

More US aid will help Ukraine avoid defeat. Winning war is another matter

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KVIV, APRIL 24

A big, new package of US military aid will help Ukraine avoid defeat in its war with Russia. Winning will still be a long slog.

The arms and ammunition in the \$61 billion military aid package should enable Ukraine to slow the Russian army's bloody advances and block its strikes on troops and civilians. And it will buy Ukraine time—for long-term planning about how to take back the fifth of the country now under Russian control. "Ultimately it offers Ukraine the prospect of staying in the war this year," said Michael Clarke, visiting professor in war studies at King's College London. "Sometimes in warfare you've just got to stay in it. You've just got to avoid being rolled over."

The US House of Representatives approved the package on Saturday after months of delays by some Republicans wary of US involvement overseas. It was passed by the Senate on Tuesday, and President Joe Biden signed it into law on Wednesday.

The difference could be felt within days on the front line in eastern and southern Ukraine, where Russia's much larger army has been slowly taking territory against massively outgunned Ukrainian forces.

The aid approval means Ukraine may be able to release artillery ammunition from dwindling stocks that it has been rationing. More equipment will come soon from American stocks in Poland and Germany, and later from the US. The first shipments are expected to arrive by the beginning of next week, said Davyd Arakhamia, a lawmaker with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Servant of the People party.

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POST PHOTO: SUNITA BARAL

A woman sits beside her charred belongings at the site of a settlement in Mahottari that was destroyed by a raging inferno on Wednesday.

## Fire destroys 110 homes in Mahottari

Displaced families are sheltering at a local school. Relief immediate priority, officials say.

SUNITA BARAL  
MAHOTTARI, APRIL 24

A fast-spreading blaze swept through Jaralhawa Gachhi village in ward 6 of Matihani Municipality in Mahottari, on Wednesday, destroying at least 110 homes. Hari Prasad Mandal, the mayor of Matihani Municipality, said the fire that broke out from a haystack at around noon burnt 110 homes in Miyatol and Hattatol. The inferno was brought under control at around 7pm.

"Personnel of the Nepal Army, Nepal Police and Armed Police Force as well as local residents doused the

fire with the help of four fire engines. Scores of families have become homeless," said Mandal.

Food grains, clothes and other belongings were destroyed in the incident. Many domesticated animals were also charred to death.

"We are yet to assess the full extent of the damage. Our current efforts are focussed on providing immediate relief to the displaced people," said Shivaram Gelal, chief district officer of Mahottari. According to him, many of the displaced are now taking shelter at a local school building.

Lakhan Devi Pasawan had gone to

Sitamadhi of India for the treatment of abdominal pain. When she returned in the evening, her four thatch-roof homes had turned into ashes.

"We have nothing left. How can we survive now?" lamented Lakhan Devi. According to her, Rs200,000 in cash that her son sent from abroad and the money earned by her husband operating an auto-rickshaw was burnt in the incident.

Incidents of fire—both house fires and forest fires—have been on the rise in various districts of Madhesh Province over the past few weeks.

>> Continued on page 2

## Deals signed with Qatar, but no major breakthrough

Nepal proposes a dozen projects seeking Qatari investment. Officials cite time constraints and insufficient homework.

ANIL GIRI  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 24

This week, Nepal accorded the highest respect to a foreign leader when it hosted the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, five years after it bestowed similar honour on Chinese President Xi Jinping when he came in October 2019.

The country even declared a public holiday on Tuesday in honour of the emir, and organised a special ceremony at the Tribhuvan International Airport upon his arrival from Dhaka, Bangladesh. President Ramchandra Paudel himself received the emir at the airport. Given the emir's status as one of the richest heads of state and Qatar's position as among the top ten richest countries, Kathmandu had high expectations from the visit.

During his Bangladesh visit, the emir signed some significant accords and pacts and the Bangladeshi government named a prominent avenue from ECB circle to Kalshi Point in Dhaka, as well as a park, after the emir.

In his efforts to achieve some breakthroughs, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal held two meetings with the Qatari emir on Tuesday and Wednesday, government officials privy to the development told the Post.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Dahal held a one-on-one with the emir and discussed some projects related to infrastructure and healthcare, among others. And on Wednesday, the prime

minister held delegation-level talks with the Qatari emir at Hotel Soaltee, after which eight agreements were signed between the two countries.

Besides these, Nepal was also looking to finalise a renewed labour pact with Qatar so as to improve the working conditions of Nepali migrant workers in the Gulf country.

Nepal was also looking to finalise a renewed labour pact with Qatar, a popular job destination.

Approximately 400,000 Nepali nationals are currently living and working in Qatar and there is also a growing call for providing round-the-clock insurance to Nepali migrant workers.

>> Continued on page 2



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Dabur Vatika SHAMPOO

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3	Itahari	06 May 2024	07 May 2024	Royal Resort, Itahari	Mr. Smit Karki   9802731800 Global Dreams Management
4	Bhairahawa	11 May 2024	12 May 2024	Siddhartha Vilasa, Bhairahawa	Mr. Rajiv Khanal   9857059568 Next Revolution Miss Western Nepal
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OPINION



OUR VIEW

The return of the chhau

Our campaigns to educate the people about the ills of ‘chhaupadi’ are inadequate.

The Nepali state’s campaign to abolish *chhaupadi*—observing forced isolation during menstruation—has suffered from indifference and lethargy, leading to the return of the *chhau* sheds. When local-level governments took the lead to demolish *chhau* sheds four years ago after the death of Parvati Budha due to snakebite, it was hoped that the hinterlands, primarily in Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces, would be free of *chhau* sheds. However, with the campaign losing steam, the sheds have started to pop up once again. And with this, there are fears that menstruating women will continue to die in the sheds as they have been dying for generations.

The *chhau* sheds are notorious for the deaths of women from cold, suffocation, snakebites and wildlife attacks. The women also face physical violence and sexual harassment when in isolation. Apart from deaths, women also face psychological stress from having to stay isolated in cramped, damp sheds for days at a stretch. The *chhau* sheds, therefore, are the spaces of dehumanisation of women and have no place in a civilised society. But as the return of the sheds has shown, doing away with superstition is easier said than done. A study by the Nepal Government 2010 showed that 19 percent of Nepali women practice *chhaupadi*, with the figure reaching as high as 50 percent in the Karnali and Sudurpaschim regions.

The *chhaupadi* system was outlawed by the Supreme Court in 2005, and in 2017, it was made punishable by up to three months in jail or a fine of Rs3,000 or both. But these legal provisions have failed to stop the practice. As per reports, the women are allowed to stay in their homes during their menstruation only when monitoring teams are in the villages. On other occasions, the women are forced by the family to live in the sheds. What’s more, the families are not even aware of the legal provisions disallowing the practice of *chhaupadi*. But this provision also has a problem: The women falling victim to the system cannot file a legal complaint against their family members. In rare cases when the women gather the courage to go against their families, they do not find social and legal support to continue their fight.

The fact that families are willing to sacrifice their members in the name of tradition shows that our campaigns to educate the people about the ills of *chhaupadi* are inadequate. Legal provisions are hardly enough to stop a practice rooted in cultural beliefs. Apart from the law, education on the need to do away with this archaic practice is of utmost importance. In the absence of solid educational campaigns, the enthusiasm to change an old practice, however dangerous, dies down. The government must, therefore, in coordination with local levels, invest massively in educational campaigns across the region. *Chhaupadi* is a practice that goes against universal human rights, and the government should be ruthless in abolishing it not just legally but socially and culturally as well.

THEIR VIEW

Ties with Tehran

Iranian president’s Pakistan visit could help improve ties particularly in the economic sector.

The significance of the trip has been enhanced by the prevailing geopolitical tensions in the region, particularly Iran’s conflict with Israel, poor ties between Tehran and the Western states, especially over the former’s central role in the ‘axis of resistance’, as well as the unpleasant episode in January when Iran and Pakistan exchanged missile strikes.

Thankfully, whatever bitterness was engendered by the latter incident seems to have been forgotten, as Pakistan rolled out the red carpet for the Iranian leader. In Islamabad, Mr Raisi met the president, prime minister and army chief, and later headed to Lahore and Karachi to meet the respective provincial leaderships.

Trade topped the Iranian president’s agenda, while security issues were also discussed. Mr Raisi said the current level of bilateral trade was “unacceptable”, and desired to see annual trade go up to \$10bn. Foreign sanctions, as well as the lack of proper banking channels, stand as major obstacles in enhancing bilateral commerce. Expanding the number of border markets can help remove these obstacles, and bring socioeconomic opportunities to border communities on both sides.

Pakistan also seeks to expand foreign trade to improve its economic position. While searching for trade partners across the oceans should continue, we must work to expand regional commerce. As things stand, South Asia is among the world’s least integrated regions. While resuming economic ties with India is more complicated, Pakistan should strive to improve trade relations with its western neighbours, Iran and Afghanistan. This can open pathways for Pakistani products to markets in Central Asia and greater Eurasia.

Regarding security matters, violent non-state actors operating in the common border areas present challenges to both states’ security. Therefore, it is welcome that an accord was signed on security cooperation. Both countries’ security forces should cooperate with each other to neutralise malign actors and manage border security.

