



YES WE CANNABIS

Despite a long and storied history of cannabis in Nepali culture, the cultivation and consumption of marijuana remains illegal, punishable by harsh jail terms and steep fines. Some people say it's high time that changed.

LEENA DAHAL
KATHMANDU

Tucked between two homes in a corner of Patan is a small but vibrant garden. Its caretaker, 37-year-old Nirakar, is an unlikely gardener in Nepal, tattooed and dreadlocked. But given the kind of herbs he grows, Nirakar is society's ideal.

"When people look at me, they misunderstand me," says the 37-year-old. "It's the same thing with my plants. They are just misunderstood."

Nirakar grows *Cannabis indica*, the most abundant marijuana strain in Nepal, which he puts up to dry alongside his mother's garlic and ginger for his own consumption. But unlike his mother's herbs, the kind he grows could cost him his freedom.

If caught, the amount of processed cannabis in his possession could earn him up to three years in prison, with fines of up to Rs 25,000, as per the Narcotics Drug Control Act 1976.

Yet, despite the risks, Nirakar publically broadcasts his love for the plant to the world through several of his social media platforms, including his YouTube channel, which has over 11,000 subscribers, and his Instagram account, 'the.stoned.photographer'.

"Having this might be illegal," says Nirakar, who spoke on condition that we use his first name only because of fears that his involvement in the story would affect his fam-



PHOTO COURTESY: THE STONED PHOTOGRAPHER

With countries around the world pursuing marijuana legalisation, many in Nepal are wondering if it too should consider government regulation.

ily. "But marijuana is the reason I was able to recover from my battle with drug addiction. It continues to save my life, so why should I

have to hide it?"

In the early 2000s, Nirakar was addicted to hard drugs including heroine, and he credits

marijuana with helping cleave him of his addiction. While many in Nepal continue to see marijuana as a public nuisance and a

'gateway drug', for people like Nirakar, ganja is therapeutic, helping them kick addiction. The latter voices—encouraged by an ongoing global push for progressive research and legislation to consider cannabis' medicinal benefits—are now finding more sympathetic ears in Nepal.

"In drug rehabilitation programmes, a typical route prescribed to recovering addicts is 'total abstinence'," says Rajiv Kafle, another recovering addict. "For addicts diagnosed with HIV—who form a sizeable number—depression, suicidal thoughts, and a lack of meaning in life are very common. So why not point users to substances that are relatively less harmful in their path to recovery from addiction?"

Like Nirakar, Kafle has long been vocal about his endorsement of the plant that helped wean him off of harder drugs. But Kafle also lives with HIV, and he says marijuana continues to help him with the side effects of antiretroviral therapy—nausea, lack of appetite, and insomnia. The plant's THC—tetrahydrocannabinol, the chemical responsible for a majority of marijuana's psychological effects—and CBD—cannabidiol, a naturally occurring compound found exclusively in cannabis—have made 'life-changing' interventions in his recovery, Kafle says.

For nearly a decade, 50-year-old Kafle, who lives in Bangkok, has been advocating for a re-evaluation of the plant's social and legal perception as a 'hard drug'.

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Another windstorm hits western Nepal

Meteorologists say windstorms are common in pre-monsoon season

CHANDAN KUMAR MANDAL
KATHMANDU, JUNE 7

Two people were killed and over a hundred injured as a raging windstorm tore through three districts in western Nepal—Kailali, Kanchanpur and Bardiya—on Thursday evening. Bir Bahadur Chaudhary and Lahun Chaudhary of Majgaun in Godavari Municipality-1 were killed in the disaster.

The storm struck at a speed of 95 kilometres per hour and lasted nearly two hours, according to the Meteorological Forecasting Division.

According to the preliminary report issued by the police, 79 people were injured in Kailali and 23 in Kanchanpur.

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Competing bid from Germany puts security printing press deal with France in limbo

Even as negotiations with France were ongoing, Germany has placed a competing bid, offering a soft loan of 260 million euros at 2 percent interest

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, JUNE 7

Despite an existing memorandum of understanding with France on setting up a state-of-the-art security printing facility in Nepal, a competing bid from Germany has placed the government in a fix, just as Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli prepares to visit France on Saturday.

Both the proposals will cost Nepal Rs32 billion, but their funding modalities are different. France has proposed a mixed model of a soft loan of 100 million euros along with technology transfer while Germany has offered a complete soft loan of 260 million euros at 2 percent interest

to build the printing facility at an ICT park in Banepa, Kavre.

In May, Nepal and France signed two Memorandums of Understanding—one of which on security printing facility with French aid—in Paris, during the official visit of Information and Communication Minister Gokul Prasad Baskota.

The other MoU signed in May regarded the operation and management of Nepal's own satellite in an orbital slot provided by the International Telecommunications Union. The two deals with France were significant because they were supposed to mark the 70th year of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

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Former child soldier files petition at UN Human Rights Office demanding justice

Lenin Bista has asked the UN to place pressure on Nepal to address the demands of child soldiers, who have been largely left out of the transitional justice process

BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, JUNE 7

Lenin Bista, a former Maoist child soldier, has petitioned the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva demanding justice for the thousands of former child soldiers who have been largely left out of the transitional justice process.

The petition, submitted on Thursday, seeks UN support to asking the Nepal government to prioritise justice for former child soldiers, recalling that a serious crime was committed against the thousands of minors forced to fight on behalf of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist during



PHOTO: VIA BISTA'S FACEBOOK PAGE

the 10-year armed insurgency.

The petition was filed just as Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli embarks on a three-country Europe sojourn that includes a visit to Geneva to mark the centenary of the International Labour

Organisation.

Bista has been in Europe for over two months now, meeting with officials from the United Nations and other international human rights organisations, seeking solidarity in his fight for justice

for child soldiers.

Bista is president of the Peace Envisioners Nepal, formerly known as Discharged People's Liberation Army of Nepal, an organisation working for the rights of Maoist combatants disqualified in the army integration process that saw former Maoist soldiers merged with the Nepal Army.

The application seeks the assistance of special rapporteurs to recommend that the Nepal government provide compensation for discharged combatants like Bista, and a public apology from the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), the Nepal government, and Maoist leaders who denied them compensation.

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Regency Watch

ANNAPURNA ARCADE
DURBAR MARG
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Parliamentary committee for stalling disputed staff recruitment process

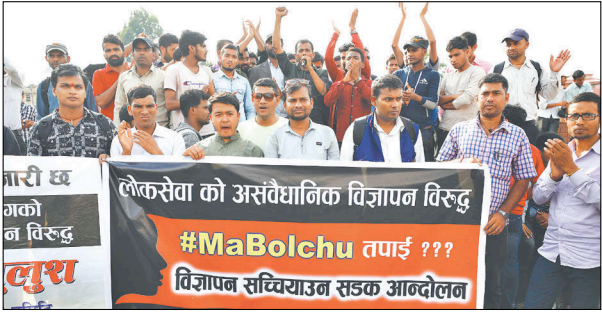
State affairs and good governance committee plans to meet Minister Pandit on Monday

TIKA R PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, JUNE 7

Following widespread criticisms from all sections of the society, the parliamentary State Affairs and Good Governance Committee is all set to direct the government to stall the hiring process of the Public Service Commission.

“We have already prepared the decision of the state affairs and good governance committee and will release after talking with Minister for Federal Affairs and General Administration Lalbabu Pandit on Monday,” said Amresh Kumar Singh, a Nepali Congress lawmaker and member of the parliamentary committee.

Last month, the Public Service Commission had published a notice to recruit as many as 9,161 staffers in 515 local governments. The issue had caused a furore in different sections of the society, including political parties and social groups, who claimed that the move was against the spirit of federalism and sought to control the local governments.



POST FILE PHOTO

A group protests against the vacancies announced by the Public Service Commission in the Capital.

After the issue ran into controversy, the parliamentary committee had held a discussion with the Public Service Commission officials on June 3. The commission officials had told the committee members that it had only followed the direction of the ministry.

The committee has been trying to arrange a meeting with Minister Pandit to enquire about the matter, but the latter has not allotted time citing busy schedule.

“We have been seeking time from Minister Pandit for last five days but to no avail,” Shashi Shrestha, chairperson

of the parliamentary committee, told the Post.

She added that Pandit did not attend Friday's committee's meeting even after scheduling it.

After the minister failed to appear in the meeting scheduled for 8 am, the committee, at the minister's request, had scheduled another meeting for 5 pm which too he failed to attend, according to the committee.

The Post made multiple attempts to contact Minister Pandit for a comment, but he could not be reached.

The recruitment plan has

also come under criticism from the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) lawmakers. Most lawmakers of the ruling party on the parliamentary committee have claimed that the recruitment process is unconstitutional.

“The committee has decided to direct the government to stall the recruitment process and to take decisions as per the spirit of the constitution,” Singh said.

The decision was not announced after Bijay Subba, one of the NCP lawmakers attending Friday's meeting, requested the committee to wait for the minister's briefing. Rajendra Shrestha, co-chairman of coalition partner Samajbadi Party Nepal, told the Friday meeting that the federal government could deploy staff until the provincial public service commissions were in place.

Most of the provincial assemblies have already endorsed the provincial public service commission Acts and they are preparing to establish the commissions.

On Tuesday, various groups of indigenous nationalities,

Madhesi, Dalits, Muslims, differently-abled people, women and backward communities had handed over a memorandum of demand, urging Shrestha, the committee chairperson, to stall the recruitment process.

“They had demanded that the recruitment process be stalled because it not only flouted the constitutional provision of inclusiveness but also the rights of the provincial governments,” said Shrestha.

Lawmakers of the ruling NCP have claimed that they had to speak in the line of the party-federalism-- but the government has been attempting to move against it.

“What we know is that the party is for federalism and we must speak in favour of it,” said NCP lawmaker Rekha Sharma, also a former general administration minister.

“I talked with the authorities of a number of local governments and they were not informed about most of the provisions.”

NCP lawmaker Janardan Sharma termed the plan a “constitutional anarchy”.

Another windstorm hits western ...



POST PHOTO: MOHAN BUDHAAR

Windstorm victims sit next to their belongings in Kailali district.

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Severely injured four were taken to hospitals in Nepalgunj and across the border in India. Twenty-eight are undergoing treatment at Seti Zonal Hospital, three of them in critical condition, according to Dr Jagadish Joshi, in-charge of the emergency unit at the hospital.

Trees and electricity poles were uprooted, disrupting power supply in the storm-hit areas. About 3,000 houses incurred damage in Kailali and 200 in Kanchanpur.

“Since the wind came so quick and all of a sudden, I was confused what to do, where to go,” Ram Singh Rawal, who is currently undergoing treatment at the Seti Zonal Hospital, said. Eighty-year-old Rawal has incurred injuries in his skull and body. He was rescued buried in the debris of his house.

“As the wind intensified, I rushed to the main door, the roof made of zinc plates flew away, and the bricks in the walls started to fall,” Rawal said.

Windstorms have been frequent this pre-monsoon season. In May, another powerful windstorm cut through Bara and Parsa districts in Province 2, leaving at least 28 people dead, over 400 injured, and causing a massive damage of property and structures.

According to Shanti Kadel, a senior meteorologist with the forecast division, sudden and powerful windstorms coupled with heavy rainfall are common during the pre-monsoon season, which generally sees sunny afternoons and rainy evenings.

“However, the country, especially the southern plains, has witnessed unusually powerful and frequent windstorms,” Kadel told the Post. “After the Bara and Parsa disaster, there have been windstorms in places like Janakpur and elsewhere in the Terai”

Kadel said that these extreme events do not appear to be connected as they are the results of local meteorological phenomena. Thursday's windstorm occurred not only because of the local wind. The destructive windstorm was generated after the ‘convergence’ of local wind, westerly wind and southeasterly wind from the Bay of Bengal that carried moisture.

The same windstorm had started moving towards the eastern part of the country later in the night. Kathmandu Valley witnessed strong winds and heavy rainfall on Friday morning, which was the result of the windstorm in western Nepal reaching the Capital.

According to the Meteorological Forecasting Division, the windstorm is

likely to get weaker as it keeps moving eastward. The weather office has predicted that the eastern and central parts of the country will witness overcast conditions, whereas some places in western hills and a few places in central and eastern districts will receive light to moderate rainfall with thunderstorm until Sunday.

Country's poor early warning system was exposed when an approaching powerful storm could not be predicted in May as the country did not have the required technology—the weather radar. The weather office said that relying on its limited resources, it could disseminate warning nearly two hours in advance.

“We did not predict the Bara and Parsa windstorm not because we did not want to but because we could not do so. If only we had weather radar, we could give longer hour updates on weather condition, wind speed and their movement, cloud formation and additional atmospheric information,” said Kadel.

The government has allocated budget for installing weather radars in Udayapur and Palpa, and announced a plan to operate such radar in Surkhet in the upcoming fiscal year.

With inputs from our correspondents in the far west.

Suspect held after a man is robbed by two persons pretending to be cops

NAYAK PAUDEL
KATHMANDU, JUNE 7

Police have arrested a suspect and are searching for a second one after they allegedly robbed a man by pretending to be police officers in the Capital last week.

A team from the Metropolitan Police Circle, Baneshwor, arrested 20-year-old Saugat Luitel from Jadibuti, Kathmandu, on Tuesday, based on a description provided by the victim, whom police identified as Bal Bahadur Sarki.

According to police, Luitel and his friend Yohuna Ghale Magar had allegedly snatched Sarki's phone and cash by pretending to be police officers in Pespicola.

“Luitel and Magar had reportedly identified themselves as police inspector and sub-inspector to Sarki on the night of the incident. They then went on to perform a body search on Sarki and snatched his mobile phone and cash,” Deputy Superintendent of Police Govinda Raj Kafle, in-charge of the circle, told the Post.

Sarki had filed a police complaint and provided the details of Luitel and Magar at the circle following the incident.

Kafle said police were looking for Magar while also investigating the past criminal record of the suspects.

“We are investigating if the duo had a previous criminal history of similar nature,” Kafle said.

Police arrest burglars who carried out robberies in four places in the Valley

NAYAK PAUDEL
KATHMANDU, JUNE 7

The Metropolitan Crime Division has arrested six men involved in four different robberies across the Valley. Among the five individuals, the leader Tsering Tamang, aka Kaka, was arrested from Makalbari, Kathmandu, on Friday after getting hit by two bullets on his leg.

“When a team went to arrest Tsering, he tried to attack them with sharp weapons. While he was about to flee, we fired two bullets on his leg and arrested him. He is being treated in Bir Hospital,” Senior Superintendent of Police Sahakul

Bahadur Thapa, chief of the division, told the Post.

According to the Division, the other arrested individuals have been identified as Yogen Tamang; Nitesh Tamang, aka Dharane; Ajay Tamang, aka Mundre; Rupesh Chaulagain, aka Bahun; and Bhimraj Thing, aka Jigre. They were arrested from Ilam and various other places of Kathmandu in the last couple of days.

On May 17, the group closed the shutter of a jewellery shop in Jorpati and threatened the owner with a khukuri on broad daylight at around 12:45 pm. Then, they robbed Rs 80,000 from the owner.

