpose.

"The US cannot move us one iota by its current way of thinking. In his previous visits to Pyongyang, Pompeo was granted audiences with our Chairman of the State Affairs Commission for several times and pleaded for the denuclearization.

"However, after sitting the other way round, he spouted reckless remarks hurting the dignity of our supreme leadership at Congress hearings last week to unveil his mean character by himself, thus stunning the reasonable people." Analysts said the North

may have been reacting to Pompeo's assessment—during a recent Senate hearing-that Kim could be described as a "tyrant".

"By agreeing that Kim is a tyrant, Pompeo basically insulted the North's 'highest majesty," said Koh Yu-hwan, professor of North Korean

Thursday's extraordinary attack on Pompeo came hours after KCNA announced Kim had supervised the test-firing of a new tactical weapon with "powerful warhead"

It also comes after satellite imagery suggested heightened activity at a nuclear test site.

Wednesday's test was "con ducted in various modes of firing at different targets' KCNA reported, adding that Kim described its development as one "of very weighty significance in increasing the combat power of the People's Army

The report gave no details of the weapon.

South Korea had not detected anything on radar so it was unlikely to have been a mismilitary official sile, а told AFP.

ared in the east insurgency-wracked state of Jammu and Kashmir.

More than 155 million people are eligible to vote in 95 constituencies in 12 states on Thursday, with results of the election to India's 545-member parliament expected on May 23.

In focus are the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, where the main opposition Congress party and its allies need to win big if they hope to stop Prime Minister Narendra Modi from securing a second straight term.

Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have run an aggressive campaign, playing to their nationalist, Hindu-first base and attacking rivals they accuse of appeasing minorities.

Critics say such divisive rhetoric threatens India's secular foundations.

"Communal polarisation is the biggest issue for me," said Rakesh Mehar, who voted in the technology hub of Bengaluru, which is the capital of Karnataka. "And the growing intolerance in the country is what worries me the most.'

Yet it may be tough for the BJP to repeat its 2014 feat of sweeping victories in six northern states that delivered 70 percent of all its seats, helping to clinch a landslide majority, said academic Neelanjan Sircar.

"You can never expect you'll do that again," added Sircar, a political science professor at Ashoka University near the capital, New Delhi. "Those seats that you lose, you'll have to make up somewhere.

The BJP would be looking to make gains in Karnataka, he added.

Congress, which is focusing on concerns about growing joblessness and farmers' distress, is staking its chances on a promise of generous handouts to India's poorest famialmost 900 people are eligible to vote, began last week and ends next month, with vote counting set for May 23 and results expected the same day. Sporadic violence was reported in the northern state Jammu and Kashmir, where separatists have called an election boycott and the eastern state of West Bengal, which has a history of election clashes.

Police fired teargas to disperse stone-throwers in Srinagar, the Himalayan region's main city, where thousands of troops had been deployed to guard the vote, although turnout was just 5 percent by 1 p.m.

"There has been stone pelting by protesters in at least 40 places," said a senior police officer who sought anonymity because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

Police in the West Bengal constituency of Darjeeling also fired tear gas at protest ers who complained they had not been allowed to vote, said the top district official, Arvind Kumar Mina.

"They had blocked a highway and had to be dispersed,' he added.

In the neighbouring constituency of Raiganj, unidentified people attacked the car of the communist candidate at a voting station he visited to check accusations of voting malpractice, the party said.

Elections in West Bengal have historically been marred by violence among the communists who ran the state for decades, the main opposition Congress and a powerful regional group, all trading charges of vote-rigging and

intimidating supporters.

The election panel has banned campaigning for a few days by a firebrand Hindu ascetic from the BJP, who governs northern Uttar Pradesh, over his anti-Muslim comments.

Poppies bloom across Afghanistan as drought eases



Afghan farmers harvest opium sap from a poppy field in the Gereshk district of Helmand province.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LASHKAR GAH (AFGHANISTAN), APRIL 18

A vast field of towering white poppies sways gently in the breeze, silky petals sometimes tumbling to the ground, a visible marker of the resilience of Afghanistan's lucra-

tive opium trade. The sight of a seemingly endless expanse of opium-producing flowers is common across rural

Afghanistan, but this farm is in the centre of government-controlled Lashkar Gah city—the capital of Helmand province.

In a field AFP visited this month, workers were scoring grooves into the plants' bulbous seed pods from which the raw, milky-white opium oozes

"We know it is harmful but we have no other way to earn money, this is the only income for us,' labourer Mohammad Ghous told AFP.

Afghanistan is the world's top grower of opium, and the crop accounts for hundreds of thousands of jobs. Farmers grow poppies with impunity, as both Taliban and government officials often profit from the lucrative trade

"The Taliban also don't care they only need their share," said Gul Mohammad, a poppy farmer.

Afghan opium production took a hit last year as an intense drought dried fields and shrunk cultivation areas.

According to a UN survey, potential opium production dropped by 29 percent in 2018 compared to the previous year.

Still, production remained near record levels-and so far this year some farmers are seeing a rebound amid heavy rains that have poured over parts of Afghanistan in recent weeks

Conflict is also providing a surprising boon for the industry.

"(The) government was destroying poppy fields in previous years, but this year due to the ongoing war they couldn't," Mohammad said. Most poppy production in Afghanistan is in the Taliban-

controlled southern part. The insurgents have long profit-

ed from poppies by taxing farmers and traffickers, and running their own drug-making factories that turn raw opium into morphine or heroin for export.

Excess supply in recent years has led to falling prices, but a lack of alternative cash crops has left many Afghan farmers hooked on growing opium poppies.

"We have been cultivating poppies for twenty years," farmer Abdul Hadi said.

"It is less tiring, makes a lot of money and is less demanding than growing corn or wheat.'

International donors have spent billions of dollars on counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan over the past decade, including efforts to encourage farmers to switch to other cash crops such as saffron

But so far, efforts to move farmers away from their lucrative but dangerous poppies have met with little success

Editorial

The Kathmandu Post -

EDITORIAL

Intimidation game

The criminalisation of legitimate journalistic activity should not be taken lightly

n Monday, Arjun Karki, editor of Tandav News, a Pokhara-based weekly, was detained for publishing a story online about a local businessman. Karki was arrested under the Electronic Transaction Act, a broad and vaguely-worded law intended to authenticate electronic transactions. This Act, along with other legal tools, has been used consistently by the government to curtail journalistic freedom, considerably shrinking the environment for free and safe reportage.

The new Criminal Code, for example, includes a number of articles that many human rights agencies say will severely hinder the ability of journalists to engage in free and fair reporting. Karki's arrest in Pokhara was made under the provisions of the Electronic Transaction Act using tenuous arguments. This Act is already set to be replaced by the IT Bill, which is currently being discussed in Parliament. The new bill has been criticised for containing even more draconian loopholes that could potentially be used to curtail freedom of the press. One provision in the bill mentions that 'inappropriate use of the electronic system' could invite fines ranging from Rs 300,000 to Rs 1 million and jail time between one and 10 years, or both. This is worrying , as the provision's vague wording leads it to be open to interpretation—and authorities could do so to suit their own interests.

Four journalists were detained under the Electronic Transaction Act in 2018, according to the Freedom Forum, a civil liberty group that advocates for free speech. According to the same report, in the last year, there have been 98 incidents of press freedom violations, the highest in the last six years, as compared to 66 cases of similar violations reported in 2017.

The criminalisation of legitimate journalistic activity should not be taken lightly. Cybersecurity is necessary, but authorities should not use safety as a weapon to gag the press. Any cybercrime legislation that possesses a threat to press freedom must be revised. Fear is a critical component of curtailing freedom, and recent studies on press freedom have shown a worldwide downward trend in access to unbiased media, along with an increase in attacks on journalists. Reporters Without Borders-an organisation advocating for freedom of expression-in its 2019 Press Freedom Index concluded that global press freedom is deteriorating wherein the situation for free media is considered satisfactory only in 24 percent of the nations. The authorities must allow a free flow of information, including criticism, as it is critical to the functioning of a vibrant democracy.

This government's penchant for controlling information and muzzling the press is particularly disappointing, since the KP Sharma Oli-led administration has repeatedly touted its commitment to transparency. The tendency to sup press the free press often has unforeseen consequences, and if the state continues to do so, whatever achievements Nepal as a country has achieved so far will be offset by this seemingly precipitous slide towards authoritarianism.





AMISH RAJ MULMI

he visit of Indian foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale to Kathmandu last month served as a reminder that Indo-Nepal relations have arisen from the trough that was 2015. That this bilateral

relationship has its ups and downs is a constant in the modern history of the two neighbours. A trend can be established: certain events cause a deterioration in relations, followed by a cooling of ties, a period in which terse words are spoken on both sides. Subsequent to Indian concessions and Nepal's withdrawals on its erstwhile positions, ties slowly crawl back to a state of relative normalcy, despite the shadows of the past affecting future ties.

The collection of US state department cables published by Wikileaks allows us to chart one such period between 1974-1976, when events in Sikkim that led to the former Himalavan kingdom being integrated into India as a state resulted in tensions between Nepal and India. The spectre of 'Sikkimikaran', or 'Sikkimisation', haunts Nepali commentators and policymakers to this day, the analogy between Nepal and Sikkim ever-present in their discussions. While the bilateral relationship between Sikkim, then ruled by the Chogyal dynasty, and India is not the focus of this essay, it should suffice to say tensions erupted in April 1974, when the Chogyal rejected state elections that won the Sikkim Congress 31 out of 32 seats after a history of polarisation between the Chogyal and popular leaders. Sikkim Congress leader Kaji Lhendup Dorji demanded a more representative constitution that reduced the Chogyal's role. The Government of Sikkim Bill 1974, drafted with the help of India, 'largely gave the Chogyal a constitutional role without tampering with precedence or personal privileges.' This bill, also the new constitution, was passed in June 1974 and called for an economic integration with India.

Fear of encroachment

At the time, Nepali ministers and the press vociferously recorded its protest at what they saw as Indian manipulation of Sikkimese events. After the Sikkim govern ment brought a bill that declared Sikkim would be 'associated with India', student demonstrations erupted outside the Indian embassy on 3 September 1974, shouting slogans such as 'Nepalese are one', 'Indira Ghandi [sic] stay home' and 'India out of Sikkim'. As a Wikileaks cable recorded, 'Following abortive attempt to burn down [a] movie theater owned by Indians, [the 500-strong] group marched to [the] gates of [the] Indian compound where they were stopped by troops.' Fourteen students were arrested, and while foreign minister Gyanendra Karki rushed to assure all that

'traditional Indian-Nepali friendship would



King Birendra meeting with Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi in New Delhi, 1975.

Nepal had made its point, and now began to withdraw itself from the Sikkim affair. But, as the US embassy noted, much depended on the Indian reaction.

When the then Indian ambassador MK Rasgotra flew to Delhi on September 23 that year, Nepalis feared a 'prolonged period of tension including [the] possibility that India may impose some form of economic and/or political pressure designed to achieve more submissive and malleable GON attitude towards India', and the government instructed the media to back down. Three editors were asked to explain anti-Indian articles published in their papers, 'a none too subtle warning that there were limits to what Delhi or Kathmandu would tolerate.

Once Rasgotra returned from Delhi in November, he explained the Indian position in a conversation with unnamed US officials. 'He insisted that while [India] had been deeply angered by [Nepal government's] position on Sikkim, India had not made and did not plan to make any significant changes in its relations with Nepal.' In an oblique reference to the then banned Nepali Congress party's members operating out of India, he assured US officials it was up to Nepal to decide its political system, and 'if there was political trouble in Nepal in the future it would not be related to any steps which India could take.' But most importantly, Rasgotra 'repeatedly' insisted that Nepal needed to recognise the new realities of the bilateral relationship. If some Nepali officials believed India should be grateful its 'defence perimeter began at Kodari and not Raxaul', Rasgotra said this would have been the Indian view in the early 60s, but no longer. In a candid expression that also has relevance today, he said 'if Nepal wished a closer relationship with China, India would not object but it could not then expect the past special relationship to continue unchanged.'

Return to normalcy

Sikkimese referendum that had voted in favour of joining India. The then acting deputy chief of the Nepali mission in Delhi, Jai Rana, told US officials on April 23 that India had taken a 'softer line' on its decision earlier that month to raise the prices of essential commodities as India did not want to 'seriously hurt' the Nepali economy. 'Jai Rana also noted that problems the Nepalese were having in getting berths for ships which had been standing off Calcutta for several weeks with loads of cement and other commodities for Nepal had been suddenly solved.' By May that year, the outgoing Nepali ambassador to India, Yadunath Khanal, agreed relations had 'passed [the] low point', and while 'Nepal could not undo [the] situation' in Sikkim, he hoped 'India would understand Nepalese nervousness in spite of Indian assurances that what happened in Sikkim would not happen in Nepal.' On May 16, 1975, Sikkim became the 22nd state of India.

improved, despite the shadow of the

In September that year, King Birendra visited India on an official visit. Following an hour-long meeting on 30 September between him and Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, which took place 'without advisors', the US embassy in Kathmandu tried to summarise the meeting through a 'variety of official and unofficial sources'. Terming its summary as 'probably speculative' or 'at best' a version the Nepal palace released to lower-level functionaries, the embassy noted the meeting was 'cordial and productive' according to Nepali sources, and 'frank and realistic' according to Indian sources. 'Most persons agree that [the] king made genuine effort to be conciliatory and that he expressed his oral support for Madame Gandhi's Emergency measures.' Gandhi had imposed the Emergency in June 1975.

Gandhi continued to refuse Birendra's pet Zone of Peace (ZoP) proposal, but India agreed to increase economic assistance. A few weeks later, US officials in Delhi met

Shah, who provided a more detailed explanation of the meeting. The Indian view was that the ZoP proposal would fundamentally change the relationship between the two countries, which Shah acknowledged was correct. Senior Nepali officials did not trust Gandhi, he said, 'specifically' excluding the king. But he agreed the visit had 'cleared the air' between the two countries post the Sikkim distrust.

The rest is history

THE HINDL

By 1976, it was apparent that the question of Sikkim had been seen as a fate accompli in Nepal, despite dissatisfactions within the popular press. A November 1976 cable from the Delhi embassy suggests Nepali officials were more displeased about 'rigid Indian positions' in the trade and transit treaty negotiations, which reflected Delhi's attempts to preserve its economic leverage over Nepal. There were also discussions over recent Indian attempts to impose travel restrictions on Nepalis, but these issues were tied to the larger ZoP proposal that had irritated India. Note that this was also during the Emergency, a time in which Indian political processes were notoriously authoritarian.

From the cables (and a third-country perspective, albeit an American one), it seems the cooling of ties had originally resulted from Nepal's attempts to carve out a new relationship via the ZoP proposal, which India (correctly) surmised as Nepal's attempts to change the 'fundamental nature' of the bilateral relationship. The referendum in Sikkim only helped to stoke Nepali fears of Indian hegemony, especially after the 1971 break-up of Pakistan that resulted in the creation of Bangladesh. As in 2015, India used its economic leverage to suggest Nepal could not demand special privileges if it was not willing to recognise India's security interests. The downturn in the bilateral relationship was the result of 'conflicting foreign policy objectives' of the two countries. Although these cables do not provide the complete picture, they allow us to get a sense of Nepali fears and Indian concerns that still find credence in the modern day, and tell us why, despite close cultural and social connections, the two governments rarely see eye to eye.

Finally, despite the royal counselor's view that Indira Gandhi could not be trusted, an ex-Indian intelligence official in his memoir recalled a most interesting offer by King Birendra. In 1977, after the lifting of the Emergency and the electoral defeat of Gandhi, King Birendra sent her a message 'through an intermediary' advising her to shift to Nepal with her family. The official recalled Gandhi did not want to shift herself, but asked her sons Sanjay and Rajiv to move with their families. However, her advisor Rameshwar Nath Kao, ex-spymaster and the first head of the Research and Analysis Wing, said no. 'He felt this could damage her political career beyond repair. She gave up the idea."

Like they say, in international relations, there are no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests.

By April 1975, one senses that ties had with royal counselor Narendra Bikram Mulmi tweets at @amish973 not be adversely affected by recent events.

The modern farmer

Conservation agriculture results in better health, better soil and a better environment.

START A CONVERSATION

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The Kathmandu Post Opinions' Team welcomes well-researched, carefully argued, and unapologetic columns on overlooked issues in Nepal. Send submissions of 800-1,100 words to: tkpoped@kmg.com.np

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NABIN BHANDARI

griculture experts globally are reluctant to recommend the conventional method of farming, where the main task is to plough the land again and again to loosen the soil before planting the seed. Experts are more focused on alternative methods of production and advise pursuing sustainable production rather than bumper harvests in one season. Sustained production is the major aim of conservation agriculture, which incorporates a number of apparently counterintuitive and often unrecognised elements that simultaneously promote soil health, productive capacity and ecosystem services.

