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THE RISING NEPAL

ALL BE HAPPY, ALL BE WELL



PHOTO: SUJAN GURUNG/TRN

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dol Prasad (DP) Aryal, administering the oath of office and secrecy to newly elected chairpersons of various parliamentary committees at the Federal Parliament Secretariat in Singha Durbar, Kathmandu, on Friday.

Speaker Aryal pledges reforms in House procedures

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 17

Speaker Dol Prasad Aryal, has pledged to introduce comprehensive changes to parliamentary procedures, including transparency of proceedings and closer consultation with stakeholders and journalists in a bid to make the upcoming sessions more transparent and effective.

Addressing an interaction programme with parliamentary journalists at Singha Durbar on Friday, Speaker Aryal highlighted that preparations were underway to conduct the session in a different and effective manner. He underscored his intention to broadcast all parliamentary activities live, asserting that there should be no room for secrecy in legislative processes.

"We are not in favour of hiding anything, and I have stressed that transparency will be a cornerstone of my tenure," he said. Aryal added that inclusive consultations with stakeholders would be prioritised before drafting any legislation, noting that repeated discussions would help ensure more comprehensive and widely accepted laws.

Aryal also indicated that amendments to parliamentary rules were being considered to expedite the law-making process. He warned that broader impact of legislative delays and slow progress in passing laws could adversely affect the overall progress of society and hinder the delivery of timely benefits to citizens.

He stressed the need for Parliament to meet the expectations of the people by delivering tangible results. "I urge cooperation from all sectors, including the media, to identify gaps and improve performance. I am committed to fast-tracking Nepal's law-making process, as delays in legislation could have serious consequences for the country," he said. "I want those wearing slippers to be able to afford shoes, and those riding bicycles to own motorbikes. I seek the overall development of the country and its people," he added.

During the interaction, journalists raised concerns over practical challenges faced while covering parliamentary affairs. They cited technical obstacles in accessing the parliament building, including the use of separate entry gates for the federal parliament, as well as stringent security measures that complicate photography and reporting.

Member of the press urged the Speaker for easier access for reporting parliamentary affairs and proceedings. They asked for better infrastructure for reporting and admission for reporters in line with protocols and the principles of press freedom.

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SC GIVES LEGITIMACY TO THAPA-LED NC

The Supreme Court has upheld the Election Commission's decision to recognise the Nepali Congress led by party president Gagan Kumar Thapa, delivering a verdict in the party's ongoing internal dispute.

A joint bench of Justices Sharanga Subedi and Nripadhwaj Niraula dismissed a writ petition filed by Sher Bahadur Deuba and Purna Bahadur Khadka, who had challenged the legality of the special general convention that elected Thapa as party president.

With the ruling, the court effectively endorsed the Election Commission's earlier decision to grant legitimacy to the Thapa-led central working committee, allowing it to continue functioning without legal obstruction.



The petitioners had argued that the special general convention, held in mid-January, violated the party's statute and existing laws. They also alleged that the Election Commission had acted improperly by recognising the new leadership without due verification and consultation.

However, the apex court rejected these claims. A preliminary hearing earlier this year, conducted by Justice Sunil Kumar Pokharel, had already declined to issue an interim order against the commission's decision.

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Iran reopens Strait of Hormuz

But Trump says blockade on Iranian ships and ports will stay in force

AP
Beirut, *Apr. 17*



Iran said Friday it fully reopened the Strait of Hormuz to commercial vessels, but President Donald Trump said the American blockade on Iranian ships and ports "will remain in full force" until Tehran reaches a deal with the U.S., including on its nuclear program.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi posted on X that the crucial waterway through which about 20% of the world's oil is shipped was now fully open to commercial vessels, as a 10-day truce between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon appeared to hold.

Trump initially celebrated, posting on social media that Iran announced the strait "is fully open and ready for full passage." But minutes later, he issued another post saying the U.S. Navy's blockade would continue "Until Such Time As Our Transaction With Iran Is 100% Complete."

The president also said Iran, with help from the U.S., is working to remove all mines from strait.

Trump imposed the blockade earlier this week after Iran restricted traffic through the strait due to fighting in Lebanon, which Iran claimed to be a breach of the Pakistan-brokered ceasefire reached between the U.S., Israel and Iran.

At the time, Trump said the blockade would enforce an "all or none" policy in hopes of pressuring Iran to reopen the strait.

The president's decision to continue the blockade despite Iran's announcement appeared aimed at sustaining pressure on Tehran as the fate of the two-week ceasefire reached last week remains uncertain. Direct talks between the U.S. and Iran last weekend were inconclusive, as the two nations differed over Iran's nuclear program and other sticking points.

Oil prices fell on hopes of a deal. The head of the International Energy Agency had warned that energy shocks could get worse if the strait did not reopen. Iran closed the crucial waterway shortly after the war began.

The truce in Lebanon offered a pause in fighting between Israel and Hezbollah and could clear one major obstacle to a deal between Iran and the United States and Israel to end weeks of devastating war. But it was unclear whether the militant group would recognize a deal it did not play a role in negotiating and which will leave Israeli troops occupying a stretch of southern Lebanon.

Trump said in another post that Israel is "prohibited" by the U.S. from further strikes on Lebanon and that "enough is enough" in the Israel-Hezbollah war. The White House did not immediately respond to a question about whether the prohibition spans both offensive and defensive strikes.

Meanwhile in Beirut, barrages of gunshots rang out across the Lebanese capital as residents fired into the air just after midnight to celebrate the beginning of the truce. Displaced families began moving toward southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs despite warnings by officials not to attempt to return to their homes until it became clear whether the ceasefire would hold.

A spokesperson for the U.N. peacekeepers in southern Lebanon said Friday they had not observed any airstrikes since midnight, but accused the Israeli military of violating airspace and of artillery shelling in southern Lebanon. The Israeli military did not immediately comment. According to the agreement shared by the State Department, Israel can act in self-defense against imminent attacks but cannot carry out offensive operations against southern Lebanon.

Trump heralded the deal a "historic day for Lebanon," as he expressed confidence the war with Iran would soon end.

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Driving licences will be printed within 24 hours : Minister Timilsina



BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 17

Minister of Communication and Information Technology Dr. Bikram Timilsina reached the Security Printing Centre located in Panauti Municipality-5, Kavre and took on-site information about the latest status of printing of driving licenses.

During the inspection, Minister Dr. Timilsina said that the government is currently prioritising public service delivery reforms and is working to end the situation where citizens do not get licenses for a long time after passing the trial.

He also informed that the system of printing and handing over licenses within 24 hours of paying revenue after passing the trial has been implemented from today.

Minister Dr. Timilsina said that the goal is to speed up the license printing process and print all the remaining licenses by the end of June, 2026.

Now the trend of holding back the possible work as impossible will end. "The problem of not getting a license for months after passing the trial has been eliminated and the printing process can be completed within 24 hours of paying the revenue," he said.

During the inspection, Minister Dr. Timilsina emphasised the need to develop the Security Printing Centre as an important asset of the state and a potential institution.

Stating that making this centre effective has been his priority since the first day of assuming the office, he said that problems had become complicated in various bodies in the past due to the lack of necessary willpower and readiness. He emphasised that institutional responsibility should be increased by solving those problems now.

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House committee chairs elected

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 17

Chairpersons of 10 thematic committees and two joint committees under House of Representatives have been sworn in following elections held on Friday, marking the formal completion of the federal parliament's committee leadership structure.

Speaker Dol Prasad Aryal administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly elected chairs at a function attended by Deputy Speaker Rubi Kumari Thakur and Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Sobita Gautam.

According to the Federal Parliament Secretariat, 10 of the 12 committee chairs were elected unopposed, while elections were required in two committees where competing candidacies were filed.

Among those sworn in, Hari Dhakal was elected chair of the State Administration and Good Governance Committee, Samiksha Baskota of the Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee, Ashok Kumar Chaudhary of the Agriculture, Cooperatives and Natural Resources Committee, Ashish Gajurel of the Infrastructure Development Committee, and Aakriti Awasthi of the Women and Social Affairs Committee.

Krishnahari Budhathoki was elected chair of the Finance Committee, while Bharat Bahadur Khadka of the Nepali Congress was selected to lead the Public Accounts Committee. Sumnima Udas was elected chair of the International Relations and Tourism Committee, and Rahawar Ansari was chosen for the Industry, Commerce, Labour and Consumer Welfare Committee. Bodh Narayan Shrestha was elected chair of the Joint Parliamentary Hearing Committee.

In the two committees where voting was required, Dr Ojaswi Sherchan defeated Guru Prasad Baral to secure the chair of the Education, Health and Information Technology Committee. In the State Directive Principles, Policies and Responsibilities Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, Ganesh Karki was elected by defeating Madan Kumari Shah.

Nepal Airlines resumes flights to Mugu after years of irregular service

BY HARI KRISHNA AIDI
Mugu, Apr. 17

Residents of Mugu, one of Nepal's most remote Himalayan districts, have long faced hardship due to irregular air services at Talcha Airport, but the situation is beginning to improve as Nepal Airlines increases its flight frequency.

For years, flights operated irregularly, forcing locals to pay high fares, and locals faced delays and hardship, mainly during the emergencies. Now, the situation has begun to improve. Nepal Airlines has increased its flight frequency to four days a week, bringing much-needed relief to the people of Mugu district.

According to Nabin Kumar Bista, Station In-Charge at Rara Talcha Airport, the revised schedule came into effect in the second week of February. Flights now operate from Nepalgunj to Talcha four times a week -- on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. In addition, a separate flight from Surkhet to Talcha operates on Thursdays.



PHOTO: HARI KRISHNA AIDI

A Nepal Airlines aircraft operating regular flights at Talcha Airport.

The expansion of regular flights follows sustained efforts by local youth leader Anil Baniya, who had long advocated for better air connectivity in the region.

With regular services, locals, especially those needing urgent medical care, have seen significant relief. In the past, patients often faced life-threatening delays due to the unavailability of timely flights.

"There were cases where people lost their lives because they could not be airlifted in time," said Mahendra Bham, a social worker from Chhayanath Rara Municipality-4. "This new schedule will help reduce such tragedies."

Improved air service connectivity is also expected to benefit tourism in the region. Rara Lake, one of the country's most famous tourist destinations, attracts both domestic and international visitors.

Reliable flights are crucial for ensuring access to the lake, which remains difficult to reach by road. Bham added that easier air travel will benefit not only tourists but also patients, elderly citizens, persons with disabilities and students.

Anil Baniya, a social activist from Khatyad Rural Municipality-4, said that previously flights were scheduled only twice a week, and even those were often irregular.

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BULLION
(Rs. per tola)

Hallmark Gold	: Rs. 299,800/-
Worked Gold	: NA
Silver	: Rs. 5,130/-

STOCK

NEPSE	: 2,838.40
Total Amount	: 7,460,698,098.48
No. of Share	: 18,063,728

EXPIRED FOOD ITEMS FOUND ON OPEN SALE IN NEPALGUNJ

BY SIRAJ KHAN
Nepalgunj, Apr. 17

A market inspection launched by Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolitan City has found expired food items being openly sold in shops, while hygiene standards in hotels and restaurants were found to be poor.

The inspection, led by the Consumer Protection Committee, revealed these issues on the first day, said Praveen Kumar Rana, committee member secretary and inspection team coordinator.

During monitoring at Ansari Traders in Nepalgunj-12, Surkhet Road, expired food items worth around Rs. 8,000 were found and destroyed. The shop was warned not to keep expired goods in the future.

Similarly, inspection at New Om Tandoori Hotel and Lodge, located north of Sanjivani College of Medical Sciences in the same ward, found the use of artificially coloured lentils and poor sanitation conditions.

The inspection, led by the Consumer Protection Committee, revealed these issues on the first day, said Praveen Kumar Rana, committee member secretary and inspection team coordinator.

The hotel has been instructed to improve hygiene standards and warned of closure if it fails to comply. Both businesses were also found to be unregistered with the sub-metropolitan city.

They have been given seven days to complete registration. Officials said monitoring will be intensified and strict action will be taken against violations.

The inspection team included representatives from the Food Technology and Quality Control Office, the Revenue Section, consumer rights groups, local journalists, and municipal police.

Local civil society leader Krishna Prasad Shrestha said monitoring in Nepalgunj has been too infrequent, allowing the sale of expired and adulterated food. He urged authorities to increase inspections, citing poor hygiene in hotels, restaurants, sweet shops and meat outlets.



PHOTO: RSS

Farmers in Dang harvest mustard with the help of a machine.

FDI pledge declines by 28%

BY LAXMAN KAFLE
Kathmandu, Apr. 17



Nepal has recorded a notable decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) commitments during the first nine months of the current fiscal year 2025/26.

According to the Department of Industry, total FDI commitments stood at Rs. 41.79 billion for 615 projects between July 17, 2025, and April 13, 2026, of the current fiscal year.

This marks a decrease of Rs. 16.18 billion, or 28 per cent, compared to the same period last fiscal year, when commitments had reached Rs. 57.97 billion.

The FDI commitment last fiscal year totalled Rs. 64.96 billion. The monthly trend shows a sharp fluctuation in investor interest.

The highest commitment was recorded in Shrawan (mid-July to mid-August) at Rs. 24.10 billion, followed by Rs. 8.98 billion in Bhadra (mid-August to mid-September 2025).

However, commitments steadily declined in subsequent months, hitting a low of just Rs. 386 million in Falgun (mid-February to mid-March). In Chaitra (mid-March to mid-April), FDI commitments were recorded at only Rs. 1.19 billion, significantly lower than Rs. 13.31 billion in the same month last year.

