



# THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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Bhairahawa Jumla

## TODAY

### NATIONAL

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As many as 90 endangered snow leopards have been recorded in Shey-Phoksundo National Park spread over 3,555 square kilometres. A total of 319 camera traps were installed for the study. Pg 3

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Chittaranjan Nepali had a keen interest in heroic epic characters in history who lived up to the expectations of the common people, writes Abhi Subedi. Pg 4

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Commandos from Iran's Revolutionary Guard rappelled from a helicopter onto an Israeli-affiliated ship near the Strait of Hormuz and seized the vessel on Saturday in the latest incident between two countries. Pg 6

### SPORTS

Man City moved to top of English Premier League as Luton were eased aside 5-1 at the Etihad, while Newcastle thrashed Tottenham 4-0 to keep their slim chances of Champions League football next season alive. Pg 7



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ACC

Dipendra Singh Airee walks back to the pavilion at the end of Nepal's innings during the ACC Men's T20 Premier Cup Group A match against Qatar at Al Amerat, Oman on Saturday.

## Airee scripts history with six sixes in an over

The 24-year-old all-rounder joins the ranks of Yuvraj Singh and Kieron Pollard in achieving the rare feat in men's T20I.

SPORTS BUREAU  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 13

Dipendra Singh Airee created history by becoming the third man to smash six sixes in an over in an international T20 match on Saturday, achieving the feat during Nepal's 32-run victory over Qatar at the 2024 ACC Men's Premier Cup in Al Amerat, Oman.

The 24-year-old all-rounder joined Yuvraj Singh and Kieron Pollard as the only cricketers to achieve the feat in men's T20I so far. Singh was the first to do so when he hammered six sixes off Stuart Broad during India's 2007 ICC Men's T20 World Cup group match against England. West Indies batter Pollard achieved the feat in 2021 by cracking six sixes off Akila Dananjaya in Coolidge during Sri Lanka's tour of the West Indies.

Airee also became the fifth batter to do so in all internationals. In ODI cricket, South Africa's Herschelle

Gibbs and the United States' Jaskaran Malhotra have both hammered six sixes in an over.

Airee also became the fifth batter to hit six sixes in an over in all internationals.

Gibbs did it during the 2007 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup match against Netherlands. Malhotra joined the list in 2021 against Papua New Guinea. Airee started the last over on 28 off 15 balls and hit medium pacer Kamran Khan's each ball for six to finish the inning on 64 off 21 balls, taking Nepal, which opted to bat first, to an imposing total of 210-7.

>> Continued on page 7

## Victims decry TJ office bearers selection panel without amending law

Rights activists say government trod the wrong path by forming the committee before revising the transitional justice law.

BINOD GHIMIRE  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 13

Ignoring the concerns of the victims and human rights activists, the government on Friday formed a committee to select candidates for the chairpersons and members of the two transitional justice commissions before an amendment to the Enforced Disappearance Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act.

A Cabinet meeting constituted a five-member committee led by Om Prakash Mishra, a former chief justice, to nominate the candidates for both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons. The committee was formed as per the Supreme Court's March 12 order, which had instructed the government to start selecting office bearers in the two transitional justice commissions within a month.

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

Following the court's order, the victims and human rights defenders had demanded the government and the parties endorse the bill to amend the Act by the top court's deadline before starting the selection process. However, the bill couldn't be endorsed within the deadline, prompting the government to form the committee based on existing law.

"No capable person with high integrity will agree to join the commissions without the amendment. Appointing the chairpersons and members for the sake of the appointment is meaningless," said Suman Adhikari, a for-

mer chair of the Conflict Victims' Common Platform. "A month was ample time for the bill to be endorsed by Parliament but no serious effort was made to this effect."

A full bench of the Supreme Court in 2015 had directed the government to amend the Act inducting the provisions that bar amnesty in serious violations of human rights.

There hasn't been any discussion on the bill that is under consideration in the Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee of Parliament ever since a change in the ruling alliance on March 4. The Nepali Congress, which had been saying the bill must be endorsed through a vote while it was still in the government, has changed its stance after being pushed to the opposition bench.

Raju Chapagain, coordinator of the Accountability Watch Committee, an association of human rights defenders, said the government was taking a wrong path by forming the selection committee without amending the Act. "The court's deadline was deliberately missed without making serious effort in endorsing the bill," he said.

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## US intel shows China equipment sales to Russia soaring as Ukraine war lingers

Russia's semiconductor imports from China jumped over 2.5 fold to \$500 million in 2022.

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, APRIL 13

China has increased sales to Russia of machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that Moscow in turn is using to produce missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weaponry for use in its war against Ukraine, according to a US assessment.

Two senior Biden administration officials, who discussed the sensitive findings on Friday on the condition of anonymity, said that in 2023 about 90 percent of Russia's microelectronics came from China, which Russia has used to make missiles, tanks and aircraft. Nearly 70 percent of Russia's approximately \$900 million in machine tool imports in the last quarter of 2023 came from China.

>> Continued on page 2



AFP/RS

Local residents remove items from their shop still intact after bombing, in the town of Kostyantynivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine, on Thursday.

NATIONAL

DISTRICT DIGEST

Tourist information centre set up in Beni

**MYAGDI:** A tourist information centre has been set up in Beni, the district headquarters of Myagdi, with an objective to provide necessary information to visitors. In an initiative of the Myagdi chamber of commerce and industry, Beni Municipality and Nepal Tourism Board established the information centre near Buspark area. "The centre will provide information about tourist destinations and help visitors get right information during their visit in the district," said Rajesh Shakya, tourism coordinator of Myagdi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Man held with Rs1.1 million in unaccounted money

**RAUTAHAT:** Police on Saturday arrested a 56-year-old man from Gaur Municipality-1 in Rautahat district with Rs1.1 million of unaccounted money. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Elija Giri, Birendra Kumar Jaiswal of Gaur-1 was held with the money that does not have any legal source. The suspect was handed over to the district customs office for further investigation.

Nature guide killed in rhino attack

**BHARATPUR:** A nature guide died in a rhino attack at Chitwan National Park on Saturday. The rhino attacked the nature guide Subas Regmi, 32, while he was guiding tourists in the buffer zone forest area at 11:50 am. Regmi, a permanent resident of Aarughat Rural Municipality in Gorkha, had been living at Ratnanagar Municipality-6, Chitwan. According to the District Police Office in Chitwan, critically injured Regmi died at Chitwan Medical College. He had been working as a nature guide at Jungle World Resort, Sauraha. Regmi was a licensed nature guide, said Ganesh Prasad Tiwari, information officer at Chitwan National Park. Regmi's body was taken to Bharatpur Hospital for post-mortem examinations.

# Devi Lake, the largest in Chitwan National Park, is on the verge of drying up

The water body covering an area of 25 hectares is estimated to have shrunk to its half.



Devi Tal during a clean-up campaign three years ago. (Right) The lake bed has seen a growth of vegetation and its water level is receding. Without urgent maintenance, the source of water for protected animals risks drying up completely soon.

**RAMESH KUMAR PAUDEL**  
CHITWAN, APRIL 13

Devi Lake is the largest of the lakes situated inside Chitwan National Park. Rampreet Yadav, who worked for the demarcation of the park before it was formally established in 1973 and was promoted to chief conservation officer, said he is now shocked to see the dry lake, which used to be filled with water.

Yadav said that back then, one could always see five to ten rhinoceros around the lake drinking water and grazing around or playing in the water, but now the lake looks deserted.

Due to the forest fire in the Chure Range, Devi Lake and several other

lakes and wetlands are currently covered in dust and ashes. The water level in Devi Lake has lowered too low, and the lake is covered in grass rather than water.

"The eastern part of the lake is dry and covered in mounds of mud and silts, while the existence of the lake could be felt only on the western part. The danger of what was once a huge lake turning into a grassland is growing by the day," said Yadav.

There are many small and large lakes, wetlands, and ponds that help maintain the ecosystem of the park. According to the park officials, Tamor Lake, Munda Lake, and Lamital are big lakes inside the park, but Devi Lake is the biggest of all.

Ganesh Prasad Tiwari, the information officer of the park, said that Devi Lake spreads in an area of 25 hectares, and it has been estimated that half of the lake has dried up. Some of the dried up area is covered in grass; while siltation and mounds of mud, among other things, could be seen scattered around in other parts.

"The northern bank of the lake is attached to Chure Hill, and the eastern part is connected with the rivulets from Chure," Tiwari said. "During the rainy season, some other rivulets flow from the hill to the lake, which brings stones, mud, and other residues creating mounds in the lake. Due to the short rainy season, the lake starts drying up faster."

Yadav said that the problem of Devi Lake drying up frequently is not a new thing. "Unlike other lakes, Devi Lake requires regular clean up and maintenance; otherwise, it starts to dry quickly," said Yadav.

Chitwan National Park is the main habitat of rare wildlife such as one-horned rhinoceros, tigers, and many other carnivorous and herbivorous animals, aquatic animals, crocodiles, and birds. Preservation of lakes, ponds, and wetlands are crucial for the survival of these flora and fauna.

If the lakes, ponds, and wetlands are not managed and maintained properly, they start to dry up, and grass, bushes, and trees start to grow there, further deteriorating their con-

dition and over the years they might disappear from the scene completely.

"Due to a lack of budget, we are having difficulties in the management of the lakes in the park," said Tiwari.

According to Tiwari, in the current fiscal year, the government allocated only Rs1.1 million for the maintenance of lakes, wetlands, and ponds, as well as for the construction of ponds inside the park. Before the fiscal year 2018-2019, the government used to allocate around Rs10 million to Rs14 million for the same purpose, but after COVID.

"Along with lakes, the budget for the maintenance of grasslands has also been decreasing, which has created problems maintaining the diet of the animals there," said Tiwari.

## Victims object to transitional justice office bearers selection panel before legal reform

>> Continued from page 1  
"The government's move will not give a solution to the existing problem."

The two commissions have been inactive since July 2022 after the government decided to extend their terms without retaining their chairmen and members. The government had claimed the bill to amend the existing transitional justice law would be endorsed by October 2022 and the appointment would be made based on the revised Act.

However, close to two years later, nothing has been achieved as the parties remain divided on different provisions in the bill. As the winter session of Parliament is being prorogued on

Sunday, the amendment process will be on hold at least until the next session is summoned.

While the truth commission has received 63,718 complaints, the disappearances commission is sitting on around 2,400 cases.

The victims say they have no expectation from a Mishra-led committee, which had previously failed them.

The government in 2019 had formed a similar committee under Mishra in order to recommend the heads and members at the two commissions. Amid reservations from different quarters, it recommended the Ganesh Datta Bhatta-led team for the truth commission and the Yubraj Subedi-led team for the disappearances commis-

sion. It had taken 10 months to make the recommendations.

However, both the committees failed to perform despite being in the office for more than two years, prompting then Sher Bahadur Deuba-led government not to extend their tenures.

"We have seen what types of people it selected last time. I don't understand why a tested and failed person has again been picked to make the recommendations," said Adhikari.

Stakeholders have also demanded that they be consulted before taking any decisions on the transitional justice process. However, the Mishra-led panel was formed without informing victims and human rights defenders.

## US hopes findings report will deter China

>> Continued from page 1

Chinese and Russian entities have also been working to jointly produce unmanned aerial vehicles inside Russia, and Chinese companies are likely providing Russia with nitrocellulose used in the manufacture of ammunition, the officials said. China-based companies Wuhan Global Sensor Technology Co, Wuhan Tongsheng Technology Co Ltd and Hikvision are providing optical components for use in Russian tanks and armored vehicles.

The officials said Russia has received military optics for use in tanks and armoured vehicles manufactured by Chinese firms iRay Technology and North China Research Institute of Electro-Optics, and China has been providing Russia with UAV engines and turbojet engines for cruise missiles.

Russia's semiconductor imports from China jumped from \$200 million in 2021 to over \$500 million in 2022, according to Russian customs data analysed by the Free Russia Foundation, a group that advocates for civil society development.

Beijing is also working with Russia to improve its satellite and other space-based capabilities for use in Ukraine, a development the officials say could in the longer term increase the threat Russia poses across Europe.

