



THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

Nepal's largest selling English daily
Printed simultaneously in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bharatpur and Nepalgunj

Vol XXXII No. 40 | 8 pages | Rs. 5
Friday, March 29, 2024 | 16-12-2080

36.7° C 5.5° C
Dipayal Jomsom

TODAY

NATIONAL

Prime Minister Dahal and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba met on Thursday. Endorsement of the transitional justice bill and making Parliament effective were the major agendas, leaders said. Pg 2

India has renewed the power export permit to Nepal for three months. The Indian side agreed to the renewal three days before its expiry though the Nepal Electricity Authority had been pursuing it for months. Pg 5

OPINION

While most Nepalis today own personal papers in various volumes, our society does not have well-resourced archives in which they can be properly deposited, writes Pratyoush Onta. Pg 4



MONEY

Chinese tech giant Xiaomi launched its first EV in Beijing on Thursday, injecting itself into a fiercely competitive sector in the world's largest car market. Xiaomi is known for affordable smartphones. Pg 6



SPORTS



The 24-team lineup for the European Championship is complete after Poland, Ukraine and Georgia finally qualify for the tournament in Germany. France will likely go into the tournament as the favourite. Pg 7



Students from various schools sit for the exam at Kanya Mandir Higher Secondary School at Nhyokha in Kathmandu. The nationwide Secondary Education Examinations (SEE) began on Thursday with half a million students being tested for the tenth-grade assessment.

CIAA charges 19 in mobile device management system purchase scam

Case filed against Telecommunications Authority ex-chairs Jha and Khanal, among others.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MARCH 28

The Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) on Thursday filed a corruption case against 19 individuals, including two former chairmen of the Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA), and two firms.

The anti-graft body registered the

case at the Special Court, accusing former chairmen of the authority, Digambar Jha and Purushottam Khanal, along with 17 others, of irregularities in the purchase of the Mobile Device Management System (MDMS) by the NTA.

Former senior director Ananda Raj Khanal of the NTA, incumbent directors Dipesh Acharya and Min Prasad Aryal, and deputy directors Binod

Chandra Shrestha, Surendra Lal Hada and Rewati Ram Pantha have been made defendants in the case, the CIAA said in a statement on Thursday.

Assistant directors Bijay Kumar Rai Yadav, Nirajan Koirala, Sandeep Adhikari and Surya Prasad Lamichhane and Deputy Director Achyutananda Mishra have also been accused of corruption.

>> Continued on page 2

Ministries to be reminded to enforce diplomatic code

The rules specify how to conduct diplomatic meetings and how office bearers should present themselves.

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, MARCH 28

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is writing to all line ministries, including the Prime Minister's Office, to strictly adhere to the diplomatic code of conduct in order to streamline meetings with foreign officials, leaders, and diplomats. It will also reiterate that all correspondence to foreign countries should be made through the foreign ministry.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha has made implementing the diplomatic code his top priority and appears determined to enforce it with urgency. Shrestha became the foreign minister for a second time early this month.

"We are writing to all line ministries once again to adhere to and follow the diplomatic code of conduct," Amrit Rai, the foreign ministry spokesperson, told the Post. The protocol division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is issuing a circular to all line ministries on Friday to follow the code.

Shrestha himself first introduced the diplomatic code of conduct in 2011 when he was the foreign minister in the Jhala Nath Khanal Cabinet. Successive governments failed to enforce or follow it despite calls from different sectors for strict adherence to the code for effective communication with foreign nations, agencies and offices.

Article 3 of the code states that the Code of Conduct applies to persons

holding public office and officials drawing remunerations and perks from the state treasury. "On the basis of Article 3, we are going to issue the circular again," a senior official at the protocol division told the Post.

Ahead of his China visit, the deputy prime minister instructed us to issue a letter to all line ministers requesting that they follow the code, said Rai. A copy of the code of conduct is publicly available on the foreign ministry's website. The old text which has been amended multiple times will be circulated, said Rai. "If needed, we will adjust and amend the code according to the suggestions and inputs from the line ministries."

Foreign ministry will send a circular to all ministries to implement code first out in 2011.

Last year too, after Pushpa Kamal Dahal became the prime minister, he had decided to enforce the diplomatic code through a Cabinet decision but that did not happen. Later, when Dahal ditched the political alliance with the CPN-UML, Rastriya Swatantra Party and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party and took the Nepali Congress on board the government, the issue of enforcing the code took a back seat.

>> Continued on page 2

United States changes how it categorises people by race and ethnicity

Momentum for changing the race and ethnicity categories grew during the Obama administration in the mid-2010s.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ORLANDO, FLORIDA, MARCH 28

For the first time in 27 years, the US government is changing how it categorises people by race and ethnicity, an effort that federal officials believe will more accurately count residents who identify as Hispanic and of Middle Eastern and North African heritage.

The revisions to the minimum categories on race and ethnicity, announced on Thursday by the Office of Management and Budget, are the latest effort to label and define the people of the United States. This evolving process often reflects changes in social attitudes and immigration, as well as a wish for people in an increasingly diverse society to see themselves in the numbers produced by the federal government.

"You can't underestimate the emotional impact this has on people," said Meeta Anand, senior director for Census & Data Equity at The

Respondents have the option to pick multiple categories at the same time such as 'Black', 'American Indian', 'Hispanic'.

Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. "It's how we conceive ourselves as a society. ... You are seeing a desire for people to want to self-identify and be reflected in data so they can tell their own stories."

Under the revisions, questions about race and ethnicity that previously were asked separately on forms will be combined into a single question. That will give respondents the option to pick multiple categories at the same time, such as "Black," "American Indian" and "Hispanic."

Research has shown that large numbers of Hispanic people aren't sure how to answer the race question when that question is asked separately because they understand race and ethnicity to be similar and they often pick "some other race" or do not answer the question.