FDI commitments amounted to Rs. 2.04 billion in the month of Ashoj, Rs. 1.54 billion in Kartik, Rs. 1.91 billion in Mangsir, Rs. 599 million in Poush, and Rs. 1.04 billion in the month of Magh during the current fiscal year.

Of the total commitments, Rs. 37.69 billion came through the approval route, while Rs. 4.09 billion was invested via the automatic route.

A total of 615 industries were registered with foreign investment, including 426 through the automatic route and 189 through approval.

Despite policy reforms such as the removal of the upper investment limit under the automatic route, most foreign investments were directed toward small-scale industries.

Earlier, the government of Nepal had streamlined the process for approving foreign investments of up to Rs. 500 million through the automatic route.

Out of the total, 599 were small industries, while only eight each fell under medium and large-scale categories.

Sector-wise, the information and communication technology (ICT) sector attracted the highest number of projects, with 366 registrations accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the total. The tourism sector followed with 164 projects, representing 26.6 per cent.

Similarly, 38 industries were registered in manufacturing, 47 in the service sector, and 16 in the agriculture sector.

During the review period, only two industries have been registered, each in the mineral and energy sectors. No industry was registered in infrastructure sector during the first nine months of the current fiscal year.

However, in terms of investment volume, agriculture topped the list with Rs. 22.08 billion in commitments, followed by tourism with Rs. 11.46 billion. Service industries attracted Rs. 3.89 billion, while manufacturing secured Rs. 2.50 billion in FDI pledges.

The ICT sector received commitment worth Rs. 1.45 billion, the mineral sector worth Rs. 115 million, while the energy sector received Rs. 234 million during the review period.

The industries registered during the period have pledged to create 22,316 jobs.

KOICA grants $2.5M for Korea returnee migrants

RSS
Kathmandu, Apr. 17

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the Agricultural Development Bank Limited (ADBL), in witness of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS), have officially partnered to launch a strategic financial support initiative aimed at the stable reintegration of Nepali migrant workers returning from the Republic of Korea.

The initiative is implemented under the project "Strengthening Stage-Wise Support System for the Stable Reintegration of Korea Returnee Migrants in Nepal".

The two organisations will implement a dedicated programme to provide increased access to finance for eligible beneficiaries who are returnee migrants from Korea and have participated in the K-HaMi Project, completing relevant entrepreneurship training till 2028, KOICA stated in a press release on Friday. The programme features a robust financial structure designed to provide sustainable, long-term support.

Out of the total project budget of USD 8 million, KOICA will provide USD 2.5 million for this programme, which will be utilised only for interest subsidy for the loan extended to the eligible Korea returnees. Whereas, ADBL will allocate approximately Rs. 1.2 billion (USD 8 million approximately) to be used as loan capital for the returnees.

It is estimated that 200 to 250 beneficiaries will be supported through this fund, depending on individual loan sizes and total fund utilization. The average loan size is projected at Rs. 5 million.

The primary objective of this partnership is to create a stable environment for entrepreneurship by overcoming the financial barriers often faced by returnee migrants. By improving access to capital, the programme seeks to utilise the skills and experiences gained in Korea to drive local economic growth in Nepal.

Country Director of KOICA Mooheon Kong states that the programme is specifically designed for returnee migrants from Korea who have demonstrated a commitment to their reintegration by participating in the K-HaMi Project and completing relevant entrepreneurship training.

By focusing on this group, the initiative ensures that the capital is paired with the necessary business skills for long-term success.

Similarly, Joint Secretary of the Ministry Of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS), Krishna Sapkota, shared that the K-HaMi project launched by KOICA for Korea returnee migrants has been highly successful in reintegration, skill development and financial literacy. He added that the access to finance component will be the most impactful component of this project. He expected similar projects from other donors, too.

Deputy General Manager at ADBL, Sudip Dahal, said that ADBL is fully committed to implementing this programme. He stated that the ADBL is eager to work in the area of enterprise development and youth employment creation.

This collaboration marks a significant milestone in the bilateral relationship between South Korea and Nepal, moving beyond labour migration toward a model of sustainable economic reintegration. By transforming returnees into job creators, KOICA, MoLESS and ADBL are investing in the long-term prosperity of the Nepali economy.

Border crackdown disrupts apple re-export trade

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Biratnagar, Apr. 17



Traders in eastern Nepal who had been importing apples from China and illegally re-exporting them to India have found themselves in serious difficulty after local authorities tightened controls at the border.

Previously, traders had been transporting Chinese apples into India through the open border points of Jhapa, Morang, and Sunsari. However, recent stricter enforcement by local authorities has disrupted these activities.

Although the apples were legally imported, their export had been carried out illegally. With increased border control, the impact is now visible in cold storage facilities. There are only three cold stores in Biratnagar, and imports have exceeded their storage capacity.

Traders had been importing more apples than the Nepali market could consume, relying on a syndicate system to smuggle the surplus into India. However, with tighter border regulations, traders are now struggling to manage the excess stock.

According to Suprim Regmi, operator of Shriram Cold Store in Biratnagar, there is currently a high influx of apples imported from China, as it is the peak season.

The three cold storage facilities in Biratnagar are Shriram Cold Storage, Eastern Cold Store, and Global Cold Store. Among them, Global Cold Store is operated by Bijay Jaiswal Chaudhary, who is also involved in fruit trading through his company, Bijay Fruit.

Issues related to apple smuggling from the three districts of Koshi Province have been reported in the past as well.

However, in recent times, illegal activities at the border have been significantly curtailed. Additionally, regulations requiring customs duties on goods worth more than Rs. 100 brought across the border have been strictly enforced.

Ahmad Saheb Guddu Miya, Secretary of the Biratnagar Vegetable and Fruit Wholesale Market Management Committee, stated that the market is currently flooded with apples imported from China, which is also the peak import period. According to him, syndicate groups have been involved in transporting these apples across the border into India, with traders from both Nepal and India participating.

Two years ago, 571 cartons of Chinese apples were seized by the Armed Police Force while being smuggled into India through the eastern Lodhawari checkpoint in Jhapa's Kachankawal Rural Municipality-4.

Earlier, on June 12, 2021, 1,350 cartons of apples being transported in three trucks were intercepted at the Lahi checkpoint in Haripur, Sunsari, while being taken into India.

According to a trader in Biratnagar, the situation has now changed. Over the past 15 days, traders have been unwilling to transport apples across the border. The trader stated that Bijay Fruit and Divyani Enterprises are among the largest importers of apples in Biratnagar.

"The cold store facilities don't even have the capacity to store ten containers, but around fifty containers have arrived," the trader said.

"Those who used to take the risk of transporting apples into India are no longer willing to do so."

Mukesh Chaudhary, operator of Divyani Enterprises, claimed that the apple trade is being conducted legally.

He stated that his responsibility ends after supplying imported apples to the market and that he is unaware of where the apples eventually go.

Chief District Officer of Morang, Yubaraj Kattel, informed that local authorities have been regularly monitoring the border, often on alternate days.

He added that the administration is working to involve locals in preventing illegal activities.

Bimal Dev Sah, a customs officer at the Biratnagar Customs Office, stated that there is no official record of apples imported through customs being exported. However, apples consistently rank among the top 20 imported goods in terms of value.

RESUNGA AIRPORT: MORE FLIGHTS ADDED, AIRFARE UP BY 46%

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Resunga (Gulmi), Apr. 17

Airfares at Resunga Airport in Gulmi have risen sharply, putting passengers under strain.

The fare has increased by Rs. 3,402 in one go, following a rise in aviation fuel prices, airport officials said. The hike represents a 46.6 per cent increase, which has already started to reduce passenger numbers.

According to Airport Chief Suman Thapa, the fare from Resunga to Kathmandu has now reached Rs. 10,402, up from the previous Rs. 7,300. Similarly, the fare from Kathmandu to Resunga has increased to Rs. 10,902 from Rs. 7,500.

Officials said passengers do not face problems when flights operate regularly. With a rise in passenger flow, flight frequency has also been increased. Nepal Airlines has been operating regular flights for the past two years.

A revised flight schedule has come into effect from April 17. Previously, flights operated on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Now, flights will also operate on Saturdays. Flights depart Kathmandu at 6:30 am and Resunga at 7:30 am.

Hospital turns into municipal office

BY PREMRAJ SIMKHADA
Kalikot, Apr. 17

No local level in Kalikot district currently has a holding centre or quarantine facility in operation, with all such centres established during the Covid-19 pandemic now fully shut down. Even the temporary Covid hospital, once run by the district hospital, has ceased operations.

During the height of the pandemic, two five-storey buildings on the outskirts of Manma Bazaar, the district headquarters, were designated and operated as a Covid hospital. Amid the crisis, then Karnali Province Chief Minister Mahendra Bahadur Shahi formally inaugurated the facility. Shortly afterwards, the same premises were rebranded as an Infectious Diseases Hospital.

The provincial government allocated funding in fiscal years 2021 and 2022 for staffing and management of the hospital. However, after a political realignment, Nepali Congress leader Jeevan Bahadur Shahi succeeded him as Chief Minister. During his tenure, the Kalikot facility was reportedly discontinued after authorities stated that the province's infectious diseases hospital was based in Mehelkuna, Surkhet, where permanent infrastructure was under construction.



PHOTO: PREMRAJ SIMKHADA\TRN
Infectious Diseases hospital turns to municipal office.

Dr. Ratna Bir Sunar, chief of the Health Service Office in Kalikot, confirmed that the hospital had initially been launched while the Chief Minister was from Kalikot, intending to establish an infectious diseases hospital in the then Karnali region.

He said the institution failed to continue for long because it was not properly incorporated into policy decisions. Dr Sunar described the closure of the hospital, which had operated for two years, as unfortunate and attributed it partly to poor advisory support.

> During the height of the pandemic, two five-storey buildings on the outskirts of Manma Bazaar, the district headquarters, were designated and operated as a Covid hospital.

"At present, we have reserved two beds at the District Hospital for patients suffering from infectious diseases," he said. "Holding centres are generally established only when an epidemic spreads, so it is not necessary to maintain them permanently. If another outbreak occurs, they can be rebuilt. At present, there are none anywhere in the district."

All nine local levels in Kalikot had earlier set up temporary holding centres, initially in schools and later in nearby health facilities or open spaces, to treat Covid patients. However, none of those facilities remains today, having gradually disappeared following the control of the pandemic.

Call for shift from 'preparedness' to immediate disaster strategy

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 17

Inspector General of the Armed Police Force Nepal (APF) Raju Aryal has said that the force's disaster management capability will no longer be confined merely to a state of preparedness, but will be advanced towards an "immediate deployment" strategy.

Addressing the 22nd anniversary of the Armed Police Force Nepal Disaster Management Training School at Kurintar, Chitwan, on Thursday, he said the government and the organisation have further expanded welfare schemes for personnel engaged in high-risk duties.

IGP Aryal said that insurance facilities for divers and other high-risk duty personnel have been enhanced.

Under the revised arrangement, a total insurance coverage of Rs 3.7 million has been ensured for victims in the event of an accident, comprising Rs. 1 million from the government and an additional Rs. 2.5 million through a partnership with Nepal Life Insurance.

He further stated that a proposal has been submitted to the government to declare those who lose their lives during rescue operations as "Disaster Martyrs," and that the government has responded positively to the initiative.

Highlighting the national and international reputation earned by the APF's disaster management unit, Aryal noted that the terms "Kurintar" and "divers" have become virtually synonymous.

He emphasised that society and elected representatives must accord due respect to rescue personnel who risk their lives to save others, adding that patience and awareness are essential before making decisions that may further endanger additional lives during recovery operations.

"We used to remain on standby once a disaster warning was issued. From now on, we will deploy teams close to high-risk areas as soon as information is received. We do not merely want preparedness; we want results," he said.

"Today, when one hears of divers, Kurintar immediately comes to mind, it has become a brand established by this training school. Our objective is to strengthen it further. These divers are not working underwater merely for a salary of Rs. 30,000; their work reflects sacrifice and dedication. Respect for these uniformed rescuers directly strengthens their morale," said IGP Aryal.



> "We used to remain on standby once a disaster warning was issued. From now on, we will deploy teams close to high-risk areas as soon as information is received. We do not merely want preparedness; we want results,"Aryal said.

He also informed that efforts are underway to make disaster management more technology-driven in collaboration with the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, and that 59 temporary disaster management bases are being established across the country.

Similarly, 167,000 disaster informants have been registered, with 25 individuals from each ward contributing to the network. In coordination with local governments, an 18-day "Disaster Volunteer" training programme has been launched to develop community-level first responders.

Aryal further announced the initiation of a Road Safety Council project along the Naubise–Mugling section of the Prithvi Highway. Under this initiative, community hospitals and ambulance services along the highway will be integrated to ensure immediate rescue and rapid transport of accident victims to medical facilities.

He also highlighted that since 2006, the Armed Police Force has been mobilised in more than 36,000 disaster incidents, successfully rescuing over 15,000 people safely. Concluding his remarks, he instructed all ranks to maintain full discipline in operational duties, noting that even minor mistakes in disaster response can result in the loss of lives.

CCTV AND GPS MANDATORY ON PUBLIC VEHICLES

BY KESHAV RAJ BHATTA
Baitadi, Apr. 17

The District Administration Office in Baitadi has directed all public transport vehicles operating within the district to install CCTV cameras and GPS tracking systems, making the measures compulsory in a bid to ensure safer and better-managed transport services.

Chief District Officer Dr. Dijan Bhattarai said transport operators had already been formally notified to implement the new provisions. He said the decision was taken to make public transport services more technology-friendly while strengthening passenger safety.

