



THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

Nepal's largest selling English daily

Printed simultaneously in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bharatpur and Nepalgunj

Vol XXX No. 142 | 8 pages | Rs.5
Sunday, July 10, 2022 | 26-03-2079

35.0° C 14.0° C
Bhairahawa Jomsom

Sri Lanka protesters storm president's house, set fire to prime minister's residence



Protesters, many carrying Sri Lankan flags, gather outside the president's office in Colombo, Sri Lanka, as they stormed Gotabaya Rajapaksa's residence and nearby office on Saturday.

Wickremesinghe says he suggested president form all-party Cabinet, but says nothing about Rajapaksa's whereabouts.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
COLOMBO, JULY 9

Protesters broke into the Sri Lankan prime minister's private residence and set it on fire, hours after he said he would resign when a new government is formed, in the biggest day of angry demonstrations on Saturday that also saw crowds storming the president's home and office.

The office of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said the protesters forced their way into his Colombo home on Saturday evening. It wasn't immediately clear if he was inside at the time of the attack.

Wickremesinghe said earlier that he will resign only when all parties have agreed on a new government.

He was responding to a call by leaders of political parties represented in Parliament that he and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa quit, after tens of thousands of people trooped to the capital to vent their fury at the leaders they hold responsible for the nation's worst economic and political crisis.

"Today in this country we have a fuel crisis, a food shortage, we have the head of the World Food Program coming here and we have several matters to discuss with the IMF. Therefore, if this government leaves there should be another government," Wickremesinghe said in a voice statement.

But he made it clear he will not step down before a new government is formed, angering crowds that moved near his home to force him to leave office immediately.

Wickremesinghe said he suggested to the president to have an all-party government, but didn't say anything about Rajapaksa's whereabouts.

Opposition parties in Parliament were currently discussing the formation of a new government.

Rajapaksa appointed Wickremesinghe as prime minister in May in the hope that the career politician would use his diplomacy and contacts to resuscitate a collapsed economy. But people's patience wore thin as shortages of fuel, medicine and cooking gas only increased and oil reserves ran dry.

Many protesters accuse Wickremesinghe of trying to save Rajapaksa when he came under pressure to resign and every other member of his powerful political dynasty quit the Cabinet.

Privately-owned Sirasa Television reported that at least six of their staff members including four reporters were hospitalised after they were beaten by police while covering the protest near Wickremesinghe's home.

Sri Lanka Medical Council, the country's top professional body, warned that the country's hospitals were running with minimum resources and will not be able to handle any mass casualties from the unrest.

>> Continued on page 6

Investment Board and Indian firm discussing West Seti project this week

India's NHPC Limited wants to generate 1200MW from two projects in the Seti river in far-western Nepal.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA
KATHMANDU, JULY 9

The Investment Board Nepal is set to begin negotiations with the NHPC Limited, an Indian state-owned power company, for the development of the 750MW West Seti Hydropower Project from Sunday, a senior official of the board said.

On May 12, the board had received a formal proposal from the Indian company to construct the national pride project.

Four years after China's Three Gorges Corporation pulled out from the project, the Indian company applied to develop the 750MW West Seti along with the 450MW Seti River (SR-6) to generate a total of 1200MW.

The IBN has remodelled the two projects under a single package to attract investors after failing to woo investors under the existing setup.

"A negotiation team headed by IBN Chief Executive Officer will sit for talks with the representatives of the NHPC starting Sunday," said Amrit Lamsal, the board's spokesperson.

According to him, the two sides will discuss a draft memorandum of understanding (MoU), which will contain the role and responsibilities of both sides after the Indian company starts work on the Detailed Project Report (DPR).

"As mandated by the Cabinet, we

have prepared the draft, under which the Indian company is supposed to study economic, social and environmental impacts of the project, determine whether to maintain the same capacity of the hydropower project or optimise or downsize the capacity and whether to develop the West Seti and SR-6 jointly or separately."

He said that the MoU will also have mention of DPR-related issues including the dates for commencement of construction and completion of the project, and the estimated cost of the project. Once the MoU is finalised, the Department of Electricity Development will issue the survey licence to the Indian company. The developer is supposed to complete the DPR of the project in two years.

Since it has been a long time since the Australian firm, Snowy Mountain Engineering Corporation (SMEC), submitted its DPR for the development of the project, a fresh DPR will be required, according to IBN officials. The China Three Gorges Corporation, which was earlier awarded the project, didn't submit a DPR, according to Lamsal.

"Once the developer submits a DPR and it is approved, negotiations on the Project Development Agreement (PDA) will begin," said Lamsal, who is also a member of the negotiation team from Nepal.

>> Continued on page 2

standard chartered

An ideal investment that gives you

11.03%* p.a. on fixed deposit

Scan to apply

Dengue detection in Lalitpur raises the risk of a 'triple whammy'

Spread of dengue is alarming as the country is already dealing with cholera outbreaks and a resurgence of coronavirus infections, experts say.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, JULY 9

Amid an outbreak of cholera in various places of Kathmandu Valley, several cases of dengue have been detected in Lalitpur Metropolitan City.

At least 13 of all cases of dengue infection in the Valley have been reported from Lalitpur. Of them, 11 cases have been reported from Tikhedawal, which is in Ward-5 of the metropolis.

"We have started a dengue search-and-destroy campaign in the affected areas, following reports of infection of the virus in several people," said Satis Bista, chief of Health Office Lalitpur. "We have alerted all agencies concerned about the risk of the spread and asked them to take preventive measures."

Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease, transmitted by female Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus mosquitoes. The same vector also transmits chikungunya, yellow fever and Zika viruses, according to the World Health Organisation.

Although post-monsoon is considered a high transmission season for the dengue virus, Nepal has witnessed



Dengue is transmitted by female Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus mosquitoes.

outbreaks of the deadly disease in the pre-monsoon, monsoon and post-monsoon seasons.

Experts warn that the timing of the dengue outbreak is serious, as the country has already been dealing with a double whammy—outbreak of cholera and resurgence of Covid-19.

"We used to talk about double whammy, but there is a chance of a triple whammy—surge in Covid-19 cases, cholera and dengue," said Dr Baburam Marasini, former direc-

tor at the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division.

In 2019, at least six people had died and over 16,000 were hospitalised with dengue fever. The outbreak, which had started in the pre-monsoon period from Dharan, spread to 68 districts throughout the country.

Doctors say with the infection of dengue detected in Lalitpur, the disease can spread easily in other places of the densely populated Valley.

>> Continued on page 2

TRY NEW

ELECTRIFYING ENERGY ULTIMATE TASTE

AVAILABLE IN OUTLETS NEAR YOU

FOLLOW ONLINE @StingEnergyNepal

STING - CAFFEINATED BEVERAGE. CONTAINS ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS AND FOR CALORIE CONSCIOUS. THIS CAFFEINATED BEVERAGE CONTAINS A MIXTURE OF SUCRALOSE AND ACESULFAME POTASSIUM. NOT RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN, PREGNANT OR LACTATING WOMEN, PERSONS SENSITIVE TO CAFFEINE. *CONTAINS CAFFEINE.† QUANTITY OF SUGAR ADDED 6.6g/100g. HIGH CAFFEINE: *22mg/SERVE. CONSUME NOT MORE THAN 300 mg PER DAY. STING IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF PEPSICO, INC.

Frequent deaths of wild elephants in Jhapa worry conservationists

Experts say human-wildlife conflict has risen because of encroachment of the bio-corridor by humans over the years.

PARBAT PORTEL
JHAPA, JULY 9

An elephant estimated to be around 30 years old was found dead near the Dahijhoda forest area of Arjunthara Municipality-4 in Jhapa on July 6.

According to the Division Forest Office, Jhapa, the cause of the elephant's death has not been ascertained but conservationists suspect electrocution since there were no visible signs of injuries on the body.

Conservationist Shankar Luitel, who visited the site where the elephant was found dead, believes that the elephant died of electrocution.

"During my on-site visit, I saw electric wires scattered around the place where the elephant lay dead," he said. "The actual cause of death can only be determined after the postmortem reports are in but my suspicions are strong in this case."

There are about a dozen native elephants in Jhapa. Luitel claims that the elephant killed on Wednesday was not a native but came from India.

This is not the first incident of elephant death reported in Jhapa this month. On July 1, an elephant estimated to be around seven years old was found dead in Aayabari village about 500 meters south of the Panchpokhari forest area in Buddhashanti Rural Municipality-5.

Elephants enter the villages spread around the forest areas to eat crops. To prevent elephants from entering the fields, the local farmers install electric fences around the perimeter of their land. This is one of the main causes behind the high number of elephant deaths in the area, say conservationists.

The Division Forest Office in Jhapa says the bodies of both the elephants have been sent for postmortem.

"The cause of their deaths can only be confirmed after the postmortem report," said Acting Division Forest chief Raj Kumar Khatri. "We are still awaiting the postmortem result of the elephant that was found dead on July 1."

Studies show that elephants from Assam and West Bengal in India travel to Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve in Nepal through Bahundangi. Experts say that instances of human-wildlife conflict are recurring because of the encroachment of the bio-corridor by humans over the years. There are around 1,800 households in Bahundangi.

Dr Narendra Pradhan, an expert on elephants, said that the conflict between humans and elephants has been going on for a long time in Jhapa, where both have suffered.



Park officials examine an elephant that was found dead near the Dahijhoda forest area of Arjunthara Municipality-4 in Jhapa on July 6.

PHOTO COURTESY: SHANKAR LUITEL

According to the Division Forest Office, Jhapa, 53 people have died in elephant attacks while 13 elephants have been killed in the last ten years.

"Elephants are intelligent animals. They do not attack for fun. People need to stop killing and torturing them," Pradhan told the Post. "The conflict between elephants and humans could go on forever if we don't think about ways to help the animal protect their way of life and their right of way. The responsibility to reduce this conflict is not in the hands of elephants but falls on us humans."

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has banned the killing of elephants or any kind of physical abuse of the animal species. But very few people living in areas prone to human-wildlife conflict abide by international law.

Due to the complexity of the issue of whether to save people or elephants, the concerned bodies and the general public do not take the issue of elephant deaths seriously, says conservationist Dr Shantaraj Gyawali.

"The death of an elephant should be taken as seriously as that of a human," he said. "When a human settlement moves into an area used by elephants as bio-corridors, the likelihood of human-animal conflict increases. The authorities should find ways to prevent confrontations between humans and elephants by protecting bio-corridors from human encroachment."

On October 30, 2020, a wild elephant was found dead in the Pachpokhari Community Forest Area of Buddhashanti Rural Municipality-5, Jhapa.

The Division Forest Office, Jhapa, had suspected the locals' involvement in the death of the elephant since it had several wounds inflicted by sharp weapons on its body. But no further investigation into the case was initiated.

According to the Nepal Law Commission, if an elephant dies for any reason, the forest officer of the area should conduct the necessary investigation and order the funeral of the elephant. However, investigation

teams are rarely formed.

"I don't think the forest office has carried out any serious investigation into the death of an elephant," said conservationist Luitel.

Although many people have been prosecuted in the forest office for killing animals like spotted deer, deer and other wild animals, no one has been dragged to court for killing elephants so far.

