



# THE KATHMANDU POST

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Maximum Minimum



People engage in various activities at Tundikhel in the Capital following a pause in rain on Saturday. As the Valley's open spaces shrink, people have fewer places to walk around and play.

POST PHOTO: SANJOG MANANDHAR

## In ruling party, a cornered Oli yields to Dahal's manoeuvrings

Party insiders say the two leaders have realised that there is no option but to reconcile.



Nepal Communist Party (NCP) Co-chairmen Pushpa Kamal Dahal and KP Sharma Oli.

TIKA R PRADHAN  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

Just as concerns were growing among ruling party leaders over a widening rift and trust deficit between the two top leaders, KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal appear to have found common ground.

According to party leaders, the two co-chairmen have finalised after several rounds of talks tentative work divisions for the central members, departments and committees between the leaders of the former CPN-UML and Maoist party.

According to the leaders, the two chairmen will decide the names of

heads of 32 departments—18 allocated for the former UML and 14 for the former Maoist Centre—during the secretariat meeting scheduled for Sunday. The two chairmen are expected to zero in on the gentleman's agreement reached between them in May last year after completing the outstanding works related to the party unification.

While reconciliation between the two top leaders is good for the party, insiders say they were not sure what prompted this.

Many believe the two leaders must have reached some sort of understanding on the gentleman's agreement. "The sudden change could be the result of an understanding on moving ahead with the gentleman's agreement," said Hemraj Bhandari, a central member who represents the former Maoists.

The agreement between Oli and Dahal, made last year just ahead of the announcement of party unification, has it that both would run the government in turn.

However, it became a bone of contention only recently, when Dahal went public, insinuating Oli should honour the agreement.

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### BRUNCH WITH THE POST | 16

Arpana Rayamajhi:  
You can't make  
everyone happy

## Congress lawmaker's move of supporting governing parties' motion puts main opposition in a dilemma

Amresh Kumar Singh goes against his own party which has been raising voice against the government in Parliament.

BINOD GHIMIRE  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

A week after the Nepali Congress joined hands with the Rastriya Janata Party-Nepal to strengthen its opposition to the government in the federal parliament, one of its lawmakers, Amresh Kumar Singh, has backed the ruling parties in registering a motion of public importance in the Lower House, prompting the main opposition to find a face-saver and discuss the code of ethics for its parliamentarians.

Singh, along with Nepal Communist Party (NCP) leader Prabhu Sah and Samajbadi Party Nepal Chief Whip Uma Shankar Argariya, on Friday registered a motion which envisions short- and long-term government actions to support and rehabilitate flood and landslide victims.

Pushpa Bhusal, the Nepali Congress whip, said Singh had made his move without the party's consent. "It is purely his personal decision," said Bhusal. It's a general practice for a member of parliament to take permission from the chief whip or whip of the party before making any move in Parliament.

"The party learned about Singh's move only after the motion was registered," Bhusal told the Post. "The party will decide what should be done next."

She said it wasn't a right step by Singh to support the motion moved by the ruling party while the opposition forces were uniting against the government.

While discussing Singh's move, the



Amresh Kumar Singh

party will also seek to develop a code of ethics for its lawmakers, according to Bhusal. But Singh's move has put the main opposition in a dilemma.

Voting against the motion would mean standing against its own lawmaker and standing in favour would mean supporting the ruling party.

Bhusal said the party could ask Singh to withdraw his support to the motion.

The Post's repeated attempts to reach out to Singh for comments went unanswered. The Congress and Rastriya Janata Party last week decided to jointly raise their voice against the government. They have even jointly obstructed the House of Representatives at least three times.

>> Continued on page 3

## Telemedicine service, once a boon for rural population, is almost defunct now

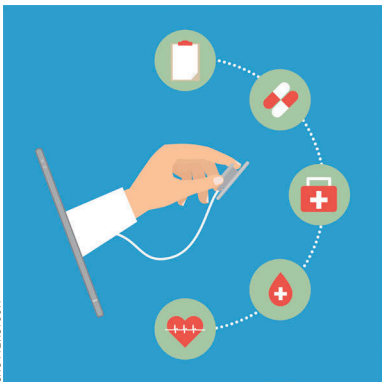
Officials admit its effectiveness but say lack of funds resulted in a halt to a potential game-changer in rural health care.

ARJUN POUDEL  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

When a woman was brought to Bajura District Hospital at Kolti nine years ago, it did not take long for Dr Gunraja Awasthi, who was then a medical officer, and his team to figure out that her condition was critical. Family members had taken the woman, who was in her teens, first to shamans and then to the nearby health post and primary health centre before bringing her to the district hospital, a two-and-a-half-day walk from her village.

"The baby had already died in the womb. The case was complicated. Her condition was deteriorating by the minute," Dr Awasthi, who is currently the chief of the Sudurpaschim Regional Health Directorate, recounted. "Our immediate concern was saving the mother."

At a hospital in a remote region like Bajura, where there is a lack of specialists, the only resort for Dr Awasthi was telemedicine. "Our team got in touch with a team of gynaecologists at



Patan Hospital, who instructed us through video conferencing on how we could detach the foetus from the womb," Dr Awasthi told the Post last week. "We saved the woman."

When the Health Ministry started telemedicine service from 25 districts—and later added another five districts—it had announced that it would be expanded throughout the country. Around 25 hospitals of

remote districts of Nepal used to consult the Lalitpur-based Patan Hospital for telemedicine services.

Today, none of the hospitals or health facilities in the nine districts of Sudurpaschim is using telemedicine service, said Dr Awasthi.

In a country like Nepal where ensuring affordable and accessible community health care is a major challenge, telemedicine can be a game changer, say officials and health workers. But as countries around the globe embrace this model of health care, Nepal is losing ground.

"The long-distance medicine service was popular and quite effective," said Dr Bishnu Sharma, director at Patan Hospital.

"But video conferencing service has been stopped for years. It is not because of us. Government health facilities are not using it anymore."

Telemedicine centre at Patan Hospital used to be in operation round the clock with seven doctors dedicated to service.

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# Soaring prices and fall in demand see bankers struggle to sell gold

The yellow metal traded at Rs65,500 per tola on Friday—on par with an all-time high price first recorded on June 25.

KRISHANA PRASAIN  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

Banks are left with around 750kg of unsold gold in stock after traders are reluctant to purchase the precious yellow metal, citing the fall in market demand amid soaring prices, according to Nepal Bankers’ Association.

On Friday, gold traded at Rs65,500 per tola—on par with an all-time high price first recorded on June 25.

The bullion market had opened with the price of Rs64,500 per tola last Sunday, and closed at Rs65,500 per tola on Friday—up by Rs1,000 a tola in a week.

Anil Sharma, executive director of the association, said the banks were forced to stop importing gold as bullion traders stopped buying gold. “Over the past month gold has hit a record high price,” he said.

Nepal Rastra Bank has allowed 24 banks to import 20kg of gold on a daily basis to sell in the domestic market. The central bank allows the banks to import up to 25kg of gold when its demand soars during the festive and wedding seasons.

The bullion traders said the increasing price has created a reverse trend in bullion market as buyers are selling more gold than bullion traders. “With the successive price increases, bullion market in Kathmandu Valley is flooded with sellers, with almost no buyers,” said Tej Ratna Shakya, former president of the Federation of Nepal Gold and Silver Dealers’ Association. Traders are not buying raw gold from banks as they have replenished their stock by buying gold from individual sellers, Shakya said. “Surprisingly, the rush to sell gold by individuals increased even during the wedding season that lasted until Tuesday.”

In the domestic market, the gold price has surged after it was announced during the budget presentation on May 29 to raise the import duty on the yellow metal by Rs800 per 10 grams.

According to Shakya, the demand for gold started to decline after the price crossed Rs60,000 per tola. “Traders across the country have been struggling to sell even 10kg of gold a day,” said Shakya, adding that the gold price has been escalating mainly due to the rising price in the international market. Nepal imports gold from Dubai and Switzerland.



POST PHOTO: ANISH REGAMI

Participants of the Kathmandu Kora Cycling Challenge-2019 are seen at the start of the annual event in Patan Durbar Square, Lalitpur, on Saturday.

# House rejects National Assembly’s decision to scrap administrative court, inviting conflict

In May, the House’s move to send the Passport Bill to the President for authentication without waiting for National Assembly’s decision had sparked controversy.

TIKA R PRADHAN  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

With the House of Representatives refusing to accept the provision of scrapping administrative court that was endorsed by the National Assembly, a conflict has surfaced between the two Houses of federal parliament.

On Tuesday, a meeting of the parliamentary Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee rejected the provision of having an administrative bench at each High Court instead of an administrative court in Kathmandu. The committee of the Lower House had revived the proposal of the government to have a powerful administrative court in Kathmandu, which was rejected by the Upper House.

The National Assembly had endorsed its Legislative Management Committee’s decision to reject the gov-

ernment’s proposal to establish a powerful administrative court in Kathmandu. An administrative court led by Kashiraj Dahal is already in place here. Anxious with the NA’s decision, chairman of the Administrative Court, Dahal had been lobbying for reviving the court.

The Upper House committee, however, had decided to place an administrative bench at the High Courts of all the provinces instead of a separate court in the Capital claiming that it would make it difficult for civil servants outside the Valley to file cases.

The rejection of the Assembly’s decision by the Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee of the Lower House, some lawmakers say, could lead to a confrontation between the two Houses. “If the National Assembly refused to accept the decision of the Lower House, it could lead to a confrontation,” said Ram Narayan Bidari, a lawmaker from the Upper

House, who represents ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Asked how the NA lawmakers are taking the rejection of its decision Bidari said he was not aware. “It depends on how individual lawmakers would take the decision.”

Now with the change in the provisions that it had endorsed, the bill now must be taken to the Assembly for endorsement. If members of the National Assembly took the issue as an offence, it would be the first case that leads the federal parliament to form a joint panel to resolve the issue.

“If the NA refused to accept the change, a joint meeting of the Houses would discuss the issue and a joint panel could also be formed to resolve it,” said Brikhesh Chandra Lal, an Assembly member from the Rastriya Janata Party-Nepal.

