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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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33.5° C -2.5° C
Janakpur Jomsom

UML mulls Koshi exit over Karki's Cabinet expansion plans

The chief minister reportedly also wants to appoint ministers from Maoist Centre and CPN (Unified Socialist).

BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, OCT 27

Differences are growing among the ruling parties in the Koshi province even before the government completes a month of its formation.

On October 14, Kedar Karki, a provincial assembly member from the dissident faction of the Nepali Congress, became the chief minister of the Koshi Province with the main opposition CPN-UML's backing. He took the oath the next day, and inducted two ministers without portfolio—Ram Bahadur Rana Magar of the UML and Shamsar Rai from his faction of the Congress.

Opposing the party's decision to support Indra Bahadur Angbo of the CPN (Maoist Centre) in the chief ministerial race, eight provincial assembly members from the Congress in the country's eastern province, had decided to form a government led by Karki, with UML's support.

While 21 members from the party supported Angbo as per the decision of the Congress top brass, eight close to dissident Congress leader Shekhar Koirala refused to oblige. Karki became chief minister with support from 39 lawmakers from the UML in the 93-strong provincial assembly.

Now Karki wants to expand his Cabinet by inducting the ministers not just from his party and the UML, but from the Maoist Centre and the CPN (Unified Socialist) as well. "We are in consultation with all the parties

that voted for us in the floor test," Rai, the minister, told the Post.

Despite rejecting Karki's claim to the government earlier, his party's rival faction, the Maoist Centre, and the Unified Socialist supported him in the vote of confidence on October 18. Only the Rastriya Prajatantra Party stood against him.

Rai said they want to turn the government into a consensus government.

The Congress, the Maoist Centre and the Unified Socialist are in an alliance at the federal level while the UML is in the opposition. But in

Karki is in Kathmandu to consult cross-party top leaders and may expand Cabinet Sunday.

Koshi, the UML has joined the government. And the UML doesn't want to see ministers from parties other than the UML and the Congress.

"We strongly oppose the idea of inducting ministers from the parties other than ours and the Congress," Rewati Raman Bhandari, the UML chief whip at the provincial assembly, told the Post. "Our party will pull out from the government and move to opposition benches if the chief minister doesn't heed our concerns."

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POST PHOTO: SANJOG MANANDHAR

Clay idols of Goddess Durga (left) and the demon king Mahishasur being carried for immersion into the Bagmati River at Chobhar in Kathmandu on Wednesday, the day following Vijaya Dashain, the main day of the Dashain festival. Dashain is the celebration of Durga's triumph over demons.

TODAY

NATIONAL

Stray cattle have posed a serious challenge to traffic management in Mahendranagar bazar in Kanchanpur. Police said unattended cattle were responsible for 21 road accidents in the area over the past five years. Pg 2

A 28-year-old woman, her two sons, and a daughter were found dead inside their house at Chhayanath Rara Municipality in Mugu district on Friday. Police suspect they were murdered. Pg 2

WORLD

Maldives has started talks with India to remove its military presence, President-elect Mohamed Muizzu told Bloomberg New on Friday. He said no foreign troops would be allowed in the island nation. Pg 4

MONEY

The price of gold soared to an all-time high of Rs116,000 per tola in the Nepali market on Friday. Local gold traders anticipate further rise due to ongoing wars and geopolitical tensions. Pg 5

SPORTS

The UAE beat Nepal by four wickets in the final of the Nepal Tri-Nation T20I Series at the TU Cricket Ground, Friday. This comes ahead of the T20 World Cup 2024 Asia Qualifier set to begin on October 30. Pg 6



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UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres is arriving on Sunday

He will address a joint session of parliament and meet communities affected by climate change in the Himalayas.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, OCT 27

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres is paying an official visit to Nepal from October 29 to November 1, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Friday.

The visit had earlier been planned for the second week of October, but was rescheduled due to the outbreak of conflict between Israel and Hamas militants on October 7.

This will be Secretary General Guterres' first visit to Nepal since taking office on January 1, 2017.

He will address a joint session of the federal parliament on 31 October.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal had extended an invitation to Guterres to visit Nepal during their meeting in New York in September, and before that, in Rome, Italy in July.

Guterres is also scheduled to observe first-hand the impacts of climate change on the Himalayas and will hold a brief conversation with the affected

communities, said the ministry.

It is said that he might visit Everest and Annapurna base camps in order to see the impact of climate change.

He will go to Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha and Pokhara, on October 31.

It will be the secretary general's first visit to Nepal since taking office in January 2017.

This will be his second Nepal visit. Guterres came to Nepal in May 2007 as the UN high commissioner for refugees. At the time, he had visited Kathmandu and Jhapa, where he had inspected the Goldhap refugee camp and discussed a third-country resettlement plan with Bhutanese refugees.

>> Continued on page 2

China's ex-premier Li Keqiang, sidelined by Xi Jinping, dies

He supported a more open market economy, advocating supply-side reforms in an approach dubbed 'Likonomics'.

REUTERS
BEIJING, OCT 27

Chinese former Premier Li Keqiang died of a heart attack on Friday, barely seven months after retiring from a decade in office during which his reformist star had dimmed. He was 68.

Once viewed as a top Communist Party leadership contender, Li was sidelined in recent years by President Xi Jinping, who tightened his grip on power and steered the world's second-largest economy in a more statist direction.

The elite economist Li had supported a more open market economy, advocating supply-side reforms in an approach dubbed "Likonomics" that was never fully implemented.

Ultimately, he had to bend to Xi's preference for more state control, and his former power base waned in influence as Xi installed his own acolytes to powerful positions.

"Comrade Li Keqiang, while resting in Shanghai in recent days, experienced a sudden heart attack on Oct. 26 and after all-out efforts to revive him failed, died



Li Keqiang pictured at the National People's Congress in Beijing on March 15, 2019.

in Shanghai at ten minutes past midnight on Oct. 27," state broadcaster CCTV reported.

>> Continued on page 2



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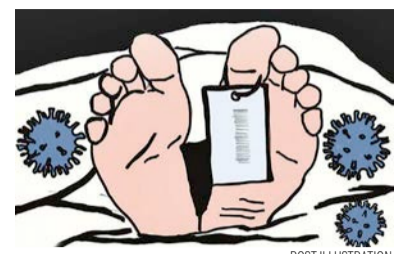
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NATIONAL

DISTRICT DIGEST

Four members of a family found dead at home



MUGU: A 28-year-old woman, her two sons, and a daughter were found dead at their house in Mandu in ward 6 of Chhayanath Rara Municipality on Friday. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Birendra Thapa of the Mugu District Police Office, blood marks at the scene suggest they could have been murdered. The woman's husband is in Qatar for employment. A police team from the provincial police office has also been dispatched to investigate the incident, said Thapa.

Man arrested on charge of raping a minor

RUPANDEHI: A 42-year-old man from ward 3 of Kanchan Rural Municipality of Rupanedhi, has been arrested on Friday for raping an 8-year-old girl on Thursday. According to police inspector Surya Bahadur Shahi of the Area Police Office, Rudrapur, the man was absconding after a complaint was filed against him by the relatives of the victim. He was arrested from ward 10 of Banganga Municipality in the neighbouring Kapilvastu district. The girl is receiving treatment at the Lumbini Provincial Hospital. Further investigation is going on, said Shahi.

Bus crash leaves one dead and two injured

RAUTAHAT: A 65-year-old man died and two others were injured when a bus coming from Kathmandu to Rautahat reportedly went out of control at ward 6 of Madhav Narayan Rural Municipality on Friday. According to police inspector Umashankar Gupta of the District Police Office, Rautahat, the driver of the bus lost control of the vehicle, which then hit the man, who was in front of his house, and crashed into a neighbouring house, injuring two others. Gupta said the driver has been detained for investigation.

Kanchanpur fails to tame stray cattle despite spending millions

In the past six years, Kanchanpur local units have spent nearly Rs100 million for the task.

BHAWANI BHATTA
KANCHANPUR, OCT 27

Ram Lal Rana, an autorickshaw driver in Mahendranagar Bazaar in Kanchanpur, leaves the market area every day before the sun sets and drives home, cutting short his working hours. As evening descends, stray cattle take over the roads in Mahendranagar and disrupt vehicular movement, making driving in the town dangerous, Rana says.

Stray cattle along the roads in Mahendranagar, including the Mahendra Highway, cause about four to five accidents every year, according to Rana. "Several people have been seriously injured while some have died in the accidents."

According to the District Traffic Police Office, Kanchanpur, in the last five years, one person has died and 23 people have been seriously injured in 21 accidents in the Mahendranagar road section under the Mahendra Highway area alone due to stray cattle. Similarly, 17 stray cattle have also died.

According to Police Inspector Naresh BK, head of the District Traffic Police Office, Kanchanpur, most of the accidents have happened at night. "Last year, we started putting radium paint on the stray cattle in order to prevent accidents, but that drive failed due to a lack of budget. There are just too many stray cattle in Mahendranagar area," said BK. "This year, we are planning to use reflective straps on the cattle. Discussions are going on with the local unit authorities to make this campaign successful."

Besides causing road accidents, stray cattle have also caused damage to farmers and their fields, says Janak Bhatta, a local farmer from Bhimdatta Municipality's ward 10. "Farmers have had to bear losses of up to Rs100,000 every season. Some of the farmers have put up fences to prevent the stray cattle from entering the fields but not everyone can afford to do so. Fencing one's farmlands can cost anywhere between Rs40,000 and Rs50,000," Bhatta said. "Farmers who cannot protect their fields suffer in silence and bear the losses since there



Stray cattle take over the Bhimdatta-5 section of the East West Highway, in this recent photo.

are no government subsidies for crops destroyed by stray cattle."

According to Mahendra Khadka, spokesperson for Bhimdatta Municipality, the problem of stray cattle started almost a decade ago, and since then, they have spent millions on managing the strays. Despite the efforts of the municipality, the number of stray cattle is increasing every year.

"From the fiscal year 2017-18, the municipality has spent almost Rs20 million for the management of stray cattle," Khadka said. "In the current fiscal year, we have allocated Rs10 million. Out of the two cattle rearing farms in the municipality, one is operational. The other farm with the capacity to hold 50 cattle at a time had to be shut down because we had reached the end of the lease agreement with the land owner."

Bedkot Municipality, another local unit in Kanchanpur troubled by the growing number of stray cattle, has allocated Rs4 million for the management of stray cattle in the current fiscal year.

"Last year, the locals whose crops were destroyed by stray cattle protested and demanded proper management of the cattle and protection of the fields and crops," said Padmaraj Bhatta, administrative officer of the

Bedkot Municipality. "Following the example of Bhimdatta, we are now in the process of building cattle rearing farms. Hopefully, it will provide some respite to the farmers."

Dodhara Chandani Municipality has established eight cattle rearing farms in community forests, where more than 700 cattle are brought from the streets. The municipality spends Rs2.5 million to Rs3 million every year for the management of stray cattle.

Ganesh Mishra, administrative officer of the Dodhara Chandani Municipality, said that in the last six years, they have spent Rs20 million on the management of stray cattle.

In the fiscal year 2018-19, the veterinary hospital and animal services expert centre in Kanchanpur sent 150 stray cattle from the district to hilly areas such as Bajhang and Bajura, but the translocation was an expensive undertaking. According to the centre, it cost around Rs1,000 per cattle to transport them to these hilly districts.