"I have never seen a case that got registered for killing elephants," said Assistant Forest Officer Kul Prasad Bhattarai.

According to the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, two dozen wild animals, including elephants, are on the protected list of the country.

The guilty can face imprisonment for 3 to 10 years or more for killing animals on the protected list.

According to Luitel, the human-elephant conflict has been going on in Jhapa for about 50 years. "Both humans and elephants are dying every year," Luitel said. "The government needs to get serious about how to protect both."

Investment Board and Indian firm discussing ...

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The PDA defines the roles and responsibilities, accountability and liabilities of both parties. According to Lamsal, the NHPC aims to develop the project to export power to India. "This is good for Nepal as the country can fulfil its power requirements from other projects. Since the NHPC is a state-owned entity, it will not be difficult for the company to have market access in India," said Lamsal.

After four years of uncertainty about the future of the project since the Chinese company pulled out from the project in 2018, the expression of interest by the Indian company has given a new hope for the development of one of the highly prioritised projects of Nepal.

After the Chinese company pulled out, the government tried to woo investors to the project during the Nepal Investment Summit in early 2019.

"But the company selected from among those which had shown interest in the project during the investment summit, didn't come forward for negotiations," said Madhu Bhetuwal, joint secretary at the energy ministry, who had earlier served at the Investment Board.

The project suddenly gained momentum after Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, while addressing a gathering in Dadeldhura on May 10, just ahead of the local elections, said that he will discuss the project with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the latter's visit to Lumbini on May 16 on Buddha Jayanti.

Modi paid a daylong visit to Lumbini on May 16. The Nepali side tabled the project during the delegation-level talks. "Development of the West Seti project was part of the discussions during the meeting between Prime Minister Deuba and Modi," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on May 16.

According to a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, Prime Minister Deuba invited interested Indian companies like the NHPC Limited to develop the West Seti project. Before Modi's visit to Lumbini, the Indian company had already submitted an application to the IBN expressing its willingness to develop the project.

The new development on the West Seti Project took place at a time when the southern neighbour has shown more interest in developing hydropower projects in Nepal and creating a sub-regional integrated energy market involving Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, collectively known as BBIN.

During Deuba's visit to India in early April, the two countries issued a joint vision statement on energy, which talks about expanding mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in the power sector including joint development of power generation projects in Nepal; development of cross-border transmission infrastructure; bi-directional power trade with appropriate access to electricity markets in both countries based on mutual benefits, market demand and applicable domestic regulations of each country; coordinated operation of the national grids; and institutional cooperation in sharing latest operational information, technology and know-how.

The West Seti project has been on the drawing board since the early 1980s. The project also attracted some geopolitical fissures in the last two and a half decades since the government issued the developing licence to a French company and then to a renowned Chinese company.

Initially, in the 1990s, the SMEC tried to build the project to export power to India. But owing to complicated negotiations with India, lack of financing, corrupt officialdom and the Maoist insurgency in the country, the 750 MW project could not make progress for around two decades. Then in 2012, an MOU was signed with the China Three Gorges Corporation.

But negotiations with the Chinese company collapsed after the Chinese company said the project would not be financially viable.

According to Bhetuwal, the Chinese company was unsure about whether Nepal could ensure the market for the electricity and a long and costly transmission line needed to evacuate the electricity was another concern for the Chinese company.

The Chinese company was also not satisfied with the price offered for the electricity by the Nepal Electricity Authority. The authority had offered Rs12.40 per unit during the dry season which lasts from December to May, and Rs7.10 per unit for the rest of the year. The Chinese company had sought a guaranteed rate of return of 17 percent.

With both sides failing to arrive at consensus, the negotiation collapsed putting the future of the project uncertain once again.

After the Indian company showed interest to develop the project, a hope for development of this project has once again revived. "With India willing to provide access to its huge power market to the electricity generated in Nepal, the developers are now less worried," said Bhetuwal.

-BY THE NUMBERS-

5,017

THE number of large manufacturing establishments in the country.
SOURCE: CBS

127.3

THE exchange rate of the US dollar in Nepal. Nepali rupee fell to a record low against the US dollar on Wednesday.
SOURCE: NEPAL RASTRA BANK

46,957

THE number of tourists who entered Nepal by air in the month of June.
SOURCE: NEPAL TOURISM BOARD

Rs70.12 billion

THE amount that Nepal spent to import cereals in the first 11 months of the current fiscal year.
SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMS

\$105.8

THE price of Brent crude on Friday, which fell far below this year's peak of \$128 reached in early March.
SOURCE: REUTERS

20%

THE share of loans issued by banking and financial institutions to fund trading, which particularly represents wholesale and retail services.
SOURCE: CONFEDERATION OF BANKS AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

56%

WORK completion at the Bheri Babai Diversion Multipurpose Project in Bheriganga Municipality, Surkhet.
SOURCE: PROJECT OFFICE



Children in cultural attire perform a dance at Kupondole in Lalitpur on Saturday.

POST PHOTO: DEEPAK KC

Dengue detection in Lalitpur raises the risk of a 'triple whammy'

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Sporadic cases of dengue have been reported in many districts, including in Kathmandu, this year.

At least four cases of dengue infection have been reported in Kathmandu so far this year. Officials at the division informed that at least 164 cases of infection have been reported in the country so far this year.

Officials at the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division say that the rise in dengue infections amid cholera outbreak and the surge in new cases

of coronavirus is concerning.

"We held a meeting with the directors of private hospitals and staffers working at the medical records section and asked them to report cases of infection at the earliest," said Dr Gokarna Dahal, chief of the Vector Control Section at the division. "But the problem is over 70 percent of the infected people do not get seriously ill and do not visit hospitals, but they can spread the infection."

Mosquitoes that cause dengue breed in clean water and infect people in

daylight. Due to an acute drinking water crisis, people in the Valley store water in jars and pots, which could be ideal breeding grounds for these mosquitoes. Uncovered water tanks, discarded plastic cups and bottles could shelter dengue-carrying mosquitoes.

Most of the dengue cases reported in Lalitpur are indigenous—meaning, the infected people contracted the virus locally, officials said. According to doctors, mild to high fever, severe muscle pain, rashes, severe headache, and pain in eyes are some of the symp-

oms of dengue.

The UN health agency says that there is no specific treatment for severe dengue, but early detection and access to proper medical care can lower the fatality rate.

Amid rise in dengue cases, at least 27 cases of cholera infection have been confirmed in Kathmandu Valley, according to the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division. Meanwhile, the country reported 102 cases of Covid-19 on Saturday, according to the Ministry of Health and Population,

taking the number of active cases in the country to 605.

Marasini, the former director at the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, said authorities should pay extra attention given the vectors that spread dengue are already present in the Valley.

"Authorities concerned should launch an awareness drive and search-and-destroy campaigns to lessen the risks," he said. "What is alarming is that the spread of infection could continue throughout the monsoon."

Federal government itself is anti-federal, politicians and experts say

Panelists concur federalism can never be strengthened unless the political parties transform themselves.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, JULY 9

Nepal adopted a federal system of governance in 2015 to ensure that people have an easy access to administrative services, they have involvement in decision making, the identities of various communities are recognised, and there is an equitable distribution of state resources.

The Constitution of Nepal has broadly categorised the authorities and responsibilities of the three tiers of government. However, even after nearly five years of federal exercise, true federalism has yet to be practised because the federal government is very conservative about delegating the authority it has been enjoying for decades to provincial and local units, according to representatives of provincial governments and experts.

"The federal government, no matter who is leading, is guided by centralised and unitary mindset which is a huge barrier to full implementation of federalism," Mohammad Lalbabu Raut, the chief minister of the Madhesh Province, said speaking at an interaction titled 'Madhesh Manthan,' in Janakpur on Saturday. "We still don't have necessary laws, and there is a human resource crunch while the federal government has not been extending the cooperation expected of it."

'Madhesh Manthan,' the one-day interaction on sustainable development, prosperity and transformation of Madhesh Pradesh, was organised by Kantipur Media Group in collaboration with the Madhesh Province government, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Information and Communications, and the Province Assembly Secretariat.

Speaking at the function, panelists concurred that the federal government, which is tasked with facilitating smooth implementation of federalism, is itself anti-federal.

"But despite various odds, the foundation of federalism is not weak," said Krishna Khanal, professor of political science at Tribhuvan University. "It is evident that the federal government is



Some speakers argued that the constitution itself was designed so as not to give powers to the provinces.

working with an anti-federal mindset. However, I also don't see provincial governments being assertive about their rights."

Meanwhile, some speakers argued that the constitution itself was designed so as not to give powers to the provinces. "The design of provinces in the constitution is defective," said CK Lal, a writer and analyst. "Therefore, I don't see the provincial government functioning effectively even if there are legal and other instruments in place." He said that no parties are voicing strongly for an effective implementation of federalism because the concept wasn't accepted wholeheartedly.

The Nepali Congress and the CPN-UMI accepted federalism as a compromise while the Madhesi parties that advocated for it aren't in a position to pressurise for its effective implementation, and therefore are not different from the mainstream parties, according to Lal. There was a unanimous voice among the speakers that federalism can never be strengthened unless the political parties transform themselves. "Federalism is not just a political issue. It has to be a way of life," said Vimala Rai Poudyal, a member of the National Assembly. "The parties must internalise federalism themselves first, but that is not happening."

The interaction, inaugurated by Nepal's first president Dr Ram Baran Yadav, had five different sessions on varied topics ranging from governance to social transformation of the Madhesh Province. Putting his views as keynote speaker, Yadav said he promulgated the constitution with a heavy heart amid deadly protests against the charter in the Tarai/Madhes. "I became happy when an environment was created for all the parties to participate in the elections," he said. "However, after the 2017 elections, there have been several attacks on the constitution, which I believe will last for decades."

He expressed his dissatisfaction over the dissolution of the House of Representatives, continuous obstruction in parliament and the protest in the judiciary. The erstwhile KP Sharma Oli government had dissolved the lower house twice in December 2020 and May 2021. Similarly, his party obstructed the federal parliament, leaving it paralysed for over seven months.

Yadav, under whose leadership Chure conservation efforts were initiated, said he was pained by the exploitation of the Chure region which is causing water shortage in Madhes. "I am concerned about warnings by experts that the entire Tarai could turn into a

desert in the next three decades if Chure's exploitation continues at the present rate," he said. "Let us preserve the trees, nature and our place."

In the day-long discussion, politicians and experts discussed conserving the Chure region and forests to protect Madhes, chewed over the problems in governance, gave their views on whether the Madhesi society had changed over the years and what could be done to rejuvenate Janakpur. The panelists argued that Madhes wasn't liberal in accommodating the marginalised communities and giving a fair share to women. "The representation of the Dalit and other marginalised communities is poor. They are still facing discrimination," said Sundar Bahadur Vishwakarma, a provincial assembly member from Madhes. "I don't think it will improve until it is linked to economic empowerment."

Kantipur Media Group has said the discussion was an attempt to draw Kathmandu's attention to the issues and problems of the province. "We hope this policy level discussion will be helpful in connecting Kathmandu with Janakpur," said Kailash Sirohiya, chairperson and managing director of the Group. "This is just the beginning. We are planning to organise similar discussions in other provinces as well."

