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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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Dipayal Jomsom

TODAY

NATIONAL

Nepal has requested India for a master seed virus of lumpy skin disease to produce a vaccine here. Without the master seed virus, which is pure, safe and immunogenic, vaccine production is impossible. Pg 3

As a parliamentary panel gives final touches to the bill to amend transitional justice law, conflict victims, rights activists and civil society protested on Friday demanding corrections in its flawed provisions. Pg 3

WORLD

Heavy rain and high water levels on rivers in northeastern China threaten cities, prompting evacuation, though the country appears to have averted the worst effects of typhoon season battering east Asia. Pg 4

Kyu-jin and her wife feel they could do a good job as parents, even though South Korea has no legal route for lesbians to become mothers together. They opted for IVF using donor sperm in Belgium. Pg 4

MONEY

Beijing has agreed to re-open the Tatopani border crossing for people from September after two-way cargo flow resumed on May 1. The decision was made at the Nepal-Tibet Trade Facilitation Committee meeting. Pg 5

Smart Krishi has become an all-in-one app for farmers. It produces information necessary for farmers such as business plans and proposals, government notices and farming news in the form of texts and videos. Pg 5

SPORTS



Ex-captain Gyanendra Malla announces retirement from cricket. Malla played 37 ODIs and scored 876 runs including seven half centuries. In 45 T20s, Malla amassed 883 runs that included a century and two fifties. Pg 6

The Women's World Cup knockout round kicks off today when Switzerland plays Spain in Auckland, and Norway faces Japan in the New Zealand capital of Wellington. Pg 6



Nepal Army personnel and local residents try to dig out bodies at Gaurishankar Rural Municipality in Dolakha on Friday. A landslide triggered by heavy rains on Thursday night had killed a 50-year-old woman and a 15-month-old infant in the rural municipality. (Report on Pg 2)

Calls grow louder for making EPG report public, one way or the other

Nepal members of the panel and former foreign ministers even advise taking the suggestions to Parliament.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, AUG 4

A fresh debate has begun on what Nepal can do with the report of the Eminent Persons' Group on Nepal-India Relations should New Delhi continue to defer receiving it. Experts have suggested that Kathmandu can make it public through Parliament in case India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to refuse to accept the suggestions of the expert panel on improving and updating his country's relations with Nepal.

An eight-member team had prepared a joint report five years ago suggesting the blueprint for Nepal-India relations in the changed regional and global contexts. The document has been gathering dust while the panel is disbanded, not least by the death of one eminent person and by other official assignments of some others on either side.

At an interaction on 'Neighbourly relations and EPG report' organised by the Tanka Prasad Smriti Pratishthan in Lalitpur on Friday, former foreign ministers and EPG members from the Nepali side said their patience was running out. They are of the opinion that either the two governments, which formed the taskforce, should disown the work or create a conducive environment for receiving it.

"If the government of India does not receive the report prepared by the joint panel, then the government of Nepal should receive it," former deputy prime minister and foreign minister Kamal Thapa said.

The EPG was formed in 2016 when

Thapa was foreign minister. He said that as the EPG report is only suggestive, it's not mandatory for the two governments to implement its recommendations.

"If the government of India does not agree to receive the report, the government of Nepal should accept it. Then it is for the government of Nepal to decide whether to make it public," said Thapa. "It's a total failure of the government of Nepal to create an environment for the report's receipt by the Indian side [first]. We should not make the EPG report a Pandora's box."

Nilamber Acharya says the task force should do its duty even by going public with the report.

The Eminent Persons Group was mandated to review the 1950 bilateral peace and friendship treaty and suggest a new one as well as to address other issues like transit, trade, water resource, and border management between the two countries. The EPG consisted of four members from each side. After preparing the report some 61 months ago, the EPG members had agreed to submit it first to the Indian prime minister but due to India's suspicions over some of the suggestions incorporated in the report, the panel has been unable to give their assignment a sense of completion.

>> Continued on page 2

At long last, police to be assigned gold smuggling probe

After over two weeks of investigation for revenue leakage, government decides to examine scam for organised crime.

PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA
KATHMANDU, AUG 4

Nepal Police is likely to take the lead in investigating the gold smuggling scam following strong indications of organised crime being committed, said a senior official of the Department of Revenue Investigation.

The DRI on July 18 had seized a huge quantity of gold from Sinamangal, Kathmandu after the consignment had passed the airport customs undetected, and had launched an investigation.

Then it sent the gold, hidden in cartons of motorcycle brake shoes and electric shavers, to the Nepal Rastra Bank, where the yellow metal's gross weight was found to be 155kg.

But the government is being criticised for not initiating an investigation for organised crime even after it was revealed that the smuggling was well-planned and taking place with the involvement of nationals from multiple countries. Police had maintained that they had not conducted an investigation without the department sending them a formal letter to do so.

"As this is apparently a case of organised cross-border crime, the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) of Police will be involved in the investigation," said Nawa Raj Dhungana, director general of the department. "We are discussing with the Office of the

Attorney General on whether to involve the CIB in investigating organised crime or give it the lead role."

As per Section 20 (2) of the Organised Crime Act-2013, if any agency other than the police receives a complaint of organised crime with evidence, such agency should immediately forward the complaint to a police office.

"If there are strong elements of organised crime, the CIB takes the lead in the investigation. But it is the DRI which leads probes into crimes where components of revenue leakage are more prominent," said Dhungana.

Recent episode of gold smuggling via airport attracts organised crime provision of the law.

"In the latest case of gold smuggling, there are more components of organised crime. So the CIB is likely to lead the entire investigation."

He said the DRI would soon write to the bureau to start an investigation for organised crime. As per the Organised Crime Act-2013, if a person commits a serious crime on behalf of a criminal gang, on the instruction of the gang and for the benefit of such gang, it is organised crime.

>> Continued on page 2

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India's court temporarily halts conviction of Rahul Gandhi for mocking Modi's surname

Gandhi is a fierce critic of Narendra Modi and his main challenger in the 2024 polls.



Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi (right) reacts next to party president Mallikarjun Kharge during a media briefing at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Friday.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW DELHI, AUG 4

India's top court on Friday temporarily halted the criminal defamation conviction of opposition leader Rahul Gandhi for mocking the prime minister's surname. His party said it would now seek to have Gandhi reinstated as a member of parliament.

A fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his main challenger in the 2024 polls, Gandhi was ousted from Parliament after his conviction

by a magistrate's court in March.

The Supreme Court stayed the conviction, which means it is temporarily halted while the court goes into Gandhi's appeal in detail before issuing a final ruling.

Gandhi's disqualification as a lawmaker also now remains in abeyance, said Live Law, an online portal for Indian legal news. Congress party leader KC Venugopal said the party would approach the Parliament speaker to restore his seat.

The court's order also means that Gandhi will be able to contest next year's general elections unless a final court decision goes against him.

Scores of his elated supporters danced to drumbeats and exchanged sweets as Gandhi briefly greeted them at the party headquarters in New Delhi. "Truth prevails ultimately," Gandhi told reporters.

Gandhi's party president, Mallikarjun Kharge, said it was "time for them [Modi and his party leaders] to stop their malicious targeting of opposition leaders."

The ruling party's "conspiratorial hounding of Gandhi has been thoroughly exposed," Kharge said.

>> Continued on page 2

NATIONAL

DISTRICT DIGEST

At least 11 Nepalis missing in landslide in India

JUMLA: At least 11 Nepalis have gone missing after a landslide washed away three hotels in Gaurikund base-camp leading to Kedarnath in the Indian state of Uttarakhand on Thursday night. Most of those missing in the landslide are from Patarasi Rural Municipality of Jumla and had gone there for business, according to Purna Singh Bohara, chair of the rural municipality. Lawmaker Kantika Sejuwal said she has received information that 16 Nepalis and three Indian nationals went missing in the landslide that occurred at around 11:30pm on Thursday. Rescuers have pulled three bodies from the debris, but their identities are yet to be ascertained. Meanwhile, the Home Ministry has written to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate with the Indian authorities in the search and rescue for the missing Nepalis.

2,000 saplings planted in Rambha

PALPA: In a bid to reverse the environmental damage caused by road construction, the Rambha Rural Municipality planted around 2,000 tree saplings along the Belpani-Moulathar road at ward 3 of the rural municipality on Thursday. According to Bishnu Prasad Bhandari, chairman of the rural municipality, more than 300 people participated, including locals, security personnel, and officials of the rural municipality in the plantation drive. While some saplings were provided by the Division Forest Office, and other government agencies, the rest were bought by the rural municipality, said Bhandari.

Local unit launches free X-ray service for pregnant women

RUPANDEHI: Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City has started providing free video X-ray services to pregnant women from Friday. According to Khelraj Pandey, the mayor, the service has been started to detect and treat pregnancy-related complications at an early stage, prevent maternal and infant mortality, and promote institutional birth. The sub-metropolis has also been providing Rs2,000 to women after giving birth in health institutions covered by the Infant Nutrition Programme, said Pandey.

Two more arrested over recent murder of a youth

BIRATNAGAR: Police have arrested two more suspects in connection with a recent murder of a youth by a gang of robbers at Seuti bridge of Sunsari along the Dharan-Ithari road section. Rohit Chaudhary, 28, of Biratnagar metropolis-5, died after he was shot by the gang on July 21. According to the Koshi Province Police Office, Prakash Limbu, 30, of Bhadrapur and Ajaya Kumar Sharma, 41, of Biratnagar were arrested on Thursday. Police said Sharma was arrested because the pistol used in the shooting was sold by him. Police said Sharma was released four months ago after spending four years and eight months in jail in a drug case. Two other accused—35-year-old Deepak Timilsina of Morang and Ansan Tamang, 34, of Dharan—were arrested on Tuesday, police said. They have been charged with being involved in several incidents of looting. According to police, among those arrested, Timilsina was released only two months ago after serving ten years in prison in a rape case, while Tamang was released two years ago after serving six months jail term in a drugs-related case.

Two dead, two missing in Dolakha landslides

Wards 7 and 8 of Gaurishankar Rural Municipality were hit by landslides on Thursday night. 62 goats and one buffalo died in Khare village.

KEDAR SHIWAKOTI
DOLAKHA, AUG 4

A landslide triggered by incessant rainfall on Thursday night killed a 50-year-old woman and a 15-month-old infant in Gaurishankar Rural Municipality in Dolakha district. Their bodies were recovered from the landslide debris on Friday.

Two men, aged 49 and 60 years, have gone missing while several others have been displaced by the landslide in Marbu Topatar village of the rural municipality.

Four people were injured, two seriously, in the disaster. All of the injured have been sent to Kathmandu for treatment.

Two seriously injured victims, a 40-year-old man and his 39-year-old wife, were airlifted to Kathmandu for treatment on Friday while two women who escaped the landslide with minor injuries were sent to Kathmandu in an ambulance the same day.

All landslide victims are from Marbu Topatar village in the rural municipality, according to Sonam Sherpa, chairman of ward 7 of the rural municipality.

"Five houses were completely swept away by the landslide. The security



Security personnel scour the debris of the landslide for victims at Marbu Topatar of Gaurishankar Rural Municipality on Friday. Two people died, two more are missing at Marbu Topatar while another landslide in Khare swept away five homes. At least 62 goats and one buffalo have been confirmed dead in the Khare landslide.

personnel are looking for the missing victims," said Sherpa. "The authorities are still assessing the damage caused by the landslide."

According to Chief District Officer

Komal Prasad Dhamala, a joint team of security personnel, including the Nepal Army, Nepal Police, and Armed Police Force, has been deployed for the search and rescue operations.

Another landslide hit Khare area in ward 8 of the rural municipality, but no casualties have been reported so far. According to ward chair Dewa Sherpa, the landslide washed away

Indian Supreme Court suspends sentence against Rahul Gandhi

>> Continued from page 1

Despite its decision, the Supreme Court noted that Gandhi's comments were not in "good taste" and that a public figure ought to have been more careful while making public speeches.

