

# THE KATHMANDU POST

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# **TODAY**

□ NATIONAL

Nepal Media Society has condemned publication of a 'fake news' report with the malicious intent of defaming members of the media and the judiciary and demanded immediate action against those involved. Pg 3

OPINION



Koirala is the only politician or writer who has written about the king's thinking over Nepali politics, writes Abhi Subedi. Pg 4

■ MONEY

The transition to federalism has improved service delivery but there are challenges in devolving functions, functionaries, and funds in Nepal, says ADB vice-president Yingming Yang in an interview. Pg 5

■ WORLD

Russia launched a "massive" missile strike at Ukraine overnight, damaging four power plants in the latest barrage targeting the country's energy supply, officials in Kyiv said on Saturday. Pg 6

□ SPORTS

Skipper Rohit Paudel scored a blistering century as Nepal defeated West Indies A by four wickets in the first T20 and took a 1-0 lead in the five-match series at the TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur on Saturday. Pg 7





A woman casts her ballot at Barbote of Ilam Municipality-5 on Saturday during the by-elections for a federal parliamentary seat.

# Polling peaceful in Ilam, Bajhang

As ballots are gathered, election officials are preparing to begin vote count early today.

PARBAT PORTEL & LAXMI GAUTAM IN ILAM BASANT PRATAP SINGH IN BAJHANG

The by-elections in Ilam Constituency 2 and Bajhang (A) on Saturday took place without any significant disturbances.

The polls, which began at 7am, witnessed a fairly low turnout, with only 60 percent eligible voters casting their ballots in Ilam-2, a federal constituency, while the turnout in Bajhang (A), a provincial constituency, stood at around 50 percent.

In Ilam-2, a total of 115,889 individuals were eligible to vote, but only around 69,287 did so on Saturday, said Chief Election Officer Keshav Prasad Ghimire.

"This is a good turnout. Efforts are on to bring all the ballot boxes to the district headquarters by midnight. The vote count will likely begin after an all-party meeting on Sunday morning," said Ghimire.

There were a total of 79 polling stations and 149 polling centres in Ilam-2. According to Chief District Officer Indra Dev Yadav, the by-elections were constituency.

According to Yadav, a total of 1,363 police personnel were deployed for poll security.

As many as 19 candidates contested the Ilam-2 by-polls. The late Subas Chandra Nembang's son Suhang is contesting the election from the CPN-UML for the House of Representatives. Nepali Congress leader Dambar Khadka, Milan Limbu of the Rastriya

Swatantra Party and independent Dakendra Singh Thegim are among the candidates.

2022election, UML's Subas Nembang beat Khadka by a narrow margin of 114 The CPN (Maoist Centre) had sup-

ported Congress candidate Khadka then but the Maoist Centre has allied with the UML now.

In Bajhang (A), of the total 61,748 eligible voters, only 30,328 cast their ballot. According to the District Election Office, voter turnout in the constituency was around 49.11 percent.

**Estimates put voter** turnout in Ilam near 60 percent and below 50 percent in Bajhang.

"We were unable to contact poll officials in some places. They could way, bringing the boxes to the counting venue. The total turnout could reach around 50 percent," said District Election Officer Man Bahadur Dhami.

There were 74 polling stations and 93 polling centres across the constituency in Bajhang.

Around 1,500 security personnel were deployed to provide security during the polls.

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# Nepal investment summit begins today

More than 1,700 investors from 55 countries will take part in the two-day event. The last summit was held in 2019.

Finance Minister

Barsha Man Pun.

POST REPORT

The government has said that preparations are over for the third Nepal Investment Summit 2024 that opens in Kathmandu on Sunday.

More than 1,700 investors from 55 countries will be taking part in the two-day summit, said Pradyumna Prasad Upadhyay, joint-secretary at the Investment Board Nepal. "A total of 150 projects—both government and private-will be showcased at the summit.'

According to the board, delegates are coming from India, China, the US, Japan, the UK, the Interview with

There are 385 Nepali delegates from the government and the private sector. The summit will see 500 delegates from Nepal's immediate

UAE and Germany.

neighbours—300 Chinese and Among the participants, 33 are from the US, 28 from Japan, 14 from

the UK and 13 from Bangladesh. According to the board, all preparations have been concluded. Among the 150 projects being showcased at the summit, 20 are ready to go, Upadhyay said.

"We have readied four projects for project development agreement (PDA) and project investment agreement (PIA) signing during the summit," he said.

The summit will showcase

hydropowerprojects Nijgadh Kathmandu-Chitlang-Chitwan expressway project, and tunnel ways, Upadhyay said.

"The third investment summit is

different from the past two ones. We have prepared a project ready to take investment so that interested investors can confirm their bid at the summit," he said. "The current political

leadership is also focused on bringing foreign invest-INVESTMENT ment to Nepal. So we can **SUMMIT 2024** expect more foreign investment in this year's summit compared to past two summits," Upadhyay said.

The board has registered around 2,100 delegates online and this will be reviewed to ascertain the actual number of participants.

The event is being organised by the government of Nepal along with the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Confederation of Nepalese Industry, the Nepal Chamber of Commerce and the Investment Board Nepal.

On the first day, there will be an inaugural session followed by a plenary session titled 'Exploring Investment Opportunities in Nepal' and 'Success Stories of Investment in Nepal', including project showcas-

ing and market sounding. The second day will see parallel panel discussions on various topics.

>> Continued on page 2



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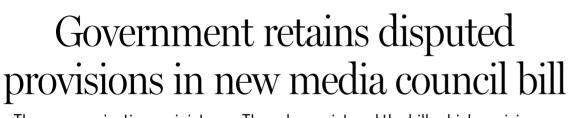




POND'S







The communications ministry on Thursday registered the bill, which envisions a committee led by its secretary to select the chairperson and members of the council.

KATHMANDU, APRIL 27

The government has registered a Media Council Bill in the National Assembly, retaining some controversial provisions from the previous bill that the media fraternity decried.

The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology on Thursday registered the bill, which envisions a committee led by its secretary to select the chairperson and members of the council. The council is authorised to advise the government in formulating media policies and the media code of conduct. A similar provision in the bill registered by the KP Sharma Oli government in 2019 had met with criticisms. Though it was endorsed by the National Assembly, it couldn't become law as the term of the lower house came to an end before the bill was endorsed.

Five years later, the new bill envisions replacing the existing Press Council with a new entity called Media Council. The council, led by a chairperson who qualifies to become a Supreme Court justice, will have 11 members in total, as per the bill.

Any Nepali citizen who holds a bachelor's degree of law and has worked as Chief Judge or Judge of the High Court for seven years or has



The bill proposes replacing the existing Press Council with a new entity called Media Council.

practised law for at least fifteen years as a law graduate senior advocate or advocate or has worked for at least fifteen years in the judicial or legal field or has worked as a gazetted officer first class or above of the judicial service for at least twelve years is eligible for appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court.

It says a three-member panel chaired by the secretary of the ministry has an expert and a government joint-secretary as members. Media analysts and journalist associations have objected to the provision.

"How can a secretary-led committee select the chairperson who has the same status as a Supreme Court justice? This provision is objectionable,' Suresh Acharya, former president of the Federation of Nepali Journalists, the umbrella organisation of Nepali journalists, told the Post.

>> Continued on page 2

# **NATIONAL**



An elderly woman is being taken to the polling booth at the Balmandir Basic School in Jayaprithvi Municipality, Bajhang on Saturday.

### POST PHOTO: BASANTA PRATAP SINGH

# Vote counting in Ilam 2, Bajhang (A) begins today

"The elections were conducted successfully without any dispute and violence. This was made possible by good coordination among security personnel, cooperation of political parties and voter awareness," District Officer Bishwamitra Kuikel.

According to the District Election Office, ballot boxes of 90 polling centres in Saipal Rural Municipality were brought to the district headquarters by Saturday evening.

The office says that the ballot boxes

Officers expect Bajhang bypoll result to come out in 30 hours after counting begins.

of the three remaining centres-Kada, Dhuli and Yarangkuringdanda—will be brought to the district headquarters on Sunday morning by a

"We will likely start vote counting from Sunday afternoon. Preparations are to conclude the counting within  $30\,$ hours after it begins," said Prakash Bahadur Singh, information officer at the election office.

The Ilam-2 House seat has been vacant after Subas Nembang died of a heart attack in September last year. The UML leader had continuously won the constituency since the 1999 general elections.

The Bajhang (A) bypoll was conducted for a seat in the Sudurpaschim Assembly which remains vacant after Prithvi Bahadur Singh, a member and provincial minister, died in a road accident in June last year.

### All women polling officers at Saptamai

All women officers were deployed to the Saptamai Literature Study and Research polling centre in Ilam Municipality-5.

According to Chief Election Officer Keshav Prasad Ghimire, five election officials were deployed to the 'model polling centre' to manage

# Congress objects to last-minute ordinance to amend multiple laws

Government awaits President's approval of the legislation aiming to streamline provisions to attract foreign investors.

A day before the third Nepal Investment Summit, the main opposition Nepali Congress has expressed serious reservations over the government's ordinance approach to amending some important laws. The two-day investment summit kicks off on Sunday.

The party's attention has been drawn to the decision to amend some important laws through an ordinance by forwarding it to the President, Congress Chief Whip Ramesh Lekhak said in a statement on Saturday.

To attract investments into the country by removing the red tape, a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday decided to amend nine Acts through an ordinance and forwarded it to the President's Office late Friday for authentication. An ordinance becomes effective only with authorisation by the President.

Sources in the government told the Post that officials, leaders, and other policymakers have already red-flagged some of the provisions of the Land Act; National Parks, and Wildlife Conservation Act; and Land Acquisition Act. These reservations have been quietly communicated to the President's Office through different channels of which the government is aware, a secretary at the prime minister's office said.

"If the President is not happy with some of the provisions proposed in the ordinance, it is likely that the President will send it back to the government for further consideration."

The last session of the federal parliament had enough time and opportunity, the main opposition says. "Without resolving the problem of the cooperative victims and other problems that the country is facing, the government decided to prorogue the House session abruptly.

And the ordinance did not reach the President's Office by the end of office hours on Friday, clearly indicating a lack of urgency in the Pushpa Kamal Dahal administration. The failure to issue the ordinance ahead of the investment summit has drawn criticism because it does not boost investor confidence, nor does it guarantee to secure their investments.

The ordinance that reached Sheetal Niwas possibly after office time has not been registered, said Kiran Pokhrel, press adviser to President Ramchandra Paudel. He will study the and make a decision accordingly, Pokhrel added

The Nepali Congress and other

opposition parties had demanded to constitute a parliamentary committee to investigate the embezzlement, misuse and fraud of the billions of rupees deposited by millions of cooperative members and urged the government to help the victims recover their deposits. "We concluded that by ignoring our call and denying our demand, the government has engaged in unpar-liamentary practice," said the statement issued by Lekhak.

While the government had months to prepare for the investment summit, it forwarded an ordinance by misinterpreting the constitution to the President, the party said, adding that the decision goes against the spirit of parliamentary democracy.

"Such work undermines the dignity and importance of institutions that represent the people and the federal, democratic republican system. The Nepali Congress warns the government not to weaken Parliament by avoiding the House," the party's chief whip stated.

If the government's claim is to be believed, various provisions of the Land Act; the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act; the Land Acquisition Act; the Electronic Transactions Act; the Special Financial Act; the Public Private Partnership and Investment Act; the Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act; the Forest Act; and the Industrial Enterprises Act have been amended through the ordinance.

After the ordinance is issued, there will be no legal hurdles to project execution in forest areas, mainly those listed as national priority projects or those approved by the Investment Board Nepal. Payments in foreign exchange will also be easy once the ordinance comes into force, people informed on the matter said.

Easing the registration and operation of startup enterprises, allowing mining and extraction of minerals from forest areas and ensuring uninterrupted supply of construction materials to infrastructure projects are other legal arrangements

The amendments were decided just a few days before the summit. It was in November last year that the Dahal government decided to hold the summit to attract foreign and domestic

The government in January had constituted a committee headed by Ek Narayan Aryal, then secretary at the Prime Minister's Office, to identify ments from flowing into the country and suggest ways to streamline laws and remove structural flaws.