Alongside the installation of CCTV and GPS systems, the administration has also instructed that fare rates must be displayed in clearly visible areas inside public vehicles for passengers.

In addition, drivers and conductors will be required to wear the prescribed uniform and identification cards throughout their service hours.

According to CDO Dr. Bhattarai, the measures have been introduced under the Government of Nepal Cabinet-approved 100-point governance reform agenda, to reduce gender-based violence on public transport and improve passenger security.

ARSON ATTACK RAVAGES TOBACCO FARM

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Gaushala, (Mahottari), Apr. 17

A tobacco farm at Banauta of Balawa Municipality–7 in Mahottari has been set on fire by an unidentified group, causing an estimated loss of around Rs. 2 million.

According to police, the fire was deliberately set at midnight on Wednesday in three separate tobacco drying barns belonging to Dipendra Mahato and Haricharan Mahato, who had brought the crop from their fields for drying.

The fire destroyed tobacco worth about Rs. 1 million belonging to Dipendra Mahato, along with prepared tobacco stock valued at around Rs. 500,000. Similarly, tobacco belonging to Haricharan Mahato, worth approximately Rs. 500,000, was also burnt.

The fire was brought under control after around two hours through the joint efforts of local residents, police, and firefighters.

The two affected farmers had cultivated tobacco on about one bigha of land each. They said the fire destroyed their produce when it was ready for sale, resulting in a major financial setback to the farmers.

The victims have urged the local government to provide compensation and appealed to Balawa Municipality Mayor Bijaya Mahato to understand the hardship faced by farmers and support them with relief assistance.

Police have launched an investigation to determine the cause of the fire and identify those involved.

Rs. 22 million contraband seized in Nawalpur

BY GYANU PANGENI
Madhyabindu, Apr. 17

The District Police Office, Nawalpur, has seized goods worth Rs. 2.77 million that had allegedly been smuggled, evading customs and revenue within one month.

According to District Police Office records, various items, including clothing and mobile phone displays, that had been brought into the district by evading customs and tax duties, were confiscated from different locations between mid-March and mid-April.

District Police Office Nawalpur Chief Superintendent of Police, Yuva Raj Khadka, said that all seized goods have been processed as required. Items related to customs evasion have been sent to the Triveni Customs Office for further action, while revenue-evaded goods have been forwarded to the Revenue Office in Butwal for necessary legal proceedings.



The district police have been conducting regular checks in the Jyamire area of Dumkibas and the Chalis Kilo forest area of Kawasoti. During these inspections, smuggled goods are frequently recovered. Khadka added that in some cases, motorcycles and bicycles have also been used for transporting such goods.

He further stated that items brought evading customs from border points such as Triveni, Maheshpur, Jholanipur, and Lakshmipura in West Nawalparasi are being transported through Nawalpur to other districts.

In addition, during the same month, police seized 35 vehicles involved in the illegal extraction of natural resources in different parts of the district. A total fine of Rs 2,483,200 was collected from these vehicles, Superintendent Khadka said.

He added that vehicles involved in the illegal extraction and transportation of riverbed materials, soil, and other natural resources were taken under control and legal action was initiated.

Driving licence service suspended in Dadeldhura

BY PUSHKAR BHANDARI
Dadeldhura, Apr. 17

The driving licence service operating in Dadeldhura for nearly three years has been suspended after the termination of an agreement with a private trial centre.

The service, introduced following long-standing public demand after the establishment of the Transport Management Office in Dadeldhura, had been operating through a partnership with the private Ugratara Driving Centre under the Sudurpashchim Provincial Government's Ministry of Physical Infrastructure Development.

However, the agreement was cancelled on Thursday, forcing the service to close.

Issuing a public notice, the Transport Management Office confirmed that its contract with the driving centre had been terminated. Office chief Bishnu Dutta Bhatta said the arrangement had been in place since mid-June 2022, with the office using the centre's trial ground to conduct driving tests and licence-related services.

The decision was taken after widespread complaints from service users that unnecessary charges were being levied for the use of vehicles during driving tests. Bhatta said the office had repeatedly urged the concerned institution verbally not to charge excessive fees.

Despite those warnings, the centre allegedly continued collecting fees arbitrarily, prompting the office to cancel the agreement on April 16.

The office had reportedly been paying Rs. 5,500 per day to operate driving tests at the centre. Candidates were expected to arrange their own vehicles, although the centre was allowed to provide vehicles when applicants could not do so. Officials said complaints had recently increased regarding this arrangement.

According to the office, trial tests were conducted up to twice a month and written examinations were conducted once a month at the centre. License services were provided when more than 250 applicants had registered.

Following the suspension, the office now has three options to resume the service.

The first is to construct its own trial centre on government land near Syaaule Bazaar in Amargadhi Municipality. A detailed project report and a basic environmental study have already been completed. Although some budget had been allocated last year, the project was delayed due to disputes over whether the land belonged to a community forest or a police post.

Mechanical engineer Prabin Raj Bhatta said the land has now been registered in the government's name. He added that work could begin immediately once compensation for shrubs and vegetation is deposited with the forest office. The site covers more than 14 ropanis, which is considered sufficient for a trial centre.

The second option is to lease private land and build the required infrastructure. The third is to conduct written and biometric tests in Dadeldhura, while practical driving tests are held at the Transport Management Office's existing trial centre in Dipayal, Doti.

Butwal e-rickshaw drivers protest against unregistered vehicles



BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
Siddharthanagar, Apr. 17

Licensed e-rickshaw drivers in Butwal have launched a protest demanding a ban on the operation of unregistered e-rickshaws. The drivers, who have legally registered their e-rickshaws with Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City, gathered at the municipal office on Friday to pressure authorities to restrict operations only to registered vehicles.

They argue that unregistered e-rickshaws have increased unfair competition and are affecting their livelihoods. According to Krishna Prasad Tiwari, chairperson of Hariyali Transport, the protest will continue until the operation of unregistered e-rickshaws is stopped.

There are currently around 1,540 registered e-rickshaws in Butwal, but drivers claim the number of unregistered vehicles is significantly higher. They also said that although there was an earlier agreement to allow only registered e-rickshaws to operate, it has not been effectively implemented.

The drivers are demanding strict enforcement of registration rules, saying that unregistered vehicles are also causing revenue losses for the municipality.

As part of the protest, a large number of e-rickshaw drivers staged a demonstration across Butwal market.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence.
-Vince Lombardi

The State Must Protect The Vulnerable

Dev Raj Dahal



The Constitution of Nepal has granted rights and duties to people. It has granted 32 rights while only four duties. As a result, the politics of Nepal has become more aspiration-oriented than stability-driven, which is essential to liberate the oppressed, support their virtues in gaining maturity, and provide an equal playing field. Each political change in Nepal has expanded the social base of politics and enlarged people's civic rights. The disproportionality of rights relative to duties has made the constitution and development rights-based. But the weakness of the state has made these rights non-actionable as they do not engineer ecological, social, economic and political progress. Equal participation of all Nepalis in deliberation, planning, setting priorities, mobilisation of resources and support, distribution and monitoring of outcomes can create ownership, stake and shared justification of development.

Harmonious life can be achieved by balancing freedom and order and reducing the cost of livelihood for the weak and powerless and constitutional dispensation. The moral principles underlie the belief to transcend interest-based political economy and create inclusive institutions and policies to represent everyone, not just the self-interests of the stronger. It does not create the condition of leading a good life of dignity. The constitution imagines an egalitarian society, ending social discrimination and providing fair opportunities even for the weaker members of society to survive, compete and thrive. Justice for the poor is an obligation of the institutions of the powerful and democratic regime.

Equality of opportunity

Both seek to provide diverse measures of justice such as tax payment, equality of opportunity, rights and needs-based fairness (minimum wage, social protection, social security, etc.), procedural distribution of public goods and services, proportional representation, quota, positive social discrimination for women, Dalits and marginalized communities and those of remote areas. These are vital equalization measures. But by no means are they sufficient to enable the weak to pursue self-conscious choices, realize potentialities and live a life of dignity.

The imposition of law in society is formed based on the power equation without feeling about the legitimate needs of people and insidious structural injustice — poverty, inequality and skewed opportunity are unfair. The lack of compassion, the connection and feeling to the other in suffering is painful. It is a crime to punish the innocents by depriving them of the necessities of life. It demands that adjudicators and lawyers raise themselves and accept the ethical integrity of law rather than find loopholes to defend illicit actors in the hope of hefty fees against the human rights of the weak. The integrity of law is based on truth and impersonality in the utility of laws. They are accountable for their interpretation of law and verdicts. Certain preconditions are vital to establish the rights of the weak in the governing institutions and processes.

Embodied cognition: The elites of society, judges, lawyers, policy makers and leaders can help realise the rights of the weak if they can reflect on the ecological, social, educational, economic and political conditions of Nepalis, create vibrant public sphere to debate on the priorities of the weak especially in areas of livelihood, education, health, technology, institutional resources and supply prudent judgment affirming janata janardan, the sovereignty of people. Embodied cognition can embrace the working of power, capital, mediating agencies and public institutions. Ecologically and socially disembodied policies cannot harness organic connections authorities with the life-world of people, care less about their integrity and mandate and act recklessly for parochial interests.

Obviously, the knowledge and beliefs of people are context-specific. Scientific or social scientific reasons cannot transcend human nature, feeling, sentiment, etc. and solve all social problems if they are not embedded in the life and hope of Nepalis. Therefore, the experience of people, empathy and their fellow-feeling for the weak are the essence of human quality established by Nepali sages long ago. To be sure, Sanatan Dharma does not suppose human beings as ends in themselves as rational creatures, as argued by Immanuel Kant, owing to their capacity for moral action according to the imperative of universal reason. Their survival and progress rest on the resilience of plants and animals.

Therefore, human survival demands not only laws but ethics of sustainability rooted in universal laws of Sanatan Dharma, which are morally binding. In this sense, knowledge and reason ought to be reasonable and accountable to the well-being of the weak and, therefore, conditions of fairness as described by John Rawls must be set. Ronald Dworkin rightly claims the justice for hedgehog where the welfare state balances the competing priorities of liberty and equality. To him, universal values complement one another.

Voice of the voiceless: To make democracy stakeholders, the governments must emphasise uplifting the downtrodden and marginalised people and communities so that they do not feel alienated and fuel the feeling of rebellion. It is important to listen to them and mainstream their voice in the public sphere and policy making, not speak over them to silence their voice. The constitution has adopted the right to information to make public affairs transparent and enable people to demand access to decisions. Functional education is a key to asserting these rights and exercising freedoms. Media, civil society, courts and representative institutions have a duty to safeguard and promote these rights. Nepali civil society, as a public sphere, is expected to mobilise grassroots people with a sense of volunteerism.

They are expected to create important venues outside the state, polity, government

> The invigoration of the public sphere is vital in Nepal to link public opinion to public policy and ameliorate the plight of the weak and wretched.

and business in demand articulation. In Nepal, however, the capacity of latter institutions to respond to these demands is imperfect. The politicisation of people has increased their capacity to ask questions to their leaders, invoking the constitutional right to information. The invigoration of the public sphere is vital in Nepal to link public opinion to public policy and ameliorate the plight of the weak and wretched. It aims to tip the scale to provide decisive leverage to the weak in a contest with the strong to breathe national vision.

Visibility of the invisible people: Mindfulness to people, accepting their sovereignty, the principle of affected and subsidiarity allows their presence, to share experience and voice in the political and policy contexts. Nepal has to cultivate civic education to link democratic theory into practice so that passive people can be transformed into active citizens who can claim rights, negotiate demands and terminate ties with dysfunctional leaders. Free and fair elections have raised two points: a surge of people's grievances and a choice in leadership selection. In no way does it generate capacity to settle the grievances unless there is political will, courage and capacity to bolster state agencies with the ability to link grievances to policies and their execution, thus making visibility of public priorities.

Nepali political parties are said to be formed to serve as a transmission belt between the people and the polity and keep the political dynamic through feedback. If they are cut off from this role, they lose legitimacy and efficacy. In Nepal, they look weak in performing political functions and face the penetration of non-political entities, marking rationality deficits. The rise and decline of parties in elections explain the salience of silent voters.

Justice beyond legal quibbling: In Nepal, justice is linked to livelihood, freedom and peace. Justice for the poor suffers if they are tyrannised by legal logic to defend the status quo, not morality and fairness. Logic by its very nature serves the interests of powerful people who can buy expert layers specialised in legal rhetoric, idioms and jargon, not rooted in public reason and public morality that rest on good conscience, prudence and wisdom of philosophy. Without them natural selection becomes a political culture. Public morality goes beyond the logic of the constitution made on the basis of power balance, not the native spirit of sanatan dharma or universal values, which requires the adjustment of law to the cosmic web of life.

The validity of the rule of justice can provide enduring political stability. But when powerful leaders are caught in corruption, impunity and patronage and a mass of layers defend this in no way they promote the national integrity system and adapt to the changing desire of people for representation, generational justice and public good. The business of politics is freedom, order and justice, not the personalisation of public interests or bureaucratisation but their de-personalization assuming the weak into account.

Equalisation of gaps: In a plural society like Nepal, the rights of weak and marginalised people must be actionable to uplift their broken life and draw their loyalties to the state where their fate and good life are tied. Do planners and policy makers take perspective, preference and concern of the weak into account for reducing the gaps in cognitive, legal and material conditions of life in worthy initiatives for nation building? These factors are correlated to Nepalis basic freedom, civic engagement and democratic self-determination. They enable them to strategically negotiate the moral terms of progress in unjust power relations.

