

# THE KATHMANDU POST

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Spotted deer are seen in an enclosure at Pashupati Mrigasthali in Kathmandu on Sunday.

# Oli's parliamentary address leaves his party members wondering

The statement seemed to put a firm end to the gentleman's agreement with Dahal, which said the two co-chairs would take turns to lead the government.

KP Sharma Oli's statement in Parliament on Sunday has led many Nepal Communist Party leaders to speculate if the prime minister is attempting to put to rest a gentleman's agreement that he and Pushpa Kamal Dahal had reached in May last year.

"I will remain in office until the next elections," said Oli, co-chair of the ruling Nepal Communist Party, while addressing the House of

According to the agreement, which is already public knowledge, Oli and Dahal would lead the government by turns—two-and-a-half-years each.

When Dahal, the other co-chair of the ruling party, made the agreement public in May, Oli was in New Delhi attending the swearing-in ceremony of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Though Oli had made light of the statement then, it caused quite a



commotion, creating new equations in the ruling party that was struggling to assign leadership to its various departments due to factional feud. The department heads were only appointed last Friday.

Oli's remarks on Sunday follow a semblance of calm in the party.

"I have not seen anyone in this world who has not stepped down from power and position—be they kings, monarchs or elected representatives, said Oli. "I am also not interested in

remaining [in power] after the elections. I urge friends to wait until the

While one of Oli's aides, who requested anonymity, said that Sunday's statement was a message to Dahal, a section of former CPN-UML leaders and most former Maoists in the ruling party believe that the agreement between Oli and Dahal should be

"In principle, the prime minister should have said that the present government will continue for a full fivea central committee member who has been picked as head of the party's federal affairs department. "He was referring to those who are trying to destabilise the government.'

According to Bhusal, who is considered to have close relations with senior leader Jhala Nath Khanal, there should be no confusion over the gentleman's agreement.

>> Continued on page 4

# Meet the women who are building bodies on their own dime

Female bodybuilders say there is hope for the sport in Nepal, but support from the government and the national association is crucial.



Binita Rai, Nepal's first female International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness pro-card

holder, trains at Cage Total Fitness in Gwarko, Lalitpur. **SNEHA DAHAL** builder looks like. Since then,

KATHMANDU, AUG 18

In 2005, Nirmala Maharjan was asked to give a demo at the Dharmashree Bodybuilding Championship in Kathmandu. This was the first time that a Nepali woman had been asked to showcase to the audience what a Nepali female body-

Maharjan has given several demo performances at many male bodybuilding competitions. It took over 10 years for a women's category to be included in a major bodybuilding championship.

The 2016 Mr Kathmandu was the first competition to have a women's section. Soon, all national competitions began having a women's section.

There is still no women's tournament. The 2019 Women's Bodybuilding Championship, organised by Gurkhas Classic, will be the first women's-only competition that is going to be held in Pokhara this September.

"I've been in this field for 15 years now and I got no financial support from the government or the Nepal BodyBuilding and Fitness Association in the preparation phase of the competition which includes diet, costume and gym training, the most financially draining aspects," said Maharjan, a 36-year-old single mother. "I've always had to keep nearly Rs 500,000 as backup per competition and as of today I've spent around Rs 1.5 million, just to earn titles for the country.

Maharjan has represented Nepal internationally multiple times, including the 2015 World Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Championship in Pattaya, Thailand, which marked the first female representation from Nepal in bodybuilding. Maharjan placed seventh in the 51st Asian Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Federation and fourth in its 52nd iteration.

But without support from the government and a lack of interest from bodybuilding enthusiasts, female bodybuilders like Maharjan have been left to fend for themselves.

>> Continued on page 4



The project, which is expected to cost \$3.45 billion in total, is eyed by both China and India.

## SANGAM PRASAIN

KATHMANDU AUG 18

Eight companies from seven countries, including Nepal, are bidding for the construction of the \$3.45 billion Nijgadh International Airport

At least two officials at the Investment Board told the Post that they had received proposals from investors from China, India, Qatar, Finland, Switzerland, Malaysia and Nepal to build the airport, 175km from Kathmandu in the plains. The airport is expected to serve as an alternative to congestion and winter fog at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, the country's sole aerial gateway.

As per the Investment Board, the airport will be built in three phasesthe first phase will cost \$1.21 billion, the second phase \$1.12 billion, and the third phase \$1.12 billion.

GMR Group, an infrastructure com-

pany headquartered in New Delhi,

India, and two airport construction firms from China have submitted proposals, the officials said. One Nepali company has also submitted a proposal to develop the air-

port under the public-private partnership model. The board has received a proposal also from Qatar. The Qatari government had approached Nepal

in January to build the project in a bid

to strengthen its presence in Southeast

Asia. The government had also mooted an option to award the project through a government-to-government deal before the 2019 Nepal Investment Summit in March.

"We have asked for proposals under the public-private partnership modality but the government has the option to build the project under any modality," said Maha Prasad Adhikari, chief executive officer of the

Investment Board. The Malaysian and Indian governments have been eyeing the project for long. The Malaysian government, on January 6, 2016, had proposed fully-financed construction of the airport under a 'design, finance, build, operate and transfer' (DFBOT) model through a government-to-gov ernment deal.

In July 2015, a four-member delega tion from the Airport Authority of India visited Kathmandu before heading to Nijgadh for a site inspection. The delegation had informed Nepali officials that they were ready to invest in the project, either through the private sector, government funding or both—as per the wishes of the Nepal government.

As an international airport close to the border with India would be more accessible to the large populations of the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, India has an interest, according to the government officials that the Indian delegation spoke to.

>> Continued on page 4



**Venue: Yogambar Party Palace** (National Tradina Centre) Near by NAME Gate, Putalisadak, Ktm August 21 & 22 2019 (भाद्र ४ र ५ गते)

Time: 10:00 am - 6:00 pm

## List of Participating Colleges/ Universities

SPOTLIGHT | 16

The art of making-and

drinking-Marpha brandy

- Enam Medical College, Dhaka
- Anwar Khan Medical College, Dhaka Sylhet Womens Medical College, Sylhet
- North East Medical College, Sylhet
- Dhaka Central Medical College, Dhaka
- M.H. Samorita Medial College, Dhaka
- City Dental College, Dhaka
- Weifang Medical University, China
- Dhaka Community Medical College, Dhaka MA School of Medicine, Manila, Philippines Lycuem- Northwestern University, Dagupan, Philippines
  - Maharishi Markendeswar University, India
  - People's University, India (In Collaboration with University of Georigia, Tbilisi)
  - Ulyanovsk State University, Russia Ai-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan
  - Vinnitsa State Medical University, Ukraine
  - Jalal Abad State Medical University (Govt.), Kyrgyzstan
  - Bukhara State Medical Institute, Uzbekistan

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Russia

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## MEDLEY

## Inside the Post

## National

A total of 32 international non-governmental organisations have either left Nepal or are winding up their operations in the country, according to the Social Welfare

Nepal's administrative and legal bodies can be slow, ambiguous and unpredictable. Such conditions are fertile grounds for disputes to arise with foreign inves-

## **Culture & Arts**

'Being Together 2019' an exhibition that brings together the work of five artists invests in telling onlookers the artistic diversity and dynamics of young contemporary artists. There is no underlying theme that brings the artworks

Money Distilled from the fermented mash of the apple itself, much of the stuff sold in Marpha falls into the category of fruit brandy.

Nepal's head coach Johan Kalin is stressing on the need of players' fitness ahead of their 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup preliminary joint qualification matches which starts with a clash against Kuwait on September 5. The Swede made the message loud and clear by axing out Biraj Maharjan, who had been

## News Quiz

Which national park recently launched a mobile app for rhino conservation?

captaining Nepal since November 2016,

- a. Chitwan National Park b. Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve
- c. Bardiya National Park
- d. Langtang National Park
- Which river is also known as
- the 'sorrow of Bihar'?
- b.Bagmati c.Kamala
- Which club did Real Madrid defeat in their first match of 2019/20 La Liga season?
- a.Granada b.Celta Vigo c.Levante
- How many times does the Health Ministry administer vitamin A supplements and deworming tablets annually?

- 5. At what temperature does Fahrenheit equal Celsius?
  - a.- 277 degrees b. - 40 degrees c. - 25 degrees
- d. 40 degrees
- Which was the first movie of actress Rekha Thapa?
  - a. Hero B. Mitini c. Kismat
  - D. Himmatwali



# Quote of the day

Meet the women who are building bodies on their own dime,

"I've always had to keep nearly Rs 500,000 as back-up per competition and as of today I've spent around Rs 1.5 million, just to earn titles for the country."

> Nirmala Maharjan on the state of female competitive bodybuilding in Nepal.

## Most read online

## After failing to buy vitamin A supplements and deworming tablets, Health Ministry seeks UN help

The Ministry of Health and Population has requested UNICEF for vitamin A supplements and deworming tablets for its national "Vitamin A Campaign", which will be launched in October.

This is the third time the ministry has requested the UN body for vitamin A supplements and deworming tablets after failing to procure them on time.

## Rekha Thapa: Women weren't born daughters, we were made daughters

Thapa, at just 16, came into the film industry like a wrecking ball. At a time when female Nepali actors were meek and subservient accessories to their male counterparts, Thapa made a name for herself as a no-nonsense, kick-ass actor. That was in 2000, and Thapa says she wasn't exactly welcomed with open arms by the male-dominated Nepali film industry, nor by Nepali society at large.

## Bhairahawa is getting a multi-billion-rupee airport. But will tourists spend time in the city?

The opening of the Gautam Buddha International Airport in Bhairahawa, slated for March next year at the latest, is expected to provide a much-needed leg-up to Visit Nepal 2020. But the private sector in this southern city is not sure how much the city can benefit from the new airport and the government's tourism

## Wild elephants wreak havoc in Sarlahi again

Wild elephants have been wreaking havoc in Hariwon and Lalbandi areas of Sarlahi district for the past couple of days. The tuskers pulled down houses and destroyed crops

## Corrections

Our reporters and editors do their best to make sure our reporting is free from errors. But when we make mistakes that warrant correction, we will be transparent and clarify at the bottom of the specific article.

If you believe we have got something wrong and it requires correction, please email us at kpost@kmg.com.np with "correction" in the subject line.

For the most recent corrections, visit kathmandupost.com/corrections.

## HOROSCOPE

On this day in history

KATHMANDU - Exporters of readymade garments in Nepal are worried by the

recall of Indian made skirts in US. The exporters have not received any infor-

mation from US regarding the status of Nepali garments made from the same

The total export of Nepali garments worth Rs4239.3 million in the year 1992/93

included 25 percent rayon-made apparels, the Garment Association said.

Answers to News Quiz: 1(c), 2(d), 3(b), 4(d), 5(b), 5(a)

According to Kedar Bahadur Amatya, president of Garment Association of

Nepal, the Association has already sent a letter of concern to the US through

## ARIES (March 21-April 19)

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

ble in your own skin.



You can breathe a great big sigh of relief todaythat issue you were afraid would rear its ugly head at the last minute is not going to be bothering you. There is a new hopefulness in your life right now, and it is inspiring all kinds of new ways of doing things

It's normal to have a heightened sense of how

different you are from the people around you,

right now. Just take your time, and go at your

own pace. Soon enough, you will start to feel

more like yourself. You'll grow more comforta-



Getting financially educated is about to get a lot easier. This is an educational time for you, when you start to learn about things you never thought you'd ever have any interest in. Your brain is ready-and waiting-to soak up some heavy stuff, so feel free to pour it on.

The people who are disagreeing with you today

are not trying to be difficult, they're just trying

to follow through on what they believe to be the

right way of doing things. You owe it to them to

be patient. They aren't trying to insult you. Cut

A participant of Bagh Bhairav festival in Kirtipur.

Rayon skirt ban worries exporters

material which is imported from India.

the Ministry of Commerce

The Kathmandu Post

August 19,1994

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

LEO (July 23-August 22)

them some slack.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)



Adding a touch of romance to your life might not seem appropriate right now, but it might be exactly what you need. You need to smile more often! Remember: You don't have to have a love partner to get more romantic. You just have to start seeing things in a more idealistic, beautiful, and hopeful way.



LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

POST PHOTO: BEEJU MAHARJAN



A problem might pop up around your home today. A family member might not know how to react, but you will. Take over and show them there's nothing to fear. The ties you have with people you're related to are stronger than



Your vision of the future has to come from inside you, organically. You can't tread in some one else's footprints, no matter how deep those footprints might be. So stop looking at what other people are doing-decide what you want, and then stand firm. Pay no attention to what others are doing

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)



You can make today a great day. All you have to do is gain more control over your agenda. To do this, you should depend on your ever-reliable sense of reality. It will help you figure out what is a real problem-and what is merely just an inconvenience that you can ignore.

## PISCES (February 19-March 20)

# GEMINI (May 21-June 21)



This day is well-suited for action, but not so perfect for deep thought or contemplation. Your brain is a bit sluggish when it comes to new plans right now, but your physical self is ready to get moving. Don't expect a lot of success in terms of understanding complicated ideas or strategies



A friend's recent advice is still humming in your mind-maybe it's something you should follow, after all! Do an experiment today. Try out what they suggested. If you don't see any changes by the end of the day, then you can go back to doing things the way you were doing



Don't be surprised if you feel like no one in your circle of friends and associates understands where you're coming from, today. The good news is that you are sure to find some fascinating people! This is a great day to talk to strangers and find out what makes them

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)



Today you will gain a key insight into how you can create a healthier, happier life. Your physical health is something you can influence more than you have been. A long lost friend will soon reappear on the scene. Things may be different for a while, but they are truly the same person they always were.

## **CROSSWORD**

## **ACROSS** Grant territory

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- 14 Mighty oak 15 Helen, in Spanish
- 16 Can't do without 17 Tie tack
- 18 Ties up 19 Better than never?
- 20 Environment 22 Hassock 24 Midwest st.
- 25 Summer Games org. 26 Recommend
- 30 Monday or Tuesday
- 34 Deep fissure
- tool
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- column

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- 35 Armed conflicts 37 Epic 38 Galley slave's
- 39 Boat crane
- 41 Essences 43 Rightmost
- intense 46 Marrying in
- 44 Become less
- 50 "Pulp Fiction" name 51 Drone or worker

- 52 Jogs the memory 56 Afternoon naps 60 Prom night
- transportation 61 Tale of Helen of Troy 63 Type of hop 64 Wednesday's
- god 65 Care for 66 Gael republic 67 Abominable
- Snowman 68 Whitman's "Leaves of —" 69 Vast number

## DOWN

- Billfold contents 2 This, in Madrid 3 Smear
- Conclusions Meat on skewers
- Found a perch Farm enclosure Disentangle
- Most flavorful 10 Opens up 11 Five hundred sheets
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## PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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- 28 "Anna Karenina" star 29 Guitar sound 30 Ankle opposite
- Lama 32 Form of quartz 33 Wobbled, as a rocket
- 39 Giving 42 Ristorante dessert

36 Blvd.

44 Not into the 45 Gives approval

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- Leave unmentioned 55 Disparaging
- remark 56 Talk back 57 Elbow grease 58 Ranch measure
- 59 Bias 62 Tax shelter

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## **SUDOKU**

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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



# Substantial progress made to better people's lives

By ZHAO XINYING

he Belt and Road Initiative has broken new ground for China and the world, and has brought new opportunities for the Tibet autonomous region to open up," said Jiang Jianguo, deputy head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

"The development of Tibet is in keeping with the country's step to open up. The region's co-operation with neighbouring countries and regions is conducive to share common development," Mr Jiang told the 2019 Forum on the Development of Tibet in mid-June.

The forum had the theme of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Opening-Up and Development of Tibet It was jointly organised by the State Council Information Office and the government of the Tibet autonomous region. "The event attracted 69 officials, scholars and journalists from 37 countries and regions outside China, organisers said.

President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to the forum saying that he hopes the Tibet autonomous region will seize opportunities for development.

As this year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Peoples Republic of China and the 60th anniversary of the campaign of democratic reform in Tibet, Mr Xi spoke highly of the achievements in the autonomous region in the past decades.

"Tibet is a key open border area designated by the country and an important channel opening to South Asia," Mr Jiang said.

"Under the BRI framework, environmental co-operation has potential," he said. He added that Tibet must insist on green development and protect the environment.







Clockwise from top: Foreign guests to the Forum on the **Development of Tibet visit the** Potala Palace. Tibetan drama Princess Wencheng is performed to entertain forum delegates. Delegates listen to a speech during the forum.

Qizhala, chairman of the regional government, said "Tibet is a crucial channel in China to South Asia and is an essential area along the BRI."

"In recent years, Tibet has

promoted infrastructure such as railways, aviation and internet," he said.

Official data showed in 2018 that the regions imports and exports reached 4.8 billion yuan (£555 million).

"With continued international exchanges in sectors including people-to-people communications and industrial co-operation, Tibet has become more open, inclusive and vibrant," Mr Qizhala said.

"Lhasa has become one of the most important international tourist destinations in China,"he

"The region will deepen communications and co-operation with others in areas ranging from policy, infrastructure, trade and finance to technology," the chairman added.

Topics such as Tibet in Silk Road civilisations; the role of Tibet in the BRI; the opening-up of Tibet and the inheritance and development of Tibetan culture were also discussed at the forum.

Paul Tembe, a senior researcher at the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute in South Africa, said he saw a different model of development in Tibet. Development is focused not only on the growth of the economy but also features a human happiness index." In this the preservation of traditions, religion and the improvement of peoples lives are

Michael Harrold, a senior editor at the English channel of China Global Television Network, said he had thought of Tibet as remote, isolated and inaccessible.

"So it comes as a surprise, to be honest, particularly during this forum, to realise that Tibet is playing a role in the Belt and Road Initiative," he said.

Liang Kaiyan contributed to this

operation with universities in

countries involved in the BRI

of Tibets universities.

to improve teacher's academic

level and the international vision

Hamish Bennett Coates, deputy

director in the Global Research

Centre for the Assessment of

# Foreign journalists impressed by advances made by local people

By LIANG KAIYAN

Fast and dynamic development

Ahead of the 2019 Forum on the Development of Tibet. which opened in mid-June in Lhasa, 69 foreign guests from 37 countries and regions including the United Kingdom, Italy and Argentina were invited by the State Council Information Office and the government of the Tibet autonomous region to visit the cities of Nyingchi and Lhasa and hold talks with people from various walks of life.

The four-day tour helped the reporters learn about Tibets development in fields including environmental protection, social development and culture.

Italian journalist Rita Fatiguso, in the Tibet autonomous region of II Sole 24 Ore, has been to Tibet has impressed a group of recent three times. "A lot has happened in the nine years since she first came she said.

> "People have become more affluent, not just in the abundance of food, but in their social lives as well," she said

Tibet is located in a challenging geographical environment but the Chinese government has invested heavily to make changes. "Great progress has been made as a result of huge input into infrastructure," she said

In Nyingchi, a city in the southeastern part of Tibet, the delegation visited a local primary school and the villages

When I see the modern facilities and the local traditions, the word that comes to me is harmony.

ZIED MOUMNI FRENCH PROFESSOR AT NORTHWESTERN POLYTECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

of Xiga Monba and Tashigang. "I used to think Tibetan villages were all simple rural villages but the villages we visited have more houses and facilities and are totally different from what I had imagined,"said Zied Moumni, a French professor at Northwestern Polytechnical University in Xian, Shaanxi province.

