



THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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41.5° C 7.9° C
Dhangadi Jiri

TODAY

NATIONAL

Gandaki Speaker declared on Sunday that Chief Minister Khagaraj Adhikari had secured a trust vote, triggering yet another controversy on the majority number in the 60-strong provincial assembly. **Pg 2**

OPINION

Nepal has a small but fast-shrinking window of opportunity to reposition its economy as a global outsourcing powerhouse, argue *Kshitiz Acharya and Dipta Shah*. **Pg 4**



MONEY

India has lifted the ban on onion export after nearly five months but has imposed a minimum export price of \$550 a tonne. The move, however, may increase the price sharply in the Nepali market. **Pg 5**

WORLD

Students protesting the Gaza war left a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of Southern California after they were surrounded by police and told they could face arrest if they didn't go. **Pg 6**

CULTURE



Preeti Kulung Rai, 19-year-old midfielder for Nepal's national team, caught everyone's attention on social media during the West Asian Football Federation Women's Championship in February and all for good reasons. **Pg 8**



Visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko pays a courtesy call on President Ramchandra Paudel at Sheetal Niwas on Sunday.

Japan foreign minister talks geopolitics, assures Nepal help in several sectors

The two countries discuss high-level exchanges in 2026 to mark 70 years of bilateral ties.

ANIL GIRI
KATHMANDU, MAY 5

Concluding a day-long Nepal visit, Kamikawa Yoko, the foreign minister of Japan, returned home on Sunday evening.

In her talks with President Ramchandra Paudel, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for

Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha, she brought up the changing geopolitics of Asia while assuring Japanese support to Nepal as it graduates from a least developed country (LDCs) in 2026.

In the delegation-level talks with DPM Shrestha, besides discussing ongoing projects and looking for new avenues of cooperation, Kamikawa also talked about regional geopolitics, two participants in the

meeting told the Post.

Japan and China are rivals in several areas, including in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific. The Japan-US strategic relationship and Japan's active participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), commonly known as the Quad, have also been a source of friction between the two countries.

>> Continued on page 2

Janata Samajbadi Party Nepal, a ruling partner, splits

A faction led by federal council chair Ashok Rai applies to register a new party at the Election Commission.

BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, MAY 5

The ruling Janata Samajbadi Party Nepal split on Sunday after a majority of its lawmakers and over two dozen central committee members applied for the formation of a new party at the Election Commission.

A faction led by the party's federal council chair Ashok Rai registered the application for a new party while the party's chair Upendra Yadav, who is also a deputy prime minister and minister for health and population, is on a trip abroad. Pradip Yadav, a lawmaker of the party, said 29 central committee members along with seven lawmakers have jointly applied to form a new party.

Of the party's 12 House of Representatives members, seven—Rai, Sushila Sherstha, Pradip Yadav, Nawal Kishor Sah, Ranju Kumari Jha, Birendra Mahato and Hasina Khan—have stood in favour of the new party named 'Janata Samajbadi Party' (without the 'Nepal' of the mother party).

Leaders of the Rai-led faction claimed they had to revolt against the party leadership as Yadav was running the party in an autocratic way. "The chair ran the party unilaterally and disrespected lawmakers," Pradip said.

Forest and Environment Minister Nawal Kishor Sah Sudi, who also quit the party, claimed that the need for a new outfit was felt after the chair tried to break the ruling coalition.

"We took this decision for the stabil-



Upendra Yadav

Ashok Rai

With party chair Yadav on a foreign visit, his side dismisses the move as a faction leaving.

ity of the incumbent government," he said. "The party chair [Yadav] is against this coalition but we will continue to support this government."

The leaders with the party establishment, however, say the party has not split. Just a dissident faction parted ways, they claim. "Lawmakers alone don't make a party. A majority of party leaders are with us," said Manish Suman, the party spokesperson. He added that less than 20 percent of the 300-strong central committee had left. The split follows a long-standing discontent in the party. Only after the pressure from the other faction, had the establishment side been ready to hold its general convention.

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Rain expected to provide respite from heat, forest fires and air pollution

Several places of Gandaki, Bagmati and Koshi provinces witnessed thundershowers on Sunday. Met office forecasts more rainfall over next few days.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 5

Several places of Gandaki, Koshi and Bagmati provinces including all of Kathmandu Valley witnessed rainfall on Sunday evening, bringing some respite to the people from haze and air pollution.

The Meteorological Forecasting Division of the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology said cumulonimbus clouds formed due to activation of the local weather system caused thunderstorms and rain in several places of the provinces. Cumulonimbus clouds are associated with extreme weather conditions such as heavy torrential rain, hail storms and lightning.

"Cumulonimbus clouds generally form and dissipate within an hour after heavy rainfall," said Saroj Pudasaini, a meteorologist at the division. "This type of rainfall will occur on Monday and Tuesday as well."



Rain is needed to rid the country of heat and pollution.

Meanwhile, people across Nepal are expected to get respite from scorching heat, haze and air pollution starting Tuesday, as light to moderate rainfall is likely to occur throughout the country on the day.

According to the Met officials the moisture-laden wind blowing from the Bay of Bengal is expected to enter the country and cause rainfall in some places of the hilly areas of Koshi, Bagmati and Gandaki on Monday and throughout the country on Tuesday. Some hilly areas of the said provinces could also see light rainfall with thunder on Sunday night, met officials said.

"Chances of rainfall on Monday are 10 to 20 percent, but on Tuesday, most places across the country would witness light to moderate rainfall," said Rojan Lamichhane, a meteorologist at the division. "Cyclonic circulation, also known as circulating winds, could cause rainfall in particular areas from Tuesday too."

Experts say cyclonic rains occur when the warm moist air comes in contact with cool dry air. At the end of summer, the air above the water heats up and rises, creating a low-pressure area.

The last time the country witnessed rainfall was in the third week of March. Due to the lack

of rainfall for a prolonged period, the country has been experiencing drought-like conditions. People across the Tarai region have been affected by scorching heat of late.

Meanwhile, severe water scarcity has been reported in many places throughout the country.

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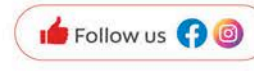


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DISTRICT DIGEST

Man arrested on charge of attempted murder

SALYAN: Police on Sunday arrested a 50-year-old man from Simkharka in ward 8 of Sarda Municipality after he seriously injured his wife with an axe with the intention of killing her over a family dispute. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Nabin Karki of Salyan District Police Office, the man attacked his wife on the head with an axe on Saturday night. She is currently being treated at the district hospital and is out of danger, police said. Further investigation regarding the incident is going on by remanding the man into police custody, said Karki.

Man dies after being hit by a truck

DANG: A 38-year-old local man was killed after being hit by a truck in Beluwa in ward 9 of Tulsipur Sub-Metropolitan City on Sunday. According to Police Inspector Nabachandra Malla of the Dang District Police Office, the man was hit by the truck while standing in front of his shop near Tulsipur bus-park in the same ward. The man was immediately rushed to the hospital, where the doctors pronounced him dead. The driver is a local of Tulsipur-13. Further investigation into the incident is going on, Malla said.

Fire destroys a house in Bhugdeu, Kavre

KAVRE: A fire started by an electrical short circuit destroyed a house belonging to Sudip Ojha, a local of Bhugdeu in ward 6 of Bethanchowk Rural Municipality, Kavrepalanchok, on Saturday night. According to Bhagwan Adhikari, chairman of the rural municipality, the fire started at around 10:45 pm on Saturday and was brought under control with the help of locals and people's representatives at around 2:30 am on Sunday. There were no human casualties, but it has been estimated that property worth Rs2 million was destroyed in the fire.

Two injured in Bhaktapur fire

POST REPORT
BHAKTAPUR, MAY 5

Two people were injured when a fire engulfed a carpet factory in Changunarayan Municipality-2 in Bhaktapur district on Sunday.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Rajan Karki of Bhaktapur Police Range said Buddha Narayan Shrestha, 23, of Ramechhap and Indian national, 29-year-old Manu Urwa, were injured while attempting to contain the fire.

Shrestha is undergoing treatment at the Bhaktapur-based Iwamura Memorial Hospital while the Indian national, who sustained serious burn injuries, was taken to the Nepal Cleft and Burn Centre, Kirtipur.

The fire was brought under control in five hours with the help of seven fire engines, four water tankers, security personnel and locals.

DSP Karki said the fire gutted property worth around Rs18 million, adding the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.

Gandaki Speaker announces majority in favour of Chief Minister Adhikari, Congress protests

The opposition party objects to Speaker Dhital's recognition of 30 as a majority in the 60-strong provincial assembly.



Congress lawmakers protest the Speaker's announcement by waving black flags at the meeting. The protest disrupted the provincial assembly sitting for some time.

DEEPAK PARIYAR & PRATIKSHA KAFLE
POKHARA, MAY 5

The Speaker of Gandaki provincial assembly on Sunday declared that Chief Minister Khagaraj Adhikari secured the trust vote, triggering yet another controversy regarding the majority number in the 60-strong provincial assembly.

Amid protest from the opposition party, Speaker Krishna Prasad Dhital announced that the votes obtained by the chief minister constituted a majority based on the Supreme Court's recent ruling.

As the Speaker tabled the motion for decision, a total of 30 members voted in favour of Chief Minister Adhikari. Then the Speaker claimed that the number was sufficient to prove the majority in the 60-member assembly.

During the floor test, 22 members from the CPN-UML, seven from the CPN (Maoist Centre) and an independ-

ent member voted in favour of Adhikari's proposal to seek the confidence of the assembly.

All 22 members of the Nepali Congress voted against the proposal while two members of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party abstained.

According to Dhital's interpretation, 30 out of the 59 votes cast meant the majority number. His decision has run into controversy for the lack of clarity in whether the Speaker is counted as the total number of assembly members.

The Congress representatives in the assembly protested the Speaker's announcement by waving black flags in the meeting, disrupting the session for some time.

Following the decision, the Congress members of the assembly denounced the Speaker's announcement terming it as "unconstitutional" and "against the parliamentary practice".

"It is sad that the Speaker, who

should play a neutral role in the assembly, works against the spirit of the constitution in favour of a particular person and a party to hold power. Our party seriously objects to the decision," said Nanda Prasad

Nepali Congress likely to move the court against the Speaker's decision.

Neupane, chief whip of the assembly party of the Nepali Congress. He said the Congress would seek legal remedy against the controversial announcement, likely moving the court against the Speaker's decision.

On April 7, UML leader Adhikari became the chief minister claiming the support of 31 members—22 from

his party, eight from the Maoist Centre and an independent member. The eight from the Maoist Centre include Speaker Dhital. Support of 31 members is the minimum requirement for the majority in the 60-strong assembly.

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

On April 9, former chief minister Surendra Raj Pandey registered the petition at the apex court arguing that Adhikari's appointment was unconstitutional. He has demanded the court issue an order for his continuation as chief minister.

In his petition, Pandey argued that the appointment was against the

constitution and established precedents, and demanded that the court stay the appointment and ensure his continuity as the chief minister.