The defamation case involved comments Gandhi made in a 2019 election speech. Gandhi asked, "Why do all thieves have Modi as their surname?" He then referred to three well-known and unrelated Modis: a fugitive Indian diamond tycoon, a cricket executive banned from the Indian Premier League and the prime minister.

The case was filed by Purnesh Modi, who is a member of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party in Gujarat state but is also not related to the prime minister.

Gandhi was sentenced to two years in prison but the court suspended his prison sentence in April. The conviction was upheld by the Gujarat state High Court so he filed an appeal in the country's Supreme Court last month.

The Supreme Court said the trial judge gave the maximum sentence of two years to Gandhi. Except for the admonition to Gandhi, no other reason was given for that sentence, the court said.

The case against Gandhi, the great-grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister and scion of the dynastic Congress party, was widely condemned by opponents of Modi as the latest assault against democracy and free speech by a government seeking to crush dissent. The speed of his removal from Parliament shocked Indian politics.

Legal experts had earlier said Gandhi's case is unusual as defamation convictions remain rare, especially with the maximum sentence.

Gandhi on Wednesday reiterated in an affidavit before the Supreme Court that he is not guilty of the offence of criminal defamation. He said he will not apologise for his remark and that if he wanted he could have made it much earlier.

Gandhi also said that there is no community going by the name 'Modi' and so he cannot be accused of defaming Modi community as a whole. People having the



Lower courts and the high court in Gujarat had rejected appeals by Rahul Gandhi to suspend the conviction, causing him to appeal to the Supreme Court.

surname Modi may fall into different communities and castes, he said.

Purnesh Modi said in his counter affidavit that Gandhi has shown arrogance rather than being apologetic.

India, with 1.4 billion people, is the world's largest democracy. However, Modi's critics say democracy has been in retreat since he came to power in 2014. They accuse his government of pursuing a Hindu nationalist agenda. The government denies that, saying its policies benefit all Indians.

The Nehru-Gandhi family has produced three prime ministers. Rahul Gandhi's grandmother, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated while in office, as was his father, Rajiv Gandhi, after he left office.

Nepal and India should either disown or accept the EPG report, say experts

>> Continued from page 1

Thapa suggested that Nepal-India relations could be improved by removing some irritants like the Peace and Friendship Treaty, boundary disputes, border management, inundation and by focussing on trade expansion and economic development.

Former foreign minister Bimala Rai Poudyal said that the EPG report remains locked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"If the Indian prime minister is reluctant to receive it, can it be submitted to the foreign minister or the foreign secretary? We have a mechanism with India at two levels. There is a foreign minister-level mechanism, which can receive the report," Rai Poudyal said. "If the report cannot be received at the prime minister's level, we have to seek its alternative. As part of public diplomacy, can our Parliament accept and make the report public? If we do not publish the report on time, there is a chance of it being outdated."

Rai Poudyal, who served as foreign minister for only 42 days, admitted that she does not have much knowledge on the EPG report.

During his recent India visit, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal did not raise the issue of the EPG report with Indian leaders and officials. Dahal told Parliament and the media on his return from New Delhi that he did not take up the matter as that could spoil the environment for negotiations in Delhi. Former minister Rai Poudyal and other participants speaking on Friday termed the prime minister's statement on the EPG issue irresponsible.

Another former foreign minister, Prakash Chandra Lohani, suggested that Nepal and India should work together on shared concerns and mutual benefits. "Unfortunately, that is not happening," Lohani remarked. "The Indian establishment has not come out of its mind-

set of 'umbrella doctrine' propagated at the time of Chandra Shumsher Rana."

On regulating the open border, the two neighbours had formed a committee of home secretaries. "We also agreed to explore the potential of navigation in Indian rivers long ago but we did not follow up on that."

In the context of the government's unwillingness to take up the EPG report matter with India, Lohani challenged the main opposition CPN-UML to press for tabling the report in Parliament. "Why is the main opposition not saying the EPG report should be tabled in the House so people will know what it suggests?"

A UML leader familiar with the nitty-gritty of the EPG issue is former foreign minister Pradeep Gyawali. "Based on my interaction with the Indian political leadership, I found a kind of illusion on EPG in the political leadership of India. The report has been grossly misinterpreted," said Gyawali, who is also a deputy general secretary of the UML. "Even though we were ready to receive the report at the foreign minister's level, that did not happen."

When Gyawali travelled to New Delhi in December 2020 leading a Nepali delegation to the sixth Nepal-India joint commission meeting, there were discussions about receiving the report at the foreign minister level.

"We don't think India does not want to accept the report because of a particular recommendation that was made. But it seems India has security concerns. A stable and prosperous Nepal is good for India but some people in India want 'controlled stability' in Nepal," Gyawali said. That could explain why India is reluctant to receive the EPG report and to address concerns put forth by Nepal on disputed issues, he reasoned.

As there is no alternative to good

neighbourly relations with India, it is the responsibility of the government of Nepal to talk to India about the EPG report, Gyawali suggests.

All four Nepali EPG members including Bhek Bahadur Thapa took part in the discussion. Thapa said that as age is not on his side, he wants to settle this issue once and for all and is consulting leaders and officials on what to do with the report.

Nilamber Acharya, an EPG member who became the ambassador to India after the report was prepared, said the panel was in favour of replacing the 1950 friendship treaty to suit the changed context. "The formation of the EPG was agreed upon at the top political level. It was included in the text of the joint commission meeting and Bhagat Singh Koshiyari had also tried his best to submit it in both the countries," Acharya added.

Acharya, as he revealed, had had interactions with several Indian leaders and officials including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former prime minister Manmohan Singh. "All of them were positive on the EPG formation. We are consulting among ourselves. If the government is not going to receive it, we will make the report public as we are accountable towards them as well," said Acharya.

On the Indian side, Koshiyari led the team involving former Indian ambassador to Nepal Jayant Prasad, Professor Mahendra P Lama, and (the now deceased) BC Uprety.

In a democratic system, people have the right to know what the EGP suggests, said Rajan Bhattarai, another EPG member.

"This [the EPG report] was prepared in line with a widely practised model. This is not only an academic exercise. As India is emerging as a regional and global power, it should certainly be accountable and responsible towards its neighbours," said Bhattarai.

Police to probe gold scam for organised crime

>> Continued from page 1

Any act that attracts imprisonment of over three years and the offences related to corruption, money laundering and financing of terrorist activities are considered to be organised crimes.

The department has so far arrested 18 people with the latest gold seizure. It also raided a factory at Tokha in Kathmandu, a suspected site used by smugglers for melting gold.

Besides, it raided the warehouse of Ready Trade, a private firm, at Sorhakutte in Kathmandu and seized 66 boxes of motorcycle brake shoes. Many of the brake shoes were found to be lighter compared to those seized at Sinamangal, raising suspicion that gold from the shoes had already been extracted.

The DRI also raided the house of Rakesh Kumar Adukia, one of the prime suspects in the smuggling case, as a part of efforts to find actual owners of the seized gold.

The department now plans to write to the police.

Police said that they would start investigation once the DRI formally writes to them and provides relevant documents. "We heard that there was a decision to ask the CIB to initiate investigation for organised crime," said CIB spokesman Superintendent of Police Sanjaya Singh Thapa. "But we are yet to get a formal request and related documents from the DRI."

The government faced questions for not immediately initiating an

investigation for organised crime as the DRI had arrested the nationals of multiple countries in connection with the gold smuggling case, suggesting it was a transnational organised crime.

People from Nepal, India and China were arrested soon after the seizure last month. But it took the department over two weeks to conclude that it is in fact a case of organised crime.

Various reports blamed Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal for the government's reluctance to involve police in the investigation. Earlier, Kantipur, the sister publication of the Post, reported that the CIB had uncovered the involvement of senior Maoist leader and former Speaker of House of Representatives Krishna Bahadur Mahara and his son Rahul in the smuggling of 9kg gold last year. But they were not prosecuted.

On December 25 last year, the airport customs office seized electronic cigarettes. Parts of those cigarettes were stolen from the warehouse of the customs office, prompting the CIB investigation.

"We later found that the gold was concealed inside the electric cigarettes," said SP Thapa.

During the investigation, police had confirmed a close contact between the Mahara duo and a Chinese national who was smuggling gold concealed inside electric cigarettes.

The main opposition, CPN-UML, has been demanding a high-level probe into the matter. Though the

government has shown no interest in forming such a committee, it has now decided to investigate the latest smuggling episode for organised crime.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Dahal held a joint meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha, Home Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka, Attorney General Dimmani Pokharel, Inspector General of Police Basanta Kunwar, Central Investigation Bureau chief Kiran Bajracharya and DRI Director General Nawa Raj Dhungana, according to the officials privy to the developments.

At the meeting, the prime minister took stock of the progress made in the gold smuggling probe, said Attorney General Pokharel. "He instructed government agencies to expedite the investigation as per the law."

At the meeting, DRI Director General Dhungana said there was sufficient ground to investigate the case as organised crime.

"I suggested that the department should write to the police to investigate the case after its chief clarified that there were elements of organised crime," said Pokharel.

Some experts, including former Deputy Inspector General of Police Hemanta Malla Thakuri, had long been calling for an investigation for organised crime. "The nature of this scam leaves no doubt that it is a case of organised crime," he told the Post.



Students of the Institute of Engineering's Thapathali Campus in Kathmandu stage demonstration against alleged attempts by the college administration to hike tuition fees of various bachelor's level engineering courses by 140 percent. They also demanded that the college be moved to a peaceful location, among other things.

Rabi Lamichhane's new populist measures fail viability test

Lamichhane's secretariat is unsure how it will manage the monthly rent of the free bus, estimated at Rs130,000.

□ NISHAN KHATIWADA
KATHMANDU, AUG 4

Rastriya Swatantra Party chair Rabi Lamichhane has yet again made headlines following his recent announcement of some programmes, with political watchers and critics terming them 'immature' and 'populist'.

Lamichhane, on August 2, on what was the 100th day of his win in the Chitwan-2 bypolls, announced programmes ranging from free 'blue bus' service for women to jobs for Nepalis living and working abroad.

It's not just those outside the RSP who are complaining though. Further, multiple office bearers of the party the Post talked to confirmed that the announcement was not discussed in the party. The announcement was prepared by Lamichhane's secretariat, they said.

But, according to Hemanta Baral, the CEO of Lamichhane's secretariat, the blue bus initiative is symbolic, and started with the intent of showing how transport can be made safe and tech-friendly. "The idea of a technology-friendly transport system has been limited to speeches. We have used the machine-readable card and GPS system in the blue bus. We can track the vehicle at all times and it also has an announcement system," he said.

They have initially given ride cards to the women above 65 years of age, said Baral, even though the blue bus will eventually be free for all women.

Lamichhane's secretariat is as yet unsure how they will manage the monthly rent of the bus, estimated at Rs130,000, and have been seeking financial support. "It is not the party's initiative. So, we have been trying to manage funds with financial support from our wellwishers. We should be optimistic," said Baral.

The announcement of vacancies has sparked even more criticism. Baral claims it too is a symbolic gesture to promote job creation in Nepal. According to him, the party will only act as a mediator between job applications and private sector employers. They will accept the applications and forward them to the companies.

Vacancy announcement has been called under the slogan "Job Opportunity for the Nepali Citizens in Nepal" for jobs under six categories. The announcement also mentions the

provision of free air tickets for those who want to come back to Nepal.

"We have already arranged the recruiting companies to cover the airfare for 80 percent of such travellers to Nepal. For the rest, we are collecting financial support," according to Baral.

Observers term the announcement as an immature action lacking any concrete vision.

Political economist Bhim Bhurtel said Lamichhane's announcements completely ignore the issue of viability. "Budgets worth billions have been failing to create jobs. Why would anyone who is earning well abroad want to return to work in Nepal, and for such meagre salaries that the RSP has announced?," he said.

