

THE KATHMANDU POST

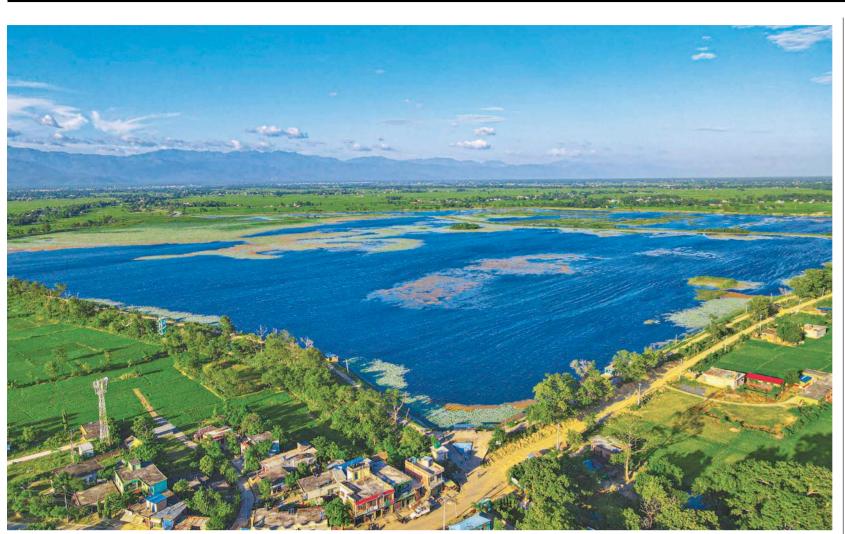
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Jagadishpur Lake in Kapilvastu pictured on Monday. The Ramsar-listed wetland is believed to host the second largest number of birds and the highest number of water bird species in Nepal. Spread over 157 hectares, the lake area is home to 167 bird species, records show

INSIDE

Madhesh parties fighting for relevance in their own base

KATHMANDU: As seat-sharing negotiations are underway in the ruling coalition, two major Madhes-based parties are also working out strategies to improve their poll prospects. While the Janata Samajbadi Party, which is part of the coalition, is mulling over quitting the ruling alliance and joining hands with other parties, including the CPN-UML, the Loktantrik Samajbadi Party is wondering if it should join the ruling alliance. Even the Nepali Congress, the leader of the ruling coalition, appears willing to bring the Loktantrik Samajbadi on board. Complexities, however, remain. The two Madhesh-based parties are likely to face a tough time during the polls, even if their leaders maintain they are in a comfortable

Erdogan throws Turkey's support behind Ukraine

LVIV: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday threw Turkey's support behind Ukraine and warned of the danger of "another Chernobyl" disaster erupting at a nuclear power plant held by invading Russian forces. The Turkish leader met his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky in Lviv just two weeks after flying to Sochi for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin during which the two sides pledged to boost economic cooperation. But Erdogan told reporters that NATO member Turkey remained firmly on Ukraine's side in the conflict and would continue its diplomatic efforts to end the fighting. (Related report on Pg 6)

Citizenship Bill, returned by President, passed by House without change

The bill will be sent to President Bhandari again once it is endorsed by the National Assembly.



The House passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill with majority votes on Thursday.

BINOD GHIMIRE KATHMANDU, AUG 18

The House of Representatives on Thursday endorsed the bill to amend the Citizenship Act 2006, which was returned by President Bidya Devi Bhandari for a review, without any

The bill that was endorsed with a majority vote will be sent to the President's Office again for authentication after it gets through the National

After sitting on the bill for 14 days, Bhandari on Sunday returned it to the lower house with a 15-point message and comments on seven provisions of

the bill, urging Parliament to review it. However, the House didn't review it as the ruling parties decided to resend it for authentication without any changes.

'The bill to amend the Citizenship Act returned by the President for review with comments has been endorsed by majority votes,' announced Speaker Agni Sapkota.

"Of the total 195 lawmakers present, 135 voted in favour while 60 voted

>> Continued on page 2

Nepal clears India to develop \$2.4 billion hydropower projects left by China

The 1,200MW projects, mooted as storage type on the Seti river, are located in far-western Nepal, and sprawl over four districts—Baihang, Doti, Dadeldhura and Achham.

SANGAM PRASAIN KATHMANDU, AUG 18

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investment that

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on fixed deposit

Nepal has formally awarded the much-touted West Seti Hydropower Project and Seti River Project in western Nepal to India through a negotiation window, nearly four years after China withdrew from it.

Investment Board Nepal on Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with India's state-owned NHPC Limited to develop the two projects—West Seti and Seti River (SR6)—joint storage projects totalling 1200MW.

Thursday's development may be seen as an attempt to mend soured relations with India by Sher Bahadur Deuba after his election as prime min-

ister in July last year. The 750MW West Seti and 450MW SR6 projects cover four districts-Bajhang, Doti, Dadeldhura and Achham in far-western Nepal.

As per a 2007 study, the West Seti project has been envisaged to generate energy throughout the year, storing excess wet season river flows in the reservoir, and using this water to generate energy during peak demand periods in the dry season (December-May). Sushil Bhatta,

As per a 2007 study, the West Seti project has been envisaged to generate energy throughout the year.

CEO of the Investment Board Nepal and Abhay Kumar Singh, chairman and managing director of NHPC Ltd, signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organisations, Kathmandu on Thursday.

On the occasion, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba said the agreement would serve as an important instrument in enhancing Nepal-India energy cooperation. "Implementation of these projects will help expand and strengthen bilateral trade and investments," the prime minister said.

"During my recent visit to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and I agreed on a vision statement on cooperation in the power sector, underlining the need for strengthening mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in

>> Continued on page 5



SEAMASTER AQUA TERRA

As its name suggests, the Aqua Terra crosses many boundaries. Developed from a long line of ocean-watches, it shares DNA with our most rugged sports chronometers, yet is infused with the design sensibility of a classic dress watch. Continuing that spirit, today's Co-Axial Master Chronometer models are tested and certified at the highest level by the Swiss Federal Institute of Metrology (METAS). This guarantees more accuracy, reliability and supreme resistance to magnetism from electronic devices, such as phones and laptops, making the Aqua Terra the ultimate everyday watch.



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1 Durbar Mall , Thamsherku Center, Durbar Marg • MGA Internation

The bill that was and the bill this is

What did King Birendra do with the bill to amend Citizenship Act 1964 that became a topic of discussion after President Bhandari returned the bill to amend Citizenship Act 2006?

TIKA R PRADHAN & TUFAN NEUPANE KATHMANDU, AUG 18

Days after President Bidya Devi Bhandari returned the bill to amend Citizenship Act 2006 with a 15-point message, the House of Representatives on Thursday passed the bill in its existing form. Once the National Assembly passes the bill, it will be sent back to the President again for authentication. This time, the President will have to

authenticate it within 15 days from the date of receiving it as per the constitutional provisions. The President's move of returning

the bill left politicians divided, with

those from the ruling parties taking exception to it while those from the opposition hailing the action. There, however, is no denying that the President exercised her constitutional powers to return the bill. One

political brouhaha. While returning the bill, the President called on the House of Representatives to take a historical

key issue, however, got buried in the



King Birendra is said to have returned the citizenship bill in 2000. But did he?

overview of issues surrounding citizenship and reminded lawmakers of an incident from 2000. She referred to the amendment bill to the Citizenship Act 1964, which was passed by the lower house on June 11, 2000 but was rejected by the upper house on June 13 that year. The lower house, however,

rejected the upper house proposal for a review on July 26 that year.

It is known to all that the bill failed to take the form of an Act, the President said in her message to the House.

The Post inquired with the Parliament Secretariat about the incident. Officials said they had no documents regarding that amendment bill.

"We have long been trying to locate the documents but haven't found them," Narayan Dhakal, chief at the bills section of the secretariat, told the Post.

Some documents that are available, however, show that then Speaker Taranath Ranabhat had certified the citizenship bill as a "money bill," and he had sent the bill to King Birendra the then head of the state— for authentication on December 1, 2000.

When the Post reached out to Ranabhat, he said he could not exactly recall the incident and that there must have been some circumstances that prompted him to certify the citizenship

amendment bill as a "money bill." >> Continued on page 2

Mid-day meal budget misused in Kalikot

Government schools in the district say they are spending the meal money to pay salaries to privately-hired teachers.

When Man Bahadur Bishwakarma first heard about the mid-day meal programme at local schools, he was relieved because he no longer had to worry, or so he thought, about what his children would eat

But he soon learnt that his children were not getting the promised daily meal.

Already running his household on a shoestring budget, Man Bahadur said he feels dejected and let down by the system

"I have seven children to feed. Four of them go to school so I was hoping at least they wouldn't go hungry. But that's not the case," said the 41-year-old farmer from Khandachakra Municipality-4,

Four among seven of Man Bahadur's children study at the local Navajyoti Basic School. His eldest daughter is an eighth grader in another school while two others are not yet of school-going age.

"I asked the school administration about it, but the school said that the money meant for mid-day meal is being spent on teachers' salaries," Man Bahadur said.

The mid-day meal programme was introduced in 2017 in collaboration with the World Food Programme to ensure children in community schools get a healthy, nutritious diet and control malnutrition. The programme has also been helpful to make school kids regular to their classes.

But most people from the target population are deprived of such facilities. The state also provides scholarships to the children of poor and needy people like Man Bahadur.

Community schools in Kalikot, meanwhile, say they have no alternative to using the mid-day meal budget to pay teachers since the authorities have left several teachers' posts vacant.

"We have to hire private teachers to run the school and we have to pay them their salaries," said Ram Bahadur Bogati, headmaster of Navajyoti Basic School. "The authorities are yet to manage teacher posts at the school, so we have to use the funds meant for the mid-day meal and scholarships

Navajyoti Basic School, which currently has five teachers appointed through private sources, received Rs543,720 for the mid-day meal programme in the last academic session. The entire amount was spent to provide salaries to the teachers, according to Bogati.

The federal government provides Rs20 per day to each student studying up to grade five in community schools through the local units in Karnali

With this scheme, the government aims to provide a nutritious diet to children and control malnutrition in the province. The programme is also expected to reduce absenteeism among students in

The community school mid-day meal programme is being run in 42 out of 77 districts in the country. However, most of the community schools in remote areas have redirected the amount for mid-

day meals to manage the salary of the teachers. "We have recently dispatched letters to all community schools instructing them to prepare mid-



Children of Saldanda Basic School at Khandachakra in Kalikot having their mid-day meal in this undated photo.

day meal compulsorily in the school and to feed the children," said Jasi Prasad Chaulagain, chief at the education, youth and sports unit of Khandachakra Municipality. According to him, the budget for the mid-day meal has been released for the students of grade six this year.

Khandachakra Municipality released a total of Rs1.9 million for 711 students of the child development centre and Rs11.5 million for 4,188 students studying up to grade five in the last fiscal year.

Children of Tilagupha, another municipality in Kalikot, also do not get mid-day meals at school. Ramkala Bohora, 31, a resident of Tilagupha-2, has three children studying at Durga Secondary School in Ratada. The school informed her that the amount released for the mid-day meal programme is used to manage the salaries of the teachers appointed through private sources.

There are just five teachers under the posts managed by the government in Durga Secondary School. "Secondary classes are being run somehow by appointing six teachers through a private source. The amount meant for the mid-day meal is used to provide salary to those teachers," said Sarpalal Bohora, the headmaster.

Guardians of students at Kalika Secondary School at Khalla in Tulagupha-5 complain that their wards have been deprived of mid-day meals and scholarships for the past five years.

In this school, too, the budget released for the mid-day meal programme and scholarships are used to manage salary to the teachers appointed through private sources, according to Debilal Neupane, guardian of a student studying at the

Tilagupha Municipality issued Rs18 million for the mid-day meal programme in the last fiscal year. In the current fiscal, a total of Rs 26 million has been released for the programme, according to deputy Mayor Mahendra Bahadur Shahi. He urged the

(६) नेपाली नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्र दिने

government to manage the teacher posts in the schools so that the educational institutions would not use the budget on paying salaries to the teachers. According to Shahi, the local unit decided to open the bank account of each student to deposit amounts for the mid-day meal and scholarship in a bid to avoid the misuse of the amounts. "Preparations are on to deposit the scholarship and mid-day meal money directly in the student's account," he said.

There are a total of 294 community schools in Kalikot, a remote district in Karnali Province. The majority of the schools in all nine local units are found using the budget for the mid-day meal programme and scholarships to manage salaries for the teachers

There are around 100 community schools in the district that do not have even a single post of gov-

Malnutrition is a serious health problem in all 10districts of Karnali Province. The Multiple Indicator Survey-2019 showed that the prevalence of wasting among the children in Karnali was 17.6, the highest in the country, followed by Province 1 (14.3 percent), Sudurpaschim Province (14.1 percent), Province 2 (13.9 percent), Lumbini Province (13.7 percent), Gandaki Province (8 percent), and Bagmati Province (4.7 percent).

