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A man takes rest at a children's park at Teku, Kathmandu on Friday.

# Caught between ruling coalition and MCC, Deuba feels the heat

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba wants to ratify the US grant, but doing so comes with the risk of breaking the five-party alliance. His choices are limited.

#### ANIL GIRI KATHMANDU FFB 18

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba appears to have fallen between two stools.

He is under pressure to move the Millennium Challenge Corporation-Nepal Compact from Parliament. Any move to table the compact could lead to breakdown of his coalition. He, won't be able compact by keeping the coalition intact, as his partners, particularly the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) and the CPN (Unified Socialist), are dead against the US grant's ratification. Of the multiple options Deuba explores, one is joining hands with the CPN-UML to get the compact ratified. That, however, also comes with a risk. His coalition may break and the Maoist Centre could forge an electoral alliance with the UML, like in 2017 when the prime minister's party, the Nepali Congress, faced a defeat.



again, according to the leader. "So Deuba is not going to take the risk of breaking the alliance and joining hands with the UML," the

leader told the post. After Thursday's coalition meeting ended inconclusively, Deuba went to meet Oli in Balkot. In the meeting, Oli clearly said that once he will terminate his ties with his ruling partners, UML will support Deuba's government and there is possibility of coor eration between Nepali Congress and UML, according to two UML leaders. Oli on Friday morning briefed some UML leaders about his meeting with Deuba. A senior UML leader, who is familiar with the meeting of the two leaders, told the Post that Oli's message to Deuba was that as long as the prime minister sets his feet on two boats, he will continue to be in a crisis. "Our party has a clear position. Until the alliance remains, there is no chance of cooperation," Oli told Deuba, according to the leader. "If you [Deuba] terminate your partnership with your partners, then UML will lend its support in lifting House obstructions, ratifying the MCC compact and reaching a power-sharing deal with the Nepali Congress."



### Publisher's note

antipur Publications completes its 29 years and turns 30 today. On the occasion of the Publication's 29th anniversary, I would like to extend my heartfelt wishes to all our readers, well-wishers and associates.

In the post-1990 era of liberalisation, Kantipur was established as an attempt to lay a strong foundation of professional journalism. This journey is completing its three decades. We've come a long way since, and over the years we have encountered multiple crises, issues and accomplishments. Overcoming obstacles as we move ahead has become our trait which perhaps fuels our pursuit of journalism without fear and favour.

In the last two years, just like the world, we have been facing a multi-pronged crisis in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. Here's hoping that the Omicron variant of the coronavirus is the beginning of an end of the pandemic and we commit ourselves to moving ahead with more vigour than ever before. I would like to express my gratitude to all my colleagues at Kantipur Publications for fulfilling their responsibilities despite unusual circumstances brought by the pandemic. We are also indebted to all our well-wishers for their relentless support, assistance and encouragement during these difficult times. During this period, we've learnt how to navigate the pandemic. This experience, we believe, will help us soar to new heights. But whatever challenges may come our way, we remain committed to the values and principles of journalism.

Moving with the times, we continue to adopt and incorporate new technological innovations across all our mass media channels. We've upgraded our mechanical press operations and equipment for a state of the art printing press. We have revamped our digital platforms to ensure that latest and reliable news updates are available round the clock for our tech savvy readers who are increasingly switching to handheld devices. This is but a start of how we would like to adopt emerging technologies as we move ahead.

We adhere firmly to democracy, rule of law and constitutional values and principles. When there were two attempts to dissolve the House of Representatives and misinterpret the constitution, we made our stance clear and stood firmly against it. The Supreme Court aptly resolved the cases. But once again, we find ourselves divided as a nation over a foreign grant project. We expect that the responsible political parties will end this stalemate and come to a logical conclusion at the earliest to resolve the social confrontations.

Lastly, I would like to convey my best wishes to colleagues, readers, distributors, advertisers and advertising agencies, supporters and well-wishers on the occasion of this major milestone. Thank you.  $\bigcirc$  /

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POST PHOTO: KABIN ADHIKARI

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In order to seek consensus on MCC tabling, Deuba has been holding meetings with the coalition partners almost every day. After failing to arrive at a conclusion on Thursday, the coalition partners met on Friday

#### Sher Bahadur Deuba

as well, but the meeting ended without any decision. The next meeting has been scheduled for Sunday.

A senior Nepali Congress leader said some leaders within his party are putting pressure on Deuba to find such a way that the MCC can be tabled while keeping the alliance intact. Maintaining the alliance will give the Congress a better chance to emerge as the single largest party in the upcoming elections which will ensure Deuba's return as prime minister

>> Continued on page 2

### Nepal's democracy revolutions, and achievements and failures

As the country celebrates democracy, observers see some gains, some hollow promises.

when the people revolted to end the

century-long autocratic Rana regime.

The long protest of the people paid off

when the country ushered in democ-

It, however, was short-lived as King

racy in 1951.



Democracy can be strengthened only when the people are empowered.

#### **BINOD GHIMIRE**

KATHMANDU, FEB 18

The country has witnessed three revolutions for democracy in the past seven decades. The first was in 1950 Mahendra hijacked it through a royal-military coup in 1960. He took direct control of the executive authority from the leaders who were elected for the first time by the people. It took 30 years to end the rule of the Palace until the Nepali people in 1990 launched a decisive protest to restore democracy in the country.

The country adopted a multi-party democracy with constitutional monarchy. Freedom of speech, right to equality and other civil and political rights were enshrined in the 1990 constitution. That, however, didn't get translated into actions, fully. The parties elected to power failed to live up to the expectations of the people. They were more focused on petty partisan interests and leaders paid little attention to people and their concerns who yearned for development and prosperity.

Six years into democracy, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist waged an armed struggle against the state which it said was to establish the "rule of the people."

>> Continued on page 2

Regency Watch

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### CLASSIC FUSION

Titanium case. Self-winding chronograph movement.

### NATIONAL

## Transmission line project fell dozens of sal trees without permission

As per the law, infrastructure projects needs to buy land and plant 25 saplings for each tree felled and hand them over to government.

#### DILLI RAM KHATIWADA UDAYAPUR, FEB 18

Twenty-four sal trees have been felled illegally in the Kamala Namuna Community forest in Khoksa of Katari Municipality-2 in the Chure area by the Solu Corridor Transmission Line Project.

The project had sought permission from the District Forest Office, Udayapur just to cut the branches of the trees saying they touched the power cables. But the project later felled the trees without taking permission from the forest authorities, according to locals.

The Solu Corridor Transmission Line Project is a priority project of the government and earlier, the project had cut down about 560 trees with the permission of the forest authorities including the community forest.

According to Chandra Bahadur Karki, vice-chairman of the forest users' committee, the project illegally cut down green trees without informing the users. Earlier, the project had been given permission to fell 560 trees. As per the government rule, a project has to plant 25 tree saplings per tree felled.

Tulasi Bhattarai, a member of the forest user group, said that the trees were felled illegally in collusion with forest officials. "It is mandatory to seek permission from the forest office along with proper reasons and paperwork before cutting down any tree, but they have chopped the trees without completing the process," said Bhattarai. He also said that forest users have to take permission even to collect firewood but the project is breaching the rules by calling itself a priority project.

According to Janardan Gautam, chief of the transmission line project, they do not need to seek permission all the time from the forest office to cut down trees that fall under the jurisdiction of the project. Workers were sent to cut the branches but it was next to impossible to do that so they felled the trees instead. "Trees under the jurisdiction of the project were cut down and later we paid the penalties," said Gautam.

Bindeshwar Shah, Assistant Forest Officer, at the Belsrot Sub-Divisional Forest Office, said no trees should be felled without permission of his office. But last time the corridor transmission line project had felled trees without permission from the Forest Office and was fined.

Meanwhile, Phanindra Pokharel, division forest officer at the Division Forest Office, Triveni Katari, said that the transmission line project's two workers and three tractors have been detained for cutting down trees illegally.

"The project cut the branches of several trees while testing the power transmission line. The team sent to cut the branches has felled 24 green trees including a big one. And the project has paid a fine of Rs 111,000 as per the law," said Pokharel.

Division Forest Officer Pokharel said that as per the law, the project needs to buy land and plant 25 tree saplings for each tree felled, but the project has not done so.

As per an agreement between the transmission line project and the Department of Forest and Soil Conservation, the project has to plant a total of 206,800 saplings for 8,272 trees it had decided to fell. The saplings have to be conserved for five years and handed over to the Division Forest Office of Triveni, Katari Municipality, Udayapur.



A pedestrian lowers his head to avoid bumping against a tree trunk overhanging a pavement at New Road in downtown Kathmandu, Friday.

### Nepal's democracy revolutions, and...

### >> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The non-performance of the mainstream political parties fueled the Maoist movement. As the country fell into deep uncertainties, King Gyanendra, following the path of his father, usurped power in 2005. He sabotaged the democratic institutions which prompted political parties, including the Maoists, and the people from different walks of life to unite together against Gyanedra's absolute rule.

That movement against Gyanedra in 2006 lasted 19 days. Gyanedra finally capitulated. People's power prevailed. Multiparty democracy was restored. The ground for turning Nepal into a federal republic was also created. The 2006 revolution also gave rise to the identity movement. The Madhes uprising in 2007, which took place on the foundation laid by the 2006 movement, prompted the country

to become federal. The country became a republic, the Hindu kingdom turned into a secular nation and transitioned into a federal set-up abandoning the decades long centralised system of governance. It is the contribution of the 2006 revolution that the country adopted the principles of inclusion in the state machinery though much needs to be done for them to be institutionalised. Political analysts say the major achievement of the different revolutions is the shift in the political system. people's revolution continues even to this day as the political behaviour and political culture of the parties remain the same. Democratisation of the existing parties and their leadership is a major challenge at present.

Analysts say despite contributions of the people from different communities in democratic movements in the country, there couldn't be economic and cultural transformations. The marginalised communities continue to suffer economically and culturally. A large number of the people from the Dalit community, for instance, still don't possess land, say analysts.