Given that the ruling party has a majority in both the Houses, Lal said the communist party could endorse

the bill through a majority if it wanted. A number of National Assembly members said the Lower House committee could have been influenced by the lobbying of those who benefit from the administrative court and leaders who wish to serve their interests by appointing their people.

However, the Lower House members said they have only corrected the NA’s decision instead of opposing it. “We wanted an administrative court in each of the seven provinces that would reduce the pressure of cases,” said Umashankar Argariya, a Lower House member from the Samajbadi Party Nepal.

This is not the first time that a conflict between the two Houses has emerged. In May, claiming that the National Assembly failed to return the bill within its deadline of two months, the House of Representatives had sent the Passport Bill to the President for authentication while

a committee of the Assembly was discussing it.

The move had sparked controversy as members of the Assembly had vehemently criticised the act claiming that laws cannot be endorsed bypassing the Upper House.

On May 22, President Bidya Devi Bhandari returned the bill to the federal parliament without authentication, requesting a review of its provision that could restrict citizens from getting a passport. The president’s office had cited “unclear provisions over the issuance and usage of different types of passports” as the reason for sending the bill back. This had caused confusion among the authorities on how to move ahead with the bill.

Since that was the first time the President had ever sent a bill back without authentication, the House of Representatives has tabled the bill after a few months.

# More than 18 months after Karki report, government yet to take action

NAYAK PAUDEL  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

More than 18 months after a high-level commission formed to investigate irregularities in medical education and suggest solutions submitted its report, the government has not taken action against 43 individuals accused by the report.

On July 6 last year, the three-member commission led by Gauri Bahadur Karki, former chairperson of the Special Court, submitted its report to then-prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

The late Dr Upendra Devkota and Surya Prasad Gautam, then joint-secretary at the education ministry, were the members.

In the report, the commission accused 43 individuals, including top Tribhuvan University officials, former Nepal Medical Council officials and senior doctors and professors for their dubious roles in granting affiliations to medical colleges, conducting entrance examinations, setting up fee structures, allocating seats and inspecting colleges.

But the government has neither made its report public nor has taken any action against the accused.

According to government officials, they are still seeking suggestions from the concerned authorities regarding action against the accused.

“We are consulting the Office of Attorney General and the law ministry,” Hari Lamsal, joint-secretary at the education ministry, told the Post.

However, an official at the education ministry said they were not clear who should take action against the officials accused in the report, explaining the reason behind the delay.

“Top-level officials of universities have been accused in the report and the universities are autonomous organisations in which the education ministry cannot interfere. In the case of doctors, they come under the health

ministry,” said the ministry official on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to speak to the media.

Tribhuvan University Vice-chancellor Tirtha Raj Khaniya, Rector Sudha Tripathi, Registrar Dilli Upreti, Dean at the Institute of Science and Technology Ram Prasad Khatiwada and Dean at the Faculty of Law Tara Prasad Sapkota are among those accused of committing the irregularities.

“Tribhuvan University has its senate, chaired by the prime minister, which can take action against the accused officials. But it has not,” said the official. “It is true that it’s unclear over who should take action but the government can clear the confusion, which it has not done.”

The top university officials were found to have played a dubious role in granting affiliations to the Kathmandu National Medical College despite its lack of required infrastructure.

In the report, a copy of which was seen by the Post, the commission has suggested that the government remove Khaniya, Tripathi and Upreti from their posts and not appoint them to any government or quasi-government offices in future.

“The government can discuss in the Cabinet and clarify who should take action against whom. The prime minister holds the power to select officials for top university posts and to take action against them as well,” Karki told the Post.

The report also accused the ousted chief of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority Lokman Singh Karki to have interfered in the entrance examination of Kathmandu University.

However, the accused officials have been expressing strong reservations over the report by questioning its legitimacy.

Issuing a statement, the Tribhuvan University registrar’s office said in July last year that the report was sub-

mitted despite a lack of majority as it came as per Karki’s decision alone.

According to the registrar’s office, Gautam, a member of the commission, registered a note of dissent, while Devkota was not present during the drafting of the report and when it was submitted.

However, Karki said Devkota, who was then undergoing treatment in London, sent him an email giving his consent to submit the report.

Recently, former registrar of Nepal Medical Council Dr Nilmani Upadhyay, one of the top names among the 43 individuals accused in the report, had applied for the post of vice-chair of the Medical Education Commission.

In the report, Upadhyay is alleged to have been associated with two government organisations—the Nepalese Army Institute of Health Sciences and the Nepal Medical Council—at once and received salaries, perks and facilities from both. He is also accused of pressuring Gandaki Medical College, while he was the registrar at the council, to employ his wife.

According to experts who demand quality education, the government needs to take action against the corrupt officials rather than letting the report gather dust.

“As there is a question over the legitimacy of the Karki report, the government needs to take a stand. The government should either say it cannot take action as per the report or it should be able to take action,” Kedar Bhakta Mathema, former vice-chancellor of Tribhuvan University, told the Post.

“The government can form a committee to look into the matter. As the officials were found to have been playing a dubious role, the government needs to address the report seriously,” said Mathema, who also coordinated the high-level committee formed to recommend a national policy on medical education.

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# Dharmaraj Thapa’s musical odyssey

The melody of early modern Nepali history inspires us to look into our own times today.

ABHI SUBEDI

WORDS & ECHOES



This article draws from a discourse I presented on the birth anniversary of Dharmaraj Thapa (1924-2014) in Kathmandu recently. In my view, Thapa’s journey represents the rainbow of the early modern Nepali historical times experienced after the country became free from the Rana oligarchy in 1950. A humble, somewhat village-oriented, confident and charismatic poet, collector and singer of folk songs, Thapa was a mirror of history because he was a witness to the crises, metamorphoses, political sincerities, bravados and apogee of monarchical power. Thapa also took the early anthropological initiatives. I have written articles about him, given seminars on his contribution to Nepali singing and folk song collections, and emulated his voice and style for light-hearted moments in public. Here I will look at the features of the early modern Nepali history by alluding to poet Thapa’s various interests and associations.

When Dharmaraj Thapa set out on a bard’s journey Nepal was just waking up to the amorphous, yet, powerful possibilities opened up by the end of the Rana oligarchy in 1950. That transformation opened Nepal to the wider world putting an end to a century of censorship and restrictions. The youth, mostly guided by democracy or left-oriented principles, followed the political path. They adopted multiple methods to express the euphoria of the changing times. Writing poetry and lyrics was one prominent interest at that time. Not only that, taking one’s invention to the audience was another guiding principle which was performed by singing songs or reading poetry about the social or revolutionary change in society. Dharmaraj Thapa wrote lyrical poems and sang; he collected folk songs and sang them effectively. He created music for his words.

Thapa felt the words and understood



the sensitivity of the times when he wrote them. One telling historical episode is in order. Dharmaraj Thapa wrote a song about the rebellious political leader named KI Singh (1906-1982) who, unhappy with the Delhi Agreement of 1950 between the Ranas and the Nepali Congress leaders that ended Ranacracy and created the first civilian controlled government, continued the so-called revolution, got arrested for that and was put in the Singh Durbar prison. KI Singh escaped the prison with the help of the security guards on 22 February 1952 and fled to China seeking political asylum. Thapa serenaded a revolutionary song *krantikaari hain vira ki singh* or ‘oh, brave KI Singh where did you go after breaking the prison!’ He sang about KI Singh’s virtue, honesty and revolutionary spirit. Thapa visited different places singing this song. He said to me in a personal interview that police came to disrupt his singing, and even beat him up. He recalled that with a sense of pride. Thapa had taken umbrage at one incident

Like Rabindranath Tagore, on a small scale, Dharmaraj Thapa wrote music for his poems.

though. KI Singh returned after staying in China for three years and eight months, in 1955. Progressive writers like Laxmi Prasad Devkota and Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan met Singh in Chababil and drove him on a jeep to Tundikhel or the open greens, with great fanfare. They gave speeches there, but the bard Dharmaraj Thapa was nowhere to be seen. He was not invited to meet KI Singh let alone serenade the song about him. But Dharmaraj Thapa said such incidents made no difference to him because he sang for the people and the nation.

One important quality of Dharmaraj Thapa’s music was that this folk singer, this poet without any training could create music for his songs according to the mood and genius of the times. For example, the now lost KI Singh song is sung in high pitch; the sharp rise and fall of tone is orchestrated with the words of the song that represents the revolutionary spirit of the times. Thapa could change the tone

and melody according to the subject of the song. His famous song about Buddha janmecha buddha nepalma written for the international Buddhist conference in Nepal many years ago is an example of that. His singing here is totally different from the KI Singh song. The cadence that he employs in this song brilliantly captures the serenity evoked by the Buddha. I am very impressed and surprised by Thapa’s musical talent. He had the great musical sensibility to give music to his words according to the mood of the historical times. His measuring scale for that was a combination of poetic strength, his voice and melody.

The other quality of his music came from his visceral relationship with the land, geography, and the passion with which he wrote and sang. He got this sense, this sensation of proximity with the land through his body, his legs mainly. He measured this scale of music through his countless travels across the country from where he picked up the tones, melodies, words and the power of the folkloristics. He sang songs directly drawn from his extensive travels all over the country. That was the first category. The second category of his songs was his own poetic creation. Like Rabindranath Tagore, on a small scale, Dharmaraj Thapa wrote music for his poems. But I do not have enough space here to cite them. The songs he wrote and sang under this category were message-oriented like dhuru dhuru narou aama, ‘our Shukraraj Shastri got arrested/ people got the news that he was going to be hanged’, ‘can you douse the flames of hunger with tears of lamentations?’ And so on. Dharmaraj Thapa looked for leaders, heroes; from KI Singh to king Mahendra, but he never put anyone but Nepal on his head when confronted with the challenge of choice. But in later times, he remained disillusioned on this score. One impressive song goes like this: *siramathi nepala amalai* or ‘I keep mother Nepal on my head, and king Mahendra on my shoulders’. He measured music, words, politics and love through his body, through his walks.

