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And the Chinese are not happy

Concerns from Sinopharm and Chinese Embassy forced Health Ministry to 'refute' media reports. But everyone, including prime minister, is giving statements on the jabs.

KATHMANDU, JUNE 18

From Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to Foreign Minister Raghubir Mahaseth, who is also a deputy prime minister, to Nepali embassy in Beijing—all are giving statements about the Nepal government's plan to buy vaccines from China's Sinopharm, 4 million doses in total. But the Chinese do not seem to be happy.

Multiple officials the Post spoke to confirmed that China communicated its displeasure to Nepali agencies. The officials told the Post that Sinopharm had communicated its displeasure at the publicisation of vaccine procurement by the government of Nepal. Similarly, the Chinese embassy in

Kathmandu also had reminded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the nature of the deal, according to the officials.

"There was quite a lot of interest in the media before an agreement could be reached, which worried us. We were worried if we would get the vaccine or not," Dr Krishna Prasad Paudel, spokesperson for the Health Ministry, told the Post. "The way the media quoted the price of the vaccine and other logistical issues was concerning because these are very sensitive issues.

The Health Ministry on Thursday issued a statement, refuting reports about buying vaccines from China. It not only said no deal had been reached but also went on to blame the media for disseminating information on vaccine procurement from China.

The Post on Wednesday reported first that the government is buying 4 million doses from Sinopharm under a non-disclosure deal as proposed by China's state-owned vaccine manufacturing firm. Some Nepali online portals later followed up the story.

In what was quite unusual on the part of the ministry, it issued the

statement in English. "The government of Nepal has requested the government of the People's Republic of China to give preference to Nepal on vaccine cooperation. The process to secure vaccines from different countries including China is still ongoing," read the statement. "Media reports on quantity, price, delivery, and other relevant information about the vaccine procurement are premature, speculative and misleading. The ministry refutes such unfounded and baseless

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Farmers celebrate a timely paddy plantation in the Mahabharata region of Sindhuli made possible by abundant rainfall with the onset of monsoon. The planting season is an occasion for celebration with dancing and singing folk songs to the beats of Panchai Baaja

INSIDE

Rise in water level of Mahakali river puts several settlements at risk of flooding

DARCHULA: The water level in the Mahakali river has risen following incessant rains for the past three days, raising fears of floods and inundation in nearby settlements. "The water level in the river is increasing day by day, as it hasn't stopped raining. The river has breached the temporary embankment in several places," said Gaji Karki, a resident of Dattu in Darchula. According to the Police Post in Dattu, the water level in the river is inching closer to cross ing the danger level marked at six metres. Security personnel said the river's water level is already at 5.8 metres. The authorities rebuilt the embankments in Khalanga swept away in 2013 to prevent floods in the district headquarters but a majority of settlements along the Mahakali river are protected only by temporary embankments.

Lockdown drags on but no relief package for urban poor KATHMANDU: It has been over a month

and a half since prohibitory orders were imposed in the Kathmandu Valley and many other districts to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, but little has been done to provide relief to the urban poor, most of whom have lost their livelihoods to the lockdown. Neither the federal government nor provincial or local governments have come up with the relief measures for such people despite reports of people walking for hours every day just to have free meals distributed by certain charity organizations and community people. Last year, when a lockdown was enforced for the first time, federal and local governments announced relief packages for the poor people hit by the restrictions. (Details on Pg 3)

Vegetables cost more due to rain, lockdown restrictions

KATHMANDU: Kathmandu Valley residents reeling from the pandemic received another wallop in the form of costlier vegetables, with traders attributing the jump in prices to incessant rain and lockdown restrictions. As wholesale markets are running low on inventory due to supply disruptions, prices of kitchen staples such as potatoes, tomatoes and seasonal vegetables have risen sharply, traders said. People in Kathmandu are bearing the brunt of an extended lockdown. Vendors are finding it hard to transport vegetables to market because of stay-home orders. Traders said prices of fresh produce shot up due to short supply caused by transportation controls. Higher freight charges have also pushed up retail prices, they said. On Thursday, the wholesale price of local cauliflower was Rs70 per kg at the Kalimati market, the country's largest bazaar for fresh produce. But retailers were selling cauliflower at Rs140 per kg, double the wholesale price. (Details on Pg 5)

Mountain districts are receiving more rainfall this monsoon

Manang sets a new record for daily rain, witnessing heavy flooding. Meteorologists say the phenomenon is unprecedented for an otherwise dry region.



In the first week of monsoon, Manang received unusually heavy rainfall that caused flooding.

CHANDAN KUMAR MANDAL

KATHMANDU, JUNE 18

An analysis of data on natural hazard event frequency shows that between 1971 and 2020, Manang was the district least affected by such events. In the first week of monsoon this

year, however, the mountain district north of the Himalayas witnessed heavy rainfall causing widespread floods and landslides. To understand the reason behind

the uncommon devastation, meteorologists say the rainfall patterns during the pre-monsoon months of March to May need to be analysed.

"Manang had already received too much rainfall between March and May. As a result, the land was already saturated, and the continuous heavy rainfall caused floods in the district, Indira Kadel, senior meteorologist with the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, told the Post.

Humde weather station of Manang recorded 232mm of pre-monsoon rain this year while the average pre-monsoon rainfall in the past six years was 135mm. In other words, the pre-monsoon rainfall was 172 percent of normal.

The rainfall recorded in Manang in the first week of monsoon is also already higher than normal. Since the beginning of June, Humde

of Manang has already recorded 84 percent of its average monsoon rainfall, according to the department's

Between June 12 and June 16, Humde received 175.8mm of rain. On June 15 it recorded 54mm. The next day, it set a new record of 82.23mm, surpassing the previous record of 41.5mm on June 6, 2020.

The amount of rain on June 15 and 16 is among the top three one day

records of rainfall since 2015, when data for the district started to be available

Normally, Humde receives 234mm rain during the monsoon months of June to September/October.

"As the surface had been already saturated [with pre-monsoon rain], not much water could go into the soil even after infiltration; so the rainwa-ter resulted in floods," said Kandel, who is also the chief of the Climate Section under the department. "Also, as the region has loose soil, rain causes fast soil erosion and debris to flow with the floodwater."

It was not only Manang but also neighbouring Mustang district, which is also north of the Himalayan mountains, has seen heavier than usual

During the pre-monsoon period, the Jomsom weather station of Mustang received 202 percent of its normal pre-monsoon rainfall. This year the weather station recorded 142mm of rain compared to the normal 70mm during March-May.

Since the monsoon began, Jomsom weather station has already received 64 percent of the season's rainfall with 86.5mm rain recorded between June 12

Jomsom's average monsoon rainfall is 160mm.

According to Kadel, these two districts received more rainfall this monsoon because of a weather system developed after collision between monsoon clouds coming from the Bay of Bengal and moisture coming from the Arabian Sea, supported by jet streams-relatively narrow bands of strong wind in the upper levels of the atmosphere. The weather phenomenon lifted clouds up to high mountains.

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THE SECOND WAVE OF

COVID-19

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Rise in Mahakali water level puts riverside settlements at risk of flooding

Rural roads in Darchula district have been disrupted due to floods and landslides triggered by heavy rainfall.



The water level in the river is inching closer to the danger mark, officials say

MANOJ BADU

The water level in the Mahakali river has risen following incessant rains for the past three days, raising fears of floods and inundation in nearby settle-

"The water level in the river is increasing day by day, as it hasn't stopped raining. The river has breached the temporary embankment in several places," said Gaji Karki, a

resident of Dattu in Darchula. According to the Police Post in Dattu, the water level in the river is inching closer to crossing the danger level marked at six metres. Security personnel said the river's water level is already at 5.8 metres.

The authorities have rebuilt the embankments in Khalanga swept away by the flooded Mahakali in 2013 to prevent floods in the district headquarters but a majority of settlements along the Mahakali river are protected only by temporary embankments.

According to the District Natural Disaster Management Centre, riverside settlements such as Dumling, Battibagad, Malaghatya, Naji, Tigram, Shribagad, Dhap, Dattu, Uku, and Lali are at high risk of floods

The District Administration Office has urged people living near river banks to stay on high alert. Chief District Officer Siddaraj Joshi said various settlements outside Khalanga are at risk with the increase of water level in the Mahakali river.

"We have asked people to stay alert since the possibility of floods in the Mahakali and other streams in the district is high. Security personnel are also kept on stand by for possible

Meanwhile, all rural roads in Darchula district have been disrupted due to floods and landslides triggered by heavy rainfall. According to the District Police Office, vehicular movement along the Khar-Khalanga, Darchula-Tinkar and Paribagad road sections is disrupted due to multiple landslides.

"Security personnel have been deployed to clear the landslide debris and resume vehicular movement,' said Narendra Bahadur Chand, the information officer at the District Police Office

In Tikapur of Kailali district, the rain-swollen Karnali river has started eroding land on both sides of the river. According to the local residents, the river is eroding the land not protected by permanent embankments.

Nirmala Kadayat, a resident of Tikapur, said various settlements in wards 7, 8, and 9 of Tikapur Municipality are at risk of floods. According to her, the river is eroding land at Bhurakhani, Daulatpur and Satti Karnali Community Forest. "The local people are worried, fearing possible floods in the settlement," she added.

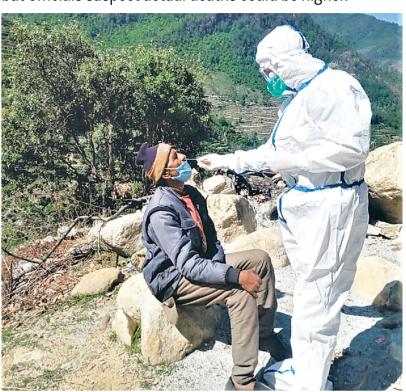
The water level has increased significantly in the Karnali river since the area has witnessed continuous rainfall in the past few days. This has put the Satti Karnali Community Forest area at risk of erosion, as the embankment construction work in the area is yet to be completed.

"The contractor cut down trees but left the work incomplete. As a result, the river is eroding the forest land," said Dhan Singh Saud, the chairman of the community forest users' group.

(Ganesh Chaudhary contributed reporting from Tikapur.)

Bajhang residents refuse Covid-19 tests to avoid missing out planting season

As many as 19 people have died of Covid-19 in Bajhang, but officials suspect actual deaths could be higher.



Out of 7,000 antigen testing kits that the district received, only 2,350 have been used.

BASANTA PRATAP SINGH

BAJHANG, JUNE 18

Last week, a 72-year-old man from Jalim in Bittahdchir Rural Municipality, Bajhang was bedridden due to fever and cough. Health workers from Deulek Primary Health Centre were called in for his treatment.

Jayaraj Awasthi, a health worker at the Primary Health Centre, went to the patient's house carrying medicines and antigen test kits. "The patient had shown all the symptoms of Covid-19. But his son did not allow us to perform Covid-19 test on him, said Awasthi.

Most villagers in the rural municipality are refusing to undergo Covid-19 tests fearing the stigma associated with the disease. The villagers cannot afford to miss the paddy planting season, say health workers.

"The local people are busy irrigating their fields. If they tested positive, they would have to go into isolation or to a hospital," said Awasthi.

"If they don't work in their fields, there will be nothing to harvest. The pandemic has threatened their lives and livelihood. It's difficult to convince them to undergo Covid-19 tests. They fear Covid-19 but also fear testing positive."

"I tried to alert the patient's family about the risks of not getting tested but they wouldn't listen to me. I gave him some medicine and came back, said Awasthi. "His wife is also showalso refused to get tested."

