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Janakpur Jomsom

Concerns grow over poll commissioner nominee

A woman has come forward to accuse Krishna Man Pradhan of years of sexual exploitation.

○ BINOD GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, JULY 5

In the normal course of things, the parliamentary hearing of election commissioner nominee Krishna Man Pradhan would have been completed on Friday.

The Parliamentary Hearing Committee would have approved his nomination for the constitutional body, paving the way for his appointment by the President.

However, the House committee on Thursday decided to postpone his hearing indefinitely after listening to a complainant, who filed objections against Pradhan's nomination, accusing him of sexual exploitation.

The victim has accused Pradhan of sexually exploiting her for five continuous years until last year.

The woman who had lodged a complaint against Pradhan had settled the case out of court after the latter paid Rs10 million in compensation. Appearing before the committee, the victim—in her 30s—said she had to compromise as Pradhan had assured her a well-paying job.

"I reluctantly accepted his demand as I desperately needed a job," the woman told the House committee, according to one of its members.

The victim said she agreed to settle the case for money given her dire economic condition. She has also handed over an audio recording as proof of her exploitation by Pradhan.

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Starmer vows 'service' for national renewal as he rides Labour landslide

In the shadow of unimpressive tenures of five successive prime ministers, Conservatives' 121 in the UK House of Commons is the worst result since 1906.



AP/RSS
Britain's Labour Party Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria wave to the crowds of supporters and media from the doorstep of 10 Downing Street in London, on Friday.

○ ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, JULY 5

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he would lead a "government of service" on a mission of national renewal in his first official remarks on Friday after his Labour Party swept to power in a landslide victory after more than a decade in opposition.

Starmer acknowledged in his first speech outside 10 Downing St that many people are disillusioned and cynical about politics, but said he and his colleagues would try to restore faith in government.

"My government will fight every day until you believe again," Starmer said as supporters cheered him on outside 10 Downing St.

"The work for change begins immediately," he said. "We will rebuild Britain. Brick by brick we will rebuild the infrastructure of opportunity."

In the merciless choreography of British politics, Starmer took over the official residence about two hours after Conservative leader Rishi Sunak and his family left the home and the king accepted the Conservative leader's resignation.

"This is a difficult day, but I leave this job honoured to have been prime minister of the best country in the world," Sunak said in his farewell address.

Sunak had conceded defeat earlier in the morning, saying the voters had delivered a "sobering verdict".

In a reflective farewell speech in the same place where he had called the snap election six weeks earlier, Sunak wished Starmer all the best but also acknowledged his own missteps.

"I have heard your anger, your disappointment, and I take responsibility for this loss," Sunak said.

"To all the Conservative candidates and campaigners who worked tirelessly but without success, I'm sorry that we could not deliver what your efforts deserved."

With results for all but two seats, Labour had won 412 seats in the 650-seat House of Commons and the Conservatives 121.

The Conservatives' previous worst result was 156 seats in 1906.

For Starmer, it's a massive triumph that will bring huge challenges, as he faces a weary electorate impatient for change against a gloomy backdrop of economic malaise, mounting distrust in institutions and a fraying social fabric.

"Nothing has gone well in the last 14 years," said London voter James Erskine, who was optimistic for change in the hours before polls closed. "I just see this as the potential for a seismic shift, and that's what I'm hoping for."

And that's what Starmer promised, saying "change begins now".

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How costly will Everest be? Climbing rules are changing

New regulations will address issues like garbage, limiting footfall, and revenue generation from world's tallest peak.

○ SANGAM PRASAIN
KATHMANDU, JULY 5

Four hundred twenty-one climbing permits were issued for fee-paying individuals during the 2024 Everest season, which ended on May 29. Around 600 people, including 200 foreigners, completed the perilous ascent. Nearly 2,000 people assembled at the base camp. Eight died. These people brought 100 tonnes of waste.

Looking ahead to 2025, the world's tallest peak could have new rules, tighter restrictions and higher fees.

Tourism Minister Hit Bahadur Tamang told the National Assembly on Thursday that the ministry has tabled a draft of a new Mountaineering Regulations at the Cabinet, to address the current challenges and evolving context.

The Post could not independently verify whether the new regulations will take effect from the beginning of the new fiscal year (July 16). Although the current Pushpa Kamal Dahal-led coalition government has fallen into minority following the withdrawal of support by its largest partner, officials say a change in government is unlikely to affect the mountaineering policy.

Rakesh Gurung, director of the mountaineering section of the Tourism Department, said that starting in the spring of 2025, a climbing permit for



SHUTTERSTOCK
Starting in the spring of 2025, an Everest climbing permit will cost \$15,000.

Everest will cost \$15,000. Currently, the permit to climb the 8,848.86-metre Himalayan giant costs \$11,000 for foreigners and Rs75,000 for Nepalis.

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NATIONAL

BRIEFING

PM Dahal congratulates UK's Keir Starmer

KATHMANDU: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Friday congratulated newly elected British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on his party's election victory. "I look forward to working with the new government of the UK to strengthen longstanding Nepal-UK relations," Dahal wrote on X, formerly Twitter. Starmer's Labour Party won a landslide victory in the parliamentary election on Friday, ending 14 years of often tumultuous Conservative rule. The centre-left Labour won more than 400 seats in the 650-seat parliament. Rishi Sunak's Conservatives suffered the worst performance in the party's long history as voters punished them for a cost of living crisis, failing public services, and a series of scandals, Reuters reported.

7 injured, 2 trapped in accident at under-construction hydropower project



SINDHUPALCHOK: At least seven construction workers were injured in an accident at the under-construction Bhotekoshi-1 Hydropower Project in Sindhupalchok district on Friday. The Sindhupalchok District Police Office said the workers were buried under concrete after a structure collapsed during construction. The condition of two others trapped at the bottom of the structure remains unknown. According to Inspector Devendra Raj Joshi of the Barhabise Area Police Office, the injured were immediately rescued and taken to Keystone Hospital and Barhabise Municipal Hospital for treatment. Some of the injured have been referred to Dhulikhel, while security personnel have been deployed to rescue the two trapped workers. The 40MW project is being constructed by Electro Power Company Limited at a cost of around Rs8 billion.

126 settlements in Salyan district at risk of landslides

Reckless use of heavy equipment for roadbuilding, along with November earthquake blamed for weakening land's topography and increasing landslides.



(Left) Workers instal bamboo barriers on a slope to prevent land erosion in Chhatreshwari Rural Municipality in Salyan in this recent photo. (Right) Last year's massive landslide in the middle of a village in ward 5 of Kapurkot Rural Municipality in Salyan district in this recent photo.

BIPLAB MAHARJAN

SALYAN, JULY 5

On October 7, 2022, heavy rains triggered a massive landslide near Sallam village in ward 5 of Kapurkot Rural Municipality on October 7, 2022. Three houses were swept away by the landslide and six others were damaged.

Fourteen families have been displaced due to the ongoing risk. The landslide generally remains inactive for most of the year but resumes every monsoon. When it rains, stones start falling from the hill slopes putting the settlement at high risk.

Last year, due to the heavy rainfalls that occurred in October, the land caved in at Kaphalpani settlement in ward 4 of Bangad Kupinde Municipality. Six houses developed cracks as the land sank and eight families were displaced for a month, while 24 families were affected by the cave-in.

Even after a long time since the disaster, the authorities have not been

able to provide any assistance other than gabion wire netting to some houses in Kaphalpani. Even now, the local residents are forced to live in risky conditions around the affected area.

Salyan, a hill district of Karnali Province, has 10 local units including three municipalities and seven rural municipalities. A total of 126 settlements in various local bodies are at risk of landslides because of which about 4,000 families are affected. Out of the 126 settlements, 35 are at high risk and 91 are at moderate risk.

The haphazard construction of various physical infrastructures, mainly roads by using heavy equipment including bulldozers and excavators weakens the land topography. The heavy rainfall in the monsoon season then triggers landslides, leaving the settlements at risk.

According to the data of the Soil Conservation Office in Surkhet, the provincial headquarters of Karnali, the areas at high risk of landslides are

Nigalchula, Majhkanda, Bhadale of Bangad Kupinde municipality; Baphukhola of Bagchaur Municipality; Kaprechaur, Kalche, Rampur, Laxmipur of Kalimati Rural Municipality; Chhanyakshetra, Jhimpe, Chami, Gurase and Kharsubas of Chhatreshwari Rural Municipality; Garpa, Khumkhani, Dhanbang, Gothiwan, Kapurkot Bazar of Kapurkot Rural Municipality and Swikot, Kalagaun of Kumak Rural Municipality in Salyan.

The earthquake that occurred on November 3 with its epicentre at Ramidanda of neighbouring Jajarkot district added to the woes. The earthquake left various settlements of Darma Rural Municipality at high risk of landslides.

Lirapaja, Dalsing, Pajakhola, Saugun, Ligachhap in ward 2 of Darma; Dhulkharka, Maineni and Lekhagaun in ward 3 of Darma; Ratikhola, Bhalchaur, Masina, Sarsukhola and Galat in ward 4 of Darma; Bachhela, Liredanda,

Lampakha, Kaulebot, Jalekharka, Nigalpani, Bholtega, Pokhari, Bhalukhola, Bohari, Dhakadamkot, Tinpokhari, Uttisani, Dhaldhunga and Adherikhola in ward 5 of Darma; and Kimutakura, Badachur, Oligau, Sunargaun, Malikcha and Malibang in ward 6 of Darma are at risk of landslides.

Several people die every year due to monsoon-induced disasters, mainly landslides, in Salyan.

"Two years ago, more than 100 families from Okhrene, Jarepani, Andheri, Tingairi, Chauradanda of Banphukhola were affected by a landslide triggered by rain. The municipality had used a bulldozer to dig the soil, which was then weakened by the vibrations," said Deepak Oli, a local and former ward chairman of ward 12 of Bagchaur Municipality.

The haphazard construction of rural roads and deforestation, according to the conservationists, are the leading causes of landslides.

Dipesh KC, Salyan in-charge of the

Soil Conservation Office in Surkhet, said that landslides occurred in 90 places in Salyan last year due to soil erosion caused by haphazard construction of roads, and deforestation.

As per the data available at the District Administration Office in Salyan, a person died, 96 houses were destroyed, 133 other houses were partially damaged while 604 people were displaced in the district last year.

Chief District Officer Shambhu Prasad Regmi said that most of the settlements in the district are at the risk of landslides due to the roads dug constructed by the local units using dozers and excavators.

"We have already instructed all the local units to make necessary arrangements to minimise the impacts of water-induced disasters. The district administration office has been launching various awareness programmes to protect from the disasters," said Regmi.

Britain's new prime minister Keir Starmer vows to restore faith in government amid public disillusionment

>> Continued from page 1

Anand Menon, professor of European Politics and Foreign Affairs at King's College London, said British voters were about to see a marked change in political atmosphere from the tumultuous "politics as pantomime" of the last few years.

"I think we're going to have to get used again to relatively stable government, with ministers staying in power for quite a long time, and with government being able to think beyond the very short term to medium-term objectives," he said.

Britain has experienced a run of turbulent years—some of it of the Conservatives' own making and some of it not—that has left many voters pessimistic about their country's future. The UK divorce from the European Union followed by the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine battered the economy, while lockdown-breaching parties held by then-prime minister Boris Johnson and his staff caused widespread anger.

Johnson's successor, Liz Truss, rocked the economy further with a package of drastic tax cuts and lasted just 49 days in office. Truss, who lost her seat to Labour, was one of a slew of senior Tories kicked out in a stark electoral reckoning.

Rising poverty, crumbling infrastructure and overstretched National Health Service have led to gripes about "Broken Britain."

Starmer began appointing the government ministers that will be responsible for helping to turn those problems around. He announced that Rachel Reeves, a former Bank of England economist, will be Treasury chief, the first woman to hold the job.

While the result appears to buck recent rightward electoral shifts in Europe, including in France and Italy, many of those same populist undercurrents flow in Britain. Reform UK leader Nigel Farage roiled the race with his party's anti-immigrant "take our country back" sentiment and undercut support for the Conservatives and even grabbed some voters from Labour.

The result is a catastrophe for the Conservatives as voters punished them for 14 years of presiding over austerity, Brexit, a pandemic, political scandals and interne-cine conflict.

