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32.8° C 12.2° C

Workers clean the exterior of a building at Gongabu in Kathmandu on Friday.

POST PHOTO: KABIN ADHIKAR

With new dispensation in

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is taking the lead in developing the plan while other agencies like the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance are providing inputs, according to at least three officials working on the draft.

from Nepal itself due to some geopolitical reasons.

India, Nepal's southern neighbour, and the United States see the BRI as China's bid to exert influence in the region, using its economic heft. Countries like Sri Lanka and Pakistan in South Asia too are part of the BRI. >> Continued on page 2

Six years after Tikapur incident, Tharus still wait for justice

Those who were tortured and sent to jails but acquitted say the state has failed them and their entire community, with no political party willing to take up their cause.

BINOD GHIMIRE

On August 25, 2015, Prem Chaudhary was at his medical store, like any other day. At around 11 in the morning, a group of police officers arrived and asked him to visit the local police station at Bhajani Municipality in Kailali district "for some inquiries". He was kept at the station for a couple of hours without being told the reason. Then he was moved to another police station in Sukkhad.

Then suddenly, police started beating him up, asking him to confess that he was one of the persons behind the protests the previous day, in which nine people, including a senior police officer and a toddler, had died.

Only then did Prem, 45, realise why he was arrested.

It was in the lead-up to the constitution promulgation. Protests had intensified across the Tarai plains. Tikapur, an area where Tharus have lived for centuries, too was simmering.

People from different indigenous communities, including Tharus, were pressuring political parties to include their agendas in the constitution.

Tharus from western Nepal were demanding a Tharuhat province. But there was huge resistance from the Pahadis, the people from the hills. They were demanding Akhanda Sudurpaschim or an undivided Far West.

Some prominent leaders like Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress, the incumbent prime minister, Bhim Rawal from the CPN-UML and Lekhraj Bhatta from the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) had either tacit or open sup-





Police Office, Dhangadhi at midnight.

Police Office, I was taken to every police station on the way, and I would

be beaten with batons, kicked and

was one of the organisers of the pro-

test. They wanted me to name others.

Every time I said I did not know, the

By the time he was taken to

Dhangadhi, he had almost lost con-

response would be thrashing.'

"Police would ask me to admit that I

punched," Prem recalled.

sciousness, he said.

"Until we reached the District

Prem Chaudhary (left) and Bishram Kushmi were tortured to confess crimes they didn't commit

port to the Akhanda Sudurpaschim idea, as all came from the region.

Tharus worried about losing their say unless they were given a separate Tharuhat province. Tharus, however, lacked the heft in comparison to those championing the Akhanda Sudurpaschim cause. Nor did Tharus have a strong representative in Kathmandu to speak and fight on their behalf.

Tensions were building up. On August 24, 2015, the protest turned violent, and nine people—eight police officers and a toddler-were killed in ensuing clashes. From the very next day, police

launched an indiscriminate crackdown, arresting whoever they wanted. Prem was one of them.

After failing to extract a confession from him, he was taken to the District

"I was forced to sign a statement the

police had prepared, even without getting a chance to read it," he told the Post over the phone from Bhajani, Kailali.

The police torture continued for

>> Continued on page 2



New urgency to airlift from Kabul Kathmandu, talks resume after blasts kill dozens on projects under BRI Biden cites threat of more terror attacks as a reason Officials say Nepal and China are drafting implementation to keep to his exit plan. plan, as Deuba government aims to push projects under Beijing initiative to facilitate passage of America's MCC. **ASSOCIATED PRESS** KABUL, AUG 27 Evacuation flights from Afghanistan resumed with new urgency on Friday, a day after two suicide bombings targeted the thousands of people desperately fleeing a Taliban takeover and killed dozens. The US warned more attacks could come ahead of next week's end to America's longest war. Two officials said 169 Afghans died, but a final count might take time amid confusion, with many bodies dismembered or not yet identified. Scores more were wounded in the blasts. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. The US said 13 troops were killed in the deadliest day for American forces in Afghanistan since August 2011. As Afghan officials struggled to deal with the dead, at least 10 bodies lay on the grounds outside Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital, where relatives said the mortuary could take no more. **ANIL GIRI** "The Chinese had sought the KATHMANDU, AUG 27 As the call to prayer echoed on implementation plan so as to have a Friday through Kabul along with the proper idea on how Nepal can execute Nepal and China are working on a roar of departing planes, the anxious the projects under the BRI," Kali crowds outside the city's airport draft implementation plan for the pro-Prasad Pokhrel, who served for more appeared as large as ever despite the jects to be executed under the Belt and than three years as the head of the risks. They are acutely aware that the Road Initiative, four years after sign-North East Asia Division at the window is closing to board a flight ing the framework agreement on Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told the before the airlift ends and Western Chinese President Xi Jinping's flag-Post. "But we had yet to respond to the troops withdraw. ship programme that seeks to connect Chinese request.' Pokhrel retired from service in In an emotional speech on Thursday Asia with Africa and Europe via land night, President Joe Biden blamed the and maritime networks. February this year. Islamic State group's Afghanistan Not a single project has taken off "Not only from Nepal, the Chinese under the BRI, to which Nepal signed affiliate, which is far more radical had asked for similar implementation than the Taliban fighters who seized up in May 2017. drafts from other countries that Now with both sides exchanging the power less than two weeks ago in a have signed up to the BRI as well,' lightning blitz across the country. draft implementation plan, negotiasaid Pokhrel. "I am not aware of the 'We will rescue the Americans; we tions on projects and their execution current status though.' will get our Afghan allies out, and our under the Belt and Road Initiative So far, close to 140 countries have mission will go on," Biden said. (BRI) are expected to take off, accordsigned up to the BRI. >> Continued on page 4 ing to multiple government officials. When Nepal signed the BRI agree-A draft of the implementation ment in 2017, it was touted as a waterplan is the prerequisite for proshed moment in Nepal-China ties. But ject selection, funding modality, with not a single project taking off standard chartered budget, supervision and moniunder the Chinese programme, there toring and human resource manwere concerns if there was reluctance Open an account at



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With new dispensation in Kathmandu ...

>> Continued from page 1

When Nepal agreed to build projects under the BRI, Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) was prime minister. After him, Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress led the government, followed by KP Sharma Oli of the CPN LIMI

Deuba once again is back in the seat of power

After successive governments failed to initiate any project under the BRI, according to people familiar with the matter, there was some kind of unease on the Chinese side if Nepal was really committed to what it signed up to.

The only development with regard to the BRI from the Nepal side is that Kathmandu in January 2019 sent a list of nine projects to China. There was no further progress on negotiations.

"After signing the framework agreement in 2017, we had sent a list of projects to be executed under the BRI to the Chinese side," said Dhani Ram Sharma, head of the International Cooperation Division at the Ministry of Finance. "Since then there has been no further development."

According to sources at the Finance Ministry, Nepal is investing \$220 million received from the European Union and the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to develop a transmission line to connect Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces with the national grid.

"Half of the money will be used from the EU and half of the investment will be made from China-led AIIB and we are trying to put the project under the BRI," a ministry official said.

A month after signing the agreement, the government in June 2017 had formed three different committees headed by secretaries from finance, foreign and physical infrastructure ministries to execute the projects under the BRI.

The finance secretary-led committee was tasked with coordinating and facilitating the selection of the projects and forwarding the concept to the foreign secretary, who was mandated to hold meetings with the relevant stakeholders before pitching them to the Chinese side.

A subcommittee led by secretaries from several ministries was entrusted with the task of providing technical support to the finance and foreign secretaries. These thematic and sectoral subcommittees were supposed to prepare technical details of the projects and recommend them to the three secretaries, according to a former secretary at the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure.

"None of these mechanisms, however, functioned properly. They became defunct without holding a single meeting," the former secretary, who did not wish to be named, told the Post.

Initially there were talks that China would be building two separate railway projects linking China's Kerung to Kathmandu and Kerung to Pokhara whose detailed study is still being carried out

carried out.

China has already agreed to carry out the study on the proposed rail links under the banner of Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network.

The study, however, was halted due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The framework was initially signed for three years, but the period elapsed without any progress. The agreement was renewed in May last year for another three years. Policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and connecting the people are the five major priority areas of the BRI.

The major impediment to the selection and implementation of projects under the BRI is the lack of clarity on financing modality, according to officials. Nepal, say officials, is seeking donations, but the Chinese are insisting on soft loans. A Nepali diplomat earlier based in Beijing said there is no hard and fast rule to develop the implementation plan and not all countries that signed up to the BRI have developed such a plan.

"There are several countries that are executing projects under the BRI without an implementation plan," said the diplomat who did not wish to be named. "Some have worked on such implementation plans though."

According to the diplomat, since both Nepal and China had agreed to develop such a plan after sign-

ing the agreement, they must be working on it. The implementation plan encompasses all possible areas of cooperation, and gives clarity on project pagetiations to both sides.

negotiations to both sides.

For example, according to officials who are working on the draft, if Nepal seeks support for projects under the BRI for connectivity, then it would make a list of various kinds of projects under air connectivity, physical connectivity, digital connectivity, transmission lines, cultural connectivity and connectivity through trade, goods and commerce.

"Then we finalise the project under each area of cooperation and start negotiations," said an official familiar with the matter.

A joint-secretary said there has been no clarity on the part of Nepal on how to negotiate and push the projects under the BRI.

"Since we never held discussions on the modality, there was no way we could have executed projects under the BRI," the joint-secretary told the Post. Another official told the Post that some rounds of discussions had taken place between the two sides and some drafts too were exchanged so as to reach a consensus on the proposed projects.

But in the absence of a dedicated implementation plan, Nepal could not identify the projects under the BRI.

When KP Sharma Oli visited China in 2018 during his first stint as prime minister, in his meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, he had read out a list of 35 possible projects to be executed under the BRI framework.

As China prefers soft loans to finance projects under the BRI, given Nepal's economic status and its desire to get grants from China, the Chinese officials later advised the Ministry of Finance to trim down the projects from 35 to nine.

China has its separate Commerce Consular Office in Kathmandu that looks after Chinese funding in Nepal, including the BRI.

The nine projects identified were—upgrading the Rasuwagadhi-Kathmandu road; Kimathanka-Hile road construction; road construction from Dipayal to the Chinese border; Tokha-Bidur road; Galchhi-Rasuwagadhi-Kerung 400kv transmission line; Kerung-Kathmandu rail; 762MW Tamor hydroelectricity project; 426MW Phukot Karnali hydroelectric project; and Madan Bhandari Technical Institute.