Other activities of the group includes robbing Rs 100,000 from Asan Investment Pvt Ltd at Lalitpur on May 16; Rs 350,000 from Pathivara Money Transfer at Gokarneshwor on May 9; and Rs 170,000 from Peoples Money Transfer at Kalanki on September 11 last year.

Along with these four places, the group had also attempted to rob Agrimore Cooperative, at Chabahil, on January 28, but fled without robbing anything.

“The group had robbed all the places in broad daylight. We had their faces captured in many CCTV cameras following which we searched for them, found them and arrested them,” said Thapa.

Former child soldier files petition at UN Human ...

>> Continued from page 1

“We also ask the leaders of the former Maoist Party for public apology for using under-age children as combatants,” reads the application.

Thousands of Maoist fighters like Bista had been disqualified for being minors during the verification process conducted by UNMIN in 2007. Among the 4,008 disqualified combatants, 2,973 were minors while the remaining 1,035 had joined the Maoist People's Liberation Army after the first ceasefire of May 26, 2006—six months before the peace deal was signed. The government had provided between Rs 500,000 and Rs 800,000 for the combatants who chose voluntary retirement. However, those who were disqualified didn't receive any substantial support, except for a few thousand rupees from the United Nations.

Speaking to the Post from Geneva, Bista said he was able to draw the attention of the UN and international human rights organisations regarding former child soldiers who have been neglected by the Nepal government.

“I believe that our issue will be raised together with other victims of the decade-long insurgency,” he said over telephone.

Former child soldiers have been demanding special social and economic assistance given that they were robbed of an education by their conscription into the rebel army.

They've also asked for medical treatment, psychosocial counselling and special support schemes for injured, mentally ill, and disabled former child soldiers.

However, the prevailing transitional justice law has no such provisions, and neither have international human rights organisations raised these concerns.

Charan Prasai, a human rights activist, said that Bista had taken the right step to mainstream the concerns of former child soldiers. “This is definitely going to build pressure on the Nepal government to act towards providing justice for former minor combatants,” Prasai told the Post.

Bista, in the second week of April, submitted a similar application to Virginia Gamba, special representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, in Belgium. Among the seven special human rights rapporteurs who received Bista's petition this time around, five had written to the Nepal government in April asking for transparency in the ongoing transitional justice process.

The Nepal government, on August 24 last year, had stopped Bista from visiting Thailand on the grounds that he would raise the issues of child soldiers in international forums. Bista was scheduled to make a presentation at a workshop on ‘Youth in Conflict Areas: Healing and Peace-building through Social Engagement’.

Competing bid from Germany puts security printing press deal with France ...

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Two top government officials confirmed that a German firm had proposed building the security printing facility. Last year, a similar deal with the German firm Bundesdruckerei and its holding company Veridos fell through.

“I can confirm that we have received a proposal from Germany,” said Bikal Poudel, head of the security printing division at the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.

Every year, Nepal loses nearly Rs 5 billion on security printing, prompting the government to seek the establishment of a domestic printing facility. Nepal and France had agreed to continue to hold negotiations on a funding modality and technical details before Oli's trip to France. But the German proposal has thrown a spanner in the works and the anticipated deal with France is now in limbo, multiple government sources told the Post.

After signing the MoU with France, the ministry has started formulating the required laws to set up the printing press as well as procuring related logistics. An expert team had been formed, a detailed project report of the architecture at Banepa's IT park had been prepared, and a Rs 650 million budget allocated to carry out the logistical and other preparations.

The French government is expected to extend a soft loan of more than Rs 50 billion to set up the printing facility and to install Nepal's satellite. But there are concerns from some sections that the soft loans offered by both countries overshoot the project and that the interest rate is also high.

“Nepal takes a soft loan at upto one percent or less with major donors like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank,” said a senior official at the Information Ministry.

Foreign Minister Pradeep

Gyawali confirmed to the Post that both deals have yet to be finalised so details are forthcoming.

“There have been no significant developments in negotiations with the French,” said Gyawali. “The concerned ministry [Ministry of Information and Communication] is working on the terms, delivery time, phase and interest rate.”

Government officials are currently weighing both proposals, said officials who have been closely following the developments.

Diplomatic sources told the Post that a team from Groupe Imprimerie nationale, a French government undertaking, was in town last week to hold negotiations with the Communication Ministry over the printing facility. A deal, however, wasn't finalised. The French company had offered a deal similar to the one that Germany is proposing. But now that the deal fell through, none of the representatives from the

Ministry of Communication and the National Security Printing Division are the part of prime minister's Europe delegation.

Prime Minister Oli's a week-long visit to Europe, which begins on Saturday, was supposed to have finalised the deal with France, where he will go after stopping in Geneva, Switzerland and in Oxford, England.

While negotiations with the French side are ongoing, there has been no agreement on the terms and conditions of the soft loan and it is unlikely that a deal will be reached with France during Oli's Europe sojourn, said officials privy to the development.

The security printing division has estimated that it will require over Rs 32 billion to set up a dedicated printing press to handle the printing of several high-end documents like passports, banknotes, stamps, identity cards, visas, and driving licences.

Classified Display

राहदानी हरायो
मिति २०७६/१/४ गते टाँडीदेखि कृष्ण मन्दिरसम्म जाँदा मेरो निम्न व्यहोरा भएको राहदानी हराएको हुँदा पाउनु हुने महानुभावले नजिकको प्रहरी कार्यालय वा फोन नं. ९८५५०६३४०७ वा खबर गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु ।
नाम: गोकर्ण घिमिरे
राहदानी नं.: ४१०५२२५
ठेगाना: धावा-३, गोरखा

मोटरसाईकल हरायो
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सवारी धनी: कर्णबहादुर वाईवा
चलिस नं.: MD2A11CY2RD-45128
इन्जिन नं.: DHYRD-20172



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Urban Development
Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC)
Regional Urban Development Project (RUDP)
Regional Project Implementation Unit (R-PIU)
Dhangadi, Nepal

ADDENDUM IN BIDDING DOCUMENT

Published Date: 8th June, 2019

Following Addendum has been issued in the following bids published by this office on 25th April, 2019 and 14th May, 2019.

| SN | Contract No. and Title | Bidding Document Clause No. | Amendment |
|----|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | RUDP/ICB/KL/06-GD/RD/01: Construction and Rehabilitation of Road, Drainage, Footpath and Road Furniture of Godawari Municipality. | Section 2, ITB Reference Clause no. 22.1 | Date: 30 th June, 2019 |
| | | Section 2, ITB Reference Clause no. 25.1 | Date: 30 th June, 2019 |
| 2 | RUDP/ICB/KL/06-DN/RD/03: Construction and Rehabilitation of Road, Drainage, Footpath and Road Furniture in Dhangadi Sub-Metropolitan City (ICB) | Section 2, ITB Reference Clause no. 22.1 | Date: 30 th June, 2019 |
| | | Section 2, ITB Reference Clause no. 25.1 | Date: 30 th June, 2019 |
| 3 | RUDP/NCB/KC/05-SK/RD/02: Upgradation and Rehabilitation of Road, Drainage, Footpath and Road Furniture of Suklaphanta Municipality (NCB) | Section 2, ITB Reference Clause no. 22.1 | Date: 30 th June, 2019 |
| | | Section 2, ITB Reference Clause no. 25.1 | Date: 30 th June, 2019 |

Project Manager

Campaign to replace thatched roofs in Sindhuli

SINDHULI: The Kamalamai Municipality in Sindhuli has started a campaign to replace thatched roofs with galvanised zinc sheets. There are around 220 families living in thatched houses in the municipality. Babindralal Majhi, of the municipal office, said galvanised zinc sheets were being distributed to the impoverished families free of charge. **(PR)**



Call for RBM & IMPACT Monitoring Consultancy

AWO International works in 17 countries around the world and is working in Nepal since 2009 in the field of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid. AWO Nepal Office is looking for a long term consultant to improve its RBM and IMPACT Monitoring tools. Tenders should be submitted until **14th June 2019**. For further information please visit our website: <http://www.awo-southasia.org/>

Clear skies



A view of the mountains as seen from Pepsicola in Kathmandu on Friday. The early morning windstorm cleared up the Valley’s sky, opening up a crisp, clear vista.

A second type of mosquito responsible for the spread of dengue in Dharan

Previously, female Aedes aegypti were thought to be solely responsible for the spread of dengue in the city

PRADEEP MENYANGBO
SUNSARI, JUNE 7

The presence of Aedes albopictus, also known as the Asian tiger mosquito, has been confirmed in dengue-affected areas for the first time in Dharan. Earlier reports had suggested that another type of mosquitoes—female Aedes aegypti—were solely responsible for the spread of dengue in the crisis-hit

zones of the Sub Metropolis. A team of health workers, including doctors and officials of the Sub Metropolis involved in the ‘search and destroy’ mosquito campaign, found hundreds of eggs, larvae and pupae in open water tanks of a hotel in Bijayapur, Dharan-14. Dip Kumar Sah, an official of the Vector Borne Disease Research and Training Centre in Hetauda, who is currently in the dengue-affected

area to collect samples, confirmed that Aedes albopictus has also been found in Dharan for the first time. According to him, they had also found the same type of mosquito in Pokhara two months ago. Aedes albopictus is a small, dark mosquito with a white dorsal stripe and banded legs. Health workers said that they are active throughout the year in tropical and subtropical locations. Meanwhile, Dharan Sub-

metropolitan City has declared Wards 8 and 15 as crisis-hit zones after the Health Directorate of Province 1 announced a dengue emergency in the city. As many as 188 people have been diagnosed with dengue in the two wards so far this year. Most of the patients are from Ward 15. The dengue patients are receiving treatment at tropical ward and emergency unit of BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences.

Shuklaphanta National Park sees decline in swamp deer population

BHAWANI BHATTA
KANCHANPUR, JUNE 7

The number of swamp deer (Cervus duvauceli), locally named Bahrasinga, has decreased in the Shuklaphanta National Park (SNP) in the last couple of years, according to a recent census conducted by the SNP administration. As per the record of the SNP, the number of swamp deer stands at 2,246 in 2019; a gradual decline from 2,301 in 2014. Laxman Prasad Paudyal, the chief conservation officer at the SNP, said that death by natural causes and tiger predation may be the reasons behind the decline in swamp deer population. According to a 2018 tiger census, there are 16 tigers in the park. The SNP can accommodate 2,000 to 2,500 swamp deer at a time and the average lifespan of the animal is around 18 to 20 years.



A herd of swamp deer seen in the Shuklaphanta National Park.

swamp deer. Conservationists say that the largest herd of swamp deer in Asia can be seen in the grasslands of Shuklaphanta. Along with the deer census, the SNP and National Trust for Nature Conservation conducted a blue bull count for the first time in Shuklaphanta. As per

a recent blue bull census, there are 82 blue bulls in the park. However, in 2013, a study report estimated that there were more than 90 blue bulls in the park. The park is also home to tigers, rhinos, reptiles, amphibians, and various bird species.

Eight people, including two Indian citizens, arrested on criminal charges

SHIVA PURI
RAUTAHAT, JUNE 7

Police have arrested eight individuals, including two Indian citizens, in connection with a number of cases in Rautahat in the past couple of days. The individuals were charged with drug trafficking, fake currency exchange, and women trafficking. Police detained four individuals carrying marijuana on Thursday night. According to DSP Nabin Karki, 22-year-old Bijaya Roy and 24-year-old Amod Sahni were caught with 10 kg marijuana from Tikuliya in Gaur Municipality-4. The duo was apprehended during a regular security check of their two-wheeler.



Police make public four men arrested with marijuana in Rautahat. After the arrest of Roy and Sahni, police intensified the search for other marijuana vendors. In the process, Ramesh Kumar Sah and Inarjit Sah were arrested

with two kg marijuana. Meanwhile, two women were arrested from the revenue office area in Gaur-1 on the allegations of human trafficking. Durga Devi Bohara and Parvati Devi were nabbed while they were taking a teenage girl to India. According to Karki, police have intensified surveillance along the Nepal-India border in Gaur over the past couple of months. The police arrested two individuals, Jiyalal Mahato and Bihari Sah, with fake notes amounting to Rs200, 000 from Katahariya-5 on Thursday evening. Authorities have stepped up their surveillance after cases of fake currency notes circulation came to the fore over the past few weeks.

Comedian in police custody for a video reviewing the film Bir Bikram 2

Responding to a complaint filed by the film’s director, police detained stand-up comedian Pranesh Gautam on Friday

BHRIKUTI RAI
KATHMANDU, JUNE 7

More than two weeks after filmmaker Milan Chams filed a police complaint about a video that Meme Nepal, a popular Facebook page, had posted about his recent film—Bir Bikram 2—Pranesh Gautam, the comedian who appears in the video, was detained on Friday. Superintendent of Police Kedar Dhakal confirmed that Gautam had been detained on Friday afternoon for investigation based on the complaint filed by the Bir Bikram 2 filmmaker.

“An arrest warrant was issued against Gautam and he will be investigated for cyber crime related charges because of the video he made,” said Dhakal. In the video, uploaded on May 22, Gautam calls Bir Bikram 2 unnecessarily loud, and says the story is strikingly similar to the Bollywood hit Sholay. Besides some good actors and plenty of drone shots of a village, it has “nothing new to offer”, he says in the video. Yet in the end, Gautam calls the film “entertaining” and says people should watch it or else “these guys will beat me up,” almost prescient of how things would unfold for him after the video’s release. As of yet, the video has over 125,000 plays on YouTube.

Advocate Rastra Bimochan Timalšina, who represented Meme Nepal during a meeting at the Teku police station two weeks ago, had received a call from police late Sunday evening, informing him that an arrest warrant had been issued against Gautam and that he would have to

appear at the Teku police station on Monday afternoon. Timalšina, who is also a YouTuber, told the Post that the police didn’t clarify the grounds on which the warrant had been issued. “The police didn’t tell me anything clearly but I think they might have used certain sections of the Electronic Transaction Act to book Pranesh for the video,” Timalšina said. “There is a high chance he might be kept in custody.” Speaking to the Post last Monday, Gautam had said he didn’t go to the police station because the authorities hadn’t been clear with him or his representatives on why he had been summoned to the police station. Gautam said he hasn’t been able to sleep or think properly, which has affected his health.

“I know I am not in the wrong. We never intended to hurt anyone with the video, but fear has gripped me so badly, I don’t know what to say,” he said, “I had no idea I would be this scared.” Gautam said that while he is thankful for all the messages of support, it still doesn’t change how he feels about the possibility of facing jail time. “I have already said goodbye to my parents and girlfriend, just in case I end up in custody,” he said days before being detained. Filmmaker Milan Chams, who filed the complaint, said he was aware that the police were acting on the complaint, but didn’t get into the details of how the case would move forward. “My brand manager is handling all the legal proceedings, and anyway these are legal proceedings so I cannot speak about them

right now,” said Chams. Chams reiterated the grounds for his complaint, which range from the video using foul language, trying to ‘defame’ people involved in the movie, and telling people to not watch the film. In addition to these, he also told the Post that Meme Nepal had tried to ‘extort’ Rs 12,000 from his team to promote a song from the film. Meme Nepal members said that is the standard rate they charge for promotions for films and other artforms, and that they receive dozens of requests for promotions or queries about promotions each day. “Nearly four months ago, someone from Bir Bikram 2 had asked us about our promotion rates. We told them and never heard back,” said Aadarsh Mishra, a Meme Nepal member. “How can they use the screenshot of that conversation to claim extortion?” Mishra was also called to the Teku Police station this afternoon but no charges have been filed against him yet. “Depending on what we find during the investigation, we may file charges against other members of Meme Nepal as well,” said SP Dhakal. Nepali content creators say they are appalled by what happened to Gautam. “This is purely a case of personal vendetta, because the filmmaker didn’t like the video about his movie,” said Sushant Shrestha, director at Kooky Dunk, which produces videos laced with humour and social commentary. “This isn’t how democracy or freedom of expression works, you can’t just put someone in jail just because you don’t like what they say about you.”