Raised entry barriers for foreign contractors may limit competition

Officials and some contractors say priority given to domestic contractors would help save forex reserves.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA
KATHMANDU, JULY 9

The government's entry barriers to foreign contractors to participate in construction works valued below Rs5 billion could result in limited competition despite intending to help domestic companies to grow, stakeholders say.

Foreign companies cannot participate in bids for construction works valued below Rs5 billion as per the 12th amendment to the Public Procurement Regulation which was published in Nepal Gazette on Monday.

It is the second time in just over three months that the government raised the threshold barring foreign companies from bidding for works valued below the threshold.

In March this year, the government hiked such a threshold to Rs3 billion from Rs1 billion.

"The main objective of putting higher entry barriers for foreign construction companies is to prioritise domestic companies amid increasing capacity of domestic companies," said Umesh Dhungana, spokesperson for the Public Procurement Monitoring Office.

Through the 11th amendment to the regulation, the government has provisioned that foreign construction firms can only bid for works valued between Rs5 billion and Rs10 billion through joint ventures with Nepali companies.

"Another objective of raising the bar for entry of foreign firms is to discourage outflow of foreign currency from Nepal," said Dhungana.

Amid surging imports, Nepal is facing continued depletion of foreign currency reserves since the beginning of current fiscal year 2021-22.

According to Nepal Rastra Bank, the gross foreign exchange reserves of the country decreased by 21.1 per cent to \$9.28 billion in mid-May 2022 from \$11.75 billion in mid-July 2021.

Dhungana, however, said that the entry barrier for foreign companies was raised not due to the current state of foreign exchange reserves. "It is just a coincidence that the entry barrier has been raised when the country is facing a decrease in foreign exchange reserves," he said. Some contractors, however, have questioned how the capacity of Nepali contractors increased overnight so that entry barriers for foreign contractors had to be increased substantially.

Until late March, the threshold was Rs1 billion, which was hiked to Rs3 billion in late March and it went up to Rs5 billion in less than four months.

"The policy was changed in the interest of some big contractors," said Bishnu Bhai Shrestha, chairperson of CM Construction. "There are less than a dozen companies which can handle the construction works valued at around Rs5 billion solely."

He said that the Federation of Contractors' Associations of Nepal (FCAN) had not demanded that threshold for entry of foreign contractors should be raised to Rs5 billion.

Rabi Singh, president of FCAN, said that the federation has suggested keeping the threshold at maximum Rs3.5 billion.

"Because of the raised bar for the entry of foreign companies, there is the possibility of a cartel among big domestic contractors as there are not many large contractors who can work in projects valued around Rs5 billion single handedly," he said.

A senior government official at the Public Procurement Monitoring Office admitted that the government heard the demand of the contractors to increase the threshold as they lobbied hard saying that they have already become capable of working up to Rs5 billion. "As they work in the field, the government listened to them," the official said.

In fact, the PPMO had proposed to increase the threshold to Rs2 billion when it was increased to Rs3 billion in March, as per the draft of amendment obtained by the Post.

The threshold was increased to Rs1 billion from Rs600 million by the fourth amendment to the public procurement regulation in 2016. Since the increase, the trend of collusion thrived, according to officials at the PPMO.

On May 13, 2019, the government had increased the threshold to Rs2 billion through the sixth amendment to the public procurement regulation. The threshold was later reduced to Rs1 billion again through the eighth amendment to the regulation on August 1, 2019.

The PPMO has been pointing out the incidents of possible collusion among the large contractors in its past annual reports.

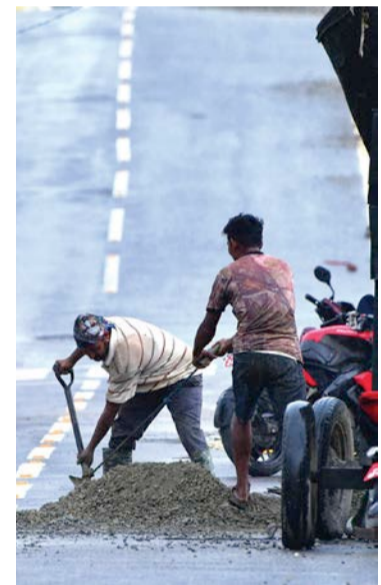
In its annual report 2017-18, the procurement monitoring office mentioned possible collusion in the ten-

der for developing Block A of the garment processing zone at Simara between the government agency and the contractors to block foreign bidders.

When the consultant prepared the detailed project design, the estimated cost of the package was Rs1.17 billion. But when tenders were called, the estimated cost was reduced to less than Rs1 billion.

Four bidders passed technical qualification to undertake the construction of roads, drainage, sewerage and land work but there were no massive differences in prices quoted by all four bidders against the estimated cost of Rs849.99 million.

A PPMO report titled 'A Collection of Reports on Public Procurement Monitoring and Complaints' released in 2018 had also pointed out possible collusion among bidders while participating in and bagging contracts for road and bridge projects in the under-construction Dharan-Chatara-Gaighat-Katari-Sindhuli road and the Galchhi-Trishuli-Mailung-Syabrubesi-Rasuwegadhi road.



Big companies support the move on entry barriers for foreign contractors.

Singh, however, said that the new provision that a contractor who had already held a maximum five contracts, cannot participate in new bids, could pave the way for more other contractors to participate in the bids.

The big companies supported the government's move on entry barriers for foreign companies as there are already many contractors that are capable of carrying out large scale construction.

"There are already 50-60 companies which can solely handle construction projects valued at Rs5 billion," said Sahadev Khadka, managing director of Bhimeshwar Drilling Tatha Nirman Sewa.

The contractors have different claims about how many companies have capacity to handle projects valued around Rs5 billion. On concerns over limitation in competition, he claimed that there would be enough competition among domestic companies.

"There is a provision in amended regulation that a contractor can bid for works valued Rs1 billion by submitting the experience of working in works valued Rs600 million which will allow entry of more bidders," said Khadka.

In the past, a contractor should have presented the evidence of working in works valued Rs800 million to participate in bids for works valued Rs1 billion.

"Nepali contractors have done better jobs than the foreign, evident from many projects where foreign contractors have failed to continue work," Khadka said. "Priority given to domestic contractors will also help save the foreign currency within the country."

The government offices have many bitter experiences of involving foreign firms in large infrastructure projects.

Major projects like Melamchi Drinking Water Project, Butwal-Narayagadh Road, Expansion of the Tribhuvan International Airport, Chhime Hydropower Project and Upper Trishuli A Hydropower Project were delayed where foreign firms were awarded contracts.

For Shivahari Sapokta, former director general of Department of Road, domestic contractors should be prioritised despite the possibility of limited competition.

"Foreign contractors don't work even when a small problem arises," he said. "Domestic contractors run behind policymakers to clear the hurdles." But limited competition could increase the cost for the government. "As long as prices quoted by the domestic contractors are lower than the estimated cost, it should not be considered as costly to the government," Sapkota said.



Children play carrom with plastic bottle lids as striker and coins at Teku in Kathmandu.

POST PHOTO: SUJAN GOPALI

Locals are first responders during disasters but they are ill-equipped and untrained

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, JULY 9

Last Thursday, a 13 year-old girl from Galyang Municipality-10 of Syangja was buried under the weight of her own house. Heavy rainfall that continued for days led to the collapse of her mud house, which also killed some livestock and injured her elder brothers.

She was rushed to the nearby community hospital, which said she was brought dead, according to Mukti Khanal, chair of Ward-10 of the municipality.

Locals rescued other injured members of the family and livestock and took them to a safe place.

Security personnel from Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force reached the incident site only after two hours, according to Khanal.

When disasters strike in far-flung and remote areas, rescuers cannot reach immediately and local residents work as the first responders.

But they lack training and are ill-equipped, leading to loss of lives and property that could be prevented, say experts.

At least 18 people have died and 19 injured in disaster-related incidents since the start of monsoon this year, on June 5. An additional 15 people have died and 18 injured in the incidents of lightning strikes.

Likewise, 85 people were rescued and 2,565 people were shifted to safe places. Fifty-seven houses, three concrete bridges and one suspension bridge have been destroyed and 55 houses have been damaged by floods and landslides, according to the

Ministry of Home Affairs.

More disaster related incidents are expected this year, as the peak of the monsoon season is yet to come.

As per the seasonal forecast by the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, this year, 55 to 60 percent more rainfall is likely in some places of the country compared to last year.

Last year saw hundreds of people killed and thousands displaced in rain-related incidents. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, between June and late October, 2021, 673 people died, 69 went missing and 181 were injured in water-induced disaster incidents. In October alone, at least 101 people died and several were unaccounted for after an unseasonably heavy rainfall.

Hundreds of private homes, several government buildings, schools, bridges, highways, and hydropower projects suffered heavy damage due to rain-triggered floods and landslides.

Although the government has planned to form the National Volunteers Bureau to mobilise volunteers to respond to disaster-related incidents, and allocated a budget for the same, there has been little progress.

"Yes we could not institute the bureau and train volunteers this year," said Dijan Bhattarai, spokesperson for the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority. "We will do it next year."

Had the authorities concerned implemented the programme, the capacity of the local governments to respond to disaster-related incidents would have been enhanced and they would have been better equipped, experts say.

In Galyang Municipality, local people removed the debris and rescued the victims using whatever means they had.

Formation of the National Volunteers Bureau is in line with the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, 2074, Disaster Reduction and Management National Strategy, 2075 and Disaster Management Regulations, 2076.

Officials concede that most of the local units in the country are ill-equipped, lack resources and training. Bhattarai said the government does not lack the budget to train volunteers and assist the local units to prepare them to respond in the event of disasters.

Experts say preparations have not been done not because of the lack of policies and guidelines but because of lackadaisical approach of the authorities concerned.

"It is the responsibility of the federal agencies to strengthen local units, equip them with necessary tools and techniques and enhance their skills," said Shakti Gurung, executive director at the Center for Disaster Management Studies. "Local units too should work proactively to respond to disaster-related incidents."

For that they can stockpile necessary materials, train volunteers, organise simulations and develop early warning systems. But the problem is new leadership has just been elected at the local level.

"The new representatives lack knowledge," said Gurung. "And the former representatives, who knew the necessity of strengthening local units to respond to disaster-related incidents, have gone."

Multisectoral multiscale disasters

Investment in science is crucial for improving the prediction of cascading hazards and risks.

SANJIB SHARMA & ROCKY TALCHABHADEL



Losses and damages from natural hazards are escalating. Over 70 people died in the 2012 Seti flash flood, 150 in the 2014 Jure landslide, and 20 in the 2021 Melamchi flood. Tens of thousands of people are displaced. Weather-related losses in Nepal are among the highest in the world. The impacts are multisectoral, threatening human settlement, critical infrastructures, economy and ecosystem.

Extreme weather, climate, and water conditions are rising in Nepal, according to a recent study published in the scientific journal *Natural Hazards*. And extreme events are likely to become more frequent and intense as climate changes. That means more record-breaking rainfall, floods, heat waves, drought and wildfires are expected in the next decades.

Cascading hazards

Cascading hazards result from a series of hazardous events and their interactions. One hazard often triggers another hazard (Event A is followed by Event B, which is followed by Event C and so on), and the compounding impacts lead to massive disasters. For example, rainfall after wildfires can trigger massive landslides and floods. Cascading events may begin in a specific location; but can intensify, propagate and become widespread to impact more extensive areas.

