



# THE KATHMANDU POST

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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## Uncertainty winner and incumbents the losers in a year of high-stakes elections

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON, JULY 18

Discontented, economically squeezed voters have turned against sitting governments on both right and left during many of the dozens of elections held this year, as global power blocs shift and political certainties crumble.

From India to South Africa to Britain, voters dealt blows to long-governing parties. Elections to the European Parliament showed growing support for the continent's far right, while France's centrist president scrambled to fend off a similar surge at home.

If there's a global trend, Eurasia Group president Ian Bremmer said at a summit in Canada in June, it's that "people are tired of the incumbents."

More than 40 countries have held elections already this year. More uncertainty awaits — nations home to over half the world's population are going to the polls in 2024. The world is already anxiously turning to November's presidential election in the US, where an acrimonious campaign was dealt a shocking blow by an assassination attempt against Republican nominee and former president, Donald Trump.

### Unpopular incumbents

Aftershocks from the Covid-19 pandemic, conflicts in Africa, Europe and the Middle East, and spiking prices for food and fuel have left dissatisfied voters eager for change.

"Voters really, really don't like inflation," said Rob Ford, professor of political science at the University of Manchester. "And they punish governments that deliver it, whether they are at fault or not."

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The water-logged premises of the Rastriya Sabha Griha that houses the Kathmandu mayor's office pictured after a rainy night, on Thursday. POST PHOTO: DEEPAK KC

## Ambica Shrestha, who championed women's entrepreneurship, dies at 92

A true visionary, she dedicated her life to preserving Nepal's rich heritage.

SANGAM PRASAIN  
KATHMANDU, JULY 18

In 2017, Ambica Shrestha, president of Dwarika's Group of Hotels and Resorts, famously said, "Empowerment will not be served to you. I challenge you. Do your own thing."

Shrestha, who managed to raise her small hotel into a majestic work of architecture and inspired a generation of women to get into business, died on Wednesday.

She was 92. "She passed away in a hospital in Kathmandu on Wednesday morning,"



Ambica Shrestha

Sangita Shrestha, her daughter, told the Post. Shrestha, the honorary consul general of Spain for Nepal since 1992, received several awards for facilitating Spanish tourists' travel in Nepal during crises, particularly in trekking and mountaineering.

In February 2024, the Spanish government conferred on her the Order of Isabella the Catholic medal at a function at Dwarika's Hotel at Battispatali, Kathmandu. Before that, she had received from King Juan Carlos I of Spain the Order of Civil Merit, one of Spain's highest honours.

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## Issue of converting private schools into trusts resurfaces

House committee begins discussions on School Education Bill that was registered in Parliament last September.

BINOD GHIMIRE  
KATHMANDU, JULY 18

The old debate of whether and when private schools should be converted into trusts has resurfaced with the lawmakers discussing the School Education Bill that has been under consideration in Parliament for a year.

The previous government had in September last year registered the bill in Parliament, leaving it up to a private school whether or not to convert into trust. Reverting from the preparations to impose a deadline for the conversion, the bill left it to the discretion of individual private schools.

However, cross-party lawmakers have registered amendments to the bill with provisions to set a deadline for such conversions. On Wednesday, the Education, Health and Information Technology Committee of the House of Representatives began thorough discussions on the bill, with members strongly advocating a maximum of 12 years for all private schools to convert into trusts.

Taking part in the discussions on Thursday, the leaders of the main opposition CPN (Maoist Centre) said no commercial schools should be permitted to continue to operate in the country, whose constitution directs a policy shift towards socialism.

Madhav Sapakota, a Maoist member on the committee, said a deadline is necessary to convert commercial private schools into service-oriented institutions.

"Our constitution has no space for profit-making schools. Time has come to set a deadline to convert private schools from companies into trusts. Let's do it in 12 years if not 10 years, but no more excuses."

Maoist lawmakers have filed 25 amendments to the bill. The ruling UML has a similar position.

Lawmakers from the Maoist Centre have registered 25 amendments to the bill. The ruling CPN-UML has a similar position. Commenting on the bill, UML lawmaker Gokul Baskota said if someone has made an investment in schools, they should be given time to recover the investment before the schools' conversion into trusts.

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Municipal police carry a woman injured in Monday night's flooding in Jhanichaur of Athbiskot Municipality in Rukum West, to a hospital after local treatment was not possible. The flood left three people dead, while one person is still missing. POST PHOTO: MAHESH KC

## DISTRICT DIGEST

### Patient dies after falling off the third floor of hospital

**CHITWAN:** A septuagenarian man with visual impairment died after he fell off the Old Medical College Teaching Hospital building in Bharatpur on Thursday. According to the District Police Office in Chitwan, 76-year-old Bal Bahadur Khamcha Magar from ward 2 of Hupsekot Rural Municipality in Nawalparasi East died after he fell off the third floor of the hospital building. Magar, a cancer patient, was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday. Deputy Superintendent of Police Beshraj Rijal said that the victim was seriously injured after the fall and died in the course of treatment.

### Three injured in Nawalparasi East truck accident

**NAWALPARASI EAST:** Three persons were injured in a truck accident near Chormara along the East-West Highway in Nawalparasi East on Thursday morning. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Bed Bahadur Poudel, the injured include truck driver Amrit Dhungana, 26, of ward 4 of Nilkantha Municipality in Dhading, his wife Kalpana Dhungana, 20, and bus assistant Basanta Gharti Magar of Bardaghat in Nawalparasi West. The truck en route to Kathmandu from Rupandehi overturned and fell some 10 meters from the road, police said. Among the injured Kalpana has been referred to Kathmandu-based National Trauma Centre for further treatment.

### 46 kilometres roads blacktopped in Salyan

**SALYAN:** A total of 46 kilometres of various road sections were blacktopped in Salyan, a hill district of Karnali Province, during the last fiscal year of 2023-24. A total of 31 km sections of different road stretches were blacktopped through the Dang-based Division Road Office while the Infrastructure Development Office, Salyan completed the blacktopping of 15 km. The local people have benefited from the upgrade of the Rapti Highway, various feeder roads and rural roads.

# Human-crocodile conflict rising in Chitwan

In the last fiscal year, 2023-24, crocodiles ranked the third major cause of human fatalities in the Chitwan National Park and its buffer zone, after tigers and rhinos.



A mugger crocodile pictured in a cave in the Budhi Rapti stream in Sauraha, in this recent photo. POST PHOTO



Nishan Mahato, the son of Phaguna Mahato, who died in an attack by a mugger crocodile on September 16, 2023, pictured recently at his home in Ratnanagar in Chitwan. POST PHOTO: RAMESH KUMAR PAUDEL

### RAMESH KUMAR PAUDEL CHITWAN, JULY 18

Phaguna Mahato, a resident of ward 5 of Janakauli in Ratnanagar Municipality, was a cook in a Sauraha-based hotel. During the rainy season, the tourist hotel reduced its operations and Mahato was granted a summer leave. On September 16, 2023, the 47-year-old went to Janakauli Buffer Zone Community Forest near his home to collect grass for the cattle. There is a stream passing through the forest. While returning, he was suddenly attacked by a mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*). He died in the incident.

The Mahato family lives in a tin-roof hut in Magartol, a settlement near the tourist hub of Sauraha. The impoverished family is left in the lurch after the death of a sole bread earner in this human-animal conflict. Mahato's widow is now working at a hotel as a kitchen help to raise her four daughters and a son. "We have been thrown into crisis after the death of the head of our family. Our mother works in a hotel to manage two squares of meals. The tragic incident ruined our family," said Salima, the third daughter of the Mahato couple.

On June 24, 72-year-old Mil Bahadur Tharu of ward 1 of Madhyabindu Municipality in Nawalparasi East died in a crocodile attack near his residence. The crocodile fatally injured him while he was taking a bath in a rivulet. He died on the spot, said police.

Human-animal conflict is unchecked in the buffer zone area of Chitwan National Park (CNP), the country's first conservation area. Mainly the tigers, rhinos and elephants attack people in Chitwan and Nawalparasi districts. However, the attacks by crocodiles are on the rise lately.

According to conservationists, crocodile attacks were rare in the past, but have become more frequent in recent years.

In the last fiscal year, 2023-24, crocodiles have ranked the third major cause of human fatalities in the CNP and its buffer zone. As per the data available at the CNP, 11 people were killed by wild animals in the area in the last fiscal year. "Five people died in the attack by rhinos while tigers mauled four people to death. Mugger crocodiles attacked and killed two people in the last fiscal year," said Ganesh

Prasad Tiwari, the information officer at the CNP.

Two species of crocodiles—mugger and gharial—are found in several streams and rivers in the national park area and its buffer zone. A good number of crocodiles are sighted in various streams and rivers that pass through Baghmara and Janakauli buffer zone community forests in Chitwan. According to conservationists, the muggers and gharials are found in the Rapti river and its tributaries lately.

"Lately, the crocodile population has been increasing in the area. Comparatively, gharials are calmer. They cannot fatally attack humans because of their physical characteristics as well. But muggers are aggressive, and dangerous," said Jitu Tamang, a conservationist who is also the chairman of Baghmara Buffer Zone Community Forest Users' Group. According to him, many mugger crocodiles are sighted on the banks of the Budhi Rapti stream that passes through the Baghmara Buffer Zone Community Forest. "They are the major attraction for the visiting tourists, both domestic and foreign," said Tamang.

Conservationists suggest that awareness programmes should be launched in the buffer zone area to minimise human-crocodile conflict and conserve the species. "Mugger crocodiles are normally gentle animals. But they become a bit aggressive when they are nesting and raising their hatchlings," said conservationist Bed Bahadur Khadka who had worked as the chief of the gharial breeding centre in Chitwan for a long time.

According to Khadka, the crocodile generally lays eggs in the months of March and April, and hatches them in June and July. They closely protect their hatchlings until October. "Crocodiles do not actively prey on humans or even quadruped animals. But they attack if they encounter people or other animals. We have to understand their behaviour to minimise conflict," said Khadka.

The number of crocodiles—both mugger and gharial—has increased in Chitwan National Park and its surroundings.

However, the authorities do not have the exact data. During a monitoring conducted in 2015, a total of 388 mugger crocodiles and 166 gharials were found in the area. The gharial's population has now reached 265.

# Globally, voters are shifting away from ruling parties, political analysts say

>> Continued from page 1

Inflation and unemployment are rising in India, the world's largest democracy, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party unexpectedly lost its parliamentary majority after a decade of dominance. Modi was forced to rely on coalition partners to govern as the opposition doubled its strength in parliament.

In South Africa, sky-high rates of unemployment and inequality helped drive a dramatic loss of support for the African National Congress, which had governed ever since the end of the apartheid system of white minority rule in 1994.

The party once led by Nelson Mandela lost its parliamentary majority for the first time and was forced to enter a coalition with opposition parties.

In Britain, the centre-left Labour Party won election in a landslide, ousting the Conservatives after 14 years. As in so many countries, Prime Minister Keir Starmer faces a jaded electorate that wants lower prices and better public services—but is deeply sceptical of politicians' ability to deliver change.

### US-China tensions

Caught between world powers China and the United States, Taiwan held one of the year's most significant elections.

Lai Ching-te, of the Democratic Progressive Party, won a presidential election that was seen as a referendum on the island's relationship with China, which claims Taiwan as its own.

Beijing regards Lai as a separatist and ramped up military pressure with drills in the Taiwan Strait. Lai has promised to strengthen the defences of the self-governing island, and the US has pledged to help it defend itself, heightening tensions in one of the world's flashpoints.

In Bangladesh, an important partner of the US that has drawn closer to

China, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won a fourth successive term in an election that opposition parties boycotted. The US and UK said the vote was not credible, free or fair.

### Political dynasties

In several countries, family ties helped secure or cement power.

Pakistan held messy parliamentary elections—under the eye of the country's powerful military—that saw well established political figures vie to become prime minister. The winner, atop a coalition government, was Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, younger brother of three-time premier Nawaz Sharif.

### Donald Trump's possible second term signals global power dynamics, uncertainties.

Opponents say the election was rigged in his favour, with opponent and former prime minister, Imran Khan, imprisoned and blocked from running. The situation remains unstable, with Pakistan's Supreme Court ruling that Khan's party was improperly denied some seats.

In Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest democracy, former Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto was officially declared president more than two months after an election in which he won over 58 percent of the vote.

His two losing rivals alleged fraud and nepotism—Subianto's vice president-elect is outgoing leader Joko Widodo's son, and Subianto was the son-in-law of Indonesia's late dictator, Suharto. The country's highest court rejected their arguments.

Some outcomes were predictable. Russian President Vladimir Putin was

reelected to a fifth term in a pre-ordained election that followed his relentless crackdown on dissent. Rwanda's election extended the 30-year rule of President Paul Kagame, an authoritarian leader who ran almost unopposed.