Conventional agriculture, also known as industrial agriculture, is highly resource and energy intensive and has an adverse impact on the sustainable yield capacity of natural land. Conservation agriculture, on the other hand, is a concept for resource-saving agricultural crop production that strives to achieve acceptable profits together with high and sustained production levels while concurrently conserving the environment, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation. It aims to minimise soil disturbance and encourage crop rotation, and retains the soil crop residue to reduce soil and environmental degradation.

The first principle of conservational agriculture, minimum tillage and soil disturbance, protects the soil against water and wind erosion, saves fuel, labour and time, and improves infiltration and conservation of soil moisture and organic matter.



In the long run, this method of agriculture has the benefit of reducing the amount of fertiliser needed per hectare of land. The second principle is permanent soil cover with crop residues and live mulches, which protects the soil from erosion by water or wind, suppresses weed germination and growth, improves recycling of nutrients, and improves organic matter accumulation and carbon sequestration.

The third principle is crop rotation and intercropping, a practice of altering different crops in the same field. Crop rotation and intercropping techniques give unique benefits to the grower. First, crops with different rooting systems utilise the soil water at different soil depths and help to increase

the efficiency of water use. Second, since different crops are susceptible to different diseases and pest agents, growing such crops in rotation will reduce incidences of disease and pests at no cost. Third, crops with different rooting patterns take up nutrients at different soil depths. The addition of legumes helps to increase the nitrogen level in the soil because they are biologically nitrogen-fixing agents.

This system of agriculture is not only feasible but should be applied urgently. This farming practice has long been practiced, knowingly or unknowingly, by our ancestors and is easy, cost-effective and environment-friendly. Nepal's growing population means more mouths to

feed by utilising the limited cultivated land, but intensive farming cannot be a permanent solution. The adverse repercussions of continuous application of synthetic compounds to increase yield is irreparable.

One may argue that there are few people who can switch from conventional farming to conservation agriculture, as it takes time and money. Novices can even encounter a financial loss. Furthermore, a financial crisis can occur due to the need to buy new equipment such as zero tiller and transplanter. But meticulously analysing the direct and indirect benefits of conservation agriculture shows that the results are far better as compared to conventional farming. And, in the long run, the approach is cost-effective.

The adoption and spread of conservation agriculture requires a change in the mindset and behaviour of all stakeholders, from small farmers to top-level decision makers. For farmers, a mechanism that encourages learning and adapting to local conditions within the constraints faced by them, and a guarantee of higher production from conservation agriculture, are a prerequisite. Fully understanding the economic, social, environmental and health benefits offered by conservation agriculture is essential to convince policymakers, planners and leaders to adopt this system of farming

With the increasing responsibility to feed the world today and in the days to come, the conservation agriculture system is the only way to fulfil this task by maintaining soil, human and environmental health-using the same amount of land that we are using today. It is high time that we designed agriculture programmes, conducted awareness programmes and implemented strategies related to agriculture which allow us to conserve the environment while reaping the benefits provided by it.

Bhandari is an agriculture extension officer at the Department of Agriculture.

Tools for better seismic detection

referred to as deep learning, a more



SUMESH SHIWAKOTY

ith all that is going on politically and economically, it seems we have started to forget that Nepal sits on a high seismic zone. As per geologists, Nepal lies atop a major

fault line between two tectonic plates. Since the unbroken upper part of the fault is continuously building more pressure over time, researchers at Oxford University in recent years have predicted that another 'major tremor could hit Nepal's Gorkha district within years or decades rather than the centuries that typically elapse between quakes.' If a major quake were to hit Nepal today, we are not in any better position to deal with its impact than we were on that darkest of days in April, 2015.

In recent years, many countries that sit in high seismic zones, like Nepal, are turning to artificial intelligence (AI) to build resiliency against future earthquakes. There is a broader consensus in the scientific community that AI can drastically reduce the loss of life and property during future quakes. This is because AI can analyse massive amounts of seismic data that can help better understand earthquakes and thus can provide faster and reliable early warnings. For instance, scientists have concluded that AI is more accurate in processing seismic data than the most useful existing model, referred to as the Coulomb stress transfer prediction model. As per their assessment of accuracy, on a scale of 0 to 1, where 1 is perfectly accurate, and 0.5 is as accurate as flipping a coin, scientists found that the Coulomb model scored 0.583, while the AI prediction model tested scored 0.849

The future holds promise

The type of AI that researchers are using for processing seismic data is

advanced kind of machine learning that utilises a neural network. A neural network is a complex mathematical system, modeled like a web of neurons in the human brain, that mimic the thinking processes of the brain and learn new tasks on its own, like neurons in a human brain would. Scientists maintain that this particular type of artificial intelligence is better suited to process complex seismic signals. With so many complex variables to consider, from the position of the tectonic plates to the type of ground involved, scientists believe that neural networks can promptly analyse a massive amount of data, pulling out only relevant patterns and signals that could be relevant for

earthquake forecasting. Further, researchers have also concluded that AI can use previously underestimated signals, such as a particular sound made by the fault which can tell when an earthquake would arrive. This signal was previously assumed to be meaningless. In recent days, researchers at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico have stated that AI can learn to discern a very specific pattern in the sound emitted by the fault before it ruptures. This pattern, researchers say, can tell us how much stress the fault is undergoing, and with the help of AI, can make an accurate prediction of the time remaining before tremors begin. Thus, with these discoveries, it is certain that AI will revolutionise early warning systems in the days to come.

Lagging behind

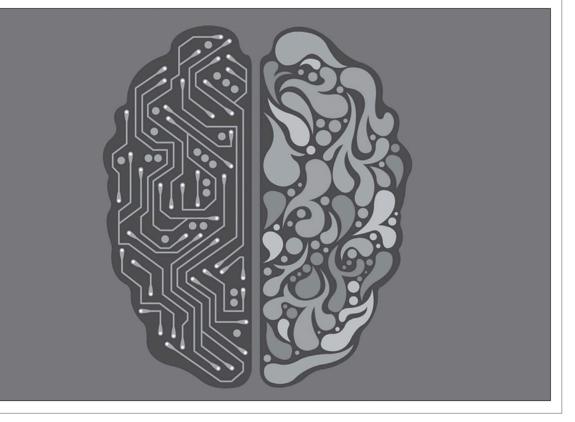
Although Nepal installed its first batch of earthquake early warning sensors in June 2015, there are neither robust nor adequate. The Nepal Academy of Science and Technology has estimated that Nepal will need 320 sensors to cover the entire country while, with the Chinese assistance, Nepal only installed its first 80 sensors in 2015. It has also been estimated that we would require approximately \$20 million for setting up supercomputers and sophisticated broadband seismometers for this purpose. Since the use of AI is

expected to dramatically raise the accuracy of the early warning system, Nepal should consider investing in it. Of course, it would be an expensive project for Nepal, but the benefits would far outweigh the costs. For example, Japan's early warning system prevented the derailment of high-speed trains during a 9.1 magnitude earthquake in 2011.

Nepal should also keep an eve on how other countries that are located in high seismic zones are utilising newer technologies for early warning purposes. The government should partner with the private sector and non-governmental organisations to adopt innovative solutions that are adaptable to our needs. Earlier this year, the Los Angeles city council, in partnership with telecom company AT&T, launched a mobile phone app called ShakeAlertLA, which is designed to give users location-based early warning alerts. Closer to home, Build Change, a US based entity, is working on creating a smartphone-based artificial intelligence that aims to inform rural Nepalis on whether their houses can be seismically retrofitted. The main ambition of this app is to provide free engineering advice to poor homeowners whose houses are vulnerable to seismic events. Recently, this project was selected as one of the top three finalists for the global Call for Code Developer Challenge, hosted by IBM.

Newer technologies, like artificial intelligence, are expected to minimise the loss of life and property during future earthquakes. Many countries which are located in seismic zones are already investing in these technologies. It is high time for Nepal to seriously consider investing in these newer technologies for building resilience against future earthquakes. While this will require significant investment, when the lives and property of our people and the future of our cultural heritage are at stake, the benefits trump any costs of implementation.

Shiwakoty is a 2015 Andrew W Mellon Foundation environmental analysis research fellow.



How climate became Germany's new culture war

For years, migration tore the country apart. Now it's the environment.



Marchers protesting a ban on driving older diesel cars in Stuttgart, Germany, a center of the German car industry. Their banner says, "We are diesel" and "a stupid policy."

ANNA SAUERBREY

Perlin—When Christian Lindner, the head of Germany's Liberal party, recently said that there was a "culture war on cars" in his country, people laughed it off as an exaggeration. After all, the Liberals are Germany's most pro-business, anti-regulation party, and they take particular aim at environmental policies.

But here's the thing: In a way, Mr. Lindner is right. For the last several years, Germany has been embroiled in a cultural war over immigration, refugees and diversity. But as those fires burn out, a new one is building. The environment is becoming the new migration—a deeply polarizing issue, and one that the populist right is gearing up to exploit.

Migration remains a contested issue in Germany, of course. But the hysteria of 2015 and 2016 has subsided. The number of people seeking asylum in Germany has dropped significantly last year there were only 186,000, down from a high of 746,000 in 2016.

And while the far-right Alternative for Germany party, known as the AfD, continues to focus on immigration, the mainstream has begun to set it aside. For much of 2018, the Christian Social Union, the conservative, Bavarian branch of the center-right Christian Democrats, waged an internal party war against Chancellor Angela Merkel's relatively open position on migration. But after painful losses in the Bavarian election last year, in which the party ran on a hard-line immigration platform, the C.S.U. decided to let it go. At the same time, debates on environmental issues are getting more heated, both in public and in private. Be it the reality of global warming, limits on greenhouse gases, the future of mobility in cities or the protection of bees-the debate is growing polemical and emotional, as people are beginning to feel the consequences of environmental policies in their everyday lives. This year, for example, several large German cities will ban cars with older diesel engines from their urban core, based on European Union limits on nitrogen dioxide in the air. The bans, announced last year, incited public outrage. In January, a group of physicians led by the lung specialist Dieter Köhler added to the anger by questioning the validity of the European Union limits. For weeks, Dr. Köhler toured the talk shows, and the AfD celebrated him as a hero for daring to speak up against what it sees as ecological paternalism. Even Andreas Scheuer, the minister of transportation. embraced the doctors' statementdespite warnings from the scientific community that Dr. Köhler, not an epidemiologist, lacked the necessary expertise to make it.

In fact, it later emerged that some of Dr. Köhler's key points were erroneous. But by then it didn't matter; the diesel bans had become politically toxic. Germans love their cars-not iust as personal property and symbols of personal expression, but as national symbols of German ingenuity and manufacturing prowess. So it makes sense that the clash over the environment would center on the automobile. When Regine Günther, the senator for transportation and the environment in Berlin's city government, recently said, "We would like people to dispose of their cars," she was denounced as a "car hater" and a "green Communist" on social media. When a preliminary report for the federal Transportation Ministry recommended speed limits on the autobahn and higher gas prices to lower carbon emissions, the public response was so hostile that the minis try disavowed it. Even children are considered fair game: Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old Swedish climate activist, is a favorite target of the German right, with the secretary general of the Christian Democrats calling her political stance "pure ideology." How did the environment become so hot, so fast?

emissions data.

At the same time, populist parties in Germany and Europe are increasingly campaigning against environmental rules. Such opposition perfectly fits into populist narratives and patterns: skepticism about science, anger over "political correctness" and a libertarian reflex against government regulations in general. The mainstream right is following suit, claiming to try to cut off the far right but in reality taking advantage of a suddenly attractive political target.

Environmental issues produce the same fundamental cleavages as migration. Both migration and environmental policies are aiming at global and moral goals that citizens profit from only in the abstract, while the costs are immediate. Accepting asylum seekers is a global moral responsibility; the "costs"—overcrowded kindergartens and schools, neighborhood tensions are local. Getting rid of old diesel cars might be a vital step toward fighting climate change, but how are you supposed to get to work?

On immigration or the environment, where you stand is a matter of your worldview. Whether you drive a car or ride a bike has become a symbol for embracing or rejecting a whole set of values connected to the notion of global responsibility. Conservatives and traditionalists feel they are being pressured by the cultural imperialism of urban liberal elites who can afford not to have a car. And it's on this divide, more than on any particular policy. where the clash is hottest. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, the new head of the Christian Democrats, recently lashed out against Berlin's "latte macchiato drinkers," while Mr. Scheuer, the minister of transportation, said in an interview, "In Berlin's political scene, people are gloating over discussions which often have nothing to do with the everyday realities of people outside the capital." It's 2015 all over again: Back then, it was the naïve open-border idealists against the xenophobes. This time it's the sentimental urban tree-hugger ideologues against ignorant Joe Diesel.

First, there are good reasons to be angry when the German government calls for significant sacrifices by everyday citizens for the health of the planet—even as it let Volkswagen and other carmakers get away with cheating on

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Not giving up on the Republican Party

In an increasingly diverse country, the GOP can't afford to alienate voters like me-the child of immigrants.

DIEGO CIFUENTES

was drawn to the Republican Party because of my conservative principles—family-oriented, religious and socially conservative. But it has been difficult to reconcile my allegiance to the party with its devolving evermore into a mouthpiece for President Trump's dangerous views and policies, especially with regard to immigration. This is deeply disturbing. It has forced me to reconsider my affiliation and it could prove to be the thing that drives me away from the party for good.

Immigration isn't just a political issue to me. It's personal. Members of my extended family in the United States are DACA recipients. My parents immigrated to Miami from El Salvador and Guatemala in the late 1980s and early '90s. The Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act gave them a pathway to citizenship and a chance at a better life. They worked their way up from dishwashers to restaurant managers while raising me and my two siblings. During the run-up to the midterm election last year, I saw how the toxic national rhetoric around immigration trickled down to local communities. In

Oklahoma's fifth district, where my family is now living, the Republican incumbent, Steve Russell, ran ads that stoked fears of "pipe bombs, shootings, migrant caravans," equating migrants with criminals. And so last year I found myself doing something I never thought I'd do: I gave up my Republican Party affiliation.

I not only voted Democrat but also actively campaigned for Kendra Horn, the first female Democrat elected to Congress from Oklahoma. Ms. Horn was an advocate for families like mine. She understood that a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers doesn't compromise border security and that millions of taxpayer dollars would be much better spent on health care and education than on building an ineffective, expensive wall.

A lot of people thought she couldn't win in a deeply conservative state. But what her Republican opponent failed to see and account for is that the state has become increasingly diverse. According to a report by New American Economy, since 2016 Oklahoma's fifth district alone added more than 6,000 Hispanic and Asian-American voters, and lost more than 2,050 white voters. Indeed nearly 30 percent of Latinos



who cast a ballot in 2018 said they were voting in a midterm for the first time. I watched many of my classmates and

peers who had supported the Republican ticket switch parties as I did. I'm also not alone in being

personally affected by the politics of immigration. Republicans don't seem to understand that they can't afford to alienate voters like me.

Research by the Center for American Progress and the University of Southern California's Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration found that nationwide about 16.7 million people live in a household with at least one unauthorized family member. Young voters also tend to favor sensible and humane immigration policy reform. A study by GenForward at the University of Chicago found that more than 80 percent of 18-to 34-year-olds in all racial and ethnic groups support a pathway to citizenship for all law-abiding undocumented immigrants. And according to the Pew Research Center, 76 percent of millennials believe that immigrants make the country stronger.

When I look at our current leaders, I don't see any of the values—Christian or otherwise—that originally drew me to the Republican Party. Instead, I see Mr. Trump's reprehensible calculation to separate children from their parents and his callous indifference to 800,000 Dreamers, many of whom know no country but the United States. This country—especially young voters like me are tired of partisan, negative rhetoric. That's why 43 House seats flipped from Republican to Democratic in November. That's why young people like me have switched parties.

Last year I took the Spring semester off to work as a legislative intern for Republican Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida. It was deeply meaningful for me, as a young Republican, to have the opportunity to work for the first Latina elected to Congress, in the very district I grew up in. Ms. Ros-Lehtinen worked for her constituents, even if it meant breaking with party lines. I admired that.

I am not ready to give up on the Republican Party altogether. I've realigned with the party, with the hope of helping to foster the kind of compassionate conservatism I believe in. I've worked in both parties, and I know change is possible. I hope to follow the example set by politicians like Ms. Ros-Lehtinen and Ms. Horn, unafraid to work across the aisle, put partisan politics aside and fight for what they believe in. It's time to put country over party.

