



THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

Nepal's largest selling English daily

Printed simultaneously in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bharatpur and Nepalgunj

Vol XXX No. 70 | 8 pages | Rs.5
Friday, April 29, 2022 | 16-01-2079

39.5° C 5.8° C
Nepalgunj Jumla

Top US official to visit Nepal prior to local elections

Under secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights arriving in the first week of May.



Uzra Zeya

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, APRIL 28

After the recent visit by US lawmakers, another high-level delegation is arriving from Washington. The Joe Biden administration is sending its Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Uzra Zeya to Kathmandu.

Zeya will travel to Nepal just before local elections scheduled for May 13, at least two diplomatic sources in Kathmandu and Washington, DC, confirmed to the Post. Zeya will be the highest level US official to visit Nepal in almost a decade. In 2012, two US under secretaries—Wendy Sherman and Maria Otero—had visited Nepal.

The US side has expressed its intent to send Zeya to Nepal before local elections and proposed a date of the first week of May, according to the sources.

The flurry of visits from the US coincides with the 75th anniversary of Nepal-US diplomatic ties, but it is taking place also hot on the heels of the ratification of the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact by the Nepali Parliament.

The \$500 million US grant was ratified on February 27 after months-long controversy prompted by differences among Nepali parties, particularly the communist forces who vehemently opposed its parliamentary passage.

On Thursday, during a regular press briefing, Sewa Lamsal, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson, hinted that a high-level visit from the United States was on the cards but she stopped short of mentioning the official leading the American delegation.

>> Continued on page 2



A woman takes pictures of jacaranda blossoms on her mobile phone at Bhainsepati, Lalitpur on Thursday.

POST PHOTO: SANJOG MANANDHAR

Indicators look bad but statistics bureau paints glowing picture of Nepali economy

Economists question 5.87 percent optimistic growth data released just before Nepal goes to polls, calling it a cheery prediction.

SANGAM PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, APRIL 28

The Central Bureau of Statistics has painted a glowing picture of the Nepali economy despite a whole host of pessimistic indicators, prompting economists to call its cheery prediction "supercharged growth".

Unusually heavy rains last October left a trail of ruin in the farm sector. Hiring by the restaurant and hospitality industry is still depressed. Industries are facing electricity problems again. High inflation has eroded the Nepali people's purchasing power. A huge investment gap in infrastructure remains. The government has shrunk the budget because it can't spend the allocated funds.

Even so, Nepal's official number cruncher said on Thursday in its preliminary report that the economy is projected to grow 5.84 percent in the current fiscal year ending mid-July without explaining how that would happen.

Economists have questioned the optimistic economic growth data that has been released just before Nepalis go to the polls.

"A layman can understand the health of the economy right now," said economist Bishwambher Pyakuryal. "That's artificially designed data."

"The economy is depressed. The government is desperate. As a result, stringent measures have been imposed to curb imports, bank lending is slow and investment is weak, and the government is stopping children from going to school, traders from doing business and government employees from going to full duty to save fuel," he said.

"Looking at all the economic indicators and current market situation, it is hard to conclude that Nepal's economy is doing well at the moment. The economy has become just data. This is face-saving data ahead of the election," said Pyakuryal. "What makes the statistical body confident that a near 6 percent growth rate is achievable? They should be careful."

The statistical bureau said that growth had been helped by mining and quarrying, electricity and gas, construction, wholesale

and retail trade, accommodation and food service activities, education and financial and insurance activities.

The official growth estimate is higher than the forecasts made by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have projected Nepal's economy to grow by 3.7 percent and 3.9 percent respectively.

The government has targeted a growth rate of 7 percent.

"It doesn't feel like we are growing at 6 percent. We have estimated that it may expand by 4 percent and not more than that," said economist Keshav Acharya.

"I doubt the statisticians took account of the consumer goods sales in urban and rural areas, the job prospects immediately

World Bank and Asian Development Bank say Nepal's economy will grow by 3.7 and 3.9 percent, respectively.

after Covid-19, the depressed growth of the agriculture sector and the poor performance of the tourism industry to get a better understanding of the ground realities," said Acharya.

"Initially, we thought the growth was due to the base effect, compared to last year's weak numbers. But it appears that is not the case." He said that energy shortages in the industrial sector would further impact manufacturing in the coming days.

Ishwari Prasad Bhandari, director of the Central Bureau of Statistics, said that the growth estimate is based on actual data of nine months and forecasts for the next three months.

"The three months' estimates are based on the assumption that everything will be normal," Bhandari said.

>> Continued on page 5

INSIDE

Electricity reaches rural villages in Jumla

JUMLA: The operation of Adalikhola Hydropower Project with 42 KW capacity has changed the lives of the locals of several villages in Guthichaur Rural Municipality in Jumla, a remote district of Karnali Province. Fifty-five-year-old Khulamai Aidi from Gadigaun says the supply of electricity to her village has made life easier for the residents. "We had to burn oil lamps at night to be able to move around. Not all families were able to afford to light their homes with solar power," she said. "The power plant has come as a boon for the villagers." "These days villages are bustling with activities even after sunset. Kitchens have become smoke-free with options to use electric appliances," said Aidi. (Details on Pg 2)

Hundreds of children sick after receiving typhoid vaccine

KATHMANDU: Hundreds of children throughout the country are suffering from the side effects of the government-administered typhoid vaccine with at least one child developing serious neurological problems. Doctors have yet to confirm if the vaccine was responsible for the neurological problems. Hospitals providing treatment throughout the country have reported that the number of children seeking care after receiving the typhoid vaccine is large, officials at the Ministry of Health and Population said. (Details on Pg 3)

Two-day weekend will add to case backlogs at hospitals, doctors say

Concerns grow patients needing surgeries, renal transplantations will suffer more.



Scheduled surgeries will be postponed or delayed once the new rule comes into force, the executive director of Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital says.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, APRIL 28

The government decision to introduce a two-day weekend policy has left Swastik Kumal worried. On Thursday morning, Kumal reached out to the director of Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, Maharajgunj. His concern was about his father's scheduled kidney transplantation.

"My father has been waiting for a kidney transplant for the last two years," Kumal told the Post. "Transplantation date has already been postponed several times, and we are worried it could be pushed further, as the government has declared two days of public holiday per week."

As per the Cabinet decision, which will come into force from May 15, government offices will remain closed on Saturdays and

Sundays. Government hospitals, which have not been providing transplantation services on Saturdays will now close the services on Sundays as well.

Like Kumal, thousands of patients with serious ailments from across the country will have to bear the brunt of a five-day work schedule, doctors say.

"Unless there is a different provision for hospitals, all scheduled surgeries will be postponed or delayed at our hospital once the new rule comes into force," said Dr Dinesh Kafle, executive director at the teaching hospital.

"Ordinary patients have to wait one more day to show the reports and consult the doctor."

Kumal's father, Tara Bahadur, 44, has been undergoing dialysis twice a week, for which the family has to pay Rs6,000 (Rs3,000 per session).

"Earlier, the date for his kidney transplantation was postponed

several times due to the Covid-19 pandemic," said Kumal, a native of Binayi Tribeni Rural Municipality in Nawalpur district.

"Now we are totally confused and still don't know when the transplantation will be done."

Doctors concede that thousands of patients across the country will suffer due to the two-day weekend rule. According to the hospital administration, there are patients who have to wait for up to three years for some surgeries.

Doctors at the hospital perform surgery immediately only on those patients whose conditions are serious or on those needing emergency care.

Others whose health condition is not serious as per doctors' assessment have to wait for months or years for their turn.

Kafle, director at the teaching hospital, says it will be unfair to those who have been waiting for years for their turn for surgeries if their schedule is postponed because of the two-day weekend rule.

Around 2,000 patients visit most of the big hospitals—Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, Bir Hospital and Patan Hospital, among others in the Capital. Patients from across the country come to the Capital for consultant care.

Doctors at the teaching hospital perform kidney transplantation surgeries once a week and the service is provided to only two patients. Given the backlog of cases, Sunday's holiday will push other patients' dates automatically.

"The waiting list for transplantation is too long," Dr Dibya Singh Shah, dean at the Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University, told the Post.

>> Continued on page 2

ALL NATURAL
FREE RANGE/HERBAL CHICKEN EGGS



- 10 times more Beta-Carotene than Normal Eggs (117.84mcg/100gm)
- 5 times more Omega-3 than Normal Eggs (139.84mg/egg)
- 2 times more Vitamin D3 than Normal Eggs (62.96IU/100gm)

Hormones & Antibiotics Free Lab-tested Eggs.

Free Home Delivery

HAPPY CHICKEN INTEGRATED FARM

Address: Maharajgunj-3, Panipokhari, Kathmandu

Contact No: 9846572280, 9823406110, 9802852280

standard chartered

An ideal investment that gives you

11.03%* p.a. on fixed deposit

Scan to apply

NATIONAL

BRIEFING

23 Congress activists detained for vandalising party office

KASKI: Police arrested 23 Nepali Congress activists who vandalised the party's Gandaki Province Office on Thursday. The disgruntled NC cadres, who have been protesting against the electoral alliance of five ruling parties, vandalised the table and chair used by NC provincial president and smashed window panes of the party office. Some NC activists have been protesting after the electoral alliance fielded Dhanraj Acharya of CPN (Unified Socialist) as the common mayoral candidate for Pokhara Metropolitan City.

NEA cuts off electricity supply at Tulsipur Sub-metropolis

DANG: Nepal Electricity Authority has cut off electricity service at Tulsipur Sub-Metropolitan City stating that the sub-metropolis did not pay electricity bills. The NEA's Tulsipur distribution centre cut off the electricity supply on Tuesday. According to Gyan Bahadur Pharsal, chief at the NEA distribution centre, the local unit has not paid Rs 9.7 million for street lamps and Rs 150,000 for electricity charge at the sub-metropolis office. "We have no alternative to cut off the electricity as the local unit did not pay electricity bills despite repeated requests," said Pharsal.

Mugu Hospital overwhelmed with patients

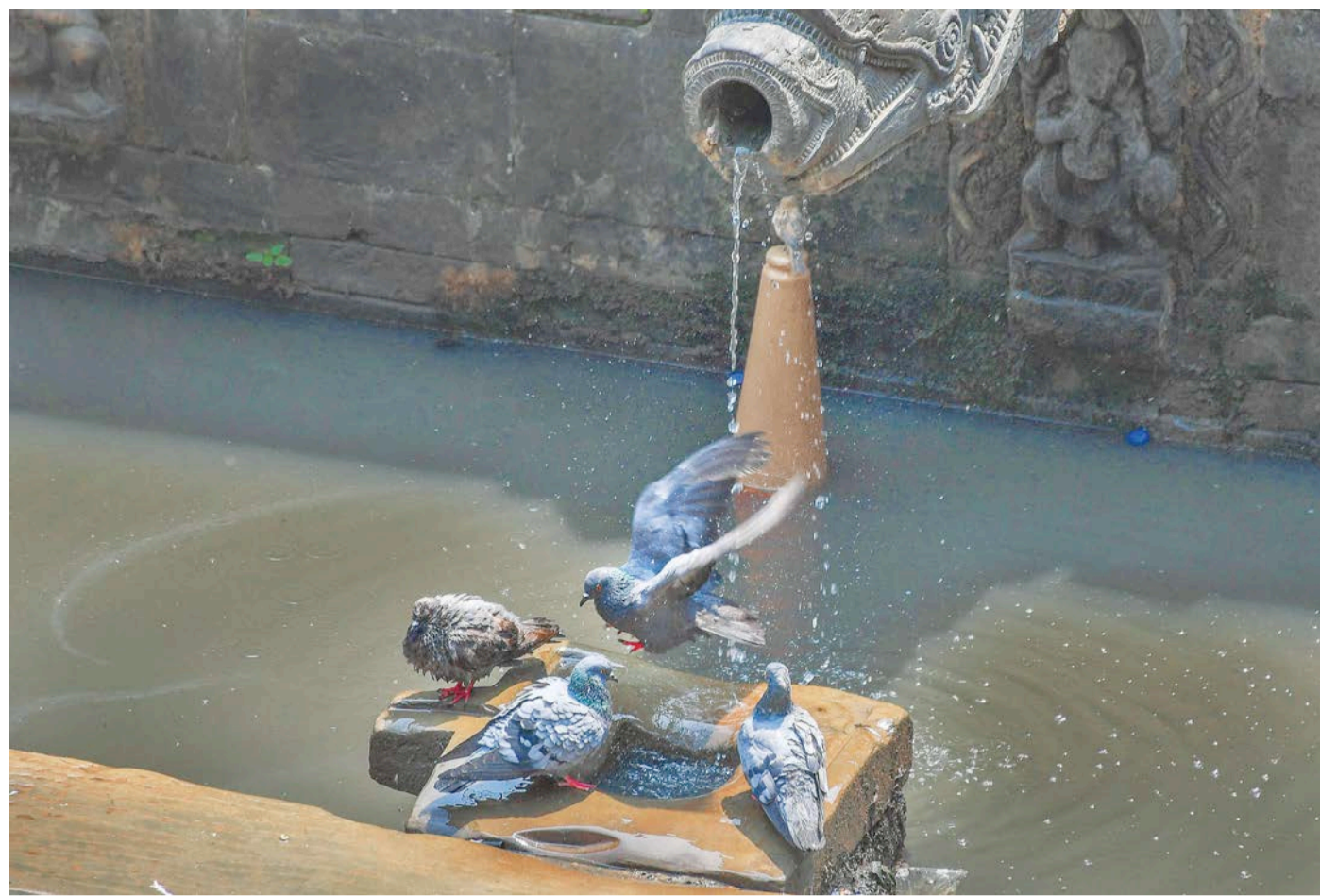
MUGU: With the onset of summer season, the number of patients is on the rise at Mugu District Hospital. According to hospital administration, patients suffering from typhoid, fever, diarrhoea and pneumonia are increasing in the district lately. According to Nahakul Shahi, a doctor at the hospital, around 10 seriously ill patients on average are admitted at the hospital daily. "Health workers have a tough time with the increasing number of patients on the one hand and short supply of essential medicines on the other," Shahi said.

Dialysis unit upgraded at Dharan BP Koirala Hospital

SUNARI: The Dharan-based BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences has upgraded the dialysis unit at the health institution keeping in view the increasing number of kidney patients. The institute added 12 dialysis machines so that patients with renal ailments get timely dialysis service. According to Dr Rabin Maskey, chief at the medicine department at the BPKIHS, the dialysis unit now has a total of 20 dialysis machines.