A Middle Eastern and North African category will be added to the choices available for questions about race and ethnicity. People descended from places such as Lebanon, Iran, Egypt and Syria had been encouraged to identify as white, but now will have the option of identifying themselves in the new group. Results from the 2020 census, which asked respondents to elaborate on their backgrounds, suggest that 3.5 million residents identify as Middle Eastern and North African.

"It feels good to be seen," said Anna Eskamani, a Democrat from Orlando whose parents are from Iran. "Growing up, my family would check the 'white' box because we didn't know what other box reflected our family. Having representa-

tion like that, it feels meaningful."

The changes also strike from federal forms the words "Negro" and "Far East," now widely regarded as pejorative, as well as the terms "majority" and "minority," because they fail to reflect the complex racial and ethnic diversity.

>> Continued on page 2



Be #TotallySorted with Colgate Total.

Health choices can be confusing. But your oral health need not be. Get the new Colgate Total, the **All-In-One*** toothpaste.

☒ Cavities

☒ Staining

☒ Plaque

☒ Tartar

☒ Enamel

☒ Freshens

☒ Gum Problems

☒ Sensitive Teeth

Colgate

NEW*

Total 12

Stronger 12-Hour Anti-Germ Protection

Follow us

DISTRICT DIGEST

Arzu Rana undergoes surgery in India

KATHMANDU: Arzu Rana Deuba, chair of the House of Representatives' Agriculture, Cooperative, and Natural Resource Committee, underwent successful surgery in India on Wednesday. The lawmaker, who is also the wife of former prime minister and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba, had been visiting India for follow-up examinations. Kamal Rawal, her personal secretary, stated that she underwent successful surgery for Hyper Parathyroidism at the Max Hospital in New Delhi, India. She left for India on March 15 by informing the federal parliament secretariat. "Currently, Dr Arzu Rana Deuba's health is improving. As per the doctors' recommendation, she will have to remain in the hospital for further treatment," the statement said.

Body of man missing in Karnali recovered

DHANGADHI: The body of Lokendra Shahi, who had gone missing after jumping off the Karnali Chisapani bridge on Monday, was recovered from the Karnali river near Tikapur on Thursday. According to Shivaraj Joshi, information officer at the District Administration Office, Shahi's body was recovered from Sanakatti Ghat at ward 2 of Tikapur Municipality. The victim was among 17 Holi revellers who had jumped into the Karnali river on the day of the festival on Monday. They had allegedly told the security personnel that they would just take photographs on the bridge.

Man murders wife in Rautahat

RAUTAHAT: A 40-year-old man allegedly murdered his wife in Rautahat district on Wednesday. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Om Khanal, 35-year-old Setimaya Waiba died on the spot after her husband Tirtha Waiba attacked her with a sickle. The couple, who had gone to collect fodder, had got into a heated argument which led to the death, police said. The incident came to light after the accused, in an inebriated state, admitted to the locals of committing the crime. Tirtha has sustained serious injury to his neck after he attempted to take his own life by slitting his throat with the sickle, police said. He has been admitted to the Civil Hospital in Chandranigahapur and further investigation into the matter is underway, Khanal said.

Dahal and Deuba meet as conflict victims grow weary

The two leaders convened after victims pressed Dahal over stalled transitional justice process.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MARCH 28

When the Nepali Congress was part of the ruling coalition with the CPN (Maoist Centre) until earlier this month, both the parties advocated for a swift endorsement of the amendment bill on the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act should be endorsed without delay. They even suggested that the bill should be endorsed through a vote if the CPN-UML refuses to endorse it by consensus.

However, the Congress's voice regarding the bill has changed after Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the chief of the Maoist Centre, ousted the largest party from the ruling coalition and formed a new government in partnership with the CPN-UML on March 4. Since then there has been no discussion in the bill.

In recent days, the Congress has been protesting in the House of Representatives to register its opposition to the induction of Rastriya Swatantra Party chief Rabi Lamichhane, who is accused of misusing cooperative funds, as deputy prime minister and home minister in Dahal's Cabinet.

Amid the deadlock, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba held a meeting on Thursday. "Endorsement of the transitional justice bill and making Parliament effective were the major issues of discussions between the two leaders," said Govinda Acharya, press advisor to the prime minister.

The amendment bill has been under consideration of the Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee of the House of Representatives for more than a year. It is not sure when the committee will resume discussion on the bill. Dahal has been reiterating that conclusion of the transitional justice process is his top priority.

The 'commitment paper' of the new ruling alliance issued a few weeks ago has listed revision of the bill one of its major priorities. Victims of the insurgency along with human rights defenders have been demanding a revision of the bill without further delay.

A section of the conflict victims on March 22 had asked the government to endorse the bill before taking any decision on transitional justice.

Another section of the victims also has demanded not to delay the amendment under any pretext. Holding a meeting with Dahal on Wednesday, the victims, led by Bhagiram Chaudhary, a former chair of the Conflict Victims Common Platform,



Pushpa Kamal Dahal

however, demanded that the government start a process to appoint office bearers in the two transitional justice commissions, as per a recent court ruling, while the law amendment process continues.

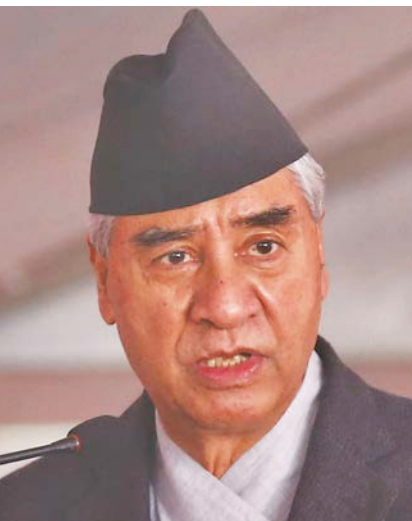
"We urged the prime minister to start the selection process within the court's deadline using the authority to remove difficulties," said Chaudhary. Section 42 of the Act authorises the government to remove difficulties.