The historic defeat—the smallest number of seats in the party's two-century history—leaves it depleted and in disarray and will spark an immediate contest to replace Sunak, who said he would step down as leader.

In a sign of the volatile public mood and anger at the system, the incoming Parliament will be more fractured and ideologically diverse than any for years. Smaller parties picked up millions of votes, including the centrist Liberal Democrats and Farage's Reform UK. It won four seats, including one for Farage in the seaside town of Clacton-on-Sea, securing a place in Parliament on his eighth attempt.

The Liberal Democrats won about 70 seats, on a slightly lower share of the vote than Reform because its votes were more efficiently distributed. In Britain's first-past-the-post system, the candidate with the most votes in each constituency wins.

The Green Party won four seats, up from just one before the election.

One of the biggest losers was the Scottish National Party, which held most of Scotland's 57 seats before the election but looked set to lose all but handful, mostly to Labour.

Labour did not set pulses racing with its pledges to get the sluggish economy growing, invest in infrastructure and make Britain a "clean energy superpower."

But the party's cautious, safety-first campaign delivered the desired result. The party won the support of large chunks of the busi-

ness community and endorsements from traditionally conservative newspapers, including the Rupert Murdoch-owned Sun tabloid, which praised Starmer for "dragging his party back to the centre ground of British politics."

The Conservative campaign, meanwhile, was plagued by gaffes. The campaign got off to an inauspicious start when rain drenched Sunak as he made the announcement outside 10 Downing St. Then, Sunak went home early from commemorations in France marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion.

Several Conservatives close to Sunak are being investigated over suspicions they used inside information to place bets on the date of the election before it was announced.

In Henley-on-Thames, about 65 kilometres west of London, voters like Patricia Mulcahy, who is retired, sensed the nation was looking for something different. The community, which has long voted Conservative, flipped to the Liberal Democrats this time.

"The younger generation are far more interested in change," Mulcahy said ahead of the results. "But whoever gets in, they've got a heck of a job ahead of them. It's not going to be easy."

Disputed nomination raises questions on Constitutional Council members' 'intent'

>> Continued from page 1

"I filed the complaint to stop such a morally corrupt person from taking the constitutional position. How can you approve his nomination?" she questioned the lawmakers on the committee.

Talking to journalists after listening to the victim Pashupati Shumsher Rana, who chaired the meeting, said they needed to study the matter seriously, as endorsing a candidate for a dignified constitutional position like an election commissioner is a serious responsibility. Committee members said they wanted more time for additional hearings as they want to make the right decision.

Ishwari Neupane, a member of the committee, the evidence provided by the complainant is being studied. "We are aware that only a person with high moral integrity can hold the constitutional position. At the same time, we also need to ensure that we don't do injustice to the nominee. We, therefore, are studying the matter closely," she told the Post.

A two-thirds majority of the 15-strong committee, which has lawmakers from both the chambers of Parliament, can reject the nomination. A member of the committee said a wrong decision of the Constitutional Council has left them in a dilemma. A meeting of the constitutional council recommended Pradhan for the vacant post of election commissioner.

"It is the council's responsibility to nominate the right candidates for such important posts," said the lawmaker. "We don't want to endorse a controversial nominee. But we are not sure if we can do that as Pradhan was picked by the heads of three state organs and the chief of the country's largest party."

The council headed by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who also is the CPN (Maoist Centre) chair, had unanimously nominated him. Speaker Devraj Ghimire, National Assembly chair Narayan Dahal, Chief Justice Bishowambhar Prasad Shrestha and deputy Speaker Indira Rana too approved the nomination without question. Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba too gave his stamp of approval.

Legal experts say wrong recommendations by the constitutional council automatically raise questions about the intent and capability of its chair and members. "The council cannot make recommendations haphazardly. It must properly check the background of the candidate before nomination," Raju Prasad Chapagain, former chair of the Constitutional Lawyers' Forum, told the Post.

Legal experts say the Constitutional Council Act clearly states that the nominees for the constitutional positions must be qualified, appropriate for the particular position and hold high moral ground. "It is the responsibility of the members of the council to carry out proper vetting of the nominees. As other members have political background, the chief justice has a major role in vetting. But [Chief Justice] Shrestha failed in this case," said a constitutional lawyer. He said Pradhan's bad deeds were no secret in the legal fraternity.

"The council fully overlooked Pradhan's tainted past. There must be some interest at play," the lawyer further said. Pradhan is the executive director of the Nepal Law Society. An expert on electoral reforms and governance, Pradhan has been in the position since 2000. He reportedly has good rapport with political and judicial leadership.

Thapathali Maternity Hospital to hold healthy baby contest

Doctors will assess baby growth, health, feeding practices, breastfeeding, immunisation, and parenting practices at the competition.

POST REPORT

KATHMANDU, JULY 5

The Thapathali-based Paropakar Maternity and Women's Hospital is going to organise a healthy baby competition next month with an aim to raise awareness about overall baby development.

Officials at the hospital said that the competition will not only assess physical growth and health of babies, several expert teams will also evaluate feeding practices, exclusive breastfeeding, immunisation, and the use of family planning methods by parents to ensure proper birth interval.

"We would like to request parents of babies born at our hospital in the past year to register their babies for the contest," said Dr Shree Prasad Adhikari, director at the hospital. "This is also an opportunity for parents to show how their parenting has been yielding positive results."

The hospital administration, however, said that the contest would be open only to babies born at the maternity hospital.

Around 24,000 babies are born at the hospital each year, with around 39 percent delivered through the Caesarean section.

The hospital administration said the contest will be held on August 13, coinciding with the hospital's anniversary, and registration will start on July 16. Babies will be assessed in three categories—1 to 45 days, 45 days to six months, and six months to one year.

Doctors say that babies' body mass index will be monitored to assess their growth. "We will also evaluate exclusive breastfeeding practices, administration of routine vaccines, and use of family planning methods," said Adhikari. "We will form several teams of experts to assess the babies and award certificates to the top three babies in each category."

Doctors at the hospital said that the contest would help raise awareness of good parenting, exclusive breastfeeding, healthy feeding habits, the drawbacks of giving junk food to small children, and the importance of using family planning methods to maintain appropriate intervals between births.

Studies show that the exclusive breastfeeding rate in Nepal has been steadily declining over the years. According to the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey-2022,

exclusive breastfeeding has been continuously declining from 70 percent in 2011 to 56 percent in 2021.

What concerns health officials is that more educated and well-off mothers are less likely to exclusively breastfeed their babies, as shown by studies.

The report said the proportion of children who are bottle-fed rises with increasing education among mothers, ranging from 12 percent among mothers with no formal education to 49 percent among those with more than a secondary education.

The use of a bottle with a nipple is the highest in the highest wealth quintile, at 46 percent, and lowest in the poorest quintile, at 11 percent.

The proportion of children aged 0-5 months who are exclusively breastfed fluctuates across wealth quintiles. The proportion is highest in the lowest wealth quintile—64 percent—and lowest in the highest quintile—44 percent.

The proportion of children who are bottle-fed is higher in urban areas, at 26 percent, than in rural areas, at 15 percent. The use of a bottle with a nipple is lowest in Karnali Province, at 11 percent, and in

Madhesh Province, at 12 percent, and the highest in Bagmati Province, at 43 percent.

The report also showed that bottle-feeding practices often start in health facilities. It showed that 22 percent of children born in a health facility receive mixed milk feeding (breast milk and fresh, packaged, or powdered animal milk or infant formula), as compared to 12 percent of those born at home.

The World Health Organisation, however, does not recommend bottle feeding, stating that the nipple on a feeding bottle is susceptible to contamination and increases the risk of diseases among children.

Nepal had committed to increasing the exclusive breastfeeding rate to more than 90 percent by 2030, but the rate declined from 70 percent in 2011 to 66 percent in 2016 and to 56 percent in 2022.

The same report also shows that four percent of children received no vaccination between 2016 and 2021. Experts say feeding practices, exclusive breastfeeding, awareness about the importance of routine vaccination, and the use of family planning methods are basic things that determine not only the health of babies but also their future.

Dahal seeks floor test on July 12

The prime minister may have wanted to scuttle the possibility of Oli becoming the next PM, insiders suspect.



POST FILE PHOTO

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Friday asked the Parliament Secretariat to make arrangements for the trust vote.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, JULY 5

Ending speculations, embattled Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal will seek a vote of confidence in the House of Representatives on July 12. The prime minister sent a letter to the Parliament Secretariat asking the latter to make arrangements for the vote.

After CPN-UML, the largest party in the Dahal government, withdrew its support on Wednesday following a deal with the Nepali Congress to form a new coalition, the prime minister lost the majority in the House.

If the prime minister fails to win the vote of confidence on July 12, which is almost certain, he will resign, one of his aides said. As Nepali Congress, the largest party in the House of Representatives, decided to extend support to KP Sharma Oli, the UML chair, as the next prime minister, both the parties have been urging Dahal to step down as soon as possible.

The two largest parties have asked the government not to make any decisions with far-reaching consequences. The UML registered a letter at the Parliament Secretariat on Thursday,

informing the Speaker that the party will sit in the opposition.

However, it is still unclear what constitutional provision will be used to initiate the new government formation process.

Some observers see no problem for President to initiate government formation under Article 76 (2).

The Congress is going to give its support to Oli in writing, a senior party leader said. "We will soon hand over the signatures of all our lawmakers to Oli and assure that the Nepali Congress is committed to forming the government led by Oli as per Article 76 (2). The signatures will also be sent to the President's Office."

The Congress has already determined that the new government will be formed as per Article 76 (2). "We suspect the prime minister might move

the Supreme Court if the President triggers the new government formation process as per Article 76 (2) [of the constitution]. We want to assure Oli that we are committed to supporting him and the President should call for the new government formation as per 76 (2)," the leader said.

Shekhar Koirala, a senior Nepali Congress leader, is cautious about the two-party deal. "Since the prime minister has not resigned, we must be careful if the new government formation will proceed under Article 76 (3)." Article 76 (3) of the constitution states that the President appoints as prime minister the parliamentary party leader of the party that has the highest number of members in the House of Representatives.

The prime minister and some of his aides claim that after completing the process of government formation under 76 (2), the President should now call for the government formation as per Article 76 (3). However, some constitutional experts have suggested that Article 76 (2) may still be applicable.

"We don't want the next government to be formed as per Article 76

(3)," said Koirala. "The incumbent government was formed as per Article 76 (2) but if the prime minister resigns, some constitutional experts suggest that the President should initiate the process to form a new government under the same provision. But if the prime minister goes for a floor test and fails, then the new government process should proceed under Article 76 (3)."

If the prime minister does not resign, "then we have to think", said Koirala. In that case, what happens next as per the constitution is a matter of concern.

Due to frequent changes in the ruling coalition, it will be Dahal's fifth floor test after being appointed prime minister on December 25, 2022. The prime minister is likely to lose the trust vote this time.

Dahal chose the floor test in accordance with Article 100(2) of the constitution, which says: If the political party which the prime minister represents is divided or a party in the coalition government withdraws its support, the prime minister must table a motion in the House of Representatives for a vote of confidence within 30 days.

In the 275-strong House of Representatives, Dahal needs the backing of 138 to win the vote of trust. But he has only 73 lawmakers—32 from CPN (Maoist Centre), Rastriya Swatantra Party's 21, and 10 from the CPN (Unified Socialist)—in his support. The Janamat Party with six members and the Nagarik Unmukti Party with four lawmakers also support him.

These parties held a meeting on Friday.

The Janata Samajbadi Party, led by Ashok Rai, withdrew its support to the government on Friday. Two ministers and one state minister of the newly formed party resigned. It has seven lawmakers in the lower house.

As per the understanding between the Congress and the UML, Oli will lead a 'national consensus government' for a year and a half. Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba will succeed him and head the government for the remaining term of the House.

The prime minister went for the fourth-floor test on May 20 after the Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal withdrew its support following a split on May 5. Dahal received 157 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives.

Unified Socialist general convention concludes, electing incomplete central committee



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ASHESH GHIMIRE

CPN (Unified Socialist) picked 93 central committee members without conducting a vote from its general convention that concluded on Friday.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, JULY 5

The tenth general convention of the CPN (Unified Socialist) concluded on Friday without giving the central committee a full shape.

