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THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL



PHOTO: PM'S SECRETARIAT

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' expressing his views at a discussion programme related to the presentation of the organisation and management survey of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its subordinate agencies held in Singha Durbar, Kathmandu on Wednesday.

PM stresses capacity boost for Nepali missions abroad

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, July 3

> The number of Nepalis going abroad is increasing. However, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its subordinate offices, and missions have not been adequately strengthened.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has said that the capacity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Nepali missions abroad should be enhanced to protect the welfare of Nepalis living overseas.

Prime Minister Prachanda made this statement at a discussion programme related to the presentation of the organisation and management survey of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its subordinate agencies held at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers on Wednesday.

Stating that he has given high priority to the welfare and rights of Nepalis living abroad, he underscored the need to enhance institutional and structural capacity as a key concern.

The Prime Minister said, "The number of Nepalis going abroad is increasing. However, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its subordinate offices, and missions have not been adequately strengthened."

He added, "The posts are outdated. Let's overhaul and strengthen organisational and manpower management. Let's prioritise the welfare and rights of Nepalis living abroad. Make technical preparations at the secretary level. Only then, we will reach a conclusion."

Speaking at the discussion programme, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha said nationalism is now a prominent issue in diplomacy.

"So, Nepal should reform both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its affiliated agencies," he added.

DPM Shrestha, Finance Minister Barsha Man Pun, Minister for Federal Affairs and General Administration Bhanubhakta Joshi, Acting Chief Secretary Lila Devi Gadtaula, Foreign Secretary Seva Lamsal, Finance Secretary Madhukumar Marasini, and other officials from the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs were present in the discussion.

NC WELCOMES AGREEMENT REACHED WITH CPN-UML

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, July 3

A meeting of the Nepali Congress Central Work Execution Committee on Wednesday welcomed the latest agreement inked between the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML to form a national consensus government.

The meeting chaired by Party President and former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and held at his residence in Budhanilkantha welcomed and supported the agreement inked between the two parties on July 1.

The meeting expressed its commitment to implement the agreement reached between the Nepali Congress and the CPN (UML) to safeguard national interests, ensure good governance by combating corruption, accelerate development efforts, maintain political stability, review constitutional practices, strengthen the federal democratic republican system and inclusiveness as well as the economy.

According to the agreement inked by Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN-UML chairman KP Sharma Oli, the national consensus will first be led by CPN (UML) Chairman Oli and later Oli will leave the government leadership to Deuba.

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Nepal prepares its first concept paper on AI use

MoCIT accepts document

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, July 3

For the first time, the government of Nepal has prepared a concept paper on the usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Despite the global rise in the development and use of AI, Nepal lacked policies and laws on the technology.

Therefore, the government prepared the concept paper to establish a foundation for formulating necessary policies and laws.

A technical committee formed by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology prepared the concept paper after nearly five months of study.

Following the direction of Minister for Communication and Information Technology Rekha Sharma, the Ministry had formed a five-member technical committee headed by Joint Secretary Anil Kumar Dutta.

Other members included Under Secretary Narayan Timilsina from the Ministry, IT Director Pabitra Dangol from the Department of Information Technology, Associate Professor Dr. Baburam Dawadi from the Institute of Engineering, and Computer Engineer Suryaprakash Upadhyay from the Ministry as the member-secretary.



The committee, formed on January 24, 2024, submitted the concept paper to the Ministry amidst a function held at the Ministry on Wednesday.

The report suggests that the government should create necessary policies, laws, and procedures for the development, usage, and regulation of AI in Nepal.

Highlighting the need to address cyber security, data protection, and privacy at the policy level, the report recommends drafting a national AI policy, preparing a national strategy, establishing a legal framework for data protection, ensuring privacy and security of AI usage and users, and setting standards that align with international benchmarks.

The report also recommends developing an integrated national portal for AI-related information exchange, prioritising research, development, and utilisation in the same field, accelerating programmes to promote AI usage, and creating national projects and sectoral initiatives to harness AI's transformative nature for socio-economic development.

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UML withdraws support to govt, ministers resign en masse

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, July 3

Eight ministers from the CPN-UML tendered their resignation en masse to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Wednesday evening.

According to the Prime Minister's Secretariat, CPN-UML ministers serving in the cabinet have submitted their resignation to Prime Minister Prachanda.

The CPN-UML ministers submitted their resignation, after the party's decision to withdraw its support given to the government led by Prime Minister Prachanda.

The UML had eight ministers in the government under the leadership of the party secretary Raghubir Mahaseth.

Those who resigned were Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Physical Infrastructure Mahaseth, Padam Giri Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Hari Upreti Minister for Defense, Bhagbati Chaudhary Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Rajendra Rai Minister for Drinking Water, Damodar Bhandari Minister for Industry and Commerce, Jwala Kumar Sah, Minister for Agriculture and Balaram Adhikari Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation.

A party secretariat meeting held on Wednesday afternoon decided to withdraw its support to the government to form a national consensus government, said UML Chief Whip Mahesh Kumar Bartaula.

The party took the decision after Prime Minister Prachanda refused to resign from the post despite the formation of a new coalition between the UML and Nepali Congress.

The decision came a day after the NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba and UML Chairman KP Sharma Oli finalised an agreement on Monday midnight to form a new consensus government to replace the ruling collation.

The meeting also urged Prime Minister Prachanda to pave the way for formation of new government, said Bartaula.

The UML is scheduled to submit the application for withdrawing support from the government at the Parliament Secretariat on Thursday.

After withdrawal of support by the UML, the Prachanda-led government has fallen into minority.

There is a provision that the Prime Minister should seek a vote of confidence within 30 days if any party participating in the government withdraws its support.

Financial crime on rise in Bagmati province

BY ANIL PARAJULI
Hetauda, July 3

Financial crimes have, of late, increased in the 10 districts of Bagmati Province, excluding Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. Statistics from the Bagmati Province Police Office in Hetauda showed a rise in organised and financial crimes.

Over the past three years, the province has seen a significant increase in banking offences and financial crimes.

In the fiscal year 2021/22, there were 563 incidents of organised and financial crimes. The number rose to 904 in 2022/23 and they further increased to 1,188 from July 17, 2023, to June 12, 2024, of the current fiscal year 2023/24.

Comparing the data of the last three fiscal years, criminal incidents have increased as of mid- June, 2024, of the current fiscal year.

According to the data released by the Bagmati Province Police Office in Hetauda, up to mid-June of the current fiscal year, 879 incidents related to homicide were recorded, 882 related to suicide, 244 related to theft, 780 related to social crimes, 286 related to vehicle incidents and 428 related to other crimes were reported. The police statistics also indicate an increase in registered cases and crimes.

Compared to fiscal year 2021/22, there was a 6.22 per cent rise in registered crime cases in 2022/23. In the fiscal year 2021/22, 4,405 cases were registered, which increased to 4,679 in 2022/23 and 4,687 cases were registered up to mid-June of the current fiscal year.

Similarly, up to mid-June of the current fiscal year, 341 drug-related incidents, 44 homicide cases, 259 cases of rape, eight cases of human trafficking, five cases of abduction and hostage-taking, eight cases of alcohol trafficking, one robbery, and 25 other crimes were recorded, according to the Bagmati Province Police Office, Hetauda.

Additionally, crimes against women and children are also on the rise. Up to mid-June of the current fiscal year, 259 cases of rape, 38 cases of polygamy, 49 attempted rapes, eight cases of human trafficking and two cases of child marriage were reported.

Tourist arrivals increase in June

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, July 3

Nepal welcomed 76,736 tourists in June 2024, marking a 6.21 per cent increase compared to their numbers in June 2023 and 2.47 per cent from their numbers in June 2019.

According to the Nepal Tourism Board, 72,250 tourists arrived in Nepal in June 2023 and 74,883 in June 2019. Similarly, 108,106 tourists left Nepal in May and 77,279 in June this year.

The arrivals of Indian tourists is higher in Nepal than those from other countries. A total of 37,835 tourists arrived from India in June. Similarly, the United States ranked second in tourist arrivals. During June, 8,281 US tourists arrived in Nepal Likewise, 7,494 tourists arrived from China, 3,857 from Bangladesh, 1,969 from the United Kingdom, 1,589 from Australia, 1,066 from Bhutan, 1,014 from Malaysia, 953 from Japan and 875 from South Korea in month.

Nepal's tourism sector shows strong signs of revival, with the increase in tourist arrivals indicating a positive trend for the industry, reads a statement issued by the Nepal Tourism Board.



File Photo

This growth is expected to contribute significantly to the country's economy and promote Nepal as a preferred tourist destination globally, it said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation along with the NTB, organised a discussion and interaction with stakeholders on the previously publicised concept of the Tourism Decade 2023 to 2032 to gather suggestions on Wednesday.

According to a press statement issued by NTB on Wednesday, during the interaction, key private sector representatives said that although the concept of the Tourism Decade is good, it should be revised according to changing times to make it more effective.

They stressed the need for such programmes to make tourism dynamic but suggested that the state prioritise policy reforms and infrastructure development.

To address the need for gradually reviving the tourism sector, which was affected by COVID-19, the ministry formed a task force in 2022 under the coordination of the former Executive Director of the Board, Prachanda Man Shrestha, to formulate an action plan. The task force submitted its strategic action plan outline on December 22, 2022, the statement said.

Speaking at the programme, Secretary at the Ministry and Chairman of the Nepal Tourism Board, Dr. Ganesh Prasad Pandey, said that the interaction was organised to gather suggestions on how to effectively move forward with the prepared concept. He said that tourism could be made dynamic only with the collaboration of the private sector.

Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee of the NTB, Ram Prasad Sapkota, said that to make tourism dynamic, private sector input on the ministry's concept would pave the way forward.

Joint Secretary of the Ministry, Indu Ghimire, said that the interaction was fruitful and the concept would be revised based on suggestions from the private sector.

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BULLION
(Rs. per 10 grm)

Hallmark Gold	: Rs. 142,700/-
Worked Gold	: Rs. 142,000/-
Silver	: Rs. 1,825/-

STOCK

NEPSE	: 2,104.22
Total Amount	: 5,083,528,935.17
No. of Share	: 17,134,082

Only 10% paddy planted in Banke

BY SIRAJ KHAN
Nepalgunj, July 3

Due to the late onset of rainfall this year, only 10 per cent of rice plantation has been completed in Banke so far.

The head of the Agriculture Knowledge Centre Banke, Sakil Ahmad Khan, said that the late start of rainfall in the district has only recently allowed for bed preparation and plantation, resulting in only 10 per cent of the rice being planted.

He said that the rain over the past three to four days has initiated planting in all areas of the district. It is expected that planting will pick up pace and be completed everywhere, as in the past.

Khan added, "By June 29 (Ashad 15), most farmers had been unable to plant seeds due to the lack of rainfall, but since July 1, the rain has started, and the seed planting has been completed and plantation has also started."

Despite the delayed start due to a water shortage, the Agriculture Knowledge Centre Banke hopes for 100 per cent planting and good production in the district.

Farmers in the district, who were worried about the inability to plant, felt relieved after the rain started. Farmer Ramesh Yadav of Dudhua-5, Banke, expressed relief as rainfall has started, alleviating the concerns caused by drought.



PHOTO: SIRAJ KHAN/TRN

Rapti Sonari farmers busy on paddy plantation.

Most farmers in the district have said that such situations will continue every year unless the dependency on rainwater for farming is eliminated.

Farmer Ramu Thapa of Khajura-3 said that the late onset of rainfall every year caused problems for rice farming in Banke.

Despite the late start of planting this year, Khan indicated that if there were no floods or waterlogging, there was a possibility of better production than in previous years.

Banke has a total of 36,500 hectares of cultivable land for paddy plantation. Last year, paddy was also cultivated on the same area. The Centre has indicated that the same area will be cultivated with paddy this year as well.

BHERI MUNICIPALITY TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE ON HYBRID SEEDS

RSS
Kakrebihar (Surkhet), July 3

Bheri municipality of Jajarkot district is in a way to become self-reliant on hybrid seeds of various vegetables and crops after the pilot project resulted in a success.

Yagya Bahadur Adhikari, Chief of Agriculture Department Office in the municipality, shared the municipality had piloted production of maize of Rampur hybrid 10 species at Arukhet of Bheri municipality-2.

Last year, they had successfully conducted pilot cultivation of maize species named Rampur hybrid 12 in one hectare at Syala of the municipality.

Following the success in the pilot project, the municipality started promoting the production and distribution of hybrid seeds. The local farmers started making good yields thereafter, according to Adhikari.

The municipality has been facilitating farmers in training and exposure visits in other places of the country as well, he shared.