### Far right's uneven march

The far right has gained ground in Europe as the continent experiences economic instability and an influx of migrants from troubled lands.

Elections for the parliament of the 27-nation European Union shifted the bloc's centre of gravity, with the far right rocking ruling parties in France and Germany, the EU's traditional driving forces.

The EU election triggered a political earthquake in France. After his centrist, pro-business party took a pasting, President Emmanuel Macron called a risky snap parliamentary election in hope of stemming a far-right surge.

The anti-immigration National Rally party won the first round, but alliances and tactical voting by the centre and left knocked it down to third place in the second round and left a divided legislature.

### New faces, daunting challenges

A presidential election tested Senegal's reputation as a stable democracy in West Africa, a region rocked by a recent spate of coups.

The surprise winner was little-known opposition figure Basirou Diomaye Faye, released from prison before polling day as part of a political amnesty.

Faye is Africa's youngest elected leader, and his rise reflects widespread frustration among Senegal's youth with the country's direction. Senegal has made new oil and gas discoveries in recent years, but the population has yet to see any real benefit.

Mexico elected Claudia Sheinbaum as the first female president in the country's 200-year history. A protege

of outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the 61-year-old former Mexico City mayor vowed to continue in the direction set by the popular leftist leader.

She faces a polarised electorate, daunting drug-related violence, an increasingly influential military and tensions over migration with the US.

### Uncertainty is the new normal

On July 28, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro will seek to extend a decade-plus presidency marked by a complex political, social and economic crisis that has driven millions into poverty or out of the country. Opposition parties have banded together, but the ruling party has tight control over the voting process, and many doubt votes will be counted fairly.

South Sudan, the world's youngest country, is scheduled to hold its long-delayed first elections in December. That would represent a key milestone, but the vote is rife with danger and vulnerable to failure.

Looming above all is the choice US voters will make November 5 in a tense and divided country. The July 13 shooting at a Trump rally in Pennsylvania, in which the former president was wounded and a rallygoer was killed, came as Democrats agonise over the fitness of President Joe Biden, who has resisted calls to step aside.

The prospect of a second term for Trump, a protectionist wary of international entanglements, is evidence of the world's shifting power blocs and crumbling political certainties.

"The world is in the transition," said Neil Melvin, director of international security at defence think tank the Royal United Services Institute.

"There are very broad processes on the way which are reshaping international order," he added. "It's a kind of anti-globalization. It's a growing return to the nation state and against multilateralism."

# No room for profit-making schools, says Maoist Centre lawmaker

>> Continued from page 1

"We can give them seven years. But there should be no ifs and buts about their conversion," he said.

Conversion into trust means that the school owners cannot divide profits. Currently, most private schools operate as companies after registering with the Company Registrar's Office.

The agenda of turning private schools into public ones was first floated by a High Level Education Commission five years back.

In August 2018, the government formed a 25-member commission led by Education Minister Giriraj Mani Pokharel. It involved education experts, representatives from teachers' and private schools' associations and officials in the task of recommending the government on its education policy.

The commission prepared a report after rigorous discussions and consultations with the stakeholders. On January 15, 2019, it was submitted to then-prime minister KP Sharma Oli

who has been reappointed to the position.

However, Oli was not interested in implementing the recommendations, so he never made the report public. His successor, Sher Bahadur Deuba, also maintained a similar policy.

The commission recommended that private schools be converted into trusts within 10 years. This would, according to the commission, stop the commercialisation of education.

The commission based its recom-

mendations on Article 31(2) of the constitution, which makes the state responsible for ensuring compulsory basic and free secondary education for all. The commission said that leaving private educators to "generate profit", as they are currently doing, would violate the constitutional spirit.

Private school operators objected to the suggested measure. They had tried to put pressure on the commission to exclude it while the report was being finalised.

A federal education Act is necessary to implement the educational provisions enshrined in the Constitution. In its absence, the devolution of the authority to the local and provincial levels has not been possible. Despite commitments from successive governments, it took around eight years for the bill to be finalised.

The bill under consideration envisions the national-level board exams to be conducted only at the end of grade 12. It doesn't mention the

Secondary Education Examinations, which means respective schools will administer the tests. The local units will hold the grade eight tests, though the district education offices will prepare the question sets.

Lawmakers participating in the discussions on Thursday also demanded a provision to ban teacher unions. "The quality of education has deteriorated as the teachers are in politics in the name of trade unions. This needs to stop," said Amresh Kumar Singh, an independent lawmaker.

BRIEFING

Nepal, Kiribati establish diplomatic relations



**KATHMANDU:** Nepal and Kiribati, an island nation in Oceania, established diplomatic relations on Thursday, taking the number of countries with which Nepal has bilateral ties to 183. Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations Lok Bahadur Thapa and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kiribati to the United Nations Teburoro Tito signed a joint declaration at the Permanent Mission of Nepal in New York. The two ambassadors exchanged views on different areas where the two nations could work together for their mutual benefit, said Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations. Nepal had previously established diplomatic relations with Tonga in March this year.

Monsoon-induced disasters claim 125 lives in 38 days

**KATHMANDU:** Monsoon-induced disasters have claimed the lives of 125 people across Nepal in the past 38 days. As of Thursday afternoon, floods, landslides, and other monsoon-induced disasters killed 38 people in Gandaki Province, 23 in Lumbini, 22 each in Bagmati and Koshi, eight in Sudurpaschim, seven in Karnali and five in Madhesh Province, according to Nepal Police. Likewise, 143 people were injured across the country, including 34 in Koshi Province, 33 in Karnali, 29 in Gandaki, 15 in Bagmati, 14 in Sudurpaschim, and nine each in Lumbini, Madhesh and Bagmati provinces. A total of 222 houses, 80 sheds, 43 bridges, one school, and two government offices were damaged during the period. As many as 3,721 households were displaced and 585 cattle were killed.

# Free screening of cervical cancer to be limited to a few local units of 11 districts due to insufficient funds

The budget for free screening can purchase around 130,000 test kits. This means only that number of women can be screened, says chief of the reproductive health section.

**ARJUN POUDEL**  
KATHMANDU, JULY 18

Providing free screening for cervical cancer from state-run health facilities across the country was among the measures the government outlined in its annual policies and programmes of the fiscal year 2023-24 to prevent deaths of women from the disease.

In the current fiscal year, however, the budget for free screening has been allocated to only a few local governments.

"We can carry out free screening of cervical cancer only in the few local units of 11 districts," said Sarmila Dahal, chief of the Family Planning and Reproductive Health Section at the Family Welfare Division of the Department of Health Services.

"The total budget for the programme is insufficient even to provide services to all women of that particular local level."

Cervical cancer is among the most common and a major cause of deaths among Nepali women, with an age-standardised incidence rate of 14.4 cases per 100,000 in 2020, with 2,244 new cases and 1,493 deaths. Most patients of cervical cancer in Nepal—80.9 percent—are diagnosed at a late stage, contributing to the higher mortality rate.

Health officials agreed that it would be best to prevent cancer from occurring, which can only be done with the help of free screening, awareness drives and administration of the vaccine against human papillomavirus.

"Symptoms of cervical cancer can be detected 10 to 12 years before, through screening," said Dahal. "But most patients seek treatment in the third or fourth stages of cancer, when their condition already gets complicated."

According to Dahal, free screening will be carried out in the local units of Sarlahi, Mahottari, Rautahat, Palpa, Dolakha, Kaski, Surkhet, Kailali, Lindhupalchok, Kavrepalanchok and Lalitpur districts in the current fiscal year that started this week.

The budget for free screening can purchase around 130,000 test kits, which means only that number of women can be screened, said Dahal.

Oncologists say early treatment can



prevent up to 80 percent of cervical cancer cases.

"Survival rate of cervical cancer is up to 95 percent if the treatment is started in stage 1 and up to 75 percent in stage 2," said Dr Shivaji Poudel, executive director at the Chitwan-based BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital. "The important thing is that problems must be diagnosed at an early stage and treatment started."

Experts say awareness and free screening, along with the administration of vaccines against human papillomavirus, could help lessen the burden of cervical cancer in Nepal. If the problem is diagnosed early, the ailment can be cured at a small cost, they add.

Health officials complained that the budget was not sufficient to carry out nationwide vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV), which they planned to start in the first quarter of 2025. They say that the Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunisation (GAVI) has agreed to provide vaccine doses enough for 1.7 million girls between 10 and 14.

Human papillomavirus is a viral infection that spreads through skin contact. The virus causes cervical cancer, which is the second-most common cancer in the developing world. Hundreds of women get diagnosed with cervical cancer every year in Nepal.

Doctors say most cervical cancers are associated with the HPV, a sexually transmitted infection. Widespread immunisation could reduce the impact of cervical cancer and other cancers caused by the HPV worldwide.

Countries like Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the Maldives have introduced HPV vaccines nationally while India and Indonesia have introduced them in some districts.

Last year, Nepal purchased 20,000 doses of the HPV vaccine, which were administered to around 9,000 girls aged between 14 and 15 years from all seven provinces. Health authorities administered the vaccines at schools after other measures failed to increase the vaccine's uptake.

The World Health Organisation says HPV vaccination is recommended as part of a coordinated strategy to prevent cervical cancer and other diseases caused by the virus.

Nepal is also among the countries that have committed to eliminating cervical cancer by 2030. For that, the country has to meet 90-70-90 targets, which means vaccinating 90 percent of the girls with the HPV vaccine by the age 15, performing screening on 70 percent of women using a high-performance test by the age 35 and again by 45 years and provide treatment to 90 percent of women who are pre-cancer tested and manage 90 percent of the women with invasive cancer.

# Nepal can't backtrack on BRI, says UML leader

Nepali leaders are only talking about loans and haven't explored funding alternatives, Rajan Bhattarai says.

**POST REPORT**  
KATHMANDU, JULY 18

CPN-UML standing committee member Rajan Bhattarai, who is also the head of the party's Department of Foreign Affairs, said that Nepal cannot withdraw from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Speaking at a function organised by the Nepal Communist Party led by Netra Bikram Chand on "the reality and illusion on BRI" on Wednesday, the UML leader said that since Nepal has already signed the agreement seven years ago, it cannot backtrack.

Nepal and China signed the framework of the BRI in 2017, but not a single project has taken off under the initiative due to lack of clarity over the funding modality. The Nepali side prefers grants over loans to execute the projects under the BRI, but the Chinese side has yet to agree. There is also a proposal for a mixed funding model to execute the projects under the proposed BRI implementation plan.

Both sides are working to finalise the BRI implementation plan, but the investment modality remains the biggest concern for both sides.

"We are talking about the BRI, which we have signed with China. Since we have already put in our signatures, there is no possibility of renegeing. China is a close neighbour and rising power, so we cannot backtrack from our past agreement," said Bhattarai.

During the recent foreign secretary level talks between Nepal and China on June 25, the implementation plan for the BRI was set to be signed, but due to lack of clarity over the funding model, the signing was deferred.

With the formation of the new government in Kathmandu led by CPN-UML chair KP Sharma Oli, the issue of BRI has come to the forefront again.

The political community is sharply divided over the funding model for BRI projects. The previous government of Pushpa Kamal Dahal also tried to finalise and sign the implementation plan of the BRI, but it could not succeed.

"I came to know that there was a dispute within Dahal's Cabinet when the prime minister wanted to push the BRI implementation plan," said Bhattarai without naming who created the dispute inside the government. Besides the UML, the coalition government included the CPN (Maoist

Centre), Rastriya Swatantra Party, CPN (Unified Socialist), and Janata Samajbadi Party led by the Ashok Rai faction.

"Do not take the BRI lightly. When the Dahal government tried to push the BRI, we came to know that it caused a dispute inside the Cabinet. So don't treat the BRI as a joke," said Bhattarai. "China has proposed the implementation plan, but we are hesitant to sign it."

Nepal should seek assistance from all sides and from neighbours, said Bhattarai, who served as foreign rela-



Rajan Bhattarai

Not a single project has taken off under BRI due to lack of clarity over the funding modality.

tions adviser to Prime Minister Oli during his previous term. "We have received economic assistance from India, so there is no reason not to accept assistance from China."

"The BRI agreement was signed seven years ago, but now no responsible party, individual or power can refuse it. In this context, we must move forward with it. The BRI is a project, but we are only talking about loans and have not explored alternatives. This could be due to a lack of understanding or lack of willingness to understand it," he said.

Also, Chand, Bhattarai, Maoist Centre's General Secretary Dev Gurung, and former ambassador to China Leelamani Poudyal, among others spoke on the occasion, where they stressed the importance of implementing the BRI in Nepal.