The convention was supposed to elect 299 central committee members and 21 office bearers through a vote. However, the convention elected only three office bearers, including the chairman, and picked 93 central members, all of them unanimously, without holding an election.

The names of 93 members of the 299-member central committee were announced during a closed session Friday. Madhav Paudel, chief of the election committee, administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly appointed central members. The Unified Socialist Party, which has a 299-member central committee as per the party's statute, said the names of the remaining central members will be finalised within ten days. Leader Beduram Bhusal said the office-bearers and other central leaders couldn't

be elected due to a large number of aspirants.

"Now, a new central committee meeting will decide," said Bhusal.

On Thursday, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Ghanashyam Bhusal retained their positions as party chair and general secretary after they were unanimously selected for the party's two key positions. Also, former prime minister Jhalanath Khanal was given continuity as the senior leader of the party.

The Unified Socialist, which is not a national party, has 10 lawmakers in the House of Representatives.

As per its statute, the party will have 21 office bearers, which include a chairman, a senior vice-chair, seven vice-chairs including one woman, a general secretary, four deputy general secretaries, and seven secretaries.

Ahead of the general convention, the leaders amended the party statute to increase the number of office bearers to 21, besides the senior leader.

In August 2021, a group of CPN-UML leaders led by Madhav Kumar Nepal split the country's largest communist party to form the Unified Socialist.

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WORLD

Orbán meets Putin for talks in Moscow in a rare visit from a European leader

In comments at the beginning of their meeting that were televised, Putin suggests that Orbán had come to Moscow as a representative of the European Council, despite several European officials having condemned the visit.

ASSOCIATED PRESS MOSCOW, JULY 5

Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to Moscow on Friday for a rare meeting with a European leader to discuss peace proposals for Ukraine.

Orbán's visit comes only days after he made a similar unannounced trip to Ukraine, where he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and proposed that Ukraine consider agreeing to an immediate cease-fire with Russia.

"The number of countries that can talk to both warring sides is diminishing," Orbán said. "Hungary is slowly becoming the only country in Europe that can speak to everyone."

In comments at the beginning of their meeting that were televised, Putin suggested that Orbán had come to Moscow as a representative of the European Council, despite several European officials having condemned the visit.

The Hungarian prime minister, widely seen as having the warmest relations with Vladimir Putin among all European Union leaders, has routinely blocked, delayed or watered down EU efforts to assist Ukraine and impose sanctions on Moscow for its actions in Ukraine. He has long argued for a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine but without outlining what that might mean for the country's territorial integrity or future security.

That posture has frustrated Hungary's EU and NATO allies, which have broadly considered Russia's actions as a breach of international law and a threat to the security of countries in Eastern Europe.

The visit to Moscow was Orbán's idea and was only agreed to on Wednesday, Putin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov said, according to the Russian state news agency Tass.

Putin told Orbán that he wanted to hear about the position of his "European colleagues" on Ukraine and discuss Moscow's plan for peace as well as bilateral relations. Orbán noted that the meeting was the fourteenth time the leaders have held bilateral talks since 2009.

European officials and leaders have



Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán shake hands during a meeting in Moscow, Russia, on Friday.

heavily criticised Orbán's visit to Moscow, something only one other European leader has done since the start of the conflict.

"This is about appeasement. It's not about peace," European Commission spokesperson Eric Mamer said.

Hungary at the beginning of the month took over the six-month rotating presidency of the EU Council, a largely formal role that can be used to shape the bloc's policy agenda. Orbán has said he wants to use the presidency to advocate for an end to the fighting in Ukraine.

The EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said in a statement that Orbán's visit to Moscow "takes place, exclusively, in the framework of the bilateral relations between Hungary and Russia."

"Prime Minister Orbán has not received any mandate from the EU Council to visit Moscow," Borrell said,

adding that his "position excludes official contacts between the EU and President Putin. The Hungarian Prime Minister is thus not representing the EU in any form."

He noted that Putin has been indicted by the International Criminal Court and an arrest warrant released for his role in relation to the forced deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia.

Kaja Kallas, the outgoing Estonian prime minister nominated to become the next EU foreign policy chief, accused Orbán of "exploiting" the presidency and said the Hungarian leader is trying "to sow confusion."

"The EU is united, clearly behind Ukraine and against Russian aggression," Kallas, a staunch supporter of Ukraine, wrote Friday on the social media platform X.

In an email on Friday, Orbán's press chief, Bertalan Havasi, said the

Hungarian leader's trip comes "as part of his peace mission"—reflecting the image of a peacemaker that the populist leader has cultivated since Putin sent his troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó also joined the trip to Moscow, according to a post on his Facebook page. Speaking to Hungarian state radio before departing Friday morning, Orbán said he was aware that his country's presidency of the EU "does not entitle us to negotiate on behalf of anyone."

Without mentioning reports of his planned trip to Moscow, he said his trip earlier this week to Kyiv did not "need a mandate, because I do not represent anything. The only thing I do is go to those places where there is a war or the threat of war that has negative consequences for Europe and Hungary as well."

Ceasefire hopes rise as Israel says it will resume stalled negotiations

REUTERS CAIRO/GAZA/JERUSALEM, JULY 5

Efforts to secure a ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza were gathering momentum on Friday after Hamas made a revised proposal on the terms of a deal and Israel said it would resume stalled negotiations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US President Joe Biden on Thursday he would send a delegation to resume negotiations, and an Israeli official said his country's team would be led by the head of the Mossad intelligence agency.

A source in Israel's negotiating team, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there was a real chance of achieving agreement after Hamas made its revised proposal on the terms of a deal, received by Israel on Wednesday.

"The proposal put forward by Hamas includes a very significant breakthrough," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity and giving no details.

The Israeli response to the Hamas proposal, submitted via mediators, was in marked contrast to past instances during the nearly nine-month-old war in Gaza, when Israel said conditions attached by the militant Islamist group were not acceptable. A Palestinian official close to the internationally mediated peace efforts told Reuters the new Hamas proposal could lead to a framework agreement if it is embraced by Israel.

He said Hamas was no longer demanding as a pre-condition an Israeli commitment to permanently cease fire before the signing of an agreement, and would allow negotiations to achieve that throughout a first six-week phase.

"Should the sides need more time to seal an agreement on a permanent ceasefire, the two sides should agree there would be no return to the fighting until they do that," said the official, who asked not to be named.

Hamas has previously said any deal must end the war and bring a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and sought the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel in exchange for Israeli hostages held in Gaza.

Israel has previously said it will accept only temporary pauses in the

fighting until Hamas, which governs the small, densely populated Gaza Strip, is eradicated.

Egyptian sources acknowledged there had been a shift but suggested that the core issue of commitment to a permanent ceasefire was still outstanding. Gaza health authorities say more than 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive launched in response to a Hamas-led attack on Israel last October 7 in which Israel said 1,200 people were killed and over 250 taken hostage.

The war has caused a humanitarian crisis across Gaza and increased tension across the region, triggering frequent exchanges of fire across Israel's northern border with the Iran-backed Hezbollah group in Lebanon.

Hezbollah said on Friday its leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and a top Hamas official, Khalil Al-Hayya, had met to discuss the latest developments in Gaza. It provided no details of the outcome.

Biden welcomes Netanyahu's decision The White House said Biden and Netanyahu had on Thursday discussed the response received from Hamas on the possible terms of a deal, and that Biden had welcomed Netanyahu's decision on resuming the stalled talks "in an effort to close out the deal."

The source in the Israeli negotiating team said: "There's a deal with a real chance of implementation."

However the source cautioned there was a risk a deal could be scuppered by "political considerations".

Some far-right partners in Netanyahu's governing coalition have indicated they may quit the government if the war ends before Hamas is destroyed. Their departure would probably end Netanyahu's premiership.

Israel's Channel 7 News reported that, during a cabinet meeting on Thursday evening, far-right coalition partner Itamar Ben Gvir had accused top security and defence officials of deciding to resume the talks without consulting him.

Hamas' response was to a proposal made public at the end of May by Biden that would include the release of about 120 hostages still held in Gaza and a ceasefire.

Hong Kong court hears mitigation pleas from Joshua Wong, other democrats

REUTERS HONG KONG, JULY 5

Prominent Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong should be considered an active participant in a landmark subversion case involving 47 democrats, his lawyer said on Friday, but urged a court to hand him a lighter sentence for entering his plea early.

Wong, 27, who wore a gray sweater and navy blue shirt in court, was one of dozens of democratic activists arrested in 2021 for participating in an unofficial poll to select candidates for a 2020 legislative council election.

Of these, 47 were charged with "conspiracy to commit subversion" under a national security law imposed by Beijing.

Wong's lawyer, Marco Li, told the court that while his client should be considered an active participant in the conspiracy, he had no involvement in organising or assisting in the primary election.

In view of Wong's early plea of guilty, Li urged a reduction of a third in his sentence, which could range from three years to 10 for active participants in the conspiracy, but life for those judged to be "principal offenders".

"He very much hopes that after all these offenses, he could part with his past history and be able to reform himself after this particular offense," Li added.

Seated in a corner of the dock, Wong was separated from the other defendants by three prison guards. Before the hearing began, he had nodded and waved to friends and supporters.

The marathon case has prompted criticism from countries such as Australia, Britain, and the United States, which say national security laws have been used to curb freedoms guaranteed when Britain handed the Asian financial hub back to China in 1997.

The governments of China and Hong

Kong say the law is necessary and has brought stability, however.

The mitigation hearings began a month after 14 activists were found guilty, with two acquittals, in May.

They had pleaded not guilty. Wong and 30 others had pleaded guilty, and four of them have become prosecution witnesses.

Wong is among the third batch of the convicted 45 making mitigation pleas for a lighter sentence.

Wong is among the third batch of the convicted 45 making mitigation pleas for a lighter sentence. He did not himself write a mitigation letter, but his mother, classmates in church and former school teachers wrote on his behalf.

A candidate who won the unofficial primary poll, Wong was disqualified from running in the 2020 election, which the government postponed on the grounds of Covid-19 pandemic.

An admitted summary of facts, Wong told the election forum that he lobbied internationally, in Britain, the United States and the United Nations since 2016, for measures such as the US Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act passed in 2019.

His lawyer said 2016 was well before the national security law and his appeal for such foreign support was not specific to the current conspiracy, forming instead part of the broader democracy movement.

Wong and most of the activists have been denied bail and remanded in custody for more than three years in what critics say has been a departure from common law traditions.

Modi to seek early discharge of Indians from Russian army in Moscow talks

REUTERS NEW DELHI, JULY 5

The early discharge sought by India of its nationals who were "misled" into serving in the Russian army is expected to be discussed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Moscow next week, his foreign secretary said on Friday.

Several cases of Indians who were lured to Russia with the promise of lucrative jobs or education and ended up fighting against Ukraine have emerged over the last few months, and Indian police in May arrested four people linked to a human trafficking network behind the practice.

Moscow has so far not responded



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

to repeated requests from Reuters for comment.

At least four Indian nationals have been killed in the war so far,

prompting Modi's government to call for an immediate stop to such recruitment and quick release of Indians fighting in the army.

India estimates anywhere between 30 and 40 of its citizens could be already serving, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra told a media briefing on Friday.

"All efforts have been made that Indian nationals return as soon as possible," he said, adding that 10 Indians have already been brought back.

Thousands of people have died on both sides since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 but India, which has enjoyed a close relationship with Moscow for decades, has refused to condemn Russia for the war, instead calling

for an end to the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

Other South Asian nations have also warned their citizens against being lured into joining the Russian army.

Sri Lanka has tightened controls to stop its citizens being duped, with the government saying dozens who want to return home are already fighting in the war.

Nepal, similarly, said in May that several of its citizens have illegally been recruited to join the Russian army, with at least 200 estimated to be serving at the front and about 100 missing.

Modi will visit Russia on July 8 and 9 for talks with President Vladimir Putin, both countries said earlier this week.

Philippines turned down US help amid South China Sea tensions: Military chief

REUTERS MANILA, JULY 5

The Philippines has turned down offers from the United States to assist operations in the South China Sea, after a flare-up with China over missions to resupply Filipino troops on a contested shoal, its military chief said.

Tensions in the disputed waterway have boiled over into violence in the past year, with a Filipino sailor losing a finger in the latest June 17 clash that Manila described as "intentional-high speed ramming" by the Chinese coast guard.