Ahead of Chinese President Xi Jinping's Nepal visit in October 2019, the Nepali side proposed developing Madan Bhandari University under the BRI when Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in Kathmandu. That was the only project the Nepali side had proposed for development under the BRI but due to several reasons, it is in limbo. After Covid-19 hit China, other projects were affected too.

Sources in the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), which is a key coalition partner, say the Deuba government is for starting at least two to three projects under the BRI within a year.

"Not strategic, but some medium-sized projects that can economically benefit Nepal can be thought of," said a Standing Committee member of the Maoist Centre. "We are of the view that some projects under the BRI must be moved forward... so as to facilitate the parliamentary ratification of the United States' Millennium Challenge Corporation."

The MCC, under which Nepal will receive \$500 million in grants, is awaiting House ratification, as it has become a hotly debated political issue in Nepal.

"As soon as the BRI was signed, there was a kind of confusion as to who will select, negotiate and pursue the projects," said Rupak Sapkota, deputy executive director at the Institute of Foreign Affairs. "When Nepal forwarded a list of 35 projects, which were later brought down to nine, there was ad hocism... there was no proper study."

According to Sapkota, a dedicated implementation plan can pave the way for selection of projects, after which negotiations and execution can move

"As per my understanding, the current dispensation in Kathmandu may make a push for some projects under the BRI," Sapkota, a PhD in International Relations from China's Renmin University. "This may also help the passage of the MCC from the House."

Modified Clause/Description

Attached as per amendment bid

Six years after Tikapur incident, Tharus ...



Security deployment was heavy in Tikapur, Kailali in the aftermath of the incident in August, 2015.

POST FILE PHO

>> Continued from page 1

Prem, an auxiliary health worker by profession, was a village committee member of the then Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Loktantrik) led by Bijay Kumar Gachhadar. He, however, was inactive in party politics and had his focus on his medical business when the Tharus' protest intensified.

"I learnt about the Tikapur incident from television and radio and the second-hand narrative from those who were there," he said. For around a month until he was sent in judicial custody, there wasn't a single day he was not tortured at the hands of police. He would be kicked, beaten with bamboo sticks and even pierced with spears in his legs.

The torture has left him fragile. He has a blurry vision. He cannot stand or lie down for an extended period due to pain.

By the time he was released following a court order after serving three and a half years in jail in March 2019, his store's medicines worth around Rs1.5 million had expired. The bank was in final preparation to auction his property.

Prem says his loan has reached around Rs10 million, as he has not been generating any income. "I have no option but to sell my remaining property to clear the debt," Prem told the Post. "My life has been ruined at the hands of the state. Where do I go for justice?"

At times he wonders if his precious three and a half years, which he spent in jail, could ever be returned.

Kailali Police had filed cases against 58 people for their involvement in the Tikapur incident. The police arrested 27 of them, while 31 others were on the run. Those who were arrested say they were tortured and were forced to admit their involvement. They were pressured into signing the statements at gunpoint without even getting to read what they were signing on, they say.

Ram Prasad Chaudhary, 50, from Joshipur Rural Municipality in Kailali, too, was arrested on the charge of organising the violent protests.

Ram, a regional coordinator of Kailali Constituency-3 of the then Forum (Loktantrik), was on medication for typhoid when the Tikapur incident took place.

He says it's not that he did not participate in protests demanding

an autonomous Tharuhat province and that he had his full support for the cause.

"But I was not there when the August 24 incident happened in Tikapur," Ram told the Post. "I learned about the incident through a

local FM station."

However, he was arrested by the police at around 2pm on August 25 without reason. The torture began as soon as he was hauled into the

police van, he says.

His wrist bone had cracked by the time he was taken to Dhangadhi
District Police Office at midnight. Under pressure, doctors at Seti
Zonal Hospital prepared a report that said he was alright.

mal Hospital prepared a report that said he was alright.
"They would beat me up and pierce my body with sharp objects.
They even ripped my moustache off and pulled my

hair," he told the Post. "But what pained more was their words against my ethnicity and identity."

According to Ram, when the police prepared the fake statement, they asked their colleagues injured in the Tikapur incident to say they had seen him.

"I heard a DSP [Deputy Superintendent of Police] coercing the injured police, saying 'don't

you want to continue your job' when they said they hadn't seen me," he told the Post.

Those who followed the Tikapur incident and its aftermath say the police made random arrests targeting the Tharu people rather than trying to find

out the real culprits.

"Those who were arrested were not at the site [Tikapur]," Mohna Ansari, a former member of the National Human Rights Commission who was in Tikapur recently, told the Post. "The police action was motivated by revenge against the entire Tharu community."

The court verdict in some of the cases also

Bishram Kushmi from Tikapur Municipality-7 was known locally for his banana farm. On the day of the incident, Bishram was working on his farm, and no one from his family was part of the protest. However, eight months after the incident, he was arrested on April 5, 2016, on the charge of his involvement in the murder of nine people. After staying in jail for three years, he was acquitted by the District Court on March 6, 2019. The decision has been upheld by the High Court as well.

"I had taken a loan to expand my farm and agrovet business," he told the Post. "My business had been ruined when I walked out of jail. The loan has increased," said Bishram. "I am selling my property to pay off the loan. But who will compensate for my sleepless nights of three years, the stress my family went through and the loss I have suffered?"

Bisharam Chaudhary from Nawalpur of Janaki Rural Municipality and Nural Jaga Musalman from Joshipur too were acquitted by the court after spending three years in jail. They all faced brutal torture at the hands of police officers who forced them to admit their involvement in the Tikapur violence.

"We were forced to sign the papers without getting to read them. The government attorneys too didn't listen to us," says Ram Prasad Chaudhary.

Different human rights organisations investigated the incident and its aftermath while two panels formed by the government carried out separate probes.

A report by Amnesty International says contrary to Nepal's obligations under international law and domestic constitutional and legal provisions, none of the detainees were informed of the reasons for their arrest. It also pointed out the coerced confessions as claimed by those who talked to the Post. It called upon the Nepal government to establish an independent, impartial and effective investigation into the allegations of torture and other ill treatment, coerced confessions and arbitrary arrests and detention and carry out prosecution against the officials suspected of responsibility for torture and other ill treatment. However, that never happened.

While there is constitutional protection against torture, the National Penal Code-2017, which came into force in August 2018, also criminalises it

Section 167 (1) of the code says no authority that is competent under the law to investigate or prosecute any offence, implement the law, take anyone into control, or hold anyone in custody or detention in accordance with law shall subject, or cause to be subjected, anyone to physical or mental torture or to cruel, brutal, inhuman or degrading treatment. A person who commits the offence referred to in subsection as per the section is liable to a sentence of imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or a fine not exceeding 50,000 rupees or both, according to the penal code. However, not a single prosecution on torture has been made so far though very few have received the monetary compensation.

While police officers were involved in the indiscriminate torture, the people from the Pahadi community too burned down the houses, shops, restaurants and radio station owned by the Tharus.

A report by the National Human Rights Commission had recommended the government take actions against those involved in the arson. However, no successive governments took steps to implement it. "We found that the arson was done under police protection and recommended actions against everyone involved. It was wrong that it never happened," Prakash Osti, a former member of the National Human Rights Commission who led the probe team, told the Post. "The nine people were killed in cold blood using spears and other domestic weapons while some were even burnt alive. However, it is the responsibility of the police to carry out a fair investigation into

A report by Human Rights Watch says while the houses and shops of the Tharu people burned, the fire brigade, whose building is just 500 metres away, refused to come without orders from the police. Police orders were not prompt.

Tharu activists say carrying out persecutions against the Tharu people alone and detaining and torturing them and imposing false charges against them show the state's discrimination against the indigenous people.

"We filed a complaint against 19 people involved in setting fire to houses, looting shops and sexually assaulting women and girls," Shravan Tharu, acting coordinator of Tharuhat Tharuwan Rashtriya Morcha, told the Post. "The people from the Pahadi community were protesting for Akhanda Sudurpaschim when we were protesting for a Tharuhat province. Their demands were addressed while we only suffered at the hands of the state authority."

The immediate fears that there would be more conflicts between Tharus and Pahadis, however, have died down, and there is a semblance of reconciliation.

Despite the protests along the Tarai plains, some violent incidents like the one in Tikapur, Nepal's political parties rushed the constitution on September 15, 2015. While half of the country celebrated, the Tharu community was still struggling to come to terms with what had happened a month ago.

Life appears to have returned to normalcy, by and large, but many of the demands of the Tharus continue to remain unaddressed.

Even today, over a dozen people, including Resham Chaudhary, a member of the House of Representatives, are serving jail terms in connection with the Tikapur incident. The leaders of Morcha say the Tikapur incident was purely a political movement, and it should be treated accordingly. They say if the armed conflict by the Maoists, which claimed the lives of 13,000 people, is a political movement, the protest by the indigenous Tharu people cannot be treated differently.

As this week marked the sixth year of the Tikapur incident, leaders of the Morcha resorted to a three-day protest in Kathmandu, demanding the release of those in prison. They are also demanding that past agreements forged with them be implemented.

"There is clearly a discriminatory approach by the state when it comes to Tharus. The Tharu protest was political in nature, and it should be treated accordingly. The dissatisfaction will only grow if the state continues to demonstrate a dual attitude while looking into cases of similar nature," Bhanu Ram Tharu, an adviser to the Morcha, told the Post. "The government should immediately release the report by the Sharma committee and the Lal Commission which will give a clear picture on the Tikapur incident."

The government had formed a panel led by Deviram Sharma, former chief of National Investigation Department, to probe the Tikapur incident while a separate commission was formed under the leadership of former Supreme Court justice Girish Chandra Lal on September 18, 2016, to investigate the atrocities committed during the protests in Tarai/Madhes prior and post constitution promulgation. Lal Commission submitted its report in December 2017 to then prime minister Deuba, who has retaken the government reins. The Sharma panel had submitted its report in October 2015, a little after a week before Sushil Koirala resigned as prime minister following

the promulgation of the constitution.

However, reports of both the panels haven't been made public.

Tharu activists say the truth will never come out until the probe reports are made public. While the Tharus' struggle for their rights will continue, the reports must be made public first for justice to prevail

The Mahantha Thakur faction of the Janata Samajbadi Party, which has now split to form Loktantrik Samajbadi Party, had decided to support the KP Oli government in May this year after assurances that the Lal Commission report would be made public. Now it is incumbent upon the Deuba government, supported by the Maoists, to make the report public, Tharu activists say.