According to the Provincial Health Directorate in Surkhet, the majority of people in Karnali, which regularly faces food scarcity, are deprived of

Kiran Adhikary, a civil society leader, said it is ironic that the schools are compelled to use the budgets for scholarship and mid-day meal programmes to provide salaries to teachers.

"The schools are doing bad work for a good purpose," Adhikary said. "The problem will be resolved only if the government manages teacher posts in the community school.'

Citizenship bill, returned ...

While the ruling party lawmakers voted for the bill, the main opposition CPN-UML stood against it arguing that a national consensus must be forged before its endorsement.

It was put to a vote after some 80 cross-party lawmakers participated in the deliberations giving their views for and against an immediate endorsement of the bill. While most ruling party lawmakers demanded it needs to be endorsed without revision, the opposition lawmakers insisted on a review.

The President could have returned the bill if it contradicted the constitution. However, the note from her nowhere mentions it contradicts the statute," said Barsha Man Pun, a CPN (Maoist Centre) lawmaker, while taking part in the deliberations. "The constitutional provision on revision can be used when there is contradiction [in the bill] with the constitution." Article 113(3) of the constitution allows the President to return any bill for the review if s/he deems it necessary.

Expressing his views, Nepali Congress lawmaker Gagan Thapa said delaying the endorsement of the bill meant that thousands of children born to the parents who have acquired citizenship by birth would be deprived of citizenship, and so would those waiting to acquire citizenship through their mothers.

"The President is for having a common understanding on naturalised citizenship by marriage but we have failed to do so," Thapa said. "The present bill doesn't talk about naturalised citizenship by marriage. Whether or not the present bill gets endorsed, a foreign woman married to a Nepali man would be getting naturalised citizenship.'

Thapa said that some 440,000 foreign women married to Nepali men have acquired naturalised citizenship so far.

CPN-UML lawmakers, however, said the five-party alliance has turned the Parliament into a rubber stamp. "The discussion in Parliament was just for formality. It was decided that it would be endorsed as dictated by the ruling alliance," said Bishal Bhattarai, chief whip of the UML, in Parliament.

"We had expected that the lawmakers would be allowed to propose amendments and due procedure would be followed for endorsement. Where is parliamentary supremacy when it functions as dictated by a few leaders of the five parties?"

The ruling alliance on Tuesday had decided to endorse the bill without revision against the request of the President. Presenting the bill for endorsement, Minister for Home Affairs Bal Krishna Khand said the bill is targeted at opening the door to children of the parents who got citizenship by birth to acquire citizenship by descent and those whose fathers are unidentified.

"We can always revise the Act if it is necessary," he said. "Let's have a common understanding on the issue of mar-

ital naturalised citizenship and amend the Act again," the minister said.

Article 11 (3) of the constitution says a child of a citizen who has acquired the citizenship of Nepal by birth before the commencement of the constitution, shall acquire the citizenship of Nepal by descent. The existing Act allows everyone born within Nepal's territory before April 12, 1990 to acquire citizenship by birth.

However, their children haven't got citizenship by descent in the absence of a law as the constitution said the provision to grant them citizenship would be guided by a federal law. Some 190,000 persons have acquired citizenship by

Similarly, the bill also paves the way for a child born in Nepal to a Nepali woman and whose father is unidentified to get citizenship by descent. However, the applicant's mother must make a self-declaration that the father "cannot be identified." She will be liable for action if it is found that the claim that the father "cannot be identified" turns out to be wrong.

For the first time, the bill also paves the way for Non-Resident Nepalis to acquire citizenship. However, they will not be eligible to enjoy political and administrative rights. The provision will be applicable only to those who reside outside the South Asian region.

As per the bill, children can choose either the surname and address of their mother or the father while acquiring citizenship. Similarly, one can get citizenship through gender identity in line with the constitution. Article 12 of the constitution says a person who obtains the citizenship of Nepal by descent in accordance with the constitution may obtain a certificate of citizenship of Nepal with gender identity in the name of his or her mother or father.

The House of Representatives will now send the bill for endorsement from the National Assembly. It will then be sent to the President's Office for presidential seal. President Bhandari has no option but to authenticate it within 15 days. Article 113 (4) of the constitution says if the President sends back a Bill along with her remarks and if both the Houses reconsider the bill as it was presented or with amendments, and pass it and present it again to the President, the Bill shall be certified by the President within 15 days of its submission.

Constitutional experts say both the President and parliament have taken decisions as prescribed by the constitution. "It would have been better had the House of Representatives discussed it in the House committee in detail as the President had returned the bill with some comments," senior advocate Chandra Kant Gyawali, who specialises on constitutional law, told the Post. "However, it was the House's prerogative to endorse the way it liked.'

The bill that was and the bill this is

>> Continued from page 1

But why would the Speaker certify any other bill as a "money bill"? And why did the bill in 2000 fail to take the form of an Act? In interviews with the Post, experts

idiosyncrasies of the parliamentary system, saying that such practices happen in other democracies too.

What is a money bill?

A money bill is defined by Article 110 (3) as matters concerning imposition, collection, abolition, remission, alteration or regulation of taxes, among others. Article 68 (3) of the 1990 Constitution also had a similar definition for the bill.

The peculiarity of the money bill is that it needs to be introduced only in the lower house and there is no upper house veto on it—it is deemed passed by both the houses if it's endorsed by the lower house-and it cannot be returned by the head of state. A statement issued by the Office of

the President on Sunday said: "The President has sent the Citizenship Act amendment bill to the House of Representatives as per Article 113(3) of the constitution, along with a message that it needs a review.

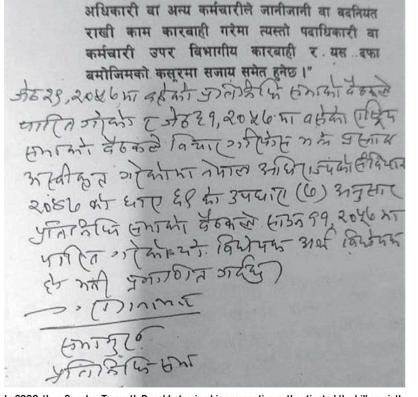
Article 113(3) says: "In case the President is of the opinion that any Bill, except a Money Bill, presented for authentication needs reconsideration, he or she may, within 15 days from the date of submission of such Bill, send back the Bill along with his or her message to the House in which the Bill originated.'

Radheshyam Adhikari, an advocate, two-time member of the Constituent Assembly and former National Assembly member, said the parliamentarians in 1990 appear to have misused the constitutional provision so as to ensure that the king did not return the bill.

"As far as my memory serves me right, King Birendra didn't return the bill, or let's say there was no message from the palace regarding the bill," Adhikari told the Post. "Nonetheless, a citizenship bill, or any other bill, should not be certified as a money

Ranabhat, however, said that any bill involving tax, fine or any financial issues could be certified as a money bill. "You should better ask the general secretary of the Parliament Secretariat, he could explain it better,' he told the Post.

Mukunda Sharma, a former secretary at the Parliament Secretariat, told the Post that there was a tendency to certify most of the bills as a money



In 2000, then Speaker Taranath Ranabhat using his prerogative authenticated the bill on sixth amendment to the Citizenship Act as a money bill.

"There was a trend in the 1990s to certify any bill that involved even a single rupee of fine or tax as a money bill so that the upper house did not have a veto on it," said Sharma. "That could be the reason the citizenship amendment bill must have been certified as a money bill."

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, the king became a constitutional monarch, but the upper house continued to have the majority of members from the palace. "It was a tactical move to nullify the

role of the national assembly," Sharma told the Post. "The Speaker's role hence became powerful. According to Sharma, discussions were also held over whether every

other bill should be introduced as and certified as a money bill. Both the 1990 Constitution and the 2015 Constitution have similar provisions regarding a money bill, except for one addition in the 2015 charter-"provided that any bill shall not be deemed to be a Money Bill only by the reason that it provides for the lev-

ying of any charges, fees or tariff

such as licence fee, application fee, renewal fee or for the imposition of fines or penalty of imprisonment." Article 68 (4) of the 1990 Constitution

says: "If any question arises whether a bill is a money bill or not, the decision of the Speaker shall be final.' This provision has been retained in the 2015 Constitution as well.

The Post could not independently verify if any controversy had arisen in 2000 on whether the citizenship bill

was a money bill or not. People familiar with the matter in 2000 say the king had held consultations with the Supreme Court but they could not exactly say what followed The 1990 Constitution allowed the king such consultations. Article 88 (5) of the 1990 Constitution says: "If His Majesty wishes to have an opinion of the Supreme Court on any complicated legal question of interpretation of this constitution or of any other law, the court shall, upon consideration on the question, report to His Majesty its opinion thereon.'

Badri Bahadur Karki, a senior advocate who was the attorney general at that time, said King Birendra had sought the opinion of the Supreme

"The Supreme Court used to con-

duct hearings on issues on which the king sought the court's opinion," Karki told the Post. "I can't remember who participated in the hearing then and what all happened."

The provision that a money bill canreview is in the Indian constitution as

Article 111 of the Indian constitution says that the President may return any bill, if it is not a money bill, to the Parliament for a review. If the bill is passed again by the Houses with or without amendment and presented to the President for assent, the President shall not withhold assent therefrom, the Indian constitution

The Indian government in 2016 had introduced the Aadhaar Bill as a

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संसव सचिवालय

जेठ २९, २०५७ मा बसेको प्रतिनिधि सभाको बैठकले पारित गरेको र जेठ ३१,

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गरेकोमा नेपाल अधिराज्यको संविधान, २०४७ को धारा ६९ को उपधारा (७) अनुसार

प्रतिनिधि सभाको बैठकले साउन ११, २०५७ मा पारित गरेको "नेपाल नागरिकता (छैठी

संशोधन) विधेयक, २०५७" नेपाल अधिराज्यको संविधान, २०४७ को धारा ७९ तथा

प्रतिनिधि सभा नियमावली, २०५४ को नियम १४६ अनुसार स्वीकृति वक्स हुनका लागि

money bill in the Lok Sabha (lower house). It was endorsed as the Bharatiya Janata Party enjoyed a majority. But it led to a row. The opposition didn't agree with the government's classification of the Aadhaar Rajya Sabha (upper house) has no power to veto. In 2018, a five-judge Supreme Court bench held its constitutional validity.

The question, however, remains why the constitution empowers the Speaker to certify any bill as money bill, and why is there another provision that says "the President can return any other bill except the money bill to the Parliament for a review."

Rameshore Khanal, a former finance secretary, said such provisions are put in the constitution so as

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ical interests," Khanal told the Post. Khanal offered the example of the "Ordinances have been provisioned in the constitution with good intent. Who had imagined the provision of ordinance would be misused," Khanal told the Post. "Both KP Oli and Sher Bahadur Deuba misused it for their petty interests." Back to the money bill.

to rescue the governments during dif-

ficulties. "The problem is politicians

tend to ignore the good intent of the

provision and misuse it for their polit-

Since there is no constitutional provision for the President to return the money bill because such a bill is introduced to the lower house with prior notice to the President, the President has no option but to authenticate it. But what happens when any bill certified by the Speaker as a money bill is sent to the head of state for authentication and the head of state does not agree with it or its provisions?

Nothing has been specified in the

constitution about it. Since there's no provision of returning, the President may not act—won't authenticate it, leading to automatic termination of the bill. Since no documents are available relating to the citizenship bill amendment case of 2000, the general assumption is the king didn't act on it—and it lapsed.

The last amendment to the Citizenship Act 1964 was made on May 30, 1991. In 2006, a new law was enacted for amendment and integration of matters relating to the Nepal Citizenship Act.

A bill to amend the Citizenship Act 2006 was introduced in the House on August 7, 2018. The State Affairs and Good Governance Committee deliberated on it for 22 months before sending it to the House. But the Sher Bahadur Deuba government earlier last month withdrew the old bill and introduced a new amendment bill, which was passed by the lower house on July 22 and the upper house on July 26.

After the passage of the bill by the lower house on Thursday, it is set to be sent to the President soon.

The President now will be left with no option than to authenticate it because she is bound by the constitution.

"In case any bill is sent back along with a message by the President, and both houses reconsider and adopt such a bill as it was or with amendments and present it again, the President shall authenticate that bill within 15 days of such presentation," says Article 113(4).

Then Speaker Ranabhat's letter to King Birendra requesting royal approval for the money bill. (Binod Ghimire contributed reporting.)

NATIONAL



People passing through a suspension bridge are silhouetted against a sky turned orange during sunset, at Balkumari in Lalitpur on Wednesday.

POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

Beset by disputes and splits, Madhesh parties are fighting for relevance in their own base

Janata Samajbadi and Loktantrik Samajbadi are in negotiations with bigger parties eying better prospects in November polls.

NISHAN KHATIWADA

As seat-sharing negotiations are underway in the ruling coalition, two major Madhesbased parties are also working out strategies to improve their poll prospects

While the Janata Samajbadi Party, which is part of the coalition, is mulling over quitting the ruling alliance and joining hands with other parties, including the CPN-UML, the Loktantrik Samajbadi Party is wondering if it should join the ruling

Even the Nepali Congress, the leader of the ruling coalition, appears willing to bring the Loktantrik Samajbadi on board.

Complexities, however, remain. The two Madhesh-based parties are likely to face a tough time during the polls, even if their leaders maintain they are in a comfortable

Keshav Jha, a Loktantrik Samajbadi leader, says since they fought local elections on their own, they don't have any plans to part-

He didn't deny his party is lobbying to join the ruling coalition though.

At a time when the five parties in the coalition have been struggling to finalise seat-sharing, the entry of the Loktantrik Samajbadi may create more confusion,

For other parties, an alliance with the Janata Samajbadi and Loktantrik Samajbadi is a good bet, as they hold sway over the Madhesh Province, which sends 32 lawmakers to the House of Representatives.

The Madhesh Provincial Assembly is

107-member strong.

In the 2022 local elections, the Nepali Congress emerged as the largest party in the province. The UML too has managed to make inroads in the region.

Out of the 136 local units, Nepali Congress won 46, UML 30, Janata Samajbadi 25, Loktantrik Samajbadi 14, and the Maoist Centre won nine.

The parties are losing their stronghold because they appear to have given up their agendas, observers sav.

Likewise, the CPN (Unified Socialist) won six units; as many went to other parties.

In the current House of Representatives, the Janata Samajbadi has 17 seats while

Baburam Bhattarai and Mahindra Ray Yadav recently parted ways with the Janata Samajbadi and launched their own Nepal Samajbadi Party. Bhattarai and Yadav, who won from Gorkha-2 and Sarlahi-4, respectively, are the only members in the House from the new party. Currently, the Janata Samajbadi has 39 lawmakers in the Madhesh Provincial Assembly while the Loktantrik

Samajbadi has 16. "Our popular votes have increased and we are now stronger in the Madhesh Province as well," said Ram Sahaya Prasad Yadav, a Janata Samajbadi leader who is also a member of the ruling coalition's task force formed to finalise seat-sharing arrangements.

Jha, the Loktantrik Samjbadi leader, echoed Yadav. "The situation is not as bad for us as it has been perceived," he said. "The real power will be tested when all the parties contest the elections on their own.

Observers, however, say as the seat-sharing arrangements will more likely be made based on the votes obtained by the political parties in the latest local polls and the 2017 parliamentary and local elections, the Janata Samajbadi and the Loktantrik Samajbadi are not in a strong position and are left with little choices.

The only province in which these parties had a noteworthy presence was Madhesh but they are losing their stronghold because they appear to have given up their agendas and been enmeshed in power politics, observers say.

The Janata Samajbadi had secured five seats in total in the provinces other than Samajbadi won two seats in other provinces

"As the Janata Samajbadi has already joined the electoral alliance led by the Congress, and the Loktantrik Samajbadi Party will soon join them, the fate of these political parties depends on other big parties as they are not in a strong bargaining position," Chandra Kishore, a journalist who has closely followed Madhesh politics for dec-

According to him, the two parties that had fought the previous elections on their own with Madhesh agenda had left a good impression on the electorate, but now they are dependent on other parties

'Both parties have lost their influence. The Janata Samajbadi fared better in the latest local elections than the Loktantrik Samajbadi because the former was part of the ruling coalition," said Chandra Kishore. "These parties got involved in power politics, thereby losing the trust of the people.

Yet another bane of the Madhesh-based parties is they have over the years gone through frequent splits, which could help other parties like the Congress and the UML make inroads into the Madhesh region.

Tula Narayan Shah, a political analyst, said the major challenge for the Janata Samajbadi and the Loktantrik Samajbadi is retaining the seats they had won in the last

"For both parties, chances of winning the same number of seats as in the last elections are slim," Shah said. "The Madhesh movement was fresh in the minds of the people for the upcoming polls."

With the elections a little over three months away, the two Madhesh-based parties are going through an existential crisis, according to CK Lal, a political commentator who is also a columnist for

"While struggling to save their existence, they will seek and take support from any other political parties," Lal said.

"They are in a serious crisis—both lack agendas, credible leadership, and intact organisations."

Malnutrition threat for pregnant women, new mums, children displaced by disasters

ARJUN POUDEL

Of the over 400 people displaced by the recent Koshi floods at Belaka Municipality in Udayapur district, around a dozen are pregnant women, some are new mothers and dozens are under five years old.

Those people from wards 1, 2, 3, 8 and 9 of the municipality have been taking refuge at the community shelters constructed by the local unit for the past several days. "Some of the children, pregnant women and new

mothers have started getting sick," Chet Nath Adhikari, an official at the municipality, told the Post over the phone from Udayapur last week. "We have been trying to mitigate the risks of an outbreak of communicable diseases at the temporary shelters of the displaced people." Officials deployed to the displaced camps for man-

agement said that displaced people, especially pregnant women, new mothers and small children, are not only vulnerable to communicable diseases but also are at risk of getting malnourished as they lack adequate nutritious food and access to health care services Experts say people displaced in natural disasters

are highly vulnerable to acute malnutrition and that the displaced need additional nutritious foods and safe "Everyone residing in temporary shelters is vulnerable to several communicable diseases," said Dr Ashok

Bhurtyal, a nutritionist. "Infants, young children, pregnant women and lactating mothers are malnour Malnutrition is developing into a silent crisis in Nepal. The country has made significant progress in reducing stunting among children under five. Stunting

decreased from 57 percent in 2001 to 32 percent in 2019, according to the recent Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS 2019). Wasting, a debilitating disease that causes muscle and fat tissue to waste away, among children under five was 11 percent in 2001, 10 percent in 2016 and 12 percent in 2019. Wasting or low weight for one's height is

an undernutrition condition, which is a strong predic-

tor of mortality among children under five, according to the UN health agency. Wasting in children, if not

treated properly, is associated with a higher risk of death, according to it. Anaemia among children under five is still at 51 percent (NDHS 2016), which experts say is concerning.

The problem of malnutrition has been escalating quickly amidst the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, according to nutritionists.

Experts say that natural disasters, from which thousands of people get affected every year, exacerbate malnutrition problems.

"The government as well as several other agencies distribute relief materials to displaced people,' said Dr Sudha Shree Adhikari, a nutrition scientist, adding, "But those agencies also distribute junk foods like noodles and biscuits as relief materials. Such foods could contribute to the increase in malnutrition cases.

The Ministry of Health and Population has decided to distribute super cereal (fortified flour) in the displaced camps of Udayapur.

A 1.5 kg packet of fortified flour, which consists of carbohydrate, fat and other minerals, will be provided to all children between six months and 23 months, all pregnant women and new mothers, officials said.

When asked about food relief for thousands of others displaced in other parts of the country, officials said that they do not have any such programme.

"Displaced people, whether they are from Koshi flood or from any other disasters, are highly vulnerable," said Dr Atul Upadhyay, a nutritionist. "Authorities concerned should take the issue seriously and address

Experts say that nutrition has a direct link with the overall development of the country. Malnutrition affects physical as well as mental growth of children, which ultimately affects the country's economic health, according to Upadhyay.

Malnutrition also plays a major role in the under five mortality rate, according to the nutrition section at the Family Welfare Division under the Department of Health Services.

"Distributing food relief alone is not enough as those distributing should carefully consider whether the food items are beneficial or harmful," said

Local units fear their first term may pass without federal education law

The federal government has yet to ready a bill for the law and the term of the current Parliament is ending in four months with elections announced for November 20.

BINOD GHIMIRE KATHMANDU, AUG 18

The jurisdiction over school education has been the most debated issue between the federal and local governments in the last five years.

While the local governments have been saying they have constitutional authority to manage education up to grade 12, the federal government is reluctant to delegate the authority. Schedule 8 of the constitution gives local governments the explicit authority of basic and secondary education while schedule 9 puts education under the concurrent authority of the federal, provincial and local governments

The constitution lists out the authorities in broad terms which are defined clearly by the Acts and regulations. They are also the prerequisite for the implementation of the constitution. However, around seven years since the promulgation of the constitution and five years since last parliamentary elections, the government is yet to register a bill to promulgate a federal education act

When he was appointed minister for education, science and technology in October last year, Devendra Paudel said preparing the bill for the Act would be his priority. He has reiterated his commitment on several occasions. However, over a year since he took charge, the education ministry is yet to finalise the bill.

Paudel is the fifth education minister since the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal and third since the last general elections. And every minister who preceded Paudel has made similar claims. No minister, however, has fulfilled their claim to have the Act in place.

The officials at the Education Ministry say they have already prepared a draft of the federal education bill along with five others which are stuck at the Finance Ministry. "We have urged the Finance Ministry to give the clearance to the bills,' Education Secretary Ram Krishna Subedi, told the Post. "Education minister raised the issue in a meeting of the ministers called by the prime minister on Tuesday."

The local representatives say they have completed their term without getting to exercise their constitutional authority in lack of the law. Even though the first term of local governments since the promulgation of the constitution is already over, there is no certainty on when the Act would be formulated. The recent local level elections were held on May 13.

"Allowing the local governments to oversee the school education was one of the most important aspects of federalism," Bhim Prasad Dhungana, mayor of Dhading's Neelkantha Municipality, told the Post. "We completed our full tenure in uncertainty and it doesn't seem like the Act will be promulgated anytime soon.



The constitution allows local governments to make laws, but the statute also says such laws will be void if they contradict the federal law.

Local government representatives say with the federal and provincial assembly elections set to be held later this year, they are not hopeful that the present House will pass the law. The government, within a few days, is expected to make an official announcement to conduct the elections on

November 20. As it takes over a month for a bill to get through Parliament, it will not be possible to promulgate the Act from the ongoing parliamentary session if the bill is not registered soon.

The constitution allows local governments to make laws. However, the be void to the extent they contradict the federal law. On different occasions in the past, the federal government has issued circulars to local governments ordering them not to make laws until related federal Acts are formulated. A writ petition challenging the

constitution also says such laws will

circular is sub judice at the Supreme Court. "The court has not scheduled the final hearing for my petition, advocate Sunil Ranjan Singh told the Post. "A verdict from the court would have ended the ongoing confusion."

Education experts say lack of legal clarity has left the entire education sector in shambles. "The Act is a must to bring school education on track,' Binay Kusiyait, an education expert, said. "Not just the education ministry but the successive governments must be held accountable for the delay."

Lack of a constitutional deadline for promulgation of laws like the one related to the fundamental rights is also responsible for the delay, experts said.

The constitution made it mandatory to have laws related to fundamental rights in place within three years since its promulgation. It also said the existing Acts that contradict the constitution must be revised within a year since the first meeting of the federal parliament. The government prepared the laws within the constitutional deadline. However, as there is no such constitutional deadline for the promulgation of federal laws, successive governments have become negligent in discharging their duties, Kusiyait said.

"The reluctance in promulgating laws like the Federal Education Act is one of the reasons why our federalism hasn't been fully implemented yet,'

OPINION

EDITORIAL

In crisis lies opportunity

We need to attract people who have ventured abroad and are now equipped with skills.

A slowdown in remittance inflows and depleting foreign exchange reserves had sparked widespread concern, but perhaps the worst is over. In the last fiscal year, Nepali migrant workers sent home a record Rs1 trillion, up 4.8 percent over the previous year. While growing remittances signal prosperity for Nepali families, the failure to retain our labour force by providing employment opportunities also points to a glaring policy gap. And as a consequence, we see this popular trend of young Nepalis jetting off to foreign lands in search of better jobs and opportunities, leaving an ageing population to mind the towns and villages in Nepal.

The departure of Nepali youths boils down to the lack of economic opportunities at home. Migrant departures had briefly stopped in the wake of the pandemic. A worsening global economic crisis saw reverse migration, with official data suggesting that nearly half a million people required rescuing. But no sooner had the pandemic waned than people who had returned to their homes due to the loss of jobs during the lockdown started leaving in droves. However bleak, the pandemic presented an excellent opportunity for the authorities to retain the people who had returned for the country's development needs.

But this opportunity was callously squandered by the authorities without thinking about how we could have thrived from the crisis. It is estimated that around 500,000 youths enter the job market annually, and 80 percent of them find their way to secure foreign employment. Those left to do domestic work probably have no thoughts of going for greener pastures at the earliest. So, what has precipitated this scenario? Over the past few decades, Nepal has been governed by visionless leaders whose only purpose in politics has been the betterment of themselves and their near and dear ones.