The upper Himalayan regions are more prone to snow and glacier avalanches. Global warming can cause the early onset of snowmelt, amplify the glacier melt rate, and contribute to glacier retreat. The number and size of glacial lakes are proliferating. Many of these lakes have unstable moraines (dams). Impacts from rock/ice avalanches or landslides can destabilise the dam, increasing the chances of glacial lake outburst floods with disastrous downstream consequences.

The Mid-Himalaya are affected mainly by landslides. Landslides often block the river



POST FILE PHOTO: ANISH TIWARI

and create landslide-dam lakes. In August 2014, prolonged rainfall induced a catastrophic landslide in Jure, Sindhupalchok. Debris from the landslide formed an earthen dam that blocked the Sunkoshi River. Landslide-dam lake destroyed sections of the Araniko highway, disrupting cross-border trade exchange. The cascading event interrupted the power transmission from five hydropower projects and caused a deficit of 66.5 megawatts of electricity in the national grid.

The 2021 Melamchi disaster resulted from multiple hazardous events that cascaded from high elevations to river valleys. Heavy rains in the upstream region triggered a massive erosion of glacial deposits, overtopping of a glacial lake, and temporary damming of a river. The dam breach resulted in a large flow of debris and a sediment-laden flood. Continuous toe-cutting and river aggradation from landslides made the river system vulnerable even to moderate rainfall.

Seemingly normal weather conditions can trigger a chain of hazardous events with disastrous consequences. Days of warmer

temperatures in the higher altitudes increase the chances of glacial lake outburst floods. A series of average rainfall events in regions with altered land use and other human activities increase the probability of landslide dam outburst floods. The interaction between glacial lake outburst floods and landslide dam outburst floods amplifies flood risks in the downstream settlements.

The southern plains are more susceptible to floods and sediment deposits. Sediments eroded from the Himalaya are transported and deposited on the southern plains. Such depositions can change the river landscape and inundate floodplains. The Koshi flood of August 2008 is a typical example where embankment failure altered the river course. The flood deposited large amounts of sediment on agricultural fields, drastically reduced crop yields and affected millions.

Land use and land cover changes can increase the risk of wildfire, landslide and flood. Wildfires can make the landscape susceptible to landslides even under normal rainfall conditions. Deforestation and unplanned earthen road constructions

exacerbate the risk of landslides and flooding, particularly during the monsoon season.

Human activities most often cause wildfires. Wildfires and severe heat waves in the southern plains have been happening more frequently in recent decades. Dry wind exacerbates wildfires, magnifies air pollution and threatens public health. Rainfall over the burned areas can cause flash floods, increase soil erosion, and drastically deteriorate water quality.

Cascading hazards lead to cascading failures across critical systems. For example, urban areas like Kathmandu and Bhaktapur are at high risk of heavy floods due to unmanaged development patterns and river encroachment. Floods overwhelm the drainage system, lower water quality, inundate the streets and destroy the power grid. Critical infrastructure such as fire departments, schools and hospitals lose access to power supply, transportation, water and communication.

Managing hazards

Investment in science is crucial for improv-

ing the prediction of cascading hazards and risks. More research is needed to understand what drives natural hazards, their interactions and failure modes, and how human and physical systems respond to risk and failures.

Better data and computer models are needed for effective hazard prediction. For instance, urban flood modelling requires a detailed representation of local rainfall, land surface characteristics, surface and subsurface flows, drainage networks, buildings, roads and water infrastructures (culverts and bridges). Predicting how risk evolves with time requires a sound understanding of future climatic conditions, development patterns, vegetation dynamics, demographic changes and adaptation strategies.

Opportunities exist in improving the predictions of cascading hazards. Recent advances in modelling capabilities, emerging computational innovations (high-performance computing, artificial intelligence and machine learning), and the availability of high-resolution remote sensing and satellite information can help in improving our understanding, modelling and predictions of cascading hazards.

Reliable early warning systems are critical for disaster preparedness and management. However, current early warning systems focus on a single isolated event, mostly on heavy rainfall and floods. We need to develop, expand and automatise early warning systems to communicate the risk associated with potential hazards, their interactions and cascading phenomena.

Infrastructure design specifications must change with the changing climate. Engineers often rely on historical climate records to design water infrastructure, transportation systems and commercial buildings. Scientists have produced many different projections of future climate. Engineers and decision-makers need to evaluate the performance of design strategies across the entire plausible range of future climates to identify robust design choices.

Adaptation and mitigation responses should be socially equitable, scientifically sound and economically efficient. Such an approach helps to enhance resilience in diverse, vulnerable and underserved communities. Resilient risk management strategies could be expensive and require strategic investment policies. Engineers, climate scientists, risk analysts and policymakers must work closely to manage risk and optimise cost.

Sharma is an assistant research professor at Pennsylvania State University and Talchabhadel is a research scientist at Texas A&M University.

Conservation of insects

It is essential to highlight that insects are the ecosystem service providers running the world.

PRAYAN POKHAREL



The greatest biodiversity loss is expected to occur in invertebrates, specifically insects. Insects represent 75 percent of animals and plant species across the globe. There are approximately 5.5 million insect species, but only 10 percent have been identified so far. Above all, only 5000 insect species cause harm to agricultural plants, farm animals, or human beings.

Insects decline is a key threat to biodiversity loss because insects are directly related to human health. For example, if we completely remove pollinators from our ecosystem, global deaths would increase by 1.4 million annually from non-communicable and malnutritional-related diseases. We get our essential micronutrients (such as vitamins A and C, antioxidants, lycopene, b-tocopherol and folic acid) from insect-pollinated crops, where at least 87 percent of the major food crops directly depend on insects. Therefore, insect decline is an emerging global environmental risk. It is estimated that over 40 percent of insect species are endangered to extinction.

Use of insecticides

Insect-killing chemicals (insecticides) are the key drivers of worldwide insect decline, including other drivers such as loss of habitat and intensification of agriculture lands, fertiliser inputs, introduced species, and climate change. These toxic chemicals cause severely negative impacts on insects' survival (growth, development, life span, and fertility) and behaviour (choice of food plant, flight directions, a place to lay eggs, etc.)

In the agroecosystem, insects can be categorised into beneficial (good) and non-beneficial (bad or pest) insects. Beneficial insects include pollinators and natural enemies (predators and parasites) of the pest-insects. Economically, services of pollinators have been valued at over \$500 billion, while natural enemies of pest-insects have been valued at over \$400 billion.

Insecticides generally do not reach the target pest-insects, and significantly affect non-target organisms like beneficial insects, or other organisms. The negative effects of insecticides on pollinating insects such as bees and flies are dramatically high.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Insecticides use in Nepal

Insecticides, especially neonicotinoids, are widely used in Nepal. They are water-soluble, and their prophylactic usage pollutes water and soil that impact the aquatic ecosystem. Not only insects but the decline in various insect-eating birds is also linked to the use of neonicotinoids. Researchers found residues of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) in the soil samples from Rupandehi and Biratnagar, although DDT has been banned in Nepal since 2001. Unfortunately, Nepal has no proper control over pesticide usage.

Nepali farmers are unaware of pesticide risk. Therefore, educational programmes should be carried out and policies must be implemented for stricter regulations on pesticide use. Furthermore, to reduce the amount of farmland insecticides, government and non-government sectors should conduct integrated pest management (IPM) trainings/workshops by actively involving farmers.

Effects of artificial light

It is also very important to note that artificial light at night directly impacts the day/night cycle of plants and animals. Light pollution is one of the drivers of insect decline—too much artificial light in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Currently, around 25 percent of the Earth's surface is illuminated artificially. Different insect orders have different

impacts. Street lights act as vacuum cleaners to the night-flying insects such as moths because they get attracted to the artificial lights, disturbing their typical environment and behavioural patterns. Fireflies, which rely on bioluminescent signals to attract potential mates find it challenging in the places with an excessive amount of light. Another example is mayflies that live and breed only for a day. Light reflecting off a pitch road can confuse them to lay their eggs on the road instead of water surfaces—this single error may eliminate the population overnight. Research suggests using amber-filtered LED bulbs instead of white LED bulbs attract fewer insects.

Protecting the insects

The Himalayan range is a highly vulnerable ecosystem, especially due to climate change and biodiversity loss. Reports suggest that the earth's temperature will be at least 0.3 degrees Celsius higher in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region than the expected global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius. In the context of Nepal, our biodiversity is largely at risk because of climate change, alien/invasive species, land-use change, pollution, etc. For example, Nepal is one of the top 10 countries with the highest air pollution, and polluted air impacts insect-mediated plant pollination.

It is essential to highlight that insects are the ecosystem service providers running

the world. Humanity must save insects as human-insect interaction is intertwined. Apart from food security, insects serve in nutrient cycling, soil formation, decomposition, biological pest control, maintenance of the food web, and many more.

Each of us can participate in the conservation of insects by adopting behaviours and habits, regardless of background and occupation, that mitigate insect declines. For instance, one should plant flowers in the garden or backyard that attract insects or grow native plants and limit the use of artificial exterior lighting. Instead of being afraid, parents and educators should encourage children and students to change their perception of insects as beautiful animals.

Strikingly, Nepal contributes the largest volume of published literature on the realm of ecology, particularly on Himalayan biodiversity. For now, research should be aimed at better understanding the changes in insect abundance and diversity. Nepali researchers and the general public must urgently call for prioritising insect conservation to develop government policies by creating a mini-jungle for insects (and birds) by planting native wildflowers.

Pokharel is a scientific employee at the University of Hohenheim, Germany, and a visiting scientist at the Gandaki Province Academy of Science and Technology (GPAST), Nepal.

Call for columns

The Kathmandu Post invites well-researched, unapologetic opinion pieces. To make sure your articles get our attention, please keep the following things in mind when inquiring and submitting your pieces.

All your opinion pieces should be pitched to the Opinion desk—not to the editor. Email your piece or pitch (along with a high-resolution headshot and a one-line bio) to tkpoped@kmg.com.np.

We will respond only to pitches that have original ideas. Plagiarism will lead to blacklisting. We suggest that you google your pitch before writing to us. If you're submitting an article that the Post or other publications have already covered, tell us why your piece offers something new.

Let us know what your expertise is on the topic you're interested in exploring. The Post receives dozens of pitches every day from aspiring writers, students, analysts, activists, entrepreneurs and diplomats. We are not able to respond to every single email, but if we like your idea, we will get back to you within a week.

INTERVIEW

‘Subsidies are just like circulating blood from the left arm to the right’



POST PHOTO: DEEPAK KC

Ken Schoolland.

Ken Schoolland is an Associate Professor of Economics and Director of the Entrepreneurship Centre at Hawai'i Pacific University in Honolulu. Schoolland served as an international economist in the US International Trade Commission, the US Department of Commerce, and on assignment to the Office of the Special Representative for Trade Negotiations. Schoolland has authored two books: *The Adventures of Jonathan Gullible: A Free Market Odyssey*, now published in 53 languages; and *Shogun's Ghost: The Dark Side of Japanese Education*, in two languages. The Post's **Sangam Prasain** caught up with Schoolland last week during his visit to Kathmandu to discuss the global economy in the context of rising costs and war, and the initiative of poor countries like Nepal to tackle the situation. Excerpts:

How do you assess the current global economy?