As for the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, the issue was obliquely referred to in a Pakistani statement, but there has been no major breakthrough. Mr Raisi mentioned that some actors did not want to see Pakistan-Iran relations grow. “It is not important,” he said, dismissing critics. The US, meanwhile, has again cautioned that anyone doing business with Iran risks being sanctioned by America.

Pakistan must take a long-term view of this problem. While ties with the US are important, should Pakistan seek American approval for all key economic and strategic decisions? Today, the US does not want the Iran pipeline to proceed. Tomorrow, if ties between Washington and Beijing nosedive, and the US asks Pakistan to reconsider CPEC, or our defence cooperation with China, will we comply?

— Dawn (Pakistan)/ANN

Muizzu’s balancing act in the Maldives

|| NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ||

Several powers are contesting for influence in the Indian Ocean countries.

SMRUTI S PATTANAİK



The Maldives held its much-awaited parliamentary election on April 17. Not surprisingly, the People’s National Congress (PNC), along with its coalition parties, won 75 seats in total while the Maldives Democratic Party (MDP), the erstwhile ruling party’s strength in the Parliament, dwindled to only 12 seats from 65 seats previously held. The PNC alone won 66 seats, showing that the other parties in the coalition would play a marginal role.

This ‘supermajority’, as described by Maldivian media, will strengthen President Muizzu’s hand in charting policies without being obstructed by the opposition in Parliament. Meanwhile, his alliance partner, the People’s National Front (PNF) president and former president of the Maldives, Abdullah Yameen, was freed from jail just two days before this election. Muizzu’s victory would have several geopolitical implications as he charts his ultranationalist foreign policy.

Fallout with former ally

Muizzu’s fallout with Abdullah Yameen may not threaten his political sustenance; rather, the divided opposition is not in a position to pose much challenge to his policies. Though Muizzu was the contingency presidential candidate in case Yameen failed to contest due to his conviction, the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM)-PNC coalition’s senate rallied behind Muizzu’s candidacy and rejected Yameen’s proposal to boycott the election. Since he was elected president, Muizzu has tried to sideline Yameen and has appointed a cabinet without consulting him, which deepened the rift between the two. Yameen’s loyalists accuse Muizzu of refusing to take phone calls from



REUTERS

Yameen after his election.

After Muizzu was elected President, Yameen was transferred from the jail where he spent his days after being convicted of corruption charges to house arrest. However, his newly created party PNF, Democrats and Adhaalath Party (AP), could not win any seats in the parliamentary election. This is a serious blow to Yameen’s political aspirations.

Economic downturn

The debt situation has worsened in the country even though it has not reached the stage of bankruptcy. Muizzu has asked for development funds from China to anchor a pro-China foreign policy while requesting India to restructure debt repayment and stagger it to help the Maldives to repay commensurating with its economic ability and at the same time to continue with projects that have already been sanctioned by the government. Muizzu also wants to bolster the free trade agreement with China without assessing the impact on its economy in its bid to reaffirm the previous policy charted by former President Abdullah Yameen. This clearly shows that Muizzu would have to balance the country’s economic situation while looking for more loans to develop infrastructure projects essential for its economic growth.

China’s share of the Maldives’ debt is 37 percent. The International

Monetary Fund has categorised the Maldives as a high-risk debt-distressed country. The World Bank has predicted 5.4 percent growth from 2024 to 2025. The country’s debt vulnerability is pegged at 115 percent of the GDP, and its external and internal borrowing would make it financially vulnerable.

The Maldives imports essential commodities from India. Both countries are discussing introducing trade in local currency to address the dollar shortage. In July 2023, the Reserve Bank of India permitted the Maldives to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) to facilitate trade in local currencies. In April of this year, India’s Directorate General of Foreign Trade also removed the export curbs on onion, rice, sugar, wheat flour and stone aggregate for the country.

Like other South Asian countries, the Maldives’ tax revenue is very low. It depends on imports to sustain. According to the Asian Development Bank’s report, the outgoing Solih government’s decision to increase the Goods and Services Tax rate by 40.0 percent for the general sector and 33.3 percent for the tourism sector has increased the price of essential commodities. Foreign exchange reserves have slumped. Subsidies have increased to provide economic relief.

Tourism booms

The tourism industry has grown signif-

Decolonising academia beyond the metaphor

Universities are creating and reproducing the conditions for present-day colonial injustice.

NAFISA AFSARA CHOWDHURY

As we continue to witness a genocide unfold in real time through social media, there is no denying that our world has irrevocably changed. Over the last six months, the courage of the Palestinian people has radically shifted the collective consciousness of people in every corner of the world, leading to a global awakening. In many ways, it has exposed the long-standing colonial agenda and hypocrisy of the West, both of which have been slowly crumbling down for quite some time now. Simultaneously, it has sparked necessary conversations regarding military occupation, settler colonialism, neocolonialism, and the deeply interconnected nature of these struggles worldwide. Every day, citizens from all walks of life have been confronting and mobilising against oppressive power structures head-on, in small and large ways.

One such example was the student-led protest at Columbia University in New York, US last week. Several students took to the university campus and set up tents on the lawn, demanding that their institution immediately divest from corporations, institutions, weapons manufacturers, and donors complicit in the genocide against Palestinians. These students remained steadfast as they resoundingly rejected Columbia’s shameful stance supporting Israel’s brutal occupation. Predictably, what followed was a mass arrest called by the university’s administration. The New York Police Department (NYPD) forcibly removed the peaceful student activists from the premises. Many students were also suspended from Columbia and its associate institution, Barnard College, as well as from their housing. This is the same Columbia University that has been home to revolutionary scholars such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and many more. This, I believe, is not the legacy that Columbia would have hoped to be a part of.

Just a week prior to the university’s crackdown on students, Columbia Journalism School—which houses the Pulitzer Prize—hosted the Palestinian journalist from Gaza, Motaz Azaiza, who played a key role in showing the world the reality of what unfolded after October 7. Columbia shifted its classes online on Monday, April 22, while the

faculty staged a walk-out to protest the arrests of students.

Of course, Columbia is not the only university where students have risen up against their university’s role in funding the colonial occupation of Palestine. Students in several universities around the world have spoken out against their institutions, all of whom have met a similar fate of repression as the Colombian students. On Monday, police arrested more than 45 protesters at Yale University. After nightfall on the same day, the NYPD arrested students from New York University.

For most of these acclaimed universities, any dialogue or action by students on Palestine that reveals the reality of Israeli settler colonialism and genocide, and protests the institutions’ own complicity in it, is deemed as a threat. And in fact, they’re right. It is a threat, but not in the way that the administrations have described it. Rather, such dialogue or action is a

order to build a more equitable, inclusive, and democratic society. Academic institutions and their knowledge production are supposed to be guided by an active concern for social change, and by a strong desire to have a meaningful impact on the wider communities in which their works are situated. Unfortunately, when you examine the situation in universities across the West, this is not the case. Instead, students with moral clarity simply speaking their conscience are repressed for challenging the status quo. Consequently, there continues to remain a profound barrier between academic scholarship and meaningful practical action.

This kind of cowardly deference does not come fully as a surprise, though. The development of Western universities has always been deeply implicated in colonialism. From the reliance on Western knowledge production for the inferiorisation of the



SHUTTERSTOCK

threat to maintaining the colonial structures of the universities. A united student front that dares to shake up structures of settler colonialism, occupation, and war is indeed the most terrifying possibility to institutions that intend to carry on with the status quo. The courage of these students who stand as voices of moral reasoning is admirable amid this wasteland of perverse immorality and violence within which we find ourselves.

But I believe that this series of ongoing events speaks to a larger crisis that has been looming in academia for decades. Our primary responsibility as academics is to nurture young minds to think critically about the world in

“other” to the imposition of Western knowledge systems across the Global South, universities have been central in creating and reproducing the conditions for present-day racial and colonial injustice.

However, in recent times, there has been a growing shift in most prestigious universities to adopt the discourse of decolonisation to confront these ugly matters and make changes. The definition of the term “decolonisation” has been ever-expanding, but broadly speaking, it is the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies of superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches. Although calls for decolonisation echo loudly in methods

icantly even though Indian tourist arrivals have declined. According to reports, Indians travel to the Maldives during the summer, which is a fill-up to the off-season tourism, as most Western tourists prefer to travel in winter. Indian tourists were the largest in 2023. The government has set the goal of achieving over 2 million tourist arrivals and 14.3 million bed nights for 2024 to generate revenue. This also requires huge investments and facilities to accommodate tourists and boost the local economy. In this context, reducing the number of Indian tourists arriving in the Maldives would be a major concern for the Maldivian government. Some estimate the loss to the Maldivian economy to be around \$2.5-5.5 million after India dropped to fifth place in the Maldivian tourism chart.

In recent years, the Maldives has seen growth in the tourism sector, which is likely to generate revenue for the cash-strapped economy, boost GDP growth and create employment opportunities for the locals.

Geopolitical balancing

In the past few months after his election, Muizzu has also successfully replaced Indian military trainers with civilian trainers, which he can boast of as his foreign policy success. He has also managed to elevate the Maldives’ relations with China to a strategic level by signing the China-Maldives Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership (2024-28). They signed 20 agreements, some focusing on the defense sector. The political ecosystem would be conducive to Chinese investment as Beijing aspires to have a foothold in the Western Indian Ocean.