Dharmaraj Thapa visited the Indian Nepalis of various places serenading *Nepalile maya maryo barilai* or ‘oh, how the Nepalis have forgotten us!’ A Darjeeling poet Agamsingh Giri’s song *naulakha tara udai* that Ambar Gurung made very famous by composing music and rendering his voice, was an inverse nostalgia, a metaphorical response to Thapa’s song *nepalile maya maryo barilai*.

The melody of early modern Nepali history inspires us to look into our own times today.

# Bastille Day and the global populist uprising

The recent protests in Hong Kong reflect deep identity differences that must be resolved.

ANDREW SHENG



July 14 is celebrated in France as Bastille Day, on which day 230 years ago, French peasants stormed the Bastille prison in Paris and sparked off the French Revolution. Thus began the populist movement that overturned the Ancien Regime (old order) of absolute monarchy and replaced it with the popular creed of liberty, equality and fraternity.

There is a popular story that when Henry Kissinger asked the late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1972 what was his view of the French Revolution, he said it was too early to tell. The American translator at that meeting, today Professor Chas Freeman, has stated that the correct question was not about the 1789 revolution, but the 1968 French student uprising in Paris. Zhou Enlai was, of course, French-trained and himself an active participant of the Chinese students’ revolt in Lyon in 1921. Born out of student protests, the Chinese Communist Party has a deep understanding of how protests work.

Bastille Day this year was celebrated with a show of French military might, as if they need that to deal with the Yellow Vest protests. Perhaps they remember the violent history of the French Revolution, which had to deal with both internal and external fighting, as it was opposed by the monarchies in Britain, Austria and other European states. From 1793-94, there was a Reign of Terror, in which many nobles and ‘enemies of the people’ were publicly tried and guillotined. Order was only restored internally when Napoleon effectively took power but spent the next twenty years fighting Britain and the rest of monarchic Europe.

Is populism defined by economics or culture? Since the Brexit referendum in 2016, experts have sought to understand populism, defined as a mass movement with anti-elite, authoritarian and often nationalist elements that are rooted in economic insecurity and identity politics.

If it is economics alone, Harvard Professor Dani Rodrik thinks that the right economic policies can deal with economic inequalities and regional imbalances. But if it is culture and val-



Hong Kong residents gathered at the anti-extradition bill protest on June 9, 2019.

ues, then there are fewer policy options, making the structural changes much tougher to solve.

The real problem is that even if there are good policies available to deal with inequities, the politics have become so polarised that it seems impossible to arrive at the right mix of policies. To prevent populism sliding into chaos, it will take careful diagnosis before the right way forward toward reconciliation, compromise and rebuilding of trust can occur.

Professor Julia Azari (Foreign Affairs 2019) argues that American democracy is dysfunctional because of three legacy deficiencies. First, modern political issues exist largely at the national level, but voting is based at the local level, which means that the older, rural white population is endowed with more Senate seats than the urban, increasingly racially mixed voters. Second, the party politics has changed dramatically along very polarised and entrenched lines, with the Republican Party increasingly willing to take hostile measures to prevent reforms demanded by the

Democrats, and also block judiciary appointments and legislative action along ideological lines, often favouring the rich, but espousing Christian-Judaic religious fervour. Third, even though the American Civil War was fought over slavery, race remains a divisive factor in American politics, as shown by Congress’s recently rebuke of President Trump’s asking four non-white Democrat Congress-women to go back to where they come from’.

The issue of race, religion and identity lies at the heart of recent populism.

Like the US, the rise of the right wing in populist politics in Britain and Europe reflect these identity issues. First, there is a generational difference in voting patterns. During the Brexit referendum, the young who would have preferred to Remain did not vote, whereas the older generation voted more for Leave. The preference for British identity and sovereignty meant an underlying resentment of the growing loss of sovereign power to the European Commission. It was this deep-seated concern about British sovereignty and identity that prompts the

170,000 mostly white and older members of the Conservative Party who will decide on not just the next British Prime Minister, but also the fate of the Brexit negotiations.

In Europe, ethnic and religious factors underlie the fears of right-wing conservatives who have also voiced their loss of economic sovereignty to Brussels (the seat of the European Commission), as well as fears of being overwhelmed by growing immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. The Hungarian and Italian right-wing parties, for example, are more comfortable with working with Russia, but much more against immigration. Even as Europe struggles to revive economic growth, how to hold Europe together as populist interests diverge is precisely the divide between local politics and national interests.

This divide exists also in Hong Kong. It is clear that after 156 years under British colonial rule, there are cultural differences between Hong Kongers and Mainlanders. The recent protests in Hong Kong reflect deep identity differences that must be resolved before the One Country, Two Systems mandate expires by 2047.

Thus both the Mainland and the Hong Kong community must arrive at a new social understanding on how to stay together as one nation that can also accommodate diverse opinions and cultural differences.

The Azari analysis of the national-local divide has excluded the geo-political dimension. Globalisation has already eroded the lines of national sovereignty as defined by the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, because of the rapid spread of knowledge and trade. Nevertheless, national governments still resent any foreign intervention in what they construe as domestic concerns.

This is why the young protesters in Hong Kong have no appreciation of the serious implications of calling on G20 intervention for their cause. By escalating a ‘within-family quarrel’ to an ‘outside-family’ dispute, the risk of ‘Balkanisation’ (fragmentation that invites foreign intervention, including war in the case of the Balkans) is something no one in the region would want.

In short, if we fail to deal with domestic economic inequalities through the right policies early enough, and we allow the more deep-seated cultural differences to surface, then the problems become more intractable than expected.

Getting the political wisdom to see that prevention is better than the cure is the tough part. Now the reconciliation and healing process becomes the real political test ahead.

Sheng writes on global issues for Asia News Network, of which The Kathmandu Post is a member.

Politics have become so polarised that it seems impossible to arrive at the right mix of policies.



THE BLACKBOARD

The last dance

BIBEK KHANAL

To the slightest change of beat we changed the movement of our arms. Every time the octave changed, we kept our feet on the different part of the grass. Every time she saw me smile, she came into my arms and I made her fly like a swan dancing over a lake.

It was supposed to be our last dance. The sky also seemed sad in our farewell dance. To hide its sadness, the sky had already covered itself with clouds, and the moon was not able to see us dancing. Later that night the moon showed up and it was brighter than ever. The moon looked as if the sun had arrived in the darkness.

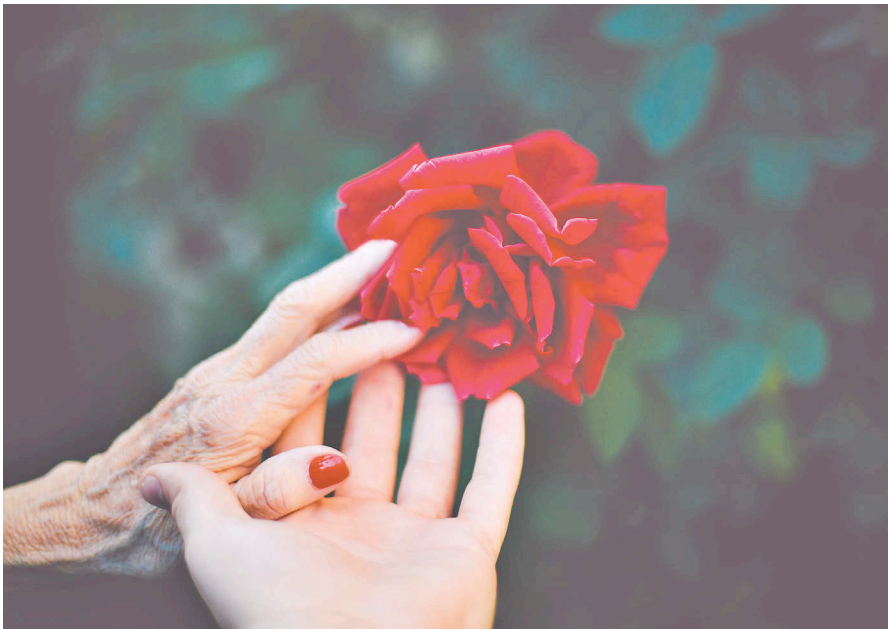
I felt her hands tickling me. Her

Infinite as if we were together there in that particular moment. A moment in which you could live in forever. That second, so long that you could live your entire life in it. The stare from her eyes where I could see our stories being told. I didn't want that dance to end. I wanted to keep dancing forever. However, I had to go, as every perfect thing eventually comes to an end.

She crossed her arms and rested her head on my chest. My heart felt the warmth of the moment. With her forehead resting over mine I struggled to look at her eyes. What I felt was her breathing, and I fell more in love with her.

I knew I was in love. I was in love for the first and the last time.

Grieving heart



MAMINA SHRESTHA

The normalcy of things isn't always a thing that gives us the solace we need. The last time I met Maa, I wanted to ask her to tell me random stories from her childhood, any piece from the past that she could scrap off. "Maa..." was the only word that escaped my mouth. I was never the granddaughter who would ask things like that. That week too, I stopped myself midway.

The folds in her skin were darkened by the wounds she earned every time she visited the hospital. The brown patches had increased over the past few weeks. The afternoon sun was bouncing off her clear, pale skin. She looked luminous. The dull brown patches on her wrists and feet seemed out of place, like wrong strokes on a canvas. They didn't belong there. She didn't deserve them.

A few strands on her forehead were now silver white. The recent hospital stays had been long and tiring. She had no chance to paint them black. Three days after she was discharged, I had pointed to her hair and teased her.

"Now you finally look like a grandmother, Maa! The silver hair suits you well. Don't colour it now, okay?" I had said. "Really? The silver hair looks nice on me? Okay, now I will let all of my hair become like this," Maa had answered back with a lingering smile.