"When I see the modern facilities and the local traditions, the word that comes to me is damage the environment," harmony" Moumni said

With the advantages of ecology the city has the largest forest coverage in Tibet Nyingchi has also developed its tourism industry with the Lunang International Tourism Town and the Lunang Maker Space, a platform also engaged in selling local specialties and creative

cultural products. "Tourists coming from Europe want to see beautiful nature," said Liz McLeod, creative director of

Meridian Line Films in the UK. "I think that I understand that

to make a very comprehensive plan to make sure tourism is developed in the way that is in harmony with nature and doesnt McLeod said

"To me, that is incredibly important not just because the natural environment is essential for human survival but also because Tibet is one of the places in the world where the natural environment is still in a good condition."

In Lhasa, the delegation visited the Hospital of Traditional Tibetan Medicine, the Potala Palace, the Jokhang Temple and Barkor Street as well as other places.

the local government is trying Xinhua contributed to this story.

and profound theories," Tseten

"We have also innovated

and developed the medicines

by improving equipment and

The autonomous region has

Norbu Tsering, head of the

office of industrial and resources

development at the Tibet Culture

Department said "Tibetan culture

attracts worldwide attention with

In 2018, the autonomous region

had more than 6,000 cultural

companies with about 50,000

employees. The annual output value

of the cultural industry reached

4.6 billion yuan (£532.25 million)

"We are committed to

also seen rapid growth in its

cultural and related industries.

Namgyal said.

formulas," he said.

its distinct features."

## What they say



and future of the Tibet autonomous based on the construction

The present

with sustainable and open development. This is done through government support to key industries adapted to the geographical conditions. Through economic development and expansion of openness and co-operation, new paths are extended to connect Tibet more efficiently

modern economic system

Andrés Flores, a journalist specialising in international politics and news anchor of A24 TV Argentina



expanding its relations with South Asia via Nepal through roads and air routes The entire

Tibet is

socioeconomic status of South Asia would be overhauled if the Lhasa-Shigatse Railway were linked to Gyirong and Kathmandu under the Belt and Road Initiative framework. So, the role of Tibet in BRI would not be limited to Tibets development. Rather it would be a cornerstone for the development of the whole of South Asia

Chet Nath Acharya, editor at the Nepalese department of the South Asian Radio Centre of China Radio

As an



important part of the Belt and Road Initiative, the development of higher education in

Tibet will play an important role in the local economy. Tibets colleges and universities should make full use of resources. They should strengthen extensive communications and coCollege and Student Development of Tsinghua University At present, the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in



to its particular geographical location, cultural environment and religious globalisation. As a longstanding cultural phenomenon, Tibetan Buddhism has integrated into the process of globalisation. The observation of Tibetan Buddhism in Hong Kong and Taiwan should not be limited to the two regions but also be closely connected with the increasingly open policy of religious freedom

**E Chongrong,** *director of the* Ethnic and Religion Institute at the Qinghai Academy of Social



For more than half a century, China has devoted a large amount of manpower materials and capital while

promoting economic and social development to protecting traditional Tibetan culture and developing Tibets new culture. which has attained remarkable achievements. Tibetan culture has developed to be open and modern. As the traditional Tibetan culture was promoted and inherited, the new local culture related to modern sciences and technologies, education and communications has got unprecedented development.

Wang Yongxi, artistic director of

# From language to medicine, region's ancient culture thrives

By LIANG KAIYAN

As a part of Chinese culture, Tibetan culture has been well preserved and developed by a sophisticated system covering many areas.

The Tibetan language in the written form, for instance, is an alphabetic system. It has a long history and is widely used in the Tibet autonomous region.

Qumig Yudron is a teacher from the No 2 Primary School of Nyingchi, who teaches the Tibetan language in grade 3.

"In Tibet, the language is taught through primary school to university," Qumig Yudron said. "The language should be

learned and passed down as it is the essence of the local culture and the basic way of communication of the people."

The primary school currently has a total of 44 classes with 24 taught in Tibetan and 20 in

Mandarin Chinese. It has also set up courses related to Tibetan culture including dancing and

Traditional Tibetan medicine is also a major part of the Tibetan culture. Historical documents showed that the medicine had a history of at least 1,300 years. Nowadays, there are Tibetan medical hospitals in each city, prefecture and county within Tibet. The region has more than 90 Tibetan medicine clinics.

Tseten Namgyal is an attending physician at the traditional therapy centre of the Hospital of Traditional Tibetan Medicine. He said"Traditional Tibetan medicine consists of 18 main techniques including diagnosis and therapy."

The theoretical basis of Tibetan medicine is all in the Tibetan language. "Traditional Tibetan medical methods are passed down through traditional therapies," he said.



More than half of the classes at Nyingchi No 2 Primary School are taught in Tibetan, highlighting the respect for local culture.

Established in 1916, the hospital has more than 60 Tibetan medical professionals. It has introduced modern facilities including laboratories and medical equipment.

"I knew about Tibetan medicine in my childhood and have studied the course in university," he said. "With the support of the State, many traditional techniques have been preserved and inherited," he

In 2018, Tseten Namgyal was selected as one of the nationallevel Tibetan medical inheritors which requires three years of study and training.

"Tibetan medicine has unique advantages with its long history

developing more creative cultural products in a bid to adapt Tibetan culture to an innovative growth path", he said.

according to Norbu Tsering.

Olive Media in Italy

# Sacked state minister, who faces banking offence charge, fails to appear before court

Khatri's whereabouts are unclear and police say there are no orders to arrest him.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA

Khadka Bahadur Khatri, sacked minister of physical infrastructure development of Karnali Province, failed to appear before the Patan High Court on Sunday, the deadline set by the court.

Khatri faces banking offence charges. On Tuesday, a joint bench of Judges Srikanta Poudel and Tek Prasad Dhungana had issued an order in the name of police through Special Government Attorney's Office to present Khatri before the court within

Due to public holidays, Khatri was supposed to be presented before the court on Sunday, according to Mohan Subedi, spokesperson for the Patan High Court.

Police are yet to arrest Khatri.

"As the high court has not issued an order for his arrest, we didn't arrest him. We have sent the court's order to Khatri and notified the [Karnali] progovernment," Superintendent of Police Deepak Regmi, at Central Investigation Bureau of Police (CIB).

When the Post tried to call Khatri on his mobile phone, it was found switched off.

Khatri, who is a contractor by profession, is among the five individuals who have been accused of providing fake bank guarantee of Rs10.1 million to District Technical Office Bhojpur to get advance mobilisation, a payment given to the contractor to start

As per the charge sheet, they were involved in creating two separate advance payment guarantees of the Agriculture Development Bank worth Rs5.55 million and Rs5.53 million and presenting them to the District Technical Office Bhojpur on June 10 and November 4, 2016, respectively.

The government had recently filed a banking offence case against Khatri, Raju Prasad Shrestha, Chhabi Lal Dhakal, Randhir Tumba and Dev Jung Shahi in connection with the case.

Dhakal was an officer at the Agriculture Development Bank, Bhojpur, and is accused of helping to produce fake bank guarantees of the bank. While registering the charge sheet, the government had not produced Khatri before the court. It had mentioned him as one of the defend-

But the Patan High Court said in its

order that it was inappropriate not to present him before the court when the charge sheet was filed.

After the latest court order, Karnali Province Chief Minister Mahendra Bahadur Shahi had sacked Khatri, a leader of the Nepal Communist Party who comes from the former CPN-UML, from the minister's post on August 15

Khatri is the proprietor of KSK Construction, a 'B' class construction company, in Surkhet. His company was also found to have been involved in a number of projects whose contracts were awarded by his own ministry in a clear case of conflict of interest.

His company is reportedly working on 11 contracts under Water Resources and Irrigation Development Division under his ministry worth Rs345 mil-

them, seven contracts were awarded to his company before the division came under the provincial government. After he assumed office, the ministry awarded his company four contracts—Chingadkhola Control Project, Itramkhola Control Project, Sotkhola Control Project and Bheri River Control Project

# Eight proposals under consideration ...



>> Continued from page 1

Adhikari told the Post that they were in the final stages of evaluating the proposals. "The proposals will be tabled at the next board meeting headed by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli,' said Adhikari.

After a decision is made, the Investment Board will then invite 'requests for proposal' from potential

Adhikari said there are a few issues in terms of financial modalities and environmental regulations that need to be addressed by the Cabinet. The government also needs to complete the pre-construction before handing over the project to foreign investors, he said.

Last week, the Investment Board held a meeting with newly appointed Tourism Minister Yogesh Bhattarai and informed him about the status of the proposals.

"The minister has asked the board to go ahead as per the plan," said an Investment Board official on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorised to speak to the media. Bhattarai has informed the board that the ministry will soon schedule a meeting with the prime minister regarding the project.

Two reports about the project have been prepared so far. A detailed feasibility study conducted by the Landmark Worldwide Company of South Korea in 2011 estimated a cost of \$650 million for the first phase. In 2016, the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal estimated that the first phase of the airport could be built for \$1.21 bil-

As per the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, it will take two years for site clearance in the first phase, and then another five years for construction. The airport will have a 3,600-metrelong and 60-metre-wide runway in its first phase.

After the initial phase is complete, the airport will be able to handle 15 million passengers annually and accommodate the Airbus A380 super jumbo, according to the South Korean study. By the end of the third phase, the airport will have a new parallel runway, enabling it to handle 60 million passengers annually.

The airport has been planned to be the largest in South Asia in terms of area, covering 8,045.79 hectares when complete. More than 2.4 million small and large trees will have to be felled to build the swanky airport, according to an environmental and social impact assessment carried out by the Tourism Ministry in February 2017. In the first phase, the project will be developed on 2,500 hectares of the total proposed area. For this, 769,691 trees will have to be cut down

# Police arrest suspected Chand party member for possession of firearms and bullets

**SHUVAM DHUNGANA** KATHMANDU, AUG 18

Police arrested a man in Chandragiri Municipality, Kathmandu, Saturday morning for possessing firearms and bullets.

The arrestee, identified as Sulav Lama, was arrested with two automatic pistols and 20 rounds of bullets, said Deputy Superintendent of Police Hobindra Bogati, spokesperson for the Metropolitan Crime Range.

Acting on a tip-off, police on Saturday morning had searched a public vehicle en route from Dharke to Kathmandu. "Documents confiscated from Lama as well as his confession have proved that he works for the Communist Party of Nepal led by Netra Bikram Chand," Bogati told the

The government in March declared the Chand-led party a criminal outfit and banned its activities.

The move followed two explosions carried out by the Chand party in the Capital.

Since banning the Chand party's activities, police have arrested 573 individuals for their association with

At least three Chand party members have died in police action while five of its cadres were killed when improvised devices in their possession went off accidentally

"The motive of bringing in the weapons to Kathmandu could be to scare people," said Deputy Inspector General Bishwaraj Pokharel, spokesperson for Nepal Police

According to Pokharel, due to open border with the southern neighbour, small arms and weapons are often smuggled into Nepal from India and some criminal groups take advantage of the porous border

# Oli's parliamentary ...

"The agreement should be implemented," Bhusal told the Post.

Oli's statement came a day after Dahal openly wondered if his former party's merger with Oli's UML was a good thing.

"Sometimes, I wonder if we would've had more alternatives had we not merged," Dahal said on Saturday while addressing a programme in the Capital.

Dahal's statement too had piqued the curiosity of leaders, as it came a day after the ruling party picked chiefs of the 32 party departments. Those in Oli's inner circle say that

the prime minister made Sunday's statement on the basis of a new power equation that has emerged in the "The statement is in line with the

discussions Oli has held with Dahal in recent days," the aide to Oli said. Bamdev Gautam and Ishwar

Pokhrel's appointments as chiefs of

two crucial departments--Organisa-

Dahal has reached a compromise, according to leaders. Earlier, the former Maoists were making a pitch for Narayan Kaji Shrestha as the head of the School Department. Oli was also not keen to

let Gautam lead the Organisation Department, for he believed that Gautam had sided with Dahal. But over the past few weeks, Oli has managed to bring most former UML leaders into his fold,

leaving Dahal with no option but to Former Maoists, however, believe that the gentleman's agreement should be respected, as the chances of Oli making way for Dahal to lead the

government are slim.

Classified Display

माटरसाइकल हराया

मिति २०७६/०४/२८ गते बेलुक

७:०० बजे डि.जी मार्ट अगाडिबाट

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चौकी वा फोन नं ९८४९४८११७३

मा खबर गरिदिनुहन अनुरोध गर्दछौं

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"It looks like the relevance of the agreement is over," said Mani Thapa, a central committee member who has close relations with Dahal. "We doubt Oli will hand over power to Dahal in the present circumstances.'

# Meet the women who are ...

"As there are no training classes for us, female athletes learn posing, flexing, hairstyle, makeup and body tanning and colouring—the major aspects to gain points in the competition—via YouTube videos," said Maharjan. "Prize money for women has also always been less than that for men. But with more women entering this field, organisers have started to increase the amount."

Despite devoting years of their lives and a lot of their own money, numerous Nepali female athletes in the bodybuilding field said that it is difficult to keep themselves motivated, as bodybuilding and fitness associations keep the prize money low for women and there is no support from government. Furthermore, many associations don't even have separate competitions for women, placing them in a separate category under men's tournaments.

The Nepal Byayam Mandir, despite being the oldest gym centre in the country, has not held a single women's Narayan Pradhan, director of Nepal Byayam Mandir, said there just weren't enough female participants.

"When we started organising competitions, there were no female participants. Even after women like Nirmala started showing up, the number of female participants is still very low, which is why we don't have a women's competition," Pradhan told the Post. "We do recognise the absence of a female category, so in the next Dharmashree championship we are planning to have a women's competition as well."

Rajan Shrestha, general secretary of the NBBFA, reiterated Pradhan, stating that their Mr Himalaya competition has a female category but no overall female winner because of the number of male participants versus the females. "Mr Himalaya is a competition that

caters to both males and females, but we can't just organise a competition for just three to four female participants," said Shrestha.

But it is not just a lack of recognition for their craft; Nepali associations are often unaware of what categories there are for women internationally. Nanita Maharjan [no relation to Nirmala Maharjan] participated in the Mr Kathmandu Bodybuilding Championship under the first ladies fitness championship, where she placed first position. She then went on to compete in the 2016 Eighth WBPF. But things didn't go as planned.

"For my first international competition, I went as a participant in the model physique category, as the NBBFA had no knowledge about other categories that existed in the competition," said 34-year-old Nanita. "When we reached Pattaya, during the pre-judging stage, I was told that my body type isn't fit for that category, so I should either participate in the athletic physique or sports physique cate-

Nanita went to place third in the athletic physique category, becoming the first Nepali female bodybuilder to win an international competition. She participated in the WBPF again in 2017, placing second.

ies, and it is often difficult to do so in

Nepal, where there are no avenues for

Bodybuilders need to go through a strict regimen to maintain their bod-

Binita Rai too learned to perform on stage by watching YouTube videos.

"The type of bikinis and heels that we female athletes require for competitions aren't available in Nepal. So we have to order them from outside the country, which makes them even more expensive," said 36-year-old Rai, who is Nepal's first female International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness pro-card holder. "I've participated in only three competitions and I've spent around Rs 1.6 million already. The daily expenditure on food during the competition preparation days ranges from Rs 3,000 to Rs 3,500, and this speaks volumes about how expensive this sport is."

Athletes have to undergo five to six hours of intense training per day and eat at an interval of a few hours. Twenty days before a competition, they have to stop eating food with sodium and moisture. They stop drinking normal water and drink distilled water instead.

eggs, boiled vegetables, huge quantities of dry chicken, no sweet food, and expensive supplements," said Nanita. "On competition day, when we are backstage waiting for our names to be called, we are completely exhausted and sometimes even fall unconscious. But regardless, we put a smile on our faces and walk the stage with the thought of representing Nepal."

Rai, who won the bronze medal in the 2018 Mr Everest and the gold medal in the 2018 Mr Bullsmen, believes that there is a lot of scope for Nepali women in the bodybuilding field, but lack of resources and financial support limits their potential.

When these athletes aren't competing, they earn their living as fitness trainers in gyms or as personal trainers. In order to collect money for the 2015 competition, Maharjan worked as a fitness trainer in Bangladesh for 18 months, earning around Rs 400,000.

One of the biggest problems here is the prize money from national competitions, as they are grossly unequal when it comes to men and women. At the 2019 seventh Mr Himalaya,

organised by the NBBFA, the winner of the title 'Mr Himalaya' received Rs 250,000. The men and women in the other six weight categories outside the main title received Rs 25,000 for first, 15,000 for second and 10,000 for third. Female bodybuilders were thus only eligible to win a maximum of Rs 25,000. According to Pradhan of Nepal Byayam Centre, the prize money will not be equal until there are more female participants.

"If there are a lot more female participants, then we will think about increasing the prize money for females," said Pradhan.

Still, these female athletes believe that there is a lot of scope for women in this sport, both nationally and internationally. There are opportunities to earn money as fitness trainers, besides the competition prizes. The demand for gyms, personal trainers and fitness training centres is increasing rapidly in Nepal, said Rai.

"But the government needs to recognise this and support the athletes by providing some financial assistance and the associations need to increase the prize money for women. We put in the same amount of hard work as men," said Nanita. "We are losing motivation."



अनरोध गर्दछौं ।

support and few opportunities to win

## NATIONAL



A woman trims grass on the roadside in Babarmahal, Kathmandu, on Sunday.

POST PHOTO: SANJOG MANANDHA

# Locals express concerns about reconstruction of historic Bhairavi Temple

KRISHNA THAP

People of Nuwakot have expressed concerns about the ongoing reconstruction of the historic Bhairavi Temple in Bidur, Nuwakot.

The locals have criticised the authorities' lackadaisical approach to the reconstruction of Bhairavi Temple.

The shrine, located atop a hill near the historic seven-storey Nuwakot Palace, suffered severe damage in the 2015 earthquake and is in dire need of immediate repair and reconstruction. Although reconstruction work is ongoing, locals say that the temple is not being rebuilt in its original form and structure. They argue that this is doing the temple more harm than good.

Ishwor Khadka, a local who has been observing the reconstruction of the temple since it began in November 2016, is worried about the shoddy work. "The main beams have not been placed right. They are not aligned properly with the wooden pillars below. Such a historical temple is being rebuilt with little thought. Given the way it's being constructed right now, it may collapse as soon as it's rebuilt."

Bhairavi Temple is one of the most important shrines in the district. It was built about 500 years ago. The Department of Archaeology initiated reconstruction of the temple in 2016 with an estimated cost of Rs 46.3 million

According to Arjun Phuyal of the Monument Conservation and Palace Care Office, around 80 percent work of the two-storey temple has been completed so far

The local people vented their frustration at the Department of Archaeology for not rebuilding the temple in its original form and structure. "The authorities assured us that the temple would be rebuilt in accordance with its original design. But the design looks completely different. Technicians from the Department of Archaeology should monitor the construction work," said Arjun Ghimire, another local.

Govinda Adhikari, an engineer for the Department of Archaeology who is responsible for the design and reconstruction of the temple, refused to comment. He told the Post that he was outside the Valley and that he was not in a position to comment without checking the design and inspecting the ongoing works.

## **BRIEFING**

# Transportation obstructed along East-West Highway

NAWALPARASI: Vehicular movement along the Nawalparasi section of the East-West Highway has been obstructed since Sunday evening after floodwater of the Arun river overflowed the diversion. The diversion was constructed three days ago after the previous bridge over the river was damaged in a truck accident, police said.