Certainly, the crisis is hitting throughout the world. The coronavirus was bad enough, but the lockdown was worse because it turned the global economies downward in such a way that it further impoverished people and made it harder to cope with the disease and other problems. And then it was compounded with the Russia-Ukraine war, which had a huge impact on oil, food and fertiliser prices.

That's having a big impact, especially in Asia and Africa. At the same time, I need to say, many countries, including the US and Europe, have been inflating their currencies. Because the coronavirus has been phased out, they think that problem will be resolved by printing lots of money. That is causing horrendous inflation, which is the most damaging thing to low-income people.

That's devastating to the family who loses 12 to 15 percent of their income to inflation. But it doesn't hit everybody the same. The impact is really hard on poor people. I fear this is the beginning of a recession in the US and Europe. This will impact other countries like Nepal and India too because the demand for products would drop. The demand for labour would also drop when the economy goes down. The situation is troubling.

Higher fuel prices, against the background of recovering demand follow-

ing the Covid-19 pandemic, have already caused high inflation around the world. How would it impact countries like Nepal that are fully dependent on imports, mainly fuel?

This is just the beginning. I think many countries are already in recession. There would be a downturn but the timing is uncertain. We will probably be in the worst situation that we expect. In the US, there is a housing bubble, the interest rates are soaring, I think that the bubble could be pretty bad when it pops out. In my view, there is always a good and responsible solution to the problem. But politicians don't want to. Politicians usually look into the problem whenever there is a problem. The government, in fact, is the cause of the problem in the first place.

The solution is to free up the economy. There are many many taxes. There are many many controls and regulations on the economy that cripple the economy. That's why people leave the

country because it's too hard to find prosperity at home. The solution is right in front of them. If the politicians open up the economy and remove the restrictions and controls on productivity activities, there will be a burst of economic activities.

New Zealand was the slowest growing economy in the industrial world after World War II, growing at 1 percent a year. They lost their export markets. They borrowed lots of money from around the world to subsidise the farmers. Soon they become the top country to subsidise the farmers. They finally ran out of credit because no one would fund them.

What they did was they held an election. The labour party, the socialist New Zealand party came into power and implemented the most radical free-market reform of any industrial country in the post-World War II era.

They removed farm subsidies in three months. The highest subsidy in the world started to give nothing in just three months. They started to

farm smartly. Instead of flat land, they started to farm on lean land. They started to serve the best restaurants in the world. They started to earn more money on less land. They started to end subsidies in all economies. They did massive divestment of government property.

The government used to own so many things that were inefficient and cost enormous subsidies and lost money. All ports, airlines, telecoms and railways were sold through competitive bidding that ended the subsidies and earned money from them. They became very productive. Instead of consuming taxpayers' money, the government enabled private agencies. They became fast economies because of being productive and efficient.

Should Nepal end subsidies on oil, fertiliser and others?

Yes. I believe deregulation would attract foreign investors. Deregulation and a low-cost market will definitely attract investors. It will become a great place to invest if the controls are removed. Reduce taxes and regulations if you want to be an attractive destination.

Is a politician wiser than an entrepreneur? I would say no. Politicians try to win favour by giving subsidies and incentives. What he does is he hands over the money from one person to another.

The person who receives feels good because his costs go down because of subsidies, but where does the money come from? It's obvious from the other. The first takes twice as much from another person. So by doing this, you are crippling other industries that are invisible to the politicians. Subsidies are just like circulating blood from the left arm to the right.

Lots of politicians are squandering, not only in Nepal but worldwide. They don't determine the market potential. Politicians have a different mindset. They are looking at votes, campaign contributions and payoffs. This makes corruption rampant, not only in Nepal but everywhere. Politicians always find ways to increase their power by providing solutions. When, in fact, if you diminish their power controls, you have a much better solution.

China's move to curb fertiliser exports is being felt around the world. India banned exports of some

food items. These situations, obviously, have exacerbated global prices, particularly in low-income countries like Nepal. Is that an unjustified restrictive measure in the free market economy?

I am not a fan of the World Trade Organisation. It is a deal-making organisation. The World Trade Organisation is based on the idea that "me producing my trade barriers is only good if you reduce your trade barriers". Protectionists say we are a better economy when we are upstream. The free traders say we are a better economy when we are downstream because it is easy to get to. The natural history of trade shows that many prosperous cities were once easy to get to downstream not upstream or on mountain tops which are difficult to get to. Henry George, an American political economist and journalist, says protectionism does to our own nation in peacetime, but the enemy does to us in wartime.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, every country in the world said we have to block their trade. The protectionists said you are then doing a favour to Russia. The free traders said you are crippling Russia. Free traders say trade barriers are harmful. The protectionists are putting trade barriers against their own countries. You don't have any justification.

People only favour protecting certain and favoured industries, and that's crony capitalism which will hurt the general population. The things India and China are doing are not the right approach. All countries are trying to manipulate the trade.

The Russia-Ukraine war has made everything expensive. Food and goods prices are reaching record levels. How should Nepal tackle these multitudes of threats?

Russia has shut down the huge productive capacity of food and fertiliser. There is a huge crisis. There is stagflation globally. Governments around the world are printing money to tackle the situation. The inflation is huge. It is rising. This will impact the poor country's growth aspiration largely for the long term. The interest rate should be between the supply and demand for money. The interest rate should not be manipulated by the central bank when inflation is rising.

FOREX	
US Dollar	127.11
Euro	128.69
Pound Sterling	152.03
Japanese Yen (10)	9.36
Chinese Yuan	18.96
Qatari Riyal	34.60
Australian Dollar	86.68
Malaysian Ringgit	28.71
Saudi Arab Riyal	33.86

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION		PRICE PER TOLA
Fine Gold		Rs 94,600
Silver		Rs 1,175

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

GASOLINE WATCH

SERVO 4T
ENGINE OILS
100% PERFORMANCE. EVERYTIME.

Petrol (Per Litre)	Rs 181.00/-
Diesel (Per Litre)	Rs 172.00/-
Kerosene (Per Litre)	Rs 172.00/-
LPG (Per cylinder)	Rs 1800/-

Source: Nepal Oil Corporation

BRIEFING

Russian 'McDonald's' runs short of French fries

MOSCOW: Former McDonald's restaurants in Russia are facing a shortage of French fries due to a poor harvest and Western sanctions over Ukraine, a business newspaper reported on Friday. The US fast-food giant announced in May that it would exit Russia in the wake of Moscow's offensive in Ukraine. A Russian businessman bought the 850-restaurant operation, with the brand now known as "Vkusno i Tochka" ("Delicious. Full Stop"). The restaurant that launched McDonald's in Russia in 1990, heralding Moscow's opening after decades of Soviet rule, reopened in June with a new name and logo. But now some restaurants of the chain are seeing a shortage of French fries. "Some of the newly-opened Vkusno i Tochka restaurants will not have any French fries," business newspaper RBC said, quoting the company. "Vkusno i Tochka" did not immediately reply to a request for comment from AFP. The shortage has been linked to a poor harvest in 2021 as well as the company's inability to import potatoes from several countries due to Western sanctions. (AFP)

Singapore minister says India needs higher economic growth to create jobs

NEW DELHI: India needs to achieve higher economic growth by focusing on exports and expanding production-linked incentives for more sectors to create more jobs, Singapore's minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said on Friday. "India needs much higher growth and much deeper inclusivity ... India must grow by at least 8 percent to 10 percent over the next 25 years," Shanmugaratnam, minister in charge of the Monetary Authority of Singapore, said while delivering a lecture in memory of Arun Jaitley, India's former finance minister. He said higher economic growth was the only way to lift average incomes and create jobs for the country's large young population. (REUTERS)



Workers weed a paddy field at Khokana in Lalitpur. An ongoing fertiliser crisis worries farmers.

REUTERS

Japan election may be tailwind for nuclear restarts

REUTERS
TOKYO, JULY 9

Japan's push to restart nuclear reactors, shut down after the Fukushima disaster a decade ago, could get a tailwind as the governing coalition looks set for gains in a national election on Sunday.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's coalition is on track to expand its majority in the upper house of parliament, polls show, in an election where nuclear restarts have been an issue, along with inflation and defence.

This comes just as an early summer, record heatwave and authorities' daily pleas to save energy have helped nudge Japanese voters toward the idea of swifter restarts.

A boost for Kishida's pro-nuclear party would not directly affect decisions on restarting reactors, as they require the approval of local commu-

nities. But public support for his agenda could be a tailwind as the national mood shifts.

Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) wants to boost nuclear back to 20 percent-22 percent of Japan's energy mix by 2030 from less than 5 percent now, keen to restore a stable source of electricity after all plants were shut down in the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami that crippled the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

Consumers got a taste of the fragility of Japan's energy security last week when the government issued a rare power supply warning, as the hottest June on record prompted a surge in electricity demand.

Flaring tensions with Russia over its invasion of Ukraine have also threatened higher energy prices for a resource-poor nation grappling with inflation after prolonged deflation. Russia is a major supplier of Japan's

Consumers got a taste of the fragility of Japan's energy security last week.

liquefied natural gas and coal.

Japanese people have been hostile to nuclear power since the Fukushima disaster, but the mood has shifted. A Mainichi newspaper poll in May, for example, found 47 percent favoured restarts vs 30 percent opposed, a turnaround from 2018, when opponents outnumbered supporters 48 percent to 32 percent.

"I think nuclear restarts are going to be unavoidable if you think about global supply and Japan's energy situation," said 70-year-old Kazuhide

Masuyama, stopping to listen to an LDP candidate's speech in Tokyo's Takadanobaba district this week.

Despite ongoing anti-nuke protests, voters have a grudging sense that restarts cannot be helped, said Daiwa Securities senior economist Toru Suehiro.

"The aversion towards nuclear power is waning a bit now since people have high utility bills and the power shortage on their mind," Suehiro said.

His brokerage reckons just four more reactors will come online by March 2024, bringing the total to 14 of the 33 available nationwide for commercial use, and increasing nuclear to 9 percent of Japan's energy mix.

Kishida indeed may just be using pro-nuclear rhetoric to court conservative voters, who regard it as a national security imperative, to cover an

otherwise dovish platform, Suehiro said. Japan's energy security is becoming more, not less, precarious.

In an increasingly tense relationship with Moscow, Kishida said last weekend the Group of Seven industrial powers had agreed to cap Russian oil prices at around half the current level, a decision not announced by the G7. The Kremlin has slammed Japan for its "very unfriendly position", hinting at the possibility of cutting off its energy supply.

A power shortage in recent days, during the unseasonal heat, has eased, but most of the country has uncomfortably low reserve power capacity for the winter months.

"There's got to be some soul-searching over why action couldn't be taken earlier," Kengo Sakurada, head of the Keizai Doyukai business lobby, said last week as companies dimmed lights and suspended production.

Musk abandons deal to buy Twitter; company says it will sue

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CALIFORNIA, JULY 9

Elon Musk announced on Friday that he will abandon his tumultuous \$44 billion offer to buy Twitter after the company failed to provide enough information about the number of fake accounts. Twitter immediately fired back, saying it would sue the Tesla CEO to uphold the deal.