Nepal reports 15 Covid cases

KATHMANDU: Nepal on Thursday reported 15 new PCR confirmed coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours taking the nationwide infection tally to 978,793. All 993 antigen tests returned negative results, according to the Health Ministry's daily situation report. A total of 4,882 PCR tests were performed in the past 24 hours, according to the Health Ministry. In the past 24 hours, 10 new infections were recorded in Bagmati, one in Province 1 and two each in Madhesh and Gandaki.



Pigeons bathe under a stone spout at Patan, Lalitpur on Thursday.

POST PHOTO: ANISH REGMI

Electricity reaches Jumla villages

A micro hydropower project has changed the lives of the locals of Guthichaur Rural Municipality.

DB BUDHA
JUMLA, APRIL 28

The operation of Adalikhola Hydropower Project with 42 kW capacity has changed the lives of the locals of several villages in Guthichaur Rural Municipality in Jumla, a remote district of Karnali Province.

Fifty-five-year-old Khulamu Aidi from Gadigaun says the supply of electricity to her village has made life easier for the residents. "We had to light oil lamps at night to be able to move around. Not all families were able to afford to light their homes with solar power," she said. "The hydropower plant has come as a boon for the villagers."

Villagers say their children no longer have to study under oil lamps.

"These days villages are bustling with activities even after sunset. Kitchens have become smoke-free with options to use electric appliances," said Aidi.

"Life before electricity was hard and most of us suffered from eye problems caused by years of squinting in the dark under dim oil lamps." According to her, they had to walk for an hour to the nearest market centre to charge their mobile phones but now they can do so in the comfort of their own homes.

The hydropower project has been constructed with Rs10.1 million provided by the Guthichaur Rural Municipality. The construction of the project commenced in the fiscal year 2017-18 and was completed around four months ago.

"The rural municipality decided to con-



The 42kW Adalikhola Hydropower Project started generation around four months ago.

POST PHOTO: DB BUDHA

struct the Adalikhola Hydropower Project as the local people of Ward No 1 were deprived of electricity. The villagers are now happy as they get electricity supply," said Hari Bahadur Bhandari, chairman of the rural municipality.

There are five wards in Guthichaur Rural Municipality. Electricity generated by some micro-hydropower projects was already supplied to the people of four other wards in the local unit.

The connectivity to electricity has also opened new avenues for communication with one's relatives living abroad. "We can now make video calls and talk to our relatives."

Electricity has also ensured a conducive environment for children to study, says Aidi. "Our children no longer have to study in the dark. They come home and sit down to study without worrying about the dark."

Gadhigaun, Napani, Munigaun and Dillikot villages are benefiting from the Adalikhola Hydro Project. According to Harish Chandra Giri, ward secretary of Ward No 1 of Guthichaur Rural Municipality, electricity is supplied to individual homes from 5am to 8am and from 5pm to 11pm daily. "In Ward No 1, altogether 360 households are connected to electricity. Some youths are trying to start businesses in the villages themselves since electricity has made it possible for them to be connected to technology."

Bhandari says the local unit has prioritised rural electrification during its annual budget plan. "Some houses are yet to be connected with electricity supply in the remote and least developed areas," he said. "Hopefully electricity will reach each and every household in the rural municipality within a month."

Top US official to ...

>> Continued from page 1

"We are trying to hold and exchange high-level visits but there is no such specific proposal as yet. This year marks the 75th anniversary of Nepal-US diplomatic ties so we are working on some high-level visits in the near future," she said. "Recently, the US ambassador to Nepal also met with Foreign Minister Narayan Khadka and discussed the prospects of high-level visits from the US."

On April 22, a US Congressional team led by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand visited Nepal.

The delegation held talks with a wide range of leaders in Nepal including Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. The delegation also held talks with former prime ministers KP Sharma Oli, chairman of the CPN-UML. But the delegation did not meet with Speaker Agni Prasad Sapkota and chairman of the CPN (Maoist Centre) Pushpa Kamal Dahal and other former prime ministers of Nepal.

According to officials familiar with the meetings, the delegation thanked Nepal for ratifying the MCC compact and standing against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and held talks on a host of issues including climate change and poverty alleviation.

The US-Nepal ties were on the verge of getting derailed over the MCC compact just as the two countries are marking 75 years of relationship. Washington even warned of considering reviewing its Nepal policy if the Nepali leadership failed to stick to its commitment to ratify the compact.

That, however, was averted after parties came up with what they called "an interpretative declaration" to ratify the US grant, which Beijing too was opposing.

Soon after the compact's ratification, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi travelled to Nepal to push for projects under the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing's flagship infrastructure project to connect China with the rest of the world. Kathmandu, however, has made it clear that it is not willing to take any commercial loans under the BRI to move any projects forward in Nepal.

Some in Nepal and China view the MCC compact as a US strategy against BRI, or China for that matter, while some Americans have in the past warned Nepal against falling into "debt trap."

"This is a good time for such high-level exchanges from both sides as there have been no high-level visits from the United States since 2002," said Arjun Karkee, former Nepali ambassador to the US. "There are possibilities of more high-level visits from both sides which were agreed upon long ago but could not happen because of various reasons."

According to Karkee, now time has come to consolidate the bilateral ties.

"Such high-level visits add momentum to our bilateral relations and also help us to secure foreign direct invest-

ments and strengthen relationships," Kakri told the Post. "Now the US secretary of state should visit Nepal as per my understanding."

Observers and officials say the increased high-level visits from Washington are an indication of America's renewed interest in Nepal, even though it has been a development partner for decades.

Currently, Jonathan Brooks, deputy vice-president of Europe, Asia, Pacific and Latin America at Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is in Kathmandu.

Brooks, Shiva Hari Sapkota, director general at Department of Roads, and Khadga Bahadur Bisht, executive director of Millennium Challenge Account-Nepal, on Tuesday jointly inaugurated laboratories at the Department of Roads, a key partner in MCA-Nepal's efforts to improve the quality of roads and help the Government of Nepal address long-term maintenance needs.

Nepal is adding its own \$130 million to the US \$500 million grant which will be used for building electricity transmission lines and improving roads.

Zeya is also concurrently serving as the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues.

The US has been expressing concerns about Tibetan refugees living in Nepal and has been putting pressure to provide identity cards to as many as 10,000 Tibetan refugees living in Nepal.

Nepal has stopped issuing identity cards to the Tibetan refugees since 1995.

Tibetan refugees in Nepal are one of major security concerns of China.

A senior Nepali official told the Post that the series of visits from Washington indicates that there will be more high-level exchanges from both sides later this year.

"The Biden administration as already extended an invitation to Prime Minister Deuba to visit the US and there is also a possibility of a visit at the highest level from Washington, probably by Vice President Kamala Harris or Secretary of State Antony John Blinken, after the local polls," said another senior Nepali official familiar with the developments.

Though Nepal and the US share 75 years of diplomatic ties, no sitting American president or vice president has ever visited Nepal. The highest level visit by an American government official to Nepal took place in 2002 when then secretary of state Colin Powell had arrived in Kathmandu.

The US otherwise has been sending its assistant secretary-level officials to Nepal.

Former US President and a Nobel laureate Jimmy Carter paid a visit to Nepal in 2007 and 2008 but in the capacity of founder of the Carter Centre.

On November 17 of last year, Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu visited Nepal.

Two-day weekend will add to case ...

>> Continued from page 1

"We could not perform any transplantation during the coronavirus pandemic. Patients have to wait for six months to a year for transplantation at our hospital."

The government on Tuesday took the decision of introducing a two-day weekend policy with an aim to cut costs, especially the use of petroleum products. The import of fuel has been creating pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves which have dwindled to Rs1,171 billion by mid-March from the beginning of the fiscal year; the existing reserve is sufficient to sustain imports for 6.7 months against the target of seven months. Nepal's fuel import bill has lately swollen to Rs1 billion daily, which is hurting foreign currency reserves badly. The Nepal Oil Corporation, the state-owned oil monopoly, has already declared that it is broke and the government has been pumping money to import fuel.

The government has also banned at least 10 types of items, which it considers luxury goods, including vehicles, mobile phones, television sets, playing cards and Lay's potato chips to save foreign exchange.

The new weekend rule will come into effect from May 15, but effectively government offices and hospitals will have three off-days that week, since May 13 is election day and May 14 is Saturday. There are concerns that this could also increase case backlogs.

Nepal is among those countries with the most number of public holidays.

"Patients needing different types of cases will be affected," said Kafle, the TUTH director. "Those with gallbladder problems have to wait for up to a year and a half for surgery at our hospital. If the government's new decision is implemented, they will have to wait for even longer."

Minister for Health and Population Birodh Khatiwada said he learned about the two-day holiday decision through the media.

"I was not present in the Cabinet meeting that took the decision," Khatiwada told the Post. "This decision will certainly affect the poor patients who come to the Capital for treatment. This is a cause for concern."

Khatiwada said that he will hold discussions with the parties concerned and stakeholders to find some ways to address the patients' concerns.

An official at the teaching hospital said that in an institution where staffers often play truant, the government has offered two days' leave on a platter.

"Of course doctors and employees will be happy, as they can go anywhere in the country for private practice. But this decision will hugely affect patients," an official at the hospital told the Post, requesting anonymity. "Patients have to arrange more money

to stay for more days in Kathmandu as they wait for their turn for surgery and other specialised treatment."

The hospital administration said that the new decision will affect the hospital as well. The costly equipment including x-ray, CT-scan and MRI machines, procured by spending millions of rupees, do not come into operation on the off days. That means it will lessen the hospital's income.

Patients have to wait for several days for a CT-Scan or ultrasound at state-run hospitals. Those who are in queue at state-run hospitals have to either wait for days even for minor services or pay exorbitant fees at the private labs.

Some hospitals said if the government has taken a decision, they will implement it.

Bir Hospital said doctors and other hospital staffers should not be deprived of the [holiday] benefit provided by the government.

Dr Bhubendra Basnet, director at Bir Hospital, said that the two-day weekend rule will certainly affect patients and that they will have to wait for more months if not a year for some surgeries, including the surgery of urology problems.

But he added that the hospital would implement the decision.

"How can you argue that doctors and hospital staff should not enjoy the benefits provided by the government?" he said. "We will implement the decision at our hospital."

Government of Nepal
Ministry of Water Supply
DEPARTMENT OF WATER SUPPLY and SEWERAGE MANAGEMENT
Prevention and Control of COVID-19 through WASH and Health Initiatives in Secondary and Small Towns Project
PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE, Panipokhari, Kathmandu

Invitation for Bids

Date : 29 April 2022 (First date of Publication)
Grant No. and Title : Grant 9219-NEP, Prevention and Control of COVID-19 through WASH and Health Initiatives in Secondary and Small Towns (PCCWHISST) Project.

Contract No. and Title : PCCWHISST/OCB-G01/Mobile Toilet.
Deadline for Submission of Bids : 30 May 2022, 12:00 Noon, Nepal Standard Time (NST)
Opening of Bids : 30 May 2022, 12:30 PM, NST

1. The Project Management Office, Prevention and Control of COVID-19 through WASH and Health Initiatives in Secondary and Small Town (PCCWHISST) Project, DWSSM, MOWS ("the Employer") under ADB financing invites electronic bids through PPMO's e-GP system www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp from eligible bidders, for Supply and Installation (Transportation, Local Handling, Registration of Vehicles in Transport Authority and Vehicle Insurance) of 20 nos of 5 Seater GESI Responsive Mobile Toilets with Tractor conforming to the required specification in bidding document.

2. Key information required for participation in this bidding process are as follows:

Minimum Average annual turnover within last five years	Value of work completed within the last 5 (Five) years of at least 1 contract and that is similar to the proposed works, where the value of the Bidder's participation exceeds	Bid Validity Period	Bid Security Amount and Validity Period	Bid Document Cost and Information to deposit the cost of bidding document.
NRs. 78.00 million	NRs. 39.0 million or equivalent. The similarity of the Bidder's participation shall be based on Metal/Stainless Steel Fabrication works with inclusive of Vehicles or Vehicle Modification (Water Tanker, Milk Tanker etc.) or Mobile Toilets or Mobile Lab Vehicles..	90 days	NRs. 1.6 million valid upto 90 days after bid opening.	Cost of Bidding Document: NRs. 5000 Name of Bank: Rastriya Banijya Bank, Thamel, Kathmandu Bank Account No: 1000100200010000 Office Code: 313013505 Name of Office: Project Management Office Revenue Account No: 14229

3. To obtain detail information and inspect the bidding documents, Bidders may visit PPMO e-GP system www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp or should contact:
The Project Director, Project Management Office
Ph: 0977-1-4006647, 0977-1-4423186, Fax: 0977-1-4413280,
Website: www.uwssp.gov.np; Email: info@uwssp.gov.np



A vendor sells flower plants on the roadside at Ratna Park in Kathmandu on Thursday.

POST PHOTO: ELITE JOSHI

Hundreds of children sick after receiving typhoid shots freshly rolled out by ministry

A child is being treated for a neurological disorder and doctors yet to confirm if the vaccine was responsible.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, APRIL 28

Hundreds of children throughout the country are suffering from the side effects of the government-administered typhoid vaccine with at least one child developing serious neurological problems. Doctors have yet to confirm if the vaccine was responsible for the neurological problems.

Hospitals providing treatment throughout the country have reported that the number of children seeking care after receiving the typhoid vaccine is large, officials at the Ministry of Health and Population said.

"Many children who developed fever, diarrhoea, headache, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting after receiving the typhoid vaccine were treated at our hospital," Dr Yuba Nidhi Basaula, director at the Kanti Children's Hospital, told the Post.

"Some are still hospitalised." According to doctors at the hospital, some children have been found to be suffering from muscle weakness, especially in the legs, and neurological problems after vaccination.

The hospital administration has also reported such cases to the Ministry of Health and Population, and has asked whether the child who has developed neurological problems after receiving the typhoid vaccine be treated for free as the treatment is costly.

"Yes, an 11-year-old boy developed paralysis after receiving the vaccine," Dr Sangita Kaushal Mishra, spokesperson at the Ministry of Health, told the Post.

"We have collected the boy's body fluid samples and sent them to the World Health Organisation's collaborating centre for tests."