The last time I met Maa she was complaining about how this winter had been hard on her: "I feel too weak for anything this year. I feel like I have been sick forever," she said. After a while, she rested her head on the armrest of the sofa that served as a makeshift bed in the newly refurbished living room. That was when I noticed that the room was warmer and airier than the other room Maa slept in. Maa woke up after a few minutes and asked me about work. I told her about the

classes I taught the week before. Maa asked me if it was hard having to manage college early in the morning and then working till late in the evening. "You were sick last week weren't you? Your mother told me you had fever. Are you good now?" Maa inquired. My head was buzzing and I felt warm and tingly and cold, all at the same time. My fever wasn't entirely gone. "I am a lot better now. But I want to go home early today," I answered.

In silence, Maa and I drifted back to our own train of thoughts. There was nothing to feel weird about in the comforting silence. I had denied Maa's offer for lunch. It was a rare day for me to deny samosas. But that day, I just wanted to sit close to Maa and read my book.

Now as I think of that day, there are only block of memories that I can put together. There are so many gaps which I will want to fill in with well-versed dialogues that never really happened. Memories are a tricky place to be at. They are never ull. But Maa, today was a slow fire. It ached. It hurt. It broke. It rose in smoke in all shades of grey and it was weird.

One moment I was smiling thinking that now Baa and you were not alone anymore. On the other hand, I remembered how you had so many dreams and wishes besides Baa that you had left undiscovered.

They brought in the colourful shawl you had lent me in a particularly chilly fall afternoon and set it to flames right next to you. In that moment, the warmth the shawl gave me that day vanished, and I choked on my own breath. It hurt.

I always told you looked lovely in all colors. But Maa, today they hid your body in yellow piece of cloth and I almost didn't recognise you from afar. Maa, I don't think you look good in yellow.

*Shrestha is an undergraduate student at St Xavier's College*

FICTION PARK

KASHI BK

Yuvraj was only 8 years old when he and his family sold their house in Naudanda Village in Kaski district and moved to Kathmandu. At 20, he left for the United States for his undergraduate degree, and by 28, he had completed his master's degree in psychology from the University of Illinois.

In the 20 years since he left his village, he hadn't returned home once. So, when he visited Nepal after his post graduation and told his parents that he would like to visit his village during his stay in the country, they were pleasantly surprised.

Yuvraj was seven when his father took him to Kathmandu for the first time. Yuvraj cried the entire return journey to the villge. He cried saying he didn't want to return to the village. Sympathetic passengers tried coaxing young Yuvraj into not crying by giving him candies and making funny faces. But Yuvraj would have none of it. The not-so-sympathetic passengers looked at the father-son duo disapprovingly and some even made comments like "kasto naterne baccha ho, baccha bhaeko bus ma ta chadnai hundaina, kasto dhukha diney bachha." As young Yuvraj kept on with his mournful wail, his father kept apologising profusely to fellow passengers.

After moving to Kathmandu, his parents visited the village every year, but Yuvraj never went with them. They never insisted him to. They were worried that if they forced him to go with them, he would cry the entire journey and disturb everybody. When Yuvraj was 12, his father asked him if he would like to go to the village with him during Dashain, Yuvrja flatly refused, like he always had.

That evening at the dinner table, Yuvraj out of the blue told his parents that he doesn't like visiting the village because the place reminds him of his paternal grandmother a lot. She passed



away when Yuvraj was seven. A few weeks after her death Yuvraj's father took him to Kathmandu. The two visited all the major temples in the city and prayed for the departed soul.

Yuvraj was very close to his grandmother and loved her deeply. He slept with her until she passed away. He only went to school if she took him, ate his medicines only when she fed them to him. Every Monday, the two visited the temple at the end of the village, and every summer Saturday, the two went to Phedi Khola, an hour walk from the village. There, the two spent the whole day bathing, washing clothes, and fishing.

When she passed away, it was a shock to everybody in the village. She wasn't suffering from any life threatening illnesses. One night,

Delayed goodbye

she went to bed with Yuvraj, just like she had for many years, and didn't wake up the next day. When Yuvraj woke up in the morning and found his grandmother still in bed, he nudged her and told her to wake up. When she didn't respond, a worried Yuvraj alarmed his parents. Everything after that happened in a blur. His mother cried, his father sobbed, and young Yuvraj had trouble understanding what had happened. He knew something terrible had happened to his beloved grandmother, but death was a concept he hadn't grasped yet. He kept telling every-

one who visited the house to pay their respects to the family that his grandmother will come back again. He told them that she loved him too much to just leave forever. On the seventh day of her death, Yuvraj told his parents that he didn't think his grandmother was coming back again. That night, he told them he didn't want to sleep in her room, and that he would like to sleep alone in the room on the ground floor of the house. When his father placed a photo of his grandmother beside his bed, Yuvraj asked him to remove it. It was his favourite photo of her. In

the photo, his late grandmother was in her 20s and wore a bright red sari. She carried a bunch of marigold flowers in her hand. Marigold was her favourite flower, and as a result it became Yuvraj's favourite flower, too.

Yuvraj took the last flight from Kathmandu to Pokhara. From the city, his village was a two-hour drive. He rented a motorcycle from Lakeside, and set out for his destination. It was a cold November evening, and the wind was bone-chilling cold. Yuvraj regretted his decision to ride a motorcycle to his village. An hour into the ride, he stopped at a small tea shop beside the road. It was getting dark. He learned from the tea shop owner that the name of the place was Phedi, a

name it got from the river that flowed via the village. The name didn't register with him. He had been away for 20 years, which was long enough time for one's memory to start forgetting things.

At the corner of the shop, Yuvraj saw a young woman waiting. She told her that she was waiting for a bus to Naudanda. He told her that he was originally from the village and was going there and that he can drop her as well. Yuvraj found it a bit surprising when she didn't ask him who his parents were. When the two passed by the temple at the end of the village, Yuvraj, in an attempt to strike a conversation, said that he used to visit the temple every week when he was a kid. The woman didn't say anything. A few minutes later she asked him to stop the motorcycle in front of the house that he grew up in.

"Twenty years is too long to be away from one's home, babu. But I am glad you are finally here," she said. Yuvraj was taken back. He didn't remember mentioning to the woman how long he had been away, and he also found it odd that she referred to her as babu even though she clearly looked younger than him.

When he reached his uncle's house in the village later that night, he noticed a lone photo hanging on the wall of the living room. It was his favourite photo of his late grandmother. When he looked at the photo closely, he was shocked. The woman he had just dropped infront of his old house looked exactly the same as his grandmother in the photo. Even the sari was the same. Everything that had happened earlier that day began to make sense. That night, he called his parents and told them what had happened. He said, "Remember how I used to tell you guys that my grandmother loved me too much to leave just like that and that she would come again. Looks like she had been waiting for me all these years. I wish I had come sooner." ♦



# The little worlds that are part of a larger whole

Microcosm brings together interpretations of 40 artists, but not everyone will resonate with the printworks on display.



POST PHOTOS: BEEJU MAHARJAN

The exhibition curated by Lina Vincent brings together printmaking works of artists from 14 different countries as part of the ongoing sixth International Art Exchange Program 2018.

## SRIZU BAJRACHARYA

We all live in different worlds but everything is interconnected. What happens in one world affects the other. This is the underlying theme of the ‘Microcosm’ exhibition that is currently being displayed at the newly opened Tara Art Gallery, Patan Dhoka.

The exhibition curated by Lina Vincent brings together printmaking works of 40 artists from 14 different countries as part of the ongoing sixth International Art Exchange Program 2018. It is themed under ‘microcosm and macrocosm’, an interpretation of little worlds that are interlinked to a vast universe. The show traces different understandings of various artists, mainly in abstracts. The various artworks use different printmaking techniques such as etching, mezzotint, serigraph, photopolymer etching and relief, photo intaglio, woodcut, drypoint, platography, aquatint, linocut and laser-cut acrylic.

At the Tara Art Gallery, the square artworks are framed individually with a blue-grey paper and are neatly arranged symmetrically on the walls. But onlookers will have to take time to understand the meanings behind these prints. They will have to spend time analysing the prints carefully, and for some, this could be time-consuming and even incomprehensible.

Although programmes like International Art Exchange Program are strengthening the global networks of artists by exchanging their works and has amassed the attention of a larger audience, it doesn’t seem to have been able to communicate ideas properly to audiences, especially in Nepal where people admire the beauty of artworks but take less from the experience itself.

The 40 selected artists of the International Art Exchange Program are all provided with the 40 selected works each, including their own, that they are required to exhibit in their respective countries. In Nepal, the exhibition has been put together jointly by Sushma Shakya, Sauranga Darshandhari and Sunita Maharjan, Nepali participants of the exchange programme.

“This programme is interesting because each artist will have the works of all the other artists with them, and it’s special because you can share your work with people who value and understand your work. Although we haven’t met these artists in person, we are now connected through a social media group,” says Sunita Maharjan.

‘Microcosm’ is unusual and therefore appeal-



ing. Sushma Shakya’s ‘element of creation’ uses etching technique and delves into the five elements of creation using a womb as a symbol. The womb has a baby developing inside it in a layered circumvent. The different layers if pondered upon deeply looks like water, fire and air.

Another artist, Sauranga Darshandhari, has his artwork exploring kinship or social engagement as one of the forms of microcosm as one would interpret from the work that uses

etching and aquatint technique. The dominant blue colour seems to represent water, and the birds and the sky represent freedom. The artist, in the exhibition’s brochure explains that the different elements in his print have various representations, for instance a dog symbolises loyalty and the lotus excitement.

Sunita Maharjan’s Terrace series, which uses woodcut, perhaps, stands out because they represent an outline of Kathmandu’s terraces.

Upon studying it carefully one will notice water tanks, wires, drums, and the compactness of these terraces, which in many parts of Kathmandu are built so close together that they look conjoined.

Of the many international artists’ printworks, people will also be drawn towards Seema Kohli’s ‘the golden womb’ in which a woman is encircled with layers of leaves’ vines. The artwork’s colour resembles that of soil although it’s actually gold and it seems to represent feminism. Most printworks that are part of the exhibition, which work on similar concepts, seem to represent a boy in the womb, but Kohli’s print is distinct because it shows a full grown woman inside the womb.