## Koshi flood victims on hunger strike

RAJBIRAJ: The Koshi flood victims, who were displaced by the river around four decades ago, continued relay hunger strike in front of the Koshi Barrage Control Office in Sunsari on Sunday as well. The agitators started the strike from Saturday, demanding compensation for their lands swept away by the river.

## Chand outfit captures land

SALYAN: Activists of the Netra Bikram Chand-led Communist Party of Nepal captured around seven ropanis of land belonging to Khairabang Bhagawati Temple at Lanti on Saturday. The banned outfit announced the land seizure by hoisting their party flag on the land.

## Man held with 15kg silver

JANAKPUR: Police arrested an Indian national in possession of 15kg smuggled silver from Aurahi in Dhanusha on Saturday. An Armed Police Force patrol nabbed Bandhu Kumar Singh of Jainagar in India while he was heading towards India on a motorcycle.

## Rhino rescued in Chitwan

CHITWAN: Technicians of the National Trust for Nature Conservation rescued a rhino that entered human settlement in Bharatpur Buspark area, Chitwan, on Saturday. The pachyderm, that apparently entered the settlement from Barandabhar forest, was later left at Chitwan National Park forest.

# Indigenous dengue cases reported in Kathmandu; over a dozen people infected

Several studies had found the presence of dengue-carrying mosquitoes in significant numbers in the Valley.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU. AUG 18

Over a dozen people in Kathmandu Valley have been infected with dengue virus over a week, according to the Epidemiology and Disease Control

The division, which is responsible for containing the spread of the deadly virus, said that several dengue cases have been reported in Kapurdhara, Baneshwor, Tinkune, Tahachal, Teku, Sanobharyang, Balaju, Swayambhu, Lagan and Ason areas.

"More people might have been infected with the virus, as all hospitals, which have been treating patients do share information with us," Dr Bibek Kumar Lal, director at the division, told the Post. "Several private as well as government hospitals have reported us about the dengue

Health officials said that all the cases reported in the Valley are indigenous, as the patients do not have a history of travelling to the areas affected by dengue virus in a week

If the patients do not have a history of travelling to dengue-affected areas for the last one week and get infected with the deadly virus, doctors call it an indigenous case. The incubation period of the dengue virus is one week, which means when dengue infected mosquito bites a healthy person, symptoms surface within one

With the rise in the number of indigenous dengue cases, the division on Sunday held an emergency meeting with representatives of Provincial Health Directorate of Province 3 and Provincial Health Offices of all three districts in the Kathmandu Valley—Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur—and discussed immediate measures to contain further spread of the disease.

"We have decided to call a meeting of all local levels and launch an awareness drive and take other measures to prevent the outbreak in the Valley," said Lal. "Kathmandu Valley is densely populated and there are challenges when it comes to containing the spread of the disease."

A source at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital in Teku said that a health assistant serving at the hospital too has been infected with dengue virus.

Several dengue infected patients have been receiving treatment at the hospital. Doctors say if the dengue transmitting mosquito bites the infected people, it can easily transmit the virus to other people.

Earlier, two health experts from the World Health Organization, who visited the Capital three weeks ago, warned the agency concerned under the Health Ministry about the possible outbreak of the deadly disease.

Those experts, who visited several places of the Kathmandu Valley, had

Doctors urge people to visit health facilities if symptoms occur.

found a huge number of eggs, larvae and pupae of Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus mosquitoes, which transmit dengue virus.

The experts were called by the

WHO's country office in Nepal at the request of the Ministry of Health and Population.

Several studies carried out in the past had also found the presence of dengue-carrying mosquitoes in significant numbers in the Valley.

"People in Kathmandu Valley are highly vulnerable to the dengue infection as, vectors are already present there, infected people are going there to the disease hit areas are also high," Shishir Panta, an entomologist, who carried out a study on the presence of dengue transmitting mosquitoes in the past, told the Post, "The Valley also provides a suitable environment for the mosquitoes to survive."

Dengue-transmitting mosquitoes breed in clean water and bite people in

Dengue-transmitting mosquitoes breed in clean water and bite people in daylight. Due to an acute drinking water crisis, people in the Valley collect water in various types of containers and keep until they are used. Uncovered water tanks and discarded plastic cups and bottles could become a breeding ground for dengue-carrying mosquitoes.

for treatment and mobility of people

Health experts say detection of dengue infection cases from various parts of the Valley is alarming, as massive outbreak can happen at any time.

"The trend of hoarding drinking water in the Valley is dangerous as it provides the dengue spreading mosquitoes a perfect breeding ground, "added Panta.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne viral disease, which is transmitted by the female Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus mosquitoes. The same vector also transmits chikungunya, yellow fever, and Zika virus, according to the World Health Organization.

According to doctors, mild to high fever, severe muscle pain, rashes, severe headache, and pain in eyes are some of the symptoms of dengue.

The UN health agency says there is no specific treatment for severe dengue, but early detection and access to proper medical care can lower the fatality rate.

According to the division, as many as 3,425 people have been infected with dengue virus in the fiscal year 2018-019—the highest number of infections in 15 years. Among them, 3,152 were from Province 1, with 3,025 cases reported from Sunsari district

# Beekeeping programme to conduct survey on availability of bee pasturages

PRAMITA DHAKAL

With the increasing dearth of pasturage for bees in Chitwan, the Beekeeping Development Programme in the district plans to conduct a survey of pasturages, in what will be the first survey of its kind in Nepal.

"Farmers are attracted to beekeeping today more than ever," said Shiva Prasad Rijal, chief of the programme. "They are, however, unaware that there is a sharp crisis of flowers and pasturages."

According to Rijal, the survey will research the demand and supply of fodder for bees.

The Province 3 government has

allocated a budget of Rs 1 lakh for the survey. Rijal says the amount would hardly be enough for a proper survey, which is conducted using GPS tracking method, but his office is committed to conduct the survey.

which is absolutely necessary," said Rijal.

In Chitwan, areas like Tori, Rayar,

In Chitwan, areas like Tori, Bayar, Padke, Rudilo, and Tikauli, with their abundance of fields, are popular floral havens for bees. "The objective of the survey

is also to find out how many bees these pasturages can handle," Rijal added. Chitwan is Nepal's most popular

district for beekeeping. But the rise in the number of farmers and a lack of pasturages have affected the industry, bee enthusiasts say. "The land the bees forage on is the

same every year but the number of farmers keeps on increasing," said Bishnu Bhusal, an apiculturist in Bharatpur, who owns 200 hives.

The district currently has over 300 professional beekeepers, with each keeping at least 50 hives, according to data provided by Rijal.



POST PHOTO: SUBAS BID

Health experts say detection of dengue cases in various parts of the Valley is alarming, as massive outbreak can happen at any time.

# Upgradation of Galchhi-Rasuwagadhi road section to begin in October

Eighty-two houses along the road section will have to be demolished, officials say.

BALARAM GHIMIRE RASUWA, AUG 18

Road upgradation works on the Syaphrubesi-Rasuwagadhi road section will start in October, road officials have said.

According to the Mailung-Syaphrubesi-Rasuwagadhi Road Project, they have to demolish 82 houses and huts and remove 323 utility poles from the road area. Narayan Datta Bhandari, chief at the road project, said that they had started the process to provide compensation for the land acquired by the project. "We have started clearing the infrastructure on both sides of the road from Saturday," said Bhandari.

The length of Syaphrubesi-Rasuwagadhi road is around 16km. It The upgradation work is scheduled to be conducted in three phases.

is a single lane rough road. According to the officials, the Chinese side informed them that the project would be completed within 39 months of its starting date.

Road upgradation work along the Galchhi-Trishuli-Mailung-Syphrubesi-Rasuwagadhi road is scheduled to be conducted in three phases. The road expansion

work, construction of the retaining wall and the drainage canal are underway along the Mailung-Syaphrubesi section in the first phase. About 50 percent work has been completed so far in this section, project officials say. The Nepal Army has also opened the track along the 18-km Mailung-Syabrubesi section and handed over the project to the Department of the Roads.

The Galchhi-Trishuli-Mailung-Syphrubesi-Rasuwagadhi is a national pride project that has been deemed as a strategic road network connecting the southern and northern neighbours. This 82-km highway is key to implementing the Transit and Transport Agreement signed between Nepal and China in 2016.



OST PHOTO: BALARAM GHI

The Galchhi-Rasuwagadhi road section is key to implementing the Transit and Transport Agreement signed between Nepal and China.

## **EDITORIAL**

# Gift from the past

The Valley's hitis must be saved for their practicality as well as aesthetic value.

It is ironic that water management issues and scarcity plague the residents of the Kathmandu Valley, given that Nepal has access to plenty of snow-fed and glacier-fed water sources, and that the ancient inhabitants of the Valley had placed much focus on a functional network of water sources. For centuries, the ponds, canals and hitis of Kathmandu Valley were joined in a system that indiscriminately provided water to everyone throughout the year, all the while helping to recharge groundwater sources as well. Now, this ancient water system-still the main source of water for many—is dying out. It is a shame that this system has been underappreciated and allowed to disappear. The city governments in the Valley must prioritise its conservation. Not only are these spouts, wells and ponds part of the answer to water security issues, but they can also be cultivated as community centres with aesthetic value. After all, that is how they had been used in the past.

The water system of the Kathmandu Valley is considered to be one of its 'greatest technological achievements'. Using ponds as reservoirs—fed through monsoon rains or through water canals—the system employs underground clay pipes that supply water to the *hitis* (water spouts). The spouts are laid out in deep pits that are below ground level, essentially using gravity to provide a steady supply of water. The walls, steps and terrace structures that make up the pit hide natural filtration, sedimentation and regulation systems that would have ensured clean running water. What is remarkable about this entire system is that until recent damage because of improper urban development, it worked as it should for centuries.

In a city that has grown to demand 360 million litres of water a day, where 20 percent of households are still not connected to the water supply, and where the authorities have only been able to ensure a maximum supply of 140 million litres a day, such an ancient utility should have been celebrated as a blessing. Instead, short-sighted development has ensured the destruction of many aspects of the system. The ponds that feed the spouts, store monsoon water and recharge aquifers have been left to stagnate or have been actively destroyed. The most famous one, Rani Pokhari, was drained by Kathmandu Metropolitan City without consulting conservation experts. Another one was destroyed last year to make way for the Chhaya Centre—a mall. The water canals and underground pipes too have been cut off or bottlenecked due to construction projects. In some cases, like Bhotahiti, the entire hiti has been covered over to facilitate the construction of buildings and underpasses.

Such myopic moves will only come back to haunt the Valley's residents in the future. With the Melamchi water project nowhere near completion, people are already reeling under water insecurity. As such, people have had to rely on groundwater extraction, which brings with it short-term problems of iron and arsenic toxicity and long-term issues of water shortage and entire geographic areas becoming unstable and sinking. Bhaktapur and Lalitpur have started to conserve their ponds, which is a step in the right direction. However, all city governments in the Valley need to come together with a plan to conserve and restore the entire water system.

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# Why big merger' faces a big hurdle

Relatively large ownership by a single entity is a potential roadblock to mergers and acquisitions.

PABAN RAJ PANDEY



Talks of mergers and acquisitions among Nepali banks have been on the rise in recent weeks. The latest Monetary Policy lays down measures meant to encourage banks to merge. By mid-July next year, commercial banks are required to maintain an average interest rate spread (the difference between rates on loans and deposits) of 4.4 percent from the current 4.5 percent; banks that complete mergers and acquisitions by that time will get a one-year extension. Also, by mid-July next year, commercial banks are required to float at least 25 percent of their paid-up capital in debentures; banks that decide to tie the knot by that deadline will get a one-year reprieve. A merged bank also does not have to seek Nepal Rastra Bank's approval to open new branches. Currently, the board of directors, CEOs and deputy CEOs are required to abide by a cooling-off period of six months during which they cannot join another bank. This restriction will not apply to executives of a merged bank

The argument for mergers and acquisitions goes something like this. There are just too many banks and financial institutions in Nepal. As of mid-June, there were 28 commercial banks (Class A), 32 development banks (Class B), 24 finance companies (Class C) and 91 micro-credit companies (Class D). Conceivably, larger banks should be able to fund large infrastructure projects individually. The existence of larger Nepali banks could also make it easier for them to branch into India. Bigger Nepali banks will be able to compete with foreign banks better on Nepali soil. These are all valid reasons. But how many is too many?

## Short history

The history of competitive Nepali banking is brief. Formal banking began 80 years ago when Nepal Bank Limited was established in 1937. It was not until the 1980s and 90s that If a large bank fails and the government steps in to save it, it's the taxpayers who end up paying.

private entities entered the sector. Here is the rub. Of the 28, 14 were founded in this century, meaning they are less than 20 years old. In other words, a good majority of the 28 have not witnessed enough cycles.

It helps if one has been through cycles-both up and down. It is in a down cycle when the wheat gets separated from the chaff. This is the perfect time for the strong to be on the lookout for cheap assets to merge with or acquire. In Class C, for instance, 10 percent of the total loan portfolio was non-performing as of mid-June, versus 1.7 percent for Class A and 1.1 percent for Class B. Just using this metric, Class C is not faring well. However, they are nothing in size compared to their A and B peers. Acquiring Class C outfits should be a walk in the park for Class A institutions. But this will not help the commercial banks bulk up. To achieve each othe

In early July, Global IME Bank and Janata Bank-both Class A institutions-signed a memorandum of understanding to merge. A few days later, Citizens Bank (Class A) agreed to acquire Sahayogi Bikas Bank (Class B). Nepal Rastra Bank would love a virtuous cycle to begin. The reality, however, is a bit different. First and foremost, commercial banks are profitable. Loan demand far supersedes deposit collection. They are more than earning their cost of capital. In an environment like this, there is no urgency to consolidate through economies of scale or lower cost structures

## Big not necessarily better

Relatedly, in 2015, while announcing the 2015-16 Monetary Policy, Nepal Rastra Bank gave commercial banks two years to raise their paid-up capital from Rs2 billion to Rs8 billion, hoping this would set in motion a merger and acquisition cycle. Banks did bulk up, but by issuing rights and bonus shares. Since commercial banks now are more or less the same size, in all likelihood a new bank results from a merger of equals. This means that there is no strategic lever

owns 70.2 percent of Standard Chartered Bank Nepal. Punjab National Bank holds a 20 percent equity stake in Everest Bank. FMO of the Netherlands holds 17 percent of NMB Bank shares. Nepal Bangladesh Bank was established as a joint venture with IFIC Bank of Bangladesh, where the latter holds three of six

board seats. Relatively large ownership by a single entity is a potential roadblock to mergers and acquisitions, as more often than not such large players would like to maintain control or influence. This also applies to banks in which an individual or a family or a group of like-minded people own a significant chunk. It will be a miracle if Nabil Bank (Chaudhary Group) and Laxmi Bank (Khetan Group) merge. In the unlikely event that more banks follow in the footsteps of Global IME/Janata in the months to come, they will be fewer in number but much larger in size. In this scenario, if in due course a large bank goes belly up and the government steps in to save depositors, it is the taxpayers who will end up footing the bill. Big is not always better, particularly not if the merger and acquisition initiative is taken not to fulfil market demands but to fulfil the regulator's wishes.

Pandey worked in the securities industry in the US for two decades.

# their A and B peers. Coutfits should be a for Class A institulation not help the comulk up. To achieve lave to merge with means that there is no strategic lever to push a merger or acquisition. Of the 25 privately owned commercial banks, Nepal SBI Bank is 55 percent owned by the State Bank of India. The Standard Chartered Group

# Disputing FDI

Nepal's investment strategy should be designed from a legal, not just policy, perspective.

SABRINA SINGH



Pakistan in an arbitrational tribunal. Initially hired to provide pre-shipment inspection services for Pakistan's exports, the Swiss corporation claimed that by cancelling their contract, Pakistan breached its Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) with Switzerland. Thus began the arbitration case known as SGS v. Pakistan at the World Bank's International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). From Pakistan's viewpoint, this course of action came as a bit of a surprise. This was the first time that it had faced such a legal proceeding. The then attorney general of Pakistan searched 'ICSID' and 'BIT' on Google to even comprehend what was

In 2001, a Swiss corporation sued

This anecdote is no criticism of a particular country but a paradigmatic example of how developing countries have approached foreign investment and trade. Many leaders and policymakers see economic development, including foreign investment and trade, as high-level policy decisions and diplomatic formalities while ignoring the tangible and binding legal effects they could have in the governance of their own countries. One such legal effect of



investment policy is investor-state dispute settlement.

International investment agreements and codes are critical instruments to attract and retain foreign direct investment (FDI). They often also contain arbitration clauses that allow investors to sue host countries. Worldwide, there are 3,300 international investment agreements, both bilateral and multilateral. Although Nepal has lagged behind in attracting FDI, today's Nepal seems keen on catching up. The government is targeting a 10-percentage-point increase in investment rates by 2021, and a graduation to middle income country status by 2030. The Investment Summit earlier this year unveiled projects worth \$24 billion, and a similar Tourism Investment Summit is on the horizon, scheduled for 2020. Nepal has introduced some domestic law reforms meant to create an investment-friendly environment and signed BITs with countries like India, Mauritius, and Germany. At this critical juncture, we should learn from the experience of other developing countries and recognise that investment instruments are not just policy frameworks, but can be binding and legally-enforceable commitments at the international level.

This is an important lens for Nepal due to several reasons. First, it is theoretically likely that Nepal could be subject to arbitration proceedings in the coming years. Earlier this year, Axiata UK (through investment in Ncell) filed a request for arbitration against the government of Nepal, based on the UK-Nepal Bilateral Investment Treaty signed in 1993. If Nepal is indeed serious about attracting and retaining FDI, the government should simultaneously build its legal dispute resolution capacity. Second, Nepal's administrative and legal bodies can be slow, ambiguous and unpredictable. Such conditions are fertile grounds for disputes to arise with foreign investors.

For example, in 1990, Mexico contracted with a foreign company to build a landfill, and the federal government had given some form of assurance about the proposed investment to the foreign investor. Shortly

A smart path to development includes legal capability, foresight, and flexibility.

after, there was widespread local opposition to the landfill, and the municipal government denied the investor the final permit needed to continue construction, stating that the targeted area was ecologically sensitive. By 1994, construction had come to a complete halt and the investor brought an arbitration proceeding against Mexico. The tribunal found Mexico liable. It is not a stretch of the imagination to picture a similar scenario in Nepal. This is important in the context of Nepal because such disputes can influence domestic resources and decisions about tax, regulations, human rights, environment and other governance issues

The future of international investment and trade dispute regimes are uncertain. With the rise of Chinese investments and numerous other states calling for reform in investor-state dispute resolution, there may be changes in the practicalities of the legal investment and trade regime. But it is especially important in uncertain times to make smart moves. Nepal's leadership should learn from the investment and trade experiences of other developing countries: A smart path to development includes legal capability, foresight, and flexibility.

Singh studies international law and human rights at Harvard Law School.

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**OPINION** 

# The links between climate change and viral infection

Global warming has taken vector-borne viral diseases such as dengue to new dimensions.

