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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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POST PHOTO: ANGAD DHAKAL

Local residents rise in protest as the Kathmandu metropolis staff moves to unilaterally remove illegal structures built by encroaching on the brook that forms the border between Kathmandu-7 and Budhanilkantha-10 wards in the Capital on Thursday. The situation remained tense for a while after the municipal force started demolishing the structures with excavators. **(Report on Pg 3)**

As Maoists discuss leadership change, some espy chance

Pun, Sharma hope to succeed Dahal. Another claimant is Shrestha. Chand could make an entry as Dahal's favourite.

❑ **TIKA R PRADHAN**
KATHMANDU, AUG 10

It sounds improbable. But perhaps it's not impossible.

During the party's recent central committee meeting, two of the most influential CPN (Maoist Centre) leaders strongly raised the issue of grooming the successor of party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal. Until recently, even broaching the topic of Dahal's successor would have been a hearsay in the party.

The two deputy general secretaries Barshaman Pun and Janardan Sharma are preparing to take the helm after party chair Dahal, who has been continuously leading the party for over three decades.

"I'm ready to support the party chair, but we should also develop a procedure to prepare his successor," Pun had said at the meeting.

Due to the conflict between the two powerful leaders, Dahal in August last year picked Dev Prasad Gurung as general secretary, a position considered second most powerful in the communist party.

On the other hand, the party's senior vice-chair Narayan Kaji Shrestha has been bolstering his prospects to stake claim to its leadership after Dahal. Shrestha's popularity is thought to be growing among the general public since he has been the face of the ongoing government campaign against corruption.

The Maoist Centre's second generation leaders are waiting for the upcoming special convention to change the party's leadership. Their effort mirrors that of the second generation leaders of the Nepali Congress. NC General Secretary Gagan Thapa is also positioning himself to lead the party—and soon.

> **As Dahal portrays self as indispensable, his supporters are set to foil newcomers' bids.**

However, some leaders close to Pun and Sharma believe Dahal will try to create an impression that the party could face an existential crisis if he is out of leadership. The two leaders are thus careful not to make Dahal feel threatened.

>> Continued on page 3

Nepal sends tomatoes to India, and asks for rice

Since July 20, India has maintained an embargo on non-basmati rice amid the threat of El Niño weather disruptions.

❑ **KRISHANA PRASAIN**
KATHMANDU, AUG 10

Neighbours Nepal and India are in a kitchen give and take.

While India has started importing tomatoes from Nepal amid a record-high spike in prices in the country, Nepal has written to the Indian government to send rice and sugar.

The first lot of tomato imports is likely to reach by Friday in Varanasi, Lucknow and Kanpur cities in northern India, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the parliament in New Delhi, according to Reuters.

Tomato prices have surged more than 1,400 percent at the wholesale market to a record IRs140 ($1.69) per kg in the past three months in India, with farmers citing reasons including poor rainfall, higher temperatures and a virus outbreak that have hit the crop. The export ban of non-basmati rice by India to boost domestic supply and keep retail prices under check has sent prices soaring in Nepal.

Against this backdrop, Nepal has formally asked the Indian government to make an exception and unshackle grain and sugar shipments to Nepal in view of the upcoming festive season.

The neighbour has banned exports of non-basmati rice considering its own needs. Officials at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies say they have made a request for 1 million tonnes of paddy, 100,000 tonnes of rice and 50,000 tonnes of sugar. "Last week, we requested the Indian government through the Foreign Ministry to supply grains and sugar. We are yet to hear from the southern neighbour," said Ramchandra Tiwari, joint secretary at the Industry Ministry.

Since July 20, India has maintained an embargo on non-basmati rice to keep its food reserve intact amid the threat of El Niño weather disruptions.

Food prices normally increase during the festive period in Nepal as goods fly off the shelves with celebrators on a spending spree. Nepal is heavily dependent on imported food, mostly from India.

>> Continued on page 5

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1 Durbar Mall, Thamsherku Center, Durbar Marg
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NATIONAL

DISTRICT DIGEST

Murder-accused man found dead

SALYAN: A man was found dead in Malneta of Sharada Municipality-14 on Thursday. According to the police, 55-year-old Bir Bahadur Giri allegedly died by suicide by hanging inside a house close to his own residence in Tusare on Thursday morning. Bir Bahadur was accused of the murder of 47-year-old Pramila Giri. The latter was found dead near her house four days ago with a cut on her throat. A police complaint had been filed against Bir Bahadur on August 6 accusing him of the crime. He had been absconding since. Further investigation into the matter is underway.

Journalists protest district administration's ban

RAJBIRAJ: The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) Saptari chapter on Thursday took out a protest march against the District Administration Office's directive to journalists to not take photos and videos without its permission. The Assistant Chief District Officer Lewan Kashyap Adhikari on Wednesday had issued a statement to that effect. Journalists have called the administration's move unconstitutional and against press freedom. The protesting journalists have warned of continued protests if the administration fails to retract its earlier announcement, said the chairman of FNJ Saptari chapter, Shrawan Kumar Dev.

Body of missing man recovered from river

DHANGADI: A 40-year-old man from Godavari Municipality-9 died in the Khutiya river where he had gone to collect driftwood. According to the District Administration Office, the man had gone missing in the river on Wednesday. His body was recovered from the river on Thursday, according to information officer Shivaraj Joshi.

Clarification

The woman featured on the front page of the Post's Thursday edition is Dal Kumari Sunuwar, a former lawmaker from the Rastriya Prajatantra Party. She was representing her Sunuwar community at the World Indigenous Day event in Kathmandu.

Floods cause displacement in Kanchanpur and Kailali

Families in Kanchanpur who fled their waterlogged homes on Tuesday night have not been able to return as floodwaters have not receded yet.

POST PHOTO: ARJUN SHAH

(Left) Police rescue people and salvage their belongings after the flooding in Bhajani Municipality of Kailali district on Wednesday. (Above) Displaced families from various wards of the municipality living under tarps along the road, which is higher than the surrounding ground.

❑ **BHAWANI BHATTA** & **ARJUN SHAH**
KANCHANPUR & DHANGADHI, AUG 10

Families displaced by a flood on Tuesday in Purnabas Municipality-5 still haven't been able to return home. A massive flooding of the local Dodi River Tuesday night inundated Simari and Ratotaal areas in the municipality displacing 35 families. According to the chairman of ward 5, Padam Bahadur Rokaya, the displaced are taking shelter at their relatives' homes.

"Although the water level has decreased, the settlement still remains inundated," said Rokaya. "Water has seeped into homes destroying food grain and furniture among other things rendering them inhabitable."

The ward office has made arrangements for free meals for the displaced, informed Rokaya.

Simari village, mostly populated by people from the Rana Tharu community, suffers from inundation every monsoon.

Since most of the houses are made of wood and mud, the water seepage has increased the danger of the houses giving way, said Rokaya.

A section of the Postal Highway passes through the village. According to the locals, the road is elevated from the ground level and has been causing waterlogging in the villages. The locals on Wednesday demolished a part of the road to allow the water to flow away.

Incessant rainfall these past few days has resulted in an increase in the water level in most rivers and streams in Kanchanpur. Swathes of agricultural land in the foothills of the Chure region have also been inundated by continuous rainfall, said locals. The extent of damage caused by flooding is yet to be ascertained, he said.

Meanwhile, vehicular movement resumed on the bridge over the Sharda Barrage on Thursday after the water level in the Mahakali River decreased, according to the Area Police Office at Gaddachauki.

Vehicular movement was brought to a halt on the bridge on Wednesday after the water level in the Mahakali River had increased. The water level in the river had reached 135,000 cusecs on Wednesday. The water level dropped to 90,000 cusecs on Thursday, according to the Area Police Office.

The Sharada Barrage bridge is estimated to be over 100 years old. Movement of heavy vehicles over the bridge is banned once the water level in the river crosses 100,000 cusecs given the dilapidated condition of the bridge.

Incessant rainfall inundated hundreds of houses in various local units of Kailali district with Bhajani Municipality the most affected by flood and inundation.

According to the mayor of the municipality, Kewal Chaudhary, hundreds of families living in different wards of the municipality have been affected by the floods.

"Houses in Kusumghat, Dhusi, Barbada, Kanhaiyapur, Bahadurpur, Janakpur, Mijaha and Sonfantha have been waterlogged. Some of the displaced locals are living under tarpaulin tents along the Postal Highway while some families have taken shelter in public buildings," said Chaudhary.

> Swathes of agricultural land in the foothills of the Chure region remain under water.

Chaudhary said Kandha and Pathariya rivers entered the settlement following a heavy downpour on Tuesday.

"Not only has my house, but the whole village has been waterlogged. We ran to safety and are living under tarps," said Janak Chaudhary from Dhusi village. "We are counting days for the water level to recede."

Residents of Bhajani Municipality have been affected by floods every year. Water from Kandra, Kandha, Pathraiya and Mohana rivers enters the settlements during the monsoon season causing inundation.

Vehicular movement along the Bhimdatta Highway, which was blocked by a landslide on Monday night, is still obstructed. The highway serves as a lifeline connecting seven hill districts of the Sudurpaschim Province with the plains.

According to the Provincial Police Office, around 200 metres of road of the Budhitola-Khanidanda section in Godavari Municipality-4 has subsided causing deep cracks and holes.

According to the Provincial Traffic Office in Dhangadhi, the road repair work is challenging because of the risk of landslides. Excavators have been deployed since Tuesday morning, but there has been no significant headway in clearing the road, said Superintendent of Police Netramani Giri, head of the Provincial Traffic Police Office.

"Five excavators have been working since Wednesday morning and efforts are being made to open the highway for traffic. However, due to heavy rain on Tuesday night, the repair work has been hampered," said Giri. "There has been some respite from rainfall so we expect to be able to clear the highway by Friday."

A total of nine families have been displaced by the landslide.

NOTICE

I, Mohammed Usman, S/O of late Mohd Yahya, resident of RCM road, Kalimpong, West Bengal, India, declare that Raksana Musalman, D/O late Jamal Musalman, resident of Kamalpokhari, Kathmandu, Nepal, is my legally wedded wife, our marriage was solemnized as per Muslim religious rites and social customs and order at our residence at Kamalpokhari, Kathmandu, Nepal on 23-03-1994, that after marriage we are living together as husband and wife for all practical purposes.

Government critic Congress MP held for fake certificates

❑ **ANIL GIRI**
KATHMANDU, AUG 10

The Central Investigation Bureau on Thursday arrested Nepali Congress lawmaker Sunil Sharma, who is a medical doctor, on the charge of possessing fake academic certificates of grades 11 and 12. The arrest comes just as he has been speaking out against the government's inability to curb gold smuggling.

Sharma, in Parliament and in public, had been demanding resignations of Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha and Finance Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat claiming that they both should be held responsible for the recent smuggling of over 100 kg of gold from Hong Kong. The gold was seized last month after it had passed the airport customs.

Speaking to the media after his arrest, Sharma compared the present government with the North Korean regime.

"The state of North Korea has arrested me, but I am happy," said Sharma. He also threatened to start a fast-unto-death demanding a thorough investigation into the gold smuggling case. Besides Sharma, the CIB also arrested four other doctors on Thursday. According to the CIB, Dr Amrit Chaudary, Dr Rambabu Yadav, Dr Arina Yadav and Dr Ranjit Kumar Yadav were arrested on Thursday on similar charges. Chaudhry is serving at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj and the remaining three are serving in other medical institutions.

POST FILE PHOTO
Lawmaker Sunil Sharma.

While the constitution requires the police to inform the Speaker before arresting any lawmaker when Parliament is in session, Speaker Dev Raj Ghimire was kept in the dark about the arrest plan, according to Ghimire's office.

Article 103 (6) of the constitution of Nepal says no member of the federal parliament shall be arrested during the period from the issuance of a notice summoning the session to its prorogation. It further says if any member is arrested, the authority making such arrest shall forthwith give information thereof to the person presiding over the House concerned.

After Sharma's arrest, a CIB team led by SP Nawaraj Adhikari reached the parliament secretariat to notify the Speaker.

As per the complaints registered at the Nepal Medical Council some doctors had produced fake academic certificates of the proficiency certificate level to sit the MBBS entrance examinations. The certificates were found not verified by the National Examination Board, the CIB said in the information provided to the parliament secretariat.

The CIB has claimed that it had received a letter from the National Examination Board on July 21, 2021 regarding Sharma's academic certificates.

Police sources said Sharma was arrested for investigation after the certificates said to be issued from an Indian academic institution were found to be fake. Sharma, also owns the Biratnagar-based Nobel Medical College and a few hospitals.

Nepal Police spokesman Kuber Kadayat said Sharma was arrested on the charge of possessing fake certificates and more such individuals could be arrested in days to come.