# China, US do not want war in Taiwan Strait: Former Taiwan president Ma Ying-jeou

"The relationship between the US and China is improving," Ma, who is also the chairman of Ma Ying-jeou Foundation, tells Media Chinese International Limited and Sin Chew Daily editor-in-chief Kuik Cheng Kang in an exclusive interview.



Ma believes that China, which has achieved significant accomplishments at this stage, will cherish what it has developed so far.

**SIN CHEW DAILY**  
TAIPEI, JULY 18

Despite showing concern about the current situation, former president of Taiwan Ma Ying-jeou is optimistic that neither China nor US want a war in the Taiwan Strait.

"It has not yet reached the point to worry about war."

"Of course, we can't say it will never happen."

"In English, we say 'not impossible but unlikely,'" he said.

Ma believes that China, which has achieved significant accomplishments at this stage, will cherish what it has developed so far.

"In terms of advancement in economy and technology, China has progressed rapidly. The wisdom of the

tion is a win-win for both side.

"Therefore, I am not so pessimistic about the US-China relations. Both sides understand that if they go to war, it will be a lose-lose situation for both," he said.

Addressing the concerns among overseas Chinese about the situation in the Taiwan Strait, Ma is relatively optimistic. The key factor is close communication and exchanges between both sides, he said.

There are a few million Taiwanese businessmen in China and such feat is not easy to achieve, he said, adding that once established, the outcomes are significant.



The Chinese leaders understand this very well, he said.

"I believe they are reluctant to go for war. In fact, once a war breaks out, ordinary people will suffer regardless of the outcome. They understand this very well, too."

"I think everyone has built a friendlier mechanism that allows both sides to work towards peace. China certainly wants unification, but if the means are not peaceful and the process is not democratic, the Taiwanese people will not accept," he said.

Taiwan is a democratic society now, so if China can understand this, it will certainly help in terms of development for both sides, Ma said.

"I think it is important to emphasise that the process must be peaceful, and the methods must be democratic too," he said.

"As China continues to develop, it will become more cautious because such achievements are hard-earned and must not be simply erased."

On whether the U.S. presidential election results will impact the stability of the Taiwan Strait, Ma said, "I am a bit worried about this election.

You know, Biden is really struggling to regain his momentum. For Trump, as you know, he often acts impulsively and is not very steady. So, I am worried. Of course, they definitely would not want to deal with the Communist Party of China in any way other than the peaceful one. The US can't afford to pay for the price," he said.

On common perception that the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Kuomintang and Taiwan People's Party (TPP) no longer have significant differences on the issue of unification and independence, Ma disagreed, emphasising that Kuomintang supports peaceful unification but not by force. "The DPP opposes unification and doesn't even acknowledge that they are Chinese, which is quite different. As for the TPP, they are more moderate and don't have strong views on unification," he said.

The Taiwanese people have not reached a consensus on unification with China, he said, adding that they do not achieve consensus on domestic matters too, Ma quipped. Asked if Kuomintang's stance on peaceful unification has not changed, Ma replied yes and said it cannot be changed.

In fact, the Constitution of the Republic of China does not exclude the option of "unification", he said.

"Do you want to achieve unification with China by force? It's impossible. Kuomintang's stance basically aligns with the tradition of Chinese history where it supports peace and opposes Taiwanese independence. This is consistent with the views of the vast majority of Taiwanese, as there aren't many people in Taiwan who truly support independence," said Ma.

He believes Taiwan is a sophisticated society with people holding various views, which is not a bad thing as a democratic society should be like this.

"Comparing the current president, Lai Ching-te, with his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen, most people still find Tsai more moderate. Lai often says he is pragmatic working towards the independence of Taiwan. But no matter how pragmatic you are, this cannot be achieved. It's definitely not a very pragmatic thing, so sometimes we find him a bit naïve."

# Oli appoints two advisers

Picks Rimal and Khatiwada as political, economic advisers.



Bishnu Rimal



Yubaraj Khatiwada

**POST REPORT**  
KATHMANDU, JULY 18

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has appointed Bishnu Rimal and Yubaraj Khatiwada as his political and economic advisers, respectively.

Khatiwada is a former finance minister and Nepali ambassador to the United States. Rimal is a deputy general secretary of Oli's party CPN-UML and a long-time trusted aide of the three-time prime minister.

The Cabinet made the decisions on Wednesday. Rimal also served as Oli's chief political adviser from 2018 to 2021. Khatiwada was Oli's finance

minister but after his term expired as a member of the National Assembly, he was appointed the ambassador to the United States of America.

According to a minister, the prime minister will appoint more ministers in the next few days.

On Oli's recommendation, President Ramchandra Paudel on Tuesday appointed senior advocate Ramesh Badal as the attorney general. Rajesh Bajracharya was appointed chief personal assistant to the prime minister. Oli is consulting his party leaders on whom to appoint press, foreign and other advisers and assistants, said a UML leader.

# Rastriya Prajatantra Party not to give Bagmati chief minister trust vote

**POST REPORT**  
KATHMANDU, JULY 18

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) has decided not to support Bagmati Province Chief Minister Shalikram Jankattel in the vote of confidence.

RPP Parliamentary Party Deputy Leader Gir Bahadur Tamang said the parliamentary party meeting held on Thursday decided to vote against the chief minister as the latter seeks trust vote from the provincial assembly.

The party, however, is yet to decide whether to support the Nepali Congress-UML coalition to form a new government. The RPP has 12 seats in the 110-member provincial assembly. Jankattel is scheduled to seek a vote of confidence in the assembly on Sunday. Chief Minister Jankattel of the CPN (Maoist Centre) is undergo-



Shalikram Jankattel

ing a floor test after the UML withdrew its support to his government on July 8. The UML ministers exited from the provincial government a few days after the party quit the Pushpa Kamal Dahal-led government at the centre. The UML broke the alliance with the Maoist Centre last week and joined hands with Nepali Congress.

The two largest parties—Congress and UML—have already formed the new government at the centre.

## OPINION



## OUR VIEW

## Over to Balen's court

He would do well to devise a well-thought-out plan that will benefit the city and its peripheral citizens.

The Kathmandu Metropolitan City has had twin triumphs this week: The Patan High Court has allowed it to continue with its road expansion work in the New Road area that had been halted due to the intervention of the Department of Roads. The KMC's win in this case is actually a victory for everyone who travels through New Road regularly, or even occasionally. Excessive vehicular movement has for long made New Road an inhospitable and impenetrable city centre. The expansion of the pavements makes it more accessible, peaceful and lively. More importantly, its user-friendliness makes New Road a desirable space for shoppers, leading to added business activities. The New Road businesspersons who have been protesting the KMC's earnest efforts will appreciate the sensible thoughts put into this action by mayor Balendra Shah once they start reaping the benefits of a green, non-congested and vibrant shopping destination.

Another triumph bestowed on the City by the judiciary is go-ahead for the clearing of squatter settlements, especially in river-side public spaces including on the banks of the Bagmati. In earlier instances, the KMC has been a target of squatters and the public alike for its hasty, even nasty, attempts to forcibly remove the squatters. Its officials even became targets of violent attacks by the squatters, leading the mayor to blame a certain political party for mobilising its cadres. In the past, political parties of various hues have tried to deal with the squatter problem differently, and most of them have failed. Former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai seemed somewhat more visionary than others of his ilk, for he had a resettlement camp built outside the Ring Road, in Ichangu Narayan. But his vision, too, turned out to be myopic, as the camp hardly attracted the interest of the intended beneficiaries. The camp outside of the city, which severs the ties of the beneficiaries to economic activities, was of no use.

The Supreme Court on Monday directed authorities to clear the settlements along the banks of the Bagmati and its tributaries in the valley, but only after providing alternative housing for genuine squatters. The court has asked the authorities to identify the actual squatters, transfer them to the camp in Ichangu Narayan, build more houses elsewhere and provide immediate cash relief where necessary. With this, Shah, ever-ready to bring his excavators and bulldozers out to demolish infrastructures deemed illegal, must be excited to resume his previous abortive attempt.

But this time, Shah has more thinking to do before he gets into action, as offering alternatives to the squatters is no cakewalk. He might face resistance once again, for the camp in Ichangu Narayan continues to fail to tempt the squatters genuinely trying to survive in the city on the back of hard work. Moreover, his previous attempts were aimed more at gentrification of the city under his jurisdiction rather than unified urban planning, and a resistance was given. This time, he would do well to come up with a well-thought-out plan that will be a win-win for the city and its peripheral citizens. Rather than a 'good versus evil' fight as some of Shah's fans have projected the long standoff, it is about finding dignified alternative spaces for thousands of people who are struggling to put a roof over their heads.

## THEIR VIEW

## Exorbitant healthcare cost

The shortage of doctors and health professionals must be resolved through proper incentives.

A research finding has confirmed our fear that many people are facing poverty because of high healthcare costs in Bangladesh. A study by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), according to this daily, showed that approximately 6.13 million people were pushed below the national poverty line in 2022 because of out-of-pocket health expenditures.

The findings also revealed that more than half the population faces financial difficulties while seeking medical services in hospitals and that a large portion of the healthcare cost is spent on medicines. This is no surprise since many people in Bangladesh visit a pharmacy for basic ailments and buy medicine based on the shopkeepers' recommendations instead of consulting physicians, who are often not available at primary healthcare centres in unions and upazilas.

Even when doctors are available, the poor quality of services at health facilities and the high cost of private ones often discourage people from seeking professional help. There is also a tendency among health professionals to overprescribe drugs and write brand names of medicine in prescriptions as a favour to pharmaceutical representatives who shower doctors with incentives.

The most disheartening part is that while out-of-pocket health expenditure continues to rise for the public (from 68 percent in 2020 to 73 percent in 2021), a portion of the health sector allocation remains underutilised. Plus, a significant portion of the allocation is spent on the salaries and wages of staff and health professionals, which often do not benefit patients directly. Although the health minister hinted at introducing a government-based health insurance system, many other ills in this sector need to be fixed to reduce people's healthcare burden.

First, our focus needs to shift from curative to preventive care. Then the shortage of doctors and other health professionals must be resolved by instituting proper incentives and monitoring systems at duty stations. Policies and regulations should be introduced and implemented strictly to prevent the over-prescription of drugs, unethical practices of pharmaceutical companies, and regulate fees at private healthcare facilities. Corruption and inefficiencies in health sector procurement processes must be checked.

Besides, a well-developed patient referral system will also decrease costs, stopping people from unnecessarily visiting specialists and paying higher fees. Only an overhaul of the entire sector, not just ad hoc measures, can re-establish people's trust in the health sector and reduce healthcare costs.

— The Daily Star (Bangladesh)/ANN

## Revisiting 'Rashtrabhasha Shiksha Pranali'

|| POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE ||

It contributed to the further entrenchment of the Nepali language in our public life and civil service.

PRATYOUSH ONTA



In an earlier column which argued for the writing of plural histories of school education in Nepal (March 15, 2024), I suggested that researchers could write about specific initiatives that expanded schooling opportunities. As a possible example, I mentioned the name of Gopal Pande (1913-78), the founder of the Nepali Shiksha Parishad (NSP, established in 1951) and its "Rashtrabhasha Shiksha Pranali" (RBSP) initiative. Four weeks from today, the NSP will have completed 73 years of existence as one of Nepal's oldest continuously run non-governmental organisations. Hence, it is suitable for us to revisit that schooling experiment.

Pande was a teacher of Nepali at a Sresta Pathshala and at Durbar High School in Kathmandu. His first publications that came out in the late 1930s and the early 1940s were works of Nepali grammar for school students. Given the increasing orientation toward English education in the dominant circles of Nepali society by the 1940s (it was in that context that Mahakavi Devkota wrote his famous essay, "Hai Hai Angreji"), Pande proposed an alternative system to benefit those who could not or did not want to study English. Students could opt for this system in place of the mainstream school system that ended with the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam and included curricula in compulsory English. The then government approved the RBSP on June 17, 1952, and institutionalised it as the annual "Praveshika Pariksha" exam. This Pariksha was in place for 20 years and was scrapped only when the New Education System Plan was fully implemented in 1974. Nevertheless, NSP's other activities, focusing mostly on the Nepali language-literary field, continue to this day.

## The idea

What was Pande's idea regarding the RBSP? He made his case to the public in a series of articles published in *Gorkhapatra* and also sought statements of support from 101 important individuals in Nepali public life. I don't



Gopal Pande (1913-78)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MADAN PURASKAR PUSTAKALAYA

have space here to discuss each of his articles, but they can be summarised thus. Pande assumed that to educate large numbers of Nepalis quickly required that the medium language of their education should be the one to which many had access, namely, Nepali. He claimed that the RBSP would not disrupt the already existing systems of education (based in English, Sanskrit, etc.; also Basic Education) but would assist in getting the maximum number of citizens educated quickly. He emphasised that putting a system in place that recognised the educational credentials obtained via the RBSP would serve the interests of Nepali citizens since qualified individuals would be available to staff the country's bureaucracy. Finally, recognising the limitations of the early post-Rana state, he exhorted one and all, especially those already educated, to get involved in his mission.