On April 29, a division bench of justices Sapana Pradhan Malla and Saranga Subedi quashed the petition filed by Pandey of Nepali Congress seeking the court's order to annul the appointment of Adhikari as Gandaki chief minister.

The petition was quashed as the provincial assembly was yet to test whether the chief minister commands a majority, the court said in the verdict. The court said a floor test from the assembly was the best way to resolve the matter.

On April 10, the Supreme Court ordered the Adhikari-led Gandaki Province government to refrain from taking any decisions with long-term consequences.

The order issued by the single bench of Justice Binod Sharma has prohibited the government from doing any work other than regular tasks.

The apex court asked defendants including Gandaki Province Head Dilli Raj Bhatta to furnish a written response by April 19, mentioning why the court should not issue an order as sought by the plaintiff.

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

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

Adhikari presented the support of 31 members—22 from his party, eight from the CPN (Maoist Centre) and an independent member. The eight from the Maoist Centre include Speaker Krishna Prasad Dhital. Support of 31 members is required for a minimum majority in the 60-strong provincial assembly. On July 27 last year, the top court annulled the Uddhav Thapa-led Cabinet in Koshi concluding that the Speaker has no stake in the government formation process.

Japanese minister leaves after 'goodwill visit'

>> Continued from page 1

Japan is in favour of a rules-based international order, she said at the delegation-level talks with DPM Shrestha. "We are also in favour of a peaceful Asia," the visiting minister stressed. Rules-based international order is the terminology that the Western bloc uses, particularly in the context of counterbalance to China's actions in the South China Sea.

"She raised some geopolitical issues that Japan currently confronts. She did not name any particular country but we could easily sense which she meant. The issue of the South China Sea, maritime security, freedom of navigation and rule-based international order were the topics of discussion," said one of the participants.

"We don't need to respond to these issues," said the participant. "We listened, and we think we understood her."

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DPM Shrestha held bilateral talks with Kamikawa at Singha Durbar where the two leaders reviewed the progress made in bilateral relations and cooperation so far and discussed ways to elevate economic and development cooperation as well as cultural and people-to-people relations.

The two sides discussed enhancing support and cooperation in Nepal's major developmental priorities such as agriculture, hydropower, infrastructure development, connectivity, export promotion, industrial production, foreign investment and tourism sectors, the foreign ministry stated.

"We have also received an assurance from the Japanese side that they will continue to assist Nepal even after we graduate from the ranks of LDCs," said Amrit Bahadur Rai, the foreign ministry spokesperson.

The matters discussed between the two sides included the transfer of experience, knowledge, skill, and technology to such sectors of Nepal as industrial development, agriculture, hydroelectricity, and infrastructure development. Nepal also hopes to receive Japanese assistance in building road tunnels.

As 2026 marks the 70th anniversary of Nepal-Japan diplomatic relations, the leaders underscored the need to commemorate the year with high-level exchanges and events, said the statement. The two sides also discussed matters relating to increased cooperation at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

In the meeting with Dahal, the Japanese minister discussed issues of bilateral interest and economic cooperation, said Rupak Sapkota, foreign relations adviser to the prime minister. Dahal thanked Kamikawa for Japan's continued support for Nepal's infrastructure and socio-economic development. Kamikawa proposed that Nepal and Japan further build bilateral ties while promising her country's help in Nepal's economic development.

The Japanese foreign minister touched down in Kathmandu in the morning, where Foreign Secretary Sewa Lamsal welcomed her at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

Following her arrival, the Japanese

foreign minister proceeded to Basantapur Durbar Square, where she took some time to explore the historic site before beginning her official engagements.

Speaking to the media, Foreign Minister Shrestha said discussions were held on strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing economic cooperation.

The delegations also discussed several global issues, said Minister Shrestha.

He said no agreement or memorandum of understanding was signed during the goodwill visit. Before wrapping up her visit, the Japanese minister called on Prime Minister Dahal at Singha Durbar and President Ramchandra Paudel at Sheetal Niwas.

During the meeting, Paudel expressed Nepal's concerns over preserving the Himalayas and water resources. The President urged developed nations to show greater sensitivity to reducing the impacts of climate change, according to Kiran Pokharel, press adviser to the President. Paudel emphasised cultural ties between Nepal and Japan, tracing back to the time of Gautam Buddha. He highlighted the harmonious and trouble-free relationship between the two countries.

He hailed Japan as a dependable partner in Nepal's socioeconomic development. On the occasion, Japanese Minister Kamikawa called for collaboration to protect the mountains of Nepal and other countries.

Kamikawa visited Nepal at the invitation of DPM Shrestha. She is the fourth Japanese foreign minister to visit Nepal after the two countries established diplomatic relations in September 1956.

Maximum temperatures dip in some Tarai districts

>> Continued from page 1

Health facilities of the Tarai region have been still grappling with an uptick in cases of diarrhoea, vomiting, and urinary infections, among other ailments.

Many forests throughout the country have been either gutted by fires already or are still being burnt, deteriorating the air quality. Even flights in many places including Pokhara and Lukla, two among the country's most popular tourist destinations, have been affected by the smoke and haze. Kathmandu has remained among the most polluted cities in the world.

The met office had issued a special bulletin of heat wave warning twice in the third and fourth week of April.

Experts say a heat wave occurs when the maximum and minimum temperatures at a location are unusually high over two consecutive days.

One could feel tiredness, weakness, thirst, headache, leg cramps, muscle pain, vomiting, dizziness and fainting due to exposure to excessive heat, according to the department.

Heat-related illnesses include heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat syncope (fainting). Heat stroke is the most severe form of heat-related illness and requires immediate medical attention.

Officials said people should take precautions if the maximum temperature in their place exceeds 40 degrees Celsius. They advise people not to venture out of their homes in the afternoon, to take sufficient fluids and water to remain hydrated and to wear cotton clothes to avoid the adverse effects of the scorching heat.

Meanwhile, the maximum temperature of most districts across Tarai region dropped on Sunday, except in Banke and Kailali. According to the Meteorological Forecasting Division, the maximum temperature of Bhairahawa has been recorded 38.7 degree Celsius, Janakpur 43.7,

Biratnagar 33.6, Simara 36.3, Nepalgunj 41.2 and Dhangadhi 41.5 degrees Celsius. Kathmandu recorded a maximum of 30.3 degrees Celsius.

Kathmandu recorded 36.6 degrees Celsius on May 7, 1989, the most extreme temperature ever recorded in the city.

The World Health Organisation said that heatwaves are among the most dangerous of natural hazards, but they rarely receive adequate attention because their toll and destruction are not always immediately obvious.

People's exposure to heat is increasing due to climate change. Globally, extreme temperature events are observed to be increasing in their frequency, duration and magnitude, according to the UN health body.

Meanwhile, a new report from the World Meteorological Organisation said that the impact of heat waves became more severe in Asia in 2023.

"Asia is warming faster than the global average. The warming trend has nearly doubled since the 1961-1990 period," the report states. "Many countries in the region experienced their hottest year on record in 2023, along with a barrage of extreme conditions from droughts and waves to floods and storms."

According to the report, Asia remained the world's most disaster-hit region from weather, climate and water-related hazards in 2023. Floods and storms caused the highest number of reported casualties and economic losses, according to the report of the organisation, a specialised agency of the United Nations whose mandate covers weather, climate and water resources.

"Climate change exacerbated the frequency and severity of such events, profoundly impacting societies, economies and most importantly, human lives and the environment that we live in," the report quoted WHO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo as saying.

Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the climate crisis and has witnessed extreme weather events over the past decade and a half.

The average annual maximum temperature of Nepal has risen by 0.056 degrees Celsius, according to a study conducted by the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology in 2017. The study shows most districts witnessed increasing temperatures annually.

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Guheshwori, Nepal

Invitation for e-Bids

Date of Publication: 2081/01/24 (6th May 2024)

HPCIDBC invited to eligible bidders for the following bid:

Invitation for electronic Bids (IFB)

Contract Number	Description and location of work	Types of Bids	Bid Document Fee	Bid Validity Period	Minimum Bid Security Amount	Bid Security Validity Period	Pre Bid Meeting	Deadline for Submission of Bid	Opening of Bid
BRBIP-01-080/81	Construction of Office Building in the Premises of HPCIDBC Office, Guheshwori, Kathmandu	E-Bidding	NRs. 5,000.00 (Non-refundable)	90 days after bid opening	NRs. 1,218,000.00	30 days beyond the validity period of bid	26 th May, 2024 11:00 Hours	5 th June, 2024 12:00 Hours	5 th June, 2024 13:30 Hours

Details Invitation for bids (IFB) and a complete set of Bidding Document can be downloaded from PPMO's Website: www.bolpatra.gov.np/egp.

NEWS



POST PHOTO: SUKARYA LAL SHRESTHA

A cultural troupe takes a break during the once-in-12-years Sikali Jatra at Lagan Tole, Kathmandu on Friday.

Top court hands over Timilsina to police

Timilsina had reportedly provided 'fake' audio to a news website.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 5

The Supreme Court on Sunday handed over Raj Kumar Timilsina, who had reportedly provided a 'fake' audio to a news website, to police.

A division bench of apex court justices Hari Prasad Phuyal and Mahesh Sharma Paudel had summoned Timilsina to testify before the court after Yubraj Kandel, publisher of Sidha Kura, told the court that Timilsina provided them with the controversial audio.

The bench, while hearing a contempt of court case, ordered to hand over Timilsina to the police through the registrar after his statement was not completed. His statement will continue on Monday, the court said.

Similarly, publisher Kandel and executive editor Nabin Dhungana of the website have been asked to appear before the court on Monday as well.

During an initial hearing on April 29, the apex court concluded that the audiovisual content published on sidhakura.com, a Kathmandu-based news website, was prima facie a malicious attempt to defame the judiciary, obstruct the judicial proceedings and

scandalise the court.

The website had aired the content claiming that the chairpersons of two leading media houses were part of a meeting with the incumbent and former Supreme Court justices and senior advocates to dismiss over 400 corruption cases in the court. The April 21, 2021 verdict was part of the deal, it had claimed. However, the court has found the claim to be baseless.

After a hearing, the top court had directed Kandel and Dhungana to be present at the court with evidence to substantiate their reports and to answer why they shouldn't be booked for contempt of court.

The petition had demanded a maximum punishment against Kandel and Dhungana and their team members in a contempt of court case.

The top court launched a suo moto contempt of court case against the publisher and the editor for allegedly publishing defamatory content against one of its justices.

Media organisations including the Press Council Nepal, Media Society Nepal and the legal fraternity had immediately condemned the website for publishing baseless content.

JSP Nepal splits following longstanding intra-party feud

>> Continued from page 1

Mohammad Istiyak Rai, a leader of the party, had decided to challenge Yadav, the party chair, in the upcoming general elections. However, the party split before the convention could be held.

Rajendra Shrestha has been named the federal council chair of the yet-to-be-legalised party, which has announced a 31-member central committee. Rai is the chairperson while Renu Yadav has been named the joint-chair. It has four vice-chairpersons, a general secretary, deputy general secretaries and secretaries, among others.

Though the Rai-led faction has sought recognition as a new party under the Political Party Act, there are no clear legal provisions to guide the party formation process after a split in an existing one.