Nepali welfare state continues to face an uphill battle as successive regimes have built consensus on neoliberal ideology in favour of financial capitalism and flagged the social contract, egalitarian effects of democracy, distributive justice and trickled up profits to power elites while coercing the poor to race to the bottom or migrate abroad to eke out their livelihood. A big incentive for the poor to organise, build solidarity and participate in productive activities can spur a big advance toward inclusive progress frozen long by the suppression of productive forces of society.

Capacity building

The art of Prime Minister Balendra Shah is building the capacity of the Nepali state to implement the vision of a dignified, stable and prosperous nation. His steps to reform education, health, admin and justice and revive unlawfully privatised and ruined import-substituting public industries to boost native production can have a healthy effect to reduce poverty, create jobs, retain youth and reduce trade deficits. But he is not without resistance from neoliberals and radicals as they are socialised in not national self-determination, but dependency, loss of national dignity and identity and a political culture of conformism against constitutional spirit. A functional polity requires a sustainable economy that cares not only the dignity of labour but also reconciles economic justice with political freedom and the health and wealth of future generations.

It is linked with its independent foreign policy that balances national interests with mutual interests beyond unfrocked priests of a shift from buffer conditioned by colonial powers to a vibrant bridge which discounts security dilemma arising out of rival conception of security of neighbours where the south prefers linearity and liberal elaboration of democracy, market economy and regime compatibility while the north on concentric circle, sovereignty and choice of the polity. Reality of the nation's strategic geography demands a sense of balance and diversification, seeking a just order.

(Former Reader at the Department of Political Science, TU, Dahal writes on political and social issues.)

Landfills Of Plastic

ANGELA GHISING

> In fact, "nearly 70 per cent of the city's shallow wells and stone sprouts tested positive for fecal coliform and E. coli."

Have you noticed that the residents of Kathmandu Valley are increasingly surrounded by moving landfills of plastic and human waste? Every day, thousands of us cross the concrete bridges over the Bagmati River, the Bishnumati River, and the Dhobikhola River. We look out at the water, thick, black, and sluggish, and instinctively quicken our pace, holding our breath to escape the overwhelming stench. But once we reach the other side, we simply return to our lives. We have developed a kind of social or psychological phenomenon known as "environmental amnesia," where the deterioration of our most sacred rivers is simply background noise we no longer hear or a smell we no longer detect.

However, in 2026, this amnesia has become a deadly luxury. What was once perceived as an ugly sight has now become a full-scale medical emergency. The rivers, which once defined the life of this valley, are no longer simply "dirty"; they are biologically dead and now represent a source of disease, a threat to the citizens of this valley. In order to understand this crisis, it is necessary to look at the most current public health data. In a report released by health officials and researchers following the monsoon season of 2025 and early 2026, it was discovered that the Kathmandu Valley was experiencing a resurgence of water-borne diseases, which were previously believed to be under control. In fact, "nearly 70 per cent of the city's shallow wells and stone sprouts tested positive for fecal coliform and E. coli."

The crisis reached a breaking point in late 2025 when health officials confirmed several clusters of Cholera in the valley. Perhaps even more concerning is the rise of "superbugs" within our waters. Recent studies at Teku Dobhan, where the Bagmati meets the Bishnumati, identified bacteria that show a 99 per cent resistance to common antibiotics. By allowing our rivers to become open sewers, we have created a laboratory for diseases that modern medicine may soon be unable to cure.

It would be unfair to say that the government has done nothing. We have seen the Bagmati River Basin Improvement Project (BRBIP), which brought us the Dhap Dam to help flush the river during dry seasons. We also saw the upgrade of the Guheswori Wastewater Treatment Plant. On paper, Kathmandu should have a reviving river. The technical failure here is no secret. According to project progress reports from BRBIP, while miles of interceptor sewers have been put in place, the system remains fragmented. 'Right of Way' disputes and technical delays have created huge gaps in the system. Furthermore, the existence of overflow bypasses means that during even light rain, untreated waste is diverted directly into the riverbed.

We are essentially spending millions on 'photo-friendly' surface projects like riverside parks and stone walls, while the fundamental 'plumbing' of our city, the interceptor network, remains incomplete and bypassed. Beyond health and looks, there is a deep economic and cultural loss. Historically, the Bagmati was the centre of our spiritual life. Today, religious rituals are performed in water that is chemically toxic. This also hurts our tourism. As we try to attract visitors to our World Heritage sites, we show them rivers that look like industrial drains. The "smell of Kathmandu" should not be the stench of waste, yet for many tourists, that is the main memory they take home.

Furthermore, the cost of treating illnesses caused by this water puts a massive, hidden tax on our economy. We are spending huge amounts on healthcare for diseases that could be prevented if we simply finished the pipes beneath our feet. If we look at other countries, we see that this is a solvable problem. Singapore's Kallang River was once a concrete sewage canal, much like ours. Through smart engineering and strong political will, it was turned back into a natural park that filters water and provides a home for wildlife.

While these efforts are kind, they give a false sense of progress. What we truly need is a shift in accountability. We must demand that the High Powered Committee for Integrated Development of the Bagmati Civilisation (HPCIDBC) and the Ministry of Urban Development prioritize a 100 per cent completion of the interceptor sewers. No more excuses and no more delays. A river is the reflection of a city's soul. If we allow ours to remain a toxic drain, we are admitting that we have given up on the dignity of our capital and the safety of our children. It is time we stop holding our breath and start raising our voices. Our rivers were here long before the concrete; it is our duty to ensure they flow safely long after we are gone.

Nepal's Journey Toward Deeper Transformation

Anjali Subedi



These days, being in Nepal feels different. Something is breeding hope, something quietly transformative. Life continues in its familiar rhythm, and personal struggles remain. But when one pauses to observe the national mood, a renewed sense of direction, an emerging belief that perhaps, this time, things may truly begin to change. This shift is not accidental. It follows a political transition: the Gen Z-led protests, the tragic loss of innocent young lives, the toppling of the government, the formation of an interim administration under former Chief Justice Sushila Karki, months of doubt, pain, and the general election bringing Balendra Shah to national leadership after the Rastriya Swatantra Party's landslide victory in the March elections.

What stands out is not leadership change, but a change in approach. Unlike in the past, when governance often became absorbed by ceremony and symbolism, there is an attempt to prioritise work over optics. The government's early direction, though still unfolding, signals urgency and intent to address long-standing gaps in governance, the economy, and public service delivery. The tone feels more focused and less performative. For years, many Nepalis had grown accustomed to political inertia. Fragile coalitions, prolonged negotiations, and slow execution steadily weakened public trust. Today, let's not say that trust has been fully restored, but it is slowly returning.

Wary of vulnerabilities

People are hopeful, though wary of vulnerabilities. There is a clear understanding that governance is complex and mistakes are inevitable. Some decisions may appear rushed, reforms may face resistance, and promises take time to materialise. Yet there is also willingness to observe with patience and allow space for sincere effort. Challenges mount as the transition has not come without friction. As new leadership disrupts established systems, those who once held influence in older networks feel unsettled. This often appears as heightened criticism, where minor missteps are amplified, reflecting change is real enough to be felt.

Yet governance alone cannot carry the full weight of transformation. Policies can be announced, targets set, and intentions communicated, but the measure of change lies in execution, consistency. The risk is that reform remains at the surface and fails to reach deeper structures that require transformation. More importantly, Nepal's challenges are not only political but deeply social. Caste-based discrimination, despite legal abolition, continues to shape lived realities. Dalits have been denied rooms in Kathmandu, punished for using public taps in towns and villages, and having affairs with so-called higher-caste partners, leading them to custody or jail continue making headlines.

The current government has taken

> It requires individuals to examine biases, challenge injustice, and build spaces where dignity and equality are practiced rather than assumed.

symbolic steps toward acknowledging historical injustice faced by Dalit communities, reflecting willingness to confront the issue openly. But symbolism alone does not dismantle entrenched structures. Next, gender inequality and social hierarchies remain equally vital. Floods of hate speech and patriarchal expression on social media reveal how deeply these patterns persist. They survive not only through systems but through everyday expectations and inherited norms shaping behavior in subtle yet powerful ways.

These are not issues policy or apology alone can resolve. They are sustained across generations through what is accepted as normal, what is left unquestioned, and what is passed on. Cultural conditioning reinforces these patterns, while gaps in education and awareness, especially in marginalised communities, make change even harder. Even when opportunities exist, they are not always equally accessed or fully understood. This is where the real challenge lies. A government, no matter how committed, cannot single-handedly transform society. Structural reform must be accompanied by a shift in social consciousness. Without it, even well-intentioned efforts remain incomplete. The responsibility therefore extends beyond leadership. It rests with citizens, with those who are aware, who question, and who reflect. Change demands participation.

Structural progress

It requires individuals to examine biases, challenge injustice, and build spaces where dignity and equality are practiced rather than assumed. It demands empathy and willingness to recognise justice is not only a principle but a lived practice. At its core, Nepal's present moment reveals a quiet but important truth: political change is moving faster than social change. If this momentum continues, Nepal has potential for meaningful structural progress. The direction, for now, appears promising.

For progress to become transformative, it must go deeper into homes, schools, workplaces, and communities. It must reshape not only systems but also mindsets. Nepal stands today at a rare intersection where political possibility meets social responsibility. The leadership shall facilitate, and the depth and permanence of change shall be shaped by participation, especially from aware, vocal, educated, reflective sections of society. These groups have a role: observers or critics, but active bridges between policy and society, working alongside government to translate intent into change on the ground. And perhaps, for the first time in a long while, there is not only hope in the air but a growing readiness to act.

(Subedi is a journalist and founder of HappyMe that focuses on healing, emotional well-being and social change.)

50 YEARS AGO

THE RISING NEPAL

April 18, 1975

Sai Baba May Visit Nepal Soon

Kathmandu, April 17: Sattay Sai Baba will be in Kathmandu on 25th May, reports RSS.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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READER'S MAIL

Do Radical Steps Work In Education?


New Education Policy Under Scrutiny

Being a teacher myself, I read Mahabir Paudyal's op-ed article titled "New Education Policy Under Scrutiny" (16 April) published in your esteemed daily with keen interest. The author has not sided with any argument and has clearly laid out the pros and cons of the government's recent policy changes aimed at reforming the education sector. However, the author, as an educator himself, could have used a classroom anecdote or two so that his arguments would have been better substantiated.

We cannot simply embrace certain changes in a seminal field like education just because they have been working in other countries, especially those with entirely different economies, cultures, values, and geography than ours. My question is: did they achieve economic prosperity and educational standards—widely considered worth emulating—in a radical way, or in a gradual manner, as per their needs?

What concerns me is that we have not yet worked towards exploring other parameters that can directly contribute to improving the quality of education, but have instead attempted to chart the choppy waters of introducing two weekends per week and scrapping conventional examinations at the primary school level. All we can do now is wait and watch whether these new initiatives come to fruition or turn out to be a debacle.

Ganesh P Paudel
Sanskar Pathshala Dang,
Tulsipur

TAILPIECE

The child comes home from his first day at school.Joke archive access His Mother asks, "Well, what did you learn today?"

The kid replies, "Not enough. They want me to come back tomorrow."

++

A laywoman was driving down the street in a sweat because she had an important meeting and couldn't find a parking space. Looking up toward heaven, she said, "Lord, take pity on me. If you find me a parking place I'll go to Mass every Sunday for the rest of my life and give up drinking wine."Miraculously, a parking space opened up right in front of her destination. The woman looked up to heaven and said, "Never mind, Lord; I found one on my own."

France, UK meet on Hormuz

AP
Paris, Apr. 17

The leaders of France and the U.K. gathered dozens of countries — but not the United States — on Friday to push forward plans to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a key oil route choked off by the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

The Paris meeting is part of attempts by sidelined nations to ease the impact of a conflict they didn't start and haven't joined, but that has sent the global economy reeling.

After the war started on Feb. 28, Iran effectively shut the narrow strait though which a fifth of the world's oil usually passes. The U.S. is not part of the planning for what has been branded the Strait of Hormuz Maritime Freedom of Navigation Initiative.

In a post on X ahead of Friday's conference, French President Emmanuel Macron said the mission to provide security for shipping through the strait would be "strictly defensive," limited to non-belligerent countries and deployed "when security conditions allow."

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, facing political troubles at home, was greeted by Macron in the courtyard of the Elysee presidential palace on Friday afternoon.

Macron and Starmer have spearheaded international efforts to increase diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran, which Starmer has accused of "holding the world's economy to ransom." U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement of a retaliatory American blockade of Iranian ports has raised the economic jeopardy even higher.

"The unconditional and immediate reopening of the Strait is a global responsibility, and we need to act to get global energy and trade flowing freely again," Starmer said before the meeting.

France and Britain also have led military planning meetings, in an echo of the "coalition of the willing" assembled to provide security for Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire in that war.

French military spokesman Col. Guillaume Vernet said Thursday that the mission is still "in construction."

Macron's office said participants will contribute "each according to its capabilities," stressing options to ensure safe passage through the strait will depend on the security situation after a lasting ceasefire.

"What matters is that ship operators have all the means at their disposal to be sure their vessels will not be hit if they pass through the strait. That may require intelligence, mine-clearing capabilities, military escorts, communication procedures with coastal states, etc.," an official said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with the French presidency's customary practices.

Sidharth Kaushal, a research fellow in sea power at the Royal United Services Institute think tank, said mine-clearing and creating a warning system for maritime threats were more likely roles for the coalition than warships escorting commercial tankers though the strait. "You need huge numbers of vessels for that sort of thing, which nobody has," he said.

Iran expert Ellie Geranmayeh, deputy head of the Middle East and North Africa program at the European Council on Foreign Relations think tank, said mine-clearing is an area where European countries and their partners could play a role.

