



# THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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Dipayal Jomsom



POST PHOTO: DEEPAK KC

A footballer in action as young players have a morning practice session after the government relaxed coronavirus restrictions, at Sano Gaucharan in Kathmandu.

## After semblance of peace in ruling party, Secretariat meeting set to move to Parisdanda from Baluwatar

There had been sharp criticism of the prime minister's official residence, a public property, being used for holding meetings of a political party.



POST FILE PHOTO

Scheduling of the Parisdanda meeting follows Dahal assuming a bigger role in the party.

ANIL GIRI

KATHMANDU, SEPT 18

Following growing criticism of the ruling Nepal Communist Party holding its meetings at the Prime Minister's official residence, the next meeting of the party's Secretariat scheduled for Monday will for the first time be held at the party's offices at Parisdanda in Koteswhor.

The Parisdanda property—which used to be the headquarters of the erstwhile Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) until its unification with the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) in May 2018 to form the Nepal Communist Party (NCP)—now houses the offices of the party's sister organisations.

“Holding the meeting at Parisdanda gives a message that party unification is being strengthened,” said a Standing Committee meeting who did not want to be named.

The Secretariat meeting comes after the rift in the party has narrowed following an abrupt end to the long drawn out Standing Committee meeting. Tensions ran high when the rival faction demanded the resignation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, but peace seems to have returned to the ruling party with the nomina-

tion of party vice chair Bamdev Gautam to the National Assembly and the handover of party reins of Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

Following the unification in 2018, the meetings of the party used to be held at Dhumbarahi, formerly the headquarters of the CPN-UML, although leaders from both sides had agreed to use the properties of Parisdanda and Dhumbarahi for different purposes and call both places the party headquarters.

But of late, most of the meetings of the nine-member Secretariat and the 44-member Standing Committee were held at the Prime Minister's official residence, which had been criticised both within and outside the party.

“This is a welcome step and this should be given continuity,” said Bhim Rawal, a standing committee member who had been demanding that party meetings be held outside Baluwatar. “To run the party in a system with institutional memory and other reasons, party meetings should be held in the party office.”

The decision to hold the Secretariat meeting at Parisdanda was taken in view of the criticism the party had been facing for holding various meetings inside the Prime Minister's official residence, according to party spokesman Narayan Kaji Shrestha.

The Secretariat meeting was supposed to be held at Parisdanda on Friday but due to the busy schedule of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, it was deferred till Monday.

“The decision to hold the meeting at Parisdanda was taken by Oli and another chairman, Pushpa Kamal Dahal during their meeting on Thursday,” said Shrestha.

Office space and meeting halls in Dhumbarahi are congested and there is no sufficient room to hold the meeting by maintaining social distance but there is enough space at Parisdanda, according to Shrestha.

During the unification of the two parties, top leaders from both sides had agreed to use the UML's central office as the new party's central office and the Maoist headquarters in Parisdanda as the offices of the party's sister wings.

As soon as Oli became the prime minister in February, 2018, the party held Standing Committee meetings and Secretariat meetings in Dhumbarahi. But after the Prime Minister became ill and went to Singapore for treatment in August last year, the meetings of the top party committees were convened in Baluwatar although one Central Committee and one Standing Committee meeting were held at Dhumbarahi.

Most Cabinet meetings also have been taking place at Baluwatar since his return from Singapore but after Prime Minister Oli had a second kidney transplant in March all Cabinet meetings, party meetings and other small gatherings that he attends have been taking place at Baluwatar.

Oli has hardly visited his office inside Singha Durbar after his kidney transplant.

The Prime Minister's Office, which was relocated to a new building inside Singha Durbar after the old office was damaged in the 2015 earthquake, does not have enough space for Cabinet meetings maintaining distance, one secretary at the Prime Minister's office told the Post.

“Prime Minister Oli's health is fragile due to the recent kidney transplant and the most important reason is Covid-19,” said a ruling party leader close to Oli. “Therefore, he has to take extra caution while meeting with people and cannot frequently move outside Baluwatar.”

Given the mandatory health protocols, party meetings are taking place at Baluwatar, he said.

Despite the situation and Oli's health, the practice of holding party meetings at Baluwatar has drawn criticism.

“Holding party meetings inside the Prime Minister's residence was totally a wrong practice,” said Chandi Shrestha, a former home secretary. “Holding Cabinet meetings is fine due to his health. The Prime Minister's official residence is a public property and the Prime Minister is of the country, not of a political party. Therefore, in general practice, party meetings should be held in the party office, not at the Prime Minister's residence. The official residence is not a place for holding family parties or party meetings.”

>> Continued on page 2

## With festival season close, bank loans for imports halve, bankers' data shows

Low spending outlook around Dashain clearly suggests that Nepal's economy, 82 percent of which is driven by consumption, will continue to slide, economists say.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA & SANGAM PRASAIN  
KATHMANDU, SEPT 18

In the first two months of the last fiscal year, NMB Bank had issued letters of credit, or LCs in common usage, worth Rs6.5 billion. During the same period this fiscal year, it has issued them worth just Rs3.5 billion.

Most of the letters of credit issued in these two months are to import goods targeting Dashain and Tihar festivals, according to Sunil KC, the bank's chief executive officer.

In normal times this is also the period the country's commercial banks would be busy issuing loans particularly for importing goods for consumption during the festivals. But loans too have gone down in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Commercial banks have lent just Rs21 billion during this period, down from Rs54 billion in the same period last fiscal year, according to Nepal Bankers' Association.

Issuance of letters of credit and lending for imports grows just before Dashain assuming that people spend lavishly and consumption grows several times compared to other times.

Letters of credit are bank guaran-

tees that a buyer's payment to sellers will be received on time and if the buyer is unable to make payment on the purchase, the bank is required to cover the due amount.

“Based on the issuance of L/C in our bank and overall lending, I don't think there will be as much consumption this Dashain as in the past years,” said KC.

People consume more food during the festival season than at other times and they purchase new items including garments, footwear, electronic goods and automobiles, according to economists.