On August 18, 2021, the then Sher Bahadur Deuba government had issued an ordinance to amend the Act to ease the split of two parties—the CPN-UML and the Janata Samajbadi Party.

Revising a provision in the Act, which requires the support of 40 percent members both in the parliamentary party and the central committee in order to split the party, the ordinance lowered the bar to 20 percent

in either of the committees.

On August 26 the same year, Madhav Kumar Nepal of the UML and Mahantha Thakur of the Janata Samajbadi Party registered new parties, the CPN (Unified Socialist) and the Loktantrik Samajbadi Party, respectively.

Two days later, the ordinance was repealed, having served its purpose. The provisions amended by the ordinance have become void after it was repealed. Though a bill to reactivate those provisions of the Act has been registered in Parliament, it is yet to be endorsed.

"We have received the application [on new party registration]," said Ram Prasad Bhandari, an election commissioner. "A proper decision will be taken after evaluating the existing legal provisions."

Before the split, in the 275-member federal lower house, the ruling parties had 154 seats—16 more than the magic number of 138.

Among them, the CPN-UML has 79 seats (including the Speaker and one suspended lawmaker), the CPN (Maoist Centre) has 32, the Rastriya Swatantra Party has 21, the Janata Samajbadi Party Nepal had 12 seats while and the CPN (Unified Socialist) has 10 seats.

Finance Secretary Marasini seeks international funds for climate action

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, MAY 5

Finance Secretary Madhu Kumar Marasini has urged the Asian Development Bank and other multilateral development banks to prioritise financing for coordinated, focused, and tangible climate actions that complement current initiatives while maximising infrastructure projects that also contribute positively to climate objectives.

Marasini said Nepal's focus is on aligning financing with the country's current projects, improving infrastructure, and addressing climate change in an integrated manner.

"With political stability, Nepal stands at a pivotal juncture in its pursuit of economic growth and prosperity," he said while addressing the 57th annual meetings of board of governors of the Asian Development Bank held in Tbilisi of Georgia. "The Government of Nepal is dedicated to ensuring good governance, social justice, and economic prosperity."

He also said that Nepal's efforts are directed towards achieving sustainable development goals, with equal emphasis on climate action, social inclusion, and economic development.

"To achieve our goals of economic prosperity, graduation from LDC status, and meeting the Sustainable Development

Goals, we face a significant funding gap that cannot be filled solely through public finance," he said. "We need to address this sizeable financing gap by leveraging investments from private capital."

The finance secretary informed the international community at the event about the third investment summit recently held in Kathmandu. He said the ADB can play a significant role in mobilising technical assistance and knowledge solutions to design attractive investment arrangements in sectors where Nepal has comparative advantage, such as tourism, hydropower, and information technology.

"Considering the huge financing needs and underlying fiscal challenges, I call upon the ADB and other development partners to substantially increase concessional resources," Secretary Marasini said. "I believe Nepal's home grown Green Resilient Inclusive Development (GRID) approach provides a partnership platform to all development partners to join hands in delivering development impact in necessary scale and speed."

He also called for additional efforts for deeper economic integration to establish South Asia as an emerging region. "We now need to focus on enhancing connectivity, innovation, and digitalisation by leveraging our collective strength for the benefit of the entire region," he added.

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OUR VIEW

Do it together

Ruling and opposition parties must join hands to collectively tackle co-operative fraud.

It is good to know that Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is thinking hard about solving the problems of victims of fraudulent co-operatives' operators. Addressing the CPN (Maoist Centre) parliamentary party meeting on Saturday, he accepted that the misuse of the deposits of co-operatives was a grave issue and as such discussions were underway both in and outside the government to form a parliamentary probe committee. Alluding to the demand of the Nepali Congress, the main opposition, that a parliamentary committee be formed to investigate the charges of embezzlement of co-operative funds by Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane, Dahal said the issue would be dealt in totality and no single person would be targeted. That sounds fair enough. If a parliamentary probe is constituted to look into the larger issue, Lamichhane can be a subject of the same investigation. Moreover, the goal here is not to target or punish one person but to do justice to the countless victims of fraud. Yet the Congress, to whom Dahal has communicated the same message, remains sceptical. It sees efforts to widen the scope of the parliamentary probe as yet another attempt to save Lamichhane. The Congress will accept no such 'conspiracy', the party leaders say.

Their scepticism is justified. Previously, Dahal had dismissed any kind of demand for parliamentary investigation against Lamichhane. The home minister's Rastrriya Swatantra Party, with its 21 seats in the lower house, remains an indispensable part of the ruling coalition. Opposition parties reckon that Dahal won't do anything that is inimical to Lamichhane's interest. This is why, as things stand, the Congress has vowed to continue obstructing the House even after the start of the new budget session. We would like to believe that a party with the Congress' democratic pedigree understands the importance of a functional parliament, particularly during budget-making, and it would as such not hinder any budget-related bills. Yet it is also incumbent on Prime Minister Dahal to try to take the main opposition into confidence. He should offer a clear assurance that any parliamentary probe will be free and fair and there will be no efforts to shield anyone from investigation. This will not be easy after Dahal 'betrayed' the Congress and joined hands with the CPN-UML to fashion a new coalition at the centre just two months ago. But he should still try and we believe a middle-way can be found.

The meeting point between the ruling and opposition parties is clear enough: the problem of embezzlement of co-operatives' funds has become too big to ignore or hide under the rug. If this is not dealt with soon, perhaps hundreds of thousands of victims will have no option but to take to the street asking for justice and compensation. The longer the problem lingers, the greater the chances of their anger boiling over. This will be the case irrespective of whichever political parties are in power. It would thus be wise for the major parties to join hands and collectively tackle the issue now.

Are we serious about our IT industry?

Digital (re)skilling is required to meet the expected labour demand for Nepal's "billion dollar" IT industry.

KSHITIZ ACHARYA & DIPTA SHAH



There are a few noteworthy things in the mainstream discourse about Nepal's IT services industry. First, this industry has grown not because of, but in spite of, the Government of Nepal (GoN). Next, despite the social media hype, the industry is still in its infancy and nowhere near the mechanically cited "half-billion dollar industry". Further, realising exponential growth in export-oriented IT services is the most immediate and achievable option to accelerate sustainable, equitable and inclusive job growth over the short-to-medium term.

There are several examples of IT services graduating into the mainstream. Also, there is evidence of constructive, forward-looking public sector support to create enabling environments along with sizable public sector investments. The Silicon Valley we know today grew from funding and research enabled by the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) starting in the 1950s. The IT sector in the Singaporean city-state grew out of recognising geographical limitations to traditional growth paths when that country was founded in the 1960s. India's policy reforms that targeted the IT sector in the 1980s and 90s eventually gave rise to the juggernaut that is India's IT services industry today.

Nepal's experience is almost entirely entrepreneur-driven. The tech industry has innovated business models while regulators and policy-makers have struggled to keep pace. This is why the country's digital ecosystem is replete with examples of reactive posturing by the government on everything—from retroactive VAT dues to taxation of capital gains on ownership transfers in off-shore jurisdictions.

A cynical view of such misguided attempts paints a picture of the bureaucracy that intends to punish success and stunt the growth of IT services industry. A more balanced take suggests a bureaucracy implementing anachronistic rules atop an industry with multi-jurisdictional business



SHUTTERSTOCK

models, which is unfathomable. Adding to this confusion is the introduction of assumption-laden data points. This confusion compounds with endless regurgitating of sensational narratives on the potential of the IT services sector and the gap between reality and a make-believe world worth hundreds of millions of US dollars, if not billions.

From a valuation perspective, Nepal's export-oriented comparative advantage is services (not products), so trading multiples for Nepal-based counterparts of foreign-domiciled companies are naturally subdued. From a revenue standpoint, Nepali companies have successfully deployed cost centres for their foreign-domiciled (parent) entities as the business model. This lays bare an obvious but glossed-over contradiction in forecasts about the potential of IT services in Nepal, i.e., the assumed availability of a skilled and growing IT labour pool into the indefinite future.

The labour conditions required to evolve from the current state to a future where Nepal as a destination for IT services is not assured. Migration data suggests the contrary: Nepali youths, the backbone of a desired services sector boom, are leaving Nepal in search of gainful employment in staggering numbers. Those leaving include the youngest and most qualified IT professionals the Nepali ecosystem can offer.

Highly celebrated outsourcing companies in Nepal are busy establishing operations in tier-2 and tier-3 cities in India and elsewhere. This dynamic is rising because wage rates naturally gravitate toward market-clearing levels regardless of physical location. In this eventuality, the rational approach for corporate decision-makers will be to grow their businesses in jurisdictions where the supply of IT labour is relatively abundant and the regulatory environments are predictable. Without deliberate action, Nepal is not well-positioned on either of these fronts.

These considerations lead to a simplistic outlook: For export-oriented IT services in Nepal to reach their potential, one must consider not just the theoretical possibility of global demand but also the practical limits of a faltering labour supply base. In addition, one must also account for upward pressures on prevailing IT services wage rates in Nepal, which seek equalisation with global benchmarks adjusted for factors like the relative cost of living. This dynamic entails margin compression for Nepali IT services businesses on the one hand and consequences for IT products and services for the domestic market on the other.

There is a substantial and unmet role for the government in helping enable the transition from academic forecasts to a reality of exponential growth

in IT services. While attempts over the past five years to convert the Digital Nepal Framework (2019) into investments in public digital infrastructure and policy reforms have been less successful, efforts underway, including those under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister through Nepal's eGovernance Commission, offer hope at a streamlined policy environment with positive knock-on impacts for Nepal's IT outsourcing industry.

Further, there is room to do more in digital (re)skilling to meet the expected labour demand for Nepal's "billion dollar" IT services industry. Even though this is a complex endeavour, it can benefit the entire digital ecosystem if thoughtfully implemented. The government's participation in a PPP model, similar to that of India's National Skill Development Corporation, could be an avenue to be explored.

Nepal has a small but fast-shrinking window of opportunity to reposition its economy as a global outsourcing powerhouse. Success on this front would be far more transformational and impactful than any other alternative over the short-to-medium term horizon.

Acharya is Head of Operations at VikasaTech Pvt Ltd and Shah is Managing Partner at 54i Ventures Pvt Ltd.

MONDAY INTERVIEW PADAM GIRI

It does not suit the Congress to change its position on transitional justice

The main intent behind demanding a parliamentary probe against the home minister is to ask for his resignation once the probe committee is formed.

The budget session of the federal parliament starts Friday without the resolution of the long-standing differences between the ruling and opposition parties over the formation of a parliamentary committee to investigate alleged cooperative fraud charges against Rabi Lamichhane, deputy prime minister and minister for home affairs. While several bills await parliamentary approval, whether the House will function smoothly is still uncertain. *The Post's* Binod Ghimire sat down with Padam Giri, minister for law, justice and parliamentary affairs, to discuss the government's plan to make the House productive and its effort to get crucial bills endorsed in the upcoming session. He is also a CPN-UML central committee member. Excerpts:

The new session is starting without resolving the old deadlock. How will you ensure its smooth functioning?