"They would be a better party to do this than the United States, because once you have U.S. military doing this and lingering on Iranian shores, it creates a potential arena for Iran and the U.S. to have miscalculations and get back into a sort of military tension," she said.



PHOTO: AP

France's President Emmanuel Macron, left, welcomes British Prime Minister Keir Starmer at Elysee Palace, in Paris.

Loaded Iranian tankers exit Gulf post-blockade

AFP
Paris, Apr. 17

Three Iranian oil tankers carrying a total of five million barrels of crude have become the first such loaded vessels to leave the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz since a US blockade came into force, the tracking firm Kpler told AFP on Friday.

The Deep Sea, Sonia I and Diona, all under US sanctions, passed the strategic strait on Wednesday after leaving Iran's Kharg Island, having loaded on April 2, 8 and 9 respectively, according to the maritime data company.

Washington has imposed a blockade on Iranian ports since Monday, intended to prevent Tehran from exporting its oil. No Iranian tanker had left the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz with a cargo of crude oil since the Starla on April 10.

Maritime data tracking sites do not provide recent AIS transponder data on the three tankers, as their devices are switched off. All three last transmitted approximately a month ago in the Strait of Malacca, according to the Marine Traffic website.

Israel, Lebanon reach 10-day ceasefire

AP
Lebanon, Apr. 17

A 10-day ceasefire announced by U.S. President Donald Trump and agreed on by Lebanon and Israel appeared to be holding in Lebanon on Friday, potentially boosting efforts to extend a truce between Iran, the United States and Israel.

It was unclear whether a lasting deal would be reached between the U.S. and Iran before the ceasefire ends next week, but the pause in fighting between Israel and Hezbollah could be an indication some progress has been made.

An end to Israel's war with Hezbollah was a key demand of Iranian negotiators. Israel has not been fighting with Lebanon itself, but rather with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group inside Lebanon, which said in a statement that "any ceasefire must be comprehensive across all Lebanese territory and must not allow the Israeli enemy any freedom of movement."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he agreed to the ceasefire "to advance" peace efforts with Lebanon, but said Israeli troops would not withdraw.

Pakistan's army chief met Thursday with Iran's parliament speaker as part of international efforts to press for an extension to the ceasefire that has paused almost seven weeks of war.

Mediators are pushing for a compromise on three main sticking points: Iran's nuclear program, the Strait of Hormuz and compensation for wartime damages, according to a regional official involved in mediation efforts.

Reopening the strait is a key demand by the U.S. and the international community as a global energy crisis worsens daily because of the key oil route's closure.

The fighting has killed at least 3,000 people in Iran, more than 2,100 in Lebanon, 23 in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Thirteen U.S. service members have also been killed.

Hassan Fadlallah, the senior Hezbollah lawmaker, praised Iran as he spoke to reporters in the battered Beirut southern suburb. "Yesterday, before the ceasefire, Hezbollah's leadership was formally informed around 4am from the Iranian ambassador that there will be a ceasefire at night," he said.

"We were informed from the Islamic Republic that the calls they took with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were encouraging and facilitating for a ceasefire as first step."

Fadlallah said that the militant group's key positions — a complete ceasefire, withdrawal of Israeli troops, a return of all Lebanese displaced people, releasing prisoners held by Israel and reconstruction — have not changed.

Senior Hezbollah legislator warns Lebanon against entering direct negotiations with Israel "During these 10 days we want the continued effort from Iran to force Israel to the pathway that was imposed by the Islamabad talks," Hassan Fadlallah told The Associated Press Friday after speaking to the press in the battered Beirut southern suburb of Haret Hreik.

Fadlallah, from Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, warned Lebanon not to enter direct negotiations with Israel. The Iran-backed militant group said direct talks with Israel would be a free concession to Israel as its troops remain on Lebanese soil.

House extends surveillance powers to April 30

AP
Washington, Apr. 17

The House early Friday approved a short-term renewal until April 30 of a controversial surveillance program used by U.S. spy agencies in a post-midnight vote after Republicans revolted and refused President Donald Trump's push for a longer extension.

GOP leaders rushed lawmakers back into session late Thursday with a series of back-to-back votes that collapsed in dramatic failure, before they quickly pushed ahead the stopgap measure as they race to keep the surveillance program running past Monday's expiration date.

First they unveiled a new plan that would have extended the program for five years, with revisions. Then they tried to salvage a shorter 18-month renewal that Trump had demanded and Speaker Mike Johnson had previously backed. Some 20 Republicans joined most Democrats in blocking its advance.

Shortly after 2 a.m. they quickly agreed to the 10-day extension, which was agreed to on a voice vote without a formal roll call. It next goes to the Senate, which is gaveling for a rare Friday session, as Congress races to keep the surveillance program running. "We were very close tonight," said Johnson after the late-night action.

But Democrats blasted the middle-of-the-night voting as amateur hour. "Are you kidding me? Who the hell is running this place?" said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., during a fiery floor debate.

At the center of the standoff that has stretched throughout the week is Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which permits the CIA, National Security Agency, FBI and other agencies to collect and analyze vast amounts of overseas communications without a warrant. In doing so, they can incidentally sweep up communications involving Americans who interact with foreign targets.

U.S. officials say the authority is critical to disrupting terrorist plots, cyber intrusions and foreign espionage.

Its path to passage has teetered all week in a familiar fight, as lawmakers weigh civil liberties concerns against intelligence officials' warnings about national security risks.

Opponents of the surveillance tool point to past misuses. FBI officials repeatedly violated their own standards when searching intelligence related to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol and racial justice protests in 2020, according to a 2024 court order.

Trump and his allies had lobbied aggressively all week for a clean renewal of the program, without changes.

A group of Republicans traveled to the White House on Tuesday, and on Wednesday CIA Director John Ratcliffe spoke directly with GOP lawmakers. House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said Thursday there had "been negotiations late into the night with the White House and some of our members."

"I am asking Republicans to UNIFY, and vote together on the test vote to bring a clean Bill to the floor," Trump wrote on Truth Social this week. "We need to stick together."

Thursday's proceedings came to a standstill as lawmakers retreated behind closed doors and Johnson reached for an agreement to resolve the standoff.

Shortly before midnight GOP leaders announced a new proposal, a five-year extension, with revisions. The changes were designed to win over skeptics of the surveillance program who have demanded greater oversight to protect Americans' privacy.

Among the changes are new provisions to ensure that only FBI attorneys can authorize queries on U.S. persons, and to require the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to review such cases, said Rep. Austin Scott, R-Ga., during the debate.

But the final product, a 14-page amendment, did not go far enough for some holdouts in either party.

With Johnson controlling a slim majority, he has little room for dissent. As the Republicans fell short on both efforts before the short extension, a handful of Democrats stepped in to try to help them advance the longer extensions, but most Democrats were opposed.

"We just defeated Johnson's efforts to sneak through a 5-year FISA authorization tonight," said Democratic Rep, Ro Khanna of California. "Now, they will have to fight in daylight."

Sri Lanka repatriates 238 Iranian sailors



FILE PHOTO: AP

Two Iranian sailors rescued from IRIS Dena warship by Sri Lanka's navy are escorted to a Judicial Medical Officer from the National Hospital, in Galle, Sri Lanka.

AP
Colombo, Apr. 17

Sri Lanka has sent home 238 Iranian sailors, including 32 who survived a U.S torpedo attack that sank their ship in the Indian Ocean, officials said Friday.

A U.S. submarine sank the IRIS Dena on March 4 while the ship was returning home after taking part in a naval exercise on invitation from India.

The Sri Lankan navy recovered 87 bodies and 32 were hospitalized. A second Iranian ship was brought to a southern Sri Lankan port after its crew reported technical problems.

Defense Ministry spokesman Brig. Franklin Joseph said Friday that everyone except for a few crew members from the second ship had been repatriated earlier this week.

The Iranian ship has been anchored in the eastern port of Trincomalee port and no decision has been taken on what should be done with it.

"I think it (Sri Lanka) has proven its policy posture not only in words but also in deeds," said H.M.G.S. Palihakkara, a retired former foreign secretary who also served as Sri Lanka's permanent representative to the United Nations.

He said the island nation ensured that it was not seen to be taking sides but acted on the basis of legality, humanity and international law. "All parties to the conflict have acknowledged that. It has enhanced Sri Lanka's government's credibility," he said.

PRISM

'Project Hail Mary' trailer stunt wins world record

Amazon: Project Hail Mary has earned a Guinness World Record following its publicity stunt in space.

Sony announced Thursday that the movie was awarded the Guinness World Records title for Highest Altitude IMAX Film Trailer after broadcasting the film's trailer in space.

In a partnership with the space agency Sent Into Space, the Project Hail Mary trailer was shown March 14 on a scale replica IMAX screen 101,896 feet above Earth.

Sent Into Space previously said its team built a carbon-fiber launch vehicle to launch the screen, which was built to operate in the sub-zero temperatures of space.

91–year-old gamer found safe

Ohio: Westlake Ohio Police were relieved when a recent welfare check on an elderly woman found her safe and playing video games.

Officers said concerns were raised April 9 after a 91-year-old resident enrolled in the city's voluntary Confirm OK program did not answer her check-in phone call, according to Cleveland.com.

Police were dispatched for a wellness check after speaking to the woman's daughter, who was also unable to reach her. They "became more alarmed" when there was no answer at the door, despite the woman's car being in the garage.

Once inside the home, police found the woman safe and playing video games in her bedroom. She explained she missed the calls because she was focused on beating her top score in a "bubble pop" game.

"Turned out to be all okay. Everyone got a good laugh out of it," Westlake Police Captain Jerry Vogel told News 5 Cleveland.

Agencies

TODAY IN HISTORY

1689– Bostonians rise up in rebellion against Sir Edmund Andros.
1738– Real Academia de la Historia ("Royal Academy of History") is founded in Madrid.
1797– War of the First Coalition: The Peace of Leoben is signed by Napoleon Bonaparte and Maximilian, Count of Merveldt, creating an armistice between France and Austria, setting the stage for the Treaty of Campo Formio and ending the War of the First Coalition.[citation needed]
1831– The University of Alabama is founded in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
1847– American victory at the battle of Cerro Gordo opens the way for invasion of Mexico.
1857 – "The Spirits Book" by Allan Kardec is published, marking the birth of Spiritualism in France.
1864– Battle of Dybbøl: A Prussian-Austrian army defeats Denmark and gains control of Schleswig. Denmark surrenders the province in the following peace settlement.

JAPAN COINS NEW TERM FOR HEATWAVE DAYS

AFP
Tokyo, Apr. 17

Blistering temperatures rising to 40C and above will now be branded "cruelly hot" or "kokusho-bi" in Japan, the weather agency said Friday, as heatwave days become increasingly frequent in the region.

By using this designation, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) "will more effectively call for vigilance against extremely high temperatures", it said. Last year, Japan sweltered through its hottest summer since records began in 1989 -- with warmer days on the rise globally due to climate change.

To come up with the new category, JMA conducted a survey with the public and received responses from 478,000 people before adopting "cruelly hot", which was deemed the most popular.

Coming in second was "super-extremely hot day" or "cho-mosho-bi" while "sauna day", "stay-at-home day" and "boiling day" were also among the choices, JMA said. The new category joins terms already used by JMA for temperatures rising to 25C and higher (summer day), 30C and higher (midsummer day), and 35C and higher (extremely hot day).

Escaped wolf safely returned to zoo

AP
Seoul, Apr. 17

The South Korean internet erupted in celebration as a 2-year-old wolf that escaped from a zoo in South Korea was captured Friday, safely after a nine-day search that kept the nation on edge and made it a national celebrity.

The male wolf, named Neukgu, burrowed out of his enclosure at the O-World zoo in Daejeon on April 8, prompting a search that gripped the nation and raised fears about his safety.

Animal rights activists questioned whether the wolf could survive outside the zoo and also worried it might be killed during capture, something that happened to a puma that escaped from the same zoo in 2018.

Intense national concern even prompted President Lee Jae Myung to make a statement reassuring the public police, fire officials and the military were doing their best to capture the wolf alive.

At one point, authorities nearly captured Neukgu after spotting him on a mountain near the zoo earlier this week, but he broke away from a perimeter set by rescue workers.



PHOTO: AP

Veterinarians examine the condition of the male wolf, named Neukgu, at Daejeon O-World theme park in Daejeon, South Korea, Friday.

A driver also spotted the wolf and shared a video of him trotting along a dark mountain road, lit by the headlights of the vehicle trailing behind.

Neukgu was finally found and tranquilized on a hill near an expressway early Friday, after an hours-long search involving drones, police and emergency workers and veterinarians, according to city and zoo officials.

He was in stable condition after being taken back to the zoo, where veterinarians used a scope to remove a fishing hook from his stomach but found no other significant health issues.

Daejeon officials released social media videos showing rescuers pulling the limp wolf from a ditch and placing it in a carrier, and the animal undergoing medical examinations at the zoo.

Social media was flooded with celebratory posts, including messages like "welcome back" and "Neukgu, it's dangerous outside the house." Daejeon Mayor Lee Jang-woo in a Facebook post expressed his "deepest gratitude to citizens of Daejeon and also the entire nation for your support in ensuring Neukgu's safe return."

Born at the zoo in 2024, Neukgu is a third-generation descendent of a group of wolves brought from Russia in 2008 as part of a project to reintroduce wolves resembling those that lived in the Korean wild before going extinct in the 1960s.

Lee Kwan Jong, director of O-World, said Neukgu will be kept in a separate area from other animals and receive care until he has fully recovered and stabilized.