There are seven municipalities and two rural municipalities in the district, and according to the District Coordination Committee, Kanchanpur, in the last six years, the local units have spent almost Rs100 million on the management of stray cattle.

Madan Singh Dhama, secretary of the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives, and Poverty Alleviation, Sudurpaschim, said that the stray cattle problem in Kanchanpur has drawn the attention of the ministry.

"There have been several studies and research in the field of stray cattle and how to manage them, but the local level government has failed to implement them," Dhama said. "The ministry will provide additional help by allotting land and developing physical infrastructure for the management of the cattle."

Guterres arriving Sunday with climate change as key agenda

>> Continued from page 1

Between 2006 and 2016, a total of 113,500 refugees were resettled in eight Western countries, including the US, the UK, Canada and Australia, under the resettlement programme coordinated by the Office of UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The key agenda of his visit this time is climate change and ways to mitigate its effects on livelihoods, said a New York-based Nepali diplomat. "He is planning to deliver a lecture on pressing issues including climate change and will interact with stakeholders."

The secretary general will be accompanied by Jean Pierre Lacroix, under secretary general for Peace Operations; Hanana Singer-Hamdy, the resident coordinator of the United Nations to Nepal; and other officials from the UN Headquarters in New York and the United Nations country team in Nepal, said the ministry.

During the visit, Secretary General Guterres will call on President Ramchandra Paudel and hold meetings with Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and other top leaders of the major parties.

The secretary general will depart from Kathmandu on the first of November. Prime Minister Dahal, during his two meetings with the UN chief, had invited him to visit Nepal and observe the progress the country has made in the peace process as well as the challenges posed by climate

change. In the last meeting between Dahal and Guterres in New York, they discussed different facets of Nepal's peace process, UN peacekeeping, climate change, Sustainable Development Goals, least developed countries, and development financing, according to a statement.

Likewise, on the margins of the United Nations Food Systems Summit, 2023 in Italy, Dahal and Guterres discussed environment, food security and strengthening relations between Nepal and the United Nations.

Haribol Gajurel, chief political adviser to Prime Minister Dahal, said the UN secretary general will talk mainly about climate change in Nepal, Nepal's peace process, and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

"We see the increasing role of the UN in global peacekeeping efforts including the current crisis in the Middle East," he said, adding, "in this regard we also echo Guterres' emphasis on the early restoration of peace between Israel and the warring factions," Gajurel told the Post.

"The UN's role is important for the conclusion of Nepal's peace process," said Gajurel, adding, "Guterres' positive gestures will help Nepal to conclude the process which remains incomplete since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord all those years ago in 2006."

Almost all UN secretary generals have visited Nepal in the past.

Kedar Karki wants to induct other parties in Koshi Cabinet

>> Continued from page 1

With 40 seats, the UML is the largest party in the assembly. The Congress has 29 seats, the CPN (Maoist Centre) 12, the RPP six, the CPN (Unified Socialist) four, and the Janata Samajbadi Party has one seat.

Karki was appointed chief minister as per Article 168(5) of the constitution after he laid claim to lead a new government by producing signatures of 47 lawmakers, which is a majority in the 93-member provincial assembly, before the province head. Withdrawal of the UML's support can push the government into minority. Karki will have to go for a floor test again if the UML opts out, as per the constitution.

Article 188 (2) of the statute says in case the political party which the chief minister represents is divided or a political party in coalition provincial government withdraws its support, the chief minister shall table a resolution in the Provincial Assembly for a vote of confidence within 30 days.

As Karki's ruling coalition was formed using the last constitutional

resort to form the government, his failure to secure the provincial assembly's confidence would mean the province is bound for snap polls. As per Article 168 (7) of the constitution, if the chief minister appointed as per Article 168 (5) fails to secure votes of confidence, the chief of the province, on recommendation of the chief minister, will dissolve the provincial assembly and fix a date for an election to be held sometime in the next six months.

"I am sure the chief minister is well aware of the consequences if the UML withdraws support. He shouldn't forget that our party supported him even when his own party was not with him," said Bhandari. "We hope the UML-Congress partnership here will continue for a long time."

Karki is in Kathmandu to consult cross-party top leaders. He is expected to return to Biratnagar on Sunday and expand the Cabinet the same day. Koshi at present has eight ministries.

"Our chief minister is in consultations. He will move ahead by taking all the parties, including the UML, into confidence," said Rai.

Former Chinese premier Li Keqiang dies of heart attack at age 68

>> Continued from page 1

An official obituary published by state media Xinhua on Friday called his death a "huge loss to the party and nation", describing him as an "outstanding leader".

"We must turn our grief into strength, learn from his revolutionary spirit, noble character and fine style," Xinhua said.

The obituary listed his policy achievements and said four times that Li carried out his work under the "strong leadership" of Xi.

There was an outpouring of grief and shock on Chinese social media, with some government websites going black-and-white in an official sign of mourning. The Weibo microblogging platform turned its "like" button into a "mourn" icon in the shape of a chrysanthemum on its mobile app.

"He's only 68. He probably hasn't enjoyed his life yet, right? He's been busy all the time taking care of the country's important responsibilities," said a 74-year-old Shanghai retiree surnamed Xu. "We're all very sad."

Li was premier and head of China's cabinet under Xi for a decade until stepping down from all political positions in March.

Laying a wreath in August 2022 at a statue of Deng Xiaoping—the leader who brought transformational reform to China's economy—Li vowed: "Reform and opening up will not stop. The Yangtze and Yellow River will not

reverse course."

Video clips of the speech, which went viral but were later censored from Chinese social media, were widely viewed as a coded criticism of Xi's policies.

Li also sparked debate on poverty and income inequality in 2020 when he said that 600 million people in the increasingly rich nation earned less than \$140 per month.

End of an era

Some Chinese intellectuals and members of the liberal elite expressed shock and dismay on a semi-private WeChat channel at the passing of a beacon of liberal economic reform, with some saying it signalled the end of an era.

"Li will probably be remembered as an advocate for the freer market and for the have-nots," said Wen-Ti Sung, a political scientist at Australian National University. "But most of all, he will be remembered for what could have been."

Alfred Wu, associate professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore, said: "All these types of people no longer exist anymore in Chinese politics."

Li was less influential than his immediate predecessors as premier, Zhu Rongji and Wen Jiabao, Wu said. "He was sidelined, but what more could he have done? It was very hard for him, with the constraints he faced under Xi."

Adam Ni, an independent China political analyst, described Li as "a premier who stood powerless as China took a sharp turn away from reform and opening."

A glowing 2014 state media profile of Li, praising him as "a calm and tough wall-breaker", went viral shortly after his death was announced. It emphasised his hard work and tenacity in pushing for economic reforms.

Li's frequent visits to disaster sites and his easy camaraderie when speaking to ordinary people were also highlighted on Chinese state media.

Some social media users mentioned a song called "Sorry it wasn't you", in

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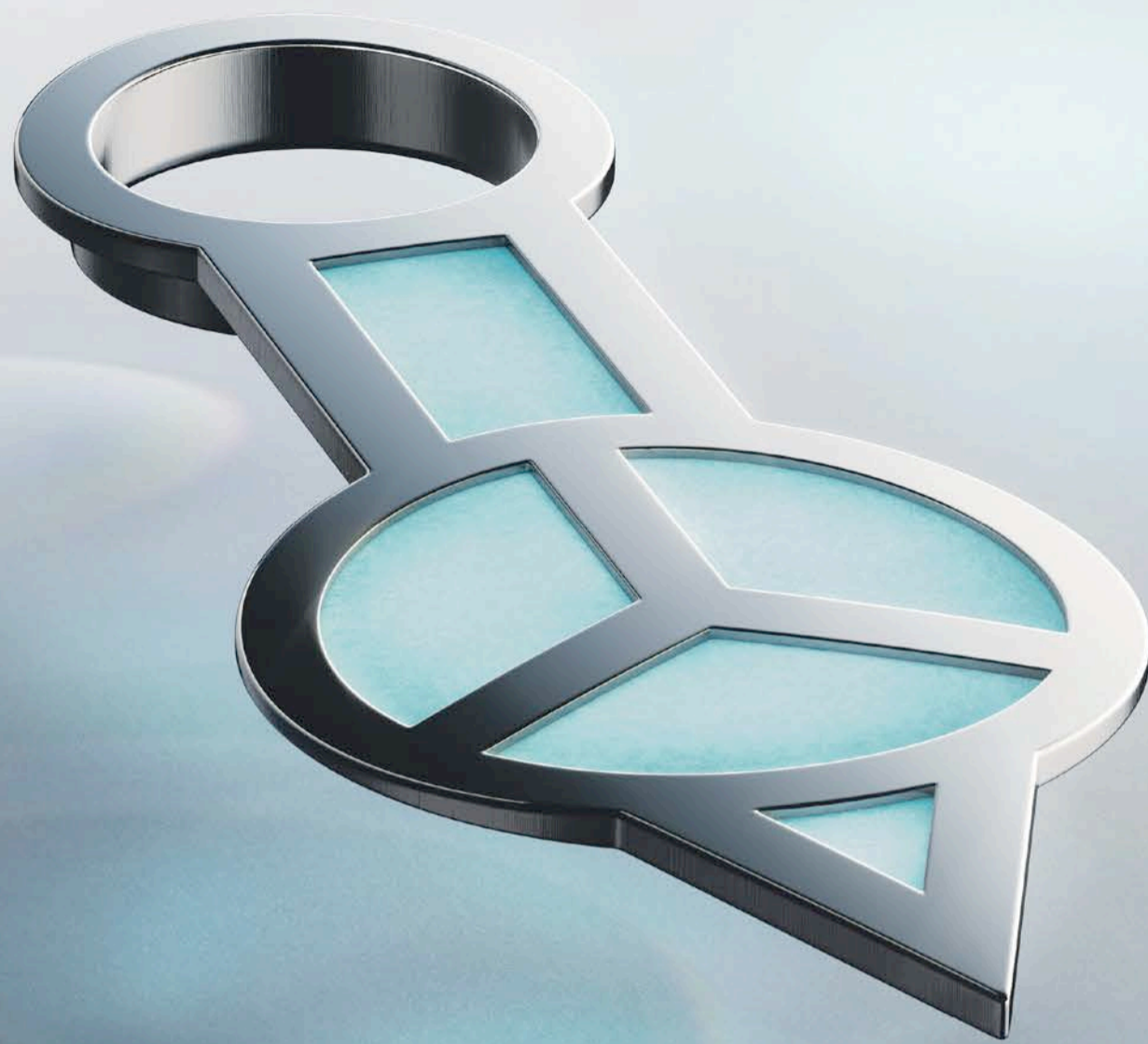
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WORLD

BRIEFING

Maldives incoming president says talks started with India on troop removal

COLOMBO: Maldives has started negotiations with India to remove its military presence, President-elect Mohamed Muizzu said in an interview published by Bloomberg News on Friday, as New Delhi and Beijing both vie for influence in the region. Removing Indian troops was a key campaign pledge by Muizzu, who ousted President Ibrahim Solih last month. Around 70 Indian military personnel maintain New Delhi-sponsored radar stations and surveillance aircraft. Indian warships help patrol Maldives' exclusive economic zone. Muizzu said in the interview he had already begun negotiations with the Indian government on removing its military presence, calling those talks "very successful already." "We want a bilateral relationship that's mutually beneficial," Muizzu told Bloomberg, adding that Indian soldiers would not be replaced by troops from other countries. Asking India to remove military personnel in no way indicated "that I'm going to allow China or any other country to bring their military troops here," he said. Muizzu's win extends the tug-of-war between China and India for influence over the Indian Ocean.