## **IFTIKHAR AHMED**

Climate change is one of the most complex challenges of this century. Globalisation and climate change have caused an unprecedented impact on emerging and re-emerging diseases including zoonoses (diseases that can be passed from animals to humans) in recent years. Emerging infectious diseases refer to diseases caused by newly identified and previously unknown infectious agents; they have the potential to cause immense burden on public health both locally and internationally. On the contrary, re-emerging infectious diseases, caused by agents that have been known for some time and have fallen to very low levels, are now showing an upward trend in incidence worldwide. It is worth noting that viruses and biological vectors (e.g. mosquitoes) swim in the evolutionary stream—they swim so fast that even any thoughtful intervention usually fails to stop them from infiltrating the system.

Global warming and climate change have taken diseases like dengue and other vector-borne viral diseases to new dimensions. Climatic factors, particularly temperature and rainfall, affect the ability of viral disease propagation and potential mosquito vectors to coexist long enough to maintain and increase the rate of transmission. The decreased prevalence of infectious diseases in western countries in the 20th century was due to urban sanitation, improved housing, personal hygiene, antisepsis and immunisation. Since the last quarter of the 20th century, there has been a resurgence of infectious diseases: certain viral diseases (Avian influenza, Ebola, Marburg, Rift Valley fever, chikungunya, dengue, Japanese encephalitis) have emerged or re-emerged while others (smallpox, poliomyelitis, measles) have declined significantly.

Zoonotic transmission of infectious agents from animals (wild and domestic) to humans constituted more than two-thirds of emerging infections. Contact among animals and people is another driving force behind the emergence of new infections. Deforestation forces wild



animals into closer contact with humans. Increased possibility for agents to breach species (host) barrier between animals and humans is responsible for the spread of diseases like Lassa fever, yellow fever and swine flu while global warming facilitated the spread of vector-borne diseases such as dengue, chikungunya and Japanese encephalitis.

Rapid urbanisation and population displacement have given rise to the growth of densely populated cities with substandard housing, unsafe water, poor sanitation, overcrowding, indoor air pollution (triggering incidence of viral diarrhea), acute respiratory tract infection, and many other microbial infections. Recognising the complexity of the diverse sociocultural processes involved in the emergence/re-emergence of infectious diseases, many researchers in the fields of biology, medicine, and public health are calling for inputs from experts in the social, economic and behavioural sciences. With its integrative approach to complex bio-cultural issues, anthropology is well-positioned to make significant theoretical and practical contributions. Climate change has been responsible for at least one emerging or re-emerging disease in many countries and the number of such countries is gradually increasing.

Diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), one of the first emerging viral diseases of the 21st century, in one country are an alarming threat to all travellers with a tremendous negative economic impact on trade, travel and tourism. Nipah virus infection is becoming endemic in Bangladesh as cases have

Climate change has been responsible for at least one emerging or re-emerging disease in many countries.

been continuously detected since 2001. Avian influenza (H5N1) has been detected since November 2003 in birds and affected 60 countries across Asia, Europe, Middle East and Africa, and more than 220 million birds were killed by the virus or culled to prevent further propagation. Swine-origin influenza A (H1N1) which leads to swine flu causes respiratory diseases in pigs; pigs can get infected by human, avian and swine influenza virus es. In late 2009 and early 2010, the global pandemic of swine flu caused great panic. Although a few cases of swine flu were detected, there were only two recorded deaths in Bangladesh.

The outbreak of dengue has taken place over the past 40 years with a 20-fold increase to nearly 0.5 million cases from 1990 to 1998. The medical community of Bangladesh was fairly unfamiliar about the presence of dengue in the country before 2000. Since its outbreak beginning in the summer of 2000, cases have been reported every year. Chikungunya fever is also a re-emerging condition in previously unaffected areas with possibly changing epidemiology and severity of the disease. This tends to be clustered geographically and overlap with dengue because they share some common clinical features.

The role of climate as well as environmental changes on the growing burden of emerging and re-emerging infections calls for a new approach so as to prevent these threats. The response options need to be appropriate keeping in mind the nature of vulnerabilities that might affect demographic transitions due to climate

change. Health, nutrition and population experts must address these areas of public-health issues related to climate change with the required responses. Member countries have given the World Organisation for Animal Health a mandate to address the issue by using its scientific capabilities and networks at the global, regional and sub-regional levels. The aim is to prevent or reduce the effects of climate change on animal diseases which are transmissible to humans. In order to offer a multidisciplinary perspective to mitigate the problem, infectious disease specialists, epidemiologists, geneticists, microbiologists, and population biologists need to join hands to address questions about the definition, identification, factors responsible for and multidisciplinary approaches to viral infections. There is also a need for monitoring at the national, regional and global levels which can be done by taking an epidemiological, laboratory-based, ecological and anthropological approach and adopting early control measures.

The role of public-health professionals is to establish monitoring and surveillance for unusual diseases and drug-resistant agents as well as ensure laboratory capacity to identify new agents and develop plans to handle outbreaks of unknown diseases. Finally, socio-political commitment at both the national and international levels is crucial for effective containment of these dangerous diseases.

This article was previously published in The Daily Star, a part of the Asia News Network.

# Hungary's Holocaust simulacrum

The memory of the Holocaust in Hungary and elsewhere is slowly becoming a simulacrum of historical reality.

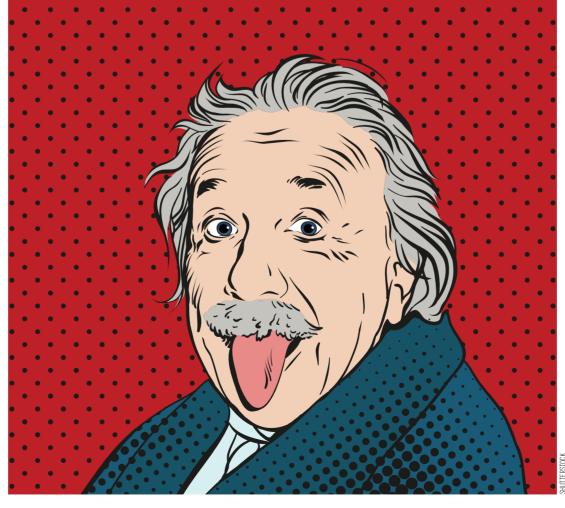
## ANDREA PETO

The exhibition at the House of Jewish Excellence in Balatonfüred, a small, picturesque town on the northern shore of Hungary's Lake Balaton, features some 130 prominent Jews in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), many of them of Hungarian origin. The museum shop, however, has nothing specifically referring to Jews in the Hungarian context. At best, one can purchase a bottle of kosher wine or a mug with the iconic photo of Albert Einstein sticking out his tongue.

Perhaps this is not a problem. Maybe we should just celebrate the opening of another Jewish museum in Hungary, which has the second-largest Jewish community in Europe but very few Holocaust memorial sites. We might even overlook the fact that by identifying excellence only with STEM research, the museum renders invisible several other prominent Jewish scholars whose oeuvre is more closely related to progressive ideas and actions. That skewed view doubtless pleases the current Hungarian government, which is supporting the museum financially.

Yet it is impossible to ignore the exhibition's painful lack of critical reflection as to why even the talented Jews it did decide to feature were persecuted, and how they survived. The only three-dimensional, material object in the museum is a plaque by the entrance that refers in general terms to 'wickedness' and 'a plan to kill.' This vagueness—or rather silence—about the Holocaust, and Hungarian collaboration in it, is part of a wider, disturbing trend in

That trend relates to the French social theorist Jean Baudrillard's category of 'simulacra,' which was in turn inspired by a one-paragraph story by Jorge Luis Borges entitled 'On Exactitude in Science.' In it, Borges describes an empire so attached to the map of its own territory that when the empire collapsed, nothing remained but the map, or the simulation of the land that once was a powerful empire. After the collapse, he writes, the land was 'inhabited



by animals and beggars.'

Similarly, the memory of the Holocaust in Hungary and elsewhere is slowly becoming a simulacrum, owing to a paradigm change in the way the event is memorialised, including in museums. This shift aims fundamentally to alter the current, universally recognised status of the Holocaust as a moral landmark in European history, with major consequences for the continent's values and politics.

It took a long time for the history of the extermination of European Jewry to achieve its current status. In countries occupied by the Soviet Red Army after World War II, Jewish communities had a corner or a room in their underfinanced and dilapidated synagogues dedicated to documenting the Holocaust. Official war memorials, however, did not mention the Jewish victims.

This Eastern European memory culture was fundamentally transformed after the collapse of communism by the 'Americanisation' of the Holocaust—meaning, as German cultural studies scholar Winfried Fluck puts it, a democratising process of stripping away complexity in order to make complicated events accessible to a wider public. After 1989,

the Americanised Holocaust narrative also reached Hungary. But not until the 2002 opening of a small memorial center in a former Budapest synagogue did any museum feature the international language of Holocaust exhibitions. At any rate, that language does not correspond with the national Hungarian memorial culture nor with the religious conceptualisation of the Shoah.

The Americanisation of Holocaust museums also technologised remembrance, resulting in exhibitions without historical objects. Instead, visitors use touch-screens to tailor their museum visit to their own interests—a dangerous educational strategy at a time when ignorance about the Holocaust is growing.

The over-technologised House of Jewish Excellence is an extreme example of this. On entering, visitors first come to a computer terminal on the ground floor. Here, they are expected to choose which scientist's brief life story they want to read on an interactive board conspicuously placed on the floor above. The mismatch between international, religious, and national discourse about the Holocaust could not be greater.

Moreover, the House of Fates, the long-planned second Holocaust museum in Budapest that was originally scheduled to open in 2014, shares this misguided high-tech approach. Although the showy buildings have been finished for years, the exhibition is still not ready, and its script is like a yeti: officially, nobody has seen it, and experts have never discussed it publicly, but it is widely believed to exist.

No respected Hungarian academic is prepared to collaborate with this project, the financing of which is alarmingly non-transparent. The museum's newly hired staff of retired Israeli and American male scholars—helped by media agencies—have been rewriting a script that was originally conceptualised along the same lines as the House of Jewish Excellence. Again, fluffy language and digital wizardry will be used to obscure the question of responsibility for the killing of 600,000 Hungarian Jews.

With a fresh start, the House of Fates project could yet help to establish a new language and self-definition of the Holocaust's meaning and legacy in Hungary today. This should involve a dialogue between the different memory cultures, among experts, local communities, and the wider Hungarian public.

Otherwise, the memory of the Holocaust as a moral landmark will become a vanishing simulacrum: the more that museums put it on touchscreens, the emptier it will become. And soon we will all be living in lands 'inhabited by animals and beggars,' selling kitschy mugs of Einstein sticking his tongue

— Project Syndicate

# 'Nepali market for beers is changing with consumers' preferences for alternative tastes'

Thomas Nösner on Nepal's beer scene and its adaptability with the international brands.

German beer brand Warsteiner's arrived in Nepal last year with much fanfare, having teamed up with Jawalakhel Groups of Industries. Since then, rumours of the beer failing swirled around Kathmandu, but it's all part of playing the long game, according to Warsteiner International's Technical Director Thomas Nösner. Following a recent visit to Raj Brewery, he spoke to the Post's Thomas Heaton about Nepal's beer scene, global trends, craft beer and the brand's future.

What was it like for Warsteiner to enter into a lager dominated market, run by a few breweries who flood the market with their product?

Nepal is dominated by, let's say, one group. From what I've seen, our problem wasn't in distribution, it was at the point of sale. But, what is happening in this market, which is dominated by one group and one or two types of beer, is it's already changing. I think this change will rapidly ramp up over the next 12

For comparison, in Germany 20 or 25 years ago, we had 10 stock keeping units (varieties), now we have 250. We extended the units because you cannot exist in a market with one or two different brands.

In Nepal, what I see is competitors are blocking new brands, which is something you can only do for a certain time. Eventually you will fail. When you block the competition, you block the customers. The customers are expecting variety and expect more beers, and this is going on all over the world. No one can avoid the competition.

For instance, until 20 years ago, there was only one beer in Argentina but now, there are a lot of beers. Then there are the craft brewers. Many of my colleagues say craft beer is bad for our business, but it's not true—they make beer interesting. They give a push to the beer busi-

I think Nepal is also following the same

What has Warsteiner learned about the Nepali market since entering last year? What is the marketing strategy now?

We want to be premium. People expected us to come in a big rush, but we didn't. When you come into such a different market, it will take a while and you have to explain what you're doing. Nevertheless, we are continuously growing—not exceptionally fast—but there will be a point when we will grow faster.

Warsteiner has offered a different productvisually and taste-wise in comparison to the existing lager beers. People who like it, love it, and that was my expectation.

You cannot expect people who have had only one beer for decades to take up new tastes quickly, because they might not be used to it. But over time, there will be a lot of changes and a lot more competition. For pub owners, I would recommend they take up more variety, because if they don't, they will fail.

Regarding Warsteiner, we wanted to make it into more of an experience. Our glass itself is a champagne glass, and our target was to always be really premium, not only by the label. Our next differentiation is our purity law—there's no alternative for us.

But entering a new market is always different in terms of infrastructure and habits in markets, especially in a country like Nepal. In



nearly at any time. In Nepal, people mostly pre fer drinking on weekends, but that's changing

Warsteiner Group's ideals include the idea of sustainability, in many forms, but what is it doing on an environmental level?

We cannot do much with the product itself. But Raj Brewery is state of the art and is brand new, and is built with sustainability in mind. We constantly work to improve processes regarding wastewater and energy consumption. There is an above-average wastewater plant from the beginning, which puts clean water back into the river, and the spent grain is going to farmers for livestock. Nothing is really wasted or lost.

Given the large 'strong beer' market in Nepal, and the international offerings Warsteiner has, would the brand look into doing its own strong

Nepal is not a typical lager beer market. We see the consumption running up in Nepal—this means we can bring new ideas in.

In the next couple of months, we will launch a strong beer because you cannot ignore that

Of course, we will make it a bit different, but not with Warsteiner. Maybe it will be more adapted to the Nepali market. It will be the same procedure, basically, with the purity laws and ingredients. We'll see how it goes.

I think there will be some more surprises in

Nepal is not a typical lager beer market but we see the consumption running up in Nepal. Nepal doesn't have a malt industry, or a culture of following German purity laws. What are the major difficulties in brewing?

Yes, malt is not available in Nepal, it needs to be imported. For malt, we had an agreement with malters and we audit them. Raj Brewery can take advantage of that—they can buy malt at the same place as we do. The hops are flown in as are the yeast, which we've selected over decades. The yeast has a big impact on several taste parameters.

In other countries, I know companies are forced to use barley produced in the country, but it's impossible in Nepal. You can't do a good malt everywhere, because it depends on the raw materials. It's pretty hard for the marketing department to explain purity laws to people, and there's still a way to go to explain it.

Due to all the imports, it's a bit more expensive, but of course it has to be for the quality. It's pure malt, pure hops, yeast and waternothing more-and not blended with rice or sugar to lift alcohol levels.

But we are more than happy with the brewery and the quality of the beer including flavour stability. It has exceeded my expecta-

We've got the result of good preparation, because we've been involved with Raj Brewery from the start, to influence all the equipment and details so we meet all our technological targets. Usually breweries at the beginning have big problems, but meanwhile here it's doing very well and the

# How companies are de-stressing workforces

Burnout: It takes place across industries and across regions.

## **CHRIS TAYLOR**

No matter who you are or what you do, let me take a wild guess: You feel a little burned out right now.

Was I right? If so, you are one of the two-thirds of Americans who report feeling burned out on the job, according to a recent Gallup poll.

That breaks down into 23 percent who are burned out very often or always, and another 44 percent who feel that way sometimes. Those numbers are epidemic.

But they do not surprise Cleveland Clinic's Dr Adrienne Boissy. When the famed clinic asked its own physicians about burnout, surveying over 1,500 of them, 35 percent reported at least one symptom. Across the nation for physicians it is even worse: a whopping 54 percent, according to Mayo Clinic researchers.

'People are feeling like their bucket is empty at the end of the day," says Boissy, who as the clinic's chief experience officer is leading the charge to combat employee burnout. "There is an ocean of distress and suffering out there."

Burnout does not just happen in healthcare, though, with its particularly intense life-or-death environment. It takes place across industries and across regions. Popular YouTuber Lilly Singh even made headlines when she announced she was taking a break to recharge her batteries. So what exactly is going on, to make everyone feel so depleted? There is no one answer. Rather, a host of factors conspire to make modern workers feel tapped out.

now make people accessible 24/7, leading to the expectation that they will be responsive outside of normal office hours. It can develop into a two-shift day: one at the office, one at

"All the ways we can get in touch with people these days, puts stress on people about how to balance it all,'

partner with consultants Bain & Co and global head of its organization practice. "It's exhausting to navigate."

To their credit, organisations are starting to realise that burnout is in no one's interest. At the Cleveland Clinic, Boissy and her team have rolled out a number of fixes to help reduce physician burnout. Since much of the problem stems from overwhelming documentation, assistants are now handling more paperwork or refilling prescriptions, so doctors can interact more with patients.

Cleveland Clinic is using innovative solutions like "Code Lavenders," where dedicated teams help during the painful or traumatic moments that happen every day in a hospital.

## Tips to prevent burnout

Some burnout prevention tips from Bain & Co's Coffman: Try no-meeting or no-email days to give staffers a break from overscheduling.

Try no-meeting or no-email days to give staffers a break from overscheduling.

wants access to a particular manager, you need to help that manager out with his or her workload. And remember that it is okay to say no. If you have five project groups demanding your time, go to your supervisor and figure out which are priorities, and which you can pass on.

Changing jobs can also relieve some pressure. Just ask Jane Barratt, who has plenty of experience working in the digital space, where "all anyone could ever talk about was how tired they were.'

When she signed on with financial-data firm MX as its chief advocacy officer, it was like a different world. Dedicated areas for spouses and kids, nap rooms, massage time, big family events like booking movie theaters or taking over theme parks—the list goes on.

As a result, her new venture "does not have the level of exhaustion of other tech companies," she says. "It's something I haven't really seen



Technology is one. Smartphones

says Julie Coffman, a Chicago-based

Another suggestion is to analyse your employee networks. If everyone

# Desolation but in its diverse forms

The current exhibition in Classic Gallery brings together the works of five contemporary artists but fails to link their individualistic themes and styles.

SRIZU BAJRACHARYA

I AI ITPUR

It's another scorching hot afternoon, the kind of day when you are thinking of dipping yourself in ice. Those walking the pedestrian pathway are swiftly hurrying to get to their desti-Banglamukhimarg, but are distracted by the paintings put up by Classic Gallery as part of its 'Being Together 2019' exhibition. They can't help but brood deeper into the paintings, even in their state of hurry—which seems like a tactic to pull passersby into the gallery. And, the lure seems to work, because these artworks are relatable. They might not be surprising but they are engaging.

Inside the gallery, a faint traditional instrumental imbues emotion to the exhibition, which feels rather melancholic, but it's apparent that is not what the exhibition wants to bring to the front. 'Being Together 2019'—an exhibition that brings together the work of five artists: Binod Giri, Aman Maharjan, Deepak Thami, Suresh Basnet and Leo Jhankar—invests in telling onlookers the artistic diversity and dynamics of young contemporary artists. There is no underlying theme that brings the artworks together.

But what makes this exhibition different is its simple expression. While many exhibitions around Kathmandu make onlookers ask 'what is art exactly', this exhibition maybe something that everyone will enjoy, because it is easy to contemplate—poetic but not too abstract. The artwork is detailed but leave you feeling hollow and estranged.