Making public the Lal Commission report is one of the points of the Deuba government's Common Minimum Programme, which was unveiled on August 8.

"We had visited Tikapur and conducted a thorough investigation into the incident and its aftermath and prepared the report accordingly," Lal told the Post. "Let the government make it public as per its commitment. Everything will be clear then."



SN | Relevant Clause

Clear counter map of

project site

Karnali Province Sports Development Council Birendranagar, Surkhet

Karnali Province

Notice of Bid Amendment

Date of online Publication: 2078/05/09 (25 August, 2021)

Karnali Province Sports Development Council (KPSDC) Birendranagar, Surkhet has made the following amendment

in Invitation for Bid notice published on dated 2078/03/31 (15 July, 2021) and Contract No. :ICB/WORKS/PS/KARNALI/01/077-078 for the Construction of Provincial Stadium at Birendranagar, Surkhet

Existing Clause/Description

	No./Name		
1	Last Date of Bid submission and opening	2078-05-13 (29 September,2021)	2078-05-21 (06 September,2021)
2	Biddocument Fee (NRs.)	25000.00	20000.00
3	Information to deposit the cost of bidding document in Bank	Name of Bank: Nepal Bank Limited Account No.: 27502000001001000001 Name of Bank: Rastrya Banijya Bank Account No.: 1000100201010006	Name of Bank: Rastrya Banijya Bank Account No.: 1000100201010006 SWIFT Code/BIC: RBBANP KA 408
4	The Bidder shall submit with its Technical Bid the following additional documents		 Photograph related of Similar Size and nature of completed work to justify the Evaluation and Qualification Criteria 2.4.2 (a) & (b). Photos of completed works with end use certificate and full contract details and address details which can be easily to identify in Google. If documents other than English language those documents translation and verification shall be from Nepali Embassy in the home country or Embassy of concerned bidder's country in Nepal.
5	Section VII - Activity Schedule (ACS)		Attached with details
6	Bid Query Response		attached
7	Geotechnical Parameter (Bearing Capacity)		Bearing Capacity soil Value Not less than of soil 100 KN/Sqm for conceptual drawing only

NATIONAL



People wade through knee-high floodwaters at Banganga Municipality in Kapilvastu district on Friday. Heavy rainfall over the past few days has flooded several Tarai districts across the country.

Rana not to sit on Constitutional Bench to hear case of controversial appointments

Questions were raised whether Rana should preside over the bench to hear the cases where he has conflict of interest.

TIKA R PRADHAN

Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana has agreed not to sit on the Constitutional Bench that hears petitions against the appointments in various constitutional bodies made through an ordinance to amend the Constitutional Council Act.

The decision comes amid controversy surrounding the petitions that involve the Constitutional Council of were raised whether Rana should preside over the bench to hear on the cases where he has conflict of interest.

"The chief justice has decided not to present himself in the first and the last hearings of the petitions against appointments made through an ordinance to amend the Constitutional Council Act, as he was also involved in the decisions as a member of the Constitutional Council," Baburam Dahal, spokesperson for the Supreme Court. "Senior-most Justice Deepak Kumar Karki will lead the Constitutional Bench in his absence.'

Though Rana decided not to be part of the bench that hears the petitions, some experts say that questions may arise over the spirit of the constitution which clearly states that the bench consists of the chief justice and four judges designated by him on the recommendation of the Judicial

Others, however, argue that Rana's decision to clear the way to settle the longstanding issue was technical and won't affect the constitutional

Article 137(1) of the constitution says the Constitutional Bench exists in the Supreme Court and that it shall consist of the chief justice and four other judges designated by the chief justice on the recommendation of the Judicial Council.

"I think Chief Justice Rana took the right decision," said Baburam Giri, a senior advocate. "I don't think it will



Chief Justice Rana, as a member of the Constitutional Council, was involved in the decision that recommended candidates for various constitutional bodies

affect the constitutional provision."

As soon as the Constitutional Bench picked the candidates to be appointed to the constitutional bodies on December 15, petitions were filed by Senior Advocate Dinesh Tripathi and Advocate Om Prakash Aryal demanding that the appointments based on the ordinance be scrapped.

Later, on February 5, Speaker Agni Prasad Sapkota filed another petition demanding that the appointments be

Sapkota has made Chief Justice Rana one of the defendants for being a member of the Constitutional Council that decided on the appointments without the presence of some of its other members including the Speaker.

Six months after the Speaker's petition, Chief Justice Rana, on August 8, issued a response defending the appointments as having been made following the due legal process.

On Friday, Constitutional Bench under Rana to hear the case of appointments made by the Constitutional Council met with a protest from the petitioners.

The plaintiff side objected to the presence of the chief justice in the bench claiming that it flouted the principle of natural justice. The principle says no one should be the judge of their own case. It is one of the fundamental rules of natural justice that no one should act as a judge in a case in which they have a personal

Senior advocate Tripathi, one of the petitioners, told the bench that Chief Justice Rana had direct conflict of interest in the petitions and therefore he must refrain from remaining in the

There were concerns over the formation of the Constitutional Bench as the constitution clearly states that the chief justice will form the bench but legal experts had suggested him to allow the second in command to form

Chief Justice Rana did not readily agree to stay away from the case

He told petitioners that he would agree to what the remaining four members of the bench decide.

sceptical, saying what if the opinion was divided equally among the four, Rana finally acquiesced.

The ordinance to amend the Constitutional Council (Function, Duties, Power and Procedure) Act-2010, brought by the KP Sharma Oli government on December 15, repealed by the Sher Bahadur Deuba government on July 18.

A day after the Deuba government repealed the ordinance on the Constitutional Council Act, advocate Om Prakash Aryal on July 19 filed a supplementary petition at the Supreme Court demanding a "quo

Aryal said his demand for "quo warranto" means those 52 individuals appointed under the now-repealed ordinance must show on what warrant they are holding their offices.

Experts have said that the absence of chief justice, as envisioned by the constitution, does not mean that s/he won't fall ill or go for a foreign visit during which another senior-most justice must take the charge.

"Chief Justice Rana's move to refrain from that particular bench was a technical issue and that won't affect the spirit of the constitution," said Anup Raj Sharma, the former chief justice. "While drafting the constitution I had said there could be some hurdles with the provision if the member of the Constitutional Council also heads the Constitutional Bench. And the issues are gradually emerg-

Continuous rainfall inundates settlements in Tarai districts

More than a thousand people have been displaced and several have gone missing with a few reported deaths.

BHAWANI BHATTA IN KANCHANPUR Ganesh Chaudhary in Tikapur & **SUNITA BARAL** IN MAHOTTARI

Continuous rainfall over the past few days has inundated several Tarai districts across the country.

In Kanchanpur, over 150 families aispiaced rivers and streams. The Chure area has been receiving incessant rainfall for the last few days, causing floods in most rivers and streams in the area.

"Doda river in Kanchanpur has inundated wards 2 and 3 of Laljhadi Rural Municipality and displaced over 60 families," said Kamal Kumar Khadka, police inspector at the Area Police Office in Belauri.

Vehicular movement along the Rajaghat-Kailali road has come to a halt after the flooded Mohana river damaged the road near Geta Kailali. Residents of Shuklaphanta Municipality-10 are also at high risk of flooding because of the Banahara river, said police.

In Kailali, dozens of settlements in the southern part of the district have been inundated by the flooded Kada, Patharaiya, and Mohana rivers.

"The detail of destruction is yet to be received. Dozens of settlements have been inundated so far. We are currently involved in relief and rescue works," said Sher Bahadur Chaudhary, mayor of Bhajani

Municipality in Kailali. In Mahottari, the flooded Ratu river has inundated 900 houses in Tilgadh settlement, Ward No. 4 of Balwal Municipality.

"The embankment of the river was in a dilapidated condition. The rain-swollen river breached the embankment and entered our settlement," said Laxman Mandal, a resident of Balwal. A team of security personnel from

Nepal Army, Nepal Police and Armed Police Force have been deployed in the affected areas to carry out relief and rescue works, according to Chief District Officer of Mahottari Tirtharaj Bhatta

In Sindhuli, a landslide buried three houses at Phiting, Kamalamai Municipality-11 while nine other houses are at high risk.

Meanwhile, a 50-year-old man from Golanjor Rural Municipality-2 in the district went missing in the flooded Bitijor stream on Friday evening.

In Nawalparasi (East), three people have gone missing in a landslide at Hupsekot Rural Municipality. Chief District Officer Manmaya Pangeni informed that the landslide buried a house at Charghare Tol in the rural municipality.

"Police personnel are conducting a

search and rescue operation at the incident site," said Pangeni.

Floodwaters also swept away a diversion constructed along the Mahendra Highway at Thumsi jungle in Gaidakot on Thursday night, disrupting vehicular movement, according to the Area Police Office in Gaidakot.

died and one went missing after being swept away by floodwaters in Ramgram Municipality. According to the District Administration Office, continuous rainfall since Thursday night has increased the water level and the current of Jharahi, Turiya and Panbhar rivers in the district. The floods have also caused damage to hundreds of hectares of arable land,

police said. Similarly, around 100 houses have been inundated by floodwaters from the Jharai river in the district headquarters of Parasi. Shops and factories in the bazaar area have also sustained damage due to the inundation.

Over 700 houses in Parasi, Sunwal, Bardaghat, Sarawal, Pratappur and Susta areas have also been waterlogged, police said.

Dipesh Bashyal, chief at the District Traffic Police in Parasi, said vehicular movement has been disrupted after the floods damaged the Turiya Bridge and a diversion along the Mahendra Highway at Sunwal.

Chief District Officer of Parasi Dharmendra Mishra said that security personnel have been deployed to the flood-affected areas to conduct rescue operations.

In Dang, the flooded Babai river swept away a 50-year-old man from Dangisharan Ward No. 1 who was taking a bath at the river.

"The body of the deceased was found 500 metres away from the incident site. Another 45-year-old man of Lamahi Ward No. 7 has also gone missing in the flooded Rapti river since Wednesday evening," said Chief District Officer of Dang Ram Bahadur

Kurumbang. In Rupandehi, several settlements Tilottama, Siddharthanagar, Omsatiya Devdaha, Rohini and Marcharwar areas have been inundated because of continuous rainfalls over the past few days.

