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### With Palestinian deal and Ukrainian foreign minister's visit, Beijing shows its rising influence

China is now doing what US and Russia traditionally did.

O HUIZHONG WU & DIDI TANG/AP

consecutive days this week China brokered a deal between rival Palestinian factions and hosted Ukraine's foreign minister at a moment when pressure is mounting on the country to negotiate an end to the grinding war there.

While it's unclear if the agreement between Hamas and Fatah will succeed where others have failed and there is little concrete progress towards peace in Ukraine, China emerged a winner, further cementing its role as a diplomatic force on the global stage, not just an economic powerhouse.

As Beijing and Washington vie for influence around the world, China is increasingly playing a role that had previously been the domain of world powers like the US and Russia. Earlier this month, Western countries called some of China's activities worrying and labelled Beijing a troublemaker. But the events of this week-and the China-brokered deal last year to rees tablish relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia—show that international players are seeking Beijing's help, an acknowledgment that it is a diplomatic force to reckon with.

"China is now offering itself as a broker on the global stage, and countries are responding," said Carla Freeman, a senior expert for China at the United States Institute of Peace.

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Refugee Olympic Team's boat parades along the Seine river in Paris during the opening ceremony of the 2024 Summer Olympics on Friday.

## Three-party taskforce 'near deal' on transitional justice law amendments

Activists, victims decry reduced sentencing citing threats to judicial independence.

**O POST REPORT** 

KATHMANDU, JULY 26

The three-party mechanism formed to iron out differences on the amendment bill to Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act has decided to submit its report to the top leaders of three major political parties—the Nepali Congress, the CPN-UML and

the Maoist Centre—but only after final rounds of consultations with the stakeholders.

A meeting of the mechanism comprising Ramesh Lekhak of the Nepali Congress, Mahesh Bartaula of the CPN-UML, and Janardan Sharma of the Maoist Centre, on Friday claimed that they are very close to an 'agreement in principle'

On Monday, the mechanism will

hold discussions with Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ajay Kumar Chaurasiya, secretary at the ministry, chairperson of the Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee of the lower house, and secretaries of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons.

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# Rate cuts, payment extension as Nepal moves to 'easing'

For the first time, central bank admits the country suffered an 'economic slowdown' in the past two consecutive years.

O SANGAM PRASAIN KATHMANDU, JULY 26

Nepal's private sector has been sailing in troubled waters.

The central bank responded to the problem experienced for the past two fiscal years by easing monetary policy and cutting rates to keep credit flowing. For the first time, the bank has admitted that the country suffered an "economic slowdown" for two con-

The private sector welcomed the monetary policy for the fiscal year 2024–25, unveiled by Nepal Rastra Bank Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari on Friday.

The policy aims to ramp up support for the economy, which has been slowing, said Adhikari. "The policy targets gradual economic recovery by controlling inflation, stabilising interest rates, and ensuring credit demand."

The central bank said monetary policy had transitioned to an "easing, cautious" mode to address the demand of the private sector, which is the driver of economic growth.

With easing measures, the central bank expects a double-digit private sector credit growth, increasing by 12.5 percent year-on-year in 2024-25.

"The monetary policy is favourable for the private sector. It aims at economic recovery through productive use of pri-

vate-sector credit," said Chandra Dhakal, president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the apex private sector body.

The private sector pumped Rs5.27 trillion into the economy in the last fiscal year.

"There was a problem. Money had piled up in banks, and businesses vere not getting it to invest. The poli-

cy has untied the knot." The central bank said the private sector pumped Rs5.27 trillion into the economy in the last fiscal year, which ended on July 15. This accounts for 92 percent of Nepal's economy.

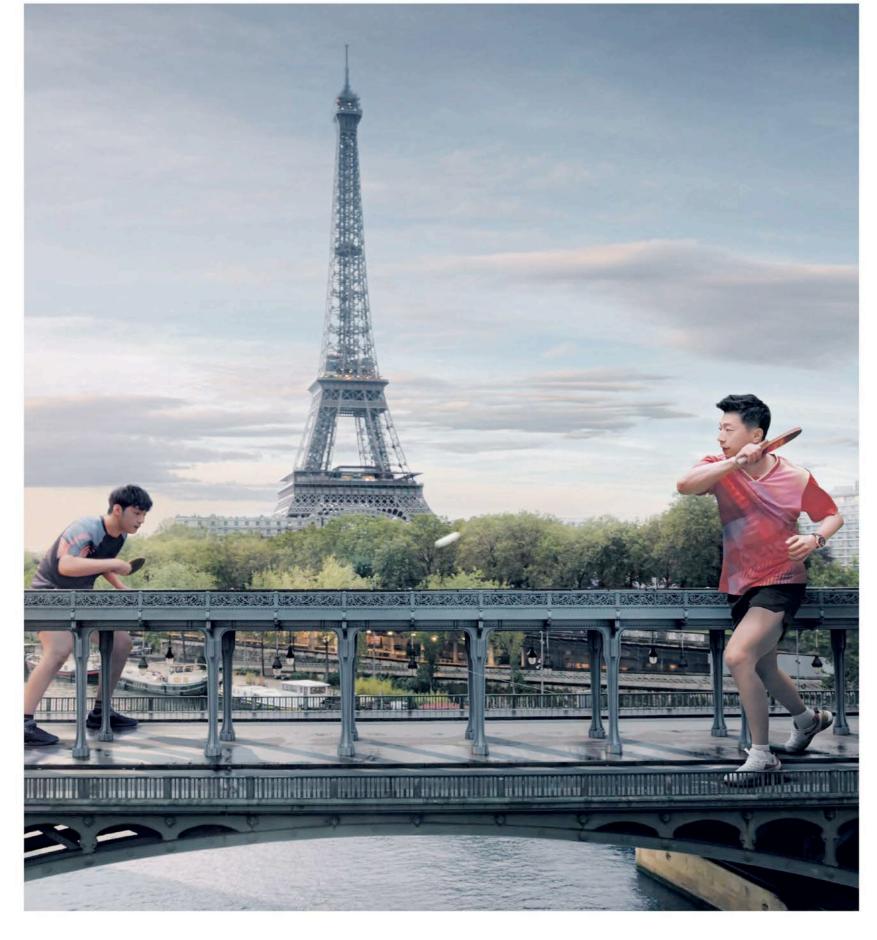
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### **NATIONAL**

#### Kirtipur Mayor Rajkumar Nakarmi dies

BRIEFING



KATHMANDU: Kirtipur Municipality Mayor Rajkumar Nakarmi has passed away. He was 61. Nakarmi breathed his last while undergoing treatment at the Bir Hospital in Kathmandu at 10:30 pm on Thursday, said Deputy Mayor Subha Laxmi Shakya. The mayor had long been battling kidney-related problems. "He had been undergoing dialysis for a long time. His condition had worsened in the past month," said Shakya. Nakarmi's body was kept at the Kirtipur Municipality office premises from 9am to 11am for final tributes. Nakarmi, a Nepali Congress candidate, was elected as the mayor of Kirtipur after winning the May 2022 local polls. He is also the vice president of the party's Kathmandu district committee. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter. With the mayor's death, the Election Commission now needs to hold an election to elect a new mayor for the seat.

### Three dead in separate road accidents in Chitwan



CHITWAN: Three people were killed in two separate road accidents in Chitwan on Friday. According to the Chitwan District Police Office, two truck drivers and a motorcyclist died in the accident. A container truck, en route to Muglin from Narayanghat, collided with an Indian truck at the Bhateri forest in ward 1 of Bharatpur Metropolitan City at around 6:15 am on Friday. Truck drivers Pramod Patel and Hetab Alam, a 24-year-old Indian national from Uttar Pradesh, succumbed to their injuries while undergoing treatment at a hospital, said Deputy Superintendent of Police Shri Ram Bhandari. Twenty-two-year-old Sawan Ahmed, the conductor of the Indian truck, is in critical condition. He is undergoing treatment at the Chitwan Medical College Teaching Hospital in Bharatpur, Bhandari added. Likewise, 50-yearold Chandi Prasad Adhikari was fatally injured after the motorcycle he was riding was hit by another vehicle at Ashok Chowk in ward 8 of Bharatpur Metropolitan City on Thursday midnight. Adhikari died at the Bharatpur-based hospital at around 2am, police said. Search for the absconding culprits is underway, DSF Bhandari added.

### Two girls drown in Dailekh

DAILEKH: Two teenage girls drowned while swimming in a river in Dailekh. According to Police Inspector Dipendra Magarati, information officer at the District Police Office, Dailekh, the girls, aged 14 and 16, drowned while swimming in the river in ward 3 of Mahabu Rural Municipality. The girls had reportedly gone to the area to graze goats, according to the police. Further investigation is underway.

### Eight injured as house collapses in Jajarkot

SURKHET: Eight people were injured when a house collapsed in Jajarkot district on Friday. The house belonging to Padam Adhikari in ward 12 of Chhedagad Municipality collapsed following a heavy rainfall, injuring eight members. According to the District Police Office, Jajarkot, the injured include 35-year-old Padam Adhikari, 10-year-old Dinesh Adhikari, 30-year-old Sarita Adhikari, 14-year-old Nabin Adhikari, 65-year-old Bhirkuli Adhikari, 15-year-old Sujata Adhikari, 16-year-old Sangita Adhikari, and 14-year-old Navaraj Adhikari. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police Purushottam Prasad Pandey, who is also chief of the Jajarkot district police office, the one-storey mud house collapsed due to heavy



POST PHOTO: ANGAD DHAKAL

Municipal workers pictured on Thursday repairing the retention wall along the dhobikhola River in Buddhanagar, Kathmandu, after a bridge subsided due to severe erosion from constant flooding. The river, squeezed by encroachment and flanking roads, floods the surrounding areas during heavy rains. Inset shows the damage caused to the bridge.

# Faecal coliform found in drinking water at cholera-hit Lalitpur drugs rehab centre

After four persons from the rehab tested positive earlier this week. Officials urge proper purification, storage and safe handling of drinking water.

O ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, JULY 26

Drinking water samp

Drinking water samples collected from the "Drugs-Free Society", a Thaiba-based rehab hit by a cholera outbreak, have tested positive for faecal coliform.

Officials at the Health Office Lalitpur, have reported the presence of the deadly microbes in all water samples including those from the water utility and well water.

"Faecal coliform, a deadly microbe, has been detected in all water samples from the cholera-hit rehab,"said Shree Bhadra Sharma, a lab technician at the Health Office Lalitpur. "We have started chlorinating the water to tackle the contamination."

Faecal coliform, a microscopic organism, lives in the intestines of warm-blooded animals or their faeces. The presence of faecal coliform means

that the drinking water being used by locals of Thaiba is contaminated with sewage, according to doctors.

At least four people had tested positive for cholera that spread in the Thaiba-based rehab earlier this week.

Cholera is a highly infectious disease that causes severe diarrhoea and vomiting, which in turn results in dehydration and can lead to death within a few hours if left untreated. The World Health Organisation says cholera is a global threat to public health and an indicator of inequality and a lack of social development.