Sharma was elected to the House of Representatives from constituency 3 of Morang last November. He is considered to be close to Shekhar Koirala, who leads a dissident camp in the Nepali Congress. Koirala has objected to the arrest. Also, a meeting of the Congress parliamentary party held on Thursday evening discussed the arrest.

"We have taken note of Sharma's arrest," said Chief Whip Ramesh Lekhak. "We will take an update from the Speaker about the arrest. Once we have all the details of the arrest, we will make a position and speak."

Congress leader Koirala said the timing of Sharma's arrest has made him suspicious about the government's motives.

"He had been making public statements against the home minister and the finance minister," said Koirala.

Meanwhile, a superintendent of Nepal Police told the Post that Sharma had produced a fake marksheet for pursuing the MBBS degree.

Some seven years ago, Nepal Police had launched a crackdown on fake academic certificates in the medical sector among others, and that was when it was revealed that many medical doctors including Sharma had used fake Indian certificates to pursue MBBS studies, and many were in medical practice without obtaining a license from the Nepal Medical Council, the police superintendent said.

After the police launched the campaign, Sharma left the country for Japan and returned after the heat of the investigation had cooled down.

Shekhar Adhikari, the Speaker's press coordinator said that Nepal Police verbally informed the Speaker about Sharma's arrest on Thursday.

Sharma was arrested from his residence at Golfutar in Kathmandu.

Besides possessing fake educational certificates, Sharma has a controversial background as a medical professional. He has been accused of attempting to influence politicians regarding the allocation of medical seats, granting of affiliation to medical colleges and the determination of MBBS fees.

Sharma's Nobel Medical College had on several occasions in the past landed in controversies including failing to meet the standards to run a dedicated medical college and other facilities. The college was also accused of admitting more students than the allocated seats.

According to a report published in Himal Magazine, Sharma evaded taxes.

The report quoting an eight-year-old investigation carried out by the Department of Revenue Investigation said Sharma's Nobel Medical College had understated the value of its property to avoid taxes, diverted the bank loan taken to construct the college infrastructure elsewhere, and manipulated the amount invested in the college to dodge taxes and tax submission deadline.

Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanepani Limited (KUKL)
Project Implementation Directorate (PID)
Anamnagar,Tanka Prasad GhumtiSadak 1235/59. Kathmandu Nepal

ADDENDUM No. 1

(Date of issue of Addendum No 1: 11 August 2023)

Contract No. and Title: KUKL/WW/TP/R-02: Construction of Remaining works of Wastewater Treatment Plants at Sallaghari, Kodku and Dhobighat

First Date of IFB Publication: 16 July 2023

Pursuant to Clause No. 8 of ITB of bidding document, all prospective bidders are hereby informed that the deadline for submission of bid has been extended up to 12:00 noon NST of 08 September 2023 and changes in the Invitation of Bids and Section 2: BDS are made accordingly as follows:

Reference	Text in the Bidding Documents	Corrected Text as Addendum No. 1
IFB S. No. 1	The Government of Nepal has received a financing from Asian Development Bank (ADB) towards the cost of Kathmandu Valley Wastewater Management Project. Part of this financing will be used for payments under the Contract named above. Bidding is open only to bidders from eligible source countries of the ADB.	The Government of Nepal has received a financing from Asian Development Bank (ADB) towards the cost of Kathmandu Valley Wastewater Management Project. Part of this financing will be used for payments under the Contract named above. Bidding is open only to bidders from eligible source countries of the ADB as described in Section 5 of the Bidding Document.
IFB S. No. 6	To purchase the Bidding Document, eligible bidders on or before **30 August 2023**; 12.00 hrs (NST) should,	To purchase the Bidding Document, eligible bidders on or **before 08 September 2023;** 12.00 hrs (NST) should,
IFB S. No. 8	Second and Third bullet of S. No. 8: • **The deadline for bid submission is** Date: **30 August 2023** Time: 12:00 Hrs • Together with a Bid Security in the amount as specified in the Bidding Document (Section 2: Bid Data Sheet **Clause 19.**1)	Third bullet of S. No. 8: • **The deadline for bid submission is** Date: **08 September 2023** Time: 12:00 Hrs • Together with a Bid Security in the amount as specified in the Bidding Document (Section 2: Bid Data **Sheet Clause 21.1**)
Section 2: BDS, ITB 24.1	**The deadline for bid submission is** Date: **30 August 2023** Time: 12:00 Hrs	**The deadline for bid submission is** Date: **08 September 2023** Time: 12:00 Hrs
Section 2: BDS, ITB 27.1	The bid opening of Technical Bids shall take place at: Date: **30 August 2023** Time: Immediately after the bid submission deadline	The bid opening of Technical Bids shall take place on: Date: **08 September 2023** Time: Immediately after the bid submission deadline
Section 3, subclause 2.26 (c)	Functional Guarantee of the Facilities: The maximum requirements stated in the specification for functional guarantee for energy consumption are: S. No. 3 | Parameters: Dhobighat | Maximum Functional Guarantee values: 1400 kWh per day	Functional Guarantee of the Facilities: The maximum requirements stated in the specification for functional guarantee for energy consumption are: S. No. 3 | Parameters: Dhobighat | Maximum Functional Guarantee values: 14000 kWh per day
Section 8, Appendix 3: Insurance Requirements	1. A. Insurance for the Works Permitted deductible limit as per GCC SC 19.2(a)(i): 0.1 % of full replacement value Additional sum to replacement value as per GCC SC 19.2(a)(ii): *5%* of full replacement value	1. A. Insurance for Works under the contract and insurance for the already constructed facilities worth of USD 5.0 million Permitted deductible limit as per GCC SC 19.2(a)(i): 0.1 % of full replacement value Additional sum to replacement value as per GCC SC 19.2(a)(ii): *15%* of full replacement value

Kathmandu metropolis' drive to remove slabs from a border brook hits snag

After Samakhusi, the Kathmandu municipal police reached Tokha, where they were confronted by local residents and people's representatives, who say the demolition drive would cause more trouble.

❑ ANUP OJHA
KATHMANDU, AUG 10

The body of the boy who went missing after being swept away in a flash flood in a local stream of the Samakhusi river in Kathmandu was discovered on August 3, nearly two weeks after the mishap.

On July 23, the flash flood breached the embankment and swept away the sixth-grader, Sajan Ale Magar.

The incident not only troubled the police, it also worried Samakhushi locals, who said they fear their children might be the next victims.

Police and locals said if only the river was not covered with slabs it would not have been that hard to get the body of the boy.

However, the 11-year-old boy's body was found on the 11th day of the search, from Bagmati river in Dakshinkali Municipality-7.

Shortly after the incident, the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) started to take off the slabs from the brook, from the bridge near the Police Beat in ward-3 to ward-36, close to Rehdon College.

Officials said as much as 80 percent of the streams flowing into the Samakhusi river was covered with slabs.

According to KMC's spokesperson, by Thursday, the City had taken off slabs from the river from an area of nearly 2.5 km.

Although KMC said it did a commendable job of opening the river which will help them in taking back the encroached land of the river, the locals say KMC worked hastily in removing the slabs.

People seem to be divided over the job performed by the KMC. While some are supporting KMC for claiming the encroached land of the river, others are saying KMC's work is not justifiable.

"The KMC's intention is good, but the timing is wrong," said Chandra Bagale, 43, a local grocery shop owner.

"The rainy season is not yet over, and the KMC has not kept any fencing on the river side. Roads and houses are very close to it, so there is a greater chance of more children falling into it."

POST PHOTO: ANGAD DHAKAL

Local residents of Kapan protest against the KMC's drive to remove slabs from the brook bordering Kathmandu-10 and Budhanilkantha-7.

KMC's spokesperson Nabin Man Manandhar said his office is working toward fencing the river on both sides. "We need to go for the beading process, which may take a few months," said Manandhar.

He, however, said people need not worry, as the rainy season is almost over.

After clearing the slabs along the Samakhusi brook, the KMC city police on Thursday reached Kapan to remove the slabs from the brook that falls between KMC ward number 10 and Budhanilkantha Municipality ward number 7. A team led by Deputy Inspector Minbahadur Thapa had reached there to demolish the slabs and a few squatter settlements with an excavator, but due to protests by the locals and representatives of the Budhanilkantha Municipality, the KMC City police had to back off.

> Two Budhanilkantha municipal staff were injured in the clash between police, locals.

The incident at the Samakhusi river is not an isolated case. In September 2021, 10-year-old Ujjwal BK fell into an open drainage in Kapan. The boy's body was found in Lalitpur after five days.

"We are very concerned about our place, but the KMC police used force on our representatives," said Mitharam Adhikari, mayor of Budhanilkantha Municipality.

He said two of his municipality staff—ward-10 chair Navaraj Maharjan and Rita Dahala, executive member of the Budhanilkantha Municipality—were injured after KMC's police used force.

"The rainy season is still not over. If we open the brook's slab, it would create more trouble," said Adhikari. "The main problem with the Kathmandu Valley is that all the cultivable land has been turned into concrete, and there is no soil left for water recharge. This has created inundation problems."

He said his municipality is ready for talks with the KMC. "But the KMC should have consulted us before it brought in the City police and used force upon our people," he said.

Construction of new cross-border power line may start in two months

Groundbreaking for the 400kV New Butwal-Gorakhpur transmission line was done during Dahal's India visit.

❑ PRITHVI MAN SHRESTHA
KATHMANDU, AUG 10

Work on the Indian section of the proposed New Butwal-Gorakhpur Cross Border Transmission Line is likely to start in the next two months with contractors for both substations and power line having been selected, a senior official of the Nepal Electricity Authority said.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his counterpart Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had virtually held a groundbreaking ceremony for the 400kV cross border power line during Dahal's New Delhi visit from May 31 to June 3.

"I expect that the contractor will be mobilised in the field in the next one or two months," said Dirghayu Kumar Shrestha, chief of transmission directorate at the NEA.

"The contractors for both substations and transmission lines have been selected but the company is yet to sign an agreement with the contractor."

Shrestha, who is also a board member at the Butwal-Gorakhpur Cross Border Power Transmission Limited, a joint venture company established in India, said that it could take up to two months to sign the contract.

Butwal-Gorakhpur Cross Border Power Transmission Limited is an equal-share joint venture between Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and Power Grid Corporation of India.

The two countries have agreed to complete construction of the 120 km power line by March 2025. The Nepal section of the line that is around 20km will be funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Nepal Compact.

Currently, the 400KV Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur Cross-border Transmission Line, is the only high capacity cross border power line between two countries. It is being used for electricity trade between the two neighbours. Nepali officials said that an additional cross border power line is a must to enable Nepal to export more power in the days to come.

The Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur can transmit up to 1000MW. Nepal and India have agreed to transmit a maximum 800MW through this line.

By mid-July 2025 when the New Butwal-Gorakhpur Cross Border Transmission Line is expected to be completed, Nepal is projected to generate 5,251MW while domestic demand is projected to remain at 2,568MW, according to the NEA. So, additional transmission lines will be required to export more power to India, according to the NEA officials.

> The two countries have agreed to complete construction of 120 km line by March 2025.

According to the NEA, the New Butwal-Gorakhpur line can transmit up to 3500MW.

Besides this, the two countries during the energy secretary-level Joint Steering Committee meeting in February, have also agreed to develop two other cross-border transmission lines—400kV Inaruwa (Duhabi-Purnia, Bihar) and 400kV New Lamki (Dodhara-Bareli, Uttar Pradesh)—by 2027-2028 and 2028-2029, respectively, according to the energy ministry's statement.

During the meeting, the two countries had also agreed to trade power through the 400kV Dhalkebar-Sitamarhi Transmission Line being built by the SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company Pvt Ltd for evacuating the power generated by the 900MW Arun 3 Hydropower Project. A joint technical team formed by the two countries has been instructed to study the spare capacity of the transmission line so that power generated from other projects could also be evacuated through this line.

Once all these projects are built, there will be five high-capacity cross-border power lines, which will facilitate smooth trade of power between the two countries.

Children's antibiotic drug being sold in the market for the past 20 months found to be substandard

❑ ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, AUG 10

An antibiotic drug being sold in the market since January 2022 has been found to be substandard in a laboratory test.

The Department of Drug Administration, which recently carried out lab testing on Enclave Bid, a paediatric antibiotic manufactured by Curex Pharmaceuticals Pvt Ltd, found that the medicine didn't meet the standards.

"We have directed the manufacturing company to recall all the medicine of the DEB-168 batch from the market and inform us," said Narayan Dhakal, director general of the department. "This medicine does not cure the ailment, prolonged the duration of the ailment and if used, another antibiotic is needed for cure."