The Nepali Congress should revisit its demand for the formation of a parliamentary committee targeting a particular person. This is not natural. What are the problems facing the cooperative sector as a whole, which types of fraudulent acts have taken place and who is involved in those cases, however, can be studied. We can constitute a parliamentary committee or other types of panels for such study, which can even recommend actions against those involved in fraud. Why should the main opposition shy away from a detailed study of the entire cooperative sector and want to focus on a particular case and a particular person? I am hopeful the Congress being a responsible democratic party will agree on forming a panel with a broader mandate.

The prime minister on Saturday said a probe committee can be formed. What kind of committee is he talking about?

He is talking about a committee to study the malpractices prevalent in the cooperative sector, to identify the problems, suggest their solutions while also recommending actions against those involved in fraudulent activities. The main intent behind demanding a probe against a particu-

lar person is that once a committee is formed, the party [the Congress] will ask for his resignation. It is an ill-intended demand aimed at creating problems.

Media have reported problems in several cooperatives. Would it be feasible to form separate probe committees for each incident?

We are in continuous informal discussions with the main opposition and there are plans to discuss the matter formally in an all-party meeting to be held very soon.

How will the budget get endorsed if Congress continues to obstruct the House in case the probe panel is not formed as per its demand?

Why just probe the home minister and the cooperative where he is allegedly involved? Why not investigate the cooperatives where the leaders from the Congress or any other party might also be involved? We are hopeful that the Congress will analyse whether its demand is rational. I cannot believe it will block budget endorsement.

Have you identified why the federal parliament has become so unproductive in terms of bill endorsement?

The performance of the parliament is not satisfactory. Getting the bills endorsed as quickly as possible has been my priority ever since taking charge of the ministry. Three bills have been endorsed after I became the minister just two months back. Before that, only one bill had gotten through the parliament in more than one year since the present House of Representatives came into being. That was a matter of shame.

Despite the UML then being the opposition party, we had raised the issue in the parliament. It is the government's responsibility to facilitate the deliberations over the bill and their endorsement. As a law, justice and parliamentary affairs minister, it is my major responsibility to make sure the House sessions are fruitful. I am working accordingly. There are 24 bills under consideration in the federal parliament including 23 under the lower house. I am taking initiatives to



Padam Giri, Minister for law, justice and parliamentary affairs

get them endorsed in the forthcoming session. The amendment bill to the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TJ) Act, school education bill, bill to amend some Nepal Acts, amendment bill to the Banking Office and Punishment Act, among others, are our top priorities.

In January your ministry had identified 109 bills that needed to be presented and endorsed. But only two of them have been registered in the parliament. Why?

Our ministry has already consented to different ministries to draft 23 bills. The ministry itself is working on eight more. Several of those bills will be registered in the upcoming session.

the necessity of broader consultation and commit to it in the days to come.

Let's come to an amendment bill on the Transitional Justice Act. What is stopping the bill from being finalised?

The Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee of the parliament has resolved most contentious issues after long discussions. We are close to finding meeting points on some disputed issues. We continue to engage in formal and informal discussions among the parties, with a plan to endorse it from the upcoming session. The Congress, when in government, didn't have any differences over the bill. Rather our party had some concerns, which we are trying to sort out.

I don't think it suits the Congress to change its position after being sent to the opposition. People are closely following the position of the different parties on the bill.

Listing murder as a serious violation and reduced sentencing are visibly the most contentious issues on the bill. What is the meeting point on these issues?

Our party's [the UML's] position is clear. All killings of the disarmed people other than in the clashes are serious violations of human rights. All the parties have a common view over reduced sentencing but there are differences over its modality.

We must be mindful that our transitional justice process delivers justice to the victims. The process cannot move ahead amid reservations from the victims. It is meaningless to push ahead with a process that is not acceptable to concerned stakeholders including the international community.

The discussions among the parties are largely focused on these issues. From next week, the House committee will resume deliberations.

A committee to recommend the names of the office bearers in two transitional justice commissions has been formed amid reservations from different quarters. Will it still recommend the names or wait until the bill is endorsed?

Let us not forget that the committee was formed in line with a time-bound Supreme Court verdict. How can we ignore the court's order? A bill doesn't get endorsed in the government's interest. It is a prerogative of the sovereign parliament. Demanding a halt to the formation of the recommendation committee when the court has already given its verdict is not a responsible act.

I have come to know that the National Human Rights Commission hasn't sent its representative to the committee, which is wrong. Being a responsible constitutional body it can't balk at implementing the court's order. It should send its representative. If there are concerns, s/he can present them before the committee.

The committee has inducted two retired judges as its members which was the demands of the victims and the other stakeholders. Similarly, there has been an agreement that two members of the five-member commissions will be retired judges. We have tried to abide by the victims' concerns as much as we can.

When will the Supreme Court get justices in vacant positions?

Three positions are already vacant and the fourth will be vacant in a matter of a month or so. Justices for all four positions will be selected in a week or two.

Voices are growing mainly from the Congress to amend the constitution to revisit the electoral system. What is your opinion?

There has been no discussion on changing the electoral modality. Yes, there is a growing concern that we should find a way to ensure greater stability. We need to discuss how.

Is there any possibility of the UML and Congress coming together to form a government?

This is now a closed chapter. The two parties had tried to find out possibilities for a tie-up when the present coalition was not even formed. Now there are no such discussions, formally or informally.

FOREX

US Dollar	133.78
Euro	143.95
Pound Sterling	167.85
Swiss Franc	147.73
Australian Dollar	88.43
Canadian Dollar	97.75
Singapore Dollar	99.13
Japanese Yen (10)	8.74
Chinese Yuan	18.48
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.67
Qatari Riyal	36.69
Thai Bhat	3.64
UAE Dhiram	36.42
Malaysian Ringgit	28.22
Korean Won (100)	9.86

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 135,400
Silver	Rs 1,640

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

Siddharth Hotel in Surkhet becomes first four-star property in Karnali Province



KATHMANDU: Karnali Province now has a four-star hotel. Under the management of Siddharth Hospitality, Siddharth Hotel has started operating a four-star hotel in Birendranagar, Surkhet, the first in Karnali Province. The hotel has 4 suites, 45 deluxe and 15 standard rooms, according to a press release. The hotel has four conference halls, a banquet hall with a capacity to accommodate more than 600 people, a pool bar and a restaurant. It has facilities such as a fitness club, spa, sauna, steam, gym, swimming pool, and beauty parlour. The hotel currently employs 70 people.

Sri Lanka, Japan agree to resume stalled projects such as light rail

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka and Japan agreed on Saturday to work to resume stalled bilateral projects including a \$1.5 billion Japanese-funded light rail. The two nations announced the agreement during a visit to Sri Lanka by Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa. Sri Lanka is working to restructure its foreign debt as part of a \$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), after its worst financial crisis in more than seven decades in 2022 triggered a foreign debt default. Japan expects the early signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Sri Lanka and the official creditor committee appointed to assist in restructuring Sri Lanka's bilateral debt, which Japan co-chairs, Kamikawa said. (REUTERS)

French cosmetics sector eyes reprieve on Chinese import rules

PARIS: France's world-leading cosmetics sector is counting on talks between Xi Jinping and Emmanuel Macron next week to help minimize the impact on French companies of tough new Chinese import rules requiring the sharing of formulas and manufacturing know-how. President Xi's first visit to Europe in five years comes amid a backdrop of tense trade relations, with the European Union threatening China's electric vehicle and green energy industries with tariffs. But progress towards an agreement between France and China on the regulation of cosmetics, including lipstick and fragrances, could be a bright spot in discussions in Paris next week. President Macron's office said ahead of the meeting that cosmetics would be a topic of "great attention," and that they sought to "find a solution that also protects the interests of our companies." (REUTERS)

China's Zeekr seeks up to \$5.13 billion valuation in US IPO

BENGALURU: Electric vehicle maker Zeekr Intelligent Technology Holding said on Friday it was targeting a valuation of up to \$5.13 billion in its US initial public offering (IPO), the first major floatation of a China-based company in more than two years. Zeekr is looking to raise up to \$367.5 million by selling 17.5 million American depositary shares (ADSs) priced between \$18 and \$21 each. The IPO will test investors' appetite for Chinese companies, given the simmering tensions between the two biggest economies in the world over trade, intellectual property and the future of Taiwan. (REUTERS)

India lifts onion export ban but traders say price in Nepal could double

The neighbour shifted onion export from 'prohibited' to 'free' but imposed a minimum export price of \$550 per tonne.

□ **KRISHANA PRASAIN**
KATHMANDU, MAY 5

India has lifted the ban on onion export after nearly five months but has imposed a minimum export price of \$550 per tonne. The move, however, may increase the price sharply in the Nepali market.

In its notification issued on Saturday, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade of India said that the export policy for onions is amended from "prohibited" to "free", subject to the set minimum export price with immediate effect and until further orders.

With the floor price, Nepali traders say onion may cost more than Rs100 per kg, adding the transport costs and the value-added tax (VAT), the additional levy the Nepal government charges on imported vegetables, said Mohan Baniya, president of the Potato-Onion Import-Export and Wholesaler Association.

Currently, onions are available for Rs60 per kg in the wholesale market and cost Rs90 per kg in retail.

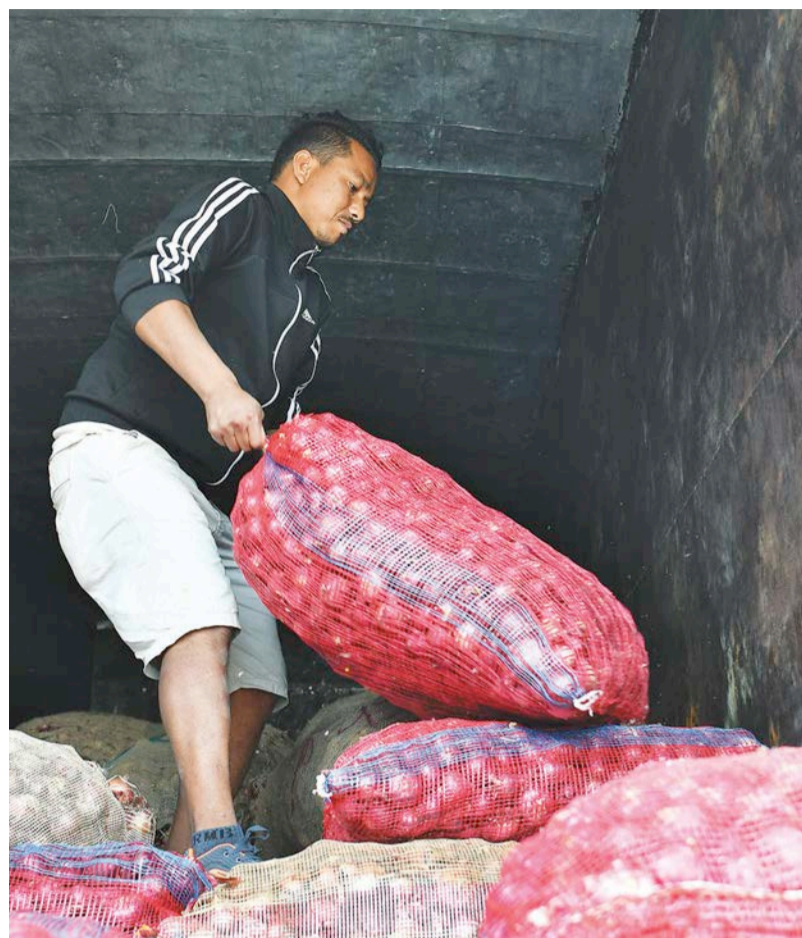
The red bulb, the vital kitchen ingredient, has been restricted by India since December last year. Despite the ban, onion supply is abundant in the Nepali market, according to the traders.