The exhibition is admirable. One can notice the details that the artists have put in their printworks and can imagine how tiring the process might have been. However, there are some mind-boggling pieces as well, where onlookers are left numb. Like, Maria Joana Santos’ ‘fresh’, which uses etching. There’s almost nothing in the printwork except a sprinkled lemon colour silhouette which seems to be wilting.

“I was surprised when I saw the artwork, but later, when I understood the depth of the concept, I felt inspired. The artist tries to express how there is affinity even with things that are not identified,” says Sushma Shakya who admires the artwork.

But how many will understand this concept is a question that needs to be pecked upon, both by artists and curators.

“Artists usually explain their work of art, but sometimes it is left open-ended to the audiences because we all perceive art in different ways and sometimes the purpose of the art itself is to explore different ideas,” says Sunita Maharjan.

“The art scene in Nepal today has gained momentum and printmaking has become a contemporary art style that many are exploring,” she says.

There is no doubt that ‘Microcosm’ has helped artists do just that. And for those who love art and like speculating the depth of the philosophies embedded in them, this is an exhibition worth your time. But the ones who are still new to art, and are still trying to figure out ‘what art is’, may leave the exhibition more confused.

*Microcosm will be on display until July 22 at Tara Art Gallery, Patan Dhoka.*

# Game of Thrones cast defend final season at Comic-Con

AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE  
SAN DIEGO, JULY 20

The *Game of Thrones* cast leapt to the defense of its much-maligned final season in front of a boisterous crowd at San Diego Comic-Con on Friday, blaming the backlash on negative media coverage.

The HBO fantasy epic’s conclusion enraged fans around the world, and organizers of the pop culture convention reminded attendees before the retrospective panel to make the cast “feel welcome.”

While the cast drew a rapturous reception, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau—who played Jaime Lannister—was booed after describing his character’s death in the arms of his sister and lover Cersei as “perfect.”

“It made sense to me,” said the actor, before being interrupted by a heckler.

“This show has brought so many people together, watching it, loving it. So obviously when it comes to an end it’s going to piss you off no matter what... just don’t call people names,” he added.

An online petition to HBO to remake the final season with “competent writers” was signed by 1.6 million people.

The panel was billed as the show creators’ first public outing following the backlash.

But showrunners David Benioff and Dan Weiss quietly withdrew along with two cast members earlier in the week.

The remaining members expressed support for the final season. Conleth Hill—who played Varys—described the fan response to the show over the years as extremely positive, referring to the negativity as a “media-led hate campaign.”

The atmosphere quickly lightened as cast members joked about stealing props from the set. John Bradley, known to fans as Samwell Tarly, addressed another controversy, shooting down theories that he was to blame for a plastic water bottle accidentally left in shot during the final season. “Pardon me for being thirsty,” he joked.

## TV takes over

After Hollywood film stars Tom Cruise and Arnold Schwarzenegger dominated Thursday’s opening day, television took center stage at Comic-Con Friday.

Netflix surprised attendees by screening the first episode of *The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance*, its upcoming prequel

series to Jim Henson’s classic 1982 fantasy film.

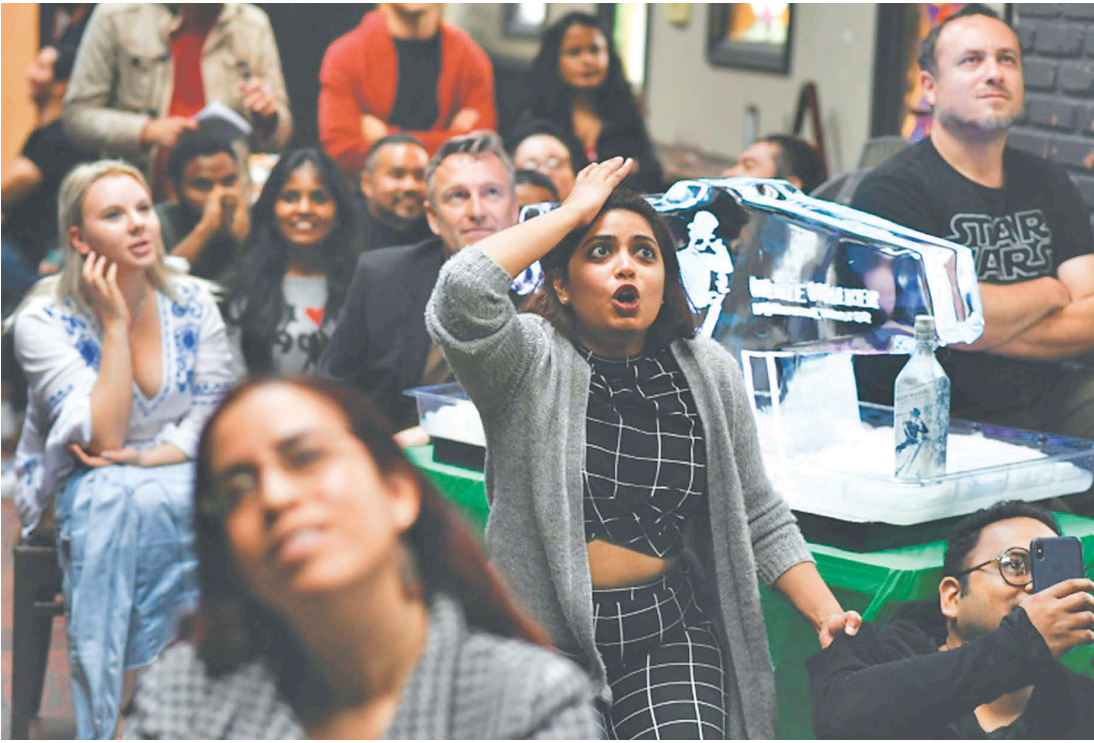
Its combination of old-fashioned puppetry and cutting-edge visual effects aims to cast a spell on old and young alike.

Mark Hamill and *Rocketman* star Taron Egerton—who both provide voices—appeared in a panel discussion.

Fan favorite Hamill was presented with Comic-Con’s “Icon Award,” telling the audience he felt lucky “to be able to do all the things I loved as a kid and get paid for it.” “This is just seems wildly excessive,” the *Star Wars* actor joked about the accolade, before serenading the crowd with his *Buddi* song from the film *Child’s Play*. Amazon Prime wheeled out *Carnival Row* starring Orlando Bloom and Cara Delevingne, which is set in a fantastical Victorian-esque world filled with mythological immigrant creatures.

Bloom said it was a “great gift and opportunity” to be in a show which was “so timely and... spoke to a lot of the issues with relevance to what’s happening in the world today.”

AMC used its annual *Walking Dead* franchise panels to confirm veteran Danai Gurira—who appeared in the recent blockbuster *Avengers* movies—



AFP/RSS

Fans react as they watch HBO’s *Game of Thrones* series finale at a viewing party at Brennan’s bar in Marina del Rey, California.

will depart the zombie show.

Gurira, who first appeared on the series in 2012, received a standing ovation.

Plans were also teased for a series of films starring Andrew Lincoln, who announced his own departure from the show—the highest rated series in cable television history—at last year’s Comic-Con.

## Avengers eye record

Earlier, *Avengers: Endgame*

directors Joe and Anthony Russo said it would be a “big thrill” to pass the all-time box office record held by *Avatar*, as they set out plans to collaborate with a number of different stars from the Marvel superhero universe. *Endgame* is inching ever closer to surpassing James Cameron’s \$2.788 billion haul. It is currently just \$5 million short, and was still playing in 1,400 US theaters at the weekend despite being released in April.

“James Cameron has always been an idol of ours... to be so close to one of his great films is really special,” said Anthony.

The filmmaking brothers said their next project *Cherry*, starring *Spider-Man* actor Tom Holland, will be a “mature” and “complicated” look at the US opioid crisis.

“It’s touched our families, the crisis, so it’s a deeply personal movie for us,” said Anthony. Filming will begin in October.

















FOREX	
US Dollar	110.39
Euro	124.05
Pound Sterling	138.38
Japanese Yen	10.26
Chinese Yuan	16.05
Qatari Riyal	30.32
Australian Dollar	77.84
Malaysian Ringit	26.84
Saudi Arab Riyal	29.43

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION		PRICE PER TOLA
 Fine Gold		Rs 65,500
 Silver		Rs 770

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

GASOLINE WATCH



100% PERFORMANCE. EVERYTIME.



**Petrol (Per Litre)**  
Rs 108.00/-

**Diesel (Per Litre)**  
Rs 96.50/-

**Kerosene (Per Litre)**  
Rs 96.50/-

**LPG (Per cylinder)**  
Rs 1400/-

Source: Nepal Oil Corporation



POST PHOTO: ELITE JOSHI

A vendor plays the flute to attract customers in Patan Durbar Square, Lalitpur.

# Visakhapatnam overtakes Kolkata in handling Nepal-bound cargo

Visakhapatnam pulling Nepali traders with efficiency and higher capacity.



A general view of Visakhapatnam port in India.

SHANKAR ACHARYA  
PARSA, JULY 20

Visakhapatnam port has overtaken Kolkata port in handling Nepal-bound cargo as shipments have exceeded the wagon-loading capacity at Netaji Subhas dock in Kolkata.

Even though Visakhapatnam is located 1,400 km from Birgunj, twice as far as Kolkata, lower sea freight costs from Chinese ports to Visakhapatnam and efficient port handling are compensating for the relatively higher rail freight costs to Birgunj, traders said. Also known as

Vizag, India opened the port to Nepali traders in March 2017.

According to Himalayan Terminal which operates Sirsiya Dry Port in Birgunj, 19 railway rakes arrived from Kolkata in April while Vizag sent 20 freight trains during the same period. In May, Kolkata sent 15 rakes and Vizag sent 25. In June, there were 15 freight trains from Kolkata and 32 from Vizag.

The Indian government allowed Nepali importers to use Visakhapatnam port besides Kolkata and Haldia from February 2016. Container shipping liner Maersk

delivered the first rake of cargo from Visakhapatnam to Birgunj in Nepal in mid-June 2017.

