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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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Janakpur Jumla

TODAY

NATIONAL

According to the Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction Portal, 46 men and 57 women died in fire related incidents in the past year. The number of people killed in forest fires was eight in the year. Pg 3

OPINION

Nepali society, with its deeply entrenched patriarchal values, harshly judges women's behaviour, particularly in public spheres, argues Rabina Shrestha. Pg 4



MONEY

A member of the parliamentary International Relations and Tourism Committee has said that there is an "invisible" hand preventing the passage of two crucial civil aviation bills. Pg 6

SPORTS

Nepal will begin their 2024 ACC Men's T20 Premier Cup against Malaysia in Oman on Friday. Nepal have been drawn alongside Hong Kong, Malaysia, Qatar and Saudi Arabia in Group A. Pg 7



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Tourists visit View Chula on the border of Curans Rural Municipality-8 in Dailekh and Birendranagar Municipality-16 in Surkhet district to see rhododendrons in full bloom. Rhododendrons of various colours decorate Nepal's upper hills in the spring season.

Koshi Head Khapung summons special provincial assembly session

UML, Maoist members demanded the session as chief minister refuses to go for floor test.

By BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, APRIL 10

A special session of the Koshi Provincial Assembly has been called for April 18 amid Chief Minister Kedar Karki's reluctance to either face the assembly or to resign.

Parshuram Khapung, the province head, summoned the session at the request of more than a quarter of the assembly members as the Karki government was unwilling to do so.

Generally, the provincial assembly session is called by the province head on the government's recommendation. But as Karki was reluctant, the CPN-UML and the CPN (Maoist Centre) members made a written request to Khapung for the special session.

Karki, who revolted within his party Nepali Congress after it decided to support Indra Bahadur Angbo of the Maoist Centre as chief minister candidate, became the chief minister with the UML's support on October 14.

He was appointed chief minister as per Article 168(5) of the constitution under which a provincial assembly member can claim the chief ministerial position by producing the support of the majority members.

Individual assembly members, irrespective of their party's decision, can support the candidates of their choice for the chief minister to be elected as per the Article 186 (5). As many as eight Congress provincial assembly members had stood against the party's decision to back Angbo. Karki garnered the support of 48 members in the provincial assembly with 93 seats.

However, the political dynamics in the province changed with the formation of a new alliance at the centre on

March 4. As per the deal among the five ruling parties, the UML has been given the leadership in the province.

With 40 seats, the UML is the largest party in the assembly while the Maoist Centre has 12. Together, the two parties have more than half the seats in the assembly. As they have withdrawn their support, the Karki government is in the minority.

The two parties have been demanding that he either win a vote of trust or resign. They have also presented a claim for a coalition government.

But Karki has maintained that as he became the chief minister as per Article 168 (5), which is the last option for government formation, there is no possibility of a new government. Dismissal of his government will directly lead to the dissolution of the provincial assembly, he claims.

The two parties have been demanding that Karki either win a vote of trust or resign.

But not all buy his argument. "There is a Supreme Court precedent which says the legislature cannot be dissolved as long as there is the possibility for the formation of a new government. More than 50 percent of provincial assembly members are with us, which is enough to form a new government," Rewati Raman Bhandari, UML chief whip in Koshi, told the Post.

>> Continued on page 2

Dahal under growing pressure to probe his home minister

As fringe ruling parties too want issue sorted, UML leader accuses opposition of trying to drive a wedge in coalition.

By ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, APRIL 10

The main opposition, the Nepali Congress, continues to up the ante against Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Rabi Lamichhane.

The party has been buoyed by wider political support as it seeks to bolster its case for the formation of a parliamentary probe committee to look into Lamichhane's alleged involvement in the misuse of cooperative funds.

According to Congress leaders, the party is invigorated by the growing support of other forces in the House of Representatives to its call for the committee's formation.

But Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has strongly stood in defence of his home minister.

As parliament continues to be polarised over the formation of a parliamentary committee to study the misuse of funds totalling billions of rupees by hundreds of cooperative operators across the country, opposition parties led by the Congress will now pile pressure on the government to comply, according to party leaders.

On Wednesday, another opposition Rastriya Prajatantra Party echoed the Congress' demand for a parliamentary probe and joined the main opposition in obstructing the regular House business. Even the ruling CPN (Unified Socialist) urged the government to heed the demand of the opposi-



Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane

tion parties. "Our strategy and objective are clear," Bishwa Prakash Sharma, a general secretary of the Congress, told the Post.

"What we are demanding in the House is based on facts and figures. Moreover, our demand captures the plight of the millions of people duped by cooperatives."

As the demand enjoyed broader support, the Congress would not abandon it, said Sharma. "We only have a few questions for the home minister."

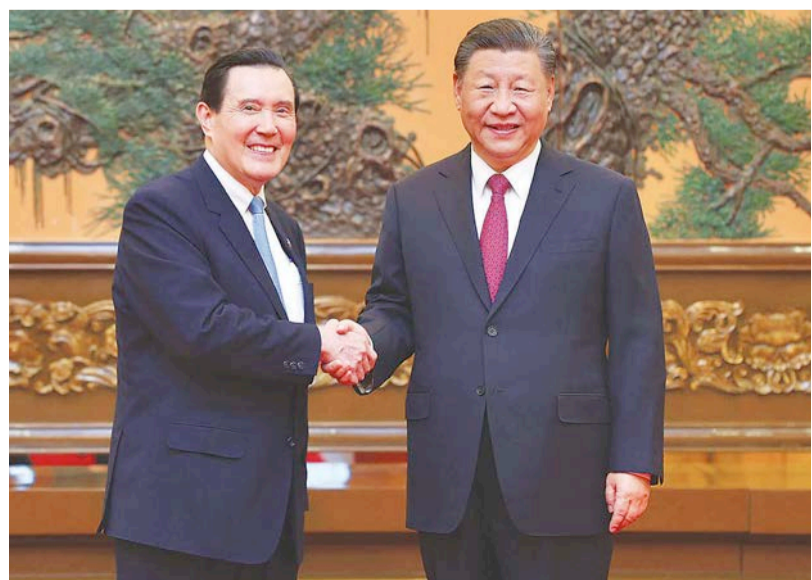
"First, the money deposited in cooperatives should not be used to run a media company, which is an embezzlement," said Sharma. "The Gorkha Media Pvt Ltd where GB Rai was the chairman and Lamichhane the managing director illegally diverted over Rs800 million [from cooperatives], but where is that media company now? It has been shut down. And there are also documents that prove Lamichhane had shares in the media house. That is why it is a serious issue."

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China's Xi says nobody can stop 'family reunion' with Taiwan

Ma, president from 2008 to 2016, last year became first Taiwan ex-leader to visit China.



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets Taiwan ex-president Ma Ying-jeou in Beijing on Wednesday.

By REUTERS
BEIJING, APRIL 10

Chinese President Xi Jinping told former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou on Wednesday that outside interference

could not stop the "family reunion" between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and that there are no issues that cannot be discussed.

Since the defeated Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in

1949 after losing a civil war to Mao Zedong's communists, no serving Taiwanese leader has visited China.

Ma, president from 2008 to 2016, last year became the first former Taiwanese leader to visit China, and is now on his second trip to the country, at a time of simmering military tension across the strait.

Ma had been widely expected to meet Xi this time around, having first met Xi in Singapore in late 2015 for a landmark summit shortly before the current Taiwan president, Tsai Ing-wen, won election.

Meeting Ma in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, where foreign leaders normally hold talks with top Chinese officials, Xi said that people on both sides of the strait are Chinese.

"External interference cannot stop the historical trend of reunion of the country and family," Xi said, in comments reported by Taiwanese media.

Xi did not elaborate but in Chinese terminology referring to external interference over Taiwan is generally aimed at the support Taipei gets from Western countries like the United States, especially arms sales which infuriate Beijing. People on both sides of the strait are Chinese, Xi said.

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NATIONAL

DISTRICT DIGEST

Fire destroys five thatch-roof homes

PARASI: Fire destroyed five thatched-roof houses at Guthi in ward 6 of Pratappur Rural Municipality in Nawalparasi West on Tuesday night. The fire that broke out from Manoj Pal's house spread to four other houses, destroying all properties including food grains and clothes. Preliminary police investigation shows the fire was caused by an electrical short-circuit. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Resham Bohora, a buffalo was also burnt to death in the incident.

Six construction workers injured in forest fire

RUKUM EAST: Six construction workers got injured in a forest fire in Ranma in ward 3 of Putha Uttarganga Rural Municipality in Rukum East district, on Wednesday. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Madhavraj Kharel of the District Police Office, the workers were constructing a foot trail from Ranma to Chattrabhir Hill. The cause of the fire is not known. A police team from the Ranma Area Police Office has been deployed to rescue the workers and take them to hospital, and efforts are going on to bring the fire under control, said Kharel.

Special session to decide reluctant chief minister's fate

>> Continued from page 1

"Karki should either resign or will be ousted."

Issuing its verdict on February 23, 2021 in a petition against the dissolution of the lower house by then prime minister KP Sharma Oli, the apex court stated that the head of government can't dissolve the legislature "as long as the House can produce a government and an option for that remains".

The UML and the Maoist Centre want Karki to resign. They are preparing to get a resolution motion demanding his resignation to be endorsed by the provincial assembly.

"The motion to be endorsed will show the assembly doesn't have trust in him. If he still refuses to resign, we will wait for a month for him to seek a vote of trust," said Bhandari. "The province chief will announce a new government if he doesn't get a vote of trust within a month."

The UML and the Maoist Centre withdrew their support on Monday, which marked the start of a 30-day countdown for the vote of trust.

Constitutional experts say in a parliamentary system the executive must always have the legislature's trust. Senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi said one can not remain chief minister without ensuring majority in the provincial assembly.

"Karki either has to prove he holds a majority in the Koshi provincial assembly or resign," he told the Post. "The assembly cannot be dissolved as long as there is a possibility of another government."

Tripathi says the Koshi provincial assembly would have been dissolved had Karki failed to get a vote of confidence within 30 days after becoming the chief minister. Now there is no constitutional hurdle to form a government as per 168 (2), he said.

Commenting on Karki's reluctance to not to resign or face the assembly, Tripathi said, "How will his government pass the budget? And what about passing the bills?"

Dalit ex-chief of district body alleges caste-based abuse

Somnath Portel accuses Dambar Giri, an ex-vice-chair of Haldibari Rural Municipality, of verbally abusing him with caste-related derogatory words.

PARBAT PORTEL
JHAPA, APRIL 10

Former chief of the District Coordination Committee (DCC) in Jhapa has claimed that he has become a victim of caste-based discrimination and abuse. Somnath Portel, the provincial level CPN-UML leader who earlier served as the DCC chief, lodged a complaint at the Area Police Office in Birtamod on Wednesday.

Portel, in his police complaint, claimed that Dambar Giri, a former vice-chairman of Haldibari Rural Municipality in Jhapa, verbally abused him using caste-related derogatory words. According to him, Giri telephoned him on March 31 and inquired about the agenda of the UML's recent meeting. Portel claimed that Giri verbally insulted Portel after the latter refused to divulge details of the meeting.

"He (Giri) called me on my cell phone and asked me to share what leaders said during the recent UML district convention. He started abusing me after I said that I could not

disclose such matters," said Portel. "He verbally abused me using derogatory words regarding the caste-based discrimination and untouchability."

Portel lodged the complaint seeking justice and action against the guilty. He also provided an audio record as evidence to the police.

Giri was elected vice-chairman of Haldibari Rural Municipality on a UML ticket in 2017. But in 2022, he contested for the post of chairman as a rebel candidate during the local elections after the UML refused him a ticket. Giri later joined the Madhav Kumar Nepal-led CPN (Unified Socialist) before signing up to the Rastriya Swatantra Party recently.

"We have received a complaint and will investigate it. Anyone found guilty of committing crime will face action," said Prakash Bista, Deputy Superintendent of Police at the Area Police Office in Birtamod.