The RBSP curriculum was divided into six subjects with eight papers for 800 full marks: Three in Nepali (prose, poetry, and creative writing/criticism), math, civics, history/ geography, general science/knowledge, and one optional language among English, Nepal Bhasa, Nepali, Hindi, Sanskrit and Urdu. When the subject of Panchayat was later added to the SLC curriculum, it was also added to the Praveshika Pariksha.

## Operational details

NSP's school, Nepali Shikshalaya, was physically held in the evenings

at the Durbar School. There were, in total, 20 cohorts of examinees in the Praveshika Pariksha, the first in 1954 and the last in 1973. Thousands of students have reportedly benefited, but I do not know their exact number at this point. Forty-six relatively famous individuals taught at the Nepali Shikshalaya in its early years, volunteering their time as teachers. Pande exhorted his colleagues to donate just 6.5 minutes a day, resulting in one weekly 45-minute period devoted to actual teaching in the classroom. Later on, many younger individuals, including Pande's children, also taught there.

For the first 10 years of its existence, Kathmandu remained the only exam centre for the Praveshika Pariksha. Although there was demand for the opening of such centres in various parts of the country, Pande feared that proper supervision of them during the exams might not happen, and hence the sanctity and quality of the Pariksha might suffer. Nevertheless, starting in the mid-1960s, additional examination centres were opened in Tansen, Bharatpur, Biratnagar, Dharan, Kuncha, Janakpur, Pokhara, Kanchandaha, Terthathum, Hanumannagar, Bhairahawa, Khidim, Rasuwa, Doti, Gorkha and Rajbiraj. In Kathmandu, Pande was assisted by a retinue of chief exam supervisors who were themselves assisted by several dozen other supervisors. A hand-operated litho machine was used to "print"

## After the fall

It will be unfortunate if Biden does not step aside before the Democratic Party's convention.

MAHIR ALI



It's emblematic of the current moment in American politics that the incumbent president's physical and mental health remains a bigger cause for concern than that of his challenger even after the latter survived an assassination attempt.

'Fight, fight, fight!' before he was led offstage. The clenched fist went up once again as he entered a black van.

Images from the incident will no doubt enhance Trump's chances of re-election four years after a defeat that many of his supporters believe was unfairly engineered. His biggest advantage, though, remains his doddering opponent in the race who is barely able to walk, let alone convincingly run.

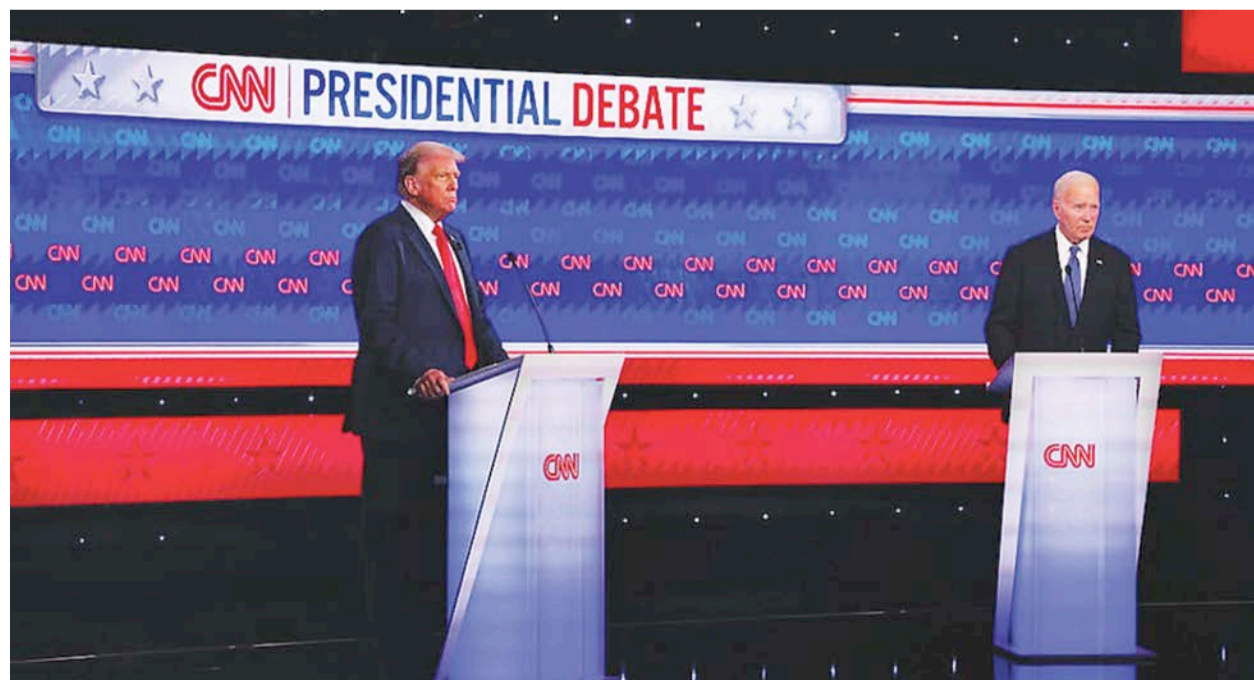
The Democratic Party ought to have recognised long before the presidential debate debacle of June 27 that relying on Joe Biden to defeat Trump a second time was a mug's game. It has been fairly obvious for what in political terms is an eternity that a physically and intellectually enfeebled president isn't up to the task.

Biden's apparent personal conviction that only he can stave off the serious risk of Trump's return to the White House does not stand up to scrutiny. No

one can claim with any certainty that Kamala Harris or another alternative would be an adequate bulwark against the Republican candidate, but their chances of making any kind of impression on the electorate diminish with each passing day.

This week's choreographed coronation of Trump at the Republican national convention in Milwaukee would have been reminiscent of a Nuremberg rally even without the supplementary advantage of the revanchist führer's injured ear. His running mate is Ohio senator JD Vance, who described Trump eight years ago as a putative 'American Hitler'. He later had a MAGA epiphany, and now blames the Democratic campaign for Saturday's violence, even though the motives of the shooter, a 20-year-old registered Republican, are yet to be determined.

It will be both surprising and unfortunate if Biden does not step aside before the Democratic Party's equivalent event in Chicago next month. This year, coincidentally, is being compared to 1968, when a Democratic convention in the same city attracted radical protests and shocking police violence. The likeliest Democratic nominee, Robert F



REUTERS

Kennedy, had been shot dead less than three months earlier, about two months after he shared with a crowd the horrifying news of Martin Luther King Jr's assassination.

The rebels of 1968 were particularly infuriated—like King and, to a lesser degree, Kennedy—by the horrors their

the question papers prepared by relevant experts who also marked the students' answer sheets. In total, about 80 people were engaged in this kind of work over the years.

## Portable lessons

What might we take away as some portable lessons from this example? The first point to note is the limited nature of the early post-Rana state. People like Pande, who had come of age during the Rana era, had first-hand experience of the state doing very little to improve the lives of Nepali citizens. This experience influenced them to expect little from the state when it came to fulfilling the educational demands of Nepali citizens in the 1950s.

Second, people like Pande interpreted the landscape they found themselves in as one in which individuals could make a difference by proposing ideas that could be approved by the state but implemented independent of it. While there were many lacks in early post-Rana Nepal, there were also many opportunities. In this context, Pande started the NSP and implemented his RBSP mission by patiently working with the state over several years to get its approval while also gathering social support for his mission from influential individuals. Based on a reading of his known writings, we can say that Pande was not a deep thinker about education and its links with democracy. All he cared for was to make the Nepali language the exclusive medium of education so that those without access to English could also pass high school and avail themselves of jobs in the civil service.

The third point to consider is the hard work that went into the planning and execution of the Praveshika Pariksha system under severe resource constraints. Pande realised the whole thing by being frugal and by securing the help of dozens of volunteers who donated their time and knowledge to teach students and administer the annual exams. He also obtained the help of his family members and others for operational support. The nature of this volunteering is related to the kind of optimism that existed in early post-Rana Nepal, where people with knowledge and other resources thought it their duty to contribute to the country's progress.

The fourth point to note is that the Praveshika Pariksha system of the NSP benefited Nepali language speakers by expanding educational opportunities for them but not for other Nepalis for whom Nepali language itself was not very accessible. In this manner, the RBSP contributed to the further entrenchment of the Nepali language in our public life and civil service, making it somewhat more difficult for other language speakers to participate in both domains.

nation was perpetrating in Vietnam. Precisely a year before he was cut down, King excoriated his nation's government as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today".

He was right then, and he would be right today—but that does not penetrate the consciousness of the American political class, which has vociferously been decrying political violence lately while insouciantly ignoring the extent to which the repressive apparatus of the state strives to sustain an appalling status quo at home, while taking various organs help to implement it abroad. Foreign policy is supposedly Biden's strong suit. As far as anyone can see, it entails endless conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the destruction of Palestine.

Biden's record as a borderline segregationist senator beholden to corporate America and the national security state, then as vice president and eventually president, does not add up to much. It's accurate but insufficient to claim that Trump would be much worse. The Clinton and Obama Democratic presidencies paved the way for George W. Bush and Trump. Biden could still bow out to give his possible successor a fighting chance. Divine intervention might be required, given his claim that only the Almighty could persuade him to do the decent thing. But family, friends, allies and donors could help to end what has aptly been described as elder abuse.

The gerontocracy that stretches from the White House to the divided Senate and the rabidly conservative supreme court isn't America's only problem. Chances are that both its global hegemony (Biden claims to 'rule the world') and the viability of the republic founded in 1776 will diminish in November, for better (in the case of the hegemony) or worse.

This verse from an ostensibly apolitical song Paul Simon wrote circa 1968 sadly continues to resonate: 'Sitting on a sofa on a Sunday afternoon/ Going to the candidates' debate/ Laugh about it, shout about it/ When you've got to choose/ Every way you look at it you lose.'

Mahir Ali is an Australia-based journalist. He writes regularly for several Pakistani publications, including Dawn.

— Dawn (Pakistan)/ANN

FOREX	
US Dollar	134.15
Euro	146.64
Pound Sterling	174.15
Swiss Franc	151.70
Australian Dollar	90.30
Canadian Dollar	98.06
Singapore Dollar	100.04
Japanese Yen (10)	8.57
Chinese Yuan	18.48
Saudi Arab Riyal	35.77
Qatari Riyal	36.79
Thai Bhat	3.73
UAE Dhiram	36.52
Malaysian Ringgit	28.74
Korean Won (100)	9.70

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

SHARES					
Nepse (in percent)	2,424.32pts 2.52%				
HIGHEST GAINERS					
NIMB	NFS	AKJCL	ULBSL	TSHL	KBL
10	10	10	10	10	953
MODERATE GAINERS		MODERATE LOSERS		HIGHEST LOSERS	
RNLI	NIBD2082	HEI	LBBL	NIBLSTF	MFLD85
0.16	0.15	0.15	0.11	0.11	0.1
SNLI	TAMOR	SAF	SIGS2	SFMF	CIZB090
-0.19	-0.19	-0.18	-0.11	-0.09	-0.01
KSY	SINDU	GMFIL	NCCD86	SIFC	BHL
-5.76	-4.57	-4.22	-3.93	-3.9	-3.79

BULLION		PRICE PER TOLA
Fine Gold	Rs 149,500	
Silver	Rs 1,860	

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

**BIZLINE**

**Egypt's Suez Canal income falls amid Yemen Huthi attacks**

**CAIRO:** Egypt's Suez Canal on Thursday reported a 23.4-percent drop in revenues attributed to disruptions in Red Sea shipping over the past year, marked by attacks from Yemen's Huthi rebels on Israeli-linked vessels. The canal is a crucial source of foreign currency for Egypt, which is currently grappling with a severe financial crisis. Since November, the Huthis have launched numerous attacks on ships in the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea. The Iran-backed group says the attacks are aimed at vessels with links to Israel in solidarity with Palestinians in the war-torn Gaza Strip. The attacks have forced many major shipping firms to suspend passage through the Red Sea, which usually carries about 10 percent of global trade, and divert their vessels thousands of miles around Africa. The canal recorded "during the financial year 2023-24 the passage of 20,148 ships, generating revenues of \$7.2 billion, compared with 25,911 ships during the financial year 2022-23, with revenues of \$9.4 billion," the Suez Canal Authority said in a statement. (AFP)

**India's Infosys beats profit estimates as client spending rises**

**BENGALURU:** Indian IT giant Infosys raised its annual revenue guidance Thursday after reporting a 7.1 percent on-year rise in net profit for the June quarter, signalling a gradual revival in client spending. Infosys is India's second largest software services exporter and earns more than 80 percent of its revenue from Western markets. The company earned \$761.3 million (63.68 billion rupees) in net profit for the quarter, beating expert estimates, while on-year revenue was up 3.6 percent to \$4.7 billion. Infosys bumped constant-currency revenue guidance for the current financial year to 3-4 percent, up from an earlier forecast of 1-3 percent. "All geographies and most industry groups grew sequentially," chief executive Salil Parekh told reporters. "Volume growth turned positive after several quarters. We had another strong quarter of large deal wins, with 34 large deals at a total contract value of \$4.1 billion." (AFP)

**Trump Organization announces deal to build Dubai tower**

**DUBAI:** The Trump Organization on Thursday announced a deal to partner with a Saudi developer to build a high-rise tower in the UAE business hub of Dubai, its latest project in the oil-rich Gulf. Trump Tower Dubai will target "the Dubai luxury market," real estate developer Dar Global said in a press release, adding that the location and design would be unveiled by the end of the year. The development will include a Trump hotel and branded residential units, said Dar Global, the international subsidiary of Saudi developer Dar Al Arkan. The announcement came a little over two weeks after Dar Global announced a separate deal with the Trump Organization to build a high-rise tower in the Saudi coastal city of Jeddah. (AFP)

# Renowned hotelier Ambica Shrestha passes away

>> Continued from page 1

Shrestha came to Kathmandu from Sikkim, India. She completed high school at St Joseph's Convent, Kalimpong, India. After school, she taught at the convent for about two years before marrying Dwarika Das Shrestha, a successful entrepreneur in Kathmandu, in 1955.