Health officials said that the Vibrio cholera 01 Ogawa serotype has been confirmed in the stool sample of an infected patient.

Of the four infected patients, one in serious condition was admitted to the intensive care unit of the Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital in Teku, Kathmandu.

Another patient, who was admitted in the same hospital, was discharged on Wednesday, but has not gone home because the rehab has closed and he has nowhere else to go.

Faecal coliform had also been detected in the study carried out on water samples collected from Godawari Municipality before the onset of monsoon.

As monsoon season is an epidemic season, in which most sources of drinking water get contaminated, presence of deadly microbes-E coli, faecal coliform in drinking water is not unusual during the monsoon season, health officials say. Even jar water, which is widely considered safer compared to water from other sources, gets contaminated during the monsoon season.

What concerns them much is the apathy of the responsible agencies in launching awareness drives about the

risks and other preventive measures.

Most local authorities across the country halted testing of drinking water just before the start of monsoon citing budget constraints.

Doctors say this is not the first time that the water used by people in the Valley was found contaminated with potentially deadly microbes. What concerns them more is that water quality has not improved significantly.

"Consumption of water contaminated with human faeces causes diarrheal infections," said Dr Yuba Nidhi Basaula, director at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital. "Whatever the source, one must ensure that water is safe before drinking."

According to Basaula, the number of diarrheal cases has started rising in the hospital, and contaminated water and food are the main culprits. He said there are chances of out-

breaks of diarrheal infections in multiple places where water from contaminated sources is being distributed.

"Around six diarrheal patients seek treatment in our hospital every day," said Basaula. "One must be careful about the quality of food and water before consumption."

Doctors say consumption of contaminated water not only causes diarrheal infections and deadly cholera but also increases the chances of contracting dysentery, typhoid, and hepatitis A and E.

Initiating awareness drives and ensuring safe drinking water are the only ways to save people from waterborne diseases, according to them.

A combination of careful surveys, provision of safe drinking water, good sanitation and hygiene standards, social mobilisation and treatment are required to contain the spread of infection, they say.

# Beijing's diplomatic clout is growing

> Continued from page

"It's a recognition — one much sought after by Beijing — that China has international influence and could play a role in improving the outcomes of a diplomatic process."

On Tuesday, Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah agreed in principle to form a government, the latest attempt at resolving a longstanding rivalry that looms over Gaza's future after the war with Israel. Previous similar declarations have failed, but even just getting the parties together in a room was an achievement, said Jon Alterman, senior vice president and director of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"They say, 'we did what nobody else could do, nobody saw was possible,' and that, by itself, represents a victow" he said

While Beijing did not publicly offer any concrete steps such as timeline for implementation or money for rebuilding, the deal was another sign that China has influence in the Middle East — and even perhaps room to manoeuvre that the US might not have, said Danny Russel, vice president for international security and diplomacy at the Asia Society Policy Institute. Hamas officials have said that they see China as a potential counterweight to the US, which is a staunch ally of their foe, Israel.

"US influence with key Middle East players remains substantial, but there is a new player in the game who is entirely comfortable dealing with Iran and Hamas," Russel said, referring to the 2023 rapprochement between archrivals Iran and Saudi Arabia, widely seen as a breakthrough.

Washington, meanwhile, is grappling with discontent at home over its position on the war in Gaza and its hosting of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week, and even its allies have doubts about US foreign policy commitments as a pres-

idential race draws closer. Beijing, on the other hand, celebrated.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi exuded confidence in a photo with top representatives of Hamas and Fatah on Tuesday. The Chinese state media tabloid Global Times hailed the Palestinian deal as having "transcendent significance."

A day later, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba also posed with Wang, and said China has a role

to play for peace.

The deal will "bring hope and a future to the Palestinian people, and is an important step toward resolving the Palestinian question and achieving peace and stability in the Middle East," said Mao Ning, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, on Wednesday.

Though some experts doubt the deal will succeed, Wang Jin, a Chinese scholar specialising in Israeli studies at Northwest University in the city of Xi'an, said the involvement of a non-Western power could inject "new force" into resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In Washington, Matt Miller, spokesperson at the State Department, declined to comment on the declaration itself but said the US has generally encouraged China to "use their influence with countries in the region—especially countries with whom they have a relationship with where we don't—to discourage any escalation in the conflict."

China has long sought more power on the global stage, and it became more assertive around 2009, after Beijing successfully hosted the Olympics, an event seen as its global debut as a modern nation. It was a stark shift from former leader Deng Xiaoping's characterization of Beijing's foreign policy approach as "keep a low profile."

The more self-assured, and at times brash, approach has only picked up under leader Xi Jinping, who came to power in 2012. Under Xi, China has urged its diplomats to pursue "major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics"—a call for Beijing to reclaim its historic status as a global power.

That has meant signature schemes like the now decade-old Belt and Road Initiative, under which the world's second-largest economy gives loans to developing countries, as well as newer ones like the Global Security Initiative, a call for China to bring its vision to the world's biggest security challenges.

While the Palestinian deal is a symbol of Beijing's new influence in the Middle East, the Ukrainian foreign minister's visit may be tied to the uncertainty the US presidential election could bring for Ukraine, and the recognition that China is one of three major players to engage with, along-

side the US and the EU.

"I am convinced that a just peace in Ukraine is in China's strategic interests, and China's role as a global force for peace is important," Kuleba, the highest-ranking Ukrainian official to visit China since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, said on Wednesday during the trip.

China is one of Russia's biggest allies, and while it insists that it does not provide military aid to Moscow, it has maintained strong trade ties with its neighbour throughout the conflict. That includes technology that ends up in Russia's arms.

But given China's strategic partnership with Russia—and the gradual advance of the Kremlin's forces— Ukraine has carefully courted Beijing, understanding that without its backing any cease-fire deal that benefits Kyiv would likely remain out of reach.

Kuleba's visit was the result of calculation. The foreign minister sought to convince China that deepening ties with Ukraine would not only serve Kyiv's interests, but feed Beijing's ambitions to be a serious player on the global stage.

# Leaders claim they are finalising transitional justice process with focus on victims' interests

>> Continued from page 1

"We are very close to an agreement. The report will be submitted after discussions with stakeholders," said Sharma, adding that the 18-year-long stalemate in the transitional justice process will soon end.

The top leadership of the major parties had on July 1 constituted the three-member committee after the House committee, despite repeated attempts, failed to find a consensus on four key issues in the bill.

After a month-long negotiation, the three-member mechanism has claimed to have found a way forward. It has agreed to classify arbitrary killings as serious violations of human rights, and reduce the sentencing by around 75 percent for those who cooperate in the investigation process.

If Sharma's claim is anything to go by, they aim to address the issue of former Maoist child soldiers by providing compensation while also ensuring reparations and relief for the families of security personnel who lost their lives or were injured during the insurgency.

Members of the mechanism say they are finalising the process with victims' interests at the forefront. However, both human rights activists and conflict victims have strongly objected to the agreement to reduce the punishment for serious violations of human rights by three-fourths. The agreement on reduced sentencing came weeks after the National Human Rights Commission came up with a similar recommendation. It said the jail term of convicts who meet the criteria [perpetrators cooperating in the investigation process], can be reduced to a minimum of 25 percent as per existing laws.

"It seems the National Human Rights Commission is being used by the political leadership," said Suman Adhikari, founding chairperson of the Conflict Victims Common

Similarly, a group of human rights activists organised under the Accountability Watch Group, also has said it is inappropriate to legally bind the judiciary to grant excessive immunity to those guilty of committing serious crimes by mandating reduced sentences. They argue that this undermines judicial independence and the victims' right to effective legal remedy. While not entirely opposed to reduced sentencing, they demand that this specific provision be scrapped.

The members of the mechanism say everyone should move ahead with the aim of settling the national issue.

"We are working with a goal to get the bill endorsed from the ongoing session of Parliament," said Bartaula. The House committee will finalise the bill based on the agreement reached in the three-member panel.

It then needs to be endorsed by both the chambers of the federal parliament.

The amendment bill was registered in the House of Representatives in March last year and sent to the parliamentary committee for finalisation. After over a year of discussions, the parliamentary committee narrowed down the differences to four points.

There had been a broader understanding on two points—to classify arbitrary killings as serious violation of human rights (thus non-amnestiable), and to allow victims, who refuse to reconcile, to seek prosecution. However, other issues remained unaddressed, prompting the major parties to form the three-member panel.

### **Maoist Centre** pulls out of Koshi government



Outgoing Maoist ministers with Chief Minister Karki (left) after resignation.

O POST REPORT BIRATNAGAR, JUL 26

The CPN (Maoist Centre) on Friday pulled out of the Koshi government.

Four ministers, including a state minister, of the party handed over their resignations to Chief Minister Hikmat Kumar Karki of the

The Maoist Centre, however, has not withdrawn its support to the provincial government.

Maoist Centre provincial leader Indra Bahadur Angbo said their support for the government remains unchanged despite quitting the

"We remained in the government at the request of Chief Minister Karki. However, we were compelled to leave the government due to changes in the power dynamics at the centre," he

On May 9, Karki of the CPN-UML was appointed chief minister of Koshi Province as per Article 168 (5) of the

From the Maoist Centre, Ganesh Prasad Uprety was the minister for physical infrastructure; Narayan Bahadur Magar the minister for forests, environment, and tourism; Rajendra Karki the minister of health and Bandana Jhangar the minister of state for forests, environment, and tourism in the government.

### 28 labourers rescued from India

O BINAYA AAJAD

A total of 28 labourers from Siraha and Dhanusha, who had been held hostage in Srinagar, India, for the past five months, have been rescued.

As many as 21 from Siraha and seven from Dhanusha were brought back to Nepal from India on Friday. A team led by Secretary Dinesh Bhattarai of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare rescued them. They have been handed over to human trafficking control committees of respective districts

the Administration Office, Siraha, the individuals had gone to India for employment through agents and had been out of contact with their families

The human trafficking control committees will now hand over the labour ers to their families. An investigation will be conducted into how they went and who sent them for employment, according to Rabindra Kumar Mahat, section officer at the District Administration Office, Siraha.

"We will hand them over to their family members today," Mahat told the Kantipur daily, the Post's sister publication. "Immediately after that, an investigation will begin, and those involved will face the law.

# Families of five plane crash victims receive bodies

Lone survivor of Saurya Airlines crash, Captain Manish Ratna Shakya, has been shifted from ICU to general ward following improvement in his health.

POST REPORT KATHMANDU, JULY 26

Kin of five out of 18 killed in the Saurya Airlines crash have received the bodies of their relatives as of Friday afternoon

Relatives of some of the deceased have refused to receive the bodies demanding that the government and airlines finalise compensation and insurance issues first. The officials had planned to hand over the bodies after their postmortem was complete.

**According to Deputy Superintendent** of Police Amar Thapa Metropolitan Police Maharajgunj, the bodies of Uddhav Puri, Ashwin Niraula, Shyam Bindukar, co-pilot Sushant Katuwal, and Rajaram Acharya have been received by their relatives.