The economy indeed took a hit during the decade-long Maoist insurgency, and it was then that people began leaving their homes in droves for a safer working environment. The country has had time to recover since the end of the fighting, yet nothing has been done to create employment opportunities at home. Instead, we are made to feel fortunate that foreign governments have shown interest in hiring our youths to plug their labour shortages. From doctors to nurses to skilled and semi-skilled labour, Nepal has seen nothing but an exodus of people from all walks of life at the slightest opportunity.

Devoid of investment which could contribute to generating output, Nepal has become reliant solely on imports. Nepal imports even farm products, which is ironical in a country classified as agricultural where 66 percent of the total population are engaged in farming. If we are to see any form of meaningful economic development, policies and programmes will be needed to ensure job creation for the youths entering the labour market. A conducive environment should be created to attract people who have ventured abroad and are now equipped with skills which could be helpful in various sectors. The current scenario is only likely to worsen if the development policies aren't addressed sooner.

City of garbage

The streets have filled up with trash once again, and no solution is in sight.

AMISH RAJ MULMI



In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the stretch of road that is currently the Shankhamul-Balkhu River corridor was a ghastly sight to behold. The banks of the Bagmati were treated as an unofficial garbage dumping site, and the stench carried itself far inside the homes of those who lived near. Although land had been earmarked for UN Park, a proposal originally mooted in 1997 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the multilateral institution, the fences did little to stop the mounds of garbage from piling up.

Suddenly, over the course of a few years, new mounds of garbage stopped appearing. Whether it was divine providence, or the valley finding a new dumping site in Okharpauwa, one couldn't say. UN Park then began to take shape. Today, silver oaks and eucalyptus trees provide green cover to a city starved of any. All along the extended pathway along the river, one can find new lovers and old couples, dog walkers and slackliners, men running to train for physical fitness tests, volleyball matches, cricket pitches, cows feeding on the grass and stray dogs greeting those who come to feed them. There's even a yoga group that practices to the sound of techno every morning. In the evenings, TikTok and Instagram aficionados take over.

The ghats of the past have been replicated in concrete on both sides of the bridge. But the garbage that once littered this spot can still be found, particularly when the soil is dug up. Old plastic wrappers emerge as fossils, and the soil can be dank when it rains. The garbage itself has not disappeared; it simply appears outside the walls of the park, a daily invitation to the stray dogs and several murders of crows

Mounds of trash

This long segue was necessitated by the uber-perennial problem of waste management inside the valley. The streets have filled up with trash once more, which became floating islands of waste during the heavy rains of these past few weeks. The new Kathmandu mayor seems to be at his wit's end, faced with constant opposition by locals living close to the landfill sites of Banchare Danda and Sisdol in Okharpauwa.

The protests are certainly politically motivated, with its leaders belonging to parties from the ruling coalition. But one could also argue the locals have a point. Who, after all, wants to live next

to a landfill site? The protests are outrightly designed to interrupt the independently elected mayor's term in office (and possibly send out a message to other independent candidates in future elections). But the locals have a right to be angry, especially after years of negligence by those who have ruled Kathmandu. They've been promised many amenities in lieu of turning their lands into a garbage dump, most of which have remained unfulfilled. Then there's the road to Sisdol itself, contracted to Maoist chair Prachanda's landlord, which is a mudslide on its worst days and a dust storm on its best.

unique to it. Most cities in South Asia suffer from it. This April, Delhi's landfill sites began to catch fire in the extreme heat, burning for more than nine days and sending toxic fumes into the skies of the world's most polluted city. Perhaps our cultural distaste towards garbage—and the belief that only lower castes and classes are fit enough to handle it-is why once the garbage leaves our homes, we no longer bother with it.

The valley's waste problem is not

Buried under its weight

Kathmandu's waste management has been the focus of innumerable stud-

ies-both by domestic and international organisations and experts. Several alternatives have been proposed, all of which seem doable, but none has been put into action. International donors began to engage with the issue of waste management from as early as the 1970s onwards with a long-term German involvement. The resultant Solid Waste Management Project began to collapse in the early 1990s under the weight of political changes and other shortcomings. "[I]ts main shortcomings were a centralised waste management system, lack of coordination with the municipalities and dependency on international expertise, machinery and finance.'

By 2003, when the valley had begun to generate 300 tonnes of waste a day, the search for a new landfill site had already been going on for a decade, with politicians preferring the Okharpauwa site despite it being "technically, environmentally and economically unsuitable". Environmental engineer Bhushan Tuladhar wrote, "The total waste of Kathmandu and Lalitpur cities can be recycled by setting up a 300 tonne/day organic fertiliser plant for which an India-Nepal joint venture project is already selected. By doing this, the waste disposal problem is

reduced by 80 percent with minimal environmental impacts, and high quality fertiliser can be generated.

reports later, the valley today generates 1,200 tonnes of waste every day, the majority of which is dumped in landfill sites, and the rest in empty plots and our rivers. At least 75 percent of the solid waste is biodegradable according to experts, with one possible solution being to feed the organic waste to domesticated pigs. A 2014 plan to produce 18 kilowatts of electricity, funded by the European Union, didn't go anywhere either. Roads and parks such as the one along the Bagmati built on top of waste are not an ideal solution by any measure either.

It may be possible that the authorities reach another agreement with the protesting locals—174 such agreements have already been signed—to make the garbage disappear from our streets. But trouble will brew again without an alternative longer-term solution. Garbage collection will be halted, and once more, the issue will come under the spotlight while citizens walk holding their noses and hop, skip and jump over piles of trash. Maybe it's time to dig out the buried reports and act on them

The Taliban's war on women and girls

When the girls arrived at the school gates, armed Taliban guards refused them entry.

YASMINE SHERIF & GORDON BROWN





When Taliban leaders visited an elementary school in Kabul in October 2021, two months after retaking control of Afghanistan, several seven- or eight-year-old girls bravely stood up, one by one, to declare: "Our classes have resumed, but not for our older sisters. We have been promised that our older sisters will return to class, but this has not happened yet!"

Now, on the first anniversary of the Taliban's return to power, most of Afghanistan's 1,880 girls' secondary schools remain closed. And when women and girls demonstrated in Kabul this past weekend, calling for their educational opportunities to be restored, Taliban forces fired shots over the protesters' heads.

Islam's holy book, the Koran, encourages both women and men to read, contemplate, and pursue education. The Prophet Muhammad advocated education as a religious duty for males and females: "Seek education from the cradle to the grave," the Prophet instructed. But the Taliban's ban on schools for girls above sixth grade has made Afghanistan the only Muslim country to prohibit girls' secondary education.

In August 2021, the Taliban promised Afghans and the rest of the world that they would reopen all primary, secondary, and tertiary schools for both boys and girls. Girls' secondary schools were expected to reopen on



March 23 to coincide with the Persian New Year. But when the girls arrived at the school gates, armed Taliban guards refused them entry.

A few days later, dozens of female students protested near the Ministry of Education in Kabul. "Open the schools! Justice! Justice!" they chanted, holding banners declaring that

"Education is our fundamental right, not a political plan." The Taliban, however, remain unconvinced. As a result, Afghanistan's girls, nearly one million of whom have no access

to secondary education, are the world's most forgotten children and No one should remain silent in the

percent today. In Saudi Arabia, half of

face of this discrimination. Islam has 1.8 billion adherents, making it the world's second-largest religious group, comprising 24 percent of the global population. In Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority country, women's university enrollment has increased from 2 percent in 1970 to nearly 33 university-age women attend university, a higher rate than in Mexico, China, Brazil, and India.

According to a World Economic Forum report, 30 percent of the 450 million women in Muslim-majority economies are in paid work. Although women's labour-force participation rates vary widely—74 percent in Kazakhstan, 53 percent in Indonesia and Malaysia, 42 percent in the United Arab Emirates, 33 percent in Turkey, 26 percent in Pakistan, and 21 percent in Saudi Arabia—they are increasing faster than for men in nearly all these economies. Muslim women's combined income of just under \$1 trillion would make them the world's 16th most prosperous country.

After four decades of armed conflict and climate-induced natural disasters, Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest and least-developed countries. But the Taliban are denying the female half of the workforce the chance to help rebuild it. Afghanistan cannot afford to regress a quarter-century to the start of the Taliban's first stint in power in 1996, when the group prohibited women and girls from working outside the home, attending school and university, or leaving their homes unless accompanied by a mahram (husband, father, brother, or son). Back then, the Taliban's religious police meted out severe punishment, including stoning, for any infraction of their moral code.

Prior to the Taliban's 1996 takeover, 60 percent of Kabul University teachers (and nearly half the students) were women. In addition, women constituted 70 percent of schoolteachers, 50 percent of civilian government workers (and 70 percent of the 130,000 civil servants in Kabul), and 40 percent of doctors.

Today, with Afghanistan facing economic collapse, soaring poverty, and increasing risks of starvation, and unable to survive without humanitarian assistance, the Taliban are arguing that girls' current school uniforms are not Islamic. But most Afghans do not think long black tunics and pants and a white head scarf (hijab)

designed in accordance with Hanafi jurisprudence will solve the country's many deep-rooted problems. Nonetheless, the Taliban are

threatening to close down those girls' secondary schools that have remained open in major provinces, such as Balkh in the north, unless they change their dress codes. "The requirements on hijab are getting tougher day by day," one teacher told Human Rights Watch. "They have spies to record and report [...] If students or teachers don't follow their strict hijab rules, without any discussion they fire the teachers and expel the students."

Meanwhile, some Taliban members who can afford to are sending their daughters abroad to study. Others are trying to convince the organisation's religious leadership in Kandahar to rethink the ban and let girls return to

secondary school. In March, the foreign ministers of the G7 countries and Norway, together with the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, issued a joint statement condemning the Taliban's refusal to reopen girls' secondary schools. "We call on the Taliban urgently to reverse this decision, which will have consequences far beyond its harm to Afghan girls,"

But more must be done. The international community, specifically countries in the region, and especially members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, should make Afghan women's and girls' rights central to their diplomatic and economic negotiations with the Taliban. Afghanistan and its people have suffered enough. Anyone who cares for the country's future must stand up for adolescent girls' right to an education—and women's right to work.

Sherif is Director of Education Cannot Wait. Brown is Chair of the $International\ Commission\ on$ Financing Global Education Opportunity.

- Project Syndicate

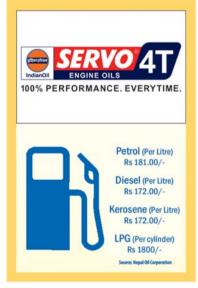
MONEY

FOREX US Dollar 129.94 Furo 154.18 Pound Sterling Japanese Yen (10) Chinese Yuan 34.94 Qatari Riyal Australian Dolla Malaysian Ringit 34.03 Saudi Arab Rival Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Rank

HIGHEST LOSERS

BULLION Fine Gold Rs 95.900 Rs 1.195 SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

GASOLINE WATCH



BRIEFING

Sri Lanka warns of record 8 percent economic contraction

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's economic meltdown will result in a record contraction of at least eight percent this year but the public could soon expect some relief from runaway inflation, the head of the country's central bank said Thursday. The island nation defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt in April and is seeking an International Monetary Fund bailout after months of food, fuel and medicine shortages. Its 22 million people have also suffered through lengthy blackouts and spiralling cost of-living pressures after scarcity and a currency crash drove up prices. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka had already projected the economy could shrink a painful 7.5 percent for the calendar year, dwarfing the previous record 3.6 percent contraction in 2020 as the pandemic raged. (AFP)

Pakistan lifts import ban, to impose heavy duties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday lifted an import ban on luxury goods, but such items will be heavily taxed, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said. Pakistan banned the import of all non-essential luxury goods in May to avert a balance of payments crisis and stabilise the economy. "We're lifting curbs on all imports," Ismail told a news conference in Islamabad, saying the policies his government introduced to stabilise the economy had worked well. He said Pakistan's foreign reserves will rise with funding expected from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He said the IMF board will meet on August 29 to decide whether to approve the seventh and eighth reviews, which would allow the disbursement of more than

Chery in talks to produce cars in Russian plants: TASS

\$1.1 billion to Pakistan. (REUTERS)

MOSCOW: Chinese car manufacturer Chery is in talks with Russian manufacturers about producing cars in Russian plants, Russia's state-owned news agency TASS reported on Thursday, citing Vladimir Shmakov, director of Chery's Russian branch. "First of all in our plans is the need to localise production on Russian territory." TASS cited Shmakov as saving. TASS also cited Shmakov as saving he wanted to increase Chery's Russia sales to around 80,000 to 100,000 vehicles in 2022. Chery is China's ninth largest vehicle manufacturer, with sales of 959,000 vehicles in 2021. According to the Association of European Business. (REUTERS)

Nepal clears India to develop \$2.4 billion hydro projects

>> Continued from page 1

"Furthermore, during the visit of Prime Minister Modiji [SIC] to Lumbini, we had a productive discussion on this matter and I invited the interested companies from India for the development of the West Seti Hydroelectric Project."