"Inequality is rife. Only a certain section is enjoying state benefits,' Daman Nath Dhungana, a former Speaker and a civil society member, told the Post. "Our leaders do not have any agenda for development. Nor are they committed to addressing the concerns of the people, especially those from the marginalised communities inat nave suffered oppression for long.' Dhungana says the political transformation alone makes no sense unless every section of society feels that there is the state for the people to look after them. The Constitution of Nepal promulgated in 2015 envisions an inclusive state. Article 42 states that representation in the state machinery should be based on the principles of inclusion. However, other than specified in the constitution and laws, the government and parties have always been hesitant in ensuring representation of women and other communities. Neither the Cabinet nor the constitutional and ambassadorial nominations, for instance, are inclusive.

"However, least has been done to empower the people as the parties have been constantly bickering for power," Meena Vaidya Malla, a former professor of political science at the Tribhuvan University, told the Post. "History has provided several opportunities for the parties to perform but they have failed miserably."

She says had the parties been committed to the country and the people, a lot could have been achieved after 1990 and 2006.

Observers say even though the country has gone through different revolutions and embraced different political systems, political parties are still unclear on what kind of security policy and foreign policy the country should adopt. "This is necessary because oftentimes external politics gets intertwined with domestic policies," said Dhungana.

Some political experts believe there is a need for yet another revolution in the country as discatification among

# Caught between ruling coalition and MCC, Deuba feels the heat

### >> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

On the MCC compact, according to the leader, Oli clearly told Deuba that the UML is not for sending the American grant back as it was his government that registered it in the House.

Oli is learnt to have told Deuba that it was his government that registered the MCC compact in Parliament but failed to table it for ratification largely because of those whom the Congress president is currently rubbing shoulders with.

"Until they are your coalition partners, you cannot move the MCC compact forward. But if you want to get it through the Parliament, you have to sever ties with your partners," said Oli, according to the leader. "We are clear that MCC is a developmental project and we are in favor of its passage."

s passage." For Deuba, the situation, however, ly met with Prime Minister Deuba and assured that they will vote in favour of the MCC compact if it is tabled in Parliament.

Minister for Urban Development Ram Kumari Jhakri, Health Minister Birodh Khatiwada, Minister for Labour and Employment Kishan Kumar Shrestha and Tourism Minister Prem Kumar Ale jointly met with the prime minister, according to a minister.

"My position as Cabinet member is no different than that of the prime minister," said Minister for Urban Development, Jhakri who represents the CPN (Unified Socialist). "MCC is the commitment made by the nation and the prime minister is saying that we should fulfill the signed obligation. As a member of the Cabinet, I am with the prime minister ord we should argenin from constituter House as per the old treaty act so we have to amend the treaty act. Second, there is an obstruction in the House by the UML. It should be lifted first to discuss whether the MCC should be tabled in the House or not."

There is a general understanding among some CPN (Unified Socialist) leaders that half of the lawmakers would vote in favour of the MCC compact if a whip is not issued. The party has 23 lawmakers in the House.

"We have hardliners like former prime minister Khanal and General Secretary Beduram Bhusal," said a CPN (Unified Socialist) leader. "Pro-MCC leaders are in the minority in our party."

Deuba's key coalition partner, the Maoist Centre, however, has a unified voice and that is against the compact.

"Our position is clear and it is not

"There have been paradigm changes in the political system. However, it hasn't yielded expected results," Rajendra Maharjan, a political analyst, told the Post. "It is because the same old faces continued to be in power despite changes in the political system."

In his view, the same "dirty politics" that was dominant after the 1990 According to experts, democracy can be strengthened only when the people are empowered. the country as dissatisfaction among the people is rising.

Maharjan says discontent is brewing in society, but how and when it will erupt is difficult to predict.

"All the revolutions so far have been political. I believe the country is waiting for an economic or cultural revolution," he said. "A new revolt is inevitable as only a certain section has benefitted from the changes so far."

Dhunanga also says a new revolution may happen but he says that is not possible in the near future. According to him, no alternative force has emerged to pose a challenge to the existing parties.

"The existing parties aren't changing because there is no powerful force to challenge them," he said. "I think the country will continue to move ahead in the same fashion as it has been, at least for a while."

Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal Air Transport Capacity Enhancement Project Sinamangal, Kathmandu

### Notice of Intention for Award of Contract

### February 19, 2022

This is to notify you of our intention to award the following contracts under SASEC Airport Capacity Enhancement Project (ADB Loan no. L4005-NEP-COL). You have *seven (7) days* from the date of this notification to (i) request for a debriefing in relation to the evaluation of your Bid; and/or (ii) submit a bidding-related complaint in relation to the intention for award of contract, in accordance with the procedures specified in ITB 46.1. The summary of the evaluation are as follows:

1. OCB-01/ACE-SDP/TIA/2020: Extension of Parallel Taxiway to connect Runway 02 end at TIA and Associated Works

Name of	None of the bidd	ers are eligible to award the contract. Hence the bid for this package will be										
Bidder:	re-invited.	re-invited.										
	ACE-SDP/TIA/2020:	Hangar Area Development at Eastside of Runway at TIA and Associated										
Works												
Name of Bidder:		AVIC-KDN Airport Engineering Co. Ltd. and China Civil Engineering										
		Construction Corporation JV										
Address:		No.4, Beifengwo Road, Haidan District, Beijing, China										
Contract Prie	ce:	Local Currency: NRs. 4,510,680,130.64 (inclusive of VAT & PS)										
Duration of Contract:		1095 days from date of commencement of the Contract.										
Scope of the Contract Awarded:		Hangar apron pavements in front of hangars, taxiways to the aprons, roads, etc.										
Amount Performance Security		USD 2,412,595/- and,										
Required:		NRs. 282,683,757/-										
		Project Director										

does not seem favourable. The Americans have already set a February 28 deadline for the compact ratification, saying it was Deuba and his coalition partner who set the time frame. His coalition partners have increasingly made their stance tougher on MCC.

During Friday's meeting, the Maoist Centre and the CPN (Unified Socialist) continued to maintain their position against the compact.

"The prime minister has just two options left... either to save his alliance or to ratify MCC," said Shashank Koirala, a senior Congress leader and former general secretary of the party. "He needs to take a call."

Friday's meeting was deferred until Sunday after the CPN (Unified Socialist) chair Madhav Kumar Nepal sought one more day to discuss MCC in his party.

If the alliance breaks down, Madhav Nepal's party will be the one to be in a tight spot. While Dahal still sees a chance of joining hands with the UML, Oli is unlikely to have a change of heart for Nepal.

It was Dahal and Nepal who had upped the ante against Oli in the then Nepal Communist Party (NCP), which was formed after a merger between the UML and the Maoist Centre. At one point, the two leaders had driven Oli into a corner, almost putting him on the brink of losing the post of prime minister.

The NCP was invalidated in March last year by the Supreme Court. While Dahal got his Maoist party back, Nepal was left with no option than to remain under Oli in the UML after months long struggle and following the UML's decision to expel Nepal and 13 other lawmakers, they decided to sever ties with the mother party and form the CPN (Unified Socialist) in August.

The CPN (Unified Socialist) has called a meeting of its Standing Committee to discuss the MCC compact and make an official position on it.

"Chairman Nepal is under increasing pressure from inside the party," said a leader. "Those lawmakers who are in the government and some others are in favour of ratifying the MCC."

Four ministers from Nepal's party in the government on Thursday jointunnecessary trouble from projects like MCC."

Jhala Nath Khanal, a senior leader of the CPN (Unified Socialist) and former prime minister, however, said that the MCC compact cannot be tabled unless its some provisions are amended. The United States has repeatedly ruled out any amendments at this time.

"It is just a contract agreement so it cannot be ratified from the House under the provision of ratifying treaties," Khanal told reporters. "The MCC compact cannot be tabled in the More than the CPN (Unified Socialist), Deuba is concerned about the Maoist Centre.

Koirala, the Congress leader, said time has come for the prime minister to make a decisive move.

"It has become obvious now. If we table and ratify the MCC, definitely the coalition will definitely break down. If we want to continue the coalition, let's drop MCC," Koirala told the Post. "You cannot have your cake and eat it too. We need to pick one option. The prime minister needs to pick the best option."



OST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

Sister organisations of the ruling CPN (Maoist Centre) and CPN (Unified Socialist) burn tyres near the parliament building at New Baneshwar to protest against a government plan to table a \$500 million US grant agreement in Parliament for ratification, Friday.

### BRIEFING

### Community schools get buses

SINDHULI: The Bagmati provincial government provided six community schools in Sindhulimadi with a school bus each. According to Kamalamai Municipality, school buses received from the province have been handed over to six community schools in the district headquarters Sindhulimadi. With this, the number of community schools with school bus services in Sindhuli has reached nine. Institutional schools have school buses but community schools did not have them until a year ago. The Education Development Directorate of Bagmati Province had provided Rs2.5 million per school for the provision of school buses.

### Woman killed in truck accident

SINDHULI: Tikaram Shivbhakti, aged 45, of Devisthan, Sunkoshi Rural Municipality-1 was hit by a tipper truck and died on the way to Dhulikhel Hospital on Wednesday. Police immediately took the driver into custody. "It looks like an accident but we are investigating the case and doing what is necessary," said Manoj Kumar Lama, DSP of Sindhuli district.

### 3 held with 400kg marijuana

UDAYAPUR: Three youths were arrested with 400kg of marijuana from Sirubani in Belka Municipality. The police caught the trio with 13 sacks of the illegal substance, according to DSP Bed Prasad Gautam of Area Police Office. Authorities also seized Rs69,025 and four mobile sets from the trio, said Gautam.

### 873 people get free treatment

KAPILVASTU: A total of 521 women and 352 men have been treated free of charge at the three-day Comprehensive Gynaecology and

Disease Health Camp at Saunhawa in Krishnanagar Municipality of Kapilvastu district. On the occasion of Lumbini Province Establishment Day, a team of 15 health workers including four doctors led by District Hospital Medical Officer Ganesh Chhetri was mobilised for the purpose. Among 41 women diagnosed with uterine prolapse, 14 were operated at Kapilvastu Hospital free of cost. Six women have been referred to a well-equipped hospital for further treatment as they showed early signs of uterine cancer.