Several powers are contesting for influence in the Indian Ocean countries. However, this contest is seen as a binary in the Maldives—India vs China. Muizzu’s task will be to balance the interests of both countries and extract benefits for the Maldives. Given the economic situation of India and China and their investment in the Maldives, it would be difficult for Muizzu to play one against the other. Given the Maldives’ proclivity to play the China card as it did when Muizzu allowed the docking of Chinese Xiang Yang Hong 03 ‘research vessel’ ostensibly for replenishment, India has decided to build its own Naval base in Lakshadweep. Cooperation between India and the Maldives continues, as the trilateral India-Maldives-Sri Lanka trilateral Dosti-16 exercise took place in February.

of scholarship and pedagogies in academic institutions, recent events in light of the Palestinian resistance have shown us, again, that academia’s decolonial appeals are simply relegated to a metaphorical realm without any material implications.

In a 2012 article titled “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” authors and influential scholars Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang make a powerful argument against the overuse of the term “decolonisation.” According to them, the frivolous adoption of the language of decolonisation, particularly by academia, has allowed institutions to enact a distancing from various forms of complicity with ongoing colonialism and its systems—and how they benefit from them. Tuck and Yang carefully remind us of the hollowness of the many uses of the terms and what they obscure—especially in regard to the ongoing colonialism in settler societies such as Israel.

Decolonial pedagogy and thinking is, indeed, a fundamental part of the movement for imagining an alternative future, beyond our present reality. It is a powerful tool for deconstructing colonial influences on knowledge and education. However, theorisation is not the sole or final step in decolonisation. These superficial discourses serve no purpose if they simply continue to echo in our own intellectual chambers as mere intellectual debates.

This brings us back to the events unfolding at Columbia University and universities all across the globe as they criminalise students who are doing the difficult work of practically bringing about the paradigm shifts that decolonisation demands from us. They challenge institutions which still continue to recentre the interests and futures of settlers under the guise of metaphorical notions of decolonisation.

Real decolonisation is difficult work, and it does not only happen through intellectual discourse that garner acknowledgments. It happens through radically enacting its material imperatives for concrete transformations. It happens by disrupting existing power structures that, for centuries, have enabled Western empires, corporations, and elites to destroy, exploit, pollute, and profit at the expense of colonised people. It is deeply uncomfortable and unsettling. Anything short of this is not decolonisation, and is simply another form of liberal appropriation.

Chowdhury is adjunct lecturer at the Department of English and Modern Languages of North South University (NSU).

— The Daily Star (Bangladesh)/ANN



FOREX

US Dollar	133.62
Euro	142.77
Pound Sterling	166.20
Swiss Franc	146.10
Australian Dollar	86.89
Canadian Dollar	97.63
Singapore Dollar	98.16
Japanese Yen (10)	8.63
Chinese Yuan	18.44
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.63
Qatari Riyal	36.63
Thai Bhat	3.61
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Korean Won (100)	9.72

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MODERATE LOSERS							
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-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01		
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BIZLINE

Intrepid DMC Nepal's cleanup campaign



**KATHMANDU:** The Intrepid DMC Nepal office team organised its second clean-up campaign in Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park on Tuesday in collaboration with Clean Up Nepal on the occasion of Earth Day. The company said that the team collected 30.52 kgs of non-biodegradable waste that was left behind on the pristine trail. The event also raised awareness among the local hikers at the park of the adverse impacts of littering and encouraged them to bring their trash back with them for proper disposal. Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park, established in 2002, lies in the northern fringes of Kathmandu Valley and spans four districts, covering an area of 159 square kilometres.

Hotel Yak and Yeti ‘Cultivating Connections’ event on Earth Day

**KATHMANDU:** Hotel Yak & Yeti held its “Cultivating Connections” event to mark Earth Day on April 22. The event emphasised the hotel’s dedication to sustainability, community engagement, and fostering meaningful connections. The event’s main attraction was a special activity that emphasised the hotel’s commitment to environmental sustainability. Attendees had the unique and rewarding opportunity to plant saplings within the surroundings of the Madhuban garden.



French air traffic controllers’ union cancels strike call

**PARIS:** France’s main air traffic controllers’ union said Wednesday it had cancelled a call for a one-day strike over pay after making a deal with the civil aviation authority. The planned stoppage for Thursday would have caused most flights at the two main Paris airports to be cancelled, sparking chaos. But this scenario appeared to have been averted after a last-minute agreement between the SNCTA union and the DGAC civil aviation authority about salary increases and other measures in a planned overhaul of France’s air traffic control systems. However, the DGAC did not confirm the union statement, and neither side released details of the reported agreement. It was also unclear whether the two smaller unions which had also backed strike action would follow suit and call off the stoppage. (AFP)

# Ride-hailing startups on expansion spree. But lack of rules hinders competition

Pathao expanded services to 18 cities starting April 13, after six years since it began services in Kathmandu.

□ KRISHANA PRASAIN  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 24

While Pathao, an app-based ride-hailing and food delivery company, has been expanding aggressively, other such companies remain stuck as they wait for guidelines to expand in and out of Kathmandu Valley.

Pathao has started its service in 18 cities across the country starting from the Nepali New Year on April 13, after six years of service in Kathmandu Valley. It launched its service in Chitwan in September 2022.

The company said demand for a convenient and cost-effective transportation service outside the Kathmandu Valley has been increasing lately.

“We have now reached all seven provinces,” said Suraksha Hamal, head of marketing of Pathao Nepal. “Within a week of announcing our expansion, we have received applications from 5,000 riders. There are more than 1,000 rides daily outside Kathmandu and Chitwan. Both riders and customers are growing,” she said.

Customers in the newly expanded markets can bid on the approximate fare displayed on the app when using the ride service, Hamal said.

Pathao was founded in 2015 in the US and officially started on September 24, 2018, in Kathmandu.

Pathao ride-hailing service has been expanded to nine cities of Koshi province including Biratnagar, Damak, Urlabari, Biratchowk, Itahari, Inaruwa, Dharan, Birtamod and Bhadrapur. In Madhesh province ride-hailing service of Pathao is available in Birgunj and Janakpur.

Similarly, Pathao ride-hailing service has started in Pokhara of Gandaki Province; Butwal, Nepalgunj and Bhairahawa of Lumbini Province, and Birendranagar of Sudurpaschim Province.

The company plans to further expand its service in other cities of the country shortly.

Tootle, a once popular ride-hailing platform, resumed its services on September 1 last year, but it is now focussed on goods deliveries. Officials at the company said they have no immediate plans to expand service outside the Kathmandu Valley.

Tootle, the Nepali tech startup, began operations in January 2017.

Initially, a team comprising Aayush Subedi, Princi Koirala, Bina Laxmi



POST FILE PHOTO

Pathao started its service in 18 cities across the country from the Nepali New Year on April 13.

Shrestha, Sixit Bhatta and a few others had designed an app to track Sajha buses. It soon became popular. However, due to the lack of marketing and transparency, its public faith started to erode. Then Pathao emerged as the dominant player in the market.

Zapp Services Pvt Ltd currently operates Tootle. The company refused to comment on its plan.

When Pathao enjoyed a market monopoly after the fall of Tootle, the United States-based inDrive launched its service in Nepal in April 2022.

Currently, inDrive’s ride-hailing service is available in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Chitwan.

The company said it too has no immediate plans to expand to other cities. According to industry insiders, inDrive is waiting for government guidelines to ensure its legality.

“We don’t have an immediate market expansion plan in Nepal. We want to focus on the cities we are currently present in. We want to grow our business there,” Pavit Nanda Anand, the Asia Pacific region communication lead of inDrive, told the Post via WhatsApp.

“Nepal is an exciting market and we entered the market to support local communication and connect drivers

and passengers for affordable and convenient mobility solutions.”

The company declined to disclose the number of riders and rides in Nepal.

inDrive became popular in a short time among Nepalis as it launched the apps where service seekers were able to negotiate on the fare rates.

For Pathao, currently Pokhara and Butwal are the top-performing markets. “Growth is picking up gradually in other cities as well,” Hamal said.

Pathao plans to launch its service in auto-rickshaws, the popular mode of transport in most of the Tarai region. “We have expanded the service to allow service seekers to book rides from one city to another.” Pathao takes a commission of 20 percent from each bike ride.

According to Pathao, there are more than 200,000 people involved with the platform, including more than 90,000 bike riders, 10,000 taxi drivers and 5,000 food delivery boys. The two other companies—Tootle and inDrive—did not disclose their figures.

In February this year, the government classified ride-hailing services as a service-oriented industry under the Industrial Enterprises Act 2020. This gives ride-hailing companies

legal status, seven years after they started operations in Nepal.

But the government has been dilly-dallying the provision to bring the guidelines which manage the ride-hailing companies by regulating the fares. The draft guidelines for ride-hailing propose registering cars and motorbikes used for ride-hailing, similar to traditional taxis, operating them under the regulations of the Ministry of Transport.

Under the guidelines the companies would have to renew their operations annually at the transport management offices. The guidelines will also regulate the fare and have made passenger insurance mandatory.

The Motor Vehicles and Transport Management Act 1993 has mentioned that vehicles registered for private use should not be used for public transportation. Bagmati province officially legalised ride-hailing services in June 2022, but did not issue any guidelines or policy.

According to the 60th annual report of the Auditor General, there are 25 ride-hailing companies in Nepal using the global positioning system (GPS) and digital platforms, but none of them are registered for their current operations.