Blasts hit two Egyptian Red Sea towns

CAIRO/JERUSALEM: Projectiles hit two Egyptian Red Sea towns on Friday injuring several people, sources and officials said, showing the risk of regional spillover from the Israel-Gaza conflict. The explosions hit Taba on the border with Israel and Nuweiba about 70 km further away, two Egyptian security sources told Reuters, saying they were still gathering more information. There was no claim of responsibility, but Egypt's state-linked Al-Qahera News said the missile that hit Taba appeared to be connected to fighting between Hamas militants and the Israeli military around Gaza, about 220 km away. Egypt's health ministry said six people were injured in Taba, with four already discharged from hospital, after an ambulance facility and residential building were hit. Witnesses in both places, who asked not to be named, confirmed explosions and smoke rising. Israel's military said it was aware of a security incident outside its borders. Taba and Nuweiba, both in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, are popular with tourists. Bordering both Gaza and Israel, Egypt is exposed to the conflict that blew up after Hamas' October 7 assault on Israel and the subsequent bombardment of the Gaza Strip.

DC pandas will be returning to China in mid-November, weeks earlier than expected

WASHINGTON: The National Zoo's three celebrity giant pandas will be heading home a little earlier than expected. Zoo officials told The Associated Press on Thursday that adult bears Mei Xiang and Tian Tian and their cub Xiao Qi Ji will be returning to China sometime in mid-November. The zoo's exchange agreement with the Chinese government, originally brokered by President Richard Nixon 50 years ago, expires December 7. Ongoing negotiations to extend the agreement haven't produced results, amid speculation from China-watchers that Beijing is gradually pulling its pandas from Western nations due to deteriorating diplomatic relations with the US and other countries. Panda-philes around the country had circled the December date as the last chance to view the iconic bears. But the zoo, for undisclosed reasons, said the departure would happen about three weeks earlier. "Discussions with our Chinese partner, the China Wildlife Conservation Association, to develop a future giant panda program will likely start after the current pandas have returned to China," zoo spokesperson Annalisa Meyer said in an email. "After 51 years of success, we remain committed to giant panda conservation. ... It's our intention to have giant pandas at the Zoo again and continue our research here and conservation work in China."

Pro-Russian Ukrainian politician is shot and wounded, Russian official says

MOSCOW: Former Ukrainian lawmaker Oleg Tsaryov, a pro-Russian figure who was reported to have been lined up by Moscow to lead a puppet administration in Kyiv after Russia's invasion, is in intensive care after being shot, a Russian official said on Friday. The official, Vladimir Rogov, did not say where the shooting had taken place. "Oleg's condition is very serious. He is currently in intensive care," said Rogov, a senior Russian-installed official in southern Ukraine. "Oleg was shot," he said on Telegram, asking Orthodox Christian believers to pray for Tsaryov. Sources told Reuters last year that Russia had been lining up Tsaryov to head a puppet government in Kyiv after Moscow's forces invaded on February 24, 2022. Tsaryov himself dismissed that possibility when the Financial Times reported it, citing US intelligence, ahead of the invasion. (AGENCIES)

Israel strikes the outskirts of Gaza City during a second ground raid in as many days

More than a million people have fled their homes, with many heeding Israeli orders to evacuate to the south.



Injured Palestinians are evacuated following Israeli airstrikes on town of Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip on Thursday.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DEIR AL-BALAH, OCT 27

Israeli forces backed by fighter jets and drones carried out a second ground raid into Gaza in as many days and struck targets on the outskirts of Gaza City, the military said on Friday, as it prepares for a widely expected ground invasion of the Hamas-ruled territory.

US warplanes, meanwhile, struck targets in eastern Syria that the Pentagon said were linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guard after a string of attacks on American forces, and two mysterious objects hit towns in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, adding to the already high tensions fuelled by the three-week-old Gaza war.

The Palestinian death toll has soared past 7,000 as Israel has carried out waves of devastating airstrikes in response to a bloody Hamas incursion into southern Israel on October 7. The Health Ministry in Gaza, which tracks the toll, released a detailed list of names and identification numbers on Thursday. The toll includes more than 2,900 minors and more than 1,500 women.

The overall number of deaths far exceeds the combined toll of all four previous wars between Israel and Hamas, estimated at around 4,000.

More than 1,400 people in Israel, mostly civilians, were slain during the initial Hamas attack, according to the Israeli government. Hamas is holding at least 229 captives inside Gaza, including men, women, children and older adults.

The airstrikes have flattened entire neighbourhoods, causing a level of

death and destruction unseen in the last four wars between Israel and Hamas. More than a million people have fled their homes, with many heeding Israeli orders to evacuate to the south, despite continuing Israeli strikes across the sealed-off territory.

The military said ground forces raided inside Gaza, striking dozens of militant targets over the past 24 hours. It said aircraft and artillery bombed targets in Shijaiyah, a neighbourhood on Gaza City's outskirts that was the scene of an urban battle in the 2014 Gaza war.

The military said the soldiers exited the territory without suffering any casualties. It reported an earlier, hours-long raid into northern Gaza early Thursday.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, an Israeli military spokesman, said the raids enable forces to "uncover the enemy," to kill militants and to remove explosives and launch pads. The aim is "to prepare the ground for the next stages of the war," he added.

The damage to Gaza from nearly three weeks of bombardment showed in satellite photos of several locations taken before the war and again in recent days.

Entire rows of residential buildings simply disappear in the photos, reduced to smears of dust and rubble. A complex of 13 high-rises by the sea was pounded to dust near Gaza City's al-Shati refugee camp, leaving only a few tottering bits of facade, according to the photos by Maxar Technologies.

The military says it only strikes militant targets and accuses Hamas of operating among civilians in an attempt to protect its fighters. The

Israeli military said that an airstrike killed one of two masterminds of the October 7 massacre, Shadi Barud, the head of Hamas' intelligence unit.

Palestinian militants have fired thousands of rockets into Israel since the war began.

Hamas' military wing said Thursday that Israeli bombardment has so far killed about 50 of the hostages. There was no immediate comment from Israeli officials, who have denied previous, similar claims.

The conflict has threatened to ignite a wider war across the region.

Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed ally of Hamas in Lebanon, has repeatedly traded fire with Israel along the border, and Israel has carried out airstrikes targeting Iran-linked groups in Syria. The United States has sent two aircraft carrier strike groups to the region, along with additional fighter jets and other weaponry and personnel, in part to deter Iran and its allies from entering the war on the side of Hamas.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said that the strikes in eastern Syria were "a response to a series of ongoing and mostly unsuccessful attacks against US personnel in Iraq and Syria by Iranian-backed militia groups that began on October 17." He said the operation was separate from the Israel-Hamas war.

Iran-backed fighters later fired rockets at an oil facility housing US troops in eastern Syria, according to Syrian opposition activists. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the US strikes had wounded seven Iran-backed Iraqi fighters.

Egypt's military said a drone crashed into a building in the Red Sea town of Taba, on the border with Israel, slightly wounding six people. State media had initially said it was a rocket. In a separate incident, the state-run Al-Qahera news said a "strange object" landed near a power station in the Red Sea town of Nuweiba, further south. Footage showed debris and smoke rising from the side of a nearby mountain.

Hagari, the Israeli military spokesman, said "an aerial threat was identified in the area of the Red Sea," which appeared to be the source of the Taba incident. He said that fighter jets were dispatched to the area and that Israel, Egypt and the US were tightening their defences in the region.

Last week, a US Navy destroyer in the northern Red Sea shot down three cruise missiles and several drones launched toward Israel by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in northern Yemen.

The war has also sparked protests across the region, and more demonstrations were held Friday in cities across the Middle East after weekly Muslim prayers.

In Gaza, supplies of food, medicine and fuel for powering emergency generators are running low. The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, which provides basic services to hundreds of thousands of people, including operating schools turned into shelters, has said it may run out of fuel within days.

Gaza's sole power station shut down because of a lack of fuel days after the start of the war, and Israel has barred all fuel deliveries, saying it believes Hamas would steal them for military purposes.

About 1.4 million of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have fled their homes, with nearly half of them crowding into UN shelters. Hundreds of thousands remain in northern Gaza, despite Israel ordering them to evacuate to the south and saying that those who remain might be considered "accomplices" of Hamas.

Over the past week, Israel has allowed more than 80 trucks with aid enter from Egypt through the Rafah crossing, the only entry point into Gaza not controlled by Israel. But aid workers say the convoys meet only a tiny fraction of the territory's mounting humanitarian needs. Before the war, an average of 500 trucks entered Gaza each day, according to the United Nations.

The US has been working with other mediators to send in more humanitarian aid, but Israel is insisting on strict screening procedures for all trucks that enter. Washington says Hamas has refused to open the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing to let hundreds of foreign passport holders leave.

The head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said that its aid operations were crumbling, citing distressing reports from local staff.

"For the first time ever, they report that now people are hungry," Philippe Lazarini told reporters in Jerusalem. "Civil order is collapsing."

Malaysia names Sultan Ibrahim as next king



Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar of Johor (left) wipes his tears at the National Palace in Kuala Lumpur on Friday.

REUTERS
KUALA LUMPUR, OCT 27

Malaysia's royal families elected the powerful and outspoken Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar from the southern state of Johor to be the country's next king.

The king plays a largely ceremonial role in Malaysia, but the monarchy has become more influential in recent years due to prolonged political instability that has prompted the incumbent king to wield rarely used discretionary powers.

Malaysia has a unique system in which the heads of its nine royal families take turns to be monarch for a five-year term.

The Southeast Asian country is a parliamentary democracy, with the monarch serving as head of state.

Sultan Ibrahim will take over from current King Al-Sultan Abdullah on Jan. 31, 2024, the keeper of the rulers' seal said in a statement on Friday.

Unlike other traditional Malaysian rulers, Sultan Ibrahim has been outspoken about politics and has said he has a good relationship with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

The sultan, who is known to have a big collection of luxury cars and motorcycles, has wide-ranging business interests from real estate to mining.

King Al-Sultan played an unusually active role in Malaysian politics, picking the country's last three prime ministers.

The federal constitution grants the monarch only a few discretionary powers, with the king largely required to act upon the advice of the prime minister and cabinet.

It also allows the king to appoint a prime minister who he believes has a parliamentary majority, a power never utilised until 2020, as the premier is typically picked through an election.

King Al-Sultan used those powers during a period of political instability triggered by the defeat of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which had governed Malaysia uninterrupted since independence until 2018.

The king also has the power to pardon convicted people. In 2018, Al-Sultan's predecessor, Sultan Muhammad V, pardoned Anwar, who was then imprisoned on sodomy and corruption charges that he says were politically motivated.