## US Embassy takes to social media to dispel MCC rumours

There have been a number of videos on YouTube awash with disinformation on the MCC compact, calling it an American ploy to 'trap' Nepal.

#### SHUVAM DHUNGANA KATHMANDU, FEB 18

After at least two interviews by American officials to the Post and separate calls to top leaders of Nepal by an US assistant secretary from the Department State, the debate over the Millennium Challenge Corporation-Nepal Compact has heated up in Nepal.

As the government prepared to table the \$500 million US grant in Parliament, protests erupted with police resorting to using tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowds. There have been a number of videos on YouTube awash with disinformation on the MCC compact, calling it an American ploy to "trap" Nepal.

The United States has time and again tried to clarify that the MCC compact is purely a grant assistance that it is extending to Nepal in honour of its long-standing relations with the only objective of helping plug the gap in electricity supply, and improving roads.

The US has also for long raised its concerns about the spread of disinformation in Nepal on various platforms like social media and YouTube channels about the MCC compact.

After the phone conversations by Donald Lu, US assistant secretary, to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Maoist chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal and UML chair KP Sharma Oli, reports suggested he also warned of some external hands, including China, in the attempts to block the compact in Nepal.

Lately, the US embassy in Nepal has activated its social media team and put out a series of tweets and Facebook posts on disinformation and propaganda, stopping short of mentioning the MCC compact.

The context is obvious. "Disinformation and propaganda have had serious consequences throughout history. State-led disinformation and propaganda have threatened democracies, inflamed wars, and provoked violence," the US embassy Nepal wrote on Facebook on February 13. "It has fomented distrust of facts, science, and credible journalism.

Only recently, the US embassy even organised an interaction on disinformation with Nepali media experts. "For the next few weeks, we will discuss disinformation and how we all can be fooled by it," the embassy wrote.

Washington has set a February 28 deadline for the Nepali leadership to ratify the compact from Parliament, as demanded by Prime Minister Deuba and Maoist chair Dahal. Lu during his conversations also said that failure to do so could force the US to review its ties with Nepal.

Amid the raging debate over the MCC compact, geopolitical factors too have come strongly into play. US officials have communicated

on multiple occasions that they are seriously concerned about disinformation in Nepal about the MCC compact. Last month, in an interview with the Post, Mahmoud Bah, acting CEO of MCC, said that MCC has been the target of "a sophisticated and malicious misinformation and disinformation campaign to discredit our agency and the Government of Nepal in order to prevent the MCC-Nepal Compact from progressing."

"You will notice that each time the government of Nepal seems poised to move forward towards ratifying the MCC compact, there is a sudden increase in false and misleading statements about MCC, especially on social media and YouTube," Bah said.

"It is even more disheartening when some of Nepal's political leaders have perpetuated these misleading statements, which only hurts the people of Nepal.'

Earlier this week, a US State Department spokesperson expressed the US concerns about disinformation campaigns in Nepal. "Yes. We have been concerned about disinformation campaigns surrounding the MCC Compact, as we are concerned with disinformation everywhere,' spokesperson told the the Hindustan Times. "Should outside influence or corruption have influenced parliamentarians' actions to vote against this electricity-transmission project, it would be deeply disappointing and a loss for the people of Nepal."

Nepal in September last year had even written to MCC seeking clarifications on some of the points, including whether the compact is above Nepal's constitution and whether it has any security component attached to it. MCC in its point-wise response had said compact is not above Nepal's constitution and that it does not have any security components.

Those opposing the compact, including some Nepali politicians, however, have refused to accept the US assertion.

Nepal's ruling alliance has been in a bid to find consensus on the compact ratification as the deadline nears. A meeting of the five parties on Friday, the second in a row, failed to reach any consensus. They have decided to sit again on Sunday. Prime Minister Deuba, however, appears firm on tabling the MCC compact. He reached out to UML chair Oli on Thursday evening after the five-party meeting ended inconclusively.

US Ambassador Randy Berry lately has held talks with both Deuba and Oli, according to lead ers from their orbits.

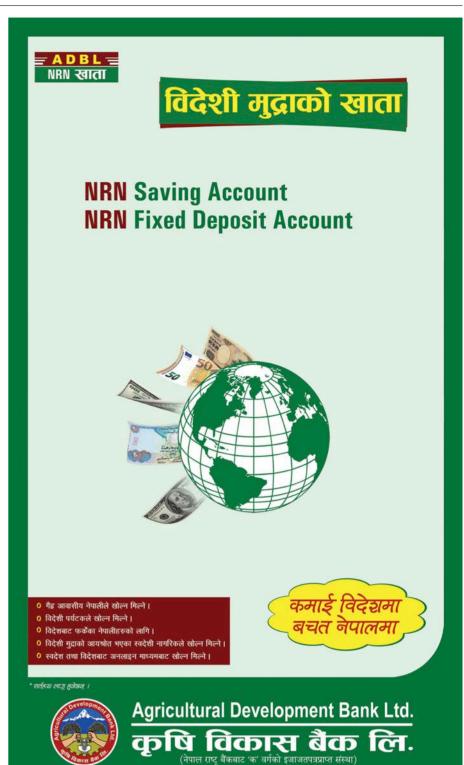
On Friday, demonstrators gathered in New Baneshwar in front of the Parliament building and resorted to burning tyres to protest against MCC.

Berry took to Twitter to assert that America believes in free speech. "We are a strong supporter of free speech & public discourse based on fact, including on MCC. The right to express one's views is intrinsic to democracy, and people must be allowed to peacefully share their views," Berry tweeted. "Violence & incitement to violence are never acceptable.'

### 437 cases as rapid antigen tests added to daily infection tally

**KATHMANDU:** Nepal on Friday reported 275 new PCR-confirmed Covid cases in the last 24 hours, taking the nationwide infection tally to 975,132. As many as 162 people tested

positive in 3,958 antigen tests, according to the Health Ministry. As of Friday, 5,369,664 PCR and 1,032,197 antigen tests have been carried out across the country. (PR)





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### WORLD

## Indian court orders death for 38 for deadly 2008 serial bomb blasts

Attacks in Gujarat's commercial hub killed 56, launching shrapnel through markets, buses and other public places.

#### AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE AHMEDABAD, FEB 18

An Indian court sentenced 38 people to death on Friday over a string of bomb blasts in 2008 that killed dozens in the city of Ahmedabad, in one of the country's biggest mass death

sentences Coordinated attacks in western Gujarat state's commercial hub in 2008 killed 56, launching shrapnel through markets, buses and other pub-

lic places An Islamist group calling itself the Indian Mujahideen claimed responsibility, saying the blasts were revenge for 2002 religious riots in Gujarat that left some 1,000 people dead.

The court on Friday convicted 49 people over the attacks, in which more than 200 were injured.

'Special court judge A R Patel awarded death sentence to 38 out of the 49 convicted," public prosecutor Amit Patel said.

"Eleven of the convicted were sentenced to life imprisonment till death... The court has considered the case as rarest of the rare," he said.

The convicted were all found guilty of murder and criminal conspiracy. Nearly 80 people were charged but 28 were acquitted.

The marathon trial lasted over a decade thanks to India's labyrinthine legal system, with more than 1,100 witnesses called to testify.

It was dragged out by procedural delays, including a legal battle by four of the accused to retract confessions.

Police also foiled a 2013 attempt by more than a dozen of the defendants to tunnel their way out of jail using food plates as digging tools.

All 77 accused have been held in custody for years, with the exception of one who was bailed after a schizophrenia diagnosis

Ahmedabad was the centre of deadly 2002 religious riots that saw at least 1,000 people—mostly Muslims— hacked, shot and burned to death in an orgy of sectarian violence that sent shock waves around the world.

It was prompted by the killing of 59 Hindus in a train fire—a case in which 31 Muslims were convicted for criminal conspiracy and murder-on the way back from one of Hinduism's most sacred sites.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was at the time head of the Gujarat state government and has subsequently been dogged by accusations that he turned a blind eye to the unrest.

Modi, from the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was cleared of conspiracy but for a time was subject to travel bans imposed by

Trial lasted a decade due to labyrinthine legal system, with over 1.100 witnesses called to testify.

### the United States and others.

India was rocked by several lethal bomb attacks in 2008 claimed by the Indian Mujahideen groupwith dozens killed in the capital New Delhi and northern tourist city of Jaipur.

In November of that year, 166 people were killed by gunmen armed with explosive devices, in a coordinated assault on hotels and other high-profile targets in Mumbai that was blamed on Pakistan-based militants.

Capital punishment remains an integral part of the Indian criminal justice system.

The number of prisoners on death row at the end of 2021 stood at 488, according to a report by Project 39A, a law reforms advocacy group.

The last execution was in March 2020, when four men convicted of the rape and murder of a student on a bus in Delhi were hanged.

## **Rebels announce evacuation from Ukraine's** east; West says Russia creates pretext for war

Russia denies Western accusations it is planning an all-out invasion of Ukraine, a country of over 40 million people.

#### REUTERS MOSCOW/KYIV FFB 19

Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine said on Friday they planned to evacuate their breakaway region's residents to Russia, a shock turn in a conflict the West believes Moscow plans to use to justify an all-out invasion of its neighbour.

Announcing the move on social media, Denis Pushilin, head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, said Russia had agreed to provide accommodation for those who leave. Women, children and the elderly should be evacuated first. The other self-proclaimed region, Luhansk, made a similar announcement.

Millions of civilians are believed to live in the two rebel-held regions of eastern Ukraine; most are Russian speakers and many have already been granted Russian citizenship.

The eastern Ukraine conflict zone saw the most intense artillery bombardment for years on Friday, with the Kyiv government and the separatists trading blame. Western countries have said they think the shelling, which began on Thursday and intensified in its second day, is part of a pretext to invade.

Washington said Russia—which says it started drawing down troops near Ukraine this week-had instead done the opposite: ramping up the force menacing its neighbour to between 169,000 and 190,000 troops, from 100,000 at the end of January.