The likely unravelling of the acquisition was just the latest twist in a saga between the world's richest man and one of the most influential social media platforms, and it may portend a titanic legal battle ahead.

Twitter could have pushed for a \$1 billion breakup fee that Musk agreed to pay under these circumstances. Instead, it looks ready to fight to complete the purchase, which the company's board has approved and CEO Parag Agrawal has insisted he wants to consummate.

In a letter to Twitter's board, Musk lawyer Mike Ringler complained that his client had for nearly two months sought data to judge the prevalence of "fake or spam" accounts on the social media platform.

"Twitter has failed or refused to provide this information. Sometimes Twitter has ignored Mr Musk's requests, sometimes it has rejected them for reasons that appear to be unjustified, and sometimes it has claimed to comply while giving Mr Musk incomplete or unusable information," the letter said.

Musk also said the information is fundamental to Twitter's business and financial performance, and is needed to finish the merger. In response, the chair of Twitter's board, Bret Taylor, tweeted that the board is "committed to closing the transaction on the price and terms agreed upon" with Musk and "plans to pursue legal action to enforce the merger agreement. We are confident we will prevail in the Delaware Court of Chancery."

Much of the drama surrounding the deal has played out on Twitter, with Musk—who has more than 100 million followers—lamenting that the company was failing to live up to its potential as a platform for free speech.

On Friday, shares of Twitter fell 5 percent to \$36.81, well below the \$54.20 that Musk agreed to pay.

WORLD

BRIEFING

UK's Conservative Party looking to speed up leadership contest, member says

LONDON: The Conservative Party committee overseeing the contest to select British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's replacement will look to whittle it down to two names by July 20, one of its members said on Saturday. The so-called 1922 Committee will set out the exact rules and timetable for the contest next week after Johnson was forced to quit by his own party. Many lawmakers are pushing for a fast-tracked process. Four Conservative lawmakers have officially confirmed their desire to be the next leader, but about a dozen others are also expected to run for the job. Conservative lawmakers will hold a series of votes to reduce the field to two final candidates.

Chinese minister hopes Canada ties can get back on track

BEIJING: China hopes relations with Canada can get back on track, China's foreign ministry said on Saturday, citing its minister telling his Canadian counterpart, after several years of strained relations between them. Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the Canadian minister, Melanie Joly, that their countries had never been rivals but partners, and China had never been posed a threat but an opportunity. The ministers met on Friday on the sidelines of a G20 meeting in Bali, Indonesia. Tension between China and Canada deepened after Canada in 2018 detained an executive of Huawei on a US warrant linked to a suspected breach of US sanctions on Iran.

Iran detains prominent activist, filmmakers on security charges

DUBAI: Iranian authorities have arrested a prominent reformist activist and two filmmakers on charges of acting against national security, local media said on Friday. Mostafa Tajzadeh, a former reformist deputy interior minister turned activist, was detained on charges of "acting against national security and spreading lies to disturb public opinion", the semi-official news agency Mehr reported. The hardline government of President Ebrahim Raisi has been facing public discontent, with soaring food prices sparking protests in recent months. (AGENCIES)

Abe's body returns home as Japan grieves

A night vigil will be held tomorrow. Funeral will take place on Tuesday, attended by close friends, according to reports.



People queue up to offer flowers and pray at the site where late former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe was shot in Nara on Saturday.

REUTERS
NARA/TOKYO, JULY 9

A motorcade carrying the body of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrived at his home in the Japanese capital on Saturday, a day after he was assassinated by a lone gunman in a rare act of political violence that has shocked the country.

Mourners gathered at his residence and at the scene of Friday's attack in the western city of Nara, where Japan's longest-serving modern leader was gunned down while making a campaign speech, a murder decried by the political establishment as an attack on democracy itself.

Authorities are reviewing security arrangements at the event where Abe was shot from close range by a 41-year-old unemployed man armed with a homemade gun. Police say the man held a grudge against Abe.

Elections for seats in Japan's upper

house of parliament are going ahead as scheduled on Sunday.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was back on the campaign trail visiting regional constituencies after making an emergency return to Tokyo on Friday after the shooting.

A metal detector, not normally seen at election events in largely crime-free Japan, was installed at a site in Fujiyoshida city where Kishida was due to give a campaign speech. There was also a heavy police presence.

In Nara, some 450 km southwest of Tokyo, a stream of people queued up to lay flowers on a table, that also held a photograph of Abe. "I'm just shocked that this kind of thing happened in Nara," Natsumi Niwa, a 50-year-old housewife, said after offering her flowers, with her 10-year-old son, near the scene of the killing outside a downtown train station.

Niwa explained how Abe, a conservative and architect of the "Abenomics" policies aimed at reflation the economy, had inspired the name of her son,

Killer wielded homemade gun, grudge over mother's bankruptcy, police say

NARA: The man who killed Shinzo Abe believed the former Japanese leader was linked to a religious group he blamed for his mother's financial ruin and spent months planning the attack with a homemade gun, police told local media on Saturday.

Tetsuya Yamagami, an unemployed 41-year-old, identified as the suspect on suspicion of murder on Friday after a man was seen in videos repeatedly shown on Japanese television calmly approaching Japan's longest-serving prime minister from behind and firing.

Wiry and bespectacled with shaggy hair, the suspect was seen stepping into the road behind Abe, who was standing on a riser at an intersection, before unloading two shots from a 40-cm-long weapon wrapped with

Masakuni. Abe used to hail Japan as a "beautiful nation". "Kuni" means nation in Japanese.

A night vigil will be held on Monday. Abe's funeral will take place on Tuesday, attended by close friends, media said. There was no immediate word on any public memorial service.

Sunday's election is expected to deliver victory to the ruling coalition led by Kishida, an Abe protege.

Abe's killing "heightens the prospect for stronger turnout and greater support for his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)", Eurasia Group analysts wrote in a note.

The LDP, where Abe retained considerable influence, had already been expected to gain seats before the assassination. Abe, 67, served twice as prime minister, stepping down citing ill health on both occasions.

But he remained a member of parliament and influential leader in the LDP after stepping down for the second time in 2020. A strong election performance by the LDP "could catalyze Kishida to push for Abe's unfulfilled goal of amending Japan's constitution to allow for a stronger role for the military", James Brady, vice president at advisory firm Teneo, wrote in a note.

Kishida visited Abe's residence in Tokyo to pay his respects on Saturday, the Kyodo news agency reported.

War in spotlight at G20 meeting as Russians try to advance in Ukraine

REUTERS
KWV, JULY 9

Ukrainian forces battled on Saturday to block Russian military advances into the eastern region of Donbas, a provincial governor said, as Ukraine urged its allies to send it more weapons.

Signalling that the Kremlin was in no mood for compromise, President Vladimir Putin said sanctions against Russia for the invasion it launched in February risked causing "catastrophic" energy price rises.

His top diplomat, Sergei Lavrov, clashed with his Western counterparts at a G20 meeting in Indonesia, where they urged Russia to allow Ukraine to ship its blockaded grain out to an increasingly hungry world. Russia's envoy to Britain, meanwhile, offered little prospect of a pullback from parts of Ukraine under Russian control.

Ambassador Andrei Kelin told Reuters that Russian troops would capture the rest of Donbas in eastern Ukraine and were unlikely to withdraw from land across the southern coast.

Ukraine would eventually have to strike a peace deal or "continue slipping down this hill" to ruin, he said.

On the front lines in the east, Ukrainian officials reported heavy Russian shelling of towns and villages as Russian forces attacked from several directions.

"Russians are firing along the entire front line," the governor of the Luhansk region, Serhiy Gaidai, said on the Telegram message system. "The enemy is trying to advance from the settlements of the Luhansk region to the villages of Donetsk region."

Russia says it wants to wrest control of the entire Donbas, the eastern industrial heartland made up of Luhansk and Donetsk provinces, on behalf of Moscow-backed separatists in two self-proclaimed people's republics.

After taking the city of Lysychansk last Sunday and effectively cementing control of Luhansk, Russia has made clear it is planning to capture parts of neighbouring region. Gaidai said Russian forces had not paused after their recent advances in the east.

Sri Lanka protesters storm president's ...

>> Continued from page 1

The association said that the president, prime minister and the government would be held responsible if people died or were maimed. It urged the leaders to heed the cry of the people, resign and hand over the reins to an all-party government.

The crowds earlier Saturday broke into Rajapaksa fortified residence. Footage showed people in a jubilant mood taking a dip in the garden pool of the residence.

Some lay on beds, others made tea and drank, and made "statements" from the conference room that Rajapaksa and Wickremesinghe must immediately quit.

It was not clear if Rajapaksa was inside his residence when it was stormed. A government spokesman, Mohan Samaranyake, said he had no information about his movements.

Leaders of political parties in Parliament met later and decided to request Rajapaksa and Wickremesinghe to step down, opposition lawmaker Rauff Hakeem said on Twitter. He said a consensus was reached that the parliamentary speaker should take over as temporary president and work on an interim government.

Sri Lanka's economy is in a state of collapse, relying on aid from India and other countries as its leaders try to negotiate a bailout with the International Monetary Fund. The economic meltdown has led to severe

shortages of essential items, leaving people struggling to buy food, fuel and other necessities.

The turmoil has led to months of protests, which have nearly dismantled the Rajapaksa political dynasty that has ruled Sri Lanka for most of the past two decades.

The president's older brother resigned as prime minister in May after violent protests saw him seek safety at a naval base. Much of the public ire has been pointed at the Rajapaksa family, with protesters blaming them for dragging Sri Lanka into chaos with poor management and allegations of corruption.

At the president's seaside office, security personnel tried to stop demonstrators who pushed through fences to run across the lawns and inside the colonial-era building.

At least 34 people including two police officers were wounded in scuffles as protesters tried to enter the residence. Two of the injured are in critical condition while others sustained minor injuries, said an official at the Colombo National Hospital who spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

Thousands of protesters entered the capital from the suburbs after police lifted an overnight curfew. With fuel supplies scarce, many crowded onto buses and trains to come to the city to protest, while others made

their way on bicycles and on foot.

Protest and religious leaders called on Rajapaksa to step down, saying he has lost the people's mandate.

"His claim that he was voted in by the Sinhala Buddhists is not valid now," said Ven. Omalpe Sobitha, a prominent Buddhist leader. He urged Parliament to convene immediately to select an interim president but said that Wickremesinghe did not enjoy the people's support.

Last month, Wickremesinghe said the country's economy has collapsed. He said that the negotiations with the IMF have been complex because Sri Lanka was now a bankrupt state.

In April, Sri Lanka announced it is suspending repaying foreign loans due to a foreign currency shortage. Its total foreign debt amounts to \$51 billion of which it must repay \$28 billion by the end of 2027.

Police had imposed a curfew in Colombo and several other main urban areas on Friday night but withdrew it Saturday morning amid objections by lawyers and opposition politicians who called it illegal.

US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie Chung on Friday asked people to protest peacefully and called for the military and police "to grant peaceful protesters the space and security to do so."

"Chaos & force will not fix the economy or bring the political stability that Sri Lankans need right now," Chung said in a tweet.