US military says Chinese jet came within 10 feet of B-52 bomber

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BANGKOK, OCT 27

A Chinese fighter jet came within 10 feet of an American B-52 bomber flying over the South China Sea, nearly causing an accident, the US military said, underscoring the potential for a mishap as both countries vie for influence in the region.

In the night intercept, the Shenyang J-11 twin-engine fighter closed on the US Air Force plane at an "uncontrolled excessive speed, flying below, in front of, and within 10 feet of the B-52, putting both aircraft in danger of a collision," the US Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement released late Thursday.

"We are concerned this pilot was unaware of how close he came to causing a collision," the military said.

China's Foreign Ministry put the blame on the US, suggesting the American aircraft was flying over the South China Sea as a deliberate provocation. "The US military planes travelled thousands of miles to China's doorstep to flex muscle," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning.

"That is the source of maritime and air security risks, and is not conducive to regional peace and stability."

The US military said in its statement that the aircraft was "lawfully conducting routine operations" ahead of the intercept on Tuesday, but did not immediately respond to questions on Friday about specifically what the B-52 was doing over the South China Sea or whether it was with a group of planes. After a similar incident in May, the Chinese government dismissed American complaints and

demanding that Washington end such flights over the South China Sea.

China has been increasingly assertive in advancing its claims on most of the South China Sea as its territorial waters, a position rejected by the US and other countries that use the vast expanse of ocean for shipping.

China's claims have led to longstanding territorial disputes with other countries in the South China Sea, one of the world's busiest trade routes. A Chinese coast guard ship and an accompanying vessel last week rammed a Philippine coast guard ship and a military-run supply boat off a contested shoal in the waterway.

Following that incident, US President Joe Biden renewed a warning that the US would be obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces, aircraft or vessels come under armed attack. He spoke in a news conference with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday at the White House.

China reacted by saying the US has no right to interfere in Beijing's disputes with Manila.

"The US defence commitment to the Philippines should not undermine China's sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea, nor should it support the illegal claims of the Philippines," Mao, the Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, told reporters on Thursday in Beijing. The US and its allies regularly conduct maritime manoeuvres in the South China Sea, and also routinely fly aircraft over the area to emphasize that the waters and airspace are international.

China's top diplomat visits Washington to help stabilise ties

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, OCT 27

China's top diplomat is meeting high-level US officials, possibly including President Joe Biden, on a highly watched visit to Washington that could help stabilise the U.S.-China ties by facilitating a summit between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister, met Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday afternoon, shortly after he landed for the three-day visit and quickly raised hopes that the relationship can be steadied.

Before going into their closed-door meeting, Wang said China would seek consensus and cooperation to "push the relationship as soon as possible back to the track of healthy, stable and sustainable development."

Before the meeting, US officials said they would press Wang on the importance of China stepping up its role on the world stage if it wants to be considered a responsible major international player. The US has been disappointed with China over its support for Russia in the war against Ukraine and its relative silence on the Israel-Hamas war.

"China should use whatever ability it has as an influential power to urge calm" in the Middle East, said State Department spokesman Matthew Miller. "We know China has relationships with a number of countries in the region, and we would urge them to use those relationships, the lines of communication they have, to urge calm and stability."

US officials believe the Chinese have considerable leverage with Iran, which is a major backer of Hamas.

In a readout after the meeting, the State Department said the two men



Secretary of State Antony Blinken shake hands with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi after a bilateral meeting at the State Department in Washington on Thursday.

addressed "areas of difference" and "areas of cooperation," while Blinken "reiterated that the United States will continue to stand up for our interests and values and those of our allies and partners."

China's Foreign Ministry said, "The two sides had an in-depth exchange of views on China-U.S. relations and issues of common concern in a constructive atmosphere."

Wang is scheduled to meet again Friday with Blinken as well as national security adviser Jake Sullivan. They are expected to urge China to play a constructive role in both the Israel-Hamas and Russia-Ukraine wars.

It's not yet clear if Wang will meet with Biden. The diplomatic practice of reciprocity suggests it is likely, since Blinken met with Xi when he visited China in June.

Neither side has confirmed whether Biden and Xi will meet next month on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders gathering in San Francisco. But Wang's trip

indicates the likelihood is extremely high, said Scott Kennedy, senior adviser and trustee chair in Chinese business and economics at the Washington-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"His visit is most likely about nailing down the agenda and negotiating potential deliverables," Kennedy said.

The Chinese president last came to the U.S. in 2017, when former President Donald Trump hosted him at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. Biden, who took office in 2021, has yet to host Xi on U.S. soil. The two men last met in Bali, Indonesia, in November 2022, on the sidelines of the Group of 20 meeting of leading rich and developing nations.

The U.S.-China relationship began to sour in 2018 when the Trump administration slapped hefty tariffs on \$50 billion worth of Chinese goods. It deteriorated further over a range of issues, including rights abuses, the South China Sea, Taiwan, technology and the COVID-19 pandemic.

FOREX	
U.S. Dollar	133.50
Euro	141.03
Pound Sterling	162.01
Swiss Franc	148.35
Australian Dollar	84.85
Canadian Dollar	96.95
Singapore Dollar	97.49
Japanese Yen	8.90
Chinese Yuan	18.24
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.58
Qatari Riyal	36.60
Thai Bhat	3.69
UAE Dhiram	36.35
Malaysian Ringgit	27.94
Korean Won	9.85

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION		PRICE PER TOLA
 Fine Gold		Rs 116,000
 Silver		Rs 1,400

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

Maruti Suzuki India's Q2 profit jumps 80 percent on SUV demand

BENGALURU: Maruti Suzuki India, the country's top carmaker by sales, on Friday reported a higher quarterly profit that smashed estimates, as strong demand for its sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and cooling input costs boosted margins. The company's profit after tax for the three months to September 30 rose to 37.17 billion rupees (\$466.64 million) from 20.62 billion rupees a year earlier. Analysts, on average, expected the maker of the 'Brezza' and 'Baleno' models to report a profit of 30.08 billion rupees, according to LSEG data. Maruti is the first of India's listed carmakers to report results and benefit from a better share of sales from the revenue and margin-boosting SUVs, analysts have said. Quarterly cost of materials consumed, or raw material costs, fell 7.4 percent. Utility vehicles sales — which includes SUVs and the seven-seater 'Ertiga' — comprised 32 percent of quarterly volumes, up from 16 percent a year earlier, sending revenue up 25 percent to 355.35 billion rupees. The company's shares rose 2.7 percent to an intraday high of 10,703.25 rupees after the results. (REUTERS)

China's Huawei reports modest revenue growth for first three quarters

SHENZHEN: China's Huawei Technologies saw a slight uptick in revenue in the first three quarters of 2023, with the company citing growth in its digital power and cloud businesses as well as the growing competitiveness of its vehicle components unit. Huawei posted revenues of 456.6 billion yuan (\$62.4 billion) for the first three quarters of the year, up 2.4 percent from a year earlier. In contrast to the modest rise in revenue, profit rose 177.8 percent in the period to 73.05 billion yuan, according to Reuters calculations. The rise in profit stemmed from payments related to Huawei's sale of its Honor smartphone unit in November 2020, along with management and sales strategy improvements, a company spokesperson said. For the third quarter, revenue rose 1.5 percent to 145.7 billion yuan, according to Reuters calculations. The growth was "in line with forecast," Huawei's rotating Chairman Ken Hu said in a press release. Huawei's smartphone sales surged in the third quarter thanks to the release of the Mate 60 series at the end of the August, three research firms said this week, with Counterpoint Research reporting a 37 percent year-on-year increase for the company. (REUTERS)

Pilots at Qantas' unit to stop work for two days over wage talks

SYDNEY: The Australian Federation of Pilots (AFAP) said on Friday it has advised an unit of Qantas Airways it will stop work on Wednesday to Thursday next week in a bid to negotiate wages. AFAP members make up over 90 per cent of the pilot group employed by Qantas' unit Network Aviation. The union has been negotiating with airline management over wage policy revisions in the resource-rich state, which is home to large deposits of iron ore and natural gas. Qantas in a separate statement deemed the actions by the union "unreasonable escalation of the dispute." "It is disappointing that there has not been any indication in that last four weeks that Qantas management might shift its position to bring its WA-based pilots' wages and conditions into line with those of other Qantas Group pilots," said Chris Aikens, senior industrial officer of AFAP. (REUTERS)

Gold soars as war sends investors rushing to safety

Festive gold sales were down by half this Dashain compared to last year because people had less money to spend, traders said.

KRISHANA PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, OCT 27

Gold continued to soar to dizzying heights as the Israel-Hamas war raged on, sending investors scurrying to safety. In the domestic market on Friday, the precious metal traded at an all-time high of Rs116,000 per tola.

According to international media reports, spot gold surged to \$1,988.20 per ounce in the world market on Friday.

Gold prices were poised for a third consecutive weekly gain on Friday as the Middle East conflict kept investors drawn towards the safety of bullion despite a higher-for-longer US interest rate backdrop, international media said.

According to Reuters, the yellow metal is commanding a hefty geopolitical premium. It will need a continuous feed of concerning geopolitical developments to keep it afloat at current levels.

Spot gold has gained about 9 percent as investors sought refuge from the potential fallout of the Israel-Hamas war that escalated earlier this month. But the lingering prospects of US interest rates staying higher for longer have kept prices below the \$2,000 ceiling last breached in May.

In Nepal, the price of gold had started rising since the beginning of the year. On January 24, gold hit a high of Rs106,300 per tola (1 tola=11.66 gm).

The yellow metal was trading at Rs75,000 per tola before the Covid-19 pandemic started in Nepal.

Nepali gold traders say that the price may rise on the heels of ongoing geopolitical tensions. The price had reached a record high of Rs113,600 per tola in mid-July.

On October 20, before the Dashain



POST FILE PHOTO

According to the Department of Customs, Nepal imported gold worth Rs51.53 billion in the last fiscal year.

holidays began, gold closed at Rs115,500 per tola.

Gold traded at Rs113,000 per tola last Sunday. The price declined to Rs112,300 on Monday before slipping further to Rs111,900 on Tuesday. By Wednesday, the price had bounced back to Rs113,200 and kept climbing on Thursday to close at Rs113,700.

"There are higher chances that the price will rise further, and we expect it to reach Rs120,000 per tola soon," said Manik Ratna Shakya, president of the Federation of Nepal Gold and Silver Dealers' Association.

According to the association, the price of gold, which had been increasing since the beginning of October,

had started to fall due to a stable dollar. But the war between Hamas and Israel sent crude oil prices haywire, and it can impact gold too.

Shakya said that festive gold sales were down by half this Dashain compared to last year because of the economic slowdown, declining purchasing capacity and rising bullion prices.

US-China tensions will slow global chip industry, TSMC founder says

REUTERS
NEW YORK, OCT 27

The founder of the world's biggest chipmaker, Morris Chang, said on Thursday that increasing tensions over technology between the United States and China will slow down the global chip industry.

Chang, who founded Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co in the late 1980s, made the remarks at an event hosted by the Asia Society in New York. The company has helped the democratically governed island of Taiwan become the world's leading producer of advanced chips.

US officials earlier this month enacted another set of export restrictions that clamped down on what chips and chipmaking tools can be exported to China after Huawei Technologies last month showed off a phone with a new domestically manufactured chip. Chang, 92, said that

cutting off China's chip industry from the rest of the world would affect other players beyond China.