However, such a decision (of removing difficulties, which means appointing office bearers) must be presented in Parliament within 30 days of its commencement. Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons have been getting extensions based on the provision.

The Supreme Court on March 12 had given the government a month to start the process to select office bearers for the two commissions.

The two commissions have been inactive since July 2022 after the government decided to extend their terms without retaining their chairmen and members. Against the government's previous claims that the bill to amend the existing transitional justice law would be endorsed by October 2022, which would have also opened the door for recruiting new office bearers, there has been no progress.

Until the office bearers are appointed, the court had asked the government to constitute task forces within the commissions in order to carry out preliminary investigations into the victims' complaints.



Sher Bahadur Deuba

While the truth commission has received 63,718 complaints, the disappearances commission is sitting on around 2,400 cases. The victims group that met Dahal on Wednesday asked him to immediately constitute a recommendation committee to pick office bearers for the commissions ensuring that it adopts a credible selection process.

The victims have also sought time to allow filing of complaints mainly by the victims of rape and sexual violence, transfer of property of the victims of enforced disappearances, and establishing separate units within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Their other demand is to make public the whereabouts of the victims of enforced disappearances.

In November 2006, the then government and the Maoist party through the Comprehensive Peace Accord had committed to disclosing the whereabouts of people disappeared or killed during the decade-long insurgency within 60 days of the signing the pact. They have yet to fulfil the commitment.

"We also request the prime minister to prioritise revision of the Act and make sure the bill gets endorsed from the ongoing session of the federal parliament," reads one of the demands of the victims.

The court in its order on March 12 had also reminded the government to immediately amend the law as per its earlier verdict. On February 26, 2015, the Supreme Court had directed the government to amend the Act's around half a dozen provisions that allowed amnesty even in cases of serious human rights violations.

Government reinforcing diplomatic codes for foreign meetings

>> Continued from page 1

The diplomatic code is mandatory for all ministers. They are required to meet foreign diplomats and representatives of foreign governments in the presence of a foreign ministry official.

The code's introduction in 2011 was widely praised by political, bureaucratic and security apparatuses and even by sections of Kathmandu's diplomatic circle. Initially only serving politicians and bureaucrats were within the code's ambit.

It was revised in 2012 and a fresh draft was tabled in the Cabinet, which did not go into the implementation but the Dahal government last year had decided to reinforce it.

A joint-secretary at the foreign ministry said that it never went into force as the political leadership did not commit to following it.

According to officials, the original draft of the code was amended several times and broadened in 2013 and 2014. The DCC has been revised to include the prime minister, ministers, top leaders of political parties, office bearers, and incumbent and former government officials.

Speaking at the House of Representatives on March 19, Deputy PM Shrestha vowed to rigorously enforce the code "very soon".

"We are going to take a bold step in implementing the diplomatic code of conduct," he added. "For a broader consensus on foreign relations and diplomacy, an effective diplomatic code of conduct is a must."

He urged the party leaders, parliamentarians, and elected representatives to keep national interests at the core while engaging in foreign relations and diplomacy. "While keeping national interests at the core, we should be careful of others imposing their own agendas. Our independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity given to us by our ancestors could face serious challenges. So on the issue of foreign relations, its policy, and conducting diplomacy, we should have a common voice

and national consensus," said Shrestha.

As per the code, the aforementioned officials and leaders must obtain prior approval from the foreign ministry before meeting foreign diplomats and officials and must brief the ministry on the meeting. The code also attempts to regulate political parties and asks them to set up a separate protocol section within the party for recording the contents of meetings as the institutional memory of their organisations.

While meeting foreign dignitaries, parties must also provide the details of their agenda to the concerned government ministries, in case details are sought.

The DCC has also proposed designated venues for party leaders to hold meetings with foreign diplomats and dignitaries. However, this does not apply to courtesy and farewell calls. It also has provisions to curtail the frequent and unnecessary movements of diplomats.

Some political figures had expressed reservations over the content of the DDC during the premiership of Sushil Koirala in 2015.

"The DDC was again tabled in the Cabinet when Koirala was the prime minister but due to reservations from various sections, it was put on hold," the joint-secretary added. "Successive governments tried to enforce the diplomatic code, but in vain."

Besides specifying how to conduct diplomatic meetings, the code also states how office bearers should present themselves at diplomatic meetings and functions.

The code requires even former prime ministers to inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before meeting ambassadors, diplomats, and foreign leaders.

In 2020, when Oli was the prime minister, then-foreign minister Pradeep Gyawali also publicly announced that the government would revise the diplomatic code and make it compatible and friendly. However, the Oli government failed to implement it.

US government redefines how it identifies people by race and ethnicity

>> Continued from page 1

The revisions also encourage the collection of detailed race and ethnicity data beyond the minimum standards, such as "Haitian" or "Jamaican" for someone who checks "Black."

The changes to the standards were hammered out over two years by a group of federal statisticians and bureaucrats who prefer to stay above the political fray. But the revisions have long-term implications for legislative redistricting, civil rights laws, health statistics, and possibly even politics as the number of people categorised as white is reduced.

Donald Trump, the presumptive GOP nominee for president, recently alluded to arguments made by people who allege Democrats are promoting illegal immigration to weaken the power of white people. As president, Trump unsuccessfully tried to disqualify people who were in the United States illegally from being included in the 2020 census.

Momentum for changing the race and ethnicity categories grew during the Obama administration in the mid-2010s, but was halted after Trump became president in 2017. It was revived after Democratic President Joe Biden took office in 2021.

The changes will be reflected in data collection, forms, surveys and the once-a-decade census questionnaires put out by the federal government, as well as in state governments and the private sector because businesses,

universities and other groups usually follow Washington's lead. Federal agencies have 18 months to submit a plan on how they will put the changes in place.