The improved seeds are being marketed outside the municipality, he informed, however, sharing that production of hybrid seeds was not as easy as producing other normal of seeds initially.

SMALL BUSINESSES IN CRISIS

AP
New York July 3

A type of bankruptcy protection filing that made it easier for small businesses to seek relief has expired, which will complicate filing for small businesses with more than $3 million in debt.

The filing type, known as Subchapter V, is cheaper and less time-consuming than the traditional Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing. The rule went into effect in 2020 as part of the Small Business Reorganization Act. It let small businesses with less than $2.75 million in debt file under the subchapter.

Chinese economy growing at modest pace: Survey

AP
Bangkok July 3

Surveys of Chinese factory managers showed a mixed outlook for the world's second-largest economy in June, with growth steady but not picking up much steam.

The China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing's official purchasing managers index, or PMI, remained at 49.5, the same as in May, on a scale up to 100 where 50 marks the cut off for expansion.

"From the perspective of output, China's economy is maintaining expansion, but the momentum of recovery still needs to be consolidated," the official Xinhua News Agency cited Zhao Qinghe, senior statistician for the National Bureau of Statistics, as saying.

The PMI for new export orders slipped to 49.4 from 49.6, perhaps reflecting announcements by the European Union and United States of plans to increase their tariffs on imports of electric vehicles from China.

A private-sector survey released Monday by the financial media group Caixin was more optimistic, edging up to 51.8 from 51.7 in the previous month. That was the fastest expansion of factory output in two years, it said. Analysts had forecast that it would fall.

But while sentiment was positive, the level of confidence among purchasing managers fell to the lowest in over four-and-a-half years due to worries over intense competition and uncertain market conditions, Caixin said.

The surveys offered scant insight into whether various measures to boost the property sector, such as cutting mortgage interest rates and down payments, have had much impact on an industrywide slump that followed a crackdown on excessive borrowing by developers.

"The PMIs for June were mixed but on balance suggest that the recovery lost some momentum last month," Capital Economics said in a report.

The official PMI reading for high-tech manufacturing rose to 52.3 in June from 50.7 in May, reflecting the government's drive to boost investment in upgrading factories and equipment in new industries such as computer chip and electric vehicles.

"This shows that the transformation and upgrading of China's manufacturing industry has continued to advance," Zhao was quoted as saying.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping has made growth of such advanced industries a top priority, a theme likely to dominate an upcoming meeting of top officials of the ruling Communist Party when they meet later in the month.

Xinhua said in a separate report that during the meeting the party would disclose a new round of "deep and comprehensive reforms." Such measures will "chart the course forward for the world's second largest economy," it said.

NOC accelerates petroleum storage facility construction process

RSS
Bhairahawa, July 3

The Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has accelerated petroleum storage facility construction process at Rohini river bank in Rupandehi.

Construction of embankment at Rohini rivulet, the border of Omsatiya and Rohini rural municipalities, was underway and 70 per cent construction of the embankment has been completed so far, said Enginer Hiramani Khanal.

He said that construction activities of the embankment have been forwarded at Rohini rivulet by assessing the flood situation of last 50 years.

> Construction of embankment at Rohini rivulet, the border of Omsatiya and Rohini rural municipalities, was underway and 70 per cent construction of the embankment has been completed so far, said Enginer Hiramani Khanal.

Rohini rivulet flows in the north and west of the land where the NOC is constructing the storage facility. A retaining wall has been constructed on the north side while gabion wall towards west of the site.



The NOC is constructing the new storage facility on around 14 bigha of land purchased at Parasi-Bhairahawa road section as the storage capacity of Bhalbari depot is less and it is near the human settlement.

The new storage facility would sustain petroleum demand of Lumbini Province for 20 days. The NOC has been constructing storage depots at different places of the country to increase storage capacity of petroleum products.

Project Coordinator Pradeep Yadav explained that the storage tank at the cost of Rs 3 billion. Three tanks having the storage capacity of 2,100 kilolitres diesel, two tanks having the capacity to storing 1,600 kilolitres of petrol, and three tanks having capacity to storing 70 kilolitres of kerosene oil would be constructed.

After the construction of new storage facility, the Bhalbari depot would be shifted at the bank of Rohini rivulet. Yadav shared that the design of the project would be completed within mid-October.

The Kathmandu University is designing the project. The foundation stone of the project would be laid in November and a target has been set to complete the construction within 2083 BS.

Continuous rainfall hampers paragliding

BY SONTOSH SUBEDI
Kaski, July 3

Heavy monsoon rain has halted paragliding activities in Pokhara. The tourism sector in Pokhara was slowly recovering, but the monsoon rain is severely impacting business operators. Currently, Pokhara is hosting many Indian tourists.

However, due to the rain, tourists are unable to enjoy paragliding. Krishna Prasad Bhandari, chairperson of the Nepal Sky Sports Organization, said "Because of the rain, paragliding has completely stopped."

He added that bookings were being cancelled due to unfavourable weather conditions.

Although it was not the peak paragliding season, tourists were still making reservations. On average, 150 paragliding flights were taking place daily, with each flight costing between 4,000 and 5,000 rupees. Currently, the main tourists are from India. The rain has also halted ultralight flights.

According to Bhandari, there are currently 60 paragliding companies in the area. There are 390 pilots of which 300 actively participate in paragliding. Paragliding activities originated from Sarangkot Hill, from 1996, with companies being established from the year 2000.



PHOTO: SANTOSH SUBEDI/TRN

Domestic tourists enjoy paragliding in Pokhara.

Paragliding flights launch from Mandredhunga, a short distance from Sarangkot, and land on the riverbank. Paragliding also takes place from Toripani, with all flights landing on the riverbank.

Paragliding entrepreneurs have expressed concerns that if paragliding activities are moved from Pokhara to other locations, it will negatively affect the local tourism sector.

Economic turmoil in Bolivia fuels distrust in govt

AP
La Paz, Bolivia July 3

Signs reading "I'm buying dollars" line the doors of Víctor Vargas' shoe shop in the heart of Bolivia's biggest city, a desperate attempt to keep his family business alive.

Just a few years ago, the 45-year-old Vargas would unlock the doors at 8 a.m. to a crush of customers already waiting to buy tennis shoes imported from China. Now, his shop sits hopelessly empty.

Bolivians like Vargas have been hit hard by economic turmoil in the small South American nation fueled by a longtime hyper-dependence on, and now shortage of, U.S. dollars.

The economic downturn has been exacerbated by an ongoing feud between President Luis Arce and his ally-turned-rival former President Evo Morales in the lead-up to next year's presidential election. Many Bolivians impacted by the crisis have lost trust in Arce, who denies the country is even in an economic crisis.

"Bolivia has an economy that's growing. An economy in crisis doesn't grow," Arce told The Associated Press in an interview. That was contradicted by both economists and dozens of Bolivians.

That deep distrust came to a head on Wednesday following a spectacle which the government called a "failed coup d'etat" and opponents including Morales called a staged "self-coup" meant to earn the unpopular leader political points before elections.

Whether the coup attempt was real or not, most Bolivians who spoke to the AP said they no longer believe what their leader says, and say Arce would be better served addressing Bolivia's gasping economy and less time carrying out political stunts.

"He should think about Bolivia's economy, make a plan to move forward, find a way to get dollars and work to move Bolivia forward," Vargas said. "No more of these childish 'self-coups.'" That simmering anger has paved the way for even more strife in a country that is no stranger to political unrest.

Bolivia's economic crisis is rooted in a complex combination of dependence on the dollar, draining international reserves, mounting debt and failures to produce products like gas, once the Andean nation's economic boon.

This has meant that Bolivia has largely become an import economy "totally dependent on dollars," said Gonzalo Chávez, an economist with Bolivia's Catholic University. That once worked in Bolivia's favor, driving the country's "economic miracle" as it became one of the region's fastest growing economies.

Vargas' family opened the shoe business nearly 30 years ago because they saw it as a surefire way to ensure stability for coming generations. The family imports shoes from China, which they pay for in dollars and sell them in Bolivia's currency, bolivianos. Without dollars, they have no business.

The shortage of dollars has led to the emergence of a black market, with many sellers bringing in greenbacks from neighboring Peru and Chile and selling them at a gouged price.

Pascuala Quispe, 46, spent her Saturday walking around La Paz's downtown going to different currency exchange shops, desperately searching for dollars to buy car parts.

Rudi village residents in Bajura have access to potable water finally

BY SHER BAHADUR SARKI
Bajura, July 3

The residents of Rudi, Swamikartik Khapar Rural Municipality-1, Bajura, who had been drinking murky river water for a long time, have finally have got clean tap water.

After tireless efforts by the rural municipality, the water from the Tusare source reached Rudi village, allowing the locals to drink clean tap water.

"We had to fetch drinking water from the river for generations. Now, we have access to running water," said Lalpura Damai, a resident of Rudi village.

He said, "Drinking water fetched from river water during the rainy season made us susceptible to various waterborne diseases. We have not faced such issues since we have access to clean tap water now."

Previously, women had to walk for an hour to fetch water from the river, which is no longer necessary and it has been easier for people to maintain hygiene after increased access to running water," said Damai.



PHOTO: SHER BAHADUR SARKI/TRN
A local technician assuring water supply which has been brought via pipes placed in high elevations with the help of poles.

The village faced a drinking water crisis after the water supply in the village was disrupted by a landslide in the fiscal year 2012/22, said Ang Lal Dhami, Chairman of the Tusare Rudi Water Users Committee.

He said, "The drinking water pipes were destroyed by landslides, leading to a shortage of drinking water in the village for the past two years." Now, after consistent efforts and financial support from the rural municipality, the pipes have been repaired while bringing drinking water to the village, said Dhami.

Chairman of Swamikartik Khapar Rural Municipality, Bharat Bahadur Rokaya said, "After two years of tireless efforts, we have finally succeeded in providing drinking water to the locals of Rudi."

He added, "Almost five kilometres of the trail between Tusare and Rudi were affected by landslides. We used poles to place the pipes in place while bringing water to the village."

Despite various obstacles, the water from Tusare has reached Rudi village, providing clean drinking water to 173 households. Water pipes have been placed in high elevations with the help of poles to ensure that recurring landslides do not disrupt the water supply, said Rokaya.

BASYAL NAMED GS BOARD MEMBER



PHOTO: TRN
Indra Prasad Basyal

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, July 3

The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology has designated Indra Prasad Basyal, Under Secretary of the Corporation Coordination Department of the Ministry, as a member of the Board of Directors of the Gorkhapatra Corporation.

According to a press statement issued by the Ministry on Tuesday, Basyal has been designated as per the minister-level decision of July 1, as per the Gorkhapatra Corporation Act 2019.

No student from three schools in Rukum East passes in SEE

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Rukum East, July 3

The stakeholders in the district are quite concerned about the poor performance of the Secondary Education Examination (SEE). The district has 25 public and one private schools. A total of 1,022 students appeared in the SEE. Of them, 965 appeared in the general stream and 57 in the technical stream.

Tilak Gautam, Head of Education Development and Coordination Unit, said that while 246 students i.e. 25.49 per cent passed SEE from the general stream, 719 i.e. 74.51 per cent students failed.

Gautam said that out of 57 students who took the exam for the technical side, 27 i.e. 47.37 per cent, passed while 30 i.e. 52.63 per cent students failed. He further said it is worrying that students who have failed are many more than students who have passed.

"How to make the course interesting? How to make the students and parents interested in education? What policies should the government make? These are the discussions that the stakeholders are holding," said Gautam.

Out of the 23 schools, three schools had all their students failed. The remaining schools have also performed badly. In Nepal Rastriya Secondary School in Bhumi Rural Municipality, all 58 students have failed. Similarly, in Secondary Kuchibang School in Bhumi-8, 17 students and in Mahendra Secondary School of Puthauttarganga Rural Municipality-10, all 37 students have failed.

"After the results, the concern and worries have increased," said Chief District Officer Madhav Prasad Sharma.

He said, "Realizing the poor state of result, it is important to focus and prioritise quality education. Every school should also find its flaw and work on it, only then will the results improve."

Illegal goods worth over Rs. 1 million seized in Nepalgunj

BY SIRAJ KHAN
Nepalgunj, July 3

A day after confiscating fabrics worth Rs. 3.8 million, which had been smuggled from India and stored in Nepalgunj to evade taxes, the police have again seized illegal goods worth over Rs. 1 million in Nepalgunj.

At 5:00 am on Wednesday, a police team from the Ward Police Office in Nepalgunj seized illegal goods worth Rs. 1.05 million, including mobile glasses of various companies, two motorcycles, and three bicycles near Basanta Malla Chowk in Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolitan City-21.