In the vacancy announcement, for example, nursing staff are sought for Rs20,000, account manager for Rs40,000, nurses for Rs 18,000-Rs 45,000 and so on.

They are also unclear on who will pay the bus rent. "The bus service can work only if there is a provision of state subsidy. But then the RSP is not in the government at any level to announce such a scheme."

The party won seven seats in the first-past-the-post elections and secured 13 seats under the proportional representational category in the polls held last year.

It then registered impressive victories, defeating the candidates of big parties in two of the three constituencies in the byelection in April. The party is now the fourth largest force in the House with 21 seats. It has cashed in on public frustration with traditional parties. But it has time and again been criticised for its immature actions.

Political analyst Pitambar Bhandari said that in a multiparty democracy, a single party cannot do everything. According to him, RSP should focus on the big picture and try to bring policy-level changes for the long term solutions of problems like unemployment. "Nothing will be achieved by creating a handful of jobs."

"Lamichhane seems to be doing these populist things only to protect the party from having an identity crisis. If such programmes have not been discussed in the party, what are their relevance?," added Bhandari. "It is a move to lure votes for what they have been claiming as Mission 84 [the next general elections of 2084 BS]."



SCREENGRAB VIA YOUTUBE



POST PHOTO

Victims of the Maoist insurgency stage a sit-in outside the Kathmandu District Court at Babar Mahal on Friday. They were protesting perceived attempts by the government to amend the transitional justice law to benefit the perpetrators of human rights violations.

Conflict victims and rights activists are sceptical about government's intentions

Stakeholders stage sit-in as parliamentary panel works to finalise a disputed bill on transitional justice.

□ BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, AUG 4

As a parliamentary panel prepares to finalise a bill to amend the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, the insurgency victims, human rights activists and civil society members staged a sit-in in the Capital on Friday to pressure the committee to correct flawed provisions in the bill.

Carrying placards with various slogans, they demanded the sub-committee of the Law and Justice Committee of the House of Representatives make revisions to the bill to ensure a trustworthy and transparent process to give justice to the victim community. "We have gathered to warn our lawmakers to correct every provision that serves perpetrators," Kalyan Budhathoki, acting chair of the Conflict Victims Common Platform, told the Post. "Several provisions in the bill are aimed at shielding the perpetrators."

The victims and the rights defenders say, based on past experience, they have doubts that the bill gets revised to make the transitional justice process victim-centric. Despite making commitments during various consultations to address the victims' concerns, the government in March registered the amendment bill in Parliament by retaining the several "problematic" provisions of the previ-

ous bill, which couldn't get through the federal parliament.

Along with the victims and human rights defenders, both domestic and international human rights organisations have pointed out several flaws in the bill that contradict international standards on human rights. Though Nepal at different international forums has committed to prosecute those involved in serious violation of human rights, the current bill gives

against humanity (if the bill wasn't amended before it gets endorsed)."

Lawmakers from various parties have registered 27 different amendments to the bill to address the concerns of the stakeholders.

Along with listing murder as a serious violation of human rights, setting up special investigation units in the transitional justice commissions or the prosecutor's office tasked with evidence collection, addressing the

then CPN-Maoist. The bill doesn't have any provision to address our issues. Nobody will own up to the transitional justice process that ignores us," Lenin Bista, the founding chair of the Discharged People's Liberation Army who also was present in the protest, told the Post.

Neither the existing Act nor the bill that is under consideration in the House committee mentions anything about the minors. During the verification process for army integration conducted by UNMIN in 2007, thousands of Maoist fighters, including Bista, had been disqualified for being minors.

Among the 4,008 combatants who did not qualify for integration, 2,973 were verified as minors. Bista along with his eight colleagues have even filed a case at the Supreme Court demanding legal action against Maoist chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai, then chief of the people's government.

"We are closely watching the parliamentary process. We won't accept any attempts at retaining the provisions that protect the perpetrators," said Gopal Shah, chairperson of the Conflict Victims' National Network.

The sub-panel under the human rights committee has a week to prepare its final report and present it to the committee. The bill will be presented in the lower house after it is endorsed by the committee.

Conflict victims and rights activists are particularly sceptical about the government's intentions since the bill in the works has not listed murder as a serious violation of human rights.

room for amnesty even in heinous crimes.

The stakeholders are particularly sceptical about the government's intentions since the bill has not listed murder as a serious violation of human rights. In their joint statement, different international human rights organisations including the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International in March had said, "it would be difficult or impossible to prosecute those responsible for serious violations of international law including war crimes and crimes

issues of child combatants and allowing the Judicial Council to nominate judges for the new 'special court' to be set up to hear conflict-era cases are some of the amendments proposed by the lawmakers. Similarly, they also have proposed a revision of the law to ensure that the office bearers in both the transitional justice commissions are appointed after proper consultation with stakeholders, and the victims, especially those who faced sexual violence, are provided protection.

"It is established that the minors like me were used as combatants by

Nepal seeks virus seed from India to produce lumpy skin vaccine

□ POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, AUG 4

Nepal has requested India for a master seed virus of lumpy skin disease, for the production of a vaccine within the country.

Without the master seed virus, which is pure, safe and immunogenic, vaccine production is impossible, officials say.

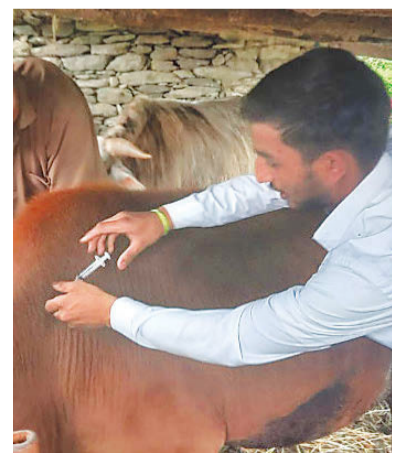
"We have the capacity and expertise to produce animal vaccines within the country and for that, we need a master seed virus," said Dr Chandra Dhakal, information officer at the Department of Livestock Services.

"The Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development during his recent India visit made a request to his counterpart for the master seed virus for vaccine production and vaccine doses to deal with the ongoing spread of the infection," said Dhakal.

Lumpy skin disease, also called LSD, is caused by a virus, an infectious disease that primarily affects cattle. The virus, which is from the family Poxviridae, mainly spreads through blood-sucking vectors-ticks, mites, and mosquitoes.

According to Dhakal, Nepal has been producing more than 56 million doses of 13 different types of animal vaccines in the country and has been exporting them too.

"We have also furnished a concept paper as sought by the Indian authori-



POST FILE PHOTO

ties for vaccine production," he added.

Officials at the department said that the government has also requested China for free vaccine doses for lumpy skin disease.

So far, more than 50,000 cattle across the country have died and more than 1.1 million are infected by the highly contagious viral disease since the outbreak began in April.

Due to the widespread infection in cattle, farmers have incurred heavy losses which include deaths of animals, decline in dairy production, and their consequent impact on farming. It takes 20 to 30 days or more to get animals infected with the viral disease

cured. Officials concede that farmers in the hill districts lost more of their oxen because they continued putting the sick animals to work due to lack of information about the disease.

Officials conceded that some animals might have died of vaccination at the time of infection due to the double impact-infection of virus and stress effects of the vaccination.

Dhakal said that his office has written to the ministry to provide relief and compensation to the affected farmers.

"Once the government announces relief for the affected farmers, more farmers will come forward to report the deaths and infections," he said. "But unless the government takes a decision, we cannot promise relief."

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has said that his government is working seriously to contain the spread of the lumpy skin disease.

Veterinarians say the infected cattle have acute fever, discharge from the eyes and nose, salivation, and soft blister-like nodules all over their bodies.

After contracting the infection, the animals immediately start losing weight due to difficulty in eating, which ultimately affects their milk yields. Pregnant cows and buffaloes could suffer a miscarriage and the infected animals could sometimes die.

As the virus is not zoonotic, the chances of humans getting infected from the disease are slim, say experts.



USAID | NEPAL
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

नेपालमा स्वास्थ्य संस्थामा आधारित र जनसङ्ख्यामा आधारित राष्ट्रिय स्तरका प्रतिनिधिमूलक सर्वेक्षण डिजाइन तथा कार्यान्वयनका लागि स्थानीय संस्थाहरूबाट सक्षमतासम्बन्धी सूचनाका लागि आह्वान

नेपालस्थित अमेरिकी अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय विकास नियोग (युएसएआईडी [USAID]) को "युएसएआईडी नेपाल स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण" (USAID Nepal Health Surveys) नामक सम्भावित नयाँ परियोजनाको कार्यान्वयनका लागि इच्छुक तथा सक्षम नेपाली संस्थाहरूको सम्बन्धमा थप जानकारी प्राप्त गर्नका लागि यो सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ। यस सम्भावित परियोजनाले युएसएआईडी/नेपालको स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयलाई दुई दूला राष्ट्रिय स्तरका सर्वेक्षणहरूको डिजाइन र कार्यान्वयनमा मद्दत गर्नेछ : २०२५ राष्ट्रिय स्वास्थ्य संस्था सर्वेक्षण (Nepal Health Facility Survey [NHFS]) र २०२६ नेपाल जनसाङ्ख्यिक तथा स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण (Nepal Demographic and Health Survey [NDHS])। युएसएआईडी नेपाल स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण परियोजनाले यी सर्वेक्षणहरूलाई कार्यान्वयन गरी नेपाल सरकार, स्वास्थ्य तथा जनसङ्ख्या मन्त्रालयलाई संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघको दीर्घो विकास लक्ष्यहरू २०३० तथा नेपाल स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र - रणनीतिक योजना (Nepal Health Sector - Strategic Plan [NHS-SP]) २०२३-२०३० तर्फको प्रगति अनुगमन गर्न र स्वास्थ्य कार्यक्रमहरूको तथ्यमा आधारित योजना तथा व्यवस्थापन प्रवर्द्धन गर्न सहयोग गर्नेछ। यी सर्वेक्षणहरूले युएसएआईडी/नेपाललाई आफ्नो Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) २०२०-२०२५ (<https://www.usaid.gov/nepal/cdcs>) को स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्रअन्तर्गत समावेशी स्वास्थ्य तथा शिक्षा प्रणालीलाई बलियो बनाउने लक्ष्यको प्रगतिलाई अनुगमन गर्न सहयोग गर्नेछन्। यस परियोजनाले युएसएआईडी/नेपालको स्वास्थ्य कार्यालय, विश्वव्यापी रूपमा स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण कार्यान्वयन गर्नका लागि युएसएआईडी/वाशिङ्टनको प्राविधिक सहायता कार्यक्रम, स्वास्थ्य तथा जनसङ्ख्या मन्त्रालय एवम् नेपाल सरकारका अन्य निकायहरू, युएसएआईडी स्वास्थ्य सिकाइ परियोजना (USAID Health Learning) र स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्रका अन्य दाता तथा साभेदारहरूसँग सहकार्य गर्नेछ।

इच्छुक पक्षहरूले sam.gov मा आह्वान गरिएको सूचना अनुसार आवश्यक कागजपत्रहरू पेस गर्नुपर्नेछ। विस्तृत सूचना यहाँ उपलब्ध छ : <https://sam.gov/opp/d3379a7338d34aa5894ba1c85d902687/view>

यहाँ आह्वान भएको सूचनाको प्रत्युत्तरमा बुझाइएको सामग्रीले युएसएआईडी/नेपालको बजार अनुसन्धानमा मद्दत गर्नेछ। यस सूचनाको आह्वानले अमेरिकी सरकारको तर्फबाट कार्यक्रम प्रदान गर्ने प्रतिबद्धता व्यक्त गर्दैन र, FAR 15.201(e) अनुसार, प्रत्युत्तरमा पेस गरिएको सामग्रीले बोलपत्रको रूपमा काम गर्ने छैन र यसलाई बाध्यकारी सम्झौताका रूपमा अमेरिकी सरकारले स्वीकार गर्ने छैन।

BRIEFING

Kremlin critic Navalny convicted of extremism and sentenced to 19 years in prison

MELEKHOVO: A Russian court convicted imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny of extremism charges and sentenced him to 19 years in prison on Friday. Navalny is already serving a nine-year term on a variety of charges that he says were politically motivated.