Curex Pharmaceuticals is a Kavre-based national drug manufacturer. The department, which is the national regulatory body of pharmaceuticals as well as Ayurvedic medicines in the country, said that the amount of the content in the medicine has been degraded to 64 percent.

Experts say if the antibiotic was given to a child for the treatment of an infection, his/her ailment would have exacerbated.

When asked why the lab testing of the medicine was carried out at the time of its expiration and when the medicine might have already sold out in the market, officials conceded that their drug inspectors could not collect the samples of the drug on time and the laboratory also took time to carry out testing.

"Had we carried out the lab testing on time, we could have recalled the substandard drug months ago from the market," said Dhakal. "That could have prevented ailments from exacerbating, helped patients to get cured earlier and saved unnecessary expenses for the patients."

The department carries out lab testing on samples of medicines collected randomly by its drug inspectors from the market. And most of the time, when the department unveils its lab reports and recalls faulty drugs, most of the substandard drugs will already have been sold.

The department's officials could not say if the recalled substandard drugs are still on the market or not. They reasoned that the department doesn't have the capacity to monitor each and every pharmacy.

Doctors say substandard antibiotics are among the reasons for the high burden of antimicrobial resistance in Nepal, which ultimately leads to the irrational use of several types of antibiotics for the treatment of infections.

They warned that antibiotics, which have saved millions of lives across the world, could soon become ineffective due to the high resistance rate caused by their irrational use.

In a study carried out in Nepal on humans, animals and environment samples, antimicrobial resistance genes were detected in 81 percent of the total samples on which antimicrobial resistance tests were carried out.

POST PHOTO: ANGAD DHAKAL

Taxi drivers park their vehicles in front of the Transport Management Office at Minbhawan in Kathmandu on Thursday, protesting the ride hailing services provided by private vehicles. They demand the concerned authorities stop private vehicles from carrying passengers for hire. The struggle committee has presented a nine-point demand to the government.

Sharma and Pun team up to bid for Maoist Centre leadership

>> Continued from page 1

Some confidants of Sharma say the two leaders have a deal to support each other, and there were also some hints of such arrangement at the recent central committee meeting.

Sharma has reportedly agreed to support Pun as Dahal's immediate successor while Pun will help Sharma to get elected as party general secretary.

"The two leaders had agreed to move ahead in unison and had told the party chair that they would accept anyone Dahal chose as the party's general secretary," said Jag Prasad Sharma, a leader close to Sharma. "The party has already decided to follow due process of leadership selection. That means election."

Jag Prasad, a member of the National Assembly, said the two leaders have for now agreed to work together and support the party chair.

Party secretary Chakrapani Khanal said he has been working hard to bring Sharma and Pun together after some others tried to drive a wedge between them. In their race for Maoist general secretary, Pun and Sharma were even thought to be rivals.

While Sharma was the finance minister in the Sher Bahadur Deuba government amid a deepening economic crisis, Pun's public statements were quite critical of Sharma's policies.

Dahal is often thought of as an adept practitioner of 'divide and rule' in party affairs. In the past, Dahal extracted maximum benefit from the polar opposite stands of Baburam Bhattarai and Mohan Baidya. Even though these leaders are now out of the party, Dahal seems to have found others to create such polarity and play in the middle.

Dahal has decided to bring in the Netra Bikram Chand-led Communist Party of Nepal in the Socialist Front, a loose alliance of four leftist parties, and there are even efforts to merge the party with the Maoist Centre and appoint Chand as the unified party's general secretary. Chand would then be the top contender to succeed Dahal.

This has forced Pun and Sharma to mend fences. For his part, senior vice-chair Narayan Kaji Shrestha, the deputy prime minister and home minister, has also projected himself as Dahal's immediate successor.

Party insiders say Sharma and Pun could have decided to support one another in order to minimise the roles of Shrestha and Chand. A recent rise in Shrestha's popularity seems to have driven the two closer still.

Shrestha had joined the party only after the warring Maoist party joined the political mainstream, following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006.

Many Maoist leaders view Shrestha as an opportunist and an outsider, one who chose to stay away when they had put their lives on the line in order to force a change in the national political system and establish their agenda; they fought for the party and yet it was Shrestha who came from outside and took all the benefits.

Khanal, the party secretary, is one of the leaders who harbour such feelings. He claims to have worked hard to bring Sharma and Pun together. Those who recently joined the party can get some space in it but they cannot be accommodated in top leadership positions, Khanal said.

The leaders who are close to Dahal have given him a clear message that someone who refused to join the people's war (Shrestha) and someone who betrayed the party leadership when the party needed them the most (Chand) are unfit for leadership roles.

After the chairman's hint of bringing Chand back home, Sharma and Pun have been meeting regularly, even inviting other senior leaders to join them.

"Actually, the two leaders are not in a position to challenge Dahal, but they won't let anyone coming from the outside take over party reins either," said Khanal.

The party has decided to launch a three-month-long campaign of 'transformation' by going to the grassroots starting September 2 and then to hold a statute convention. Then the party is preparing to organise a special convention to elect a new leadership.

"As the special convention is over nine months away, there is no concrete discussion yet on a change in leadership," said DP Dhakal, a central committee member. "But it's true that Sharma and Pun have agreed to join hands without offending the party chair."

However, some political analysts said there is no point in discussing leadership change or handover so long as the current party chair does not voluntarily give up power.

"Dahal has designed the system in a way that he can run the party pretty much as he wishes. He has this knack for selecting the weakest leaders for various party positions," said Mumaram Khanal, a former Maoist leader turned political analyst.

"There is no competition for party leadership and the only real contest will be for the general secretary. But whoever becomes the general secretary has no impact as it is the chairman who runs the show."

The Central Committee meeting held in January last year after the eighth general convention of the Maoist Centre reelected Dahal as party chair for five more years. Dahal has thus been leading the party for over three decades—uncontested.

Analyst Khanal said Dahal would never allow Shrestha to take over the party and that the Maoist Centre would lose its significance in national politics when Dahal becomes inactive.

"Communist parties like the ones led by Rohit [Narayan Man Bijukchhe], Mohan Bikram Singh and the Maoist Centre will cease to exist along with the demise of their all-powerful leadership," said Khanal. "Maybe, in the post-Dahal phase, the Maoist party will merge with other like-minded forces."

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Incentivise good behaviour

People clicking photos of a dying man rather than coming to his help is deeply disturbing.

Social media and legacy media have been abuzz with disturbing visuals of a youth lying on the road, in a pool of blood, after meeting with an accident in Dolakha district. A dozen individuals surround him, some with mobile phones in their hands, looking on or clicking his photos even as he awaits help. As per media reports, neither the public nor the police showed any hurry to rescue Bishwo Raj Shrestha and take him to hospital on time. When Shrestha did get to a hospital, it was too late; he had succumbed to his injuries.

As much as the injuries, the 23-year-old probably died of negligence, for he could have been saved with timely medical attention. In what is increasingly becoming symptomatic of the social media age, Shrestha's struggle for life and his ultimate death became a spectacle to behold, record and disseminate. The public seems to have been incapacitated by the adrenaline rush presented by content that was certain to go viral on social media. What else explains the inhumane treatment of someone begging for his life as the public chose just to become *ramitey*, or casual onlookers, rather than Good Samaritan?

There was a similarly disturbing scene near the Pokhara International Airport earlier this year when a Yeti Airlines passenger plane crashed with 72 people on board. The crowd was so busy taking photos and videos on their mobile phones that first responders had difficulty conducting the rescue work. The most obvious explanation for such a spectacle of public insensitivity has to do with the increasingly anti-social human behaviour in the age of social media. Moreover, the crowd seems to take interest in incidents in which they or their close ones are not actively involved in what is a *fursad* spectacle, an act of witnessing done out of idleness rather than a will to act and make a difference.

The public apathy that is fast undercutting the normative narrative about Nepalis being a helpful and social lot also has to do with how the security system functions in the country. Nepal's police administration is infamous for its ruthlessness while quizzing the first responders in accident cases. The general public is concerned that an act of selfless help can ultimately be a means for their harassment. A public that does not want to face the interrogation of an unfriendly police system is often guided by the principle of not touching the victim until the police arrive. And in doing so, they lose the crucial moments when the victim's life can be saved with quick action. Unless the police's attitude transforms from harassing to incentivising Good Samaritans, we cannot expect people to take personal risks and come out to help.

To deter potential Good Samaritans from looking the other way, the state should come up with a Civic Responsibility Act which incentivises spontaneous public support in cases such as road accidents while also inculcating in the public a sense of moral obligation to help fellow citizens in distress. India, for instance, has a set of guidelines to that effect, whereby those calling the police to inform them of an accident do not need to reveal their identity and can choose whether they want to be witnesses. If they choose to, they can be questioned at a time and place of their convenience and are not liable for civil or criminal liability. A similar witness protection programme can go a long way in inculcating civic behaviour among the public and possibly saving many lives.

THEIR VIEW

Pulling back

Pakistan's economy is fragile, and the results of facing US sanctions could be detrimental.

Pakistan's decision to temporarily postpone the gas pipeline project with Iran due to pressure from the US, which has sanctions against Tehran aligns with the country's efforts to stabilise its economy with assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Suspending the project could have several implications for Pakistan's economy. The project was aimed at importing cheap energy which could have helped alleviate energy shortages and reduce energy costs in the country.

Now it must prepare to face continued energy challenges, potentially impacting industries and overall economic growth. Additionally, the decision might strain relations with Iran, a neighbouring country that Pakistan has historically maintained good ties with. Furthermore, if Pakistan relies on other, more expensive energy sources to meet its energy needs, it could lead to higher costs for consumers and businesses, potentially contributing to inflation. This could pose challenges for the government's efforts to stabilise the economy, especially because of its present economic struggles.

In the longer term, the decision could also impact investor confidence in Pakistan, as it might raise concerns about the stability of economic projects and the country's commitment to its agreements. It is important to note that the full extent of these implications would depend on various factors, including how long the suspension lasts, the alternative energy sources Pakistan utilises, and the broader geopolitical context. Pakistan's decision can be attributed to several factors. It has faced economic challenges for many years and has relied on international financial assistance, including loans from the IMF, to stabilise its economy.

The US holds significant influence over international financial institutions and can use its leverage to influence Pakistan's economic decisions. The US has imposed sanctions on Iran due to its nuclear programme, which has extraterritorial implications. This means that countries conducting business with Iran can also face US sanctions. Pakistan's economy is fragile, and the consequences of facing US sanctions could be detrimental, leading the country to prioritise its economic stability over relations with Iran. Pakistan has a history of close ties with the US, especially in the context of its role in the region, including its involvement in the Afghan conflict. Maintaining these alliances might take precedence over certain economic projects. The US is a significant trade partner and source of aid for Pakistan. Trade and aid relationships can be leveraged to influence policy decisions. Cutting off or reducing trade benefits and financial assistance could put additional strain on Pakistan's already fragile economy.

Pakistan's foreign policy is influenced by a complex web of regional and international dynamics. Balancing relations with Iran and the US, while also considering its relations with other regional players, can lead to difficult decisions based on diplomatic and strategic considerations. Pakistan might view maintaining a positive relationship with the US as essential for its own national security interests.

— The Statesman (India)/ANN

Beyond Balen and Rabi

Can the political messiahs lead their disillusioned flock to the promised land?

BISHAL THAPA

POST FILE PHOTO

Balendra (Balen) Shah and Rabi Lamichhane burst into Nepal's rugged political landscape like two messiahs in a hurry, offering a tantalising promise to lead disillusioned Nepalis to the promised land of good governance, zero corruption, development and progress. Nepalis are loving it all. So, we march on, behind our messiahs, towards the promised land.

Shah is the mayor of Kathmandu. In the last elections, he defeated the heavily favoured candidates of the Nepali Congress, Sirjana Singh, and the CPN-UML, Keshav Sthapit, who was also a former mayor of Kathmandu. Although an engineer by training, Shah gained prominence as a Nepali rap artist. Not just any rap, but battle-rap, where performers freestyle, relying on spontaneity and instantaneous rhythm to outdo other performers. He has carried his penchant for spontaneity into political office.

Lamichhane is a Member of Parliament from Chitwan-2, chairman of the Rastriya Swatantra Party, and former deputy prime minister and home minister. He established the party just six months before the 2022 general elections, and went on to lead it to become the fourth-largest party in Parliament. He won elections twice from the same constituency within just a few months of each other after the courts nullified his first election on the charge that he was not a Nepali citizen. He won with a large majority in both cases. By the time of his second, even larger resounding election victory, Nepalis weren't asking whether he was a Nepali or not, but whether he was even human at all. Such was the embodiment of his overnight political success.