Incidents of caste-based discrimination and untouchability are unchecked in Jhapa, a Tarai district of Koshi Province. According to Dalit rights activists, most cases of caste-

based discrimination and untouchability rarely make it to the police. Such cases are usually settled in the village at the behest of village leaders.

Cases of caste-based discrimination rarely make it to the police, say Dalit rights activists.

"Even the high profile Dalit leader who earlier served as the DCC chief has been a victim of caste-based discrimination. What would be the situation of ordinary Dalit people in Jhapa and the whole country?" said Naresh Khatri, an advocate and Dalit rights activist in Jhapa. According to him, two caste-based discrimination cases were registered with the police in the current fiscal year of 2023-24.

In October 2023, Ranju Bishwakarma was discriminated against for being a Dalit by her neigh-

bours. Two women had been arrested after the victim lodged a police complaint. The case is sub judice in the Jhapa district court though the accused were released on bail.

During the Covid pandemic in August 2020, national record-holder athlete Chandra Kala Langade had been assaulted by a non-Dalit couple. Langade, who works for Nepal Police and holds two national records in athletics, was seven months pregnant when the incident happened. The couple beat her up when she confronted her neighbour and former Nepal Army personnel Durga Shrestha, along with his wife Bishnu, who attacked Rajan Darji, a local Dalit man allegedly for visiting their eatery in Charali.

The local leaders and police had urged Langade to reach a compromise, but she refused. Her husband Suman Khatri had filed a case at the Area Police Office in Dhulabari seeking justice. Dalit rights activists claimed that the police had attempted an 'out of court settlement' of the case. The police tried to register a case

of 'indecent behaviour' but they finally registered it as a case of caste-based discrimination following pressure from Dalit rights activists.

Section 7 (a) of the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2011, with its third amendment in 2018, says a person who commits the offence referred to in sub-sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 of Section 4 shall be liable to imprisonment between three months and three years and a fine between Rs50,000 and Rs200,000. Section 4 is related to incidents involving caste-based discrimination and untouchability.

However, cases related to caste-based discrimination are running rampant mainly due to poor implementation of laws and lack of mass awareness.

In May 2020, six Dalit youths were killed in Rukum West. Following the killings spurred by caste-based hate, the Ministry of Home Affairs wrote to the province police offices to set up a Dalit desk in all district police offices.



Vendors wait for customers beside their spreads of artisanal crafts and knickknacks at Kathmandu Durbar Square, a major tourist destination, on Wednesday.

POST PHOTO: DEEPAK KC

China president tells Taiwan ex-president they can resolve differences

>> Continued from page 1

"There is no rancour that cannot be resolved, no problem that cannot be discussed, and no force that can separate us."

China has never renounced the use of force to bring democratically-governed Taiwan under its control, and has ramped up military and political pressure to assert its sovereignty claims.

Ma told Xi that tensions have caused unease for many Taiwanese.

"If there is a war between the two sides, it will be unbearable for the Chinese people," Ma said, using a term that refers to people who are

ethnically Chinese rather than their nationality.

"Chinese on both sides of the strait absolutely have enough wisdom to handle all disputes peacefully and avoid heading into conflict."

Responding to the meeting, Taiwan's China-policy making Mainland Affairs Council said it deeply regretted that Ma did not publicly convey Taiwan's people's insistence on defending the sovereignty and democratic system of the Republic of China, which remains Taiwan's formal name.

Beijing should stop intimidating Taiwan and resolve its differences

with Taipei through respectful, rational dialogue, it added.

Taiwanese ex-president Ma tells Xi that tensions have caused unease for many Taiwanese.

Xi called Ma "Mr Ma Ying-jeou" rather than former president, given neither the Chinese nor Taiwanese governments formally recognise the

other. Ma called Xi by title as head of the Communist Party—general secretary.

Tsai and her government reject China's territorial claims, saying only the island's people can decide their future.

China says it will only talk to Tsai if she accepts that both sides of the strait are part of "one China", which she has refused to do.

Xi has only rarely made public remarks about Taiwan in recent months.

Speaking to US President Joe Biden in early April, Xi urged Washington to translate "Biden's commitment of not

supporting "Taiwan independence" into concrete actions.

Xi has also not commented publicly on Taiwan's January presidential election, won by current Vice President Lai Ching-te, viewed by Beijing as a dangerous separatist and who takes office on May 20.

Ma remains a senior member of Taiwan's main opposition party the Kuomintang (KMT), which in January lost the presidential election for the third time in a row, but has no official party position.

The KMT advocates close ties with China and dialogue, but strongly denies being pro-Beijing.

More parties join Congress in demanding parliamentary probe on home minister

>> Continued from page 1

Nepali Congress leaders said they were not targeting the home minister. "We are demanding investigation into all cooperatives that are facing problems in our quest to return the deposits of millions of people," said Sharma.

On Wednesday, too, the opposition lawmakers rose from their seats demanding the resignation of Home Minister Lamichhane and formation of a parliamentary committee to probe his alleged involvement in the cooperative scam.

The only party that appears united in rejecting a parliamentary probe against Lamichhane is the CPN-UML, a central committee member of the Nepali Congress said. "This is not due to the UML's affection for Home Minister Lamichhane, but due to the fear of several of their leaders and cadres that they too could be dragged into various co-operative scams."

The UML leaders have presented varying arguments on a parliamentary probe. A case involving the Pokhara-based Surya Darshan Cooperative, to which Lamichhane has been linked, is sub judice in a court, said UML lawmaker Surya Thapa. "So it cannot be discussed in the House."

"The case of Surya Darshan is under review at the Kaski district court. As per the constitution, no sub judice case can be discussed in the House. We had raised this issue [that

sub judice cases should not be discussed] even when we were in the opposition, and now, as a ruling party, we continue to do so. The Nepali Congress clearly wants to sow division in the ruling coalition," said Thapa.

On Wednesday, too, the House was divided for and against the formation

of a parliamentary probe. Besides the Congress and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, the ruling CPN (Unified Socialist) and Janata Samajbadi Party are also not convinced with the position of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on the probe committee.

Lawmaker Rajendra Pandey of the Unified Socialist, speaking in the

lower house on Wednesday, drew the government's attention to the main opposition's demand and suggested holding "meaningful dialogue" to end the deadlock.

He also seconded the proposal for a comprehensive investigation of cooperative scams and corruption cases right from 1990, as demanded by law-

makers from the main opposition Congress, ruling RSP and other parties.

When Pandey, who is also a vice-chair of the ruling Unified Socialist, was airing his views, Congress lawmakers were seen thumping tables welcoming his statements.

Earlier on Tuesday, he said an accused minister should resign from the post and pave the way for independent investigation. "The insistence [by Lamichhane] to stay in power makes one suspect foul play," Pandey told journalists outside the parliament building.

Maoist lawmakers have focussed on shielding prime minister but are silent on home minister.

A Maoist Centre lawmaker, requesting anonymity, told the Post that the cooperative scam is a serious issue and should be dealt with utmost care.

"Publicly, we cannot demand a parliamentary probe into Lamichhane, but several of our party's lawmakers agree that this issue is nuanced and calls for a more careful consideration," the Maoist lawmaker said. "Prime Minister Dahal is under pressure of [UML chief] Oli not to form

such a committee."

"Growing controversy appears to have caused unease in Lamichhane's party, and some [RSP] lawmakers have been asking us to settle this issue once and for all," the Nepali Congress lawmaker said.

In Parliament, Maoist Centre lawmakers are primarily focussed on shielding the prime minister, but they have been conspicuously silent on home minister Lamichhane. Very few Maoist lawmakers have spoken about this issue in the House.

Maoist Centre lawmaker Madhav Sapkota told the House that the prime minister's reply on the allegations against Home Minister Lamichhane were based on the facts provided by state agencies.

"The prime minister's response may not have satisfied the opposition parties, but Congress should stop targeting an individual," he said.

Lamichhane, who is accused of misusing cooperative funds worth millions of rupees, rejects the charges.

But opposition leaders say such denial is now meaningless.

"Our demand is clear enough. We are not going to let up unless there is a probe panel," Sanjay Gautam of the Nepali Congress told the Post. "You see, the RPP is now fully on board with our demand and other parties like the Unified Socialist and Janata Samajbadi Party are also supporting us. We now have a solid case for a parliamentary probe," he added.



Lawmakers of opposition parties including Rastriya Prajatantra Party (left section) and Nepali Congress (right) protest in Parliament, Wednesday.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF PARLIAMENT SECRETARIAT

Bimala Ghimire elected National Assembly vice-chairperson

The UML lawmaker received 39 out of 55 votes cast.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF PARLIAMENT SECRETARIAT

Ghimire, who was the common candidate of the five-party ruling alliance, waves after victory.

POST REPORT

KATHMANDU, APRIL 10

CPN-UML lawmaker Bimala Ghimire has been elected vice-chair of the National Assembly. The proposal to elect Ghimire as the vice-chair was passed by the majority of the upper house on Wednesday.

A total of 39 votes were cast in favour of Ghimire, who was the common candidate of the five-party ruling alliance. Bishnu Devi Pudasaini of the Nepali Congress received 16 votes in her favour while 39 votes were cast against her.

A total of 55 members were present in today's meeting.

The position was vacant after Urmila Aryal resigned from the post on March 28 on the heels of the changed political equation in the ruling alliance. She stepped down from

the position to pave the way for the election of a lawmaker from one of the other ruling coalition partners to the position as per the understanding reached among the alliance members.

Maoist leader Narayan Dahal was elected chair of the upper house last month. A common candidate of the five-party ruling coalition, Dahal got elected to the post defeating Yuvaraj Sharma of the main opposition Nepali Congress.

The newly formed four-party ruling coalition on March 4 had agreed to elect a Maoist candidate to the top post of upper house chair that went vacant after Ganesh Timilsena completed his six-year tenure as the Assembly chair on March 3.

In the eight-point agreement, the four parties had stated that they would elect a CPN-UML lawmaker as vice-chair of the Assembly.

As peak forest fire season nears, number of human fatalities rises

At least 113 people died and 533 were injured in fire and forest fire related incidents in the past year.

POST REPORT

KATHMANDU, APRIL 10

Three army personnel, who were critically injured while dousing a fire raging in Tipla Masta Bhawani Community Forest of Thuli Bheri Municipality in Dolpa district on Monday, died in the course of treatment. The health condition of a fourth soldier injured in the incident is critical.

He has been receiving intensive care at Kirtipur Hospital, the Nepal Army said in a statement.

The number of people who succumbed to fire and forest fire related incidents last year was 113.

According to the Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction Portal of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 46 men and 57 women died in fire related incidents in the past year. The number of people who died in forest fires was eight in the year. As many as 33 people have been injured and properties worth over Rs2.4 billion have been gutted in fire-related incidents.

The army said that 12,500 personnel were deployed to control forest fires across the country in the current Nepali year 2080. Besides, personnel of the Armed Police Force, Nepal Police and local people have been also risking lives to douse forest fires.

Officials at the Ministry of Home Affairs said that 325 incidents of forest fire were recorded in 51 districts across the country on Wednesday. Since January this year 1,441 forest fire incidents have been recorded throughout the country.

"Forests in the districts adjoining the Kathmandu valley are also burning, making the Valley's air toxic," said Sundar Sharma, a forest fire expert. "Except in the mountainous region, people across the country are living in gas chamber-like conditions."

The air quality in Kathmandu Valley has been worsening since Sunday due to the rise in forest fires

across the country. According to IQAIR, a Swiss group that collects real-time air-quality data from around the globe, particulate matter pollution (PM2.5) levels of the Valley on Sunday reached hazardous levels—413 micrograms per cubic metre—making the national capital the most polluted city in the world.

The air quality had slightly improved but remained concerning with PM2.5 at 250 micrograms per cubic metre on Monday, 223 micrograms per cubic metre on Tuesday, a very unhealthy level, and 173—an unhealthy level—on Wednesday.

Home ministry says that 325 forest fire incidents were reported from 51 districts on Wednesday.