Chief District Officer of Rupandehi Asman Tamang said, "The rain-swollen Rohini and Danda streams have inundated settlements in Bhairahawa and Rohini areas. The local administration rescued 100 families from Ward No. 4 of Omsatiya on Friday

(With inputs from our local correspondents in Province 2, Bagmati, Gandaki, Lumbini and Sudurpaschim

Driving licence exams to resume with health protocols licences, many students who went abroad for

KATHMANDU, AUG 27

The Department of Transport has published a protocol for conducting driving licence tests on

Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, the department has not issued new driving licences since March last year when the country went under a lockdown. Though the department opened online applications for driving licences in mid-January this year, it was closed after three months in April.

"We have written to all the transport offices to resume the driving licence exams by following the health and safety protocols," said Loknath Bhusal,

Spokesperson. "The exams will likely resume from the first week of September."

The department had been waiting for a nod from

the Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre to resume the driving licence exams. The department's records show that around

700,000 licence applications have been pending for processing for a year. It is estimated that over a million people are in need of new driving licences.

"We realised that we can no longer keep such a big number of people waiting, so we have published a protocol for conducting trials and exams for new licence, one centre can't keep more than 100 people in one shift," said Bhusal.

After the transport department stopped issuing

higher studies as well as migrant workers could not get their driving permits. The department's 'Covid-19 Pandemic Special

Vehicle Licence Exam (Conduct and Management 2076) mandates no more than 25 candidates in an exam hall. The protocol also requires the transport offices to conduct the written exam in venues that have plenty of open space where social distance rule could be enforced, like school

The protocol also states that all candidates should wear masks and follow social distancing. It also prohibits large gatherings at the trail or written exam

WORLD

BRIEFING

Ninety pupils freed in Nigeria after three months; one died MINNA: Overjoyed families awaited reunions on Friday with 90 young children who had been held captive

by gunmen for three months in northern Nigeria as the state's governor vowed to pursue the kidnappers. One of the children taken in May died during the ordeal and four others are receiving medical treatment, officials told reporters. The children—some as young as 5—have been transported to Minna, the capital of Niger state. Gunmen on motorcycles had attacked the Salihu Tanko Islamic School in Niger state in late May.

Russians fined for protest in support of Afghan women

MOSCOW: Russia has fined two activists for organising a demonstration in support of Afghan women who face an uncertain future after the Taliban returned to power in the country, a court said Friday. The two activists, Artemy Pityukov and Ksenia Bezdenezhnykh, were fined 200,000 rubles (\$2,670) each for "violating public order", a spokeswoman for the Presnensky district court in Moscow told AFP. The activists took part in a small-scale demonstration on Monday outside Afghanistan's embassy in Moscow. They took turns holding up posters in a "solitary picket" line, one of the last forms of protest in Russia that do not need official authorisation. Six activists were detained, according to independent monitor

Iraqi cleric Sadr says he will participate in general election BAGHDAD: Iraqi populist Shi'ite

Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr said on Friday that he and his supporters would take part in an October general election, reversing a decision last month to stay out. Sadr's bloc is part of a coalition that holds the most seats in parliament now, and is likely to be one of the frontrunners in the vote, which was called early by Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi as a response to popular protests from 2019. Sadr said in a televised address that the about-face came after a number of political leaders, whom he did not identify, had written to him with a "charter for reform" to rid Iraq of corruption and mismanagement. He urged supporters to go to the polls

Biden vows retribution against | New urgency to airlift ... extremists in Kabul attack

'We will respond with force and precision at our time, at the place of our choosing. These ISIS terrorists will not win, the US president says.

ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON, AUG 27

President Joe Biden is vowing to avenge the deaths of 13 American troops and dozens of Afghans in attacks at the Kabul airport that thrust the White House deeper into crisis over a chaotic and deadly end to a 20-year war. Retribution, however, will be harder with fewer US intelligence assets in Afghanistan.

In an emotional address after the attacks, Biden declared to the extremists responsible: "We will hunt you down and make you pay."

The president, speaking from the White House Thursday, said the US-led evacuation of Americans and others from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan would proceed, and indeed more than 12,000 people were airlifted from Kabul in the last 24 hours, as of Friday morning. US military officials have said they are braced for more attempted attacks by the group Biden said was responsible for Thursday's multi-pronged attack—the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate.

The IS affiliate in Afghanistan has carried out many attacks on civilian targets in the country in recent years. It is more radical than the Taliban, who seized power less than two weeks ago and are an enemy of IS. The most heralded American attack on IS came in April 2017 when the US dropped the largest conventional bomb in its arsenal on an IS cave and tunnel complex. The group more recently is believed to have concentrated in urban areas, which could complicate US efforts to target them without harming civilians.

"We will respond with force and precision at our time, at the place of our choosing," Biden said. "These ISIS terrorists will not win."

As for the bombers and gunmen involved, he said, "We have some reason to believe we know who they are. Not certain." He said he had instructed military commanders to develop plans to strike IS "assets, leadership and facilities.'

Gen Frank McKenzie, the US Central Command chief who is overseeing the airlift, told reporters at the Pentagon prior to Biden's



President Joe Biden speaks about the bombings at the Kabul airport that killed at least 12 US service members, from the East Room of the White House on Thursday.

remarks that the first step will be determining with confidence who carried out the attacks.

"Yes, if we can find who is associated with this we will go after them," he said. "We've been clear all along that we retain the right to operate against ISIS in Afghanistan, and we are working very hard right now to determine attribution, to determine who is associated with this cowardly attack, and we are prepared to take action against them—24/7, we are looking for them."

Tracking extremist groups in Afghanistan, including al-Qaida and IS, will be more difficult with no US forces on the ground and an absence of a US intelligence network that has been pulled out as part of Biden's promise to end what he calls a forever war. Biden has vowed, nonetheless, to contain any threat to the US from Afghanistan by monitoring it with aircraft and other assets based outside

In his appearance at the White

House, Biden asked for a moment of silence to honour the service members, bowing his head, and ordered US flags to half-staff across the country. The 13 service members who died include 10 Marines and one Navy sailor. The military has not yet identified any of those or given a service affiliation for the two others.

The US-led airlift continued even as commanders and officials were recovering from Thursday's devastation. The White House said Friday morning that 8,500 evacuees had been flown out of Kabul aboard US military aircraft in the previous 24 hours, as well as about 4,000 people on coalition flights. That is slightly less than the combined total for the day before the attacks.

The coalition's evacuation flights are scaling back, and the US is scheduled to finish its evacuation operation by Tuesday. As many as 1,000 Americans and many more Afghans are still struggling to get out of Kabul.

But despite intense pressure to extend Tuesday's deadline and his vow to hunt down those responsible, he has cited the threat of more terrorist attacks as a reason to keep to his plan—as the Taliban have repeatedly insisted he must.

The Taliban have wrested back control of Afghanistan two decades after they were ousted in a US-led invasion following the 9/11 attacks, which were orchestrated by al-Qaida extremists being harboured in the country. Their return to power has terrified many Afghans, who fear they will reimpose the kind of repressive rule they did when they were last in control. Thousands have rushed to flee the country ahead of the American withdrawal as a result.

The US said more than 100,000 people have been safely evacuated from Kabul, but thousands more are struggling to leave in one of history's largest airlifts. The White House said Friday morning that 8,500 evacuees were flown out aboard US military aircraft in the previous 24 hours, along with about 4,000 people on coalition flights. That is about the same total as the day before the attacks.

More people hoping to flee arrived on Friday at the airport, though in one area Taliban fighters set up a cordon about 500 metres (1,600 feet) away.

The attacks led Jamshad to head there in the morning with his wife and three small children, clutching an invitation to a Western country he didn't want to name. This was his first attempt to leave.

"After the explosion I decided I would try because I am afraid now there will be more attacks, and I think now I have to leave," said Jamshad, who like many Afghans uses only

Others acknowledged that going to the airport was risky-but said they had few choices.

"Believe me, I think that an explosion will happen any second or minute, God is my witness, but we have lots of challenges in our lives, that is why we take the risk to come here and we overcome fear," Ahmadullah Herawi.

Many others will try to escape over land borders. The United Nations refugee agency said a half-million people or more could flee in a "worse-case scenario" in the coming months.

In the wake of the attacks, Gen Frank McKenzie, the US Central Command chief overseeing the evacuation, warned that more were possible, and American commanders were working with the Taliban to prevent

them. Sweden's foreign minister also said there was a threat, but offered no details.

Scenes of chaos, desperation and horror from the airport have trans fixed the world. Images of people standing knee-deep in sewage and families thrusting documents and even young children toward US troops behind razor wire have come to symbolize both the disarray of the last days of the American presence in the country and the fears Afghans have for their future. But chances to help those hoping to join the evacuation are fading fast. Many American allies have already ended their efforts, in part to give the US time to wrap up its own operations before getting 5,000 of its troops out by Tuesday.

from Afghanistan will end within hours, and the main British processing centre for eligible Afghans has been closed. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace told Sky News there would be "eight or nine" evacuation flights on Friday. British troops will leave over the next few days. Italy's foreign minister confirmed

Britain said Friday its evacuations

that its last military flight evacuating people would depart later on Friday. And the French European affairs minister, Clement Beaune, said on Europe 1 radio that the country will end its operation "soon" but may extend it until after Friday night.

The Taliban have said they'll allow Afghans to leave via commercial flights after the US withdrawal, but it remains unclear which airlines would return to an airport controlled by the militants. They have asked Turkey to operate Kabul airport, but a decision will be made "after the administration (in Afghanistan) is clear," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Friday. Taliban leaders have been holding talks with former Afghan

Untold numbers of Afghans, espe cially ones who had worked with the US and other Western countries, are now in hiding, fearing retaliation despite the group's offer of full amnesty. The new rulers have sought to project an image of moderation in recent weeks—a sharp contrast to the harsh rule they imposed from 1996 to 2001, when they required women to be accompanied by a male relative when they left home, banned television and music, and held public executions.

Despite the promises, Afghans in Kabul and elsewhere have reported that some Taliban members are barring girls from attending school and going door to door in search of people who worked with Western forces

Three endangered Sumatran tigers found dead in Indonesia

ASSOCIATED PRESS BANDA ACEH AUG 27

Three critically endangered Sumatran tigers, including two cubs, were found dead in a conservation area on Indonesia's Sumatra island after caugnt in traps set by a poacher, authorities said

The mother and a female cub were found dead Tuesday in the Leuser Ecosystem Area, a forested region for tiger conservation in Aceh province, said Agus Arianto, head of the conservation agency. The body of a male cub was found on Thursday about 5 meters (15 feet) away, he said.

An examination determined they died from infected wounds caused by traps. Arianto said.