Last week, a health camp was organised at Dangaji in Thalara Municipality for general health consultation for the villagers and also to run Covid-19 tests on those with the symptoms. According to the municipality, around 100 individuals had arrived for a checkup but a majority of them refused to undergo antigen tests.

"Eighteen people agreed to undergo antigen tests. One person tested positive," said Bishal Ojha, a lab assistant of Thalara Rural Municipality. "We couldn't convince the rest to undergo tests."

A team of health workers from Luyata Health Post in Ward No. 4 of Jayprithvi Municipality also faced similar obstacles. They were deployed to pay door-to-door visits to conduct antigen tests but the health workers

returned without conducting any test. "There were people with Covid-19like symptoms but they refused to undergo testing," said Narendra Thapa, the in-charge at Luyata Health Post. "They were scared because they

would have to go into isolation during

the paddy planting season if they test

ed positive

According to the District Health Office in Bajhang, the threat of the coronavirus in rural villages is still high due to the hesitation among villagers to get tested and seek treatment.

A few weeks ago, the District Health Office launched a testing campaign with 7,000 antigen kits but the campaign failed to take off as nobody came forward for tests.

"We have used only 2,350 antigen kits out of the total 7,000 kits that we received since the start of the second wave of Covid-19. The villagers refuse to be tested even when we reach their doorsteps," said Narayan Joshi, the information officer at the District Health Office.

According to health officials, even symptomatic patients are refusing to get tested for fear of being sent to hospitals. The delay in testing and treatment has had serious consequences in villages in the district with the District Health Office estimating the number of coronavirus-related deaths in the district to be around 30 in the last few weeks.

"Since there were no tests conducted, we don't have the exact 30 coronavirus-related deaths and they were mostly caused due to delay in treatment," said Bhanu Bhakta Joshi, the chief at the District Health

"We have learnt that there have been more than 30 coronavirus-related deaths in Jayaprithvi, Bungal, Chhabis Pathivera, Durgathali and Khaptad Chhanna areas," he said.

According to the office record, 19 people have died of Covid-19 infection in Bajhang so far. A total of 1,593 people have tested positive for the disease in the district with 170 active cases. However, health workers say the actual number of Covid-19 cases could be

"People are dying almost every day but it's difficult to make the villagers understand the importance of timely testing and treatment to defeat the virus," said Joshi.

Mountain districts are receiving more rainfall

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Incessant heavy rainfall since Monday had flooded many small rivers and rivulets in Manang with floodwaters entering villages and causing Floods in the Marshyangdi river

and landslides, triggered by continuous rainfall since Monday evening, had displaced more than 350 people since then. Around 300 people are taking shelter in the new prison building in Chame, the district headquarters.

On Thursday, as many as 35 victims of floods and landslides-24 from Sirantal area of Naso Rural Municipality and 11 others from the Thoche area of the same rural municipality-were rescued by a Nepal Army helicopter.

On Friday, another 80 persons, who had gone to harvest yarsagumba in the highlands, were rescued by helian altitude metres, two days' walk away from Phu village. Phu is a two-day walking distance from Chame.

The yarsagumba collectors were left stranded due to snowfall, landslides and floods caused by the rains since

On Friday, another 88 people were rescued from lower altitudes of

Manang. According to Chief District Officer Bishnu Lamichhane, 139 villagers have been rescued from different parts of the districts until Friday.

Floods have inundated the whole of Talgaun, a village with more than 55 houses. In Chame, five houses are inundated and another five have been washed away. In Dharapani, ten houses have been flooded.

The devastation from rains in the mountain district has surprised mete-

"The region is too dry for such a scale of rainfall," said Kadel. "After a wet pre-monsoon, rainfall in Manang has been record-breaking this season.'

The department has been collecting rainfall data in Manang only since 2015 and therefore there isn't adequate data available over a long period to analyse the rarity of the devastation Talgaun was washed away by the

recent flooding, according to Kadel. "Mustang has also recorded a similar amount of rainfall, indicating both districts have received extreme rainfall that could cause damage," said Kadel. "On the basis of available data and our communication with local residents, there was continuous heavy

rainfall which was much above normal for the area.'

The amount of rainfall in the two mountain districts would be considered normal for a place like Pokhara,

"But it is extreme for a dry region like Manang," said Kadel. "Chances of flood and damage simply increase because infrastructures are not constructed accordingly. People's lifestyle is different in regions more prone to heavy rainfall. It was bound to cause massive damage as houses are constructed considering the dry climate.'

While most of the country awaited rain during the pre-monsoon period, which was largely dry across the country, Humde weather station recorded 51mm rain in April, higher than the month's normal of 37mm.

In May it received 166mm, more than six times the normal of

2015 and 2020. "This year's data prove that Manang has received too much rainfall in the last three months. In the past, the highest amount of daily rainfall would be between 20mm and 30mm,' said Kadel. "One can only imagine the situation when daily rainfall crossed 80mm in one day."

The forecast for this year's monsoon, which entered the country on June 11, is that rainfall in most parts of the country will be 'above normal'. Forecasts that high mountains and

mid-hills will receive above-normal rainfall mean mountain districts like Manang and Mustang could receive more rain in the remainder of the monsoon season. According to Kadel, the senior meteorologist, there is a 55 to 65 per-

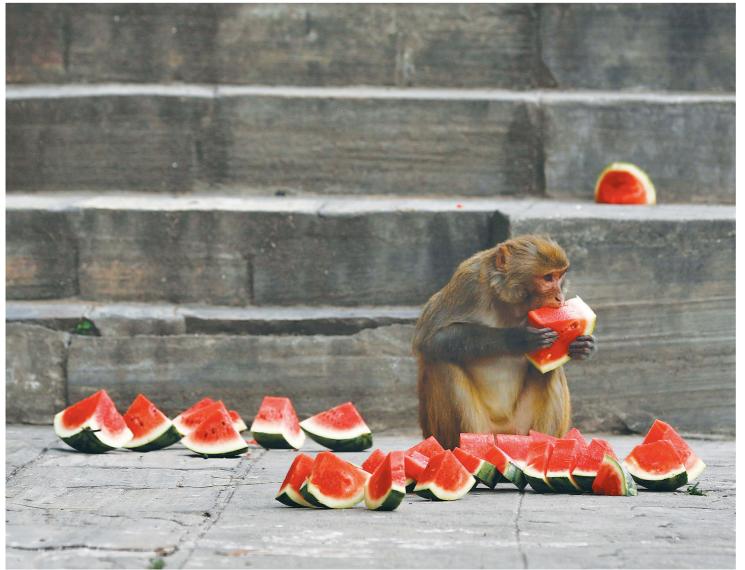
cent probability of high mountain areas receiving above normal rainfall this season. So far, the northern part of Gandaki Province and northwestern Bagmati Province, which borders Gandaki,

mountain districts. "Since there has already been a significant amount of rainfall, we cannot deny there will not be more rain dursaid Kadel.

have had significant rain among other

"There is the possibility of more rainfall in these two districts and elsewhere in the mountain region, which could lead to incidents similar to one witnessed in Manang.'

(Aash Gurung contributed reporting from Manang.)



A monkey eats a slice of watermelon provided by volunteers at Swayambu, Kathmandu on Friday.

Gandaki chief minister wins vote of confidence

31 votes cast in favour of Pokharel, 27 against him.

PRATIKSHA KAFLE KASKI, JUNE 18

Chief Minister of Gandaki Province Krishna Chandra Nepali Pokharel has secured a vote of confidence in the

Provincial Assembly on Friday. Pokharel filed a proposal at the assembly meeting the same day, seeking a vote of confidence. After the voting procedure, Speaker Netranath Adhikari informed that Pokharel secured 31 votes in the 60-member Provincial Assembly. As many as 27 votes were cast against the vote of

confidence motion. A total of 59 members, including Speaker Adhikari, were present during the Provincial Assembly meeting. All members except Adhikari used their voting rights.

Pokharel, a provincial assembly member elected from Nepali Congress, was appointed as the chief minister on June 12 after then chief minister Prithvi Subba Gurung lost the vote of confidence. Governor Sita Paudel appointed Pokharel as the chief minister under article 168 (5) of the Constitution of Nepal, 2015. He was appointed chief minister with the support of Nepali Congress, CPN (Maoist Centre), Rastriya Janamorcha and Janata Samajbadi Party.

According to the constitutional provision, the chief minister appointed under article 168 (5) has to win a vote of confidence within 30 days of his/ her appointment. Pokharel received the support of 15

members of Nepali Congress, 11 members of Maoist Centre (except speaker), two members each of Rastriya Janamorcha and Janata Samajbadi Party and independent member Rajiv Gurung also known as Dipak

The Provincial Assembly in Gandaki currently has 59 members. The Supreme Court recently decided to strip Rastriya Janamorcha member Krishna Thapa.

Supreme Court puts brakes on government's | Lockdown drags on plan to extract aggregates for export

Extracting the Chure resources in the name of decreasing trade deficit would degrade the environment, critics say.

The Supreme Court has issued an interim order to the government not to implement its policy for the fiscal year 2021-22 to extract sand, pebbles and stones for export.

Citing the fundamental right of citizens to clean environment in Article 30 of the constitution that says every citizen shall have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment, the court has directed the government not to implement the policy.

"It is not appropriate to implement point number 199 [of the fiscal budget] as using ordinance on issues like natural resources will have a long-term impact because that would interfere with the rights and effectiveness of the legislature," the Constitutional

The Constitutional Bench has also cited Article 51(g) that talks about policies relating to protection, promotion and use of natural resources saying that while using the national resources of the country inter-generational coordination and environmental balance should be given due importance

The Constitutional Bench comprising Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana and Justices Deepak Kumar Karki, Mira Khadka, Hari Krishna Karki and Bishwambhar Prasad Shrestha on Friday issued the order not to implement the decision until there is a final decision on the case.

Government had banned the extraction of sand and stones in the Chure region since July 2014.

While presenting the fiscal budget, Finance Minister Bishnu Poudel had said: "Based on environmental impact assessment, mine-based stones, pebbles and sand can be exported to minimise trade deficit.'

The decision was met with criticism. Seven different writ petitions have been registered at the Supreme Court, where the petitioners have claimed that extracting the Chure resources in the name of decreasing trade deficit with India would degrade the environment.

Following the petition, the apex court had ordered the government to furnish reasons behind the government policy within a week.

Environmentalists have welcomed the Supreme Court's decision.

The court's decision has created a breathing space for the people to expedite debate over the government's move,' said Madhukar Upadhya, an environment expert. "At least this development will help ignite debate among the

Upadhya, who also writes for the Post on environmental issues, said there are genuine demands of some people who say they need to extract aggregates to build their homes but the government has to decide the extraction sites.

"Extraction of sand and gravel has become a huge industry and is deeply intertwined with politics," said Upadhya. "All the expenses for the elections come from such business in which politicians

Government had banned the extraction of sand and stones in the Chure region since July 2014.

But Finance Minister Poudel came with the decision to export aggregates from the Chure region, drawing criticism from various sections of the society including all the political parties and environmentalists and conservationists.

"We have taken the decision to ban the export of sand and pebbles, citing that sensitivity of the rampant exploitation of the region would seriously affect the lives of more than half of the country's population," said Mahesh Acharya, for mer Finance Minister, who had decided to ban the export of the resources from Chure range. "We have decided to use the resources within the country only after conducting an Environment Impact Assessment for which committees of experts were formed.'

According to Acharya exploitation of Chure range is not just a problem of Nepal rather it has transnational impact of desertification and loss of rechargeable water sources

He said though the President Chure-Terai Madhesh Conservation Development Board had formed a master plan to conserve the fragile range but the subsequent governments failed to implement it properly.

but no relief package for the urban poor

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA

It has been over a month and a half since prohibitory orders were imposed in the Kathmandu Valley and many other districts to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, but little has been done to provide relief to the urban poor, most of whom have lost their livelihoods to the lockdown.