The officials, citing downgraded intelligence findings, said the US has also determined that China is providing imagery to Russia for its war on Ukraine.

The officials discussed the findings as Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to travel to China this month for talks. Blinken is scheduled to travel next week to the Group of 7 foreign ministers meeting in Capri, Italy, where he's expected to raise concerns about China's growing indirect support for Russia as Moscow revamps its military and looks to consolidate recent gains in Ukraine.

President Joe Biden has previously raised his concerns directly with Chinese President Xi Jinping about Beijing indirectly supporting Russia's war effort.

While China has not provided direct lethal military support for Russia, it has backed it diplomatically in blaming the West for provoking Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to launch the war and refrained from calling it an invasion in deference to the Kremlin.

China has repeatedly said it isn't providing Russia with arms or military assistance, although it has maintained robust economic connections with Moscow, alongside India and other countries, amid sanctions from Washington and its allies.

"The normal trade between China and Russia should not be interfered or restricted," said Liu Pengyu, spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington. "We urge the US side to refrain from disparaging and scapegoating the normal relationship between China and Russia."

Xi met in Beijing on Tuesday with

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who heaped praise on Xi's leadership.

Russia's growing economic and diplomatic isolation has made it increasingly reliant on China, its former rival for leadership of the Communist bloc during the Cold War.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who returned to Washington this week from a visit to Beijing, said she warned Chinese officials that the Biden administration was prepared to sanction Chinese banks, companies and Beijing's leadership, if they assist Russia's armed forces with its ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

as well as its coordination with Iran and North Korea to supply it with badly needed weaponry. Blinken last year spotlighted intelligence that showed China was considering providing arms and ammunition to Russia.

The White House believes that the public airing of the intelligence findings has led China, at least for now, to hold off on directly arming Russia. China's economy has also been slow to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. Chinese officials could be sensitive to reaction from European capitals, which have maintained closer ties to Beijing even as the US-China relation-



In this photo released by Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service on Tuesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (left) and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi shaking hands after their joint news conference following the talks in Beijing, China.

The Democratic president issued an executive order in December giving Yellen the authority to sanction financial institutions that aided Russia's military-industrial complex.

"We continue to be concerned about the role that any firms, including those in the PRC, are playing in Russia's military procurement," Yellen told reporters, using the initials for the People's Republic of China. "I stressed that companies, including those in the PRC, must not provide material support for Russia's war and that they will face significant consequences if they do. And I reinforced that any banks that facilitate significant transactions that channel military or dual-use goods to Russia's defense industrial base expose themselves to the risk of US sanctions."

The US has frequently downgraded and unveiled intelligence findings about Russia's plans and operations over the course of the more than 2-year-old war with Ukraine.

Such efforts have been focused on highlighting plans for Russian misinformation operations or to throw attention on Moscow's difficulties in prosecuting its war against Ukraine

ship has become more complicated.

Meanwhile, China on Thursday announced rare sanctions against two US defence companies over what it called their support for arms sales to Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy Beijing claims as its own territory to be recovered by force if necessary.

The announcement freezes the assets of General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and General Dynamics Land Systems held within China. It also bars the companies' management from entering the country.

Filings show General Dynamics operates a half-dozen Gulfstream and jet aviation services operations in China, which remains heavily reliant on foreign aerospace technology even as it attempts to build its own presence in the field.

The company also helps make the Abrams tank being purchased by Taiwan to replace outdated armor intended to deter or resist an invasion from China.

General Atomics produces the Predator and Reaper drones used by the US military.

Government of Nepal  
Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport  
Department of Roads  
Project Directorate (ADB)  
Bishalnagar, Kathmandu

**ADB Loan No. 3722-NP: SASEC Highway Improvement Project (SHIP)  
Road Safety Implementation Consultant (RSIC-CSC)  
Notice for Shortlisting of Consultants**

(First Date of Publication: 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024)

In connection with our Consulting Service Recruitment Notice (CSRN) calling for Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Construction Supervision Consultant for Road Safety Implementation Consultant published on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023 in the ADB's CMS portal and as provision made in the Public Procurement Regulation-2064, Clause 70(10), the names of the shortlisted consulting firms are given below:

| S.No. | Name of Consultant                     | Country of Incorporation | Type of Association |
|-------|--|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1     | ERMC (P.) Ltd.                         | Nepal                    | Lead                |
|       | Soil Test (P.) Ltd.                    | Nepal                    | Joint Venture       |
|       | Udaya Consultancy (P.) Ltd.            | Nepal                    | Joint Venture       |
| 2     | Full Bright Consultancy (Pvt.) Ltd.    | Nepal                    | Lead                |
|       | Traffic & Transport Unlimited Solution | Nepal                    | Joint Venture       |
|       | Scholars Consult Pvt. Ltd.             | Nepal                    | Associate           |
| 3     | GEOCE Consultants (P) Ltd.             | Nepal                    | Lead                |
|       | AVIYAAN Consulting (P) Ltd.            | Nepal                    | Associate           |
|       | CARD Consult (P) Ltd.                  | Nepal                    | Associate           |
| 4     | ITECO Nepal (P) Ltd                    | Nepal                    | Lead                |
|       | Total Management Services              | Nepal                    | Joint Venture       |
|       | Tech Studio of Engineering             | Nepal                    | Joint Venture       |
| 5     | K & J Projects Private Limited         | India                    | Lead                |
|       | InfoTrans Engineers Private Limited    | India                    | Joint Venture       |
| 6     | TAEC Consult P. Ltd.                   | Nepal                    | Lead                |
|       | SILT Consultants (P.) Ltd.             | Nepal                    | Joint Venture       |
|       | Devtec Nepal Private Limited           | Nepal                    | Joint Venture       |

All shortlisted consultants are requested to collect Request for Proposal (RFP) document from Project Directorate (ADB) office, Bishalnagar during office hours.

**PROJECT DIRECTOR**

# Ninety endangered snow leopards recorded in Shey-Phoksundo National Park

Study said to be the first intensive research carried out using the latest technology to record wildlife in Shey-Phoksundo.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Snow leopards are found in the national park areas in the elevation of 2,500 to 5,500 metres above sea level.

RAJ BAHADR SHAHI  
MUGU, APRIL 13

As many as 90 endangered snow leopards have been recorded in Shey-Phoksundo National Park that spreads across 3,555 square kilometers in Dolpa and Mugu districts.

According to Bishwo Babu Shrestha, senior conservation officer serving the protected area, 90 snow leopards were found during the latest study of the species which is on the endangered species list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, supported by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), conducted a detailed study and assessment of the snow leopard population in Shey-Phoksundo National Park from 2019 to 2022.

A total of 319 camera traps were installed in the country's largest and only trans-Himalayan national park and its buffer zone in 2019 to count snow leopards. According to the park officials, the conservationists started analysing data one year after installing the camera traps.

"Based on the most parsimonious spatial capture-recapture model, an abundance of 90 snow leopards was estimated with a density of 2.21 snow leopards per 100 km<sup>2</sup> in Shey-Phoksundo National Park," says the study report.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation made

public the study report coinciding with the World Wetland Day on February 2, 2024.

According to Chandra Jung Hamal, research and field programme officer at the WWF, the study was the first intensive research carried out using the latest technology to record wildlife in Shey-Phoksundo. He said the study also focused on prey abundance and density in and around the national park.

**319 camera traps were set up in the national park and its buffer zone to count snow leopards.**

The government of Nepal and the WWF had carried out a study of snow leopards for the first time in Shey-Phoksundo National Park in 2009. There were an estimated 110 to 130 snow leopards in the national park then, said Shrestha.

Nepal is one of the 12 countries that hosts snow leopards. Their estimated population worldwide ranges from 3,921 to 6,290 while 350 to 500 snow leopards are believed to exist in Nepal.

Himalayan tahr, goral and blue sheep are the major prey for snow leopards. According to conservationists, there are more than 4,000

Himalayan tahr, goral and blue sheep members in the Shey-Phoksundo National Park and its vicinity.

Established in 1984 to preserve a diversity of flora and fauna, Shey-Phoksundo National Park has the highest population density of snow leopards in Nepal. According to Hamal, snow leopards are found in the national park areas in the elevation of 2,500 to 5,500 metres above sea level.

Shey-Phoksundo National Park straddles three local units of Dolpa—Shey Phoksundo, Dolpo Buddha and Jagadulla rural municipalities—and Mugu Rural Municipality of Mugu district in Karnali Province. The national park is named after the historical Shey monastery and Shey-Phoksundo lake, the deepest lake of Nepal. This national park is home to other endangered species including grey wolf, musk deer, blue sheep, goral, great Tibetan sheep, Himalayan tahr, leopard and Himalayan black bear. According to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, six species of reptiles, 29 butterfly species, and over 200 species of birds are found in the Shey-Phoksundo Park.

According to Shey-Phoksundo National Park, around 4,000 tourists—both domestic and foreign—visit the park area in a year. Shey-Phoksundo lake is the major tourist attraction in the area. A visitor reaches the lake by walking two days from Dunai, the district headquarters of Dolpa.

# Decision to prorogue House session irks Nepali Congress

The main opposition calls a joint meeting of party lawmakers to discuss the government move amid its demand for a home minister probe.

POST REPORT  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 13

With several crucial bills remaining to be endorsed, the government's decision to prorogue the winter session of Parliament has irked the main opposition, Nepali Congress. More than two months since its commencement, the bill session endorsed just three bills despite the government's promise to pass much of the essential legislation.

The government had also announced to amend at least a dozen laws to ensure an investment-friendly environment ahead of the third Nepal Investment Summit, which also proved hollow.

At a time when the Nepal Congress is demanding a parliamentary committee to investigate Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Rabi Lamichhane for allegedly embezzling cooperative funds, the main opposition finds the government's decision to abruptly end the House of Representatives session fishy.

To chart out its strategy on the heels of the government's decision to prorogue the House session, the Congress has called a meeting of its parliamentary party and parliamentary committee on Sunday morning.

The parliamentary party consists of members of the House and the National Assembly.

The parliamentary committee consists of the party's parliamentary leader, deputy leader, parliamentary leader of the upper house, chief whip, whip, and the Congress general secretaries.

The government has refused to form a parliamentary probe against Home Minister Lamichhane. Some ruling party leaders, including CPN-UML Chairman KP Sharma Oli, have accused the Congress of obstructing the House session and forcing the government to prorogue it.

However, the government on Friday

decided to recommend that President Ramchandra Paudel prorogue the federal parliament session effective from Sunday midnight.

Congress leaders said that since the government is escaping its responsibility to form the parliamentary probe against the home minister and is unable to give any business to the House, the party needs to tell the people it is the government that takes the blame.

"We oppose the government's decision to prorogue the House session," said Shyam Ghimire, a Nepali Congress lawmaker. "We were preventing the home minister from speaking from the rostrum but we did not obstruct other House proceedings."

The home minister was supposed to table a bill related to the political parties but due to protest from the Congress, he could not do so.

"If the government's intent was positive, it could allow other ministers to table the bill in the House. But it didn't do so, showing that the government wants confrontation," said Ghimire. "There are several instances of parliamentary probe committees formed when such questions were raised against sitting ministers."

According to the Congress lawmaker, they also made it clear that the ruling parties will have a majority on such a committee and even the coordinator could be someone from the ruling parties. "Despite being given all those benefits, why are the ruling parties not ready to form the committee?"

Rastriya Prajatantra Party and other fringe parties have joined the main opposition in demanding the parliamentary probe committee.

"We are not going to backtrack on our decision because it is our bottom line," a Congress office bearer said. "We have been demanding the formation of the committee but the government decided to prorogue the session. This means it is under tremendous pressure and a moral dilemma."

There is no alternative for the gov-

ernment but to form the committee because "we will take our agenda to the next session too", said the leader.

Some Congress lawmakers said the government made a joke of the upcoming investment summit for which it committed to amending at least a dozen laws believed to be hindering investments in the country.

A secretary-level committee had recommended amending the laws in order to improve the country's investment climate.

If the government was serious about tapping investment and wanted to remove the bottlenecks, why did not it table the bill in the House, Nepali Congress lawmaker Ramhari Khatriwada, who chairs the State Affairs Committee of the House, questioned.

