

THE KATHMANDU POST

Nepal's largest selling English daily

Printed simultaneously in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bharatpur and Nepalgunj

Vol XXVII No. 187 | **16 pages** | **Rs.5** Saturday, August 24, 2019 | 07-05-2076



37.0° C 11.4° C

Bir Hospital is the last hope of the poor, but it is letting them down

Beset by a lack of staff, mismanagement and political interference, the country's oldest hospital has become a shell of its former self.

ARJUN POUDEL

axmi Prasad Niraula was brought to Bir Hospital in Kathmandu on July 29, all the way from Ilam. Niraula was suffering from jaundice and had fluid accumulating in his stomach. He had been referred to Bir Hospital by the Nobel Medical College in Biratnagar and required immediate treatment. On the afternoon of July 30, Niraula remained on a bed in the emergency ward, awaiting treatment. Attending doctors had told his relatives that Niraula couldn't be admitted to the hospital because there were no beds free in the general ward. He could seek treatment at a private hospital instead, he was told.

"I wouldn't have come here if I could afford private care," 52-year-old Niraula told the Post. "I will stay here until I receive treatment or I will die."

Every day, dozens of underprivileged patients like Niraula visit Nepal's oldest hospital, not because it is the best medical care facility in the country but because it performs a vital public service—it treats the poor for free. But every day, numerous patients face the same dilemma that is plaguing Niraula. The hospital is overcrowded and it doesn't have enough beds, forcing doctors to ask patients, even desperately poor ones from the country's hinterlands, to seek treatment elsewhere. But these patients can't afford care anywhere else, so many of them end up camping out in or outside Bir Hospital, waiting for a bed in the general ward

As one of the country's few tertiary care medical facilities, Bir Hospital receives patients from all over the country, especially those who cannot afford private, or even subsidised, medical care. But the last refuge for the country's sick



With only paramedics and medical officers attending to the emergency ward, patients often have to wait days for a doctor to see them.

and poor has long been beset by mismanagement, political interference and a lack of human resources.

At the time of reporting, for two days, not even a nurse came to see Niraula. Since the hospital is so understaffed, not a single doctor or nurse works the night shift at Bir, say administrators.

"Only paramedics and medical officers see patients at night," Dr Kedar Prasad Ceintury, hospital director, told the Post.

After spending all night in the emergency ward, sharing the narrow bed with one, or at times two others, Niraula and

his relatives were frantic. His family members were attempting to contact any one they knew in positions of power who could help Niraula, but to no avail.

"Every day, over a dozen people-ministers, lawmakers, political leaders and others-call me for a bed on behalf of

someone they know," said Ceintury. "No recommendation is needed when we have vacant beds.'

But Ceintury conceded that every day, dozens of patients who come to the hospital for quality care at an affordable price are forced to seek private care due to a lack of sufficient beds at the hospital.

"When patients are forced to wait for days, if not months, for treatment or even to just meet the doctor, all their hopes shatter," said Gagan Thapa, a former Health Minister. "They are forced to seek private care and all their expectations from the state and government are destroyed."

Most patients seem to know that getting admitted to Bir Hospital is a long shot, and yet, there are few choices for the

A hospital for the poor

Ever since its establishment in 1889 by Bir Shumsher as the nation's first public hospital, Bir Hospital has been a bastion for those who cannot afford to seek treatment anywhere else. Every day, around 2,000 patients from across the country visit the hospital after being referred there by local healthcare centres in their hometowns. Last fiscal year, there were 422,801 out-patients and emergency patients while 13,159 people received in-patient care and 6,877 underwent surgeries, according to the hospital's records.

The hospital is operated by the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS), an academic body directly under the Ministry of Health. Along with Bir Hospital, the Thapathali Maternity Hospital, Kanti Children's Hospital, Nepal Army Hospital, Patan Hospital and Nepal Eye Hospital are all affiliated to the academy. Students at NAMS are resident doctors at Bir Hospital.

>> Continued on page 8

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang to visit in the second week of September

Wang's visit is likely to set the stage for a possible visit by Chinese President Xi in October.

KATHMANDU, AUG 23

Foreign Minister and State Councilor Wang Yi will be arriving in Kathmandu on a two-day official visit in the second week of September, according to foreign ministry officials. Wang's arrival is expected to set the stage for Chinese President Xi Jinping's likely visit in October, a visit long awaited in Nepal.

Wang will be the first high-level Chinese politician to arrive in Kathmandu since the formation of the KP Sharma Oli government in February last year.

Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali had invited Wang to visit Nepal when he travelled to Beijing in the first week of July to attend the 13th World Economic Forum meeting in Dalian.



He had later visited Beijing and held

talks with Wang, his counterpart. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu, however, refrained from confirming Wang's visit, which is most likely to take place on September 15 and 16.

Gyawali refused to divulge the date but told the Post that security agencies have been instructed to make high-level visit from the north.

'We have not received any official confirmation about the visit but we are expecting the Chinese foreign minister soon," said Gyawali. "To avert any kind of last minute urgency, we have instructed security agencies to make all the necessary prepara-

The security agencies have also been instructed to check the activities of Tibetan refugees living in various camps in Kathmandu and a possible demonstration during the visit, one senior security official told the Post on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

>> Continued on page 4

A semblance of calm has returned to Tikapur, but the demands of Tharus remain unaddressed

Marking four years since the Tikapur incident, where nine people were killed, a three-day conference hopes to address demands and maintain social harmony.

TIKA R PRADHAN KATHMANDU, AUG 23

In 2015, as the new constitution was set to be promulgated, a large section of Nepalis-Madhesis, Tharus and Janajatis—were protesting the statute on the grounds that various provisions had marginalised them and that their demands were being ignored.

Protests in the Tarai continued for days, with at least 50 people killed in violent clashes. August 24, 2015 was one of the deadliest days, when at least nine people, including a police official and a toddler, were killed in Tikapur. The clash was a result of simmering discontent among Tharus against a campaign called 'Akhanda Sudurpaschim', or Undivided Far West, which was backed by the leaders of the major parties. A clampdown and a curfew ensued. There were arbitrary arrests and many Tharus fled as houses were burnt down and people from the indigenous community attacked.

Today, August 24, marks four years since the Tikapur incident. Despite



Shops were vandalised in the aftermath of a violence in Tikapur, Kailali in 2015.

the protests, the constitution was passed on September 20, 2015. While the Madhesi parties refused to sign the document, there were celebrations in some parts of the country, with the

government hailing the constitution as "the best in the world". An amendment was passed on January 23, 2016, but many said it was too little, too late.

OYSTER PERPETUAL DATEJUST 41 Regency Watch ANNAPURNA ARCADE **DURBAR MARG** MGA INTERNATIONAL PVT. LTD.

MEDLEY

Inside the Post

National

Amid concerns that public school teachers are not performing well, the government has revised the regulation of Teachers Service Commission to have more competitive tests to induct qualified teachers.

Til Bikram Nembang Limbu, also known as Bairagi Kaila, is one of the most revered poets in contemporary Nepali literature. The Post shares some of the best books he's read and recalls the beginning of his seven-decade long poetic journey.

Culture & Arts

There are problems everywhere in Bikash Raj Acharya's latest movie. The biggest being the very foundation of the film: its screenplay.

The Nepal Electricity Authority has received clearance to chop down 38,545 trees on the route of the planned Hetauda-Dhalkebar-Duhabi transmission line in Rautahat and Bara districts.

Sports

Money

Nepal overpowered Afghanistan in four sets to finish fifth in the AVC Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship on Friday. Nepal had a few nervy moments but eventually overcame a spirited Afghanistan side by 25-23, 23-25, 25-18, 26-24 at the Army Physical Training and Sports Centre in

News Quiz

- Who is the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu?
- b. Matsya c. Krishna d. Narsimha
- Who is the only batsman to
- score 20,000 runs across all format of International cricket in a single decade?
- a. Brain Lara b. Sachin Tendulkar
- c. Kumar Sangakara d. Virat Kohli
- Conor McGregor is associated
- with which sports? a. Mixed Martial Arts
 - b. Golf c. Football
 - d. Cricket
- When is the World Mental Health Day celebrated?
- a. January 12
- b. December 3
- c. June 30 d. October 10

- 5. Which of the following English bowlers recently made test cricket debut?
 - a. Stuart Broad
 - b. James Anderson c. Jofra Archer
- d. Mark Wood
- 6. Who built the Krishna Mandir of Patan?
 - a. Pratap Malla b. Siddhi Narasingh Malla c. Jayasthiti Malla
 - d. Ranajit Malla





Two elderly women chat by a roadside in Bhaktapur.

On this day in history

Government allows 69 expeditions for autumn

KATHMANDU - Sixty-nine expedition teams have been granted permission for the autumn climbing season that begins Sept 1, the Tourism Ministry said Tuesday. Eighty-one teams were given permission for autumn last year. Three teams will be making their bid on Mt Everest, among them is a four-member Nepal Sagarmatha Expedition, led by Kaji Sherpa.

Sherpa, 30, a two-time summitteer plans to climb the 8,848-metre Everest without oxygen in 18 hours, a feat unparalleled in the mountain's history

The Kathmandu Post August 24, 1994

Answers to News Quiz: 1(c), 2(d), 3(a), 4(d), 5(c), 6(b)

Quote of the day

Bir Hospital is the last hope of the poor, but it is letting them down,

"When patients are forced to wait for days if not months for treatment or even to just meet the doctor, all their hopes shatter. They are forced to seek private care and all their expectations from the state and government are destroyed."

> Gagan Thapa, former health minister, on the plight of patients visiting Bir Hospital

Most read online

State of children's homes

Last week, Bal Krishna Dangol, the director of Bal Mandir, the country's oldest non-profit organisation for children, was arrested on charges of child trafficking. This week, reports emerged of nine minors being rescued from a children's home in Baphal with three employees arrested.

Nepal and Myanmar to hold talks to develop Himalaya 2 airspace

Nepal and Myanmar have agreed to hold talks to develop the Himalaya 2 airspace that has been pending for a long time due to lack of surveillance and communication system along parts of the route over Myanmar, officials said. The Kathmandu-Bagdogra-Guwahati-Silchar-Imphal and Kunming air route is shorter, safer, more economical and efficient for flights between Europe-Middle East and East Asia.

Parliamentary committee postpones implementation of Clean Feed Policy

In a reversal of talk on immediate implementation of the Clean Feed Policy which bans screening of non-Nepali advertisements on foreign pay channels. the parliamentary Development and Technology Committee has paved the way for the existing service providers to air clean feed content only a year after the endorsement of the Advertisement Bill.

Nepal announce 15-member squad for ACC U19 Asia Cup

Nepal on Thursday announced a 15-member squad for the ACC U-19 Asia Cup cricket tournament scheduled for September 5-14 in Sri Lanka. Batsman Sandeep Jora, wicketkeeper-batsman Asif Sheikh and left-arm spinner Surya Tamang made it to the final list having previously ignored for the ACC Eastern Region Qualifiers.

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.

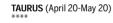
For the most recent corrections, visit kathmandupost.com/corrections.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)



You've been exploring new opportunities in an old relationship, and today a lot of signs will be pointing in the same direction. You might be confused by what you're feeling, so make sure you give yourself enough time to process your thoughts. Have faith in what you're doing and keep following your instincts





Maintain a slower pace today. There are changes coming up soon that could bring some confusion in your life, so you shouldn't be hurrying to move things forward. Being rushed will leave you too unfocused to deal with things as they come. Book yourself some spa time or pick a long movie to rent, settle down and relax.





You are not as objective as you usually are, and you might not be in the best position to make level-headed decisions. Exposing yourself to the perspectives of people you trust is recommended, and what you learn might surprise you. You may have been working on a lot of assumptions that will turn out to be untrue.



You'll be happiest when you're learning something new today, so explore the world around you. Instead of just wondering how something is done, ask someone to explain it to you or hit the internet for answers to satisfy your curiosity. Do not put off feeding your brain when so much knowledge is right at your fingertips.

There will be a bit of disconnection between

what you want to do and what the people around

you are doing. You can try to go ahead on your

own, but you won't be able to get far without

other's help. Wait patiently for their attention,

respect their priorities, and they'll respect

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

CANCER (June 22-July 22)



Some very good news will arrive in your inbox early today. It will prove that you were right all along. You'll be feeling high-spirited and confident all day long. Later today, the tough problem you've been wrestling with will start to crumble, and your newly invigorated sense of self will help take things the rest of the way.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)



Talk to that person in your life who always knows what to say today. You will benefit immensely from contact with the person whose perspective and honesty you never doubt. Time with this person will be even better if they're also a family member-you could use a good dose of familial reconnection, too.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)



Today you should try to suppress your urge to confront someone when you hear them say something ridiculous. The more you can avoid conflict and discord right now, the better. Getting involved in a debate is not a good use of your time or your energy. You need to focus on positive and peaceful things.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)



A closed has been hiding things and playing childish games, and it is going to be exposed today. You'll get a ringside seat when the bell goes off and they are forced to explain themselves. Do not defend them. Stay out of the situation and let them handle it alone. They have to learn that their actions have consequences.

Your family needs you, but so does your career-

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)



and balance just doesn't seem possible right now. Stop trying to give everyone equal time. It's just not going to happen. Communicate clearly to whomever you need to turn away from for the time being. Tell your boss or your loved ones that you need them to understand, and they will.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)



Don't abandon your ideas just because you aren't able to sort things out. Instead, you should sit down with someone whose experience and intelligence you respect and tell them what you've been thinking about. You might need a few holes in your plan to be filled in, and this person could give you the extra brain power you need.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)



You've been so absorbed by your own life lately that some of your friends may be wondering whether something is wrong with you. So make sure not to leave the people you care about in the lurch. Do not miss any social commitments. Show them that you're doing fine and you're just as eager to hang out with them as ever.

CROSSWORD

ACROSS Swabber's need

Host's request 9 Patriarch of an Arab family 14 Part of aka

15 Is very thrifty 16 Colossal 17 Actress Tyne 18 Equips

19 Irritate 20 Skulked about 22 Motormouths 24 Rent 26 Friend or

27 Revised 30 Yellow wildflower 35 Upholstery choice

36 Truth bender 37 Broadcast 38 Mrs. Peron 39 Broke to bits 42 NYC opera

house 43 Not any 45 Bustling commotions 46 Less green

48 Kept from falling 50 Fourscore 51 Energy source 52 Ms. Burstyn 54 Discolored by spots or streaks 58 Provided funds

62 Turned down 63 Italian wine city 65 Early VCR

format 66 Biscotto flavor 67 Man-goat deity 68 Spinks of the

ring 69 Adhesive

70 Spelling error 71 — St. Vincent Millay

DOWN Water lily leaves 2 Ladd of films

4 Devotion 5 Go over again 6 Fishtails — out (relax)

8 Classroom sound 9 Downhill race

10 Longs for 11 Sea eagle 12 Mad scientist's

aide 13 Pocket janglers 21 Hull parts 23 Burning

TV serial part 27 Levels off 28 Fairway clump 29 Lacking sense 31 Super Bowl

cheers

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

FLED LORE CALL TERHOURS URDL NEELIOUSTELLAR T E S T S I M P THIRST PENITENT REBUT VADER GOO ELSECINES TRIM ALECABIN TONSURES LATTES UTE HAUTE HOMIEST CCI ARF FORTYNINER SENSE ROAD

© 2019 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS 3-5-19

32 Get-up-and-go 33 Like honev 34 Doorway 36 Take on cargo

40 Mt. Katahdin locale 41 Helped with the dishes

(2 wds.)

53 Quit raining

44 Least hard Of low character 49 Paul Hogan role 50 Climate affecter

54 Be grouchy 55 "Typical Male" singer 56 Poles connector

57 Senseless

60 Bond's alma

59 Garden intruder

61 Emmy winner – Délany 64 Utter

mater

15 16 18 19 28 33 36 38 39 46 48 60 55 63 65 68 66

SUDOKU

8 7 5 6 4 9 2 3 1 3 6 2 8 1 5 9 7 4 149372586 6 9 7 5 3 4 8 1 2 2 1 8 9 6 7 3 4 5 5 3 4 1 2 8 6 9 7 4 8 1 2 5 3 7 6 9 9 5 6 7 8 1 4 2 3 723496158

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION





People stand in line to perform puja at Krishna Mandir on the occasion of Krishna Janmashtami, a festival to mark the birth of lord Krishna, in Patan Durbar Square, Lalitpur, on Friday.

Teachers vying for permanent posts now need to take qualifying exams

The new provision will ensure a more competitive teaching force, officials say.

BINOD GHIMIRE KATHMANDU, AUG 23

Amid concerns that public school teachers are not performing well, the government has revised the regulation of Teachers Service Commission to have more competitive tests to induct qualified teachers.

The amendment, endorsed by the Cabinet on Wednesday, has made screening tests, similar to that of Public Service Commission, mandatory before candidates are qualified to sit in the final competitive exam.

so far didn't need to take a qualifying test. They only had to sit for one test for 100 marks on their related subjects. With the new provision

in place, the test will now carry 200 marks. "The new provision will ensure a more competitive teaching workforce," Uttam Uttam Kapri, chief of school education division at the Ministry of Education, Science and

Technology, told the Post

Out of the total 200 full marks, the screening test will carry 50 marks in the final test.

The amendment to the Teachers Service Commission regulation has also reduced the marks for the experience to 5 from 12.

Earlier, the teachers who had prior experience in the teaching could get up to 12 marks in the interview. The weightage for experience was reduced as a majority of temporary teachers got their jobs without facing any test, mostly due to political connection, said an official at the Ministry.

public school system. Reduction of the marks for experience means more freshers will get permanent position," an aide to Education Minister

Giriraj Mani Pokharel told the Post. Under the political pressure, a majority of 22,076 permanent positions for the three levels-primary, lower-secondary and second-

ary—were allocated for temporary teachers, in

the test held last year.

Though the government data shows over 96 percent of public school teachers are trained, the learning achievement of the students is decreasing every year. Different reports by the Education Review Office, under the Education Ministry, suggest the students from different grades grasp less than 50 percent of their curriculum.

Educationists say the government move will help more competitive people to enter the teaching profession. Besides making the test more competitive, they have also suggested that the government standardise the questions and inter-

"Our tests only measure the candidate's knowledge, which alone is not sufficient for him or her to join the teaching profession. There should also be a provision for attitude and aptitude tests," Binay Kusiyait, a professor at Tribhuvan University, who has conducted several researches in school education, told

Police buy 36 breathalysers to check drunk driving

ANUP OJHA

The Metropolitan Traffic Police Division has recently added three dozen new breathalysers, finally giving some respite to the traffic police, who for more than seven months had to make do without proper machines to check drunk driving.

"There were some bureaucratic hurdles because of the lengthy tender process," said Senior Superintendent of Police Basanta Pant, who heads the traffic division. "The anti-drunk-driving campaign will be more

effective with the new batch of machines." Pant said that 10 new machines have already been sent to different units in Kirtipur, Bhaktapur and a few areas in Kathmandu, while the remaining 26 breathalysers will be used through the head office in Baggi Khana.

According to Pant, this is the first time the traffic police have invested such a significant chunk of its own money, without relying on donors, to purchase these equipment. Unlike the old breathalysers, the new ones can detect alcohol intake levels from a few inches of a driver's mouth.

Damaged by floods and landslides, Kanti Highway's deadline pushed further

The rain has brought about more than 100 landslides on the road, causing cave-ins at 15 spots.

PRATAP BISTA HETAUDA, AUG 23

The deadline for the completion of the Kanti Lokpath Project on the Kanti Highway is set for October, right around Dashain when vehicles ply the highway. But road officials say that the road section will not come into operation by then because repair works on the road will not be complete by then.

Kanti Highway is the shortest route that links Kathmandu and Hetauda.