"This is the most significant military mobilisation in Europe since the Second World War," US ambassador Michael Carpenter told a meeting at the Vienna-based Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The events transpiring in the border area over the past two days are part of a Russian scenario to create false provocations, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

Rather than pull troops back, "on the contrary, we see additional forces going to the border including leading edge forces that would be part of any aggression," Blinken said at the Munich Security Conference alongside German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

A diplomatic source with years of direct experience of the conflict



A view of a kindergarten, which according to Ukraine's military was damaged by shelling, in Stanytsia Luhanska, Ukraine, on Thursday.

described the shelling in eastern Ukraine as the most intense since major combat there ended with a 2015 ceasefire.

Close to 600 explosions were recorded on Friday morning, 100 more than on Thursday, some involving 152 mm and 122 mm artillery and large mortars, the source said. At least four rounds had been fired from tanks.

"They are shooting-everyone and everything," said the source. "There's been nothing like this since 2014-15."

Other officials have been more cautious, noting that there have been periods of deadly fighting during the ceasefire. Shortly after the evacuation announcement in Donetsk on Friday, a Reuters witness said a loud warning siren sounded in the city centre.

People will start being bussed out of the Donetsk region at 8 pm on Friday, Russia's Interfax news agency cited a source saying.

Asked about the moves, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he had no information about the situation and did not know if they were being coordinated with Russia, Interfax also

reported. The announcement piled further pressure on Russia's rouble currency and other assets as jittery investors closely monitored the diplomatic and military developments.

The West has threatened tighter economic sanctions on Russia if it invades Ukraine, but Moscow, already under sanctions since 2014, has brushed this off. President Vladimir Putin told a news conference in Moscow that Western countries would probably find a reason to impose sanc-

tions whatever Russia does Russia denies Western accusations it is planning an all-out invasion of Ukraine, a country of over 40 million people. Moscow also said it was closely watching the escalation of shelling in eastern Ukraine, where government troops have faced the rebels since 2014. It described the situation as potentially very dangerous.

In the most detailed US warning yet of the likelihood of war, Blinken told the UN Security Council on Thursday that Washington believed Russia was planning an all-out assault. Blinken said this could begin with a

#### manufactured pretext, possibly involving a faked attack and false accusations about the separatist conflict, Blinken said.

US President Joe Biden, rallying allies to maintain a unified stance. was due to host a call on Friday with leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Romania, plus the European Union and NATO.

But Russia has also forcefully pressed a set of security demands, including a promise Ukraine never be admitted into NATO, which the West calls a non-starter.

On Thursday Russia delivered a strongly-worded letter to the United States threatening unspecified "military-technical measures"

Russia announced Putin would personally supervise exercises of its strategic nuclear missile forces on Saturday, though it said these drills were no cause for alarm.

Among ambiguities surrounding the Kremlin's intentions are plans for tens of thousands of troops staging exercises in Belarus, north of Ukraine, due to end on Sunday.

Canada police start UK warns people to stay home in view arresting protesters of 90 mph winds camped in Ottawa ASSOCIATED PRESS ASSOCIATED PRESS said a 122 mph gust was

LONDON FEB 18

recorded on the Isle of Wight, provisionally the ever recorded in

England. Authorities in the

UK took the unusual step of

issuing "red" warnings-

indicating a danger to life—

England and London from

10am until 3pm. A lower

level amber warning for

gusts up to 80 mph covers

the whole of England from

Eunice is the second

named storm to hit Europe

in two days, with the first

killing at least five people in

Germany and Poland.

stronges

5am to 9pm.

self-styled Freedom Convoy protesters. The capital represented movements

stronghold after three

weeks of demonstrations

and blockades that shut

down border crossings

into the US, caused eco-

nomic damage to both

countries and created a

political crisis for Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau.

They also shook Canada's

reputation for civility,

with some foes of the



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Aavash Adhikari HR Officer. Jyotilife Insurance Company Ltd.

in the illions of people UK were urged to cancel travel plans and stay indoors on Friday as the second major storm this week prompted warnings of high winds and flying debris across northern Europe. Britain's weather service

said Storm Eunice, known as Storm Zeynep in Germany, was likely to cause significant disruption and dangerous conditions, with gusts that may exceed 90 miles per hour in highly exposed coastal areas. The Met Office later

### All Nepal Football Association

ANFA Complex, Satdobato, Lalitpur, Nepal

### Amendment No. 1

### (Date of publication: 20th February 2022)

This is to inform all the concerned bidders that amendment has been made in the bidding document for Contract No. ANFA/NCB-07-078/079; Construction of Technical Centre at Kaski District published in The Kathmandu Post National daily on 28th January 2022. Please visit PPMO e-GP system www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp for further details.

**General Secretary, ANFA** 

Police arresting began protesters on Friday in a bid to break the threeweek, traffic-snarling siege of Canada's capital for parts of southwest by hundreds of truckers England between 7am and angry over the country's Covid-19 restrictions. noon and for southeast

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, FEB 18

Officers were seen going door to door along a line of trucks, campers and other vehicles parked on Ottawa's snow-covered streets.

Some protesters surrendered and were taken into custody, police said. Some were led away in handcuffs. One person being taken away carried a sign that read "Mandate Freedom".

Many of the truckers remained defiant.

"Freedom was never free," said trucker Kevin Homaund, of Montreal. "So what if they put the handcuffs on us and they put us in jail?"

Police made their first move to end the occupation late Thursday with the arrest of two key protest leaders. They also sealed off much of the downtown area to outsiders to prevent them from coming to the aid of the unrest blaming the influence of the United States. Over the past weeks, authorities had hesitated to move against many of the protesters around the country, in part for fear of violence. The demonstrations have drawn rightwing extremists and veterans, some of them armed. With police and the government facing accusations that they let the protests gain strength and spread, Trudeau on Monday invoked Canada's Emergencies Act, giving law enforcement extraordinary authority to declare the blockades illegal, tow away trucks, arrest the drivers, suspend their licenses and freeze their bank accounts.

नेपाल सरकार 😂 चिकित्सा शिक्षा आयोग, सानोठिमी, भक्तपुर बोलपत्र स्वीकृत गर्ने आशयको सूचना सचना प्रकाशित मिति : २०७८।११।०७ गते यस आयोगको मिति २०७८/०९/२१ गतेको राष्ट्रिय दैनिक The Kathmandu Post एवं सार्वजनिक खरिद अनुगमन कार्यालयको वेभ पोर्टलमा

प्रकाशित बोलपत्र आह्वानको सूचनाअनुसार रितपूर्वक पेश हुन आएका बोलपत्रहरूमध्ये तपशिलबमोजिमको बोलपत्र न्यूनतम मूल्याङ्कित सारभूत रूपमा प्रभावग्राही भई छनौट भएकाले सम्बन्धित सरोकारवालाको जानकारीका लागि सार्वजनिक खरिद ऐन, २०६३ को दफा ४७ को प्रयोजनका लागि उक्त ऐनको दफा २७(२) बमोजिम यो सचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ।

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	078-079	above Existing Building		त्रिहत्तर पैसा उनन्चास मात्र)

### MONEY

### FOREX

US	119.76
Euro	136.11
Pound	163.05
Australian	86.3
Japanese Yen (10)	10.4
Chinese	18.93
Saudi	31.92
Qatari	32.89
Malaysian	28.61

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

### BRIEFINGS

### Renault returns to profit but chip shortage hits output

PARIS: Renault returned to profit last year but the global shortage of semiconductors will crimp production again in 2022, the French automaker said Friday. The company posted a better-than-expected net profit of 967 million euros (\$1.1 billion) after a record eight-billion-euro loss in 2020. when the onset of the pandemic pummelled the global economy. Renault sold fewer cars last year but the company has cut costs, raised prices and shifted to a strategy of focusing on its more profitable brands instead of volumes. Revenue rose 6.3 percent to 46.2 billion euros as the company exceeded its financial targets despite the shortage of semiconductors and the higher cost of raw materials. 'Renault is back," chief executive Luca de Meo said at a news conference. "The difficulties are behind us. We have shown that we can overcome adversity," he said. (AFP)

### Chinese food delivery giant slumps on fee-cut measures

BEIJING: Shares of Chinese food delivery giant Meituan slumped Friday as Beijing released new guidelines instructing internet platforms to lower fees for struggling eateries. The guidelines, published by China's top economic planner, aim to support a service sector hit especially hard by restrictions to curb the spread of Covid-19. Shares in Meituan, which has hundreds of millions of users in China, plunged almost 15 percent in Hong Kong when markets closed Friday. Earlier this week, a State Council meeting pledged to scale up support for sectors such as catering, retail and tourism, including temporary tax breaks. (AFP)

## Nepal gives Indian travellers digital payment access

The move would be of huge relief to the Indian people travelling north as there are restrictions on the use of high denomination IC notes in Nepal.

#### KRISHANA PRASAIN Kathmandu, Feb 18

If things go as planned, come this May, Indian visitors in Nepal will no longer be required to carry paper money. They can simply make payments by scanning quick response (QR) codes. The Gateway Payment Service Private Limited, a payment service operator, is all set to begin the cross-border payment system for the first time in Nepal based on interoperable and mobile first technology.

"We are all set to launch the system after three months," Anu Maity Shakya, marketing head of Gateway Payment Service, told the Post.

The National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) and International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of National Payments Corporation of India, have joined hands with Gateway Payments Service and Manam Infotech to deploy a unified payment interface (UPI) in Nepal.

The system will enable payments for larger digital goods and boost interoperable real-time person to person (P2P) and merchant payment transactions (P2M) in Nepal.

The UPI is a real-time payment system that provides person to person and person to merchant transactions simply, safely and securely in India.

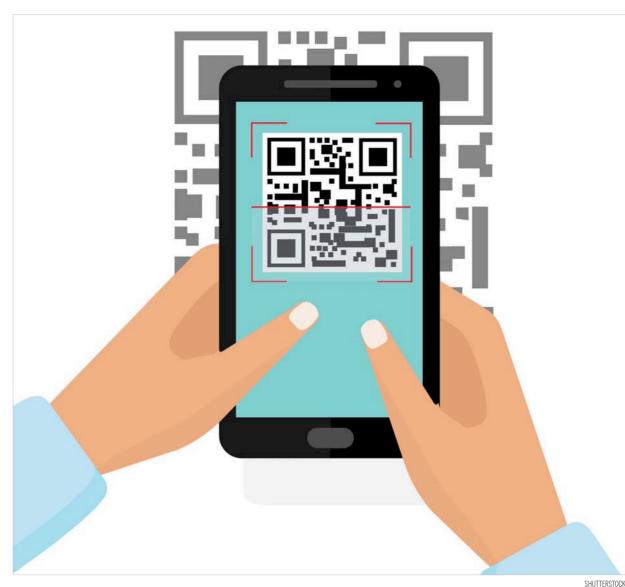
Industry insiders say that the move would provide a great relief to the Indians travelling to Nepal because there are restrictions on using high denomination Indian currency notes in Nepal. Since December 2018, Nepal allows use of only IRS100.