"This shows the government is not serious about the investment summit and it will erode the state's credibility."

However, the government looks set to introduce ordinance to address legal issues ahead of the third investment summit.

If needed, the government will issue ordinances and amend the laws, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal said while addressing the 58th annual general meeting of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries on Wednesday.

"We need to amend 12 laws. If it's essential, we will amend them through an ordinance," the prime minister said, committing to improving the legal framework to facilitate investments.

Ahead of such an important event, the prime minister is talking about ordinance to amend laws, said former foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey. "Amending laws through ordinance will not boost investors' confidence."

The government is organising the investment summit on April 28 and 29, presenting 132 big, medium and small projects before potential investors.



POST PHOTO: MANOJ POUDEL

Women perform Lathi Naach, a traditional Tharu cultural dance, at the Thakurdwara village in Bardiya recently.

# Why does Japan PM Kishida still want to meet Kim Jong-un?

Experts say Kishida's persistent attempts to arrange a meeting with Kim, despite Pyongyang's firm stance, are primarily aimed at bolstering the Japanese PM's low approval rating.

JI DA-GYUM  
SEOUL, APRIL 13

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's steadfast pursuit of a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, despite Pyongyang's unequivocal public refusals to engage with Japan and address the abduction of Japanese citizens, is primarily intended to resonate with the domestic audience, experts in Seoul said Monday.

I have said in the past."

However, Kishida's remarks in the interview notably followed a series of statements from North Korea in late March, attributed to the North Korean leader's sister, Kim Yo-jong, and Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui, rejecting any contact with Japan.

Choe claimed that North Korea "has nothing to solve regarding the 'abduction issue' insisted upon by Japan, and furthermore, it has neither the responsibility nor the will to make any effort for it," in a statement issued on Mar. 29 in response to Kishida's parliamentary speech.

Choe also emphasized that the North Korea-Japan dialogue "is not a matter of concern" to North Korea, adding that North Korea "will not allow any attempt of Japan to contact the former."

According to experts on Japan in Seoul, Kishida's persistent attempts to arrange a meeting with Kim, despite Pyongyang's firm stance, are primarily aimed at bolstering the Japanese prime minister's low approval rating. His approval rating dipped below 20 percent and remained around the 20 percent threshold during the first quarter of this year.

"Despite positive trends in various domestic economic indicators, the populace isn't experiencing the benefits due to inflation. Consequently, there's substantial domestic discontent in Japan regarding (Kishida's) capabilities of policy performance and achievements, resulting in notably low approval ratings," Yang Keeho, a professor of Japanese studies at Sungkonghoe University, told The Korea Herald.

"In my opinion, he aims to pursue diplomatic achievements, whether through the US-Japan summit or

high-level negotiations between North Korea and Japan, in order to give his government a boost."

Jin Chang-soo, director of the Center for Japanese Studies at the Sejong Institute, also emphasized another factor is a pressing need to resolve the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea during the 1970s and 1980s, highlighting the sense of time pressure.

Jin stressed the growing urgency of resolving the matter and the "changing dynamics resulting from the aging of the families of abduction victims."

The Japanese government has identified individuals as victims of abduction by North Korea, with five of them returning to Japan in 2002, while the remainder have not.

Lee Ki-tae, director of the Global Strategy Research Division at the Korea Institute for National Unification, emphasized that addressing abductee issues has been a longstanding challenge for Japanese prime ministers throughout history.

"So, Japan is persistently demonstrating to its citizens its efforts to resolve the issue. Particularly through

the Japan-US summit, it seeks to reaffirm its desire to receive cooperation from the US once again," Lee told The Korea Herald, highlighting the fact that the interview was released before Kishida's trip to the US.

Yang further elucidated that Kishida's repeated attempts to arrange a meeting with Kim can also be viewed as preparation for the potential change in the US presidency in the run-up to the US presidential election in November. "Furthermore, Japan aims to secure its position in preparation for a potential North Korea-US summit in the event of a Trump presidency," Yang said.

"With South Korea's relations with North Korea completely severed at the moment, Japan seems to be striving to

assume a diplomatic leadership role and set the stage for navigating the situation after the next presidential election."

Jin also highlighted "Japan's diplomatic urgency in resolving the abduction issue" as a critical factor. He noted that failure to resolve the abduction matter, particularly amid progress in North Korean nuclear negotiations, could adversely affect Japan's broader policy towards North Korea.

However, experts also disagree on whether a potential summit could reverse the downward trajectory of Kishida's approval rating.

Yuji Hosaka, a professor at Sejong University, suggested that the meeting itself could potentially boost Kishida's approval rating, even if it does not yield concrete outcomes on the abductee issue.

Hosaka pointed out that no Japanese prime minister, neither Shinzo Abe nor Yoshihide Suga, has held a summit with North Korea in the past 20 years. The last such meeting occurred during Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to North Korea in 2002 and 2004, despite director-level talks between Japan and North Korea being held in Stockholm in 2014.

"That's why meeting with Kim Jong-un is considered quite groundbreaking in itself for Kishida," Hosaka said. "So even just the meeting alone will be extensively covered by the Japanese media. There also could be many hopeful aspects emerging from the meeting. It's not necessary to resolve everything at once." Yang forecasted that the summit itself would not alter Kishida's destiny, as the ruling Liberal Democratic Party is scheduled to hold a vote for a president when Kishida's current term as LDP

president ends in September.

After the election of the next LDP president, a special session of the National Diet will convene to appoint the prime minister through a majority vote, and the newly elected leader will then assemble a cabinet. Subsequently, there is a possibility of general elections occurring shortly thereafter.

"Nevertheless, irrespective of any unfolding events, Prime Minister Kishida's tenure is likely to conclude in September," Yang said. "With such low approval ratings, it's simply impossible to hold general elections with Kishida at the forefront."

Lee suggested that a summit could raise Kishida's approval rating if it occurs, but it may not have the same significant impact as it did for then-Prime Minister Koizumi in 2002. Following Koizumi's trip to Pyongyang in 2002 for the first Japan-North Korea summit, five abductees were returned to Japan.

"For the approval ratings to truly soar, it would necessitate the confirmation of the abductees being alive and their successful repatriation. Only then, akin to the era of Koizumi, would we witness a significant rise (in his approval rating)," Lee said.

However, Lee also raised questions about the feasibility of Kishida holding a summit with Kim amid mounting domestic challenges, including a slush fund scandal that has rocked Japan's ruling LDP.

"Prime Minister Kishida currently finds himself in a situation where he has his hands full resolving domestic political issues," Lee said.

"Given the current chaotic domestic situation, the necessary conditions for facilitating a meeting simply do not exist domestically at the moment."

— The Korea Herald



PHOTOS: REUTERS

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (left) and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

## OPINION

## The boring truth about AI

New technologies introduce new risks, yet life goes on.

AMAR BHIDE



Experts who warn that artificial intelligence poses catastrophic risks on par with nuclear annihilation ignore the gradual, diffused nature of technological development. As I argued in my 2008 book, *The Venturesome Economy*, transformative technologies—from steam engines, aeroplanes, computers, mobile telephony, and the internet to antibiotics and mRNA vaccines—evolve through a protracted, massively multiplayer game that defies top-down command and control.

Joseph Schumpeter's "gales of creative destruction" and more recent theories trumpeting disruptive breakthroughs are misleading. As economic historian Nathan Rosenberg and many others have shown, transformative technologies do not suddenly appear out of the blue. Instead, meaningful advances require discovering and

to smartphones, automatic braking and fuel-injection systems in cars, special effects in movies, Google searches, digital communications, and social-media platforms. And, as with other technological advances, AI has long been put to military and criminal uses.

Yet AI advances have been gradual and uncertain. IBM's Deep Blue famously beat world chess champion Garry Kasparov in 1997—40 years after an IBM researcher first wrote a chess-playing program. And though Deep Blue's successor, Watson, won \$1 million by beating the reigning *Jeopardy!* champions in 2011, it was a commercial failure. In 2022, IBM sold off Watson Health for a fraction of the billions it had invested. Microsoft's intelligent assistant, Clippy, became an object of ridicule. And after years of development, autocorrected texts continue to produce embarrassing results.

Machine learning—essentially a souped-up statistical procedure that many AI programs depend on—requires reliable feedback. But good feedback demands unambiguous outcomes produced by a stable process. Ambiguous human intentions, impulsiveness, and creativity undermine statistical learning and thus limit the useful scope of AI. While AI software flawlessly recognises my face at airports, it cannot accurately comprehend the nuances of my carefully and slowly spoken words. The inaccuracy of 16 generations of profes-

## Chittaranjan Nepali's epic themes of history

WORDS & ECHOES

His major thrust was the study of the characters in national history who had performed heroic acts.

ABHI SUBEDI



Chittaranjan Nepali (1931-2023), probably the oldest historian many of us knew, should be remembered today for several reasons. Like many historians who tend to present grand images of their favourite historical times and events, Chittdai, as we knew him, too, foregrounds the epic nature of events and personas of history in his writings. Historical and literary writings constitute Chittdai's oeuvre. History, whether seen as messianic like Walter Benjamin or materialistic like Karl Marx, reverberates to the present. My interest in this subject is guided by my background as a literary person interested in the cohesion of the heroic psyche commonly evoked in the oldest literary genre, epic and "grand history".

Chittdai had a keen interest in heroic epic characters in history who lived up to the expectations of the common people. There are mainly two trends in history writing. The most known form follows a canon that focuses on the history's heroic or dominating characters and events. The other is oriented towards deconstructing that or putting a different perspective. The majority of Nepali historians have more or less followed the former. Significantly, Chittdai had a great respect for Nepali historians, including Baburam Acharya, Nayaraj Panta and Mahesh Chandra Regmi.

I was struck by the demise of this nonagenarian historian whom I had proposed to interview for a long article and had mentioned some topics to him. They included his choice of heroes in Nepali history, sense of nationalism, recollections about his discovery of the manuscripts of Nepali poems, and perceptions. Inquiring about his experiences and



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interpretations of the Nepal-China borders would be important, as he was involved in that process. Fundamentally, that ran into his family, which we can see especially from the impact of his father Sardar Medini Prasad Rajbhandari's knowledge about the Nepal-Tibet China relationship and work in that area.

As I was familiar with his associations and company with some major Nepali writers and some of his views about personas and the imago effects, I wanted to discuss topics from those areas. Sadly, I missed that opportunity! This brief article is an attempt to allude to some of those themes.

Chittdai's life as a government servant had its own history. But some of his works cohered with his responsibility as a government employee. His book *Nepal-Chin Simana Sandhi*, or 'Nepal-China Border Agreement', published in 1964, is an example. The long document signed on March 21, 1960, by Nepali Prime Minister BP Koirala and Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-Lai during Koirala's China visit, was handwritten by Narayan Prasad Rajbhandari, alias Chittaranjan Nepali, who worked as a member secretary of the drafting committee.

Chittdai lived two lives, as it were. It must have been both exciting and challenging for him to put the two sides together for that long. He spent

his entire life both as a bureaucrat, an active research-savvy historian and a sensitive literary researcher. He had a bizarre story to tell. He was invited to identify the dead body of Wangdi, a Tibetan fighter killed by the Nepali army. He had appeared in a photo found in the pocket of the dead. This event had no connection with his life as a historian and writer. Sitaram Baral has written a very readable story of Chittdai in *Nepalkhabar* (November 2, 2023). Based on Chittdai's conversations and the ease and confidence with which he wrote, we can say that he was a historian with a strong passion for uncovering important events.

Reviewing his oeuvre and what I knew from my close acquaintance, I always felt that Chittdai was impelled by a sense of heroism in history. He was familiar with Western philosophy as postulated in English philosopher Thomas Carlyle's book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. Though I did not discuss this subject with him in detail, I knew from reading his works and personal conversations that Chittdai's major thrust of history was the study of the characters in national history who had performed what he considered heroic acts.

He looked at native history and the acts of some personas whom he considered heroic characters. Chittdai's

magnum opus *General Bhimsen Thapa ra Tatkalin Nepal* won him Madan Puraskar, a literary award, in 2013 BS. This book is founded upon his argument that Thapa is a hero in Nepali history though historians are divided about his achievements and positions. Chittdai's other books of history take up different national heroes. The major titles speak about that. They are "Shree 5 Rana Bahadur Shah" and "Jung Bahadur Katha", besides others that deal with the family conspiracies and power structure of the Ranacracy as described in *Ranashahiko Roveyavastha ra Dharmapatraharu*.