As soon as the smugglers saw the police team, they abandoned the illegally imported goods, which had bypassed customs duties and fled the scene.

Hari Bahadur B.C., Police Inspector of the Ward Police Office in Nepalgunj, said that the seized goods include 9,280 pieces of mobile glasses worth Rs. 896,000 from various companies, a Super Splendor motorcycle with the number plate Bhe-1-Pa-4765 worth 50,000, a TVS motorcycle with the number plate UP-40-AN-9202 worth Rs. 50,000 rupees, and three bicycles worth Rs. 9,000.



PHOTO: SIRAJ KHAN/TRN
The seized goods and other materials are seen at the Nepalgunj Customs Office which have been brought for further investigations.

Inspector B.C. said that all the seized goods have been taken to the Nepalgunj Customs Office for further action.

Previously, on Tuesday, the police had confiscated ready-made clothes worth Rs. 3.8 3 million smuggled from India and stored in the house of Soni Gupta in Bhanubhakta Chowk of Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolitan City-2.

Before this, various police units had repeatedly seized goods smuggled illegally from India.

174 new cases of TB found in Kohalpur

BY SIRAJ KHAN
Nepalgunj, July 3

At a time when the campaign to make Kohalpur a tuberculosis-free municipality was gaining momentum, 174 new tuberculosis infected have been identified in Kohalpur Municipality.

According to the municipality, the tuberculosis treatment completion rate is 94.9 per cent in Kohalpur while the new case detection rate is 163 per 100,000 and the death rate is 1.9 per cent.

Prem Pandey, the focal person for the municipality's tuberculosis-free campaign, said that the new tuberculosis infected identified in the current fiscal year are taking regular medications.

One has been admitted to Nepalgunj TB Hospital for treatment while 22 patients regularly receive medicines and nutritious foods.

As part of the campaign, TB patients are provided nutritional food for at least six months.

Pandey, the focal person, stated that nourishing food will be distributed to low-income, poor and disabled individuals to improve their nutrition.

Kohalpur Municipality informed that individuals diagnosed with TB are taking their medication regularly.

The government is implementing various programmes to eradicate tuberculosis in Nepal by 2050.

Mayor of Kohalpur Municipality Purna Prasad Acharya said that the municipality is also running a campaign to eradicate tuberculosis by prioritising public awareness, early screening and management programmes.



PHOTO: SIRAJ KHAN/TRN
The Kohalpur Municipality building. At a time when the campaign to make Kohalpur a tuberculosis-free municipality was gaining momentum, 174 new tuberculosis infected have been identified recently.

Mayor Acharya mentioned that there are DOTS centers in all 15 wards of Kohalpur.

He also said that patients diagnosed with TB in these wards are regularly taking their medications from the DOTS centers.

According to him, volunteers have been mobilised in each ward of Kohalpur Municipality to identify TB patients. They reach door to door to look for TB patients.

Ramesh Bhandari, coordinator of the campaign, said that patients with symptoms of tuberculosis were sent to Nepalgunj Medical College, Bheri Hospital, and the TB Hospital for check-ups.

According to him, the municipality has formed ward-level committees to create a security plan and review progress at the ward level to eradicate tuberculosis.

Gulmidurbar Municipality provides livelihood allowance to unmarried

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Tamghas, July 3

Gulmidurbar Rural Municipality in Gulmi district has provided livelihood allowances to 34 unmarried men and women within the rural municipality.

Information Officer Nabaraj Ghimire of the rural municipality informed that, according to the policy and programme of the rural municipality, unmarried women who have reached the age of 40 and men who have reached the age of 45 have been provided with a livelihood allowance of Rs. 1,000 per month in the current financial year.

Thirty-four persons, including 16 women and 18 men, are now receiving the allowance, he said.

He also mentioned that they have a policy and programme to continue the initiative in the next financial year as well.

Saroj Kumar Thapa, chairman of the rural municipality, informed that such a programme was introduced to prevent unmarried men and women from feeling lonely.

Thapa said that the programme was introduced to help them feel less alone and to convey the message that the municipality is with them.

Spokesperson and vice chairman Parbati Kunwar of Isma Rural Municipality informed that they have been provided Rs. 1,000 per month for single men and unmarried women aged above 55 years.

Similarly, Madane Rural Municipality has also introduced a programme to provide a monthly allowance to unmarried men and women, which will be implemented in the next financial year.

Vice chair Sarita Khadka informed that an arrangement has been made to provide a monthly livelihood allowance of Rs. 500 to women aged over 40 years and unmarried men aged above 45 years.

She claimed that they have introduced such a programme so that single men and women do not feel alone.

Apart from this, Khadka mentioned that the rural municipality has also introduced various programmes to make them self-reliant by providing various trainings.

विद्युत उत्पादन कम्पनी लिमिटेड
Vidhyut Utpadan Company Limited

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO AWARD THE CONTRACT

(Date of Publication: July 4, 2024)

Pursuant to Sub Sections 27.2, 27.3 of the Public Procurement Act, 2063, Rule No. 85 of Procurement bylaw 2077 of Company and ITB 41 of Bidding Document, this is to notify all the bidders who submitted their bids for the execution of **Supply and Delivery of Sport Utility vehicle (Contract No.: VUCL/G/NCB/01/2080-081)** as per the invitation for bids published on May 31, 2024 in "The Rising Nepal" National Daily and www.bolpatra.gov.np that the following listed substantially responsive lowest evaluated bidder has been selected for the award of the contract.

Substantially Responsive Lowest Evaluated Bidder	Evaluated Bid Price
M/S Agni Incorporated Pvt.Ltd. Panipokhari, Kathmandu, Nepal	**NRs. 6,193,805.31** (Excluding VAT)

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Between two evils, I always pick the one I never tried before.
- Mae West

EDITORIAL

New Political Turn

Nepali politics has taken a new turn after two major political parties – Nepali Congress (NC) and CPN-UML – struck a midnight deal to form a 'national consensus government' on Monday. The two parties have claimed their agreement aimed to ensure stability through the amendment of the constitution promulgated in 2015. As per the informal deal, UML chair KP Sharma Oli and NC president Sher Bahadur Deuba will share the post of premiership on a rotation basis. Similarly, the NC and UML will take the posts of Chief Ministers of three provinces each and allow a Madhes-centric party to lead the Madhes Province. While asking Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda to pave the way for the formation of the new government, the two parties have called upon the political parties represented in the House of Representatives (HoR) to join the new government.

Not only the ruling parties but even the general public is taken aback by the unexpected political development because many were unaware of what is going on behind the scene. The two-party accord has triggered strong reactions from ruling partners - CPN-Maoist Centre, Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) and CPN-Unified Socialist. According to Maoist Centre, Prime Minister Prachanda would face the parliament and not resign now. It has termed the NC-UML alliance unusual and unnatural, arguing that it would put the country on the regressive path. The RSP said that the new alliance was forged after the government decided to investigate into the corruption cases involving the influential figures. The Unified Socialist described it an opportunism and insisted that democracy needed a strong opposition.

However, the fringe parties such as Janata Samajbadi Party, Nepal, (JSP-N), Loktantrik Samajbadi Party (LSP) and Janamat Party said they were positive to be the part of the new coalition. The UML and Maoist Centre had formed their alliance four months ago but the increasing misunderstanding between them led to its disbanding. The leaders of both left parties used to say that their partnership would continue till the next general elections. UML's deputy general secretary Pradeep Kumar Gyawali disclosed that the new situation emerged after PM Prachanda approached the NC to constitute a national consensus government. But the largest party rejected the proposal and started the negotiations with the UML for the purpose.

The breakdown of UML-Maoist alliance shows that the political parties need to nurture the coalition culture with a mechanism to iron out their differences that surface when they hold different views and stances in handling the affairs of the state. News reports have said that the NC and UML that had a history of working together in the government in the past are in the mood of the changing provisions related to the proportional representation (PR) electoral system. They consider it as a source of instability but PR is an important tool to bring the representatives from Dalits, women and marginalised groups into the mainstream politics. Removing this provision might invite protests from the diverse communities.

Any constitutional amendments require two-thirds majority in the parliament. But the constitution should not be amended on the basis of numerical strength alone. There should be the consent of broad section of the populace. Virtually, all political parties should come to common ground for this initiative. Without securing the support of the Maoist Centre, the third largest force in the House, constitution amendment will not be possible. No matter which alliance holds the reins of the government, constitutional norms and values must not be underestimated.

Perils Of Urban Traffic

AJITA RIJAL

It was a typical bustling late afternoon in Kathmandu, and I was riding my scooter from office to home through the chaotic traffic. The constant noise of horns, the shouts of vendors, and the endless stream of vehicles made for a busy and familiar scene. Little did I know, my day was about to take a dramatic turn.

As I approached a busy intersection on the Ring Road, a motorcycle overtook me from the wrong side. The bike carried a pillion rider, holding a wide flat-screen TV, precariously perched on the back seat. As the motorbike overtook me, the TV swung and hit me, knocking me off my scooter. As I fell on the asphalt, I found my heart beating faster. I barely noticed the bruise on my right leg as I tried to understand what had happened.

My scooter lay on its side, petrol leaking on the ground. However, the pedestrians surrounded me, indifferent to my plight. They hurried past me, the drivers honked impatiently, and no passers-by stopped to offer help. It was a reminder of the apathetic nature of urban life.

As I tried to muster the strength to stand, I saw the Pathao driver — the same one whose pillion rider had struck me — rush to my side. His face was a mix of worry and guilt as he bent down to help me up. "Are you okay?" he asked.

I nodded, wincing as I tried to put weight on my bruised leg. Before we could exchange more words, a traffic police officer arrived at the scene. His stern expression suggested he had seen countless accidents like this one. He immediately asked for our documents; his tone was curt and detached. The Pathao driver and I provided a bluebook and license. The officer scrutinised them and then turned to me. "You need to get that leg checked," he said, pointing to a nearby Metro Hospital. "Go now."

The frustration was running within me. The real culprit, in my eyes, was the pillion rider and his ill-judged decision to transport such a large item in such an unsafe manner. Yet, there was no system in place to address this. There is no accountability and no clear delineation of fault.

I limped to the hospital, the Pathao driver following behind, still murmuring apologies. The traffic police officer remained at the scene, directing the ever-flowing river of vehicles. As I waited for my turn in the emergency room, I couldn't help but reflect on the randomness of urban accidents. In a city where rules often seem optional and chaos reigns supreme, there's no straightforward way to determine fault or seek recompense.

The system, or lack thereof, left victims like me enduring not just physical pain but also a navigating labyrinth of bureaucratic hassles. Despite the minor nature of my injuries, the incident left a lasting impression—a distinct reminder of the fragility of order amid urban chaos. As I hobbled out of the hospital later that day, I couldn't shake the feeling that the streets of Kathmandu had revealed yet another of their countless, unpredictable stories.

Civic Actions Key To Curbing Corruption

Mukti Rijal



Of the seven hundred fifty three local governments, most of them have unveiled their annual budget last week according to the provision stipulated by law. However, around forty local governments have failed to deliver their annual budget owing to internal governments. Even the annual budget endorsement of the Kathmandu metropolitan city for the upcoming year is also deadlocked due to political and perspectival differences. Almost two years have elapsed since democratic local elections was held in 2079 B.S. which had imparted a fresh vigour into the body politic of local democracy in Nepal.

It had given rise to a new optimism and hope for democratic renewal and rejuvenation of democratic institutions in the country. Local elections did also pose a kind of challenge to the traditional political parties which do keep guarding zealously the traditional pattern of organisational ethos and leadership. The local elections had signaled that the parties could lose their relevance and meaning should they fail to attend and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people in an accountable and democratic way.

Development agenda

The surprising victory of the independent candidates such as Balen Shah in Kathmandu metropolis, Gopal Hamal in Dhangadhi, and Harka Rai in Dharan had sent the message that the voters and constituents can rise above the partisan alignment and throw their full weight behind the candidates who has a convincing message for delivery and demonstrate their commitment to integrity and accountability. Another strong indication that can be inferred from the elections results is that people no longer vote along the geographical and ethnic divide, and they seem to be more interested in governance and development agenda than in the ethnic and communal cleavages, as harped by the political leaders time and again.

Moreover, the local polls had confirmed that the local government executives who had failed to perform and deliver to meet the minimum expectations of the people were badly beaten in the polls. According the analysis of the local elections results held, around sixty to seventy per cent local government executives who made repeat attempt to return to the posts they held for the terms beginning from 2074 B.S. failed to get elected because of their poor performance and delivery record.