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AstralReflections



ARIES [March 21-April 19]
Light chores continue this week. Be curious; media, travel will bring “new facts” and can point you to new opportunities. Love lives by discussion. Remain gracious, long-suffering on the home front. You might waste a lot of energy on the start of the week. At the end of the week you might have to choose between home and career. The choice might be forced by a higher-up who does not approve of your domestic situation. Saturday is for love, far travel, legal pursuits.



TAURUS [April 20-May 20]
The accent remains on money, assets, memory, learning what’s already known, and physical sensuality. The best times to chase money this week are through work, opportunity or agreement and through friendship, communication, new contacts, hope, optimism, and—well, through other people’s money. Your wealth luck now improves, to July 3. You remain assertive in talk and driving/cycling all June. However, the road is twisting—possible deception, financial and man-woman disagreement. So enjoy, without chasing chimeras.



GEMINI [May 21-June 20]
You’re still at the top of your game, Gemini. Continue to start things, to visit, see and be seen, to ask favours, to be the leader. Money continues to race to you and through you—be conservative, save. Lots of talk about money, maybe a document. You might not notice it immediately, but you have become more attractive to the opposite sex, will receive many appraising glances. Be near home early in the week. You might not get much done especially if your mind is on a major project at your place of work.



CANCER [June 21-July 22]
Remain restful, Cancer. By June 21, your energy will come surging back. Until then, delegate work, deal with workers and pamper your health. Despite your tired state, you’re very intense, assertive and determined all June—don’t “burn out.” And despite your leaning toward quiet contemplation, you’re quite talkative. A month of contradictions! But, when all’s added up, solitude and quietude bring you peace and affection from those closest. Talk, travel, errands, paperwork and easy chores fill the beginning of the week. Romance, passion, creative surges and gambling urges take over late mid week.



LEO [July 23-August 22]
It’s still party time, Leo. In fact, the party gets better, affection floats everywhere. Get out, give and accept invitations, apply to join a group that has attracted you, discuss the future, even plan it with people you like, and seek entertainment. Your popularity is high, social delights and optimism buoy your spirits, and flirtations pluck at your heart. Continue to avoid dark alleys and belligerent people, all June. Confidential discussions arise, now to late June. Sunday be careful of a terrible investment. Also, best stance: just plod along with work.



VIRGO [August 23-September 22]
The general emphasis remains on your ambitions, career, prestige relations, and worldly status. Pursue your objectives here, but remember that your main pipeline to good fortune in 2019 is your home, family, real estate, carving out a (new) platform to stand on, a foundation for future growth and success. Bosses and authorities treat you with benevolence now to July 3. Your social life remains active, in fact grows, and shimmers with a hint of secrets, secret connections and financial opportunities. Your energy and charisma shine early in the week.



LIBRA [September 23-October 22]
Your intellectual side loves this month, Libra. Your vision widens, your tolerance grows, and you want to learn, to travel, to absorb ideas and cultures. These, and legal, educational, publishing and philosophical pursuits—all will take place in an affectionate, mildly lucky atmosphere. Love won’t be a stranger. If you’re single, someone could intrigue you with their mind and ideas, their light, easy way of talking. Bosses and authorities continue to be impatient and temperamental all June. Lie low, withdraw from the hustling crowd this week.



SCORPIO [October 23-November 21]
Life’s depths continue to draw you. Dig deep, ponder what emotions and desires flow under the surface—yours and another’s. It’s time to turn any meetings, agreements into commitments, funding. And, if applicable, any recent “open” attractions into something more intimate. (Intimacy cannot exist w/o trust.) Your luck is good in all these, but make sure you don’t chase the big deal and forget where your 2019 good fortune lies: in small, daily earnings/ business.



SAGITTARIUS [November 22-December 21]
Relationships are the main theme this month, but remember, your greatest good fortune will come (in 2019) from independence, self-promotion, adventure, so don’t be too quick to settle for “number two.” Still, you could meet someone pretty attractive, who offers both affection and sexual desire—and is a good foil to your personality. (But if you can’t abide someone sprinkling facts on your ideas, forget this person.) June remains sexy, lustful—be careful, avoid impulsively investing.



CAPRICORN [December 22-January 19]
Still two weeks of chores, Cap—might as well just plod through them. The workplace atmosphere grows genial, even affectionate, the rest of June. Relationships aren’t quite so great—arguments, potentially bond-ending disagreements, and lots of verbal jousting are slated. Be diplomatic, long-suffering, for soon this changes. Remember, in 2019 your greatest good fortune comes from quietude, contemplation, resting, spas, resorts, planning, charity and spiritual awakening. Look at yourself, rather than others.

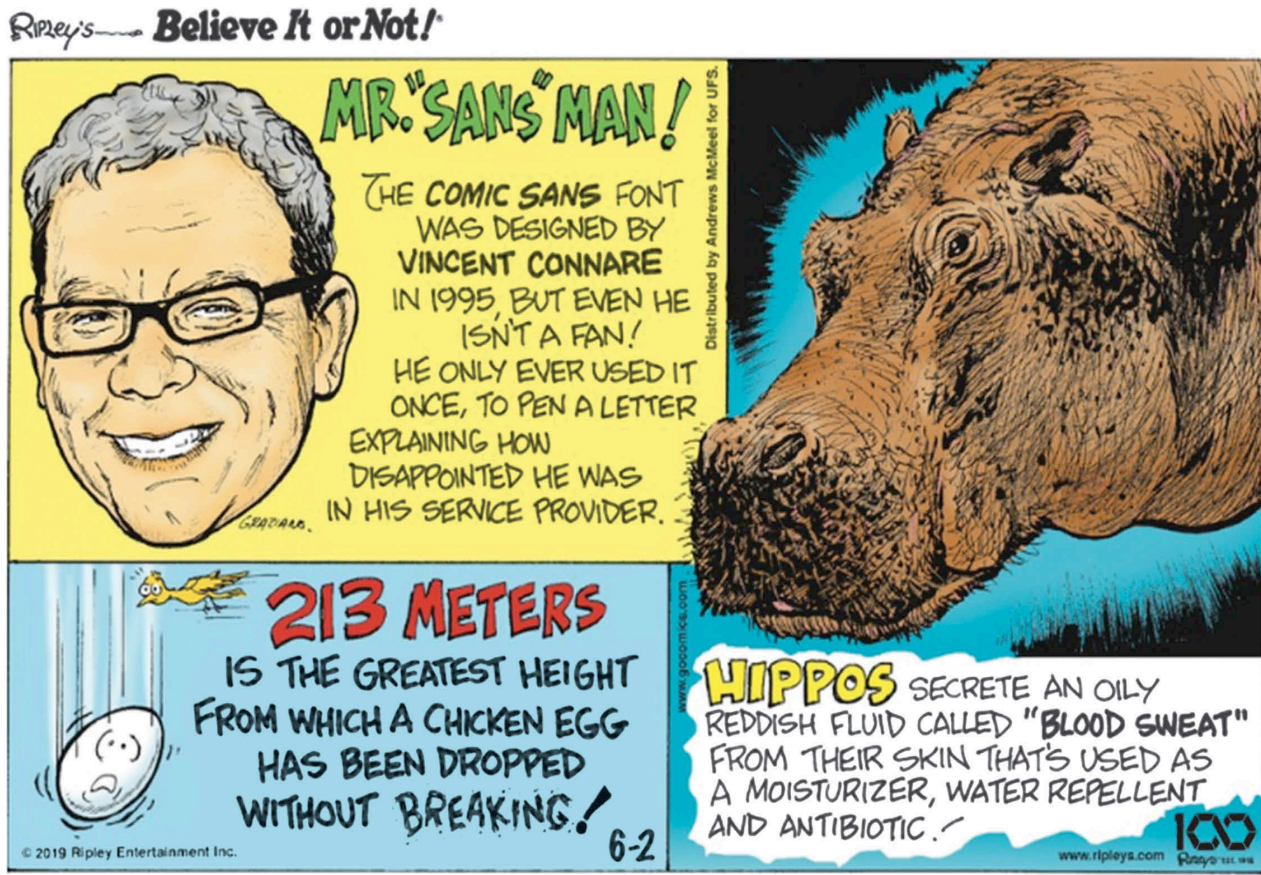
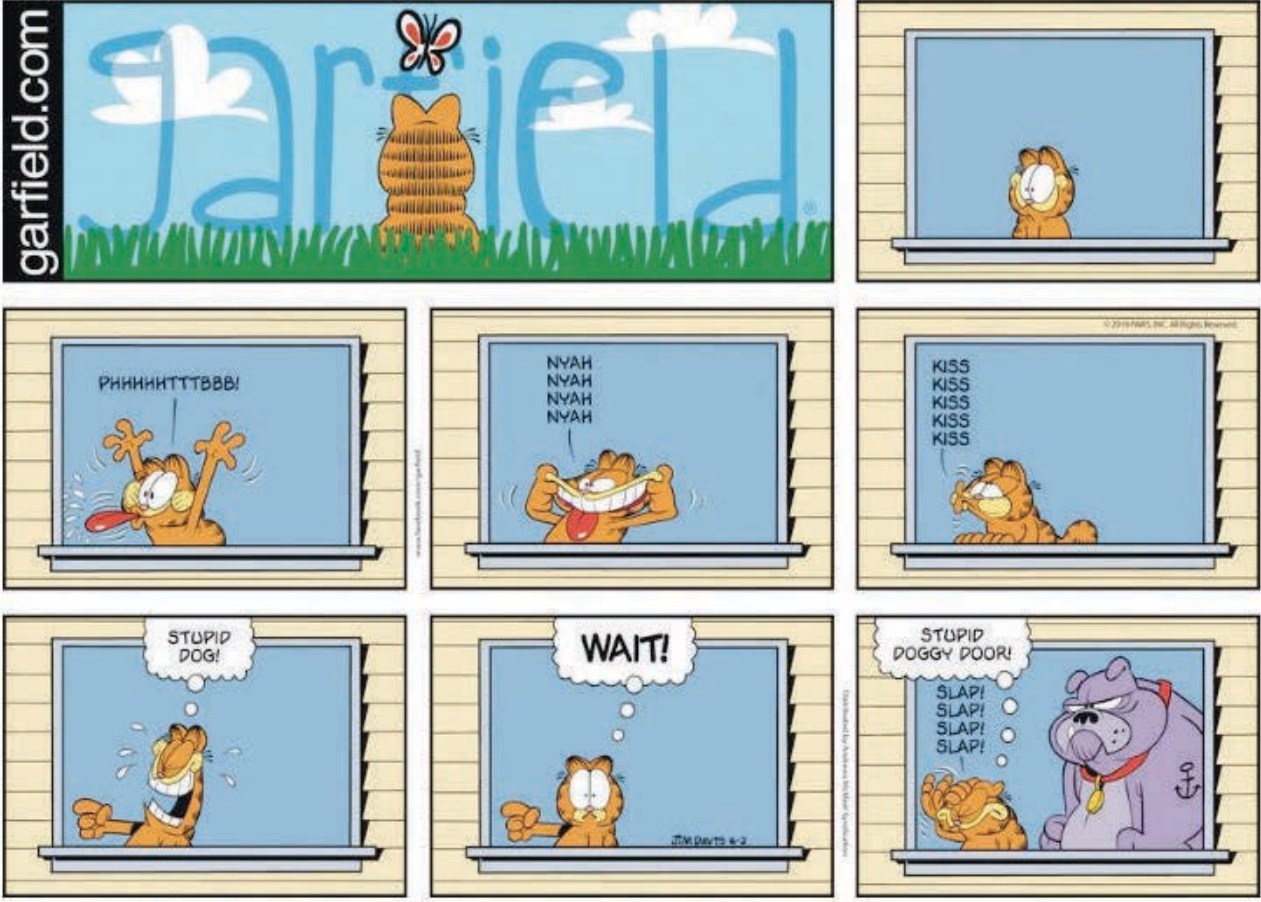


AQUARIUS [January 20-February 18]
Romance continues. And you know the list: creativity, self-expression, beauty, pleasure, adventure, charming kids, risk-taking—all favoured this week. In fact, these (esp. romance) grow even sweeter and more problematic, as events will show. (Most of the obstacles will arise from work demands, or a health difficulty.) A Gemini might seduce you, while you think you’re seducing him/her. Work remains intense, hard all month—and more rushed, now to late June.



PISCES [February 19-March 20]
The focus remains on home, residence, family, gardening, security, Mom Tando, cooking, the environment. Your home grows more beautiful—either you just love it more, or you decorate (a fine project for this June). Kids behave, charm you. All June, your physical passion runs hot; now to June’s end, especially, it draws you toward a potential mate (or your present one).