Chittdai was a literary critic, researcher and translator of *Visakhadatta's Mudra Rakhas* and Chittadhar Hridaya's Newar epic *Sugata Saurava*. He is known to have discovered the works of some Nepali poets for the first time. I have written about that aspect of his personality in my book *Nepali Literature: Background and History* (1978). He discovered a poet named Udayanada Aryal whom he calls a good Nepali poet. According to Chittdai, the poem, which he discovered, was written around 1776, or during the reign of Pratap Singh Shah. Not much is known about the poet's life. However, it is known that this poet's uncle, Pundit Shakti Ballav Aryal, also a poet, was a Pundit at the court of Gurkha. The poet was very much influenced by the "personality and glory" of King Prithvi Narayan Shah.

Besides, Chittdai has written a long critical essay on Diamond Shumsher Rana's historical novel *Seto Bagh*, a novel based on the life of Junga Bahadur. Chittdai has criticised the "inappropriate use of history" in this novel. As a literary essayist, he published critical and progressive essays in the old issues of the literary magazine *Sharada* during the period of political transition in the great fifties.

Metaphorically, Chittdai, in his quest for epic themes, turned to a major poetic oeuvre in the Newar language titled *Sugata Saurabha*, which was written on the life of the Buddha by poet Chittadhar Hridaya in the mid-1940s when he was put to jail for his democratic views by the Rana autocracy. Nepali has brilliantly translated this epic into Nepali with a long introduction; Nepal Academy published it in 2059 BS. Chittaranjan Nepali's quest for epic themes finally rests in this great epic of peace, calm and creative dynamism.



SHUTTERSTOCK

gradually overcoming many unanticipated problems.

New technologies introduce new risks. Invariably, military applications develop alongside commercial and civilian uses. Aeroplanes and motorised ground vehicles have been deployed in conflicts since World War I, and personal computers and mobile communication are indispensable for modern warfare. Yet life goes on. Technologically advanced societies have developed legal, political, and law-enforcement mechanisms to contain the conflicts and criminality that technological advances enable. Case-by-case court judgments are crucial in the United States and other common-law countries. These mechanisms—like the technologies themselves—are evolutionary and adaptive. They produce pragmatic solutions, not visionary constructs.

The Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb and helped end World War II, was an exception. It had a high-priority military mandate. With the Nazis seeking to develop a bomb of their own, speed and effective leadership were essential. And as all-out thermonuclear war became a real threat, statecraft and strategic deterrence helped avert doomsday.

But nuclear weapons are a misleading analogy for AI, which has followed the typically diffused, halting pattern of most other technological transformations. AI spans disparate techniques—such as machine learning, pattern recognition, and natural language processing—and has wide-ranging applications. Their common feature is mainly aspirational—to go beyond mere calculation to more speculative yet useful inferences and interpretations.

Unlike the Manhattan Project, which proceeded at breakneck speed, AI developers have been at work for more than seven decades, quietly inserting AI into everything from digital cameras and scanners

sional dictation software (I bought the first in 1997) has repeatedly frustrated me.

Large language models (LLMs), which have become the public face of AI, are not technological discontinuities that magically transcend the limitations of machine learning. Claims that AI is advancing at warp speed confuse a mania with useful progress. I became an enthusiastic user of AI-enabled search back in the 1990s. I thus had high hopes when I signed up for ChatGPT's public beta in December 2022. But my hopes that it, or some other LLM, would help with a book I was writing were dashed. While the LLMs responded in comprehensible sentences to questions posed in natural language, their convincing-sounding answers were often make-believe.

Thus, whereas I found my 1990s Google searches to be invaluable timesavers, checking the accuracy of LLM responses made them productivity killers. Relying on them to help edit and illustrate my manuscript was also a waste of time. These experiences make me shudder to think about the buggy LLM-generated software being unleashed on the world.

That said, LLM fantasies may be valuable adjuncts for storytelling and other entertainment products. Perhaps LLM chatbots can increase profits by providing cheap if maddening, customer service. Someday, a breakthrough may dramatically increase the technology's useful scope. For now, though, these off-mendacious talking horses warrant neither euphoria nor panic about "existential risks to humanity." Best keep calm and let the traditional decentralised evolution of technology, laws, and regulations carry on.

Bhide is a Professor of Health Policy at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.

— Project Syndicate

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— Editors

## Environmental justice for Harawa-Charawa

They face a higher risk of climate-induced stressors due to class- and caste-based economic discrimination.

SURESH DHAKAL



In Madhesh Pradesh, approximately 69,000 families of Harawa-Charawa (HC) face the threat of floods and environmental hazards. HC are bonded agricultural labourers, most of whom are landless Dalits. Primarily because of unpaid debt, they are coerced to work as ploughmen or agricultural labourers for landlords.

Centuries of structural inequalities and injustice expose HC to unequal impacts of environmental hazards. David N. Pellow, in his article titled 'Environmental Inequality Formation: Toward a Theory of Environmental Injustice', published in the journal *American Behavioral Scientists*, argues that environmental inequality results from "the intersection between environmental quality and social hierarchy". Those like HC suffering economic and social inequalities struggle with disproportionate environmental inequality and vulnerability. Primary information gathered from selected sites of Madhesh Pradesh in the winter of 2022 suggests that for HC climate change makes all of this worse.

Contracts that bind

Mahesh Chandra Regmi, in his treatise work *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal* (1978), explains that the bonded labour system in agriculture, like the HC system, emerged alongside Nepal's feudal land systems in the 1700s and onward, with the state granting land to its functionaries and service providers, members of the royal family, warrior family, priests, and close kin and officials. Through such a state-facilitated process, a few privileged families accumulated huge areas of land, while the vast majority had to provide free service, known as Jhara, to those landlords.

Over the next few centuries, Nepal's landless agricultural labourers became increasingly dependent on the landlords for their livelihoods. With accumulated debt, this dependency gradually bonded them. Eventually, this unfree labour system was mapped onto Nepal's caste system, which posi-

tioned members of the most oppressed occupational caste (Dalits) at the bottom of this hierarchy.

As time passed, HC could not detach themselves from their landlords because they feared losing shelter and livelihood. Consequently, such unequal landlord-landless relationships were institutionalised as patron-client relationships. HC would enter into such a contract through a ritualised process, traditionally on the day of Shreepanchami, usually in mid-February. Such rituals legitimised the practice as a social-cultural contract, despite it being discriminatory and exploitative to the laborers.

Caste-class matrix and climate injustice

A convoluted history of caste and class factors in Nepal has resulted in harmful practices and injustice. The



POST FILE PHOTO

same historical process left Dalits bereft of landownership and turned them landless over the generations. It calls for a historical understanding to comprehend the contemporary HC phenomenon in its entirety.

According to research by a non-governmental organisation, Community Self-Reliant Centre (CSRC), 88 percent of HC live in temporary shelters made of wattle and daub, and only 29 percent of them own the land where they have built their houses. Usually, HC settlements are in congested areas, and spaces inside and outside of houses are crammed and of low-quality construction. They are usually located in hazard-prone areas, such as unreg-

istered land along rivers, ponds, canals, and roadsides, or, degraded and low-quality land provided by the landlords.

Additionally, HC suffer from food insecurity. Because of landlessness, 39 percent do not have any food production. Another 27 percent can survive only up to three months from their agricultural products. Only one percent produce enough for the whole year. This shows the vulnerability of HC.

Members of HC families reported that in the last few rainy seasons, settlements flooded, shelters collapsed, and stored food was destroyed. They had to take refuge in local schools. During such events, their mobility was restricted, and they often lost work and wages. Children could not go to school as culverts were clogged and trails were washed away.

to information, the response is delayed in some cases." The Vice-Chairperson of Dhanuji Rural Municipality remarked, "The *Palika* itself does not discriminate, but those who are affected cannot approach the office by themselves on time." She added, "Whoever is responsible for distributing relief and rescue activities may have delayed reaching to them also because of the limited human and other resources."

As climatic events such as flooding, drought, and other extreme weather become more frequent and severe, HC and other marginalized groups will experience worsening living and working conditions.

Justice to HC

We can't understand the unequal impacts of environmental hazards like floods without understanding caste-class discrimination. HC face a higher risk of climate-induced stressors and disasters because of economic discrimination based on caste and class. A regional human rights organisation, Forum Asia, reveals that on one hand, climate-induced disasters have been prevalent in Madhesh Province, and on the other, highly relevant climate change projects are found to have been depleting in Nepal with little attention being given to vulnerable groups.

HC are not politically organised and are not economically stable enough to effectively demand their legal rights and push for broader social and environmental justice. HC cannot resist environmental injustice and other forms of discrimination and exploitation; hence for many years ahead, they will continue to suffer disproportionate damage and loss.

The Government of Nepal should recognise the specific needs of HC social and economic positions, and realise that a general framework to address their problems may not work. Policies and implementation strategies must link caste, class, labour, agriculture, and environmental dynamics.

The Constitution of Nepal (2015), the National Land Policy (2019), and some other state policies provide an adequate legal base for eradicating the HC practice. Unfortunately, the government's unpreparedness to implement those constitutional provisions and policies has not only delayed but obstructed justice for HC. Such barriers to justice will be recorded as a lost opportunity in history.

Dhakal teaches anthropology at Tribhuvan University. This article is excerpted from a chapter in the book "Environmental Justice in Nepal: Origins, Struggles and Prospects".

FOREX

|                   |        |
|-------------------|--------|
| US Dollar         | 133.77 |
| Euro              | 142.56 |
| Pound Sterling    | 166.87 |
| Swiss Franc       | 146.61 |
| Australian Dollar | 86.87  |
| Canadian Dollar   | 97.35  |
| Singapore Dollar  | 98.44  |
| Japanese Yen (10) | 8.73   |
| Chinese Yuan      | 18.48  |
| Saudi Arab Riyal  | 35.66  |
| Qatari Riyal      | 36.67  |
| Thai Bhat         | 3.67   |
| UAE Dhiram        | 36.43  |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 28.04  |
| Korean Won (100)  | 9.69   |

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION PRICE PER TOLA

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| Fine Gold | Rs 139,000 |
| Silver    | Rs 1,750   |

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

India asks companies to fire-up power plants to meet rising electricity demand

**NEW DELHI:** India has asked companies to operate underutilised gas-based power plants in May and June, and extend operations of imported coal-based plants until October 15 to meet anticipated high demand for electricity, according to two government orders. The South Asian nation registered an 8 percent rise in electricity consumption in the financial year that ended last month, and demand is expected to rise in the hot summer months. In an order dated Friday, the government for the first time invoked an emergency clause mandating companies to operate underutilised gas-based power plants by importing the fuel. India has about 24 gigawatts of gas-based power plants that have been idling or underused for decades due to lack of fuel. Power stations will be informed two weeks in advance about the requirements so they can import gas, the order says. "Gas-based power plants are required to meet the anticipated surge in power consumption in summer months," the order says. (REUTERS)

US lawmakers angry after Huawei unveils laptop with new Intel AI chip

**WASHINGTON:** Republican US lawmakers on Friday criticized the Biden administration after sanctioned Chinese telecoms equipment giant Huawei unveiled a laptop this week powered by an Intel AI chip. The United States placed Huawei on a trade restriction list in 2019 for violating Iran sanctions, part of a broader effort to hobble Beijing's technological advances. Placement on the list means the company's suppliers have to seek a special, difficult-to-obtain license before shipping to it. One such license, issued by the Trump administration, has allowed Intel, opens new tab to ship central processors to Huawei for use in laptops since 2020. China hardliners had urged the Biden administration to revoke that license, but many grudgingly accepted that it would expire later this year and not be renewed. (REUTERS)

# Back to physical stores. E-commerce falters in Nepal's topsy-turvy business climate

Tens of thousands of people turned to online shopping. Now a trust deficit has reversed the trend.