### □ DISTRICT DIGEST

### Lakhan Thapa's statue unveiled CHITWAN: Statue of Lakhan Thapa,

Nepal's first martyr, has been installed at Ramnagar in Bharatpur Metropolis-1. Bharatpur's mayor Renu Dahal unveiled the bust amid a function on Saturday. The statue was constructed in an initiation of Lakhan Park Management Committee. According to Nil Kumar Magar, chairman of the committee, the 3.5 feet tall statue was constructed at the cost of Rs1.3 million. Lakhan Thapa attained martyrdom in 1877 while raising voice against autocratic Rana rule in Gorkha.

### Man dies in forest fire

burnt to death while attempting to control forest fire in Tamankhola, Baglung, on Friday. According to the District Police Office, Devsingh Kami of Tamankhola Rural Municipality-3 died during his attempt to douse the wildfire. Kami died on the spot, said police. Two others—Gyan Bahadur Budha Magar and Prem Bahadur Gharti Magar—sustained injuries in the incident.

### Rape-accused under secretary 'on the run'

under secretary at Office of Chief Minister and Council of Ministers in Madhesh who is accused of rape, is on the run after the victim lodged a complaint at police two weeks ago. Sah allegedly raped the wife of a fellow employee at her quarter on February 1. In her complaint, the victim said the suspect repeatedly raped her by issuing threat since February 1. Superintendent of Police Bhuwaneshwar Tiwari said an arrest warrant has been issued against Sah.

JANAKPUR: Rupesh Kumar Sah, the

# Investment summit kicks off today

## >> Continued from page 1

In March 2017, the government organised the first investment summit, drawing investment commitments worth \$13.5 billion from six countries. But when it came to realisation, only a fraction of the commitment trickled in.

The second investment summit held in March 2019 secured nearly \$12 billion for 50 projects. But only little was realised. In an interview with the Post on Saturday, Finance Minister Barsha Man Pun said that Nepal had learned a lot from the two previous investment summits. "We have also compared ourselves with our neighbouring countries in terms of attracting investment," he said.

"For foreign investment, we are bringing a better policy than in the past. With policies related to taxes and investment, we are creating an environment that will make it easier to bring in investments and for investors to take the benefits back without hassles," the finance minister added.

# New media council bill under fire for retaining controversial provisions

A few months ago, a panel led by Acharya that had the sitting president of the federation among members, submitted a report to the ministry suggesting an independent panel for the selection of the chairperson and members but its recommendations were not adhered to while finalising

"We will object to any provision that is not in line with our report,' Bipul Pokharel, president of the federation, told the Post. "We will soon come up with our official position on

The new bill also makes it mandatory for the owner of the media houses to disclose his/her sources of those in the media houses.

Every news related to the business operated by the media owner must

repatriation of their kin and compensation for the dead and injured recruits.

The bill will be presented in the upper house after the budget session commences.

have a disclaimer, as per the bill. The new bill, however, has removed several controversial provisions from the

The bill registered by the Oli government had proposed confiscation of media equipment and slapping fines up to Rs1 million and 15 years in jail for media persons found content that undermined Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity and nationality. It also provisioned mandatory licensing for all working journalists and licensing examinations for aspiring new journalists from the council.

The provisions, however, were removed by the National Assembly following widespread criticism from various quarters.

As per the new bill, if one deems the media content defamatory, they can file cases in district courts. The council will work to hold the media accountable through self-regulation, which is in line with the federation's

The bill will be presented in the upper house after the budget session commences. It will then be sent to a parliamentary committee for detailed vote. To become a law, it needs to be endorsed by both houses of the federal



the country's realistic economic picture to foreign investors.

International investors who attended the investment summit three years ago had suggested doing the rating.

aimed at capacity building of the agencies concerned on sovereign credit rating with stakeholders. Finance Minister Barshaman Pun, Revenue Secretary

On Friday, the finance ministry convened a workshop

past three years, just ahead of the Nepal Investment

The government took the initiative with a view to pres-

The government has also signed an agreement with UK

Earlier, the process was halted as economic indicators

Aid for the technical support and has selected Standard

Summit that is scheduled to kick off on Sunday.

before making investment in a new country.

were not positive due to the Covid pandemic.

The initiative aims to present

Ram Prasad Ghimire and senior officials from the central bank and other agencies attended the event. "Once the credit rating is done, investors from across the

world can see Nepal's financial face in the same document,' Minister Pun said at the workshop. "Then, we don't need to explain facts and figures in each and every international

He said Nepal needs foreign investment as its own domestic resources aren't sufficient to carry out development activities as per the need of the day.

"As we plan to graduate from the least developed country status, we should maintain over 7 percent economic growth and for that we need huge foreign investment," Pun said. "For that, sovereign credit rating is necessary.

Family members of Nepali youths fighting for the Russian army against Ukraine stage a hunger strike at Ratnapark in Kathmandu on Saturday. They demand immediate

# Nepal presents equal opportunity for all investors

Finance Minister Barsha Man Pun discusses the third Nepal Investment Summit and his expectations from the event.

The third edition of the Nepal Investment Summit starts today. At the event, the Nepal government will present the prospects of investing in Nepal to investors and try to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Nepal acknowledges that foreign direct investment plays a major role in its economic development, given the shortage of resources within the country. The Post's **Purushottam Poudel** sat down with Finance Minister Barsha Man Pun on Saturday to discuss the summit and what Nepal aims to gain from it.

Nepal hosted two investment summits before this, in 2017 and 2019. Nepal hasn't been able to draw the investments promised in both editions of the summit. What different is Nepal doing this time to attract more investment?

We have learned from the two previous investment summits. We have also compared ourselves with our neighbouring countries in terms of attracting investments. Data suggests that while they have attracted around 30 percent of the commitments made in similar summits, Nepal has received more.

We have drawn around 35 to 40 percent of the investment pledges, which should be considered good. However, we need more than this. This time, we have learned from our previous experience as to why more investment did not come.

This time, we have invited investors or people who are researching possible investment prospects to the summit. We are presenting the success stories of people who have invested in other countries of the world or in Nepal. So that it can inspire people

The government brought an ordinance to amend the laws that were seen as obstacles to foreign investment just a few days ago. The ordinance awaits the President's approval. Potential investors must have noticed this. What do you say?

The government has decided to amend some laws through the ordinance that we consider necessary from previous experience. The amended law has reached the President's Office for verification. By the time this interview goes to press, the ordinance may get certified. This will be strong evidence for national and international investors that Nepal is investment-friendly.

On the other hand, there is the matter of soverign credit rating—we have already started work on this. It has not started, but it will be finished soon. Once the rating works get completed it will confirm that we are more open to foreign investment. After this, we will be able to know Nepal's investment rating without asking anyone.

Based on this, foreigners can come to Nepal for investment. All these reasons show we are becoming more investor-friendly. On foreign investment, we are bringing a better policy than in the past. With policies on taxes and investment, we are creating an environment that will make it easier to bring in investments, and for investors to take the benefits back to their country without hassle.

There are examples of complications faced by investors to take back dividends. Axiata, the parent company of Nepal's private telecom company Ncell, faced the problem. How will investors be attracted when they cannot take profit home?

There is a legal provision for withdrawing the return on investment. We are trying to make it simple and practical by learning from the experience of other countries. No multinational company has suffered losses in Nepal. Everyone is earning profkea in proiit many ment in Nepal. Dabur Nepal and Unilever are also making profits. There are other multinational companies that are making profits by investing in

Similarly, foreign investments in the hospitality sector have also returned profits. These profits earned by the companies are no less than what they earn elsewhere. The problem seems to be that we are not presenting our data properly. We will also use this summit as a platform for investors to share their experiences of successfully investing in Nepal.

Many investors appear to be attracted to hydropower. However, India has adopted a policy of not buying power from projects with Chinese investment. This also affects our investment climate. How will the government address this?

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Investments are coming into this sector from these countries. Business is also being done. Some infrastructure related to the cross-border transmission line is being built. A 400 KV high voltage transmission line has been built on the India side. Some others will be built soon. The Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line has been built. Butwal-Sunauli is in progress. Similarly, Lamki-Bareli is also in the pipeline. A long-term agreement has been signed with India to sell 10,000 megawatts of hydropower in 10 years.

The agreement signed during Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's visit to India last year is in the implementation phase. An agreement has been reached to sell 40 megawatts of hydropower to Bangladesh through India. Bangladesh has asked us for more electricity. We are coordinating with Bangladesh and India at various levels on this issue.

As far as the Indian policy is concerned, we will try to consume our own electricity first. We will try to sell the surplus energy to regional markets.

### Nepal's political instability is said to be distracting foreign investors. How do you convince them?

There is no truth in this. Change of political leadership does not hinder foreign investment in Nepal. This is a normal practice in a democratic system with regular elections. Sometimes the government veers into the minority. Our mixed electoral system tends to give no single party the majority result, we have a coalition government. And whether or not the government maintains policy consistency is important. We may not always have a stable government, but we have a stable policy.

We have adopted consistent policies in the fields of hydropower and cement industries for 10 to 15 years. The minister may be changed due to the change of government, but there is no change in policy. Any change in policy is meant for the convenience of investors.

When the government was led by the Congress-Maoist alliance, it was said that big investors—from India's richest man, Gautam Adani to the Tata Group—were interested in investing in Nepal. However, with the communist forces in

presents KANTIPUR

power, they are said to be reluctant.

This is just a rumour spread by those who do not want the prosperity of Nepal. It is true that some people close to Indian businessman Gautam Adani came to Nepal, and they showed interest in investing in Nepal. According to my information, Adani has invested in Nepal's cement industry. And even now he is positive about investing in Nepal. His representatives are coming to the investment summit as well. The summit is not a matter related to the views of any party. This is Nepal's investment

Just because there is a particular coalition does not mean investment will not come. Pushpa Kamal Dahal was the leader of the government when the summit was announced and he is still leading the government. Such rumours are propaganda peddled by those who want to keep investments away.

Again, as far as Gautam Adani is concerned, I am personally in touch with people who work with him at various levels. When I became a minister, I invited Adani to Nepal, and we have interacted with him frequently. He is still looking at different areas of investment. He is especially interested in airport construction and management and the energy sector.

Geopolitical factors are also believed to impact investments. Is the government prepared to ensure that geopolitics does not affect investment pros-

There are geopolitical conflicts all over the world. In Nepal, we are not against anyone's legal investment. We have always welcomed foreign investment that comes with good intent. If geopolitics affects investment, the most intense geopolitical competition is between the US and China. But these two countries are also the world's largest trading partners. When talking about India and China, there cooperation. We need legitimate investment in priority areas. We want to ensure that the investments coming into our country are not targeted against any country. Let's invest in Nepal.

# Nepal Media Society condemns dissemination of fake news

Organisation chair Subha Shankar Kandel expresses concern over the attempt to spread misinformation.

The Nepal Media Society on Saturday condemned the publication of fake news with the malicious intent of defaming members of the media and the judiciary and demanded immediate action against those involved.

Issuing a statement, the society's chairman Subha Shankar Kandel expressed his concern on the attempt to spread misinformation.

On Friday, a video of an alleged sting operation', including an audio clip, was uploaded on the YouTube channel of 'Sidha Kura', a television programme previously broadcast on the now-defunct Galaxy Television, which was established with the money embezzled from various

The umbrella organisation called the video a condemnable attempt at attacking the democratic system, media and judiciary without any basis and demanded that the concerned authorities take action against all those involved in the act.

"The law enforcement agencies should take immediate action in the case of the YouTube channel publishing content with the intent of defaming established media houses, its owners and even a sitting judge without any facts or evidence," the statement reads.

It is necessary to clarify that such irresponsible and 'propaganda-producing factories' cannot be considered media, the society further added.