STRIPS



KANTIPUR TV

| | | | | |
|-------|------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 5:00 | Shuvarambha/ Bhaktisur | Samachar | 17:00 | Headline News |
| 5:30 | Radhe Radhe | 10:30 VMAG | 17:05 | Call Kantipur |
| 6:00 | Jeevan Bigyan | 11:00 | Headline News | 18:00 Kantipur News |
| 6:30 | Jyotish Manthan | 11:05 | Samkon | 18:30 Nirbachan Sarokar |
| 6:40 | Sky Shop | 12:00 | Kantipur | 19:00 Kantipur |
| 7:00 | Kantipur | 12:30 | Harke Haldar | 19:30 Info Plus |
| | Samachar | 13:00 | Headline News | 20:00 Kantipur |
| 8:00 | Kantipur News | 13:05 | Quiz Mania | Samachar |
| 8:30 | Rise N Shine | 14:00 | Headline News | 21:00 Ditha Sab |
| 9:00 | Headline News | 14:05 | Nepali Movie | 21:30 Pulsar Dareventure |
| 9:05 | Surshala Idol | 15:00 | Headline News | 22:30 Kantipur News |
| | Junior | 15:05 | Nepali Movie | 23:00 Kantipur |
| 9:30 | Ukali Orali | 16:00 | Headline News | Samachar |
| 10:00 | Kantipur | 16:05 | Headline News | 23:30 Info Plus |

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|-------|-------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|
| 05:00 | Bhakti Anushan | 11:05 | Games People Play | 20:00 | Security & Crime |
| 06:30 | Kantipur Diary | 12:00 | Kantipur Diary | | Diary |
| 07:00 | Bigyan Prabidhi | 12:10 | Top Ten | 20:05 | Rock Machine |
| 08:00 | Development & Economics Diary | 13:00 | District Diary | 21:00 | Kantipur Diary |
| 08:05 | The Good Morning Show | 13:05 | Celebrity Hour | 21:25 | News Maker Of The Day / Indreni |
| 08:30 | Old Is Gold | 14:00 | International Diary | 21:30 | Rumpum Hello |
| 09:00 | Kantipur Diary | 14:05 | Kick Start | | Mithila |
| 09:10 | Traffic Update | 15:00 | Kantipur Diary | 23:00 | Show Time |
| 09:15 | National Songs | 15:15 | Raiwar | 00:00 | Top Ten Nepali Pop (Repeat) |
| 09:20 | Ghumne Mech | 16:00 | Health & Education Dairy | 01:00 | Recorded Program |
| 10:00 | Sports Diary | 16:05 | Quick Fix | 02:00 | Non-Stop Nepali Songs |
| 10:05 | Gajab Chha Baa | 17:00 | District Diary | 03:00 | Non-Stop Hindi Songs |
| 11:00 | Art & Entertainment | 17:05 | Music Lounge | | |
| | Diary | 17:55 | Baal Geet | | |
| | | 18:00 | Jyotish Darshan | | |
| | | 19:00 | Kathmandu Beat | 04:00 | Non -Stop Bhajans |

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BHARAT : 8:00 AM, 11:15 AM, 2:30 PM, 3:00 PM, 5:45 PM, 6:15 PM, 8:45 PM, 9:00 PM
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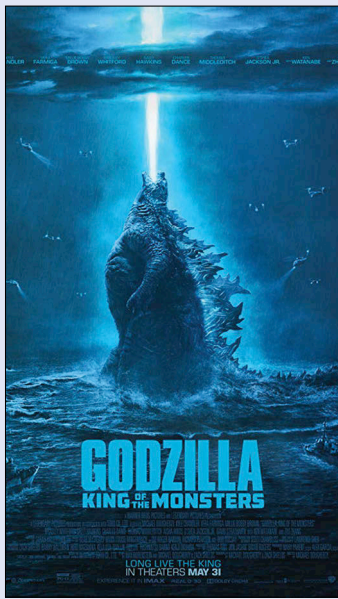
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CURRENT SHOWTIME

| MOVIES | ATMOS 1 | ATMOS 2 |
|---------------------------|----------|---------|
| (3D) X-MEN : DARK PHOENIX | 8:00 AM | |
| BHARAT (ATMOS) | 10:30 AM | 8:30 AM |
| | 1:45 PM | 2:30 PM |
| | 5:00 PM | 5:45 PM |
| JATRAI JATRA | 8:15 PM | 9:00 PM |

JATRAI JATRA : 11:45 AM
TUESDAY & **WEDNESDAY** : 1900 SUPER DAYS
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BIG SCREEN TOPPERS



- 1) Godzilla: King of the Monsters
- 2) Aladdin
- 3) Rocketman
- 4) Ma
- 5) John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum
- 6) Avengers: Endgame
- 7) Pokémon Detective Pikachu
- 8) Booksmart
- 9) Brightburn
- 10) The Hustle

(SOURCE: IMDB)

AIR WAVE TOPPERS



1. Old Town Road by Lil Nas X
Featuring Billy Ray Cyrus
2. Bad Guy by Billie Eilish
3. Talk by Khalid
4. I Don't Care by Ed Sheeran & Justin Bieber
5. Sucker by Jonas Brothers
6. Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse) by Post Malone & Swae Lee
7. Wow. by Post Malone
8. Dancing With A Stranger by Sam Smith & Normani
9. Suge by DaBaby
10. Sweet But Psycho by Ava Max

(SOURCE: BILLBOARD)

FILMS

BHARAT
QFX CIVIL MALL: 07:30/08:00/11:00/14:00/14:30/18:00/20:00/21:30
QFX LABIM MALL: 08:15/08:45/11:45/15:15/18:30/20:00
QFX CHHAYA CENTER: 08:30/09:30/13:00/15:30/16:30/18:45/20:00
QFX KUMARI: 08:45/11:45/15:00/18:30/19:00
QFX JAI NEPAL: 08:30/12:00/15:30/19:00

JATRAI JATRA
QFX CIVIL MALL: 11:30/20:45
QFX LABIM MALL: 17:30
QFX KUMARI: 08:15/15:15

3D: ALADDIN
QFX LABIM MALL: 14:45
QFX CHHAYA CENTER: 11:45
3D GODZILLA: KING OF THE MONSTERS
QFX CIVIL MALL: 17:45
QFX LABIM MALL: 12:00

3D X-MEN: DARK PHOENIX
QFX CIVIL MALL: 08:45/11:15/14:45/17:15
QFX LABIM MALL: 08:30/11:30/14:15/17:00/20:45
QFX CHHAYA CENTER: 09:00/12:00/14:45/17:30/20:30
QFX KUMARI: 12:15

EVENTOGRAPH

FOOD & DRINKS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Enjoy a Barbecue Buffet at the Radisson Hotel, wide selection of mixed fresh grills and vegetables together with a choice of salads and a delicious dessert buffet at a rate of Rs. 1.350 plus taxes per person. Contact: 4411818

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trisara offers food and drinks along with good music and great times. Sunday-Live Music by Baroque Night, Monday, Wednesday by Positive vibes, Tuesday, Saturday-B'y Jyovan Bhujra, Friday-Live Music by Dexterous

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OTHERS

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

Enjoy Gourmet Saturday Brunch with your family and friends at the Sunrise Restaurant , Hotel Yak & Yeti from 12-7 pm every Saturday, Contact: 4248999

Escape, relax and get in shape @ Hyatt Regency. Embark on a personal well-being at Club Oasis. Remember us for Tennis, sauna, Jacuzzi, swimming, fitness centre and Beauty Salon. Contact: 4491234

In Kabul’s liberating Cafes, ‘Women make the culture here, not men’

Mina Rezaee, who opened the Simple coffee shop in Kabul a year ago, makes sure no one harasses her female customers for wearing trendy clothes or sitting with men

DAVID ZUCCHINO AND FATIMA FAIZI

On some days, life as a young woman in Kabul can feel suffocating for Hadis Lessani Delijam, a 17-year-old high school senior. Once, a man on the street harangued her for her makeup and Western clothes; they are shameful, he bellowed. A middle-aged woman cursed her for strolling and chatting with a young man. “She called me things that are so terrible I can’t repeat them,” Ms. Delijam said. For solace, Ms. Delijam retreats to an unlikely venue—the humble coffee shop. “This is the only place where I can relax and feel free, even if it’s only for a few hours,” Ms. Delijam said recently as she sat at a coffee shop, her hair uncovered, and chatted with two young men. Trendy new cafes have sprung up across Kabul in the past three years, evolving into emblems of women’s progress.

The cafes are sanctuaries for women in an Islamic culture that still dictates how they should dress, behave in public and interact with men. Those traditions endure 18 years after the toppling of the Taliban, who banned girls’ education, confined women to their homes and forced them to wear burqas in public. These days, conversations at the cafes often turn to the Afghan peace talks in Doha, Qatar, between the United States and the Taliban. Many women worry their rights will be bargained away under pressure from the fundamentalist, all-male Taliban delegation.

“We are so frightened,” said Maryam Ghulam Ali, 28, an artist who was sharing chocolate cake with a friend at a coffee shop called Simple. “We ask each other what will happen to women if the Taliban come back.”

“When we come to cafes, we feel liberated,” she added. “No one forces us to put on our head scarves.” Many young women in Kabul’s emerging cafe society were infants under Taliban rule. Ms. Delijam had not yet been born. They have come of age during the post-Taliban struggle by many young Afghans to break free of the harsh contours of a patriarchal society.

The women have grown up with cellphones, social media and the right to express themselves freely. They cannot imagine returning to the puritanical dictates of the Taliban, who sometimes stoned women to death on suspicion of adultery—and still do in areas they control.

Farahnaz Forotan, 26, a journalist and coffee shop regular, has created a social media campaign, #myredline, that implores women to stand up for their rights. Her Facebook page is studded with photos of herself inside coffee shops, symbols of her own red line.

“Going to a cafe and talking with friends brings me great happiness,” Ms. Forotan said as she sat inside a Kabul coffee shop. “I refuse to sacrifice it.”

But those freedoms could disappear if the peace talks bring the Taliban back into government, she said.

“I don’t want to be recognized as someone’s sister or daughter,” she said. “I want to be recognized as a human being.”



Hadis Lessani Delijam, left, meeting with friends at the Jackson coffee shop in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Beyond cafe walls, progress is painfully slow. “Even today, we can’t walk on the streets without being harassed,” Ms. Forotan said. “People call us prostitutes, Westernized, from the ‘democracy generation.’”

Afghanistan is consistently ranked the worst, or among the worst, countries for woman.

One Afghan tradition dictates that single women belong to their fathers and married women to their husbands. Arranged marriages are common, often to a cousin or other relative.

In the countryside, young girls are sold as brides to older men. Honor killings—women killed by male relatives for contact with an unapproved male—still occur. Protections provided by the Afghan Constitution and a landmark 2009 women’s rights law are not always rigorously enforced.

In 2014, the Taliban launched a series of attacks against cafes and restaurants in Kabul, including a suicide bombing and gunfire that killed 21 customers at the popular Taverna du Liban cafe, where alcohol was served, and Afghan men and women mingled among Westerners.

Afterward, the government forced a host of cafes and guesthouses to shut down for fear they would draw more violence.

For the next two years, much of westernized social life in Kabul moved to private homes. But in 2016, new coffee shops began to open, catering to young women and men eager to mingle in public again.

Still, except for urban outposts like Kabul, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif, there are few cafes in Afghanistan where women can mingle with men. Most restaurants reserve their main rooms for

men and set aside secluded “family” sections for women and children.

That is why the Kabul cafes are so treasured by Afghan women, who seek kindred souls there.

“Human instinct is as powerful as religion,” said Fereshta Kazemi, an Afghan-American actress and development executive who often frequents Kabul coffee shops.

“The need to connect, to share and love, to make eye contact, is instinctual,” she said.

After the Taliban fell in 2001, those instincts were nurtured as girls and women in Kabul began attending schools and universities, working beside men in private and government jobs, and living alone or with friends in apartments. The Afghan Constitution reserves 68 out of 250 seats for women, at least two women from each of 34 provinces.

Protecting those achievements dominates cafe conversation.

Mina Rezaee, 30, who opened the Simple coffee shop in Kabul a year ago, makes sure no one harasses her female customers for wearing trendy clothes or sitting with men.

“Women make the culture here, not men,” she said.

She gestured to a table where several women, their head scarves removed, sat laughing and talking with young men.

“Look at them—I love it,” Ms. Rezaee said. “It’s the Taliban who needs to change their ideology, not us. That’s my red line.”

Tahira Mohammadzai, 19, was an infant in the southern city of Kandahar, the Taliban headquarters, when the militants ruled Afghanistan. Her family fled to Iran and returned seven years ago

The women have grown up with cellphones, social media and the right to express themselves freely. They cannot imagine returning to the puritanical dictates of the Taliban

to Kabul, where she is a university student.

“I heard stories from my mother about how different life was then,” she said at the Jackson coffee shop, named for Michael Jackson. “It’s impossible now to go back to the way things were.” Her red line? She said she would rather continue living with the war, now in its 18th year, than face a postwar government that included the Taliban. “If they come back, I’ll be the first one to flee Afghanistan,” Ms. Mohammadzai said.

Ms. Forotan, the #myredline founder, said she was determined to stay no matter what happens. Relaxing inside the coffee shop, her short dark hair uncovered, she longed for another type of cafe.

“I wish there was a cafe full of male politicians who had one priority—peace,” she said.

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Drawing the pain: Sketch therapy for war-torn children

The therapy also helps parents understand why a child may be craving attention or behaving aggressively

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The scratching of crayons on paper fills the air as the children at Lazare camp in war-ravaged Central African Republic draw scenes from daily life. They draw armed men. Armoured vehicles. And they use red. Lots of red. In a makeshift tent, glasses perched on her nose and her feet in the dust, psychologist Mamie Nouria Meniko pores over the creations — an indicator of the children’s mental health, and a much-needed outlet.

“Their problem is that they suffer daily exposure to violence,” she says.

The 43-year-old Congolese runs a Red Cross programme at the displaced people’s camp to identify and help kids suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“Drawing helps children to express what they are feeling. It shows what children cannot say out loud,” Nouria Meniko says.

“Sometimes, some of them start crying as soon as they start drawing.”

Years of violence

The town of Kaga Bandoro housing the camp is a case study for the instability and violence that plagues the CAR.

Some 330 kilometres (about 200 miles) north of the capital Bangui, the town lies on a strategic junction of routes used by nomadic cattle-herders.

For five relentless years, Kaga Bandoro was in the hands of armed groups—militias who control four-fifths of the troubled country.

Typically claiming to defend specific ethnic groups or religions, the militias fight for resources and carry out extortion and acts of violence.

In a nationwide population of 4.5 million, thousands have lost their lives, nearly 650,000 have fled their homes and another 575,000 have left the country, according to UN figures as of December last year.



A young child watches, through the hole in a tent, his friends with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder drawing at the Lazare camp for internally displaced people (IDP) in Kaga Bandoro on May 23, 2019. In the northern part of the country devastated by the crisis, the International Red Cross has set up a workshop to detect and treat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder through drawing.

Many children have seen beatings, rape or murder. Some have seen their homes invaded, their parents humiliated, hurt, abducted or killed.

In Kaga Bandoro, relative calm returned last month with the arrival of the armed forces after the government and 14 warlords signed a peace pact in February—the eighth in a series of treaties.

For now at least, the militiamen are confined to their base, although sporadic violence continues on the outskirts of town.

Troubled kids

The Red Cross programme has enabled Nouria Meniko to identify 233 children aged five to 15 who bear symptoms of PTSD. Seated on a mat, she asks a group of six children: “Who had a bad dream last night?” Three hands are raised.

Holding her little sister on her lap, 10-year-old Florine confides her nightmare.

“My mother and father came to pick me up but I told them I couldn’t come,” she says. Her parents were killed in 2013 by the Seleka, a mainly

Muslim armed group. To help the children manage their trauma, the psychologist teaches them breathing and relaxation techniques.

“When I feel bad, I do these exercises and I think of a nice meal,” says Florine, whose name has been changed to protect her identity.

Dead father

To her right sits 12-year-old Herve, attending his third therapy session. Herve’s drawings always show the same things: pickup trucks with machine guns mounted on the back. A body in a river. A hand in a well. A house on fire, with his dad inside.

“I have to draw to get the images out of my head and be able to sleep,” he says. Herve’s mother, widowed by the Seleka in 2013, says the sessions have helped the boy and her relationship with him. “Before, he used to cry all night. This week, he’s only woken up five times.”

The therapy also helps parents understand why a child may be craving attention or behaving aggressively. “Before, when he didn’t obey me and did something silly, I used to hit him,” Herve’s mother admits.

“I didn’t understand. But now I know why he did that, and we talk to each other.”

Vicious circle

Professor Jean-Chrysostome Gody, the head doctor at Bangui’s paediatric hospital, says mental problems linked to conflict are widespread in a country that has been gripped by violence since 2003.

But the issue is also taboo.

“It’s a real public-health problem,” Gody says. “Untreated trauma can cause depression and even lead to violence—it fuels the vicious circle.”