Culture & Arts PG 08 | FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2019 www.kathmandupost.com

Surreal landscapes and abundant wildlife await visitors at Shuklaphanta National Park

Tucked away in the south-western corner of Nepal, the park is famed for its deer, tigers, rhinos and other exotic species.

BHAWANI BHATTA KANCHANPUR, APRIL 18

huklaphanta National Park is composed of surreal landscapes—expansive grasslands vie for dominance with dense forests and tropical wetlands. A rangale of deer, a streak of tigers, a flight of butterflies—all tread the same spaces. This untouched wilderness, spread out over 305 square kilometres north of India's Lagga-Bagga and east of the mighty Mahakali, is Nepal's best-kept secret.

Established as a national park in 1976, Shuklaphanta is the country's second youngest national park, after Parsa National Park. Located in the south-western corner of Nepal in the Sudurpaschim province, this park was once a hunting reserve, famed for its abundance of deer, tigers, rhinos and other exotic species. But ever since its conversion into a national park, its animal, bird and fish species have multiplied. The park is now home to 2,500 swamp deer, 17 tigers, as many rhinos, 12 species of reptiles, 20 species of amphibians, 424 bird species, 24 fish species, 35 species of butterflies; the flora extends to 665 plant species from 118 different families. Rare bird species like the Lesser Adjutant, Bengal Florican, White-rumped Vulture, Sarus Crane, and Finn's Weaver also make for exciting bird watching.

However, this park has often been eclipsed by other, more popular reserves, especially the Chitwan National Park. Most tourists, both local and foreign, are not even aware of the park's existence, let alone its abundance of flora and fauna. Only about 2,000 to 2,500 people visit the park annually. But perhaps that is its charm. Away from the madding crowd, this park offers untouched wilderness and serenity.

One of the few patrons who made their way to the park last year, former Finnish ambassador to Nepal Jorma Suvanto, likened the park's grasslands to the Savanna, Africa's massive tropical grassland.

"This is untouched territory," said Suvanto. "Those who come to Nepal must visit Shuklaphanta. I'll advise tourists from my own country to pay a visit to Nepal and the Shuklaphanta National Park."

The park lies close to the Indian border and thus is located strategically close to popular Indian national parks like the Dudhwa and Jim Corbett national parks. India's Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary, a specially designated tiger reserve, lies contiguous to the south of Shuklaphanta, together making up 439 square kilometres of a protected tiger conservation unit. Shuklaphanta is also part of the Tarai Arc Landscape, five million hectares of protected land from both India and Nepal.

Despite this proximity to the Indian border and its teeming wildlife, the park hosts comparatively fewer visitors. "Of course, you have national parks that may offer more but Shuklaphanta offers you one thing that others don't—a personal space you can share with nature," said Ravi KC, a Kathmandu-based entrepreneur who was visiting Shuklaphanta this March. "It makes you feel as if you're the only one who is given the privilege to enjoy nature in its full glory. And there is just so much to do here."

Tourism entrepreneurs are of the opinion that a lack of publicity and inadequate transportation and accommodation options are hindering the park's growth into thriving tourist destination.

"Shuklaphanta is a virgin territory in terms of tourism," said KC. "That so few people visit is a blessing in disguise, but of course, the more people

visit,

the

easier it

will be for the park to sustain itself in the long-term." Laxman Prasad Paudel, chief conservation officer at the

SNP, understands the importance of attracting more tourists to the park but also underscores the lack of infrastructure on the park's premises. "It's good for the park to have visitors but we also have to look at our own capacity to host," he said. "People come here for safaris but we only have a limited number of vehicles, so we can only entertain a certain number of tourists at a time."

Paramananda Bhandari, a Kanchanpur-based tourism entrepreneur, also pointed out that the Majhgaun Airport adjoining the park has been closed for some time now.

"The lack of air connectivity has contributed to the dwindling number of tourists at the park," said Bhandari. "If the physical infrastructure is developed then I'm certain that the park will see more visitors."

Infrastructural shortcomings aside, visitors say that the park is definitely worth a visit at least once in your lifetime. For visitors like KC, the best thing about the park is that you get to enjoy something outside of the mainstream, and leisurely soak in every sight the park offers, because the one thing the park does best is that it makes you

stop in your tracks and take notice of nature's bounty.

Entry fee for Nepali citizens is Rs 100; SAARC nationals Rs 750 and Rs 1,500 for others. The closest airport is Geta Airport in Dhangadhi, Kailali, about 55 km from Shuklaphanta. There are numerous homestays around the national park that provide accomodation. The best time to visit is during April-May. Approximate costs are Rs 5,000 for Nepalis and Rs 8,000 for others, per day.

Keeping up with the world's largest Passover Seder in Kathmandu

What started with a hundred people over 30 years ago has grown to 2,000 Jewish people gathering in Kathmandu for the annual Passover Seder.

ROSE SINGH

KATHMANDU, APRIL 18

n April 19, nearly 2,000 Jewish people from across Asia will gather in Kathmandu for the annual Passover festival, one of the most important Jewish holidays. They come from India, Thailand, Australia, Israel, the US and Europe, and are mostly young backpackers in the region for hiking, trekking and general touristing. But for the first two days of the festival, they all congregate in Kathmandu for the Passover Seder, a feast that marks the beginning of Passover.

Passover, a traditional Jewish festival, is celebrated by Jewish people all around the world to commemorate their emancipation from slavery in ancient Egypt by the God Jehovah himself and their liberation as a nation under the leadership of Moses over 3000 years ago. It also harkens the onset of spring.

"We believe in the importance of togetherness in the Jewish community because we are who we have for us and it's really important for us to protect ourselves and our culture," says Chani Lifshitz, founder and co-director of the Chabad House of Kathmandu, which hosts the annual celebration.

The Seder begins in the evening, when everyone sits together and eats from a traditional Seder plate, which consists of three *matzos* (unleavened flatbread) on top of each other, *zeroa* (roasted lamb shankbone), *maror* (grated horseradish), *charoset* (a mixture of chopped apples, nuts and wine), *karpas* (green, non-bitter vegetables), fruits, bitter herbs, salt-water and four glasses of red wine each.

All of the food on the *kosher* Seder plate has its own symbolism. For instance, the stacking of the three *matzos* represents the haste of the Jews while leaving Egypt, as well as symbolising the importance of the Trinity, while the bitter herbs symbolise the bitterness that slavery carried. During the ceremonial meal, each dish on the Seder plate is eaten in a particular order and in specific combinations.

Apart from the widespread significance of Passover celebrating the liberation of Jews from slavery, it is also believed that the Hebrew slaves were in such a haste to leave that they had to bake dough into hard crackers in the desert sun, rather than waiting for the bread to rise, which is *matzo*.



rabbis from Israel to prepare for the arrival of thousands of Jewish backpackers. The rabbis dispatched to Nepal arrive at the Chabad House with hundreds of pounds of kosher matzo, kosher foods and the religious Seder prayer book, the Haggadah. They prepare the food and take part in cleaning, which is also part of the prohibition on *chametz*, leavened breads and foods.

"In order to prevent the grains from mixing with water and rising to take the form of *chametz*, wherein the food grain is allowed to rise, which is strictly not allowed in the festival, the entire house or surroundings where the celebration takes place is cleaned," says Chani. "This also symbolises the removal of egotism and spiritual coarseness from life."

Chametz can also be understood as any bread or food that takes longer than 18 minutes to prepare. This includes wheat, barley, rye, oats, fish without scales, yeast, beer, and whiskey.

"This is another reason why matzo became such an important part of the tradition, because it takes less than 18 minutes to cook. Matzo is the food of hurry," says Hodaya, 28, a Passover volunteer at the Chabad House.

This significance and popularity of matzo and the increasing number of Jews coming in to celebrate the festival has seen its import grow from 1,100 pounds in 2012 to 4,500 pounds in 2019, says Chani.

Due to the large number of Jews visiting Nepal, the Lifshitzs have also started a Chabad House in Pokhara and Manang. The Passover celebration in Manang is known as the world's highest celebration.

As such, Chabad House has become a home away from home for many young Jewish people from all over the world.

"People come here to trek up the Himalayas but their first stop after reaching Nepal is Chabad House," says Hodaya. "I come here myself because of the warm and welcoming environment. It's just like home."

The popularity of the Seder in Kathmandu has meant that many other Chabad Houses have sprung up around Asia. One new celebration in Thailand promises to have even more attendees than the one in Kathmandu. But wherever it may take place, Passover is a time for the Jewish people to come together, make merry, and celebrate and safeguard their religion and culture.

"Our rabbi has always preached to us the importance of being together and saving each other," says Chani.

The matzo, seen here as a ball, is a traditional bread eaten during the annual Passover festival, which starts today, April 19.

Passover is also seen as an opportunity to educate young people about the rich culture that the Jewish people have been carrying for thousands of years.

The tradition of celebrating Passover in Nepal dates to 1989, when Jewish travellers first came to Nepal and started celebrating Passover among themselves. Over the years, the celebration continued to grow, with volunteers ensuring that the food was kosher and there was enough matzo and wine to go around. In 2000, when Chani and Rabbi Chezki Lifshitz came to Kathmandu and started the Chabad House in Thamel, they took over the organisation of the festival. In 2006, Nepal saw around 1,500 Jewish people come together to celebrate the festival and the numbers have been growing ever since. Although there was a decline in numbers during the 2015 earthquake, the festival is now celebrated by over 2,000 people and is marked by a coming together, special Passover songs, reciting the holy text of the Haggadah, and of course, the Seder meal.

This year, the festival will be taking place from April 19 to 27, at a location that hasn't been made public yet for security reasons. But Jewish people have already started to fly to Nepal and most foods have been imported.

The preparations for the festival begin by bringing in

Food & Travel PG 09 | FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2019

Welcome to eastern Nepal. Now let's eat.

Newar food might be considered one of Nepal's most distinct cuisines, but Limbu and Rai food are equally diverse and exciting.

THOMAS HEATON LALITPUR, APRIL 18

wa, but there are plenty of other dishes worth asking for. Two distinctive ingredients that these com-

munities are known for are *yangben*, a wild lichen found on trees in the eastern jungles, and kinema, fermented soybeans. Both these curious things are hard to find in Kathmandu, generally requiring one to 'know a guy'. However, if you're lucky, you can find *yangben* being sold at some shops in bags for about Rs 300.

At the Tareba Khaja Ghar in Nakhipot, the brother-sister duo of Ithang Limbu and Manu Hangma Limbu is among a small group of cooks bringing their cultural cuisine from Taplejung to Kathmandu.

Ithang, considered a great Limbu chef within the community, was always fascinated with food. Among the dishes that are most popular is sargemba, a blood sausage, which is a specialty of their restaurant. At this Limbu khaja ghar, patrons prefer their sausage sliced and sizzled, served alongside a prickly timmur-chilli sauce. The nuances of Limbu cuisine cannot be described in one dish, however; there are many different dishes that make up this unsung cuisine.

The Tareba Khaja Ghar opened four years ago and now has swathes of loyal customers frequenting their restaurant for tongba and sekuwa-their two most popular dishes-but they cooked the Post some delights they think everyone should seek out.

Kinema

Fermented soy beans, most often white, are boiled and crushed before being wrapped in leaves to sit for a few days. This ferments and becomes an extremely smelly and sour mixtureits stench is akin to the durifruit's strength. Kinema is most often used as an ingredient in tarkari, curry, soup and *achar*. The potent mixture takes a few tastes to get used to, for the uninitiated game enough to try. But its even divisive within the Limbu and Rai communities themselves.

ild lichen, chicken feathers, pork

blood and stinky soybeans-there is

so much more to eastern Nepali cui-

sine than tongba and barbecued pork.

Despite pork and millet beer being

delicious in their own right, the

Limbu and Rai communities have a

rich culinary heritage that is far more eclectic

Eastern cuisine uses wild ingredients, curi-

ous cooking methods and cunning fermenta-

and adventurous than pigs and millet grog.



tion to create a very distinct set of

flavours. When it comes to finding this cuisine

in the valley, however, it's relatively slim pick-

ings. The food can mostly be found in

Nakhipot, where many Limbu and Rai

families have settled-both cuisines while

distinct, share some similarities-but both

cuisine have generally been reserved for

equal amounts of smokey grilled pork seku-

Local eateries pour litres of tongba and

households.

Plucked off trees throughout Nepal's eastern jungles, this wild lichen is traditionally cleaned and boiled ingeniously with charcoal. Once dried, it becomes a seaweed-like substance and turns from mossy grey to black, with the spindly tufts resembling gundruk. And like that ubiquitous Nepali favourite, yangben is steeped in warm water before cooking. The taste is resoundingly bitter, compared to gundruk's fermented flavour, but it mellows when cooked and has a slight mushroomy aroma. It finds its way into several dishes, such as pork and yangben curry, and sargemba sausage

It's typically a difficult and expensive find in the country's capital, costing about Rs 300 per bag. That's because finding the fungus is difficult and takes a shrewd eye, given it only grows on three trees and looks similar to other slightly intoxicating varieties of lichen.

The aforementioned rich pork dish is stewed in its own blood. This yangben and blood curry follows a quintessential spice mix to start, but the later addition of blood makes for a distinctly rich flavour. When cooked, the blood turns the dish almost black, and the slightly bitter addition of yangben balances it out.

Dharane kalo bangur

To properly be introduced to Limbu or Rai cuisine, one must understand how important the pig isspecifically black porkers from the south-east. Hailing from Dharan, these pigs are as wellknown for their flavour as their cultural and religious importance to the Limbu community. Pigs are used as prasad, as well as traditionally for bride prices. So it's only natural that pigs find their way into many dishes, in the form of blood, offal or meat-or all together.



Sisnu ko tarkari and philinge ko achar

Stinging nettle, or sisnu, tarkari can often be found in the dal bhat of Limbu and Rai families, in lieu of lentils. While the harvest might prove difficult, the cooking of the saag is relatively straight forward. Boiled with cornflour, and sometimes okra, to thicken, the soup is later tempered with a mixture of garlic, timmur and chillies. The result is a somewhat bitter and spicy soup to be mixed with rice achar. and Alongside this dish, phillinge ko achar might be found—a nutty, salty and spicy mixture made up of niger seeds, dried chilli, garlic, and ginger. The addition of a super-strong lemon concentrate, a black tincture known as chuk amilo, helps give a rubble-like appearance and texture, while bitter spices chinming (Nepali hogweed) and khanukpa lend their distinct flavours.

Titte

The key ingredient in this dish is burnt chicken feathers, which lend a distinctly bitter flavour to the offal mixture. While the once-maligned nose-to-tail eating has become all the rage around the world, Limbu communities have been taking it further for a long time. Also popular in Rai communities, and often rolled out at special occasions, this dish starts with the plucking of a local chicken and burning of the softer feathers. Once collected, minced neck and skull, wings and legs of the chicken are added alongside other spices to create an achar. While it could be grim for some, the dish is slightly bitter and spicy with a distinct offal flavour and a unique texture thanks to the cartilage from the wings.

B

TODAY'SHOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Think out every move you make, carefully and methodically. You should anticipate other people's moves and stay several steps ahead. This is a time saving trick. You don't want to do something that you'll just end up having to redo, do you? TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

More people than ever are in love with your ideas. The attention will enliven you and ignite your more animated side. Creative ideas are born in satisfied situations. A meal out with a bunch of friends might just be it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Pay attention to the difference between being cheap and being thrifty today. Your money is yours to spend, but don't skimp on the wrong things. Being a bad tipper isn't going to get you closer to your savings goal.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Something inside you will be distracted today. Relax! This worry is probably caused by the uncertainty swarming around you right now. Look at the facts, and you'll be able to chill out. Don't let pessimism get the better of you.

LEO (July 23-August 22)

False modesty isn't really honest. Sure, you shouldn't run around shouting about how wonderful you are, but there's nothing wrong with admitting that you worked hard to accomplish whatever it is you're being lauded for. VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

A group of women helps you refocus today in a dramatic way. If you get your comeuppance in any way, you will end up enjoying it. You are a source of entertainment, but you should feel flattered by the attention.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

Your aptitude for appreciating the smaller things in life will help you and the people you care most about. Your fresh outlook could provide a new awareness of what is possible. It's time to get in touch with the details.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

Your faith will be restored by an unusual development later in the day. Either your mind is changing, or your gut is. The two will come together with a smart plan. You are getting back to defining your own destiny.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

People with different energies can be hypnotic and appealing. but these differences can also lead to a lot of conflicts. In the end, you and the people in your life must be on the same wavelength for complete harmony to exist.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)



You should try to wholeheartedly embrace change and unfamiliar ideas today. This process could take all day to complete, but it will exhilarate you, not frustrate you. By this evening, you will have learned something exciting and new.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

Females will be a prominent force in your day. There is a strong current of compassion and nurturing running throughout your life right now. Don't let yourself be paralyzed by details. Even the grays have different shading. PISCES (February 19-March 20)



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It can be hard to align your schedules. But today the energy around your circle is more positive than ever, so it's a great time to get everyone together for a relaxing evening. You can find an alternative time very soon.