Binod Giri's large painting titled 'Pattern' explores different motifs

visible in the Valley.

The painting feels like an opening to another realm, one that will transport viewers to the city of temples. The yin-yang water shapes that surround the window in the painting look like they are part of the spell that opened the realm. The painting feels ancient with the use of gold; however, because of the use of dark hues and withering effect, they look detached from the real world—as though on the verge of disappearing. And the style remains persistent in all of Giri's other works present in

the gallery.

Another artist, Deepak Thami's artwork feels familiar and novel at the same time—for his paintings are of old people. His elderly characters hold and embrace things forgotten in the hustle of life, such as a lotus and birds. But they also feel like they are wrapped in the worlds they live in—a world uncared for by others. The minute details make the artworks poignant—for instance, the detailed precision on the wrinkles tell of the



POST PHOTOS: ANISH REGMI

One of the five artists whose artworks are displayed in 'Being Together 2019' exhibition at the Classic Gallery, Leo Jhankar's artworks explore the deterioration of green forests due to urbanisation.

characters' age and the stories they have lived.

However, it's Suresh Basnet's artworks that stand out the most in the exhibition. His paintings are colourful, although they delve on social pressure, enclaved worlds and departure. Some of his works are even comical. In one painting, a woman is adorned in jewels made out of greens, her earrings shaped like egg-

In another painting, he explores the backdrop of post-earthquake ruins in Kathmandu Durbar Square. The painting illustrates people pointing at flying deities, perhaps to account for how people described the devastating earthquake as the wrath of the gods. But even amidst this chaos, there is one character who is immersed in taking pictures of the flying deities—showcasing how in the modern world, we are addicted to capturing even our tragic moments.

But, Aman Maharjan's artwork, 'Utpatti'—in which he retells the story of Swoyambhu's origin and Kathmandu's beginning after Manjushree cut a gorge in Chobhar, draining out the water that filled the Valley—will make onlookers think otherwise. An observer might interpret the painting as Swoyambhubeing engulfed by the rapid changes happening around its vicinity. The use of dark cyan in the painting imbues a tragic feel.

While Leo Jhankar's environmental dystopia, which looks like a view from a lens, shows how forests are being cut down to serve humans—although this isn't a new idea, and many have seen such artwork before, the pieces are still penetrating. The forests he inscribes look ravaged and abandoned.

But it's likely that most, after viewing the exhibition, will question the title 'Being Together'—how do these artworks come together and what is

the aligning theme of the exhibition. Especially, because all of the artists touch on diverse issues and while they are just making expressions of culture, chaos, origin, and dystopia, the paintings unintentionally seem to lurk with melancholy—the hollow feeling when one is lonely.

Sarita Dangol, the founder of Classic Gallery, says, 'Being Together' was never the theme, rather it served as a title to bring together works of various young artists in Nepal are always looking for opportunities to exhibit their work, and although the prospects for them look better today, there still aren't enough opportunities, hence under the title 'Being Together' I wanted to bring together works of various contemporary artists," said Dangol.

It is peculiar that artists and the curator have decided to abandon a defining coherence among the artworks on display. Although the artworks carry their own individualistic meaning and purpose, it is somewhat disappointing that the exhibition doesn't offer any underlying collective theme. Heterogenous ideas can showcase diversity, but it can also leave the audience dazed and scattered—and hence, requires a curator's careful choice over the displayed works, artists' styles and themes that can bind the exhibition together

But, despite the missing theme, 'Being Together' will still bring people closer to knowing and understanding art, as the artworks can stand alone. This is an exhibition people shouldn't miss, specifically if they want to contemplate the meaning of art. After a long time, this is an exhibition that feels straightforward and comprehensible.

'Being Together 2019' will be on display until September 10 at Classic Gallery, Chakupat.





The exhibition brings people closer to knowing and understanding art.



# Gotta catch and keep 'em all: Pokemon's enduring legacy

More than 7,500 people from 49 different countries are expected to attend the annual Pokemon World Championships in Washington.

TORI OTTEN

Pokemon — the small, adorable creatures with special fighting abilities — have been around for more than two decades, and they're as popular as ever, mainly due to families sharing the legacy.

More than 7,500 people from 49 different countries are expected to attend the annual Pokemon World Championships in Washington this weekend. On Friday, as the event kicked off, most of the attendees appeared to be in their twenties or older.

"I'm 24, but I know I look young," joked Amanda Gunkle, who was decked head-totoe in the gear of Pikachu, the iconic yellow Pokemon.

She came in from Pittsburg with her twin brother to watch the tournament. "I've been a fan (of Pokemon) since my early childhood," she said.

It's clear why Pokemon appeal to younger children. But for many of the older fans, Pokemon simultaneously represent nostalgia and novelty.

The Pokemon franchise launched in Japan in 1996 but didn't take off in the United States until the early 2000s.

The brand, which is currently estimated to be the highest-grossing media franchise ever, produces video games released in pairs every one to two years, alongside a new batch of Pokemon species.

a new batch of Pokemon species.

It also makes trading cards that players



A man takes a selfie with a Pikachu during the first day of the 2019 Pokemon World Championships at the Washington Convention Center.

use to battle each other, an animated television series and several movies.

"We're definitely seeing some intergenerational fans," said Elvin Gee, a spokesman for the Pokemon Company, who was a big fan of Pokemon himself growing up. "It's amazing to see parents pass on their cards or pass on their video games to The goal of the event is to encourage education and strong principles.

their children," he said. Something for everyone

The franchise's popularity is also due to the recent success of smartphone app Pokemon Go, a game that lets players walking the real world hunt virtual Pokemon, as well as the film "Detective Pikachu," which opened in May and has made more than \$430 million worldwide.

"There's something for everyone," Gee said.

said.

New Jersey native John Kim drove down with his family so his two older sons, ages 11 and eight, could compete in the tournament.

"I really like it for (my sons), because... they have to learn to lose gracefully, to win gracefully. They learn rules, they learn to accept outcomes," the 40-year-old said.

For the Kim family, Pokemon's legacy moved in the opposite direction: John became interested when his sons started playing Now, the whole family plays together, even the youngest boy, who at four years old plays alongside his brothers — albeit

with a simpler deck.
"They have to sit with an opponent" and engage with others, Kim said.

That engagement is a staple of the Pokemon community, with many players developing close friendships, despite only seeing each other at the World Championships once a year.

The Championships prize money—which runs up to \$25,000 for the card game tournament—is mainly offered in the form of scholarships or travel certificates, particularly for players under 18 years old.

The goal is to encourage education and strong principles among the participants, many of whom are minors.

"It's about sportsmanship, it's about great characters, it's about a great game," said Geo

Like the Kims, Yannick Daunais' interest in Pokemon was sparked when his daughters started playing. The 38-year-old from Joliette, Quebec drove to Washington so his 11-year-old son could compete in the Championships. "We're like a huge family," said his daughter Mya, 14. She and her sister Lidya, 12, were dressed as Pikachu

and Eevee, another Pokemon.
"Exactly," her father agreed. "We're part of a huge Pokemon family."

-Agence France-Presse

## WORLD

## UK strips citizenship from 'Jihadi Jack' dual national

BRIEFING

LONDON: Britain has revoked the citizenship of a dual national Muslim convert to the Islamic State group dubbed "Jihadi Jack" being held in northern Syria, according to reports on Sunday. The move targeting Jack Letts, 24, who was a dual UK-Canadian national, has prompted a diplomatic row with Ottawa, Britain's Mail on Sunday reported. Former prime minister Theresa May approved the decision—which had been made by then-interior minister Sajid Javid—in one of her last actions before leaving office in early July, the newspaper said. A spokesperson for Britain's interior ministry

## Russian nuclear plant turns off unit after safety system error

declined to confirm the report, noting

it does not routinely comment on

individual cases.

MOSCOW: Block 4 of Russia's Beloyarsk nuclear power station in the Urals mountains was switched off on Sunday following a "false" response by the safety system, a subsidiary of state nuclear corporation Rosatom said. "The stoppage was carried out under a routine algorithm,' Rosenergoatom said in a statement, adding the radiation background at the station and surrounding areas was in line with usual levels. The plant was opened in 1964. Last month, a Russian nuclear power plant northwest of Moscow turned off three of its four generating units after a transformer short circuited. They have returned to operation since

## Spain comes to rescue of migrants on charity boat

MADRID: The Spanish government on Sunday offered Algeciras as a port to disembark the more than a hundred migrants on a charity rescue ship stranded off the coast of Italy after the boat had spent more than two weeks waiting for a port to dock. The migrants, most of whom are African. were picked up by the Open Arms boat off the coast of Libya and have been waiting to disembark on the southern Italian island of Lampedusa. Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has ordered his officials not to let the migrants

disembark, though he made a partial

concession on Saturday by allowing

27 minors to leave the boat.

# UK faces food, fuel and drugs shortages in no-deal Brexit, Times report says

Leaked Cabinet Office papers give 'the most comprehensive assessment of the UK's readiness for a no-deal'.

Britain will face shortages of fuel, food and medicine if it leaves the European Union without a transition deal, jamming ports and requiring a hard border in Ireland, official government documents leaked to the Sunday Times show.

The Times said the forecasts compiled by the Cabinet Office set out the most likely aftershocks of a no-deal Brexit rather than the worst case scenarios. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's office said it did not comment on leaked documents.

The newspaper said up to 85 percent of lorries using the main channel crossings "may not be ready" for French customs, meaning disruption at ports would potentially last up to three months before the flow of traffic

The government also believes a hard border between the British province of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, an EU member, will be likely as current plans to avoid widespread checks will prove unsustainable, the Times said.

"Compiled this month by the Cabinet Office under the codename Operation Yellowhammer, the dossier offers a rare glimpse into the covert planning being carried out by the government to avert a catastrophic collapse in the nation's infrastructure, the Times reported.

"The file, marked "official-sensitive"-requiring security clearance on a "need to know" basis—is remarkable because it gives the most comprehensive assessment of the UK's readiness for a no-deal Brexit.'

Asked about the Yellowhammer documents, energy minister Kwasi Kwarteng told Sky News: "I think there's a lot of scaremongering around, and a lot of people are playing into 'Project Fear' ... We've got to prepare for no deal.

"We will be fully prepared to leave without a deal on the 31st of October."

The United Kingdom is heading towards a constitutional crisis at home and a showdown with the EU as Johnson has repeatedly vowed to leave the bloc on Oct. 31 without a deal unless it agrees to renegotiate the



A line of lorries is seen during a trial between disused Manston Airport and the Port of Dover of how road will cope in case of a 'no-deal' Brexit,

The newspaper says up to 85 percent of lorries 'may not be ready' for French customs.

Brexit divorce. After more than three years of Brexit dominating EU affairs, the bloc has repeatedly refused to reopen the Withdrawal Agreement which includes an Irish border insurance policy that Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May, agreed in November.

Brexit minister Stephen Barclay said on Twitter he had signed a piece of legislation which set in stone the repeal of the 1972 European Communities act - the laws which made Britain a member of the organisation now known as the EU

Though his move was largely procedural, in line with previously approved laws, Barclay said in a statement: 'This is a clear signal to the people of this country that there is no turning back (from Brexit). A group of more than 100 lawmak-

ers wrote to Johnson calling for an emergency recall of parliament to discuss the situation. "We face a national emergency, and parliament must now be recalled in

August and sit permanently until October 31 so that the voices of the people can be heard, and that there can be proper scrutiny of your government," the letter said. Johnson will this week tell French

President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel that the Westminster parliament cannot stop Brexit and a new deal must be agreed if Britain is to avoid leaving the EU without one.

The prime minister is coming under pressure from politicians across the

political spectrum to prevent a disorderly departure, with opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn vowing this week to bring down Johnson's government in early September to delay Brexit.

It is, however, unclear if lawmakers have the unity or power to use the British parliament to prevent a no-deal departure—likely to be the United Kingdom's most significant move since World War Two.

Opponents of no deal say it would be a disaster for what was once one of the West's most stable democracies. A disorderly divorce, they say, would hurt global growth, send shockwaves through financial markets and weaken London's claim to be the world's preeminent financial centre.

Brexit supporters say there may be short-term disruption from a no-deal exit but that the economy will thrive if cut free from what they cast as a doomed experiment in integration that has led to Europe falling behind China and the United States

## Ukraine peace the prize as Macron hosts Putin

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

French President Emmanuel Macron will attempt to convince Russia to accept Ukraine's overtures of dialogue when he meets Vladimir Putin for talks on Monday ahead of a G7

Macron, who hosted his Russian counterpart in grand style at the palace of Versailles in 2017, will this time meet Putin at his official holiday residence in Bregancon in southern

The visit comes days before world leaders, including US President Donald Trump, gather for the August 24-26 Group of Seven (G7) summit in

Russia was slung out of what was the G8 in 2014 after it seized Ukraine's Black Sea peninsula of Crimea, an annexation the international community deemed illegal. Shortly after, a war broke out in eastern Ukraine between government forces and Russian-backed separatists. An estimated 13,000 people have been killed

Macron has taken a keen interest in brokering an end to the conflict and believes that the arrival in power of new Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky could give a new impulse to halting the fighting.

The visit comes days before world leaders gather for the August 24-26 G7 summit in Biarritz.

Zelensky has offered to meet Putin for face-to-face talks and spoken to him by phone in recent weeks.

"President Zelensky has made offers to which-it seems to us-President Putin should respond in an encouraging way," said a French official, who asked not to be named.

"The election of President Zelensky gives us some room to manoeuvre, the official added.

Brokering peace in eastern Ukraine would be a major feather in the cap for Macron, who since coming to office in 2017 has sought to magnify France's international role.

Kremlin advisor Yuri Ushakov said that the dialogue between France and Russia had "intensified" in the recent months and that Putin's visit was the "logical continuation" of his regular contact with Macron

Alexander Baunov, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Center, said Macron would be looking for ways to resuscitate the 2015 Minsk ceasefire deal which Paris and Berlin helped

"The main public issue will be reviving the Minsk accords," Baunov told AFP.

agenda, with Paris keen for Moscow to use its close ties with Tehran to prevent a further escalation of conflicts in the Middle East.

Tensions have shot up since Washington's unilateral pullout from a 2015 deal to rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

Ushakov confirmed that Macron and Putin would discuss Iran's nuclear programme, as well as the conflict in Syria, EU-Russia cooperation and Franco-Russian relations.

Macron is expected to press Putin to use his influence on the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to stop an offensive in the northern region of Idlib and ward off new refugee flows towards Turkey.

# Gibraltar rejects US demand to seize Iranian oil tanker

Gibraltar on Sunday rejected a US demand to seize an Iranian oil tanker at the centre of a diplomatic dispute overseas territory after weeks of

Gibraltar's government said it could not seek a court order to detain the supertanker because US sanctions against Iran were not applicable in the European Union. "The EU sanctions regime against

Iran—which is applicable in Gibraltar-is much narrower than that applicable in the US," the Gibraltar authorities said in a statement. A Gibraltar judge had ordered the Grace 1 tanker released on Thursday,

weeks after authorities seized the vessel on suspicion of transporting oil to Syria in breach of European sanctions. Iran has repeatedly denied this.

But on Friday the US Justice Department filed a request to detain the ship alleging it was involved in



A boat approaches Iranian supertanker Grace 1 off the coast of Gibraltar.

supporting illicit shipments to Syria by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, listed as a terrorist group by Washington. The seizure triggered a sharp deterioration in relations between Tehran and London. Iran subsequently detained the Britishflagged tanker Stena Impero in what was seen as a tit-for-tat move.

The US Justice Department says the

Grace 1-now renamed the Adrian Darya-and its oil are subject to forfeiture because of US sanctions violations. Ties between Tehran and Washington have frayed since US President Donald Trump withdrew last year from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal between major powers and Iran, reimposing crippling unilat-

# Conservationists, EU MPs urge ban on trophy hunting of endangered species

and conservation groups called Sunday on the regulator of global wildlife trade to ban all trophy hunting of rhinos, elephants and other endangered animals.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) bans all commercial trade in more than 1,000 species of animals and plants considered to be endangered, listed under its so-called Appendix I.

But in a letter handed to CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero, more than 50 European MPs and an equal number of conservationist groups decried that trophy hunting, which is deemed "non-commercial", has been exempt from that ban.

"A considerable number of Appendix I species trophies are traded each year, (including) trophies of species listed as extinct in the wild, critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable or near threatened on the IUCN

The signatories called on CITES to "treat the trade in hunting trophies in the same manner as it treats all other trade in wildlife," and to "implement an immediate moratorium on the import of all Appendix I species.' They also called for an end to allow-

ing captive farming of lions for hunting trophies. The letter was delivered during an ongoing global wildlife conference in Geneva tasked with evaluating the CITES rules, but the issue is currently not on the agenda for debate.

The Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, which is behind the push to close the CITES "loophole", said in a statement that "CITES permits have been issued (by) hunters wanting to shoot and take home trophies of some of the world's most endangered

# Iceland commemorates Okjokuli, its first glacier lost to climate change

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

REYKJAVIK, AUG 18

Iceland on Sunday honours the passing of Okjokull, its first glacier lost to climate change, as scientists warn that some 400 others on the subarctic island risk the

A bronze plaque will be unveiled in a ceremony starting around 1400 GMT to mark Okjokull-which translates to "Ok glacier"-in the west of Iceland, in the presence of local researchers and their peers at Rice University in the United States, who initiated the project.

Iceland's Prime Minister Jakobsdottir, Environment Minister Gudmundur Ingi Gudbrandsson, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson are also due to attend the event.

"This will be the first monument to a glacier lost to climate change anywhere in the world," Cymene Howe, associate professor of anthropology at Rice University, said in July. The plaque bears the inscription "A let-

ter to the future," and is intended to raise awareness about the decline of glaciers and the effects of climate change. "In the next 200 years all our glaciers are

expected to follow the same path. This

monument is to acknowledge that we know

what is happening and what needs to be done. Only you know if we did it," the plaque reads.

It is also labelled "415 ppm CO2," referring to the record level of carbon dioxide measured in the atmosphere last May.

"Memorials everywhere stand for either human accomplishments, like the deeds of historic figures, or the losses and deaths we recognise as important," researcher "By memorialising a fallen glacier, we

want to emphasise what is being lost—or dying-the world over, and also draw attention to the fact that this is something that humans have 'accomplished', although it is not something we should be proud of." Howe noted that the conversation about

climate change can be abstract, with many dire statistics and sophisticated scientific models that can feel incomprehensible. "Perhaps a monument to a lost glacier

is a better way to fully grasp what we now face," she said, highlighting "the power of symbols and ceremony to provoke feelings". Iceland loses about 11 billion tonnes of

ice per year, and scientists fear all of the

island country's 400-plus glaciers will be

gone by 2200, according to Howe and her Rice University colleague Dominic Boyer. Glaciologists stripped Okjokull of its glacier status in 2014, a first for Iceland.

In 1890, the glacier ice covered 16 square kilometres (6.2 square miles) but by 2012, it measured just 0.7 square kilometres, according to a report from the University of Iceland from 2017.

In 2014, "we made the decision that this was no longer a living glacier, it was only dead ice, it was not moving," Oddur Sigurdsson, a glaciologist with the Icelandic Meteorological Office, told AFP.

To have the status of a glacier, the mass of ice and snow must be thick enough to move by its own weight. For that to happen the mass must be approximately 40 to 50 metres (130 to 165 feet) thick, he said. According to a study published by the

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)in April, nearly half of the world's heritage sites could lose their glaciers by 2100 if greenhouse gas emissions continue at the current rate

Sigurdsson said he feared "that nothing can be done to stop it."