Children such as Florine and Herve who have witnessed extreme violence have a lifelong burden, adds Nouria Meniko.

“We can’t wipe out anything out,” the psychologist says with a sigh. “What we try to do is to help them live with the trauma.”

YES WE CANNABIS

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“When I first raised the issue back in 2010, very few people were willing to publicly talk about cannabis legalisation in a serious manner,” says Kafle, who primarily campaigns online through his Twitter handle @RajivKafle and the hashtag #LegalizeNepal. “But living with an HIV diagnosis has built my immunity to stigma.”

Focusing on medicinal legalisation, particularly for people living with HIV in Nepal, Kafle has a seemingly lofty goal: legalise cannabis in Nepal by 2020. Despite being met with dismissive laughs, his efforts—from posting informative statuses, reporting about arrests and seizures related to cannabis, and engaging with the government on issues related to legislation through social media—were never blunted. As his self-imposed deadline approaches, people are not laughing anymore, he says.

A thorny question

In the budding cause for legalisation, Kafle has been joined by other Nepalis dispersed around the world who are asking similar questions.

Some have taken to creative outlets to challenge the stigma around the recreational consumption of cannabis. YouTube is rife with examples—Chirag Singh Khadka’s (5:55) ‘Budi’, a lovesong to marijuana that quickly went viral after it was launched in February, is one popular example.

But the movement gained an unexpected supporter earlier this year on February 20, when Birodh Khatiwada, a lawmaker from the ruling Nepal Communist Party, raised the issue of cannabis legislation in the House of Representatives. Pointing to its potential to become a lucrative cash crop and create employment opportunities, especially among rural farmers, Khatiwada’s interjection has furthered discussions on legalisation among state officials.

“Nothing has happened on the legislative level yet, but there have been some informal discussion in the upper levels of government,” Khatiwada told the Post. “The response from the party was not negative. Some of my fellow parliamentarians wanted to approach the topic long ago, but did not do so for various reasons.”

The renewed debate over whether or not cultivation and consumption of cannabis should be legalised in Nepal comes at a time when a number of countries around the world—from Canada to South Africa to Thailand—have legalised cannabis, either for medicinal or recreational use or both, under a regulatory framework. And with more research into the plant’s medicinal values also being conducted, governments around the world are confronting the thorny question of legalisation.

In Nepal, cannabis has long been a part of many medicinal and cultural traditions. But despite this long and storied history, the cultivation and consumption of marijuana remains illegal, punishable by harsh jail terms and steep fines.

For young, connected people like Nirakar—his brother-in-law is an influential politician—the Narcotics Drug Control Act 1976, in many ways, is merely an inconvenience. But for those without his resources and connections, the Act holds entirely different consequences.

Farmers from across rural Nepal and their families, brokers, middlemen, and youth caught within the illicit drug trade have felt the blunt end of the Act.

According to statistics provided by the Narcotics Control Bureau, cannabis is consistently its most-seized substance. In 2018, 4,181 kg

of cannabis, 1,546 kg of hashish, 8 kg of heroin, and 2 kg of cocaine were seized from across Nepal—a slight rise on all accounts from the previous fiscal year. While the Nepal Police said that they do not have official data that identifies how many arrests were related to cannabis, they noted that the number of drug-related arrests in general has risen sharply in recent years—by 83 percent since 2013.

That a culturally significant plant is regulated by a harsh law has led to numerous incongruous examples throughout the Act’s four-decade-long history.

During the Maoist insurgency, for example, the ganja market was regulated by cadres in some areas of Nepal. As evidenced by a confidential US cable titled ‘Nepal: Mid-Year Status Report on Drug Trafficking’ published by WikiLeaks in 2003, Maoist insurgents in the middle hills of Nepal would regularly levy taxes on both the cultivation and transportation of cannabis. The report estimates that the levy was as high as 35 percent of the value of crops.

Across Nepal, from the hills of Rolpa and Rukum—where the Maoist insurgency was born—to the eastern plains, marijuana cultivation, though farmed by locals, is now largely controlled by a cross-border nexus of political figures, armed mafia and drug smugglers.

There is a clear nexus in the market, says Kanchan Jha, founder of Sano Paila, an organisation that runs, among other social interventions, a leadership programme for youth in Birgunj recovering from drug addiction. In Parsa district, the ones who get arrested aren’t the people at the top, he says. Farmers and brokers, many of whom are youth, only get one percent of the cut but face a majority of risks.

“There was and still is so much violence in the trade, especially in Parsa, and many youth and farming communities are simply caught in the middle,” Jha says.

Parsa’s history is entangled with cannabis and poppy cultivation. According to a 2015 article in the Nepali Times, it accounted for 60 percent of its arable land before 2011.

The District Police Office in Parsa told the Post that in the past year, 63 people had been arrested for smuggling marijuana and hashish. As clashes between marijuana smugglers and police often result in armed exchanges, the District Police Office has sought to up the ante on combating drug smuggling.

“The risk of legal persecution depends largely on who you are and where you buy from,” says a 20-year-old marijuana dealer in Kathmandu who refused to give his real name and asked to go by Babaji, the name he gives his buyers. Kathmandu is hundreds of kilometres from Parsa and the Indian border, where most of the smuggling takes place.

“There are popular spots and cafes in Basantapur filled with Nepali youth smoking weed,” he says. “The police do not care. But if the same place was elsewhere, somewhere outside Kathmandu, things might be different.”

Babaji, who estimates he has around a hundred customers, procures his supply from villages surrounding the Valley—including Dhulikhel, Phulchowki, Budhanilkantha and Tarebhir. He makes ‘hunting’ trips every weekend and claims to make Rs 7,000 a week on average. Others, especially those who rely on cannabis sales as their primary source of income, make much more, he says.

But Babaji’s homework—he is currently a master’s student in Public Health—causes distractions.

“I face little to no risk doing this job. Many of my friends also go out [cannabis] hunting and sell to make money on the side—but maybe not as much as I do,” he admits. “It is really easy. But it really depends on who you are and what kind of connections you have.”

For one 43-year-old Pokhara-based dealer originally from a village in Hetauda, things are a little different. Though his family engages in cannabis-farming on the outskirts of their home district, he regularly frequents Pokhara’s Lakeside in search of tourists and high-paying customers.

“If I get arrested, my family will not eat,” says the Pokhara dealer, who asked to be identified as Vishnu, also a pseudonym, because he feared getting arrested. “But my customers, the ones who ask for large amounts to sell themselves, will not be punished. Someone needs to get punished and at the end of the day, it will be small people like us.”

According to Vishnu, legalisation will not dismantle the existing nexus in the transnational marijuana market, especially in Nepal where corruption is rampant.

“The only market I care about is one where those at the top and those at the bottom like me are on the same level,” he says. “I don’t care about legal or illegal. I want equality, a fair chance, and food for my family.”

The discrepancy that Vishnu points to is largely a result of ambiguities and contradictions in the Narcotics Drug Control Act itself, say experts. For example, advocate Subash Acharya argues in a 2016 article that the Act’s failure to draw distinctions between casual drug users, hardcore addicts, petty drug peddlers and seasoned traffickers encourages an environment of disproportionate and irregular prosecution.

And the lengthy history behind the Act itself is a controversial one, as some argue that it was shaped by a series of strains that had very little to do with Nepal.

A strained history

With eyebrows furrowed, Rabi Raj Thapa, a retired Assistant Inspector General of the Nepal Police, scans through the Narcotics Drug Control Act. As a founding member of the Nepal Police’s Narcotic Drug Control Law Enforcement Unit in 1992, Thapa is no stranger to the document.

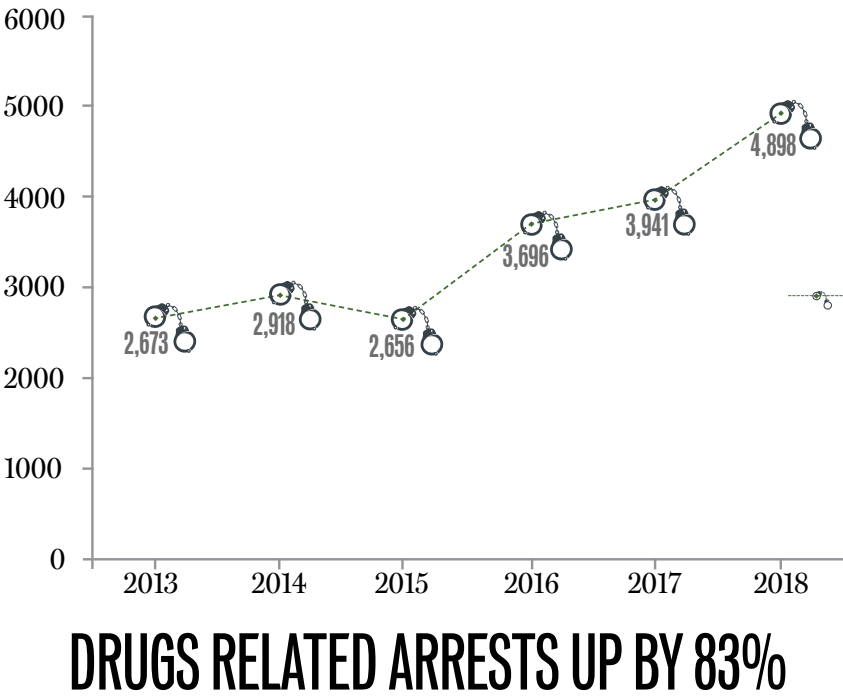
“Everytime I read it, I notice something else that seems unclear. See here,” he points at the document and says, “the act puts ‘medicinal cannabis’ and ‘cannabis’ in different categories but labels both as a ‘narcotic’. What is ‘medicinal cannabis’? How is it a narcotic and why isn’t it defined?”

According to Thapa, the ambiguous treatment of cannabis by the document largely stems from the fact that the act was not drafted on Nepal’s terms.

The criminalisation of marijuana is largely a foreign imposition—from the then Richard Nixon-led United States administration’s ‘war on drugs’, according to Thapa.

“It seemed to come out of nowhere,” says Thapa. “Suddenly, a plant that grew abundantly across the country, that was used to treat stomach aches even among young children was placed under the same category as heroin and cocaine.”

In the chapter ‘Cannabis in Nepal: An Overview’, written in 1975, James Fisher discusses the series of pressures exerted on the Nepali government to crackdown on cannabis in the early 70s. According to Fisher, when hip-



pies from Western countries flocked to Nepal in the late 60s and 70s as part of the overland hippie trail, they brought with them a market and commercialised demand for the country’s marijuana and hashish.

Afraid that Nepal was becoming a major contributor to the transnational drug trade, the United States government saw to it that Nepal’s legislation discouraged drug use, or ‘public enemy number one’, in Nixon’s terms, especially among some of its youth who had used Nepal as a haven to escape the draft during the Vietnam War.

With the greater demand for cannabis, the price of *charas* (cannabis concentrate) skyrocketed—from about \$15 per kilogram to \$70. In an attempt to regulate the growing market, the government had already enforced the Intoxicants Act of 1961 and the Intoxicants Rules in 1962, making it mandatory for farmers seeking to cultivate cannabis commercially to obtain licenses.

While there is a lack of concrete historical documentation to undeniably implicate the US government in the plant’s criminalisation in Nepal, historians and politicians over the years have pointed to past examples of US-led pressure to encourage Nepal to adopt stricter drug laws.

For example, Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, finance minister at the time of the ban, recently told the *Annapurna Express* that “the US government threatened, if in not so many words, not to recognise Birendra Shah’s ‘authoritarian rule’ in order to force him to ban cannabis.”

According to Fisher, the government began regressing from its progressive stance on marijuana on July 16, 1973, when an ordinance was issued to revoke all licenses to “cultivate, ban, and sell marijuana.”

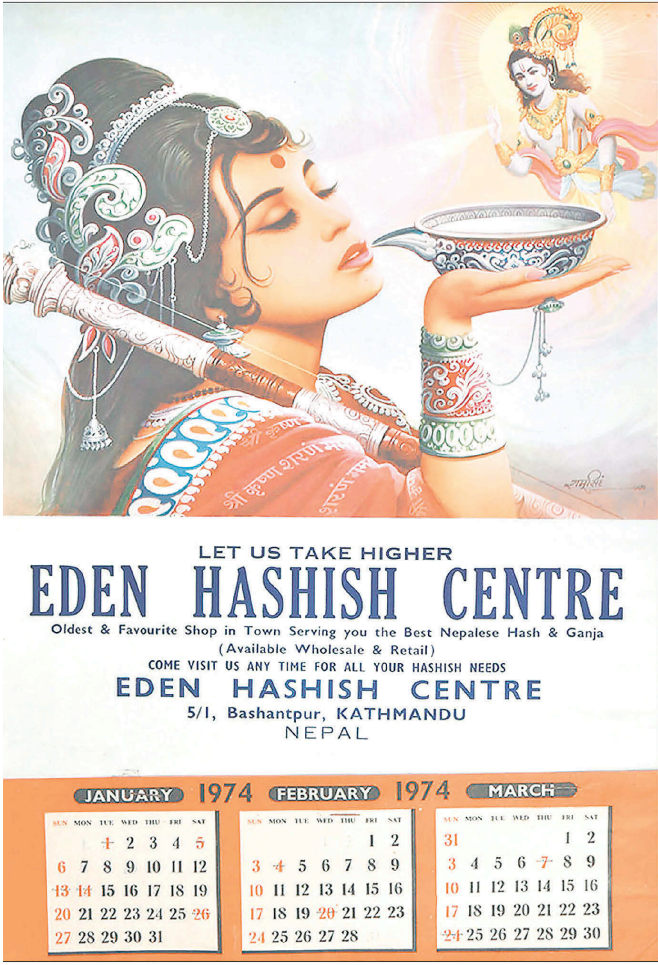
The crackdown on the marijuana market in Nepal was supplemented three years later by the Narcotics Drug Control Act 1976, which—at least on paper—criminalised the “sale, cultivation and consumption” of cannabis.