Neither the federal government nor provincial or local governments have come up with the relief measures for such people despite reports of people walking for hours every day just to have free meals distributed by certain charity organisations and community people.

Last year, when a lockdown was enforced for the first time starting March 23, 2020, the federal and local governments had announced relief packages for the poor people affected by the lockdown and the local governments of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur among other municipalities in the country had made arrangements to distribute food and other relief materials including free meals targeting the daily wage workers and the destitute.

But now both the local and federal officials are claiming that there are not many people seeking relief this year compared to last year and they had to give greater priority to saving lives instead of livelihoods due to the havoc created by the second wave of the pandemic. Nongovernmental organisations also have not come up with a plan to help the poor facing hand to mouth problems.

Raju Maharjan, spokesperson at the Lalitpur Metropolitan City said his office had to focus on disease control first because of the overwhelming number of Covid-19 cases this year. "We are aware of the plight of the daily wage workers and are planning a relief package if the existing lockdown prolongs," Maharjan told the Post

Lalitpur Metropolitan City had provided free meals for struggling families last year.

According to Maharajan, compared to the lockdown last year, there haven't been many requests for relief this time. This year's lockdown, first enforced on April 29, has been extended several times and the latest extension will remain in force until June 21.

The Kathmandu Metropolitan City also has not announced any relief package for the poor. According to the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, the line minis try of local governments, it does not have information of any other municipalities in the

relief packages to the unorganised sector workers.

"Some municipalities outside Kathmandu have distributed relief packages to a total of 14,000 households during the second wave of the pandemic," said Basanta Acharya, spokesperson at the Ministry.

He said the federal government also has not initiated any efforts to provide relief this year as demand for relief is not so high. "But, we are not saying people won't come if we start distributing relief," he added.

According to the Federal Affairs Ministry, 5.7 million people from 1.8 million families were provided relief packages during last year's lockdown. About Rs3 billion was spent in relief last year, according to the

As per the federal government's relief package, each poor family with three members or more was provided 30 kilos of rice, three kilos of pulses, two kilos of salt, two litres of cooking oil, four soaps and two kilos of sugar. This quantity of relief materials would be available for a family with three or more members. Families with two members received half the amounts.

This year relief has not been the priority of most of the non-governmental organisations as well with only a few of them providing relief packages to the

According to Jitram Lama, president of the NGO Federation Nepal, a grouping of local non governmental organisations, problems related to hunger didn't appear prominently this year compared to last year as the daily wage workers in the cities managed food for a relatively longer period and many of them left for their villages before the lockdown.

"Maybe many people learnt from last year's experiences and prepared themselves for the impending situation," he said. "Relief package for the poor was also on the government's priority this time as the aid agencies were asked to assist in setting up health infrastructure instead.

As per the government's request, both domestic and foreign non-governmental organisations invested in health facilities, oxygen cylinders, medical equipment and oxygen concentrators among other things. According to the Social Welfare Council, the domestic and international non-governmental organisations have so far committed around Rs1.2 billion in the areas of controlling the pandemic.

lockdown further then we will have to think about providing relief,"

GORKHA: The District Administration Office in Gorkha has extended prohibitory orders in the district for a week. On the recommendation of the District Covid-19 Crisis Management Shaligram Sharma Paudel prolonged the prohibitory order until June 26 to

on stationeries and allowed them to Bagmati government to provide Rs25.5 million

to six hospitals

Centre, Chief District Officer

control Covid-19 infection. The

administration has eased restrictions

BRIEFING

in Gorkha

Prohibitory order extended

HETAUDA: Bagmati provincial government has decided to provide Rs 25.5 million to six different hospitals to control Covid-19 and provide treatment to the infected people. The provincial natural disaster directorate committee chaired by Chief Minister Dormani Paudel on Thursday decided to distribute the amount immediately through the social development ministry. As per the decision, Khwapa Hospital and Nepal Korea Friendship Hospital in Bhaktapur will receive Rs 10 million and Rs3.5 million respectively. Similarly, Manmohan Memorial Community Hospital in Kathmandu will be provided Rs 5 million, Nuwakot City Community Hospital Rs 3 million while Sing Hospital in Dolakha and the Covid-19 hospital in Likhu of Nuwakot will receive Rs2 million each.



A woman returns home carrying firewood in Bhaktapur.

POST PHOTO: DEEPAK KO

Nepal talks about vaccines from China. And the Chinese are not happy

>> Continued from page 1

The Post's story was based on confirmation from two ministers and two government secretaries who were present at Monday's Cabinet that decided to procure 4 million doses of vaccine from Sinopharm. The Post reported that the price was yet to be fixed given the nature of the agreement, but as per officials, it could be around \$10 per dose

"Since it was mostly reported by the English media, we issued the statement in English," Dr Samir Kumar Adhikari, joint spokesperson for the ministry who signed the statement, told the Post on Friday. He refused to

Ever since the coronavirus second wave hit the country, the government has been scrambling for vaccines. After India, on which the government was over-reliant for the jabs, put a ban on vaccine exports in the wake of its own coronavirus crisis, the government was looking to China as well as other countries to procure the shots.

Buying vaccines from China, however, was easier said than done given the non-disclosure agreement proposal by Sinopharm. A non-disclosure agreement entails not quoting the price of the commodity, quantity in advance and mode of payments among other details.

But after failing to acquire vacthe Cabinet on Monday approved the Health Ministry's proposal to buy 4 million doses from Sinopharm.

The same day Prime Minister Oli informed the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre, which he heads, about procuring the vaccine from China. Similarly, on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Mahaseth told a TV channel that the government is buying 4 million doses of Sinopharm vac-

cine from China. Many find the Health Ministry statement, blaming the media for disseminating information about the vaccine, uncalled for, as the prime minister and foreign minister themselves were discussing the matter publicly.

Officials admitted that the statement followed concerns from the

An official at the Health Ministry who did not wish to be named said there was pressure from "higher ups" to issue the statement.

An official at Chinese embassy in Kathmandu confirmed to the Post that Sinopharm had taken note of several media reports about the vaccine deal, provisions of non-disclosure agreement, price and logistics with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

"We also reminded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the 'commercial process agreement'," the Chinese embassy official told the Post over the phone. "Both sides should follow the due process of the agreement after its

According to the official, a non-disclosure agreement is normal international practice.

"Several other vaccine manufacturing companies [have] also signed similar agreements with many countries. Why has this become an issue in Nepal?" said the official. "Now, no one should interfere with this deal signed between the Sinopharm and Nepal's Health Ministry. Negotiations are ongoing between the Health Ministry and Sinopharm on how to deliver vaccines in different tranches... or in months and quantities."

Non-disclosure agreements on vaccine procurement have been an issue globally, as in such deals, among many other items, the price is confidential. Such agreements are very much in practice in many countries. However, in Nepal's case, a non-disclosure agreement is barred by the country's

Experts on public procurement told

the Post last month that the existing law barred any non-disclosure agreement to ensure transparency. Though the government has introduced a "sunset law" to ease the procurement process in view of the Covid-19 crisis, it does not speak about the non-disclosure agreement.

Vaccine deal with Sinopharm, however, has stoked controversy in other South Asian countries as well.

In Bangladesh, after the price was disclosed, the country's finance ministry had issued a statement similar to the one issued by Nepal's Health

According to the Daily Star, the Bangladesh government on May 27 approved the proposal of procuring 15 million doses of Sinopharm vaccine from China. An official of the Cabinet division at a briefing told journalists that the government was going to procure each dose at \$10.

After the media reported about the vaccine procurement, a finance ministry official, according to the paper, requested the media not to mention the price for the "greater interest of the country". The same paper, earlier this month, reported China was annoyed with Bangladesh for making public the price of the vaccine.

"China is a little upset that the procurement price of the Sinopharm vaccine was made public in Bangladesh," said Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen. Disclosure of procurement price of

Sinopharm vaccine had also sparked controversy in Sri Lanka last month, after reports suggested that the government was set to pay \$5 more for per dose compared to Bangladesh. There was a similar displeasure

from China at how the price was being made public in Nepal, according to a senior government official.

"Everyone is giving interviewsfrom the prime minister to our ambassador in China to ministers and officials—and they are discussing everything about the vaccine procurement. This definitely affects the business of Sinopharm because it has different kinds of business strategies with different countries," the official, joint secretary at the Prime Minister's Office familiar with the Chinese concerns, told the Post. "This is a legally binding agreement. But look at our top officials. They are happily discussing the price, quantity and the money for logistics. The [Health Ministryl statement was issued in view of such speculations.

The Chinese embassy did not hesitate to say that the manufacturing firm is not happy at the disclosure of the price in Nepal.

"Sinopharm is not happy with some media reports in Nepal, particularly about the price of the vaccine at which it is going to sell to Nepal," said the embassy official who spoke on condition of anonymity. "If you have signed the agreement, you should follow it, and should not disclose it.'

The Chinese official's statement, however, clearly contradicts what Nepali officials are saying-that the agreement is yet to be signed.

A Health Ministry official told the Post that reports about buying Sinopharm vaccines preceded the agreement, after information "was leaked" to the media.

"The Cabinet has approved the proposal to buy the vaccine and has decided to sign a non-disclosure agreement for the same," said the official requesting anonymity. "But the agreement is yet to be signed. We are still in the process to sign the deal for the vaccine import, but information was leaked long before any progress could

During the interview with the Post, the Chinese embassy official also tried to explain why disclosure of the price and other related information is a cause for concern for the manufacturing company.

According to the official, since negotiations are underway with various other countries too, such disclosure can affect the company's busi-

ness and credibility. "We know it's taxpayers' money but let's view it from a different angle," said the official. "Such revelations of the price and other facts and figures could hamper negotiations with other countries. We also understand the problem Nepal is facing, but if you want the vaccine, you should follow the agreement."

Amid a deepening vaccine crisis in Nepal, any government plan or decision to procure the jabs from any company or firm generates immense interest among the media and the public.

After China provided an additional 1 million doses of Sinopharm vaccine earlier this month—after supplying 800,000 doses in March—the government plan to procure more doses from the north is a welcome move, but secrecy in the deal is a cause for concern, people well-versed on Nepal's public procurement say.

"There should not be any ifs or buts when it comes to buying the vaccine. This should be the topmost priority of the government," Shanta Raj Subedi, a former finance secretary, told the Post. "But the government should make a clear statement that procurement is being done under a 'government-to-government' deal without the involvement of any middleman. But the government does not seem to have learned a lesson from the past mistakes and controversies.

According to Subedi, there are rare incidents in which Nepal has signed a non-disclosure agreement with any firm.

Subedi agrees that misinformation and dissemination of half-baked information could spoil any vaccine deal. "But the government should have been cautious about it," Subedi told

Government sources said that a "commercial process agreement" was signed between the Department of Health Services and Sinopharm electronically earlier this month with the Nepali side initially showing interest

to procure 10 million doses. "During the initial negotiations, Sinopharm offered to provide 2 million doses. Later we requested them to increase the quantity. Then we got an offer that we could get 4 million doses for which the price and other procurement conditions were kept secret as per the non-disclosure agreement," a senior Health Ministry official told the Post. "As soon as the Cabinet gave the nod, reports surfaced, some even quoting the price and quantity. The Chinese were not happy."

A senior official at the Prime Minister's Office said that the objective of introducing the "sunset law" was to ease the procurement process.