The first federal standards on race and ethnicity were produced in 1977 to provide consistent data across agencies and come up with figures that could help enforce civil rights laws. They were last updated in 1997 when five minimum race categories were delineated—American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and white; respondents could pick more than one race. The minimum ethnic categories were grouped separately as not Hispanic or Hispanic or Latino.

The interagency group that worked on the latest revisions noted that categories are sociopolitical constructs, and race and ethnicity are not defined biologically or genetically.

Racial and ethnic categories used by the US government reflect their times.

In 1820, the category "Free Colored People" was added to the decennial census to reflect the increase in free Black people. In 1850, the term "Mulatto" was added to the census to capture people of mixed heritage. American Indians were not explicitly counted in the census until 1860. Following years of immigration from China, "Chinese" was included in the 1870 census. There was not a formal

question about Hispanic origin until the 1980 census.

Not everyone is on board with the latest revisions.

Some Afro Latinos feel that combining the race and ethnicity question will reduce their numbers and representation in the data, though previous research by the US Census Bureau did not find significant differences among Afro Latino responses when the questions were asked separately or together.

Mozelle Ortiz, for instance, is of mixed Afro Puerto Rican descent. She feels the changes could eliminate that identity, even though people can choose more than one answer once the race and ethnicity questions are combined.

"My entire lineage, that of my Black Puerto Rican grandmother's and all other non-white Spanish speaking peoples, will be erased," Ortiz wrote the interagency group.

Others are unhappy about how some groups of people such as Armenians or Arabs from Sudan and Somalia were not included in the examples used to define people of Middle Eastern or North African background.

Maya Berry, executive director of the Arab American Institute, said that while she was "incredibly happy" with the new category, that enthusiasm was tempered by the omissions.

"It is not reflective of the racial diversity of our community," Berry said. "And it's wrong."



A mother carrying her baby navigates a road undergoing sewer maintenance at Ikhalukhu in the old quarter of Patan on Wednesday.

CIAA seeks Rs919.83m recovery, Rs232m penalty from MDMS scam accused

>> Continued from page 1

The CIAA has accused the individuals and consultant Nuemera JV of illicitly profiting from the procurement of the device management system and causing losses to the NTA.

The anti-graft body has filed the case demanding the recovery of Rs919.83 million, which the government allegedly incurred as a loss, from those accused.

It has also demanded that the accused be sent to prison and a penalty of another Rs232.06 million be imposed on the defendants.

The CIAA has accused the officials of submitting the bidding document without preparing cost estimation with a breakdown and of presenting baseless and fictitious documents. According to the commission, the officials had submitted the bid documents only manually even as the Public Procurement Act 2007 has made electronic bidding (e-bidding) mandatory.

Likewise, the officials had allegedly stifled competition in the bidding process to favour certain firms by introducing a 'bid security' provision, which is not required by the law, and

managed to obtain approval for 'unnaturally high' quotation prices.

The commission has also asserted that their acts of hiding and destroying official documents, preparing forged dossiers and quoting abnormally inflated prices were proven in its investigation.

The commission has accused them of deliberately overlooking various mandatory provisions and a report presented by another consultant TAEC Consult, which had recommended a review of the request for proposal.



Florida state representative Anna Eskamani poses in front of her office, Wednesday, in Orlando. For the first time in 27 years, the US government is announcing changes to how it categorises people by race and ethnicity. "It feels good to be seen," said Eskamani, whose parents are from Iran.



Powered by



“महिलामा लगानी : सभ्य र समुन्नत समाजको थालनी”

नेपालको कुल जनसंख्यामा पुरुषभन्दा महिला करिब सात लाख बढी छन्। एक करोड ४२ लाख ९१ हजार (४८.९६%) पुरुष भएको नेपालमा महिलाको संख्या एक करोड ४९ लाख एक हजार (५१.०४%) छ। जनसंख्यामा महिलाको संख्या बढी भए पनि शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, रोजगारी, उद्यमशीलता तथा आर्थिक, सामाजिक र राजनीतिक पहुँचमा भने महिला निकै पछाडि छन्। केन्द्रीय तथ्याङ्क विभागको विवरणअनुसार नेपालमा पुरुष साक्षरता दर ८३.६ प्रतिशत पुगे पनि महिला साक्षरता दर ६९.४ प्रतिशत मात्रै छ। देशको निजामती क्षेत्रमा ७३ प्रतिशत पुरुष छन् भने २७ प्रतिशत मात्र महिला छन्। अझ प्रहरीमा ८.८ प्रतिशत र सेनामा ४.४ प्रतिशत मात्र महिला छन्। सरकारी, सार्वजनिक तथा कर्पोरेट क्षेत्रको रोजगारीमा पछाडि पारिएका महिला अनौपचारिक र असंगठित व्यवसाय र रोजगारीमा लाग्न बाध्य छन्।

महिलाको हिस्सेदारी बढाउन राजनीतिक हस्तक्षेप आवश्यक ठानेर नयाँ संविधानले संसदमा महिलाको उपस्थिति ३३ प्रतिशत हुने सुनिश्चित गरेको हो। यस्तै राजनीतिक प्रबन्ध भएकाले स्थानीय तहमा पनि महिला जनप्रतिनिधिको संख्या करिब एक तिहाई पुगेको छ। आर्थिक, सामाजिक र राजनीतिक जागरणकै कारण हो, यो बीचमा देशले महिला राष्ट्रपति पाएको छ। सभामुख, उपसभामुख, न्यायाधीश, प्रधानन्यायाधीश, नेपाल सरकारका सचिव, सुरक्षा निकायमा उच्च अधिकारी, विभिन्न कर्पोरेट संस्थामा प्रमुख कार्यकारी अधिकृत र गैरसरकारी संस्थाको नेतृत्वमा महिलाको उपस्थितिको साक्षी देश बनिसकेको छ। प्रविधि, मनोरञ्जन र खेल क्षेत्रमा पनि महिला नेतृत्वले आफ्नो योग्यता साबित गरिरहेको छ।

