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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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Dipayal Jomsom



Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal (right) and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba meet during a photo exhibition on the late Girija Prasad Koirala at Sanepa in Lalitpur on Tuesday.

TODAY

NATIONAL

The 15th municipal meeting of Bharatpur endorsed its policy to make the city clean, green and safe. A week after the meeting, the streets of the metropolis are littered with garbage, posing health risks. Pg 2

OPINION

It's difficult to name a Madheshi politician who played an important role in the governance of Nepal in the pre-republican era, writes CK Lal. Pg 4



MONEY

The hopes of locals, traders, and hoteliers for the Gautam Buddha International Airport, the gateway to Lumbini, to transform the economic landscape of the province are dashed as there are no foreign flights. Pg 5

WORLD

Hungary's Moscow-friendly prime minister Viktor Orban has urged Kyiv to work towards a "quick ceasefire" in Ukraine that could pave the way for negotiations with Russia to end more than two years of war. Pg 6

SPORTS

The United States crashed out of the Copa America on Tuesday after a 1-0 defeat to Uruguay, as Panama sealed their place in the quarter-finals with a 3-1 win over Bolivia. Pg 7

No clear path, commitment from UML and Congress to amend constitution

In upper house, they'll need backing of every party except Maoists to secure 2/3 majority.

○ **PURUSHOTTAM POUDEL**
KATHMANDU, JULY 2

The two major parties, the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML, reached a written agreement on Monday to form a new government. Although the leaders of both the parties said they have agreed to amend the constitution, the agreement document is reportedly silent on it.

"Leaders of two parties have agreed in principle to amend the constitution, but the amendment has not been included in the power-sharing agreement," a Congress leader who is closely associated with the latest political developments told the Post on the condition of anonymity.

"We are still discussing how to make changes to the constitution."

Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba informed his party leaders during a meeting on Tuesday morning that they have decided to amend the constitution, as per the party insider.

The midnight deal between the Congress and the UML on Monday, however, has decided that UML chair KP Sharma Oli will lead the government for the first half of the remaining term of Parliament.

"On Monday, the two parties essentially agreed on three major points," a

UML leader closely involved in the political developments told the Post. "To form a stable government, to address the country's economic crisis, and new government leadership."

The UML leader also confirmed that there is no written agreement on amending the constitution. However, he claimed that the constitution amendment will happen in due course after the formation of the Congress-UML government.

A UML leader says there is no written agreement between two parties on revising the charter.

UML General Secretary Shankar Pokharel also claimed that the new Congress-UML government plans to amend the constitution to ensure political stability.

After the agreement on power-sharing between Congress and UML on Monday night, the general secretary wrote on social media that a 'national consensus government' would be formed under Oli's leadership.

>> Continued on page 2

116 killed in stampede at India religious gathering

A large crowd had built for sermon near Hathras city, but as they were leaving, a fierce dust storm sparked panic.

○ **AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**
LUCKNOW, JULY 2

At least 116 people were crushed to death at an overcrowded Hindu religious gathering in northern India on Tuesday, government officials said, the worst such tragedy in more than a decade.

A large crowd had gathered for a sermon by a popular preacher near the northern Indian city of Hathras, but as they were leaving, a fierce dust storm sparked panic.

Many were crushed or trampled, falling on top of each other, with some collapsing into a roadside drain in the chaos.

"The attendees were exiting the venue when a dust storm blinded their vision, leading to a melee and the subsequent tragic incident," said Chaitra V, divisional commissioner of Aligarh city in Uttar Pradesh state, told AFP.

"We... are focusing on providing relief and medical aid for the victims," she added.

Senior police officer Shalabh

Mathur said that it appeared "more people had come than permission was asked for".

Several hours after the crush, Chaitra said that "the death toll stands at 116", with at least 18 others injured.

Most of the dead were women, according to state chief medical officer Umesh Kumar Tripathi.

Deadly incidents are common at places of worship during major religious festivals in India, the biggest of which prompt millions of devotees to make pilgrimages to holy sites.

Lines of ambulances rushed the injured to hospitals.

Wailing women and crying men gathered outside one mortuary in the town of Etah, where many of the dead were taken, seeking news of their relatives.

"When the sermon finished, everyone started running out," Shakuntala, a woman who gave only one name, told the Press Trust of India news agency.

"People fell in a drain by the road. They started falling one on top of the other and got crushed to death."

>> Continued on page 6

PM Dahal refuses to quit, plans to face Parliament

UML demands the prime minister resign by today.

○ **ANIL GIRI**
KATHMANDU, JULY 2

A day after the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML sealed a deal to form a new political alliance and decided to amend some provisions of the constitution, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who was largely left out of the new power-sharing process, has refused to step down from the post.

The political fraternity has been divided over the new understanding between the Nepali Congress and the UML. But the prime minister's decision to cling on and seek a vote of confidence is set to delay the process of forming a new government, which will be led by UML chairman KP Sharma Oli as per the understanding.

On Tuesday, a UML secretariat meeting requested all political parties to join the new government of 'national consensus' and contribute to political stability.

As per the Congress-UML understanding to form the government under Article 76 (2) of the constitution, the UML meeting also called on the prime minister to pave the way by Wednesday evening.

"The meeting endorsed the agreement reached between the Congress and the UML," Pradeep Gyawali, deputy general secretary of the UML, said after the meeting.

Contrary to widespread expectations, the UML has decided to delay its earlier plan to immediately recall ministers from the Dahal Cabinet.

"We don't want more animosity [against the Maoist Centre] and so we

did not recall our ministers today," Gyawali said. "But if the prime minister does not pave the way for new government formation by tomorrow [Wednesday] evening, we will recall our ministers and take other necessary steps."

"If the prime minister ignores UML's request [to quit], our party will withdraw its support to the government."

The party has eight ministers in the Dahal Cabinet.

The UML has also given a reason for its decision to sever ties with Dahal.

Oli seems to be in a rush to replace Dahal but his party has yet to recall its ministers.

"The prime minister was in talks with the Congress for a month in order to form a national consensus government, which created a situation of mistrust," said Gyawali. "This ultimately forced us to initiate talks with the Nepali Congress."

After Congress rejected Dahal's proposal, the UML and Congress started talking seriously to unseat Dahal, according to Gyawali.

"The UML and the Congress started talking and decided to move ahead together for political stability and democratic exercise," he said.

>> Continued on page 2

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Commitment to Excellence



A man pedals through a waterlogged road at Lagankhel, Lalitpur on Tuesday afternoon.

POST PHOTO: SAFAL PRAKASH SHRESTHA

Supreme Court issues interim order against cancellation of Sebon chair appointment process

A single bench of Justice Abdul Aziz Musalman summons both parties for next hearing.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, JULY 2

The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued an interlocutory interim order against the decision to cancel the process of appointment of chairman of the Securities Board of Nepal.

According to Govinda Ghimire, the court's information officer, a single bench of Justice Abdul Aziz Musalman ordered the appointment process on hold until Friday. The bench also ordered both parties to be present before the court to discuss whether to issue an interim order, as sought by the petitioner.

The bench was responding to a writ petition filed by Santosh Narayan Shrestha, one of the shortlisted candidates for the position.

The Ministry of Finance issued a notice on Friday stating that the recommendation process was cancelled. The process was cancelled after only two out of five shortlisted candidates appeared for the interview.

On January 17, the government formed a three-member committee led by the vice-chairman of the National Planning Commission, Min Bahadur Shrestha, to recommend a candidate for chairman of Sebon to the Cabinet. Two members of the committee were Finance Secretary Madhu Kumar Marasini and Prof Udaya Niraula.

As per the mandate, the Shrestha-led committee on February 28 invited applications from interested individuals. However, the Finance Ministry's notice on Friday announced that the entire recommendation process was cancelled.

Earlier, responding to the committee's call, 19 candidates had submitted their applications to

lead the country's only security board. The recommendation committee later shortlisted five candidates for the interview.