The US, a treaty ally, has offered support but Manila prefers to handle operations on its own, Armed Forces Chief General Romeo Brawner told Reuters late Thursday. "Yes, of course, they have been offering help and they asked us how they could help us in any way," he said.

"We try to exhaust all possible options that we have before we ask for help."

Manila and Washington are bound by the 1951-Mutual Defence Treaty (MDT), a military pact that can be invoked in the case of armed attacks on Philippine forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea.

Confrontations between the Philippines and China in Asia's most contested waters have increased in frequency over the past year as Beijing has pressed its claim to the waterway and Manila continued missions to bring supplies to soldiers living aboard a rusty, aging warship that it grounded on a contested shoal.

Some observers, including former deputy US National Security Adviser Matt Pottinger, have called for direct US naval support for the resupply missions.

But Philippine National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano said the Philippines wanted them to be a "pure Philippine operation".

"This is our legitimate national interest, so we don't see any reason for them (the US) to come in," Ano told Reuters. Ano, who spoke to his US counterpart Jake Sullivan last month to discuss shared concerns over China's "dangerous and escalatory actions", said the MDT was "far from being invoked".

"We (the Philippines and China) agreed that there will be some easing tension, but we will assert our rights, we will not compromise our national interest, and we will continue to fight and claim what is ours," Ano said.

Neither official specified what



Chinese Coast Guard fires water cannons towards a Philippine resupply vessel Uniazh on its way to a resupply mission at Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea.

support the US had offered.

Greg Poling, a South China Sea expert at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies think-tank, told Reuters he believed the US was open to naval escorts for the resupply missions to the stranded vessel. Washington has already provided some limited support, he said.

A Philippine official said last year Manila was consulting the US Army Corps of Engineers on how best to stabilise the BRP Sierra Madre, which was grounded on the contested Second Thomas Shoal, Poling said, while US aircraft have been filmed providing overwatch

of the ship on multiple occasions.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague ruled in 2016 that Beijing's expansive South China Sea claims via its nine-dash line had no basis under international law, but that has not stopped China, which rejects the ruling, from being more assertive in the waterway.

It has deployed coast guard vessels to patrol those areas, alarming the Philippines, rival Southeast Asian claimants and other states operating in the South China Sea, including the US, which is wary about China's growing military power and territorial ambition.

काठ लिलाम बिक्रीको सूचना

यस सावउसको साल र असना जातको ३२४ थानको ३८१७.३७ क्यू. फिट काठ र दाउरा ६ चट्टा लिलाम बिक्री गर्नुपर्ने भएकोले २१ दिने सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ। यस सम्बन्धी विस्तृत विवरण सा.ब.उ.स. को कार्यालयबाट लिन हुन सूचित गरिन्छ।

श्री सिपाहीडाडा सावउस हरिहरपुरगढी गापा-१ सिन्धुली

काठ लिलाम बिक्रीको सूचना

यस सावउसको साल र असना जातको ६३ थानको ७४२.०१ क्यू. फिट काठ र दाउरा १.५ चट्टा लिलाम बिक्री गर्नुपर्ने भएकोले २१ दिने सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ। यस सम्बन्धी विस्तृत विवरण सा.ब.उ.स. को कार्यालयबाट लिन हुन सूचित गरिन्छ।

श्री धुवतारा सावउस कमलामाई नपा-१ सिन्धुली

काठ लिलाम बिक्रीको सूचना

यस सावउसको साल र असना जातको ४१ थानको ७०८.५० क्यू. फिट काठ र दाउरा १.५ चट्टा लिलाम बिक्री गर्नुपर्ने भएकोले २१ दिने सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ। यस सम्बन्धी विस्तृत विवरण सा.ब.उ.स. को कार्यालयबाट लिन हुन सूचित गरिन्छ।

श्री नगुना सावउस कमलामाई नपा-७ सिन्धुली

FOREX

US Dollar	133.88
Euro	144.88
Pound Sterling	171.21
Swiss Franc	148.93
Australian Dollar	90.15
Canadian Dollar	98.36
Singapore Dollar	99.16
Japanese Yen (10)	8.32
Chinese Yuan	18.42
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.69
Qatari Riyal	36.71
Thai Bhat	3.66
UAE Dhiram	36.45
Malaysian Ringgit	28.43
Korean Won (100)	9.69

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 144,400
Silver	Rs 1,870

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

Flights suspended in Sicily's Catania as volcano erupts

ROME: Catania airport on the Italian island of Sicily was closed on Friday after Mount Etna, the largest active volcano in Europe, erupted and spewed ash into the sky, disrupting air travel. "The runway at Catania Airport is unusable due to volcanic ash fall: both arrivals and departures are suspended," the company managing the airport said in a statement. Flights should resume at 3:00 pm (01:00 pm GMT), it said, asking travellers to check the status of their flights before heading to the airport. Ash plumes shot up into the sky as high as 4.5 kilometres, Italy's National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV) wrote on X, formerly Twitter, on Thursday. Footage shared on social media Friday showed the streets of Catania's city centre covered in thick layers of black ash, slowing down traffic. (AFP)

Glencore gets go ahead to buy Canadian firm Teck's coal unit

ZURICH: Swiss commodities giant Glencore said Friday that Canadian authorities had approved its takeover bid for Teck Resources' coal unit, ending a long battle over one of the mining sector's biggest deals. After two refusals over eight months, Teck Resources finally agreed last November to sell a 77 percent stake in its steelmaking coal subsidiary, called Elk Valley Resources (EVR), for \$6.93 billion in cash. "We are pleased to have received final regulatory approval for the transaction and look forward to completing the acquisition," Glencore said, adding that it expects to complete the purchase by July 11. Glencore's attempts to buy Teck's steelmaking coal activities was opposed by many shareholders and by Canadian politicians over concerns about the environment and key industries falling into foreign hands. (AFP)

Denmark accuses bank of laundering 3.5 billion euros for Russians

COPENHAGEN: Denmark has charged the Nordic bank Nordea with laundering 3.5 billion euros (\$3.8 billion) for Russian clients, the country's financial prosecutors said Friday. "Nordea did not adequately investigate transactions by Russian clients of the bank and ignored warnings about foreign exchange trades in Copenhagen," Denmark's National Special Crime Unit said in a statement. The alleged laundering happened between 2012 and 2015. Nordea, which is based in Helsinki, said it expected to pay a fine and had set money aside for provisions in 2019. "We are disappointed that this affair has been brought in front of the courts," Nordea's chief legal counsel Anders Holkmann Olsen said. (AFP)

China cracks down on money-changing syndicates in Macau

HONG KONG: Loan sharks earn tens of millions of dollars a year by providing underground money exchange services and cash smuggling networks for Chinese gamblers in Macau, China's Public Security Ministry said Friday. Macau, known as the Las Vegas of the East, is the only city in China where gambling is legal, but the mainland Chinese visitors who fuel the city's multibillion-dollar economic pillar are bound by the country's strict foreign exchange controls. Under those restrictions, a Chinese citizen is allowed to change no more than \$50,000 worth of yuan into foreign currency in a given year, and to carry no more than \$5,000 in cash in or out of the country on any one trip. (AFP)

Insurance on cards to repatriate bodies of foreign climbers

>> Continued from page 1

The last time the government reviewed the royalty fee was on January 1, 2015. At that time, an expedition with a maximum of 15 members cost \$10,000 per person.

The cost has now been revised for autumn and winter, as well as the climbing routes. As per the draft, in 2025, Nepal will introduce death repatriation insurance for climbers for the first time.

"We have set a minimum coverage of Rs5 million (\$37,593) for repatriating bodies under the insurance plan, which will be mandatory," said Gurung. "The insurance should be done in Nepal."

He said expedition agencies would be responsible for retrieving bodies from the base camp and upper reaches.

The draft regulations propose increasing the insurance coverage paid by climbers for their high-altitude guides to Rs2 million (\$15,037) from the existing Rs1.5 million (\$11,278).

Additionally, the regulations mandate that every climber, no matter how experienced, must be accompanied by a Nepali guide.

"We have proposed a ban on alpine-style or solo climbing," said Gurung. Before preparing the new regulations, the Law Ministry debated the issue, as it was concerned that banning solo climbing could restrict the personal freedom of alpinists.

"But we presented our arguments on why banning solo climbing is crucial for saving lives," said Gurung. "The law ministry was finally convinced."

Among eight deaths on Everest this year, five were preventable, said Gurung.

The Mongolian duo—Tsedendamba Usukhjargal and Lkhagvajav Purevsuren—who were both experienced mountaineers and members of the Hunnu hiking club—climbed Everest without supplemental oxygen and Sherpa guides. They went missing on May 13 and were found dead on May 17.

On May 22, Binod Babu Bastakoti, a Nepali national, died near the South Col while descending from the summit. It was later found that he decided to hire a guide only at Camp II when he started facing difficulties.

As in previous years, this year too, a group of foreign climbers were reported



SHUTTERSTOCK

The court has ordered the government to issue climbing permits only after specifying the number of climbers that can be safely accommodated.

edly found climbing the higher reaches without obtaining a permit from the government.

The new regulations propose introducing "Monitoring Rangers" on Everest from next season, comprising officials from the Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, and various ministries and government bodies.

"This unit will be authorised to monitor every activity on Everest and go up to the higher reaches for investigation," said Gurung.

According to the Himalayan Database, which records all expeditions and deaths in the Himalayas, there have been more than 200 deaths on the Nepal side of Everest between 1953, when Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa first scaled the peak, and 2022.

Nepal's tourism ministry started documenting Everest incidents in 1922 when seven Sherpa climbers died in an avalanche, marking the first reported deaths on the tallest mountain. But it has no archive of those who lost their lives on the icy slopes.

Separately, the tourism department has proposed a garbage management fund—to be raised from each climber, which will be used to clean up Everest.

"We have proposed that the fund

provision be included in the Tourism Act, which is currently in the drafting phase," said Gurung, adding that this provision, however, is not part of the new regulations.

With more and more people visiting each year, Everest has grown increasingly polluted. This has led to the contamination of the local watershed, threatening the health of local people.

The slopes are littered with discarded empty oxygen canisters, abandoned tents, food containers, and even human faeces. The base camp has tented toilets with large collection barrels that can be carried away and emptied. Hundreds of gas and electric heaters and stoves are used at the base camp to cook food and keep warm, thus contributing to the warming of the area.

Climate change is melting snow and ice, exposing even more garbage and bodies that have been covered for decades. All that waste pollutes the natural environment and poses a serious health risk to everyone who lives in the Everest watershed.

Nearly 100 tonnes of garbage were collected during this spring climbing season from Everest and Lhotse, which share the same base camp.

According to the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC),

77.19 tonnes of waste was collected from the Everest base camp alone during the Spring 2024 climbing season. With 8.9 tonnes coming from the higher camps brought by the expedition agencies, the SPCC collected 85 tonnes of waste this spring.

The breakdown of collected waste shows burnable garbage at 27.99 tonnes, recyclable garbage at 7.51 tonnes, human waste at 27.53 tonnes, and kitchen waste at 14.15 tonnes. Besides, the Nepal Army collected over 11 tonnes of garbage.

In the Spring of 2023, the SPCC managed nearly 70 tonnes of waste generated by expedition groups.

Since 2015, the SPCC has also enforced the 8 kg garbage rule, under which every climber ascending the Everest base camp must bring back at least 8 kg of garbage. Anyone visiting Everest must pay a \$4,000 garbage deposit, which is refunded if the person returns with 8 kg.

Before the start of the climbing season this year, the Supreme Court issued a mandamus order directing the government to regulate the rising number of expeditions on the world's tallest mountain.

A division bench of justices Sapana Pradhan Malla and Sushma Lata

Mathema ordered the government to issue climbing permits only after specifying the number of climbers that can be safely accommodated.

The court order followed increasing traffic jams on the world's highest peak and the trash people leave on its slopes. Everest has even been called the 'world's highest garbage dump'.

This spring, the government implemented a slew of new rules in the Himalayas, including mandatory use of tracking devices and poo bags while summiting the peak.

Jagat Prasad Bhusal, chief administrative officer of the Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality, told the Post in a recent interview that the rural municipality sold 1,700 poo bags. "In the first year of its implementation, we have received good feedback and the requirement to bring the bags back."