The Nepal Automobile Dealers' Association auto show, held before Dashain every year, attracted 80,000 visitors and did business worth Rs5 billion last year. But this year the show has been postponed because of the Covid-19 pandemic and may be held in February, according to Surendra Pradhan, chief of the Association's secretariat.

Economist Keshav Acharya predicts that consumption of almost everything will go down this year due to two factors: reduced income of people and reduced movement of people compared to previous years.

>> Continued on page 2

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# Apple to launch first online store in India next week

REUTERS  
NEW DELHI, SEPT 18

Apple Inc will launch its first online store in India on September 23, the iPhone maker said on Friday, coinciding with the country's holiday season that brings some of the biggest sales for retailers every year.

Apple sells its products in India through third-party vendors and e-commerce operators such as Amazon.com Inc's Indian unit and Walmart Inc-owned Flipkart.

The Cupertino, California-based tech giant's iPhones are coveted by tens of millions of Indians but their price keeps them out of the reach of many. Chinese companies led by Xiaomi Corp dominate in the world's second-biggest smartphone market, with Apple accounting for just 1% of shipments.

Through its online retail platform, Apple plans to offer assistance to customers in English and Hindi, while allowing users to personalise some devices, including iPads, with engravings, it said.

The website will also allow Mac customers to configure their laptops according to their needs.

The opening of Apple's online store presents another challenge for bricks-and-mortar retailers whose business has suffered due to discounts by e-tailers, said Subhash Chandra L, managing director of Sangeetha Mobiles.

"At least some of Apple's die-hard customers are likely to shift to buying from its online store," said Chandra whose chain operates more than 650 stores across southern and western India. "But we've learned to compete with online retailers."

China's Xiaomi, RealMe and OnePlus also sell smartphones from their websites, besides Amazon and Flipkart.

Apple is building its first company-run retail store in India, in the financial capital of Mumbai, with plans to launch in 2021.

India offers huge growth prospects for device makers and competitive labour costs for electronics manufacturing.

FOREX	
US Dollar	117.82
Euro	139.65
Pound Sterling	152.99
Japanese Yen	11.27
Chinese Yuan	17.43
Qatari Riyal	32.36
Australian Dollar	86.19
Malaysian Ringit	28.56
Saudi Arab Riyal	31.41
Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank	
BULLION	
PRICE PER TOLA	
 Fine Gold	Rs 97,000
 Silver	Rs 1,330
SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA	

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Petrol (Per Litre)	Rs 107.00/-
Diesel (Per Litre)	Rs 90.00/-
Kerosene (Per Litre)	Rs 90.00/-
LPG (Per cylinder)	Rs 1375/-

Source: Nepal Oil Corporation

# BIZLINE

## CG launches Black+Decker small home appliances in Nepal



**KATHMANDU:** CG Impex, a subsidiary of Chaudhary Group, has partnered with Black + Decker, a renowned American brand to launch their products in Nepal. The launching event was conducted virtually through zoom on Friday in CG Digital Park, Kathmandu, states the press release issued by the company. Various products from Black + Decker will now be available in Nepal through CG Impex's distribution network throughout Nepal. Customers will be able to buy products such as steam iron, grinder mills, rice cookers, garment steamer, sandwich maker grills, heaters, microwaves and more.

# Tiger Palace Casino Resort lays off 393 employees

Silver Heritage Group, the operator of the resort which came into operation in 2018, is facing financial distress with no income since March.

AMRITA ANMOL  
BUTWAL, SEPT 18

Tiger Palace Casino Resort in Bhairahawa has laid off all its 393 Nepali employees due to financial distress as the virus lockdown brought tourism to a halt.

On March 23, the Silver Heritage Group, the Australian-listed gaming investor which operates two casinos in Nepal, had announced a temporary closure of its two properties—Tiger Place Resort and The Millionaires' Club & Casino in Kathmandu.

Two weeks ago, the Silver Heritage Group emailed all Tiger Palace Resort employees informing them that it was unable to renew the agreement as their two-year terms ended on September 9.

"Following the conclusion of our initial two-year business plan and pursuant to clause 4 of the contract, the company hereby notifies you that your employment contract will not be renewed for a further period. We thank you for your efforts in completing the contract requirements," Mike Bolsover, managing director of the Silver Heritage Group, said in the letter, a copy of which was obtained by the Post.

The letter continues: "The global coronavirus pandemic is an unprecedented event that has left the business mandatorily shuttered since March 2020. With no revenue since this time, the company is faced with several financial hardships and an inability to reopen unless action is taken to reduce cost and become more efficient."

The company said that during the lockdown, unlike most other businesses in Nepal, it continued to pay 50 percent of the gross salary as a gesture of goodwill.

"The company requests you to con-



Around half of the employees at the resort have launched a protest claiming that it was a unilateral decision and against Nepal's labour laws.

tact the finance department for your final settlement." The company said it hoped to reopen soon and begin the next two-year phase, and urged the employees to stay in touch regarding suitable vacancies in the future.

Indra Bhattarai, human resource manager at the company, said all employees had been served the layoff notice. "The senior teams are in Hong Kong and Australia. We are not in contact with them."

Around half of the employees at the resort have launched a protest claiming that it was a unilateral decision

and against Nepal's labour laws. Nepali employees also charged that the company did not discharge foreign workers. "Some of the foreign staffers, whose visas have expired, have not been laid off yet," said Bishal Karki, an employee. "They are paid more than Rs500,000 monthly," he said. "It's a discriminatory policy to terminate Nepali workers only."

Chitra Bhandari, who has been leading the protest, said the decision to lay off workers was made unilaterally by the company. "Without prior information, we have been given a

surprise termination letter by email."

He said that based on labour laws, the company cannot lay off workers who have served for more than two years. "That's why we have been forced to launch the agitation."

Nearly 200 workers are protesting against the company demanding their immediate reinstatement.

Basu Dev Ghimire, mayor of Tilottama Municipality, said that they would find some solution to the problem without causing any negative impact on foreign investors. "As the resort has been operated under the

# Asian financial leaders agree to make 'all policy efforts' to fight pandemic



A man wearing a face mask walks in Lujiazui financial district in Pudong, China.