The road had been heavily damaged by floods and landslides that occurred in mid-July and vehicular movement on the highway has, for now, come to a complete halt.

Amindra Khadka, an engineer and also the information officer of the project, said there are more than 100 landslides along the highway with cave-ins at 15 road sections. "The road has been damaged by recurring landslides. It will not operational for vehicles by



A road section that collapsed due to rains and landslides

October as expected," said Khadka.

The Kanti Highway, a nearly 90-km-long feeder road connecting Satdobato, Lalitpur, to Buddha Chowk, Hetauda, is currently undergoing repair and replacement work. "We first have to clear out the landslide debris in various parts of the road sections," said another engineer Dipesh Rajak.

"The road section in Makwanpur is at high risk due to multiple landslides," said Rajak. According to him, workers have started to remove landslide debris and are constructing retaining walls along the highway.

Binod Sapkota, chief of the project, said that the floods and landslides have destroyed road infrastructures worth around Rs 320 million. "Repair and replacement work is slowly gaining momentum now. Hopefully, smaller vehicles will be able to run through the highway within a few days," said

Kanti Highway is the shortest route that links Kathmandu and Hetauda and was inaugurated by the then King Mahendra 63 years ago. After nearly six decades of work, the highway was expected to be operational by mid-April, 2019.

The construction crew had already blacktopped 33 km in two stretches, 25 km in Makawanpur and 8 km in Lalitpur, but floods and landslides have destroyed around 10 kilometres of the blacktopped road. Around 40km of the road is still gravel. "Floods and landslides along various road sections have pushed the project's deadline further again," said Khadka.

According to the project, around 65 percent of the expansion works were concluded before mid-June. The project had widened the single-lane road to an 8.5-metre double lane road with high-quality asphalt blacktopping, allowing two-way movement of cargo trucks as well as passenger buses.

The government has allocated Rs630 million for upgrading the highway in the current fiscal year.



NATIONAL

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang to visit in the second week of September

The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu, however, said it had not received any information regarding [Wang's] visit. But it is usual practice for Chinese authorities to keep the foreign visits of senior leaders under wraps, especially if there are security concerns, said a Nepali official who has worked with Chinese officials.

Xi is likely to visit Nepal upon his return from India in October.

"They always make announcements at the last hour," he said.

Since the Oli administration took office, there have been a number of high-level visits from Nepal to China, with almost no reciprocity. President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, Vice-President Nanda Bahadur Pun, Prime Minister Oli, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ishwar Pokhrel, Foreign Minister Gyawali, and some chief ministers have already visited China in the last year-and-a-half.

Nepal's engagement with China took off after India imposed a border blockade in 2015 following the promulgation of the constitution. Nepal and China have since signed two important pacts and a slew of partnership and cooperation deals, including participation in the China-led Belt and

Classified Display ट्रेकिङ्ग गाईड लाइसेन्स हरायो

मिति २०७६/३/२५ गते पोखराबाट काठमाडौंसम्म आउदा मेरो निम्न व्यहोरा भएको NATHM को ट्रेकिङ्ग गाईड लाइसेन्स हराएको हुँदा पाउन हने महानुभावले नजिकको प्रहरी कार्यालय वा फोन नं. ९८६३३२९५०० मा खबर गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु Name: Santosh Bastola Regd. No.: 438-068/69 Course No: TKG-01/62 Address: LekhNath-13, Kaski

Road Initiative. Wang's upcoming visit is likely to set the tone for a possible visit by Chinese president Xi. At least two foreign ministry officials told the Post that an advance Chinese team has already visited Kathmandu in connection with Xi's visit to security arrangements, infrastructure at Tribhuvan International Airport, a possible hotel for the Chinese president, and other logistics. Xi is likely to visit Nepal upon his return from India in October, according to foreign ministry

As October will be the festive season, it will be relatively easier for security agencies to ensure security arrangements and other preparations as Kathmandu will empty out, said a national security official, who also requested anonymity. During President Bhandari's visit to China in April, Xi had assured that he would visit Nepal at an appropriate time. Xi has already visited other South Asian countries, except for Bhutan and

Officials and diplomats said that since Xi is visiting Varanasi, India on October 12, there are chances of a stopover in Kathmandu while returning home. Xi is visiting India at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as part of what has been dubbed the second series of the Wuhan Summit.

Given China's economic might, expectations in Kathmandu are high that Xi could announce a significant economic assistance package during his visit. The visit is also expected to help expedite a number of projects under the Belt and Road Initiative.

former ambassador Beijing, however, said that Nepal should first do its homework and figure out what it wants from the northern neighbour.

"Our economic cooperation with China is not moving fast," said Mahesh Maskey, who served as Nepal's ambassador to China from 2012 to 2016. "We had agreed to execute several projects with China, including a cross-border economic zone to reduce trade deficits. We had also developed a blueprint of cooperation with China during Oli's visit in 2016 and some of them have been expedited. But others remain idle.

A semblance of calm has returned to Tikapur ...

Next month will mark four years since Nepal got a new constitution.

In Tikapur, people have largely come to terms with what happened, but the scars remain. In a bid to maintain social harmony and deal with the psychological impact of the violence a three-day Tharuhat/Tharuwan conference is being held in Tikapur from Saturday.

According to the organising committee, peace and communal harmony, rights of the Tharu community, and grievances against constitutional provisions are the conference's major

The conference will try to find ways to get the Tharu community's demands addressed and minimise the effects on social harmony caused by the Tikapur incident," said Minraj Chaudhary, coordinator of the organising committee.

An amendment to the constitution is the common demand of both Tharus and Madhesis. But while Madhesis have representation in the form of political parties, Tharus have no party of their own. The one representative from Tikapur's Tharu community-Resham Chaudhary—is currently in jail after the district court in March handed him a life sentence for masterminding the Tikapur violence.

Now, four years since the constitution was promulgated, two Madhesi parties—Samajbadi Party and Rastriya Janata Party—are saying that they will once again demand an amendment. But neither Tharus nor Madhesis know if the amendment will "An amendment could not happen

when the Nepali Congress was positive about it and the Rastriya Janata Party and Sanghiya Samajbadi Party were both part of government. It cannot happen today," said CK Lal, a political analyst.

As Tharus are expected to find a way to demand an amendment during the conference, Madhesi parties are trying to form a united force to raise the issue in parliament and on the

But the road is fraught with challenges. A working alliance between the two Madhesi parties will only be possible if the Samajbadi Party Nepal—formed after the merger between Upendra Yadav's Sanghiya Samajbadi Forum-Nepal and Baburam Bhattarai's Naya Shakti Party—quits the government. A party that is in government cannot protest against it. However, Yadav, chairman of the Samajbadi Party, does not seem likely to quit government anytime soon



A curfew was imposed in Tikapur after nine people were killed in violence that occurred during clashes between Tharu demonstrators and security personnel on August 24, 2015.

On the other hand, the Rastriya Janata Party has a divided presidium that comprises of six leaders. Some leaders on the presidium, according to party insiders, are concerned about losing their space if the two parties unite. "Unless leaders agree to accept Yadav's dominance in the unified party, unification will be a difficult task," said Lal. "And without Yadav at the helm, the party may not be able to take bold and necessary decisions."

This has created a catch-22 situation.

"An amendment is not possible without a movement stronger than the previous one," said Lal. "This constitution is an outcome of a big conspiracy. So it's not going to be amended easily as a majority are against any

While constitution amendment remains a pressing issue, Tikapur locals—Tharus and others—want to

Netra Saud lost his 18-month-old son in the Tikapur incident.

"That incident is a black day not only for me but for all Tikapur locals," said Saud. "It should not be viewed as one community's hatred against another. We need to have a common spirit that after all, we are all Nepalis.'

The government had paid Rs1 million to Saud as compensation, and the Tek Prasad Memorial Foundation has been formed in his memory.

"I won't get my son back," said Saud. "I want a park in his name where people—young and old—from all the communities can come and spend time.

In the aftermath of the Tikapur violence, opinions were largely divided. Local Tharus said the incident took place spontaneously while others believe it was premeditated.

The government has yet to make public a report prepared by a commission formed under former Supreme Court judge Girish Chandra Lal. The commission had carried out a study on human rights violations during the movements in Tarai, Madhes and Tharuhat movement. Jit Bahadur Chaudhary, a village

leader from Bangau, Tikapur, said that the 2015 movement was for the rights of the Tharu people and that it was purely political in nature. "The incident was an accident,"

said Chaudhary. "Rather than further complicating the issue, the state should find a lasting solution.' After the incident, the police had

filed cases against 58 Tharu activists, charging them with murder. The district court on March 6 convicted 24 of them. Currently, 11 of them, including Resham Chaudhary, are serving jail

Laxman Tharu, a leader affiliated

with the Rastriya Janata Party, was among those arrested. After serving 42 months in jail, he was released five

months ago, when Resham was sent to "Things have gradually returned to normal here," said Tharu who is busy with preparations for the three-day programme. "It's about time we raised our concerns-not only for constitu-

Tharus in the past. Tharu is hopeful that the programme will help devise a concrete plan for the future.

tion amendment but also other agree-

ments that have been signed with

However, two organisations affiliated to the ruling Nepal Communist Party -Loktantrik Tharu Sangh and Tharu Rastriya Mukti Morcha-are likely to skip the event, as they have been instructed by the party's Dang district committee to not participate.

Today, most prominent Tharu leaders are affiliated with different parties. Rajkumar Lekhi, who is a member of the Rastriya Janata Party, said that though there is a semblance of normalcy in the region, nothing has changed politically. Tharu demands have not been addressed.

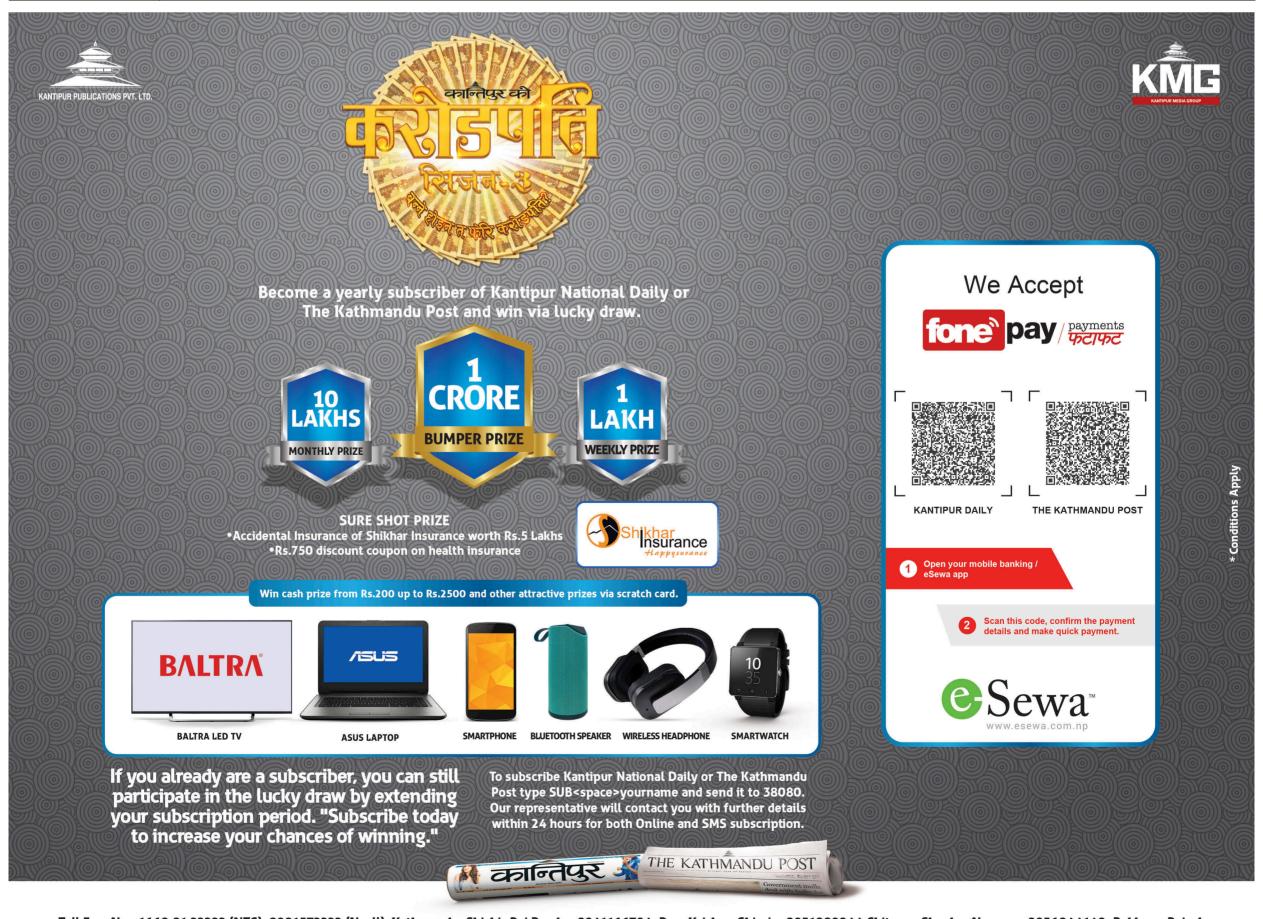
"After a thorough discussion for three days among thousands of Tharu people, we will devise a plan to launch a movement to press the government to address our major demands—a Tharuhat autonomous province and amendment to the constitution," said Lekhi. However, there are concerns about whether Lekhi's Rastriya Janata Party will make a push for the amendment. Analysts say the two Madhes-based parties, which together have 34 members in the lower house and two each in the upper house of the federal parliament, can exert more pressure only when they make a demand for amendment together.

"But unification won't happen anytime soon," said Chandra Kishore, another political analyst. "Even if they unite, demands from the Madhes could become diluted. A separate force is necessary to raise the issues of the Madhes."

Lal believes that unless those in power recognise constitution amendment as a national issue, nothing is likely to happen.

"The Nepal Communist Party is not under any pressure to move the issue forward," said Lal. Even if the ruling party proposes an amendment, the Nepali Congress might not support it as their relations have been worsening."

Ganesh Chaudhary contributed reporting from Kailali



NATIONAL

Guthi Sansthan was in dark for years about how its land was being used

National Vigilance Centre's investigation found that land was being exploited for commercial purpose.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA

The Religion Culture Preservation Committee, a social institution, handed over six ropanis and 14 aanas of land at Narayanchaur in Kathmandu, owned by Guthi Sansthan, to another social institution—Satya Sai Kendra on May 9, 1998.

The Guthi Sansthan, an independent institution entrusted with the task of taking care of religious, cultural and social heritage of the country, had no idea about it. Officials say they don't know how the Guthi-owned land went into the hands of the committee, which subsequently handed over the land to Satya Sai Kendra. The National Vigilance Centre, which conducted an investigation into the ownership of the land, said that only the Guthi Sansthan itself or the Nepali government (Cabinet) has the authority to give public land to any organisation for a particular use.

A recent report of the National Vigilance Centre concluded that the former officials of the Guthi Sansthan were involved in the handover of the land to the committee and that they should be held accountable.

Based on this conclusion, the National Vigilance Centre has decided to send the report to the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority for further investigation.

The Guthi Sansthan and the National Vigilance Centre have not found any trace of the existence of Culture Preservation Committee. "Documents show that the Guthi Sansthan had given the land to the Religion Culture Preservation Committee. But it handed over the same land to Satya Sai Kendra without our knowledge," said Hari Prasad Joshi, deputy administrator at Sansthan. "We came to know about it only about a decade ago. We mounted pressure on Satya Sai Kendra to vacate the land, but we failed to do so after former government secretaries

While the Satya Sai Kendra used a certain portion of the land for itself, it provided the rest of the property to Harihar Narayan Samaj, a grouping of local Khadgi community, also without the consent of the Guthi Sansthan.

The Harihar Narayan Samaj built a three-storey community building after taking building permits from Kathmandu Metropolitan City on December 31, 1991; again, the Guthi Sansthan was kept in the dark.

The Satya Sai Kendra itself also admitted to having received the land from Religion Culture Preservation Committee without knowing that the land belonged to the Guthi Sansthan.

"Only after Guthi Sansthan started to inquire about it, we knew that it belonged to Guthi," said Dol Bahadur Khadka, chairman of Satya Sai Kendra. "When it gave a part of the land to local Khadgi community as per their demand, we were not aware that the land belonged to Guthi Sansthan.

The land, in fact, had come under the Guthi Sansthan on August 22, 1991, from a private Guthi-Harihar Narayan Guthi. Then, the Guthi Sansthan asked the Satya Sai Kendra to pay the rent for the land as per the market rate. But the latter refused to pay the rent as per the market rate, arguing that they were using the space for social services and religious activities and not for making profit.

The two sides ultimately signed a deal under which the Satya Sai Kendra would pay Rs200 per month for nearly seven ropanis of land, according to the Guthi Sansthan officials.

Nearly one and a half years ago, the rent was revised to Rs3,000 per month.

A separate agreement was also signed between the Guthi Sansthan and Harihar Narayan Samaj under which the Samaj would pay Rs3,000 per month.

The vigilante centre had conducted an investigation after a complaint was registered saying the land was provided to the Satya Sai Kendra at a very low rent without any competition During its probe, the centre found that Harihar Narayan Samaj had given a space on the northern side of the community building on rent for Rs20,000 to run a restaurant.

Satya Sai Kendra's Chairman Khadka said they were not concerned about how Harihar Narayan Samaj was using the land as the Guthi Sansthan had signed a separate agreement with Samaj.

"We are running a diagnostic centre where we provide free treatment to patients and conduct various religious activities," said Khadka. "There is no source of income for us, except donations that people give voluntarily."



People from Far-Western Nepal dance during the Gaura festival celebrations in Tundikhel, Kathmandu, on Friday.

22 doctors resign in Rapti Academy of Health Sciences citing pressure from administration

Health services at the academy have come to a halt following the resignation of doctors.

DURGALAL KC DANG, AUG 23

Twenty-two doctors of the Rapti Academy of Health Sciences in Dang resigned en masse on Thursday citing undue pressure from Vice-chancellor Dr Sangita Bhandari.

According to the doctors, Bhandari misbehaved with them and repeatedly threatened to terminate them. In the resignation letter, the doctors claimed that they were compelled to resign due to physical and mental pressure from the hospital administration. The doctors tendered their resignation to Chancellor, Medical Association, Council, Administration Office, and Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli through Vice-

Twelve medical specialists and 10 medical officers have resigned from their posts. Since the doctors put in their papers, health services at the hospital have come to a halt.

On Friday, locals organised a meeting in Ghorahi to address the problems people are facing since the disruption of services at the hospital. They put forth their concerns to the hospital administration. The meeting decided to start a campaign named "Save Academy Campaign" and the campaigners led by Bikiran Gautam, a rights activist, advised Bhandari to resign from her post immediately for mistreating the hospital employees.

Bhandari, however, said that she was only seeking clarification after

incidents of patients being referred to private clinics came to her notice. "I have asked doctors to stay within the rule of the academy, but they instead staged protests. All of them should join their posts and resume work," said Bhandari.

Rapti Sub Regional Hospital, the biggest hospital in Rapti zone, was converted into Rapti Academy of Health Sciences in 2018. On February, more than 62 employees of the hospital had staged protests against the mismanagement of the academy for a month, demanding the authorities to provide professional security to staff, proper salary and allowances.

The Education and Health Committee of Parliament had then formed a subcommittee to solve the problem. The subcommittee had recommended the government to take action against the representatives of the academy for not working towards solving the issues and problems faced by the academy's employees.

The report prepared by the subcommittee found that the academy lacks various aspects of management and medical assistance largely because of the unilateral decisions taken by the representatives including Vicechancellor Dr Sangita Bhandari. The subcommittee had also advised the hospital to decrease the treatment fees, resume its health services, adjust the salary scale of the employees as per the designation assigned to them, and to address the demands of the agitating employees.