PM2.5 refers to particulate matter or solid and liquid droplets in the air that are less than 2.5 micrometres, or 400th of a millimetre, in diameter. As per the United States Environment Protection Agency's air quality index, when air pollutant PM2.5 exceeds 300 µg/m3, the level is considered 'hazardous' for everyone and may prompt emergency condition alerts. When air pollutant PM2.5 reaches 201 to 300 µg/m3, air quality is considered very unhealthy; everyone may experience problems, with sensitive groups experiencing more severe effects.

Experts say forest fires in the surrounding districts are mainly responsible for the deterioration in air quality in the Valley.

Wildfires, common during the dry season, peak during April-May in Nepal. The majority of the country's forests—community protected and others—burn every year.



Wildfires, common in the dry season, peak during April-May in Nepal.

Experts say that incidents of forest fires are likely to increase in the coming days due to ongoing dry conditions and a low chance of heavy precipitation in the next few days.

Nepal's valuable forests, which took more than six decades to restore, face a worsening wildfire reality with scarce resources and nearly zero strategies to prevent or fight it. The country has increased forest coverage by 45 percent from around 41 percent in 2019. However, growing incidents of forest fires threaten progress, according to experts.

They ask the authorities concerned to launch an awareness drive about the risk of forest fires, and urge people not to go to forests if there is an out-of-control blaze and the wind blows from all directions.

Wildfires also threaten lives and livelihoods, ecology, and the environment, according to experts.

"Strengthening local governments, imparting training to local residents, providing them with necessary kits to deal with fire incidents, and building artificial ponds are among the ways to deal with fires," said Sharma.

"Raising awareness of the consequences of deliberately causing forest fires, and penalising those responsible could significantly reduce such incidents. We should also make people aware of the dangers of putting out fires."

Humans are responsible for almost all incidents of forest fire in our country and over 60 percent of fire incidents are intentional, according to studies.

Top court bars Gandaki government from taking decisions with long-term consequences

The order issued by Justice Binod Sharma applies until a final verdict is passed.

POST REPORT

KATHMANDU, APRIL 10

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the Khagaraj Adhikari-led Gandaki Province government to refrain from taking any decisions with long-term consequences.

The order issued by the single bench of Justice Binod Sharma has prohibited the government from doing any work other than regular tasks. The order applies until the court issues its final verdict in the writ petition filed challenging the government formation earlier this week.

The apex court has asked defendants including Gandaki Province Head Dilli Raj Bhatta to furnish a

written response by April 19, mentioning why the court should not issue an order as sought by the plaintiff.

The bench prioritised the writ petition and scheduled it for the next hearing on April 22.

On Tuesday, former chief minister Surendra Raj Pandey registered the petition arguing that Adhikari's appointment was unconstitutional. He has demanded the court issue an order for his continuation as chief minister.

In his petition, Pandey argued that the appointment was against the constitution and established precedents and demanded that the court stay the appointment and ensure his continuity as the chief minister.

On Sunday, Adhikari became the

chief minister in Gandaki, a move that blatantly disregarded both the precedent set by the Supreme Court and the principles outlined in the Constitution of Nepal.

Province Head Dilliraj Bhatta appointed Adhikari to the position as per Article 168 (2) of the Constitution after he staked a claim for the chief ministerial position claiming that he had the support of a majority of provincial assembly members including the Speaker.

Adhikari presented the support of 31 members—22 from his party, eight from the CPN (Maoist Centre) and an independent member. The eight from the Maoist Centre include Speaker Krishna Prasad Dhital. Support of 31

members is required for a minimum majority in the 60-strong provincial assembly.

The Congress had urged Province Head Bhatta not to appoint Adhikari as chief minister, arguing that the claim of the UML-Maoist alliance was unconstitutional as they included Speaker Dhital as one of the supporters to make Adhikari as chief minister. A Speaker in the legislature can't take a side except for casting a vote in case of a tie in the assembly.

On July 27 last year, the top court, setting a precedent, annulled the Uddhav Thapa-led Nepali Congress government in Koshi concluding that the Speaker cannot be a part of the government formation process.

Karnali Chief Minister Yam Lal Kandel sworn in

The UML's provincial assembly leader was appointed to the position on Tuesday.

JYOTEE KATUWAL

SURKHET, APRIL 10

Newly appointed Karnali Chief Minister Yam Lal Kandel on Wednesday took an oath of office and secrecy.

Province Head Tilak Pariyar administered the oath of office and secrecy to Kandel amid a function at the Surkhet-based Office of the Province Head.

Province Head Pariyar appointed Kandel, who is UML's provincial assembly leader, to the position on Tuesday after he staked a claim to lead a new government.

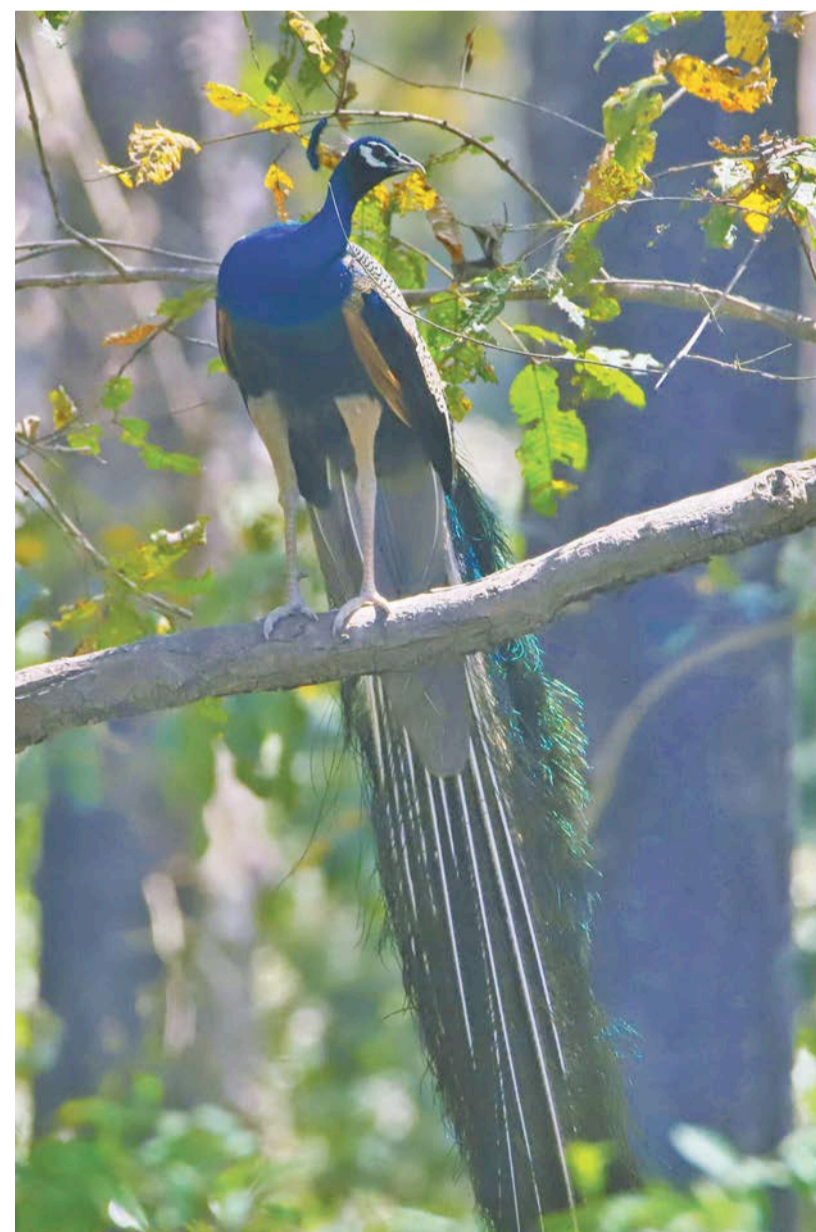
Kandel presented his claim for the

chief ministerial position with the support of 23 provincial assembly members. Kandel has the backing of 13 lawmakers of the CPN (Maoist Centre), nine of the UML and one of the CPN (Unified Socialist).

Support of 21 members is needed to command a majority in the 40-member assembly.

Province Head Pariyar had called on political parties to stake a claim for the government after Raj Kumar Sharma of the Maoist Centre resigned from the chief minister on April 3.

As per a power-sharing deal reached among the ruling coalition partners at the centre, UML was allocated the chief ministership of Karnali.



A peacock pictured near Ambasa in Bardiya National Park recently.

POST PHOTO: MANOJ POUDEL

Post photojournalist Prakash Chandra Timilsena awarded



POST PHOTO

POST REPORT

KATHMANDU, APRIL 10

Photo Editor of Kantipur Publications Prakash Chandra Timilsena was honoured with the Award on Brave Photojournalism on Tuesday.

Deputy Speaker Indira Rana Magar and lawmakers Chandra Bhandari and Santosh Pariyar honoured Timilsena at a function organised by News Express Media in Kathmandu.

Timilsena received the award for his ground-zero reporting of the Israel-Hamas War.

Along with Timilsena, journalists Deepa Dahal, Arun Baral, Rishi Dhamala, Birendra Jairu and Dilip Paudel were honoured with different titles.

Likewise, senior journalist Bhairav Risal was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award.



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation



Nepal Academy of Tourism & Hotel Management
Bardibas, Mahottari

Invitation for the Application of Resource Persons

Date of Publication: 2024 April 11

Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM), Bardibas, Mahottari invites application for Resource Persons on the following Subjects of Bachelors in Hospitality Management (BHM), Kathmandu University. Resource persons will be employed as per requirement on Course Contract. Interested Candidates can apply with CV and academic certificates till April 16, 2024 (2081/01/04) to our e-mail address bardibas@nathm.edu.np or in person at NATHM, Bardibas office.

Eligibility for BHM: Master's degree with at least second division (or its equivalent CGPA) having three years of experience. MPhil or PhD will be preferred.

S.N.	Subjects	S.N.	Subjects
1.	Fundamental of Hospitality Management & Leadership	17	Organizational Behavior and Productivity Management
2.	English for Hospitality	18	Research Methodology & Statistics
3.	Food Science, Nutrition & Sanitation	19	Marketing & Sales for Hospitality Business
4.	Success Skills (Professionalism in Hospitality)	20	Research Project and Diploma Paper
5.	Business Communication & Writing Skills	21	Entrepreneurship for Hospitality
6.	International Foreign Language (Chinese/German/French/Spanish)	22	Tourism Destination Management
7.	Sustainable Hospitality Environment	23	Managing Productivity through people
8.	Ethic and Fair Society	24	Customer Relationship Management
9.	Property, Safety and Security Management	25	Service Quality Management
10.	Managerial Accounting for Hospitality Industry	26	E-Marketing & Distribution
11.	Management of Function & Events	27	Hospitality & Tourism Development Seminar
12.	Tourism Product Development	28	Information Technology in Hospitality
13.	Airlines Operation & Management	29	Hospitality Brand Management
14.	Adventure Tourism	30	Social Media in Hospitality
15.	Hospitality Industry Law	31	Bakery Practical
16.	Behavioral Economic	32	Barista Practical

OPINION



OUR VIEW

Of suitcases and caskets

The sorry saga of Dhan Bahadurs who go abroad with big dreams returning home dead should end.

“So many people, how did they all die?” asks an old war veteran in an intensely chilling scene in Fidel Devkota’s film *The Red Suitcase*, set to release Friday, April 12. The ex-lahure, played by Bipin Karki, is shocked to know from his interlocutor, a mortuary vehicle driver, about the number of dead bodies of Nepali migrant workers that arrive at the airport each day. The driver, played by Saugat Malla, then says, “The government is responsible for all these deaths.” In the film, Malla’s character is seen riding his jeep to Malewa village to deliver the corpse of Dhane, who is yet another victim of sub-human working conditions in Qatar, where he went as a migrant worker to build a football stadium for the 2022 World Cup. The casket that carries Dhane’s dead body is accompanied by a red suitcase inside which is a cacophony of dreams, despair and death.