The five shortlisted candidates were Nabaraj Adhikari, Chiranjivi Chapagain, Krishna Bahadur Karki, Mukti Nath Shrestha, and Santosh Shrestha. However, only two candidates, Mukti Nath Shrestha and Santosh Shrestha, appeared in the interview.

The government has already formed a new recommendation committee.

After only two candidates appeared in the interview, the recommendation committee informed the three candidates—Adhikari, Chapagain, and Karki—to reappear in the interview and set a new date.

Despite this, the three did not appear in the interview the second time. As per the Sebon Act, it is compulsory to recommend at least three names to the Cabinet for the final selection.

When the committee failed to recommend three names even after the second round, the Shrestha-led committee sought legal advice from the Office of the Attorney General. The Office of the Attorney General communicated to the recommendation committee that the entire selection process would be invalid if three names were not recommended to the Cabinet.

The government has already formed a new recommendation committee for the appointment process.

Constitutional options for new government

Advocates say the President can cite Article 76 (2) to install another majority government.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, JULY 2

The Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML sealed a mid-night deal on Monday agreeing to form a new government ousting Pushpa Kamal Dahal as prime minister.

According to the deal, KP Sharma Oli, the UML chairman, will lead the coalition for the first half of the three-and-a-half years until the next election. He will hand over the premiership to Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba, who will oversee the elections. However, how soon Oli will move into Baluwater from Balkot will depend on Dahal's decision.

The UML, the senior coalition partner in the Dahal government, hasn't recalled its ministers from the Cabinet. Nor has it withdrawn its support to the prime minister. Its secretariat meeting on Tuesday asked Dahal to clear the way for a national consensus government by resigning.

"We will look at other constitutional options [quitting the government and withdrawing the support] only if the prime minister refuses to quit," said Rajendra Gautam, the UML's publicity

department chief.

Countdown of the CPN (Maoist Centre)-led government will begin the day the UML withdraws its support.

Dahal will then be left with two options: resign or face Parliament. An office bearer meeting of the Maoist Centre decided that the prime minister will not quit but go for the floor test.

Any party that proves the majority in the House of Representatives leads the government, said Devendra Paudel, the Maoist Centre secretary. "The prime minister will not resign," Paudel said. "He will take the constitutional course [opt for the vote of trust]."

Article 100 (2) of the constitution states that if the political party the prime minister represents is divided or a political party in the coalition withdraws its support, the prime minister shall table a motion in the House of Representatives for a vote of confidence within 30 days.

Dahal will have a month at most, from the day the UML withdraws its support, to go for the trust vote. It will be Dahal's fifth floor test since he formed the post-election government in December 2022. Last time he faced Parliament was on May 20 after the Upendra Yadav-led

Janata Samajbadi Party withdrew its support.

As it is certain that he will lose the vote of confidence without the UML and the Congress backing him, the President will call for the formation of a new government with a two- to three-day deadline.

The provision at hand is Article 76, which deals with government formation. There are four provisions in the constitution for appointing the prime minister. As no party has a majority, the President can call for the coalition government as per Article 76 (2).

The article states that in cases where no party has a clear majority, the President shall appoint as prime minister "a member of the House who can command a majority with the support of two or more parties".

The first and the second largest parties, the Congress and the UML, have a combined strength of 167, much above the majority mark of 138 in the 275-member House. While the UML has 78 members excluding the Speaker, the Congress has 79.

Senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi said there are rumors that the President has

to initiate government formation as per Article 76 (3)—a minority government—if Dahal, who was appointed under Article 76 (2), fails the floor test.

"This argument is incorrect. The President can call the parties to form a coalition government as per Article 72 (2) after Dahal fails the vote of confidence," he said. "Several verdicts by the Supreme Court have clearly said that every available option for government formation can be used."

In its recent verdict to retain the Hikmat Karki-led government in Koshi Province, the top court said the same constitutional provision can be cited for more than once.

Advocate Raju Prasad Chapagain, former chairperson of the Constitutional Lawyers' Forum, said the Constitutional Bench made a similar ruling while overturning the twin decisions of Oli to dissolve the House of Representatives in December 2020 and May 2021.

"There is no bar for the President to trigger government formation based on Article 76 (2)," said Chapagain. "He can make a call for a minority government as per Article 76 (3) only if a coalition government cannot be installed."



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OPINION



OUR VIEW

Midnight matchmaking

The new Oli-Deuba deal is a sign of dishonesty at the heart of contemporary Nepali politics.

What has happened in Nepali politics in the past 48 hours—as in by late night of Tuesday, when this paper went to print—cannot be explained simply on the basis of mainstream political theory. In the intervening midnight of Monday and Tuesday, when most Nepalis were asleep, septuagenarians Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress and KP Sharma Oli of the CPN-UML sealed a deal to form a new government. Such is the distrust among the new coalition partners that they could not wait until daybreak to meet in their sophisticated offices or even drawing rooms to do so, as they chose the house of a businessman to decide the country's future course.

That the top leaders of the country's two biggest political parties had to be brought together to form a new coalition government by an outsider exposes the degenerate nature of our politics. For now, let's come back to the point about political theory failing to explain the drama that gets performed on the Nepali political stage in the name of constitution and democracy. Perhaps in order to explain the actions of the top three players of Nepali politics—Deuba, Oli, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal—political theorists would want to draw a bit from game theory, whereby the actions of a player are dependent on the possible strategies of another player.

Other things being the same, the Dahal-led government is all but gone thanks to the Deuba-Oli midnight rendezvous. Dahal will likely be replaced by Oli, who will then make way for Deuba after a year and a half—if they stick to their promise. Whether the new marriage of the ideological opposites will survive depends on the checkmates they use against each other on the moral, policy-level and financial corruption committed by each other. The Giri Bandhu tea estate scandal and the fake Bhutanese refugees scandal, in which the UML and the Congress bigshots, respectively, are allegedly involved, are a case in point.

In fact, the foundation for the new coalition was prophetically—or even pathetically—laid over three months ago during Dahal's floor test in Parliament. Oli, while offering his support to Dahal, had signaled to Deuba of his interest in forming a coalition, to which Deuba had responded with a nod and a smile. It was not difficult to understand that Oli was not very happy to have struck a deal with Dahal, who is well-known for his propensity to change partners in a jiffy; nor was it difficult to get Deuba's hope amid despair that either Dahal or Oli could come back to him at any point to form yet another coalition. After all, for our old leaders, changing coalition partners is a matter of convenience rather than conviction.

If we are still looking for some silver lining amid the black cloud of political uncertainty, it is this: Dahal's reputation as a kingmaker-turned-king with just 32 seats in a 275-strong parliament has taken a big jolt. The coming together of the two biggest parties of Parliament is never a good sign for parliamentary democracy, for that leaves us without a strong opposition. But in bringing Dahal to the ground at last, the Deuba-Oli duo has given a message that a political pigmy can no longer play a permanent *badshah* in the game of thrones that is Nepali politics.

THEIR VIEW

Limited choices

No terrorist outfits can be allowed to use Afghan soil to attack other countries.

None of the limited choices before the international community where dealing with the Afghan Taliban regime are very good ones. For example, it would not be advisable for foreign countries to fully embrace the Taliban before securing commitments from them regarding inclusivity and lifting of curbs that stand in the way of women's education and participation in public life. On the other hand, it would be unwise for the world to isolate Afghanistan and leave millions of ordinary Afghans in the lurch.

It should be remembered that the last time the comity of nations refused to engage with the Taliban, the hard-line outfit moved even closer to Al Qaeda. Therefore, the most feasible course at this point appears to be limited engagement with the Taliban, while continuing to apply pressure upon Afghanistan's de facto rulers to lift their stringent curbs on women's freedom. The international community seems to have realised the practicality of the aforementioned course, which is why Taliban representatives were invited to recent UN-backed discussions in Doha about the future of Afghanistan. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, who led the Afghan delegation, did not mention girls' education or human rights, but was keen to court foreign support for his country, and called for lifting sanctions on Afghanistan.