Most of the bodies were identified by Friday afternoon. However, there have been issues in identifying the severely charred bodies, according to doctors

The Forensic Department called in doctors from Patan Hospital, Dhulikhel Hospital, Bhaktapur Hospital and Pokhara to assist with the identification process. A large team of doctors worked to identify the victims as quickly as possible, according to officials. Forensic experts said that establish-

ing the identities of air crash victims is a complex, time-consuming process.



On Friday afternoon, family members on TUTH premises crowd an ambulance carrying one of the bodies from Wednesday's air crash.

Dr Gopal Chaudhary, head of the forensic department at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, said

initiatives are taken to hand over the identified bodies to their relatives. A total of 18 people, including a

crew member, were killed when a Pokhara-bound 9N-AME aircraft of Saurya Airlines crashed immediately after takeoff at the Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu on Wednesday morning.

Saurya Airlines officials have committed that the company would provide as much support as possible to

the victims' kin. "We assure the victims' families that we will provide all possible support and assistance," Saurya Airlines Chairman Dipak Kumar Pokharel

said in a statement on Friday. Meanwhile, Captain Manish Ratna Shakya, who was injured in the crash, has been moved from the intensive care unit (ICU) to a general ward.

Shakya is the lone survivor of Wednesday's crash.

Professor Dr Meena Thapa, director of the Kathmandu Medical College and Teaching Hospital, said that Shakya had been shifted to a general ward following improvement in his Shakya was being treated in the ICU

for observation after receiving initial treatment in the emergency section. The hospital said Captain Shakya's condition is now stable and improving. According to Thapa, Shakya is

being monitored by neurologists and orthopaedic specialists.

"He has injuries to his face, eyes, nose, and head. Additionally, one of his spinal bones and three ribs on the left side are fractured," she said, adding that they were still undecided on whether to perform a surgery on him.

# Sign language chatbot among Singapore innovations to get funding support from new programme

Public transport users from deaf community will get help with directions at Chinatown MRT station from a chatbot that communicates in sign language.

**O THE STRAITS TIMES** 

Public transport users from the deaf community will soon be able to get help with directions at Chinatown MRT station from a chatbot that communicates in sign language.

Singapore start-up FingerDance is deploying Silvia - or Sign Language Virtual Assistant - at a kiosk in the station, in a collaboration with SBS

In response to queries that are typed or spoken, it will provide real-time answers in text and sign language. Queries cannot be made via sign language

Silvia is trained to answer questions most frequently asked by comstop is. It will also translate all MRT announcements into sign language.

"It's just like ChatGPT... if ChatGPT had the capacity for sign language as well," said FingerDance co-founder

FingerDance is one of seven local start-ups that received funding from a new Technology for Sustainable Social Impact (TS2) accelerator programme established by NUS Enterprise and the Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise, which committed \$3.5 million to growing tech-based

The programme provides support for such early- and growth-stage startups that use technology to try to solve community issues in Singapore.

On July 25, the seven start-ups presented their products to industry experts and venture capital firms at the TS2 Demo Day. The programme was open for appli-

cations at the start of 2024 and the start-ups were chosen based on team dynamics, uniqueness of the solution, potential depth and breadth of social impact in Singapore, potential for international scaling, and sustainability of business model. The TS2 accelerator programme

was birthed from a vision to nurture the next generation of social impact entrepreneurs, who leverage technology as the cornerstone for businesses that are both purpose-driven and financially sustainable," said National University of Singapore deputy president Chen Tsuhan.

The programme will nurture 16 start-ups over two years, with the second batch of start-ups to be announced grant funding of up to \$95,000, as well as access to mentors, investors and impact professionals to help scale their businesses and amplify their

The programme will have a structured curriculum and a development plan tailored to the needs of each

Aside from FingerDance, the inaugural batch of start-ups also includes Tech Up Advance, an education solutions provider that aims to help students better understand and develop

an interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Stem). Through mini-games on the

GoTechUp website, students will explore basic concepts of robotics to connect what they learn in classrooms with real life.

Tech Up Advance co-founder and chief financial officer Sulfya Lim said a Primary 5 pupil once asked her why he had to learn about angles when all he wanted was to draw comics. "His simple question exposed a massive

disconnect between what we teach versus what's needed for the future,' she said.

In one mini-game, students are tasked to collect potions and drive a car into a portal. To get the car moving, they have to drag and drop a sequence of instructions that control the speed and tyre direction.

Noting that different schools have their own curricula, Tech Up Advance co-founder and chief executive Ainaa Rosli said that GoTechUp should not PHOTO: NUS ENTERPRISE/THE STRAITS TIMES VIA ANN

replace but, rather, be used to supplement each school's main curriculum. While the start-up currently recommends mini-games based on the school's curriculum, teachers should eventually be comfortable enough to

pick and choose the mini-game to suit

their lesson plans.

"Ultimately, if (students) start having a good fundamental Stem (understanding), they will have a lot more opportunities and options," Ms Ainaa said

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### WORLD

### India, China agree to work urgently to achieve withdrawal of troops on border

ASSOCIATED PRESS

India and China have agreed to work urgently to achieve the withdrawal of tens of thousands of troops stationed along their disputed border in a long-running standoff, India's government said

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, on Thursday on the sidelines of Association of Southeast Asian Nations meetings in Laos, where they stressed the need for an early resolution of outstanding issues along the disputed Line of Actual Control, the long Himalayan border shared by the two Asian giants

The line separates Chinese and Indian-held territories from Ladakh in the west to India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety.

The Line of Actual Control divides the areas of physical control rather than territorial claims.

Ties between the two countries deteriorated in July 2020 after a military clash killed at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese. It turned into a long-running standoff in the rugged mountainous area, where each side has stationed tens of thousands of military personnel backed by artillery, tanks and fighter jets.

Both India and China have withdrawn troops from some areas on the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso, Gogra and Galwan Valley, but continue to maintain extra troops as part of a multitier deployment.

The two foreign ministers "agreed on the need to work with purpose and urgency to achieve complete disengagement at the earliest," according to an Indian statement late Thursday, which added that peace on the border is essential for restoring normalcy in

ties between the two countries.

Jaishankar in his opening remarks said the border issues have "cast a shadow" over India-China ties for the last four years despite considerable efforts by both sides to solve them. "The state of the border will necessarily be reflected on the state of our ties," he said, according to the

Wang stressed that improving China-India ties is beneficial for both countries as well as for other nations, China's official Xinhua News Agency reported. The two sides agreed to work together to maintain peace in border areas and push for progress, it said.

India and China fought a war over their border in 1962. The Line of Actual Control divides the areas of physical control rather than territorial claims. According to India, the de facto border is 3,488 kilometers (2,167 miles) long, but China claims a considerably shorter figure.

Top Indian and Chinese army commanders have held several rounds of talks since the military clash to discuss the disengagement of troops from areas of tension.

# Arsonists attack French high-speed rail system hours before opening ceremonies of the Paris Olympics

Targeting remote locations far from the capital, the apparently coordinated attacks sought to cut off rail routes into the city from all directions.

O ASSOCIATED PRESS

Arsonists attacked France's highspeed rail network early Friday, paralyzing train travel to Paris for some 800,000 people across Europe, including athletes heading to the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games.

Targeting remote locations far from the capital, the apparently coordinated attacks sought to cut off rail routes into the city from all directions. The fires were predominantly set in pipes containing critical signaling cables for the system known as the TGV.

Blazes were reported before dawn near the tracks on three separate lines, causing widespread disruptions. Another arson attempt, in the south in Vergigny, was thwarted by rail agents who scared off several suspects.

French authorities did not publicly comment on who might have carried out the attacks or why; none of them said the sabotage was directly related to the Games. Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said intelligence services were mobilized to find the arsonists, whose attacks he described as "premeditated" and "calculated."

The evidence indicates "a desire to seriously harm" the French people, said the CEO of national railway company SNCF, Jean-Pierre Farandou. "The places were especially chosen to have the most serious impact, since each fire cut off two lines."

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo said the damage would not affect the opening ceremony. There were no reports of injuries. Prosecutors in Paris opened a national investigation, saying the crimes included property damage threatening the nation's "fundamental interests" and could carry prison sentences of up to 20 years.

The troubles came ahead of an opening ceremony in which 7,000 Olympic



Soldiers patrol outside Gare du Nord train station at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in Paris, France, on Friday.

athletes were due to sail down the Seine past iconic Parisian monuments such as Notre-Dame Cathedral, the Louvre Museum and the Musee d'Orsay. "Disturbing such a festival of peace with acts of violence can never be accepted and demands the most determined rejection," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said in Paris. Two out of four trains carrying athletes to Paris on the western line were stopped hours before the opening ceremony, an SNCF official said.

Two German athletes who were on a Paris-bound train for the opening cer-

emony had to turn back in Belgium because of the closures, German news agency dpa reported. Repairs were being made as police conducted forensic tests. "We have to repair cable by cable, so it's very meticulous work," Farandou said.

French Transport Minister Patrice Vergriete said train traffic began to resume in the afternoon.

The attack occurred against a backdrop of global tensions and heightened security measures as the city

prepared for the Games.
French authorities have said they

have foiled several plots to disrupt the Olympics, including arresting a Russian man on suspicion of planning to destabilize the games.

Earlier this week, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said about 1,000 people suspected of possibly meddling on behalf of a foreign power have been blocked from attending the Games. Among those blocked were people suspected of Islamic radicalization or left- or right-wing political extremism, or who had significant criminal records, he said.

Although he has repeatedly pointed

to suspicions of Russia-backed interference, Darmanin added that such threats have also come from other countries that he did not name.

countries that he did not name.

The Paris police prefecture "concentrated its personnel" in train stations after the attack, Paris Police Chief Laurent Nuñez told France Info television. In the capital, 35,000 police officers are being deployed each day for the Olympics, with a peak of 45,000

for the opening ceremony.

Paris has been the target of deadly terror attacks in the past decade, and some French officials saw the Games as a chance for the nation to heal from years of trauma. The disruptions hit Paris' Montparnasse station particularly hard. In the station's crowded hall, Maiwenn Labbé-Sorin said she spent hours stranded on a train before it doubled back to Paris.

"We stayed two hours without water, without toilets, without electricity," she said. "Then we could go out on the track for a bit and then the train returned. Now I'm not sure what's going to happen." Many passengers at the Gare du Nord, one of Europe's busiest train stations, sought answers and solutions on Friday morning

All eyes were on the central message boards as most services to northern France, Belgium and the United Kingdom were delayed.

Germany's national railway operator, Deutsche Bahn, said there also were short-notice cancellations and delays between France and Germany. Prominent French cartoonist Plantu found inspiration in the rail network's quick response. He posted a cartoon on Instagram depicting the first three Olympics gold medals going to SNCF agents. Three agents were sketched on the Olympic podium, holding cables and trains, with dangling gold medallions around their necks.

# Pakistan uses 'terrorism, proxy war' to stay relevant: Modi

O REUTERS
NEW DELHI, JULY 26

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that Pakistan was trying to stay relevant through "ter-

strategy would never succeed.