Deuba thanked the government of India for opening the electricity market for Nepal.

"I am confident that our close neighbour India will increase the import of surplus power from Nepal. In this context, I am of the view that we should start, with due priority, the construction of a few more cross-border transmission lines. It will help develop more projects and promote cross-border power trade for the benefit of our two countries and peoples.'

As per the MoU, the Indian developer has to apply for the survey licence for the West Seti project within 45 days after signing the agreement. For the SR6 project, the developer has to apply for the survey licence within six months.

According to the MoU, after the survey licence is approved, the developer has to complete the detailed project reports (DPRs) within two years and submit them to the Investment Board Nepal.

In the detailed project reports, the developer should state whether the projects could be constructed as storage-type, semi-storage type or joint or separately, including the cost of the

"It's our history that once we enter a project, we complete it," said Singh, immediately after signing the MoU. "These two projects are crucial for us as they will boost our credentials as a global hydropower player."

Singh said that these two projects are harbingers of development in the Sudurpaschim Province. "I am sure, we will get more opportunities to harness the hydropower potential of

Initially, the 750MW West Seti was proposed by West Seti Hydro Limited, a storage scheme designed to generate and export large quantities of energy



According to the MoU, after the survey licence is approved, the developer has to complete the detailed project reports within two years.

However, in March 2019, during the Nepal Investment Summit, the government bundled the West Seti and SR-6 as a joint storage scheme and showcased them before foreign and domestic investors. The projects were among eight hydro schemes showcased at the summit.

But they received no attention from potential investors.

The NHPC Limited, an Indian government hydropower board under India's Ministry of Power, had submitted a proposal in May to develop the

The estimated cost of the two projects, according to the Investment Board, is \$2.4 billion.

The West Seti project, first envisioned some six decades ago, is located on the Seti River in far-western Nepal. The proposed dam site is located 82 kilometres upstream of the confluence of the Seti and Karnali rivers, forming part of the Ganges basin.

As soon as Sher Bahadur Deuba was elected prime minister in July last year, the government decided to push the projects forward.

A panel headed by Biswo Nath Poudel, vice chairman of the National

Planning Commission, was constituted to move the projects ahead.

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.

The project dates back to 1981 when a 37MW run-of-the-river scheme was proposed based on preliminary studies conducted in 1980-81.

In 1987, the French company Sogreah prepared a pre-feasibility study proposing a 37MW run-of-theriver scheme without building a dam, according to a report of the Asian Development Bank. Later, the same company revised the capacity to a 380MW storage-type scheme stating that the energy could be optimised without environmental impacts.

West Seti Hydro, a company promoted by Australia's Snowy Mountain Engineering Corporation, won the survey licence for the project in 1994. The government issued a construction licence to West Seti Hydro

The project was originally designed as export-oriented with 90 percent of the power intended to be sold to India. However, the project, whose cost was estimated at Rs120 billion at that time, failed to go into construction.

The cash-strapped project got a boost when China National Machinery and Equipment Import and Export Corporation (CMEC) decided to invest in it. The CMEC even signed an agreement with the project during the then prime minister Madhav Nepal's China visit in 2009.

At that time, CMEC President Jia Zhiqiang and West Seti Hydro director Himalaya Pandey signed a memorandum of understanding in Beijing. The Chinese firm had decided to invest Rs15 billion in the project.

However, the CMEC later opted out of the project saying that Nepal lacked an investment-friendly environment. Another important shareholder in the company, the Asian Development Bank, also did not show interest citing a lack of public acceptance of the project and the absence of good governance. The project received yet another jolt

when the main promoter of the com-

pany, Snowy Mountain, stopped sending funds for office operations in August 2010.

The government revoked the licence of West Seti Hydro on July 27, 2011.

Then came the Three Gorges International Corporation, China's biggest hydropower developer and the operator of the world's largest hydropower plant at the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River. The project was formally handed over to the Chinese company on August 29, 2012.

In November 2017, state-owned power utility Nepal Electricity Authority signed the final agreement with the China Three Gorges International Corporation, a subsidiary of the China Three Gorges Corporation, to set up a joint venture to develop the 750MW West Seti Project. In 2018, the China Three Gorges

Corporation hinted at pulling out of the project saying it was financially unfeasible because of the steep resettlement and rehabilitation costs. Subsequently, in September 2018,

the government scrapped the agreement with the China Three Georges Corporation. On May 29, 2020, the then finance

minister Yuba Raj Khatiwada, pre-

senting the annual budget, announced plans to build the project by mobilising Nepal's internal resources. The announcement effectively scrapped a \$1.6 billion plan by the Chinese firm. Nepal can earn up to Rs310 billion per year in 2030 and as high as Rs1,069

billion per year in 2045 if the country is able to sell electricity to India by harnessing its hydropower potential, according to a report.

Nepal stands to generate these earnings provided the country starts exporting 13 gigawatts of electricity to India by 2030 and double this capacity by 2045, says a USAID report titled 'Economic Benefits from Nepal-India Electricity Trade' released in 2017.

To harness the electricity of this quantum, Nepal needs to invest up to Rs2,596 billion between 2012 and 2030 and another Rs2,216 billion between 2031 and 2045, says the report produced by Integrated Research and Action for Development.

Public sector paralysed as Lebanon lurches towards 'failed state'

REUTERS BEIRUT, AUG 18

It's a weekday, but 50-year-old Lebanese finance ministry employee Walid Chaar is not at work and hasn't been since June.

He rushes to water the garden at his home in the hills south of Beirut, using the single hour of rationed state power to run the sprinkler. He then phones his mother, who is struggling to get a new passport at a state agency grappling with paper and ink shortages. "The public sector is at its end if

Like thousands of state employees in Lebanon, Chaar has been on strike for two months over the collapse of his salary caused by Lebanon's economic implosion—one of the world's worst in modern times.

The public sector paralysis is spreading further—this week judges launched their own protest, while soldiers moonlight to feed themselves and government offices run out of power and basic office supplies.

The average public servant's monthly salary has dropped from around \$1,000 to barely \$50.

State infrastructure, already strained by years of unchecked spending, corruption and a preference for has reached breaking point.

"We are in a state of collapse," said Lamia Moubayed of the Lebanese Institute of Finance Basil Fuleihan, a research centre at the Ministry of

In parliament, there is no fuel to run a generator for the elevator—so security guards run messages up and down the stairs between workers.

Those registering a new car purchase with the department of motor vehicles were given handwritten notes instead of proper state-issued documents due to paper shortages.

Commanders in Lebanon's security services are looking the other way as troops take on second jobs—typically prohibited, but now unofficially allowed as soldiers' salaries crash.

The average public servant's monthly salary has dropped from around \$1,000 to barely \$50—and counting, as the Lebanese pound loses more value by the day. That prompted tens of thousands of

state employees-from ministries, local government bodies, schools and news agency—to strike.

This week, 350 Lebanese judges will not show up for hearings, demanding a hike to their salaries, too.

"The judges are hungry," said Faisal Makki, a founder of the country's Judges' Club—the judiciary's equivalent of a syndicate or union. Makki told Reuters the justice ministry had long been underfunded, so judges had for years been buying paper and ink for their office printers at their personal expense.

UK rail workers strike again as inflation intensifies crisis

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Railway staff in Britain on Thursday staged the latest in a series of strikes, once again disrupting commuters and leisure travellers, as decades-high inflation hits salaries and prompts walkouts across various industries.

The latest action by rail workers, which will be repeated on Saturday, is part of a summer of strike action by the sector and others at a scale not seen since the 1980s under former prime minister Margaret Thatcher. The dispute over pay rises and

sign of resolution and is likely to be exacerbated by news this week that UK inflation topped 10 percent in July for the first time since 1982.

The global impact of the war in Ukraine on energy and food prices, and, to a lesser extent, post-Brexit trade frictions are blamed for the surging cost-of-living crisis in Britain.

Tens of thousands of railway staff are set to walk out over the two days, leaving a skeleton train service and stranding holidaymakers and commuters, even if home-working continues for many office staff after Covid restrictions were lifted. Meanwhile, London transport workers serving the underground "Tube'

and bus network will walk out on Friday, creating three days of travel misery in southeast England. "It's extremely unreliable these days, so I'm finding I'm having to

drive, park and pay a lot more,' recruitment consultant Greg Ellwood, 26, told AFP at an unusually quiet Euston station in London.

"We're all just trying to make a living and get by... So I've got all the symreferring to the strikers.

Among the sectors also calling strikes are dockers at Felixstowe, Britain's largest freight port situated in eastern England, who will start an eight-day stoppage Sunday.

The waves of industrial action could continue into the autumn, since the Bank of England forecasts inflation will top 13 percent later this year, tipping the economy into a deep and long-lasting recession.

Luxury sneakers may be a step too far for cash-strapped Gen Z



Sneakers of Italian high fashion sneaker brand Golden Goose are displayed at its

REUTERS

SHANGHAI/PARIS. AUG 18

From \$300 bucket hats to \$900 sneakers and \$700 t-shirts, the high-flying luxury sector is fretting over the appetite among financially stretched Gen Z consumers for such "aspirational" purchases.

Executives are troubled in particular by a hit to young Chinese shoppers, not only because mainland China has been a major driver of the industry's growth in recent years, but also because high end consumers in the world's second-largest economy are a decade younger

than the global average of 38. Young adults around the world have been "a very strong factor of luxury growth over the past decade," said Gregory Boutte, chief client and digital officer at Gucci-owner Kering.

Data this week showed China's economy slowed unexpectedly, prompting a central bank rate cut, while macroeconomic trends are disproportionately impacting the extra funds that those born between 1996 and 2012 might use to enter the world of luxury.

Whereas in North America and Europe, inflation and a rising cost-of-living are hitting discretionary incomes of young consumers especially hard, China's problem is different.

"In the US, inflation is a huge issue, the major focus of a lot of luxury companies ... In China, it's the youth unemployment rate that's alarming right now," Kenneth Chow, principal at consultancy Oliver Wyman said.

Government data for July registers the unemployment rate of China's urban population aged 16 to 24 at a record 19.9 percent, exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns and a crackdown on big tech firms that traditionally hired droves of graduates.

"This might be the first time that a lot of young adults (in China) are facing (such an) economic impact, so it will be a testing ground on how these consumers are going to spend on luxury items going forward," Chow said.

"If a recession happens, then I will 100 percent buy less or maybe even stop buying altogether," said US-based luxury lifestyle and travel TikToker Jeffrey Huang, 28, who shares his Louis Vuitton shopping trips and hauls with his 150,000 followers. A recent Oliver Wyman study showed that some luxury brands are significantly lowering their sales expectations for the Chinese market in response to current conditions, with 80 percent of executives quesnot expecting a "v-shaped" recovery this year. Oliver Wyman declined to name the brands it surveyed.

Nevertheless, earnings last month from firms including LVMH and Kering painted a picture of resilience in the face of economic headwinds, with luxury players riding a wave of post-Covid spending by their wealthiest clients.

माइग्रेशन हरायो

कलैया, देवकोटा चौक देखि विरगंज सम्म जाँदा मेरो निम्न व्यहोरा भएको +२ को माइग्रेशन सर्टिफिकेट हराएको हुँदा फेला पार्नुहुने महानुभावहरुले निम्न फोन न. मा सम्पर्क गरिदिनुहुन हार्दिक अनुरोध गर्दछ।

नाम : अनिल कुमार पाल रजिष्टेशन नं. : ६४३३०५०२० सिम्बोल नं. : ५२२०४३ सम्पर्क नं. : ५८५५०८५३५०



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WORLD

Two killed in Italy as

storm lashes Tuscany

BRIEFING

ROME: Two people died on Thursday and 100 others were evacuated as bad weather toppled trees and tore off roofs in Tuscany, the Italian region said. The civil protection agency prepared emergency accommodation in schools and gyms for those forced from their homes after violent winds and rains pummelled the area from the coast to tourist hotspot Florence, killing a man in Lucca and a woman in Carrara, the region said. Both were hit by falling trees, local media reports said. Four people were injured by toppling trees at the seaside camping site of Marina di Massa, while four others were rushed to hospital in the mediaeval town of Barga after the car they were travelling in was hit by a torn-off roof, according to local news site.