The boy from Jajarkot district has been admitted to the Capital's Kanti Children's Hospital, the national referral centre for paediatric care. "The boy's condition is improving," said Mishra.

"It will be too early to say that typhoid vaccination is responsible for the neurological problems in the boy."

Officials at the ministry said that it will take around a month for the report to come from the WHO's collaborating centre.

"We suspect that the boy has Guillain Barre



POST FILE PHOTO

Doctors say some children are found to be suffering from muscle weakness after getting the vaccine.

Syndrome," said Mishra. Doctors say Guillain-Barre syndrome is a rare neurological disorder in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks part of its peripheral nervous system—the network of nerves located outside the brain and the spinal cord.

The problems can range from a very mild case with brief weakness to nearly devastating paralysis, leaving the person unable to breathe independently.

"Whether the condition is due to the adverse effects of the typhoid vaccine can be confirmed after receiving the report from the WHO lab," Mishra added.

The Health Ministry launched a nation-wide vaccination campaign against typhoid from April 8. Around seven million children between the ages of 15 months and 15 years were inoculated during the month-long campaign, according to officials.

The vaccine has been included in the regular immunisation list.

Typhoid fever, usually called typhoid, is a highly contagious disease caused by two types of bacteria—salmonella typhi and salmonella paratyphi—which spread through contaminated food or water. Studies have shown that the disease can be fatal in up to 10 percent of the reported cases.

Typhoid fever has been found throughout the world but the problem is acute in the areas with

a lack of safe drinking water and poor sanitation. Nepal has also recorded major typhoid outbreaks in the past, but very few cases have been reported in the last few years.

There are divided opinions among experts about typhoid vaccination in Nepal.

Some say mass vaccination against typhoid and the jobs' inclusion in the regular immunisation list is needed, as it lessens the morbidity and mortality rates.

Others believe authorities are launching the programme without having convincing scientific evidence on the prevalence of the disease.

Those not very keen on typhoid mass vaccination say the programme should be made more specific by launching it in the hotspots and the areas where the condition of drinking water and sanitation is very poor.

"Of the total typhoid patients in Nepal, over 50 percent have been found suffering from paratyphoid, against which this vaccine doesn't work," said Dr Shyam Raj Upreti, former director general at the Department of Health Services. "As the vaccine currently being used in Nepal is new, much is yet to be known about its side effects. Authorities should study its impacts, and side effects."

The Ministry of Health and Population said that data of the last five years show that around 450,000 people get sick with typhoid every year. And typhoid is among the top three diseases that are caused by contaminated food and water, and the fourth cause of hospitalisation in Nepal, according to the data of the last three years maintained by the Health Management Information System.

Experts also questioned the sustainability of the mass vaccination programme after the inclusion of the typhoid vaccine in the regular immunisation list, as aid agencies do not always provide the jobs. On top of that, typhoid is not like any other disease which can be eradicated, as it can occur in areas where sanitation and water conditions are poor.

Doctors the Post talked to say that without improving water and sanitation conditions, problems of other water-borne diseases cannot be addressed. To improve water and sanitation problems, long-term investments and multi-sectoral approaches are needed, they say.

Rebel candidates refuse to heed party orders to withdraw from race

Election Commission officials say it is against the code of conduct to pressure the candidates to pull out.

TIKA R PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, APRIL 28

On Wednesday, top leaders of the ruling five-party alliance issued a joint statement urging all rebel candidates from the alliance-member parties to withdraw from the local election race by that evening.

But the local leaders refused. Again on Thursday, Nepali Congress President and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba issued another appeal asking party mutineers to withdraw their candidacies by Friday evening, the deadline set by the Election Commission, and support the official candidates of the five-party alliance.

By expelling Karna Malla on Tuesday, Deuba had given the message to Congress leaders and cadres that he will not tolerate rebellion in the party. Malla resigned as a member of the Sudur Paschim provincial assembly on Thursday.

However, most of the rebels standing against the official candidates of the alliance have refused to withdraw from the electoral race.

And the major dispute is over candidacies for top positions of metropolitan cities—especially Bharatpur, where chairman of CPN (Maoist Centre), Pushpa Kamal Dahal, has fielded his daughter Renu Dahal for a second term as mayor; and Pokhara, where the alliance has allocated its mayoral position to the CPN (Unified Socialist).

In Bharatpur, former lawmaker Jagannath Poudel has refused the request of Prime Minister Deuba, Home Minister Bal Krishna Khand and Minister of State Umesh Shrestha. After Poudel refused his request on Tuesday to come to Kathmandu, the prime minister had sent home minister and state minister to Chitwan, but to no avail.

As the ministers are learnt to have pressured the rebel candidates to withdraw from the race, observers and even election officials have criticised the move.

After pressure from Maoist Centre chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal, a key member of the five-party electoral alliance, Congress chief Deuba has instructed his leaders to ensure that the party rebels including Poudel of Bharatpur withdraw their candidacies.

The Election Commission has set 10 am-5pm Friday for candidates to pull out of the race.

"We don't have any data on those withdrawing their nominations yet but the coalition is working hard to ensure that their rebel candidates withdraw," said Jagannath Khatiwada, spokesperson of the CPN (Unified Socialist).

"No one has made an announcement to withdraw yet but we believe many of them will abide by their parties' directives and pull out of the race by Friday evening."

Also the Election Commission officials have said they have taken notice of the activities of the ministers as it is against the election code-of-conduct to pressure any candidate to withdraw. "Any public position and public resources come with public responsibilities," said Surya Prasad Aryal, assistant spokesperson of the Election Commission, at the regular press briefing on Thursday. "Our code-of-conduct does not allow such activities. The Commission will take necessary decisions with regard to such activities."

Leaders of the alliance, however, are not hopeful that the rebel candidates would follow their party's orders.

In Pokhara Metropolitan City, Congress's Rishi Sapkota has projected himself as a candidate for mayor against the alliance's official candidate from the CPN (Unified Socialist). The party has fielded

Dhanaraj Acharya for mayor.

"Many party leaders have telephoned me and asked me to withdraw but I'm not going to change my decision," Sapkota told the Post over the phone from Pokhara.

Local Congress leaders said they have also been trying to persuade him to withdraw from the race but he has not heeded them.

"We are working hard to convince him to withdraw but there has been no progress," said Guru Baral, a Congress leader of Kaski district.

During the manifesto launching function on Thursday, local Congress leaders and cadres, who are unhappy with the alliance's selection of candidate from a party "that does not have a voter base", had tried to obstruct the function by chanting slogans outside the function venue.

However, the coalition leaders are working hard to convince Sapkota, a long-time Congress leader, to withdraw his nomination.



In Janakpur, Manoj Sah and Nirmal Chaudhari of Nepali Congress have rebelled and filed nominations for mayor and deputy mayor, respectively, of Janakpur Metropolitan City. Sah resigned as president of the party's Sub-metropolitan Committee. Congress leaders are working to persuade them to withdraw their candidacies.

After party chair Upendra Yadav fielded his son Amarendra Yadav as deputy mayor of Biratnagar metropolitan city, Umesh Yadav filed nomination for mayor resigning from the Janata Samajbadi Party. Umesh alleged that Upendra forged an electoral alliance with big parties just to ensure his son's win in Biratnagar.

According to Congress insiders, the party will take stern action against those who defy the party's instructions, so they hope most of the rebel candidates will withdraw their nominations by Friday evening. But they admitted that candidates like Poudel of Bharatpur and Sah of Janakpur may still not withdraw.

The Election Preparations and Monitoring Committee, led by senior Congress leader Ram Chandra Poudel, held a meeting on Thursday to discuss rebel candidates. "We have been working to ensure that the rebels withdraw their candidacies by Friday evening," said Dev Gurung, a senior Maoist Centre leader and member of the Poudel-led committee. "The parties concerned will take action if the rebel candidates ignore their parties' decisions."

Of the total 152,465 candidates filing their nominations at the Election Commission, 12,720 are independent.



WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

The road to the truth is difficult.
A path filled with division, diversion and danger.
A path filled with validation and temptation.
There are voices to be heard and stories to be told.
The road is long and the road is hard.
But this is the road we walk.

Without fear or favour.

THE KATHMANDU POST



KMG
KATHMANDU GAZETTE

EDITORIAL

Fewer women this time

Underrepresentation of women in politics has long-term drawbacks.

Just when you start to think that Nepal's political scene is getting better in terms of representation of the marginalised, it manifests its Achilles' heels to remind us that not everything is rosy. The local level elections after Nepal adopted federalism showed a grand promise when it came to women's representation in politics, with 41 percent of the elected representatives being females. As the elections to the second term of the local governments come near, it would be only natural to expect the number to rise. However, the opposite became the case, with only 37.84 percent of the total candidates this time being women, raising concerns that the number of women candidates who actually win might come down yet more.

Of the 152,465 candidates contesting 35,221 positions in 753 local units this time, only 57,705 are women. This is a gross underrepresentation of women in a country that boasts of a higher number of women than men in the national census. There is no re-stating the argument that a higher number of women at the local level potentially means a better redressal of women's issues locally and ultimately leads to the formation of a more equitable and just society. However, neither the Election Commission nor the political parties in the fray seem to have bothered to increase the number of female candidates in the upcoming local level elections.

Section 17 (4) of the Local Level Election Act 2017 mandates a political party to field a woman candidate for either the chief or the deputy chief at the local level. However, the provision is not applicable when a party fields a candidate for one of the two positions. For the parties looking for ways to curb the number of women representatives, the loophole came as a boon. Political parties have used this legal loophole to field a maximum number of male candidates, and this has decreased the number of women contesting the chief and deputy chief positions. The Election Commission, meanwhile, failed to fulfil its moral obligation to ensure maximum participation of women in the upcoming electoral contest.

Leading the race to curtail women's representation in politics is the ruling alliance of five parties, which came up with a plan to defeat KP Sharma Oli's CPN-UML, who, during his tenure, had gone out of his way to dismantle democratic institutions, including Parliament itself. In waging a joint struggle against Oli's undemocratic ways, the alliance seemed to respect the ideals of democratic politics. But alas, it has undone its earlier commitments by choosing to ignore the demand for increasing women's representation and fielding a greater number of male candidates in the upcoming local level elections.

Desperate to win the elections by hook or by crook, and depending on candidates who often have the money and muscle power to back them up, the parties have depended on male candidates in their pursuit of power. However, what the parties have failed to understand is that underrepresentation of women in politics has long-term drawbacks. Now that they have used the legal loopholes to increase the representation of male politicians, the onus is on the people to decide who best represents them. However, it is also necessary to break the structural barriers that restrict women's access to the political process in the first place.

Kin and clan networks will once again play a formidable role in determining victory margins.

AMISH RAJ MULMI



One of the signs of a democracy's good health is the regular occurrence of elections. By that measure, the fact that elections for local governments are being held as scheduled, despite persistent attempts by certain political groups to tamper with the dates, should be a cause for celebration, especially since the last local elections were held after a gap of nearly two decades (one can disregard the 2006 local elections under Gyanendra's regime). There will certainly be many—both domestically and internationally—who will consider the May 13 polls as a signpost of Nepal's successful post-conflict transition.

Such reasoning will be superficial and self-celebratory. The centralising tendencies of Nepal's political leaders has been openly displayed in the selection of candidates. Local issues have been pushed to the background. The federal system shows all signs of derailment, with individuals even rejecting provincial representation in favour of local government. The ruling coalition has tried its best to have the cake and eat it too, with the entire population getting a ringside view of the deal making that has been a hallmark of Nepali politics.

Several commentators and reports have already pointed out that whatever the results of the elections, representation of the marginalised and women will be significantly lower than in the previous election. The candidate choices have made several local leaders and party workers unhappy, as have the nepotistic choices. The election manifestos do not say anything that hasn't already been said. And if earlier voting patterns are to go by, one can be assured that kin and clan networks will once again play a formidable role in determining victory margins.

Candidates for whom?

Local elections the world over are usually held on local issues. While political parties usually have a say in the choice of candidates, local-level elections are considered to be a jumpstart to political careers. Candidates will mobilise at the community level, projecting themselves as best placed to solve neighbourhood issues. This should have been especially true in a place like Nepal, where social

Whose election is it anyway?



SHUTTERSTOCK

and community bonds are held to be paramount.

However, federalism has yet to evolve from the very centralising tendencies it was supposed to resolve. The Nepal Communist Party government's weakening of provincial autonomy meant few leaders had the incentive to view provincial positions as anything but a titular placeholder. In turn, the strengthening of local governments turned political incentives on its head, with leaders—both at the central and local levels—seeking to grab hold of resources available to local governments. While the recent discourse around view towers sought to categorise it as an issue of waste of public resources, the key to understanding why such white elephants became popular is the budgetary allocations to local governments.

It was thus no surprise to find party headquarters choosing candidates at the local level. The UML under Oli has shown to be far more nimble in its selections, as it is not beholden to any electoral partner or borne down by the weight of multiple leaders and their demands. It is clear who calls the shots within the UML, even if that involves choosing a candidate with a history of inappropriate behaviour towards women and sexual misconduct as Kathmandu mayor, or a candidate infamous for backing casteist practices in Pokhara.

On the other hand, the ruling coalition's electoral "alliance" operates under several assumptions: That the current coalition will continue to share power until November's scheduled general elections (which it may); that the Maoists and the UML (Socialists) will be willing to play second fiddle to Sher Bahadur Deuba's Congress in the seat-sharing arrangements in the forthcoming elections (local results may well change the dynamics); and, perhaps the greatest assumption, that Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal are firm on not joining hands with Oli's UML once again (going by communist histories, the contrary is always a possibility).

In all this, the greatest loser is the Nepali Congress under Deuba. Its only claim to fame in the contemporary political system is that it calls itself a party with "internal democracy". The rebellions witnessed in Pokhara and other units where it has ceded mayorship positions to its coalition partners tell us Deuba's commitment to the alliance may strengthen his position in Kathmandu, but will certainly hollow out the party elsewhere. Its insistence on nepotism, at a time when organisational rebuilding is the need of the hour, will do it no good either.

Once the preferred party of the upper middle classes and the natural alternative to the royalists, the Congress today is a shadow of its for-

mer self. Like its counterpart in India, it seems to be clueless about elections and organisation in the 21st century, and comes across as an evolutionary mistake to new voters. The irony is, neither of the Congresses seems to be learning any lessons from their chief rivals.