The government move to ban the use of high denomination Indian currency notes in Nepal had drawn criticism particularly from the tourism industry because Indian bills were widely used in Nepal.

However, according to Nepal's central bank, the system is currently not on a reciprocal basis or Nepalis are not allowed to make payments through Bharat-QR while travelling to India.

"We have sought permission to allow digital transactions for Nepalis while travelling to India as well. We are waiting for the response from Nepal's central bank," said Shakya.

The system will enable an interoperability electronic payment network between banking and financial institutions and payment service providers to transfer money from any pay-



The system is currently not on a reciprocal basis or Nepalis are not allowed to make payments through Bharat-QR while travelling to India.

ment service providers in India to any banking and financial institutions and e-wallets in Nepal.

"UPI's real-time payment infrastructure will help catalyse the process of financial inclusion in Nepal and will also create more opportunities for businesses. It will help modernise Nepal's digital payment infrastructure and bring the convenience of digital payments to citizens of Nepal," according to a statement issued by Gateway Payment Service

Private Limited.

"Our system will be enabled in the apps of banking and financial institutions and payment service providers through the connection of 'UPI Nepal'," said Shakya.

With the system, the customer without displaying their bank account details can make bank to bank transfers and can make payment through payment service providers by using the ID and pin number, Shakya said.

The system mainly provides securi-

ty without exposing the bank account details, Shakya said. "The system will also eradicate the closed system in the Nepali digital payment service as there is no wallet to wallet fund transfer option and not easy for bank to wallet transfer," Shakya said.

According to Shakya, to make digital payment, it requires the account number of the receiver or mobile number and it only gets sent only after a one-time password (OTP) is generated. If OTP is linked with a bank account, there are higher chances data regarding accounts can get leaked. But the UPI system which creates virtual addresses will help in making payment without displaying bank account details, she said.

Customers taking mobile banking app service or wallet service are enabled with UPI identity, and customers will create an identity and they can make payment from the UPI identity or can be sent on mobile number. "The national identity can also be created in the country," Shakya said. Besides Nepal, UPI system is being operated in Bhutan, Malaysia, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates by cross-border payment agreement.

In 2021, UPI enabled 39 billion transactions amounting to commerce worth \$940 billion which is equivalent to approximately 31 percent of India's GDP, the company stated.

As of now, five banks have consented to join the system, she added.

Guru Prasad Poudel, executive director of Nepal Rastra Bank, said that the system would help ease cross-border payment. This system will give the Indian currency direct access to Nepali banks, he said.

"Although we have not permitted the system on a reciprocal basis, it's on a priority of the central bank," Poudel said. "Nepal currently imposes some restrictions on sending money outside the country."

The Gateway Payment Service got operator's licence in mid-February 2021 and was the first company in the country to get cross-border payment system operator licence. The company was running an e-commerce platform for card payment to merchants directly.

Transactions through digital payment systems have grown tremendously in recent years in Nepal, and the development and expansion of digital payment related infrastructure like real time gross settlement (RTGS), interbank fund transfer, payment card, mobile wallet, mobile banking and internet banking has played a significant role in the spread of online transactions.

Digital payments during the period mid-December to mid-January, the sixth month of the current fiscal year, amounted to Rs5.14 trillion with 54.56 million digital transactions, the highest single-month digital transactions on record.

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### SPORTS | MEDLEY

### BRIEFING

### Australia crush Sri Lanka by six wickets in fourth Twenty20

MELBOURNE: Player of the match Glenn Maxwell scored 48 runs from 39 balls to pace Australia to a six-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Friday at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the home team's fourth consecutive win in the five-match Twenty20 series. Josh Inglis chipped in with 40 runs from 20 balls to help Australia reach 143 for four in reply to Sri Lanka's 139 for eight. Inglis and Maxwell put on a match-winning 71-run stand for the fourth wicket. After being sent in, opener Pathum Nissanka scored 46 from 40 balls for Sri Lanka. But once Nissanka departed in the 16th over, it started a collapse of 5-9 as Australia took control of the match. Kane Richardson (2-44) and returning fast bowler Jhye Richardson (2-20) led the Australian bowlers. The final match will be played in Melbourne on Sunday

### New Zealand close in on victory

WELLINGTON: New Zealand closed in on a massive victory inside three days in the opening Test against South Africa on Friday after taking a 387-run lead and then reducing the tourists to 34-3 on day two of the contest, Henry Nicholls struck 105 and Tom Blundell made 96 as the world Test champions amassed 482 all out to effectively bat South Africa out of the contest. On the back foot since being bundled out for 95 in the first innings, South Africa's top order collapsed for a second time at Christchurch's Hagley Oval to finish the day 353 behind. Temba Bayuma (22) and Rassie van der Dussen (nine) will resume on Saturday hoping to delay an imminent defeat in the first match of the two-Test series. (AGENCIES)

## Nepal start Global Qualifiers with stunning victory

Sandeep Lamichhane-led team pull off a sensational 39-run win over Oman after they defend 118-run target bowling out Oman for 78 runs in 17 overs.

#### SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU, FEB 18

Nepal pulled off a sensational 39-run victory over hosts Oman to make a flying start to their ICC Twenty20 World Cup Global Qualifiers at the Al Amerat Cricket Grounds in Muscat on Friday.

After an under-par start in the batting department, Nepal bounced back with the ball to bowl out Oman for a meagre total of 78 runs with three overs to spare. Pacer Kamal Singh Airee grabbed three wickets while captain Sandeep Lamichhane and Dipendra Singh Airee took two scalps each.

Earlier, put to bat first, Nepal struggled with the bat and were restricted at 117-8 at close

"The wicket was not that good and we had expected we could easily defend the total if we scored around 140 runs. But we could collect just 117 runs. However, we were confident that if it was difficult for us to bat then they also would face a similar situation and we also have better bowlers. So we did not panic," said captain Sandip Lamichhane.

The victory in the opening match at the four-team group 'B' that also comprises Canada and the Philippines, strengthened Nepal's bid for qualification into the semi-finals. The top two teams of the group will secure semi-final berths. Nepal are scheduled to play against the Philippines on Saturday before taking on Canada on Monday.

Nepal made a shaky start to their innings and lost wickets in regular intervals. Middle order batter Aarif Sheikh contributed highest for Nepal scoring 38 off 37. The player-of-thematch hit two boundarie



Nepal's Sandeep Lamichhane (right) and Aarif Sheikh leave the pitch following the end of the first innings in Muscat, Oman on Friday.

"We were able to post a challenging total on the back of Aarif's brilliant performance with the bat. The win was possible due to brilliant teamwork. But we need to improve on many fronts and a single mistake can play spoilsports for our World Cup ambition. We still need to improve in the batting department," he added.

Openers Kushal Bhurtel and Aasif Sheikh departed cheaply scoring five and four runs respectively at 2-12 on board. Former captain Gyanendra Malla, who contributed ball-a-run 15, was the next wicket to fall after he was bowled out by Fayyaz Butt. He hit two fences

Dipendra was the next batter to depart, scoring 11 off 18 with 4-40 on board. Aarif who came to bat at number five tried to give stability to Nepali and was run out in the last delivery of the innings

Rookie Lokesh Bam and captain Lamichhane contributed equal 16 runs each. While Bam hit a six in his 17-ball knock, captain Lamichhane, who came to bat at number nine, made a decent contribution to anchor the innings in his seven-ball knock. He hit a four and a six remaining unbeaten. Bibek Yadav contributed seven runs.

Oman's Khawar Ali was the pick of the bowling claiming three wickets in his four-over spell conceding 30 runs. Bilal Khan claimed two wickets in his three-over spell giving away 25 runs while Fayyaz Butt and Zeeshan Maqsood pocketed one wicket each.

Chasing the moderate target, the home team also made a poor start to their run chase. Lower middle order batter Naseem Khushi was the only Oman player to touch a double digit figure. The wicketkeeper batter hit 18-ball 24 before being bowled by Lamichhane. He hit a fence and two sixes

Oman opener Kashyap Prajapati was out for a duck in the third ball of

the innings after he was caught by Dipendra off Kamal. Ayaan Khan was the next wicket to fall as he was caught by wicketkeeper Aasif in Jitendra Mukhiya's delivery with 2-7 on board.

The other opener Jatinder Singh was run out in the sixth over by Dipendra while Khawar Ali was bowled for seven runs with 4-31 on board. Nepal got the prized wicket of captain Zeeshan Maqsood for two runs as he was caught by Kushal Bhurtel off Mukhiya with 5-33.

Aamir Kaleem contributed nine runs before he was trapped leg before by Dipendra. Shoaib Khan (1) Kaleemullah (5) and Bilal Khan (0) were out cheaply while Fayyaz Butt remained not out on six runs.

"We were however wary that if Oman maintained the run rate, it would be difficult on the pitch. But we got early wickets and played with confidence. We also got regular wickets," he said.

Nepal's Kamal was the pick of bowling claiming three wickets in his three-over spell conceding 15 runs. Lamichhane and Dipendra pocketed two wickets apiece while Mukhiya and Abinash Bohara picked one wicket each. Lamichhane gave away 20 runs in his four-over bowling while Dipendra conceded 15 runs in his fourover spell.

In another match of the group, Canada registered a thumping 118-run win over the Philippines. Put to bat first, Canada scored a massive total of 216-1 after opener Matthew Spoors played a quickfire 66-ball 108 remaining not out. His opening pair Rayyan Pathan scored 73 off 44.

Chasing the target, the Philippines were restricted to 98-5 as Kaleem Sana and Saad Bin Zafar grabbed two wickets apiece.