While the Taliban's track record on human rights is abysmal, and the international community should not legitimise the group's misogyny, a more realistic view of the issue is needed. As per the UN, 23.7m people in Afghanistan are in need, and the country continues to suffer from "entrenched poverty". It is evident then that ordinary Afghans should not be punished for the Taliban's medieval worldview. Cutting off Afghanistan from the global financial system, and preventing states from trading with it, will only add to the population's misery.

Therefore, engagement with the Taliban should continue, with the message that full international recognition can only come when girls are allowed unobstructed access to education, and women participation in public life. Moreover, no terrorist outfits can be allowed to use Afghan soil to attack other countries. As this process continues, Afghans in need should be able to access international humanitarian aid. Moreover, Muslim states, including Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, should make more effort to convince the Taliban leadership that educating girls does not violate religious norms.

— Dawn (Pakistan)/ANN

Pitfalls of pleasurable servitude

|| SOUTH SIDE ||

Only by confronting the ethnonationalists can Madheshi politicians make a mark on history.

CK LAL



In most oligarchies of the world, power-sharing arrangements are negotiated behind the curtain and inked in darkness. The supremo of CPN-UML, Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, is a habitual night owl—even a foreign spook, Samanta Goel, had to schedule a meeting with him late in the evening. Perhaps an astrologer suggested the leader of the largest party in Pratinidhi Sabha and the Chair of the Nepali Congress (NC), Sher Bahadur Deuba, to sign a pact with the supremo of the second-largest party in Parliament after midnight. The deal is finally sealed, and the foremost democratic force of the country will be collaborating with the dominant communist party to entrench an ethnocratic regime.

Maoist supremo Dahal has been jumping from the NC camp to the UML platform and the other way round with the regularity of a hawk and the dexterity of an acrobat. He had swiftly set up a meeting with Sharma Oli to placate his senior partner in the coalition and offered to quit in favour of the latter to maintain the status quo. The permanent establishment of Nepal (PEON) seems to have scuttled his plans.

The PEON has been vouching for a rapprochement between the NC and the UML for quite a while. Since the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1990, these two parties have joined hands or taken turns ruling the country for much of the duration. They have much more at stake in maintaining the ethnonational oligarchy than the Maoists. When the influence of the two dominant parties was reduced in the Constituent Assembly elections of 2008, they had worked assiduously to have it dissolved through a judicial intervention.

No matter how hard Dahal tried to propitiate the high priests of Khas-Arya hegemony—ritualistically worship a buffalo, don the Daura-Suruwal ensemble or offer prescribed prayers at the temple of Mahakal in Ujjain—he failed to win their confidence. In the eyes of ethnonational zealots, Dahal had unleashed the forces of dignity politics—Dalit empowerment, Janjati



Upendra Yadav

awakening and Madheshi autonomy—that must be put back in their places through regressive changes in the electoral system.

The proponents of Dalit empowerment are still too weak to challenge the existing sociopolitical order. The fragmented and resigned Janjati groups lack the will to resist the hegemonic designs of Khas-Arya ethnonationalists. The only community that could have countered the resurgence of ethnonational majoritarianism was that of Madheshis. Sadly, a craving for the crumbs from the high table has turned most politicians of Madhesh-dependent parties from committed activists to devoted conformists.

Externalised Madheshis

It's difficult to name a Madheshi politician who played an important role in the governance of Nepal in the pre-republican era. Ram Narayan Mishra, a cabinet minister in the short-lived BP Koirala government, stands out as an exception. Put behind bars after the royal-military coup, Mishra remained incarcerated and was freed only to die from a terminal disease. Justice Aniruddha Prasad Singh, Justice Bhagwati Prasad Singh and politician Chaturbhuj Prasad Singh—the ABC Singhs of Saptari—did rise to the highest posts, but they were merely royal loyalists at the beck and call of their master.

The restoration of parliamentary democracy brought a new set of political players that shared their ethnonational beliefs with those of the ousted regime. Mahendra Narayan Nidhi was perhaps the best Prime Minister this country never had because of ethnic prejudices among the NC ranks. Gajendra Narayan Singh tried hard to establish amity between Pahadis and Madheshis based on political equality and social dignity through his Sadbhavana platform. He was repeatedly booed in public.

Just as in the absolutist Shah era



CK Raut

POST FILE PHOTOS

(1960-90), under the name of Panchayat, the highest ambition of an upwardly mobile Madheshi was to ape the dominant community in dress, language and mannerism, and become a mimic man of a "true Nepali". The violent campaigns of Maoists and counter-violence of the state forces in the aughties were dreadful, but they did succeed in establishing the recognition of diversity in the manufactured uniformity of national unity. It's the experience of the marginalised and externalised communities between 1990 and 2008 that makes the prospect of a political settlement between the NC and the UML terrifying.

Useful tools

When the UML emerged as a powerful force of the post-1990 order, its leaders found, to their chagrin, that their presence in Madhesh was limited to the Pahadi community. They wanted Madheshi youths to build their organisation in a region that the NC had traditionally dominated. Ambitious Madheshis also discovered that they had little chance to rise fast in the NC, which was a party in the tight grip of the old guard. In addition to being ambitious, Upendra Yadav also possesses a sharp mind. He was already a foot soldier of the communist radicals, and when they constituted themselves into a parliamentary party as the UML, he became its low-level apparatchik.

Yadav used his uncanny ability of sensing the direction of the wind and jumped on the Maoist bandwagon but remained carefully clear of direct armed confrontations. Contentions are often based on inferences, but the allegation that the non-party Madheshi Janadhikar Forum was constituted to counter the Madhesh Mukti Morcha of the Maoists with the covert support of the PEON doesn't look too far-fetched.

Barely active in anti-monarchy protests before 2006, Yadav became the public face of the Madhesh Uprising 2007, which challenged and beat the

Maoists at their own game of violent propaganda. He then lost little time in making peace with his former enemies of the Gaur Massacre and became the messiah of sorts in Madhesh after the formation of the first Constituent Assembly in Nepal's history.

In much of South Asia, people vote for their caste rather than casting their votes. Yadav prioritised caste solidarity over political affiliations and helped elect Ram Baran Yadav of the NC as the first President of the new republic. The PEON now had a new Yadav face to show in Madhesh and a pliant tool to control the polity and society.

The political perseverance and tenacity of Upendra Yadav are admirable, but he seems resigned to his marginalisation after the overt entry of CK Raut into the electoral arena. The masters like to change their horses not just for utility but also for fun. The Yadavs remain the dominant caste in the entire Tarai-Madhesh and are the single largest group with 15.2 percent of the population in Madhesh province. However, an assertion of non-Yadav solidarity between what are colloquially termed the other backward classes and the extremely backward classes castes had necessitated the nurturing of a sufficiently rebellious but conveniently compliant face from the group to counter the possible consolidation of Muslim-Yadav (MY) alliance in Madhesh.

Since its formation, the Loktantrik Samajbadi Party (LSP) has always been a loose coalition of predominantly upper-caste and primarily comfortable class of politicians in a patron-client relationship with their relatively reliable vote banks. They have little incentive to engage in combative politics.

Perhaps it will take a while for Madheshi politicians to realise that conformity breeds contempt, and confrontation with the majoritarian ethnonationalists for political equality, economic justice and social dignity is the only way of making a mark on history.

The human cost of big sporting events

Each minute of football played at FIFA 2022 equated to the loss of one human life.

OFER IDELS



With the Copa América, the UEFA European Championship and the Olympic Games all taking place over a few months, summer 2024 is shaping up to be a celebration of sport.

However, many modern sporting events have been held in countries with appalling human rights records, with little pushback from fans, broadcasters or governments. In a world where celebrities are held to high moral standards—and face consequences for falling short—this inconsistency is striking.

My historical research focuses on this troubling issue, aiming to understand why sport often evades the scrutiny we so readily apply to other events and individuals.

Qatar 2022

For years before its first match began, the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar was marred by accusations of sportswashing, environmental damage, exorbitant costs and, most critically, severe human rights abuses—including the country's treatment of women, the LGBTQ+ community and migrant workers.

Among these widely reported allegations was one especially harrowing statistic: over 6,500 migrant workers from India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh died while building hotels and stadiums in preparation for the 2022 World Cup. This means that each minute of football played at the tournament equated to the loss of one human life.