World's oceans set new surface temperature record: EU monitor

PARIS: The world's oceans set a temperature record in the past week, with their surface hitting 20.96 degrees Celsius (69.7 Fahrenheit).

Deadly flooding in China worsens as rescues and evacuations intensify

At least 20 people have been reported killed in Beijing's outer suburbs and another 27 were missing.

ASSOCIATED PRESS BEIJING, AUG 4

Heavy rain and high water levels on rivers in northeastern China were threatening cities downstream on Friday, prompting the evacuation of thousands, although the country appears to have averted the worst effects of the typhoon season battering parts of east Asia.

Hebei province, which surrounds the capital Beijing on three sides, issued alerts for several of its cities. The province of Heilongjiang to the north was evacuating entire villages in anticipation of life-threatening deluges.

Rescue work remains underway. At least 20 people have been reported killed in Beijing's outer suburbs and another 27 were missing following the weekend storms that quickly overwhelmed drainage systems.

Beijing usually has dry summers, but had a stretch of record-breaking heat this year that broke dramatically over the weekend with almost a week of constant rain and drizzle. Power was knocked out in areas, public transport and summer classes were suspended and citizens of the metropolis of more than 20 million people were told to stay home.

The nearby cities of Tianjin and Zhuozhou were also hit hard. Fire services aided by volunteer rescue groups searched apartment buildings and railway tunnels for stranded people, bringing hundreds to safety.

With its status as the nation's capi-



An aerial view of the flood devastated Nanxinfang village on the outskirts of Beijing on Friday.

tal, the headquarters of the ruling Communist Party and home to cultural treasures such as the ancient Forbidden City, Beijing has provided special protection from flooding through the diversion of waters to neighbouring regions. That sparked complaints on social media Friday of flooding in surrounding areas that could allegedly have been avoided if the rainwater had been flushed through the capital's system of canals and rivers.

Other regions, especially in China's south, have suffered unusual deadly

summer flooding. Other parts of the country are struggling with drought, putting further pressure on food supplies for the nation's 1.4 billion people already struggling with the disruption in grain shipments resulting from Russia's war against Ukraine.

Muddy water surging down streets washed away cars in the hilly Mentougou district on Beijing's western edge. "A couple of cars parked behind my apartment building disappeared in just one minute," said resident Liu Shuanbao.

In Zhuozhou, southwest of Beijing,

about 125,000 people from high-risk areas were moved to shelters, Xinhua said. President Xi Jinping issued an order for local governments to go "all out" to rescue those trapped and minimise loss of life and property damage.

The government of Tianjin, a port east of Beijing, said 35,000 people were evacuated from near the swollen Yongding River.

As much as 500 millimetres (almost 20 inches) of rain has fallen in some places since Saturday, according to the Hebei province weather agency. Some areas reported as much as 90 millimetres (3 1/2 inches) of rainfall per hour.

Thirteen rivers exceeded warning levels in the Haihe Basin, which includes Beijing, Tianjin and Shijiazhuang, Xinhua said, citing the Ministry of Water Resources.

About 42,000 people were evacuated from areas of Shanxi province to Hebei's west, it reported, citing emergency officials. In early July, at least 15 people were killed by floods in the southwestern region of Chongqing, and about 5,590 people in the far northwestern province of Liaoning had to be evacuated. In the central province of Hubei, rainstorms trapped residents in their vehicles and homes.

China's deadliest and most destructive floods in recent history were in 1998, when 4,150 people died, most of them along the Yangtze River.

In 2021, more than 300 people died in flooding in the central province of Henan. Record rainfall inundated the provincial capital of Zhengzhou on July 20 that year.

NZ vote frontrunner backs Chinese cash for roads

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SYDNEY, AUG 4

The leader of New Zealand's political opposition said on Friday he would "absolutely" accept money from China to fund new roads if his party wins October's general election.

Christopher Luxon, from right-of-centre National Party, is currently ahead in opinion polls against the incumbent centre-left government led by Prime Minister Chris Hipkins. Asked if he would turn to Beijing to fund a massive road infrastructure project worth NZ\$24 billion (US\$14.6 billion), Luxon told public broadcaster TVNZ: "Yeah, absolutely."

"New Zealand is a country the size of Great Britain and Japan, we have 5 million people in it," he said. "A strong and resilient road network will be absolutely critical to our future."

New Zealand's relationship with China is a hot-button issue, with traditional allies like the United States and Australia fearing Wellington is edging evermore into Beijing's political orbit.

New Zealand governments of all political stripes are careful not to criticise Beijing too forcefully on issues like human rights—for fear of angering the country's largest trading partner. Luxon's willingness to accept Chinese investment is likely to raise yet further concerns in Washington.

Under Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative, China has funded major infrastructure projects around the world. But the programme has been criticised for saddling recipient nations with onerous levels of debt and being a tool for Chinese political leverage.

'Happy mothers': South Korean couple beat same-sex barriers to parenthood

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SEOUL, AUG 4

South Korea has spent billions of dollars on policies to boost its birth rate. But when Kim Kyu-jin and her wife wanted to have a baby, they had to fly to Belgium.

Legally, South Korea considers Kim single, despite her 2019 wedding—ceremony in Seoul, legal registration in New York City—because the country does not recognise same-sex unions. Seoul city authorities declined to register her marriage.

So when the happy couple decided they were ready to have a baby, their domestic options were limited: single people are typically deemed ineligible to adopt and sperm banks are designed for heterosexual married couples with fertility issues.

But Kim Kyu-jin and her wife Kim Sae-yeon—they share the same last name by coincidence—decided to try

anyway and, thanks to IVF using donor sperm in Belgium, Kyu-jin is now eight months pregnant.

The couple plan to have the baby in their home country, at the hospital where Sae-yeon is a doctor and have decided to speak publicly to raise awareness of same-sex parenthood in South Korea.

Many Koreans believe they should "end unhappiness in our generation by not having children", Kyu-jin said. She did not think she would have children herself, especially because growing up gay in socially conservative South Korea "wasn't easy".

But now Kyu-jin and her wife feel they could do a good job as parents, even though in South Korea there is no legal route for them to become mothers together.

"This child will grow up with happy mothers. We believe there is a high probability that the child will be happy as well," Sae-yeon said.

South Korea's birthrate—0.78 percent per woman—is among the lowest in the world. Seoul has poured billions of dollars into encouraging its citizens to have more babies but to no avail.

Policies include subsidised fertility treatments, cash bonuses and free childcare, but the government is only targeting heterosexual, married couples. That means many would-be parents who are unmarried or in same-sex relationships are ignored.

The official approach reflects deep-seated stigmas against single parenthood, experts say, pointing to the fact that just 2.5 percent of all South Korean babies in 2020 were born out of wedlock.

The OECD average is around 40 percent. In South Korea, people who try to parent "outside the conventional system" come in for a lot of hurtful criticism, Sae-yeon said.

"People are criticising and saying



South Korean lesbian Kim Kyu-jin

some people just shouldn't have children," she said.

There are also major practical hurdles. Sae-yeon will have no legal

parental rights to her child, she is ineligible for parental leave and will not be able to serve as the child's legal guardian in cases such as medical emergencies.

The only way to change this would be for her to legally adopt her own child, itself tricky due to official reluctance to allow unmarried people to adopt.

The idea that she could have a baby only struck Kyu-jin after she spent time working in France. Her French boss, on learning she was a lesbian and married, asked if she was planning to start a family.

"I was taken aback since it was such a personal question. And I thought [lesbians having children] must be common here, if people would ask about it when meeting someone for the first time."

A nationwide sperm shortage means long delays for IVF treatments in France, so the couple went to

Belgium, where they received an anonymous donation.

The couple have been called "selfish" for having a child who could face discrimination due to their parents' sexuality.

Kyu-jin and Sae-yeon said they might even consider emigrating if it proves too hard to raise their baby in South Korea.

"There are many warm-hearted people who worry about our child who are concerned how much [emotion] hurt the child will experience," Kyu-jin told AFP.

"But if these kind-hearted individuals can help make our society a little more inclusive for our child, there will eventually be no need for such concerns."

Even the baby's grandparents may not meet the new arrival at first—Sae-yeon does not currently have a full relationship with her parents, who did not come to the couple's 2019 wedding.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19) The vibes pair well with fresh starts and imitating new projects, though an unbalanced connection this afternoon suggests you may need to work on your organizational skills first. Good vibes flow this evening, triggering new creative ideas while igniting passions.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Though weekends are thought of as a time for going out and seeing friends, you may find yourself in a more private mood. Don't feel guilty about laying low, even if your friends give you a hard time as afternoon settles in.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) It may be difficult to decide which events to attend. These vibes could also cause you to feel bogged down by domestic responsibilities and chores, but don't be afraid to ask for help from your housemates. Luckily, you will be in a social and outgoing mood.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) A refreshing energy will carry you into the weekend, dear Cancer. The lunar placement marks the beginning of a new cosmic cycle, marking the perfect occasion to implement fresh structures that can help you get ahead.

LEO (July 23-August 22) You should feel supported by the universe as the weekend kicks off, dear Leo. Luck will be on your side as you move through the hours, though you should be mindful to stay grounded and logical when Mercury is activated this afternoon.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22) You should feel inspired to make changes right now, dear Virgo. These vibes pair well with efforts to evolve and transform, though you may be required to make a few sacrifices along the way. Watch out for brain fog this afternoon.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22) The vibes pair well with flirting, romance, and following your heart. However, you should be mindful of how quickly you share vulnerable details with new companions, especially. Consider exploring new corners of your community this evening.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21) Your efficient side will shine as the weekend kicks off. These vibes are perfect for catching up on errands or chores at home, though you may want to take a social breather this afternoon, promising to distract you from your to-do lists.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) Your weekend will be filled with plenty of fun. Use this energy as an excuse to catch up with friends and seek adventure, though you may also feel inspired to pick up a new passion project. Be mindful of other people's boundaries.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) Your home will bustle with activity as the weekend kicks off. Focusing on domestic duties will ground you, though you should watch out for temperamental behaviors, especially if you feel overwhelmed by tasks.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) Your wits will sharpen, putting you in an intellectual and social mood. However, you may want to think through your words before sharing them this afternoon, which may cause your tone to come out wrong. A loving vibe will surround you, later.

PISCES (February 19-March 20) Your senses will come alive, giving you permission to embrace the finer things in life. Don't feel guilty about embracing luxury and rewarding yourself this weekend, but be mindful not to overspend, which could cause you to prioritize leisure over logic.

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS 1 Typography measure 5 Loose dress 10 Plots of soft wet ground 14 Soon 15 Crowbar 16 Evangelist — Roberts 17 Support for plasterboard 18 Hippodrome 19 Word on a credit card 20 Female vocalist 22 Yoakam or Eisenhower 24 "Grumpy — Men" Japanese, e.g. 27 Heliograph 29 Make more concise 33 Greek lyric poet 34 Advantage 35 Sea eagle 36 Coulter and Cusack 37 Dossier 38 Snow cones, mostly 39 "God's Little —" 43 Conceals 45 Skillful in using the hands 47 Retains 48 Privileged ones

- PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED SHOT TRAP MOSS NAVE BRAVO IDOL ARE ALUKES DIRE PERMEATE EARNED WASH MIMI ALMOST CODEBLUE DAIRY RATION ISM HUNK HERON SLAM ORE HOVER STAGE CARRYOUT FAUCET DEGREE FALSETTO IDEE GAUGE NARD NELL OWLET TROD ONLY WELD SETS 8-15-23 © 2023 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS 28 Take territory by force 30 Water nymph 31 Pouts 32 Supplements (with "out") 33 Remunerated 37 Traditional stories 39 Dried-up lake in Asia 40 Desired 41 Actress — McClanahan 42 Ending for lion or poet 43 In fetters 44 Come into view 46 London's river 50 Now-and-then worker 51 — vera 52 Liquefy 53 Opera highlight 54 Markets expert (abbr.) 55 Getz of jazz 56 Shepard and Elliott 59 That girl 60 It borders Nev.