The nuclear-armed South Asian neighbours have uneasy relations and India has, for decades, accused Pakistan of backing Islamist militants fighting its rule in Kashmir, the Himalayan region both claim in full but rule only in part.

rorism" and "proxy war" but such a

Modi spoke at an event to mark the 25th anniversary of India's short military conflict with Pakistan in the Himalayan region of Kargil. The arch rivals have also fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir.

Modi said Pakistan had been unsuccessful whenever it tried to further its plans but had "not learned anything from its history".

"I want to tell these patrons of terrorism that their unholy plans will never be successful...Our brave (forces) will squash terrorism, the enemy will be given a befitting reply," he said. Pakistan has previously denied



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

such accusations by India, saying it only provides diplomatic and moral support to Kashmiris seeking self-determination in the Muslimmajority region.

In a statement later on Friday, Pakistan's foreign ministry said it stood resolute in its ability and intent to "safeguard its sovereignty against any aggression".

"While Pakistan is ready to counter India's aggressive actions, it remains committed to promoting peace and stability in the region," the foreign ministry said.

# UK drops plans to challenge ICC arrest warrant request against Netanyahu

O ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, JULY 26

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office said Friday that the UK will not interfere with the International Criminal Court's request for an arrest warrant against Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The announcement is reversal of plans announced by former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who was ousted earlier this month when Starmer's Labour Party swept Conservatives from office in a landslide.

"This was a proposal by the previous government which was not submitted before the election, and which I can confirm the government will not be pursuing in line with our long-standing position that this is a matter for the court to decide," a

Starmer spokesperson said.

The court's prosecutor, Karim Khan, accused Netanyahu, Gallant, and three Hamas leaders—Yehya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh—of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel. Netanyahu and other

Israeli leaders condemned the move as disgraceful and antisemitic. US President Joe Biden also criticized the prosecutor and supported Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas—as did Sunak.

ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan sought warrants for Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant in May over Israel's war in Gaza, a symbolic blow that deepened Israel's isolation over the war in Gaza.

Israel is not a member of the court. Even if warrants are issued, Netanyahu and Gallant do not face any immediate risk of prosecution. But the threat of arrest could make it harder for them to travel. The ICC had set a deadline for Friday for the government to file a challenge.

Starmer's decision puts the UK at

odds with America, though his office on Friday described the decision as based in a strong belief in the separation of powers and the rule of law domestically and internationally.

The issue is a tricky one for Starmer and his party. Starmer, a former human rights lawyer, has been under pressure from his party to take a tougher stand on the ongoing crisis in Gaza. London has also been the scene of

huge protests decrying Israel's actions intended to root out Hamas militants and has also reported record levels of antisemitic incidents.

Labour lost support and seats they had been expected to win after Starmer initially refused to call for a cease fire shortly after Israel retaliated for the October 7 attack by Hamas militants.

The party is still recovering from the stain of a scandal involving antisemitism allegations against the leadership of his predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn. Starmer recently restored funding for the United Nations' Palestine relief agency UNRWA, which had been suspended by Sunak's government in January.

He has also said the Palestinian state has an "undeniable right" to be recognized as part of a peace process. Sacha Deshmukh, Amnesty International UK's chief executive applauded Starmer's decision not to challenge the action at the Hague court.

# Cheap Russian drones locate Ukraine's air defences

OREUTERS
LONDON, JULY 26

Russia has begun including new, cheaply-made drones in its long-range attacks on Ukraine, to try to identify air defences, film any damage and act as decoys, a Ukrainian military spy official said.

The two new types of drone, which Russia has used in five drone attacks in the last two to three weeks including an overnight strike on Thursday, are produced from materials like foam plastic and plywood, the official told Reuters.

One type carries a camera and a Ukrainian mobile phone SIM card to send images back to the Russian military.

"They identify where our mobile groups are positioned, where the machine guns are that can destroy them. They're trying ... to get a picture of where all our air defences are located," said Andriy Cherniak, a military

spy agency spokesperson.

The previously unreported details from Cherniak are further evidence of Russia seeking to adapt its tactics and try new technology to gain an edge during its daily missile and drone strikes on Ukrainian cities and infrastructure.

Iranian-designed Shahed attack drones, which fly to their target and detonate on impact, have become a staple of Russian aerial attacks since they began being used in the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion launched in February 2022.

Ukraine, which has been appealing

es to repel increased Russian airstrikes on its power facilities since March, tries hard to conceal the locations of its air defence systems. The new Russian drones with cameras do not carry explosives but

to the West to provide more air defenc-

closely resemble regular Shahed drones and fly with groups of them, Cherniak said.

Iranian-designed
Shahed attack

drones fly to their target and detonate on impact.

The second new type of drone contains no explosive charge or only a small one and is being used as a decoy, Cherniak added.

Because it is virtually indistinguishable from a regular attack drone from the ground, it still needs to be shot down, revealing where Ukraine's air defence systems are located.

He said the new drones probably cost as little as \$10,000 each despite their long range, making them far cheaper to produce than air defence missiles.

The drones can also fly at an altitude of 1,000 meter, putting them out of range of machine guns and automatic rifles, he said.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has



Paths of bullets are seen during a Russian drone strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kherson, Ukraine on Friday.

served as a testing ground for drone warfare technology, with both sides using attack and reconnaissance drones on the battlefield extensively. Kyiv has poured energy into domestic drone production to narrow the gap between its strike capabilities and Moscow's, staging long-range drone attacks on Russian targets including oil refineries.

Russia says its long-range aerial

attacks are used to degrade Ukraine militarily. Ukraine says Russia's attacks have hit civilian buildings and caused serious damage to civilian energy facilities and loss of civilian life.

Russian troops occupy around 18

percent of Ukrainian territory and have been making incremental gains in the east in recent months, putting Kyiv on the back foot along a 1,000-km.

## Typhoon Gaemi displaces nearly 300,000 in eastern China

O AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING, JULY 26

Authorities evacuated nearly 300,000 people and suspended public transport across eastern China on Friday, as Typhoon Gaemi brought torrential rains already responsible for five deaths in nearby Taiwan.

Gaemi was the strongest typhoon to hit Taiwan in eight years when it made landfall on Thursday, flooding parts of the island's second-biggest city.

Typhoon Gaemi exacerbated seasonal rains in the Philippines on its path to Taiwan, triggering flooding and landslides that killed 30 people, according to police figures on Friday.

A tanker carrying 1.4 million litres of oil sank off Manila on Thursday, with authorities racing to offload the cargo and avoid an environmental catastrophe.

It had weakened by the time it made landfall in China's eastern Fujian province shortly before 8:00 pm local time on Thursday, state media said.

China is enduring a summer of extreme weather, with heavy rains across the east and south coming as much of the north has sweltered

much of the north has sweltered under successive heatwaves. The country is by far the world's largest emitter of the greenhouse gases scientists say are driving climate change and making extreme weather more frequent and intense.

Chinese authorities warned Typhoon Gaemi was bringing with it torrential rains that could cause flooding. They have relocated more than 290,000 people in Fujian and shut down public transport, offices, schools and markets in some cities.

In neighbouring Zhejiang province, footage aired by state broadcaster CCTV Friday showed streets turned into rivers, trees strewn over roads and bikes struggling through kneehigh waters.

The province's Wenzhou city—home to nine million people—has issued its highest warning for rainstorms and evacuated nearly 7,000 people, CCTV said.

The typhoon will also bring heavy rainfall to central Jiangxi and Henan, state media said. Guangdong, China's most populous province, on Friday suspended some passenger train services ahead of the typhoon's expected arrival, CCTV said.

Citing the official China Weather Network, the broadcaster said the typhoon was moving northwestward at about 20 kilometres per hour. It will "gradually weaken" as it

makes its way to Jiangxi on Friday late afternoon, it said.

### MONEY

#### **FOREX** 134.27 **US Dollar** 145.76 172.75 Pound Sterling 151.96 Swiss Franc 88.05 Australian Dolla 97.16 Canadian Dollar Singapore Dollar 8.68 Japanese Yen (10) Chinese Yuan Saudi Arab Riyal 35.79 36.82 Qatari Riyal 3.73 Thai Bhat **UAE Dhiram** Malaysian Ringgit 28.83 Korean Won (100) **BULLION** PRICE PER TOLA Fine Gold Rs 144,700

Rs 1,730

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

#### BIZLINE

Silver

#### TSMC leads chipmaker plunge as trade resumes after typhoon pause

TAIPEI: Taiwanese giant TSMC tumbled with several other leading chip makers Friday as traders returned from a typhoon-imposed two-day break to play catch-up with a global tech rout. Equities across the world tumbled after disappointing earnings from "Magnificent Seven" titans Alphabet and Tesla fuelled worries about the tech sector, which has driven a surge in markets and pushed all three main indexes on Wall Street to multiple record highs. The rally, sparked by a frenzy to snap up firms linked to artificial intelligence, has led to speculation that valuations are far too high and a correction could be round the corner if reports from other heavyweights such as Apple and Amazon also fall short. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company controls more than half the world's output of silicon wafers—considered the lifeblood of the global economy-that are used to power anything from smartphones and cars to missile launch

#### OpenAI to challenge Google with new search functionality

pads and stock markets. (AFP)

SAN FRANCISCO: OpenAI on Thursday said it was putting its artificial intelligence engine to work in a challenge to Google's market-dominating search engine. The startup behind ChatGPT announced that it is testing a "SearchGPT" prototype that is "designed to combine the strength of the web" to answer online queries quickly and to provide relevant source es. SearchGPT is being made available to a small group of users and publishers to get feedback, OpenAI said in a blog post. Search features refined in the prototype will be woven into ChatGPT in the future, according to the San Francisco-based company. Users will be able to interact with SearchGPT through conversational queries, and can ask follow-up questions as they might if speaking to a person, OpenAI said. Google recently added AI-generated query result summaries-referred to as "Overviews"to its search engine, causing worries among some that the move would result in fewer opportunities to serve up money-making ads. (AFP)

# NRB expects 12.5 percent private sector credit growth

The growth of the construction sector also stalled in the period. In the last fiscal year, the sector, with a contribution of 5.41 percent to the economy, is projected to have dropped to 2.07 percent.

To address the sector's grievances, the monetary policy has extended the interest payment deadline for contractors to November.

"It's welcoming, though it is late," said Rabi Singh, president of the Federation of Contractors' Associations of Nepal. "But this is just a temporary arrangement.

"We had recommended the government for recapitalisation of the loans and interest for 2 to 5 years to stabilise the construction industry's capital structure," he said.

The government defaulted on payment for contractors, forcing hundreds of projects to halt and eventually cause the construction sector, one of the key economic indicators, to enter a recession. "Still, we need the assurance of

enough cash flow for the development of the critical infrastructure, which is also the basis for jobs creation.