### Gu wins third Olympic medal Napoli hold Barcelona, Rangers shock Dortmund

### The Italian side play a 1-1 draw at Camp Nou while the Scottish team beat the Bundesliga's second-placed side 4-2.

#### REUTERS **BARCELONA, FEB 18**

Barcelona were held 1-1 at home by Napoli in the first leg of their Europa League knockout stage playoff tie on Thursday, while Scottish side Rangers shocked Borussia Dortmund with a 4-2 win in Germany.

Barca dominated proceedings but found themselves a goal down to the Italians after Piotr Zielinski finished off a counter-attack in the 29th minute. Barca forward Ferran Torres equalised shortly before the hour mark from the penalty spot after the video assistant referee had spotted a very subtle Juan Jesus' handball from a Adama Traore cross inside the area.

The second leg will be played at

Napoli next week. Elsewhere, Real Betis defeated Zenit St Petersburg 3-2 after scoring twice in the first 20 minutes through Guido Rodriguez and Willian Jose. But the Russian side fought back to equalise with two goals in three minutes scored by Artem Dzyuba and Malcom. However, midfielder Andres Guardado found the winner for Betis right before halftime, as the La Liga side held on to hand Zenit their first home loss since October 2021.

Sheriff Tiraspol beat Braga 2-0 at home in Moldova thanks to goals from Sebastien Thill and Adama Traore. However, the shock of the night came in Germany as Rangers beat Bundesliga's second-placed side

Borussia Dortmund 4-2.

A penalty from James Tavernier put the Glasgow side ahead in the 38th minute before Colombian forward Alfredo Morelos doubled their advantage in the 41st, tapping in from close range following a well-worked corner routine made easier by slack marking from Dortmund. A thumping firsttime strike from John Lundstram from outside the box put Rangers in dreamland in the 49th minute although England midfielder Jude Bellingham quickly pulled a goal back in the 51st, smashing into the net from outside the box to give the hosts a foothold in the game.

Rangers took no time to respond, restoring their three-goal advantage in the 54th with an own goal from

### HOROSCOPE

Dortmund defender Dan-Axel Zagadou, who deflected a strike from the Morelos beyond the reach of goalkeeper Gregor Kobel

Later, Porto fought back to get a 2-1 home win against Lazio thanks to a brace from Spanish striker Toni Martinez. Atalanta also came back from a goal down to beat Olympiakos Piraeus 2-1 at home.

In Germany, Leipzig rescued a 2-2 draw against Real Sociedad thanks to a late Emil Forsberg penalty.

In Spain, La Liga second-placed side Sevilla won 3-1 against Dinamo Zagreb, with French forward Anthony Martial scoring his first goal for the Spanish side, and are one step closer to advancing in a competition they have won a record six times.

**ASSOCIATED PRESS BEIJING, FEB 18** 

Eileen Gu came into the Beijing Games hoping to win three gold medals in freestyle skiing while representing China, where her mother was born. She didn't, but she did come away with two golds and one silver, making her the first action-sports athlete to win three medals at the same Olympics.

The American-born Gu, 18, won the gold medal in women's halfpipe on Friday. She had such a big lead after two runs that she was able to take a carefree final run down the halfpipe.

She won the gold medal in the Olympic debut of women's freeski big air and took the silver in slopestyle.

It was a remarkable contrast to the tears of Russian figure skater Kamila

Valieva after her shocking litany of mistakes left the heavily favoured teenager off the podium in women's figure skating.

Ryan Regez led a 1-2 finish by Switzerland in the Olympic skicross final at Genting Snow Park, taking the lead early and never giving it up. Teammate Alex Fiva finished with the silver medal and Russian athlete Sergey Ridzik grabbed the bronze.

Thomas Krol won gold in the 1,000 meters speedskating, giving the Netherlands its third straight Olympic speedskating title in the event. The Netherlands earned its fifth gold medal in 12 events in Beijing with one day of competition remaining.

Johannes Thingnes Boe of Norway won the gold medal in the men's Biathlon. Justine Braisaz-Bouchet of France won the women's mass start race.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) \*\*\*\* While you'll certainly be in a talkative mood you self, try to be mindful during each discussion by asking as many questions as you answer. These vibes will be exciting and fiery but remember not to talk about yourself too much.

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

CANCER (June 22-July 22) \*\*\*



The day brings a soft and creative vibe to the table These vibes will remind you of the importance of self-care, which will go a long way in boosting your confidence, so don't feel guilty about spending the dav relaxed.

#### TAURUS (April 20-May 20) \*\*\*



Tapping into nature can work wonders in opening up your perspective, allowing you to see the invisible life force that connects everyone and everything. Remember to unwind, destress, and embrace the lighter side of life

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



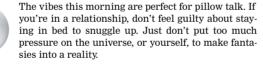
You'll be amazed by how much healing human creation can bring to your soul right now, inspiring you to usher through a few works of art yourself. Today, try to arrange for a quiet evening with your nearest and dearest.

### CROSSWORD

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Tapping into your beauty and grace will come easily under today's skies. The lunar placement will inspire you to nurture your friends and family, showering them with abundance of sweet sentiments, love, and

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



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

Try not to be frivolous with your spending, or you could end up having anxiety over it later, under today's cosmic alliance. As evening rolls in, try to reconnect with your body through some deep stretching, and self-care.

Give yourself permission to daydream, as your mind is flooding with ideas on how you might improve yourself. Look for reasonable steps you can take to reach this potential and make a personal vow that you will reach it.

#### SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) \*\*\*

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) \*\*\*

Try not to hide from your deepest thoughts or emotions, even if they're slightly uncomfortable. A meditation session can help you make the most of today's cosmic climate, offering you clarity in your thoughts.

This cosmic climate is poised to help you find smart-

er and more efficient ways to run your home and

daily life. Today's energy is perfect for socialization

and perhaps a bit of flirting, so be sure to get some

### SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) \*\*\*

time for those.



#### AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) \*\*\*



The demands of your social life could become a burden. While you usually respond to your friends and family within a timely matter, don't feel guilty if you need to take a break from your phone under today's skies.

### PISCES (February 19-March 20) \*\*\*

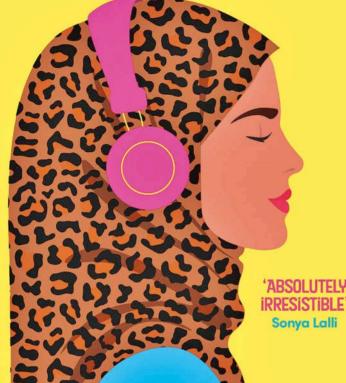


**SUDOKU** 

Your words will have a positive yet possibly unexpected impact on the ones you love today. Don't hold back with your ingenious ideas, no matter how unconventional they may seem, as it could be the key to unlocking success

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## From the Winner of Cosmopolitan's Book of the Year 2019 UZMA JALALUDD HANA KHAN **CARRIES ON**



Hana Khan Carries On Author: Uzma Jalaluddin Publisher: Penguin Random House Pages: 368

## The lively representation we need and deserve

Uzma Jalaluddin's 'Hana Khan Carries On' is a mindful peek into the triumphs and tribulations of a second-generation immigrant.

### **RICHA BHATTARAI**

wenty-four-year-old Hana Khan dreams of being a broadcast journalist and telling meaningful stories to the world. However, at the radio station she interns for, she keeps being shunted into drafting reports that stereotype her religion and culture.

Hana Khan also dreams of turning her family's halal restaurant with the unforgettable name, 'Three Sisters Biryani Poutine', into a booming success. Unfortunately, clientele is at an all-time low, and she does not enjoy working at the restaurant. To add to it, the insufferable Aydin Shah is opening a swanky new halal restaurant right at the edge of their Golden Crescent neighbourhood in Toronto.

There is at least one thing Hana can still enjoy, away from the pressures of her two part-time jobs as an intern and restaurant help. She has a secret podcast, 'Ana's Brown Girl Rambles', where she promises to impart 'nothing of substance, and nothing but my truth.' When dealing with her father's illness, her parents' multiple guests, and the family's dwindling finances get too much for Hana, she can drop a note to her listener StanleyP, who admits he also has 'family-and-business-shaped' complications, but is always willing to lend her an ear.

This, then, is the premise for 'Hana Khan Carries On', the second novel by Uzma Jalaluddin, who is surprisingly knowledgeable about the lingo and idiosyncrasies of her young heroine. The story starts off simply, but do not be fooled, this is no abridged bildungsroman. There are complications galore, just as in life. Hana faces challenges that span across money and class, race and religion, authenticity and confirmation, career and heritage, family and romance.

All these dilemmas are so real, after a while she stops being a character and is a living person. Because it is the story that is being lived by you and me and every person

that has ever grappled with questions of belongingness and roots and ethics. "There's a lot of freedom in being a pioneer of your family's history in a new place, of course," says Hana, "But there's a lot of loneliness, too."

It is not difficult to surmise that these are all issues that the author has experienced, or seen, or watched develop, as a second-generation Indian Muslim herself. The way she has adapted these experiences for the novel, in a way that is thought-provoking and passionate, but also so gentle, compassionate, and full of worldly love-it is a rare balance, indeed. Uzma has beautifully intertwined faith into the story, illustrating how there is so much to learn about the religion of Islam.

The story starts off simply, but do not be fooled, this is no abridged bildungsroman.

Even though the novel makes you feel heavy-hearted when you comprehend the extent of the scrutiny and prejudices that millions like Hana face around the world, it is also a work of great joy and exuberance. Not everything is neatly wrapped up at the end as we would like it to be; there are no overnight solutions to the evils of communal hatred and xenophobia; and we are not even promised that the Muslim community of Scarborough will be magically welcomed by everyone from the next day. However, there is a strong undercurrent of the possibility of change, of transformation, and of the gradual shift in our mindsets that will lead us towards the path of acceptance and tolerance. This feeling of hope and courage might seem overtly positive, yet it is a true skill to be able to impart this through a book.