Shortage of blood putting lives at | Budget for road project | Irregularities in driver's risk in Bajhang District Hospital

To meet the demand for blood, Nepal Army officials and hospital personnel have been donating blood at the hospital for the past three years.

BASANTA PRATAP SINGH

BAJHANG, AUG 23

Early on Thursday morning, Gita Rokaya underwent acute labour. Rokaya was bleeding profusely when her relatives took her to the district hospital in Chainpur, Bajhang's district headquarters, from the rural village of Gadaraya. It was already five in the evening when she was admitted to the hospital. The excessive bleeding had already taken its toll on her body.

Once admitted, the doctors at the hospital announced Rokaya had lost too much blood and asked her relatives to arrange for pints of B positive blood, Rokaya's blood group. The relatives tried to manage the blood but couldn't. After several failed attempts, they tried to take Rokaya to Dhangadi. That too didn't materialise. As a last resort, the relatives took a bus to Dhangadi at eight

After an eleven-hour bus ride, the family reached Dhangadhi where Rokaya underwent surgery successfully. "We had already lost hope," said Milan Rawal, a surgeon at the district hospital in Bajhang. "Since her body was already short on blood, we had only a little hope left. Thankfully, she survived."

In another instance, a month ago, Gita Joshi, 21, from Dadagaun in Jayaprithvi Municipality, went through a similar ordeal during childbirth. Her husband, Gajendra Joshi, couldn't manage blood after Gita bled profusely. Gajendra had lost all hopes until a police head constable, Mahendra Bahadur Bam, donated blood. "If there was any more delay, we wouldn't have been able to save her,"

Gajendra said. Like Rokaya and Joshi, cases of



A Nepal Army official donates blood in Bajhang District Hospital.

victims suffering due to blood shortages have become a pervasive problem. The district's best-equipped hospital, the Simkhet-based District Hospital, does not have a blood bank. Cases like the ones mentioned above occur on a daily basis. "As far as the blood group matches, army personnel, police constables and hospital officials volunteer to donate blood," said Narayan Prasad Joshi, an official at the hospital. "When we can't find blood, we refer the patients to hospitals outside the district. That's all we can do."

Joshi added that he has personally donated blood to eight patients so far. In the past three years, Nepal Army personnel have donated blood to 32 patients and hospital officials to 30 patients, according to data by Sangram Sardul Company in

"It's a sensitive issue," said Sandip Okhada, hospital chief. "Searching for a pint of blood takes an entire day, sometimes it is not available at

Okhada added that they carry out almost every surgery under great risk. "Should there be any big accident or emergency, the chances of survival are slim," said Okhada. He said that he has prepared a proposal to send to authorities requesting to establish a blood bank. "Hopefully, the process will move forward soon, so patients won't have to risk death in a shortage of

released before work completion

The road upgradation project is still ongoing, locals say.

MANOJ PAUDEL KAPILVASTU, AUG 23

If paperwork is anything to go by, the Juguniya-Birnagar Road Upgradation Project in Bijayanagar completed in the last fiscal year. The contractor received the final instalment of the budget before July after completion of the work. However, road upgradation work is still ongoing along the road

locals claim that the upgradation work has not only been delayed, but it has also been

"The road is almost the same as it was before. The contractor just spread 8-10 trolleys of sand and pebble in the name of road upgradation," said Govardan Yadav, a local.

The locals expressed their dissatisfaction with the elected representatives, stating that they have failed to ensure timely completion of work. They blame the representatives for protecting the contractor.

The Rs 5 million contract of upgrading the Juguniya-Birnagar Road was awarded to Amar Construction Service. According to the agreement, the construction company has to gravel the road and construct six culverts along the road section.

The locals say the contractor, following a protest from the villagers, laid sand and pebble in some parts of the road in the name of con-

"Hume pipes have been laid in six places to make the culvert, but the

work is yet to complete," said Yadav. The disgruntled locals also complained that they were unaware of the contract and budget allocation of the

The construction company has to gravel the road and construct six culverts.

"There are no boards or signages that mention the project. When we went to the rural municipal office, nobody answered our queries regarding the project," said Rajendra Yadav, another local.

Pradip Kumar Chaudhary, an engineer at the local unit, admitted of issuing the budget without completing

"The local unit issued the budget after preparing the necessary paperwork by the end of the last fiscal year,' Chaudhary said. Refuting the locals' claims that the

construction work is still ongoing, he said, "The work continued until mid-August. It is now complete." Rabindra Prasad Chaudhary, the

chief administrative officer of the local body, said that the budget was released in the last fiscal year after officials from the rural municipality monitored the project.

"But the work continued till mid-August," he said.

Employees at the local body said they tried to stop the budget allocation before the work completion but in vain. They said the elected representatives put pressure on them

When the Post tried to reach the local unit's Deputy Chief Laxmi Chaudhary, she refused to comment.

licence distribution on the rise in Birgunj

BHUSAN YADAV BIRGUNJ, AUG 23

A team from the Parsa District Police Office on Tuesday nabbed four people from a driving trial centre at Prasaunibirta in Birgunj. They were nabbed for illicitly demanding money from people sitting for driving tests, promising to facilitate them in obtaining a driver's licence, said DSP Ananta Ram Sharma.

Among the nabbed were Rajkumar Sah and Amlesh Prasad Sah from Bindabasini Rural Municipality; Satarohan Sah from Prasauni Rural Municipality; and Samarthan Neupane from Hetauda Submetropolis.

The police also confiscated Rs 92,000 and some documents from the detainees.

On April 26, a team from the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority arrested two middlemen from the Office of Transportation Driving Licence Certificate with bribe money. The duo, Roshan Rauniyar and Sunil Yadav, had promised its clients that they would "arrange" driving licences for them at Rs 31,000 each. The anti-graft body also charged Badri Dahal of the Licence Bureau for his involvement in the irregularity.

Though the office had adopted strict measures after these incidents, cases of irregularities have far from declined, with middlemen active once again.

According to sources from the office, two among the four middlemen who were nabbed on Tuesday have 'good relations' with officials at the licence department. The middlemen were nabbed with the certificates of 17 individuals who had failed the written exams, according to the

The in-charge of the trial centre Bhola Sah admitted that there are irregularities in licence distribution, but denied that the centre had any connection with those mid-

"We are aware that the number of middlemen is on the rise, but we don't have any connection with them," Sah said.

However, Sushil Kumar Sah, recently appointed chief of the Transportation Management Office's driving licence department, said he is unaware of the irregularities.

French winemakers jittery over Trump tariff threats ahead of G7

President Trump has repeatedly suggested a 100 percent tax on French wine imports to the United States.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

French winegrowers are on tenterhooks as they wait to see whether Donald Trump will follow through with his repeated threats to raise tariffs on French wine in retaliation for the new GAFA tax.

As the leaders of the world's richest countries gather for the G7 opening Saturday, winegrowers in host nation France fear they will have to suffer consequences from the new French tax on the US tech giants.

Representatives of the GAFA corporations—Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon-on Monday railed against the tax aimed at plugging a loophole that allows the firms to pay next to nothing in countries where they make

They called the tax "discriminatory" and a "troubling precedent".

Meanwhile, while President Trump has repeatedly warned of retaliation, on August 9 suggesting a 100 percent tax on French wine imports to the United States, according to the Bloomberg news agency.

Trump, though a teetotaller, had tweeted in late July that "American wine is better than French wine!"

While putting on a brave face, the French wine sector—the world's top exporter in terms of value and third in volume—is making contin-

Will Americans—who bought 1.6 billion euros (\$1.8 billion) worth of French wines and spirits last year—be willing to pay double for their favourite Cotes du Rhone?

"We have to take the American president's threats seriously," said Jerome Despey, the head of the wine industry section of France's leading agricultural union FNSEA. "Wine cannot be held hostage in an international trade

Even before the French parliament approved the GAFA tax on July 11, Trump had hinted on numerous occasions that he could impose customs duties on French wine. But at the time the rationale was one of unfair competition with American wines.

"France charges us a lot for the wine and yet we charge them little," the US president told CNBC in June, adding: "And you know what, it's not fair. We'll do something about it."

Imported wine currently faces US duties of 5.3 cents to 12.7 cents (5 to 12 euro centimes) a bottle, while US wines shipped to the EU face duties of 11 to 29 cents a bottle, according to trade bodies.

Trump repeated the threat on July 26 when he mooted a "substantial reciprocal action" in response to the GAFA tax, which is expected to raise 400 million euros this year, growing to 650 million by 2022, according to the French economy ministry.

The contingency plans vary among winegrowing regions. In Champagne, "of course we're worried because the United States is our leading market in terms of value after France," said regional winegrowers representative Maxime Toubard.

But he said he remains "confident" because "American consumers like champagne."

In the southwestern Cognac region—which exports nearly half of its production to the United Statesone industry figure said business leaders were "vigilant" but "nothing is confirmed."

Thomas Montagne, president of the Confederation Independent Winegrowers (CEVI), noted that cheaper and mid-range wines were most at risk from new US tariffs, as opposed to reserve wines.

The high-end wines that will lose market share in the United States because of tariffs will still find other export markets, Montagne told. "While (grands crus) aren't con-

sumed in the United States, they will be elsewhere," he said. "These are wines that can be put away for years and can wait before being sold," Montagne told France Inter radio.

Mid-range and cheaper wines will "pay the price" imposed by US tariffs,

In Provence, bolstered in recent years by a growing US preference for rose wines, the concern is deep.

The region's US exports have risen from "practically nil" to 46 percent in a decade, a local industry source said.

Two labels in particular account for the boom: Whispering Angel by Var winegrower Sacha Lichine, and Cotes de Provence Rose Miraval produced by the Provencal estate of Hollywood stars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.



Vineyards are pictured at the Chateau du Pavillon in Sainte-Croix-Du-Mont, France.

REUTERS

HONG KONG/SHANGHAL AUG 23

Chinese technology giant Huawei said on Friday the impact of US trade restrictions on its business will be less than what it initially feared, though the curbs could push its smartphone unit's revenue lower by about \$10 billion this year.

Huawei Technologies' \$100 billion business has been hit hard since mid-May after Washington put the world's second-largest smartphone maker in a so-called Entity List that threatens to cut off its access to essential US components and technology

In its first assessment of the impact of the restrictions, Huawei founder and CEO Ren Zhengfei said in June the blacklisting would hit the company's revenue by \$30 billion, leaving it

"It seems it is going to be a little less than that. But you have to wait till our results in March," Eric Xu, Huawei's deputy chairman, said at a news conference to introduce new artificial intelligence chips at its headquarters in Shenzhen.

Huawei's consumer business group—which includes the smartphones business and is racing to develop an operating system of its own in preparation for the worst case scenario of being stripped of essential Google Android apps—is doing "much

better" this year than initially feared,

unit's revenue by over \$10 billion

"But a reduction of more than \$10 billion could happen," he said. Huawei's consumer business group reported revenue of 349 billion yuan

Spurred by promotions and patriotic purchases, Huawei's smartphone sales in China surged by a nearly a third compared to a year ago to a record high in the June quarter, helping it more than offset a shipments slump in the global market. Huawei said last month the consumer business group turned in revenue of 221 billion yuan in the first half of 2019.

In a temporary relief to Huawei, Washington said this week that it will extend by 90 days a reprieve that permits Huawei to buy from US firms in order to supply existing customers, while adding more than 40 of Huawei's units to its economic blacklist.

Xu said the reprieve was "meaningless" to Huawei, whose employees

its own chips to reduce its reliance on foreign technologies, reiterated on Friday that its chips, including a new AI chipset it launched on Friday called the Ascend 910, are for its own use and it does not aim to become a chip vendor.

with the ban.

are "fully prepared" to live and work

Huawei, which has been developing

"We are open to discussing partnerships with AI chipset development companies so there are chipsets of various kinds that could be used in Huawei products. So, positioning our chipset business as a standalone is a scenario that is not going to happen,' Xu said. The Ascend 910 AI processor, a 7-nanometre chipset designed by Huawei's semiconductor unit HiSilicon based on ARM architecture for AI model training, has more com-

set in the world, Xu said. British chip designer ARM earlier this year announced it was halting deals with Huawei in compliance with the ban, dealing a blow to Huawei, but Xu said Huawei's perpetual ownership of the ARMv8 license meant the Ascend 910 chipset would not be affected.

Huawei said it was no longer able to work with US chip designers such as Cadence Design Systems Inc and Synopsys due to the trade restrictions, but the company has alternatives.



A commuter rides an e-scooter on the sidewalk in Los Angeles, where an e-scooter enforcement task force has been launched in an effort to ensure riders follow laws which include no riding on

Huawei says US curbs to cut smartphone

Spurred by promotions and patriotic purchases, Huawei's sales in China surged by a nearly a third in the June quarter.

the sidewalk and no passengers. E-Scooters are becoming more pevelant across neighborhoods in southern California, creating problems and prompting complaints.

People visit a newly opened Huawei store in Xian, Shaanxi province, China

FAA says it will invite global Boeing 737 MAX pilots to simulator tests

CHICAGO/WASHINGTON, AUG 23

Federal Aviation Administration said on Thursday it would invite Boeing 737 MAX pilots from across the world to participate in simulator tests as part of the process to recertify the aircraft for flight following two fatal crashes.

Earlier, Reuters reported that the agency had asked the three US airlines that operate the MAX to provide the names of some pilots who had only flown the 737 for around a year, including at least one MAX flight.

In a statement, the FAA said it had

not specified the number of required hours of flight experience, but said the candidates would be a cross-section of line pilots and must have experience at the controls of the MAX. Boeing Co's latest 737 narrow-body

model, the MAX, was grounded worldwide in March after two crashes within five months in Indonesia and Ethiopia that killed 346 people. Boeing has been reprogramming

software for a stall-prevention system at the centre of both crashes, which the FAA must approve before the plane flies again commercially.

The FAA said it had not yet specified a firm schedule for the tests.

Boeing has said it is working toward getting the 737 MAX flying again com-



Unpainted Boeing 737 MAX aircraft are parked at Renton Municipal Airport in Washington, US.

mercially in the early fourth quarter. Reuters reported on Thursday that it had told suppliers it planned to ramp 737 production back up in February, sending its shares 4 percent higher.

The world's largest planemaker slowed its 737 production rate in April because deliveries of the MAX, which makes up the bulk of its single-aisle production, were frozen under the grounding, hitting its supply chain and airline customers

In the United States, MAX operators Southwest Airlines Co, American Airlines and United Airlines have had to cancel hundreds of daily flights as they wrestle with slimmer fleets at a time of strong domestic air travel

The MAX is Boeing's fastest-selling

aircraft, with about 5,000 pending

As part of its own testing process, Boeing has invited senior airline pilots to experiment with the software fix and use simulators to run scenarios similar to the ones that led to the

two crashes. But sources told Reuters that the FAA also wanted to observe newer 737 pilots. One source said the simulator tests were supposed to be conducted during the first week of September but had been pushed back to the mid-

dle of the month. The FAA, which is working alongside global regulators, has said repeatedly it does not have a fixed time line to approve the grounded jets to fly commercially again.

Top Indian government official dampens hopes of economic stimulus

India's economic growth has slowed in the past three consecutive quarters, losing its status as the world's fastest-growing major economy to China.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MUMBAI, AUG 23

Indian markets fell on Friday after a top official dampened hopes of a stimulus package to support a misfiring economy and ease a liquidity crunch in Asia's third-largest economy.

India's economic growth has slowed in the past three consecutive quarters, losing its status as the world's fastest-growing major economy to China, with unemployment at its highest since the 1970s.

Industry figures have been calling on newly re-elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to provide more of a fiscal boost as signs multiply that numerous sectors are

suffering a painful slowdown. But Krishnamurthy Subramanian, the government's chief economic advisor, suggested on Thursday that state intervention creates a "moral hazard" and is "anathema to the way the market economy functions".

Reportedly under pressure from the government, India's central bank in August cut interest rates for the fourth time this year to a nine-year low in an attempt to boost growth.

automotive particularly stricken, with car sales plunging 31 percent in July, the ninth consecutive monthly drop, prompting manufacturers to halt production at some plants.

India's largest biscuit maker Parle Products warned this week that it might have to lay off up to 10,000 workers if the government doesn't cut sales taxes

Part of the problem is that India's banks are reluctant to lend following a slew of bad loans, with the deputy head of government think-tank Niti Aayog calling for Modi's government to "take steps that are out of the ordinary"

"For the last 70 years, we have not faced this kind of a liquidity situation. (The) entire financial sector is up in a churn and nobody is trusting anybody else," Rajiv Kumar said.

Gross domestic product (GDP) for the world's sixth-biggest economy grew 5.8 percent in the final quarter of 2018, down from 6.6 percent in the previous quarter.

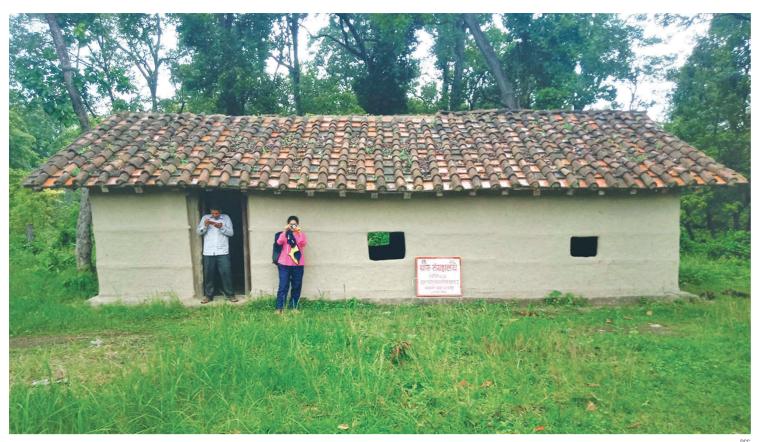
Economists at Nomura predicted this week a further slowing of momentum, forecasting growth of 5.7 percent



Chawri Bazar in New Delhi.

in the first three months of 2019. GDP data are due next Friday.

Shares fell sharply on Thursday on Subramanian's comments with the Sensex index dropping almost 600 points. On Friday morning the index fell almost 100 points before recovering slightly.



A tourist takes photos in front of a traditional hut constructed as part of a Tharu museum in Shuklaphanta Municipality, Kanchanpur. The hut was constructed three years ago to attract tourists but due to lack of funds, it has been left abandoned.

India proposes to conduct study for navigational satellite programme

GPS-Aided Geo Augmented Navigation is expected to improve air traffic management on the Indian subcontinent.

SANGAM PRASAIN

KATHMANDU, AUG 23

India has formally proposed to Nepal to allow it to conduct a feasibility study for the implementation of its advanced navigational satellite programme—GPS-Aided Geo Augmented Navigation (GAGAN) which is expected to improve air traffic management on the Indian

The Airports Authority of India has provided a draft memorandum of understanding to Nepal seeking its consent to perform the feasibility study in order to take the GAGAN expansion programme forward for mutual benefit, said Rajan Pokhrel, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

The draft was presented on the sidelines of the 56th Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation, Asia and Pacific Regions which ended on Friday in Kathmandu. "We are yet to study the proposal. After that, we will hold discussions with the Foreign Ministry before reaching a final conclusion.

India has been lobbying member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation including Nepal to join its ambitious GAGAN programme, jointly developed by the Airports Authority of Organisation.

India expects GAGAN to put it in the same league as the US, Europe and Japan with their advanced navigation

FOREX

Pound Sterling

Japanese Yen

Chinese Yuan

Qatari Riyal

Saudi Arab Riyal



A view of real-time commercial aircraft flight information on a map.

systems. The system uses Satellite Based Augmentation System receivers during the approach, and is an alternative to the current land-based navigational aids.