"I think that decoupling will ultimately slow down everybody. Of course, the immediate purpose is to slow China down, and I think it's doing that," Chang said. Chang said that the effects of such decoupling were already becoming clear and that many previous economic conflicts between established and emerging powers had ended in wars.

"It looks like counties are mad at each other, that worries me," said Chang, who characterises the geopolitical tension between the US and China as an existing power confronting an emerging power. "Our only hope is it doesn't lead to anything even more serious," Chang said. He also praised the higher education system in the US, adding his optimism about the country as TSMC invests to build chipmaking facilities in Arizona.

Oil rises more than \$1 on fears of spread of Middle East conflict

REUTERS
SINGAPORE, OCT 27

Oil prices rose by over \$1 on Friday as reports that the US military struck Iranian targets in Syria raised concerns of a widening of the Israel-Hamas conflict that could impact supply from the key Middle East producing region.

Brent crude futures for December rose \$1.32, or 1.5 percent, to \$89.25 a barrel by 0638 GMT. The US West Texas Intermediate contract for December climbed \$1.29, also 1.6 percent, to \$84.50 a barrel.

The strikes on two facilities in eastern Syria used by the Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and groups it backs was in response to recent attacks on US troops in Iraq and Syria, the Pentagon said on Thursday. Those attacks have increased since the start of the Israel-Hamas conflict on October 7.

Though the strike did not directly impact supply, it increases fears that the conflict in the Gaza Strip between Israel, backed by the US, and

Hamas may spread and disrupt supply from major crude producer Iran, which backs Hamas. A wider war could also impact shipments from Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, and other large producers in the Gulf.

Both Brent and WTI are on track to post their first weekly drop in three weeks as the geopolitical premium built on these fears has ebbed as there has been no disruption of oil supply outside of the immediate region of the fighting.

"As a trader I'm going to have to say we are somewhat out of our league here — trying to ascribe a value to geopolitics when no meaningful supply has been disrupted outside of the Levant," said Kelvin Yew, a senior oil trader at Ocean Leonid Investments.

Israeli forces carried out their biggest Gaza ground attack in their 20-day-old war with Hamas overnight, angering the Arab world.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had said Israeli troops were still preparing for a full ground invasion, while the United States and

other countries urged Israel to delay, fearing it could ignite hostilities on other Middle East fronts.

"... [It] remains incredibly difficult even for the most knowledgeable regional watchers to make high conviction calls about the trajectory of the current crisis as the redlines that could bring more players onto the battlefield remain largely indiscernible," RBC Capital analyst Helima Croft said in a note.

Goldman Sachs analysts have kept their first quarter 2024 Brent crude price forecast at \$95 a barrel but added that lower Iranian exports could cause baseline prices to rise by 5 percent.

Prices could jump 20 percent in the less likely scenario of an interruption of trade through the Strait of Hormuz where 17 percent of global oil production transit, they said in a note.

Voluntary supply cuts by Saudi Arabia and Russia, which will be in place until the end of the year, are tightening markets globally and supporting prices, analysts said.

Twitter takeover: 1 year later, X struggles with misinformation, advertising and usage decline

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SAN FRANCISCO, OCT 27

One year ago, billionaire and new owner Elon Musk walked into Twitter's San Francisco headquarters with a white bathroom sink and a grin, fired its CEO and other top executives and began transforming the social media platform into what is now known as X.

X looks and feels something like Twitter, but the more time you spend on it the clearer it becomes that it's merely an approximation. Musk has dismantled core features of what made Twitter, Twitter — its name and blue bird logo, its verification system, its Trust and Safety advisory group. Not to mention content moderation and hate speech enforcement.

He also fired, laid off or lost the majority of its workforce — engineers who keep the site running, moderators who keep it from being overrun with hate, executives in charge of making rules and enforcing them.

The result, long-term Twitter watchers say, has been the end of the platform's role as an imperfect but useful place to find out what's going on in the world. What X will become, and whether Musk can achieve his ambition of turning it into an "everything app" that everyone uses, remains as unclear as it was a year ago.

"Musk hasn't managed to make a single meaningful improvement to the platform and is no closer to his vision of an 'everything app,' than he was a year ago," said Insider Intelligence analyst Jasmine Enberg. "Instead, X has driven away users, advertisers, and now it has lost its primary value proposition in the social media world:



A file photo shows a workman removing a character from a sign on the Twitter headquarters building in San Francisco.

Being a central hub for news."

As one of the platform's most popular and prolific users even before he bought the company, Musk had a unique experience on Twitter that is markedly different from how regular users experience it. But many of the changes he's introduced to X has been based on his own impressions of the site — in fact, he even polled his millions of followers for advice on how to run it [they said he should step down].

"Musk's treatment of the platform as a technology company that he could remake and his vision rather than a

social network fuelled by people and ad dollars has been the single largest cause of the demise of Twitter," Enberg said.

The blue checkmarks that once signified that the person or institution behind an account was who they said they are — a celebrity, athlete, journalist from global or local publication, a nonprofit agency — now merely shows that someone pays \$8 a month for a subscription service that boosts their posts above un-checked users. It's these paying accounts that have been found to spread misinformation on

the platform that is often amplified by its algorithms.

On Thursday, for instance, a new report from the left-leaning nonprofit Media Matters found that numerous blue-checked X accounts with tens of thousands of followers claimed that the mass shooting in Maine was a "false flag," planned by the government. Researchers also found such accounts spreading misinformation and propaganda about the Israel-Hamas war — so much so that the European Commission made a formal, legally binding request for information to X over its handling of hate speech, misinformation and violent terrorist content related to the war.

Ian Bremmer, a prominent foreign policy expert, posted on X this month that the level of disinformation on the Israel-Hamas war "being algorithmically promoted" on the platform "is unlike anything I've ever been exposed to in my career as a political scientist."

It's not just the platform's identity that's on shaky grounds. Twitter was already struggling financially when Musk purchased it for \$44 billion in a deal that closed October 27, 2022, and the situation appears more precarious today. Musk took the company private, so its books are no longer public — but in July, the Tesla CEO said the company had lost about half of its advertising revenue and continues to face a large debt load.

"We're still negative cash flow," he posted on the site on July 14, due to a about a "50 percent drop in advertising revenue plus heavy debt load."

"Need to reach positive cash flow before we have the luxury of anything else," he said.

In May, Musk hired Linda Yaccarino, a former NBC executive with deep ties to the advertising industry in an attempt to lure back top brands, but the effort has been slow to pay off. While some advertisers have returned to X, they are not spending as much as they did in the past — despite a rebound in the online advertising market that boosted the most recent quarterly profits for Facebook parent company, Meta, and Google parent company, Alphabet.

Insider Intelligence estimates that X will bring in \$1.89 billion in advertising revenue this year, down 54 percent from 2022. The last time its ad revenue was near this level was in 2015, when it came in at \$1.99 billion. In 2022, it was \$4.12 billion.

Outside research also shows that people are using X less.

According to research firm Similarweb, global web traffic to Twitter.com was down 14 percent, year-over-year, and traffic to the ads.twitter.com portal for advertisers was down 16.5 percent. Performance on mobile was no better, down 17.8 percent year-over-year based on combined monthly active users for Apple's iOS and Android.

"Even though the cultural relevance of Twitter was already starting to decline," before Musk took it over, "it's as if the platform no longer exists. And it's been a death by a thousand cuts," Enberg said.

"What's really fascinating is that almost all of the wounds have been self-inflicted. Usually when a social platform, starts to lose its relevance there are at least some external factors at play, but that's not the case here."

Nepal lose T20I Tri-Series to UAE by four wickets

The defeat will serve as a wake up call to Nepal ahead of the T20 World Cup 2024 Asia Qualifier that begins at Kirtipur on October 30 and a bitter reminiscent of the 2022 T20 World Cup Global Qualifier A, where Nepal lost to the UAE in the semis and failed to qualify for the 2022 T20 World Cup.



POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

United Arab Emirates players pose with the Nepal T20I Tri-Nation Series trophy after defeating Nepal by four wickets in the final at the TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur on Friday.

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, OCT 27

Nepal lost the final of the Nepal Tri-Nation T20I Series to the United Arab Emirates by four wickets at the TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur on Friday. Nepal, sent in to bat first after losing the toss, posted a moderate total of 162-8 in the allotted 20 overs, courtesy of a half-century by opener Kushal Bhurtel.

Bhurtel and his opening partner Aasif Sheikh scored 43 runs in the powerplay but the hosts were left frustrated after other batters failed to exploit a good start.

Aayan Afzal Khan (3-19) broke the opening partnership bowling out Aasif for seven and sent back Kushal Malla for one in the seventh over.

Bhurtel smashed six boundaries and three sixes to score his sixth T20I fifty that came off 29 balls but Zahoor Khan halted his spree in the eighth over.

Captain Rohit Paudel added 18 and Dipendra Singh Airee contributed 20 but both batters were undone by Ali Naseer in the first and the fourth balls of the 13th over.

Karan KC offered some breathing space with his 17-ball 23 late in the innings.

In the run chase, UAE openers, captain Muhammad Waseem and Aryansh Sharma put on a 71-run partnership to set the tone for the UAE.

Gulsan Jha ended their stand removing Waseem for 45 in the seventh over but Sharma (25) and Vriitya Aravind (26) continued the chase.

Basil Hameed added not out 22 off 16 balls to guide the UAE to 167-6 in 19.5 overs.

Nepal had defeated the UAE by seven wickets in the series opener and won by five wickets in the return fixture of the group stage. Nepal had also beaten Hong Kong by six wickets in their first meeting of the series and 79

runs in the second leg to progress to the final.

The defeat also ended Nepal's 16-match unbeaten streak at home under coach Monty Desai that dated back to February 17. During that run Nepal won all eight home matches of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2, followed by an unbeaten run (except for the Premier Cup matches against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait both of which was abandoned due to rain) to the ACC Premier Cup title. Desai was appointed as the head coach of the Nepal national men's cricket team on February 6.

The defeat will also serve as a wake

up call to Nepal ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Asia Qualifier that begins at TU Cricket Ground on October 30 and a bitter reminiscent of the 2022 ICC Men's T20 World Cup Global Qualifier A, where Nepal lost to the UAE in the semi-finals and failed to qualify for the 2022 T20 World Cup.

Nepal are pitted alongside Malaysia, Oman and Singapore in Group A, while the UAE are in Group B with Bahrain, Hong Kong and Kuwait.

The finalists will book two slots from Asia at the 20-team 2024 T20 World Cup which takes place in the West Indies and the United States from June 4 to June 30 next year.

NEPAL TRI-NATION T20I SERIES

KIRTIPUR/TOSS: UAE, FIELD FIRST.

Nepal 162-8

Kushal Bhurtel 50 (29), Karan KC 23* (17); Aayan Afzal Khan 4-0-19-3, Zahoor Khan 4-0-26-2, Ali Naseer 4-0-36-2

United Arab Emirates 167-6

Muhammad Waseem 45 (22), Vriitya Aravind 26 (25); Gulsan Jha 3-0-19-2, Abinash Bohara 4-0-27-2

UAE win by four wickets.