The zoo's management, which has been criticized over a series of animal escapes, closed the facility following Neukgu's escape and says it has not decided when it will reopen.

Lee Kwan Jong said the zoo, which is reviewing its security measures, will prioritize Neukgu's recovery. He's expected to be a huge attraction when the zoo reopens.



PHOTO: RSS

Dried dung cakes carefully stored for use as cooking fuel at Laxmipur in Tulsipur Sub-metropolitan City in Dang district. With the rising price of cooking gas, traditional fuels like dung cakes are regaining importance.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Resources to be ascertained in three days

RSS
Kathmandu, April 17

A decision has been made to classify the disaster-related issues raised by the members of the House of Representatives in discussions with Prime Minister Balendra Shah and to prioritise them on the basis of risk within three days.

Similarly, it is decided to complete the work that can be done within the current fiscal year by June 29.

The meeting of officials from the disaster risk reduction and management bodies held at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers also decided to ascertain the necessary resources for potential disaster risk reduction in the upcoming dry and rainy seasons and to request any shortfall within three days.

The Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers has stated that the meeting decided to manage the necessary resources for the prevention and response of monsoon-related disasters such as drought and forest fires in the dry season and floods, landslides, inundation and river erosion in the rainy season from the allocated budget of the concerned ministries, and to request any insufficient resources from the Ministry of Finance.

The meeting has decided to prepare an integrated report within five days on the inventory of disaster management tools and materials available in various agencies through the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA).

Details of the necessary additional equipment will be prepared in coordination with the concerned authority and will be procured and provided based on priority, for which the Ministry of Finance will make budget arrangements.

The meeting also decided to effectively coordinate between federal, provincial and local levels at all stages of disaster management.

In addition, cooperation with neighbouring countries will be promoted through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the exchange of meteorological and disaster-related information.

Speaker Aryal pledges reforms in...

Responding to these concerns, Speaker Aryal acknowledged that the existing difficulties were due to the temporary meeting hall currently in use. He expressed confidence that such issues would be resolved once the permanent building is completed. He pledged to coordinate with the Parliament Secretariat and security agencies to simplify entry procedures and facilitate smoother reporting conditions.

"The relationship between the parliament and the press is indispensable for strengthening democracy. I remain committed to improving journalists' access and supporting transparent coverage of parliamentary activities," he said. "I am available to the journalist at any time and I hope to make our relation more transparent and strong," he added.

Speaker Aryal further stated that he viewed his role as an opportunity for institutional improvement, vowing to uphold positive precedents while addressing past shortcomings. "I call on the media to play a constructive role, encouraging balanced reporting that not only highlights weaknesses but also contributes to solutions," he said.

The speaker reiterated his commitment to ensuring that parliamentary processes are guided by constitutional principles and that reforms introduced during his tenure would strengthen democratic governance in Nepal.

Driving licences will be printed...

Minister Dr. Timilsina directed for the effective use of the equipment at the centre and expressed dissatisfaction over the fact that the equipment purchased with a large investment has been unused for years.

He said that the equipment, generators and other materials worth about one billion rupees should be put into use. He also raised the question of why work could not be done in the past when the machines that had been idle for three years have now been brought into operation and printing work is possible.

During the inspection, Minister Dr. Timilsina directed to give high priority to the data security of citizens and made it clear that the government will operate only in the interest of the people.

"The government does not operate in anyone's interests, but in the interests of the people," he said. He also said that the ministry is committed to working with the service recipients at the centre, listening to complaints and resolving them.

Similarly, Minister Dr. Timilsina said that improving the access and quality of mobile network and internet services across the country is also a priority for the ministry. He said that the goal is to resolve complaints about the quality of Nepal Telecom's services and bring access to technology to all citizens of the country within the next one year.

Devraj Dhungana, Executive Director of the Secure Printing Centre, informed that they are preparing a business plan with the aim of strengthening this organisation in the long term. He said that in the future, important documents including passports, checkbooks, smart cards, postage stamps, excise stickers can be printed from this centre. Dhungana said that the centre has submitted a detailed plan to the government with a budget of about Rs. 8 billion.

According to Executive Director Dhungana, currently around 40,000 licenses are being printed daily. He informed that the licenses required for Nepali citizens going abroad are given priority and the Department of Transport Management receives around 1,000 applications daily. He said that the target is to print 1.2 million licenses by April 25 and the remaining 1.7 million licenses by the end of June, 2026.

MPs Madhu Kumar Chaulagain, Dr. Ram Lama, Badan Kumar Bhandari, newly elected lawamker from Kavre, and others were present on the occasion. Minister Dr. Timilsina also inquired about the physical infrastructure, machinery and condition of the vacant building of the centre.

Uncollected passports pile up in Makwanpur, DAO begins postal delivery

BY RAMMANI DAHAL
Makwanpur, Apr. 17



There has been a growing trend of people not collecting their passports on time from the District Administration Office (DAO) Makwanpur after applying for them for various purposes.

With an increasing number of applicants failing to collect passports issued for foreign employment, study, travel and other purposes, managing and distributing passports has become a challenge for the Office.

In a solution to this, the DAO has begun sending passports to recipients via the postal service. The initiative has been introduced in line with the government's 100-point governance reform plan, which aims to deliver services, including passports, directly to citizens' homes.

The office has publicly requested individuals whose passports are ready to clarify whether they will collect them in person or prefer delivery by post.

According to Ramesh Lamichhane, Chief of the District Postal Office, passport delivery to homes began on Wednesday. Within three days until Friday, 76 passports were delivered to various locations within Hetauda Sub-metropolitan City through postal staff.

He said the administration contacts applicants via phone, and if they agree for postal delivery, passports are sent to their homes. A fee of Rs. 40 is charged for a standard letter, and Rs. 55 for delivering a passport.

The DAO stated that passports of applicants who applied up to April 3 this year have already been prepared and received. However, more than 650 passports remain uncollected.

Although the plan includes delivering passports and national identity cards to homes, the service is currently limited to the Hetauda Sub-metropolitan City area.

Lamichhane said expanding the service to rural areas is currently not feasible due to a lack of manpower, transport and security concerns. He added that even within the municipality, poor road access has made it difficult for postal workers to reach the homes of a few individuals.

He said the postal office lacks vehicles and must rely on staff with personal transport, without additional allowances or fuel provisions.

He also noted that the current communication allowance of Rs. 1,000 for postal staff is insufficient given the increased workload.

Tanahun begins home delivery of passports

Meanwhile, our Tanahun correspondent Amar Raj Naharki adds: The District Administration Office (DAO) Tanahun has begun delivering passports directly to people's homes.

The DAO has introduced the service in coordination with the District Postal Office, enabling passports to be delivered to the doorsteps of service recipients, thus removing the need for people to travel for hours to the district headquarters to collect passports.

The service has been launched in line with the government's 100-point governance reform agenda (point no. 27), which commits to providing passports at home. Speaking at the launch of the service, Chief District Officer Shiva Lal Tiwari, said the initiative follows the government's policy of taking public services to citizens' doorsteps. "This service will continue through the postal system to ensure passports are delivered directly to people's homes," he said.

According to Tiwari, applicants are now given the option at the time of applying to either collect their passport from the office or have it delivered at home. Those opting for home delivery will receive the service through the postal office.

Chief of the District Postal Office, Tanahun, Shirish Upadhyaya, said four individuals received their passports at home on the first day of the campaign. "We have coordinated with the administration to ensure safe delivery of passports to the recipients' homes," he said.

The service was formally launched on Thursday with the delivery of a passport to Samiksha Ojha of Byas Municipality–5, Sange Barbote, in the presence of CDO Tiwari, Assistant CDO Deepak Regmi and Postal Office Chief Upadhyaya.

Ojha said she was pleased to receive the passport at home within 15 days without hassle. Her father, Shiva Raj Ojha, said the service made him feel that the government had arrived at people's doorsteps. Her mother, Sushila Ojha, said the service saved both time and travel costs, especially during the farming season.

Likewise, Regmi said the initiative would save time and money for citizens and improve satisfaction with public services.

SC gives legitimacy to...

Following written submissions from the Election Commission, the Nepali Congress central office and Thapa himself, the case proceeded to a full hearing, concluding this week. Legal representatives for both sides presented arguments before the bench, with senior advocates appearing for both the respondents and the petitioners.

In its detailed explanation, the Supreme Court concluded that the process leading to Thapa's election did not violate existing laws or party statutes, dismissing key claims raised by the rival faction.

The bench found that the special general convention held in mid-January had been convened in accordance with the party's constitutional provisions. The court noted that prior notice had been issued and that the convention was organised following internal procedures, including provisions allowing such a gathering when a regular general convention could not be held.

It also ruled that the Election Commission Nepal acted within its legal mandate under the Political Parties Act, 2073, when it recognised the newly elected central working committee. The court stated that the commission had carried out the necessary study and verification before updating party records and found no procedural or legal error in its decision.

Petitioners Deuba and Khadka had argued that the convention was unlawful and breached party statutes, also questioning the verification of required support within the central committee. However, the court rejected these assertions.

The verdict affirms the legality of both the convention and subsequent administrative actions, effectively settling the dispute in favour of the current leadership.

"This decision can be seen as political justice delivered by the Supreme Court. It is highly welcome and sends a message for all of us to move forward together towards holding the party's 15th general convention," said Pushpa Bhusal, vice-president of the Nepali Congress.

Similarly, General Secretary Pradip Poudel urged restraint and unity within the party following the verdict. In a statement, Poudel said the decision should not be interpreted as a victory for one faction or a defeat for another, warning that such narratives could harm party unity at a sensitive time.

"I urge all leaders, members and well-wishers to remain vigilant against divisive interpretations and to focus on strengthening internal cohesion. It is essential that we create an environment in which all sides feel secure and included," he said.

Appealing for reconciliation, he called on party members to come together under the party's four-star flag and work collectively towards the 15th General Convention, adding that unity and cooperation would be essential in guiding the party forward.

Iran reopens...

"I will say the war in Iran is going along swimmingly," Trump said in a Las Vegas speech. "It should be ending pretty soon."

An end to Israel's war with Hezbollah was a key demand of Iranian negotiators, who previously accused Israel of breaking the current ceasefire deal with strikes on Lebanon. Israel said that deal did not cover Lebanon.

Pakistan's army chief met Thursday with Iran's parliament speaker as part of international efforts to press for an extension of the ceasefire.

The fighting has killed at least 3,000 people in Iran, more than 2,100 in Lebanon, 23 in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Thirteen U.S. service members have also been killed.

Israel's hard-line Defense Minister Israel Katz warned on Friday that Israel plans to respect the ceasefire even though attempts to completely disarm Hezbollah in southern Lebanon are "not yet complete." Katz said Israel would continue to hold all the places it is currently stationed, including a buffer zone extending 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the border with Israel into southern Lebanon. He said many homes in the area would be destroyed and Lebanese residents will not return to the area.

Earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he agreed to the ceasefire "to advance" peace efforts with Lebanon, but also said Israeli troops would not withdraw.

Israeli forces have engaged in fierce battles with Hezbollah in the border area as they pushed into southern Lebanon to create what officials have called a "security zone."

"That is where we are, and we are not leaving," he said.

Hezbollah has said Lebanese people have "the right to resist" Israeli occupation of their land and that their actions "will be determined based on how developments unfold."

Nepal Airlines expands flights...

"People in the area have suffered for years due to expensive fares and unreliable services. After continuous efforts, we have finally managed to secure four regular weekly flights," he said.

According to Yamraj Singh, Nepal Airlines' regional manager in Nepalgunj, one aircraft has now been stationed at Nepalgunj Airport to ensure regular service to districts in Karnali Province.

He added that flights are currently being operated regularly across most Himalayan districts as per schedule.

To maintain safety standards, the aircraft is sent to Kathmandu once a week for routine maintenance, mainly on Fridays and returns to Nepalgunj by Sunday. Singh suggested that managing a maintenance team directly at Nepalgunj Airport would make operations more efficient and sustainable in the long term.

The increase in flight frequency is expected to not only ease travel difficulties but also support tourism and stimulate the local economy in this remote region.

Lumbini Provincial Government
Ministry of Health
Province Health Logistics Management Center, Butwal

Letter of Intent

Date: 2083/01/05

Pursuant to clause 27(2) of Public Procurement act 2063 this is to notify all the bidders that the following Substantially responsive lowest bidder have been selected to award the contract as per the invitation for bids published on National Daily and PHLMC intends to award the contract to the same.

IFB No.	Description	Name and address of Bidder	Quoted Price (without VAT)
L/PHLMC/ NCB/ GOODS-26/2082-083	The Procurement of Supply & Delivery of Portable Ultrasound Machine Color Doppler Machine with Single Probe	General Medical Suppliers, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur	NRs. 1,70,76,106/-

PHLMC, Butwal

Matatirtha Aunsi observed





PHOTO: SUJAN GURUNG/ TRN

On the occasion of Mata Tirtha Aunsi, observed every year on the no moon day of the Krishna Paksha in the month of Baisakh, devotees gathered at the Mata Tirtha Kunda in Chandragiri Municipality–6 on Friday in the memory of their late mothers.

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 17

Matatirtha Aunsi, a day dedicated to honouring mothers with deep reverence, devotion and gratitude, was celebrated across the country on Friday.

Observed on Baishakh Krishna Aunsi (new moon day), the day sees sons and daughters across the country presenting their mothers with clothes, sweets, fruits and other gifts as tokens of love and appreciation, while seeking their blessings in return.

Thousands of devotees also throng Matatirtha Kunda, a sacred pond located in Chandragiri Municipality, Kathmandu, to pay homage to their departed mothers.