## Germany growth forecast up, ailing economy at ‘turning point’

□ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
FRANKFURT (GERMANY), APRIL 24

The German government slightly increased its 2024 growth forecast on Wednesday, saying there were signs Europe’s beleaguered top economy was at a “turning point” after battling through a period of weakness.

Output is expected to expand 0.3 percent this year, the economy ministry said, up from a prediction of 0.2 percent in February.

The slightly rosier picture comes after improvements in key indicators—from factory output to business activity—boosted hopes a recovery may be getting under way.

The German economy shrank slightly last year, hit by soaring inflation, a manufacturing slowdown and weakness in trading partners, and has acted as a major drag on the 20-nation eurozone.

But releasing its latest projections, the economy ministry said in a statement there were growing indications of a “turning point”.

“Signs of an economic upturn have increased significantly, especially in recent weeks,” Economy Minister Robert Habeck said at a press conference.

The ministry also cut its forecast for inflation this year to 2.4 percent, from a previous prediction of 2.8 percent, and sees the figure falling below two percent next year. “The fall in inflation will lead to consumer demand—people have more money in their wallets again, and will spend this money,” said Habeck.

“So purchasing power is increasing, real wages are rising and this will contribute to a domestic economic recovery.”

Energy prices—which surged after Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine—had also fallen and supply chain woes had eased, he added. Several months ago there had been expectations of a strong rebound in

2024, with forecasts of growth above one percent, but these were dialled back at the start of the year as the economy continued to languish. Last week the International Monetary Fund became the latest institute to downgrade its German growth forecast, and is now predicting a figure of just 0.2 percent.

But improving signs have fuelled hopes the lumbering economy—while not about to break into a sprint—may at least be getting back on its feet.

On Wednesday a closely-watched survey from the Ifo institute showed business sentiment rising for a third consecutive month in April, and more strongly than expected. A key purchasing managers’ index survey this week showed that business activity in Germany had picked up.

And last week the central bank, the Bundesbank, forecast the economy would expand slightly in the first quarter, dodging a recession, after earlier predicting a contraction.

## Chinese sellers go to TikTok school to reach buyers abroad

□ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GUANGZHOU, APRIL 24

Donning hijabs and floor-length abaya gowns over shorts and tank tops, Chinese students at an e-commerce school perform into a smartphone camera as they learn how to sell the clothes to overseas TikTok users.

It is the final day of a two-week course on selling products abroad via the short video app—which despite being blocked in China is a platform more and more Chinese vendors are turning to.

Succeeding on TikTok requires tools for bypassing internet restrictions as well as foreign-language skills, challenges that have prompted a boom in courses and consulting services.

At the school in Guangzhou in southern Guangdong province, an instructor holds up the Middle Eastern-inspired garments to the camera and rattles off prices and sizing information for Muslim buyers in the UK.

“This is chiffon, it’s really breathable!” she gushes in English as her proteges model the goods and sort through racks of satin robes under stark studio lights.

“We teach people which products are selling better, and which markets are more suitable for their current stages,” 27-year-old Wang Yaxuan, another instructor at the school, tells AFP.

Guangdong is home to thousands of factories making a mindboggling variety of products, from the abayas to

espresso machine parts to wigs made of human hair.

After decades of producing goods for export, Chinese companies are increasingly seeking to cut out the middleman and market themselves at lower prices, directly to overseas consumers.

Shein, the China-founded fast fashion giant, has effectively taken over the lower-end Western market using this strategy, with TikTok a key facet of its selling network.

TikTok Shop launched in the United States late last year, and e-commerce features have previously been rolled out in places like Britain and Southeast Asia.

A casual scroll on the hugely popular app’s “Live” tab can land users on multiple shopping livestreams within minutes.

But with TikTok unavailable in China—parent company Bytedance operates the more strictly censored sister app Douyin domestically—smaller businesses there are at a disadvantage.

Courses like the one at Mede Education Technology’s e-commerce school help by covering everything from the basics of creating a TikTok account to handling shipping and analysing sales data.

Fees start at around 9,000 yuan (\$1,244) for a six-day course.

Students, who range from factory owners to fresh graduates, often take classes for multiple foreign shopping platforms including Amazon and Southeast Asia’s Shopee.

Qiu Zhouwen, a course participant



AFP/RSS

The photo taken on April 7 shows students attending a course on selling products on TikTok at Mede Education Technology’s e-commerce school in Guangzhou, China.

in his 30s, works for a Guangzhou cosmetics company. He says his company enrolled him because they are hoping to eventually sell their skincare range through TikTok.

“Information is part of the cost (of doing business) now, and if you don’t have the information that’s appropriate to the market, your cost will be way too high,” Qiu says.

Wang, the Mede instructor, attended university in the United States and says it can be challenging for Chinese sellers to adapt to different consumer tastes abroad.

Chemical manufacturer Donghua Jinlong spawned viral memes on TikTok this month after overseas social media users found absurdist

humour in the company’s matter-of-fact videos about industrial-grade glycine featuring AI-generated voiceovers. There are also significant technical hurdles.

Accessing TikTok from China requires VPN software to bypass the country’s virtual “Great Firewall”, while dodging the app’s own curbs on users manipulating their IP addresses. VPNs are a legal grey area in China, with authorities occasionally cracking down while generally tolerating their use for business purposes.

TikTok is also caught up in global geopolitical tensions—the US Congress is threatening to ban the app entirely over concerns it could share personal data with the Chinese gov-

## EU opens probe into China’s medical device market

□ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BRUSSELS (BELGIUM), APRIL 24

The European Union on Wednesday announced a probe into China’s medical devices market, prompting an immediate accusation from Beijing that the bloc was engaging in “protectionism”.

Brussels fears China is favouring its own suppliers when it comes to the procurement of medical devices. The EU’s official administrative journal, announcing the probe, set out ways that could be happening, including through a “Buy China” policy.

The EU also has concerns that China may have restrictions on imports as well as imposing conditions “leading to abnormally low bids that cannot be sustained by profit-oriented companies,” the notice in the journal said.

Beijing lashed out at the investigation, with a foreign ministry spokesman saying it would “damage the EU’s image”.

“All the outside world sees is it (the EU) gradually moving towards protectionism,” said the ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin, calling on Brussels to “stop using any excuse to groundlessly suppress and restrict Chinese business”.

China’s medical devices market is the second largest after the United States, worth around 135 billion euros in 2022 (\$145 billion), according to a 2023 report by China-focused think tank MERICS.

The EU probe is the first under the bloc’s International Procurement Instrument which seeks to promote reciprocity in access to international public procurement markets.

EU’s official journal says the investigation will conclude within nine months.

“The... restrictive measures and practices put at a significant and systemic disadvantage (European) Union economic operators, goods and services as they systematically favour the procurement of domestic products to the detriment of imported ones,” the official journal said.

If the investigation finds unfair behaviour by China, the EU can limit Chinese companies’ access to the 27-nation bloc’s public procurement market. The journal said the investigation is to conclude within nine months, although the European Commission can extend this by another extra five months.

Beijing is “invited to submit its views and to provide relevant information” and can hold consultations with the European Commission—the EU’s trade authority—“to eliminate or remedy the alleged measures and practices,” the text said.

Brussels has launched a wave of investigations targeting China over the past few months, looking into green tech subsidies.

The EU provoked Beijing’s ire earlier in April after announcing an investigation into Chinese wind turbine suppliers. Other probes have focused on Chinese subsidies for solar panels, electric cars and trains as Brussels seeks to move away from excessive reliance on cheaper Chinese technology.



WORLD

# US Secretary of State Blinken back in China seeking pressure but also stability

The Biden administration has trumpeted the agreement with Xi on fentanyl as a success.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SHANGHAI, APRIL 24

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken returned on Wednesday to China on his second visit in a year, as the United States ramps up pressure on its rival over its support for Russia while also seeking to manage tensions with Beijing.

The US diplomat will meet China's top brass on Friday in Beijing, where he is also expected to plead for restraint as Taiwan inaugurates a new leader, and to raise US concerns on Chinese trade practices—a vital issue for President Joe Biden in an election year.

But Blinken is also seeking to stabilise ties, with tensions between the world's two largest economies palpably easing since his last visit in June.

At the time, he was the highest-ranking US official to visit China in five years, and the trip was followed by a meeting between the countries' presidents in November.

At that summit in California, Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to a US wish list including restoring contact between militaries and cracking down on precursor chemicals to fentanyl, the powerful painkiller behind an addiction epidemic in the United States.

Blinken arrived in Shanghai, where he will kick off his visit by attending a Chinese basketball play-off match between two teams with American players on their rosters.

The friendly side trip—the first visit by a US secretary of state to the bustling metropolis since Hillary Clinton in 2010—would have been unthinkable until recently, with hawks on both sides previously speaking of a new Cold War between the two powers.

A senior US official previewing Blinken's trip said that the United States and China were at a “different place than we were a year ago, when the bilateral relationship was at an historic low point”.