While the Qatari government put the death toll far lower, at 47, these abuses were no secret in the run up to the event. Still, they had little impact on public opinion—in the weeks leading up to the tournament, fans were more

concerned about how the winter timetable would affect the regular football season, or their ability to consume alcohol in a Muslim country.

Calls for a boycott failed to catch on, and the event went on to garner high ratings, with one BBC poll even declaring it the best World Cup of the century.

Greed and corruption are obvious explanations for how this was allowed to happen. There is substantial evidence of corruption within both FIFA and Qatar, particularly regarding the bidding process for the games.

Reports also indicate that some fans were paid by the host to sing and chant on command, and celebrities were paid huge amounts to attend and endorse the event, thereby whitewashing Qatar's human rights record.

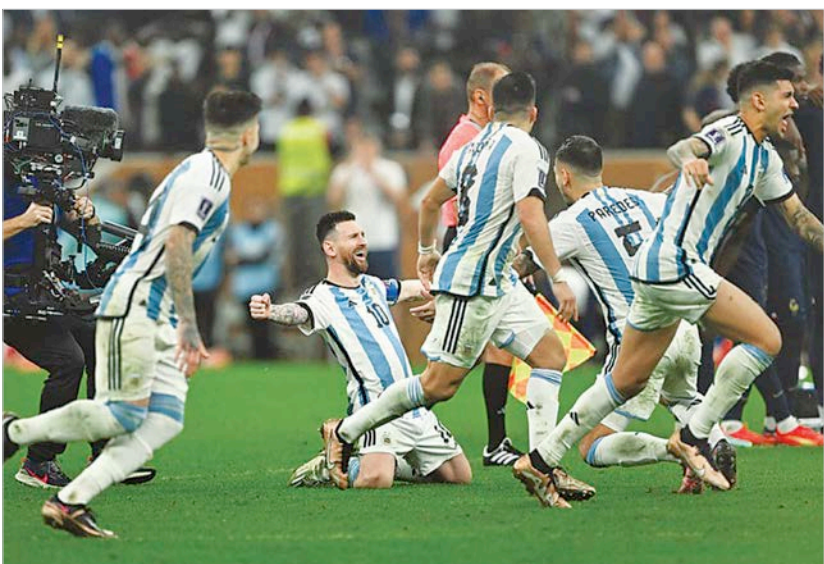
Such blatant displays of greed are not always met with apathy. In 2021, for example, the attempt to form the European Super League faced widespread, vehement criticism from fans, football players, managers, and politicians, and the multi-million dollar ven-

ing it is extremely difficult to analyse or explain from an objective point of view.

It is therefore worth considering how organisers addressed human rights concerns in the run up to the 2022 World Cup. Shortly before the its opening, FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Secretary General Fatma Samoura wrote the following in a letter to competing teams: "Please, let's now focus on the football! We know football does not live in a vacuum and we are equally aware that there are many challenges and difficulties of a political nature all around the world. But please do not allow football to be dragged into every ideological or political battle that exists."

Such a statement may seem cynical and calculated, but it reflects a widespread perception that modern sports are pure, universal and autotelic—meaning an activity in and of itself, rather than a means to an end. This is often expressed in claims like "sport is art", or that sports should be separate from politics.

Sport's appeal for both participants



REUTERS

ture was swiftly axed as a result.

The unique, irrational appeal

Objectively speaking, Qatar's human rights abuses are unforgivable. However, humanity's fascination with sport is emotional rather than rational, mean-

ing and spectators therefore lies in its immediacy, and its ability to unify people into an authentic experience of the here and now. The men and women on the field are much more than sweaty people wearing shorts and kicking a ball—to spectators they are

heroes of pure beauty.

This might help us understand the strikingly and paradoxically different responses to the 2022 World Cup and the Super League. The Super League aimed to usurp the traditional structure of football to benefit big clubs over small ones, but it was perceived as a greedy affront to the purity of sport. However, fans may have been able to accept the death toll of the Qatar World Cup as a necessary sacrifice to preserve the universal, binding power of modern sport.

The 1936 'Nazi Olympics'

The pivotal moment in shaping our modern sporting ethos was the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, also known as the Nazi Olympics. The controversial event ignited a widespread boycott movement, which argued that holding and respecting the games under a fascist and antisemitic regime would tarnish sport's purity, and vindicate the Third Reich in front of a global audience.

Nevertheless, the games went ahead giving a powerful demonstration of sport's ability to make the world overlook unspeakable crimes. Oppressive nations today are still following its example.

Ethical sporting culture

Nearly a hundred years later, Qatar is a candidate to host the 2036 Olympics. Given the death toll of the 2022 World Cup, it is likely that such an event will cost the lives of thousands more workers, and it should be met with firm resistance.

However, history teaches us that protests should not be based solely on general terms like "sportswashing" or cynical perspectives that overlook the emotional and tangible meaning that sport holds in people's lives.

As seen in the case of the Super League, sports fans are capable of fighting for the purity of the games they love, but such a fight for the soul of modern sports should not begin only after enjoying the summer tournaments. Ultimately, as sports fans, we should know that ethics often begin in the here and now.

Idels is a Minerva Postdoctoral Fellow at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

— The Conversation

WORLD

India’s parliament removes parts of Rahul Gandhi’s speech targeting Modi

‘Taking off from records my considered remarks goes against the very tenets of parliamentary democracy.’



Indian National Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at the Parliament in New Delhi on June 26.

REUTERS
NEW DELHI, JULY 2

Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi’s first speech in the new parliament ran into controversy with parts of it, including accusations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party, redacted on Tuesday for violating the rules of the legislature.

The decision by the speaker of the lower house came a day after Gandhi made his maiden speech as the leader of the opposition in the chambers, his first official position after two decades as a lawmaker representing the main opposition Congress party.

Among the sections removed from the speech, which was telecast live by TV channels, were Gandhi’s attacks on Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and what he said were their links to religious hate and violence.

Gandhi also made multiple references to industrialists Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani and linked them to Modi and his government, which were removed by speaker Om Birla, parliament records showed.

Following the speech, federal ministers Ashwini Vaishnaw and Kiren Rijiju told reporters that they met Birla to point out “inaccuracies” in Gandhi’s speech and were assured

their complaint would be examined.

Under Indian parliamentary rules, the speaker can expunge or redact words used by lawmakers in the chambers that are deemed defamatory, indecent, unparliamentary, or undignified, following which they cease to exist in parliament’s records and can no longer be reported by the media.

Responding to the speaker’s decision, Gandhi said “truth cannot be expunged”.

He wrote to Birla requesting the redacted remarks be restored, saying they were not violations and conveyed the “ground reality” and “factual position”.

“Taking off from records my considered remarks goes against the very tenets of parliamentary democracy,” he said.

The scion of a dynasty that gave India three prime ministers, Gandhi is the first leader of the opposition in a decade in the lower house, where no opposition party was able to secure the numbers to claim the position in the last two terms.

He led an opposition alliance of two dozen parties that denied Modi an outright majority in the April to June multi-phase general election, forcing him to depend on regional parties for the first time and form a coalition government to return as prime minister for a rare third straight term.

Hungary’s Orban calls for Ukraine ceasefire to speed up peace talks

Visit comes the day after Hungary took over EU’s presidency, a position which gives him sway over the bloc’s agenda.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KYIV, JULY 2

Hungary’s Moscow-friendly prime minister Viktor Orban urged Kyiv on Tuesday to work towards a “quick ceasefire” in Ukraine that could pave the way for negotiations with Russia to end more than two years of war.

Orban issued the appeal standing next to President Volodymyr Zelensky during a surprise visit to Ukraine, the first by the vocal critic of Western support for Kyiv.

“I asked the president to consider whether... a quick ceasefire could speed up the peace talks,” Orban told reporters, adding that the ceasefire he envisioned would be “time-limited”.

Ukraine has repeatedly rejected calls for a pause in fighting, which it says would just give Russia time to regroup for a fresh assault.