Devkota’s directorial feature film debut triumphs in its visual representation of the trials and tribulations of Nepalis who have lost their lives building somebody else’s country. It crudely reminds viewers of the failure of the Nepali state, even as it depends on remittance to provide for its citizens. The cost of remittance is unimaginably high. Numbers hardly show the intensity of the costs to human lives, but as Qatar built seven stadiums to host the World Cup, over 6,500 migrant workers from Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh died between 2010 and 2021. Many more have perished in other workplaces in the Gulf, South Korea and Malaysia in Southeast Asia. According to the *New York Times*, at least 2,100 Nepali workers died in Qatar while 3,500 died in Malaysia, around 3,000 in Saudi Arabia, and at least 1,000 in the United Arab Emirates.

No wonder that each day, caskets and suitcases of deceased Nepalis arrive at the Tribhuvan International Airport. According to the Department of Foreign Employment, 680 Nepali migrant workers died in the fiscal year 2019-20 while the figure stood at 1,275 in 2020-21. Similarly, 1,509 workers died in the fiscal year 2021-22 while 1,208 did in the fiscal year 2022-23. The Nepal Rastra Bank’s data for the first six months of the fiscal year 2023-24 shows remittance increasing by 25.3 percent, to Rs733.22 billion. Having found little or no way to bring down inflation and increase exports, the government is intent on sending its youths to the labour markets hoping to bring in more remittance. And with growing remittance comes the risk of more migrant deaths.

The story of Nepali youths toiling in the dangerous labour markets of the Gulf and Southeast Asian countries is now over three decades old, and it seems to have no end in sight. What’s more, successive governments have failed to own up their complicity in the trials, tribulations and deaths of the Nepalis abroad. The story saga of Dhan Bahadurs and their dreams of a good life returning home in caskets and suitcases must end.

THEIR VIEW

Challenges in UP

The state finds itself embroiled in a whirlwind of uncertainty and confusion over candidate selection.

As the political landscape in Uttar Pradesh gears up for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the state finds itself embroiled in a whirlwind of uncertainty and confusion over candidate selection. The recent developments in key constituencies highlight the complexities and challenges faced by opposition parties in navigating the intricate social and political dynamics of India’s most populous state.

One of the focal points of this tumultuous saga is Meerut, a constituency historically dominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). However, the shifting social calculus and the emergence of new contenders have rendered the seat a battleground for political supremacy. The Samajwadi Party’s (SP) attempt to tap into Dalit votes by fielding Bhanu Pratap Singh was met with internal resistance, underscoring the intricacies of caste politics and regional affiliations.

The narrative extends beyond Meerut, with similar dramas unfolding across the state. In Bijnor and Moradabad, the SP’s experimentation with Dalit candidates reflects a strategic attempt to broaden its voter base. However, internal rifts and conflicting interests have muddled the party’s agenda, leaving supporters bewildered and disillusioned. The chaos is further compounded by last-minute changes and defections, as seen in the case of Rampur and Baghat.

The SP’s indecisiveness in finalising candidates not only undermines its credibility but also exposes the fragility of opposition unity in the face of a resurgent BJP. Amidst this political quagmire, the Congress finds itself grappling with its own set of challenges. The last-minute replacement of candidates in Sitapur and Mathura underscores the party’s struggle to assert its relevance in a landscape dominated by regional powerhouses and a formidable ruling party. The implications of these developments are far-reaching, with ramifications not only for the electoral outcome but also for the broader democratic fabric of the nation.

The erosion of trust in political institutions and the disillusionment of voters with the political process are ominous signs that demand urgent attention. At the heart of this conundrum lies a fundamental question of representation and accountability. The rampant horse-trading and opportunistic manoeuvres by political elites betray a stark disconnect between the aspirations of the electorate and the actions of their elected representatives. In the midst of this chaos, it is imperative for opposition parties to introspect and realign their strategies.

A cohesive and principled approach, grounded in the values of inclusivity and integrity, is essential to counter the hegemony of the ruling party and uphold the democratic ethos of the nation. Ultimately, the fate of Uttar Pradesh lies in the hands of its citizens. As they navigate through the labyrinth of political intrigue and manoeuvring, they must seize the opportunity to demand transparency, accountability, and genuine representation from their elected leaders. In the crucible of democracy, amidst the cacophony of competing voices and vested interests, the true test lies in the resilience and determination of the people to forge a path towards a more equitable and just future.

— The Statesman (India)/ANN

What hinders women’s representation

Achieving true gender equality requires policies that respect, value and treat women as equals.

RABINA SHRESTHA



Nepal is at a crossroads in its journey toward gender equality in politics and policy-making bodies. Constitutional provisions, including quotas, have led to a numerical rise in women’s representation in the public sector, marking a positive departure from the previously exclusionary structure. Yet, the culture of exclusion and disparity remains, as numbers alone don’t translate into equality. They may show a positive trend but fail to reflect the actual situation.

Consider, for instance, the data from the National Women Commission (NWC) on the representation of women in politics. A total of 14,445 women won various posts in the 2022 local elections and are now in the local governments. This looks impressive, but considering that many of these posts are reserved for women by law, this figure appears elusive. Moreover, only 25 and 568 women won mayoral and deputy mayoral positions in 753 local units, respectively. Similarly, 69 women won the post of ward president, while 442 women were elected as ward members (other than the reserved women quota). From the reserved women’s quota, 6,732 women and 6,610 Dalit women were elected ward members.

The NWC explains why and how: The law reserves a certain number of posts for women, specifically for Dalit women, and political parties must nominate only women candidates for these categories. But “when it came to the free competition category, political parties prioritised men and pushed women back.”

The figure in the House of Representatives (HoR) in federal parliament and in provincial assemblies shows a similar picture. Out of 165 posts in HoR under the first-past-the-



POST ILLUSTRATION

post (FPTP) category, there were only nine directly elected women. Only one (male) was elected from the Dalit community, one from Tharu and one from Gurung communities (both males). In provinces, of the total 330 provincial lawmakers, only 14 were women and only one Dalit woman. We have only two female judges in the 16-member panel in the Supreme Court, only 18 among 121 judges in the High Court and only 17 in district courts, while men account for 255.

A separate study by Dignity Initiative, a research organisation, shows that Khas-Arya males hold 47 percent of seats (FPTP and PR combined) in HoR, while 27 percent of seats are occupied by Khas-Arya females. Madheshi women have 16 percent, and Dalit women have 5.82 percent. Across provinces, the Khas-Arya community controls a percentage ranging from 44 to 80, except in Madhesh province.

Impeding factors

These figures suggest that discriminatory attitudes continue to impede women once they hold senior roles or are elected to high offices. Men from dominant castes continue to occupy key positions in municipal governments, sidelining women and members of Dalit, ethnic and religious minorities. The representation system, meant to empower women, disproportionately benefits those from upper castes. This tokenistic approach has left women struggling to assert themselves in political spaces, facing challenges

within their families and communities.

It also shows that increasing numbers alone won’t dismantle the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that inhibit gender inequality. We are still on this journey of achieving true equality and inclusion. Cultural acceptance must match apparent gains in political and constitutional representation to foster true gender equality. For example, quotas have led to more than 40 percent of local representatives elected in 2017 and 2022 being women, but this has not led to their meaningful representation at the decision-making level. Most women hold deputy mayor and deputy chairperson positions, and only a few hold top-level positions like mayor or chairperson. Likewise, women elected in the Dalit women quota complain that they don’t get a space in decision-making at the local level.

Nepali society, with its deeply entrenched patriarchal values, harshly judges and monitors women’s behaviour, particularly in public spheres. To genuinely empower women, a deeper confrontation with cultural barriers is essential. Numbers, while a positive step, cannot address the pervasive gender bias ingrained in social structures. The fight for genuine empowerment of women requires challenging and transforming the harmful and discriminatory socio-cultural norms and values that perpetuate gender inequality.

The Comprehensive Peace Accord recognised that true inclusion, not only in terms of gender but also class, eth-

nicity and other areas was necessary to support a sustainable peace. While women have found new roles under constitutional provisions, patriarchal social norms have proved pervasive. These norms restrict individuals to predefined roles based on gender, creating inherent inequalities.

Patriarchal social norms, extending across global, national and local power structures, are persistent barriers to positive peace. While quotas in Nepal contribute to increased representation, they fall short of dismantling patriarchal values within political institutions. Women, often perceived as token figures, face patronisation and are seen as less capable, perpetuating gender biases.

Beyond numbers

Transformative change demands a holistic approach, moving beyond increasing women’s numbers in political roles to challenging and reshaping gender norms and behaviours. Achieving true gender equality requires policies that foster an environment where women are respected, valued and treated as equals. Dismantling patriarchal values is paramount, as they perpetuate a cycle of inequality, reinforcing rigid roles and behaviours.

The societal impact of patriarchy extends beyond the workplace into homes, public service institutions, political spheres and communities. To break down these barriers, comprehensive efforts to challenge ingrained attitudes and behaviours are needed from an early age. Home, community, education, media representation and corporate policies are pivotal in reshaping societal norms. Gender-sensitive curricula, diverse media portrayals and inclusive workplace policies contribute to challenging stereotypes.

In Nepal, governmental and political party initiatives must surpass quotas, including comprehensive gender-sensitive training for politicians and officials. Addressing cultural barriers requires grassroots initiatives that empower women and challenge harmful societal norms. Engaging with local communities, community leaders, religious figures and educators is essential for a cultural shift towards recognising and respecting women’s agency.

Shrestha is the country director for Nepal and the regional director for Asia at International Alert.

Climate change and public behaviour

Even when leaders acknowledge the science behind climate change, they prefer ‘wait and watch’ policy.

KASHIF ISLAM



It has been over three decades since the Rio Summit of 1992 and the signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The growing evidence since that time has established climate change as a fact, with scientists warning that time is running out to prevent the effects of runaway global warming. Yet, world nations have failed to reduce or stabilise greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel usage over this period.

No end in sight

Thus, not only has the use of coal, oil and gas increased steadily since 1992 but their use is projected to remain stable over the next few decades. The International Energy Agency forecasts fossil fuel usage peaking by 2030 under assumptions of continuing addition of renewable capacity and adoption of electric vehicles. But emissions will remain at levels well above those required for limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Tellingly, a 2023 report by the United Nations Environment Program highlights that governments worldwide are still planning for a coal- and oil-dependent future and expanding fossil fuel investments.

Slow progress is often assumed to be due to the associated economic costs. Fossil fuels such as coal and oil are abundant and cheap, compared to renewable alternatives. Developing countries like India and China have relied on coal and oil to fuel their growing economies and asked for financing from developed countries to increase the usage of renewables. On the other hand, no developed country is ready to commit itself to drastic changes involving sacrifices in economic growth and citizens’ standard of living. While the economic aspects are undeniable, discussions miss important psychological and behavioural aspects that explain the lack of urgency on climate change.

It has long been recognised that the effects of climate change are not direct and obvious. Many people believe that the consequences of climate change will be felt in the distant future, not in their lifetime. This is in line with

research suggesting that most people have limited ability to imagine the future beyond 10-20 years. The timelines of a distant future, such as activists urging governments to act for the sake of ‘future generations’, or scientists predicting what will happen to the earth by the year 2050 or 2100, are not meaningful for most people and national governments.

Researchers have further found that people are prone to believing that the adverse effects will be felt elsewhere and that their own lives will be unaffected. Various global warming-related phenomena such as prolonged drought in Europe, shrinking Himalayan glaciers and increased tropical cyclones are not seen as part of climate change, but rather individual events happening elsewhere to other people. Even when global warming has local effects, such as an early onset of summer or erratic rainfall, many individuals have lost contact with the natural world and are not as tuned to these changes.

Global warming is thus abstract and distant. In this, it bears similarities with the risks associated with tobacco



POST FILE PHOTO

use. Ordinary consumers cannot estimate the harm to themselves because they do not perceive any serious adverse effects in the short term and discount the possibility of harm happening in the future. Even when they believe smoking to be harmful, they are likely to believe that they will be spared of the worst effects.

Behavioural issues

Policymakers are aware of how the general public perceives climate change. For populist leaders like Donald Trump and Jair Bolsanaro, denial of climate change was a cynical way of pandering to their constituents. Even when leaders acknowledge the science behind climate change, they have preferred a policy of ‘wait and watch’; there is little appetite for pushing changes that will prove to be unpopular

with the public or damage national economies.