“We also believe, and we have also clearly demonstrated, that responsibly managing competition does not mean we will pull back from measures to protect US national interests,” he said. The Biden administration's



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (right) is greeted by Kong Fuan, director general of the Shanghai Foreign Affairs Office, US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns (2nd left) and US Consul General in Shanghai Scott Walker (left) on his arrival in Shanghai on Wednesday.

eagerness to engage China stands in stark contrast to its efforts to isolate Russia since its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

After initially being pleased that Beijing has not directly supplied weapons to Russia, the United States has accused China in recent weeks of lavishing industrial material and technology on Moscow.

Washington has encouraged European leaders, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who recently visited Beijing, to stand firm on China not backing Russia, believing that it wants stable ties with the West as it focuses on addressing economic headwinds at home.

“If China purports on the one hand to want good relations with Europe and other countries, it can't on the other hand be fuelling what is the big-

gest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War,” Blinken said Friday after Group of Seven talks in Capri, Italy. The Biden administration has trumpeted the agreement with Xi on fentanyl as a success.

A State Department official said that since the November summit, China appears to have taken its first law enforcement measures on the matter since 2017.

Blinken will ask for further implementation, the official said.

“More regular PRC law enforcement action against PRC-based chemical companies and pill press manufacturers involved in illicit fentanyl supply chains would send a strong signal of China's commitment to address this issue,” the official said, referring to the People's Republic of China.

Another source of friction between

the two countries is legislation that cleared the US Congress on Tuesday—and which Biden intends to sign—requiring the wildly popular social media app TikTok to be divested from its Chinese parent company ByteDance, or be shut out of the American market.

Biden faces a rematch in November against former president Donald Trump, who has vowed a more confrontational approach against China.

Yun Sun, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Stimson Center, said that China's leaders, eager to focus on their economy, were in a wait-and-see mode ahead of the US election. “The Chinese understand that the Biden administration is unlikely to deliver any good news on trade because that simply does not support the election agenda,” she said.

# Russia detains ally of Defence Minister Shoigu for alleged corruption

REUTERS  
MOSCOW, APRIL 24

A Russian court on Wednesday ordered one of Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu's deputies be kept in custody on suspicion of taking bribes, the highest-profile corruption case since President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine in 2022.

Deputy Defence Minister Timur Ivanov was detained on Tuesday at work by the Federal Security Service (FSB), the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, for accepting large bribes.

Moscow's Basmanny District Court ordered Ivanov be kept in custody until June 23. Ivanov, 48, was shown in uniform standing in a glass cage in court, frowning slightly, footage released by the court service showed.

“The investigation believes that Ivanov entered into a criminal conspiracy with third parties, teamed up with them in advance to commit an organised crime by an organised group,” the court service said.

It said the conspiracy was to receive “property and services on a particularly large scale during contract and sub-contract work for the ministry of defence.”

Ivanov, who said he was innocent, faces 15 years in jail if convicted. State media gave the case full coverage.

The sudden arrest of an ally of Shoigu, who Putin tasked with fighting the war in Ukraine, triggered speculation about a battle within the elite and of a public crackdown on the corruption that has plagued Russia's post-Soviet armed forces.

Some Russian bloggers, who have accused senior generals of incompetence, rejoiced at the apparent fall of a top military official long linked to the ostentatious opulence which Putin has made clear he does not want to see displayed in wartime.

A Russian source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Ivanov was a close ally of Shoigu and that his arrest was a sharp blow for the defence minister. Shoigu, a Putin ally and one of Russia's most powerful men, is widely expected to keep his position in a coming government reshuffle.

The Kremlin said Putin and Shoigu had been informed. The defence ministry made no comment. A close friend

of Ivanov, Sergei Borodin, was also charged with conspiring to take bribes. Ivanov, who has served as deputy minister since 2016, was in charge of property management, housing, construction and mortgages at the defence ministry, whose spending has spiralled since the war began.

The TASS state news agency said the investigation into Ivanov has been under way for some time and that the FSB's military counter-intelligence department was involved.

The Kremlin dismissed a Russian report that Ivanov may be suspected of treason as pure speculation.

Ivanov is one of the wealthiest men in Russia's security structures.

Ivanov had long been the subject of journalistic investigations. Russia's Anti-Corruption Foundation, headed by the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, had alleged that Ivanov and his family lived a life of luxury including yachts, helicopters, visits to the French Riviera, purchases of diamonds and a 19th Century mansion in Moscow.

Forbes magazine listed Ivanov as one of the wealthiest men in Russia's security structures. Other investigations alleged corruption in Russia's reconstruction of the Ukrainian city of Mariupol now controlled by Russian forces.

Ivanov was unable to comment as he was in detention. Putin last month ordered the FSB to root out corruption in state defence procurement.

Ivanov, who graduated with from Moscow State University with a mathematics degree, rose through the ranks of Russia's state atomic energy sector before becoming deputy head of the Moscow region government under Shoigu, who was then governor.

Some Russian military bloggers have long accused top generals of corruption, especially after the army's hurried withdrawal from parts of Ukraine after over-extending itself during the first days of the invasion.

# Some Palestinians forced to flee homes as Israel shells northern Gaza



Displaced Palestinians, who fled their homes due to Israeli strikes, shelter in a UNRWA-affiliated school in Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip on Tuesday.

REUTERS  
CAIRO/JERUSALEM, APRIL 24

Some Palestinian civilians were fleeing their homes in northern Gaza on Wednesday just weeks after returning because of an Israeli bombardment which they said was as intense as those at the start of the war.

Much of the shelling was focused for a second day on Beit Lahiya on the northern edge of Gaza, where the Israeli military gave evacuation orders to four neighbourhoods on Tuesday, warning they were in a “dangerous combat zone”.

After weeks of relative calm, Israel intensified its attacks overnight on Monday, focusing on areas - particularly in the north - from where it had previously withdrawn troops, saying the Palestinian militant group Hamas was no longer in control.

Israel's military said on Wednesday it was ready to launch a ground assault on the southern city of Rafah, which it regards as Hamas' last bastion and which is the only part of Gaza not yet subjected to a ground offensive.

The operation will proceed when the military receives government approval, a senior defence official told Reuters.

Plans for an attack on the city, where more than 1 million people have been displaced, have caused widespread international concern. Aid agencies have warned of a potential humanitarian catastrophe and US President Joe Biden has urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to invade Rafah.

Moving civilians out of harm's way

will be an important part of Israel's strategy, a government spokesperson said. Israel has said it will eradicate Hamas following the militant group's rampage in southern Israel on October 7 in which 1,200 people were killed and 253 were taken hostage, according to Israeli tallies.

The war, now in its seventh month, has killed over 34,000 Palestinians, and many more are feared buried in rubble. The offensive has laid to waste much of the enclave, displacing most of its 2.3 million people and creating a humanitarian crisis.

In the past 24 hours, Israeli strikes have killed at least 79 Palestinians and wounded 86, the Gaza Health Ministry said.

Two people were killed in a strike on a house in Rafah, four were killed when a missile hit a group standing outside a supermarket in the Al-Nuseirat refugee camp and one was killed in a strike on a house in Deir Al-Balah, central Gaza, Palestinian health officials said.

Residents in northern Gaza and suburbs of Gaza City reported heavy shelling.

“We don't know why this is all happening. Is it because we returned home and we finally got some aid through after months of starvation and the Israelis didn't like that?” said Mohammad Jamal, 29, a resident of Gaza City, near Zeitoun, one of Gaza's oldest suburbs.

“It is as if the war started again. As if it is just happening, they burnt up the place,” he told Reuters via a chat app. Asked about Wednesday's developments, the Israeli military had no immediate comment.

# Myanmar rebel group withdraws from key town on Thai border

REUTERS  
BANGKOK, APRIL 24

An armed ethnic group in Myanmar has withdrawn its troops from a town along the Thai border following a counteroffensive by the ruling junta from whom rebel fighters wrested the key trading post this month, a spokesperson for the group said on Wednesday. Myanmar is locked in a civil war between the military on one side and, on the other, a loose alliance of established ethnic minority armies and a resistance movement born out of the ruling junta's bloody crackdown on dissent after its 2021 coup.

The Karen National Union (KNU) made a “temporary retreat” from Myawaddy, its spokesperson, Saw Taw Nee, said after the return of junta soldiers to the vital strategic area that is a conduit for annual foreign trade of more than \$1 billion. Armed soldiers from a militia with a history of shifting allegiances, the Karen National Army, were clearing barricades and patrolling the town of 200,000 people, two residents said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

# Ukraine uses long-range missiles from US to hit Russian-held areas: Officials

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, APRIL 24

Ukraine for the first time has begun using long-range ballistic missiles provided secretly by the United States, bombing a Russian military airfield in Crimea last week and Russian forces in another occupied area overnight, American officials said on Wednesday.

Long sought by Ukrainian leaders, the new missiles give Ukraine nearly double the striking distance—up to 300 kilometres—that it had with the mid-range version of the weapon that it received from the US last October. One of the officials said the US is providing more of these missiles in a new military aid package signed by President Joe Biden on Wednesday.

Biden approved delivery of the long-range Army Tactical Missile System, known as ATACMS, in February, and then in March the US included a “significant” number of

them in a \$300 million aid package announced, one official said.

The two US officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the delivery before it became public, would not provide the exact number of missiles given last month or in the latest aid package, which totals about \$1 billion.

Ukraine has been forced to ration its weapons and is facing increasing Russian attacks. Ukraine had been begging for the long-range system because the missiles provide a critical ability to strike Russian targets that are farther away, allowing Ukrainian forces to stay safely out of range. Information about the delivery was kept so quiet that lawmakers and others in recent days have been demanding that the US send the weapons—not knowing they were already in Ukraine.