15x15 crossword grid with numbers 1-67 indicating starting points for words.

SUDOKU

9x9 Sudoku grid with numbers 1-9 and a difficulty rating of four stars.

FOREX

US Dollar	132.85
Euro	145.35
Pound Sterling	168.72
Swiss Franc	151.34
Australian Dollar	87.07
Canadian Dollar	99.37
Singapore Dollar	98.92
Japanese Yen (10)	9.31
Chinese Yuan	18.5
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.41
Qatari Riyal	36.47
Thai Bhat	3.82
UAE Dhiram	36.17
Malaysian Ringit	29.17
Korean Won (100)	10.14

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 112,200
Silver	Rs 1,425

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

Himalaya Airlines donates funds to children's home



KATHMANDU: Taking further its 'step towards education' campaign under its corporate social responsibility, Himalaya Airlines has funded the renovation of the kitchen and dining facilities of Lova Prasad Bal Griha, a non-governmental and non-political social organisation operated by Lova Prasad Sudhar Sangh for orphan and underprivileged children. Himalaya Airlines President Zhou Enyong handed over the cheque of Rs396,000 to Usha Karki, chairperson of Lova Prasad Bal Griha. The airline also donated kitchen cutlery sets, sketchbooks and various sports games like cricket sets, carrom board, badminton sets, basketballs, ludo, skipping ropes, hula and hoop to uplift the lives of resident children, the airline said in a statement. Located at Sundarijal, the organisation currently provides shelter, education, care, and a nurturing environment to a total of 13 children. "Since its establishment, Himalaya Airlines has been making contributions to its utmost for society. Through the donation to Lova Prasad Bal Griha this time, we wish to provide better living and accommodation conditions to the children staying here and hope they will grow to be contributors to the nation's future," said Zhou. (PR)

Kuwait's top diplomat invited to Iran as gas dispute flares

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's top diplomat has been invited to visit Iran, state media said, amid a dispute over a gas field to which Kuwait and Saudi Arabia say they have exclusive rights. The dispute over the field—known as Arash in Iran and Dorra in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—dates back to the 1960s when Iran and Kuwait awarded overlapping offshore concessions. Last year Kuwait and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement to develop the field, despite objections from Iran which in July said it was preparing to start drilling there. On Thursday, Kuwait's official KUNA news agency said Foreign Minister Salem al-Sabah had "received a letter from his Iranian counterpart... which included an invitation for an official visit to Iran". It did not say if the invitation had been accepted. The dispute over the field—whose recoverable reserves are estimated at some 220 billion cubic metres (seven trillion cubic feet)—has long been a bone of contention between the three countries. (AFP)

German car market extends rebound in July

FRANKFURT: The German car market extended its rebound in July, official data showed Friday, driven by booming electric vehicle sales as supply chain woes continue to ease. In total, 243,277 new cars were registered in Europe's biggest economy last month, an 18.1 percent increase from a year earlier, according to the KBA federal transport authority. Car sales have been rebounding since the start of the year, although they still remain substantially below the level recorded in 2019 before the coronavirus pandemic. Manufacturers in Germany, home to industry titans like Volkswagen and BMW, produced 300,300 vehicles in July, 20 percent more than in the same period last year, according to the VDA industry association. The sector is gradually recovering from supply chain issues—notably when it comes to semiconductors—that had slowed deliveries to customers. (AFP)

Smart Krishi, an all-in-one app for farmers

It produces information necessary for farmers such as the business plans, government notices and news in the form of videos and texts.

□ SUBIN ADHIKARI
KATHMANDU, AUG 4

Fresh out of college after completing Bachelor of Engineering in 2013, Anil Regmi began doing gigs and projects related to information technology.

Then in 2015, Ncell announced a nationwide competition for app developers with a prize of Rs500,000.

"App developers were energised, and got to work to create a unique app to win the prize money," said Regmi. "I did some research and found out that not much work had been done in Nepal to connect technology with agriculture. And so I developed the Smart Krishi app."

Regmi didn't win the competition, but he kept working on his concept of connecting information technology with agriculture.

Now, Smart Krishi has become an all-in-one app for farmers. It produces information necessary for farmers in the form of videos and texts, such as the format of business plans and proposals, government notices and agriculture news.

But the app's x-factor is a collection of step-by-step guides for different kinds of farming.

Regmi's company has teamed up with horticulture expert Shiva Yendyo, livestock experts Bharat Raj Gautam and Arjun Pandit, and agribusiness management expert Niranjana Pande to prepare the content and provide consultation to farmers.

The company's website contains guidelines on 18 types of fruits, 20 varieties of vegetables, 14 types of

animal husbandry activities, nine cash crops, five food crops and four medicinal herbs.

It provides detailed information on the different varieties of each species, the climatic conditions suitable for each of them and a crop calendar.

The company has also prepared profiles of common bugs and diseases that infest crops along with pictures for easy identification by farmers and preventive and curative measures for each of them.

"We want to reach farmers in far-flung places, so we have prioritised creating video content on TikTok and YouTube which is understandable for people who are not so tech-savvy," said Regmi.

It also creates videos of farm tours, podcasts with farmers to share their farming journey and podcasts with agriculture experts to provide ideas and suggestions to farmers. Regmi claims that their video contents reach more than 3 million viewers monthly.

The company also helps farmers prepare financial projections, proposals and other documents to apply for loans from banks.

The company has put together a directory of agro vets, agricultural equipment suppliers, agriculture-related government and non-government organisations, veterinaries and traders.



In addition, Smart Krishi receives feedback, queries and problems of farmers via social media platforms and connects them with consultants to provide solutions.

"We want to create a sustainable ecosystem of agriculture and agribusiness by connecting farmers with innovative business ideas, the latest equipment and agro vets through our platform," said Regmi.

"Smart Krishi helps farmers make agriculture a sustainable business."

Due to its innovative approach to solving agricultural issues, Smart Krishi was listed among the top five companies across the world in Youth Agripreneurs Projects 2016.

Smart Krishi's journey has not been a bed of roses, however. Most of its employees and partners left for foreign employment, and Regmi has been trying to build a new team to take the journey further.

In the initial days, the company's revenues came mostly from advertisements of agro-vets and training fees collected from farmers. And then the Covid-19 pandemic struck, and everything came to a stop.

"Even then we conducted around 76 training sessions virtually to help farmers during the lockdown," said Regmi.

"But a large number of farmers have left farming altogether due to the economic slowdown which sent the cost of production soaring," Smart Krishi cur-

rently relies on consultation fees and sales of agricultural equipment to fund the creation of its digital content.

The company has been encouraging farmers to lower their cost of production by making animal feed out of locally available resources instead of relying solely on commercial feeds and growing highly nutritious grasses to increase animal yield.

Regmi added that in many cases farmers tend to practice the traditional method of farming even after obtaining training for innovative farming. "There are several flaws in government policy that are preventing agriculture from becoming innovative and commercialised in Nepal," said Regmi.

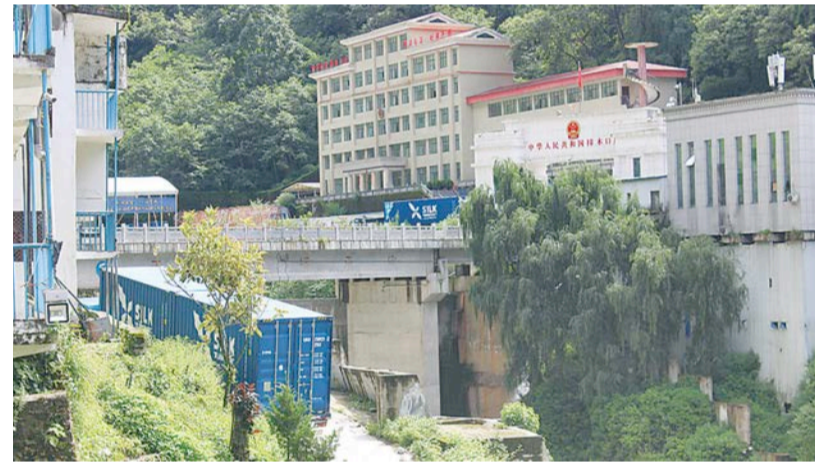
"The government has not allocated adequate budget funding for agricultural innovation, which is a must to lower the cost of production and increase output. The government does have any reliable plan to combat issues like the current lumpy skin epidemic either."

According to Regmi, the problem is red tape that prevents agriculture from being commercialised in Nepal.

"The lengthy and excruciating paperwork for insurance claims, subsidised agriculture loans, government subsidies and so on is preventing agriculture from becoming commercialised," he said.

"Our company is doing its best to make farming innovative, but a lot more effort of every stakeholder is needed for a holistic change," said Regmi.

Beijing to allow people's movement through Tatopani border point



In May, the border was opened for the first time after the devastating earthquake of 2015.

□ ANISH TIWARI
SINDHUPALCHOWK, AUG 4

Beijing has decided to re-open the Tatopani border point for people's movement from September after reopening two-way cargo movements on May 1, according to Nepali authorities.

"The 11th meeting of the Nepal-Tibet Trade Facilitation Committee held on Sunday agreed to open the border for the general public within the next two months," said Ramesh Neupane, chief district officer of Sindhupalchowk district.

The meeting was chaired by Ram Chandra Tiwari, joint secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, including several other officials from Nepal and China.

In May this year, the border was opened eight years after the devastating earthquake of April 2015.

Before the earthquake, nearly 30,000 Chinese tourists used to enter Nepal from the Tatopani border point. Local traders were also allowed to travel to Tibet for business.

"The meeting has concluded. But we have not received any official or unofficial communication. As the decision has been made at the higher level, we are coordinating and preparing accordingly," said Neupane.

Nepali and Chinese officials had already held the meeting on three different occasions regarding the opening of the border for travellers.

The Chinese authorities are particularly concerned about the cross-border crime issue, which they have raised on several occasions.

Both sides have been discussing a wide range of issues including the transmission of information, border security arrangements and patrolling to mitigate and control crimes.

Ravindra Pokharel, chief of Tatopani Immigration Office, said that they have not received any official information from the Chinese side. "Discussion is underway regarding the issue."

"Even if nothing is confirmed at the district level, we think that the decision is being made at a higher level in Kathmandu," said Neupane.

"Although the border has been opened, the trade movement is insignificant," said Dayanand KC, chief of the Tatopani Customs Office.

Since May, goods worth Rs4.2 million have been exported in seven containers that included bamboo seats

and utensils. "The export is almost at a standstill," KC said. He said that 4-5 containers are coming from China on a daily basis.

Due to low trade activities, revenue collection has not matched the target set by the customs, KC said.

The customs targeted revenue collection of Rs4.62 billion but were only able to collect Rs3.27 billion, which is 70 percent of the targeted amount, said KC.

KC said they were optimistic that by opening the border for travellers, the customs revenue would increase.

Tatopani and its adjoining areas like Liping Bazaar have been wearing deserted looks while on the Chinese side, new infrastructure is being built.

Anyone who arrived at the Tatopani border is often aghast by the poor infrastructure on Nepal's side.

Apart from the Miteri bridge and Tatopani dry port built by the Chinese company, all other important structures like immigration, gates, and security posts on Nepal's side are in a dilapidated condition.