कुनै पनि भूमिकामा महिला पुग्नु आफैँमा सम्पूर्ण उपलब्धि होइन। नेतृत्वमा महिला पुगेपछि आर्थिक तथा सामाजिक न्यायका लागि नीति निर्माण र कार्यान्वयनमा के फरक आयो ? मूल प्रश्न यही हो। बहसका लागि कान्तिपुर मिडिया ग्रुप प्रस्तुत गर्दछ, चौथो संस्करणको **निर्भीक नारी**

IVF Partner



Haircare Partner



Celebration Partner



Paint Partner



Skin Care Partner



Hospital Partner



France beatable, Germany resurgent, Italy seek redemption at Euro 2024

Over the recent international break, the French lost soundly to Germany and England were defeated by Brazil, underlining their vulnerability and showing that perhaps there's no overwhelming favourite.



Kylian Mbappe Jude Bellingham Robert Lewandowski Tony Kroos Cristiano Ronaldo.

■ ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, MARCH 28

The 24-team lineup for the European Championship is complete after Poland, Ukraine and Georgia became the final teams to qualify for the tournament in Germany. Here's a look at the how the favourites, title outsiders and underdogs stack up with less than 80 days to go until the opening game:

The favourites
France will likely go into the tournament as the favourite, given their status as the leading European team in the FIFA ranking—at number two—and having been the champions or runners-up at three of their last four major international tournaments. Fronted by Kylian Mbappe, the French squad remains deep and will be motivated by their loss in the World Cup final in Qatar. Number three ranked England have regrets after losing the title match against Italy at the last Euros in 2021 and have their strongest pool of players for 20 years, with Jude Bellingham now a star at Real Madrid. Over the recent international break, France lost soundly to Germany and England were defeated by Brazil, underlining their vulnerability and showing that perhaps there's no overwhelming favourite at the Euros. Belgium have lost some of their luster and will be concerned by the absence of goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and the persistent injury issues of Kevin De Bruyne. Portugal, meanwhile, have so much talent in their squad and were the only team to qualify with a flawless record. At 39, can Cristiano Ronaldo win the Euros for a second time?

The host nation
Never write off Germany. After a miserable 2023 ended with friendly losses to Turkey and Austria, the Euro 2024 host kicked off this year by beating France and the Netherlands over the last week. Former Bayern Munich coach Julian Nagelsmann seems to have Germany ticking again with help from Real Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos, who was back in the German lineup for the first time since the last Euros in 2021. Bayer Leverkusen's 20-year-old attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz set a record with his goal just seven seconds into

the win over France. Germany will have something to prove as hosts. Group-stage exits at the last two World Cups and a round-of-16 loss to England at the last Euros mean Germany have won just three of their last 10 games at major tournaments. Facing Scotland, Hungary and Switzerland in the group stage at Euro 2024 seems a relatively kind draw.

The defending champs
There is a familiar feel to Italy seeking redemption at the European Championship after failing to qualify for the previous World Cup. However, the defending European champions have faced more upheaval over the past year with coach Roberto Mancini quitting and key player Sandro Tonali banned for gambling. While there is no doubting new coach Luciano Spalletti's credentials after he led Napoli to their first league title in more than three decades last season, there are some question marks about the talent he has at his disposal. There have been positive signs as Spalletti appears to have Italy playing the type of entertaining football he delivered at Napoli, but the Azzurri still have problems in attack. Lazio forward Ciro Immobile was dropped by Spalletti after struggling with form, as was Atalanta's Gianluca Scamacca. That means an Argentina-born player could be leading the way for Italy in Germany. Mateo

INSIGHTS
Six teams were unbeaten during qualifying - France, England, Portugal, Belgium, Romania and Hungary.
Portugal are the only side to have won every match in qualifying. They scored 36 goals and conceded only two.
Spain and Scotland lost their only one qualifying match.
Manchester City forward Erling Haaland and Arsenal midfielder Martin Odegaard will not be in the Euro 2024 as Norway failed to qualify.
Sweden will not play a part in Germany as they failed to qualify for the first time since 1996.
Georgia will be playing their first major tournament at Euro 2024.

Retegui spent his entire playing career in the South American country before moving to Genoa this season. He has Italian citizenship through his maternal grandmother.

The title outsiders
The European Championship has produced previous surprise winners in a way the World Cup has not. Denmark won in 1992 after the players came back from vacation when the team was put into the tournament as a late replacement for Yugoslavia. Greece stunned the football world by taking the title in 2004. With 16 of 24 teams advancing to the knockout rounds in the current format, the chance to go on a hot streak is always there. In recent Euros, Austria and Turkey were fashionable dark horse picks, although they both flopped. Austria's 6-1 win over Turkey in a friendly on Tuesday suggests coach Ralf Rangnick has created a team of substance. Austria also caught the eye by scoring the fastest-ever international goal last week—through Christoph Baumgartner after six seconds at Euros-bound Slovakia. However, Austria are in a tough group with France, the Netherlands and Poland. The Dutch have a solid foundation for a title shot with a defence led by Virgil van Dijk. But that would require winning a Euros knockout game for the first time in 20 years. Switzerland also have the talent for a deep run and are in what looks like a relatively weak group aside from top-seeded Germany.

The underdogs
Who else might the neutrals be rooting for at Euro 2024? How about Georgia, who will be the biggest underdog when the country making their debut at a major tournament after qualifying through the playoffs. It gives star forward Khvicha Kvaratskhelia—one of the best players in Europe over the past two seasons—an even bigger stage to shine. Other underdogs to watch out for are Albania, appearing in only their second major tournament, and Scotland, whose tartan-wearing fans will be noticeable and whose team's run of impressive results under Steve Clarke has included a win over Spain.