REUTERS  
TOKYO, SEPT 18

Financial leaders from China, Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia vowed on Friday to redouble their efforts to help the region recover economically from the novel coronavirus and to defend a multilateral system of trade and investment.

"We will remain vigilant to the continued downside risks ... We are taking steps to reduce vulnerabilities to these risks and are determined to continue to use all available policy tools to support the sustained recov-

ery," they said in a joint statement.

"We will remain resolute in our commitment to uphold an open and rule-based multilateral trade and investment system, and strengthen regional integration and cooperation."

The statement followed the annual meetings of finance ministers and central bank governors from China, Japan, South Korea and the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The meetings were held via teleconference on the sidelines of the annual gathering of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

# Tech savvy, flexible workers boost Covid-hit Nordic economies

REUTERS  
STOCKHOLM, SEPT 18

Helen Balfors, a project leader at Norwegian conglomerate Orkla, has been working from home for longer than most of her colleagues after returning from a skiing trip to Italy in February as the new coronavirus took hold in Europe.

The mother of three said that while the company had always encouraged a good work-life balance, some managers had required their employees to be in the office before the pandemic hit.

"But now they realise it works just as well to be at home," she said. "I just needed an extra screen and an extra keyboard from the office, which I got in a couple of days."

Well-developed digital infrastructure has helped the Nordic economies weather the pandemic better than most of Europe.

Britain's economy contracted by around a fifth in the second quarter, Spain registered an 18.5 percent drop, while the euro zone economy as a whole shrank 11.8 percent.

In contrast, Finland's GDP fell just 4.5 percent although Sweden and Norway saw larger hits of 8.3 percent and 6.3 percent respectively.

"Better digital infrastructure means we were quicker at being able to work from home. The infrastructure is there and we are used to using it," said Robert Bergqvist, chief economist at Swedish bank SEB.

"That has helped hold up production and consumption."

Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the

Netherlands had the most advanced digital economies in the EU in 2018, a research paper from the European Commission showed, based on connectivity, human capital, internet use and extent of e-commerce.

The Nordics—home to telecoms infrastructure firms Ericsson and Nokia—topped the EU table for home-working even before the pandemic. Sweden, in first place, had just under a third of workers working from home, at least occasionally, in 2019, according to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), an EU agency. The EU average was around 10 percent.

Long-term flexible employment practices, such as allowing parents to stay home with sick children and an emphasis on a healthy work-life balance have encouraged remote working.

During the pandemic, around 60 percent of Finns have been able to work from home, around double the level in Spain. Sweden and Denmark are also well above the EU average of less than 40 percent, according to Eurofound. A high proportion of information technology-focused jobs that lend themselves to distance working has helped but businesses and individuals have been quick to make the digital leap.

That, along with well-established rules for furloughing employees, means working hours have dropped less than in most of Europe—by 4.2 percent in Norway in the second quarter against a drop of 10.7 percent for



Following eased lockdown measures amid the coronavirus disease outbreak in Helsinki, Finland, people enjoy and stroll in a park.

the euro zone as a whole, Eurostat data shows.

With workers retaining at least some income, household spending and consumption have held up well.

Eurofound's survey showed around 70 percent of Swedes, Finns and Danes were optimistic about their future against just 45 percent across the EU. The Nordic economic resilience has come despite very different approaches to fighting the virus.

While Sweden took a light-touch

approach, Norway, Denmark and Finland all opted for stricter measures, with Finland isolating its capital from the rest of the country.

That means other factors have played a significant role.

"The structure of the economy is an obvious candidate, where many southern European countries are more dependent on tourism," Riksbank Deputy Governor Martin Floden said this earlier month.

Tourism accounts for just under 15

foreign direct investment policy and has foreign management, the municipality does not have any crucial role to deal with the issue, but we can play a facilitating role to settle the issue."

An official of the Silver Heritage Group told the Post that they were trying to save the company and the investment. "We are, as ever, guided by and acting in accordance with the laws of Nepal. These are unprecedented times," the official said in an unofficial conversation with the Post.

The Silver Heritage Group debuted in Nepal in 2015 with the opening of The Millionaire's Club & Casino at the Shangri-La Hotel in Kathmandu. The group has planned a massive investment of more than \$150 million to develop a chain of five-star properties across Nepal.

In the first phase, the 100-room property, which is the first integrated five-star casino resort in South Asia, was developed by the company. It was awarded a five-star rating by the Department of Tourism in November 2017, and came into operation in the first quarter of 2018, well behind its operation deadline that cost the company an additional \$12 million to complete the project.

The cost overrun increased the project's price tag to \$60 million, and the company counted on its other casino, the Phoenix International Club in Vietnam, to provide support. Silver Heritage was managing the property's gaming operations at the time; however, the venue lost its gaming tables licence in 2019, dealing Silver Heritage a huge blow.

Nepal's operations haven't been able to close the gap completely, and failure to generate adequate funds even prompted the company to sell its Nepal property. Covid-19 came as another setback for the company.

# Trump to block US downloads of TikTok, WeChat on Sunday

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON, SEPT 18

The US Commerce Department said it will issue an order Friday that will bar people in the United States from downloading Chinese-owned messaging app WeChat and video-sharing app TikTok starting on September 20.

Commerce officials said the ban on new US downloads of TikTok could be still rescinded by President Donald Trump before it takes effect late Sunday as TikTok owner ByteDance races to clinch an agreement over the fate of its US operations.

ByteDance has been talks with Oracle Corp and others to create a new company, TikTok Global, that aims to address US concerns about the security of its users' data. ByteDance still needs Trump's approval to stave off a US ban.

Commerce officials said they will not bar additional technical transactions for TikTok until Nov. 12, which gives the company additional time to see if ByteDance can reach a deal for its US operations.

"The basic TikTok will stay intact until November 12," Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross told Fox

Business Network. The department said the actions will "protect users in the US by eliminating access to these applications and significantly reducing their functionality."

Oracle shares fell 1.6 percent after the news in pre-market trading

The Commerce Department order will "deplatform" the two apps in the United States and bar Apple Inc's app store, Alphabet Inc's Google Play and others from offering the apps on any platform "that can be reached from within the United States," a senior Commerce official told Reuters.