"The inertia of the climate system is such that, even if we could stop introducing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere right now, it will keep on warming for century and a half or two centuries before it reaches equilibrium.'

Iceland's Vatnajokull National Park which was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in early July, is home to, and named after, the largest ice cap in Europe.





This combination of September 14, 1986 (left) and August 1, 2019 photos provided by NASA shows the shrinking of the Okjokull glacier on the Ok volcano in west-central Iceland.

# Thousands of protesters flood Hong Kong streets in 'peaceful' march

Despite the near-nightly clashes with police, the movement has won few concessions from Beijing or the city's unelected leadership.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

A sea of democracy activists once more flooded the streets of Hong Kong in a defiant show on Sunday to the city's leaders that their movement still pulls wide public support, despite mounting violence and increasingly stark warnings from Beijing.

Ten weeks of demonstrations have plunged the financial hub into crisis, with images of masked black-clad protesters engulfed by tear gas during street battles against riot police stunning a city once renowned for its

Communist-ruled mainland China has taken an increasingly hardline tone towards the protesters, decrying the "terrorist-like" actions of a violent hardcore minority among the

Despite the near-nightly clashes with police, the movement has won few concessions from Beijing or the city's unelected leadership.

The spiralling violence, which last week saw protesters paralyse the city's airport, has tarnished a campaign that had taken pride in its peaceful intent and unpredictabilitywhich demonstrators have tagged with the slogan 'Be Water'.

Organisers of Sunday's rally, which started at the city's Victoria Park, said it was an attempt to wrestle the narrative of the protest back to its peaceful

It is a "rational, non-violent" demonstration, according to organisers the Civil Human Rights Front, the driving force behind record-breaking rallies in June and July that saw hundreds of thousands of people hit the

Protesters flouted a police order not to march from the park, pouring across the heart of Hong Kong island despite torrential rain.

Calling it a "flowing rally", one protester said the leaderless movement was constantly adapting to outfox the

"We keep learning, the movement has evolved and become more fluid, the 25-year-old recent graduate, who gave his name only as Lo, told AFP.

China's propaganda apparatus has seized on the weeks of violence, with

BRIEFING

Three dead as Israel fires on

GAZA CITY: Israel said it opened fire on

armed Palestinians on Gaza's border overnight and Hamas's health ministry reported three dead on Sunday, the latest in a series of incidents

along the tense barrier. Israel's tank

Strip fired three rockets at Israel late

Saturday, the army said, the second

such attack in 24 hours. Two rockets

defence systems, it said, without spec-

Israel, but said a rocket fragment fell

they had treated six people, including

were intercepted by Israel's air

ifving what happened to the third.

on a house in the southern Israeli

town of Sderot. Israeli medics said

two with minor injuries sustained

Yemen Huthi rebels appoint

**DUBAI:** Yemen's Iran-linked Huthi

rebels have appointed an "ambassa-

the internationally recognised gov-

the Huthis, who control the Yemeni capital Sanaa and much of the north The Huthi-run Al-Masirah TV said late Saturday that a "presidential decree was issued appointing Ibrahim

Mohammed Mohammed al-Dailami

plenipotentiary for the republic of

Iran." Yemeni President Abedrabbo

relations with Iran in October 2015,

accusing Tehran of providing mili-

Gun found in FedEx package

**BEIJING:** Chinese authorities have

found at least one firearm in a FedEx

package sent from the US, local police

said on Sunday, in the latest incident

to befall the logistics firm in China.

province, said "in recent days" they

sent to a Fujian-based sporting goods

company. The parcel was sent by a US

client and contained at least one fire-

Weibo account. The firearm has been

seized and officers are investigating,

arm, said Jin'an district police

through their official Twitter-like

had received a tip about a package

Police in Fuzhou, eastern Fujian

sent from US to China

tary aid to the rebels.

Mansour Hadi severed diplomatic

Yemen to the Islamic republic of

as an ambassador extraordinary and

dor" in Tehran, a step condemned by

ernment as a breach of international laws. The Islamic republic made no announcement about accepting the appointment of an ambassador for

four others with panic attacks.

'ambassador' in Tehran

while running to bomb shelters and

Police reported no casualties in

and heliconter fire came after Palestinian militants in the Gaza

Gazans after rocket attack



Protesters shelter from the rain next to the Tin Hau metro station in Hong Kong during a rally on Sunday.

state media churning out a deluge of damning articles, pictures and videos.

State media also ran images of military personnel and armoured personnel carriers across the border in Shenzhen, prompting the United States to warn Beijing against sending in troops. Analysts say any intervention by Chinese security forces would be a reputational and economic disaster for China.

But Hong Kong's police force are under intense pressure, stretched by flashmob protests and criticised for perceived heavy-handed policing including the use of tear gas, rubber bullets and beating demonstratorsincidents that have pinballed across social media.

"I think the way police have dealt with this is absolutely out of order. You can make your own judgement based on the many videos out there, protester James Leung told AFP.

diverged over the billowing violence, which has seen hardcore protesters using rocks, Molotov cocktails and slingshots against the police. Some say the violence has driven

the pro-democracy movement into an uncomfortable direction. "There are some expressing

extreme views," rally-goer Ray Cheng, 30, told AFP. "But we have tried many times with peaceful approaches... I really hope

the government can listen to us. Many among Sunday's rally goers carried rucksacks stuffed with protest paraphernalia-laser pens, gas masks,

googles and helmets. The consensus in online forums is that today is 'a peaceful, rational' gathering," said a 30-year-old identify-

ing himself only as Man. "We have our gear with us, but we

A Hong Kong government spokes-

"illegal acts with tolerance" and appealed to the protesters to "express their views in a peaceful and rational

Hong Kong's unprecedented political crisis was sparked by opposition to a plan to allow extraditions to the Chinese mainland.

But protests have since morphed into a wider call for democratic rights in the semi-autonomous city. Under a deal signed with Britain, authoritarian China agreed to allow Hong Kong to keep its unique freedoms when it was handed back in 1997.

But many Hong Kongers feel those freedoms are being chipped away, especially since China's hardline president Xi Jinping came to power.

Beyond suspending the extradition bill, Beijing and city leader Carrie Lam have shown no desire to meet key demands such as an inquiry into police violence, the complete withdrawal of the bill and an amnesty.

# Joy turns to horror as bomber kills 63 at Kabul wedding

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Joy and celebration turned into horror and carnage when a suicide bomber targeted a packed Afghan wedding hall, killing at least 63 people in the deadliest attack to rock Kabul in months, officials and witnesses said on Sunday.

The massive blast, which took place late Saturday in west Kabul, came as Washington and the Taliban finalise a deal to reduce the US military presence in Afghanistan and hopefully build a roadmap to a ceasefire.

The groom recalled greeting smiling guests in the afternoon, before seeing their bodies being carried out hours later.

The attack "changed my happiness to sorrow", the young man, who gave his name as Mirwais, told local TV station Tolo News

"My family, my bride are in shock, they cannot even speak. My bride keeps fainting," he said.

'I lost my brother, I lost my friends, I lost my relatives. I will never see

happiness in my life again." Interior ministry spokesman

Nasrat Rahimi said at least 63 people had been killed and 182 injured. "Among the wounded are women

and children," Rahimi said. Earlier he stated a suicide bomber carried out the attack. Afghan weddings are epic and

vibrant affairs, with hundreds or often thousands of guests celebrating for hours inside industrial-scale wedding halls where the men are usually segregated from the women and children. "The wedding guests were dancing

and celebrating the party when the blast happened," recounted Munir Ahmad, 23, who was seriously injured and whose cousin was among the dead. "Following the explosion, there was

total chaos. Everyone was screaming and crying for their loved ones," he told AFP from his bed in a local hospital, where he is being treated for shrapnel wounds. Images from inside the hall showed

blood-stained bodies on the ground along with pieces of flesh and torn clothes, hats, sandals and bottles of mineral water. The huge blast ripped parts of the ceiling off. The wedding was believed to

be a Shia gathering. Shia Muslims are frequently targeted in Sunnimajority Afghanistan, particularly by the so-called Islamic State group, which is also active in Kabul but did not immediately issue any claim

Wedding guest Hameed Quresh told AFP the young couple were saying their vows when the bomb went off. 'We fainted following the blast,

and we don't know who brought us to the hospital," sobbed Quresh, who lost one brother and was himself wounded. Another guest told Tolo that some

1,200 people had been invited. With low security, weddings are seen as easy targets. The attack sent a wave of grief

through a city grimly accustomed to atrocities. President Ashraf Ghani called it "barbaric", Afghanistan's chief executive Abdullah Abdullah described it as a "crime against humanity".

The attack underscores both the inadequacy of Afghanistan's security forces and the scale of the problem they face. While the police and army claim they prevent most bombings from ever happening, the fact remains that insurgents pull off horrific attacks with chilling regularity.

The blast comes as Washington and the Taliban agree to cut down US troops in Afghanistan.

On July 28, at least 20 people were killed when attackers targeted Ghani's running mate Amrullah Saleh as he campaigned in presidential elections.

The incident showed how even amid tight security and known threats, insurgents can conduct brazen The issue also goes to the heart of a

the Taliban that would see Washington begin to withdraw its approximately 14,000 soldiers from Afghanistan. The deal relies on the Taliban providing guarantees they will stop jihad-

prospective deal between the US and

ist groups such as Al-Qaeda and IS from using Afghanistan as a safe haven. Saturday's attack suggests any such promise would be tough to keep. The "Taliban cannot absolve them-

selves of blame, for they provide platform for terrorists," Ghani said. Few believe such a deal will bring quick peace.

Many Afghans fear the Taliban could return, eroding hard-won rights for women in particular and leading

to a spiralling civil war. Meanwhile, in the northern prov-

ince of Balkh, 11 members of the same family were killed when their car hit a roadside bomb, officials said. The provincial governor blamed the Taliban for planting the device



A wounded man receives treatment at the Wazir Akbar Khan hospital after a deadly bomb blast in a wedding hall in Kabul on Sunday.

## hope not to use it." Opinions among the protesters have person praised the police for handling

Eight protesters injured, restrictions reimposed in Kashmir, officials say

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Eight people have been injured during weekend protests in Kashmir's main city with authorities reimposing heavy restrictions to quell unrest in

the troubled region, officials said. Tensions remain high in the disputed Himalayan territory following New Delhi's decision to strip its semi-au-

tonomous status on August 5. Authorities were gradually easing a massive movement and communications lockdown imposed two weeks ago. But clashes in a dozen locations around Srinagar on Saturday saw restrictions brought back in some locations, the Press Trust of India

reported, citing unnamed officials. Authorities have previously denied or played down reports of any violence and stressed that most of the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley has been peaceful. Jammu and Kashmir government spokesman Rohit Kansal told reporters late Saturday that eight

people had been injured in the clashes but did not provide further details

AFP earlier Sunday that more telephone exchanges would return to normal operations "by the evening".

Schools in some areas will reopen on Monday, officials said. In the Hindu-majority city of

Jammu, authorities cut mobile internet services and warned locals not to circulate messages or videos on social media that they said were fake, PTI reported. The Indian army also confirmed that one soldier was killed when it exchanged "heavy" cross-border fire with Pakistan on Saturday.

Kashmir has been divided between the two countries since independence, and has been the spark for two major wars and countless clashes between the two nuclear-armed arch-rivals.

New Delhi's shock decision to strip the special constitutional status of the part of Kashmir it controls and impose a lockdown has sparked public anger and frustration

## About 3,000 homeless as fire consumes Bangladesh slum

**REUTERS** 

About 3,000 people in Bangladesh were left homeless after a massive fire consumed several hundred shanties in a slum on the northern outskirts of the capital city of Dhaka, government officials said on Sunday. Three people were injured in the

blaze that struck a congested slum in Mirpur town on Friday night. Video footage showed heavy plumes

of smoke billowing all around the slum area, just a few kilometres from the country's main cricket stadium.

Fire officials scrambled to get access to enough water and struggled for three hours to douse the flames, said Anwar Hossain, senior station manager of Mirpur fire station.

"According to our investigation committee 1,200 shanties were damaged and out of this 750 shanties burnt totally," said Enamur Rahman, junior minister for Disaster Management and Relief.

# High-end rebrand makes life sweet for Japan's 'ice farmers'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE NIKKO (JAPAN), AUG 18

In a mountainous area north of Tokyo, a priest blows a conch shell as Yuichiro Yamamoto bows and thanks the nature gods for this year's "good harvest": natural ice.

Yamamoto is one of Japan's few remaining "ice farmers", eschewing the ease of refrigeration for open-air pools to create a product that is sold to high-end shaved ice shops in trendy Tokyo districts His trade had all but disappeared in

recent decades, and the shaved ice or kakigori that is popular throughout Japan in summer had been produced with cheap machine-made ice. But reinventing natural-made ice as a high-end artisanal product has helped revive the sector and save his firm. "When I started making natural

ice, I wondered how I should market it.

I thought I needed to transform kakig-

Yamamoto tells AFP at his

ice-making field in the town of Nikko, north of Tokyo. Yamamoto took over a traditional ice-making business 13 years ago in



Shop owner Koji Morinishi makes a kakigori dessert with natural ice in Tokyo, Japan.

cially flavoured syrup.

After months of research, he began producing his own small batches of artisanal kakigori.

"I put the price tag at 800 yen for a bowl of kakigori. I also priced the ice at 9,000 yen per case, which is six

that ordinary people could taste the With the development of ice-mak-

ing machines, the number of traditional ice makers dropped to fewer than 10 nationwide.

The story is one familiar to many

traditional Japanese crafts and foodstuffs-with expensive and labour-intensive products losing ground as cheaper, machine-driven versions become available.

And making ice naturally is a gruelling task. The season begins in the autumn when workers prepare a swimming-pool-like pit by cultivating the soil and pouring in spring water.

Thin frozen initial layers are scraped away along with dirt and fallen leaves. The ice-making begins in earnest in the winter, when water is poured in to freeze solid, but it must be carefully protected. Producers regularly scrape off snow that can slow the freezing process

"I once spent 16 hours non-stop removing snow," Yamamoto recalls. And rain too can ruin the product, causing cracks that mean the whole

batch has to be discarded. "I check the weather forecast 10

times a day," Yamamoto laughs. Once the ice is 14 centimetres (5.5 inches) thick, which takes at least two weeks, workers begin cutting out rectangular blocks. Each block, which weighs about 40 kilogrammes (88 pounds), is glided into an ice room filled with sawdust on a long bamboo slide.

The blocks are sold to some of Tokyo's high-end shaved ice shops as well as department stores.

In the Yanaka district, more than 1,000 people queue up every day for a taste of kakigori made with natural ice produced by another ice-maker from Nikko. Owner Koji Morinishi says the naturally made ice has a texture that is different from machinemade products. "It feels very different when you

shave it. It's harder because it's frozen over a long period of time," explains "It's easier to shave really thin if

the ice is hard. If not hard, it dissolves too quickly.' Morinishi himself struggled when

he first opened the kakigori shop, but has gradually built a cult following for his desserts topped with purees of mango, watermelon, peach or other fruit. And Yamamoto's firm has seen demand soar-he now harvests 160 tons a year and knows two new producers who have entered the market.

they added. (AGENCIES)

## **MONEY**



People look at the cows displayed during the Agricultural Fair at Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver, Canada. The Agricultural Fair at Pacific National Exhibition showcases wide varieties of farm animals and activities for the public to experience and learn about the agriculture industry in Canada.

## Ferrari to expand its lineup of road cars, but not too much

**REUTERS**PEBBLE BEACH (CALIFORNIA), AUG 18

Italian premium sports car maker Ferrari NV will expand sales of easier-driving grand touring cars, but will not try to chase rival Porsche's annual sales volume, Ferrari Chairman John Elkann told an audience of classic car enthusiasts gathered at this storied golf resort on the Pacific coast.

Elkann also reiterated that Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV, of which he is chairman, remains open to opportunities to combine with other automakers, but is positioned to remain independent. Fiat Chrysler in May proposed a merger with French automaker Renault SA, but the deal fell apart after the French government intervened and Elkann withdrew the proposed merger.

Fiat Chrysler Chief Executive Mike Manley sent the same message to Renault and other would-be partners earlier this month. Elkann visited Pebble Beach during the annual Concours d'Elegance, during which wealthy collectors bring some of the world's rarest vintage automobiles to be admired-and sold-and premium manufacturers showcase exotic new

Ferrari is best known for flashy, high performance sports cars. Elkann hinted Ferrari will unveil a new GT type car in November. Ferrari has said previously that about 40 percent of its total sales could come from GT cars by 2022, up from 32 percent now. Ferrari has outlined plans to expand revenue to 5 billion euros (\$5.54 billion) by 2022 from 3.4 billion euros in 2017.

# Easy credit poses challenge for Russia

The level of loans has grown so much that the economy minister warned it could contribute to another recession.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MOSCOW, AUG 18

New machines popping up in Russian shopping centres seem innocuous enough—users insert their passport and receive a small loan in a matter

of minutes. But the devices, which dispense credit in Saint Petersburg malls at a sky-high annual rate of 365 percent, are another sign of a credit boom that has authorities worried.

Russians, who have seen their purchasing power decline in recent years, are borrowing more and more to buy goods or simply to make

The level of loans has grown so much in the last 18 months that the economy minister warned it could

contribute to another recession. But it's a sensitive topic. Limiting

credit would deprive households of financing that is sometimes vital, and could hobble already stagnant growth.

in 2014 by falling oil prices and Western sanctions over Moscow's role in Ukraine, and it has yet to fully

"Tightening lending conditions could immediately damage growth,' Natalia Orlova, chief economist at Alfa Bank, told AFP.

"Continuing retail loan growth is currently the main supporting factor,'

But "the situation could blow up in 2021," Economy Minister Maxim Oreshkin warned in a recent interview with the Ekho Moskvy radio station.

He said measures were being prepared to help indebted Russians.

According to Oreshkin, consumer credit's share of household debt increased by 25 percent last year and now represents 1.8 trillion rubles, around \$27.5 billion.

For a third of indebted households, he said, credit reimbursement eats up 60 percent of their monthly income, pushing many to take out new loans to repay old ones.

Alfa Bank's Orlova said other countries in the region, for example in Eastern Europe, had even higher levels of overall consumer debt as a percentage of national output or GDP.

But Russian debt is "not spread equally, it is mainly held by lower income classes," which are less likely to repay, she said.

The situation has led to friction between the government and the central bank, with ministers like Oreshkin criticising it for not doing enough to restrict loans.

Meanwhile, economic slowed sharply early this year following recoveries in 2017 and 2018, with an increase of just 0.7 percent in the first half of 2019 from the same period



A woman passes a notice advertising loans in downtown Moscow.

That was far from the 4.0 percent annual target set by President Vladimir Putin—a difficult objective while the country is subject to Western

With 19 million people living below the poverty line, Russia is in dire need of development.

"The problem is that people don't have money," Andrei Kolesnikov of the Carnegie Centre in Moscow wrote

"This is why we can physically feel the trepidation of the financial and economic authorities," he added.

Kolesnikov described the government's economic policy as something that "essentially boils down to collecting additional cash from the population and spending it on goals indicated

At the beginning of his fourth presidential term in 2018, Putin unveiled ambitious "national projects."