My high school assignment was to ask a veteran about World War II. Since my father had served in the Philippines during the war, I chose A UGHOU him. After a few basic questions, I very gingerly asked, "Did you ever

kill anyone?" Dad got quiet. Then, in a soft voice, he said, "Probably. I was the

cook."

We were inspecting several lots of grenades. While everyone was concentrating on the task at hand, I held up a spare pin and asked, "Has

anyone seen my grenade?"



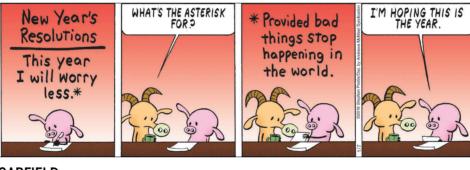
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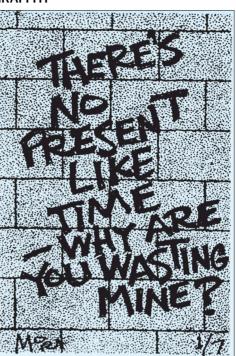
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| RULES OF THE GAME: 1. Words must be of four or more letters. 2. Words that acquire four letters by the addition of "s," such as "bats" or "dies," are not allowed. 3. Additional words made by adding a "d" or an "s" may not be used. 4. Proper nouns, slang words, or vulgar or sexually explicit words are not allowed. Contact Word Game creator Kathleen Saxe at kzaxe@gmail.com. | | | | | | | |
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www.kathmandupost.com President Bhandari declares Games open, officially

kathmandu post DOCTS



Olympian Surendra Hamal lights up the cauldron during the opening ceremony of the eighth National Games in Nepalgunj on Thursday.

ADARSHA DHAKAL NFPALGUN LAPRIE 18

President Bidya Devi Bhandari declared the eighth National Games open as the multi-sporting extravaganza of the country officially kicked off at the Nepalgunj Stadium amidst poor preparations on Thursday.

A total of 14 sports disciplines out of 35 had already concluded when the opening ceremony started. At the refurbished Nepalgunj Stadium the event witnessed a colourful inauguration partially under lights.

The opening ceremony began with the march-past of players from all seven provinces, three departmental teams--Tribhuvan Army Club, Nepal Police Club and Nepal Armed Police Club,--Non Resident Nepalese Association and tournament officials. The march-past was followed by cultural presentation from different organisations.

Youth Olympian Sonu Bhatta of judo took the oath on behalf of the and weightlifting's players Samsuddhin Siddiqui represented the referees and judges. Province 5 Chief Minister Shankar Pokhrel hoped the infrastructure prepared for the Games will set an example for all other parts of the country. "The infrastructure constructed for the National Games in Province 5 is result of hard work from every individual. I am sure the current infrastructure is going to be utilized for

the development of the region in coming days as well. I hope the infrastructure will help people from other provinces to follow the suit and get encouraged in holding National Games like this," said Pokhrel.

President Bhandari congratulated Province 5 hosting the Games saying: "This edition of the Games is result of a long preparation and intense hard work from everyone involved. I expect having regular events like these will help our athletes enhance their competitive skill." The speech from the President was followed by the eighth National Games theme song from parliamentarian Komal Oli, vote of thanks from Youth and Sports Minister Jagat Bahadur Bishwakarma, khukuri drill from Nepal Army and joint physical drill from 12 different organisations. Olympian and Province 5 parlia-

ment member Surendra Hamal lit the Olympic cauldron before the opening ceremony was concluded vith fireworks. National Sports Council Member Secretary Keshav Kumar Bista said the Games will help Nepal, as a country, and athletes prepare for the upcoming 13th South Asian Games that the country is hosting from December 1-9.

"The National Games has helped Nepal add few more sports infrastructure. This will show our preparedness to organise the regional event. Our preparation for the South Asian Games will be boosted further

after the Games. We have taken this Games as athletes' preparation for the South Asian Games and hope our players will give the best at the international level," said Bista.

Although the Games are certain to lay foundation for multiple sporting infrastructure at Province 5, the opening ceremony was blighted by under preparedness of the local organising committee. The finishing works around the 3,500-seater VIP parapet brought from China was still incomplete when the organisers welcomed the guests.

Multiple facilities at the Nepalgunj Stadium premises were completed only by 70 percent with rest of the works still in doubt to be completed even after the Games conclude on April 24. The swimming complex adjoining the Stadium still gives a barren look as it is certain to be relocated to a different venue although local organiser Bhim Oli insists oth-

erwise. "We cannot rule out the fact that works at the swimming pool are yet to be completed but we will get it done and hold the event there by postponing it for two days," said Oli. However, swimming is not the only venue that looks under-prepared for the Games. The covered hall that hosted fencing events and will see wushu events kicking off from Thursday is left with a huge amount of work to be done. The handball venue, also at the Stadium premises, looks substandard

Dehydrated and without proper spikes, Kunwar's 10,000m race ends in pain



Mahato for the 10,000-metre race but the former pulled out prompting head coach Indra Malla bring in Kunwar for the race. Malla said the athlete's coach from Parbat Jagadish Kunwar pressurized him to include her in 10,000m. "I told him (Kunwar) that she cannot compete in the event but I had to give in after intense pressure," said Malla

Kunwar understandably herself had a little say in the matter. "We all tried to convince her not to compete in 10,000m as it was really tough and demanding race. But she said she could do it," said her Gandaki teammate Lalita Lamichhane, who is set to run

Lamgade sets national record in shot put

DHRUBA TULADHAR TULSIPUR APRIL 18

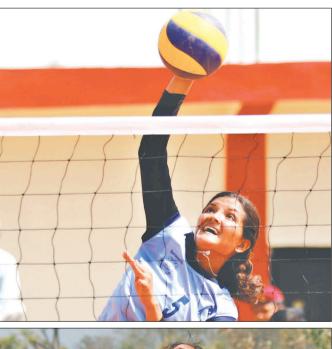
Chandra Kala Lamgade of Nepal Police Club (NPC) set women's national record in shot put on the first day of athletics tournament held under eighth National Games at the Beljhundi Stadium in Dang on Thursday.

Lamgade hurled 12.04m to better her own mark of 11.56m set a year earlier during qualifier for national team preparations. She will get an additional Rs 25,000 award for setting the national record apart from Rs 15,000 for winning gold. Sangita Adhikari of Province 5 took silver with a hurl of 10.56 while Basanti Chaudhary of Nepal APF Club took bronze with a throw of 10.05m. Altogether 18 players competed in shot put.

Ashis Chaudhary of APF claimed the men's 100m gold while Saraswati Chaudhary of ribhuvan Army



Thursday. Punam Chand of Province 5 in action during the women's volleyball. Chandrakala Lamgade of Police competes in the shot put finals.



Saraswoti Kunwar of Gandaki Province competes in the 10,000m race during the National Games in Beljhundi, Dang, on Thursday.

DHRUBA TULADHAR TULSIPUR (DANG), APRIL 18

Donning yellow vest, black short and conspicuously a gold star shoes, the ninth-grader Saraswoti Kunwar ran energy and enthusiasm at the Beljhundi Stadium track on Thursday but her 10,000m race held under the eighth National Games was cut short after completing just 4 laps. Reason: she suffered muscle cramp.

She was destined for a disappointing end to her race even before the start for multiple reasons. In the first place she was completely unfit to compete in the race because she was suffering from diarrhoea. Secondly, she was forced to compete in the event

which she never ran or trained for before Thursday. To add to her misery, she ran with ordinary shoes instead of a proper

athletics spike. Dehydration took a toll on Kunwar and she fell flat in pain clutching her thigh before the medical team attended her in the newly laid synthetic track. Kunwar hails for Phalebas in Parbat and was drafted into Gandaki Province team to compete in the 5,000m and 1,500m races.

She had no prior experience of competing in greater distance than 5,000m. She was thrust into the

event as a last minute replacement for Soniya Baduwal. Gandaki had originally registered Baduwal and Dolmaya

um races Surprisingly, Kunwar

defended his call to include the 15-year-old in the race. "I wanted her to race as she has potential to run the distance," said the coach. "She was complaining of a mild abdominal pain and took a medicine as well. Inquired about her health yesterday (Wednesday), she said she was totally fine, said Kunwar giving a good impression of how ill-informed he was in identifying fitness of a player. Kunwar also resorted to blaming the athlete's health poor to arduous journey from Parbat as well as the intake of junk food during the trip.

For her part, Kunwar was carried away by the big occasion of competing in the National Games and accepting to run the race which was never meant for her. She was totally unaware that running while suffering from diarrhoea was madness. Kunwar can be forgiven for her ignorance but not her coaches. On top of that she was running in synthetic track for the first time in her career, and that too without a proper athletics spikes.

It exposes the organizers' utter carelessness in implementing standard athletics norms that call for all athletes to wear professional spikes. Making an excuse, like the ones made by her Parbat coach, of weak financial background of the athlete's family

would be ridiculous. It was not the first instance of an athlete running without a proper spike. In the last edition in Itahari, the organizers allowed an athlete to run bare foot.

Provided she is fit, Kunwar is set to compete in the 5,000m race on Sunday where she will try to erase the bitter disappointment of the 10,000m race. Irrespective of how she performs in Nepalgunj, Kunwar hopes to establish herself in the game. Her dream is to join the Army club in the future.

clinched the women's 100m gold. Ashis clocked 11 seconds to finish ahead of national record holder Yamsajan Sunar of Province 6. Sunar holds 10.3 second (hand-timing) national record. Ananda Dev Chaudhary walked away with bronze clocking 11.15 seconds. The women's 100m race saw Chaudhary trio claim top three spots. Saraswati clocked 12.19 to secure the gold to match the 20-year old national record held by Devi Maya Paneru. Paneru had set the national record during the eighth South Asian Games in Kathmandu in 1999. Jayarani Chaudhary (12.39) of Province 5 and Krishna Chaudhary (12.52) of Army finished completed the podium finish. "I have achieved my goals

of putting in my best performance. I am happy for that," sais Saraswati who had her previous best timing of 12.40 seconds. Saraswati, who hails from Bardiya, is enrolled by Army club for the last one year. Though she failed to play the seventh National Games due to injuries two years ago, Saraswati had claimed gold during medals NSC Championship last year in Pokhara. She is yet to compete in 200m sprint and relay. "I hope to win both my remaining races," said Saraswati adding that she did not felt any discomfort running in the newly-laid track.

Bishwarupa Budha and Tek Prasad Dahal were the other athletes to add gold medals for Army. Budha claimed the women's 10,000m gold and Dahal won the men's shot put title. Budha clocked 37:30.89 to complete the 25-lap race and finish ahead of Rajpura Pachai (37:30.92). Santoshi Shrestha of Province 3 bagged bronze in 37:50.53. Pushpa Bhandari of APF and Dol Maya Mahato of Gandaki Province finished fourth and fifth respectively.

Dahal hurled 12.19-metre to bag the men's shot put gold.

POST PHOTOS: ANISH REGMI & KESHAV THAPA (Clockwise from left) Durga Budha from Province 6 participates in the men's 10,000m during the eighth National Games in Belihundi, Dang, on

Puskal Khadka (12.04m) of NPC and Chitra Bahadur Oli (11.85m) of Army secured silver and bronze medals.

Karnali Province ended the gold drought after Durga Budha claimed the men's 10,000m title, completing the distance in 31:03.06. Anish Thapa of Gandaki Province took silver in 31:09.71 minute coming ahead of national record-holder Gopi Chandra Parki of APF, who clocked 31:58.3. Parki holds national record of 30:99 minutes set during Incheon Asian Games in 2014

Budha said that he was happy for the achievement despite playing in a different weather condition including the untested synthetic track. "It could probably been difficult had the event been held in Nepalgunj. I could have achieved even better timing if the event was held in early morning," said Budha who had finished second in 10,000m and third in 5,000m during fifth the National Games in 2009. He did not compete in the sixth and seventh National Games in a bid to pursue career in ultra race.

Parki, the third-place finisher, had lodged complaint to athletics jury committee about Budha and Thapa. He had suspected about the district and regional qualification process about the duo. Gandaki



Province have also filed complaint expressing dissatisfaction towards the results. Badminton

Sita Rai of Province 1 stunned third-seeded Shova Gauchan of APF to enter the women's singles badminton semi-finals in Ghorahi, Dang, on Thursday. The 11th seed Rai overcame Gauchan 21-17, 21-15 to set up semi-final clash with Nepal No 1 Nangsal Devi Tamang of Army, who edged her teammate Ranjana Bhatta 21-18, 21-12. Anumaya Rai of Army saw off Jessica Gurung of APF 21-16, 21-9 and next plays clubmate Rashila Maharjan. Maharjan dispatched Sima Rajbanshi of Province 1 21-14, 21-11.

Nepal No 1 Ratnajeet Tamang defeated Jeevan Acharya of NPC 21-10, 21-11 to storm into the men's singles semi-finals. Tamang will meet Prince Dahal of Province 1, who beat Praful Maharjan of Army 21-10, 21-10. Former

national champion Bikash Shrestha of Province 1 and Dipesh Dhami Sudhurpaschim also made it to the semi-finals. Bikash beat Nabin Shrestha of Army 21-15, 15-21, 21-16 while Dhami eased past Dipak Bohara of NPC 21-17, 21-15. Football

NPC defeated Sudhurpaschim Province 3-0 in the men's football at the ANFA Academy ground in Debinagar, Butwal, on Thursday. Bharat Shah, Rabi Paswan and Santosh Hemran were on targets for NPC, who played with numerical advantage for more than an hour after Sudhurpaschim goalie Tikendra Thapa was sent off in the 25th minute. He was sent off for intentionally handling the ball. Shah broke the deadlock in the 36th minute and Paswan doubled their lead on the hour mark. Hemran sealed the victory

The other match between Karnali and Province 2 ended in a 4-4 draw. Bhupendra Shahi struck twice for Karnali while Khagendra Khatri and Suraj Shahi added one each. Sunil Raut Kurmi, Nir Bahadur Ale, Sunil Kumar Raut and Ganga Bahadur Ale were on targets for Karnali.

with stoppage time goal.

In the women's football played in Ghorahi, Province 2 defeated Province 5 3-1. Rajani Thoka, Dil Kumari Rana Magar and Sajani Thokar scored for Province 2 while Mamata Pun replied for Province 5. In another match, Province 3 edged Sudhurpaschim 2-0 at the Beljhundi Stadium. Manisha Thapa Magar scored both the goals

Handball

Army registered double win in handball that kicked off in Nepalgunj on Thursday. The men's handball team defeated Province 542-17 while Gandaki thrashed Karnali 40-15. In the women's event, Army thumped Province 3 33-4 while Province 5 edged Karnali 10-7. The event features nine teams in total including seven provincial teams apart from APF

and Army. (Ghanashyam Gautam in Butwal and Durgalal KC in Dang contributed to this report)

MEDALS TALLY G S D TOTAL Teams

| Tourno | ~ | • | - | |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Nepal Army | 34 | 27 | 24 | 85 |
| Nepal Police | 19 | 17 | 17 | 53 |
| APF Club | 15 | 12 | 23 | 50 |
| Province 3 | 7 | 13 | 32 | 52 |
| Gandaki Province | e 6 | 7 | 18 | 31 |
| Province 2 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 17 |
| Farwest Province | 6 | 5 | 11 | 22 |
| Province 5 | 4 | 8 | 21 | 33 |
| Province 1 | 3 | 5 | 25 | 33 |
| Karnali Province | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| NRNA | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 103 | 101 | 180 | 384 |

Nepal fail to qualify for ICC Under-19 World Cup



Nepali cricketers huddle up before entering the field for their ICC U-19 World Cup Asia Qualifier match against Kuwait at the Kinrara Academy Oval in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

STANDINGS

NR Pts

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2

RITESH RIJAL KATHMANDU. APRIL 18

Nepal's bid to secure a berth in the ICC U-19 World Cup for the eighth time agonisingly failed on Thursday despite winning four of their five matches in the Asia Qualifier in Kuala Lumpur.

For Nepal to qualify, they needed to beat Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to lose against Oman in the final round matches on Thursday. While Nepal did manage to win, but so did the UAE. UAE beat Oman by 10 wickets for their fifth win in as many matches to qualify for the U-19 World Cup slated for January and February next year in South Africa. The UAE join Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri

Nepal 160-2 in 28 overs (R Gautam 62. P Sarraf 53. A Sheikh 33*: H Amanullah 1-25, A Sadiq 1-17) beat Kuwait 175 in 49.4 overs (N Budroo 70, G Kumar 36; RK Paudel 3-13, K Malla 2-21, S Tamang 2-27, R Khan 2-16) by eight wickets Man-of-the-match: R Gautam

Summary

Lanka, the West Indies and Zimbabwe in the tournament proper.