High detention and demurrage and long container dwell time are the main complaints Nepali importers have against Kolkata port. It takes up to 30 days for importers to return the container to Kolkata, and traders said they had to pay a penalty most of the time.

The delay is primarily due to capacity constraints at Netaji Subhas dock to load containers on cargo trains. While Kolkata port authorities have undertaken a project to increase the

capacity, importers are forced to take the costlier road option.

“Nepali importers have been facing a number of problems in Kolkata for a long time, and they have been looking for an alternative. Visakhapatnam port is now ahead of Kolkata port as a result,” said Pradip Kedia, former president of the Birgunj Chamber of Commerce and Industry. “Sooner or later, this was bound to happen.”

Unlike the river port in Kolkata that can accommodate only small daughter vessels, Visakhapatnam is a deep-water sea port where large container ships can unload cargo 24 hours a day. “As the Maersk Line has a monopoly in providing dedicated shipping service to Nepali importers, it has been frequently increasing fees, and that has worried traders,” said Kedia.

Freight forwarders have been asking the government to establish a consulate general’s office in Visakhapatnam like in Kolkata to deal with different issues.

Bishnu Kant Chaudhary, CEO of Himalayan Terminal, said that Maersk Line had a strong hold at Visakhapatnam, and it has been providing time- and cost-efficient services that may have attracted Nepali importers.

“Visakhapatnam now handles 70 percent of the cargo bound for Nepal,” he said, adding that it was the other way around a few months ago. “The changes have been visible from the last six months.” Chaudhary said that Nepal should look for other sea ports as well for trade.

According to Nepal Rastra Bank, Nepal’s import bill surged 25.5 percent to Rs1,242.83 billion in the last fiscal year 2017-18. Exports to India accounted for 57.4 percent of total exports.

# Plan to boost market activity sends NEPSE soaring over 20 points

Securities Board of Nepal to introduce reform measures this fiscal year.

RAJESH KHANAL  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE) last week escalated 23.95 points to close at 1,272.5 points, after the Securities Board of Nepal expressed its commitment to enforce a number of reform measures this fiscal year.

Despite the upswing in the market index, the average daily turnover slumped to Rs380.23 million last week from Rs526.66 million in the previous week.

The market which opened at Rs1,248.55 points on Sunday, rose marginally by 0.94 points to close at Rs1,249.49 points. The market continued to gain traction during week, gaining 5.08 points, 4.45 points and 15.84 points on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday respectively. However, the market ran out of steam on Thursday, losing 2.36 points.

Stock analysts said the investors were buoyed by the regulator unveiling its policies and programmes to boost activity in the country’s only secondary bourse. “The board has expressed its commitment to enforce book building which will allow listed companies to fix premium prices for their initial public offerings and reducing the transaction settlement period, among others,” said a stockbroker on condition maintaining anonymity.

The sensitive index that measures

the performance of Group A companies also went up 5.51 points to close at 273.84 points with a notable rise in stock prices of commercial banks.

An increase in share prices also saw investors gaining Rs30.03 billion in the book value of their investment portfolio.

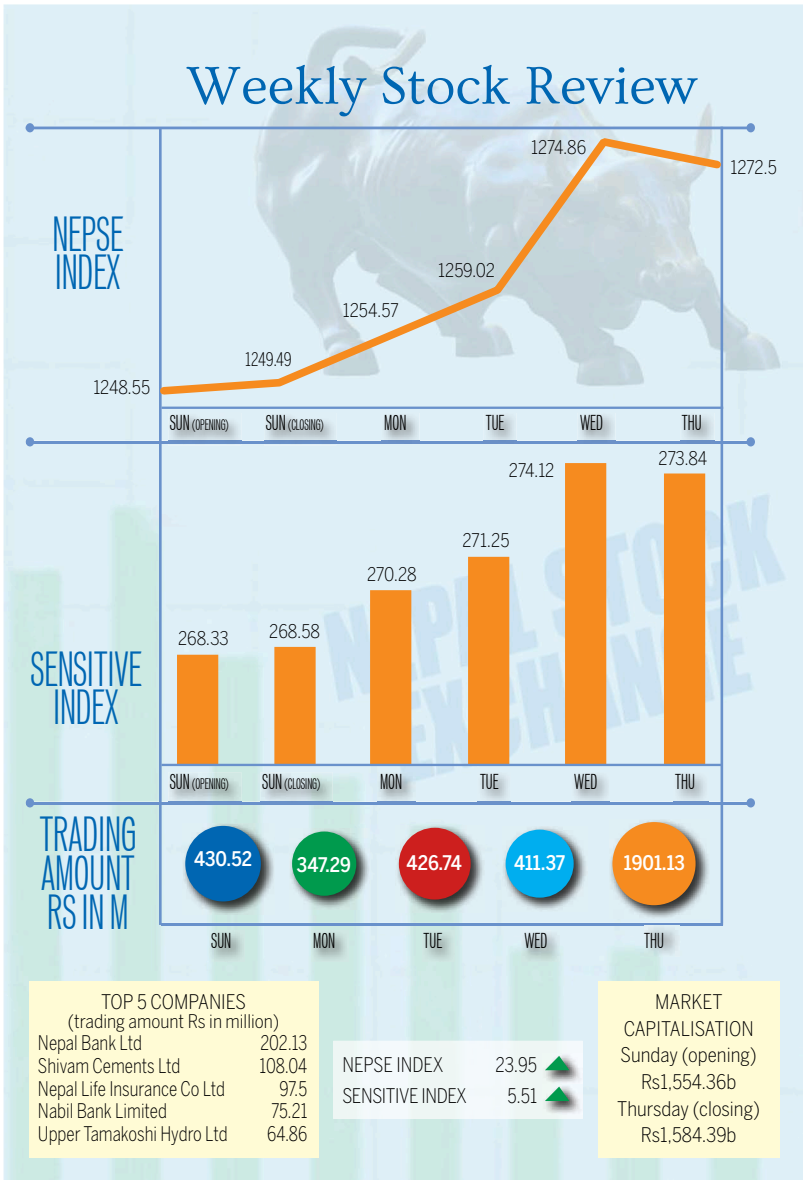
Most of the sub-indices posted gains except for trading which remained stable at 259.85 points during the review period.

Manufacturing recorded the highest gains, adding 81.9 points to close at 2,717.5 points. Non-life insurance, life insurance, development bank, hotels, microfinance, hydropower and commercial banks picked up double-digit gains. ‘Others’ and finance companies gained 9.93 points and 7.89 points respectively.

In terms of individual companies, Nepal Bank Limited saw Rs202.13 million worth of shares exchanging hands, the largest in the segment. It was followed by Shivam Cements, Nepal Life Insurance, Nabil Bank and Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Limited.

Last week, stocks worth Rs1.9 billion were traded, which was 27.8 percent less than the amount in the previous week. The total number of traded shares also plummeted to 8,599,020 units from 11,387,516 units.

NEPSE listed 134,973,466.6 units of new shares from four companies during the review period.



RIGHT SHARES/BONUS SHARES		
COMPANY	TYPE	UNITS
Asian Life Insurance Company	Right	7,540,352.73
NMB Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha	Bonus	211,312.5
Nabil Balance Fund 2	IPO	112,000,000
Kumari Bank	Bonus	15,221,781.39

# Nepal’s rising trade deficit takes toll on country’s foreign currency reserves

The balance of payments deficit stood at Rs90.83 billion during the review period (mid-July 2018 to mid-June 2019).

RAJESH KHANAL  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

Nepal’s rising trade deficit is taking a toll on the country’s foreign currency reserves which fell by 8.2 percent to \$9.25 billion, according to the Current Macroeconomic Report of Nepal Rastra Bank. At this rate, Nepal has enough to cover the import of goods and services for less than eight months.

The trade deficit grew 17 percent in the first 11 months of the last fiscal year. The balance of payments deficit stood at Rs90.83 billion during the review period (mid-July 2018 to mid-June 2019).

Balance of payments records a country’s financial transactions with the rest of the world under two subheadings-current account and capital account.

The current account registered a deficit of Rs248.72 billion, up from a deficit of Rs210.24 billion during the same period in 2017-18. The current account involves the net value of trade in goods, trade in services, transfers and income from abroad.

Nepal’s foreign income has not been able to

## Nepal has enough to cover the import of goods and services for less than eight months.

sustain expenses as imports have exceeded exports by a wide margin, resulting in trade deficit of a whopping Rs1,211.96 billion in the first 11 months of the 2018-19 fiscal year, which recently ended July 16. The trade deficit during the period was around 37 percent of the country’s gross domestic product.

Nepal’s expense on goods import surged by 17.3 percent to Rs1,299.80 billion due to soaring demand for mainly petroleum products, aircraft spare parts, readymade garments electrical goods and iron. Exports, on the other hand, was up 18.7 percent and stood at Rs87.83 billion.

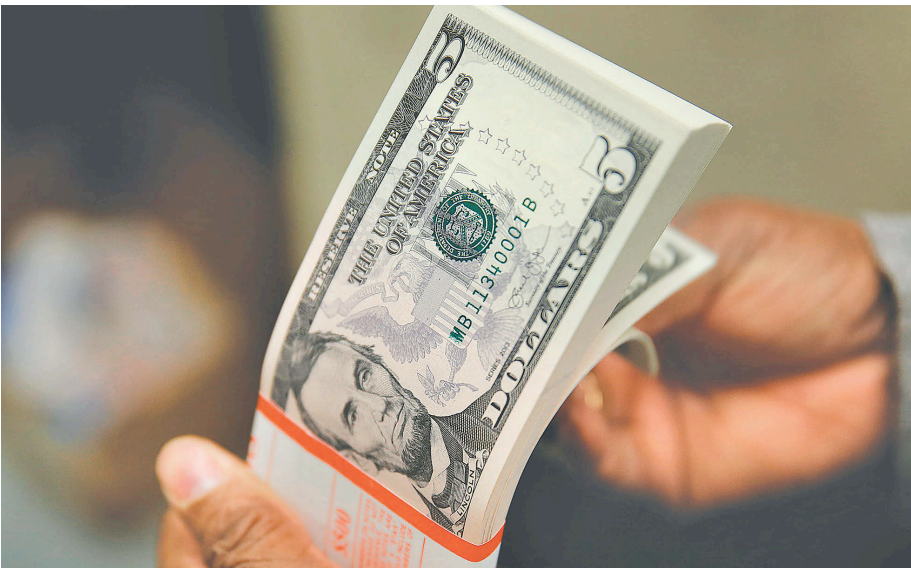
The foreign income loss triggered by a mismatch in import and export earnings is offset by

remittance inflow to some extent. Over the period, the country earned Rs799.02 billion from remittance, the major source of the country’s foreign currency earnings for over two decades. Despite remittance earnings rising by 17.5 percent, the exaggerating import bills exerted pressure on the country’s foreign currency reserves.