"After the introduction of the sunset law through an ordinance, we expedited the process to procure vaccines from China," the official who also spoke on condition of anonymity told the Post.

Proponents of transparency, media freedom and freedom of expression say the question is not whether Nepal is shelling out more money to buy the vaccine or getting the jabs at a cheaper price. Rather the question is whether the taxpayers' money is being spent in a transparent way or not, according to them.

"The objective of introducing the 'sunset law' is to shorten the procurement process, not sign a secret deal,' said Taranath Dahal, chairman of the Freedom Forum, a civil liberty group. 'We know this is an emergency situation, but the government should maintain transparency.

(Arjun Poudel contributed reporting.)

BRIEFING

Hundreds of vaccinated health workers infected

JAKARTA: More than 350 doctors and healthcare workers have caught Covid-19 in Indonesia despite being vaccinated with Sinovac and dozens have been hospitalised, officials said as concerns grow about the efficacy of some vaccines against more infectious variants. Most of the workers were asymptomatic and self-isolating at home, said Badai Ismoyo, head of the health office in the district of Kudus in central Java. Kudus, which has about 5,000 healthcare workers, is battling an outbreak believed to be driven by the more transmissible Delta variant.

UN watchdog seeks release of two Bahrainis from death row

DURAL: A United Nations human rights watchdog has called on Bahrain to release and compensate two activists facing death sentences saying they are being arbitrarily detained. In July 2020 Bahrain's highest court had upheld death sentences against Mohammed Ramadhan and Husain Moosa for bombing a convoy and killing a police officer, after convictions in December 2014 that human rights groups say were based on confessions extracted through torture

Palestinians clash with Israel

police at Jerusalem holy site JERUSALEM: Palestinians protested after Friday prayers at the Al-Agsa mosque compound in Jerusalem and briefly clashed with Israeli police. leaving three demonstrators wounded. A series of far more violent clash es at the site in April and May helped ignite last month's 11-day Gaza war. The site is the third holiest in Islam and the holiest for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount because it was the location of the biblical temples. This time, the police refrained from entering the compound and appeared to act with more restraint. possibly on the orders of Israel's newly sworn-in government. The Red Crescent emergency service said two Palestinians were wounded by rubber bullets and a third by a stone that was thrown. Young Palestinians could be seen throwing stones at police stationed at an entrance to the compound, who fired stun grenades and rubbercoated bullets

richest state to gear up for third wave of Covid-19 cases

A third wave of infections is likely to hit India by October, and although it will be better controlled than the last outbreak, it will remain a public health threat.

BENGALURU, JUNE 18

Health officials in India's richest state have urged authorities to step up preparations against a possible third wave of coronavirus infections, they said on Friday, as lockdowns eased less than a month after a surge that killed thousands.

India's second most populous state of Maharashtra lifted many curbs this week in its cities, such as the financial

India has managed to inoculate only a little over 5 percent of all 950 million eligible adults so far.

capital of Mumbai, re-opening malls, movie theatres and gyms at 50 percent capacity and freeing offices from staff attendance limits.

"We should have a clear plan, and keep our preparations ready for the next few weeks, whenever the next wave comes," Rahul Pandit, a member of the state's Covid task force and a director of Fortis Hospitals Mumbai, told Reuters.

"Our efforts should be directed in delaying the wave as much as we can, and even try to prevent it.

A Reuters poll of medical experts showed a third wave of infections is likely to hit India by October, and although it will be better controlled than the last outbreak, the pandemic will remain a public health threat for at least another year.

Maharashtra, the epicentre of India's second wave, has yet to fully emerge from it, Pandit added, after having gone into lockdown in early April as the surge pushed sparse healthcare facilities to breaking point.

As media broadcast images of large crowds in markets and streets, with virtually no social distancing, India reported on Friday 62,480 new infections over the past 24 hours, with deaths at a two-month low of

India, along with Brazil, is one of the countries reporting the highest seven-day daily average of

Maharashtra, with 9,830 new infections overnight, accounts for about a fifth of India's total of 29.76 million infections. Its death toll stands at more than 116,000.

Crowds and traffic also filled streets in other cities, from the capital of New Delhi to the southern tech hub of Bengaluru, though experts cautioned that a race to resume business activities could compromise vaccination

"The government on its part has to ramp up vaccination to reach a target of 10 million jabs a day and also unleash a blitzkrieg about the advantages of vaccination to overcome vaccine hesitancy," said Harsh Mahajan, president of Nathealth, a grouping of private healthcare pro-

Although India is the world's largest vaccine producer, it has managed to inoculate only a little over 5 percent of all 950 million eligible

Experts urge India's | Global displacement from war, crises doubles in decade, UN says

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, the number of people fleeing war and persecution continued rising last year, with global displacement climbing to over 82 million-double the figure a decade ago, the UN said Friday.

A fresh report from the UN refugee agency showed global displacement figures swelled by around three million in 2020 after an already record-breaking year in 2019, leaving a full one percent of humanity uprooted and displaced.

The report highlighted how drawnout crises like those in Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen were continuing to force people to flee, while eruptions of violence in places like Ethiopia and Mozambique were causing surging displacement.

The fact that the numbers rose for the ninth straight year was all the more devastating because Covid-19 restrictions had been expected to limit displacement

During the pandemic, "everything else has stopped, including the economies, but wars and conflict and violence and discrimination and persecution, all the factors that pushed these people to flee, have continued," UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi told

The UN agency found that by the end of 2020, a record 82.4 million people were living as refugees or asylum seekers, or in so-called internal displacement within their own countries, up from some 40 million in 2011.

A full 42 percent of the world's displaced are girls and boys under the

"The tragedy of so many children being born into exile should be reason enough to make far greater efforts to prevent and end conflict and violence," Grandi said.

Some 26.4 million people were living as refugees at the end of 2020, including 5.7 million Palestinians.

Some 3.9 million Venezuelans were also displaced beyond their borders without being considered refugees, while 4.1 million people were registered worldwide as asylum seek-

But while both refugee and asylum seeker numbers remained relatively flat from 2019, the number of people displaced within their own countries



An intensifying Islamist insurgency has forced many to flee their homes in Mozambique

surged by more than two million to 48 million, the report said.

This was perhaps not surprising, given that the factors that generally force people to flee did not disappear during the pandemic, but the possibility to cross borders largely did.

In 2020, at least 164 countries closed their borders because of Covid-19, and more than half of them made no exceptions for asylum seekers and refugees fleeing for their lives.

"In a situation of increased conflict and violence, in a situation in which borders have been difficult to cross because of Covid, inevitably the figure... that has gone up is that of internally displaced people (IDPs)," Grandi told reporters.

Last year, more than 11 million people were newly displaced—slightly more than in 2019—with most in just a handful of conflict-wracked countries and regions, the report showed.

They include Syria, which after more than a decade of war counts 13.5 million people displaced either inside or outside the country-more than half of its population and a sixth of the global displacement total.

More than two-thirds of the world's refugees meanwhile come from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and

A number of new crises have also sparked significant displacement, the report said, pointing to Ethiopia's violence-hit Tigray region, which saw an exodus into Sudan of over 54,000 people in the final months of 2020 alone.

Hundreds of thousands of people

also escaped deadly jihadist violence in northern Mozambique, while hundreds of thousands more were freshly displaced in Africa's restive Sahel

The vast majority of the world's refugees are hosted in countries neighbouring crisis areas, mainly in poorer parts of the world.

Turkey remained the host of the world's largest refugee population totalling some 3.7 million, followed by Colombia with 1.7 million, Pakistan and Uganda with 1.4 million each and Germany with 1.2 million.

While needs are continuously rising, solutions for the displaced seemed to dwindle last year. Over the course of 2020, only around

3.2 million IDPs and just 251,000 refugees returned to their homes, marking drops of 40 and 21 percent respectively And only 34,400 vulnerable refugees

were resettled in third countries last year-the lowest level in 20 years, the

"Solutions require global leaders and those with influence to put aside their differences, end an egoistic approach to politics, and instead focus on preventing and solving conflict and ensuring respect for human rights,' Grandi said.

Masked Palestinians wearing the Palestinian flag are seen in front of the Dome of the Rock Mosque at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City on Friday.

Russian-annexed Crimea orders partial evacuation of Yalta over floods

OSCOW, JUNE 18

Crimea on Friday ordered the evacuation of parts of the city of Yalta after heavy rain caused major flooding on the Black Sea peninsula.

The region, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, has declared a state of emergency and sought help from the military to contain the damage caused by the floods.

In Yalta, a popular tourist destination on the peninsula's southern coast, authorities ordered an evacuation as they scrambled to contain rising water levels. They said one person had died after being swept away by the current, TASS news agency reported.

"We are first evacuating the people from flooded areas in the city centre and those located near rivers," Yanina Pavlenko, head of the city's administration, said in a statement.

Footage from the city of around 80,000 people showed cars almost completely submerged in murky water.

witnessed rain this heavy in nearly a century, urged the population to stock up on drinking water after the city cut off the water supply and blocked Power was also cut in Yalta and in

Kerch, a city in eastern Crimea, to prevent equipment from being damaged in the floods, officials said. Known for its jagged coastline and

mild climate, Crimea was a favoured destination for 19th century Russian nobility and Soviet workers state-funded holidays. Since its annexation by Moscow,

Crimea has continued to be a popular destination for Russian tourists, with the authorities investing heavily to link the peninsula to southern Russia via a massive road and rail bridge. Ukraine says it wants the peninsula

North Korea's Kim vows to be ready for confrontation with US

ASSOCIATED PRESS SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA, JUNE 18

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered his government to be prepared for both dialogue and confrontation with the Biden administrationbut more for confrontation-state media reported on Friday, days after the United States and others urged the North to abandon its nuclear pro-

gramme and return to talks. Kim's statement indicates he'll likely push to strengthen his nuclear arsenal and increase pressure on Washington to give up what North Korea considers a hostile policy toward the North, though he'll also prepare for talks to resume, some experts say.

During an ongoing ruling party meeting Thursday, Kim analysed in detail the policy tendencies of the US under President Joe Biden and clarified steps to be taken in relations with Washington, the Korean Central News Agency said. It did not specify the steps.

Kim "stressed the need to get prepared for both dialogue and confrontation, especially to get fully prepared for confrontation in order to protect the dignity of our state" and ensure national security, it said.

In 2018-19, Kim held a series of summits with then-President Donald Trump to discuss North Korea's advancing nuclear arsenal. But the negotiations fell apart after Trump rejected Kim's calls for extensive sanctions relief in return for a partial surrender of his nuclear capability.

Biden's administration has worked to formulate a new approach on North Korea's nuclear programme that it describes as "calibrated and practical." Details of his North Korea policy haven't been publicised, but US officials have suggested Biden will seek a middle ground between Trump's direct meetings with Kim and former President Barack Obama's "strategic patience" to

curb Kim's nuclear programme. Earlier this week, leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy nations issued a statement calling for the complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and "the verifiable and irreversible abandonment" North Korea's nuclear and missile

edition day after arrest of editors AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE executives, including editor Ryan Law and

HONG KONG, JUNE 18

Hong Kong's pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper hit the stands Friday a day after police raided its newsroom, with an extra-large print run and a characteristic message of defiance emblazoned on its front that read: "We must press on"

The paper and its jailed owner Jimmy Lai have long been a thorn in Beijing's side with unapologetic support for the financial hub's pro-democracy movement and scathing criticism of China's authoritarian leaders.

But those same leaders are now determined to see it silenced as they press ahead with a sweeping crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong.

More than 500 officers raided the paper's newsroom on Thursday in an operation authorities said was sparked by articles that allegedly appealed for sanctions against China.