There are other behavioural aspects which determine our response to global warming. Research suggests that increased optimism about what will happen to the self and the world at large, known as the optimism bias, is associated with less concern and responsibility for the environment. Understandably, if one does not believe that the worst effects of climate change will come to pass, they are less likely to make or promote the changes to address those effects.

Optimism bias also manifests in the way influential people in politics and business oppose hard measures on climate change. They reason that imminent crises, such as the population explosion and food shortage, were solved through technological advancements. They do not see any value in sacrificing present economic growth and instead place trust in developing methods such as carbon sequestration and hydrogen-powered vehicles.

Moving from individuals to society and nations, perhaps the most formida-

developed and the developing nations, and amongst the various countries themselves, all of which are wary of doing too much without reciprocity from others. On the one hand, developing countries try to avoid binding commitments citing their per capita low emissions and the need to develop. For their part, the developed nations point to the large populations of India, China and the African continent, which they say account for the bulk of emission increases.

Way out

What are some possible solutions? Researchers suggest that an effort should be made to link current events with climate change and activists should focus more on the present than the distant future in their communications. To a certain extent, this is already the case: When scientists communicate that such and such month was the hottest ever recorded or when they report on the low levels of arctic ice. Researchers also suggest avoiding abstract figures and using concrete examples. For instance, when mentioning a 1.5 percent rise in temperature, they should also describe what this would mean for the planet. Getting the right communication strategy is however only part of the solution.

The optimism bias should be dealt with by pointing out that what worked in the past may not necessarily work in the future. It should be pointed out that the short-term economic cost that technological optimists desire to avoid is minimal compared to the potentially catastrophic future losses in the event there are no satisfactory technological solutions for capturing carbon or using emission-free transportation.

Finally, the problem of the free rider needs to be given more recognition in policymaking forums like the Conference of Parties (CoP). It is now abundantly clear that some amount of hardship in the short term is inevitable for most countries to make any meaningful progress. The developed bloc cannot expect the developing countries to make substantial sacrifices when their own per capita emissions remain very high. Likewise, developing countries must realise that whatever the merits of their arguments, the developed bloc will not agree to a substantial decrease in personal comfort and emissions, if the developing countries do not quickly move away from coal and oil.

The focus should ultimately shift from how little a particular country or group can do which others can be made to accept, to how much the world needs to do together. Such a change requires an approach different from the usual self-interest-maximising strategies pursued by nations.

Islam works in the financial services industry based out of Gurgaon, India.



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Bidya Devi Bhandari
Former President of Nepal

1 Women in leadership: Breaking with tradition?

Speakers



Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya
Chief Election Commissioner



Laxmi Ghimire
Member(RPP), Bagmati Provincial Assembly



Sunita Dangol
Deputy Mayor, Kathmandu Metropolitan City



Rubina Chhetry Belbase
Former Captain, Female Cricket Team



Laxmi Bhandari
Nari Magazine

Moderator

2 Discussing maternity

Speakers



Dr Akriti Bharati
Infertility Specialist, Vatsalya Natural IVF



Kumudini Koirala
Director, Punyaarjan Foundation



Sagun Ballav Pant
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, TU Teaching Hospital



Gauri Malla
Actress



Sneha Jha
Kantipur TV

Moderator



Session Keynote

Garrett E. Wilkerson
Public Affairs Chief, U.S. Embassy Nepal

3 Leaders in information technology

Speakers



Rashmi Pant
Chief Business Officer, Prabhu Bank



Lena Keshari Kansakar
Acting Chief Technical Officer, NCELL



Sonika Manadhar
Co-founder and CTO of AloI Global



Dr Amrita Sharma
Researcher



Sanjib Subba
Chairman, Fintech Alliance

Moderator

4 Judging beauty

Speakers



Prasant Tamrakar
Actor/Model



Jane Dipika Garet
Miss Universe Nepal 2023



Dayahang Rai
Actor



Nirmala Dhakal
Sociologist



Dr Sareesha Shrestha
Miss Nepal Earth 2022

Moderator



TODAY
11 APRIL 2024

IVF Partner



Haircare Partner



Celebration Partner



Paint Partner



Empowering Partner



Education Partner



Hospital Partner



MONEY

FOREX

US Dollar	133.40
Euro	144.91
Pound Sterling	169.39
Swiss Franc	147.66
Australian Dollar	88.32
Canadian Dollar	98.37
Singapore Dollar	99.23
Japanese Yen (10)	8.79
Chinese Yuan	18.44
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.56
Qatari Riyal	36.57
Thai Bhat	3.67
UAE Dhiram	36.33
Malaysian Ringgit	28.10
Korean Won (100)	9.87

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

SHARES

Nepse (in percent) **2,025.30pts** **-0.52%**

HIGHEST LOSERS					
SHEL	WNLB	NICSF	MKLB	SABSL	PRSF
-10	-9.93	-6.43	-5.68	-5.5	-5.46

MODERATE LOSERS					
H8020	EBLDB6	SJCL	SGIC	NMB	JFL
-0.11	-0.1	-0.07	-0.06	-0.06	-0.04

MODERATE GAINERS					
EBL	BHPL	RHGCL	SAGF	PCBL	SAMAJ
0.22	0.2	0.15	0.11	0.05	0.05

HIGHEST GAINERS					
MANDU	KKHC	GLBSL	PPL	PFL	SIG53
9.69	8.26	7.73	6.83	6.62	6.4

BULLION PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 136,800
Silver	Rs 1,700

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

Japanese restaurant opens new outlets



KATHMANDU: Hokkaido Nepal Business Group, a leading organisation dedicated to introducing Japanese food culture in Nepal, has expanded its network of Japanese restaurants to six locations in Kathmandu, with two more QX establishments coming up. It started in 2019 as Hokkaido Ramen House Restaurant at Park Village Hotel, Budhanilkantha. It has opened its branches in Dekkaido Farm House, Budhanilkantha, Omakase in Naxal, Izakaya Hokkaido at Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, Lazimpat, Hokkaido House in Sanepa, and Hokkaido Bento House in Boudha. The QX outlets operate at Labim Mall, Pulchowk, and Le Sherpa in Kathmandu. It has also taken its venture to Dekkaido Agro Farm in Bhairahawa, Rupandehi.

ByteDance profits jump 60 percent, beating tech rivals

BEIJING: The profits of TikTok owner ByteDance jumped around 60 percent in 2023, Bloomberg reported Wednesday citing sources, beating online rivals Tencent and Alibaba. ByteDance has grown into one of the world's biggest tech firms—best known in most countries as the creator of video app TikTok—since its birth in a Beijing apartment 12 years ago. The company has rocketed in recent years to become one of the most valuable tech giants in the world, worth around \$225 billion, according to market intelligence firm CP Insights. Bloomberg's report, which cited "people familiar with the matter", said the company's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization soared to more than \$40 billion from around \$25 billion in 2022. (AFP)

Brazil inflation hits nine-month low

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's annual inflation rate fell to a nine-month low in March, officials said Wednesday, as the central bank weighs how far to lower interest rates to boost the growth of Latin America's biggest economy. Beating analyst forecasts, the rate fell to 3.93 percent, down 0.57 percentage points from February and the lowest since June 2023, according to the national statistics institute, IBGE. Analysts polled by business daily Valor had predicted the figure would come in at 4.01 percent. The monthly inflation rate was 0.16 percent, down from 0.83 percent in February. But food and beverage prices rose by 0.53 percent—an indicator that could keep the central bank wary. The food-price rise was driven by "problems related to climate issues," IBGE said in a statement. (AFP)

'Invisible' hand stopping civil aviation bills: Lawmaker

Private sector says government should immediately pass the bills that have been languishing for years; time to get rid of the dead horse—Nepal Airlines.

SANGAM PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, APRIL 10

A member of the parliamentary International Relations and Tourism Committee has revealed that there is an "invisible" hand preventing the passage of two crucial civil aviation bills.

"A former tourism minister has informed our committee that he tried to table the civil aviation bills in Parliament, but did not succeed," lawmaker Udaya Shumsher Rana told an interaction on Tuesday.

"The minister informed us that there is an invisible hand stopping the bills."

The two long-pending aviation bills—the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal Bill, and the Air Service Authority of Nepal Bill—envisage splitting up Nepal's aviation body into two entities—service provider and regulator, a condition for Nepal to be struck off the European Union's air safety list.

"We have heard that the prime minister himself has barred the bills from being tabled in the Cabinet before it is tabled in Parliament," said Rana. "Many experts have advised us that Nepal urgently needs to have a separate civil aviation regulatory body."

On December 28 last year, the committee directed the prime minister's office to table the bills in Parliament at the earliest and also ordered the Tourism Ministry to regularly provide updates on the bill's status. But there has been no progress.

The private sector has charged that the government has deliberately ignored the civil aviation bills even though they have passed the upper house. Passage of the bills is a must for rigorous safety measures to prevent air accidents and incidents.

"The air safety issue is preventing European tourists from visiting Nepal," said Rajesh Kumar Agrawal, president of the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), speaking at an interaction titled 'Unleashing the Tourism Potential: Healing the Past, Shaping the Future', in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

"We request the government to do the needful to lift Nepal from the air safety list of the European Commission." "For this, the govern-



Tourism entrepreneurs say Nepal can double tourist numbers in a short period if effective laws are in place and priorities are accorded.

ment should immediately split the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal into a service provider and regulator."

Private investment, imperative for tourism sector revitalisation, languishes amid the government's hesitancy to enact laws and policies, according to them.

Tourism entrepreneurs have invested billions of rupees in the country. The government too has invested heavily in infrastructure development. "It's time to be serious about drawing tourists," said Agrawal.

Tourism entrepreneurs say Nepal can double tourist numbers in a short period if effective laws are in place and priorities are accorded.

The first thing is to strengthen the national flag carrier—Nepal Airlines—the key means for transporting tourists.

Agrawal said that there are issues regarding the non-operation of the two new international airports in Pokhara and Bhairahawa.

Dipendra Purush Dhakal, former tourism secretary, said under his leadership in 1999, the country's Department of Civil Aviation was converted to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

"That was the demand of time then.

Now, the time demands the separation of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal into two roles," he said. "This is a crucial agenda for the tourism industry to prosper. The government, however, seems least bothered."

Global aviation watchdogs, including the International Civil Aviation Organisation, have been saying that an independent civil aviation regulator is imperative for a country like Nepal where crashes are frequent.

According to Dhakal, apart from the civil aviation body issue, Nepal's two expensive airports are not operational even months after they were inaugurated.

"The airfare to Nepal is expensive. Until and unless we strengthen our national flag carrier, Nepal will become expensive [for tourists]."

He said that air pollution is another threat. "We need a strategy to tackle air pollution."

Deepak Raj Joshi, former CEO of the Nepal Tourism Board, said air and road safety issues are glaring in Nepal and it has deterred high-end travellers.

"We cannot hide the fact. But Nepal remaining on the European Commission's air safety list for a long time is a big concern," he said. "The

budget of the current fiscal year has announced splitting up the civil aviation body into two separate entities, but that remains on paper only."

In the last two decades, Nepal has seen various upheavals—from a plane hijack to a royal massacre, from political insurgency to political instability and from earthquake to the Covid pandemic, and has suffered a lot.

"Now, we are experiencing a recession followed by an economic slowdown. Problems galore," said Joshi. "In this situation, if we can't heal, it will be a big problem."

Yogendra Shakya, a senior tourism entrepreneur, said in its heyday Nepal Airlines used to bring in 60 percent of tourists and that number contributed to 12 percent to the country's GDP. "Now, Nepal Airlines' share in terms of tourist carriage has dwindled to 6 percent."

According to him, if a tourist spends \$1,000 on his Nepal trip, \$600 of that sum is swallowed up by airfare. "The figure indicates how crucial is the transport sector for the country's GDP."

Shakya said that the government has several reports on bringing reforms to Nepal Airlines.