Baniya said traders haven't imported onions in the last five months. "However, there is no dearth of onions in the market, thanks to illegal imports." India decided to lift the ban, after taking into account estimated rabi production in 2024 and good kharif (summer-sown) prospects because of above-normal monsoon, Reuters said quoting an Indian government official.

"Onion supply was normal despite the Indian ban in the past months. But now, the minimum export price may send the price higher," said Binay Shrestha, information officer at the Kalimati Fruits and Vegetable Market Development Board, Nepal's largest vegetable trading centre.

"During India's ban on onion, its smuggling thrived in Nepal mainly due to the price difference between the two neighbours."

Onions, which are a major ingredi-



POST FILE PHOTO

Onions are available for Rs60 per kg in the wholesale market and cost Rs90 per kg in retail.

ent in Indian food and a politically sensitive commodity, are cultivated three times a year—in monsoon, winter and summer.

As there is no commercial cultivation of the crop in Nepal, the country is dependent on the spice from India.

Nepal gets almost all of its onion requirement from the southern neighbour, and any ripple there is amplified when it reaches the Nepali bazaar.

In Nepal, Chinese onions, which are available in bigger sizes and are relatively cheaper, are not preferred due to their taste.

The ban was enforced by the world's biggest exporter of the vegetable last

December and then extended in March. The price nearly doubled to Rs200 a kg in retail in the Nepali market, from Rs120 per kg, following India's export ban.

Prices, however, started to cool down, after smuggling soared.

Nepal police seized thousands of tonnes of onion being smuggled through the southern border, according to reports.

Despite the Nepali customs office in the boarding area conducting regular inspections, onions continued to be smuggled, particularly on motorbikes.

The policy changes come in the middle of staggered voting in India's

EU probes on Chinese subsidies and imports

□ **REUTERS**
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, MAY 5

The European Union launched an investigation into China's procurement of medical devices on Wednesday in a latest effort to protect home-grown manufacturers.

It has also launched several probes into whether Chinese clean tech producers are dumping subsidised goods on its market and whether Chinese-owned companies unfairly benefit from subsidies while operating inside the EU. The European Commission, which is carrying out the investigations, says its aim is to prevent unfair competition and market distortion.

Here's what you need to know about the investigations:

The European Commission launched a probe into Chinese public procurement of medical devices, the EU's official journal said on April 24.

The investigation is the first under the EU International Procurement Instrument, which aims to prevent countries from unfairly favouring domestic suppliers. If the Commission

finds that European suppliers don't have fair access to the Chinese market, it could place restrictions on Chinese medical device companies bidding in EU public tenders. The investigation is to be concluded within nine months, although the Commission can extend this period by a further five months. The EU is investigating subsidies received by Chinese suppliers of wind turbines destined for Europe, the bloc's anti-trust commissioner Margrethe Vestager said on April 9.

It will look into wind park development in Spain, Greece, France, Romania and Bulgaria, Vestager said without naming specific companies.

This spoon can be planted and could one day blossom into an herb or vegetable. China said the probe was "discriminatory" against Chinese enterprises and endorsed protectionism.

The Commission opened two investigations under the EU Foreign Subsidies Regulation into whether two Chinese bidders benefited excessively from subsidies in their offers in a public tender for a solar power park in Romania, it said on April 3.

Boeing's Starliner finally ready for first crewed mission

□ **AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**
CAPE CANAVERAL, MAY 5

Launch day is finally here: Boeing's Starliner capsule blasts off on Monday to the International Space Station on its first crewed mission—several years after SpaceX first achieved the same milestone.

The flight, a final test before Starliner takes up regular service for NASA, is critical for the US aerospace giant, whose reputation has suffered of late due to safety issues with some of its passenger jets. Starliner, which was first ordered a decade ago by the US space agency, has had a bumpy ride to the finish line, with surprise setbacks and multiple delays—a saga Boeing is eager to complete.

Astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams are set to leave Cape Canaveral at 10:34 pm on Monday aboard the capsule.

Starliner will be propelled into orbit by an Atlas V rocket made by United Launch Alliance, a Boeing-Lockheed Martin joint venture.

Wilmore and Williams, Navy-

trained space program veterans, have each been to the ISS twice, traveling once on a shuttle and then aboard a Russian Soyuz vessel. "It's going to be like going back home," Williams said.

As for the Boeing spacecraft, Wilmore said: "Everything is new. Everything's unique." "I don't think either one of us ever dreamed that we'd be associated with the first flight of a brand new spacecraft."

For NASA, the stakes are also high: Having a second option for human space flight in addition to SpaceX's Dragon vehicles is "really important," said Dana Weigel, manager of the agency's International Space Station program.

Weigel said the flexibility could help NASA manage emergency situations, such as problems with a particular space vehicle.

Starliner is scheduled to arrive at the ISS at about 0500 GMT Wednesday, and remain there for a little over a week. Tests will be performed to check it is working properly, and then Williams and Wilmore will reboard the capsule to return home. A success-

France's Macron set to press China's Xi on trade, Ukraine

□ **REUTERS**
PARIS, MAY 5

French President Emmanuel Macron will likely urge China's President Xi Jinping, who arrives in Paris on Sunday for a rare visit, to reduce trade imbalances and to use his influence with Russia over the war in Ukraine.

Macron's hopes are unlikely to be easily fulfilled during a time of mounting trade disputes between Europe and China.

France is backing a European Union probe into Chinese electric vehicle exports, and in January, Beijing opened an investigation into mostly French-made imports of brandy, a move widely seen as a fit-for-tat retaliation for a growing set of EU probes.

The EU's 27 members—and in particular France and Germany—are divided on their attitude towards China.

"We want to obtain reciprocity of exchanges and have the elements of our economic security taken into account," Macron said in an interview with French newspaper La Tribune on Sunday ahead of Xi's two-day visit, his first trip to the region in five years.

Xi was due to arrive at around 4 p.m. (1400 GMT). His official meetings will include talks with Macron and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen. The EU's 27 members—and in particular France and Germany—are divided on their attitude towards China. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will not join Macron and Xi in Paris due to prior commitments, sources said.

"In Europe, we are not unanimous on the subject because certain players still see China as essentially a market of opportunities," Macron said, without naming any countries. These divisions could undermine the EU's ability to influence the Asian giant.

France will also seek to make progress on opening the Chinese market to its agricultural exports and resolve issues around the French cosmetic industry's concerns about intellectual property rights, officials said.

Heatwave hammers Thailand's stinky but lucrative durian farms

□ **AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**
CHANTHABURI (THAILAND), MAY 5

Clambering hand-over-hand, sweat dripping into his eyes, a durian labourer expertly slices a cumbersome fruit from a tree before tossing it down to land with a soft thump in his colleague's waiting arms some 15 metres below.

Among Thailand's most famous and lucrative exports, the pungent "king of fruits" is as distinctive in its smell as its spiky green-brown carapace, and has been farmed in the kingdom for hundreds of years.

But a vicious heatwave engulfing Southeast Asia has resulted in smaller yields and spiralling costs, with growers and sellers increasingly panicked as global warming damages the industry. "This year is a crisis," durian farmer Busaba Nakkipat told AFP bluntly.

The weather-beaten 54-year-old took over her parents' farm in eastern Chanthaburi province—Thailand's durian heartland—three decades ago.

"If the hot weather continues to rise in the future, it'll be over," she said. "Farmers wouldn't be able to produce durian anymore."

Durian season usually lasts from March until June, but the soaring temperatures—which in her province have hovered around 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) for weeks—and subsequent drought have shortened the harvest. Busaba said the heat causes the durian, which is graduated by weight and size, to ripen faster so it does not grow to its full—most valuable—size.

"The quality of the durian won't meet the standard," she said.

And not only is she getting less money for the crop, Busaba's operational costs have risen. Since March a drought has sucked water from the wells, so to keep her precious durian trees alive Busaba is forced to bring in thousands of litres by truck.

"We have to buy 10 water trucks for 120,000 litres of water for one-time watering the whole 10-rai (1.6 hectares) of our farm," she said, repeating the process every other day, at a cost of thousands of dollars.

"We have prayed for rain," she said. "But there was no rain."

Thailand's durian exports are worth billions and are the kingdom's third most valuable agricultural product—behind rice and rubber.

But in the nearby durian market, anxiety is running high among stall-holders, many of them with family businesses going back generations.

Siriwan Roopkaew, manning her mother's stall, said the lack of water has impacted the size of the fruit, but for now prices remain high thanks to demand from China.

Around 95 percent of Thailand's durian exports are to China, which shipped nearly \$4.6 billion worth of the love-it-or-hate-it fruit from the kingdom in 2023, according to data from Beijing's commerce ministry.

But the weather is threatening Thailand's dominance.

In May Chinese state media reported an almost 50 percent rise in durian imported from Vietnam, citing heat and drought in Thailand.

"Hot weather means there will be less durian. Even this year, there is less durian," Siriwan, 26, said.

"Normally, my stall would be full of durian by now." While farmers worried about water, she said, sellers like her family were more concerned about the knock-on economics.

"Less durian means our earnings are less," she said, "so it'd be hard for us to live the whole year."



This photo taken on May 2 shows a worker harvesting durians at BB Garden durian farm in Thailand's eastern Chanthaburi province.