Kim-hung, were arrested under Hong Kong's new national security law on charges of

Hong Kong democracy paper runs defiant

Apple Daily and its jailed owner Jimmy Lai have long been criticising leaders in Beijing.

Staff returned to a newsroom gutted of many computers and hardrives which had been carted away in police evidence bags.

But they pressed on throughout the night to get the next day's edition out, as they have for the

This time, they were surrounded

by a gaggle of reporters from rival outlets documenting the seemingly inexorable decline of media freedoms in their city, an international media hub.

Editors settled on a simple front page featuring pictures of the five arrested executives with a straight news headline that read: "National security police searched Apple, arrested five people, seized 44 news material hard disks.

Underneath, in a bold yellow font, they printed "We must press on", words the paper said Cheung told staff as he was led away by police in handcuffs.

The company opted for a 500,000 print run-far beyond its current daily circulation of around 80,000 copies—hoping Hong Kongers who want a greater say in how their city is run might snap up the historic edition.

In the working class district of Mongkok, dozens of residents were queuing in the early morning hours for the first edition as it was delivered to news stands.

"Usually we sell around 60 copies but tonight, we just sold 1,800," the owner of one stand, who did not give

his name, told AFP. "Now it is all sold out. We ordered 3,000 so we are still waiting

for the rest to come," he added. A 40-year-old product developer, who gave her first name Polly, said she

bought ten copies.

many enjoyed the freedom of press and we were able to say anything," she told

different, it has deteriorated so much

"But just within one year it's all

and everything is happening so quickly," she added. Another customer, 45-year-old

Steven Chow, snapped up three "There is no perfect media, but it

(Apple Daily) is a unique voice in Hong Kong," he said. "You may not like it, but I think you

need to let them have their voice and survive, it is important.'

MONEY

Vegetables cost more due to incessant rain, lockdown restrictions

Deliveries have declined to 450 tonnes daily from 600 tonnes due to the rains, officials say.

KRISHANA PRASAIN KATHMANDU, JUNE 18

Kathmandu Valley residents reeling from the pandemic received another wallop in the form of costlier vegetables, with traders attributing the jump in prices to incessant rain and lockdown restrictions

As wholesale markets are running low on inventory due to supply disruptions, prices of kitchen staples such as potatoes, tomatoes and seasonal vegetables have risen sharply in the valley, traders said.

People in Kathmandu are bearing the brunt of an extended lockdown. Vendors are finding it hard to transport vegetables to market because of stay-home orders. Traders said prices of fresh produce shot up due to short supply caused by transportation controls. Higher freight charges have also pushed up retail prices, they said.

On Thursday, the wholesale price of local cauliflower was Rs70 per kg at the Kalimati Fruits and Vegetable Market, the country's largest bazaar for fresh produce. But retailers were selling cauliflower at Rs140 per kg, double the wholesale price.

The wholesale price of string beans was Rs100 per kg, while bitter gourd was priced at Rs50 per kg, bottle gourd at Rs60 per kg, sponge gourd at Rs60 per kg and long cowpea at Rs60 per kg.

On the retail side, cabbage costs Rs85 per kg, bitter gourd Rs110 per kg, bottle gourd Rs120 per kg, and beans Rs70 per kg. Local cucumber was being sold for Rs145 per kg, okra for Rs70 per kg, long bean for Rs90 per kg, squash for Rs80 per kg, sponge gourd for Rs140 per kg and green pumpkin for Rs90 per kg.

Binaya Shrestha, deputy director at the Kalimati Fruits and Vegetable Market Development Board, said that the daily supply of vegetables had declined to 450 tonnes for the last three days from 600 tonnes due to the



Traders say prices of fresh produce shot up due to a short supply caused by transportation controls.

rains. The lockdown that began on April 29 has been extended for the fourth time until June 21, and this has also hit the supply chain, causing transportation costs to increase sharply, traders said. The increased cost of hauling has been passed on to consumers

Shrestha said that the wholesale price had not increased much, but if the rains continue, it will damage crops and create obstacles in transportation. "If that happens, prices will increase sharply," Shrestha said.

"Unruly retail prices need to be controlled by the local government and concerned departments with proper inspection," he added. The Kalimati Fruits and Vegetable Market that is open for wholesale business till 10 am receives vegetables from Dhading, Panchkhal Nuwakot,

Makwanpur, Chitwan, Sarlahi, Bara and Parsa. The market used to receive around 700 tonnes of vegetables daily before the lockdown started.

Bijay KC, president of the Kalanki Vegetable Market, an agriculture market hosting 115 stalls, said that the monsoon rains had created havoc in the regular supply of vegetables leading to a hike in prices.

"Wholesale prices rose by 10 percent within a few days with a drop in supply. The price of vegetables will increase further if the rains contin-

"The supply line from Chitwan has been cut off due to landslides at different places on the highway leading to Kathmandu. Deliveries plunged by more than half in just a few days,

"We used to receive around 70

tonnes of vegetables daily before the monsoon, now we are getting only 40 tonnes," he said. The monsoon in Nepal began on June 11 this year.

According to Nepal Rastra Bank, the country imported vegetables worth Rs12.99 billion in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year (mid-July to mid-May), a 14 percent rise year-on-year. During the same period in the last fiscal year, imports were valued at Rs11.40 billion. Nepal buys vegetables like potato, lemon and onion and varied fruits from India.

The monsoon entered the country last Friday and it has been pouring since then. The weather forecaster is expecting above normal rainfall this season, and heavy floods and landslides are predicted which will damage monsoon crops ready to be

Pacific undersea cable project sinks after US warns against Chinese bid

A World Bank-led project declined to award a contract to lay sensitive undersea communications cables after Pacific island governments heeded US warnings that participation of a Chinese company posed a security threat, two sources told Reuters.

The former Huawei Marine Networks, now called HMN Technologies and majority owned by Shanghai-listed Hengtong Optic-Electric Co Ltd, submitted a bid for the \$72.6 million project priced at more than 20 percent below rivals Alcatel Submarine Networks (ASN), part of Finland's Nokia, and Japan's NEC, the sources said.

The East Micronesia Cable system was designed to improve communications in the island nations of Nauru, Kiribati and Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), by providing underwater infrastructure with a far greater data capacity than satellites.

Two sources with direct knowledge of the tender told Reuters that the project reached a stalemate due to security concerns raised within the island nations over HMN Tech's bid. The project's planned connection to a sensitive cable leading to Guam, a US territory with substantial military assets, heightened those security concerns

"Given there was no tangible way to remove Huawei as one of the bidders, all three bids were deemed non-compliant," one of those sources said.

The source said that HMN Tech was in a strong position to win the bid due to the terms overseen by the development agencies, prompting those wary of Chinese involvement to find an expedient solution to end the tender.

The World Bank said in a statement to Reuters that it was working with the respective governments to map out the next steps

"The process has concluded without an award due to non-responsiveness to the requirements of the bidding documents," the Washington-based multilateral lender said.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said in a statement to Reuters that all parties should provide a non-discriminatory business environment that companies from all countries, including China, can participate in.

"As a matter of principle, I want to emphasise that Chinese companies have always maintained an excellent record in cyber security," the spokesperson said.

"The Chinese government has always encouraged Chinese companies to engage in foreign investment and cooperation according to market principles, international regulations and local laws.

The three island nations involved in the project were represented on the assessment Development agencies typically review the committee's recommendations to ensure the selected bidder complies with the agencies' policies and procedures. A second development bank involved in the project, the Asian Development Bank, referred questions from Reuters to the World Bank as the lead agency.

A spokesman for Nokia-owned ASN told Reuters the company was not authorised to comment on confidential information. NEC did not respond

During the bidding process last year, Washington detailed its concerns in a diplomatic note sent to FSM. which has military defence arrangements with the United States under a decades-old agreement.

The note said Chinese firms posed a security threat because they are required to co-operate with Beijing's intelligence and security services, an assertion rejected by China.

FOREX Pound Sterling 10.76 Japanese Yen 18.41 Chinese Yuan Qatari Riyal 28.63 Malaysian Ringit

PRICE PER TOLA **BULLION** Rs 90,800

Saudi Arab Riyal

31.59



Gharaunda, in the Northern state of Haryana, India.

Thai tourism set for sluggish reboot as Phuket stutters on 'sandbox'

Thailand's planned reopening of the resort island Phuket next month to vaccinated visitors, bypassing quarantine requirements, has met a lukewarm response, with hotel bookings indicating expected occupancy of less than 20 percent so far.

The "Phuket Sandbox" initiative from July 1 will allow free movement on the island for tourists fully vaccinated against Covid-19, with no self-isolation on arrival. They will be given a green light to travel elsewhere in Thailand after 14 days.

But there are a few tricky conditions, too plained that uncertainty and constant rule changes are deterring bookings. The plan won't be finalised until later this month.

"This will be a slow process. None of us are expecting a 100 percent occupancy on July 2," said Anthony Lark, president of the Phuket Hotels Association.

Thai Airways is on board, with direct flights from six European cites to Phuket from July, although it anticipates only a fraction of seats being filled, with about 100 passengers in the first week, one the airline's representatives said.

For an economy reliant on tourism for jobs and consumption, the new arrivals won't bring immediate relief, although removal of the costly, two-week quarantine requirements that deterred tourists for more than a year offers some hope.

"We're seeing strong interest, particularly from the Middle East, UK, Europe and Scandinavia already, to return to Phuket gradually," Lark said.

Thailand lost about \$50 billion in tourism revenue last year when foreign arrivals plunged 83 percent to 6.7 million, from a record 39.9 million in 2019. The slump was attributed to global travel curbs and Thailand's tough entry requirements.



Empty chairs are seen on a beach which is usually full of tourists, amid fear of Covid-19 in Phuket, Thailand.

Phuket was particularly hard hit by job losses and business closures

The government hopes the Phuket Sandbox will draw 129,000 visitors to the country in the third quarter—a far cry from the average 3.3 million monthly arrivals to Thailand in 2019. Typically, a quarter of Thailand's visitors go to Phuket

Thailand had just 28,701 visitors in the first four months of this year.

One Phuket hotel owner said the sandbox initiative was "a bunch of bull" that would make little difference, in part because much of the target audience-middle class and wealthy Asians-must quarantine upon their return home.

"More than 50 percent of Phuket tourism comes from China," said the hotelier, who asked not to be named.

"Without that market it will be difficult."

The island's hotel association has projected a gradual increase in occupancy to 30 percent-40 percent towards year-end, rising from 10 percent-20 percent over July-October, which includes local bookings.

Several major airlines are backing the plan and offering direct flights, including Emirates, El Al, Air France, Qatar Airways, British Airways and Cathay Pacific, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

But a few obstacles remain, with outbound movement restrictions in some key markets, like China, Japan and Malaysia, while Thai health authorities have banned visitors from some high-risk countries,

Critics also complain of onerous conditions, like mandatory swab tests, insurance coverage of a minimum \$100,000 for Covid-19 treatment and use of a tracking application.

VACANCY

Job Title: Global Data & Business Intelligence Manager **Number Of Positions: 1**

Sprout Technology Service Pvt. Ltd is looking for a Global Data & Business Intelligence Manager with proven experience in managing all activities related to the development, administration, design, installation, configuration, maintenance, support and utilization of business data assets and supporting Business Intelligence services across the company.