The United States meanwhile on Tuesday announced new security aid for Ukraine worth \$2.3 billion.

Unlike many other European leaders, Orban had not visited Kyiv since Russia invaded in February 2022 and is widely seen as the 27-member bloc’s most pro-Russian leader.

In October 2023 he met Russian President Vladimir Putin at a summit in Beijing, becoming the first EU leader to do so since the start of the war.

The populist leader, in power since 2010, regularly criticises Europe’s financial and military support for



Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky (right) with Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban in Kyiv.

Kyiv, temporarily blocking a 50-billion-euro (\$53-billion) aid package for weeks. And he openly opposes holding EU membership talks with Kyiv as well as Brussels’ sanctions on Moscow—though Budapest has not used its veto to block the moves.

The visit comes the day after Hungary took over the EU’s rotating presidency, a position which gives the central European state sway over the bloc’s agenda and priorities for the next six months.

Orban said he would report on his talks with Zelensky to EU prime ministers “so that the necessary European decisions can be taken”.

Zelensky said the timing of the visit was symbolic. “This is a clear indication of our common European priorities, of how important it is to bring a just peace to Ukraine,” he said, urging European countries to maintain military support. As the two leaders talked in Kyiv, yet more civilians were reported dead from Russian bombard-

Prosecutors agree to delay Trump sentencing

REUTERS
NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, JULY 2

Donald Trump’s July 11 sentencing on charges stemming from hush money paid to a porn star may be delayed after prosecutors said on Tuesday they don’t object to giving the former US president a chance to argue he should have been immune from prosecution.

Trump’s lawyers on Monday asked that they be permitted to argue his conviction in New York state court in Manhattan should be set aside due to the US Supreme Court’s ruling this week that presidents are entitled to immunity from criminal prosecution for official acts.

Trump faces an uphill battle getting the conviction overturned, since much of the conduct at issue in the case predated his time in office. But

prosecutors’ agreement to delay the sentencing makes it more likely Justice Juan Merchan will push back the date and consider the immunity argument.

Any delay of sentencing would lift the spectre of Trump, the Republican presidential candidate, facing possible confinement just days before the Republican National Convention begins in Milwaukee on July 15.

In Monday’s landmark ruling, a 6-3 majority of the US Supreme Court justices wrote that Trump could not be prosecuted for any actions that were within his constitutional powers as president, but could be prosecuted for unofficial acts.

That decision all but ensured Trump would not go to trial before the November 5 election on separate federal criminal charges involving his efforts to undo his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden. Trump has pleaded not guilty to those charges.

In their letter to Merchan, Trump’s lawyers argued that prosecutors had presented evidence stemming from Trump’s official acts while president during his trial on charges of covering up his former lawyer Michael

Cohen’s \$130,000 payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels.

“The trial result cannot stand,” lawyers Todd Blanche and Emil Bove wrote, asking to submit a full brief on the issue by July 10.

In a response on Tuesday, prosecutors with Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg’s office said Trump’s argument was “without merit” but they had no problem giving Trump the opportunity to make his case. They asked to have until July 24 to reply to the defence’s full motion.

Trump pleaded not guilty and has vowed to appeal his May 30 conviction—the first-ever criminal trial of a US president, past or present—after sentencing.

Prosecutors argued Trump directed Cohen’s October 2016 payment to keep Daniels quiet about an alleged 2006 sexual encounter until after the November 2016 presidential election when he defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Trump denies having had sex with Daniels. Under the Supreme Court’s ruling, prosecutors cannot use evidence related to official actions to help prove criminal cases involving unoffi-

cial actions.

Trump’s lawyers said evidence presented at the hush money trial of conversations Trump had in the White House and social media posts he made while in office constituted official acts.


Those posts included tweets from April 21, 2018, in which Trump called Cohen “a fine person with a wonderful family” and predicted he would not “flip.”

Jurors also saw a tweet from August 22, 2018—after Cohen pleaded guilty to violating campaign finance law with the Daniels payment—in which Trump wrote, “If anyone is looking for a good lawyer, I would strongly suggest that you don’t retain the services of Michael Cohen!”

“This official-acts evidence should never have been put before the jury,” Trump’s lawyers wrote.

Last year, Trump made a similar argument as part of an unsuccessful push to move the hush money case to federal court.

In July 2023, US District Judge Alvin Hellerstein wrote that the payment to Daniels “was a purely personal act.”



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Urban Development
Urban Resilience and Livability Improvement Project
Project Implementation Unit
Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City
Janakpurdham, Dhanusha, Madhesh Province

Invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI)
for
Supervision and Design Consultant (SDC) for
Infrastructure (Road, drainage, footpath, road furniture improvement) and
Revitalization of heritage and cultural sites in Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City

Package No: URLIP/JNK/CS/01
Published Date: 2024/07/03

Government of Nepal has negotiated a project loan and project grant with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for financing the proposed Urban Resilience and Livability Improvement Project (URLIP) with the objective to improve livability and sustainability of urban service delivery in seven project municipalities – Pokhara MC, Janakpur SMC and Lumbini Sanskritik, Sainamaina, Devdaha, Tilottama, and Siddharthanagar of Western Urbanizing Corridor (WUC) – through municipal infrastructure improvement, regeneration of natural, cultural and heritage tourism assets, and institutional strengthening over a period of 6 years.

Janakpurdham PIU (the Client) on behalf of the EA now invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from reputed and interested engineering firms for short-listing in order to extend their service of **Supervision and Design Consultant (SDC)** which shall provide consulting services for design review, revision of design, detailed engineering design, preparation of safeguard documents, technical specification and bidding documents with supervision of works and contract management to support the URLIP.

The SDC comprising of national experts will be stationed in Janakpurdham. The SDC is a Time-based contract. The duration of consulting services is over a period of 45 months (3 months for design and 42 months for supervision; including defect notification period) which requires an estimated 269 national person months input of key personnel and 571 person months input of non-key personnel. This SDC assignment is estimated to be NRs **154,494,746.00** (Nepalese Rupees One Hundred Fifty-Four Million Four Hundred Ninety-Four Thousand Seven Hundred Forty-Six only) i.e. approximately USD 1,178,359.74 (including Provisional Sum and VAT).

EOI will be evaluated against a set of pre-approved criteria and Request for Proposals (RFP) will be sent to the Shorted-listed firms. Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method will be adopted using 80:20 weight for technical and financial score respectively for evaluating RFPs. EOI should be supported by details including name, registration details of firm(s), Joint Venture agreement in case of joint Venture, experience of projects of similar nature and size and complexity. EOIs should be supported by details including tax clearance up to fiscal year 2079/80 and VAT registration certificate.

The EOI documents should be submitted by 1st August, 2024 not later than 9:44 PM (GMT +5:45). The client reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all EOIs without assigning any reason. Interested consultant firms should visit ADB’s website for CSRN (<http://cms.adb.org>) about specific requirements and submit EOI following the instructions in the CSRN website (hard copy submission not applicable)

Opening of the Submitted EOIs will be held on 2nd August, 2024; 1:00 PM (GMT +5:45).

Urban Resilience and Livability Improvement Project,
Project Implementation Unit
Janakpurdham Sub-metropolitan City, Dhanusha

Public Notice

Looking for Mr. TULACHAN Sachin
Please contact Ms. Gladys Hung, a social worker at International Social Service Hong Kong Branch, via WhatsApp at +85268160986 or email at gladys.hung@isshk.org to discuss the welfare plan of his child born in Hong Kong on April 3, 2017

Many were crushed or trampled, falling on top of each other

>> Continued from page 1

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced compensation of \$2,400 to the next of kin of those who died and \$600 to those injured in the “tragic incident.”

“My condolences are with those who have lost their loved ones... I wish for the speedy recovery of all the injured,” Modi wrote on social media platform X. President Droupadi Murmu said the deaths were “heart-rending” and offered her “deep-est condolences”.

Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh chief minister who is also a Hindu monk, expressed his condolences to the relatives of those killed and ordered an investigation into the deaths, his office said. Religious gatherings in India have a grim track record of deadly incidents caused by poor crowd management and safety lapses.