Nepal also faced net loss of Rs10.56 billion from the service trade. The central bank’s statistics show that Nepalis going abroad spent Rs80.45 billion while the country earned Rs68.63 billion from tourists who visited Nepal.

Under the capital account, capital transfer-an investment in purchase of fixed assets-registered at Rs13.88 billion, down from Rs15.02 billion. The amount of foreign direct investment that the country received also went down to Rs11.81 billion from Rs15.88 billion.

Keshab Acharya, who served as an economic advisor to the Ministry of Finance, said the pressure on the foreign currency reserves could affect national pride projects that need a large amount of money to purchase equipment from abroad. “It may also affect the country’s capacity to repay foreign debt and sink the country into a debt trap in the long run,” said Acharya.



REUTERS

A packet of US five-dollar bills is inspected at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington.



SPORTS

BRIEFING

**Ibrahimovic nets hat-trick in upset victory**  
**LOS ANGELES:** Zlatan Ibrahimovic lived up to the bravado on Friday, scoring all three goals to power the LA Galaxy to a hard fought 3-2 victory over MLS rivals Los Angeles Football Club. The unstoppable 37-year-old showed he's still capable of astounding feats by dominating the smaller LAFC defence and scoring when it counted the most for his second career MLS hat trick. "When you play against a rival like that, in a full stadium, I get pumped. I get adrenaline. This is considered to be the biggest game in the league and I show up in the biggest games," said Ibrahimovic. Ibrahimovic, who has a flair for the dramatic since the big Swede joined the MLS in 2018, boasted prior to Friday's game that he is "by far" the best player in the league despite Carlos Vela's superior stats. **(AFP)**

**Former Argentina coach in serious condition**  
**BUENOS AIRES:** Argentina's 1986 World Cup winning coach Carlos Bilardo is in a serious condition in hospital following brain surgery, the center treating him has confirmed. The 81-year-old was taken into intensive care at the Argentine Institute of Diagnosis in Buenos Aires on July 4 due to a "deterioration in his underlying disease," the center said in a report on Wednesday. He is suffering from Hakim-Adams syndrome, a neurodegenerative disease common in men over 60, for which he was twice hospitalized in 2018. He underwent a procedure to drain blood and puss from around his brain. **(AFP)**

**De Rossi on verge of Boca Juniors move**  
**BUENOS AIRES:** Veteran former Italy international Daniele De Rossi is "99 percent" sure of joining Boca Juniors, the Argentine giants' president Daniel Angelici said on Friday. The 35-year-old midfielder brought down the curtain on an 18-year career with his hometown club Roma at the end of last season. The only remaining stumbling block to De Rossi joining is a cap on the number of foreigners allowed at Argentine teams. They can only have six in their squad with a maximum of five allowed on the pitch at any one time. De Rossi is the fourth most capped Italy international of all time with 117 games. **(AFP)**

# Indian bodybuilder Ravinder Malik clinches Mr South Asia title

Men's 80kg division winner Malik pipped eight other contestants for the top honour.



Indian bodybuilder Ravinder Kumar Malik holds the Mr South Asia trophy on Saturday.

POST PHOTO

**PRAJWAL OLI**  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

Ravinder Kumar Malik of India clinched the Mr South Asia title as Afghanistan won team championship finishing ahead of hosts Nepal in the 12th South Asian Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Championships in Kathmandu on Saturday.

Malik, the winner of men's 80kg division, was adjudged the best bodybuilder among the winners of various nine senior men's weight categories. The final day of the two-day competition saw Nepal's Naresh Munikar clinch gold in men's athletic physique. Mallika Shakya of Nepal also won the women's model physique.

Nepal finished second overall with three gold, seven silver and six bronze medals.

Nepal finished the championships with three gold, seven silver and six bronze medals. On Friday, Samir Shrestha had won the gold in men's 65kg division. Afghanistan secured six gold, four silver and five bronze medals to claim the team championship title.

The Afghans finished with 535 points in total ahead of Nepal who, earned 445 points. India stood third with 380 points. India won four gold, five silver and a bronze medal. Participated by all six South Asian countries, the championships featured competitions in 17 categories.

Munikar, the winner of the athletic physique for participants with heights over 167cm, finished ahead of Nakul Kaushal of India and Mohammed Fathuhulla of Maldives. Shakya beat compatriot Pooja Shrestha for the women's model physique title while Nishrin Hitesh Parikh of India finished third.

Malik posed himself as the Mr

## Dortmund sink Liverpool in US tour opener

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
CHICAGO, JULY 20

Danish internationals Thomas Delaney and Jacob Bruun Larsen scored second half goals as Borussia Dortmund handed Liverpool a 3-2 defeat in the opening game of the Premier League giants pre-season US tour on Friday.

In sweltering heat at Notre Dame Stadium in South Bend, Indiana, Bundesliga side Dortmund punished a rusty defensive display from the European champions, who were missing several star players. Brazilian internationals Roberto Firmino and Alisson were both absent for the Reds following their Copa America campaign along with Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane, both missing due to the African Cup of Nations.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp opted for a youthful starting lineup against his former club before making 10 changes in the second half. "It was a very difficult game for both teams," Klopp said afterwards. "I saw a lot of good things, and a lot of good individual performances, but obviously not enough. We're obviously not any-

where near where we want to be," he added, referring to the goals his team conceded.

Dortmund took the lead after only three minutes when Paco Alcacer capitalised on some hesitant defending from Liverpool defender Nathaniel Clyne to rifle home from close range. Liverpool soon began to carve out openings of their own however, and the lively Ryan Kent and Harry Wilson always looked threatening.

Liverpool drew level with a cleverly worked goal in the 35th minute. Fabinho's pass into the area was brilliantly dummied by Kent into the path of Wilson, who calmly stroked home the finish. But despite the bright opening 45 minutes, Liverpool were soon trailing again early in the second half as Dortmund once more seized on sloppy defensive play to score two quick goals.

Delaney, one of nine Dortmund changes made at half-time, made it 2-1 in the 53rd minute. Six minutes later Bruun Larsen fired Dortmund into a 3-1 lead. A Rhian Brewster penalty in the 75th minute after Ben Woodburn was brought down cut Dortmund's lead to a single goal.

## Sherpa wins Surya Nepal Gokarna Monthly Medal

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
KATHMANDU, JULY 20

Ang Dendi Sherpa clinched the fourth edition of the Surya Nepal Gokarna Monthly Medal at the par-72 Gokarna Golf Club on Saturday.

Playing with 10 handicap, Sherpa carded seven-under 65 nett points to secure the monthly trophy. Korean golfer Eui Jae Lee finished second with six-under 66 nett score. Colonel Avaneesh Chambial shot four-under 68 nett points to end up as the second runner-up.

Wangchen Dhondup claimed the best gross award with one-under 71 gross points. Sadbhav Acharya won the junior category award with the nett score of three-over 75. In all, 42 golfers took part in the tournament. President of Gokarna Golf Club Suhrid Ghimire gave away the prizes to the winners. The tournament was played under stroke play format with full handicap.

A total of 10 medal rounds will be played till the month of December to decide the overall club champion. In each medal round, top 10 players in nett category, top 5 players in gross category, and top 5 in the junior category are awarded points.

First place golfer in nett category



POST PHOTO

(From left) Eui Jae Lee, Ang Dendi Sherpa, Col Avaneesh Chambial, Sadbhav Acharya and Wangchen Dhondup at Gokarna Golf Club on Saturday.

from each event earns 100 points, runner-up will get 60 points, third place amateur will receives 40 points. Players finishing fourth to 10th get

35, 30, 25, 20, 15, 10 and five points respectively.

In the Gross and Junior categories top five scorer's from each event earn



Wolverhampton Wanderers' Diogo Jota (2nd right) is challenged by Manchester City players during their final match of the 2019 Premier League Asia Trophy football tournament at the Hongkou Stadium in Shanghai on Saturday.

AFP/RSS

## Wolves beat City to claim Asia Trophy

In the third-place playoff, Newcastle United beat West Ham United 1-0.

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
SHANGHAI, JULY 20

Goalkeeper Rui Patrício was the hero for Wolves, saving three spot-kicks after their Asia Trophy final against Manchester City went to penalties on Saturday in Shanghai.

Wolves won the exhibition tournament 3-2 on penalties after the game against the Premier League champions ended 0-0 after 90 minutes. It was a story of missed penalties for Pep Guardiola's City. Raheem Sterling missed a first-half penalty for City, who dominated at a full Hongkou Stadium but were blunt in attack without Sergio Agüero and Gabriel Jesus.

Pre-season games are notoriously poor barometers for the season to come, especially when played in stifling heat like in Shanghai. But both sides fielded close to their full-strength sides and Guardiola and counterpart Nuno Espírito Santo will be glad to escape without any serious injuries to their squads. Leroy Sané, the German winger wanted by Bayern Munich, started for City and won the Sterling

penalty, but otherwise had a quiet game before being substituted on the hour.

Kevin De Bruyne was Guardiola's captain for the night—the City arm-band is up for grabs following the departure of talisman Vincent Kompany. Sterling should have put City in the lead but instead blasted his 20th minute penalty over the bar to let Chinese-owned Wolves off the hook. The England international forward, playing through the middle, then fluffed a golden chance from close range with only goalkeeper Patrício to beat.