Required Experience and Qualification:

- At least a Bachelor's Degree in Management of Information Systems from an internationally accredited University.
- At least 5 years of professional experience with at least 3 years in a managerial position.
- Experience with development and implementation of processes and policies that serve to safeguard the company's global business data strategy and business intelligence services. • Experience with Waterfall, Agile, Scrum and
- Kanban methodologies in an enterprise environment. Leadership in implementing the above mentioned methodologies in a team of more than 25 individuals is preferred. • Experience with development of ETL framework
- for SSIS-based data movement with experience of implementation of cloud based dimensional datamart using various tools including Azure, Power Pivot, Power BI, SQL etc.

Job Title: Director of Delivery Number Of Positions: 1

As a Director of Delivery to help us develop and lead a high performance Delivery team in Nepal so that we can deliver high quality work to our clientsprimarily in the USA, Australia and Europe. You will develop a vision and execute strategies to implement in order to create efficiencies across the department as we scale in Nepal.

Required Experience and Qualification:

- MBA from an international university. ■ Minimum 8 years of experience leading large cross
- functional teams on an international level. Experience in maintaining profitability by managing scope, profit margins, revenue, growth
- strategies and cost schedules of Service Delivery. • Experience managing critical projects with investments worth more than \$50 million.
- Experience managing enterprise platforms.
- Proven experience working with big western clients in an extremely demanding environment.
- Experience reporting to the C-level at a multinational company.

Qualified candidates are requested to submit their resume along with a cover letter by post at P.O. Box 8975, EPC 2283 by 26th June, 2021 or through email at nepal.talent@cloudfactory.com Nepalese citizens will be given preference for the position.

India's roadside restaurateurs count cost of pandemic **REUTERS** Friday reported 62,480 new daily cases, down



Workers are seen inside the kitchen of a dhaba, a small restaurant along a national highway in

KARNAL, JUNE 18

Asin Sharma lies idle on a cot near his restaurant by a highway linking India's capital New Delhi with the northern state of Punjab.

Few motorists stop at the line of five open-fronted roadside eateries on this stretch of highway. Those who do venture cautiously inside ask only for tea and water. The restaurant's tandoor, a traditional clay oven used for making flatbreads, sits cold and unused.

"We are in a very bad situation and the restaurant is on the verge of dying," said the 35-year-old. "We have no work and so many expenses to bear. Our condition is pathetic." The eateries, or "dhabas" are ubiquitous in

India. Tens of thousands line national highways but many are now struggling to survive as customers stay at home despite several state governments relaxing coronavirus curbs on movement. Many dhabas are family-run and employ millions, including local people and migrant workers. The problems they now face are part of a wider malaise in the travel and leisure industry, and the Indian economy in general. India on significantly from a peak of more than 400,000 on May 9 during its second wave of Covid-19 infections. Given low vaccination rates, experts are already warning of a third wave later this year. Economists fear the sector faces weakness

into next year, even if the government can vaccinate the majority of India's near 1.4 billion people. Only 6 percent are fully vaccinated now.

Last year, the government extended federal guarantees on bank loans for small businesses including hotels and restaurants, as well as a moratorium on some bank loans through to the end of March. Some restaurant owners have already had notices from banks to repay these loans. Finance ministry officials last month said the government could consider more measures for restaurants later this year.

Restaurant owners interviewed said many could be forced to shut their businesses permanently in the absence of further government support. Others said they were likely to delay bank loans, defer payments and sell properties if the third wave does hit. Most have cut salaries and laid off staff.

Neymar nears Pele's goal record for Brazil

The PSG forward has scored 68 times for Brazil in 107 appearances, nine shy of Pele's 77 goals in 92 games.

Neymar might not win three World Cups in his career like Pele did, but he is closing in as the top goal scorer ever for Brazil's national team

He reduced the gap to nine after his Brazil's 4-0 win over Peru on Thursday in the Copa America. Official statistics from FIFA, football's international governing body, put Pele in number one spot for Brazil with 77 goals. Neymar has 68 after he netted the Selecao's second against Peru

"It is obvious for me that this is a great honour, to be a part of Brazil history," a tearful Neymar said in an interview full of squeaky tones and long pauses after Brazil's victory in Rio de Janeiro. "To be very honest, my dream was to play for Brazil, wear this shirt. I never imagined I would get to

"It is very emotional to me because I went through a lot of things over these last two years, difficult and complicated things. These numbers are nothing compared to the happiness I have playing for Brazil.'

Neymar has had several injuries, lost a Champions League final with Paris Saint-Germain in 2020, and had to deal with a sexual assault allegation that was later proved false.

Pele, who has followed Neymar's career since the younger man's first appearances at Santos, published a picture of the pair on Instagram. "I, like all Brazilians, am always happy when I see him play ball. Today, he gave another step toward my record of goals for the Selecao. And I am cheering for him to get there, with the same joy I have since I saw him play for the first time," 80-year-old Pele said.

Brazil coach Tite doesn't want to compare the super star players, but he does say the 29-year-old Neymar is



Neymar (left), Alex Sandro, Everton Ribeiro and Richarlison netted in Brazil's 4-0 win against Peru in Copa America on Thursday.

extraordinary. "He has a really personal thing, he developed his skills to give assists, his right foot, his left foot. He became unpredictable," Tite said after the 3-0 win against Venezuela last Sunday.

Tite is working on a system to give Neymar space closer to the goal and more protection. "That's where the adversaries fear pressing him harder, they could give a foul in an important place," Tite said. "We structured our team so he can ... (be) more efficient to

Under FIFA's criteria, Pele got his record after 92 matches, while Neymar has already played 107. The Brazilian football confederation's official scoring tally — which includes some non-international games against clubs and differs from the FIFA statistics — puts Neymar 28 goals behind the man who Brazilians call the king of football.

Defender Alex Sandro, midfielder Ribeiro and

Richarlison also netted at the Nilton Santos stadium as the defending champions recorded ninth consecutive victory and moved to the top of Group B standings with six

Colombia are two points behind after their 0-0 draw with Venezuela.

Brazil's next match in the tournament will be on Wednesday against Colombia. The top four teams in each group advance to the knockout

What next for Sergio Ramos after Real Madrid departure?

Sergio Ramos declared on Thursday that leaving Real Madrid had never been on his mind but he must now find a new destination after ending a 16-year, silverware-laden era with the Spanish side.

Ramos recently turned 35 and had a season littered with injuries which led to him being left out of Spain's Euro 2020 squad, but said he wants to keep proving himself at the highest level. Yet only a few European clubs could afford his high wage demand, reported by newspaper Marca to be 12 million euros per year.

Paris St Germain could be a good fit for Ramos given the club's resources and the French side could certainly do with the personality of the four-time Champions League winner to help them finally get their hands on club football's holy grail. Manchester United and Manchester City are two of the few Premier League clubs that could afford his high salary.

City, however, are well equipped in central defence and the Spaniard might also struggle in a high defensive line favoured by coach Pep Guardiola. Ramos held talks with United in 2015 before eventually opting to stay at Real. While his salary demands remain the same, he is now six years older and there are increased questions about his fitness

Manuel Flores, a resident of Camas, the Seville district where Ramos grew up, said Paris would suit the defender better than Manchester as it would be closer to Spain, where his wife Pilar Rubio works as a television presenter. "I don't see him going to England,"



Ramos won 22 titles for Real including five La Liga and four Champions League.

said Flores, adding the 2010 World Cup winner had put the district on the

But while he felt a sense of pride in sharing a hometown with Ramos, Flores said the player was not overly loved locally after an acrimonious split from Sevilla to join Real in 2005.

And on a rainy afternoon in Camas. the overall feeling among locals approached by Reuters was one of indifference towards their most

Flores said he would love to see the player return to Sevilla but Ramos quashed hopes of a homecoming in his farewell press conference while also ruling out joining Real's rivals Barcelona, declaring: "It is a resounding no, so you can all relax.'

Latham thankful for extra day

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SOUTHAMPTON, JUNE 18

New Zealand's Tom Latham was thankful for the possibility of extra time after the opening day's play in inaugural World Championship final against India at Southampton on Friday was washed out without a ball being bowled.

While a standard Test lasts a maximum of five days, this fixture can be extended into a sixth day should match referee Chris Broad decide that is the only way to make-up time lost earlier in the game to bad weather.

"It's great that there's the extra day, and hopefully whatever happens then there might be a result on that last day," Latham told reporters after play was called off Friday. "It's disappoint-

ing, the rain today. It's just one of those things that as cricketers you need to adapt, and unfortunately that's something we can't control. For us it's just about waiting, and then when we get the opportunity to come on, making sure we're ready to go.'

A match that represents the culmination of two years' worth of series stalled after heavy overnight and early morning rain delayed the scheduled 10:30 am local time start and ensured there was no play before lunch. With south coast county Hampshire's headquarters subjected to further downpours, it was no surprise when umpires Michael Gough and Richard Illingworth abandoned play for the day at 2:48 pm.

This winners will walk away with \$1.6 million and runners up \$800,000.

Nepal announce 20-member squad for WCL 2

SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU, JUNE 18

Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) on Friday unveiled a 20-member squad for ICC World Cricket League 2 series involving Nepal, Scotland and Namibia set to take place in Spain.

Though the International Cricket Council (ICC) has not revealed the date for the series, the event is likely to take place from July 22 to 30, according to CAN president Chatur Bahadur Chand. The closed camp training is set to take place from Sunday.

The series was originally scheduled to be held in Scotland in July 2020 before it was postponed by the Covid-

"As the game is set to be played in a

neutral venue, the ICC has not yet confirmed the exact date. But they have said it will most probably take place from July 22 to 30," said Chand, adding that CAN would travel to Spain with at least 16 players in the squad.

The national team normally had a 14-member final squad in the past. But owing to the pandemic, the cricket team would travel with at least 16 to 18 players for the tournament, according to Chand.

Veteran spinner Basanta Regmi, youth batsman Rohit Kumar Paudel and former opener Subash Khakurel have been left out of the provisional

The League 2 features seven teams-Nepal, Oman, USA, United Arab Emirates, Scotland, Namibia and NEPALI SQUAD

Gyanendra Malla, Kushal Bhurtel, Aarif Sheikh, Paras Khadka, Dipendra Singh Airee, Aasif Sheikh, Kushal Malla Binod Bhandari, Karan KC, Sandip Lamichhane, Sompal Kami, Kamal Singh Airee, Abinash Bohara, Sandip Zohra, Shahab Alam, Sushan Bhari, Sharad Vesawkar, Bikram Sob, Pawan Sarraf, Prithu Baskota.

Papua New Guinea (PNG). Nepal will play 36 ODIs in total by February 2023. The teams that finish in the top

three will secure berths for the World Cup Qualifiers while the bottom four will compete in the World Cup Qualifiers playoff set to take place in Zimbabwe in June and July of 2023. Nepal have so far played four matchuntil February 2023 and they stand sixth in the table with two wins and two losses. Oman lead the standings winning eight matches from 10 games USA are second with six wins from

es in the tournament that will run

12 matches played and PNG are at the bottom of the standings having lost all eight matches played so far. Nepal have so far played four match

es in the three-year League 2 cycle and they stand sixth in the table with two wins and two losses. Oman leads the standings winning eight matches from 10 games played. USA are second with six wins from 12 matches played and PNG are at the bottom of the standings having lost all eight matches played so far.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19) ****

today, Aries. The moon floats through other-oriented Libra, directing your focus towards your current partnership story. It's an ideal day for important conversations that need to run smoothly.