AFP/RSS



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‘अर्थतन्त्रको आधारभूत आवश्यकता: राजनीतिक नेतृत्वको सामूहिक प्रतिबद्धता’

अर्थतन्त्रको अवस्था देखाउने क्षेत्रहरूको आँकडा हेर्ने हो भने कतै उत्साह त कतै निराशा देखिन्छ। निरन्तर बढिरहेको रेमिट्यान्स र घटिरहेको आयातका कारण विदेशी मुद्रा सञ्चितिले हरेक महिना नयाँ कीर्तिमान बनाइरहेको छ। तर नेपालीले दुःखले कमाएर पठाएको पैसा चलायमान भएको छैन। बैंक तथा वित्तीय क्षेत्रमा साढे ६ खर्ब रुपैयाँ थन्किएर बसेको छ। बैंक ब्याजदर घट्दो क्रममा छ तर व्यापार-व्यवसाय गर्नेले सहजै ऋण पाइरहेका छैनन्। नवीन सोच भएका नवप्रवर्तक र ऋण पाउन सक्ने क्षमताका उद्योगी-व्यवसायीले थप लगानी विस्तार गरिरहेका छैनन्।

एक दशकयता तीन वटा लगानी सम्मेलन भएका छन्, तर प्रत्यक्ष वैदेशिक लगानी (एफडीआई) अपेक्षित रूपमा बढ्न सकेको छैन। सरकारी खर्च र आम्दानीमा पनि उस्तै समस्या छ। लक्ष्यअनुसार राजस्व संकलन भएको छैन, संकलन भएको राजस्वअनुसार पुँजीगत खर्च भएको छैन। वैदेशिक सहायता र अनुदान पनि बढ्न सकेको छैन।

निजी र सरकारी क्षेत्रका विभिन्न अध्ययन-अनुसन्धानअनुसार धेरै साना उद्योग व्यवसाय बन्द भएका छन्। सञ्चालनमा रहेका उद्योग पनि ४० प्रतिशतभन्दा कम क्षमतामा चलिरहेका छन्, तिनको उत्पादन स्वतः घटेको छ। उद्योग-व्यवसायले जनशक्ति कटौती गरिरहेका छन् भने नयाँ रोजगारी सिर्जना भएको छैन। युवा पलायनको संख्याले हरेक वर्ष कीर्तिमान कायम गरिरहेको छ। उपभोग्य जनशक्ति पलायन हुँदा बजारमा उपभोग्य वस्तुको मागमा कमी आई दीर्घकालका लागि अर्थतन्त्रमा असर निरिर्तै छ।

अर्थतन्त्रको बागडोर सम्हाल्दै आएको राजनीतिक नेतृत्वबीच ठूलो विमति छैन, तर आन्तरिक समस्या समाधान गर्न आमसहमति पनि देखिएको छैन। आन्तरिक समस्यालाई सम्बोधन नगर्ने र अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय अवस्थालाई दोष दिने प्रवृत्तिले नेतृत्वलाई बहाना त प्राप्त हुन्छ, तर यसले आमसर्वसाधारणको जीवनमा कस्तो निराशा छाडिरहेको छ। यो अवस्थाको अन्त्य अहिले नगरे कहिले ? फेरि राजनीतिक दलहरूले नै नगरे कसले ? दलहरूलाई एक ठाउँमा ल्याएर सार्वजनिक रूपमा प्रतिबद्ध बनाउन र सरोकारवालाका आवाज तथा नीति निर्माताका योजना अभिव्यक्त गर्न कान्तिपुर इकोनमिक समिट-२०२४

कान्तिपुर इकोनमिक समिट-२०२४

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"मेरो पहिलो रोजगार"



WORLD

Pro-Palestinian protesters at USC comply with school orders to leave the camp



Pro-Palestinian demonstrators remove belongings from an encampment after police arrived on the campus at the University of Southern California on Sunday in Los Angeles.

□ ASSOCIATED PRESS
LOS ANGELES, MAY 5

Students protesting the ongoing war in Gaza left a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of Southern California early on Sunday after they were surrounded by police and told they could face arrest if they didn't go.

The move, days before commencement was set to begin, came after the university said campus safety officers, assisted by the Los Angeles Police Department, were clearing the area. "If you are in the center of campus, please leave. People who don't leave could be arrested," USC said on the social media platform X at about 4:15 am.

Livestream video from student journalists showed the encampment had emptied out as police formed a line to move remaining protesters away and stop people from re-entering. The encampment had restarted after the LAPD first arrested 93 people on April 24. The atmosphere on the private university campus had largely remained calm since then, while attention turned to arrests at the University of California, Los Angeles.

In Boston, commencement for Northeastern University began peacefully on Sunday at Fenway Park. Some students waved Palestinian flags, but those were dotted among flags from India, the U.S. and other nations. Graduate students went first, with undergraduate commencement in the afternoon. Last month, police arrested about 100 protesters at Northeastern when they broke up an encampment on the Boston campus.

At the University of Virginia, 25 people were arrested Saturday for trespassing after police clashed with pro-Palestinian protesters who refused to remove tents from campus, and demonstrators at the University of Michigan chanted anti-war messages and waved flags during commencement ceremonies. At the Art Institute of Chicago campus, police cleared a pro-Palestinian encampment hours after it was set up Saturday and arrested 68 people. Students, who attend classes in downtown buildings surrounding the museum, want the school to divest from companies profiting from the Israel-Hamas war, among other demands.

The institute said the protest grew disruptive and Chicago police were called. Those arrested will be charged with criminal trespass to property, police said.

USC, a private university, has been the subject of student protests over the war as

well as the administration's decision to cancel a commencement speech by the valedictorian, a Muslim student who had expressed support for Palestinians. The university made that decision last month, citing safety concerns after receiving threats. Some Jewish groups had criticized the student's selection as speaker.

Administrators later canceled the entire main-stage commencement planned for May 10, when 65,000 people were expected to gather. Other commencement activities, including graduation ceremonies for individual schools and colleges, are still scheduled for Thursday through Sunday. Access to the private campus has largely been restricted for people not affiliated with the university since late April.

In Charlottesville, Virginia, student demonstrators began their protest on a lawn outside the school chapel Tuesday. On Saturday, video from WVAW-TV showed police in heavy gear and holding shields lined up on campus. Protesters chanted "Free Palestine," and university police said on X that an "unlawful assembly" had been declared. As police moved in, students were pushed to the ground, pulled by their arms and sprayed with a chemical irritant, Laura Goldblatt, an assistant professor of English and global studies who has been helping student demonstrators, told The Washington Post.

The university administration said in a statement the demonstrators were told the tents and canopies they erected were prohibited under school policy and were asked to remove them. Virginia State Police were asked to help with enforcement, the university said. It was the latest clash in several tense and sometimes violent weeks at U.S. colleges and universities that have seen dozens of protests and hundreds of arrests at demonstrations over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war; many of the encampments have been dismantled by police.

Tent encampments of protesters urging universities to stop doing business with Israel or companies they say support the war in Gaza have spread in a student movement unlike any other this century. Some schools reached agreements with protesters to end the demonstrations and reduce the possibility of disrupting final exams and commencement. The Associated Press has recorded at least 63 incidents since April 18 in which arrests were made at protests across the U.S. Nearly 2,500 people have been arrested on the campuses of 49 colleges and universities.

Brazil mounts frantic rescue effort as flooding kills 66

□ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL, MAY 5

Authorities in southern Brazil raced against the clock on Sunday to rescue people from raging floods and mudslides that have killed at least 66 and forced more than 80,000 to flee their homes.

All over the city of Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul state, people stood on rooftops hoping to be rescued as others in canoes or small boats navigated streets that have turned into rivers.

Civil defense officials said at least 101 people were missing in the latest of a string of catastrophic weather events in the South American giant.

Viewed from the air, Porto Alegre was completely flooded, with streets under water and the roofs of some houses barely visible.

The Guaiba River, which flows through the city of 1.4 million people, reached a record high level of 5.3 meters, according to the local municipality, well above the historic peak of 4.76 meters that had stood as a record since devastating 1941 floods.

The water was still advancing into economically important Porto Alegre and hundreds of other localities, with increasingly dramatic consequences.

Rain was intermittent Sunday morning but expected to continue for another day or so, as the flood waters kept rising.

In addition to the tens of thousands forced from their homes, Brazil's civil defense agency said more than a million people lacked access to drinking water and it described the damage as incalculable. Some 15,000 people are now living in shelters.

Rosana Custodio, a 37-year-old nurse, fled her flooded Porto Alegre home with her husband and three children. "During the night on Thursday the waters began to rise very quickly," she told AFP via a WhatsApp message. "In a hurry, we went out to look for a safer place. But we couldn't walk... My hus-

band put our two little ones in a kayak and rowed with a bamboo. My son and I swam to the end of the street," she said.

Her family was safe but "we've lost everything we had."

Authorities scrambled to evacuate swamped neighborhoods as rescue workers used four-wheel-drive vehicles—and even jet skis—to maneuver through waist-deep water in search of the stranded.

Rio Grande do Sul Governor Eduardo Leite said his state, normally one of Brazil's most prosperous, would need a "Marshall Plan" of heavy investment to rebuild.

Sunday will be a key day for the rescue effort, said Paulo Pimenta, a senior communications official under President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Viewed from the air, Porto Alegre was completely flooded, with streets under water and the roofs of some houses barely visible.

Long lines formed as people tried to board buses in many places, although bus services to and from the city center were canceled.

The Porto Alegre international airport suspended all flights on Friday for an undetermined period.

Lula posted a video of a helicopter depositing a soldier atop a house, who then used a brick to pound a hole in the roof and rescue a baby wrapped in a blanket.

The speed of the rising waters unnerved many. "It's terrifying because we saw the water rise in an absurd way, it rose at a very high speed," said Greta Bittencourt, a 32-year-old professional poker player.

Liverpool shatter Spurs' top four bid as Villa eye Champions League

Needing a win at Anfield to close the gap on fourth-placed Villa, Tottenham slumped to a fourth successive loss to leave their Champions League hopes in tatters.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LIVERPOOL, MAY 5

Liverpool shattered Tottenham's hopes of finishing in the Premier League's top four with a 4-2 win that left Aston Villa on the brink of Champions League qualification despite their 1-0 defeat at Brighton on Sunday.

Needing a win at Anfield to close the gap on fourth-placed Villa, Tottenham slumped to a fourth successive loss to leave their Champions League hopes in tatters.

Villa are seven points ahead of fifth-placed Tottenham, who have a game in hand but will miss out on the top four if Unai Emery's men win one of their remaining two matches.

Mohamed Salah was back in the Liverpool team after being dropped for last weekend's draw at West Ham.

The Egypt forward had argued with Klopp before being introduced as a substitute at the London Stadium and fanned the flames afterwards when he said there would be "fire" if he spoke about the clash.

Klopp, in the final weeks of his nine-year reign, was celebrating in the 16th minute when Salah notched his 25th goal in all competitions this term with a clinical header from Cody Gakpo's cross.

Andrew Robertson scored Liverpool's second on the stroke of half-time as the Scotland left-back finished from close-range after Salah's shot was saved by Guglielmo Vicario.

There was worse to come for woeful Tottenham as Gakpo headed in a 50th-minute cross from Harvey Elliott, who netted the fourth in the 59th minute with a superb curler from 20 yards.

It was little consolation for Tottenham that Richarlison reduced the deficit in the 72nd minute before setting up Son Heung-min's goal five minutes later.

Third-placed Liverpool's first victory in three league games kept them in mathematical contention to win the title, but in truth they have little chance, with leaders Arsenal five points ahead with only two games left.

A Villa win combined with a Tottenham loss would have sealed a Champions League place for Emery's side.

But Villa were unable to fulfil their part of that equation as Joao Pedro's 87th-minute goal condemned them to a second painful defeat in four days.

'It's in our hands'

Ending Brighton's six-match winless run, Pedro headed in the rebound after Robin Olsen saved his penalty, which had been awarded for Ezri Konsa's foul on Simon Adingra.



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah celebrates scoring his side's opening goal during their Premier League football match against Tottenham Hotspur at Anfield Stadium in Liverpool, Sunday.

Surprisingly beaten 4-2 by Olympiakos in the Europa Conference League semi-final first leg on Thursday, Villa were well below their best once again.