The order will not ban US companies from doing businesses on WeChat outside the United States, which will be welcome news to US firms like Walmart and Starbucks that use WeChat's embedded 'mini-app' programmes to facilitate transactions and engage consumers in China, officials said.

The order will not bar transactions with WeChat-owner Tencent Holdings' other businesses, including its online gaming operations, and will not prohibit Apple, Google or others from offering TikTok or WeChat apps anywhere outside the United States.



SPORTS | MEDLEY

# Champions Liverpool face Chelsea test

Frak Lampard's ambitious Blues welcome Juergen Klopp's Reds while Pep Guardiola's Manchester City travel to Wolves.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON, SEPT 18

Liverpool face an early test of their Premier League title defence against Chelsea this weekend as Manchester City and Manchester United launch their quest to be champions. Arsenal, Everton and Leicester hope to build on encouraging opening wins while Jose Mourinho needs a morale-boosting victory for Tottenham.

Here are some of the main talking points ahead of the action.

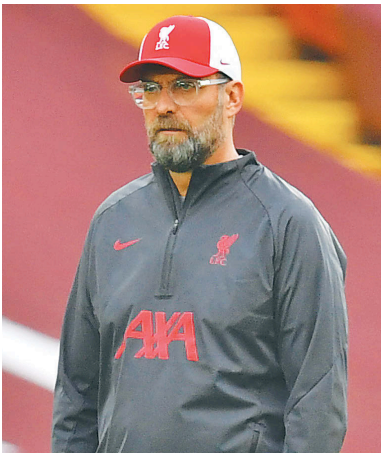
### Will big-spending Chelsea make Liverpool pay?

Chelsea's meeting with Liverpool at Stamford Bridge on Sunday has added edge after a feisty exchange between the managers over transfer spending. The London club finished 33 points behind the champions last season but have splashed out around £200 million (\$259 million) on new players. By contrast, Liverpool have been relatively quiet, adding just Greece left-back Kostas Tsimikas so far, with Spain midfielder Thiago Alcantara likely to follow.

Jurgen Klopp pointedly said Liverpool could not spend in the same way as clubs owned by "countries" and "oligarchs" such as City and Chelsea during the coronavirus pandemic. But Frank Lampard, who also became embroiled in a spat with Liverpool's bench in July, pointed out the Anfield side had spent big in previous seasons as they built their title-winning side.



Frank Lampard (left) says he was amused by Juergen Klopp's comments on Chelsea's spending.



REUTERS/AP

Liverpool will be keen to cut out the defensive errors they committed in a 4-3 win against newly-promoted Leeds, but Mohamed Salah looked in fine early season form as he scored a hat-trick on the opening weekend. Chelsea were also unconvincing winners against Brighton in their opening match, but Timo Werner, who chose to join the Blues despite interest from Liverpool, did impress in winning a penalty against the Seagulls.

### Manchester City's tough task

Manchester City are the bookmakers' favourites to land a third Premier League trophy in four seasons but face a tough opener against Wolves. City boss Pep Guardiola has shored up his

defence by signing Netherlands international Nathan Ake and has added to his rich attacking options, landing Ferran Torres from Valencia.

City scored 102 goals last season as they finished second, but lost nine matches as they surrendered their crown to Liverpool. Both Manchester clubs are starting a week later than other sides due to their European commitments last season.

Guardiola will be painfully aware that his team must be more consistent this campaign and he cannot afford to let Klopp's men open up an early lead. But he will feel nervous as he travels to face Wolves, who beat City twice last season, after a disrupted pre-season.

# Gareth Bale leaves Madrid after loveless marriage and disappointment

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MADRID, SEPT 18

Gareth Bale arrived at Real Madrid as the world's most expensive player and the heir to Cristiano Ronaldo. After seven years, he will leave for next to nothing, a dramatic return to Tottenham allowing Madrid's fans and accountants to breathe a heavy sigh of relief. They will be rid of the player that delivered jaw-dropping moments but overall failed to justify the expectations or expense, neither of which were of his own making.

Bale's flashes of brilliance will leave an indelible mark, not only on his own career but on the history of the club too. He can lay claim to scoring the greatest goal in a Copa del Rey final, at the end of that barnstorming run that began on the halfway line, circled almost into the stands and finished with Barcelona crumpled in a heap. And the best goal in a Champions League final probably belongs to him as well, Bale's bicycle kick against Liverpool perhaps better even than Zinedine Zidane's volley 16 years before. There was the crucial header against Atletico Madrid in another Champions League final, the stunning volley against Borussia Dortmund, the quick feet against Schalke and against Rayo Vallecano another surge, this time from deep in his own half. But Bale was never loved at Madrid, even if disappointment felt almost inevitable given the context in which he started.

Early on, injuries proved disruptive, creating scepticism instead of affection and while Bale's transfer record was repeatedly beaten, his wages would become a new yardstick for him to be measured against. The contract he signed in 2016, worth 30 million euros a year, made him the game's highest paid player, but the cost only intensified resentment when his contributions became increasingly lacklustre.

The fans felt it, whistling harder at Bale when shots flew over and crosses went unmet. When defeats came, the criticism from the press was heavier for him than others too.

Bale could have done more, on the pitch, where he let too many games pass him by, lacking either the energy or perhaps belief to whir his legs like he used to. And off the pitch, where his lack of interaction was taken as a lack of interest, the sneering at his Spanish and passion for golf unseemly but symptomatic of an unwillingness to engage.

But taking over the mantle of Ronaldo was always going to be a gargantuan task, not least while Ronaldo was still there, the figure that defined the club for the best part of a decade. And by the time Ronaldo was gone, it was too late, Bale almost 30 and already an outcast, his decline under Zidane long-since setting in.

Bale's earliest memory of Madrid was watching Zidane's volley against Bayer Leverkusen as a boy. But it was Zidane who brought his Madrid career to a close, their relationship irretrievable after four years when affection was in short supply and trust eventually ran out. Zidane gave Bale chances and repeatedly backed him in public, regretting it almost instantly when he spoke too freely before a move to China broke down last year. When Bale returned to London for talks with his agent, Zidane said he had his permission. When Bale, on international duty, celebrated behind a banner that read 'Wales.Golf.Madrid'.