In fact, the local government leaders running the municipalities and rural municipalities during the previous tenure had been alleged to be lured into corrupt practices and irregularities. A letter sent by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) to the ministries and authorities concerned recently indicates that municipalities and rural municipalities have degenerated into one of the corrupt agencies in the country. A big horde of complaints indicting the local government leaders directly or indirectly had been registered with the CIAA during the previous fiscal years. This establishes that governance practices at the local level had become weak.

It was largely expected that elected representative would become accountable and governance would improve in a meaningful way compared to the previous period. But the spate of the cases of irregularities and corrupt practices, according to the media reports, did not decline and poor governance at the local level could not be improved. The elected representatives in some cases became so arrogant and errant that there was a persistent tendency to breach laws and rules with impunity.

> Local citizens should also be substantively encouraged and empowered to have a meaningful space to engage with local government through hearings, audits and consultations.

Some local governments have been reported to be spending money in projects which had not been discussed and endorsed by the local assembly. Not only the equalisation grants but conditional grants provided by the Centre had also been misused at many local governments. However, these allegations leveled against the local governments had been brushed aside by the local government authorities time and again. It must be thus admitted that there are several public finance management related challenges and risks, including fiscal indiscipline at the local level. Though financial laws and regulations are enacted to enforce fiscal discipline, they are not fully complied and followed.

An analysis of the budget data confirms poor prioritisation of projects and programmes, leading to spending in non-prioritised areas and sectors. Also, several projects had been listed under priority projects and were considered and approved more on political grounds than on strategic importance. Moreover, poor internal control and weak enforcement of corrective measures against irregularities constitute the challenges to aggravate fiduciary and corruption risks at the local level.

Capacity development

Given the substantial number of public finance management-related challenges and risks at the local level, both the elected and non-elected officials at the local level need to ensure that such risks are overcome, corrupt practices fully discouraged and fought off. Besides the measures to enforce fiscal discipline, there is a need to build capacity of local governments both at the organisational and individual level. Such capacity development actions need to be implemented thorough assessment of the needs, obligations and expectations. The present government in its policy and programmes and budget statement announced last month has talked at length about the programmes for capacity development of local governments.

But such initiatives should be designed in such way that they are demand-driven and result oriented. Likewise, there is a need for digitisation of the public finance management system, including the information and asset management systems to reduce the risks of irregularities and wasteful expenditure of resources. In addition to it, local citizens should also be substantively encouraged and empowered to have a meaningful space to engage with local government through hearings, audits and consultations to set local governance and development agenda and to seek accountability and responsiveness from the local authorities.

(The author is presently associated with Policy Research Institute (PRI) as a senior research fellow. rijalmukti@gmail.com)

Making Electoral Process Frugal

Rabindra Adhikary



When asked what the most beautiful aspect of democracy is, one would likely cite the election. Transitioning from the era of tyrannical Rana regime to this freedom to vote in a republic, the impoverished hoi polloi struggling to make their ends meet face similar kinds of livelihood challenges now as they did in the past. It should be sounding quite surprising that the election process is complex that hinders common people from coming to the leadership position. Though the role of public voting is highly revered, manipulation of its dark side is really rotting away the hard-earned beauty of republicanism and here is an alternative to minimise that rot.

As the election is announced or even before that, party cadres race to get tickets of candidacy. The purported basis of awarding a ticket is the nonpareil contribution to the party but in today's context, it is loud and clear that there is money involved if a stranger makes a lateral entry into the party, those with fat purse get a token for fighting in the election. Hence, as a party determines its candidate, it is not unlikely that the candidate has already spent hundreds of thousands of rupees that he ought to recoup later.

Exorbitant cost

There is also an exorbitant cost on the part of the government when it comes to elections. For a small budget country like us, whose almost 40 per cent of national budget is sourced from debts and grants, are not the expenses made in the elections too much of a financial burden to afford?

But we have a solution for that and the name of the solution is sortition, in which a random selection of one candidate is carried out from a pool of listed applicants. Someone may readily ridicule me when I propose sortition as a better alternative to voting, especially in this changing era when democracy is thought to be the best and common political practice worldwide wherein an elected candidate gets a chance to govern. We may well take a risk for more positive changes to wipe out many blemishes for one good thing, for sortition is by no means an inferior practice.

Dating back to the 6th Century BC in Athens political positions were filled by sortition, which finds its applicability well even today in America's court where jurors are selected randomly from a pool of qualified citizens. In many instances, democratic lottery is the well-practiced device to cut down corruption from the roots.

The Election Commission (EC) can make definite eligibility criteria for different tiers of candidates to formally solicit the applications. We can first skim applicants in four different aspects: education, experience, knowledge and situational tasks. The assessment can be done by EC, Public Service Commission or by forming an independent body of experts under EC. For example, to be eligible for the candidate of House of Representatives (HoRs), at least a bachelor degree of education and two years of formal work experience in the social sector would be mandated.

> For those who contend that sortition deflowers one of the beauties of hard-earned democracy, we can at least propose this approach to by-elections and snap election as a litmus test.

The applicants who meet these criteria will be furthered to sit for a written examination on the general knowledge about current affairs, history, geography, laws and constitution. The last section would be an interview to check the intuition and readiness for certain kinds of unprecedented situations. The remaining candidates after crossing these stages are comparably competent for the post of HoRs from which we will have to sort out one lucky winner through a lottery. This nourishes public attitude to seek skills and knowledge instead of joining politics as a full-time loyal follower.

Understandably, big party candidates flood money to the have-nots in electioneering far beyond the limit — set by EC — as they siphon funds from the haves. Thus, the candidate is under an obligation of returning the money or favour to those who funded him. Nonetheless, sortition completely exterminates the expenditure of the election not only of the competitors but also of the government. It, thus, proactively controls the socio-political hazards of inflation, national trade-deficits, corruption, cronyism and favoritism.

Traits of leaders

Additionally, there are particular traits of leaders we elect through public voting. They seem to be vociferous, narcissistic and constantly hungry for power. The leader now in power had been a leader since childhood in school groups or play teams. This progressive development of exercising power since childhood has already corrupted the individual as he feels himself the 'chosen one.' Whereas, the randomly selected person attributes his leadership solely to the luck and thus does not exude the pride that undermines the values of others. They also tend to listen to others before coming to the decision. These leaders are best fit for a thriving democracy like us like never before.

Therefore, to finally minimise the exorbitant ballot expenditure in each 5-year cycle, we can first start practicing sortition from a small social unit like school management committee, district coordination committee and after analysing their repercussions, we can adopt it to the mass election which will ensure a new face in the leadership arena. For those who contend that sortition deflowers one of the beauties of hard-earned democracy, we can at least propose this approach to by-elections and snap election as a litmus test.

(Adhikary is Banepa based writer, ravinems@gmail.com)

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

July 4, 1974

New Education Plan Lauded

Biratnagar, July 3: Ex-Prime Minister Matrika Prasad Koirala has said that the new education plan of the country was prepared duly taking into consideration the interests of all sections of Nepalese society, reports RSS.

CORRIGENDUM

The Editorial published on Monday, July 1, 2024 was inadvertently published on Wednesday, July 3 issue of The Rising Nepal. The error is regretted.

- Editor

READER'S MAIL

Stay Safe From Dengue



This is in reference to the news report titled *"35 people infected with dengue in Bagmati Province"* this daily carried on July 3. According to the report, dengue cases have been steadily increasing in the province, with Kathmandu being the worst affected with known 18 cases.

Though the disease is mostly non-fatal, some people develop severe dengue and need care in a hospital. And in some severe cases, it can be even fatal. In August-September period of 2022, how life-threatening it can be became evident after beds in many hospitals, particularly in the Kathmandu Valley, were filled with dengue patients. Dozens died as a result.

It also highlighted a worrying trend: places in higher elevation, where the disease was unheard of, cases were not only plentiful, but people were dying of it. Warming climate is making our hilly and even mountainous areas hospitable place for dengue-causing mosquito to migrate to these places.

As dengue continues to become widespread, taking precautionary measures can effectively keep the threat at bay.

Santosh Gaire
Tamghas, Gulmi

TAILPIECE

A man in Amsterdam felt that he needed to confess, so he went to his priest.

"Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned," he said. "During World War II, I hid a refugee in my attic."

"Well," said the priest. "That's not a sin."

"But I made him agree to pay me $20 for every week he stayed," the man explained.

"I admit that wasn't good, but you did it for a good cause," the priest replied.

"Oh, thank you, Father. That eases my mind," the man said. "I have one more question, though."

"What is that, my son?" the priest inquired.

"Do I have to tell him the war is over?"

Hurricane Beryl roars toward Jamaica

AP
Kingston, Jamaica, July 3

Hurricane Beryl was roaring toward Jamaica on Wednesday, with islanders scrambling to make preparations after the powerful Category 4 storm earlier killed at least six people and caused significant damage in the southeast Caribbean.

In Kingston, people boarded up windows, fishermen pulled their boats out of the water before sitting around a table to play dominoes beside a bay, and workers dismantled roadside advertising boards to protect them from the expected lashing winds to come.

A hurricane warning was in effect for Jamaica, Grand Cayman, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. Beryl was forecast to weaken slightly over the next day or two, but still be at or near major-hurricane strength when it passes near or over Jamaica on Wednesday, near the Cayman Islands on Thursday and into Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula on Friday, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Centre.

A hurricane watch was in effect for Haiti's southern coast and the Yucatan's east coast. Belize issued a tropical storm watch stretching south from its border with Mexico to Belize City.

Late Monday, Beryl became the earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic and peaked at winds of 165 mph (270 kph) Tuesday before weakening to a still-destructive Category 4. Early Wednesday, the storm was about 185 miles (300 kilometres) east-southeast of Kingston. It had maximum sustained winds of 145 mph (230 kph) and was moving west-northwest at 20 mph (31 kph), the centre said.

Beryl was expected to bring life-threatening winds and storm surge to Jamaica, where officials warned residents in flood-prone areas to prepare for evacuation.



PHOTO: AP

Evacuees from Union Island arrive in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tuesday, July 2, 2024. The island, in the Grenadines archipelago, was hit by Hurricane Beryl.

"I am encouraging all Jamaicans to take the hurricane as a serious threat," Prime Minister Andrew Holness said in a public address Tuesday. "It is, however, not a time to panic."

In Miami, U.S. National Hurricane centre Director Michael Brennan said Jamaica appears to be in the direct path of Beryl. He urged residents to find a safe place to shelter and stay there through Wednesday.

"We are most concerned about Jamaica, where we are expecting the core of a major hurricane to pass near or over the island," he said in an online briefing.

Storm surge of 6-9 feet (1.8 to 2.7 meters) above typical tide levels are likely in Jamaica, as well as heavy rainfall.

A tropical storm warning was in place for the entire southern coast of Hispaniola, an island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

As Beryl barrelled through the Caribbean Sea, rescue crews in southeastern islands fanned out to determine the extent of the damage the hurricane inflicted on Carriacou, an island in Grenada.

Three people were reported killed in Grenada and Carriacou and another in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, officials said. Two other deaths were reported in northern Venezuela, where five people are missing, officials said. About 25,000 people in that area also were affected by heavy rainfall from Beryl.

Stampede at religious event in India kills at least 116 people

AP
Lucknow, India, July 3

Thousands of people at a religious gathering in India rushed to leave a makeshift tent, setting off a stampede Tuesday that killed at least 116 people and injured scores, officials said.

It was not immediately clear what triggered the panic following an event with a Hindu guru known locally as Bhole Baba. Local news reports cited authorities who said heat and suffocation in the tent could have been a factor. Video of the aftermath showed the structure appeared to have collapsed.

At least 116 people died, most of them women and children, said Prashant Kumar, the director-general of police in northern India's state of Uttar Pradesh, where the stampede occurred.

More than 80 others were injured and admitted to hospitals, senior police officer Shalabh Mathur said.

"People started falling one upon another, one upon another. Those who were crushed died. People there pulled them out," witness Shakuntala Devi told the Press Trust of India news agency.

Relatives wailed in distress as bodies of the dead, placed on stretchers and covered in white sheets, lined the grounds of a local hospital. A bus that arrived there carried more victims, whose bodies were lying on the seats inside.

Deadly stampedes are relatively common around Indian religious festivals, where large crowds gather in small areas with shoddy infrastructure and few safety measures.

Police officer Rajesh Singh said there was likely overcrowding at the event in a village in Hathras district about 350 kilometres (220 miles) southwest of the state capital, Lucknow.

Initial reports said organizers had permission to host about 5,000 people, but more than 15,000 came for the event by the Hindu preacher, who used to be a police officer in the state before he left his job to give religious sermons. He has led other such gatherings over the last two decades.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered condolences to the families of the dead and said the federal government was working with state authorities to ensure the injured received help.