It was little consolation for Tottenham that Richarlison reduced the deficit in the 72nd minute.

Emery's men host Liverpool and travel to Crystal Palace in their last two games as they fight to return to the Champions League for the first time since 1982-83.

"We competed but we didn't get a good result and we didn't deserve more. I don't want to know anything about Tottenham because it's in our hands," Emery said.

At Stamford Bridge, seventh-placed

Chelsea thrashed West Ham 5-0 to keep alive their hopes of European qualification

Chelsea boss Mauricio Pochettino is fighting to convince the club's co-owner Todd Boehly to give him a second season in charge after his troubled debut campaign.

Pochettino admits it is "not his decision" if he stays, but securing a place in Europe could be enough to avoid the sack.

Cole Palmer put Chelsea ahead in the 15th minute with his 21st league goal of the season, the forward firing home after West Ham failed to clear.

Conor Gallagher doubled Chelsea's advantage after 30 minutes with a blistering volley after West Ham's Kurt Zouma deflected the ball towards the midfielder.

Noni Madueke bagged Chelsea's third six minutes later as the winger turned in Thiago Silva's header from close-range.

Nicolas Jackson piled on the misery for woeful West Ham in the 48th minute and the Senegal striker bagged his second with 10 minutes left.

How an injury-hit Real Madrid rode Bellingham boom to league success

Bellingham took Spain by storm, Vinicius Junior did what the super-talented Brazilian does, and backups rose to the challenge as Madrid clinched its 36th Spanish league title.

ASSOCIATED PRESS BARCELONA, MAY 5

It wasn't supposed to look this comfortable for Real Madrid — even for a team which is nearly always a strong contender to win the Spanish league.

Not after Karim Benzema left for even bigger money in Saudi Arabia and injuries wiped out the heart of Madrid's defense.

But Jude Bellingham took Spain by storm, Vinicius Junior did what the super-talented Brazilian does, and Madrid's backups rose to the challenge as Madrid clinched its record-extending 36th Spanish league title on Saturday with four games left.

Carlo Ancelotti's team will now focus on trying to beat Bayern Munich to reach another Champions League final. The winner will play either Borussia Dortmund or Paris Saint-Germain.

Here's how Real Madrid did it:

Bellingham Boom

Madrid hit the jackpot when it secured the transfer of Bellingham from Borussia Dortmund. He was given the No. 5 jersey of Zinedine Zidane, along with the pressure of having put Ballon d'Or winner Luka Modric on the bench.

But nobody expected the 20-year-old England midfielder to adapt so quickly and become a lethal attacking and scoring threat.

Either slaloming past defenders to lead the attack or arriving at the box in a second wave, Bellingham struck 18 of his team-high 22 goals in the domestic league. He scored on his debut for a win at Athletic Bilbao and never looked back, finding the net in his first four league games and then also scoring in his first four Champions League group matches.

He solidified his status as Madrid's new star by scoring winning goals in both Spanish league "clasico" games against Barcelona, including a late strike last month. He also scored in both games against upstart challenger Girona to quash its hopes of giving Madrid a run for the title.

"Everyone expected us to slip up, and we didn't slip up," Ancelotti said after Madrid won the title. "Bellingham's goal against Barcelona gave us the advantage. We had a lot of continuity from the first to the last game."

No striker, no problem

Benzema, Gonzalo Higuain, Ruud van Nistelrooy, Ronaldo, Raül—Real Madrid always wants a big-name striker up front. So when Benzema left a year after leading the club to its 14th European Cup and the club could only bring in Joselu Mato in his place, its

attack was supposed to suffer.

Ancelotti swapped his 4-3-3 for a 4-4-2 formation, played with a talented midfield led by Bellingham and Toni Kroos and left his attack to Vinicius and Rodrygo.

Vinicius thrived once again, despite being targeted for racial abuse from some opposing fans, and has scored 13 goals in the league. Rodrygo has had an erratic campaign but has still scored 10 times, while Joselu chipped in with nine more goals in limited minutes.

Carlo Ancelotti's team will now focus on trying to beat Bayern Munich in Champions League.

Eduardo Camavinga also solidified his spot as a versatile workhorse in midfield, along with Federico Valverde.

Backups step up

Perhaps the greatest surprise for Madrid, however, was how well its defense performed after it lost goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, who returned Saturday, and defenders Eder Militao and David Alaba to serious leg injuries at the start of the season.



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during their match against Cadiz at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Spain, Saturday.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Make one final push to get the ball rolling on any new projects you've started recently. Your ideas will seem more tangible today. Avoid zoning out with your screens this evening, understand the importance of being present and in your body.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

You'll spend much of the day wrapped up in your thoughts. Luckily, you'll find that it's easier to stay focused on the present moment. Watch out for run-ins with authoritative figures. This day makes it easier to block out negativity.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

You'll be busy throughout the better part of the day. Use this energy to invest in blooming friendships, both local and online, unleashing the social butterfly within. You'll need a major breather midafternoon, putting you in a private and closed-off mood.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Take initiative and step into leadership roles as a way to get ahead. You'll have a chance to relax and enjoy your connections. Maintaining a level of mystique, and expressing vulnerabilities too freely could become a problem later.

LEO (July 23-August 22)

Grow bigger and taller than you ever thought you could. It may be necessary to tear down and establish new boundaries within matters of the heart this evening. This day will bring you closer to those you admire.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Purge thoughts, patterns and dynamics no longer serve you while the moon takes its final steps. You'll feel lighter and inspired to invite in goodness. Try not to get overwhelmed this evening when tension brews.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

Developments within matters of the heart could lead you down new pathways. This day urges you to focus on the journey toward personal evolution and how your relationships impact your ability to grow. Reconnect with yourself this evening.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

You'll burst into the workweek with a renewed sense of motivation. Slow down midafternoon. Check in with your emotions this evening, especially if you become agitated with loved ones. If your rough edges appear, consider pulling back to practice self-care.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Your boldness gains much attention. Prioritize your to-do lists and overall wellness over the pursuit of fun. Your words could cut in ways you didn't intend them. Be mindful of how you communicate with yourself and others.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

You may travel through a series of emotions as your heart searches for an opportunity to start fresh. You'll feel more grounded and comfortable with your situation. Just be mindful of your spending especially when it comes to ego-driven purchases.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

Document your thoughts, this day brings sharpness to the mind. It may be necessary to pull back and nurture the spirit. Feelings could bubble up if there are no alternate avenues for release. Set healthy boundaries.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)

You'll be busy laying down the foundations for the work week ahead. Use this day to initiate conversations or brainstorming sessions geared toward manifesting personal goals or new knowledge. It may be wise to pull back and reconnect with your thoughts.

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 What the doctor ordered
5 — Plaines
8 Baby buggy
12 Jazz great — Fitzgerald
13 Lose feathers
14 Govern
15 Black
16 Garlic mayo
17 — even keel
18 Legislator
20 Made metal money
22 " — See Clearly Now"
23 Fringe group
24 Investigate
27 Holy
31 Makes turbid
32 Magnum —
33 Lyricist — Gershwin
34 Competent
35 Gives a hoot
37 Inclination
38 " — Hard with a Vengeance"
39 Gaunt
40 Actress — Gardner
41 Angelina —
43 Said further
44 Gossip's lowdown
45 Actor — Shalhoub

- 47 Take
50 Obliquely
54 Accused's answer
55 Spiked
57 Egg-shaped
58 Cousin's mom
59 Love personified
60 Speaking part
61 Nerve network
62 Moisture
63 Remembered

DOWN

- 1 Bobbin
2 Place of exile
3 Decelerate
4 Substantially real
5 Portal
6 Building afterthought
7 Incentive
8 Very soon
9 Litter's littlest
10 Wings
11 Get better
13 Bearing
16 Actress — Gardner
19 Frozen treats
21 Ladies
23 Headland
24 "The Devil Wears —"
25 Actor — Williams

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

Grid of letters from the previous puzzle solved, showing words like ACTOR, LEFT, RHODE, APER, CURES, ZERO, etc.

- 26 Anointed
27 Brass instruments
28 Handle
29 "Sesame Street" star
30 Outmoded
35 Laughed
36 " — Misbehavin'"
37 Garage specialty
39 Trek
40 Tarzan's mate
42 Form a notion
45 Fastens
46 Unmatched
47 On — (comparable)
48 Hint
49 Dollar fraction
50 Flat-bottom boat
51 Bard's river
52 Lock maker
53 Did in
56 Exist

Large crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-63 indicating starting points for clues.

SUDOKU

9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers filled in, including 5, 2, 9, 4, 7, 1, 8, 3, 6, etc.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

9x9 Sudoku grid showing the solution from the previous day, with numbers like 3, 9, 5, 7, 5, 3, 1, etc.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★



‘For the sheer joy of playing’

Nineteen-year-old Preeti Kulung Rai talks of her journey into the national team and ‘that’ winning goal against Lebanon in the semi-final of the WAFF Women’s Championship.

ing the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) U15 Women’s Championship and even captained the U18 and U20 national teams. In the 2019 SAFF Women’s Championship and the 13th South Asian Games, she was shortlisted in the training camp but didn’t make the final squad.

Finally, at 16, Rai debuted for the national team during a friendly match at Dasharath Stadium against Bangladesh in 2021. Not only did she debut, but she also scored the team’s opening goal, earning herself the title of Player of the Match.

“Before I joined the team, I thought once I got in, that would be the biggest achievement but I was wrong,” she says, realising that merely making it to the team isn’t enough. Instead, the true challenge lay in being able to consistently perform and maintaining a high level of athleticism.

Despite suffering a torn meniscus during Nepal’s loss in the final game of the WAFF in February, Rai sees the tournament as a turning point in her career. She describes her winning goal in WAFF as surreal, “Crowd was cheering but I felt like time froze. I was happy that our teamwork made it to the finals.”

When Rai was captain of the U19 and U20 teams, she had to keep everyone pumped up and be their rock. However, in the national team, with senior players, she got to be guided and support a leader, rather than always being the leader. “This taught me to be more grounded and learn from my seniors,” she says.

Rai had caught the eye of Kickstart Football Club in India, where she played in the Indian Women’s League in 2023. Unfortunately, the injury sustained during the WAFF finals, caused her to miss the rest of the season. While the timing of the injury saddens her, she understands the importance of facing setbacks and starting anew.

A crucial takeaway for Rai from the WAFF experience, according to her is, “I learned to cultivate mental strength and handle adversity calmly on the field which is quite essential for any athlete.”

Rai’s primary goal for the future is to become her best self, both mentally and physically on personal and professional levels. She is also determined to win the SAFF championship and dreams of seeing the Nepali team reach the World Cup and bring home the trophy someday. “For that, we need all the support we can get,” she adds.

Reflecting on her pre-U15 days, Rai recalls encountering talented players whom she believed would excel in the national team. However, unlike her, they couldn’t join because of a lack of family support, financial hardships and training opportunities. So she stresses the necessity of enhancing support systems for female athletes, particularly in rural and marginalised communities.