No incentive to change

Systems change when there is an incentive to do so. The current dispensation—and federal structures—do not provide any; if anything, the incentive is for the status quo to continue. Party workers upset at seat distribution have little choice beyond voicing their discontent. They can either face expulsion, or contest as independent candidates, who rarely get traction in the face of large-scale resource mobilisation by political parties (unless they have regional strongholds). Even once independent candidates, such as the UML's Kathmandu vice-mayor candidate—one who supposedly fit the bill of a young, modern and progressive leader—find party affiliations boosting their own political careers.

What is available to the Nepali voter now is the illusion of choice, making us believe our voting right gives us a say in the conduct of our political class. As a short-term outcome, the status quo works great for those who make the decisions. As for the future, who cares, for we are all dead in the long run.

Acting against workplace bullying

Organisations should find the root causes of bullying and ways to reduce it.

KARA NG & KAREN NIVEN



Imagine that you are at work, and you witness a colleague repeatedly bullying another colleague. What would you do? While many of us like to think that we would interfere to stop it, surveys show that most employees who witness bullying situations, known as bystanders, do not respond in ways that would help the victim.

Instead, up to 60 percent of employees in some places report doing nothing when witnessing bullying. But why is this the case and what consequences does it have? Our recent research gives important clues.

Workplace bullying occurs when an employee is subjected to repeated behaviours that harass, exclude, or negatively affect someone's work. This may range from obvious acts of physical violence to more ambiguous behaviour, such as mocking, insulting or socially excluding someone.

Bullying can seriously affect victims' mental and physical health, with extreme cases leading to self-harm or suicide. On average, workplace bullying affects around 15 percent of people, though some sectors, such as healthcare and higher education, report higher rates.

The impact of doing nothing

Workplace bullying has traditionally been seen as an issue just between the victim and bully—and dealt with accordingly. But bullying often occurs in front of others. Surveys show up to 83 percent of employees in some organisations report witnessing bullying at work.



SHUTTERSTOCK

This is troubling. Witnessing bullying may harm bystanders' own wellbeing, stimulating fear of how they might be treated in the future.

But how bystanders respond can either help or worsen the situation for victims. In our recent study, we asked employees at a large university to answer questions about their experiences of bullying, as a victim or a bystander.

We showed bullying victims suffered less damage when they had helpful bystanders who actively intervened. Conversely, victims in groups with bystanders who did nothing experienced greater detriments.

We suggest that this is because vic-

tims in these situations must not only deal with bullying, but also understanding why others did not respond, which is more added stress. It seems to us bystanders are key in helping create an anti-bullying workplace culture.

Researchers have proposed that bystander responses to workplace bullying can be categorised in two ways: active versus passive, and constructive versus destructive. The former describes how proactive the response is in addressing the bullying situation, while the latter shows whether the response is intended to improve or worsen the situation for targets.

This gives four types of bystanders. There are active-constructive bystanders, who proactively and directly seek to improve the bullying situation by, for example, reporting the bully or confronting them. There are also passive-destructive bystanders who don't directly "solve" the bullying, but listen to or sympathise with the target.

Passive-destructive bystanders, on the other hand, typically avoid the bullying and "do nothing". While this may sound benign to some, targets may view passivity as condoning the bully's actions. Finally, active destructive-bystanders actively worsen the bullying situation, for example, by

openly siding with the bully or setting up situations where the bully can pick on people. They effectively become secondary bullies.

The psychology behind bystanding

Why do so many people fail to intervene when witnessing something they know is wrong or harmful? The most famous theory to explain the phenomenon, known as the bystander effect, was inspired by the murder of Kitty Genovese. Kitty was a young woman in 1960s New York who was stabbed to death outside her apartment building while 38 residents watched from their windows. Initially, it was reported that not a single person intervened or called the police, showing passive-destructive responses—though this story and the theory itself have been challenged.

That said, the effect seems to hold in more ambiguous situations, such as bullying, that don't amount to a medical emergency. The bystander effect explains their actions by proposing that individuals are less likely to help when there are other people present. This makes us feel less personally responsible to act, especially in ambiguous situations.

In another recent paper, we tried to delve deeper into the psychological processes underlying bystander behaviour. Bullying is often subjective, with people interpreting the same situation differently. So, we were interested in understanding what interpretations lead to active-constructive responses, which are the most helpful.

For active-constructive responses to occur, employees must perceive that the incident is severe enough to warrant intervention. This can be ambiguous—is that offhand remark just a joke or something more?

Next, employees must perceive that the victim does not deserve what is happening to them. Work relationships are complex and in certain cases, such as when group performance is key, employees may not approve of others making mistakes or inconveniencing them and may perceive mistreatment as justified.

Finally, employees must perceive that they are able to intervene effec-

tively. There are many cases where employees wish to act but don't feel able to, such as if the bully is a supervisor, or if previous attempts to intervene have failed.

Taking action

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to encourage bystander intervention, there are things you can try to help you better understand a target's situation and, hopefully, become an active constructive bystander. Research suggests that perspective taking, or trying to see things through another point of view, can be beneficial.

Experiments have shown that participants who are asked to take a perpetrator's perspective are more likely to agree that misconduct has taken place, while participants who are asked to take the victim's perspective don't.

Organisations have a key part to play in stopping bullying and, ideally, should have anti-bullying policies that are easily accessible by employees. These policies should clearly define what bullying is and have transparent, confidential processes for reporting incidents that are either directly experienced or witnessed.

Policies and anti-bullying initiatives should have buy-in from senior management. This would ultimately help employees feel safe in speaking out.

Importantly, organisations should try to find the root causes of bullying and if there is anything they can change to reduce it. For example, high workload and poor communication may contribute to a bullying culture.

Organisations whose members can reflect on problem areas can then take appropriate actions to tackle them. Not only could this reduce bullying, but it can also improve overall workplace wellbeing.

Ng is Presidential Fellow in Organisational Psychology at the University of Manchester. Niven is Professor of Organisational Psychology at the University of Sheffield.

— The Conversation

FOREX

US Dollar	122.68
Euro	129.00
Pound Sterling	153.39
Japanese Yen (10)	9.41
Chinese Yuan	18.56
Qatari Riyal	33.63
Australian Dollar	87.17
Malaysian Ringgit	28.12
Saudi Arab Riyal	32.71

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

Indicators look bad but statistics bureau paints glowing picture of Nepali economy

>> Continued from page 1

"If everything remains the same, the economic performance of all economic sectors will be the same as in a normal year."

Bhandari says the estimate is also based on the assumption that the status of the Covid-19 pandemic will not change in the next three months and there will be no shocks.

Computed on the basis of this growth rate, Nepal's gross domestic product is estimated to reach Rs4.85 trillion at the end of the fiscal year in mid-July.

Ram Kumar Phuyal, member of the National Planning Commission, says the country is obviously facing an external shock and there is pressure, but the economy is not in a bad shape.

A significant chunk of bank credit has gone to pay for imports, leaving the country short of cash to finance economic activities to support an economy devastated by Covid-19, according to Nepal Rastra Bank.

The central bank said that alongside increasing import loans, remittances also dropped creating challenges to external sector stability.

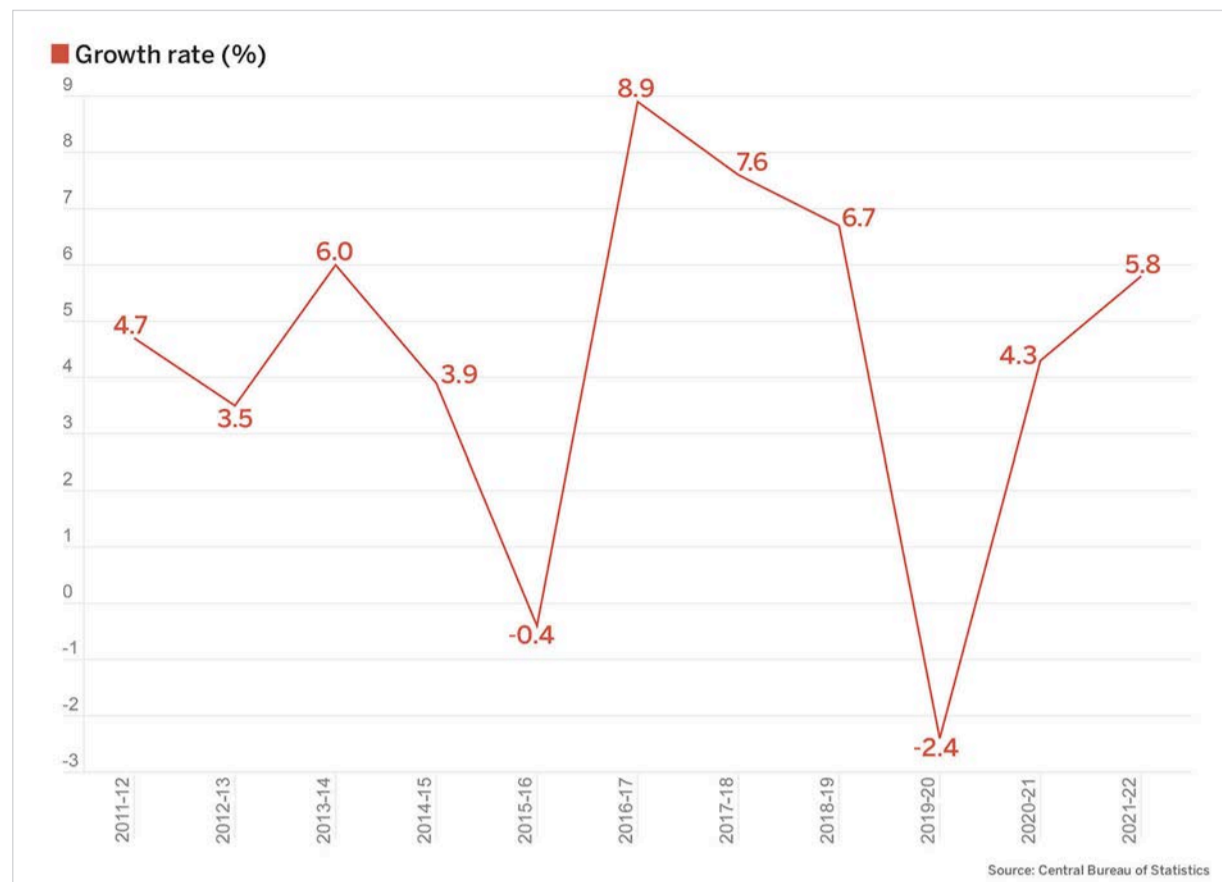
The external sector of the economy covers sectors including export and import, remittance, foreign direct investment and foreign aid.

"The problems arising in the external sector are also creating difficulties for the domestic sector of the economy," said Phuyal.

The government has formally banned imports of at least 10 goods, which it considers luxury or non-essential, in a bid to stop the country's foreign exchange reserves from going down further.

The ban went into effect on Tuesday and will last until the end of the fiscal year in mid-July. A notice to this effect was published in the Nepal Gazette.

The Central Bureau of Statistics has estimated that the per capita gross national income or per capita income may rise to \$1,381 from



\$1,196 in the last fiscal year.

The per capita GDP or the income of a person may reach \$1,372, up from \$1,191 in the last fiscal year. The per capita income means an average annual income of a person.

Economists say that the slowdown is especially pronounced in rural areas, which suffered from unseasonal October rains.

Farmers across the country were upbeat about reaping their first bumper harvest because the monsoon rains had been good, and chemical fertiliser was available during the planting season. But heavy downpours and fierce

winds in October, when the paddy in the fields had ripened, flattened their standing crops.

Adding to the farmers' woes, state-owned Food Management and Trading Company and traders refused to buy their paddy crops pointing to quality issues.

Farmer Ram Kamal Chaudhary from Marchbari Rural Municipality in Lumbini said his income was slashed because of the flood.

Crop losses due to the flood may have caused imports to soar. The statistical body has estimated that imports will reach Rs2 trillion by the

end of the fiscal year despite government measures to curb them.

"That will fuel inflation and squeeze the economy further," said Acharya. But officials at the statistical body say that increased imports are good for the economy too.

According to the report, the final consumption expenditure or money spent by Nepalis on consumption will reach Rs4.41 trillion, which is 90.7 percent of the total GDP.

"That will enable people to save 9.3 percent of their income, which is so far good," said Bhandari, the director of the Central Bureau of Statistics.

Indian heat wave disrupts industrial activity as power demand soars

REUTERS
NEW DELHI/BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 28

India's northwestern Rajasthan state scheduled four hours of power cuts for factories, making it at least the third state to disrupt industrial activity to manage surging power demand amid an intense heat wave.

Extreme heat continued to scorch large swathes of south Asia this week offering no reprieve after the hottest March on record in India, and triggering comments from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on India getting too hot too early.

India's western Gujarat state and Andhra Pradesh restricted industrial activity this month as air conditioning demand peaked and economic activity picked up following an end to coronavirus-related restrictions.

The desert state of Rajasthan also imposed four-hour power cuts for rural regions, exposing thousands of families in the desert state to extreme temperatures, with peak summer heat still to come before cooling monsoon rains arrive in June.

Maximum power demand in India surged to a record high on Tuesday, and is seen rising by as much as a tenth next month. The India Meteorological Department has warned of worse heatwave conditions in the coming days.

The unprecedented heat puts millions of blue-collar workers, including construction and farm labourers and those working on factory shop floors, at great risk. Sunstrokes have claimed thousands of Indian lives in the past.

Industrial disruption and widespread power cuts are also bad news for corporate India, as economic activity has just started to pick up after months of stagnation amid coronavirus lockdowns.

A rapid rise in power demand has also left India scrambling for coal, the dominant fuel used in electricity generation.

BULLION PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 98,000
Silver	Rs 1,320

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

GASOLINE WATCH

SERVO 4T
ENGINE OILS
100% PERFORMANCE. EVERYTIME.