CANCER (June 22-July 22) ***

Reach out to your family, as you're longing to make close contact and be your sentimental self. Luna's presence in the peaceable Libra helps maintain the



LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***

there and embrace your shine, as the moon's pres ence in your sign centres people's focus on you. It's an ideal day to put yourself on a stage of your choos



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) **** You've got everything you need to mak

the ambition front today, Capricorn. Rather than think of your day job, focus your attention on what you want to meaningfully contribute to society.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) ***



Let yourself ride out the productive wave you're on Taurus. The moon coasts through logic-first Libra all day, pointing your focus towards the unfinished tasks on your to-do list. Today is an easy day to stay on track with your plans

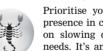


LEO (July 23-August 22) ***

Leo, there are things you long to speak up on, and you have all the resources you need to do it. The gentle Libra moon aligns with communicator Mercury today, making it an ideal one for important conversa-



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) ***



Prioritise your peace today, Scorpio. The moon's presence in calm-seeking Libra focuses your efforts on slowing down and reconnecting to your own needs. It's an ideal day to seek out your favourite nature spot and unplug from reality.



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) *** You are hungry for information today, Aquarius. Let yourself get lost in a good book, a cool museum, or a trip out of town to help you reset yourself. It's an ideal date day, as you're likely to be overflowing with

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) ****



You're likely to be feeling fired up on the creative front today, Gemini. The moon meanders through beauty-seeking Libra and harmoniously aligns with your ruling planet, messenger Mercury. Today don't be shy about woo-ing a special someone



PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

ARROW

RABBI

EPEE ODOR SHAPED CUCUMBER

M A L T A D A T A S A G A A T V F A C E T M G T C H I A O M A R T I B E T K A N G A R O O U N T I D Y

|R|Y|A|N |E|S|T|A

MTSLIONEL

You've got everything you need to get ahead today,

E D I E

FILL

Virgo. Rather than rest on your laurels, aim to push ahead with your personal projects. It's an easy day to stay on task with career goals and deal with the logi-



SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ***

benefit your aspirations



PISCES (February 19-March 20) ***

witty banter but meaningful conversations.

As a Pisces, you crave intimate soul contact with a

CROSSWORD

ACROSS Did great

5 Beadwork, e.g 10 Lap dog, briefly 14 Slapped

together 15 Greek epic poet 16 Jellybean shape 17 — -a-brac

18 It may be airtight 19 Oasis feature 20 Acquired the film rights to

22 Plains tribe 24 Razor brand 25 Ad award 26 Recently

(2 wds.) 33 Neighbor of Austria 34 Toe woe

29 Merlot or claret

36 Rotating part 37 Gehrig o baseball 38 Goes out of

business 39 "- had it!" 40 Climber's

challenge 41 Take on cargo 42 More in touch 44 Resolve

(2 wds.)

47 Overgrown

48 Pear-shaped instrument

53 Allow 58 D.C. figure 59 Beach find 61 Crowbar end

49 Period

50 Deli buy

62 Running wild 63 Name 64 Dog owner's shout 65 Talking bird

66 Lieu

67 Fiscal period **DOWN**

1 Lectern 2 Bottom feeder 3 Go over proofs

4 Acoustical measure

5 Uncertain Cattle call

reward Between 8 Calendar abbr.

9 Parent's armful 10 Meeting 11 Deadlocked 12 Cabbage

13 Vogue rival 21 Unctuous 25 Tanker cargo

26 Fragrant shrub

tions concerning your goals.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22) ****

cal, laborious side of things



Go after your goals today, Sagittarius. They needn't be gigantic to be meaningful. The logical Libra moon aligns with expressive Mercury today, allowing you to make headway in any collaborative efforts that



select few other people. Let yourself inhabit that natural longing today, as the big-hearted Libra moon propels you into deeply exploring your current rela-

SUDOKU

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



PENS © 2021 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS

27 Ring-shaped reef 28 Neutral tone

ROAR

30 Clinching 31 Seedless orange 32 Polishing agent

34 Freak out (2 wds.) 35 Passe 38 Galway and Rampal

42 Positive

43 Mayhem

46 Pirate's swig 47 Firmed up 50 Meat in a can

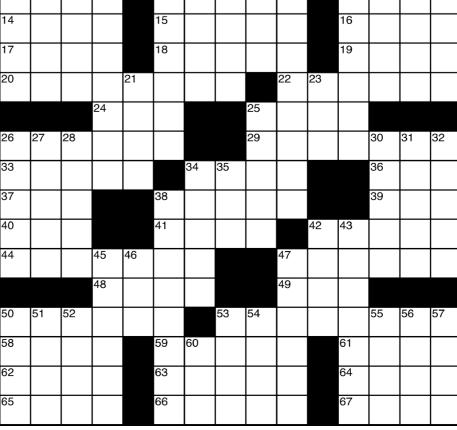
name 53 Antoinette lost hers 54 Earthen jar

45 North Slope state 51 Multitude 52 Trotsky's first

IBEX

55 Sheltered Scarlett's home 57 Still-life subject

60 Whacked





Czech Republic edge towards Euro last 16

Patrik Schick's penalty helps the Czechs hold Croatia to a 1-1 draw and earn four points while the latter also have chances of advancing.



Patrik Schick has taken his tally for the tournament to three goals, his two coming against Scotland in the opening match.

⇒ prabba Bank

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Patrik Schick moved top of the Euro 2020 goalscoring charts with his third of the tournament as the Czech Republic held Croatia 1-1 in Glasgow to edge towards the last 16.

Schick broke Scottish hearts on Monday with two goals to beat the hosts at Hampden Park 2-0, including an incredible strike from nearly 50 metres that will go down as one of the ever in the European Championship history.

He had a much simpler task from the penalty spot to open the scoring, but Ivan Perisic's stunning strike early in the second half maintained Croatia's chances of reaching the knockout

"There is a bitter taste after this match, as we didn't win. We entered the match really disorganised," said

"We looked better in the second half. We scored that goal and we could have scored even more, but unfortunately we didn't win. Now, we have to defeat Scotland to go through.

The World Cup finalists will have to beat Scotland on Tuesday to either pip the Czechs to second place in Group D or most likely head through as one of the four best third-placed

Buoyed by their opening win, Jaroslav Silhavy's men made a confident start as West Ham duo Vladimir Coufal and Tomas Soucek came close. Schick then had a glorious chance

from Coufal's cut-back, but from a tenth of the distance from where he scored four days ago, he failed to make a sweet connection and Dominik Livakovic easily saved

Croatia upset Argentina and England on their road to the final in Russia three years ago, but have looked a pale imitation of that side so far this tournament without Ivan Rakitic and Mario Mandzukic, who have retired from international football.

The ageing Luka Modric and Perisic remain their nation's biggest threats and a well-worked corner between the pair found the Inter Milan winger, but his shot was too close to Tomas

Sweden on brink of knockout stage

ST PETERSBURG: Emil Forsberg's second-half penalty sealed Sweden a 1-0 win over Slovakia in Saint Petersburg on Friday as the Scandinavians moved top of Euro 2020 Group E.

Janne Andersson's men, who played out a goalless draw with Spain in their opener, now look set to reach the knockout stage for the first time since 2004. A point in their final game against Poland at the Krestovsky Stadium on Wednesday would be enough to be sure of a top-two finish in the group.

Slovakia could have qualified with a game to spare with a win, but still have their fate in their own hands ahead of their final match against Spain in

Both sides had spells of pressure in the first half without creating many chances, perhaps in the knowledge a point would be a reasonably good

It was Sweden who almost made the breakthrough twice before the hour mark, as Newcastle stopper Martin Dubravka tipped away Ludwig Augustinsson's header and Marcus Danielson nodded over from the resulting corner.

Sweden continued to press for the winner, as Real Sociedad striker Alexander Isak almost scored one of the great European Championship goals, weaving past four defenders before seeing a low strike saved by Dubravka at his near post.

Sweden finally forged ahead in the 77th minute, as RB Leipzig midfielder Forsberg beat Dubravka from the penalty spot after the 'keeper had brought down substitute Robin Quaison.

Slovakia laid a late siege on their opponents' goal, but saw an optimistic late penalty appeal for handball turned down as Sweden held on. (AFP)

EURO 2020 STANDINGS

Group C								
Teams	Р	W	D	L	GF	GA	PTS	
Netherlands*	2	2	0	0	5	2	6	
Ukraine	2	1	0	1	4	4	3	
Austria	2	1	0	1	3	3	3	
North Macedonia**	2	0	0	2	2	5	0	
					*(ualified, '	** Eliminated	

Dejan Lovren had been recalled by Zlatko Dalic in two changes from a 1-0 defeat by England on Sunday, but the former Liverpool centre-back was penalised in highly controversial circumstances to gift the Czechs the opening goal. Lovren's elbow caught Schick as the two challenged for an aerial ball into the box. The Bayer Leverkusen forward was

left with a bloodied nose and while he received treatment,

Spanish referee Carlos del Cerro Grande was advised to view the incident again by VAR. There appeared to be no intent by Lovren, but the official still pointed to the spot. Schick sent Livakovic the wrong way to

Players to Watch

move ahead in the race for the Golden

Ante Rebic had a great chance to level immediately, but summed up Croatia's half when he sliced horribly wide. Dalic had seen enough as he made two changes at the break with Bruno Petkovic and Luka Ivanusec introduced. But it was Croatia's reliable source

of goals in major tournaments that came up with the moment of magic needed to launch their tournament less than two minutes after the break. Perisic cut inside onto his weaker right foot to blast into the top corner for his eighth goal at Championship or World Cup. Croatia had the better chances to

snatch all three points as Nikola Vlasic fired inches wide before Tomas Kalas produced a last-ditch block to deny Petkovic in the final minute.

Silhavy's wild celebrations at the final whistle showed who were the happier side with a point, with the Czechs likely to have already done enough to secure a place in the last 16 thanks to their four points.

Netherlands start to think big with Dumfries on target

REUTERS
AMSTERDAM, JUNE 18

Netherlands defender Denzel Dumfries has taken Euro 2020 by storm, having scored twice, set up another two goals and earned a penalty, all in two games

As the Dutch earned their knockout stage spot with a convincing 2-0 victory over Austria on Thursday, man-of-the-match Dumfries was on target for their second goal, settling nerves as the Austrians pressed for an equaliser. He had earlier been awarded a penalty for a foul by David Alaba and Memphis Depay converted it to earn the hosts an 11th-minute lead

The 25-year-old PSV Eindhoven defender, who made his professional debut seven years ago but did not come out of the youth system of any of the big Dutch clubs, was indefatigable as the Netherlands looked for their first knockout spot in a major tournament since the 2014 World Cup. They had missed out on Euro 2016 and the 2018 World Cup after failing to qualify but Dumfries is giving them hope this could be a successful tournament for the 1988 European champions.

Dumfries locked down his side of the pitch as the Austrians, also looking for a second group win that would have sent them through, struggled to break down the Dutch defence. His modern right wing back role gave him the opportunity to find space and create passing options as the Dutch controlled the game throughout and he also adding blistering pace to his team's attacks. That was demonstrated when Dumfries raced clear and

tapped in a pass from Donyell Malen to kill off the game in the 67th minute, becoming only the second Dutch player to score in his first two European Championship games, after prolific striker Ruud van Nistelrooy. It is not the first time that Dumfries defied expectations

after being plucked out of the amateur leagues as an 18-yearold and making the Dutch national team only four years later. "It's starting to feel like a fairytale. We are really growing, it feels good," Dumfries said.

A transfer target for major clubs before the tournament, Dumfries will now see his shares on the football stock market rise sharply as he leads his country to the sharp end of the tournament

Today's Fixtures SULUX CENTRE BVLGARI **RADO** DURBARMARGH, KATHMANDU **Hungary vs France** 18:45 NST, Saturday **Portugal vs Germany** 21:45 NST, Saturday Spain vs Poland 00:45 NST, Sunday

Results

Netherlands	2-0	Austria
Sweden	1-0	Slovakia
Croatia	1-1	Czech Republic

Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal)

The Juventus forward scored twice against Hungary and broke the Euro goalscoring record with 11 goals. Ronaldo is also the first player to score at five consecutive Euros. He has never scored against Germany but with his current form few would bet against him ending that run on Saturday. The 36-year-old is also international goals in men's game.