In the third-place playoff, Newcastle United beat West Ham United 1-0 to give Steve Bruce victory in his first match as head coach. The 58-year-old, whose appointment as head coach has gone down badly with already disillusioned Newcastle fans, was unable to be pitch-side because of Chinese visa restrictions. The former Sunderland boss is just three days into the job and this was only a pre-season friendly, but he will have been heartened by what he saw against a strong West Ham

## Tomic's appeal against fine rejected, receives stinging rebuke instead

**REUTERS**  
WELLINGTON, JULY 20

Australian Bernard Tomic's appeal to overturn a fine for not playing to "required professional standards" at Wimbledon earlier this month has been denied in a stinging rebuke by the Grand Slam board.

Tomic lost his first round match 6-2, 6-1, 6-4 to France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga at Wimbledon and was fined his entire winnings of £45,000 after organisers ruled he had put in minimal effort in the 58-minute defeat. The 26-year-old Tomic appealed the decision, citing the fact he was unwell before the match, while Tsonga added that he felt his victory had been devalued.

The board, however, refused to overturn their original decision and heavily criticised Tomic's attitude to tennis. "A review of your historical record of misconduct at Grand Slams, never mind elsewhere, provides little justification for an adjustment," board director Bill Babcock wrote in the decision letter that was published by the New York Times. "In your case, Bernard, I am sure you would agree there is no historical evidence to give comfort to the theory that you can reform your behaviour."

Babcock added that if Tomic goes without a sanction in his next eight Grand Slam events then he would be refunded 25 percent of the fine. "Admittedly, I am sceptical that you can achieve this reform of Grand Slam on-court behaviour," Babcock added. "Many others, no doubt, would be even more than just sceptical. Good luck and I hope to be pleasantly surprised in the future by your successful reform." Tomic, however, said he would appeal the decision further. "I don't care about this 25 percent; I care about the right thing for players in the future," he told the newspaper.

This year's tournament was not the first time Tomic has run afoul of tennis officialdom. He was nicknamed "Tomic the Tank Engine" after accusations he "tanked"—or failed to try his best—in a loss to Andy Roddick at the 2012 US Open. Tomic also said after his first round loss at Wimbledon in 2017 that he was "bored" during the match. He has also been periodically suspended from Australia's Davis Cup team over the last five years.









# Arpana Rayamajhi: You can’t make everyone happy

The Kathmandu-born jeweler does not shy away from the spotlight—but she doesn’t cultivate it either.

PRANAYA SJB RANA

Arpana Rayamajhi has just two days left in Nepal and wants to pack in as much dal-bhat as she can before she flies off to New York. We are torn between two Thakali restaurants: the newly opened Jimbu or the more venerable Thakkhola, both in Jhamsikhel. I am not surprised when she picks Thakkhola, mid-market and low-key, as opposed to the decidedly glitzier Jimbu. The restaurant choice is in keeping with who Rayamajhi is—despite the magazine spreads and fashion photo shoots, she remains, at heart, a Nepali who grew up trawling Kathmandu’s many hole-in-the-wall eateries.

I arrive early and have just finished pouring myself an icy Gorkha beer when Rayamajhi appears, with her boyfriend Bruno Levy and long-time friend and confidante Chandan Shakya in tow. After perfunctory hellos, Levy and Shakya leave us for Piano B, while Rayamajhi settles into her own beer.

It’s been years since we last met but Rayamajhi looks very much the same, only more ornamented. Her slim fingers are covered in accoutrements of various sizes while two long earrings in the shapes of snake dangle from her earlobes. Her hair is impossibly long and let loose, framing her face like a photo album. Before the waiter can arrive, she already knows what she wants, a consummate purveyor of Kathmandu’s thakali food offerings.

“Veg khana set and a plate of sukuti sandeko,” she says, quickly. “Oh, and another beer.”

The food arrives before we’ve gotten our introductory chatter out of the way, two steaming plates littered with rice, potato and mushroom tarkari, gundruk with fried soybeans, burnt tomato achar, bitter gourds, papad, and two bowls of dal and yogurt. And a messy pile of sukuti, liberally tossed with onions, tomatoes and chillies. Rayamajhi talks in between mouthfuls.

We speak about the jewellery she makes, her life in New York and the fame she’s found since the last time we met. She was selected for The New York Times’ 30 under 30, has been featured on ads for Apple and Lufthansa, appeared in numerous magazines including Vogue and Elle, and showcased her work at the

2016 Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show in Paris. She might have a career that many only dream of but Rayamajhi keeps a good head on her shoulders.

“I’m very fortunate,” she says. “In terms of success, I’ve done nothing. I made some jewelry, and some magazines needed someone new so they found me.”

But why did the high fashion in New York and Paris choose her? After all, there are thousands of artists and fashion designers just looking to make a break.

“Luck,” she says. “Being in the right place at the right time. But maybe, maybe they saw something different in me.”

She has been celebrated for being different, as someone from Nepal, an immigrant, drawing on diverse experiences and traditions that those in the slick, mirrored corridors of Vogue magazine might not have encountered before. In this age of diversity and difference, she is someone

THAKKHOLA, JHAMSIKHEL

ON THE MENU:	
Vegetarian khana set (2)	Rs 550
Sukuti sandeko (1)	Rs 435
Gorkha beer (2)	Rs 990

they can champion. But fame doesn’t come without criticism, and she’s had her share.

“They used to allege cultural appropriation,” she says. “But I don’t think I’m appropriating anything. I use beads, I use metal, I use string. If anything, I’m inspired by everything.”

There is, of course, a fine line between appropriation and celebration, speculation and inspiration. Rayamajhi understands that, but sometimes, she functions as a shield behind which to hide. When the 2016 Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show was criticised for cultural appropriation, there were those who pointed to Rayamajhi’s inclusion in defence.

But for Rayamajhi, focusing only on what belongs to whom misses the point.

“It’s a very American thing, this desire to put labels on things,” she says. “I was reading Salman Rushdie’s Fury and he talks about how everything American has to be labelled as such, this American bar or this

American drink, and how that’s a sign of insecurity. That’s because it’s easier to sell things when you categorise and label them. But these things define humanity, a history. These things are bigger than their labels.”

Clearly, this is something she is passionate about and has spoken about at length before. But before we can continue, we are interrupted by the waiter who asks if we would like more of anything. Rayamajhi wants more dal, more saag and more rice. The server looks at her plate and says that he’ll bring her more rice when she’s finished what’s on her plate. Rayamajhi laughs.

We resume talking, moving on to what inspires her these days. She’s been taking acting classes, and that’s opened up a whole different world for her. She hopes to get into acting, in theatre and film, one day.

“I love the idea of training or studying something new. It’s exciting,” she says.

She also listens to music a lot while working, she says and lists James Blake, Chicano Batman and disco music from the ’70s when I ask for recommendations.

“There’s also this app called Radio, that’s radio with five Os, that allows you to listen to music from any part of the world,” she says. “I use that and I really like music from Botswana and Malawi.”

Some of Rayamajhi’s jewellery is also inspired by rock and roll and punk rock and we talk about her older inspirations and how they’ve changed.

“Iggy Pop is now on Instagram, Kim Gordon is on Instagram,” she says in reference to how rock icons too have adapted to the changing ways of the world.

But they haven’t lost their essence, that which makes them who they are. They haven’t sacrificed their idiosyncrasies on the altar of fame and relevance.

“Iggy Pop has an Instagram for his parrot, apparently he really loves his parrot,” she says to make a point.

More dal and saag arrive and since she’s almost finished with her rice, the waiter brings some more. I can barely finish the rice the thali came with and she’s already on her seconds. I try the sukuti instead. It is not as spicy as one would expect but the buffalo meat is flavourful and pleasantly chewy.

She devours the dal bhat, just

“I love the idea of training or studying something new. It’s exciting.”

as you would expect someone who’s been away from the country for years to. But even in busy New York, she keeps up with what’s happening in Nepal, she says. We speak of Rishi Dhamala, who she calls a “phenomenon”—not necessarily in a good way—and we also speak of Priyanka Karki, who recently visited the Cannes Film Festival.

“We’re very different people and I think we want different things out of life,” she says. “But given all the shit she has to go through and deal with, it’s pretty miraculous. Imagine being so popular in this tiny space and then being the person who everyone tries to scrutinise.”

Rayamajhi doesn’t look too fondly upon fame. She believes it is ephemeral and that it invites unwanted scrutiny. But she is also comfortable with it, as the numerous videos talking about her process exemplify. She’s not someone who shies away from the spotlight, but she’s not someone who cultivates it either.

Recently, her work got her an invite to speak at the United Nations as part of a panel on Nepali women and entrepreneurship, an event that was attended by President Bidhya Devi Bhandari. She relates, in breathless fashion, how she was supposed to go over to the UN building with Nepali officials but they left her behind while she was charging her phone. Then, after the event, she, along with everyone else, lined up to meet and greet the president.

“When I came up to her, I stuck out my hand for a handshake,” she says, laughing. “And then I hear a bunch of ‘ahems’ and coughs from around me so I look up and everyone is shaking their heads. Apparently you’re not supposed to touch the president.”

So, she presented a polite namaste and stood for a photo-op.

“If only people with fame and popularity stood up for certain issues,” she says in reference to a discussion over providing citizenship to Nepali children through the mother’s name. “If the guthi protests can happen, why can’t this one?” she asks. “It seems like people are more concerned when their temples are about to be taken away.”

Rayamajhi speaks her mind. She is by turns funny, philosophical and nostalgic, hopping from subject to subject like a hare on the run. Towards the end of our conversation, we end up talking about our place in the world and how we tend to believe that everything directly around us is what is most important.

“I don’t think I know anything,” she says. “I’m still figuring things out. But one thing I do know is that Buddha was born in Nepal.”

I ask her if she’s afraid of pissing anyone off, if her opinions might get her into trouble or if her jewellery might invite harsh criticism.

“These days, I don’t really care,” she says. “You can’t make everyone happy.”

कान्तिपुर की करोड़पति सिजन-३

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