He said several traps similar to ones used to capture wild pigs on farms were found in the area of the bodies. "Setting traps for pigs in a

conservation area is very unlikely," Arianto said, "This was intended to poach endangered animals for economic gain." He said his agency will cooperate with law enforcement agencies in an investigation.

Sumatran tigers, the most critically endangered tiger subspecies, are under increasing pressure due to poaching as their jungle habitat

Conservationists have warned that pandemic has led to increased poaching

shrinks, according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. It estimated fewer than 400 Sumatran

killings of endangered animals on Sumatra island. Conservationists have warned that the coronavirus pandemic has led to increased poaching as villagers turn to hunting for economic reasons.

found dead with injuries caused by a snare trap in South Aceh district.

An elephant was found without a head on July 11 at a palm plantation in East Aceh. Police arrested an alleged poacher along with four people accused of buying ivory taken from the dead animal.

Aceh police also arrested four

WHO begins shipping 100 million Chinese vaccines

The Chinese shipments will help the sputtering global COVAX vaccine sharing programme.

REUTERS

BRUSSELS/JOHANNESBURG/JAKARTA, AUG 27

The World Health Organization's pandemic programme plans to ship 100 million doses of the Sinovac and of next month, mostly to Africa and Asia, in its first delivery of Chinese vaccines, a WHO document shows.

The Chinese shipments will help the sputtering global COVAX vaccine sharing programme which is far behind its pledge to deliver 2 billion doses this year following supply problems and export curbs imposed by major producer India

It could also boost Beijing's vaccine diplomacy efforts despite concerns over the efficacy of the Chinese shots, which have been turned down or paired with boosters from Western manufacturers by some of the recipi-

Of the 100 million Chinese vaccines, half will be provided by Sinopharm and half by Sinovac, with deliveries planned for "July to September 2021", a WHO document dated July 29 says.

About 10 million Sinopharm shots had been shipped by mid-August, a spokesperson for the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), which co-leads COVAX along with the WHO, told Reuters Sinopharm, Sinovac and China's

trade ministry did not respond to requests for comment about when the Chinese vaccines would be delivered. The Chinese vaccines have been

Africa, which is expected to receive a third of the 100 million doses. However, not all countries want the

countries,

Chinese vaccines.

South Africa is listed by COVAX as one of Africa's largest recipients of Chinese shots with an allocation of 2.5 million Sinovac doses, but a senior health official told Reuters the country was currently unable to accept the vaccines.

"There is not enough information on effectiveness against the Delta variant and there is no data on Sinovac in populations with HIV," said Nicholas Crisp, a deputy director-general in the health department who is overseeing the vaccine rollout.

"We have not accepted the COVAX Sinovac because it is premature in our evaluation and planning process," he told Reuters. Sinovac did not immediately

respond to a request for comment about South Africa's stance Nigeria, the main recipient of

Chinese shots in Africa under COVAX

with an allocation of nearly 8 million Sinopharm doses, has approved that vaccine but has called it a "potential" option for the country's inoculation

A GAVI spokesperson declined to and noted that other countries had not been included in this round, with one of the reasons being that some had decided not to receive the Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines.

The Chinese jabs have been allocated to 60 countries, mostly in Africa.

Officials from Kenya, Rwanda, Togo and Somalia, which are entitled to smaller COVAX shipments, said they had no concerns about the Chinese shots because they had been vetted by the WHO and more people needed to be inoculated as soon as possible.

COVAX's allocation of Chinese vaccines comes after the WHO gave emergency approval to the Sinopharm shot in May and Sinovac in June. GAVI has secured a combined supply of up to 550 million vaccines from the two companies until next year. Including the Chinese vaccines, the

facility expects to deliver about 500 million doses by the end of September, shipped 215 million vaccines, mostly AstraZeneca's. Ukraine is the only country in

Europe on the COVAX list for Chinese shots and is set to receive about 160,000 Sinovac doses

Asian countries are expected to receive more than 25 million Chinese vaccines, of which nearly 11 million Sinovac doses would go to Indonesia, making it the largest recipient of Chinese shots through COVAX. Other vaccines will go to countries in Latin America and the Middle East.

Indonesia has decided to give boosters, largely with the Moderna vaccine, to healthcare workers-who have mostly been immunised with Sinovac shots. That mirrored similar moves in other countries that have deployed Sinovac shots, such as Brazil and Chile.

Healthcare workers are a small portion of those vaccinated in Indonesia, but the booster policy has been interpreted by many as a sign of decreasing confidence in Sinovac.

मात २०७७/१२/२५ गते काभ्रुपलाञ्चोकबाट काठमाडौं आउँदा मेरो निम्न व्यहोरा भएको +2 को माइग्रेसन सर्टिफिकेट हराएको हुँद् पाउनुहुने महानुभावले नजिकको कार्यालय 9818461888 मा सम्पर्क गरिदिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछ। Name: Rupesh Raj Acharya Registration No.: 74760156B Symbol No.: 90520672

माइग्रेसन सर्टिफिकेट हरायो

माइग्रसन हराया

मिति २०७८/०४/०५ गते कोटेश्व बाट बल्खु (टि.यू.) सम्म जाँदा मेरे निम्न व्यहारा भएको BBA-BI Apex College को माइग्रेशन सर्टिफिकेट हराएको हुँदा पाउनुहुने महानुभावले फोन नं ५८१८२०३३३५ वा नजिकको प्रहरी कार्यालयमा खबर गरिदिन हुन अनरोध गर्दछ । नामः रुवी महता रजिष्टेशन न : १६५१७ सिम्बल नः ५२७१२३ वर्षः २०१५ ठेगानाः बोरिया-ट. सप्तरी

tigers remain in the wild. It was the latest in a series of

Early last month, a female tiger was

men in June for allegedly poaching a tiger with a snare trap and selling remains for 100 million rupiah (\$6,900).

Lebanon heading to complete collapse, Sunni cleric warns

REUTERS

BEIRUT, AUG 27

Lebanon is heading towards complete collapse unless action is taken to remedy the crisis caused by its financial meltdown, Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian, the state's most senior Sunni Muslim cleric, warned on Friday.

The economic collapse that began in 2019 has plumbed new depths this month, leading to fuel shortages that have crippled even essential services and causing numerous security incidents involving scrambles for gasoline.

The head of one of the main security agencies, Major General Abbas Ibrahim, ordered his officers to stand firm in the face of the crisis, saying it could be protracted and warning of the chaos that would ensue if the state collapsed. The warnings are some of the strongest yet from Lebanese officials about the gravity of the situation.

The accelerating pace of the deterioration has added to international concern about a state that was pieced back

together after a 1975-90 civil war and is still deeply riven by sectarian and factional rivalries. The U.N. secretary general on Thursday called for a new government to be formed urgently.

Lebanese politicians have failed to agree on the government even as the currency has lost more than 90% of its value and more than half of Lebanese have fallen into poverty.

Even vital medicines are hard to find. Cancer patients who have been told their treatment cannot be guaranteed protested on Thursday.

"We fear that ... the patience of Lebanese will run out and that we will all fall into the furnace of complete chaos, manifestations of which we have started to see in all fields," Sheikh Derian said during a Friday sermon in comments carried by the National News Agency.

"The matter requires serious and immediate treatment," he said. "Otherwise we are truly going to what is worse and to complete collapse," he said, noting clashes that have flared up

in some parts of Lebanon.

The World Bank says it is one of the worst collapses ever recorded. Its root causes include decades of corruption in government and the unsustainable way the state was financed.

Foreign donors say they will provide assistance once a government is formed that embarks on reforms.

President Michel Aoun, a Maronite Christian, and Prime Ministerdesignate Najib Mikati, a Sunni Muslim, have yet to agree on a cabinet to replace the government that quit after last year's Beirut port explosion.

The already difficult process was overshadowed on Friday by a row between Aoun and a group of former prime ministers, including Mikati and Saad al-Hariri, over the probe into the explosion. The former premiers have objected to attempts by the investigating judge to question the caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab, seeing it as an unjustified move against a post reserved for a Sunni and accusing the presidency of steering the probe.



Traffic jam caused by cars lining up for fuel in Damour, Lebanon.

MONEY

118.20 launched on February 20, 2020, but the

PRICE PER TOLA **BULLION** Rs 91,600 Rs 1,200

FOREX

Pound Sterling Japanese Yen

Chinese Yuan

Qatari Riyal

Saudi Arab Riyal

Euro



BIZLINE

Himalayan Bank aids renovation of ward at Gangalal National Heart Centre

KATHMANDU: Himalayan Bank Limited has provided financial support worth Rs692,962 to Shahid Gangalal National Heart Centre to renovate and maintain their General Ward. The ward was jointly inauguratetd by Sushiel Joshi, general manager of the bank and Chandra Mani Adhikari, executive director of the hospital. Himalayan Bank recognises that it has been difficult for patients and the medical team to provide better medical service due to the degraded condition of the ward and provided financial support as part of the bank's corporate social responsibility.

Winner for Hami Sabai Ko Wai Wai Jingle Remix Contest to be announced

KATHMANDU: Wai Wai will be announc-Wai Wai Jingle Remix Contest 2021 after introducing the event on World Music Day on June 21. They received 62 entries from all across Nepal in many different genres - from rap to pop, rock to local Nepali classical compositions. The richness in production values, technological expertise and the professional level from entries from outside Kathmandu was really inspiring. The freshness of talent seen in the entries, leads us to believe that Nepali music and musicians from across Nepal can really thrive with consistent corporate support, according to the press statement released by the company. The winner of the contest will take home a prize amount of Rs100,000.

Electricity goes to waste for lack of transmission line

Solu Hydroelectric Project produces 23.5 megawatts, but only 5MW power reaches consumers.

Solu Hydroelectric Project in Solukhumbu district has been faithfully generating electricity since it

power is not reaching consumers for lack of a transmission line. Since coming online one and a half years ago after completing a test run begun in November 2019, the power plant has been churning out 23.5 megawatts of electricity. But only 5 megawatts of it is being transmitted to

disappears into thin air. "The rest of the electricity is being wasted," said Badri Man Shrestha, a senior officer of the project. "That's a

people's homes through a temporary

local power line while 18 megawatts

Nobody knows when a transmission line will be completed to evacuate the power to the national grid.

The Rs4.40 billion project had signed a power purchase agreement with the Nepal Electricity Authority. Despite the deal, electricity worth Rs60 million is going to waste monthly, according to Shrestha.

The plant produces 408,000 units of electricity daily. "Based on this estimate, the project has suffered losses totalling Rs1.08 billion in the last one and a half years," said Shrestha.