Nepal were dominant throughout the Qualifier winning all four matches convincingly but their unfortunate one-run loss to the UAE in the rain-affected match on April 13 sealed their fate. Had not rain intervened, Nepal were in comfortable position to beat the UAE having set 248-run target. The UAE were 122-3 in 30 overs when rain washed out the match. The Duckworth-

Teams UAF Nepa Kuwait Malaysia Oman Singapore

1 4 0 2 Lewis calculation saw the UAE win the match by

one run. Apart from the UAE match, Nepal beat Singapore by 217 runs, Malaysia by eight wickets, Oman by 15- runs and finally on Thursday Kuwait by eight wickets. The Asia Qualifier allowed just the table-topper a berth in the U-19 World Cup.

At the Kinrara Academy Oval grounds on Thursday, Kuwait were bowled out for 157 in 49.4 overs and Nepal

raced to victory scoring 160-2 in just 28 overs. But their yet another convincing victory ended up just as a footnote to the UAE qualification.

Kuwait's total was built around a solid knock of No 4 batsman Noman Budroo, who was the last man out at 70. Budroo saw wickets fall at the other end but the batsman himself stood firm to help his team post a respectably total on the board. Budroo slammed eight boundaries in his 120ball stay in the pitch.

Opener Gokul Kumar also chipped in a painstaking 36 off 66 balls. Hamoud Amanullah (17) and Meet Bhavsar (10) were the only other Kuwaiti batsmen to score in double figures. Nepal showcased their depth employing eight bowlers against Kuwait. Skipper Rohit Kumar Paudel was pick of the Nepali bowlers with fig-

ures of 3-13 from three overs. Kushal Malla, Surya Tamang and Rashid Khan also took two wickets each.

In reply openers Rit Gautam and Pawan Sarraf literally killed off the match as a contest putting on 93 runs for the first wicket. Sarraf was first to go, dismissed by Abdul Sadiq in the 20th over having scoring 53 off 61 balls with eight fours and a six. Man-ofthe-match Gautam added another 47 runs for the second wicket with Aasif Sheikh but was trapped leg before wicket by Hamoud Amanullah in the 27th over.

Gautam clobbered seven boundaries in his 84-ball 62. Sheikh and Sundeep Jora (5) then carried their team to the finishing line. Sheikh remained unbeaten on 33, his 20-ball cameo included five fours and a six.

We need bigger World Cup, says Lamichhane

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE NEW DELHI, APRIL 18

Nepalese sensation Sandeep Lamichhane has called for the World Cup to be expanded to up to 16 teams, saying limiting it to 10 hurts players from emerging cricket nations.

The 18-year-old leg-spinner, who last year became the first Nepalese player to land an Indian Premier League contract, said he was frustrated to be missing out on the tournament in England and Wales starting in May. "Sorry to say but a 10-team World Cup will hurt a lot of players like me who will not be a part of it," the Delhi Capitals player said. "I think there should be 14-16 teams in the World Cup."

Lamichhane added: "World Cup comes after every four years and teams can achieve their biggest dreams there. We are an emerging nation and this is something we would love to play for our country. "Even in 2023 there are (again) only 10 teams so it will be a while before we can even think of playing in the 50-over event."

Lamichhane, who has a blond streak in his dark hair and earrings in both ears, has drawn comparisons with his hero, the flamboyant Australian great Shane Warne, for his bowling style and ability to generate wicked turn. The confident teenager is the poster boy for the rise of cricket in mountainous Nepal, which gained one-day international status last year but remains a long way from contesting a World Cup.

Cricket's showpiece tournament had 16 teams in 2007, but the field was reduced to 14 in 2011 and 2015 as the International Cricket Council sought to avoid one-sided matches. It has been slashed to just 10 teams for 2019 and 2023, featuring the top eight sides in the one-day rankings and another two coming through qualifying.

Lamichhane, who will be watching the World Cup from



Sandeep Lamichhane

afar, said he was hoping for some upsets by the smaller teams, who include Afghanistan. "I am going to watch the World Cup on TV and love to see any team that is under-rated perform well against the big nations," said Lamichhane. "It will be an inspiration for us who are just beginning their journey right now."

Test cricket is also on Lamichhane's radar as Nepal bid to follow in the footsteps of Afghanistan and Ireland, who in 2017 were elevated to the elite club of nations eligible to play the five-day game. "Two years back we were nothing," said Lamichhane. "But now we are an ODI and T20 international nation. Hopefully there will be a time when we become the next Test nation. Even if I play a Test match for my country after 10 years, it will be the proudest

moment.' Nepal gained ODI status at last year's World Cup qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe despite the ICC's suspension of Nepal's national governing body since 2016 over political interference. Despite their success, the team from the side, and have just a couple of international-standard grounds capable of hosting games. However, individual talent flourished and has

Himalayas are yet to play a top

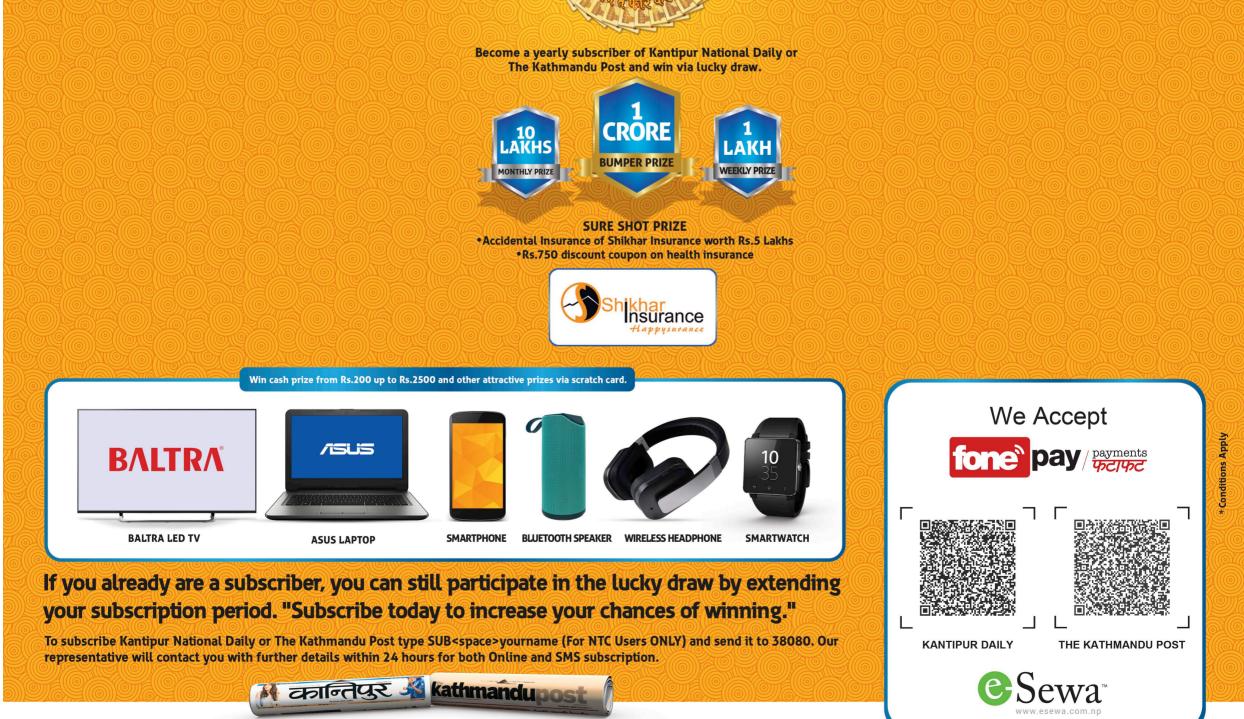
Lamichhane, a product of Nepal's Chitwan Cricket Academy, became a protege of former Australian captain Michael Clarke who spotted him at a tournament in Hong Kong. The teenager's big break came when he was snapped up by IPL's Delhi Capitals, coached by another ex-Australia captain in Ricky Ponting.

So far this season he has bagged five wickets in four IPL matches, with the Capitals often using him as a new-ball bowler on spin-friendly Indian wickets. Lamichhane, whose biggest idols are Warne and Sachin Tendulkar, is surrounded by the world's top cricketers in the IPL but insists he remains focused on his own self-improvement. "I look up only to myself because I want to be better than yesterday. I never plan something big, I always enjoy the day I am playing a game and let the life go in a flow," he said.









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Published and Printed by Kantipur Publications Pvt. Ltd., Central Business Park, Thapathali, Kathmandu, Nepal, P. B. No. 8559, Phone: 5135000, Fax: 977-1-5135057, e-mail: kpost@kmg.com.np, Regd. No. 32/049/050, Chairman & Managing Director : Kailash Sirohiya, Director : Swastika Sirohiya, Editor-in-Chief : Anup Kaphle



| CROSS CURRENCY | | | | | | | | | | FOREX | |
|---|----------|----------|--------|----------|----------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------------------|--|
| | USD | EUR | JPY | GBP | CHF | CAD | AUD | INR | NR | US Dollar | |
| NR | 111.2800 | 125.2300 | 9.9400 | 144.7700 | 110.0400 | 83.2000 | 79.6600 | 1.6015 | | Euro | |
| INR | 69.3830 | 78.0770 | 6.1993 | 90.2810 | 68.8090 | 51.8683 | 49.6710 | | 0.6244 | Pound Sterling | |
| GBP | 0.7683 | 0.8646 | 0.0069 | | 0.7597 | 0.5746 | 0.5500 | 0.0111 | 0.0069 | Japanese Yen | |
| JPY | 111.8900 | 125,9100 | | 144,9275 | 110.6400 | 83.6400 | 80.1000 | 0.1613 | 0.1006 | Chinese Yuan | |
| | 0.8883 | 125.5100 | 0.0070 | 1.1566 | 0.8784 | 0.6640 | 0.6360 | 0.0128 | 0.0080 | Qatari Riyal | |
| EUR | 0.8883 | | 0.0079 | | | | | | | Australian Dollar | |
| USD | | 1.1257 | 0.0089 | 1.3016 | 0.9886 | 0.7475 | 0.7159 | 0.0144 | 0.0090 | Malaysian Ringit | |
| HOW TO READ THE TABLE Saudi Arab Rival 29. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| The chart shows the rates of nine world currencies. Move across the table to find rates of exchange between any two surrencies. One unit of the currency mentioned horizontally is worth that amount in the currency mentioned vertically. | | | | | | | | | | | |

Pakistan's finance minister steps down ahead of IMF deal

Page II Pakistan's finance minister Asad Umar has stepped down from cabinet, he announced on Thursday, ahead of securing a crucial bailout deal with the International Monetary Fund.

Committee files motion to vacate Supreme Court ruling on Sudhir Basnet's housing project

RAJESH KHANAI KATHMANDU, APRIL 18

The Problematic Cooperatives Asset Management Committee filed a motion to vacate before the Supreme Court on Monday requesting it to annul its March 29 interim order allowing promoter Sudhir Basnet of troubled Oriental Cooperative to complete his Vegas City housing project to pay off his creditors

Rewati Raman Pokharel, spokesperson for the committee which wants to auction Basnet's assets, said they filed the motion to vacate to prevent him from prolonging the suffering of the scam victims. "Basnet is black listed and has lost the trust of prospective lenders, and he might not be in a position to generate additional funding to complete unfinished project,' Pokharel said.

Oriental Cooperative went bankrupt in 2013 after it disbursed loans haphazardly and allowed its key promoter Basnet to illegally invest depositors' funds in the real estate market which later crashed. The Problematic Cooperatives Asset Management Committee was



A general view of the Supreme Court building in Kathmandu

tions.

formed to identify and liquidate the assets owned by Basnet, the kingpin in what is possibly the largest scam in

the cooperative business. The committee has received complaints from 7,545 applicants

seven-member panel The formed last year has estimated the total liabilities of Oriental at Rs17 billion. This includes monies owed to Oriental depositors and apartment buyers along with outstanding taxes and loans and interest to banks and financial institu-Basnet has been demanding that he be allowed to complete 573 apartments in the property

located in Balkumari, Lalitpur. As per committee officials, Basnet has been claiming that his creditors will get only a small amount in compensation if the property is auctioned

Committee officials said that Basnet was still trying to convince the depositors that he would settle his debts with the money received from the sale of the housing project. The committee said it did not believe Basnet and wanted to auction off the property. On April 3, the police arrest-

ed Basnet on the charge of cheating Oriental depositors. He was released last Monday after his wife filed a writ of habeas corpus with the Supreme Court.

According to Pokharel, the committee plans to pay Oriental's creditors with the money received by auctioning

off Basnet's property. "As we are not mandated to construct the project, we will distribute the money proportionately to the actual victims," he said.

The victims of Oriental Cooperative also expressed doubts over Basnet's pledge to settle their dues by constructing the project himself. "We will accept the compensation to be provided by the government committee," said Nirmal Gautam, a victim living in Battisputali, Kathmandu. Basnet owned 14 housing

colonies and apartment buildings and hundreds of ropanis of land in the Kathmandu Valley. A number of banks have recovered their dues by auctioning the collateral. The government has declared 10 cooperatives including Oriental as 'troubled'. The committee is in the process of

collecting claims from the other nine cooperatives. Several savings and credit cooperatives have fallen into financial problem mainly by failing to implement good gov-

ernance practices. There are more than 35,000 cooperatives out of which 13,500 are financial cooperatives. They have mobilised deposits of around Rs300 billion.



Nepal Airlines Airbus A330 jet taxis on the runway at Tribhuvan International Airport.

Firms involved in supplying two A330s given one-week summon extension

SANGAM PRASAIN KATHMANDU, APRIL 18

The Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority has given five international firms involved in supplying two wide-body Airbus A330 jets to Nepal one more week to appear before the anti-graft agency.

They had failed to appear before the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority even after a fifteen-day summons notice was issued on March 27.

The jet purchase deal ran into controversy following which a corruption case was filed at the anti-graft agency.

On March 27, the apex constitutional body for corruption control issued a public notice asking the firms-Hi Fly X Ireland Limited, Dublin; AAR International Inc, USA; German Aviation Capital GMBM, Frankfurt; Hi Fly-Transporte Aereos [Hi Fly Airlines], Lisbon, Portugal and Norton Rose Fulbright, Munich, Germany-to appear at the authority office in Tangal within 15 days.

An official source said that the investigation team has summoned the officials for recording their statement in connection with \$209.6-million

in Nepal's aviation history. "We have extended the second summons notice as per the investigation process, said Pradip Kumar Koirala, spokesperson of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority. "Failure to comply with this notice shall result in legal action as per prevailing laws.'

Airbus deal, the largest ever

In January, the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee had concluded that the procurement of the two wide-body aircraft by Nepal Airlines had caused a loss of Rs4.35 billion to the government.

The parliamentary committee had questioned the motive of Nepal Airlines Corporation and Hi Fly Portugal for forming a special purpose vehicle-Hi Fly X Ireland-to specifically look into the procurement process

The committee has termed Hi Fly X a "fictitious" company and has suspected "massive financial irregularities" in the deal.

Stating that Ireland is the biggest tax haven in the world used by multinationals to shelter profits, the lawmakers suspected Nepal Airlines Corporation might have reached the deal with the com-

pany "to evade tax". While advance payment was released to the Portugalbased HiFly Transporte Aeroes, rest of the payment was released to the Ireland based-company, the committee report had said. The national flag carrier

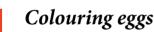
POST FILE PHOTO

had initially signed a \$209.6-million contract for two jets with the consortium of the United States-based AAR Corp and German Aviation Capital in April 2017. The corporation had deposited \$79 million into the escrow account held by Norton Rose Fulbright as an advance pay-

ment for the two jets. Pointing out irregularities worth Rs4.35 billion in the aircraft purchase deal, the parliamentary committee had implicated then sitting tourism minister, Rabindra Adhikari, Nepal Airlines Corporation Managing Director Sugat Ratna Kansakar and some other gov ernment officials. Adhikari died in a helicopter crash on February 27.

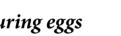
The government also had formed its own panel in January to probe into the irregularities in the jet purchase deal, but its term ended before it could initiate any work





Jet shares nosedive after all flights grounded

Jet Airways shares plunged more than 32 percent on Thursday, hours after the Indian carrier's final flight landed following a decision to ground its entire fleet. The Mumbai-based carrier is on the edge of bankruptcy and has failed to secure emergency funding from banks, forcing it to suspend all operations late Wednesday. Jet's stock fell more than 32 percent to 162.15 rupees on the Bombay Stock Exchange Thursday. Pg: II





Coloured eggs are pictured at 'Gefluegelhof Zembrot' farm ahead of Easter in Bad Schussenried, Germany.