MEN
19,848

WOMEN
934

INDIAN NATIONALS
786

OTHER NATIONALS
101



The Eden Hashish Centre was a popular restaurant that offered snacks made with marijuana and hashish



PHOTO COURTESY: THE STONED PHOTOGRAPHER



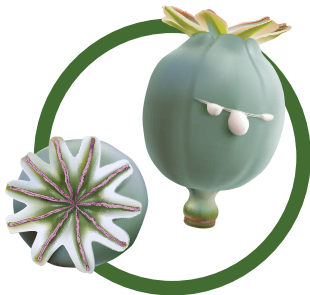
PHOTO COURTESY: THE STONED PHOTOGRAPHER



CANNABIS
49,690 KG



HASHISH
10,407 KG



OPIUM
191 KG



HEROIN
36 KG



COCAINE
35 KG

ALL DATA: NEPAL POLICE

QUANTITIES OF DRUGS SEIZED FROM 2013-2018

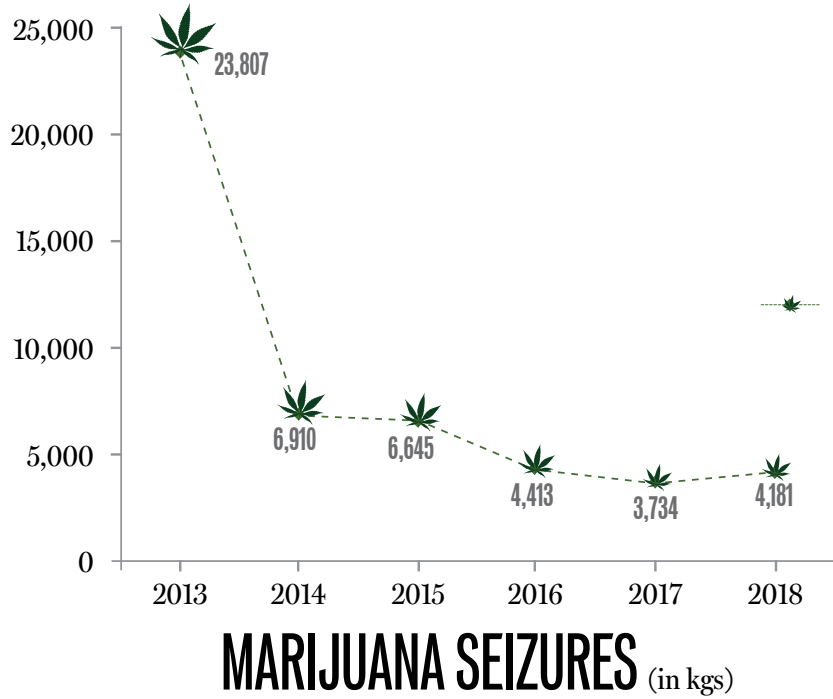


LEENA DAHAL



PHOTO COURTESY: US NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Many allege that Nepal's criminalisation of marijuana was prompted by American President Richard Nixon's 'War on Drugs'.



But the history is hazy. While licenses were supposedly revoked and marijuana was legally declared a 'narcotic', subject to stringent control, the time period in which the ban was legally enforced among local populations is ambiguous.

"Narratives on marijuana's history in Nepal cannot start with the hippies nor can it end with the Narcotics Control Drug Act," says Abhi Subedi, a historian at Tribhuvan University. "Though the ban was introduced in 1976, consumption continued among locals. The difference was that despite the ban, a transnational illicit trade market for the drug had grown—and it continued to find protection."

The ambiguity also stems from Nepal's delayed accession to the 1961 Single Convention, an international treaty that prohibited the production and supply of narcotics and formally classified cannabis as a Schedule IV drug. Under this category, the plant was now subject to more stringent international control and clubbed together with heroin, cocaine and opium.

Though Nepal eventually acceded to the Single Convention in 1987—nearly a decade after India and two years after China—it did so with a reservation that included the "right to permit temporarily" the "use of cannabis, cannabis resin, extracts and tinctures of cannabis for non-medical purposes" without a specified end date.

According to Kafle, the omission of an end date was highly strategic and could be seen as an example of early resistance against the criminalisation of marijuana.

"Nepal was the last country to defend marijuana's medicinal values in the international arena," Kafle said. "Because nobody objected to Nepal's reservation, a review by the World Health Organisation should have been held to consider our claims."

The necessary review Kafle refers to was finally concluded on January 24, 2019—three decades after Nepal's reservation and one week before Birodh Khatiwada address in Parliament—when the World Health Organisation's Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD) recommended that cannabis be removed from the Single Convention's Schedule IV and be placed under Schedule I, citing recent research that "highlighted its medicinal values."

Forty-three years after the ban was instituted in Nepal, the context has virtually flip-flopped.

The very system of governmental regulation of cannabis through the issuance of licenses, which Nepal was pressured to abandon, is now being encouraged by the same countries that were once at the forefront of marijuana's criminalisation.

Joint benefits

It is largely due to this storied history that the Narcotics Control Act 1976 is riddled with ambiguities and contradictions—some of which have made for tangible entry-points to talks on legalisation.

Several activists point to various legal loopholes in the Act that provide space for the usage of cannabis for medicinal purposes. For example, Article 5 (a) stipulates that the "purchase and consumption of narcotic drugs by any person in the recommended dose from any licensed shop on the recommendation of any recognised medical practitioner for the purpose of medical treatment...shall not be deemed to have been prohibited".

While seemingly disjointed from and contra-

Governmental regulation, which Nepal was forced to abandon, is now being embraced around the world

dictory to other sections of the Act, the provision has been used to justify Oral Substitution Therapy programmes under the Home Ministry, wherein minute doses of drugs such as methadone or synthetic opioids are prescribed to those recovering from drug abuse and addiction. But no regulatory mechanisms or directives to carry out this provision for cannabis, which falls under the category of 'narcotic drugs', have been passed or discussed on a legislative level—even though the Act has been amended five times in the past 46 years.

"Studies have shown that for those living with HIV, cancer patients, those with chronic illnesses, and people recovering from a history of drug abuse, cannabis can play a transformative role in treating mental and physical pain," says Kafle. "If our history and the law itself points to the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes, why can't we provide a mechanism to enforce it?"

According to Dr Binod Sah, a production officer at Singha Durbar Vaidyakhana, Nepal's oldest government-run ayurvedic medicine manufacturing company, the legalisation of cannabis could lead to new avenues for profit. Contrary to claims made by Khatiwada in his parliament address, Sah maintains that the Vaidyakhana "neither exports nor imports any cannabis products or essence" but stands to gain much if it is legally able to capitalise on the plant's medicinal values.

"The ban does, to some extent, limit our capacity to maximise profits," he says.

Beyond the ayurvedic industry, others point to legalisation's role in Nepal's economic development. According to Michael Sautman, a leading expert in producing standardised cannabis products on an industrial scale in regulated environments, Nepal could benefit immensely from the legal cannabis industry, which is expected to reach \$146.4 billion by 2025. But time is of the essence.

"With new countries entering the global cannabis industry, the market risks saturation," Sautman told the Post in a Skype interview. "By joining the industry, Nepal will create thousands of employment opportunities."

Sautman adds that Nepal is uniquely situated. While other countries may have to start from zero to cultivate a brand and gain recognition, Nepal is far ahead: a brand exists, thanks to Nepal's global reputation as a hippie haven. The genetics of many Nepali strains are found in hybrids around the world today, Sautman says. The country merely has to cash in.

But for Thapa, the calls for legalisation feel frustratingly familiar.

"We succumbed to international pressure when we rushed to enforce a Narcotics Control Act that wasn't adapted to our country's context—that wasn't on our terms," he says. "There is no rush and we shouldn't jump into the market immediately."

A homegrown way forward

According to Chakra Raj Joshi, a superinten-

dent of police at the Narcotics Control Bureau, the government is "currently working to draft a new law regarding legalisation" but said "he could not elaborate any further."

"Legalisation of marijuana is a sensitive issue and needs much thought before taking any steps," says Joshi. "I have argued that instead of legalising marijuana, there should be additional punishment to the perpetrators. The number of marijuana users has been on the rise, but there hasn't been any significant change in terms of punishment since the 1976 act. So more stringent punishment might discourage the use, farming and business of marijuana."

He especially pointed to legalisation's impact on further drug consumption among youth, who form a majority of consumers. In 2016, the Narcotics Control Bureau told Republica that 75 percent of drug users are aged between 15 to 30 years, according to admission trends at rehab centres. The primary substance within this group was found to be cannabis and hashish.

Sautman, however, says that research suggests otherwise.

"Legalisation and more progressive drug laws could encourage those who are now operating within the illicit drug trade to come under the tent of a regulatory system. This is what we've seen in countries like Colombia," he said. "The theory of marijuana being a 'gateway drug' and thereby encouraging further drug use has received less credence in the marketplace of ideas."

A necessary prerequisite to any further talk is a feasibility study that examines the impacts of legalisation in Nepal's context, says Thapa. By answering fundamental questions—such as how the consumption and trade of marijuana has evolved in recent years, how that evolution has impacted the country, and how the larger public feels about the issue—the discourse on legalisation can be supplemented with much-needed research rooted in Nepal.

"Everyone points to 'research' but how many studies have been conducted here?" asks Thapa.

Thapa also points to another concern: the need for a protective apparatus to ensure that the market is not inundated by the interests of large foreign corporations.

Similar concerns were expressed when the Government of Thailand amended its 1979 Narcotic Act, legalising marijuana for "medical use and research" in December 2018. In response to fears that the market would be dominated by large-scale foreign firms—two of which had already sought patents shortly after legalisation—the Thai government decided to revoke all patent requests under the premise that "a plant cannot be patented".

Such actions offer a blueprint for relatively smaller countries like Nepal seeking protection from the growing presence of powerful corporations. But Thapa remains skeptical.

For him, the key to a successful way forward are home-grown solutions and, most importantly, dialogue to hash out remaining concerns in the legalisation movement.

"At the end of the day, our approach to legislation—when or if we decide to take that step at all—has to be led by Nepal and Nepali concerns," Thapa said. "It doesn't matter who has legalised already or what the international market is doing. What matters most is that we see both sides of the coin. Who stands to gain and who stands to lose?"

Timothy Aryal and Asmita Manandhar contributed reporting.

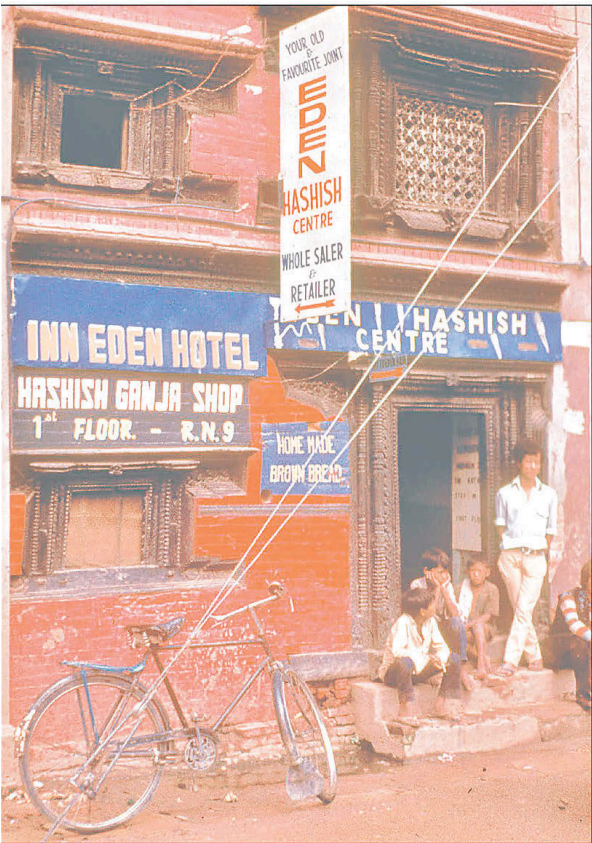


PHOTO: ROGER MCCLASSUS

A Freak Street storefront advertises hashish and marijuana in the 70s, at the height of the hippie movement.



Frenetic Salman Khan epic throws everything in the mixer

Bollywood strongman's Eid offering, following a boy separated from his family at partition, packs so much in it's hard to care about the unification message

2.5/5

Bharat

Director: Ali Abbas Zafar

Actors: Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif, Tabu, Jackie Shroff

Genre: Action drama



MIKE MCCAILL

Since 2015's cornily effective *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, Bollywood strongman Salman Khan has laid siege to the annual Eid holiday, and has done much to restore both a once-tarnished reputation and his box-office clout. For his latest vehicle, he has recalled writer-director Ali Abbas Zafar (who oversaw 2016's *Sultan*) to rework the premise of a major east Asian hit: *Ode to My Father*, from 2014, in which an everyman endured 60 years of Korean history in something like a straight-laced *Zelig* or *Forrest Gump*. Star power holds sway in Bollywood, however, and Khan's hefty grocer, roaming memory lane while awaiting a train, feels like a brother to *Sultan*'s wrestler-hero. Once more we're asked to cheer for Salman the survivor, whose bruised, battered, still-staggering bulk is somehow intended to stand for India itself.

This time, alas, we struggle. *Bharat*'s Achilles heel is its desire to pack so much in, at headspinning pace, tossing causality to the wind. Zafar reduces history to one damn thing after another, resulting in a 150-minute fire sale of period costumes and abandoned story beats. Separated from his

father and sister during partition, the Muslim-raised Bharat joins the circus, romances civil servant Katrina Kaif during a spell as a pipeline worker, expresses dreams of becoming a stationmaster that come out of (and go) nowhere, before dancing through a Maltese brothel while on navy shore leave. Even by masala movie norms, it feels absurdly overstuffed.

The better moments come when Zafar calms down and closes in on his leads' well-tended chemistry. Kaif is one of the few actors capable of taking her co-star seriously, and the sincerity in her gaze encourages us to look more favourably upon a protagonist who gets yanked through the decades without making a single compelling choice or facing anything like dramatic consequences. The last half-hour neuters the most substantial idea—a TV show reuniting families split by partition—by squashing it between a comical encounter with African pirates and a fight scene intended to sate hardcore Khan devotees.

Bharat is certainly spirited, and almost admirable in its determination to cover every conceivable base, but there's a fine line between all-embracing and simply all-over-the-shop. *Bharat* needs rewrites, or at least some kind of breath test.

—©2019 The Guardian

Bharat is certainly spirited, and almost admirable in its determination to cover every conceivable base

New Myanmar filmmakers shoot to rekindle golden years

The Southeast Asian nation used to be a regional cinematic hub before the military junta suppressed creativity



Director Christina Kyi (right) explaining a scene to actress PaingPhyo Thu while filming their movie in a studio in Yangon.

DELPHINE THOUVENOT, RICHARD SARGENT

A deadly race to find hidden treasure, car chases and slick fight scenes drive the breakneck narrative of one of Myanmar's latest blockbusters, as a new generation of directors aim to revive the country's golden era of film.

The Southeast Asian nation used to be a regional cinematic hub before the 1962-installed military junta suppressed creativity, imposed censorship and cut the country off from outside influences.

Myanmar's opening up since 2011 has so far done little to propel its movie industry—which is preparing to mark its century next year—onto the international stage.

"The film industry is like the country—after 100 years, it's not in good shape," says Grace SweZinHtaik, 66, who has worked in the business for decades as an

actress and consultant.

Foreign distributors remain unmoved by its movies, often churned out to hackneyed formulae with low production costs and over-acting that many find toe-curling.

A handful of young directors, however, are seeking to raise the bar—using skills and know-how picked up overseas.

Director Arkar Win, 29, learned the trade in Singapore before coming back to Myanmar.

His box office 2018 smash hit "The Mystery of Burma" set the protagonist on an action-packed quest to find an ancient ruby buried in a hidden temple, a plot with clear nods to Steven Spielberg's Indiana Jones and Jon Turteltaub's National Treasure.

"We're trying to catch up," he tells AFP in Yangon.

"Indonesian and Cambodian films are selling internationally... but the quality isn't here yet."

New vs old generation

Arkar is proud that his movie's stunts, set against cinematography that sweeps across Myanmar's dramatic landscapes, have enticed "new audiences" to the cinemas.

But a duopoly of distributors controlling all of Myanmar's 154 commercial movie theatres means there is little negotiating power for directors or space for new talent.

A frenetic filming schedule is the norm in the industry, meaning proper castings and pre-production planning often fall by the wayside, while scripts are commonly written on the set of low-budget films. Around half of the movies made in 2018 ended up going straight to DVD.