"There has been a rising trend of misusing technology to attack democratic systems and independent media and the judiciary, motivated by blind public support, worldwide," Kandel said. "The latest incident is also a similar attempt by some YouTube channel by producing tasteless 'fake news', which is a serious issue."

The organisation also claimed that the content posted on social media sites and online domains created using technological loopholes cannot be news or correct information.

Meanwhile, senior advocate Hari Prasad Upreti and advocate Kishor Bista also issued a joint statement denying the allegations levelled against them in the audio clip. "We did not visit the Annapurna

Post's office on April 12, 2021, as claimed in the audio. Nor were we a decision-making constitutional bench in the case of petitioner Bishnu Prasad Ghimire mentioned in the audio clip," the state-

The fact that the allegations are being made four years after the incident allegedly took place itself raises doubts, the advocates said.

lication is misleading and we believe that this is a deliberate attack on the judiciary and the media, they said. "We strongly object against all those

who share and defend such content on social media."

Earlier, Bista had denied the accusation stating that the 'fake audio' had been produced with a criminal intent.

"One of the two voices heard in the recording has been attributed to me, but I am not the one speaking. Nor have I ever been to the Annapurna Post's office," Bista said. "Also, the tone of the conversation, the noise of children playing in the background, and the comments being made on the case being discussed not only prove that the audio is a complete hoax but also suggest that the hosts of the show created this conspiracy on their own or on the direction of someone else.'

Stakeholders from the media and legal fraternities have also called for the concerned video's immediate removal and demanded legal action against programme producers.



AN LIMBRELLA ORGANISATION DE NEPAL'S MAINSTREAM MEDIA H

Stakeholders have called for immediate removal of the video in question.

Citing that the content was being disseminated with the motive of character assassination of those accused of being involved, the Press Council has directed that the content be removed and clarification be furnished within 24 hours. Earlier, Nepal Press Council, the

Nepal Bar Association and other concerned stakeholders had expressed their serious concerns over the issue. Citing that the content was being

disseminated with the motive of character assassination of those accused of being involved, the Press Council on Friday directed that the content be removed and clarification be furnished within 24 hours.

Supreme Court Justice Ananda Mohan Bhattarai, who is named in the clip, objected to the content saying that it was motivated by the intent of spreading disbelief not only against the media houses and individuals but also against professional journalism and the judiciary as a

"I am shocked and surprised that my name has been linked with the news published by 'Sidha Kura.' My career, spanning almost 43 years, is an open book," Bhattarai said.

Filing a complaint at the Press Council, Kantipur Media Group chairaccused of being involved in the case, requested that those involved in attempting to undermine the pillars of the democratic system be investigated and held accountable for their actions. Similarly, Captain Rameshwar

Thapa, chairman of the Annapurna Media Network, also filed a complaint at the Press Council on Friday, stating that the content was a fake story that had been created with the intention of creating a 'viral' product.



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# **OPINION**

# Al needs UN oversight

International guardrails are needed to ensure that the emerging technology serves the common good.

PETER G KIRCHSCHLÄGER



Many scientists and tech leaders have sounded the alarm about artificial intelligence in recent years, issuing dire warnings not heard since the advent of the nuclear age. Elon Musk, for example, has said that "AI is far more dangerous than nukes," prompting him to ask an important question: "Why do we have no regulatory oversight? This

The late Stephen Hawking made a similar point: "Unless we learn how to prepare for and avoid the potential risks, AI could be the worst event in the history of our civilisation. It brings dangers, like powerful autonomous weapons, or new ways for the few to oppress

Given the potentially catastrophic consequences of unchecked AI, there is a clear need for international guardrails to ensure that this emerging technology-more accuwas made possible by an international regime—the IAEA—with strong enforcement mechanisms.

A growing number of experts worldwide have called for establishing an IDA and supported the creation of data-based systems founded on respect for human rights. The Elders, an independent group of global leaders founded by Nelson Mandela, have recognised the enormous risks of AI and the need for an international agency like the IAEA "to manage these powerful technologies within robust safety protocols" and to ensure that they "used in ways consistent with international law and human rights treaties." Consequently, they encourage countries to submit a request to the UN General Assembly the International Law Commission to draft an international treaty establishing a new AI

Among the influential supporters of a legally binding regulatory framework for AI is Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, whose public release of ChatGPT in late 2022 kicked off the AI arms race. Last year, Altman called for an international authority that can, among other things, "inspect systems, require audits, test for compliance with safety standards, [and] place restrictions on degrees of deployment and levels of security." Even Pope Francis has emphasised the need to establish a multilateral institution that examines the ethical issues arising from AI and regu-



rately called data-based systemsthe common good.

Specifically, that means guaranteeing that human rights are upheld globally, including online. To that end, governments should

introduce regulations that promote data-based systems that seek to proful by ensuring that human rights are respected, protected, implemented, and realised within such systems' entire life cycle, including design, development, production, distribution, and use.

Equally important, the United Nations must urgently establish an International Data-Based Systems Agency (IDA), a global AI watchdog that would promote safe, secure, sustainable, and peaceful uses of these technologies, ensure that they respect human rights and foster cooperation in the field. It would also have regulatory authority to help determine market approval for AI products. Given the similarities between data-based systems and nuclear technologies, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would be the best model for such an institution, not least because it is one of the few UN

agencies with "teeth." The success of the IAEA has shown that we are capable of exercising caution and prohibiting the blind pursuit of technological advances when the future of humanity and the planet are at stake. After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki revealed the devastating humanitarian consequences of nuclear war, research and development in the field of nuclear technology was curtailed to prevent even worse outcomes. This

lates its development and use by "a binding international treaty."

The UN, for its part, has highlighted the importance of promoting and protecting human rights in data-based systems. In July 2023, the Human Rights Council unanimously adopted a resolution on emerging digital ogies and human rights," which notes that these technologies "may lack adequate regulation" and stresses the need "for effective measures to prevent, mitigate, and remedy adverse human rights impacts of such technologies." To that end, the resolution calls for establishing frameworks for impact assessments, exercising due diligence and ensuring effective remedies human oversight and legal accountability.

More recently, in March, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on "Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development." This landmark resolution recognises that "the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including throughout the lifecycle of artificial intelligence systems.

Now that the international community has recognised the imperative of protecting human rights in data-based systems, the next step is obvious. The UN must now translate this global consensus into action by establishing an IDA

Kirchschläger is a professor of ethics and director of the Institute of Social Ethics ISE at the University

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# Play of ideologies in Nepali politics

WORDS & ECHOES

As far as I could understand. Communist Party of Nepal's diamond jubilee did not evoke any specific history.

**ABHI SUBEDI** 



The diamond jubilee of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) has brought out an interesting mix of history, ideology and interpretations. The party, founded in 1949, was a monolith organisation of the Nepali communists. Over the years, its history has covered all forms and variations. I consider that a remarkable phenomenon in Nepal's political history. The foundation and evolution of the CPN had direct guidance from the Communist Party of India, founded in 1925; the CPI (Marxist) that split from it in 1964 did have an important influence on the foundational history of the communist party of Nepal. This is not the subject of this article.

Major political parties, both the communists and the social democratic groups, became operational in Nepali rajniti in the middle of the last century. To mention two important dates, the CPN was founded under the leadership of Pushpa Lal Shrestha in 1949, and the Nepali Congress was established under the leadership of BP Koirala in 1950. However, the communists split into many factions. The bigger and smaller factions articulate a call for unity and the desire to return to a monolith communist party

Perhaps such an operational continuum has become a feature of the communist organisations in Nepal. This call has entered a new major post-political phase this year, which was seen at the diamond jubilee of the foundation of the Communist Prty on April 22, 2024. A decisive approach comes from UML chairperson KP Sharma Olis political paper presented on April 20, in which he rules out the call for communist unity as an immediate need. As reported by *The Kathmandu*  Post, "The chief of the country's

largest communist force says that left unity or polarisation is impractical as well as unnecessary". The gathering of the major leaders of the communist groups of Nepal, also attended by Sher Bahadur Deuba, president of the Nepali Congress, was theatrical. A unique psyche of perfor-

mance and ideology was dramatised

on the occasion.

The histories of these parties and their internal changes have become a commonplace subject in books of history and political studies. Native and foreign interpreters have been writing on this subject. Ideological shifts, crises and confusions have continued to draw the interest of mavericks like us who use the above themes in post-political culture studies and the role of agencies and social changes in some academic exercises and cultural studies. The binary of the Nepali Congress and the Nepali communists, organised under several nomenclatures, is no longer the reality. But the communists' attempts to come together again are being interpreted variously.

Journalist and columnist Rajaram Gautam has interpreted the present predicament of the Nepali communists as what he calls kanatabijok or a very miserable state (Kantipur, April 22, 2024). A certain sense of disillusionment and some scepticism, not least about a natural process of evolution of party and ideology, has become the topic of discussion.

But we should look at the pervasive influence of the communist ideology in Nepali politics at different levels. King Mahendra's takeover of power by dissolving the people's elected parliament and locking up prime minister, ministers and leaders of all political parties in 1960 became a turning point in Nepali history. Not much is written about the king's mind. Naturally, his actions and dictatorial modus operandi dominated the majority of discussions. BP Koirala is the only politician or writer who has written about the psyche of the king, though briefly, in his diary entries and short discourses.

The king banned the parties but continued to show his interest in the style and operational mode of the communist party. His liking for the methods of the communists can be seen in his actions. He became very interested in turning the Nepali communists to his side. Nepali communist leader Kesharjung Rayamajhi's support of the king's dissolution of the parliament as a "progressive step" in 1960 is a case in point.

King Mahendra used the style of the communists, especially that of the Chinese communist party and its chairman Mao Zedong. He emulated the style used during the Chinese Cultural Revolution to launch the "Back to the Village" campaign. A small red book with quotations from his ideas and that of the Panchayat ideology was circulated nationwide like the "red book" disseminated during the revolution. King Mahendra was a Hindu monarch who liked any aggrandisement that came with that. But he did not take up the cudgel to project himself as a great Hindu monarch. Instead, he projected an image like that of an all-controlling communist leader spreading his ideologies.

I don't know how much of this side of the king is discussed by analysts, but I have not come across any convincing psycho-political study of King Mahendra's temptation to use the communist methodology, ironically, by maintaining the ban on the communists and the Nepali Congress. The king's successors used "inter-party and intra-elite conflicts once again" to "nurture the monarchical ambition to be fully absolute." (Lok Raj Baral, The Kathmandu Post, April 21, 2024).

The diamond jubilee of the Communist Party, split into several communist parties, did present an occasion for review, but not of any systematic and pragmatic order. As far as I could understand, the diamond jubilee did not evoke any specific history. The Communist Party documents are more the records of the seminars, plenums and resolutions passed at the end rather than systematic compendiums of them. One remarkable oeuvre running 780 pages is titled Nepali Communist Andolan ra Janakrantika Atihasik Dastabejharu-Part 1 (2071 BS).

A statement in the report of the then general secretary Pushpa Kamal Dahal presented at the central committee meeting of the Mashal group in 2045 speaks volumes. It says, "As the Jhapa minority group...has adopted a method of election, their claims about the armed struggle does not have any meaning and validity." However, Lokendra Bista, the organiser of this volume, says it presents important communist history anyway. I would mention Puspalalka Chhanieka Rachana (2016) or "Selected Writings" as one important communist ideologi-

The Maoists have produced some ideological documents. But I think it is time for independent scholars to shun the stereotypes of communist party arguments and engage seriously and openly about the origin, spread and academic significance of the communist documents and history.

# Towards ethical elephant tourism

Land around conservation areas in Nepal is being developed for tourism, displacing local poor people.

MICHELLE SZYDLOWSKI



Suju Kali is a 50-year-old elephant in Nepal who has been carrying tourists for over 30 years. Like many elephants I encounter through my research, Suju Kali exhibits anxiety and can be aggressive toward strangers. She suffers from emotional trauma as a result of prolonged, commercial human contact.