"In 2002, a high-level committee led

WTO eyes global trade rebound but warns of risks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA, APRIL 10

The World Trade Organization said Wednesday that global trade should rebound this year from an unexpected slump in 2023, but warned that regional conflicts, geopolitical tensions and economic policy uncertainty risked darkening the picture.

In its annual trade forecast, the WTO disclosed that world trade volumes unexpectedly declined by 1.2 percent in 2023.

That downgrade was "mainly due to the worse-than-expected performance of Europe," WTO chief economist Ralph Ossa told AFP, with lingering high energy prices and inflation drove down demand for manufactured goods. The eurozone economy stagnated in the final quarter of last year, with Germany's economy contracting by 0.3 percent.

But a recovery in the global trade of goods is already under way, thanks in part to inflation slowing.

The WTO forecast that the global

economy will continue to grow modestly over the next two years, by 2.6 percent this year, and 2.7 percent in 2025. It expects merchandise trade volumes to increase by 2.6 percent in 2024, and to expand by 3.3 percent next year.

The 2024 forecast was lower than the 3.3-percent hike the WTO predicted for the year last October.

"We are making progress towards global trade recovery," WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said in a statement, stressing though that it was "imperative that we mitigate risks like geopolitical strife and trade fragmentation". The organisation said trade developments on the services side were far more upbeat last year, growing by nine percent.

The organisation does not provide specific forecasts for the development in services, but said it expected further growth this year, in particular linked to swelling tourism and passenger transport around the upcoming the Olympic Games in Paris and the European football championships.

US consumer inflation accelerates in March, dampening rate cut hopes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON, APRIL 10

US consumer inflation continued to accelerate last month, according to US government data published Wednesday, reducing the chances of an early interest rate cut from the Federal Reserve.

The data also raise the likelihood that the first Fed rate cut could come right before November's presidential election, which would thrust the independent US central bank into the middle of a fractious fight between Joe Biden and his likely opponent, former president Donald Trump.

The annual consumer price index (CPI) came in at 3.5 percent in March, up 0.3 percentage points from February, the Labor Department said in a statement.

This was slightly above expectations of a 3.4 percent rise, according to a survey of economists conducted by Dow Jones Newswires and The Wall Street Journal. Monthly inflation

came in at 0.4 percent, also slightly above expectations.

"Today's report shows inflation has fallen more than 60 percent from its peak, but we have more to do to lower costs for hardworking families," US president Joe Biden said in a statement. "Prices are still too high for housing and groceries, even as prices for key household items like milk and eggs are lower than a year ago," he continued.

"I'm calling on corporations including grocery retailers to use record profits to reduce prices," he added.

The Fed has raised interest rates to the highest level in 23 years as it attempts to bring inflation back down firmly to its long-term target of two percent.

Price increases have slowed significantly from their peak in 2022, but have crept higher in recent months, keeping the markets guessing about when the Fed could start cutting rates, even as other indicators of US economic strength have remained resilient.

"You can kiss a June interest rate cut goodbye," Bankrate chief financial analyst Greg McBride wrote in a note to clients.

"Inflation came in higher than expected, the lack of progress toward two percent is now a trend," he added.

The indexes for shelter and gasoline together contributed "over half" of the monthly increase, according to the Labor Department.

A widely watched inflation measure excluding volatile food and energy prices rose at an annual rate of 3.8 percent, in line with the data from February.

The so-called "core" inflation index rose 0.4 percent in March from a month earlier, according to the Labor Department.

Earlier this month, Fed chair Jerome Powell told a conference in California that the current risks to the US economy were "two-sided," with negative consequences for the economy if policymakers moved to cut rates too fast or too slow.

'World of Warcraft', other top games to return to China

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SHANGHAI, APRIL 10

"World of Warcraft" is returning to China this summer, its developer and local partner said Wednesday, more than a year after dismayed devotees saw the hugely popular video game and other titles pulled from the market in a contract dispute.

US-based game-maker Blizzard and China's NetEase said a new deal would see the sequential return of "World of Warcraft" (WoW) alongside first-person shooter "Overwatch" and spin-offs such as WoW card game "Hearthstone".

WoW's Chinese servers went offline in January 2023, prompting a wave of mourning and anger from millions of fans who poured years of their lives into building up their in-game points.

"I'm super excited, super happy about this return! I hope that the two companies will continue to cooperate, that they will win back old players and attract new ones," 25-year-old gamer Zhao Xuejia told AFP in Beijing.

"We were all waiting to find out who Blizzard was going to work with to be able to return to China. The fact that it's NetEase again is good, it's going to make things easier," another young man, Fu Tianze, said. "I'm excited about getting my account back soon."

Chinese social media users were equally delighted, with "Blizzard



People play video games at an internet cafe in Beijing on Wednesday.

announces return" and "NetEase and Blizzard remarry" the top trending searches on the Weibo platform.

"Today, our long-lost old friend returns, our most beloved game returns," gaming blogger "Scarlet Bunny" wrote in a Weibo post.

"Come back to life, my beloved!" another fan wrote.

Massively popular worldwide, particularly in the 2000s, WoW is an online multiplayer role-playing game

set in a fantasy Medieval world where good battles evil. It is known for its immersive and addictive gameplay, and players can rack up hundreds of hours of game time.

Blizzard's games launched in China—the world's largest gaming market—in 2008, through collaboration with internet giant NetEase.

Under local law, foreign developers are required to partner with Chinese firms to enter the market.

After 14 years and acquiring millions of players in China, the two firms announced in November 2022 that contract renewal talks had failed to lead to an agreement.

After continuing discussions over the last year, though, the companies said in their Wednesday statement they were "thrilled to align on a path forward" and had struck "a renewed publishing deal".

"From Blizzard's point of view, China is a market that the company obviously can't ignore... If they re-open the servers, it's clear that that's going to bring a lot of players back," Tian Yiran, a 21-year-old gamer, told AFP.

Some long-time WoW players, though, remained bitter about the title's extended absence from China.

"The Chinese market is not Blizzard's living room where you come and leave as you want. Players are not playthings in Blizzard's hands that you take or abandon at will," one gamer wrote on Weibo, calling for a boycott.

Zeng Xiaofeng, China manager of gaming research firm Niko Partners, told AFP he believed fans in the country "would still have a lot of demand" for WoW despite the lengthy hiatus.

"Some of the gamers, when the games stopped operation, they still played the game... in other Asia servers," Zeng said, referring to versions

of WoW available in other countries.

Zeng said while it was hard to "know the real story", it was likely that Microsoft's acquisition of Blizzard, which concluded last October, prompted a shift in strategy at the game publisher.

The news will be a welcome boost for NetEase, which like many of the country's tech giants has had a rough few years after a government crackdown on the industry.

Since 2021, children under 18 years old have only been allowed to play online between 8:00 pm and 9:00 pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays during the school term.

Gamers are required to use their ID cards when registering to play online to ensure minors do not lie about their age. Companies are also prohibited from offering gaming services to young people outside government-mandated hours.

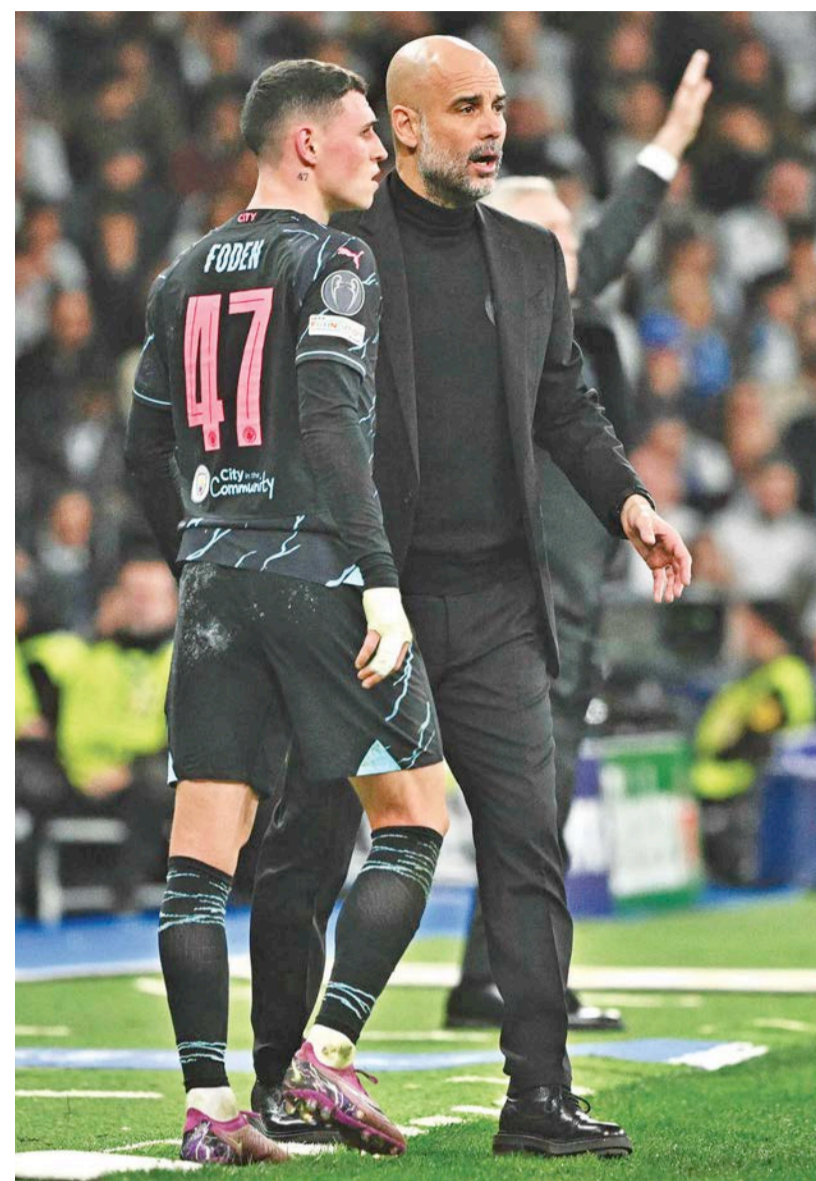
An end to a freeze in gaming licences had raised hopes that the focus on the industry had subsided.

But then in December a set of draft guidelines aimed at limiting in-game purchases and preventing obsessive gaming behaviour sent shares in NetEase and its rivals tumbling.

Authorities backtracked a day later, announcing that the rules would be further revised, though it did not give details. The draft rules were later removed from the regulator's website.

Foden outshines Bellingham in frantic quarter

It was the third straight clash between Man City and Real Madrid in the Champions League knockouts. Madrid eliminated City in semis in 2022, while City beat Madrid at the same stage last year. Both teams went on to win the title after eliminating their rivals.



Manchester City's Phil Foden talks with manager Pep Guardiola during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final first leg football match against Real Madrid in Madrid on Wednesday.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MANCHESTER, APRIL 10

Phil Foden won the battle between two of England's brightest stars to give Manchester City the upper hand after a thrilling Champions League quarter-final, first leg against Real Madrid ended 3-3 at the Santiago Bernabeu.

In a game lit up by stunning strikes, none was better than Foden's smash into the top corner to haul City level at 2-2 midway through the second half. Further rockets from Josko Gvardiol and Federico Valverde left it all to play for at the Etihad on April 17.

However, City will feel confident thanks to a stellar home record in the Champions League, that includes hitting Madrid for four in each of the past two seasons.

Pep Guardiola's men are unbeaten in their last 30 home Champions League games, stretching back to 2018. A 4-3 victory over Madrid was not enough two years ago in the semi-finals as the Spanish giants staged a remarkable recovery late in the second leg on their way to a 14th European crown. City got their revenge last season in a 4-0 thrashing that was arguably the high point of Guardiola's glorious eight-year reign.

A tighter tie was anticipated this season in large part thanks to Bellingham's spectacular debut season in Spain.

The 20-year-old rejected the advances of City and other Premier League giants when offered a chance to return to his homeland in favour of becoming a darling of the Bernabeu. Yet, his hot streak in front of goal has cooled off just as Foden has hit top form in 2024.