Uttar Pradesh's chief minister, Yogi Adityanath, called the stampede "heart-wrenching" in a post on X. He said authorities were investigating.

"Look what happened and how many people have lost their lives. Will anyone be accountable?" Rajesh Kumar Jha, a member of parliament, told reporters. He said the stampede was a failure by the state and federal governments to manage large crowds, adding that "people will keep on dying" if authorities do not take safety protocols seriously enough.

Egypt swears in new Cabinet as mounting challenges fuel public discontent

AP
Cairo, July 3

Egypt's new Cabinet was sworn in Wednesday as the country faces an ailing economy and raging conflicts in neighbouring nations.

The new Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly, who has been in office since 2018, included major changes, particularly in the defense and economy-related portfolios. Some ministers, including those in charge of police and tourism, remain in place.

The change comes as the country faces mounting public discontent following years of economic mismanagement, the coronavirus pandemic and the fallout of the wars in Europe and the Middle East.

In addition, a Western-backed reform program — adopted in 2016 and backed by President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi — has caused prices to soar due to austerity measures. Nearly 30% of Egyptians currently live in poverty, according to official figures.

Mohamed Maait, the country's finance minister since 2018, was replaced by his deputy Ahmed Kouchouk, a former World Bank economist who played a major role in implementing a reform program with the International Monetary Fund.

Earlier this year, the government floated the pound and sharply increased the main interest rate. Commercial banks are now trading the U.S. currency at more than 47 pounds, up from about 31 pounds. The measures are meant to combat ballooning inflation and attract foreign investment.

This also came as attacks by Yemen's Houthis on shipping routes in the Red Sea have slashed Suez Canal revenues.

Egypt has been struggling to revive the lucrative tourism sector decimated by years of turmoil, the pandemic and most recently the war in Europe and the Middle East. In the new Cabinet, Sherif Fathy, a former civil aviation minister, replaced Ahmed Issa as Tourism and Antiquities Minister in the new government.

Another main point of contention is the recurring power cuts during the soaring heat of summer in the country of over 106 million people. Consequently, Mahmoud Esmat was named to oversee the electricity ministry.

As conflicts rage in Gaza, Libya and Sudan a key portfolio of Egyptian diplomatic leadership is the foreign ministry. Badr Abdelatty, who has acted as Egypt's envoy to European countries including Germany and Belgium, has been named Foreign and Migration Minister. The 58-year-old diplomat replaced Sameh Shoukry, 72, who led the country's diplomacy for the past decade.

Also, Gen. Abdel-Majeed Sakr replaced Gen. Mohamed Zaki who was on top of the defence portfolio since June 2018.

The ministers, their deputies, and provincial governors took the oath in a presidential palace in Cairo before President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, elected in December for a third six-year term. El-Sissi tapped Madbouly to form the new government last month.

It comes three months after el-Sissi was sworn in for his third term. The former defense minister was first elected president in mid-2014, and then reelected in 2018. A year later, constitutional amendments, passed in a general referendum, added two years to el-Sissi's second term, and allowed him to run for a third, six-year term.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation holding summit in Kazakhstan

AP
Beijing, July 3

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping will be meeting for the second time in as many months as they visit Kazakhstan for a session of an international group founded to counter Western alliances.

Putin and Xi last got together in May when the Kremlin leader visited Beijing to underscore their close partnership that opposes the U.S.-led democratic order and seeks to promote a more "multipolar" world.

Now they'll be holding meetings amid the annual session of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Wednesday and Thursday in the Kazakh capital of Astana. A look at the summit:

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established in 2001 by China and Russia to discuss security concerns in Central Asia and the wider region, Other members are Iran, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Observer states and dialogue partners include Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Besides Putin and Xi, and summit host President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, other leaders there will be Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, President Emomali Rakhmon of Tajikistan, and President Sadyr Zhaparov of Kyrgyzstan. President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus will attend because his nation is becoming a full member.

Iran is still choosing a successor to President Ebrahim Raisi, killed in a helicopter crash in May, with a runoff election Friday, so acting President Mohammad Mokhbar will attend.



FILE PHOTO: AP

Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, and Russian President Vladimir Putin look toward each other as they shake hands prior to their talks in Beijing, China, Thursday, May 16, 2024.

Other guests of the SCO include President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan.

Also present will be U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, who is visiting Central Asia. Guterres wants "to position the U.N. as an inclusive organization that's talking to all the big clubs," said Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India is sending his foreign minister. Indian media reports speculated the recently reelected Modi was busy with the parliament session that began last week. He attended the recent Group of Seven summit in Italy, and some reports also speculated he wants to balance India's relationship with Russia and the West.

Putin wants to show that Russia is not isolated over Western sanctions from the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

An arrest warrant has been issued for him by the International Criminal Court for war crimes, accusing him of personal responsibility for abductions of children from Ukraine. Kazakhstan is not party to the Rome Statute and thus is not obliged to arrest him.

For Putin, the meeting is about "prestige and the symbolic optics that he's not alone," Gabuev said.

The meeting is another chance for Putin and Xi to demonstrate the strong personal ties in their "strategic partnership" as they both face soaring tensions with the West.

PRISM

Shelley's 'Frankenstein' auctioned for $843,750

New York: The only privately-owned first edition of Mary Shelley's pioneering horror novel Frankenstein was auctioned for a hair-raising sum of $843,750.

The 1818 first edition of Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus, published anonymously in three pink-boarded volumes, was sold by Heritage Auctions alongside other prized tomes from The William A. Strutz Library.

"This was a single-owner sale 60 years in the making, and the results are a true testament to a great collector and a market that recognized the treasures assembled by William Strutz," Francis Wahlgren, Heritage Auctions' international director of Rare Books & Manuscripts, said in a news release. The copy of Frankenstein is one of only three pink boarded first editions known to still exist, and the only one in private hands. The other two reside in the Pforzheimer and Berg Collections at the New York Public Library.

Family searching for emu on the loose

South Carolina: Members of a South Carolina family are on the hunt for an escaped emu that has become a local celebrity on social media.

Brad Cieluch said two emus initially escaped from his family's farm in Marlboro County about three weeks ago, and one of the birds was located in the Clio area during the weekend.

He said the remaining bird is believed to be nearby, but he and his family have thus far not been able to find it.

"We're going out every chance we can to try and get it," Cieluch told WSPA-TV. "The more people that are around it, it gets antsy. So it's going to be me and my father-in-law all day on Saturday with treats."

He said the missing bird was last spotted near Highway 38, in the Blenheim area.

Cieluch said he is taking measures to make sure the emus don't escape again.

(Agencies)

Afghan woman wanted to be a doctor, now makes pickles

AP
Kabul, Afghanistan, July 3

Frozan Ahmadzai is one of 200,000 Afghan women who have the Taliban's permission to work. She should have graduated from university this year in pursuit of her dream of becoming a doctor, but the Taliban have barred women from higher education and excluded them from many jobs.

Now, instead of suturing, she sews in a basement in Kabul. Instead of administering medication, she makes pickles.

Half of Afghanistan's population now finds itself locked out of the freedom to work at a time when the country's economy is worse than ever.

Few jobs are still available to women. They include tailoring and making food, which the 33-year-old Ahmadzai now does along with women who once were teachers or aspired to be one.

Women's participation in the workforce in Afghanistan, always limited by conservative cultural beliefs, was 14.8% in 2021, before the Taliban seized power and imposed harsh restrictions on women and girls. They include banning female education beyond sixth grade, barring women from public spaces like parks, and enforcing dress codes.

Women's participation in the workforce was down to 4.8% in 2023, according to World Bank data.

Ahmadzai's eyes flare when talking about the new reality for Afghan women. "We are only looking for a way to escape," she said, referring to the work in the basement. It's a step, at least, beyond being confined at home.

But profits are slim for her and her 50 colleagues in the collective. In a good month, the pickle-making and tailoring businesses bring in around 30,000 afghanis ($426).

The women also have other complaints familiar to anyone in Afghanistan: The rent and utility bills are high. The sewing machines are old-fashioned. The electricity supply is erratic. Local retailers don't compensate them fairly. They don't receive support from banks or local authorities to help their businesses grow.

Just obtaining permission from the Taliban to work is challenging for women, though under Afghan labour laws, the process for work permits ought to be the same for both sexes.



PHOTO: AP

An Afghan woman tailor works with a sewing machine in the Afghan Women Business Hub in Kabul, Afghanistan, Tuesday, July 2, 2024.

The ministry responsible for issuing permits has banned women from its premises, setting up a female-only office elsewhere. It's to "speed things up and make things easier" for women, said a spokesman for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Samiullah Ebrahimi.

There, women submit their paperwork, including their national identity card, a cover letter and a health certificate from a private clinic. That's assuming they have the documents along with the money to cover any costs. It also assumes they can move around without being harassed if unaccompanied by a male guardian.

Last year, a top United Nations official said Afghanistan had become the most repressive country in the world for women and girls. Roza Otunbayeva, head of the U.N. political mission in Afghanistan, said that while the country needed to recover from decades of war, half of its potential doctors, scientists, journalists and politicians were "shut away in their homes, their dreams crushed and their talents confiscated."

The Taliban have a different view. They have tried to provide women with a "safe, secure and separate" working environment in line with Islamic values and Afghan traditions in sectors where women's work is needed, according to ministry spokesman Ebrahimi. They can work in retail or hospitality, but it must be a female-only setting.

TODAY IN HISTORY

1754 – French and Indian War: George Washington surrenders Fort Necessity to French forces.
1775 – American Revolutionary War: George Washington takes command of the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts.
1886 – The New-York Tribune becomes the first newspaper to use a linotype machine, eliminating typesetting by hand.
1890 – Idaho is admitted as the 43rd U.S. state.
1938 – United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicates the Eternal Light Peace Memorial and lights the eternal flame at Gettysburg Battlefield.
1970 – The Troubles: The "Falls Curfew" begins in Belfast, Northern Ireland.
1996 – British Prime Minister John Major announced the Stone of Scone would be returned to Scotland.



PHOTO: SAGAR BASNET/TRN

Putting up their umbrellas, people go to their destinations under the downpour of Wednesday afternoon at Basantapur, Kathmandu.

School provides hair-cutting training to students in Beni

BY THAKUR PRASAD ACHARYA
Myagdi, July 3



Prakash Secondary School in Beni has provided hair-cutting training to its students. The school conducted training for students from grades 7 to 10 under the practical learning 'We Can, We Will' programme of Beni Municipality.

According to Beni Municipality Mayor Surat KC, the municipality has been organising various programmes to provide practical and life skills to students, recognising the importance of academic knowledge and practical and vocational skills.

Lekh Bahadur Hamal, headmaster of Prakash Secondary School, informed that the training was very beneficial. He said, "Within two weeks of the training, students have already developed skills of hair cutting." The school conducts two hours of training daily after regular classes.

Training instructor Abhishek Shrestha said that the students who found it difficult to hold and use scissors initially had gradually mastered cutting hair. He said, "At present, students up to class 10 have learned to cut their hair. As the students of class 11 and 12 also want to take the training, there is a plan to conduct the training for them as well."

Saruna Pun, a student from class 8, who aims to become a beautician in the future, said that she enrolled in the training to learn hair cutting skills.

Headmaster Hamal said that the training also aimed to develop students' interests, capabilities and competencies beyond regular academics.

In the current fiscal year, Beni Municipality has allocated Rs. 100,000 to each of the 16 community secondary schools for conducting various skill-based training programmes under the 'We Can, We Will'. These programmes include painting, plumbing, house wiring and hair-cutting training among others. Students who have received this training have also been involved in addressing community issues related to household and local maintenance.

Mayor KC said the municipality had signed agreements with schools that had chosen training fields according to students' interests. He informed that the programme was conducted to make students self-reliant upon graduating from grade 12. He also pointed out the necessity of practical education along with theoretical knowledge.

Human trafficking survivors demand policies to address their needs

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, July 3

Survivors of human trafficking have pointed out the need to formulate policies to address their needs.

"We are suffering from injustice. We got sold. It is like someone beating you and escaping, and you are being blamed for having been beaten. Our society still has this distorted, unjust and inhuman perspective about us, which still prevents us from coming openly," they shared their plight.

The survivors of human trafficking shared this on Wednesday at a research workshop on participatory research involving women survivors (living with HIV/AIDS) of human trafficking.

Charimaya Tamang, President of Shakti Samuha, viewed that social integration was very important for the survivors and that challenges have mounted with the new trend of human trafficking.

Dr. Rita Dhungel, one of the principal investigators of the research team, informed that the survivors would be involved in the research as co-researchers which will help them include their own experiences and transform themselves as they talk with other survivors during the research.