For months, the US resisted sending Ukraine the long-range missiles out of concern that Kyiv could use them to hit deep into Russian terri-

tory, enraging Moscow and escalating the conflict. That was a key reason the administration sent the mid-range version, with a range of about 160 kilometres, in October instead.

Admiral Christopher Grady, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Wednesday that the White House and military planners looked carefully at the risks of providing long-range fires to Ukraine and determined that the time was right to provide them now.

He told The Associated Press that long-range weapons will help Ukraine take out Russian logistics nodes and troop concentrations not on the front lines. Grady declined to identify what specific weapons were being provided but said they will be “very disruptive if used properly, and I'm confident they will be.”

Like many of the other sophisticated weapons systems provided to Ukraine, the administration weighed whether their use would risk further escalating the conflict.

# Rush hour chaos in London as 5 military horses run amok after getting spooked during exercise

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON, APRIL 24

Five military horses spooked by noise from a nearby building site bolted during routine exercises on Wednesday near Buckingham Palace, unseating four riders and causing chaos as they galloped loose through central London streets and collided with vehicles during the busy morning rush hour.

It is believed the chaos erupted when the horses from the Household Cavalry, which were conducting an extended exercise for an upcoming military parade, became alarmed by the sound of concrete falling off a moving walkway at a construction site in Belgravia, a swanky neighbourhood just to the west of the palace.

Five of the seven horses ran off with four soldiers thrown off. Three of them were hospitalized with injuries.

The riderless horses then ran through main roads in central London, hitting vehicles and stunning commuters as they headed to work. The horses were all captured shortly after and are undergoing medical tests.



Two horses on the loose bolt through the streets of London near Aldwych, on Wednesday.

Witnesses saw one of the loose animals crashing into a taxi waiting outside the Clermont Hotel nearby, shattering windows. Another of the ani-

mals crashed into a tour bus, smashing the windshield.

Pictures and videos shared widely across social media showed two of the

horses—one white, one black—running at speed down Aldwych, in between London's historic financial centre and the busy West End theater district. The white horse's face and legs were soaked in blood. A British Army spokesperson was not able to confirm what caused the injury.

Megan Morra, who was on her way to work, told the BBC that she saw the striking image of the white horse with a head injury.

“There was a lot of blood,” she said. “I was a bit distressed to be honest, looking at the poor horse.”

The horses are from the Household Cavalry, the ceremonial guard of the monarch and a regular feature of state functions in London.

“All of the horses have now been recovered and returned to camp,” an army spokesperson said. “A number of personnel and horses have been injured and are receiving the appropriate medical attention.”

The London Ambulance Service said it treated four people across three separate incidents in the space of 10 minutes after the horses ran amok around 8:30 am



# Liverpool line up Slot as Klopp's successor

REUTERS  
LONDON, APRIL 24

Liverpool have lined up Feyenoord coach Arne Slot as successor to departing manager Juergen Klopp and have opened negotiations with the Eredivisie club, Dutch media reported on Wednesday.

The Algemeen Dagblad newspaper said Liverpool made contact with Feyenoord on Wednesday morning.

Slot was heavily linked with a possible move to Tottenham Hotspur last year, but opted to stay at Feyenoord and signed a contract extension with the Dutch side until 2026.

He has been widely praised for his innovative, attacking football with Feyenoord, winning the league title in the 2022-23 season, as well as the KNVB Cup on Sunday. In his first season at Feyenoord, he also led the Rotterdam club to the final of the inaugural Europa Conference League.

Klopp announced in January that he would stand down as Liverpool manager at the end of the season.

# Rangnick confirms contact with Bayern Munich

REUTERS  
BERLIN, APRIL 24

Austria coach Ralf Rangnick on Wednesday said Bayern Munich had been in touch, with the German club in search of a successor to departing Thomas Tuchel.

Rangnick said he was not dealing with any potential Bayern interest at the moment, with his focus firmly on the Euro 2024 starting in Germany in June.

"There has been contact from the side of Bayern Munich and I have informed the Austrian Football Association," Rangnick told Austrian website 90 Minuten. "My focus is on the Austrian national team. We are focusing completely on the European championships."

Bayern, who had won the previous 11 league titles, missed out on this season's Bundesliga trophy with Bayer Leverkusen securing their first ever league crown five matches before the end of the season.

Tuchel is leaving a year earlier than his contract after a disappointing domestic campaign that also saw them eliminated in the German Cup by third-tier Saarbruecken. Bayern, however, are still in the running for one title, having reached the Champions League semi-finals where they face Real Madrid next week.

# Prajapati, Nagarkoti share lead

Dinesh Prajapati cards 4-under 64, while overnight leader Bhuwan Nagarkoti plays 1-under 67 for the 36-hole total score of 2-under 134 at the Surya Nepal Kathmandu Open.



Dinesh Prajapati (left) and Bhuwan Nagarkoti play shots during the Surya Nepal Kathmandu Open in Kathmandu on Wednesday.

SPORTS BUREAU  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 24

Dinesh Prajapati and Bhuwan Nagarkoti shared the lead after the second round of the Surya Nepal Kathmandu Open, the seventh event under the Surya Nepal Golf Tour 2023-24, at the par-68 Royal Nepal Golf Club on Wednesday.

Prajapati carded 4-under 64 on the second day, while overnight leader Nagarkoti played 1-under 67 for the 36-hole total score of 2-under 134.

Prajapati and Nagarkoti are two strokes ahead of Rabi Khadka, who carded 1-under 67 for an even-par 136 total.

Rame Magar, Niraj Tamang and Bhuwan Kumar Rokka are tied for fourth at 1-over 137.

Magar matched the best card of the day scoring 4-under 64, while Tamang and Rokka played even-par 68 each.

Jayram Shrestha and Sanjay Lama share the seventh position at 2-over 138 after both of them carded even-par 68.

Subash Tamang, who made the Surya Nepal Golf Tour debut as a professional golfer, carded 1-unde 67 and he is ninth at 3-over 139.

Purna Prasad Sharma and Dhana Bahadur Thapa are tied for 10th at

4-over 140. Both of them played 2-over 70 in the second round.

Cut was applied at 17-over 153 and 22 pros and four amateur golfers progressed to the final two rounds.

Toran Shahi, Tanka Bahadur Karki, Pradip Kumar Lama, Krishna Man Rajbahak, Tashi Ghale, Bhimsen Chaulagain, Basanta Raj Gurung, Ram Krishna Shrestha, Pashupati Sharma, Bhu Bahadur Gurung and Kishan Kaliraj Sunar made it to the money-making final 36 holes in pro section.

In the amateur section, Tashi Tsering opened up a one-stroke lead over Nepal number one amateur golfer Sadbhav Acharya.

Tsering carded 2-under 66 for a 36-hole total of 2-over 138, while Acharya carded 1-under 67 and slipped to second at 3-over 139.

National team member Rahul BK is third at 10-over 146 after he played even-par 68.

Bharat Thapa Magar also survived the pro cut and progressed to the final two rounds.

Co-leader Prajapati moved four places up to the top to join overnight leader Nagarkoti.

Prajapati carded 3-under 31 on the front nine and played 1-under 33 on the back nine. He carded four birdies

on the first, fourth, sixth and seventh holes, while he faced a lone bogey on the fifth hole before taking the turn. He carded birdies on the 10th and 14th holes before dropping a shot on the 15th hole.

Former Nepal number one pro Nagarkoti carded 2-under 32 after taking the turn at even-par 34. He began the day with a birdie before facing a double bogey on the fourth hole. He carded another birdie on the sixth to take the turn at even-par 34. He then carded four birdies on the 10th, 13th, 15th and 16th holes and dropped shots on the 14th and 18th holes.

Another former top pro, Khadka carded 4-under 30 on the front nine and played 3-over 37 on the back nine. He sank two eagles on the first and fourth holes and carded a birdie on the seventh hole, while he faced a lone bogey on the third hole. On the back nine, he faced three straight bogeys on the 14th, 15th and 16th holes.

The event carries a total purse of Rs703,500. The winner will bag a cheque of Rs120,000. The runner-up will take home Rs82,000 while the third-placed golfer will earn Rs66,000. Fourth-placed and fifth-placed finishers will earn Rs55,000 and Rs43,000 respectively. Others in the top 21 will also receive their share of cash prizes.

# Havertz coming good at perfect time for Arsenal

His 12 goals in all competitions looks a decent return while his all-round play gives Arsenal's attacking a flexibility.

REUTERS  
LONDON, APRIL 24

Kai Havertz took a long time to win over the Arsenal fans after his summer move from Chelsea but there will be few doubters left after his clinical double against his old club on Tuesday helped fire his side open up a lead in the Premier League title race.

The 24-year-old German produced two clinical finishes after the break as Arsenal accelerated to a 5-0 victory that sent a powerful message to Liverpool and Manchester City.

Havertz took 10 appearances to mark his first Arsenal goal and for those first few months in north London the player who scored the winner for Chelsea in a Champions League final looked like a player struggling for identity.

But those difficult times now look behind him and 12 goals in all competitions looks a decent return while his all-round play gives Arsenal's attacking flexibility.