At least 112 people were killed in 2016 after a huge explosion caused by a banned fireworks display at a temple marking the Hindu new year. The blast ripped through concrete buildings and ignited a fire at a temple complex in Kerala state, where thousands had gathered. Another 115 devotees were killed in 2013 in a stampede at a bridge near a temple in Madhya Pradesh.

Up to 400,000 people were gathered in the area and the stampede began after a rumour spread that the bridge was about to collapse. In 2008, 224 pilgrims were killed and more than 400 were injured in a stampede at a hilltop temple in the northern city of Jodhpur.

सवारी साधन (कार) मुख्य बढावदबाट बिक्री सम्बन्धी सूचना

(प्रथम पटक प्रकाशित मिति २०८१/३/१९)

यस कान्तिपुर पब्लिकेशन्स लिमिटेड अन्तर्गत चालु अवस्थामा रहेको तपशिलको विवरण अनुसारको सवारी साधन (कार) जे जस्तो अवस्थामा छ, सोही अवस्थामा मुख्य बढावदबाट बिक्री गर्नुपर्ने भएको ले इच्छुक व्यक्ति वा फर्म/कम्पनीबाट यो सूचना प्रकाशित भएको मितिले ५ दिन भित्र दरभाउ पेश गर्न यो सूचना प्रकाशन गरिएको छ ।

(क) सवारी साधन (कार) को विवरण :

क्र.स.	कम्पनीको नाम	मोडल	सिसि	बनेको साल	सवारी साधन रहेको कार्यालय
१	फोर्ड	इन्डेभर	३१९८	२०१६	प्रधान कार्यालय, थापाथली, काठमाडौं

(ख) शर्तहरू :

१) रकम पूर्ण भुक्तानी गरे पश्चात सवारी (कार) नामसारी हुनेछ ।

२) पेश भएका बोलपत्र बिना जानकारी अस्वीकृत गर्ने वा खारेज गर्ने सम्पुर्ण अधिकार कान्तिपुर पब्लिकेशन्स व्यवस्थापनमा रहनेछ ।

(ग) निवेदन सँग संलग्न गर्नुपर्ने कागजातहरू :

व्यक्तिको हकमा :	संस्थाको हकमा :
नागरिकताको प्रमाणपत्रको प्रतिलिपि,	१) फर्म/कम्पनी/संस्थाको दर्ता प्रमाण-पत्र, २) स्थायी लेखा नम्बर दर्ता प्रमाण-पत्र, ३) आ.ब २०७९/२०८० को कर चुक्ता प्रमाण-पत्र

(घ) बोलपत्र पेश गर्ने स्थान : कान्तिपुर पब्लिकेशन्स लिमिटेड, प्रधान कार्यालय, सामान्य प्रशासन विभाग, थापाथली, काठमाडौं ।



कान्तिपुर पब्लिकेशन्स लिमिटेड
प्रधान कार्यालय: थापाथली, काठमाडौं, सम्पर्क नं.: ०१-५१३५०००, ईमेल : gad@kmg.com.np

Misfiring France relying on impressive back line at Euro

Les Bleus have scored only three times in four games but they have kept a third clean sheet in a tournament in which they have let in a solitary goal.



France's winning goal arrived in the 85th minute when substitute Randal Kolo Muani's (right) shot deflected off Belgium defender Jan Vertonghen inside the penalty area and went past goalkeeper Koen Casteels.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DUSSELDORF, GERMANY, JULY 2

Kylian Mbappe and France's attack might be misfiring, but a solid foundation can be more important at a major tournament and an outstanding defence has helped carry them to the quarter-finals of Euro 2024. Les Bleus have scored only three times in four games so far at the European Championship, once from a penalty by Mbappe and twice via opposition defenders, including Jan Vertonghen's own goal which sealed a 1-0 win over Belgium in the last 16 on Monday. However, France kept a third clean sheet in a tournament in which they have let in a solitary goal, a penalty by Poland's Robert Lewandowski. "We have been really solid defensively and that is essential at this level," said coach Didier Deschamps after the victory against Belgium in Duesseldorf, which sent France into the quarter-finals for the sixth time in the last seven major tournaments with Portugal up next. "We have come a long way in that regard. It's not just about defending well, because you also need to use the ball well from the back and we did that. We are doing everything we can to not concede a goal." France's defensive performance in Germany is remarkable because Deschamps lost two key members of his back line after the 2022 World Cup, when they lost on penalties to Argentina in the final. Captain Hugo Lloris, who had been the first-choice goalkeeper for over a decade, retired from international football following that tournament along with centre-back Raphael Varane. Lloris's place in goal has been taken by Mike Maignan of AC Milan, and the 28-year-old has stepped up superbly. Against Belgium he made three vital saves, including two from Kevin De Bruyne, and even the penalty he conceded against Lewandowski was a retake after he saved the first effort but had stepped a fraction off his line before the ball was struck. The back four in front of Maignan has remained unchanged, with Arsenal's William Saliba and Bayern Munich's Dayot Upamecano in the middle,

Barcelona's Jules Kounde on the right and Theo Hernandez of AC Milan on the left. "They are top-level players," said Deschamps. "They deserve the credit, but you just need to look at the clubs they play for." Deschamps also pointed out that this was not even his defence during qualifying, when Liverpool's Ibrahima Konate was a first pick and the likes of Lucas Hernandez and Benjamin Pavard also featured. Saliba may have been outstanding for Arsenal in the Premier League, but his only start in qualifying came away to Greece after France's place at the Euros had been secured. He has now taken over from Konate and has grown in stature as the games have gone on. No other team left in the tournament has as impressive a defensive record as France, with Spain having at least let in one goal from open play. However, few sides have needed to be as strong at the back given France's travails in attack. "That doesn't put extra pressure on the defence," said Kounde, France's man of the match against Belgium. "If we are so solid at the back it is because we are working so well as a team." Deschamps has in the past been criticised for not making a France side full of wonderful talent more exciting to watch. Yet they scored 16 goals and conceded eight in seven games at the last World Cup. Their run to victory at the 2018 World Cup featured a 4-3 win against Argentina and the 4-2 defeat of Croatia in the final. France have shown they can score goals, but might also look to Italy at the last Euros as an example of how defensive solidity can be so important. Italy did not concede a goal in the group stage in 2021, and let in just four in four matches after that as they went on to win the trophy. Midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni is not worried about style as long as France keep winning in Germany. "It doesn't matter if we score three goals or 15 goals. We are still in the competition," he said after Monday's match.

Ronaldo seeks redemption after Slovenia penalty ride

The former Real Madrid hitman missed a penalty in extra-time and Portugal had to rely on three penalty saves from Costa to progress.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
FRANKFURT, GERMANY, JULY 2

Cristiano Ronaldo has so often been Portugal's saviour that potentially becoming the villain brought him to tears. The 39-year-old superstar was shown crying after missing an 105th minute penalty in the Selecao's Euro 2024 last-16 victory over Slovenia on Monday. Despite multiple attempts at goal and then Jan Oblak saving his spot kick, Ronaldo could not pierce Slovenia's sturdy defensive wall and eventually the match finished goal-less across 120 minutes, leading to penalties. Taking Portugal's first spot kick, this time the former Real Madrid hitman did find the net and his team triumphed 3-0 on penalties after Diogo Costa saved all three Slovenia efforts. Ronaldo is now on a redemption trail and his side face France next in a rematch of the 2016 final which Portugal won in Paris to clinch their first ever European Championship. Eight years ago Ronaldo was not the hero either, going off early with an injury and



seeing the lesser-known Eder striking in extra-time to defeat Les Bleus. Without a goal to his name at the Euros, the all-time men's leading international goalscorer with 130 strikes has at times appeared desperate. "I will always do my best for this shirt, whether I fail or not, and I'm going to do this my whole life," Ronaldo told Portuguese television channel RTP. "I've been doing this for 20 years—as you saw I missed the penalty, but I wanted to be the first to score. If he scores in the Euros he will become the oldest ever goalscorer in the competition's history—so long as his 41-year-old team-mate Pepe doesn't find the net. "The last Euro" Ronaldo is appearing in a record-extending sixth Euro and has scored 14 times in the competition, far ahead of French great Michel Platini's runner-up tally of nine. "It's undoubtedly the last Euros (for me) of course," said Ronaldo. Ronaldo had multiple free-kicks either off target or saved by his former nemesis, Atletico Madrid's Jan Oblak. The striker has scored at every major tournament he has played at but is without a goal in eight Euros and World Cup games, having taken 20 shots without success in Germany this summer. Ronaldo is aiming to put that right against France.