As per the agreement, the Nepal Electricity Authority buys electricity at Rs8.40 per unit during the dry season in the winter, and at Rs4.80 per unit in the summer. "We have been evacuating only 5 megawatts of electricity through the local transmission line. And that too for only 20 to 21 days

According to the project, a 132 kV substation was completed two years ago, but the transmission line is yet to be finished



SHUTTERSTOCK

According to the project, a 132 kV substation was completed two years ago, but the transmission line is yet to be finished.

The Tingla-Okhaldhunga-Jaljale-Lahan transmission line which extends for 89.5 km consists of 302

"Out of the total number of pylons, only four are left to be erected,' said Janardan Gautam, chief of the Solu Corridor Transmission Line

The power utility had signed power purchase agreements to buy nearly 325 megawatts of electricity from 12 hydropower schemes, including the 23.5-megawatt Solu Khola Project and the 82-megawatt Lower Solu plant in the Everest region.

Gautam said they had been unable to complete the construction of the transmission line because locals of Maruwa in Katari, Udaypur frequently obstructed work

"The transmission line project is almost finished, but locals have put up a roadblock. Recently, we erected

seven poles in the area with the help of the local administration. But again, locals filed a writ at the Supreme Court which issued an interim order to stop work," said Gautam. "I'm in Kathmandu to attend the court

In July, a clash broke out between police personnel and locals over the erection of transmission towers at

The residents of Maruwa said the

compensation they were being offered was too small, and wanted the towers to be built elsewhere. The municipality had recommended land compensation at the rate of Rs5 million per kattha.

In June, the local administration moved to resume construction work by sending in police personnel.

"If locals do not obstruct the project, it will be completed within two months," said Gautam.

The Nepal Electricity Authority had awarded the transmission line contract to an Indian company Mohan Energy in March 2016. The 30-month project became effective on September 25, 2016, with the completion deadline set for March 24, 2019.

The project, funded through government investment and a concessional loan from the Export-Import Bank of India, had come to a halt on two occasions owing to rows over the contractor selection process. The completion deadline has been extended multiple times

The project envisages building 302 transmission towers and installing 132 kV double circuit cables to evacuate power from hydropower plants in Solukhumbu and the surrounding region to eastern Nepal and the national grid.

As per the power purchase agree ment, the electricity authority has to pay fines amounting to 45 percent of total losses caused by spillage of power from those projects in the absence of transmission infrastructure.

"Unfortunately, the Electricity Authority has not compensated the producer," said Shrestha.

"We have claimed compensation many times. The compensation amount would be around Rs460 million," said Shrestha, adding that they would now seek legal remedy.

Malaysian chip makers still struggling to meet demand, association says

KUALA LUMPUR, AUG 27

Global demand for chips from Malaysia is still outstripping supply after a surge in Covid-19 cases disrupted production at a time when car firms and makers of phones and medical equipment are ramping up their output, an industry executive said.

Still, the semiconductor shortage could start to ease by the end of the year as more workers in Malaysia return to factories once they have been vaccinated and the government eases restrictions on critical sectors, Wong Siew Hai, president of the Semiconductor Malaysia Association told Reuters.

"Predicting based on data I'm seeing, the situation should improve, but we still cannot fulfil the demand," said Wong, adding that demand had not shown signs of slowing and last year. Malaysia is home to suppliers and factories serving semiconductor makers such as Europe's STMicroelectronics and Infineon, as well as major carmakers including Toyota Motor Corp and Ford Motor Co.

The country accounts for 13 percent of global chip assembly testing and packaging, and 7 percent of the world's semiconductor trade passes through Malaysia, undergoing some added value at local factories or getting combined with other parts before being shipped.

Several automakers and semiconductor companies have said this month that pandemic-related disruptions in the Southeast Asian nation were hitting their

Malaysia imposed a strict nationwide lockdown in June that initially shut almost



A file photo shows a view of a deserted bridge during a lockdown amid the coronavirus disease outbreak in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

all industries, before it eased restrictions for some key sectors. Plants in recovery areas can now employ 80 percent of their workforce and run at full capacity if all staff are vaccinated.

"The constraints we had in June and early July are now beginning to reduce and more volume is being shipped because we are allowed to operate at a higher percentage level," Wong said.

He said it was hard to quantify the lockdown impact on the industry but sales losses easily ran into billions of Malaysian ringgit. One ringgit is worth about a 25 US cents.

Electrical and electronics exports worth \$92 billion made up 39.4 percent of Malaysia's total exports last year.

Citing disruption in Malaysia, Ford said this month it would temporarily shut a truck plant, and Infineon said it would take a hit from plant shutdowns. Toyota and Japanese rival Nissan Motor Co have also announced output adjustments.

Wong said many automakers scaled back chip orders last year, anticipating a downturn in demand, so Malaysian chipmakers diverted capacity to other sections of the electronics industry.

"Come January, the automotive industry realised they wanted to get back the capacity but the semiconductor fabrication plants didn't have the capacity for them," he said.

"We do see more exciting companies

emerge. I would be constructive on the

opportunities within Southeast Asia," said

Sukumar Rajah, director of portfolio man-

agement at Franklin Templeton Emerging

Southeast Asia's internet economy is

forecast to triple to \$300 billion by 2025

from end-2020, according to a report from

The total value of venture capital trans-

actions has already hit a record \$10 billion

in the first half of this year, surpassing

2020's level of \$8.2 billion, data from indus-

these countries have large enough domes-

tic populations where digitisation opportu-

nities can be unicorn size," Jeffrey

Jaensubhakij, chief investment officer at

Singapore sovereign wealth fund GIC said

last month. The region has also attracted

interest from SPACS or special purpose

acquisition companies and accounts for

four of eight Asia-related SPAC targets

before in China and India, so they are look-

ing to leverage that experience in a bigger

way and avoid missing out on some of

those same opportunities," said Perlman

"Investors have also been to the movie

unveiled this year, Dealogic data shows.

"Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand—all

try tracker Preqin shows.

from Warburg Pincus.

Google, Temasek and Bain & Company.

Markets Equity.

Bangladesh reviews oil-fired power plants lease renewals as gas prices soar

REUTERS

DHAKA/SINGAPORE, AUG 27

Bangladesh is reviewing the lease renewals of five oil-fired power plants as they near expiry, despite a government plan to move away from oil and instead use natural gas for power generation, two senior government officials told Reuters.

This comes amid soaring gas prices globally, with Asian liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices currently at their highest for this time of the year since at least 2010, and which are well above oil-linked gas prices. Bangladesh has been a critical growth market for LNG,

with annual imports climbing six-fold since 2018, according to Refinitiv data. Extended use of oil-powered plants beyond their expected lifespan may slow LNG purchases going for 'The proposal has been sent to the energy regulatory body

for scrutiny. If they find it cost-effective, the tenure of the power plants will be extended by two years," one of the two to speak with media.

The lease is expiring this year for five "quick rental" power plants, which are private sector funded plants that run on fuel oil or gas oil and came online at short notice in mid-2011 when Bangladesh was grappling with severe power shortages. They have a total capacity of 457 megawatts.

Last year, the country idled several oil-fired power plants and imported LNG as the price of gas in Asia fell to record lows.

Last year, the country idled several oil-fired power plants and imported LNG as the price of gas in Asia fell to record lows from coronavirus-induced demand slump.

For now, Bangladesh is considering increasing imports of fuel oil to 3 million tonnes in the financial year starting from July, this year, from 2.75 million tonnes from the previous financial year, a senior official from Bangladesh Petroleum Corp told Reuters

"Imports could further rise if LNG prices don't come down," the official said, adding that it has slowed down purchase of spot LNG cargoes due to the high prices.

Currently, more than half of Bangladesh's electricity comes from natural gas, though some power plants also run on heavy fuel oil and diesel. Benchmark Asia spot LNG prices hit record highs earlier

this year, driven by production losses combined with cold weather and increased use in China, India and elsewhere. Prices are currently at their highest ever for this time of

the year, as low inventory levels in Europe sees Asia competing for the fuel amid a hot summer. This is really tough to cope with such high prices," a sen-

ior Petrobangla official said, adding that he anticipates spot LNG imports to remain depressed until April next year, when he expects prices to finally ease.

"Luckily, our demand for electricity is much less in the winter season," he said. Still, Bangladesh's long-term demand for LNG is expected to remain robust, he added.

Certificate Lost

This is to inform you that I, Abinash Kumar Bhat, Son of Sarita Bhat/Narendra Bahadur Bhat, permanent residense of Sankhamul, Kathmandu lost my All India Senior School Certificate, 2015 Issued by Central Board of Secondary Education. If any found please inform to nearest police station or Phone no.: 9840850854

Name:-**Abinash Kumar Bhat** School Name:- Birla Public School, Doha, Qatar 9112884 Roll NO:-Passed year: 2015

Southeast Asia tech dealmaking booms as investors place post-Covid-19 bets

REUTERS SINGAPORE, AUG 27

Fintech and e-commerce companies in Southeast Asia are raising hefty amounts of capital as global investors bet on post-pandemic technology plays, bankers and investors said, a trend that is also stoking concerns about frothy valuations.

Public equity capital raising by Southeast Asian firms has surged to a fouryear high of \$8.4 billion this year, data from Refinitiv shows, with companies such as Indonesian e-commerce firm Bukalapak attracting strong interest in its IPO.

Private equity investments have also jumped, reaching \$8.2 billion, just shy of a record of \$8.9 billion in 2020 and expanding the "unicorn" club of startups valued at more than \$1 billion.

Near-term fundraising activity will be led by Indonesian tech group GoTo's expected completion of a \$2 billion pre-IPO funding, while about a dozen start-ups are looking to list regionally or in the United States over the next two years, bankers and investors said.

The hectic pace of activity comes as the Covid-19 pandemic boosts consumers' adoption of digital platforms and investors scout for internet-based companies that are able to grow their businesses faster

Cash-rich global funds are also sharpening their focus on these opportunities, given China's regulatory crackdown on technology companies

"There's strong interest from public market investors to get exposure to the growth profile of this region," said Jeffrey Perlman, head of Southeast Asia at buyout fund Warburg Pincus, one of the biggest investors in the region.

year include Indonesian travel firm Traveloka and online classified marketplace Carousell, sources familiar with the

Regional logistics group Ninja Van and Thai e-commerce enabler aCommerce both said an IPO was a possibility but gave no timeline. Other sources said Thai startup Pomelo Fashion was considering an IPO

The app of Indonesian e-commerce company Bukalapak is seen on a mobile phone next to its logo displayed in this illustration picture.