"Until last year I had no hope," said director Christina Kyi, who recently broke into Myanmar's movie-making scene after returning from a New York film school 10 years ago.

"Most actors here can do up to 20 films a year. With me they know they will have to work for six months," she says.

In Myanmar, superhero and zombie movies reign supreme.

For directors like Arkar and Kyi—who both missed out at this year's Myanmar Academy Awards, stoking mass controversy—gaining acceptance from the mainstream movie industry presents a serious challenge. Kyi's widely-acclaimed "Mudras Calling" sees the US-raised Burmese lead role, played by her real-life husband,

returning to discover his Myanmar roots—and fall in love.

Tipped for top prizes in the country's version of the Oscars, she came away with nothing.

Outraged fans organised a boycott on social media of the winning director's movie, pouring scorn on what they viewed as the elitist awards.

Industry veteran Grace calls for more investment, better technology—and more cooperation from both sides.

"I want the old generation to welcome new directors and the new generation to respect their seniors too."

'Soft power'

With an arthouse flick at this year's Cannes Festival, Midi Z is perhaps Myanmar's highest-profile director internationally—but he has lived for years in Taiwan.

Plans are afoot for a movie studio in capital Naypyidaw.

But the industry might not see as smooth a transition away from political interference as many would like.

Civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi opened the contentious Academy Awards with a speech urging the film industry to use "soft power" towards a "peaceful, united and developed country".

The military is only too aware of the power of the silver screen in a country riven with ethnic armed conflicts.

A high-budget film is released each year to mark Armed Forces Day, championing the sacrifices made by patriotic soldiers fighting battles against villainous rebels.

Work has been underway for years to produce a biopic of Suu Kyi's father and independence hero General Aung San.

The movie even has its own committee under the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Culture.

Foreign filmmakers are eyeing up Myanmar as a shooting location.

An array of exploding cars and daring stunts recently beguiled Yangon residents for the filming of Hong Kong movie "Line Walker 2" and there are rumours Nicolas Cage will soon visit to shoot his upcoming sci-fi flick "JiuJitsu".

These movies are guaranteed to do well in action-mad Myanmar.

Arkar says it is down to Myanmar filmmakers to produce the goods in a country with limited nightlife and entertainment.

"The audience is there. We just need to do good work."

—© Agence France Presse



Film developer is poured into the loaded film developing tank.

In focus: Stepping back and learning from the past

PHOTOS & TEXT: SANJOG MANANDHAR

When I had just begun my career as a photojournalist, a decade ago, my brother had bought a film camera from Japan. That was the first time I had laid my hands on a rollfilm camera, which had been rendered obsolete many years ago. Whenever I had the time, I would work with the camera, but I wanted to learn more about how the film roll functioned and about darkroom techniques.

It was only recently that I was finally able to learn in detail about the rollfilm camera, after I met Jagadish Upadhyaya, the founder of Film Foundry, a studio located in Jawalakhel. In these last few months that I have met him, I have frequented his studio religiously, which became my haven to learn more about rollfilm photography.

Learning and working with my rollfilm camera has taught me a few things in life. The most important being patience. With rollfilm, as opposed to digital cameras, one has limited rolls at their disposal. Meaning, while working with rollfilm, one must be more focused and more patient-to wait for the perfect moment and lighting conditions to take that perfect shot.

In rollfilm cameras, the process doesn't just end with the click-after exhausting all the film rolls, the images need to be processed in a darkroom. And to see your vision and hard work materialise in film is nothing short of euphoric.

Some people may think that getting into rollfilm photography in this day and age is pointless, given that photography technology has come such a long way. But film photography was already perfect-with its dynamic range of colours, black and white tone and emulsion properties.

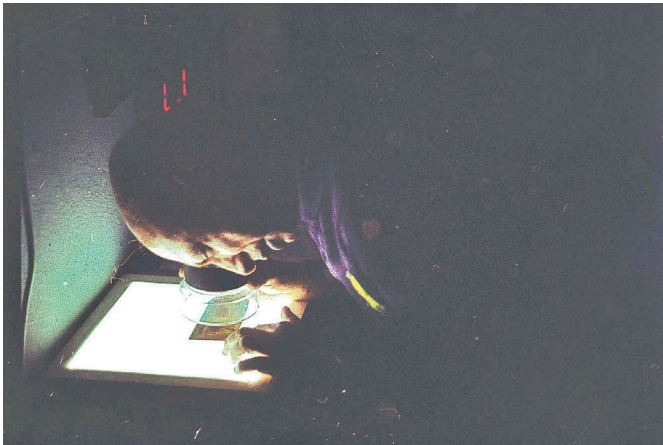
Despite having worked with pictures for more than a decade, experiences such as these keep reminding me that I have yet to learn new skills and techniques-sometimes by stepping back and learning from the past.

Working with traditional methods also gives us a glimpse of how modern photography came into place. For me, it is like carrying a piece of history in my camera bag.

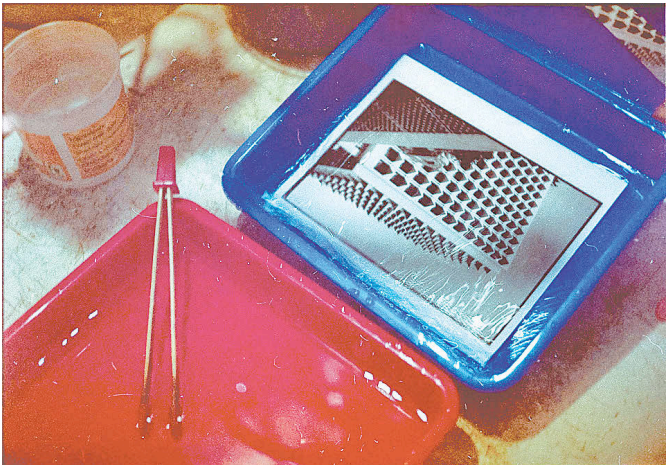
These photographs were taken with Canon EOS Kiss, Yashica FX-3 Super 2000 and Mamiya RB67.



Jagadish Upadhyaya loads exposed rollfilm into the developing tank inside a film changing darkroom bag.



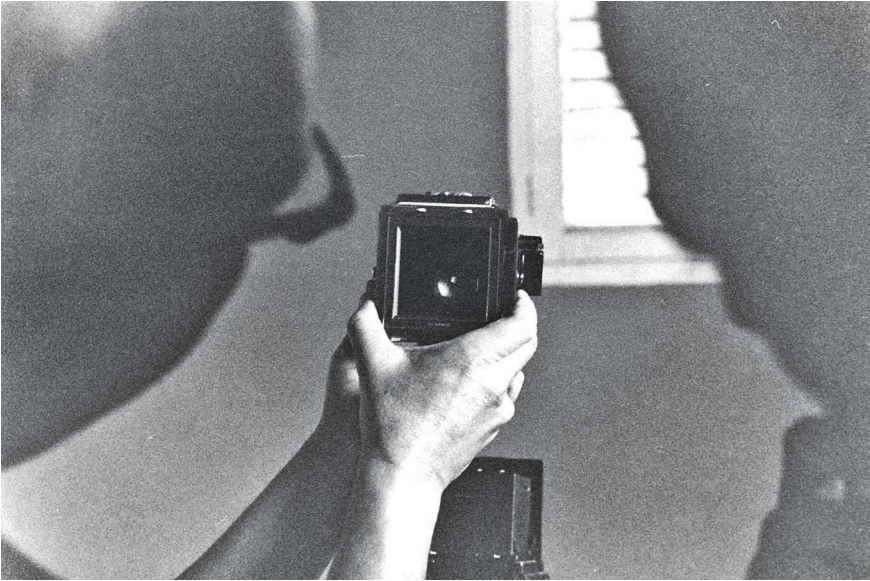
Checking the negative with a loupe magnifier.



Prints on photo paper.



Finally the washed print is hung for it to dry.



Checking a medium format camera.



Jagadish Upadhyaya poses for a photo in his studio's backyard. He holds a light meter in his hand.



The photo taken with Canon EOS Kiss Panorama SLR.



Upadhyaya explains the feature of a medium format camera to a film photography enthusiast at Film Foundry.

With love, from Tibet

Old Demons New Deities presents well-rounded narratives of the Tibetan people that go beyond the binary depiction of them as either a religious, peaceful community or slogan-chanting freedom fighters.

TSERING D GURUNG

In the introduction to *Old Demons New Deities*, the first English-language anthology of short stories by Tibetan writers, the book's editor, Tenzin Dickie, writes about how Tibetans, both living in exile and in Tibet, have grown up as "literary orphans," a term she borrows from American-Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat.

"As a function of growing up in Tibet-in-India, a young society, we were cut off from our historical past, from our historical literature and culture," Dickie writes. "Of course, for Tibetans growing up on the other side of the mountains, this break from history was imposed by the Chinese state. This separation from our literary past was compounded by the fact that modern Tibetan literature was still in its infancy. Thus, on both sides of the Himalayas, we grew up orphaned from our literature."

Growing up, as a person with a hyphenated identity, I, too, struggled with finding literature and literary heroes whose work and experiences mirrored my own. Although Tibetan literature has a rich history, much of it is religious. The tradition of fiction writing began much later, and Tibetans writing in English, even more so. For a person like me, whose comprehension of written Tibetan (which is still very formal) is elementary at best, there has only been so much Tibetan fiction to devour.

Old Demons New Deities, which was launched in North America in the winter of 2017, is thus a landmark in the history of contemporary Tibetan fiction. As the book gets ready for its South Asia launch, I re-read it this past week, and realised my feelings toward it haven't changed much. The stories that stayed with me after I read it for the first time nearly two years ago are still the ones I liked the most after my second reading.

Because much of contemporary Tibetan literature has been written after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, politics, communism, freedom, and identity have always fea-

tured heavily in both fiction and non-fiction. Nearly half of the 21 stories in the collection deal with these themes—in varying degrees—including the opening story, 'Wink' by Pema Bhum.

Set in the fictional county of Ogya in Tibet in the late 1970s, the story centres around a couple, who plan an escape from their village because they worry they are going to be sent to a re-education camp due to an accidental transgression. Bhum, who lived in Tibet until 1988, and has written two memoirs on the Cultural Revolution, uses his deep insight on life in occupied Tibet, and deftly interlaces elements of humour and suspense to weave a deeply engrossing tale about life under the Communist regime.

Beside the aforementioned, two other favourites are 'Tears' by the Beijing-based writer Woesser, perhaps the most well-known of the lot, and 'Letter for Love' by Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, who authored *A Home in Tibet*, a moving memoir of her trips to the homeland after her mother's passing. (You must read this book if you haven't already.)

While 'Tears' is a poignant tale about a Tibetan man conflicted between his duty as a Chinese government official and his desire to freely embrace his ethnic identity, 'Letter for Love' is about a mother-daughter duo living in a refugee settlement in Nepal who team up to assist a widowed neighbour find a suitor.

The two stories couldn't be more different, but they spoke to me in equal measure because they successfully evoked an emotional response. I sighed reading 'Tears', feeling for the character as he dwells upon the question thousands of Tibetans living in Tibet ask themselves regularly: Should I stay or flee?

Woesser, who has been placed under house arrest multiple times by Chinese authorities and whose books are banned in mainland China, sums up the character's dilemma with a searing line. "How can I not return? Our home is there. If we all leave, to whom will Tibet be left?" retorts the main character

when a woman asks him to stay back in Europe after an official trip.

'Letter for Love', which was originally published in *The Caravan* in 2010, is a beautifully written story about a young Tibetan girl living in Nepal, who, as a consequence of being one of the few literate ones in the community, is regularly asked to pen letters by her neighbours—an experience I am all too familiar with. When a neighbour comes home with a request to help write a letter to an American man, with whom she had a brief interaction, her mother, who particularly enjoys the process and takes pride in her daughter's ability, begins scheming.

While essentially a story about a mother and daughter helping their neighbour write love letters, it beautifully tackles concepts of love, longing, and desire. Dhompa has a knack for writing about the most mundane moments, and packed with cultural peculiarities (not Chinese-Chinese, but Chinese from Taiwan, remarks one character to another), her story presents a portrait of the Tibetan refugee community, perhaps more insightful than any research article. That she is deft with her prose only makes the story more enjoyable.

Here's an example: "Karma imagined her mother studying her face carefully in the mirror the afternoon Pema had flown away. Perhaps for the first time she had looked at the slight swelling under her lower eyelids, at the three lines on her forehead, and had looked into them for signs of options other than the life she lived."

'Ralo', 'The Connection' and 'The Valley of Black Foxes' are other stories that I enjoyed reading.

As is inevitable with any collection, some works shine brighter than others. And not all of them leave an impression. As much as I've admired Jamyang Norbu's intrepid essays on Tibetan politics, his fiction is less impressive.

Norbu pens two of the stories in the collection: 'The Silence' and 'Hunter's Moon', the latter being the superior of the two. In 'The Silence', a story about a mute fiddler's journey to find love, Norbu writes in clichéd prose: "And yet there was



COURTESY: TSERING D GURUNG

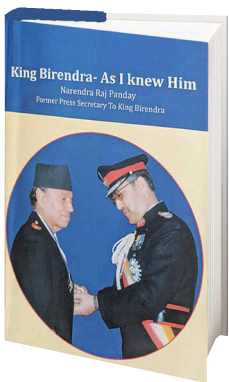
another side of his life that was not as sweet and beautiful as his music. He lived his life in silence because he could not speak." I had similar feelings reading Tenzin Dorjee's 'The Fifth Man'.

For many Tibetans and non-Tibetans alike, this book will be their first introduction to the world of Tibetan storytelling and storytellers. While not all the stories hit their mark or can even be characterised as quality writing, they present well-rounded narratives of the Tibetan people that go beyond the binary depiction of them as either a religious, peaceful community or slogan-chanting freedom fighters that we often see in popular culture.

Old Demons New Deities will be launched in Nepal at the end of the month.

For many Tibetans and non-Tibetans alike, this book will be their first introduction to the world of Tibetan storytelling and storytellers

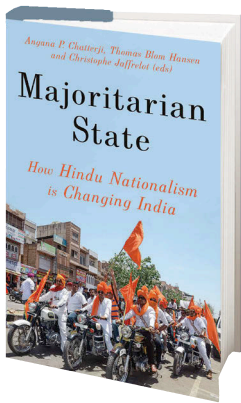
NEW BOOKS



KING BIRENDRA—AS I KNEW HIM

Author: Narendra Raj Pandey
Publisher: Nalini Panday, Asim Pandey and Anjan Pandey
Price: Rs 300

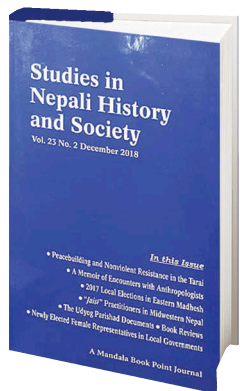
Late Narendra Raj Pandey shares his off the records conversation with Late King Birendra. Pandey had served in the Royal Palace Secretariat and various other positions before retiring as Principal Secretary. The views of King late Birendra compiled in the book help to understand Nepal and Nepal's issues at the time. The book records King Birendra's off the cuff observation and mentions about Nepal's relation with India, China, Japan, Thailand, France, Britain and Israel.