Last year, the Airports Authority of India team gave a detailed presentation on the GAGAN system in Kathmandu, and explained to Nepali officials the benefits of being part of tem developed by India.

It has been conducting various workshops for civil aviation representatives from South and

Southeast Asian nations to appraise them of the performance and benefits of GAGAN, and provide them with hands-on experience of the functioning of the system for the last few

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, both domestic and international airlines can use the system. But this will mean extra expens-Satellite Based Augmentation System receivers. The civil aviation body said that they were yet to analyse the

The Indian Directorate General of Civil Aviation has issued a directive mandating GAGAN equipage on all registered Indian aircraft entering the country on or after January 1, 2019.

The Airports Authority of India said that India was among the only four nations in the world to develop and deploy this ingenious technology that removes signal errors from Global Navigation Satellite Systems and provides highly precise navigation signals to users. Other countries that use such a system are the US, the European Union and Japan.

According to reports, flight delays, diversions and cancellations can be minimised by adopting the Satellite Based Augmentation System. Also, it enables direct flight paths and reduces the minimum separation of aircraft, which decreases the workload for pilots and controllers. Hence, air traffic can be significantly minimised, especially in busy airspaces, according to reports.

Pokhrel said that Indian and Nepali authorities had reached an understanding to facilitate 'near-border operation' that envisages helping Nepal for the smooth operation of Gautam Buddha International Airport, which is located close to the Indian border in the western part of

Nepal's second international airoperation by the first quarter of 2020, although no formal date has been announced for the launch of commercial operations

Government implements national strategy for e-commerce sector

The online marketplace is growing steadily despite a late start, but there are no laws to regulate them.

KRISHANA PRASAIN

KATHMANDU AUG 23

The government has put in place a national strategy for e-Commerce, the critical first step in encouraging industries and enterprises to adopt e-commerce, before a relevant law to govern the sector is drafted.

The strategy that was approved by the Cabinet in June has given the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies one year to draft the guidelines and regulations for the e-commerce sector.

The online marketplace is growing steadily despite a late start, but there are no laws to regulate them. Nepal lags in e-commerce because of inadequate information and technology infrastructure.

The strategy has provisioned taking legal action against the e-commerce firm if they are found selling substandard products, charging a high price and not delivering the goods on time. It has also provisioned legal action for selling goods by labelling false details.

The government plans to bring online advertisements into a legal network by enacting a new law, according to the strategy. The strategy also has provision for a refund and return for goods purchased online.

Currently, there is no specific law to regulate e-commerce sector, and consumers often get cheated. According to a government official, the strategy-which will act as an initial guideline—will allow the registration, approval and operation of e-commerce

The new strategy allows websites to be registered as e-commerce businesses under the Company Act.

Rohit Tiwari, the founder of Foodmario, an online platform that connects home cooks to their customers, said there is a dire need of a provision to streamline the registration and operation of e-commerce business in Nepal.

"Due to the lack of guidelines, it's difficult to register an online company in Nepal," he said.

The new strategy also has a privacy provision to protect consumers. It has also suggested a body to listen to consumer complaints and setting up a consumer court.

Yogendra Gauchan, the director-general of the Department of Commerce, Supply and Consumer Protection Management, said they have been enacting guidelines to regulate the e-commerce market. "A series of discussions will be held with concerned bodies and stakeholders before preparing the guidelines.

Prajwol Tamrakar, marketing manager at Sastodeal, said that due to the lack of government policy, even established companies are facing problems as customers' trust and perception towards the e-commerce sector has turned negative due to unhealthy competition.

"There is no proper regulation to govern the industry, and it has been a setback for the growth of e-commerce future in Nepal," he said.

'E-commerce is a tech-based sector. It will be better if the government introduces flexible law and amends it as technology evolves," he said, adding that the government does not have to wait for a year to introduce the guidelines.

Industry insiders and government officials said that the e-commerce market would grow manifold due to a swelling middle class and a surge in the number of internet users.

According to the latest management information system report of Nepal Telecommunications internet penetration in Nepal had reached 64.46 percent of the total population as of June 2019 following a smartphone boom.

There are no exact statistics of the size of the e-commerce business in Nepal, but market insiders estimate annual turnover to be in the neighbourhood of \$25 million.

The government doesn't have the exact data for online marketplaces According to a government official, there are a large number of unregis tered online shops. Daraz, Sastodeal, eSewaPasal, Metro Bhatbhateni Online, Mero Kirana, Foodmario, Foodmandu and Urban Girl are some of the most popular online stores in the country.



Nepal lags in e-commerce because of inadequate information and technology infrastructure.

127.12 140.39 10.78 16.23 31.57 Australian Dolla Malaysian Ringi

27.43

30.65

PRICE PER TOLA **BULLION**



SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

GASOLINE WATCH



Power utility gets go-ahead to chop down 38,545 trees

Forests will be cleared in Rautahat and Bara districts for the planned Hetauda-Dhalkebar-Duhabi transmission line.

PRAHLAD RIJAL KATHMANDU, AUG 23

The Nepal Electricity Authority has received clearance to chop down 38,545 trees on the route of the planned Hetauda-Dhalkebar-Duhabi transmission line in Rautahat and Bara districts. Following the Cabinet's go-ahead,

the project office has moved to mobilise workers to expedite the construction of the much-delayed multimillion-dollar power line. 'We will clear a path through com-

munity and national forests for the power line as soon as the Forest Ministry and regional offices grant a written permit," said Shyam Kumar Yadav, project chief.

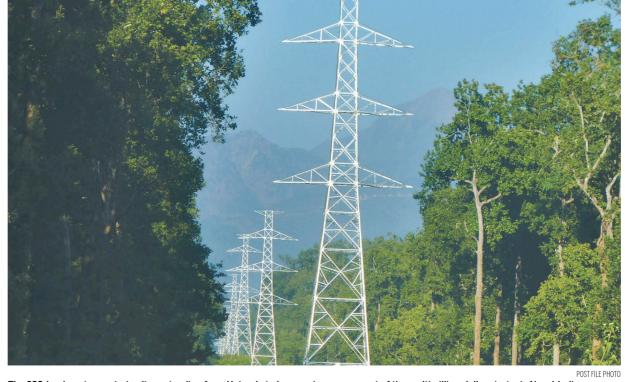
Despite receiving approval in Rautahat and Bara, the project, which has reported 70 percent physical progress till date, is yet to obtain easement rights in Makwanpur and Sarlahi districts.

"Locals have created obstructions to the erection of transmission pylons on private land in Sarlahi while there are similar disputes in Makawanpur," said Yadav. "The alignment of the transmission line in Makwanpur passes through plots occupied by

The power line passes through 11 districts in the southern plains. The electric utility needs to chop down 131,229 trees to construct 792 towers, 319 of them on community forest land and 473 on private plots. As per the project office, it needs

to cut down at least 66,371 trees in Rautahat, Bara and Makawanpur "A report on possible ways to resolve the conflict in Makwanpur is under

consideration at the Energy Ministry;



The 288-km-long transmission line extending from Hetauda to Inaruwa is a component of the multimillion-dollar strategic Nepal-India **Electricity Transmission and Trade Project.**

and once the Cabinet grants our request, the project will be free of easement issues," said Yadav.

The 288-km-long transmission line extending from Hetauda to Inaruwa is a component of the multimillion-dollar strategic Nepal-India Electricity Transmission and Trade Project expected to strengthen Nepal's grid and facilitate the trade of 1,000

megawatts of electricity between the

The project has floundered to the chagrin of donors, including the World Bank and various bilateral funding agencies.

According to an official close to the situation, World Bank officials have said that they will not disburse funds after April 2020 as

the project has crossed the limit

As of July, the World Bank had disbursed \$83.42 million out of the pledged amount of \$99 million in four instalments starting 2011, records show.

Initially, the project was to be completed by 2018. Authorities revised the deadline till 2020 because of natural disasters, implementation delays and dismissal of several contractors undertaking substation projects.

Easement issues have held up the project as the high capacity line requires a wider corridor width of 46 metres The government has also accorded

priority to the transmission line and three 220 kV substations in this fiscal year's budget as the infrastructure will open up new avenues of power trade between Nepal and India. According to the Nepal Electricity

Authority, Inaruwa substation will be a strategic power trade point with two high voltage lines running from Inaruwa to Purnea in Bihar. The power utility has plans to evac-

uate electricity generated by plants in Ilam, Phidim and the Kabeli cluster to Bihar to augment power supply during the monsoon when Nepal's run-ofthe-river schemes operate at full

The government's Transmission System Development Plan has also identified Inaruwa as a significant load centre in the region with an annual demand forecast of around 3,000 megawatts

Currently, a consortium of Siemens and Telmos Electronics is building the substations in Hetauda and Inaruwa. The consortium was awarded the contract in 2018 after the power utility fired Chinese contractor Central China Power Grid in 2017.

According to the World Bank, the project will establish cross-border transmission capacity between India and Nepal of about 1,000 megawatts to facilitate electricity trade between the two countries and increase the supply of electricity in Nepal by sustainable imports of at least 100 megawatts.

ON SATURDAY

>> Continued from page 1

As a tertiary care hospital, Bir

provides all manner of medical

services, from the Out-Patient

Department to residential care

and all major surgeries and proce-

dures. But all of these are provid-

ed either for free or for minimal

Of the 378 beds currently in

operation in Bir's general ward, nearly 90 percent, or 330 beds, are

offered for free to patients. The

hospital only charges patients for

the remaining 10 percent of beds

in the general ward, beds in the

intensive care unit, and cabins,

but even these are available at

rates that are twice as cheap as

the rates of private hospitals. For

comparison, an ICU bed at Bir

Hospital costs Rs 3,000 including

the doctor's fee for a night while

the same bed at a private hospital

would cost Rs 6,000 plus the doc-

Patients who are admitted to

the free beds also get free treat-

ment, including free surgeries.

Those who come to Bir with rec-

ommendation letters from local

representatives and local health

facilities stating an inability to

pay for services even receive med-

icines for free, according to the

Health Ministry's policy of ensur-

ing free treatment for the poor

and marginalised, patients with

disabilities, senior citizens, and

survivors of gender-based vio-

lence. Such patients can receive

treatment from designated hospi-

tals across the country but have to

present a recommendation letter

from the local health facility of

But even for those who don't

comprise the poorest of the poor,

the cost of treatment at Bir

Hospital is nominal, even when

compared to other government

hospitals. While Bir Hospital

charges up to Rs 3,000 for major

surgeries like neurosurgeries and

cardiac surgeries, Tribhuvan

University Teaching Hospital and

Patan Hospital, both public hospi-

tals, charge over Rs 30,000 for

such surgeries. While Teaching

and Patan Hospital charge Rs 600

to 700 for an ultrasound x-ray, Bir

MRIs, a notoriously expensive

procedure, cost just Rs 7,000 at

In addition to the free, or very

cheap, services, patients are pro-

vided with two square meals a

day, along with milk, eggs and

biscuits as snacks, according to

hospital director Ceintury. Even

visitors can get meals, if they

can't provide for themselves, he

Khil Bahadur Thapa Magar was

brought to Bir Hospital from

Sailungshwori in Dolakha in an

ambulance on June 20. Seventy-

eight-year-old Thapa Magar had

an enlarged prostate gland that

needed immediate surgery,

which was unavailable at the local

hospital. But beyond inserting a

catheter to release his urine and

giving him some medicine for

emergency relief, doctors told

Rupa, Thapa Magar's daughter,

that there was little they could do

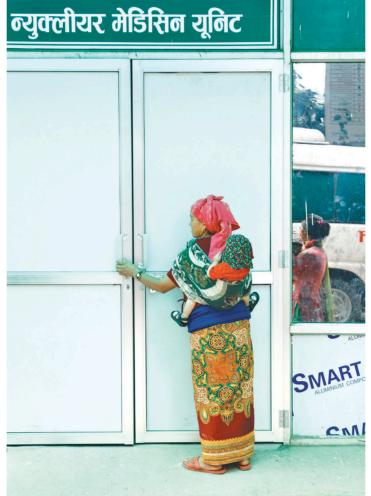
immediately.

A lack of resources

their respective districts.

Bir Hospital is the last hope of the poor, but it is letting them down

Beset by a lack of staff, mismanagement and political interference, the country's oldest hospital has become a shell of its former self.



hire a certain number of staff, all

of whom Bir has to pay the sala-

ries for; all others are hired by the

Health Ministry and paid for

"The ongoing employee adjust-

ment process has prevented us

from carrying out an organisa-

tion and management survey to

increase posts," said Dr Bikas

Devkota, chief of the policy plan-

through the ministry's budget.

Along with a number of other senior specialists, there is cur-

wait for prostate surgery, said

Ceintury, as there are hundreds

of patients in line. Many like

Thapa Magar cannot afford pri-

vate care so they are forced to

wait it out hoping for a surgery

rently no urosurgeon at Bir Hospital. There are also no neurologists, neurosurgeons, plastic surgeons, cardiothoracic surgeons, oncologists, radiotherapists, hepatologists, pulmonologists, endocrinologists, clinical geneticists, and kidney transplant surgeons. In one instance, after pulmonologist Dr Dhungana was promoted and transferred last month to the National Tuberculosis Centre, the hospital hasn't been able to hire his replacement.

"We are now compelled to deny services to patients suffering from respiratory diseases," said Ceintury. Every day, hundreds of patients from across the country reach Bir Hospital for treatment but are then either forced to seek private care or, like Thapa Magar,

wait for months. "Patients from across the country come to Bir Hospital through the national referral system. Health facilities in remote places lack trained manpower, due to which patients are compelled to come to the capital," said Dr Sharad Onta, assistant dean of the Institute of Medicine. "But even here, due to a lack of human resources, they are left with no option than to seek private care, which is several times more expensive than Bir Hospital. Those who cannot afford private care are forced to wait months in the Capital, which often costs

more money than the treatment." It is not just doctors the hospital lacks. It lacks all manners of human resources, from janitorial and administrative staff to nurses. Take nurses-the hospital needs a minimum of 600 nurses, but it currently only has 270, according to Goma Devi Niraula Shrestha, chief of the nursing department. This means that one patients, leaving the hospital with no nurses in the emergency ward at night, said Shrestha

"Often, we are unable to give medicines to our patients on time because of the workload," said Shrestha. "Our nurses have to start giving medicines 30 minutes before the prescribed time and until 30 minutes after.

The hospital could hire more nurses on a contract basis but that would require Bir Hospital to pay them itself through its earnings, which are negligible. Hiring more nurses could lead to an increase in the service charge, which would defeat Bir's purpose as a hospital for the poor, said director Ceintury.

The lack of nurses doesn't just affect medicine intake but also all manner of medical procedures where doctors require trained nurses to help. "There have even been instances of patients dying due to a lack of nurses," said Shrestha. "If you visit the surgical wards or the ENT wards at night, you will see the picture."

Ceintury said that both services and the number of patients have increased several-fold in the last 26 years but additional posts for doctors, nurses and other staff

agrees that there aren't enough staff to cater to the increased pop-

the several new specialised services that are offered at Bir. "I tried to improve the hospital when I was health minister, but I had to give up in the middle after the government changed," said Thapa. "The government should provide a sufficient budget and adequate human resources, as the trust of a lot of people is on Bir

ulation of patients or even man

Hospital." Bir Hospital, as a public entity, is beholden to the government for the hiring of replacement doctors, who must come through either the National Academy of Medical Sciences or the Public Service Commission. NAMS, which runs Bir Hospital, Nursing College and the National Trauma Centre, said that it had drawn the Ministry of Health and Population's attention to Bir's acute shortage of human resources, but they've yet to receive a concrete answer. NAMS can only employee adjustment process is complete, we will work towards addressing the problems."

Critically ill patients are sent to private hospitals due to a lack of beds. Those who are lucky enough to get admitted to Bir often have to visit private laboratories and radiology centres for CT scans and MRIs since those services are either unavailable or booked through for days, said Ceintury.

"Some departments have more than enough manpower, but others are understaffed," said a former director of the hospital who did not wish to be named. "For instance, up to 300 patients visit the urology department for out-patient services but there are only two consultant doctors. Quality care will be compromised when one doctor has to see over 150 patients in three hours. The same doctors have to attend to patients at the wards (including emergency), conduct surgeries and also engage in their academic

Without adequate staff, many of the hospital's resources are underutilised. After the 2015 earthquake, the Japan International Cooperation Agency had constructed a new three-story building which could accommodate a hundred beds. The building, which is for gastroenterology, cardiology and nephrology wards, was handed over to the Ministry of Health and Population first and later to the hospital by the aid agency in May. But three months later, the building has not come into operation due to a lack of staff.

Hospital administration said that it had demanded additional budget and human resources to bring the newly constructed building into operation, but the Health Ministry has yet to

Health Minister Upendra Yadav agreed that there is a problem with Bir Hospital, but said he is

'No matter who the [health] minister is, he can do nothing except deliver speeches," Yadav admitted on July 3 at a programme organised to unveil the country's health policy. "A minister is not going to perform surgeries. We need doctors for that, and we don't have enough doctors."

Yadav admitted that there were significant problems with the country's public health sector but his ministry just didn't have the budget for it

"It is difficult for us to even organise a press meet with this budget," said Yadav.

The government has allocated Rs 68.78 billion in the budget for the upcoming fiscal year for the health sector, 4.48 percent of the total Rs 1.53 trillion budget. A large portion of this will go towards the salaries of staff and on carrying out day-to-day tasks at government hospitals, with little left over for new hires. Bir Hospital's budget for the last fiscal year was Rs 2.1 billion, but the hospital administration says this is not nearly enough.

"Health facilities can hire manpower on a contract basis, but the problem arises when these ers gain experience. That's when private hospitals offer better pay and poach them," said Onta "This problem can be resolved if the government just makes those staff permanent. But that will require a bigger budget, which actually will not be a big burden on the state."

What went wrong? Bir's perennial human resource crunch can largely be attributed to not creating additional posts of doctors, nurses, technical staff for a long time. But there are more pervasive problems at the

country's biggest hospital. As a government-run institution, the hospital suffers from the same problems that plague many other state-run bodies: politicisation and mismanagement, according to Dr Swyam Prakash Pandit, former director of Bir Hospital.

"Despite having dozens of experts, we are unable to provide effective services to the patients when private hospitals provide better services with limited manpower," said Pandit. "The hospital lacks doctors, nurses and other staffers but if all the existing staff fulfill their duties, a lot of patients will benefit. But the issue is that most of the staff are part of employee unions that are very

According to Pandit, hospital employees spend more time taking part in union meetings and other political events than attending to patients and their hospital

But the problem with political interference goes deeper. As it is government operated, Bir Hospital's leadership changes whenever there is a change in government, and the new health minister appoints people they are close to. This has a knock-on effect, where the new leadership then transfers hospital employees based on their political leanings.

"Incumbent office-bearers have even transferred an electrician from the store," said the former director who also asked to speak on condition of anonymity. "An endoscopic assistant has been assigned to work in the procurement unit without ensuring his replacement."

According to the former director, transfers tend to take place into and out of the procurement unit since that is the department that deals directly with tenders and money, providing opportunities for graft.

"Several pieces of equipment that have been purchased for millions of rupees, like intraoperative CT-Scan machines and tomotherapy machines, have been gathering dust as office bearers are not interested in bringing them into operation. They're only interested in the procurement,'

he said. There is also a general apathy from the leadership, according to both current and former hospital officials. The gastro ward's endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography machine has been out of order for three months but the administration hasn't bothered to fix it, despite the fact that Bir is the only public hospital in the country that owns this machine. The hospital's CT-scan, angiogram and mammogram machines, along with numerous other pieces of hi-tech equipment,

Even doctors themselves are engaged in malpractices. Senior doctors holding private clinic hours during their duty hours at Bir have been reported time and again. The hospital administration has attempted to address this problem by instituting electronic attendance, which has reduced absenteeism to some extent but the problem remains.