The cost of those projects—which fall into 12 categories that range mated at \$400 billion by 2024, of which \$115 billion is to come from private

A rise in value-added tax on January 1 that was presented as crucial for the projects contributed to Putin's fall in popularity over the last year.

"If the debt bubble suddenly bursts, how will people behave?" Kolesnikov asked.

"They will be left without money" while authorities continue to spend on grand but ultimately unprofitable projects, the analyst warned.

# US removes some Chinese furniture, modems from planned 10 percent tariffs

**REUTERS** 

WASHINGTON, AUG 18

The Trump administration is sparing some Chinese-made household furniture, baby items and internet modems and routers from its next rounds of 10 percent tariffs, it said on Friday.

The US Trade Representative's office released a complete list of the items that were removed from \$300 billion in tariffs scheduled to go into effect on Sept. 1 and Dec. 15, some of which had already been hit with 25 percent tariffs.

Trump on Tuesday delayed more than half of the proposed tariffs until December, saying it would help shield businesses and consumers from the US-China trade war fallout during the Christmas selling season.

The new list of 44 categories of spared imports, worth about \$7.8 bil-Bureau data, also includes some chemical compounds used in the manufacture of plastics. Reuters previously reported that bibles and religious texts would be spared from the tariff list.

Modems and routers made in China were part of a \$200 billion list of products hit with tariffs last September that have since been raised to 25 percent. Friday's exclusion would avoid a further 10 percent hike as Trump imposes tariffs on Sept. 1 to products in the same broad cus-

imports, worth about \$7.8 billion, according to US Census Bureau data.

The new list spared

toms category, including smart watches, smart speakers and Bluetooth

The bulk of the items removed from the tariff list were furniture products, including wooden- and metal-framed chairs and those made of plastics. Some of these were previously hit with tariffs as part of broader furniture categories

Baby-related furniture items also bassinets, cradles, strollers and chil-

The \$114 billion retail furniture industry has been among the sector's hardest hit with price increases due to Trump's tariffs, which rose to 25 percent in May.

The US Labour Department said on Tuesday that the price index for household furnishings rose 0.4 percent in July, marking its third consecutive monthly increase and contributing to broad-based growth in consumer prices during July.

# Airbnb records 30 percent growth rate in first quarter

REUTERS NEW YORK, AUG 18

Airbnb Inc recorded \$9.4 billion in total booking value in the first quarter, up 31 percent from the year-ago quarter, a source familiar with the matter said on Friday, a key number that could help pull in investors as the home-sharing company plans its foray into the public market.

The San Francisco-based home rentals company booked 91 million nights on its platform in the quarter, leading to the surge in total booking value, which measures the transaction dollars on its platform, the source said.

Airbnb had about \$3.5 billion in cash on its balance sheet as of March 31, the source said. The company reported a 40 percent revenue growth rate in 2018 compared with the previous year, according to the source.

Airbnb is readying for a listing in the first half of 2020, according to the Wall Street Journal, which first reported Airbnb's first-quarter financials earlier in the day.

This year marked several high-profile IPOs including Uber Inc and Lyft Inc, but the companies have fared poorly after their launch, amid investor skepticism over their lack of a concrete plan to profitability.

# Drone buzzes above vineyard helping Luxembourg winegrower

It can fly both in automatic mode on a pre-determined route, or be guided by the pilot on the ground.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HËTTERMILLEN (LUXEMBOURG), AUG 18

Buzzing like a giant insect over the verdant Moselle Valley, a drone sprays fungicide over rows of vines. Luxembourg wine producer

Corinne Kox began trials of the small unmanned aircraft last month over part of her century-old family estate near the borders with France and Germany. The test drone, guided by a pilot operating a digital control panel on

the ground, sprays more accurately and less wastefully than a helicopter which her family sometimes uses, she said. Kox, who is in her late 30s, is among the trailblazers in Europe deploying drones in wine production.

"It gives us some flexibility, especially on the slopes," she told AFP.

"With a tractor, it is sometimes dangerous to drive right after a rainfall because it slips," said Kox, who is gradually assuming management of the 10-hectare (24.7-acre) estate from her father.

Drones have been in use in California's Napa Valley vineyards for

In Europe, meanwhile, drones have been used in Switzerland for about three years and in Germany since last year, according to French viticulture expert Robert Verger.

"In France, all aerial treatments in agriculture are forbidden, and the drone is classed as aerial treatment,' Verger, of France's leading FNSEA agricultural union, told AFP.

Above Hettermillen village on the Moselle River, Domaine Kox sprawls over lush green limestone slopes, where grapevines have been cultivated for 2,000 years.

Born in 1919, Kox's late grandfather Francois launched a grape production business on the estate and her father and mentor Laurent turned it into a sophisticated vineyard and winery in 1977. Kox produces white wines from Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Auxerrois and Gewuerztraminer grape varieties. They also turn out a few sparkling wines as well as reds.

With a wingspan of nearly 1.5 metres (five feet) and eight propellers, the drone buzzes a metre or so above the vines, its two flashing green lights protruding like antennae.

It sprays a liquid mix of sulphur and copper over the green leaves.

After flying for about five to six minutes, the drone returns to recharge its batteries and refill the plastic tank with 10 litres (2.6 gallons) of fungicide. It can fly both in automatic mode on

a pre-determined route, or be guided

by the pilot on the ground. In conditions like those of the Grand Duchy's vined slopes, the drone can be an advantage, said chief editor of Luxembourg's specialist Vinorama magazine, Erwan Nonet.

"Luxembourg's average vineyard estate is private aviation operator



More and more wine makers in Europe are turning to drones as more accurate and less wasteful ways to spray fungicide over their vines

gradient is the highest in the European

Union," he told AFP. Wine growers and farmers find it safer to use drones to spread fungicides and other chemicals to protect crops, added Verger, of the FNSEA.

They are "not in contact with the product" and less likely to have an accident, he noted. Carrying out the trial at the Kox

Luxaviation, founded in Luxembourg in 2008, which supplies the drone and pilot.

"There are other winegrowers who are interested in drones," Christophe Lapierre, director of Luxaviation Drones, told AFP, mentioning interest from South Africa and Australia.

Costing \$40,000 (about 36,000 euros) to buy, Kox is just leasing the drone but hopes, in the long term, it would cost the same as a helicopter but with less noise and greater efficiency.

"We're still in the trial phase, so we don't have exact figures yet, but the idea is to reduce costs to match the cost of the helicopter," she said.

And, although she has still to reach a final decision, Kox said that she already planned to use the drone

next year over a much larger portion of the estate.

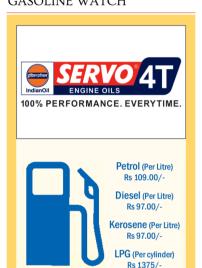
## **MONEY**



**BULLION** Rs 71.000 Rs 830

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

**GASOLINE WATCH** 



## Nepal hosting 56th DGCA conference after two decades

KATHMANDU: The 56th Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation of Asia and Pacific Region will begin on Monday in Kathmandu. Nepal is hosting the conference after two decades Directors General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is 'Harmonising Efforts to Capacity Constraints". According to Rajan Pokhrel, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, the five-day conference will see 400 foreign delegates from 34 countries. The participants will present 54 discussion papers and 48 information papers during the event. Pokhrel said that the conference will focus on 12 topics including aviation safety, aviation security, air transport, aviation meteorology and human resource. The International Air Transport Association in its forecast states that routes to, from and within Asia-Pacific will see an extra 2.1 billion annual passengers by 2036, for an overall market size of 3.5 billion. Its annual average growth rate of 4.6 percent will be the third-highest, behind Africa and the Middle East. This is the third Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation hosted by Nepal. The first and second was hosted in 1978



A general view of agricultural land with sprawling houses in the background seen from Khonaka in Lalitpur, on Sunday. Rampant construction in Kathmandu has been shrinking arable land over the years

# Brace yourself for expensive festivals, traders say

The government has increased the customs duty on foreign farm and industrial products in a bid to hold down imports and trim the trade deficit.

KRISHANA PRASAIN KATHMANDU, AUG 18

With food prices rocketing into the stratosphere due to tax hikes and shrinking domestic production, the upcoming festival season is poised to strain household budgets.

Traders said that people will have to dig deep into their pockets when they do their festival shopping for the impending Dashain, Chhath, the most widely observed celebrations in Nepal. Vegetables, fruits, dried fruits, meat, edible oil, sugar, legumes, flour and rice have all become dearer, and prices are expected to increase further, they said.

The government has increased the customs duty on foreign farm and industrial products in a bid to hold down imports and trim the ballooning trade deficit. The higher tariffs have consumer rights activists said that prices of daily essentials started rising immediately after the budget statement for this fiscal year was released on May 29.

"Traders have started hiking the price of food items as the festivals are drawing closer," said Prem Lal Maharjan, president of the National Consumer Forum. "The government is unable to regulate the market."

As per the Department of Commerce, Supply and Consumer Protection Management, prices of food items such as rice, beaten rice, lentils, spices, sugar, beans and flour have bloated by more than 22 percent after the budget

Raj Kumar Shrestha, president of the Nepal Retailers' Association, said that food prices may increase by 10-15 percent this festive season mainly due to a hike in the customs duty and transportation costs after the government enforced the vehicle consignment tracking system.

Opportunist traders may engage in



Middlemen and traders spike prices during festivals because of loose market inspection, consumers complained.

price gouging during festival time by creating artificial shortages or hoarding goods if the market is not properly monitored, association members said.

Nabin Jha, a consumer from Balkhu, told the Post that Dashain was a special festival for traders as they are free to spike prices of essentials. "Every year, during the festivals, the price increases and the quality decreases," he said.

Shrestha said that the government should conduct effective price and quality inspections starting now in order to check the festival market.

Rajan Sharma, former president of the Nepal Freight Forwarders' Association, said that Dashain shoppers may have to fork out 10-15 percent more due to higher transportation costs and poor distribution systems.

Prices of food items such as rice, lentils, spices, beans and flour have bloated by more than 22pc.

"Our production and distribution mechanism is not good. And the government has jacked up the customs duty as part of its ambitious policy to curb imports which has resulted in a steep price hike. As demand soars during Dashain, market prices can go out of control.

The price of mutton increased to

Rs1,300 per kg after the government made it mandatory for traders to produce a quarantine certificate for live goats imported from India, traders said. During the same period last year, the price of goat meat was Rs900 per kg. Anil Khadgi, former vice-chairman of the Nepal Fish and Meat Sellers Association, said that it wouldn't be a surprise if the price of mutton reaches Rs1,500 per kg this Dashain. "This is because of a drop in domestic output. As imports of live goats from India could be limited this Dashain due to quarantine hassles, prices may increase sharply.'

The government has also started charging a 5 percent customs duty on livestock imported from India.

Devendra Bhakta Shrestha, president of the Wholesalers' Association, said that prices went up after the government imposed 13 percent value added tax on imported wheat flour. The price of rice has also swelled by

Middlemen and traders spike prices during festivals because of loose market inspection, consumers complained. The government launches schemes to regularise supply and stabilise prices of daily consumable food items during festivals, but in limited places and for a few items.

Yogendra Gauchan, director general of the Department of Commerce, Supply and Consumer Protection Management, said during a recent interaction that the government planned to regularise supply by collaborating with the provincial and local governments this year.

Economist Kesab Acharya said that imposition of value added tax in the automatically hiked market prices. 'The festival season is going to be expensive this year—as priced of food and meat items have already

He said that the government was preparing to increase the price of milk as well by Rs10 per litre on the eve of the festival season.

"Consumers stock goods during festival time assuming that prices will increase, and this creates a scarcity and a run on the market. "The government's taxation policy this year has directly impacted consumers." He said that neither the budget nor the monetary policy had addressed con-

The government's reluctance to take strict action against middlemen and traders has also encouraged artificial price hikes, he said. "Traders are allowed to add a markup of 20 percent, but they make 200 percent profit, and this irregularity has been prevailing in the market for a

# Permanent account number rule to come into force despite calls for deferral

**RAJESH KHANAL** KATHMANDU, AUG 18

The government is likely to make it mandatory for all individual wage earners to obtain a permanent account number (PAN) immediately despite calls from the private sector to postpone its implementation.

account numbers became required for salaried workers from July 17, the beginning of the fiscal year 2019-20. The government also made it mandatory for cargo transporters to use the vehicle and consignment tracking system from

As per the Finance Act, firms cannot put distributed salaries without PAN under the expenditure heading. Any firm making payment to its workers who do not have a PAN is not validated by the tax authority.

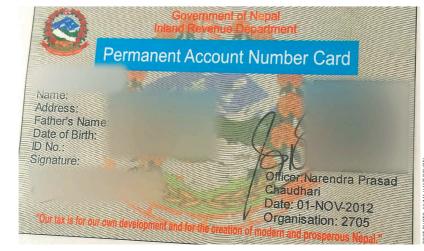
The private sector has urged the government to defer the date of implementation complaining that the rule was impractical. It has also demanded

Firms cannot put distributed salaries without PAN under the expenditure heading.

that the government enforce PAN only on payments of more than Rs5,000 per day. Currently, PAN is mandatory for all transactions exceeding Rs1,000 daily.

Following complaints from the private sector, the Ministry of Finance formed a task force under Joint Secretary Nirmal Hari Adhikari consisting of representatives from the Nepal Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Confederation of Nepalese Industries.

The ministry has held several meet-



ings with business persons, but it has not fixed the minimum value of transactions for the implementation

"The ministry is holding discussions with the private sector to revise

the limit, but it will not stop from implementing the system for all salary earners even at the grass roots level," said Uttar Kumar Khatri, spokesperson for the ministry.

Khatri said the ministry had sched-

uled the next meeting for Monday. "Government officials and the private sector are expected to reach a consensus at that meeting," said Khatri.

According to the private sector, the ministry is adamant on implementing PAN for all despite the fact that there are a number of practical difficulties. Parsuram Dahal, chairman of the Tax Revenue Committee of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce and also a member of the task force, said the ministry was holding discussions with the private sector on how to implement PAN for wage earners in businesses like tea estates, small

shops and eateries. Dahal said the ministry planned to require non-Nepali workers engaged in small businesses obtain PAN. "The government will distribute PAN cards to these workers based on the recommendation letter issued by their employers and their identity cards,"

Small business owners are sceptical about the ministry's move. "People who work in small shops change their jobs frequently. Shopkeepers cannot issue recommendation letters frequently to workers who are always switching jobs," said Pawan Jajodiya, proprietor of Jajodiya Khadda Store, Gyaneshwor.

The private sector has also asked the government to reschedule the date of implementing the vehicle and consignment tracking system. As a result, the launch date has been postponed to mid-October.

Kamlesh Kumar Agrawal, vice-president of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce, said they were requesting the ministry to pilot the tracking system for a year. "As many transport operators are not familiar with the online system, we have asked the government to give more time for preparation," he said.

According to Agrawal, the government should also define the type and quantity of traded goods and the related distance to effectively implement the tracking system.

## BRIEFING

## Dangihat in Pathivara Gold Cup semi-finals

TAPLEJUNG: Dangihat Football Club of Morang advanced to the semi-finals of the Pathivara Gold Cup football tournament with a narrow 1-0 win over Belbari Football Club in Phungling on Sunday. Dangihat skipper Bikram Limbu scored the solitary goal of the game in the 33rd minute. Belbari had made it the quarter-finals after defeating the hosts Taplejung XI in their first match. Dangihat will play the winners of the match between Red Horse Club and Gorkha Sporting Club. Eleven Arrows will take on UK FC of Darjeeling on Monday. (SB)

## ANFA picks preliminary squad for AFC Futsal Championship

LALITPUR: The ANFA Futsal
Committee announced a preliminary
32-man squad for the 2020 AFC Futsal
Championship Qualifiers scheduled
for October 23-25 in Iran. Nepal are
drawn with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan
and Afghanistan in the Qualifiers.
The squad was named following a
five-day nationwide trials and selection procedure, informed ANFA. The
Futsal committee also named Bishnu
Gurung the head coach and Gaurab
Basnet as coach for the Nepal
National Futsal team. The committee
also named five players in a reserve
list (ED)

# Ramsey makes Juve debut in final pre-season friendly

MILAN: Aaron Ramsey made his debut for Italian champions Juventus on Saturday in their final pre-season friendly, a 1-0 win over Serie C side Triestina. The Welsh international midfielder and former Arsenal star. who signed a four-year deal in February worth a reported seven million euros a season, came on for Federico Bernardeschi in the 70th minute of the game in Trieste. "This was a very proud moment for me to put on this famous jersey," said Ramsey. Ramsey won three FA Cups in his 11 years at Arsenal and played a key role in Wales reaching the semi-finals of Euro 2016. Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo did not make the trip to north-eastern Italy because of muscular problems. A stunning Paulo Dybala goal after 38 minutes was enough to seal a win for the reigning Serie A champions. (AFP)

# Nepal head coach stresses on the need of fitness

Johan Kalin says he is looking for better performance rather than results in the joint World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers.

PRAJWAL OLI LALITPUR, AUG 18

Nepal's head coach Johan Kalin is stressing on the need of players' fitness ahead of their 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup preliminary joint qualification matches which starts with a clash against Kuwait on September 5.

The Swede made the message loud and clear by axing out Biraj Maharjan, who had been captaining Nepal since November 2016, for a friendly against Malaysian Super League champions Johor Darul Ta'zim FC on August 26. The friendly is part of Nepal's preparations for the Qualifiers. The 28-yearold was ignored for the friendly despite the defender being under a regular training. "Fitness is an issue for sure. I don't want to field players who do not survive the physical demands of the game," he said adding that Maharjan's exclusion was a message to others.

"Everyone is putting in hard work during training but we pick those who are fitter and better," said Kalin, who took over the national team rein on March 1. "One big problem I found here (Nepal) is that the clubs don't contract players round the year and they don't get chance to play more often," said Kalin whose team is scheduled to play Taiwan, Australia and Jordan on home-and-away format from September to June next year. Their campaign starts with an away game against Kuwait on September 5.

The Swede is yet to taste victory having led Nepal in four international friendlies since taking over job. He led Nepal in a two-match friendly series against Kuwait in March but drew one and lost 1-0 in another. Also against Malaysia on June 2, Nepal lost 2-0 before playing a 1-1 draw against Taiwan four days later.

Kalin considers his team as heavy underdogs against the likes of Australia and Kuwait. But he is determined to put in best performance owing to the hard work of his team. "We have been training six sessions a week. We are trying to focus on what we can do on the pitch," he said.

Nepal were originally drawn to host Kuwait on September 5 and Taiwan on September 10 in their first two matches. But due to unavailability of Dashrath Stadium, which is currently undergoing renovation for the 13th South Asian Games, Nepal flipped the



Nepal's national football team coach Johan Kalin (right) instructs his players during a training session at the ANFA Complex ground in Satdobato, Lalitpur.

ex ground in Satdobato, Lalitpur.

fixtures on mutual consent with their opponents. Nepal will now play their first two games away from home. "Playing away match first is always tough. But we don't have a choice due to the unavailability of ground," said Kalin

Kalin is expecting a tough match against Kuwait. "They are having a really good preparation and fared really well in recently held West Asian Championship where they beat Saudi Arabia and drew Jordan. They also drew the likes of UAE, Egypt and Iraq in international friendlies. They also made trips to England for preparations. It all adds up to their strength. But we have a good idea on how to tackle them. If we are on top of our games, we have the ability to trouble

them. In any case, we will look for performance not result... All I can promise is that we will do our best," he said.