Like Suju Kali, many animals are trapped within the tourism industry. Some venues have no oversight and little concern for animal or tourist safety. Between 120,000 and 340,000 animals are used globally in a variety of wildlife tourism attractions, including endangered species like elephants. Over a quarter of the world's endangered elephants reside in captivity with little oversight.

Wildlife tourism—which involves viewing wildlife such as primates or birds in conservation areas, feeding or touching captive or "rehabilitated" wildlife in facilities, and bathing or riding animals like elephants—is tricky business. I know this because I am a researcher studying human relationships with elephants in both tourism and conservation settings within Southeast Asia.

These types of experiences have long been an extremely popular and profitable part of the tourism market. But now, many travel-related organisations are urging people not to participate in, or calling for an outright ban on, interactive wildlife experiences.

Tourism vendors have started marketing more "ethical options" for consumers. Some are attempting to truly improve the health and welfare of wildlife, and some are transitioning captive wildlife into touch-free, non-riding or lower-stress environments. In other places, organisations are attempting to implement standards of care or create manuals that outline good practices for animal

This marketing, academics argue, is often simply "greenwashing," applying marketing labels to make consumers feel better about their choices

without making any real changes. Worse, research shows that some programs marketing themselves as ethical tourism may instead be widening economic gaps and harming both humans and other species that they are meant to protect.

For example, rather than tourist dollars trickling down to local struggling families as intended by local governments, many tourism venues are owned by nonresidents, meaning the profits do not stay in the area. Likewise, only a small number of residents can afford to own tourism venues, and venues do not provide employment for locals from lower income groups.

This economic gap is especially obvious in Nepalese elephant stables: Venue owners continue to make gle is not a choice—many have never learned to live in the wild, so they cannot survive on their own.

Hurting local people

Part of the problem lies with governments, as many have marketed tourism as a way to fund conservation centage of ticket sales from elephant rides are given to community groups to use for forest preservation and support for local families.

Increasing demand for wildlife-based tourism may increase traffic in the area and thus put pressure on local governments to further limit local people's access to forest resources.

This may also lead to increased demands on local communities, as was the case in Nepal. In the 1970s, the Nepalese government removed local

out Southeast Asia have been transformed into croplands, cities or train tracks for human use. Other problems arise from the fact that tourism elephants have never learned how to be elephants in their natural elements, as they were separated from their herds at an early age.

ing food, care and shelter to captive elephants for the rest of their lives and providing jobs for those who really need them. Because elephants can live beyond 60 years, this can be a large commitment.

Being ethical

To protect elephants, tourists should check out reviews and photos from any venue they want to visit, and look for clues that animal welfare might be impacted, such as tourists allowed to feed, hold or ride captive wildlife animals. Look for healthy animals, which means doing research on what "healthy" animals of that species should look like.

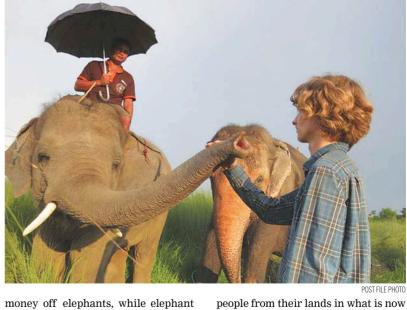
If a venue lists no-touch demonstrations—"unnatural" behaviours that don't mimic what an elephant might do of their own accord, such as sitting on a ball or riding a bike, or other performances—remember behind-the-scenes training used to achieve these behaviours can be violent, traumatic or coercive. Another way to help people and ele-

phant is to use small, local companies to book your adventures in your area of interest, rather than paying large, international tourism agencies. Look for locally owned hotels, and wait to book excursions until you arrive so you can use local service providers. Book homestay programmes and attend cultural events led by community members; talk to tourists and locals you meet in the target town to get their opinions, and use local guides who provide wildlife viewing opportunities while maintaining distance from animals.

Or tourists can ask to visit venues that are certified by international humane animal organisations and that do not allow contact with wildlife. Or they can opt for guided hikes, canoe or kayak experiences, and other environmentally friendly options.

While these suggestions will not guarantee that your excursion is animal-friendly, they will help decrease your impact on wildlife, support local families and encourage venues to stop using elephants as entertainment. Those are good first steps.

Szydlowski is a visiting assistant professor at the Department of Biology, Project Dragonfly, Miami University.



caregivers continue to work 17 hours a day for about \$21 a month; tourists are led to believe they are "promoting sustainability.'

Yet, there are no easy answers, especially for elephants working in tourism. Moving them to sanctuaries is difficult because with no governmental or global welfare oversight, elephants may end up in worse conditions.

Many kindhearted souls who want to "help" elephants know little about their biology and mental health needs, or what it takes to keep them healthy. Also, feeding large animals like Suju Kali is pricey, costing around \$19,000 yearly. So without profits from riding or other income, owners—or would-be rescuers-can't maintain elephants. Releasing captive elephants to the jun-

Chitwan National Park as part of increasing "conservation efforts" and changed the protected area's boundaries. Indigenous "Tharu," or people of the forest, were forced to abandon their villages and land. While some were offered access to "buffer zones" in the 1990s, many remain poor and landless today.

ble land surrounding conservation areas in Nepal is being developed for tourist-based businesses such as hotels, restaurants and shops, pushing local poor people farther away from central village areas and the associated tourism income.

In addition, more and more desira-

Some activists would like humans to simply release all wildlife back into the wild, but there are multiple issues with that. Elephant habitats through-

### **FOREX** 133.65 **US** Dollar 143.41 **Pound Sterling** Swiss Franc 146.63 87.37 Australian Dollar Canadian Dollar 97.88 98.20 Singapore Dollar 8.53 Japanese Yen (10) 18.44 Chinese Yuan Saudi Arab Riyal 35.63 36.65 Qatari Riyal 3.62 Thai Bhat 36.39 **UAE Dhiram** 28.03 Malaysian Ringgit Korean Won (100) Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank PRICE PER TOLA **BULLION**

Rs 137,200 阵 Fine Gold Silver Rs 1,675 SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

### □ BIZLINE

### US food regulator gathering information on Indian spices after alleged contam

HYDERABAD: The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is gathering information on products of Indian spice makers MDH and Everest after Hong Kong halted sales of some of their products for allegedly containing high levels of a cancer-causing pesticide. "The FDA is aware of the reports and is gathering additional information about the situation," an FDA spokesperson told Reuters on Friday. Hong Kong this month suspended sales of three MDH spice blends and an Everest spice mix for fish curries. Singapore ordered a recall of the Everest spice mix as well, saying it contains high levels of ethylene oxide, which is unfit for human consumption and a cancer risk with long exposure. Reuters is the first to report the US FDA's review of alleged contamination of Indian spice products. MDH and Everest did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment on this matter. Everest has previously said its spices are safe for consumption. MDH has not responded to queries about its products so far. MDH and Everest spices are among the most popular in India and are also sold in Europe, Asia and North America. India's food regulator, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), is now checking the quality standards of the two companies, following the moves in Hong Kong and

### Russia extends mandatory FX conversion for major exporters

MOSCOW: Russia on Saturday said it would require major exporters to carry on converting the bulk of their foreign currency earnings into rubles for another year to help support the national currency. Moscow has used strict capital controls to prop up the value of the ruble in the two years since the West levelled sweeping financial sanctions in response to Russia's military offensive on Ukraine. The Russian government said Saturday it had agreed to extend rules requiring 43 major Russian commodities groups to convert at least 80 percent of their foreign currency earnings into rubles until the end of April 2025. "The deci sion will contribute to maintaining the stability of the exchange rate and the resilience of the Russian financial market," it said in a statement. Russia first introduced forced foreign currency sales in February 2022. That was soon after the West froze around \$300 billion of Russia's international reserves and effectively banned its major banks from trading internationally. By boosting demand for the Russian ruble at a time of intense economic uncertainty, the measures helped avert a run on the currency and major financial crisis. (AFP)

# Nepal deserves global attention as a promising investment destination

**Yingming Yang** is the vice-president of the Asian Development Bank's South, Central and West Asia regions. He joined ADB in January 2024. Yang is responsible for operations in the bank's South Asia and the Central and West Asia departments. He is currently in Kathmandu to attend the Nepal Investment Summit. In an email interview with the Post's Sangam Prasain, Yang spoke on a range of issues, including ADB's support for improving Nepal's business climate, agricultural productivity, enhancing the skills of youth, supporting private sector investments, investing in hydropower, transport connectivity and digital development and supporting climate mitigation and disaster risk management. Excerpts:

You are here to attend the Nepal Investment Summit. What are your expectations from the summit?

I am delighted to be here in Nepal, and it is an honour for me to participate in the Nepal Investment Summit 2024. I would like to extend my congratulations to the government of Nepal for hosting this important event. Nepal is at a crucial juncture, welcoming investors and highlighting progressive changes that have improved the business climate in recent years. Nepal deserves global attention as a promising investment destination, and this summit provides an ideal platform to showcase the opportunities that Nepal has to offer to investors. Nepal has taken proactive measures to ensure key reforms are underway and these are crucial steps toward unlocking the full potential of the private sector. It is also important to ensure effective implementation for translating policies into tangible outcomes. Eventually, I hope the summit paves the path for greater investment mobilisation, from domestic and international investors. I think Nepal should institute a regular process of introducing reforms and being responsive to investor concerns

How would you describe ADB's relationship with Nepal when it comes to investing in developing countries?

Over the past five decades and more, dating back to 1969, Nepal and the ADB have worked hand in hand to address the country's most pressing development needs and improve the lives of its people. From building roads, and airports, and enhancing energy and water systems to supporting education, skills development, and agriculture, ADB has been a key partner in Nepal's development journey. We take immense pride in our partnership with the people and the government of Nepal. As of the end of last year, ADB's active portfolio in Nepal stood at around \$3.6 billion, supporting a broad range of key sectors, including energy, transport, agriculture, water, urban infrastructure natural resources and education. We are committed to scaling up our support to Nepal in partnership with the government, the private sector and development partners.

Nepal is due to graduate from its current status, as one of the world's least-developed countries, in 2026. This means Nepal will also lose benefits from certain preferential provisions laid out in different WTO agreements, including the official development assistance. What will be the ADB's role in facilitating Nepal's graduation process through the transition phase?

The fact that Nepal is set to graduate from the least developed country (LDC) category in 2026 underscores the progress made over the past decades despite numerous challenges, including political changes, natural disasters, and the Covid-19 pandemic. For this graduation to be sustainable, Nepal must focus on achieving inclusive and robust economic growth by enhancing productivity and competitiveness in the economy.

ADB is currently conducting a diagnostic study titled 'Nepali Exports: Firm-level Evidence', which will suggest policy recommendations to inform its new Country Partnership

Strategy (2025–2029). The study will provide insights into fostering Nepal's export growth and supporting the transition to a new growth model based increasingly on competitiveness, export diversification, and employment creation.

Under ADB's country partnership strategy for Nepal, which we are currently developing in close alignment with the World Bank's country partnership framework, ADB will facilitate Nepal's transition to the developing country status. This will be achieved through measures such as improving the business climate, increasing agricultural productivity, enhancing the skills of youth, supporting private sector investments, investing in hydropower, transport connectivity and digital development, and supporting climate mitigation and adaptation, and disaster risk management.

its potential, particularly in renewa-

Green financing refers to financial instruments, investments, and mechanisms specifically designed to support environmentally sustainable projects or activities. These could include initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions, promoting renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, conserving natural resources, or mitigating climate change impacts. Green financing can take various forms, such as green bonds, green loans, green mortgages, and green investment funds. In Nepal, the government and private sector, supported by development partners, continue to invest substantially in hydropower, a renewable and green source of energy. However, access to financing remains a major constraint. Green finance mechanisms, such as green bonds, loans, and



POST PHOTO: PRAKASH CHANDRA TIMILSENA

**Yingming Yang** 

Despite rapid poverty reduction, Nepal's development path is not helping it escape a low-growth trap. What should Nepal do to accelerate development, and achieve higher and inclusive economic growth?