For a while, Zidane kept faith in the most important games, suspecting the fire burned hot in Bale only on the biggest stage. Then he played him against weaker teams, when defensive lapses were less likely to be punished. In the end, he refused to play him at all.

Zidane won the argument, by transforming Madrid and taking them to the La Liga title last season, almost entirely without Bale, who played just two of their final 11 games. While his teammates were tossing Zidane into the air, Bale stood back, arms folded, a second league winner's medal draped around his neck.

It was his last appearance in the Madrid shirt after a long relationship defined by unforgettable moments, lingering disappointment and when it was all over, for everyone, relief.



REUTERS

A file photo shows Real Madrid's Gareth Bale celebrating in their Champions League match.

# Second-tier Stoke knock Wolves out

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WOLVERHAMPTON, SEPT 18

Championship outfit Stoke dumped Wolves out of the League Cup on Thursday as the Premier League side's club record signing Fabio Silva had a nightmare debut in a 1-0 defeat.

The 18-year-old, who cost 40 million euros (\$47 million £36 million) from Porto despite scoring just three goals for the Portuguese giants, fired a glorious opportunity wide to open the scoring in the second half. But it was Stoke substitute Jacob Brown who netted the winner four minutes from time to stun a strong Wolves side named by Nuno Espirito Santo.

Burnley edged Sheffield United 5-4 on penalties after the all-Premier League tie ended 1-1. David McGoldrick's early strike for the visitors was cancelled out by Matej Vydra midway through the second half. England international Nick Pope then got down low to save Oli McBurnie's spot-kick and Burnley were clinical in the shootout, netting all five of their efforts.

Brighton were comprehensive 4-0 winners over Portsmouth with Alexis Mac Allister, Alireza Jahanbakhsh, Bernardo and Victor Gyokeres on target.

# Naomi Osaka pulls out of French Open

REUTERS  
LONDON, SEPT 18

Japan's Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from the upcoming French Open with a hamstring injury, she said on Thursday.

The 22-year-old had her left hamstring taped when she battled back against Victoria Azarenka in the US Open final in New York on Saturday to win her third Grand Slam title.

"Unfortunately, I won't be able to play the French Open this year," the world number three wrote on social media in a message she also posted in Japanese.

"My hamstring is still sore so I won't have time to prepare for the clay—these two tournaments came too close to each other for me this time. I wish the organisers and players all the best."

The French Open will be held from September 27 to October 11 after being moved from its usual late May-June slot due to the coronavirus pandemic.



REUTERS

US Open champion Naomi Osaka.

The hamstring issue had prompted Osaka to withdraw from the final of the Western & Southern Open in the run-up to the US Open but it did not appear to hamper her at Flushing Meadows.

Osaka made headlines in New York as much for her performances on court as for her commitment to social justice causes.

For each of her US Open matches she wore a different mask that carried the name of a Black

American, aiming to highlight racial injustice in the United States to a wider audience.

The withdrawal of Osaka, who has never advanced past the third round at Roland Garros, comes as another blow to the tournament after world number one Ash Barty of Australia said she would not be defending her title due to Covid-19 concerns. On the men's side, Roger Federer will not compete as he continues to recover from knee surgery.

Osaka's absence would improve Serena Williams's chances of winning a record-tying 24th Grand Slam title if the American chooses to play. The 38-year-old has pulled out of the Italian Open with an Achilles issue.

The French Tennis Federation (FFT) said on Thursday it would allow 5,000 spectators per day following a recent spike in COVID-19 cases in the country. It had previously said the claycourt major would permit a maximum of 11,500 fans per day.

## HOROSCOPE

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19) \*\*\*  
There is a hero deep inside of you, and you just might get a glimpse of that person today when you notice a problem or danger that no one else notices. Your quick action will be essential for creating a safer environment for the people you love.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20) \*\*\*\*  
If drama erupts on the scene today, avoid it at all costs. Just keep your head down, mind your own business, and resist the urge to go find out what the fuss is about. Getting caught up in a power struggle right now is not going to be a good move.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21) \*\*\*  
You need to pay closer attention to the numbers today, especially if you're reviewing any budgets or bank statements. It is not a day to gloss over details and just hope that everything turns out all right. Numbers could also be important socially.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22) \*\*\*  
You could receive an inexpensive but impactful gift, and it will be no bargain basement purchase! It will be more like a gift of an idea, an inspiration that creates a spark in your mind. This spark could grow into a flame of new romantic feelings.

**LEO** (July 23-August 22) \*\*\*\*  
You will be exuding confidence today even if you don't feel particularly proud of yourself. This type of bravado will be very useful for you, so don't try to alter the positive opinions people will be forming of you by pointing out your faults.

**VIRGO** (August 23-September 22) \*\*\*  
Are you worried that there is too much happening in your life right now? Think about those days that are filled with boredom and how difficult they can be, and then consider yourself lucky that you are being kept so active and busy right now.

**LIBRA** (September 23-October 22) \*\*\*  
It's time for you to give your subconscious something new to dream about at night. Take the time to picture where you want to be and who you want to be with in five years. And don't forget to include family and friends.

**SCORPIO** (October 23-November 21) \*\*\*\*  
You have mastered an immense challenge that few people could have handled, but you might be feeling like no one noticed! This resounding lack of praise could be disappointing, and it certainly is not appropriate. You deserve praise for your accomplishments.

**SAGITTARIUS** (November 22-December 21) \*\*\*\*\*  
You probably won't be in a very aggressive mood today. Mellow is more your style right now. But don't think that this laid-back attitude won't have its advantages, because it certainly will! You will unknowingly invite more people of all walks of life to talk to you.

**CAPRICORN** (December 22-January 19) \*\*\*  
There are a lot of things going on in your life already, so it's not an easy day for new beginnings. Instead of starting yet another new project or trying yet another new activity, stick with the tried and true for now.

**AQUARIUS** (January 20-February 18) \*\*\*\*  
Someone's words are not matching their actions, and it should cause you to think twice about taking their advice or following in their footsteps. These contradictions in their character are a sure sign that they are not who you thought they were.