REUTERS

Tamakoshi transmission line project delayed due to change of contractor

PRAHLAD RIJAL

KATHMANDU, APRIL 18

The construction of a section of the 400 kV Tamakoshi-Kathmandu Transmission Line has been delayed by a year due to a change of contractor, project officials said.

The Nepal Electricity Authority had originally awarded the contract to build the 44-km stretch from New Khimti to Barhabise to a Chinese firm, but ended the agreement last December for slow progress. On Monday, the state-owned power utility gave the contract to install the overhead power line to an Indian company, KEC International. It has told KEC International to sign the contract and submit the performance guarantee within 28 days.

Highly placed sources at the Nepal Electricity Authority say that although the power line project has been delayed, the electricity produced by the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project, which is expected to commence generation in November, will not go to waste as it can still be evacuated to eastern and western Nepal through the existing 132 kV and 220 kV transmission lines

According to project chief Navaraj Ojha, the project costs have increased slightly owing to the delay. "The con-



A general view of the 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project in Dolakha.

sion the remaining two towers in the

entire procurement process and mobi-

Six international firms--five Indian

and one Chinese--had submitted tech-

nical proposals in March to execute

the strategically important project

Mude area. We plan to complete the

lise the new contractor by May 15,"

Ojha said.

tract winning company KEC has bid to carry out the construction work for around Rs710 million, slightly more than the Rs610 million quoted by the previous contractor," Ojha said.

"Out of the six main towers, we have the designs ready for four; and the new contractor will be asked to design, supply, install and commisdesigned to place high capacity overhead power lines to evacuate power generated by hydel plants on the Tamakoshi and Khimti rivers to the Kathmandu Valley where power demand is the highest.

The Nepal Electricity Authority approved the technical bids of the five Indian firms; and after studying their financial bids, it awarded the contract to the lowest bidder KEC. The transmission line project is funded by the government, Asian Development Bank and government of Norway under their Electricity Transmission Expansion and Supply Improvement Project.

As per the contract signed with the original contractor, a joint venture of Guangxi Transmission and Substation Construction Company and Shenzhen Clou Electronics, the project was expected to be up and running by May 2019.

The project office terminated the pact with the Chinese joint venture for working slow. Nepal Electricity Authority Managing Director Kulman Ghising had visited the project site on multiple occasions to direct the contractor to expedite work, but to no avail. The state-owned power utility then moved to end the contract with the joint venture, and seized its Rs123.2 million performance and bank guarantee.

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World

Amazon to pull plug on China

retail operations

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Amazon plans to close down

its online retail operations

that cater to consumers

in China in an apparent

admission of defeat to local

e-commerce rivals such as

Alibaba and JD.com, a report

The US e-commerce pio-

neer will maintain other oper-

ations in China such as

Amazon Web Services (AWS),

Kindle e-books and cross-bor-

der teams that help ship

goods from Chinese mer-

chants to customers abroad,

Bloomberg News said, citing

unidentified people familiar

Beginning on July 18, the

An Amazon spokesperson

did not explicitly confirm

plans to throw in the towel on

domestic e-commerce, but

said the company was

looking to focus more on

we have been evolving our

China online retail business

to increasingly emphasise

cross-border sales, and in

return we've seen a very

strong response from Chinese

customers," the spokesperson

said in a statement emailed to

AFP. The company was mak-

ing "operational adjustments

to focus our efforts on

cross-border sales in China",

Founded by Jeff Bezos 25

years ago, Amazon in January

became the world's biggest

publicly traded company by

the statement said.

"Over the past few years,

cross-border sales.

company's Chinese website,

SHANGHAI, APRIL 18

said on Thursday.

with the plans.

report said.

NEWS DIGEST

Portugal petrol strike lifted

LISBON: Fuel haulers in Portugal lifted on

Thursday a strike that caused long lines at petrol stations days before a long holiday weekend following mediation by the government. "After three difficult days of uncertainty and even insecurity the situation should progressively return to normal," said Infrastructure Minister Pedro Nuno Santos after announcing that negotiations would be held later this month. The strike launched at the beginning of the week quickly led to shortages, with Portugese media reporting Wednesday that some 3,000 petrol stations had run dry. The government had ordered a certain number of drivers back to work in order to ensure a minimum service to airports, ports, emergency services, public transport and 40 percent of filling stations in the Lisbon and Porto regions as the

country begins marking a three-day holiday weekend for Easter

on Friday. (AFP) **Unilever Q1 sales** top expectations

LONDON: Consumer goods group Unilever reported stronger than expected quarterly underlying sales growth, helped by higher prices and volume, and strength in emerging markets. The maker of Dove soap and Ben & Jerry's ice cream also on Thursday stood by its outlook for the full vear, which calls for underlying sales growth in the lower half of a 3 to 5 percent range. Rival Nestle also reported better-than-expected first-quarter sales on Thursday. Following its first quarter under new chief executive Alan Jope, Anglo-Dutch Unilever also stood by its 2020 target for an underlying operating margin of 20 percent, set by Jope's predecessor Paul Polman in the wake of 2017's rebuffed \$143 billion takeover offer by Kraft Heinz. (REUTERS)

SAfrican miners end five-month

wage strike

JOHANNESBURG: Thousands of gold miners at South Africa's Sibanye-Stillwater gold

US trade deficit hits eight-month low on weak Chinese imports

REUTERS WASHINGTON, APRIL 18

The US trade deficit fell to an eight-month low in February as imports from China plunged, temporarily providing a boost to President Donald Trump's "America First" agenda and economic growth in the first quarter.

The surprise second straight monthly narrowing in the trade gap reported by the Commerce Department on Wednesday was also driven by soaring aircraft exports, which are likely to reverse after Boeing halted deliveries of its troubled 737 MAX aircraft. MAX planes have been grounded indefinitely following two deadly crashes. Economists warned the

trade deficit would remain elevated regardless of whether the United States and China struck a trade deal that was to the White House's liking because of Americans' insatiable appetite for cheaper imports

Talks between Washington and China to resolve the bitter trade war have been dragging. The United States is also embroiled in conflicts with other trading partners, including the European Union, contributing to big swings in exports and imports data in recent months.

"Even if trade negotiations are resolved in such a way as to reduce the bilateral trade deficit with China, one of the Trump administration's stated goals, this would likely divert trade flows to other countries and have little impact on the top-line US trade deficit," said Emily Mandel, an economist at Moody's Analytics in West



An aerial photo shows shipping containers at the Port of Seattle and the Elliott Bay waterfront in Seattle, Washington, US

with duties on \$110 billion

worth of American products.

Trump has defended the

duties as necessary to protect

domestic manufacturers from

what he says is unfair foreign

Trump has delayed tariffs

on \$200 billion worth of

Chinese imports. The White

House argues that substantial-

ly reducing the trade deficit

would lift annual economic

growth by at least 3 percent on

a sustainable basis, a feat that

economists have said is impos-

sible because of low produc-

tivity and population growth.

The economy grew 2.9 per-

The dollar was little

Iconic park

competition.

cent in 2018.

- Trade deficit falls 3.4 percent to \$49.4 billion in February
- Exports increase 1.1 percent, imports rise 0.2 percent
- China goods trade deficit drops 28.2 percent

Chester, Pennsylvania. The trade deficit tumbled 3.4 percent to \$49.4 billion in February, the lowest level since June 2018. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the trade shortfall widening to \$53.5 billion in February.

The politically sensitive goods trade deficit with China—a focus of the Trump administration's protectionist trade policy-decreased 28.2 percent to \$24.8 billion in February as imports from the world's No. 2 economy plunged 20.2 percent. US exports to China jumped 18.2 percent in February.

Washington last vear imposed tariffs on \$250 billion worth of goods imported from

changed against a basket of currencies, while US Treasury debt prices rose marginally. Stocks on Wall Street fell. February's smaller trade China, with Beijing retaliating

deficit suggests the economy will probably avoid a sharp slowdown in growth that had been feared at the start of the year. The goods trade deficit declined 1.7 percent to an eight-month low of \$72.0 billion in February.

When adjusted for inflation, the overall goods trade deficit fell \$1.8 billion to \$81.8 billion, also the lowest since last June. Goldman Sachs raised its first quarter gross domestic product estimate by four-tenths of a percentage point to a 2.1 per-

cent annualised rate. The Atlanta Federal Reserve bumped up its GDP forecast to a 2.4 percent pace from a 2.3 percent rate. The economy grew at a 2.2 percent rate in

the fourth quarter.

"It sounds like pencils are being sharpened in order to revise up first-quarter GDP forecasts," said Jennifer Lee, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets in Toronto.

In February, goods exports increased 1.5 percent to \$139.5 billion. The surge in goods exports is unlikely to be sustained given slowing global economic growth. The dollar's strength last year means US-manufactured goods are less competitive on foreign markets. Shipments of civilian aircraft soared by \$2.2 billion in February. Exports of motor vehicles and parts increased by \$0.6 billion. There was a small rise in soybean exports. Economists expect soybean exports to remain moderate because of an outbreak of swine flu that has reduced demand for soybean meal in China.

In February, imports rose 0.2 percent to \$259.1 billion. Consumer goods imports increased by \$1.6 billion in February, led by a \$2.1 billion rise in imports of cellphones and other household goods.

Imports of industrial supplies and materials fell by \$1.2 billion. Capital goods imports rose slightly, pointing to slower business spending on equipment. Crude oil imports fell to 173.7 million barrels, the lowest since March 1992, from 223.1 million barrels in January. An increase in domestic production has seen the United States become less dependent on foreign oil.

'We see more potential for stronger imports in coming months, which would reestablish a trend toward wider deficits." said Andrew Hollenhorst, an economist at Citigroup in New York.

market value and dominates in the United States and other markets

E-commerce is just as popular with consumers in China-if not more-than it is in the United States, due to cheap delivery costs and a less-developed bricks-andmortar retail landscape.

But Amazon has struggled to make headway in China, where a host of nimble rivals led by Alibaba and JD.com have capitalised on domestic supplier networks and a deeper understanding of Chinese consumers to gobble up market share before Amazon could gain a foothold.

Amazon has tried to make a go of it on China retail, investing in logistics and acquiring Chinese online book seller Joyo in 2004.

Amazon.cn, will featured only diminished offerings sourced But it has barely made a from its global network, the dent

The firm occupied just 0.6 percent of Chinese business-to-consumer online retail in the fourth quarter of 2018, with Alibaba's Tmall taking 61.5 percent, and JD.com 24.2 percent, according to China-based Internet consultancy Analysys.

The Amazon statement said that "we will continue to invest and grow in China across Amazon Global Store, Global Selling, AWS, Kindle devices and content".

Bloomberg News called the move the latest sign that Amazon, due to the difficulty competing with Chinese rivals, would focus its overseas attention on India's growing market.

Amazon opened an India website in 2013 and has invested heavily in logistical infrastructure

Pakistan's finance minister steps down ahead of IMF deal

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE ISLAMABAD, APRIL 18

Pakistan has gone to the IMF repeatedly since the late Pakistan's finance minister 1980s, and last received an Asad Umar has stepped down IMF bailout in 2013 to the tune

would impact the deal.

of \$6.6 billion. from cabinet, he announced Umar has said often that a on Thursday, ahead of securing a crucial bailout deal deal is coming soon, and that

mines ended a fivemonth strike on Wednesday after agree ing to sign a three-year wage deal, the company and a labour union announced. Some 15,000 members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCII) downed tools in November over a pay dispute. They have now agreed to a pay rise of 5.5 percent for the first vear followed by 5.5 percent or the prevailing annual rate of inflation—whichever is greater-the two following years. "We are going to sign the agreement. That means the strike has come to an end officially," AMCU leader Joseph Mathunjwa told workers. (AFP)

t will be the last or nternational Earlier this week Hammad

Monetary Fund. Umar, one of cricketer-turned-premier Imran Khan's most powerful ministers, had been entrusted with the task of negotiating the long-delayed bailout as Pakistan's cash-strapped economy faces a balance-of-payments crisis. "As part of a cabinet reshuf-

fle, PM desired that I take the energy minister portfolio instead of finance," Asad Umar tweeted.

"However, I have obtained his consent to not take any cabinet position. I strongly believe @ImranKhanPTI is the best hope for Pakistan and inshallah (God willing) will make a naya (new) pakistan,'

he wrote. There was no immediate statement from Khan's office or confirmation of who would replace Umar, and it was not clear how Umar's absence

Azhar, a state minister for revenue, tweeted that Umar had reached an "agreement in principle" on an IMF deal during a recent trip to

Washington, with the agreement to be finalised later this month. Experts have warned that any tough measures imposed by the IMF could impact Khan's grand plans for an Islamic welfare state in Pakistan. Forecasts by the IMF and World Bank suggest the Pakistani economy is likely to grow between 4.0 and 4.5

percent for the fiscal year ending June 2019, compared to 5.8 percent growth in the last fiscal year

The United Arab Emirates, Pakistan's largest trading partner in the Middle East and a major investment sources, recently offered \$3 billion to support Pakistan's battered economy



Children play in the Central Park in New York, the United States. With a history of over 160 years, the Central Park was created as the nation's first major landscaped public park. It is one of the most frequently visited park in the United States, with over 40 million visitors per year nowadays. Set in the middle of bustling Manhattan and covering an area of 341 hectares, its grounds serve as a safe haven, not only for athletes, musicians and strollers, but also for hundreds of migratory birds each year.

Major automakers fear Trump 'grenade'—imposing US auto tariffs

REUTERS

NEW YORK, APRIL 18

Major automakers are bullish on the outlook for the US economy and auto sales, but one big question remains—will President Donald Trump throw a grenade into the sector by imposing sweeping tariffs of up to 25 percent on car and auto parts imports?

The industry is in "wait-and-see mode," but the tariffs would be a bad idea, Bob Carter, head of US sales at Toyota Motor Corp, told Reuters on Wednesday.

"If the tariff happened on the auto industry, quite frankly that's pulling the pin out of the grenade," he said at a conference on Tuesday held in conjunction with the New York International Auto Show. "I don't believe the US economy can run out of the room fast enough if that happens."

Carter said in an interview he was optimistic the Trump administration would decide against tariffs, yet "uncomfortable" given the president's decision last year to impose tariffs on steel and aluminium imports.

Trump ran for office in 2016 on a protectionist platform aimed at shoring up US manufacturing jobs. He has said in the past he was considering tariffs on autos and auto parts of up to 25 percent.

In February, the US Commerce Department sent recommendations to Trump, which auto industry

officials expect to include at least some tariffs on fully assembled vehicles or on critical technologies and components related to electric, automated, connected and shared vehicles

Such tariffs would have a deeper impact on car prices and con-



An official New York State electric car is displayed in a New York State exhibit at the 2019 New York International Auto Show in New York City, US.

sumers than earlier metals tariffs that were imposed. The steel and aluminium tariffs cost Detroit automakers General Motors Co and Ford Motor Co \$1 billion each and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV said they could add up to \$350 million in costs in 2019. Trump is supposed to make a

decision by mid-May, but some

officials think the administration will find a way to delay final action, using the threat as leverage to try to win concessions on autos in trade talks with Japan and the European Union.

Joe Eberhardt, chief executive of Jaguar Land Rover North America, said a 25 percent tariff on all imported vehicles would cost the company "billions." If the tariffs were on parts, it would also hit US automakers hard, he noted.

"We just hope that reason will prevail," he said.

Toyota and other automakers have been lobbying heavily to block any new tariffs on imported vehicles, arguing the industry's global supply chain is so intertwined that tariffs would raise prices, hurt sales and thus damage the economy.

At a conference held ahead of the New York auto show

this week, IHS Markit's chief US economist, Joel Prakken, forecast 2019 US new vehicle sales of 16.8 million units, down about 500,000 units from 2018 but still high historically.

However, tariffs could reduce sales by another 2 million vehicles and shave half to two-thirds of a percentage point off US gross domestic product, he said.

"It would be horrible for the automotive industry, it will be horrible for consumers and it will be horrible for the US economy," said Fred Diaz, the US chief executive of Mitsubishi Motors Corp.

In one example, Carter said 72 percent of the parts for the Camry sedan that Toyota makes in Kentucky come from US suppliers, but 28 percent are imported. A 25 percent tariff would cause that car's price to rise \$1,800 overnight.

"There is no such thing as a 100 percent US vehicle," he told Reuters

According to industry estimates, broad tariffs could add an average of \$4,000 to a new car's sticker price.

Nissan Motor Co Ltd's North American chairman, Jose Valls, said the automaker has "invested very heavily in the US and they (the Trump administration) need to take into account our customers and our employees.