While progress has been made in reducing poverty over the past two decades, Nepal's GDP growth has been moderate, averaging 4-5 percent annually. Productivity growth has been low, primarily due to reliance on remittance-dependent private consumption. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates Nepal's long-term economic growth at just above 5 percent, needed to transition to an upper-middle-income country, given its lower-middle-income status. To achieve growth, Nepal needs structural economic reforms. While the services sector has grown slightly, this growth hasn't translated into enough job opportunities, largely due to prevail-

ing informal activities. To expedite development, Nepal must enhance private sector competitiveness and global market integration. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has been minimal, constituting less than 1 percent of the GDP. Political stability, improved infrastructure, and consistent policy reforms are necessary to attract more FDI, particularly in manufacturing and services.

Beyond these, Nepal should prioritise the export promotion of IT services, tourism, and hydropower. Support from ADB and other development partners has improved the energy sector's reliability and sustainability, facilitating cross-border trade. Additionally, ADB's assistance in developing sustainable transport infrastructure and trade facilitation will reduce costs for firms, improve market access for people, and create more employment opportunities

What is green financing? How will green finance help Nepal leverage investment funds, can provide additional capital to develop renewable energy projects. This access to capital can help accelerate the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure, leading to increased energy generation.

It is expected that climate change will adversely affect Nepal's biodiversity, human well-being, and economy. Is there any support ADB is extending to Nepal to mitigate disaster and climate change effects?

We commend Nepal for its comprehensive National Adaptation Plan and tionally Determined Contribution We recognise the government's commitment to achieving a net-zero climate emission target by 2045. ADB's operations in Nepal are aligned with these plans and targets. Furthermore, ADB's operations in Nepal are aligned with Nepal's homegrown Green, Resilient, Inclusive Development (GRID) strategy, which is being supported by 16 key development partners

Currently, ADB Nepal is preparing a GRID policy-based programme with a strong climate focus, expected to be approved in 2024. Additionally, there are several initiatives and technical assistance projects on climate change and disaster risk management. One of the main initiatives is the Building Adaptation and Resilience in the Hindu Kush Himalayas--Bhutan and Nepal, aimed at boosting the two countries' ability to evaluate multi-hazard risks, improve multi-hazard risk management, and examine innovative finance strategies for climate-resilient

Moreover, ADB is preparing a large scale financing facility, the Green and Resilience Financing Facility, to help the government implement projects identified in the National Adaptation Plan. The goal of the facility is to raise \$1 billion in highly concessional loans and grant financing. Globally, ADB aims to achieve \$100 billion in cumulative climate finance using its resources between 2019 and 2030

There are questions raised in the project financed by ADB. Large infrastructure projects in Nepal have been delayed even during times when the politics was stable. What's the reason behind the delays in your assessment?

Delays in delivering large infrastructure projects are a common challenge in many developing countries. Broader governance and capacity issues, along with project-specific challenges, affect project effectiveness and efficiency. In Nepal, factors like fragile geology, natural disasters, remote locations, and limited working seasons add complexity beyond individual projects' control.

The transition to federalism has improved service delivery but poses challenges in devolving functions, functionaries, and funds. Timely project implementation requires strong, continuous project leadership with less frequent changes in staffing and adequate authority delegation. Involving project stakeholders from the outset is essential.

I firmly believe that leveraging new technologies can significantly improve project progress and alleviate implementation bottlenecks. Resolving issues like poor contractor performance and delays in land acquisition and permissions requires updating legal frameworks and digitisation of clearance processes. It's essential to address concerns such as contract management, environmental safeguards, and governance constraints to enhance project implementation and ensure the timely delivery of development results on the ground.

We appreciate the efforts of the government to address administrative and policy-level issues related to investment project cycle management. ADB has recently initiated a technical assistance project to enhance procurement efficiency and quality, improve contract management and execution tools, digitise environmental and forest cutting clearances, harmonise project readiness processes among ADB, the World Bank, and the government, and enhance interagency coordination.

In recent years, Nepal has been confronted with the phenomenon of brain drain. The number of youths leaving the country in pursuit of better opportunities in foreign lands continues to grow. In your view, what strategy should Nepal adopt to stop the brain drain?

The lack of adequate decent job opportunities in Nepal serves as a critical "push factor" for outmigration. Foreign employment emerges as an attractive alternative for those struggling to find jobs domestically. Most ondary education and work in lowskilled and semi-skilled jobs abroad, with only a small percentage employed in professional or high-skilled roles.

While remittances contribute significantly to Nepal's GDP (accounting for about 22.7 percent in the fiscal year 2022-23) and play a crucial role in economic growth and poverty reduction, Nepal cannot solely depend on migration and remittances as primary economic drivers. These factors are highly contingent on economic and political conditions in host countries and mainly boost private consumption, leading to low productivity growth.

Nepal's economic policy must promote sustainable and inclusive economic transformation that generates ample job opportunities. Currently, many youths are seeking employment abroad due to the lack of acceptable opportunities at home. To address this, Nepal should prioritise promoting safe migration by enhancing the skills of migrant youth, enabling them to secure better-paying jobs with improved working conditions in host countries, while also reducing the cost of remitting money back to Nepal. Moreover, in the medium to longer term, Nepal's development objectives should increasingly focus on investing in infrastructure, productive capacity,

productivity growth, and job creation within the country.

What is your assessment of the progress that Nepal has made in infrastructure and development?

Nepal has made significant strides in expanding its infrastructure, but it still lags behind middle-income economies in Asia. For landlocked Nepal, roads serve as a critical lifeline, transporting 90 percent of passengers and goods. In recent years, extensive strategic road networks and rural roads have emerged, connecting previously remote areas to markets and the outside world. However, while developing new infrastructure, Nepal also needs to ensure better maintenance of the assets already created. Investments in improving roads and related infrastructure have been a crucial part of ADB's strategy in Nepal to reduce poverty and support economic growth.

Through various projects and initiatives, ADB has supported the government of Nepal in enhancing infrastructure, including roads, airports, energy systems, water management, and urban facilities. These efforts aim to improve connectivity, promote economic growth, and enhance the overall quality of life for the people of Nepal. ADB is also assisting cities in Nepal in building climate-resilient infrastructure.

In recent years, Nepal has seen remarkable growth in its energy sector, with a surge in hydropower projects, policy initiatives, and cross-border collaborations aimed at meeting domestic energy needs and fostering regional energy integration. Just about fifty years ago, the electrification rate hovered around 2 percent. Half a century later, Nepal has witnessed incredible transformation. Over 95 percent of households now have access to grid electricity, and the country is exporting electricity to generate foreign currency. We are incredibly proud of our over five decades of partnership with the government of Nepal in the energy sector. Nepal has also witnessed significant advancements in telecommunications over the past decade, with mobile phone penetration reaching even the remotest locations. This has huge implications for the advancement of the digi-

What are the areas that ADB is seeking to support Nepal in the upcoming future?

ADB continues to support Nepal's green, resilient, and inclusive development strategy by investing in infrastructure, improving access to basic services, and safeguarding poor and vulnerable populations from disaster and climate risks. Additionally, ADB will continue to collaborate with Nepal to strengthen institutional capacities for sector planning, enhance project readiness and implenentation performance, and sustainable asset management.

In our forthcoming CPS for 2025-2029, being developed jointly with the World Bank's country partnership framework, ADB will prioritise fostering high, sustainable, green, and job-intensive economic growth in Nepal. This involves promoting the green economic transformation to create employment opportunities by enhancing the business climate, increasing agricultural productivity, improving youth employability, and supporting private sector investments.

Furthermore, ADB will maintain its commitment to investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, including renewable energy generation, transmission, and distribution, as well as enhancing national, provincial, and local transport connectivity and improving accessibility to urban infrastructure and services. Additionally, we will support enhancing the capacity of federal and sub-national governments and improving access to and the quality of school education, alongside strengthening local governance for education delivery. ADB remains dedicated to advancing gender equality and social inclusion, promoting digital development, and implementing comprehensive climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, including disaster risk management.

# Instagram, YouTube likely winners of TikTok ban but smaller rivals could rise too

## ASSOCIATED PRESS

Adult US TikTok users spend an average of 54 minutes on the app on any given day, more than Instagram, Snapchat or YouTube, according to research firm eMarketer. If TikTok were to disappear, those platforms along with younger, smaller emerging rivals—would be scrambling for those valuable minutes of people's

But with an actual ban still likely years away, it's not clear what app will be its biggest beneficiary. Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, may see more advertisers amid uncertainty for its biggest rival, according to analysts who follow the company. Creators, dealing with uncertainty themselves are also expanding to other platforms if they weren't already. But users, especially the younger ones who are TikTok's bread and butter, are less predictable. Will they embrace Instagram, a possibly uncool mom favorite? Or could a newer app like Triller rise to viral fame? Here's a look at some notable TikTok alternatives and how they

Meta has a long tradition of cloning competitive services, with varying degrees of success. The Instagram "Story" feature, which lets people

share photos and videos that expire in 24 hours, is similar to Snapchat. The company also launched a TikTok knockoff called Lasso in 2018 but closed that down in 2020.

Then Instagram launched Reels 2020, a TikTok-like feed of short videos users can create or scroll through. It's proven to be massively popular. Could it replace TikTok? That depends. While many creators post on both platforms, some experts say the youngest users are unlikely to migrate to a service made popular by their millennial parents. And while Meta's algorithm is addictive, it's still not TikTok.

"Replicating TikTok's algorithm is a nearly impossible task, as rival Meta would attest to," said eMarketer ana-



lyst Jasmine Enberg. "TikTok's ability to serve up relevant and entertaining content to its users is unparalleled in the social media world.'

## YouTube

While TikTok gets more headlines, YouTube still dominates US teens' attention. Roughly nine in ten teens said they use YouTube, in a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, making it the most widely used platform among the 13-17 crowd. TikTok clocked in at 63 percent, Snapchat at 60 percent and Instagram at 59 percent. Its parent company Google launched YouTube Shorts in 2020, shortly after India banned TikTok.

YouTube users can scroll through Shorts just as they can on TikTok or Reels on Instagram and Facebook, watching hours of bite-sized videos. As with Reels, many of the videos featured are from TikTok or creators who post to several different platforms. That said, YouTube is still known for its longer-format videos, so it may not have the variety that TikTok users are looking for—at least not yet.

While older adults never quite got into Snapchat, launched in 2011 with its infamous disappearing videos, it remains popular among teens and younger adults. In addition to its disappearing video feature, the company launched Snapchat Spotlight in 2020 (yes, the same year India banned TikTok and former US President Donald Trump was trying to in the US). The feature can be accessed by pressing the sideways triangle icon at the bottom of your screen and, at least according to Snapchat, it "shines a light on the most entertaining Snaps, no matter who created them.

# WORLD

# Philippines denies deal with China over disputed South China Sea shoal

The Philippines on Saturday denied a Chinese claim that the two countries had reached an agreement over an escalating maritime dispute in the South China Sea, calling the claim

A spokesperson at China's embassy in Manila said on April 18 that the two had agreed early this year to a "new model" in managing tensions at the Second Thomas Shoal, without elaborating.

Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said on Saturday his department was "not aware of, nor is it a party to, any internal agreement China" Ferdinand Marcos Jr took office in 2022. Defence department officials have not spoken to any Chinese officials since last year, Teodoro said in a statement. China's embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Teodoro's comments outside office hours.

Beijing and Manila have repeatedly clashed in recent months at the submerged reef, which Philippines says is in its exclusive economic zone but which China also claims.

The Philippines had accused China of blocking manoeuvres and firing water cannons at its vessels to disrupt supply missions to Filipino soldiers stationed in a naval ship which Manila deliberately grounded in 1999 to bolster its maritime claims.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion in annual ship commerce. Its claims overlap with those of the Philippines and four other nations In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague said China's claims had no legal basis, a decision Beijing rejects

Teodoro called China's claims of a bilateral agreement "part of the Chinese propaganda", adding that the Philippines would never enter into any agreement that would compromise its claims in the waterway.