Like Shah, Lamichhane was a popular public figure prior to commencing his political journey. A journalist who combined tough questions with a focus on cases involving corruption and injustice. He packed in nationalism and editorial monologues into entertaining television shows. For seven years between 2013 and 2020, he held the world record for the longest marathon show on television, lasting over 62 hours in a single stretch.

Balen and Lamichhane bring all the prerequisite traits to succeed in Nepal's political scene—smarts, ambition, ruthlessness, an ability to read the mood, enough new ideas, marketing capabilities, organisation skills, and the greatest of them all, the gift of the gab. They will no doubt go on to establish long successful political careers.

Nepal has gained two political messiahs who appear to be poised for greatness. But these gains must be equally tempered by what Nepal has lost.

With the transition from civilian to political life, we have lost a talented rap artist. Not just any rap artist but a battle-rap artist. Nepal's rap cultural scene will never be the same again. We have lost an entertaining journalist. Nepal's search for the truth, at least ones that unfold in entertaining ways, will never be the same again.

Civil society

The sensational successes of Shah and Lamichhane also exhibit a deeper failure within Nepal.

Shah and Lamichhane both promised significant political changes. Would they have had greater success in achieving those changes if they had worked on those goals as civil society members (a rap artist and a journalist), which they were before, instead of becoming politicians, which they are now? Could they have utilised their prominence and convening authority of civil society members without the need for the state's political power to achieve those changes?

Yes, and they could possibly have achieved a whole lot more in terms of impact. If every doctor, engineer, artist, journalist, businessperson, mother, father and citizen wanting to bring positive change were to become a politician to achieve those goals, there would be no more citizens, only politicians.

Shah and Lamichhane may have had many motivations for wanting to join active politics. Their right to engage in the political process cannot be restricted or even questioned. Every citizen wishing to participate in the political process directly by contesting elections, or as a party functionary must have the right to do so. For many people with the right acumen, this is also the right profession for them.

But political power is not the only instrument for achieving change. Civil society seeking to deliver change must reject the lure of politics. Politicians run the country. But citizens make the country. We would be much more successful in building a stable political system with a prosperous economy if civil society were able to keep political leadership on track, influence better policymaking, and secure proper implementation. For the country, the political system must work. Civilians, not politicians, are the ones that can get it to work.

Such civil activism requires more than just showing up to vote. It requires active convening, organising and mobilising. Which is why the defection of Shah and Lamichhane to the political establishment is a great loss. Nepal's civil society is poorly organised and even more poorly resourced. Its organisations lack leadership depth. Those that have the capability to address these challenges are all too busy defecting to the lure of politics.

Civil society participation

The lack of civil society participation represents a large danger for Nepal. Without civil society participation, there is no pressure on the political system to remain accountable. Policymaking becomes very one-sided, with the risk of its being hijacked by a set of interests.

Consider the energy sector as an example. New government and development programmes are designed and implemented every day. A wide range of policies are instituted. Nepal, for example, is seeking to sell electricity to India and Bangladesh. There are policies providing free electricity for certain households. Electric vehicles receive the benefits of low import taxes. These are only a small subset of the large number of policies that are instituted daily. It is the same across other sectors.

These policies and programmes, however benign or trivial they may appear, lock Nepal to specific development and strategic pathways. The absence of civil society engagement in these decisions means that the state has a monopoly over the rules and narrative. There is no counterforce pushing back against political influences in the policymaking process or in the selection of strategic pathways.

Civil society participation is equally important to fill gaps. In the electricity sector, again, as an example, Nepal is in need of an amendment to the Electricity Act and a new act for distributed renewable energy. Despite many efforts and drafts, political forces haven't aligned to push these acts to Parliament. Civil society can, should and must play a role in enabling such legislative changes.

It may be tempting to believe that benevolent honest leaders wielding political power will deliver us to the promised land. We should prepare for disappointment, or at the minimum, tone down our expectations. More than politicians, the biggest power for change lies within us—labourers, farmers, businesspersons, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and so on—the fabric of civil society that is made up of ordinary citizens simply going about their daily lives.

Our challenge is how to organise, resource and mobilise civil society. No easy answer there. But it may be an equally worthwhile consideration than simply betting on political messiahs to lead us to the promised land.

Nepal and International Humanitarian Law

The government should identify legal and operational gaps and address them on time.

KRISHNA CHANDRA CHALISEY

The codification of modern International Humanitarian Law (IHL), also known as the law of armed conflict or law of war, began in 1864 with the adoption of the first Geneva Convention in Geneva, Switzerland. Later, various states adopted the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, to address limitations and gaps witnessed in the conduct of hostilities in twin world wars. The four Geneva Conventions offer protection to wounded and sick soldiers on land and at sea, prisoners of war and civilians. The 1949 Geneva Conventions were later complemented by adopting the two Additional Protocols in 1977 that covered both international and non-international armed conflict. The Protocols govern the means and methods of warfare.

The Conventions and their Protocols form the key instruments of IHL. Despite the efforts made by the states to avoid or ban war from the ancient period to the modern era, they have failed in all ages. Only the form and modality of war have changed over the years. Now, in many cases, armies no longer face each other on the battlefield; autonomous weapons, cyber warfare and artificial intelligence have changed the battlefield scenario.

Nepal and IHL treaties

All countries, including Nepal, are parties to the Geneva Conventions. Nepal acceded to the Conventions on February 7, 1964. In addition to the Geneva Conventions, Nepal is a party to other IHL instruments, such as the 1925 Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating; Poisonous or Other Gases and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare Geneva; the 1972 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction; the 1993 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction; and the 2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Nepal also signed the 2005 Additional Protocol of the Geneva Conventions and the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Despite persuasive efforts at the national and international levels, Nepal is yet to join the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The Government of Nepal didn't accede to additional IHL instruments, including two protocols of 1977, despite the conclusion of the comprehensive peace agreement and the formation of the new government. It was the only common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions applicable in the Maoist insurgency (1996 to 2006). In addition, Nepal could invoke customary norms, rules and practices. Nepal could have better regulated the conduct of hostilities and offered enhanced protection to the victims with 1977 Protocol II, applicable in non-international armed conflict. During the formal and informal interactions, the representatives of relevant ministries indicate that Nepal needs to wait until the conclusion of the transitional justice process to consider the two protocols. There is a general reluctance to engage on those issues. Globally, Protocol I and II have almost universal acceptance among 174 and 169 state parties respectively.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Officials at the relevant ministries say the Government of Nepal will study the desirability of accessions and make appropriate decisions. However, no such study has taken place so far. Some are skeptical of a need to promote IHL as Nepal does not have any active conflict. But this is a short-sighted perspective. Promoting IHL and adopting legislative measures must be done in peacetime to prepare for potential conflicts. The government should thoroughly study the past conduct of hostilities, identify legal and operational gaps and address them through appropriate measures—developing national law and joining essential and relevant IHL instruments in Nepal. This will enhance the country's image at home and outside.

Implementing IHL

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was instrumental in supporting the government and other stakeholders to spread the knowledge of IHL during the conflict and post-conflict period. The government joined the ICRC to host several national and regional IHL workshops and conferences aimed at civil servants, military officers, police officers, judges and prosecutors and academics. The government, together with the ICRC, hosted the first-ever South Asian IHL conference in 2009, attended by high-ranking government officials. The fact that a country that has just gone through a decade of armed conflict had organised the conference was taken as a positive gesture.

IHL has been integrated into the training and courses of armed and security forces, judiciary and academic institutes. The government even decided to form a National IHL Committee—an inter-ministerial body—under the chair of the Minister of Law and Justice to look at multiple aspects of IHL issues and advise the government accordingly in 2007.

The ratification of a treaty by a state is simply an expression of commitment to comply with the treaty rules. Translation of those rules into practice requires national implementation law. Even after 59 years of accession to the Geneva Conventions, Nepal does not have such a law. Universal jurisdiction enables all states to fulfill their duty to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of war crimes. To make this principle effective, states must establish universal jurisdiction for war crimes in their national legislation.

Without national legislation, Nepal cannot apply the principle of universal jurisdiction. The Geneva Conventions Act drafted by the National IHL Committee some years ago is awaiting final approval before it is referred to the focal ministry. The National IHL Committee is requested to give utmost priority and finalise the draft at the earliest. Nepal has performed well in promotional activities; however, it lags behind in treaty participation and national implementation.

IHL is a regime that applies while concluding Nepal's transitional justice process in addition to human rights law, criminal law and domestic law. Its proper understanding is limited compared to human rights law. Investigators, prosecutors and judges would require adequate knowledge of IHL.

The International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held every four years (this year on August 12), is the topmost body to deliberate on emerging humanitarian challenges and develop resolutions to deal with those, including IHL. The conference is attended by the state parties to the Geneva Conventions and the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Nepal Red Cross has the mandate to work for the promotion of IHL and can develop further partnerships with the government for the same. Seventy-four years after their signing, the Geneva Conventions are far from perfect in terms of compliance. All states are expected to adhere to the agreed norms sincerely.

Chalisey served as head of communication at the International Committee of the Red Cross Mission, Nepal.

FOREX

US Dollar	132.65
Euro	146.26
Pound Sterling	169.33
Swiss Franc	151.89
Australian Dollar	87.08
Canadian Dollar	98.99
Singapore Dollar	98.58
Japanese Yen (10)	9.22
Chinese Yuan	18.40
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.36
Qatari Riyal	36.39
Thai Bhat	3.78
UAE Dhiram	36.12
Malaysian Ringit	29.01
Korean Won (100)	10.11

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

SHARES

Nepse (in percent) ▲ 2,066.05pts 0.24%

HIGHEST GAINERS

AVYAN	SHEL	SGHC	NEF	SHL	BBC
9.09	7.49	6.55	5.67	5.65	3.96

MODERATE GAINERS

LEC	SALICO	EBLD86	UAIL	TRH	MBL
3.46	3.43	3	2.95	2.86	2.65

MODERATE LOSERS

HHL	NABBC	SAPDBL	PPL	SEF	SMFBS
-3.58	-3.66	-3.72	-3.82	-4.08	-4.22

HIGHEST LOSERS

GBLBS	SMATA	AHL	GRDBL	SMHL	HLBSL
-4.43	-4.98	-4.99	-5.2	-5.84	-6.53

BULLION

PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 111,300
Silver	Rs 1,380

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

Russian central bank halts currency buys as rouble falls

MOSCOW: The Russian central bank said it would no longer purchase foreign currency on the domestic market from Thursday, as it sought to prop up the rouble, at its lowest level against the dollar since March 2022. "The Bank of Russia has decided that, from 10 August through 31 December 2023, it will not buy foreign currency in the domestic market," the central bank said in a statement late Wednesday. "This decision is aimed at reducing volatility in financial markets," it said. With the announcement, the bank is setting aside its budget rule, under which Russia buys or sells foreign currency stored in its National Wealth Fund to compensate for fluctuations in revenues from oil and gas exports. The move comes after the rouble fell sharply in recent weeks, prompting fears among many Russians that their standard of living could take a hit. On Thursday morning, Russia's currency was trading at 107 roubles to the euro and 97 roubles to the dollar, its lowest levels since the early days of Moscow's offensive in Ukraine. **(AFP)**

Egypt's inflation reaches record high of 38.2 percent in July, government data shows

CAIRO: Egypt's annual inflation rate reached a record high in July, as price hikes continue unabated in the cash-strapped North African country, official figures said on Thursday. Consumer prices rose 38.2 percent from a year earlier, up from 36.8 percent in June, according to data released by the state-run Central Agency for Mobilisation and Statistics. Average food and beverage prices, the main drivers of inflation, increased 68.2 percent over the past 12 months, the agency's data showed. Egyptians, particularly working-class households, are struggling to keep up with the rising prices, which have soared since Russia invaded Ukraine last year. Egypt is the world's largest wheat importer, with most of its supplies traditionally coming from eastern Europe. **(AP)**

Israel's El Al in talks to buy Airbus jets in potentially historic shift

TEL AVIV: El Al Israel Airlines is in "serious" talks with planemaker Airbus to buy as many as 30 A321neo jets, El Al's CEO said on Thursday, in what would be an historic change of supplier as it looks to replace its short-haul fleet. Israel's flag carrier is also in talks with traditional supplier Boeing to buy 737 MAX aircraft, Dina Ben Tal Ganancia told Reuters on the sidelines of a conference after El Al issued quarterly results and as it celebrated 20 years of being traded on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange after privatisation. A decision likely would be made early in 2024, Ben Tal Ganancia said. At list prices the investment would be near $4 billion but El Al would likely pay far less after discounts. Since its inception in 1948, El Al has maintained an all-Boeing fleet, owing to Israel's close ties with chief ally the US, so a break would be a significant policy change. **(REUTERS)**

Nepal requests India for 1 million tonnes of paddy, 100,000 tonnes of rice

>> Continued from page 1

In the 2021-22 Indian fiscal year, which starts on April 1 and ends on March 31, Nepal imported 1.4 million tonnes of rice—1.38 million tonnes of non-basmati and 19,000 tonnes of basmati rice—from India, the highest import on record, according to an Indian government report.