A booking would have ruled Bellingham out of the second leg and he was lucky to escape without a suspension as he took out his irritation at some perceived rough treatment on Ruben Dias in the first half.

Bellingham's one big chance to twist the knife into City's defence of the Champions League arrived early in the second half with Madrid leading 2-1. He twisted and turned Bernardo Silva but failed to find the far corner on his weaker left foot.

By contrast, Foden is lethal on his left side and Madrid were made to pay for leaving him too much space on the edge of the box to fire into the top corner for his 22nd goal of the season.

"It's something I always practice in training where you receive it on the edge of the box and

thankfully today I saw it go into the top corner," Foden told TNT Sports.

At just 23, Foden already has a medal haul most retired footballers could dream of. Yet his prime years still lie ahead of him and he stood up to be counted on a night City needed him without Kevin De Bruyne.

The Belgian took his place on the bench but he had fallen ill in the hours before kick-off to force Guardiola into a late change of plans.

"In the last meeting in the hotel he was playing. (Then he) started to feel bad and vomit, he didn't feel well to play," said Guardiola. "One of the secrets at a high level is adapt to the chaos. There's no time to complain."

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE			
QUARTER-FINALS, FIRST LEG RESULTS			
In London			
Arsenal Bukayo Saka 12', Leandro Trossard 76'	2-2	Bayern Munich Serge Gnabry 18', Harry Kane 32' (P)	
In Madrid			
Real Madrid Ruben Dias 12' (OG), Rodrigo 14', Federico Valverde 79'	3-3	Man City Bernardo Silva 2', Phil Foden 66', Josko Gvardiol 71'	

Luckily for City, Foden has been thrust into filling the void left by De Bruyne for much of this season in an injury-hit campaign for the 32-year-old. "He has this spark," added Guardiola. "This incredible talent, to score goals, to create something, it is the truth."

Often a victim of his own versatility, for most of his career Foden has been forced out of a central role to accommodate others.

Bellingham's rise to stardom has seen Foden play second fiddle at international level as well as at City. But his case to be trusted as the creative hub for both his club and country, with England among the favourites for Euro 2024, is becoming impossible to ignore.

In the other first-leg quarter-final, Arsenal and Bayern Munich drew 2-2 in London.

Arsenal took an early lead through Bukayo Saka before former Gunners winger Serge Gnabry put Bayern back on level terms. Harry Kane gave Bayern lead with a first-half penalty but Leandro Trossard's late leveler left the tie delicately poised ahead of the second leg in Munich on April 17.

Nepal open Premier Cup against Malaysia

SPORTS BUREAU
KATHMANDU, APRIL 10

Nepal will look to qualify for their second Asia Cup when they begin their 2024 ACC Men's T20 Premier Cup against Malaysia in Al Amerat, Oman on Friday.

Nepal have been drawn alongside Hong Kong, Malaysia, Qatar and Saudi Arabia in Group A. Group B includes Bahrain, Cambodia, Kuwait, hosts Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

Nepal will play their second group match against Qatar on Saturday before facing Hong Kong on April 15 and Saudi Arabia on April 17.

The top two teams from each group will progress to the semi-finals, which will be played on April 19.

The final will take place on April 21, with the champions booking their spot in the 2025 Asia Cup.

Nepal are the defending champions of the Premier Cup. The Rhinos defeated the UAE in the final to win the 2023 edition in Kathmandu and qualified for their first ever Asia Cup which was held in India in August and September last year.

Nepal have announced a 14-member team for the Premier Cup, retaining all the players from a squad that won the title of the SMS Friendship Cup—involving Gujarat and Baroda—in India four days ago, except for Aakash Chand.

The Premier Cup will also serve as a preparation to Nepal ahead of the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World—their only second appearance at a World Cup and first since 2014—in the West Indies and the United States in June.

Prior to the World Cup, Nepal will host West Indies-A in a five-match T20 series at TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur from April 25 to May 5.

2024 ACC MEN'S PREMIER CUP		
GROUP A	GROUP B	NEPAL'S GROUP FIXTURES
Hong Kong	Bahrain	April 12 - vs Malaysia
Malaysia	Cambodia	April 13 - vs Qatar
Nepal	Kuwait	April 15 - vs Hong Kong
Qatar	Oman	April 17 - vs Saudi Arabia
Saudi Arabia	UAE	Semi-finals on April 19 & final on April 21
NEPAL SQUAD FOR ACC PREMIER CUP		
Aasif Sheikh, Kushal Bhurtel, Kushal Malla, Rohit Paudel (C), Bibek Yadav, Sundeeep Jora, Anil Sah, Gulsan Jha, Dipendra Singh Airee, Lalit Rajbanshi, Karan KC, Sompal Kami, Pratis GC and Abinash Bohara		

Leverkusen's unbeaten run and Klopp's fairytale finish at stake in Europa League quarters

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS, APRIL 10

The Europa League has reached the quarter-finals, with Bayer Leverkusen and Liverpool looking the teams to beat. Here are the narratives at play ahead of the first-leg matches on Thursday:

Still unbeaten
It's 41 games and counting for Bayer Leverkusen and Xabi Alonso.

In what is turning into an historic season, the German club have yet to be beaten in any game in any competi-

tion and take that undefeated streak into a home game against West Ham.

Leverkusen are on course to clinch their first ever Bundesliga title this weekend, with the team having built a remarkable 16-point lead.

The trophy will be theirs if second-place Bayern Munich lose to Cologne on Saturday, otherwise on Sunday if Leverkusen win at home to Werder Bremen.

Alonso's team are also in the German Cup final, so a treble of trophies is on.

West Ham are having another impressive season in Europe after

winning the Europa Conference League last season.

Fairytale ending
Another team bidding for a treble are Liverpool, in manager Jurgen Klopp's final season in charge.

The English League Cup has already been secured and the team are embroiled in a tight Premier League title race with Arsenal and Manchester City, with only one point separating the three clubs with seven games left.

If Liverpool reaches the Europa League final, it would be Klopp's final game in charge after nearly nine

years—ensuring fans of the Reds would make the short trip to Dublin in their thousands in the hope of a fairytale ending for the German coach.

Next up for Liverpool is Atalanta. They met in the group stage of the 2020-21 Champions League, with each team winning away.

Completing the set
Lifting the Europa League would see AC Milan complete the set in continental football.

Milan, a seven-time winners of the European Cup or Champions League, have also won the discontinued

European Cup Winners' Cup twice, as well as the UEFA Super Cup a record five times but have never triumphed in the Europa League, or the UEFA Cup as it was previously known.

The Rossoneri have never even reached the final—something Roma, their opponents in the quarter-finals, achieved twice, losing both in 1991 and last year.

Milan are no stranger to all-Italian knockout matches, having beaten Napoli in the Champions League quarter-finals last season before losing to Inter Milan in the semi-finals.

Marseille
Marseille's resurgence under coach Jean-Louis Gasset has ground to a halt. After winning his first five games in charge, with 18 goals scored during that run, Gasset's side has lost the past four matches.

Marseille's bad habits have returned, with defensive lapses, sloppy play in midfield and a lack of cutting edge up front all too apparent recently. At least Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang is still scoring, though, and he has 23 goals this season.

But Gasset also needs someone else to step up in attack against Benfica.

HOROSCOPE

- ARIES** (March 21-April 19)
The day brings forth your inquisitive side, dearest Ram, supporting your intellect and conversational skills. Share ideas on a larger scale, connecting with your community far and wide. Acquaintances could evolve into friendships today, making this a good time to socialise.
- TAURUS** (April 20-May 20)
You should feel more alert and connected with the present. Focus on manifestation today. Step into more authoritative roles when it comes to pursuing success. Watch out for distraction. Do something luxurious to calm the mind later tonight.
- GEMINI** (May 21-June 21)
Take note of any interesting dreams. This could reveal information that may bring you closer to success or help you cultivate healthier boundaries. Spend some time in deep thought this afternoon.

- CANCER** (June 22-July 22)
Spiritual visitations could find you in the dream realms, dear Cancer. The day pushes you to seek new personal truths. You'll have a chance to go deep with someone important. New commitments could also be on the horizon.
- LEO** (July 23-August 22)
Your social antenna goes up today, sweet Lion. Use this energy to forge new alliances while continuing to invest in close relationships. Matters of the heart also benefit and technology can help bring you closer to your latest crush.
- VIRGO** (August 23-September 22)
A harmonious and spiritually charged energy washes over you in the very early hours, dear Virgo. Allow your optimism to grow by acknowledging pleasant dreams or taking a few moments in quiet contemplation before starting the day.

- LIBRA** (September 23-October 22)
You'll notice your perspective shift as wisdom blossoms. Use this energy to look beyond yourself and your current situation, sweet Libra. The desire to reinvent yourself and grow as a creative will be pronounced later in the day.
- SCORPIO** (October 23-November 21)
Your wits sharpen today, helping you gain awareness of your current situation and what must change. Try not to revert to any habits or thought processes that have led to self-doubt in the past. You'll feel more inspired tonight.
- SAGITTARIUS** (November 22-December 21)
Look toward the lighter side of life, dear Archer. Don't be afraid to reveal personal truths in order to establish mutual trust with someone special. You'll also have a chance to evolve your most important relationships through open and honest communication.

- CAPRICORN** (December 22-January 19)
Your eye for detail sharpens, dear Capricorn, giving you an edge when it comes to correcting errors, completing tasks, and turning in exceptional work. This luminary placement also promotes teamwork, nudging you to lean into stable partnerships.
- AQUARIUS** (January 20-February 18)
Your sparkle returns today, darling Water-bearer, putting you in a position to dazzle. Use this to take up space, seeking attention where you desire it most. Be mindful to cultivate an air of mystery as you charge toward the limelight.
- PISCES** (February 19-March 20)
Get in touch with your emotions today, dear Pisces, bringing a thoughtful yet moody energy your way. Take a logical approach toward understanding yourself and your situation, considering where you need to focus more attention or grace.

CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- Flavorful plant
 - Battery type
 - Cummersbund
 - Part of the eye
 - Bit of wisdom
 - "To Know You" — Love You
 - Weasel relative
 - Bland
 - Singer — Diamond
 - Disney dwarf
 - Lazybones
 - Yokel
 - Light shade
 - Yellowstone's Old Faithful
 - Baby powder
 - Sleeve
 - Smooths by rubbing
 - Mediterranean island country
 - Soliloquy start (2 wds.)
 - Dressed to the
 - Campus mil. group
 - Unfolds
 - Like some seals
 - Witness
 - Became as one
 - Kitchen tool
 - "Exodus" author Leon —
- DOWN**
- Sings, in a way
 - "Midnight in the Garden of Good and —"
 - Philosopher — Descartes
 - Market area
 - Legume (2 wds.)
 - Crete mountain
 - Berets
 - Like a gymnast
 - Take off
 - Unique
 - On the ocean
 - Commotion
 - Wrestling grip
 - in Boots
 - Metric unit

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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

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17				18					19			
20				21			22		23			
			24			25		26				
	27	28						29		30	31	32
33				34		35	36		37			
38				39		40			41		42	
43				44		45			46		47	
48				49				50		51		
55	56	57				58		59		60	61	62
63						64		65		66		
67						68				69		
70						71				72		

SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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	2			8		7	3	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

The more you read, the more you realise how much you don't know

Poet Avaya Shrestha talks about his reading life, literary influences and his recently published poetry collection.

Avaya Shrestha, writer of 'Phul Binako Sakha' (2003), 'Kayakalpa' (2005) (both anthologies) and 'Tesro Kinara' (2011) (a collection of short stories), recently published another anthology titled 'Lahana Ra Teer'. Divided into four parts, the book has 49 poems.



BOOK TALK

Though he specialises in Nepali literature, he is also an avid reader and writer of works in English and Nepal Bhasa. Shrestha received the 'Balkumari Risal Memorial Journalism Award' in 2018.

In this conversation with the *Post's* Anish Ghimire, Shrestha discusses how he began reading, his literary influences and his recently published poetry collection.

Describe to me your first read.