Singh said the construction sector has been working on projects amounting to Rs600 billion. The central bank said the measures

to cut interest rates are intended to enhance market liquidity and support economic activity in a low-inflation The upper ceiling interest rate cor-

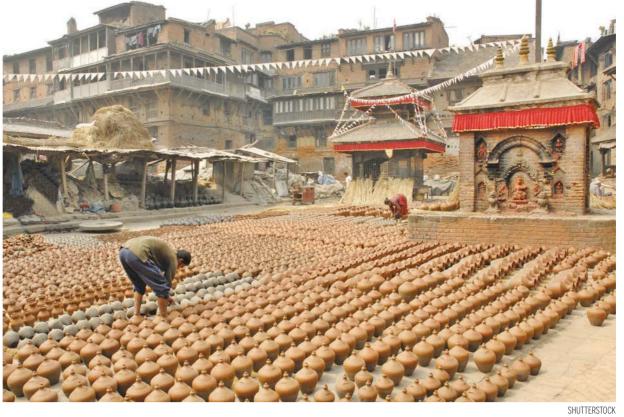
ridor has been decreased by 0.5 percentage points to 6.5 percent, and the policy rate has been reduced by 0.5 percent, to 5 percent. According to market analysts, if

banks' interest rates are low, people generally tend to invest. This will allow liquidity injections in the market without it being absorbed by the banks and the central bank. The monetary policy stated that the high liquidity in the banking system

uals and ease the difficulties of the private sector. The central bank said mobilising the banks' liquidity through the private sector would support the federal government's ambitious economic

would support businesses and individ-

"This monetary policy will help us



The pottery square in Bhaktapur in this file photo. The monetary policy stated that the high liquidity in the banking system would support businesses and individuals and ease the difficulties the private sector faces.

reach the 6 percent economic growth targeted by the federal government by keeping inflation at around 5 percent, said Governor Adhikari. He said the central bank would manage liquidity and inject capital into the productive sector to achieve the target growth.

According to the annual account estimates by the National Statistics Office, Nepal's economic growth was estimated at 3.87 percent in the last fiscal year, in an optimistic scenario.

The World Bank said in its April Nepal Development Update that economic growth is projected to accelerate to 4.6 percent in the current fiscal year, a way below the govern-

"This recovery is largely attributed to the easing of monetary policy, assuming the productive use of private-sector credit," the multilateral funding agency said. "Private sector

credit contracted in the last fiscal year due to the tighter regulation on working capital loans, high lending rates, and weak domestic demand.'

"The reforms to improve the business environment could attract more private investment," according to the World Bank. On Friday, the central bank announced it would review the

current working capital loans guideline. Banks and financial institutions offer short-term working capital loans to finance a company's everyday At present, industrialists and busi-

nesspeople get working capital loans of up to 25 percent of their annual

For those taking more working capital loans than the set threshold, the deadline for borrowers to repay the excess credit has been extended to mid-July 2025. The central bank said it aims to maintain seven months of forex reserves to cover goods and services imports in the ongoing fiscal year 2024-25.

The central bank said it would coordinate with the government to formulate necessary laws to regulate and supervise savings and credit cooperatives

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has flagged a risk to Nepal's economy that could trigger social unrest if the ongoing cooperatives problems are not sorted out.

It said that several cooperatives have collapsed in the past six months, causing a loss or freezing of client savings and creating small-scale social unrest. The IMF warned that problems in the savings and cooperatives sector are expanding.

The leading cause of the failure is

forming cooperatives' assets, which impact repayment capacity, combined with some cases of fraud.

The monetary policy said it would facilitate the government's initiative to return Rs500,000 to each coopera-

tives depositor by recovering them from the directors' properties. With a growing number of companies being blacklisted, the central bank said it had worked out a policy for the companies that are associated with the blacklisted companies but

have not committed any offence. Under the policy, if one firm is blacklisted in a joint venture, it will not be mandatory to keep the other in the bad book if it has committed no offence.

cent or more shares in any other firm, personally or institutionally, the director and executive head of such a firm or company can also be blacklisted. The central bank said it would provide collateral-free loans to migrant

At present, if a person or organisa-

tion that is blacklisted owns 15 per-

workers based on the assurance that remittances would be sent to the bank accounts in their home country. The NRB has extended the deadline

for loan repayment to microfinance customers who failed to pay loans under various circumstances. Monetary policy has increased the

limit on home loans. The bank said that the limit on home loans taken for the first time would be increased to Rs25 million from Rs20 million. It has increased the foreign exchange limit for Demand Draft/

Telex Transfer facilities when importing goods to \$50,000 from the existing \$35,000. The existing limit for importing goods through 'document against pay-

ment' and 'document against acceptance' has been increased from \$60,000 to \$100,000. The monetary policy has removed

the limit on share mortgage loans for institutions, which is currently Rs200 million. However, no new provision has been

made on personal or individual loan limits. Currently, the share mortgage loan limit for individuals is Rs150 million, and individual share investors have been demanding an increase in

### Plan to tax super-rich divides at G20 meet in Rio

O AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Brazil's vision for a global deal to tax the ultra-rich sparked divisions Thursday at a meeting of G20 finance ministers in Rio de Janeiro, where Washington dismissed the need for an international accord on the matter.

The initiative, discussed at an afternoon meeting, is a key priority for Brazil's leftist president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who this year heads the G20 grouping of the world's major the African Union. Even before talks began, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen dampened the mood by saying there was no need for a global agreement on taxing billionaires.

"Tax policy is very difficult to coordinate globally," she told journalists. "We think that all countries should make sure that their taxation systems are fair and progressive." However, those backing the plan saw having it on the agenda as a key first step.

After the meeting, Brazil's Economy Minister Fernando Haddad expressed his confidence in the initiative, and said a final "declaration" to be published Friday would mark a "first step." This communique will take up the "Brazilian proposal to start looking at international taxation, not only from the point of view of companies but also from the point of view of individuals called the super-rich.' According to a draft of the declara-

tion seen by AFP, G20 members would "seek to engage cooperatively to ensure that ultra-high-net-worth individuals are effectively taxed.' "Wealth and income inequalities

are undermining economic growth and social cohesion and aggravating social vulnerabilities," read the text of the draft.

It added that international cooperaprogressive tax policies" without mentioning any taxes negotiated at the international level.

One participant at the meeting, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP: "There is no consensus today to create a global tax on the capital of multimillionaires." "The idea is to have the theme on the agenda and the first steps discussed.'

Brazil's search for a global agreement on taxing the richest of the rich is backed by France, Spain, South Africa, Colombia and the African Union. "Some individuals control more resources than entire countries," Lula said Wednesday at the launch of an initiative to fight world hunger, another project topping his

# Countries finalise 'groundbreaking' digital trade deal talks

O AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE **GENEVA. JULY 26** 

Dozens of countries have finalised years of negotiations towards a 'groundbreaking" agreement drawing up global digital trade rules, Britain said on Friday.

Protections for online consumers, digitalisation of customs procedures and recognition of electronic signatures figure among the measures laid iea at promoting facilitating digital transactions.

Once in place, the deal "will make trade faster, cheaper, fairer and more secure", Britain said in a statement.

Digital commerce is growing far faster than its traditional counterpart.

The OECD group of economically developed nations says it estimated that in 2020, e-commerce already made up a quarter of global trade, making it worth just under \$5 trillion. Despite its growing importance, "no

common set of global rules exist", British Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said in the statement

Finalising the negotiations "is a huge step forward in correcting that and ensuring British businesses feel the benefit", he said.

The talks were launched in 2019, with the negotiating countries representing 90 percent of the WTO membership, including heavy-hitters like the United States, the European Union

The final text is to be presented Friday during a closed-door meeting at the WTO headquarters in Geneva.

**Digital commerce** is growing far faster than its traditional counterpart.

It remained unclear if all the negotiating countries had signed onto the final agreement and how long it would take to implement.

"From our perspective, the text is still a work in progress," US ambassador and Deputy Representative Maria Pagan told reporters Thursday. "We have a variety of issues that from our perspective are still outstanding," she said, pointing for instance to exceptions around privacy and security.

Australia, Japan and Singapore, which have been leading the talks, have said the aim is to facilitate electronic transactions, promote digital trade and foster an open and trusted digital economy. 'This would be the first-ever set of

baseline digital trade rules, Singapore's ambassador to the WTO Hung Seng Tan said in April. "It would contribute to the growing

e-commerce in our countries by viding greater legal and certainty, against the backdrop of increasing regulatory fragmenta-In Friday's statement, UK Science

Secretary Peter Kyle said the agreement aimed "to help people use technology safely by protecting them from fraud, while driving economic growth through the digitalisation of trade so it's faster and more secure'

The agreement also includes a component providing preferential treatment to developing countries.

The British statement said the deal could swell the UK's gross domestic product by up to 24.2 billion pounds (\$31.2 billion), compared to its 2023 GDP. "Even partial adoption could represent a significant boost to UK GDP," it said.

## Greece's Instagram island' Santorini nears saturation point

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE **GREECE, JULY 26** 

One of the most enduring images of Greece's summer travel brand is the world-famous sunset on Santorini Island, framed by sea-blue church domes on a jagged cliff high above a volcanic caldera.

This scene has inspired millions of fridge magnets, posters, and souvenirs—and now the queue to reach the viewing spot in the clifftop village of Oia can take more than 20 minutes.

Santorini is a key stopover of the Greek cruise experience. But with parts of the island nearing saturation, officials are considering restrictions.

Of the record 32.7 million people who visited Greece last year, around 3.4 million, or one in 10, went to the island of just 15,500 residents.

"We need to set limits if we don't want to sink under overtourism, Santorini mayor Nikos Zorzos told AFP. "There must not be a single extra bed... whether in the large hotels or Airbnb rentals.'

As the sun set behind the horizon in Oia, thousands raised their phones to the sky to capture the moment, followed by scattered applause. For canny entrepreneurs, the Cycladic island's famous sunset can be a cash cow.



Tourists wait for the sunset in the village of Oia on the Greek island of Santorini on July 20.

One company advertised more than 50 "flying dresses", which have long flowing trains, for up to 370 euros (\$401), on posters around Oia for any-

one who wishes to "feel like a Greek goddess" or spruce up selfies. But elsewhere in Oia's narrow

streets, residents have put up signs

urging visitors to respect their home. "RESPECT... It's your holiday... but it's our home," read a purple sign from the Save Oia group. Shaped by a volcanic eruption 3,600 years ago, Santorini's landscape is "unique", the mayor said, and "should not be harmed by new infrastructure'

Around a fifth of the island is currently occupied by buildings. At the edge of the cliff, a myriad of swimming pools and jacuzzis highlight Santorini is also a pricey destination.

In 2023, 800 cruise ships brought some 1.3 million passengers, according to the Hellenic Ports Association.

Cruise ships "do a lot of harm to the island", said Chantal Metakides, a Belgian resident of Santorini for 26 years. "When there are eight or nine ships pumping out smoke, you can see the layer of pollution in the caldera,"

In June, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis floated the possibility of capping cruise ship arrivals to Greece's most popular islands.

'I think we'll do it next year," he told Bloomberg, noting that Santorini and tourist magnet Mykonos "are clearly suffering".

"There are people spending a lot of money to be on Santorini and they don't want the island to be swamped, said the pro-business conservative leader, who was re-elected to a second four-year term last year.