"We'll adjust," Valls said. "But we're not taking decisions on things that haven't been finalised yet.'

Mitsubishi's Diaz said industry groups are lobbying hard against the tariffs.

"The feedback is that we're being heard," he said. "But fundamentally, how do you really know?

REUTERS

monev

NEWS DIGES

Coffee helps Nestle brew up sales growth

ZURICH: Swiss food giant Nestle said on Thursday its sales have climbed, boosted by recent acquisitions including the right to market Starbucks coffee products in supermarkets around the world. Despite the overall climate of stagnant consumer spending in industrialised countries and a slowdown in growth in emerging markets, Nestle reported a 4.3 percent rise in sales in the first quarter of this year to 22.2 million Swiss francs (\$22 billion, 19.4 billion euros). Recent acquisitions accounted for 1.2 percentage points of that increase. In recent years, the company has been under intense shareholder pressure to boost sales and profitability, and has been shaking up its portfolio that includes over 2,000 brandse. (AFP)

Toyota to sell first hybrid car made in Brazil

SAO PAULO: Japan's Toyota Motor Corp said on Wednesday it will begin building a new version of the Corolla sedan in Brazil that will run on electricity, ethanol and gas, which it says will be the first vehicle of its kind in the world. Brazil, which is South America's largest auto producer, has largely resisted the shift toward electric and hybrid vehicle production that has swept through more developed markets. Some of Toyota's competitors in Brazil have said they will import electric vehicles but do not plan to produce them domes tically. Toyota said the car will be produced in the state, at its Indaiatuba plant which will receive an investment of 1 billion reais (\$254.73 million). (REUTERS)

Continental, Valeo seek EU antitrust action against Nokia BRUSSELS: German car

parts maker Continental and French rival Valeo have joined Daimler and Bury Technologies to seek an EU antitrust investigation into Nokia's patent licensing practices for cars, the Finnish tech

100 MW solar farm Intel pulls out from 5G smartphone modem facturer between Qualcomm network business.

100MW, enough to power 12,000 typical French households.

business AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL 18

US electronics giant Intel said on Tuesday it was withdrawing from the 5G smartphone modem business, hours after Apple and American microchip manu-Qualcomm announced they had clinched an agreement to end a battle over royalty payments.

The modems that connect smartphones to telecommunications networks were at the heart of the battle Apple and

Intel said it will "complete an assessment of the opportunities for 4G and 5G modems in PCs, internet of things devices and other data-centric devices,' while pursuing investment opportunities in its 5G infrastructure

"5G continues to be a strategic priority across Intel, and our team has developed a valuable portfolio of wireless products and intellectual property," CEO Bob Swan said in a statement.

A general view of the photovoltaic solar panels at the power plant in La Colle des Mees, Alpes de Haute Provence, southeastern France. The 112,000 solar panels cover an area of 200 hectares with a total capacity of

Jet shares nosedive after all flights grounded but lenders remain 'hopeful'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MUMBAI, APRIL 18

Jet Airways shares plunged more than 32 percent on Thursday, hours after the Indian carrier's final flight landed following a decision to ground its entire fleet.

The Mumbai-based carrier is on the edge of bankruptcy and has failed to secure emergency funding from banks, forcing it to suspend all operations late Wednesday.

Jet's stock fell more than 32 percent to 162.15 rupees on the Bombay Stock Exchange Thursday. It was worth more than four times that a year ago.

The lenders that control the airline said Thursday were focusing on finding a buyer for Jet, which was until recently India's second-biggest carrier by market share. "Lenders are reasonably hopeful that the bid process is likely to be successful in determining fair value of the enterprise in a transparent manner," they said in a statement. The State Bank of India-led consortium is looking to sell a controlling stake in Jet and his surname has shortlisted four potential buyers, including Etihad Airways, which already owns 24 percent The four have until May 10



Bangladesh garment makers ask government to extend export subsidy

REUTERS DHAKA, APRIL 18

Bangladesh's garment makers have asked the government to extend a 5 percent export subsidy for the industry, saying they are being squeezed between low international prices for clothing and rising production costs.

The country's garment industry, the world's second biggest producer, currently receives a 5 percent cash incentive for exports but that is due to end on June 30.

Siddiqur Rahman, the president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, told

reporters on Wednesday that without the subsidy, more garment makers would go out of business. The association says that 1,200 garment factories have closed down in Bangladesh in the past five years

Siddiqur said another 5 percent cash incentive on exports would cost the government \$1.67 billion.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi told Reuters that he would talk to the finance minister about including the proposal in the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

"After the enhancement of wages since December last year there is a pressure to the

owners and if they get some cash incentive that would be a relief," said Tipu.

Siddiqur said that the prices of readymade garments in 2018 were 7.4 percent lower in the US market and 3.64 percent less in the European mar-

ket than they had been in 2012. At the same time the manufacturers' costs have been climbing, mainly driven by labour costs.

Last year, there was a big increase in the minimum wage for Bangladesh garment makers and that drove the costs of production higher.

Bangladesh earns about \$30 billion annually by exporting readymade garments.

company said on Wednesday. Last month, German carmaker Daimler and Bury complained to the European Commission about Nokia's patents essential to car communications. The complaint highlights ongoing disputes between tech companies and the car industry on royalties paid on technologies used in navigation systems, vehicle-to-vehicle communication and self-driving cars. Nokia was notified of the Bury, Continental and Valeo complaints at the same time that the Commission told the company of Daimler's complaint, a Nokia spokesman said. (REUTERS)

to submit formal bids. But until then, the carrier's to suffer," he added.

her future

remaining fleet is grounded, with a final flight from Amritsar to Mumbai landing in the early hours of Thursday.

Several hundred staff gathered outside the airline's headquarters in Mumbai Thursday, chanting "We want justice'

AFP/RSS

Indian passengers stand at the Jet Airways ticketing counter for cancelling their tickets at Chattrapati ivaji International Airport in Mumbai on Thursday

and "Please save Jet Airways". Minister Narendra Modi's "What's the management pro-business reputation as he doing and why isn't the govseeks a second term in ongoernment doing anything to ing national elections. save our jobs?" said Sarvesh,

The chairman of state-carrier Air India, which has been an employee of Jet's ground staff who did not want to give bailed out by the government several times, said Jet's tem-"Many here have been porary closure was a setback working for Jet for over 20 for India's aviation sector.

years. Our families are going "We have in the past witnessed many airlines shutting Zoya Khan, a 23-year-old shop and it is time to appreciflight attendant, said she was ate that the razor thin margins "extremely concerned" about which airlines are forced to operate with in a competitive environment results in a sce-"This is my first job," she nario that encourages unsustold AFP. "We just want the tainability," Ashwani Lohani management and the governsaid in a Facebook post.

ment to figure out a solution." A collapse of Jet, and the Jet, which has debts of loss of more than 20,000 jobs, more than \$1 billion, has been would deal a blow to Prime in a tailspin for months. It has

defaulted on loans and failed to pay many staff since the start of the year.

The carrier cancelled hundreds of flights in recent weeks, stranding thousands of passengers. It was operating just five planes before Wednesday's grounding, down from 120 last year. Bad investments, competi-

tion from several low-cost carriers, high oil prices and a weak rupee contributed to Jet's financial demise. experts say.

Its plight has been compared to that of Kingfisher Airlines, which ceased operations in 2012 before later going bust, causing thousands of job losses and huge financial costs to lenders

despite Brexit uncertainty

UK retail sales surge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON, APRIL 18

British retail sales rose far more than expected in March, official data showed on Thursday, despite political uncertainty over Brexit and turmoil for department stores.

Total sales increased by 1.1 percent compared to February, when they rose 0.6 percent, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

The March reading easily outshone analysts consensus forecast for an increase of just 0.3 percent, according to a Bloomberg poll.

"Consumers have undeniably been resilient and have seemingly so far largely brushed off Brexit concerns," said EY economist Howard Archer. "But retailers will nevertheless likely be wary that consumers could become more cautious and limit their spending over the coming months as a consequence of prolonged Brexit uncertainties—and a highly uncertain domestic economic and political environment.'

Rising sales could reflect stockpiling by some consumers ahead of the original Brexit date of March 29, Archer added. Britain is now due to leave the European Union by October 31. In addition, retail sales soared 6.7 percent in March compared to a year earlier in the best annual gain since October 2016.

However, the comparison was skewed because retail sales had plunged in March 2018 on the back of freezing weather during the o-called "Beast from the East" cold wave.

In contrast, this year Britain enjoyed warm veather in March.

The ONS also revealed Thursday that department store sales fell 0.3 percent in March from a year earlier-the only category to register a decline. "While the quantity bought in department stores is decreasing, other store types are contributing positively to the overall growth in retail sales," the ONS said.

Department stores have been hit particularly hard by fierce competition from online-specific retailers, that do not have such high costs.

Cheap solar panels power consumer appliance boom in North Korea

REUTERS

SEOUL, APRIL 18

Years after they first appeared in North Korea, increasingly cheap and available solar panels are giving a boost to consumer consumption and industry as Pyongyang tries to limit the impact of tough international sanctions.

Electricity shortages have been a perennial concern for North Korea, and leader Kim Jong Un has called for greater use of renewable energy as part of his drive for self-sufficiency as sanctions have ratcheted higher in response to the country's nuclear and missile programmes.

Now ever more households, factories and businesses are equipped with solar panels, leading to a greater variety of home electronics products available in increasingly common private markets known as jangmadang, defectors

and recent visitors say. Among the hottest selling items are water purifiers, hair straighteners and electric bicycles, mostly from China but some made in North Korea or even smuggled in from South Korea.

"A few years ago, such things as water purifiers, mixers and rice cookers were only seen at some restaurants and rich households, but they are becoming commonplace, especially in cities," said Kang Mi-jin, an economic expert who regularly speaks with North Koreans for Daily NK, a website run by defectors

"Some would look just like an ordinary middle-class South Korean home, with a wall-hanging LED TV, multiple laptops and electric mini cars for babies.

North Koreans started using solar panels several years ago, mostly to charge mobile phones and light their homes as a backup



A file photo shows Appliances and televisions displayed inside Daesong Department Store in North Korea.

to the unstable, mostly hydro and coal-fired national grid. As well as markets brimming with electronics products, there

are more teahouses, computer games rooms, karaoke bars and billiard halls open longer after switching to solar from diesel generators, according to recent visitors and defectors.

Such entertainment venues are becoming more widespread, not

only in cities, but also the countryside, where grid power is even less reliable. "At night, often it is only those places that have solar panels and batteries that have lights on," a source with knowledge of the issue told Reuters on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of North Korea affairs

Use of the panels spread after they were used at a now-closed inter-Korean factory park in the North's border city of Kaesong that opened in 2004.

"Now many apartment balconies have them out in the sun during the day collecting energy so they are readily visible, the source said.

Private use of solar panels has gone from being officially banned, to tolerated, to encouraged by the ruling Workers' Party, which keeps a tight rein on the economy and the populace.

Early this month, the official Rodong Sinmun ran an article about a team of labourers at a cooperative farm who earned solar panels and LED TVs as a reward from the Party for surpassing a production goal.

State television has also aired a series of reports on the growing use of solar energy over the past year, including a 17-minute documentary from October introducing locally made devices, such as high-voltage inverters and even a portable charger for electric bicycles

Kim Yun-soung, a research fellow at the Green Energy Strategy Institute in Seoul, said the North's push for domestic production of solar equipment was spurred by sanctions banning imports of metal products.

"Electricity was the biggest problem but we achieved such a highly advanced, cutting-edge

technology ourselves from scratch, which was once monopolised by developed nations," the film's narrator said, referring to the inverters.

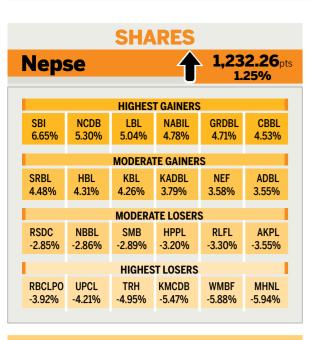
State media has listed the central bank, schools, factories, and even ferries as entirely powered by solar panels

"A solar panel gives you 'free' power once it is installed," said Kim Young Hui, a defector and an economist at the South's state-run Korea Development Bank.

"So the nature of the panels perfectly fits Kim Jong Un's mantra of self-reliance - or in other words, creating something out of nothing.'

Most of the panels sold in markets were brought in from China, and prices have dropped by up to 40 percent over the last few years amid a global glut and rising North Korean production, defectors and experts said.

Bazaar



Nepal Stock Exchange

TRADING INFORMAT

Arun Kabeli Power Ltd Arun Valley Hydropower Dev Co Ltd Asian Life Insurance Co Ltd Asian Life Insurance Co Ltd Bark of Kathemaedu Ltd

Bank of Kathmandu Ltd

Barun Hydropower Co Ltd Bhargav Bikash Bank Ltd

Butwal Power Co Lto

Central Finance Co Ltd

Citizen Investment Trus

Citizens Mutual Fund -1

Gandaki Bikas Bank Ltd

Garima Bikas Bank I to Global IME Bank Ltd

City Express Finance Co Ltd Civil Bank Ltd

Civil Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd Corporate Dev Bank Ltd

Deprosc Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd Deva Bikas Bank Ltd

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Doyasmkor Hydropower Ltd Everest Bank Ltd Everest Insurance Co Ltd Excel Dev Bank Ltd First Mirco Finance Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd Forward Community Microfinance Bittiya Sanstha Ltd

Global IME Bank Ltd Global IME Samunnat Scheme-1 Goodwill Finance Co Ltd Grameen Bikas Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd Green Dev Bank Ltd Guheshowori Merchant Bank & Finance Co Ltd

Guischwori Merchant Bank & Finance Co L Gurans Life Insurance Co Ltd Gurans Life Insurance Co Ltd Himalayan Bank Ltd Himalayan General Insurance Co Ltd Himalayan General Insurance Co Ltd Himalayan Power Partner Ltd Hydroelectricity Investment and Dev Co Ltd UCFC Finance Ltd Janaki Finance Ltd Janaki Finance Ltd Janaki Finance Ltd Janaki Bark Nepal Ltd Janautha Bark Mepal Ltd

Janautthan Samudayic Laghubitta Bikas Bank Ltd Jyoti Bikas Bank Ltd

Kailash Bikas Bank Ltd Kalika Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha I Kalika power Co Ltd Kamana Sewa Bikas Bank Ltd Kamana Sewa Bikas Bank Ltd

Laxmi Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd Laxmi Value Fund-1

Mahila Sahavatra Microfinance Bittiva Sanstha Ltd Mahuli Samudavik Laghuhitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd

Kanchan Dev Bank Lt Kankai Bikas Bank Lto Karnali Dev Bank Lto Khanikhola Hydropower Co Ltd Kisan Microfinance Bittiya Sanstha Ltd

Kumari Bank Ltd Laxmi Bank Ltd

Laxmi Equity Fund

Life Insurance Co Nepa

Lumbini Bikas Bank Ltd umbini General Insurance Co Ltd Machhapuchhre Bank Ltd Mahalaxmi Bikas Bank Ltd

Maniushree Finance Ltd Mega Bank Nepal Ltd Mero Microfinance Bittiva Sanstha Lto Mirmire LaghuBitta Bittiya Sanstha Lte Miteri Dev Bank Ltd Mithila LaghuBitta Bittiva Sanstha Ltd Mountain Hydro Nepal Ltd Muktinath Bikas Bank Ltd Nabil Bank I td

NABIL Bank I to Promotor Share

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Nabil Fouity Fund

Century Commercial Bank Ltd Century Commercial Bank Ltd Chautari Laghubitta Bittya Sanstha Ltd Chhimek Laghubitta Bikas Bank Ltd Chhiyangdi Hydropower Ltd Chilime Hydropower Co Ltd Citizen Bank International Ltd

Agriculture Dev Bank Ltd Ankhu Khola Jalvidhyut Co Ltd Api Power Co Ltd Arambha Microfinance Bittiya Sanstha Ltd Awar Krishe Dewand Hd

urbar Plaza, Katl April 18, 2019

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81 137 650

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Samsung Galaxy Fold screen under scrutiny, raises spectre of Note 7 battery fiasco

REUTERS NEW YORK/SEOUL, APRIL 18

HARE

338

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd said it has received "a few" reports of damage to the displays of samples of its upcoming foldable smartphone, raising the prospect of a less-then-smooth entry for the splashy \$1,980 handset. The Galaxy Fold, on sale from April 26 in the United States, resembles a conventional smartphone but opens like a book to reveal a second display the size of a small tablet at 7.3 inches (18.5 cm). The design, matched by Huawei Technologies Co Ltd's Mate X, was hailed as the future in a field that has seen few surprises since Apple Inc's iPhone in 2007.