"We are now discussing Everest's 'carrying capacity' as per the Supreme Court order. It's difficult to ascertain what exactly the limit of Everest is," said Gurung.

In 365 days, Everest opens its climbing window for less than two weeks, depending on the weather.

"Hopefully, we will soon have an answer to this query," said Gurung.

Key allies of India's Modi demand nearly \$6 billion for their states

The Indian government set aside 1.3 trillion rupees in loans to states in its interim budget in February, of which half is conditional on the implementation of some economic reforms.

REUTERS

NEW DELHI, JULY 5

Two key allies of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have asked for about \$6 billion in funds for their home states, pressuring the federal government to raise spending when it presents its budget later this month, according to a document reviewed by Reuters and a source familiar with the matter.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is having to rely on two regional parties—Andhra Pradesh's Telugu Desam Party and Bihar's Janata Dal (United)—to run the government, after it failed to win a majority on its own in the recently concluded national elections.

These two states are now demanding 480 billion rupees (\$5.75 billion) in additional funds for the financial year ending March 2025, according to the document—which listed demands from one of the state govern-

ments—and the source.

In addition, both states have asked the federal government to nearly double unconditional long-term loans offered by the government to all states for infrastructure spending to 1 trillion rupees (\$11.98 billion), according to the document and the source.

Andhra Pradesh has sought funds for developing its capital city and a key irrigation project, source says.

The Indian government has set aside 1.3 trillion rupees in loans to states in its interim budget in February, of which more than half is conditional on the implementation of certain economic reforms.

The states also want more headroom to borrow funds from the market, a limit set by the federal government, according to the document and the source.

India's federal finance ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. In the interim budget presented in February, the government has targeted a fiscal deficit of 5.1 percent of GDP. The final budget is due to be presented before the end of this month.

Beyond the immediate funding demand, Bihar is seeking funds for nine new airports, two power projects, two river water programmes and setting up seven medical colleges, according to the document.

The period over which funds for these projects are being sought has not been specified.

The southern state of Andhra Pradesh has sought funds for developing its capital city and a key irrigation project, the source said.

New UK government faces economic challenge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON, JULY 5

Britain's new Labour government has pledged immediate action to grow the economy after clinching a landslide election victory to oust the Conservatives, but its task could be hampered by strained state finances following huge Covid expenditures.

The centre-left Labour administration led by Prime Minister Keir Starmer has promised investment in key areas such as health and education but also stresses the need to balance the books. This after government coffers were further hit by subsidies for energy bills after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent oil and gas prices rocketing.

Starmer will want to avoid a repeat of October 2022, when the then-Conservative government's proposed unfunded tax cuts spooked markets and tanked the pound.

It also sank the chaotic premiership of Liz Truss, who lasted just 49 days before she was replaced by Rishi Sunak. Truss then lost her seat in Thursday's election.

Britain's economy is currently on a

more stable footing after exiting a mild recession and as inflation returns to normal. Labour "will benefit from the economic recovery", noted Ashley Webb, UK economist at Capital Economics research group.

However, eight years after Britain voted for Brexit, businesses still lament economic fallout caused by the country's departure from the European Union, with little prospect of change in the near future.

Starmer has ruled out returning Britain to the European single market, customs union, or bringing back free movement of EU nationals.

"I want investors to look at Britain and say it is a safe haven in a turbulent world, a place where I can invest with confidence in a world where perhaps other countries are tilting to more populist politics," Labour finance spokesperson Rachel Reeves said ahead of Thursday's UK vote.

She has also said that "change will be achieved only on the basis of iron discipline".

British public debt has flirted with a level totalling 100 percent of gross domestic product in recent months—a situation not seen since the 1960s.

Chinese AI market optimistic despite scrutiny from West

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SHANGHAI, JULY 5

China's AI sector showed confidence this week at a major fair in Shanghai that it would overcome restrictions imposed by the West, with companies rolling out cutting-edge products developed by a growing pool of young talent.

The country's generative AI industry has shown explosive growth, with the United Nations reporting China has in recent years been the top filer of patents for AI software that creates everything from illustrations to computer code.

At the World AI Conference in Shanghai on Thursday, exhibitors were keen to show off generative AI products, with one stall displaying realistic "watercolours" and sci-themed illustrations produced by software.

Meanwhile, a troupe of humanoid robots developed by close to a dozen Chinese organisations performed for visitors, raising their hands in unison and waving.

According to Ethan Duan—an employee of a startup incubator—China could eventually benefit from its large population of tech talent, even if domestic companies had their



AFP/RSS

Visitors look at Tesla's humanoid robot Optimus at its exhibition booth during the World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC) in Shanghai on Friday.

wings clipped by Western restrictions. "A sudden cut of access to (OpenAI) API would definitely pose some challenge to many corporations right now, but it's still far too early to say if it's

going to also be a challenge after one year or two," Duan told AFP.

Duan's hope is backed up by statistics showing China has expanded its domestic AI talent pool over the last

few years to meet the demands of its own growing industry.

A global AI tracker by MacroPolo, the Chicago-based Paulson Institute's think tank, said China had almost half (47 percent) of the world's top AI researchers in 2022, up from 29 percent in 2019.

The mood in Shanghai was bright, even against the backdrop of increased suspicion and restrictive measures from the United States and other countries targeting China's AI industry. OpenAI, the US company behind ChatGPT, has accused China of using its language models to create content aimed at influencing social media sentiment.

The company will cease providing its app programming services to Chinese developers next week.

The US government, meanwhile, has revoked export licenses for certain American chips used by Chinese smartphone giant Huawei, after the company unveiled a new computer using an Intel AI-capable chip.

China's critics say the country's AI can be used for espionage operations.

Interest in AI products appeared to be burgeoning at the Shanghai fair, with crowds of eager visitors lining up to enter the exposition hall and try games and interactive exhibits.

Shi Yunlei, founder and CEO of an AI-equipped health equipment company, said visitors at previous industry fairs had already begun asking to buy his exercise machines even though the products are not yet in the mass production stage.

"The Chinese robot industry is still pretty hot... everyone is working hard to find a settled direction," Shi told AFP.

Lyu Meixiu, a representative of software company OpenCSG, told AFP that her firm was "not too affected" by US restrictions, and was expanding its operations abroad.

"The United States' technology may currently be ahead of us, but we in China are also extremely strong," Lyu said. "I think in the future the gap will continue to shrink, or we may even continuously surpass them," she told AFP.

A speech by Li Qiang—China's second-ranking official after President Xi Jinping—to kick off the conference on Thursday underlined the country's commitment to AI technology.

Premier Li urged nations around the world to adopt "more open mindsets" on AI and to promote "movement of data across borders, free trade of equipment and connectivity of infrastructure".

SPORTS | MEDLEY

CAN to organise Nepal Premier League in November and December

SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU, JULY 5

Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) has decided to organise Nepal Premier League in November and December this year.

The country's cricket governing body decided to organise the league ending uncertainty over the continuity of its franchise tournament, the Nepal T20 League, that was marred by match-fixing controversy and pay issues.

"This will be a continuation of the Nepal T20 League," CAN President Chatur Bahadur Chand told the post.

CAN had hired Indian sports management company Seven3Sports as its strategic and commercial partner of Nepal T20—which was held from December 24, 2022 to January 11, 2023—for eight years. However, following revelation of spot-fixing and players' complaint of non-payment issues, Seven3Sports was forced to terminate its contract with CAN, who were also planning to initiate the process to scrap the deal.

A total of 10 people including four Nepalis and six foreigners were found involved in spot-fixing during the league.

The Central Investigation Bureau had arrested Nepali cricketers Mohammad Aadil Alam (Aadil Ansari) and Mehboob Alam in connection with spot-fixing in January last year. Aadil Alam was a member of Janakpur Royals at Nepal T20 and featured in eight of the 12 matches Janakpur played in the tournament. The CIB had also claimed that there were 'none-transparent roles' of Seven3Sports in spot-fixing and financial transactions.

Later, Kathmandu District Court acquitted Aadil Alam, Mehboob, and three others of spot fixing charges.

CAN also decided to initiate a process to lift suspension on fast-bowling all-rounder Aadil Alam, directing its investigating committee to make a decision within a week.

Meanwhile, CAN suspended Nepal women's cricket team member Apasari Begam "for breaching associations' code of conduct". CAN stated that Begam had misbehaved with the national women's cricket team manager and coach during the closed camp of the ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup. CAN also assigned the responsibility of further investigation to its disciplinary committee.

Begam has not been included in Nepal's final 15-member squad for the Asia Cup, which is scheduled to take place in Dambulla, Sri Lanka from July 19-28.

Lamichhane reinstated in central contract CAN also decided to reinstate Sandeep Lamichhane in the central contract.

Lamichhane was not included the central contract that was announced in February as the leg spinner was facing a trial for raping a girl.

Lamichhane's suspension was lifted, for a second time in May, after Patan High Court cleared him of rape charges.

Lamichhane went on to participate in two of Nepal's four T20 World Cup matches in the West Indies. He missed matches in the United States after the US Embassy in Nepal denied him a visa.

Lamichhane has been included in the Grade A category of the central contract. His contract will run until December 31 this year.

Lamichhane will be the 31st player in the CAN central contract. Kushal Bhurtel, national captain Rohit Paudel, Sompal Kami, Karan KC, Dipendra Singh Airee and Aasif Sheikh are under the Grade A category.

Southgate under pressure to change tack against Switzerland

The England coach is reportedly looking at switching to a back-three, which served him well in reaching the 2018 World Cup semi-finals and the final at Euro 2020.



England coach Gareth Southgate has so far stuck to his guns with 10 of the same 11 starting all four matches at Euro 2024.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE DUSSELDORF, GERMANY, JULY 5

Saved by a dramatic late fightback to beat Slovakia, Gareth Southgate will take charge of England for the 100th time in Saturday's Euro 2024 quarter-final against Switzerland under pressure to tear up his tactical plan.

The Three Lions have stumbled their way through to the last eight, winning just one of their four games within 90 minutes, and a star-studded squad who thrive when playing for their clubs has so far failed to deliver.

Yet history could still beckon for Southgate's men in Germany.

England are the highest ranked side left on the 'soft' side of the draw with Turkey or the Netherlands waiting in the semi-finals should they manage to defeat the Swiss in Duesseldorf.

Switzerland, who cruised past holders Italy 2-0 in the last 16 and held Germany 1-1 in the group stages, promise to be a step up from anything England have faced at the tournament so far.

Failure to change tack is likely to see Southgate bow out as England boss at a century of matches and invite a tidal wave of criticism for failing to make the most of the talent at his disposal.

He has already been targeted at this tournament with thrown beer cups after a dull 0-0 draw with Slovenia in the group stages.

Southgate has so far stuck to his guns with 10 of the same 11 starting all four matches.

There will be one enforced change to face the Swiss as defender Marc Guehi is suspended.

But it is further forward that Southgate faces bigger challenges to correct England's imbalance.

Any questions over Jude Bellingham's role as a number 10 appear to have been wiped away by his stunning overhead kick deep into stoppage time against Slovakia to keep England alive.

However, Bellingham's position as the creative hub of the team does cause Southgate other issues.

Phil Foden, who picked up Premier League player of the year awards for his starring role in Manchester City's title triumph this season, has looked out of sorts shunted out to the left to accommodate the Real Madrid man.

Meanwhile, there is little threat down England's left as Foden has drifted inside and Southgate's decision not to take a fit natural left-back, with Luke Shaw battling back from injury, has proved misguided.

INSIGHTS: ENGLAND VS SWITZERLAND

England are playing their fourth quarter-final game at a major tournament under manager Gareth Southgate. They have won two of the previous three.

Switzerland haven't beaten England for 43 years. Harry Kane scored the winning goal when England had a comeback 2-1 win the last time they played in a 2022 friendly.

It's only the third time Switzerland are playing in the quarter-finals of a major tournament. They have yet to reach a semi-final. A penalty-shootout loss to Spain in the quarter-finals of Euro 2020 was their best European Championship showing.

England have stumbled their way through to the last eight, winning just one of their four games within 90 minutes.

Switzerland cruised past holders Italy 2-0 in the last 16. They held Germany 1-1 in the group stages.