Denmark to invest \$5.5 billion in new warships

COPENHAGEN: Denmark expects to invest 40 billion Danish crowns (\$5.47 billion) in new warships as the NATO member seeks to bolster its maritime security in the wake of Russia's inva sion of Ukraine, the defence ministry said on Thursday. As part of the investments due over the next 20 to 25 years, a partnership with the country's maritime industry was launched, aiming to develop and build the new warships in Denmark, Defence Minister Morten Bodskov said in a statement, "With Russia's attack on Ukraine and the new security situation in Europe, it is more important than ever Denmark is able to defend itself. Security of supply plays a decisive role,' Bodskov said.

Estonia blocks cyber attacks claimed by Russian hackers

TALLINN: Estonia on Thursday said it had thwarted a major wave of cyber attacks against public and private institutions, as Russian hackers claimed responsibility. "Yesterday, Estonia was subject to the most extensive cyber attacks it has faced since 2007." Undersecretary for Digital Transformation Luukas Ilves said on Twitter. "Attempted DDoS attacks targeted both public institutions and the private sector." he added. "The attacks were ineffective. E-Estonia is up and running. Services were not disrupted.

US trade talks plan with Taiwan irks China

Taiwan's military holds a drill with missiles and cannons simulating a response to a Chinese missile attack.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The US government will hold trade talks with Taiwan in a sign of support for the island democracy that China claims as its own territory, prompting Beijing to warn on Thursday it will take action if necessary to "safeguard its sovereignty".

The announcement of trade talks comes after Beijing fired missiles into the sea to intimidate Taiwan after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi this month became the highest-ranking American official to visit the island in

Chinese President Xi Jinping's government criticised the planned talks as a violation of its stance that Taiwan has no right to foreign relations. It warned Washington not to encourage the island to try to make its de facto independence permanent, a step Beijing says would lead to war.

"China firmly opposes this," Ministry of Commerce spokesperson Shu Jueting said. She called on Washington to "fully respect China's core interests.'

Also Thursday, Taiwan's military held a drill with missiles and cannons simulating a response to a Chinese missile attack.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 after a civil war and have no official relations but are bound by billions of dollars of trade and investment. The island never has been part of the People's Republic of China, but the ruling Communist Party says it is obliged to unite with the mainland, by force if necessary.

President Joe Biden's coordinator for the Indo-Pacific region, Kurt Campbell, said last week that trade talks would "deepen our ties with Taiwan" but stressed policy wasn't changing. The United States has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan, its ninth-largest trading partner, but maintains extensive informal ties.

The US Trade Representative's announcement of the talks made no mention of tension with Beijing but said "formal negotiations" would develop trade and regulatory ties, a step that would entail closer official interaction

Being allowed to export more to the United States might help Taiwan blunt China's efforts to use its status as the island's biggest trading partner as political leverage. The mainland blocked imports of Taiwanese citrus



Taiwanese soldiers operate a Oerlikon 35mm twin cannon anti-aircraft gun at a base in Taiwan's southeastern Hualien county on Thursday.

and other food in retaliation for Pelosi's Aug. 2 visit.

Taiwan's Foreign expressed "high welcome" for the trade talks, which it said will lead to a 'new page" in relations with the **United States**

"As the situation across the Taiwan Strait has recently escalated, the US government will continue to take concrete actions to maintain security and stability across the Taiwan Strait," it said in a statement.

US-Chinese relations are at their lowest level in decades amid disputes over trade, security, technology, and Beijing's treatment of Muslim minorities and Hong Kong.

The US Trade Representative said negotiations would be conducted under the auspices of Washington's unofficial embassy, the American Institute in Taiwan.

"China always opposes any form of official exchanges between any country and the Taiwan region of China,' said Shu, the Chinese spokesperson. "China will take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its sover-Washington says it takes no posi-

but wants their dispute settled peacefully. The US government is obligated by federal law to see that the island has the means to defend itself. "We will continue to take calm and

tion on the status of China and Taiwan

resolute steps to uphold peace and stability in the face of Beijing's ongoing efforts to undermine it, and to support Taiwan," Campbell said during a conference call last Friday.

China takes more than twice as much of Taiwan's exports as the United States, its No. 2 foreign market. Taiwan's government says its companies have invested almost \$200 billion in the mainland. Beijing says a 2020 census found some 158,000 Taiwanese entrepreneurs, professionals and others live on the mainland.

China's ban on imports of citrus, fish and hundreds of other Taiwanese food products hurt rural areas seen as supporters of President Tsai Ing-wen, but those goods account for less than 0.5 percent of Taiwan's exports to the mainland.

Beijing did nothing that might affect the flow of processor chips from Taiwan that are needed by Chinese factories that assemble the world's smartphones and consumer electronics. The island is the world's biggest chip supplier.

A second group of US lawmakers led by Senator Ed Markey, a Democrat from Massachusetts, arrived on Taiwan on Sunday and met with Tsai. Beijing announced a second round of military drills after their arrival.

Taiwan, with 23.6 million people, has launched its own military drills in

On Thursday, drills at Hualien Air Base on the east coast simulated a response to a Chinese missile attack. Military personnel practised with Taiwanese-made Sky Bow 3 anti-aircraft missiles and 35mm anti-aircraft cannon but didn't fire them.

"We didn't panic" when China launched military drills, said air force

Saudi doctoral student gets 34 years in prison for tweets

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Saudi court has sentenced a doctoral student to 34 years in prison for spreading "rumours" and retweeting dissidents, according to court documents obtained on Thursday, a decision that has drawn growing global condemnation.

Activists and lawyers consider the sentence against Salma al-Shehab, a mother of two and a researcher at Leeds University in Britain, shocking even by Saudi standards of justice.

So far unacknowledged by the kingdom, the ruling comes amid Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's crackdown on dissent even as his rule granted women the right to drive and other new freedoms in the ultracon servative Islamic nation. Al-Shehab was detained during a family vacation in January 2021 days before she planned to return to the UK, according to the Freedom Initiative, a Washington-based human rights group.

Al-Shehab told judges she had been jailed for over 285 days before her case was even referred to court, the legal documents obtained by the AP show The Freedom Initiative describes al-Shehab as a member of the Shiite Muslim minority, which has long complained of systematic discrimination in the Sunni-ruled kingdom.

"Saudi Arabia has boasted to the world that they are improving women's rights and creating legal reform. but there is no question with this abhorrent sentence that the situation is only getting worse," said Bethany al-Haidari, the group's Saudi case manager. Since rising to power in 2017, Prince Mohammed has acceler ated efforts to diversify the kingdom's economy away from oil with massive tourism projects-most recently plans to create the world's longest buildings that would stretch for more than 100



Rights advocate Salma al-Shehab in Riyadh

UN's Congo peacekeepers pull out of major city

The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Democratic Republic of Congo has pulled out of one of the largest ly protests against its failure to protect civilians, Congolese and UN officials said on Thursday.

Butembo, a trading hub of almost a million people, has been one of the epicentres of violent demonstrations since last month that have killed dozens, including civilians, peacekeepers and Congolese police.

The mission's hundreds of troops and civilian personnel in Butembo have left and discussions are planned over how to evacuate their equipment, General Constant Ndima, the military governor of North Kivu province, told

Ndeye Khady Lo, the spokesperson for the mission, which is known by its French acronym MONUSCO, said the

"MONUSCO is not leaving Butembo. After consultations with local and national authorities, the mission has proceeded to a temporary redeployment of its personnel outside saying when they might return.

The protests, which also hit the cities of Goma and Uvira, have laid bare public frustration with the UN peaceekepers, who have been deployed to Congo for more than two decades.

MONUSCO has around 12,400 troops and costs more than \$1 billion

Even after a peace deal in 2003 drew a line under a five-year regional conflict in which millions died, UN peacekeepers and Congolese forces have been unable to stamp out persistent violence by dozens of rebel groups in the eastern areas bordering Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

Local residents often accuse the peacekeepers of being too passive.

Death toll in Kabul mosque blast rises to 21, police say

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

A blast that ripped through a mosque packed with worshippers in the Afghan capital killed at least 21 people and wounded more than two dozen others, police said on Thursday.

The number of bombings across Afghanistan has declined since the Taliban returned to power last year, but several attacks-some tarcountry in recent months, including those claimed by the jihadist Islamic State (IS) group. No group has claimed responsibility for

Wednesday evening's blast at Kabul's Sediqia Mosque, which has an adjoining madrasa. "He was my cousin, may God forgive him," said one local resident who gave his name as

Masiullah, referring to a relative who died in the explosion. "One year had passed from his marriage, he

was 27 years old... he was a good person.' Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadran said 21 people were killed and 33 others wounded.

Italian non-governmental organisation Emergency, which operates a hospital in Kabul, said it had received 35 patients, including three who died. "Most of the injuries were caused by shrapnel and burns. Our surgeons were operating throughout the night. There were nine children among the victims that we received," country director Stefano Sozza said in a statement on Thursday. Local hospitals contacted by AFP said they

were not permitted to provide details of casualties they had treated. The United Nations Assistance Mission in

Afghanistan on Thursday said security was "deteriorating" in the country.

"We deplore yesterday's attack in a Kabul bombings which have killed & injured more than 250 people in recent weeks, the highest monthly number of civilian casualties over the last year," said a statement released on Twitter.

Taliban officials insist they have full control of security and frequently deny or play down incidents reported on Afghanistan's vibrant social media.

They have also taken recently to preventing local and foreign media from covering the aftermath of attacks-sometimes using violenceand on Thursday armed Taliban fighters blocked journalists from reaching the latest blast site. Wednesday's explosion comes nearly a week after a suicide bomber killed top Taliban cleric Rahimullah Haqqani, along with his brother, at his madrasa in Kabul.

Haqqani was known for angry speeches against IS, which later claimed the attack.

Taliban test repaired helicopters

KABUL: Taliban military aircraft roared over the Afghan capital on Wednesday as the group's defence ministry tested out recently repaired hardware, much of it left behind by foreign militaries acquired the Taliban seized power a

Aircraft, including helicopters and at least one plane, flew low over Kabul skies near the airport, including what appeared to be at least one Russian-made MI-24 attack helicopter and two other American-made aircraft. A defence ministry spokesperson told Reuters the Taliban had recently repaired some helicopters and were conducting the flyovers as a test. He did not confirm the exact make or country of origin, saying only that "all types of aircraft" were being tested.

It was not clear who had provided the technical expertise to repair the helicopters. Taliban officials have said

that pilots, other specialists from the former Afghan National Army would be integrated into their security forces.

The defence ministry also said in a statement that its engineering team had recently repaired 35 tanks, 15 Humvee armoured vehicles and 20 US-produced Navistar 7000 military vehicles. All had been damaged as the Taliban took over the country in August 2021, the anniversary of which was marked on Monday with gatherings and gunfire by the hardline Islamist group. (Reuters)

Zelensky hails Turkish leader's visit as Russian strikes batter Kharkiv

Ukrainian president calls on the United Nations to ensure security at the Zaporizhzhia power plant, where increased fighting has raised fears of a nuclear incident.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky on Thursday hailed a visit to his war-ravaged country from Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan as Russian strikes battered the eastern region of Kharkiv, leaving several dead and dozens injured.

In a separate meeting with UN chief Antonio Guterres, Zelensky called on the UN to ensure security at the Zaporizhzhia power plant, where increased fighting has raised fears of a nuclear incident.

"The visit of the President of Turkey to Ukraine is a powerful message of support from such a powerful country," Zelensky said in a statement, adding that they would discuss cereals exports and Zaporizhzhia.

Erdogan and Guterres, who were due to hold a press conference with Zelensky in Lviv, were key brokers of a deal last month allowing the resumption of grain exports from Ukraine after Russia's invasion blocked essential global supplies.

On Thursday, the 25th cargo ship departed Ukraine under the deal and Zelensky said he and Guterres had "agreed to continue the coordination



of the grain initiative implementation. We also discussed the possible directions of its development"

Erdogan, who has significant geopolitical rivalries with the Kremlin but maintains a close working relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, met with the Russian leader less than two weeks ago in the Black Sea resort of Sochi. The early morning strikes across

the city of Kharkiv and nearby Krasnograd meanwhile left at least six dead and 25 injured, just one day after Russian bombardments killed 13 in the Kharkiv city. The regional governor Oleg

Synegubov posted images from the scene of one Kharkiv strike showing the smouldering remains of several burnt out buildings and twisted wreckage of destroyed vehicles nearby. A spokesman for the regional prose-

cutor's office said the latest tally showed four were killed and 22 injured in Kharkiv city with another two killed and three injured in Krasnograd further southwest.

"Kharkiv. 175 days of horror. Daily terror, missile strikes on residential areas and civilians," a senior presidential aide, Mykhaylo Podolyak, wrote on social media.

The UN chief is slated to travel on Friday to Odessa, one of three ports involved in the grain exports dealhammered out in July under the aegis

of the UN with Ankara's mediation. He will then head to Turkey to visit the Joint Coordination Centre, the body tasked with overseeing the accord.