Its unique content recommendation technology is what predicts which videos will pique user's interest.

# Russia hits Ukrainian energy sites in 'massive' attack

Officials urge people and businesses to limit their power usage.



A woman throws debris out of a window of a hospital building damaged by a Russian missile strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine on Saturday.

■ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE KYIV, UKRAINE, APRIL 27

Russia launched a "massive" missile strike at Ukraine overnight, damaging four power plants in the latest barrage targeting the country's

energy supply, officials in Kyiv said on Saturday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called on Kyiv's Western partners to supply more air defence

systems to protect his country's skies, as the air force said it shot down 21 of 34 incoming missiles. Moscow has launched some of its biggest ever strikes on Ukraine's energy facilities in recent months, knocking out a significant chunk of produc-

energy rationing across the country. Ukraine also said it hit two oil refineries and a military air base in southern Russia its own wave of overnight drone attacks.

tion, and triggering blackouts and

"Thirty-four Russian missiles overnight. We managed to shoot down some of them. But the world has every opportunity to help (us) shoot down every missile and every drone, Zelensky said in a post on Telegram.

Energy facilities were hit in at least three regions-including Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk in the west, hun-

dreds of kilometres from the front line—Energy Minister Galushchenko said in a Facebook post. One of the missiles landed 15 kilometres from the Polish-Ukrainian border, Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk said.

Kyiv says Moscow is escalating attacks from the air and on land ahead of nationwide celebrations on May 9, when Russia marks victory in World War II, and while Ukraine awaits the arrival of crucial US weapons.

The DTEK power operator said equipment at four of its thermal power plants was "severely damaged" in the overnight strikes

State electricity operator Ukrenergo said it had disconnected its main overhead power line in the west of the country as a preventative measure.

Officials urged people and businesses to limit their power usage.

"We ask all consumers to consume electricity sparingly. Industry is asked to maximise electricity imports and use alternative power sources, Ukrenergo said in a statement.

The head of the western Lviv region called on residents not to use kettles, irons, washing machines and microwaves in peak evening hours.

At least two people were killed in separate shelling attacks on the north-

eastern Kharkiv region and southern Kherson region, Ukrainian officials said. The spate of missile and artillery attacks also injured more than a dozen. Russia's defence ministry said Saturday that over the last week it had carried out 35 "group strikes" against Ukrainian energy sites, military factories, railway facilities, air defence systems and other targets.

The United States on Friday announced a \$6 billion package of military supplies to Kyiv to include key air defence munitions and artillery rounds. Ukraine launched its own massive drone attack on Russia's southern Krasnodar region overnight.

A Ukrainian defence source told AFP it had hit two oil refineries and a military airfield in the region, just east of the annexed Crimean peninsula. "Ukrainian drones struck the atmospheric distillation columns of the Ilsky and Slovyansky refineries. These are key technological facilities," the source said.

Russian officials in the Krasnodar region reported a fire at an oil refinery in the town of Slavyansk-on-Kuban. The refinery partially suspended operations as a result, Russian state media reported, citing a company representative.

Videos and photos on social media showed a large fire raging overnight at the site after a series of blasts.

Moscow said Ukraine had launched one of its largest ever attempted drone attacks on the Krasnodar region.

"Air defences destroyed and intercepted 66 Ukrainian drones over the territory of the Krasnodar region and two over the Crimean peninsula," the defence ministry said.

The governor of Russia's Belgorod border region said later on Saturday that five people were injured when a Ukrainian drone fell on a road a few kilometres from the border. Kyiv has hit several oil refineries in western Russia in recent months, despite reports of concern in Washington that the strikes could be seen as escalatory and might drive up global oil prices.

Ukraine says targeting Russia's vital energy sector is legitimate as it is a source of fuel and funds for the Russian army.

# US and China talk past each other on most issues, but at least they're talking

■ ASSOCIATED PRESS

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up his just-concluded latest visit to China with a stop at a Beijing record store where he bought albums by Taylor Swift and Chinese rocker Dou Wei in a symbolic nod to cross-cultural exchanges and understanding he had been promoting for three days.

Music, he said at the Li-Pi shop on his way to the airport late Friday, "is the best connector, regardless of geography."

Yet Swift's "Midnights" and Dou Wei's "Black Dream" could just as easily represent the seemingly intractable divisions in the deeply troubled relationship between the world's two largest economies that both sides publicly and privately blame on the other. Blinken and his Chinese interlocutors, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, all referred to these rifts even as they extolled the virtues of keeping communication channels open to manage these differences and avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations.

Blinken went out of his way to champion the importance of US-China exchanges at all levels. In Shanghai, he ate at a famous soup dumpling restaurant, attended a Chinese basketball playoff game and visited with American and Chinese students at the New York University branch. In his official meetings with Chinese leaders in Beijing, he spoke repeatedly of improvements in ties over the

But he also stressed that the US has serious and growing concerns with China's policies and practices on the local, regional and global stages. And, he said, the US would not back down. "America will always defend our core interests and values," he said.

On several occasions, he slammed Chinese overproduction of electric vehicles that threatened to have detrimental effects on US and European automakers and complained that China was not doing enough to stop the production and export of synthetic opioid precursors.

At one point he warned bluntly that if China does not end support for Russia 's defense industrial sector, something the Biden administration says has allowed Russia to step up its attacks on Ukraine and threaten European security, the US would act to stop it. "I made clear that if China does not address this problem, we will," Blinken told reporters after

meeting with Xi. Chinese officials were similarly direct, saying that while relations have generally improved since a low point last year over the shootdown of a Chinese surveillance balloon, they

remained fraught. "The two countries should help each other succeed rather than hurt each other, seek common ground and reserve differences rather than engage in vicious competition, and honor words with actions rather than say one thing but do the opposite," Xi told Blinken in a not-so-veiled accusation of US hypocrisy.

Blinken went out of his way to champion the importance of US-China exchanges at all levels.

Wang, the foreign minister, said China is fed up with what it considers to be US meddling in human rights, Taiwan and the South China Sea and efforts to restrict its trade and relations with other countries. "Negative factors in the relationship are still increasing and building and the relationship is facing all kinds of disruptions," he said. He urged the US "not to step on China's red lines on China's sovereignty, security, and development

Or, as Yang Tao, the director general of North American and Oceania affairs at the Foreign Ministry, put it, according to the official Xinhua News Agency: "If the United States always regards China as its main rival, China-US relations will continuously face troubles and many problems."

# Lebanon moves towards accepting ICC jurisdiction for war crimes on its soil

REUTERS

Lebanon has moved towards accepting the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction to prosecute violations on Lebanese territory since October, in what Human Rights Watch said on Saturday was a "landmark step"

Lebanon has accused Israel of repeatedly violating its sovereignty and committing breaches of interna tional law over the last six months, during which the Israeli military and Lebanese armed group Hezbollah have traded fire across Lebanon's southern border in parallel with the Gaza War.

That cross-border shelling has killed at least 70 civilians, including children, rescue workers and journalists, among them Reuters visuals reporter Issam Abdallah, who was killed by an Israeli tank on October 13, a Reuters investigation found. Lebanon's caretaker cabinet voted on Friday to

instruct the foreign affairs ministry to file a declaration with the ICC accepting the court's jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute crimes committed on Lebanese territory since October 7.

Ukraine has twice filed such declarations, which allowed for the court to investigate alleged Russian war crimes.

The decree also instructed the foreign ministry to include in its complaints about Israel to the United Nations a report prepared by the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO), an independent research institute.

That report looked specifically into Abdallah's killing, and was produced

by examining shrapnel, flak jackets, a camera, tripod and a large piece of metal that were gathered by Reuters from the scene, as well as video and audio material.

Tensions flared in front of Paris's prestigious Sciences Po university, as student protests over the war in Gaza spread further on Friday.

members of the ICC, which is based in The Hague. But filing a declaration to the court would grant it jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute relevant crimes in a particular period. Ukraine has twice filed such declarations, which allowed for the court to investigate alleged Russian war crimes.

"The Lebanese government has taken a landmark step toward securing justice for war crimes in the country," said Lama Fakih, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, urging the foreign minister to "swiftly" formalise the move by filing a declaration to the ICC.



French 19th-century three-masted barque Belem sails on the Saronic Gulf after setting sails from the Piraeus port, near Athens, with the Olympic flame on board to begin its journey to France on Saturday, a day after Greece handed over the torch of the

# Migration roils US elections. In Mexico though, politicians rarely mention it

frontrunner, Claudia Sheinbaum,

didn't even include a mention of

immigration when she announced 100

campaign commitments last month.

When she came to the state where

Monterrey sits—Nuevo Leon—in

February she talked about security

and the water supply. Her main oppo-

nent, Xochitl Gálvez, visited the city

last month and talked about her pro-

posals to raise police salaries and

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRIGHTON, COLORADO, APRIL 27

Republican activists gathered in a school lunchroom last month to hear political pitches from candidates and agreed on the top issue in the Denver suburbs these days: immigration.

The area has been disrupted by the arrival of largely Venezuelan migrants coming north through Mexico, they said. Virtually everyone in the meeting said they were uncomfortable with the new population, which has overwhelmed public services and become a flashpoint in local and national elections.

"We've lived here our whole lives, and now we have to pay for hotels and debit cards and health care" for the migrants, through government spending, said Toni Starner, a marketing consultant. "My daughter's 22 and she can't even afford to buy a house.'

Some 1,200 miles to the south, migrants are also transforming the prosperous industrial city of Monterrey, Mexico. Haitian migrants speak Creole on downtown streets and Central American migrants ask motorists for help at intersections.

But the new arrivals aren't even part of Mexico's political conversation as the country gears up for its

presidential vote on June 2. "If it were a problem, the politicians would already be mentioning it in their campaigns," said Ingrid Morales, a 66-year-old retired academic who lives on Monterrey's south

Every 12 years, the coincidence of presidential elections in the US and Mexico provides a valuable comparative snapshot. The different ways migration is resonating in the two countries' elections this year reflects the neighbors' very different styles of democracy.

Mexican politics are still dominated by institutional political parties, while Donald Trump disrupted the United States' two-party system with his more populist approach, and moved anti-immigration sentiment to centre stage in US politics.

Mexican politics also revolve more around "bread-and-butter" issues like the economy than in the wealthier United States, which is increasingly consumed with questions of national identity, said Andrew Selee, president of the Migration Policy Institute.

What's more, just about every Mexican family has an immediate experience with migration, with many still having relatives living in other countries. While migrants must travel through Mexico to enter the US, they are more dispersed as they travel and have not generated similar scenes of an overwhelmed Mexican side of

"In Mexico, there isn't that same perception of chaos," Selee said. Trump is making that perception of chaos his campaign's main theme as he tries to return to the White House. AP VoteCast, a survey of the national electorate, found immigration was a top issue among voters in the Republican presidential primary's initial states. An AP-NORC poll conducted last month found that 58 percent of Americans say immigration is an extremely or very important issue for them personally.

In contrast, Mexico's presidential



Lincoln Montero eats outside a motel for migrants after helping his aunt sell home-cooked Venezuelan-style food to fellow Venezuelan migrants sheltering here in Denver on April 18.

But Monterrey, a three-hour drive from the Texas border, has increasingly become a critical waystation, even destination, for tens of thousands of migrants. Local authorities and international organizations have scrambled to find a place for the new

Femsa, the owner of the ubiquitous convenience store chain Oxxo, has hired hundreds of migrants to work in its stores through a program with the United Nations refugee agency.

An annual survey of Nuevo Leon found last year that nearly nine in 10 residents noticed an increase in migrants and about seven in 10 felt that they should be provided work. It's not as if Mexicans aren't divided over the issue: Those surveyed in Nuevo Leon were split over whether Mexico should admit more migrants or stop

The lack of clear political advantage could explain why politicians have stayed away from talking about immigration, said Luis Mendoza Ovando, a political analyst and columnist with the main local newspaper, El Norte.