"He deserves it. He's been outstanding since he's come in. You don't realise how good he is until you play with him," Ben White, who also scored twice, said.

Manager Mikel Arteta showed loyalty to Havertz earlier in the season and is now being richly rewarded with the former Bayer Leverkusen striker unleashing his full potential.

"His overall contribution in every phase of play was tremendous," Arteta said. "When you add the two goals he scored and some of the link-up play that he had in big moments, it was a great performance."



Kai Havertz (left) scored twice in Arsenal's 5-0 rout of Chelsea in London on Tuesday.

# HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

The morning gets off to a rocky start exaggerating any unexpected snafus that might pop up. Good vibes flow this afternoon making it easier to dissolve away tension, power struggles, or obsessive behaviours. You'll feel elevated this evening.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Stay grounded while navigating these vibes, consciously separating your energy from those you encounter to make clearer decisions. Consider planning a date night or dinner with your friends this afternoon nudging you to seek positive interactions.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Don't be afraid to ask for help, and consider outlining a clear to-do list to stay on course. You'll feel elevated and socially open later, marking it crucial to circle back to any new connections you made.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Go only where you can be authentically yourself, hiding away from judgmental prying eyes. Your career should see some positive growth though it'll be necessary to use your voice, demonstrate accountability, and show off your skillset.

LEO (July 23-August 22)

Try not to take it personally if you encounter a few stoic people this morning. People could become shockingly insensitive without realising it, making it important that you find ways to love and support yourself and do something bold.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Pay attention to any ingenious ideas or moments of inspiration that find you this morning. Flirty vibes flow throughout the afternoon marking the perfect time to make a move on your latest crush. Do something restorative at night.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

Invest your time, energy, and resources wisely this morning. The day will bring forth unpredictable growth and opportunities to prosper. If you've been struggling with romantic issues you can breathe a sigh of relief as things will improve.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

Love may strike in odd ways this morning. Lean into the day by spreading joy and offering small gifts or gestures to loved ones as a statement of appreciation. Things will get easier related to task completion.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Focus on ways to nurture your creative visions throughout the afternoon, dear Sagittarius. You'll perk up this evening sharpening your perspective and sense of self. Pay attention to any profound thoughts or conversations that manifest tonight.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

Make it a point to shine brightly while standing out amongst the crowds. This energy can help you break through social barriers both online and within the community. Plan on capping off the day with some much-needed solitude.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

You may feel pulled in too many directions today, intensifying strain between your private and public affairs. Though exciting changes may be brewing in your time, try not to lose sight of long-term goals and current responsibilities.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)

This morning electrifies your aura, offering guidance while granting the motivation and luck to reach major goals. The day will help you reconnect with your senses and the material world. Show that you're bold enough to pursue your dreams.

# CROSSWORD

## ACROSS

- "— your breath!"
- Moisten with drippings
- Yak
- Wicked
- Make more beautiful
- Boorish
- Furnish
- lazuli
- Module
- No-tolls road
- Throb
- Luis Obispo
- Seven —
- Proton or neutron
- Graceful and slender
- Diamonds
- Memorize
- Distress signal
- Alaskan cape
- Clock number
- Crisp cookie
- Decorates
- Tinge
- Play a part
- Shenanigans
- Persistence
- "Great" boy detective
- Poetic contraction
- School subject

## DOWN

- "To thine own — be true ..."
- Assert
- Grape plant
- Most senior
- Proportionate
- Call it —
- Concession
- Excursions
- Occurs as a result
- Belgium's capital
- moth
- Mine entrance
- noire
- Caterwaul
- Etna's output
- Ship of 1492
- Oak nut
- Send
- Secular

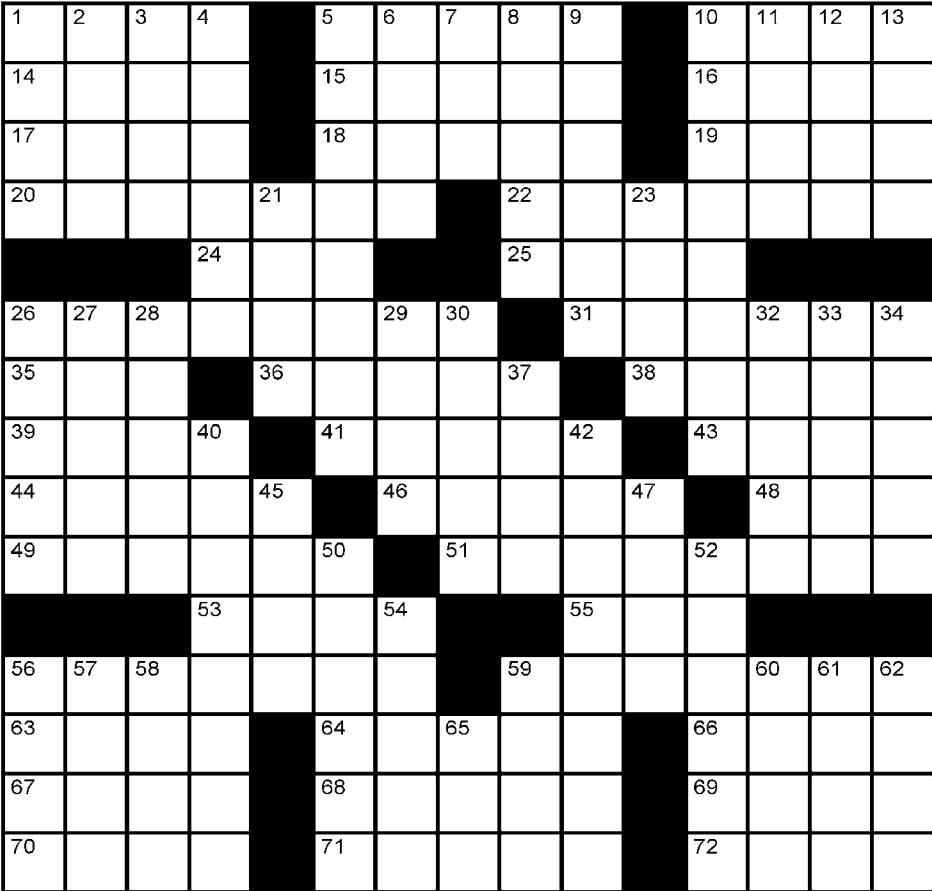
## PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

D	I	S	K		S	C	R	A	P		S	A	S	H
A	N	T	I		P	L	A	T	E		E	R	I	E
S	C	A	N		L	O	N	E	R		L	A	N	E
H	A	N	D		P	I	C	K		I	D	L	E	D
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S	T	R	I	C	T		C	E	R	E	M	O	N	Y
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T	I	N	E		T	R	O	T	S		S	H	U	N

4-1-24

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- Rye fungus
- Hawaiian porch
- Land expanse
- Drain
- "Death on the —"
- High station
- Moderate (2 wds.)
- Sign of healing
- avis
- Emphasize
- Settle firmly
- Third rock from the sun
- Charity
- Security problem
- Actor — Sinise
- Done to —
- Region
- State near Minn.
- Container weight
- "— You Being Served?"



# SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆



# Writers should explore all aspects of their identity in writing

Mukahang Limbu discusses his love for reading and the challenges he faced while establishing himself as a Nepali migrant writer in the UK.



**M**ukahang Limbu is a Nepali writer based in Oxford, UK. He has received global recognition for his poetry, winning the Foyle Young Poet Award by The Poetry Society three times, in 2016, 2017 and 2018, and the Outspoken Prize from the Out-Spoken Press in 2019.

His work has been published in various collections, including 'England: Poems from a School' and 'Nascent'. In 2023, Limbu won the prestigious Eric Gregory Award for his debut book, 'Mother of Flip-Flops', which was published in 2022.

In an interview with the *Post's* Aarati Ray, Limbu shares his love for reading, how it influences his writing, and the challenges that he faced while establishing himself as a Nepali migrant writer in the UK.

**How connected were you with reading growing up?**

I started reading when my family moved to the UK in 2007. When I was eight, a friend lent me a couple of books on a school bus; that is when I was hooked.

Even though my parents didn't really push me to read at home, they sometimes took me to the library, where I read mythology books like 'Ramayana', and fiction novels like the 'Harry Potter' series. A couple of years later, I was obsessed with books, even staying

up late during school breaks and holidays just to read. In my teens, I was really into fiction.

Nowadays, I mostly read memoirs, poetry and translated literature. Recently, I have been exploring French and Italian authors like Annie Ernaux and Elena Ferrante as well.



**How connected do you feel to Nepali literature given your upbringing abroad?**

I have to admit, I'm not as connected to Nepali literature as I would like to be. When I was younger, I could understand some Nepali, but living in the UK made it difficult to keep up with reading in Nepali. However, I do follow some authors like Muna Gurung and Manjushree Thapa.

I've also checked out collections from Kathmandu Post. I'm still working on building a stronger connection to Nepali literature.

**What inspired you to write your debut book, 'Mother of Flip-flops'?**

Well, you can interpret it as an influence of me moving abroad when I was young as well but it's mainly about my relationship with my mother, family dynamics, and a bit about Gurkha history, as my grandfather was a Gurkha soldier.

**Could we interpret the emphasis on your relationship with your mother in the debut book as a metaphor for your connection with the motherland?**

Memories from Nepal often find their way into my poems and writings. While my relationship with my mother might touch on aspects of my upbringing in Nepal, I think it's more about my childhood

experiences there.