According to the UN, the first half of August saw 21 freighters authorised to sail under the deal carrying more than 563,000 tonnes of agricultural products, including over 451,000 tonnes of corn.

The Ukraine ports authority said on Thursday that 25 cargo ships carrying grain had departed from three Black Sea ports under the deal and the latest to depart was expected in Egypt in the coming days.

Russia's defence ministry meanwhile said on Thursday its forces had not deployed heavy weapons at the Zaporizhzhia plant, accusing Kyiv of preparing a "provocation" at the

"Russian troops have no heavy weapons either on the territory of the station or in areas around it. There are only guard units," the ministry said in a statement.

BRIEFING

Wolves sign midfielder Nunes LONDON: Wolverhampton Wanderers have signed Portuguese international

midfielder Matheus Nunes from Sporting Lisbon, the Premier League club said on Thursday. The fee was not disclosed, but Wolves stated it is a club record, with British media reporting it to be around 38 million pounds (\$45.8 million). The transfer fee would surpass the 35 million pounds Wolves paid for forward Fabio Silva in 2020. The 23-year-old Nunes has signed a five-year contract with Wolves, with a one-year option. He had his breakthrough in the 2020/21 season when he helped Sporting to a league and a Portuguese League Cup title. Nunes played his first game for Portugal's national side in 2021 against Qatar and has eight games and one goal for the team. After a defeat and a draw in their first two games of the new Premier League season, Nunes will be a welcome addition to Bruno Lage's squad ahead of the travel to face Tottenham.

Simeone joins Napoli on loan

ROME: Argentine forward Giovanni Simeone has joined Napoli on loan for the rest of the season from Verona, the two clubs announced on Thursday The 27-year-old, the son of Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone, is coming off his most prolific season in Serie A after scoring 17 goals for Verona last term. The deal could become permanent next summer for a fee of 12 million euros (\$12.2 million) if certain conditions are met, according to Italian media. Only Ciro Immobile, Dusan Vlahovic and Lautaro Martinez scored more goals in Serie A last season than Simeone. Napoli, who lost Lorenzo Insigne and club record scorer Dries Mertens in the close season, are also reportedly close to completing a move for Sassuolo forward Giacomo Raspadori. (AGENCIES)

New manager Humagain eyes win in Bangladesh friendly

The former Three Star boss says he got the coaching role earlier than he expected.



Nepal acting football coach Pradip Humagain meets the press in Kathmandu on Thursday.

SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU, AUG 18

Newly appointed Nepal national team acting coach Pradip Humagain said that he would start on-field training from Friday to prepare the team for an international friendly against Bangladesh scheduled for September 27 in Kathmandu.

"We had theoretical training today [Thursday], the practical training will begin from tomorrow," said Humagain during a media briefing at ANFA headquarters in Satdobato.

Humagain has already called 40 players for the friendly including 10 senior players expelled by Kuwaiti coach Abdullah Almutairi, who is currently on holiday, owing to a dispute over accommodation facilities. "I am not in the place to talk about (those) players," said Humagain regarding their exclusion by Almutairi.

"My concentration is on preparing the team for the Bangladesh friendly. We will not take the game just as friendly but do our best to win the said the former Three Star coach who obtained American citizenship a couple of years ago.

"I thank All Nepal Football Association for entrusting me with crucial responsibility of the national team," said the AFC 'A' licence holder who became the surprise choice of the newly elected ANFA executive committee to look over the team against the likes of many senior and experienced coaches.

'Getting the national team coaching job was a bit surprising for me as it came earlier than my expectations. However, I was already ready for the position," said Humagain who was sacked by Lalitpur City FC in the Nepal Super League last year after four matches following a run of poor

"I don't know why ANFA chose me. I have huge respect for the other coaches of the country. They have huge potential. I request them to visit the training and share their knowledge so that we can come up with some innovative ideas," he said. "I felt that Nepali football is at a difficult juncture now and accepted the coaching role as soon as I was offered.'

Humagain also said that the role at the national team was a natural journey as a coach rather than a challenge. "It's a journey and a process of life. I have neither taken it as a challenge nor do I feel pressure," he added. 'Now I will focus on reducing the team from a group of 40 players very soon. Though it seems that we have plenty of preparation time for the game, the fact is that there was no domestic football for a long time."

Humagain also said that he would start a new culture of welcoming fans on the training ground every Wednesday from September. "We want the fans and all stakeholders to encourage the team," Humagain said, adding that goalkeeping coach Binod Dangol and assistant coach Yugal Kishor Rai were nominated for the post as per his advice to the football governing body.

Regarding recalling more than half a dozen of Nepali international players, who flew to Australia in the past couple of months for better opportunities, Humagain said that he had talked with them directly or indirectly. "I don't think they are in the situation to return back to Nepal anytime soon,'



Rama Singh, the first captain of Nepali national women's football team that played the first ever official international football match against Hong Kong in 1989 AFC Women's Championship, speaks at Sports Dialogue in Kathmandu on Thursday. Singh says women's football has improved in recent days but it is still not rewarding financially.

Bayern Munich and Dortmund already setting the pace in Bundesliga

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bayern Munich has made such an impressive start to the season that few if any expect Borussia Dortmund or any other challenger to be able to

The two rivals are the only teams remaining with 100% records after two games of the Bundesliga, where they already occupy the places they had at the end of last season-first and second.

Bayern lead due to a superior goal difference after racking up six in their opening win at Eintracht Frankfurt and two more in last weekend's comfortable victory over Wolfsburg. The Bavarian powerhouse

next visit Bochum on Sunday, where they hope for more target practice against a team who lost both of

Dortmund, who are banking on a mix of youth and experience for the new season, overcame tough rivals Bayer Leverkusen and Freiburg. Edin Terzic's team next host promoted Werder Bremen on Saturday.

Bayern and Dortmund don't play each other until the ninth round on the weekend of October 8.

Bayern are going for a-record extending 11th consecutive league title since Dortmund last won it in 2012.

Former Bayern great Lothar Matthaus doesn't anticipate a change after paying tribute to sporting direc-

The two rivals are the only teams remaining with perfect records after two rounds.

tor Hasan Salihamidzic for a busy summer of transfer activity.

Matthaus says the squad is strong enough to challenge for the Champions

"Based on the performances we've seen so far and my gut feeling, I think that Bayern, with this team and this

mind may feel a bit busier than usual today

This luminary placement will ask you to take a logi-

cal approach toward sorting through your feelings.

Unfortunately, it could cause you to struggle with the

spirit, can once again have an important say when it comes to winning the most important European club trophy," Matthaus said in a column for Germany's Sky Sport. Bayern saw top-scorer Robert

Lewandowski depart for Barcelona, brought in Senegal star Sadio Mane, Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt, Ajax stars Noussair Mazraoui and Ryan Gravenberch, and highly rated French talent Mathys Tel.

Franz Beckenbauer, another former Bayern great, struggled to contain his excitement after seeing Bayern's opening game in Frankfurt.

"I'll hold off congratulations for the title. But I hadn't seen such desire, such a performance in a long time," Beckenbauer told the Bild tabloid.

Dortmund are focusing on their own team and results. Sporting director Sebastian Kehl said he had watched Bayern's opening game in Frankfurt but that it had caused "little excitement" in his

Kehl, who took over from predecessor Michael Zorc after last season, has overseen another summer of rebuilding in Dortmund. Top-scorer Erling Haaland is gone, replaced first by Sebastien Haller from Ajax, then Anthony Modeste from Cologne after Haller was found to have a testicular

household

Dortmund also signed Germany attacker Karim Adeyemi and his national team teammates Niko Schlotterbeck and Niklas Sule for the defence. But existing players like Marco

Youssoufa Moukoko and Jamie Bynoe-Gittens are just as important. Moukoko and Bynoe-Gittens both scored in Dortmund's come-from-be-

Reus, Jude Bellingham, and young-

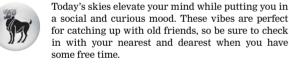
hind win in Freiburg last week, and Dortmund extended the 18-yearold Bynoe-Gittens' contract on Edin Terzic is back to coach the

team following Marco Rose's inconsistent spell in charge last season. Terzic led Dortmund to the German Cup title in his first stint in 2021. After last Friday's win in Freiburg, he's also the first Dortmund coach to win nine

HOROSCOPE



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





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

You'll feel centered and in control of your surroundings today. This cosmic climate will give you a chance to understand the world around you in a new light, helping you master any tasks or obstacles that may fall into your lap

Your dreams may be action-packed and emotionally

intense. Take a moment to regroup and center as you

stir from your slumber to help shake off any intense

encounters. Luckily, the day will help you reclaim



LEO (July 23-August 22) ***

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

your daily calendar

CANCER (June 22-July 22) ***

idea of confrontation

Try not to get too sucked into your social media pages



today. Though you'll be eager to converse with your nearest and dearest, it could cause trouble if you're not able to stay on task at work. Be sure to open your

Though the weekend is almost here, you'll have plen-

ty of work to keep yourself busy with. Luckily, this

luminary displacement will elevate your clarity and

efficiency, allowing you to complete any tasks on



the people who lift you up.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) ***

you move forward boldly.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) ***



SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) *** Your decision-making skills will benefit from a nice boost. Though you'll still want to weigh your options before making important choices, your ability to understand your options with more clarity can help

The sweet smell of love will seem to linger in the air

today. Don't feel guilty about indulging in a bit of

flirting. However, you'll want to keep tabs on your

connection to reality, no matter how high the vibes

excitement than usual. You'll be more sensitive to

the thoughts and feelings of others. Keep an eye out

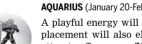
for any energy vampires in your midst, leaning into



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) **** Under today's cosmic landscape, you'll be hyper-fo

cused on completing your professional tasks. Luckily, this cosmic climate will also elevate your ability to multitask and move quickly, helping the hours pass

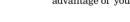
AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) ***



A playful energy will find you today! This luminary placement will also elevate your aura, which could attract a fiery new fling. Your voice will travel far later tonight, so remember to speak with kindness



under today's skies. PISCES (February 19-March 20) ***



Your heart and mind will work as a team today. Though this luminary placement will put you in a nursing and compassionate mood, try not to give too much of your energy to anyone who might take

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

Portended 6 Goldfish 10 — and kin 14 Romance, in

15 Corrida shouts 16 Ibsen heroine 17 Authentic 18 One engaged in contemplation

20 Autographs 22 Duck out from under 23 Switch positions

24 Drone 25 Brainless 29 Extend coverage 34 Sister's clothes

35 Gives temporarily

36 Molasses-based drink 37 Sunblock additive

38 Bandleader Count — 39 Slugger — Ruth 40 Ostrich look-

41 Asked a question 42 Fuel tanker

47 Luau fare

48 Fast horses

alike 43 Not schooled 45 Slick 46 Half a couple 51 Disclaimer of responsibility Add new stock to

61 Earthen pot 62 Follow 63 Rushed 64 Botched 65 Sweeter and

iuicier

60 Lawyer's job

59 Snapshot

DOWN

Indonesian island 2 Ominous sign

Tootsies 4 Sevareid of the news

5 Motor city Searches high and low

Sheltered Tulip colors

Tire pressure

meas. 10 Rascals 11 Small amount

12 Stepped on 13 Mad Hatter guest 19 They're almost

grown 21 Midwest st.

24 Linger 25 Sea World whale

26 Eagle's gripper

staple (hyph.)

27 WWII movie

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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28 Slapstick missile 29 PC button

Eurasian range 32 Yokels 33 Common abrasive

35 Flog 38 Fens 39 Profile

Famed

41 Prize money

44 Walked slowly

45 Tibetan gazelle

48 Rocket

trajectories 49 Gather in, as crops 50 Church part 51 Sour pickle

47 "Baloney!"

52 — of Wight 53 Former Atlanta stadium 54 Hornet kin Shakespearean 55 Winter woe

60 56 Lascivious glance 58 San Francisco

26 29 32 49 50 52 53 54 55 56 51 62 65

SUDOKU

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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

Salman Rushdie attacker 'surprised' the author survived

Matar, charged with attempted murder and assault, said he had only read 'a couple pages' of 'The Satanic Verses'.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

he man charged with stabbing Salman Rushdie on a lecture stage in western New York said in an interview that he was surprised to learn the accomplished author had survived the attack.

Speaking to the New York Post from jail, Hadi Matar said he decided to see Rushdie at the Chautauqua Institution after he saw a tweet last winter about the writer's planned appearance.

Rushdie suffered a damaged liver and severed nerves in an arm and an eve.

"I don't like the person. I don't think he's a very good person," Matar told the newspaper. "He's someone who attacked Islam. He attacked their beliefs, the belief systems.'