"Moreover, some doctors as well as other health workers have also been found luring patients to private centres for commission,' said the former director.

The problems with Bir are numerous, but for patients like Laxmi Prasad Niraula, there are few other alternatives. Too poor to afford private care, or even care at moderately priced public hospitals like the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital and Patan Hospital, Niraula has no choice but to wait it out.

"The hospital is a mirror of the country, where the people are able to judge how responsible the government is towards its citizens,' said Thapa.

If that is the case, then Bir Hospital is an example of just how little the state cares about its



Patients from across the country visit Bir Hospital as the national referral centre.

have not been created in conjunction. And the few posts that are available are currently vacant.

"The government has not created additional posts in the health sector for over two decades," said Onta. "The number of patients has increased and the patterns of diseases have changed, but the government has not hired the manpower required to fulfill

those needs and expectations.'

ning and management division at Former health minister Thapa the Health Ministry. "Once the

A severe lack of specialists has meant that patients often end up waiting for days.

'We've been asked to come back every week for a surgery date," said Rupa, who has been visiting the hospital ever since her father was admitted. There is usually a six-month

Bir Hospital's budget for the last fiscal year was Rs 2.1 billion, but the hospital administration says this is not nearly enough.



The wait for some complicated procedures can lengthen into months.

Due to a lack of adequate resources, the hospital is almost always crowded.

Hajar Juni Samma is an exact representation of what's wrong with Nepali filmmaking

There are problems everywhere in Bikash Raj Acharya's latest movie. The biggest being the very foundation of the film—its screenplay.



ere's how most Nepali movies work: there's a likeable protagonist(s) (read hero) who jokes, sings, and dances. His major agenda is to woo the love of his life in the first half of the film. He does this with the help of his best friend, the token comic character whose entire world revolves around the hero and whose sole purpose is to crack a few jokes while communicating the hero's

The interval brings in a major twist and the second half that follows turns abruptly intense. The jolly characters morph into emotional wrecks. We then move towards the climax where the antagonistic force is defeated but only after a rather unnecessary plot twist right before

On the technical side, the cinematographer is more concerned with making things pretty more than serving the story, background scores are flat and fixed for each character—jolly for the comic relief, and brooding for the main lead. Editing choices are safe and redundant: establish every scene with a drone shot, and cut to close-ups for dialogues and expressions. And not to forget the most expensive part of the whole film that needs to take place in exotic locations, the songs: one to introduce the character, one to fall in love, and one to convey heartbreak.

The new film *Hajar Juni Samma*, by Bikash Raj Acharya, the director of five Nai Nabhannu La movies, follows this narrative rigidly, offering nothing new.

There are problems everywhere in the movie. The biggest being the very foundation of the film: its screenplay. In the first scene Avantika (Swastima Khadka) goes to Siddhanta Kshetry's (Aryan Sigdel) guitar shop to change her strings. Avantika notices Siddhanta is coughing excessively and offers advice because she is a medical student. Siddhanta then analyses the guitar and goes on an unsolicited rant about the similarities between boyfriends and guitar-strings, and that she shouldn't be changing either so

Now, besides being severely offensive as the hero mansplains how a woman should live her life, the first scene establishes unique character traits: Avantika has a guitar and is a medical student while Siddhanta is an old pervert who has some throat issues. Ideally, these elements should contribute to the story but here, well it's never mentioned again. Except Siddhanta is a pervert. That one should stand.

Now, the film's story itself isn't that bad. It follows Siddhanta's adopted sons Atharba (Akhilesh Pradhan) and Nishant



(Salon Basnet) who find love letters and gifts from Maya (Priyanka Karki) to their father and confront him about those. Siddhanta reveals that he spent only nine days with Maya and that too some 14 years ago in Sikkim. He also confesses to his sons that he loves her dearly, and that's why he chose to remain single—to honour her memory.

Nishant and Atharba now take it upon themselves to unite the lovers, and go on a journey from Pokhara to Sikkim. On the way they meet Avantika who is also going to Sikkim because her boyfriend and her best friend are getting

From the outside, Bishal Chamling's (also the producer) story sounds like an independent film measuring up to the standards of Piku or Finding Fanny. It has great potential of being an emotional journey—one with exotic locations—that leads to self-discovery of its characters.

But Chamling's efforts have been wasted because the delivery is lazy. So is the screenplay and dialogue, written by director Bikash Raj Acharya and Samipya Timilsina.

The latter is a journalist, therefore the script has excellent details, such as about the Nepali passport acquiring process, Indian Aadhar Cards, how you need permission from the Indian Embassy to take a Nepali number plated car into India, even how an Indian 1000-rupee note is not permissible in Nepal. But even these details can't save a film with such incompetent writing.

Logic too falls apart in many places. For example, the makers expect us to believe that 14 years ago, which is 2005,



the only mode of communication between audience's basic common sense. Siddhant, from Pokhara, and Maya, from The dialogues also are condescending. Sikkim, was letters. They completely The token comic character, Nishant, says forgo the fact that STD (Subscriber Trunk things like, "There are three types of boy-Dialing) and ISD (International Subscriber Dialing) services was still friends for every girl: someone who is after her, a time pass, and marriage mateavailable in almost every grocery store in rial". There is a disgusting fart joke, and Nepal and Sikkim. Had this been a creathen, rhymes like "Breakup Parne ho, Afutira Sarne ho" (Break couples apart tive decision, the audience would have happily suspended disbelief. But no, and pull the girl towards yourself).

The film is marketed as an ensemble featuring Aryan Sigdel, Swastima

Khadka, Sanchita Luitel, Salon Baset, Priyanka Karki, and Akhilesh Pradhan. Now, all of these actors are traditionally good looking, and some of them, especially Swastima is a gem of an actor. But if you restrict their capabilities as an actor, by casting them in such confining roles, then you don't do justice to the actors' talent.

The current crop of commercial Nepali film makers have a certain comfort zone, as is evident with Hajar Juni Samma's Bikash Raj Acharya, and they sadly seem to have zero intentions of leaving this zone. They make films with the sole intention to sustain themselves, they treat films as only business and without understanding the great power of cinema or the responsibility of its social impact.

For things to change, new makers with new ideas and forms of storytelling must be encouraged; otherwise we'll just be stuck with this same form of filmmaking-hajar juni samma-for a thousand

Dixit is a filmmaker, film educator and film campaigner based in Kathmandu.

HAJAR JUNI SAMMA

Actors

Aryan Sigdel, Swastima Khadka, Priyanka Karki, Salon

Story/Producer: Screenplay/Dialogue:

Bikash Raj Acharya Bishal Chamling Bikash Raj Acharya, Samipya Timilsina

How Shah Jahan connects Bhopal, Delhi, and England

this is the result of casual carelessness,

zero creativity, and underestimating the

How two rulers with a common name left a rich history and culture for its people but one is more renowned than the other.

AENA THAKUR

n the heart of Madhya Pradesh's capital city, Bhopal, resides Taj-ul-Masajid which literally translates to the 'crown of mosques'. The mosque was intended to be the largest mosque in the country and was based on the design of Delhi's Jama Masjid. In a town called Woking in England stands a mosque called Shah Jahan.

The common denominator between these three mosques is the name Shah Jahan. The fifth Mughal emperor Shah Jahan built the Jama Masjid in Delhi and the third female ruler of Bhopal, Shah Jahan Begum built Taj-ul-Masajid of Bhopal. The Bhopal's matriarch went a step ahead as she also funded the construction of England's first Mosque in 1889.

The female dynasty of Bhopal started with the death of young Nawab Nazar Muhammad Khan. His 18-year-old wife Qudsia Begum decided that the legacy of her family shall continue and declared her 15-month-old daughter Sikandar as the rightful heir of the state. In 1819, Qudsia Begum became the first Muslim female who defied the veil and became the ruler of Bhopal. Her rule was

legitimised by the British and the clergy.

Both Qudsia (1819-37) and Sikandar (1847-68) were known to be tough rulers who strengthened Bhopal's military and trained themselves to fight. However, it was the third matriarch of Bhopal, Shah Jahan Begum who brought in the period of flourishing art and culture just like her male Mughal namesake.

Unlike Qudsia and Sikandar, Shah Jahan was not known for her tough training for battles. Shah Jahan followed the system of veil and was more interested in literature, poetry, and arts.

Interested in Urdu and Persian poetry, Shah Jahan Begum also offered state pensions to poets like Amir Minai, a contemporary of Mirza Ghalib.

Shah Jahan Begum ordered that a dictionary of select terms in Hindustani, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, English, and Turkish was compiled to facilitate translation of literature between these languages. A poet herself, Shah Jahan Begum also patronised a group of female poets. According to Siobhan Lambert-Hurley's book Muslim women, Reform and Princely Patronage, these gifted women included "Hasanara Begam 'Namkeen,' author of a diwan and two prose publications, Munawwar Jahan Begam and

Musharraf Jahan Begam, the daughters of Nawab Mustafa Khan 'Shefta,' and several others.

In her book, Siobhan Lambert-Hurley also mentions, "Shah Jahan's interest in this area was so great that she charged a male poet at her court, Abul Qasim 'Muhtasham', to devote himself to collecting an anthology of female poets writing in Persian. Entitled Akhtar-i-taban, it publicised the work of 81 poetesses when it was printed in Bhopal in 1881 in dedication to the ruling Begam.'

Her ambitions for grand architecture is evident from the fact that her daughter Sultan Begum in her biography mentioned that she has lost count of the number of palaces and buildings, her mother made. Some of the prominent buildings that still remain are Taj-ul-Masajid, Taj Mahal, Ali Manzil, and Benazir.

Unlike Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan's Taj Mahal which is a tomb, Bhopal's Taj Mahal was a palace for the Begum. Shah Jahan Begum also helped orientalist and scholar Dr Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner in constructing England's first mosque which is also called the Shah Jahan mosque.

The similarities do not stop here. Just like the

Mughal emperor built a planned city named Shahjahanabad, the Begum too built a neighbourhood with the same name. Hurley mentions in her book, "Shah Jahan was also responsible for building an entirely new neighbourhood of homes and offices within her capital that was predictably named Shahjahanabad. Unlike the version at Delhi, however, it was laid out on a uniform plan in-keeping with the latest ideas of town planning in Britain.'

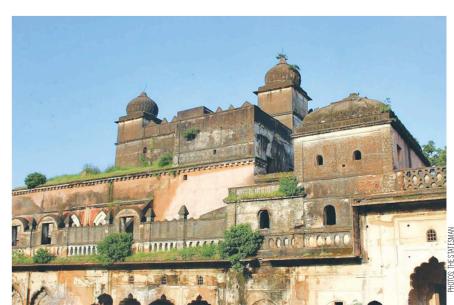
Shah Jahan Begum of Bhopal encouraged female participation in education, religion, and culture. She was responsible for setting up institutions for female education, she reserved areas in mosques for veiled women to pray on special occasions, she also constructed a Pakka bazaar exclusively for women.

Shah Jahan Begum's daughter Sultan Jahan Begum was the last Begum of Bhopal whose reign ended in 1926. The reign of female rulers in Bhopal broke stereotypes and brought in various reforms in the princely state. Even though women still continue to fight for their rights it should not be forgotten that the Begums did assert their authority in the 19th century and it can be done again.

-©2019 The Statesman



Interested in Urdu and Persian poetry, Shah Jahan Begum offered state pensions to poets like Amir Minai.



EXPRESSION



A large Iceberg floats away as the sun sets near

Summer this year is hitting Greenland hard with record-shattering heat and extreme melt.



NYU student researchers sit on top of a rock overlooking the Helheim glacier in Greenland. Summer 2019 is hitting the island hard with record-shattering heat and extreme melt.



Large Icebergs float away as the sun rises near Kulusuk, Greenland.



A boat navigates at night next to large icebergs in eastern Greenland. Greenland's ice has been melting for more than 20 years.

TEXT: SETH BORENSTEIN PHOTOS: FELIPE DANA

his is where Earth's refrigerator door is left open, where glaciers dwindle and seas begin to rise.

New York University air and ocean scientist David Holland, who is tracking what's happening in Greenland from both above and below, calls it "the end of the planet." He is referring to geography more than the future. Yet in many ways this

The ice, Holland is standing on, is thousands of years old. It will be gone within a year or two, adding yet more water to rising seas worldwide.

place is where the planet's warmer and watery future is being written.

Summer this year is hitting Greenland hard with record-shattering heat and extreme melt. By the end of the summer, about 440 billion tons (400 billion metric tons) of ice—maybe more—will have melted or calved off Greenland's giant ice sheet, scientists estimate. That's enough water to flood Pennsylvania or the country of Greece

about a foot (35 centimetres) deep.

And one of the places hit hardest this hot Greenland summer is here on the southeastern edge of the giant frozen island: Helheim, one of Greenland's fastest-retreating glaciers, has shrunk about 6 miles (10 kilometres) since scientists came here

Several scientists, such as NASA oceanographer Josh Willis, who is also in Greenland, studying melting ice from above, said what's happening is a combination of man-made climate change and natural but weird weather patterns. Glaciers here do shrink in the summer and grow in the winter, but nothing like this year.

Summit Station, a research camp nearly 2 miles high (3,200 meters) and far north, warmed to above freezing twice this year for a record total of 16.5 hours. Before this year, that station was above zero for only 6.5 hours in 2012, once in 1889 and also in the Middle Ages.

This year is coming near but not quite passing the extreme summer of 2012—Greenland's worst year in modern history for melting, scientists report

At Helheim, the ice, snow and water seem to go on and on, sandwiched by bare dirt mountains that now show no signs of ice but get covered in the winter. The only thing that gives a sense of scale is the helicopter carrying Holland and his team. It's dwarfed by the landscape, an almost imperceptible red speck against the ice cliffs where Helheim stops and its remnants begin.

-Associated Press



Early morning fog shrouds homes in Kulusuk, Greenland. Scientists are hard at work in Greenland, trying to understand the alarmingly rapid melting of the ice.



Boys carry plastic bags full of fish in Kulusuk, Greenland. The winter that used to last as long as 10 months can now be as short as five months.



Crosses stand in a cemetery as an iceberg floats in the distance during a foggy morning in Kulusuk, Greenland.

Notes from the underground

People like Tatai, capable of loving, appeared unreal to her. Like a mask would someday come off and a disaster would unfold.



PRATEEBHA TULADHAR

he went back to reading her book while the ice-cubes refused to melt in the November chill. But she didn't really want to read the book she was holding. She wondered if she should pick a conversation with the woman who was sitting at the next table. But it had been ages—or so it seemed to her—since she had last found the courage to speak to a stranger.

She continued to stare at the letters on the page before her. The ice cubes stayed intact. She reached out for the cold glass of tea, mint and lemon, and held it in her hands briefly. Maybe the ice cubes would melt. The clammy fingers, the nervous mouth—this wasn't who she had always been.

It was 2019 when her job stopped making sense to her. She carried the senselessness she felt within around her, everywhere. Mere gestures began to sound an alarm inside her head sometimes. Sometimes, it would be something as simple as the way someone cut their food. At restaurants, she always felt like the voices around her grew louder and louder. Or the free background score got louder and louder even when she asked the waiters to turn the volume down. She couldn't stand the noise.

Every morning when he opened the door to take the trash out, he did a thing with his leg at the door that gave her a small headache. Everything bothered her.

•••

Tatai bent down to pick up the magazine that had fallen off the coffee table. Prachinta noticed that deep dimples formed on the small of her back as the white shirt covering her torso slipped over during the movement. Tatai picked up the magazine, sat down and started talking about what rice meant to the region. "All Asians wake up to rice," she said. "At least East Asians." How can you wake up to something you have no physical or financial control over, Prachinta wanted to ask her. But she didn't. She only thought of the dimples on the small of her back, while lingering her gaze on the ones on Tatai's cheeks. They dug deep into her cheeks as she spoke, and were

Prachinta's bladder felt bloated. She couldn't tell if it was the strange concoction she had been made to drink or her surgery. But she decided she was just going to stay in bed and wait to go until Tatai left. She did not want her to see that her legs needed waxing. And that under the hospital robe

released as though in punctuation

as she talked without interrup-

was just a person in need for physical care. She didn't want Tatai to see that she would never be her—the woman with deep dimples, high spirit, kind eyes.

She had always felt inadequate. She lacked Tatai's selflessness, her giving streak and her complacence. People like Tatai, capable of loving, appeared unreal to her. Like a mask would someday come off and a disaster would unfold.

But there would always be the

rain to make up for every disaster. The rain, ushering in winter, fell swiftly. It was almost lyrical the way it created two different strains of music as it landed on the backyard and the garden in front of the house. It was on rainy nights that she would find the inspiration to sit up, wade through words on the ether, cling to posts by strangers in some unknown corner of the word. She moved through comments, micro

essays, stray thoughts:
"I decided to leave the rest of

Some photos made way for a brief mental

journey.

the pages blank on my diary because you've run out of things to say to me."

The rain lasted all night.
When she woke up, the smell of petrichor had settled and given way to that of the rising heat of the sun. She reached out for her phone first thing, like she always did. There were photos on her Instagram feed. Faces strewn with innocence and confusion. There were no words that spoke to her directly, nothing written for her. But there were a couple of photos that spoke to her from their darkness and their light

Some photos made way for a brief mental journey. Then she stumbled upon the face of a girl she used to know—a face rimmed with confusion around innocence. This girl used to be in her class. She had very pale skin, fine brown hair. Her eyes were light brown and her lips the colour of skin. Prachinta could not decide if a

face as lifeless could have a description. She always wanted to add colour to the girl's memory. She wanted to add fierce colours to her description. But she couldn't. Her memory of the girl was feeble. But she could still recall how the girl always spoke with a lilt as though she was afraid of something, even when her voice seemed to laugh. The girl was called Shamrock. One of her grandfathers had come from England during the British colonial rule of India and never left.

Every time Prachinta thought of Shamrock, she was washed over by an intense urge to paint, to draw or find a way to describe her.

One afternoon, during the final term, Rosy and Prachinta had spent hours in the Oval garden, searching among clovers. "I want a Shamrock!" they repeated during the search. It was as though all they needed was to say the word and they would pass the exams. Magic. The word did something to their teeth and lips when they spoke it, leaving a light hoarse strength at the bottom of their throats. Like the hope from a four-dimensional clove. So like Shamrock's coy smile.

•••

Years later, sitting at a restaurant with her book open, she could only remember fragments of the past. She drank some more of the iced tea and then walked out of the restaurant. A cold breeze had started to blow. The sky was overcast. She flicked open her umbrella and started walking. There was nowhere she was going.

Tuladhar lives in a village in Asia, where everything desirable is within an imaginary walking distance. She tweets @prateeish.

P for protocol

When it comes to our folks serving in the Indian Army, our government should ask the Indians if they are going to war with Pakistan anytime soon.

GUFFADI

think it's time our politicians learn a thing or two about protocol when it comes to meeting officials from foreign countries. Our netas should also learn a thing or two about the order of precedence so that they would not look like fools. With due respect to government folks from across the border but it's about time we all saved money by sending emails and using social media to communicate with each other rather than wasting taxpayers money by visiting Kathmandu or Delhi for a few hours of suffauff

Recently, we had the RAW chief in town meeting our former Prime Monsters and netas. Let us not blame the Desis all the time. Our netas and civil servants are mostly shameless sons of seedless cucumbers who will bend backwards or anyway possible to secure educational scholarships, free medical treatment and other freebies from India whenever possible. I think it's time our netas and civil servants show at least an ounce of class and not beg for free lunch from our chimekis. We blame thousands of Indian beggars in our town for making our city look bad but forget about thousands of our own thulo mancheys begging for everything else

from the Desis.