She and her husband developed Dwarika's Village Hotel (now Dwarika's Heritage Hotel), a world-famous, one-of-a-kind heritage property built in traditional Newari style.

She was elected President of the National Heritage Society and is a pioneer in Nepal's hospitality industry.

"She was a legendary and inspiring personality," said Deepak Raj Joshi, former CEO of Nepal Tourism Board.

"I met her for the first time when I joined the tourism sector in 2000. She always used to guide us about quality and environment-friendly tourism, and her love and affection towards preserving cultural heritage is praiseworthy," said Joshi.

Condolence messages began to pour in on social media immediately after the news of her death broke.

Noted economist Bishwambher Pyakuryal wrote on Facebook: "The pioneering Nepalese entrepreneur and president of Dwarika's Hotels and Resorts has passed away, leaving an indelible mark on Nepal's tourism and cultural heritage."

"Shrestha, a true visionary, dedicated her life to preserving the country's rich traditions while elevating its hospitality industry to new heights. Her legacy will continue to inspire generations of entrepreneurs and leaders to follow in her footsteps, ensuring that Nepal's unique charm and hospitality remain a beacon for travellers worldwide."

Hanna Singer-Hamdy, the UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal, wrote on X: "With a heavy heart, I join the mourners of our beloved Ambica



Shrestha was the first Nepali woman to secure bank loans to fund her hotels.

POST FILE PHOTO

Shrestha. What a loss to Nepal. Ambica ji's dedication, kindness, impressive resilience, and energy have left a perpetual mark on all of us. An icon that'll be forever in our hearts. Rest in peace, my dear friend."

"I am deeply saddened to hear that Ambica Shrestha, who I used to call the Iron Lady, one of the leading figures in Nepal's hospitality industry, has passed away. Heartfelt condolences to her daughter, Sangita and the family! A heartfelt tribute to Ambica Shrestha! Leela Mani Paudyal, former chief secretary, wrote on X.

The Hotel Association Nepal, the Pacific Asia Travel Association, Nepal, the Nepal Association of Rafting Agencies, the Nepal Tourism Board, the South Asian Women Development Forum, the Nepal Association of Tour & Travel Agents, the Trekking

Agencies Association of Nepal, the EU in Nepal and hundreds of individuals and associations mourned the loss of Shrestha.

"Nepal has lost a true entrepreneur and rights activist who devoted her time and incredible energy to empower Nepali women over the past decades. We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family," the European Union in Nepal wrote on its Facebook page.

Shrestha was the first Nepali woman to secure bank loans to fund her hotels.

A few years back, Shrestha told this scribe that the disadvantages of men going abroad for jobs have become advantages for women in rural areas. "Women are left to farm. This means that not only household work but also all decisions in the houses are made by women. This has made them

independent and leaders as well."

She believed the empowerment and literacy movements for women launched by I/NGOs and women's groups during the 1990s also helped change the status of women in Nepal. Then, the cooperative movement began directly engaging women with financial access.

"If you have the money, you certainly are powerful. And this change became real and visible in Nepali society. Look at the changes today—women's participation in the policy and decision-making bodies—because their rights are institutionalised or supported by law. However, they have still been unable to cover the private sector extensively. They remain significantly under-represented in the private sector," she had said.

Dwarika's Hotel is in Kathmandu, and the Dwarika's Resort is in Dhulikhel. The Shrestha family runs both. The family runs a premium hotel with the highest tariff rates in Nepal. Ambica was married into the orthodox Newar family of Dwarika Das Shrestha in 1955. In the year 1952, Dwarika Das started the first hotel in Nepal, Hotel Paras at New Road.

Dwarika's Hotel was started in 1972 and registered in 1977. In 1972, during the coronation of King Birendra, royalty booked all the rooms. Since then, Dwarika's has prospered and earned its niche as a pioneer in conserving cultural heritage in Nepal's hospitality industry.

Shrestha came from a well-off family, but she had to face difficulties fitting into household chores as women were not allowed to go outside. "Women were treated as enslaved people. My husband used to support me as he was against such systems. We were even ostracised for revolting against traditional family norms."

Her husband passed away in 1992. She believed that women automatically become confident if they have

the money. "In the past decades, Nepali financial institutions used to view women entrepreneurs as riskier than men. It was tough to get bank loans as women wouldn't have any collateral," she had said.

She said some women wished to be independent by establishing their businesses. For certain women, various socio-economic activities, including micro-credit programmes, changed things. "Now, it has been proved that women are more trustworthy than men when paying back debt."

She also shared the incredible story of how Dwarika's Hotel emerged.

In 1952, Dwarika Das saw carpenters cutting up intricately carved and engraved wooden pillars at the Durbar Square in Basantapur, which was part of an old building that had been demolished to make a modern structure.

He stopped and convinced the carpenters to exchange the damaged pillars for money or new timber. He brought two pillars. After that, he began a quest to protect such wooden heritage and started bringing them to the place where Dwarika's is now located. After a few years, he hired some carvers from Patan to restore these carvings. Eventually, Dwarika's Hotel, a uniquely high-end heritage hotel with a collection of antique art, was founded in 1959.

Initially, it had five rooms, including a cowshed that was later converted into two rooms. The family then ventured into another business, founding the Kathmandu Travels and Tours, the third oldest travel agency in Nepal, around 1973.

Despite all odds, Dwarika's hasn't compromised on the room tariff rates. During the 1980s, Dwarika's used to charge \$80 per night. Today, the tariff starts from \$200 per night. It has been charging \$1,500 per night for a royal suite room. Shrestha is survived by two daughters, five grand-children and five great-grandchildren.

## USAID claims better-than-expected results in sectors of support in Nepal

**POST REPORT**  
KATHMANDU, JULY 18

The US Agency for International Development says its support of the economic sector, particularly in agriculture, has yielded better-than-expected results in Nepal, with output boosted by 139 percent.

USAID on Thursday held an interaction in Kathmandu to explore the depth of the Nepal-US partnership and review the achievements.

Officials said that among the five major sectors USAID supports—including health, education, democracy and governance, economic growth and environment, and resilience—the farmers and small enterprises sector achieved better-than-expected results.

The USAID said \$62 million in sales of agricultural products was recorded in the projects it supported.

The USAID's economic growth activities aim to improve the income-generating potential of the poorest of the poor, expand young people's access to jobs, and increase farmers' incomes and food security.

The economic department of USAID works in the irrigation and agriculture sectors. The department develops and modernises the agricultural sector and also helps the government improve its policy.

The department mainly deals with tourism, agro-processing, and digital services. USAID is focused on paddy, maize, lentils, poultry and goat farming in the agricultural sector. It has supported \$125 million annually in five key sectors in Nepal.

Nepal and the United States are set to sign a new five-year agreement to continue regular US aid to Nepal, which is expected to be \$659 million or around Rs88 billion.

The proposed aid is about \$100 million more than the total disbursement by the US government through USAID over the last five years until mid-July 2021.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF USAID

Nepal and the US are set to sign a new five-year agreement to continue regular aid, which is expected to be \$659 million or around Rs88 billion.

An official working on democracy, rights and governance said that USAID has been spending \$10.20 million in the democracy and governance sector.

"We have been providing direct support to the Election Commission of Nepal to strengthen the organisational capacity and provide electoral education to youth, women and marginalised people," said Bishwas Rana, head of the democracy, rights and governance department of the agency. The USAID also provides technical help for the commission.

In the general election of 2017, the invalid votes under the proportional election category were 14.7 percent. In the general election of 2022, this number declined to 5 percent, which Rana attributed to the support.

The USAID officials said they support strengthening Nepal's organisational capacity at the local level. USAID has been partnering with a fact-checking organisation to minimise the spread of fake news through the media and social media.

The agency claims to be spending \$60 million annually to improve Nepal's healthcare system. It provided \$40 million during the Covid-19 pandemic for vaccines and other healthcare equipment.

USAID spends 15 percent of its annual budget on the environment and resilience sector in Nepal.

The organisation is helping the government finalise 11 different hydropower projects valued at \$2.4 billion that could generate 1,200 MW.

## Ivory Coast tilts economy from farming to natural resources

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
ABIDJAN, JULY 18

The discovery of huge deposits of natural resources including oil, gas and gold in the Ivory Coast is pushing the country's economy in a new direction as it explores its underground potential.

Over the last three years, the West African country—traditionally focused on agriculture, in particular cocoa—has leaned into a new role as an oil and gas producer.

Three discoveries of oil deposits were made in September 2021, July 2022 and February this year, revealing huge reserves estimated at six billion barrels. The discoveries give the country the potential to become a net exporter by the end of the decade.

The first deposit, called "Baleine", is already up and running, operated by Italian company Eni.

It aims to supply 200,000 barrels per day by 2026, and 200 million cubic feet per day of gas.

The minister of mines, oil and energy, Mamadou Sangafowa Coulibaly, said the country could now have the chance of joining the OPEC group of oil-producing countries.

Other discoveries of raw materials are also opening potential new revenue streams. The number of mining permits and projects has tripled since 2012—from nine to 28—while research permits have increased from 120 to nearly 200 over the period.

Sangafowa Coulibaly said the tax revenues generated are already 20 times higher than they were in 2012, at 372 billion CFA francs (\$620 million).

"The western half and the north-east of our country are full of strategic and critical minerals," said the minister.

"The Ivorian economy is diversifying into everything related to raw materials," said Cedrick Sehe, president of CAMP2E, an organisation that promotes mining in the country.

In May, the country's largest gold deposit was discovered in the west, with the potential to be the third-largest mine in West Africa.

Lithium, manganese, nickel and even coltan—a precious ore used to make electronic devices—have also been found in Ivorian soil.

"These minerals are particularly sought after because they are part of energy transition policies," Serge Parfait Dioman, an engineering expert



AFP/RSS

A general view of machines working in Agbaou gold mine, near Divo.

in the oil and energy industries, told AFP. "They are, for example, used for the manufacture of electric cars."

In a sign of its changing role, Ivory Coast will host the SIREXE conference—its first international mining industry exhibition—this November

and December. But some have cautioned that the country could fall into the "raw materials curse", where a focus on extracting an abundance of resources can end up having negative impacts on the economy.

Parfait Dioman countered that "the

more diversified your raw materials are, the less risk you have of falling into this trap".

Experts have also warned about the risk of environmental damage.

Eni has said it plans to make the Baleine field the first "carbon-neutral" operation in Africa, mostly by using less-polluting technologies and by setting up projects to restore forests in the country.

But while this aim is linked to its own operations (Scope 1 and 2) it does not mention the significant amount of indirect emissions linked to its value chain, known as Scope 3.

Eni does however pledge to be carbon-neutral worldwide by 2050, in both direct and indirect emissions (Scopes 1, 2 and 3). Last year, the Institute for Security Studies also noted a risk of increased deforestation through more drilling and mining.