Player of the match: Aayan Afzal Khan

ICC MEN'S 2024 T20 WORLD CUP ASIA QUALIFIER

NEPAL'S GROUP FIXTURES

Oct 30 Nepal vs Singapore

Oct 31 Nepal vs Malaysia

Nov 2 Nepal vs Oman

All three matches will be played at TU Cricket Ground, Kirtipur.

CRICKET WORLD CUP 2023

PLAYING SATURDAY

Australia 10:45 New Zealand
Bangladesh 14:15 Netherlands

AUSTRALIA VS NEW ZEALAND HEAD-TO-HEAD RECORD

LAST 10 MEETINGS

- Dec 06, 2016 Canberra - Australia won by 116 runs
- Dec 09, 2016 Melbourne - Australia won by 117 runs
- Jan 30, 2017 Auckland - New Zealand won by 6 runs
- Feb 05, 2017 Hamilton - New Zealand won by 24 runs
- June 02, 2017 Birmingham - No Result
- June 29, 2019 Lord's - Australia won by 86 runs
- March 13, 2020 Sydney - Australia won by 71 runs
- Sept 06, 2022 Cairns - Australia won by 2 wickets
- Sept 08, 2022 Cairns - Australia won by 113 runs
- Sept 11, 2022 Cairns - Australia won by 25 runs

OVERALL

Australia wins: 95
New Zealand wins: 39
Tied: 0
No result: 7

Australia target victory over New Zealand 'mates' at Cricket World Cup

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DHARAMSALA, OCT 27

Australia skipper Pat Cummins believes Saturday's World Cup clash with New Zealand will be a battle between "mates" as the push for semi-final places enters a critical phase.

Five-time champions Australia are back on track for a last-four spot having won three matches on the trot after an unimpressive start which saw them lose their first two games.

New Zealand, runners-up in the last

two World Cups, have the better record so far with four wins from five games.

Australia, however, have the upper hand when it comes to clashes at World Cups over the years, winning eight of the 11 match-ups.

"I think most of the Kiwis are pretty placid and we're pretty similar," said Cummins on Friday on the eve of the game taking place in the Himalayan venue of Dharamsala. "We've played a lot of cricket with these guys and some of them are really good mates. If anything, it makes you want to beat your mates even

more. It will be intense out there."

In 2015, New Zealand edged a low-scoring group game by one wicket in Auckland before Australia gained revenge with a seven-wicket stroll in the final.

Mitchell Starc, David Warner, Glenn Maxwell, Steve Smith and Josh Hazlewood are all survivors from the 2015 final. Cummins played in the group game.

Current New Zealand squad members Kane Williamson, Trent Boult, Matt Henry and Tim Southee also played that final.

Australia are back on track for a last-four spot having won their last three matches.

"It always seems like there's great contests. And on a personal note, as well, we know a lot of the New Zealand guys and we have played a lot against them and with them. So, it's always

good fun," added Cummins.

Cummins said he was delighted by Australia over-coming early losses at this World Cup to India and South Africa.

They have since seen off Sri Lanka, Pakistan and then the Netherlands by a huge 309 runs.

"I think in the first two games not only did we not win, but I think we didn't really nail the style that we wanted to play," said the captain. "I think in the last few games you've seen us be a bit more aggressive - batting and bowling."

Most of the aggression in the rout of the Dutch came from Glenn Maxwell who hit the fastest World Cup century off just 40 balls in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Cummins shared a 103-run partnership with Maxwell, contributing only eight runs.

"Yeah, that was just insane the other night," said Cummins. "I was lucky to be down at the other end, see it first-hand, the creativity that he seems to have, to find boundaries in just different spots, just incredible. He's a superstar."

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

The astrological event will have a shaky effect on your foundations, challenging how you view wealth. Try not to invest in anything you're unfamiliar with, understanding that the rushed nature of this cosmic climate could lead to foolish decision-making.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Brace yourself for an emotionally, electrically, and mentally charged day, dear Taurus, as the solar eclipse manifests in your sign. You'll be forced to confront anyone, bringing closure to cycles that have played out throughout the last two years.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Use the energy to fully accept behaviours that have held you back or created drama, turning over a new leaf as you break cycles that no longer serve you. Secrets could also come to light.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Use the energy to move out of toxic circles and into supportive dynamics, even if doing so requires you to pull away from old friendships. You'll find value in being a part of something bigger than yourself.

LEO (July 23-August 22)

Your focus will hang solely on a mission to succeed and build status. Use this energy to get serious about what you want and whether or not it's important, having a clearer understanding of what achievement looks like to you.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Use this energy to play with new beliefs to find your own way, releasing outdated systems you no longer relate to. Keep only what makes sense in the present moment. You should avoid fixating on synchronicities that lead to confusion.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

The progress you've been chipping away at will amount to meaningful results under this cosmic climate, bringing a culmination to any personal work you've done throughout the last two years. New commitments could also come into play.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

You'll grow tired of fighting to repair dynamics that simply never change, finding the motivation and freedom to finally break free from toxic connections. Remember that you're only as good as the company you keep.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

This cosmic climate urges you to make important adjustments to your lifestyle choices, especially if you've been neglecting your physical needs or taking good health for granted. Plan on relaxing later tonight, allowing yourself to release tension.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

Watch out for inflated egos within yourself and others, dear Capricorn. Personalities could clash under this afternoon's lunar eclipse, though focusing on yourself and important projects can help you escape the shadowy aspects of this cosmic climate.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

Don't feel guilty if you decide to hide away at home, riding out these erratic and exhausting vibes from the place you feel safest. You may also become more moody than usual as repressed feelings bubble up to the surface.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)

Stay grounded to avoid overstimulation and over-sharing, dear Pisces. This cosmic climate could make it difficult to stay focused and present, and it will be important that you follow your intuition when it reminds you to slow down.

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 Low, woody plant
 - 5 House support
 - 10 Gentle one
 - 14 On the briny
 - 15 Stop
 - 16 Margarine
 - 17 Stamping animals
 - 18 Bike-steering devices
 - 20 Mass medium
 - 22 Young ladies
 - 23 Lingering scent
 - 25 Army installation
 - 26 Luxurious
 - 29 Not before
 - 31 Bird's bill
 - 32 Cold weather garment
 - 34 "Phoey!"
 - 37 Sea eagle
 - 38 Tiny colonist
 - 39 Morse code signal
 - 40 Old Testament book
 - 42 Imperfections
 - 44 Charter
 - 45 Relating to hearing
 - 47 Name to a position
 - 49 Bulk
 - 50 Some votes
 - 51 Way of speaking

- 54 Composer Bruckner
- 57 Guard at an entrance
- 61 Footnote abbr.
- 63 Rights org.
- 64 Inexperienced
- 65 — Star State
- 66 Yoga accessories
- 67 Ranch animal
- 68 Liveliness
- DOWN**
- 1 Curmudgeon's cry
 - 2 Internet cafe customer
 - 3 Antitoxins
 - 4 Food fish
 - 5 Educates
 - 6 "Not my cup of —"
 - 7 Bond creator — Fleming
 - 8 Hallucinogenic drug
 - 9 Chew out (2 wds.)
 - 10 Seafood item
 - 11 Mournful cry
 - 12 Meager
 - 13 Mob big shot
 - 19 "— of Eden"
 - 21 Actress — Lupino
 - 24 Brings to mind again

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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1	5	3	9	4	8	6	2	7
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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

A new perspective on self-discovery

Sagar Parajuli's 'Agony to Ecstasy' explores concepts like life, death, karma and meditation, seamlessly blending Eastern wisdom with scientific insights.

SHREEDHAR ACHARYA

Agony to Ecstasy' is a recent self-help release by Nepali author Sagar Parajuli, a geoscientist based in the US. At first, I considered it just another self-help book in a crowded market. However, as I delved in, it felt different, as if penned by someone deeply enlightened.

Self-help books in English by Nepali authors are incredibly rare, both in Nepal and globally. While there are numerous self-help books available, most are authored by Western writers. Interestingly, many of these bestsellers draw inspiration from Eastern wisdom. Thus, there was a noticeable gap, one that 'Agony to Ecstasy' fills by presenting authentic Eastern knowledge in a language spoken worldwide.

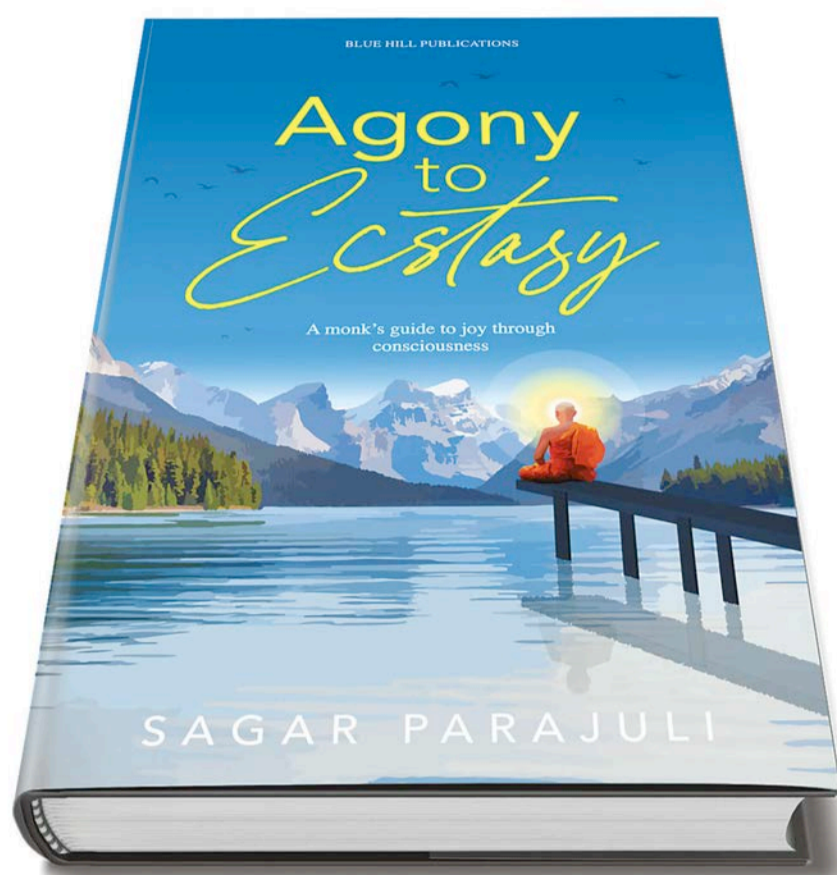


BOOK REVIEW

The author led a fulfilling life with a stable job and a happy family. Despite this, a profound sense of unease lingered, a feeling that something essential was missing. This inner turmoil led him to explore the roots of his discontent, eventually guiding him towards the practice of Yoga. Thus, his spiritual journey commenced.

In the opening section of the book named 'The Immortality of Life', the author explains the intricate concepts of life and death using straightforward scientific explanations. He reassures readers that there's no need to fear life, as our "awareness" never truly ceases to exist. The author encourages readers to embark on adventures to discover their true nature. For example, referring to the bungee jump, he says, "You will have an opportunity to glimpse the 'afterlife' when you fall face-down into that deep, formidable chasm."