I'm always reflecting on Nepal and wondering what my life would have been like if I had stayed there. Would I be a national badminton player instead of a writer? The elements of Nepal and migration are present, but it's not always the central focus.

I also believe good poems should not narrow themselves down to one specific theme; they leave room for interpretation and spark a plurality of ideas.

**What's your take on the notion that reading fiction is merely a pastime and not as significant or serious as other forms of literature?**

Everyone is entitled to their opinion but I think fiction is serious too. It's not just made-up stories; it's a mix of imagination and what authors observe in the world around them. Whether it's about society, politics or personal change, fiction can be insightful.

Sure, some people might see certain types of literature as more important, but I think people should only read what they like. There shouldn't be a hierarchy when it comes to reading.

**You also worked as the editor-in-chief for Oxford University's student magazine, 'The Isis'. How different is editing from writing?**

Editing is something I really love. Every writer, including myself, needs to edit their work. Even if you think a piece of work is your magnum opus, you must edit it.

Through editing, I have learned a great deal about how others shape their writing and thinking. This has also helped me evaluate and improve my own writing. I have learned to strike a balance between objectivity and subjectivity. Even today, my best friend and I share our work and assist each other with editing. I find this practice essential for growth in writing and learning.

**As a young poet and a member of the Nepali diaspora, what challenges have you encountered in establishing yourself in the UK?**

While being a migrant is an inherent part of who I am, I don't want to be limited to being

just that. It can be challenging to break out of that box of definition, especially when people only see you as a migrant writer.

Furthermore, it's tough for Nepali migrant writers to establish themselves in the English literary scene and find opportunities for publication in a foreign country.

There is also the challenge of deciding what to write about as a Nepali writer. Are we just reinforcing stereotypes by focusing on mountains and nature, or is there more to our identity and experiences that we should be exploring? It's a fine balance between staying true to ourselves and avoiding extending clichés about Nepali culture.

There is also a lack of prominent Nepali figures and voices in the UK literary scene for young people like us to look up to and model ourselves after.

**Do you feel pressure to represent Nepal in a certain way while also catering to the expectations of the literary landscape of the UK?**

Personally, I haven't felt pressured to present Nepal in a specific light or to portray a glamorous image of it. I believe it's unrealistic and even dangerous for one person to be expected to represent an entire country or community.

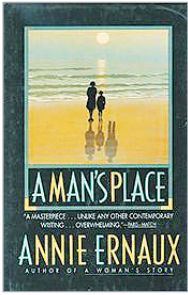
While I do feel responsible towards my country and consider the impact of my words, I try not to put too much pressure on myself to be a spokesperson for Nepal. Instead, I focus on writing about topics that resonate with me.

What advice would you offer to young writers who are worried about being typecast based on their themes or identities?

My suggestion is to explore all aspects of your identity and interests in your writing. While it's great to explore topics that are meaningful to you, don't limit yourself to just one subject.

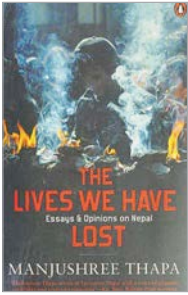
For example, if people are labelling you as a migrant poet, that's okay if migration is a big theme in your work. However, make sure to also explore other aspects of your identity and experiences. No one is just one thing or has just one side, after all. It's important to ensure that how you're being perceived aligns with how you want to be seen.

## Mukahang Limbu's book recommendations



**A Man's Place**  
**Author:** Annie Ernaux  
**Publisher:** Seven Stories Press  
**Year:** 1983

This book recounts the tale of a daughter coming to terms with her upbringing as she paints a picture of her father's life and passing. Ernaux's writing can resonate with diverse readers.



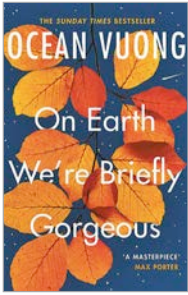
**The Lives We Have Lost**  
**Author:** Manjushree Thapa  
**Publisher:** Penguin Group  
**Year:** 2011

Thapa is among authors I admire a lot. In her book, she offers insights into the political landscape of Nepal post-2001. This book has been helped me enhance my understanding of Nepali socio-political dynamics.



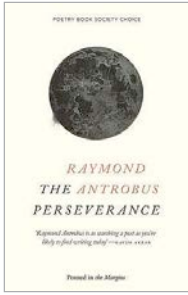
**My Brilliant Friend**  
**Author:** Elena Ferrante  
**Publisher:** Penguin Random House  
**Year:** 2012 (English)

This is a heartfelt story revolving around the friendship of two women, Elena and Lila. Ferrante's writing breathes life into these characters, capturing not only their essence but also offering a vivid portrayal of Italy.



**On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous**  
**Author:** Ocean Vuong  
**Publisher:** Penguin Press  
**Year:** 2019

Vuong's book tells a story of a son who writes a letter to his mother, even though she can't read it. Vuong soulfully writes about people who feel stuck between different worlds, and questions how we can help each other.



**The Perseverance**  
**Author:** Raymond Antrobus  
**Publisher:** Penned in the Margins  
**Year:** 2018

Antrobus is one of my favourite poets. His words inspire readers with their sincerity. The poems in his book touch on themes of loss, language and tribute, exploring the poet's experience of losing his father and navigating life as a deaf person.

## Call for contributions

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

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

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

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

# After four decades in music, Jon Bon Jovi is optimistic and still rocking

The band's next album, 'Forever', hits stores June 7 and its first single 'Legendary' is out now.

**ALICIA RANCILIO**  
CALIFORNIA, US

**W**hen Jon Bon Jovi agreed to let director Gotham Chopra follow him with a documentary camera to delve into the history of his band, Bon Jovi, he didn't anticipate it would catch him at a major low point in his career.

The band was launching a tour, and despite doing all he could do to be vocally ready, the 'Livin' on a Prayer' singer struggled through songs and couldn't hit the notes the way he used to.

Critics noticed and wrote about it. A review from Pioneer Press in St Paul, Minnesota, said: "It felt like he had forgotten how to sing."

In a recent interview with The Associated Press, Bon Jovi said the reaction at the time was "heartbreaking." After exhausting holistic options, he saw a doctor who said one of his vocal cords was atrophying.

"This was unique. It wasn't a nodule. The strong (vocal cord) was pushing the weak one around, and suddenly, my inabilities were just exacerbated," said Bon Jovi. He underwent major surgery and is still recovering.

"Every day is sort of like doing curls with weights and just getting them both to be the same size and to function together." This year has been a turning point. In February, he performed for an audience for the first time since his surgery at the MusiCares Person of the Year benefit gala where he was also named Person of the Year. The band's next album, 'Forever' hits stores June 7, and its first single 'Legendary' is out now. The four-part, 'Thank You, Goodnight: The Bon Jovi

Story,' debuts Friday on Hulu.

In a Q&A, Bon Jovi talks about his voice, his famous hair, the music industry and his work ethic.

Answers have been edited for clarity and brevity.

**The work you put in behind-the-scenes is like a quarterback in between football games. Are you still rehearsing at that intensity, and how are you now?**

I'm doing great. The record was easy to do. The process has been steady. Would I like it to be a light switch? Yeah. I said to the doctor, 'I want to flip the switch and be done with this.' It's just not how it works. Like an athlete coming back from an ACL tear or whatever, it just takes time. The therapy is still intensive and yet I'm confident that it gets progressively better.

**We learn in the docuseries that your father was a barber. You've always been known for having good hair, especially in the 1980's. Does that come from your dad?**

Not in as much where he sat down and said, 'I've got this idea.' Really, I was a byproduct of what was the 80s. Those were my baby pictures. I love laughing at them. Now, I can jokingly at least say, 'After 40 years of a career, I still have all my hair.' That is a good thing. Genetics works in my favor.

**Do you ever think about acting again?**

I do, on occasion. My day job then comes back to get in the way. In truth, I've got a big record coming out, and I'm hoping to go out on the road, so I

don't have time for it. And I respect the craft far too much to think I'm going to walk on a set and hit my marks and call that acting.

**Your work ethic stands out in 'Thank You, Goodnight'. We see in the early days you would sleep at the music studio. Where does that come from?**

If you're not going to be great, the guy that's coming in tomorrow night is going to be better. This isn't a career that



you should take lightly. There's a million other young guys that are waiting to take your spot. And there are no guarantees in this business...You have to win hearts in order to win people's hard-earned dollar. If you're asking them to stay with you for four decades, that's a task. You better be one of the greats or else good luck.

**A lot of musicians are selling their music catalog. Would you?**

For some, it makes sense because they need to. For some, it makes sense because they want to. I just find (Bon Jovi's music) to be my baby, and I have no desire at this juncture in my life to ever even consider it.

**The music industry is such a singles market now. Did you ever consider just putting out some new songs and not an entire album?**

See, I'm the opposite. I can only put out an album. I do all I know how to do. I have to tell the complete story. It has to be the beginning, a middle and an end because that's who and what we are.

**How do you describe the new album?**

What comes through is joy. My goal with this record was to capture joy which for these last few years has been difficult, whether it's the dark cloud of COVID that the world experienced or my own personal journey. With this record, I think we captured joy.

— Associated Press