In terms of value, rice imports came to $473.43 million or just over Rs60 billion.

Imports of basmati and non-basmati rice dropped sharply to 812,028 tonnes in 2022-23 as India strangled exports. The total value of the imports was $283.94 million or Rs37.48 billion.

Nepali traders say that immediately after India stopped the export of rice, retail prices jumped by Rs200 to Rs250 per 25-kg bag. They say that prices are expected to increase further, particularly during the festive season.

Dhurba Adhikari, joint treasurer of the Nepal Retailers Association, says that the price of rice is still on an upward trend. "We have been informed by wholesalers that prices of rice and other foods may rise further."

Adhikari, who is also the proprietor of Adhikari Khadya Store at Tarakeshwar, said that retailers do not keep large inventories. "So the prices are determined by the wholesalers. We have heard that market inspections are being done, but they don't seem to be effective," he said.

The price of edible oil has also started to rise. Soybean oil now costs Rs200 per litre, up Rs25 per litre. The price of other edible oils has increased by Rs10 to Rs15 per litre. Mustard oil costs Rs250 to Rs300 per litre depending on the brand.

The price of lentils has also increased by Rs10 to Rs15 per kg and now cost Rs220 to Rs230 per kg.

Consumer rights activists say that import delays may impact the market.

"If the government delays importing rice, wheat and sugar, black marketers will jack up prices again," said Prem Lal Maharjan, president of the National Consumer Forum.

"The industry ministry has written to the finance ministry for approval to import rice, paddy and sugar from India, but the finance ministry has a track record of procrastination," said Maharjan. "Delays may create chaos in the market."

Considering the Indian ban on non-basmati rice exports and the current weather phenomenon in Nepal, there may be a food crisis for a short period, say experts.

POST FILE PHOTO

In the 2021-22 Indian fiscal year, which starts on April 1, Nepal imported 1.4 million tonnes of rice—1.38 million tonnes of non-basmati and 19,000 tonnes of basmati rice—from India, according to an Indian government report.

Poor people will be hit hard by the ban on non-basmati rice as they can't afford to eat basmati rice.

"The embargo has prompted price spikes globally. In Nepal too, prices are already up," agriculture economist Devendra Gauchan told the Post in a recent interview.

"Requesting India to provide rice is not sufficient, the government should subsidise it to control inflation in the domestic market," said Maharjan.

The authorities claim that they have been actively conducting market inspections, but rights activists say they are not visible.

On July 30, the Department of Commerce, Supplies and Consumer Protection wrote to the government to inform all local levels to conduct market inspections amid complaints of unnatural price hikes.

Issuing a public notice on July 31, the commerce department asked traders to sell rice at the old prices after voices were raised against the abrupt price hikes that followed the Indian announcement.

The department also warned that lawful action would be taken if it was found that prices had been hiked unnecessarily.

"Warehouses were raided in some parts of the country," said Maharjan. "But market prices have not come down as expected."

On Tuesday, officials of the concerned ministries and departments, including secretaries of the industry ministry, director generals of the commerce department, Nepal Bureau of Standards, Food Technology Department and officials of food supply bodies met to discuss possible responses to India's move. According to Nepal's central bank, the year-on-year consumer price inflation remained at 6.83 percent in mid-June compared to 8.56 percent a year ago.

Food and beverage inflation stood at 5.66 percent in the review month. Under the food and beverage category, the price index of spices increased by 35.29 percent, cereal grains and their products by 13.06 percent, and milk products and eggs by 10.98 percent.

UK considers response to US ban on tech investments in China

❑ **REUTERS**
LONDON, AUG 10

Britain said on Thursday it was weighing how to respond to a decision by US President Joe Biden to prohibit some tech investments in China, adding it was continuing to assess potential national security risks.

Biden signed an executive order on Wednesday that authorises the US Treasury secretary to prohibit or restrict US investments in Chinese entities in three sectors: semiconductors and microelectronics, quantum information technologies and certain artificial intelligence systems.

The US government has said the measures are designed to address national security risks. China said on Thursday it was gravely concerned by the move.

A spokesperson for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government said the executive order gave important clarity on the US approach: "The UK will consider these new measures closely as we continue to assess potential national security risks attached to some investments."

London has recently sought to stabilise its relationship with Beijing following a period of turbulence over issues such as security rules in Hong Kong and alleged human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly set out Britain's new approach in April, saying it would seek to protect itself by limiting national security threats posed by China while engaging in areas such as trade, investment and climate change.

Sunak and Biden signed a new agreement to strengthen the historical security alliance between their two countries in June, vowing to deepen economic ties in areas such as advanced technologies, clean energy and critical minerals.

Official data shows that China is not a significant destination for British foreign investment, with the figure standing at 10.7 billion pounds ($13.6 billion) at the end of 2021, compared with 461.4 billion pounds in the United States. British investment in Hong Kong stood at 77.6 billion pounds.

Palm oil demand boosted as rival oil prices jump

❑ **REUTERS**
MUMBAI, AUG 10

Demand for palm oil has been increasing as its discount to soyoil and sunoil has grown, driven by the recent price rise in rival oils due to production concerns in the US and supply disruptions from the Black Sea region, industry officials said.

This surge in demand is expected to assist Indonesia and Malaysia in bringing down their palm oil inventories, simultaneously bolstering Malaysian palm oil futures .

"Aggressive pricing has been aiding palm oil as buyers are shifting toward palm oil from other oils for near-month shipments," said Sanjeev Asthana, chief executive officer at Patanjali Foods Ltd, India's top palm oil buyer.

India, the world's biggest buyer of edible oils, imported 1.09 million metric tons of palm oil in July, nearly 60 percent more than June and the highest in seven months.

India's imports would remain robust during August and September as well, Asthana said.

Crude palm oil is offered at $910 a tonne including cost, insurance and freight (CIF) to India for September shipments, compared with $1,050 and $1,010 for crude soyoil and crude sunflower oil respectively, dealers said.

Soyoil prices jumped in the last one month on production concerns in the United States and lower supplies from top exporting Argentina, while sunflower oil became expensive after Russia withdrew from the Black Sea grains deal, said a New Delhi based dealer with a global trade house.

The Black Sea region accounts for 60 percent of world sunflower oil output and 76 percent of exports.

"Palm oil prices didn't rise; instead, they came down due to rising stocks in the producing countries and become even more cheaper for buyers," the dealer said.

China expands the number of countries for travel by its big-spending tourists

❑ **ASSOCIATED PRESS**
BEIJING, AUG 10

China has increased the number of countries that its big-spending tourists can visit by more than 70 following the lifting of its last Covid-19 travel restrictions.

The decision comes as international flights to and from the country gradually return to their pre-pandemic levels.

China implemented strict lockdowns and draconian travel controls within the country and closed its borders almost entirely after the virus was first detected in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019.

Those restrictions began to be lifted late last year, but the government has been hesitant to resume issuing passports and allowing in foreign tourists, as well as giving its citizens the ability to travel abroad.

"The government agencies in charge will provide businesses in the tourism sector with the necessary guidance for the implementation," the Foreign Ministry said. "At this moment, we would like to remind all outbound tourists to be well-prepared before each journey, stay safe and healthy and show civility as they travel, enjoy the trip and have a safe journey home."

AP/RSS

A file photo shows a tourist in traditional Thai dress posing for a photograp at Wat Arun or the 'Temple of Dawn' in Bangkok.

Chinese tourists, who generally travel in groups organised by agencies, are known for spending lavishly on hotels, tours, souvenirs and designer brands. Pre-pandemic, they travelled in larger numbers and spent more as a whole than any other nationality, accounting for $255 billion in revenue in 2019, according to business consultancy McKinsey & Company.

Thailand, Japan, Australia and EU countries such as Germany have been among the biggest beneficiaries of the Chinese tourist spending, given the relative ease of obtaining visas and the availability of flights.

Japanese Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihiko Isozaki on Thursday said Japan and China agreed to revitalise exchanges of people between the two countries when their leaders held talks in November.

Rising prices for travel do not appear to be curbing wanderlust

❑ **REUTERS**
LONDON/CHICAGO/NEW YORK, AUG 10

The post-pandemic travel boom and the high ticket prices that come with it show no signs of slowing well into next year, despite economic uncertainty and dwindling household savings.

While questions linger about how much longer consumers will continue to indulge, airlines, hotels and analysts say travel has remained a top priority instead of the "nice to have" purchase as in years past.

International travel reached around 90 percent of pre-pandemic levels this year, according to the International Air Transport Association. The rebound was led by visitors to Southern Europe from cooler climates despite soaring temperatures and included swaths of American tourists flying overseas.

"In the wake of the pandemic, a number of folks have reset their priorities and have focused on splurging on travel," said Dan McKone, a senior partner at strategy consultancy LEK Consulting.

That desire may even strengthen next year, according to travel tech firm Amadeus, whose recent survey showed that 47 percent of respondents said international travel was a high-priority discretionary spending category for 2023 and 2024, compared with 42 percent who ranked it as such the previous year. Amadeus sampled travellers from Britain, France, the United States, Germany and Singapore.

REUTERS

A file photo shows people visiting Dassia beach on the island of Corfu, Greece.

Those trends lifted quarterly earnings of travel companies, with cruise operators like Royal Caribbean reporting record results in recent weeks. Travel operators Booking Holdings and Airbnb said revenue was up 27 percent and 18 percent, respectively, and air carrier Delta and hotel giant Marriott International forecast strong future demand.

German carrier Lufthansa said bookings for the rest of the year currently exceed 90 percent of the pre-pandemic level and the summer season extending into October. United Airlines is expanding Pacific coverage this autumn with new flights to Manila, Hong Kong, Taipei and Tokyo.

Overall, global passenger demand is estimated to grow 22 percent year-on-year in 2023 and 6 percent in 2024, Moody's investor service said on Tuesday. Ticket prices, which in some cases have increased by double-digit percentages since the pandemic, are unlikely to plummet.

"Everyone is pricing against demand and this is the basic economic equation," Jozsef Varadi, CEO of budget carrier Wizz Air, told Reuters. "We are in a high-input cost environment. So, that puts pressure on pricing."

Hayley Berg, lead economist at online travel agency Hopper, said travellers to Europe and Asia are not expected to see substantial price relief this autumn. She expects air fares on long-haul international routes to remain high until supply outpaces pre-pandemic levels, demand normalises and jet fuel prices decline further.

The weak spot is US domestic travel, as the end of Covid-19 testing restrictions has unleashed pent-up demand by Americans to take vacations overseas.

"They said earlier in the year, 'Look, I'm going to do that international trip that we've been meaning to do,' and that's created a lot of crowded places with Americans in Europe," Booking Holdings CEO Glenn Fogel told Reuters.

International inbound travel to the United States in May rose 26 percent year over year to 5.37 million visitors but is still about 20 percent lower than pre-pandemic visitor volumes reported in May 2019, according to the US National Travel and Tourism Office.

Average domestic airfare is currently $246 round-trip, down 8 percent from 2022, according to travel booking app Hopper.

Executives said US hotel rooms may become more expensive due to lack of supply, but softening demand may moderate that effect.

"Growth is expected to remain higher internationally than in the US and Canada, where we're seeing a return to more normal seasonal patterns," said Marriott CFO Kathleen Oberg.

Looking ahead, some airline groups like British Airways owner IAG said it is unclear whether demand can be sustained.

Analysts have said dwindling consumer savings could cause a downturn in spending if inflation fails to let up.

BRIEFING

Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant switched to reserve power line

KYIV: Ukraine's Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant again lost connection to its last remaining main external power line overnight and was switched to a reserve line, state-owned power generating company Energoatom said on Thursday. Energoatom said Europe's largest nuclear power plant was on the verge of a blackout as the reserve line had less than half the power capacity of the main power line. "Such a regime is difficult for the reactor plant, its duration is limited by the project's design and it can result in failure of the main equipment of the energy unit," Energoatom said on Telegram. The Zaporizhzhia plant with its six reactors has been controlled by the Russian military since the early days of Moscow's invasion in February 2022. It has become one of the focal points of the conflict, with both sides blaming each other for shelling around the site.