My interest deepened as the author shared his spiritual encounters, such as feeling a tingling sensation between the eyebrows, experiencing a surge of energy



AGONY TO ECSTASY
 Author: Sagar Parajuli
 Publisher: Blue Hill Publications
 Year: 2023

from the base of the spine and the release of happy hormones in the brain. In the chapter titled 'Dynamics of Body, Mind, and Consciousness', the author provides practical tips to master the mind, highlighting the connection between the moon and our mental state. He distinguishes between Shiva and Krishna, representing silence and awareness, respectively. Reflecting on the Mahabharata story, he observes that the triumphs and tragedies of this ancient tale echo within our lives

and society daily. In the next section, the author elucidates the subtle workings of life as the interplay of Shiva and Shakti, symbolising the masculine and feminine energies. Here, he dispels misconceptions about self-realisation, emphatically stating, "You could also be under the impression that only exceptional people like Buddha or Ramana Maharshi only could attain this state of absolute bliss. Well, I am here to tell you that this idea is false."

In the book's concluding section, the author outlines eight practical steps for self-discovery, each intricately aligned with human existence, making them highly sensible. The first lesson, 'Perform Karma', simplifies the complex concept of 'karma' using practical examples, highlighting that the results of our actions are influenced by various external factors. The author emphasises our full responsibility for the events in our lives, both positive and negative. Additionally, he discusses the transformative power of forgiveness, noting that it untangles emotional energy knots when practised with understanding.

In the concluding section, the author outlines eight practical steps for self-discovery, each intricately aligned with human existence.

In the second step, 'Detox your body', the author emphasises mindful eating, promoting organic and local food choices and fostering environmental consciousness. He explains that mealtime rituals are meant to purify the mind, not the food itself. Being fully present while eating enables us to eat slowly, pay attention to our food and consume the right amount, leading to better assimilation and improved health.

The third step, 'Unburden', advocates detachment from material possessions, reshaping thought patterns. The author stresses the significance of secret giving, underlining its positive impact on the mind. He also promotes gratitude and acceptance, stating, "When you are ready to accept whatever happens in your life, an inner transformation begins. You start to experience the higher dimensions of life."

The fourth step, 'Pay attention', involves observing every detail in our surroundings to train the mind away from compulsive thoughts, conserving energy. The author recommends focusing on breathing, aligning with the wisdom shared by

Eckhart Tolle in 'The Power of Now', to find life's rhythm and enhance awareness. Midway, the author offers practical tips to energise homes, asking readers, "Have you been getting bad dreams lately? Are accidents happening more frequently in your home?" Simple remedies, from cleaning to burning incense, are suggested, enhancing the home's vibrancy.

The author's fifth step is 'Meditate', where he advises us to pause and listen to nature's sounds, highlighting that true meditation lies in observing silence. To quieten the mind, he suggests diminishing the ego, allowing our 'presence' to intensify. The sixth step, 'Do Yoga', explores yoga's deeper meaning and offers practical tips for its integration into daily life.

In the seventh step, 'Find your Guru', the author mentions inspiring Gurus but emphasises that our 'self' is the ultimate Guru, the true source of knowledge. Finally, in the last step, 'Surrendering', the author stresses the importance of the mind surrendering to the underlying 'awareness' to realise our higher power.

In the final chapter, the author emphasises the importance of remembering what you read for true understanding. I have endeavoured to follow this advice, and this book has positively influenced my awareness, especially during a period of my life when I was struggling to find my rhythm. The author's shared experiences resonated with my own, gained through a decade of practising yoga and meditation.

What sets 'Agony to Ecstasy' apart from most self-help books is its authenticity and relatability to everyday life. It seamlessly combines ancient wisdom, scientific insights and practical, contemporary advice. Whether you're caught up in work, stressed, or finding it hard to balance your professional and personal life, this book is a must-read. Even if you're content and happy, this book can amplify your joy.



Acharya is a lecturer at Little Angels' College of Management, Lalitpur.



Free Sound Workshops

Jazzmandu is hosting two live sound workshops at Yalamaya Kendra in Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, next week. 'Fundamental Concepts of Live Sound' is taking place on October 31 and 'Advanced Concepts and Techniques' is taking place on November 1.

Where: Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur
When: October 31 to November 1
Time: 10:00 am to 12:00 pm (morning session), 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm (afternoon session)
Entry: Free



PHOTO: COURTESY OF JAZZMANDU/FACEBOOK



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CLOCK B BUSINESS INNOVATIONS/FACEBOOK

Coffee Queries

Clock b Business Innovations organises Coffee Queries every Sunday where like-minded professionals in the business sector interact and discuss business ideas and experiences.

Where: Kaffe Codes, Thapathali, Kathmandu
When: October 29
Time: 9:00 am to 11:00 am
Entry: Free

Film Showcase

Tumbahalaya, a creative community space, is hosting a showcase of the movie 'Rudraksh' under its segment 'Awesome Film Showcase'. Attendees can also participate in the special events happening throughout the showcase.

Where: Tumbahalaya, Thamel, Kathmandu
When: October 28
Time: 6:00 pm onwards
Entry: Rs100



PHOTO: COURTESY OF TUMBHALAYA/FACEBOOK



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ZEST KTM/INSTAGRAM

Zest Ktm Fall Fest

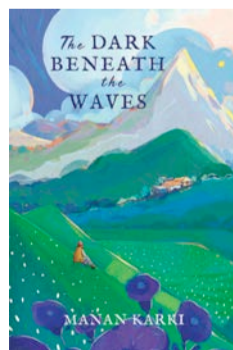
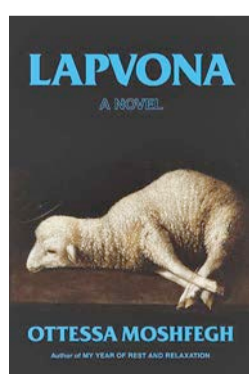
Zest Cafe and Community is hosting Fall Fest 2023 today. The event will have stalls with games, face paint, a photo booth and bakery items. There will also be a costume contest at 7:00 pm.

Where: Zest Cafe and Community, Bhaishepati, Lalitpur
When: October 28
Time: 2:00 pm onwards
Entry: Free

BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES

Fiction

- Lapvona by Ottessa Moshfegh
- Golden Prey by John Sandford
- No One is Talking About This by Patricia Lockwood
- A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens
- The Good Earth by Pearl S Buck



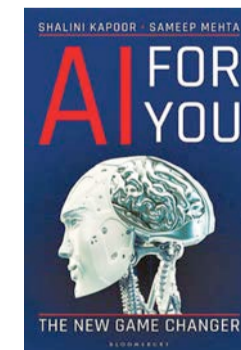
The Dark Beneath the Waves
 Author: Manan Karki
 Price: Rs575.00
 Publisher: FinePrint

MananKarki's 'The Dark Beneath the Waves' unfolds in the mystical backdrop of the Nepali Himalaya. Through poetic prose, the story explores betrayal, guilt, and the relentless pursuit of redemption. The nameless protagonist grapples with the weight of his past misdeeds as he unravels his story. The absence of names symbolises his disconnect from humanity. Karki's narrative delves into fragmented memories, shifting between timelines, and the narrator's unreliability. The heinous crime, a gruesome murder driven by jealousy, leaves the narrator beyond redemption. His fate is to live with his haunting past as his sole companion. This book is a haunting exploration of human remorse and the elusive nature of redemption in a world devoid of salvation.



The Company We Keep
 Author: DivyaKhanna
 Price: Rs798.40
 Publisher: Viking

'The Company We Keep' by DivyaKhanna is a timely exploration of the challenges faced by business corporations today. Beyond immediate issues like the pandemic and economic downturns, Khanna delves into the often-overlooked challenges of corporate culture. This book offers a unique perspective on Indian work culture, intertwining personal narratives and case studies. Divided into four parts, it covers cultural undercurrents, lifestyle choices, the corporate lifecycle, and expert insights, with a special focus on the impact of COVID-19 on the workplace. This book is an indispensable resource.



AI For You
 Author: Shalini Kapoor
 Price: Rs1,118.40
 Publisher: Bloomsbury

'AI For You' is a transformative guide that exposes the complexities of Artificial Intelligence while offering practical insights for businesses. This book equips individuals involved in AI, from builders to sponsors, with essential frameworks and tools for seamless integration into business processes. In a world where AI both promises innovation and raises concerns, it acts as a beacon, addressing the fears of various stakeholders. It narrows the gap between the potential of AI and its actual impact. With clear and accessible guidance, it empowers readers to navigate the AI landscape effectively.



Non-Fiction

- Elon Musk by Walter Isaacson
- The Theory of Everything by Stephen Hawking
- The Escape Artist by Jonathan Freedland
- The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck by Mark Manson
- My Friend Anne Frank by Hannah Pick-Goslar

Ekta Books

A blend of architecture and artistry

Bara Imambara captures the essence of Lucknow's vibrant past, blending intricate Mughal designs with awe-inspiring architectural brilliance.



Asafi Mosque situated inside the complex of Bara Imambara.

ANISH GHIMIRE
LUCKNOW

The gate leading inside the city of Lucknow proudly declares, "Muskurayi aap Lucknow mein hain" (Smile because you are in Lucknow). During my brief stay, the city lived up to its promise. Known as the city of Nawabs, with a rich history going centuries back, the city is abuzz with autos, rickshaws, honks of public buses and the constant loud sounds of the metro going over your head, irritable honks of public buses and food that leaves you wanting more.

In such a happening place stands Bara Imambara, built in 1784 by Asaf-ud-Daula. 'Bara' means big, and 'Imambara' is a building with a big hall where people assemble for mourning congregations. This building was originally built to provide employment for the public because, at that period, the country was going through a famine, and it was seen as a relief project.

I walked through the grand entrance gate known as Rumi Darwaza (Turkish Gate), wiping my sweat and fighting the Lucknow heat, entering the vast complex. Echoing in all corners was a voice from the speaker that kept reminding the visitors of the many rules inside the historical place. I tried not to let the wonder

overwhelm me as I walked through the complex.

To my right stood the elegant Asafi Mosque, recently painted in cream-like white. Its design is visually pleasing and a testament to the Mughal era's artistic finesse. Its walls are adorned with intricate calligraphy and elegant designs, reminiscent of a time when such aesthetics held great importance. I couldn't help but admire the tremendous effort the craftsmen put into bringing the Nawab's vision to life, meticulously crafting the elegant domes which seemed to touch the sky. The mosque's serene atmosphere stands in stark contrast to the bustling city just beyond its walls.

Upon stepping into the main hall—known as Asafi Hall—I was immediately struck by its sheer size. It is vast and impressive, appearing to stretch into eternity, and its massive arched roof seemed to defy gravity. What's even more intriguing is that it stands without the support of pillars or beams. The interlocking system of bricks, a hidden secret, upholds this colossal structure, leaving one in awe of the brilliance of the builders of the past.

This very hall houses a large vaulted central chamber with the tomb of Asaf-ud-Daula. Standing beside his tomb was a chilling moment, knowing that the remains of a great historical figure was resting just a few feet below.

After scanning the large hall, the guide took me to my favourite part of the Imambara—the labyrinth or the Bhoal Bhoalaya. This labyrinth sits right above the main hall, and because the hall is unsupported, the ceiling had to be lightweight, so the hollow labyrinth was born. It is quite impossible to figure out the Bhoal Bhoalaya on your own, as it is a confusing network of corridors and staircases. So, it is necessary to have the company and guidance of a guide.