India fines Amnesty nearly \$8 million after funding probe

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

India has fined the local arm of Amnesty International nearly \$8 million after a probe into its finances the watchdog said was part of a "witch hunt".

Rights groups have long claimed they face harassment from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist administration for highlighting rights abuses, including in the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Amnesty's local bank accounts were frozen in 2020 as part of the probe, forcing the group to lay off staff and halt campaign and research work.

India's Enforcement Directorate, the agency responsible for investigating financial crimes, said on Friday that Amnesty had broken foreign funding laws by directing overseas contributions to expand its local operations.

In a statement, it said Amnesty India had been fined \$6.5 million for receiving illegal foreign contributions, while its former chief executive Aakar Patel was fined an additional \$1.3 million.

Amnesty India said the allegations against it were "patently untrue" and criticised the Enforcement Directorate for issuing press releases on the case before serving legal notices.

"Putting a squeeze on its critics through trumped-up charges under repressive laws has become routine for this Indian Government," the group said on Twitter.

Like in Russia under President Vladimir Putin and Viktor Orban's Hungary, critics say Modi's government has sought to pressure rights groups by heavily scrutinising their finances and clamping down on foreign funding.

In 2015, the year after Modi took office, the Indian government froze the bank accounts of environmental organisation Greenpeace's India unit.

Amnesty faced sedition charges, later dropped, the following year over an event to discuss human rights violations in Kashmir.

In 2018, the Enforcement Directorate raided Amnesty's office in Bangalore, and the watchdog said investigators later selectively leaked documents to the media.

In 2020, Amnesty India said the freezing of its accounts was part of an "incessant witch-hunt of human rights organisations".

Patel was stopped from flying to the United States earlier this year because of the government's legal action against the human rights watchdog.

US tells China its support for Russia complicates relations

Just two days earlier, the countries' top military officers had faced off over Taiwan during a virtual meeting.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (right) shakes hands with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi during a meeting in Nusa Dua on the Indonesian resort island of Bali on Saturday.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NUSA DUA, JULY 9

China's support for Russia's war in Ukraine is complicating US-Chinese relations at a time when they are already beset by rifts and enmity over numerous other issues, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his Chinese counterpart on Saturday.

In five hours of talks in their first-to-face meeting since October, Blinken said he expressed deep concern to Foreign Minister Wang Yi about China's stance on Russia's actions in Ukraine and did not believe Beijing's protestations that it is neutral in the conflict.

The talks had been arranged in a new effort to try to rein in or at least manage rampant hostility that has come to define recent relations between Washington and Beijing.

"We are concerned about the PRC's alignment with Russia," Blinken told reporters after the meeting in the Indonesian resort of Bali. He said it is difficult to be "neutral" in a conflict in which there is a clear aggressor but that even it were possible, "I don't believe China is acting in a way that is neutral."

The Biden administration had hoped that China, with its long history of opposing what it sees as interference in its own internal affairs, would

take a similar position with Russia and Ukraine. But it has not, choosing instead what US officials see as a hybrid position that is damaging the international rules-based order.

Blinken said every nation, China included, stands to lose if that order is eroded.

The two men met a day after they both attended a gathering of top diplomats from the Group of 20 rich and large developing countries that ended without a joint call to end Russia's war in Ukraine or plan for how to deal with its impacts on food and energy security.

However, Blinken said he believed Russia had come away from G-20 meeting isolated and alone as most participants expressed opposition to the Ukraine war. However, the ministers were unable to come to a unified G-20 call for an end to the conflict.

"There was a strong consensus and Russia was left isolated," Blinken said of individual condemnations of Russia's actions from various ministers, some of whom shunned conversations with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. On China, Blinken said he and Wang discussed a range of contentious issues from tariffs and trade and human rights to Taiwan and disputes in the South China Sea that have all been complicated by the Chinese position on Ukraine.

Four stabbed at major Shanghai hospital

REUTERS
SHANGHAI, JULY 9

Four people at a renowned Shanghai hospital were wounded by a knife-wielding assailant on Saturday, in the second reported stabbing incident after a Covid-19 lockdown of the financial hub was lifted early in June.

Officers raced to the more than 100-year-old Ruijin Hospital on Saturday morning after receiving calls about an attack, police said.

Videos on social media showed chaos as visitors clambered under turnstiles to get out of the hospital while doctors were seen running out with their patients, some in wheelchairs and one on a mobile bed.

A long trail of blood was seen on the marble surface of a flight of stairs in one video.

"It's very shocking," said a Shanghai resident who had arrived for a check-up just after the hospital was sealed off, declining to give her name.



Police officers walk outside the outpatient department of Ruijin Hospital following a stabbing incident in Shanghai on Saturday.

"This is very despairing. What has happened to this society?" Hospitals are a flashpoint for many in China, who face issues from touts ille-

gally trading appointment tickets, long queues to see doctors, and corruption that can push up the cost of receiving care.

Rybakina wins Wimbledon final, first Slam

The 17th seed beats Jabeur 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 to become the first player from Kazakhstan to win a Grand Slam singles title.



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, JULY 9

Russian-born Elena Rybakina powered back from a set down against Ons Jabeur to win the Wimbledon title on Saturday, denying the Tunisian world number two the chance to make African tennis history.

Jabeur was in charge at the start of the match but the 17th seed, representing Kazakhstan, regrouped and dropped just four more games on the way to a 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 victory.

"I never felt anything like this before," said the champion. "Congratulations to Ons for everything you have achieved. You are an inspiration to Tunisians and everybody. You played a great match."

Jabeur, 27, started in style, breaking Rybakina in the third game of the match when the Kazakh went long with a backhand. She followed that with a hold to love that included a delicious backhand pass angled past her opponent at the net.

Rybakina was under intense pressure on her own serve again as the set threatened to run away from her but she dug deep to hold for 3-2.

But she failed to force a single break point on the sun-baked Centre Court in the first set and an error-strewn service game gifted the set to Jabeur.

As Jabeur celebrated with a fist-pump, Rybakina returned to her chair contemplating a costly 17 unforced errors.

But momentum shifted immediately at the start of the second set as Rybakina broke Jabeur before holding for a 2-0 lead.

Rybakina had now found her rhythm and Jabeur had to battle hard to hold to stay in touch.

The 23-year-old Kazakh, who

Rybakina had never got past the quarter-finals of a Slam before this year's Wimbledon.

stands six feet (1.84 metres) tall, then fended off three break points before breaking again to take a 4-1 lead when Jabeur went long with a forehand.

Rybakina levelled the match with an ace as Jabeur reflected on four missed break-point opportunities in the set.

The 17th seed was first to strike in the decider, breaking straight away to heap the pressure on Jabeur.

The Tunisian squandered three break points in the sixth game as her frustration mounted and that proved to be her last chance.

Rybakina showed a few nerves in serving out for the set but won with her first championship point when Jabeur went long with a backhand.

Rybakina, playing in her first Slam final, switched allegiance to Kazakhstan in 2018.

Russian and Belarusian players are banned from Wimbledon this year following the invasion of Ukraine.

Rybakina had never got past the quarter-finals of a Slam before this year's Wimbledon.

Jabeur congratulated the winner, saying: "Hopefully next time it will be mine. Thanks to my team for support and believing in me," she said. "I love this tournament. I feel sad but that's tennis—there can only be one winner."

Karunaratne, Kusal power Sri Lanka reply

The batters share a 152-run partnership to guide the Lankans to 184-2 at close after Australia post 364.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GALLE, JULY 9

Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne and Kusal Mendis hit gritty half-centuries on Saturday to lead a strong Sri Lankan reply on day two of the second Test against Australia.

The hosts reached 184 for two at stumps in Galle, where only a few spectators watched from the stands after a fresh outbreak of political unrest in the country.

Karunaratne made 86 in a marathon stand of 152 with Kusal before Mitchell Swepson broke through with the captain's wicket. Kusal was still batting on 84 alongside Angelo Mathews, on six, at close of play, with Sri Lanka trailing Australia's first innings 364 by 180 runs.

Debutant Sri Lankan spinner Prabhat Jayasuriya claimed six wickets to bowl out Australia in the first session, with Steve Smith left unbeaten on 145.

"I enjoy playing away from home. I've missed it, we only had the three Tests in Pakistan, before that we had a pretty long lay-off because of Covid," Smith, who scored his first Test ton after 18 months, told reporters.

The hosts were dealt an early blow when Mitchell Starc's pace bowling got Pathum Nissanka to edge the ball to gully, where Cameron Green took a good catch.

The left hand-right hand batting pair of Karunaratne and Kusal survived an inspired spell of pace bowling from Starc and skipper Pat Cummins to grind their way through the afternoon.

Karunaratne raised his fifty with a

boundary off Swepson, while Kusal's stubborn resistance prompted Australia to rotate their bowlers.

Premier off-spinner Nathan Lyon who starred in the team's opening win with nine wickets, had 21 overs without success. Swepson eventually trapped Karunaratne lbw on a delivery that skidded straight into the batsman's pads.

The tourists started the day on 298-5 with Smith, who scored his first Test hundred in 18 months on day one, resuming on his 109.

Jayasuriya, who took three wickets on the opening day, set a trap for overnight batsman Alex Carey, who miscued a reverse sweep to be caught at backward point for 28. The left-arm spinner soon got Starc out for one to become the seventh Sri Lankan bowler to take five wickets in an innings on Test debut.

Jayasuriya was one of the three Sri Lankan players, along with Maheesh Theekshana and Kamindu Mendis, to be awarded a first Test cap following a Covid outbreak sidelining several members of the squad.

There were barely any spectators at Galle for the second day's play, with the host country embroiled in public unrest arising from its painful economic crisis. The morning session saw hundreds of protesters looking down on the Galle fort to demand the resignation of Sri Lanka's president—who fled his home on Saturday shortly before a huge crowd of protesters stormed his residence.

Australia lead the two-match series 1-0 after a crushing opening win inside three days during last week's first Test.

Spain, Germany launch Euro 2022 campaign in style

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MILTON KEYNES, JULY 9

Spain rebounded from the loss of star midfielder Alexia Putellas by beating Finland 4-1, as Germany also got their Euro 2022 campaign off to a flying start with a 4-0 win over Denmark on Friday.

La Roja had been pre-tournament favourites until the cruciate ligament injury to reigning female Ballon d'Or winner Putellas in training on Tuesday. However, Jorge Vilda's side showed why they are still contenders to win a first major women's tournament despite falling behind inside a minute to Linda Sallstrom's strike.

Goals from Irene Paredes, Aitana

Bonmati, Lucia Garcia and Mariona Caldentey extended Spain's unbeaten run stretching back to March 2020.

Walking with crutches and decked out in a Spain shirt, Putellas was in attendance to offer encouragement to her teammates. But the shock of losing their star woman rolled over into the slow start.

Anna Westerlund's long ball forward played Sallstrom clean through and the Paris FC striker produced a cool finish in off the far post.

But with all-time top goalscorer Jennifer Hermoso also out of the tournament through injury, they had to rely on the unusual route of crosses into the box to turn the game around.

Captain Paredes started the come-

back when she bulleted home a header from Caldentey's corner. Aitana Bonmati then produced a stunning header into the top corner to settle Spanish nerves before half-time. Garcia made sure of the points 15 minutes from time when she nodded Maria Leon's free-kick into the bottom corner before Caldentey slotted home a penalty with the last kick of the game.