Majoritarian State traces the ascendancy of Hindu nationalism in contemporary India. Led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP administration has established an ethno-religious and populist style of rule since 2014. The contributors explore how Hindutva ideology has permeated the state apparatus and formal institutions, and how Hindutva activists exert control over civil society via vigilante groups, cultural policing and violence.

MAJORITARINA STATE: HOW HINDU NATIONALISM IS CHANGING INDIA

Editor: Angana P Chatterji, Thomas Blom Hansen, Christophe Jaffrelot
Publisher: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd
Price: Rs 1438



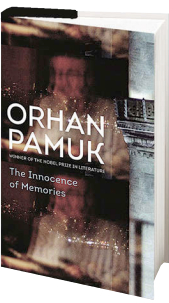
STUDIES IN NEPALI HISTORY AND SOCIETY

Vol 23 No.2 December 2018
(Published 2019)
Editors: Pratyoush Onta et al
Publisher: Mandala Book Point 2019
Price: Rs 500

Studies in Nepali History and Society: Vol 23 is a compilation of research articles about Nepal's history and society contributed by various researchers. The book among several articles includes studies about peace building and nonviolent resistance in Nepal's Tarai region; local Elections in Madhes; elected female representatives in Nepali institutions. The book also includes book reviews, commentary and notes from the archive from various writers.

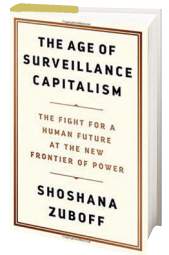


BEST-SELLER LIST HARDCOVER FICTION



1. **The Innocence of Memories** by Orhan Pamuk
2. **My Lovely Wife** by Samantha Downing
3. **Half the Night is Gone** by Amitabha Bagchi
4. **18th Abduction** by James Patterson
5. **The Only Story** by Julian Barnes

HARDCOVER NONFICTION



1. **The Age of Surveillance Capitalism** by Shoshana Zuboff
2. **India Positive** by Chetan Bhagat
3. **The McMahon Line: A Century of Discord** by J J Singh
4. **Theatre of Nepal and the People who Make it** by Carol C Davis
5. **Women in Nepali Politics** by Binda Pandey

Source: Mandala Book Point

Words of power: the best books on leadership

Here are the books examining authority from Machiavelli to Daphne du Maurier



ELIANE GLASER

Despite our supposedly post-differential era, we still seem rather wedded to strong leaders. We can only hope that whoever wins the race to be the next British prime minister will know the difference between authoritarianism and authority.

For Max Weber, the key is legitimacy. But how do you define that in an age when leaders bow to 'the will of the people'?

Our discomfort with the notion that a chosen few hold sway makes it easier to find depictions of bad leadership than

positive exemplars. Novels, from Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* to Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* to Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* portray leaders as capricious, deranged and, well, quixotic. Likewise, in *The Mirror for Magistrates*, a Tudor collection of poems, the ghosts of eminent statesmen recount their misdeeds and comeuppances while gazing ruefully at their own reflections. The poems were intended as cautionary tales for others keen to don the mantle of power.

Much scholarly ink has been spilled debating whether Machiavelli's *The Prince* is a blueprint for pragmatic ruthlessness or a subversive satire. Machiavelli was a staunch republican who was arrested and tortured for his

views. Did he dedicate his treatise to Lorenzo de' Medici—the man who had him imprisoned—in a bid to rescue his reputation, or was he thumbing his nose?

Changing attitudes towards authority can lead to long-respected literary characters being summarily knocked off their pedestals. Atticus Finch, the small-town Alabama lawyer who defends a black man in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, used to be a hero—he was even quoted admiringly by Barack Obama. But the publication of Lee's earlier novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, revealed him as a more complex character.

Leaders Eat Last, by the organisational consultant and "motivational speaker" Simon Sinek advises leaders to put under-

Our discomfort with the notion that a chosen few hold sway makes it easier to find depictions of bad leadership than positive exemplars

lings first in order to maximise their performance—presumably this also helps them forget that their boss is being paid three hundred times more than they are.

A similar strategy leads to disaster for the nameless narrator of Daphne du Maurier's luridly brilliant novel *Rebecca*. When she moves in to widower Maxim de Winter's imposing family seat, Manderley, she finds it difficult to give the servants their orders. Rather than rewarding her for her liberal attitude, they are horrified by this breaking of protocol. Unpleasant aspects of class are at work here, but the novel also offers a counterintuitive lesson in the importance of rules and norms, of authority appropriately exercised. Our hapless narrator is overpowered by the precedents of her semi-mythical predecessor, Rebecca, and Manderley burns to the ground.

The feminist scholar Jo Freeman published her essay *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* as a pamphlet in 1972—presumably after sitting through too many meetings dominated by someone insisting that everyone's voice is equally valid. In it she argues that an apparent absence of hierarchy often conceals informal and unaccountable leadership.

Hannah Arendt was a prominent critic of totalitarianism, but she defended authority as the willingness to take responsibility. Whoever replaces Theresa May must at least acknowledge that they are in charge, rejecting the modish populism that paves the way for dictators. Ambition is more dangerous in disguise.

—© 2019 The Guardian

Nadal inflicts Federer worst Grand Slam loss in 11 years

Ashleigh Barty, Marketa Vondrousova set up women's single title showdown



Ashleigh Barty returns to Amanda Anisimova in the French Open semi-final match on Friday.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS, JUNE 7

Rafael Nadal made quick work of Roger Federer in their first French Open meeting since 2011, beating his rival 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 Friday in strong wind to reach his 12th final at Roland Garros. Nadal has never lost a semi-final at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament. Never lost a final, either. And he's never lost to Federer in Paris, improving to 6-0. Overall, Nadal leads their series 24-15. Federer had won their past five meetings, but those were all on hard courts. It's a whole different task to take on Nadal on clay, in general, and at the French Open, in particular, where his one victory away from a 12th championship, which would be more than any man or woman has won at any of the Grand Slam tournaments. In Sunday's final, the No 2-seeded Nadal will take on either No 1 Novak Djokovic or No 4 Dominic Thiem. This was the first time since 2011 the four top-seeded men were in the semi-finals at Roland Garros. Like so many times before, it was Nadal's topspin-heavy lefty forehand, his relentless ball-chasing and his return game that gave Federer fits. Frustrated the guy so much that the generally stoic Federer smacked a tennis ball toward the stands after getting broken to trail 2-1 in the third set. It would soon be over. Federer, who was playing at Roland Garros for the first time since 2015, hadn't lost a set through five victories over the past two weeks. With an aggressive, head-to-the-net style, he had been broken a total of only four times by those opponents. Nadal easily exceeded that in a span of three sets across less than 2½ hours, winning 6 of 13 return games. The 37-year-old Federer, whose 20 Grand Slam titles are a record for a man, was serenaded off the court by spectators' chants of his first name. He raised his right arm for a quick wave as



Semi-final results

- Men's Singles**
- Rafael Nadal (ESP x2) bt Roger Federer (SUI x3) 6-3, 6-4, 6-2
- Women's Singles**
- Ashleigh Barty (AUS x8) bt Amanda Anisimova (USA) 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 6-3
 - Marketa Vondrousova (CZE) bt Johanna Konta (GBR x26) 7-5, 7-6 (7/2)

he walked away—perhaps for the final time. He missed the tournament in 2016 with a bad back, then skipped it the next two years to prepare for grass and hard courts. He looked quite good in his return, until running into his old nemesis. In the women's semi-finals earlier, Ash Barty came back from a set and a break down to end 17-year-old American Amanda Anisimova's break-through run with a topsy-turvy 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-3 victory. The No 8-seeded Barty, a 23-year-old Australian who took nearly two years off from tennis to play cricket, will face another unseeded teen for the championship on Saturday: unseeded 19-year-old Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic. Vondrousova also reached her first major title match, eliminating No 26 Johanna Konta of Britain 7-5, 7-6 (2). Vondrousova has not dropped a set in the tournament and can become the first teenager to win the French Open since Iva Majoli in 1997. Both matches saw massive swings of momentum, particularly Barty vs Anisimova, the 51st-ranked American who hadn't ceded a set through the quarter-finals. The semi-finals were played in difficult conditions, with drizzle that had spectators opening umbrellas, wind that reached 12-mph and temperatures around 60 degrees Fahrenheit. And they were played at unusual courts—scheduling that was criticized by women's tennis tour CEO Steve Simon as “unfair and inappropriate.” Normally, all French Open singles semi-finals are held in Court Philippe Chatrier, with the women on Thursday and men on Friday. But after a full day of play was washed out by rain Wednesday, tournament officials were forced to shuffle the schedule. The two women's semi-finals were contested simultaneously at the second- and third-biggest courts at Roland Garros instead of the main stadium.



Rafael Nadal plays a shot against Roger Federer in the French Open semi-final match on Friday.

Neymar in trouble over intimate pics

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RIO DE JANEIRO, JUNE 7

Brazil's Neymar went to a Rio de Janeiro police station on Thursday to give a statement in a probe into whether he broke the law by posting intimate pictures of a woman who accused him of rape. The football megastar went to the station in an attempt to defend himself, sitting in a wheelchair after spraining his ankle the night before in a pre-Copa America friendly that has ruled him out of the tournament. As he made his way out through a media scrum after giving his statement to police, the star striker expressed gratitude to his fans for their support. “I felt very loved,” he said. The injury to the world's most expensive player is a huge blow to host nation Brazil's preparations for the South American continental championship, which begins on June 14. Neymar hobbled off the field in the 20th minute of Brazil's 2-0 win over Qatar in Brasilia on Wednesday. A large ice pack had been strapped to his lower right leg. Neymar's club, Paris Saint-Germain, tweeted on Thursday that the player “suffered a severe sprain of the outer lateral ligament of his right ankle,” and will be “reassessed by the club's medical department within the next 72 hours.” The injury caps a troubled season on and off the field for Neymar, who faces accusations that he raped the woman, Najila Trindade Mendes de Souza, in a Paris hotel in May. Neymar denies the claims and in an attempt to defend himself, published intimate WhatsApp messages and images of his encounter with Trindade on social media—without her consent, possibly breaking Brazilian law.

Gorillas enter final as Malla fashions Police victory

ADARSHA DHAKAL
KATHMANDU, JUNE 7

Samridhi Gorillas entered the final of the Women's Nepal Basketball League defeating ISO Kites 54-44 for their fifth consecutive victory in the tournament. The match was the resumption of Thursday's game which had to be called off with both teams tied on 39 points with 7:21 left in the final quarter. ISO Kites, who had bolstered their team by inclusion of two Filipinos and one Bhutanese hoopsters, were on top of their game a day earlier but on Friday they failed to offer any challenge against the table-toppers. While Gorillas added 15 points to their total, ISO Kites failed to convert in their possession and netted only five. Sony Waiba sealed the victory for Gorillas with

15 seconds remaining. Srijana Giri scored 14 points for Gorillas who now lead the standings with 10 points. Allana May Lim of Philippines was the biggest contributor for ISO Kite with 30 points. After their third defeat, ISO Kites are now in a danger of league stage elimination and require a huge margin victory over Nepal Police Club. In their first leg, NPC had claimed a 76-63 win. NPC, whose only two losses came against Gorillas, defeated Saipal Academy 71-58 with Anusha Malla yet again making an overall impact in the game. Malla scored 20 points, took eight rebounds, made six assists and had four steals as NPC put a foot in the final. They just need to make sure they don't lose to ISO Kites by a big margin. Saipal, winless in five games, are already out of the tournament. Although the scorelines suggest otherwise, Saipal had shown promise with the way they fared in the first quarter on Friday. NPC only managed to take a slim one-point (15-14) lead in the first quarter. Saipal also managed to take lead in the second quarter at 18-17 but two 3-pointers from Malla and one from Preeti Tulachan helped them race away in the game. Malla scored eight points in the second quarter for NPC who headed into the second half with a 35-28 lead. Another 21-15 lead in the third quarter handed a 13-point lead heading into the decider at 56-43. Saipal gave a tough contest in the final quarter which ended 15-15. While Malla sunk three 3-pointers, her sister Alisha Malla sunk four 3-pointers to contribute 16 points. Shreya Khadka and Tulachan also netted nine points apiece. Shreya also had 10 rebounds in the game. Sushma Gautam scored 15 points for Saipal and Amisha Ghale rolled in 13 points. The women's double league concludes on Saturday with ISO Kite taking on NPC and Gorillas playing Saipal. The top two teams will directly compete in the final slated for June 22.

POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA
NPC player Anusha Malla (right) in action against Saipal Academy during their Nepal Basketball League match in Kathmandu on Friday.

De Jong at the heart as Dutch revival continues with England win

It was a victory that came courtesy of two dreadful errors from England in extra time



Netherlands' Memphis Depay in action against England during their Nations League semi-final match in Guimaraes, Portugal, on Thursday.

REUTERS
GUIMARAES (PORTUGAL), JUNE 7

Ronald Koeman's Netherlands team continued their impressive renaissance on Thursday by earning a place in the inaugural Nations League final with a 3-1 triumph over England after extra time to secure a meeting with hosts Portugal. It was a victory that came courtesy of two dreadful errors from England in the extra period and thanks to the intervention of a VAR review that cancelled out what could have been a winner for Gareth Southgate's side in the 83rd minute. But the specifics of the deciding goals—after the game was level at 1-1 in 90 minutes—should not take away from the achievement of Koeman's team in setting up a fascinating clash with Cristiano Ronaldo and company on Sunday in Porto. A year on from a World Cup the Dutch watched from home having failed to qualify, their young side now have a chance of winning UEFA's new tournament and, whatever status that brings, Koeman cannot be any-

thing but delighted with their progress. To reach the last four in Portugal, the Netherlands had to finish top of a group with 2018 World Cup winners France and four-times world champions Germany—beating both on home soil. Then the Dutch had to come from behind on Thursday against an England team that reached the semi-finals in the last World Cup in Russia and came into this competition with a real sense that they could win their first major silverware since 1966. While England will rue their defensive errors, the Netherlands certainly showed why they are going to be genuine contenders in next year's European Championship. Although much of the buzz around the Dutch has focused, rightly, on the young talent in an exciting Ajax Amsterdam team that reached the Champions League semi-finals this season, Koeman has been able to blend them with an experienced core. Champions League winner Virgil van Dijk at the back is a once in a generation quality centre-half, while in midfield his Liverpool team mate Georginio

Wijnaldum combines technical skill with a physical presence and football brain. At left back Daley Blind delivered a composed and assured performance that must have left Manchester United fans wondering if their struggling club let him go too soon. But the player who stood out at a rainy Estadio Afonso Henriques, was the 22-year-old central midfielder Frenkie de Jong who will move from Ajax to Barcelona next month. In a game with more than the amount of mistakes expected at this level, De Jong's consistent quality shone through. In the bustle of midfield, his touch was light, his vision sharp and his delivery precise, while everything about his display suggested that this is a player ideally suited to continue the fine tradition of Dutch players at the Nou Camp. The Netherlands have though brought style and class to the beautiful game since the 1970s and those who have appreciated their football across the decades can only be pleased to see them moving back to the upper echelons once again.