The media, as usual, made it quite a big issue when the RAW chief came calling but who really cares about the media? Our politicians, civil servants and contractors do not care what our patrakars think about them. They know very well they can have it their way and nobody can do anything about it. After all, this is the land where small fishes get arrested for corruption whereas the big sharks take their money to tax havens abroad. Just look at Rabi. The man is in custody for the death of one of his former colleague.

Yes, the police have to carry out an investigation and hopefully, we will come to a closure and we will know what really happened but it's really tough for our media wallahs these days. Instead of writing the truth without fear or favour, our government wants our patrakars to either shut up and write nothing or face the music if they write about what's wrong with our netas and the government.

And this is also the land of conspiracy theories and us Nepalis are all busy watching YouTube videos, Facebook feeds and what not all related to Rabi. Well, Oli



try to divert the matter to Rhinos and asked the world to start calling them Gaidas instead but it did not go viral as expected. Oli Ba is once again in Singapore and we wish him well. Get well soon and yes, let MaKuNe and Jhallu Baba share the same chair if that makes both of them happy. Just build a bigger chair to fit the two together in the next meeting if possible.

This time around, we had the Indian External Subrahmanyam Jaishankar coming to Kathmandu for some chiya and biskoot with our netas. It's okay with such foreign officials meeting with their counterparts but why should our PM and President waste their own time trying to entertain every foreign official who happen to visit our land? If the President of India comes to town then our Madame President should offer some tea. The same goes for Modi if he comes to town. But we can't have everyone from across the border show up in the capital and get to do a photo-op with our head of state. Maybe, Modi Jaishankar was once the Foreign Secretary himself and knows how his ministry works inside and out. will be kind enough to meet and greet all of our government officials when they show up in Delhi.

There is nothing wrong with our former Prime Monsters catching up with Jaishankar but instead of going to his hotel room for some guffsuff, it would have been better if Jaishankar had paid the visits to Dr Saheb's and Deuba's residences. Jaishankar is not a clown—like most of our netas and civil servants. The Indians do their homework very well and do what is best for their country's interest whereas our civil servants and netas do what is best for their pockets while the country can go down the drain.

Jaishankar was once the Foreign Secretary himself and knows how his ministry works inside and out. He last came to our land a few years ago to tell our netas that our constitution was not right and needed some fix-ups. Our netas said no and went ahead and then we had the blockade gift from the Desis. Maybe, our Foreign Minister can learn a thing or two from Jaishankar. After all, the man

serving in the Indian Army, our government should ask the Indians that if they go to war with Pakistan anytime soon then please do not send our brothers to fight at their borders.

served as Ambassador to China for more than four years and was the Desi

I think we should ask Jaishankar to give a class to our civil servants and netas

how we too can improve economic, trade and cultural relations with both China

and India. And when it comes to our folks

Ambassador to the US as well.

It's about time India acknowledged the fact that our people have died in numerous wars with Pakistan fighting for India to protect their land and its people. So, it's about time Indian government officials stop bragging about billions of rupees India give us every year to help us out here and there. We have forty thousands of our folks serving in the Indian Army and thousands have died fighting for India. Let somebody do the math. Should India be grateful for Nepali sons fighting for them or should we be grateful for a few ambulances, scholarships and other

should be grateful we have each other.
Our folks serve in the British and Indian armies and the Singapore Police Force. And the folks who have served before and even now have really not gotten the respect they deserve. It's time Oli and his government scrapped the tripartite agreement with the British and Indian government concerning military

development projects? I think we both

Don't worry about a few hundreds who may not get the opportunity to earn a few extra pounds or Singapore dollar or thousands who could earn Indian Rupees if they join the Indian Army. If our government had any spine and respect for the History of the Gurkhas then we should let the UN wallahs know as well that either they hire thousands of Nepalis as permanent peacekeeping force or we will leave the UN peacekeeping mission as well. It's time we also dole out our own set of demands to the world instead of everybody coming to us with their list of demands. And Oli has started it all with this 'It's Gaida, not Rhino' campaign. You may either like or not like him but he is as

Guffadi is a grumpy old man who blogs at guffadi. blogspot.com. You may contact him at maguffadi@gmail.com.

••••

Monomyths and meany-myths of Kathmandu

Peter J Karthak's experimental Kathmandruids challenges the conventional method of telling a story.



BIBEK ADHIKARI

short story of eleven thousand word—even though short stories are mostly below that word limit—gets turned into a humongous book: *Kathmandruids*, Peter J Karthak's latest delivery, which is half-fiction, half-nonfiction.

Citing Gao Xingjian in the epigraph, Karthak presents his take on how novels should work, as if to justify his decision to merge the worlds of fiction and nonfiction. He writes that fiction is, in fact, made up of "travel notes, moralistic ramblings, feelings, jottings, unrhetorical discussions, unfable-like fables, some folk songs, your own legend-like nonsense"—all put together in a single bowl, or rather violently yoked together in a glamorous fashion. Yet, the very entropy of ideas makes the novel a supremely experimental one.

Karthak's latest novel relies heavily upon its structure. Written in twenty parts with five Nepal Mandalas—polemical writings about the history of the country and its people—the book draws back its influence upon the circular journey of a monomyth, the archetypal hero. The hero goes on an adventure, struggles against many decisive disasters, is victorious, and returns home transformed. That is the basic premise of the 1871's Joseph Campbell's concept of a monomyth, which was heavily influ-Cari Jung's view of myth and collective unconsciousness. Contrasting that idea of the monomyths, meanymyths (a neologistic term) takes on minor characters, mostly flat and static, who do not learn any valuable lessons throughout the hero's journey, nonetheless act as foils, deepening the former's character traits and dimensions.

The four major monomyths of the novel, *Kathmandruids*, are Birendra Bahadur Shahi, Delight Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah-Rana, Purushottam Prasad Pundit, and Maina Devi Pundit. Birendra is the supreme godfather of Nepal, the so-called social equaliser, who has a knack for bypassing laws and minting money out of his criminal deeds. Delight is the founder principal of Delight Academy Nepal (DAN), and she pulls together all the acts in the

Purushottam, the antagonist, on the other hand, is the secretary of the then His Majesty's Government of Nepal, who keeps freeloading on the spoils of his official positions. His wife, Maina, likewise, always grubs on and gulps down the very spoils brought home by her husband. All these principal characters go on a cyclical journey, at times supporting one another, at others challenging and tempting each other. They all hit rock bottom, go through a metaphorical abyss (death and rebirth) and come out of it transformed, even atoned. Towards the end of the book, they seem to bring the 'gift of goodness' to the world, thus completing a full cycle.

The novel can be compared to Homer's *Odyssey* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Both these epics begin with the start of the hero's journey of adventure. *Kathmandruids*, however, begins at the very beginning, with one of the main characters, Birendra, pooping. What follows afterward is several pages of a sermon on peeing and pooping. Since the novel begins with toiletry, it reads like a mock-epic, scorning at the convention. The scatological chapter then leads to the character's daily routine—from jogging to love-making. The readers also get to learn about the daily habits of the other three prime characters. But the palpable joy of being transported to the realm of fiction gets interrupted by seminal articles—of the Nepali mandalas—and the reader might be left more about the fictional world than dwell in the boulevards of scholarly articles.

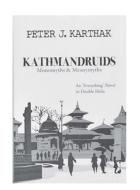
There's one of the reasons why the author chooses the work to be called a double-helical novel. The two strands of fiction and non-fiction stand as a pair of parallel helices intertwined about a common axis-the backdrop of Kathmandu valley. This beautiful yet uncommon imagery combines the made-up world and its characters to the fact and factoids about the landscape and its real people. The non-fiction part, however, tries too hard to be pedantic at times. Narrated by an alter-egomouthpiece, Swarna Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana (once an A-class Rana, now a spiritual seeker, a yogi, a sanyasi, who travels around the world, preaching peace and love), these

chapters on the history of Kathmandu valley tells a lot, but shows very little. The essays range from commentaries on the Mahabharata to the Medieval Monomyths of Asta Aju of Tham Bahil to Araniko of Patan to the Major Modern Monomyths like Ram Bahadur Limbu, the first Nepali to win a Victoria Cross.

The question this book raises is: can fiction and nonfiction in Kathmandruids merge? Unlike Rushdie's Enchantress of Florence, they look like separate works of art. Apart from the fact that the narrator appears in one of the Nepal Mandalas when he submits his manuscript to Swarna Rana, there is no strong link between the two strands. As prophesied by the author in Part 19 of the novel, they do not coalesce; they just disappear. That means one can read the fiction section of the book separately, or they can read the non-fiction first, and then go back to fiction afterward. This kind of loose connection makes the book suitable for multiple

readings.

One of the major flaws in the narrative arc of the double-helical novel, however, is the author's penchant for repetition. The descriptive passages about the four major monomyths are repeated to such an extent that readers cannot help but yawn at such clumsy redundancy. Unlike the author's proclamation that "the repeating comes with fresh and timely contexts," they add very little to the story. Another major flaw can be traced back to the age-



KATHMANDRUIDS

Author: Peter J Karthak Publisher: Book-Hill Publication Price: Rs 599 old axiom of writing: show, don't tell. The writer seems to be telling a lot of stories beforehand rather than showing them to the readers in vivid detail. At one point, the readers may even feel that the writer is guiding them event by event. The problem of enumeration can be another major flaw. Instead of using the standard three parts or four parts list, the writer uses a paragraph-long list, enumerating all the possible options, leaving little room for the readers to ponder over.

Alliteration seems to be writ-

er's forte. From the name of the characters to the name of the chapters, Karthak enjoys playing with language. His mastery over the English language makes him a stylist of some sort. The way he writes, paying special attention to the sounds and rhythm, is what makes the book an interesting read. Another positive (or could it be negative?) quality about the book is that it is charged with such libidinal energy that one cannot ignore it while reading. Birendra, the protagonist, always keeps thinking about sex. Maina and her kitty-party partners also talk about sex quite openly, describing their husbands' penises and their fascination with sextoys without any hesitation. Even the descriptive part of the book is cloaked under the shadow of sexual feelings and misgivings. For the narrator, radishes are like "elephants' phalluses" while cabbages are "huge as Jayne Mansfield's breasts." This burst of sensual details adds layers and

If one can ignore the amount of repetition and the problem of enumeration, the fictional world of Kathmandruids is an enjoyable one. If one is looking for a book that provides a snapshot of the history of Kathmandu valley, the non-fictional part of Kathmandruids is the right choice. But if one is looking for a rich fictional experience coupled with seminal factoids, one might be at a loss. No matter the errors, the 'everything novel' is a thought-provoking experimental yarn that challenges the conventional and orthodox method of telling a story that is so very prevalent in the Nepali fictional

Adhikari is a student of literature at Tribhuvan University. He tweets @bibek_writes.

'Realism taught me how to express myself'

Bairagi Kaila on the new age of Nepali literature and his best picks.

Til Bikram Nembang, also known as Bairagi Kaila, is one of the most revered poets in contemporary Nepali literature. He was recently felicitated with the Jagdamba Shree Award 2076 for his contribution in Nepali literature. In 1963, along with his stalwart literary contemporaries, Bairagi Kaila started a literary movement called 'Tesro Aayam', with Indra Bahadur Rai and Ishwar Ballav. He also served as a chancellor for the Nepal Academy in 2009 until 2013. In this interview with the Post's Alisha Sijapati, 80-year-old Bairagi Kaila shares some of the best books he's read and recalls the beginning of his seven-decade long poetic journey. Excerpts:

How did you first come to love books?

In the 50s I was sent to Darjeeling for my education where I developed a reading habit and my literary interest got nurtured. In the beginning, my knowledge was only limited to reading and writing poems, but when I grew a little older, my interest developed in reading novels.

I was always curious and interested in increasing my creative knowledge. I liked reading prose as well as poetry in different languages. It was after 1955 when my poems were printed in magazines, journals and papers that I wanted to write more

What was the last book you read and did you like it? What would you recommend as a must read?

It's been a while since I have read anything of others. I have only been re-reading and revising my old write-ups and poems. I cannot focus on my work and others simultaneously; maybe the age has kicked in too.

But if I have to recommend, I have liked reading Laxmi Prasad Devkota's poems, notably Muna Madan. I loved reading prose and dramas written by Balkrishna Sama. I like Bengali writers—Sharat Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore and English poets William Wordsworth and TS Eliot.

How do you compare Nepali literature then to now?

Everything has its time. Those were the days of romanticism. Our feet were never on the ground; we were flying without wings. During that time, it was easy to figure out who were the writers and poets. People used to be amazed by us, and similarly, we used to be amazed by them. The poets always looked sad, desperate to evoke creativity in their work through their emotions. However, society changed. Everything is different now.

How did the romanticism period end for you?

A lot happened in the world, and maybe those experiences changed the way writers expressed themselves too. All of us realised that we had to face reality one day. For how long could romanticism last when there was so much of discrimination and social



injustice happening around the world? We had to express ourselves, revolt against such

unfair rules, through our work.
When I started out, I, and other writers of our time, either wrote on patriotism or about love. After that, I slowly moved away from romanticism and towards realism. Realism taught me how to express myself, how to be careful with the language I use, what style should I use, and how to structure my sentences. I learnt to be expressive through crisp

Most importantly, post-romanticism and modernism came in and changed all our ideologies. It was then that we realised that change is inevitable.

Why do you think reading and writing is essential?

The reason I haven't been able to write is that I hardly get to read now. If you read more, you write more, and that improves your skills. Right now, I write and read, but just my own work. I have been trying to give my work a final touch. That is why I haven't been able to catch up with new books and new 'literature'. I don't know new things so I can't write new poems or prose.

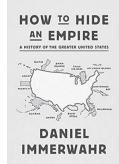
Who inspires your writing?

I believe TS Eliott and John Keats influenced me. In terms of Nepali writers, Devkota and Sama inspired me to write more. Madhav Prasad Ghimire inspired me to make my words powerful, short and crisp.

Back then, there was hardly any medium for communication and my contemporaries and I often gathered in New Road's Peepal Bot. If it weren't for the usual chiya-paan and constant discourse session, I wouldn't have evolved.

Over the years, I realised it is fun to read others' work and get inspired from them but there comes a time when one needs to draw a line between drawing inspiration from others and being true to yourself.

NEW RELEASES | BEST-SELLERS



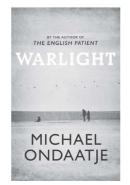
How to Hide an Empire Author: Daniel Immerwahr Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Price: Rs 1,278

In *How to Hide an Empire*, Daniel Immerwahr attempts to show the American history in new light by revealing its forgotten episodes. With surprising facts and good humour the book is nothing but engaging. The book is driven by an original conception of what empire and globalisation mean today making it a compulsively readable work of history.



Aristotle's Way Author: Edith Hall Publisher: Penguin press Price: Rs 798

Aristotle's Way is a handbook to Aristotle's timeless teachings. In modern language and expert writing, Edith Hall, not only analyses and summarises his teaching but also shows how ancient thinking is precisely what we need today. It explores themes such as happiness, realising our full potential, and becoming the best version of ourselves.



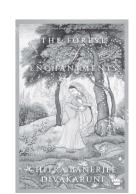
Warlight
Author: Michael Ondaatje
Publisher: Random House LLC
Price: Rs 958

With a mysterious narrative and intriguing plot *Warlight* is a vivid, thrilling novel of violence and love, intrigue and desire. Set in 1945, in the backdrop of London, the book tells a dramatic and mesmerising story of two teenagers. It narrates the journey of the protagonist through reality, recollection, and imagination.

Fiction

- 1. The Forest of Enchantments by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
- 2. Reaper at the Gates by Sabaa Tahir
- 3. The House with Chicken Legs
- by Sophie Anderson

 4. Ambiguity Machines: And Other
 Stories by Vandana Singh
- The Cut Out Girl: A Story of War and Family, Lost and Found by Bart van Es



THE GREAT Secon MARCH Decades of India's Elections DEMOCRACY S.Y. Quraishi

Non-Fiction

- The Great March of Democracy Edited by S Y Quraishi
- 2. The Russia Hoax: The Illicit Scheme to Clear Hillary Clinton and Frame Donald Trump by Gregg Jarrett
- The Nonviolent Struggle for Indian Freedom, 1905-19 by David Hardiman
- On Drinking by Charles Bukowski
 The Transformative Constitution: A

Radical Biography in Nine Acts by Gautam Bhatia

UN, France raise concern over Amazon wildfires 'crisis'

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro blasted his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron as having a 'colonialist mentality' for rallying G-7 countries to address wildfires.

GIOVANNA FLEITAS & JORGE SVARTZMAN

aris and the United Nations called Thursday for the protection of the fire-plagued Amazon rainforest as Brazil's rightwing president accused his French counterpart of having a "colonialist mentality" over the issue.

Official figures show nearly 73,000 forest fires were recorded in Brazil in the first eight months of the year—the highest number for any year since 2013. Most were in the Amazon.

The extent of the area damaged by fires has yet to be determined, but smoke has choked Sao Paulo and several other Brazilian cities in the past week.

UN chief Antonio Guterres said he was "deeply concerned" by the fires.

"In the midst of the global climate crisis, we cannot afford more damage to a major source of oxygen and biodiversity," he said on Twitter.

"The Amazon must be protected."

France's President Emmanuel Macron said the wildfires were "an international crisis" and called on the globe's most industrialized nations to address it at their summit this weekend.

"Our house is on fire. Literally. The Amazon, the lung of our planet which produces 20 percent of our oxygen is burning," Macron said on Twitter.

"It is an international crisis. Members of the G7, let's talk in two days about this emergency."

That did not sit well with Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro.

"The French president's suggestion that Amazon issues be discussed at the G-7 without participation by the countries in the region evokes a colonialist mentality that is out of place in the 21st century," Bolsonaro wrote on Twitter

Neighbouring Peru, which contains much of the Amazon basin, announced it was "on alert" for wildfires spreading from the rainforest in Brazil and Bolivia.

Paraguay and Bolivia are battling separate wildfires that have devastated large areas of their rainforests.

Rapid deforestation

Environmental specialists say the fires have accompanied a rapid rate of deforestation in the Amazon region, which in July quadrupled compared to the same month in 2018, according to data from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE).

Bolsonaro instead attributes the fires to increased drought, and accuses environmental groups and NGOs of whipping up an "environmental psychosis" to harm Brazil's economic interests.

"This environmental psychosis lets you do nothing," the president lamented, adding that it was hampering the country's development.

"I don't want to finish the environment, I want to save Brazil," said Bolsonaro, a climate change sceptic who had advocated opening up tribal lands and protected areas to farming and mining interests since assuming office in January.

Bolsonaro's comments come as Brazil hosts a UN regional meeting on climate change in the northeastern city of Salvador ahead of December's summit in

A senior Brazilian official defended Brazil's environmental policy at the conference and said it complied with the Paris Agreement against global warming.

Smoke billows during a fire in an area of the Amazon rainforest near Humaita, Amazonas State, Brazil.

"We are teaching the world how to produce. In only 29 percent of our territory we produce food for everyone.

"Worldwide, the average land use for agriculture exceeds 50 percent—we only use 29 percent," said Roberto Castelo, an environment ministry official who was roundly booed by greens at the conference.

Not 'Captain Nero'

"I do not defend the burnings, because there always was and always will be burnings. Unfortunately, this has always happened in the Amazon," Bolsonaro said, referring to dry season, land-clearing

"But accusing me of being a Captain Nero setting fire to things is irresponsible. It is campaigning against Brazil," the president told reporters outside his Brasilia residence.

The reference to Captain Nero appeared to be to the Roman emperor said to have fiddled while Rome burned. Bolsonaro is a former army captain.

Forest fires tend to intensify during the dry season, which usually ends in late October or early November, as land is cleared to make way for crops or grazing.