Joshua Kimmich (Germany)

The Bayern Munich star has the fighting spirit Germany need to get their Euro campaign back on track. A key player for club and country, the 26-year-old is a force to be reckoned with, either as a midfielder or at wing-back, who never backs down in the fight for the ball. He has a great eye for timing a tackle, uses the ball

Germany eye full points against Portugal

ASSOCIATED PRESS MUNICH, JUNE 18

Portugal have the European Championship's all-time leading scorer in Cristiano Ronaldo. Germany have a team full of players who have never even scored once at the continental tournament. They will come up against each other on Saturday.

Ronaldo scored two late goals in a 3-0 victory over Hungary on Tuesday to become the tournament's record holder with 11 career goals. Germany, meanwhile, tried and tried but failed break through France's defence in a

With no goals scored and no points in the standings, the pressure is on Germany to do much better before the team's final Group F match against Hungary, also in Munich. "We have zero points. But we still have to keep our heads up," Germany midfielder Toni Kroos said. "There are still six points to be won. We have to concentrate on those."

Defending champions Portugal can secure a spot in the round of 16 with a win ahead of their last group game against World Cup champions France.

"It will be a difficult game for us, but for Germany, too," Portugal play-

Germany had more possession and their players ran more than France,

maker Bruno Fernandes said.

with 10 attempts on goal compared to their opponents' four. But France always looked more dangerous and had two goals ruled out in close offside

"The only thing is we didn't do was score in the end. We weren't clinical enough and we have to work on this," Germany coach Joachim Loew said. "But the commitment I saw makes me positive for the next two

Germany have defeated Portugal in their last four meetings.

Germany lack an out-and-out football in the mold of Ronaldo, who is the first player to have scored in five difference European Championships, or Poland forward Robert Lewandowski, who broke the Bundesliga's record for goals scored last season.

Germany do have players that can score goals, however, including Thomas Muller, Kai Havertz, Ilkay

Gundogan and Serge Gnabry. Loew brought on Timo Werner, Leroy Sane and then Kevin Volland in the match against France in what looked a desperate attempt for a goal, but none made any difference.

Muller, recalled for the tournament after scoring 11 league goals and setting up 21 more for Bayern Munich last season, has now played 12 tournament games without scoring. The Germans also failed to make the most of their set pieces, with two good freekick opportunities and five corners all going to waste.

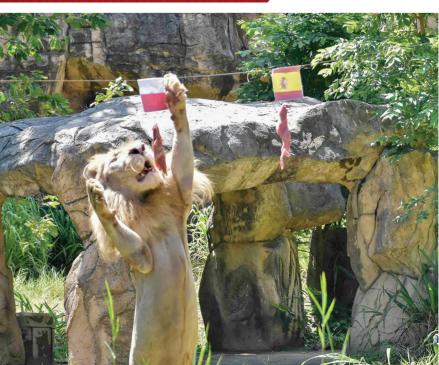
'We trained many set pieces Unfortunately we weren't rewarded for it today," Loew said after the loss to France. "It's our job to better that in the next two, three days. On the other hand, France are world champions at defending and the best team at defending standards in the last two or three

For Portugal, Nuno Mendes is an injury worry. The left back had a minor thigh problem and trained individually in the gym on Thursday while his teammates worked together

Germany, though, have more to worry about. Defender Lukas Klostermann injured his right groin in training Thursday, Gnabry took part only in individual exercises, midfielder Jonas Hofmann is still working his way back from a knee injury, and Leon Goretzka has only just recovered from a muscle injury.

RELEASING NEW MH150R

Today's picture



Boy, a five-year-old white lion, lunges at a piece of meat hanging under the flag of Poland instead of the piece under Spain's flag, set up to see the big cat 'predict' the outcome of European Championship 2020 matches at the Khon Kaen Zoo in Khon Kaen, Thailand on Friday.





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KUMARI LAMA

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

ngoing incidents have

left the world aghast. I

am not referring to the

Covid-19 crisis that has

wreaked havoc in the

Indian subcontinent.

My concern is about the never ending

miseries and plight of women. No

sooner had they saved Malala

Yousafzai, we lost Qandeel Baloch; no

sooner had they rubbed ointment on

Mini's wounds, we lost Nirbhaya; and

Dhaphali survived after being set to

fire by her husband and her in-laws,

Nirmala took her last breath in a sug-

arcane field. These are some of the

fragments of women's sufferings in

today's global village. Women are still

imprisoned in the patriarchal slaugh-

terhouse where their bodies, minds

and souls are continuously chopped

and scattered. For years women have

had to live with the pain and sorrow

Despite women's rights movements,

women are still treated as subordi-

nates and left aside by the structural

power. But women have not let their

hopes down; they are constantly voic-

The anthology of poems Still We

Sing: Voices on Violence Against

Women, which was published in 2020,

aptly presents this fighting spirit

despite all the pain. The collection is

edited by an Indian-born and Austria-

based poet Sarita Jenamani. The book

features poems of seventy-five women

by their similar thread of circum-

stances and sufferings. Until a few

decades ago, it was customary for

wives in the region to self-immolate at

the demise of their husbands, a cus-

tom known as Sati. While Sati may be

South Asian women are connected

poets from South Asia.

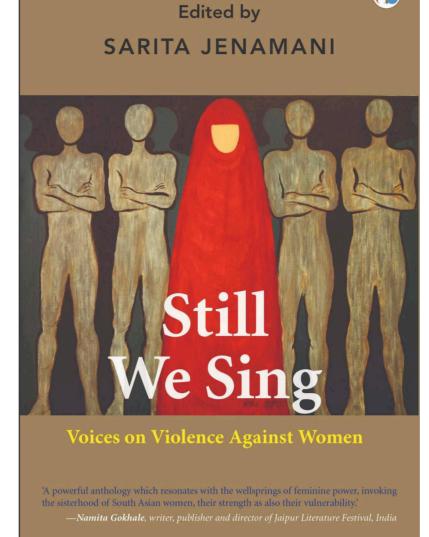
ing for equality, freedom and justice.

inflicted by the patriarchal society.

sooner had Rihana Sheikh

Tales of scars

Edited by poet Sarita Jenamani, 'Still We Sing: Voices on Violence Against Women' features poems by women from Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.



every day. Women are neither safe at home nor outside. In most cases, the perpetrators of violence against women are people the victims knowfriends, relatives to family members. Amidst such a scenario, Devrati Mitra's poem 'Kiki' captures a brutal

rape and murder case of a girl.

a thing of the past, setting women

ablaze due to dowry is prevalent today.

Female foeticide, molestation, acid

attack, rape and murder, and honour

killings are just as common. The

poems included in Still We Sing por-

tray the precarious situations of

women in the region. Rape and mur-

der of girls make the headlines almost

The girl Kiki of Jade House was found
In the far north near the water line-

... Black bruises like fish bile on the

On her thigh not men's caresses Faint sores from cigarette burns

Kiki's tortured body is just a representative one. There are many girls who have suffered her plight. The raped and murdered bodies of young girls can be found everywhere: in the woods, at the seashore or just in a bush nearby our locality. This violence against women unveils the ruthlessness of our patriarchal society.

The capitalistic market and our patriarchal society have managed to commodify women and abuse them. Women are no more than flesh in today's consumerist culture. Moreover, their bodies have been used and abused as battlefields or as laboratories for experimentations. Poet Anar in her poem 'A Woman Slaughtered' explores the issue of women's identity pointing towards socio-cultural understanding of their existence and bod-

It is a battlefield,

a regular laboratory, an everlasting treasure trove, a permanent prison, an altar.

Anar's verse has unfolded the sensitive issue of women's existence. Most women are defined by their social roles and responsibilities. They become daughters, wives, mothers and grandmothers, but do they hold anything as a person beyond such roles or not? Anar and many other poets have shed light upon the question of women's identity and dignity in this anthology.

Patriarchal society has always

Vegetables

repressed women's freedom through strict socio-culture values. They get imprisoned inside the household boundaries in the name of love, safety and security, and this aspect is what poet Geeta Tripathee has internalised in her poem 'Chains',

chains of Helmer-mentality/fastened further tightly/and kept Noraflowers/ensnared endlessly/in the name of security.

How women are viewed clearly shows our society's double standard. On the one hand, it adores women as devis, and on the other hand it diminishes them as whores. As long as women follow the patriarchal values and submit themselves within the frame they are taken as devis, but as soon as they start resisting injustice and try to break-through the suffocating boundary, they become characterless and filthy women. Moreover, our society does not hesitate to dump resisting voices in a loony bin by questioning their sanity. Poet Deepti Naval presents a heart-wrenching tale of a woman who ends up in a mental ward in her poem 'Goddess'. The society declares,

'She is too dangerous to be left free!'/ They signed on a piece of paper/ Dumped her in the loony bin!

A woman's beautiful body pleases the patriarchal eyes; whereas her brain becomes threatening as it carries the seed of resistance. The easiest way to control such rebellious women is to throw them into the musty cells by declaring them mad.

The world has confronted the latest surge of feminist movement, #metoo, which has unveiled the myriads of violence against women. But violence against women has not declined; it has rather increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Women continue to fight several battles within their domestic boundaries and also push their territory beyond four-walls. From one generation to another, women have suffered continuously. Kalpana Singh-Chitnis captures the tale of scars each generation carries with them in her

You have bruises on your body, I said.

None of your business, She responded and left. I carry her scars now.

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Even though a woman's world is drenched with tears, blood and semen, they also have womanly happiness, joy, and pleasure. More importantly, they have inner strength and resilience. They have been suppressed for long; now they have started raising their voice for liberty. Women who have survived the draconian Hudood Ordinance, acid attacks, honour killings and various invisible violence can overcome any situation. Zehra Nigah in her poem highlights this strength.

Rise, Anasya from this weeping earth and set your chained feet free.

Women are fuelled with dissidence and courage of Yogmaya to break themselves free from patriarchal

Undoubtedly, Still We Sing has raised questions of identity and dignity of women, as editor Sarita Jenamani has claimed. It also presents the struggle, anger, agony and resistance of women. This anthology includes powerful women poets from Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Had there been poems from the remaining countries of South Asia, it would have added to the diversity. Beside that, this book is a powerful documentation of women's history of suffering, resistance and hope, which is highly appreciable.

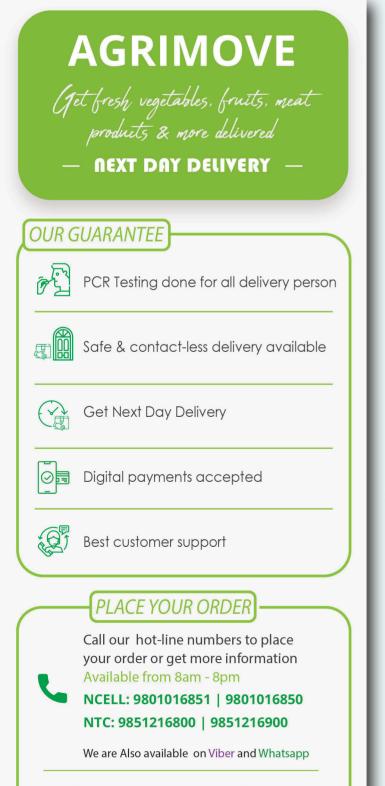
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Lama is an essayist and the author of Ujyalo Andhakar, a collection of essays.

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