In memory of their late mothers, large crowds have gathered at Mata Tirtha in Chandragiri Municipality–6 to offer prayers, perform shraddha, and conduct religious rituals.

Krishna Prasad Khadgi, Spokesperson for Chandragiri Municipality, said that the number of people bathing, making donations, performing shraddha, offering tarpan, worshipping and attending the fair has started since 3 am today at Matatirtha.

According to Hindu mythology, those who have lost their mothers can see their mothers' reflections in the pond on this new-moon day of Baishakh. Devotees offer sweets and flowers at the pond, believing that their offerings will reach their mothers and earn their blessings.

The village of Matatirtha, from which the festival derives its name, holds special significance as a spiritual site for this tradition.

MARVEL DEBUTS AVENGERS: DOOMSDAY TRAILER AT CINEMACON

AFP
Las Vegas, Apr. 17

Disney showcased the first theatrical trailer of the new Marvel franchise film "Avengers: Doomsday" on Thursday during the closing day of CinemaCon in Las Vegas.

The clip -- played twice for the enthusiastic audience at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace -- offered the first look at Robert Downey Jr. as the villainous Doctor Doom.

It marks the actor's return to the Marvel Cinematic Universe since the death of Iron Man in 2019's "Avengers: Endgame."

The footage also teased several dramatic moments from the movie, including a fight between Gambit and Shang-Chi -- played by Channing Tatum and Simu Liu, respectively -- and Patrick Stewart reprising his role as X-Men's Professor Xavier, warning: "Something's coming, something we may not be able to deter."

At the very end of the trailer, Chris Evans returns as his character Steve Rogers, otherwise known as Captain America, appearing before a surprised-looking Thor (Chris Hemsworth) as the Norse god's Mjolnir hammer flies into Rogers' hands.

Both Evans and Downey Jr. were on the stage at CinemaCon to present the trailer alongside the film's directors, brothers Joe and Anthony Russo.

"I said I would only come back if there was a real reason," Evans told the crowd.

"And in Doomsday, there is a very real reason that these heroes need Steve Rogers."

"Avengers: Doomsday" follows the events of "Avengers: Endgame," bringing together a host of Marvel characters new and old, including the X-Men, previously excluded from the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Only humans can make art: Bakers

AFP
Paris (France), Apr. 17

Millions of gamers around the world may not know Troy Baker's face but would recognise his voice -- perhaps as the heartbroken father Joel in "The Last of Us" or an intrepid Indiana Jones in "The Great Circle".

That human connection is why the 50-year-old actor is "not afraid of anything replacing artists" even as creative industries are beset by fears of artificial intelligence taking over.

Baker spoke to AFP soon after of the release of a new title, "Screamer", the latest in a string of 430 games and animations to which he has lent his vocal cords rather than his bearded face and piercing blue eyes, according to IMDb.

Although AI can easily ape an actor's voice,"we're talking about art," Baker said.

"We make art. Art is inherently, intrinsically a human expression, and only humans can make it."

In "Screamer", a car racing title released last month for PC and consoles, Baker plays the role of Mister A., the organiser of a tournament whose high-octane clashes are interspersed with animated sequences.

"History has shown us that technology creates more opportunities than it replaces," Baker said.

Nevertheless, "anytime, in any art form, people are fearful of their jobs," he acknowledged. "I understand it."

Baker himself came in for online criticism in early 2022 for associating with a company specialising in NFTs ("non-fungible tokens", or tradeable digital objects) before quickly backing out.

Baker fell almost by accident into voice work in the early 2000s as he was trying to get a rock band off the ground.

But it was in 2013 that he broke through with the role of Joel in "The Last Of Us", the action-adventure game that tells the story of a man and a young girl traversing a post-apocalyptic America.

Baker's motions were also captured in his performance as the gruff and bereaved father.

Popular the world over, the game's success spawned a 2020 sequel and an HBO series starting in 2023, in which Baker appeared for a cameo role as a different character.

"I love Joel. I miss him every day," Baker said, while adding that he "cannot imagine any more of (his) story that's left to tell" despite rumours of a third game regularly circulating online.

Unlike the "multimillion-dollar sets" common in the movie business, in games "there's times when I'm given a microphone, a script and a Zoom call," said Baker, whose other major roles include the brother of the protagonist Nathan Drake in "Uncharted 4" (2016) and the antagonist of two "Death Stranding" games (2019 and 2025).

Baker struck just the right tone in 2024's "Indiana Jones and the Great Circle," in which he played Harrison Ford's film hero in his prime.

He recalled how at first, he "prepared in a completely wrong way" by attempting to copy one-for-one the movie star's voice and movements.

"That's the least Indiana Jones thing I could do," he later realised, saying he "had to let go" of Ford and do things his own way.

The Hollywood star himself congratulated Baker on his performance at the Game Awards in Los Angeles in 2024, one of the high points of the video game calendar.

But across different projects, "I can't have a single process," Baker said. "Every studio is different. Every game should be different."

His approach these days is to "ask a lot of questions" -- as in "Screamer", where "we spent a lot of time really dialing in each individual character".

This year Baker is appearing in the film "Iron Lung", a sci-fi thriller directed by the YouTube star Mark Fischbach, who goes by the moniker Marliplier.

Nevertheless, "I've never looked at video games as a stepping stone. This is where I love to be," he said.

LAWYERS FOR SINGER D4VD SAY HE DIDN'T KILL 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL AFTER HIS ARREST

AP
Los Angeles, Apr. 17

Singer D4vd has been arrested on suspicion of killing a 14-year-old girl whose decomposed body was found seven months ago in his apparently abandoned Tesla, authorities said Thursday, while his lawyers declared his innocence.

Los Angeles police said in a brief statement that homicide detectives arrested the 21-year-old Houston-born alt-pop singer, whose legal name is David Burke, on suspicion of murder in the investigation of the killing of Celeste Rivas Hernandez.

Defense attorneys Blair Berk, Marilyn Bednarski and Regina Peter responded in an email: "Let us be clear — the actual evidence in this case will show that David Burke did not murder Celeste Rivas Hernandez and he was not the cause of her death."

Police said investigators would present a case to prosecutors at the Los Angeles County District Attorneys Office on Monday. The office said in its own statement that it is aware of the arrest and its Major Crimes Division will review the case to determine whether there is enough evidence to file charges.

The defense lawyers added, "There has been no indictment returned by any grand jury in this case and no criminal complaint filed. David has only been detained under suspicion. We will vigorously defend David's innocence."

Japanese fans welcome BTS on world tour



PHOTO: AFP

Many fans came without tickets, just for the atmosphere.

AFP
Tokyo, Apr. 17

Tens of thousands of excited fans gathered at a landmark Tokyo stadium Friday to watch K-pop megastars BTS, in concert outside South Korea for the first time on their new world tour.

The seven-member group -- widely regarded as the world's biggest boy band -- took to the stage together for the first time last month following a years-long hiatus prompted by mandatory military service.

The tour coincides with the release of their latest studio album "ARIRANG".

Last week's spectacular concert in Goyang, about 16 kilometres from the South Korean capital Seoul, marked the start of a tour that will span 85 shows across 34 cities worldwide. "I waited so long," Miki Satani, 50, clutching a ticket for the concert, told AFP. BTS "give me lots of energy and cheer me up", said Satani, who discovered BTS six years ago.

"When I have various kinds of hardships in life, I can receive cheer by listening to their music... I feel they are like vitamin supplements for my life."

Fans who Friday surrounded Tokyo Dome -- which can accommodate up to 55,000 people -- included many without tickets, who came just for the atmosphere.

Ticketless Russian tourist Viktoria Diatlova, 27, expressed love for the boy band, saying their music "has such a beautiful message". Noa Iwaasa, 22, a hairdresser in Tokyo, said: "BTS is part of my life, as I've been listening to them since I was a student."The two concerts are on Friday and Saturday.

HOROSCOPE

tarot.com

ARIES: Aries, what you say sets the tone right now. With Mercury in your sign linking to Pluto in your friendship zone, group conversations can actually move forward if you step in. If things feel scattered or stuck, pull it together.

TAURUS: Taurus, you're coming across steady and easy to talk to today. With the Moon in your sign linking to Jupiter in your communication zone, conversations feel smoother and more supportive.

GEMINI: You've got a lot of ideas, but one is ready to move. With Mercury active in your friendship zone and linking to Pluto in your learning sector, conversations can turn into something useful.

CANCER: Support feels easier to access today, especially in your close circles. With the Moon linking to Jupiter, people are more responsive and willing to show up.

LEO: Conversations have a little more depth to them today, and people are paying attention to what you share. With Mercury linking to Pluto, it's easier to express something meaningful and have it land.

VIRGO: A small detail is asking for your attention, and it's worth fixing properly today. With Mercury in your intimacy sector linking to Pluto in your daily work zone, it's easier to notice what's inefficient or unclear

LIBRA: A conversation helps you find common ground today. With Mercury in your partnership zone linking to Pluto in your creative sector, it's easier to talk things through and land on a shared plan.

SCORPIO: Something that's been slightly off is easier to spot and fix today. Intellectual Mercury moves through your 6th House of Daily Work, highlighting process and care.

SAGITTARIUS: Where will your curiosity take you today? With Mercury moving through your creative zone and linking to Pluto in your communication sector, it's easier to shape an idea so it actually lands.

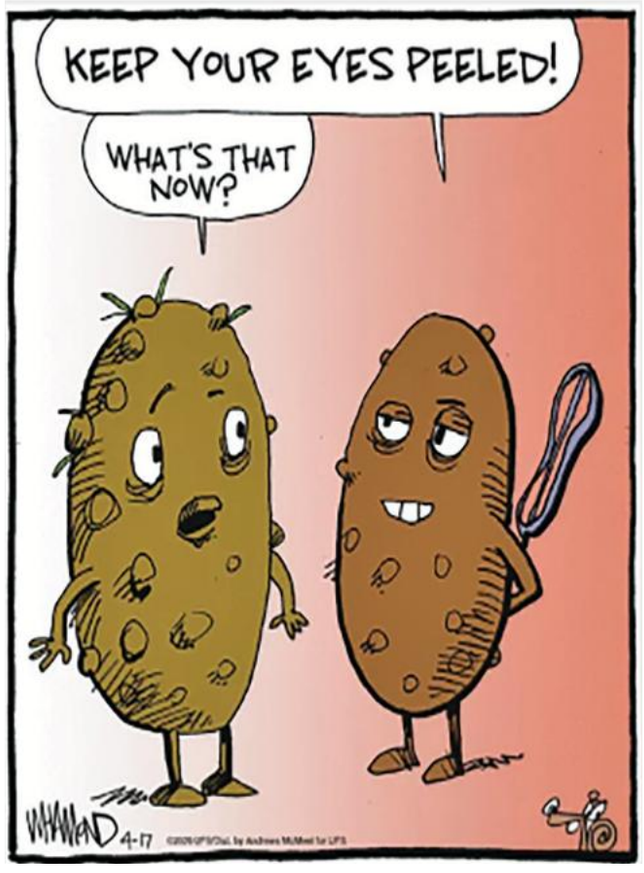
CAPRICORN: A little patience early on sets you up to make a solid decision later. With Mercury moving through your home zone and linking to Pluto in your money sector, it's easier to look at the numbers and choose what actually holds up long term.

AQUARIUS: Listen to the universe's signals. They might be hard to hear, but if you pay attention, the New Moon in your wordy 3rd house likely has information you ought to know.

PISCES: Inspiration shows up in small, easy moments today. With the Moon linking to Jupiter, it's easier to put what you're feeling into words that actually connect.

CARTOON

gocomics.com





Kumal earns first Nepal call-up, Bhandari returns to ODI squad

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 17

Including Arjun Kumal, the Cricket Association of Nepal has named the national squad for the upcoming triangular series under the ICC Cricket World Cup League 2 against the UAE and Oman, to be held in Kathmandu. The League-2 series is slated on 25 April to 5 May at TU Cricket Ground.

Binod Bhandari has also returned to the 15-member national squad, which CAN announced on Friday.

This is the first time Kumal has been included in the national squad. He has been consistent with his impressive performances in domestic cricket and age-group tournaments.

He is in fine form in the ongoing PM Cup. Playing for Gandaki, Kumal is the top scorer with 504 runs from nine innings. He has scored two centuries. He also represented Nepal A in the List A matches against Ireland A at Kirtipur in April 2024.

Similarly, wicketkeeper-batter Binod Bhandari has returned to the ODI side.

He last played for the national team in a Twenty20 against the West Indies A in May 2024. His last ODI appearance was in July 2022 against Scotland at Glasgow. Bhandari is also in fine form in the ongoing PM Cup. As skipper of Tribhuwan Army Club, he has led his team to the final, becoming the third-highest scorer with 404 runs, including two centuries.

Skippered by Rohit Paudel, the squad also includes Dipendra Singh Airee (Vice-Captain), Kushal Bhurtel, Aasif Sheikh, Bhim Sharki, Aarif Sheikh, Basir Ahmad, Gulshan Jha, Sompal Kami, Sandeep Lamichhane, Lalit Rajbanshi, Nandan Yadav and Karan KC. CAN has also named Hemant Dhai, Sher Malla, Rijan Dhakal, Ishan Pandey and Dev Khanal as reserve players.



Arjun Kumal

Airee to captain T20I series

Meanwhile, all-rounder Airee will captain the Nepali squad for the upcoming T20I series against the UAE. This is the first time CAN has named different captains for two different formats.

The two-match T20I series will be played at TU Cricket Ground on Monday and Tuesday evenings. The match will be the first-ever international fixture under floodlights on home soil.