Acharya clinches NPGA Tour

■ SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, MARCH 28

Nepal number one amateur golfer Sadbhav Acharya recorded a seven-stroke victory over pro Bhuvan Nagarkoti to win the title of the Surya Nepal NPGA Tour Championship, the sixth event under the Surya Nepal Golf Tour 2023-24, at the par-72 Gokarna Golf Club on Thursday. Overnight leader Acharya carded a bogey-free 3-under 69 for the 72-hole total of 14-under 274 to claim the third major career title. Acharya became the youngest winner in the Tour by winning the Surya Nepal Challenge last year. He won the season-opening Surya Nepal Central Open and became the first player to win two titles in the 2023-24 season. Pro Nagarkoti finished overall second with the score of 7-under 281 after he faltered to 3-over 75 in the final round. He was one stroke behind Acharya going into the final round and finished first among pros winning the top prize money of Rs140,000. Amateur Vijay Shrestha Einhaus finished as runner-up in amateur section. He was tied for overall third with pro Niraj Tamang at 4-under 284. Einhaus carded 1-under 71 in the final round, while Tamang carded 2-under 70. Tamang received runner-up prize money of Rs96,000. Dinesh Prajapati finished third among pros with the total score of even-par 288 and earned Rs74,000. Prajapati played 3-over 75 in the final round. Tashi Tsering fired second straight 1-under 71 to finish third among amateurs at 1-over 289 and was sixth overall. National team member Rahul



Amateur Sadbhav Acharya recorded a seven-stroke win over Bhuvan Nagarkoti for his third major career title.

Bishwakarma was seventh at 291 after he played 2-over 74 in the final round. Sanjay Lama and Dhana Bahadur Thapa shared fourth position among pros at 4-over 292. They received Rs54,500 each. Former top pro Rabi Khadka (74) was sixth at 5-over 293 and walked home with Rs42,500. Rame Magar and Bhuvan Kumar Rokka shared the seventh position at 7-over 295. They bagged a purse of Rs37,250 each. Yuvaraj Bhujel and Bal Bhadra Rai were tied for ninth at 299 and they got Rs 32,000 each.

RNGC Scramble Golf tomorrow



Organisers of RNGC Scramble Golf Tournament meet the press in Kathmandu on Thursday.

■ SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, MARCH 28

RNGC Scramble Golf Tournament is set to take place at the Royal Nepal Golf Club (RNGC) on Saturday. A total of 29 corporate houses are sponsoring the participating teams in the one-day event, according to RNGC captain Mithun Rai. Each team comprises a professional and three amateur golfers chosen by the sponsors. This will be an 18-hole tournament with a shot-gun start. Each team will compete for the lowest 18-hole score. Each team member will hit a tee shot on every hole, with the best drive selected as the ball in play. The team will choose the position where the best tee has landed for the next shot. It continues until the hole is completed. The best score among the four-member team will be decided

as the winners of the tournament played in stroke play scratch handicap format. Neeli, Matrika Eye Centre, Himalayan Bank and Salt Trading have two teams each, while Roadhouse Cafe Pvt Ltd, Heidelberg, Arshiya Couture Creations Soft Nepal, AEDA, Dynasty Air, Sahara Builders, Integrated Solutions, Altitude Air, San Soju, Bhatbhateni International Pvt Ltd, Lama Excursion Pvt Ltd, JGI, Vijay Motors, Wisdom Law Solutions, Bad Boys Group, Leon Motors, Premier Organics, SALICO and Kailash Helicopter will have one team each. Scramble golf often has a relaxed atmosphere, making it fun for golfers of all skill levels. RNGC has been organising the tournament since 2006. The tournament aims at gathering corporate houses under one roof to promote golf. It will also help the Nepali golf professionals with financial incentives.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

The morning kicks off with a dreamy start, dearest Aries, whisking you off to a world of fantasy and introspection. You'll feel reinvigorated and ready to take action toward your dreams, pushing you to broaden your horizons.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

A sweetness surrounds you and flows through the community this morning, dear Bull. Allow this cosmic climate to soften your heart, making space for love and new connections. You'll crave intimacy and adventure all at once.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Allow unrealistic expectations to dissolve into the ether, dear Gemini. This energy is perfect for appreciating where you're at and what you've built, taking a more gracious approach toward attaining more. Your thoughts shift toward matters of the heart.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Invite in peace while embracing your most intuitive and spiritual self, dearest Cancer. This energy encourages you to know yourself better by connecting with the divine. Your attention shifts this afternoon, nudging you to catch up on any work.

LEO (July 23-August 22)

Don't be afraid to face your shadow this morning, darling Leo. Allow your fears, shame, and grief to dissolve away, rising like a Phoenix from the ashes. A rush of energy flows through you this afternoon, triggering a lust for life.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

You'll have a hypnotic presence, dearest Virgo, winning the admiration of others. If you're currently crushing on someone special, harness these vibes with a bit of soft flirting.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

You'll have a chance to release pressure and reconnect with gratitude, dear Libra. Take the edge off by embracing mindfulness, being fully present while appreciating beauty wherever it may lie.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

You'll have a chance to release pressure and reconnect with gratitude, dear Libra. Take the edge off by embracing mindfulness, being fully present while appreciating beauty wherever it may lie.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Consider how being gentler with yourself can provide a sense of nurturing and emotional security. You'll perk up this afternoon, heightening your energy levels and popularity. While many will demand your attention, be mindful of where your focus is directed.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

You'll have a soothing effect on those you encounter this morning, dear Sea-goat. Use this energy to your advantage, looking for opportunities to expand your network, share ideas, or sell others on your visions. Seek personal space this afternoon.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

You'll come across as both down-to-earth and incredibly dreamy this morning, dear Aquarius. This energy will be particularly beneficial within financial and professional matters, helping you sway things in your direction.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)

Follow the light and invite in blessings this morning, dear Pisces. Your sweetness will be contagious and the universe will be eager to reward kind gestures. However, you'll be forced back down to reality, expanding your horizons and ability to manifest success.