At first, 50 survivors will be trained on data/experience collection and they will reach out to survivors in Kathmandu and Makawanpur of Bagmati province and Dhanusha district of Madhesh province.

"Our approach is community action research and we wish to develop effective community leadership strategies to address challenges faced by the survivors," she said. Dr. Dhungel, who is an assistant professor at the University of Fraser Valley, Canada.

Japan's top court orders compensation for forced sterilization

AP
Tokyo, July 3

In a landmark decision, Japan's Supreme Court ordered the government Wednesday to pay suitable compensation to about a dozen victims who were forcibly sterilized under a now-defunct Eugenics Protection Law that was designed to eliminate offspring of people with disabilities.

An estimated 25,000 people were sterilized between the 1950s and 1970s without consent to "prevent the birth of poor-quality descendants" under law, described by plaintiffs' lawyers as "the biggest human rights violation in the post-war era" in Japan.

The Supreme Court said the 1948 eugenics law was unconstitutional and rejected the government's claim that the 20-year statute of limitations should prevent it from paying restitution.

Wednesday's decision involved 11 of the 39 plaintiffs who fought at five lower courts across Japan to get their case heard by the country's top court. Cases involving the other litigants are still pending.

The plaintiffs, a number of them in wheelchairs, held up signs saying "thank you" and "victory" outside the court after the ruling. "I couldn't be happier and I could have never done this alone," said an 81-year-old plaintiff in Tokyo who uses the pseudonym Saburo Kita.

Kita said he was sterilized in 1957 at age of 14 when he lived in an orphanage. He told his wife his long-buried secret just before she died several years ago, adding that he regretted their inability to have children because of him.

Judge Saburo Tokura ruled that sterilization surgeries were performed "with no rational reasons" and in clear discrimination against the plaintiffs because of their disability, according to court documents released by their lawyers.

The court also said the procedure severely violated their dignity, adding that the continuous discrimination and severe violation of human rights for 48 years at the hands of the government was a very serious matter.

In 2019, in response to several lower court rulings holding it accountable, the government offered one-time redress money of 3.2 million yen ($19,800) to each plaintiff. However, the supreme court declared Wednesday the compensation was insufficient.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida expressed "sincere regret and heartfelt apology" to the victims and said he hoped to meet the plaintiffs to apologize in person. Kishida said the government will consider a new compensation scheme.

"The eugenics protection law has created a society that considers people with disabilities as 'inferior people.' We call on the society to further promote effort toward eliminating prejudice and discrimination in response to the ruling," said plaintiffs' lawyers Koji Niizato and Takehiko Nishimura said in a statement.

About 10,000 leprosy patients were also among those who underwent sterilization procedures while being confined in isolated institutions. In 1996, the leprosy prevention law was abolished, allowing them to be part of society.

The government has offered them compensation and an apology for its forced isolation policy.

In addition to the forced sterilizations at the time, more than 8,000 others were sterilized with consent, though likely under pressure, while nearly 60,000 women had abortions because of hereditary illnesses.

In October, the Supreme Court also ruled that a law requiring transgender people to undergo sterilization to change their gender on official documents was unconstitutional, a landmark verdict welcomed by human rights advocates as a sign of growing acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights.

Province Chief Miya suggests review of provincial capital

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Dipayal July 3

Province Chief of Sudhurpashchim, Najir Miya, has proposed reconsidering the location of the province's capital. Speaking at an event organised by the Federation of Nepali Journalists, Doti, on Wednesday, Province Chief Miya emphasised the need to rethink the capital decision in light of ongoing development discussions.

"Other provinces are still deciding on their capitals, focusing on development programmes," Miya stated. "There was a proposal to establish the capital but progress has stalled which is unfortunate."

He highlighted that a legal case regarding the capital's decision is pending in the court. He expressed concern that public attention was currently more fixated on the capital issue than on developmental initiatives. In the beginning, Dipayal was designated as the regional headquarters, hosting the Provincial High Court.

"The High Court is located in Dipayal because it should be situated in the same place as the capital," Miya said. "Dipayal is an ideal location with numerous government structures, including the assembly hall centrally located within the province."

Miya said that elected representatives have the authority to decide the capital's location, suggesting that a new decision could be taken. "The capital will be determined by a two-thirds majority in parliament," he said. "Elected representatives must act with integrity. While nothing has gone wrong yet there's still the possibility of shifting the capital to Dipayal or another area. A commission could also decide this by a two-thirds majority."

Addressing journalists' questions, Miya mentioned that the constitution could be amended as needed. He also referred to a Supreme Court verdict, stating that the House cannot be dissolved if there is potential to form a new government. He recalled how the Supreme Court dismissed a dissolution order in 2021.

Miya said that the political instability in the country has delayed law formulation. "Political parties are preoccupied with retaining or toppling the government, which is a significant misfortune for the country," he lamented.

Madhes Academy discusses promotion of languages

BY DHIRENDRA PRASAD SHAH
Janakpur, July 3

Madhes Academy has started discussions on establishing a comprehensive dictionary of languages spoken in Madhes Province.

The Academy was formed by the Madhes Province government for the preservation, promotion and translation of language, literature, arts, culture, music and drama.

Ram Bharos Kapadi, Chairman of the Academy, informed that they had initiated discussions on creating an inclusive dictionary, aimed at including words and their meanings from numerically spoken languages within the geographical area of Madhes Province. He said that the dictionary will primarily use Maithili as its base language, with words and meanings adapted into other languages.

Dinesh Kumar Yadav, a member of the Academy, informed that linguistic experts had suggested creating an inclusive dictionary with foundational languages spoken in the province such as Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu and others which are also nationally recognised. They also pointed out the importance of timing and resource management in creating the dictionary.

Stating that Maithili will be the primary language of the dictionary, he said that they would include translations into Maithili to English, Bajjika, Magahi and Bhojpuri. He said that by identifying the geographical and cultural recognition of Maithili, the dictionary would encompass languages spoken and their respective meanings across different regions.

During the two-day workshop, linguist Professor Ramavatar Yadav suggested studying the history of previous dictionaries to review and ensure their accuracy. He pointed out the necessity of including grammatical, gender-specific language usage, developing a comprehensive questionnaire, providing examples in the questionnaire and arranging training for questionnaire development.

Dr. Gopal Thakur, Chairman of the Language Commission, said that regional, grammatical and phonetic terms should be used in the dictionary along with the cross-frequency and cross-reference. Stating that our society had been multilingual from the beginning, he said that the language spoken and understood in each place was their language.

Tribhuvan University's Professor Dan Raj Regmi suggested that compiling words from the Maithili language should be based on various principles when selecting words. He pointed out the need to study how Janakpur could be a focal point and interpret other languages.

Press Coordinator of the office of Vice President Dinesh Yadav suggested that the dictionary should be in digital format, and its purpose, target audience, and intended language should be clearly defined.

Nepal prepares its first...

Under Secretary and member of the technical committee, Narayan Timilsina, said that the report also called for the promotion of privacy protection, transparency, and accountability, enhancing research, investment, and collaboration in AI usage.

The report emphasises identifying existing human resource and enhancing their capabilities, suggesting that the availability of skilled personnel in both public and private sectors is crucial for AI development, usage, and promotion.

Therefore, it recommends focusing on human capital development in this field, said Timilsina.

The report suggests utilising AI in various sectors such as disease prevention and treatment, financial services and analysis, construction and production, education and development, communication and experience enhancement, organisational management, government services, social security, sports, research and development, agriculture, and tourism.

It states, "The current state of the AI development ecosystem in Nepal, potential areas for promotion, research and development capacities, and the way forward need to be assessed."

The national strategy should set future plans for major sectors like healthcare, agriculture, education, smart cities, infrastructure, smart mobility, and transportation.

The AI strategy should include data and digital infrastructure, financial arrangements to accelerate AI start-ups, research and development, ethics, data privacy, security and regulation, skill and capacity building for human resources, technology industrialisation, and sectoral initiatives, as suggested by the report.

Under Secretary Timilsina said that the report encompasses Nepal's future direction based on the study of AI background, concept, ecosystem, basic principles, perspectives, objectives, existing state, policy arrangements, institutional and usage status, international practices, and strategies.

The report includes a comparative analysis of AI usage strategies issued by entities like the European Union, United Nations, Nordic-Baltic region, UAE, India, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Singapore, and South Korea.

Tourist arrivals increase...

Former Executive Director of the Nepal Tourism Board, Deepak Raj Joshi, suggested that revising the programme in light of new contexts would be beneficial.

Presenting the action plan outline, the Director of the NTB, Mani Raj Lamichhane, informed that the action plan aimed at developing multi-faceted infrastructure across the country, reviving the tourism sector, restoring tourist arrivals to pre-2019 levels by 2024, achieving an annual 15 per cent increase in tourist arrivals, reaching 3.5 million by 2032, and creating additional one million new jobs in the tourism sector in the next 10 years.

NC welcomes...

The meeting also decided that it would be appropriate for Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' to pave the way for the formation of a new national consensus government with a clear majority of the House of Representatives as per Article 76(2) of the Constitution of Nepal under CPN-UML chairman Oli.

The meeting also mandated various sister organisations of the Nepali Congress to hold their general conventions. The sister organisations are required to hold their conventions by the end of 2024.

Likewise, in Janakpur, Nepali Congress leader and House of Representatives member Arjun Narsingh KC asserted that regardless of who leads the government, Nepali Congress remains responsible.

"The Congress must transition from an unstable government to a beacon of hope," said KC, during a press conference organised by the Nepal Press Union Dhanusha branch on Wednesday.

KC highlighted the need to amend the constitution to reflect the people's sentiments. "The constitution needs amendment to offer new solutions," he said. The new coalition, according to KC, is focused on constitutional amendments and respects all parties' opinions.

He argued that the current proportional electoral system was the main cause of political instability and should be abolished. "The proportional system should be removed to stabilise development and politics," he said. KC highlighted the formation of a new alliance as both a challenge and an opportunity for the Nepali Congress.

Kala shines in folk duet music for over two decades



BY RENUKA DHAKAL
Kathmandu, July 3

Kala Lamsal has become a household name among folk duet enthusiasts, captivating audiences with her melodious voice and mesmerising performances for over two decades.

She has been fascinated by folk music since childhood. She was involved in music while she was studying at school.

During her school days, she actively participated in numerous folk duet programmess, securing prizes and increasing her fan base.

She said that she always wears traditional Nepali attire while performing on stage to promote authentic Nepali culture. She started recording songs in 2008 and has sung over 100 songs over the years so far.

She has also collaborated with popular singers like Pashupati Sharma, Khuman Adhikari, Shiva Hamal, Badri Pangeni, and Ramesh BC. She has worked with almost all the well-known folk duet singers.

She specialises in folk songs and recorded 'Marna Paye Birsinthey Ma' in 2008.

She took a break from music for around eight years while working as a government employee. However, she remained passionate about music. Despite her involvement in the government job, she eventually left to pursue her music career full-time.

Though her passion drove her into music, her family was against her pursuing this path, believing that during her school and college life, a music career was not the best choice. They wanted her to follow a more secure profession. However, destiny led her to folk duet music.

She has now performed in about 10 countries and is busy with various festivals across Nepal.

Her next international performance will be in the UK.

The song "Chuche Chuche Raichhau Hauli Pakkai Bahuni Nakai Hera Thaha Huni" in 'Roila Bhaka' helped her gain recognition as Kala Lamsal in the folk duet scene.

Later, she sang 'Patali,' which further boosted her career in music. The success of 'Patali' led to five series of the song. Her folk duet songs like 'Nakai Herda Thaha Huni,' 'Patali,' 'Aina Heri Heri,' 'Dhanko Chamal Dhanakai Chiura,' 'Lahure Aayen,' 'Tiriri Murali Bajyo,' and 'Saili Salala' are some of her hits.

Recognised for her significant contributions to the Nepali folk duet sector, she has received multiple awards and honours.

Lamsal is also a central committee member of the National Folk Duet Academy.

Currently, she is focusing on Teej and Dashain songs. "Nepali folk music is thriving, and folk singers are gaining recognition not only in Nepal but also in international shows," remarked singer Lamsal.

Eddie Murphy's 'every man' hero returns in 'Beverly Hills Cop' sequel



REUTERS
Los Angeles, July 3

After more than a decade of superheroes saving the world on the movie screen, Eddie Murphy is bringing back the character he describes as "every man."

Murphy returns as Axel Foley in "Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F," a new installment in the action comedy franchise that debuted 40 years ago in 1984. The movie lands on Netflix, opens new tab on Wednesday.