By KRISHANA PRASAIN  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 13

The 'To-Let' sign hanging in shops across Kathmandu Valley has been a common sight for the last two years. Shoppers say online stores that deliver goods and services to the customer's doors have eaten a huge market pie of physical stores ever since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Now, it's the turn of online shops. The impact of the economic slowdown that has eroded people's income has become visible in online marketplaces with many shutting down operations and laying off workers.

Market insiders say that the economic slowdown has hit almost every sector, and e-commerce could not remain an exception. The e-commerce sector thrived especially after the pandemic with most companies reporting business growth by tenfolds. Sastodeal, one of Nepal's largest homegrown e-commerce companies, has folded, with a loss of 200 jobs. "We shut down three weeks ago after running for a year and a half," said Amun Thapa, co-founder of Sastodeal. "Obviously, there is no demand. The consumption has sharply declined."

Sastodeal forayed into the market in 2011, providing an online shopping experience, with 10 million users. In June 2020, Dolma Impact Fund, the first international private equity fund, invested \$1 million in Sastodeal. Also, the company made an exclusive cross-border partnership with Myntra and Flipkart of India. "Observing the current economic situation of the country, we thought it better to shut down for some time. We see no immediate sign of improvement," said Thapa.

"But there are also discussions to bring in new management." In Nepal, buying habits have changed significantly, with tens of thousands of people shopping online. The country's transition from a cash-based economy to a burgeoning digital payment ecosystem has been a remarkable journey with a positive impact on financial inclusion and economic development.

The pandemic sped up the shift to online shopping. Nepal Rastra Bank, the country's central bank, started to keep records of electronic payments from the fiscal year 2019-20.

But online fraud started to grow at an alarming rate, worrying tech-savvy



POST FILE PHOTO

Market insiders say the economic slowdown has hit almost every sector of business in Nepal.

customers who are increasingly turning to online shopping, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many online shops that have popped up in Nepal promise a service they never intend to deliver.

Consumer rights activists say that since there is no monitoring of online fraud, it leaves customers in a dilemma-to shop or not to shop online.

Besides, there are hassles of untimely delivery and the long process to follow for a refund by the online shops. Thapa too admitted that the customer base started to fall as they failed to deliver on time. "The market competition was tough."

The situation is not good for many other e-commerce players.

Bjarke Mikkelsen, CEO of Daraz Group, a subsidiary of Alibaba Group, told Reuters a year ago that it was reducing its workforce by 11 percent to prepare for the 'current market reality'.

He said that a difficult market environment, with a war in Europe, huge supply chain disruptions, soaring inflation, increasing taxes, and removal of essential government subsidies from its markets were reasons behind the plan for layoffs.

On February 27, Daraz Nepal announced layoffs.

"Over the past couple of years, we have worked to manage costs and improve operational efficiency substantially. Despite our efforts to explore different solutions, our cost structure continues to fall short of our financial targets," Daraz said in a statement about its move.

"Facing unprecedented challenges in the market, we must take swift action to ensure our company's long-term sustainability and continued growth." The Daraz Nepal refused to comment. The e-commerce bill that envisages streamlining the market remains stranded in Parliament for months. The legislation had been drafted in 2021.

The absence of a law governing e-commerce has emboldened errant players. Many customers have complained of having been delivered damaged products, getting the wrong product, price differentials and the lack of a return and refund policy.

Consumer rights activists and e-retailers say an e-commerce law is long overdue in Nepal. Lawmakers have been overtaken by business trends which allowed unscrupulous market

activities to spread, they say. E-commerce entrepreneurs said that the demand for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), fashion goods accessories and electronic items has subdued due to slowed economic growth.

"The overall online demand for goods has declined by 40 percent," said Surakchya Adhikari, co-founder and chief operating officer of Thulo.com, another online shopping platform. The demand for luxury goods and electronic items is almost down to the bottom, she said.

"Also, people are opting for cheaper goods," Adhikari said.

According to the Connectivity in the Least Developed Countries Status Report 2021, e-commerce is related to a country's level of development, partly explaining the poor performance of the least developed countries (LDCs).

The report said that even among countries with higher internet penetration, awareness of e-commerce platforms is low in LDCs like Nepal.

In a recent panel discussion organised by the Kantipur Media Group in Birgunj, panellists said that the private sector has lost confidence and factories are shutting down one after another.

# New capital requirements for Swiss banks will slow growth at UBS, says finance minister

By REUTERS  
ZURICH, APRIL 13

The Swiss government's proposed tougher capital requirements for the banking industry will impact UBS's, opens new tab ability to grow, the country's finance minister said in an interview published on Saturday.

Switzerland's largest bank will have to hold more capital if the regulatory package, announced on Wednesday to prevent a repeat of the collapse of Credit Suisse, is implemented, Karin Keller-Sutter told Aargauer Zeitung.

"In short, growth will become more



REUTERS

expensive," she said. The proposed changes target the country's four largest banks with 22 measures and more than 200 pages of recommendations on how to police those deemed "too big to fail" (TBTf).

The government aims to put the measures into effect quickly and present two packages for implementation in the first half of 2025.

Of the measures, Keller-Sutter highlighted the proposal to change how Swiss parent companies of UBS and the country's other systemic banks must in future back their foreign holdings with up to 100 percent

equity, up from 60 percent at present. "If we adjust this regulation now, it will have consequences for the growth and size of UBS," she said.

The requirement would also make it easier to deal with authorities abroad in the event of a crisis, she added.

According to an analyst estimate UBS might need to retain \$10 billion to \$15 billion in excess capital, compared to what it currently holds.

In the interview, Keller-Sutter again criticised UBS CEO Sergio Ermotti's pay package, which last year amounted to 14.4 million Swiss francs (\$15.75 million).

# Bird flu is spreading to more farm animals. Are milk and eggs safe?

By ASSOCIATED PRESS  
NEW YORK, APRIL 13

A bird flu outbreak in US dairy cows has grown to affect more than two dozen herds in eight states, just weeks after the nation's largest egg producer found the virus in its chickens.

Health officials stress that the risk to the public is low and that the US food supply remains safe and stable.

"At this time, there continues to be no concern that this circumstance poses a risk to consumer health, or that it affects the safety of the interstate commercial milk supply," the US Food and Drug Administration said in a statement.

Here's what you need to know about bird flu and food:

Which states have found bird flu in dairy cows?

As of Friday, the strain of bird flu that has killed millions of wild birds in recent years has been found in at least 26 dairy herds in eight US states: Idaho, Kansas, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas and South Dakota.

The virus, known as Type A H5N1, has been detected in a range of mammals over the last few years, but this is the first time it has been found in cattle, according to federal health and animal agencies. Genetic analysis of the virus does not show that it has

changed to spread more easily in people, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

How is bird flu affecting food production?

Agriculture officials in at least 17 states have restricted imports of dairy cattle from states where the virus has been detected, but, so far, government agencies say it's had little effect on commercial milk production. Officials believe cows likely have been infected by exposure to wild birds, but said cow-to-cow spread "cannot be ruled out."

Farmers are testing cows that show symptoms of infection, including sharply reduced milk supply and lethargy. Animals that show signs or test positive for illness are being separated from other animals on the farms. The animals appear to recover within two weeks.

US egg producers are watching the situation closely after bird flu was detected in chickens in Texas and Michigan. Millions of birds have been killed, but the FDA said the risk of affected eggs getting into the retail market or causing infections in humans is low because of federal inspections and other safeguards.

Does pasteurisation kill bird flu?

Scientists say there's no evidence to suggest that people can contract the

virus by consuming food that's been pasteurized, or heat-treated—or properly cooked.

"It's not a food safety concern," said Lee-Ann Jaykus, an emeritus food microbiologist and virologist at North Carolina State University.

Two people in US have been infected with bird flu to date. A Texas dairy worker who was in close contact with

an infected cow recently developed a mild eye infection and has recovered. In 2022, a prison inmate in a work program caught it while killing infected birds at a Colorado poultry farm. His only symptom was fatigue, and he recovered.

Is grocery store milk safe from bird flu?

The FDA and the CDC are less certain about unpasteurized, or raw, milk sold in many states, saying there's limited information about the possible transmission of the H5N1 virus in such products.

So far, no herds linked to raw milk providers have reported cows infected with bird flu, but the agencies recommend that the industry not make or sell raw milk or raw milk cheese products made with milk from cows that show symptoms—or are exposed to infected cows.

US health officials have long warned against the risk of foodborne illness tied to raw milk, which the CDC said caused more than 200 outbreaks that sickened more than 2,600 people between 1998 and 2018.

Still, raw milk proponents like Mark McAfee, owner of Raw Farm

Yes, according to food safety experts and government officials.

US producers are barred from selling milk from sick cows and must divert and destroy it. In addition, milk sold across state lines is required to be pasteurized, or heat-treated using a process that kills bacteria and viruses, including influenza.

"We firmly believe that pasteurization provides a safe milk supply," Tracey Forfa, director of the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine told a webinar audience this week.

Is raw milk safe from bird flu?

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# Ukraine starts building first US-design nuclear reactors

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
NETISHYV, UKRAINE, APRIL 13

Ukraine has started constructing two US-designed reactors at a nuclear power plant in the west of the country following devastating Russian attacks on its energy network.

Workers at Khmelnytskyi nuclear power station on Thursday poured a symbolic cubic metre of concrete for the reactors, which will use US technology and fuel, as Ukrainian and US flags fluttered.

The project is aimed at increasing Ukraine's energy security and reducing its dependence on Russian nuclear technology.

Guests at the ceremony included the head of Ukraine's state nuclear operator, Energoatom, Petro Kotin; Ukrainian Energy Minister German Galushchenko; US Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink and the CEO of US nuclear energy company Westinghouse, Patrick Fragman.

Energoatom asked for the launch to be reported Saturday due to security concerns over Russian attacks.

The ceremony took place hours after a Russian strike destroyed a power plant outside Kyiv.

"This is our answer to the terrorists, this is our answer to the invaders," Galushchenko said.

## Ukraine derives around half of its energy from nuclear power.

"Today we are talking about the future, we are talking about stability, we are talking about the development of nuclear energy," he said, describing the plans for Khmelnytskyi as Ukraine's most significant modernisation project since World War II.

A sign at the plant reads "the future is with nuclear energy". Ukraine derives around half of its energy from nuclear power. All its current reactors are of Soviet design but it has shifted them to US fuel.

The country's largest nuclear plant—Zaporizhzhia in the south—has been under Russian control since the start of the war. Khmelnytskyi power plant already has two functioning reactors. Its reactors 3 and 4 are partially built to a Soviet design.

The ground-breaking ceremony was for unbuilt reactors 5 and 6, which will be built using Westinghouse's AP1000 technology. The units will each have a capacity of over 1,100 megawatts and according to Fragman will be "the most advanced nuclear reactor operating today in the world".

With all six reactors on stream, Khmelnytskyi will become Europe's largest plant, topping Zaporizhzhia, said Energoatom chief Petro Kotin.

EnergoAtom and Westinghouse did not say exactly when the reactors will come on line. Energoatom said construction of one reactor unit in peace time takes five years and the estimated cost starts from \$ five billion.

The first unit will be on an "accelerated schedule", because Ukraine has agreed to buy heavy equipment that is ready to instal, Fragman said.

The US Exim Bank will partly finance the project.

The Khmelnytska region has been regularly targeted by Russian attacks because of a major air base there.



This file photo shows a line of Holstein cows feeding through a fence at a dairy farm in Idaho.

AP/SS

## WORLD

# Iran's Revolutionary Guard seizes a container ship near Strait of Hormuz

The seizure followed a suspected Israeli strike this month on an Iranian consular building in Syria that killed 12 people.

■ ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, APRIL 13

Commandos from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard rappelled from a helicopter onto an Israeli-affiliated container ship near the Strait of Hormuz and seized the vessel on Saturday in the latest attack between the two countries.

The seizure followed a suspected Israeli strike this month on an Iranian consular building in Syria that killed 12 people, including a senior Guard general.

Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip has inflamed decades-old tensions across the region. With Iranian-backed forces like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Yemen's Houthis rebels also involved in the fighting, any new attack in the Mideast threatens to escalate that conflict into a wider regional war.

Iran's state-run IRNA said a special forces unit of the Guard's navy carried out the attack on the Portuguese-flagged MSC Aries, a container ship associated with London-based Zodiac Maritime.