Petrol (Per Litre)	Rs 160.00/-
Diesel (Per Litre)	Rs 143.00/-
Kerosene (Per Litre)	Rs 143.00/-
LPG (Per cylinder)	Rs 1600/-

Source: Nepal Oil Corporation

BRIEFING

Poland says countries paying for Russian gas in roubles should be penalised

WARSAW: The European Union should penalise countries that use roubles to pay for Russian gas, Poland's climate minister said, following Moscow's decision to cut off supplies to Poland and Bulgaria over their refusal to do so. EU member states appear split on how they can keep paying for gas without breaching European sanctions imposed over Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine. Many nations in Europe remain heavily reliant on Russian energy imports. Poland, one of the EU's staunchest proponents of punitive sanctions against Moscow, says the bloc should ban purchases of Russian gas altogether. (REUTERS)

Huawei's sales down 14 percent as US sanctions remain

SINGAPORE: Chinese telecoms equipment and smartphone maker Huawei's sales fell 14 percent in January-March from a year earlier as it pumped money into research and development while grappling with US sanctions, according to figures released by the company on Thursday. Huawei Technologies said its revenue was 131 billion yuan (\$19.8 billion) in the first quarter of 2022, compared to 152.2 billion yuan a year earlier. (AP)

India's antitrust raids target sellers on Amazon, Walmart's Flipkart, sources say

NEW DELHI: India's antitrust body launched raids early on Thursday against two top domestic sellers of online retail giant Amazon.com Inc, and some on Walmart's Flipkart, following accusations of competition law violations, sources told Reuters. Indian retailers, key supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have long contended that Amazon and Flipkart's platforms benefit a few big sellers, via predatory pricing, though the companies say they comply with all Indian laws. (REUTERS)

Sweden's central bank raises interest rate to hit inflation

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's central bank on Thursday raised a key interest rate from zero to 0.25 percent, citing the highest inflation level since the 1990s. Riksbanken said there had been "unusually large fluctuations in inflation in Sweden" and the rise last year "was largely due to rapid increases in energy prices." (AP)

Report: Germany top buyer of Russian energy since war began

Germany has faced strong criticism for its reliance on Russian fossil fuels.

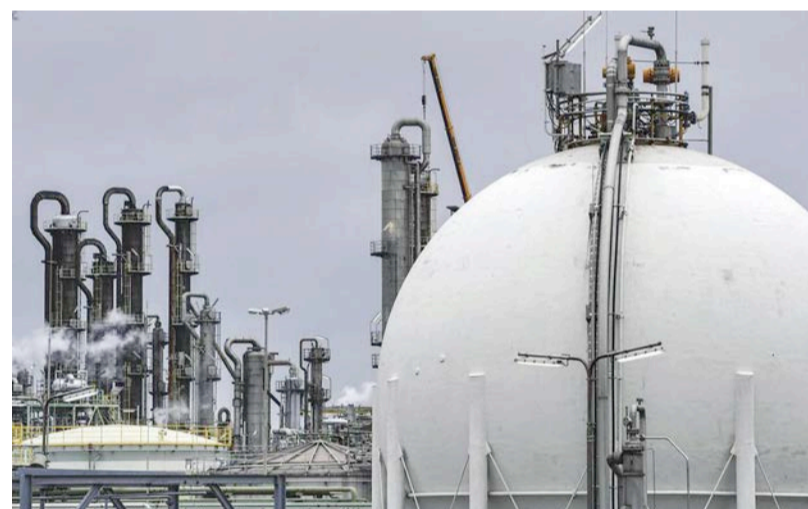
ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, APRIL 28

Germany was the biggest buyer of Russian energy during the first two months of the war in Ukraine, an independent research group said on Thursday.

A study published by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air calculates that Russia has earned 63 billion euros (\$66.5 billion) from fossil fuel exports since February 24, the date Russian troops attacked Ukraine.

Using data on ship movements, real-time tracking of gas flows through pipelines and estimates based on historical monthly trade, the researchers reckoned Germany alone paid Russia about 9.1 billion euros for fossil fuel deliveries—mostly natural gas—in the first two months of the war.

Claudia Kemfert, a senior energy expert at the German Institute for Economic Research who was not involved in the study, said the figures were plausible given the recent sharp increase in prices for fossil fuels. Last year, Germany paid about 100 billion euros in total for imports of oil, coal



A gas tank is seen at a chemical plant in Oberhausen, Germany.

and gas—a quarter of which went to Russia, she said.

The German government said it couldn't comment on estimates and declined to provide any figures of its own, saying these would need to come

from companies that procure the energy supplies. Germany has faced strong criticism for its reliance on Russian fossil fuels despite warnings from allies that this could endanger its own and European security.

China to cut coal import tariffs to zero from May 1

Beijing strives to ensure energy security amid soaring global prices and supply disruption concerns.

REUTERS
BEIJING, APRIL 28

China will cut import tariffs for all types of coal to zero from May 1, 2022, until March 31, 2023, the finance ministry said on Thursday, as Beijing strives to ensure energy security amid soaring global prices and supply disruption concerns.

Top Chinese officials, including President Xi Jinping, have repeatedly addressed the vital role of coal in China's energy mix despite climate pledges to gradually reduce coal use and to bring the country's carbon emissions to a peak by 2030. Import tariffs for anthracite and coking coal, mainly used in steelmaking, will be cut to zero from the current 3 percent, and rates for other kinds of coal will be down from 3-6 percent.

China imported 323.33 million tonnes of coal in 2021, about 8 percent of its total coal consumption.

However, the removal of coal import tariffs is seen having little impact on China's coal purchases in 2022, as domestic output holds at record levels

while sea-borne prices have surged to historically high. Some traders said the move could benefit its imports from Russia.

Australian thermal coal futures linked to benchmark Newcastle prices are hovering around \$326 a tonne after touching as high as \$440 a tonne in early March.

China's spot coal prices are around 1,200 yuan (\$181.61) a tonne, with term-contract prices capped by the government at 770 yuan.

"The tariff cuts will make no difference to Indonesian coal imports, as the tariff rates have been at zero, and no impacts on Australian coal due to imports ban," said a Beijing-based coal trader.

"Then we can only make a guess that it will benefit coal imports from Russia, which is at 6 percent for thermal coal."

China's imports of Russian coal fell 30 percent in March from a year earlier but some Chinese traders in recent weeks have begun asking for cheap Russian cargoes following a planned embargo from the European Union.

EXPLAINED

What Twitter could do as privately held company

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, APRIL 28

If Elon Musk and Twitter get their way, the company will soon be privately held and under his control.

The most obvious immediate change would likely be Twitter's stock being taken off the New York Stock Exchange. But the company would also likely get freed from having to give regular updates about its business to US regulators and to Wall Street.

One important change for Twitter users is that the company would likely have more freedom to make big or unpopular changes. That's because it wouldn't have to worry about potential blowback from Wall Street.

Here's a look at what it means for a company to go private.

What will happen to its stock?

If the merger closes as planned, Twitter investors would get \$54.20 in cash for each share they own. Those shares would then be cancelled and cease to exist.

What difference does that make?

Twitter would likely no longer have to

file documents with US regulators every three months to show how much money it's making. It also likely wouldn't have to announce changes to its strategy or operations that are big enough to materially change its fortunes. Now, it risks getting sued if it doesn't make such disclosures.

"The biggest distinction is that Musk as an owner would be beholden to his own desires or to his and whatever remaining shareholders are still around, rather than to the wide investor base that it has now," said Eric Talley, a law professor at Columbia University.

Who would be in charge?

The company would still have a board of directors, Talley said. It would also need to still follow state-level corporate governance rules, as well as all applicable tax, environmental and other laws.

What are the benefits of being privately held?

Going private removes the possibility of Twitter having to answer to angry shareholders if it makes big changes to its business. Musk has already floated the idea of



The Twitter app icon is seen on a phone.

depending less on advertising, which is Twitter's main way of making money.

Investors often send a stock price lower if they think a company's decision is wrong, or at least being made at the wrong time. And the fiduciary duty of the board of directors for a publicly traded company is to generate a return for its investors.

A privately held company, meanwhile, doesn't need to worry about short-term drops for its stock price.

It can also jump more wholeheartedly into plans, say by hiring slews of new workers to transform it, without having to explain the jump in expenses to shareholders in its

next quarterly report.

Both private and public companies "can do whatever they want, but there will be less blowback for privately held companies because a shareholder can't complain because there are no other shareholders," said Harry Kraemer, a former CEO and chairman of Baxter International who is now a professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management.

How much potential blowback is there, really?

There's a lot more scrutiny on publicly held companies by not only shareholders and regulators but also by the media, said Kraemer, who currently sits on boards of both publicly held and privately held companies. And the pressure to hit performance targets every three months is indeed high, he said.

"I often tease people who say I was at Baxter for 23 years," Kraemer said. "I tell them I was at Baxter for 92 quarters. And every quarter was the most critical of my life, until the next quarter started."

Getting away from short-termism is a good thing, right?

It does allow companies more freedom to make bold changes they believe in. But it also removes a source of accountability, said Columbia's Talley. "If you're running the thing in a wasteful or slothful way, you're going to get called on it," he said.

What does a company lose by going private?

A potentially quick way to raise cash. Companies that are publicly traded can sell more shares of their stock if they need to raise cash in a pinch.

Invitation for Bids
The Noble Compassionate Volunteers (NCV) invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the Procurement of
1. Health and Hygiene Items
2. Health Care Waste Management items.
Detail information can be viewed on the News and Event section of NCV's official website (www.ncvnepal.org) or via phone call at:
01-4442022

WORLD



People cool off at a swimming pool during a hot summer day in Lahore on Thursday.

Israel halts for annual Holocaust day

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEL AVIV, APRIL 28

Sirens blared across Israel early Thursday as the country came to a standstill in an annual ritual honouring the 6 million Jews murdered during the Holocaust.

People halted where they were walking, and drivers stopped their cars to get out of the vehicles as people bowed their heads in memory of the victims of the Nazi genocide. Ceremonies were planned throughout the day at Israel's national Holocaust memorial, parliament and elsewhere.

Israel was founded in 1948 as a sanctuary for Jews in the wake of the Holocaust. About 165,000 survivors live in Israel, a dwindling population that is widely honoured but struggling with poverty.

Ushering in Holocaust memorial day at Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett late Wednesday called on the world to stop comparing the Holocaust to other events in history. He spoke after the presidents of both Ukraine and Russia drew parallels between their ongoing war and the genocide during World War II.

"As the years go by, there is more and more discourse in the world that compares other difficult events to the Holocaust. But no," he said.

"No event in history, cruel as it may have been, is comparable to the extermination of Europe's Jews by the

Nazis and their collaborators."

He also warned the country against allowing its deep differences to tear the nation apart. The speech, coming on one of Israel's most solemn days of the year, came in a deeply personal context as well.

On Tuesday, his family received a letter with a live bullet and a death threat. Israeli authorities tightened security around the premier and his family and were investigating.

Israel was founded in 1948 as a sanctuary for Jews in the wake of the Holocaust.

"My brothers and sisters, we cannot, we simply cannot allow the same dangerous gene of factionalism to dismember Israel from within," Bennett said.

Israel makes great effort to memorialise the victims of the Holocaust and make heroes of those who survived. Restaurants and places of entertainment remain closed on Holocaust memorial day, radios play sombre music and TV stations devote their programming to documentaries and other Holocaust-related material.

BRIEFING

Africa seeing uptick in Covid cases driven by South Africa

NAIROBI: Africa is seeing an uptick in Covid-19 cases largely driven by a doubling in cases reported in South Africa, the World Health Organisation said on Thursday. "This week new Covid-19 cases and deaths on the continent increased for the first time after a decline of more than two months for cases and one month for deaths," Benido Impouma, director for communicable and non-communicable diseases at the WHO's Africa office told an online news conference. "This uptick is largely associated with the increasing number of cases reported from South Africa as the country enters its winter season when respiratory illnesses become more prevalent," Impouma added.

Some 1,150 corpses recovered in Ukraine's Kyiv region since war began, police say

KYIV: The bodies of 1,150 civilians have been recovered in Ukraine's Kyiv region since Russia's invasion and 50-70 percent of them have bullet wounds from small arms, Kyiv police said on Thursday. Kyiv regional police chief Andriy Nebytov said in a video posted on Twitter that most of the bodies had been found in the town of Bucha, where hundreds of corpses have been discovered since Russian forces withdrew. Ukraine says the civilians found dead in Bucha were killed by Russian forces during their occupation of the area.

Another Malaysian to be hanged in Singapore wins last-minute reprieve

SINGAPORE: A second Malaysian man due to be hanged in Singapore this week for drug trafficking won a last-minute reprieve on Thursday from the top court. Datchinamurthy Kataiah, 36, was scheduled to be hanged Friday, just two days after the execution of a Malaysian man that sparked an international outcry because he was believed to be mentally disabled. Lawyer M Ravi, who earlier represented Datchinamurthy, said the Court of Appeal allowed a stay of execution pending a legal challenge on May 20.

US says Russia plans fake independence votes in seized Ukraine territory

Putin is now seeking to consolidate Russia's control of occupied territory, acting as a 'cancerous growth' inside Ukraine.

REUTERS
KYIV, APRIL 28

The United States accused Russia on Thursday of planning to stage fake independence votes to justify its conquest of territory in Ukraine, as Russian forces stepped up their assault on the east.

More than two months into an invasion that has flattened cities but failed to capture the capital Kyiv, Russia has mounted a push to seize two eastern provinces in a battle the West views as a decisive turning point in the war.

Although Russian troops were pushed out of northern Ukraine last month, they are heavily entrenched in the east, and also still hold a swathe of the south that they seized in March.

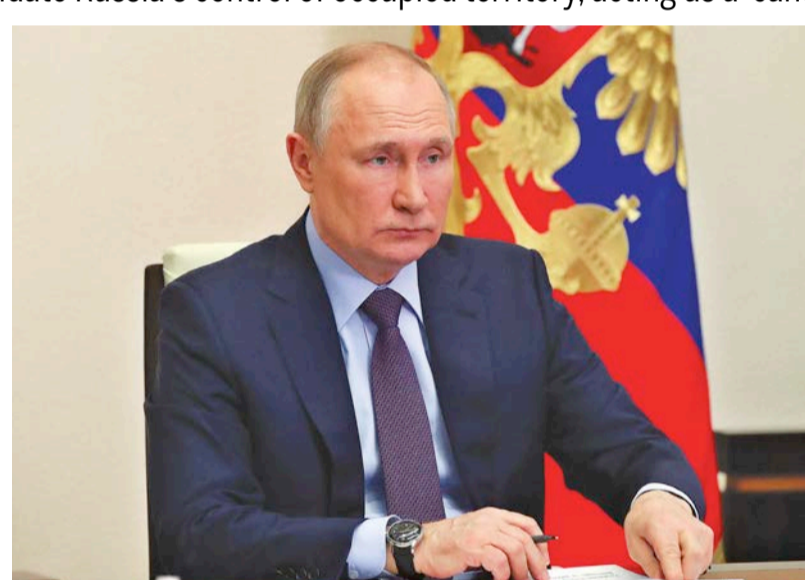
The US mission to the OSCE security body said the Kremlin might attempt "sham referenda" in southern and eastern areas it had captured since the February 24 invasion, using "a well-worn playbook that steals from history's darkest chapters."