"Ultimately, society says if there are more migrants, give them work and everything is good," he said.

Ricardo Cobián, 30, runs a beauty salon in downtown Monterrey. The next administration will have to deal with immigration but it is not a top priority for the nation, he said.

"The main issues for the candidates must be resolving security and ensuring economic stability," said Cobián, adding that he has sympathy for migrants because he knows of his own relatives' recent struggles to reach the United States.

Colorado became a stop on the migrant trail even more recently than Monterrey. In late 2022, Venezuelans crossing into Texas from Mexico found that it costs less to take a bus from the border city of El Paso to Denver than many of the United States' better-known metropolises. And Denver-a liberal, fast-growing city-offered migrants food and shelter.

Now, Denver's mayor, Mike Johnston, reports that his city of 710,000 has received nearly 40,000 migrants, what he calls the highest number of new migrants per capita of any city in the United States. The largely Venezuelan population is mainly confined to Denver but has started to trickle into surrounding suburbs like Brighton, often selling flowers or window-washes at streetcorners.

Unlike in Monterrey, where many migrants found jobs with established employers, paperwork hassles and federal regulations have prevented most migrants in Denver from receiving authorization to work. Irregular labor like yard work or housecleaning is their only way of making a living.

# Liverpool title hopes fade after West Ham draw

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Jurgen Klopp said he was "not in the mood" to discuss Liverpool's Premier League title chances after a 2-2 draw at West Ham on Saturday effectively snuffed out their hopes.

Just weeks ago Liverpool were on course for a quadruple of trophies but Klopp's final season at Anfield is fizzling out. The latest blow came at the London Stadium, where the visi-

tors realistically had to win to have any chance of staying in the hunt alongside Arsenal and Manchester City.

A goal from Andy Robertson and an own goal from West Ham goalkeeper Alphonse Areola put Liverpool 2-1 in front but Michail Antonio powered a header past Allison Becker to pull David Moyes's side level. The single point leaves Liverpool third in the table on 75

points, one behind defending champions City, who have two games in hand. Leaders Arsenal are two points clear of Liverpool, with a game in hand. Klopp, whose side were dumped out of the FA Cup and

Europa League at the quarter-final stage, brushed aside questions about the title race in the aftermath of the disappointing draw. "I'm not in the mood to talk about that to be honest or look at

that at all," he told TNT Sports. "We had to win here, we knew that, and we didn't, and now we have a little bit more time between now and the next game." The German bemoaned his side's squandered chances, which

have cost them dear in recent weeks.

'When we are 2-1 up we could control it, and still, as I said, in a lot of moments playing really well but the final situation we didn't take," he said.

"That has been the story of the last four weeks."

### Missed chances

Liverpool were on the front foot from the start at the London Stadium but energy quickly drained out of the encounter and

West Ham midfielder Lucas Paqueta was lucky to escape punishment after a reckless early tackle on Alexis Mac Allister.

The contest livened up in the closing minutes of the first period, with Luis Diaz hitting the post for the visitors after good work down the left.

Two minutes later Liverpool goalkeeper Allison was called into action, making a sharp save from Jarrod Bowen's deflected shot. But he was powerless to keep out Bowen's header from the resulting corner, which took the England forward to 16 Premier League goals this season.

Liverpool emerged for the second half with renewed intent and Ryan Gravenberch fired over from just inside the box.

They were back on terms in the 48th minute when Robertson squeezed a shot past Areola at his near post. Gravenberch attempted a flick minutes later but the chance

Angelo Ogbonna then made a crucial block as the game

opened up before Trent Alexander-Arnold's shot from distance

Liverpool got their noses in front in the 65th minute after Cody Gakpo's shot hit Ogbonna, Tomas Soucek and Areola on its way into the net.

The visitors had chances to pull further ahead but Antonio headed home a Bowen cross in the 77th-minute to level. Klopp threw on Mohamed Salah, Darwin Nunez and Joe

Gomez after the equaliser in a desperate search for a winner. Salah, who appeared to direct angry words at Klopp before he was introduced, raced forward as the clock ticked down

His pass fell behind Nunez but Harvey Elliott picked up the ball, rattling a shot off the crossbar—Liverpool's final clear

West Ham, eighth in the Premier League table, face a battle in

their bid to secure European football next season.

Moyes last season delivered the club's first major trophy for 43

years but has been coy over his future. at the TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur on Saturday



Nepal captain Rohit Paudel reacts during the first T20 cricket match against West Indies A

Paudel ton gives Nepal thrilling win over West Indies Å in first T20

The skipper scores 112 runs off 54 balls to help the Rhinos chase down a huge target of 204 runs.

☐ SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU, APRIL 27

Skipper Rohit Paudel scored a blistering century as Nepal defeated West Indies A by four wickets in the first T20 and took a 1-0 lead in the five-match series at the TU Cricket Ground in Kirtipur on Saturday.

Paudel smashed 112 runs in his aggressive 54-ball knock that featured 10 fours and six sixes, helping Nepal chase down a big target of 205 runs with two balls to spare.

Coach Monty Desai gave the responsibility of opening the batting to Anil Sah in place of regular opener and wicket keeper Aasif Sheikh, who was rested for the opening T20.

In February, the 25-year-old Sah had announced his return to international cricket with a fifty and an unbeaten century against Canada during the Nepal-Canada home bilateral ODI series. He also scored an unconquered half-century in Nepal's nine-wicket thrashing of the Netherlands during the ICC Cricket World Cup League 2 the same month.

However, Sah has lost his form since, scoring only 42 runs from his last five innings.

On Saturday, Sah left the crease in the 2.1 overs making just five runs facing nine deliveries, caught by Kadeem Alleyne off Mathhew Forde.

Nepal's another regular opener Kushal Bhurtel is experiencing the lowest point of his career—he was dismissed for a duck for a three match in a row in Nepal's forgettable ACC Men's T20 Premier Cup campaign in Oman. Bhurtel is one of the only three Nepali cricketers (alongside Dipendra Singh Airee and Paudel) to have crossed 1000-run mark in men's T20Is but his dip in form just one month before Nepal's 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup has raised question whether he would be fit to travel to the West Indies and the United States.

Desai, who is now feeling the pressure to reinstall steel in a failing Nepali team ahead of their crucial World Cup tournament, still put faith in Bhurtel but the opener struggled with the bat again, as he returned to the pavilion making 16 runs off 12 balls. But Paudel came at number three and

showed the world Nepal can emerge from the ashes, shouldering the responsibility and batting all the way to the 19 overs, and steering his team closer to victory. Kushal Malla's form is also a big concern.

His 16 off 15 against the visiting West Indies was his highest individual score in his last In fact, Paudel returned from Oman wear-

ing the tag of the biggest flop after failing to lead the Rhinos to the 2025 Asia Cup and 2024 ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup.

But, back at home, Paudel showed character and demonstrated his side could learn

He added 64 runs with Dipendra for the fourth wicket before Dipendra, one of the consistent batters and the only bright spot of Nepal in the Premier Cup, fell to Keemo Paul in the 15.3 overs.

Paudel kept on fighting and reached his century off 47 balls. It was his first hundred in an international (unofficial) T20 match. It will not be recognised by the International Cricket Council though.

New batter Bibek Yadav (7) also departed without making significant contribution, before Forde finally undid Paudel in the 18.5 But the skipper had already laid a strong

With Nepal needing 14 runs from the last seven balls, Pratis GC smashed a four off Forde to balance the equation and Gulsan Jha cracked two consecutive boundaries off Oshane Thomas, helping Nepal overhaul the target in style.

Forde and Obed McCoy took two wickets each for the West Indies A, while Paul pocketed one.

Earlier, West Indies A posted 204-5 from their 20 overs after being invited to bat first, thanks to impressive knocks from captain Roston Chase and Alick Athanaze.

The tourists lost their opener Johnson Charles for a duck to Kamal Airee in the first over but Athanaze played a brisk 25-ball 47 and Chase cracked 74 runs from 46 balls to guide their team to a huge total. Keacy Carty was also brilliant as he made

38 off 26 balls and assisted Chase to add 60 runs for the fifth wicket. Andre Fletcher contributed 5-ball 13,

while Alleyne added 14 not out off 15 balls for the visitors. Kamal Airee, who was one of the four

additions alongside Lokesh Bam, Binod Bhandari, Sagar Dhakal, in the squad, took a wicket. Dipendra, Rohit Paudel and Abinash Bohara also picked a wicket apiece. The second T20 takes place on Sunday.

This tour is the first for a West Indies side in

WEST INDIES A TOUR OF NEPAL

FIRST T20, TU CRICKET GROUND, KIRTIPUR TOSS: Nepal, field first.

West Indies A 204-5 (20/20 overs) Roston Chase 74 (46), Alick Athanaze 47 (25),

Keacy Carty 38 (26); Rohit Paudel 1-0-10-1, Dipendra Singh Airee 3-0-30-1

**CAPRICORN** (December 22-January 19)

**Nepal 206-6** (19.4/20 overs) Rohit Paudel 112 (54), Dipendra Singh Airee 24 (18);

Obed McCoy 4-0-34-2, Matthew Forde 4-0-49-2 Nepal win by four wickets. Player of the match: Rohit Paudel

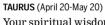
Series result: Nepal lead the five-match series 1-0.

# HOROSCOPE



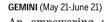
## ARIES (March 21-April 19)

impending work week. You'll feel hungry for success throughout the next two days, inspiring you to implement new structures that will allow you to approach Monday from a grounded and capable headspace.





Your spiritual wisdom awakens, dearest Taurus, igniting the sector of your chart that governs higher thinking and intuition. Take a few moments to connect with the divine forces that swirl within and around you, asking for guidance or messages from beyond.





An empowering and transformative energy washes over you early this morning. Use this energy to invest fully in the commitments that matter most, allowing yourself to evolve along-



CANCER (June 22-July 22)

and connection. Use this energy to express how much loved ones mean to you, being mindful to show some extra support to yourself as well. Take action toward spiritual guidance.



LEO (July 23-August 22) Use your Sunday to catch up on personal errands. Though you should ask for assistance if teamwork is required. Passions grow later, causing you to get lost in your most intimate connections. Just be mindful to maintain



healthy boundaries.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)



Your spritely and fun-loving nature shines through this morning, dearest Virgo. Use this energy as an excuse to devote your Sunday to artistic pursuits, personal interests, and good times. Love could take you on a grand journey



LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

22

new opportunities

in the comfort of home, dearest Libra. Use this energy to catch up on household chores or finally pull the trigger on any home improvement projects you've been meaning to start

Your words carry an elevated level of finesse

and refinement. Take a direct approach toward

manifesting change, establishing your position,

triggering relationship shifts, or cultivating

Embrace the luxury only a quiet Sunday can

provide, dear Sagittarius. This vibe promotes

leisure, nudging you to treat yourself while

indulging the senses. If possible, head outside to

connect with the great outdoors and its healing

16

19

38

42

60

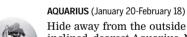
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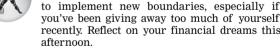
35



morning gives you much to feel good about Use this to recommit to your own goals, using your elevated charisma and natural drive to proceed at a comfortable pace. You'll feel inspired to act on your most visionary ideas



Hide away from the outside world if you feel so inclined, dearest Aquarius. Now is the ideal time



PISCES (February 19-March 20)



You'll feel in tune with your community this morning, putting you in the mood to connect. Carve out respect amongst your peers, demonstrating class, kindness, and maintaining friendships. Now is a good time to get involved with local charitable organisations.