Zodiac Maritime is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer's Zodiac Group. Zodiac declined to comment and referred questions to MSC. Geneva-based MSC acknowledged the seizure and said 25 crew members were on the ship.

"We are working closely with the relevant authorities to ensure their wellbeing, and safe return of the vessel," MSC said.

An Indian government official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief to journalists, said 17 of the crew were Indians.

IRNA said the Guard would take the vessel into Iranian territorial waters.

A Middle East defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, provided video of the attack to The Associated Press in which Iranian commandos are seen rappelling onto a stack of containers on the vessel's deck.

A crew member can be heard saying: "Don't come out." He then tells



This image from a video provided by a Mideast defence official shows a helicopter raid targeting a vessel near the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday.

his colleagues to go to the ship's bridge as more commandos come down. One commando can be seen kneeling above the others to provide them potential cover fire. The video corresponded with known details of the MSC Aries. Also, the commandos rappelled from what appeared to be a Soviet-era Mil Mi-17 helicopter, which both the Guard and the Iranian-backed Houthis have used before to raid ships.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations described the vessel as being "seized by regional authorities" in the Gulf of Oman off the Emirati port city of Fujairah, without elaborating.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz called on nations to list the Guard as a terrorist organization.

Iran "is a criminal regime that sup-

ports Hamas' crimes and is now conducting a pirate operation in violation of international law," Katz said.

For days, Iranian officials up to and including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have threatened to "slap" Israel for the Syria strike. Iran since 2019 has engaged in a series of ship seizures, and attacks on vessels have been attributed to it amid ongoing tensions with the West over its rapidly advancing nuclear program.

In previous ship seizures, Iran provided initial explanations about its operations to make it seem like the attacks had nothing to do with wider geopolitical tensions—though later acknowledging as much. In Saturday's attack, however, Iran offered no explanation other than to say the MSC Aries had links to Israel.

Iran in the past largely avoided directly attacking Israel, despite it carrying out the targeted killing of nuclear scientists and sabotage campaigns against Iran's atomic sites. Iran has targeted Israeli or Jewish-linked sites through proxy forces.

Earlier this week, Guard Gen. Ali Reza Tangsiri, who oversees Iran's naval forces, criticized the presence of Israelis in the region, including the United Arab Emirates. The UAE reached a diplomatic recognition deal with Israel in 2020, which has angered Tehran.

"We know that bringing Zionists in this point is not merely for economic work," Tangsiri reportedly said. "Now, they are carrying out security and military jobs, indeed. This is a threat, and this should not happen."

# Six killed in Sydney shopping centre attack

■ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SYDNEY, APRIL 13

Six people were killed and several others injured—including a nine-month-old baby—when a knife-wielding attacker rampaged through a busy Sydney shopping centre on Saturday.

Australian police said multiple people were stabbed by the unidentified assailant, who was tracked down and shot dead by a policewoman who is being hailed as a national hero.

The incident occurred at the sprawling Westfield Bondi Junction mall complex, which was packed with thousands of Saturday afternoon shoppers. New South Wales police commissioner Karen Webb said five women and one man had died. A baby was undergoing emergency surgery.

Police said the attacker is believed to be a 40-year-old man who was known to law enforcement, but he has not yet been formally identified.

Webb played down suggestions that the attack could have been an act of terrorism and said it is believed the attacker acted alone.

"If it is in fact the person we believe it is, then... it's not a terrorism incident," she said.

A New South Wales Ambulance spokesperson told AFP that eight patients were taken to various hospitals across Sydney, including the baby who was taken to the city's Children's Hospital.

"They all have traumatic injuries," the official said.

Security camera footage showed a man wearing an Australian rugby league jersey running around the shopping centre with a large knife.

Injured people lay lifeless on the floor, or surrounded by pools of blood.

Eyewitnesses described a scene of panic, with shoppers scrambling to safety and police trying to secure the area.

Many people took shelter in shops, trying to protect themselves, their families and frightened strangers.

Ayush Singh was working at a cafe inside the centre when the incident occurred. "I saw the whole thing in front of me," he told AFP. "I saw a lot of people running around, I saw the guy running with the knife and people running away."

Singh helped two elderly ladies

who were having a coffee to hide inside his cafe. He heard three gunshots ring out, then saw the man lying on the ground.

"It was really scary," he said. "I've felt really safe (in Australia). I've been here for six years. I didn't feel unsafe but now I feel scared."

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese praised the bravery of strangers who helped each other and the woman police inspector who rushed headlong toward danger.

"She is certainly a hero. There is no doubt that she saved lives through her action," Albanese said.

Pranjul Bokaria had just finished up work and was doing some shopping when the stabbing occurred.

**Police say the attacker is believed to be a 40-year-old man who was known to law enforcement.**

She ended up running to a nearby shop and taking shelter in a break room. "It was scary, there are some people who were emotionally vulnerable and crying," she told AFP.

She escaped using an emergency exit with other shoppers and staff, which took them to a back street.

She described a scene of "chaos", with people running and police swarming the area.

"I am alive and grateful," she said.

As night fell, dozens of heavily armed police and ambulances were still outside the shopping complex, with stretchers ready to take people to nearby hospitals.

The sound of police sirens and helicopters filled the air.

The mall has been locked down and police have urged people to avoid the area. Britain's King Charles III said he and his wife Queen Camilla were "utterly shocked and horrified" by the stabbing.

Pope Francis said he was "deeply saddened" by the attack and sent his "spiritual solidarity to all those affected" in a message addressed to the archbishop of Sydney.

## ■ BRIEFING

### Gunmen kill 9 men after abduction in southwest Pakistan, say police

**QUETTA, PAKISTAN:** Gunmen shot and killed nine men after abducting them from a bus in a troubled province in southwestern Pakistan bordering Afghanistan and Iran, officials said on Saturday. No one has claimed the responsibility for the Friday night attack in Balochistan province in Pakistan's southwest. Separatist ethnic Baloch militant groups in the mineral-rich region have been fighting for decades against the state, saying it denies them their share of regional resources. Several gunmen intercepted the Iran-bound bus in Noshki district, taking the nine men with them after determining they were from the eastern province of Punjab, said police officer Abdullah Mengal. "All of them were travelling to Taftan," he said. The victims were shot at close range, he said. Their bullet-ridden bodies were found from beneath a bridge after one and a half hour, said the district deputy commissioner, Habibullah Musakhail. Ethnic Baloch insurgents have previously claimed responsibility for similar killings in the region, which is home to deep-water Gwadar sea port being developed by neighbouring China. The insurgents have also targeted Chinese nationals and their interests. Beijing has invested heavily in regional development projects as part of its \$65 billion pledge under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. (REUTERS)

### US Assistant Secretary of State Kritebrink to visit China on April 14-16

**WASHINGTON:** The top US diplomat for East Asia will visit China starting on Sunday, the State Department said, just days after President Joe Biden held a summit with the leaders of Japan and the Philippines that focused on China's aggressive moves in the South China Sea. US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritebrink will travel to China April 14-16, and White House National Security Council Senior Director for China and Taiwan Affairs Sarah Beran will accompany him, the department said in a statement. They will meet with Chinese officials "as part of ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication and to responsibly manage competition," the statement said. The Philippines and China had several maritime run-ins last month that included the use of water cannon and heated verbal exchanges. The disputes center on the Second Thomas Shoal, home to a small number of Filipino troops stationed on a warship that Manila grounded there in 1999 to reinforce its sovereignty claims. (REUTERS)

# Ukraine says its eastern front has 'deteriorated'

■ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KIVIV, UKRAINE, APRIL 13

Ukraine's commander-in-chief, Oleksandr Syrsky said Saturday the situation on the eastern front had worsened significantly as Russia claimed the capture of a village near the occupied industrial town of Avdiivka.

"The situation on the eastern front has deteriorated significantly in recent days," said Syrsky, who took over as commander-in-chief in February after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky fired his popular predecessor, Valery Zaluzhny.

Russia's defence ministry announced its troops had "liberated" the village of Pervomaiske in the Donetsk region, about 11 km west of the largely destroyed town of Avdiivka, captured by Russia in the middle of February.

Ukraine has not confirmed the loss. Its army said Friday that it had repelled attacks on the village.

On his Telegram channel, Syrsky wrote of "a significant intensification of the enemy's offensive after the presidential elections in Russia" last



Commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrskyi

month. The commander-in-chief added decisions were being taken "to strengthen the most problematic defence areas with electronic warfare and air defence".

In the southern Zaporizhzhia region, Russia accused Ukraine on Saturday of killing 10 by shelling the occupied town of Tokmak.

The town fell to Russia at the start of the invasion.

Ukrainian authorities in Zaporizhzhia said Russia had struck the region more than 400 times over the last day, including from planes.

Ukraine has also said the situation around the eastern frontline city of Chasiv Yar is "difficult and tense" with the area under "constant fire".

Chasiv Yar lies 20 kilometres west of the town of Bakhmut, which was flattened by months of artillery fire before it was captured by Moscow last May.

Russia is now securing fresh territorial gains and trying to press onwards against Ukrainian units hobbled by delays in the supply of vital Western military aid.

Germany on Saturday announced it would send a Patriot air defence system to Ukraine, the third it has supplied so far, citing "massive and ongoing Russian airstrikes".

Zelensky thanked German Chancellor Olaf Scholz for "a real manifestation of support for Ukraine at a critical time for us". In the east, Russia "is actively attacking our positions in the Lyman and Bakhmut sectors ... In the Pokrovsk sector, they are trying to break through our defence

using dozens of tanks and armoured personnel carriers," Syrsky said.

"The issue of achieving technical superiority over the enemy in high-tech weapons has again arisen. Only this will enable us to defeat a larger enemy," Syrsky said.

"The second serious problem is to improve the quality of training of military personnel, especially infantry units, so that they can make the most of all the capabilities of military equipment and Western weapons," Syrsky added.

European allies of Ukraine are engaged in a training push for its forces. France's defence minister Sebastien Lecornu on Friday said future Ukrainian fighter pilots likely to fly American F-16 aircraft were receiving their initial training in the south of France. Other countries including the Netherlands, Denmark and Romania are seeking to help Ukraine train pilots.

Some Ukrainians, after receiving initial training in Britain, are now undergoing "advanced training" in an undisclosed location to learn how to fly fighter jets, according to a military source.

# China's top legislator meets North Korea's Kim

■ REUTERS  
BEIJING, APRIL 13

China's top legislator Zhao Leji met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang on Saturday, expressing Beijing's willingness to work with its counterparts to deepen trust and boost cooperation, Chinese state media said.

Zhao, finishing a goodwill tour that began on Thursday, is the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit the North since 2018, when Li Zhanhu attended the 70th anniversary of the North's founding. "No matter how the international situation changes, the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, created and nurtured by the older generation of leaders from both parties and countries, remains deep-rooted and strong over time," Zhao said in a speech, according to China's Xinhua news agency.

DPRK refers to the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

# Far fewer young Americans now want to study in China

■ ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, APRIL 13

Stephen Garrett, a 27-year-old graduate student, always thought he would study in China, but the country's restrictive Covid-19 policies made it nearly impossible and now he sees interest among fellow scholars wane even after China reopened.

Common concerns, he said, include restrictions on academic freedom and the risk of being stranded in China.

These days, only about 700 American students are studying at Chinese universities, down from a peak of close to 25,000 a decade ago, while there are nearly 300,000 Chinese students at US schools. Some young Americans are discouraged from investing their time in China by what they see as diminishing economic opportunities and strained relations between Washington and Beijing.

Whatever the reason for the imbalance, US officials and scholars bemoan the lost opportunities for young people to experience life in China and gain insight into a formidable American adversary.

And officials from both countries agree that more should be done to encourage the student exchanges, at a time when Beijing and Washington can hardly agree on anything else.

"I do not believe the environment is

as hospitable for educational exchange as it was in the past, and I think both sides are going to need to take steps," said Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell.

The US has advised its citizens to "reconsider travel" to China over concerns of arbitrary detentions and widened use of exit bans to bar Americans from leaving the country. Campbell said this has hindered the rebuilding of the exchanges and easing the advisory is now under "active consideration."