"Just think, if the world begins imposing trade barriers, our agribusiness will fall, we will start to go backwards, the economy will start to get worse—your life, the lives of newspaper editors, television owners, the lives of all Brazilians will be complicated, without exception. The press is committing suicide," Bolsonaro said.

Environmental pariah

However, there are signs of growing concern from within the powerful agribusiness sector over Bolsonaro's environmental isolationism.

The governors of Brazil's Amazon states have also criticized the government

for recent decisions by Germany and Norway to suspend Amazon aid projects.

"This week two big German media outlets expressed the idea that it was time to start boycotting Brazilian products. It's only a matter of time," Marcello Brito, head of the Brazilian Agribusiness Association, told the Valor daily.

"The question is, who is interested in transforming Brazil into an environmental pariah," he asked.

"We cannot change the president of the republic. What our sector can do is work, in a unified way, to try to reverse the damage as much as possible."

Five things to know about the

The Amazon is the largest tropical forest in the world, covering 5.5 million square kilometres (2.1 million square miles), an ecological treasure threatened by escalating deforestation and forest fires.

Sanctuary of biodiversity

Amazon

The Amazon basin, spanning 7.4 million square kilometres, covers nearly 40 percent of Latin America and is spread across nine countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela. About 60 percent of it is in Brazil.

The Amazon forest, of which 2.1 million sq km are protected zones, is home to a biodiversity sanctuary that is unique in the world.

A quarter of the Earth's species are found there, namely 30,000 types of plants, 2,500 fish, 1,500 birds, 500 mammals, 550 reptiles and 2.5 million insects, according to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty

Organization (ACTO).

In the past 20 years, 2,200 new species of plants and vertebrates have been discovered there.

Lungs of the earth

The Amazon contains a third of the world's primary forests and, via the Amazon River and its tributaries, provides 20 percent of the Earth's unfrozen fresh water.

The Amazon is the world's largest river and—by some accounts since new research was carried out in 2007—the longest, running for up to 6,900 kilometres (4,287 miles).

The forest acts as a carbon sink, absorbing more CO2 than it emits while releasing oxygen, and stocking 90 to 140 billion tonnes of CO2, which helps regulate worldwide global warming, according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

But deforestation is reducing this capacity for absorbing CO2.

420 tribes

The Amazon has been inhabited for at least 11,000 years and today counts 34 million people, of whom two-thirds live in cities. Nearly three million are Indians who are members of some 420 different tribes, around 60 of which live in total isolation, according to ACTO. The Amazon's Indians speak 86 languages and 650 dialects.

The largest Amazon tribe is the Tikuna, counting some 40,000 members who live in Brazil, Peru and Colombia, according to Survival International.

Brazilian Indian chief from the Kayapo tribe, Raoni Metuktire, is the leading campaigner in the campaign against deforestation in the Amazon and has travelled the world for three decades calling for the preservation of the forest and its indigenous population.

Manaus, the Amazon 'capital'

Manaus is the capital of Amazonas state, the largest in Brazil and spanning 1.5 million km2.

Founded by the Portuguese in 1669 on the banks of the Rio Negro, near its con-

fluence with the Amazon River, Manaus has a population of 1.8 million.

After fast expansion at the end of the 19th century due to the rubber trade, the city went into major decline until the creation of a free trade zone in 1967.

Manaus now lives mainly off its industrial sector, importing spare parts and exporting end products, notably electronic equipment.

After Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Manaus is Brazil's third main economic hub.

Massive deforestation

Almost 20 percent of the Amazon forest has disappeared in the last half-century, according to the WWF, and this is accelerating.

Since Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro took power in at the start of 2019, the rate of deforestation by July was nearly four times higher than a year earlier, according to a satellite system known as DETER, which is used by the National Institute for Space Research (INPE).

According to the INPE, which tracks clear-cutting of the rainforest, around 2,254 km2 of the Amazon forest were cleared in July, a spike of 278 percent from a year ago.

The main causes of deforestation are soya and livestock farming, the construction of hydroelectric dams and roads, the mining industry and forest fires.

As well as its rich biodiversity, the Amazon is rich in minerals resources including gold, copper, tantalum, iron ore, nickel and manganese.

Sections of the forest are now being devoured by fires.

INPE figures show nearly 73,000 forest fires were recorded in Brazil between January and August—the highest number for any year since 2013. Most of them were in the Amazon.

That compares with 39,759 in the first eight months of 2018.

—Agence France-Presse

West Papua and its troubled history with Indonesia

Recent riots and protests are just symptoms of long simmering ethnic tensions.

COD SATRUSAYANG

rotests have broken out in the Indonesian province of West Papua with a local parliament being set alight and buildings torched in Sorong, the province's largest city.

The protests, involving hundreds of people, occurred throughout the province on Wednesday with buildings set on fire, including a prison where 250 inmates escaped, and rocks and projectiles thrown at security forces.

The protests erupted, in part, because of the detention of ethnic Papuan students in the Indonesian city of Surabaya over accusations that they had desecrated the Indonesian flag on its

But long running ethnic tensions between the native West Papuans and the Indonesian central government have plagued the province since it was incorporated into Indonesia in the 1960s.

A colonial legacy

After the Second World War, the area once known as the Dutch East Indies fought for independence from the Netherlands and the right to self-determination.

A bloody war for Independence was fought for four years before Indonesia finally gained independence in 1949 and the newly formed country claimed all the areas of the former Dutch colony as her own. West Papua New Guinea, however, remained in the hands of the Netherlands until the mid-1960s when an agreement was signed with Indonesia for the region to be transferred to Jakarta provided that the people of West Papua were granted an independent referendum by the end of the decade

the decade.

The vote was marred with controversy



and only 1,000 people, all government-selected, were allowed to vote in the referendum which unanimously backed staying as a part of Indonesia.

The province was renamed Irian Jaya by the central government (reverting to West Papua in 1999) and an armed resistance to Indonesian rule erupted overnight.

Accusations of genocide

Papuan nationalists, under the Free Papua Movement, have carried out a guerrilla campaign against the central government and security forces for decades.

The Indonesians have responded with programs to instil Indonesian culture and language in West Papuan schools and arbitrary crackdowns which have sparked accusations of human rights abuse. Such claims are hard to verify however as the region has been closed off to journalists for decades.

According to a paper published by the Yale University Law Centre,
"Indonesian authorities have also been

"Indonesian authorities have also been responsible for numerous extrajudicial

killings, including torture killings of detained prisoners, assassinations of West Papuan political, cultural, and village leaders, and brutal killings of civilian men, women, and children. This pattern of massacres and killings falls squarely within the first category of act identified by the Genocide Convention."

Dissent has been met with arbitrary arrest and torture. The United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner released the following statement as recently as February 2019.

"Prompt and impartial investigations must be carried out into numerous cases of alleged killings, unlawful arrests, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of indigenous Papuans by the Indonesian police and military in West Papua and Papua provinces."

Indonesians also granted a US owned mining company permission to construct the world's largest gold mine in the province and gave the company sweeping political rights over indigenous people that it continues to enjoy till today.

A BBC report on the region found that

A BBC report on the region found that although the province was extremely rich in resources, local indigenous people remain malnourished and stuck below the poverty line.

In recent years, the Indonesian President has made efforts to reach out to the Papuan population. He has visited the province more than six times since his election in 2014.

Widodo has said that funds will be

made available to develop the region and create jobs. But progress is slow and sectarian violence will continue to be around the corner until the situation improves.

This article was originally published by Asia News Network.

Liverpool the true testing ground for Arsenal

Given Gunners' propensity to concede at Anfield, attack may be the best form of defence.



A file photo of Liverpool players during a warm up prior to their Super Cup match against Chelsea at the Besiktas Park Stadium in Istanbul.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LIVERPOOL, AUG 23

Arsenal manager Unai Emery's concession that his side "don't want to play against Liverpool ever" was hardly the rallying cry of a confident man leading his side to Anfield on Saturday.

But the Spaniard will have a much better grasp of what the Gunners are capable of achieving this season on the journey back home. Early summer scepticism around the Emirates after missing out on Champions League football for a third consecutive season and fans' discontent with the level of investment provided by owner Stan Kroenke, has evaporated thanks to a fruitful end to the transfer window and two wins to start the Premier League season.

Emery has more firepower at his disposal with club record £72 million signing Nicolas Pepe joining Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Alexandre Lacazette in attack. On loan Real Madrid midfielder Dani Ceballos showed his class with both assists in last weekend's 2-1 win over Newcastle,

while David Luiz's switch across London in the final hours of the window from Chelsea provides much-needed cover at centre-back.

Arsenal's defence should also improve in the coming months with the return of new £25 million left-back Kieran Tierney, Hector Bellerin and Rob Holding from injury. However, they will not be fit in time to try and stop the European champions inflicting another rout on Emery's men this weekend. In Arsenal's last two visits to Anfield, the visitors have been humiliated 4-0 and 5-1.

"When we play against them it is a big challenge to show how we can be," added Emery. "That is really our challenge, a really good test. Really our target is to reduce the distance to Liverpool, Manchester Tottenham and Chelsea.

Challenging Liverpool or reigning champions Manchester City for the title is not yet expected of Emery, but a return to the Champions League via a top-four finish is the minimum requirement after being backed in the transfer market. "We know what we

need to do; we know there are squads ahead of us that are very strong, Arsenal director Josh Kroenke, told the BBC this week. "We've come back with a stronger squad than we finished with in May in Baku (after the Europa League final) and I'm excited to see what this group can do. They're ready to get to work and they know what they need to do on behalf

Early signs are that Arsenal are a work in progress. Two victories have been ground out against meagre opposition in Newcastle and Burnley by the odd goal thanks to Aubameyang's prowess. Emery could name the Gabon striker, Lacazette and Pepe in his starting lineup together for the first time at Anfield, after bedding Pepe in slowly following his participation at the Africa Cup of Nations this

That attack has the potential to cause Liverpool huge problems, particularly with Jurgen Klopp's men also struggling at the back despite winning their opening two Premier League games. Liverpool have yet to keep a clean sheet in four games this season against Manchester City in the Community Shield, Chelsea in the UEFA Super Cup and Norwich and Southampton in the league. They faced 26 shots against Norwich and Southampton alone, whilst Chelsea had 20 attempts on goal, more than Liverpool faced in any match last

Injury to first-choice goalkeeper Alisson Becker has caused disruption with his understudy Adrian at fault for Southampton's goal last weekend. And a higher defensive line has been blamed for opening up a defence that kept 20 Premier League clean sheets last season. "When I say Liverpool have got away with it, the quality they've played against hasn't been top class," former Liverpool captain Jamie Carragher told Sky Sports. 'The quality Arsenal have, if Liverpool get caught in those positions and don't run back, they're going to have major problems.

Given Arsenal's propensity to concede at Anfield, attack may be the best

Thomas shares lead with Koepka, Schauffele

The winner on Sunday will receive \$15 million, the sport's biggest payout.

REUTERS ATLANTA, AUG 23

Justin Thomas missed two short putts in a mediocre even-par 70 on the first day at the Tour Championship on Thursday but ended the round tied for the lead with fellow Americans Brooks Koepka and Xander Schauffele.

Thomas was grateful for the unique staggered scoring system, which afforded him a headstart at 10-underpar thanks to his top seeding as FedEx Cup points leader entering the season-ending event at East Lake in Atlanta. Third seed Koepka birdied three of the last four holes to card 67 and Schauffele had a 64, the day's best round by two strokes. Americans Thomas, Koepka and Schauffele led the 30-man field by one stroke from Northern Irishman Rory McIlroy (66). The winner on Sunday will receive \$15 million, the sport's big-

Thomas was grateful for his lofty position after finding the punishing rough several times, and also pushing his tee shot into water for double-bogey on the par-three 15th. Add in a couple of missed three-footers and it could have been a lot worse. The runaway winner of last Sunday's BMW Championship said he had paid a price for his slight inaccuracy off the tee, even if his misses were not very far off line.

"The difference between fairway and rough out here... is so huge," he said. "To come in the house at 10-under feels pretty good. I thought I played better than I scored. I played a lot of good golf the last five or six holes other than that dumb mistake on 15. I still can't believe those two short putts. I hit them right where I

World No 1 Koepka said it had been "weird" teeing off three shots from the lead on the first day, but thinks the tournament will feel more normal from now on. He found some confidence on the greens by sinking a 25-footer at the fourth and then almost holed his approach shot at the next for a tap-in birdie. "I don't know how it missed," he joked.

Joint leader Schauffele won the 2017 Tour Championship by



Justin Thomas of the US plays a shot on the 13th hole during the first round of the Tour Championship in Atlanta on Thursday.

shooting the best score over 72 holes under the regular scoring system. This time he might need the best score and then some, after starting as the eighth seed, six strokes behind Thomas. Schauffele could have enjoyed the sole lead, but he missed a five-foot birdie at the last, which left him fired up.

McIlroy also missed a short birdie putt at the last, leaving himself with a five-foot comeback attempt that was almost as long as the first. He made it.

EUROPA LEAGUE QUALIFYING

2-1

Dudelange

Ararat-Armenia

0-0 Suduva 3-0 0-0 Maribor Ludogorets 3-0 Hapeo Fevenoord FC Copenhager Riga **AEK Athens** Trabzonspo Rangers Warsaw Legia Rijeka PSV Eindhover 3-0 Apollon **FCSB** 0-0 Vitoria 3-2 Linfield Oarabag 2-0 Celtic AIK Braga 1-0 1-0 PAOK Slovan Bratislava 2-1 Molde Partizan Belgrade 3-1 Wolves Torino

Spartak Moscow Zorya Luhansk

PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURES

Norwich City vs Chelsea (1715 NST, Saturday) Brighton vs Southampton (1945 NST, Saturday) Man United vs Crystal Palace (1945 NST, Saturday) Sheffield United vs Leicester (1945 NST, Saturday) Watford vs West Ham United (1945 NST, Saturday) Liverpool vs Arsenal (2215 NST, Saturday) AFC Bournemouth vs Man City (1845 NST, Sunday) Tottenham vs Newcastle United (2115 NST, Sunday) Wolverhampton vs Burnley (2115 NST, Sunday)

SPANISH LEAGUE FIXTURES

Osasuna vs Eibar (2045 NST, Saturday) Real Madrid vs Real Valladolid (2245 NST, Saturday) Celta Vigo vs Valencia (0045 NST, Sunday) Getafe vs Athletic Bilbao (0045 NST, Sunday) Deportivo Alaves vs Espanyol (2045 NST, Sunday) Mallorca vs Real Sociedad (2045 NST, Sunday) Leganes vs Atletico Madrid (2245 NST, Sunday) Barcelona vs Real Betis (0045 NST, Monday)

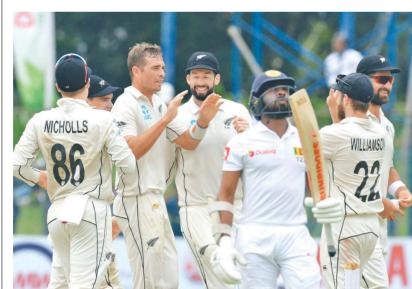
QUOTE OF THE DAY

"San Mames is always a difficult place to play. When you're not at your best, they make you look stupid." —Gerard Pique



Boult, Southee rattle Lankans on 2nd day

The pacemen claim two wickets each as hosts reach 144-6 in rain-hit second Test.



Tim Southee (2nd left) celebrates with his New Zealand teammates after dismissing Sri Lanka's Niroshan Dickwella during the second day of their second Test in Colombo on Friday.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

COLOMBO, AUG 23

Trent Boult and Tim Southee led New Zealand's charge against Sri Lanka on the second day of the rain-hit second Test in Colombo on Friday.

The pacemen claimed two wickets each as Sri Lanka reached 144-6 at

lunch when rain came down and no further play was possible. Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne moved from his overnight 49 to score 65 and provided the only bit of resistance in the morning session, which saw 29.3 overs bowled. Boult took two early wickets in one over after Sri Lanka resumed the day at 85-2. Dhanajaya de Silva on

32 and Dilruwan Perera on five were at

Southee, like Boult, also delivered a double-wicket maiden as the duo put on a superb display of seam bowling under overcast conditions. Boult got overnight batsman Angelo Mathews caught behind for two to reach a landthird Kiwi bowler to achieve the feat. He trapped Kusal Perera leg before wicket for nought after just three balls as Sri Lanka slipped to 93-4 and would have been in further trouble had Boult held on to a simple catch from de Silva off his own bowling a few overs later.

Karunaratne also got a lifeline on 61 when Kane Williamson could not grab a tough chance at short mid-wicket off Ajaz Patel. But the left-hander, who completed his 23rd Test fifty after resuming the day on 49, soon fell, caught behind off Southee for 65. Southee struck again in the same over to send Niroshan Dickwella trudging back to the pavilion for nought. Perera then played out the rest of the session

with de Silva. Medium-pace bowler Colin de Grandhomme and spinner William Somerville took a wicket each on the opening day after Sri Lanka elected to bat first. Weather permitting, extended playing time is planned for the third day after two days of continuous rain interruptions in the Sri Lankan



Sagan Tosu's Fernando Torres kicks the ball as his team plays Vissel Kobe during a J-League first division football match in Tosu, western Japan, on Friday.

Defending champion Djokovic on semi-final collision course with Federer

Serena Williams will begin her quest for a record-tying 24th Grand Slam victory against long-time rival Maria Sharapova.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE NEW YORK, AUG 23

Top-ranked defending champion Novak Djokovic could face Roger Federer in the semi-finals and Rafael Nadal in the final under the US Open draw unveiled at Flushing Meadows on Thursday.

Djokovic, who defeated Federer last month in an epic Wimbledon final for his 16th Grand Slam crown, had the 20-time Grand Slam champion and third seed dropped into his half of the draw. "The finals against Roger in Wimbledon was probably top-two in the most exciting matches I've ever been a part of," Djokovic said. "It took me some time... to get back on track."

The other match cited by the 32-year-old Serbian star was his fiveset victory over Nadal in the 2012 Australian Open final. Djokovic is 26-22 all-time against Federer and 28-26 for his career against Nadal in matches among the Big Three. Federer and Nadal, who have never played at the US Open, could only meet in the

Djokovic, who beat Juan Martin del Potro in last year's US Open final, will play his first-round match against Spain's 76th-ranked Roberto Carballes Baena. He could be tested by South African Kevin Anderson or Swiss Stan Wawrinka in the fourth round and face in-form Russian fifth seed Daniil Medvedev in a quarter-final. Djokovic defended his title at Wimbledon, the fifth time he has managed the feat at a Grand Slam but one he has not achieved at Flushing Meadows after wins in 2011, 2015 and last year.

Medvedev, who opens against 89th-ranked Prajnesh Gunneswaran of India, is coming off an ATP Cincinnati Masters crown after also reaching US Open tuneup hardcourt



finals at Montreal and Washington. Federer will open against a qualifier as will Japan's seventh-seeded Kei Nishikori, also in his quarter of the

Second seed Nadal, who won his 18th Grand Slam title at this year's seed Dominic Thiem on his side of the bracket. Nadal's first US Open match will be against Australia's 61st-ranked John Millman, who shocked Federer at the tournament in 2018, while fourth-seeded Thiem's opener will be

against Italy's Thomas Fabbiano. On the women's side, Serena Williams will begin her quest for a seventh US Open title and record-tying 24th Grand Slam victory against long-time rival Maria Sharapova. Williams has dominated the Russian star in their head-to-head rivalry, winning 19 times with only two defeats, including their past 18 meetings, most recently at the 2016 Australian Open quarter-finals, although Sharapova advanced by walkover against Williams in the fourth round at Roland Garros last year.

Eighth-ranked Williams is looking to match the all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles won by Margaret Court when the year's final major championship gets under way Monday. The 37-year-old American has dropped her past three Grand Slam finals appearances, including last month to Simona Halep at Wimbledon and last year to Japan's Naomi Osaka at the US Open after a controversial game penalty for her tirade at umpire Carlos Ramos.