In an AFP interview, Tourism

Minister Olga Kefalogianni echoed this sentiment and said: "We must set quotas because it's impossible for an island such as Santorini... to have five cruise ships arriving at the same time." Local officials have set a limit of 8,000 cruise boat passengers per day from next year. But not all local operators agree

Antonis Pagonis, head of Santorini's hoteliers association, believes better visitor flow management is part of the "It is not possible to have (on) a

Monday, for example, 20 to 25,000 guests from the cruise ships, and the next day zero," he said. Pagonis also argued that most of the congestion only affects parts of

the island like the capital, Fira. In the south of the island, the volcanic sand beaches are less crowded, even though it is high season in July. The modern tourism industry has

also changed visitor behaviour. "I listened (to) people making a FaceTime call with the family, saying 'I'm in Turkey'," smiled tourist guide

"They think that the church over there is a mosque because yesterday they were in Turkey." The veteran guide said the average tourist coming

to the island has changed.

Kostas Sakavaras.

### SPORTS | MEDLEY

### Anti-doping leaders accept some cheating is inevitable at Paris 2024

O ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS, JULY 26

The days are over when Olympic organisers and anti-doping officials would typically predict "the cleanest Games ever." Not at the Paris

"It's not our role to do it," World Anti-Doping Agency President Witold Banka said Thursday.

"It's not that now we want to assure that every single athlete is clean. We do not," Banka said at the agency's pre-Games news conference. "It's obvious that you will never eliminate doping from the sporting

'You will always find someone who wants to cheat."

The lesson of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2012 London Games is that it can take years to judge how clean or dirty it was.

Dozens of medals were stripped and athletes disqualified years after those competitions, in large part because more advanced testing could be used The samples taken in Paris will be

stored and can be retested until 2034 in a programme run by the International Testing Agency, the operational wing of the global anti-doping system based in the Olympic home city of Lausanne, Switzerland.

"Our role is to oversee the system," said of Montreal-based WADA, "to make sure the system is robust, to make sure that we are using all the existing tools to test athletes

"And not to tell you that the Games are going to be totally clean and you will not have even one single positive test," said the 39-year-old former 400metre runner from Poland.

WADA took one track and field athlete out of the Paris Olympics on Thursday, after winning an appeal hearing at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne.

CAS judges imposed a two-year ban on Romanian long jumper Florentina Iusco, who had tested positive last year for a banned diuretic, furosemide. WADA used its right to challenge doping verdicts worldwide after a Romanian tribunal decided she was not at fault and issued only a reprimand.

Banka said Thursday the programme overseen by the ITA took 87,000 samples from potential Olympic athletes in March to June. The bestin-class operator is likely track and field's Athletics Integrity Unit.

"Our focus has been that the Olympics and Paralympic Games are protected," Banka said, "and the athletes are afforded a level playing field that they deserve.'

Not all athletes have full confidence in that goal.

United States, Spain win women's Olympic football openers

The record four-time gold medallists beat Zambia 3-0. World Cup holders top Japan 2-1.



Spain's Aitana Bonmati celebrates after scoring a goal against Japan during the 2024 Paris Olympics women's football Group C match at the La Beaujoire Stadium at the in Nantes, France on Thursday.

**○** AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS, JULY 26

Reigning Ballon d'Or Aitana Bonmati scored one goal and helped create another as World Cup holders Spain beat Japan 2-1 in their first game of the women's Olympic football tournament on Thursday, while record fourtime gold medallists the United States beat Zambia 3-0.

Spain are making their Olympic women's football debut at the Paris Games but are leading contenders to win gold after their World Cup triumph in Australia and New Zealand

They fell behind against Japan in Group C in the western French city of Nantes to Aoba Fujino's superb early free-kick, but Bonmati soon equalised as she rounded the goalkeeper to score midway through the first half.

Spain then grabbed the winner in the 74th minute when Mariona Caldentey exchanged passes with Bonmati before firing in.

With 12 teams split into three groups of four, there is margin for error as the two best third-placed sides will advance to the quarter-finals.

That will provide some comfort for Japan, silver medallists at London 2012.

A strong Spain starting XI featured seven players who were in the line-up for last year's World Cup final win

over England in Sydney, plus Alexia Putellas, the two-time former Ballon d'Or winner.

In the same section, two-time silver medallists Brazil beat Nigeria 1-0 in Bordeaux. Former world player of the year Marta, in her sixth Olympics at the age of 38, had an effort disallowed for offside before setting up Gabi Nunes for the only goal late in the first half.

The US have come to the Games with a young squad but with high hopes of success under new coach Emma Hayes.

They were comfortable winners against Zambia in Nice but should have triumphed by a greater margin after netting three times in the first half against opponents who had a player sent off before the break. Trinity Rodman and Mallory

Swanson both hit the woodwork before Rodman—daughter of former NBA superstar Dennis Rodman-scored on 17 minutes with a lovely turn and finish in the box. Swanson made it 2-0 on 24 minutes

when she controlled Lindsey Horan's pass and finished, and she netted again just a minute later, this time rounding the goalkeeper to slot in.

Zambia's Pauline Zulu was left in tears as she was sent off following a VAR review shortly before the break for a foul on Sophia Smith. However, the US could not add any more goals with the extra player.

Also in Group B, 2016 gold medallists Germany outclassed Australia, winning 3-0 in Marseille with Marina Hegering and Lea Schueller both scoring headers before Jule Brand wrapped up the victory.

The US and Germany meet each other in Marseille on Sunday.

France survived a wobble to beat Colombia 3-2 in Lyon, where there were plenty of empty seats to greet the host nation.

Marie-Antoinette Katoto scored twice in the first half either side of a Kenza Dali strike as France appeared to be cruising. However, Catalina Usme pulled

one back from a penalty early in the second half and substitute Manuela Pavi further reduced the deficit before a red card for Mayra Ramirez ended Colombian hopes of snatching a point. In the same Group A, reigning

Olympic champions Canada claimed a 2-1 win over New Zealand in Saint-Etienne. Mackenzie Barry gave New Zealand

the lead before a sparse crowd at the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard.

Arsenal's Cloe Lacasse levelled in first-half stoppage time for Canada, who beat Sweden on penalties in the final in Tokyo three years ago. Evelyne Viens then fired in the winner 11 minutes from time

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

solve problems you encounter

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

# Judoka Shrestha Pradhan to meet Serbian Perisic at Paris 2024

She is competing in the women's 57 kg weight category in the Olympic jodo competition.

O SPORTS BUREAU KATHMANDU, IULY 26

Nepal's judo player Manita Shrestha Pradhan will face Marica Perisic of Serbia in the women's 57 kg weight category Elimination Round of 32 at the Paris Olympics on Monday.

Shrestha Pradhan has been drawn in Pool A in the women's judo competition which will be held at the Grand Palais Ephemere in Paris. If Shrestha Pradhan beats the

Serbian, she will meet the winners between Mariama Koroma of Sierra Leone and Lien Chen-ling of Chinese Taipei in the round of 16. Shrestha Pradhan secured her

place at the Olympics through continental quota based on Olympic point Nepal has sent seven athletes to

Paris 2024.

Table tennis player Santoo Shrestha and badminton's Prince Dahal are in action on Saturday.

Nepal is making its debut in both badminton and table tennis in Paris. Santoo, who is the only third Nepali player to qualify for the Olympics via qualification tournament after taek-

wondo's Sangina Baidya (Athens 2004)

and Deepak Bista (Beijing 2008), will

face Diaw Ibrahima of Senegal in the men's singles preliminary round. Santoo will progress to the round of 16 if he beats Ibrahima.

Dahal, who entered the Paris 2024 on universality spot, will meet world number two Viktor Axelsen of Denmark in his opening game of the Group P, which also includes Ireland's Nhat Nguyen and Israel's Misha Zilberman.



Manita Shrestha Pradhan

A total of 41 players (from 36 countries)-split into 13 groups of three or four-are competing in the men's singles badminton. The group winners will advance to the knockout stage. Each game of the round-robin tournament will be played in a bestof-three format.

Shooter Sushmita Nepal is competing in the women's 10 m air rifle, which will be held on Sunday.

Swimmers Duana Lama and Alexander Shah will compete in women's 200 m freestyle and men's 100

m freestyle events, respectively. The Heats of the swimming take place on Tuesday.

Long-distance runner Santoshi Shrestha will participate in the women's marathon on August 11, the final day of Paris 2024.

### Nepal to open CAVA Women's Volleyball against Sri Lanka

**O SPORTS BUREAU** KATHMANDU, JULY 26

Nepal will launch their CAVA Women's Volleyball Nations League campaign against Sri Lanka at the National Sports Council covered hall in Kathmandu on August 1, the opening day of the tournament.

Five countries—Hosts Nepal, India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Iran-are competing for the trophy.

India are also in action against Iran on the opening day.

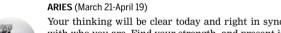
Nepal next face India on August 2, the Maldives on August 4 and Iran on

The top four teams will advance into the semi-finals, which are scheduled for August 6. The group winners of the sin-

gle-round league will take on the fourth placed team, while the group-runners will lock horns with the third-placed team in the last four

The final and the third-place playoff will be held on August 7.

### HOROSCOPE



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

with who you are. Find your strength, and present it to the world to see. You will find others having a difficult time hiding things from you. Use this

You might make some mistakes today, but it's totally

fine to be wrong sometimes. Free free to admit to

them without worry. Don't let your ego get in the

way of progress. You may feel more sensitive than

Be careful of being too critical today. This might turn



You may feel very sluggish or lazy today. Maybe it is tiredness or a lack of interest in your surroundings. This is possibly a sign to take a break and relax. Take advice from others, and withdraw from pressure



VIRGO (August 23-September 22)

even a bit compromising if needed.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)



Remember that emotions are powerful things, and it is important to respect yourself and others too. Don't discount your feelings, they will give you direction and help you figure things out. Relax, and let your thoughts clear, so you can make rational decisions.

You may feel called out for certain actions today. It

needn't be your fault, though, maybe they just can't

deal with your spirit. Yet, let yourself be kind, and



you for a while. You are sure to find a solution to them finally. You will find it easier to balance your SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

You will feel even more open to new ideas than usual

today. Remember, you can learn something from

every person you meet. Keep your mind exercised

and alert. Give it the daily stimulus it needs, and

You will feel very clear and mentally refreshed today.

Be ready to take in everything you witness, your

brain will be very eager to think and even imagine.

This will give you lots of confidence in your thoughts

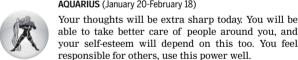
Tune into smaller thoughts that have been bothering



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

Γune into the thoughts of others. Only focusing on yourself will make you miss the wisdom of the people around you. Respect everyone's opinions, even if you might disagree with them. Be sensitive to others to gain their respect.





AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) Your thoughts will be extra sharp today. You will be able to take better care of people around you, and



PISCES (February 19-March 20)

You will feel like many people around you are not living their lives consciously as they should. Pay them no mind. Today is a day to go in the other direction. Take charge of your thoughts and better

#### people away and might add unnecessary social anxiety. It is a good time to listen, observe and receive instead. Think before taking any major steps

**CROSSWORD** 

Not talking

**ACROSS** 

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17 Vocalize 18 Hobbit of the Shire 19 Matte 20 Perp who sings

22 Wool source 24 "On the Again" 25 Family group 26 Pioneer vehicle 28 Eminence 32 Pressing

33 Catch some -34 Actor - Gibson 35 Metal element 36 Lively dance 37 Dog breed 38 Dined

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PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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© 2024 UFS, Dist, by Andrews McMeel for UFS

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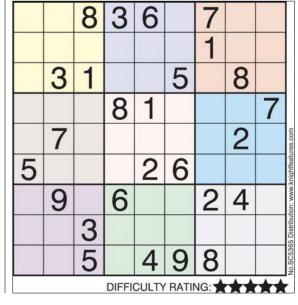
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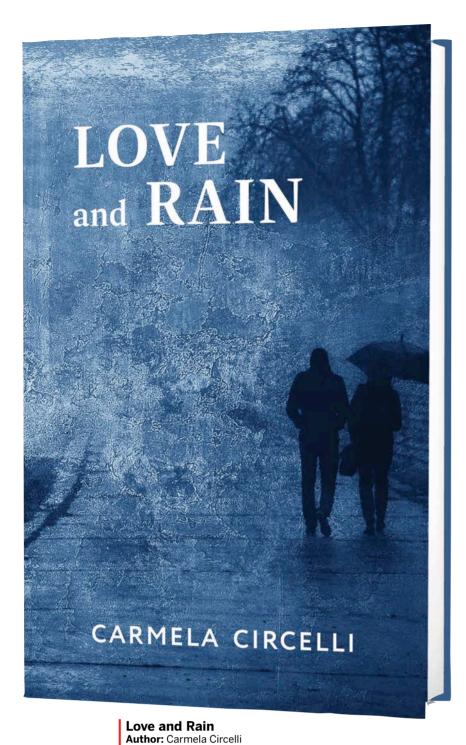
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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION





# Violating the power of love

In 'Love and Rain', Carmela Circelli explores the complex emotions of love and betrayal, weaving a narrative that spans generations and political landscapes.

O FATHIMA M

armela Circelli's 'Love and Rain' is a gorgeous novel, so much so that critiquing it from literary point of view feels like violating its beauty. Circelli has packed and unpacked much in this novel—history, entangled relationships, human fragility, love and relationships, beauty and resilience.

Somehow, it feels like reading John Fowles's novel 'The French Liuetenant's Woman'. Sarah's sheer beauty, resilience, and vulnerability in Fowles's book and Mara in Circelli's novel are hard to overlook. Still, this entanglement is an emotion, not something tangible and understandable in words.

A good response to this novel would be a poem, something that all lovers of love and literature can relate to in their peculiar ways. This is not to romanticise the "sadness" these two characters feel. On the contrary, it's about the beauty of resilience that surpasses every otherworldly experi-

Even though it's hard to categorise, this novel is not about romantic love nor about failed relationships. That kind of realism is never a personal preference for me.

One of the most intriguing questions that the novel evokes is betrayal. Is betrayal an absence of love, or is it possible for betrayal to exist alongside love? There are no concrete answers to this age-old question, but the contradiction remains an oxymoron, no matter what. Love and betrayal might have the ability to co-exist together, but the violence of betrayal can never be fixed by love.

The novel begins with the world of Chiara, a young woman in her thirties who is grieving over the loss of her relationship with her boyfriend, Daniel. But this is not just that—it feels like she is grieving for all her ancestors, and as if she can feel the pain of separation in her

It is not just the separation from Daniel that is bothering her; she feels an unfamiliar pain in her bones as if an entire history is stored in them. Chiara, a professional philosopher, is not interested in the professionalism of philosophy, so she leaves the academic world behind and starts working in a flower shop. That's where she unravels the history of her lost mother, her lost love, and the betrayal her mother endured at the hands of her father.

At the backdrop is the political move-



**BOOK REVIEW** 

**During Mara's moments** of silence, she conversed only with the sea.

ment and the resistance that is labelled as terrorism. The question of who is a terrorist has become a crucial question. When Chiara learns about her family history, her mother and her roots, she comprehends her pain in a better way. She realises how she relied on sex to feel connected to a lover, even though she remained disconnected throughout the relationship.

The narrative structure moves back and forth, and we get to know about Mara and her sister later in the novel in the form of letters that Paolo hands over to Chiara. She realises that it is only by making peace with your pain that people can move ahead in all the lives they might have.

The backdrop of the sea is deeply saddening, as much as it is inevitable. The intersection of life and death lies there. The sea is always lively, even during the moments of death elsewhere. Mara's silence was a response to her lover's betrayal. And during her moments of silence, she conversed only with the sea.

Her silence was for her fellow humans,

but she found a way to speak to nature. Mara and the sea both have been betrayed by humans and they both resist in their way. This nature-woman connection encapsulated against the backdrop of love, betrayal, and resistance makes it a highly intense read.

"I was sure Mara could hear the world even from our shore. Its grief and laments hounded her, pushing her, always, further in. At least that's what I imagined, I imagined that she was done with whatever it was that had happened to her, done with the inevitable harm humans cause each other, done with the indifference of the fates, their tangled weave of beauty and horror. She wanted none of it. She wanted to drown it out. She wanted to wash it away. In this, the sea was her only ally, smashing and clearing. In this, even I was an adversary, and love, a fractured thing she had discarded" (190).

Even though much has been said about love and heartbreaks, the real intensity of love and the pain of betrayal can never be captured by words. Circelli, that way, presents us with a highly complex and delicate character through the character of Mara. Mara doesn't just respond to the pain of betrayal but also to the beauty of resilience and dignity.

But the novel is not just a quest for a lost mother or lost love. It is about nations betraying their own people and people betraying the land that they call home. The violence of betrayal surpasses the power

Fathima is an assistant professor of English at Jyoti Nivas College, Bangalore.

students.

When: July 18

Time: 10:00 am

Entry: Free



**Publisher:** Guernica Editions

### 'Where is Nepal?' Solo Exhibition



Gallery Mcube invites you to the opening reception of a solo exhibition entitled 'WHERE IS NEPAL?' by Phil Robinson an artist from the USA. This event has a lot to offer for all art enthusiasts.

When: July 28 Where: Gallery Mcube, Mitra Road Time: 5:00 pm **Entry:** RSVP at 9860028387

### **Runaway Career Connect**

KEC Entrance Education is hosting an event featuring musical performances by Sabin Rai and The Pharaoh. The event's major highlight will be food, game stalls, scholarships and college placements.

**Where:** Annapurna Hotel, Durbar Marg **When:** July 27 **Time:** 10:00 am Entry: Free for plus 2 graduates

### Kitab Jatra 2081

An annual event symbolising and exemplifying the scenario of reading culture in Nepal, the Kitab Jatra is hosting authors, publishers and speakers from diverse backgrounds. It will feature debates with policymakers and interna-

Where: Army Officer's Club, Sundhara When: August 2 to August 3

### **Magical Tarot Reading session**

Alpine Crystal is organising an event on tarot reading sessions with expert tarot reader Tarotwith Samunnati. The event will offer insights and guidance on various aspects of life, including career, relationships and personal growth.

Where: Alpine Crystals, Jawalakhel When: July 27 **Time:** 12:00 pm to 2:30 pm Entry: Rs400 for 10 mins reading Rs600 for 20 mins reading

#### **GBOB** Live at Club Fahrenheit



GBOB is going LIVE at Club Fahrenheit this Friday, August 2nd. On his Birthday, he is coming to perform his hits.

Where: Club Fahrenheit, Keshar Mahal

Time: 6:00 pm Entry: RSVP at Club Fahrenheit's social

### Free Eye CheckUp

Optical House is organising a free eye checkup for everyone. The checkup will offer eye services such as eye exams and a wide range of Frames and Lenses.

When: 28 July 2024 Where: Optical house, Chawwni, Padrauna **Time:** 10:45 to 7:45 pm Entry: Free

### **IELTS Mock Test**

Entry: Rs100

Interface Education Centre is conducting an IELTS Mock Test covering all four sections: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking, simulating the actual IELTS exam. The event will provide assistance to help improve English proficiency and prepare for the IELTS exam.

When: 28 July 2024 Where: Interface Education Centre, Devkota Road Time: 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

### Special Training for +2 Students

LA GRANDEE International College



**Sales Summit** 

Machine Learning, and Cyber Security.

The sessions are especially aimed at +2

Where: La Grandee International College



'Sales Summit 2024', is happening. After completing 7th edition of organising the event under diverse themes, the group is announcing the 8th edition with the theme "Innovate, Transform and Thrive". Explore the day filled with Keynote sessions and dynamic panel discussions.

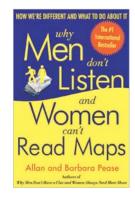
Where: Soaltee Hotel, Kathmandu When: August 30 **Entry:** Rs9,990

#### **BEST-SELLERS** NEW RELEASES

### **Fiction**

- Dark Matter by Blake Crouch
- Summer Reading by Jenn McKinlay
- Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens
- The Camel Club by David Baldacci
- Kane and Abel Jeffrey Archer





### Non-Fiction

- Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps by Allan and Barbara Pease
- Unlimited Power by Anthony
- Far From The Tree by Andrew Solomon
- Blue Ocean Strategy by W Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne

Beyond Possible by NimsdaiPurja

**EKTA BOOKS** 



Nandini Satpathy: The Iron Lady of Author: Pallavi Rebbapragada

Price: Rs1,438 Publisher: Simon & Schuster India

Pallavi Rebbapragada's 'Nandini Satpathy: The Iron Lady of Orissa' resurrects the remarkable legacy of Odisha's first woman Chief Minister, Nandini Satpathy. This compelling biography delves into Satpathy's early resistance against British rule, her ascent as a prominent Rajya Sabha member, and her influential role as Information and Broadcasting Minister. Rebbapragada masterfully examines her complex relationship with Indira Gandhi, her transformative land reforms, and her bold stand against the tobacco mafia. With empathy and precision, the book also explores Satpathy's political struggles and personal challenges. This biography focuses on political figures.

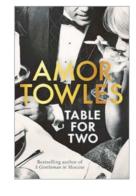


Table for Two **Author: Amor Towles** Price: Rs1,278 Publisher: Hutchinson

'Table for Two' by Amor Towles is a captivating collection featuring six short stories set in New York City, along with a novella that transports readers to 1938 Los Angeles. The New York stories, set around the turn of the millennium, delve into themes of ego, fleeting connections, and the intricacies of modern marriage. The novella, "Eve in Hollywood," continues the story of Evelyn Ross from 'Rules of Civility', exploring her reinvention in Los Angeles through seven distinct perspectives. At the heart of this collection are the pivotal conversations held across dining tables, showcasing Towles's profound understanding of human nature and relationships. Written with his trademark wit and elegance, 'Table for Two' is a delightful addition to Towles's oeuvre.