For its part, Beijing is rebuilding programs for international students that were shuttered during the pandemic, and Chinese President Xi Jinping has invited tens of thousands of US high school students to visit.

The situation was far different after President Barack Obama started the 100,000 Strong initiative in 2009 to drastically increase the number of US students studying in China.

By 2012, there were as many as 24,583 US students in China, according to data by the Chinese education ministry. The Open Doors reports by the Institute of International Education, which only track students enrolled in US schools and studying in China for credit, show the number peaked at 14,887 in the 2011-12 school year. But 10 years later, the number was down to only 211.



David Moser, an American and associate professor at Capital Normal University in Beijing.

In late 2023, the number of American students stood at 700, according to Nicholas Burns, the US ambassador to China, who said this was far too few in a country of such importance to the United States.

"We need young Americans to learn Mandarin. We need young Americans to have an experience of China," Burns said.

Without these US students, "in the next decade, we won't be able to exercise savvy, knowledgeable diplomacy

in China," warned David Moser, an American linguist who went to China in the 1980s and is now tasked with establishing a new master's program for international students at Beijing Capital Normal University.

Moser recalled the years when American students found China fascinating and thought an education there could lead to an interesting career. But he said the days of bustling trade and money deals are gone, while American students and their parents are watch-

ing China and the United States move away from each other. "So people think investment in China as a career is a dumb idea," Moser said.

After 2012, the number of American students in China dipped but held steady at more than 11,000 for several years, according to Open Doors, until the pandemic hit, when China closed its borders and kept most foreigners out. Programs for overseas students that took years to build were shuttered, and staff were let go, Moser said.

Amy Gadsden, executive director of China Initiatives at the University of Pennsylvania, also attributed some of the declining interest to foreign businesses closing their offices in China. Beijing's draconian governing style, laid bare by its response to the pandemic, also has given American students a pause, she said.

Garrett, who is on track to graduate this summer from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, said he is ambivalent about working in China, citing the lack of access to information, restrictions on discussions of politically sensitive issues and China's sweeping anti-spying law. He had lived in Hong Kong as a teenager and interned in mainland China, and said he is still interested in traveling to China, but not anytime soon.

# Nepal defeat Qatar to register second successive victory



Nepal's Aasif Sheikh bats during the ACC Men's T20 Premier Cup Group A match against Qatar at the Al Amerat Cricket Ground in Oman on Saturday.

>> Continued from page 1

Airee scored three boundaries and seven biggies in total.

It was Airee's 10th fifty-plus scores in T20Is, the most for Nepal, eclipsing Kushal Bhurtel's record of nine fifty-plus scores.

Airee had also scored six consecutive sixes against Mongolia on the way to recording the fastest T20I fifty (off nine balls)—that broke Yuvraj Singh's record of 12 deliveries—during the men's cricket tournament of the Hangzhou Asian Games in September last year, but his accomplishment was spread across two overs.

The Rhinos also owed their big total to another half-centurion Aasif Sheikh, who cracked 52 runs off 41 balls—his fifth T20I fifty. He hit six fours.

Nepal's another fast hitter Kushal

Malla—who is second in the list of cricketers to score fastest T20I hundred (off 34 balls)—played an aggressive 18-ball 35 and captain Rohit Paudel contributed 18 runs facing 17 deliveries to build the inning—setting the stage for Airee to breathe fire in the closing hour.

Himanshu Rathod was the pick of Qatar bowling, with match figures of 3-26. Musawar Shah also took three wickets for Qatar but his four-over spell was expensive, resulting in 43 runs conceded. Amir Farooq also pocketed one wicket.

Player-of-the-match Airee also shone with the ball to help Nepal restrict Qatar to 178-9.

Qatar put up a determined fight in their chase.

Despite a valiant half-century from skipper Muhammad Tanveer, Airee

(2-34), Lalit Rajbanshi (2-23) and Gulsan Jha (2-24) took crucial wickets to put the Qatari batters under constant pressure throughout the 20 overs, ensuring a comfortable victory for Nepal.

Tanveer scored 63 runs off 33 balls. He hit six fours and four sixes.

Mohammad Tanveer provided the second highest score for Qatar with 23 runs off 18 balls.

Malla and Abinash Bohara also took one wicket apiece for Nepal.

A second victory in as many matches moved Nepal to the top of Group A with four points.

Hong Kong, who have a match in hand, are second on two points.

Nepal next play Hong Kong on Monday.

Malaysia bounced back from their opening loss against Nepal to beat Saudi Arabia by 12 runs, which kept them in the third position in the group.

The United Arab Emirates, who defeated Bahrain by 37 runs, top the Group B with four points. Kuwait are second in Group B, after a convincing eight-wicket win over Cambodia gave them two points. They had lost their opening match to the UAE by seven wickets on Friday.

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

The final takes place on April 21.

## ACC MEN'S PREMIER CUP

### SCOREBOARD

GROUP A, ALAMERAT

TOSS: Nepal, bat first.

Nepal 210-7 (20/20 overs)

Dipendra Singh Airee 64\* (21), Aasif Sheikh 52 (41); Himanshu Rathod 4-0-26-3, Musawar Shah 4-0-43-3

Qatar 178-9 (20/20 overs)

Muhammad Tanveer 63 (33), Mohammad Ahnaff 23 (18), Lalit Rajbanshi 4-0-23-2, Gulsan Jha 2-0-24-2, Dipendra Singh Airee 4-0-34-2

Nepal win by 32 runs.

Player of the match: Dipendra Singh Airee

### STANDINGS

#### GROUP A

| TEAM         | P | W | L | PT | NRR    |
|--------------|---|---|---|----|--------|
| Nepal        | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4  | 0.975  |
| Hong Kong    | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 1.300  |
| Malaysia     | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2  | 0.157  |
| Saudi Arabia | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0  | -0.600 |
| Qatar        | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0  | -1.450 |

#### GROUP B

| TEAM     | P | W | L | PT | NRR    |
|----------|---|---|---|----|--------|
| UAE      | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4  | 1.642  |
| Kuwait   | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2  | 1.743  |
| Oman     | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2  | 0.150  |
| Bahrain  | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0  | -1.000 |
| Cambodia | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0  | -5.656 |

# Five-star Man City go top

A 5-1 victory over Luton Town takes Pep Guardiola's men two points clear of Arsenal and Liverpool, who both have a game in hand, and are in action on Sunday.



Manchester City's Erling Haaland (centre) celebrates with teammates after Luton Town's Daiki Hashioka scored an own goal during their English Premier League football match in Manchester on Saturday.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MANCHESTER, APRIL 13

Manchester City moved to the top of the Premier League as lowly Luton were eased aside 5-1 at the Etihad, while Newcastle thrashed Tottenham 4-0 on Saturday.

Amid a gruelling schedule, Pep Guardiola could hardly have wished for a kinder fixture in between the two legs of his side's Champions League quarter-final against Real Madrid.

Guardiola made six changes from a thrilling 3-3 draw in the Spanish capital on Tuesday and City seemed set for a stress-free afternoon from the moment they opened the scoring after just two minutes.

Erling Haaland's shot deflected in off the unfortunate Daiki Hashioka into his own net.

Yet the floodgates refused to open as the English champions had to wait until after the hour mark before making the points safe when Mateo Kovacic smashed in Julian Alvarez's cross at the edge of the box.

Haaland scored five then the sides met in the FA Cup in February.

The Norwegian had to settle for just one time this time when scored from the penalty spot for his 20th Premier

League goal of the season.

Ross Barkley netted a late consolation for Luton but they have just five games left to save their top-flight status.

Jeremy Doku fired into the far corner after jinking through the Luton defence before Josko Gvardiol scored his second goal in a week after opening his City account in Madrid.

Victory takes City two points clear of Arsenal and Liverpool, who both have a game in hand, and are in action on Sunday. Liverpool host Crystal Palace at Anfield looking to bounce back from their shock Europa League defeat to Atalanta. Arsenal entertain Aston Villa, who moved back into the top four without kicking a ball on Saturday thanks to Tottenham's trouncing at St. James' Park.

### Isak double

Alexander Isak scored twice, while Anthony Gordon and Fabian Schar were also on target as the Magpies kept their slim chances of Champions League football next season alive.

Newcastle are 10 points adrift of Tottenham and Villa with six games remaining but have the far easier run-in.

"We've just got to keep doing our bit which is trying to win every game,"

said Newcastle boss Eddie Howe.

"We're hopefully returning to somewhere near our best and we've got to keep heading in that direction."

At the bottom of the table, Nottingham Forest edged one point clear of the bottom three after a thrilling 2-2 draw against Wolves.

Matheus Cunha struck twice for the visitors at the City Ground to deny Forest a vital three points after goals from Morgan Gibbs White and Danilo had put them 2-1 in front.

Brentford's first win in 10 games pulled the Bees seven points clear of the drop zone as Ollie Arblaster's own goal and Frank Onyeka earned a 2-0 victory over Sheffield United.

Burnley's chances of survival are fading fast after a 1-1 draw at home to Brighton left them still second bottom, six points adrift of safety.

## ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

### RESULTS

|              |     |                  |
|--------------|-----|------------------|
| Brentford    | 2-0 | Sheffield United |
| Burnley      | 1-1 | Brighton         |
| Man City     | 5-1 | Luton            |
| Newcastle    | 4-0 | Tottenham        |
| Nottm Forest | 2-2 | Wolves           |

## HOROSCOPE

### ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Your Sunday may not start as harmoniously as you'd hoped. Setting boundaries will be important when navigating these vibes, which could intensify frustrations if conflict isn't skirted. Luckily, the energy elevates tonight, though it may be necessary to embrace solitude.

### TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Remember that words can hurt, so take care to be gentle with yourself and others. You may struggle to feel seen, though a helping hand can provide a sense of community when you flow alongside family or friends. Social media feeds can come in handy.

### GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

You may feel disenchanted by society and your social media feeds, dear Gemini, which could cause you to disconnect. A stabilising yet challenging energy takes hold later in the afternoon, making it important that you prioritise acting responsibly.

### CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Consider how setting restrictions or boundaries can help you expand, nudging you to cultivate healthy structures so you can focus on long-term aspirations. Just remember that progress takes time, even if you can't quite see the road ahead.

### LEO (July 23-August 22)

You'll revel in soft moments of peace and quiet, dear Leo, unleashing your elusive and spiritual side. Use this energy to acknowledge where you're at energetically, taking steps to balance the mind, body, and soul. Uplifting yet intense vibes flow later today.

### VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Be wary of anyone who attempts to get too close too fast, dear Virgo. You won't be in the mood for overly dramatic displays of affection, preferring a slower approach toward intimacy. Prioritise your sense of balance by socialising with those who lift you.

### LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

The morning, dear Libra, cultivating a dreamy energy that could cause you to oversleep or forget important engagements. You'll have a chance to recalibrate and reclaim order, especially when you set your sights on long-term goals and establishing healthy structures.

### SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

You may feel suspended in time, dear Scorpio, bringing a stagnant and hazy energy to the table. Don't feel guilty about going slow, especially if your motivation needs time to catch up with your agenda. You'll feel uplifted mid-morning.

### SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Watch out for manipulative or gaslighting behaviours within yourself and others this morning, dear Archer. If you start to feel confused, create distance between yourself and these sources of frustration. You'll have a chance to release emotional weight later.

### CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

Disorganisation and miscommunications could muddy your mind this morning, dear Capricorn. Rather than fighting for transparency and truth, try to temporarily make peace with what you don't know and cannot see. Harmonious vibes carry you to happier times later.

### AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

You may feel slightly unlike yourself as the day brings a disconnected and hazy energy. Luckily, the energy shifts mid-morning, offering focus when you invest in wellness and living your best life. Remember it's okay to second guess yourself.

### PISCES (February 19-March 20)

The morning brings a hazy energy to the table that could trigger a sense of disconnection or emotional drifting. You'll have a chance to snap out of these hypnotic vibes later, reigniting your lust for life and sense of self.