EURO 2024

PLAYING SATURDAY

England 21:45 Switzerland

PLAYING SUNDAY

Netherlands 00:45 Turkey

Southgate also admitted after the Slovakia match that both his goalscorers, Bellingham and Harry Kane, were physically exhausted 15 minutes from the end but were kept on for the one moment of magic they can produce.

Bar a Bellingham exhibition for the first half of a 1-0 win over Serbia in England's opening game, both have been far from their best but are undroppable in the eyes of their manager.

Instead, Southgate is reportedly looking at switching to a back three, which served him well in reaching the 2018 World Cup semi-finals and the final at Euro 2020.

That would allow both Foden and Bellingham to play centrally, behind Kane, but runs the risk of still leaving England to easy to play against without natural width.

John Stones said he hoped the second chance offered by the Slovakia fightback will act as a "turning point emotionally" for a squad trying to find their mojo.

"It's time for us to realise where we are and the magnitude of what we can achieve and put that into practice," added the Manchester City defender.

Bellingham's memorable goal in Gelsenkirchen stopped the rot and all will be forgotten and forgiven should England emerge victorious in Berlin on July 14.

On the other hand, if they are instead on a plane home on Sunday morning, Euro 2024 will be a stain on Southgate's legacy after eight years as England boss.

Martinez takes Argentina to Copa America semi-finals

REUTERS HOUSTON, TEXAS, JULY 5

Argentina beat Ecuador 4-2 on penalties to move into the semi-finals of the Copa America on Friday after goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez made two saves in the shootout following a 1-1 draw in regulation time.

Lisandro Martinez's opener for Argentina was cancelled out by Kevin Rodriguez in stoppage time, and with no extra time at the Copa America apart from the final the match went straight to penalties.

Lionel Messi clipped the crossbar with Argentina's first effort in the shootout but Martinez saved from Angel Mena and Alan Minda as the defending champions moved into a semi-final match-up against either Venezuela or Canada.

"In penalties, the team has blind confidence in its goalkeeper and that is fundamental," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "Even after Leo's miss and with all that means for the team, it's very important that our goalkeeper came up clutch."

"I think it's not enjoyable when you win in this way. Of course, we are happy, but I didn't enjoy this victory."

Messi started the game despite being an injury doubt after missing their final group match against Peru due to a hamstring issue, and the Argentina captain broke the record for most minutes played in the tournament's history.

Argentina dominated possession early on but it was Ecuador who created the first chance when Jeremy Sarmiento found space to shoot from a tight angle and forced Martinez into a save.

But as Argentina's fans found their voice their team took the lead in the 35th minute when Alexis Mac Allister's headed flick-on found Martinez at the far post and the defender nodded home his first international goal.

Ecuador turned up the pressure in the second half and it paid off at a corner on the hour mark when the cross was deflected onto Rodrigo De Paul's hand and the referee immediately pointed to the spot.

Skipper Enner Valencia stepped up and sent Martinez the wrong way but Ecuador's top scorer saw his effort come off the post before Argentina defender Cristian Romero blocked a shot from the rebound.

Martinez turned to the crowd and roared in delight with his arms raised and the miss took the wind out of Ecuador's sails.

"He's the captain and he took the penalty because he was feeling confident enough, but he missed. That happens in football," Ecuador coach Felix Sanchez said.

"In many other areas of the game, he was able to contribute... We really appreciate that he took the chance. It's a lottery today, it didn't go in. Maybe next time it will." But as the game went into stoppage time Ecuador, who have never beaten Argentina at the Copa America, found the equaliser when John Yeboah whipped in a cross and Rodriguez stayed onside to direct a header past Martinez in the 91st minute.

The Argentina goalkeeper had the last laugh, however, making two crucial saves in the shootout before Nicolas Otamendi scored the decisive kick to book a semi-final spot.



Goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez made two saves in the shootout as Argentina beat Ecuador 4-2 on penalties in the quarter-finals.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Consider a slow start to the weekend once you've awakened. You may feel called to update your interior, encouraging you to invest in your space. Unleash your creative side, forgoing plans to see friends.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

As the afternoon sets in, you'll have a chance to break free from wonky vibes, which will encourage you to embrace your social and original self. Lean into these vibes by stepping into your community, but consider spending the evening at home.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Embrace leisure, seeking sensual experiences to sharpen the mind. Your intuition peaks later tonight, though you should be mindful to keep one foot on the ground to avoid overstimulation or disorganisation.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Be mindful to protect your energy once you've awakened. Your manifestation game peaks this evening, helping you bring personal visions into the material realms. Surround yourself with supportive people later tonight.

LEO (July 23-August 22)

Pull back socially to focus on your spiritual well-being this morning. Personal breakthroughs could manifest, so it's important to honour the voice within, no matter how unconventional it may be. Focus on clearing away toxic dynamics.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Set boundaries with your screens this morning, opting to greet the weekend by staying present in the moment. Romantic vibes flow, putting you in the mood to hide away with someone special. Focus on cultivating wellness practices later tonight.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

This morning, you may struggle to set healthy boundaries in matters of the heart. Focus on what you need to support yourself before focusing on interpersonal relationships. Today, you'll have a chance to break through restrictions.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

Your psychic senses will be in full force today. Use this energy to promote personal wellness, inviting along your nearest and dearest for a Saturday full of relaxing and uplifting activities. Surprises within matters of the heart could emerge.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Watch out for power struggles, bruised egos, and relationship meltdowns this morning. Find distraction by focusing on your to-do lists or wellness quests while having fun. Spend some time recharging at home.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

Disruptions could find you this morning, Capricorn, heightening emotions and tensions at home. Focus on ways to cultivate harmony, even if doing so requires you to take a step back from loved ones.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

Organise your thoughts to avoid overstimulation or relationship issues, darling Aquarius. Catch up on household chores. A romantic and dreamy energy emerges, encouraging you to embrace your favourite wellness practices with someone special.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)

Your confidence could fluctuate this morning, darling Pisces. Think about what you can do to make yourself feel more supported, moving away from people or situations that bring you down. Innovative thoughts lead to creative breakthroughs.

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Heart's desire
5 Essential oil
10 Declines
14 Arrow poison
15 Clear a winter's windshield
16 Fiddling despot
17 Read
18 Lifeless
19 - and bear it
20 Cook partially
22 Rx amounts
24 Rudiments
25 Projecting handle
26 Innovator
30 Advantage
34 Beatles' "Road"
35 Make
37 Literary collection
38 - of Tranquility
39 Monet
40 Roadster
41 Flat cap
42 Essays of -
43 Worn out
45 Metal mixture
48 Converts a hidden message
50 Islet
51 - Alamos
52 Quarrel

- 56 Speaks indistinctly
60 Campus military org.
61 Kind of seal
63 "Just a minute!"
64 Fencer's blade
65 Breakfast bread
66 Concerning (2 wds.)
67 Requirement
68 Molts
69 Do a farm job

DOWN

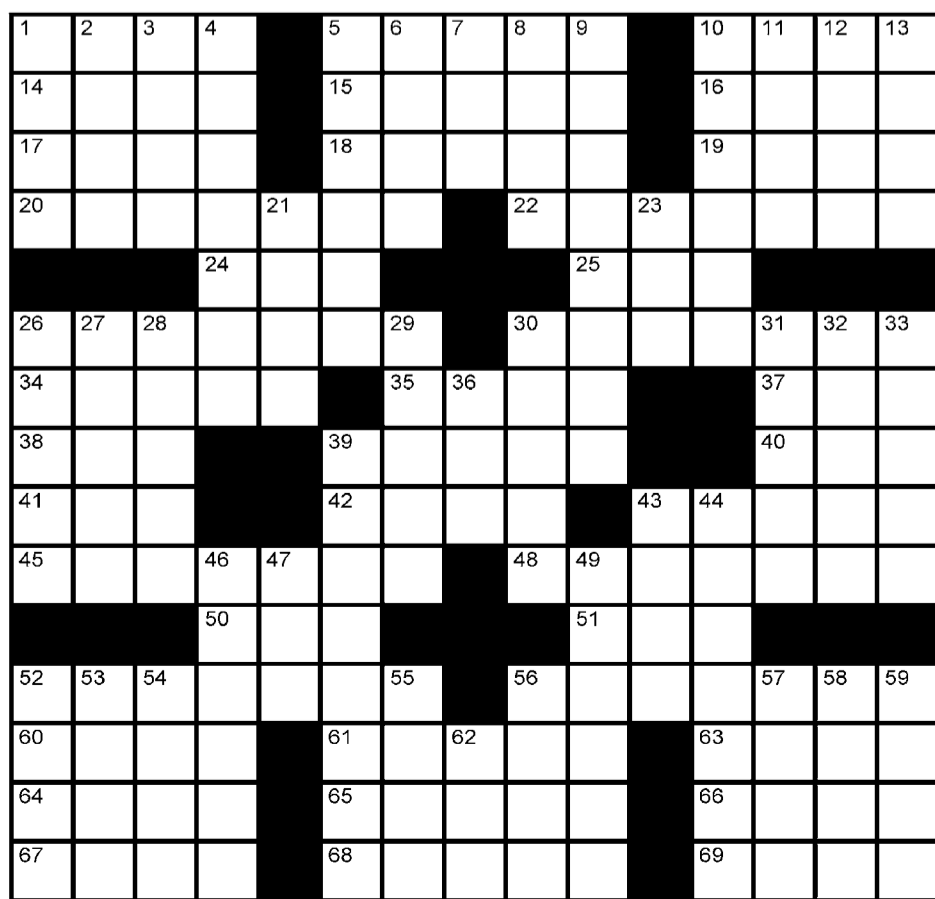
- 1 Bit of smoke
2 Machu Picchu builder
3 Burn
4 Poisonous plant
5 Counsel
6 Blue-green color
7 End
8 Lab substance
9 Nice-smelling
10 Hire
11 Hazard at sea
12 French cheese
13 Offspring
21 Toe the line
23 Daystar
26 Ristorante fare
27 Girder (hyph.)
28 POTUS #44
29 Region
30 Cover with crumbs

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



6-22-24 © 2024 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS

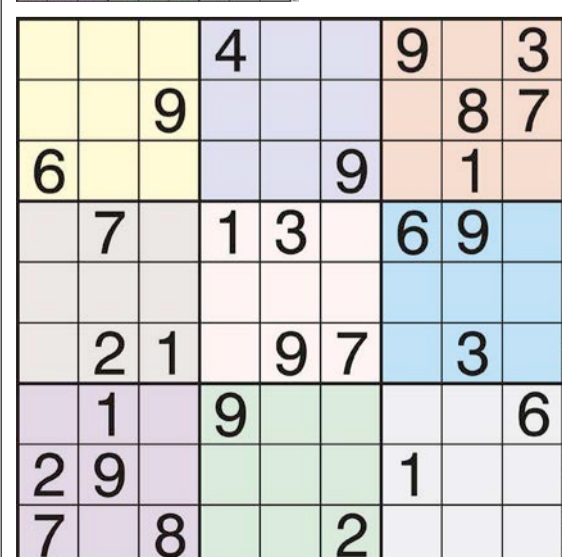
- 31 Confronted
32 Without sense
33 Fruit-filled desserts
36 "Wheel" buy (2 wds.)
39 Like vegan meals
43 Edinburgh native
44 Time of renewed peace (hyph.)
46 Speared
47 Job for a band
49 Gets away from
52 Small bird
53 Lasso
54 Cooked to -
55 Individually
56 Heal
57 Facilitate
58 Actress - Hayworth
59 Layover
62 Fish eggs



SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

The Great Upheaval: Navigating the post-pandemic world in Asia-Pacific

Today, policymakers in the region are urged to rethink development strategies, prioritise investments in human capital, and foster regional and global cooperation.

○ KHIM LAL DEVKOTA

The Great Upheaval, edited by Swarnim Waglé and Kanni Wignaraja, was published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2022. It offers an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic and environmental challenges confronting the Asia-Pacific region in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This compilation draws from diverse authors to assess the region's response to the pandemic. It proposes pathways for sustainable recovery and growth and presents innovative policies and strategies essential for long-term development.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Asia achieved a remarkable feat by lifting one billion people out of poverty within a single generation. However, this progress was abruptly halted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which exposed and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities across the region.