ROUND OF 16		
RESULTS		
Portugal	0-0	Slovenia
Portugal win 3-0 on penalties.		
France	1-0	Belgium
Jan Vertonghen 85' (OG)		

Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo (7) reacts after failing to score a penalty against Slovenia. (Below) Portugal's goalkeeper Diogo Costa saves a penalty shot from Slovenia's Jure Balkovec.

US out, Uruguay and Panama progress

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KANSAS CITY, UNITED STATES, JULY 2

The United States crashed out of the Copa America on Tuesday after a 1-0 defeat to Uruguay, as Panama sealed their place in the quarter-finals with a 3-1 win over Bolivia. The tournament hosts suffered an upset 2-1 defeat to Panama last week and went into Tuesday's final Group C game at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City needing to match or better Panama's result against Bolivia to advance. But US coach Gregg Berhalter's side never looked like doing enough to seriously threaten a well-drilled Uruguay who advanced to the last eight as group winners. Hopes of a great escape for Berhalter's men faded inside the first 30 minutes as news filtered through that Panama had taken a 1-0 lead against Bolivia in Orlando.



US hopes were revived early in the second half after Bolivia equalised, leaving the hosts on course for qualification, provided they continued to hold Uruguay. Yet the US optimism was punctured just moments later when Uruguay took the lead in controversial circumstances through Mathias Olivera on 66 minutes. Ronald Araujo's powerful header from Nicolas de la Cruz's free-kick was parried away by US goalkeeper Matt Turner, but only into the path of Olivera, who tucked away the rebound. Replays appeared to show that Olivera was offside when Araujo first made contact with the ball, but despite a lengthy VAR review, Peruvian referee Kevin Ortega ruled that the goal should stand. The mathematics of qualification looked even more bleak for the US after news that Panama had scored again through Eduardo Guerrero to regain the lead at 2-1, and the final nail in the coffin came when Cesar Yanis added a third for Panama in stoppage time. The nature of Tuesday's early exit is certain to reignite debate about whether he is the best man to lead the United States into the 2026 World Cup on home soil. Failure to defeat Uruguay, 14th in the latest FIFA rankings, extends Berhalter's poor record against top 20 teams.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Choose your words wisely, especially when dealing with competitive people. Today could lead to increased tension, so try to stay focused on your own path. Just be mindful to pull back and give your mind a rest.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Emotions will strain, making it important to honour your intuition. If you've been over-worked, use this energy as an excuse to pull back and nurture the spirit. Tapping into your gratitude can help you decipher where to head next.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

You'll feel uplifted today, helping you better understand your place within society. These vibes also support creative ambitions, marking the ideal time to return to passion projects. Try not to be offended by stoic behaviours.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Disagreements over money or emotional security could test your most important relationships. Be sure to listen to and acknowledge the concerns of family and friends and be mindful of negotiating while advocating for yourself.

LEO (July 23-August 22)

Be aware of what you can and cannot tolerate in your relationships regarding matters of the heart. If you can survive the rocky energy at play, commitment may be on the horizon. Seek counsel from peers.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Curb your demands for perfection. Now is also a good time to reflect on your own habits and how they're impacting your health and path toward wellness. Check in with your sense of harmony, practising self-care if needed.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

Watch out for jealousy or unhealthy competition, steering clear of any frenemies who walk with dark clouds. Moving with love will help you attract more positive relationships helping to balance your dynamics. Big dreams flood through your mind.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

It'll be difficult to conceal your true emotions, heightening tensions where drama has built up. Don't hesitate to set boundaries, pull back, or redirect more energy toward yourself, but try to do so with style and grace.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Today will make it easier to find supportive connections and opportunities for creative collaboration. This evening, watch out for temperamental vices at home. Take time to nurture your own emotional and mental state.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

Think about what you need to feel emotionally secure. This energy could reveal cracks within your romantic and financial situation, helping you identify where change is most necessary. Pay attention to your physical needs.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

P relationships will require some extra compromise today. Consider where give and take can be implemented, finding solutions so everyone can feel heard and appreciated. Focus on what the future holds, reflecting on where you are.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)

Resist the urge to demand perfection from yourself and others. Attempting to do too much at once could unravel your plans and confidence, so it's important to go with the flow while staying active.

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Festival

5 Separately

10 Allergic reaction

14 Trick

15 Jewish scriptures

16 Writer — Wiesel

17 Televangelist

Graville — Roberts

18 Blank

19 Manner

20 Marine mammal

22 Broke free

24 Diagnostic image (hyph.)

25 Arctic bird

26 Leave in haste

28 Shoulder ornament (var.)

34 "Seven — for Seven Brothers"

36 Abbr. in schedules

37 Unprocessed

38 Years upon years

39 Japanese verse form

41 Pub offering

42 Objective

43 Vacation spot

44 Spring weather event

47 Deadlock

51 "— fair in love and war"

DOWN

1 Shoot — the hip

2 Emanation

3 "No man — island ..."

4 Laid back

5 Lost (2 wds.)

6 Cartoon sailor

7 Altar

8 constellation

9 Go very fast

10 Book of synonyms

11 Do-over

12 Crooked

13 Faction

14 Careful attention

21 Genealogical diagram

23 — -de-sac

26 Facade

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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

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27 Singer — Ronstadt

29 Apply liquid over

30 Boat

31 Dragnet

32 "The Canterbury —"

33 America's Cup trophy

34 Hive occupants

35 Shone unsteadily

40 Santa —

45 Tortoise's rival

46 Senior citizen

48 Settled

49 Work unit

50 Lure

54 Star sign

55 Burn to blackness

56 Cereal grass

57 About (2 wds.)

58 Baby talk

60 Food fish

61 Black

62 "Heaven Must Have — You"

65 — & Bradstreet

SUDOKU

3 5 1 2 9 8 7 4 6

7 9 4 6 1 3 2 5 8

6 8 2 4 5 7 1 3 9

8 2 3 1 7 6 5 9 4

1 6 5 9 2 4 8 7 3

4 7 9 3 8 5 6 1 2

9 1 8 5 3 2 4 6 7

2 3 6 7 4 1 9 8 5

5 4 7 8 6 9 3 2 1

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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7				8	2			
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7			4			3	9	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆



Vishal Bhardwaj adapts Othello in caste light

Omkara fuses Bollywood masala and Shakespearean tragedy to form a timeless classic.



SCREENGRAB VIA YOUTUBE

Ajay Devgn (right) as Omi and Vivek Oberoi as Kesu in a scene from the movie.

○ KSHITIZ PRATAP SHAH
KATHMANDU

Shakespeare's plays have had an important place in the history of subcontinental storytelling. On the one hand, Shakespeare is taken as the epitome of English literature—a symbol of everything sophisticated, aspirational, and foreign. Everything about Shakespeare, from language to the quality of storytelling, is perceived as superior in our societies. Many novels and plays have been written using Shakespearean frameworks to tell local stories. Romeo and Juliet have

been used for centuries to represent forsaken love in the stark divides of many subcontinental communities. Shakespearean characters like Romeo, Juliet, Macbeth, and Hamlet are extremely popular. Romeo is especially a common-place term for a rowdy lover. In short, Shakespeare has found a space among local storytellers. One such example is Vishal Bhardwaj's Omkara. This gangster drama is an adaptation of an entirely different kind of story—an epic, highly romanticised war drama in Shakespeare's Othello. The language of Omkara is a rougher dialect of Kharibori, filled with curses,

while in Othello, even the Moor of Venice speaks high Venetian in the most courteous tongue. Item numbers replace ballads, and corrupt politicians and policemen replace valiant fighters and gallant rulers. Yet, despite these differences, Shakespeare's notion of a gangster drama fits. One reason is that Omkara captures the idea of purity in Othello and translates it to caste, a largely subcontinental notion. The story is focused on Omkara (Ajay Devgn), a half-Brahmin, half-lower caste gangster leader on the cusp of two drastic decisions.