"These falsified, illegitimate referenda will undoubtedly be accompanied by a wave of abuses against those who seek to oppose or undermine Moscow's plans," it said. "The international community must make clear that any such referendum will never be recognised as legitimate."

Ukraine said there were explosions overnight in the southern city of Kherson, the only regional capital Russia has captured so far since the invasion. Russian troops there had used tear gas and stun grenades on Wednesday to suppress pro-Ukrainian crowds, and were now shelling the entire surrounding region and attacking towards Mykolaiv and Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine said.

Russian state media quoted an official from a self-styled pro-Russian "military-civilian commission" in Kherson on Thursday as saying the area would start using Russia's rouble currency from May 1.

Ukraine's general staff said Russia was also stepping up its main military assault in the east, where Moscow now aims to seize all of two provinces partially controlled by separatists since 2014.



Russia's President Vladimir Putin at a residence outside Moscow, Russia.

"The enemy is increasing the pace of the offensive operation. The Russian occupiers are exerting intense fire in almost all directions," it said.

It identified Russia's main attack as near the towns of Slobozhanske and Donetsk, along a strategic frontline highway linking Ukraine's second-largest city Kharkiv with the Russian-occupied city of Izyum. The Kharkiv regional governor said Russian forces were intensifying attacks from Izyum, but Ukrainian troops were holding their ground.

Western countries have ramped up weapons deliveries to Ukraine in recent days as the fighting in the east has intensified. More than 40 countries met this week at a US air base in Germany and pledged to send heavy arms such as artillery for what is expected to be a vast battle of opposing armies along a heavily fortified front line.

Washington now says it hopes Ukrainian forces can not only repel Russia's assault on the east, but also weaken its military so that it can no longer threaten neighbours. Russia says that amounts to NATO waging

"proxy war" against it, and has made a number of threats this week of unspecified retaliation.

"If someone intends to intervene in the ongoing events from the outside, and create strategic threats for Russia that are unacceptable to us, they should know that our retaliatory strikes will be lightning-fast," President Vladimir Putin told lawmakers in St Petersburg on Wednesday.

"We have all the tools for this, things no one else can boast of having now. And we will not boast, we will use them if necessary. And I want everyone to know that."

British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said Putin's remarks suggesting he would escalate the conflict were a sign of "desperation". "Having failed in nearly all his objectives" Putin was now seeking to consolidate Russia's control of occupied territory, acting as a "cancerous growth" inside Ukraine, Wallace said.

When Russian forces were pushed away from Kyiv last month, they left behind destroyed suburbs strewn with the bodies of hundreds of slain civilians in what Western countries call

clear evidence of war crimes. Moscow denies targeting civilians and says, without evidence, that such signs of suspected atrocities are fake.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres struck an emotional note during a visit to the formerly Russian-occupied Kyiv suburbs of Borodyanka and Bucha.

"I imagine my family in one of those homes, now destroyed and black. I see my granddaughters running away in panic, part of the family eventually killed," Guterres told reporters in Borodyanka, surrounded by scorched, windowless apartment blocks.

"Innocent civilians were living in these buildings, they were paying the highest price for a war which they have not contributed to at all."

Guterres met Putin in Moscow on Wednesday on a failed peace mission. Russia rebuffed the UN chief's offer to help evacuate Mariupol, the besieged port that has been scene of the war's bloodiest fighting and worst humanitarian catastrophe.

Ukrainian troops are still holed up in a giant steel works in Mariupol. Putin claimed victory in the city last week, ordering the steel works blockaded. Kyiv says 100,000 civilians are still trapped in the city's ruins.

"As long as we're here and holding the defence... the city is not theirs," Captain Sviatoslav Palamar, deputy commander of Ukraine's Azov Regiment, told Reuters in video link from an undisclosed location beneath the huge factory.

"The tactic [now] is like a medieval siege. We're encircled, they are no longer throwing lots of forces to break our defensive line. They're conducting air strikes."

More than 5 million refugees have fled abroad since Russia launched its "special military operation" in Ukraine on February 24. Moscow says its aim is to disarm its neighbour and defeat nationalists, which the West calls a bogus pretext for a war of aggression.

US President Joe Biden is expected to deliver remarks on Thursday in support of Ukrainians, the White House said.

Defectors fly leaflets with South Korea's Yoon photos into the North

REUTERS
SEOUL, APRIL 28

A group run by North Korean defectors working to promote human rights in the isolated country said it has sent propaganda leaflets including photos of incoming South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and aid parcels into the North.

North Korean defectors and activists in South Korea had for decades flown balloons carrying leaflets and humanitarian aid across the heavily fortified border.

Their campaigns were banned by the outgoing Moon Jae-in government which sought to improve inter-Korean ties, but an official whom Yoon nominated to oversee North Korea affairs has said he opposed that ban.

Fighters for a Free North Korea, a defector group leading the movement, said it launched 20 balloons carrying some 1 million propaganda flyers on Monday and Tuesday.

Images released by the group's head, Park Sang-hak, showed one leaflet consisting of a photo of Yoon and a note "Great country where a prosecutor became the dear leader, the Republic of Korea's 12th president Yoon Suk-yeol," using South Korea's official name.

Other images showed parcels containing the leaflets and aid including food wrapped with South Korean newspapers, and Park holding a balloon carrying those packages at night from an unspecified location.

"Breaking the hereditary dictatorship of Kim Jong Un, who revealed his ambition for a preemptive nuclear missile attack, is a true mission and conscience of free men," the group said in a statement, vowing to continue sending leaflets.

Moon's government barred the campaigns in 2020, citing safety concerns of residents on the border, but activists called the ban an attempt to white-wash Pyongyang and silence critics amid efforts to improve cross-border ties.

Yoon is set to take office on May 10 and expected to take a harder line with the North.

Beijing classes go online

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, APRIL 28

Beijing shifted more classes online on Thursday in a further tightening of Covid-19 restrictions, as China's capital seeks to prevent a wider outbreak.

The city of 21 million has already ordered three rounds of mass testing this week for the virus, with the third due to take place on Friday, and closed down some communities where cases were found.

On Thursday, it moved most students in the sprawling Chaoyang district to online learning, with exceptions for middle and high school students who are preparing to take crucial exams that could determine their academic futures.

Beijing announced 50 new cases on Thursday, two of them asymptomatic, bringing its total in the latest wave of infections to around 150. Students

make up more than 30 percent of total cases, with clusters linked to six schools and two kindergartens in Chaoyang.

At least three other districts had already moved students online, and officials on Thursday announced rules requiring residents to remain inside two housing compounds in Chaoyang where cases have been detected.

Beijing has moved more swiftly than many Chinese cities to impose restrictions while case numbers remain low and the scale of the outbreak is still manageable.

The goal is to avoid the sort of sweeping measures imposed on Shanghai, where the highly transmissible Omicron variant has torn through the city of 25 million. Restrictions confining many Shanghai residents to their homes are now in their fourth week and all schools have been online since last month.

Sri Lanka teachers, bank workers join mass walkout

REUTERS
COLOMBO, APRIL 28

Many schools in Colombo were shut and several train stations deserted on Thursday as teachers and train drivers joined mass walkouts demanding President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's government quit over Sri Lanka's worst financial crisis in decades.

Hundreds of employees from Sri Lankan state-run banks, most wearing black and carrying black flags, also joined other bank trade unions in a protest march to the president's office as thousands of people took to the streets around the country.

The pandemic, rising oil prices, populist tax cuts and rapidly dwindling foreign currency reserves have left Sri Lanka without enough dollars to pay for vital imports of fuel, food and medicine.

Sometimes violent street demon-



Trade unions protest during a nationwide strike in front of the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Thursday.

strations have erupted this month as shortages and power cuts became acute.

"This government has ruined our country. Costs are increasing every day, businesses are closing, and people

have no way to live. There is no fuel, when we go home there is no electricity and no cooking gas to make meals," said Samantha Ekanayake, 34 who works as a teller at a state-run bank.

"We are tired of broken promises." The country's trade union leaders have threatened an ongoing strike from May 6 if the president and the government do not resign.

Rajapaksa this week reiterated his willingness to form an interim government with a new prime minister and cabinet.

However, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is his elder brother, has declined to step down and insisted he continues to have a majority in the 225-member parliament.

Meanwhile, two Opposition parties, the Samagi Jana Balawegaya and the Tamil National Alliance have started the process to bring no-confidence motions against the president and prime minister in parliament.

Footballers question Almutairi's conduct

The national team members had left the training after the head coach allegedly expelled them from the closed camp.



The agitating footballers of the Nepal national team have accused the coach of torturing them mentally and even trying to control them off the field, including during their club duty.

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, APRIL 28

Ten members of the national football squad who left the team's camp on Tuesday evening have urged All Nepal Football Association to probe head coach Abdullah Almutairi's behaviour, alleging him of "imposing dictatorship" in the camp.

Senior players of the squad including caretaker captain Rohit Chand, Sujal Shrestha, Bishal Shrestha, Bishal Rai, Anjan Bista, Ananta Tamang, Tej Tamang, Suman Lama, Dinesh Rajbanshi and Bimal Gharti Magar had left the closed camp after coach Almutairi allegedly asked them to leave, following differences over accommodation.

The national team had started the closed camp for the third and final rounds of the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers on Monday while the training camp had started from April 15.

The players blamed the coach of torturing them mentally and even trying to control them off the field,

including during their club duty.

At a press conference coordinated by the Football Players' Association, the players said that their motive was to clarify the incident that took place at the camp because media reports tagged them as "rebels" and "deserters".

ANFA General Secretary Indraman Tuladhar said the incident was "disappointing" and the body would hold a discussion with the dissatisfied players.

"We have talked to them informally and they have informed us that they would hold discussion with us only after the press conference," Tuladhar said. "But it is up to the coach to decide who remains in the team because he is the person entrusted with responsibility of the whole team. But if the players were treated unfairly we will not accept it."

The players had called the press conference late on Thursday.

Goalkeeper of the Nepal team, Bishal Shrestha, said that the coach had informed the players on Sunday

that the closed camp would begin from Monday. "Rohit (Chand) then asked the coach if the team would stay at a hotel or ANFA hostel and the coach had replied they would stay at the hostel," Shrestha told the Post.

"Rohit told the coach that the hostel lacked basic facilities and it was not a good idea to stay there as per his discussion with the teammates. Then the coach grew aggressive and asked the players to raise their hands if they didn't want to stay at the hostel. But none except Rohit raised hand. He then said if all of them were not willing to stay at the hostel, he could call another set of 23 players in the team."

Shrestha further said that the coach alleged Rohit of making a "negative impact" on the team, following which Rohit left the team after completing his warm-up.

"The coach asked if we were disappointed with Sunday's incident," Shrestha went on, "and when all replied yes, he said he doesn't care about it and he could bring another set

of 23 players. We did not get a clear answer about the Rohit incident after Tuesday's training. In a discussion, five senior players among us said that Rohit's demand was valid and he made such a demand upon our request."

Quickly thereafter, the coach left the room saying there won't be a training camp for a week and he would call the other 23 players.

Defender Tamang said that the team members want a probe into the incident and punishment to the guilty. "Despite repeated discussions, the coach told us to leave the camp. And so we left it," said Tamang.

Chand said that with all that has transpired over the week, it is now uncomfortable to play under Almutairi.

"Because he has lost trust in us and we have in him," he said. "Our demand is not that he calls us again in the camp. He has already called 14 new players as replacements. But we wanted to clarify the issue as there were reports that we were truant players."

Liverpool expose flaws of Emery's Villarreal

Klopp's Reds defeat the Spanish side 2-0 in the Champions League semi-final first leg match at Anfield.

REUTERS
LIVERPOOL, APRIL 28

There is no dispute that Villarreal deserve their place in the semi-final of the Champions League but Wednesday's 2-0 defeat at Anfield against Liverpool exposed their limitations and limited options when faced with key injuries.

Spanish coach Unai Emery has rightly won plaudits for the way he has turned a collection of relatively modest and low-cost players into a last-four team in Europe's top club competition.

By knocking out Juventus and Bayern Munich in the previous rounds, Emery showed that his side's smart defending and effective counter-attacking could cause problems for clubs with far more illustrious histories.

The Villarreal coach was described by Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp before this tie as the 'King of the Cups' and he does indeed have a remarkable record in knockout competition.

Emery won the Europa League three times with Sevilla and triumphed in the same competition with Villarreal last season, beating Manchester United in the final. He won four domestic cups with Paris St Germain.

While the Spaniard's time in charge at Arsenal was a disappointment, he still managed to take the London club to the Europa League final in 2019.

Plenty of teams in Spain and Europe can attest to how frustrating it can be to play against a defence so expertly marshalled by Pau Torres with a deep three-man midfield providing a line of protection to the back four.

For the opening 45 minutes at Anfield, there were indications that the approach might work but what was missing was the counter-attacking threat that is such a vital part of the game plan.

Without key striker Gerard Moreno to partner him, Dutch forward Arnaut Danjuma was less of a danger than he has shown with his six goals in the competition this season.

Moreno's influence is such that Villarreal are unbeaten in this year's Champions League when he is on the field. He was missing for both defeats against Manchester United in the group stage.

Key injuries

Another key injury absence was winger Yeremi Pino, the pacy 19-year-old, who has been so impressive this season.

Samuel Chukwueze was moved into a more central role than he is accustomed to and never quite clicked with



Jordan Henderson and Sadio Mane (pictured) scored to help Liverpool put one foot in the Champions League final.

Danjuma against a rock-solid Liverpool defensive pairing of Virgil van Dijk and Ibrahima Konate.

Effective counter-attacks might have caused Liverpool to think twice about pushing their full-backs Andy Robertson and Trent Alexander-Arnold so far forward but there was no sign of caution or fear from the pair.