CAN named a 15-member T20I squad, excluding regular captain Paudel and handing the armband to Airee. Along with Paudel, Sompal Kami, Karan KC, Lalit Rajbanshi and Aasif Sheikh, who were part of the T20 World Cup squad, are also not included.

Kushal Malla and Arjun Saud have both returned to the T20I side. Malla last featured in the Asia Qualifier for the T20 World Cup, while Saud's most recent appearance came against Kenya in 2022.

Santosh Yadav and Hemant Dhami have also earned places in the T20I squad, with both yet to make their debuts. Sundeep Jora, Aarif Sheikh, Basir Ahmad, Gulshan Jha, Lokesh Bam, Nandan Yadav, Shahab Alam and Sher Malla are the other players included in the final squad. Pratish GC, Narayan Joshi and Rashid Khan have been named as reserves.

Army clinch third PM Cup title

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 17

Tribhuwan Army Club have won the Men's Prime Minister (PM) Cup National One-Day Cricket Tournament 2026 on Friday.

Army remained unbeaten throughout the event to claim the PM Cup title for the third time.

In their bid for a treble, Army secured a five-wicket victory over Sudurpaschim Province in the final held in Birgunj.

Army have reached all eight finals of the competition but succeeded in lifting the title on only three occasions.

They shared the trophy with Nepal Police Club in the inaugural edition in 2017 and bagged their second title in the 2020/21 edition, defeating APF Club by 33 runs.

Of the nine editions, Police have won four titles, while APF Club have three.

This is the first time the PM Cup has seen a provincial team reach the final, breaking the dominance of departmental sides.

However, the departmental team prevailed in the decider.

Chasing a target of 162 runs at Narayani Cricket Ground, Army eased to victory in 33.3 overs, losing five wickets.

Army stumbled to 56/4 in 10.3 overs, but Imran Sheikh and Basir Ahmad built the foundation for victory.

Captain Binod Bhandari (2) and Bhim Sharki (4) were dismissed in the third over with only 15 runs on the board.

Army then lost opener Trit Raj Das and Kushal Malla for 56 runs.

Das contributed 31 off 32 balls, while Malla chipped in with a run-a-ball 17 before departing in the 10th and 11th overs respectively.

Sheikh and Ahmad, then, steadied the innings with a crucial 96-run partnership for the fifth wicket.

Sheikh guided Army home, remaining unbeaten on 46 runs off 82 balls, including two sixes and two fours.

Ahmad added 45 runs from 56 balls, with four boundaries. Arjun Saud remained not out on 7.

Sudurpaschim's Hemant Dhami claimed two wickets, while Bikash Aagri, Sher Malla and Ashok Dhami picked up one each.



PHOTO CREDIT: CAN

Tribhuwan Army Club celebrating their third title victory at the Men's PM Cup in Birgunj on Friday.

Earlier, Sudurpaschim, having won the toss and chosen to bat first, were bowled out for just 161 runs in 39.4 overs.

Their batting faltered from the start, with the top five batters struggling against disciplined Army bowling.

Opener Abhishek Pal (9) and Khadak Bohora (1), along with Naren Bhatta (1), Raju Rijal (7) and Dipak Bohora (7), all fell cheaply.

At 31 runs, Sudurpaschim had already lost five wickets.

Kiran Thagunna and Narayan Joshi added 62 runs for the sixth wicket. Narayan was dismissed for 29, while Kiran scored 35.

Ashok Dhami top-scored with 43, and Hemant Dhami contributed 16. Seven of their batters failed to reach double figures.

For Army, Akash Chand was the pick of the bowlers, taking 3/31 with one maiden in his nine-over spell.

While Chand dismantled the top order, Shahab Alam did the damage to the lower middle order with figures of 3/55, including one maiden in his 10 overs.

Basir Ahmad, who was named Player of the Final, also claimed two wickets, while Kushal Malla took one.

Santosh Yadav of Lumbini Province was declared Player of the Series.

In nine innings, he scored 265 runs at an average of 33.12 and took 21 wickets with an economy rate of 3.92.

He ranked 10th on the top scorers' chart and fourth among wicket-takers.

Sudurpaschim's Hemant Dhami was named Best Bowler with 27 wickets from 10 innings, while Gandaki's Arjun Kumal was adjudged Best Batter with 504 runs, including two centuries and two half-centuries, becoming the first player to surpass 500 runs.

Aashik Baitha of Madhesh Province was named Emerging Player of the Tournament.

CANADA T20 WORLD CUP GAME UNDER ICC SCRUTINY

AFP
New Delhi, Apr. 17

The International Cricket Council said Friday it is investigating Cricket Canada over allegations of match corruption, including the team's loss to New Zealand at the recent T20 World Cup hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

The game in Chennai -- which Canada lost by eight wickets -- is under scrutiny following allegations of corruption highlighted in a documentary aired by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) on Thursday.

"The ACU (anti-corruption unit) is aware of the programme broadcast by CBC," Andrew Ephgrave, interim general manager of the ICC's Integrity Unit, said in a statement.

The documentary by the public broadcaster made wide-ranging accusations of corruption and poor governance against Canada Cricket.

In the Chennai game, suspicion is focused on the fifth over bowled by captain Dilpreet Bajwa during New Zealand's chase, according to the ESPN Cricinfo website.

He started with a no-ball, bowled a wide, and ended up conceding 15 runs in the over.

Canada scored 173 for four wickets in 20 overs, while New Zealand replied with 176 for two off 15.1 overs.

The ICC, the game's world governing body, is also investigating a telephone call involving then Canada coach Khurram Chohan in which he claims that senior Cricket Canada board members put pressure on him to select certain players, it said.

"Governance matters in relation to ICC Members are considered by the ICC, where they fall under its jurisdiction, in accordance with the ICC's standard constitutional processes," Ephgrave said.

Cricket Canada said it was treating the matter with "utmost importance".

"Recent promotional material alludes to allegations related to organized crime and match-fixing -- issues that Cricket Canada takes extremely seriously," the organisation said on its website.

"Where matters are raised, we are committed to reviewing them responsibly and taking appropriate steps as needed."

Tamang, Karki set up Surya Nepal Match Play final

BY A STAFF REPORTER
Kathmandu, Apr. 17

Niraj Tamang successfully defended his Surya Nepal NPGA Match Play title at the Royal Nepal Golf Club on Friday.

This was the sixth event under the Surya Nepal Golf Tour 2025–26.

Defending champion Niraj defeated Tanka Bahadur Karki 3&2 in the 36-hole final to claim his second trophy of the season and fifth career title.

Along with the title, Niraj received Rs 100,000, while runner-up Tanka earned Rs 75,000. Earlier, Rabi Khadka beat Sanjay Lama 3&1 to finish third.

Rabi collected Rs 56,000, while Sanjay received Rs 42,000. The four losing quarter-finalists- Rame Magar, Jayram Shrestha, Dinesh Prajapati and Bhuvan Nagarkoti- received Rs 18,000 each.

Likewise, the seven professionals eliminated in the first round - Surya Prasad Sharma, Bhuwan Kumar Rokka, Ramesh Adhikari, Deepak Magar, Bal Bhadra Rai, Dhana Bahadur Thapa and Krishna Man Rajbahak - received Rs 10,000 each. In the final, Niraj opened a 2-up lead after the first nine holes and extended it to five by the halfway stage.

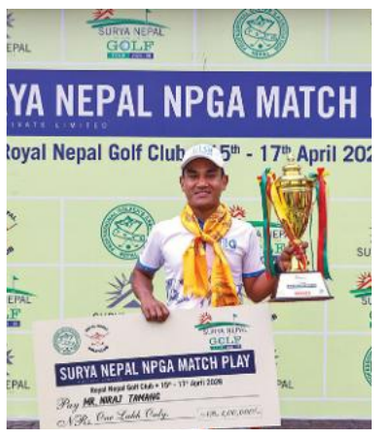


PHOTO CREDIT: NPGA

Golfer Niraj Tamang with winner's trophy and cheque on Friday.

After losing the 20th hole, he sank a superb eagle on the 22nd to restore his five-hole advantage. Tanka fought back, winning three consecutive holes from the 23rd to reduce the deficit to two. Niraj responded by winning the 33rd hole to go 3-up, before sinking a 20-yard par putt to seal victory in style, with two holes to spare.

The three-day match play tournament, organised by PGA Nepal and sponsored by Surya Nepal Pvt. Ltd., featured the top 16 players from the Surya Nepal Golf Tour 2024–25 Order of Merit. The event carried a total prize purse of NPR 425,000. Prizes were handed over by Surya Nepal Brand Manager Bidur Raj Adhikari, Nepal Golf Association President Tashi Ghale and RNGC Treasurer Roshan Rai.

The seventh event of the season, the Surya Nepal Challenge, will be held in the second week of May.

Villa, Forest in Europa League semis

AFP
London, Apr. 17

Aston Villa demolished Bologna and Nottingham Forest beat Porto in the Europa League on Thursday to set up an all-English showdown in the semi-finals.

Leading 3-1 from the quarter-final first leg, Unai Emery's team swatted aside Bologna with a 4-0 victory at Villa Park.

Forest defeated 10-man Porto 1-0 in Nottingham to secure a 2-1 aggregate success. Villa are into their second European semi-final under Emery after making the last four in the Conference League in 2024.

Ollie Watkins had scored twice in the first leg in Italy and the England striker tormented Bologna again in the 16th minute. Watkins' 100th goal for Villa made him the club's top scorer in European competitions with 10, overtaking Peter Withe and John McGinn.

But it was only a temporary reprieve for Bologna as Emiliano Buendia struck with a fierce blast in the 26th minute. Rogers made up for his penalty miss in the 39th minute, netting for the first time in 12 games with a drive that beat Ravaglia at his near post.

Ezri Konsa's 89th-minute volley capped Villa's dominant display. At the City Ground, two-time European champions Forest booked their first continental semi-final since the 1983-84 UEFA Cup.

Porto defender Jan Bednarek was dismissed in the eighth minute for an ugly foul that caught Chris Wood on the knee and forced the New Zealand striker to limp off injured.

Forest quickly took advantage of their numerical superiority as Morgan Gibbs-White's shot from the edge of the penalty area took a hefty deflection before looping into the back of the net in the 12th minute.

Freiburg swept into the Europa League semi-finals for the first time with a 3-1 win against Celta Vigo. In the semi-finals, Freiburg will play Sporting Braga, who came from behind to win 4-2 at Real Betis, sealing a 5-3 aggregate triumph.

God, destiny, Griezmann: Atletico target rare Copa success

AFP
Seville, Apr. 17

No sooner had Atletico Madrid eliminated Barcelona from the Champions League than their fans turned their attention to Saturday's Copa del Rey final against Real Sociedad.

"We'll give everything to win the cup -- spirit of '96'," read a banner they unfurled, harking back to Atletico's historic La Liga and Copa double 30 years ago under Radomir Antic.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone had a similar idea to the fans.

There was no time to celebrate downing the Catalans, even if Antoine Griezmann said he was craving "a cold beer".

"(The joy) was short-lived because Cholo (Simeone) cut us off a bit," explained the Frenchman, who is desperate to leave the club with a farewell trophy -- or ideally two.

Griezmann, 35, Atletico's all-time top goalscorer, is leaving for MLS side Orlando City at the end of the season, and Simeone said he would love for the forward to depart with his ambitions fulfilled.

"I hope that God and destiny give him what he's looking for in the time he has left in the game," said the Argentine coach.

"We'll only realise over time that we had and still have a football genius."

Griezmann flirted with an early exit from Atletico in March but with the Copa del Rey and Champions League trophies still on the line, he could not bring himself to depart.

"(Playing in the Copa final) is my dream, my objective, and I hope we can do something big," said Griezmann a few weeks ago when announcing that he would stay until the end of the season.

The forward has been one of Simeone's most reliable soldiers during his long reign in the Spanish capital.

"I've been here 14 years at the club and I never stop getting emotional,"



said Simeone after reaching the Champions League semis.

"I told the players when the game ended -- thank you, thank you. I'm completely grateful as a coach for the way they play, for their drive, for their heart, for the belief we have, for what we do.

"And now rest, rest, because on Saturday we have a very important match."

Long awaited return

Competing with giants Barcelona and Real is an uphill struggle but Simeone has led Atletico to La Liga titles in 2014 and 2021.

While winning the Champions League cannot be expected of Atletico, the club's lack of success in the Copa del Rey is a different issue, and one the Argentine coach can legitimately be criticised for.

Atletico have won the trophy 10 times, but only once under Simeone -- in 2013 against city rivals Real Madrid, which was also the last time they reached the final.

Since then, Real Sociedad, Valencia, Real Betis and Athletic Bilbao have all won the trophy. Sevilla, Alaves, Osasuna and Mallorca have finished as runners-up.

Sociedad, their opponents at La Cartuja stadium in Seville, won the 2020 edition, which was played in 2021 without fans because of the covid pandemic.

That ended a wait of over three decades for a major trophy, but winning it in front of their fans this time would be even better.

Since American coach Pellegrino Matarazzo was appointed in December, they have rediscovered their belief and resuscitated a drab season.

"I want (the fans) with us during the whole game -- before, during and after, because we want to win it with them," said La Real defender Jon Martin.

Both teams like to strike fast on the counter and it could be an intense and entertaining battle.

Ideas about Simeone's side being durable and defensive are outdated, as was shown in the thrilling European tussle with Barca, whom Atletico also eliminated in the Copa semi-final.

"Over the years we've evolved into different game approaches because of the different characteristics of our players," explained Simeone.

"We're a team that attacks better than it defends and we need to attack."

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