Fire hits grain silos at French Atlantic port

PARIS: More than 80 firefighters fought a huge blaze at grain silos in the French Atlantic port of La Rochelle on Thursday, disrupting shipping activity at one of France's biggest grain export terminals. The fire started on a conveyor belt at around 8:00 am and spread to four grain silos operated by SICA Atlantique, the local prefecture said. Staff from SICA Atlantique and neighbouring companies in the terminal were evacuated and no injuries were reported, it said. The fire had been brought under control and had not reached compartments containing stored grain, a representative of SICA Atlantique said. France is the European Union's biggest grain producer and the cereal terminal at La Rochelle, known as La Pallice, is an important export outlet as it handles larger panamax vessels. The port has loaded a large amount of barley for China this summer as the harvest has arrived, though the current loading schedule was light, according to port data compiled by Refinitiv.

India, Japan, US, Australia hold first Malabar naval exercise off Australia

SYDNEY: India, Japan, the United States and Australia will hold the Malabar navy exercise off the coast of Sydney on Friday, the first time the war games previously held in the Indian Ocean have taken place in Australia. Japanese and Indian navy vessels stopped in Pacific Island countries Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea on the way to Sydney, highlighting the strategic importance of the region at a time of friction between China and the United States. Vice Admiral Karl Thomas, Commander of the US Navy's Seventh Fleet, said at a press conference on Thursday in Sydney the exercise was "not pointed toward any one country" and would improve the ability of the four forces to work with each other. "The deterrence that our four nations provide as we operate together as a Quad is a foundation for all the other nations operating in this region," Thomas said. "Oceania, the island nations that are just northeast of Australia...all of our nations now are focusing on those countries," he added.

Uganda president defiant after World Bank funding suspended over LGBT law

KAMPALA: Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni on Thursday denounced the World Bank's decision to suspend new funding in response to a harsh anti-LGBTQ law and vowed to find alternative sources of credit. The World Bank said on Tuesday that the law, which imposes the death penalty for certain same-sex acts, contradicted its values and that it would pause new funding until it could test measures to prevent discrimination in projects it finances. The World Bank has an existing portfolio of $5.2 billion in Uganda, although these projects will not be affected. **(AGENCIES)**

Storm Khanun pours intense rain on South Korea and heads toward its urban centres

More than 16,000 people, mostly in southern regions, were evacuated from their homes.

AP/RSS

Rescue workers on a boat search for missing people in floodwaters caused by tropical storm Khanun in Daegu, South Korea on Thursday.

❑ ASSOCIATED PRESS
BUSAN, AUG 10

Tropical Storm Khanun was pouring intense rain on South Korea on Thursday, turning roads into chocolate-coloured rivers and leaving at least one person dead as it advanced north toward major urban centres near the capital.

More than a foot of rain fell in eastern and southern areas after the storm made landfall on the mainland in the morning. Emergency workers responded to increasing reports of flooding and landslides by the afternoon.

More than 16,000 people, mostly in southern regions, were evacuated from their homes. The number was expected to grow as the heavy rains continue and rivers and streams rise.

Officials shut down hundreds of freeways, streets and public parks and sent text alerts warning about the perils posed by Khanun, which is hitting South Korea weeks after torrential rains caused flash floods and landslides that killed at least 47 people.

Khanun made landfall around 9:20 am near the southeastern port city of Geoje, Khanun and was approaching the central city of Chungju on Thursday evening.

The storm's strength diminished as it moved inland. It was generating maximum wind speeds of 86 kilometres per hour, compared to around 129 kph at the point of landfall.

Since Wednesday, the storm has dumped nearly 40 centimetres in some areas in the country's eastern and southern regions. Khanun continued to deliver heavy rain as it slowly ploughed toward the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, where half of South Korea's 51 million people live.

The storm was expected to move into North Korea early Friday, but forecasters said the greater Seoul area would still feel its force until Friday afternoon.

Among the areas of South Korea hardest hit by Khanun was the southern inland city of Daegu, where rescue workers navigated a submerged village in rubber boats, looking for residents who might have been left behind.

A 67-year-old man who was found unconscious near a bloated stream was later pronounced dead at a hospital, according to Lee Ga-yeon, an official at the Daegu fire department. The city's emergency workers were searching for at least another person who was reported missing, Lee said.

In Gangwon province, a mountainous region on the east coast where the Korea Meteorological Administration forecast 50 to 60 centimetres of rain in some places, emergency workers in the seaside cities of Gangneung and Sokcho waded across rivers of brown, thigh-high water covering what used to streets.

In nearby Yangyang county, workers repaired the embankment of another stream that crumbled and was spilling water on a major highway.

In the southern city of Changwon, emergency workers used ropes to rescue pedestrians trapped in huge zones of flooded roads and responded to landslides that spilled dirt and other debris over motorways. Residents and shop owners blocked their doors with sandbags while workers established flood shields to protect a major seafood market.

In Geoje, emergency workers in helmets examined a parking lot where vehicles were smashed or damaged by bricks and other debris apparently flown by forceful winds.

In coastal Busan, South Korea's second-largest city, several motorways were closed because of flooding. Emergency workers cleared uprooted trees that collapsed over roads and responding to destroyed walls and fences, broken windows, and other damage. A public park in the Yeonje district was submerged.

The neighbouring cities and towns of Gimhae, Ulsan, Pohang, Gimcheon issued flood warnings for areas near rivers and streams that flow through its urban districts.

More than 380 flights were grounded around South Korea, ferry services were halted and more than 60,000 fishing vessels sent to port.

Khanun meandered around southern Japanese islands for more than a week, knocking out power and disrupting transit. The Japan Meteorological Agency warned of possible mudslides and flooding in the areas affected. It also said Typhoon Lan was gaining strength in the Pacific Ocean and forecast to affect Japan's main islands next week. Lan was about 220 kilometres south of Chichi island and packing winds up to 126 kph on Thursday, threatening the remote islands with high winds and heavy rain through the weekend, Japan's meteorologists said.

The Central Japan Railway Co said some Shinkansen bullet train services may be delayed or suspended between Sunday and Wednesday depending on the typhoon's path.

Khanun previously forced South Korea to evacuate the World Scout Jamboree that was taking place at a coastal campsite. About 37,000 Scouts were transferred to university dormitories, government and corporate training centres and hotels in Seoul and nearby areas.

Despite the storm, organisers were proceeding with plans to hold a K-Pop concert on Friday to go with the Jamboree's closing ceremony.

Workers dressed in raincoats worked on scaffolding at the Seoul World Cup Stadium to set up lights and other stage preparations, even as the wind started to pick up in the city.

Kim Jong Un fires top general, calls for war preparations

❑ REUTERS
SEOUL, AUG 10

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un replaced the military's top general and called for more preparations for the possibility of war, a boost in weapons production, and expansion of military drills, state media KCNA reported on Thursday.

Kim made the comments at a meeting of the Central Military Commission which discussed plans for countermeasures to deter North Korea's enemies, which it did not name, the report said.

The country's top general, Chief of the General Staff Pak Su Il was "dismissed," KCNA reported, without elaborating. He had served in his role for about seven months.

Pak was replaced by General Ri Yong Gil, who previously served as the country's defence minister, as well as the top commander of its conventional troops.

US has accused North Korea of providing arms to Russia for its war in Ukraine.

Ri also previously served as the army chief of staff. When he was replaced in 2016 his sacking and subsequent absence from official events sparked reports in South Korea that he had been executed. He reappeared a few months later, when he was named to another senior post.

Kim also set a target for the expansion of weapons production capacity, the report said, without providing details. Last week he visited weapons factories where he called for more missile engines, artillery and other weapons to be built.

Photos released by KCNA showed Kim pointing at Seoul and areas surrounding the South Korean capital on a map.

The United States has accused North Korea of providing arms to Russia for its war in Ukraine, including artillery shells, rockets and missiles.

Russia and North Korea have denied those claims.

EXPLAINED

What are China's 'sponge cities' and why aren't they stopping floods?

❑ REUTERS
BEIJING, AUG 10

China has been hit by devastating floods in recent weeks, inundating cities and causing deaths and infrastructural damage, as well as raising questions about the effectiveness of its 2015 "sponge city" initiative aimed at reducing urban flood risks.

The initiative was launched to boost flood resilience in major cities and make better use of rainwater through architectural, engineering and infrastructural tweaks.

But cities remain vulnerable to heavy rain. In July alone, floods and related geological disasters caused 142 deaths and disappearances, destroyed 2,300 homes and caused direct economic losses of 15.78 billion yuan ($2.19 billion), China's emergency ministry said on Monday.

Why was the initiative launched?

China has long sought to improve the way it handles extreme weather, and make highly populated cities less vulnerable to flooding and drought.

The "sponge city" initiative was designed to make greater use of lower-impact "nature-based solutions" to better distribute water and improve drainage and storage.

Those solutions included the use of permeable asphalt, the construction of new canals and ponds and also the restoration of wetlands, which would not only ease waterlogging, but also improve the urban environment.

Breakneck urbanisation has encased vast stretches of land in impermeable concrete, often along banks of major rivers that tr

aditionally served as flood plains. With wetlands paved over and nowhere for surplus water to settle, waterlogging and flooding was commonplace.

According to 2018 data, 641 out of 654 large- and medium-sized cities in China were vulnerable to flooding and waterlogging, with 180 facing flood risks every year.

What has been done so far?

Studies show that many of the local pilot initiatives launched so far have had a positive effect, with low-impact projects like green roofs and rain gardens reducing run-offs.

But implementation has so far been patchy. A total of 30 pilot sponge cities were selected in 2015 and 2016.

By last year, only 64 of China's 654 cities had produced legislation to implement sponge city guidelines, researchers said in January.

The researchers said the government had so far paid "minimum attention" to sponge city construction, and called for national legislation to be drawn up as soon as possible.

What are the limitations of sponge cities?

Even if sponge city measures had been implemented in full, they would have been unable to prevent this year's disasters. Zhengzhou in Henan province was one of the most enthusiastic pioneers of sponge city construction, allocating nearly 60 billion yuan to the programme from 2016 to 2021.

But it was unable to deal with its heaviest rainfall in history in 2021.

Experts believe sponge city infrastructure can only handle no more than 200 millimetres of rain per day.

At the height of the rainstorms that lashed Beijing at the end of July, rainfall at one station reached 745 millimetres over three and a half days.

In July 2021, Zhengzhou saw rainfall in excess of 200 mm in just one hour.

Authorities are also playing catch-up to climate change.

This year's heavy rain hit cities in the normally arid north, where sponge city development is less advanced.

Muslims flee Indian business hub after religious clashes, attacks

REUTERS

A police officer sits outside a mosque that was attacked by a mob following clashes between Hindus and Muslims that erupted last Monday, in Gurugram, on the outskirts of New Delhi.

❑ REUTERS
GURUGRAM, AUG 10

Over 3,000 poor Muslims have fled a business hub outside New Delhi this month, fearing for their lives after Hindu-Muslim clashes and sporadic attacks targeting them, residents, police and a community group said.

Shops and shacks owned or run by Muslims and their houses in two large slum areas were padlocked when Reuters visited them more than a week after seven people were killed in clashes in Nuh and Gurugram districts in Haryana state, adjoining the Indian capital.

The violence began on July 31 after a Hindu religious procession, organised by groups ideologically aligned with the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was targeted and a mosque attacked in retaliation. Police quelled the unrest in 48 hours.

But minor attacks targeting Muslims have continued for days, scaring families who had moved to the new urban centre of Gurugram—where 250 of the Fortune 500 companies have offices—in search of a livelihood.

Stone-throwing, arson and vandalisation of two small Muslim shrines in the slum districts forced hundreds of Muslim families to abandon their single-room houses and seek shelter at a train station before heading out, witnesses said.

"Many of us spent the entire night on a railway platform because it was much safer there," Raufullah Javed, a tailor who fled to his home village in the eastern state of Bihar, told Reuters by phone.

The Gurugram president of Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind (Council of Indian Muslim Theologians) Mufti Mohammed Salim estimated that more than 3,000 Muslims had left the district after the violence.

Four Muslim shopkeepers who also fled to their villages in eastern India said by phone that members of hardline Hindu groups had questioned them about their businesses and families.

"Some Hindu men came in a large group and started asking questions such as how much money I earn," said Shahid Sheikh, a barber who fled from Tigra village, home to over 1,200 Muslim families.

"Many Muslims decided it's best to leave for a while," said Sheikh, adding that some Hindu owners of shops rented out to Muslims wanted them to vacate.

Tensions between India's majority Hindus and minority Muslims have risen over issues such as the eating of beef and inter-faith marriages with Muslims saying they have been increasingly targeted by Hindu activists since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP government took power in 2014.

BJP leaders say clashes between the two communities have broken out in the past as well and have been less frequent since they came to power.

Haryana police said they had arrested over 200 men from both communities in connection with the violence and some Muslims who had fled had begun to trickle back.