Uzma has said that the novel is inspired by 'You've Got Mail', and indeed, the trope of secret friends-open enemies-lovers is hard to miss. But it also reminded me a little of 'The Hate U Give', of young people battling the lethal diseases of anti-Muslimness and anti-Blackness. One of the ways to counter this fear born through ignorance is to educate and inform. Though it is of course not Uzma's (or Hana's) responsibility to carry this heavy burden of educating someone, they do it valiantly and with great poise. Hana is such a relatable heroine, with her self-doubt, dilemmas, and a beautiful heart underneath it all. The best thing is she grows throughout the novel; we watch her turning mature and resilient in front of our own eyes. Aydin is a surprisingly good match for her, never allowed to overshadow her, but a good friend throughout all the chaos in her life.

The chaos in the novel is sometimes too much. Yes, the same does happen in real life, and yes, all the issues are worth talking about, but perhaps they did not need to be crammed into a single volume. At one point in the novel, the plot goes haywire; the characters crowd in the pages, and it is so all over the place that readers might even lose interest. The author does catch hold of the plot after a while, but those multiple simultaneous incidents and innumerable characters call for some ruthless editing.

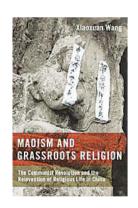
Apart from this hitch, the novel is quite enjoyable. The language is nothing extraordinary, but quite routine I would say. But the dialogues are the ones we speak, the thoughts are ones we fall asleep to, the challenges are what we face-it is our story. When Hana asks her supervisor at the radio station if she wants Hana to help the next day, Marisa responds, "Of course, sweetie. You're a natural."

So is Uzma a natural, and I will watch out for her next books with great interest.

Richa Bhattarai is a writer from Kathmandu.

### Fiction

- The Lincoln Highway by Amor Towles
- Great Circle by Maggie Shipstead
- One Last Stop by Casey Mcquiston 3.
- The Promise by Damon Galgut
- The Dutch House by Ann Patchett



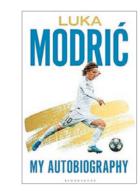
### Non-Fiction

Maoism and Grassroots Religion: by Xiaoxuan Wang The Long Game: Chain's Grand

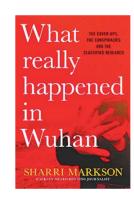
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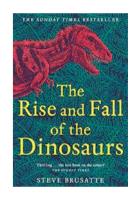


My Autobiography Author: Luka Modric **Publication:** Bloomsbury Publishing **Price:** Rs 1438



What Happened in Wuhan Author: Sharri Markson **Publication:** HarperCollins **Price:** Rs 1598

Part-thriller, part-expose, 'What Really



The Rise and Fall of The Dinosaur Author: Steve Brusatte Publication: Pan Macmillan **Price:** Rs 1118

s book, Dr Steve Brusatte, one of the leading dinosaur experts, tells us dinosaurs' origin and how they came to power. Based on the fossil clues that were gathered using state of the art technology, Brusatte traces the journey of the magnificent animals from their beginnings in the Early Triassic period.

### **BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES**

Strategy to Displace American Order by Rush Doshi

- Literary Theory and Criticism: Recent 3 Writings From South Asia Edited by Arun Gupto
- Envisioning a Tibetan Luminary: by 4. William M Gorvine
- My Reflections on Nepal's onstitution, 5. Governance and Politics by Ganesh Raj Sharma

red one of the greatest midfield players, Croatian legend Luka Modric tells the story of his journey from his childhood days growing up during the Croatian War of Independence to becoming a serial UEFA Champions League winner and the personal events that have shaped him.

Happened in Wuhan' is a ground-breaking investigation into the origins of Covid-19. The book, which acclaimed journalist Sharri Markson wrote, features never-before-seen primary documents and interviews, exposing how China hid the spread of the virus from the world during the initial stage.

## South Korea's cyberbullies driving victims to suicide

The country's online harassment crisis is spreading and victims have had no way out.

### **CLAIRE LEE**

[Editor's note: This story contains references to suicide and bullying.]

an-hating feminist, mentally ill, grind her into dog food: activist Kim Ju-hee endures a torrent of abuse from powerful South Korean cyberbullies, who are driving more and more of their victims to suicide.

From K-pop stars like Sulli to lesser-known figures like a volleyball player who killed himself earlier this month, South Korea's cyberbullying crisis is spreading and victims have no way out, activists say.

In a country where sexism is entrenched, a leading presidential candidate can vilify feminism, and misogynistic posts are a defining feature of Reddit-like forums, cyberbullies have the power to ruin people's lives--and face few repercussions.

YouTube is a key platform for such attacks--one video attacking activist Kim was watched hundreds of thousands of times, and garnered thousands of comments, including violent death threats.

"I always feel unsafe," Kim, who also works as a nurse, told AFP.

"I feel like this is never going to end unless I take my own life and disappear."

Earlier this month, South Korean volleyball player Kim In-hyeok killed himself after being brutally ridiculed online, suffering a barrage of hateful comments and online rumours that he was gay.

In January, YouTuber BJ Jammi ended

South Korea has the highest suicide rates in the developed world.

her life having endured years of abuse after South Korean online trolls accused her of being a "man-hating feminist".

Her uncle blamed the suicide on "severe depression caused by malicious comments and rumours", according to a post on her Twitch account announcing her death.

Jammi's mother had taken her own life in 2019, which her daughter blamed on the cyberbullying, saying in an emotional Twitch stream that she was struggling with her mental health.

"Those of you who leave me malicious comments, is it fun to make me suffer and destroy my life?" she said, fighting back tears during the 2020 live stream.

#### Profitable

Anti-feminist South Korean YouTube accounts, some of which have hundreds of thousands of followers, are profiting from the harassment, experts say.

"Famous YouTubers gain more attention by uploading videos denouncing feminism and feminists," Jinsook Kim, a University of Pennsylvania postdoctoral fellow, told AFP.

Women or minorities in the public sphere are particularly vulnerable to attacks, experts say, and South Korea's



South Korean feminist activist Kim Ju-hee posing for a photo at a subway station in Seoul.

lack of an anti-discrimination law leaves victims uniquely exposed.

"They were not just targeted and assaulted randomly," but were singled out and accused of being "feminist or gay", Jinsook Kim said, referring to the cases of volleyball player Kim In-hyeok and BJ Jammi.

Other women in the public eye have been doxxed--had their personal information published online--by male YouTubers who accuse them of being a "misandrist", or man-haters.

Some of the YouTubers even live-

streamed as they tracked down a victim and issued rape and death threats--with the hateful content generating more clicks and advertising revenue.

AFP/RSS

"They continue to produce sensationalist and hateful content for a profit," Jinsook Kim told AFP.

There have been few successful prosecutions of online trolls over any such attacks. South Korea is a deeply wired nation with the world's fastest average internet speeds and female celebrities have endured online harassment for decades.

In 2008, top actress Choi Jin-sil took her

own life after enduring cyberbullying over claims she worked as a loan shark.

In 2019, K-Pop star Goo Hara killed herself after being the victim of "revenge porn" threats by a disgruntled ex-boyfriend, and her friend and fellow singer Sulli took her own life after online attacks that accused her, among other things, of not wearing a bra.

#### No help for victims

High-profile suicides after cyberbullying attacks typically prompt nationwide hand-wringing and petitions to the Blue House calling for change, but little has been done to help.

Known for its high-pressure and competitive society, South Korea has the highest suicide rates in the developed world, and online character assassination can be extremely damaging.

Anyone who is "perceived to be different from the norm" is at risk of an online attack, Seoul-based freelance journalist and online commentator Raphael Rashid told AFP, and it's difficult to recover.

Cyberbullying victims feel "they have nowhere to escape" after having their public profile ruined, and that "society cannot tolerate their existence", he said.

Activist Kim said that the doxxing and cyberbullying attacks had made her contemplate suicide. "It feels like the whole world has turned its back against you,' she told AFP.

Unless laws and prosecutions catch up to the online trolls, more suicides are inevitable, she said. For now, "cyberbullying only stops when the victims die"

Agence France-Press

### CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

## For the love of books

### Meet bibliophiles who have been quietly building their book collections.

#### SRIZU BAJRACHARYA Kathmandu

hile e-books might have put a dent in the popularity of physical copies of books, they haven't dissuaded many bibliophiles in Nepal from continuing to rely on physical books. Many ardent readers have gone a step further by creating their own book collection, some even worthy of rivalling small public libraries.

Some private book collections have also extended to the public's reach, like scholar and historian Dilli Raman Regmi's private collection, which became Dilliraman Kalyani Regmi Memorial Library, and



### Indira Dali: 'It has been my dream to read all my life.'

In Indira Dali and her husband Ninu Chapagain's home library in Sanepa, there are books everywhere on the shelves and inside boxes. With over 4,000 books, the room has limited space for people to move around.

Dali, a library advocate and a children's book writer, often frequents the room to find books to help her with her manuscripts, essays, and reports.

"In the past, I used to have a lot of fiction books. But of late, I have begun collecting books that help in my research as a writer," says Dali. "And that is what I think a home library should be able to do—to help one in one's pursuit of work."

Dali started collecting books long before she dreamt of being a librarian. When she was a girl, her father used to read her fairy tales like 'Cinderella' and 'Hansel and Gretel' in Nepalbhasa, and this, she says, drew her into the world of books. She vividly remembers her father's bookshelves lined with his science and English books.

"It has been my life's dream to spend all my time reading and become a learned person. Because of our family's weak financial state, my mother had to struggle a lot to send me to school, so I never took school for granted and focused a lot on studying. Naturally, books became my companion," shares Dali.

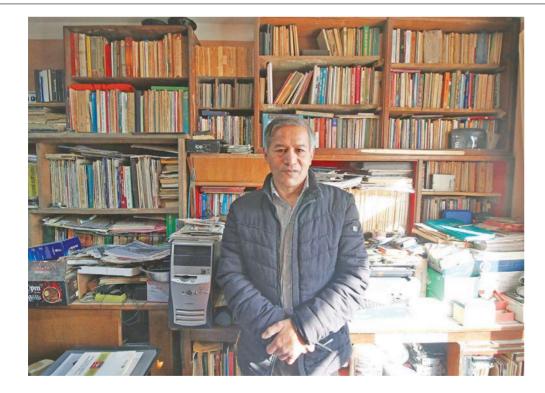
In the many years that Dali has been collecting books, she has made it a point to find books by women writers and create a bibliography of women writers in Nepal. "A lot of those boxes you can see in my library are works by women writers. We must have that in documentation because works by women writers have not been documented as much as works by men have been. And because education for women started much later, you don't find many books written by women," says Dali.