As I moved with my guide through the maze, I thought I could feel the presence of the past inhabitants who had walked through these confusing passageways. What fascinated me most was the maze's design: every sound, no matter how faint, echoed through the structure, enhancing its aura of mystery.



TRAVEL

The guide whispered from a distance, his head close to the wall, and the sound reached my ears, even though he was out of sight. It felt as if the walls carried the whispers. We exchanged astonished glances. When the guide reappeared, he smiled and remarked, "Now, you understand why they say that walls have ears."

Exiting the maze, I climbed to the roof, which offered a breathtaking view of Lucknow. The city spread out in front of me, its modern skyline contrasting the monument's historic charm. It was a moment of reflection, contemplating how centuries had passed, and yet, Bara Imambara stood as a timeless witness to the changing tides of history. As I stood there, taking it all in, I felt recharged by the air coming in from all directions.

After descending from the terrace, my brisk guide led me to the final stop in the Imambara, Shahi Baoli (Stepwell). Also referred to as the royal stepwell, it sits underground and is another example of architectural brilliance in the complex. This didn't surprise me much since it was built at a time when architecture wasn't just functional but also a work of art.

The moment I descended the steps that led me underground, I noticed the sudden drop in temperature. The Shahi Baoli served as a cool refuge during the blistering summer day. The well-planned architecture of the Baoli allowed it to naturally regulate its temperature. The way to the main well is locked, but visitors can throw coins through jail-like doors into the well in order to try out their luck, much like we do in Davis Falls in Pokhara.

Entering the underground corridors, I felt a slight chill because it was cold and dimly lit. I turned on my phone's flashlight and saw the walls adorned with intricate Mughal carvings.

Upon reaching a spot where we could see the well, the guide informed us that the well acted as a CCTV camera at the time. He explained that individuals inside the structure could discreetly observe those entering, as their reflections would be visible on the well's water, but the people entering could not see the people

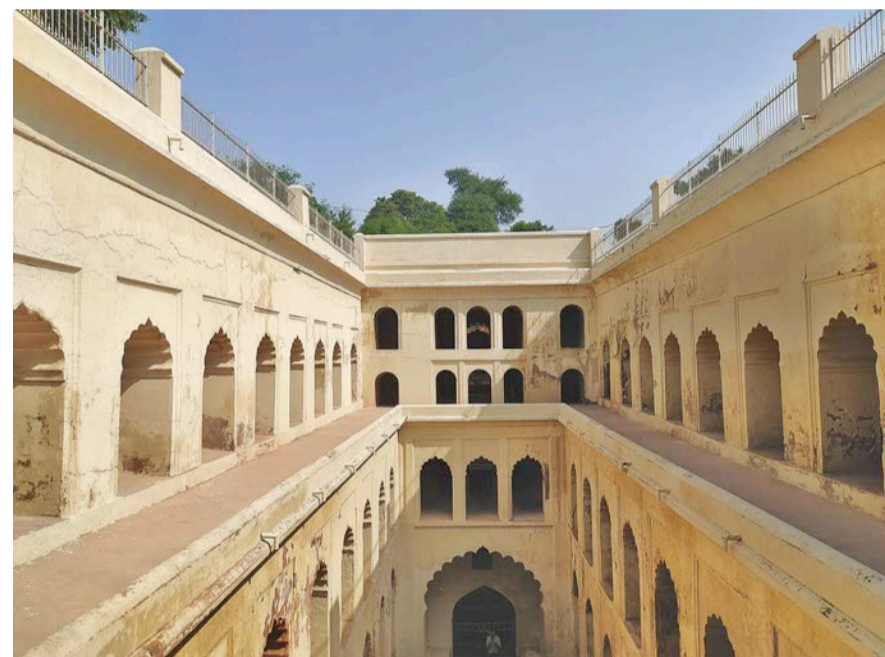
inside the building.

I waited to see that happen, and when a group entered through the gate, I was stunned; their faces were perfectly mirrored on the water's surface, showcasing the ingenuity behind the well's design, serving both as a water source and a security measure.

My experience at Bara Imambara was a delightful one. I had never seen such a remarkable work of architecture before—it is beautiful, interesting and ahead of its time.



Rumi Darwaza, the portal to Bara Imambara.



Underground stepwell known as Shahi Baoli.

Exploring the duality of tradition and modernity

Kishor Sharma's 'Living in the Mist' explores how the Rautes resist new ways of life, highlighting the complex relationship between photography, culture and the evolving socio-political landscape of Nepal.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF KISHOR SHARMA

NIRANJAN KUNWAR

We know that discourse around art practice is influenced by technological advances. Photography is no different. More than other forms, this medium straddles a liminal space between art and science, its value and utility a topic of criticism as well as fascination, ever since its invention in France in the 1820s. At its advent, the required bulky tools were accessible to only a few. Those involved were mainly attempting to figure out its social purpose. Many of these early practitioners sought to capture painterly images influenced by the dominant art form of the era. In the 1870s, France began using photographs for surveillance and as a source of evidence in criminal courts. By that point, the technology had already evolved; cameras were more readily available and photographs became coveted artifacts useful for recording memories.

Yet, in a 1931 essay, Walter Benjamin lamented the industrialisation of photography, nostalgic for the 1840s when the field was ultra-niche. He was reacting to

photography's mass use, recoiling from the documentation of grotesque images of wars, famines and human ugliness. Photography was rapidly decoupling from its closest cousin, painting, the realm of delicate minds and beautiful things. Ironically, in a 1973 article, Susan Sontag refers to Benjamin's lamentation, claiming that it was only with "industrialisation that photography became an art", a reaction against the utilitarians by those concerned with style, taste and conscience. And in 2023, this writer wonders how Sontag would respond to the expeditious technological inventions of the past three decades—the creation of the Internet and the proliferation of digital images via smartphones and social media. We are at a precipice, caught up in intergenerational culture wars and anticipating a future dominated by Artificial Intelligence.

With this in mind, I entered Patan House, a small building on a long-term lease by photo.circle, to check out an exhibition by Kishor Sharma, 'Living in the Mist'. It's a small show contained inside a small room. The work itself is not new. Sharma's larger exhibition with a longer title, 'Living in the Mist—The Last Nomads of Nepal',

was one of several attractions of Photo Kathmandu in 2015. The current show, on display at Patan House until the end of November, features similar photographs, similarly rendered in black and white. The nomads from the 2015 subhead refer to the Raute people of Nepal, who still adhere to their nomadic lifestyle in the western districts of Nepal.

Sharma, who grew up in the eastern region of Nepal, first encountered the Rautes in 2011 as part of an assignment for a workshop. That time, he took a few photos, which were subsequently published. Sharma mentioned this during a panel discussion on October 11—the day of the

show's opening—explaining that since he was trained in Communications and Journalism, his focus in 2011 was more straightforward and goal-oriented. Soon after, in 2012, during his time at the Danish School of Journalism, he received proper encouragement to follow up with the Rautes. He also began thinking more deeply and broadly, not just about this particular project but about the scope and impacts of photography in general.

Sontag put forward the idea that to photograph is inherently an aggressive act. "To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have. To photograph is to turn people into objects that can be symbolically possessed (New York Review of Books, October 18, 1973)." Sontag does acknowledge the various uses of photography in the modern world as "a social rite, a tool of power, a defense against anxiety." The stakes continue to get complicated as the world gets more digital and images become more ubiquitous.

photo.circle was founded in Nepal in 2007 as a platform for diverse photographers, but its vision is unambiguous. The founders intend to "nurture unique voices that document and engage with social change in Nepal."

This intention provides further clues to Sharma's ongoing exhibition—the photos of Rautes were not propped up solely for our aesthetic pleasures, nor are we meant to simply comment on the quality of light, the scale of the images, or to get sentimental about the past. In fact, one could argue that in terms of artistic innovation, the exhibition does not offer much. This century is distinguished not by the kind of images found in Sharma's collection (painterly retrospectives evoking the early 20th century) but by the "poor image"—low-res

compressed pictures like memes, thumbnails, screenshots—whose meanings arise from being modified and circulated. (Farago, NYT, October 10, 2023)

So what's the value of 'Living in the Mist'? The organisers have unfurled multi-layered options for engagement—the exhibition is only a small doorway to Sharma's evolving journey that spans over a dozen years. Be sure to delve into the accompanying book, also published by photo.circle, which includes Sharma's personal narratives and notes. These reflections are a testament that attempts to counter Sontag's charge. The words reveal a Nepali trying to understand Nepal and its people.

The photographs could be a metaphor for the postmodern, globalised world that tugs at individual concerns.

Together, the words and images begin to address and resolve the many purposes of photography—Is it art? Is it documentation? Or is it more about the process, which encapsulates individual growth and leads everyone towards a shared understanding?

Since his first encounter, Sharma has travelled to the western districts numerous times to find the Rautes and commune with them. He wasn't interested solely in capturing their portraits and outfits. He began getting interested in how they were perceived by the villagers they passed by. He felt the need to slow down to read instructive anthropological texts.

At one point, the Rautes might have numbered in the thousands in Nepal, but these days, their population has dwindled to about a hundred. They mainly barter to survive, receiving grains from the community in exchange for pots and pans they make. As Nepal modernised, there have been consistent attempts to "civilise" the Rautes and bring them into the spheres of "development." The state wants to provide citizenship cards to them, even land, and to send their children to schools. These markers would bolster government data and please Western donors concerned with education and economic productivity.

Yet, this kind of simplistic framework shirks larger ideas and deeper concerns. 'Living in the Mist' could be viewed as a troubling metaphor for the postmodern, globalised world that tugs at individual concerns (career, home ownership) and poses pertinent questions to politicians, media professionals and Instagram influencers seeking likes.

To do justice to this project, one must situate it in the context of Nepal's socio-political landscape, which is still nursing a hangover as a result of the exclusionary Panchayat era policies. One must also remember that Nepal's economy is largely dependent on foreign aid and remittance from migrant labour. "Development" has been a buzzword since the early nineties when the population embraced democracy and the state freed the market. During that chaotic decade, when these dynamic forces crashed head-on with the Internet and swathes of Nepalis began migrating to various countries, it was easy to forget our Eastern culture and indigenous roots. Even today, mainstream newspaper headlines describe the Rautes as "the ones who don't know" and "who are from the jungle", among other things. Viewed from a capitalistic, industrial lens, they appear as ignorant fools without skills. Yet, Sharma wondered, "What could we learn from them?"

During the panel discussion, Dharendra Nalbo, a co-founder of the Open Institute of Social Science, mentioned that since he is properly integrated into modern society, he can't afford not to send his children to school. He doesn't even have the luxury of entertaining that option. For the Rautes, that question is still alive, profound and loaded with meaning. Many of them openly question our modern values—Why send children to schools? Why get citizenship cards? We have been living like this for generations and we like it this way. To that end, the Rautes might be more liberated than us, more courageous, more in tune with nature and less anxious; their lifestyle a successful resistance against social conformity and modernism.



Kunwar is the author of 'Between Queens and the Cities', a queer memoir published by FinePrint in 2020.