Germany produced a stunning display to dismantle Euro 2017 finalists Denmark in London.

The eight-time winners were dominant from the start and could have been out of sight before half-time as Felicitas Rauch twice hit the crossbar. Lina Magull finally made the Germans' pressure count. The Bayern

Munich striker blasted into the roof of the net after charging down Stine Pedersen's attempted clearance. Lea Schuller headed home from a corner to double Martina Voss-Tecklenburg's women's lead just before the hour mark.

Germany rounded off a superb performance with two more goals in the final 12 minutes. Lena Lattwein smashed home a loose ball from close range before Alexandra Popp rounded off a fine team move by heading in at the back post.

Denmark's miserable night was summed up when Kathrine Moller Kuhl was sent off in stoppage time for a second bookable offence.

Germany face Spain next on Tuesday.



Spain's Irene Paredes (centre) celebrates scoring her side's first goal of the game during the Women's Euro 2022 match against Finland at the Stadium MK in Milton Keynes on Friday.

HOROSCOPE

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

Use the day to get back to basics, embracing only the people and activities that bring you the most peace. Meanwhile, a sweet connection between the sun and Uranus could bring pleasant surprises.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) ***

The day is perfect for indulging in a bit of Sunday cleaning. Shocking news could fall into your lap under this cosmic climate, though you may also find yourself being blessed with new and innovative ideas.

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

A flirtatious and love-oriented energy will fill the air this morning. These vibes are perfect for releasing your inhibitions and leading with an open heart, as your aura is blessed with glamour and grace.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) ***

You'll feel inspired to prioritize your health and wellness today. Look for ways to optimise your eating, sleeping, and exercise routines. The day is also ideal for an impromptu gathering with your friends.

LEO (July 23-August 22) ***

You'll feel alive and ready to make the most of what remains of the weekend today. These vibes are all about having fun and embracing life, so be sure to rally your besties for good times and good conversation.

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

The day is ideal for celebrating life from the comfort of your own space, making it a great day for hosting your family and friends. Don't be afraid to let down your guard and get intimate with someone you love.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***

Your voice will feel larger than life today. The day will bring brilliance to your psyche, helping you conjure exciting ideas. Use this energy to cuddle up with someone special or as an excuse to indulge in self-care.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) ***

The world will hand you an abundance of blessings today. Gifts and financial gain are all positive side effects of this luminary placement, making it a great time to search for ways to expand your wealth.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ***

You'll feel refreshed and ready to take on the world when you wake up today. You'll want to make the most of these vibes by focusing on goals and relationships that are the most important to you.

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

You'll be in a quiet yet optimistic mood today. This cosmic climate is perfect for listening to your heart and breaking out of your shell, though you'll only feel like talking to your best friends or a love interest.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) ***

You'll have a chance to grow your online presence today. Though you should certainly use this luminary placement as an excuse to publish a well-curated post, you may also want to find ways to support your local community.

PISCES (February 19-March 20) ***

You'll feel inspired to prioritise your responsibilities today. This cosmic climate will score you some karmic points if you handle your to-do list, which, in turn, will bring you closer to your goals.

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- Tomato jelly
 - Oklahoma town
 - Nonswimmer, maybe
 - Bow of the silents
 - Toshiba rival
 - Humble
 - Kafka topic
 - Taste or smell
 - Golf ball stand
 - Resembling
 - Lieu
 - Cobblers' tools
 - Smart-mouthed
 - Flowering shrub
 - Chevalier musical
 - Small flat-bottomed boats
 - Deer's rack
 - Melody
 - Good times
 - Warrior princess
 - Growled at
 - Pekoe packet
 - Strong, as venison
 - Something to pay
 - Rose pest
 - Antarctic explorer
 - Herring
 - Floor
 - Muscle spasm
- DOWN**
- No. on a bank statement
 - Fruit of the blackthorn
 - Smart-mouthed
 - Flowering shrub
 - Chevalier musical
 - Small flat-bottomed boats
 - Deer's rack
 - Melody
 - Good times
 - Warrior princess
 - Growled at
 - Pekoe packet
 - Strong, as venison
 - Something to pay
 - Rose pest
 - Antarctic explorer
 - Herring
 - Floor
 - Muscle spasm

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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

6-17-22 © 2016 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS

30 Tavern
33 Checkups
34 McEntire of country music
35 Pitfall
37 Not masc.
39 Make cheddar better
41 Shake
42 No gentleman
43 Flip-flop
44 Goddess of dawn
47 Doctor's bane?
48 Admire oneself

49 "Share" anagram
50 Way to climb
51 Too lenient
52 Smack
53 Tipster
54 Big brass
55 "Et tu" time
56 Stonehenge builder
59 Not well
60 Dead heat

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14					15			16				
17					18			19				
20					21			22				
23	24				25							
26	27	28			29	30						
31					32			33	34	35		
36					37			38			39	
40				41	42			43	44			
45								46				
47	48	49					50					
51					52	53			54	55	56	
57					58			59	60			
61					62			63				
64					65			66				

SUDOKU

3	5	6	8	7	2	4	1	9
7	9	8	4	3	1	6	5	2
2	1	4	9	6	5	3	8	7
6	7	9	5	8	4	2	3	1
8	2	3	7	1	6	9	4	5
5	4	1	3	2	9	8	7	6
9	3	5	6	4	7	1	2	8
4	6	2	1	5	8	7	9	3
1	8	7	2	9	3	5	6	4

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

7	1	2						
	8	9	6					
				1			2	
	1	7	8				4	
	4	5		9	7			
	5			4	2	9		
6		1						
			4	5	1			
		7			9		8	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Minimise entropy

After spending a week in his room, Suyash finally decided to take charge of his life.

SANDESH PARAJULI

Of late, he had grown fond of looking into the mirror, not because he was a narcissist, but because it was the only way he found company. However, he hated the person on the other side today, because, over the past few days, it was the same dull face over and over again. His eyes, which once used to gleam with confidence, projected misery. His lower eyelids were swollen, and his upper eyelids were drooped, drowsily covering a portion of his reddish-veined sclera. The corners of his mouth were drawn down, and his hair was unkempt.

Fed up with the disquieting drama of the outside world, he had sealed himself within the four walls of his melancholic room. But the inside world turned more ruthless, which made him loathe himself. He had neither seen sunlight nor eaten any cooked food for almost a week. He realised it was time to redeem.

He went to the washroom to wash his face. After coming out of the washroom, he quickly scanned his room to take stock of things. The carpet was full of rampantly strewn clothes. The room was messy with paper shreds and emptied packets of chips and biscuits. The bed sheet was crumpled and exposed the dirty mattress underneath. A part of the ragged quilt, whose cover looked stained and unwashed for months, lay hideously on the floor.

He went near his bed and pulled a wrinkled t-shirt from one of its side drawers. A phone, plugged into a charging socket, vibrated near his pillow. He gave it a quick glance and chose to ignore the call. As he put on the t-shirt, he realised it didn't smell good. So, he sprayed some perfume and smelt his armpits. "Better now," he thought and finally went to slide the curtains open.

As the bright sun rays pierced the glass window, he felt a sudden glare in his eyes, and his eyelids abruptly shut. He opened his eyes slowly. As his eyes adjusted to the day's brightness, his pupil constricted, and the dust gathered over the slats and rails of his bed became visible.

"Where the hell does this dust come from?" he muttered in annoyance and insanely started checking for small openings in the window.

"Dirt, dust, and garbage, everywhere, damn it!"

Frustrated, he sat on a chair and rested his arms on a bulky book that lay open on the table that overlooked the window. There was a huge stack of such books at



UNSPLASH

the end of the table. He had already read all of the books.

Right beside his right arm lay an ashtray that contained several cigarette butts and a bottle, which he shook to see if it was empty.

He then took a deep breath, stood up, and reached to unplug his mobile. There was an SMS that read: 'Son, we are so proud of you for graduating at the top of your class. We will be there on your convocation day.'

He didn't immediately know what to think about it. Does it even matter whether the entire world is proud of you if you are not proud of yourself? Maybe yes, and

maybe not. Perhaps, yes, when parents are your entire world.

A half smile appeared on his face as he placed the mobile phone inside his pocket and started walking towards his door. As he neared the door, his eyes caught the sight of a small note he had clipped at the door's handle about a month ago. Affected by the note's words, he turned around to glance at his room again.

He went straight towards the table, picked up the ashtray, and threw it out the window with all his strength. He wrapped the empty bottle with newspapers, took out a small hammer from a drawer, and started crushing the bottle, yelling, "No

more booze, no more booze!"

He took a deep breath and took some time to recollect himself. He got up and disposed of the shattered bottle in a bin. He made his bed, wiped away the dust, and cleaned the rest of the room. Within a few minutes, the room looked good enough to present a façade of cleanliness, except for a pen under the table whose ink was oozing out of its nib. He picked up the pen, headed to the door, and started scribbling on the note. He then took a picture of the note and set it as his smartphone's wallpaper.

He opened the door and stepped outside. Then, there was a momentary vibration inside his pocket. It was a text message

that read, "I am so sorry for what I have done to you, Suyash. Will you please forgive me?"

He suddenly felt nauseous, but before he could reply to the text, he saw his smartphone's wallpaper, which read 'Minimise Entropy'. Suyash took a quick breath and closed his eyes. "Well, well, let me differentiate first," he calmed himself down before he opened his eyes and walked away contemplatively to a place only a random-walk theorist could attempt to answer.

Parajuli is a student of aerospace engineering at IOE, Pulchowk Campus.



PRESENTS



Powered by



भविष्य, नेपालको

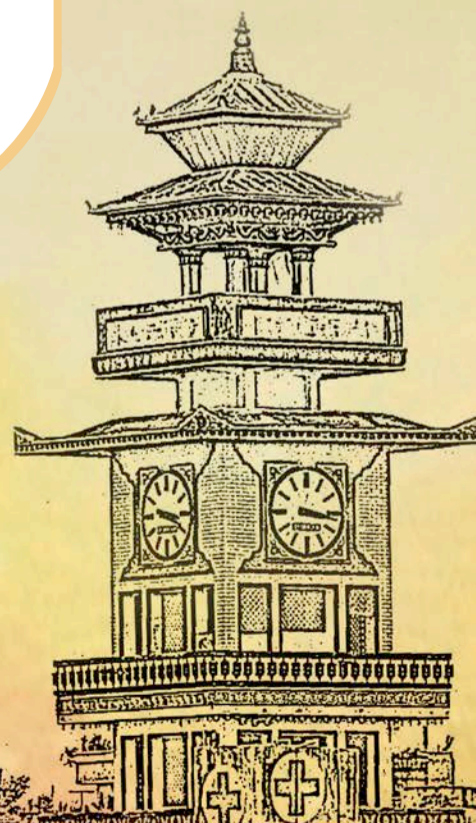


Thank You !

We would like to thank everyone for making Madhesh Manthan a grand success.

We express our sincere gratitude to all our sponsors, delegates, speakers, and participants. Your contributions are highly appreciated, and we look forward to your support in the future.

Let's work together on the development of Madhesh Pradesh.



In association with