Astrology.com

## CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

- Give support
- Way in
- mater
- Render a verdict
- seal
- Animal with tusks
- Most shallow Great Lake
- Fancy pancake
- Type
- Smartly dressed
- Peanut butter variety
- Poems
- Speak indistinctly
- Fruit pastry
- Lynx
- Devoutness
- "Once — — midnight dreary ..."
- All — — flutter
- Lawyers' org.
- Beam
- Move up and down
- Bit to drink
- "— Without a Cause"
- "A Christmas —"
- Huge
- Copy

### DOWN

- Born and —
- Atmosphere
- Fastening device
- No trespassing order (2 wds.)
- Royal proclamation
- Scul
- Mine's output
- Sales agent
- Ridiculous
- Laughing bird
- Actor — Wahlberg
- Dilettantish
- Politely refuse
- Whirlpool
- Island dance
- Sleep

### PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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

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- Puffed up
- Charley horse
- Skeletal part
- Harvests
- Hooded snake
- Underway
- Data in rows and columns
- Tart
- Cut
- Ready to eat
- Panacea
- Receiver of charity
- Ringed planet
- Blotch
- Cheat
- Curved molding
- Toward shelter
- Drink too much
- "Born Free" lioness
- Buck
- Poor grade
- Frozen
- Sedan

|    |    |    |   |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|---|----|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4 | 5  | 6 | 7 | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |    |    |
| 13 |    |    |   | 14 |   |   | 15 |    | 16 |    |    |    |    |
| 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 |    |    |    |    |
| 51 | 52 | 53 |   |    |   |   |    |    | 54 |    | 55 | 56 | 57 |
| 58 |    |    |   |    |   |   | 59 | 60 | 61 | 62 |    | 63 |    |
| 64 |    |    |   |    |   |   | 65 |    |    |    |    | 66 |    |
| 67 |    |    |   |    |   |   |    |    | 68 |    |    |    | 69 |

## SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

## FICTION PARK

## A walk to Basundhara Park

Surya Kumar's knees were recently operated on, which confined him in his room. However, one morning, he decided to take a walk.

□ SUGAM GAUTAM

Surya Kumar, who hardly used to leave his house, suddenly felt the urge to go for a walk this morning. It was a beautiful, warm morning. On the porch of his house stood a big mango tree where birds were chirping loudly. Surya Kumar was enjoying the music of the birds from his balcony when his wife, Hima, called out to him from the kitchen, "Breakfast is ready." She had set the breakfast on the table, and he consumed it hastily.

"I'm going out today," Surya Kumar said to his wife.

"Where?" she asked, astonished.

"Basundhara Park."

"You're going to Basundhara Park? What's the need? Don't forget that you have just undergone knee surgery," she said angrily.

"I know, Hima," he said reassuringly.

"You can stroll around the street here. Basundhara Park is too far," Hima said.

"Don't worry. I'll be alright," Surya Kumar said and walked down the stairs.

He strolled through the alley of Machhapuchhre Tole to reach Rastra Bank Chowk. Vehicles were moving recklessly on the road; pedestrians were walking hurriedly to get their work done. He fetched the newspaper from one of the bookshops of Rastra Bank Chowk and headed towards Basundhara Park, which was a 5-minute walk away.

The park always fascinated him and whenever he felt like going out, he prioritised Basundhara Park over any other place in Pokhara. When he was young, he used to visit this park almost daily. He would go out with friends sometimes and with his lover other times. As he headed towards the park, he thought of his old days and his lips curved into a smile.

The only change he could figure out was the increase in vehicles. He had not visited the park recently, and the presumption of newness around the park added to his excitement. His knees, which had undergone surgery recently, kept him confined to his room most of the time.

The sun slowly ascended towards the middle of the



SHUTTERSTOCK

sky, and Surya Kumar felt a stream of sweat dripping down his face. As he was about to reach the park, he noticed lovers on the other side of the road, with their hands intertwined. This amused Surya Kumar. He recalled how shy he was to do this when he was young. Time has changed, he thought. He entered the park through the main gate and found himself on the stone-paved path where a few women were selling tea. They asked if Surya Kumar wanted a cup of tea. He shook his head and walked ahead.

It had been three years since he last visited the park. Now that he had come, he wanted to spend some time here. He sat on the dew-drenched grass and began to observe the surroundings. A bunch of young people were playing football on the ground. By the ground, on the pavement, Surya Kumar noticed a large number of people walk-

His focus shifted to the young boys, and he began to enjoy the game. Football used to be his favourite sport when he was younger.

ing towards Kedareshwor Temple.

Surya Kumar flipped through the pages of the newspaper and since he couldn't find anything interesting to read, he kept the paper aside. His focus shifted to the young boys, and he began to enjoy the game. Football used to be his favourite sport when he was younger.

He remembered that he had quarrelled

once with his father, demanding a football. His father had brought him a football the next day and owning a football had made him the hero in his neighborhood.

Surya Kumar was surprised to see how quickly the boys were running, and he wished he could run like that. The boys will also turn old, he thought and smiled. Once, the ball came close to him, he wanted to kick it. The boys also asked him to kick the ball, but he couldn't kick since his legs were weak.

He threw the ball with his hand, and the boys made fun of him, saying, "It's a football, uncle. Not volleyball." Surya Kumar wanted to tell them that he was a good player once, and now he couldn't kick because his legs were weak. But he chose to stay quiet. In between the game, some of the boys would curse each other without caring about the presence of old Surya Kumar. He felt uncomfortable, but he chose

to stay, for he was enjoying the game.

Once the game was over, the boys walked off the park, and Surya Kumar trudged towards Kedareshwor Temple. There was a wedding going on in the temple, so he excused himself from the crowd and sat at one corner of the temple.

He and Hima had gotten married in the same temple after he persuaded his parents. His parents were reluctant at first, but somehow he convinced them and married Hima. It was ages ago, but he remembered each moment of his marriage. On the wedding day, Hima was shy to look into Surya Kumar's eyes though they were lovers even before getting married. A pleasant memory flashed through Surya Kumar's mind, and it brought a big smile to his face. At 78, he still loved Hima like a new couple loves each other.

After staying for an hour in the temple, he felt it was time to have lunch, so he decided to return home. He took the same route as earlier, and when he reached Rastra Bank Chowk, he saw a familiar face in the distance. It was someone he knew, but he couldn't identify the person. Finally, as their distance grew closer, Surya Kumar recognised him—he was Dhan Bahadur Gurung. They both folded their hands and exchanged a smile.

"Tea?" Dhan Bahadur asked, and Surya Kumar couldn't refuse it.

Over a cup of tea, they talked of the old times, politics and their mutual friends. It had been more than seven years since they last met. Surya Kumar discovered that Dhan Bahadur now lived in Birauta. After having tea, they parted ways. There was a common thing about them that they never discussed—they both had lost their sons in the Maoist war.

Surya Kumar remembered his deceased son upon seeing Dhan Bahadur. For Surya Kumar, this visit to Basundhara Park brought back many pleasant and unpleasant memories.



Gautam is a writer from Pokhara.



AP/PRSS

□ LINDA DEUTSCH

LOS ANGELES, US

Ten things to remember about OJ Simpson, the NFL running back-turned-actor who was acquitted of murdering his wife and her friend.

The family announced on Simpson's official X account that Simpson died Wednesday after battling prostate cancer. Simpson's attorney confirmed to TMZ that he died in Las Vegas.

#### How he met Nicole Brown

She was a waitress at the trendy Beverly Hills restaurant, The Daisy. They met when he dined there and they quickly became inseparable. They married in 1985, had two children, Sydney and Justin, and divorced in 1992.

#### His son's early death

Simpson had three children by his first marriage to Marguerite Whitley: Arnelle, Jason and Aaren, who drowned at the age of 2 in a family swimming pool in 1979.

#### NFL career highlights

At the University of Southern California, Simpson won the Heisman Trophy in 1968 and was the first player chosen in the 1969 NFL draft. As a pro, Simpson was the first player to rush for more than 2,000 yards. He was NFL Player of the Year in 1972, 1973 and 1975 and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1985. Simpson played for the Buffalo Bills for nine years and for the San Francisco 49ers for two years.

#### His overwhelming fame

At the height of his football fame, polls indicated he was one of the top three most recognised faces in North America. In 1977, he became the first pro football player to make the cover of 'Rolling Stone'. In 1978, he became the second professional athlete to host 'Saturday Night Live'.

#### Actor Simpson's movies

He had roles in 'The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!' (1988), 'The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear' (1991) and 'The

## 10 things to remember about OJ Simpson

The NFL running back-turned-actor who was acquitted of murdering his wife and her friend, died in Las Vegas.

'Towering Inferno' (1974). He was considered for the title role in 'The Terminator,' but producers feared he was 'too nice' to be taken seriously as a cold-blooded killer. He was working on a film called 'Frogmen' shortly before the killings.

#### Commercials had him running through airports

He made a series of commercials for the Hertz rental car company, including the juggernaut ad that had him jumping over counters at an airport.

#### The Bronco chase

The infamous Bronco chase caused one television station to rearrange coverage of an NBA Finals game, featuring the chase on the main screen and the game as an inset. Nearly every network was broadcasting the chase as it headed toward the cemetery where his ex-wife was buried, then wound back to Simpson's house. Cameras in helicopters showed Simpson holding a gun to his head as his friend Al Cowlings drove. Because the chase was so slow, huge crowds had time to gather on overpasses, where they cheered wildly when he drove by.

#### Mother's moment

Simpson's frail 73-year-old mother left her wheelchair, hobbled to the witness stand and told jurors how her son had rickets as a child and had inherited rheumatoid arthritis from her, suggesting he was too crippled to kill anyone.

#### Two books he wrote for money

While in jail during his criminal trial, he wrote a book called 'I Want to Tell You' with a collaborator. It helped finance his defence. In 2008, he collaborated on a hypothetical confession called, 'If I Did It', which stirred up so much controversy that it was withdrawn from publication. Simpson said he needed money to pay for his children's education. He called the proceeds "blood money."

#### Johnnie Cochran

Attorney Johnnie Cochran was not his first attorney. That was Robert Shapiro. Cochran was reluctant to take on the case but was eventually convinced after praying with his pastor. He had been a commentator on the trial before becoming a part of it. He instantly went from being a well-known local attorney to being world-famous.

— Associated Press



AP/PRSS

Simpson and his wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, arrive for the opening of the Harley-Davidson Cafe in New York in 1993.

## Spring Orchestra in Kathmandu

The concert will feature a vibrant mix of musical genres.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHMANDU YOUTH ORCHESTRA FACEBOOK

What: Spring Concert (Tunes of Nepal)

Where: Russian Culture Center, Kamalpokhari, Kathmandu

When: April 20

Time: 4:45 pm onwards

#### □ POST REPORT

KATHMANDU

Kathmandu Youth Orchestra is organising a student concert, titled 'Spring Concert, Tunes of Nepal' at the Russian Culture Center, Kamalpokhari on Saturday.

According to the organisers, the concert will feature a vibrant mix of musical genres including Dafa songs, traditional Nepali and Nepal Bhasa songs, Charya songs and Western classical music. John Sharpley will conduct the concert and attendees will get to hear performances by more than 40 artists in the chamber orchestra. Both Nepali and Western instruments, including Khin, Dhime, Dholak, Bhusiya, Tinchu, Piano, Guitar, Violin, Cello, Flute, Sarangi and Sitar, will be played.

Sunita Dangol, the deputy mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, will chair the programme as the chief guest.

The musical performance will be followed by a book launch of 'Nepali Orchestra (Tunes of

Nepal) Vol.1' containing transcription of Nepali and Nepal Bhasa folk and traditional songs in staff notation.

John Sharpley is a composer, performer and teacher whose career spans geographic and cultural borders. Born in Houston, Texas in the US, he earned a doctorate in composition from Boston University, a bachelor of music and a master of music from the University of Houston as well as diplomas for piano, violin and composition at the National Conservatory of Music in Strasbourg, France. His composition teachers include Michael Horvit, David Del Tredici, John Harbison, Betsy Jolas and Leonard Bernstein.

Since its inception in 2011 AD, the Kathmandu Youth Orchestra has been dedicated to promoting traditional Nepali and Nepal Bhasa music globally through staff notation and orchestration. Over the years, it has organised various successful events, including orchestral concerts and student performances, along with offering valuable masterclasses and workshops to its members.