Astrology.com

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Large boat
5 "Be quiet!"
10 Elec. unit
13 Campbell of "Scream"
14 False gems
15 Always
16 Greek god of war
17 Standard of perfection
18 "Your guess is as good as —"
19 Placard
21 Angry (2 wds.)
23 Hideaway
25 Rowing need
26 Buyer of stocks and bonds
30 Sweetens
34 Briny deep
35 Lukewarm
37 Fiend
38 "— Land"
40 Station
42 Change purse item
43 Musical work
45 Song and dance show
47 Formerly called
48 Clippers
50 Adjacent (hyph.)
52 Wire measure
53 Nevada city
54 Fruits in a bunch

DOWN

1 Ginger cookie
2 "Last Action —"
3 Currier's partner
4 Mortar and —
5 Lively
6 Held
7 Employ
8 Top performer
9 God of the sun
10 Eager
11 Bill of fare
12 Make ready
15 Came into view
20 Compass point
22 Praise
24 Cowboy with a lariat
26 British —
27 Under
28 Worth
29 Get mellow
31 — acid
32 Doomed lover

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

PARIS	LAPIS
SALUTE	BELOVED
OVERATE	EXPLODE
DECAL	AWESERGE
LIBRARY	YEP
NETCENT	AFT
ERAS	DEEMOORED
ESTOP	DRYGRATA
DEARTH	FATTROT
EAU	ANONE
PERMILKMAN	
ANTI	ONALETORTE
SAGGING	EDITION
SCORPIO	EVENTS
TREAT	LEDGE

2-29-24 © 2024 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS

33 Derisive look	59 Cabbage
36 White Cliffs locale	60 Perfect place
39 Determined	61 "A friend in —"
41 In formal dress	64 — Jones Industrial Average
44 "— go brag!"	65 Suffix for "Japan"
46 Lab burner	
49 Works hard	
51 Windowed rooftop structure	
54 Hisses	
55 Bullets	
56 Actor — Patrick Harris	
57 Father	



SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

A mimicry on existentialism

Sudam CK's 'Ubur Ubur Tikki' is a dialogue-free exploration of human boundaries, emotions and the search for meaning through body movement and music.

□ AARATI RAY
KATHMANDU

No elaborate sets, no dialogues, no named characters—just body movement and music. That's the signature style of director Sudam CK. Following 'Aiya! Maya' and 'Paanch', CK returns with yet another movement and sound-based theatrical play which uses the body to tell a story, or rather, many stories this time around.

Unlike the usual plays driven by dialogues, in 'Ubur Ubur Tikki', there is no fixed storyline. The audience can interpret the play as they see fit.

The play 'Ubur Ubur Tikki', currently staged at Kausi Theatre in Teku, Kathmandu, stars Akash Nepali, Binita Gurung, Sarita Kathayat, Nistha Tripathi, and CK. However, attempting to decipher the meaning behind every movement will lead to confusion.

What you need to do is just let your emotions and intuition take over logic and reasoning. I understood this 10 minutes into the play. As I was fretting over every little detail, I realised that not everything needs a crystal clear explanation. Rather, I should simply enjoy the experience. And that, I believe, is the point of this play.



We are often so lost in finding meaning and understanding everything about life, and where our paths and actions are headed, that we forget to live in the moment. The play encourages us to feel and live within the moments and be more conscious of our body movement. In doing so, we might comprehend less but feel more. Sometimes things become much clearer when we stop searching for meaning.

The bell rings and play begins. We see five actors, seemingly portraying insects chasing something akin to a ray of light. Sometimes, they run after their shadows, other times after each other. Sometimes support each other and other times, they fight one another. Throughout the play, I struggled to discern whether they were enemies, friends, different insects altogether, or different body parts of the same insect.

One thing that seemed constant, though, was that they were running after something, trying to find something, perhaps to find themselves in the dark.

The motifs, shadows, and the premise of characters running after light remind the audience of Plato's Allegory of the Cave'. In it, prisoners chained in a cave perceive shadows on a wall as reality because they have never seen the outside world. Similarly, in 'Ubur



Actors playing the character of insects in a scene from 'Ubur Ubur Tikki'.

Ubur Tikki', the characters represent individuals trapped by their own perceptions or social constructs.

From what I have understood from Plato's allegory, the play might also be challenging the audience to differentiate between illusion and reality in their own lives. Especially, the absence of dialogue and reliance on physical expression blur the lines between what is real and what is perceived, prompting viewers to question their understanding of reality.

While both the 'Allegory of the Cave' and 'Ubur Ubur Tikki' explore philosophical concepts of perception, reality and liberation, they do so through different mediums and narratives. Plato's allegory is a philosophical thought experiment, while the play presents these ideas through song and body movements.

The play also invites the audience to explore existential themes of identity, question, and purpose. This can be linked to Shakespeare's famous lines from 'Hamlet', "To be or not to be, that is the question", where he contemplates the nature of existence, wondering whether it is nobler to endure the hardships of life or to end one's suffering through death.

Aside from the excellent delivery of intriguing themes, the play excels in its musical composition. Music director Naresh Gajurel's



background score keeps the audience engaged till the end. If the music wasn't as good, the play might not have worked. Even the audience not habituated to watching plays void of dialogues might be drawn to the play, thanks to its score. Moreover, the coordination of actors' body movements and expressions with

music is very smooth.

Throughout the play, a whiteboard is used as an empty prop. In many scenes, we see insects looking at the whiteboard, getting shocked, bored or amazed. The whiteboard can be interpreted either as a mirror that shows the reality of one's life or as an empty canvas that is waiting to be filled

by colours inside every individual.

A noteworthy aspect of the play is the effective use of lighting. The skilled handling of light behind the scenes brings the production's minimalistic aesthetic to life.