# **CROSSWORD**

**ACROSS** 1 Daddy

5 Bit of statistical

information 10 Radar dot 14 Regretted 15 Obliterate 16 River in England

17 Dies 18 Fall drink 19 Russian range 20 What's playing

"Exodus" author 25 "That's disgusting!" Stopped 33 Settled on a

22 Convincing

branch 34 Daisy type 35 Big bird 36 The - the merrier

37 Stannum

38 Soon 39 Simian creature 40 Crime fighter Ness 42 Acquires

43 Debauchery 45 Strike down 47 Kid 48 Jot

49 Tournament of

Roses event

52 Plane figure 56 - Musk 57 Actress

Perez 60 Drink a lot 61 Plod - -garde 63 Utah city

64 Accept 65 Goes at an easy pace 66 "Biggest Little

DOWN

Straight-laced Atmosphere 3 Pome fruit Sufficient

Trickery 6 Star sign Trace

8 Application Messenger god 10 Branches 11 Bait

12 "No man island .. 13 Strike

21 Internet address 23 Pointed arch 26 Incline 27 Chartered

28 Self-evident

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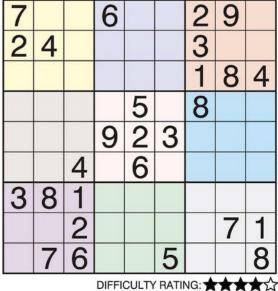
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58 Ab - (from the beginning)

55 "Finding -

# **SUDOKU**

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FICTION PARK

# A promise of new beginning

With a baby on the horizon and a foreign land as her new reality, Kamana faced the daunting question of her place in this brave new world.

☐ SANTOSH KALWAR

he sun dipped below Chitwan's horizon as Kamana wrapped up another long shift. Her feet ached for rest and her heart longed for the indulgence of a hearty dinner, but familial duty beckoned. With a sigh, she redirected her steps towards her family home. There, amidst the warm embraces and familiar chatter, stood Shankar—a dashingly familiar face from her childhood, the man whose silent admiration had flourished from schoolyard glances.

With intentions as clear as the sky, Shankar sought her hand in marriage. Agreeing to a courtship, Kamana stepped into a dance of destiny with the man who once lived in her daydreams.

The days unfurled like the petals of a lotus, revealing a profound love that Kamana found herself enveloped in its bloom, wedded to the man of her reveries. But fate, ever the trickster, had surprises tucked up its sleeve. Shankar revealed plans for a new life in America, a land of dreams where opportunity beckoned like the stars. Yet, just as their American journey began, life stirred within Kamana—a child, a promise of new beginnings.

With a baby on the horizon and a foreign land as her new reality, Kamana faced the daunting question of her place in this brave new world, where a pregnant foreigner's prospects seemed as uncertain as the fluttering of a butterfly's wings.

"Shankar, I don't know how to find work here while pregnant."

"You are my wife now, so you don't need to worry about these things. I will provide for you and the children. You will stay home and care for the children and the

Kamana honestly didn't like the idea of staying at home, but for now, it seemed like the best decision for her. Soon, their son was born, and a little girl was born a couple of years later. Kamana seemed lost in the daily routine of caring for the children, cooking and cleaning. She had lost her identity as a person and was now just Shankar's wife. Before she knew it, ten years had passed, and she couldn't remember having an identity of her own any-

The days she worked and lived off her own money were gone, but she still missed those days. Having something to do that made her feel important and like she

Trapped in the existential void of being



known merely as Shankar's wife, Kamana grappled with the erasure of her essence.

For a decade, she had slipped through Kamana's fingers like grains of sand, each year amplifying her sense of isolation in a land that was home yet not entirely. She moved through her American life as though wrapped in a translucent veil, visible yet separated from those around her.

Her life in Nepal, vibrant with friendships and familiarity, now played out in distant echoes carried on the wind. As she tended to her children, a creeping realisation hollowed her spirit—she had become a mere shadow of her former self, an empty vessel where once a fierce soul blazed.

On an unremarkable day, amidst the mundane lull, a spark ignited within her. Kamana could no longer wither in the confines of her bubble; the time had come to reclaim her essence, to seek her rightful place in this sprawling tapestry. She yearned to rediscover the fire that once defined her, the unique essence of being that whispered, insistently—Kamana.

"Shankar. I can't live this way anymore. The kids are growing up, and I need something more in my life than just caring for them. I want to find who I am, get a job and feel like I am doing something," Kamana tried to explain to her husband.

"How would I look? I can't support my family, so I have my wife go off and try to find her work. Your place is at home taking care of the children, and mine is going out and making money. You already have an identity; you are Kamana; you already have a belonging; it is here with the children," he replied.

**Trapped in the existential** void of being known merely as Shankar's wife, Kamana grappled with the erasure of her essence.

He tried to argue with her, not wanting her to go out into the world and leave being a housewife.

"I feel empty compared to how I used to feel. When we first started seeing each other and I was working and helping people, you could see how happy I was. Look at me and tell me that you see the same joy in me having to stay at home all the time. The children are now old enough to let themselves in after school.

Weeks of tension strained Kamana and Shankar's marriage as they grappled with her need for self-fulfilment. Eventually, Shankar recognised that her happiness was paramount and blessed her to seek what would give her a sense of belonging.

Lost at first, Kamana wandered the city, considering various roles that might reignite her sense of identity. It wasn't until her eyes met a billboard for nursing school that her path became apparent—an opportunity to nurture her true self.

"I want to attend school and become a nurse," She told her husband.

"You're not the cheery woman I married," Shankar replied.

He was unhappy and told her he didn't want her doing something that would take so long to learn. So that she could find something else that gave her a less time-consuming purpose, she was determined, though she knew that helping people medically would be the thing that made her feel whole again.

So, she started to attend school and learn how to become a nurse. By the time she had finished everything and passed all the exams, her children had grown into young teenagers. They were proud of their mother, and her daughter said she aspired to be just like her and find the thing that gave her identity.

As the Nepalese New Year dawned, it ushered in a tide of fortune for Kamana She secured a position at a local hospital, and even in the face of long hours and challenging patients, an unwavering sense of belonging enveloped her-a sign that luck was indeed on her side as the new year began.

She wasn't just Shankar's wife anymore; she was her person. She had an identity as a nurse, which gave her a community where she could make friends and become more part of society than she had been since she arrived in Nepal. Her husband had finally realised that she was much happier now that she had found a place in this country where she belonged.

Being his wife wasn't an identity of her own, just an extension of his. Kamana wanted to do one more thing: share her story with others so that nobody would feel like they had no identity or belonging in the world.

Kamana's journey of self-discovery resonated far and wide as her blog became a beacon of inspiration. Her words encouraged others to seek out their passions and to find their voices and places in the world. Her story, a ripple that turned into a wave, even reached her homeland of Nepal, where pride swelled in the hearts of her family and friends.

In her quest for identity, Kamana had transformed from a woman adrift to a purposeful nurse. It was a stark reminder of the existentialist truth that one must forge one's path to avoid the abyss of losing oneself to the definitions of others.

Her newfound wholeness became a rallying cry for her fellow nurses, a call to share their tales. Kamana's dream was to foster a community, a sanctuary for all who felt lost, to help them uncover their spark—their reason to be. She proved that within everyone lies the power to be their person, to carve out their destiny.



Kalwar is a writer from Chitwan.

# A closer look at OCD

Psychologist Bohara explains obsessive-compulsive disorder, it's symptoms, coping strategies and myths.

ANISH GHIMIRE

rom the outside, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) might seem like a simorganised, but it goes far deeper than just cleanliness. It's a complex disorder characterised by intrusive thoughts, urges or images (obsessions) that cause anxiety, as well as repetitive behaviours or mental acts (compulsions) aimed at reducing that

Psychologist Gopal Bahadur Bohara puts further light on the issue. He is currently working as a Psychologist Supervisor under the Centre for Mental Health & Counselling - Nepal (CMC - Nepal).

## What is OCD?

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, or OCD, is a mental health condition where individuals experience recurring unwanted thoughts known as obsessions, along with repetitive behaviours known as compulsions. Those with OCD often feel compelled to carry out these rituals to alleviate the anxiety triggered by their obsessions. However, the relief is usually short-lived, and the symptoms tend to

### What are the common symptoms of this disorder?

Common symptoms of OCD include obsessions, which are recurring and unwanted thoughts. They can be about all sorts of things, like worrying about getting sick from germs, being afraid that something bad will happen to you or someone you care about, or constantly needing things to be just right. Compulsions, on the other hand, are the actions you feel like you have to do because of those thoughts. It's like you just can't help it. Maybe you find yourself washing your hands repeatedly, checking the locks on your door multiple times, or needing to count things or arrange them in a certain order.

These behaviours might give you temporary relief from the anxiety caused by your obsessions, but they can also take up a lot of your time and interfere with your daily life. That's why it's important to recognise the signs of OCD and seek help if you think you might be struggling with it.

What are some common misconceptions about OCD?

Misconceptions about obsessive-com-



pulsive disorder (OCD) are widespread and can hinder proper understanding and treatment. One common misconception is the belief that individuals with OCD can simply stop their compulsions through willpower. In reality, these compulsions are often driven by intense anxiety, making them difficult to control without proper treatment.

Misconceptions about **OCD** are widespread and can hinder proper understanding and treatment.

Additionally, there's a misconception that OCD is rare when in fact, it affects about one to two percent of the population, highlighting its prevalence and importance as a mental health

Another misconception is that OCD is solely about being neat and organised. While some individuals may have a need for symmetry or orderliness, OCD



Psychologist Gopal Bahadur Bohara



involves intrusive thoughts and repetitive behaviours that can significantly disrupt daily life. These intrusive thoughts, coupled with compulsions, form a complex cycle that can cause distress and impairment beyond organisational preferences. It's crucial to understand the multifaceted nature of OCD and dispel misconceptions to ensure those affected receive appropriate support and treatment.

## What are some effective treatment options available for individuals with

Effective treatment options for individuals with OCD include cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), exposure therapy and medication. CBT helps individuals identify and change their thought patterns and behaviours related to OCD, while exposure therapy involves gradually exposing individuals to their feared situations or triggers to help them learn healthier ways of responding.

In some cases, medication, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), can also be beneficial in managing symptoms. However, the best treatment approach may vary from person to person, so individuals with OCD need to consult with a psychiatrist or therapist to determine the most suitable treatment plan for their specific

### How does this disorder impact daily functioning and quality of life?

OCD can greatly disrupt various aspects of a person's life, including daily routines, social interactions and work or school performance. It falls under the umbrella of anxiety-related disorders and manifests in various ways. For instance, someone with a fear of con-



tamination may struggle to touch surfaces that others have touched, such as doorknobs or windows, leading to difficulty in completing everyday

Similarly, individuals with washing compulsions may spend excessive amounts of time cleaning their hands to alleviate their anxiety. These behaviours can consume a significant amount of time and energy, making it challenging to engage in normal activities and maintain healthy relationships. OCD's impact on daily functioning underscores the importance of seeking appropriate treatment and support to manage symptoms and improve quality of life.

### Are there any specific coping strategies or techniques that you recommend for managing it?

When managing OCD symptoms, several coping strategies can be effective. Acceptance involves becoming aware of thoughts and feelings without judgment and accepting obsessions without trying to suppress them. Gradual exposure to feared situations while resisting compulsive behaviours can help reduce anxiety over time. Additionally, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, a balanced diet, sufficient sleep, and stress-reduction techniques, is crucial for symptom management.

Seeking support from friends, family, or a therapist is essential for encouragement and guidance. Distraction techniques, such as engaging in hobbies or exercise, can redirect focus away from obsessions and provide temporary relief from anxiety. By incorporating these coping strategies into daily life, individuals with OCD can better manage their symptoms and improve their overall

# 'Shame' wins at Moscow International Film Festival

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mexican film has won the top prize Friday at the Moscow International Film Festival, which took place as major Western studios boycott the Russian market and as Russia's

'Shame', a film by director Miguel Salgado and co-produced by Mexico and Qatar, was the most highly awarded film at the which began in 1935 and has been held annually 1999. This year's edition

In his victory speech, Salgado hailed the festival as one of the most important in the world, adding that he was pleased to see his film, a thriller, being shown so widely and that it was a "great gift" to see so many people moved by it.

included more than 240

The head of the jury for the festival's main award, the Golden St George, was Fridrik Thor Fridriksson, from NATO Iceland.



with his Golden Saint George trophy at the festival in Moscow, Russia on Friday.

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