The 26-km of the Kodari highway, connecting the border, is yet to be repaired.

Traders say it is risky to drive the goods-laden containers on the highway connecting the international border.

Beginning March 15, Beijing allowed its citizens to travel to Nepal as tourists after more than three years.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, through its notice, had allowed national travel agencies and online travel companies to resume, on a pilot basis, the outbound group tours for Chinese citizens to Nepal.

Chinese arrivals to Nepal crossed the 100,000 mark for the first time in 2013, largely due to the improved air links between the two countries. Around 93 percent of Chinese tourists were first-time visitors to Nepal, according to the Tourism Ministry's statistics.

In 2014, Nepal received 123,805 Chinese visitors.

The back-to-back 2015 earthquake and the blockade by India led to arrivals from China dropping to a four-year low of 64,675 individuals in 2015, down 47.76 percent from 2014.

The surface road at the Tatopani border point where Nepal used to receive a large number of Chinese tourists was also blocked.

Armenia funnels US-built cars to Russia, in sanctions' evasion

□ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GYUMRI, AUG 4

A kilometres-long caravan of trailers loaded with used cars meanders on a dusty road leading to a customs terminal in the Armenian city of Gyumri.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and unprecedented Western sanctions levied on Moscow have created a business opportunity for used car dealers like 31-year-old Yaroslav Kolchenko, who sips a coffee in the sun near the queue.

The US and the EU have banned the export of vehicles to Russia but cars can still be cleared through Armenia, and Kolchenko stands to gain.

"Today even wealthy Russians only have access to used American cars brought to Russia via Armenia," he told AFP.

The native of Saint Petersburg described the arduous journey for vehicles coming to Russia in the wake of sanctions.

"Used, damaged or cheap cars are bought at online auctions in the United States," he explained.

They are then "transported by sea to the Georgian port of Poti, repaired, transported to Armenia for customs clearance, and then taken to Russia by land via Georgia."

Parallel exports are generally seen as a legal grey area and contradict the spirit of sanctions.

The new and lucrative route helps explain growing Ukrainian and Western concerns that Russia's economic partners in the ex-Soviet Caucasus region or Central Asia are

aiding Moscow to bypass sanctions.

Armenia fell under the spotlight last year when President Vahagn Khachatryan said Russia would "withstand sanctions" and vowed closer economic ties with "brotherly" Moscow.

The small and poor Caucasus country has a free trade agreement with Russia and clearing cars at Armenian customs is much cheaper compared to Russia. This has helped Armenia emerge as a hub for re-exports from the United States to Russia after Western car dealers closed dealerships.

Statistics show a 2.4 fold surge in exports that reached a record \$2.4 billion last year.

Kolchenko's business partner, Andrei, who gave his first name only, said they have been in the business since the war started last February.

"We sold eight cars in April alone and plan to expand the business, which is pretty profitable," he said.

By way of example, Andrei said one car he just purchased for \$13,000 would be sold in Saint Petersburg for at least \$23,000 with customs costs of spending around \$5,000.

Those figures help explain why Armenia's trade turnover with Russia skyrocketed since Moscow's all-out

invasion of Ukraine. Official statistics show a 2.4-fold surge in exports that reached a record \$2.4 billion last year. Car re-exports grew last year by 170 percent, and more than 450,000 cars—mostly from the United States—were taken to Russia in the first quarter of 2023.

In March, the US Departments of Justice, Treasury and Commerce said in a joint report that Armenia was among the countries used as transhipment points to Russia.

The EU in June introduced new measures to its 11th sanctions package against Russia to clamp down on the evasion of restrictions, specifically closing loopholes on the re-exportation via third countries of sensitive technology like microchips.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told AFP this month that complying with Western sanctions without angering a key economic partner was a difficult balancing act.

"We're in close contact and cooperation with the EU special envoy and the representative of the US to ensure that we act as a responsible member of the international community," he said. "At the official level, we do not have any objections or complaints from European or American partners, nor from Russia."

Still, Yaroslav said that "what is happening here in Gyumri shows that any sanctions could be evaded."

"Of course, the Americans are not happy about it, and they will probably try to cause trouble but they will fail. You can't isolate a country as big as Russia," he said.



USAID | NEPAL
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Call for a statement of capabilities from local organizations for design and implementation of nationally representative health facility-based and population-based surveys in Nepal

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Nepal is conducting market research to understand more about Nepali organizations that are interested and capable of implementing a potential new activity, "USAID Nepal Health Surveys." This planned activity will assist USAID/Nepal's Health Office to design and implement two large scale national level surveys: the 2025 Nepal Health Facility Survey (NHFS), and the 2026 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). The USAID Nepal Health Surveys activity will implement these surveys to support the Government of Nepal (GON)'s Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) to track Nepal's progress towards United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and Nepal Health Sector- Strategic Plan (NHS-SP) 2023-2030, and to promote evidence-based planning and management of health programs. These surveys will support USAID/Nepal to track progress of the health component of its Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) 2020-2025 (link: <https://www.usaid.gov/nepal/cdcs>), Development Object Three, which aims to strengthen inclusive health and education systems. This activity will work with USAID/Nepal's Health Office, USAID/Washington's Technical Assistance Program for implementing health surveys worldwide, MOHP and other GON institutions, USAID Health Learning activity, and other health sector donors and partners.

Interested parties must submit necessary documents in accordance with the sources sought notice available on sam.gov. The detailed notice is available at: <https://sam.gov/opp/d3379a7338d34aa5894ba1c85d902687/view>

Responses to the information requested will serve as market research. Please note that issuance of this Sources Sought Notice does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. Government, and in accordance with FAR 15.201(e), responses are not considered offers and cannot be accepted by the Government to form a binding contract.

SPORTS

Chhetri officiating in G1 Championships in Korea

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, AUG 4

Nepal's international taekwondo referee Raju Chhetri is officiating matches of the Kimunyoung Cup International Open Taekwondo Championships 2023 in Muju, South Korea, taking place from August 2 to 6. The event recognised as G1 is organised by World Taekwondo and is being held under coordination by the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. The event is organised in the memory of Kim Un-Yong, the founder president of World Taekwondo.

Chhetri, also the former president of Non Resident Nepali Association Korea chapter, has officiated in the UA Open World Ranking G2 Championships in Las Vegas, USA. As well, the gold medallist of World Ranking G2 Championships in 2008, Chhetri was given an honorary citizenship by the Korean government in 2013.

Chelsea complete Disasi signing

REUTERS
LONDON, AUG 4

Chelsea have signed France international centre back Axel Disasi from Ligue 1 side AS Monaco on a six-year contract, the Premier League club announced on Friday.

The 25-year-old, who will join the Stamford Bridge side in a deal worth a reported 45 million euros (\$49.23 million), has won four caps for the national team and has made 130 appearances in the French top flight.

"Axel has showcased his quality over several seasons in France and that has deservedly led to recognition on the international stage," Chelsea co-sporting directors Laurence Stewart and Paul Winstanley said.

Chelsea are looking to revive their fortunes under new manager Pochettino after coming 12th in the standings last season—their worst finish since 1994.



Gyanendra Malla

PHOTOFILE

Former captain Malla retires

The 32-year-old was part of a team that witnessed the biggest accomplishment in Nepal's cricket history, including maiden World T20 and ODI status.

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, AUG 4

Former national captain Gyanendra Malla ended his almost two-decade long cricket career with immediate effect on Friday.

"I think it is the right time to retire," said the 32-year old, who is considered one of the members of the 'golden generation' of Nepal cricket and achieved what his predecessors dreamt of.

After making his debut as a member of the Under-15 national cricket team during 2005, Malla never had to look back. In the same year, he was picked for the national team to compete in the Asian Cricket Council's Under 17 and Under 19 age group tournaments.

In 2006, Malla made it to Nepal's Under-19 squad that played in the Under-19 World Cup. He was one of the key members of the squad that beat South Africa in the Plate semi-final. He was picked for the national team that played in the Intercontinental Cup in 2006. Since then, he had stamped his place as an inevitable member of the national team.

"It has been nearly two decades that I have been associated with the national team and got the opportunity to represent the country for 18 years—also as deputy captain and captain," said the top order batter.

"As a player, I always tried to give my cent percent, shouldering the hopes and collective dreams of the country. I am thankful for the opportunity and I feel proud to have carried the national flag."

Considered as one of the most talented batsmen of Nepal, Malla, however, faced criticism for lack of consistency with the bat throughout his cricketering career and was being criticised for lack of form of late.

Malla was assigned the vice captaincy in 2009 at a time when former player Paras Khadka was named the national captain. He was understood to have a strong bonding with Khadka and remained his deputy until the latter stepped down as captain in 2019. He was elevated to captain's role after Khadka.

Nepal's maiden appearance in the ICC World T20 and gaining One-Day International (ODI) status were

GYANENDRA MALLA STATS					
Age:	32 years				
Batting style:	Right hand bat				
Playing role:	Top order batter				
ODI Debut:	August 1, 2018 - vs Netherlands at Amstelveen (Nepal tour of England and Netherlands)				
Last ODI:	July 4, 2023 - vs Ireland at Harare (ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifier)				
T20I Debut:	March 16, 2014 - vs Hong Kong at Chattogram (ICC World T20)				
Last T20I:	August 30, 2022 - vs Kenya at Nairobi (Nepal tour of Kenya)				
BATTING STATS					
Format	Match	Innings	Runs	100s	50s
ODI	37	37	876	0	7
T20I	45	39	883	1	2
CAREER RECORDS					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malla led Nepal in ten ODIs, out of which they won six. In T20Is, Nepal won nine of the 12 matches under his captaincy. Malla is the first Nepali batter to score an ODI half-century. He scored a fifty against the Netherlands in August, 2018 in Nepal's maiden 50-over appearance. Malla holds the record for the fastest T20I fifty by a Nepali batter. He reached 50 runs off just 20 balls against Malaysia during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Asia Region final in July, 2019. Malla's 107 against Bhutan during the 2019 South Asian Games is the second-highest individual score by a Nepali batter in T20Is. Malla also represented Nepal in two U-19 World Cups, in 2006 and 2008. 					

among the major highlights of his career.

Malla was an influential member of the team that qualified for the global stage of the shortest format of the game—Twenty20. He also played a key role in Nepal's elevation from Division 5 in 2010 to gaining ODI status for the first time in 2018.

All in all, Malla played 37 ODIs and scored 876 runs that included seven half centuries. In his 45 Twenty20 International games, he scored 883 runs, which included a century and two half centuries. His century came against Bhutan in the 2019 South Asian Games (SAG) at the TU cricket ground.

He is currently the fifth-highest run scorer for Nepal in ODIs and the second-highest in T20Is, only behind Dipendra Singh Airee.

He had to go through a roller-coaster ride following his assignment as captain. Malla and three other players, including then vice-captain Dipendra Singh Airee were stripped of their duties by the Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) in December 2021 alleging violation of the code of conduct.

At the time, CAN also announced that the four players, including captain Malla would also be stripped of their central contract for six months. CAN and the four players later reached an agreement and they were also called to the national camp within a month. However, Sandeep Lamichhane was named the new captain instead of Malla.

Malla was struggling for form and a place in the starting XI of late. Though he was part of the Nepali team under coach Monty Desai, he was included in the playing XI only twice in the recently-held ICC World Cup Qualifier where Nepal played six matches. He was included in the starting lineup in the playoffs after Nepal bowed out from the race of qualification into the knockout stage.

"It is the rule of nature to be replaced. I might have replaced someone in the game and it is my time to be replaced. This isn't a farewell; it's a new chapter of my journey. A journey where I continue to be a staunch supporter of the sport, a witness to its evolution and a proud flag bearer of the country I loved dearly."

FIFA Women's World Cup 2023

Five players who lit up group stage

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY, AUG 4

The Women's World Cup knockout rounds begin on Saturday after some sparkling performances in the group phase.