The country has already lost nearly 90 percent of its forest cover in half a century. Fears have also been raised over the toxicity of chemicals used in extraction processes.

In June the Cavally river in the west of the Ivory Coast was polluted by cyanide discharges after an incident in the Ity gold mine.

WORLD

# Israel bombards central Gaza as tanks advance deeper in Rafah

More than nine months into the war, Palestinian fighters led by Hamas are still able to attack Israeli forces on the ground.



The collapsed minaret of Abdullah Azzam mosque leans against a house after the mosque was hit by an Israeli strike, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, in Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, on Wednesday.

REUTERS  
CAIRO/GAZA, JULY 18

Israeli forces bombarded the Gaza Strip's historic refugee camps in the centre of the enclave and struck Gaza City in the north on Thursday, killing at least 21 people, and tanks pushed deeper into Rafah in the south, health officials and residents said.

A barrage of Israeli airstrikes killed 16 in Zawayda town, Bureij and Nuseirat camps and the overcrowded city of Deir-Al-Balah, the last major urban centre in Gaza not to be invaded by Israeli forces, health officials said.

In Gaza City in the north, medics said five Palestinians were killed in two separate strikes.

The Israeli military said in a statement its forces killed two senior Islamic Jihad commanders in two airstrikes in Gaza City, including one whom it said had taken part in the October 7 attack in southern Israel that triggered the Gaza war.

In Rafah, residents said Israeli tanks advanced deeper in the western side of the city and took position on a hilltop there. The Israeli military said forces located several tunnels and killed several gunmen. At Al-Amal Hospital, run by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, Palestinian health officials exhumed at least 12 bodies buried inside the medical facility to rebury them at another location.

Reuters footage showed medical

workers digging up bodies from graves inside the facility, wrapping them in white shrouds before placing them inside vehicles for transfer to a new burial site as some relatives watched, some in tears.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced heated opposition in the Knesset on Wednesday from opposition lawmakers. Areej Hamouda, a mother of one of the dead, clutched some of the sandy earth from the grave of her son and kissed it before medics exhumed the body.

"They (Israel) shot him and he had a loaf of bread with him, which he had to beg for to get for his daughter, they shot him in the eye and the head—it rained on him, he was washed with blood," Hamouda said, weeping. "He

was (lying) there all day long, they weren't able to move him, (then) they pulled him with a rope when they brought him to be buried here."

The fighting has pushed the 60-bed Red Cross field hospital in Rafah to the brink of capacity, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said in a statement on Thursday.

"The repeated mass casualty events resulting from the unrelenting hostilities have stretched to breaking point the response capacity of our hospital—and all health facilities in southern Gaza—to care for those with life-threatening injuries," said William Schomburg, head of the ICRC's sub-delegation in Gaza.

More than a million people had sought shelter in Rafah from fighting further north, but most have scattered again since Israel launched an offensive in and around the city in May to root out brigades of militant group Hamas operating there.

More than nine months into the war, Palestinian fighters led by Hamas are still able to attack Israeli forces on the ground, occasionally firing rocket barrages into Israel.

Islamic Jihad said it fired missiles at two southern Israeli communities on Thursday and the armed wing of Hamas said it fired mortar bombs at Israeli forces in southwest Rafah. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Israel vowed to eradicate Hamas after its militants killed 1,200 people and took more than 250 hostage in the October 7 attack, according to Israeli tallies. More than 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory offensive since then, Gaza health authorities say.

On Tuesday, Israel said it had eliminated half of the leadership of Hamas' military wing and killed or captured about 14,000 fighters since the start of the war. Israel says 326 of its soldiers have been killed in Gaza.

Hamas doesn't release figures of casualties among its ranks and said Israel was exaggerating to portray a "fake victory". Diplomatic efforts by Arab mediators to halt the hostilities, backed by the United States, appear on hold, though all sides say they are open to more talks, including Israel and Hamas.

# Bangladesh death toll rises to 16 in nationwide anti-quota protests

REUTERS  
DHAKA, JULY 18

Thousands of students armed with sticks and rocks clashed with armed police in Dhaka on Thursday as the Bangladesh authorities cut some mobile internet services to quell anti-quota protests that have killed at least 16 people this week.

The nationwide agitation, the biggest since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was re-elected for a fourth time, is fuelled by high unemployment among the youth, with nearly a fifth of the 170 million population out of work or education.

Protesters are demanding the state stop setting aside 30 percent of government jobs for families of those who fought in the 1971 war of independence from Pakistan.

Ten people died in clashes with police on Thursday in Dhaka—the highest toll in a single day so far—including a bus driver whose body was brought to a hospital with a bullet wound to his chest, a rickshaw-puller and three students, officials told Reuters.

Hundreds more were injured as police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to break up protesters who torched

vehicles, police posts and other establishments, witnesses said.

Law Minister Anisul Huq said the government was willing to hold talks with the protesters, but they refused saying "discussions and opening fire do not go hand in hand".

"We cannot trample over dead bodies to hold discussions. Discussions could have taken place earlier," protest co-ordinator Nahid Islam told Reuters. Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who led Bangladesh to independence, has so far rejected the demands of the protesters.

Earlier, police fired tear gas to scatter protesters near a Dhaka university campus and authorities cut some mobile internet services to limit the demonstrations. Police also fired tear gas to disperse stone-throwing students who blocked a highway in the southern port city of Chittagong.

The US Embassy in Dhaka said it would close on Thursday and advised its citizens to avoid demonstrations and large gatherings. The Indian embassy also issued a similar advisory. Authorities had shut all public and private universities indefinitely from Wednesday and sent riot police and the Border Guard paramilitary force to university campuses to keep order.



Anti-quota supporters clash with police and Awami League supporters at the Rampura area in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Thursday.

# Taiwan says committed to strengthening defence after Trump comments

REUTERS  
TAIPEI, JULY 18

Taiwan is committed to boosting its defences and working with the United States, the foreign ministry said on Thursday, days after Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump was quoted as saying Taiwan should pay to be defended.

The United States is Chinese-claimed Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier, despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties, and Washington is bound by law to provide the means for the island's defence.

Taiwan's government has made defence modernisation a priority, including developing its own submarines, and has said many times the island's security rests in its own hands. The budgeted defence spending for this year amounts to 2.5 percent of its gross domestic product, a historic high.

Speaking to reporters in Taipei, Kuoyu Chiao, deputy head of the North America department at Taiwan's foreign ministry, said Taiwan and the United States share the universal values of democracy, freedom, and human rights, and have a mutually beneficial economic relationship.

"Therefore, Taiwan has long enjoyed cross-party and cross-government support in the United States," he said, declining to comment directly on Trump's remarks.

"In the future, we will continue to work together with the United States and like-minded countries to strengthen our national defence capabilities and jointly maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," Chiao added.

# British public were failed by flawed planning for Covid pandemic, public inquiry finds

REUTERS  
LONDON, JULY 18

Britain let down its citizens by leaving the nation ill-prepared for the Covid-19 pandemic because of significantly flawed planning and failures by ministers and scientific experts, a public inquiry concluded in a scathing report on Thursday.

Britain recorded more than 230,000 deaths by December 2023, a similar death rate to the United States and Italy but higher than elsewhere in western Europe, while the nation's finances are still suffering.

Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered an inquiry in May 2021, and its first report was damning, saying had preparation been better, the financial and human cost might have been less.

"I have no hesitation in concluding that the processes, planning and policy of the civil contingency structures across the UK failed the citizens of all

Britain recorded more than 230,000 Covid deaths by December 2023.

four nations," said the inquiry chair, former judge Heather Hallett.

"There were serious errors on the part of the state and serious flaws in our civil emergency systems. This cannot be allowed to happen again."

She said Britain had been "dangerously mistaken" in believing, as others across the world had also thought, that it was one of the best prepared countries globally.

Her report found there had been a "lack of adequate leadership" with "groupthink" clouding expert advice. Ministers had not been given a broad enough range of opinions, and then

had failed to sufficiently challenge what they did receive.

The European Central Bank kept interest rates unchanged as expected on Thursday and it gave no hints about its next move.

A flawed 2011 strategy, which had underpinned the nation's preparations for such an emergency, had prepared for only one type of pandemic—influenza. It was outdated, had focused on dealing with the impact of an outbreak rather than trying to prevent its spread, and had not taken into account the economic and social impact, the report said. That strategy was virtually abandoned on its first encounter with Covid.

"The Secretaries of State for Health ... who adhered to the strategy, the experts and officials who advised them to do so, and the governments of the devolved nations that adopted it, all bear responsibility for failing to have these flaws examined and rectified," the report said.

Hallett made 10 recommendations, saying preparation for a civil emergency should be treated the same way as a threat from a hostile state.

"There must be radical reform. Never again can a disease be allowed to lead to so many deaths and so much suffering," she said in her introduction to the report.

Her inquiry's first module has only examined Britain's preparedness, and later reports will provide assessments of the more politically charged issues of decision-making during the pandemic against a backdrop of widespread accusations of government incompetence.

Johnson himself was forced from office in July 2022, with revelations of parties during Covid lockdowns among the many scandals that ended his premiership. Rishi Sunak, the finance minister during the pandemic who later became prime minister, was also fined for breaking lockdown rules at the time.

# 'It's unbearable': Heatwaves scorch southern and eastern Europe

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS, JULY 18

Unrelenting heat is blanketing swathes of southern and eastern Europe, with dozens of cities on red alert as scorching temperatures fuel wildfires, strain power grids, and make daily life unbearable.

There was no let up on Thursday as the mercury again hovered near or above 40 degrees Celsius in many countries, with worse expected in the coming days.

Europe is no stranger to baking summer spells but climate change is making heatwaves longer, stronger and more frequent, sustaining dangerously high temperatures even at night. Greece, which recorded its earliest-ever heatwave this summer, withered through its 11th-straight day above 40C on Thursday.

Nights in the capital Athens have hit 30C as heat rocks unbroken from one day to the next. On Thursday, authorities closed the Acropolis, the country's most visited attraction, during the hottest hours for a second day in a row. Some outdoor work, like construction and meal delivery, have also been suspended. Cooler weather isn't expected until July 26.

In the heart of Athens, tourists

sought precious shade as Sam Rizek, a waiter, drank chilled water to keep the heat at bay. "It's not easy, it makes my work harder," the 19-year-old told AFP. "Here in Greece, we have to get used to it."

In Italy, zoo keepers gave animals ice blocks to ward off heat stroke as temperatures soared, while 14 cities including Florence, Palermo and Bologna were placed on red alert.

To make matters worse, swarms of locusts thriving in the hot conditions have invaded fields and orchards in the eastern region of Emilia Romagna.

"The high temperatures and the lack of rain have favoured the massive proliferation of one of the insects most feared by farmers," said Italy's main agricultural lobby Coldiretti.

In Hungary, which has been under a maximum heat warning since July 7, searing temperatures have warped an airport runway while the state-run train operator urged passengers to take air-conditioned buses instead of its outdated rail cars.

Croatia and Serbia this week consumed a record amount of electricity as residents switched on air conditioners to beat the heat.

It followed an early start to the Balkans summer in June when a sudden heatwave saw power grids overwhelmed in Albania, Bosnia, south-



A man cools off in a fountain in the centre of Sofia on Thursday, as Bulgaria experiences a heatwave with temperatures reaching 42 degrees Celsius across the country.

ern Croatia and Montenegro. In Romania, gripped by a heatwave since Saturday, evening temperature records have tumbled as blistering daytime highs have carried into long, suffocating nights.

"Without air conditioning it's unbearable," 20-year-old Alexandru Tudor told AFP in Bucharest, which is on its highest state of alert.

"It's very hot in the evening too, and

we can't sleep." Ilan Kelman from University College London said prolonged heatwaves could turn deadly if the human body was not given ample chance to cool off at night. "This is what we need to be worried about. Temperatures are not falling at night," said the professor of disasters and health.

The past 13 months have been the hottest ever recorded, and heatwaves

have already this year hit North America, Mexico, India and Thailand, to name a few.

The EU's climate monitor Copernicus said the average temperature for June across Europe was 1.57C above the 1991-2020 average, making the month the joint-second warmest on record.

But this was largely felt in southern regions and Turkey, with western Europe experiencing a slow start to summer, with near or below average temperatures for June.

Paco Pozo from Cordoba, a southern region of Spain, said the heat so far had been "completely bearable" compared to past years.

"At this time of year, normally, we would be asphyxiated. But so far, we are doing really well," he said.

But this doesn't look set to last. Spain declared its first heatwave of the year on Thursday with temperatures forecast to hit 44C in some southern areas in coming days, accompanied by hot and uncomfortable nights.