After the break, Liverpool clearly upped the tempo, their midfield pushing higher and the Spanish resistance finally, with some inevitability, crumbled.

"We wanted to use direct, vertical football to relieve the pressure on us—that was our plan," said Torres. "But we failed to connect with our front players. We were up against a very good, very strong opponent."

Torres suggested that it will be a very different game in Spain next Tuesday and promised that the team will rediscover the resourceful and clever approaches that took them past Juve and Bayern.

But the problem for Emery is that Liverpool play the same way away from the noise and colour of Anfield and will seek to swarm the Villarreal defence, pressing and counter-pressing and generally suffocating their opponents.

Villarreal must hope that Moreno and Pino can recover in time for the return. Unlike Liverpool, they don't have a bench full of internationals—another limitation at this level.

Moreno in particular is the heart and soul of the Villarreal team and his presence would give Emery different options. "The match next week will be very different than tonight," promised the coach. "It is very important in our home to change something, maybe tactically. They are going to suffer more than tonight."

Ben Stokes succeeds Root as England Test captain

REUTERS
LONDON, APRIL 28

England unveiled Ben Stokes as their Test captain on Thursday, hoping for a swift turnaround under the talismanic all-rounder after a tame end to Joe Root's five years in charge of the team earlier this month.

Root led England in a record 64 Tests but his role became untenable after they managed one win in their last 17 Tests, a run which included a 1-0 Ashes thrashing in Australia and a 1-0 series defeat in West Indies.

"I had no hesitation in offering the role of Test captain to Ben," Rob Key said in a statement in his first major appointment since taking over as the managing director of England men's cricket earlier this month. "He epitomises the mentality and approach we want to take this team forward into

the next era of red-ball cricket."

The 30-year-old Stokes, who has scored more than 5,000 runs and taken 174 wickets in his 79 Tests for England, called it an "honour" to lead the Test side. "This is a real privilege, and I'm excited about getting started this summer," the Durham player said.

Arguably the greatest all-rounder of his era, Stokes acknowledged Root's role in his development as a leading figure in the England dressing room.

"I want to thank Joe for everything he has done for English cricket and for always being a great ambassador for the sport all across the world," Stokes said of England's batting mainstay. "He has been a massive part of my development as a leader in the dressing room, and he will continue to be a key ally for me in this role."

Root, who initially wanted to continue in the job, stepped down citing



Ben Stokes' first assignment as skipper will come against New Zealand in June.

the heavy toll it took on him. "Always got each other's backs. Congratulations mate, I'll be with you every step of the way," Root wrote on Twitter after Stokes' appointment and posted a

picture of the pair embracing.

While Stokes was an obvious choice to replace Root, his battles with injuries and workload remain a concern for the team. He also took an indefinite break from cricket last year to focus on his mental health.

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief executive Tom Harrison was optimistic of a glorious "new era" under Stokes.

"He cares deeply and passionately about what it means to represent England and he will lead us into a new era with great pride," Harrison said. "It's an important summer for our Test side and Ben will, I am sure, relish the challenge before him and his team."

Stokes' first assignment will be a two-match home series in June against New Zealand, the country of his birth.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19) ***

Don't be afraid to set gentle boundaries with your phone. The day will remind you of the importance of a work/play balance. If you're eager for the weekend to start and can get away with cutting out of work early, go ahead.

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

The workday should pass with relative ease this morning. This planetary placement will inspire you to take a more proactive approach toward growing your wealth, inspiring you to seek new opportunities for making money.

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

Big shifts will happen for you today. This planetary placement will give you an opportunity to thrive, making it important that you approach your goals with gusto. Under today's skies, your psyche reaches to new depths.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) ***

Make a plan to practice some serious self-care. If you've already made plans that you don't want to cancel, never fear, as you'll be more open to seeing friends this evening, helping you find your center under today's skies.

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

You'll have an opportunity to set healthy boundaries within your love life. This is also a good time to get real about what you want from a partner, even if it feels scary to do so. The day brings flurry of activity to your social life.

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

Map out a reasonable path for your work-related ambitions under today's cosmic landscape. Optimism will fill the air, activating the spiritual center of your chart. Take some time to work with your meditative practices.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***

You could feel a bit suffocated within your relationship. These vibes could trigger your desire for deep connection and intimacy with that special someone. Be sure to keep your eyes peeled for signs and synchronicities today.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) ***

You have strong opinions, but you may want to keep them to yourself. Rather than becoming frustrated by views or opinions you don't agree with, embrace the choice to move away anything that are particularly triggering.

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

While your aura will be elevated and full of life, you'll want to make sure you don't abandon discernment this afternoon. It will, however, put you in a grounded and reasonable headspace for the remaining day.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) ****

You may become anxious to get home and clock out for the day. This lunar placement will inspire you to have a bit of fun, as the universe encourages you to embrace your unique interests, see friends, and indulge.

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

Your mind will feel agile and disciplined this morning. Creative inspiration will come in abundance, making it a good time to bust out your art supplies. More good vibes will flow through the day under today's skies.

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

If you've been feeling a bit weighed down by personal issues lately, you should find some relief this morning. The day puts you in the mood to celebrate life, embrace luxury, and socialize with the people you feel closest to.

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Italian wine city
- 5 Get more out of
- 10 Dim
- 14 Afternoon socials
- 15 Ohio city
- 16 Play award
- 17 Rain gear
- 18 Rank above species
- 19 Radius neighbor
- 20 Animal nose
- 22 Brushed off
- 24 Vast ages
- 27 Bug repellent
- 28 Wonder
- 32 Goes on a voyage
- 35 Versatile vehicle
- 36 Edible bulb
- 38 Stretch fabrics
- 40 Unseen emanation
- 42 Santa's helpers
- 44 Huge excess
- 45 Prospect for oil
- 47 Uses coupons
- 49 "Wheel" buy (2 wds.)
- 50 Sherpa's country
- 52 Bluegrass State
- 54 Zipped through
- 56 66 and I-80
- 57 Subsidized
- 60 Hand warmers

- 64 Arroyo
- 65 Forest clearing
- 68 Little creek
- 69 Two fives for
- 70 Social mores
- 71 Cop a —
- 72 City on the Truckee
- 73 Bargain events
- 74 Large number

DOWN

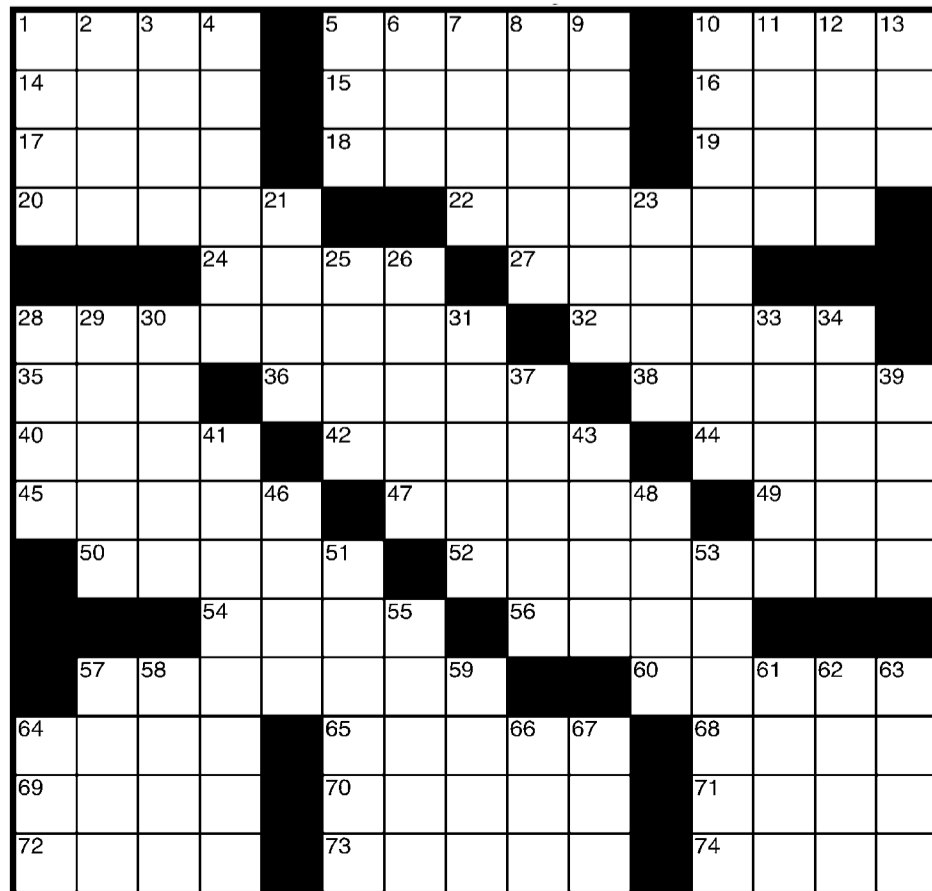
- 1 Cash dispensers
- 2 Connery of 007 fame
- 3 Tex-Mex snack
- 4 Hands out
- 5 Scrap of cloth
- 6 Scratch out a living
- 7 Impressive vases
- 8 Audio
- 9 Follows
- 10 Being skeptical about
- 11 Up to the job
- 12 Outer coat
- 13 Big green parrot
- 21 Oz canine
- 23 Bird's bill
- 25 After eight
- 26 Agronomists' studies
- 28 Dorm view

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

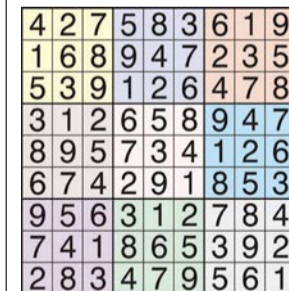


3-19-22 © 2022 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS

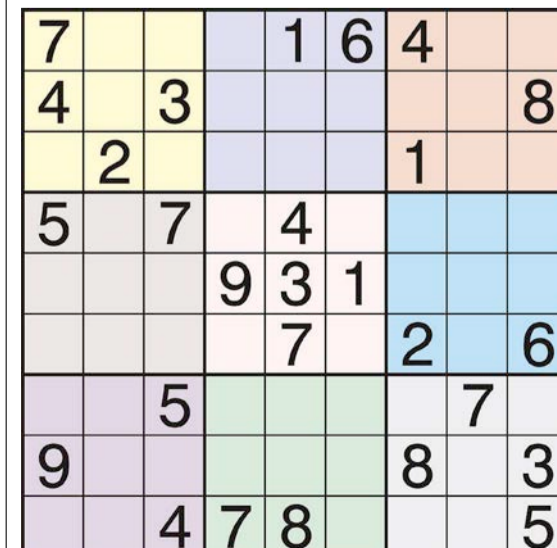
- 29 Driver's 180 (hyph.)
- 30 Spooky
- 31 Kim of "Vertigo"
- 33 Flowery scent
- 34 Reeked
- 37 When pigs fly
- 39 Linger
- 41 "The Godfather" actor (2 wds.)
- 43 Dispatched
- 46 Add some brandy
- 48 Stalk
- 51 Projecting ridges
- 53 Seizes the throne
- 55 Alluvial fan
- 57 Mortgage consideration
- 58 Blissful spot
- 59 Wonka's creator
- 61 Plug up
- 62 Cut and run
- 63 Popular side dish
- 64 "The — of the Roses"
- 66 Fawn parent
- 67 Curve



SUDOKU



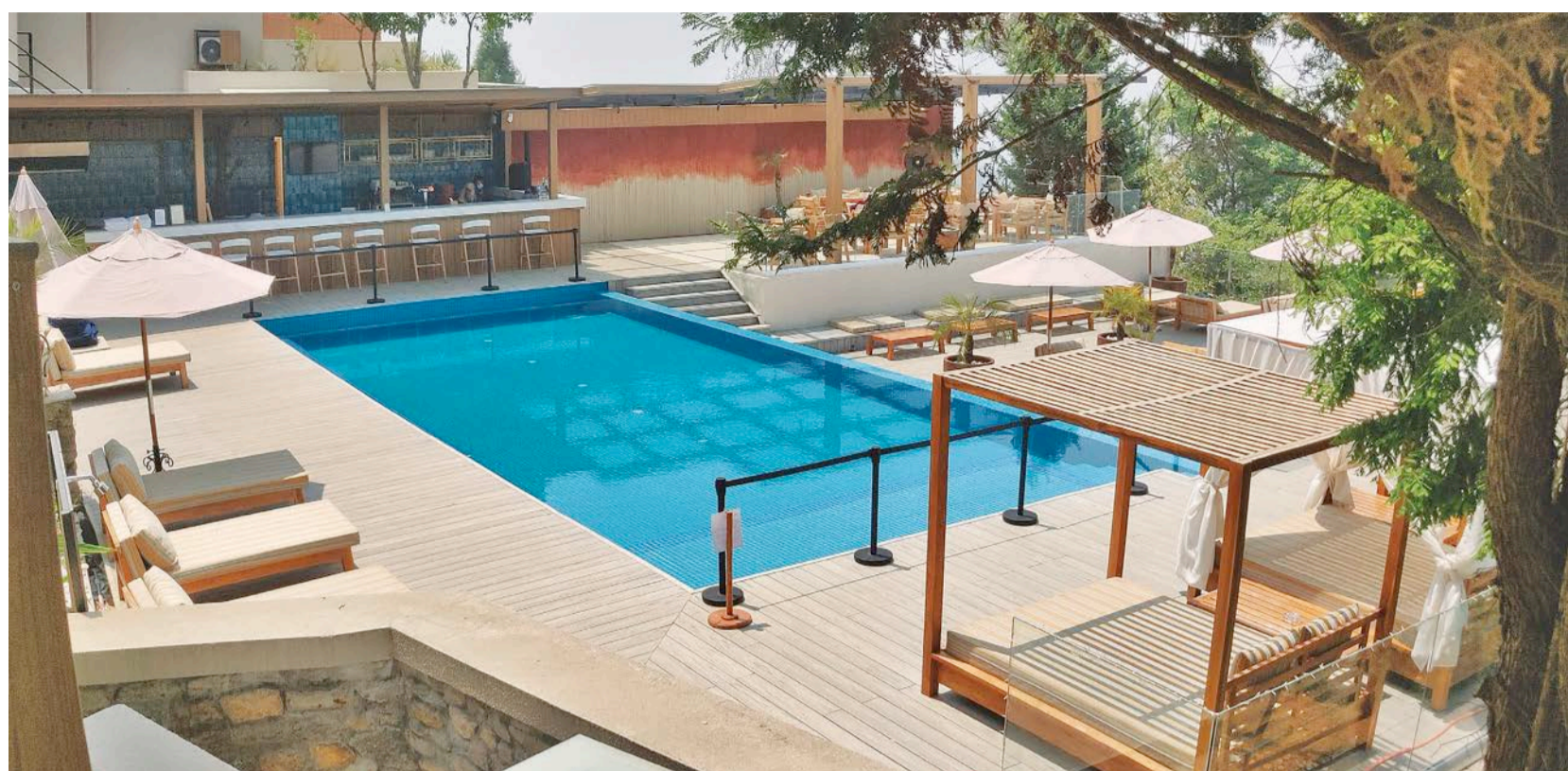
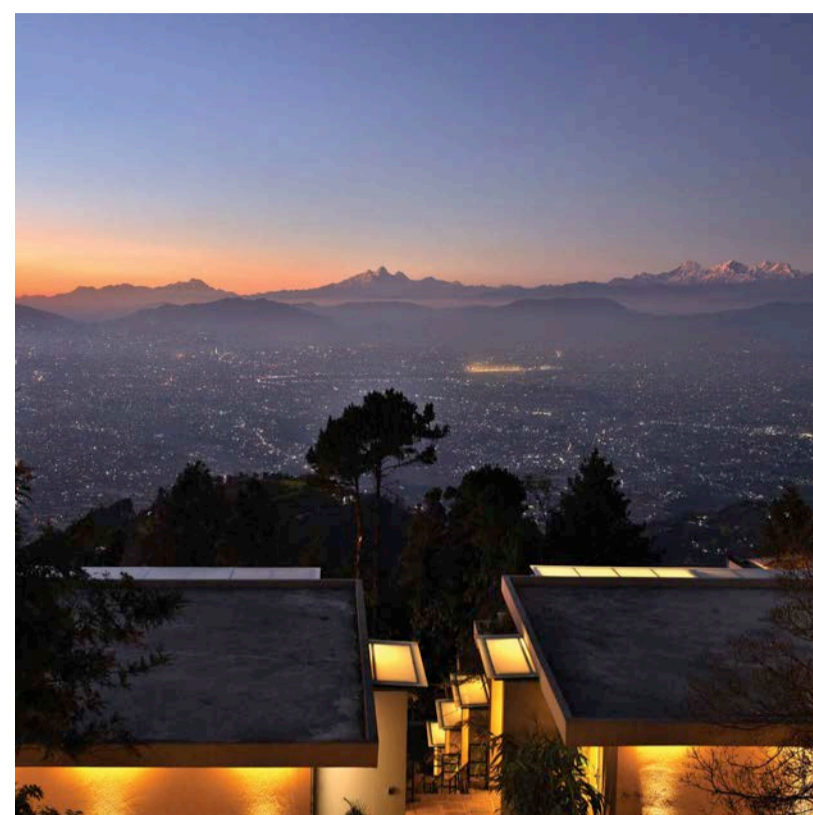
YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Putting Lakuri Bhanjyang on the tourist map