Here are five players who have lit up the tournament so far:

Lauren James (England)



The 21-year-old attacker made her first World Cup start in England's second match and needed just six minutes to score, bending the ball into the corner from outside the box to give the European champions a 1-0 win over Denmark.

The Chelsea player then played a starring role in the 6-1 thrashing of China, scoring two wonderful goals—one with each foot—and setting up three others.

Chiamaka Nnadozie (Nigeria)

James will need to get score past Chiamaka Nnadozie next—England play Nigeria in the last 16.

Nigeria's 22-year-old skipper has



presented a formidable barrier at the tournament. The Paris FC goalkeeper defied legendary goal scorer Christine Sinclair from the spot to help Nigeria grab a crucial point in an opening 0-0 draw with Olympic champions Canada. She then kept another clean sheet in a 0-0 stalemate with Ireland which saw Nigeria into the knockouts.

Linda Caicedo (Colombia)

The 18-year-old Real Madrid attacker has brought her rare talents to a global audience.

She scored on her World Cup debut against South Korea, albeit with a helping hand from a goalkeeping howler, and netted again in a famous 2-1 win over Germany. That was one of the goals of the tournament so far. Caicedo received the ball in the German box, beat two players and bent the ball into the opposite top corner.

The teenager, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at 15 but made a full recovery, has though been at the centre of another health concern. She went down in training clutching her chest and in the Germany win also seemed to struggle with her breathing. Medical tests gave her a clean bill of health.



Hinata Miyazawa (Japan)

Japan won all three of their group games, scoring 11 and conceding none, the highlight being a 4-0 spanking of a fancied Spain side.

The 23-year-old Miyazawa has been central to Japan's unexpected success, netting four times and topping the scoring charts along with Alexandra Popp, who is now out with Germany. Two of Miyazawa's goals came against Spain and she also got an assist in that game.

The attacking midfielder might



have added to her tally but coach Futoshi Ikedo brought her off at half-time against Spain to keep her fresh for their game in the last 16 against Norway.

Amanda Ilestedt (Sweden)

Not many would have picked the Arsenal player out before the tournament—especially as a goal scorer. But the 30-year-old defender is among the top scorers with three goals in as many games—all headers from corners.

Holders the United States, who face Sweden in the last 16 on Sunday, have been warned.

Sweden coach Peter Gerhardsson was not joking when he said she could win the Golden Boot. And Ilestedt, formerly of Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich, insisted her prowess was not a fluke.

"Maybe I didn't expect three goals but I know that's one of my strengths and it's something we're working on a lot at training," she said.



England and Japan sniff chance

With most of the heavyweights already out and the US hardly dominant, a clinical Japan have come from under the radar, while the Euro champions are the bookies' favourites.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
AUCKLAND, AUG 4

Germany's shock exit and the United States' plodding performances were just two of the surprises of a wild Women's World Cup group stage, with England and Japan now leading the charge when the knockouts begin on Saturday.

It has been the story of the World Cup: the lower-ranked teams have dramatically closed the gap on the sides traditionally regarded as the best. Last year's European finalists Germany became the highest-profile victim yet, dumped out in the group stage for the first time in their history on Thursday, with debutants Morocco progressing. South Africa, Jamaica and Nigeria are also into the last 16; Brazil, Italy and Olympic champions Canada are all out.

The US flew to Australia and New Zealand as the favourites to defend their title and win an unprecedented third consecutive World Cup. But Vlatko Andonovski's side only squeezed into the knockout rounds, their performances making it hard to make a case for them reaching the final in Sydney on August 20.

They limped into the last 16 with a 0-0 draw against debutants Portugal and now play Sweden on Sunday in Melbourne.

The fixture is a World Cup classic. They have met in the last five editions, each time in the group stage, with the Americans winning three of them against one draw and one defeat.

"I feel like it wouldn't be a major tournament if we were not facing Sweden," said US captain Lindsey Horan.

Sweden are ranked third in the world, reached the 2019 semi-finals and were silver medallists at the Tokyo Olympics, so another heavyweight will be heading home this weekend. That could present an opportunity to someone else, and the pre-tournament focus on the strong European contingent means a clinical Japan have come from under the radar.

Japan face a Norway side on Saturday whose campaign has been clouded by talk of squad disharmony and injury to Ada Hegerberg. Japan won the World Cup in 2011 and were runners-up in 2015, but were dismissed before this tournament, even back home.

"I think we were left behind by the sudden strides that the rest of the world were making," former Japan coach Asako Takakura, who led the team in 2019, told AFP before the



Japan's players warm up during a training session in Wellington on Friday, on the eve of their FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 Round of 16 football match against Norway.

The knockout round begins Saturday when Switzerland play Spain and Norway face Japan.

tournament.

But they were one of three teams to win all three group games—England and Sweden were the others—were top scorers with 11 goals and did not concede. They destroyed Spain 4-0 with their direct running and clinical finishing, and Hinata Miyazawa leads the race for the golden boot with four goals.

But it is European champions England who are now the bookies' favourites, overcoming injuries to roll into the knockout phase after demolishing China 6-1. England might feel the draw is opening up kindly, with surprise-package Colombia or Jamaica waiting in the quarter-finals if they beat Nigeria in Brisbane on Monday.

They have an outstanding coach in Sarina Wiegman and one of the tournament's breakout stars in Lauren James, although they will be eager to get key midfielder Keira Walsh back from a knee problem.

"I think we are growing into this tournament," warned Wiegman.

France and 2019 runners-up the Netherlands look dangerous too, and

both appear to have kind draws. Then there is Australia, with the co-hosts now playing Denmark after surviving a scare to qualify.

They have a nation behind them and will hope star striker Sam Kerr has recovered from the calf injury that ruined her group stage.

Saturday's first last-16 tie sees Spain try to bounce back from that Japan defeat against solid but unspectacular Switzerland. Spain are waiting for reigning Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas to rediscover her best form after a serious knee injury.

'Minnows' make case The so-called outsiders will be aiming to continue their fairytale runs. Morocco play France while South Africa face the Dutch. Morocco lost 6-0 to Germany on their World Cup debut but ended up qualifying instead of them.

Theirs is a sensational achievement, as is that of South Africa and Jamaica, two teams that had never won a World Cup game before. Jamaica advanced for a clash with Colombia despite turbulent preparations caused by an open dispute with their federation.

"We hope that they're looking at us and taking us seriously now," said goalkeeper Rebecca Spencer.

The success of those nations has justified FIFA's decision to expand the tournament to 32 teams. With so many surprises so far, nobody would bet against them.



Raute youths running about.

A peek into the nomadic life of the Rautes

The settlement on the riverbank of the Thamghat River is home—albeit a temporary one—for around 141 individuals.

TEXT & PHOTOS: PRAKASH CHANDRA TIMILSENA

The first time I saw someone from the Raute community in person was some years ago. I was covering a Nepal Tourism Board event where three-four individuals from the community had come to the Valley Details of the day are hazy now, but I clearly remember taking pictures of the Rautes, who had donned blazers on top of their regular attire for the occasion.

Last month, I went to Bajura for work with a few colleagues—including the Kantipur reporter Jyoti Katuwal. We planned to stop by Dailekh on our way back to Kathmandu. Jyoti has written a few stories about the Raute community, so she was more accustomed to their culture. She and the Dailekh correspondent of Kantipur TV, Chakra Bhandari, helped us navigate the way to the Raute basti (settlement), which wasn't easy to get to.

En route to the settlement at Mahabu rural municipality, I started picturing how the community and their lifestyle would be. I had wanted to visit the settlement and take pictures there for some time. So, I was excited to finally get to see their unique way of life.

The Rautes have their own empire in Dailekh, and they live by their own laws. They rule the forests in Dailekh and call themselves Suryavanshi (descendants of the sun). They are considered an endangered tribe of the Khas Arya community. For urban folks accustomed to the city lifestyle, their way of living seems strange. The language they speak, Khamji, also sounds unique. It didn't take long for us to realise that things like convenience and modern comforts had no meaning in their lives. They are also nomads who don't stay in a place for long.

On the way to their settlement, a person was on the ground—drunk and passed out. A few feet away, the other Rautes were feasting and dancing about. Apparently, an old Raute had passed away some days ago, and this was their way of mourning. The kids were busy playing about, and the adults were seen drinking.

We joined in their dancing and singing. I wanted to take out my camera and capture

these moments as they unfolded but didn't think it was time yet. Just then, we met the *Mahamukhiya*, the main chief Man Bahadur Shahi. The *Mahamukhiya* is the head of the Rautes, who is treated as a ruler by the other community members. He also decides who gets to do what on any given day. Besides the *Mahamukhiya*, there are also three *Mukhiyas* in power—Bir Bahadur Shahi of the Kalyal clan, Suryanarayan Shahi of the Rashkoti clan and Dil Bahadur Shahi of the Chhatyal clan.

We began conversing with the *Mahamukhiya* inside his hut. After a long chat, I mustered the courage to take out the camera. Soon we were surrounded by the other Rautes, who started asking us for money after seeing the camera. We gave them what we had. They seemed less reluctant to us taking photos after that.

About 141 Rautes live in Dailekh today. The Rautes are known for their exceptional hunting skills. They are also good crafters, skilled at making wooden pots and pans. Earlier, they used to go to the market to sell goods made from wood and use that to buy salt and cooking oil. But presently, it looks like they are giving up on their craft.

A reason for this could be the monthly allowance—around Rs3,000—they have received from the government for the past 16 years. That is enough for them to buy food and basic necessities. Recently, it was also revealed that the community is facing problems due to alcoholism which has increased infant mortality rates as well. The government has also tried to give them formal education and access to primary healthcare. But the Raute community don't seem receptive to any of this.

Even in the present context, the Rautes live in a different world alone and don't care much for outside interference. *Mahamukhiya* Shahi revealed that his wife gave birth to ten children, but all died. Was he hesitant to take them to the hospital or give them medicine on time? He wouldn't admit. Now the *Mahamukhiya* has a grandson and his wife as his only living relatives.

Timilsena tweets @prakashtimilsena



Community elders seen chatting.



A young boy with a red cloth tied over his regular attire.



An elderly woman wearing traditional earrings with a turquoise torchlight slung over her blouse.



A young Raute girl.



A woman and a man resting inside their hut.



The Raute settlement in Dailekh.



A woman combs through her son's hair, searching for lice.



Two women going about their day.



Children posing for the camera.

'The Invisible Man': Revisiting HG Wells' iconic novel

This sci-fi story centres on Griffin, a brilliant scientist who discovers the key to invisibility.

ANISH GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU

The gripping science fiction book 'The Invisible Man' by HG Wells was first released in 1897. It presents the compelling tale of Griffin, a brilliant scientist who discovers the key to invisibility. The book, thus, explores Griffin's spiral into madness and the consequences of his acts as he copes with his newfound authority—raising significant issues regarding identity, power, and the darker shades of human nature.

The narrative centres on the mysterious Griffin, a researcher who makes a scientific discovery that grants him invisibility. He sets off on a quest for exploration and isolation, driven by a thirst for control and power, finally losing sight of his humanity.