I Want to Die but I Still Want to Eat Tteokbokki Author: Baek Se-Hee Price: Rs1,118 Publisher: Bloomsbury

Building on the poignant and insightful tone that resonated in her previous bestseller, Baek Se-Hee's 'I Want to Die but I Still Want to Eat Tteokbokki' offers a deeper dive into her ongoing struggle with dysthymia. Expertly translated by International Booker Prize-winner Anton Hur, this memoir continues Baek's raw and honest exploration of her psychiatric sessions and personal battles. Originally intended as a tool for introspection, Baek's story has struck a global chord, particularly among young readers grappling with similar mental health challenges. Her unflinching portrayal of her internal conflicts during therapy sheds light on the arduous path to recovery.

● **()** () ()

### CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

# A blend of mythology and modernity

'Rasa Lila', showing at The Nepal Art Council, reimagines the Mahabharata through contemporary eyes, challenging conventional norms and exploring the paradoxes of modern morality.

O RISHIKA DHAKAL

ccording to Nietzsche, "Art helps us to know how to make things beautiful, as either creators or enjoyers; as the latter, we can be poets of our lives and give ourselves satisfaction and style, treating our own lives as a creative work and giving it aesthetic value as part of its ethical character. And this requires that we be autonomous individuals, free spirits, rejecting the restrictions that society and conventional morality seek

The above paragraph is an extract from AC Grayling's book 'The History of Philosophy'. The passage rightly encapsulates the essence of the ongoing exhibition at Nepal Art Council, 'Rasa Lila: The Divine Dance.

'Rasa Lila' embodies everything unconventional and unique. It doesn't conform to typical norms but instead aligns with the authentic way an individual is likely to perceive things.

The artists behind the exhibition are Priyam Pradhan, Utsab BS Pradhan, Urza

Acharya, Binit Maharjan, Julian Shakya, Smarika Phuyal, Shristika Yonzon, and Shubi Lama, who hail from diverse

The show is unlike any other exhibition in Kathmandu. For instance, the regular clay sculptures have been replaced by carbon steel sculptures and the use of jenga blocks, and the installed headphones act as a phone booth for the emotions embodied in the statues.

Moreover, the adjustment of light is done so skillfully that it creates the illusion of multiplying the presented figures, adding dynamism to its display.

As I perceived, the theme of the exhibition revolves around fusing the contemporary world with the mythological world of Mahabharata.

Jawaharlal Nehru, in his book 'The Discovery of India', mentions that myths provide insights into the thoughts and emotions of people throughout history, reflecting their aspirations, fears, and societal norms.

In a similar vein, with its aim to compare the myths of yesterday with today's spectacle, the angles used in creating this exhibition represent contemporary



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF SUSHIL KHAREL

Visitors observing the painting of Devaki and the statue of the sleeping Krishna.

perspectives, offering a fresh interpretation of timeless narratives such as Mahabharata itself.

One of the artists, Priyam Pradhan, who is ready to start his academic life abroad, said, "This exhibition marks the celebration of departure and acceptance of the fact that we will have to move away and find our footing in the world.'

Similar to his saying, the exhibition makes the spectators enter the world of Vraja, the highest domain of the heavenly world. Examining the atmosphere of the exhibition, the descriptions of the exhibit labels come to life, providing a sense of calmness and serenity as they begin their

The story of the exhibition begins with Krishna dancing with the Gopis before he leaves to fulfil his duty of freeing his birth parents from the claws of Kamsa, his uncle and the tyrant ruler of Mathura.

While Krishna is fully absorbed in performing 'Rasa Lila', Shiva, along with his consort Parvati, arrives to participate in the dance. However, Shiva is restricted from participating. The lack of 'Sakhibhav'—seeing onset as a companion or friend of the divine-prevents Shiva from joining in the celebration.

As somebody who was educated in an all-girls school, this particular instance transported me back to my school days, making me home-sick of the strong bond that I shared with my girlfriends.

Contrary to my current environment, which lacks that understanding and connection, especially with boys, this feeling of nostalgia gets well articulated in the concept of Sakibhav.

Adamant to participate in the zesty celebration, Shiva turns himself into Gopeshwor Mahadev, a beautiful maiden who can take part in the 'Rasa Lila'.

With ghungroo tinkling in a feminine foot contrasted with the depiction of masculine dancing hands, the structure cleverly illustrates Gopeshwor Mahadev dancing with the Gopis.

The holy Yamuna river, flowing beside the beautiful Vraja, has symbolic meaning exhibition. The river is scattered with the jumbled letters of the names of the exhibition's creators, hinting at civilization's ever-flowing nature.

Just like the scattered letters represent the intertwined history, the river has long absorbed the ashes of people from various

backgrounds. This makes one realise that nature is not to be owned but to be appreciated and preserved.

The exhibition also Draupadi's vastraharan (disrobing). In the dramatic episode of the Indian Epic, Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas, is humiliated in the Kaurava court after the Pandavas lose a game of dice to the Kauravas.

As a punishment, the Kaurava prince Dushasana tries to disrobe Draupadi, but Lord Krishna provides her with an endless supply of cloth, preventing her from being stripped.

However, while Draupadi suffers indignity, her family members remain tight-lipped and do nothing on their part to save her from the plight she is facing.

The documentary titled 'God of Small Things' revolves around the inner turmoil of a woman.

A white saree symbolises Draupadi's ordeal, and the ending of her saree after being saved by Lord Krishna is depicted in blue. A red light on the head of the statue represents Draupadi's anger towards her family members. Similarly, to help spectators truly connect with Draupadi's plight, a song by artist Smarika Phuyal has been installed in the exhibition, which spectators can listen to from headphones.

Rather than concentrating on the wellknown discourse of Draupadi's plight as a 'Damsel in Distress', the exhibition highlights a new perspective. It calls out the paradoxical nature of today's people, who claim to uphold morals and ethics while frequently acting against these principles.

Likewise, blending contemporary fashion with classical mythology, the exhibition offers a fresh representation of the Pandavas. The innovative approach representing with t-shirts of different colours is something that one rarely comes across in an exhibition.

The exhibition has also made a substantial effort to showcase the predicament of modern-day Draupadi through a documentary presentation.

Documentarian Urza Acharya outlines the theme of her documentary, "One cannot always dwell on happy moments. To enjoy the true embrace of delightful times, one must partake in the adventure of life, which has its challenges and less exciting

The five-minute documentary titled 'God of Small Things' revolves around the inner turmoil of the protagonist, who is dressed in a pink dress with tinkling ghungroos.

She often pendulums between two extremes leaving a grey area. The grey area is marked with her being close with herself through the performance of mundane and small tasks.

"By fixing small things, I am confronted with my honest self, the small things end up fixing me too."

In an era where a person's identity is often recognised by great achievements attained through complying with the set standards of society, the documentary provides a respite from this routine.

It instead voices the perspective that the pursuit of greatness shouldn't be one's core conquest in life. There is a profound wholeness to be discovered in the mundane.

To sum up, from a philosophical perspective, the exhibition can be compared to Neitzche's pressing question, "How were we to find meaning and purpose in a post-religious world?" Just like philosopher Heidegger

developed a new approach to address Nietzche's question, the eight artists of this exhibition offer a fresh perspective on interpreting mythologies. The eight artists in this exhibition do

not reject religious traditions; instead, they provide contemporary insights that reinterpret and breathe new life into these In this way, the exhibition serves as a

modern response to age-old questions, blending classical themes with innovative approaches to offer viewers a deeper understanding of both past and present.

Rasa Lila: The Divine Dance Where: Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal

**Timings:** 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Entry:

Till August 3

# English translation of Muluki Ain 1854 published

Vajra Books and Publications has come out with the English translation of Nepal's first written law, drafted by Janga Bahadur Rana.





PHOTO: COURTESY OF VAJRA PUBLICATIONS

POST REPORT

ajra Books and Publications has published the English translation and scientific analysis of the Muluki Ain, first drafted by Janga Bahadur Rana in 1854. This text, a major milestone for the archiving of Nepali historical documents, was translated by Rajan Khatiwoda, Simon Cubelic, and Axel Michaels, a team created in collaboration with Heidelberg University.

The first Muluki Ain was considered an important document not only in Nepali but also in South Asian history. It was created to replace sporadic regional law systems of various parts of the country and unify them through a single

Although the text is traditionally accredited to Janga Bahadur Rana, a fact our authors also acknowledge in this translation piece, it was most possibly drafted by a council of prominent

The team behind this translated piece is especially dedicated to South Asian legal history. Khatiwoda completed his PhD on the Homicidal Law of 19th-century Nepal, based on various versions of the Muluki Ain. Cubelic, with his PhD in Hindu Legal Scriptures (Dharmashastra), and Michaels, a senior professor at Heidelberg University focusing on South Asian text culture and language, are also experts in this field.

The translation brings the various legislatures of 19th-century Nepal to the eye of a larger readership. Some highlights of the Muluki Ain are its highlighting of laws around caste family systems, purity and sexuality, and punishment systems.

These punishment systems also include penalties for acts ranging from stealing, murder and other crimes, to smaller grievances, like punishments for spitting and farting.

The text acts as a time capsule for enthusiasts of early Rana history.

The authors believe that their text was primarily created to make Nepal's first written law more accessible to scholars, local and Global, especially those interested in the legal and political systems of South Asia. Khatiwoda adds, "We believe that the book will assist scholars, researchers, and those with interest in related materials to comprehend the immediate social, economic, and political environment of South Asia and Nepal.

Although initially published by Heidelberg University, Vajra Publications has now released the book to make it easily accessible to Nepalese and South Asian audiences.

## Creators Mela 2024 kicks off in Kathmandu

The Mela features 19 lectures and interactive workshops designed to help aspiring creators grow their online presence.

O POST REPORT KATHMANDU

rganised by the US Embassy, the two-day Creators Mela 2024 has officially begun. This digital confer-

ence, taking place at the Aloft Hotel in Kathmandu, is aimed to enhance the skills of both aspiring and established Nepali digital creators and influencers, empowering them to launch and grow their online presence or businesses.

Creators Mela 2024 features an impressive lineup of 19 lectures and interactive workshops combined with 12 main stage performances. Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in sessions covering crucial topics such as brandbuilding, monetisation, and mental

This year's event has more performances and speakers than last year. On Friday, there were sessions on Podcasting, growing social media presence across different platforms, leveraging AI for social media suc-

cess, reaching social media success, art of visual storytelling, addressing social media regulations, attracting sponsors and Question and Answer sessions with Embassy Public Affairs Chief Garrett Wilkerson and Spokesperson Zehra



Naqvi, while on the MainStage there were amazing sessions and performances by the artists. Sessions and performances by the

artists were also held. According to the organisers, over 500 content creators attended the event. According to a statement issued

by the US Embassy, "Last year, over 1,500 content creators attended the first-of-its-kind in-person event to network, experience the music festival-inspired main stage and immersive creator zone, and enhance their skills through 17 sessions on topics like brand-building, financial literacy, and content development. This year, we have 19 interactive workshops.

In a notable addition to this year's program, several parliamentarians will join a session to address the concerns of content creators regarding social media regulations, providing a platform for dialogue and collaboration.