Kalin is aware of the fact that Kuwait were closely monitoring his team. "Naturally every team takes to the field to win and we are not an exception. The reality is that getting result in our favour against Kuwait would be really tough," said the coach. "I expect our boys to enter the pitch with respect but without any fear."

National team midfielder Bishal Rai was satisfied with the way their training was going. "Our pace has increased remarkably and the friendly against the Malaysian outfits which will test our fitness level," said the 26-year-old. "Our recent style of play is such that whole team goes simultaneously on attack as well as defence. It demands every player to be fit."

Kalin said drawing against any other teams would be equally difficult at this stage of the Qualifiers. "We could have avoided Australia or Kuwait but would have ended up meeting with China or Japan. So, I don't want to say that we were drawn in weak or strong pool." Rather than eyeing for qualification, he said that his objective was to make the Qualifier a stepping stone for improving his team's performance.

The Nepali team has been training at the artificial turf at the ANFA Complex in Satdobato but they will have to play their away matches at natural grass. The shift of playing surface can also hamper Nepal's performance, says Kalin. Ever since taking over the team, Kalin has been working on organisation, team building and style. But the coach said it takes a lot of time to achieve that goal.

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In all, 40 teams of Asia are divided into eight groups of five teams each. Eight group winners and four best runners-up will secure places to the AFC Asian Cup 2023 Finals in China as well as the final round of qualifying for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The remaining 24, except for the four bottom-placed teams, who fail to pass the joint Qualifier hurdle will have another shot at earning tickets to the AFC Asian Cup. The 24 teams will fight it out for another 12 berths for the Asian Cup.

# Karunaratne steers Sri Lanka to victory

The hosts chase down 268 runs for the loss of four wickets to win the first Test.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE GALLE, AUG 18

Captain Dimuth Karunaratne scored 122 as Sri Lanka chased down 268 for the loss of just four wickets to win the first Test against New Zealand at Galle on Sunday and take a 1-0 lead in the

Karunaratne posted his ninth Test hundred along with enjoying a record-equalling opening partnership of 161 with Lahiru Thirimanne, who made 64, as Sri Lanka collected their first points of the World Test Championship. Former captain Angelo Mathews chipped in with an unbeaten 28 as Sri Lanka finished off the game before lunch after the morning session was extended because only 22 runs were needed at the scheduled time for the interval.

Karunaratne enjoyed some luck, dropped on 58 by Tom Latham while r BJ Watling missed a stumping chance on the same score. He batted for over five hours, facing 245 deliveries, and hit six fours and a six. "Perhaps we didn't have a lot go our way, and maybe the odd chance we let slip," New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson said. "We knew that on that sort of surface if you are able to get a breakthrough things can happen quickly, as we saw later today when perhaps the game was already lost. It was a shame not to get early breakthroughs."

Karunaratne and Thirimanne's stand equalled the record for the highest opening partnership in Tests between the two countries. In 1991, John Wright and Trevor Franklin had



Sri Lankan's Dimuth Karunaratne plays a stroke against New Zealand during the fifth day of their first Test match in Galle on Sunday.

also put on 161 for the first wicket in Hamilton. The opening stand was pivotal in Sri Lanka achieving the highest successful run chase in Galle, easily surpassing the previous best of 99. Resuming play on 133-0, Sri Lanka required 135 from the remaining three sessions.

"Thirimanne did a very job for us. The key was rotating the strike. I told him that we needed a big partnership. They had two left-arm spinners and the two of us being left-handers, we had to handle them. That was what we

were talking about," Karunaratne said. "When we started this morning, we had a small target to get another 30 runs and then reassess and all went to plan."

Karunaratne said he was happy with his performance. "The last time I scored a hundred was a year ago. I had gone through 11 games without a hundred since then... During the tours of South Africa, New Zealand and Australia I couldn't make an impact but when I got an opportunity today I cashed in," he added.

# Stokes keeps Australia at bay as concussion rules Smith out

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

England's Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler batted through a rain-shortened first session on the final day of the second Ashes Test at Lord's on Sunday after Australia's Steve Smith was ruled out with concussion

At lunch, England were 157-4, a lead of 165 runs, with Stokes (51 not out) and Buttler (31 not out) having so far shared an unbroken stand of 86. England resumed on 96-4 after rain—which had already washed out five sessions in this match—delayed the start by over an hour. Stokes was then 16 not out and Buttler unbeaten on 10, with the match in the balance.

Allrounder Stokes, however, went on to complete a 106-ball fifty including seven fours and, with Buttler, was inching England closer towards the safety of a draw. Smith was felled by a bouncer from Test debutant fast bowler Jofra Archer that struck his neck on Saturday and, although he resumed his innings after retiring hurt, was ruled out of Sunday's play by Cricket Australia.

This series is the first being played under the International Cricket Council's new concussion substitute regulations, part of the inaugural World Test Championship. These allow players who have suffered head or neck injuries to be replaced fully by a substitute, who was previously restricted to fielding alone.

Marnus Labuschagne, on the field as 12th man when play resumed Sunday, became the first concussion



Ben Stokes

substitute in Test history after Australia's request was approved by match referee Ranjan Madugalle. Smith was hit by an Archer delivery when on 80 on Saturday and retired

Smith resumed his innings at the fall of the next wicket after 46 minutes off the field, and was eventually out for 92 — the first time this series he had been dismissed for fewer than 100 runs. But there are doubts over whether he will be fit for the third Test at Headingley starting Thursday, with an Australia spokesman saying the "short turnaround is not in his favour".

Australia, bidding for their first Ashes campaign triumph on English soil in 18 years, lead the five-match series 1-0 after a 251-run win at Edgbaston last week.

## SPANISH LEAGUE RESULTS

Celta Vigo	1-3	Real Madrid					
Valencia	1-1	Real Sociedad					
Mallorca	2-1	Eibar					
Leganes	0-1	Osasuna					
Villarreal	4-4	Granada					

## PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Aston Villa	1-2	Bournemouth
Brighton	1-1	West Ham
Everton	1-0	Watford
Norwich	3-1	Newcastle
Southampton	1-2	Liverpool
Manchester City	2-2	Tottenham Hotspur

## BUNDESLIGA RESULTS

enchengladbach	0-0	Schalke
rder Bremen	1-3	Fortuna Duesseldorf
iburg	3-0	Mainz
er Leverkusen	3-2	Paderborn
russia Dortmund	5-1	Augsburg
lfsburg	2-1	Cologne

## FRENCH LIGUE 1 RESULTS

lantes	0-0	Marseille
Amiens	1-0	Lille
Bordeaux	1-1	Montpellier
Metz	3-0	Monaco
oulouse	1-0	Dijon
limes	1-2	Nice

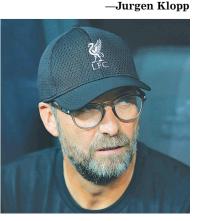
## CINCINNATI SEMI-FINAL RESULTS

D Medvedev (RUS x9) bt N Djokovic (SRB x1) 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 D Goffin (BEL x16) bt R Gasquet (FRA) 6-3, 6-4

S Kuznetsova (RUS) bt A Barty (AUS x1) 6-2, 6-4 M Keys (USA x16) bt S Kenin (USA) 7-5, 6-4

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We controlled the game, we were fluent but yes, Southampton came up with some set pieces and long balls. But Sadio scored a fantastic goal. That helped of course and in the second half we made more good steps."



# VAR controversy hides gulf between Manchester City and Tottenham

Pochettino's men escape with a draw at Manchester City thanks to Gabriel Jesus's late winner.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MANCHESTER, AUG 18

"I am in love with VAR," joked Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino after his side escaped with a 2-2 draw at Manchester City thanks to Gabriel Jesus's late winner for the Premier League champions being ruled out on review.

Yet, the scoreline masked the fact that Spurs, despite reaching the Champions League final last season and breaking the club's transfer record for French midfielder Tanguy Ndombele, still look well off potential challengers to City's throne as champions. Mauricio Pochettino's men finished 27 points behind City last sea-

son, on Saturday 27 was the difference in the shot count as Tottenham mustered three to the hosts' 30.

City will bemoan their luck and lacklustre defending that allowed Erik Lamela and Lucas Moura to cancel out goals from Raheem Sterling and Sergio Aguero with Spurs' only two efforts on target. However, there was no evidence in the performance of a slipping of standards after winning the first domestic treble of trophies English football had ever seen last season.

"When the people say: 'you can do better', better than this I don't know if it is possible," said a proud City manager Pep Guardiola. "We played incredible. The best game we have

played in our time together, it was so good. We played good, but we could not win. If we continue to play in that way we won't have regrets and that is the most important thing."

City were pushed all the way last season by a Liverpool side who recorded the third highest points tally in English football history with 97 and yet still could not topple Guardiola's men for the title. The European champions have started the Premier League season with two wins to take an early two-point lead over the champions and are clearly the most likely challengers to prevent City a hat-trick of titles.

However, if anything Guardiola's men look stronger last season with Kevin de Bruyne restored to full fitness, while Spanish international Rodri was slotted seamlessly into midfield. "We have to be proud because to play at this level against a team like Tottenham is really good for the rest of the season," said De Bruyne, who set up both City goals.

Hones that Tottenham could kick on

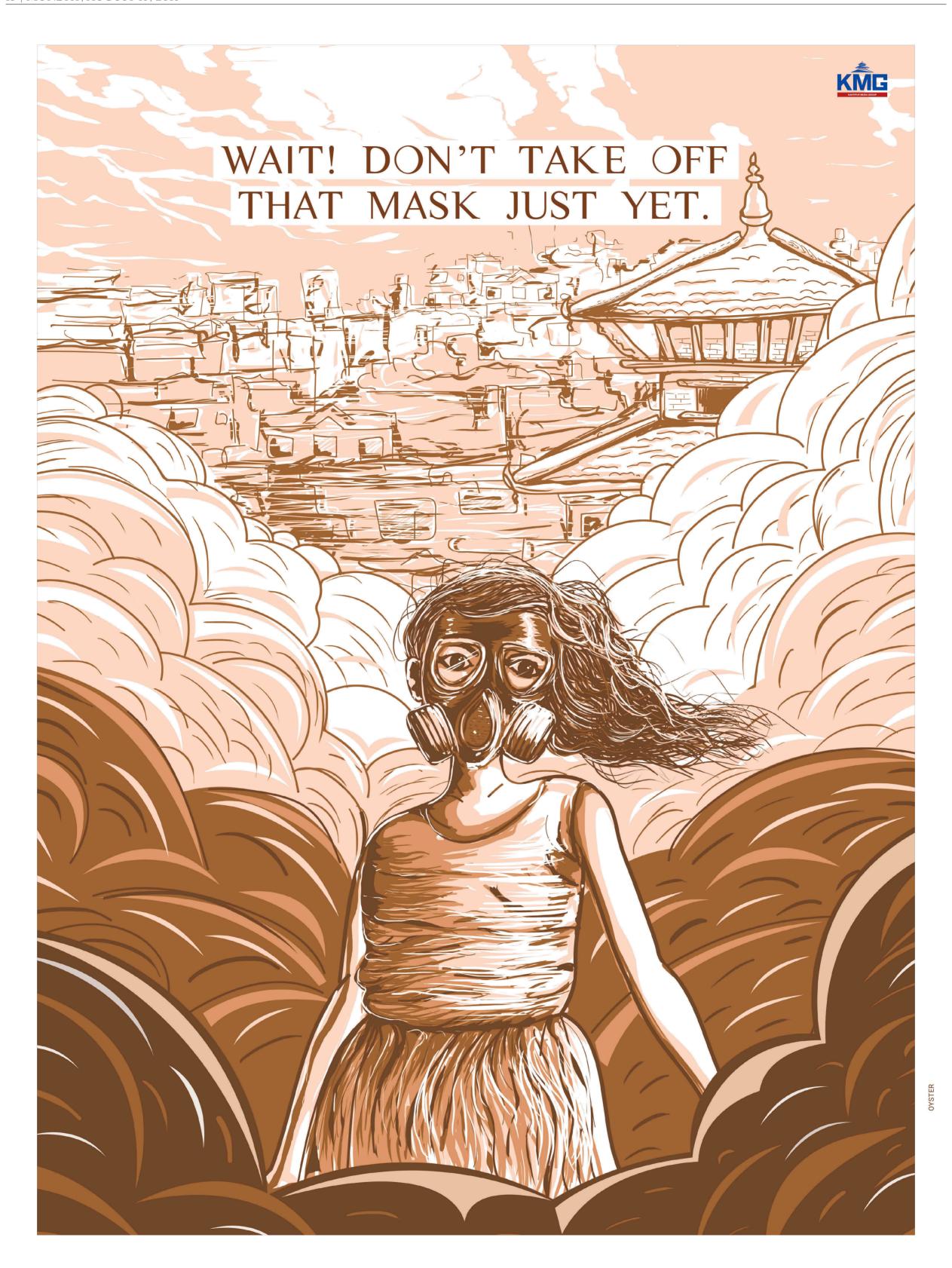
Hopes that Tottenham could kick on after a season in which they eliminated City in dramatic fashion to reach the club's first ever Champions League final and moved into a new 62,000 capacity stadium to mount a title bid look fragile. Ndombele has impressed in his first two matches, while the signings of Giovani lo Celso and Ryan Sessegnon will add greater depth and Son Heung-min is still to return from suspension.

However, Pochettino is bracing himself for the possibility Christian Eriksen or Belgian defenders Toby Alderweireld and Jan Vertonghen could yet depart before the transfer window across Europe closes on September 2. All three have entered the final year of their contracts and could leave club for free next summer

if they are not sold in coming weeks.
"The squad is still unsettled, we need to wait until the transfer window in Europe is closed," said Pochettino, who started Alderweireld and Eriksen. VAR may have ridden to Spurs' rescue for now, but on this evidence they face a long season ahead if they are to keep up with the relentless pace set by City and Liverpool.

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The prime minister says fewer people have to wear dust masks since he's taken office. But pictures don't lie, and neither do numbers. The Post will bring you both, without fear or favour. See upto-the-minute status of air quality in major cities across the country at:

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## **SPOTLIGHT**

# The art of making—and drinking—Marpha brandy

Distilled from the fermented mash of the apple itself, much of the stuff sold in Marpha falls into the category of fruit brandy.

## CHASE BRUSH

n the dark backroom of his distillery in Marpha, Vishnu Raj Hirachan stoops low over a cask of clear liquid, an empty glass in hand. He turns the spout at the bottom, taking care not to spill as he collects the contents. But the liquid runs out too fast, and soon the glass is spilling over, suffusing the room with the sharp scent of alcohol.

Can you drink this much?" Hirachan, coming up with a full cup still dribbling over at its edges, asks. Not one to pass on free liquor – especially not the kind pulled fresh from the tap—this reporter nods vigorously.

This is Hirachan's "Marphak" brandy, a colorless but potent alcohol derived from fermented apples. It's made right here, in Hirachan's distillery, a squat old building that sits amidst his 400-tree-strong apple orchard on the outskirts of the village. The backroom, comprising the cask and four massive vats of liquor nearby, is where Hirachan keeps his supply in the offseason—and also where he offers tastes to curious visitors.

"I don't usually drink," Hirachan says as he pours himself a glass, which he dilutes with a splash of water, to bring out the flavour. "But since I have a guest..."

Situated on the banks of the Kali Gandaki, Marpha is an ideal place to try brandy-specifically apple brandy. Long renowned as the "apple capital of Nepal", its fertile soil and temperate climate makes it particularly suited for growing the sweet, crunchy fruit, which serves as the bedrock of the local economy. Walking down the village's narrow cobblestone streets, stopping to peruse the shelves of its storefronts and the menus of its myriad guesthouses, one finds apples in nearly every form imaginable, from dry apple snacks and apple crumble to apple jam, sauce, juice and cider.

Brandy, of course, is also one of those forms. Distilled from the fermented mash of the apple itself, much of the stuff sold in Marpha falls into the category of fruit brandy, a style distinct from the old-world brandies that use as their base cider or wine. And unlike the latter, which are usually put through a wood-barrel ageing process, most of Marpha's brandies go straight from still to bottle, leaving them with the cy-and in many cases taste -that typifies many fruit brandies of the world.

"The taste must be smooth, with no other flavours," Hirachan says, lifting the glass to his nose. "And there should be no other smell. That should be removed during filtration."

Hirachan should know—at 75, the Marpha native has been making brandy for much of his adult life. Fifty years ago, the Nepal government installed an

agricultural outpost just down the road from here, on the property that Hirachan's family originally owned. The office soon began introducing various varieties of apple trees to the region, including Red Delicious and Golden Delicious, and teaching local farmers to turn them into marketable products, such as juice, cider, and even wine. Naturally, it wasn't long before someone—in this case, a man named Pasang Sherpa, the agricultural office's first chief, according to Hirachan—came up with the idea to use the sugary fruit to make a more potent spirit.

"At the time we were just young men who enjoyed a strong glass of alcohol," Hirachan, who rarely imbibes these days, says. "We didn't know there would be money in it."

Today, there are at least five major distilleries in Marpha, including one operated by the agricultural centre itself. Marphak is among the more recognisable brands, distinguished by its red and yellow label, red cap, and frosted glass bottle, which Hirachan imports from India. It comes in two varieties, an apple and a "premium" apricot brandy, both around 42 percent alcohol. Hirachan produces over 2,500 bottles a year, distributed mostly in and around the Mustang region, though he says there is an increasing demand in places as far-flung as Kathmandu, where one bottle goes for

But the industry is not without its challenges, Hirachan is quick to add. Lately, apple farming in the Mustang region has been beset by climate change, as rising temperatures correspond with

an increase in pests and diseases that can wreak havoc on crops.

"We have had to use more pesticides, which has made

pesticides, which has made everything more costly," Hirachan says. "The business is not as lucrative as it once was."

Still, brandy makers like Hirachan persist. Virtually all of the Marphak's supply is brewed and packaged in the building on Hirachan's farm, beginning with the harvest, which takes place in October for apples, and August for apricots. After it's collected, the fruit goes to the washing area, where it is cleaned. Next is the fruit processor, into which the bulbous materials are fed to create a thick mash. Thirdly there are the tubs, inside of which the mash is mixed with some yeast and brown sugar and left to ferment for several

Finally, there is the elaborate—and ancient-looking—pot still, where the now-fermented mash is heated, the alcoholic vapour condensed, and the brandy ultimately released. Each batch distillation takes around four hours and can produce up to 90 litres of liquid, according to Hirachan, and the process is repeated throughout the year.

Hirachan's brandy has clearly brought him a lot of success, but he takes no credit for it. At the end of the day, he says, it's really all about the fruit.

"A good apple is the same as a good man," Hirachan says. "If you are a good man, you will have success in all parts of life—a good job, good relationships, lots of money. It is the same with fruit—if it is good, it will make good juice, good pie, and good brandy."



Apricots ripen on a tree.

Today, there are at least five major distilleries in Marpha, including one operated by the agricultural centre itself.



A woman collects apricots for the making of Hirachan's Marphak brandy on his farm in Marpha in lower Mustang.



A selection of fruit brandies stand on display in a shop in Marpha.



Vishnu Raj Hirachan holds bottles of apricot and apple brandy at his home in Marpha, lower Mustang.

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A path filled with division, diversion and danger.

A path filled with validation and temptation.

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The road is long and the road is hard.

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