Yet ahead of the launch, journalists supplied with review samples reported malfunctions after only a day or two of use.

"We will thoroughly inspect these units ... to determine the cause of the matter," Samsung said in a statement.

Shares of the company closed down 3.1 percent, while the broader market was down 1.43 percent.

The malfunctions raised the spectre of Samsung's doomed Galaxy Note 7 phone three years ago. Battery and design flaws in the Note 7 resulted in some units catching fire or exploding, forcing Samsung to recall and cancel sales of the model.

The recall wiped out nearly all profit of Samsung's mobile division in the third quarter of 2016.

With the Fold, analysts said malfunctions from the first batch of a test model were of little surprise. Moreover, the handset's in-folding design is likely to be

PM inaugurates five-star hotel

Soaltee Westend Premier

Westend Premier, a five-star hotel in

Nepalguni, Shankar Pokharel, Chief

Premier is the first five star hotel in

green Building Council.

new savings product

Minister of Province No 5 and Barsaman

Pun, Minister for Energy, Water Resources

and Irrigation were also present, the hotel

said in a press statement. Soaltee Westend

Nepalgunj and the first 5 star hotel with

Leadership in Energy and Environment Design is the most widely used green build-

ing rating system in the world set up by US

Bank of Kathmandu launches

KATHMANDU: Bank of Kathmandu, on the

Aatmiya Bachat Khata' an insurance cover

ing critical illness and death amounting to

savings product is diagnosed with any of the

15 major critical illnesses, the customer shall

receive the insured amount, the bank said in

a press statement. In case of death, 10 per-

cent of the insured amount will also be provided for funeral expenses. With 84 branches,

75 ATMs and 8 extension counters, the bank

has been offering a full range of services such as VISA Debit card, Credit Card,

Bancassurance, locker facility, remittance

International USD card, E-commerce

facility, BOK Smart, BOK Click,

and POS machine to its customers.

Rs100,000. If the customer enrolled to this

occasion of its 25th Anniversary, has

launched a new savings product 'BOK

LEED certification in Nepal. LEED or

size of a small tablet at 7.3 inches (18.5 cm). durable than Huawei's less out-folding approach, they said.

"In-folding is more difficult to make than out-folding, as it adds higher pressure to screens, which people have worried about," said analyst Park Sung-soon at BNK

Securities Technology journalists took to Twitter on Wednesday to report instances of the screen either cracking or flickering.

Bloomberg reporter Mark Gurman tweeted: "The screen on my Galaxy Fold review unit is completely broken and unusable just two days in. Hard to know if this is widespread or not."

Gurman removed a plastic layer on the screen that was not meant to be removed and the phone malfunctioned afterwards,

according to his tweets.

A wrapper around the device featured "ATTENTION" in uppercase and warned not remove the layer, showed a tweet from another sample recipient. Samsung on Thursday said removing the protective layer might result in damage, and that it would clearly inform customers of the issue.

The Samsung Galaxy Fold resembles a conventional smartphone but opens like a book to reveal a second display the

Dieter Bohn, executive editor of The Verge, said a "small bulge" appeared on the crease of the phone screen, which appeared to be something pressing from underneath the screen. Bohn said Samsung replaced his test phone but did not offer an explanation for the problem.

"It is very troubling," Bohn told Reuters, adding that he did not remove the protective layer

CNBC.com tech editor Steve Kovach tweeted a video of half of his phone's screen flickering after using it for just a day.

PHOTO COURTESY: SAMSUN

Samsung has said it plans to make at least 1 million Fold handsets, versus the total 300 million phones it produces annually. It has closed Fold pre-orders due to 'high demand"

On Thursday, the firm told Reuters there was no change to its release schedule following the malfunction reports.

"I think as time goes on its yield rate will improve, and foldables that customers have in hand will be much better," said analyst Lee Kyu-ha at NH Investment & Securities. "But I don't know if Samsung can completely fix the problem about screens.





MARKET WATCH

| RETAIL PRIC | E | |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Vegetables | Unit | Price (Rs) |
| Red Potato | kg | Rs45 |
| White Potato | kg | Rs33 |
| Onion (Indian) | kg | Rs45 |
| Tomato Small | kg | Rs55 |
| Carrot | kg | Rs35 |
| Tomato Big | kg | Rs65 |
| Squash | kg | Rs45 |
| Cabbage | kg | Rs25 |
| Brinjal Long | kg | Rs55 |
| Cow Pea | kg | Rs105 |
| Cauliflower | kg | Rs55 |
| Fruits | Unit | Price (Rs) |
| Apple | kg | Rs125 |
| Pomegranate | kg | Rs145 |
| Pineapple | kg | Rs105 |
| Cucumber | kg | Rs85 |
| Papaya | kg | Rs75 |
| Banana | | Rs115 |
| Lime | 100Pcs | Rs340 |

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



| Sensitiv Float | ve 265.56 3.99 1.53 90.98 1.24 1.39 Base: 16/07/2006, (Adjus | Finance Non Life Ins | 622.76 5,468.89 | 3.97 13.32 | 0.63 0.24 |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| INDEX NEPSE | CURRENT PTS CHANGE %CHANGE 1,232.26 15.22 1.25 | Hotels Dev Bank HydroPower | 1,784.00 1,508.66 1,132.73 | 16.36 0.72 6.14 | 0.93 0.05 0.54 |
| Total Tra | aded Amount Rs.: 821,698,010 | Sub-Indices | Current | Pts Change | %Change |
| Total Tra | aded Shares: 2,801,613 | Banking | 1,121.69 | 25.35 | 2.31 |
| 170 Vi | pper Tamakoshi Hydropower Ltd | 232 | 228 | 229 | 36025 |
| | ijaya laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 627 | 600 | 600 | 804 |
| | /orld Merchant Banking & Finance Ltd | 85 | 85 | 85 | 20 |
| 168 U | nnati Micorfinance Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 1135 | 1120 | 1135 | 240 |
| 166 Ui | nited Modi Hydropower Ltd | 113 | 112 | 112 | 142 |
| 167 Ui | niversal Power Co Ltd | 95 | 89 | 95 | 13800 |
| 165 U | nited Finance Ltd | 202 | 196 | 202 | 120 |
| | nited Insurance Co (Nepal) Ltd | 861 | 840 | 848 | 6646 |
| 163 SI | warojgar Laghu Bitta Bikas Bank Ltd | 512 | 505 | 512 | 1191 |
| 162 9 | wabalamban Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 919 | 884 | 884 | 7447 |
| | wadeshi Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 570 | 553 | 568 | 1106 |
| 160 Si | uryodaya Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 899 | 899 | 899 | 46 |
| 158 Si | upport Microfinance Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 597 | 586 | 587 | 50 |
| | urya Life Insurance Co Ltd | 561 | 543 | 554 | 13433 |
| 157 Su | ummit Micro Finance Dev Bank Ltd unrise Bank Ltd | 248 | 242 | 640 245 | 68334 |
| 155 St | tandard Chartered Bank Ltd | 610 640 | 597 640 | 600 | 4817 250 |
| 154 So | indhu Bikash Bank Ltd | 132 | 127 | 132 | 3168 |
| | oaltee Hotel Ltd | 211 | 210 | 210 | 2200 |
| 152 Si | iddhartha Insurance Ltd | 625 | 608 | 615 | 5236 |
| | iddhartha Equity Fund | 9.50 | 9.41 | 9.43 | 24700 |
| | iddhartha Equity Orineted Scheme | 10.05 | 10.05 | 10.05 | 4100 |
| 149 Si | hrijana Finance (Bittaya Sanstha) iddhartha Bank Ltd | 345 | 327 | 345 | 88521 |
| 147 SI | hree Investment Finance Co Ltd | 142 226 | 140 223 | 140 226 | 1395 510 |
| 146 SI | hine Resunga Dev Bank Ltd | 242 | 233 | 233 | 8852 |
| | hivam Cements Ltd | 316 | 305 | 305 | 19531 |
| 144 Sł | hikhar Insurance Co Ltd | 899 | 882 | 890 | 2631 |
| | anima Mai Hydropower Ltd | 231 | 228 | 228 | 22834 |
| | hangrila Dev Bank Ltd | 146 | 144 | 146 | 5612 |
| 141 Sá | anima Bank Ltd | 340 | 329 | 334 | 41697 |
| 139 Sa | amudayik Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 668 | 652 | 652 | 270 |
| | ana Kisan Bikas Bank Ltd | 1002 | 974 | 976 | 6634 |
| 138 Sá | ahayogi Bikas Bank Ltd | 196 | 196 | 196 | 560 |
| | amata Microfinance Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 1273 | 1273 | 1273 | 10 |
| 136 Sa | agarmatha Insurance Co Ltd | 1336 | 1300 | 1300 | 715 |
| 135 R | MDC Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 595 | 581 | 584 | 3927 |
| | SDC Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 395 | 383 | 385 | 3488 |
| 133 Ri | idi Hydropower Dev Co Ltd | 93 | 90 | 90 | 8147 |
| 131 Ra | astriya Beema Co Ltd Promoter Share | 8697 | 8550 | 8697 | 60 |
| | eliance Finance Ltd | 127 | 119 | 121 | 1989 |
| 130 Ra | astriya Beema Co Ltd | 9220 | 9200 | 9200 | 79 |
| 128 Ra | adhi Bidyut Co Ltd | 167 | 163 | 164 | 307 |
| | airang Hydropower Dev Co Ltd | 94 | 93 | 93 | 250 |
| 127 Pr | rogressiveFinance Ltd | 125 | 125 | 125 | 50 |
| | rudential Insurance Co Ltd | 716 | 700 | 716 | 2875 |
| 125 Pr | rime Life Insurance Co Ltd | 479 | 457 | 473 | 14424 |
| | remier Insurance Co Ltd | 1035 | 1015 | 1017 | 4256 |
| | rime Commercial Bank Ltd | 347 | 338 | 341 | 61429 |
| 122 Pr | rabhu Insurance Ltd | 434 | 416 | 418 | 4728 |
| 120 Pc | okhara Finance Ltd | 138 | 135 | 135 | 1748 |
| | rabhu Bank Ltd | 271 | 262 | 269 | 161285 |
| 119 Pa | riental Hotels Ltd | 455 | 446 | 452 | 1145 |
| | anchakanya Mai Hydropower Ltd | 112 | 110 | 111 | 570 |
| 117 N | MB Sulav Investment Fund-1 | 10.86 | 10.71 | 10.71 | 101915 |
| | MB Bank Ltd | 390 | 373 | 389 | 189582 |
| | MB Hybrid Fund L-1 | 9.56 | 9.35 | 9.50 | 22456 |
| 114 NI | MB Microfinance Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 1053 | 1032 | 1032 | 80 |
| 112 Ni | irdhan Utthan Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 819 | 798 | 805 | 2400 |
| | LG Insurance Co Ltd | 835 | 821 | 827 | 2621 |
| 111 N | IC Asia Bank Ltd | 498 | 484 | 487 | 92921 |
| | IC Asia Growth Fund | 9.35 | 9.35 | 9.35 | 1000 |
| 109 N | ÎBL Samriddhi Fund 1 | 9.48 | 9.41 | 9.41 | 25000 |
| 108 Ng | erude Laghubita Bikas Bank Ltd | 478 | 470 | 472 | 2658 |
| | gadi Group Power Ltd | 122 | 119 | 122 | 154 |
| 106 Ne | epal Seva Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 506 | 502 | 502 | 60 |
| 104 Ne | epal Life Insurance Co Ltd | 1122 | 1100 | 1110 | 16108 |
| | epal SBI Bank Ltd | 440 | 427 | 436 | 20209 |
| 103 Ne | epal Investment Bank Ltd Promoter Share | 515 | 506 | 510 | 3776 |
| 101 Ne | epal Insurance Co Ltd | 390 | 378 | 378 | 7395 |
| | epal Investment Bank Ltd | 561 | 548 | 552 | 42129 |
| 100 Ne | epal Doorsanchar Comapany Ltd | 686 | 678 | 680 | 3370 |
| | epal Hydro Developers Ltd | 125 | 123 | 125 | 110 |
| 98 Ne | epal Credit And Commercial Bank Ltd | 233 | 226 | 227 | 98519 |
| 97 Ne | epal Bank Ltd | 302 | 296 | 299 | 145581 |
| | epal Community Dev Bank Ltd | 135 | 132 | 132 | 4150 |
| 95 Ne | epal Bangladesh Bank Ltd | 218 | 214 | 217 | 55869 |
| | aya Nepal Laghubitta Bikas Bank Ltd | 444 | 444 | 444 | 20 |
| | eco Insurance Co Ltd | 533 | 523 | 525 | 35999 |
| 92 Na | ational Life Insurance Co Ltd ational Microfinance Bittiya Sanstha Ltd | 1600 | 590 1591 | 1600 | 43 |
| 90 Na | ational Hydro Power Co Ltd | 71 604 | 69 | 70 599 | 14980 4153 |
| 89 Na | agbeli Lagnubitta bikas bank Ltd | 635 | 616 | 628 | 1450 |

MARKET WATCH

TVS Bikes and Scooters now available on DARAZ



dar

KATHMANDU: Jagadamba Motors and DARAZ online has signed a memorandum of understanding to provide prospective buyers a sure shot discount of 10.000 on an online purchase of bikes and scooters from TVS Motor. Jagdamba Motors is the sole authorised distributor of TVS Motor Company in Nepal. Daraz is the ultimate online shopping solution for customers offering a wide and assorted range of products including clothing, footwear, accessories, electronics, mobile phones. home and living and much more. DARAZ said in a press statement that the New Year offer will be valid for a limited period of time and only the first hundred customers will benefit from it. This offer is only applicable if a purchase is made from DARAZ online inside Kathmandu.

NMB Bank unveils new bumper product offering



KATHMANDU: NMB Bank has announced the launch of a bumper product offering, NMB Sabaiko Sahara Bachat Khata' in line with the government's campaign 'Lets Open Bank Account', which has been initiated to increase financial access and inclusion of the unbanked population in the country. The Bank had erstwhile been campaigning for financial literacy with its nationwide campaign 'Ek Ghar Ek Khata' which now gains further momentum with the government's new initiative with the onset of the New Year, the bank said in a press statement. As part of the government's umbrella campaign, the bank shall deposit Rs100 in every new NMB Sabaiko Sahara Bachat Khata opened and tops its off with insurance facility of upto Rs 1 million against 18 critical illnesses accidental death and permanent total disability. NMB Bank currently has network strength of 110 branches, 99 ATMs and 4 extension counters across the country.

Everest Bank customers to get discount at Chirayu Hospital



KATHMANDU: Everest Bank Limited has tied up with Chirayu National Hospital to provide discounts and special packages to the bank's customers. Nepal Chirayu National Hospital at Basundhara, Kathmandu provides best general and specialist medical services. The hospital commenced its operation in December 2013, offering both out-patient services and in-patient services. As per the scheme, customers will get discount up to 15 percent on various services. The bank customers can avail the discount after showing their ATM or credit card. The bank currently has a customer base of over 1 million. Presently, the bank has been rendering services through its domestic network of 94 branches, 28 Revenue Collection Counters and 116 ATMs



| Fine Gold | Rs 59,100 |
|-----------|--------------------|
| | |
| Silver | Rs 725 |
| | SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA |
| | |

INT'L MARKET

| Energy | Price (US\$) | %Change |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------|
| Brent Crude Futr (Bbl) | 71.8 | 0.25 |
| Gas Oil Fut (Ice) (Mt) | 637.25 | 0.04 |
| Gasoline Rbob Fut (Gal) | 205.05 | 0.43 |
| Natural Gas Futr (Mmbtu) | 2.51 | -0.41 |
| Agriculture | Price (US\$) | %Change |
| Cocoa Future (Mt) | | -0.79 |
| Coffee 'C' Future (Lb) | 90.1 | 0.50 |
| Corn Future (Bu) | 367 | 0.00 |
| Cotton No.2 Futr (Lb) | 78.46 | -0.63 |
| Rough Rice (Cbot) (Cwt) | 10.7 | -0.28 |
| Soybean Future (Bu) | 894.00 | 0.17 |
| Soybean Meal Futr (T) | 308.1 | 0.16 |
| Soybean Oil Futr (Lb) | 28.82 | 0.14 |
| Sugar #11 (World) (Lb) | 12.55 | 0.16 |
| Wheat Future(Cbt) (Bu) | 446.5 | -0.83 |
| Industrial Metals | Price (US\$) | %Change |
| Copper Future (Lb) | 292.7 | -1.56 |
| Precious Metals | Price (US\$) | %Change |
| Gold 100 Oz Futr (T Oz) | 1,277.20 | 0.03 |
| Silver Future (T Oz) | 14.93 | -0.06 |