Once Dali starts talking about books, it becomes evident how much she loves books. She speaks enthusiastically about her book collection and is quick to share what she says are must-read books.

"You must read Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra, Maxim Gorky, Leo Tolstoy, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Parijat, and Laxmi Prasad Devkota. They were great writers. I used to sleep besides their books. And I used to copy the words of 'Geetanjali' by Tagore and 'Lalitya' by Lekhnath Poudel in my register copy. When I was younger, I have spent innumerable days reading the works of these splendid writers," says Dali, her eyes lighting up.

Dali was also one of the leading people responsible for getting Jamal's Nepal National Library building's construction off the ground. Before Dali and her compatriot's intervention, the project had been stalled for years due to the vested interest of business people and the country's apathy for learning institutions like libraries. She is also passionate about children's libraries and has co-founded Community Child Development Library, a children's library, in Sanepa. "If you want to cultivate a reading culture, you must start with children," she says. "It was my father who helped me develop a reading habit, which has benefited me immensely." In a world where many are choosing e-books over physical books, Dali is a firm believer in the latter's importance.

"The relationship you have with a physical book is nothing in comparison to something you have in your device." she says.



opened to the public in 1981.

"A book lover will always find a way to make a collection, a library of their own, and it won't be all that surprising. It's just a natural thing for them to do," says 73-year-old Indira Dali, an advocate for public libraries and the former chair of the Dilli Raman Kalayani Regmi Memorial Library

### Priyansha Silwal: 'We wanted to remember our Sanu with books.'

The sorry state of government-run public libraries in the country has made them one of the last places for people to think of as places to find books to read. But things are completely different at Sanu ko Pustakalaya, a community library, started by Priyansha Silwal and her family. The library opened in October last year. The well-stocked library, located in Manbhawan, Patan, is devoid of the musty smell that one usually finds in many public-funded libraries.

This newly opened community library was started in the memory of Silwal's younger sister, who passed away around a year ago. The family started the library with their own book collection. The afternoon the Post visited the library, warm sunlight pouring through the windows bathed the room, and a handful of readers were lost in the world of books. At the library entrance, a portrait sketch of Silwal's sister 'Sanu' welcomed readers inside their book world.

"We are a family of readers, and reading has been a significant part of getting through life. It's the bridge to knowledge. But it has also been a comforting companion for us," says Silwal, choosing her words carefully and softly, not wanting to disturb the other readers in the room. "I remember turning to books when my sister passed away—most of them were books she had gifted me. Reading helped everyone in our family deal with our grief."

The idea of setting up a memorial library came to the family as it tried to gain a sense of balance. "Sanu was an avid reader, and the Sanu ko Pustakalaya is our attempt to remember her life by bringing a library

#### Development Board.

The Post recently sat down with some passionate bibliophiles—whose collection has been a significant part of their identity—to bring forth their stories about their love for books and how their collection increased to shape as a library in their homes and communities.

where people could come and read, which Sanu loved to do," says Silwal, an ENT doctor.

Before deciding to set up the library, the family, says Silwal, first researched the need for a public library. "We came to the understanding that most state-funded libraries are not user-friendly. As a result, they fall short in giving a good environment for people to spend time reading. Spaces like these have become quite uncommon in recent times, and so we thought it's an idea we could work on," says Silwal.

The family's book collection had about five hundred books, Silwal says. "Our family collection was made up of my father's economic books, my mother's Nepali fiction books, and Sanu's array of spiritual books and my English fiction, and classics books," says Silwal.

Since the family's collection wasn't enough to start a library, they started racing out to family and friends to contribute to the cause.

"Many of them came forward and donated books and money for the library. And because we are new, we are still growing our collection," says Silwal.

At present, Sanu ko Pustakalaya has a collection of over 2,500 books, and includes non-fiction, fiction, and children's book sections. Currently, the Silwal family funds the library's upkeep, but in the long run, the family hopes to sustain the library with the funds collected from the institution's readers' membership programme.

"This journey of setting up and sharing this library with the people has been a gratifying one," says Silwal. "We have also realised that the joy of sharing books comes with much responsibility, and we want to make it a learning space that keeps evolving so people could make the best use of it."



### Mukesh Malla: 'I wanted to build an inventory to help my writing.'

On the third floor of Mukesh Malla's house in Bulbule, Chabahil is a room filled with art books. From cataes of old exhibitions art history and culture, Malla's collection is a treasure trove for those interested in arts. Malla can often be found reading on the library's bed, which is also his preferred place to sit when writing analytical pieces about Nepal's art practices. The air in the library is thick with the particular smell of old books Sixty-eight-year-old Malla is an artist and has written extensively about Nepali art and artists. He is also one of the eminent art critiquers in the Nepali art community. His first book was 'Tulikaghat', published in 1995. He also regularly writes art columns for Nagarik, a Nepali national daily newspaper. "I started writing in 1973 when I was living in Dharan. I used to read art pieces written by Raghubir Sahai for an Indian magazine called 'Dinman', and I think it was his writings that got me into art writing," says Malla. "At first, I took it up as a way of earning some money but eventually I became more passionate about it, and that's how this collection you see here started," shares Malla, beaming in front of his collection. Malla's home library is personalised and is more functional and practical than any library can be. He has files of his own published articles and stacks of photocopies of art-related books, which include a copy of 'Investigating Modern Art' by Liz Dawtrey, Toby Jackson, Mary Masterton, Paul Wood, that he collected while growing up. Malla even has a catalogue of Siddhartha Art Gallery's 1991 exhibition of carpets by Yogendra Dangol and Kumbeshwor Technical School.

Malla started collecting art-related books and writings to work on his craft as a writer. "Good writing is not just about perfecting language but also about giving medow the wight information to help in their

### Pushpa Raj Bajracharya: 'I think of books I own as memories of my life that I can revisit whenever I want to.'

Sixty-one-year-old Pushpa Raj Bajracharya loses all track of time whenever he spends time in his home library. The room is his favourite part of his house, located in Chakupat, Patan.

"I started collecting books when I was about 11. And I began with the electronic engineering books that my elder brother had left behind. He was a very talented person. He even used to make radios out of matchboxes," says Bajracharya, his voice soft and careful.

"As a child, I looked up to my brother, and I admired his creations. I wanted to learn from him and become like him. But unfortunately, my brother passed away when he was 22, and his books became the only way to get to know his works better. Reading his books made me fall in love with reading, and I eventually started collecting books and now have a home library of some sort," he explains.

Bajracharya is a man of many talents; he is a sculptor, data engineer, computer technician, and also has a handicraft business. He says that he has never shied away from pursuing his interests and believes in always being open to learning new things in life.

"I love reading books and immersing myself in the knowledge it holds, but on the contrary, I was not very interested in school. I felt like schools limited us to only a few books, and as a young, impulsive, and determined boy, I was more into exploring books that were not part of my school curriculum. At that age, I had already understood the ability of books to broaden my knowledge," he says.

Over the years, whatever new interests Bajracharya

developed, he researched about them by reading books. Books about science led him to understand religion, and books of religion led him to understand life, he says.

"When I was trying to understand parapsychology, I wanted to understand the idea of reincarnation, which eventually brought me to the world of Buddhist philosophy and science," shares Bajracharya.

Today, Bajracharya's book collection has many books on electronic engineering, parapsychology, psychology, and an extensive collection of Buddhist literature. His library is also filled with books and magazines he read as a child, such as 'Science Today' and 'Science Reporter' magazines.

When he pulls out a book titled 'Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Research', Bajracharya eyes sparkle with excitement, like a child showing their favourite toy. Through the years, Bajracharya's collection of Buddhist literature on the Newa Buddhist community of Patan has also made him a go-to person for Buddhist reading materials. And he doesn't mind visitors who want to spend time in his library. Every now and then, his friends drop by to borrow books from him. And many student researchers rely on his collection. "Knowledge should always be shared. Although my library is not public, I don't like to say no to people who want to read like me," he says.

For Bajracharya, the books in collections are priceless. During his free time, he likes to revisit old books. "I think of books I own as memories of my life that I can revisit whenever I want to. They are phases of my life. Books, after all, embody knowledge that we all are after in life," he says. "These collections were made with hard work. And they are my life's most valuable possessions." ing readers the right information to help in their critical thinking and analysis," says Malla.

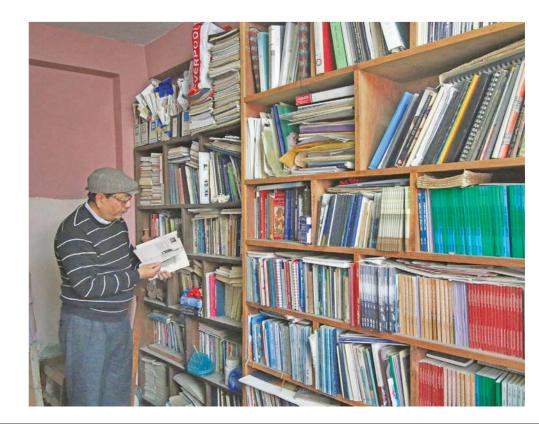
As a writer pursuing art writing, Malla felt that it was imperative to create an archive of books and reading materials to rely on to help make his writing truthful and factual.

"Today, my collection helps me map the development of art and critique the Nepali art practises rightfully," he says. Malla, over the years, has collected over 1,000 books about art, of which hundreds and hundreds are Nepali documentations about art.

His repository is even considered significant in the Nepali art community and has drawn many visitors interested in understanding Nepal's art history to his home.

Malla's motivation for the collection, over the years, has fortified even more with the understanding that libraries in the country still do not have enough books on Nepal's art history and literature. And even with his extensive collection, he remains a hungry bibliophile.

"It's sad that our libraries still don't have a good collection about Nepal's art history. A lot of these libraries only curate lavish collectors' books. It's a shame that even after all these years, we don't have a good art library," says Malla. "Which is why I feel all the more proud of my collection and possessive of my handpicked books on art."



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