Matar, 24, said he considered late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini "a great person" but wouldn't say whether he was following a fatwa, or edict, issued by Khomeini in Iran in 1989 that called for Rushdie's death after the author published "The Satanic Verses.

Iran has denied involvement in the attack. Matar, who lives in Fairview, New Jersey, said he hadn't had any contact with Iran's Revolutionary Guard. He told the Post he had only read "a couple pages" of "The Satanic

Rushdie, 75, suffered a damaged liver and severed nerves in an arm and an eye, according to his agent, in the attack Friday. His agent, Andrew Wylie, said his condition has improved, and he is on the road to recovery

Matar, who is charged with attempt ed murder and assault, told the Post he took a bus to Buffalo the day before the attack and then took a Lyft to Chautauqua, about 40 miles (64 kilometres) away.

He bought a pass to the Chautauqua Institution grounds and then slept in the grass the night before Rushdie's planned talk.

Matar was born in the US but holds dual citizenship in Lebanon, where his parents were born. His mother has told reporters in interviews that Matar came back changed from a visit to see his father in Lebanon in 2018. After that, he became moody and withdrew from his family,



Hadi Matar, 24, arrives for an arraignment in the Chautauqua County Courthouse in Mayville,

Randy Rainbow, master satirist, vies with Goliaths for Emmy

In the guise of a TV reporter, Rainbow conducts mock interviews with clips of his targets before launching into a bespoke song.

LYNN ELBER LOS ANGELES

f Randy Rainbow is adored by the legendary Carol Burnett, and he is, what flimsy excuse could TV academy voters have to deny him an Emmy for his fourth nom-

Rainbow, who has raised musical parody to a political-satire art form, is again David facing Goliath. His competition in the short-form series category includes shows from James Corden, Stephen Colbert and Seth Meyers.

Corden's "Carpool Karaoke: The Series" has nabbed the award the past three years. Does Rainbow see the British actor-comedian as his chief

"Nemesis is a strong word," Rainbow replied, waiting a perfectly timed beat: "Enemy," he said, tonguein-cheek. "No, I'm a big James Corden fan, so it's been an honour to share the category with him. They could throw it to the little guy every once in a

It's true that the self-described little guy doesn't have a network or its resources to draw on. But his YouTube videos--typically merciless, fearless and peppy roasts of conservative politicians and policies—have racked up more than a half-billion views, and he's amassed 3 million-plus social media followers.

"He's a genius," Burnett said of Rainbow. "His lyrics are right up there with Stephen Sondheim....In fact, Steve said he's one of the best lyricists around today. I mean, that's a quote from Sondheim, and that's from the master himself."

The late Sondheim said just that. John Legend and Lin-Manuel Miranda are among Rainbow's many other prominent admirers.

His latest Emmy nomination is for "Gay," which takes on Florida's GOP governor and the new law he championed that bans lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through third grade. The award will be given on September 3 as part of the creative arts Emmy ceremony that precedes the September 12 main awards show.

"It's my send-up, tribute I guess you could call it, to Ron DeSantis and his 'Don't Say Gay' bill," Rainbow said, using the title bestowed by its critics. "That video obviously has a lot of meaning, and I was very proud that it made such an impact. It was nice to be recognised for that one.'



Randy Rainbow arrives at the Creative Arts Emmy Awards in 2019, in Los Angeles.

But it's the desire to entertain, not punditry, that drives his career, he

"I didn't get into this because of an interest in politics. I'm certainly more interested in politics now than I was when I started doing YouTube videos 11 years ago," he said, attributing the shift to his own maturity and the

"But I try to stay true to my initial intent, which is only to be amusing and bring a little levity to these situations which are otherwise anything but light," he said. "I think that that's the reason that it continues to resonate with people and why people still get a kick out of my stuff.

The escapism of make-believe is what helped sustain Rainbow-his real family name—as a shy and bullied youngster, along with the unstinting love of his mother, Gwen, and the grandmother he called Nanny. The three of them shared a passion for music, and Rainbow credits Nanny's caustic humour as another key influ-

When he hit adolescence, Gwen Rainbow accepted without hesitation that her son was gay. In his touching and lively new memoir, "Playing With Myself," Rainbow recalls his mom's

reassurance that she "loved her gay friends."

"I certainly didn't remember ever meeting them," Rainbow writes. "I mean, I'm gay five minutes and suddenly my mother's Liza Minnelli at Studio 54?'

His musician-father was "reasonably tolerant," Rainbow says in the book. But Gerry Rainbow dismissed young Randy's early artistic efforts, telling him he'd never earn a living "wearing wigs and making silly vide-

So much for predictions, with Rainbow's YouTube success just the start. He's on the road with his national "The Pink Glasses Tour," named for a favourite accessory (and a song he co-wrote with composer Alan Menken). His latest album, "A Little Brains, a Little Talent," includes duets with Bernadette Peters and Patti LuPone, Broadway stars he'd long admired from afar.

Rainbow still runs a lean video operation. The studio is in his two-bedroom New York City apartment, "where all the magic happens," he said during a recent Zoom interview, gesturing at the modest space. A producer, arranger and musicians tailor songs to Rainbow's specifications.

He writes the lyrics, often usually set to the Broadway tunes he reveres In the guise of a TV reporter, he conducts mock interviews with clips of his targets before launching into a bespoke song. He's the lead vocalist, his own backup singers in a dazzling array of costumes, and he does the

He knows how to sell a song. Rainbow's supple voice adapts easily to every tune, and his boyishly handsome face becomes a veritable flipbook of vivid expressions that slide from faux sincerity to skepticism to wide-eyed alarm.

The source material Rainbow draws on is equally varied. "Gurl, You're a Karen," which mocks Republican Reps Marjorie Taylor Greene and Lauren Boebert, is set to the tune of "Dentist," sung by Steve Martin in the 1986 film "Little Shop of Horrors.

Rainbow's YouTube videos have racked up more than a half-billion views.

"Gay" is set to "Shy," a song Burnett performed when she made her Tony-nominated Broadway debut in the 1959 musical "Once Upon a Mattress." In his first viral political video, Rainbow inserted himself as moderator of the 2016 Donald Trump-Hillary Clinton presidential debate and did a "Mary Poppins" riff on Trump's use of the impromptu word "braggadocious."

tric braggadocious. Likes to throw big words around and hopes that we all notice. If he keeps repeating them, they might just make him POTUS, belted out Rainbow. The biting lyrics and brassy on-screen persona aside, Rainbow is

"He's super callous, fragile, egocen-

"funny and loving, and there's just this kind of sweetness to him," said Burnett, a friend as well as a fan. "You just fall in love with him." Burnett said she shares his political perspective, but Rainbow has learned

from meeting fans that they aren't all in sync. Some have bluntly informed him they dislike his views but love his "In a way, what I'm trying to do is

transcend the politics of it all. So that's always nice to hear," he said.

'Three Minutes', a heartbreaking celluloid memorial

Shot in the Polish town of Nasielsk, the documentary's story is remarkable because the majority of the town's Jews were eventually murdered by the Nazis.

JOCELYN NOVECK

New York, on August 13.

hat gets you, deep in the gut, are the smiles. The broad, awkward, sometimes smiles of people on an unremarkable day in an unremarkable town in 1938 Poland, fascinated by this new thing called a movie camera and oblivious to the fact that one day, this amateur travel movie will become a devastating historical artefact.

Many documentaries tell vital and poignant stories. Only a few, though, simultaneously make as urgent an argument for the existence of filmmaking itself as does Bianca Stigter's

The film is based on some three minutes of 16mm footage taken in 1938.

"Three Minutes: A Lengthening," a heartbreaking work based on some three minutes of 16mm footage taken by a tourist who himself had no idea what he was capturing-no idea that in a few years, nearly everyone he filmed would be dead.

David Kurtz, an American Jew, was making a "grand tour" of Europe's big cities but also stopping in Nasielsk, the town 30 miles (50 kilometres) north of Warsaw, where he was born and lived as a child. He had a new camera for the trip and tried it out on some 150 Jewish villagers on an August day—milling in a square, spilling out of a synagogue, gathering near a grocery shop or inside a cafe. Young boys in caps, old bearded men, girls with long braids-they eagerly follow the camera, curious and

amused by the strange contraption. The story these three minutes tells is remarkable only because of what happened soon after: All Jews were



A scene from the film 'Three Minutes: A Lengthening'.

rounded up and expelled a year later from the town and, save a lucky few, eventually murdered by the Nazis at the Treblinka death camp. This amateur travelogue becomes, then, not only a historical document—a very rare film of prewar Jewish town life in Poland—but also a memorial.

The story of the film's discovery is remarkable in itself. The footage, mostly in colour, was discovered by Kurtz's grandson, Glenn, in a closet in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, in 2009. He sent it to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, which had it restored and digitised only a month before its deteriorating condition would have rendered it unrecoverable. The degrading celluloid is a constant reminder of the fragility of the life it

Several years later, director Stigter came across Glenn Kurtz's book, "Three Minutes in Poland: Discovering a Lost World in a 1938 Family Film, his own four-year investigation. She

says she watched the film and wondered: "Could you make those three minutes longer, to keep the past in the present?" (The film, Stigter's directorial debut, is co-produced by her husband, Oscar-winning filmmaker Steve McQueen.) The result is just that: A lengthen-

ing, multiplying these three minutes by about 20 times, explaining and exploring and elaborating. "They say one picture is worth 1,000 words,' intones narrator Helena Bonham Carter. "But before that phrase makes sense, you need to know what you're

The film starts with the footage in full. The men and women and boys and girls in the square grin and offer awkward waves. Others pour out of the carved synagogue doors. For a few seconds inside a cafe, curious crowds stare through windows. A woman calls out from the doorway of a grocery store. Who is she? Stigter investigates.

Two years after the film was restored, a woman called Kurtz and told him she recognised her grandfather, Maurice Chandler, then a 13-yearold boy named Moszek Tuchendler, who managed to survive the Holocaust. Interviewed for the film, he describes a comfortable existence, with "no fears." If you had told him what would happen in a few years, "I wouldn't have believed it probably," he says.

The end of this vibrant community came suddenly on December 3, 1939, we learn, three months after Germany invaded Poland. The town's Jews were gathered in the square by Nazi soldiers bearing whips and steel bars, while their homes were looted, and transported in hellish sealed cattle cars to ghettos in larger cities.

were sent to the Treblinka death camp, where they were immediately murdered. Fewer than 100 Jewish townspeople of an original 3,000 in Nasielsk (out of an overall population of 7,000) survived the Holocaust and were alive Near the end of the film, Stigter

Eventually, the film tells us, they

lines up separate portrait shots of the 150 or so villagers in the film. Except for a few, we don't know their names. But seeing their faces pulled out from a crowd is one way of acknowledging that each was a human being of value, lost to the world. The town square still exists 80 years

later, near a park with a statue of Pope John Paul II. But there is no statue or memorial to the lost Jewish population, we learn: "The only thing left is an absence." An absence that this film tries to fill

as best it can. At the end, one feels gratitude not only for Stigter's painstaking work but for author Kurtz and, of course, his grandfather, just a man with a camera whose fleeting footage is a powerful response to those who intended to eradicate the existence of these people and millions like them. The film, even three minutes of deteriorating celluloid, does not lie.

Marvel's She-Hulk hopes Disney+ fans like her when she's angry

Jen Walters, played by Tatiana Maslany, gains powers from Bruce Banner (original Hulk, played by Mark Ruffalo).

ROLLO ROSS WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

he-Hulk: Attorney at Law' is the latest Marvel Comics superhero to get the TV series treatment.

Tatiana Maslany stars as Jen Walters, who struggles to embrace her Hulk-like superpowers and instead wants to continue her life as a high-powered attorney.

Maslany, though, wishes Marvel fans don't see it as "the female superhero show" when it begins streaming on Walt Disney Co's Disney+ on

"Why do we like hit it over the head that it's like a female series or whatev-

Maslany's character struggles to embrace her Hulk-like superpowers.

er?" she told Reuters in a virtual interview. "The whole idea of her existence is threatening, not even when she's in a fighting mode," she added.

The show features several scenes with either media or male online trolls criticising She-Hulk for her very

Maslany's character gains Hulk powers from cousin Bruce Banner (the original Hulk and an Avenger, played by Mark Ruffalo), who mentors her on being a superhero. She is also put in charge of her law firm's superpower division, allowing the show to bring in a slew of Marvel Universe

However, it's not all about law, cameos and superpowers.

"To me, it's the like really kind of mundane, human moments that we get to experience with somebody who has superpowers that make it so special and the thing I found funniest and kind of most engaging and like compelling about the show was like just seeing Jen at a family dinner or like trying to learn to swipe-date," Maslany said.



Cast members Tatiana Maslany and Mark Ruffalo attend a premiere for the television series 'She-Hulk: Attorney at Law', in Los Angeles, California, on Monday.

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