**PISCES** (February 19-March 20) \*\*\*  
There might be a lot of drama going on in your life now, but none of it is centered around negative energy. There are just a few different people with differing agendas working against each other, and you're getting caught up in the middle of it all.

## CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- Comes down with
  - Type of roast
  - Invites
  - Uprising
  - Golfer Lorena —
  - Cafe au —
  - Yen
  - Boast about
  - Kind of sax
  - Skullcap
  - That woman
  - Distort, as data
  - Joker or ace
  - Egg part
  - Conferences
  - Casual shoe
  - Salchow relative
  - Cabbie's income
  - Accustom
  - Kind of reaction
  - Start over
  - Souvenir item
  - Prince Valiant's wife
  - Baja Ms.
  - Music genre
  - Layers
  - Reptiles
  - Telescope part
  - Wind-driven mist
  - Niece or daughter
- DOWN**
- Chuck wagon offering
  - Patrick's domain
  - Gaius' garb
  - Lettering guide
  - TV brand
  - Slangy refusal (hyph.)
  - Lettuce, slangily
  - Walk the beat
  - From Juneau
  - Polio vaccine inventor
  - Toy with a tail
  - Pack away
  - Dined too well
  - John, in Aberdeen
  - and drabs
  - Burglar's "key"
  - Epics

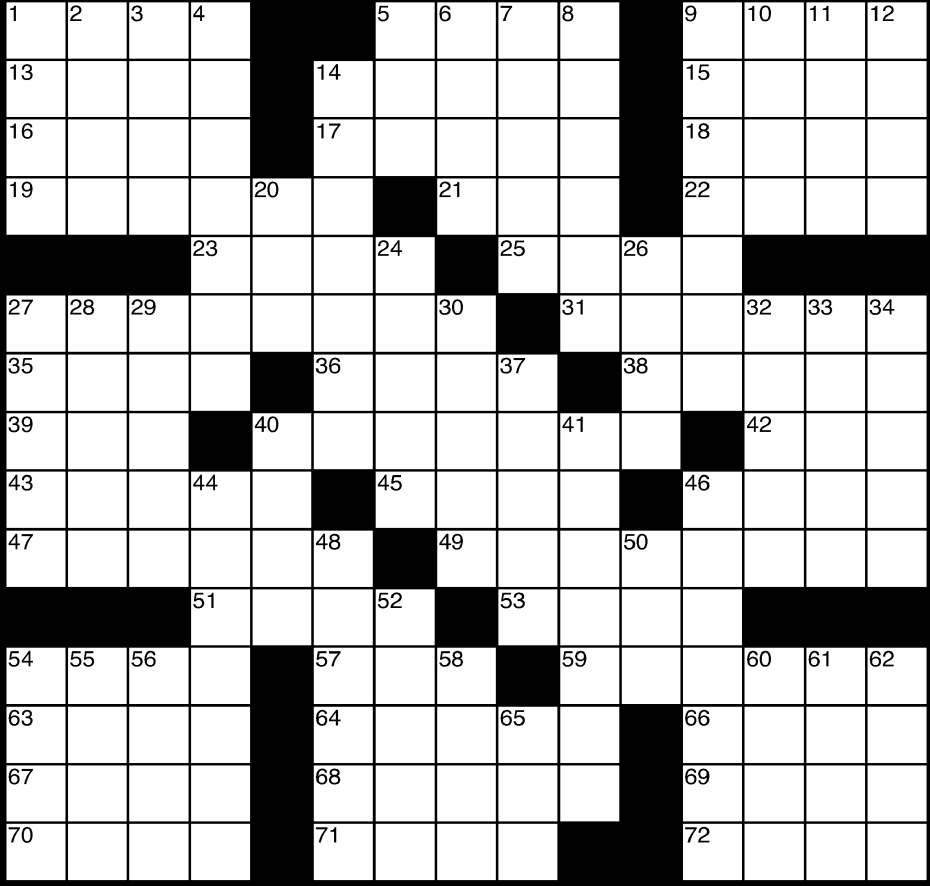
PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



6-5-20

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- 28 Shout for joy
- 29 Unit of length
- 30 Boot jinglers
- 32 Japanese bedroll
- 33 Put up
- 34 Smells strongly
- 37 Venues
- 40 Loan figure
- 41 Theft
- 44 Highest
- 46 Baggage porters
- 48 Battery posts
- 50 Phrased
- 52 Sea World whale
- 54 — Zeppelin
- 55 Davenport's state
- 56 Road map info
- 58 Foreshadow
- 60 Hawaiian seaport
- 61 Imported cheese
- 62 Copenhagen resident
- 65 Web suffix



## SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆



# Invalid recipient

We must have been just another Asian couple to their eyes. Because he could have been placed anywhere from the Middle-east to South Asia. And I could be placed anywhere from South to the Southeast of Asia.

PRATEEBHA TULADHAR

On the Tube, he stood over me like he was guarding me from the world; his back almost arching to keep the world out. Whenever I looked up at his face, he would look into mine and smile, his eyes widening like he'd just received a surprise. I suppose we were his surprise!

Once, when the train tunneled in, I reached out for him in reflex and my hands clutched his jumper briefly. I let go quickly, in embarrassment.

Some fellow-passengers stared at us. You know how it is when people look at you and then swiftly away like they never looked your way, and still keep an eye on you from the corner of their eyes?

We must have been just another Asian couple to their eyes. Because he could have been placed anywhere from the Middle-east to South Asia. And I could be placed anywhere from South to the Southeast of Asia.

He looked my way a lot. Like he was constantly watching over me. And always with that smile, as though responding to some sort of serendipity. For the first time, I actually noticed that he had a nice smile. I guess I had never really cared to look at him properly during our previous meeting two years ago. I noticed he had nice eyes, and his movements were graceful. Almost feminine, which made him attractive to me suddenly. But I remembered his face had carried those sure pair of eyebrows from my memory of him. It perked up now and then now, as he smiled at me. This man I had married!

I had married him in a hurry. Two years ago. In a random, impulsive moment.