In my school days, I mostly read novels in Nepali and Hindi. I loved novels by Gulshan Nanda, Ved Prakash, Yudhir Thapa and more. Throughout my teenage years, books were my steadfast companions, nurturing within me an insatiable appetite for new reads.

When I read Maxim Gorky's autobiographical novel 'My Childhood', and found it so impactful that I immediately searched for the remaining two autobiographies by Gorky. These biographies are what got me into reading.

Who are your literary influences?

I love the works of Gopal Prasad Rimal, Bhupi Sherchan and Laxmi Prasad Devkota. Although their poems were written over 60 years ago, they still resonate today. Similarly, the works of Walt Whitman, Nazim Hikmet and Allen Ginsberg have had a significant impact on me. But Guy de Maupassant, Anton Chekhov and O Henry are my favourite storytellers.

I admire the language, style, and expressiveness of Dhruva Chandra

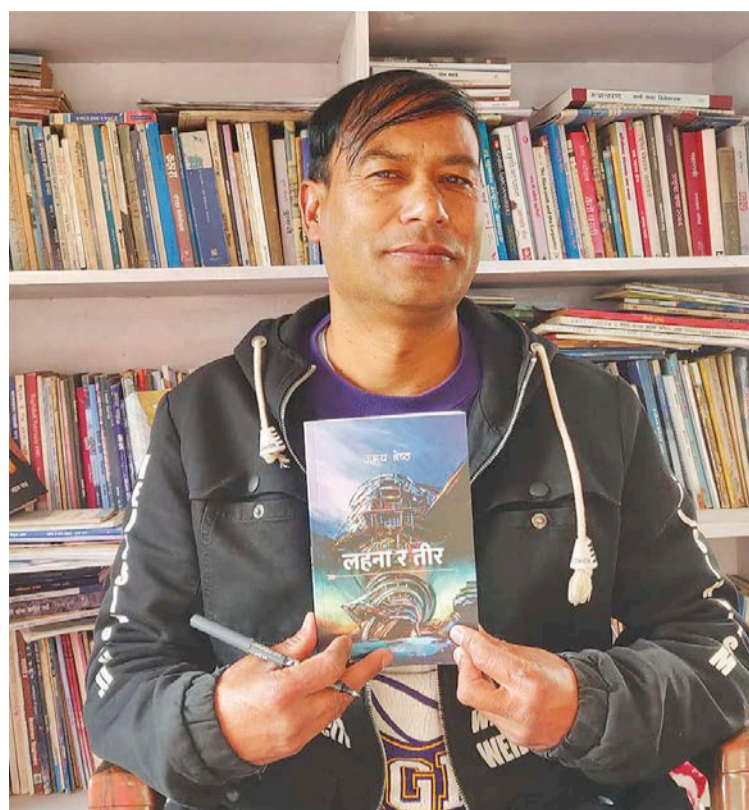


PHOTO COURTESY OF AVAYA SHRESTHA

Gautam, Khagendra Sangraula, Narayan Dhakal, Parijat and Shankar Lamichhane.

You recently published a poetry book. What inspired you to write it?

Yes, I recently released a poetry collection titled 'Lahana Ra Teer'. Divided into four parts, the book consists of 49 poems, they were written in the span of 20 years.

My motivation comes from human struggles—people's unwavering will to survive, and their pursuit of justice, love and the truth. I compose poetry as a means of provoking conversations with others on these subjects. The themes of my

poetry include self-awakening, revelation and confessional feelings. They give me the motivation to write.

Are there any particular themes or subjects you explore in your writing that are unique?

Yes, there are several themes and subjects in my writing that might seem new to readers. Firstly, my poems often draw imagery from the Newa civilisation, offering readers a unique perspective rooted in local culture and history. Secondly, my poems embody ideologies and a sense of time consciousness.

Moreover, I do not cater solely to popular sentiment in my writing. Rather, I express what I believe to be right, even if it challenges conventional thinking. Lastly, I place equal emphasis on ideology and aesthetics in my writing process, recognising the importance of both elements in creating impactful literature.

My poems often draw imagery from the Newa civilisation, offering readers a perspective rooted in local culture.

What role do you think reading plays in understanding oneself?

Reading is really important in a civilised society. It helps you become more kind, understanding, caring and forward-thinking. The more one reads, the more they realise how much they don't know. It also helps you understand yourself better and helps others understand themselves too.

It's like discovering things about yourself. When you understand yourself, you start becoming a better person. Then you start to understand society and the world around you little by little. Even if you're just reading a book, it can make you feel like you're experiencing a part of the world you've never been to before—more vividly than watching a documentary or a movie.

How do you envision the future of Nepali literature?

I see the future of Nepali literature shining bright, especially in poetry. I believe poetry reflects the psychology, trends, social issues and diversity of Nepal.

Poets like Gopal Prasad Rimal, Bhupi Sherchan, Bairagi Kainla and Shyamal have laid a strong foundation in the past. The younger generation is also making remarkable contributions with their wonderful writing, focusing on identity issues and using rich images and symbols from Nepali civilisation.

Short stories are promising and novels are also finding their unique identity while being widely sold. Overall, Nepali literature is evolving with a promising future ahead.

Avaya Shrestha's book recommendations



Aamako Sapana
Author: Gopal Prasad Rimal
Year: 1962
Publisher: Sajha Prakashan

This collection of 28 short poems won Madan Puraskar in 1963. Though the book is thin, the themes explored in the poems are heavy. It is believed that some poems by Rimal, such as 'Aamako Sapana' and 'Hos', inspired political parties and leaders to fight against the autocratic Rana regime in the early 1950s.



Kattel Sirko Chot Patak
Author: Dhruva Chandra Gautam
Year: 1980
Publisher: Sajha Prakashan

The tragic story of a professor, Basudev Kattel, during Panchayat period is heartbreaking. It shows how even an honest man suffers tragedy and can be a victim of an ineffective system. Among Gautam's works, this book moves me the most. This novel is a must-read in Nepali literature.



Shokmagna Yatri
Author: Narayan Dhakal
Year: 2012
Publisher: Fine Print

This is a collection of essays and articles by Dhakal, published in various newspapers and magazines. The beautiful language and soulful narration offer a fresh taste. The things he covers here are still relevant today. Dhakal is good at expressing the essence of the books he reads and connecting them to the present.



Sanaiya
Author: Hom Karki
Year: 2021
Publisher: Kitab Publisher

To understand Nepali society thoroughly, one must read this non-fiction work. It has heartbreaking stories of Nepalis in Gulf countries, who have shed a lot of sweat and tear to earn their livelihood. These individuals, crucial to Nepal's economy, face humiliation abroad and at home. The book has a good blend of fictional scenarios and factual accounts.



Jaba Euta Manche Harauchha
Author: Chandra Gurung
Year: 2022
Publisher: Indigo Ink

'Jaba Euta Manche Harauchha' is another beautiful collection of soulful poetry. Comprising 50 concise and powerful poems, it gives voice to the marginalised. The poems in it are both impactful and artistically vibrant. This is another essential read for anyone interested in Nepali poetry.

A spectacle of creativity

The 18th edition of Namuna College's annual graduation fashion show featured some incredible designs.

Phases/Forms of Precipitation' aimed to depict existential crisis through imagery of precipitation in the designs. Designers used crystals, beads, pearls, sequences and rhinestones for this.

Materials like glass, lacquer, mirror and chrome were used to portray sleek and shiny looks in the sixth sequence 'Art Deco Glam: Radiant Reflection', inspired by the by the modern art style. 'Rouge Allure: Macrame', which means alluring red in French, had elegant and bohemian dresses in a darker red hue. The final sequence 'Frosty Allure: Frosty Flourished' embodied winter with sophisticated winter wear in muted tones.

The graduating batch undertook the overall planning, fund generation, logistics management and execution of the event. The designers were awarded grades for their creations by a panel judges comprising of Anu Shrestha, founder of Kallisto Designs, professor Jaya Laxmi Pradhan, campus chief of Padma Kanya Multiple Campus, Kiran Prakash Saakha, chairman of Saakha Group, Kul Bahadur Basnet, former vice-chairperson of Council of Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), Kushma Shrestha, head of department for clothing and garment at NCFE, Pashupati Dev Pandey, president of Garment Association of Nepal, Rajendra Singh, head of department for Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Garment Technology at NCFE, Sabina Chaudhary, president of alumni of NCFE and the founder of Divahustler.

Basnet is also the former chairperson of the Fashion Technology Subject Committee of Purbanchal University, and Anu Shrestha, Pradhan, Saakha, Khushma Shrestha and Singh are members of Purbanchal University's Fashion Technology Subject Committee.

The grades received by the graduating designers will be combined with their individual grades from the internal evaluation and the pre-judgment. These grades will then be published by Purbanchal University under the subject 'Fashion Show' as part of its board examination results of the bachelors of fashion design programme.

Thirty-two models walked the runway for the show, which was choreographed by media personality and NCFE faculty Rojin Shakya.

POST REPORT

KATHMANDU

Namuna College of Fashion Technology (NCFE) organised their annual fashion show showcasing the designs of their graduating students on Sunday. Started in 2005, this year marked the 18th edition of the show, which took place at Hyatt Regency in Baudha, Kathmandu.

Seventy-one fourth year students enrolled in NCFE's bachelors of fashion design and management (BFDM) programme (under Purbanchal University) showcased their designs. Titled 'Journey of Fashion XVIII: Nirmiti Navyata', the show had eight sequences with 71 looks and eight creative wear pieces.

Thirty-two models walked the runway for the show, which was choreographed by media personality and NCFE faculty Rojin Shakya.

The first sequence 'Yokai: Mystical Creature' was inspired by the Japanese spirits, fairies, demons and trickster spirits, 'Alankrit Phal: Fruity Inflorescence' featured organza and silk gowns inspired by fruits, fitting for spring time, while 'Tzen Meraki:

Model Sara Rai walks the runway in a design from the 'Tzen Meraki: Chain Chic in Denim Couture' sequence.

Chain Chic in Denim Couture' showcased eye-catching denim dresses and top-skirt sets with metal embellishments and chains and a touch of organza designs.

Unlike the first three sequences, all designs under the fourth sequence 'Harmonia Vestis' were modelled by male models. Inspired by various ancient cultures, the sequence featured calf-length coats with matching pants. Following it, 'Midnight Rain:

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NAMUNA COLLEGE

Winter, apparently, is not coming back

The Jon Snow sequel to 'Game of Thrones' isn't happening, Kit Harington says.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, US

Kit Harington has shut down talk of a Jon Snow sequel to HBO's massive hit 'Game of Thrones'. So, winter, apparently, is not coming back.

"There are no plans for it at the moment. It's off the table for the foreseeable," Harington told The Associated Press in an interview Tuesday, while promoting his new crime drama film 'Blood for Dust'.

'Game of Thrones' ended in 2019 after eight seasons, but the prospect of spinoffs were banded about. Fans had to wait three years for the only one that's aired thus far, the HBO prequel 'House of the Dragon', set two centuries before 'Game of Thrones'.

A sequel centered around the popular Snow, who started 'Game of Thrones' as an outcast and brother of the Night's Watch and fought his way to more power in Westeros and the truth of his ancestry, had reportedly been in development for a few years.

"We sort of threw around a few ideas. Nothing really stuck, and we're going to leave it there for the moment," Harington, 37, said.

An HBO spokesperson declined comment to the AP. The Snow-centric sequel isn't the first spinoff put on ice. In 2019, HBO reportedly dropped a prequel set thousands of years beforehand. Starring Naomi Watts, it had already filmed a pilot episode.

As for Harington, he recently partnered again with HBO for an appearance on the third season of the network's drama 'Industry', which premieres later this year. The actor said he was "really excited" about being on the show, based on London's cutthroat financial world.

The second season of "House of the Dragon" is set to premiere on June 16—and fans eager for more Westeros can look forward to the prequel 'Seven Kingdoms: The Hedge Knight'. Warner Bros. announced last week that Peter Claffey and Dexter Sol Ansell will lead the series, set 100 years before 'Game of Thrones'.



Harington played Jon Snow throughout the eight seasons of 'Game of Thrones'.