She also highlights the critical role of family support, “In lack of family support, many dreams and hopes can be shattered

at an early age even before it fully blooms.” Rai also acknowledges the financial hurdles prevalent in pursuing professional football in Nepal. While it may suffice for personal expenses, she finds it inadequate for supporting one’s family.

the national team has taught her the importance of persistence.

“I understand that overcoming life’s challenges off the field is crucial for success on the field,” she says.

Rai encourages the youth, particularly young girls, not to abandon their dreams. She stresses the importance of having more stories, players and hope in the Nepali sports scenario.

Currently, in a recovery phase post-injury, Rai recognises that she’s just at the beginning of her journey and expects more challenges ahead. While achievements and awards are significant, she values the free and pure joy of playing the most. “I’m uncertain about what lies ahead,” she shares, “but I hope I never lose the genuine and innocent joy of playing football, akin to my childhood. That’s something I want to feel forever. I wish to keep playing as long as I can.”

Rai encourages the youth, particularly young girls, not to abandon their dreams.

Due to gender discrimination, societal biases against female athletes, financial constraints and limited support for women’s sports, Rai’s journey to this day has been challenging. However, being part of



Rai in action during the Indian Women’s League in 2023.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF PREETI RAI

□ AARATI RAY
KATHMANDU

Preeti Kulung Rai, nineteen-year-old midfielder for Nepal’s national football team, caught everyone’s attention on social media during the West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) Women’s Championship in February and all for good reasons.

Rai’s winning goal in a close game against Lebanon in the semi-final not only secured Nepal’s spot in the final but also captured widespread attention online, leading many to compare her with international football icons.

Interestingly, Rai didn’t even know that Nepal had a women’s national football team while she was growing up. For her, it was also about realising that girls can love and excel in football too, not just boys.

Growing up with four brothers, Rai enjoyed outdoor activities like running, basketball, tennis and especially football. From the age of six, she would go to the nearby ground from her house in Kapan, Kathmandu to play football.

Despite her love for the game, Rai often encountered discouragement from boys who would tell her that “girls don’t play” or refuse to play with her. Some even treated her poorly, resorting to name-calling. Nevertheless, her passion for football never wavered.

Constantly hearing that girls shouldn’t play, Rai subconsciously believed that girls couldn’t pursue football. “Despite my love for the sport, the idea of girls playing

football professionally never crossed my mind,” she confessed.

When Rai was just ten years old, something clicked for her. A big moment came when an older boy on the playground hinted that she had so much passion for the game that she could make it to the national team one day. This contradicted what she had always been told, that girls couldn’t play football. Surprised and doubtful, she asked herself and the boy, “Can girls play too?”



WHY DO IT

Discovering the presence of a women’s national team and talented women footballers, Rai found her purpose and began training hard, determined to join the national team one day.

Following that, she began taking part in school tournaments. At 11 years old, she learned about the training offered by the Nepal Youth Programme Club and started attending sessions six days a week until she turned 15.

Subsequently, she took part in the Coca-Cola Inter Football Competition (school level) and became aware of the U15 (Under-15) selection process, where she successfully secured a spot on the team.

Rai served as the captain of Nepal dur-

Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony: 200 years of an iconic work of art

The enthusiastic response to the symphony’s debut performance presaged its reception in the European music community globally and across time.

□ TED OLSON

In early 1824, 30 members of Vienna’s music community sent a letter to Ludwig van Beethoven petitioning the great composer to reconsider his plans to premiere his latest work in Berlin and instead debut the symphony in Vienna.

Beethoven had lived in Vienna since 1792, when he left his hometown of Bonn, Germany, to pursue a career as a composer. Beethoven rose to world renown, but by the 1820s he had fallen out of favour with Viennese arts patrons who, at the time, were drawn to the sounds and styles of Italian composers.

Beethoven had not appeared before a Viennese audience in a dozen years, but he was moved by the letter’s sentiment and agreed to debut his new work, Symphony No 9 in D minor, in the city. The premiere performance was on May 7, 1824, at Kärntnertor Theater.

Concert promoters promised the public that the legendary—and legendarily anti-social—composer would be present at the performance of his latest symphony. Indeed, during the entirety of the performance, he was on stage, his back to the audience, as described by Maynard Solomon in his acclaimed biography of Beethoven.

The composer insisted upon conducting the symphony from a conductor’s stand. The official conductor at the concert, Michael Umlauf, had instructed the musicians—a Viennese orchestra and choir—to ignore Beethoven, who was completely deaf and who theoretically could not be relied upon to keep time.

The performance was interrupted several times by rapturous applause from the approximately 2,000 attendees, but Beethoven could not hear the reaction. According to eyewitnesses, the composer “threw himself back and forth like a madman” and fell several bars behind in his “conducting”.

The enthusiastic response to the symphony’s debut performance presaged its reception in the European music community, globally and across time.

Global appeal
Symphony No 9, sometimes referred to as

the Choral Symphony, was the capstone to Beethoven’s extraordinary career. In the 200 years since its debut, the symphony has become an essential composition in the orchestral repertoire and is often cited as the crowning achievement of Western classical music.

A central reason for the symphony’s accessibility to a broad audience was Beethoven’s incorporation of the 1785 poem ‘An die Freude’, or ‘Ode to Joy’, by Friedrich Schiller, a leading German author, historian and philosopher. Matched to a memorable melody in the fourth movement, this text—with its uplifting, humanitarian sentiment—contributed to the symphony’s character as an anthem.

Groundbreaking composition

Symphony No 9 is extraordinary in many ways, according to Teddy Abrams, music director of the Louisville Orchestra and a Grammy Award-winning conductor.

The Ninth Symphony was not the first long piece of music at the time, but the others were generally built by stringing together many shorter sequences. In contrast, Beethoven crafted the Ninth Symphony—a 74-minute work—out of just four long movements. “The proportions alone are staggering,” Abrams said in an interview for this article.

Each of the Ninth’s four movements is a single cohesive, coherent musical statement. This, more than the innovation of using a chorus in a symphony, was what

made Beethoven’s Ninth revolutionary, according to Abrams.

At the beginning of the last movement, Beethoven reprised elements of the previous three movements. This ‘quoting’ was a highly unusual technique at the time, according to Abrams. “It is from these musical ‘memories’ that the timeless Ode to Joy theme emerges,” he said.

Energy and drive

The symphony has influenced artists across the cultural spectrum, including various modern and avant-garde music genres. British composer Gabriel Prokofiev, grandson of famed Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev, was commissioned by a French orchestra in 2011 to create a new work, Beethoven9 Symphonic Remix, that interpreted the symphony through a fusion of classical and electronic music.

When interviewed for the 2020 documentary film ‘Beethoven’s Ninth: Symphony for the World’, Prokofiev

commented: “A lot of the techniques and approaches [Beethoven] used, particularly his climactic finales and his codas and the drama and the sense of energy and drive he had, we find that everywhere, especially in dance music and electronic music.”

For over a century, Symphony No 9 has played an iconic role within the recording industry. Given the ongoing popularity of Beethoven’s work, record companies since 1923 have sought to release commercial recordings of this particular symphony. Early records couldn’t fit the entirety of the symphony, however.

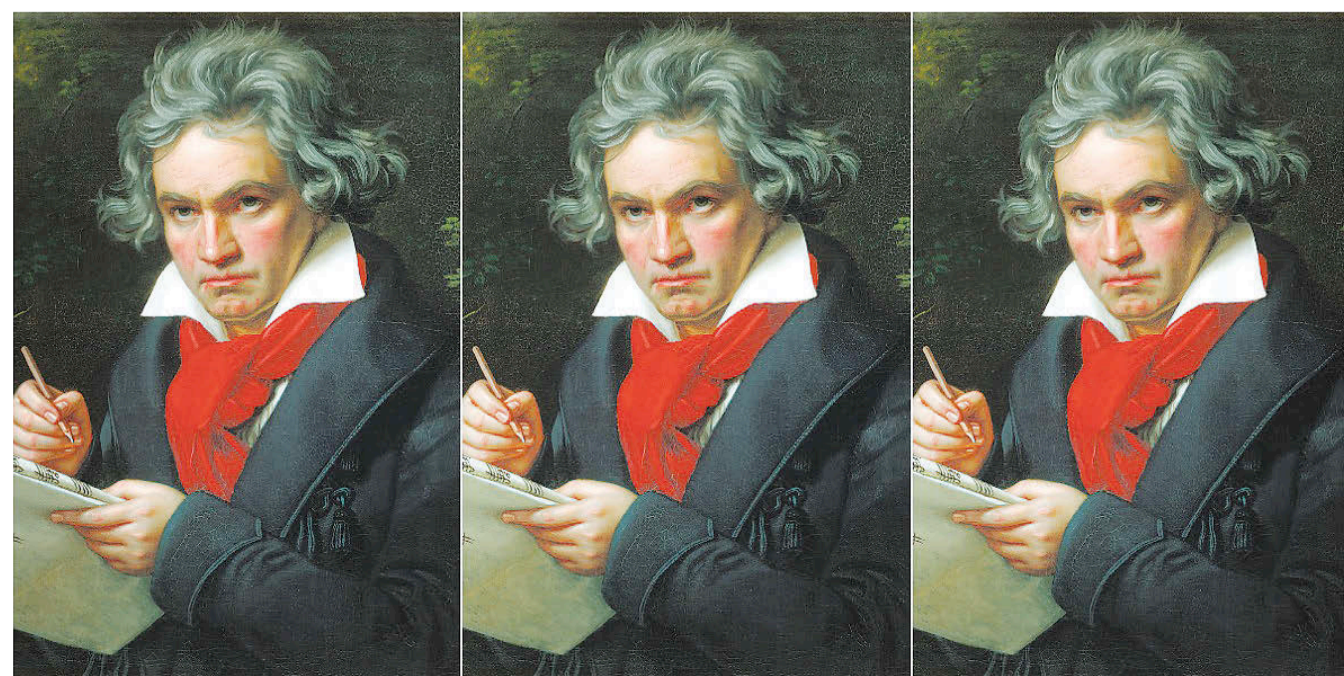
Then, around 1980, two record companies—Sony and Philips—negotiated the length of the new digital compact disc format at just over 74 minutes per CD. According to Joop Sinjou, a Philips engineer who played a key role in developing the technology, Sony Chairman Akiyo Morita and his wife insisted that the new format be designed to fit the full Symphony No 9. However, there are variations of the story, so it’s not certain that the companies’ decision to make CDs capable of holding more than an hour of music was specifically to accommodate Beethoven’s Ninth.

Goodwill symphony

Embedded in the symphony’s fourth movement is a message for peace with particular resonance in the 21st century. In one section of that movement, Beethoven incorporated a ‘Turkish March’ featuring two instruments associated with Turkey: the cymbal and bass drum. According to Prokofiev, during Beethoven’s era Europeans discriminated against Turks.

Daniel Barenboim & the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, composed of young Israeli and Arab musicians, performed Beethoven’s Symphony No 9 in 2006.

Beethoven’s Symphony No 9 was performed in 2006 by the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, an ensemble that consisted of young Israeli and Arab musicians. The performance was part of a campaign for a peaceful resolution to the Middle East conflict.



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