The authors of this volume critically examine the Asia-Pacific response to the pandemic while

economic policies, enhancing digital connectivity, restructuring global value chains, and promoting regional cooperation.

The book emphasises the urgency of bolstering investments in universal public health, education, and social protection to enhance human capabilities and ensure equitable development.

Authors advocate revitalising production methods and networks to promote sustainable growth, underscoring the importance of leveraging global public goods to address emerging digital and climatic challenges.

With the Asia-Pacific region home to three-fifths of the world's population and accounting for nearly half of global output, the book projects that 2050, despite historical setbacks and pandemics, the region is poised to reclaim its role as a leading economic and social force.

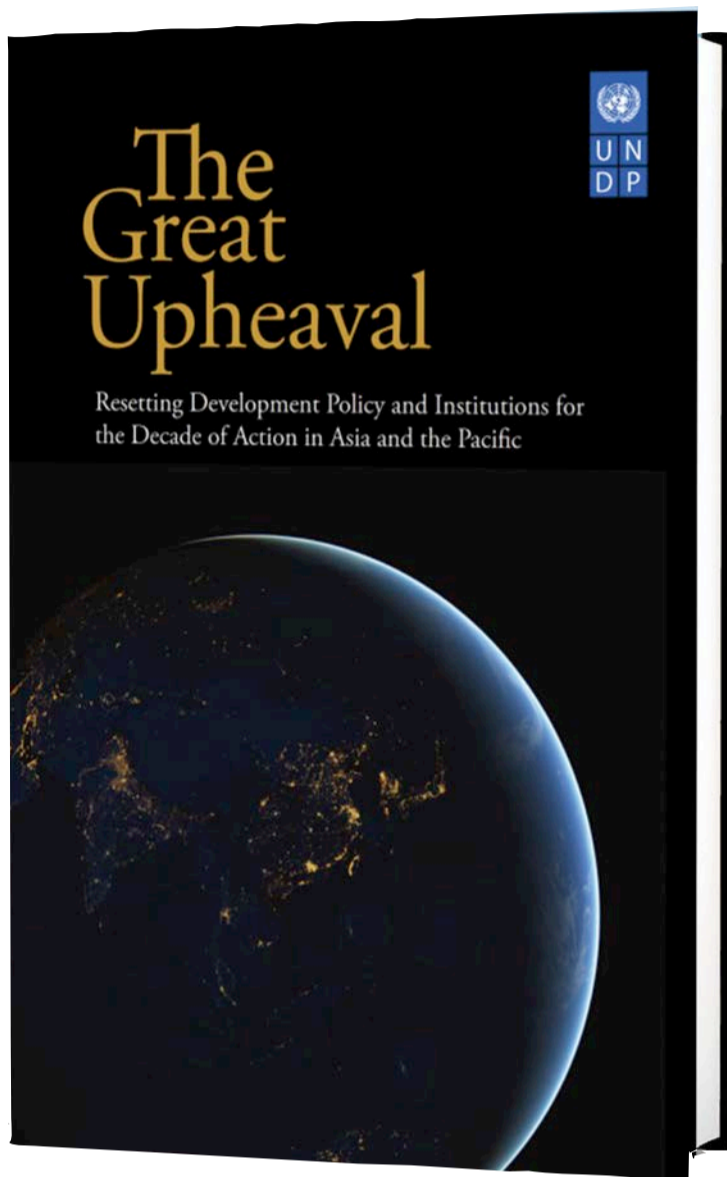
However, it stresses that economic strength alone will not suffice; inclusion, resilience, and sustainability are now imperative for planetary well-being.

The book serves as a vital resource for policymakers, development practitioners, and stakeholders, offering actionable insights and strategies for navigating the complexities of the post-pandemic world and fostering a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia-Pacific region.

It explores the Asia-Pacific region's response to the pandemic and identifies areas requiring reform to achieve a robust recovery. Authors present innovative perspectives on social and economic strategies, aiming to guide policymakers and practitioners in navigating the complexities of post-pandemic recovery.

They emphasise revitalising production methods and networks as essential for sustainable growth, advocating increased investments in universal public health, education, and social protection to enhance human capabilities.

Despite the pandemic's profound impact—disrupting global



The Great Upheaval
Year: 2022
Publisher: UNDP

supply chains, causing significant job losses, and exacerbating inequalities—the region's response varied widely. Some countries more effectively contained the virus and mitigated economic

damage than others, underscoring the critical need for enhanced regional cooperation and resilient health and social protection systems.

The authors highlight the imperative of bolstering investments in universal public health, education, and social protection as fundamental for immediate recovery

and building long-term resilience against future crises.

For instance, Manuel F Montes advocates aligning sovereign debt financing with climate action to address escalating climate risks and integrating climate considerations into fiscal policies to promote economic recovery and climate resilience simultaneously.

Paul Garnett addresses the persistent digital divide in the region, where disparities in broadband access hinder economic participation and social development. He proposes strategies for expanding digital infrastructure, reducing costs, and promoting digital literacy to harness digital technologies for innovation, productivity, and economic growth.

Jose Gabriel Palma and Jonathan Pincus explore the risk of countries in the Asia-Pacific region falling into the middle-income trap. They advocate for structural transformation, particularly in the manufacturing sector.

They stress policies that promote industrial diversification, technological upgrading, and higher value-added production to avoid overreliance on low-cost labour and commodity exports.

AK Shiva Kumar discusses human security and its relevance in a post-Covid-19 context, emphasising comprehensive approaches to addressing root causes of insecurity such as poverty, inequality, and inadequate access to essential services.

Inge Kaul underscores the need for international cooperation in providing global public goods to effectively tackle transnational challenges like pandemics, climate change, and digital governance.

Khalil Hamdani examines the potential of enhanced regional cooperation in the post-Covid-19 era, highlighting the importance of regional institutions in coordinating responses to health crises, economic shocks, and environmental threats.

Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and Sanjay G Reddy provide valuable policy

lessons, highlighting governance, human development, and flexibility in policy design and implementation as crucial for effective response and recovery.

'The Great Upheaval' envisions a new Asia-Pacific century where economic strength is complemented by inclusion, resilience, and sustainability. As the region navigates the post-pandemic landscape, policymakers are urged to rethink development strategies, prioritise investments in human capital, and foster regional and global cooperation. By embracing these principles, the Asia-Pacific region can not only recover from the current crisis but also build a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future.

Inclusion, resilience, and sustainability are imperative for planetary well-being.

The insights from 'The Great Upheaval' are particularly relevant for Nepal, given its challenges with climate change, digital connectivity, and economic stability.

Aligning sovereign debt with climate action, improving digital infrastructure, and fostering regional cooperation are critical strategies for Nepal to navigate the post-pandemic landscape and achieve sustainable development.

The book offers actionable insights and recommendations. Nepal can enhance its resilience, promote inclusive growth, and contribute to regional stability and prosperity by adopting the recommended policies and strategies.

Devkota is an expert in federalism and local governments.



BOOK REVIEW

identifying crucial areas that require reform to facilitate effective rebound and sustained growth.

The book is structured into thirteen chapters, each addressing critical aspects of development policy and institutional reform necessary for the region's recovery and long-term sustainability.

A central argument is needed to reimagine development policies and institutions to foster resilience, sustainability, and inclusivity. Key themes explored include integrating climate action with



Art Market

As part of Re-Envision Lalitkala, the Free Student Union of the Lalitkala campus is organising an art market this weekend. Stalls for printmaking, handicrafts, weaving, and painting will be displayed, along with teaching sessions and art shops.

Where: Lalitkala Campus, Bhotahiti
When: July 5 to 6
Time: 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Entry: Free

Yugko Sancho

Michael Chekhov Nepal and School Theater Nepal are putting on a play called 'Yugko Sancho'. This play is based on

'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' and explores current issues in Nepal, such as unemployment, migration, inflation, and the decline of industries and businesses.

Where: Shilpee Theatre, Battispatali
When: July 11 to August 3
Time: 5:30 pm onwards
Entry: Rs500 (general), Rs1,000 (premier)

Line of Thought

Line of Thought is a conference on the arts and humanities where participants can engage in discourse and research in the field of the arts.

Where: Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal
When: July 9 to July 12
Time: 11:00 am onwards
Entry: Free

Hatti Hatti Monthly Market

Hatti Hatti Monthly Market is launching a marketplace aimed at promoting women-led organisations. The market will feature various products, foods, games, and giveaways. Interested ones can book the stalls to sell their products.

Where: Bluestar Mall, Thapathali
When: July 6
Time: 10:00 am to 6:00 pm
Entry: Free

Basic Climbing Workshop

Gateway Adventure Hub is conducting a three-day basic climbing workshop. On day



PHOTO: COURTESY OF GATEWAY ADVENTURE HUB

1, the workshop covers climbing fundamentals, knots, gear, and communication.

Where: Gateway Adventure Hub
When: July 12
Time: 10:00 am onwards
Entry: Registration required

Paint for Animal Rights

Kathmandu Animal Save is organising a painting session for animal rights based on the theme 'Paint for Animal Rights.' The event will also provide everyone interested in painting with materials, guidance, and inspiration.

Where: Chaksbari Marg, Kathmandu
When: July 6
Time: 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm
Entry: Rs250

4th Art of Parenting

Child psychologist Dr Ganga Pathak is leading a transformative social-emotional session to enhance children's social-emotional development. The event will present strategies to nurture resilience, empathy, and positive relationships in children.

Where: Hattiban, Lalitpur
When: July 6
Time: 9:30 am to 12:00 pm
Entry: Free

Research Seminar Series

Dipti Sherchan will present a chapter draft based on her dissertation, 'The Contested Academy and Proliferating Modernities: The Art of Nation Building in Nepal.'

Where: Martin Chautari, Thapathali
When: July 7
Time: 3:00 pm onwards
Entry: Free

Folk Tunes from Gorkha

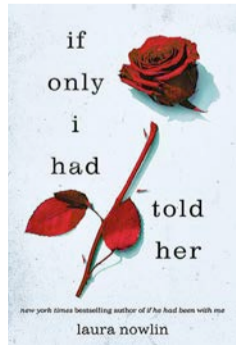
Kutumba is hosting an event dedicated to the preservation of folk music. This show will feature a performance by Maya Gurung. She will perform a selection of traditional Gurung songs.

Where: Alliance Française, Kathmandu
When: July 8
Time: 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Entry: Free (Registration Required)

BEST-SELLERS | NEW RELEASES

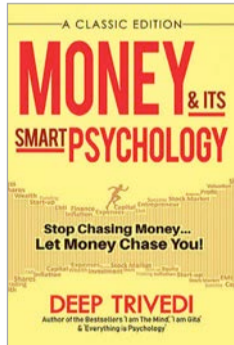
Fiction

- Shuggie Bain by Douglas Stuart
- Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro
- The Final Twist by Jeffery Deaver
- Will Grayson, Will Grayson by John Green and David Levithan
- A Painted House by John Grisham



If Only I Had Told Her
Author: Laura Nowlin
Price: Rs798
Publication: Sourcebooks

In the sequel to her No1 bestseller, 'If He Had Been With Me,' Laura Nowlin returns with a poignant exploration of unrequited love in 'If Only I Had Told Her.' This bitter-sweet romance intertwines the lives of Finn, Autumn, and Jack, offering perspectives from each character. At the heart of the story is Finn's silent affection for Autumn, enriched by Jack's insightful observations. Nowlin masterfully delves into unspoken desires, personal sacrifices, and the pursuit of others' happiness, touching on themes of loyalty, communication, and emotional depth. With fleshed-out characters and keen insights into relationships, this novel leaves a lasting impression, emphasising the importance of vulnerability.



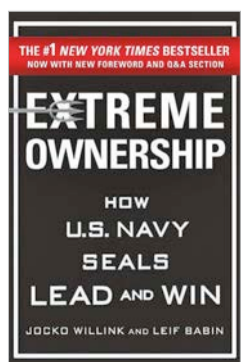
Money and Its Smart Psychology
Author: Deep Trivedi
Price: Rs638
Publisher: Aatman Innovations Pvt Ltd

Deep Trivedi's 'Money And Its Smart Psychology' provides an innovative approach to achieving financial wealth. Trivedi rejects the assumption that making money is difficult, focusing instead on the significance of developing the appropriate mentality and tactics. He teaches readers how to attract wealth, manage their finances intelligently, and avoid common traps using plain language and insightful case studies. The book's strength lies in its practical approach and accessibility, making complex financial ideas approachable to everyone. It is not only a comprehensive guide to financial well-being but also a tool for changing one's perspective toward wealth. This book is an invaluable resource for anyone looking to prosper in today's fast-paced world.