Ukraine announces 'humanitarian corridor' for ships

❑ REUTERS
KYIV, AUG 10

Ukraine announced a "humanitarian corridor" on Thursday to let dozens of cargo ships trapped in its ports since the outbreak of war last year sail into the Black Sea, where shipping routes are under scrutiny since Russia quit a deal to allow grain exports.

At least initially, the corridor appears to apply to vessels such as container ships that have been stuck in Ukrainian ports since the Feb. 2022 invasion, and were not covered by the deal that opened the ports for grain shipments last year.

But it could be a major test of Ukraine's ability to reopen sea lanes at a time when Russia is trying to reimpose its de-facto blockade, having abandoned the grain deal last month.

"Today a new temporary humanitarian corridor has started to work," Oleh Chalyk, a spokesperson for Ukraine's navy, told Reuters by telephone.

REUTERS

A file photo shows vessels in the southern anchorage of the Bosphorus in Istanbul, Turkey.

"The corridor will be very transparent, we will put cameras on the ships and there will be a broadcast to show that this is purely a humanitarian mission and has no military purpose," he said.

In a statement, the navy said the routes had already been proposed by Ukraine directly to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

The routes would "primarily be used for civilian ships which have been in the Ukrainian ports of Chornomorsk, Odesa, and Pivdenny since the beginning of the full-scale invasion by Russia on February 24, 2022."

"Vessels whose owners/captains officially confirm that they are ready to sail in the current conditions will be allowed to pass through the routes," the statement said.

It said a risk remained from mines in the Black Sea and the military threat from Russia.

A German grain trader told Reuters: "People want more details about the Ukrainian temporary shipping channel announced today as it cannot work unless Russia gives a concrete commitment not to attack the ships."

Bayern reach deal with Tottenham to sign Kane: Reports

❑ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MUNICH, AUG 10

Bayern Munich have reached an agreement to sign England captain Harry Kane from Tottenham, for a Bundesliga record fee of more than 100 million euros ($110 million), reports said on Thursday.

Talks between the two clubs had been ongoing for several weeks, as Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy pushed for a higher fee, aware that Kane could leave on a free at the end of his deal in 2024.

Bayern had reportedly submitted their final bid for the 30-year-old striker in recent days, breaking through the 100-million-euro barrier for the first time. The Athletic reported the deal between the two clubs first, and was followed by Sky Sports and several other British and German media.

Kane must now decide whether he wants to leave or not, the reports said.

Bayern Munich are set to sign Kane for a deal worth more than 100 million euros.

"Kane is coming!" ran a headline in top-selling German tabloid Bild, which reported the striker had pushed for the negotiations to be resolved before Tottenham's Premier League opener on Sunday. The mood in British media was more downbeat however—The Sun reported that Spurs fans were "heartbroken" and had "gone into meltdown".

Six-time European champions Bayern have been historically more reluctant to spend big on transfer fees than many of their European rivals. The reported figure of over 100 million euros well exceeds their club record transfer outlay of 80 million euros paid in 2019 for French defender Lucas Hernandez. Hernandez left Bayern for Paris Saint-Germain earlier this year for 45 million euros.

Bayern had been on the lookout for a striker since the departure of star forward Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona at the end of the 2021-22 season. The club won the Bundesliga in each of the Pole's eight seasons in Munich, with Lewandowski scoring 344 goals in 375 appearances.

The Bavarians struggled in Lewandowski's absence last season.

Kane has scored more than 20 league goals in all but three of the past nine Premier League seasons, winning the golden boot on three occasions. Despite finishing second in last season's Premier League scoring charts behind Erling Haaland (36), Kane netted 30 league goals in 2022-23, equalling his best mark.

AP/RSS

Japan players jog across the field during a training sesson in Auckland.

Japan look to stake claim as favourites

After the early exits of the United States, Germany and Norway, the Nadeshiko are the last former winners remaining at the Women's World Cup 2023 going into their quarter-final against Sweden.

❑ ASSOCIATED PRESS
AUCKLAND, AUG 10

Japan have hardly been tested in this Women's World Cup and rolled with a perfect 4-0 record into the quarter-finals, where a win over Sweden would show the Nadeshiko are very much true contenders.

But Friday's opening day of the quarter-finals also gives Netherlands an opportunity to take control of a wide-open World Cup. The Dutch were runners-up to the United States four years ago, and the Americans beat them in the quarter-finals of the Tokyo Olympics.

With the US already eliminated, Netherlands have a major obstacle out of their way. But first up comes a match against Spain, who had never before advanced into the quarter-finals of the World Cup until this year.

Japan vs Sweden

Sweden are rated third in the world by FIFA and the highest-ranked team still in the World Cup. After three third-place finishes in the tournament, the Swedes are ready to play in a championship game.

Sweden ended America's run toward an unprecedented third consecutive World Cup title, have been to the semi-finals three different times, including in 2019, but have not made it to the final since 2003. Sweden were runners-up to Germany in their only championship game.

The Swedes were sparked by goalkeeper Zecira Musovic, who was unflappable during Sweden's 5-4 penalty shootout win over the Americans.

The one thing Sweden coach Peter Gerhardsson has figured out about Japan is that they are nothing like any other team the Swedes have seen so far in this tournament.

"None of the four opponents we've played so far are reminiscent of Japan," Gerhardsson said. "But when we're looking at the matches played by Japan, we don't think that there are any similarities between those countries and Sweden either."

But Japan have breezed through the tournament and are a perfect 4-0 headed into this match against Sweden at Eden Park, where Japan can avenge their loss to the Swedes in the quarter-finals of the Tokyo Olympics.

Hinata Miyazawa has scored fives times in four games and leads the Golden Boot race headed into the match against Sweden. The 23-year-old has already matched the team's World Cup record set by Japanese legend Homare Sawa, who had five goals when Japan won the event in 2011.

Japan have scored a team-record 14 goals and conceded only one goal this tournament, in a 3-1 victory over Norway in the knockout stage.

"Since this team have been built, everything that we have done is now taking form and we're able to see it on the field," midfielder Fuka Nagano said.

The game could be a defensive battle despite Japan's scoring abilities because the teams have combined for six clean sheets, and each have conceded only one goal apiece in four games. But Sweden rank seventh among the eight quarter-finalists for average expected goals, and had just three shots on goal against the United States.

Spain vs Netherlands

Spain seemed to be among the strongest teams in the competition until a 4-0 blowout loss to Japan in the group finale. La Roja rebounded to eliminate Switzerland in the knockout round with 5-1 win.

The goal allowed was an own goal, and the Spaniards made five lineup changes ahead of the Switzerland match in a major shakeup after the Japan loss. Now in the quarter-finals for the first time, Spain's match against the Netherlands will be a true test of where they stand among the football elite.

Spain have scored 13 goals through four games and have been offensively aggressive in every game, except the loss to Japan.

Netherlands are trying to make the championship game for the second World Cup in a row. The Dutch failed to qualify for the first six editions of the World Cup but have been among the best since their 2015 debut. Netherlands made it to the knockout round that year and lost to the United States in the final in 2019.

Dutch forward Lineth Beerensteyn couldn't help but celebrate a bit when Sweden eliminated the reigning two-time champions United States. The two teams played to a tense 1-1 draw in the group stage and Beerensteyn is happy to avoid another match against the Americans.

"I still have a lot of respect for them but now they're out of the tournament," Bereensteyn said. "For me it's a relief and for them it's something they will have to take with them in the future."

The match is a meeting of prolific scorers: Jill Roord has scored four goals so far, one off the pace behind tournament-leading Hinata Miyazawa of Japan. Aitana Bonmati has three goals so far and has stepped in for Alexia Putellas, the two-time Ballon d'Or winner who has been limited by injury.

Danielle van de Donk, the midfielder who tussled with American captain Lindsey Horan in group play, will miss the game for the Netherlands because she has two yellow cards in the tournament.

FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP 2023

QUARTER-FINALS

PLAYING FRIDAY

Spain	06:45	Netherlands
Japan	13:15	Sweden

PLAYING SATURDAY

Australia	12:45	France
England	16:15	Colombia

SWEDEN VS JAPAN INSIGHTS

- Japan have scored a team-record 14 goals and conceded only one goal at this World Cup.
- Hinata Miyazawa of Japan leads the Golden Boot race with five goals.
- Sweden and Japan played the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011 semi-final, which Japan won 3-1.
- The two sides have met three times at a Women's World Cup. Sweden hold the upper hand with two wins to Japan's one, including an 8-0 drubbing at the 1991 edition. Japan, however, won the last encounter 3-1 in 2011 en route to winning the tournament.
- Sweden haven't lost in 5 matches and have won the previous two matches against Japan including their encounter at the Tokyo Olympics two years ago, which Sweden won 3-1 before going on to lose the gold medal match on penalties to Canada.

NETHERLANDS VS SPAIN INSIGHTS

- Spain have scored 13 goals at the 2023 finals and have been offensively aggressive in every game, except the loss to Japan.
- Spain are looking to reach the semi-finals of a major tournament for just the second time after previously appearing in the last four of Euro 1997.
- The Netherlands are trying to make the final for the second World Cup in a row.
- The Netherlands have opened the scoring inside of the opening 17 minutes in each of their previous four matches at this World Cup.
- The two sides have met ten times previously with Spain having the edge in their head-to-head record with five wins to two. Each of their last three encounters were won by Spain without conceding a goal.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

We know everything about Spain. We have a small book about them. We spoke with our players, and of course Damaris, who knows a lot about Spain. Our scouting team did its job. I think they (Spain) won't surprise us.

– **Netherlands coach Andries Jonker** says ahead of Spain game. Damaris Egurrola made one appearance for Spain in a friendly and was a regular in their youth teams, but the midfielder now plays for the Netherlands and is in contention to start in Wellington.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Today will threaten you to cloud your judgment with brain fog and wishful thinking. Luckily, you'll have a chance to recalibrate and ground, reinvigorating you to touch base with your core self. You'll sense a shift late in the day.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
It may be challenging to connect with your surroundings today. Be mindful of how invested you are in your screens and social media feeds, taking care to touch base with the beauty that surrounds you. Good vibes will flow.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)
The moon continues its journey through your sign today. Do your best to maintain healthy boundaries, and consider restricting your contact with anyone with a penchant for fabricating truths. Good vibes will flow, nudging you to network and expand your community.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)
You may get lost in your world, bringing ethereal energy. Feel free to indulge in solitude if it's what your soul craves, but try not to stumble into any dark corners of your mind. Opportunities to move up professionally may come into focus.

LEO (July 23-August 22)
Watch out for drama and power struggles within your social sphere. Though you're always happy to step up for a friend in need, these vibes suggest you might not get the full story immediately, so you should take a hands-off.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)
You may struggle to make necessary sacrifices today, threatening to blur lines and create confusion within your professional and romantic lives. Remember that transformation is possible, but you must make room for good things to come in before they can manifest.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)
Try not to view the world through rose-coloured glasses this morning. Though these vibes are perfect for dreaming big, nothing of worth will materialise if you can't keep tabs on your present situation and how to work for these ambitions.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)
You may encounter a few hostile or jealous characters this morning. Don't hide who you are out of fear of what others might think, but be mindful of maintaining a healthy level of privacy. Good vibes flow just before afternoon.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)
Today will threaten to challenge your image and composure, putting you in an emotional mood that will have you craving the comforts of home. Luckily, you'll perk up just before afternoon sets in, urging you to live boldly while showcasing natural talents.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)
Try not to take on too much at once today. This cosmic climate will bring confusing and overstimulating energy to the table, making it vital that you prioritise essential tasks first. Touch base with your emotions this afternoon.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)
Avoid jumping at every brilliant idea that finds you today. Today will threaten to skew your perception of reality when you move from a place of blind faith or extreme confidence. Luckily, you'll have a chance to reclaim clarity.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)
Today will threaten to cloud your judgment while heightening emotions. Give yourself space to sort through your feelings, pulling back on major life choices until clarity is restored. Luckily, you'll have a chance to ground and connect with the present.