The first is when Dolly (Kareena Kapoor), a distressed Brahmin girl, asks him to whisk her away from her wedding and marry her. Next is when he decides his successor to be the educated gangster Kesu (Vivek Oberoi) instead of the loyal but limping Ishwar Langda Tyagi (Saif Ali Khan). Two wrong turns, and Omkara, despite his prominence, incurs the wrath of those who see him as inferior due to his caste. Tyagi's conspiracy makes him doubt the fidelity of the girl he loves and question the possibility of an intercaste marriage itself, leading to disastrous consequences. Omkara discusses caste with a different lens than traditionally seen in Bollywood.

Omkara	
Director:	Vishal Bhardwaj
Released:	2006
Duration:	2 hours 32 minutes
Cast:	Ajay Devgn, Saif Ali Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Vivek Oberoi
Language:	Hindi
Available on:	Amazon Prime

Its protagonist is not someone strictly from the lower caste but instead from a mixed background, a half-Brahmin. Throughout the film, he constantly has to prove his worth. His ability to lead, make decisive actions, and marry a Brahmin woman of his choice is consistently undermined. He cannot forget his lower-caste self in whatever he does.

Despite being 18 years old, Omkara reminds us not to fall into the trap of boxing social matters and identity issues.

And neither can Dolly, whose agency in choosing someone inferior as a husband, is always undermined because it is unimaginable in Omkara's world for a woman to do so. Omkara cannot shake off the idea that Dolly has tainted herself by marrying him. Caste is an inherently misogynistic notion, and Dolly's agency being seen as pollution throughout the story reflects that. Yet, the biggest breakout star of the film definitely is Tyagi, a two-faced villain who cannot be read or judged as good or bad by anyone in the story, much less himself. An orchestrator of the events that lead to death and destruction in the story, it is easy to blame Tyagi for all that happens; he is very much a mischievous Shakuni-like figure, whispering in Omkara's ears and destroying lives. Yet, he is also, at the same time, a mirror to the fallacies of everyone in the story. Tyagi is merely a catalyst; the

thoughts of misdeed were always there. With this career-changing performance, Saif portrays this duality incredibly and also highlights how Omkara is, in essence, a film about duality. From a technical standpoint, Omkara also has a lot going for it. Bhardwaj, who started directing movies to give himself more opportunities to compose music, added a further layer to his compositions this time. The songs are memorable and enjoyable and add an ethereal quality to the fairly grounded setting. My favourites were 'Naina', sung by Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, and the famous 'Beedi', enhanced by how their lyrics add more Easter eggs to the plot for a keen listener to catch. The lighting is excellent, and apart from certain fight scenes and the conflict between the politicians, there is barely any moment that feels dry or out of place. In proper Bhardwaj style, the Bollywood masala mixed with the gravity of Shakespeare's Othello makes for a truly enjoyable experience. Lastly, but very importantly, why discuss Omkara in this day and age? The movie is 18 years old, and we are more used to seeing such stories in the present day. Yet, Omkara reminds us not to fall into the trap of boxing social matters and identity issues. Caste, for example, can affect individuals in so many ways, as a stain, as a patriarchal chain in the wrists of women like Dolly, as a loophole to turn husband against wife, friend against friend, like Tyagi does throughout the movie. It is a reminder that the caste system is not an issue limited within itself but one that rears its fingers into every inch of subcontinental society, and a lesson to be wary and vigilant of it constantly.

Maximising results in a limited time

Trainer Bivek Adhikari discusses the nature of HIIT exercise, its benefits, and how to prepare beforehand.

○ POST REPORT
KATHMANDU

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) is an intense and effective workout method. This approach alternates between short bursts of intense activity and brief rest periods or lower-intensity exercise. HIIT is also known to deliver significant health benefits time-efficiently, making it a go-to option for those with busy schedules.



Bivek Adhikari has more than five years of experience as a personal trainer. He specialises in light to heavy exercises, including HIIT. He explains each exercise and how to prepare for it in advance.

How does HIIT work, and why is it effective in improving fitness levels?

The HIIT approach comprises brief, intense exercise bursts like sprints or jumping jacks alternated with short periods of rest or lower-intensity activities. These intense intervals elevate your heart rate significantly, prompting your body to exert more effort and burn more calories. Even after the workout, your body keeps burning calories at an increased rate, thanks to the rigorous exercise, maximising calorie consumption.

What are the benefits of this exercise compared to other forms of exercise?

Firstly, HIIT's intense bursts and recovery periods can incinerate

more calories in less time than steady-state exercise. This calorie burn continues even after your workout, thanks to the afterburn effects, where the body continues to burn calories at an elevated rate post-exercise. Secondly, HIIT rapidly enhances cardiovascular health, VO2 max (oxygen use), and endurance. The intense intervals push the heart rate higher, challenging the cardiovascular system and improving efficiency. This improvement in cardiovascular fitness contributes to better overall health and stamina. Thirdly, HIIT workouts are time-efficient, typically lasting 15 to 30 minutes.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF BIVEK ADHIKARI

Trainer Bivek Adhikari

This short duration makes them perfect for individuals with busy schedules who struggle to find time for longer exercise sessions. Despite their brevity, HIIT workouts can deliver significant fitness gains. Finally, it offers variety and motivation. Their diverse nature keeps things interesting and prevents boredom. With various exercises and workout formats available, individuals can constantly challenge themselves and push their limits, leading to continued progress.

How can beginners safely incorporate HIIT into their fitness routines?



SHUTTERSTOCK

Start slow and short: Begin with 1-2 weekly sessions, each lasting 15-20 minutes. Gradually increase the duration and frequency of your sessions as your body adapts to the intensity. **Master form first:** Prioritise proper technique over intensity. Opt for body-weight exercises or low-impact options until you feel confident in your form and movement patterns. **Listen to your body:** Pay attention to any signs of discomfort or pain during your workouts. Don't push through pain; instead, modify exercises or rest adequately when needed to prevent injury. **Warm-up and cool-down:** Never skip your warm-up and cool-down sessions. Properly prepare your body for the work-

out ahead with a dynamic warm-up, and help it recover afterwards with a thorough cool-down routine. This practice can help prevent injuries and improve overall flexibility. **Mix it up:** Keep your workouts interesting by incorporating a variety of exercises and incorporating low-intensity alternatives during rest periods. This diversity not only prevents boredom but also helps target different muscle groups. **Progress gradually:** As you become more accustomed to HIIT, gradually increase the intensity, duration, or complexity of your workouts. Allow your body

time to adjust to the increased demands to avoid overexertion and burnout.

What are some important safety tips or precautions to remember while doing HIIT?

Begin with warmups, spend 5-10 minutes doing dynamic stretches and light cardio to prepare your body. During the workout, prioritise form over speed to avoid injury. Listen to your body and take breaks if needed. Afterwards, cool down with 5-10 minutes of static stretches and light cardio to help your body recover. Also, wear supportive footwear, modify exercises as needed, and consider guidance from a certified trainer, especially if you're new to the exercise.

What are some common misconceptions about this exercise?

One common myth is that HIIT is only suitable for advanced exercisers. However, the truth is that it can be adapted for all fitness levels. Beginners can start with shorter intervals or lower-intensity exercises and gradually increase the difficulty. Another myth is that HIIT is about pushing as hard as possible for short bursts. While intensity is important, listening to your body and allowing proper recovery between intervals is equally crucial. Pushing too hard can increase the risk of injury or burnout. A third myth is that it is bad for your joints. When done correctly with proper form and impact control, HIIT is no more harmful to your joints than other forms of exercise. However, if you have any concerns about your joints, it's always wise to consult a doctor or physical therapist before starting any new exercise regimen.



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