"For 10-15 years, everything was CG (computer-generated), big visual effects and superheroes and people saving the day wearing capes and tight suits," Murphy said in an interview.

"I knew eventually it would have to get back to this," he added. "It used to be stuff was character-driven and story-driven and that's going to always work." In the new film, the wise-cracking Foley is working as a detective in Detroit when he learns his estranged daughter is in danger in Beverly Hills. He returns to the city to reconnect with her and help solve a case.

Foley "is not Superman," Murphy said. "He's every man, every guy who doesn't play by the rules. He's the kind of guy you want to have a beer with."

The movie - the fourth in the franchise and the first since 1994 - aims to capture the look and feel of the original without modern special effects. The action takes place through real-life stunts such as a harrowing helicopter chase across Los Angeles.

"What was more difficult was all the physical stuff," Murphy said. "I'm in my 60s now and I did the first one (at) 21 years old, so you can imagine the differences."

Previous stars Judge Reinhold and John Ashton reprise their roles in the film. Newcomers include Kevin Bacon and Joseph Gordon-Levitt. Bacon said he liked the old-school stunts in the new movie, saying he believed it was hard to impress today's audiences with computer-generated effects.

"If you put a truck driving and it knocks the door off a cop car, and you see Joe in the middle saying 'there's no seatbelt', that's like, to me, that's a wow," Bacon said.

"That's much more satisfying, I think, for people now because I think we're just kind of numb to all the other stuff."

Murphy said there had been attempts over the years to resurrect the franchise but none of the scripts had the "emotional hook" of the storyline between Foley and his now-adult daughter.

"The movie is really about this father reconciling with his daughter," Murphy said. "Once we added that to it, everything just fell into place. That's the glue that holds the whole movie together."

New Mexico denies film incentive application on 'Rust' movie

AP
Santa Fe, July 3



Producers of the western film "Rust" may have to forgo a robust economic incentive as they try to sell the film to distributors and fulfil financial obligations to the immediate family of a cinematographer who was fatally shot by Alec Baldwin during rehearsal in 2021. New Mexico tax authorities denied an application this spring by Rust Movie Productions for incentives worth as much as $1.6 million, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press. A late July deadline for producers to appeal the decision is approaching.

Meanwhile, Baldwin is scheduled to go on trial starting next week on an involuntary manslaughter charge in Halyna Hutchins' death. The lead actor and co-producer of "Rust" was pointing a gun at Hutchins when it went off, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza. Melina Spadone, an attorney representing the production company, said the film production tax incentive was going to be used to finance a legal settlement between producers and Hutchins' widower and son. "The denial of the tax credit has disrupted those financial arrangements," said Spadone, a New York- and Los Angeles-based senior counsel at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman. She helped broker the 2022 settlement that rebooted the stalled production of "Rust" in Montana with some of the original cast and crew, including Baldwin and Souza. Filming wrapped up last year. Terms of the settlement are confidential, but producers say finishing the film was meant to honour Hutchins' artistic vision and generate money for her young son. Court documents indicate that settlement payments are up to a year late, as attorneys for Hutchins' widower determine "next steps" that include whether to resume wrongful death litigation or initiate new claims. Legal representatives for Matthew Hutchins did not respond to telephone and email messages seeking comment.

The prosecution of Baldwin and the film's tax incentive application both have financial implications for New Mexico taxpayers. The Santa Fe district attorney's office says it spent $625,000 on "Rust"-related prosecution through the end of April. The state's film incentives programme is among the most generous in the nation, offering a direct rebate of between 25% and 40% on an array of expenditures to entice movie projects, employment and infrastructure investments. As a percentage of the state budget, only Georgia pays out more in incentives.

Ann Wilson announces cancer diagnosis, postpones Heart tour

AP
New York, July 3

Ann Wilson, lead singer of rock band Heart, says she has cancer and the band is postponing the remaining shows on its Royal Flush Tour while she undergoes treatment.

Wilson said in a statement Tuesday that she underwent a surgery to remove a cancerous growth and is recovering steadily, but that her doctors urged her to undergo preventive chemotherapy and take time off from performing "in order to fully recover." That meant the rest of the shows on the North American tour will be postponed to dates in 2025.

"To the ticket buyers, I really do wish we could do these gigs. Please know that I absolutely plan to be back on stage in 2025," Wilson said in the statement. "My team is getting those details sorted & we'll let you know the plan as soon as we can."

All previously purchased tickets for the now-postponed shows will be honored. The rescheduled dates will be announced in the coming weeks, according to the release.

"This is merely a pause. I've much more to sing," Wilson continued in the statement before adding, "Respectfully, this is the last public statement I'd like to make on the matter."

Over 50 shows at stadium and arena venues in dozens of cities across the U.S. and Canada are impacted by the postponement. Select shows were set to include performances from Def Leppard and Journey, and Heart has not announced whether those bands will accompany them at the rescheduled performances.

The band, led by Wilson and her sister Nancy Wilson on the guitar, canceled the European leg of their tour in May, citing that the singer had to have "a time-sensitive but routine procedure for which the minimum recovery time is six weeks."

Wilson posted on Instagram at the time of the European shows' cancellation, writing, "I'm okay! Please don't worry. I do apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. It's certainly an inconvenience for me."

The Wilson sisters, who made hits like "Magic Man," "Crazy on You" and "Alone," have made music together since the '70s. The Rock & Roll Hall of Famers were honored with a lifetime achievement award from the Recording Academy in 2023.



HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

ARIES: Holding grudges may occupy too much mental space, preventing you from connecting with better friends or partners and missing out on opportunities for happiness. Letting go can open doors to new, fulfilling experiences.

TAURUS: You can say what's on your mind. You may have been keeping it to yourself because you weren't sure how it would land with your audience.

GEMINI : Let loved ones help you. Accepting aid can be hard when you wish to do everything alone. See it as letting others show their love rather than burdening them with your needs.

CANCER: Someone might be getting in touch with you to get some spiritual advice. They may be going through events that are weighing on their soul, and they want to get a second opinion on what they've been feeling.

LEO: Your dreams are calling -- and they're telling you all about your true feelings. Set aside time to think about any lingering anxiety that's been in the back of your mind.

VIRGO: Emotional wounds may hold you back, fearing a repeat of past troubles. This fear can prevent you from fully engaging in life. Overcoming this can help you live more openly and freely.

LIBRA: You're meant to learn from the people around you -- without treating updated knowledge like a criticism of what you already know. Open-mindedness is a good thing!

SCORPIO: Who is on your side, Scorpio? And, just as crucially, who isn't? You might have been friends with someone who was very close with you for a long period of time, but lately, you've possibly noticed their mindset shifting.

SAGITTARIUS: Letting your creative side shine can soothe hurts from your history. You may want to engage in some art therapy today, maybe by painting a picture that translates your feelings into visual form.

CAPRICORN: Your chance to provide support to those who have supported you in the past is nigh. The universe is encouraging you to give back to someone who once braced you up in a time of need.

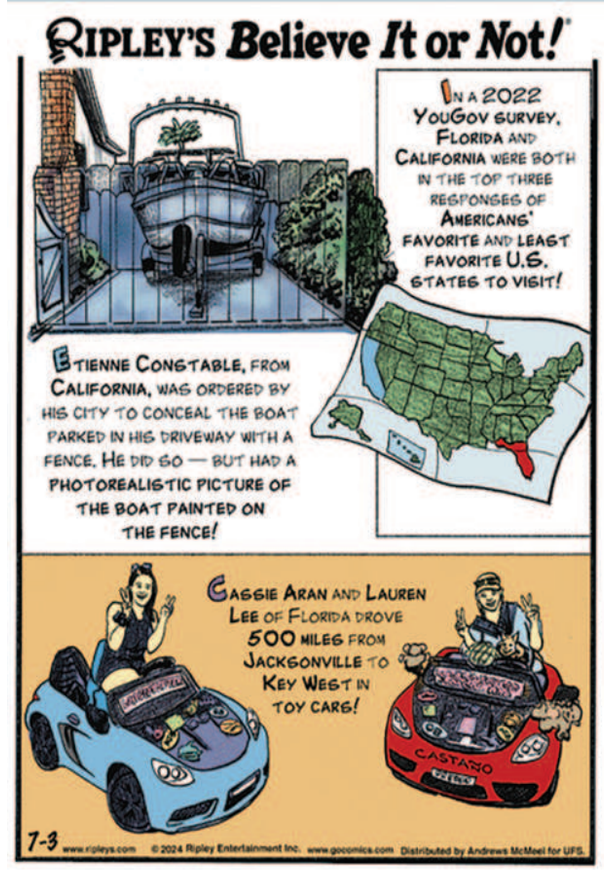
AQUARIUS: Talking about past hurts should have a purpose. Don't open wounds for nothing, but sometimes they have to hurt before they can heal.

PISCES: You can inspire others to understand themselves better. Being in tune with your emotions, expressing your feelings comes naturally to you. Your peers may struggle with this, but your example can guide them to start.

CARTOON

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Turkey edges Austria to set up quarter-final with Dutch



PHOTO: AP

Turkish team celebrate after a 2-1 win in a round of sixteen match against Austria at the Euro 2024 soccer in Leipzig, Germany.

AFP
Leipzig, July 3

Turkey will face the Netherlands in the quarter-finals of Euro 2024 after winning a thriller with Austria 2-1 as both countries reached the last eight of a European Championship for the first time since 2008.

Merih Demiral was the unlikely hero for Turkey, in soaking Leipzig, after bundling his team ahead with less than a minute on the clock and then thumping in the decisive header just before the hour mark.

Vincenzo Montella's side, who were missing suspended captain Hakan Calhanoglu but once again backed by massive support at the Zentralstadion, will take on the Dutch in Berlin on Saturday after their comfortable 3-0 win over Romania earlier on Tuesday.

Turkey were beaten 6-1 by Austria in March and Montella admitted he was hoping to get his own back for that embarrassing defeat.

"I denied it yesterday but today I can admit that Austria was the team I wanted so that I could get rid of that stain that as a coach I had on me," said Montella.

Turkey will again be able to count on their raucous fans in the German capital as they aim to replicate their run to the last four from 16 years ago.

That tournament was co-hosted by Austria, who played a full part in an engrossing match and on another day may have run out winners.

Ralf Rangnick's side were on top for most of the match and in particular in the second half, when they pinned Turkey back and conceded the second goal completely against the run of play.

Al-Ahli centre-back Demiral became the first European defender to score twice in the knockout stages of a major tournament since Lilian Thuram for France at the 1998 World Cup.

Michael Gregoritsch halved the deficit by forcing home Stefan Posch's flick on at another corner shortly after Demiral took his international goal tally to four in 48 caps. But Austria couldn't capitalise on their dominance and went out after Christoph Baumgartner was denied a leveller in the final seconds of added time by an incredible Mert Gunok save.

Dutch ease through

Cody Gakpo and Donyell Malen, with a brace in the second half, eased the Dutch through to the last eight.

Ronald Koeman's side were heavily criticised after the 3-2 defeat to Austria which led the Oranje to finish third in Group D.

But they were impressive on Tuesday, creating a hatful of chances and running out deserved winners in at the Allianz Arena.

"We showed a good reaction from the last match and I'm very pleased... We took a step in the right direction today," said Liverpool forward Gakpo.

"It's all about aggression and intensity and defending like a team and I think it was a good step and an important one."

Gakpo was the Netherlands' most impressive performer and put his team ahead in the 20th minute when his rasping shot caught goalkeeper Florin Nita off-guard at his near post.

Chances came and went as Romania failed to get hold of their opponents and after having what would have been his second ruled out for offside he took matters into his own hands with seven minutes remaining.

Gakpo's mazy dribble through a crowded penalty area led to him finding Malen who tapped home and then added the third in stoppage time to make the scoreline more representative of the balance of play. "The only critical point was that it took us too long to score the second one," said Koeman.

Whoever wins between the Netherlands and Turkey will play one of England and Switzerland a week on Wednesday.

Brazil to face Uruguay in Copa quarter-final

AFP
Santa Clara
July 3



Colombia came from behind to grab a 1-1 draw with Brazil on Tuesday, ensuring their qualification to the Copa America quarter-finals as group winners.

An equalizer from Daniel Munoz in first half stoppage time was enough to earn Colombia a share of the spoils after Raphinha had fired Brazil into the lead with a sublime 12th-minute free-kick at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California.

The result means Colombia advance to the knockout rounds as winners of Group D, where they will face Group C runners-up Panama in Glendale, Arizona, on Saturday.

But Tuesday's draw means Brazil will face a titanic showdown in Las Vegas on Saturday against arch-rivals Uruguay, winners of Group D with a perfect record.