Whatmore resigns as national cricket coach

The 67-year-old World Cup winning coach will part ways with Nepal after the ICC World Cup Cricket League 2.

Nepal national cricket team head coach Dav Whatmore has resigned.

The former World Cup winning coach on Friday sent an email to the Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) writing that he would resign from his post citing the situation in Nepal.

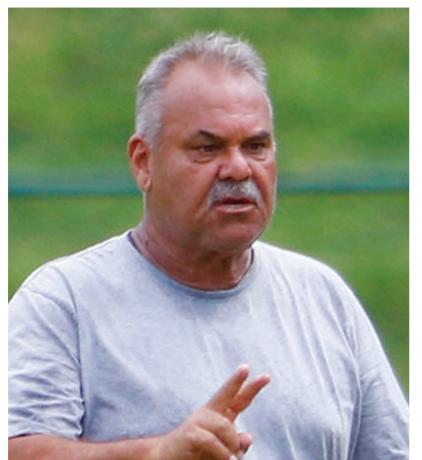
"He said through an email that he would resign owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, and personal and family reasons," said CAN president Chautra Bahadur Chand.

"It was an unexpected incident. We are in an important stage as we are set to play the ICC World Cup Cricket League 2 against Oman and the US We wish the coach hadn't resigned ahead of the Oman tour," said CAN secretary Ashok Nath Pyarkurel. "It would be good had it not come at this moment because the experienced captain and player Paras Khadka resigned

The 67-year-old Sri Lanka-born Australian national, who coached Sri Lanka to a World Cup win in 1996, was appointed in January this year for a year-long term

He guided Nepal to the trophy in the Tri-Nation Series Twenty20 cricket tournament in April involving Nepal, the Netherlands and Malaysia.

The Nepali national team is currently in Oman to play ICC World Cup Cricket League 2 against Oman and the US, set to take place from September 13 to 20. Before that, they



Day Whatmore decided to quit as Nepal head coach citing pandemic and personal reasons.

will play a two-match One-Day International (ODI) series against Papua New Guinea on September 5

Late on Friday evening, the cricket governing body said: "He [Whatmore] has resigned with immediate effect after the Oman tour citing his personal reasons.

"It was an unexpected event for us. But we will think of his replacement as we don't have any other choice at the moment. As per the contract, Whatmore would have given us notice about his resignation a month prior and he did that," said Pyakurel.

Nepal currently sit sixth in the League 2 table featuring seven teams— Oman, the USA, Scotland, Namibia, the UAE and Papua New Guinea. The event is the gateway to the World Cup as three teams finishing on top will secure berths in the World Cup Qualifiers. The bottom four will compete in the World Cup Qualifiers playoff set to take place in Zimbabwe in June and July of

Each team will play 36 ODIs when the event concludes in February 2023. Nepal have so far played four

matches in the three-year League 2 cycle and have registered two wins and as many defeats. Oman lead the standings winning eight of the 10 matches played. The US are second in the standings with six wins out of 12 matches played and PNG are at the bottom having lost all eight matches

ble 450 goals in 438 matches in a glit-

tering nine-year spell in Madrid that

also included four Champions League

triumphs. Juventus' hopes he would

be the final piece required to end their

25-year wait to become champions of

Europe have been thwarted. They

have failed to get beyond the quar-

qualification for Europe's top club

Rohit and Pujara lead India's resistance in third Test

REUTERS LEEDS, AUG 27

India opener Rohit Sharma and under-pressure batsman Cheteshwar Pujara put up a gritty fight to steer the tourists to 112-1 at tea on day three of the third Test at Headingley on Friday.

The tourists, who were all out for 78 in the first innings, remain on the back foot having conceded a huge lead of 354 runs.

They lost opener KL Rahul on the stoke of lunch but Rohit and Pujara batted through the wicketless second session forging a still-flourishing 78-run partnership. Rohit was batting on 59 at the break, while Pujara was on 40 with India still 242 behind.

Earlier, England lost their last two wickets quickly to be all out for 432 in their robust reply to India's meagre first innings total.

Rahul was adjudged lbw to Ollie Robinson when on six but the batsman hesitantly reviewed the decision, which was overturned after replays confirmed the ball would have missed the stump. Craig Overton soon dismissed the opener for eight though when the bowler induced an edge and Jonny Bairstow dived to his left to pluck a stunning one-handed catch at second slip.

Rohit survived a couple of close lbw appeals and occasionally counter-attacked, like when he guided a rising Robinson delivery over the slip cordon

Pujara came out to bat with his team in dire straits and amid growing whispers about his future, having gone without a fifty in his previous 12 innings.

As if to silence criticism of his unflattering strike rate, the batsman hit three early boundaries, going at a run-a-ball rate before putting his head down and focusing on the rebuilding job.

Session held for journalists on boxing reporting



Participants pose for a group photo after the coaching session in Kathmandu on Friday.

SPORTS BUREAU

KATHMANDU, AUG 27

Nepal Sports Journalists Forum (NSJF) Academy and Kathmandu District Boxing Association jointly conducted a session on boxing reporting in Kathmandu on Friday.

The training was organised on the occasion of International Boxing Day. A total of 46 sports journalists had participated in the mentorship programme, which was led by Anup Lama.

The academy was launched in March this year by the NSJF aiming to help sports writers and journalists across the country to properly cover various sports disciplines.

NSJF chief Durganath Subedi hoped the interaction would inform sports journalists on the technical aspects of boxing.

of the academy's "Know your Game" series, which aims to update journal ists on various sports disciplines from The academy has already organised writing workshops on volleyball and

Academy coordinator Niranjan

Adhikari said the coaching was a part

mountain sports. National Sports Council (NSC)

member secretary Ramesh Kumar Silwal expressed his confidence that such programmes will help sports journalists accurately sports-related issues in the country.

International Boxing Day, first observed in 2017, used to be celebrated on July 22 every year. The International Boxing Association (AIBA) moved the Day to August 27 in July this year to connect the date with the first edition of the AIBA World Championships, held in Havana, Cuba in 1974.

Man United agree deal to re-sign Ronaldo

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Manchester United announced on Friday they have reached a deal to re-sign Cristiano Ronaldo from Juventus, 12 years after he left Old Trafford for Real Madrid.

"Manchester United is delighted to confirm that the club has reached agreement with Juventus for the transfer of Cristiano Ronaldo, subject to agreement of personal terms, visa and medical," United said in a statement. "Everyone at the club looks forward to welcoming Cristiano back to

United's swoop capped a tumultuous 24 hours during which Ronaldo initially seemed poised to join rivals Manchester City. Premier League champions City had been widely linked with a move for the Portuguese forward after missing out on England captain Harry Kane. However, United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer hinted a deal was in the offing during his prematch press conference on Friday ahead of Sunday's Premier League

"Cristiano is a legend of this club, he's the greatest player of all time, if you ask me," said Solskjaer, who played alongside Ronaldo. always had a good communication. I know Bruno (Fernandes) has been talking to him as well. He knows what we feel about him. If he was ever going to move from Juventus, he knows that we're here.'

Sky Sport Italia reported that United have offered Juve 28 million euros (\$33 million), agreeing a twoyear deal with the superstar attacker worth 25 million euros per season.

Ronaldo won the first of his five Champions League titles and was first crowned the world's best player during six years at United between 2003 and 2009. In total he scored 118 goals in 292 games, also winning three Premier League titles, one FA Cup and two League Cups.

Earlier in the day, Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri confirmed the five-time Ballon d'Or winner's desire

to leave the Italian giants "Yesterday, speaking with Cristiano,



Cristiano Ronaldo is returning to Manchester United from Juventus, 12 years after he left Old Trafford for Real Madrid.

he told me that he has no intention of staying at Juventus, for this reason he will not be picked tomorrow. This morning he didn't train," said Allegri. "He was here three years, he made his contribution, he made himself available to Juventus and now he's leaving.

Life goes on. Ronaldo won two Serie A titles with Juventus, but his time in Turin has not lived up to expectations. He joined Juve in 2018 after scoring a remarka-

ter-finals in the past three seasons. Last season, they were deposed as Italian champions by fierce rivals Inter Milan and had to wait until the final day of the campaign to secure

HOROSCOPE

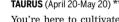
competition.

However, Ronaldo still topped the Serie A goal charts, edging out Romelu Lukaku, who joined Chelsea this month for £97 million. And he also rolled back the years at Euro 2020 to win the Golden Boot despite playing just four games as Portugal bowed out at the last 16.

United have already significantly strengthened their squad with the signings of Jadon Sancho and Raphael Varane during the transfer window as they aim to win the Premier League for the first time since 2013.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) ***

turday's skies push you full-speed ahead towards finding a good time. It encourages you to prioritize those activities that help you return to a childlike sense of joy and wonder. The day provides you with ample energy and a can-do attitude



GEMINI (May 21-June 21) **

require effort and exertion

energy towards creative projects

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



TAURUS (April 20-May 20) *** You're here to cultivate simplicity in the body and self by stepping away from messy, psychological situations. Saturday's skies remind you of the seemingly simple task, and makes it easy to devote ample

Try to keep from socially-taxing situations today. The

universe encourages you to keep things low-key and

prioritize soul-refreshing solitude and it pushes you

to devote energy towards home based projects that

This time of year finds you sending all of your focus

toward striking a better balance between pleasure

and productivity. In that process, you find yourself

fine-tuning your craft, carving out space for exercise

and health, and redefining your work environment.

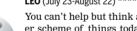


LEO (July 23-August 22) *****

While it's easy for you to hole up and be a homebody,

aim to push yourself out of your comfort zone and

seek out new connections. The day calls for a local



CANCER (June 22-July 22) ***



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) **

to lean into this process

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***



You can't help but mull over the current stories taking place in your partnership. Your emotional energy is directed towards these all important one-onones, as they help illuminate any imbalances in

You're working through a major phase of regenera-

tion and renewal, which requires honoring a deep

craving for release. Saturday's skies encourage you



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) *** Stay local if you can under Saturday's skies. You're in the mood to spruce up your living space, revisit ancient history, and generally keep a low profile that honors restorative action. The day encourages you to

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ***



This time of year has you totally focused on what's taking place with your career. Saturday's skies help



keep your hands busy.