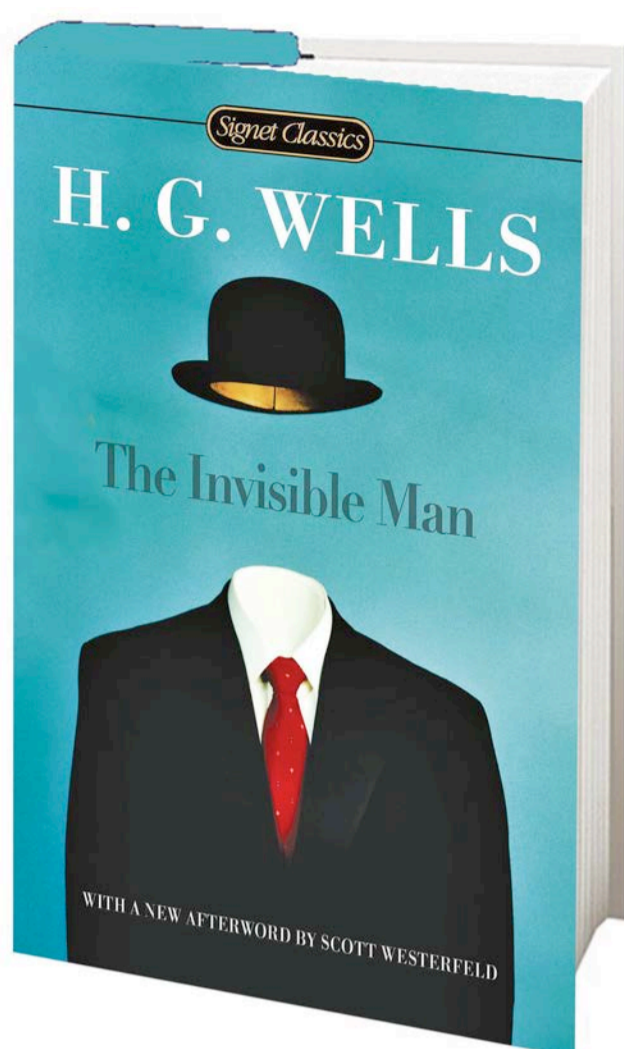


BOOK REVIEW

Griffin struggles to reintegrate into society as he deals with the difficulties of being invisible. Everywhere he goes, he experiences animosity, anxiety, and mistrust. Griffin's actions take a dark turn as he is seized by a thirst for dominance and revenge, causing havoc on the lives of all who come into contact with him.

Identity exploration is one of the book's central themes. Due to Griffin's invisibility, he is deprived of his physical shape and consequently feels removed from the outside world. As a result of his alienation from society's norms and the loss of his moral compass, he gradually loses his sense of self-worth. Wells emphasises the damaging effects of solitude on psychological health and the perilousness of identity.

'The Invisible Man' concerns how people respond to and perceive the unexpected. Griffin strives to fit in, and society



THE INVISIBLE MAN
Author: HG Wells
Year: 1897
Publisher: Simon & Schuster

reacts with mistrust and hostility, reflecting society's propensity to reject and distrust the unexplainable.

As Griffin becomes more desperate to reverse his invisibility, he becomes increasingly erratic and unstable. His attempts to become visible again are unsuccessful, and townspeople become increasingly wary of him due to his secretive and erratic behaviour, which fuels their suspicion and fear. Griffin's inability to switch between visibility and invisibility further isolates him. This limitation intensifies his feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness, making his attempts to find acceptance and assimilation in society all the more difficult.

The book isn't simply a tale of science gone wrong; it is a profound exploration of human nature and the fragility of societal order.

The novel also explores the concept of morality and the responsibility that comes with knowledge and power. Griffin's actions, driven by his newfound abilities, show the consequences of unchecked ambition and the absence of ethical considerations. Wells forces readers to confront the ethical dilemmas surrounding scientific progress and the need for responsibility in its application.

The novel also delves into the corrupting influence of power. Griffin's invisibility grants him a sense of superiority, enabling him to commit acts of cruelty and manipulation without consequence. Through the character, Wells examines how power can corrupt even the most brilliant minds.

The engaging and descriptive writing style immediately draws readers into the

story. His vivid descriptions immerse readers in the unsettling world of the invisible man, creating a sense of tension and dread.

The narrative by Wells moves quickly, maintaining a sense of urgency that captivates readers throughout the book. The book isn't simply a tale of science gone wrong; it is a profound exploration of human nature and the fragility of societal order. Wells' commentary on the individual's place within society and the potential dangers of radical individualism still resonates today. It serves as a cautionary tale, reminding us of the importance of ethics, empathy, and accountability in the face of advancing technology.

In addition, Wells' vivid and descriptive prose draws readers into his world. The novel is a masterclass in setting and atmosphere, from the tranquil English countryside to the tense and suspenseful moments of the invisible man's rampage.

The writer's ability to create a nuanced protagonist is one of the book's greatest strengths. Griffin's descent into madness is vividly depicted, making him a compelling and disturbing character. The novel delves into the psychological effects of invisibility, demonstrating how it erodes moral boundaries and one's sense of identity.

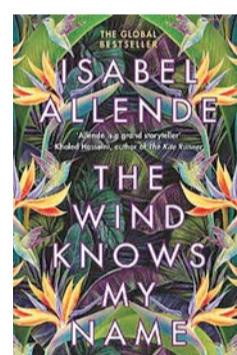
'The Invisible Man' is undoubtedly a remarkable work that has stood the test of time as a classic science fiction novel. However, modern readers may find the language and style a little outdated. The novel was first published in 1897, and as such, it reflects the language and conventions of that era, which can pose challenges for contemporary readers.

Ultimately, the book is a thought-provoking piece of science fiction that has captivated readers for more than a century. This novel by Wells is a must-read for fans of the genre and anyone interested in learning more about the darker shades of human nature. It also features complex characters, insightful social commentary, and skilful storytelling. The book is a timeless classic that shows how literature can always reflect and illuminate the world around us.

BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES

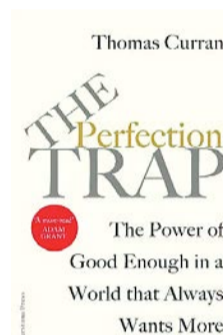
Fiction

- Mrs S by K Patrick
- Final Offer by Lauren Asher
- King of Pride by Ana Huang
- Moms in Wild by Nidhi Raichand
- Love Again by Sofie Cramer



The Wind Knows My Name
Author: Isabel Allende
Price: Rs958.40
Publication: Bloomsbury

This moving novel weaves the lives of two children across time and continents, delving into war's far-reaching impact. In 1938, five-year-old Samuel embarks on a courageous journey, escaping Nazi-occupied Austria on the Kindertransport train, carrying only a change of clothes and his cherished violin. In 2019, seven-year-old blind Anita and her mother seek refuge in the US, fleeing dangers in El Salvador. However, the new family separation law cruelly separates them upon arrival. As these resilient characters navigate challenges to find a place they can call home, unexpected connections unite them. Through her book, Isabel Allende honours parental sacrifices.



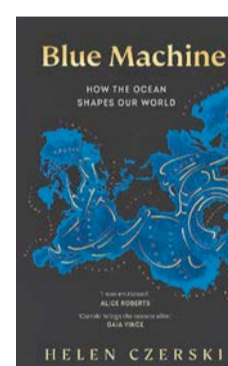
The Perfect Trap
Author: Thomas Curran
Price: Rs1278.40
Publication: Cornerstone Press

In our current world, burnout and depression reach alarming levels, fueled by intense workplace competition, pervasive social media comparisons, the pursuit of prestigious accolades, and overbearing parenting. The relentless pursuit of more and perfection bombards society. Curran compiles compelling contemporary evidence, urging introspection and societal change. In 'The Perfect Trap,' he guides individuals on resisting the pressure to be flawless, leading to a more fulfilling and contented life. For those overwhelmed by the soul-crushing drive to outdo themselves unreasonably, this book offers solace.



Menopausal
Author: Naomi Potter & Davina McCall
Price: Rs1918.40
Publication: HQ

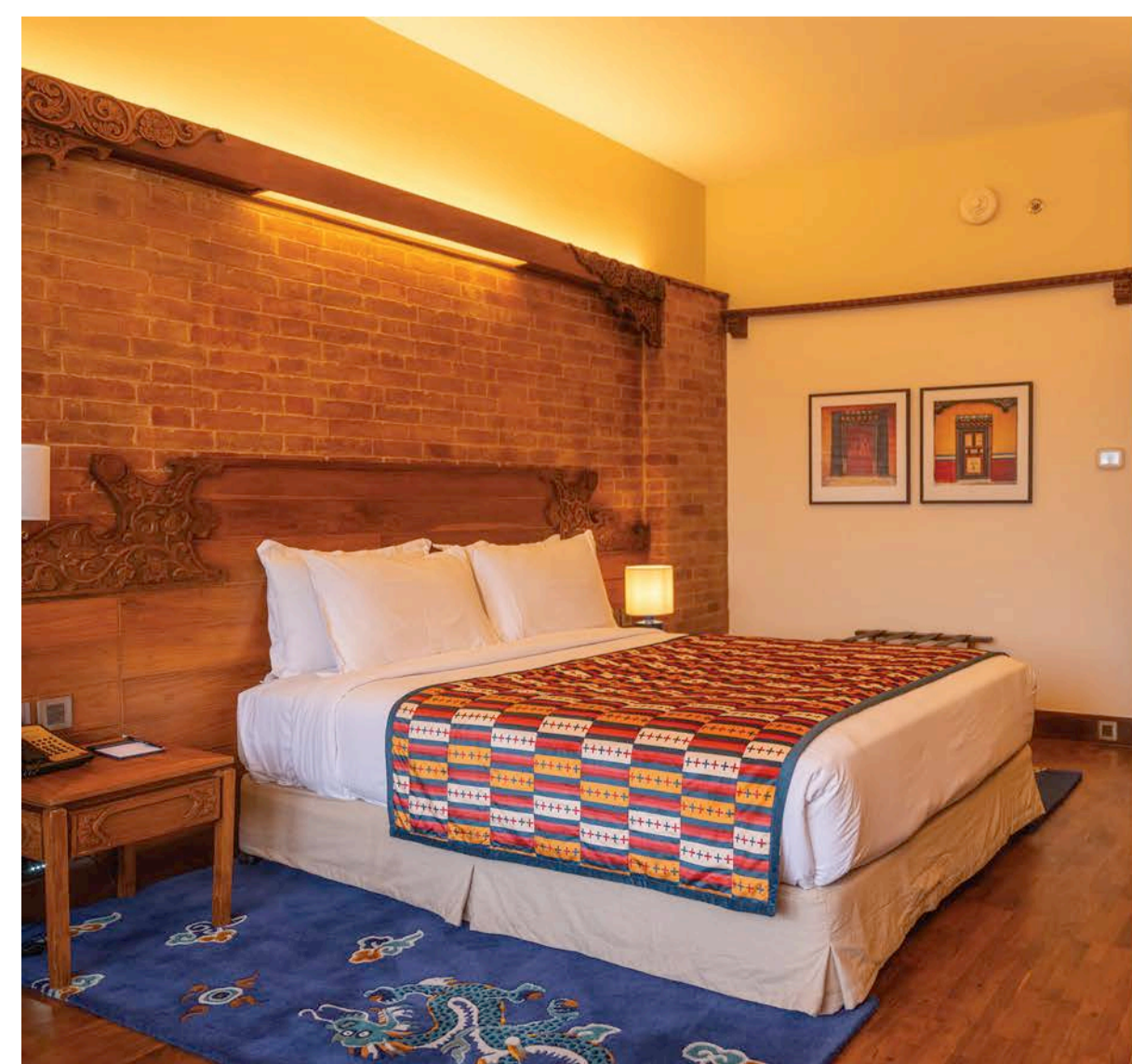
Women have endured a stifling silence surrounding menopause for far too long—the onset, symptoms, treatments, and its implications. Often dismissed with shame, fear, misinformation, or silence, Naomi Potter & Davina McCall's book, 'Menopausal,' breaks this taboo with accurate information. Through scientific exploration, myth debunking, and challenging societal norms, the book empowers women to make informed decisions about their health and lives during perimenopause and menopause. Moreover, it celebrates the power of shared stories, encouraging open and positive conversations about this vital life stage.



Non-Fiction

- Blue Machine by Helen Czerski
- Sound & Fury by Karan Thapar
- Politics of Hate by Farahnaz Ispahani
- The Perfect Trap by Thomas Curran
- Vedic Reader by Arthur Anthony Macdonell

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