In an interview after the premiere, CK shared his interpretation of the play, saying, "We are conditioned to include and

exclude, to see and not see, to hear and not hear, to accept and not accept, to follow and not follow, to praise and to loathe. We want to be different, and yet, we also want to be like others. The play is about the experiences of such human boundaries and to acknowledge, or perhaps celebrate, frailties and contractions."

As CK suggests, 'Ubur Ubur Tikki' does focus on emotions, human experiences, and intuition over logic, which can be connected to various art and literary movements, like Romanticism, that prioritise emotional expression and intuitive understanding over strict rationality.

The play's emphasis on silent communication through physical expression and music and its exploration of inner struggles and existential themes resonates with the Romantic notion of the 'sublime'—the idea that emotional experiences can transcend rational understanding.

Moreover, the play's focus on the human condition and the complexities of relationships echoes Romantic literature's exploration of the individual's connection to nature and society, as well as the tension between the rational and the emotional.

Effective use of lighting and a good background score are the play's noteworthy aspects.

Through these connections, it is evident that CK's play is an exemplary expression of art. But it also cannot be ignored that this form of play is an avant-garde experiment in the Nepali theatre scene.

For someone who is not familiar with plays driven by bodily movements and no dialogue, 'Ubur Ubur Tikki' might be confusing and possibly boring.

If you are enthusiastic about art and theatre, 'Ubur Ubur Tikki' is a must-watch. The play is a step towards revolutionising Nepali theatre with its silent yet strong narrative. It also promotes the notion that there are other forms of expression and communication besides vocal speech and words.

UBUR UBUR TIKKI	
Where:	Kausi Theatre, Teku, Kathmandu
Director:	Sudam CK
Music director/composer:	Naresh Gajurel
Cast:	Akash Nepali, Binita Gurung, Sarita Kathayat, Sudam CK
Duration:	1 hour
Date:	Till March 31
Showtime:	5:00 pm (except Tuesday), extra 1:00 pm show on Saturday

Ariana DeBose to host Tony Awards for the third straight time

□ ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, US

It's a new location but the same host for the Tony Awards: Ariana DeBose will make it three in a row as MC of theatre's most watched event, which this year moves uptown to Lincoln Center.

The Academy Award winner and Tony Award nominee, who hosted both the 2023 and 2022 ceremonies, will be back this year for the show on June 16, and will produce and choreograph the opening number.

"I couldn't pass up the chance to host the Tonys one more time, at Lincoln Center. I'm excited to collaborate with the team to create an incredible celebration of this season's achievements on Broadway for our community and for everyone at home," said DeBose in a statement.

DeBose was widely cheered for the way she hosted last year amid the Hollywood writers' strike, leading a show that had no script and opening the telecast by dancing and leaping her way through the lobby of the United Palace Theatre. She earned an Emmy nomination for her work.

DeBose is a theatre veteran, with roles in 'Summer: The Donna Summer Musical', 'Hamilton', 'A Bronx Tale', 'Pippin', 'Motown the Musical', 'Bring It On: The Musical' and 'Company'. She won an Oscar for her role in Steven Spielberg's remake



of 'West Side Story' and was in 'Schmigadoon!' on Apple TV+.

This year's location—the David H Koch Theater—is the home of the New York City Ballet and in the same sprawling building complex as Lincoln Square Theater, which houses the Broadway venue Beaumont Theater.

Like last year, the three-hour main telecast will air on CBS with a pre-show on Pluto TV, with some Tony Awards handed out there.

The Tony eligibility cut-off date for the 2023-2024 season is April 25, and nominations for the 2024 Tony Awards will be announced on April 30. The awards are presented by The Broadway League and the American Theatre Wing.

Last year, the intimate, funny-sad musical 'Kimberly Akimbo' took the best new musical crown, and Tom Stoppard's 'Leopoldstadt', which explores Jewish identity with an intergenerational story, won best play. Sean Hayes won lead actor in a play for 'Good Night, Oscar', and Victoria Clark won for 'Kimberly Akimbo'.

World Theatre Day celebrations at Mandala Theatre



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MANDALA THEATRE NEPAL/FACEBOOK

□ POST REPORT
KATHMANDU

Mandala Theatre Nepal celebrated World Theatre Day on Wednesday, uniting the global theatre community for a day of cultural exchange and artistic reflection. Guests, including Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Hit Bahadur Tamang, as well as litterateurs and artists Abhi Subedi, Sabitri Kakshapati, Bijay Bisfot, Joerg Andrees, Dayahang Rai and Buddhi Tamang were present at the event.

The event commenced with the reading of a powerful message from the International Theatre Institute, penned by 2023 Nobel

Prize winner Jon Fosse. The message underscored theatre's ability to foster social change and cultural dialogue.

A highlight of the event was the announcement of the 3rd Nepal International Theatre Festival (NIT Fest) 2025, themed 'Light of Indigenous Wisdom'. Scheduled for March 16 to March 27, 2025, the festival aims to celebrate diverse cultures and traditions, offering a platform for indigenous communities to showcase their heritage.

Additionally, the Mandala Alumni Drama Festival (MAD Fest) and its theme 'Youth, Roots, and Stage' were announced. Scheduled for July 5 to July 7, MAD Fest will provide graduates of Mandala Theatre Nepal with a platform to showcase their crea-

tivity. The event also marked the launch of 'Reflections Vol II', a compilation capturing the essence of the 2nd NIT Fest held in 2022. Through articles, interviews and reflections, this book preserves the festival's legacy for future generations.

Attendees also viewed the screening of a documentary highlighting the memorable moments of the 2nd NIT Fest, offering insights into the behind-the-scenes efforts that bring theatre to life.

A panel discussion, featuring senior theatre artists, explored the possibilities of theatre and offered valuable suggestions for future festivals. Emphasis was placed on inclusivity, accessibility, and artistic integrity in festival organisation and management.