PISCES (February 19-March 20) *** You're likely to find yourself on-the-go today. The universe tends to push you out of the house into your

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

Exhausted 6 Vinland explorer

language

10 Deep tracks 14 Desensitize 15 Pakistani

16 Poet's black 17 Serious

offender 18 Tiny stream 19 Wound a

matador 20 Dancer Astaire

21 Slow down 23 Long steps 25 Seesaw 26 Ballpoint point 27 Carnivals Carnivals

29 Cosmetic buy 32 Salon treatment 33 Email option 37 Not just mine 38 More jolly

41 Listener's need 42 Finishes first 44 Warrior princess 45 Pound sounds

49 Not skinny 50 On the go 53 Charity ball 57 Huge

61 Chocolate

47 Prolific diarist 60 Went by horsebáck

62 Fix a hole 63 Rile up 64 Sublet 65 "Frozen"

princess

66 Helga's husband 67 Joins on 68 Do business

69 Furtively **DOWN** 1 Spats

> Autocrat Blowing away Hideaway Tempts

2 Immobile

Musician – Clapton Out of action

Not temporary (hyph.) 10 Go backward

11 Wolf pack member (hyph.)

12 Viennese dessert 13 Scoff at

21 Chaperoned girl 22 Poetic contraction 24 "Carpe —!

27 Spore producers La Scala

29 Garden planting

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

EDENBRINETHEN

MEANCAPES LEIS

TRIANGLE

E|N|T|R|E|E| | F|A|R|G|C

E A S E D

A L O H A P E T A L

EREGETANTSY

travel and movement

You can't help but think about your place in the larger scheme of things today. The universe encourages you to devote energy to career projects or fostering the growth of your reputation in a good light; you're at peak visibility now

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

UNTIE

G|L|A|N|D

ODDEST

M|O|L|I|N|E|

It's easy to feel good under Saturday's skies. You need to direct your excess energy into a constructive channel. This energizing aspect makes it easy to accomplish anything you devote focus towards, as it provides ample stamina





you fine-tune this ongoing story. The universe pushes you to expand upon your craft and provides ample



local environment, as you seek out a fresh perspective to sink your teeth into. It is an ideal day to devote energy towards collaborative efforts.

SUDOKU

2 7 8 6 5 3 1 4 9 9 3 6 4 1 7 2 8 5 5 4 1 2 8 9 6 3 7 4 8 5 9 7 6 3 2 1 1 6 7 3 2 8 9 5 4 3 9 2 1 4 5 7 6 8 859732416 724561893 6 1 3 8 9 4 5 7 2 YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



SPORE SNORT TOWED © 2021 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS

30 Monsieur's affirmative 31 40-cup brewer

32 Zebras, to lions Japanese delicacy

43 Faucets

46 Without end

49 Marshy area

48 Magda's sister

CLOTH

SOP

35 Doze 36 AMA members 39 Used up 40 "Saving Private 50 Greek marketplace 51 Felt for 52 Vogue

54 Socked in 55 Flawless 56 Absorbent towel 58 Fable

SIR

19 32 38 40 45 60 63 65 66 68 69

59 Bear in the sky

63 Happy sighs

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE



Gosainkunda, which sits at 4,380metres above sea level, is a popular trekking destination in Nepal.



Devotees ascend the steep trail of Chandanbari, a small settlement upwards from Dhunche.



Every year, thousands of devotees make their way to Gosainkunda to mark Janai Purnima. Some pilgrims also rent horses to commute on the foot trail.



A pilgrim searches for a mobile network on his way to Gosainkunda.

Between the world and the still glacial lake

Each year on Janai Purnima, thousands of pilgrims head to the abode of the gods—Gosainkunda, the holy lake. The pandemic didn't deter the devotees.

TEXT & PHOTOS: PRAKASH CHANDRA TIMILSENA



At Dhunche close to midnight, I was still looking for a room to accommodate our group of five. Unfortunately, the locals informed us that there were no rooms available. When we finally managed a room, we knew the journey ahead would not be easy, and it would be a race to book hotel services along the way. Many people had turned up to make a pilgrimage to the holy lake at an elevation of 4,380 metres, two days

away.

On the trail, however, these things didn't matter. In the monsoon drizzle, we strolled, enjoying the natural sounds of the woods we passed through. The sweet smell of the damp earth beneath me invigorated my senses. The green view of the season filled me with wonder. Everything on the trail was exciting. And even something as simple as potato and yak

cheese tasted divine.

But at Buddha Mandir above
Laurebina, we had trouble finding a
room again. Like hundreds of pilgrims, we had no option but to
take shelter under the open sky

with just the tarpaulin and thin mats as our makeshift accommodation. It was cold and uncomfortable as we shifted sides. No one was sleeping. You could hear people rambling with each other.

I stared at the plastic ceiling, thinking if I should cover my face with my mask. But because the air was thinning with the altitude, I tried to distract myself from the idea. Perhaps, near the gods, the virus would weaken and be at bay. I choked on my logic.

When the morning arrived, I shoved off my reasoning and walked towards the glacial lake with my group, and upon reaching Gosainkunda, nothing else mattered. I was at peace with myself. The lake was stunning and surreal, as I had heard.

The soreness of the night disappeared after I took three daring dips in the icy water. Some pilgrims meditated before the lake, others changed their *janais* after taking a bath in the *kunda*. And I shivered in my euphoria and longed to stay back as some pilgrims packed their bags hurriedly to leave

In that moment of clarity, I realised how the pandemic had burdened my shoulders too, like many people in the country. And in letting go of the anxiousness of the times, I could live a little more calmly. There on the edge of the lake, I took deep breaths and contemplated the profound landscape before me. As people performed their prayers and rituals, I heaved a sigh of relief from between the world and the still glacial lake.



Devotees walk through the misty environs of Chandanbari.



A devotee wears a plastic cape to protect himself from the rain while enjoying the view at Lauribina, Rasuwa.



Devotees pray in the morning at Gosainkunda, which is considered the abode of gods.



Devotees take a dip in the cold water of Gosainkunda. It is believed that the cold water of Gosainkunda washes away one's sins.



A group of shamans lead the kora procession around the sacred lake. Gosaikunda draws both Hindu and Buddhist devotees.

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

A museum in my home

The places we have lived in stay with us, as it is, even after we have moved far away from it.



SHUVEKSHYA LIMBU

friend always said that my house smelled like warm rice and curry, wafting into her nose at 12 pm and tempting her to break her no-carb diet. Now every time I think about home, I think of boiled rice and the sweet smell of thin onion strips sizzling away in a hot pan. I can hear my mother humming subconsciously as she sits by the window cutting vegetables for dinner. I can picture the dining table and the always-present basket of fruits that my dad picks up from the market every morning. In the dining room's windowsill, my mother's pickles glisten

Every new month, my mother will clean the stubborn oil stains on the kitchen wall, just above the stove. In one corner of the kitchen will be our 10-year-old LG fridge humming like a Buddhist monk, even in the dead of night. And during summer, daring cockroaches will come out of their hiding nooks to nibble at my mother's leftover curry only to meet with instant death tasting the poison chalk on the floor.

TV lights will illuminate the living room as my dad watches the 7 pm news with glasses perched on the bridge of his nose and a steaming cup of tea by his side. The news will be as follows: the parliament's decision to dissolve the government after yet another failed democratic coalition, the ever-rising fuel prices, young people leaving the country for better opportunities, and between the news will be an advert of a popular instant

For more information:

Ncell: 9801572222, 9801016850

NTC: 16600122222

noodle brand. My dad will groan, sigh, and curse in disappointment—'Where's this country heading?'

Our lime green sofa will contain my nephew's lego pieces from the afternoon and his stick figures perched on the wall, just behind the sofa. My sister and I will keep smiling from the big picture hung on the wall, as the souvenirs consisting of a Koala plush toy, miniature models of an Emirates aeroplane, and the London Bridge substitute for our absence

Meanwhile, my room will still hold the tiny collection of books of which I was so proud of. Some of my favourite books by Franz Kafka, Murakami, and Ishiguro will be collecting dust; their pages yellowed, blotted, dog-eared from all the times I reread and highlighted my favourite parts.

Perhaps, I can still hear the sounds of

kids playing cricket outside my window in the main street and my neighbour's pressure cooker screaming with the proclamation of perfectly cooked daal. If I listen hard, I will hear the distant muffled drone of an aeroplane carrying people to a new beginning—far away from the dust fumes that now permanently hang over Kathmandu, from the clanging of bells from the thousands of temples that my mother frequented for our success, away from the languid commotion of a city that chokes dreams and youth.

Thousands of kilometres away from home, I am here in Sydney, staring at the city's towering skyscrapers. The city has been my home for the past three years. I have frequented its glistening Westfields and dined in Circular Quay overlooking the Harbor Bridge. I have jaywalked drunk with laughter on the light rail tracks of the city. I have eaten Kebab rolls

in Blacktown in shops that stay open till 3 am. I have perfected my Australian accent and stopped sweating in front of old men at the pub who complain to me about all the jobs that have been taken over by Indians and Chinese. I serve 60 beers a shift to these people who call me 'Sue' or 'Suzie' instead of Shuvekshya. I scrub tables and clean ashtrays while exasperated sighs escape my chest like the whispers of a storm that has laid dormant for far too long. In between my shifts, I sometimes think about the two-storey home in Kathmandu.

I pray that it is still filled with the smell of rice and curry and the sounds of the 7 pm news that's interrupted with the sharp whistle of the pressure cooker. I pray that its walls warm up as the sun climbs up. But sometimes, I imagine the worst; my mother's wrinkled face contorted into a grimace as she coughs for

I hope nothing changes from how things are imprinted in my memory.

her life. I fear that she will get infected by Covid-19, and my father will be too old to take her to the hospital. My mother's sheer disregard for modern medicine and blind approval for prayers and honey-infused turmeric drinks amplify my fear in these uncertain times. There is, I imagine, a chilling reality in the prospect that the people we deeply love will not be around forever

But I hope my home remains the same, forever frozen in time; all the sounds, smell, and images perfectly curated and preserved like someone's personal version of a well-funded museum. I hope my parents never age. I hope Kathmandu remains the same; filled with the clanging of bells, children playing cricket out on the streets, and its chilly air pervaded with the smell of momos and sweet milk tea. I hope my friends always have time to catch up on weekends. I hope the street vendor outside of my house still makes the tangiest pani puris. I hope nothing changes from how things are imprinted in my memory—regardless of the distance, the oceans, time, governments, lack of opportunities, and the

Limbu is a student of English literature and creative writing at Western Sydney University.

Type SUB <Space> Your name

and Send to 34001



INSIDE VALLEY: 9841166784 (Shishir), 9851098944 (Ram), 9841631473 (Dhirendra)

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