I Don't Love You Anymore
Author: Rithvik Singh
Price: Rs478
Publisher: Ebury Press

'I Don't Love You Anymore' by Rithvik Singh is a deeply emotional collection of poetry that explores the complexities of unrequited love with profound honesty and sensitivity. Singh's verses eloquently capture the raw emotions of betrayal, emotional vulnerability, and the longing for love that resonate deeply with anyone who has experienced heartbreak. Each poem in the collection is a poignant reflection of personal and universal experiences, offering solace and understanding to those navigating the pain of lost love. Singh's writing is courageous and skillful, weaving together words that are both raw and comforting, making the book accessible and compelling for readers of all backgrounds.



Non-Fiction

- Extreme Ownership by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin
- Blue Ocean Strategy by W Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne
- Beyond Possible by Nimsdai Purja
- The E-Myth Revisited by Michael E Gerber
- Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman

EKTA BOOKS

My menstrual odyssey

As I manage the subtleties and shifting rhythms of my altering menstrual cycle, the need for perimenopause early detection, intervention, and proactive self-care has become clear.

○ PREETI MITTAL

A woman's menstrual cycle is a fascinating tale of her resilience, growth, vulnerability, and self-awareness, from her untainted curiosity as a teenager to the seasoned wisdom of adulthood.

Upon reflecting on my path from menarche to the brink of perimenopause at the age of forty, I recognise how important it is to discuss these experiences openly and truthfully, dispel myths, and navigate the transition with empathy and grace.

I distinctly remember my first period at the tender age of 13. It arrived unannounced, like an unanticipated visitor knocking on my adolescent door. I was surprised when I discovered the red stain on my clothes.

Fear immediately gripped me, accompanied by a flood of emotions. In my innocence, I carried unjustified fears of mortality and ostracism, believing that menstruation was a horrible secret to be hidden at all costs.

Despite growing up with two sisters, my family kept the topic of menstruation a secret. Unable to tell my mother right away, I spent the entire day grappling with my fears before confiding in my younger sister, who generously broke the news to my mother.

Finally, I received comfort and much-needed clarity about my body's natural processes. Still, I am left with regret, wishing I had learned this sooner. It would have saved me from the dreadful torment of my solitary and confusing ordeal throughout the day.

In retrospect, I understand the importance of breaking the silence and seeking help, laying the context for future discussions about reproductive health and gender.

Over the years, menstruation, which seemed mysterious and daunting, has become a familiar yet uncomfortable part of my life.

I learned to endure the monthly changes in flow, pain, mood, and energy, manage my menstrual cycle with ease, and navigate the societal taboos and restrictions that come with it.

I have not only accepted but also challenged the status quo while remaining unaware of what lay ahead. Menopause was a distant concept to me, something that seemed inconsequential in the present moment.

Little did I know



SHUTTERSTOCK

that there was another phase of transition prowling on the horizon—perimenopause.

Fast-forward to the present. At the age of forty, I am observing my body's natural rhythms ebbing and flowing, with gradual symptoms of changes in the texture of my skin and hair, hot flashes, anxiety, mood swings, and palpitations.

I dismissed these changes as normal fluctuations, attaching them to stress or other external factors.

However, as the symptoms persisted and intensified, I realised that something more profound was at play, all of which prompted me to consider, investigate, and learn more, and it was during this time of uncertainty that I first encountered the term 'perimenopause.'

I experienced a powerful hot flash one chilly winter's night. I ignored it as a momentary abnormality, not able to understand what was happening to my body.

However, when the same incidents continued days later, I realised I could no longer ignore them. Determined to solve the puzzle, I began searching for

It is crucial to deconstruct the menopausal experience and embrace open conversation and a support system.

solutions to the confusing symptoms I was experiencing.

When I confided in a buddy about my experience, I encountered doubt. She protested, "You're too young for perimenopause."

However, I pointed out the harsh reality that young girls can start menstruating as early as age 8 or 10. If early menarche is happening and accepted, why should the onset of perimenopause at age 40 be dismissed?

This conversation highlighted the evident lack of understanding and awareness surrounding menopause. It made me realise how important it is for us

to educate ourselves about the changes our bodies are undergoing.

I've accepted that hormonal changes will soon affect my body, which will have a mild but discernible impact on my day-to-day functioning.

My once-reliable 28-day cycle has now shrunk to 26 days, a sobering reminder of both the transience of youth and the inevitable nature of change.

The onset of perimenopause has signalled a new chapter in my life, marked by physiological and emotional changes that demand my attention and comprehension.

As I manage the subtleties and shifting rhythms of my altering menstrual cycle, the need for early detection, intervention, and proactive self-care has become clear to me.

I've gone on a quest for knowledge to understand the changes unfolding within me while continuing to thrive in my personal and professional life.

With so much information readily available online, sorting through the maze of menopausal discourse has been a daunting task, leaving me anxious, con-

fused, and uncertain.

While I struggle with the uncertainty of these changes, I realise how crucial it is to deconstruct the menopausal experience and embrace open conversation, education, and a support system.

Throughout my career in the development sector, I have worked on issues of Menstrual health and hygiene (MHH), and in every instance, I have found conversations about whether the young girl knows about menstruation, menarche, PMS, how and where she knows about menstruation, her period cycle, etc.

While much attention has been rightfully given to addressing MHH issues and educating adolescent girls about menstruation, advocating on the importance of WASH facilities to manage menstruation, awareness of taboos and misconceptions, and encouraging school attendance during periods, seldom do we inquire or talk about women's understanding of menopause and her changing biological needs.

On May 28, we commemorate World Menstrual Hygiene Day, a global campaign aimed at promoting awareness about menstrual health and hygiene and breaking down taboos surrounding menstruation.

But the conversation, including the entirety of the female reproductive journey, acknowledging and supporting women at every stage of life, including the often overlooked transition into menopause and menstrual needs while navigating the complications of each menstrual phase, must also be recognised.

Sharing our menstruation stories and experiences can spark discourse and communication, breaking down barriers and addressing cultural norms that perpetuate stigma and misinformation.

It is time to advocate for inclusive menstrual health efforts that help women at every step of their journey. My path from menarche to perimenopause has allowed me to demonstrate my fortitude, female spirit, and the transformational power of self-awareness.

By sharing and accepting our stories and the full range of our reproductive experiences, we can pave the path for future generations to traverse their journeys with courage, grace and pride.



Mittal is a senior policy advocacy and campaign coordinator at WaterAid Nepal.

Dior's Mount Olympus: A sporty homage to the Paris Games

○ ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS, FRANCE

Dior staged an homage to sport on the eve of the Paris Olympics on the grounds of the Musée Rodin on the first day of Paris Couture Week.

The show let the sumptuous, light-weight silks—georgette, taffeta, tulle, and sporty jersey—speak for themselves, draped elegantly over the body.

The walls were lined with mesmerizing artworks in the eye-popping colour of sports players and athletes by artist Faith Ringgold, who died in April. Designer Maria Grazia Chiuri used fall's couture as a stage "to pay a fitting tribute to all athletes ... from antiquity to the present day."

On the runway, Grecian-style draping evoked the original Olympics. The nod to antiquity echoed the Italian designer's penchant for historical influences.

Jersey fabric, an unconventional couture material, was handled poetically. It cascaded down the model's body in loose, fluttery segments, with a twin leather belt to define the waist.

Mosaic embroidery on skin-tight tank tops added a contemporary twist, seeming to sculpt the bust. Sandals adorned with pearls sported crisscross straps up the leg.

The nicest looks were the simplest. An ecru lightweight wool gown seemed like a single whoosh of fabric, hanging whimsically and loosely from the shoulders. It had an unexpected cowl back. This simplicity with an element of surprise is quintessential Chiuri, who has said she often finds elegance in restraint.

Venus Williams marvelled and applauded from the front row.

Couture Week kicked off with a bang at the Hôtel Salomon de Rothschild. Kylie Jenner, veiled and striking in a pink ribbed hourglass Schiaparelli bustier, caused a media frenzy.

Doja Cat appeared in a coat with pronounced shoulders, while 'Emily in Paris' star Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu added to the star-studded front row. Guests were enveloped in an

intimate black box-like setting adorned with nostalgic chandeliers.

On the runway, designer Daniel Roseberry unveiled fall silhouettes inspired by the legendary phoenix. The bird and rebirth theme was inspired by Schiaparelli's homage to ballerina Anna Pavlova, symbolized by a coq feather stole she once wore. The couture was executed with theatrical flair.

The show opened with a breathtaking phoenix gown featuring 3D chrome trompe l'oeil feathered wings over a black ensemble, paired with silver eggshell earrings. This set the tone for a collection defined by technical skill.

Standout pieces included a bustier dress of moving circles, creating a mesmerizing effect, and a cocoon-shaped jumpsuit of faux horsehair and sequins mimicking zebra skin. These designs were accompanied by a haunting soundtrack featuring Nina Simone's "Plain Gold Ring."

On the runway, designer Daniel Roseberry unveiled fall silhouettes inspired by the legendary phoenix.

Iris van Herpen presented her couture as sculptures in what the house called a "profound shift" in the Dutch designer's trajectory.

Froth, flowers, and more than meets the eye—that's the signature of Giambattista Valli, the master of couture illusions. Known for his sumptuous off-kilter silhouettes, the Italian designer once again delivered one of the most highly anticipated shows of the Paris couture calendar.

His collections often merge Italian ebullience with Parisian flirty nonchalance, creating a distinct yet harmonious blend.

A pink silk gown that might have seemed classical was given a contemporary lift, with unexpected segments pulled up in an avant-garde twist. Adding to the visual spectacle, the model's face was painted blue, evoking an ethereal, otherworldly Eastern aura reminiscent of Valli's penchant for blending classicism with modernity.

His mastery of creating weightless volumes and intricate draping was evident throughout. A lilac bridal dress showcased his signature florals, with petals falling down the tulle haphazardly, mimicking the natural shedding of a dying flower—a poetic nod to nature's fleeting beauty.

Another veiled bridal look featured an acid gold frothing beam around the bust, a statement piece that combined Valli's love for volume and fashion-forward color clashes.

MADFest 2024 begins with 'Railway to Nowhere'

The festival, running from July 5 to 7, will feature six plays.

○ POST REPORT
KATHMANDU

The Mandala Alumni Drama Festival (MADFest) 2024, organised by former students of the Theatre, has begun. The festival was inaugurated with the play Railway to Nowhere, directed by Samyog Guragain.

Anup Neupane, the director of MADFest, said, "It started as just an idea. Once everyone joined in, the festival became possible. The festival's name is 'Mad', which reflects a kind of madness for art and creation. We started this festival to create opportunities for ourselves," Neupane said.

Actress Pashupati Sharma, at the event, encouraged young theatre artists to continue with such festivals.

Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) Deputy Mayor Sunita Dangol, who chaired the event, highlighted the presence of theatre culture in Kathmandu. She expressed her support for the continuation of 'MADFest'.

"Kathmandu has a close relationship with theatre. There have always been plays in Kathmandu's public squares. Festivals like this should keep happening," she said.

"The Kathmandu Metropolitan City is always ready to collaborate on such festivals," Dangol added.

Teknath Parajuli, affectionately called "Mama", has served food and tea to many Mandala artists for years and was honoured as a guest at the event. He was happy to be part of a festival organised by the artists he once served. "The young ones who used to eat at my place have grown up and are now organising such a big event," he recalled.

Theatre artist Kedar Shrestha acknowledged Mama's contribution to Mandala's artists, noting that Mama always fed them during their struggles, even when they couldn't pay immediately.

The festival, running from July 5-7, will feature six plays. Along with 'Railway to Nowhere', there will be 'Mirror' directed by Sushan Basnet, 'Shilpini' by Bedana Rai, 'Nugdha' by Bijay Tamang, 'Aagam' by Pritisha Adhikari, and 'Ankuran' by Sagar Karki.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MANDALA THEATRE

A model wears a creation for the Dior Haute Couture Fall-Winter 2024-2025 collection.

AP/RSS