With the opening of The Terraces Resort and Spa, Lakuri Bhanjyang, a village in Lalitpur, is getting the tourism push it rightfully deserves.



The Terraces Resort and Spa, which opened last October, has 46 rooms, an infinity swimming pool, an outdoor jacuzzi, and a host of other facilities for guests to enjoy.

TSERING NGODUP LAMA
LALITPUR

The first time I found myself in Lakuri Bhanjyang was in early 2012. I reached the village in the waning light of the dusk and had no clue where I would be spending the night. Inside one of the watering holes that line the village's entrance, I met a local who told me that I might find a room for the night at a resort a five-minute ride away.

I rode in the dusk on the dusty village road and ended up at Adventure Tented Camp and Country Cottages. I spent the evening watching the expansive Kathmandu Valley shimmering in millions of lights. The next morning, panoramic mountain views made up the view, and after breakfast, I went on a hike in the neighbouring forested hills. That afternoon, as I left the village, I told myself I would return soon to explore this quaint and scenic village properly.

But I didn't, until last week.

The very moment we started riding the final uphill, winding, and forested stretch from Lamatar to Lakuri Bhanjyang, I was overcome with a strong sense of familiarity with the surrounding landscape. The bumpy road, the crisp fresh air, the scent of pine trees, and the shrills of cicadas reverberating through the forests, nothing seemed to have changed at all in the last ten years. It felt like I had entered a place that time had forgot-

ten. Once we entered the village, the changes became more noticeable. There were more houses and restaurants than ever, but the village still had that unmistakable laid-back vibe I fell in love with all those years ago. The rows of watering holes that lined the village's entrance were still there.

Unlike ten years ago, there were now a handful of hotels in the village, so travellers rolling into the village late in the evening will now have no problem finding rooms to stay. But if you are in the mood to splurge, look no further than The Terraces Resort and Spa, which opened in October last year, and it was this opportunity to visit this resort that made me make my long overdue second trip to the village.

Ever since the resort opened, I have seen celebrities, influencers, and leading entrepreneurs post photos and videos of their visits to the resort. It's fair to say that the property is a huge hit among the town's movers and shakers, and the moment I walked into the resort, I knew why.

The 46-room resort has everything from an outdoor jacuzzi, a gorgeous swimming pool, a restaurant that emphasises organic and locally sourced ingredients, a spa that overlooks a lush protected forest, to a semi-outdoor yoga hut tucked away in the middle of a forest.

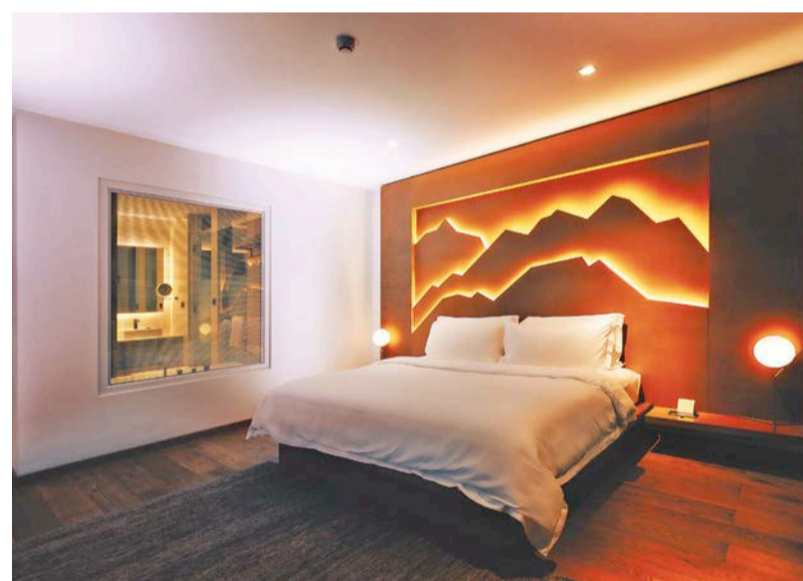
The rooms are divided into three categories—suites, deluxe, and standard. If you have serious money and do not mind splurging it, opt for one of

the resort's two suites. The spacious terrace and a private outdoor jacuzzi help set the property's suites apart. The most important differentiating factor between the deluxe (there are 16

of them) and standard (there are 28 of them) are the bathrooms. The former features a bathtub, while the latter has an overhead shower.

There are also plenty of activities

Tourism will bring in more jobs and encourage the more enterprising among the villagers to start tourism-related businesses.



for guests to take part in. For those who love the outdoors, the hiking trails in and around the village are a great place to get closer to nature. The resort also has mountain bikes that guests can use to explore the village.

But if outdoor activities are not your thing, you will still have plenty of things to do well within the resort's confines.

The relaxing spa is a great place to let yourself unwind and entrust the experienced masseuses to knead you into bliss. There's also a pool table and a library for guests to make the most of. But the majority of guests will most likely end up spending most of their time in the pool area, which has an infinity pool, a bar that serves an array of drinks, an outdoor jacuzzi, and plenty of lounge chairs and cabanas to laze around on. The resort's general manager Suman Shrestha told me that on clear days, the deck adjacent to the pool offers views of the Kathmandu Valley with panoramic mountain views. On the day of my visit, Kathmandu was blanketed in a stubborn haze, and thick clouds blocked the mountain views. But I did get to view a beautiful sunset from the deck.

It was while sitting on the deck and trying to take in whatever view I could see of Kathmandu through the haze that I couldn't help but shake the feeling of familiarity with my environment. I asked Shrestha if he knew of a property named Adventure Tented Camp and Country Cottages (ATCCC),

and much to my surprise, he told me that ATCCC was demolished around 2014 and in its place, The Terraces Resort and Spa was opened. I didn't know what to make of the fact that I had ended up at the same place during my two visits to Lakuri Bhanjyang.

After spending some time at the resort, it became clear to me why a high-end resort like The Terraces Resort and Spa makes sense in Lakuri Bhanjyang. While neighbouring hill-top getaway locations like Nagarkot and Dhulikhel have long served as the go-to getaway destinations near Kathmandu, Lakuri Bhanjyang (despite having spectacular mountain views, scenic forested trails, and quaint villages) has largely remained under the radar. But The Terraces Resort and Spa changes all that. Shrestha told me that the significant number of employees at the resort are locals, and as the village's popularity as a tourist destination grows, it will bring in more jobs and encourage the more enterprising among the villagers to start tourism-related businesses.

After leaving the resort, I headed to the entrance of the village and peeked into one of the watering holes. I saw a few men sipping cups of sweet tea and milky white rice beer. Outside a few children chased each other. Somewhere in the distance, I heard a rooster crow. As we finally made our way back to Kathmandu, I told myself that I wouldn't let another ten years pass by before making my third trip to the village.

Liam Neeson kills down 'Memory' lane

There's much that's familiar in 'Memory,' a remake of the 2003 Belgian thriller 'Memory of a Killer.'

JAKE COYLE

'Memory' is an interesting title for the latest Liam Neeson thriller. Do you remember the last Liam Neeson thriller? Or the one before that? Who was it that got taken in that one? It began getting hard to tell these films from one another years ago, and yet they've kept coming. "Key & Peele" only seems more prophetic for making the actor's name plural. "Liam Neesons" is right. He contains, and kills, multitudes.

"Memory," which opens in theaters Friday, doesn't much alter the formula but makes for a brutal and bleak variation on the Liam Neeson theme. It casts a broader, more interwoven noir tapes-

Neeson plays an assassin named Alex Lewis who tilts more toward bad guy territory.

try set around the Texas borderlands, with an ensemble cast including Guy Pearce, Monica Bellucci, and Ray Stevenson. If you come to "Memory" hoping Neeson is going to growl one-liners like "Commit THAT to memory!" or "If memory serves me correctly, you're toast!"—you may be surprised to find a movie less interested in such action-star heroics than it is something murkier and more cynical.

Does that make it good? Well, I wouldn't go that far. The filmmaking, by Martin Campbell, the British director of thrillers both glossy ("Casino Royale") and gritty ("Edge of Darkness"), lacks the texture and sense of place that could have made "Memory" (much of which was shot in Bulgaria) something more than a throwaway. But the performers—Neeson and particularly Pearce—



Liam Neeson in a scene from 'Memory.'

don't phone anything in.

Neeson plays an El Paso, Texas, assassin named Alex Lewis who tilts more toward bad guy territory than most of the actor's protagonists. Of course, though, Alex has a moral compass that won't tolerate certain things. He smashes one guy's head against the bar for his rude behavior toward a prostitute. And he won't kill kids. When Alex refuses to kill a 13-year-old girl (Mia Sanchez), a crime syndicate seeking to cover up a child trafficking ring comes after him. At the same time, Alex is beginning to experience early-onset Alzheimer's. That, curiously, only seldom affects his mission to protect the girl and bring down the syndicate, but it does make Alex even bolder; his life is fading away, anyway.

At the same time, the FBI agent Vincent Serra (Pearce) is trying to bring down the ring and is watching over the very same teenage girl, but his higher-ups keep pushing him toward other cases. Pearce's very presence in a memory-loss thriller is a nod to "Memento." In one scene, when Neeson writes clues on his forearm to help himself remember, you half expect Pearce to grab the pen and give him a few pointers. There's much that's familiar in "Memory," a remake of the 2003 Belgian thriller "Memory of a Killer."

Alex and Vincent form a loose partnership as two men trying to carry out one act of justice in a place without it. If the Liam Neeson thriller has cast Neeson as a kind of globe-trotting vig-

ilante and defender of justice in a fallen world, it's fitting that he should make his way to the US-Mexican border. Credit "Memory" for summoning outrage for the plight of young Mexican immigrants along the border.

Pearce, sweaty and grungy, steadies "Memory"; it's his film as much as Neeson's. But if anything, they seem like actors who ought to be in something better than this, an often slipshod movie populated largely by stock and half-formed characters—like Bellucci's somewhat ridiculous millionaire, an El Paso mogul pulling strings to cover for her son. There's just enough here to imagine a better, more memorable iteration of "Memory."

—Associated Press

Amazon Prime launches movie rental service in India

The company unveiled plans for 41 original series in three Indian languages.

REUTERS

MUMBAI

Amazon's Prime Video launched a movie rental service in India on Thursday, promising to release more than forty original series and movies over the next two years in a key market.

The world's second-most populous nation with a population of nearly 1.4 billion, India is a valuable market for Amazon and its rivals Netflix, and Walt Disney Co's Disney+ Hotstar.

"We are super excited about the launch," Gaurav Gandhi, head of Amazon Prime Video India, said at a function, adding that the service would widen customers' reach and choice. It enables them to pay per movie, instead of a flat monthly fee.

The move comes five years after the US tech giant launched its streaming service in India, and the company said it planned to more than double its investment in Prime Video over the next five years, but did not give figures.

The company unveiled plans for 41

original series in three Indian languages, some to be produced by top Bollywood directors such as Karan Johar and Zoya Akhtar.

Amazon has invested heavily in acquiring and producing local content in India, where, founder Jeff Bezos said in 2020, Prime Video was doing better than anywhere else in the world. Amazon does not break out user numbers by country.

It is also expected to take on heavyweights such as India's Reliance Industries, Sony Group Corp and Disney in the battle for exclusive digital broadcast rights to the hugely popular Indian Premier League (IPL).

Amazon has invested heavily in acquiring and producing local content in India.



REUTERS