ASTROLOGY.COM

CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Linksman's game
5 Pitches
10 Farm denizen
13 Son of Adam and Eve
14 Charged particle
15 Edgar Allan —
16 Like a takeout order
17 Role in "The Matrix"
18 Tear down
19 Fled to wed
21 Wobbled
23 Urge
25 Buddhist sect
26 Ride a wave without a board
30 Leavening
33 "See — — care!"
34 Ornamental box
35 Drink noisily
37 Bahamas' ocean, briefly
38 Food fish
41 "Do — — favor..."
42 Vends
45 Table part
47 Floor pad
48 Paintbrush material
50 Easily damaged
52 Sixty minutes in Milan
53 Lottery game
54 Recess
59 Olivia —- -John
63 Fat
64 Lawful
66 Elaborate song
67 It follows Sept.
68 Chew the scenery
69 Coarse file
70 — Moines
71 Had a bite to eat
72 Hair preparations

DOWN
1 Turnstile
2 Former Greek coin
3 Toy block brand
4 Outmoded kind of disk
5 Fact sheets
6 Single (prefix)
7 Public violence
8 Ear part
9 One of the Seven Dwarfs
10 Practice in a ring
11 Seep
12 Unwelcome plant
18 Of the kidney
20 Celtic language
22 Letters
24 Bongo
26 Favoritism
27 Many times
28 Humdinger
29 "— of Dreams"
31 — cum laude
32 Special pleasure
36 Meaty spread
39 Emblem of Wales
40 Gifted
43 Frank — Wright
44 Ilk
46 Top-notch
49 Got exactly right
51 Fearful person
54 Trudge
55 Shoestring
56 Fine and liberal
57 — Bobeck in "The Drew Carey Show"
58 Travel class, briefly
60 Inbox
61 River in France
62 Snoozes
65 Native of (suffix)

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

B	O	M	B	■	A	A	R	O	N	■	I	T	A	L
I	D	O	L	■	L	L	A	M	A	■	M	I	M	E
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G	R	E	A	S	E	■	■	T	I	G	R	E	S	S
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M	I	C	H	I	G	A	N	■	N	I	P	P	E	D
O	N	A	■	T	I	B	E	T	■	B	E	L	L	E
S	L	U	M	■	C	A	P	O	N	■	R	A	I	N
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V	I	N	C	E	N	T	■	■	F	O	S	S	I	L
A	N	D	I	■	B	E	G	T	O	■	L	O	V	E
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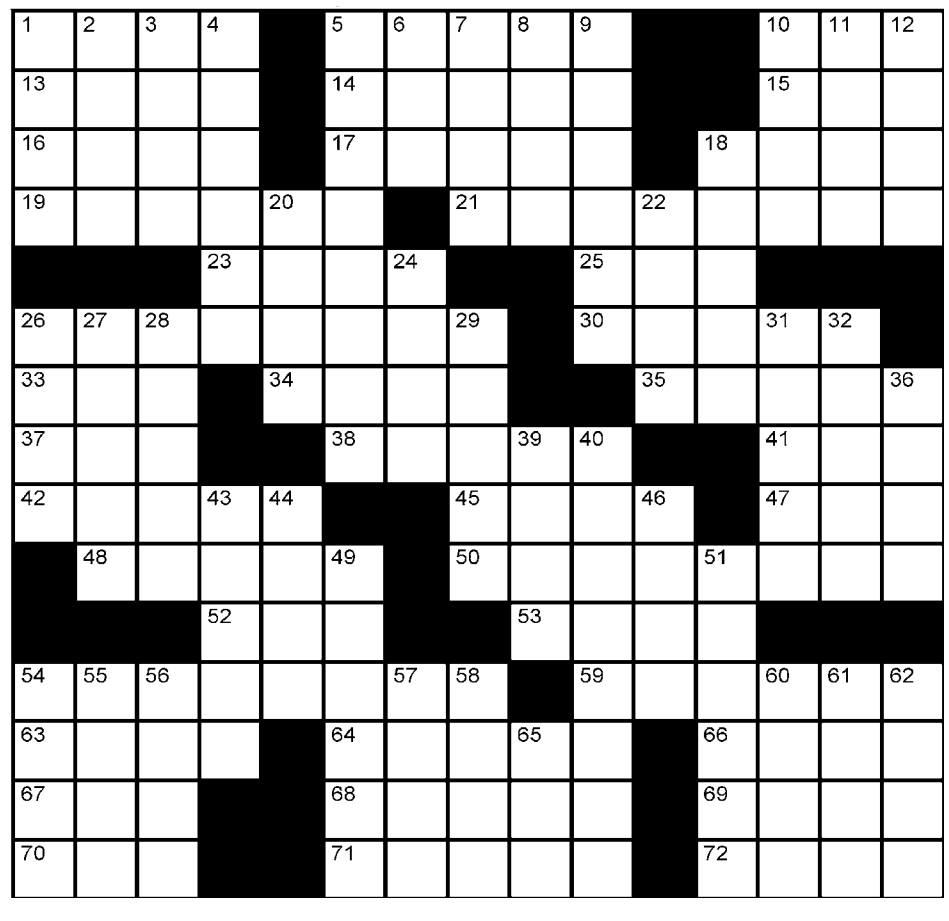

SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

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Unwind at The Lawn

Nanglo Restaurant's newest eatery offers affordable and delectable dishes—inspired by cuisines from all across Asia.

❑ RUKUSHA GIRI
KATHMANDU

The Lawn, a newly constructed franchise of Nanglo Restaurant, commenced its operations a mere month ago. Nanglo Restaurant, founded by brothers Shyam and Gopal Kakshapati, established its first branch at Durbarmarg back in 1976. Today, Nanglo has over eight branches of cafes, restaurants, and bakeries inside of Kathmandu Valley, making it one of Nepal's largest and most popular restaurant chains.

The Lawn, still in its nascent phase, is presently managed by the second generation of Kashapatis. Taijash Kakshapati, son of Gopal Kakshapati, completed his studies at the Culinary Institute of America in New York and has been serving as the Managing Director of Nanglo since his return to Nepal in 2012. He is also the force behind The Lawn. He observes that Nepali people tend to follow a specific pattern of food consumption, and it's time to explore new horizons.

Upon entering The Lawn, one is transported to a luxurious and serene environment, far removed from the hustle and bustle of the city. The outdoor seating area, adorned with lush greenery, embodies the essence of the restaurant's name. While the dining experience may not necessarily reflect that of a traditional Nanglo restaurant, it does carry the professionalism and homeliness one associates with the parent restaurant. The ambience is unique, yet the overall vibe remains true to the original Nanglo experience.

The outdoor lawn area serves as a recreational space and welcomes children. Barbecue enthusiasts can enjoy the restaurant's daily 5:00 pm grill sessions, which last till the night. Individuals who do not smoke can unwind in the restaurant's indoor section, while those who smoke can enjoy their dining experience in the outdoor area.

TASTE OF THE TOWN

POST PHOTOS: KESHAV THAPA

Hickory Mushroom

Price: Rs425
For this dish, button mushrooms are thoroughly cleaned before being grilled with salt and pepper. The cooking process involves monitoring the mushroom's water content to enhance its natural flavour. Once cooked, a BBQ sauce is prepared and generously slathered onto the mushrooms.

Presented on skewers, the mushrooms' chewy and condensed texture was quite a delight to bite into. The BBQ sauce only added to its flavours, ensuring it didn't overpower the mushrooms.

Unlike other preparations of mushrooms, which usually entail additional flavourings or intense frying, this approach highlighted the mushroom's natural flavour. By eliminating additional seasonings, the natural essence of the mushroom was brilliantly emphasised.

Chicken Chop

Price: Rs475
Chicken Chop is a dish characterised by chicken stuffing covered with bread crumbs and gently fried, resulting in a light texture. The dish's lightness can also be attributed to the absence of overt spices, which may suit individuals who prioritise healthy and light food. It was like a classic Chicken schnitzel. The accompanying Tartar sauce, a mayonnaise-based condiment, was simple yet pleasant on the mouth.

Anda Bread

Price: Rs385
Taijash was the one who decided that the menu include Anda Bread, a dish he consumed for breakfast during his trip to Istanbul. The dish comprises of two poached eggs accompanied by a thick cream and cheese sauce—served with glossy, buttered sesame buns.

The bread in Anda Bread is brought in from Nanglo Bakery. This dish will appeal to ovo-vegetarians due to its novelty. The saltiness of the egg and sauce combined with the slight sweetness of the bun creates a delectable flavour that will delight the taste buds.

Keema Bun

Price: Rs675
Keema Bun is a popular Indian street food that bears a resemblance to the well-known dish 'Pav Bhaji.' 'Pav Bhaji' is often considered a symbol of everyday man's food; it comprises of a rich curry served with soft bread rolls.

Taijash, an ardent fan of Indian cuisine, sought to innovate with the conventional 'Pav Bhaji' and demonstrate that mutton could be used to create something just as iconic. As a result, minced mutton curry is paired with two buns, similar to Anda Bread.

Combining the minced mutton with the bun created a delicious symphony of flavours. The spiciness of the meal was enjoyable, and the mutton curry had a lighter taste than what is typically found in other mutton dishes. Overall, Keema Bun was a delightful culinary experience.

Mutton Shank

Price: Rs950
Mutton Shank is an innovative dish that utilises the bottom piece of the mutton leg. This dish requires a time-intensive cooking process of six hours. However, this technique results in tender meat that effortlessly falls off the bone. Adding coconut cream and Thai curry paste provides a creamy and flavorful touch that pairs exceptionally well with either rice or mashed potatoes.

I loved the dish's velvety consistency and exceptional texture. Although it was spicy, pairing it with rice subverted the spiciness to bring forth the savouriness of the mutton.

Grilled Eggplant

Price: Rs500
The preparation of this dish involves roasting the eggplant and extracting its inner contents, which are then mixed with mushrooms, potatoes and capsicums. The mixture is cooked and seasoned with quick spices to create a delectable curry. The mixture is then stuffed back into the roasted outer layer of the aubergine, which is grilled and topped with cheese.

The dish features prominent notes of mushrooms and capsicum, which somehow do not overpower the star ingredient, the eggplant. Combining it with rice made for an excellent meal.

Highway Fish

Price: Rs495
Highway Fish is a culinary creation that draws inspiration from fish served on highways during travel, specifically on Mugling Road. The restaurant's owner— recognising the popularity of Mugling's fish among Kathmanduites—sought to incorporate this beloved dish into their menu. However, as fishes brought in from Mugling have plenty of thorns, the fish itself was replaced with thornless ones while still offering the same flavour profile as their Mugling counterparts.

The initial texture of the fish was crispy, while its insides were soft and chewy. Served with a Tartar sauce, it makes for a perfect dish to have on the side, perhaps with a chilled beer.

THE LAWN

Location:	Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur
Time:	10:00 am to 10:00 pm
Service options:	Dine-in, takeaway
Price:	Inclusive of all taxes
Parking:	Available

Nepathya in Tokyo

The band kicked off the Japanese leg of its tour on Tuesday.

PHOTOS: DIPIT RAJ NEUPANE/NEPALAYA

❑ POST REPORT
KATHMANDU

On Tuesday evening, Toyosu Pit Hall in Tokyo, Japan, was filled with Nepalis—students and individuals there for work—and the occasional Japanese music enthusiasts. The occasion? A concert by the Nepali folk-rock band Nepathya.

Amidst the deep sound of madal (a kind of folk Nepali drum), the band's lead singer, Amrit Gurung started singing the lyrics of 'Koshiko Pani' to kick off the concert. This was followed by the uber-popular tracks 'Bhedako Oon Jasto' and 'Chhekyo Chhekyo'. By the time the band was done with the third song, the whole crowd was hyped, singing along to the lyrics and dancing about.

In its two-hour long set, Nepathya played 16 songs, including 'Aanganai Bhari', 'Yo Jindagani', 'Resham' and 'Rato Ra Chandra Surya'. "In our three-decade-long journey, we have experienced a lot of things. We have many memories here in Tokyo, too—ones of separation, friendship and music," said Gurung during the show.

Among the attendees was the Japanese restauranter Nauro who said he enjoyed the show even though he doesn't understand a word of Nepali. "I don't need to understand the language; the vibes conveyed everything," he explained, adding that although he hasn't visited Nepal, he attended the concert based on a friend's recommendation who said he liked Nepathya's music.

Besides Nepalis and Japanese, the concert was also attended by South Koreans, says Subhash Lamichhane from the organising team.

This isn't the first time the band visited the island nation in East Asia. Nepathya held its first Japanese concert in 1998. The band's last concert, at the iconic Tokyo Dome, took place five years ago.

The 14-member Nepathya team arrived in Japan two days before the concert and was greeted with fanfare by the local organisers at Narita International Airport. Its next concert will be at the Fukuoka Civic Hall, Fukuoka, Japan, on August 12.

Call for contributions

The Kathmandu Post invites well-researched and creative pitches for 'Fiction Park' stories and feature articles—travelogues, book reviews, as well as pieces on technology, culture and lifestyle. To ensure your articles get our attention, please keep the following things in mind when inquiring about and submitting your pieces.

All your stories should be pitched to the Features desk, not the editor. Email your piece or pitch (along with a high-resolution headshot and a one-line bio) to tkpfeatures@gmail.com.

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

The Post receives dozens of pitches every day from aspiring writers and students. We are not able to respond to every single email, but if we like your idea, we will get back to you.

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