Serena was placed into the same quarter as Australian second seed Ashleigh Barty, the reigning French Open champion whose first match is against 77th-ranked Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan. Top-seeded Osaka opens against Russia's 93rd-ranked Anna Blinkova and could face a third-round date against 15-year-old American Coco Gauff, who eliminated Venus Williams in the first round at Wimbledon in a run to the last 16 in her Grand Slam debut.

SPORTS

BRIEFING

Ribery hungry for success with Fiorentina

FLORENCE: Franck Ribery said on Thursday his hunger for success drove him to turn down lucrative offers from clubs in China and the Middle East in favour of Serie A's Fiorentina in Italy. The former French international left Bayern Munich as a free agent after 12 seasons during which he earned the nickname 'Kaiser Franck', winning nine league titles among his 23 club trophies. "Football is my life. I still have a special love for football and that's why I absolutely wanted to stay in Europe," the 36-year-old said. Ribery has agreed a two-year deal worth four million euros a year plus bonuses with the Tuscan club. (AFP)

Murray heads back to Challenger Tour

PARIS: Former world No 1 Andy Murray is set to compete in his first Challenger Tour event in 14 years at the Rafa Nadal Open in Manacor Spain, next week. The 32-year-old Murray has confirmed he will skip playing doubles at the US Open to focus on his singles game at the second-tier hard court event in Spain and to build up his confidence. After undergoing hip surgery in January following his first round exit from the Australian Open, Murray began easing his way back by playing doubles, starting at Queen's in June. However, he opted to drop doubles and focus on a return to singles earlier this month and was beaten in straight sets by Richard Gasquet in Cincinnati. He then lost to American Tennys Sandgren in the first round of the Winston-Salem Open. (AFP)

Oxlade-Chamberlain inks new Reds deal

LONDON: Injury-hit Liverpool midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain penned a new deal with the European champions on Thursday and pledged to "make up for lost time". The 26-year-old former Arsenal star, who made just two appearances last season after being sidelined with a serious knee injury, has agreed a deal which which stretches to 2023. "I feel like I missed out on a year, which I obviously did, so it's really exciting for me to be able to sign," Oxlade-Chamberlain, who moved to Anfield from Arsenal in 2017 for £35 million. told liverpoolfc.com. (AGENCIES)

Nepal sign off with victory over Afghanistan

The hosts finish fifth in the AVC Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship.



Nepal captain Em Bahadur Magar (No 9) in action against Afghanistan during their AVC Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship in Lagankhel, Lalitpur, on Friday.

SAILENDRA ADHIKARI

LALITPUR, AUG 23

Nepal overpowered Afghanistan in four sets to finish fifth in the AVC Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship on Friday.

Nepal had a few nervy moments but eventually overcame a spirited Afghanistan side by 25-23, 23-25, 25-18, 26-24 at the Army Physical Training and Sports Centre in Lagankhel. The victory ensured Nepal finish fifth in the tournament. Nepal had also defeated the same opponent in a twomatch friendly series prior to the start

In the first set, Nepal overwhelmed Afghan side to a nervy but comforta-

ble 25-23 victory. Nepal raced to early lead in the set but found Afghanistan right back on their trail. This was also the first set victory by Nepal in the tournament having lost in straight sets against Kyrgyzstan and Maldives during the league stages. Afghanistan bounced back well taking the second set 25-23. The third set saw Nepal produce one of their best performance to sweep to 25-18 victory. Afghanistan put on a great fight in an attempt to level the match in the fourth set but buoyed by a huge cheering crowd, Nepal finally overpowered them to claim a 26-24

Nepal's coach Han Abbing said he was happy for his players who put in a solid fight. "A win is a result of good

performance. I am happy for my players to bounce back after earlier defeats," said Abbing. The Dutch national also called for more matches to be played to help players gain more exposure. "We practice a lot but what we lack is match exposure. We need to play more matches. Let's also play on winter, go abroad for matches. Let's explore more opportunities but let's play more matches," he said.

Nepal's Dutch coach lamented on players' inability to handle pressure during tense situations, saying it was largely due to lack of match experience. "What we do is practice, practice and more practice. Why not practice, play a match, practice again, play another match and so on. This will

help us gain match experience and players will also know more about handling pressure," he said.

When asked about his contract situation, Abbing said he was open to new challenges and had kept his doors open. "It's a great experience here. Wherever I go, people are nice to me. I am loving life here," he said. A former Dutch player and coach, Abbing was appointed as Nepal head coach prior to the tournament on a three-month contract.

Nepal's hopes of making it to the semi-finals were dashed after consecutive defeats against Kyrgyzstan and Maldives. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan will play for the title at the same venue

India's Rahane not concerned about century drought

REUTERS

The last time Ajinkya Rahane scored a century in international cricket was over two years back but the India Test vice-captain says the drought does not concern him as long as he is contribut-

The middle-order batsman was dismissed after a gritty 81 in the opening Test against West Indies in Antigua on Thursday, the sixth time he had gone past a half-century in the format since scoring 132 against Sri Lanka in Colombo in August, 2017. Rahane, 31 fell short of the three-figure mark again when he was bowled by pace man Shannon Gabriel, via an inside edge, but not before he had resurrected the world's top-ranked Test side from a precarious 25-3.

"I knew this question will come, was ready," Rahane said after a brief laugh when he was asked about missing out on a hundred again. "As long as I am contributing for my team, that's what matters. Yes, I was thinking about my hundred but the situation we were in was tricky. I am not too worried or concerned about my hundred as that will come automatically. As long as I am at the crease, I am thinking about my team, I am not a selfish guy. I thought 81 on that wicket was really crucial and we are in a decent position."

Rahane's innings helped India steady the ship with the right-handed batsman adding 68 for the fourth wicket with opener KL Rahul (44) and another 82 for the next with Hanuma Vihari (32) to help the touring side reach 203-6 on the rain-truncated day He had missed out from India's World Cup squad and used the time for a with English Championship side Hampshire.

With India playing their first Test in over seven months, the Hampshire stint was helpful, Rahane said. "That was a good thing for me because I took the decision when I got to know that I was not in the World Cup squad, Rahane said. "I wanted to make use of the two months and I thought the county stint helped me a lot. I was focusing on my batting, few areas to work on basically. When you play with Dukes ball in England you got to play close to your body. I was batting at No 3 as well so luckily I got to play the new ball there. Those two months I really used my time well."

Eleven Arrows stun Red Star, lift Pathivara Gold Cup title



Players of Eleven Arrows celebrate with the trophy after winning the Pathivara Gold Cup football tournament title in Phungling, Taplejung, on Friday.

ANANDA GAUTAM TAPLEJUNG, AUG 23

Eleven Arrows of Sunsari stunned defending champions Red Star Football Club of Jhapa to clinch the Pathivara Gold Cup football tournament title on Friday.

The outcome was decided through spot kicks after the normal 90 minutes of play ended in a 2-2 deadlock. Rupesh KC, Jivan Dhami, Bishwa and Umesh Karki converted from the spot for Eleven Arrows while only Pujan Uparkoti and Bishal Limbu found the back of the nets for the holders.

After the lacklustre first half, the match swung into real action as Yogesh Gurung gave Red Star the lead in the 55th minute. Gurung beautifully converted an 18-yard freekick into goal. But Eleven Arrows drew level through Yannick in the 74th minute. Yannick was in right place to drill home after cutting past two defenders following a nicely set up ball from Prabesh Danuwar. The goal meant Yannick finished the tournament at the top scorer with four goals to his credit. He was tied at 3 goals with Fofona of Red Horse Club of Ilam.

Milan Rai restored the lead for Red Star two minutes from time but as the team from Jhapa appeared to have won the match, Susan Tamang struck the equalizer four minutes into the

The match headed straight into the penalty shootout and Eleven Arrows completed a remarkable turnaround beating the defending champions in the shootout. The champions received Rs 3,11,000 and the runners-up earned Rs 1,51,000. Prabesh Danuwar was adjudged the player of the tournament and got Rs 10,000.

Eleven Arrows' Proso was named the best goalkeeper, Bishnu Sunuwar the best defender and Bishwa Bandhu Pokharel the best coach. Red Star's Yogesh Gurung was named the best midfielder and his team mate Milan Rai the best forward. Maniraj Limbu of Taplejung XI was declared the rising star. In all, 10 teams took part in the knockout tournament.

Swish win to enter NBL 3x3 East final

KATHMANDU, AUG 23

An influential performance from Rabin Gautam led Eastern Swish to the Biratnagar leg of NBL 3x3 East Basketball Tournament on Friday.

In all, six teams took part in the Biratagar, the NBL 3x3 East will be held in Dharan and Birtamode. Top two teams each from three cities will play for the title in Birtamode.

Held at the Bal Kalyan Vidhya Mandir School premises, Swish beat hosts school 21-13 in the final. Gautam, who had represented Southsiders in the Nepal Basketball League, alone contributed a whopping 13 points. In all, Gautam scored 39 points in four matches his team played on Friday.

In the semi-finals, Swish hammered Belbari Basketball Club 21-5 with Gautam scoring 11 points. Bal Kalyan saw off Sagarmatha Secondary School 16-6 in another semi-final match. The 3x3 basketball is played on half court with each game lasting for 10 minutes. The Dharan leg will be played on Saturday and Birtamode leg on Sunday. The final is on August 27.



POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA Senior Nepali national football team during a training session at ANFA Complex ground in Satdobato, Lalitpur, on Friday.

Hazlewood takes five as England slump to 67 all out

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LEEDS, AUG 23

Australia's Josh Hazlewood took five wickets as England collapsed to just 67 all out on the second day of the third Ashes Test at Headingley on Friday.

In a match they had to win to square the five-Test series at 1-1, England arrived at Yorkshire's headquarters having dismissed Australia for a seemingly modest 179, with fast bowler Jofra Archer taking 6-45, on Thursday. But with Hazlewood returning figures of 5-30, England were bowled out inside 28 overs to leave Australia with a first-innings lead of 112. Joe Denly, with 12, was the only England batsman to reach double figures, with their total seven fewer than the 74 scored by Australia's Marnus Labuschagne, in for concussed star batsman Steve Smith, on Thursday.

But whereas Labuschange and David Warner (61) fought hard during their partnership of 111, few England batsmen showed anything like the same willingness to sell their wickets dearly, with several playing key roles in their own dismissal for all Australia's good bowling. England's slump was no great surprise, however, but rather the latest in a line of recent



Australia's Josh Hazlewood (third right) rattles England.

Test collapses that have seen them dismissed for 58 by New Zealand (Auckland 2018), 77 by the West Indies (Bridgetown 2019) and 85 by Ireland at Lord's last month.

But what made this collapse all the more troubling was that the blue and sunny skies above Headingley on Friday ought to have made conditions for batting easier than the gloom of Thursday, when England captain Joe Root won the toss. World Cup-winning opener Jason Roy took guard having made just 40 runs in four innings this

series. He fell for nine in familiar fashion when he edged a drive off a wide Hazlewood ball to Warner.

England's best batsman, was out for a second ball nought-his second straight zero after a golden duck in the second innings of the drawn second Test at Lord's-when nicking a straighter Hazlewood ball. Hazlewood had taken two wickets for no runs in three balls, with England 10-2.

England were almost 10-3 when new batsman Denly was given out lbw to Hazlewood on nought by umpire Joel

Wilson only to review successfully. They were, however, 20-3 when Rory Burns was caught behind for nine by Australia captain and wicketkeeper Tim Paine after the left-handed opener's gloved hook off a Pat Cummins bouncer. Allrounder Ben Stokes came into this match following an unbeaten 115 in the second innings at Lord's. But he all but gave his wicket away when he flat-footedly carved at a wide half-volley from recalled fast bowler James Pattinson he could barely reach, with Warner holding a fast edge high above his shoulder.

Denly fought hard only for his 49-ball stay to end when caught behind following an inexplicably extravagant drive off Pattinson. And 45-5 became 45-6 when Jonny Bairstow, like Root playing at his Yorkshire home ground, was drawn into edging a good-length Hazlewood ball with Warner holding another excellent catch.

England, 54-6 at lunch, lost their seventh wicket off the first ball after the interval when Chris Woakes was caught behind off Cummins (3-23). Archer hooked a four off Cummins before his attempt to duck a Cummins bouncer also saw him caught behind. Hazlewood ended the innings when he clean bowled No 11 Jack Leach.

DESTINATIONS



POST PHOTOS: KALENDRA SEJUWAL

Valley of many virtues

Old Nepali songs serenade Surkhet for its abundant beauty

JYOTI KATUWAL

urkhet might not be the most romantic destination in Nepal or very popular, compared to other places like Rara and Shey Phoksundo that fall nearby. Yet Surkhet sees a massive number of tourists year-round, because the district makes for a gateway to several famous tourist destinations in the country.

It is where tourists setting out for a trip to Rara in Mugu, Shey Phoksundo in Dolpa, Chandannath in Jumla, and Panchakoshi in Dailekh drop by Hotels in Surkhet are thus busy year-round, bustling with wide-eyed visitors.

Little may they know that Surkhet has its own several awe-inspiring sites that one can get to within an hour's ride from the district head-quarters, Birendranagar. These venues might not be well-known to outsiders, let alone for-eigners, but they are worthwhile destinations, all of them with their unique characteristics.

Bulbule Lake, for instance. This time of the year, the lake comes alive with something other than its aquatic splendour. Nepalis might recall coming across the name in their General "Visitors come mostly from six in the morning to one in the afternoon." The number of visitors increases during Hindu festivals, with Hindus pouring in with sacrificial goats and pigeons. Many Hindus believe that Deuti Bajai, the goddess, fulfils one's wishes. Anyone visiting Surkhet, irrespective of their religion, should definitely visit the temple.

Kakre Bihar—the "other Lumbini"

Kakre Bihar is the second-largest and oldest bihar in the country, after Lumbini. Enclosed by dense forests of saal and salla from all sides, it has an exotic location—a stark monument in the wilderness of resplendent green. Kakre Bihar is just about a half-hour's walk from Mangalgadhi in Birendranagar. Constructed by Ashok Malla, a khas king from Jumla, Kakre Bihar was partially damaged during the earthquake of 1934. It took a long time for renovation to begin, and work in earnest only began recently. Kakre Bihar is a melting pot of cultures and religions, worshipped with equal ardour by Hindus, Buddhists and people from other religions. It's because the Malla king who built it was religiously liberal, say locals. There is the Buddhist bihar, but there are also statues of Shiva, Parbati and Saraswati, the venerated



PRADEEP 65110/CC-BY-SA4

of the lake and its compound. Once the area is doubled, there will be not just a couple but seven rafts, sailing their way across the breezy lake"

Viewpoint Gothikanda

Gothikanda provides a safe haven to escape Surkhet's sweltering summer heat. Resting on a steep hill, Gothikanda is cool, lush, vibrant. It makes for a perfect vantage point to view all of sprawling Surkhet Valley, and almost all of the districts in the Karnali region. Gothikanda is being developed by the day. Big resorts have been built, spawning a sort of a mini market-place. It is popular for organic produce from vegetables to fruits. You have to make a half-hour's trek uphill to reach Gothikanda from the district headquarters of Birendranagar. Along the trail, you will see hamlets faraway set up along the steep hills, making for a stunning view. Up north from Gothikanda, there are jungles and nothing else.

Baraha Lake and its mysterious Jalchara

Trapped between the dense forests, Baraha Lake is famous for a species of aquatic birds with no wings—locally called Jalchara; locals have been requesting authorities to research on just what kind of birds they are. Though not as vast as Bulbule, the lake is expansive nonetheless, covering a total of 16 bigha area. It is just some 20 kilometres from Birendranagar. Locals, however, complain that even though the lake holds extensive tourism potential, it's lagging behind, shadowed by Bulbule, and also because of a lack of motorable roads, proper maintenance and sanitation. "If further neglected, the lake may dry up, who knows," warned Tej Bahadur Basnet, chief of the Barahatal Rural Municipality. But Basnet assured that the Rural Municipality is coming up with a master plan to preserve the lake, committed to developing it as one of Surkhet's crowning jewels.

TOP TIPS

Getting there

Kathmandu to Birendranagar via bus or plane. Auto-rickshaws are the popular means of transportation in Surkhet: one can get to all of the places listed here from five minutes to an hour on an auto-rickshaw.

Where to stay

There are several hotels of all kinds. But one is recommended to stay in Tharu homestays, run by the indigenous Tharu communities.

What to eat

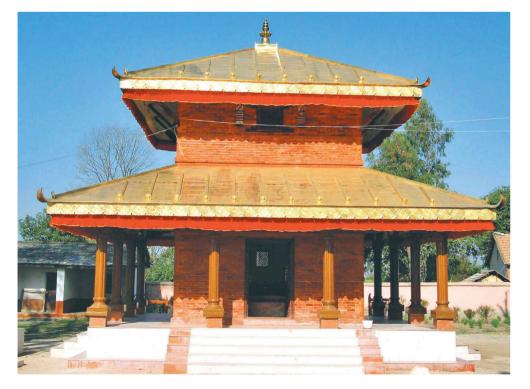
Indigenous cuisines, Tharu delicacies, Marshi rice.

Detours

If one wants to extend the stay further, there are several other places one can opt to visit, from Panchakoshi in Dailekh, Rara, Sinja Valley in Jumla, Kubhinde Lake in Salyan, and Khalanga Durbar in Jajarkot.

Budget

Rs 10,000 – Rs 15,000 for a three-day stay. [Two-way transportation: Rs 3,400 (by bus), around Rs 16,000 (via plane); lodging Rs 1,000-Rs 2,500 per night; food: Rs 250-Rs 500 per plate of *dal bhat*]



Knowledge books from secondary school. Or maybe from that iconic song from the Niruta Singh-starrer film *Bandhaki—Surkhetma Bulbule Taal*, *Laaigo Maya Leu Chino Rumal* goes the song's famous refrain—parts of which were shot in the lake.

The song set the tone for what was to come. Today, hordes of people with movie cameras are seen competing to reserve the best spot to shoot their music videos or films. The crew negotiate with other crews while the cast waits on, observing the lake. The site resounds with Nepali tunes played out on loudspeakers, this time of the year, with Teej songs.

But Surkhet is not just about the famed Bulbule, obviously. The district is equally popular, at least among its locals, for sites of historical, religious and archaeological importance.

Listed below are five such sites that you should visit when you're in Surkhet.

Deuti Bajai—the wish-granting goddess There was a time when Deuti Bajai temple would be busy only on Mondays and Tuesdays. But today, this temple, built by King Yash Malla, receives over a 100 pilgrims every day. "It's because it's close to Birendranagar. The temple welcomes more visitors today than ever," says Saraswati Raji, one of the priests in the temple. The renovation is underway and the ward office has made provisions to conserve its surrounding jungle, which is being illicitly cut down and encroached upon. For this purpose and to renovate Kakre Bihar, the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Environment has allocated Rs 40 billion budget this fiscal year.

Bulbule ko taal

The lake has inspired a plethora of songs, dating as far back as the 70s when *Surkhet Bulbul Taal, Maya Mai Sani Hunale Chhutyo Maya Jaal* was released via Radio Nepal. The reason is obvious. It's attractive, it's turquoise water a literal oasis amid the heat that Surkhet can experience during summer.

The premise of the lake also has a park and a garden, which lures movie and video makers. The lake is spread over 30 bigha area and, recently, a boating service was launched in the lake, another feather to its already illustrious hat. Moreover, the Surkhet Valley City Development Committee has come up with a Bulbule Area Development Master Plan and Dev Kumar Subedi, mayor of Birendranagar Municipality, has high hopes. "In a few years, there will come a situation when people will queue up just to get a ticket to visit Bulbule," claimed Subedi. "We are soon doubling the area