A wall of heat from Africa driving up temperatures was also expected to bring sand and dust from the Sahara across Spain, the State Meteorological Agency said.

In all these regions, deadly wildfires have accompanied the tinder-dry conditions.

**काठ लिलाम बित्रीको सूचना**  
यस सावउसको साल तथा असना जातको १३६ थानको १५७२.०८ क्यु. फिट काठ र दाउरा २ चट्टा लिलाम विक्री गर्नुपर्ने भएकोले २१ दिने सूचना प्रकाशित गरिएको छ । यस सम्बन्धी विस्तृत विवरण सा.ब.उ.स. को कार्यालयबाट लिन हुन सूचित गरिन्छ ।  
श्री खरक सावउस हरिहरपुरगढी गा.पा ट सिन्धुली

# Nadal could be bidding adieu at Paris 2024

And even though the idea that Rafael Nadal, 38, could add to his gold medals—in singles at Beijing in 2008, and in doubles with Marc Lopez at Rio de Janeiro in 2016—seems far-fetched, just the sight of him back in Paris will mean a lot to him and his fans.

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
PARIS, JULY 18

All the way back when he first discussed the likelihood that 2024 would be his final season as a professional tennis player, Rafael Nadal made sure to refer to the Paris Olympics as “one of the important competitions I would like to be at.”

If, indeed, this is his last hurrah, and if, indeed, he does make it to the Summer Games a little more than a year after hip surgery—neither of which is an absolute certainty—it would be fitting that the site of the French Open is also the site of this goodbye.

No event, at least in this sport, defines an athlete's legacy the way the clay-court Grand Slam tournament does for Nadal. And the opposite is true, too, which is why there is a statue of the 38-year-old Spaniard at Roland Garros, the site of a record 14 of his 22 major trophies and where the Olympic tennis matches begin on July 27.

## Nadal skipped Wimbledon

Nadal skipped Wimbledon in order to avoid going from clay to grass and back to clay at the Paris Games, where he has been planning to team in doubles with Carlos Alcaraz, the 21-year-old coming off back-to-back major titles at Roland Garros and the All England Club.

And even though the idea that Nadal could add to his gold medals—in singles at Beijing in 2008, and in doubles with Marc Lopez at Rio de Janeiro in 2016—seems far-fetched, just the sight of him back in Paris will mean a lot to him



Nadal has been planning to team in doubles with Carlos Alcaraz at the Paris Olympics.

and his fans.

“My body has been a jungle for two years. You don't know what to expect,” said Nadal, who has been able to play only 16 matches since the start of last year, going 8-8, including a first-round loss at the French Open this May. “I wake up one day and I (felt like I had) a snake biting me. Another day, a tiger.”

## Paris Games will mark Murray's farewell

Another popular, and successful, figure in men's tennis whose body has let him down lately, Andy Murray of Britain, says this Olympics will mark his adieu.

The 37-year-old Murray, a three-time Slam champion, is the only athlete with two singles golds in the sport—from London in 2012 and Rio four years later. After having hip replacement surgery in 2019, and various other injuries more recently, he withdrew from singles at Wimbledon because he needed a procedure to remove a cyst from his spine last month. “It's great that they'll be at the Olympics one last time. Any chance to see those guys on a court again should be celebrated,” US coach Bob Bryan said.

“They're both working through tough times with injuries, but they're showing

that resilience and that will to fight and be on the court.”

## Djokovic, Swiatek and Gauff seek Olympic gold

While Murray and Nadal both own golds, the best of the best in tennis do not always leave an Olympics with the top prizes.

Novak Djokovic of Serbia, for example, will be trying to fill that one gap on his otherwise-impeccable resume, which includes 24 Grand Slam trophies and more weeks at No. 1 in the rankings than anyone.

## Andy Murray of Britain has also said that the Paris Olympics will mark his farewell.

Also eyeing a first gold will be such stars of the sport as Iga Swiatek of Poland, who has won the French Open four of the past five years, and Coco Gauff of the United States, the reigning US Open champion and runner-up to Swiatek at Roland Garros in 2022.

She missed out on the Tokyo Olympics three years ago because she tested positive for COVID-19 right before she was supposed to travel to Japan.

“I've been trying to put myself in the mindset of just enjoying the experiences,” Gauff said, “because you're only going to have your first Olympics once.”

# Spain climb to third in FIFA Rankings, Argentina stay top

REUTERS  
LONDON, JULY 18

Newly crowned European champions Spain rose to third in the latest FIFA rankings published on Thursday, while World Cup winners Argentina held on to the top spot following their Copa America triumph.

The rankings come after a busy month for football, with Argentina beating Colombia to win the Copa America and Spain defeating England to win the European Championship.

England moved up to fourth, leapfrogging Brazil after their underwhelming Copa America campaign.

Venezuela, who reached the Copa America quarter-finals, were the most improved side in the rankings, rising 17 places to 37th, with Euro quarter-finalists Turkey jumping 16 places to 26th.



Chief Executive Officer of Kantipur Television Shishir Pachhai (third left) and Hamro Khelkud Editor Prakash Timilsina (second right) exchange agreement during a function at the Kantipur Media Group's head office in Kathmandu on Thursday. According to the agreement, Kantipur Television and Hamro Khelkud will live broadcast the CAVA Women's Nations League which is scheduled to be held at the National Sports Council's covered hall in Tripureshwar from August 1 to August 7.

# HOROSCOPE

## ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Focus on harnessing your intuition without losing sight of reality and hard facts. Reflect on what your heart desires. Avoid overburdening yourself with too many projects at once, taking a responsible approach toward building this evening.

## TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Unleash your intuition and connection with the universe. Consider what you need to feel emotionally fulfilled. Now is also a good time to seek healing by connecting with family and nurturing the child within. Touch base with your spirituality this evening.

## GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Today's energy may lead to romantic developments, and friendships could show signs of blossoming into something more. Just be mindful to protect your own energy this evening, and be sure to watch out for jealous or obsessive behaviours within yourself and others.

## CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Today, you will feel relaxed as you meditate on what comes next. Your resilience will bring you to new heights of success, so be sure to continue at a sustainable pace. Plan on a relaxed evening from home this evening.

## LEO (July 23-August 22)

You may need to suspend playful notions or fanciful dreams as most good things manifest through hard work. Manage your agenda accordingly, being mindful to make time for health and wellness practices. Just try not to overthink what comes next this evening.

## VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

Take a playful approach to your goals, looking for opportunities to have fun, even when faced with the mundane. Lean into personal change, remembering that while you don't always have control of the outside world, you do have power over your own disposition.

## LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

Today, you may crave secure relationships and time spent at home. Now is also a good time to invest in your network by making introductions or following up with new contacts. Just be sure to pull back this evening and consider planning an easy night in.

## SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

Your wits sharpen, strengthening your ability to both process and communicate advanced ideas. Harness these vibes by relying on the wisdom you've cultivated thus far, but remember to ask questions where gaps in your education remain.

## SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Use today's energy to fully experience your environment, using each sense to identify beauty, grace, and sweetness. Themes around money also come into play, motivating you to work toward abundance, even if the process feels drawn out.

## CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)

Strange dreams could usher in messages from beyond early this morning. Honour your intuition during this time, lending passion and nurturing to the areas of your life that need it most. Try not to let emotional hang-ups from the past create roadblocks on the path ahead.

## AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)

Take note of any realistic dreams that found you early this morning, taking space for quiet contemplation as you prepare for the day. Go where you feel balanced, loved, and supported to make the most of these vibes. Remember to release that which does not serve you.

## PISCES (February 19-March 20)

Use your energy to organise large gatherings, advocate for causes that are important to you, and expand upon your existing network. Professional allies will be particularly important right now, so be sure to align yourself with those on similar career paths.

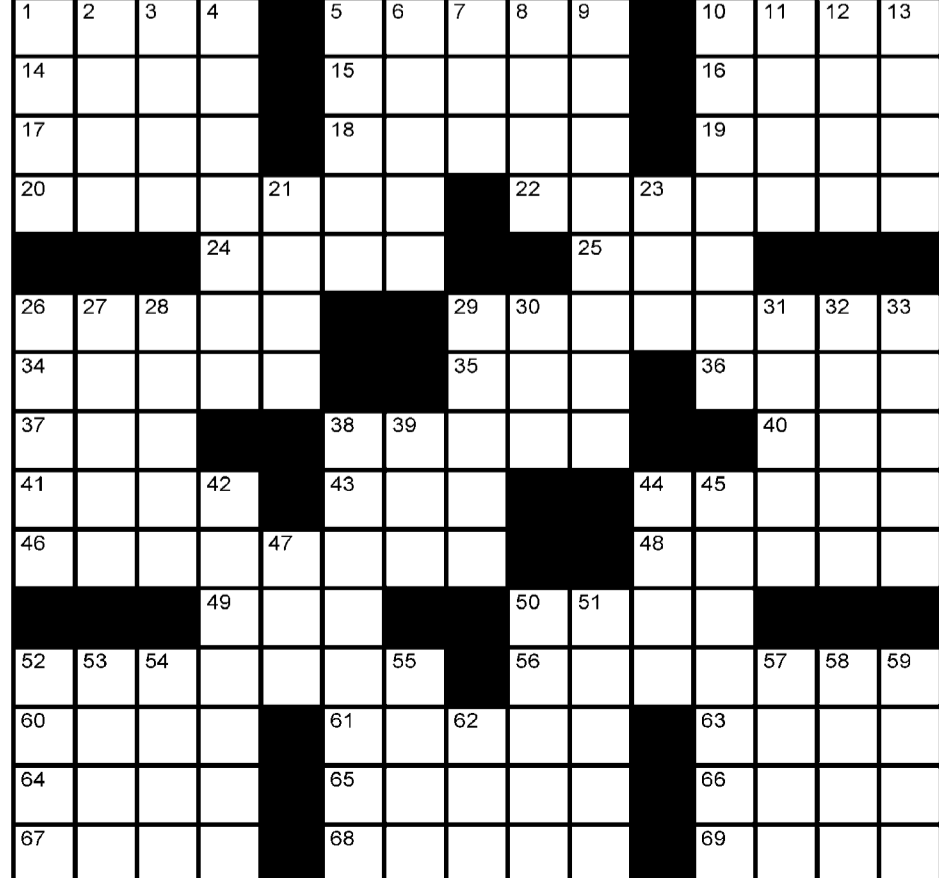
# CROSSWORD

- ACROSS
1 Civil wrong
5 Portion
10 Notoriety
14 "I got — attitude ..."
15 Claw
16 Send forth
17 Former "Tonight Show" host
18 Set up
19 Dasheen
20 Traversed
22 "Everything but the — sink"
24 Unctuous
25 Cheer
26 Mark with a dater
29 Came before
34 Sharpens
35 Did an usher's job
36 Race car driver — Earnhardt
37 Samovar
38 Substantial
40 Thickness measure
41 Let it stand!
43 Part of NATO
44 In progress
46 Star with six points
48 — Fe Trail
49 Cloth for cleaning
50 Homer's "Iliad"
52 Party
56 Event at Cape Canaveral
60 Mata —
61 Artless
63 Graphical — interface
64 Hertz rival
65 Montezuma's empire
66 Wings
67 Interlock
68 Rental contract
69 "The — of the Rings"
DOWN
1 Baby powder
2 Unmatched thing
3 Gambling town
4 Pair
5 Iron alloy
6 Robust
7 Cakes and —
8 Pop music variety
9 Sum total
10 Went for and brought back
11 Eastern nurse
12 Muck
13 Town in Berkshire, England
21 Drinks
23 Tic — -toe
26 "Be quiet!"
27 Rich cake
28 Building extension
29 Sacred song
30 Lab animal
31 "Bourne Identity" Actor Matt —
32 Poet T.S. —
33 Greek letter
38 Limited
39 Timetable abbr.
42 Stain
44 " — I cared!"
45 True
47 — about (wander)
50 Magical creatures
51 Part
52 Counterfeit
53 " — You Never Been Mellow"
54 Eye part
55 Fixed look
57 Norwegian capital
58 " — the Walking Dead"
59 — Flintstone
62 "Isn't — pity?"

## PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



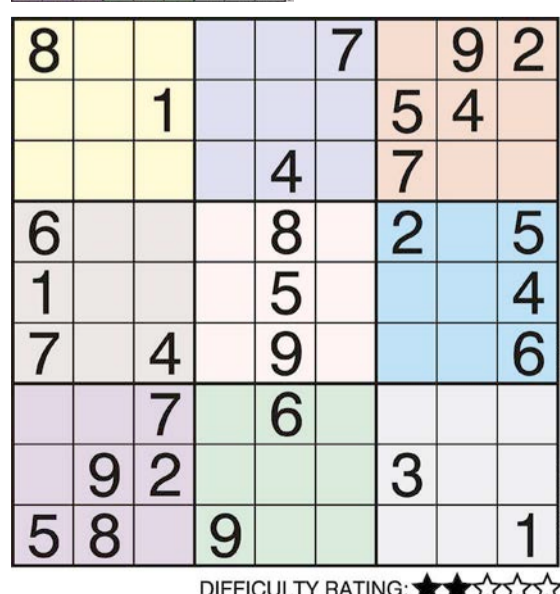
7-8-24 © 2024 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS



# SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

# A comical satire on Nepal's socio-political reality

'Yugko Saancho', an adaptation of Roald Dahl's 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', features five different families, each with their package of antics to be unpacked.



The characters come from different backgrounds, and with their own temperament and nature.

POST PHOTOS

○ RISHIKA DHAKAL  
KATHMANDU

'Yugko Saancho' reflects the turmoil of the many citizens whose lives have been difficult due to dysfunctional government.

The play, written and directed by Tanka Chaulagain, is an adaptation of Roald Dahl's 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. Instead of Willy Wonka and his chocolate factory, we see Moon, an ambitious textile factory owner.

The story features five different families, each with its package of antics to be unpacked.

Unlike in 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', where chocolates are more important, 'Yug ko Saancho' regards clothes as more essential.

Aabha, the passport seller's daughter, is the play's bookend character. With the unabashed spending of her family's money on new clothes, Abha's inclination to spend money transpires from her unending dream of obtaining the 'Yug ko Saancho' coupon.

'Yug ko Saancho', when loosely translated to English 'Key of the Era' coupon, is hidden in different purchasable products. Only five lucky customers to find 'Yugko Saancho' will get an opportunity to visit the infamous 'Moon Industry'.

Moon has created jobs for youths across the country in her industry. Therefore, she is looking for a successor who has the capability to provide tangible and intangible profit to both the industry and the country.

Every little instance in the story has a depth of its own, which symbolises Nepal's contemporary social landscape.

For instance, all five families of the play embark on a horse race to find the sought-after key, which is similar to the trend of Nepalese people racing to fill out the EDV form for the USA.

Upon finding the coupon, five families are invited by Moon to visit her industry which is stationed in Hetauda. The enigmatic Moon promises a special prize for one lucky winner at the end of the visit to her industry.

The play is characterised by its musical setting, where each character gets their individual spotlight to express their current mental state through musical dance.

Each coupon winner is to be accompanied by a guardian. The characters come from different backgrounds, each with their own temperament and nature.

For instance, the father-daughter duo represents the father-daughter dyad of urban-class families. The father, a typical patriarch, belittles the beliefs of the other people while flaunting

his political standing.

His daughter, on the other hand, is a bubbly little girl whose privileges have blessed her with the ability to refrain from rudeness toward others.

Similarly, the mother-son duo symbolises the typical modern-day relationship of a mother with her son and vice versa. The son, with his carefree Gen Z attitude, never fails to make the audience erupt with laughter.

The mother-daughter duo, a typecast depiction of the so-called "social media influencers," depicts the lifestyle of a self-proclaimed trendsetter.

The duo's portrayal in the play is the director's slam to the many who chase after superficial fame.

Likewise, Ankur, the fourth character, is a businessman. He is represented as an innocent young man, yet the nuances of his character are filled by the depth he provides through his enthusiastic approach to learning about the machines of the Moon industry, which irritates other characters.

From my observation, Ankur's eagerness and enthusiasm to learn about machines portray the energetic youths of the country who want to start businesses of their own.

The annoyance and exasperation that he faces from other characters represent the state's failure

to supply youths with the required resources to start their own businesses in the country.

As the play progresses, Moon gives the lucky winners a tour of her factory. The tour features the turn-wise downfall of each character due to their own actions.

Some get eaten by the machine, whereas some get turned into a pumpkin.

The play places a special emphasis on Karma, echoing the fatalistic maxim embraced by Nepali society: fate is determined by one's daily actions.

As a family-friendly play, it has incorporated moral lessons for its young audience. Through the characters' unfortunate fates, the director warns the young audience to be disciplined and cautions them against harbouring excessive ambition.

Analogously, Ankur's fall while examining the machines imparts the moral lesson that it is difficult to get out of an addiction once it has taken hold.



The play is characterised by its musical setting, where each character gets their spotlight.

"Udhog garne kasailai aafaile jalaaunu naparos," when roughly translated to English, states that the businessman may never have to burn themselves alive.

This phrase captures the incident in Nepal where a year ago, an entrepreneur, Prem Prasad Acharya, self-immolated in front of the federal parliament building.

Moon, a leader of a business factory, sets an example that business can be run by women. This can be contrasted with the prevalent paradoxical structure of the government, where the Ministry of Women is headed by a man.

The play's major objective and strength is depicting the grim realities of the nation. It has also attempted to debunk various notions circulating the Nepalese diaspora, such as the perception of politics as merely a "dirty game".

In a similar vein, the characters begin to vent their frustration towards Sharmaji, the father of

the father-daughter duo, pointing out that every party's manifesto contains ambitious and far-fetched promises that do not necessarily cater to the pressing needs of the citizens.

As his fate stands, Sharmaji gets caught up in the industry's machine and is later eaten by termites. The rendering of such scenes is intended to make Sharmaji taste the bitter medicine of his own making.

This particular scene can be compared to the sufferings faced by farmers who fall prey to the exploitation of middlemen (bichauliyas).

In a country where reusing already-worn clothes is a Sisyphean task, the play, with its admixture of lessons, introduces the concept of thrift.

It has tried to deconstruct the shame surrounding wearing thrift clothing.

Similarly, Moon's other objective is to flourish the country's industrial landscape by exporting clothes made in Nepal.

In her unrelenting effort to make her winners understand the importance of wearing locally made clothes, she comes up with the idea; "If Nepali clothes were also worn in schools, how beneficial would that be?"

In hindsight, the play is 'less talking and more doing'. As a

result, the cast is all dressed in clothes made in Nepal, emphasising the fact that one doesn't need to hunt Chanel or Gucci to showcase style and elegance.

In the end, the winner of the special prize is bestowed with the responsibility of running Moon's industry.

Moon's expectations from the winner are woven into the melodious melody sung by the music team.

The lyrics urge people to make the best use of Kirtipur's handicrafts, Lalitpur's statues, and Ilam's tea leaves.

The play concludes with the lesson that stopping mass emigration and encouraging the return of those who have strayed abroad are crucial for the country's development.

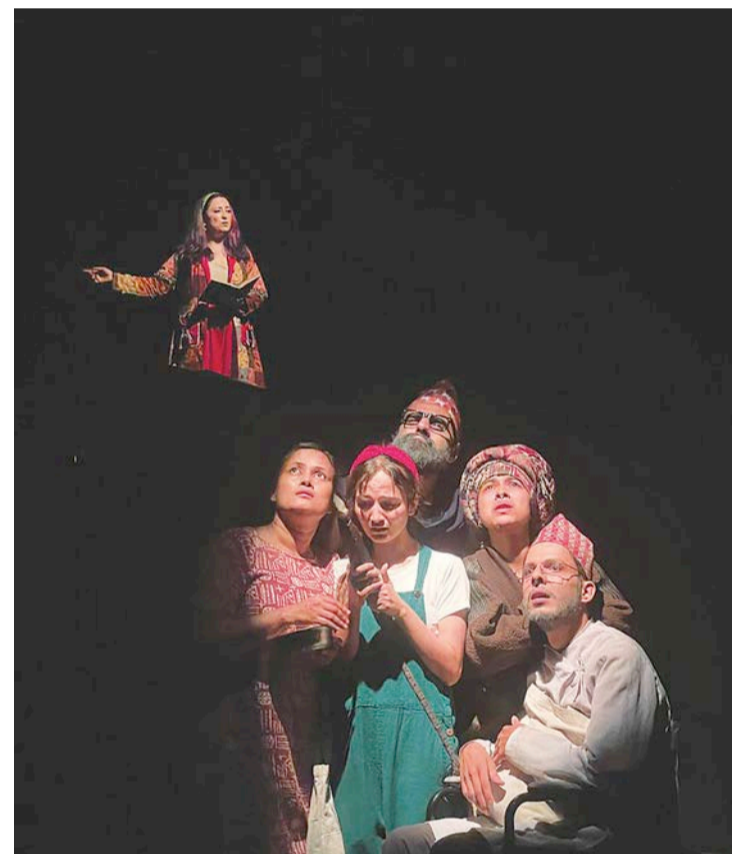
Self-reliance is now the key to the door of the upcoming era.

**YUGKO SAANCHO**

**Director:** Tanka Chaulagain  
**Cast:** Akanchha Karki, Sebita Adhikari, Sheela Niraula, Rara Jyoti Pokhrel

**Duration:** 1 hour 30 minutes  
**Venue:** Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali, Kathmandu

**Showtimes:** Every day at 5:30 pm and an extra 1:00 pm show on Saturday until August 3



The winner of the special prize (Yugko Saancho) is given the responsibility of running Moon's textile industry.

## Nepal into the finals

The Kibo Robot Programming Challenge is being held at the International Space Station.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE NEPALESE SPACE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

○ POST REPORT  
KATHMANDU

Team Nepal has entered the finals of the fifth edition of the Kibo Robot Programming Challenge, held annually at the International Space Station. The team of Nepali youth had won first place in the preliminary round and secured the spot.

The Nepalese Space Research Association organised the competition in Nepal.

Nepali youths participated in the competition by forming a team named PGS group. E Shashankashree Neupane, E Atish Shakya, Sanju Paudel, Gaurav Raut, and Gaman Aryal are participating in the competition.

Youths from eleven countries will participate, including representatives of the United States and Japan. Teams of young people selected by the governments of five other countries in Asia Pacific, including Australia, New

Zealand, and Singapore, will compete in the finals.

The Kibo Robot Programming Challenge is one of the most fierce competitions in the field of outer space. In this competition, a NASA-built automatic robot called Astrobee will have to send commands and codes from NASA's ground station.

The robot will help the astronauts on the ISS in their daily life.

"It is a matter of pride that we will be competing with international teams, and our team is confident that we will be able to achieve the best results," Neupane, the team leader, said.

## Selena Gomez gets her due, and 2 Queen Elizabeths get nominated for Emmys

○ ASSOCIATED PRESS

With fewer overall entries due to the shortened TV season, this year's Emmy nominations probably won't spark any protest campaigns. The folks at FX should be popping bottles, though, for a stand-out year, with 93 nominations—including 25 nods for 'Shogun' and 23 for 'The Bear'.

The nominations bring overdue acknowledgement for critical favourites like FX's 'Reservation Dogs' and 'What We Do in the Shadows' and fresh competition, including 'Shogun' actors Anna Sawai and Hiroyuki Sanada.

Lily Gladstone and Kali Reis became the first female Indigenous actors to be nominated for Emmys—Gladstone for 'Under the Bridge' and Reis for 'True Detective: Night Country'.

'Reservation Dogs' was nominated in the best



comedy series category, for what is its final season. D'Pharaoh Woon-A-Tai of 'Reservation Dogs' will compete for lead actor in a comedy.

The Emmy Awards show will be held September 15 at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles and air on ABC.

Here are other talking points, 'snubs' and surprises from the Emmy nominations:

This year, HBO didn't have 'Succession' or 'The White Lotus' to bolster its Emmy nominations count, giving Netflix and FX an edge. Netflix leads with 107 nominations for programs, including 'Baby Reindeer' and 'Ripley'.

FX comes in second, thanks in part to the continued roar of 'The Bear' and newcomer 'Shogun.' HBO has 91 nominations.

Even without 'Ted Lasso', Apple TV+ also did well with 70 nods, including for 'The Morning Show' and 'Slow Horses.'

Hulu's 'Only Murders in the Building' is a three-hander comedic mystery starring Steve Martin, Martin Short and

Selena Gomez. Until now, Emmy voters have acknowledged only Martin and Short in the Best Actor category.

That changed Wednesday morning, with Gomez receiving a best actress nomination. She will compete against Quinta Brunson, Ayo Edebiri, Maya Rudolph, Jean Smart and Kristin Wiig.

Claire Foy, whose portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II in 'The Crown' earned her a Lead Actress Emmy Award in 2018 and a Guest Actress Emmy in 2021, is now nominated again for a guest spot.

Foy appeared in the final episode of the series as Imelda Staunton's Queen Elizabeth II contemplated abdicating the throne. Olivia Colman, who portrayed the queen in the third and fourth seasons, also appeared in the same episode but was not nominated.

This isn't due to a snub, however, but a technicality where Colman didn't meet the nomination qualifications. She wasn't on camera long enough. Staunton, by the way, is nominated for best actress.

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