Brazil goalscorer Raphinha insisted the five-time world champions would be unfazed at the prospect of playing Uruguay.

"Our team is evolving with each game, with each training session and we think we're on the right track," Raphinha said. "If we want to win this competition we have to be prepared to play our best."

Vinicius Jr out

Brazil will head into the quarter-finals without Real Madrid star Vinicius Jr, who picked up his second yellow card of the tournament for a reckless early foul on James Rodriguez on Tuesday.

Colombia playmaker Rodriguez had alarm bells ringing amongst Brazil fans from the ensuing free-kick, just clipping the top of the bar with goalkeeper Alisson beaten.

But although Colombia made the smoother start it was Brazil who took the lead after 12 minutes, with Raphinha curling a sensational free-kick into the top corner to make it 1-0.

Colombia however continued to threaten, Rodriguez volleying over the bar on the turn after 16 minutes.

Rodriguez thought he had set up Colombia's equalizer three minutes later, supplying a pinpoint cross from a free-kick on the right for Davinson Sanchez to home.

The goal was ruled out for offside after a VAR review. Tempers threatened to boil over midway through the first half, and Venezuelan referee Jesus Valenzuela issued three yellow cards in quick succession to Colombia's Deiver Machado and Jefferson Lerma along with Brazil's Joao Gomes.

Colombia looked the more assured side throughout the first half and in stoppage time their slick play got its reward, with Crystal Palace wing back Munoz blasting home after being released by a superb pass from veteran forward Jhon Cordoba.

In Tuesday's other Group D game Costa Rica defeated Paraguay 2-1 in Austin to finish in third place.

URJAN LEADING U-20 MEN'S NATIONAL TEAM

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, July 3

The All Nepal Football Association appointed Urjan Shrestha as the head coach for the national U-20 men's team. Shrestha was handed over the appointment letter on Wednesday.

Similarly, Sashindra Dhimal and Raju Singh have been appointed as the assistant coach and goalkeeping coach for the team respectively. Urjan is a popular name in Nepali football. Alongside a former player, Urjan has coached Three Star Club, an A-Division club of Nepal. On the other hand, Sashindra has worked as an assistant coach for the U-19 national team while Raju has trained goalkeepers for the age-wise national teams multiple times.

The appointments were finalised at a time when the ANFA has been gearing up player selections for the U-20 team. Around 400 players from seven provinces are taking part in the central selection underway at ANFA Complex in Satdobato, Lalitpur.

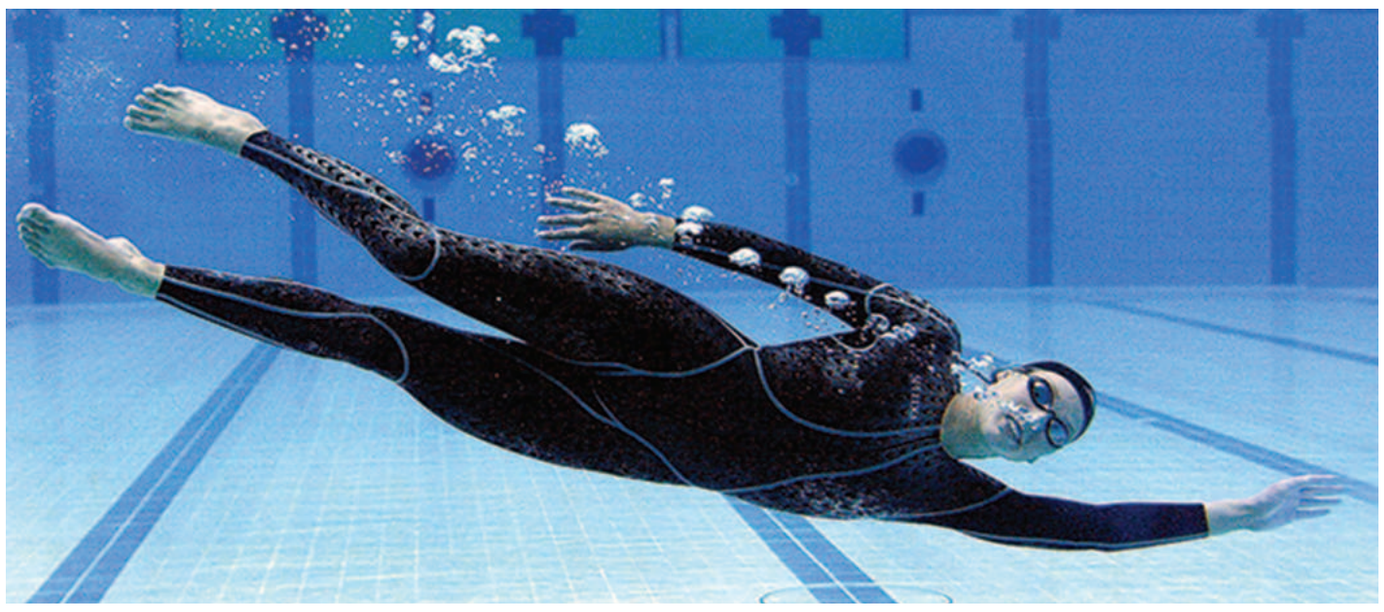
"The coaching team is now preparing the national squad for the upcoming SAFF U-20 Championship, scheduled to be held in Kathmandu from August 16-28," read a statement by the ANFA. Likewise, the squad, alongside the coaches, will be training for the AFC U20 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers scheduled in September. Nepal will be visiting Chinese Taipei alongside Group B members Uzbekistan, Bahrain and Cambodia for the tournament being played between September 21 and 29.

T20 WORLD CUP WINNERS HEAD HOME

AFP
New Delhi, July 3

India's T20 Cricket World Cup winners were finally heading home Wednesday, officials said, after a hurricane in the West Indies delayed their departure. Favourites India won the title on Saturday after defeating South Africa in a thrilling final, but their travel plans were disrupted by Hurricane Beryl. "The team has left from Barbados on a special Air India flight," Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) vice-president Rajeev Shukla told the Press Trust of India. Rohit Sharma's men were scheduled to reach the Indian capital New Delhi on Thursday morning.

Olympic swimmers hope for winning edge with latest 'rocket suits'



AFP
Sydney, July 3

Swimmers battling for gold at this month's Paris Olympics are banking on the latest cutting-edge swimsuits to be their secret weapon in the pool.

Competitors believe innovation can be the difference in a sport where medals are sometimes decided by a mere fingertip, although the evidence is not so sure.

Driven by technology that takes inspiration from space travel, Speedo has produced a new version of its Fastskin LZR Racer suit billed as its most water-repellent ever.

Claiming to provide a sense of "weightlessness", it will be worn by top swimmers including Emma McKeon from Australia, the American Caeleb Dressel and Britain's Adam Peaty as they strive to shave every hundredth of a second off their times.

"It's my own little Speedo rocket suit," said freestyle and butterfly ace Dressel, who won five gold medals at the Tokyo Olympics in an earlier version of the suit.

"I'm feeling confident that the (new) suit is going to help me," he added.

McKeon, who won seven medals including four gold at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, called her new attire "faster than ever" with water "just gliding off".

The suits use a coating technology originally used to protect satellites.

They are the latest development in a battle for supremacy spanning decades with other brands such as Arena, Mizuno and Jaked to push the boundaries ever further.

"The biggest factor in swimming, because it's in water, is drag, which is far and away the main detractor for speed," Kevin Netto, a specialist in exercise science at the Curtin School of Allied Health in Perth, told AFP.

"So anything that will change drag forces, it's worth its weight in gold."

Over the years swimsuits have progressed through flannel, rayon, cotton, silk, latex, nylon and lycra.

They are now required by World Aquatics to be made from permeable materials since Speedo's controversial full bodysuit used at the 2008 Beijing Olympics was branded "technological doping".

Seamless and part-polyurethane, it was designed with the help of NASA to aid buoyancy and support muscles, significantly reducing drag and making it easier to swim faster for longer.

It contributed to a bumper crop of world records at the Games in China.

Even more advanced models followed, including part-polyurethane suits by Arena and the all-polyurethane Jaked 01, which saw another burst of records at the 2009 world championships.

World Aquatics, then known as FINA, banned polymer-based suits from 2010 after mounting criticism that they offered unacceptable performance-enhancing properties.

Full body suits are also outlawed. They can now only be worn from kneecap to navel for men and knee to shoulder for women.

Lack of evidence

Minimising surface drag from the water remains a key task of the current suits, compressing the body to aid streamlining.

"If they provide some sort of compression, you don't have any wobbling mass in the water," Netto said.

"It basically keeps the human shape very, very streamlined, you don't produce more oscillation or wave drag."

But for all that, the suits' influence on performance remains inconclusive despite reams of research, with advances in diet and training increasingly contributing to swimmers going faster. In 2019, the European University of Madrid examined 43 studies into the subject and concluded that there was no clear consensus.

"Controversies exist as there are those who believe fervently that these swimsuits have had some benefit for performance in general," it said.

"However, the lack of evidence to clarify such opinions places any consensus among researchers in doubt, despite the years that have passed."

It is not just swimsuits that have seen drastic technological advances. Cutting-edge eyewear can now provide real-time insights while you swim, tracking a host of metrics that appear inside the goggles, although they are not allowed at the Olympics.

WEATHER

Thursday

Sunrise at 5:13 am, Sunset at 7:04 pm

Forecast for Nepal (Thursday)

Generally to mostly cloudy throughout the country. Light to moderate rain with thunder and lightning is likely to occur at many places of the country . chances of heavy rainfall at a few places of the Koshi Province, Bagmati Province, Gandaki Province, Lumbini Province and Sudur Pashchim Province and at one or two places of rest of the country . chances of very heavy rainfall at one or two places of Koshi Province and Lumbini Province.

Expected Temp.: 27 - 29°C
Rain Probability: 60%

Wednesday's Weather Record

Stations	Max. temp. (C)	Min. temp. (C)	Rain (mm)
Dipayal	27.7	25.0	39.9
Dadeldhura	19.7	18.5	39.5
Dhangadi	25.2	25.5	170.2
Birendranagar	29.1	24.8	7.8
Nepalgunj	30.3	27.0	8.3
Jumla	21.6	17.8	13.2
Ghorahi	27.7	23.9	62.1
Pokhara	25.8	22.7	125.8
Bhairahawa	30.8	26.0	91.0
Simara	32.2	25.7	5.7
Kathmandu	29.9	20.8	6.7
Okhaldhunga	26.3	18.3	1.4
Taplejung	24.3	18.7	1.3
Dhankuta	31.5	20.8	1.4
Biratnagar	32.3	26.0	0.9
Jomsom	23.0	15.5	0.0*
Dharan	32.2	25.4	4.0*
Lumle	20.0	18.5	89.8*
Janakpur	33.4	27.4	0.0*
Jiri	23.9	18.2	6.3*

NEPAL RASTRA BANK

FOREIGN EXCHANGE DEPARTMENT

EXCHANGE RATES

July 4, 2024

CURRENCY	UNIT	BUYING	SELLING
Indian Rupee	100	Rs. 160.00	Rs. 160.15

Open Market Exchange Rates
For the purpose of Nepal Rastra Bank

CURRENCY	UNIT	BUYING	SELLING
U.S. Dollar	1	Rs. 133.36	Rs. 133.96
Euro	1	Rs. 143.47	Rs. 144.11
Pound Sterling	1	Rs. 169.33	Rs. 170.10
Swiss Franc	1	Rs. 147.64	Rs. 148.30
Australian Dollar	1	Rs. 88.96	Rs. 89.36
Canadian Dollar	1	Rs. 97.50	Rs. 97.94
Singapore Dollar	1	Rs. 98.32	Rs. 98.76
Japanese Yen	10	Rs. 8.24	Rs. 8.27
Chinese Yuan	1	Rs. 18.34	Rs. 18.42
Saudi Arab Riyal	1	Rs. 35.55	Rs. 35.71
Qatari Riyal	1	Rs. 36.57	Rs. 36.74
Thai Bhat	1	Rs. 3.63	Rs. 3.64
UAE Dirham	1	Rs. 36.31	Rs. 36.47
Malaysian Ringgit	1	Rs. 28.25	Rs. 28.38
South Korean Won	100	Rs. 9.60	Rs. 9.64
Swedish Kronar	1	Rs. 12.63	Rs. 12.68
Danish Kronar	1	Rs. 19.23	Rs. 19.32
Hong Kong Dollar	1	Rs. 17.07	Rs. 17.15
Kuwaiti Dinar	1	Rs. 435.01	Rs. 436.96
Bahrain Dinar	1	Rs. 353.76	Rs. 355.36

Note: Under the present system the open market exchange rates quoted by different banks may differ.

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