I had walked into our regular cafe in Thamel, where my sister would usually

meet her friends and found her seated with this man and an elderly woman. Over coffee, in the next hour, we had started talking about the mounting marriage pressure on Nepali women, the moment they were in their early 20s. And my sister made fun of me for how I was being hounded by relatives and how I wasn't ready. I didn't have my sister's fierceness and rebellious spirit. Not then. And every day, I was terrified I would just cower down to the pressure.

And just then the woman said: Just get married to someone you like and then when they ask you to get married, tell them you're married! She was clearly a confident, open-minded, opinionated woman in her 30s. I envied her.

"I can't just get married!" I had said.

"Yes, you can!" She had said and then gone on to explain how I should find an accomplice. And before we knew, she had suggested I marry him!

"I can't!" I protested. "We don't even know each other!"

He had just smiled through it, exposing a neat set of teeth that put my tetracycline stained teeth to shame. He hadn't said no, but had thrown his hands in the air for a bit and smiled, like he was being shoved into some sort of adventure.

So, before I knew, my sister and this woman darted off in the search of rings.

With them gone, silence fell between us and we were swallowed whole by the buzz in the cafe. Awkward. Then he raised his eyebrows and asked me about work. I finally had a chance to speak for myself. I think he did too. He didn't seem to divulge much about himself, but he listened intently when I spoke.

Then they returned with two identical silver rings that looked like wedding bands. We exchanged them over sips of coffee and we were married!

They told me to wag a finger at the elders, anytime I came under marriage

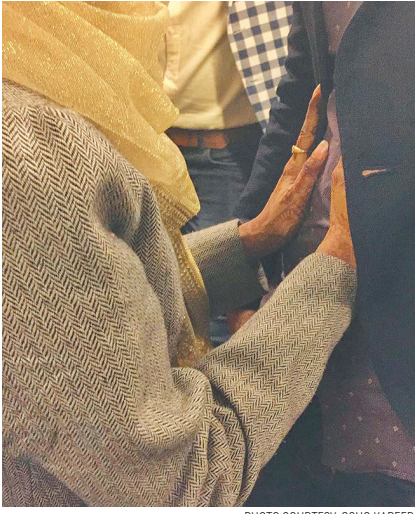


PHOTO COURTESY: OSHO KABEER

I was trying to hide. From all sorts of things. From the world, mostly.

pressure. But what was I going to say? That I was married to someone I don't even know? We laughed then parted, my secret pressed between my fingers, with my sister as its witness.

I didn't see him in Kathmandu after that. We didn't really have an excuse to see each other. In the months that followed, I heard from my sister that he had left for Egypt. That's where he came from, in case I forgot to mention.

Two years after our hurried wedding, I found myself in the UK. I was trying to hide. From all sorts of things. From the world, mostly. Then one day, my sister

wrote to me saying he was there and I should try and meet him if I happened to be in London. She had sent his email.

So, I wrote to him:

Dear Mohammed, I don't know if you still remember me. I'm Looni's sister. I'll be in London next month and I would like to meet you if you have time.

P

Mohammed wrote back. (Yes, that was his name.) Soon, we were chatting over hotmail's msn service.

We met in a garden. I can't even recall its name or the location anymore. But I remember how he came darting towards me—white shirt, sky blue jumper, black coat and jeans— and gathered me in a hug. As though we'd always hugged.

How odd to think now that we were dressed almost identically.

I was carrying a homemade sandwich—cheese and lettuce and tomatoes—Walkers crisps and some Tropicana in my bag. We sat on a park bench, shared it and talked. He told me about how difficult it had been for him to find jobs in the past year since he moved to the UK from Egypt, and that he finally had one he liked.

Later, over coffee in a café, the setting of which escapes my memory, he asked me about my plans. I said I didn't know. I didn't. I had gone to the UK with no dream, only one of being able to put off getting married for as long as I could. But it looked like I was surrounded by everything that resonated with it. Because here I was, sitting next to my almost-husband. He said I should move to London, look for a job. He would help me. I could move in with him. "I don't know," I said and smiled.

As opposed to everyone else who seemed to be going somewhere in a hurry, we sauntered around all day, until it was time for me to catch the last train to Cambridge. Then we jumped on and off

Tubes, trying to catch the right line. When he saw me off at King's Cross, he held me again, more comfortably this time, and said: "I'll see you soon."

It was the last time I saw him.

We kept in touch over msn and emails. Cell phone calls were expensive then, so he would call me on the landline some evenings and I would sit on the steps, whispering details about my slow day to him. There wasn't much happening in my sheltered life then, but his was going through quick changes. Whenever he called, he always eventually arrived at the same question: "When would I go to London again?"

But when I did go again, it was Dashain and I was busy visiting family friends. We didn't get a chance to meet.

I decided to move back to Nepal suddenly, in the midst of political changes in the country that made me feel like I had to come home. I didn't get a chance to say goodbye to him. And over the years, we kept in touch for some time over msn and then Gmail took over and I no longer remembered my Hotmail account passwords. I guess we became blocked for each other because of a change in our email addresses. We lost each other to the ether.

A couple of months ago, he popped up in my mind and I asked my sister: "What happened to your friend Mohammed?"

She said: "Which Mohammed? Oh! Right. I don't know."

I asked: "What's his full name again?"

She said: "I can't remember."

I did a Google search for "Mohammed + Egypt=UK" and the results were always overwhelming. His family name remains lost on my memory and with that, every possibility to look him up.

*Tuladhar has worked as a journalist for over a decade, with affiliations to Kantipur TV and German Press Agency.*

# Living and working with the stigma called Covid-19

I will most likely be infected with the virus in the next few days or months. But I became a physician knowing the job incurred risks.

PREETI SHAKYA

You walk in for your shift at the emergency department. Shortly after your arrival, a patient arrives gasping. Short of breath. Fever.

A chill runs down your spine but you have no time to contemplate. You quickly assess the patient and carry out the immediate interventions.

More patients arrive. More assessments. More interventions.

You are dripping in sweat inside your protective suit. It is starting to get uncomfortable inside. You want to rip it off and throw your mask away but you quickly come back to your senses—because these are the only set of protective gear you have.

In between hours, your phone keeps beeping. It's your mother checking up on you. 'Stay safe,' she reminds you, now and then. Every day you leave for work, you leave your family anxious at home.

It's already late afternoon and you realise you haven't had a sip of water all morning. You are too afraid to take off your mask. You think water can wait until lunch time.

It's lunch time. You wash your hands thoroughly. All seven steps you count. Has it been twenty seconds? You are not sure. You repeat the hand washing. You cautiously take off your mask. Get your lunch. Eat as fast as you can. And get back to your shift.

A few more patients. And it's time to leave.

Before you leave the hospital, you wipe everything. Your phone, your wallet, your water bottle. Check again. Are you sure?



SHUTTERSTOCK

You wipe again.

You get home. You get into the shower as quickly as you can making sure you don't touch anyone, anything. You have an ageing father who is on anti-hypertensive and anti-diabetic drugs. You fear you carried the virus home. So you go to your room and lock yourself up. Home isolation.

This is what everyday looks like for a doctor at the emergency department. Here, patients arrive with symptoms and no diagnosis at all. Doctors have to think

on their feet and take immediate interventions before they have time to screen the patient for Covid-19.

For young doctors like me, this is all very new. We have never been put face to face with this level of anxiety and stress. Even senior doctors are having a difficult time coping with the stress. We have had emergencies in the past. But this is different because of the scale and uncertainty of the disease. The protocol we must follow changes every few hours to meet the shifting dynamics of the disease. Add to

the shortage of protective gears. Some health care centres are down to one surgical mask per shift, some per day. The stress level only increases when coworkers start testing positive.

I feel like I am dipping into a swamp every day.

There is no denying the coronavirus has brought humanity to its feet. The health care systems of countries deemed the most developed have failed in front of our eyes. As cases flare up day by day, it is expected that a certain number of health-

care workers will have to miss work because they or their family members will be ill. It is clear: we still do not realise our own vulnerability.

Our hospitals only have a limited number of ICU beds isolated to treat Covid-19 patients. Hospitals are nearing capacity and we are running out of ICU beds and ventilators. Ambulance sirens don't stop beeping. The number of cases will continue to rise as they have in the past few days. Our health care systems will become overwhelmed at any moment; a total collapse of the system can be very much anticipated.

Looking at the state of things, I will most likely be infected with the virus in the next few days or months. But I became a physician knowing the job incurred risks and that I have a duty towards my patients and society. Even today, at the face of this pandemic and uncertainty, I wouldn't trade this life for anything because this is what I signed up for.

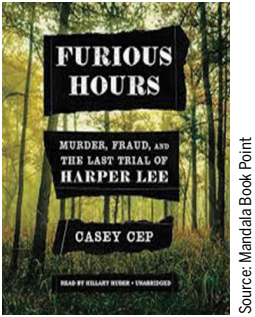
At such a testing time, we, as a society, need to introspect. Where are we headed? The decisions governments and people take now and in the next few days will probably shape our world for years to come. It will not only shape our health care systems but also other aspects of our society including our economy, politics and culture. Every crisis is a challenge, yet every crisis presents itself with an opportunity. A crisis can be a turning point for society, but only if we make it thus.

*Shakya is a doctor working at the Department of Pediatric Oncology at the BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital, Chitwan.*

## BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES

### Fiction

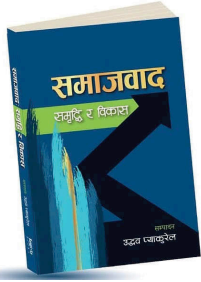
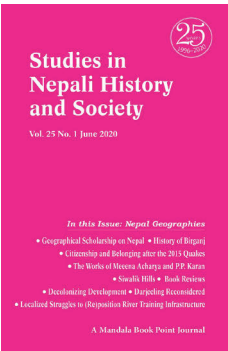
- Furious Hours: Murder, Fraud and the Last Trial of Harper Lee by Casey Cep
- The Secretary by Renee Knight
- The Golden House by Salman Rushdie
- The Guardians by John Grisham
- A Year of Wednesdays by Sonial Bahal



Source: Mandala Book Point

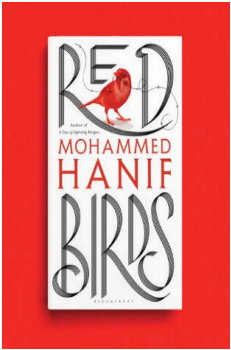
### Non-Fiction

- Studies In Nepali History and Society: Volume 25, No.1, June 2020 by Pratyoush Onta, Mark Liechty, Seira Tamang, Tatruro Fujikura
- Cabals and Cartels by Rajib Upadhya
- China Pakistan Military Nexus by P C Katoch, Sarad Tewari
- The Politics of Nepal: Persistence and Change in and Asian Monarchy by Leo E Rose and Margaret W Fisher
- Nepal's Quinquennial Mission to China by Rri Ranta Manandhar & Tirtha Prashad Mishra



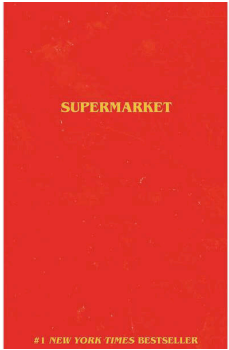
**Samajwaad: Samriddhi ra Bikash**  
**Editor:** Uddhab Pyakurel  
**Publisher:** Sangrila Book  
**Price:** Rs 335

Edited by scholar Udhhab Pyakurel, the book consists of anecdotes of leaders like Pradeep Giri, Chaitanya Mishra, Nawin Tiwari, Supriya Manandhar and others about how Nepal can become developed by filling the gaps in political and social sectors.



**Red Birds**  
**Author:** Mohammed Hanif  
**Publication:** Grove Press  
**Price:** Rs 958

A poignant and a thrilling satire on US foreign policy told through the story of a teenage refugee and a philosopher dog, the book captures the horrors of war and criticises the American military and its missteps in the Middle East.



**Supermarket**  
**Author:** Bobby Hall  
**Publication:** Barnes & Noble  
**Price:** Rs 798

Dark, funny and a psychological thriller, Supermarket by Bobby Hall is an interesting tale of a guy, who's dealing with his own problems and starts working in a supermarket where a crime scene occurs.



